

The Pop Culture Grimoire: A Pop Culture Magic Anthology

Edited by Taylor Ellwood



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The Pop Culture Grimoire

By Taylor Ellwood

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Introduction

When I wrote *Pop Culture Magick* in 2003, and had it published in 2004, there wasn't a lot of available material on the topic. There were some mentions of it in Phil Hine's books and an article by Grant Morrison, but for the most part it really hadn't been written about. Since then, pop culture and magic have been discussed on podcasts, written about in new books, and otherwise become an accepted discipline within magic. At the time I wrote *Pop Culture Magick*, I was told I was reinventing the wheel and met with much skepticism over potential "fluffiness", and likely trying to put together an anthology would have been much harder. But four or so years later, this anthology represents the work others have done, which is thrilling to see.

What is so essential about integrating pop culture into magic is recognizing the very important concept that the culture we live in shapes us in ways that older cultures cannot shape us, because we don't live in them. While it can be validly argued that much of pop culture is consumer driven, what is often ignored within that argument is that it is also an expression of (and often commentary on) the values of contemporary culture. Pop culture magic allows us to examine those values and work with them, instead of taking the mentality of longing for a previous age or simpler times. It shows us the diversity of our contemporary culture, even as it remakes the previous

cultures into a contemporary context.

In this anthology, there is a broad variety of pop culture magic, from working with Elvis as a god form, to different pop culture tarot interpretations, to how to use pop culture music in ritual, and much more. The diversity of these workings from different magicians is inspiring to read because it represents a diversity of perspectives on what pop culture can be as well as how it can be integrated into magical practices. When we can take a character from a role playing game and adapt it to a belief system such as voodoo, where new deities can be discovered, what we find is innovation as well as recognition of the relevance of pop culture to spirituality and how we manifest that in everyday life. Seeing the diversity of people's practices, as that diversity applies to pop culture magic is encouraging because it shows that pop culture magic has the necessary flexibility that all spiritual practices should have.

So sit back, relax, and get inspired in your own practice by seeing what others have done and learning what you can do.

Taylor Ellwood
Portland OR
June 2008

Popular Music as Ritual

By Lisa McSherry

The idea of music incorporated into ritual is ancient. From the intricate rhythms played upon the body by the Aborigines to the wild instrumentals of the Celts, modern pagans have borrowed many songs to use to enhance their rituals. Music focuses the mind and accesses the unconscious in a medium it can more easily understand than the textual symbols of spoken language, bringing the conscious and unconscious together to more easily direct

the will.

What I propose is a new way to use music: not as an adjunct to ritual, but as the ritual itself. With modern technology it is very easy for anyone with a computer to put together a playlist, burn it to a CD, and have it automatically play – freeing the practitioner from having to pay attention to distracting details. An older technology version requires creating a tape and playing it on a machine that automatically ‘turns the tape over’ at the midpoint, but this is an easily ignored pause in the overall flow of the ritual.

I have created ritual music for years now (originally on tapes in the 1980s, now I use CDs) to express my deepest intentions and manifest new creations within my life. Some examples include: celebrating Beltane, enhancing creativity, and letting go of a romantic relationship gone bad. I will be using two examples of ritual music – Beltane Beat and Catharsis to illustrate the process of creating a ritual from music. One note: there is a growing body of pagan-specific music within our community, some of it amazingly powerful. I have deliberately chosen to use that music very little, finding the quirkiness of popular music more to my preference. For those who would prefer not to use popular music I propose a collection of pagan-specific music for ritual use at the end of this article.

My personal preference is for outstanding music with excellent lyrics, but I will settle for adequate music with perfect lyrics in some cases. My partner is nearly the opposite. He barely hears lyrics and for him the music is far more important. Along those lines, there are several genres of music I simply do not like, and that limits some of my musical choices (Broadway musicals, for example). Obviously each practitioner will be drawing upon a unique collection of music as well as a unique outlook of what is and isn't enjoyed.

Begin with Intent

As with every magickal endeavor, the creator must specify intent for the working. This is different from deciding on a theme, although song themes are the starting place for deciding which are appropriate to use.

I first created Beltane Beat in the late 1980s, and it's been recreated from the original tape at least twice, with slight modifications to include more recent music and for changes in the desired results. In the 80s I was in single, in college, and interested in attracting healthy sex partners with or without an accompanying relationship. Beltane Beat was originally created simply to celebrate the glorious diverse sexuality of my life and it's sacredness in service to the life-force of the God/dess and updated songs keep that flavor. If I were to create this collection anew, the focus would be more on the sacredness of sexuality within a monogamous partnership, or perhaps how fun it is to be in love.

Here's the playlist:

Soraidh Bhuam far chuan is beannachd, Maggie MacInnes

Thing Called Love, Bonnie Raitt

Cathouse, Danielle Dax

Wrap it Up, Romeo Void

Ode to Boy II, Alison Moyet

Stripped, Depeche Mode

Listen, Sophie B Hawkins

I Want Your Hands On Me, Sinead O' Connor

Sins of the Flesh, Sister Machine Gun

I Need a Man, Eurythmics

Because the Night, Patti Smith Group

Bring Me Some Water, Melissa Etheridge

You Sexy Thing, Tom Tom Club

Sleep Together, Garbage

Sexuality, kd lang

The Sensual World, Kate Bush

As we begin this ritual, imagine that you are looking for a little spice, a spark of that divine, sexual, fire. This ritual cries out for movement; if shared with another that is an added bit of spice. Shake your hips, fling your hair, dress up and go out to show off your beauty.

We open with the incredible Maggie MacInnes and her “Soraidh Bhuam far chuan is beannachd”. Sung in Scottish Gaelic, most listeners are going to find themselves carried along by the sounds rather than the lyrics. The beat is strong, like a heartbeat and it carries us right into a sense of sacred space. Right then, in a quick change of mood, the bass guitar comes in and is quickly joined by the steel guitar of Bonnie Raitt’s “Thing Called Love.” Witty and confident, this is a woman we could become. When she sings “I ain’t no bar of soap/sent in to clean up your reputation” we know exactly what she means and we laugh along with her.

Danielle Dax’s “Cat-house” is another witty song, but much more blunt. With lyrics like: Baby, baby, gonna hunger for your leisure/ gonna polish up your chrome and shine your treasure/ silken bellies and downy thighs/ a little trick with a big surprise/ so stay let me be your pleasure” how could you resist laughing out loud? Romeo Void’s

“Wrap it Up” continues the sexy theme (“I’m gonna treat you like the queen you are” – yum!) and the up-beat tempo. As a counterpoint to these simplistic lyrics, however, I followed it with Alison Moyet’s “Ode to Boy” – a much more complicated song of straightforward desire (“I watch his lips caress the glass/ His fingers stroke its stem and pass/ To lift a cigarette at last”).

At this point I feel like singing, and so I turn to Depeche Mode and “Stripped.” I love to really let it out with “Let me see you/ stripped down to the bone” only to soften it for “Let me hear you speaking/ Just for me.” This song also serves as notice that it’s not just sex I want, it’s a lover, someone who will be worthy of my sacred sexuality. The ticking clock at the end of this song merges perfectly into Sophie B Hawkins’ “Listen.” This is a truly sexy song. From its quiet beginning, deliberately building like a Bach Cantata until she wails (literally) and you realize you’ve got a metaphorical orgasm going on in your ears. Interestingly, the beat and tempo started with “Stripped” links into another song, Sinéad O’Connor’s “I Want Your Hands on Me.” Bluntly: it’s here because it is perfectly literal. (In later years I would replace it with her “Daddy I’m Fine” for the stronger emphasis on the woman’s strength.)

I’m dancing now, and Sister Machine Gun’s “Sins of the Flesh” flows through my head and into my body. This is early industrial rock with a hard bass line and driving syntho-drum machine. The lyrics are less important than the impact on my body. Annie Lennox steps in right on Chris Randall’s heels with “Hey! Is this my turn? Do you want me to sing now?” and I’m strutting around telling the world that “there’s just one thing/ I’m looking for/ And he don’t wear a dress.” One of the classic anthems of female desire, “I Need a Man” needs no further discussion, nor does Patti Smith’s “Because the Night” (which I much prefer to the Springsteen version, even though she wrote it

for him). In a kind of response to Ms. Smith is Melissa's Etheridge's "Bring Me Some Water."

Tom Tom Club's "You Sexy Thing" is another stroke to the self esteem, and a welcome break after all these women have shared their songs. But it's back to the women in a big way to hear Shirley Manson wonder if we'd be happier if we "Sleep Together."

With that, the ritual begins to shift focus from the wilder aspects of Beltane to its more sensual perspective. k.d. lang sings "Sexuality" and the lyrics reveal that it isn't about sex, but exploration and desire and sharing – all shared in that gorgeous voice. Finally, with the incredibly obvious song title we come to Kate Bush's "The Sensual World." The name may be obvious, but the lyrics are an exquisite play on Molly Bloom's Soliloquy (from James Joyce's *Ulysses*):

Mmh, yes,
Then I'd taken the kiss of seedcake back from his mouth
Going deep South, go down, mmh, yes,
Took six big wheels and rolled our bodies
Off of Howth Head and into the flesh, mmh, yes,
He said I was a flower of the mountain, yes,
But now I've powers o'er a woman's body--yes.
Stepping out of the page into the sensual world.
Stepping out.....
To where the water and the earth caress
And the down of a peach says mmh, yes,
Do I look for those millionaires
Like a Machiavellian girl would
When I could wear a sunset? mmh, yes,
And how we'd wished to live in the sensual world
You don't need words--just one kiss, then another.
Stepping out of the page into the sensual world
Stepping out, off the page, into the sensual world.
And then our arrows of desire rewrite the speech, mmh,
yes,

And then he whispered would I, mmh, yes,
Be safe, mmh, yes, from mountain flowers?
And at first with the charm around him, mmh, yes,
He loosened it so if it slipped between my breasts
He'd rescue it, mmh, yes,
And his spark took life in my hand and, mmh, yes,
I said, mmh, yes,
But not yet, mmh, yes,
Mmh, yes.

It's hard to beat that for turning sexuality to sensuality
and so I come to a close.

Beltane Beat is a passionate creation with a single theme expressed in a variety of easily-updated songs. Catharsis is another ritual creation entirely. Created in 2003 as the result of a passionate but ultimately not permanent relationship, its purpose is to take me through the shadow back into the light. I was the one left, I had an extremely difficult time 'letting go' and everything I tried to get over him simply was not working (including 'regular' ritual work). Almost in desperation, I decided to create a CD expressing all of my pain, love, regret and desire in one place. It would, I hoped, purge me – if only through repetition. I played it every day, sometimes several times a day (on weekends in particular, when I had huge blocks of time with no other distractions) for months. Its efficacy can be measured thusly: I am friends with that person, and my heart no longer aches.

Here's the playlist:

Jesus Forgive Me (For the Things I'm About Say),
Concrete Blonde

Numb, Pink

She Cries Your Name, Beth Orton

Pretty When You Cry, VAST

Drift and Die, Puddle of Mud

Torn, Natalie Imbruglia

Thin Line, Annie Lennox

You Oughta Know, Alanis Morrisette

As Heaven is Wide, Garbage

Numb, Disturbed

The Ubiquitous Mr. Lovegrove, Dead Can Dance

Closer, Nine Inch Nails

Judith, A Perfect Circle

I Fucking Hate You, Godsmack

Schism, Tool

In The End, Linkin Park

Concrete Blonde opens this ritual with Johnette Napolitano's distinctive voice wailing "Oh h h h Jesus, PLEASE, forgive me/ for the things I'm about to say." There is a long pause and then the music begins with her singing once again:

I killed you in my mind today

I cut you up, I watched you bleed

I killed you in my heart today

For everything you did to me

The words are like a punch to the gut, a stabbing of the voodoo doll, an exorcism of the pain. She knows exactly how I feel, and her voice pulls the pain out of me into the open where we can look at it.

I murdered you a hundred times

I shot you dead and never cried
I killed you in my mind today
I laughed and watched you die
Screaming at me all on fire
Liar, liar, liar
I buried you with my desire
Liar, liar, liar
I buried you so far below
Liar, liar, liar
I hate to see you go

And in that last line we begin to approach a look at the deeper problems. One piece is: I am not ready to let go. How to cut that cord? Pink's "Numb" captures how I'm feeling, despite the pain of my emotions, it's almost the hardest part about this break up:

Like the coldest winter
I am frozen from you
I was weak before now
You've made me so numb
I can't feel much for you anymore
I gave you my all my baby
I'm numb, numb, numb

It's the line "I gave you my all" that hits me like a gut punch. That's a deep fear being brought into the light: is there anything left? Without the forest-fire passion is any other relationship worth it? I've been burned so deeply, the nerves are truncated, I can no longer feel.

Beth Orton captures my sadness, my longing, in her eloquently poetic "She Cries Your Name." Listening to her I feel for a moment like some romantic heroine from an old ballad. I remember that women for ages untold have been where I am, felt what I feel, and yet we go on. "She cries your name/ Twelve times again/ She cries your name/ How long can this love remain?" At this point I also remember how much I hate the myth of the romantic.

VAST's "Pretty When You Cry" is my ironic song – my

antidote to the sweet, dreamy, unrealistic words of the previous song. VAST is an artist that my former lover introduced me to, and it was while seeing them in concert that I was first told that he loved me. This song takes that and twists it around and it's here because it is so twisted, particularly this line: "If you knew how much I love you/ you would run away." It helps sometimes to go to the dark places and just go as deep as you can before returning.

Puddle of Mud comes along at that point and I suddenly feel compelled to sing aloud. As river ice cracks when the weak sun begins to warm it, so too my voice sounds: cracked and thick with unshed tears and emotion. Its sound was hardly more than a croak. But in doing so, I am reminded of my deepest values: I don't lie ("I Believe, I Believe, I Believe in the truth, from inside"). This honesty is sacred to me, and yet it is one reason the relationship ended. That shook my faith and now I'm feeling adrift, uprooted.

"Torn" (thank you Ms. Imbruglia) pulls my soul right up and out. Pop it may be, it's also energy pushing me through, acknowledging my feelings, my situation, but because the music is so, dare I say, upbeat, it clarifies rather than enervates me. Here, the line: "illusion never changed/ into something real" is the gut-clencher. I need to face that – my illusions were never real.

Annie Lennox's "Thin Line" is another sing-out-loud song and one that describes so perfectly where I am – so easy to fall into hate from the passion I once felt. This song is a tale of the consequences of being taken for granted. It's worth it to reproduce the lyrics in their entirety here:

It's a thin line between love and hate
It's a thin line between love and hate
It's five o'clock in the morning
And you're just gettin' in
A knock upon the door
A voice sweet and low says (who is it?)

She opens up the door
And she lets you in
And never once does she say “where have you been?”
She says “Hold it,
Are you hungry, did you eat yet,
Let me hang up your coat now”
And all the time she’s smiling
Never raises her voice
It’s five o’clock in the morning
And you don’t give it a second thought
It’s a thin line between love and hate
It’s a thin line between love and hate
The sweetest woman in the world
Could be the meanest woman in the world
If you make her be that way
She might be holding something in
That’s really gonna hurt you
One of these fine days
There you are in the hospital
Bandaged from foot to head
In a state of shock
That much from bein’ dead
You didn’t think your woman
Could do something like that to you
You didn’t think she’d got the nerve
Accidents speak louder than words
Louder than words
Louder than words
Louder than words
Come on
Come on, baby, baby
You don’t give a damn about me
Come on baby, baby
You don’t really care about me
Hear what I say
Hear what I say

Here is the turning point: I'm done with being sad, now I'm a little mad. It's time to get a little (more than a little, really) nasty. Anger is powerful, and it is time that I let myself feel that. "You Oughta Know" by Alanis Morissette is just the right vehicle to mark this transition. Her singer is powerful, strong, and really pissed off; she also genuinely likes herself, and that's a feeling I need to be reminded of at this time. "As Heaven is Wide" by Garbage only reinforces that (bless you Shirley Manson for the lyrical malevolence you bring).

Nothing said could change the fact
My trust was blind
You broke the pact
If God's my witness, God must be blind
If flesh could crawl
My skin would fall
From off my bones
And run away from here

It's not just the women who do angry break-up songs, and Disturbed does angry almost better than anyone. In a deliberate echo of an earlier song, with a very different feel, I chose "Numb" to represent where I am at this point. Again, here I am using the music and lyrics in deliberate ironical counterpoint to one another. The words evoke Pink's, but the tone in which they are shared is far from sad. David Draiman begins quietly, almost explaining:

Bleeding now
I'm Crying out
I'm Falling down and
I'm Feeling nothing
Like Laughing now
I'm Stopping now
I'm Reaching out and
I'm Feeling nothing
Then he explodes:
Yeah, you have created a rift within me

Now there have been several complications
That have left me feeling nothing
I might say, you were wrong to take it from me
Left me feeling nothing

This is a song to attempt to sing along to. To shout aloud and not care if you hit anything resembling the right notes, particularly one of the last lines: “I can feel you ripping and tearing/ Feeding and growing inside of me/ I want this, more than you know/ I need this, give it back to me.”

It is time to calm down a bit, moderate the intense heat of the anger into something a little more painful. Dead Can Dance’s “The Ubiquitous Mr. Lovegrove” is that song for me. Deliberately, the closing lyrics are painfully true and reawaken a sense of sadness in me: “Never let it be said I was untrue/ I never found a home inside of you/ Never let it be said I was untrue/ I gave you all my time.”

All through this ritual I’ve been spinning my emotions along, deliberately getting into the depths and manipulating myself to feel strongly and deeply – the point of Catharsis is to purge me and free me of the pain. The only way to get ‘over’ the pain is to go through it, in my experience. Otherwise it’s just buried. But now I feel it’s time to get back to being nasty, perhaps even a bit angry. One of the masters of being nasty is Mr. Trent Razor of Nine Inch Nails. Yes, I chose “Closer” which is more usually known as “(I want to) Fuck You Like an Animal.” The sex had been truly outstanding, and now which of us was violated? isolated? broken?

A Perfect Circle’s “Judith” follows up and continues the feeling. The key lines in this song are the opening: “You’re such an inspiration for the ways/ That I’ll never ever choose to be.” It wasn’t a lie, not exactly, but I did not manufacture the words of love spoken to me. Nor did I make the first move towards physical intimacy. No, I was cautious, and my heart was stolen by the thief.

What else could be said now but the ridiculously over-

the-top “I Fucking Hate You” by Godsmack? It’s a last gasp of intensity, of absurdity – I can’t really be the person who says “everyday I’m gonna blame you. Even if you justify every f**king bulls**t lie/ it only makes me want to break you.”

No, I’m closer (now, or will be) to the person who sings “I know the pieces fit ‘cause I watched them fall away” as Tool’s “Schism” closes around me. The bass line and unusual time signature feel like a shifting fractal might sound. “Schism” reminds me that every failed relationship -- love or other – broke upon the jagged shores of communication. It took two, and one chose the other shore.

Finally, we come to the end. Linkin Park’s “In the End” is a bit strange as a closer, but it is a counterpoint to the one song I always thought of as ‘ours.’ That song shall remain nameless, a secret kept until the end, but it speaks of not caring what others think or say, of knowing the one you open your heart to will always keep that trust. And so when Chester Bennington sings: “You kept everything inside and even though I tried / it all fell apart/ What it meant to me / will eventually / be a memory / of a time when I tried so hard” I am reminded of what I did do, how hard I did try. But the choice was made, and that “I’ve put my trust in you/ Pushed as far as I can go.” “But in the end/ It doesn’t even matter.”

That seals the magic. I am purged, strengthened, reminded, and even warned.

When using music for magickal purposes, my general preference is for popular music, but there is a lot of ‘pagan’ music that works just as well. Jeremy Bredeson (High Priest of JaguarMoon and a member of the Green Faerie Grove) put together a perfect little set for me to share with you:

Casting the circle: Element Chant - Spiral Rhythm (I Am)

Calling the Goddess: I Summon Her - Spiral Rhythm (We Are Light)

Calling the God: Hymn to Herne - S. J. Tucker (Blessings)

Working: Witches' Rune - S. J. Tucker (Blessings)

Celebration: Brothers Beautiful - Jeffrey Altergott (Don't Be A Stranger)

Lesson: Ah Ho - Todd Alan (Earth Changes)

Celebration: I Am Pagan - Spiral Rhythm (We Are Light)

Working: Belladonna & Aconite - Inkubus Sukkubus (Wytches & Vampyres - The Best Of)

Celebration: Freedom - Spiral Rhythm (I Am)

Releasing the Deities, Elements and Circle: Let the Way - Spiral Rhythm (We Are Light)

Music as ritual comes from the heart; it unites the two sides of the brain with the lyrics speaking to one side and the music supporting that message through the other. It can be a powerful medium for transformation of the self into what we desire from what we currently are.

Lisa is the author of *Magickal Connections* and *The Virtual Pagan* as well as one of the contributors to *Magick on the Edge*. A priestess, teacher, lecture and owner of Facing North (www.facingnorth.net a collection of reviews and articles of interest to the Pagan community), she can be reached at lisa@cybercoven.org.

[Death and Captain Jack Harkness](#)

Mary Caelsto

“But I can’t. Something happened to me a while back. Long story and far away. But I was killed.... and then I was brought back to life, and ever since then... I can’t die.” – Captain Jack Harkness, *Everything Changes* (Torchwood Season 1, episode 1)

We alternately fear, revere, and misunderstand death. The archetypal image of Death comes in the form of the thirteenth card in the Major Arcana. The image of a skeleton astride a white horse grabs a hold of our visceral response confirming that death is a bad thing. He’s the Grim Reaper. He’s death incarnate. It harkens back to horror movies where the hero wants very much to live. Living is a good thing. It’s something we should all want. Isn’t it? But too much living, like too much of anything, isn’t good, and in the end, it can be as much a torment to live as it is to die. You see, in the twenty first century, according to Captain Jack, everything changes.

To fans of the British television series *Torchwood*, Captain Jack Harkness puts a much more pleasant face on death and still teaches us the very same lessons found in the tarot card. Captain Jack cannot die in the literal sense. Instead, he’s tossed from buildings, shot with guns, and attacked by a demon arising from the bowels of the earth. Each interaction would kill a normal human being. Instead, viewers are given images focused on Jack’s “corpse” only to have him brush himself off, make a witty remark, and live to star in another episode. Except that he’s not the same. Every death changes him.

The fundamental lesson of the Death tarot card is that nothing in our lives ever remains the same. We live in a fluid world, constantly changing and growing. In fact, when Death appears reversed it reminds us that we’re clinging too strongly to an old way of living. We need to clean out our metaphysical closets to make way for the new

things entering our lives. It's a scary prospect and in order to do so we need to release all our out dated ways of thinking about death. This release becomes a type of death in and of itself.

Whether we're aware of it or not we experience countless smaller transforming deaths during the course of our lives. When we go to sleep at night the current day "passes away." It becomes the new day, in which we awake refreshed and ready to tackle whatever tasks may present themselves. When we awake today, we're not the same as we were yesterday. And yesterday we were just a little bit different (or a lot depending on what happened) than we were the day before.

Any time we release negative thoughts or feelings, we experience their "death." When we discover something new about ourselves than what we previously thought true or possible, then those old thoughts die. Looking at our lives from this perspective, our initial idea of a rigid timeline for life and death transforms into a more fluid concept.

By thinking about death in this flexible manner, we prepare ourselves for magickal work. Much to the chagrin of those who focus exclusively on logic, magick isn't a straight-forward way of working with the world. Instead, the practitioner focuses around the edges, peeling up the corners to see what's beneath. Serious personal magickal work is designed to take someone as inflexible as a thick oak branch and turn them into a lump of clay. The rigidity of the branch creates a death if it's taxed too much. The branch, if bent by strong enough hands, breaks. It's not a clean death. It's a painful, messy one. Compare this to a rope of clay that bends and flexes. If it splits apart, it can easily be pinched back together, or simply balled up and rolled anew. The deaths are gentler than those offered by being inflexible, and thus, we get to the transitive nature of death as taught to us by Jack Harkness.

Though Jack can live forever, his entire life is devoted to

death. He steps into the line of fire, knowing that he could take a bullet for a co-worker. He kills aliens who pose a threat to Earth. As it was said in the episode *Adam*, he remembers all of his deaths. Yet, he continues his work because he knows death isn't permanent. Not in the world of science fiction and not in our world either.

Magicians, just like Jack Harkness, by necessity need to embrace the fluid nature of life and death. Not necessarily by stepping into the line of a bullet or doing something foolhardy, but by understanding that death happens all around us. We walk in death and we live in death. We may not find aliens roaming the streets of our towns, but we do find ideas fading away only to be replaced by new ones. This process of transformation happens constantly. We "kill" our hunger by eating. We "kill" time by watching television or reading a book. By flooding our minds with images and thoughts of death we become immune to it, just like Captain Jack Harkness. Or do we?

As we see through the series, each physical death weighs heavily on Jack's conscience. He blames himself for the death of those he's sworn to protect. He's not immune to death; he just can't seek the escape a physical death offers. He has to stand and face death, and the change it causes, every day. If things get too much, he can't just "end it all" because for several hundred thousand years, at least, there won't be an "end" for Jack. He lives, day after day, week after week, year after year, living with the consequences of death and all the change that it brings. Jack's strength should become our strength.

There's physical death and there's escape. The two are not the same. We will die, just as eventually, when his work is done, Jack will die. To those left behind, the physical death appears permanent. We watch our loved ones, our friends, die. Some go peacefully, others go tragically, but in the end, it can be said that we all die. What happens afterwards is up for debate. Everyone has

their own opinions of what happens after death, where we go, and what we face. Even if you believe that nothing happens to the soul, that the body is laid to rest and the essence of the person is simply gone, it can be argued that even there, death is a transformation. The physical body may be gone, but as the earth and time take its toll on the body, each cell becomes broken down into its component parts and transforms into something new. And, although the body may be gone, and our lives feel emptier because we no longer share them with a friend or loved one, we have memories and the body feeds the soil, so really, the person isn't really "gone." The individual is simply changed, transformed by death.

Escape, on the other hand, is available to anyone who wants it, except Captain Jack Harkness. If someone wants out of Torchwood their memories are erased and they're sent back out into society none the wiser. In our lives we can seek a momentary escape in the pages of a book or by watching a television program. Some seek longer-term escapes through drugs, or other means, and there are others who want a permanent escape. These individuals may seek suicide, believing falsely that the physical death is a final death. But as we've discussed, through the eyes of a magician, even physical death is a transformation.

What would happen if instead of the skeleton sitting on the horse carrying the black flag with the white flower on it, death came in a better looking guise? I'm sure if Death arrived looking like Captain Jack Harkness, many people would be willing to rush into its embrace, or at the very least sit down and have a cup of coffee with it. And once again we see death's transformation powers at work, because suddenly we don't fear death, we welcome it, and the change it brings.

“Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves

And Immortality.”

- Emily Dickenson, Because I could Not Stop for Death

Miss Dickenson’s poem sparks in us a welcoming of death that isn’t often found in today’s life. We spend money on products and fads to make us look younger and seem ageless. However, if we looked at death like Emily Dickenson, or Captain Jack Harkness, we would relish the passing of time. We see Death as something to welcome. He kindly stopped so Miss Dickenson could get into his carriage, just as Captain Jack pulls up in his spaceship, or in the Torchwood van, and welcomes people inside. The longer we spend time in Captain Jack’s company, the more we realize that by him being willing to face death, he inspires those around him. Suddenly, other members of his team are willing to do dangerous and brave things, because they see something in themselves that wasn’t there before. Merely being in Jack’s company changed them, because Death changes everything it touches.

So how do we bring Jack’s perspective on Death into our magickal work? Going back to the tarot card is a good start. It helps to remember that death is just a transformation. Whether you meditate on the tarot card and its meaning, or curl up with a few episodes of Torchwood, thinking about all the little deaths and the resultant change in our lives will help us become more comfortable with the thought and images of death.

Jack stares death boldly in the face. He knows he can’t die, and it’s his curse as well as his power. His fearlessness enables him to do things, like running Torchwood, that might not be possible for a mortal. He brings lifetimes of experiences into this life and shares them with those in his close, inner circle. By inviting Jack into our lives, he can share them with us as well.

Jack brings a “been there, done that” mentality to thinking about death. He knows that every time he dies, it’s not permanent, and he’ll come back a changed man.

Sometimes he welcomes this, other times, he does it to prove a point. And, sometimes, such as when a great demon has arisen from the depths of the planet, he does it to save mankind. In the face of such bravery, can we do no less?

It really doesn't matter what kind of death we're facing. Some circumstances may take more bravery than others, but in the end, we should all be like Captain Jack Harkness and stand up bravely to the transformations that *every* death brings. After all, it's the twenty-first century, and as he said, this is the time when everything changes. As magickal practitioners, I think we should be standing boldly in the front of the line, ready to embrace change and, if need be, death. After all, from where I'm standing, he doesn't look half bad.

Mary Caelsto lives in the Midwest with a menagerie of animals including a very opinionated horse, and a cat who was a dog in a past life. Her metaphysical work has appeared in many pagan publications, and her book ANIMAL REIKI TO GO is forthcoming from The Lotus Circle. She runs Jupiter Gardens, LLC, an online store catering to everything that nurtures your inner worlds. Learn more about Mary at <http://www.jupitergardens.com/>

[Break On through To the Other Side](#)

Jackie Schmitt

In early December 2006, the administrator for an online Vampire: The Requiem roleplaying server shut down the game. I'd been playing on that server, and helping run it as a Storyteller (which is a little like a Dungeon Master in D&D). Previously the admin had said he was going to sell the server to the game's Storyteller staff, but after jacking up the price repeatedly the admin instead passed the server

over to some of his friends, for free, breaking the verbal contract he'd made with us.

The Storyteller staff, myself included, requested that these friends of the admin take down some websites we'd coded and designed; they refused. Tensions mounted on both sides, and between the breach of contract and the potential copyright violation, it looked more and more every day like the situation was going to go to court.

It had me pretty anxious at the time. Much of the impending legal battle was out of my hands, and so I felt very useless. But I was still determined to do what I could to help, and so with mundane means essentially unavailable to me, I opted for magic. Maybe it was that powerless feeling acting up, but at the time I was convinced I couldn't do the magic alone, and I felt that I needed to call on some entity outside of myself to help.

I consulted with the gods I'm close with, and none of them really seemed interested enough for me to count on them. So I opted to create a godform, in order to be absolutely sure that the entity I called on to help would be interested. And what better way to ensure the godform in question had a stake in the matter, than to create it out of the very game that we'd been playing on that server?

My character in our game was named Alejandra. She had been Embraced (turned into a vampire) while studying Santería. She'd joined the Ordo Dracul, which is a vampiric organization dedicated to overcoming the curse of being a vampire and eventually achieving something comparable to godhood—whether it's as an obscenely powerful predator, a deva, an angel, a demon, or something else (Marmell et al, 2004).

I'd given some thought, before the server was taken down, as to what sort of apotheosis my character would achieve if she got to that point. (She never would in our game—our setting didn't allow it, so it was an impossible dream. Of course, the characters never knew that, and

within the Ordo Dracul tried for it anyway.) My decision was that she'd become a "pseudo-orisha", the name given to Santería orisha that sprung up in the New World rather than in Africa, and didn't have very large cults. A lot of Santeros apparently find pseudo-orisha heretical and dangerous—me? I found them fascinating, and a sign that while Santería was old and came straight out of Africa, it was still a decentralized, evolving system (Ramos, 2007). In other words, new orisha to add into the pantheon wasn't an unheard-of prospect; it'd be silly to expect a Santero to believe in my orisha, but appending a pop-culture entity—a roleplaying character—into that worldview wasn't unheard of. And by thinking about the matter, and rather deeply at that, I'd already done part of the mental work of making a deity. I wasn't coming at this wholly blind or reinventing the wheel to do the working.

On the grounds that a good portion of the work was already done, and I'd already done a fair amount of daydreaming around the character and thereby fed her power, I figured that if I just gave the Alejandra-orisha more energy I could propel it into a 'real' existence. Then I could bargain and deal with it just like a real orisha, despite its strange origins. I weighed the possibility of Alejandra just brushing me off—a very real possibility; vampires in general aren't known for their sentimentality—and eventually I decided I wasn't all that worried about the working going out of control like that. While vampires in a group aren't sentimental, Alejandra had remained remarkably humane through her Embrace. It wasn't a stretch at all to assume that if she were pulled out of her world and granted ascension, she would likely remain interested in the fate of "the other side" and work to protect it. Everyone she'd ever known, and everything she'd worked for, remained there, and—with the storyline on pause due to the trouble with the server—it was all in jeopardy. Not to mention that if she were given a purpose,

and a function to carry out, I considered it pretty likely that she'd fulfill it: both to keep herself occupied, as she'd often done in the game, and to maintain her ascended state via adoration and sacrifice. I was wracking my brain, in other words, to take into account the personality of the character.

I didn't go about the creation of the Alejandra-orisha with any fanfare or overt ritual, since the thoughtform already existed. I figured that if I fleshed out the correspondences common to most orisha—colors, rhythms of drumming, days of the week, numbers, Catholic saints, physical objects, favorite offerings—and addressed the pseudo-orisha as though it seriously existed from the start, I would create the entity in the process and start my bargaining right then and there. Not only that, but I was worried that the bizarreness of what I was doing (evoking a roleplaying character, imagine that!) would create so much doubt that I would fail, and I was already battling my own doubt from the start in the working.

So I set to work, continuing to consider the character's features in the game. Alejandra had been a member of clan Nosferatu, a vampiric family famed for its disturbing physical characteristics, and her trait had been milky white, unblinking eyes. The saint connection seemed obvious to me: St Lucy, the martyr with her staring eyes on a platter. Alejandra's ori, or Santerian "head" orisha, had been Oya; with that in mind I made the pseudo-orisha's colors red, white, and violet, comparable to Oya's. I gave her a veve for visualization purposes, though that's more explicitly common in Vodoun: a single eye, with lines coming out of it. I considered the physical characteristics of the orisha, and for this I wound up deliberately tying it into imagery that felt deep and archetypal, to strengthen the force behind the entity. The orisha's eyes, I decided, still stared, penetratingly. But with Alejandra it hadn't been a sign of hate or contempt, and it wasn't for the pseudo-orisha,

either, I decided. Her hair had been a mass of curls within the game, and upon her apotheosis I turned it into a mass of little snakes, Medusa-like. She'd dressed in white during the game's run, in memoriam of her spiritual studies, and she kept this up on her apotheosis.

I cleared a metaphorical place for her in the Santerian assembly of orisha and I set her there, so she'd fit in with the mythos and be more than just a clumsy Santeria-flavored add-on. In the game, she'd been the child of the Grand Wurm, a high-ranking vampire in the Ordo Dracul, and Seneschal to the Prince—that is to say, the right-hand woman to the vampire who ruled the city. With these two facts in mind, combined with her enduring humanity, and the need established by the impending case, I decided that she served at the side of the ruling orisha, Obatala, standing by him and murmuring gentle advice to alter the outcome of fate to something more fair. It wasn't necessarily a realistic outgrowth of Santerian belief, but since I was already doing a pretty bizarre working I didn't feel like this was a terribly awful thing (and besides, pseudo-orisha can get pretty bizarre). Notably, doing this working hasn't affected my relationships with other, "real" orisha. I get along with Obatala, for instance, just as well as I did before I assigned him an assistant.

I picked out potential offerings: sweet red wine, strawberries, ice cream. They were all things that the character had enjoyed, and had the color correspondences as well, plus ice cream matched her eyes' frigidity. But the best offering, I decided—playing my cards right for both this working's success and the pseudo-orisha's satisfaction and continued memetic existence—was the recommendation of her to others for future workings, or the replication, without explanation, of her sigil. As a pun on her name ("Alejita") and a reference to her strange, cold eyes, I called the resulting orisha La Lejita—"the distant girl".

A while after I did all this mental work, I had plenty of time and space to myself, so I performed my first ritual to La Lejita. I banished thoroughly with a Star Ruby ritual to open, and as befitting the thoughtform's status as an honorary orisha, I evoked Eshu first, so he would open the ways for me. I'm on good terms with Eshu in general, and he seemed keen and attentive, like he knew the importance to me of what I was about to do, and even like he wanted to stick around and watch. Since he wasn't just serving as way-opener but also as a midwife of sorts, I was happy to pour out a little extra Kahlua for him and let him watch over the working.

With that, I lit a red-and-white candle, poured out a little sweet red wine, put some ice cream in a small bowl, and began to call on La Lejita. I did it aloud, noting all the aspects I'd laid out for her, and meanwhile focusing on this current I'd delineated.

I think I was almost surprised (that nagging doubt, remember?) when she came. It felt like there was a definite **MOMENT** where she broke through into 'real' existence, like she broke some membrane between the worlds coming through. She seemed nervous and shaky, like she was gasping for air, like an exhausted swimmer. She was bright through, and curious, and seemed to want to know very badly what was going on—it was as though I'd pulled her out of her study at the Ordo Dracul chapterhouse and brought her here, even though the game was on pause!

I explained to her as best I could that the world she came from—White Wolf's "World of Darkness"—wasn't "real" as we understood it: it was a work of fiction, and existed inside of a game. Chance wasn't real, but was instead determined by dice rolls. And, moreover, I'd created her, essentially independently, with other parts of her environment (things, people, events) created by other people from my world. She seemed, oddly, to take this very well, and I got the distinct feeling that this wasn't a wholly

unexpected development. And that took ME by surprise, since that sort of existential feeling wasn't anything I'd written into the character. That fact, combined with how I felt like I'd pulled her directly out of her everyday life even though the game was on pause, made me feel like I didn't know this character nearly as well as I thought I did. I wondered if I'd pulled her not just out of a parallel universe to our own, but out of one parallel to both my world and the World of Darkness...

With that out of the way, and much more easily than I expected, I explained what I wanted: the quick resolution of the court case, in our side's favor. I explained how the state of the server and, therefore, her world was in jeopardy. Or, at least, it might still exist—it was a work of fiction, and still played out in our memories and imaginations, and therefore had some continuing existence—but not as vividly and powerfully as it had before, when the server was extant and all the characters were still having new adventures, coordinated and played out by us on the other side. What I was asking for wasn't a hex, I explained very carefully, or a curse, or a desire for a long, impractical, expensive court case if the matter could be settled out of court.

She agreed to help, under the conditions I'd delineated. I thanked her, gave her the food, said goodbye, put out the candle, and did another banishing to clear out the space. Eshu was still around, and seemed pretty pleased with what had happened; I let his candle burn down in thanks.

I realized a while after the working that what I'd done had been, in some ways, very stupid. The roleplaying character I'd evoked had been a vampire, after all, and I could have found myself dangerously psychically tapped; I'd expended so much energy thinking up correspondences and personality traits that this simple fact had passed me by. I tend to be pretty deadheaded when it comes to energy, but I hadn't noticed anything at the time, and as I double-

checked myself over after the working I couldn't find anything amiss. Maybe it had worked in my favor that I'd completely forgotten about this aspect of the character, or maybe the character had gone the truly Ordo Dracul -route and transcended her vampiric hunger.

The case actually never went to court. The bulk of the copyrighted material was deleted off their server, and with that the brunt of the bad feelings passed, and it was deemed too much trouble to serve the offending parties for what remained of the case.

Despite the fact that La Lejita's talents weren't ever needed, I don't see this working as a failure. I definitely pulled her into existence, and the fact that the case didn't go to court when we didn't want it to tells me that La Lejita was willing to work with me enough to not disobey me. After all, I didn't want a court case, if it could be avoided.

When a friend of mine went to court a few months later with a divorce case, I copied out all the salient information on La Lejita from my magical record—minus her origins as a roleplaying character—and passed her on to him. Partially I did this to help out, and partially it was to help the thoughtform grow and pay her my debt of gratitude. The divorce worked out in his favor, I'm glad to say, and he corroborates La Lejita's love for sweet liquors and strawberry ice cream.

I haven't had to work with La Lejita since, thankfully; I haven't been called into court, and knock on wood I won't be. And since none of the other magicians I've known have had to deal with legal battles, I haven't had reason to pass her on to anyone else—save, of course, for you, the reader. She's still around, though. As I write this, I can feel her current. She seems lonelier now, darker and more solemn. I think that's because the server never came back, and what happened there lies essentially forgotten by the players—we moved on to a new game and the old one doesn't occupy our imaginations anymore.

The story she comes from, in other words, is dead. But Alejandra, La Lejita—strange, cold, yet purposeful and sincere—remains on the astral as its sole survivor. She'll help you; just ask her nicely and leave out some ice cream.

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The Alchemy of Bollocks:

Turning Pop Culture into Something Useful

Nick Farrell

In the UK, there is a term which means something is completely untrue, or a waste of time. It is called 'bollocks' and it is considered a rude word which you aren't supposed to use in polite company. It is the complete opposite of the phrase the 'dog's bollocks' which is said to mean something very good – particularly for the dog.

Popular culture is built on bollocks. It sucks you into a morass of TV chatshows, *Jerry Springer*, and reality game shows. It is bollocks that television presenters can renovate your home or that you will be better if you look like they say you should. It is bollocks that you should take drugs to make you 'normal' or that it is wrong to be depressed occasionally. It is bollocks that your flight is somehow

safer because you took your belt off and let someone sniff your trainers. Soap operas are temples of bollocks that we sacrifice our brain, time, and souls to their virtual altars.

Popular culture demands that we not only build our lives on bollocks, but look away from things that are sensible and well thought out in search of bollocks answers to everything. Occultists consider themselves outside the mainstream. They are supposed to look at the unseen world and find a measure of reality that is unseen by other people. But despite this, popular culture seeps into their reality too. Despite our attempts to be outside the system we cannot escape it. This has led many modern magicians to say “if you can’t beat them, join them.” This leads us to the question, is it possible to turn the symbols of popular culture into something we can use?

The logic is that if modern popular symbols are archetypes it should be possible to use them to key into the same forces that are accessed by older symbols. However this is not as easy as it appears. Older symbols are often hard-wired into the consciousness of humanity. They are based on beliefs held by our ancestors for thousands, if not millions of years. This gives the symbols a depth which more recent symbols cannot quite match. Each symbol is adapted by a new generation but all are linked back to the original one. I might not think like my ancestors, but our understanding about a symbol like a cross is similar.

For a long time I followed the view that a symbol was a symbol. It didn’t matter which one you used so long as it meant something to you. In the spirit of experiment, I did two rituals. The objective was to remove negativity in a particular area of Florida. In the first rite I used pop culture symbols of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. It was a great laugh, I got to play Picard. The negativity was visualised as a Borg cube which was destroying the area. The ritual was effective. Energy from the phaser banks was seen belting out of the East of the temple by more than one of the

temple psychics. In short it did what was expected and was a lot of fun.

The control ritual used heavy cabbalistic symbolism, neo-platonic symbolism, and alchemy. The Group members were made up largely of members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, so they were fairly well versed in that particular type of symbolism. It was less of a ritual and more of a pathworking, but it also was designed to send a burst of spiritual energy outwards to smash up a negative thought form. It did this to the same technical standard as the other ritual. One could say well that was proof that pop culture symbols worked just as well as the traditional ones. But it didn't.

When the ritual officers were asked which ritual was the most effective, they all felt it was the classical ritual. They felt that the symbols gave them more to grab hold of. While the Star Trek rite amused them and intellectually they could understand the logic of the symbols it failed to move them emotionally in the way the cabbalistic version moved them. So my experiment failed, it seemed that it was not entirely possible to root a magical system in popular culture symbols. They were simply not deep enough to carry it off.

Does this example write off the use of popular culture symbols within magic? Not at all. But it isn't simply a matter of replacing your rituals with popular symbols. You have to alchemically wire it into the collective unconscious yourself. In short, you have to turn bollocks into gold.

This has been done before, and will probably be done again in the future, with the myth of Atlantis. Popular culture has muttered that Atlantis was a real place for centuries, but in the 19th century the literal idea of this place really took off, with the works of the Theosophical Society. One of the people heavily influenced by this teaching was Dion Fortune who became convinced that she was an Atlantian adept in a past life. She worked with the symbol of Atlantis and made it into a system.

This led to a funny incident in the 1980s. There was a very famous collective of magicians that used to meet around a residential centre called Hawkwood. They had heard a legend that when Atlantis had sunk, the Solar Logos, which in Dion Fortune's system ruled the solar system, had decided that it did not want some of the Atlantian adepts to re-incarnate because they were too evil. It stuck their souls on a comet with an incredibly wide orbit around the solar system, to gnash their teeth until the solar system was ready for them.

It is not clear where the legend started from. It has all the hallmarks of a channelling session, but it could have come from Dion Fortune's own Inner Light. However the story got several of these famous magicians thinking. It seemed to them after a few thousand years the Atlantians should have sorted themselves out so they could be ready for an incarnation or two. They meditated and prayed about the idea and got a good feeling about it. Those who channelled the Secret Adepts of Power also got the nod from their contacts for the project.

So they met at Hawkwood with a plan to do a huge ritual to save the Atlantian evil adepts. The ritual was set up, everyone was robed, but all was not well with the bloke in charge of the ritual. He was starting to have a few doubts. What if the Solar Logos was not happy with the idea of pulling these people back into incarnation? What if he was releasing a plague of terrible evil on the world? The rite opened and in the West the priestess made her contacts and poured power into the thought forms that were supposed to draw the errant Atlantians back onto the planet. There was a pressure building. The Mighty Magus of Power had broken out into a sweat. Suddenly he knew he wanted to do this ritual about as much as he wanted someone to jab red hot needles in his eyes. He decided that the Inner Planes Masters did not want the ritual to happen and used an emergency ritual shut down technique that

delivered his fellow magicians to earth with a bump.

The Priestess, speaking words of her contact, said: “Priest you have failed” and stormed out of the temple room only to faint when she got into an outside corridor. Many of the other officers felt physically sick and the ritual when down in legend as one of the ones which went bang. But no one seemed to have paused before the ritual took place and thought; evil Atlantian magicians on comets are complete bollocks! Nor did they consider what would have happened if the ritual had been completed.

The idea that the souls of these adepts were stuck on a comet by the God of this solar system did not seem funny or odd to them. This is despite the fact that accepting this bollocks meant that the Adepts had to reject some of their core beliefs. For example, they would have to believe that the soul could be attached to a physical reality. They also had to believe that the Solar Logos, or Sun, might consider some humans too evil to allow them to re-incarnate. This would mean that the Solar Logos woke up one morning and decided to abandon the law of karma for these evil sods. Adherents of this flavour of occultism are great fans of karma.

Yet they disabled all of these ‘common sense’ structures to accept a pop-culture myth and then allowed it to affect them so deeply that one of them passed out when it ‘failed’. Why? Well it was all about faith. It was serious magic to them. What normally would have been popular culture symbols had been rooted into their belief structure so deeply that they were wired to the archetypes. They were able to take the symbols and use them in a way that I was not able to hit with my Star Trek ritual.

This ‘faith’ built out ideas in other areas. I know of four people who claim to be the priestess who guided the ships from the sinking Atlantis to the shores of Britain. The first was Dion Fortune who invented that version of the myth. Others have been those who often are not aware that Dion

claimed that role for herself and think they must have done it because they are such shit hot psychics. However the Atlantis myth also developed into a system of magic based around geometric shapes. Each shape was held to have a magical virtue and officers in a rite were told to hold lines in this pattern. The idea was to make the shape light up on the astral. Now this idea is really superior because it shows that the bollocks has been refined into pure intellectual magical gold. It is producing something incredibly useful that could be adapted outside of that particular system. The probably owed a lot to the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, but that isn't so important to the people who are using this system.

Popular culture can also motivate esoteric people to do workings that they normally wouldn't consider. As the world readied for the First Gulf War there were a number of magical groups that responded by doing rites for victory. Some responded by digging up copies of Dion Fortune's *Magic Battle of Britain* book which described the setting up of wards around Britain during World War Two. What was interesting about these groups was that they had apparently ignored the fact that the Dion Fortune defence rituals were designed to protect Britain from invasion from the Nazis. There was no way that the Iraqi army was ever going to fight its way through Europe to besiege Britain. But what they were doing was responding to a stirring in the popular culture that felt that Britain was being attacked. This was, of course, bollocks, but it added power to the working that perhaps logic alone would not have provided.

So how is it possible to redeem a popular culture symbol so that it can be used to the same magical level? The Atlantian working was based on faith. The people practising were certain that it must be true and therefore made it happen. The Gulf War working was faith based on war propaganda and mass hysteria. These are things that are very difficult to mimic in the regular working of a

magician. Neo-platonic thought, which is the backbone of a lot of Hermetic Magic, says that a symbol is not a single object but a gateway to many other objects that link to single divine idea. Look at it this way. One day a creator God, let us call him Jeff, decides to create beer. He doesn't visualise a pint of something wet, hoppy, refreshing, lager or dark beer. He thinks about everything that beer is and conceives it as a symbol: a primal symbol of all beeriness. This image flows towards manifestation and gives birth to other symbols that make for different types of beer and flavour until there are legions of different types for creation to use. This divine idea attracts more ideas to it over time so the longer the ideas are working within humanity's race mind the more symbols they link too.

However popular culture symbols are a bottom up creation. They make links based on other symbols. Picard is not wired into the Universal archetype for leadership, but he is a symbol of other captains who show these qualities. The Borg is not the archetype of a mechanistic collective, but they are based on human societies where these ideas have gone wrong.

Popular culture symbols might track a way to becoming archetypes over time, but the very nature of popular culture is that it is ephemeral and will pass into history. The magician will not let that stop them. Equipped with knowledge of how these things work, it is possible to connect popular culture symbols to more primal ones. It will take some doing and will probably only be personal to you, but it will make symbols from popular culture carry the same weight as those older and more traditional ones.

First you have to do some internal wiring and this requires some meditation. Take the symbol that you wish to redeem and stare at it for some time. Allow it to create some 'ideas' in your mind. So if we use Buffy, we allow the idea of being a chosen one roll around in our mind. We think of a few of the adventures she has had etc. Then try to

think what she is a symbol of. Compare and reject those other heroes who do not fit the qualities you find interesting about her. So Alexander the Great for example was a 'Chosen One' but he led armies fighting humans, while Buffy only had a small gang fighting evil. It does not quite work. If you think that it is vital for the archetypal 'Buffy' to be a female hero then you will have to find a heroine who fits. Remember, you do not have to use humans. Myths and legends, gods and goddesses will all work.

Once you have selected a 'hero' then you start to look at the qualities that hero has which makes them represent what you want to use. Say we decided that Buffy, with her super powers and tendency to rush into dark places to fight evil, has enough links to be similar to the symbol of Hercules. What is it that Hercules has that connects us to the ideas of heroism? We might generate a list – bravery, leadership, not fleeing in the face of monsters or being eaten by them, and, above all, a strong sense of humanity.

Now, in our mediation, it gets a bit tricky. We have to take these qualities and ascend upwards with them. The process makes them more abstract. Generally I see the symbols as becoming geometric shapes but they radiate feeling. Allow the shape to move upwards and follow it in your mind's eye toward a single point of light. That light has symbolically to be damn big. It represents the singularity of the creator....in my case Jeff. In that light you should see the shape changing before settling on a single shape. You might want to note that shape, before allowing it to come back. Watch it change, moving from primal shape, to new forms, separating out into different beings, heroes, linking to Hercules and finally, like the bottom of a family tree, Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

What you have done is link Buffy magically to something more primal and when you use her you will find that she is 'connected' to all the symbols that you meditated on. It might be interesting to see if some of these symbols

start to evolve in the direction that you meditated on. You might pick up a Buffy comic and see a story line which reflects your meditation. In magical terms it would be a good 'check on earth' that your links to the primal symbol have been properly made when others telepathically start seeing Buffy in that way too. Again that would be a matter for experiment, but from your perspective, when you tap into that image you will be free from a lot of the bollocks that surrounds popular culture icons and rooted into a divine reality. Because you have seen those links between Buffy and 'Jeff' you can believe in them and because you have felt the depth of the links between her and him you benefit from the depth of the symbol.

Some Popular Culture symbols already come with a bit of history attached to them. Xena and Hercules should be easier to work into a primal idea. However do not assume that Xena or Hercules as seen in the television shows are wired completely into their original myth. Some of the symbolism attached to Xena, for example, is more closely connected to some of the Indian deities than any of the Amazons of Greek myth.

Nevertheless, this technique can be applied to any popular culture symbol, from Star Trek to an Andy Warhol tin of soup. But as an experiment I suggest you do a ritual using the pop culture symbols without the linking exercise. Then do a linking exercise on a complete set of officers, say the whole cast of Buffy, or the Bridge of the Enterprise, the Jerry Springer show, a range of cars, anything. Then use them as magical symbols to see if you can improve them by linking them to the Divine. It does make watching the shows, or car spotting, a completely out of this world experience.

Nick Farrell is widely seen as a god among his people. His people are those with very low esteem and expectations. He started out his spiritual quest in NZ as a fundamentalist

Christian after he was convinced by someone too ugly to have sex, that he was somehow responsible for the crucifixion of his best friend 2000 years before he was born. He became interested in occultism, at the age of 17, after he signed a non-aggression pact with Christianity and followed his interest in Tarot. He joined Builders of the Adytum, before being asked to leave for saying the leadership should listen to people a bit better. He got involved with the remains of the last Golden Dawn temple in Hawkes Bay called Whare Ra before moving to the UK. After involvement with Servants of the Light and the Pharos school he was helped establishing a Golden Dawn temple in the UK. He has penned six several books on occultism, including Making Talismans, Magical Pathworking and Gathering the Magic, which too few people have ever read, despite the grave peril to their evolution. His first novel, an amusing romp through heaven hell and other alternative universes in search of a supreme being called Jeff, will be out in the shops later this year. When he is not calculating how many angels can fit on the head of a pin, he is writing for three online magazines about computing. He is hated by Apple and Windows users alike.

Neon Genesis Evangelion and the Psycho-Shamanic Journey

Lupa

I was recently introduced to *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (NGE), specifically the 26-episode series created in the 1990s. The surface story deals with fourteen-year-old Shinji Ikari, one of several children recruited to pilot mechas (giant robots) called Evangelions, or Evas for short. The Evas are used to defend a post-Apocalyptic Tokyo from strange, nearly invincible giant beings referred to as

Angels. In between defending the city, Shinji and his fellow pilots go through the rigors of school, puberty and growing up in a dangerous time.

Beneath the surface there's an entirely different subplot. Predictably, Shinji and the other young pilots experience psychological strain as an effect of being thrust into a war zone, and the series explores how this stress impacts the different personalities of them and the other people involved. We're given a deeper look into the psyches of the characters than is found in most entertainment in general, not just anime.

Part of this may be attributed to the fact that the creator of *NGE*, Hideaki Anno, used the storyline as a method of overcoming his own struggle with depression. In fact, the final two episodes of the series are pure stream of consciousness that delve deep into feelings of worthlessness, value based upon the expectations and perceptions of others, and the effects these can have on one's reality. Having been through depression myself, I found a lot of the psychological content both in these episodes and the series as a whole resonated with my own experiences.

The esoteric elements of *NGE* are drawn from Judeo-Christian mystical traditions and writings, though they are interpreted rather liberally. There are also parallels between the experiences of the pilots, particularly from a psychological level, and the journey of the shaman into the Otherworld. It is this particular spiritual/magical/etc. tradition that I'm primarily addressing here.

The Nature of the Journey

One of the defining characteristics of the shaman is the "spirit-flight", or journey to the Otherworld. Rather than simply being a person who may attain any altered state of consciousness attained through dancing, drugs, or other

physical stimulants, the shaman enters into trance in order to fulfill a certain purpose, and has at least some control over the experience (Webb 2003) This ability alone does not make a shaman; there are entire bodies of cultural lore and training that accompany true initiation as a shaman. However, even those who have no contact with any indigenous culture may utilize shamanic techniques, particularly with the increase in texts detailing these practices outside of any specific cultural context. What I am primarily dealing with in this essay are shamanic techniques, not a specific tradition of shamanism; my use of the term “shamanic journey” should not be taken as an indication that anyone who uses the practices described is a shaman. (Most cultures do not refer to their magical practitioners or holy people as shamans. “Shaman” is derived from the language of the Evenk (Tungus) in Siberia. In some cases, a self-described shaman may be a fraud; see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plastic_shaman for more details.)

The shamanic journey involves traversing difficult terrain, battling hostile beings that hold pieces of peoples’ souls hostage, and may even include a death-rebirth ritual, particularly in the case of initiation. In the latter case the shaman may experience being torn apart by wild animals, only to be recreated anew; such a ritual may be the shaman’s entrance into his practice. The spiritual and psychological tests are often coupled with physical stressors ranging from fasting and sleep deprivation to long periods of travel or hours upon hours of dancing, all depending upon the cultural elements that inform the shamanic traditions. The physiological stimulation helps to shift the shaman from an ordinary state of consciousness (OSC) to a shamanic state of consciousness (SSC).

What happens once consciousness has been altered may be interpreted in several ways. In modern neoshamanic literature, such as that derived from Michael Harner’s core

shamanism, it may be initially assumed that the World Tree, Upper and Lower Realms, and additional Otherworldly places are literal spiritual and/or astral locations that the shaman accesses through ritual and “flight”. Eliade describes the shaman as one who “specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld”. (Eliade 1989, p. 5) And in an ordinary state of consciousness (OSC), this may seem obvious, since these other realms are not physically accessible. But one of the characteristics of the shamanic state of consciousness (SSC) is that the concept of reality extends beyond that immediately apparent. Harner defines the SSC as “the cognitive condition in which one perceives the ‘nonordinary reality’ of Carlos Castaneda, and the ‘extraordinary manifestations of reality’ of Robert Lowie”. (Harner 1990, p. 21) And Webb further extrapolates on this heightened state of reality by reminding us that “Each of us is a microcosm that reflects and contains the macrocosm... and where one begins and the other ends is nearly impossible to say”. (Webb 2003, p. 40)

The psychological model of magic would argue that the journey is entirely experienced within the realms of the mind. The various characters that we meet along the way are manifestations of archetypes, and the environment is the collection of imprints and conditioning received over a lifetime. (Graham 2007) While this doesn’t necessarily have to be the only level of experience, it shouldn’t be ignored, especially if we consider the aforementioned idea that the borders between the microcosm and macrocosm are rather blurry depending upon context. Personally, I believe that shamanic experiences—and magic in general—occur internally and externally at the same time. As Above, So Below = As Within, So Without.

But leaving the external (?) spiritual implications of these experiences for another time, I do want to focus on

the internal (?) psychological changes that accompany the ordeal. (I place the question marks here since the dichotomies of microcosm/macrocosm, internal/external and psychological/spiritual are not always as clear-cut as may be assumed.) It is this level of the shamanic journey that particularly informs my interpretation of the interaction between the pilots, the Evas, the Angels, and the environment they inhabit for the duration of the battles.

The Shamanic Psychonaut

In modern America the psychotherapist has largely taken the place of the initiatory leader from a purely secular viewpoint. Many magical texts or websites that discuss any sort of psychological magic whatsoever caution the reader not to discontinue any medications or therapy regimens prescribed by a professional. And it's true that even high priests and priestesses and other elders of the pagan and occult communities don't have the same perspective on psychology that a trained therapist has (unless, of course, the elder possesses the necessary degrees!).

This doesn't mean that the study of psychology is entirely cut off from the layperson. While reading books is not a substitute for therapy or pills, the experienced magical practitioner is still quite capable of meditation for the purpose of improving the psyche. Modern magicians may utilize everything from Jungian psychology to neuro-linguistic programming in their practices, and a decent amount of advanced magical practice is at least partly concerned with improving the personal microcosm.

When we consider the shamanic journey from a purely psychological viewpoint, we leave behind the physical by travelling deeper into ourselves rather than exiting the body entirely. (In the case of the shaman who goes to retrieve part of the soul of a patient, or otherwise work on another person, it may be suggested that while the shaman may

travel into his own microcosm during the journey, the ritual and the conveying of events that occur during the journey may be sufficient to alter the psychology of the patient. Many traditional shamanic healing rituals are done with a lot of fanfare and community participation which helps to create altered states of consciousness among the patient as well as other participants. This is only from a psychological viewpoint, however, and does not take into account other levels of reality and perception; therefore it is necessarily limited in its scope and possible explanations. For the purpose of this article I'm primarily concerned with journeying into the personal microcosm, not the psychology of another person.) The environment we explore is a representation of the thoughts and memories we possess. The beings we encounter are symbols that may adhere to certain archetypes common within all human psychology. By interacting with the environment and its denizens in the SSC we are able to manipulate our own consciousness in order to make permanent changes in our OSC. Defeating a raging dragon may represent overcoming an addiction, while sex with an ethereal being could symbolize the joining of the ego with another aspect of the self. The wide variations in the specific manifestations of these archetypes and motifs reflect the individual experiences of each person, but certain patterns are nearly universal.

Shamanic journeys are designed to deliberately confront places or inhabitants in the personal microcosm. While the experience may not be entirely scripted from start to finish, the intent is made clear. What happens once the journey is underway depends entirely on the mind of the traveler. Nonetheless, a successful journey generally results in the release of a bad habit or the introduction of a healthier pattern of thinking. The manifestation in the OSC may take a certain amount of time to come to fruition; initiations in general are often catalysts that lead to periods of change,

rather than causing all the change at once. Repeated journeys are used to fine-tune the overall effect that's desired. In the end, though, the hard work pays off, and the journeyer finds himself in a much healthier place. (Ideally, of course. It's entirely possible to reprogram yourself in an unhealthy way, both through magical and everyday means. This is why shamanic journeying and related practices are NOT introductory material, especially for the solitary practitioner who may not have access to experienced guides who have been through similar ordeals before. And, again, any magical practice should not be seen as a substitute for professional help already being sought.)

Most of what I've covered thus far has been setting the stage for my primary idea: that *Neon Genesis Evangelion* contains, among other things, a remarkable portrayal of the shamanic journey within the personal microcosm. I wanted to explain my understanding of both shamanic techniques and psychological magic to provide some context, as both of these are open to quite a bit of interpretation. Now we get to dig into the meat of the concept.

Shinji's Initiation

Anno didn't waste any time in incorporating the motif of the journey into *NGE*. The very first episode shows us the reluctant initiate, Shinji, being thrust into a role he wasn't entirely sure he wanted in the name of helping his community survive. In many indigenous cultures people chosen to be shamans weren't exactly enthusiastic about the situation. Some would-be shamans were made aware of their potential by being thrust into an altered state of consciousness by an experience, or through a serious illness. Those who survived this initial ordeal were often none too happy about their fates. Despite what expensive weekend seminars claim, traditional shamanism was (and still is) a full-time career, fraught with physical,

psychological and spiritual dangers. The shaman may have been a revered figure, but s/he faced injury, illness and death on a regular basis, whether through the application of natural psychotropics (an allergic reaction or wrong dose could be highly problematic) or through the attacks of rival shamans. Additionally, the psychic strain of facing one's own demons as well as those of others was no walk in the park. Today's New Age shamans have clipped the fangs and claws of their enemies; Shinji, on the other hand, had no such luxury. Intuition and the aid of elders (the members of NERV, the organization that designed and maintained the Evas) were all Shinji had to go on in his first experience with the Eva Unit 01. An Angel attack on the day he first arrived at NERV headquarters required him to pilot Unit 01, as the only other local pilot at the time had been gravely injured.

Shinji, as with other pilots, was placed in the Eva by way of an entry plug filled with an amnion-like fluid (and yes, there is quite a bit of symbolism of rebirth in *NGE*). The Eva itself symbolizes the SSC—powerful, and dangerous if not controlled properly. It's no coincidence that in order for the Eva to function properly there had to be a certain level of psychological synchronicity between it and the pilot. Just as the shaman has to be able to fully access the SSC without distraction, so the pilot must meld himself with the Eva. To lose that connection with the altered state of consciousness in the middle of the journey/battle spelled disaster, as later episodes demonstrated (but we'll cover that later).

Not surprisingly, despite a high rate of synchronicity with Unit 01, Shinji's first battle was very nearly a loss. Unfamiliar with the method of piloting an Eva, he took a pretty serious beating from the attacking Angel. What saved him was the berserker fury that overtook him as the stress of the fight pushed him over the edge of sanity.

This initial vacillation between near-helplessness and

uncontrollable altered states is common in early stages of shamanic experience (as well as magical practice in general). Novices are guided by more experienced practitioners precisely because a healthy balance may take a while to attain. SSC and other altered states are not easy to pick up without practice, and newcomers to magic of any sort often experience great variation in the success of their workings. Time and effort reveal the most consistent techniques to be used by the individual.

Over the course of the series, Shinji improves his synchronization with Unit 01, as well as his ability to defeat the Angels as they arrive. In the same way, the novice continues to practice until the SSC comes naturally, and the focus becomes about the tasks at hand rather than simply maintaining SSC. But the challenges that present themselves in the course of training aren't limited merely to the external. Even as he improved his ability to fight Angels, Shinji found the barriers between his conscious and unconscious mind breaking down.

The Shell Cracks

The latter half of the series includes an increasing number of instances in which the viewer is given disorienting looks into the psychological processes of the pilots. These deal primarily with identity. Rei Ayanami, for example, is essentially a created human. Her theme is "Who am I, and where did I come from?" Asuka Langley Soryu, on the other hand, is an incredibly self-centered girl who quite openly focuses her entire identity on her ability to pilot Unit 02. Shinji combines elements of both of these themes, exploring the idea of what exactly identity is, and how both internal and external influences create it.

The first time a person is blatantly confronted by a previously hidden part of the self, it can be an incredibly frightening event, regardless of how it occurs. We use

symbolism as a way of approaching ourselves, whether through shamanism or therapy. Symbols allow us just enough distance to be able to confront a new concept or aspect of ourselves, without divorcing ourselves from it entirely. This doesn't take away the terror we may feel, but it does help us to face that fear. At some point, though, the symbols may break down into pure internal dialogue and stream of consciousness. The masks are taken off, and we confront ourselves with nothing to distract us.

The final five episodes see an increase in the amount of psychological exploration of the characters, particularly the pilots. In Episode 22, Asuka is attacked by an Angel that manages to penetrate her mind, breaking her connection to Eva Unit 02. Questions that pierce the deepest parts of her psyche flood unbidden into her mind, and the viewer is given an intimate look at what makes this arrogant, bossy person who she is—insecurity and fear of loss of identity.

It's at this point that it becomes clear that the Angels are not merely enemies out to destroy the physical structures of Tokyo 3, but to also tear down the barriers of the mind, forcing people to face themselves. The battle suddenly shifts from an external one, with an enemy that is separate from the self, to a fight that is wholly internal. Similarly, the shamanic journey goes from being an out of body experience to a plunge into the depths of the self. All the symbols and entities serve, not to draw the practitioner out, but lead him further inward.

This level of self-awareness is terrifying, and its vehicles are initially demonized. Humanity in general fears what it doesn't understand, and in NGE the employees at NERV are scrambling to try to explain the Angels from an external, scientific, rational perspective. The true answer, though, lies within: the Angels are guides to the personal microcosm, and they are feared because they bring forth such ordeals.

The Final Confrontation

The 24th episode ends with Shinji destroying the last Angel, who has taken the form of a teenager and become a pilot himself. This final infiltration of NERV's defenses allows the Angel to fulfill the purpose that all the Angels seem to ultimately possess—opening people to themselves.

At one point, the Angel and Shinji share a very tangible sexual tension. While it is never fully consummated, it should be remembered that in a magical sense sex often symbolizes great spiritual intimacy, rather than merely physical. A dream or vision of making love to a god or spirit can represent a deeper connection with that entity and/or what s/he represents. The situation between the Angel and Shinji is sufficient to emotionally open the latter far enough that the former can plant the seed of awareness.

This becomes crucial at the end of the 24th episode, when Shinji, piloting Unit 01, crushes the Angel and simultaneously releases the final blockages in his mind. Episode 25 clearly shows the Angel's death as the catalyst for the stream of consciousness that composes Episodes 25 and 26 as a whole. As the Angel insisted right at the very end that it was time to die, so he was also reminding Shinji that the time had come to let his fear of himself die, and move on into the next stage.

Some people really dislike the last two episodes. Episode 25 in particular can be tough to follow, as it is a constant flow of the internal thought processes of the various characters. Both can be very surreal. However it was these two episodes, particularly 26, that really wrapped up the psychological aspects of the series for me.

One of the main themes of NGE is the search for identity. Rei, Asuka and Shinji felt that their identities were shaped wholly by the fact that they were Eva pilots and that if they were removed from that position that they as individuals would cease to exist. Rei realizes that her

existence depends wholly on her purpose as a NERV pilot; her new bodies are created only as long as her function lasts. While Episode 22 went into detail on Asuka's perspective of her role as a pilot, her thoughts and Rei's are woven into a supporting role when Shinji's psyche is displayed in 25 and 26. Shinji follows the questions and threads in his mind from why he pilots his Eva (which is a crucial question throughout) to why he feels that he must please others, and why he feels he can't have an identity outside of his achievements. He learns that in the end he is the one who is in control of his perceptions, whether he pilots an Eva or not, and that while he can't control all of the limitations that are placed on him, he can control how he chooses to react to them. This includes acknowledging the effects on identity that his environment and the people around him have, while understanding that ultimately his identity is shaped by his perception of himself.

I find this to be an incredibly empowering revelation. Both in America and Japan, what one *does* is considered to be the equivalent of one's value. This can create unhealthy pressure, especially if societal or familial expectations grate against the budding individual. Too much pressure can cause depression, as well as an underdeveloped idea of identity, or one that relies primarily on the perceptions of others.

Is this self-centered? Well, yes, in the sense that our *perception* starts from the self. And our value is shaped by perception--do we let others' perceptions of us supersede our own perception, even though the latter is the primary influence at all times? But it is not *selfish* to understand that the most important person to place value on me—is me. Think of it this way. If I'm feeling crappy about myself, beating myself up and telling myself I suck, then it doesn't matter how many times other people tell me that I'm a wonderful person. If I don't believe, if I don't perceive, that I am a wonderful person, then it makes no difference what

anyone else says.

Conclusion

The question that the dialogue keeps turning back to, especially in episode 26, is “Why do you pilot Eva?” The ultimate answer is, “To find my identity”. This is the same answer that could come from the person who journeys into the psyche: “Why do you journey?” “To find my identity”.

When we enter into ourselves and go past our everyday barriers, we find parts of ourselves we never knew existed. In the same way, Shinji and the other pilots found that the more they piloted their Evas in confrontations with the Angels, the more they learned about themselves. The entrance to the Eva is also the entrance to the microcosmic Otherworld; the pilot and the shamanic journeyer are one and the same.

As I continue in my own self-exploration and refining myself as an individual, I have no doubt that NGE will be a valuable allegorical tool in helping remind me of some of my goals in those efforts. Like Shinji, though I am twice his age, I still seek to define myself as an individual and feel confident in that identity. My internal demons are also my Angels, acting as guides and torturers through my personal Otherworld. The SSC is my Eva, which I use to traverse these frightening yet familiar places.

One final point: it’s revealed by the end of the series that the Evas are created from the first Angel, and that there is an Angel in each one. When we take on a SSC, we access that Angelic part of ourselves, the aspect that is not afraid to explore or confront. From a purely psychological viewpoint, we lead ourselves in our journeys and battles; it’s a matter of learning to access that guide. Just as we journey to find other spirit guides and helpers, so must we learn to accept the part of ourselves that breaks down our barriers so that we may view ourselves without self-

ensorship, no matter how afraid we might be.

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[Pop Culture Goddess:](#)

The Worship of Marilyn Monroe

Leni Hester

June 1, sunset. As the sun drops into the west, a circle of women approach an altar. A vase of pink roses towers above the white silk altar cloth, the champagne flute chalice, the pale pink candles in silver candlesticks. The altar looks more like the vanity in someone's boudoir than a ritual altar, but if you look closely you'll see an expensive eyeliner pencil where the athame usually rests, a mirror holding space where the pentacle belongs. The Goddess's many icons are displayed at a nearby table, also lit with pink candles. Instead of cleansing the space with incense or burning sage, one altar sister sprays Chanel No. 5 in each of the 4 directions. The women's dresses all differ: an evening gown, a white terry bathrobe, silk lingerie with fishnets, simple black slacks with a white shirt. With reverence, one woman lights the central candle in honor of a departed Ancestress, an Archetypal being who has hovered in each of their imaginations since childhood. Her spirit is offered a resting place on the night of Her Birth, and She is accorded the seat of honor surrounded by the things she would have loved in her mortal life. She is named by Her birth name, the one given to Her by Her mother, and then by the one She chose Herself. Her accomplishments are named; Her beauty and Her talent are toasted with rounds of champagne. Finally, as the wind gutters the candle flames and the pink wax runs down in winding sheets, the women sing:

“A Kiss on the Hand may be Quite Continental, But Diamonds are A Girl's Best Friend...”

It's the night that Norma Jeane Mortensen was born, decades ago, and has been set aside to be in contemplation

of Her icon, Her life and the vast weight of cultural freight She carries, even in death.

There is perhaps no more recognizable image on the planet today than the face of Marilyn Monroe. To describe her simply as an American actress seems silly and reductionist, for MM was and is more than just a celebrity. Her popularity escalated from mere fandom to obsession during her life, and has sky rocketed into a quasi-religious devotion in the thirty-five years since her death. Her face and figure are still highly marketable commodities, accounting for vast amounts of licensed merchandise and memorabilia. On the internet, fan sites abound, and her image, sometimes altered but unmistakable, routinely pops up in other pop cultural iterations such as film, television, and music. She's drawn the ink of such diverse social critics as Norman Mailer and Gloria Steinem. In all of the images and words devoted to her, the word used most often is "icon." Who was Marilyn Monroe and why does she continue to exert such a hold over our imaginations?

Norma Jeane Mortensen was born June 1, 1926 in Los Angeles to Gladys Mortenson, a recently divorced employee of Columbia Studios. Like many mythic heroes, Norma Jeane's paternity has never been established absolutely. Indeed, the story of Norma's early years is uneven, unstable parenting. Gladys Mortenson was mentally ill, and Norma was placed in the care of Gladys' friends, mother and finally the Los Angeles Orphans Home before she finally married Jim Dougherty at the tender age of 16. Years later she would claim that they had gotten married so she would not have to go back to the orphanage (Lefkowitz, 28, 1995). Throughout her childhood, Norma Jeane lived with hunger, poverty, and uncertainty about who would care for her. She later reported childhood sexual abuse to her therapists, but she was not believed by many people that she told.

In her late teens Norma Jeane began modeling, and

worked very hard to secure a studio contract in Hollywood. This effort cost her her first marriage, but Norma Jeane was determined to succeed as a film actress. Despite early setbacks, by the time she was 30 she was the highest paid actress in Hollywood, and had the type of control over her projects that was unheard of for any actor. Arguably she was one of the most powerful women in media, rich, with a global fan base that numbered millions. At the height of her popularity, there may have been no human being so universally loved, admired, and lusted after as Norma Jeane's creation: Marilyn Monroe.

She was also under the care of therapists much of her adult life, she abused alcohol and prescription medications, she may have suffered from multiple personality disorder, and her dearest dreams of a home, husband and children were never realized before her death by drug overdose at the age of thirty-six. With the words "icon" and "Goddess" being bandied about with regard to this woman, and with her image syncretized with Goddesses such as Aphrodite, Venus and Ezili, it is appropriate to ask what is the significance of a pop culture Goddess, and what does our understanding of the person behind the icon do to that worship?

Webster's Desk Dictionary defines an icon thusly: a representation of a sacred personage, or anything devotedly admired. The operative word here is "representation". The image of MM was carefully crafted over the course of her career. Much of the time, the person who was Marilyn felt at odds with the media image that she had created and elaborated on with every photo, every film, and every public appearance. The maintenance of that image was Marilyn's job, and it eventually consumed and killed her.

There are many reasons why Marilyn's memory commands such attention. Her physical beauty and its connotations of sex and sensuality are not enough to explain her idol status. Hers is a uniquely American story—

the undistinguished birth and humble beginnings giving little hint of the incredible, dizzying success and wealth that is won through hard work and tenacity. And despite her iconic celebrity status, Marilyn was Everywoman in her time: valued more for the body than the spirit within, robbed of autonomy and dignity to further other people's agendas, often victimized by men, devalued, objectified and ultimately discarded. Marilyn's status of Goddess is problematic in light of the less than ideal realities of the human being Marilyn, and equally problematic is what her elevation to Goddess says about the status of women. Her beauty and talent do not mitigate the fact that if the status of Woman is devalued, then the status of Goddess will similarly be degraded.

The Denied Triple Goddess

In recent years, the popularity of the women-spirituality movement has brought the word "Goddess" into a more common usage: it can now refer to any good looking or competent woman. While the original rationale for this was to empower women and to encourage them to identify with ancient sources and role models of powerful, sexual, autonomous women that were/are so lacking in modern culture, the unfortunate side effect has been to open up the definition of Goddess so wide that it becomes a non-term. In regard to MM, the term has so often been applied (it is indeed the title of one her many biographies) referring to her astonishing physical beauty and compelling presence. But as magickians and Witches, the term "Goddess" is not a casual compliment. For MM, it's not just the use of the term, but the devotion that her iconic status generates, and that her image has been ritually pulled into the devotional practices of "real" Goddesses. This makes it imperative that we understand precisely what is being worshipped.

The first question that comes to mind is: if MM is a

Goddess, what type & aspect of Goddess is she: Mother, maiden or crone? Lover, scholar or warrior? Does she exist in Daylight or Shadow, or somewhere in between? What exactly is she the Goddess of, anyway? And what are the practices and lore of this recently arisen cult?

Norma Jeane's childhood and adolescence were marked by instability, poverty and disrupted parenting. She moved abruptly from one house, and one guardian, to another. If her beauty, youth and sexuality classify her as a Maiden Goddess, it is ironic that her own maidenhood was stolen from her. A child without a sense of security, without the support of at least one loving guardian or parent who is continually present, is not able to fully be a child, will always feel as if she is in some kind of exile, somehow degraded and undesirable. Norma Jeane had inconsistent and at times abusive parenting, which in effect held her hostage, like Persephone in the Underworld.

If MM had any consistency in her life, it was the movies. In a very true sense, MM was the child the motion picture industry. Born in Los Angeles when the film industry was in its infancy, to a mother employed by a movie studio, MM was a true native daughter of Hollywood. As a girl, she loved the movies and idolized the screen stars of the day—Clark Gable, Jean Harlow—the same as any young girl. Like millions of young women, she fell into the mass dream of movie stardom as a fairy tale life of wealth and glamour. With the exception of her job at an airplane factory during WWII, film was the only career she ever pursued and she pursued it with a will. Though she lived briefly in New York and Connecticut, she was born, lived, and died in the Los Angeles area. Hollywood was her home in every sense of the word.

What makes Marilyn resonant as a Maiden is her vulnerability, her gentleness and her naiveté. Although she railed against being cast as a dumb blonde, the warmth, sincerity, and the genuine innocence of her characters,

sprang from her own fey, playful nature, and prevented her characters from appearing as bimbos.

MM's qualities of generosity and compassion, her desire for a home and family as well as her hard work, all would place her as a Mother Goddess, if not for her own thwarted attempts to have a baby. MM had a number of miscarriages and abortions, and was never able to have the family she so desperately wanted. However, it is also true that she put off having children again and again in order to focus on her career. This reluctance to have children cost her her first marriage to Jim Dougherty and was a significant factor in her divorce from Joe DiMaggio many years later. MM was caught in the kind of catch-22 that Betty Freidan and Simone deBeauvoir were just beginning to write about—the dilemma facing women who longed for careers and families but had no idea or support how to do both. All she had were the conflicting pressures of the men she loved, and the work that was her true passion.

If MM was an abandoned Maiden, and a thwarted Mother, the real tragedy of her death at age 36 is that she was absolutely robbed of her wisdom years, and never got to be a Queen/Crone. Always seeming younger than her years, MM embodied the motto of the rising youth culture: Live fast, die young, leave a beautiful corpse. This pattern has played out in two generations of celebrities and cultural heroes—James Dean, Buddy Holly, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix--and the great paradox of their worship is that in dying young, all of these artists became immortal. Their loss, the often sordid details of their passings as well as their lives, makes more poignant the work they could have done, the lives they could have led, but for their early deaths. MM's death came at a time when her star power was at its height, when she commanded the highest salary in Hollywood and was able to exercise more control over her work than most actors. In many ways she was a powerful woman, and may have become more so.

But she still felt unable to create the kind of work she wanted most and to represent herself as she wanted to be known. She longed for recognition, and also for the professional respect from her peers which was often withheld.

In addition, her professional success and wealth could not overcome the psychic wounds of a lifetime of abandonment and insecurity. As her therapeutic history and drug use will attest, star-power and money had not brought her happiness. And that is the greatest tragedy of her missing out on her Queen/Crone years, years when many women report they experience their greatest professional success, their highest confidence and personal satisfaction. Denied Maiden, denied Mother, denied Crone. MM is the Goddess of what women are denied, as much as she is the Goddess of what women can attain.

Marilyn Magick

Look at a shrine to Ezili Dantor in Haiti or Ochun in Miami—you'll find a picture of Marilyn among the other objects, offerings and tools. See a group of North American women making collages of Goddesses—won't Marilyn appear among all the magazine scraps? What image is more synonymous with femininity, beauty, sexuality, wealth and glamour? Whose image is most often invoked to convey these qualities? MM is loaded with cultural freight in image, in sound, in narrative, in cultural myth—and therefore has leaked into the global magickal consciousness. How do we deploy this metaphorical power with honesty and compassion for the human being behind the cultural freight? This is a very important question in this cult.

Marilyn was victimized throughout her life, and struggled to find sources of strength outside of herself. “But if that which you seek you find not within yourself, you

will never find it without.” MM may be syncretized with Venus, Aphrodite, and Ochun for her beauty and sexuality, but she also exhibits Venus’ compassion, Aphrodite’s tenacity, and Ochun’s creative drive (and Ochun’s love of wealth in her famous musical number, “diamonds are a girl’s best friend”). In these aspects MM serves as an example to all women, to care for children in need, to work for their dreams, to make their art without apology, to manage their money and careers expertly—in short to be the sovereign of their own lives.

Let us put aside the enormous racial implications of African love Goddesses being syncretized with an Aryan stereotype of ideal womanhood. The core issue with Marilyn-olatry is that, while most mythic heroes must answer the question “Who am I?” MM was also answering the question “How do I represent myself?”. These are two radically different questions, and for Marilyn, the answers were frequently at odds. MM was the calculated construction of Norma Jeane, almost like a glamour, a magickal disguise. While it seems obvious to invoke her as a love or sex Goddess, it’s essential to remember that MM had a number of unhappy love affairs and never found the love she desperately craved. While it may be appropriate to invoke her ability to create your most beautiful, radiant self, one should not wish for her luck with men. Her cult is strongest among prostitutes and gay men, so in a real sense she is the Patroness of the sexually marginalized and exploited. Extreme care should be exercised in evoking this type of magickal current—one must have an incredibly strong basis in will to transmute this type of psychic trauma without taking it in.

In the end, Marilyn Monroe embodied the Divine Energy of—not the Goddess—but the God: Dionysus. Dionysus is the God of Theatres and his patronage of theatre as sacred art, of commitment to that craft which demands that the artist use himself the same way other

artists use paint and clay, provides a lens through which to view MM's work. Whatever else was said about her, MM was devoted, passionately devoted to her art and worked feverishly to improve and deepen her skills. Her ability to manipulate her image is a type of shape shifting. And sadly, much like Dionysian heroes of ages gone by, her artistry was accompanied by drug and alcohol use, depression, madness, and finally a premature, tragic death. While Marilyn was not killed by raving maenads, the demands of her public image and the increasingly intrusive nature of her publicity essentially devoured her and her image. While it is appropriate for an actor to invoke her spirit as a talented role model, it is also appropriate to acknowledge that MM's story is a cautionary tale; about not having a strong enough core to withstand the psychic demands of this medium.

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Out of the Wardrobe:

Ritual Design for Pop Culture Topics

Elizabeth Barrette

“Pop culture is modern mythology.” We’ve all heard that before. Okay, great, so it’s mythology. The question is: what can you *do* with it?

You already know how to handle classic mythology. You know that you can use it as inspiration for storytelling, for regalia, for pageantry – all kinds of things. You also know how to sell people on the idea of a ritual based on “The Abduction of Persephone” or “Lugh at the Gate.” But what do you do with Buffy the Vampire Slayer, or Frodo, or Superman? You can use pop culture motifs to design ritual much the same way you use traditional mythology.

Some time ago, my coven did this with Narnia. Many of us were friends of Narnia from childhood, and some of our regular attendees had children. Several of us had recently seen *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* movie. While flipping through a book in the bookstore, I came across the scene where Aslan creates Narnia, and in my mind it matched the end-of-winter scenes in the movie. So I pitched the idea of a Narnian Ostara ritual, and it took off...

The Design Process

First, choose a pop culture topic. Good pop culture sources include movies, television shows, books, and comic books. These offer the richest material in terms of characters,

dialog, and scenery. However, stay open to other possibilities such as pop songs, holidays, or even art forms. You can make a ritual out of almost anything, if you care enough about it. In my case, we used both the original series of books and the new movie *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

Second, choose a theme for your ritual. It can be something drawn from the pop culture source (like “freedom,” a common theme in the Superman mythos) or from sources outside pop culture (like connecting a pop culture motif to a sabbat), or even a combination of the two. The theme is the message of your ritual, and the pop culture myth is how you choose to express it. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* has lots of imagery relating to the end of winter and the arrival of spring; *The Magician’s Nephew* shows the beginning of the world of Narnia; and both match neatly to the themes of birth and beginning found in the sabbat of Ostara.

Third, research your pop culture source. You may need to watch or read something several times to get as much material as you want out of it. This is much easier, of course, for items in a format that you can stop and start as needed! Look for props or scenes that really catch your eye. Listen for dialog that you could work into a ritual.

The first time I saw the new Narnia movie, I was particularly struck by the coronation and its use of the four directions. So when I was outlining the ritual, I went to see the movie (still in theaters at that time) again and quickly scribbled down the relevant lines. I also pulled lines from the books. One pesky point was that C.S. Lewis described multiple versions of Narnian royal heraldry, so we wound up with a bunch of colors in our altar decorations and ritual garb.

Fourth, do some additional research. Connect your pop culture topic to its deeper mythic roots in a conscious way. This adds power to the mythic imagery by reinforcing it,

makes the ritual more serious, and reduces the chance of it seeming “silly,” while allowing you to draw on the archetypal energy itself. Seek such connections as the Hero, the Wise Guide, the Quest, the Magic Item, Birth/Death/Rebirth, Transformation, and Redemption. Check to see if the basic plot outline of your pop culture story follows a similar plot outline as a classic myth or legend. Use your Pagan and folklore books for this part.

For the Narnian ritual we found several powerful connections. The scene of Aslan singing the world into being echoes many Creation Myths. Meeting Aslan represents forming a bond with a patron deity. And the coronation scene manifests a claim of personal power. As mentioned above, these go hand in hand with the birth and renewal aspects of Ostara.

Next, make a rough outline of your ritual. It needs a beginning, a middle, and an end. What characters will appear in it? Who will take those roles? What will they do? The Narnian ritual naturally took the shape of a visit to Narnia, involving two Kings and two Queens and Aslan.

If you haven't already involved other people, now is a good time to do so. You've got enough to show them, but also still have enough wiggle room left for them to make valuable input. The most important thing here is to get people *excited* about this ritual. You don't want them to laugh it off as “not real magic.” So, think about why you love it. What makes you passionate about this piece of pop culture? What ideal does it represent to you? How does it rouse your sense of wonder? Hold onto those ideas and pour them into your pitch so that you convey to other people how powerful and memorable your ritual will be.

After you've got some interest, flesh out your outline into a complete ritual. Use the notes you took earlier to insert key lines. Look at the cool things the character(s) said and try to find places for them in the ritual; also consider what you need for the ritual and look for pieces

that will fit. You can save energy by quoting more from your source(s) and composing less from scratch. What tools, supplies, and garb do you need? Choose things that support the mood you want to create. Don't be afraid to raid the Halloween aisle if that's what it takes – pop culture gives you the advantage of readily available props that match your theme. Think about where you will perform this ritual. How much space will it take? Work in descriptions of those things, and instructions for movement, into your ritual text. Include a checklist of items needed for the ritual, so you can check them off right beforehand.

We got lucky with spring weather and managed to hold the Narnian ritual outdoors, but we designed it so that it could have been performed indoors if necessary. We didn't have specifically Narnian garb, but we *did* have enough medieval and general fantasy garb to create the desired effect, with the help of a few craft store additions.

Preparation and Performance

With full ritual text in hand, it's time to find volunteers for the roles. If your coven has a permanent High Priest/ess, start there. Also consider who most enjoys the pop culture that inspired the ritual, and who most resembles the character or purpose of each role. We chose boys and girls for the Kings and Queens of Narnia, and an experienced priest for Aslan.

One drawback to using pop culture in ritual is a higher chance of resistance from other people. Some will just laugh and not come. Others will outright attack you for doing something so outrageous. If you're not sure of the reception in your group, discreetly test the waters before revealing your whole plan. If you're confident, proceed – but try to anticipate possible objections and prepare responses to them. Assure people that you've done your homework and you're going to deliver a satisfying,

effective ritual.

Proofread your ritual *carefully*. If possible, show it to someone else too. Mistakes in spelling a character's name, or other pop culture errors, will leap out at anyone who knows and loves the material – like, say, the ideal people for performing this ritual! Precision is extra important in pop culture rituals because you're shoring up a new myth.

Setup and ritual prep require a little more attention than usual too. Use your checklist to make sure you've got everything you need for the ritual. If it depends on a specific prop, and you don't have that, you're out of luck. Remove anything that detracts from the intended setting and mood, if possible. "Setting the stage" in advance lets you present a vivid scene to your participants all at once, as if you were lifting the curtain on a stage. So when you get to ritual prep, give people an idea what to expect. There's a delicate balance between letting people know what they need to do during the ritual, and giving away so much that you spoil the experience. It helps to talk a bit about how pop culture is an example of living myth – you can use generalities to prepare people, and then impress them with details. For our Narnia ritual, a couple of people set up the altar in the ritual meadow, and then returned so that everyone could make the procession together.

During the ritual, concentrate on creating and maintaining the right mood. Mood is everything in a pop culture ritual. Its effectiveness relies largely on how well you can pull everyone into that world and make the mythic connection tangible. The Narnian ritual created a marvelous "sense of wonder" that touched all of us with Lewis' special magic.

Finally, devoke everything and return participants to consensus reality. This is another place where a pop culture ritual requires extra care. Entities summoned from a traditional myth already know the routine; entities from pop culture are still in their formative period and benefit from

guidance by experienced ritualists. Your participants may also feel especially attached to a favorite hero or world, and not want to return. Make sure everyone gets *all the way back*. The grounding influence of food and (nonalcoholic) drink can help with this process; so can physical activities. After the Narnian ritual, we held a potluck lunch and made gods-eyes as a craft project.

So there you have it, the process for designing and performing a ritual based on the pop culture source of your choice. By doing this, you stop being a passive consumer and become a participant in the creation and transmission of myth. Today's "classic mythology" was yesterday's pop culture. Today's pop culture will become part of tomorrow's classic mythology. And it's the cultural icons that are best loved that will survive. Choose wisely. Choose *consciously*. Worship joyfully. Your descendants will thank you. If the scholars don't like it, well, there's always ancient Greece.

Narnian Ostara Ritual

Celebrants dress in Narnian style garb. Featured colors are gold, red, green, blue, and silver. Each person (or family) brings a resealable jar of water from somewhere special to them. Gather everyone and line up near the house, then process to the ritual meadow. The altar is draped with a lion-patterned cloth, and the water bowl sits upon it. Celebrants arrange themselves in a circle around it.

Narrator: *Steps into the center of the circle.* "We gather now to celebrate spring and to awaken the land. You have all heard of the magical land of Narnia – Narnia of the heathery mountains, Narnia of the many rivers, the mossy caverns and deep forests ringing with the hammers of Dwarves. Such stories have great power, and so we will draw on that power to turn the seasons, by calling the Kings and Queens of Narnia and the Great Lion, Aslan."

Narrator: “To the listening Eastern sea, I give you Queen Lucy the Valiant.”

Queen Lucy: *Turns to face the East.* “I call to this Court the waters of the East. Grace us with your faith. Hail and welcome!”

All: “Hail and welcome!”

Narrator: “To the great Western wood, I give you King Edmund the Just.”

King Edmund: *Turns to face the West.* “I call to this Court the earth of the West. Grace us with your honesty. Hail and welcome!”

All: “Hail and welcome!”

Narrator: “To the radiant Southern sun, I give you Queen Susan the Gentle.”

Queen Susan: *Turns to face the South.* “I call to this Court the fire of the South. Grace us with your warmth. Hail and welcome!”

All: “Hail and welcome!”

Narrator: “To the clear Northern sky, I give you King Peter the Magnificent.”

King Peter: *Turns to face the North.* “I call to this Court the winds of the North. Grace us with your vision. Hail and welcome!”

All: “Hail and welcome!”

Narrator: “Now the true king of Narnia is Aslan, the Great Lion, son of the Emperor-over-the-sea. At this time of year, Narnians call him with this verse:

When he bares his teeth,
Winter meets its death,
And when he shakes his mane,
We shall have spring again.

Aslan: *Steps into the center of the circle.* “Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters.”

Aslan leads the water-sharing. Each celebrant comes forward in turn to pour their water into the bowl, explaining

where it came from. Then Aslan blesses the waters. Celebrants come forward to touch the water and bless themselves with it. After everyone has done so, the celebrants bring their bottles to be refilled with the mingled waters.

Narrator: "Aslan is always coming and going. One day you'll see him, the next you won't. He's wild, you know – not like a *tame* lion. So we bid Aslan – hail and farewell!"

All: "Hail and farewell!"

Aslan: *Rejoins circle.*

Narrator: "To the clear Northern sky, I give you King Peter the Magnificent."

King Peter: "I release the winds of the North. Hail and farewell!"

All: "Hail and farewell!"

Narrator: "To the radiant Southern sun, I give you Queen Susan the Gentle."

Queen Susan: "I release the fire of the South. Hail and farewell!"

All: "Hail and farewell!"

Narrator: "To the great Western wood, I give you King Edmund the Just."

King Edmund: "I release the earth of the West. Hail and farewell!"

All: "Hail and farewell!"

Narrator: "To the listening Eastern sea, I give you Queen Lucy the Valiant."

Queen Lucy: "I release the waters of the East. Hail and farewell!"

All: "Hail and farewell!"

Narrator: "Once a King or Queen of Narnia, always a King or Queen of Narnia. May your wisdom grace us until the stars rain down from the heavens. Hail and farewell."

All: "Hail and farewell!"

Narrator: "You may be thinking, now that our adventure is over, that you'll never find your way into

Narnia again. You'll get back someday, though. It'll probably happen when you're not looking for it. All the same – probably best to keep your eyes open.”

Materials

Altar table

Lion altar cloth

Water bowl

Dipper & funnel

4 crowns

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[A Revelation of Elvisinian Mysteries](#)

Diana G. Rice

On the day of the Autumn Equinox, 1988, I traveled with the Sisters of the Sacred Moon Pie and Brother Bill to the annual SPiRaL gathering in the wilds of Georgia. As the drive was long and uneventful, one of the Sisters fell fast asleep and the others of us playfully conspired that upon awakening we would claim that she had been channeling Elvis Presley, the King of Rock and Roll. Little did we realize that we had awakened the King’s spirit.

Things at SPiRaL soon began to get all shook up. We evoked Elvis in our humor wherever we went. This constant meditation on Elvis' joy culminated during one of the main rituals. The SPiRaL organizers decreed that in this ritual there was to be no singing and no dancing. This was serious magic, they said, and taught us the LVX so we could draw The Light into ourselves. With many dozens of people arrayed not in a circle, but in a long figure 8, tongues firmly held against the roof of our mouths, we vibrated "Nnnn" into the top of our skulls while a priest directed the energy to a priestess who would channel the Goddess for a select few. So filled with the laughter of Elvis were we Elvisinians that our ritual decorum began to fall away, and when the priest chanted E-A-O, Brother Bill responded E-I-E-I-O. One by one we Sisters picked up the chant. The heavy veil of pomposity that shrouded the ritual began to lift, joy illuminated the darkness, and the voices of others in our vicinity echoed Bill's chant. Only later did we discover that we were Drawing Down the King for the first time.

Although it would be some years before the actual working of this ritual would be fully understood and welcomed at SPiRaL, our devotion was immediately rewarded upon our return home when the King made a special appearance at our Witches' Ball and Elvis Throwdown '88. He was fat; dressed in blue jeans, plaid shirt, black cape, and ski mask. Many scoffed when he entered the Elvis-look-alike contest against such contenders as Siamese Elvis, Black Leather Elvis, Elvis After Drugs, and others, but when Elvis #3 sang "Dixie," onlookers fell to their knees and girls rushed the stage. He pocketed his \$100 prize, blessed us with a "Thank you, thank you very much," and disappeared.

We declared ourselves Handmaidens of Elvis and dedicated to the revelation of His Mystery. It became obvious that Elvis was the Kundalini Master of the New

Aeon and had awakened the collective unconscious of the Baby Boomers through his tantric gyrations. This knowledge had been broadcast directly into living rooms across America during his early appearances on national television and for decades afterward would reach countless others and reinforce the message through the power of the film clip.

Elvis revealed that his records contain hidden messages. When he sang, "I'm in love, I'm all shook up," the King shared his understanding of the unity of the Divine Spark and Big Bang theories of creation, proving his spiritual mastery. Elvis felt the suffering of the world and, like many kings before him, had died for our pain. Time and again he told his followers, "Don't be cruel." Indeed, he was born on January 8, 1935, soon after Yule, the birthday of the Sun King. His death on August 16, 1977, came soon after the cross-quarter day of Lugh, the celebration of the Celtic sacrificed king, who has solar qualities.

A pilgrimage to Graceland was planned. They know how to worship Elvis in Memphis. The city built an Olympic-sized glass pyramid on a small island in the Mississippi, the secret function of which is to focus Elvis' energy for intergalactic transmission. Graceland's mirrored foyer is a powerful energy vortex in its own right. The King had the mirrors installed in 1974, during the jelly doughnut years. He whispered to me that he was looking for his shadow. We knelt at his grave and bought icons in the gift shop.

Soon after the pilgrimage, I met the Reverend T-Bone Wyrd. Standing in line for breakfast at a secret annual reunion of 1500 May revelers, a bit cranky from lack of sleep, but easing the pain by smoking the sacred bowl, a woman I knew from other circles introduced me to her partner, who grunted and toked on the bowl, yet appeared to be otherwise unconscious. When I mentioned my recent journey to visit the King, T-Bone began to speak whole

words, then sentences.

“The Sun. The key is the Sun,” he said, removing his shades. “You see, Elvis has been here before. The King was once Pharaoh, the original rebel from the delta, Amenhotep IV, known as Ahkhaton, which translates as “He who lives in the land of grace.”

The telltale chill of truth passed through me, and the shaking that precedes a revelation of the Mystery began.

“Ahkhaton,” the Reverend Wyrd continued, “worshipped the grace of the Sun, Aton-Re, and sat on the Sun Throne. Elvis, of course, achieved his stardom recording on Sun Records. Ahkhaton lived in a state of grace in Memphis. Elvis lived in Graceland in Memphis. Just as the rhythms of Africa floated down the Nile to the Sea of Reeds on the Delta, so did that ole voodoo rhythm move up the Mississippi from New Orleans, curling like a stream of heady incense through the poor cotton country of the Delta, flowing into Memphis, mighty city on the river. The rhythm, the rhythm, oh Lord, done snaked out a tentacle of its powerful beat and curled ‘round the pelvis of the only white boy black enough to teach the entire world how to get down and shake its booty!”

I could feel the power of his channel. The red gleam was in his squinted eye. I recounted my theory of instantaneous transmission of the Kundalini mysteries through television.

“Who else but the King, dear Sister, could teach with such simplicity and humility the esoteric concept of the body as robot as he did?” asked the Reverend. ““You ain’t nothing but a hound dog,” says it all. ‘You ain’t nothing’ is emphasis on the purely physical, limiting awareness to the realm of the material. ‘Hound’ is animal nature; the unreflective, automatic, in short, the robot. ‘Dog’ is, of course, ‘god’ spelled backwards, indicating the descent into matter, as well as the Gurdjieffian ‘die like a dog,’ which is the lot of those who cannot develop higher awareness, a crystallization of self-remembering. ‘Cryin’ all the time’ is

the Buddhist recognition of life as suffering. This hit record is a perfect statement of the human condition. Elvis was delivered to this Earth to heal the great mind/boy split of WE-stern consciousness.

“Let us look at his name: *El*, the Phoenician word for light, is the Canaanite word for God and is used as one of the divine names attributed to the West in the Spirit Invoking Ritual of the Pentagram. *Vis*, of course, is the Latin word for power or strength. As the contraction of visus, vis, the pluperfect of videre, it means ‘to see’ and is the root of the word ‘vision.’ Many interesting meanings can be derived from these components: ‘to see God’ or ‘to see the light,’ or ‘light vision/God vision.’ My favorite, though, is ‘God sees.’”

“I have seen and heard the King since his death,” I told the Reverend. “I believe that when there is true desire within us, when the time is right and we are truly deserving, we achieve Elvis-harmony within ourselves and our pelvis is in synch with the world around us.”

Others were moving away from us, including the Reverend’s girlfriend, who now claimed that she had no idea who we were. I relit the bowl -- these were high mysteries -- and told him of Elvis’ channeling of our collective shadow, how he shouldered the burdens of our hedonistic culture. I asked for a sign.

“The harmonic convergence occurred on the tenth anniversary of Elvis’ death,” the Reverend said. “The divine intervention of Spirit produced Elvis. He was sent to heal the psychic wound, the oozing pus of repression, perversion, and damaged sexuality. He had to embody all these things as an example.” The Reverend put on his sunglasses and I felt the channel fade. My leg stopped shaking.

We became fast friends. Later he told me of the Gematriological significance of Elvis’ middle name, Aaron.

“Aaron was the brother of Moses, the mouthpiece and

holder of the serpent rod; in short, the Kundalini Master of the Hebrew exodus. He became patriarch of the tribe of Levi, from which all priests of the temple were called. These very priests were entrusted with the correct pronunciation of the sacred name YHVH. At the end of *Shake, Rattle and Roll*, Elvis screams the name of God: YEE HAA.

“In Hebrew, Aaron is spelled *aleph heh resh nun*. This adds up to 256, a number that connotes the sons of the righteous, a second-century Melchizedek group, and the spirit of Mother, the Earth, signifying the return to the body. If you spell his name as it is misspelled on his birth certificate, Aron, it becomes *aleph resh nun*. This adds up to 251, which has connotations of the coming race, the new beings, the Vrihls or Uriels, the coming fifth-dimension crystallization. If you add another *aleph* to this you get 252, which is the serpent’s den, the pelvic center, Elvis the Pelvis.” T-Bone moaned and lapsed into a series of spasms.

Many times I tried the Drawing Down the King ritual with minimal results. It wasn’t until I was required by the Reverend Wyrd to study ceremonial magic that the long-revealed puzzle pieces fell into place.

T-Bone had fallen into a deep chasm of seriousness and geomancy, and had even reentered the US economy, opening a bank account. For tax purposes he created a Mystery School and assembled a Board of Directors. We studied his magical system so we could travel with him to the Center of the Universe and learn the Great Mystery. During his lessons on the LVX, Elvis came through.

“It’s not E-A-O, it’s E-I-E-I-O,” I said. “Remember Elvis?”

“That’s nice,” he said. “We’re trying to work here.”

“But, don’t you see, we’re not supposed to draw the light just into our heart centers, we’ve got to bring that ole barnyard energy down into our pelvic centers. The gestures

are different, too. The ‘L’ pose for the ‘E’ sound is the same, but then you go straight up into a cheerleading ‘I’ for that sound, and then back down with the right arm for ‘E,’ repeat the ‘I,’ then down with both arms, forming a diamond with your hands over the pelvic center for a deep ‘O.’ LVX spells ‘Elvis’ in Hebrew because the vowels are understood. The Latin ‘light’ correlates with your earlier definition of the components of his name.

The Reverend had become too psychopompous to appreciate Elvis’ joy. He planned a complex ritual whose ceremonial ground was laid out in a figure 8. A priestess/channel was enthroned on one end, while on the other the ills of the world were embodied by a man in a business suit wearing a Nixon mask. I had been recruited to draw into myself the starry light and mysterious darkness that is Nuit to heal the world’s ills, who were embodied by none other than T-Bone himself. “E-A-O” the group intoned. I giggled to myself. At ritual’s end, bent over T-Bone as he lay motionless on the ground, an empty vessel, I whispered the unexpected name of God, “Yee Haa!”

Late that evening, our hearts already filled with light, we finished drawing down the King and I channeled an admonition to beware the evils of prescription drug abuse, a warning that medical doctors work to subdue the serpent with brain-altering chemicals. Not quite enough energy was raised by the group to manifest a complete god vision.

It wasn’t until that year’s SPiRaL, the place where it all began, that the experiment could be attempted with a focused group. We began with the E-A-O, drawing the light into our hearts, then moved to the E-I-E-I-O, drawing the reptile into the britches. Sexual tension was raised and held by the group for a full 24 hours and released the following night as the drums raged and men walked through the gathering’s hearth fire. After nightlong pelvic gyrations, several people had profound experiences reconnecting with their bodies. On their way home from the

gathering, one pair of revelers journeyed to Graceland and grounded the working in a secret location there.

The King rests eternally in the land of grace. He dons his white jumpsuit in the fullness of the waxing year and wears black leather as the year wanes. His joy is available to all who seek it.

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Pokémon Magic:

A Modern Guide to the Secret Elemental and Spirit System of Pokémon

Andrieh Vitimus

In most cities, you can buy Pokémon trading cards at your local grocery store. Most children know what Pokémon is and enjoy the card game. In fact, the Pokémon craze is still sweeping through the nation. The game has captured the hearts and minds of many children. As magicians, there must be ways to tap that built up force and have fun in the process. When I first saw the Pokémon animated series, I thought, “Man, these little creatures act a lot like spirits.” A web search on Pokémon turns up some interesting starting ideas:

“What if they (children) carry their favorite monsters like magical charms or fetishes in their pockets, trusting them to bring power in times of need? (Kjos, Berit, 2007).”

‘What if’, indeed. The web page goes on further to state:

In Paganism and the Occult there are spirit guides, messengers, and elementals or artificial elementals. They can be summoned to do things for the ‘trainer’ or ‘practitioner’. They can 1. Watch and tell the trainer what it

sees, 2. Guard the trainer, 3. Fight with other spirits or elementals, 4. Carry out assignments given by the trainers. Pagans can capture free elementals (much like Pokémon trainers capture pocket monsters) and build relationships with them for use (just like Pokémon trainers). Witches, Shamans, etc, recommend only master practitioners do this because you are not masters of the elementals, just like Pokémon trainers are not masters of the Pocket monster – and they warn that they can be hard to get rid of and may require an exorcism to become free of a bad one. (Kjos,Berit, 2007)

Other web sites point out the connection of Pokémon directly to Shinto, Buddhist thinking, and Taoist philosophies (Peterson, 2006). Of course, even if these connections are a bit tenuous, a magician can ask, why can't we make this system work? I started working with the system before they were available at the grocery store, but you could get them at almost any toy store. You can easily apply the methods I was using to any to any collectible card game that uses spirit like creatures. Pokémon have a rich tradition in the vein of the Japanese Kami (or, monsters) and the Pokémon themselves were called Pocket Monsters (Wikipedia, 2008).

The Pokémon Mystery

The Pokémon Cards are a code that gives clues to what these spirits can actually do. In the context of the card game, everything is related to winning a battle and the language of the cards is coded for this theme. If you can understand what the Pokémon can do to other Pokémon, you can try to apply that to real world situations. The manga and the animated series present a much richer view of what these spirits can do. In the animated series, Ash uses the Pokémon for battles. However, it is clear that many of the criminal houses like Team Rocket use the

Pokémon to influence people, cause damage or effects on other people, and generally get ahead in the world. In fact, in the Pokémon movie, Mewtwo, a genetically altered and cloned Pokémon, nearly destroys a city. Many of the legendary Pokémon in the animated series have nearly godlike powers. In my experience, more powerful and evolved Pokémon will expect a greater level of respect from the magician. For instance, take PsyDuck. It is clear based on the description of his powers, that PsyDuck can greatly influence the minds of other Pokémon and people. In working with this system, it is important to ask the Pokémon what they can actually do, since we do not often have the needed information to know this based on the cards alone. Communicating with the Pokémon is not difficult, but first we have to catch one. I will explain one method for catching Pokémon later in the article.

Starting Out with the System

Most card games require “energy cards” that you must play before you can get a creature summoned. Magic the Gathering, Pokémon, and other systems use mana or fuel to summon the creatures within the logic within the game. To make the system work, assume that each of these card games represents a self-contained and distinct universe. One explanation is that artists, writers, and creative types working on the systems are tapping into a self-existent universe. Of course, they might not get the universe exactly right because of game mechanics, but perhaps if enough people are really into a game, it does exist in some astral sense.

In this explanation, we are enticing the spirits to come through a gateway. Functionally, the creatures of the card game are similar to elementals although the methods will be different to “call them” (Bardon, 1999), but if we follow the Pokémon universe, each Pokémon has a different

personality and is unique.

Before enticing a spirit into this world to work with us, we have to know how to produce the energy they need and like to eat. In Pokémon, there are Grass, Fire, Water, Lightning, Fighting, Colorless, Metal, Dark and more (Wikipedia, 2008). In *Ovayki*, I detail methods for producing energy that is colored by certain information patterns (Vitimus, 2007). We can use similar methods to generate energy that can entice a Pokémon to come into this world for us. If we take on sensory data in our minds, our energy follows this intention and the energy we “project” outwards will have the characteristics of that energy. Fire is an easy element to try with this idea. I am sure we all have experienced a campfire, or a candle flame. We can write down what the word “FIRE” means to us in terms of our five senses and the memories we have regarding fire. Try to remember times you were around fire. What did you smell, what did you see, what did you feel, taste, or hear? Look at what details you wrote down; try to pick out details that most represent “fire”. If you can imagine those details while in a trance state, your personal energy will take on those qualities. Some of the energies in Pokémon represent natural “elements” while other energies are created between the interaction of the “Pokémon” universe and humans. Each type of energy can be mapped to a certain breathing pattern, which seems to help generate the state of mind. For instance, for fire energy, I used Reverse Chi Breathing (Yudelove, 2000). For water, I prefer to use deep and slow rhythmic breathing and for electricity, I tend to use hyperventilation. These correspondences might not work for you, so you must use your experience to figure out what type of breathing seems to “work” with the type of details you wrote down about each energy type. In *Magic the Gathering*, the energy types correspond to places such as Plains, Swamps, Mountains, Forests and Islands. The procedure would be the same.

Read the description of the energy, and see what memories or associations that you have corresponding to the description. Clear your mind with a banishing, and focus on the sensory details of those memories while projecting the energy outward. For more information on energy projection and these techniques, see Ovayki.

Gathering a Pokémon

Once you know how to create the energy to attract the Pokémon, there is a relatively simple method for gathering the Pokémon that I use in my workings. In Pokémon, you need some sort of place to put the collected spirit. For magicians familiar to the Goetia, one might draw comparisons to the brass bottle (DuQuette & Hyatt, 1992). If you want to, buy a small pokeball from a toyshop. I often prefer to make my own container. At first, you just need a container to “trap the Pokémon”.

In Western ceremonial magic, we can use an equilateral triangle for an area to direct energy into (Kraig, 2004). Pokémon are usually drawn into pokeballs, so a circle is more appropriate. In my experience, a circle works well as a containment field for evocation. Functionally, we will be doing an evocation of the chosen Pokémon, but I have found it much more useful to consider this process an enticement for a unique Pokémon.

Each Pokémon has a different temperament even if it is the same species of Pokémon. Two Pikachu do not act exactly the same. Fortunately, Pokémon USA, Inc. gives us several clues to help attract a Pokémon. First, the cards have the image and description of the Pokémon in question. Imagine that the card is in fact a one way gateway to this world. A hose is a good metaphor for what a one way flow would be. Second, in the animated series, we can see that basic Pokémon constantly repeat their own names. In my experience, it was better to call basic Pokémon and evolve

them (since they have a great deal of trust with you). It was easier for me to work with the Pokémon as they become more powerful. If you watch the animated series, clearly this is the approach that Pokémon trainers take with their Pokémon.

We don't have Pokémon running around the physical world so we need to direct the energy into a space, to attract the Pokémon through the card, using the card as a sympathetic gateway to pull the Pokémon into this world. Before starting the ritual, try to imagine what the Pokémon would act like, what it might smell like, what it would look like in 3 dimensions, even what touching the Pokémon would feel like. Write all of this down.

Draw a circle on the floor or on a piece of paper with your Pokémon in the middle of the paper. Relax for a few minutes and clear your mind by your preferred banishing technique. State your intent to attract a Pokémon of the desired type into the circle through the card. For basic Pokémon, their species name is the mantra you need to attract them. Concentrate on all the sensory details that you wrote down for that energy type while in the relaxed state and project that into the circle. Use the breathing technique that seems to match the type of energy you are using. See, feel, and hear the Pokémon arrive through the card. Essentially, imagine the Pokémon arriving with all the details you wrote down previously. For this to work, you must be in sufficient trance state to believe the Pokémon is there. That generally takes 20-30 minutes of chanting and energy work. When there is enough "energy", imagine the Pokémon taking form from the energy you have raised.

Once you have the Pokémon in the circle, ask the Pokémon its name. Because the card represents a "species" name, the Pokémon may or may not have the same name. Use your intuition. Now, since we are working with the cards without the benefit of the manga or animated series, ask the Pokémon what it can do. Basic Pokémon in the

show usually can only say their name, but you might imagine non-verbal gestures to communicate. Pay attention to what pops in your mind. Write down the details. Try to get as many details about what you have called up as possible. Scry out a sigil and listen to how the Pokémon pronounces its own name. Now, we don't actually want to finish the ritual with a banishing. If we have enticed a Pokémon through the gateway of the card, we certainly don't want to banish and let it go back through the gateway. Instead, we want to put the Pokémon into a container. This could be a pokeball, or a container you made yourself. Pokémon have to be weakened before they will go into a container so you have to willfully imagine pushing the Pokémon into the container.

I found it very useful to do a sigil spell to “empower the container” before putting a Pokémon inside. Sigils are covered in *Liber Null and Psychonaut* (Carroll, 1987). The Pokémon might struggle a little, but you have to force the Pokémon into the container. We are trying to work with the Pokémon as a familiar spirit. The container should be something you can close to trap the spirit inside the container. In practical terms, put the card and any unique name or sigil into the container.

I Have a Pokémon, Now What?

In the show, it's clear, Pokémon can refuse to do what you ask them to do, but usually they listen. A good trainer will make sure they have an excellent relationship with their Pokémon. Additionally, the Pokémon will watch out for and protect their trainers. As the Pokémon become stronger, the relationship that the Pokémon trainer has with the Pokémon will often determine how a Pokémon will react. In the Animated series, Ash has a relationship with each of the Pokémon. Even the members of Team Rocket have their favorite Pokémon, and these Pokémon will act in

a way that is much more like a friend than merely something to boss around. Traditionally, servitors in a chaos magical sense do exactly what they are told. Familiars in the medieval magic sense may actually act in the best interests of the magician when what the magician is asking for will hurt them. Well-fed spirits of the dead in bottles will act to protect the people who feed them in situations that would catch the Vodouisant off-guard. Although, we are summoning something in the same manner as a servitor, using the metaphor of enticing the Pokémon allows us to attract something that has greater levels of intelligence and can do more than a servitor usually can.

Something with intelligence (even if we are only conceiving of the intelligence in our own minds by the trick of the metaphor we are using), generally can be bribed. If you ever watch a dog, you know that the dog knows very well who feeds them. We can treat the basic Pokémon very similarly. We have a new Pokémon in a container. We can give it five minutes of energy a day, of the energy type specified by the Pokémon card in order to learn the temperament and personality of the Pokémon we have called forward. You can chant the name of the Pokémon while pushing energy to strengthen the Pokémon. What you are doing here is building up a trust relationship with the Pokémon and “training” the Pokémon to know where to get fed. Allow the Pokémon, to be “Out” of the container for extended periods of time and make a small area with things that the Pokémon might like. For instance, I enticed a grass Pokémon and put its container near some plants. A water Pokémon might like to be by an aquarium. Don’t give the Pokémon too much energy though, since we want the Pokémon to earn its keep.

After two weeks of developing rapport with the Pokémon, we are ready to get some results. Through conversations with the Pokémon while in trance, we know

what additional things the Pokémon can do. Banish, go into trance, and ask the Pokémon to do something for you (opening the container after banishing). While in trance, make sure the Pokémon understands the task. If the Pokémon refuses to work, tell it you will give it a lot more energy if it does the task for you. Positive reinforcement is far more effective than punishment. However, do withhold energy from the Pokémon if it refuses to comply. When the Pokémon successfully gets results, reward it with 20-30 minutes of its preferred energy type. After feeding it in this fashion, move towards only feeding the Pokémon after successful results are had. This trains the Pokémon that to get fed the energy it needs, it must produce results. Be generous with the process when you get the desired results. If you get spectacular results, spend more time generating and projecting energy. Again, use positive reinforcement whenever possible. You want the Pokémon to love you and act on your behalf even when you can't act on your own behalf. My experience working with the Pokémon was that as they get more and more conditioned to produce positive results, the results become more consistent and pronounced.

Generally, after a few energy sessions and positive reinforcement, you won't need to keep your Pokémon trapped, per se. It will want to stay around you since you feed it, and treat the Pokémon so well.

Evolution

Pokémon can evolve. If you have enticed the Pokémon and used positive reinforcement, you have an extremely friendly familiar that can evolve to more powerful forms with greater abilities. This evolution can spontaneously happen in the show, but as magicians we can see the evolution slowly occurring. The Pokémon might change its personality etc. It is beyond the scope of this article in

detail how to evolve the Pokémon, but by watching the show, it should be possible to derive ideas for a ritual to evolve a Pokémon to a higher form with greater powers. Usually, this involves feeding the Pokémon the energy it needs and imagining with all 5 of the senses how the creature is changing. I usually will throw some kind of ritual mutagen such as an invocation of Chaos (Carroll, 1987), but that may create an evolution that is not in line with the official “Pokémon” evolutions. Once the Pokémon is evolved, you have to repeat the process of “feeding”, positive reinforcement, and results orientated magic. This time the Pokémon, the process should go faster since the Pokémon trusts you.

Pokémon Battles in Our World

For fun and training, it is possible to arrange battles with Pokémon. At Alchemy Arts in Chicago, we conducted many battles to strengthen and work with our familiars. The first goal of this is, of course, to have some fun.

Additionally, competitive battle forced people to better connect with their familiars in order to win the battle. The pressure, fun, and desire to win sharpen the connection.

The method we used for Pokémon tournaments where we enticed and worked with Pokémon may not work for you, but it was quite effective in Chicago. First, we would create a battlefield. This usually consisted of a circle, with sigilized glyphs around the outside of the circle. The sigils would be created with the intent to “contain the Pokémon battle” and was empowered through ritual previous to the tournament.

Two people who were good at scrying “spirits” and were fair were selected to be judges. This exercise was a great exercise to work with sensing spirits in a contained space. The participants were then put on each side of the battlefield facing across from each other. At this point,

participants evoked their Pokémon into the playing field by their preferred method. The evocation had to end with “<Name of their Pokémon>, I choose you” for historical consistency. Then the battle was on. If a player believed they had won and both players agreed, the match was over. If there was disagreement, the judges would scry the winner and both judges would have to agree.

Of course, in magic against other magicians and their familiars from other systems, the real battlefield could happen anywhere, but as a training exercise, this was an excellent tool.

Pokémon Open Handed Magic

One of the real beauties of the way I implemented the Pokémon system was a post results emphasis of payment that led to a style of open-handed magic. If you work with the Pokémon in this manner, you can develop a deep and powerful relationship with your Pokémon. In fact, clearing your mind, and just asking your Pokémon for what you want to do was on more than one occasion enough to get results. Of course, you have conditioned the Pokémon to expect an energy reward after the results come flowing in. In my experimentation, the Pokémon was able to get results simply by asking for things it had a good track record of success at. Now, for me personally, Pokémon are slightly less troublesome than some Goetic familiars and more fun than capturing cemetery spirits.

Now, if you asked the Pokémon what more they can do, you might get surprising answers. There are fire Pokémon that hypnotize people to sleep, and certainly a fire Pokémon might be able to burn away toxins from your system or slightly warm up your body (causing more healing). Likewise, water Pokémon might be able to flush things out of your system. A psychic Pokémon might be able to predict future events or gather extraordinary information

for you. A Grass Pokémon might be able to take the life-force energy from one source and give it to you. A lightning Pokémon might be able to regulate and protect your computer from power surges. The possibilities are endless.

Oh My and the Children Too

The great thing about working with Pokémon is that you can work magic with children. Of course, children generally have all sorts of “nonsense” in their heads, like the Pokémon are not real. If the children are imaginative and young enough, you can usually get around any objection by telling them that the Pokémon exist in a different world. In Chicago, we had children who believed in fairies but told us Pokémon don’t exist. We got around that by explaining to them that Pokémon were a type of Japanese fairy, and that very clever adults made a game out of the experiences they had with the Kami. Given the similarities in my experience between Kami and some fey like creatures, this explanation was not very far from my personal experience.

Exit Strategies

On a few occasions, the Pokémon either had a bad temperament, or a mutation/evolution produced a counter-productive species. This problem was rare, but easily dealt with. In some cases, the magician may just wish to not work with the Pokémon anymore.

Initially, we used the cards as one-way gateways that could “entice” a Pokémon to come to this world, but because it was like a hose the Pokémon could not return back.

We can use a simple ritual to imagine the Pokémon sliding back through the gateway. Again the magician should draw a circle around the card, and any unique sigils

for the Pokémon. The magician should clear their minds, relax and banish by their preferred method. They should state their intention to send a Pokémon back through the gateway. Using a sigilized mantra, empower the circle till you believe the circle can hold the Pokémon in its current state. One method for creating a circle would be to repeat a sigilized mantra you create using the intent “hold the Pokémon”. Project that energy into the circle while imagining it glowing or feeling the circle start to vibrate. Information on creating sigils and mantras is available in *Liber Null and Psychonaut* (Carroll, 1987). At this point, the magician should evoke the current form of the Pokémon and imagine it fully in the circle over any unique descriptions, sigils and the Pokémon card itself. The magician should, with their hand, make a vortex motion around the edge of the circle imagining that the card is acting as a large drain. With as many of your senses as you can, imagine the Pokémon getting sucked down the drain (not destroyed) that is the gateway. When the Pokémon is no longer present in the circle, destroy any unique descriptions and the original Pokémon card you used as the gateway. Close the ritual by banishing with your preferred method. It would be interesting to see if unique mutations in Pokémon show up in expansion packs for the game at some time in the future. I leave that as an exercise for the reader.

The Pokémon system is particularly good for learning to use familiar or elemental type spirits. Digimon and other similar systems will work, but these methods can work with any collectible card game where a spirit needs some sort of energy and can evolve. The framework is the same. Map the “energy” to your memories and experiences making sure to map the experiences to your senses. Use your imagination to recreate those sensory experiences and then project the energy out in contained space while focusing on “evoking” the spirit from the card. For the Pokémon

system, I found it more useful to entice them. In other card games, this may not work as well. Follow the idea of positive reinforcement and reward based energy feeding to develop an expectation of results. By using these simple techniques, you can have a tremendous amount of fun working with and getting results. If the magic isn't fun why do it?

PsyDuck, I choose you, well at least once I did.

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X-Box, Weed, and Magick

Cameron

I was about to practice magick and I didn't even realize it:

The weed I remove from the Romeo y Julieta cigar tube is very dry and breaks up easily as I roll it between my fingertips onto a stick-it note: no longer chronic, I've been

working on the same ¼ ounce for the past three months. I use the stick-it note to funnel a small amount into the nickel bowl of my handmade turkey bone pipe.

I wish I could say that I offer a silent prayer or acknowledgement to the gods before lighting up and smoking, but I don't. There is no opening ceremony nor will there be a closing. There is no banishment, no preparation, which in retrospect may have been a good idea, but then again those things might have made the whole working collapse.

I light up and inhale. Once, twice, and the dry green marijuana becomes grey ash. The familiar buzz sets on me almost immediately. The stress in my shoulders melts away but a cold knot forms in my stomach. My tolerance is low and the pot almost overpowers me. I begin some controlled breathing and sit on the floor; straight, in lotus, and take charge of the high. Finally I'm relaxed enough.

I pick up the X-Box controller and begin to play *Fable*, my favorite game. For those who are not familiar with it, *Fable* is a fantasy roleplaying game where the environment adapts to your character as he or she develops through gameplay. I like that there are consequences to every action you make in the game: Become a killer and people fear and avoid you, become a hero and people cheer and worship you when you walk into town. It's the best example of roleplaying I've ever encountered in a video game.

Maybe it's the weed, or maybe it's the game itself, but I end up immersing myself into playing more deeply than any attempt I've ever made at meditation. My internal dialogue politely shuts the fuck up so I can play in peace; my worries, problems, and thoughts are all pushed to the side by my True Will, which at that point is trying to rescue a lost child while fighting goblins and bandits bare-fisted and naked. My thoughts are focused completely on my character and the task at hand.

I play late into the night, smoking three or four more

bowls as I try to shape my character (named Cameron, of course) into becoming a better hero. Strong, brave, honourable, and impeccable: A true Castaneda style warrior, as I myself would like to be. Sometimes I get my ass handed to me as I bite off more than I can chew, but I can always “Try Again”. Truly, initiation never ends (Until the credits roll, that is, at least in this game, but even then, one can choose to continue on or start again). There are lessons and tricks to be learned and with patience and persistence, one can succeed in the game. You get out of it what you put in.

It's only the next day that I decide to perform some retroactive magick. I call myself a Chaos magickian, and by doing so I am risking offence to those others who perform Chaos magick: I'm a lazy magickian. I read copious volumes of “occult” literature, and I have a deep understanding of what I read, yet I've barely attempted the rituals. The times I have attempted some, I felt self conscious and foolish. It's even more difficult now, with my jobs and wife, to find some quiet time to actually *practice* magick. My journal-keeping record is horrendous, and any attempt at a magickal routine has never lasted more than a week. Any *true* magickian would most likely scoff and remark “that magick is a choice that one needs to commit to, regardless of the perceived costs”. I tell myself this, but still...I'd be such a disappointment to Aleister.

I am most definitely of the “fake it until you make it” school of thought...at least I follow some of Crowley's advice and attempt to make every action a magickal action, albeit sometimes retroactively. It occurred to me that when looked at from a certain angle, my night of pot-hazed gaming could easily be seen as, or twisted into, a ritual: I was focusing my will upon my character/avatar/godhead, attempting to imbue him/myself with the qualities I would most like to possess. I see it as being similar to asking for strength from Ogun, or Thor, or Hercules: Gaining Wisdom

from Thoth, or Odin, or Solomon.

It has been posited that Godheads can evolve or even be created. Certain qualities are attributed to certain gods who can then distribute those qualities to those who successfully petition them. Sometimes humans (Or animals, places, objects) are seen to embody a certain quality to such a degree that they themselves become Godheads. With imagination, you can pray to Bruce Lee for martial prowess, to Mother Theresa for piety, or even to Ché Guevara for tactical knowledge.

The idea struck me: When we pray to a Godhead, are we not actually looking externally for what lies latent within? We focus our thoughts on the Who (or What) that is perceived as (in our minds) the ultimate expression of *that which we wish for ourselves*; asking to be blessed, asking for a key to unlock our potential, or asking for power.

All the gods we can dream of lie within our hearts and minds, and all the qualities we endow them with and then ask of them are *ours* for the taking, *if* we are willing to work to obtain them. We can pray to Ganesha to remove the barriers to what stands between us and our heart's desire, but unless we put our own heads down and charge forth, those walls will never break. We can pray to Loki to give us the cunning and gall to get that promotion instead of the hard working co-worker who truly deserves the position, but unless we step up and prove our worthiness to the boss, we will remain in our dead end jobs. Praying is like a taking shot of liquid courage in a bar to help you meet that certain someone: it helps prepare you by removing the mental barriers, but it's not worth shit unless you follow through.

Praying, ritual, and meditation are tools used to prepare oneself for the work to achieve one's goals. So why not treat playing video games like meditation, ritual, or prayer? It's the *intent* that counts: when you empty your mind and focus your will on a goal, your X-Box becomes as potent a

tool as any in your magickal arsenal.

Think of playing a video game as a deeply intense visualization exercise with actual visual aids. You can actually “see” your Great Work unfolding before you: You search through the maze seeking the Magick Sword (Strength), you must overcome great odds to be rewarded with the Magick Wand (Knowledge, Wisdom), if it’s your heart’s desire, and if you work hard enough, you can even get the Princess. The potential for symbolic magickal metaphors is practically limitless: any game, through proper focus, can become sort of a personal tarot. You can treat the game as though you are creating a dynamic sigil; the life of your character then becomes a four dimensional “wish” etching itself onto your subconscious. Your desire is abstracted through the levels of the game. You are using the game atavistically, where your magickal self can be projected to seek out what you need or want. The actions of your character mirrors the steps you may need to achieve your goals; the game becomes your private macrocosm, writ in small to illuminate your path, in symbolic fashion.

That is how the idea to send a magickal working backwards in time came to me (This idea of retroactive magick did not merely dawn on me: I first encountered the possibility of it when reading Grant Morrison’s *The Invisibles*, who referenced Michael Bertiaux’s *Voudon Gnostic Workbook*, but finally decided to make my own go of it after reading an online review and description of Taylor Ellwood’s *Space/Time Magic*, which is still on my ‘to read’ list. These sources provided me with the inspiration that this type of magick could be performed, even though I really had no clue what I was doing.) the understanding that a video game could be used to focus my will. I want to be stronger. I tend to not stand up for myself as often as I should. I want to be braver. I try to face all my fears as best I can, but some demons are more tenacious than others, and I need help to overcome them. I want to be

honourable. I find it far too easy to lie to save face. I want to be impeccable. Under self scrutiny, I would wither in the face of those actions I've been too ashamed to admit to.

The archetype of the Noble Warrior, the Knight who is willing to make the greatest sacrifices in the name of Right, has always appealed to me. There should have been no great surprise that every time I played *Fable* I gravitated towards good, or Moral characters. Even the times I explored my darker side, my characters end up having a strong moral code.

Throughout all the times I played *Fable*, there was a thread, or a germ somewhere on the periphery of my awareness. There was an unanswered longing floating about without direction or focus. On that introspective day I made a magical decision: to unlock that germ and give meaning and direction to the subconscious underlying of my game play.

I performed a small informal ritual: I knelt in front of an eye level candle, rung a small bell, lit the candle, and asked for help from a *very* vague idea of the gods, spirits, ancestors, or whatever. (At this point, I was trying to come to terms with my atheist leanings and magick, but that's a story belonging elsewhere.) I began with the simple techniques I knew to clear my mind. I knew that I wished to turn all my wasted nights of pot and X-Box into something constructive, but I wasn't sure how. Maybe I was looking for an excuse, or apology to myself for being so self indulgent, but what I found instead were memories of many various heroes I've had in my life from Luke Skywalker to Bill Hicks to Wolverine. All my heroes are flawed, but have noble purpose, and they are tempered by experience. They were all creatures of concrete action where I was not. I began to think of Carlos Castaneda's Warrior Ideal and realized that I wanted to embody those qualities myself. When playing *Fable*, I was unknowingly externalizing something deep within.

At that moment I gave meaning to the hours I spent playing. There was a two way flow of time as I received a message from my past, almost smacking me off the side of my head, at the same time as I impregnating my past with meaning to be revealed to me at that very moment, and perhaps even to this moment, as I type. I felt a great rush followed by a swoon, and my ritual was over.

So has my retroactive spell traveled back in time to bring ritual meaning to an evening which initially held none? As clumsy and amateur as it was, I believe so. Analyzing my actions and redirecting my focus has made me take steps towards my avatar's goals: I take less shit. I am more critical of my weaknesses and take more steps towards erasing them. I am loathe to lie and I admit my mistakes more readily to others, finding forgiveness is more forthcoming and even when not granted, is better than the weight of guilt. I am more upright and straightforward in my own actions and more forgiving of others.

I am working on refining this magical technique. Every time I play video games now, I begin with a small prayer and banishment before I take the sacrament of marijuana. Of course weed isn't necessary, but I find it a useful tool, and it helps focus my thoughts on the work at hand. Set and setting are also important; I prefer a very dark room. That way the TV screen becomes my only visual focus. My mood needs to match my objective. If I've had a shitty, miserable day, and my goal is to be kinder to strangers, it's probably not the best time to attempt the working. (However, venting frustrations with an ultra-violent game can be great stress relief, but I wouldn't make a magical venture out of it...) The point is I now consciously direct my avatar to embody those qualities I wish to possess in *this* world.

I don't want to be *actively* aware that I am casting a sigil into the æther, as I may sabotage myself and not plunge as deeply as I need into the game. Losing myself in the

environment of the game is crucial. Playing the game becomes akin to automatic writing; my intent flows through me and then is reflected back at me through the screen, forming a sort of psychic feedback loop. The more my avatar acts out my will, the more I will begin to act as my avatar.

Afterwards, while remembering important aspects of the game and what I wish to achieve, I place a “sealing” charge on the sigil I’ve created. Sometimes I use sex while imagining myself as being in the game’s environment to achieve this. Sometimes I will act as my character when hiking in the woods all the while reminiscing about the game and the nature of my avatar... Whatever way I feel appropriate usually works. The important thing is that the sigil is dynamic: it can grow, change, and be built upon as long as the intent remains the same. Constantly charging it with intense emotion during visualization provides a fertile ground for it to take root.

As I’ve mentioned, I like to think of myself as a Chaos magickian, but perhaps that’s just a way for me to justify those few nights I like to smoke some weed and veg out with my X-Box. Personally, I think all that matters is the *intent*.

Cameron has been reading occult themed literature since he was 5 or 6 years old. He is now 36. He is somewhat of a dabbling dilettante on the threshold of becoming a full time magickian. In his other “professional” life he is somewhat of a dabbling dilettante on the threshold of becoming a writer. He was born in Montreal, Canada, has lived in Crewe, England, and has found a loving wife and cat in Ottawa, Canada.

[Creative Visualization and Pop Culture](#)

Daven

A couple years ago, I read the brouhaha about Taylor Ellwood's essay "Invoking Buffy" being stupid because it used a pop icon in magick. I had difficulty understanding why someone was having a problem using pop culture in magick. It was such a basic concept; Use special effects images from pop culture to enhance the ability to visualize the process and ultimately the desired end.

One of the biggest problems I have with new students of magick or meditation is that often they can't visualize the images when asked to do so. These students can't see a ball of light in their hand, a beam of light shooting at a target, a small ball hitting someone else's shields, or even the shell encasing them and keeping them safe. They can't creatively visualize the things that they need be able to see.

However, if you say something like, "Shoot that beam at your target like Iron Man would do," or, "See a force field around you like the Enterprise's Shields," ninety-nine percent of the time you will get a sudden flood of understanding and rapid compliance.

It's not hard to find examples of any esoteric visualization that has been done up for the mass media audience. Need to explain how to separate yourself from your body? Have your student sit down and watch *What the #\$!%* Do We Know!?* and pay special attention to the shots of a soul separating from the body. Need a concept for shooting lightning from your hands? What about watching *Nightmare on Elm Street 3*, *The Dream Warriors* or even *Return of the Jedi*? Need a visual of a clear sphere? I can't think of a better example than the contact juggling done in *Labyrinth*.

The truth is that most human beings are visually-oriented. Give us color, motion, shape, and depth, and we can imagine anything. The unfortunate side effect is that if we haven't seen it, it's normally very hard for us to visualize something. It is hard to conceive of the color red if you have never seen it. It's just as hard to conceive of a

laser beam shooting from the eyes if you haven't seen that either.

In pop culture, visual media takes the concept and shows it to everyone. While the laser beam heat vision from George Reeves's *Adventures of Superman* may be laughable next to the heat vision used by Tom Welling's *Smallville* Superman, the effect still inspires people to understand the concept that is needed.

When I was a little witch, I remember sitting in my parent's car while they were driving down the road, imagining a laser beam shooting from my fingertip. I pointed it out the window, and it skimmed just a few inches above the ground. It would completely cut any artificial substance it met. It cut down houses, signs, telephone poles, bicycles, cars, shops, and streets, but it didn't hurt people, animals, or plants. It was a good exercise for me, but I didn't realize the significance of it until much later.

I would never have come up with that concept except for a James Bond movie where a laser beam was about to cut him in half. Had I not seen that laser beam, I may not have thought of that practice. After I saw it, I could think of little else. I must have done that particular exercise every day for 10 or 12 years, and I still occasionally do it to this day.

Pop culture and the visuals created by pop culture media aren't bad; they are useful tools. They don't become bad unless that is all you exist in and with, or until those concepts are all that you focus on. Being a fan of *Star Trek* is acceptable until you become engaged to be married to the Enterprise, but using the Phaser concept for a magickal visual of projected energy at someone else is absolutely fine in my opinion.

The fact remains that special effects have come a long way in making the visuals that magickians rely on accessible to those who don't have an ultra creative mind. It's easy to come up with a concept, but sometimes it is very hard to think of the steps to bring it to pass, and when

those steps include visual concepts, the matter becomes even more complex.

I would advise anyone who is teaching to have a good repertoire of TV shows and movies that show in good clear visuals what you are trying to do. It can be as simple as “Think of the lightsaber” or “put up a force field” to “see a blue unicorn from that commercial” or “see ribbons of light shooting out and solidifying around the target like in the transformation sequence from *Sailor Moon*.”

Make sure that the people you are talking to can relate to that visual cue you are using as well. It does no good to describe the floating glyphs of light from *The Dresden Files* (as shown in the TV series) if the person you are talking to has never seen it.

Spend some time while you are relaxing to see if you can find a visual you can use. There have been times when I was having trouble visualizing a strong clear image, until I found one while watching T.V. or playing a game. I was finally able to find a special effect that worked perfectly for what I had been trying and failing to see. For example, the sword I use on the Astral Plane was described as being a blue sword, glowing with the same shade as my aura. I wasn't really able to visualize it like I wanted, and then I realized that the Blue Lightsaber effect from Star Wars was a perfect visual for what I was trying to see in my mind.

It's very easy to fall into a pattern of not tweaking these visuals for yourself. It's great that you found the transformation sequence in *An American Werewolf in London* to be perfect for your Astral shifting, but take that basic sequence and impose your own customization on it. You don't have to have the ichor dripping and the screams and the hair growing as slowly as is shown. Take liberties with the visual and personalize it.

I have found it very hard to convert a visual I see in third person perspective as a watcher of a story into a first person perspective as it happens to me. I can see the Shields go up

on the USS Reliant, but it is very hard to see the shields go up around me in the same manner. Be very careful not to fall into the trap of only seeing it from a watcher's perspective.

Also, keep your references up to date. It's fantastic if you have a classic reference like a lightsaber to describe something that you have in mind, but it's useless when you use the candy coating shower reference from the original M&Ms commercial to describe another concept since it's unlikely that your audience will remember that visual at all.

Over time, it is likely that your reference visual will change, and that's alright. As more updated, accurate, or digitally enhanced visuals come out in our culture, you should update those reference visualizations to what you are using now. Above all, the visualizations you use should be relevant and of use to you. It shouldn't matter to anyone else what visualizations you use to "see" your magick taking effect.

Daven is an ordained High Priest whose ministry is online only. He is the owner of Daven's Journal (<http://davensjournal.com>) and all of his writings on metaphysics and religion eventually end up there. He has been studying magick and metaphysics since he was 4 years old. He's 40 now. He writes a number of articles for various online publications and reviews books for several publishers. This is his third contribution to a printed book.

The Critical Value of Magical Thinking

Patrick Dunn

Magic embarrasses me.

I imagine no other artists are embarrassed about their work. When a painter has a showing, he doesn't have to explain with a sheepish look "it's about . . . painting." Or

when a musician writes a song, she doesn't have to say "Well, it's about . . . music, but you know, not like weird music." Yet when people ask me what I'm writing these days, I am struck dumb. I sometimes just say "poetry," which is true, but incomplete. At dinner parties, I make a joke of it. "My books? They're about the occult," I say, wiggling my fingers as if casting a spell. "You know, magic. Spooky stuff."

I'm embarrassed because I live a double life: academic and magician. As an academic, I am a hard-boiled skeptic. I refuse to accept an idea until I have seen the reasoning, and "show me the data" is my motto – I'm more rigorous, in fact, than most other people in literary studies. I teach critical thinking not just about literature but about a wide range of topics, covering culture, philosophy, and even the occasional science.

I find myself similarly embarrassed when the topic of pleasure-reading comes up. Nearly every English professor, I imagine, feels this kind of embarrassment. "What are you reading right now?" "Um, DeLillo," we might say, when a more honest answer would be "George R. R. Martin." I was at a faculty party some time ago, and a psychology professor and I fell to talking about our guilty pleasures. "I love reading...self-help books!" she whispered. This embarrassment illuminates the seemingly rigid barrier between high and low culture. Some books seem appropriate for scholars. Others, not. Yet popular or low culture is popular for a reason: popular culture can be as complex and sophisticated as any opera. Yet the dichotomy and embarrassment still exist and persist. The difference between "popular" and "high" culture parallels a difference in ways of thinking -- critical and magical.

Critical thinking is a method of ordering thoughts in order to arrive at true conclusions. For example, recently I voted in my state's primaries. I listed out the candidates, noted their positions, and compared their positions to a

ranked list of my own positions and values. I selected those candidates who most accurately matched my own positions and values. Similarly, when faced with contrary positions, I look up data and analyze the positions, comparing them to my own objectively to determine which position I should cleave to. Sometime, I change opinions because of this critical thinking; one of the hallmarks of critical thinking is the willingness to change on the basis of fresh observation.

Rhetoricians often place critical thinking in opposition to magical thinking. Magical thinking is the belief that our actions have causal links that they do not physically have. A symbol of a thing might stand for that thing, or an object might be accorded powers of “luck” or “bad luck.” If I wash my car, and drive home in a sudden downpour, magical thinking might suggest that washing my car made it rain. A critical thinker would identify no causal connection between washing my car and a sudden rain shower. After all, simply because two things happen together does not mean one causes the other. And even if that were the case, we cannot deduce a law of nature based on one piece of data. The critical thinker points out that the method of magical thinking leads to conclusions that are false, and sometimes downright pernicious.

Just as scholars of high culture assume it to be “better” than popular culture, so proponents of critical thinking believe it to be superior to magical thinking. What they fail to specify is in which areas it is superior. If predicting the weather, it would be ineffectual to rely entirely on the dustiness of one’s car as an indicator. And magical thinking in other areas *can* be dangerous — for example, the belief that allegedly drove certain people in Africa to try to cure their AIDS through a ritual that involved non-consensual and unprotected sex. In critical thinking, magical thinking is defined as a fallacy, a fundamental error in reasoning, and in some cases, it certainly seems to be.

But magical thinking is not just bad critical thinking.

What critical thinking decries as magical thinking is often a straw man — magical thinking done incorrectly. The scientific method has greater predictive and explanatory power — but the magical method is not useless. The method of critical thinking we call the scientific method is useful in areas where causality governs — most of the physical world. In other places, however, cause and effect aren't as relevant.

The appropriate uses of magical thinking involve the investigation of the non-causal. Where in critical thinking and science we can claim “correlation does not imply causation” (a fact some scientists forget, especially in the fields of neurology, I've noticed), in magical thinking we can claim “correlation implies pattern.” When two things occur together, in magical thinking, it means something — not always that one caused the other, but that one is related to the other. Ramsey Dukes (2002) explains how magical thinking might lead to a conclusion that is true to facts in his *SSOTBME*. There, he describes how a “scientific” thinker might conclude that wood must be dry to burn because evaporation of water will lower the temperature of the wood below that of combustion. A “magical” thinker might come to the same conclusion arguing that fire and water are contrary elements and will contend against each other. There's a pattern between wetness and dryness, water and fire, and between emotions as well. Feeling sympathy (a “water” emotion) for someone will counteract feelings of anger (a “fire” emotion), just as water will put out fire. From one correlation we perceive a pattern of correspondences, a web of synchronicity. To make such an intuitive leap with the scientific method requires much more data, and the physics of combustion have nothing to do, they would say, with the psychology of emotion.

The conclusions of science are more precise and reliable than the intuitive leaps of magic. But at the same time, science finds itself impotent in the face of the holistic

world. To investigate anything, the scientific method requires operationalization of terms, isolation of variables, and a standardized method. This scientific method is useful for a variety of natural phenomena, but it always leads to approximation from inductive reasoning. Because no variables in reality are ever completely isolated, every scientific conclusion is false-to-facts, just as a “critical thinking” might claim for magical thinking.

Operationalizations are nothing other than abstractions invented to soothe the bumpy progress of measurement. Abstractions are always false; they never perfectly describe reality.

The Ideologies of Method

What many scientific or critical thinkers fail to recognize is that the way we think is not value-neutral. Critical thinking is not free of ideology. It promotes a set of ideas about how we can know the world, and what the world actually is. Critical thinking seems to assume that the world is material; however, from a philosophical standpoint, the world’s substance is not a settled question. In fact, from a scientific perspective, the assumption of a material universe with Newtonian laws has occasionally proven counterproductive. The behaviors of very large and very small objects do not seem to obey Newton’s laws, and therefore we need both relativity and quantum mechanics to explain them. Similarly, the world does not consist entirely of matter, and therefore we need both critical or scientific thinking, and magical thinking, to explain it.

The attitude toward popular culture, like the attitude toward magic, also grows out of ideology. The complex forces that shape the “intellectual” response to popular culture are too tangled to unravel here, but simply put, the advocate of “high” culture has something to protect — a position, self-respect, or respect for an ideal — that popular

culture might threaten. The response of popular culture, however, is often more nuanced. For example, a sitcom might criticize professionals and intellectuals, but in the end offer the ambiguous message that it's best, after all, to listen to authority when it knows what it is talking about. In other words, where the intellectual "high culture" is nervous in the presence of popular culture, popular culture speaks back to high culture in diverse dialects, from diverse ideologies, and with diverse and even self-contradictory claims.

Magical thinking, like popular culture, is both ubiquitous and polyvocal. It represents many voices. On one end, a magician may assert that radical skepticism of all systems, whether scientific, religious, or magical — and at the same time, this same magician appeals to traditional Hoodoo "tricks," or Hebrew divine names, or the geometrical patterns of Hermetic magic. I've met magicians who speak eloquently for religious agnosticism during the day yet, at night, they pray over their alembics. These religious-agnostic-chemists aren't hypocrites, any more than a sitcom is a hypocrite for simultaneously suggesting we respect and ridicule doctors.

Just as popular culture is not bad culture, but different culture, so magical thinking is not bad thinking, necessarily. Obviously, magical thinking can be done badly — so can critical thinking. One can do damage with magical thinking, living a fanatical and hyper-superstitious life. At the same time, one can do great good with it, achieving insight and real positive change.

Toward a Method of Magical Thinking

Popular culture borrows from the high culture, taking plots from Shakespeare and Wagner, characters from myth, or musical patterns from Beethoven. Similarly, if we wish to outline how to do magical thinking responsibly, we can

start with critical thinking.

For example, critical thinking relies on the importance of confirmation. One of the things I like to do with my class is make a wild claim — something like, “67% of all teenagers report getting drunk before the age of sixteen. How can we explain that statistic?” After letting the debate rage for twenty minutes or so, between those who suggest a break-down in social order and those who suggest an excessively restrictive society that that drives teens to drink, I’ll interrupt to point out that one way of explaining the statistic is that I just made it up. And, in fact, I did. Then I’ll ask them why they trusted me. “You’re the professor!” True. Does that mean I’m incapable of being wrong or even lying? Authority means nothing in critical thinking — only ideas matter, and they stand or fall on their own, regardless of who says them or when.

Magical thinking relies on a different kind of confirmation. Magical ideas stand or fall, not based on who says them, not based on tradition, but on personal resonance with experience. What we “feel” is true isn’t necessarily, but what matches our experience in an aesthetic, not empirical sense, has a kind of magical truth. It’s dangerous to walk down the road of “everyone has his or her own truth,” but in magic, everyone has his or her own *aesthetic* experience of ineffable truth. For me, God manifests through the ten emanations of the Tree of Life. Not “really” in the critical thinking sense, but “really” in the sense that this Qabalistic and neoplatonic description of experience matches my own – at times.

Critical thinking employs logic. A critical thinker uses an inductive syllogism with steady awareness of its drawbacks. If a critical thinker says “I have seen ten thousand swans, and none of them were black,” he or she will not conclude “there are no black swans.” The best a critical thinker will conclude is “at this stage in my investigation, I’ve never seen a black swan.” As he or she

collects more data, he or she will become more certain, arriving at an asymptotic certainty in the nonexistence of black swans, but never absolute truth. A critical thinker is comfortable with that.

A magical thinker, however, reasons by logic *and* by intuition. A magical syllogism, if I can dare to construct one, will look insane from a critical standpoint: “I saw a white swan yesterday standing to my left and facing the sun. Therefore, my presentation at work will go badly unless I address my superior directly.” How is this not superstition? The simple answer is, superstition is a magical syllogism that isn’t true. Depending on circumstances, however, a magical syllogism might be true or false, while remaining exactly the same. After all, where critical thinking relies on abstraction, the magician recognizes that the swan I see Tuesday isn’t the same bird I saw Monday — nor does it mean the same thing if it is, because I’m not the same observer.

Magical thinking is heavily context dependent, while critical thinking is context independent. We can ignore extraneous data in critical thinking, and in fact, should. Another critical thinking exercise I do with my students is lecture them on the dangers of cigarettes while having a pack sitting on the edge of my desk, as if by accident. Someone will eventually mention that I apparently smoke (actually, I don’t), and therefore am a hypocrite. “Yes,” I said. “I’m a hypocrite. Does that make smoking suddenly stop causing cancer?” Of course not. What I do or do not do doesn’t impact on the truth or falsity of what I say, unless I’m making claims about what I personally do.

Yet in magic, we cannot so easily ignore context. In fact, where critical thinking is analytic, magical thinking is synthetic. We combine data that seems erroneous to arrive at new ideas, all seemingly unrelated to the original data. To the outsider, this process looks like the madness of the artist, perhaps, or just plain madness. After all, if I need

extra money, it doesn't make a lot of logical sense for me to talk to a little clay doll I keep in a drawer in my altar. The doll does not causally connect to money or any means of getting money. But that little clay doll is aesthetically connected to a whole host of ideas and events, and I find that after talking to my little fetish doll, I rarely fail to come across an unexpected bit of cash.

Perhaps the biggest difference is this: critical thinking is linear, while magical thinking is nonlinear and metaphoric. Critical thinking suggests X, therefore Y. Magical thinking suggests X, Y, and Z, all connected in subtle and not immediately obvious ways. Pull on Z, and you'll jiggle Y. Yank on X, and who knows? You might create Q. Critical thinking relies on the Aristotelian Law of Identity: A is A. Magical thinking relies on the metaphor: A is B. The identity is always true: A is always A. The metaphor is always false: A is not, in fact, B. But A is B in *some* sense. "Jim is Jim" is critical thinking. "Jim is a shallow stream" is magical thinking. Critical thinking warns us away from such labels. For example, in critical thinking, it's unwise even to label Jim as a Republican, because we might miss some important data about Jim. A critical thinker, faced with "Jim is a shallow stream" might translate the metaphor: "Jim apparently speaks a lot (for some value of 'a lot') yet says very little of import (for some value of 'important' and 'little')." That's admirable thinking, actually — it encourages us to observe Jim more mindfully.

Magical thinking, however, would engage "Jim is a shallow stream" not as a mere metaphor, but might very well extend it into the realm of pataphor. A pataphor is a metaphor treated as if it is literally true — a metaphor treated as an identity. A magical thinker who wishes to influence Jim (say, cure him of a nasty boil) might prepare the magical talisman and leave it in a shallow stream, a little watercourse. The metaphor of "Jim is a stream" becomes not just metaphorical, but real.

I said earlier that magical thinking, like critical thinking, can go wrong. Bad magical thinking is characterized by similar failures as bad critical thinking. Where bad critical thinking provides us with a skewed map of the world, bad magical thinking leaves us believing the map is the territory.

For example, if we believe that the ten sephiroth of the Quabala are the only valid map of the universe, and all others are wrong or even insidious, we'll find our experiences limited to those consistent with this model. This way lies fanaticism and self-righteousness. Many magicians fall into this, for nearly any model: some insist on spirits doing everything; others cannot imagine anything that's not "energy" or "mana."

The other extreme of bad magical thinking is the vacant-eyed, spacey-faced "whatever's right for you, dear," approach. This second approach is almost worse than the fanatic, because it's not just bad magical thinking, it's bad magic. Aesthetic, in the magical sense, doesn't mean "whatever you happen to think is pretty." It means "whatever works consistently with the symbolic system you're using."

Obviously, magical thinking as I've outlined it, or as you develop yourself, will require discipline and self-honesty, just as critical thinking does.

But You Believe in Magic?

I'm still embarrassed.

I actually, honestly believe that I can go home and do a ritual and have some sort of unlikely coincidence happen in my day-to-day life, consistent with the symbols employed in that ritual. I believe this mostly because I've done it, again and again, since childhood.

I cannot prove it. I can point to my life, lay out my experiences, but none of those constitute proof in the

critical thinking sense.

To prove it in the sense of critical thinking or the scientific method involves adopting the ideology of those systems: an ideology of materialism, a context-independent ideology, and a system of knowledge based on the logical identity rather than metaphor. I have no problem adopting those ideologies long enough to investigate, for example, the use of the definite article in some language or other. And I wouldn't presume to try to publish a paper on some scientific question that uses pataphor — the idea makes me smile. That's what crazy people do.

Crazy doesn't mean not having the right ideology. It means, adopting a method with an ideology that inherently denies the very thing you're claiming. Science cannot investigate magic, not just because "it won't work in a lab" (although, I suspect, it won't — the magician's laboratory is the universe, and it's hard to find a control universe). Science and critical thinking fall short in investigating magic because they assume an ontological and epistemological position contrary to that assumed by magic. It'd be as if a rabid Marxist were put in charge of Sunday mass. When a Marxist sees religion, he or she sees only what Marxist ideology allows him or her to see. Similarly, when a scholar of high culture hears, for example, rock and roll, he or she hears only what the ideology of high culture allows: noise and confusion. But when a Catholic sees mass, he or she sees the body and blood of Christ, and when I hear rock and roll, I detect complexity underneath the simplicity, harmony under the noise.

Is there a way to stand in both worlds, though? Is there a way to exist comfortably with a foot in the critical thinking that's useful in much of our day-to-day life, and the magical thinking that's so integral and so necessary to our soul's life? I'd say yes, just as it's possible for me to read T. S. Eliot or James Joyce, and follow them with a rousing

bit of science fiction. And the answer to how to do that is the same: when reading T. S. Eliot and James Joyce, I'm looking for one kind of thing. When reading science fiction, I'm looking for others. Watching opera and watching "Will and Grace" require a different set of expectations and goals: different, but related, methods.

But I'd be misleading if I suggest that the line between critical thinking and magical thinking is firm. One of the advantages of the postmodern approach to magic that I talk about in my books is the ability to move easily between worlds and modes of thinking. Just as the line between popular and high culture is permeable, and bits of high culture inform popular culture, and vice versa, so the line between critical and magical thinking is permeable. Yes, I perform a ritual to contact an angel. But then I sit down and write down the experience so I can think critically about it afterwards. I approach magic with the skepticism of a scholar, but I also approach it looking for the resonance of experience. And, to be honest when I do scholarly research, I wait eagerly for that little flash of intuition or inspiration of the magician.

I don't think I'm alone in that, and I think if I could give most scientists a spot of good brandy and get them talking, they'd admit to waiting for, expecting, even invoking that inspiration themselves. And that makes us all magicians — sane and crazy, high and low culture, in academia and out of it. In that case, what need for embarrassment could there be?

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His first book on the occult, *Postmodern Magic: The Art of Magic in the Information Age*, was published in 2005 by Llewellyn. His second book, *Magic Power Language Symbol: A Magician's Exploration of Linguistics*, was published in August of 2008. It concerns the use of language and symbols in magic, both theoretically and practically.

Building Your Pop Culture Toolkit

Vince Stevens, I.S.U.A.G.

I confess that I have an ambiguous relationship with popular culture, both as a magician and in general. On one hand I find myself tired of information-free, shallow cultural ephemera designed to separate people from their money, time, and critical thought. On the other hand, a lot of popular culture can be stimulating, produce shared experiences, and just be fun. I find that popular culture requires some careful navigation to find fulfilling things (or just plain fun), and avoid useless distraction or waste of money (or at least unfulfilling waste of money).

All of that being said, one of the factors that has to be acknowledged about popular culture is that we're immersed in it - it is popular *culture*, something we share with others and something that affects our worldview. It is part of our conversations, part of our shopping habits, part of our politics, part of our language - and part of our thoughts. Unless you want to live completely away from the culture you're born in (as appealing as that may be to some, especially when one has to deal with, say, obsessive sports fans), you'll have to have some familiarity with pop culture elements.

We rely on the thoughts, feelings, and emotions we invoke in our activities, be it to probe spiritual realms, be receptive to divination, or enter alternate states of

consciousness. Because our popular cultural experiences do produce powerful feelings, images, and associations we might as well put them to use in our magic. Not only are the associations there, but I find it useful as a way to improve the efficiency of one's life - take that pop culture knowledge and put it to work.

The use of popular culture in magic is an area that I find produces, to say the least, diverse reactions. Chaos magic has a long history of using pop cultural references (as Phil Hine notes in *Condensed Chaos*, he even did magic using Narnia characters), but I find that the idea of using popular culture in magic does make some people uncomfortable - it can seem ridiculous, shallow, or hint at a disconnect from reality. After all, it may seem strange to invoke Batman as a way to develop insight into solving a mystery because it suggests the idea that the invoker considers Batman to be as real as an actual person. A quick surf of the internet can usually find obsessive fans taking their pop culture too seriously.

However, Magic isn't an easily classifiable thing. Magical systems by necessity are widely-encompassing, and the use of pop cultural imagery does not suggest the magician is taking the reality of the magical work to be the same as a reality of their neighbor mowing their lawn - merely that the imagery has significance. Pop cultural forces rally thought and emotion into our magic, and thus produce results. However one approaches magic, connection, association, and reactions of the mage are what is needed to tap into whatever forces really are "out there."

Thus, though I rarely do "hard" pop culture magic of invoking characters, I can easily see that Batman is an aspect of the Avenging Son - and thus taps into the same forces "out there" that the imagery and legend of Horus does. Sailor Moon can be seen as a mercurial lunar goddess reinterpreted. The Dukes of Hazzard are a classic yin-yang pair of rational and irrational - Apollonian and Dionysian,

and Uncle Jessie the classic wise-man archetype, hearkening back to Nessus.

Using popular culture, with a bit of analysis, is not as strange as it may seem, some irrational and obsessive fans aside. I find that to use it well, however, it's best to take an organized approach. You can determine what you can and can't use, and what you feel comfortable with as part of your magical system. Popular culture is like having a poorly organized toolbox, but one you can sort to find the tools you need.

In fact, taking an organized approach lets you use the pop culture associations without, frankly, feeling a bit ridiculous. There's a certain magic to sitting down rationally and carefully looking at magical uses of ideas that makes invoking Radar O' Reilly from M.A.S.H. less likely to make you stop in the middle of a ritual and ask "what the HELL am I doing?" That is always important.

So, let's find out how to clean up your pop culture toolkit.

Before We Sort the Tools

I'm going to walk through a series of ways to organize your pop culture knowledge, associations, and interests for magical use. I'll be addressing this in categories mostly related to senses to provide some organization and suggestions. I find that it's helpful to find what areas of your "toolbox" you need, have resources in, or work best in. It also lets you find a comfort level with using pop culture imagery. I will of course be maintaining a rational tone to avoid the "what the Hell" reaction. The gnosis of feeling ridiculous isn't the easiest one to use for magic.

Visual Tools

Visualization is a primary tool of magicians - few indeed are the rituals or activities that don't at least partially

involve the visual imagination. Popular culture also provides us a wealth of visual stimuli and imagery, and is a prime source of things to add to your magical toolbox. Pop culture, simply, gives us WAYS to visualize things, making it very valuable.

Consider strong visual imagery from popular culture. Massive ray blasts and glowing force fields in science fiction. Strange and evocative art styles and film techniques in independent films. Think to yourself of the rich visual experiences you've had. You may even want to make a list.

Now ask yourself about magical activities you engage in, both common and unique to your work. What do they involve? Circles of protection seal off an area. Banishings may involve powerful gates or repelling energies. Evocations may open a gate.

Finally, see where the magical activities are best visualized using visual elements and styles in popular culture that you find evocative and appropriate. Some examples:

A protective circle could be like your favorite science fiction force field.

An invoked creature may be visualized not just normally, but stylistically - a spirit to seek out a troublemaker could be invoked with a hard-edged film noir visualization. A trickster could use the cartoon style of "Ren and Stimpy"

An exorcism could look like a spectacular explosion from an action film.

A summoning may open a gate for a creature to come through - straight out of a fantasy film (why, not, for instance, a Wardrobe?)

Visual tools derived from popular culture are among the easiest to find - mostly as we're visual creatures.

Personal Example: I'm a fan of anime, and I find that some of the styles of anime and videogames are excellent tools of visualization. The blazing, spectacular attacks of a combat anime are excellent for providing ideas of how to visualize wards or exorcisms. Fantastical anime styles are also excellent for visualizing supernatural creatures - and comedic styles are useful for other kinds of entities.

Auditory Tools

Auditory popular culture tools are a bit more difficult to derive than visual stimuli if only because if visual stimuli are pervasive, they're also obvious. Auditory stimuli are prevalent, but as creatures of language, we often mix the importance of auditory and verbal expression. On the plus side, identifying useful auditory pop culture tools often means finding tools that are very, often surprisingly, stimulating - as anyone who knows the effect of words and music can tell you.

Auditory tools are also harder to derive than visual tools because, again, we're used to them to the point that we don't think of them. Here are the basic categories I've found:

Music: A primary source of auditory tools is music. We've all got a favorite song or tune, or even a band. You can easily find music that is useful for ritual or meditation. I do however recommend avoiding the use of a song with lyrics unless you're very sure the lyrics fit your intention and association.

However, if you do use lyrical songs, also consider the possibility of singing it yourself and modifying the words - "filking" as it's called in the science-fiction community. You can take a song with some appropriate associations, and improve or modify it to fit your magical needs. This also provides the ability to personalize it - and the work that entails increases the associations in your mind.

Voices: A good actor's voice can work a magic all its own. So consider "appropriating" the voices or vocal style of characters and actors for your magical work. Can you sound like a specific character during an invocation? Or do you want to grant a particular character a voice that you've discovered in your popular culture indulgences?

Again, you may want to be careful in picking stimuli that work, but don't distract. You may wish to associate a cynical sounding voice with a servitor, but if it makes you think too much of Doctor Cox from *Scrubs*, then it's no good to you.

Sounds: This is an area I find is the most beneficial for pop culture work. Much as our visual work involves deciding what things look like, we also need to "visualize" what they sound like. Your wards can crackle with a menacing electric hum out of a *Frankenstein* film. A spell for speed can be cast while imagining the sounds of engines revving in a race - or the instrumental of the "Speed Race" theme. An exorcism's energies can sound like any ray gun or laser blast from your preferred science-fiction film.

You can of course combine the visual stimuli from popular culture with the auditory. Whether you want to take ideas from the same sources (such as the same show or genre) is up to what works for you.

Personal Example: I get ideas from videogames and anime, which often provide rather wild and useful sound effects for my works. I also find the sound effects of epic films, such as *Lord of the Rings*, with great, echoing, booming sounds, provide an excellent "style guide" to imagining auditory effects.

Olfactory and Taste Tools

Visual and auditory imaging is a large part of magic, but despite our love of incense, magicians often forget the role of smell and even taste in magic. We have some standard

incense, maybe partake of the offerings, and that's it. Food, in my experience, gets ignored even more.

But smell and taste are deep, visceral, powerful stimuli, senses we share with the crudest of life forms on Earth's shaky evolutionary ladder. Anyone who ever found the right perfume or ate that perfect slice of pizza knows the sheer power of these stimuli. In magic, of course, powerful stimuli and associations rally our minds and bodies to produce magical results, and thus taste and smell are well worth paying attention to.

Popular culture and such experiences are a wonderful source of finding olfactory and taste oriented magical tools. There's an array of foods we associate with various things, candies, chips, merchandise, scents, and more. In fact, the hardest part is, much like auditory stimuli, olfactory and taste stimuli are so part of our lives we miss their importance.

I find that using popular culture food and scent associations is not very organized. Because of its visceral nature, you have to go find what works for you, and that requires a mix of self-analysis and playing around with ideas. It also means what works for you may not work for other people - while they find nag champa works for a ritual, the same ritual works for you if you eat a cheeseburger.

The results, however, are rewarding. You can find triggers that have deep, primal reactions.

Personal Examples: I've used popular associations and foods quite a bit in my magical work:

In developing an exorcism strongly associated with the element of fire, I found myself thinking of my favorite fiery foods - curries and barbeque chips. After some thought, I found eating my favorite barbeque chips before doing the work was an excellent way to set the mood.

Jelly Bellies are an amazing magical tool. Coming in so many colors and flavors, you can almost always find a set of tastes that fit a ritual you're doing. Also, for offerings for deities where a candy is appropriate, you have a wide range to choose from.

Energy drinks. I fully confess that my favorite sacrament for gods of communication, such as Hermes, is Red Bull.

Pop Culture Correspondences

Sensory associations and imaginations are fairly obvious uses of popular culture elements. However, another major part of magic is association - correspondence tables, associations, and more. Few are the magicians who haven't vaguely imagined how their favorite show or novels map to the Sephiroth, elements, or more. I can also confess having spent several hours, on a lark, analyzing the names of the characters of Full Metal Alchemist with Gematria (translating the name Ed Elric into pseudo-Hebrew was less than fun).

However, I find that these mapping exercises are not just fun or amusing (though they are an excellent magical party game). They're also thought-provoking and useful to explore how you associate elements in your life with your magical universe. My previous sections dealt with organizing your pop culture toolbox by senses, think of this one as organizing your thoughts.

EXERCISE 1: Take your favorite television, book, or other series, and map the characters in it to your preferred magical system, such as the Sephiroth or 7 planets. Think over this very carefully and take your time. Get out and reread those old references.

Ask yourself why you made what choices you did. It's a great way to understand your OWN understanding of your

magical system.

EXERCISE 2: Now begin mapping other pop culture sources to your chosen system - I recommend using at least eight, and as many as you possibly want.

When done, start looking at the characters you've mapped to the same symbol/association and ask how they're similar and what that tells you. In what way are the five characters you mapped to Mars similar? You mapped certain characters to Geburah - what does that say about the characters you mapped to Chesed? Why did you map certain similar characters to the element of Earth?

These kinds of exercises are surprisingly useful despite their seemingly odd or merely playful nature. It often lets you find archetypal patterns among characters, fiction, and popular culture.

EXERCISE 3: If the magical system you use is associated with various deities, spirits, and angels, see how they correspond to the mappings you've done above. What characters seem to embody particular deities?

Self Example: I prefer to use the Eight Trigrams as a magical system, and thus mapped some of the cast of the (in)famous plot-padding laden ninja-action-drama anime Naruto. What started as a lark actually told me a lot about how I associated with the symbols, and also that I had some odd correspondences that surprised me (such as realizing how well some paired/opposed characters mapped to my mind). It led me to many useful speculations on cultural concepts, archetypal characters, and how I thought about things.

I also did an extensive, initially humorous, mapping of a large amount of TV show characters to the classic Western-

occult five elements - air, earth, water, fire, and spirit. What started as a joke quickly had me thinking. Among amusing findings:

I associated the following characters with Fire: Fred Flintstone, Captain Kirk, and Harry for Harry Potter - then realizing they were all, in a way, classic “fiery” males - passionate, at times temperamental, and territorial. To an extent, they are like passionate and paternal Zeus.

Associating Velma of Scooby Doo, Sailor Mercury of Sailor Moon, Hermione of Harry Potter with Air led me to take a deeper look at the “Smart Girl” archetype I see in various cultures.

“Spirit” was the element I often associated with sidekicks, mascots, and mentor characters. This led me to an unexpectedly sincere discussion of how these characters are A) similar, and that B) Radar O’Reilly and Scooby Doo are similar in that they are sidekicks who detect things before others do.

And, yes, these were also useful in late-night rambling conversations that often ended in disturbing silences as we contemplated issues like this. Those are worth the entertainment value alone.

Substitute Imagery

Another use of pop culture is finding actual material items that are useful in rituals. If you work with the correspondence suggestions above, this is very easy. If you need an icon, ritual item, idol, etc. and don’t have one available, consider the possibility of using a pop cultural element instead - if only for a temporary solution.

Though it may seem a bit silly to some (“I don’t have a Persephone statuette, but Daphne from Scooby Doo DOES

get kidnapped a lot...”), once you’ve built up some associations from the above exercises, it can be surprisingly easy. When you find the depth of feelings, when the associations make sense to you, the idea that your pop culture image, icon, or totem isn’t meaningful passes.

I would recommend that you not use this as a way to save money unless that’s truly needed. Obsessing over money in your occult work can be distracting and affect your intent.

Personal Example: In a rather amusing finding, I found a personally-preferred deity of mine had been reinterpreted in a Japanese anime. Unable to find an appropriate statuette, I merely sought out an action figure of the character in question. It was a distant association, but as it turned out to be a character I liked, it worked well.

Conclusion

I hope this essay has shown you how you have a ready-made, if possibly disorganized, set of pop-culture imagery and associations you can use in your magical work. It takes a bit of commitment to use what you’ve got in your head already, but it’s usually worth it. Just get over some of the sense that popular culture may be shallow or useless, and find the deep associations important to you. We’ve got years of pop culture in our heads. We might as well use it.

Vince Stevens is an IT Project Manager and experimental mage who lives on the west coast of the United States. He has engaged in both his technical, meditative, and magical interests for over twenty years in an admittedly erratic, if enjoyable manner. His major focus is the use of magical, meditative and psychological practices to develop a completely integrated, magical life. For recreation he plays video games, works on websites, and speaks on various issues.

When Not Becomes Pop

Michael Szul

Grant Morrison, quirky comic book writer extraordinaire, has been the single most influential writer in the postmodern occult movement, simply because of two works: a comic book (*The Invisibles*) and a short essay (*Pop Magic!*). But these were not his greatest achievements. His greatest achievement, by far, has been to turn the world of mythology and religion on its head, warping mythos and archetypal beliefs, while bleeding the ancient gods into the current magical consciousness, as well as into the lifeblood of pop culture.

What do I mean when I say postmodern magic; and how does this differ from its parent: chaos magic? In an article for *Konton Magazine*, I made this claim:

The distinction between chaos [magic] and postmodern [magic] (though admittedly a distinction that many argue against) lies in the [magician's] interpretation of the mundane material at their exposure. Chaos [magic] is famous for using anything in [magic]. Why evoke a spirit when one can just as easily evoke Mickey Mouse, or invoke the qualities of Batman. Nothing is true; everything is permitted. Postmodern [magic] is a subtle yet distinct shift from this perspective. Simply using the example of walking up the stairs, note that a chaos [magician] would think: how I can use walking up the stairs in my [magic]? On the contrary, a postmodern [magician] would look at that act and proclaim: walking up the stairs *is* [magic]. (2005, p. 26).

It is important to understand what postmodern magic is because the bleed between traditional occult thought and the postmodern occultural philosophy often occurs during the emergence of pop culture. Morrison, with his thoughts on the Dow Jones as a grimoire, his *fake it 'til you make it*

proclamation and his advocacy of sigil magic - combined with masturbatory pop cultural references - was the herald of the postmodern magician. *The Invisibles* was an ode to punk rock and James Bond pop culture, while living inside the pop cultural genre of comic books. It was *The Invisibles* that put Grant Morrison on the occult map.

With his work on the *The Invisibles*, his answers to letters in the comics' letter columns, his various interviews, his web site rants, and the online – and eventually revised and published – essay *Pop Magic!*, Morrison became a pop culture – and pop occulture – phenomenon.

I'll be the first to profess my admiration for *The Invisibles*, as well as my appreciation for his eloquently enthusiastic and energizing *Pop Magic!* essay, but it always amazes me that so many point to Morrison and his *Pop Magic!* as the prime resource of new wave chaos magic and postmodern occultism...especially when a much more refined and elaborative resource exists in Taylor Ellwood's book *Pop Culture Magick* – the book that broke open the door to practical pop culture magic.

No. Grant Morrison's real contribution to the occult and pop culture is how he re-introduced some of the old mythos and religions into the modern archetypal meme-space to make that which was ancient - and decidedly not pop culture - into pop culture iconography. Morrison has the ear – or is that eye – of the postmodern counterculturalists, as well as the everyday hobbyist cultural experimenter. His popularity as a writer and his tendency to mix fiction, meta-fiction, history, philosophy and self-aware (fourth wall breaking) literature have somehow gained him easy access to the collective unconscious of like-minded individuals, allowing him to take topics of ancient origin and inject new life into them for the postmodernists. The two topics for which he does this the most are Voodoo and the 2012 meme of the ancient Mayan culture. Let's look at each one of these in turn.

Which Voodoo Do You Do?

Voodoo has always had a place in pop culture. When one thinks of the marvels of Voodoo, unfortunately, one thinks of witch doctors and Voodoo dolls, the lifeblood of New Orleans stereotypes and notoriety.

Voodoo – as a religion of worship – is seldom seen as a valid spiritual pursuit by most Western culturalites. Despite its ancient history, despite its grand roots and complex cosmology, Voodoo has always been rendered a pop culture horror show thanks to Hollywood, the loosely adapted film *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, and mass-marketed Voodoo dolls at toy and bookstores nationwide. Even in the Western occult world, Voodoo has always been on the verge of becoming a forgotten system of magic and worship, often reduced to ideas of primitive magic and those self-same picturesque stereotypes of New Orleans or Haitian worship. As Stephen Grasso put it in his Key 64 article *Live and Let Die: Fear of Voodoo Planet* “Voodoo, [...] seems to exist for people as a bizarre pop-culture collage of zombie movies, Baron Samedi coming out of the ground to harangue James Bond, giant space scorpions in the [*Invisibles*], cameo appearances of Brother Voodoo in old Dr Strange comics, Lisa Bonet dancing with a snake in *Angel Heart*, and Eshu knows what else.”

Despite the supposed open-mindedness of occultists, personal bias and misunderstandings have gotten in the way of any clear presentation of traditional Voodoo to Western occultists that are anywhere near on par with Milo Rigaud’s well-documented *Secrets of Voodoo*, which favored academic knowledge seekers.

Occultists were lost when it came to harvesting the rich ideology and belief structure of Voodoo, but Michael Bertiaux changed all that. Michael Bertiaux, the son of a theosophist mother, was a Ph.D. candidate at Tulane University focusing on ontological positivism, before leaving and later attending the Vancouver School of

Theology. It was here that he received his master's degree in theology and was ordained a deacon.

In 1960, Bertiaux went to Haiti as a missionary to teach philosophy at a college in Port-Au-Prince. Coming into contact with practitioners of a local occult tradition that was highly influenced by 19th century European occultism, Bertiaux was eventually initiated into those traditions and made a bishop in the Ecclesia Gnostica Spiritualis, a Gnostic Church sharing similar roots with the more well known Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica.

His most popular work, the *Voudon Gnostic Workbook*, came to fruition out of a correspondence course and a series of classes for students and followers of Voudon Gnosticism, a fusion of Voodoo and Gnostic teachings. Though always one of the more sought after rare texts in occultism (right next to Kenneth Grant's *Outside the Circles of Time*), Bertiaux's book gained even more popularity in occult circles (particularly with chaos magicians and their postmodern cousins) after Grant Morrison revealed that it was a major inspiration for his *Invisibles* graphic novels. Copies of it were even selling on eBay for around three hundred dollars. In fact, Bertiaux's book became such a sought after tome that Weiser Books eventually released a new edition of it in the Summer of 2007.

Bertiaux's work is not traditional Haitian Voodoo. Grasso acknowledges that "There is a clear and identifiable [Voodoo] line of transmission that runs through Bertiaux's work, but it equally draws on elements of Thelema, Tantra, Shinto, Martinism, [...] and the work of pulp horror writer [H.P.] Lovecraft to create a unique synthesis significantly removed from the practices of traditional Haitian [Voodoo]" (Key 64).

Though Bertiaux's work is not traditional Voodoo, neither is it Hollywood window-dressing. Thanks to the popularity of Grant Morrison's *Invisibles*, Bertiaux has

been a hot topic amongst the same occultists that swarm around the pop culture iconography that is often used in chaos magic. Morrison helped jump start the interest in Bertiaux's *Voudon Gnostic Workbook*, bringing it out of the rarity of the occult bibliophile's bookshelf and into the collective consciousness of the pop culture generation of magic.

What does this mean?

When occultist think of Voodoo, gone are the days where all Voodoo thought surrounded stereotypes. Even with the non-traditionalism of Bertiaux's Voodoo, there is a certain respect, reverence and seriousness attributed to it. Western occultists have begun to point to the *Voudon Gnostic Workbook* when referencing Voodoo rather than Voodoo dolls, zombies, and other misunderstood stereotypes. This influx of alternative Voodoo is a direct result of the pop culture, and in turn, the attention being paid to Bertiaux's work, directly feeds this pop culture now. With this newfound serious attention and reverence, the old Lwa's of Voodoo are starting to gain the same respect in pop culture that they receive in more traditional religious rituals and beliefs, even if the ideas have somewhat transmuted. This same seriousness and belief towards the works of Bertiaux also helps to bring more attention to the traditional beliefs of Haitian Voodoo that lie outside of the pop culture.

2012: The End is the Beginning

Now let's move on to another, more powerful, example: the 2012 meme. The millennium brought us nothing in terms of the apocalypse, Y2K bugs or wanton destruction; and left many an apocalyptic ranter hanging their head. But fear not! With 2012 right around the corner, we can begin to dust off those end-times prophecies and get back on the holy horse.

In the last couple of years, 2012 has taken on a life of its

own.

Most of us are familiar with the date. 2012 is the completion of the thirteenth baktun cycle of the Mayan calendar. The end date is placed somewhere around December 21st 2012, and more theories surround the meaning of this end date than any other future phenomenon or prediction currently known to man.

Will it be the end of all time? Will there be major catastrophes? Will there be a shift in global consciousness? Nobody knows. But it sure is fun to speculate.

This has thrust 2012 to the forefront of occult and counterculture thought like never before, not to mention the popular culture. The *X-Files* television show set the alien invasion date at December 22nd 2012. In Grant Morrison's *The Invisibles* - already examined as an important text in current occult thought and evolution - the universe "whites out" - or expands - into a possible higher existence in December of 2012. The video game *Assassin's Creed* plays with the 2012 meme. In fact, you can't walk into a bookstore, or read a "new age" article, without tripping over a 2012 reference. It's like it has a mind of its own.

What does this actually mean for us, though? What is the 2012 meme doing?

2012 has created a resurgent interest in the Mayan civilization. But just as anthropologists, scholars, television shows, hobbyist history, and culture buffs have brought new light and life to the Mayan peoples and culture, the counterculture, the occult, new age prophecies, and conspiracy theories have brought new light and life to the Mayan gods. However, Kukulcan - or Quetzalcoatl in the Aztec tradition - does not hold the same domain that he once did in ancient Maya. His role has expanded. His domain has expanded. Quetzalcoatl is a god of the evolving consciousness. His return is not necessarily imminent. He has already returned. Indeed, he has always been here, at the very least, in the back of our consciousness. Daniel

Pinchbeck, in *2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl*, quotes author Jose Arguelles as saying:

‘It was clear that Quetzalcoatl was not just a god, but a multiple god; not just a man, but many men, not just a religion but a mythic complex, a mental structure. [Quetzalcoatl was] an invisible and immanent force underlying and transcending the mythic fabric or mechanization.’ (2006, p. 229).

Pinchbeck himself goes on to say:

As myth, legend, and historical account, Quetzalcoatl permeates ancient Mesoamerican thought, taking numerous forms. He participates in the creation of the cosmos, helping to separate earth and sky. (2006, p. 229).

What we’re witnessing with the 2012 meme is the rebirth and reintroduction of the Mesoamerican gods. Just like Morrison and Bertiaux were able to reinvigorate the reborn Lwas of Voodoo to transmute their perception into the modern consciousness, the 2012 meme – to an even much greater extent – has caused the rebirth, and expansion of power, of the ancient gods.

They no longer exist just in history books. They now exist in the pop culture: gods reborn anew.

What’s This Got to Do with Pop?

Chaos and postmodern magicians are notorious for using pop culture symbolism in their magic. The argument is that the energy and belief contained in fictional characters such as Buffy, Batman, etc. far outweigh the current influence of ancient gods.

But there’s a catch-22.

The ancient gods were seen as real; and even with today’s monotheism and doubts, the ancient gods still probably have enough belief and residual influence (even on a subconscious level) to be extremely effective. The downside is that these gods are fading. They’re generally accepted as mythology and don’t venture far from ancient philosophy, history, and mythology books and classes.

The pop culture icons are powerful and influential, but how far can their influence stretch? Using chaos magic with pop culture iconography requires not only gnosis and a solid magical link, but also a suspension of disbelief, and an ultimate subjugation to the notion of the fictional pop culture icon as a living, breathing entity – both on a conscious and on a subconscious level. If you are the type of person that can do this, then you are amongst maybe the five or ten percentile. This is no easy feat, despite what people might say on Internet bulletin boards and blogs. Even the most stoic of religious observers has their moments of doubt – their “dark night of the soul” – and they’ve lived and breathed their religion all of their life. It’s much more difficult to hold off doubts about a belief adopted ten minutes ago that you intend to discard a half an hour from now. After all, doubt and skepticism are a part of human nature.

There are many reasons why most Western occultism encompasses the Judeo-Christian belief set. Familiarity. Upbringing. Consensus power of belief among the population at large. Let’s face it. The most powerful pop culture...is culture. The Roman Catholic religion alone is so ingrained in the collective consciousness of the population (and firmly believed as being fact) that there usually isn’t a more powerful system to work with. If you’re working outside of the Roman Catholic (or any mainstream religious) set, you then have one of two choices. You can go with the immediately powerful pop culture iconography and leave yourself to rely on your own ability to believe – absolutely – what your subconscious knows is fiction. Or you can throw your belief in with the powerful, yet fading, ancient gods that have a small advantage of being reflected upon as real.

It’s a hard choice, but pop culture has offered us an amalgamated alternative.

Much like television (*Hercules*, *Xena*, etc.) and comic

books such as *Thor*, with the 2012 meme and the *Voudon Gnostic Workbook*, we have seen how pop culture can not only reinvigorate gods and pull them into the popular culture; but we've also seen how they can transform these gods – bring them back reborn – as more powerful versions of themselves, with greater depth and more relevance in today's modern civilization.

Nothing truly fades forever – even if it solely ends up residing in the collective unconscious of the mind, dying to break out in dreams, stories and myth. The truly great stories get reborn, again and again. That's what myth is all about. Thanks to pop culture and viral memes, we're bearing witness to an incredible phenomenon. We're witnessing the rebirth of gods.

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World of Willcraft:

Sigilbringer's Metaquest

Jeremy Owen Turner

“The fantastic simulation of the medieval is not only a chief characteristic but, one of the central drives in the success of the WoW platform. The platform is distinguished by the militaristic zones of influence and the struggle for power by rival parties. And many of the explicit goals written into the narrative are to expand power and influence of the tribe through service, loyalty, and favor...”
– Thomas Asmuth – *Ars Virtua Guild*, 2007.

“Sorcery works at creating around itself a psychic/physical space or openings into a space of untrammelled expression-- the metamorphosis of quotidian place into angelic sphere. This involves the manipulation of symbols (which are also things) & of people (who are also symbolic)--the archetypes supply a vocabulary for this

process & therefore are treated as if they were both real & unreal, like words...”

– Hakim Bey, 1985.

“Dungeons and Dragons is a tragic and tangled subject. It is essentially a feeding program for occultism and witchcraft.... On top of that, the second issue is that the materials themselves, in many cases, contain authentic magical rituals. I can tell you this from my own experience.”

– William Schnoebelen, 1984.

I – About my performance art/magick ritual with the Ars Virtua Guild...

Using the extremely popular multi-player video game phenomenon known as the World of Warcraft (<http://www.worldofwarcraft.com>) as a magickal and artistic medium, I have embarked on a large-scale performance ritual every Sunday with the ongoing support of a dedicated “Artist Guild” known as Ars Virtua (<http://www.arsvirtua.com/guild> (WoW) <http://www.arsvirtua.com> (SL)) Ars Virtua is a guild comprised primarily out of “New Media” artists who are seeking out ways to find their own personal modes of artistic expression within the context of WoW’s proprietary top-down narrative. Ars Virtua also has a curatorial presence in the more chat-focused virtual metaverse known as Second Life (<http://www.secondlife.com>) In fact, Ars Virtua began in Second Life as a contemporary art museum started by the CADRE Laboratory for New Media in San Jose, California.

As both an “Artist” and an “Occult Dabbler”, I have decided to embark on a self-generated quest that goes beyond the regular gameplay and role-play in the World of Warcraft.

My previous supernatural experience within the performance-art realm involves the art of scrying and group tulpa creation. By practicing “real life” magickal operations in this game, I am intentionally perpetuating the urban myth that playing such games (including traditional pencil and paper RPGs such as Dungeons and Dragons), leads one astray towards a genuine interest in the occult. As a Troll Shaman, the conventional WoW narrative expects me to be overtly interested in the pre-packaged occultic paraphernalia offered to me in the form of totems and relics since they help me increase my level in the game and allow me to complete several epic “vision quests”. I take this “addiction” with magickal questing one step further by working with my fellow Guildmembers to pursue a parallel quest where we use these same relics and totems as tools to summon a post-game astral entity that I have created out of my own initiative as an “Artist”. Although I am first and foremost allowing myself to be perceived primarily as an “Artist” amongst my peers in the Guild, I am sure many of them are starting to take notice of the fact that at least I am practicing some sort of Left-Click Path form of WoW Magick (as compared to the Left Hand Path of “Black Magick”).

II - TAZ 2 – The Temporary Autonomous Zone Strikes Back...

Unlike most dedicated gamers who play the game “straight” (i.e. strictly within the narrative set forth by the game’s creators), our Guild prefers to find ways to subvert the narrative-navigation interface while at the same time completely relying on it as a catalyst for collaborative camaraderie. In addition, they also occasionally adhere to the narrative of WoW simply for the leisurely enjoyment of playing the game as it was originally intended.

One way we have playfully expressed our artistic

autonomy within this otherwise creatively draconian environment was through Thomas Asmuth's establishment of a Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ) within a couple of the discrete realms

(<http://www.worldofwarcraft.com/info/faq/realms.html> - The Realm I perform in is known ironically as "Demon Soul" and it based in the USA.

<http://www.realmhistory.net/demon-soul/152/realm-news.html> Another name for a "Realm" is a "Server") that WoW maintains for its subscribing players. Asmuth's TAZ II is directly inspired by Hakim Bey's concept of the TAZ as a place where we are collectively "engaging the platform and expressing the culture and power structures of the fiefdom." (Asmuth, 2007).

Unlike Bey, however, we do not necessarily agree that we need to be obsessing over "courageous acts of art making and intervention without arrogance or ceremony." (Asmuth, 2007). If anything, all of the Guild's performances embrace at least a certain level of drama and pomp and no shortage of role-played arrogance. One might argue that it is, in fact, virtually impossible to perform in a ceremonially constructed world without some element of ceremony. However, not every activity that the Guild engages in is blatantly more ceremonial in nature than is expected by the conventional narrative arc.

In fact, sometimes our "artistic" activities appear to be almost indistinguishable from the expected "questing" and "raids" mapped out for the masses by the corporate Dungeon Master egregore known as "Blizzard Entertainment" (<http://www.blizzard.com>) If we look at this founding corporation for the World of Warcraft through a magickal lens, we can actually convince ourselves that "Blizzard" and corporations like it are literally "multi-dimensional beings comprised of the ideas and resources of the people that sustain it" (Ellwood, 2008). The entity known as "Blizzard Entertainment" is

very protective over how the world's narrative is interacted with and many legal procedures (<http://www.worldofwarcraft.com/legal/termsofuse.html>) are in place to ensure that the players do not acquire the rights to their own magickal identity.

For example, Blizzard does not allow a subscribing player to choose any name that is "*Comprised of gibberish (e.g., 'Asdfasdf', 'Jxccm', 'Hvlldrm')...*" (*Ibid.*, Refers to line item # 10 of "*Rules Related to Usernames and Guild Designations*")

This kind of limitation is problematic within the context of Occult Dabbling in that it limits the usage of customized entity names that tend to be derived from an abstracted statement of intent (with the elimination of repeated letters and vowels etc). Furthermore, you are not allowed to overtly communicate with someone who belongs to an opposing faction to your character (for my character, it would be the Alliance). (*Ibid.*, Refers to line item #10 of "*Rules Related to 'Chat' and Interaction With Other Users*".) Probably the most vague and psychically limiting regulation that "Blizzard" like to enforce is the idea that you cannot perform anything "*that Blizzard considers contrary to the 'essence' of the Program*". (*Ibid.*, Refers to line item #3 of "*Rules Related to Game Play*".) So if your own parallel Occult beliefs become publicly manifested in-world, the Great Entity known as "Blizzard" might consider what you do to be contrary to its own "essence". In other words, "Blizzard" might consider any customized entities as being in direct competition with its monopolizing "essence".

In addition, the NPC (*Ibid.*, Refers to line item #3 of "*Rules Related to Game Play*".) (Non-Player Character) entities within the game cannot be customized by the player/magician. In this sense, most of the players are unwittingly feeding a massive and vampiric entity and out of this vicious cycle of exploitation, I felt it was time that I

channeled this feeding process towards my own player-generated egregore as a work of social sculpture and performance art.

By framing my archetypal role in World of Warcraft as an “Artist” in addition to my official Armory (<http://www.wowarmory.com/>) designation as a “Shaman”, I can also be given license from my fellow Artists in the Guild to role-play as a “Sorcerer” and/or “Alchemist” instead of “Gamer” or “Player”.

I am actually a lousy gamer so this has given me ample incentive to overcompensate as a diviner and shaper of multiple virtual dimensions. My virtual body can thus act as a bridge between the modalities of role-play (getting into “character” and adapting to the “set and setting”), gameplay (becoming familiarized with the interface and the necessary tools for ascending levels), and ritual play (reframing the conventional roleplay and gameplay as an accepted form of performance art and occult ceremony). By using the limitations of the gaming interface, I can find and extract the limited yet refined opportunities for artistic expression. In this sense, the entire Guild has chosen to work within what I call “narrow windows of proprietary content” – especially when it comes to video games (as compared with chat worlds such as Second Life).

III – A Real Non-Player-Character (NPC)...

The Tolkienesque consensual hallucination that the “straight” players tacitly agree to reinforces the legitimacy of a rigidly defined mechanistic and tokenistic magical ritual system that is normally hostile to extra-dimensional custom “demon” or “daimon” (NPC) creation. Strangely the comprehension to indulge in any customizing activity and to try and contact even one single entity outside of the game-world is the role-playing equivalent of heresy because the authority of the purchased narrative is diluted

by sub-narratives that may seem whimsical and potentially post-medieval. This hesitant attitude towards directly engaging in extra-curricular activities related to user-generated content is very similar to the historical reluctance of our Christianized society in “real life” to play with the completely customizable world of the Occult itself – especially when it leads to entity creation. In this sense, my ambition for creating an autonomous and intelligent astral entity out of the residual game-play energy is for the primary purpose of customizing a genuine Non-Player Character. Perhaps an additional title for this class of interactive entity, within the context of the World of Warcraft, is “Non-Gamer Character (NGC)”.

IV – On Charging The Entity’s Cyber-Sigil...

To charge this NPC/NGC, I use a very liberal form of Chaos Sigil Magick (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaos_magic) under the guise of a very traditional (Neo-Medieval) and rigid interpretation of Sigil charging outlined by pioneers such as Osman Austin Spare ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigil_\(magic\)#Modern_Uses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigil_(magic)#Modern_Uses)) For example, although my sigil was formed out of recognizable letters, these words do not come from a compressed (free of repeating letters) statement of intent. This sigil is simply a playful abstraction of the entity’s chosen name and the full intent of the purpose and character of this entity (with an undetermined lifespan) functions as more like a hyper-sigil since it harnesses and inhabits the entire narrative infrastructure of the World of Warcraft. Unlike some other modes of entity creation, this entity’s overall intention and purpose is emergent in order to mirror the emergent narrative put forward by massively multiplayer game environments.

This entity’s ultimate purpose and intent is socially

sculpted out of each Guildmember's own subjective impressions regarding what my created entity's ultimate goal and purpose should be. In hindsight, I now have some regrets that I did not initially generate a programming symbol for this entity before sharing this astral embryo with the Guild (and with the public on my blog). At the time, I was too seduced by the surface appearance and overall aesthetic of my Warcraft entity during the act of creation and programming to focus on the exact function and purpose of OWZL's existence.

To the trained magician, my attitude towards the way I created and nurtured my entity must seem utterly reckless and naive since the usual and safeguarded method recommended for entity creation requires having a specific purpose and intent in mind right from the start. Perhaps it is too late to turn back the clock and re-insert a programming symbol for this entity. Despite the potential consequences of my (in)actions, my entity's specific identity is now in the hands of the entire Guild and is truly an evolving manifestation of Joseph Beuys' Social Sculpture.

V – All Hail Beuysian Social Sculpture!

This methodology has reinforced some facets of my ongoing artistic practice in virtual worlds performance as well as my directly engaged interest with the more occult and virtually metaphysical mode(s) of what has been known in recent years as the various attempts to harvest the collective will of the community-at-large as a kind of “social sculpture” (J. Beuys, 1973).

As one of the earliest articulators for the occasionally elusive and cryptic nature of “social sculpture”, Joseph Beuys saw this meta-medium function in this manner:

They should provoke thoughts about what sculpture can be and how the concept of sculpting can be extended to the

invisible materials used by everyone. THINKING FORMS--how we mold our thoughts or SPOKEN FORMS--how we shape our thoughts into words or SOCIAL SCULPTURE--how we mold and shape the world in which we live: *SCULPTURE AS AN EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS; EVERYONE IS AN ARTIST* – (Beuys 1973).

Following this gradual public perception of “social sculpture” as becoming a valid, even “mainstream” artistic medium in itself, I would like to emphasize that for this particular performance project, “social sculpture” is made from the collective willpower of those who are perpetually immersed in the gameplay (and role-play) of the World of Warcraft. Furthermore the “invisible materials” they produce as the residue or byproduct of this intensely coordinated willpower is intentionally molded and shaped by my own artistic will towards the end-game of creating a magickally intelligent egregore-like entity that exists in a parallel dimension.

VI – Channeling the Beta-Tested Grimoire in the Name of Nostalgia

Although I did not pre-program any sort of concrete purpose for the entity’s reason to exist before launching it into the World of Warcraft, I can say that on a subconscious level I programmed my entity to go forth and remind some of the more “artistically-minded” players that there is indeed an occult reality lurking behind the scenes of the video game and that this parallel reality is not limited to the outmoded Medieval view of demonolatry. If there is a predetermined “purpose” at all to this entity, it is to induce an altered state of consciousness in its “worshippers” and use its aesthetically-pleasing appearance to attract and seduce Non-Worshipping-Players (NWPs) into a genuine interest of the occult using “gateway realities” such as the quasi-occult World of Warcraft. In

addition, I wanted this entity to lure these same players towards an expanded view of the occult via the archaic rituals of “demon-worship” and “ritual ‘sacrifice’”. The reason for the intentional perpetuation of these rituals had to do with prodding the players to be more self-conscious about their current metaphysical belief systems.

Mirroring my own attitude towards the rather “Neo-Medievalist” narrative behind WoW’s role-playing protocol, this egregore henceforth known as “OWZL OWWAN OAAZ” literally feeds off of the Guild’s role-played (momentary suspension of dis) belief in the validity of perpetuating Medieval stereotypes of Grimoire-themed evocation, elemental scrying, sigil charging and (virtually) violent ritual sacrifice (including temporary mass suicide) as a way to express itself as a contemporary multi-dimensional avatar identity.

As many of the readers of this essay are likely already aware, our D&D obsessed fantasy culture is content with Neo-Medievalist stereotypes (and archetypes) because as the virtual worlds Artist Eddo Stern puts it, indulging in this sort of anachronistic (and occasionally barbaric) activity provides a “getaway (that) was a much-needed reprise from a daily drudgery and offered a quick escape from the stress of a life governed by modern technology.” (Stern, 2000-2002). So within the context of “straight” play in the World of Warcraft, a more traditional approach to the concept of a created entity as a “demon” immediately comes to mind amongst the collective will of the players.

However, when I initially visualized OWZL and determined the astral blueprint for hir magickal manifestation, I envisioned a Trickster archetype who possessed all the hallmarks inherent in the dreams of our contemporary futurist zeitgeist. OWZL was brought to life with a gender-neutral chrome smile, a streamlined and sleek alien appearance, as well as a keen interest in quantum possibilities, multiple dimensions as well as

(gasp!) civilized and rational communication stratagems. OWZL, once charged, hardly resembles any of the dangerous demonic forces that were reluctantly evoked in the time of our immediate ancestors. To summarize, this entity had been intentionally created to harvest the energy from the gamers' immersed mutual obsession with their highly romanticized quasi-medieval lifestyles in order to transmute this energy towards the formation of personified properties that ultimately transcended its own cultural stereotype.

The irony with subverting the gamers' reinforced stereotype of the "demon summoned through ritual sacrifice" via the published text of the Solomonic Goetia is that OWZL himself is a tribute entity to one of the 72 daemons of the Lesser Key of Solomon – the specific identity of this daemon will be kept secret as part of the pact I telepathically made with this entity.

The purpose of this performance series, other than to further my own avatar performance art career, was to re-enact these stereotypes in a virtual environment as a "cleansing ritual" that would work through my own inherited stereotypes of "evil demonic forces" and come to realize on an unconscious level the barbarous and unreal nature of perpetuating such outmoded beliefs about entity creation and evocation. I used the conditioning and the romanticism that the game offers as a way to deal with the occult as a way to transcend its own shallow and Neo-Medieval interpretation of it. I have realized since that although I can role-play a Medieval attitude towards astral entities (fight or flight response), I could never really treat an entity that way so in terms of the relationship between myself and OWZL, I would like to think that we are both in on the joke as OWZL is a trickster after all and thrives off its own societal stereotypes.

VII – In Order to Break the Rules, I Must at Least Try to Learn and Follow Some of Them

On the surface, it will appear that I am going ahead with the usual magickal totem quests and tasks that is typical of a troll shaman who works for the “neutral evil” faction known as The Horde (There are two dominant factions – The Alliance and the Horde...Sigilbringer belongs to the Horde - <http://www.wowwiki.com/Horde>.) A Troll Shaman’s official goal is to acquire totems and relics that correspond with the 4 Medieval elements – Fire, Earth, Air, and Water. One can position these totems in any configuration but only one totem of each element can be used and it takes many hours of conventional questing before a Shaman can level up high enough to acquire totems from all 4 elements. For more details, one can study the complete overview of the Shaman Totems on “Blizzard Entertainment’s” official WoWWiki entry (http://www.wowwiki.com/Shaman_Totems)

Basically, this means that at the time of writing, I still have many more hours of conventional gameplay before I can receive the necessary totems for my higher level rituals with the Guild. In the meantime, I have already accomplished one lower level ritual.(This exact ritual was video documented on April 12, 2008 and has since posted to Google Video on April 23, 2008 at <http://video.google.ca/videoplay?docid=4415861461281399559>) Here is the sample script that I passed along to my fellow Guildmembers:

WoW Ritual #1 - “FYRE SKRYING EVOKATION FOR OWZL”

1) Before signing in to WoW, have a glance at the OWZL sigil (drawn pattern) to the right of my blog...try and picture the sigil in your mind’s eye before logging into WoW.

2) We find a fire-place (firepit) that is free from distractions and form a circle around it.

3) I utter a cryptic text incantation that will appear as a public speech bubble...

4) During this time, you try and remember what the sigil looked like in your mind's eye.

5) You then gaze into the fire and look for patterns in the fire that look like alien entities (kind of like looking for faces in the clouds)...you may only see one, and that is fine...

6) As soon you see such an entity's face appear in the fire, please describe what you see in the public chat (speech bubbles).

7) After each public description made by a Guildmember, we all chant "FOR THE HORDE! FOR OWZL!" - please continue to visualize the sigil while doing this.

8) We then step into the fire and try to burn ourselves to death. If this does not work, we will resort to dueling with each other over the fire until all of our charred reminds are heaped over the firepit.

9) There should still be time to level up and quest for the fire totem (or other totems if there is time).

With the acquisition of newer elemental totems, these entity evocation rituals will become increasingly more complex. Here is a sneak preview of the next Fire Totem ritual that has been scripted at the time of writing:

WoW Ritual #2 – "TRYL BY FYRE – A TOTEMIC EVOCATION OF OWZL"

1) Before signing in to WoW, have a glance at the OwzL sigil (drawn pattern) to the right of my blog...try and picture the sigil in your mind's eye before logging into WoW.

2) We find a fire-place that can burn us to death and form a circle around it. If we stand in the firepits for long enough, we should be able to burn ourselves to death, if not we may need to aid each other in the process via dueling or some other form of mediated violence.

3) I cast a single fire totem (assuming that I am at least level 13) and make a cryptic text incantation that will

appear as a public speech bubble...

4) During this time, you try and remember what the sigil looked like in your mind's eye.

5) You then say, "FOR THE HORDE! FOR OWZL!" and then proceed to jump into the fire and slowly burn yourself to death - please continue to visualize the sigil while doing this.

6) Hopefully, we all end up in the same graveyard and I am hoping we can still see our ghosts on the map.

7) We then place ourselves on the map to line-up with certain points on the sigil symbol...I will draft up the plan for what these dots should look like on the map.

8) I will say another cryptic incantation using text (yes, the same speech bubble)...

9) If there is still time on that Sunday, we could resurrect and continue questing to celebrate. Due to the coordination with forming the sigil pattern out of our ghostly avatars, there might not be much time leftover to quest.

VIII - Is There a Conclusion or Endgame in Sight?

Some of you may be asking if there is an end to this entity creation game or rather, is there an "endgame" to this entity's lifespan and therefore this performance art series?

Although I have never officially determined the expiry date for OWZL when drafting up the blueprint for this entity's creation, I believe my subconscious mind had conjured its own programming symbol that indicated I would do one final charging ritual and then it would be up to the rest of the Guild to charge OWZL sigil when playing WoW. I am also guessing that a mythology surrounding OWZL could organically emerge and a newer generation of players who had learned about OWZL via the orally transmitted lore of the day might also continue to keep OWZL's trans-dimensional spirit alive.

For the final official ritual, it has been my aim to quest until reaching level 30 where I will have earned a sample totem from each of the corresponding traditional elements. Other Shamans in this Guild are also working towards this goal so we can have a large cache of totems. With all these (pardon the pun) “hoarded” totems, the Guild will place a totem of each element along the corresponding dots on the map I will assign to them as key points of OWZL’s sigil and then we will make one large group incantation using the public speech bubbles and fire all the totems at once. If the operation is successful and the documentation is viral, we should be able to elevate OWZL’s entity status from occultic to mythological in scope. Perhaps if enough WoW players hear about the legend of this epic endgame ritual, OWZL will finally have been promoted from egregore to God-Form. (A similar example is the creation of the Cyberspace Godform created by Don Webb of the Temple of Set known as XaTuring – <http://www.xaturing.net>)

Project Weblinks

Ars Virtua Guild – <http://www.arsvirtua.com/guild>

Sigilbringer’s blog – <http://sigilbringer.blogspot.com>

World of Warcraft – <http://www.worldofwarcraft.com>

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www.extropy.org, www.eyebam.org and articles about avatar culture on www.shift.com.

[Pop Goes the Tarot:](#)

Experiments with Tarot and Cultural Icons

jaymi elford

Imagine a small room, lit only with candles. Scattered around you are a few images of your favorite characters from the DC Comics universe. You face an altar with three action figures poised on the table top. Wonder Woman, her golden lasso hanging at her side; Batman, off in one corner, silently watching over you and your ritual in the shadows of the candles; and Superman, his hand raised to the sky in a pose suggesting power and truth. You smile as you recall how these Justice League members fight for everything good as you turn to the matter at hand. Grabbing your tarot deck, you begin your ritual by honoring the members of your pantheon and hope that their energies, along with those in the tarot, guide you to the answer you seek.

Tarot and pop culture. Who would've thought the two could go hand in hand? Not many. But I think they do. Tarot in of itself is a pop culture icon. It has yet to be fully integrated into the mainstream, and usually gets moved into obscure corners of the bookstore and small spots in western media as the deck that foretells one's death in fantasy or horror-based shows. Amazingly, it continues to hold people's interest and grows more popular each and every day. However, I'm not going to go into rhetoric on the history of tarot and its relationship to pop culture. Instead, we'll explore ways to magickally use tarot with pop culture. You'll be applying the techniques in your tarot readings and deck creations. I'll also show you an easy way of building your own deck with nothing but an iPod. So

grab your favorite tarot deck and start reading!

Reading for the Stars

The easiest way to start working pop culture tarot magic is to introduce your favorite pop culture icons to your deck. How so? Bring out your favorite characters and invite them to a tarot reading. All your favorite characters from TV and books are right there and ready for you to practice with them. Practicing tarot readings with characters from books and TV helps boost your confidence in interpreting card meanings and prepares you for the world of reading tarot for friends and family.

All it takes is a little imagination and some knowledge of how to read the tarot. You don't need to be a reading expert and are allowed to "cheat" by using the little white book that comes with your favorite deck. First, pretend that the character is alive and currently sits across from you. You need to get it into your head that while this is "a practice reading" it is also a very real reading. Doing so helps boost your confidence later on in your reading career and gets you comfortable with reading the cards and their meanings to others. Then, after you create the layout and figure out what the cards say, speak the results out loud. Don't just perform a reading in your head; speak out the details of the reading so the character can hear everything. Reading the meanings of the cards out loud gives you the same practice that you got when you practiced college level speech classes. It helps you to relax and deliver precise and carefully worded explanations to your clients.

Imagine that Dream, from Neil Gaiman's Sandman series, appears right out of the comic book resting peacefully on your shelf. He now stands in front of you, a troubled look on his face. He knows you read tarot and needs your help to answer a question that plagues him. You ask Dream to sit down as you pull out your deck and begin

shuffling. He then tells you what is going on and what he hopes you can help him out with. You nod as he speaks but do not respond. Instead you allow your eyes to stare into his as you shuffle, drawing his energy into yourself and the deck and when he finishes talking, you simply ask him to let you know when to stop shuffling and cut the deck.

After a few seconds, he whispers stop. You draw cards off the top of the deck and lay them down into a familiar pattern of ten cards. Staring at the cards, you take some time to understand what they are telling you and Dream. After a minute or two you stare at Dream and start telling him what the cards think. You point out key cards and patterns that speak to you as you go. Satisfied at your answer, he thanks you for the help as he drifts back into the covers of the comic. You silently thank him for coming to see you and then write about the experience of reading tarot for a pop culture icon in your journal.

If you are having problems conjuring up the actual character in your mind, bring out the book or DVD that contains the character(s) you want to read for. Allow the book's energy and your remembrance of the story help give focus and realism to the character. If the character comes from a movie or TV show and you own the DVD, use the DVD player's search feature to locate a time in the movie when the character asks a question. Note the question down on a piece of paper, pause the show so the character's questioning image freezes on your TV, and then shuffle your deck. Then proceed with your reading as in the example.

Designing a Pop Culture Deck

Reading for your favorite character is only the start. You can also tap into the power of pop culture and magick when you're ready to create and develop your own tarot deck. As long as you don't cross copyright laws by attempting to

resell the deck for a price, go ahead and use images and characters from your favorite shows and movies.

You can design your deck digitally using software packages like Adobe Photoshop or MS Paint and then print them out and paste them on card-stock. Or you can print your images out and then paste them directly to a deck of recycled playing cards or a blank tarot deck that you can purchase online. Let your imagination run wild and allow you to come up with stylized and creative ways to express your personality, and the personality of your favorite pop icons while blending them with tarot.

While reading posts on the aeclectic.net forum boards, I once saw a poster do just this. They decided that creating a tarot deck from personal imagery was too much for them. They didn't feel confident in their own symbolism to apply it to deck creation. Coupled with no real artistic experience and a feeling of awkwardness towards drawing and using computer-based art programs, they had difficulty getting started on this project. So they turned to their favorite show, Buffy the Vampire Slayer. They used the thread to write about which characters would represent which position in the major arcana. Buffy became Strength and Willow became the Magician. They also chose several key themes and relationships from the series, like Buffy and Angel, Buffy and Spike, and Oz and Willow to create the remaining cards for their 22 card deck. After coming up with a solid outline and receiving feedback from several other forum members, all this person had left to do was to hunt down and choose images that further enhanced those key themes and card meanings. As the deck construction progressed with each card design, new posts detailing thoughts about why a card, image, or relationship was selected to fit each specific card appeared in the forums. It was a beautiful, personal experiment of pop culture tarot magick in progress.

Creating your own tarot deck using pop culture icons

and themes connects you to the meanings of tarot on a deeper, more personal level. When you design the images and pull each card together to form a cohesive deck, you learn how to relate to each symbol you add to the cards. This, in turn, helps you to work with the card faster than you would have with a store-bought deck. It's your symbolism, your mythology, and your meanings.

Don't give into the idea that using themes from shows and mixing them with tarot is a bad thing. It wasn't silly for Joss Whedon to bring Buffy to TV. Which means it's not silly for you to use his 'verse as a way to tap into learning the tarot. Is it silly to use a TV show or book to make your first deck? Only if you allow it to be. If you need permission to indulge in that silly side of your magical life, here's permission to use your favorite show like Buffy, Charmed, or even Friends, and use those characters to fashion your first tarot deck.

Alternative Divination

Imagine sitting on the bus. Your neck is stiff, so you glance over at the person sitting next to you. She's young, wearing a layer of shirts and a scarf, and holds a backpack adorned with zillions of buttons. It sits precariously across her lap. You notice she's focused on a small, rectangular device in her hand. There's an image of an apple embedded in the device's stainless steel casing. On the screen appears a strange sight, instead of cover art and album info, you're staring at non-sensical words and a complex image filled with symbolism. The image looks vaguely like one of those tarot cards your sister used to get into when she was in junior high school. Three lines of text appear to the right of the image. You scan the three lines of text that appear to the right of the image and get "4 of Wands", "power of the earth, creative fire," and "iPod Tarot". You blink...have your eyes deceived you? Is this possible? Tarot on an iPod?

Divination without the use of a deck of cards? Yes. With today's technology and gadgets you can now integrate the tarot in with your favorite music device, such as the iPod.

In this section, I'll let you in on two ways that you can use your iPod as a tarot reference and divination tool. You'll need a Notes-capable iPod in order to experiment with these ideas.

Did you know that you can use the iPods Notes feature to make a tarot grimoire? All you need is a Notes-enabled iPod and a note making software application that allows you to upload your notes to the iPod (like Voodoo Pad for the Mac or NotePad for Windows). Store any and all divinatory meanings, spreads, rituals, or other tarot-related items you think you'll need to reference when you're on the road with only your tarot deck.

First, use the software to type up everything you want to include in the grimoire. Connect your iPod to your computer and then upload the files to the iPod's Notes folder. I won't get into details on how to do this here, but if you search for adding notes to an iPod online, you'll find many websites that will help you do this. Then all you have to do is use your iPod's navigation system to access the notes you need during a reading.

Setting up my tarot grimoire was one of the first things I did with my iPod when I got it. I also created a companion grimoire to store all my favorite general magickal knowledge. This goes to show that you don't have to just limit this idea of putting Notes on your iPod to just tarot. I love having my tarot grimoire on my iPod. It's handy when I'm in the middle of a reading and have forgotten what the Queen of Swords is trying to say to my querent. It also beats carrying around a few dozen, heavy reference books when you know you might be asked to read for someone on something specific and want that additional knowledge with you.

Adding tarot notes to an iPod is just a beginning. You

can also use your iPod and the music stored on it to make your own tarot deck and spreads. You'll need iTunes or another music management software application to attempt this next experiment. Pick out seventy-eight songs, either at random or by choice, and then copy them to a playlist called "tarot deck". If you don't copy the songs, you may end up losing the original song information for them. Alternatively, you can pick out one song and copy it from your file system seventy-eight times to that playlist. This way you can have the same time stamp for each "card".

Now you'll need to edit the song's information. Rename each Name field to the name of the tarot card it represents. For the Artist field, list two or three quick reference definitions on what the cards mean. Finally, under Album, list the suite it came from (if the card is a major arcana, list it as major). For example, your screen should read "4 of Wands" in the Name field, "creation, celebration, power of the earth" in the Artist field, and then "Wand" in the Album field. When you are done with all seventy-eight cards, you have your deck.

I decided when I made my deck that listening to the deck wasn't as important as being able to "read" each deck. Therefore, I created seventy-eight five minute silent song tracks and placed them into my tarot deck playlist. I chose five minutes arbitrarily, I wanted enough time to read through all the cards in the play list and write them down for later study. Then I entered the name of the card into the song Name field (adding in the suite it came from if it was a minor arcana). Then I added the meanings of each card under Artist. Instead of entering a suite for the Album field, I decided I wanted to name the deck, so that all the "cards" live in one location on my hard drive. You can use any name you want, I chose iPod Tarot Deck. I also added a picture of each card in the Album Artwork field for each "track". That way I have a small, reference picture to go along with all card information.

There are two ways to use your new deck. You can do single card readings by loading in the 78 card playlist. Then think about the issue at hand, close your eyes, and hit the play and then forward buttons until something inside you tells you to stop forwarding through all the tracks. Look down at the “card” displayed on the screen and you’ll have your answer. You can also put the iPod into shuffle mode and allow it to display the first random card on the screen.

For more complex situations, you can also set up several playlists on your iPod to act as spreads for your cards. Use the iTunes Smart Playlist feature to create spreads and layouts that tie into your tarot deck and pull from the seventy-eight card playlist you just set up. Create a new Smart Playlist and give it the name of your spread. For example, “Celtic Cross” or “Three Card Reading”. Next, set up the parameters of the smart list to: display songs from the “tarot deck” playlist only and then limit the number of songs to the number of spaces in your spread. Therefore the Three Card Reading will draw, at random, three cards from that deck every time it loads.

When you are finished making your deck playlist and each spread playlist, connect your iPod to your computer and upload the files and playlists to it. Then give it a shot and see how well this electronic tarot works.

As you can see, there are many ways you can apply tarot in with pop culture magick. For years I was using the obscure, but very popular Vertigo Tarot deck that featured major arcana based off the Vertigo Comics line. This deck, although a bit dark for many people, was my constant companion as I used it to provide readings and extracted information regarding the stories I wrote for publication. It was also my introduction to pop culture tarot magick, even though I didn’t know it at the time.

I hope that you use the three ideas in this article to spark your own exploration in using tarot with pop culture magick. Be creative; allow your mind to wander. I’m sure

if you look around, you'll find that you can incorporate and uncover more ways to integrate the two. Why not use several readings to create your own fan fiction stories? Or use your deck in popular role playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons? The sky's the limit in how you choose to use and apply a deck of 78 cards with images on them.

Jaymi Elford, also known as Innoven online, loves all things tarot. She believes it's the ultimate utility to write stories and brainstorm ideas; in addition to providing guidance for her life. She lives in the Pacific Northwest with her loving husband, 3 cats, and an ever growing collection of books. When she is not coming up with new ways to use the tarot in her life, she's writing about creativity and journaling for www.DIYPlanner.com.

[The Secret Chiefs Advertise on Late-Night TV](#)

Bill Whitcomb

In traditional Qabalah, it is thought that there are multiple worlds or layers of reality that interpenetrate everything. Atziluth is the divine or archetypal world. Briah is the archangelic or creative world. Yetzirah is the angelic or formative world, the world of appearances. Assiah is the physical world, the underlying physical reality. Everything starts as a thought in the mind of some aspect of God and descends, taking form, until it is embodied in matter.

In more Jungian terms, archetypes are complexes of very ancient modes of being human that are part of our culture and reside in our collective unconscious. They have no form, in and of themselves, but activate and take form when the appropriate circumstances are present – that is, when we perceive them in the world. The stories, characters, and specific actors or performers that most

accurately convey the essence of these archetypes to us are those that end up having the greatest claim on our psychic real estate.

While archetypes have been expressed in art since the earliest carvings and cave paintings, it is only comparatively recently that a new phenomenon has emerged. For the first time in history, we have externalized our inner world. Our astral world, the world of our dreams and imagination, has been converted to product with ever-increasing speed until our environment is utterly saturated with the stuff of dreams. In a way, this is like Vladimir Vernadsky and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's concept of a "noosphere" or "collective consciousness" that would evolve from the underlying geosphere and biosphere. Somewhat as de Chardin predicted it would, the biosphere has given birth to the noosphere, but it isn't quite what most people once thought it would be. For one thing, there's a lot more advertising.

For most of us in the early 21st century United States, save for the few that have been raised in a strict and rigorous religious framework or have a strong and idiosyncratic inner life, our astral world is inhabited by vast—unbelievably vast—amounts of media content soaked up from a lifetime of comics, radio, television, movies, video games, internet media, books, magazines, and our general environment. The average person is exposed to corporate logos or other commercial communication as much as 20,000 times a day. According to the book *Brand Sense* by Martin Lindstrom, the average child in the U.S. is exposed to 30,000 television commercials in a year.

In *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less* (2005), Barry Schwartz writes that "The average American sees three thousand ads a day." We are changed by the media we surround ourselves with, even if we are not always changed greatly by any single thing. Most of us have grown up amid a torrent of children's books, comics, cartoons,

television programming, toys, lunch-boxes, school notebooks, and other “tied-in” merchandise. Long-lived characters, still commercially viable generation to generation, such as Hercules, Superman, Zorro, Tarzan, and Sherlock Holmes, have become part of our cultural DNA. Even archetypal figures that have little more presence than television commercials or toys can take on a life in our collective psyche, as in the case of Barbie and Ken. These semiotic phantoms are more likely to appear to most of us these days than the angels and demons and other astral inhabitants that traditionally vied for our mental space. If, for some reason, you began wildly hallucinating just at the moment, would you be more likely to see Jesus, Shiva, or Scooby Doo?

For better or worse, whether you love it for the new conceptual freedom it allows or you loathe it for its post-modern, deconstructed lack of grace, mass culture — pop culture — is our astral plane, gutted with its intestines strewn all over the kitchen floor, and it is inherently magical even in, or perhaps because of, its raw need-driven condition.

The clichés that make up so much popular entertainment can be readily utilized as an alphabet of archetypal processes, events, and actions to create symbol systems for divination, ritual, or other magical purposes. For example, for some years, some of my friends and I have occasionally used a pop-culture based divinatory card deck known as the Hard-Boiled Tarot of Tales.

What is the Hard-Boiled Tarot? Well, to understand the Tarot of Tales, you must first understand the Tarot. The word tarot is used generally to refer to any set of cards bearing symbolic pictures used for divination. These images are usually designed around archetypes encompassing large facets of human existence, so that the deck as a whole represents the complete wheel of human life. The Tarot archetypes are intended to reflect aspects of

both our inner and outer worlds, allowing us to recognize the building blocks of the soap-operas, sit-coms, and “made-for-reality-movies” of the Gods.

People have come up with many different theories for the origins of tarot cards. Some occultists believe the tarot to be a remnant of the Egyptian Book of Thoth, the legendary repository of the Egyptian mysteries. (For this reason, traditional occultists sometimes refer to the Hard-Boiled Tarot as the “TV Guide of Thoth.”) It is certainly true that tarot cards are the hieroglyphs of the western mystery tradition, containing a great deal of information in a pictorial, densely packed form. Beyond this, however, there is little evidence to support the Egyptian theory. The creation of the tarot has also been ascribed to the ancient Hindus, the Phoenicians, and even the Koreans, just to name a few! Recent work by our expert psychometrists has indicated that the Hard-Boiled Tarot of Tales was actually created in pre-flood times in the marketing temples and sacred movie studios of Mu. (Please note, however, that the modern version of the Hard-Boiled Tarot was brought to light with the assistance of the inestimable Yogi Mugapanda, also known as Frater SCD.) The earliest decks known to historians were made in Italy during the 15th century and were called Tarocchi. The number of suits, number of cards in each suit, and the types of images used in the early Tarocchi decks varied greatly.

The “standard” tarot deck of modern times contains 78 cards. These 78 cards are divided up into the Major Arcana of 22 trumps, and the Minor Arcana of 56 suit cards. The 22 trump cards (usually numbered 0 through 21) have been associated with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and through them, the 22 paths of the Qabalistic Tree of Life. The 56 suit cards are divided into four suits of 14 cards each (Ace through 10, Page, Knight, Queen, and King) associated with the four elements (earth, air, fire, and water).

The Hard-Boiled Tarot of Tales, however, strips away the veneer of relatively recent Hebrew and Egyptian influences. In this strange and wondrous deck, the powerful images of primeval pop-culture are restored to their original form of 11 trumps (or Major Plot-Twists) and 5 suits of 11 cards each (comprising the 55 Minor Plot-Twists). The trumps and suit-cards of the Hard-Boiled Tarot are described in further detail below.

The eleven Trump cards or “Major Plot-Twists” of the Hard-Boiled Tarot are the roots of the fifty-five Minor Plot-Twists in their most archetypal form, comprising a central structure from which the suit cards emanate. These are the raw fragments of fate that form the seeds of stories before the divine editors and producers make their changes....

Jupiter, Executive Producer of the Gods, sits smoking a Cuban cigar the size of the Titanic, feet propped up on a desk carved from a single emerald, listing to Mercury make his pitch.

“So you see, Mr. J, it’s a simple story of a young kid with a Shining Dream, but as he goes down the Road, Unforeseen Circumstances cause him to take a False Step.”

Jupiter blows out a thick cloud of smoke, shot through with tiny lightning. “I like it, Merc, but Westerns are the big thing this year. Make the gangsters into train-robbers, add a cow-girl as love interest, and have the kid play guitar.”

Mercury throws down the script in disgust and stalks out of the office. “You’ve got no respect for art anymore, Jupiter! I’m taking this story to Jehovah Studios!”

...The Trumps can act as a central core, as the main building blocks of the story, or they can modify the plot created by the suit cards. A description of the most common form of the Trumps is provided below.

1. The Shining Dream (Inspiration)

The Promise of the Good Thing. A vision of the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. The Holy Grail! The Fountain of Youth! El Dorado! It's always just beyond the horizon, but you know you're getting closer. You can taste it! You can almost see the glow!

2.The Nebulousness (Confusion)

What is it? There's something out there, but no one quite knows anything about it. Perhaps it's been seen, but no one is sure they would know it if they saw it again. It's always just at the edge of perception. No one can seem to get a grip on it. It's so... so...

3.The Unforeseen Circumstance (Redefinition)

“There's nothing about this is in the contracts.” No one planned for it, nobody saw it coming, but here it is! The Unforeseen Circumstance could be good or bad. All you can really say is, “*dis aliter visum*” (the Gods decreed otherwise). It's the Hand of Fate. Think fast!

4.The Black Box (Change)

There's something in the Black Box. Things go in and come out transformed. The Black Box changes things. Things go into it. Things come out of it. It makes things happen. No one knows what's in it. There may be no way to know until something comes out. The Black Box also can be viewed as the unconscious or magical will.

5.The Plan (Intention)

The Grand Design. The Master Scheme. The Magnum Opus. The Plan is all thought out and every piece is in its place. Sometimes the plan saves the day. Sometimes the plan blinds you to what is really happening. The Plan is

thought, words, form, and all other things attributed to Mercury.

6. The False Step (Error)

The situation is precarious. The Big Rock is poised on the cliff and could fall in any direction. It's obvious if you look at it in the right way, but one Wrong Move and....The False Step is also called the Wrong Move, the Bad Turn, and the Last Straw.

7. The Road (Movement)

The Road goes on and on forever. Sometimes you need to hit the Road. Sometimes you need enough sense to get out of the Road. The Road is life as journey, the path to enlightenment through experience. You may take the Road in any direction you choose. Why did the chicken cross the Road?

8. The Big Rock (Obstruction)

The Big Rock can be an obstacle blocking the Road. You may have to go around it. The Big Rock can be a menace hanging above you, balance on a point. Be careful going under it. You can put your back to it. You can roll it down the hill. You can push it over the edge. It would certainly be a horrible weight to carry. Whatever you do with it, you can't take it lightly. The Big Rock sometimes represents karma, ignorance, or obstruction.

9. The Great Big Joke (Illumination)

What a cream-pie in the face! It's all a colossal joke, strictly for laughs. Just relax, stay loose, and have a good

time. The Great Big Joke is farce and fantasy. It's a revelation! It's appalling! Its simplicity and absurdity could grind you under if you can't keep your sense of humor. Only a fool would try to change the Great Big Joke, and only a perfect fool could. Keep smiling!

10. The Flawless Performance (Mastery)

It might be tremendously difficult, but it looks easy. Afterwards, the crowd bursts into well-deserved applause. Jolly good show! The Flawless Performance signifies the avoidance (or the necessity of avoiding) the False Step.

11. The Good Thing (Fulfillment)

This is it! There is a straight line between your heart and the Good Thing! The Road was headed towards it all along (whether you knew it or not). Enjoy the Good Thing while you have it. It's All Good.

The eleven Trumps, or Major Plot Twists, are followed by the suit cards, as described below.

The Western Saga

1. The Western Saga (Action)

The Wild West, Land of the Big Sky, where men are men, women are women, horses are horses, etc., etc. You're back in the saddle again and riding the range. Happy trails!

2. The Wanted Poster (Imbalance)

The Wanted Poster is up at the Sheriff's office. It's up in the post-office. The Wanted Poster is even nailed to a tree by the Old South Road. Is that the Tall Stranger's face on that poster? Is it the Bad-Guy? Could it be *your* face on the

Wanted Poster? Uh oh.

“Haey, Marshal! I seen thet feller on the poster plain as day! He was a sittin’ over at Nate’s Saloon playin’ poker!”

3. The Tall Stranger (Freedom)

The Tall Stranger rode into town out of the sunset covered in the dust of the badlands. Nobody knows who he is or why he’s here, and he ain’t sayin’ much. The Tall Stranger has a lean untamed look to him, and his spurs they jingle-jangle-jingle!

The Tall Stranger sometimes represents the Byronic Hero — a melancholy loner, perhaps an outlaw, but a defiant champion of liberty!

4. The Hostile Indian Raid or the Native Uprising (Turmoil)

Somebody has angered the local tribes. At least, that’s how it seems, seeing as there’s hundreds of screaming warriors surrounding the wagon train. Move your wagons into a circle. Perhaps it’s time to powwow with the Chief, if it isn’t already too late. It might not be a bad idea for somebody to ride out on the Fast Horse to go get the cavalry.

The Native Uprising can also represent a disturbance in the unconscious...like maybe your ego’s about to git burnt at the stake!

5. The Fast Horse (Will)

The Fast Horse is swift and sure and smart enough to know it’s rider’s mind. It’s probably the Tall Stranger’s closest friend. The Fast Horse is just what you need to ride for the cavalry or to get the hell out of Dodge. “Hiyo, Silver!

Away!” The Fast Horse sometimes represents speed, power, and vitality.

6.The Stampede (Momentum)

Maybe something just spooked ‘em. Maybe the Bad-Guy started it. Whatever it was, the Stampede’s a-comin’. You can see the dust cloud and feel the earth shake already. You might be able to turn the Stampede if you have a Six-Gun and a Fast Horse, but if not, ye’d better git out of the way iff’n you don’t want to git trampled. The Stampede symbolizes untamed natural force.

“Mooooooooooooooooooooo!”

7.The Bad-Guy (Evil)

He drifted into town with the tumbleweeds, all mean and scruffy-lookin’. He doesn’t seem to have any business here, he just keeps hangin’ ‘round the train station asking folks about the next gold shipment. The Bad-Guy has a nasty smirk. He kicks dogs and scares the women and children. He scares the men, too, for that matter. Even his horse looks ornery. Maybe somebody ought to tell the Marshal.

The Bad-Guy is an aspect of the negative double, the evil twin or shadow that represents the unredeemed part of the unconscious...but smile when you say that, pardner!

8.The Six-Gun (Force)

The gun that tamed the West, or at least shot it up a whole bunch. The Tall Stranger swore he’d never wear the Six-Gun again and keeps it wrapped up in his trail kit. The Bad-Guy loves to use it whenever he can. Some days it seems like it’ll never run out of bullets, but some days it just can’t seem to hit a durn thing. The Six-Gun represents power and, in its negative aspect, destruction. Don’t take the Six-Gun out of the holster unless you’re ready to use it, son, and careful you don’t shoot yer foot.

9.The Flesh Wound (Sacrifice)

It may be painful, but it takes more than a Flesh-Wound to stop somebody with true grit. It helps if you can shoot with either hand, though. Besides, Old Doc can fix it up in no time. The Flesh Wound symbolizes initiation and “difficult learnin’.” Just throw back a shot of whiskey and bite the bullet. “No, it’s alright. Really. It’s just a Flesh Wound! Gasp...” “Now you jest shet-up and hold still young feller. This might hurt a little!”

10.The Cavalry (Redemption)

Always listen to your scouts and keep your powder dry. If you put your ear to the ground, you can hear the horses. The bugles are blowin’ as the Cavalry arrives in the nick of time. “Gosh, they sure look handsome in those blue uniforms...especially that dashing General Custer!”

11.The Showdown (Adjustment or Resolution)

Almost everybody’s hiding in the saloon and the general store. The Sheriff has already left town on the last train. The whole town is quiet. The dust swirls in tiny spirals down the street and a lonesome tumbleweed blows by. If you step outside you’ll either ride off into the sunset looking good, or you’ll be riding off to that last round-up. The choice is yours. Either way, this is it!

“Say, who was that masked man, anyhow?” “I don’t know, but he left this here silver bullet!”

High Adventure

1.High Adventure (Enjoyment)

From the mountains of forgotten Tibet to the deepest jungles of the Amazon, there is spine-tingling adventure!

The world is a grand exciting game and you are here to play! You sail the seas of fate as captain of your own ship. Hoist your sails and spin the wheel of fortune.

2.The Map (Impulse)

The Map is torn and stained and the Map is cryptic, but you're sure it leads to the mysterious island, the lost city, the Fabled Treasure! Now, if you can only read it!

There may be copies, some more complete than yours. Others may want the Map. They might have the other half. Of course, the Map might only lead to trouble. X marks the spot!

3.The Swashbuckling Adventurer (Enthusiasm)

He's a handsome rogue with a smile on his lips. The Swashbuckler laughs in the face of danger and his devil-may-care attitude might lead to peril, but there's no way to talk sense into him. He's a soldier of fortune, an ace of aces, and a jack-of-all-trades. Lady Luck is his deity. Let the chips fall where they may!

The Swashbuckling Adventurer sometimes represents the playful or daring part of the self.

4.The Pirate Attack (Obsession)

The galleon off the port bow has raised the Jolly Roger and they're closing in fast. You can see the scurvy lot of 'em lined up at the railing in their gold earrings, eye-patches, and bandannas. "AARRRH!" Grab a cutlass, load the cannons, and prepare to repel boarders. ...and watch out for that parrot with the peg-leg!

5. The Mighty Galleon (Intuition)

You can see it on the horizon, running under full sail. It's a big ship and fast, and not just a merchant ship by the look of her! Maybe it's that dashing young captain you've heard about, but it might be the pirates. Perhaps it's your ship!

The Mighty Galleon could be said to sail the waters of the unconscious, propelled by the intellect and imagination. Sometimes confused with the Slave Galley of the Id.

6. The Pitched Battle (Conflict)

The knights are charging across the plain and the sound is thunderous. Man the battlements! Unchain the galley slaves!

People are dueling up and down the stairs. The Swashbuckling Adventurer swings by on a chandelier. The outcome is in doubt, but there's no turning back now. Blow the trumpets! Ramming speed!

7. The Oppressive Tyrant (Oppression)

Sometimes, the Oppressive Tyrant is obsessed with a "higher purpose" as when Captain Ahab just had to seek out Moby Dick. Usually, however, the Oppressive Tyrant just wants all the power and money. The Oppressive Tyrant needs control. Act carefully if you're not willing to oppose the tyrant right on the spot. The Oppressive Tyrant can sometimes represent the unbalanced ego. "I said, that will be *all*, Mr. Christian! Tell the crew to return to their stations or I'll have them flogged!"

8. The Trusty Sword (Decision)

The Trusty Sword can be a magical heirloom like Excalibur, or it might just be a humble steel blade, but the

Trusty Sword will never fail when wielded with a strong arm and a true heart. The Trusty Sword, like the mind, must be kept sharp and well oiled (unless it was forged of “star-metal”, made by the Gods, created by an ancient wizard, made entirely of finest aluminum, etc., etc.).

The Trusty Sword sometimes symbolizes the separating and analyzing powers of the intellect. Used unwisely, the Trusty Sword can end up resembling that related card from the apocryphal Horror Movie suit, “The Meat Cleaver.”

9. Thrown in the Dungeon (Restriction)

The door closes with a depressing clang. Things seem pretty dark. In fact, they’re completely dark! This is the Dungeon and it’s nasty and full of bones and rats and stuff. Not only that, there’s a bunch of guys in hoods and leather giggling unpleasantly while they fire up the red-hot pokers.

Whatever you do, don’t panic! Steal a spoon and start digging. Pretend to be sick and surprise the guards. Throw notes out the window to the ACLU. This could even be the time for the supreme effort, like in the Hercules movies when Steve Reeves breaks free and slays the entire army with his chains! UNNGGH! Or...maybe not. Maybe it’s just the right moment to bide your time and get some serious thinking done.

10. The Friendly Tribe or the Native Guide (Trust)

The “first people” always know the hidden secrets, the forgotten paths, the best restaurants. Their help and goodwill may be essential to your quest. However, you must earn their respect — you may have to undergo fearsome trials or strange initiations in order to be recognized as human (i.e. part of the tribe). The Native Guide sometimes represents the beneficial powers of the unconscious and

your instinctual or heuristic processes.

“Tarzan thanks Chief. Tarzan will be friend to the Oowatabangis as long as the sun shines!” The Chief and the Oowatabangis smile. Tarzan’s chimp Cheetah jumps up and down clapping hands, “Ook ook eek eek!”

11. The Fabled Treasure (Attainment)

Rare incenses, strange drugs and wine, disks of gold, and gems of fire! The Wealth and Pleasure of the World. A gold falcon encrusted with gems. The Pearl of Great Price mounted in the Diamond as Big as the Ritz! Everybody wants the Fabled Treasure, but no one can own it forever! Possessing the Fabled Treasure is perilous. Here there be dragons!

The Fabled Treasure can represent both worldly and spiritual riches.

True Romance

1. True Romance (Passion)

Will the Ingénue find True Romance in a world of tempestuous passions and heartbreaking illusion? Is it all just a kiss in the dark, a blind date with fate? Sigh dreamily and wonder... “Now, who could be sending those mysterious flowers?”

2. The Contrived Encounter (Interaction)

You bump into each other at the check-out counter, and your heart skips a beat as a burning look passes between you. Good thing you’ve just eaten your breath-mints!

Surely it’s just coincidence, but things are not always what they seem.

“Say, haven’t I seen you somewhere before?”

3. The Ingénue (Innocence)

Strangely innocent, perhaps even naive, the Ingénue is possessed of an unconscious joy of life, a certain genuineness that many fall in love with. The Ingénue is frequently unaware of this attraction (or at least its source), sometimes to the point of insecurity.

The Ingénue sometimes symbolizes the pre-initiation or pre-fall state of the Self.

4. The Costume Ball (Transfiguration)

The masks will come off at midnight, but for the moment, anyone can be beautiful and mysterious. Come laugh and dance, so that others may see you without the masks you wear every day. The Costume Ball is sensuality, joy, transformation, and illusion.

Oops! You lost one of your glass slippers!

5. The Expensive Sports-Car (Emotion)

While it is one of the most frequent sites for the Tryst, the Expensive Sports-Car is also by far the most preferred suicide method of rejected romantics. Made to faster than the law will allow, the Expensive Sports-Car just reeks of wealth and unabashed sensuality. It throbs with a well-tuned power that tends to lend style and excitement to nearly any driver (whether deserved or not). Vroom! Vroom!

6. The Tryst (Immersion)

Walking hand in hand by the lake in moonlight, or meeting

at a candle-lit restaurant, the Tryst is a date with the object of your heart's desire. With some, the Tryst is only in their dreams, or just a stolen kiss. With others, the Tryst may last a lifetime.

“Meet me by the Fountain of Inadvisable Desire at first moonrise...I'll be the one with the cauliflower in my lapel.”

7.The Rival (Opposition)

The Rival is suave and sophisticated and drives the Expensive Sports-Car. The Rival is good-looking and charismatic. Sometimes it seems as if the Rival is everything you are and then some, but don't despair. The Rival can only be defeated by remaining true to your heart, true to your love, and true to yourself.

8.The “Dear John” Letter (Separation)

The gift of freedom, often considered better to give than to receive. Perhaps there might have been another way, but it's too late now. That's all she wrote.

The “Dear John” letter symbolizes severance, whether it refers to a romantic relationship or any other sort. It rarely comes in an envelope.

9.The Telegram (Communication)

Direct communication. The Telegram always contains necessary information, whether it is pleasant or not.

Don't assume that those around you understand what you mean to say or what you intend to do. It may look obvious from where you stand (or it may not), but that's only your viewpoint. Sometimes you really do need to send a Telegram (or receive one).

10. The Old Friend (Sympathy)

The Old Friend might be someone you look to for guidance and wisdom, or they might simply be someone who was always there when you needed them. Sometimes a sympathetic ear will help more than anything else. The Old Friend can often see your situation more clearly than you can.

“Gosh, Lassie, you always seem to know what to do!”

“Woof Woof! Woof Woof Woof!”

11. The Ring or the Happy Ending (Union)

The Ring is union and balance. It is marriage or partnership in any form. The Ring is an end and a beginning, symbolizing endurance, purity, and commitment. The Ring also encompasses happiness in general. Don't forget to shine it now and then.

Weird Science

1. Weird Science or Interplanetary Stories (Knowledge)

The world of the future, where every day is tomorrow! There's a robot in every garage, and a rocket ship in every living room...or is that vice-versa? Anything is possible. Just stay calm, think logically, and remember, “It's for science!”

2. A Message From Space (Apprehension)

It's the type of transmission that often seems to begin with “People of Earth...” that comes from where no transmission has come before. Is it a diplomatic call, a request for aid, or are they announcing the Invasion? Will they be friendly? Will their worldwide broadcast cause you to miss the

football game? You can never tell about a...Message...
From...Space! (imagine voice-over echoing and fading
away)

3.The Young Space-Cadet (Discipline)

Though idealistic, perhaps even naive, the Space-Cadet is efficient and resourceful. The Space-Cadet's nova-bronzed face shows experience and responsibilities far beyond its youthful years. However, the harsh self-discipline of the life of a rocket-ranger is more than compensated by the chance to explore new worlds. Not only that, the Space-Cadet gets to carry a Ray-Gun and wear a really snazzy outfit!

4.The Alien Invasion (Intrusion)

Nobody believed the Message From Space until the flying saucers started landing. "We are from a highly advanced civilization and we want to eat your brains. Resistance is useless." They want slaves, plutonium, unnatural life-extension, and total world domination, and they possess infernal devices of vast destructive power. Of course, come to think of it, there isn't anything very alien about all of that, but we were here first! It may, however, still be possible to find common ground for understanding and become friends. "Hey, where'd you guys get those nifty Ray-Guns!?"

5.The Rocket-Ship (Thought)

The basic transportation of the Weird Science set (only the upper-classes own time-machines). Tom Swift would never consider challenging the unknown without his ultra-sleek, chromium-plated, art-deco void-cruiser. Just remember, the speed of light is 186,000 miles per second. It's not just a good idea, it's the law!

“That new ship really looks fast, Dr. Zarkov!” “It is, Flash. Would you like to try it out?”

6. The Amazing Discovery (Revelation)

Nobody’s ever seen anything quite like it. Who’d have thought that specimen from Planet-X would show such unusual qualities when exposed to those unknown radiations the Eccentric Professor has been experimenting with? Uh oh. Something’s eaten the navigator. Look out for the space-warp!

7. The Eccentric Professor (Creation or Imagination)

Are there some things humanity was not meant to know? Maybe, but how will you find out if you don’t blow up your laboratory now and then?

Part magician and part mad-scientist, the Eccentric Professor is the principle of creativity and imagination in all of us. Of course, the Eccentric Professor does tend to get a little wrapped up in work, and may lose perspective sometimes. “Eureka! I’ve created the self-heating nuclear burrito!”

8. The Ray-Gun (Analysis)

“From a holster of black Plutonian leather protruded the well-worn butt of a stubby proton pistol.”

Usually the product of an advanced (if twisted) civilization, the Ray-Gun’s amazing rays may disintegrate people, penetrate obstructions, or simply cause things to explode! In the wrong hands, it could do untold harm. Luckily, only a genuine Space-Cadet is very likely to have one. “Security to the bridge. Phasers on stun!”

9.The Crash-Landing (Loss)

All the astro-stabilizers have melted down, the back-up framistat is shooting off sparks, and there's this ominous grinding noise coming from the transmission. The Rocket-Ship is out of control! "Please strap yourself securely in your seat and remain calm. The Captain is doing everything possible, however, you may encounter some turbulence during the landing." AAOOOOGHA!...AAOOOOGHA!... AAOOOOGHA!....

10.The Computer or Friendly Robot (Service)

While some might be mere appliances, others can be as sophisticated as a full-blown butler, chauffeur, and companion all in one. Nearly all are designed to serve humanity and to protect humans from harm (and themselves) if at all possible. Often, the Friendly Robot acts as a recorder and can be a great storehouse of vital knowledge and history. Being made in humanity's image, however, the Friendly Robot sometimes does little except provide comedy relief. "Danger! Danger, Will Robinson!" "Aw, come on, it's just some kinda old alien artifact...."

11.Blast-Off For Home (Reintegration or Return)

The radio is still burnt-out from the cosmic ion storm, and the ship's navigator was eaten by that gigantic disgusting blob from Planet-X, and worst of all, the crew is running out of Tang breakfast drink. It's been a rough voyage, but the friendly aliens gave you the mystery element that makes your space-drive go faster. Then you found the lost expedition and recovered the prototype Z-Ray in time to save all life on Earth. It's time to Blast-Off For Home!

The Blast-Off For Home is the return implicit in any journey, inner or outer.

Thrilling Detective Stories

1. Thrilling Detective Stories (Perception)

There are a million stories here in the City of Dreams, and this is at least one of them, but which one? This is a quest for knowledge, not for its own sake, but ultimately, for survival. The Cheap Detective must unravel the knots...and then live long enough to use what has been learned!

2. The Unexpected Car-Chase (Pursuit)

It was just another night, then the headlights appeared behind you on the deserted road. You sped up, then they sped up, nearly driving you off the road! Is it a coincidence? A warning? Are you really in danger? Who was in the Dark Sedan, and what sort of deal have you gotten mixed up in? There are too many questions, and the night is long.

3. The Cheap Detective (Necessity)

A three-day beard, a glass of booze, a cigarette, a cheap-cut suit, and a beaten-up hat. Don't let it all fool you. Beneath that gruff exterior is a gruff interior. But the Cheap Detective has a heart of gold (and a .45 in a shoulder-holster with a clip full of lead). Just remember, when the going gets tough, the tough charge a flat fee per day plus expenses, sweetheart!

4. A Rainy Night Downtown (Exposure)

The rain washes down the windshield, making the sleazy neon signs of Ennui Boulevard run like a nightmare impressionist painting. You light up another Lucky Strike as you wait for the suspect to come out of a run-down building. This might be the break in the case that you've

been waiting for, but right now, it's just another Rainy Night Downtown.

The Rainy Night Downtown symbolizes waiting and vigilance. It is associated with both vulnerability and possibility.

5. The Dark Sedan (Fate)

Sometimes, you see the Dark Sedan on Main Street, just following silently behind someone walking down the sidewalk. Then...blam! Sometimes, it takes people for a ride and they never come back. When they do come back, they usually won't talk about it. Anybody could be driving the Dark Sedan. You never know when you'll see the headlights appear behind you. The Dark Sedan is a manifestation of Fate and the Unknown. "Just get in the car, quiet-like, Mack! You're goin' for a little ride."

6. The Baffling Case (Mystery)

For years you've just been doing your job, day in and day out, then suddenly, there it is. It's the nut that won't crack, the Gordian Knot, the dreaded hard case they always talk about. You might have tried to keep your nose clean, but you're in it now!

"Hurry, Watson. The game's afoot."

7. The Dangerous Blonde (Desire)

She had the kind of blue eyes you could die for. Maybe soon. The Cheap Detective felt his head swimming as she pressed her svelte body close to his - but he knew she was dangerous!

The Dangerous Blonde can represent temptation,

distraction, material-attachment, and out-right peril! It's that thing that tempts you to do something that you know, deep down, you would come to regret.

"It's not true," she said breathily. "I didn't shoot him! Oh, please hold me, darling!"

8. The .45 Automatic (Compulsion)

The Rod. The Gat. The Roscoe. Nearly everybody in the Thrilling Detective Stories has one. The .45 Automatic can get you into and out of a lot of trouble. But mainly, cleaning the .45 Automatic gives you something to do while you're sitting around your sleazy downtown detective agency office, besides watching the neon sign outside blink on and off.

9. Taking the Rap (Consequence)

The pieces are falling into place, the skeletons are tumbling out of the closet, and the whole dirty situation is beginning to become clear. The cops are putting on the pressure and the squealers are starting to give. There's gonna be some hard time.

"Somebody's going over, sweetheart, and it's not going to be me!"

10. The D.A. (Determinacy or Causality)

Is the D.A. a good friend or a bad enemy? It's hard to tell sometimes. The D.A. represents law, order, and authority, and sometimes that isn't very good for the Cheap Detective. The D.A. has the power to protect, but the D.A. can also turn on the heat!

"You're coming with us, Shamus. The boys downtown

want to talk with for a little while.”

11. The Final Clue (Understanding)

This is the denouement, the moment when it all becomes clear. The Final Clue might be something small that was overlooked earlier, or it might be a sudden revelation, or maybe the culprit just breaks down when you gather all the suspects at a dinner party, but whatever it is, it is the one thing that will bring the quarry to bay and lay the mystery to rest. The Final Clue represents both enlightenment and victory!

“By Jove, Holmes, that’s astounding!” “Elementary, my dear Watson.”

Alternative suits, such as The Monster Movie, Daring Espionage, and The Sit-Com have evolved as the Hard Boiled Tarot has moved through the years. A War Move suit had a brief currency, but most users felt that the typical cards, such as “The One With Your Name On It” were just too overwhelmingly negative. Of course, as is sometimes done with many forms of tarot cards, the meaning of cards drawn reversed (facing away) can be read with reversed meaning. Any tarot layout, such as the “Celtic Cross,” can readily be used with the Hard Boiled Tarot. While no graphic version of the cards is now known to exist, some believe that a full pictorial Hard Boiled Tarot of Tales may still be found sometime in the future.

...but entertaining or edifying as all of this may or may not be, none of it is as significant as the essential opportunity afforded by the rich, if tacky, ocean of popular culture that permeates us and surrounds us. The images and stories that we loved in our earliest childhood, the characters that meant something to us as we grew older, have the emotional resonance to act as great wellsprings of magical energy for us now. All the strange and gooey fruits

of the popular imagination are wholesome for the modern magician as long we know where the energy comes from and do not confuse the appearance with the archetype underneath. Go ahead – you CAN put it in your mouth – you DO know where it’s been...even if it may produce a little stomach upset now and then.

Pop culture, however, is more than just a source of archetypal characters, images, and energy. The contents of this gaudy world can be used as the gods and spirits are used, just as they, in a sense, use us. Pop culture is a recursive arena for our concepts. Our dreams and visions are incorporated into our art and distributed across the world, influencing others and, eventually, through them, ourselves. How much easier is it to imagine the miraculous since the advent of convincing special effects in movies? Joseph Campbell, the great mythologist, helped George Lucas refine and describe his concept of “the force,” essentially distilling the subtle-energy concepts of many cultures into a brief jargon-free description. This externalization of our collective imagination stretches the imagination of the individual and is, in the long run, initiatory. Given an experience with enough sensory richness, the brain doesn’t treat imagined experience any differently from remembered experience.

Just remember...there are a trillion, trillion stories here in the Eternal City, however, most of them use the same old plot-lines over and over. Only the appearances are changed to exploit the innocent. Any resemblance found in the Hard-Boiled Tarot of Tales to existing people, places, things, or events is just synchronicity.

You’ll laugh! You’ll cry! You’ll be amazed! We guarantee you’ll never forget. . .

THE HARD-BOILED TAROT OF TALES

Now playing at a theatre in you. DG - (Divine Guidance

Suggested)

Whitcomb, Bill (1959 -) has been fascinated by magic, symbols, and language since contracting semiotic fever as a child. He has spent the greater part of his life in pursuit of magical knowledge and has, on occasion, found some. He is a member of the neo-tribalist network WOC, but hangs with a variety of other organizations. Whitcomb believes, “The two great tasks for today’s magicians are to develop magical traditions integrated with modern ways of life and to make our spiritual work manifest in our communities.”

Bill lives in the beautiful Northwest with his wife, Marian, and several odd cats. He currently works for a corporation where he applies his knowledge of arcane symbols and ritual practices to software development and documentation. Whitcomb is the Author of *The Magician’s Companion* (Llewellyn Publications, 1993), a comprehensive reference to traditional magical systems, *The Magician’s Reflection* (soon to be re-released by Megalithica Press), an encyclopedia of magical symbolism notable for its attempt to guide the reader through the creation of personal symbols and rituals. Other works include writing for *The Big Book of Vice* (Paradox Press, 1999), a cartoon history of vice in America. Bill is also working on *Selections from the Dream Manual* (a collaborative effort with the artist Michael Skrtic) which will be published by Megalithica in the not too distant future.

Deharan Forgiveness and Banishment Ritual

Taylor Ellwood

(Dehara is a pop culture system of magic based on the *Wraeththu* fantasy novels by Storm Constantine. For

**more information see *Grimoire Dehara: Kaimana,*
published by Immanion Press.)**

I woke up in a bad mood. I'd been dreaming about some people who long ago in the past had done some unpleasant things to me. I usually don't think about them, but occasionally I remember what they did and feel a lot of anger toward them. Each time I feel that anger, I also feel frustration, because there doesn't seem to be much I can do to vent that anger toward them. Today was no different, until I meditated and realized that my real source of frustration wasn't what those people did, but my choice to brood on what they did. I felt like I had no control, but if anything I was *giving* my them control and energy by continuing to dwell on the past, instead of focusing on the present and future.

To rectify that problem, I decided it was time to stop investing energy in the past and start focusing on what I could do about it. I decided to create a ritual of forgiveness, which would also act as a banishment of and release of the energy I was keeping in those past situations. I couldn't talk with the majority of the people I was forgiving as they are people I am no longer in touch with for various reasons. But by forgiving both the person who offended me and forgiving myself for my part in the various situations, I could release the connection between myself and that person and then banish that person from my mind. I didn't want to not feel an emotion such as anger, but I also didn't want that emotion to continue controlling me, especially with situations that had occurred long ago.

I chose to work with the Deharan system, because it's a system I already use on a fairly regular basis. I went up to my ritual room and called the quarters, calling to the Dehara (Wraeththu Deities) Aghama, Aruhani, Miyacala, Lunil, and Agave. Aghama is the Dehar of Space and Spirit; Aruhani is the Dehar of Death, Rebirth and Aruna

(sex magic); Miyacala is the Dehar of Initiation and Magic; Lunil is the Dehar of Flexibility and Flow; and Agave is the Dehar of Protection and Healing. By asking them to create a sacred space where I could do my ritual of forgiveness, I felt that I was protected from any malice that those evoked might bear me.

Once the circle was cast, I sat down and brought before me a bell and a crystal pendant. I rang the bell and called the full name of the person, to evoke his or her presence into the circle. As the tone of the bell faded, I sat and meditated on that person and the harms I had done to him/her as well as the harms done to me. I recounted in excellent detail every way I felt those people had hurt me. I then recounted how I knew I had hurt those people in return, so that I could forgive myself for the harm I caused them. I didn't ask for forgiveness from them for what I did because I felt it would be a symbolic gesture and not necessarily in tune with how those people authentically felt about me.

Each time I recited the litany of hurts, of what had occurred, and then said, "I forgive you for what you have done and I banish this connection, releasing your energy back to you and re-claiming my energy for myself. Go in peace on your journey." I took the crystal pendant and wrapped it around my hand, so that I could hold the crystal between my thumb and forefinger. I raised it in the air and traced a symbol that I devised for the ritual to cut the lingering connection between myself and the other person (You can create your own symbol which represents the cutting of ties.)

Each time I did this, I imagined two clasped hands slowly uncurling and releasing, each person's energy going back to that person. As I banished the energy of the other person, I felt a weight come off of me and I also felt myself rejuvenated by re-claiming my own energy.

After I finished forgiving everyone, including myself for

what I could remember, I did a Taoist exercise called the fusion of the five elements. (To learn more about this technique, see Mantak Chia's *Fusion of the Five Elements*.) It is designed to recycle negative emotional energy into positive energy. Because I had recalled my energy from those incidents, I wanted to make sure I did a purification to cleanse that energy of any leftover negative emotions. I used the fusion technique, because it is an excellent method for cleansing the energetic and physical body, while also recycling the energy so it can be merged back into the energetic body of the person.

The forgiveness ritual can be adapted to any spirituality or system of magic. I used a pop culture system because I think it's an effective medium for me to use. However you could just as likely adapt it to a system that relies on more traditional gods or ceremonial equipment. The main point of the ritual is to be able to forgive both the people and yourself for previous harm that has occurred and then be able to banish and let go of the harmful energy that is keeping the connections in place.

For many people forgiveness is hard to give because we mistakenly believe that it also means we condone what occurred to us. When you also include the Christian belief to turn the other cheek, it's understandable why forgiveness is hard to give. Nobody wants to invite somebody else to walk all over them yet again. We sometimes hold on to our emotions of anger and unhappiness because it reminds us of what the person did (and perhaps reminds us why we avoid them, so we hopefully don't forget and get into the same situation again!). The problem is that holding onto those emotions continues to let that person affect us. We continue to react to what happened, and we also poison ourselves by continuing to feel anger toward that person. When a person can't forgive another person, who has the power in that situation? Forgiving someone doesn't mean you have to turn the other cheek or condone bad behavior.

Doing a forgiveness ritual has a number of benefits. It allows you to set aside any lingering unhappiness or resentment you feel toward someone or yourself for a situation. Forgiving someone can be for your benefit as well as the other person's, because you are no longer putting energy into that person or the situation. In fact, forgiveness in this kind of ritual is a conscious act, a conscious choice to set aside feelings of resentment and move on by forgiving the person. A final benefit of forgiveness is that you forgive yourself as well. Sometimes a person can be angry at him or herself for getting involved a situation, or for his or her own actions that caused hurt to another. That anger can hurt the self-esteem a person has, but by forgiving yourself, you can let it go, and yet still learn from the situation so it doesn't happen again.

The forgiveness ritual doesn't have to involve evocation. I used evocation because it was an excellent way to release the energy, but you could also invoke the memories of the situation or person and then go into your memories and forgive the person and yourself. You could also use a meditative pathworking to revisit what occurred and change the outcome to put it behind you. Another method could involve burning candles with symbols that represented the situations or people you are unhappy with. Imagine all the anger and unhappiness going into the symbols. Light the candles, and use the fire of forgiveness to banish the linger energy of your unhappiness and anger.

There are likely other methods you can devise to do a forgiveness ritual. Experiment with what you know best. Remember, in the end, forgiveness is more for you than for anyone you forgive. If you can let go of the unhappiness and anger you feel then you have empowered yourself to move on and live life a bit less weighed down than before. You've let go of feelings that defined your actions and freed yourself to focus on what is important to you.

Taylor Ellwood is the author of Pop Culture Magick, Space/Time Magic, Inner Alchemy, Multi-Media Magic, and co-author of Kink Magic. He is also the managing non-fiction editor of Immanion Press/Megalithica books, and is currently engaged in starting up a life coaching career. To learn more about him, please visit <http://www.thegreenwolf.com>.