THE LIVING TEMPLE OF WITCHCRAFT

VOLUME TWO
THE JOURNEY OF THE GOD

CHRISTOPHER PENCZAK

Body, Mind, Spirit / Wicca & Witchcraft

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Christopher Penczak (New Hampshire) is an award-winning author, teacher, and healing practitioner. He is a faculty member of the North Eastern Institute of Whole Health and a certified Reiki Master (Teacher) in the Usui-Tibetan and Shamballa traditions. He is the author of twelve books, including the first five books in this critically acclaimed series: *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft*, *The Outer Temple of Witchcraft*, *The Temple of Shamanic Witchcraft*, *The Temple of High Witchcraft*, and *The Living Temple of Witchcraft, Volume One*.

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THE LIVING TEMPLE OF WITCHCRAFT

Mystery, Ministry, and the Magickal Life

Volume Two: The Journey of the God

Christopher Penczak

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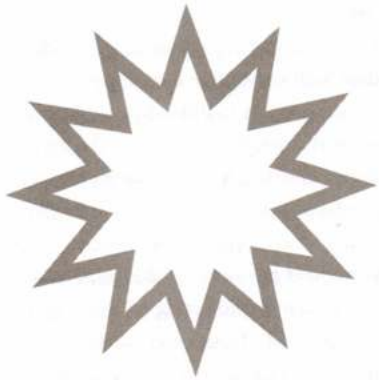


Introduction

The Labors of the Witch

You hold in your hands the second volume of a textbook used to train witches as high priests and high priestesses when they study with me. Originally, the book was envisioned as one whole and complete text, but there was so much information, and so many guided experiences to share with students, that it soon became apparent after the first draft that the culmination of my Temple of Witchcraft series of books would have to be divided into two separate volumes. Thankfully there is a natural break in the teachings, which lends itself to the division of one course into two separate volumes.

While there are many things that naturally come up organically through classroom discussion, question-and-answer periods, and one-on-one time with a student, they don't naturally come up in the lesson plan. When writing this book, I had to make sure that complex and personal topics of leadership, theology, group dynamics, and personal development were included to give the student reading the book the most

complete education possible, but I also had to make sure that such topics appeared with a pattern, with an overall spiritual purpose that fit each lesson.

While both books deal with what I like to call the "three Ms"—mystery, ministry, and the magickal life—as all three are essential to a successful high priest/ess, Volume One of *The Living Temple of Witchcraft* is based upon the mythos of the Descent of the Goddess. For those unfamiliar with it, Wiccan lore reconstructs the myth of the Goddess descending to the Underworld to explore the mysteries of life, death, and rebirth. It is taken from one of the oldest myths we have, the story of Inanna, who descends through seven gateways to meet her sister Erishkigal, the Queen of the Underworld. At each gate, she is forced to remove an article of clothing, jewelry, or other emblem of power or office as the Queen of Heaven and Earth. In the Underworld, she has no power or rank. Modern witches and mystics see the seven gates as an allegory for the seven energy centers known as the chakras. She descends, moving from head to root. She first gives up her crown, aligning the first gate with the crown chakra. Each tool roughly corresponds with a power center until she gives up her robe, her royal gown, for the root chakra, exposing her body completely, like many of those in the British Traditional forms of Wicca, being skyclad in the circle before the gods.

The goddess Inanna descends faithfully, and when she arrives at the heart of the Underworld, before the throne of her sister, she is naked, cold, and alone, facing the ultimate challenge of death. Through her own ingenuity, she is prepared, and undergoes a rebirth process as her faithful servants, the Asushimir, cleverly descend, bargaining with Erishkigal for Inanna's body, and feed her the Waters of Life and the Food of Life, resurrecting her. She returns to the land of the living with new insight and power.

But her story does not end there. In the Wiccan mythos, the Goddess is met not by her shadow sister, but the God, and the story does end with her acceptance of him and his Underworld mysteries. But in the story of Inanna, the God is drawn into the tale in a different way.

Inanna is claimed by the Underworld, and it will not give her up. Yet she refuses to remain, and the "demons" of the Underworld, under the command of Erishkigal, appear to have no power over her. They demand a replacement for her in the Underworld. They try to take her loyal servants. She protects them and refuses to let the Underworld claim them before their time. Inanna then happens to see her husband,

Dumuzi the shepherd, who is not concerned for his missing wife, sitting on her throne, eating rich food, and wearing fine clothes. She is enraged and allows the demons of the Underworld to claim Dumuzi. He tries to escape and is eventually caught. Later, his sister Geshtinana makes a deal with Inanna and the forces of the Underworld, where she shall take her brother's place in the Underworld for six months of the year.

The resulting cycle of six months below and six months above is indicative of a yearly fertility mystery. Many cultures have a divine figure who descends for a time to bring the fall and winter, and returns to usher in the spring and summer, only to descend again. In our own modern witchcraft mythos, the God is divided into a light side and a dark side, a god of life and a god of death. The life god is known as the Oak King, Green Knight, Sun Child, and Green Man. He is reborn from the Underworld womb of the Goddess at the winter solstice. He grows in power as the Sun King and Grain God. His shadow grows as the light grows, and on the summer solstice he faces his shadow half, the dark god. Known as the Holly King, Horned Hunter, and Underworld Lord, he defeats the god of life, and rules from above for the next six months, until the life god is born again.

While the first volume explored the mysteries of the Goddess through her descent of seven gates, this second volume looks at the journey of the God through the cycle of the year. The yearly turning of the seasons is a pivotal part of the mysteries of witchcraft. Today we celebrate an eightfold seasonal calendar known as the Wheel of the Year, tracing the development of the God and Goddess through the seasons. Most basic witchcraft books cover the rites and rituals popular at these times. Yet there is so much more to the mystery.

Not only is the Wheel of the Year a passage of time through four seasons, with four solar holidays marking the turning of the seasons and four Celtic fire festivals marking the peak of the seasons' power, but also the turning of the wheel is a journey through the heavens. The Sun passes through twelve zodiac signs, twelve heavenly stations, as the year progresses. Here we have the origin of the twelve months, and each zodiac sign has correspondences with seasons, elements, planets, myths, and its own spiritual lessons. Sadly, while we know that detailed knowledge of astrology and the seasons is a part of our spiritual ancestry, there is not a surviving detailed myth of a God's journey through the year, as there is for the Goddess's descent into the Underworld.

Only one pagan myth has been used, in fractured form, to detail the journey through the zodiac, and I have chosen to work with it when teaching the mysteries of the God as a complement to the Descent of the Goddess. The labors of Hercules have long been associated with the zodiac, and while some of them link nicely to a specific sign, others are not as obvious. Modern mystics have tried to make these fragmentary stories—as no single complete account of the labors has survived from the ancient world to the modern era—fit a cohesive whole with varying degrees of success. The correspondences found in this book reflect my own personal correspondences, drawing upon the works of modern mystics, yet often varying from their counsel because I'm using the twelve labors in the context of a modern neopagan teaching.

While the seven gates of the Goddess's descent detail more inward spiritual mysteries, levels of consciousness that must be experienced and mastered, the twelve labors of Hercules give the modern witch a new platform from which to study. These next twelve lessons are much like labors. They represent a "rounding out" of the modern witch's education, mingling spiritual lessons, self-development exercises, philosophy, theology, and advice for the budding high priest/ess. The labors help you truly integrate the mysteries of each zodiac sign, and all your previous experiences and training in the Temple of Witchcraft series, with the call to ministry, in any role you may fulfill as a high priest/ess. As discussed in Volume One of this series, no one book can make you a high priest/ess, yet these two volumes, in combination, can better prepare you for such a role if the Goddess and God are calling you to it. Lastly, the work of the labors and self-study help you integrate all of these levels of knowing into your daily life. If you can't use it to improve your life, to live a magickal life, then ultimately what good is any esoteric knowledge?

When teaching this course to my students, I truly consider this portion of the class to be the "labors" of the training, as there are many outside projects, as well as research and study, that must be done to successfully complete it. It is labor-intensive, and quite a challenge, for the teacher no longer spoon-feeds all the information. Experience, discussion, and outside exploration play a huge part in this course. Each student has an opportunity to teach the class, make presentations, and lead ritual and meditation. All that I ask my flesh-and-blood students to do has been included here for the home student. In fact, much more is required of the home student, as there is no large group to share the

workload. Unlike in a classroom setting, no one will be checking up to make sure you are doing all the work necessary, but if you are truly serious about your education as a witch, you will take advantage of all learning opportunities and suggestions.

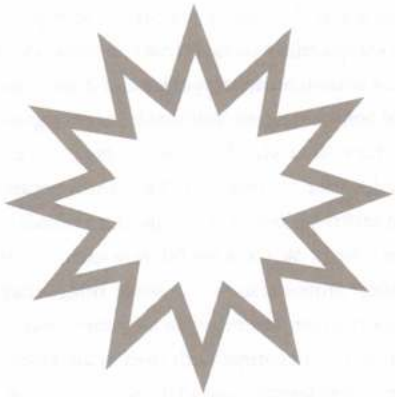
While Volume Two of *The Living Temple of Witchcraft* can be used alone intellectually to complete the course, it assumes you have already worked through the material in Volume One. Details on making the nineteen-knotted witch's cord and other techniques mentioned in the lessons, homework, and tips sections are covered in Volume One. The mysteries of Volume One prepare you to continue on to Volume Two. The first four Temple of Witchcraft books prepare you for both volumes of level five, the training of spirit and the mysteries of both Goddess and God. References to techniques or lessons in past books will be abbreviated. The first level, the level of fire, *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft*, will be abbreviated as *ITOW*, with a chapter or exercise number. The second level, the level of earth, *The Outer Temple of Witchcraft*, will be noted as *OTOW*. *The Temple of Shamanic Witchcraft*, the level of water, is identified as *TOSW*, while the air teachings of *The Temple of High Witchcraft* are noted as *TOHW*. (*The Living Temple of Witchcraft* will be *LTOW*, vol. 1 or vol. 2.)

For those familiar with the first four books of the Temple of Witchcraft series, the format for the last level of training is a bit different. Rather than having four introductory chapters followed by twelve monthly lessons, to be culminated in a year and a day with a final self-initiation ritual, level five is divided into two major parts, now separated as Volume One and Volume Two. The lessons of each volume are preceded by an introductory chapter explaining the concepts behind the lessons, along with detailing any preparatory work the student must do. Volume One has seven lessons, for each of the gates of the Goddess. Volume Two is followed by twelve lessons, one for each sign of the zodiac. The final chapter culminates in a self-initiation ritual combining the lessons of the two volumes in an intense and personal experience with the gods.

While a book is no substitute for an in-person teacher and mentor, I've tried to encapsulate all that I offer my students and more into this series of books and CD companion sets, to create a resource for those seeking the mysteries of witchcraft but lacking the right teacher, group, or area in which to pursue these studies. Now, with these resources, a solitary witch can develop from the beginning stages through the deeper mysteries. I fervently hope that you continue the practice of sharing knowledge, experience, and wisdom, and,

through your own ministry, model a healthy, happy, and holy magickal life as a modern witch. I hope that you share your wisdom, formally and informally, to help all of us heal, transform, and grow. Only then will my mission to share my own experiences and teachings be complete.

Blessed be,
Christopher Penczak



The Journey of the God through the Circle of Stars

No matter how much training they have had and how confident they are in their abilities, few think they are ready to be a high priest/ess. When you really contemplate the vastness of magick, of spirituality and the responsibilities of the high priest/ess, it's easy to understand why. There is always something more to learn. There is always something more to do. You can get caught in the trap of the perpetual student, always studying and seeking, rather than taking responsibility and doing the work of your will in the world. A high priest/ess knows that he or she will always be a student, but also hears and answers the call to clergy.

I've found that when I've taught my own students, they have all the education they need. They have been exposed to a wide range of magick and traditions, and encouraged to develop their own personal style, yet they feel like they have "holes." Few master a subject the first time they are taught it. We naturally gravitate toward the things we are good at, while the details of tasks that were not our favorites might slip away.

By going through the seven chakras, after working deeply with the mysteries of the four elements, students are spiritually prepared for this work. I've then used the model of the twelve zodiac signs, a complete archetypal look at human consciousness, to "round out" their education and help them gain confidence in putting their skills together.

Over the course of the zodiac wheel year-and-a-day program, students learn to set personal goals in their education and practice. They must contemplate their True Will, as they know it thus far, and think about the skills they will need in order to fulfill their True Will in the role of clergy. What skills do they need to exercise? Where in their education are they lacking? Students set a "quest" of things they seek to accomplish in that year and a day. They craft a master spell in alignment with their will and work for the year. A final project, also in harmony with their goals, is set.

The twelve signs, and their lessons, round us out, making us face all twelve aspects of the wheel, through contemplation of philosophy, theology, meditations, and rituals. We align with divinities in the circle of stars and do ritual workings with them to know them better, and to know ourselves. One can look at classic myths and archetypes, particularly the twelve labors of Hercules, as the challenges of both life and the zodiac. When we set our goal lists, what we think we need and what we really need become two separate things, and going through the cycle of the zodiac shows us our strengths and weaknesses, helping us reevaluate our goals and projects.

In a classroom setting, further work is divided. In each meeting, there is a lesson led by me, but the students themselves also present several times during the year. Each is required to lead a ritual for the group. If you have been practicing ritual since your *OTOW* training, the mechanics should be no problem, but to be suddenly in charge, to be the high priest/ess of the group ritual, can be daunting. Each student has to present a myth, a religion, and a biography. We expand our knowledge of mythology by sharing tales and discussing their magickal significance. We do a cross-cultural religious survey. We study some of the personalities of witchcraft, to get a better understanding of our more immediate history, which is often left in the dark in favor of studying the more ancient root of the Craft.

The solitary student lacks the advantage of the group, to share in the workload, offer discussion, and give companionship on the path. Without these supports, the workload of this course is quite challenging. Solitary students are encouraged to work through

the bulk of the lesson to the best of their ability. If you do have the opportunity to study with like-minded individuals of the same education level as you go through this course all together, you can support each other and share the workload, but it is not necessary. It is similar to the difference between a classroom graduate course and a directed self-study graduate course. Both are valuable, but offer different experiences. Solitary self-study has less supervision and requires more personal discipline.

The circle of stars is a never-ending cycle, spiraling around and around. Our Sun makes the circle every year, as you will be doing. Because it is a circle without end or beginning, there is no "right" place to start. When teaching this course, Lesson Eight corresponds to whatever zodiac sign the Sun occupies for the meeting, as we meet once a month. We typically begin in Capricorn, just after the holidays, as the first seven lessons occur in the fall. In this book, I've started Lesson Eight in Aries, the natural start of the zodiac, rather than the traditional witch's New Year in Samhain (Scorpio) or Yule (Sagittarius/Capricorn). Feel free to start the cycle wherever you desire, as long as you complete it. If the training takes longer than a year and a day, that's fine. Better to take two years and two days, and do things well, than rush through and complete on time. Everyone's life has a different rhythm and cycle. If you can follow the cycle of the Sun corresponding with the lesson, you will move in greater harmony with the work, but it's not an absolute rule.

Year-and-a-Day Goals

After our journey through the seven temples, the remaining twelve lessons and initiation ritual follow the familiar year-and-a-day pattern. In mythology, the year-and-a-day structure is used in quests, where mythic figures would return to the same place in a year-and-a-day's time. Our journey through the circle of the zodiac is much like a quest. Quests are hallmarked by goals. The quester is seeking to accomplish something, such as discovering an artifact or sacred land. Heroes would train with the gods and spirits for a year and a day, returning transformed.

On your year-and-a-day quest, you are also seeking to accomplish something. Yet the tasks that will best serve your development might not suit other students. Instead of creating a one-size-fits-all program for my students, I encourage them to devise

their own quests. They must set and fulfill their own goals, which are far more important than any goals I could set. Developing good goal-setting skills serves not only in furthering your education, but in making your entire life magickal. The most successful, accomplished, healthy, and happy people I know are all fairly adept at setting goals, and they each have different goals. What is an accomplishment for one might be lounging for another, but they have managed their time and energy to manifest the life they desire in accord with their higher calling. Many of these successful people are not necessarily witches, yet they all live a magickal life.

Take the self-evaluation in appendix VI of the first volume to understand your own strengths and weaknesses. By answering these questions, you will be better able to create your own year-and-a-day quest. Use the information to make a curriculum based on goals you wish to accomplish in the year's time. Do you have the knowledge, skills, tools, and expertise, or do you need to seek outside aid in the process? Do you have everything you need, but have simply been slow in pursuing your goals, or do you need a healer, guide, or mentor to help you on the path? Such help can prove to be invaluable. Keep in mind that part of your goals will be your final project and master spell (see page 24), so don't try to be overly ambitious, but make sure you challenge yourself to be the best witch you can be. This is the time to fill in any remaining holes in your foundation. With a solid foundation, you will build a magickal life that will continue to nourish you as you do your work in the world.

The following are samples of year-and-a-day quests:

Year-and-a-Day Quest, Example 1

Fulfill my vision of a high priestess.

Continue with a daily magickal practice.

Develop my relationship with the element of fire.

Work on opening my heart chakra.

Work on being thankful for all that I have.

Work on public speaking in rituals by taking on more roles in public rituals.

Complete my Book of Shadows—writing out a ritual for a Moon Circle, Sun Circle, and all of the Wheel of the Year rituals.

Write a paper on the history of the Craft, from the past to the modern revival.

Study some Gaelic words and use them in ritual.

Read tarot cards for someone I don't know.

Do healing magick at least one month for myself and family.

Take on a student and teach a basic introduction to witchcraft class and simple meditation techniques.

Learn basic herbalism.

Make a rattle.

Meditate deeply with a crystal.

Explore the past life in Rome that I'm afraid to explore.

Turn the Wheel of the Year through ritual celebration of the Sabbats and Esbats.

Year-and-a-Day Quest, Example 2

Gain greater mastery over the element of earth by

- spending more time outside;
- starting an exercise program;
- eating more healthfully and learning nutrition;
- working with crystals.

Gain great ability with the throat and third eye chakras—psychic ability:

- Meditate regularly.
- Practice psychic diagnosis of health cases.
- Practice astral projection.

Learn basic astrology.

Learn a mainstream healing modality such as Reiki.

Get a sword for ritual use and speak up more in ritual to learn more about the element of air.

Turn the Wheel of the Year through ritual celebration of the Sabbats and Esbats.

Year-and-a-Day Quest, Example 3

Really work on healing my relationship with the shadow.

Do a shamanic journey once a month.

Make a different reality map.

Learn the basics of the Norse runes.

Study Celtic history and Celtic magick.

Lead a group on a guided meditation.

Turn the Wheel of the Year through ritual celebration of the Sabbats and Esbats.

Read more scholarly books on witchcraft.

As you can see, many of the goals in the list are things you might already be doing in your daily life. And the witches who made these lists probably have many more things going on in their magickal lives, but these were the goals they wanted to focus on and be more consistent in doing.

Building a Direct Relationship with Divinity

Central to the mysteries of witchcraft is the mystery of the gods. For many witches, a relationship with the gods is the most natural and easy thing on their path. The gods clearly chose them and made the path evident. For other witches, the gods are like the classic Gordian knot, with no end, no beginning, and no understanding. They are not clear and their role in our lives is not clear. In *OTOW*, I posed the question, "Who are the gods?" The answer to this question is a part of the mysteries.

For modern witches who are coming from a variety of backgrounds, from traditional mainstream monotheistic religions and from modern psychological, self-help backgrounds, the gods are quite often elusive. We learn the rituals and call upon the gods. We learn their mythologies. But do we truly understand?

Each priest/ess will have a different view of and relationship with their gods, and through the gods, find their connection to the heart of the divine creative force. Some are worshipful, formal, and ceremonial. Many bring their ideas of worship from other

religions into paganism. That's not a bad thing, assuming that those ideas help them in the Craft. And ideas will always evolve and flow over time. What you believe now, and what your relationship with the divine is now, will not be the same in ten years.

For me, it has been about partnership. My patron goddess is my goddess, but I know she is one of many. She is my partner in magick, and my friend, healer, and guide. I love and respect her, and do see her as a goddess, but I also know that I am divine. We are just on different paths, or in different places. Her role in the relationship we have is one thing, while mine is another. It is a personal relationship.

I think of my Christian upbringing, and the image I had of Jesus as god—on the cross, up on the wall, behind the altar, distant from the congregation. Then I think of how Jesus, assuming he was a historical figure, would be with his disciples. They would share long walks and long talks, and they would take meals together. They had a personal relationship. The relationships I have with my gods are quite the same. Since they are not incarnate, we do not often have meals together, but offerings, in a way, are sharing meals together. Many modern pagans will put down the ancient practice of offerings, feeling the gods don't need anything material, yet there is a powerful reason behind the practice. The gods and spirits take the energy of the offerings, and it helps forge stronger links, stronger relationships between you. The gods don't "need" the offerings, but your relationships together need the time and energy.

For your year-and-a-day practice, to deepen your relationship with the gods, I want you to "choose" your pantheon of twelve gods to work with in the coming year. I love the Greek image of the twelve gods of Olympus—based loosely upon the twelve signs of the zodiac—each one ruling over one section of "reality" as humanity knows it. Together they cover the main areas of life, though the Greeks worshipped many other gods. Use the zodiac model to create your own pantheon.

You can choose gods from all one culture, similar cultures (such as general Celtic instead of focusing specifically on the Irish), or different cultures all together. I think the choice should be determined by your own personal practice and how you see your ministry evolving. I suggest that you start with the gods you know well and have worked with before. Where do they fit into the pantheon? Do your patron and Master-Teacher fit into it? Then look to see the remaining spaces. If you have all gods of one type, such as war gods, the pantheon pattern of the zodiac is telling you to spread out

your energy, and learn a bit about other forms of divinity. Wherever you are lacking a divinity, do some research and choose your gods. Once your pantheon is complete, you will be working with the corresponding god for each zodiac sign in your year-and-a-day course of study. I've corresponded the twelve zodiac signs to twelve basic archetypes in the lessons.

Aries	Warrior
Taurus	Steward
Gemini	Trickster
Cancer	Mother
Leo	Solar deity or artisan
Virgo	Servant or maiden
Libra	Judge
Scorpio	Guardian
Sagittarius	Teacher
Capricorn	Father
Aquarius	Rebel
Pisces	Ecstatic

Though I think forethought is excellent, you might find it helpful to read the zodiac lesson first, and pick your deity to match its energy as you learn the lesson, culminating in your ritual with that deity at the end of the lesson. A deity might choose you instead, so be open to new contacts with the divine that you did not expect. You can do a ritual thinking you will be meeting Zeus, and the Dagda shows up. Be willing to work with whoever shows up, for they might have deeper wisdom for you than the ones you chose intellectually.

As community leaders, bridge builders, and priest/esses, we should also keep in mind that the dominant views of divinity in modern neopaganism outlined in this series of books are not the only views of divinity in the pagan world. Many traditions that seek to be as separate from Wicca as possible, such as some Saxon and Norse heathen traditions and non-Gardnerian forms of British witchcraft, are strictly polytheistic with little influence from ceremonial magick, the Principle of Mentalism (*ITOW*, chapter 8), or Eastern

thought. We must be respectful of all views of divinity as we are all seeking the mysteries in our own way.

The Gifts of the Goddess

In many traditions of witchcraft, the Goddess is said to "gift" her secret children with specific blessings. Awakening to these blessings that are inherent in you is part of awakening to your identity as a witch, as a secret child of the Goddess. Our training helps awaken and develop these gifts, but the nature of her gifts sets the tone of our spiritual practice, making it different from other mystical practices.

There are several versions of the gifts, usually numbering twelve or thirteen. The "original" list is outlined in Charles G. Leland's *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches*:

To grant success in love.
To bless or curse with power friends or enemies [to do good or evil].
To converse with spirits.
To find hidden treasures in ancient ruins.
To conjure the spirits of priests who died leaving treasures.
To understand the voice of the wind.
To change water into wine.
To divine with cards.
To know the secrets of the hand (palmistry).
To cure diseases.
To tame wild beasts.
To make those who are ugly beautiful.

In his book *Italian Witchcraft*, author Raven Grimassi gives a list that is slightly different from the Aradia material that is available to us:

To bring success in love.
To bless and consecrate.
To speak with spirits.
To know of hidden things.
To call forth spirits.

To know the Voice of the Wind.
To possess the knowledge of transformation.
To possess the knowledge of divination.
To know and understand secret signs.
To cure disease.
To bring forth beauty.
To have influence over wild beasts.
To know the secrets of the hands.[1]

My own teachings have also slightly altered the list of the gifts of the Goddess, influenced by several versions circulating among modern witches, and giving them astrological associations for these last twelve lessons. It was not originally an astrologically based system, but I've found wisdom in looking at the gifts of the Goddess as a part of this cycle, and trying to emphasize and develop the abilities as I study each lesson:

Aries: *To use the power to bless friends and curse enemies.*
Taurus: *To bring forth beauty—inner and outer.*
Gemini: *To understand the secret signs of the hands, stars, cards, and omens.*
Cancer: *To commune with animals and wild creatures.*
Leo: *To banish people, things, and even misfortune.*
Virgo: *To cure disease and wounds of body, mind, heart, and soul.*
Libra: *To bring success in love and romance.*
Scorpio: *To sense, conjure, converse, and command spirits.*
Sagittarius: *To conjure good fortune.*
Capricorn: *To know and find hidden treasures and truths.*
Aquarius: *To understand the Voice of the Wind.*
Pisces: *To predict and control the weather.*
Spirit: *To possess the knowledge of transformation.*

1. Raven Grimassi, *Italian Witchcraft: The Old Religion of Southern Europe* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 2008), 299–300.

The Labors of Hercules

One of the modern occultists' views on the Greek myth of Hercules[2] is that Hercules, being of both divine and mortal parents, is like the initiate on the path, knowing both his divine and human, starry and earthy, sides. The twelve labors are the twelve stations of the zodiac, though just as ancient writers differ in the telling of the story, modern writers often disagree as to what labors are related to what signs, as they unfortunately don't follow a sequential pattern with the zodiac. I used my own interpretations, with reference to material by both Alice Bailey and Wynn Westcott. The original epic of the labors, written by Peisandros of Rhodes near 600 BCE, is lost to us, but we can reconstitute the story through the fragments that have survived in other classical writings. There is speculation that there were originally only ten labors, but the list was altered to fit the twelvefold pattern. The two additional labors may not have been previously accepted as successful because he received help. The ancient Greeks had a different concept of the constellations than we do today, not seeing Libra as a separate constellation from Scorpio, adding to the confusion of our current twelve sign associations, yet occultists have found ways to make these correspondences work with modern astrology. I have related the twelve labors to the twelve signs we are studying in this course based on past information and intuitive wisdom. Although my list doesn't always follow the chronology of the remnant Greek tales, it does follow the spirit of the twelve powers:

Aries: Capture of the Ceryneian Hind
Taurus: Capture of the Cretan Bull
Gemini: Stealing the Apples of Hesperides
Cancer: Capture of the Herd of Geryon
Leo: Slaying of the Nemean Lion
Virgo: Victory over the Amazon Queen
Libra: Death of the Erymanthean Boar
Scorpio: Death of the Lernaean Hydra
Sagittarius: Shooting of the Stymphalian Birds
Capricorn: Capture of Cerberus

2. Though usually spelled *Herakles* in Greek myth, I've chosen to use the more recognizable Roman spelling of *Hercules*.

Aquarius: Cleaning of the Stables of Augeas
Pisces: Capture of the Horses of Diomedes

The labors were initiated by the goddess Hera, the wife of Zeus. Technically, Hera was Hercules' stepmother, because although Zeus was his father, Hercules' mother was a mortal. Hera induced madness in Hercules, and in his madness he slew his wife and children. Once the madness passed and he realized what he had done, Hercules set off into the wilderness, shamed by his actions. His cousin Theseus convinced him to visit the Oracle of Delphi, which told him that for penance he must perform ten tasks set by King Eurystheus. Hercules hated Eurystheus because Zeus had originally intended for Hercules to be king, but due to Hera's manipulation, he was not. Hercules was born three months late due to Hera's magick, while Eurystheus was born two months early, fulfilling Zeus's proclamation that the next son born in the House of Perseus would be king.

While Hera is seen as the villain in this tale, all the tasks and locations where the labors take place have a strong Goddess or Underworld association, making some modern pagans speculate that the original version of these tales might have been far more initiatory and devoted to the Goddess, rather than antagonistic. For many modern pagans, the figure of Hercules is too destructive for a teaching archetype. His labors are destructive of nature, and he kills a wide variety of beasts. Yet the beasts he kills are usually monstrous, perhaps symbolizing those forces out of balance with nature, harmful to all, rather than warring with Nature herself. In our own initiatory paths, we experience many destructive forces before finding the divine. With the thought of initiation in mind, we use Hercules' journey as a guide for us on this yearlong quest. Through his stories, we gain wisdom to aid us on the journey of initiation.

Thirteen Tools of Import

One of the wonderful things about witchcraft is that we use many tools to work our magick. While some look at our traditions as materialistic, filled with "toys" (as I was once told by a Buddhist practitioner), we really use these "toys" as expressions of divine power in the material world, to partner with. Everything, including wood, stone, metal, and herbs, has a vibration, and when you want to make change in the world,

partnering with the spirit of something in the world that carries a vibration similar to what you want to attract or repel is a great boon to your magick.

The tough part is that by the time we reach a deeper level of training, we often have so many tools that we are overwhelmed. Many are just collecting dust, never used, while some have become favorites, almost to the point of being a crutch when we won't do magick without that tool. We need to find a balance. I find the fifth level an excellent time to reevaluate your relationship with ritual tools.

One of the bits of mythic lore that appeals to me is the Thirteen Treasures of Britain. As a part of our romantic mythology, the associations of these thirteen remarkable objects have been linked with grail lore and the four mythic tools of the Tuatha de Danann, found in the caers, or castles, of the Welsh Underworld. Some witchcraft traditions, such as the Alexandrian lines, teach about them in comparison to the witch's tools. Though there is some similarity, they don't seem particularly witchy to me. I've tried to associate the thirteen gifts with the thirteen moons, the twelve zodiac signs, or anything else that would have a more personal and practical application. No luck so far, though they provide some interesting lore. Arthur is said to have gone to Annwn to recover these tools, as they are linked with the sovereignty of the land. It's unclear if he recovered all of the tools. In other lore, Merlin is said to have kept them safe and hidden away.

The White Hilt Sword of Rhydderch the Generous: The sword would burst into flame from the hilt to the tip if drawn by a "well-born" man.

The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank: The hamper could turn one meal into a hundred meals.

The Horn of Bran from the North: The horn would provide any drink one desired.

The Chariot of Morgan the Wealthy: This ride possessed the ability to travel at great speed anywhere one desired. It was associated with the Chariot of Arianrhod.

The Halter of Clyno Eiddyn: This horse halter, when fixed to the foot of the user's bed, would provide any horse the user wished for by the morning, in the halter at the foot of the bed.

The Knife of Llawfronedd the Horseman: This knife could cut enough food for twenty-four men.

The Cauldron of Diwrnach the Giant: This cauldron would boil and heat the food of a hero, but if the food of a coward were placed in it, the food would remain cold.

The Whetstone of Tudwal Tudglyd: If a brave man sharpened weapons on this whetstone, any wounds inflicted by those weapons would be fatal.

The Coat of Padarn Red-Coat: This coat would identify those of noble birth by fitting perfectly. It would not fit peasants.

The Crock of Rhygenydd the Cleric: The crock would manifest the favorite foods of whoever used it.

The Chessboard of Gwenddolau ap Ceidio: The chessboard could play itself, moving the pieces with magick.

The Mantle of Arthur: The wearer of the mantle turned invisible to any observer, though the wearer could see normally.

What I do like is the idea of thirteen treasures. A friend of mine is well experienced in magick through training in several traditions, ranging from Celtic witchcraft to African diasporic traditions. He, too, built up quite an extensive collection of ritual tools. He then received a direct message from his spirits to narrow down his tools to his major power objects. Though his message was for nine tools, I have used his advice to narrow down tools to thirteen, in emulation of the thirteen tools of Britain. Narrowing down your tools doesn't mean you necessarily have to get rid of everything else. We'd all have some problems if we did. Some of our tools are simply functional. Not every candleholder is a power object, but through defining your thirteen major working tools, you get a greater focus for your practice. *OTOW*, *TOSW*, and *TOHW* each offer their own list of ritual tools. Working on more traditional witchcraft, shamanic witchcraft, or ceremonial witchcraft creates a focus for your tools. You evaluate many of the power objects you have, and you contemplate the possibility that an object is no longer useful for your stewardship. It might be time to pass it on to a student, mentor, peer, or aspiring witch, much in keeping with native traditions of passing on objects, as each object has its own life to experience.

In the Cabot tradition, a series of thirteen tools is emphasized, corresponding with the planets, including the "mythic planets" Vulcan, an intra-Mercurial planet, and

Sparta, an Earth twin. Today, many modern astrological witches will use Chiron in place of Vulcan and the asteroid belt, particularly the dwarf planet Ceres, in place of Sparta.

Sun	Candle
Moon	Cauldron/chalice
Mercury	Wand
Venus	Thurible (censer)
Mars	Sword
Jupiter	Cord
Saturn	Athame
Uranus	Garter
Neptune	Crystal ball
Pluto	Black robe/cape
Vulcan	Gold pentacle
Earth	Animal horn, egg
Sparta	Magick mirror

A more traditional list of tools would include the following:

Athame
Boline
Sword
Wand
Chalice
Pentacle
Cauldron
Cord
Bell
Scourge
Censer
Broom
Book of Shadows

My own personal thirteen tools might include the following:

Wand
Athame
Peyton
Chalice
Cauldron
Witch bag
Tarot deck
Drum and beater
Sword
Power potion
Crystal skull
Walking stick
Mortar and pestle

Choose your thirteen tools of power, based upon your own magickal working. Cull from your toolbox the more important tools of your Craft, not including the seven treasures of the Goddess you worked with at the seven gates in the previous lessons—robe, cords (both robe cords and witch's ladder), bracelet, breastplate, double-stranded necklace, single-stranded necklace, and crown. Choose the tools that reflect where your power has traditionally been found, and where you wish to focus. For your year-and-a-day work, focus on one tool per lesson. Cleanse it. Re-consecrate it. Make a ceremony out of the re-consecration to truly awaken and empower the spirit of the tool to work with you. Use the knowledge you have learned from the previous levels to anoint it with herbal teas, essences, or fluid condensers. Shamanically journey to the tool's spirit, to draw it out into full realization and partnership with you. Though frowned upon by some modern witches, many traditions that hark back to older ways anoint their ritual tools with a drop of blood, spit, or sexual fluids. Make each consecration ritual unique and personal to that tool and your relationship with it.

The Thirteen Goals of the Witch

In the modern American movement of witchcraft, Scott Cunningham's work is among the most influential. Many witches learn bits of his lore as it has been copied into Books of Shadows and websites, without even knowing that it originated with him. One of most influential aspects of his work, from *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner*, is his Thirteen Goals of a Witch.

Some witches dislike lists like this, feeling that they smack too much of Judeo-Christian dogma, like a form of Wiccan Ten Commandments, but these are clearly not commandments, but guidelines from one witch to another. They have become influential, not only as basic thoughts to help us integrate our spirituality with our daily life, but also as a good check-in as we develop further as high priest/esses. Sometimes we focus so much on the esoteric goals that we lose sight of the practical ones, such as basic meditation, celebration, and balance.

In the following lessons, I've aligned one of the goals with each of the zodiac signs in the lists of correspondences. Reflect upon each chapter's goal, and how well you integrate it into your life. For those unfamiliar with the Thirteen Goals, here they are as Cunningham listed them:

I. Know yourself
II. Know your Craft
III. Learn
IV. Apply knowledge with wisdom
V. Achieve balance
VI. Keep your words in good order
VII. Keep your thoughts in good order
VIII. Celebrate life
IX. Attune with the cycles of the earth
X. Breathe and eat correctly
XI. Exercise the body
XII. Meditate
XIII. Honor the Goddess and God

Master Spell

The master spell is a major working of transformational magick. When we perform simpler acts of magick, we are taught to do the spell and then forget about it, to let it go and allow it to manifest. While this is good advice, it doesn't always work for the more personal spells, or those that require daily follow-up and action over a long period of time. When we seek to transform ourselves, our behaviors, our body, and our lives, we are in the situation where we are thinking about those changes and implementing them every day. It's hard to simply let it go. Though it's magick, our results are usually not instantaneous. The longer the cycle continues, the more easily doubt, worry, and fear of failure creep into our magick.

The system of the master spell is designed to work with the long-term cycles of time and the need to take action. The concept is to formulate your intention and repeat it monthly, over the period of at least seven months and up to thirteen months. Usually witches choose numbers such as seven, nine, twelve, or thirteen for the duration of their master spells. The intention is kept the same for the spell during the entire time, but your own personal refinement of the spell, and your understanding of your intention, can change over the course of the spell. Some repeat the spell exactly the same way each month, with the same Moon phase, usually full or dark Moon, and the exact same technique. They feel that the exact repetition of it builds the energy. Others will change the technique each month, doing a petition spell, candle magick, or cord magick, or using an herbal charm bag, stone, sigil, etc., for each month. They feel the variation adds more and different kinds of energy to the spell.

Why do you do a master spell? The intention of the master spell is not your ordinary, average spell intent found in most recipe books for magick. It's not a quick spell to pay your rent, pass a test, or cure a cold. The master spell represents a major working in your life, to transform yourself. Where do you need personal mastery in your quest to be a high priest/ess? What aspect of life has eluded you thus far so that you seek to transform your relationship with it? While the spell can have an overt, outer-world manifestation, this is really the by-product of a deep and profound inner-world change, a change within your entire being. At first glance, your intention might seem mundane or materialistic, but the deeper significance is apparent to you. As you reflect

on your goals and year-and-a-day quest, what you need to work on and where you are out of balance become clearer.

Master spells are unique to each witch, and intensely personal. They draw together all that you have learned in the previous four levels. They are not easy. Like the distilling-the-shadow work of *TOSW* or creating your reality map in *TOHW*, your master spell will present challenges to your sense of self and personal beliefs, but it will be challenging those images and beliefs that no longer serve you, that are blocking your master spell goal from manifestation.

Students often focus on prosperity for their master spell. Witches and pagans can have difficult relationships with money and finance. Though receiving money doesn't seem particularly transformative, the spell should be framed to transform your relationship with money. Why don't you receive the money you need and want? Why can't you do what you love and receive compensation for it to make a living? Why do your spending and budgeting habits leave you with no money? For many of us, self-esteem issues are at the core of prosperity magick. For others, a sense of poverty consciousness—that there will never be enough for everybody—resides at the heart of the problem. We know intellectually that if everybody is serving their True Will, then the resources will be allocated so that everybody has everything they need to fulfill their True Will. Making the intellectual leap to living your life that way is a hard, but necessary, step for a high priest/ess. By tackling these questions in your master spell, it goes beyond a simple act of prosperity magick into a life-changing experience by moving toward the root of the issue.

My own first master spell involved weight. The overt mundane desire was to lose weight, but the greater issue was the relationship with my body, with food, exercise, and general health. Over the course of the thirteen moons I lost the weight that I desired, but I did it both by educating myself on the body and nutrition, and by truly changing my lifestyle. Only when I framed exercise as part of my spiritual practice—as important to me as daily meditation and regular ritual—did it become transformative. While I had dieted and started exercise programs many times before, the master spell grounded the spiritual dimension into the issue for me, and the changes made over those thirteen months will last a lifetime, for my consciousness, not just my body, has changed.

I have a student who used my master spell as an inspiration for her own body relationship, and focused on alleviating her chronic illnesses. By the end of the spell, the illnesses didn't spontaneously disappear, but they became so manageable that they didn't interfere with her daily life or her enjoyment of life. She went off most of her medications (with her doctor's supervision) and handled many of her issues herbally and with proper nutrition.

Another profound master spell result I witnessed came from a woman who desperately wanted to be a mother. She had a partner and a home, and she was financially stable to provide for the child, but she couldn't get pregnant. With her partner and doctor, she began the first round of fertility treatments, and still no pregnancy. She was concerned about more invasive procedures and really wanted to have the child naturally. The course of her nine-month master spell brought up concerns about motherhood, her own mother and family, past-life issues, and a host of other "psychic" blocks she had to children, even though consciously she really desired to have a child. She got a clearer understanding of why she wanted a child and healed the wound of this life and the past lives. By the ninth month, she was pregnant and had a lovely baby girl.

Sometimes master spells are very healing, but they don't yield the results that you originally imagined. One male student was looking for a romantic life partner after a series of disastrous relationships. His master spell was to be with his partner in a romantic and harmonious relationship. Over the course of the year, he really learned to be a partner to himself, to date himself, for he had always been in a relationship and didn't know what it was like to be alone. He found his true partner in himself and realized he needed to work on his relationship with himself, and at this time, how unready he was for a serious romantic, committed relationship with another person. There was still so much he had to work on himself to be ready for the right partner. Though the result wasn't what he envisioned, he was very happy with himself by the end of the master spell.

After looking at your goals, reflect and then devise a master spell that is appropriate. I suggest you visit with your Master-Teacher in the inner temple to get otherworldly advice and counsel on the project.

Choose the duration of the spell—how many moons? Does the nature of the spell lend itself to the waxing, full, waning, dark, or new Moon? I don't often recommend

new Moons because they are all about beginnings, and you want this spell to end, not to constantly repeat the spell with beginning energy. Some will not stay consistent with the Moon phase, but will start it on a new Moon and build up so that the last few repetitions are closer and closer to the full Moon. It's up to you. There are no formal rules other than making sure you do it.

I suggest you plan out your spell, marking on your calendar when you will do each ritual and what techniques you plan to use. Even if you are not doing a formal petition spell, I suggest writing it out, and being as clear and concise as possible. Use the tools and techniques that have worked best for you in the past, that resonate with you. I like to make something that I carry with me or wear daily for the duration of the spell, but depending on your lifestyle, that might not work for you. Others will link it to an herbal potion or flower essence that they take several drops of every day.

The idea is to engage yourself in the spell regularly, building energy up to manifestation in a "positive" or affirming way. The buildup of energy can help prevent pessimism about the final goal, though sometimes that pessimism or depression is a part of the challenge of manifestation.

Comparative Religions

As we enter the New Age, and hope to take a place in the council of world wisdom—not just from the shadows as we have in the recent past, but as a part of overall society as the temple priests and priestesses did in ancient cultures—we must be versed in the religions of all those around us. So that there is never again such a sense of mistrust and misunderstanding, we must help bridge the gaps and learn the traditions of our sisters and brothers in the world. Even though their ways are not our ways, there can be wisdom in their ways.

As we have no specific core book of theology, as most other traditions do, there is even more room for interpretation in our theology amongst our different factions. Sometimes by studying other traditions and other religions, our similarities and differences are better illustrated. Though we base a lot of our ideas on ancient practices and traditions, or at least what we believe to be ancient wisdom, we as modern people don't truly understand the mindset of our ancestors. Much of our lore is lost or,

at the very least, uncertain. We look to other theologies and models to better define ourselves. Sometimes we know what we are by knowing what we aren't, by peeling back the layers. It's like we're hacking our way with a machete through the overgrown paths long forgotten to all but the very few. Using these old trails and patterns we are making new maps, and also blazing new paths for the next age. Most witches are of the first generation, making the conscious conversion from another religion to neopaganism; we were not born into it. As we mature as a religion and spiritual culture, we will develop our own models and modern history, and raise our own children in the traditions. The need to compare ourselves to other religions won't be as great, but for now, it offers an interesting insight. Even if we don't need to look at other religions, it's wise to know what's out there. We become better witches through surveying other religions. Some of the best Bible quoters I know are not Christians, but pagans who have studied the Bible well enough to refute of lot of common misinformation, and to refute it with authority and scripture on their side, knowing the various levels of translation and mistranslation in the history of the Bible.

As a witch, you are also encouraged to study other religions to make sure that witchcraft is the path for you. For many, witchcraft and magick are but one stop on a wandering journey. For the rest of us, it is our path to service, but it is a hard path, both in the inner and outer worlds. If we are to serve it best, we must make sure it is the best path and know that there is not any other to serve our spirit better. Though we might feel an affinity for past religions of our childhood—as most of us were not raised pagan—or have a past-life calling to another religion, knowing with some measure of certainty that the Craft is for us helps to forge our foundation.

In each monthly lesson, a different religion is surveyed. In large groups, the burden is shared, with each student presenting on one religion and preparing a report for the other students. Questions can be asked during the presentations. If you are following this course alone, you will have to do each monthly survey yourself, but the rewards are well worth it.

The following religions are mandatory for my students to survey and study, in order for them to gain a general understanding of the religions' tenets and history. Some are more complicated than others. I don't require students to write a thesis, but they should be knowledgeable about each religion, its practice, and its worldview.

- Buddhism
- Christianity (including a general understanding of the major branches of Christianity—Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestantism)
- Hinduism
- Islam (including Sufism)
- Judaism
- Satanism (including popular and often erroneous ideas of Satanism, as well as the formal traditions of the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set)

The list of required religions covers quite a large range and consists of some of the most widespread religions. It includes Satanism because modern witches spend quite a bit of time defending our Craft from accusations of Satanism, yet few modern witches can accurately define modern Satanism. If we're going to insist we are not Satanists, we should at least know what Satanists are.

The remaining six lessons can be filled with the students' choice of the following traditions. These religions are not as well known in America, but they have a rich history and many have influenced the world quite profoundly. Some are considered controversial. Being practitioners of a controversial religion ourselves, we shouldn't be quick to judge. Often the strongest allies will be found in those who are also misunderstood by the general public.

- Baha'i
- Falun Gong
- Jainism
- Native American spirituality
- Scientology
- Shinto
- Sikhism
- Taoism

- Gnosticism/Gnostic Christianity
- Voodou, Santeria, and other African diasporic traditions
- Zoroastrianism

When looking at other religions, it can be hard to understand how they can help you understand your own tradition, or what facts of such a large body of lore are pertinent in your survey. Here are some questions you may find helpful as you survey another religion for this course:

- What is the attitude toward the planet and the material world?
- What is the view of the creator and/or creation? Are they separate or whole?
- What is the attitude and view of women in this tradition?
- What are the attitudes and views on animals, plants, and nature?
- Is this tradition prophetic, meaning that it is based upon the prophecies of another forming a sacred document; or is it mystical, meaning that techniques and structure are taught so the participant will have a direct and personal experience of the divine?
- Does it have a concept of evil and sin? If so, how is this concept defined? Is there an ultimate source of evil?
- Is there a need to be saved? If so, from what? Is there a need to be rescued or led?
- Is there a hierarchy or institution in the tradition? Is the structure centralized or decentralized? Is the hierarchy built into the theology, or is it simply a part of the organization's worldly structure?

These questions can be a bit leading, and seemingly biased against the dominant mainstream religions, but the theologies of the dominant religions have become the basis for comparison in most minds, creating the defaults to which other religions, including witchcraft, are compared.

Mythic Survey

The monthly religious survey is followed by a mythic survey, from which the students learn a myth. Then we discuss that myth's magickal, theological, and moral teachings. Students can pick any myth, as long or as short as they like, but I do ask that they stick to the major cultures influencing modern witchcraft. These cultures include the following:

Greek/Roman
Celtic
Norse/Saxon
Egyptian
Mesopotamian
Hindu
Central-South American (Aztec/Mayan/Incan)

These cultures have similar archetypal themes. The point of this mythic survey is to start seeing the world mythically, and thinking mythically, for all our psychology and theology can be found in world myth. Our job in the next age will be in the reception and transmission of the new myths. Like a good musician, we must know where we have been to know where we are going. Musicians have to learn the scales, chords, and songs created in the previous ages to have a solid foundation in their musical databank. We need that same education in our mythic skills. As you learn more about various figures, you can work with them in meditation and ritual. I tend to encourage students to choose myths on gods and goddesses, rather than cultural heroes or historic points, because part of the purpose of the mythic survey is to build a better relationship with the gods.

Modern History and Culture

In searching for the strands of the past Craft traditions in the sands of Egypt, the ruins of Greece, and the forests of Europe, we forget what a rich tradition we have in our modern era. Many young witches are deficient in their recent history, when compared to their knowledge of the ancient world. We have recently passed and still-living treasures who have dedicated their lives so that you might practice the way you do today. They are our modern foundation. They began the modern movements, wrote the first books,

opened the first occult shops, and were the first to speak out about our traditions to the public. Many of them paid for it dearly.

Along with understanding our religion and myth, the students of the fifth level are required to present brief biographical sketches on some of the major figures, living and dead, who have influenced our modern Craft. One is chosen each month. Here is a list, far larger than twelve names, from which the students can choose. The connections for some of the individuals will be obvious, while others will be a bit more obscure. Some names go beyond the modern era a bit, but are people who have kept witchcraft alive and have become the threads connecting us to the past. Do not assume that because someone is on the list I endorse everything that person has done or said. There are some controversial figures on the list, but an educated witch should be passingly familiar with most of them.

Aleister Crowley
Alex and Maxine Sanders
Andrew Chumbley
Austin Osman Spare
Carl L. Weschcke
Cecil Williamson
Doreen Valiente
Dorothy Clutterbuck
Ed Buczynski and Herman Slater
Ernest Thompson Seton
Gavin and Yvonne Frost
George Pickingill
Gerald Gardner
Gwen Thompson
Gwydion Pendderwen
Isaac Bonewits
Janet and Stewart Farrar
Joseph Wilson
Lady Sheba
Laurie Cabot
Leo Martello
Madeline Montalban

Marion Weinstein
Oberon and Morning Glory Zell-Ravenheart
Patricia and Arnold Crowther
Rhuddlwm Gawr
Robert Cochrane (Roy Bowers)
Robert Kirk
Ronald Hutton
Selena Fox
Starhawk
Sybil Leek
Victor and Cora Anderson
William G. Gray
Z. Budapest

Final Project

I often describe *ITOW* and *OTOW* as the basic foundational work, while *TOSW* and *TOHW* are more like the advanced work, like attending college. *LTOW* is the graduate level of magickal education. The final project is like your graduate thesis.

The final project for the fifth level can be any project that you feel is worthy of your time and attention for a year and a day, through which you will learn more about the art, science, and religion of witchcraft and further your own goals. The project should be in harmony with your goals for the year. Other than that, I have no rules as to what the final project should be. Each student comes to his or her own conclusion. Though other teachers and I act as mentors and guides, like student advisors in the academic world, the final work is up to the student.

Past final projects have varied widely and run the range of creative pursuits. They have included the following:

- **Academic Thesis:** A final project could be an actual thesis on an aspect of the history, mythology, or customs of the Craft. I usually encourage those who are nonacademics or those who feel they can't write or go on to higher education to engage in something academic, while I encourage those who are very well versed in academics to challenge themselves with a mostly artistic or personal project.

- **Manuscript:** Many students who study with me are aspiring writers, whether they know it or not. A manuscript on the topic they wish to write and teach about becomes their final project: not necessarily an academic paper, but either a "how to" manual or personal journey.
- **Work of Art:** A magickally inspired work of art—music, painting, sculpture—furthering pagan culture and creating change can also be a final project. One student wrote and recorded a collection of chants. Another did a detailed painting. A third did god and goddess sculptures. A husband and wife team, both musicians, paired up to do recordings for each of the seven chakras. Another student created a set of divinatory cards.
- **Book of Shadows/Grimoire/Formulary:** With all the other personal work, exercises, and rituals assigned in the following year, the idea of doing a major project makes the work of the year seem impossible to complete. Many students choose to work the ritual exercises into their final project, making a complete Book of Shadows of the rituals they write this year, as well as previous rituals, rites of passage, spells, and formulas. Organizing all your previous rituals and experiences into a complete book of the art is a major project, and making one is a major accomplishment.
- **Work of Ritual:** While many choose to work on completing a full Book of Shadows as their final project, one student who was learning Italian and planned to move to Italy after the completion of the fifth-level class wrote a series of Sabbats influenced by Italian Stregeria, in Italian, to help attune her to the land where she was going to be living and expand her knowledge of witchcraft.
- **Work of Activism:** Your final project can be establishing, or significantly contributing to, an act of social, political, or environmental activism, as a part of your spiritual path.
- **Community Work:** Establishment of a community event, organization, or institution.
- **Garden:** One student made a magickal garden, from the planning to planting stages, divided by the elements and planets, and a materia medica/materia magicka as she went.

- **Health Plan:** A student suffering from chronic illness did the research on magickal, medical, and holistic healing for her condition, and with her doctor's input, created a course of treatment for improving her health. She combined her master spell and her final project.
- **Class Plan:** Some who aspire to be Craft teachers revamped their class notes and created their own class plan and system to teach students.
- **Metaphysical Skill:** Developing professional skills in a complementary area to better aid your work as a high priest/ess. The detailed study of astrology, tarot, Reiki, mediumship, numerology, aromatherapy, flower essence therapy, homeopathy, or herbalism will aid your work. The "project" was to do at least three case studies applying these skills, or attain certification in some form of recognized program.

All of these projects vary widely, and all require different sets of skills and effort. They are all acceptable, for they are projects that prepare the students for the next phase of their work. None have to be perfect. The most important thing is the effort and education that occurs. I think of my own final project as my first book, which was never published. In the end, I'm glad it wasn't published, because like many a graduate thesis, it wasn't necessarily good. It just happened to serve a purpose in deepening my education on a wide range of subjects. It prepared me to go teach, as I drew from bits of that manuscript to create class notes for years. Some of it even made its way into *ITOW* and *Spirit Allies*.

Choose your year-and-a-day project. Outline what it will be in its final form, and what steps you need to take to make it happen. Ritualize the process of working on it. For example, if you are writing something, before you begin, light a candle, say a prayer, and ask for divine or otherworldly help in your writing. Remember that every aspect of your project is magickal.

Homework

- Choose your pantheon and if you desire, start your research into this group of gods.

- Contemplate and set your year-and-a-day goal list.
- Contemplate and craft your master spell. Mark it out on your calendar and plan what you will do for each spell, yet be open to divine inspiration as the time draws closer to each ritual.
- Contemplate and craft your final project.
- For each lesson, find a small stone that you can mark with the zodiac sign. These stones will be used to mark the boundary of your circle for your final initiation ritual, creating a circle of stones.

Tips

- Tattoo. I was taught that it is customary for a witch to have a tattoo as a "ticket" into the Otherworld upon death. Though I'm not sure if that is necessarily true, I do think that ritual marking of the body is a profound experience, often triggering inner world and life "initiations." Tattooing is discussed and encouraged in the Cabot tradition and in the Blue Star Wicca tradition. I encourage my students to think about getting a tattoo over the course of this year. If you think that would be appropriate for you, start working with design ideas that appropriately reflect your magickal self and this path you have traveled thus far.
- Don't get overwhelmed. It's easy to fear that you can't do this much work. Take your time. Do your level best, and set your own goals. The only one you have to please is yourself. This is a tough course, and it's meant to be in order to prepare you for the role of high priest/ess. You can still get quite a bit out of it the first time, and then go back, repeating it, to get the full effect later.
- Get back to basics. Look at your integrated practice (appendix II in Volume One) and get into a regular meditation and simple ritual practice. Reflect on the basics. How often do you ground, center, and do basic purifications, like the Shamanic Smudging Ritual (*TOSW*, chapter 3) or the LBRP (*TOHW*, chapter 6)? How often do you cleanse and re-consecrate your entire altar? How often do you purify and ward your home? How often do you work on your own protection shield or do healing and rejuvenating meditations for yourself? Make sure you take care of the basics.

Lesson Eight
The Wisdom of Aries

In the wheel of the zodiac, Aries is the first sign, initiating the cycle of life. When the Sun enters Aries, we begin the spring season, with the holiday of Ostara. Though most witches start the year with Samhain, in the fall, from a zodiac and solar perspective spring initiates the new year. Traditions that start their magick circles with the element of air in the east also can look at spring as the start of the cycle of the wheel.

Gender: Male
Triplicy: Cardinal
Element: Fire
Image: Ram
Season: Spring
House: House of Identity
Key Phrase: "I Am"
Theme: Identity
Blessing: Courage

Challenge: Fear
Archetype: Warrior
Ruling Planet: Mars
Exalted: Sun
Detriment: Venus
Fall: Saturn
Esoteric Ruler: Mercury
Monadic Ruler: Uranus
Classical Deity: Athena/Minerva
Angel: Anmixiel
Color: Red
Metal: Iron
Stones: Ruby, Garnet, Diamond
Body: Head, Face, Brain
Labor of Hercules: Capture of the Ceryneian Hind
Gift of the Goddess: To Use the Power to Bless Friends and Curse Enemies
The Thirteen Goals of the Witch: Know Yourself
Alchemical Operation: Digestion
Cell Salt: Kali Phos (Potassium Phosphate)
Tarot: Emperor

The elemental sequence of zodiac signs always starts with fire, as fire is the power of creation, the spiritual light and will to begin manifestation. Naturally the first quality would be cardinal, for the cardinal energy is the generating or initiating energy of creation. It is needed to begin anything. Signs are divided in polarities, alternating between two sides, described as male and female, active and receptive, or yang and yin in modern lore. Aries is considered a masculine sign because it has the power to project, to charge forward with its fiery energy, to initiate the turning of the wheel at the dawn of spring. The power of Aries is embodied by the warrior.

The Way of the Warrior

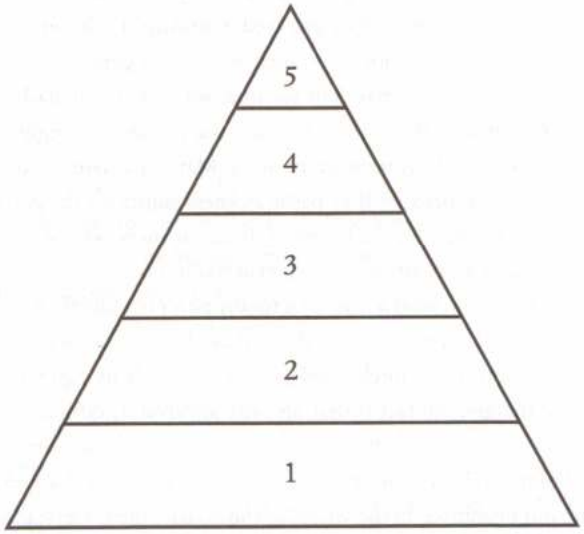
For many mystics, the way of the warrior is not easy, but it is necessary. At first, I didn't understand why. I held to the belief that to be a "spiritual" person one must always be peaceful, serene, loving, and forgiving. That seemed to conflict with my image of a warrior as a combatant, as someone who could and would fight, who would use violence, and whose very purpose was built upon the concept of war, a concept I wholeheartedly wanted to see extinguished from human consciousness. But I was wrong.

I bought into the mainstream, late-twentieth-century popular media image of a warrior without really understanding the spiritual implications of a warrior, the honored ancient warriors that were deeply involved in spiritual traditions, codes of ethics, and personal and societal evolution. A soldier, and even a general, is not the same as a spiritual warrior. You see the images of spiritual warriors particularly in the ancient East, yet they can be found the world over, from the chivalrous knights in our Arthurian myth to yogis and South American shamans. Many shamanic traditions call their healers spiritual warriors, because they battle sickness spirits for the good of the tribe. Such spiritual warriors, fighting the forces of illness or those who would threaten the tribe or village, are a part of our pagan magickal traditions.

Though we'd like to envision a time of a totally peaceful, blissful Stone Age human society where witchcraft's roots are found, we don't know that such societies actually existed. While there are very enlightened groups of people living in Stone Age tribal conditions today, the general fact is that life, and survival, is difficult even under the best of circumstances, and through our evolution of consciousness and body, we must face various conflicts. These conflicts and challenges to survival are not necessarily bad, as they aid our evolution. In the wheel of the zodiac, the understanding and application of the martial forces, your will, is the first step in really evolving. Through our challenges we discover who we are, individually and collectively as a people.

The ruling planet of Aries, meaning the planet most in harmony with this sign, is Mars. Mars in astrology and magick represents the warrior principle. It is the part of us that is the will, the energy that takes action. It is considered to be the lower, or personal, will. It is the will of survival, as well as the will of our desires. We must work with the lower will to find the higher will. Much like the psychological model

known as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (fig. 1), we need to deal with the foundation, the lower principles, both personally and magickally, before we can seek out the self-actualization of the apex of the pyramid. That's why so much magick seems like "low" magick, dealing with healing, survival, money, home, fertility, sex, and love. Those bases need to be covered solidly before real dedication can be applied to the greater principles. Many people never quite cover those areas in life, so they don't seek out the apex. But if you seek out the top of the pyramid and lack the foundation, things fall apart quite easily.



5. Actualization
4. Status (esteem)
3. Love/Belonging
2. Safety
1. Physiological (biological needs)

Figure 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The sign of Aries is the ram. The ram's nature is to charge forward. The biggest obstacle to the ram's progress is fear. If you know a strong Aries person in your life, you might think that person has no fear, yet that would be totally untrue. One of the strongest lessons of Aries is facing fear. With the ram, it's better to do something rather than nothing at all. It is a sign of action, of movement, and making things happen, not sitting around or being stagnant. A good Aries warrior figure will have the wisdom to choose the course of action wisely, but action will be taken. Fear is the potential paralyzing agent to the Aries energy, and it must be overcome.

Much of our spiritual warrior training is in conditioning the body, emotions, and mind to not be overcome with fear. While few think of the yogi as a warrior, much of the yogi's training is understanding what is a real signal from the body—pain, pleasure, or fear—and what is the mind fearfully anticipating pain. All the "martial" arts, particularly the well-known forms of karate and kung fu, teach students to recognize and move through limitations, including fear. Few people think they will be able to break a board with their bare hand, yet with training, they do so. This is akin to the witch's magick, moving through self-imposed limitations to do the seemingly impossible.

Unfortunately, we've created a view of the "spiritual" as being divorced from the martial energy. Even as pagans, the dominant Christian paradigm of the last two thousand years has helped our culture equate being meek and peaceful, turning the other cheek, with being spiritual. That was but one side of the mysterious figure of Jesus. When I think of the figure of Jesus Christ, I think of someone who was a revolutionary, saying and doing a lot of things that others did not like. I think of Jesus overturning the money lenders' tables in the temple. I think of someone who was a spiritual warrior, if not a physical one.

As pagans, it's even more important for us to spiritually claim our warrior tradition, for it is a part of the greater whole. When we deny it, and cast it out of the spiritual picture, that is when the warrior energy becomes part of the untamed shadow. It grows malignant and destructive, rather than protective.

When we wistfully look to the Stone Age past as the utopia of paganism, we call such societies "hunter/gatherer" societies, based on the concept that they were not yet a part of the agricultural revolution but moved nomadically with their food sources, in homeostatic balance with the planet, like most animals. People either gathered their food

from the available plants or hunted animals to survive. The mysteries of both the plants and animals are integral to the society's religious practice, and if we look closely enough, we see it still in the Craft today. The most popular images of the gods are in the form of vegetation deities of nature, from the Earth and grain mothers to the Green Man and Grain God, to the animal figures and horned gods. Both the plants and animals go through cycles of life and death that we participate in, which is central to our mysteries. We are a cult of both life and death. The direct interface with these mysteries, as either gatherers or hunters, is potentially an inherent part of the human condition.

Yet as our society has evolved, it has come to cater to the gatherers rather than the hunters. Though I know a few people who hunt, most of us do not have that experience. Most of us who are meat eaters do not have an intimate relationship with the source of our food. For those who traditionally had the inherent skills for hunting, the inclination and nature of it are now placed into gatherer roles. Much of our daily life and daily work is more akin to gathering. Today we gather information, ideas, tools, widgets, and parts. We rarely "hunt" for anything as warriors. People who would be the hunters of our society, forced into these boxes, are labeled as violent, hyperactive, or learning disabled. They have different talents and urges than the gatherers, and these needs are not being met. In earlier societies, the concept of the warrior, and the training and honored purpose of the warrior, developed out of the hunter model. Yet today, few of us understand and honor the concept of the warrior, let alone the spiritual warrior.

The warrior is the first step in the discovery of the self. When we look at all the myths of the ancient pagan world, who were the central characters? Warriors. Their stories can be seen as mythic allegories to the problems of life. Their solutions to their problem shows us the warrior's struggle, what mythologist Joseph Campbell called the Hero's Journey. Even today, we have a certain love/hate relationship with the warrior, though our modern epics are usually (but not always) filled more with violence than allegory to help us understand life's mysteries. Yet the old myths come out again to be reinterpreted. You can look at the Star Wars series and see the spiritual warrior's journey.

Hercules is the warrior, and he learns by doing, by taking action through accomplishing these twelve great tasks, and it's from his example that we see and understand the myths and the zodiac path we are also on. Hercules in particular is associated with the warrior archetype, with Mars and the two signs it ruled in traditional astrology,

Aries and Scorpio. One need only look at the twelve labors as a whole to see an Aries/Scorpio influence on the tale, the warrior, and the dark monsters.

Traditionally known as the third labor of Hercules, the capture of the Ceryneian Hind, the Stag of Artemis, can be associated with Aries. Artemis found five gigantic hinds in Thessaly, a land long associated with witchcraft, and caught four of them to draw her chariot. The fifth escaped. It was so fast that it could outrun an arrow, its horns were of gold, and its hooves were like brass. Technically it was a doe bearing antlers, which is unknown in Greece, but author Robert Graves suggested that the myth's origins might be found in the northern climes, where reindeer are found. King Eurystheus wanted Hercules to be successful, believing that Artemis would punish him for the insult of desecrating her sacred animal. In this labor, Hercules had to do better than the great huntress Artemis. He had to capture what she could not. He pursued the hind relentlessly for a year, through Greece, Thrace, Istria, and even the mythic northern land of Hyperborea, charging forward like an Aries ram with no thought of the consequences, simply focused on the object before him. Hercules continued until, depending on the version of the story, he either shot it with an arrow to render it lame when it stopped for water, or captured it when it tired and could no longer run. With the hind in hand, he encountered both Artemis and her twin brother, Apollo, and asked for her forgiveness, explaining the situation and promising to return the hind. She forgave him. Eurystheus intended to make the hind a part of his stable, so Hercules agreed to bring him the hind if the king would come and take it from him. Hercules let go of the hind when the king approached, and it sprinted back to Artemis safely. Hercules said he delivered the hind to the king, succeeding in his task, but it was the king who was not quick enough to keep her.

The key to the warrior's energy of Aries is in knowing yourself. Self-knowledge—knowledge of your abilities, strengths, weaknesses, and how you perceive yourself and how others perceive you—is the magick of the martial arts, along with the ability to change those traits.

In astrology, Aries naturally rules the First House of the astrological mandala, meaning that it has the most in common with the First House. The sky is divided into twelve segments known as houses. Each house represents "where" the actions of the zodiac take place, while the signs represent "how" the actions occur, and the planets

are the parts of yourself that perform the actions. I learned this through a theater metaphor: the planets are the actors, the signs are their roles, and the houses are the scenes. Though they are recast and combined in a wide range of variations when each of us is born, each planet, sign, and house has a "natural" order where it feels most in harmony. The natural house for Aries is the First House, which is the house where you build a relationship with yourself. The cusp of the First House is on the eastern horizon, and the sign on the eastern horizon when you are born is your ascendant. The ascendant rules the First House. This sign represents how you act to relate to yourself. Since it is on the horizon, it is also how many people first perceive you. Aries also rules the head and face, the part of the body most people "identify" you with. We don't identify people by their feet, hands, or shoulders, but by the uniqueness of their face. The ascendant is much like the face in combination with your whole astrological chart. Some astrologers call it the "mask" you wear and show to the world. If you are born at night, with the Sun below the horizon, your mask will be the first thing people notice about you. People might mistake you for your ascendant, also known as your rising sign, rather than your traditional Sun sign. If you were born during the day, it plays a less prominent role in your daily interactions. But it's interesting that the way other people perceive you is also the way you relate to yourself.

Your relationship with yourself is the first relationship you really have, and the only lifelong relationship that is guaranteed to you. Each sign has a key statement to help you understand its power and action. Aries' statement is "I am." This is a powerful statement in affirmations, used to change yourself and your identity. By understanding how you identify yourself—the roles, labels, titles, and qualities—the more you can strip them back and get to the core essence of who you are.

Exercise 32

"I Am" List

In your journal or BOS, make a list of statements starting with "I am," and complete the sentence will all the words you would use to identify yourself. Make a second list from the perspective of others. How would other people identify you? If you are doing this work in a study group or coven, and feel the level of both honesty and intimacy

is present, you can make lists for each other. How much of what you perceive about yourself is actually seen by others? What about the list do you like and what about the list do you wish to change?

Once you have a sense of both your self-identity and how others perceive you, you can go about breaking unhealthy identity patterns, or at the very least, expanding yourself and your consciousness to include identities that seem beyond you. A true sorcerer is not bound by how anybody, including himself, sees him. We walk on the edge and are free to take on many roles and guises, as our work requires. We do this through our shapeshifting exercises in the other world, but how many of us do this in the waking world? I know I didn't for quite a while. It is comfortable to stay where we are. It is comfortable to work with the identities and concepts we like, and say they "resonate." We don't need more. Yet as witches, we are always striving to know, learn, and be more, and that journey takes us into places that are not comfortable, easy, or resonant. To have an expanded consciousness, we need to expand to include the areas we don't necessarily like, to be able to successfully integrate them.

What are the identities you see as wholly opposite to yourself? What can you do to understand and better integrate with them? Now, I'm not talking about harmful identities, such as those of murderers or rapists, but aspects of our society that are accepted by society, yet divergent from you.

I grew up being the last kid picked for teams in gym class. I was a nerd, a brain, a geek. Those were labels put on me, and eventually labels I embraced, because to me, they meant smart, creative, and successful. I learned to look down on jocks, athletes, and the popular kids in school, and I took that bias into my adult life. I looked down on physical people, those inclined to the military, our modern-day warriors. I saw myself entirely as a man of peace, and these concepts were as far from my self-identity as I could get. So that is what I had to embrace. I made an effort several times to go out in what I called my "jock drag," acting not so artsy, but like my idea of a "regular" guy and visit a sports bar and drink beer. I interacted with people a bit, but also observed myself, my environment, and the people in it, until I realized that they weren't so different from me. Just a different perspective and interest. Differences aren't something to look down upon. Many of the people were just as smart and talented as I was. Now,

I've integrated an athletic program into my life, and while not a "jock," I've brought more physical talents into my life and embraced a new segment of my community from which I used to remain aloof.

Exercise 33

Breaking Identity Patterns

Do something that is radically different from your identity pattern. Change your clothing, attitude, and location. Introduce something new into your consciousness. Think of it as a full magickal ritual, because it is. Your clothing is your ritual garb. Your new place is your sacred space. Make a ritual of it, saying an intention or spell for guidance and safety. When you are home, ritually divest yourself of the clothing and persona, and reflect upon the experience. Think about how you can incorporate some of these traits in daily life.

The Aries spiritual warrior represents a path of doing, and as such, it is perceived as a path of leadership. The Aries leader is not the good king or queen planning for the future, but the trailblazer, the leader by example. Others may follow if they so choose. As fear is one of the challenges to overcome when blazing a trail, when the trail is blocked, fear becomes corrupt and the natural Martian drive forward stagnates to become anger. When we want to go forward and the way is blocked, we get frustrated. When we identify solely with the little will, we want to go where we want to go and we want to do what we want to do. When things don't work out, rather than looking at the larger picture and potentially changing plans, we can move into the anger aspect of Mars/Aries energy. But the root of this anger is really fear, the fear that what we have planned, and what we want, is not going to happen. The fear comes from having to choose again and pick another path or take another action.

The anger associated with Mars/Aries creates the impression that warriors are always in conflict, fighting "against" something or someone. In reality, they are fighting "for" something or someone, fighting to create the change or conditions they feel will serve the highest good. Violence is the last resort for spiritual warriors, but when it comes to that resort, they are not afraid to use it to protect themselves or their loved ones. Yet the violence is not for violence's sake—it is the amount of force necessary to protect and re-

solve a situation. Many martial artists have the ability to kill someone who intends them harm, but most are trained to restrain and render the attacker unconscious. A warrior is not one who seeks out violence, but one who knows whatever is needed to resolve the situation. Fear, anger, and violence are the allies of the warrior who is in control of these forces, but the enemies of the warrior who is controlled by them. These warriors who have something worth fighting for have a reason to get up in the morning.

I learned some similar ideas in witchcraft. Witchcraft is ultimately a religion of survivors, and while we do not have the motto of "turn the other cheek," we are like the warriors—we use the amount of force necessary to resolve a situation, neither bragging nor threatening, but acting justly in accord with the situation. Witches *are* warriors. Accepting this is our first step in self-mastery.

Exercise 34

Fighting

Make a list of all the things you feel you are fighting "against" or struggling with in your life. What are the forces of opposition and conflict in your life, and how are you approaching them? Then make a list of all the things you are fighting "for" in your life. See how you can transform your own vision of the fight from what you are "against" to what you are "for." Even the larger issues, such as fighting against evil, crime, hatred, or injustice, are transformed when we are fighting for good, harmony, love, and justice. To work against something is to weaken yourself, and eventually you become that which you fight against. A quote from author Philip K. Dick reminds me of this wisdom: "To fight the Empire is to be infected by its derangement. This is a paradox; whoever defeats a segment of the Empire becomes the Empire; it proliferates like a virus, imposing its form on its enemies. Thereby it becomes its enemies."[1] Rather than struggle against something, if you strive to create what you want, and model it for others, you are strengthening yourself and your inner warrior.

Part of mastering our Martial energy and our will is learning about how to use, and release, our angers in the best way possible. The spiritual warrior is at peace. The ability

1. Philip K. Dick, *VALIS* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 134.

to defend or perform physical and aggressive acts is not a sign of a lack of peace. There is righteous anger, and even divine anger, against injustice in the world. But at the same time such anger is not personal. You can feel righteous anger as fuel, as momentum, but also have the inner peace of the warrior, knowing that you are doing exactly what needs to be done in any given moment. We need to learn how to hold both aspects—peace and the ability to be a warrior—simultaneously. As you have reviewed those things you are fighting against, look closer at those people you are "fighting." Now is the time to remove all blocks and drains to your power, so you can be single pointed, like the warrior, to fulfill your True Will. Unnecessary drains on your will sap the strength of your foundation and prevent you from accomplishing all that you are called to do in this world.

Exercise 35

Warrior's Anger

Make a list of all the people you are angry with, are upset with, or hate. Reflect on each person. What is the root of these feelings? Where and when did your will toward this person move toward anger? Can the situation be resolved? Why are you still feeling so strongly about it? Can you rectify the situation with this individual personally? If not, can you do so in meditation in communion with his or her higher self (*TOSW*, chapter 8)? Journal your experiences.

As Aries is the sign of identity, and these past exercises were created to help you understand yourself and your identity better, one of the best ways to bring it all together is through the use of the personal myth. We are each living a myth. We have each come from a past that has led us to where we are. We are all going toward a future. We all have a story to tell.

Exercise 36

Spiritual Biography

Write your own personal myth. Write down a spiritual biography of who you are, where you have been, what you've done, and now where you are going. What is the

archetype (*LTOW*, vol. 1, Lesson Seven) you identify with, and how does that fit into your story?

Although some may think it's silly, this is a great foundational technique for working with the Aries "I am" energies. As your life changes, you will find that reworking and rewriting your myth, framing things differently as you grow wiser, will be very helpful as you walk the path. Your archetypes change, and your story changes with them. Writing your myth, your life story, helps you navigate those changes. As the writer, you gain some distance and perspective on where you are, where you have been to get there, and where you are going. Archetypally you can see where you are setting yourself up for a fall, or sabotaging yourself, and periodic reviews and rethinking of your story can help you avoid and rework these events. They can still be hard, but they don't have to be tragic. This rewriting is not to deny past traumas or problems, but to change your perspective and direction. A trauma at one point in your story can become your source of strength and purpose later in the story. You see how the mythic strands are working in your life, and learn to work with them better.

Warrior Magick

Once you have a greater sense of identity, you can perform effective warrior magick. Warrior magick is the application of your will, your energy and force, to accomplish that which you set out to do. *Will* is the key word for the warrior and the magician. Unfortunately there is a lot of misunderstanding about will in magick. With our concept of *wyrd*, of fate, many think things are predestined to happen. Even if that is so, one is called to a destiny and one must answer the call. There is always the choice to say no, do nothing, and stagnate. Will is taking action when opportunities present themselves on the path of life.

Warrior magick is the start to understanding the journey of the life force and the identity of the life force in our own lives. The hunters were those with the sacred duty to not only hunt animals for their life force, their meat to feed the tribe, but to be a part of ceremonies thanking the animal spirits, so they would return to the hunting grounds and continue the cycle. To know that you can be the hunter is to also know

your identity. Your role can shift, and you can be the hunted. As others feed you, you too must feed others—literally, in the sense of wild animals in our not-so-distant past, or spiritually, in the sense that we all feed the roots of the Great Tree when we die.

One of the theological concepts of paganism and witchcraft that is not often explicitly stated but is central to our religion is "life feeds life." The cycle of all living things is our teacher, and the process from birth through survival with food and shelter, sexuality, maturity, death, and rebirth is lived out in the animals, plants, and people. As hunters and gatherers still, we see how life must feed life. To be born is to die in the spirit world, and to die is to be reborn in the spirit world. All things are patterns, ever evolving and changing, but following basic cycles.

When we understand the cyclical nature, and realize that we are not static, that our identities are not rigid or solid, we can better learn to flow with the changes of life. We learn that our identities are more fluid. We have a self that is our regular day-to-day persona. We often build up a magickal persona. Though I know I'm the same person in and out of circle, there is a different quality about me when preparing for and in the midst of magick than when I'm shopping at the local grocery store. We have public and private identities. Who I am at home is a bit different from who I am when I'm teaching a class or out in the working world. Most importantly, we have a higher self-identity that we hope to manifest more and more in daily life. Some of these selves remain while we are on the path, while other identities have to develop and evolve. Though we never stop being students, we have to evolve into the identity of the teacher. We have to make transitions from wounded to healed. Some identities have to be left behind.

Looking at all these "selves," it's easy to seem disingenuous, as if we are being phony or fake, but all of them are us. We realize that all these selves are part of the cycle of the self, that all these selves are like the tools and the weapons of the warrior, brought out in the appropriate circumstances.

The blessing of the Goddess I associate with Aries is the dual power to bless friends and to curse enemies. Essentially this is what the warrior does. The spiritual warrior protects the self and the tribe, to allow blessings, prosperity, and health to flow unimpeded. To enemies, the warrior thwarts their actions that would move against the blessings of the warrior and his people. The warrior is all about taking the appropriate

action for the situation. Sometimes that is the application of expansive blessings and generous energy, while at other times it requires the martial power to remove, inhibit or destroy a threat. Just as in healing, there are some practices that stimulate the body's own healing by bolstering overall health, while other practices, like surgeries and forms of drug therapies, directly attack and remove the threat before it grows too strong. A good witch has the knowledge of both generative and destructive magick. It's wise to note that destructive magick is not necessarily the same thing as destroying people or causing them harm. It's the amount of force necessary to protect yourself or others.

The most practical application of warrior magick is in the practice of discipline. Aries on the surface doesn't appear to be a sign of discipline. Cardinal fire just rushes headlong into whatever is next. Yet to effectively use the cardinal fire, warriors must have discipline and control in directing their martial fire. Controlled fire is a powerful tool. Wildfire, while having some benefits for the environment, is always haphazard and destructive. As witches, we want to control our magickal fires and direct them where they are best needed.

Warriors keep in shape, in practice of their art, by doing it regularly. The martial disciplines require frequent, if not daily, practice for the spiritual and physical wisdom teachings to become a part of the warrior. Soon these disciplines become a way of life. Here are some ideas to incorporate both the fire and discipline of the warrior into your life.

Regular Personal Practice

Many students think witchcraft is simply about the spells, and the once-a-Moon Esbats and seasonal rituals. That's fine for those who walk a pagan path only, but those who seek to be true high priest/esses of the Craft should be involved in magickal, meditative, and ritual practice far more than that. If you don't develop the skills in your personal practice, they will not be polished and available to you when you need them, both for yourself and for your community. In yoga, such daily practice is called *sadna*, and it is vitally important in both the physical and spiritual development of the yogi. I've tried to apply the principle of discipline sadna to my own witchcraft practice and teaching, setting an example and encouraging my students to make a magickal practice a part of their daily lives, including meditation, altar devotionals, and standard rituals such as variations of the LBRP and

Middle Pillar. My own regular practice has also included yoga, Reiki, and traditional physical fitness, which I see as vitally important to magickal health. Appendix II in Volume One has some ideas and suggestions for how to work the various teachings of the five levels into your regular practice. The most important thing is to do something magickal every day. I've also found that having a regular schedule is very helpful. Depending on my job situation in life, I've had an early morning practice, though I tend to prefer a late evening practice. At times when neither was feasible, I just managed to get in my twenty or so minutes of meditation wherever I could during the day, sometimes in the bathroom of my office building when I was in a more traditional job. If it's important to you, you will make the time. One part of my regular practice that I try to do every day, to align with the highest will and guide my warrior fire, my ability to *do*, is this altar devotional prayer:

> *I ask the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit to guide my every thought, word, and deed. By your divine will, so mote it be.*

Exploration

A warrior is never bored or stagnant. Don't feel that your personal practice has to become something set in stone, done every day the same exact way. You continue with a set of exercises until you reach a level of proficiency, and then you challenge yourself with something new, rotating new skills into the mix to keep from growing bored, and to continue to expand your consciousness. You can look outside traditional witchcraft for new ideas, and with your training from *TOHW*, you can integrate these new concepts into your witchcraft worldview. Much of the traditional material on witchcraft is sparse, and I believe it is our job to flesh it out, add to it, and expand our magickal knowledge to take the Craft into the future. I suggest changing your personal practice with the seasons or Sabbats, changing every few months. Aries as the warrior is a cardinal, initiating, and new energy. By keeping things new, you keep the fire going, though a few standard exercises might always be done regularly. I rarely keep a set of exercises the same for more than six months. Usually I change every three. Set a goal, choose what you want to work on, and pursue it for a set amount of time. Then when the time is up, change your goals and your program.

Personal Cycles

Be aware that the warrior, like all people and places, goes through cycles and seasons. We have periods of high energy and enthusiasm, and periods of low energy. We go through cycles of great ability, particularly for witches and magicians where everything seems to work and psychic abilities are phenomenal. Then we go through periods of dulling and dampening, when abilities are much less present and powerful. Those who have built up a base set of skills will still have abilities during these low points, even if they are not as exciting and heightened. It's important to maintain a practice at these low points, to keep the channels of magick and spiritual communication as open as possible, while at the same time not getting mired in frustration or difficulty. The wisdom of the dandelion has helped me during these periods. Sometimes I'm like the seed, flitting through life feeling ungrounded and less than powerful, with no roots or support. But I know my seed will land, take root, and grow deep and powerful. Eventually, I must cast out more seeds and change again. It's part of life and the cycles of magick, though it can be very worrisome when it first happens. Keep a record of your experiences in your journal, and follow your astrological cycles. You might find a correlation. When I was undergoing my first Saturn return, I felt as if a lead weight were on my third eye. I was trained well enough to get answers for my clients, and I was able to read adequately for psychic consultations, but they were not the spectacular results I was used to. My clients didn't seem to notice. Yet when I tried to get answers directly for myself, I felt like I hit a wall and didn't get very far. What little I did get led me to the next step, and I'm glad I maintained a regular spiritual practice to keep my grounding and sanity at a difficult time in life.

Offerings

Personal practice is not all meditation and silent, still inner work; it is also ritual, movement, dance, song, and offerings. Some of the most profound experiences I've had have involved the blessing of offerings, the pouring of libations, the burning of incense and candles, and the offering of my time, talents, and services to the greater community, making such offerings rituals to my Goddess and God. Opportunities to put into practice the talents you have mastered come every day.

Balance the Practical and the Spiritual

Some will shift so far into a daily spiritual practice that they will forget the tools of their craft, the ability to change their physical reality—their health, relationships, finances, sex life, etc. All of these things are spiritual as well as being practical, and doing magick to change your life in balance with the inner introspection work can be a part of a disciplined practice. Those who do not ask for or create what they want and need are just as likely to get out of balance as those who do not listen to or ask for guidance.

Mastery

When you maintain a practice for a period of time, you consistently build a set of skills and gain a certain level of mastery. To continue with the practice is great, but these skills soon become a part of you. Once you have the foundation, it's easier to maintain. I think of a witch as being like a musician. You can spend a long time practicing scales and chord progressions, until they become a part of you, and a foundation to draw upon when doing other work. Though you could play a major scale in your sleep, and there is still benefit to practicing your scales, your practice has to include new scales, chord progressions, and music for you to continue to grow. I also think of a practice as similar to the ceremonial magician's Abramelin Operation, where six months of intense work are required, but once contact is made with the Holy Guardian Angel, the same level of intensity is not expected. Once you gain a certain mastery, it becomes yours. Like riding a bicycle, you never forget, but if you want to remain good at it, you have to continue to practice.

I was amazed by one witch queen I met who has maintained a deep and regular practice since her teens. She is in retirement now, yet she still maintains her morning and evening meditation practice, sometimes with a short midday session. The magick in her life was very evident. She was truly inspiring, and she showed me that no matter how long you have been doing it, the consistency is what really puts the magick into daily life.

Moderation

While I'm a big advocate of discipline, there is a time and place for everything, and a watchword in witchcraft is *moderation*. We are a middle path of balance. When I look

back at my early journal entries, I meditated for hours, trying to do everything, every day. Be gentle with yourself, balancing pushing yourself to new heights and depths, and taking time to enjoy life. Sometimes it's just as important to rest and give yourself time off from regular practice, letting your body and psyche heal and readjust to all the work you have done. Keeping our cycle and season analogy, fields must take time to lie fallow over the winter, and crops are rotated so as not to deplete the soil. Think of yourself in much the same way, walking the Wheel of the Year in your personal life.

After a particularly intense and long period of shamanic healing, flower essence therapy, and past-life regression work, I took the whole summer off. I did the bare minimum I felt I needed to do as a high priest, celebrating the moons and the Sabbats with my coven, but otherwise, I did nothing for the summer. I had fun and did mundane things only. I set a date of when I would resume regular practice and I did, with much greater enthusiasm, perspective, and insight, than I would have if I slugged through the summer doing more deep spiritual work. Sometimes you need to give yourself permission for a break. Witchcraft is not a religion of guilt or "have to's." We are all responsible for our own decisions and only have to do the things we *decide* we have to do. Other traditions feel that you have to maintain one practice consistently. In the end, it is up to you to follow your own inner wisdom and voice.

It actually took my yoga teacher to help me understand this. After doing a prolonged series of early morning yoga sadnas, I completed a forty-day period of a difficult exercise set, but before beginning another, I took a break and told my yoga teacher about it. I felt a little guilty, as if I should have jumped back into another routine. She said, "It feels really good to take a break, doesn't it?" I then figured that if this wonderful, loving, spiritual yogi takes breaks from her practice, and yoga is her primary form of spiritual practice, as witchcraft is mine, then it was okay for me to take breaks in any of my spiritual pursuits. I realized I don't have to do it all, all the time.

In the esoteric astrology of Alice Bailey, each sign is given a traditional "mundane ruler," an esoteric or soul ruler, and a monadic ruler. The monad could be thought of as the higher self to the soul/higher self of the esoteric ruler. The more you develop your soul qualities and merge with these "higher" aspects of the soul, the more you are influenced by and in harmony with these other rulers.

The esoteric ruler of Aries is Mercury. At first it seems like a poor match for the fiery Aries to be ruled by the mental and social Mercury, but it shows how the warrior archetype is a balance of the two masculine elements, fire and air. One must have the drive, passion, and energy on the mundane level, but also the intellectual discipline and clear thought expressed by the highest talents of Mercury. Only then does one receive the powers and insights of the monadic ruler, Uranus, as the planet of individuality, self-expression, and divine light. Only then can one truly answer "Who am I?" in the cosmic sense.

Wands and blades have had mixed symbolism in the Western mysteries. Some traditions adamantly assign blades to air and wands to fire, while others just as strongly reverse the two (*OTOW*, chapter 9). Whichever you believe, know that this confusion is because fire and air are both needed in the ways of magick and the ways of the warrior. This next ritual is to be done with any blade you choose—athame, boline, sword, kitchen knife, pair of scissors—but it must be one that you can use to cut. You will also need two slips of paper, one red candle, matches, a cauldron in which to burn paper, fresh water, and red thread.

Exercise 37

Warrior Transformation

1. Review your "I am" lists and the exercises on identity patterns, fighting, and anger. Think about what kind of spiritual warrior you are and want to be. What are the qualities, identities, and traits that need to be purified by the refining fire of the warrior? Make two lists, one of the qualities you have and want to encourage, and one of the qualities that no longer serve you.
2. Roll up the lists separately, and tie one with the red thread, leaving a length of thread from it to tie the second rolled-up list. Now you have two "scrolls" connected by a red thread.
3. Light your red candle with the intention of stoking your warrior fire, purifying what doesn't serve and transforming you into who you want to be.

4. Hold the scrolls taut between your hands. Some will place what they want to absorb in their receptive nondominant hand and what they want to release in their dominant hand. Focus on what you are letting go of. Imagine it burning in fire and flames. Then focus on what you wish to encourage. Imagine it becoming a part of you.
5. Take your blade and cut the thread that ties the scrolls together. Place the scroll of the traits you wish to encourage on your altar. Hold the scroll with the traits that you wish to release. Light it in the candle flame and burn it in the cauldron. If you are outside, scatter the ashes when you are done. If not, transfer them to another vessel and scatter them to the wind later. Empty the cauldron before continuing on to step 6.
6. Hold the scroll of traits to encourage. Now burn this scroll in the cauldron. Add a bit of water to the cauldron, letting the ashes mingle with the water. Then anoint yourself with the water and ash on your brow, as the face is the part of the body ruled by Aries. Feel those traits become a part of you.

You can perform this ritual in a magick circle if you so choose.

Witchcraft in the Modern World: Weapon and Gun Control

As high priest/esses of the modern world, we must look at modern issues through the eyes of the witch. Though people assume that witches and pagans are like a political group, with one core set of party values, that's patently untrue. Witches and pagans are as diverse as any other segment of the community, with values ranging between what one would consider to be fairly conservative to wildly liberal, depending on the individual. We have no one set view on anything in our magickal practices, let alone how we see the world and the issues facing it today. Many people assume that all witches are liberal on all issues, because many of the issues that are dear to us spiritually, such as the environment, are classically considered to be liberal issues, at least in the United States. But as responsible community leaders, we must be seeing such issues through the lens of the

witch, giving each issue reflection and thought from our spiritual perspective if we hope to be leaders in the coming age and help shape the society we live in. There are no easy answers here, and I certainly don't have the solutions that will fit everyone, but I think these considerations are important seeds to plant in the next generation of witchcraft leaders, so perhaps the solutions can be found in harmony with our spiritual values.

The concept of weapons is wed to the image of the warrior. Hunters in the hunter/gatherer society needed weapons for the hunt. Weapons have developed from the simple spears and arrows to the blades of the sword, and now to modern guns, working very differently in form and function from the weapons of our ancestors. What do we think spiritually about the concept of weapons?

In witchcraft and ceremonial magick, the four elemental tools—wand, blade, cup, and disc—are often called "weapons," yet only two would be considered real weapons. The four are considered to be more metaphorical weapons; when one has mastered the elements, one has the skill to use these four energies in any area of life. Yet one can't help but look at the blade, be it the athame, boline, or sword, and not think of a weapon. Witches have gone out of their way to divorce themselves from any image of bloodshed or violence, particularly with ritual tools, stating that the athame blade is not sharpened and only "cuts" and directs energy. The blade is merely symbolic. Though I don't think it's necessary for a blade to be sharp, if we are thinking about symbolism, what does that say to our psyche to have our blade of truth be dull and unsharpened? In an effort to be more acceptable to mainstream society, to not be associated with movie-style Satanists killing animals and babies, have we lost touch with what the tool is about and compromised what a blade actually is?

Beyond the ceremonial tools, do weapons have a place for the witch? I know great witches on both sides of the fence. In the United States, the Second Amendment, "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed," is generally interpreted as permitting citizens to own weapons, including guns. Later laws have attempted to restrict and regulate which weapons we can own and how they can be obtained, but the basic concept is stated in the amendment. Some witches envision a utopian society where there is no need for weapons and believe that to move toward that vision is to move away from guns, to learn to solve our problems peacefully and diplomatically. I hap-

pen to hold that vision myself, though I'm not sure how realistic it is to apply to every segment of society, including the military, if the rest of the world doesn't yet hold that vision. Some would argue that the Second Amendment was written in a time when there was a militia, in a very different world, and the Founding Fathers did not envision the modern weapons we have. They also lived in a time of fear of the federal government abusing the states and their citizens like a monarchy, and the citizens needed options to break from such oppression if need be. Ideally this is not the state of affairs in our modern world, and should be taken into consideration. Other civilized countries have far more restrictive gun laws and seem to benefit from them in terms of a lower crime and violence rate than the United States.

I know quite a few witches on the other end of the spectrum, who own handguns for their personal safety and know how to use them effectively. One of my most powerful memories early in my own training was in a class on protection magick. The teacher asked us what we did to protect ourselves. And as the diligent and naïve metaphysical students we were, our answers were "surround myself in the light," "wear patchouli oil charged for protection," and "call on my guardian angel." One student was a little more pragmatic, and said that she was aware of her surroundings, carried her key as a potential weapon when walking in tough areas and parking lots, and also carried mace spray. The teacher liked her response best, and when we asked our instructor what she does for protection, she said, "I carry a gun and I know how to shoot it." I was floored. That was not the answer I was expecting. She told us that even though we worked in the spiritual world, we were still in the physical world and needed to be aware and prepared for physical danger. Sometimes magick will not be enough. You need to be prepared. She didn't advocate that we all go out and get guns. If you don't know how to use them, and don't want to, they will be more of a liability to you. But she did urge us to learn about self-defense, to be cognizant of our environment, and to be safe in a practical, street-smart way. The light, patchouli oil, and angels are fine to reinforce your safety, but don't go into a dangerous area thinking that these alone will save you. Use all your skills. My teacher, and a few others, made me rethink my positions on gun control. Though I don't own a gun and have no desire to, I don't necessarily demonize those who do. I think back to the laws of Thelema: "Do what

thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law." If you feel that carrying a firearm is necessary for your True Will, then I guess you should do it.

What are your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about weapons and gun control? How do they work with your life and beliefs as a witch?

Ritual of the Warrior

Before passing to the next lesson, make a deep and meaningful connection to the warrior god in your personal pantheon. If you have not yet chosen a pantheon, now is the time to choose your warrior deity, god, or goddess. Choose well, for you will be laying the foundation of potentially lifelong work. If you have chosen a deity to fit the Aries warrior archetype, perhaps you have already made contact, or felt its presence in your life as you worked on this lesson. Now you will work directly with this god. Design a ritual to both honor and connect with this entity. You can meet with the deity in meditative vision or shamanic journey, or if you already have a connection to the deity, you can try a direct invocation (*TOSW*, exercise 19).

In this ritual, you will either ask yourself the three questions listed here, or the deity will ask you at least three questions regarding the lessons of this zodiac gateway. You will have to answer each of them before you are allowed to pass on to the next lesson and gate. The questions for Aries are: Who have you been? Who are you now? Who will you be? When you have completed the ritual, make sure you continue to honor and work with this deity over the course of the year.

Homework

- Do exercises 32–37 and record your results in your journal or BOS.
- Perform your master spell for this lesson.
- Review one myth from one of the cultures outlined on page 31.
- Review one religion as outlined on pages 29–30.

- Choose one figure from the biography list on pages 32–33, and learn all you can about that person.
- Start work on your final project, assuming you've chosen to start at Aries. If not, adjust your final project schedule.
- Work with the Aries warrior deity from your personal pantheon.
- Obtain the Aries gem for your "breastplate" charm bag, if you haven't done so already. Work with the Aries stone this month. Carry it with you. Meditate with it. Place it under your pillow at night before you go to sleep, and learn to attune to the power of Aries. (You might find an Aries stone is too much energy to sleep with. If so, place it on your altar.)
- Work with one of your thirteen tools, re-consecrating it. Seek out its spiritual equivalent in the Otherworld, and know its mysteries.
- Optional: Make a fluid condenser (*TOHW*, chapter 9) out of a high-grade, flammable alcohol for this zodiac sign. Research appropriate plants for that sign, and choose the one that is right for you (*OTOW*, chapter 13). Twelve zodiac fluid condensers can be blended and burned as part of your initiation ritual at the end of this course.
- Optional: Find a small stone with a flat surface that you can mark with the zodiac sign of Aries. Cleanse it, mark it, and charge it. You can also use it like a talisman, along with, or in place of, the Aries gemstone. Collecting one for each lesson, you can use these stones to mark the boundary of your circle for the initiation ritual at the end of this course.
- When you complete the trials of this chapter, tie another knot in your witch's cord in a ritualized manner.

Tips

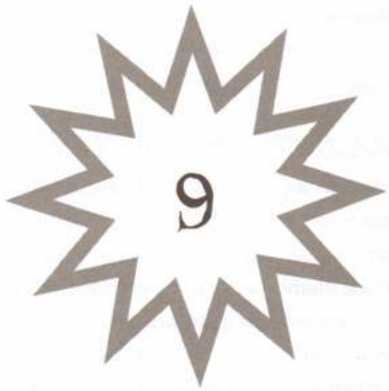
- How do the themes of the warrior fit into your year-and-a-day goals and final project?

- Continue working on your own BOS, adding appropriate material to it each month. Write and perform these rituals when appropriate. You could write one of the following:

  Esbat for the new Moon in Aries, or for the full Moon in Libra, its opposite sign.

  Sabbat ritual for Ostara.

  Rite-of-passage ritual for a child blessing/Wiccaning/welcoming.
- Explore the gateway of transformation in your inner temple (*ITOW*, chapter 14).



Lesson Nine
The Wisdom of Taurus

Following the two prevalent patterns of the zodiac cycle—fire, earth, air, water and cardinal, fixed, mutable—the fixed earth sign Taurus follows the trail of the pioneering cardinal fire Aries in our cycle. Fixed signs designate the center of a season, with Taurus firmly anchoring the center of spring. Within the fixed signs is one of the four Celtic fire festivals beloved by witches. Within Taurus is one of our most prominent celebrations, the festival of Beltane, second only to its opposite Sabbat Samhain, with which it shares much in common, each being the shadow of each other, just as Taurus is the shadow of Scorpio. Between the two lie the mysteries of the witch, of life and death.

Gender: Female
Triplicy: Fixed
Element: Earth
Image: Bull/Cow
Season: Spring

House: House of Resources
Key Phrase: "I Have"
Theme: Physical Security
Blessing: Stability
Challenge: Stubbornness
Archetype: Steward
Ruling Planet: Venus
  Exalted: Moon
  Detriments: Mars, Pluto
  Fall: Uranus
  Esoteric Ruler: Vulcan
  Monadic Ruler: Vulcan
Classical Deity: Aphrodite/Venus
Angel: Malchidael
Colors: Green, Pink, Red, Orange
Metal: Copper
Stones: Emerald, Rose Quartz
Body: Throat, Larynx
Labor of Hercules: Capture of the Cretan Bull
Gift of the Goddess: To Bring Forth Beauty, Inner and Outer
The Thirteen Goals of the Witch: Exercise the Body
Alchemical Operation: Fixation
Cell Salt: Natrium Sulph (Sodium Sulphate)
Tarot: Hierophant

Taurus is considered to be a feminine sign, and while its totemic figure is a bull, astrologers will note a strong feminine, receptive quality to Taurus, particularly in contrast to the previous Aries energies. In astrology, the feminine Moon is exalted, or celebrated and empowered, when in the sign of Taurus, showing how the lunar crescents of the Goddess are linked with the horns of the bull. Many will substitute the image of the sacred cow for the bull to bring the totem in harmony with the traditional gender

assignment, but I prefer the interplay of mixing gender symbols, a feminine sign with a masculine bull, to show we are all a mix of both male and female qualities.

The Way of the Steward

Taurus doesn't have any one neatly defined archetypal divine image. Because of its mixed gender qualities, a particular god or goddess form we can relate to doesn't easily spring to mind. But the qualities of Taurus are quite clear. As a fixed earth sign, Taurus is all about security, and primarily security in the world. All the fixed signs are seeking security and stability in some fashion, and when that security is in earth elemental energy, it is security in the physical world.

The traditional ruler of Taurus is the planet Venus, associated with the goddesses of love, such as Venus, Aphrodite, Freya, and Hathor. At first glance, they seem to have nothing to do with security. We think of security as almost a martial quality, like a security guard, but the security of Taurus is feeling safe, feeling peace and enjoyment in the material world. The goddesses of love are traditionally known to be sensualists, enjoying music, food, drink, art, sensuality, luxury, the comfort of the home, and of course sex.

Because of this, Taurus energy is portrayed as shallow, materialistic, jealous, and self-centered. But this manifestation is simply one octave of Taurus. When you look at these goddesses, they are the goddesses of life. In our pagan religions, we celebrate and enjoy life. Spirituality is not equated with aestheticism. We don't need to be hermits, prudes, or beggars. When we look at the original myths of Aphrodite, she is born of the foam, from both sex and violence (the castration of Uranus). Her "sisters," the triple-goddess figure of the Furies, embody the shadow side of life—death, vengeance, or retribution. Aphrodite, on the other hand, walks upon land and the flowers bloom behind her. One of the names of Roman witches, *venefica*, comes from the root word *Venus*, and establishes associations to both the goddess of love and love magick, and poisons, in the word *venom*. Though she is not often thought of as a witch goddess in the same way figures like Artemis, Diana, Persephone, Demeter, and Hecate are, Venus is the goddess of green and living things, from which we derive our original pleasure of the world. Our first security comes from nature, from the fertility and abundance of nature. Our earliest ancestors

were hunters and gatherers, and it was from the animals and plants, both here and reproducing through sex, that we survived. Our relationship with nature was directly related to our ability to eat, find shelter, and use medicine. Through the goddess of nature we grow and prosper.

We then evolved into an agricultural and craftsman society. Another archetype associated with Venus comes to mind, that of her classical husband, Hephaestus in Greece, or Vulcan in Rome. In esoteric astrology, a mythic planet named Vulcan, said to be inside the orbit of Mercury, rules Taurus. Science has not yet discovered it, and some occultists speculate that it is a planet not quite in this physical dimension, but on a higher plane of existence. There is no way to prove that to modern science, but whether it is a reality or a fantasy, the archetypal concept of the forge god connected to Taurus is what's important. The craftsman takes things from nature and, in partnership with both the art and the materials used, transforms it. Through craftsmanship we enhance our security and comfort in the world, creating new homes, utensils, methods of staying warm, preparing food, and most importantly, expressing our soul through creativity. If our soul does not feel expressed in the world, it's not going to feel that the world is a pleasurable place. If you don't feel safe in the world, it can be quite hard to express yourself creatively, yet it's an important part of the human experience.

So we have figures such as the beautiful enchantress of love, the fertility and flowery goddess, and the smith or craftsman as our archetypes. Not all easy to string together in one phrase. The title I've found most helpful in the understanding of Taurus's nature is the steward. Also considered the caretaker, this is the one who solidly nurtures our relationship with nature, be it the primal wild man of nature or the one who acts as a guardian. I think the later Minoan myths we will explore point to a mythic bull figure that acts as the guardian of the goddess, just as the Moon is exalted in Taurus. Also the gardener, the one who cultivates nature to bring us together to relationship, is an archetype of Taurus, the steward of nature. Taureans are known to get their hands dirty and play in the soil, having tactile, sensory experiences in nature. The goddesses of the home and of love and pleasure are the guardians of our relationship with ourselves, with our bodies and each other, our personal expressions of nature. In the craftsman, we have the guardian of the inner secrets of nature, how to speak with it and work with it to transform and create anew. All of these roles require

a true reverence of nature, a sense of stewardship for the mysteries of nature, of our bodies and the body of the Earth.

While on an exoteric level we think of a steward as a manager or overseer, on the esoteric level, the steward is a spiritual guardian, overseeing our relationship with nature, and through it, the spirit world. Witches can act as warriors, gaining a certain level of power, and then putting that power to use as stewards, as guardians and guides. It's not often that nature needs to be overseen, though we are in a symbiotic relationship with all of nature, and our actions affect it as well as its energies affect us. The steward is really concerned with overseeing humanity's relationship with nature, particularly in a day and age when we have forgotten the old ways. Our personal connection with the planet is what needs guidance and aid. It would be the height of arrogance to think we must take care of nature. It's more like we're a family, not the crowning jewel of creation. We take care of aspects of nature, through our relationship with the land, and nature, like a wonderful friend or sibling, helps take care of us. In this case, stewardship is really a symbiotic relationship.

In the Herculean myth cycle, the adventure most closely coinciding with Taurus is the capture of the Cretan Bull. The Cretan Bull is associated with the form that Zeus took to seduce Europa and take her to Crete. He was known for his ability to shift his shape into other forms, particularly to seduce women. For Europa, he took the form of a bull. But in the labors of Hercules, the Cretan Bull is more likely referring to the white bull that fathered the Minotaur. The bull was a gift from the sea god Poseidon to King Minos, but Minos later angered Poseidon. Poseidon sent the bull to be sacrificed in his name, but Minos, so enraptured by the beauty of the white bull, did not and hoped the gods would not notice. Poseidon did notice, however, and he cursed Pasiphae, Minos's wife, with lust for the bull. She later gave birth to the Minotaur, half bull and half man, called Asterion, the starry one. The Minotaur grew to be ferocious and was eventually held in an elaborate labyrinth under Minos's palace, believed to be the historical site of Knossos today. As some equate a strong link between Poseidon and Zeus, potentially being the same figure at one time and split by different cultural associations, the two tales could be the same myth, told by different people with different perspectives.

Hercules' seventh labor was to capture the bull, which was dangerous and destructive on Crete. He did so with a lasso, riding it back to King Eurystheus. Like our modern bull riders, Hercules had to show the same sort of fixed tenacity to ride the bull, much like the stubborn qualities associated with Taurus today. Fixed earth people can dig their heels in and focus on their goal until it's accomplished. Though Eurystheus planned to sacrifice the bull to Hera, she refused this offering because it demonstrated the success of Hercules, and the bull was released into Marathon, and later became involved in the myths of Theseus. Theseus went on to Crete to slay the Minotaur with the help of Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos. He entered the labyrinth with a cord to guide him back out. Today many pagans believe the myths of the bull and the Minotaur to be a corruption of some original bull god cult in Minoan culture that was transformed in the writings of the Greeks to reflect their separation from Minoan culture and beliefs. Adaptations of the Minoan myths play a pivotal role in the modern Minoan Brotherhood/Sisterhood witchcraft traditions today.

The Minoan tale gets into some of the themes of Taurus quite well. On one level, all this sex with horned gods and divine bulls figures well into the Beltane symbolism. On another level, Hercules required inherent physical power embodied by Taurus and the Sabbat of Beltane to obtain the bull. He prevented the bull from further disrupting the way of life of the Minoans on Crete. The core dispute that fathered the Minotaur was really over who "owned" the bull, who did it belong to—Poseidon as a sacrifice, given to Minos for that express purpose, or to Minos, who received the gift. The Minotaur itself proved in this tale to be a danger to the people of Athens, who were required to sacrifice their youth to him, hence Theseus's quest to stop the sacrifice and slay the monster.

Taurus naturally rules the Second House. The Second House is described as the house of material possessions. What do you have? What do you own? What are the resources at your command? The key statement of Taurus is "I have." Many think of resources simply as money, but money is just a symbol for value, of potential energy. Resources include tangible and nontangible things alike, including the talents and abilities naturally occurring and honed through hard work. They are things that help you earn money, to have resources to exchange with others.

Exercise 38

"I Have" List

In your journal or BOS, make a list of statements starting with "I have," and complete the sentence with all the possessions you have. This is not an inventory of just your music, books, and movies, but a general overview of not only your tangible possessions, but all your resources. What do you possess that is of value to you?

Reflect on the list. What nontangible items are on your list? Do you include your talents and abilities, your body, mind, emotions, and soul? They are the tools of the magician. Do your friends and family, as well as spiritual sisters and brothers, show up on the list? It's strange to think of people as resources, but your relationships are resources that both sides have to "invest" in to make successful. Look at your tangible possessions. Do you need all these possessions? Do you want them all? Why do you have them? Are you afraid to part with something? Why? It's believed that if all things possess an energy, to make room for new and fresh energy in your life you have to let go of the old. Sweep out what doesn't serve you anymore, as the lessons of the broom show us. Letting go of something doesn't mean it's bad, just that it's not of any use to you. One of the reasons why witches think the world's resources are unlimited is that we give up whatever we don't need so that others may use it, knowing that others will shift resources and we'll get what we need. We are not ignorant of environmental factors, and we don't think that all resources are literally unlimited. We do believe the shifting of resources through truly following your higher will makes sure that all can be provided for, assuming all are working in higher will. This process can actually place less strain on the environment.

Ownership and possessions are the themes of Taurus. Who owns what? Who is secure in that ownership, and who disputes it? Do we ever truly own anything, even ourselves? When we look at the Minoan myths, it doesn't appear that we always do. One of the great mystical teachings from Dion Fortune, in her book *Moon Magic*, is "An initiate possesses nothing but has the use of everything."[1] Those of us who awaken and live in a true reality know that we appear to possess things, yet everything is divine and

1. Dion Fortune, *Moon Magic* (York Beach, ME: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2003), 40.

ultimately does not belong to us as individuals. Ownership is ultimately an illusion, just as separation from our source and each other is ultimately an illusion. But it's a pretty strong illusion, so we work with it while we are in this world, knowing that if we work with the laws of magick, the laws of the universe, we can create, manifest, and use any resources we want to fulfill our True Will. We don't always get everything we want, but everything that is necessary.

With the teachings of the initiate in mind, are your own material needs fulfilled? If not, why not? Taking care of your basic needs is a critical step in the service of the community. If you are not provided for, you will not be very useful in helping others, both in the physical world and the spirit world. Those needs on the lower rungs of Maslow's chart must be fulfilled before you get to the higher reaches of spirit and service. Witchcraft teacher T. Thorn Coyle likes to use the analogy of a plane in her lectures. In the case of an emergency, you must first secure your own oxygen mask before trying to help others.

Our first, last, and really only physical possession in this lifetime is not obvious to most of us, yet we are never without it. Our primary possession is our body. It is the resource we have to execute all our other talents and abilities to earn money and credit to operate in the world. The Second House is sometimes referred to as the House of the Body, for all other monetary things are dependent upon how we relate to this first possession, the first temple or castle we own. We must take care of this possession so it can help take care of us.

This teaching is often lacking amongst witches, but the concept of physical health and physical fitness was at one time paramount in the Craft, as a matter of both spiritual and physical importance. Working with our "green ray" of magick, some experiences require ritual in physically challenging places—hiking into the woods, climbing hilltops, enduring both hot and cold weather. Now we have the luxury of doing everything in our homes, and although that is very valuable, I'm not sure it always conveys the same magick. Caring for the body, building its strength, also strengthens our magick, helping the power flow through us. Many esoteric healers actually take up weight lifting, believing the strength in their arms helps facilitate the transfer of energy to others. One of Cunningham's thirteen principles is exercise. While some take Eastern spiritual concepts too far, believing that the body is unimportant and that one

must be somewhat detached from it, there is an inherent contradiction in this logic, as the Eastern traditions are far more physical than our current Western mysteries. You don't see many overweight yogis and martial artists. Witches must go further in embracing the body. Our pagan ancestors were known for celebrating the body, adorning it with jewelry and makeup. The art of makeup was one of the forbidden arts taught by the fallen angels, the Grigori, along with witchcraft and astrology. Magick existed in makeup, body adornment, and celebration of the body through dance, song, and sex. One of the gifts of the Goddess is to bring forth both inner and outer beauty. Witches can take pride in their bodies and celebrate them.

Exercise 39

Body Awareness

Answer these questions in your journal or BOS. Reflect upon the answers when you are finished. If you have a study partner or group, discuss them.

1. How do you feel about your body, self-image, and physical health? Scan your body, from the top of your head down to the tips of your fingers and toes. What parts of your body catch your attention?
2. Do you like how you look? How you feel?
3. What would you change if you could? Why?
4. Can you change it without radical methods, or is it simply something you are born with and must accept? If you can change it, why haven't you?
5. What are your exercise, diet, and health habits? Is it time to change or adapt them?

Celebration of the body is not perpetual indulgence and hedonism, but understanding that there is a time and a place for everything. Our middle path is not the way of continual static balance never veering from the center, but a dynamic cycle, in which we sway from one end to the other in a rhythmic, measured pace while celebrating all aspects of the cycle of life. There is a time for indulgence and a time for discipline. There

is a time for pleasure and a time for striving. There is a time for rest and a time for exercise. Part of celebrating the body is gaining greater mastery of the body. Witches, like our Eastern mystic counterparts, should have a certain measure of control over the physical body, being able to control breath, heartbeat, temperature, and brain waves. Review the fundamental body-control principles of *ITOW*, particularly exercise 17. Have you continued to practice them and gain greater mastery over your own rhythms and cycles? If not, make them a part of your spiritual practice. Do you have an exercise program? Exercise can widely vary from a gym routine or yogic practice to regular walking and hiking. The form of exercise doesn't matter as long as you do something regularly to keep yourself healthy, to care for your body. By conditioning it now, you'll enjoy it for many years to come. As those involved in the sacredness of the physical world, we should treat our bodies as sacred and care for them.

One of the witches' theological teachings on the material world can be summed up in an old English blessing abbreviated as FFFF, for Flags, Flax, Fodder, and Frig, though some will change the order of the words or simply shorten it to FFF, for Flags, Flax, and Fodder. These four terms are a blessing for four specific material things. *Flags* refers not to cloth hung from a pole, but flagstones. It is the foundation of a living space, the home and hearth. It is also a blessing for a good home. *Flax* refers to linen specifically, and good clothing in general. May you have the clothing you need to protect, adorn, and keep your body warm. *Fodder* refers to food. May you, your family, and your animals have all the food you need and want. Lastly, *Frig* refers to the Norse goddess Frigg or Frigga, the wife of Odin, who is considered to be a goddess of the home, the hearth, and conjugal love. Frigg is also associated with Freya, a powerful Norse goddess sometimes equated with Venusian archetypes but having many more associations. Yet like the Venus figures, she is strongly associated with sex. Frig is a blessing for good and plentiful sex. FFFF is summed up as good home, good clothes, good food, and good sex—all things very important to us as human beings, seeking security and comfort in the world.

In most cultures, these things do not come for free. They all require payment or exchange of some kind, yet the concepts of money and witchcraft are a very hard subject. I've found it interesting to see how many people involved in Wicca are often financially unstable and have difficulties with earning and managing money consistently.

As with issues of physical health, people with issues of finance are attracted to Wicca. This could be because classically the witch was the poor, rural practitioner rich in life if not coin. Many went on to form the temples of the ancient world, but the ancestors of the primal witch remained in the countryside, with the crossroads as the temple rather than any permanent structure adorned with precious metals and stone carvings. Or it could be that those who need to learn about the physical world are drawn to witchcraft and paganism in this life to gain greater mastery in the physical world. Some will stay in the Craft and others will draw upon this wisdom in future lives, not necessarily committed to the ways of the witch.

Magick and Money

One of the stickiest issues of money and the Craft comes from any direct involvement they might have. Great debate rages in the modern pagan communities over the need for payment for services and if so, what kind of services? Much of the concern stems from our Western cultural conditioning, which is decidedly not pagan, but dominated by the Judeo-Christian mindset. People often ask if magick can be used for personal gain, yet the history of magick from cultures all over the world is filled with spells for money, wealth, power, home, love, sex, fertility, curses, curse breaking, and good luck. All of these issues are intimately personal and involve gain and benefit to an individual. Yet we have this notion that power cannot be used for the self, but only for others, perpetuated through books, movies, and television shows.

The first issue arrives with the Gardnerian "laws," specifically these laws:

> *119. Never accept money for the use of the art, for money ever smeareth the taker. 'Tis sorcerers and conjurers and the priests of the Christians who ever accept money for the use of their arts. And they sell pardons to let men escape from their sins.*
>
> *120. Be not as these. If you accept no money, you will be free from temptation to use the art for evil causes.*

Here the witch is compared to the Christian priest and, wanting to distance ourselves from the Christians as much as possible, we take a different stance: no exchange of money

for magick or miracle. Gardner specifically speaks on personal gain, citing the main tenet of the Wiccan Rede:

> *121. All may use the art for their own advantage or for the advantage of the craft only if you are sure you harm none.*

So modern witches descended from the Gardnerian persuasion can do magick for themselves if there is no harm. If we do magick for another, it must be for free or not at all. Yet when gaining our tools of the Craft, there can be no bargain in it. Witches are called to pay full price for all tools of the art:

> *125. Never bargain or cheapen anything whilst you buy by the art. So be it ordained.*

The extended version of the Wiccan Rede also says, "Fairly take and fairly give." Is that advice for life in general? Or does it apply to magick as well? Who defines what "fairly" is? Is one to be fairly compensated for time, consultations, and services? Does "fairly give" require me to give them away for free? The answers are as varied as there are witches out there, and each witch, or tradition, appears to have its own code of what "fair" is, yet the examples are not always consistent and clear.

Most are fine with a witch charging for services as a psychic, tarot reader, rune reader, or the like. This is technically not witchcraft or the "art," so they are simply providing a service and skill. Yet, I learned my tarot as a part of my witchcraft training. I consider it a part of my art. I think of divination as the listening side of magick, while spell casting is the speaking side of magick. Why is one side of the coin okay to charge for, while the other is not?

Healing, a specific form of active magick, is another contested arena. Some will charge for operative magick for the purposes of money and love, yet feel that all healing must be free. How can you charge someone in need when you could help them? Today, many witches' training coincides with alternative and holistic health modalities that our society expects to pay for—massage, aromatherapy, herbalism, flower essences, Reiki, chakra balancing, and the like. Many hardcore traditionalists will say it's fine to pay for materials, but not the service, while more New Age practitioners will say that healing is healing, and whatever combinations of modalities I perform, you are coming for a service and, as a trained healing professional, I am compensated for

my time. Just because I am a witch doesn't mean I do my job for free. Would I let my religion tell me I should work in an office or factory for free? What about full-time staff and administrators for churches, temples, and social service agencies? They have religious and spiritual associations, but are still paid for their work.

Some will go a step further, and say it's fine to charge for magick, because you are performing a service. It's not spiritual. It's not charging for religion. You are simply consulting with others to help them change their own lives. The Art talked about in the laws is the Art of High Magick, not simple folk magick that anyone can do.

Teaching is the last hot button. Many traditions take oaths against teaching the Craft for money. Again, this comes from distancing themselves from Christianity, which they have seen as intimately tied with the exchange of money. Religions should be free and available to all. And witchcraft is no exception, for there are many ways to explore the mysteries, through books, the spirits, and walking in the woods, yet should a teacher's time be free and available to all? What happens when a teacher is so devoted to teaching that there is no time to have a social life, make a fair living, or do anything else? If it is a vocation, then why can't one earn a living from it? The traditional religion of the Craft is not free and available to all. Most traditional teachers will turn away far more students than they take, for both practical and spiritual reasons. But access to books today makes the Craft more widely available, if not free.

The main concern is the concept of not just information, but initiation for money. Those with this concern contend that one should not accept money for initiation because it implies that anybody can be initiated as a witch if that person has the cash, and work, merit, and magickal ability will be ignored. Someone who has done the work and "deserves" it, someone who is really meant to be initiated, should be, regardless of how much or how little money he or she has. Yet some teachers feel they should not bar initiates, for who are they to judge who deserves initiation if all the mundane requirements have been fulfilled? Many teachers charge for classes, and if the classes are passed, the students are initiated. Often these teachers are the most stringent in their requirements of the students. The admission and even completion of the a does not guarantee initiation.

The term *simony* refers to buying ordination, and ironically comes from the figure of Simon Magus, who, seeing the magick of Christianity, seeks to learn it and add it to

his repertoire, offering to teach and initiate the apostles into his magick, or simply pay them for their time and training. They refuse, feeling that they have the one true way, and one cannot buy into it, yet now we find a Catholic Church highly influenced by finances. It is interesting that some branches of witchcraft find so much in common with Catholicism, both being against simony and both being concerned with a form of divine succession. For Catholics, it is the apostolic succession of the Pope, descending from the first Bishop of Rome. For many British Traditional witches, it is the line of succession tracing back to Gardner, Sanders, or another founding personality.

All of this concern flies in the face of other indigenous and unbroken traditions of magick, healing, and spiritualism. Many living traditions have adapted and easily mix money with their work, with no disastrous consequences. In fact, the openness and honesty about financial realities have created a clearer, more professional relationship between clients and practitioners and between teachers and students, whereas in many witchcraft traditions, this relationship blurs and breaks down.

When one looks to the practitioners of African disasporic traditions, one finds that those who offer either individual personal services or initiatory training are expected to receive compensation. In terms of initiation, payment might come in the form of all the material offerings that are needed for the rituals as well as training time, and it can be quite expensive, yet it's a part of those cultural traditions.

Hoodoo root workers, primarily in Protestant Christian traditions drawing from African and American folk magick, are fully compensated for their charms, baths, and candle-burning ceremonies. Though people are paying for their products, they are also paying for the time of the consultations and the work that was put into them.

The question of ethics in Voodou, Santeria, and Hoodoo traditions is not hotly debated. There is no Wiccan Rede, Law of Return, or karma in their theology. The practitioners of these services believe that those who contract them are ultimately responsible for the consequences of their actions. Some have personal codes based on what they feel comfortable doing, but there is no overall religious teaching guiding them. Perhaps the clients were justified in wanting to curse a rival or separate two people, just as much as we feel people are justified to come together or receive money and luck. Practitioners don't assume they know better, but simply provide a service and give the clients the options available. The practitioner is like a tool, and the client

is the one holding the tool. The client can choose to build or destroy—both are needed in the cycle of creation, and many practitioners do not judge.

A story told to those involved in traditional Chinese medicine is that long ago, healers were continuously paid by their patients for every day they did not get sick. The job of the healer was to keep them well. If the patient became ill, the healer would treat them free of charge no matter how long it took, and they would only resume payment once they were healthy again.

In the Andean shamanic tradition, an apprentice must provide payment to the master in combinations of money, alpacas, llamas, labor, and staple supplies such as coca leaves, liquor, wine, food, and candles during the training period of the apprentice. It's not uncommon for shamans of many different traditions to receive compensation for their healing. For some it is for specific acts, or for others, like the Chinese healer, the tribe would take care of the shaman continuously to ensure no harm or illness would befall the community, and if it did, the shaman would be ready to take care of it.

In the Western magick world, we have the romantic image of the sorcerer's apprentice, yet it's not so romantic. The apprentice must do menial work to free the teacher to go about his own studies and research. The manual work builds the apprentice's experience with the earth element, and in exchange the apprentice receives training in the arts. The challenge for the apprentice is to see the magickal in the mundane work of cooking, cleaning, gardening, and finance. Similarly, Ceridwen's "slave," Gwion Bach, learns much from stirring her cauldron for a year and a day. Overtly it appears he learns nothing, but at the culmination, he receives three drops of wisdom and all the magick the world has to offer. Many witches are forced into mundane work to relearn this fact, because few of us apprentice as youngsters with a master.

The pre-Christian image of the witch fits quite nicely with these portraits from living traditions. We have the image of the cottage witch in the Dark Ages, living by the edge of society, where people would visit the wise one for advice, divination, healing herbs, or a charm to change their lives. The ethics of the witch of this era was not guided by the Rede, and I'm sure curses and specific love spells were as common as healings and blessings. In exchange, the people did labors for the witch, brought gifts, and gave offerings of food such as chickens or bread. There was an exchange for the services. The exchange was a barter, because money was not as important in that society. I imagine the old rural

witches of the truly ancient world were much the same with their clients, receiving items of value from the population in exchange for a bit of magick or a spell.

Their parallel peers in the temples, the priestesses and priests of the old gods, were supported by their congregation members, who paid donations to the temple to maintain its structure, to pay its taxes, and to take care of the needs of the clergy, as the temples were centers of worship, aid, and healing for the community. In many ways, these pagan temples operated similar to modern institutional churches we have today whose practices Gardner's laws criticize.

So what happened to separate modern witchcraft from this line of thinking, divorcing us from the concept that money and compensation could be part of our spiritual path, as it is now a necessary part of life? One could imagine the general cynicism many have for institutional religion and not wanting to emulate what has come before us, because it has become corrupt on many levels. Yet our whole structure and theology is nothing like that of the Christian church. Why do the Voodou and Santeria traditions that are intimately connected to Catholicism still have a rich and vibrant tradition, yet have no qualms about the exchange of money? Their clergy learned that to support themselves in this work full-time and do it well, they needed to be compensated.

We could blame it on the Fraudulent Mediums Act, the inheritor of the previous witchcraft laws. Gavin and Yvonne Frost, the founders of the Church and School of Wicca, stated in a workshop I attended at a Florida Pagan Gathering festival in 2005 that Gardner, upon receiving an O.T.O. charter from Aleister Crowley, asked Crowley how much he should charge for initiations. Evidently Gardner had nothing personal against intertwining money and magickal initiation then. But he later added the codes against money to the Book of Shadows because he was afraid of witches being persecuted by the Fraudulent Mediums Act, which replaced the repealed witchcraft laws. Though I have not been privy to the documents stating this, it certainly sounds feasible to me.

Modern witches, called to the vocation of the priesthood full-time, have struggled with this ever since. *A New Wiccan Book of the Law*, compiled and edited by Lady Galadriel, is a reworking of the various versions of the Laws of Witchcraft. While still retaining the prohibition against accepting money for the art, it also includes this new law:

50. If any Wiccan truly labors, just payment becomes a personal right. This is not considered the taking of money for the Art, but good and honest work. Yet if any Wiccan works willingly for the good of the Craft, or a brother or sister without pay, then it becomes the cause of great honor.

This rendition of the laws gives us a little more leeway and takes the modern world into consideration, yet there is still room for debate.

People feel very strongly about the issue of money on both sides, and I don't think there is an easy answer except our guiding principle of "harm none." If you've taken oaths against charging, then you have to respect those oaths. You made them. Some oaths inhibit charging for teaching, so I know a few witches who are fine with doing healing and magick classes for money, but won't train and initiate someone into their specific tradition for money. If they learn another tradition without those prohibitions, then they are free to train and charge in that other tradition.

I personally believe that the exchange of money for services doesn't harm anybody if all actions are done with clarity and honesty. As we move into the next age, I feel witchcraft and its ministers will play a vital role. It's hard to imagine priests and priestesses who can devote themselves to their work full-time because they are attempting to perform a full-time spiritual job while keeping a traditional forty-hour-a-week job, as well as balance personal life and family. We have to find ways to support and encourage our ministers, yet I don't envision great financial institutions with high-paid clergy and weekly circles to collect donations, or a "tithing" of pagan congregations to support the temples.

At this time, I know a few pagan elders who have been so devoted to their teaching in life that they have made little financial provisions for retirement and elderhood. Their students "hide" money in the elders' homes and jackets, where they will find it, to help them out financially. Money has become an awkward and difficult thing. If the teachers were able to professionally take on their vocation throughout life, and get paid for it, perhaps they would not be in their current situation.

One of the teachings that guides my practice is from the Reiki tradition. Though it has nothing to do with witchcraft, it has definitely influenced my professional practice as a reader, teacher, and healer, as I combine my Reiki with more magickal rituals and

techniques. Reiki healing has two main precepts. The first is that the client must want the healing. The individual must request it in some way. The second is that there must be an exchange of energy. You are offering your time and are compensated for your time, even though the energy is universal and free. If not, you would spend your days doing Reiki treatments for those who found it easier to come to you to get "fixed" rather than take part in their own healing process. Exchange can come in many forms and isn't always money, but there is some sort of compensation, some payment between the practitioner and the client.

Payment can bring a level of expectation and competency to exchange that is not otherwise needed. If you don't do a good job and people feel like it was not worth the payment, they stop coming to you and they spread the word. If people feel that what you did was of value, they share it and others come to you. Many people carry titles and certificates without the talents to back them up. If we are going to charge for our services, we must be professional and competent at what we do—be it reading, magick, healing, or teaching. You can think of it as charging time for your professional services rather than charging for magick, because the magick is provided by the client. You are really providing the space for the magick to happen and the expertise to make sure all goes well.

I'm fine with charging for any magickal service as long as what the expected service is, and what the expected payment is, are both made clear up front. If someone doesn't want to do it, or needs to make other arrangements, I'm also agreeable. I've done barters and payment plans, but the exchange must be valued, equal, and honest. I've had many good unorthodox exchanges and some bad ones. People often want to give you things that are of no value to you. At times and under certain circumstances that can be fine, but when your own bills come along, you can't pay your rent or buy groceries with ceramic cat statues or tie-dye T-shirts. I've exchanged my time for office services, which I valued greatly. One classic barter given in witchcraft books tackling this subject is an exchange of labor, such as weeding your garden. I only need so many garden weeders, and in fact, I prefer to do that myself. It gets me out of the office and classroom and in touch with my plants. So make sure the service is something you really want or need.

Sometimes payment plans that follow a regularly schedule can be quite helpful to both the professional and the client. Payment plans that are easy and loose can be destructive to that relationship. When I started with payment plans, I would say, "Just pay me when you can." I had one student in particular, when I first started teaching at what I thought was a very reasonable rate, tell me she really wanted to study with me but didn't have the class fee. Could she still come? I told her to pay me what she could, and she agreed. She studied for months with me, and when the students would "check in" at the start of classes, she would tell us of her shopping sprees, buying over two hundred dollars worth of books over the weekend (which was higher than the full class fee she owed me), her partying binges drinking at bars, and her weekend getaways to exotic locations. I got more and more frustrated, but I felt that as a "spiritual" person, the money would come to me if I really needed it. Yet I kept thinking, *I can't buy any new books, or take a vacation, or really do more than pay my rent right now. This seems unfair.* I finally confronted her and was immediately paid, and our relationship has been better since then. Now I say, "Why don't you tell me what would be a good payment schedule and amount for you, and as long as you can follow that, I'm sure a payment plan will be fine." The money is not as important as the respect. I'd rather get a dollar a week from someone genuinely doing the work.

Sometimes there is just simple charity. Some students cannot afford to do something and won't be able to anytime soon. They can't offer any services you need, and their needs are immediate and usually do not require a long commitment. I think of those as "on me," as a gift freely given, and I simply do the work to help out a person, knowing that when I need money it will come to me, and this is a part of my service. Many people have given me such gifts when I've needed them, and I appreciate it. I've gone back to them when finances were better for me, and I've sent even more clients their way. When you maintain proper boundaries and respect, it will all work out.

In general, I've found that the clear exchange has facilitated clearer boundaries in my relationships with students and clients. I only expect a commitment based on what they have committed to, and they can only expect the same level of commitment from me. I'm being compensated for very specific acts of work, and when they are complete, we are both free to part ways unless we enter into another agreement. I was charged money for much of my training, and I think that was good for me. It made my requirements

very clear, just as it did when I went to college. I got a clear description of what I was going to be taught, and the classes delivered on exactly what was stated. There were no power struggles, politics, or mixed relationships with my teachers. Our roles were very clear. I try to set that same standard of professionalism when I teach and work with people one-on-one today. My own guide is, "If I had need of this class/service/product, would I pay for it and would I pay the price being asked?" If I honestly have to answer no to either of those questions, then I change it until I can say yes, or I don't offer it.

With all this pro-money-exchange talk from my perspective as a "professional" witch working in the world, it must be stated that many can take it to an extreme, and this is truly what the witchcraft laws caution against. Early in my practice, I was associated with a group of witches who were, in their own words, just "money witches." They learned how to read fortunes, make products, and run a store simply to gain cash, because it was a more fun way to make money than a regular nine-to-five job. They had no sense of community, ethics, or service to anybody but themselves, and they did not consider themselves priestesses of the community unless the title served them. They did not seek the mysteries as part of their personal evolution, but were simply concerned about the business of witchcraft.

Witchcraft is not the money-making business that many would believe. Very few people become obscenely rich professionally practicing the Craft, not even the bestselling authors, teachers, and stores you might assume to be very successful. Witchcraft is a small niche in the greater world of movies, music, and popular fiction, so success is relative. Professional witches, myself included, make a living, but if you simply want money, there are far more efficient ways to make it than with potions, spells, and tarot cards. I would like to say you can become rich doing this work, and it is possible, but for most of us, the Craft is a middle path. You can be comfortable, but you should do it more for your love of magick, spirit, and service than of money. Money is only a symbol of energy, a means of exchange, not a means to an end itself. Money alone is useless if you have no community agreement upon its value, and no people willing to exchange it.

I see these teachers who are focused on money as a great example, a mirror to me, to always know what I don't want to become, and our time together makes me ever

vigilant of my motives and methods. I strive to keep honor and respect in all my dealings, so I never head down that path.

Earth Magick

As stewards of the sacred relationship between humanity and the land, witches are versed in the arts of geomancy. Though often strictly defined as divination through the Earth, often visually poking holes randomly in the Earth with a stick and divining from the pattern, geomancy has come to mean working with Earth—*telluric*—energies on many levels, from crystal magick to, most importantly, working with the living, sacred sites of the land. This magick is nothing to be trifled with, and it is only for those who feel called by the Earth Mother to do it, but it will be of great importance if we desire to aid the planet and its people in the transformation of the ages.

Another quote I like from *A New Wiccan Book of the Law* addresses the witch's role with these sacred sites:

> *37. The etheric web and energy vortices of the earth are in constant flux and motion to adjust to the needs of the planet. The sacred trust of the Wicca is to create and to maintain centers of light and knowledge, using the powers of the divine spark within us to focus and channel the forces of the Universal fire. And these webs are the channels established between worlds of the stars and the realms of the earth, bringing in and regulating the spirit flames which energize and activate all life forms. Thus we tend and guard the threads of creation, and thus we weave the patterns of life and manifestation in an ever evolving tapestry.*

These sacred sites are the interfaces between the worlds that naturally occur. Classically they have been the sites of great inspiration, vision, healing, magick, and otherworldly contact. They regulate the flow of energy into our world, to aid all life and in turn offer energy to sustain the Otherworld. They are the interface of the heavens with the Earth, and because of this, they have particular alignment with the cycles of the Sun, Moon, and Stars, and many are speculated to be ancient sacred calendars.

Some of the most famous of these sites in the history of witchcraft include those of the British Isles, of Stonehenge and Avebury, Woodhenge, Glastonbury, and the chalk

hill carvings of the Uffington Horse, Cerne Abbas Giant in Dorset, and the Long Man of Wilmington in East Sussex. These are not the only sites by far, even in Britain. There are numerous less famous, perhaps less monumental, sites that are very powerful, secluded away on both public and private properties. This phenomenon isn't limited to just England. You will find amazing standing stone sites and other ancient monuments that are aligned with the etheric web of the planet all across Europe, and all across the world. Sacred wells and stones of Ireland and Scotland, the stones of Karnak, the ancient temples of Egypt and in particular the pyramids, the ziggurats of Mesopotamia, the temples of Rome and Greece, the megalithic sites of the Americas, the vortices of Sedona, and the Camino of Spain, as well as the many well-maintained, still spiritually active temples and sites of the Eastern world, are all keyed into the energy system of the planet. In the Western world, many have been marked with churches, as native power sites were adopted by the church to convert the locals. Much of the dominant power of these churches has come from the fact that they are often right on top of sacred sites, transmitting their message across the world through this web of light. Some geomancers believe that both the Christian church and some world governments, notably the United States, built their institutions over such lines to gain more power and control over the world. Washington, D.C., and much of early America were designed by Masons, with the principles of sacred geometry in mind.

Just as Britain has many sacred sites hidden away from prying eyes, so does the whole world. There could be such a vortex of telluric energies near your home, marked by ancient people, or left unmarked and awaiting a living contact. Some are on private property, guarded and maintained by old families who know the old ways, and if you approach them with respect, and an offering of bread, alcohol, or flowers for the land, they might show you their ways. My own childhood home is not far from a prehistoric site that is still surrounded in mystery. Known as America's Stonehenge, the area is alive with the power of the Earth.

There is no one set teaching on sacred sites for witches. I must admit that most of what I have learned and practiced has been from more modern metaphysical sources than from the Craft, but it seems to complement the Craft teachings, particularly those summed up in that previous modern law, quite well. The following sections describe some basic concepts that will help you in understanding sacred sites.

Ley Lines

Ley lines is the modern name for the lines of energy that connect the sacred sites. In the East they have been known as Dragon Lines, carrying chi through the environment. In the West, they have been associated with the faeries, witches, and the dead. Our modern concept of ley lines is an amalgam of several different ideas, and we're not really sure if the ancients looked at sacred sites in the same way we do. Technically the original concept of ley lines was a geographical alignment of sacred sites by straight "tracks" observed by Alfred Watkins. Eventually this idea got fused with the energetic connections between sacred sites. Some of the first and most powerful modern imagery comes from Dion Fortune's novel, *The Goat-Foot God*. Was she revealing secret initiate knowledge or using a colorful imagination? We'll probably never know for sure.

In our modern practice, these ley lines operate much like the meridian system of our own bodies, connecting power points together by allowing energy to flow through the lines to each site. Many perceive the flow of ley lines to be one way, like the flow of blood through your veins and arteries. Generally the lines are described as straight roads, and the ancients sometimes followed them as travel paths, while later civilizations, such as the Romans, built roads on these paths. Other people characterize the lines as spiraling or curving in nature. Lines are also given masculine and feminine, or yang and yin, qualities. Still others describe them as fire and water, and might even describe other types of lines in harmony with air, earth, and spirit.

In Glastonbury and surrounding areas, two major lines have been documented and given the names the Michael and Mary lines, denoting gender quality in their energy as they move through the English countryside. People compare them to the *ida* and *pingala* in the human body. Another major pair of lines is named for Apollo and Athena. Some interpret the Red Dragon and White Dragon from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The Prophecies of Merlin* as not just a political statement of the Celts and Saxons, but a metaphysical look at the feminine and masculine serpentine earth energies.

Ley lines can be found using dowsing rods and acute psychic senses. Minor lines run everywhere, and you can probably find at least one in a backyard or park area, though be aware that dowsing rods can also find underground flowing water quite easily, which often gets mistaken for ley lines. Have the intention of finding ley lines with your dowsing rods, and that is what you will find.

Vortex

Vortices are points in this web of light where two or more lines cross, creating an energy point akin to a chakra or acupuncture point. They occur pretty frequently, but the major vortices appear when major lines cross, or many different lines intersect at a spot. Like chakra points, there are major, medium, and small points to be found on the Earth. Many systems try to correspond the qualities of major world sites with the chakras of the human body, but there doesn't appear to be a coherent linear system, even though Glastonbury Tor is called the heart and Uluru, also known as Ayer's Rock, in Australia, is called the navel of the world. Vortex points are considered sacred sites where ancient people gathered. There is power at the sites to add to your magick, and a natural system to transmit your magick to the world to transform it. Vortex points have different qualities and characters, like ley lines. Some are considered masculine and feminine. They can be described as spiraling inward and outward, or upward and downward, depending on the site. Certain traditions believe that clockwise-rotating vortices are "good" while counter-clockwise vortices are "bad," but witches know that each serves a purpose. Each is needed. Many traditions identify power spots that are not for humans to use, as the energy is incompatible or toxic to humans, while others are places where humans shed and purify their toxic energies, and they should not be used for other ceremonies or habitation.

Physical Markers

Sacred sites are often marked by either natural or man-made constructs. Standing stones erected by ancient people, or simply left by nature through glacier movement, can mark energy pathways. Sacred sites such as wells, bogs, springs, mounds, and hills can mark sacred sites. Some New Age lore divides them into "electric" and "magnetic" qualities that in reality are more like masculine/yang and feminine/yin. Watery or deep sacred sites—wells, bogs, pits, ravines, lakes, waterfalls, caves—all have a feminine and magnetic quality. They are calming, introspective, and emotional. Sacred sites that are high and dry—mountaintops, hilltops, and deserts—have a more masculine or electric quality and are energizing and projective. Lines can also cross in seemingly random places, or where human constructions have been erected, oblivious to them. There is not always a telltale sign for the site. Some can simply be found untouched in nature.

Genus Loci

A Greek term for the "spirit of a place," *Genus Loci* refers to a concept that is central to most pagan traditions of Earth healing and geomancy, but forgotten in our modern New Age context. There is a belief that each place, vortex or not, has its own spirit. Some use the words *nature spirit*, *guardian*, or *deva*, all with slightly different cultural nuances, but a spirit of the location must be engaged when working with the land. Ritualists make offerings, referred to as "feeding the land spirits," to thank them for our "use" of the land, from ritual to living on the land and taking its bounty to survive. Homes are considered to have spirits, sometimes referred to as house elves or brownies, which are an expression of this Genus Loci concept in a domestic situation. When doing any geomantic work, make sure you are in communion and harmony with the will of the Genus Loci.

Grid Systems

Different Earth workers have different ideas about the whole system and shape of this web, or grid, of light around and in the Earth. Many think it is static and unmoving, like the nerves in our body. Others believe it is fluid and readjusts in different times and ages, and sacred sites of past ages are not always sacred sites today, just echoes of sacred sites left from another time. One teaching states that there are twelve main lines, or perhaps pairs of lines, like Michael and Mary, encircling the Earth, with a multitude of minor lines branching off and crisscrossing. Many look at sacred geometry and believe the "grid" of the Earth is based on one shape, such as the dodecahedron or a combination of shapes (fig. 2). Others believe that just as we have several subtle bodies, with their own energy systems—etheric, astral, emotional, mental, psychic, and divine—the Earth has many subtle bodies, with a different grid system in each. Some people are called to work in, and sense, one system, while others sense another system.

Man-made Vortices

Some speculate that sacred sites were not always sacred sites naturally, but through construction of standing stones, temples, and other geomantic alignments, the builders created a vortex, or collected a pool of telluric energy. The standing stones of Europe have been compared to giant stone needles, like acupuncture needles for the planet.

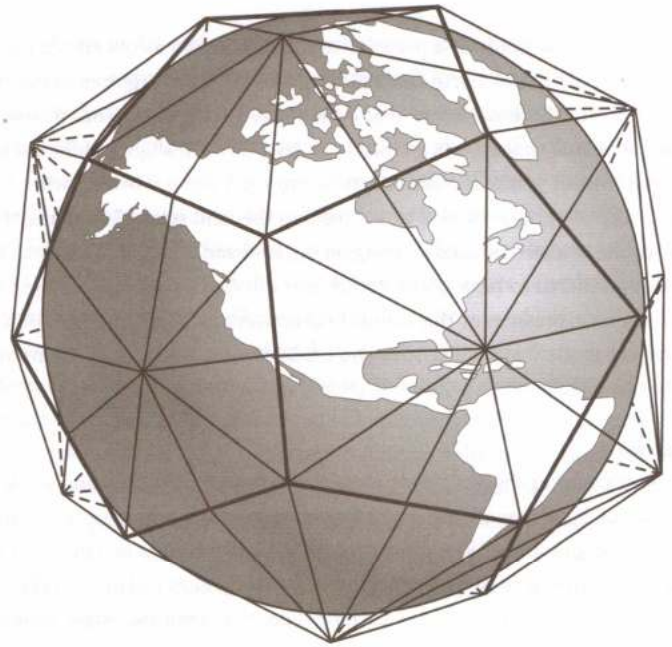


Figure 2: Earth Grid

Their placement and rituals conducted around them help heal and balance the Earth. We create vortex points all the time through our rituals, yet such permanent temples create permanent vortices. They can peak and wane during astrological cycles, but like a chakra point, they are present all the time.

Toxic Lines

In some traditions of geomancy, not all lines are considered life giving and beneficial. Some are considered harmful to both your physical and spiritual health. In feng shui, chi energies that move too quickly in a straight line are called poison arrows and promote ill health and misfortune. In Western metaphysical and alternative health lore, toxic lines

are referred to as *geopathic stress*. Geopathic stress has been defined in many ways. Natural radiation that is distorted by weak electromagnetic fields created by underground water, particularly by mineral concentrations, fault lines, and underground cavities, becomes toxic to living beings. Man-made geopathic stress can be caused by the electromagnetic fields of electric generators and pylons. These distortions create special zones, and supposedly those who live and sleep in them have lower immune systems and greater overall physical stress. They are more susceptible to a wide range of illnesses, including infertility, allergies, hyperactivity, cancer, and crib death. These distorted fields create a vortex of harmful geopathic energy.

Another source of geopathic stress related to our geomancy is a grid network of lines known as Hartmann lines, named after Ernst Hartmann, who claims discovery. They are considered "black streams" of energy compared to the natural life-giving "white streams" of the Earth's ley lines. They are not quite the same as the poison arrows of feng shui, or the toxic "elfshot" causing illness in the Faery Faith traditions, because the Hartmann lines are in a grid system, but the idea is similar. Most animals are said to avoid them, while insects, parasites, bacteria, and viruses thrive in them. Strangely, cats also seem to be attracted to them. Many claim that these black lines leave marks in the landscape, stunting trees and planks, creating cracks in buildings, sidewalks, and pipes, as well as zones where more traffic accidents happen and where there are higher crime rates. Many also claim that sites of great crime, evil, or destruction are built upon the intersection of these lines. They run in a uniform north-south and east-west pattern, and where two lines cross in a "knot," they are the most toxic. Knots can be amplified by the other electromagnetic fields that will distort them and expand their effect.

Other grids have also been "discovered" that are similar to, yet run differently from, the Hartmann lines. Geomancers who work with such energies will dowse to find these lines and where they enter a building, and then bury copper pipes in the ground, perpendicular to the lines to block their entry into the area. The lines are said to be about eight inches wide, so piping that is slightly larger than that will be effective. Others use orgone generators, based on the work of Wilhelm Reich, to intercept and transform the lines. Feng shui practitioners will use objects such as hanging crystals to break up the stream of poison arrows, in order to make the energy flow more

smoothly and harmoniously. More ceremonial geomancers, those versed in the ways of the spirits and magick, will use ritual, stones, crystals, and charms, building mandalas similar to medicine wheels of the native traditions, in harmony with the spirit of Mother Earth, the land spirits, and their own inner guides, to effectively dissipate these lines and knots.

Geomantic workings are very powerful and not for everybody. You should have a direct relationship with your Master-Teacher, Mother Earth, and the spirit of the sacred site before proceeding. Don't assume you know better without such guidance.

Here are some basic guidelines if you do choose to work with the sacred sites:

1. **Location of the site.** First you must determine where the site is. Sometimes you simply know. Walking in nature, you feel the power of a site when you cross its threshold. You might feel it resonating, and its vibration draws you into it. Sites that want to be worked with have a way of calling to the right people. If you have a special place that you feel called to, and you are doing meditation and ritual there, you might already be working with a sacred site that chose you. Sometimes the journey to the site, when first finding it, or even trying to get back to a place you know, is a big part of the process of working with the site. The journey is often more important than the destination.

Lines of power can be dowsed. Dowsing means locating them through nonordinary means, usually by using specific tools such as dowsing rods, divining rods, or pendulums. Through the motion of the tool, one can locate water, pipes, ley lines, Hartmann lines, and a variety of other objects and phenomena. Traditional dual dowsing rods can be made from wire coat hangers. The dowser walks around an area with two wires pointing forward and parallel to each other with an intention held to find something specific. If you are thinking of water, the rods will find water. If you are thinking of ley lines, they will find ley lines. The tools interface with your psyche, your consciousness. You can even ask your spirit guides and Master-Teacher to accurately guide them. When they do find lines of power, the rods will either cross or open widely. Those who are truly attuned to their intention and telluric energies no longer need tools, and they can feel it right in their solar plexus. By walking in a methodical manner, with a map of the area, and marking points where the rods cross, you can

map out the lines of force in the area, and find where they intersect and form energy points.

2. **Determining the nature of the site.** Once you locate the site, meditate in the area. Make sure you determine the nature of the site. Ask to connect with the Genus Loci. Ask for aid from your Master-Teacher and Mother Earth. What is this site used for, if anything? Does it want human contact? If so, and it wants to be used, what does it need from you? How should it be used? Be clear in your agreement with the spirit of the land, and offer only what you can truly deliver.

3. **Awakening and activating the site.** The spirit of the land will give you its instruction on what needs to be done. Some sites, with lack of human contact, are akin to being "asleep" and need to be activated. Others, with or without contact, are fully in operation. Connect with your team of allies, including the spirit of the land and the planet, and go about activation. This can be as simple as meditating at the site, radiating different colors of light in your aura (*ITOW*, chapters 10 and 11), and asking to activate the site. Some sites will require more complex rituals, with specific offerings. It might require a reshaping of the area—aligning cleansed and consecrated stones or crystals in a sacred pattern, or a mandala, such as a circled cross; an eight-spoked wheel; a triangle; or a five-, six-, or seven-pointed star. Some require an "acupuncture" process of burying a rock, stone, stick, pipe, or other "stake" like a needle in the line to stimulate the healthy energy. This should only be done upon direct request by the spirits, because only particular places benefit from this method and others do not. When I do this, I actually ask for a "needle" of light, from the Upper World, through the line, through the Earth, and into the Underworld, in order to balance the site in all three realms, knowing that if I'm making a mistake, I'm asking the spirits to aid me. They will "shut off" the light needle when it's done.

4. **Maintaining the site.** The spirit of the land might require you to be periodically involved with it, to be its steward and caretaker. You might be called to do ritual there, bring others there, and operate within the nature of the site, for the benefit of yourself and the individuals you take, and/or the benefit of the site and the planet. Some sites act as gateways between the worlds, allowing profound contact with other world intelligences, to the benefit of both sides. Continued offerings, meditations, rituals, and healings may be needed to maintain the power of the site.

Two important things to keep in mind when working with sacred sites are fluctuation and contamination. Most people think that the power is constant, like an electrical switch, but it isn't. Others think the sites are tremendously resilient, and while they are, like any organ in our body they must be handled with care.

The power fluctuates with the cycles of the seasons, Moon, and astrological alignments. Certain sites will be more keyed into these patterns than others, but like people, they have their ups and downs. Some sites will have no lunar influence, while others are all about the Moon. Others will be patterned strongly on the rise and fall of solar energies with the Wheel of the Year. Some will be sensitive to eclipses and planetary alignments such as the Grand Cross or Grand Trine. Others will have no discernable pattern at first glance.

As these sites are always in a state of flow, unless it is a particular place that by its very nature absorbs "heavy" toxic energy, you must make sure not to contaminate a site with your own unwanted energies, because they will then flow through the Earth like toxins injected into someone's veins. Cleansing, purification, and the like should be done prior to entering a sacred site, not in it. Don't bring personal tools to sacred sites to cleanse them. Cleanse them first and then empower them at the sacred site, but do not bury anything unwanted at a sacred site because you will pollute it. Only bury things at sacred sites at the direction of the Genus Loci, who is asking for an offering or aid through that action of burying.

I've found that, in practice, each sacred site is like a new person in one's life. No set of rules covers them all, for each is unique. By entering into a conscious relationship with that site, you will be told how best to work with it, if at all. Some don't want human contact, and you should respect that. This is a very basic overview to educate you on what is out there and, if you feel called, to inspire you to do this work.

There are some safe ways of becoming more familiar with Earth workings. The first is doing blessing and healing with the mineral world. The second is working with directing the flow of energy through sacred geometry, through the construction of a labyrinth. Both work well to attune you to the telluric currents of the planet and prepare you for deeper work.

Exercise 40

Earth Blessings

Find a stone in nature that calls to you. Commune with the spirit of the stone. Does it want to work with you? If not, put it back. If so, take the stone, ritually cleanse it, and consecrate it with whatever blessings you both, in partnership, desire. You can include general blessings of healing, peace, harmony, partnership with the Otherworld, love, knowledge, insight, light, or anything else you can think of as a blessing. It's best to start with one blessing. Periodically work with the stone, embracing the quality you wish to bless it with while holding it. If your blessing is love, conjure forth a place of love in your heart, and transmit that to the stone, infusing its crystalline structure with the energy of love. When you feel the blessing is sufficient, place the stone somewhere you feel it will do good. It will resonate and broadcast your blessing to others who pass by it. You can put it in running water, so the blessing is transmitted to the water and sent the world over. Ask the stone where it wants to be put. It might want to go back exactly where you found it, to bring human energy to its realm of nature and build a bridge with our consciousness for its fellow spirits of nature. This is a particularly good technique for areas of construction, to help heal the disrupted nature spirits that are traumatized by construction when there is no preparation time given or permission asked. I actually soak the blessed stone in water, sprinkling the water over the area of construction and leaving the stone someplace in the zone to continue the healing.

Exercise 41

Making a Labyrinth

The seven-level Cretan labyrinth is fairly easy to make. The design is based upon a seed pattern. You connect the lines of the seed pattern with arcing lines moving around the center (see fig. 3). Walking labyrinths can be made by setting up stone or crystal markers, candles, chalk, or tape on the floor. I've even known people to mow a field, leaving high grass as the walls of the labyrinth. Just make sure that the paths are wide enough for a person to walk through easily. If you will have more than one person walking at

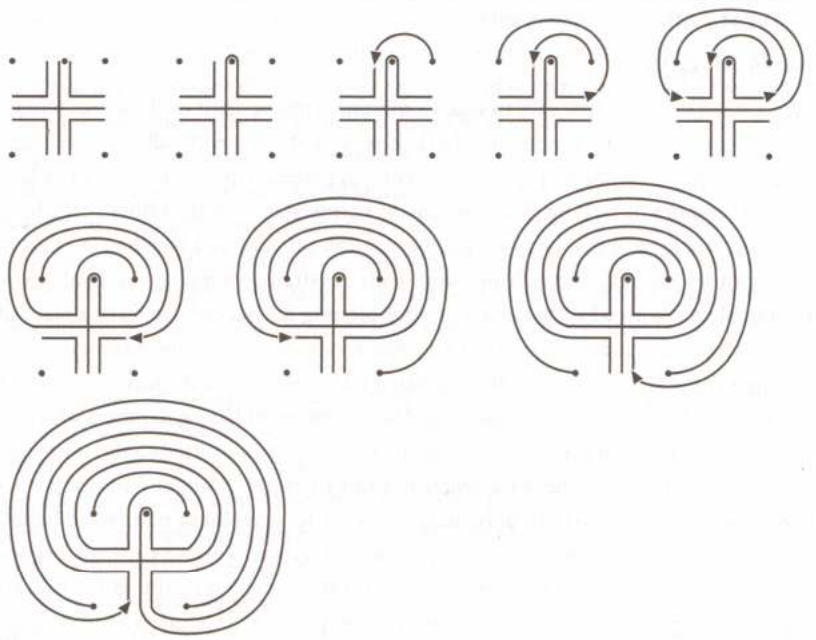


Figure 3: Setting Up the Labyrinth

a time, make sure that the path is even wider, to allow passage as they cross going in opposite directions.

For those who do not have a large enough space indoors or outdoors to work in a full labyrinth, a smaller one could be made out of clay. The user would meditatively trace the pattern in and out with the finger as a part of attuning to the flow of the labyrinth. Those talented in other arts, such as woodcutting or stonework, could also fashion labyrinths from those materials. Stones with spirals and labyrinths were known as Troy stones, and attributed to witches and magicians seeking to enter altered states by tracing the pattern with their finger.

The following exercise is the one that causes the greatest stir among students. I know I had a hard time with it on my first endeavor. To truly be a steward of nature, you must be intimately familiar with nature. Nature is our teacher. For our ancestors, that wasn't a problem. They lived in nature fairly harmoniously. Even the village and city dwellers of that time had more connection with nature than modern people in the postindustrial era have. Many witches do all their work indoors and never step outside to do magick. While it is possible to do this, these witches are missing a big part of the tradition, particularly if they are called to do geomantic work with the planet's sacred sites. This exercise helps attune you to the natural world, and it can be repeated often with great benefit.

Exercise 42

Initiation of Nature

Choose a time and place where you will have about a day uninterrupted for yourself. I realize that this is almost impossible for many people, but it is really important to do this. On that day, spend the entire day—ideally a twenty-four-hour period—outdoors in nature, alone. Restrict yourself to one spot. Ask permission of the land spirits there to perform this exercise. Observe nature. Observe yourself. Commune with nature. Commune with yourself. That's it. How you do this is up to you. This is an ordeal of both isolation and endurance, as we are not used to simply "being" in nature without a task at hand. You will go through many cycles of energy and thought, as you attune to the daily cycle of the land where you are. Bliss, boredom, pain, ecstasy, loneliness, camaraderie, and insight are all yours for the taking. You might find yourself beating in harmony with the living planet. There is great learning to be gained from the experience that cannot be conveyed in words on a page. It can be visionary and otherworldly, or part of your everyday consciousness. It is different for everyone. If you feel like there is no way you can do this exercise, look to the end of this lesson for tips on overcoming your hesitation.

Witchcraft and the Modern World: Medicine and Health

If the body is the first "possession" or temple we own, then we would be remiss not to discuss the witches' view on medicine and its future development. Many witches are intimately involved in the health field, allopathic or alternative, and have a deep desire to help people heal. Our choices today are vast, with a wider range of treatment and drugs and natural alternatives to be had. Some witches favor natural remedies first, from herbalism and homeopathy to Eastern forms of medicine, which strangely get more respect in the medical field than our native Western traditions of folk medicine and treatment. Such teachings were never lost in Eastern culture, and they still hold status in the East. They have also attained a certain level of status in our culture that the old cunning woman just does not have . . . yet. Many of our most common medicines come from the cunning woman's cupboard, but they were transformed, like willow bark to aspirin. Sadly, if witchcraft herbalism was as complete of a system as Chinese or Ayurvedic medicine, it has not survived.

While witches are generally advocates of natural cures, we are not stupid. We walk a middle path and realize that everybody must do what they need to do for their own health and well-being. If that requires pharmaceutical medication, surgery, or other less-than-natural treatments, then so be it. Everything can be a tool for your overall health. I have many clients I have to encourage to seek out medical treatment, because both herbs and magick are not the final solution to their problem. Many feel a stigma about taking a prescription, particularly things like antidepressants. Yet if you have a physiological imbalance and nothing natural is working, but a prescription does, making you feel better and making you functional in society, then you should take it. If things should change, with your doctor's help, you can change your course of action, but we as witches should not vilify the modern medical world completely. Is there room for improvement in philosophy and care? From our perspective, yes. But if I'm in an accident, I want to go to a hospital first, not the local witch, Reiki Master, or crystal healer. Alternative and natural healings are an excellent complement to a well-balanced medical program to care for your body and your heath. Proper diet and exercise are other components. All are needed to maintain optimum health.

Witches seeking to be healers should not only learn about rituals, spells, and charms for healing, but also use the information we have available on physiology, chemistry, and overall biology of the human body. Learn not just folk magick and the planetary correspondences of herbs, but also their medicinal properties. Learn the terms associated with their actions. Build up a materia medica of your herbs, a database of the medical uses, not just a materia magicka (*OTOW*, chapter 13). Look into other systems of healing that will complement your witchcraft—Eastern and Ayurvedic medicine, energy healing, aromatherapy, nutritional therapy, homeopathy, and flower essence therapy. I'm certain that ancient healers, if they had access to all the information we do today, would want to know as much as they could, even if they used the same traditional formulas. Any knowledge is power to aid yourself and others in the healing journey.

Though we are magickal beings, we are also human, and we should not delude ourselves about our health, pushing ourselves too far, too fast. Nor should we have any illusions about our health and invulnerability. Some witches adopt a very teenaged attitude of believing they are invulnerable because they are attuned with the universe. Some take unnecessary risks, particularly in regard to sexual pleasure, and they do not educate themselves fully or use that knowledge. While we celebrate the body and its many pleasures, and we can share that love freely with whomever we choose based upon our personal relationship and boundaries, magick does not make us completely immune to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV. Magick also doesn't shield us completely from dangerous situations, stunts, or other harmful environments. Though it should not have to be said, magick and common sense regarding the health and safety of our body must go hand in hand.

Ritual of the Steward

Before moving on to the next of your zodiac lessons, make a strong and powerful connection to the deity who fills the role of steward in your personal pantheon. This may be a nature goddess or god, such as an earthy goddess or Green Man. Horned gods as the masters of the natural world are quite appropriate. It could be a flowery enchantress of love in the classic Venusian sense, or a builder craftsman. Your steward might be even more different from these images. The gift of the steward is to teach us that

our security in the world is not in our body, our home, our money, or even our talents, but in our relationship with the divine, as manifest through nature.

If you have chosen a deity to fit the Taurean steward archetype, perhaps you have already made contact with the god and felt this deity's presence as you performed these exercises. Design a ritual to both honor and connect with this entity. You can meet with the deity in meditative vision or shamanic journey, or if you already have a connection to the deity, you can try a direct invocation (*TOSW*, exercise 19). In this ritual, you will either ask yourself the three questions listed here, or the deity will ask you at least three questions regarding the lessons of this zodiac gateway. You will have to answer each of them before you are allowed to pass on to the next lesson and gate. The questions for Taurus are: What do you truly own? What do you protect? What do you fear to lose? When you have completed the ritual, make sure you continue to honor and work with this deity over the course of the year.

Homework

- Do exercises 38–42 and record your results in your journal or BOS.
- Perform your master spell for this lesson.
- Review one myth from one of the cultures outlined on page 31.
- Review one religion as outlined on pages 29–30.
- Choose one figure from the biography list on pages 32–33, and learn all you can about that person.
- Continue work on your final project.
- Work with the Taurus steward deity from your personal pantheon.
- Obtain the Taurus gem for your "breastplate" charm bag, if you haven't done so already. Work with the Taurus stone this month. Carry it with you. Meditate with it. Place it under your pillow at night before you go to sleep, and learn to attune to the power of Taurus.
- Work with one of your thirteen tools, re-consecrating it. Seek out its spiritual equivalent in the Otherworld, and know its mysteries.

- Optional: Make a fluid condenser (*TOHW*, chapter 9) out of a high-grade, flammable alcohol for this zodiac sign. Research appropriate plants for that sign, and choose the one that is right for you (*OTOW*, chapter 13).
- Optional: Find a small stone with a flat surface that you can mark with the zodiac sign of Taurus. Cleanse it, mark it, and charge it. You can also use it like a talisman, along with or in place of the Taurus gemstone.
- When you complete the trials of this chapter, tie the next knot in your cord in a ritualized manner.

Tips

- If doing geomantic work is not your calling, or even if it is, work with the Earth steward energy in the most down-to-Earth and practical way possible: garden. Get in the dirt and dig, plant, nurture, and care for a garden, even if it's window plants. Working directly with the growing cycles of nature attunes you to it. Observing nature is wonderful, but actively participating in parts of nature's unfoldment, particularly with your own shamanic plant allies (*TOSW*, chapter 9) is amazing and transforms you.
- For Exercise 42: Initiation of Nature, I've often left variables up to my students. Some simply cannot commit to twenty-four hours, so we settled on twelve hours. Those who lived in urban environments could do it in a park from sunrise to sunset. It wasn't easy, but it was the best and most safe method for their environment. You can do this in your backyard if you will be undisturbed by people. You can do it anywhere that feels appropriate for you, but you must do it. I suggest you set up a safety system, where you check in at the end, and if your contact doesn't hear from you, he or she knows exactly where you are to come get you. You don't have to be in the deep woods for this, particularly if you are not the outdoors type. Make the challenge reasonable for your experience level. You can bring food and water, or if you are healthy and strong, you can do it as a fast. Some will take ritual tools, cast a circle, and remain in the circle until the end of the exercise, cutting a doorway to leave in order to relieve

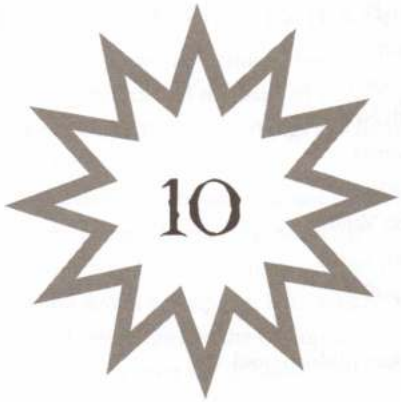
themselves and then return, closing the circle. Other will be more mundane, and simply sit down and observe the world. Some British initiatory traditions require the initiate to not only stay in one place while fasting, but also keep one position, a star formation, lying down on the ground, without moving, for twenty-four hours. In the end, you must decide what is best for you to complete this task based on your own health, life, and location. But do not let the complexities of life become an excuse for omitting the exercise, and then think you will be able to be a steward of nature and work deeply with the Earth currents. In this exercise, you might discover that earth workings are not your path, and your calling as a witch lies in other directions, but the purpose of this year is to explore all aspects of the Craft, even the inconvenient ones. More traditional versions of this exercise are better aligned with Taurus's opposite sign, Scorpio, and act as initiations. The student digs his or her own grave to spend the night in, or the student is bound with vine, ivy, or leather straps by a mentor and left in nature for a shamanic rebirth.

- Learn all you can about how to live in a more environmentally conscious way in your daily life, and act upon this knowledge if you don't already do so. Learn about recycling and reuse, public transportation, shopping locally, and conserving power. Learn about more environmentally friendly cleaning products for your home and office, and home remedies and basic herbal medicines rather than rely on pharmaceuticals.
- Continue working on your own BOS, adding appropriate material to it each month. Write and perform these rituals when appropriate. You could write one of the following:

  Esbat for the new Moon in Taurus, or for the full Moon in Scorpio, its opposite sign.

  Sabbat ritual for Beltane.

  Rite-of-passage ritual for a coming of age/young adulthood.
- Explore the gateway of peace in your inner temple (*ITOW*, chapter 14).



Lesson Ten
The Wisdom of Gemini

Our spring season is rounded out with the mutable air sign of Gemini. All mutable signs are about change, preparing us for the end of one season and the beginning of the next. With Gemini's power, we are heading toward the summer solstice, the height of solar activity, yet in many climes we have a mix of warm summer days and relatively cool days, ushering us into the next season.

Gender: Male
Triplicy: Mutable
Element: Air
Image: Twins
Season: Spring
House: House of Learning, Siblings
Key Phrase: "I Think"
Theme: Communication
Blessing: Intelligence

Challenge: Scattered
Archetype: Trickster
Ruling Planet: Mercury
  Exalted: North Node
  Detriment: Jupiter
  Fall: South Node
  Esoteric Ruler: Venus
  Monadic Ruler: Earth
Classical Deity: Apollo
Angel: Asmodel
Colors: Orange, Blue, Multicolored
Metal: Quicksilver
Stones: Agate, Carnelian
Body: Respiratory System
Labor of Hercules: Stealing the Apples of Hesperides
Gift of the Goddess: To Understand the Secret Signs of the Hands, Stars, Cards, and Omens
The Thirteen Goals of the Witch: Learn
Alchemical Operation: Distillation
Cell Salt: Kali Mur (Potassium Chloride)
Tarot: Lovers

While Gemini is a male sign, it is one of the most androgynous of the male signs because of its mutable adaptability. Gemini is ruled by the twins, and by its very nature has a dual, polar current inherent in it. While not a familiar animal, like most other zodiac signs, the image of the twins suitably conveys the nature of Gemini to our psyche, yet it also creates misunderstandings. Many misinterpret the double nature of Gemini as two-faced, as deceptive, or as a split personality, but it is about two complete lives and personas, the inner and the outer world.

The Way of the Trickster

Many archetypes fall under the domain of Gemini. Here we can find the student, the messenger, the scribe, the storyteller, and the bard all equally powerful, but it is the image of the trickster that embodies all of these things and more, to truly teach us the power of mutable air and the twins.

The gods associated with Gemini are brothers, if not twins. In popular modern astrology, Gemini is ruled by the planet Mercury, the messenger god of the Romans. His Greek counterpart is Hermes, who is brother to Apollo. In classical times, the Olympian most strongly associated with Gemini was Apollo. Both sons of Zeus, their relationship began when Apollo was already established in the Olympian pantheon but Hermes was a baby. After his mother put him to sleep and fell asleep herself, the prankish Hermes woke, snuck out, and began his adventures. He found the cow herd of Apollo and stole them away. One account said he made them walk backwards, so no one could tell where they went. Another says he tied branches to their tails to wipe away the tracks and put hay beneath their hooves to leave no marks. He sacrificed one cow to the gods of Olympus before Apollo found him, and Zeus was called to intervene and forced the brothers to make peace. They exchanged gifts that later became hallmark symbols for each god. Clever Hermes placed strings over a tortoise shell and made the first lyre, a harplike instrument, and gave it to Apollo, the god of music. Apollo gave his caduceus, the staff entwined with a serpent (fig. 4), to Hermes as a sign of medicine as well as commerce, and later Hermes and Apollo shared associations with healing, but the caduceus became most strongly associated with Hermes and the Roman Mercury. The popular form of the caduceus, with double entwined serpents, is used interchangeably today with the Rod of Asclepius (fig. 5) as a sign of both ancient and modern medicine; yet traditionally the caduceus more often represented commerce, while the rod more often represented medicine. The association grew out of alchemical and Hermetic concepts about healing and medicine, associating planets with healing. The caduceus is the herald's staff, and it holds the power to heal or to harm. Today, many view the double caduceus as a model for the chakra energy system and a symbol of ascent toward enlightenment. The Rod of Asclepius is also reminiscent of the Orphic Egg of Creation (fig. 6), with a single serpent entwined around it. Within it is the universe waiting to be born.

Figure 4: Caduceus

Figure 5: Rod of Asclepius

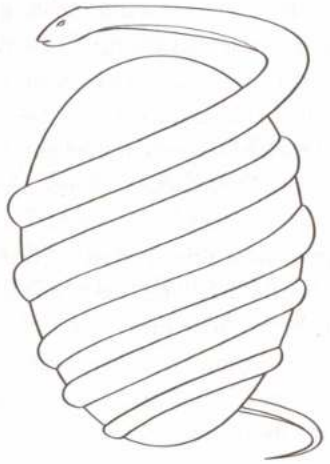


Figure 6: Orphic Egg of Creation

Hermes negotiated his place in the Olympian pantheon as the messenger and psychopomp. He didn't want any one place to rule over as his domain, as the other gods did. He wanted to be able to go anywhere and everywhere, so Zeus made him the messenger of the gods. While messenger might be his exoteric function, understood by most of the people of the ancient Greek and Roman worlds, others see the messenger figure as not just the deliverer of notes or decrees, but the psychopomp, the deliverer of souls between worlds. Hermes plays such a role in the mystery cults.

In the myths that come to us in the modern age, Hermes is the trickster, prankster, or instigator of trouble, shaking things up in a manner that is ultimately good for the whole, yet creates the conflict or impetus for the myth. He is both guide and purposeful fool, and with this in mind, he shares much in common with a variety of shadowy godforms known as tricksters. Some, like Coyote in Native American traditions, are celebrated, while others, like our modern concept of the Norse Loki, are demonized, but in the end, they embody the power of change. Without them, creation could grow stagnant.

Gemini's nature is intimately associated with the dual nature of Hermes. Gemini is the star sign of the twins, and twin mythology abounds in the ancient world. Castor and Pollux are associated with Zeus in Greek myth and classically associated with the stars of Gemini, while Romulus and Remus are related to Mars and the founding of Rome in Roman myth. The symbol of the twins is really one of the continual dialogue of the sibling and best friend. We each have our best friend within us, as the voice of the self that is constantly with us. Even in seeming silence, most of us run a continual internal dialogue, between two voices, two senses of self. In the Celtic tradition, a term that has gained popularity in recent years is *Anam Cara*, meaning soul friend. Though some use Anam Cara to describe good friends, family, and spouses, the deeper meaning is the friend that you are to yourself, your soul, your higher self, being in relationship with you in the inner world. The lesson of the twins of Gemini is to be your own twin, your own soul best friend to yourself, to guide and bless yourself in all times. The dual current of Gemini is the challenge of communication, the honest communication with yourself, and then the challenge to bring that authentic, honest self out into the world.

The personality descriptions of Gemini are often about social abilities—speaking well at parties, being smart, and having the ability to turn a phrase, either verbally or in writing. The Gemini persona can be seen as shallow, flitting from topic to topic as the twins change like the wind. Some see it as a split personality, because the topic, mood, and focus can change so quickly. Yet the challenge is not in the little conversations, but in the big conversations, to be truthful and meaningful to the self and to the world, to have the twins in harmonious and complementary relationship, rather than being antagonistic or conflicted, or lacking in communication with each other. As we enter a deeper relationship with ourselves, we realize that we have not only the twin selves within us, but many selves, many souls who wish to have a direct relationship with us.

The "higher" rulers of Gemini get to the deeper places of the sign. Its esoteric ruler is Venus, a sign with a strong magnetic pull to bring together all the diverse parts into a harmonious whole, as well as ground in the practical world, and in the body. Venus is very body-and-sensation oriented, while people having a high Mercurial Gemini energy are very high strung mentally and sometimes ungrounded and not present in their body. The monadic ruler of Gemini takes it even deeper, as the Earth plays a role in esoteric astrology, ruling Gemini on this level. The Earth takes the blessings of Venus to an even deeper and more practical level, asking the creative, intelligent, and expressive Gemini to use their talents in the world, manifesting them from the mental plane and into the physical plane.

Hercules has both strong Mars associations, as the warrior, and Mercury associations, as the wanderer, moving quickly through different territories in the completion of his labors. His troubles began when he became afflicted with madness, an illness of the mind, and in astrology, the planet Mercury embodies the mind and logic. As a child, Hercules had a mortal half-brother, often called his twin, named Iphicles. Hera sent a two-headed snake to their crib to kill Hercules, but he slew the snake, crushing one head in each hand, demonstrating his remarkable strength even as an infant. Iphicles accompanied Hercules on some of his adventures, and had his own as well. Out of the twelve labors, I associate the Gemini-trickster lesson with the eleventh labor, the stealing of the Apples of Hesperides.

The Hesperides are triple-goddess figures, sharing some similarities with the Graces and the Fates, viewed as the nymphs of the far western garden that is often seen as the Greek parallel to the Judeo-Christian Eden, or the Celtic Isle of Avalon. They are the western maidens or daughters of the evening. A variety of locations have been given for the garden, such as Arcadia, the Atlas Mountains, and a blessed island on the western edge of the ocean, reminiscent of both stories of Atlantis and the blessed western isles of Celtic lore. In their garden is a tree of golden apples that grant immortality to the eater. Many myths have a sacred fruit, apples in particular, that grant godhood or from which an elixir of divine power is made. Hera charged the Hesperides to guard and tend to the apples, which were a gift from Gaia to Hera and Zeus upon their wedding. Hera did not entirely trust the Hesperides, so she also placed the never-sleeping serpent Ladon there, sometimes described as hundred-headed, other times described as three-headed.

Various versions tell us how Hercules, charged with stealing the apples as one of his labors, found the location of the garden. They include interactions with Nereus, the sea god; Prometheus, the bound Titan; Antaeus, the son of Gaia; and most popularly, Atlas. Hercules met Atlas, holding up the heavens. Atlas agreed to not only tell Hercules where the apples were, but also to fetch the apples for Hercules, since Atlas had a special relationship with the Hesperides and could get them easily, bypassing Ladon. Hercules traded places with Atlas and held up the sky for him. When Atlas returned, he decided he wanted to be free of his burden, and was going to leave Hercules to his fate. Hercules tricked him again, agreeing to hold the sky for Atlas, if Atlas would simply hold it temporarily so Hercules could adjust his cloak, to make it more comfortable. Atlas agreed and Hercules simply walked away with the apples. Athena later returned the apples to the garden.

The trickster imagery of Hercules, learning to use cunning rather than brute force to get the job done, is apparent. But the surrounding imagery is also charged with meaning. Both Atlas and Hercules had to hold up the sky, the air, the cosmos, reflective of the air sign of Gemini and all thought. The garden relates to so many other popular tales, most familiar to modern Western culture as the Garden of Eden, with its forbidden fruit of knowledge, and the serpent, also a totem of forbidden knowledge and power. The claiming of the apple is the claiming of divine knowledge here on Earth.

The learning, communication, and information of Gemini eventually must be transformed into divine knowledge, to be put to use in the world. One cannot stay in the paradise of the western island, but must head out into the world with the apples, to fulfill higher will. In this case, Hercules was fulfilling the will of the gods by completing his labors.

To overcome the challenges of Gemini, one must think, communicate, and relate to others. The inner dialogue cannot always be revealed in the outer dialogue. You must be your own guide, confidant, and risk taker. The key phrase of Gemini is "I think," for its mutable air is all about the mental process. It rules the Third House, or House of Learning, for it is here where we learn how to think, how to communicate our thoughts. Siblings are also associated with the Third House, as they are the first ones we speak to on an equal, peer level, as opposed to parents and those outside the household early in life. Siblings help us think and communicate better. Only children have to either find siblinglike playmates or be their own playmates.

Exercise 43

"I Think" List

In your journal or BOS, make a list of statements staring with "I think," and complete the sentence with all the thoughts that come to mind. This includes your thoughts about the world, spirituality, people, friends, family, and most importantly yourself. What thoughts cross your mind the most regularly? Review your thoughts.

What do you think about yourself, others, and the world? Do you like these thought patterns? Are these thoughts serving you, or are you serving them? Do you feel you have any control over your thoughts, over what crosses your mind? If you don't, who does? Do you want to change your thoughts, change your mind?

Our thoughts are the single most powerful tool and powerful obstacle we have. Remember, our thoughts are embodied by the blade, but it is the Sword of Truth. Your mind is your instrument; it is not your identity. Are you holding the double-edged blade by the handle, or by the edges?

Our minds are the tricksters. If we don't pay attention to them, they do things we are not aware of, yet are ultimately responsible for. Part of our education is in learning to harness the power of our thoughts, yet realize they are one of many tools. We have the power to change them, to guide and direct them. Like a computer, we can program and reprogram them. We are always programming them, but we have to determine if it's conscious or unconscious programming. When there is a problem, the trickster of the mind will show its head, ultimately for our own good. The unconscious thoughts of the shadow self come out of the woodwork to create our problems and act as a mirror.

Language is one of the keys to the lessons of the twins. Our language, our words, have become one of the primary ways we communicate with ourselves, programming our mind, and communicate with others and the world, programming our reality. Without an awareness of our words, we are creating unconsciously. In particular, magicians need to always remember the power of their words as this medium for creation. We neutralize what is unwanted in our lives when we speak (*ITOW*, chapter 8), and we create much of our lives through our words, but especially through words and petitions (*OTOW*, chapter 12). We eventually evolve so that every thought, every word, and every action becomes a magickal incantation and ritual, transforming our lives. When those thoughts, words, and actions are all devoted in service to the divine, all our actions become theurgy.

One vital exercise is to observe the power of your words. In popular Toltec spirituality, the concept of "Four Agreements" can be found, including "Be impeccable with your word." If words have power and can change consciousness, you should endeavor to say only what you mean and not get caught up in the use of a lot of words, yet saying nothing. The extended version of the Wiccan Rede often has the line "Speak little, listen much," signifying that those who listen, observe, and take in, particularly before speaking, and only speak when necessary are following the wisdom traditions of the witch. In a day and age when everybody is endlessly talking, not a lot is being communicated, because few are also listening, to themselves and to others. Words should not be used against yourself or against others, and that includes gossip. Though at times it can appear that the pagan community virtually runs on gossip, this doesn't have to be the case. I like to know what is going on, and people only share what they know if you share what you know. Contrary

to popular actions, this can be done without malice or assumption of information, including assuming people's motives that you don't know. Share only what you know, and try to share only things with which you have had direct experience. Direct your power with your words in everyday life, becoming conscious of every word you say.

Exercise 44

The Impeccable Word

Make a list of all those you have wronged in some way with your words, including yourself. Be honest. Who have you slandered, deceived, cheated, or harmed in action or intent? Or otherwise, when have you not behaved impeccably with your words? Think of all the little white lies that we have made peace with in our society. Perhaps some are for a higher purpose, but we can also tell ourselves that when it's not true. Be true now and review the power of your word. Think about each situation. Why did you do it? This is not a justification or defense, but simply an understanding. Now, have any of these had lasting repercussions? Can you rectify any of them? When possible, rectify and apologize when you are causing more harm to others or to yourself. If it's not possible to directly communicate with others, commune with their higher selves (*TOSW*, chapter 8). Most importantly, learn from this experience, to think before you speak.

The remaining three agreements ("Don't take things personally," "Don't make assumptions," and "Always do your best") and a full commentary can be found in the book *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz.

Magickal Literacy

As words are important in our magick and our minds, educating our minds is a key component of our Craft. We are eternal students, always knowing that no matter how much ability and power we accrue, there is always more to learn, and that while knowledge is powerful, the true power comes in the wisdom of knowing when and how to use our knowledge. Knowledge and wisdom go together, but they are not the same thing. Many of the best witches I know are always learning, always exploring

new methods of magick, new cultures, and new spiritual traditions and philosophies. Even though they might not adopt everything they learn, they are constantly hungry to explore more, and then share their new knowledge with others. In many ways, modern witchcraft is a scavenger religion, dedicated to the dark bone goddesses and gods. We know the only way to keep the tradition fertile and growing is to add to it, while pruning away that which doesn't serve or fit the Great Tree we oversee. Though the addition of modern material is not always popular among traditionalists in this era, one need only to look back on the history of witchcraft, to see how well we have absorbed other teachings and material into our wisdom tradition.

Education comes in many forms. It can come from observance of the signs and omens of nature, speaking to spirits, speaking to other practitioners, and through books and written materials. Modern witches tend to love books and use them for ideas and inspiration, be they books on actual operative magick, or fiction and poetry that inspire new ways of doing things. Unfortunately, a lot of modern witches only stick with the easiest and most available books and never dive deeper in their education. Like college students who read only high-school-level books, the range of their knowledge never grows. I encourage witches to be well read in all areas of magick, from fun and accessible books to the more scholarly texts, if they are serious about their education.

One of our thirteen tenets of the witch is to learn. One of the gifts of the Goddess is "To understand the secret signs of the hands, stars, cards, and omens." While both can be done orally, most of us get our extended education from books. Some of the best teachers will lack lesson plans, but have a student read a book, and then discuss and debate its contents to teach thinking as a skill, along with the facts of the text.

Some students are resistant to using books in their training, feeling that traditional witchcraft really has nothing to do with literacy, and the many witches of old didn't know how to read, write, or be academic. And that is true to a certain extent, though in the ancient world, I think the temple priest/esses were some of the most educated members of society. Those in the Dark Ages or rural peasantry were born into a culture that did not require or expect them to be literate or educated in an academic sense, yet I believe they were still as educated as possible in the ways of the world. I think that if anybody in such villages knew how to read, it would be the cunning person. In our modern society,

literacy and education is the expected default. Yet I've had students with limited education and interest in reading still turn out to be wonderfully wise and powerful witches. Reading is simply not their strong suit, and they found many other ways to learn.

I would suggest that every modern witch should have a good magickal library. It becomes a wonderful resource. Though many of us have a lot of information memorized, a library is a resource where you can go to find the answers when you don't know them off the top of your head. You can't have everything memorized. You will also find books becoming valuable teachers. Reading classic texts, even basic ones, several times over the course of your life can reveal a depth of meaning you missed as a novice. I have to say that I've reread my first witchcraft book, *Power of the Witch* by Laurie Cabot, every few years, and I always find something new that I missed or forgot, or that I find deeper meaning in, even though many consider it to be a simple, basic book. Basic books can sometimes be the most profound.

If you have been following the coursework of this series, you have already started a good magickal library. Beyond the books you will buy for your own pleasure, these courses have suggested the following texts as supplements and additions to your education. Some of them are suggested in the text, and others come from a list of additional resources I give my students.

Recommending any book doesn't mean the teacher necessarily agrees with all, or even any, of the book. It is important for us to go out, explore, listen to new ideas, and come to our own conclusions. Having a good reference library can help us make educated decisions about what works best for us.

Witchcraft I

The Inner Temple of Witchcraft by Christopher Penczak
The Witch's Shield by Christopher Penczak
Instant Magick by Christopher Penczak
The Mystic Foundation by Christopher Penczak
Spirit Allies by Christopher Penczak
Power of the Witch by Laurie Cabot
Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner by Scott Cunningham
The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess by Starhawk

Wicca: The Old Religion in the New Millennium by Vivianne Crowley
To Ride a Silver Broomstick by Silver RavenWolf
The Law Enforcement Guide to Wicca by Kerr Cuhulain
Psychic Self-Defense by Dion Fortune
The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz
Drawing Down the Moon by Margot Adler
Origins of Modern Witchcraft: The Evolution of a World Religion by Ann Moura
The Kybalion: A Study of the Hermetic Philosophy of Ancient Egypt and Greece by Three Initiates
The Holographic Universe by Michael Talbot
Stalking the Wild Pendulum: On the Mechanics of Consciousness by Itzhak Bentov
The Tao of Physics by Fritjof Capra
Real Magic by Isaac Bonewits
The Hermetica by Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy
Wheels of Life by Anodea Judith
Anatomy of the Spirit by Caroline Myss
Heal Your Body by Louise L. Hay
The Silva Mind Control Method by Jose Silva
The Complete Book of Magical Names by Phoenix McFarland

Witchcraft II

The Outer Temple of Witchcraft by Christopher Penczak
Sons of the Goddess by Christopher Penczak
Gay Witchcraft by Christopher Penczak
Buckland's Complete Book of Witchcraft by Raymond Buckland
The Portal Book by Ian Corigan
To Stir a Magick Cauldron by Silver RavenWolf
Earth, Air, Fire & Water by Scott Cunningham
The Witch's Circle by Maria K. Simms
The Wiccan Mysteries by Raven Grimassi
West Country Wicca: A Journal of the Old Religion by Rhiannon Ryall
Magick of the Gods and Goddesses by D. J. Conway

The Witches' God by Janet and Stewart Farrar
The Witches' Goddess by Janet and Stewart Farrar
Invoke the Goddess by Kala Trobe
Invoke the Gods by Kala Trobe
Celtic Gods, Celtic Goddesses by R. J. Stewart
The Power of Myth by Joseph Campbell
Spells and How They Work by Janet and Stewart Farrar
True Magick by Amber K.
Jambalaya by Luisah Teish
Basic Magick by Phillip Cooper
Dark Moon Mysteries by Timothy Roderick
The Complete Book of Incense, Oils & Brews by Scott Cunningham
Magical Herbalism by Scott Cunningham
Cunningham's Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs by Scott Cunningham
Cunningham's Encyclopedia of Crystal, Gem & Metal Magic by Scott Cunningham
Master Book of Herbalism by Paul Beyerl
The Compendium of Herbal Magic by Paul Beyerl
Love Is in the Earth by Melody
Celebrate the Earth by Laurie Cabot with Jean Mills
Wheel of the Year by Pauline Campanelli

Witchcraft III

The Temple of Shamanic Witchcraft by Christopher Penczak
City Magick by Christopher Penczak
The Way of the Shaman by Michael Harner
The Celtic Shaman by John Matthews
Fire in the Head by Tom Cowan
Witchcraft and the Shamanic Journey by Kenneth Johnson
Witchcraft Today, Book Three: Witchcraft and Shamanism edited by Chas S. Clifton
Witchcraft: A Tradition Renewed by Doreen Valiente and Evan Jones
Animal Speak by Ted Andrews
Animal-Wise by Ted Andrews

The Witch's Familiar by Raven Grimassi
Singing the Soul Back Home by Caitlín Matthews
Shamanism Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy by Mircea Eliade
The Night Battles by Carlo Ginzburg
Earth Light by R. J. Stewart
Power Within the Land by R. J. Stewart
The Living World of Faery by R. J. Stewart
The Faery Teachings by Orion Foxwood
Evolutionary Witchcraft by T. Thorn Coyle
Chosen by the Spirits by Sarangerel
The Teachings of Don Juan by Carlos Castaneda
Slavic Sorcery by Kenneth Johnson
The Master of Lucid Dreams by Olga Kharitidi, M.D.
By Oak, Ash, & Thorn: Modern Celtic Shamanism by D. J. Conway
The Nine Doors of Midgard by Edred Thorsson
The Book of Ogham by Edred Thorsson
Green Witchcraft III by Ann Moura
Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth by Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer
Walker Between the Worlds by Caitlín and John Matthews
Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits by Emma Wilby
Between the Living and the Dead by Eva Pocs
Witches, Werewolves, and Fairies by Claude Lecouteux
Psychedelic Shamanism: The Cultivation, Preparation and Shamanic Use of Psychotropic Plants by Jim DeKorne
Witchcraft Medicine by Claudia Müller-Ebeling, Christian Rätsch, and Wolf-Dieter Storl

Witchcraft IV

The Temple of High Witchcraft by Christopher Penczak
Ascension Magick by Christopher Penczak
Modern Magick by Donald Michael Kraig
Qabalah: A Beginner's Guide by Kate Rheeders
The Chicken Qabalah of Rabbi Lamed Ben Clifford by Lon Milo DuQuette

Witches Qabala by Ellen Cannon Reed
The Mystical Qabalah by Dion Fortune
The Essential Golden Dawn by Chic Cicero and Sandra Tabatha Cicero
The Golden Dawn by Israel Regardie
The Ritual Magic Manual by David Griffin
The Magick of Aleister Crowley by Lon Milo DuQuette
Magician's Companion by Bill Whitcomb
The Magician's Reflection by Bill Whitcomb
The Secret Teachings of All Ages by Manly P. Hall
The Eastern Mysteries by David Allen Hulse (formerly *The Key of It All, Book One*)
The Western Mysteries by David Allen Hulse (formerly *The Key of It All, Book Two*)
The New Hermetics by Jason Augustus Newcomb
Summoning Spirits: The Art of Magical Evocation by Konstantinos
Mastering Witchcraft by Paul Huson
Witchcraft for Tomorrow by Doreen Valiente
An ABC of Witchcraft by Doreen Valiente
Between the Worlds: Witchcraft and the Tree of Life by Stuart Myers
The Pickingill Papers by W. E. Liddell
The Sea Priestess by Dion Fortune
Initiation into Hermetics by Franz Bardon
The Magician: His Training and Work by W. E. Butler
Mysteria Magica by Denning and Phillips
Condensed Chaos by Phil Hine
The Lesser Key of Solomon
The Greater Key of Solomon
Three Books of Occult Philosophy by Henry Cornelius Agrippa
The Magus by Francis Barret
The Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage
The Zohar
Sepher Yetzirah
The Book of the Law by Aleister Crowley
Progressive Witchcraft by Janet Farrar and Gavin Bone

Fifty Years in the Feri Tradition by Cora Anderson
Practical Celtic Magic by Murry Hope
Celtic Sorcery by Ian Corrigan
The Sacred Magic of the Angels by David Goddard
The Secret Tradition in Arthurian Legend by Gareth Knight
The New Encyclopedia of the Occult by John Michael Greer
777 and Other Qabalistic Writings by Aleister Crowley
Godwin's Cabalistic Encyclopedia by David Godwin
A Beginner's Guide to Constructing the Universe by Michael S. Schneider
The Handbook of Celtic Astrology by Helena Paterson

Witchcraft V

A Witch's Guide to Life by Kala Trobe
Uncle Setnakt's Essential Guide to the Left Hand Path by Don Webb
Angels, Demons & Gods of the New Millennium by Lon Milo DuQuette
The Robert Cochrane Letters by Robert Cochrane and Evan John Jones
Stranger in a Strange Land by Robert Heinlein
The Witches' Craft by Raven Grimassi
Spiritual Mentoring by Judy Harrow
Covencraft by Amber K.
The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft by Rosemary Ellen Guiley
Encyclopedia of Wicca & Witchcraft by Raven Grimassi
The Element Encyclopedia of 5,000 Spells by Judika Illes
The Element Encyclopedia of Witchcraft by Judika Illes
The Goodly Spellbook by HPS Lady Passion and HP *Diuvei
The Encyclopedia of Celtic Wisdom by John and Caitlín Matthews
The Celtic Spirit by Caitlín Matthews
Taliesin: The Last Celtic Shaman by John Matthews
Mabon and the Guardians of Celtic Britain by Caitlín Matthews
King Arthur and the Goddess of the Land by Caitlín Matthews
The Quest for the Holy Grail edited by Pauline Maud Matarasso
Underworld Initiation by R. J. Stewart

The Prophetic Vision of Merlin by R. J. Stewart
The Mystic Life of Merlin by R. J. Stewart
Sacred Contracts by Caroline Myss
Living Wicca by Scott Cunningham
Weaving a Web of Magic by Rhiannon Ryall
Voodoo Contra by Robert Gover
Cunningham's Encyclopedia of Wicca in the Kitchen by Scott Cunningham
The New Wiccan Book of the Law compiled and edited by Lady Galadriel
The Hidden Messages in Water by Masaru Emoto
The Witch in Every Woman by Laurie Cabot
The Witch's Dream by Florinda Donner-Grau
The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries by Zsuzsanna E. Budapest
Summoning the Fates by Zsuzsanna E. Budapest
Celestial Wisdom for Every Year of Your Life by Zsuzsanna E. Budapest and Diana L. Paxson
Spirit of the Witch by Raven Grimassi
Deepening Witchcraft by Grey Cat
When, Why... If by Robin Wood
Utterly Wicked by Dorothy Morrison
The Earth Path by Starhawk
Truth or Dare by Starhawk
The Twelve Wild Swans by Starhawk and Hilary Valentine
Shamanism and the Mystery Lines by Paul Devereux
Keepers of Ancient Knowledge by Joan Parisi Wilcox
On Death and Dying by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, M.D.
Aquarius Now by Marilyn Ferguson
The Triumph of the Moon by Ronald Hutton
Wiccan Roots by Philip Heselton
Out of the Shadows by Lilith McLelland
Rotting Goddess by Jacob Rabinowitz
Fifty Years of Wicca by Frederic Lamond
The *Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe* series, vols. 1–6

Moon Magic by Dion Fortune
The Goat-Foot God by Dion Fortune
The Mists of Avalon by Marion Zimmer Bradley
Awen: The Quest of the Celtic Mysteries by Mike Harris
The Divine Struggle by Frederic Lamond

There is a host of books considered classic for the neopagan, yet today many criticize them as being dated or erroneous. That might be true, yet many new pagans are very critical of these books without ever reading them firsthand, basing their criticism on what others say. Yet these were the books that helped shape the modern pagan movement, and they deserve a read by the serious student. You can make up your own mind about them when you have all the facts before you, and then you will better understand the criticisms leveled against them, and the shortcomings inherent in the time they were written, and the level of scholarship available, as well as the personal biases of the authors. We have to look at all resources and think about their sources, be they academic, personal, or magickal, and determine what the authors have to gain by presenting this material to the public, and what inherent biases are in their points of view. Many are biased simply because of the time period in which they were written and published, but they represent the best of what was known at the time.

Isis Unveiled by H. P. Blavatsky
The Secret Doctrine by H. P. Blavatsky
Magick in Theory and Practice by Aleister Crowley
Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbat by Carlo Ginzburg
The Golden Bough by Sir James Frazer
The God of the Witches by Margaret Alice Murray
The Witch-Cult in Western Europe by Margaret Alice Murray
The White Goddess by Robert Graves
The Greek Myths by Robert Graves
The Magic Arts in Celtic Britain by Lewis Spence
British Fairy Origins by Lewis Spence
The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe by Marija Gimbutas

Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches by Charles G. Leland
Witchcraft Today by Gerald Gardner
The Meaning of Witchcraft by Gerald Gardner
The Alex Sanders Lectures by Alex Sanders
When God Was a Woman by Merlin Stone
The Black Arts by Richard Cavendish
The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries by W. Y. Evans-Wentz
Religion and the Decline of Magic by Keith Thomas
The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Faires by Robert Kirk and Andrew Lang
Culpepper's Complete Herbal by Nicholas Culpepper
The Alphabet Versus the Goddess by Leonard Shlain
The Malleus Maleficarum by Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger
The Book of Coming Forth by Day (The Egyptian *Book of the Dead*)

To extend your library, I also recommend that you get out of the metaphysical section of your local bookstore and library, and into the religion and mythology sections. Look back at classic works and translations of classic works. Look to the ancient poetry and writings of the Greeks and Romans, the Sumerians, and the Celtic myths in their earliest, pre-neopaganized forms. The following are a good place to start:

Bulfinch's Mythology by Thomas Bulfinch
Theogony by Hesiod
Metamorphoses by Ovid
The Homeric Hymns by Homer
The Golden Ass by Apuleius
The Hymns of Orpheus by Thomas Taylor
The Tain translated by Thomas Kinsella
Early Irish Myths and Sagas by Jeffery Gantz
The Mabinogion translated by Patrick Ford
The Poetic Edda
The Prose Edda
The Kalevala

I also believe that every pagan should have a copy of the Bible, the Koran, and *The Satanic Bible* by Anton LeVay. We spend so much time explaining what we are not, we should have a good idea of the stories and mythologies we are not drawing from and understand when they do overlap.

One of the greatest complaints from the pagan community about the pagan community is the lack of particular books, topics, and information. Most often, experienced pagans and magicians will cite the lack of advanced books available for their phase of learning. Yet the few advanced books that do come out suffer from poor sales because they are either intimidating, or those who consider themselves advanced don't find the material advanced enough. The flood of Wicca 101 books occurs because there are always people new to the Craft. Many never advance beyond this level and buy 101 books over and over again to get different perspectives. Each generation has its take on the basics and wants its voice heard, but many writers never progress to give their thoughts on more advanced topics. Writing a whole book—even a bad book—is not easy. If it were easy, there would be even more books out there. In a tradition where simplicity and a grounded approach are encouraged, much wisdom can be conveyed through the basics. A good, fresh approach to the foundation can give something to even the most seasoned practitioner. But how do we go beyond that?

I'm a big believer in a spiritual adage attributed to Gandhi: "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." I apply it to many areas of life, but particularly to education and community building. If you observe a lack of something in the community and educational material, then perhaps you are being called to fill the need you've observed. If you want it, someone else will want it too. Writing occurs in trends and currents. Often, several books by different publishers will come out at the same time without warning. There is a trend in the ethers, and sensitive writers pick up on it. For one to be copying the others, there would have to be more time between releases. These books must be written concurrently if they are released within months or even weeks of each other. People see and feel a need and fill it. Each has something to offer on the topic.

If your complaint is that there is too much 101 material in the pagan world, think about what you consider to be advanced knowledge. What topics would you like to see covered? I bet you've already begun exploring and talked to others who explore those topics. Perhaps you can share your ideas through workshops and your own writing. I began

writing books on the courses I taught because there was not enough time in the course to cover every fact and topic. I designed my courses to be extensions of my own personal training, and to include the things I wished my teachers covered, emphasized, or expanded upon. I put several different trainings into a cohesive whole, as I personally use this knowledge. You can do the same. People give me "suggestions" of what they want to see me write next, but often on topics I have no interest in. I recommend they write such books themselves, because the topics really speak to them.

Not everybody has to dedicate themselves to the life of an author or deal with the business of writing to publish articles online, do small self-print runs, or release electronic versions of books. Many of what are considered to be classics in witchcraft today came from personal papers passed between students, ritual notes, and parts of people's Books of Shadows. Rather than complain about what you perceive is lacking, or what big companies and teaching centers won't do, start your own grassroots movement. If there is a need for it, people will respond. Not everything has to reach the *New York Times* Best Seller list to be a valuable contribution to the world. Some of my favorite magick books are small, self-printed books that are hard to find today.

Some fear that one cannot, or at least should not, write down the advanced material, because that would be "revealing the secrets of the Wicca" to the public world, and that could be dangerous. Without teaching someone, you don't know the student has mastered the fundamentals before going on to the advanced working. You shouldn't give the student advanced power without the wisdom to use it, or put that person through a process that could potentially destabilize him or her psychologically without providing the support of a traditional coven or teacher/student relationship. Though there is some validity to those concerns, we are entering an "age of light," and many of the supposed secrets are being revealed in print. Most are unusable by those who don't have the "eyes to see" and the "ears to hear" the mysteries. Though the mysteries are mysteries for a reason, and should remain mysteries, the true mystery comes through the experience. No amount of text on a page will defile the mysteries. They continue to evolve and advance as we evolve and advance. No one should have any illusions that what we do today in any branch of paganism is identical to what occurred in ancient Greece, Egypt, Sumer, Rome, or Gaul. Reminiscent perhaps. Similar.

Yet they are still mysteries, despite the archaeological and academic writings about ancient religions. They must be experienced. Preserve the mysteries. Reveal them often.

Good teaching books, sharing the process of how to step into and out of the mysteries safely, are a necessity in an age when there are more students than teachers. If you responsibly put everything that a student would need in the book, it is the student's responsibility to actually read it and put it to use. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, mistakes and misuse of power can be great learning experiences and eventually set you on a path to wisdom. Students must be allowed an opportunity to explore deeper magick, and a chance to make mistakes if they are ever to learn.

Exercise 45

Bibliomancy

A wonderful divination technique that requires a good library is the act of bibliomancy, or book divination. Many folklorists cite that this is done with a Bible, and it can be, but the very act of book divination can be done with any book, or with a library of books. Perform your instant magick trigger, and ask yourself a question, seeking divine guidance of the higher mind through the books. Without reading or intellectualizing the process at all, pick a book from the library, just as you would an overturned tarot card. Open the book and flip through its pages without reading. Pick a page. Read it and look to see how your question is answered in the text on that page. You will be surprised at how accurate it can be.

The Mind of Magick

The trickster element of the mind is both our finest asset and our greatest enemy, much like the trickster gods themselves. It is this ability that allows us to step out of the dominant paradigm of our society, where magick is from the land of make-believe and there is no way we could ever do something profoundly supernatural. Yet it is the trickster who tells us nature and supernature are two different perspectives on the same thing. Both are one, and all things are possible. It's the madness of the trickster that lets us be truly sane with our magick. In the work of fantasy author Terry Pratchett, one of the main

witch characters of his Discworld series, Granny Weatherwax, puts the mind to use as her greatest tool, using the arts of "headology" for herself, her clients, and her enemies. Her words of wisdom have influenced quite a number of modern pagans today, leaving many of us wondering if Pratchett is an initiate of the mysteries, or simply a very wise man.

The trickster embraces paradox, and paradox is a fundamental part of the magickal worldview. When two things seem to be contradictory, yet simultaneously true, we have a paradox. Magick and spirituality are filled with paradoxes. When common sense and magickal thinking are both at work, we have a paradox. The concept of being separate, individual beings, yet part of a greater fabric of reality, a greater whole, is a paradox. Which is it? Are we separate, or are we whole? Yes, there is paradox in realizing that we are all fundamentally both genders, just different blends of male and female qualities. How can I have the anatomy of a man yet qualities of a woman? Paradox. How can the divine be both spirit and flesh, energy and matter? Paradox. How can divinity be found in and embodied by love, yet there are suffering and harm in the world? Paradox. At the heart of all the great religions and mystic traditions' core mysteries is paradox.

We all go through periods of doubt, wondering if we have crossed a line and gone crazy, even in the midst of our deepest magickal experiences. The fact that such ideas even cross our minds shows us that we are probably still in control of all our faculties, and the embracing of paradox helps us through those times.

For witches, the magick of the Great Rite is one of the ways to resolve paradox and contradiction. Through the blade and the chalice, the mind and the heart, all seemingly opposite sides come together, and when taken as a whole, they make sense to our total being, not just any one part. The Great Rite is the enactment of creation, and ritually the precursor to creation, before a witch does spellcraft. It is both a celebration of life and a method of doing magick, to identify with the gods, the fundamental forces of creation, to then create your life. Even in the most minor of applications, it is an invocation. In the greater methods, it is preceded by full ritual invocation of drawing down the gods.

When many get to the "advanced" stages of magickal practice, or at least feel they have, they become disconnected from the magick, then enter a syndrome of thinking

they are too good, powerful, or enlightened for spellcraft. They think they shouldn't need spellcraft anymore, so they don't practice it, and often their lives take a turn for the worse.

It is true that when we begin a magickal practice, we seek to fulfill our needs. Magick becomes a process of transforming our lives. Most of us start with waxing-Moon magick, to get more and more stuff, because suddenly we realize we can have anything we want. Then we have an experience that teaches us that just because we can have something, it doesn't mean we should. It might not actually make us happy or healthy to fulfill every desire. And our desires change.

Then we start doing waning-Moon magick, healing, cleansing, and banishing, to get rid of all the excess we have. We realize how much we carry, psychologically, emotionally, and even physically, and we seek to shed what no longer serves our higher good.

Then we reach a place of balance, where the spellcraft isn't as important. We focus on our relationships with the universe, the powers, the spirits, the land, and the gods. Hopefully our understanding of magick evolves into the concept that our whole life is an act of magick and worship, yet we have to be able to operate on all levels. When something goes out of balance, we have all this craft to contemplate, identify, seek wisdom about, and then transform through our magick. Yet many do not.

A bias develops, and many adopt some of the stance of the ritual magician, thinking of low magick as, well, low, beneath them, or base and unworthy of attention. For many, the regular rituals, celebrations, and meditations go away because they have reached a plateau and are now "spiritual" and don't need the tools of the Craft. We think we are beyond them. Yet, Gemini teaches us that just because we think something, it doesn't mean it's true. Sometimes we trip and trick ourselves, getting in our own way rather than helping ourselves.

Many advanced witches find themselves with difficult problems in their personal lives, yet they refuse to use magick to solve them. They have all the tools, and usually help others use the same tools, but for some reason the solution escapes them. My partner Adam Sartwell, who is simultaneously spiritual and practical, asks his students in this situation, "Are you thinking like a witch?" It's something we should all remember. Think like a witch. Act like a witch. How would a witch solve this problem? If you

were coming to a wise one in the ways of the Craft, what would that person say to you?

Some of our hesitance to use magick is wrapped up in our idea of what it means to be spiritual beings. We come from a culture that generally doesn't value magick, or understand it, and even many in the spiritualist communities frown upon spellcraft, yet they are fine with "manifestation" through prayer. Sometimes we try to conform to a cultural idea of the spiritual, rather than define ourselves as a witchcraft culture.

Other times our hesitance comes from our deep feelings of fear, denial, and lack of self-worth that come up as we do deeper spiritual work. Many don't know how to ask for what they really want, or don't know what they want and choose to go on without exploring, thinking their unexpressed and undiscovered desires will simply happen with no effort on their part. Many, as they explore the concept of divine will, feel that if there is a "plan" or a "destiny," then they don't want to mess it up with magick. Yet for a witch, using magick is a part of the "plan," and the rest won't fall into place unless you claim your power and responsibility. We are partners with the divine. Things don't just happen. Ideally we work with the divine to make them happen. If we don't, we're really not following the path of witchcraft. *Will* denotes a certain level of action on our part. We are in the world to do this work. Our minds can paralyze us, playing tricks on us with our cultural and emotional programming of what we think is right, rather than taking action when action is needed. Our egos want us to be less than what we can be, to keep us in ego, not divine consciousness where the ego's role is diminished. Regular ritual and meditation help us connect with the divine and keep the ego in check.

All the regular rituals serve two purposes. Yes, they do get you to a plateau that develops your psyche and elevates you spiritually. They empower you to a point where you might feel you don't need them, but they condition you. You develop such good magickal and spiritual strength because you do them regularly. Like an athlete who stops training, you will regress, you will gain weight, and overall you will lose some ability. While you might retain certain core ability, you will not be at your previous peak, and you will not advance. Unlike in athletics, there is no real limit placed on us by the body. We can continue to walk the spiral path, evolving and growing as we do. There is no need to take a step back, but to go forward and evolve the practice while re-

maining true to the core. Secondly, the seasonal and lunar rites, as well as your meditations, are done in service, to connect not only you personally, but your people, human consciousness, and the land where you reside to the other powers. We each have a mission and a calling to connect the realms into a great multidimensional whole. If we fail in that calling, part of the Otherworld is not as connected, and we will not transform our world. We do these rites to keep the Wheel of the Year turning, to keep the balance and harmony, and to keep relations with the fey, angels, nature spirit, and gods. All are needed.

All of our lives go in cycles and seasons, and patterns flow no matter how spiritual we become. Life brings ups and downs even while a part of us stays at the center of the wheel, the center of the web, at peace. We do magick for the benefit of the personal self who is on the rim of the wheel, walking the cycles. Magick connects the messenger self, also known as the lower self, with the personal self and the higher self in the peaceful center. With constant communion, our lives turn more in harmony with nature and the spirit world. Ritual best facilitates communication between these selves. Rituals, tools, herbs, gems, and woods are necessary, despite popular opinion. It's not because magick doesn't work without them, but because they bring a sacredness to the physical and give us an opportunity to partner with the spirits of nature. Ours is a path of nature. No matter how spiritual we become, it's a poor witch who can't do healing, love magick, money magick, or protection magick when needed. Perhaps the experienced witch listens first, seeks more guidance rather than rushing in, but when it's time to take action, the action is effective.

Many think of magick as the action of last resort. It's not a last resort—it should be a first resort. Do magick to align yourself with your higher will, to commune with your guidance through divination, to heal any sense of separation, and to set your intention, even if you are not absolutely sure of your desired outcome. Then take your physical actions, knowing that you are working on all levels simultaneously.

When we begin, we learn magick. We understand the theory and the art. Then we put the knowledge into application. We do magick. We explore and experiment and change our lives. Then we change again. We become magick. Everything we do, in ritual and in every moment, takes on a magickal significance. Every thought, every word, and every deed becomes an expression of our magick, as our lives become one

big spell. Yet we never stop learning magick. We never stop doing magick. All three steps occur simultaneously.

To the witch, there really is no low magick. Magick is magick. It is a part of our spiritual tradition, and taking care of our wants and needs—spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical—is as much a part of our ways as deep contemplation and seeking enlightenment. Magick cannot really be separated from our spirituality, though many try. A witch who doesn't do magick is like a traditional Christian who doesn't pray. It's a fundamental part of the tradition. The way one does magick, or prayer, might change, but it's a constant part of the relationship one builds with the divine in the Craft. The major question, regardless of the form of magick, is "Is it effective?" Can you transform yourself, your life, and others with it as you intended?

In the Temple of Witchcraft, all magick has been high magick. We ask the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit to be a part of everything, in all our meditations, for the highest good, harming none. We are all doing theurgy. Magick is the work of the gods. If we don't do it, no one else would. Victor Anderson, the founder of the Feri tradition, said that we are doing the work of the gods on Earth, according to his student, T. Thorn Coyle. She also reported him saying that we are "fetal gods." Our magick, on all levels, helps us prepare for our divine birth.

Exercise 46

Transforming the Mind

1. Review your "I think" list. Divide the list into thought patterns you wish to keep and encourage and thought patterns you wish to break by crossing off the latter.

2. Take the remaining statements, remove the "I think" part of each, and "sigilize" them into one collective symbol, either by crossing out the repeated letters of each statement and using the remaining letters as your starting symbols, or by taking the first letter of each word. Further instruction on making sigils can be found in both *OTOW*, chapter 13, and *TOHW*, chapter 12. Make the sigil into a talisman that pleases you, in paper, wood, or another

flammable material. (Instead of making a sigil talisman, you could rewrite the entire list in a magickal alphabet, such as Theban, runes, or ogham.)

3. In ritual, breathe on the talisman three times, connecting it to your mind and energizing it with your breath. With this talisman you are reprogramming your mind.
4. Burn the talisman in a cauldron, and scatter the ashes to the wind, in the mutable air, to manifest your desire. Let the reprogramming take hold and slowly transform your consciousness.

You can perform this ritual in a magick circle if you so choose.

Witchcraft and the Modern World: Academia

Another place where modern witchcraft and the world intersect is in the halls of academia. Well, perhaps not so much now, but the trend is developing, and more scholarly eyes are taking a look at Wicca and the general neopagan movement. As almost all religions have some component of academic religious study, witchcraft will also come under the same scrutiny, and we as a community and as individuals must deal with this and determine whose role it will be to represent us and how.

In many religious studies programs, the programs themselves are sponsored by the religious institution. There are many Christian-based colleges with religious studies programs, and while some are solely academic, others are based on training clergy. Witchcraft, having no central authority or central source of money, does not have any equivalent institutions at the moment, and many doubt if it ever will, given the nature of the religion. While some could say that the modern metaphysical movement can be traced to academic and historic texts on magick, most of the academic eyes looking at witchcraft today see it only from a philosophical and intellectual point of view. As witches, we see our religion as one based on mind, heart, body, soul, and spirit. The single perspective leaves only an incomplete view. We exist in an interesting substratum—we are part of the modern world and culture, and we are able to relate on one level, yet the experience

of our beliefs and rites can be akin to the indigenous tribal societies of the past and present. We are not so alien, yet we don't quite fit in when compared to the church congregations of the mainstream. Thankfully many programs and texts are being organized by actual practitioners, or at least experiencers of our traditions, to get a living experiential perspective along with the academic one. There's a strange line that is crossed when an observer becomes an experiencer, but when one is talking about an experiential mystic tradition, it is hard to report on it accurately without experiencing it. Yet in the experience, you lose your objectivity.

The current wave of academic and pseudo-academic studies of modern paganism has endangered many of the sacred cows of the older generations. The once generally accepted histories among the new witchcraft students are put into doubt when they are looked at through the academic lens. Primarily in focus is the documentation of the rise of modern Wicca and its relationship, if any, to past witchcraft and pagan traditions.

Questions arise regarding the surviving witchcraft traditions, and if there is any validity to claims of family traditions or secret sects. Was Gerald Gardner really initiated into a coven in New Forest, or did he just make it all up? If he was, did that coven have anything truly traditional, or did its members simply make it all up in a day when Theosophists and Spiritualists were considered witches by country folk? Wider questions go on to the Burning Times, its reality and fallacy, and what the death toll really was. Were the images of witches in ancient times fact or fiction then, as some would claim they are now in our popular stories and faery tales?

Is any of the exciting and colorful history of neopaganism "real"? The only answer anybody can give is that we don't know for certain, but it helps us to take a look at what we consider history, what we consider real. With close inspection, we find the trickster spirit hiding even in academia. What is real to the shaman or magician-priestess is very different from what is real to the academic scientist.

The respected Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein said in *Philosophical Investigations* that reconstructing the past was as futile as trying "to repair a torn spider's web with our fingers."[1] It cannot be done. History is always written by the victors of any conflict, so our perspective on what is and what was is always skewed. History is just that, a

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations: The German Text, with a Revised English Translation*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 39.

perspective on what happened based on the available evidence. Two different people can interpret the same evidence differently, and while one's opinion might be more respected or logical, it is not absolute proof, simply a widely accepted opinion. As times change and more evidence comes to light, our collective historic perspective changes. What is real now may become false in the future. All we have is what we have now, yet for the one who steps outside of time ritually, the evidence now is not the only perspective that matters. The scientist seeks to measure and correlate all available data, yet the root of the Hindu term *maya*, the illusion of the world, also means "to measure." Our very desire to measure and catalogue the illusion is part of the illusion to the mystic. Its mysteries cannot ever be completely catalogued.

Since I've been involved in the Craft, which, comparatively speaking, has not been that long, its popularly accepted history, etymology, and worldview have changed several times. I'm still a witch, and my practice evolves as I evolve, yet the history that is now taught, or considered "right," has changed, and older witches have to keep up to know what the next generation considers fact.

When I began, the word *witch* was related to concepts of "bending," "shaping," and "wisdom," yet several new studies of the word link it to other terms, such as the Old Norse *Vitki*, meaning "witch" or "seer," one who does magick. Others will trace etymologies to insist that *witch* was always used only as a pejorative, and never with respect or honor. How long will these connotations last before a new insight changes the way we look at the word *witch*? And even if it is true that *witch* was only used pejoratively, words do change and evolve with cultures, often differing greatly from their original meaning, not only in our past, but now in our present and future. I tend to favor the interpretations that move toward wisdom, or holiness, in order to remind us that being a witch is a holy task of being a priest/ess, but that is part of my own personal spiritual agenda as a teacher of witchcraft. I freely admit that, and I'm neither unbiased nor an academic. So whenever we get information, we need to know the author's background and potential personal agenda, and we should not assume anything to be fact just because it's in writing.

At the start of my own training, students were given a sense of history of the past as an ancient fertility religion, and our beliefs are the remains and reconstructions of that religion. While at heart I still think that's a true statement, many imply, if not state

outright, that there is an unbroken line of priest/esses going back to the ancient past, which is not true. Yet there is great debate on where the line actually does start—the twentieth century, the nineteenth, or earlier?

Most modern journals of science consider the prevalent theories about prehistoric matriarchal cultures to be out of date. Yet it wasn't that long ago that pagans widely accepted the idea of a peaceful, advanced, ancient matriarchal culture. The evidence for it is roughly still the same; only the interpretation changes. Many blame feminist scholars for promoting a feminist worldview with no real evidence, yet one could easily say that the inherent patriarchal structure of our society, and academia in particular, would blind it to envisioning an ancient matriarchal society. Those with a traditionally male worldview have difficulty seeing the world from an ancient woman's point of view and assume things must be as they are. From a metaphysical perspective, if things swing from one side to the next, and if man has been dominant in our society, isn't it at least conceivable that woman has been dominant at some time in the past? Who is right? We simply don't know, but I've found truth to be in the middle of extremes.

There has been a wide range of estimates of the number of deaths due to the persecutions and the witch trials in Europe, popularly known to witches today as the Burning Times. Most agree today that the numbers cited by witches and feminists in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s were an exaggeration based on the evidence, but that exaggeration has caused a backlash of people doubting they really occurred at all. I have a hard time believing that something that has been etched into our collective Western consciousness did not occur. It has shaped how I see the world, but again, that's a part of what I've learned as my spiritual history, so I'm a bit biased. Due to the time period and nature of the events, evidence is not going to be complete, yet we have some fairly detailed trial transcripts, which some have used to point to the shamanic reality of medieval witchcraft. I don't think we'll ever have close to an exact figure of those put to death in the witch-hunts, but the current trend is to err on the side of conservatism while the previous trend was to err on the side of exaggeration.

It might sound crazy to think of history being written and rewritten until we really aren't sure of what happened. Most of us like to think of history as something safe, something definite that we can point to, there behind us, stationary and unchanging, well, because it is. Yet the more we do magick, the more we realize that so much of it

is based on a perspective. Forgetting the Inquisitions and witch-hunts seems crazy, yet there are already people in the early twenty-first century who are trying to downplay the Holocaust of World War II, saying that it didn't happen, or wasn't as bad as people make it out to be, and those who support the "image of the Holocaust" are obviously "sympathetic to the Jewish cause." At the moment, these individuals are seen as radical and are not taken seriously, and there is a body of evidence, photographs, films, and personal records from that time documenting the atrocities. Yet if we didn't have such records, and we fast-forwarded a few centuries into the future, perhaps people would be debating the intensity, body count, or even the reality of the Holocaust.

The further you move away from an event, the less sure you can be sure of what happened. Even things that happen in a personal setting, among a small group, are remembered differently by the participants. Those who play the "telephone" game, where a story is repeated among a chain of people until the originator of the story hears it, know how much the details can change in the retelling by the time the story goes around the room. A humorous e-mail winding its way around the Internet described archaeologists of the future unearthing the strange Barbie cult culture, of which only skinny plastic dolls survived. Based on the "evidence" left by the forgotten society, the futurists all assume these were statues of the Great Goddess, envisioned as skinny, white, blonde, and blue eyed. Her temple was a great beach house, and her chariot a pink Corvette. All the priests who served her took the ceremonial name Ken and obviously sacrificed their genitals to her, as did the god of this mythos, while her priestesses took the name Skipper as they trained in her mysteries. With the evidence at hand, and assumptions of human nature, it's easy to understand the mistake, no matter how ridiculous it appears to us. Perhaps the ancients would say the same thing about our theories as we explain Neolithic statues and cave paintings, or even the great monuments and temples of the past.

Many experts can make leaps of logic based on the facts that seem plausible at the time, yet might later turn out to be wrong. Some are never challenged because the supporting evidence is never discovered. The conclusions could be wrong, but they get passed on as fact because a particular text is not found and translated or a tomb goes unearthed. Scholars can express strong opinions as facts and don't always adequately

make a case for the assumptions. Because of their status as scholars, they are taken more seriously. When an occultist does the same thing, it is challenged more openly.

Much of the current controversies and speculation surrounds the roles of Gerald Gardner and Robert Graves and the work of Margaret Murray in the rebirth of modern witchcraft. While much of their work should be considered uncritical or amateurish by modern scholarly standards, there is an essential nugget of truth within their work that provides a tie to the past. Dismissed books of Murray, Graves, and Sir James George Frazer have amazing research and resources, even if the conclusions drawn by the authors are disagreed with today. Gardner was a romantic and sought to popularize a religion he felt was dying out, so it's quite possible that he embellished liberally. That's the general consensus today. He filled in the cracks of what he admitted was a fragmentary tradition with ideas from the cultures and traditions he was interested in, accounting for the Eastern influence, both in his background and the growing accessibility of Eastern occultism in the Western world. Yet there are enough strands of the Craft in the same time and place, links with Robert Cochrane and the earlier George Pickingill, to indicate that some form of witchcraft survived. One theory contends that surviving elders of the witchcraft tradition, detesting Gardner's openness and attempt to bring the Craft to the mainstream public, worked to discredit him to preserve their secrecy.

We have other strands of Craft knowledge that have added to the modern stew of Wicca, though we have little hard evidence to support most of these strands. We have the remnants of Faery Faith traditions in the British Isles. The strains of Italian Witchcraft, brought to light by Charles Leland and later popularized by authors such as Raven Grimassi, surely influenced Gardner and Valiente, but they have a separate origin. The mysterious Kent tradition of witchcraft, in which Laurie Cabot first trained, appears to be a separate strain from the New Forest coven of Gardner. She later adapted and modernized it into her Cabot tradition. Sybil Leek also claimed a heritage that does not exactly appear to be the same as Gardner's. Gwen Thompson claimed a separate Welsh tradition that made its way into the New World independently. The origin of the original faery group that initiated Victor Anderson and became the genesis of the Feri tradition is unknown, though a lot of other diverse cultural material was added to it. And lastly we have the "Traditional Craft" of non-Wiccan lineage tradition in Eng-

land, known to us through the works of Andrew Chumbley, Nigel Pennick, and Nigel Aldcroft Jackson.

Robert Graves, in the highly influential work *The White Goddess*, gives us a beautiful poetic look at the Goddess tradition, based on his opinions and reinterpretations. Like many of the ancient myth writers, he often gives us variations and new perspectives on the old tales in his work. To some, his intent and action are very clear. It is not an exacting scholarly work analyzing established fact objectively; it's a poetic work of inspiration with a historic basis. Yet for many, that was not made clear, and when taken as a critical scholarly work, his mythology falls short. At the time, not much was written on these topics, and subsequent researchers took his work as historic fact, blinded by the romance of it. Although derided today, his approach is quite similar to the way the ancients worked. We do not criticize one ancient for not following the story exactly as the previous ancient storyteller did. We wonder at the variety of ancient beliefs and myths. Today we often lack divine storytellers and spiritual poets and myth makers, elevating only those who repeat and dissect the ancient stories. Because of that, we are bereft of our own interpretations of the primal forces, to relate to our own culture. Whether it was his conscious intention or not, Graves gave us a modern view on many ancient mythic themes, and they have been absorbed into our collective neopagan psyche.

As modern pagans will point out, Murray's greatest mistake was to look at the past as a single unified cult, fueling Gardner. I don't think ancient pagans were any more unified than the hodgepodge of pagan groups and varieties we have today. But this error has been used by many academics to deny the existence of pagan cults in post-Christian times altogether. Modern pagans who wholeheartedly accepted this vision of a single Goddess cult sequestered away from the Christian authorities added fuel to the fire. Both sides sought to reduce history to simplest reality, yet reality is not so simple. The reality was most likely something varied and diverse, with much of the cult dying out, yet enough survived to plant seeds for the future. Though I personally wince whenever I hear somebody with a family tradition story, and as a public speaker I hear a lot of them, every so often one comes up that has the look and feel of something genuine, stretching back further than Gardner, or perhaps a few hundred years,

if not into an ancient past. I don't think all these seeds can be credited to Gardner's imagination.

A common retort to challenges of Wiccan histories that has become popular in Internet discussion groups and on chat boards is something along the lines of "a lack of evidence is not proof that something did not happen." All you have is the lack of proof, but not evidence to the contrary. One can't assume that because we cannot prove our practices today are like those of the ancients in any way, they were obviously nothing like the ancient practices. As a practitioner myself, I imagine there are some elements that are similar and some that are very different, the same as if you looked back at any ancient religion and compared it to a modern version of the same faith.

Author Raven Grimassi quotes historian Peter Kingsley in the signature file of many of his online posts on pagan message boards: "Academically, doubt is a virtue. It is wise to be cautious, virtuous to allow for different points of view. The problem arises when this attitude hardens: then doubting becomes a certainty in itself, and we forget the importance of doubting our doubt." Raven has been a powerful voice in the community, calling for us to look at the traditions, lore, and history we've inherited, offering a scholarly view on our history and practice while also being an initiate to the mysteries. While a current popular view is that a European witchcraft cult was entirely fictional, witches pop up through our history and folklore an awful lot. Strange to have so many references to something that supposedly didn't exist.

In terms of determining the authenticity of lore found amongst living practitioners, the default assumption of most interested scholars now is that there is no true link to the past, and anybody who would claim otherwise must bear the burden of the proof, rather than be open to and then investigate any possibility that presents itself. This backlash has occurred due to erroneous assumptions, poor scholarship, and, according to some, outright deception, yet the pendulum has swung so far in the opposite direction. There is little room left open to possibility. And whether you are a scholar or not, if you are a practitioner of true magick, you must always be open to possibility. Soon, hopefully, as we explore our roots and build our future, we will find a middle ground balancing skepticism and possibility.

Many modern pagans accept the "debunked" view of the modern Craft completely. Many of us work very hard to not seem flaky, flighty, or unbelievable in the modern

world and to establish an acceptable image in the mainstream community. We refute the romantic ideas of our elders and trade it for the most conservative view of our history. People find the idea of a modern, newly invented Craft more acceptable than the idea that any form of secret cult survived and went public in the twentieth century. For most mainstream Christians, that's a wild and disturbing thought. To be more in harmony with mainstream and academic perspectives, we embrace the most conservative history available, rather than anything with romantic overtones, without much thought, and then we claim ourselves to be the more advanced and progressive pagans because of it.

I've been accused in the past of making history a matter of opinion, when it's really a collection of facts and facts are not open to interpretation. Yet that is what anybody does in writing history. Everything is open to interpretation, reality as well, and that is the essence of magick. I'm not advocating a denial of basic facts, or the rewriting of personal history. "Healing" techniques that tell you to envision your life as if abuses, pains, and traumas never happened are in my opinion detrimental to the healing process. I'm just advocating an understanding that history is not always the neat and tidy package that most sources would have you believe, and there are often alternative points of view and undiscovered facts.

With all this in mind, the modern pagan has to be able to understand that priest/esses and scholars have two different jobs. Priest/esses can be scholars, and vice versa, but they each have to be clear what "hat" they are wearing. Religion and history, while not incompatible, have a different purpose, and a different focus. One requires the facts of the consensual world. The other, particularly for the shamanic magickal priest/ess, the witch, requires the "facts" of both the physical and spiritual worlds, making reality more mutable.

One could compare the histories of witchcraft and Judaism. While scholars will argue that there is no true evidence of a witchcraft culture in our history, there was really no true evidence of a Jewish culture and religion predating the "second" temple, even though Jewish history clearly states a rich lineage and tradition. To mention such a possibility undermines many people's accepted worldview, not just those of Jewish descent. Mostly likely myth was used to unite disparate groups at the time of the second temple, and forge them into a community. Today Judaism exists, just as witchcraft

exists. The histories of both can be debated, yet that doesn't change the present-day reality that we are here.

One needs to look at the history of the modern witch, like that of most religions, as the mythos. In religion, the mythos serves the purpose of drawing in the initiate, to give a sense of purpose, understanding, and belonging. Think of when you came to the Craft. You knew you were called to something different. Now you have a name for it, and a story for people like you. People attracted to witchcraft have historically been misunderstood and persecuted. This leads you to further exploration and deeper understanding.

Imagine that your teacher or the first book you read started out by saying, "Here is the story of witchcraft, but it may or may not be true. Most scholars think this guy Gardner made it all up. The Burning Times and witchcraft trials persecuted our people, yet they really might not have happened. If there was an ancient witchcraft practice, it's nothing like what we do now." You would be overwhelmed with these contradictions and have no understanding or place to start. The mythos gives you a place to start. The mythos alters consciousness to link you to the past and make you think about your purpose and future.

The mythos is a mythic history, a folk history, and other religions have the same type of mythos, though due to our Judeo-Christian cultural bias, their mythic histories are considered factual, not folk myth. Theirs are the mainstream religions, not ours. Mythos is subjective by its very nature. To the academic, the Burning Times and the survival of an ancient witch cult is more plausible than angelic visitors seeking out Moses, Mary, or Mohammed, yet these scriptural stories are not often questioned. Was Jesus a real figure who died and was resurrected? Was he ever real at all? Millions of people have believed so, and this belief shapes their worldview. It even shapes the perspective of atheists with an academic background, who live in a Christian-dominant society. Was Mohammed a real man, who ascended into heaven? Was he visited by angels? Who knows truly? Did Buddha sit under a tree until he found enlightenment and awoke? Witchcraft history is the same, yet instead of giving you prophets to follow, it gives you a family tree—an ancestry in blood and spirit, for those who are hearing it now know they will be woven into it. Many believe it is literal. Many dispute it, but it's "our story." Not only is academia part of the mysteries of Gemini, but also storytelling is the art of Gemini, and most of the trickster gods were great storytellers.

Academics are trained to pick their subjects apart analytically, looking for weaknesses in theory and faulty logic while finding connections and new paradigms. They are necessary to society, but not the only necessity of society. The healers and priest/esses are also needed. Yet without the academics of the time, whether you agree with them or not, we might never have had the rise of neopaganism. While most religions by their nature cling to an unprovable mythic history as literal fact and become dogmatic, witches do not. We can recognize mythic truth and be open to the latest academic opinions, yet our true Craft lives on in our practice, which adapts and changes with the people, while still honoring the old ways.

I've had witchcraft friends and peers criticize this approach to teaching history, feeling that it is not giving the new student enough credit, and that I'm talking "down" to the student. Yet they say this from a perspective of being involved in the Craft for many years. It's like trying to explain the various levels of intimacy a witch can have with a deity through invocation to a first-year witchcraft student who is still looking to understand the names and functions of the altar tools. The complexities will come with time. To give too many conflicting points of view all at the beginning doesn't help the new student's growth or ground that student in a tradition. You have to start slowly and build up to deeper understandings.

When Masons retell their history, they often use the saying "Masonic tradition informs us...," followed by whatever historic component that they want to convey. Though it's not explicitly said in our teaching, and perhaps it should be, "Witchcraft tradition informs us..." of our history. The witchcraft mythos is one of change, death, and rebirth. The witch cult will die out at times and be reborn. Its roots are shrouded in mystery, as few can "prove" anything. It will be guided by the inner-plane contacts of witches of the past, the Hidden Company. Some think these contacts guided Gardner and Valiente in its rebirth. Some think that Old George Pickingill, aware of the shift of ages, and believing that those souls who were alive during the ancient Greek pagan times would be reincarnating soon, and looking for a familiar Goddess tradition, adapted and added to the tradition that Gardner eventually received. Perhaps the inner-plane guides know better than many of us, including the traditionalists, guiding the hand, mouth, and pen of many writers, to add new fertile soil to our deep roots. Even things that are seen as a foreign influence or seemingly poor scholarship serve a

higher purpose and create something that would not only survive into the coming era, but thrive. Perhaps the mingling of paganism with Christianity in the Celtic Christian Church, the Arthurian mythos, and the folk magick of Italy seeded our traditions with enough to help us relate to others, and the world to relate to us. Perhaps the addition of the Wiccan Rede to the mass public teaching of the Craft will save us from another era of persecution, and perhaps another era of hubris of power, and then we can work with others in the new era. Working together, knowingly and unknowingly, are the witches of flesh and spirit, to bring about the rebirth of the Craft of the Wise into the new aeon. And we are all now a part of this mythos.

Ritual of the Trickster

When befriended, the trickster can act as one of our most amazing allies. Like the court jester in the king's throne room saying things that no one else will say, or the wise teacher who pushes you to figure something out for yourself, this power is one of change. The trickster will push and pull us into uncomfortable situations that force us to grow, to change, and to become more than what we are today.

Make your bargain with the trickster god of your pantheon, communicate with the deity, and potentially even merge together in this ritualized meditation. The mercurial figures, the messengers, magicians, scribes, light bearers, rebels, and cunning animal gods are all trickster figures in some fashion. Design a ritual to both honor and connect with the trickster. You can meet with the deity in meditative vision or on a shamanic journey, or if you already have a connection to the deity, you can try a direct invocation (*TOSW*, exercise 19). In this ritual, you will either ask yourself the three questions listed here, or the deity will ask you at least three questions regarding the lessons of this zodiac gateway. You will have to answer each of them before you are allowed to pass on to the next lesson and gate. The questions for Gemini are: How is the world most interesting and true? How is it most dull and false? Where do these two things meet to become one? When you have completed the ritual, make sure you continue to honor and work with this deity over the course of the year.

Homework

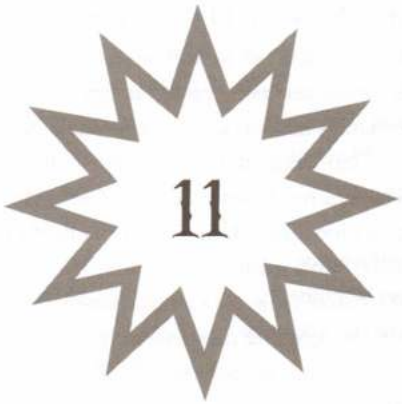
- Do exercises 43–46 and record your results in your journal or BOS.
- Perform your master spell for this lesson.
- Review one myth from one of the cultures outlined on page 31.
- Review one religion as outlined on pages 29–30.
- Choose one figure from the biography list on pages 32–33, and learn all you can about that person.
- Continue work on your final project.
- Work with the Gemini trickster deity from your personal pantheon.
- Obtain the Gemini gem for your "breastplate" charm bag, if you haven't done so already. Work with the Gemini stone this month. Carry it with you. Meditate with it. Place it under your pillow at night before you go to sleep, and learn to attune to the power of Gemini.
- Work with one of your thirteen tools, re-consecrating it. Seek out its spiritual equivalent in the Otherworld, and know its mysteries.
- Optional: Make a fluid condenser (*TOHW*, chapter 9) out of a high-grade, flammable alcohol for this zodiac sign. Research appropriate plants for that sign, and choose the one that is right for you (*OTOW*, chapter 13).
- Optional: Find a small stone with a flat surface that you can mark with the zodiac sign of Gemini. Cleanse it, mark it, and charge it. You can also use it like a talisman, along with or in place of the Gemini gemstone.
- When you complete the trials of this chapter, tie another knot in your witch's cord in a ritualized manner.

Tips

- How do study and education fit into your year-and-a-day goals? Can you incorporate deeper education, reading, the study of a magickal alphabet or language, or the study of the "hands, stars, cards, and omens" into your practice?
- How do storytelling and mythology fit into your education?
- Continue working on your own BOS, adding appropriate material to it each month. Write and perform these rituals when appropriate. You could write one of the following:

  Esbat for the new Moon in Gemini, or for the full Moon in Sagittarius, its opposite sign.

  Rite-of-passage ritual for a dedication to the gods and the path of the witch—you might have already done this personally, but it's good to have a copy to show your own future students as a formal part of your BOS.
- Explore the gateway of learning in your inner temple (*ITOW*, chapter 14).



Lesson Eleven
The Wisdom of Cancer

The summer season strangely begins with the cardinal water sign of Cancer. While the Sun reaches the peak of its power, one usually doesn't think of the element of water, yet the peak of the Sun's power at this time is as nourishing to the land and plants as water is, as the plants prepare their harvest yield of food at the end of the season. The Sun becomes the food, the vital life force of the plants, so that plants, in turn, can create food for the animal and human world.

Gender: Female
Triplicy: Cardinal
Element: Water
Image: Crab
Season: Summer
House: House of Home, Mother
Key Phrase: "I Feel"
Theme: Nurturing

Blessing: Sensitivity
Challenge: Moody
Archetype: Mother
Ruling Planet: Moon
  Exalted: Jupiter/Neptune
  Detriment: Saturn
  Fall: Mars
  Esoteric Ruler: Neptune
  Monadic Ruler: Neptune
Classical Deity: Hermes/Mercury
Angel: Ambriel
Colors: Yellow, Silver
Metal: Silver
Stones: Moonstone, Pearl, Beryl
Body: Digestive System
Labor of Hercules: Capture of the Herd of Geryon
Gift of the Goddess: To Commune with Animals and Wild Creatures
The Thirteen Goals of the Witch: Breathe and Eat Correctly
Alchemical Operation: Separation
Cell Salt: Calcium Fluoride (Fluoride of Lime)
Tarot: Chariot

As the Sun shifts from Gemini into Cancer, the sign of the Mother takes hold. While we think of it as the time of the Sun King, the good god really rules through his relationship with the Goddess of the Land, like the sacred king of ancient myth ruling through his sacred "marriage" with the goddess. She is the true power here, when the Earth and solar powers are both at their peak. And the most primal form of the Goddess, that gives rise to both the land itself and the God in his many forms, is the Ocean Mother. She is the great primordial pool we each come from and return to, be it the salty sea or the cosmic womb of stars.

The Way of the Mother

While all witchcraft could be called the Way of the Mother, out of all the twelve zodiac signs, the sign of Cancer, the crab, is the one that best embodies the principles of the Great Mother in our circle of stars. Cancer is a crab, an animal not often thought of for its motherly tendencies, but the sign is the embodiment of the ocean, and the power that naturally rules the tides, the Moon. Both the Moon and the ocean have been linked with the mysteries of motherhood, birth, and life. With our evolutionary theory, science believes we evolved out of a primordial soup, from a one-celled organism to a multi-celled organism, eventually developing into the wide variety of races we know today. This scientific creation story fits very well with the pagan creation story if we think of the Great Mother as the ocean. While the Moon is the traditional ruler of Cancer, the esoteric ruler is Neptune, named after the sea king of Roman mythology. Strangely, our Western magickal tradition depicts the sea with a sea king, even though so much of our mythos concerning water and oceans is feminine and motherly. Perhaps the sea king was originally the divine agent of the Ocean Mother, much like the sacred king of the land is the divine agent of the Earth Mother. In the end, our planet, our Mother Gaia, is both land and ocean. The Moon is associated with menstruation and the cycle of life. Early on, farmers learned the benefits of planting and harvesting in harmony with the Moon phases and Moon signs, as certain positions yield greater or healthier crops.

Diana, the goddess of the Moon, is associated with witchcraft. At one point during the European persecutions of witchcraft, most goddess figures were equated in some way with Diana, whose name comes from the Roman pantheon. Diana is linked with the virgin huntress Artemis, another goddess associated with the Moon and with witchcraft. The two are often seen as the same entity. The crescent Moon is said to be her hunting bow. Neither figure has a popular image of being overly motherly, yet they are the mother figures of witchcraft. Artemis, though considered chaste herself, is born and immediately aids her mother Leto in giving birth to her twin, the solar figure Apollo. She acts as midwife to her own mother, aiding the delivery of her twin. Diana eventually was equated with the great Goddess of the Witches, synchronizing with many different mythic figures, including those with more motherly associations. In *The Gospel of Aradia*, she is the mother of Aradia, the witch goddess avatar who comes

to the world to teach the ways of witchcraft and magick on behalf of her parents, Diana and Lucifer, both bearers of light.

Strangely enough, in classical lore, the Olympian associated with Cancer is Hermes/Mercury, the messenger, as commerce and messengers were associated with waterways as well as roads. Messengers are also magicians, and the ways of magick are strongly associated with water, as the tides of life and the tides of the ocean and Moon are all linked.

In the tales of Hercules, the strong mother figure is Hera. She is the jealous one, and in most of her myths she is not painted in a particularly flattering, or even magickal, light. She is the wife and consort of Zeus. She plays the role of nemesis to Hercules and all of Zeus's children who are not hers, including Dionysus, who is a spiritual Neptunian figure if not a sea king, linking him to this sign's esoteric ruler. At first glance, Hera does not seem to be motherly at all. She is continually plaguing her "stepchildren," becoming the first archetypal wicked stepmother so strongly associated with witchcraft. A popular thought among the proponents of Hera is that she is a surviving aspect of a pre-Greek mother goddess figure, sometimes associated with the Earth, sky, or Moon, and was adapted to fit the Greek pantheon. The collective Greek psyche used her myths to work out the change of cultures. She is often depicted with a crown, cows, and peacocks, and also with pomegranates, connecting her to both Overworld and Underworld goddess figures.

Hera is responsible for the labors of Hercules, and she endeavored to make each one more difficult. Many myths tell us that she tried to either prevent his birth or kill him in infancy. Zeus tricked Hera into nursing the young Hercules, and when it was revealed who he was, she pulled him from her breast. The resulting spurt of milk created the Milky Way.

When we look deeper into the mythic relationship between Hercules and Hera, is it the nemesis relationship we first see? One could look to her as his patron, as Hercules is sometimes thought of as "Hera's man," with his name being a tribute to her. When we look at many of the archetypal witch goddesses with sons, their relationships are viewed as antagonistic, yet the deeper meaning is a level of patronage and training. The tale of Arianrhod and Lleu is similar, as she curses her son three times, and eventually he breaks all three curses and through great trials becomes a god figure. Taliesin has a similar relationship with Ceridwen, who chases him, puts him through

shapeshifting trials, devours him, and then gives birth to him as a great and wise bard. At the end of his labors, Hercules also becomes like a god, ascending to the heavens, with his trials depicted in the stars of the zodiac. Are these tales of antagonism, or magickal initiations through the Goddess?

In the twelve labors, the tale of the Hydra is associated with Cancer first, because in some version of the tale, the death of the Hydra is followed by attack of the crab, following the orders of Hera. Hercules defeats the giant crab, and Hera places it in the sky, near the lion, to commemorate it. The Hydra is also placed in the sky, with its constellation not too far from Cancer. Cosmologically, the Hydra story doesn't have much to do with the lessons of Cancer. I associate the tale of obtaining the Herd of Geryon with Cancer. A herd of magnificent red cattle or cows, owned by the Titan Geryon and residing in the western lands, was the focus of the tenth labor of Hercules. Geryon was an unusual chthonic figure, a warrior having three bodies, three heads, and six arms, but only two legs. Hercules traveled across Africa, forcing the aid of the solar Titan Helios to transport him to the western isle of Geryon. There, Hercules defeated Geryon's two-headed dog, then the watchman of the herd, and eventually was confronted by Geryon himself. Using an arrow dipped in the toxic blood of the Hydra, Hercules pierced the three shields of Geryon, mortally wounding him and taking the herd. In various accounts, Hercules had difficulty moving the herd, as Hera sent the gadfly to bite the cattle, and a flood to raise the river and prevent their crossing. In the Roman version of this tale, some of the cattle were stolen, and Hercules had to retrieve them, reuniting the herd to be truly successful in this labor. Eventually Hercules gathered the cattle and brought them back to King Eurystheus. The cattle were then sacrificed to Hera.

Though the tale of the herd does not have a particularly nurturing and motherly theme at first glance, the cow is a universal sign of the Goddess, of nourishment and motherhood. Cows give of their milk for other species, and of their flesh for our survival. These were western island cows, corresponding with the mythic otherworlds of the west and, by association, the magick of the western goddesses. Hera has been associated with cows. The main guardian of the cows was in a triple motif, like the triple goddess. Once Hercules obtained the cows, he had to care for them, preventing them from wandering away or being stolen. Like a parent caring for the family, Hercules looked after both those who remained "home" and those who were far away.

Cancer as a cardinal water sign is related to the active use of emotional power. The mother is the progenitor, the creatrix, initiating creation. The shell of the crab is the container of water, the vessel of emotions, and the cardinal power seeks to protect the soft tissues of the crab, or symbolically our soft and sensitive emotions, by providing a hard exoskeleton shell. While a cardinal and initiating sign, cardinal water moves differently than cardinal fire Aries. Rather than the straight and direct approach, Cancer shuffles from side to side, like the crab, negotiating the boundaries. Much of Cancer's work is in finding and creating boundaries, particularly our emotional boundaries. Mother figures have to establish and set boundaries for the home, the family and the children. They set the tone and territory. When people have a strong Cancer energy in their personal chart, they are learning the issues of motherhood, particularly caretaking, nourishing, and setting appropriate emotional boundaries. The balance is in finding both a boundary and the flexibility to grow and adapt. The downfall of the protective shell is its rigidity. In an effort to protect, sometimes we create such a strong boundary we close off all forces, good and bad, in an effort to shield, protect, and nurture the emotions.

Cancer calls us to truly feel and work with our emotions as tools for spiritual growth and evolution. We are not our emotions—just as we are not our thoughts, body, or will—but our emotions are sacred tools that help us grow and evolve in the world. The key phrase of Cancer is "I feel." Cancer is the ruler of the Fourth House, the house of family, the nurturing environment, and our relationship with our mother. We learn where our boundaries are in the Fourth House, and develop some of our first and strongest relationships, those with our primary care provider. Traditionally it was the mother, but the Fourth House rules the relationship of whoever takes care of you in the home—mother, father, older sibling, and even nanny.

Exercise 47

"I Feel" List

In your journal or BOS, make a list of statements starting with "I feel," and complete the sentence with all the feelings that surface for you. What are the emotions you are experiencing in this moment, and generally in your life?

Are you aware and conscious of your feelings? Do feelings that you don't expect "sneak up" on you? Do you ever try to stop feelings, or block yourself from them? Are you sensitive to other people's feelings, having what people consider to be empathy? If you are empathic, do you have problems blocking out other people's feelings, or sorting out what are your own feelings and what are other people's feelings?

Our feelings are incredibly powerful, yet they are states of energy that pass through us. We can be aware of them, and to a certain extent control them with our thoughts and will, yet they inform and educate us in so many great ways and must be experienced directly. No feeling is particularly good or bad. Feelings simply exist, and each one can be a powerful teacher. Take stock of how aware and in touch you are with your feelings, and what you need to do to get more in touch with your feelings if you are lacking in awareness. Doing this feeling check-in, which pagan author Lisa McSherry calls an "emotional weather report," on a regular basis can be particularly helpful. Group work, with biological families or spiritual families such as covens and circles, becomes a powerful way to work on our feelings and learn how to better communicate our emotions. Meditation upon the cup as a ritual tool, and working with the cup in ritual, is an excellent way of working with the power of Cancer, for the cup is like the shell of the crab, the container for the sensitive, soft emotions we all carry.

Nourishment

A key teaching of the mother is the gift of nourishment. The body parts associated with the sign of Cancer are the stomach, the place where digestion starts, and the breasts, the vessels of nourishment. Anything that holds nutritious water is considered to be ruled by Cancer. The Great Mother is the nourisher, the provider of nutrition, comfort, and nurturing. It is her milk we drink metaphorically, and in the literal world, all our bounty and food comes from her body, from the land providing the vegetation, and the vegetation supporting the animals. In times past, we were much more conscious of our relationship with the land and the Earth Mother in regard to our nourishment and food. Now, we remain dependent, since our food still comes from the Earth, yet there are many more steps between it and our dinner plate, creating a disassociation from the Earth Mother.

Witches have a theology that includes the sacredness of the Earth, of the material reality, and all things that sustain material reality. This is the densest form of spirit, divine energy manifest in the physical world. The respect of the source of our food, and the enjoyment of it, are part and parcel of our spirituality.

A ritual statement that has made its way into American witchcraft from the Church of All Worlds, and originating in Robert A. Heinlein's novel *Stranger in a Strange Land*, is "May you never hunger. May you never thirst," often said during the Great Rite, when passing the chalice of wine or ale and the cakes. On a surface level, it is a blessing to have abundance and prosperity in your life, to have the resources to nurture yourself with food and drink. These are the essential building blocks of life. Much of our conscious efforts in ancient days went toward the pursuit of finding fresh water to drink and food to eat. These needs must be satisfied in order to contemplate deeper mysteries. On a higher level, the blessing is nourishment not just on a physical level, but also on a spiritual level. May your spiritual hungers and thirsts be satisfied by the Great Rite, as the mysteries of paradox are resolved. Not only must your body be nourished, but also your emotions, mind, and soul. Each requires a different kind of food, but each must be fed.

One of the thirteen goals of the witch is to breathe and eat correctly, meaning that we must take care of our physical body, nourishing it with oxygen and nutrients. Learning to honor the body and its dietary needs is an important part of the spiritual path. Each of us is unique, and has unique needs, but a basic understanding of proper nutrition and diet is essential.

Education in nutrition can be controversial, as there are many theories as to what makes the best diet and, in fact, what makes a spiritual diet. Many people assume that I'm vegetarian, or vegan, because they perceive me as being "very spiritual." When they find out I'm an omnivore, they somehow equate that with being nonspiritual. Yet before they knew my diet, they had a certain perception of me. Each of us has unique needs, physically and spiritually, and with education on nutrition, and an understanding of our body's physical needs, as well as our own ethics and morality, we can make the daily food choices that serve us best.

Many ancient philosophers from whom we draw many of our magickal ideas were vegetarian, yet we don't have a lot of information on the diets of the priests and priest-

esses in the ancient world. If we look to the rural witches beyond the temple, most certainly they were not solely vegetarian, but lived on what was available—a combination of foods. When we look at indigenous people today, and the diets of their magickal and shamanic practitioners, we find them consuming what is available and nutritious, and often modifying diets during certain rituals and workings in order to prepare for deeper levels of contact. These "shamanic" diets are not meant to be followed always, but are used as a method of food magick to open and close the gates to the spirit world.

Modern nutritional information has been popularized with the four food groups. I always liked the image of them as four quarters, because of the magickal associations of four. Then a revised "food pyramid" was created with a fifth group, still resonating with magickal symbolism. The traditional five groups of this pyramid are as follows:

Grains: breads, cereals, rice, and pasta

Fruits and vegetables

Meats, including red meat, poultry, pork, fish, and eggs

Dairy: milk, yogurt, and cheese

Oils: natural oils and butters

Practitioners who abstain from animal products obviously find this model flawed, because it doesn't take their health and moral choices into account. A different model might be based on the type of food product, rather than its source.

Proteins: meats, pulses, legumes, eggs, and dairy products

Complex carbohydrates: grain products and starches

Fibrous carbohydrates: low-calorie vegetables, including greens and mushrooms

Simple carbohydrates: fruits

Fats: oils and butters

Though not considered a "food group," water is an essential part of any diet. Clean, pure water. General recommendations suggest six to eight eight-ounce glasses

of water a day. Many advocate much more. May you never thirst is a literal blessing as well as a metaphor. In my healing work, I've found that a great many people improve simply by having a gallon of pure water a day to rehydrate and flush out their system. Water is so magickal, as it imprints the intentions of those who charge or pray over it. A lot of mainstream research is being directed into the phenomenon, beautifully illustrated in *The Hidden Messages in Water* by Masaru Emoto. These researchers are simply documenting something witches and shamans have always known.

Having the proper balance of all these food groups is necessary for good health. Many who follow a vegetarian lifestyle never get enough protein, even though vegetarian sources of protein are available. Many omnivores are quite deficient in healthy vegetables and fruits. I know that has been my problem in the past. We are imprinted with the eating habits we developed at home, at a young age, and in my own experience, not having the importance of fruits and vegetables stressed then has made it a struggle for me now. Recognizing those formative patterns and deciding which ones you want to keep and which ones you need to change, even when you grew up in a wonderful home, is part of the work of Cancer. Think of your family eating habits. Which of them do you still practice now? Are they the ones that are best for you?

Our relationship with food and with the body is an important part of our spirituality as a witch, yet our religion has no one-size-fits-all list of rules and regulations to ensure the health and well-being of everybody. Not every diet is going to work for everybody. We are a middle path, but not a constant middle path. We have our ups and downs, our cycles and seasons, our periods of indulgence and asceticism. Many assume the path of the spiritually aware person is a path of renouncement, and pleasures of the flesh, including good food, must be given up. We have an archetypal image of the strict and bland diet of the mystic, and while that does serve some witches, it is not a law of the tradition, nor does it serve everybody. We enjoy the body and its pleasures, including the pleasures of the taste buds. Benjamin Franklin is often attributed with the saying, "Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy." Many pagans substitute the gods for God, and many more replace beer with their favorite food or drink. I think the statement captures the ethos of the pagan. We enjoy food and drink, for they are divine manifestations. While I believe in all things in moderation, including moderation, I would not want to live in a world without ice cream. It's simply too

yummy to go without the occasional cone. Yet a diet of nothing but ice cream, or even ice cream every day, is not healthy or necessary. We also learn the simple pleasures of enjoying brown rice and steamed vegetables. They are wonderful in their own right. The entire spectrum of taste and sensation is ours to explore as long as it doesn't harm ourselves or others.

For myself, I struggled with the idea of going vegetarian and wondered if it was necessary for my spiritual development. I tend to be an "all or nothing" type of person, committing fully to something, or not at all, yet I didn't feel called to make the commitment to a more dedicated and disciplined dietary path. I felt that, for me, eating was a middle path. I have had weight issues in my life, and I asked the gods and spirits what was best for me. The answer I got surprised me. They did not ask of me, or require of me, to follow a specific diet. I have so many spiritual, magickal, and exercise regimens that I follow, to balance my life, they knew that in many ways I felt my discipline disconnected me from many of my peers and society. My religion, my spiritual practices, my worldview, my sexuality, and my ideas of family make me so different from the mainstream that to be even more disconnected, without being able to eat "normal" food when traveling or working with others, would really separate me from those whom I'm here to serve. The gods encouraged me to make more and more healthy decisions, to educate myself about food, but to live in moderation. If I want something, I don't deny myself. We are not a religion of denial, but moderation. I love salty chips. Having a few isn't horrible; having a bag is not a great idea. The gods encouraged me to choose healthy, organic, cruelty-free foods whenever possible, also knowing that my budget as a self-employed writer/minister means I often have to make the cheaper of the food selections when money is tight, even when I might want to choose the free-range, completely organic, and more expensive products. Doing so was not to be a point of guilt or judgment for me, but what I simply chose to do based on the circumstances of the time.

Later, through education and exercise, I learned and followed a simple dietary program that is found in the *Body for Life* book by Bill Phillips. He recommends three small meals a day, with two to three snacks in between, such as a protein shake and/or fruit, to keep the metabolism going. My meals consisted of a serving of protein, a serving of carbohydrate (usually a complex carbohydrate such as a whole-grain product), and

a serving of vegetables. A serving was the size of my closed fist, or the palm of my hand. Each week I had a "free" day, where I could eat whatever I wanted, with no guilt. Eventually this got shortened into a free meal or free snack, because I found I didn't want to eat unhealthy things for a day, but sometimes I'd have a craving.

This simple, easy program, along with the Phillip's exercise program, really transformed my relationship with food and with my body. I was able to adapt further education on nutrition into this simple program and change and heal my body, without getting into diets that made me feel like I was abstaining or had to order special food, count calories, or weigh out the meal.

Though we are a religion that holds the body as sacred, there are a lot of pagans, witches, and magicians with eating disorders, weight-related health problems, and generally poor eating habits. At one time in the Craft, those of poor health who did not take care of themselves were turned away from training, because the rites were physical, and those who did not have the health and stamina couldn't participate in them. Today, with the increase of esoteric material available to everyone, such prohibitions are meaningless, yet I do find it interesting that many with body issues are attracted to a religion that finds the body sacred. I think that many are attracted to paganism because the work involves learning about the sacred body and food. They come to paganism not because they already see food as sacred, but because they need to learn how to think of food as sacred and divine. Using our techniques to ritualize food and food preparation is an excellent way of making these transformations in our body and in our lifestyle habits.

Exercise 48

Eating Consciously

A key to understanding the sacredness of food is to learn to eat more consciously. Most of us eat unconsciously, while we're doing other things. We don't listen to our own body about when we are hungry and when we are full. We don't experience the range of sensation and taste. We eat mindlessly and, as a consequence, overeat.

Make your next meal, or the consumption of any food or drink, a ritual. You can do this with a five-course meal. You can do it with two pieces of candy and a raisin.

The food can be "healthy" or not. Repeating the exercise with different kinds of foods can be very enlightening. Choose foods from the different categories. How does each make you feel? Eat slowly, silently, and deliberately. Look at the food. Observe its color. Smell it. Take a bite. Put the food down. Reflect on the taste, the texture, and the temperature. Reflect. What sensations does it create in the body? What thoughts and emotions come up for you? Do you have any reaction to it at all? How does it feel in your stomach? Repeat these steps until you have consciously eaten your meal. Listen to your body. Stop eating when you are full.

Food magick is a powerful way of working magick. I think that much of our old forms of folk witchcraft were done with food. At one time, the cauldron was both the ritual tool and the dinner pot, and magick was done continuously in it. It's hard for most of us to understand, since we are taught to cook outside of the sacred context. I do remember that my old Italian grandmother, who did practice some folk magick, stressed to me the importance of what she was thinking and feeling when she baked the cookies for Christmas or made the Sunday spaghetti sauce. But she would also say that even if she started in a bad mood, the process could uplift her and make her happy, as she thought about the love she had for the ones who would be eating her food. Though I didn't turn out to be much of a cook, I always remembered that. In the ancient world, where magick, medicine, and food were more closely linked than they are today, these ideas were common, but perhaps unspoken, as everybody believed in them. Hippocrates said, "Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food." With this form of magick, you begin to know that every act of eating and preparing food is a potential ritual and spell, with magickal consequences. The more consciously you eat, the more you can choose to remake and transform yourself on many levels. There are consequences that come with the consumption of any substance, as it changes our energy, and there are benefits when we consciously choose what we put into our body.

The "shaman's diet" is based on information given by the South American shamans who work with the psychedelic brew *ayahuasca*, though you'll find similarities in magickal traditions everywhere. The diet is far more than it implies, and it's not part of the latest get-thin-quick craze. Culturally it usually involves the purification rituals, meditations, songs, herbs, and other rituals that prepare one's biochemistry, nervous

system, physical body, and energetic bodies for the interface with the spirit world. It can literally rewire you and open you up to different pathways of energy and consciousness. This diet is undertaken during periods of apprenticeship or intensive work. It is undertaken when one wants to study with a particular plant spirit as a teacher, adding the tea or tincture of the plant into the diet in order to attune to its subtle vibrations and power.

Prohibitions to the diet include abstaining from pork, fats, salt, spices, condiments, and alcohol. Coffee and other stimulants are avoided, as are lemons and limes. These citrus fruits are often used to break magick. Hoodoo has cleansing formulas based on lemon scents that clear away harm. The shamans say that salt is the doorway to the magick. Stopping the consumption of salt starts the fast, and one can gradually cut out the other foodstuffs, while starting up with salt closes the fast, and indicates that the work is done. One can break the fast with a little salt on a lemon. Some traditions use alcohol to shut down the sight. I know a Scottish seer who takes some whiskey to stop the magickal work, while those from other traditions use alcoholic spirits to open themselves up, such as the followers of Dionysus. While many with a Western sensibility might assume that a true "holy" person would abstain from alcohol, I've come across quite a few traditional indigenous shamans who enjoy their alcohol and see no discrepancy between enjoying the occasional state of drunkenness and being spiritual. Wine, mead, and beer have always played a part in pagan myth and spirituality.

If you are following the restrictions, it leaves a healthy but bland diet available to the shaman. Rice, fish, and unseasoned vegetables are encouraged most. Some will differentiate certain types of fish, and not allow those considered to be "bottom feeders." Following this diet will be in close parallel to the practices of the indigenous tribes and spiritual practitioners of Haiti, Brazil, and Africa.

The practice helps people focus more on the spirit world than on the physical. The blandness helps them attune to the effects of a plant spirit teacher if working with one is a part of the diet regimen. Sex is often prohibited while individuals are on this diet, and during intense periods, human contact is discouraged, as the shamans or members of the group sequester themselves in a remote location in nature, focused on the task at hand.

Shamanic and witchcraft wisdom encourage the use of plants and foods that help us work with energy and spirit. Local foods, both plant and animal, are encouraged, as well as things that are in season in your area, rather than those shipped over long distances, both for your physical health, and for the impact such shipping has on the environment. Beyond the specific shamanic diet, items to be generally avoided include fatty, fried, and greasy foods, highly processed foods, refined white sugar, and white flour.

Magickal wisdom encourages the use of adaptogens and antioxidants. Adaptogens help us adapt and neutralize stress and prevent damage to our cells. They include panax ginseng, schizandra berry, and licorice root. Antioxidants, such as vitamin C, help stop free radicals from damaging our cells, and they can be found naturally in oranges, which, unlike lemons and limes, do not necessarily cut through magick. The B vitamin group is very important to mental and cognitive functions, which are vital to a magickal practitioner. B_6 is found in oatmeal, peanuts, beans, bananas, and chicken. B_{12} helps maintain healthy nerve cells and is found in oysters, clams, liver, trout, salmon, eggs, and dairy products. It is also available as a supplement for those on vegetarian diets. Serotonin boosters, such as bananas or the herb black cohosh, help our capacity for dreaming, as well as overall well-being. Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish and flaxseed oil, are important to visual abilities. Making sure you get the right amino acids into your system is also highly important to those who work with spirit. Supplements might be needed to make sure you are getting the right vitamins and minerals. I've also found benefit in taking algae supplements as a type of "super food."

While all of these are helpful, you must find out what supplements and foods are right for you, and when. Needs change over time, and the proper combination now might not be as effective three months from now. If you do not work with a nutritionist or health advisor, I suggest using the technique of applied kinesiology, outlined in *ITOW*, chapter 13, to test yourself, and the advice of your own body wisdom/spirit guides, to find the right combination of foods and supplements. I do this roughly around each Sabbat, to prepare for the seasonal changes. As always, educate yourself on any substance, food, herb, or mineral, and when necessary, discuss any issues with a doctor or other qualified health care practitioner before altering your current intake of food and medicines.

One of my favorite recipies for food magick and a health supplement is honegar. Honegar is the name given to a mixture of apple cider vinegar and honey, as a general healing tonic. The two ingredients have some very magickal properities alone—apples and honey are both associated with the Otherworld, immortality, and the magick of the gods. Together, they create a sweet-and-sour tonic that is quite powerful in maintaining health and vitality. Some know this mixture as a "witch's brew," which I found quite funny once I did some research. Many witches advocate it, using it as a substance for fasting before rituals and Sabbats, and they claim that the ancient Druids used to consume only apple juice or cider during a fast in order to promote magickal awareness.

The recipe is to mix one tablespoon of raw natural honey with one tablespoon of organic unfiltered apple cider vinegar in an eight-ounce glass of water. I like to use hot water to dissolve it, and drink honegar as a warm beverage in the morning. A recipe for the syrup is to dissolve equal amounts of the honey and vinegar in a saucepan until they mix together completely. Then it can be stored in glass bottles in the refrigerator. To use the syrup, take one to two tablespoons of it and add it to water, or use it with olive oil as a salad dressing. With both forms, you can adjust the ratio of water or oil to honey/vinegar to find a combination that is palatable for you.

According to folklore, this magickal foodstuff will kill off unhealthy bacteria, grant longevity, detoxify the body, heal the bladder and kidneys, curb addictions, cure sore throat, absorb mucus, promote weight loss, lower harmful cholesterol, ease menopause, heal chronic headaches and chronic fatigue, lower high blood pressure, ease allergies, cure candida, cure dizziness, clear acne, ease pain in the joints, and aid digestion. It's an overall cure-all. While this is good folk medicine, there is not a lot of scientific evidence for these claims, so don't make honegar your only source of treatment. The psychic Edgar Cayce was an advocate of both ingredients for natural healing, to promote the alkalinization of the body.

I suggest using honegar three times a day for a week as a healing regimen. At this dose, it will act as both a laxative and a diuretic, so you will be spending time in the bathroom, particularly if you are detoxing from alcohol, nicotine, drugs, or other substances. If you keep with it, it will revitalize you. Many recommend taking it daily as a tonic. Though you can take it daily, I actually take it in cycles, and then take breaks from it. I prefer it once a day in the spring and in the fall, for several weeks to even

three months, to fortify and detoxify my systems during the change of seasons. I tend to drink it only occasionally in the summer or winter, when I'm feeling ill or have low energy. I drink other herbal beverages at those times.

I highly recommend an exploration of the wisdom of the "old wives' tale" to aid the development of your Craft, particularly in regard to food and plants. Many of the most profound wisdoms are right there for us, if we simply have eyes to see. Who would have thought the old charm "an apple a day keeps the doctor away" would have so much merit? What other wisdom is there for us to discover?

Exercise 49

Food Magick

The same techniques and intent you would use to make a talisman, charm, or potion can be put into making food. Start with a magickal intention for yourself or someone else. What do you wish to manifest, create, change, or heal? Choose a meal with that intention in mind. What food will match your intention? Think of the symbolism and mythology of various meats, oils, vegetables, fruits, and grains. Many of them will be listed in magickal books of correspondences along with herbs. In many ethnic foods, particularly those delicacies that contain body parts of an animal, you can use your knowledge of astrology to show how the particular body parts relate to signs and planets. Liver is always associated with Jupiter. Kidneys are associated with Libra and Venus. Charge each ingredient as you put it into the food you are preparing. Charge the spices and seasonings you use to bring out your specific magickal intention. Make the consumption of the food a part of the magickal activation, like wearing a magick scent or drinking a magickal brew.

An excellent resource in food magick is *Cunningham's Encyclopedia of Wicca in the Kitchen* by Scott Cunningham.

Homecoming

In many other religions, people often feel like they are joining something new, or hearing the "good news" for the first time to receive religious salvation. But witches encounter a curious phenomenon—they feel a sense of homecoming when seeking out and finding the Craft. For many of us, there is a sense of returning to something familiar, of finding a family we never really knew was missing yet longed for all the time.

Though there are formal rites and rituals of dedication and initiation, witchcraft is not a religion of conversion. There is no proselytizing. There is no seeking out others to turn them to our ways. In fact, while most of us believe the world could benefit from some of our philosophies, we know that most people are not suited to the path of the witch. Most are not called to this way. One must be called. Like the shamans chosen by the spirits, we too are chosen by the spirits, or the gods, to this path. It requires certain skills and aptitudes, or it will tear a person apart. Unlike the practitioners of other faiths, we don't offer the world a universal panacea, claiming our faith can cure all ills and fit everyone. Though perhaps there are aspects of paganism that could fit the masses, for before the rise of Christianity the basic pagan tenets did suit the larger population, the ways of the witch are the ways of the priest/ess, of the beings set between worlds, and are not for everybody. Witchcraft is as much a vocation, a job, as it is a religion. Not everybody is suited to be a painter, doctor, or politician, though they each play a role in society and have much to teach. Likewise, not everybody is meant to be a witch. Everybody has a role to play, and witches are a specialized force in the world. The "cells" of Mother Earth, like the cells in our body, must have some diversity. We all can't be heart cells, muscle cells, or bone cells. We each have a special role to play.

The feeling of homecoming can be like the end of an exile in the wasteland. We are home again, in the embrace of the Mother and Father. There is a sense of family, both spiritual kin and personal kin. That doesn't always last, because we have an idealized version of what "family" should be like, and when covenmates or circle sisters/brothers fail to live up to those expectations, we can feel betrayed, as if our new home were not really our home. Witchdom is our kith and kin, yet we are all human. We all make mistakes, and our disillusionment with what at first seems like the perfect reunion simply helps us understand, to truly know, that the only real home we have is in our

soul. That is our only true home, our only true refuge and sanctuary. For it is through the lunar-influenced soul vessel that we know the Perfect Love of the gods. The inner temple exists within our soul.

Most of us are of the first generations of witches in the modern era, post-Wicca-Renaissance. We have most likely come to the Craft, leaving behind past religions of our parents and conventional society. We are making a break, or at least opening a door to something new and mysterious when we first seek out the Craft. But those in the Craft will eventually raise children of their own, and must figure out how to raise those children. Many of us, seeking not to force our religion on our children as we feel mainstream religion was forced on us, often err in the opposite direction, and give our children no sense of tradition, of belonging, of a spiritual home, even if it's their choice to rebel against it. This lack of "home" can create a great disruption in the developing psyche. Many of our children might not have the aptitude to follow the life path of the witch, yet they can still be raised with modern neopagan traditions in case they express interest in pursuing the deeper mysteries when they are older.

Most traditional covens have prohibitions against teaching children under the age of eighteen, yet, for good or bad, Wicca is extremely popular among teens. Much of the information and experience available to those teens interested in pursuing the path is horrible, and poor ideas, habits, and techniques become their foundation, rather than learning from a mentor or teacher. For legal reasons, many coven leaders and public teachers won't take a minor as a student, but if the parent consents and the child is interested, or if it's your own child, how do you handle it? How young is too young? How can you adapt the teachings to develop over time with the developing child? How can you help instill a sense of wonder and magick, yet not quash the spirit exploring new and different ideas? It's a fine line, and there are no easy answers.

For some traditions of witchcraft, the idea of teaching children and bringing them into the fold is not a complex one. What is known as "Traditional Craft" or "Old Craft" in the United Kingdom or a "Family Trad" in America—meaning a tradition that predates the Gardnerian revival of witchcraft—believes that the blessings and responsibilities of the witch are often passed on from parent to child. While those in the United States have somewhat looser concepts of family traditions, many of those native to the United Kingdom believe in the concept of witchblood. The magick and mysteries of

blood ancestry and lineage are a part of the mysteries of the Goddess and the magick of the chalice or cauldron.

In such lines, one does not simply choose to become a witch, any more than one can choose his or her nationality or blood family. One who is "of the blood" either is born into a witch family or has the blood through ancestors and is simply called to remember.

While most consider this a genetic connection, many think the passing of the "blood" can be a soul incarnation. If you were once a witch in a past life, you remember it in this life, and are called again to it. To many, past-life memories of the soul and ancestral memories of the blood or genetics are the same thing. Being "of the blood" is often thought to be a specific genetic connection, such as Celtic lineage. I had one teacher who stressed Celtic lineage, though I personally have no known Celtic blood in this body. Yet the traditions of witchcraft have so many common points, starting in the ancient world and winding its way through Europe. Even those of "Traditional Craft" have to see the blending of Celtic, Germanic, Scandinavian, Saxon, Roman, and Greek ideas. Our modern concept of witchcraft, traditional or not, is much like a melting pot, or a pattern of interwoven strings. American witchcraft is even more so—a true melting pot of cultures, like the country itself, reminiscent of the Theosophical root races predicting the rise of the new, mixed race in America, foretelling the next age.

To others, witchblood refers to a spiritual and genetic connection to otherworldly beings, an elder race. Depending on the mythos, the elder race is known to us today as the fey, the elves, the gods, or the angels in the Bible called the Watchers. Witches were beings somewhere in between, with kin between the worlds, holding a sacred duty to be a bridge between worlds. In these circles, the homecoming of the witch is the remembrance of the elder race's blood, recalling these ancient connections, and recognition of the blood, of kinship, by others who have the blood in body and those of the tradition's spirit-world contacts. Though there can be ritual initiations into these traditions of witchblood, often they are not necessary, as hereditary craft implies that all that is needed is passed on in the blood. A child would be examined for the "mark," an identifying birth characteristic demonized in the persecutions of witches. Some traditions that would "adopt" a non–family member into the overall family through an

initiation ritual might have used ritual tattooing, branding, or scarring to make a mark. Other traditions would look for signs such as a caul at birth.

While those of Traditional Craft will have strict and specific definitions of the blood for their own lines, the concept also refers to that of divine lineage. Julius Caesar, in his *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, wrote that the Celts claimed ancestry with Dis, possibly referring to Cernunnos or another Underworld deity. Their magickal and otherworldly power comes from this descent. The descendants of the Q'ero people of the Andes are said to come from the grandsons of Inkari, the mythical first Inca. Their worldview and abilities come from this lineage. Stories of mating with the fey, the Tuatha de Danann, the Watchers, and other angelic or faery beings are similar examples, elevating the witch's potential beyond human, yet not quite in the realm of the gods.

Though it sounds fantastical to some, it's not necessarily egotistical. As witches, we do not think we are better than everybody else. Just different. Our past, our ancestry, our blood and spirit give us certain gifts, responsibilities, and at times, burdens. Psychic sensitivity is not always desirable. Power uncontrolled is not a blessing. We are no better than those who follow any other path, any more than an artist, doctor, or politician can be valued over someone from another profession. Each is needed. Each brings blessings. Each has problems. The same goes for the witch.

Other traditions of witchcraft, old and new, look to empowering others regardless of blood, initiation, and life path. My first serious teacher, Laurie Cabot, wrote a book of women's empowerment called *The Witch in Every Woman*. Those with an empowerment vision seek to share the tools of magick and witchcraft with anyone who could benefit from them. I also think of the teaching of the traditional Venezuelan witch and healer, Dona Mercedes, chronicled in the book *The Witch's Dream* by Florinda Donner-Grau. While having a specific definition of a witch, and the teaching of the "witch's shadow" to intervene for others and move the wheel of chance, she says, "A witch's shadow is only a name. All of us have a bit of a witch in us."

Witchblood can also be seen more as a state of consciousness, a term for gnosis, when one becomes his or her own witchsoul or magickal personality, rather than having anything to do with lineage. Those who are called to witchcraft earnestly can experience the witchblood gnosis regardless of their genetic or spiritual lineage beforehand.

I think of witchcraft and its homecoming as being akin to the modern experiences of the GLBT (gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered) community. Many come to terms with being different by living between the worlds, and they find a community and a homecoming. That homecoming is often bittersweet, as modern gay culture, while welcoming, can also have many faults and problems, much like witchcraft culture. One does not really choose to be gay, just as one does not choose to be a witch, yet many people stumble into it, not realizing they were gay, or stumble out of it, realizing they were confused. Why would you choose to be so different, to be always on the outside in some way if it were not truly you? Just as everybody has the potential for bisexuality, there is "a bit of a witch in us" all—but we are not all called to witchcraft as a life path. Those who are witches can never really "unbecome" witches. If you do, you never really were a witch to begin with. You might have experienced witchcraft ritual and magick, you might have had a great experience, but you weren't called to be a witch. You did not have "the blood." Those who feel the pull, regardless of tradition, usually have the blood, or are "called" to become witches by the gods in this lifetime, to rend and rebuild spirit and flesh. Really, we all have some ancient pagan blood in us, even those of us who are of Jewish descent, if we look far enough back into Hebrew mythology. I believe we all have the blood, to be a mystic or pagan, to be self-realized, if not to be specifically witches. There can be many kinds of blood, and many paths to call to you. Our calling is a call home, coming to us through both flesh and blood, and spirit and soul, which is only fitting for a tradition that views divinity as paradoxically immanent and transcendent. When we are called home, we are truly called home to a family of flesh and spirit, hearing the call of the Great Mother, and that is only just the beginning of the journey.

Witchcraft and the Modern World: Animal Rights

A controversial topic in the modern world, and no less so in the pagan community, is that of animal rights. One of the blessings or gifts of the Goddess is for the witch to be able to commune with animals and all sorts of wild creatures. The witch gods and god-

desses, particularly Artemis and Diana, favor the creatures of the wild woods. Many witches feel a natural affinity or kinship for animals, both wild and domestic. They, along with other people who have a similar kinship, are often advocates and activists for animals who have no physical voice in our human politics and policymaking.

Most witches have no problem with animal rights advocacy, and in fact are for it, but the issue lies in disagreements as to what rights are in question, and how far to go. Most witches do not advocate the unnecessary testing of products upon animals. Yet the definition of "necessary" comes into question. Most would not advocate the testing of things such as cosmetics on animals, but lifesaving medicines might be a possibility. Many animal rights advocates do not condone the eating of animals for food in any way whatsoever, advocating that everybody be vegan, consuming no animal products, while others are simply proponents of reforms in the food industry, supporting free-range animals raised in as close to a natural and humane environment as possible, without chemical preservatives or antibiotics. Meats that are raised "cruelty free" are fine with them, yet one could argue that any farm environment is a setting of cruelty. Issues of environmentalism and endangered species are also on our minds, as humanity's development threatens the environments and long-term survival of animals and plants, as well as our natural resources.

What, if anything, does this have to do with our religion and spiritual practice? Many find it essential to our spiritual viewpoint, finding kinship and connection with the animal world on a spiritual level. Such people then advocate our connection to the animal world not just through spirit vision and totem animal, but also with real, living animals.

Those with an Eastern influence will cite that the spirit of animals could be those of former people in their former life, or those that will spiritually evolve into people, and karmically it is unhealthy for us to eat animals or harm them in any way. While this is a precept in some traditions, it is not necessarily a part of witchcraft. If one believes that the human soul can come from the animal kingdom, then why not from the plant or even mineral worlds? Some belief systems say that when humans eat animals, the animals become closer in understanding human consciousness, and we as humans come closer to understanding animal consciousness. The exchange aids the evolution of both. The magick of foodstuffs, of flesh, conveying information and energy, is a fundamental

part of most magickal traditions, from the Catholic Eucharist to the cakes and ale of Wicca—both indicate identification with the God through eating his body as bread and alcohol.

When we think of our Stone Age ancestors, we may paint an idyllic portrait of them living in total harmony with their environment, but I'm not sure if they worried about animal extinction. Though we see their hunting as more humane than many of our treatments of animals in the food industry, hunting and killing still results in the death of animals for our sustenance. Death is a part of life, and from a spiritualist's perspective, is the extinction of a species from tribal hunting a bad thing or a natural course of events? What do you think when one animal species wipes out another? Yet when we can trace this extinction back to the industrialization of the planet by one species, us, does this change the perspective? I think so, and most witches do, yet we don't all have the same views about spirituality, environmentalism, animal rights, and politics.

There is no spiritually easy answer in regard to animal rights as defined by modern witchcraft. There is a wide spectrum of beliefs, from the conservative to the radical. Animals and the images of animals in our divinities play an important part in our spiritual paradigm, regardless of the tradition. Each land had animals in its sacred myths, if not animal gods. If you haven't given time to think about and reflect upon your stance on animal rights, or to commune with your spirit guides and gods upon the topic, now is the time to do so. Animals are all a part of the Great Mother's family, and as such, they are our four-legged brothers and sisters. Our relationship with them helps define our relationship with the planet and with the Goddess.

Ritual of the Mother

Having a direct connection to the Mother is an important part of the witch's magick. Male or female, we are so often called to embody both the creative or destructive magick of the Goddess. Many of us focus on the war goddess and crone, on the destructive aspects of the dark goddess, because she resonates so much with the archetype we have of the witch, yet the bright mother is equally important and necessary. We must learn to connect with this energy and learn how to nourish and mother our-

selves if we have any hope to aid others. In this New Age we are not only to nourish and care for others, but also to teach them how to care for themselves, to call upon the Mother Goddess in themselves.

Design a ritual to both honor and connect with the Great Mother. You can meet with her in meditative vision or shamanic journey, or if you already have a connection to her, you can try a direct invocation (*TOSW*, exercise 19). In this ritual, you will either ask yourself the three questions listed here, or the deity will ask you at least three questions regarding the lessons of this zodiac gateway. You will have to answer each of them before you are allowed to pass on to the next lesson and gate. The questions for Cancer are: Where do you feel safe and loved? Where do you go when you're scared? What do you do when you're in danger? When you have completed the ritual, make sure you continue to honor and work with this deity over the course of the year.

Homework

- Do exercises 47–49 and record your results in your journal or BOS.
- Perform your master spell for this lesson.
- Review one myth from one of the cultures outlined on page 31.
- Review one religion as outlined on pages 29–30.
- Choose one figure from the biography list on pages 32–33, and learn all you can about that person.
- Continue work on your final project.
- Work with the Cancer mother deity from your personal pantheon.
- Obtain the Cancer gem for your "breastplate" charm bag, if you haven't done so already. Work with the Cancer stone this month.
- Work with one of your thirteen tools, re-consecrating it. Seek out its spiritual equivalent in the Otherworld, and know its mysteries.

- Optional: Make a fluid condenser (*TOHW*, chapter 9) out of a high-grade, flammable alcohol for this zodiac sign. Research appropriate plants for that sign, and choose the one that is right for you (*OTOW*, chapter 13).
- Optional: Find a small stone with a flat surface that you can mark with the zodiac sign of Cancer. Cleanse it, mark it, and charge it. You can also use it like a talisman, along with or in place of the Gemini gemstone.
- When you complete the trials of this chapter, tie another knot in your witch's cord in a ritualized manner.

Tips

- How do the home and mothering fit into your year-and-a-day goals? Can you incorporate caring for the self, food, nourishment, and animals in your practice?
- Reflect on your diet and health supplements for the coming season. What changes do you need to make to care for your body and health?
- Continue working on your own BOS, adding appropriate material to it each month. Write and perform these rituals when appropriate. You could write:

  Midsummer/Litha Sabbat ritual.

  Esbat for the new Moon in Cancer, or for the full Moon in Capricorn, its opposite sign.

  Ritual of home blessing.
- Explore the gateway of memories in your inner temple (*ITOW*, chapter 14).

Lesson Twelve
The Wisdom of Leo

The peak of the summer heat is manifested through the sign of Leo, the solar lion of fixed fire. Though the Sun has already peaked in terms of daylight hours with the summer solstice, the power of the Sun is most felt at the end of summer, during the time of the first harvest.

Gender: Male
Triplicy: Fixed
Element: Fire
Image: Lion
Season: Summer
House: House of Kingdom, Ego, Children, and Lovers
Key Phrases: "I Create," "I Rule"
Theme: Creativity
Blessing: Royalty
Challenge: Ego

Archetype: Artisan
Ruling Planet: Sun
Exalted: Uranus
Detriment: Saturn
Fall: Neptune, Mercury
Esoteric Ruler: Sun
Monadic Ruler: Sun
Classical Deity: Zeus/Jupiter
Angel: Muriel
Colors: Gold, Yellow
Metal: Gold
Stones: Citrine, Topaz, Diamond, Amber
Body: Heart and Circulatory System
Labor of Hercules: Slaying of the Nemean Lion
Gift of the Goddess: To Banish People, Things, and Even Misfortune
The Thirteen Goals of the Witch: Know Your Craft
Alchemical Operation: Calcination
Cell Salt: Magnesium Phos (Magnesium Phosphate)
Tarot: Strength/Lust

When the Sun moves into Leo, the first harvest occurs. The Sun is at its peak of heat, and the building energy of the growing season starts to bear its seeds, the first grains of the harvest. This is the first of three main harvests celebrated in the Wiccan Wheel of the Year. The Sun King is embodied by the golden grain of the field, be it wheat, barley, or corn. It is the ripe grain that is just asking to be cut. The Golden King is defeated by his Shadow Brother, the Oak King is defeated by the Holly King, and then this god of life is transformed into the sacrifice. His death opens the first gates to the Underworld, to prepare for the death of the land and animals, to usher in the winter season and time of withering.

The Way of the Artisan

The Sun is the vital creative force of our solar system, the fuel that creates all things on the physical level. Our sign of Leo, the golden lion, is ruled by the Sun on all levels—mundane, esoteric, and monadic. The Sun is the center of our solar system, and the power of the Leo is the center. The Sun rules the body in terms of the heart. Without the heart, the center, feeding blood, like the Sun feeding the body of the solar system with light, the whole system would fail. Even in death, the Sun King of the Wiccan mythos is the prime figure. Though the dark god rules in the winter months, we spend so much time honoring the death of the god at Lammas, following him to the Underworld at Mabon and celebrating his death and the rebirth at Samhain and Yule. We had just spent the previous months celebrating his birth, growth, and assumption of manhood and kingship. The horned god is our guide and protector in the dark half of the year, but he is not as celebrated or welcomed by most people.

The power of Leo must also hold center stage. In personality-based astrology teachings, Leo is described as the entertainer, the one who must have the attention of the crowd to feed the ego. Yet such people, described as showmen, hold our attention through their creative pursuits, their song, dance, music, acting, and art. While this is true to a certain extent, they are not just entertainers, but at their core, they are creators. They are artisans. They are seeking to create something, even through creating themselves as a persona, and are recognized for their creation. Many fail to assume and discard roles as a true actor does, and create a false notion of self as a part of their bid for attention.

Leo has many archetypes beyond the entertainer commonly described. Leo's popular archetype is the Sun Child, the young solar king of youth and vitality. The elder solar king is just as appropriate, if not more so, for this sign. As lions are animals associated with royalty throughout Europe, the power of Leo is like the power of the king. In myth, the ruling deities associated with Leo also hold center stage. Though today we associate the Zeus/Jupiter archetype with Sagittarius, the image of Zeus as the king of the gods, and thereby the ruler of Leo, was a common one. Today we associate the Sun, and hence the solar son of Zeus, Apollo, with Leo. While Zeus embodies Leo as the king and ruler, sometimes displaying the wisdom and creativity of Leo and at other times displaying the ego and childlike behavior of Leo, Apollo embodies Leo

through his arts, talent, and beauty. He too could lead humanity to the gifts of prophecy, wisdom, and poetry, or to immaturity and hubris. While Hephaestus was not classically associated with Leo, having few regal qualities, his ability to create with fire, and the admiration his skill earned him, can give him a cursory link to the creative powers of Leo, perhaps as a shadow to Apollo.

Other Leonine figures from mythology share similar attributes with Apollo, including his close association with Hermes/Mercury archetypes. To the Celts, the solar figures were so talented; they were associated with Mercury when the Romans encountered them. The Welsh bard Taliesin, son of Ceridwen, is known as "golden brow" and is a master magician, poet, prophet, and musician. The inspiration of the divine flows off his tongue. The Irish god Lugh, who is celebrated by modern witches at the Leo festival with the name of Lughnassadh, is another many-skilled figure. His skills—including poetry, fighting, magick, chess, and shoemaking, to name just a few—gained him entry to Tara, the home of the gods, and eventually brought him to lead the gods after the marring of King Nuada, who lost a hand and was judged too imperfect to rule. His Welsh counterpart, Lleu, nephew of Gwydion, also learns many skills from his uncle, while questing for a name, arms, and a wife.

From the Norse myths we have the beautiful Balder. His mother Frigga makes all things in creation promise not to hurt her son, all but mistletoe, because she believed it posed no threat to her son. But through the machinations of the trickster god Loki, a mistletoe dart becomes Balder's undoing, signaling the end of all creation. Even in death, beautiful Balder remains the center of all things.

Ra, the Egyptian Sun god, is credited with the creation of the universe in some tales, making the universe and other gods out of himself. The Sun, and thereby Ra, was a central theme and focus for the ancient Egyptians and their magickal practices.

Hercules is linked with a solar-Mercurial figure in Celtic mythology, Ogmos or Ogma, the inventor of the Celtic tree language. Though we don't think of Hercules today as particularly inventive or eloquent with the word, the ancients saw a link between these two figures. Ogma was so skilled with the inspired word that he was said to have chains from his tongue to the ears of others. He was said to be "honey tongued," and honey, a sign of inspiration, was a heavenly, solar substance.

Out of all the labors of Hercules, the Slaying of the Nemean Lion is the one most easily linked to one of the twelve signs with no dispute. Yet its link to the lessons of Leo can be difficult to see. They center on ego and creativity. The Nemean Lion was a fierce monster terrorizing the land of Nemea. Said to be the offspring of the monster Typhon, or perhaps the result of a mating between Zeus and Selene, it fell from the Moon when it was a cub. This creature was incapable of having its hide pierced. All weapons simply bounced off its invulnerable skin. No one could best it, because no one could injure it. The lion was the destructive force of the Sun, untouchable and unstoppable. The Egyptian myth of Sekhmet's rage destroying human civilization holds a similar teaching.

Hercules' first labor was to slay the lion and bring back its skin. It seems like an impossible task. He was forced to use his own creativity, his own divine connection, to do the impossible. He realized that all his weapons, swords, spears, and clubs broke across the invulnerable skin of the lion. He eventually wrestled the lion, and in some accounts he was said to have stuck his arm down its throat, strangling it from the inside out, as the inside of the lion was not invulnerable, only its skin. Other versions simply say he strangled it. Such seeming invulnerability is like the invulnerability of an overdeveloped ego—ultimately false. Once the lion was dead, Hercules was flummoxed with skinning the animal, since even in death, its hide was invulnerable. A disguised Athena came by to offer him advice, suggesting the use of the lion's own claw to cut the skin, which worked well. Hercules skinned the lion and wore the skin as a protective armor, returning to his taskmaster, King Eurystheus, who was so frightened by the lion-cloaked Hercules that he hid from him, relaying his messages to the hero through heralds.

The lesson of the labor of the lion is that no one is invulnerable or perfect or eternal, regardless of how that power appears. Thinking you are invulnerable will lead to your defeat through the lessons of hubris, of ego unchecked. We all have a link to the creative fires, to the source, and we are all called to be creative. It's the creative inspiration to overcome rigid ego that will lead to success. Though the Sun seems eternal and ever shining, it also goes through a process of rising and falling, in daily cycles of sunrise and sunset, and in yearly cycles from solstice to solstice. The paradox of having eternal power and also a transitional relationship is the mystery of the solar cults.

The fire of Leo is fixed fire, best embodied by the Sun. Though we know the Sun scientifically has a limit and is not eternal, for all practical human-life purposes, the Sun is timeless and eternal. The sign of Leo inspired the timeless truths to come out through the creative power embodied by the Sun. It comes out through art and acting, through song, word, poetry, music, writing, and crafts—any opportunity that one gets to be like a Sun god and create. That is why so many of the solar figures are either literal creators and rulers, or artistic creators. The artist and creator work with the same force.

The divine kings that are embodied by the Leo archetype are meant to mediate these forces. In the truest way, divine kings are not important political rulers, though they can be. They are the priest-kings, mediating these solar forces of creativity to the land and to the people. When they do this job well, they are celebrated. When they do it poorly, they are sacrificed, literally or symbolically, to renew the connection to the creative life force. But they are mediators for the force. Mediating the creative force of the solar consciousness is the true job of Leo, and we align best with this force when we are in touch with our creative side. Only then, when we have this life force flowing through us, do we become sovereign and humbly serve our community in the role of sacred mediator of creation.

Exercise 50

"I Create" List

In your journal or BOS, make a list of statements starting with "I create," and complete the sentence with all the things you have created, are creating, and will create. What things in your life are you working on that you want to manifest creatively? What parts of your life do you see as your creations?

Doing this exercise can help you become aware of how in touch you are with the creative life force, and how you are expressing it, or not expressing it. Our creativity is an incredibly powerful force in our magick and spirituality. Art and magick have always been linked. Though one doesn't need to label oneself an artist to create, if you feel that you are not creative, that the divine life force and impetus to create are not flow-

ing through you, then you might have problems performing ritual, healing, or other acts of magick, for the deepest mysteries require you to be open to inspiration, to be one in the moment and feel it flow.

Ego

The powers and pitfalls of the ego go hand in hand with the lessons of Leo and the solar sphere. Misunderstanding the ego, and its role in our lives, is one of the most unfortunate experiences of the magickal path. Many looking to misunderstandings of some Eastern traditions believe that the ego is something harmful or evil and must be destroyed. The ego is looked at as the enemy, which must be vanquished for true enlightenment. Many of these practitioners will look at the shadow much the same way, but we know that the shadow is a part of us, and a strong ally in our magickal spirituality. The vanquishing comes not in destroying a part of ourselves, but in refining our relationship with it, so the ego doesn't believe that it is solely in charge of our lives. It is one of many selves.

The ego self can be compared to the middle self of the shaman, or the conscious mind of the mediator. It is made up of our personal elements, our mind, emotions, body, and desires. When we solely identify with these parts, and think we are these parts alone, then the ego has triumphed. We live in a society that generally encourages such thinking and behavior, for a higher self is not readily acknowledged.

The ego is our personal self, identifying with this body, this life, and this form. It is our most visible self, and therefore it resonates with the solar sphere, for it is revealed to the world. Yet it is in this sphere of illuminated perception, by others and by the self, that true spiritual evolution, inspiration, and creation shine through. Only by understanding these parts, and learning to transcend them, do we really touch the deeper levels of creation. The ego is not destroyed as long as you are in a body, but its role grows less important as your sense of self encompasses the whole ego, and more, identifying with your higher self or superconsciousness, which is large enough to contain the ego self.

This middle persona is necessary, for it's the part of us that is an individual in the world, and has an individual identity and purpose to fulfill. Your ego is the part of you

that separates you from the wall, chair, or other people. If you are too much dominated by the ego, you can't see how connected you are to everything. If you destroy the ego, you can't function, because you can't differentiate yourself and your will from the rest of reality.

The solar self is embodied by the Sun Child, for it holds the paradox of these two selves, the higher and ego selves. The child is born, drawn away from the holistic view of the spirit world, and must seek out an individual identity through direct experience with the world. A child grows and develops a stronger sense of self through exploring the body, desires, emotions, and mind. Yet a young child is the one who has a strong sense of being connected to everything and everyone on a deep, intuitive level, understanding profound truths that most of us spend a lifetime trying to remember or relearn. There is much wisdom in the child's viewpoint. Children also hold that essence of creativity, to be able to create without the adult-developed ego of critical self-judgment. It is free and pure, simply creating to create. It is through that spirit of creation that they are most in touch with the divine.

As we go through the growth process, we develop more of a sense of individual self, more of an ego. The process is stimulated by the perceptions and feedback of others. We learn about ourselves through how others perceive us. Their praise and critique begin to shape us. In the astrological mandala, Leo, with its Fifth House, naturally falls on the right side of the circle, a place where we must receive feedback from others in order to grow. This feedback is an essential part of our ego development, but it isn't always fun or pretty to experience. Yet to develop further along the spiritual path, to come full circle to a place of greater connection to the solar spirit of creation, one must develop this ego and transcend it.

The key concept, misunderstood by many, is that the ego must be developed to a point where it can be transcended. As the ego serves a function, it is part of our "team" of selves and must be in good shape. Many start to transcend the ego, with the thought of killing the ego, but they have never built a healthy ego to begin with. One who has a healthy ego is not someone who is egotistical. That is an unhealthy ego self. The healthy ego is marked by self-esteem, self-confidence, and knowledge of unique abilities and talents. Our creative talents are the very things that lead to our ego development. Some simply create or perform, either through an artistic medium or life goals,

to receive praise from others. Some create their lives, their personas, and their works of art for others, based on what they think others will like. The true key is to create for yourself, but also to be able to share it with others who will value it, to have your work serve a greater good in society, preparing you to take the leap to the next sign of Virgo. Art in a vacuum doesn't fulfill a higher societal purpose. The development of a healthy ego comes in the sharing, and then learning to balance and blend your own opinions about your work and yourself, and those of others. The process helps you realize that both are points of view, and like any two divergent points of view, the truth is somewhere in the middle. Your self-view is not absolutely perfect. You're biased. It's about you. We either start out being very self-critical and can't see the good in ourselves and our work, or, the opposite, we can't see the faults. Other people act as mirrors, yet these mirrors are not perfect, as they can project their own issues upon our process. To develop a healthy ego, you need to balance the two views and find something healthy that stimulates your growth and development. The ego ebbs and flows. We can move into periods of too much praise or too much criticism, but we must seek the middle ground.

One of the most important keys is also to separate yourself from your creative work. You are not your latest project, job, office, poem, song, or book. Those are things you do or create that inform you and others about you, but they are not you, just as your body, emotions, thoughts, and desires are things you have, tools that can help you, but the true you, the higher self, is the one who holds those tools.

Those who don't develop a healthy ego are usually very ineffective in the world. As witches, their magick has little power in the physical world to change reality, because they haven't claimed the power of the Middle World. Some who develop too much ego in regard to their magickal work also develop a distorted worldview of delusion, where they rule supreme. Some simply put themselves above others, seeing witches in general, or their tradition of witchcraft, as better. Many in blood or spirit lineages can fall into this trap. There is no problem with being different or being special, but you should not have to find your specialness and self-esteem in tearing down others. Everybody has a path that is special to them, though it may not be our path. Magick is about finding your own True Will and developing it to fulfill your purpose in life.

Once you do develop a sense of self-esteem, self-love, and a healthy ego to be effective in the world, you go about the work of transcending it. Much of our initial magick, satisfying the base of our pyramid of needs, seems egotistical. Only by moving through that work do we learn how to open the gates to transcend it and feel the flow of inspiration and creativity. The secret is in detachment. While a part of us, the personal middle ego self, is very attached and passionate, the higher self of superconsciousness transcends the personal wants and needs, and has a higher perspective and feeling of detachment. When we connect to this level of consciousness and let it flow through us, we are connected to awen, the breath of inspiration. We have the golden honey mead of our True Will flowing through us, and ideas, inspiration, and the ability to create come more naturally because we are in tune with the creative force. We might find ourselves drunk with ideas, overflowing with creativity, and find the physical world limiting because we can only do so much in a day.

The hallmark of this level of awareness, which can at first come in small ways, is a detachment from our work, knowing that it is not us, but comes through us. Praise is nice, but there is a detachment with it. Criticism can still be tough, but there is also a detachment there when you know you have fulfilled your True Will to the best of your ability in that moment. Not everybody will like it on a personal level, but you have fulfilled your divine creative calling.

When reaching this level of solar creative consciousness, embodied by both the Sun Child and reclaimed by the Sun King, one banishes much of the misfortune and "negativity" that many see in both the ego and the artist archetype. Classically plagued by the darkness of depression, self-criticism, and low self-esteem, the initiate, like the Sun, learns to banish much of this, and simply transcend. On a personal level, we experience day and night, light and dark, yet the part of that which is the Sun, or a star, knows that there is eternal light—we just can't see it. One of the gifts of the Goddess is banishment, to banish people, things, and misfortune, and this comes with the creative solar consciousness. The detachment in view makes the effect of many people, who previously were antagonists, minimal, if it doesn't make their influence completely evaporate from your life. Obstacles can disappear because you are in harmony with the source of light.

Creativity, or any activity that gives you an opportunity to know yourself through your own opinions and through others, can help develop a healthy ego. I find, however, that meditations on the creative source are very helpful in working with the divine energy. This meditation will call upon your deity for the sign of Leo, the one resonating with the solar powers of creativity. If you are unsure of your solar deity, try this meditation and see who appears to you.

Exercise 51

Solar Journey

1. Perform Exercise 1: Inner Temple as a Mystery School Meditation, steps 1–4 (*LTOW*, vol. 1, page 45), to go to the World Tree.
2. Climb the World Tree to the higher branches, and reach out to the Sun.
3. Go into the land of the Sun, and ask to meet with the solar god of creativity and inspiration.
4. Communicate with the solar god about your sense of ego, your creativity, and how to transcend it. The god may give you a drink of sacred liquid light, from a bottle, fountain, or well in the solar lands. This is the liquid light of inspiration, from the rivers and wells of the stars. Drinking it will grant new ideas and insight to your creative path.
5. Thank the god and make your way back. Return back the way you came. Finish exercise 1, steps 8–11, to return to normal consciousness.

Hopefully with all the materials of this training, starting with *ITOW*, you have developed a healthier sense of self and a strong ego. You have probably even taken steps toward transcending the ego and moving to a consciousness that embodies it. Shamans are said to "stalk" the self by being fully aware of the strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, and personal programs of their consciousness, akin to what we've done in *TOSW* in our shadow work. Ideally we're not only "stalking" but "taking stock" of the ego in order to move beyond it.

I think of transcending the ego much like the observation of the Sun seemingly moving around the Earth. Some will debate that the ancient civilizations had a worldview that was heliocentric in the scientific sense, but geocentric in the spiritual sense, and that knowledge was lost by the Dark Ages. The process of humanity progressing from believing that the Sun revolves around the Earth to coming eventually to the conclusion—through study and observation—that the Sun is the center of a system, is like the process of transcending your own ego-centered view of your current life to embrace a wider, solar perspective from the divine. Just like in the spiritual notion of geocentric astrology, for all practical purposes at our viewpoint, we are the center of our universe, and the Sun does revolve around us. We are individuals in a world of individuals, yet there is a higher, but less obvious truth only revealed to those who are observant, or those who have mysteries handed down to them from other sources of knowledge. As a species, we've observed the Sun as the center, and as a species, we can shift to the perspective of the divine and True Will.

Art Magick

One of the first forms of magick was art magick, with the hunter and herds daubed in simple pigments on the cave walls of tribal people, and art magick continues to captivate us in the form of modern day sigils, signs, and talismans. Artistic magick is not just consigned to the visual arts, but every act of creation, including poetry, music, sculpture, dance, and film, along with the newly emerging multimedia forms. The very act of creating art can be a form of magick, whether the artist knows it or not. Magick is a change in reality, and that change first occurs within consciousness, as the magician Dion Fortune taught. Only then does the outer world reflect our inner change.

Magick has always been associated with art. Witches and magicians call it *Ars Magica*. The Book of Shadows in Gardnerian branches is sometimes known as *Ye Bok of ye Art Magical*. Laurie Cabot defines witchcraft as a religion, science, and art, with her second-degree training focusing on the art of magick and ritual. Witchcraft has always been entwined with vocation and the work of the craftsman. We call it a Craft because there is an element of skill and vocation, as well as religion and science. Some

Figure 7: Masks of Comedy and Tragedy

witches are more artistically talented at the Craft they practice, having more natural skill just as some artists have more natural ability. Some witches hone their art more than others, and develop what skill they have to a keen edge. One of the essentials for the witch is to know the Craft, just like any artisan who must know the intricacies of his or her profession. Only those with the deepest understanding and the ability to apply the knowledge and skill make their way as "professionals" in their art.

The arts of music, dance, and theater are said to come from the mystery plays first taking place as ritual and myth making. The twin masks of comedy and tragedy find their origin in Greek theater and have been adopted as a symbol of the theater (fig. 7). They can be seen as the two sides of the god, the light god and dark god. In Greek lore they can represent the two sides of Dionysus, or a Dionysus and Apollo link, as dark and light figures associated with theater.

Getting in touch with creative impulses helps us understand the life force that pumps through us, and it fuels our magick. All ritual is an opportunity for creativity, involving the devising of the ritual, the writing and/or speaking of the words, the ritual theater and dramatic gesture, and the execution of the magick itself. Items can be crafted to be used in ritual. Though some witches shy away from ritual theater, fearing their actions would not be genuine (and I know I once felt the same way), the more I do ritual, particularly ritual for public service, the more I understand the importance of heartfelt theater, of drama, in any ritual. There is both worship and magick in such theatrical rituals. Victor Anderson is known for saying, "Every poem is a love letter to the Goddess."

When engaging the Leo energy, I encourage you to take every opportunity to create in any and all of the arts imaginable. Be like the child again, and learn to create playfully and without judgment, at least in the making of the art. Later you can go back and refine what works and what doesn't, but let spontaneity rule in the moment.

The following is a helpful exercise that anybody can do as a part of the craft working.

Exercise 52

Statue Making

This exercise involves creativity on many levels. It first appears to be an exercise in baking, for you are called upon to make your own dough "clay." Rather than mold it into bread or cookies, you use it like clay to make your own figures and statues of divinity. Using your creativity to embrace the divine is a wonderful way of attuning to the powers of Leo. The shapes you can make with this mixture are fairly simple, and I suggest something in the vein of the primal goddess figures, the first art of our Neolithic ancestors (*ITOW*, fig. 1). You can fashion goddesses, gods, and heroes from your myths and imagination using the dough clay. The following is based on a recipe featured in Michael Thomas Ford's *Path of the Green Man*, and it can be used to make one full statue roughly six inches or so high.

3 cups flour (plain white)

3 cups salt (kosher or sea salt works best)

¾ cup to 1 cup water

1. Mix the flour and salt together in a bowl. Slowly add water to the mix, starting with half a cup until you have a dough consistency that is not sticky in your hands or the bowl itself. Add only a little bit of water at a time. Too much makes the dough too sticky to work with. If you add too much water, try adding more flour to dry it out.
2. Knead the dough on a flat, hard surface. Get it into a workable consistency. If it's too dry, add a little more water to soften it up. The dough should be soft enough to make shapes. If it's not, try wrapping it up in plastic wrap for a half hour to let the gluten in the mix break down, making the dough more elastic.
3. Once the dough is elastic enough to shape, play with it. Sculpt it. Use your hands, fingers, sticks, spoons, forks, and knives to form your statue. Ritualize it. Ask the divine to move its energy through you and inspire you. Feel the gods work through you. If the dough starts to crack, use water to help smooth out the rough edges.
4. Once you have your statue, you have to dry it. Air-drying is possible, though it takes a long time and thick statues will never fully dry by air. You can bake the statue by heating the oven to about 200 degrees and placing the statue on a tray covered with tinfoil. The guide is roughly an hour for every half inch of thickness. If you are afraid of the statue cracking, put the heat on a bit lower and bake the figure even longer, perhaps overnight.
5. The statue will eventually break down, teaching us the impermanence of art. These statues can be left as offerings in nature, easily biodegrading, though you don't want to leave one someplace where the high salt content will kill off living plants. If you want to keep your statue, you will have to varnish it to prevent it from deteriorating.

The most important instruction for this exercise is to have fun creating. Later, reflect on how you felt—emotionally, physically, mentally—while in the space of creation. What can you do to bring that quality into everything you do?

Witchcraft and the Modern World: Sacrifice

When talking to modern witches, sacrifice is a sticky subject. The word truly means "to make sacred," and it refers to the spiritualizing of seemingly ordinary, mundane things. But modern witches seeking to distance themselves from the disturbing images of Hollywood horror portrayals of witches, or the propaganda of the Dark Ages, don't talk about sacrifice at all, and rarely even talk about any other offerings, which are really just another form of sacrifice. Death and magick are scary subjects, along with death in general. The Sun King is also the sacrificed Grain God, and an understanding of death in religion and society is a pivotal point of his mysteries.

Almost all ancient pagan societies have had some form of sacrifice, be it offerings of grain and harvest, animals such as bulls, rams, goats, and sheep or even humans. You even find sacrifices in the history of modern religions such as Judaism and Christianity. The classic conflict of Cain and Abel in the Old Testament was over whose sacrifice was more pleasing to the Lord. The story can be interpreted as the mythic schism between shepherding and agriculture. You even see the willingness of human sacrifice with Abraham and his son in Genesis 22. Christians will claim that Jesus was the last sacrifice, dying for our sins, yet when one looks at the history of the church, one cannot help but see other subtle forms of religious sacrifice in the witch trials and Crusades.

Modern pagans will challenge the notion that paganism has anything to do with sacrifice, but it is definitely a part of our history. Many of our ancestors did not see sacrifice as purely symbolic. People today still living with Stone Age technology and having an indigenous relationship to the land perform animal sacrifices as well as harvest offerings. Modern practitioners of the African diasporic traditions are also known to practice animal sacrifice. Pagans are apt to draw from African spirituality until this point comes up, and then they seek to distance themselves from it. The difference between our traditions and those of modern African practices is really demonstrated in our own disconnection from the source of our food. Animal sacrifices seem horrific to many of us today, but we buy our food at the supermarket. Those who are culturally much closer to their food source—slaying, gutting, and plucking their own meat—are

not as horrified. Death is a part of life. To make a sacrifice is to make the act sacred, to share this food in communion with the gods, and to give thanks. If you eat meat then the idea of animal sacrifice shouldn't be horrifying to you, even if you choose to never do it. Understanding the process of death and how it relates to our food and rituals gives us a respect for life. I know one modern witch priestess who sacrifices a goat every year, making a meal of it for herself, her family, and the gods. It reminds her of the preciousness of life, and the mysteries of death, when her culture and daily life would otherwise have shielded her from this death. Though I don't make animal sacrifice a part of my practice, I highly respect her for doing so, walking her talk.

The issue of human sacrifice is an altogether different topic, but it should at least be discussed by modern pagans. While all ancient traditions have changed their practices, and what was culturally appropriate in one era is obviously not in another, it's most likely a part of our ancient ancestors' traditions, and understanding it can be very helpful to us today, both in understanding our spirituality, and in applying spiritual lessons to the modern world. In the stories of the Divine Sacrificed Kings, there is some evidence to show that many went willingly to their death, as a part of their job, and as a part of their community service. Kings who ruled wisely in the grace of the Goddess lived to continue their rule. Those whose leadership brought famine, disease, or defeat could be sacrificed, their blood renewing the people's connection to the land. Traditions suggest that one "fool-king" might be chosen to live a life of royalty for a year before being sacrificed, sparing the true political leader from such a fate. Those mummified remains buried deep around the world, referred to as "sleepers," might be voluntary sacrifices of those who agreed to have their spirit bound to the land, acting as mediators between the land, spirits, gods, and space/time with their people.

Today the thought of voluntarily sacrificing the self for the people in a ritualized manner is an anathema to most of us, which is ironic because we live in a predominantly Christian-oriented society, and the foundation of Christianity is the literally sacrificed king. It seems okay when we have the distance of two thousand years between us, and we are not called on to perform the same actions as our religious icons. In cultures with a different aesthetic, with a shorter lifespan and a much more holistic and magickal view of the world, such self-sacrifice might not be as alien as we think today.

Our modern society is very different from the ancient societies, yet we have some similar themes in our issues. Death in society is a hard subject to tackle, and one of the most controversial topics comes in the form of capital punishment. Capital punishment is the closest thing we have to human sacrifice in the modern world—for civil, if not religious, reasons—yet the pagan community does not have a strong consensus or singular view about this political topic. Many will state that "harm none" prohibits capital punishment. *The Charge of the Goddess* tells us that the Goddess of our era does not demand any sacrifice, for she is the mother of all living things. Others will cite the Law of Three, and say that this is society's—and the Goddess's—mechanism for making sure their actions return to them. One of the strongest cases for a pro-pagan view in favor of capital punishment comes from the Druids. The Romans claimed that the Druids performed human sacrifice in their groves, colorfully painting the portrait of large wicker men burning in sacrifice. Horror writers and movie producers have cashed in on the image. Many pagans today will cite it as total propaganda of the Romans, who sought to conquer the Celts and eradicate the Druids. Yet we know that the Celts and the Druids, were not all sweetness and light. Ruling in a religious society much more akin to a tribal theocracy than our modern forms of democracy with civil liberties, a tribal society with little infrastructure would have difficulty housing criminals and dangerous deviants from society. While the sacrifice was religious in nature, for everything in Celtic society was religious in nature, it could have been a practical way of effectively removing the criminal element from a society directly overseen by the priest caste. Yet we don't have a theocratic government. We have other options for housing and rehabilitating criminals today, with opportunities undreamt of by the ancient Druids.

Suicide and assisted suicide is another area of death in our culture that pagans need to contemplate from a spiritual perspective. In the ancient world, suicide was not always seen as a bad thing, as determining your life, including choosing the end, is a part of life. Today we have great debates about assisted suicide for those suffering from debilitating diseases, but in many cultures of the ancient world, if people wanted to end their suffering and pass on from this world, there was no shame or effort to stop them. In fact, many of those who knew how to administer healing formulas also knew how to dose for a peaceful death. While suffering is a part of life, and a part of the pagan

perspective, needless suffering or endless suffering is not. Self-determination is an important part of magickal traditions, and if individuals feel it is their True Will to end their lives, then I see no need to stop them. But the same theological arguments against the death penalty can be applied to suicide. "Harm none" includes yourself too; yet to the pagan, is death harm or simply a transition to the next life? Birth is death in the spirit world, and death is birth in the spirit world. Both are traumas and joys.

Ironically, those who are often the staunchest opponents to ending life in the case of capital punishment have a different view of the other highly controversial issue concerning death in our modern society, abortion. As much of witchcraft has been entwined with modern feminism and women's rights, being a strong Goddess tradition, it is often assumed that to be pagan is to be pro-choice. And I would agree that most pagans I know are. Yet interesting theological arguments can be made from a pagan perspective on both sides, from a woman's right to control her own body to the sanctity of life. Historically, before this became a true political issue, the wise women and witches tended to fall on the side of pro-choice, both aiding in childbirth as midwives and administering herbs and remedies to cause a miscarriage when the pregnancy was unwanted. Many of these herbs are the classic power herbs of the witch, and much care should be taken when one is pregnant and working magick with herbal formulas, for they are dangerous to the mother and unborn fetus.

Today there is no party line for all witches to follow concerning the issues of life and death. While generally I am not in favor of the death penalty, I am not morally against it. I think that, in certain cases, the society and the individual might be best served by the removal of the criminal from this plane of existence. Yet I would hate to have the job of determining who lives and who dies, and I don't know what the criteria for such decisions should be, so I tend to err on the side of life. I am in favor of assisted suicide for medical reasons after deep contemplation. I am not particularly in favor of suicide for other personal reasons, as such decisions are usually made in the heat of the moment, while in crisis, and it can be averted. Most people I know who have attempted suicide later regretted it and now want to live out their lives. I fall toward a woman's right to choose what she wants to do with her body, but I also envision a society where abortions become the exception to the rule, where many women will be encouraged to have the child come to full term and give the child up for adoption. I think those

who are pro-life should discontinue their campaigns to make abortion illegal and do all they can to create a society where there is no stigma for pregnancy outside of marriage and giving a child up for adoption. We need to create a world where no child will go unloved and without parents, even by opening up to easier adoption by gay and lesbian couples, single parents, and those in nontraditional relationships.

Only through understanding the transition of the life force in our religion and our society will we understand and respect it as the creative force driving our lives. Though these seem to be political rather than magickal topics, if our magick permeates everything, we must look at such controversial political topics through magickal eyes.

Ritual of the Solar God

Our creative archetype for the sign of Leo is often embodied as the solar god, manifesting as either child or king. Having a connection to the divine illumination helps us understand our own radiance and creative light. The Leonine figures can be associated with many other archetypal forces, from king of the gods to poetic mercurial influences, and this gives us a wide range of interpretation for this sign.

Commune with the creator and artisan god of light in your pantheon, and design a ritual to honor and explore his mysteries. You can meet with him in meditative vision or shamanic journey, or if you already have a connection to the artisan, you can try a direct invocation (*TOSW*, exercise 19). In this ritual, you will either ask yourself the three questions listed here, or the deity will ask you at least three questions regarding the lessons of this zodiac gateway. You will have to answer each of them before you are allowed to pass on to the next lesson and gate. The questions for Leo are: What have you created that will outlast your physical lifetime? What have you sacrificed in its creation? What are you doing with your creativity? When you have completed the ritual, make sure you continue to honor and work with this deity over the course of the year. Use this connection to better understand your own inner radiance and light, and how to translate that into transcending the ego to manifest your divine will in the world.

Homework

- Do exercises 50–52 and record your results in your journal or BOS.
- Perform your master spell for this lesson.
- Review one myth from one of the cultures outlined on page 31.
- Review one religion as outlined on pages 29–30.
- Choose one figure from the biography list on pages 32–33, and learn all you can about that person.
- Begin the second phase of your final project. Assuming you started in Aries, you are done with one-third of your zodiac year, and you should be moving beyond the planning stages and into the application of the plan.
- Work with the Leo solar deity or artisan from your personal pantheon.
- Obtain the Leo gem for your "breastplate" charm bag, if you haven't done so already. Work with the Leo stone this month.
- Work with one of your thirteen tools, re-consecrating it. Seek out its spiritual equivalent in the Otherworld, and know its mysteries.
- Optional: Make a fluid condenser (*TOHW*, chapter 9) out of a high-grade, flammable alcohol for this zodiac sign. Research appropriate plants for that sign, and choose the one that is right for you (*OTOW*, chapter 13).
- Optional: Find a small stone with a flat surface that you can mark with the zodiac sign of Leo. Cleanse it, mark it, and charge it. You can also use it like a talisman, along with or in place of the Leo gemstone.
- Find three people in your life who have known you fairly well over a period of time. Ask these three people in your life to write down for you how they have seen you change since you became a witch, or since you started the Temple of Witchcraft programs. It can be as long or as short as they feel is necessary to accurately describe the changes. Review what they write, and see if you agree with how they perceive you. They may not necessarily be correct, but

part of Leo's lesson is to understand how you are perceived by friends and loved ones.

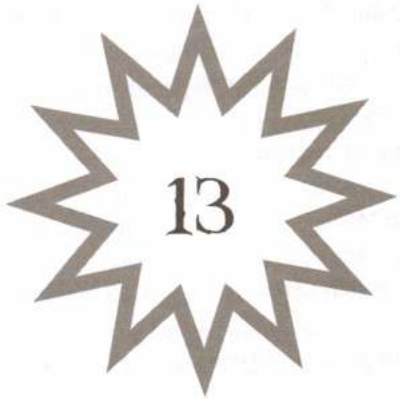
- When you complete the trials of this chapter, tie another knot in your witch's cord in a ritualized manner.

Tips

- How does your creative expression fit into your year-and-a-day goals and final project?
- When you take stock of your own ego, is it healthy, overdeveloped, or in need of some self-esteem?
- Think of the solar child figure and the hidden child of hope as the child within. Are you in relationship with this inner child? Is the child still hidden, or someone you have found?
- Continue working on your own BOS, adding appropriate material to it each month. Write and perform these rituals when appropriate. You could write one of the following:

  Lammas Sabbat ritual.

  Esbat for the new Moon in Leo, or for the full Moon in Aquarius, its opposite sign.
- Explore the gateway of creativity in your inner temple (*ITOW*, chapter 14).



Lesson Thirteen
The Wisdom of Virgo

As the Sun's power begins to visibly wane, the land also begins its changes. The fertile Earth stops growing. The grain becomes golden, the fruit ripens, and everything that has reached its peak now needs to be picked. The power of Virgo, of mutable and changing earth, is upon us, and with the coming of the Corn Maiden is the harvest, the most changeable form of earth we know.

Gender: Female
Triplicy: Mutable
Element: Earth
Image: Maiden
Season: Summer
House: House of Daily Service, Health
Key Phrase: "I Analyze"
Theme: Service
Blessing: Scrutiny

Challenge: Overly Critical
Archetype: Servant
Ruling Planets: Mercury, Ceres, Chiron
- **Exalted:** Mercury
- **Detriments:** Jupiter, Neptune
- **Fall:** Venus
- **Esoteric Ruler:** Moon
- **Monadic Ruler:** Jupiter

Classical Deity: Demeter/Ceres
Angel: Verchiel
Colors: Brown, Dark Blue, Gray, Green
Metal: Quicksilver
Stones: Agate, Sapphire
Body: Lower Digestive System, Intestines
Labor of Hercules: Victory over the Amazon Queen
Gift of the Goddess: To Cure Disease and Wounds of Body, Mind, Heart, and Soul
The Thirteen Goals of the Witch: Attune with the Cycles of the Earth
Alchemical Operation: Congelation
Cell Salt: Kali Sulph (Potassium Sulphate)
Tarot: Hermit

The movement of the Sun into Virgo brings not only the harvest, but also the gathering of the community for the harvest. Though today people tend to be disconnected from the harvest, in ages past the community would come together for it, because their survival in the winter months depended on it. The food of the harvest becomes the center of many fall festivals and celebrations, as it is a source of nutrition and medicine, but also a source of community. All members who partake in the harvest fests serve not only themselves, but also the greater good of everyone in the community.

The Way of the Servant

Virgo's archetypal image is always so difficult for modern astrology students. Virgo is the sign of the virgin. For a system that is predominantly based on animals, that throws a kink into the works, even more so than the twins. Does the virgin mean abstaining from sexual intercourse, or the classic neopagan definition of a woman unmarried and in charge of her sexuality? Does the virgin of Virgo have to be female? Traditionally the Corn Maiden is the other depiction of Virgo's symbol. The young maiden becomes the icon for Virgo, aligning with the virgin, yet what is the deeper symbolism? It is not for virgin soil, for Virgo is about the harvest. Perhaps it is virgin in terms of being before the harvest, before the farmers go in and harvest what they want.

While ceremonial magick usually relates Virgo to Isis, mythically one of the strongest Virgo archetypes is Demeter's daughter, the maiden Kore, who eventually becomes Queen Persephone. Though not a part of the Celtic/Teutonic mythos of the Wheel of the Year, the story of Persephone from Greek mythology has become a staple to help modern pagans to mythically understand the Wheel of the Year and change of seasons. While picking flowers, Kore is brought to the Underworld. Different versions of the myth bring her to the Underworld in different ways. The earlier versions have her being seduced by the dark lord of the Underworld, Hades, falling in love with him. The later versions of the tale have Hades springing up from the land in his chariot, kidnapping and raping her. In all versions, Kore ends up in the land of the dead. Demeter, in her grief, refuses to make the world produce its ever-abundant supply of food, so we have our first autumn leading to winter. Humanity, unused to this change of seasons, knowing only the eternal summer, suffers. Zeus is called in to save humanity and fix this problem, knowing full well his brother Hades has the maiden. Demeter travels far and wide, and through conversations with Hecate, who sympathizes with her plight, and Helios, the solar Titan, who sees all from the heavens above, she discovers where Kore is and demands her return or she will not make the vegetation grow. Hades has fed Kore pomegranate seeds, the food of the dead, and those who eat the food of the dead cannot leave the land of the dead. That is the law. So Zeus must creatively work with two powerful gods. A compromise is reached, where Kore will return to be with her mother for part of the year, and then remain with Hades, now her husband, for

the other part of the year, as many months as pomegranate seeds she has eaten. Most modern versions tell us six, for six months, the time between the equinoxes. While she is above, Demeter will bring the growth of the plants, giving us spring and summer. When she is below, the world will wither, giving us fall and winter.

Kore is renamed Queen Persephone, often translated as "she who shuns the light" or "she who must be feared." She becomes one of the most powerful of the gods. Just by her movements, she brings life or death and utterly transforms the world. Yet she is also bound by duty, for everybody knows where she will be and who she will be with. She cannot decide on a whim that she will do something different, which is ironic considering that she is now the goddess of change. The Reclaiming witchcraft tradition has a popular chant about Kore, which has spread throughout the neopagan community.

Persephone's story leads us to a greater understanding of the powers of Virgo. Though she is the ruling queen, she is really a servant in the highest sense, to the people, to the gods, and to life. Without her, the cycles would end. Although she is a queen, she is a worker, working to change, to turn the wheel and keep everything in balance. The archetype of Virgo is described as the servant or worker, one who is dedicated to the community, the higher good, who will sacrifice aspects of herself to serve. It is the civil servant, from the worker in the field, collecting the harvest, to one who cares for the health and balance of the community, individually and overall. Coming from the sign of Leo, we ideally learn our sense of sovereignty, and our divine creativity, and then we understand that all kings and queens are really servants of the people and of the land or country and must use their gifts and resources for all.

In the tale of Hercules, defeating the Amazon Queen and claiming her girdle is the labor most in harmony with the imagery of Virgo. The Amazons were a legendary race of warrior women, in harmony with the old-world image of the virgin as the fierce and independent woman, and knowing the love of a man only to continue the tribe, not for domestic life. The ruler of the Amazons, Queen Hippolyta, owned a magick girdle, given to her by her father, the war god Ares. Hercules was charged with obtaining the girdle. There are many versions of the story. In one of the most popular versions, Hercules explains his situation to Hippolyta. She falls in love with him and freely gives him the girdle. Hera, upset that this has gone so smoothly, spreads a rumor

amongst the Amazons that Hercules is kidnapping the queen, and they attack him and eventually turn their battle toward the Greeks as a whole. The fate of Hippolyta is not always clear in the myths, as one version has her raped by Hercules, echoing the story of Persephone, and then "given" to his companion Theseus as a wife. In other versions, it is her sister, Antiope, who becomes Theseus's bride.

The current themes of the story, as it pertains to Virgo, are the blessings and problems of communication. As Virgo is ruled by the planet Mercury, the planet of communication, Hercules starts well by simply communicating his needs to the queen, who responds in a manner to aid him. Miscommunication happens, with the deception by Hera, and no one discerns where this false information is coming from, or what the true facts are. The power of Virgo is to discern the lie from the truth, to separate the chaff from the wheat, and to use what is good. The downfall for Virgo energy is that one can see problems everywhere, being critical of everything, and not see the good or truth that can be culled from the situation. Regardless of the version of the tale, Hercules' response to the Amazon attack is not even, measured, or rational, but meets violence with violence. In many ways he loses the virtues of Virgo while he still retains the girdle. While Hippolyta was willing to offer aid, to serve him in the quest, Hercules fails to serve her in her time of need.

Virgo is a mutable sign, a sign of change. The lessons of this zodiac sign are being open to change, and clearly and effectively communicating during times of transition. The harvest is such a perfect example of Virgo energy. The seeds must grow into a plant. The plant must ripen. The grain is cut and harvested. The grain is separated into what is edible and what is not. The grain is baked into bread, changed again. The bread is eaten and the body part strongly associated with Virgo, the intestines, must take the digested matter and separate waste product from nutrition in our bodies. The remaining fiber helps move things along. Virgo is all about the discernment of the situation.

In humans, Virgo is expressed in the ability to analyze, to look at the whole, but also to look at all the separate and discrete pieces, all the details. Organization is a blessing of Virgo. Some get obsessed with the details and move into perfectionism, needing every piece to be right, and they lose sight of the greater purpose. Critical thinking gives way to overly intense and unnecessary criticism. Some move into martyrdom, feeling they can never have a perfect world or perfect life, and feel they must

sacrifice their need for perfection to make everybody else happy, but truly they must sacrifice their need for perfection to function in the imperfect, changing world.

The archetypes of Virgo manifest as the worker. One who can work out the details, paying attention to intricacies of one part of a larger project, becomes an excellent worker when overseen by someone who can see the bigger picture. The model of the worker, from the harvest farmer to the office worker, finds a higher expression in what we now call the civil servant. Civil servants work for the greater good of the community and apply their ability, their responsibility for a part, to the larger whole of the society. The archetype is further expanded on in the area of healing, of helping others discern what is healthy and good for them, and what is toxic for them. The image of the nurse, the therapist, and the holistic healer works well with Virgo, as people who work one-on-one with individuals to create a greater, more healthy society, one step at a time. The further expression is the servant to the community, the minister, the one who looks to fill needs in the community on all levels—physical, emotional, and spiritual.

Exercise 53

"I Serve" List

In your journal or BOS, make a list of statements starting with "I serve," and complete the sentence with all the things you feel you serve. Who or what do your actions serve? What agenda, community, or principle do you advance through your actions, both "positive" and "negative"? Look at all of your thoughts, words, and actions as potentially serving something or someone.

We are all considered to be the servants of something. Ideally we serve our higher will, or the divine, but taking note of what divinities we serve as witches is helpful in understanding our motives and challenges.

Another key statement for Virgo is "I analyze." You can repeat this exercise with this statement instead, taking a closer look at what you are already focusing on. What do you scrutinize? Where in your life do you pay attention to detail? By omission, what don't you scrutinize? Do you analyze yourself and know your faults and weaknesses

clearly? Do you see the strengths and weaknesses in others? Are you open to change in both yourself and the people around you? One of my Virgo-inspired weaknesses is that I tend to see people around me in the best possible light until their faults are glaringly obvious, and then I continually look for faults afterward, missing new virtues as they are developed. Being open to change is a key lesson for Virgo.

Exercise 54

Journey to the Underworld Queen

1. Perform Exercise 1: Inner Temple as a Mystery School Meditation, steps 1–3 (*LTOW*, vol. 1, page 45), to get into a meditative state. This exercise is done best if you are outside on the ground, but simply lying down on the floor is effective too.
2. Imagine opening the doorway to the Underworld, through the ground. Everywhere you are is an entrance to the realm beneath the Underworld queen. This is just like the World Tree axis, yet we are simply focusing on the land and, through the land, the realm of the dead.
3. Travel into the depths, calling on your animal guide, and ask to visit the Queen of the Underworld.
4. Commune with the great queen about the duties and blessings of service, of ushering in the time of the living and the time of dying. Ask to hear her wisdom on duty and service, and culling the wheat from the chaff of life.
5. When you are done, she may give you a gift. Be wary of the food of the dead, and only accept her seeds if it is in your best interest, for they come with both power and responsibility. She may give you her girdle/breastplate or another gift instead.
6. Thank the goddess and make your way back to the Middle World, returning the way you came. Finish exercise 1, steps 8–11, to return to normal consciousness.

Ministry

Witchcraft is a tradition of priestesses and priests. We are all clergy. Part of our job is service to the community, but service comes in many forms. Though many of us identify with the solitary practitioner, living at the edge of society, our modern Craft teaches us that we must be part of our communities, serving as a bridge between the worlds. Whenever I forget this, or seek to withdraw, I'm reminded of Robert Cochrane's words on the subject, from one of his famous letters:

> *It is not enough to see The Lady, it is better to serve Her and her will by being involved in humanity and the process of Fate. . . . In Fate, and the overcoming of Fate, is the true Grail, for from this inspiration comes, and death is defeated.*

One of our mysteries is service to the community, for that is part of the witch's function. Truth be told, this whole book is an effort to inspire service, from living a healthy life and modeling it for others, to being actively engaged in the community as a witch. Witchcraft itself is like a tree, with the eldest teachings in the roots. The newest teachings are the youngest leaves, the flowers, and the new acorns. The four mysteries embodied in the first four Temple of Witchcraft books are like the four main branches. The trunk that unites them all is the mystery of service. Through that service we experience the mystery of fate, and overcome it, uniting with the Triple Goddess of Fate. We overcome death by learning to weave our own fate in harmony with our goddess.

Anybody can practice magick, but a witch practices magick in service to the gods, and through the gods, to the communities of practitioners and those beyond the ring of occultists—the greater community. Our rituals then serve the world. I look at the living, unbroken tradition of the African diasporic faiths, such as Voodou. In Voodou, the aspect of service has never been forgotten the way it has in some practices of witchcraft. A Voodou priest or priestess, a *hougun* or *mambo*, is differentiated from the sorcerer, known as a *bokor*. Though much of their practices are the same when it comes down to spellcraft and charms, and both can be very powerful, they are on different magickal wavelengths and have different responsibilities. The hougun/mambo serves the spirits of Voodou, the *lwa*, and thereby serves the community. The bokor does not have the call to service, simply the job of selling spells and charms to fulfill

wants and needs. Unfortunately, many witches practice solely like a bokor, rather than embrace their role of service to the gods and their community.

I'm a big believer in "witchdom," the invisible nation of witches who are my sisters and brothers, my spiritual kith and kin, spread throughout the world, in all lands, and in all times. Though there are petty disagreements and difficulties, just as in any extended family, I see what brings us together as far more important than what separates us. We have a witch bond, something inherent that brings us together, and I feel we have a duty, first and foremost, to take care of witchdom, taking care of each other. Then our duty is to serve the greater community and the world. All of this stems from our service to the Goddess and God.

Many would say that the witch is the clergy to the greater pagan community, with the words "every witch is a pagan, but not every pagan is a witch." While I know quite a few pagan mages who would disagree, and don't see witches as their clergy, I also know many pagans who subscribe to the philosophies and ideas of paganism but don't have the ritual skill and spellcraft to do a lot of magick and introspective work on their own. They need facilitation. Even many experienced witches enjoy the opportunity to be guided, rather than hold the space for others. Covens are wonderful because people have the opportunity to be guided by others as they take leadership roles, but for the solitary witch and the everyday pagan, it's important to have community venues where those of like mind can gather with a more seasoned celebrant.

Ministry and service come in many forms. We've already talked about quite a few of them—healing, teaching, psychic readings, counseling, and stewardship. There are many more ways to serve. First, like our Virgo statements, you must determine who or what you serve. What principles, forces, communities, groups, or gods do you serve? What do they require? What would aid them?

Modern witches can find ways to serve through ritual, first and foremost. Social, political, and environmental activism is another popular service, particularly building bridges with like-minded yet different communities that should be educated about paganism and witchcraft. We have many allies in the environmental rights groups, women's rights groups, and the GLBT communities. By supporting each other, we can transform the world into a more inclusive, holistic paradigm. While our allies are generally found in the more liberal political groups, it's important to note that many pagans are not what

is considered politically liberal, and those who find themselves identifying as conservative should also reach out to conservative factions in the greater community to educate them on the truths about paganism and witchcraft. Such conservatives should also gently remind the greater pagan community of their presence and need to be addressed and included in paganism.

Fundraising for social services, for the pagan community or the larger community, is needed. My coven has had a partnership with a local Christian soup kitchen and food pantry where we gather canned goods at Samhain and Beltane and make a donation in the pagan community's name. While our small group doesn't have the resources to establish a pagan soup kitchen, such services are hopefully developing in the pagan community. As our elders grow older, we have precious few resources for them, and they would receive a different measure of care if they were members of established Christian churches. Though more and more hospitals have the check box for Wicca under *religion* on their entry forms, many are at a loss as to what to do when a patient requests a Wiccan minister. Though Wicca is the more widely recognized form of paganism, many practitioners don't identify with the label of Wicca and refuse to choose this designation to describe themselves, particularly if they identify as a non-Wiccan traditional witch, general pagan, shaman, heathen, Asatru, or Druid. Yet *Wiccan* is closer than any of the other options on a registration form, and most other religions don't get a wide sub-selection of faith options on medical and governmental forms either. Registering with local hospitals and hospices if you choose to work with the sick and the dying is an important act of service. Some hospitals will be receptive while others won't, but the attempt is important at this stage. I have several clients whose hospital or family has called me as their minister to visit them in the ER or intensive care.

Pagan prison ministry is another area that is sorely lacking. We can look at some mainstream church prison ministries to find effective models to adapt to our own needs. Just as many inmates find Jesus during their stay in prison, others find the Goddess, or return to her, and need guidance during this difficult phase of their lives. As Christian groups offer outreach to attend to these people's needs, we must reflect on what the pagan movement can, or should, do for those in prison.

We need to address these issue as the neopagan movement grows. Those who do take on the vocation of public servant find themselves in the role of full-time ministers without a legal church, financial resources, or congregation to back them up. Even with a small coven, the demands on ministers far outweigh what any individual or small group can reasonably meet. In my own ministerial experience, I had a client and student who was in the process of getting declared legally disabled and put on disability and in public housing. In the meantime, he lost his source of income and home, and was not yet approved by the government—their solution was to find him a public homeless shelter where he could stay while he waited for approval, which could take six months to a year. In a larger church community, housing resources would have been available. As a minister, I made the difficult and probably foolish decision, in terms of client/minister boundaries, to offer my home to him until he was approved. It was one of the roughest six months of my life, and it clearly demonstrated to me the need for further resources for pagan ministers.

While the purpose of this lesson is to plant seeds for the future leaders of the pagan community, to bear fruit as we grow, we can fully address the service of public ritual. Different types of rituals have different purposes. For a minister, the size of the ritual group can determine the type of purpose best suited to it. Many will complain that the rituals of larger groups don't have the same energy and focus as those of the smaller coven or even solitary ritual. That's true. It's hard to get 50 to 150 people focused on the same thing when they all come from varying traditions and levels of competency. Yet that's not the purpose of these large rituals. For many experiencing the larger ritual, the energy there is much more powerful than they can experience as solitary witches. Once you have a greater understanding, as a minister, of the purpose of each kind of ritual, the better you will be able to facilitate these rituals for others.

Solitary or Very Small Ritual

This is a time for personal worship and private devotion to the gods, as well as a time for personal goal magick with specific intentions.

Coven or Small Ritual

While coven rituals are also times of worship, and they can be used for personal goal magick with the support of the coven, their true magick comes in the learning of interpersonal dynamics in a magickal group. When you gather in a small group only once, or in a "circle" or more traditional coven structure over a long period of time, you learn a lot about yourself through dealing with other people. You must learn to find your role, and then in long-term groups, to explore and expand beyond your current role so you may grow. While in a group structure, the rituals of passage, initiations, and the mysteries can be deeply explored. Although these things can be experienced in solitary practice, in a group framework they carry a greater depth.

Large Open Rituals

The larger rituals are for building community and a greater web of connection with others. While transpersonal goals might be experienced, as well as life passages and the mysteries, the larger the group, the greater the sense of the community, yet intimacy will decrease. In a coven, you will know everybody's name and several important things about each person. As the circle gets larger, you might not know everybody's name, let alone anything personal. You might not even personally like everybody in the circle, yet you have to put those feelings aside in Perfect Love and Perfect Trust, for you are all members of the community. By necessity, larger rituals allow less spellcraft and personal involvement of every participant. Many of the participants simply act as spectators. Effective group rituals include singing, dancing, or mystery plays, all of which engage the whole group at the level at which each participant wants to be involved.

These are all very human-centric reasons for rituals. As we say our service is truly to the gods, any of these rituals can be done for the express purpose of fulfilling the gods' will, as we understand it. Magick may be for offering, building bridges to the Otherworld, turning the wheel, opening the gates, political change, or healing. It can just be helpful to understand the dynamics of larger or smaller groups participating in the magick.

As you develop as a minister in your community, you might be called on to facilitate ritual, or even a group. It's good to understand the dynamics of circles and their

sizes before you begin. A large part of my community service is facilitation of public rituals, particularly the Wheel of the Year rituals, so that others can harmonize with the seasons, commune with the spirits, and aid in the turning of the wheel. Many covens open up their private circles at these times for friends, families, and other like-minded people to celebrate together. This is a service to both the community and the spirit world, to aid in the mutual turning of the wheel. The Incan shamans have a word for it, *Ayni*, to denote reciprocity with the spirit world. We live in a constant state of exchange with the Otherworld, and Ayni is a moral call to duty, for us to live in balance with the world and with the spirits. Following this example and giving others an opportunity to fully participate in this exchange is the truest ministry a witch can have. One of our thirteen principles of the witch is to "attune with the cycles of the Earth." It's not only our job to attune, but to help those who seek to attune as well, so we all live in harmony.

Public community rituals come in three "octaves" and, like music, you can have all three "notes" playing at the same time in the same space, but it's important to understand the dynamics of all three. Many only experience one level because that is where their own personal energy is anchored. Any one individual, or even a celebrant or coven of celebrants, can experience all three, but it's important for ministers to understand all three, and be aware of what part they're called on to play.

Revelers

The lowest, and I don't necessarily mean the worst, form of public celebration is enjoyed by what are affectionately known as the party pagans. Public ritual and celebration is just that: a celebration. It is a time to sing, dance, feast, have sex, and revel in the wonders of the body, the world, and sensation. Those involved in such revels can experience a level of mystery, the divine immanent mystery found in the body. *Revel* and *revelation* are not far off from each other. Such partygoers also help build a level of energy that the other celebrants can use. If running a ritual or celebration, one must be clear about the boundaries set, in terms of what is appropriate behavior, if there are children on the premises and policies toward alcohol. More importantly, one must set a clear boundary on the use of such mind-altering substances in the circle. I prefer to have no one drunk in the circles I lead, because the energy is just too erratic for me to monitor and manage. I enjoy the revelers singing and dancing in large circles, but I save the drinking and feasting for afterward.

Personal Mysteries

The middle note of our three expressions of energy in a public circle consists of those who are seeking personal healing, guidance, or empowerment. Rituals can be used to give people experience with divination, spellcraft, and shamanic journey. Here the community supports the goals and healings of the individuals. The group energy propels them deeper and sets a tone that would be sorely lacking on their own.

Service

Those who are running a public ritual are usually the most aware of this level of energy. They are directing the group energy, mediating it to the Otherworld to literally turn the Wheel of the Year. The energy of the circle is an offering to the spirit world, so the spirit world, in turn, will push our wheel. The celebrants, or ministers of the celebration, hold the space for the previous two expressions of the ritual, yet they also use the energy in service to the divine. The ritual may have another purpose as well, such as a community or world healing that is directed by the celebrants. The celebrants mediate the human energy to the spirit world, and the spirit energy to the divine world.

Being in the public eye as a public servant can be a harrowing experience. Many who seek to serve don't often find the best ways to serve, as what they want to do and what the community needs can be two very different things. Here are some thoughts to keep in mind when seeking to be of service to the community.

Seriousness

Take the work seriously, but don't take yourself seriously. Humor in a minister goes a long way to connect with others. Though at times it will be necessary to speak of your credentials, background, training, and accomplishments to gain the confidence of those you serve, the titles are not the important thing. Many who are concerned with the titles are not concerned with the work, and those concerned with the work are not as concerned about the titles.

Embrace All

Though witches primarily feel a duty to serve witchdom, and pagans in general, we can't turn up our noses at anybody. In this work, we cannot afford to be snobs. Some are religious snobs, and although many of us came to witchcraft because someone opened the way, we were most likely born into a different religion. Others are energy snobs who do not want to work with those who might prove difficult, claiming that their energy is "off" or "dark" or anything else. While you must pay attention to your intuition, you must not use it as an excuse to avoid dealing with difficult situations or people you don't like. Ministers don't have the luxury of working only with people they like. You can't turn away people you don't like from a public circle or service. Often the dislike is more reflective of something you are personally working on, rather than anything concerning that person. Some will use the excuse of Perfect Love and Perfect Trust to explain why they can't be in circle with someone, and might say "I don't feel Perfect Love for that person," or "They don't feel that way toward me. How can they dare enter the circle?" One of my students' favorite teachings of mine about Perfect Love is comparing it to the Eastern term *namaste*. *Namaste* usually translates to "the divine within me honors the divine within you." It's divine and impersonal. I think Perfect Love is much the same. My divinity, my soul, has Perfect Love for you, and it seeks to be in touch with that part of my self in the circle, yet the personal part of me outside of the circle thinks you're an ass, and stepping into a circle doesn't change that. But I can put that aside and stand next to you as my sister or brother in the Craft. I don't have to like you to love you.

Power Traps

Many who serve lose sight of the service and soon believe that the community serves them. They get caught up in their own sense of power, and they look for each experience or exchange to validate their power. It becomes the goal of the priest/ess, rather than a tool to more effectively serve the community. It's easy to be seduced by power when you have many people telling you how powerful and magickal you are, but power is one of many tools. It is important, but not the final goal. Moving through the gate of the solar plexus, and the lessons of Leo, can help prevent this trap.

Educational Disparities

Whenever you are dealing with the public, one-on-one or in groups, it's important to remember that everybody comes from a different background and education level. I have a friend who jokingly refers to this tip as "people are stupid." It's not that people are stupid. Most people are pretty smart, but not everybody has the same education level. Witchcraft uses a lot of specialized jargon, and also explores concepts similar to those of modern psychology, with its specialized terms. Don't assume anybody you are communicating with will know all the terms you use, even if the terms are second nature to you. My friend spoke to some pagans about unguents, and all the different unguents that could be made with the various herbs. While it was a great talk, most people didn't understand it, because they didn't know that an unguent was an ointment, and the term was never explained in the talk. Nobody asked because nobody wanted to seem dumb, assuming everybody else knew what it meant. Don't make assumptions about whomever you are serving.

Ordination

It can be useful for a pagan minister to be legally ordained. While ultimately ordination simply provides you with a piece of paper and the true credentials are internal, that legal document can help you serve the community by making handfastings legally binding if a couple takes a marriage license, and it gives you greater access for hospital and prison visits, as well as greater leeway to do last rites/crossing rituals for those at the end of earthly life. There are many nondenominational spiritual ministry groups that are welcoming to pagans and witches, as well as a growing number of ordaining pagan groups. Investigate and find the group that is appropriate for your needs and level of commitment to that group.

Exercise 55

Community Service

Perform an act of community service. You must define what community service means for you at this time. It doesn't necessarily have to be a "witchy" act of service. It can be volunteering in a mainstream venue of social service, such as serving in a soup

kitchen or food pantry. Both would be very appropriate Virgo forms of service. The main concept of this exercise is to selflessly serve the community in some fashion and bring that sense of selfless service, unattached to personal glory or the outcome of the service, to all your acts of service as a minister. Those who feed and clothe the poor with compassion can teach quite a lot to those who lead rituals.

Healing Vocation

In modern astrology, the image of the healer is even more strongly associated with Virgo. Virgo is ruled by Mercury, along with Gemini. In older systems of astrology, each true planet, Mercury through Saturn, ruled two signs. With the addition of "new" planets, only Venus and Mercury rule two signs, and many astrologers experiment by assigning asteroids, planetoids, and mythical planets to the doubled signs. Most popular is to assign the asteroid Ceres to Virgo, as the Corn Mother to the Corn Maiden, or to assign the "planetoid" Chiron, the wounded healer and centaur, to Virgo. Chiron is the point in the astrology chart where we have been wounded in this life, and where we are called to share our healing with others.

Witches, shamans, and cunning men are often archetypally lame, or wounded. One of the gifts of the Goddess in our modern adaptation of the thirteen powers list is "to cure disease and wounds of body, mind, heart, and soul." It seems like one cannot truly facilitate healing for another without understanding the nature of healing by personally going through it. There is something about being on a healing path that encourages one to then share the gifts, tricks, and secrets of the path with others, to act as a guide and mentor for those undergoing their own healing. In the Gardnerian Book of Shadows, there is an entry encouraging the witch to find personal help and to help others in "To Help the Sick." Much of this Gardnerian wisdom is common sense and the power of suggestion, Granny Weatherwax's "headology" with no real specific herbal or energetic knowledge, but much of our own healing work is just that, common sense and the attitude we adopt in our hearts and minds. One bit of magick from this section is the suggestion to use prayer, particularly the Amalthean Horn Prayer in healing, as it "causes stimulation to the body as well as to the mind." The Amalthean Horn Prayer bears a striking resemblance to an Aleister Crowley poem entitled "La

Fortuna," and it is one of the points in the Gardnerian Book of Shadows that some critics will say proves that Crowley ghost-wrote Gardner's original Book of Shadows.

Amalthean Horn Prayer

Hail, Aradia, from the Amalthean horn
Pour forth thy store of Love. I lowly bend
Before Thee! I invoke thee at the end
When other Gods are fallen and put to scorn.
Thy foot is to my lips! My sighs inborn
Rise, touch, curl about thy heart. Then spend,
Pitiful Love, loveliest Pity, descend
And bring me luck who am lonely and forlorn.

Though we've covered the powers of healing in *LTOW*, vol. 1, Lesson Four, the call to do healing work is part of the vocation of the minister, though not all ministers are called to be healing facilitators. When one hears the call to be a healer, it is often precipitated by his or her own healing crisis. Like the shamanic practitioners, one is literally called by the spirits, often through trauma, illness, or accident, to access the healing power of the spirit world.

Exercise 56

The Healing Path

Make a timeline of your own healing path. Starting from your earliest memories, make a chronological list of the healing traumas and experiences you have had, from traumatic illnesses and injuries, to the more subtle experiences of life that are healing on the emotional, mental, and spiritual levels. A healing trauma can be defined as any experience that brought pain, separation, shock, suffering, or intrusion within you, and a healing as anything that alleviated and resolved these conditions. Do you notice a pattern? Which of your traumas are still in need of healing? Are some "healed," yet they never really go away completely, as with the wounded limping healer, and serve as a constant reminder? Is that constant reminder something helpful for you, despite

it being a wound, or something harmful to you? How can you transform it into a strength to be shared? Do you notice that people who suffer similar traumas are attracted to you?

Examining your own healing path can help you determine how you can be of aid to others, answering a call to the healing vocation or making it a small part of your spiritual ministry.

Witchcraft and the Modern World: Professional Clergy

A controversial point within the pagan community, and that concerns the pagan community only, is the topic of professional clergy. As our community grows, and we are of service to the pagan community and the greater world, many people find their lives consumed with their duties and responsibilities as clergy—as ministers, teachers, healers, and counselors. While such duties take up the time of a full-time job, they do not compensate financially the way a full-time job does, and many are forced to make tough choices about their life, livelihood, and ministry.

On one end of the spectrum, we have a community that is primarily clergy. We are all considered priestesses and priests of our own faith. Even those involved in general paganism can perform all the rites and duties of a priest/ess. We have a theology of direct experience, where no intermediary is needed. We are a mystical tradition, where everyone is encouraged to make direct contact with the divine, with the gods, ancestors, and spirits, and have their own experience. We have no supreme hierarchy. There is no witch "pope" conferring authority or interpreting scripture. We must all do this for ourselves. So there is no need for full-time professional clergy if all the members of the community are doing their own personal work. High priest/esses are simply guides, and the work of being guides to those on a self-directed path does not take the time of a full-time career. Everybody must be in the world, and work in the world, including high priest/esses, or else they will lose touch with it. Those witches who are

looking to be paid clergy are looking for a free ride from the community, and should work like the rest of us.

On the other end of the spectrum, we have some people who are truly talented in the art of magick, who feel the devotional call to pursue their art, not just personally, but for the community, full-time. Their service to people comes in many forms, and their service to the gods in many more. Their door is open to those who need them, witch, pagan, or cowan. They find themselves in the position of teaching groups of people, and the amount of sincere students in this age outstrips the number of covens available with openings to train them. They are also in a position where mainstream members of the community and media are seeking them out to know more about witchcraft, and they find themselves aiding pagans in situations where civil rights are potentially being violated, as well as doing outreach in religious interfaith groups, educating other ministers about the path of the witch. All this, and they have a day job, too. They work all day at their job and then work all night helping others and maintaining their own spiritual practice. Soon, they burn out and are not in a position to help or educate others. If we had positions of paid clergy, those who are truly called could continue to help the community and be supported in this important endeavor.

Both sides have valid points, depending on how you see the community, and how you see the role of the priest/ess. As witchcraft and paganism develop and play a greater role in the world, we realize we don't have the same support structure inherent in mainstream religions. One could argue that to be a viable voice at the table of world faiths, we need to have some of these structures to serve our community and take part in adding to the wisdom and direction of the world. We are already seeking out religious rights recognition, tax-exempt nonprofit status, and anti-defamation leagues. One could alternately argue that we are a completely different religion from mainstream faiths, a mystery tradition, a secret cult, and those mainstream institutions have no place in our religion, including professional and paid clergy.

One intermediate solution is for those called to the clergy to find complementary vocations that will support them financially. Many pagan ministers find their way into traditional counseling and therapy jobs, teaching jobs, health practitioner jobs, or alternative health jobs. Such jobs can pay the bills, cross over into the secular world, yet fulfill the spirit of what the minister seeks to do, serve people through healing and

counsel. Unfortunately, due to the highly sensitive nature of many of these positions, witchcraft ministers often cannot be public about their faith in the way most Christians can.

I don't think complementary vocations are always the best solution. Personally, I find the best compromise is the "paid for the work you do" solution. We will probably never have "mega-churches" with the resources to pay a staff of clergy, and I think this is good. Even in the largest communities, by our nature, we best celebrate in small groups, in our homes, in our yards, and out in nature. Our deepest mysteries do not lend themselves to the larger experience. Yet we do have a need for those priest/esses to take full-time leadership in our community. I have made my living as a minister in the pagan community through a combination of several "jobs" that together constitute a full-time income, and I know several high priest/esses who are in similar positions. I make my living through tarot sessions; healing consultations involving herbalism, flower essences, Reiki, crystals, shamanism, and guided imagery; private lessons; group workshops; presentations at festivals; making herbal products; conducting rites of passage and facilitating large public Wheel of the Year rituals; as well as writing books and articles. I get paid per job, often based on a percentage of the income generated—so part of my job is also self-publicity, marketing, and sales—but I still get to make a full-time living at the job I feel called to do. I am also involved in many nonpaying events, a more traditional coven, and many areas of community service, and the flexible schedule of my work allows me to participate in all these areas for my ministry. I don't feel like I am taking advantage of anyone or creating any trends that will be harmful to the pagan community.

In many ways, I'm practicing much like a spiritual practitioner of indigenous communities. If one looks to Central and South America, Haiti, and parts of the American South, one finds magickal practitioners being paid by the job they perform, be it a reading, healing, or spell. In the Western world, the role has been transformed into the therapist or the alternative health practitioner, and many witches feel divorced from those jobs, yet the basic result and societal function is much the same. I don't expect a community or institution to pay me regardless of what I do or don't do. I have a very specific contract in each case, which makes it very clear what services I am offering and how much they are. There are other practitioners and other options, and my ministry

allows me to be flexible in situations where there is need but no financial resources. Most importantly, my contract with my Goddess is very specific. I was told long ago to leave the world of traditional business, and as a Sun-sign Taurus who seeks financial security, that was very difficult for me. I was told that if I followed her path and did as I was asked, I would not have to worry about financial problems. All that I needed and more would be provided for me. And it has been. It doesn't mean that I'm foolish financially. Like any self-employed individual, I have savings and backup funds for times when income is low, but I'm able to have all the things I need without worry, and I find great fulfillment on all levels through serving my ministry and my Goddess.

All of the successful, full-time pagan ministers I know have had to reach their own contracts with the divine, and with the universe, to make things work. Those who work in partnership with the universe and are truly called to this work find their True Will supported.

Ritual of the Servant

Our servant figure for the sign of Virgo is the virgin Corn Maiden, the Underworld queen, and the wounded healer. Use this experience to better understand the role of the servant. While we think of the word *servant* as meaning "lowly," we know that, in truth, the highest and most noble royal is a servant to the divine will.

Commune with the "servant" god in your pantheon, and design a ritual to honor and explore the mysteries of service, healing, and ministry to the greater public. You can meet with this deity in meditative vision or shamanic journey, or if you already have a connection to your chosen god, you can try a direct invocation (*TOSW*, exercise 19). In this ritual, you will either ask yourself the three questions listed here, or the deity will ask you at least three questions regarding the lessons of this zodiac gateway. You will have to answer each of them before you are allowed to pass on to the next lesson and gate. The questions for Virgo are: What is the greater good? Have you served the greater good? How will you serve in the future? When you have completed the ritual, make sure you continue to honor and work with this deity over the course of the year. Use this connection to better understand whom and what you serve, and how you serve in everyday life.

Homework

- Do exercises 53–56 and record your results in your journal or BOS.
- Perform your master spell for this lesson.
- Review one myth from one of the cultures outlined on page 31.
- Review one religion as outlined on pages 29–30.
- Choose one figure from the biography list on pages 32–33, and learn all you can about that person.
- Continue with your final project.
- Work with the Virgo servant deity from your personal pantheon.
- Obtain the Virgo gem for your "breastplate" charm bag, if you haven't done so already. Work with the Virgo stone this month.
- Work with one of your thirteen tools, re-consecrating it. Seek out its spiritual equivalent in the Otherworld, and know its mysteries.
- Optional: Make a fluid condenser (*TOHW*, chapter 9) out of a high-grade, flammable alcohol for this zodiac sign. Research appropriate plants for that sign, and choose the one that is right for you (*OTOW*, chapter 13).
- Optional: Find a small stone with a flat surface that you can mark with the zodiac sign of Virgo. Cleanse it, mark it, and charge it. You can also use it like a talisman, along with or in place of the Virgo gemstone.
- When you complete the trials of this chapter, tie another knot in your witch's cord in a ritualized manner.

Tips

- How does your service fit into your year-and-a-day goals and final project?
- Continue working on your own BOS, adding appropriate material to it each month. Write and perform these rituals when appropriate. You could write the following:

Esbat for the new Moon in Virgo, or for the full Moon in Pisces, its opposite sign.

- Explore the gateway of healing in your inner temple (*ITOW*, chapter 14).

Lesson Fourteen
The Wisdom of Libra

As the Sun moves from Virgo to Libra, we have the second balance point of the year, the autumnal equinox, which many witches celebrate as the Feast of Mabon. Although it is a time of balance, it is also a time tipping toward the Underworld and the dark of the year, as Ostara tips toward the light. As we continue into the last six zodiac signs, we understand them better in relationship to their opposite signs. Though depicted as opposites on the astrological mandala wheel, they are really complements, like the two sides of the scales.

Gender: Male
Triplicy: Cardinal
Element: Air
Image: Scales
Season: Fall
House: House of Partnerships, Marriage
Key Phrase: "I Balance"

Theme: Harmony
Blessing: Open Minded
Challenge: Indecisive
Archetype: Judge
Ruling Planets: Venus, Transpluto
Exalted: Saturn
Detriment: Mars
Fall: Sun
Esoteric Ruler: Uranus
Monadic Ruler: Saturn
Classical Deity: Hephaestus/Vulcan
Angel: Hamaliel
Colors: Green, Pink, Pale Blue
Metal: Copper
Stones: Peridot, Jade
Body: Kidneys, Buttocks
Labor of Hercules: Death of the Erymanthean Boar
Gift of the Goddess: To Be Successful in Love
The Thirteen Goals of the Witch: Achieve Balance
Alchemical Operation: Sublimation
Cell Salt: Natrium Phos (Sodium Phosphate)
Tarot: Justice

The scales are the symbol of Libra, and all the wisdom of Libra concerns measured balance. As a cardinal air, Libra is the embodiment of the breath of life, one in and one out to maintain continual balance. The cardinal signs initiate the change of seasons when the Sun enters them, and Libra initiates the fall. Mabon is the holiday when we celebrate the descent of the God to the Underworld, after his Lammas sacrifice. The Underworld is a place of trials, of testing, and of judgment. Sometimes we need to descend to again find balance.

The Way of the Judge

Libra contains many interests and archetypes, yet the concept of balance is always at the heart of this sign. Balance brings us the divine image of the judge, the justice bringer, the arbiter of disputes. The blessing, and some would say downfall, of Libra is the ability to see both sides of any argument. Libra's shadow, Aries, is all about the self and the individual's needs. Libra is about understanding the perspective of the other. Libra is the sign of partners, be it business partners, romantic partners, or partnering priestesses and priests. You must be able to see another's point of view to have a strong partnership, yet at the same time, you must balance your own needs. The judge must be able to rise above both sides, and see each side to make fair judgments.

Venus is the traditional ruler of Libra. While we have the sensual love goddess ruling Taurus, another aspect of Venus rules Libra, the intellectual artisan, the one making the statement of aesthetics and ideas, rather than physical sensuality. Many depict the goddess ruling Libra not as the well-known Venus, but as the more intellectual Athena. In some modern systems of astrology, where the asteroids take rulership of certain signs, the asteroid Pallas influences the sign of Libra. In one system, a theoretical trans-Plutonian planet is given rulership of Libra, sometimes associated with the figure of Proserpina/Persephone. Many astrologers believe that we will discover another major planet beyond the orbit of Pluto, and each has a pet theory as to which mythological figure would best represent these energies embodied by this planet. Transpluto might be the same as the recently discovered Senda, though not all astrologers agree. Each of these heavenly bodies gives a more serious rulership to Libra, concerned with balance. Persephone keeps balance, for she changes the seasons between living and dying. Many see her rise and descent at the equinoxes.

Pallas Athena is a goddess of war, but also a goddess of wisdom, for she uses strategy and insight to win her battles. She is a goddess of arbitration, and she presided over the trial of Orestes. Orestes murdered his mother, Clytemnestra, since she killed his father, Agamemnon. The Erinyes, or Furies, were born out of the blood of Uranus, which spilled upon the land when he was castrated by his son Cronos, along with their "sibling" Aphrodite, who was born of his genitals as they fell in the ocean. The Furies personify vengeance, and in particular vengeance against those who kill family

members. They sought out Orestes, and eventually he petitioned Athena for shelter. She judged his trial, and eventually found in his favor, convincing the Erinyes to release their vengeance and embrace a new nature with the name of the Kindly Ones.

Other goddesses of justice and arbitration from the Greek mythos are the Titan Themis and her daughter Astraea, who is sometimes equated with the goddess Dike, who is also associated with the constellation of Virgo. Themis is the embodiment of nature law and order, as opposed to human order. Dike is depicted having scales. The popular image of Lady Justice is drawn from Themis, Dike, and the Roman Fortuna, though she embodies a Roman concept of legal justice more than a mythic and religious figure. Lady Justice is depicted as bare breasted and blindfolded, with scales in one hand and a sword in the other. The sword is an important and often forgotten component of justice, both as a symbol of air and intellect and of action.

In the tale of Hercules, the capture of the Erymanthean Boar can be related to Libra. The boar was a creature sacred to Artemis and Apollo, and it was released to fulfill their vengeance. Hercules sought out counsel on how to beat this monster, and he visited the centaurs. On his visit, Hercules convinced his centaur friend Pholus to open a jar of wine. The other centaurs, with their heightened senses, smelled it and became drunk or enraged by this potent gift, and started charging. Hercules shot them with his arrows dipped in the Hydra's poisonous blood and killed many of them to save himself and his friend. The immortal centaur Chiron was also hit by a stray arrow. The toxin was very painful to him, but it could not kill him. Chiron volunteered to give up his immortality and to take the place of the rebel Titan Prometheus in the Underworld. Prometheus was being punished by Zeus, chained to a rock with an eagle tearing out his regenerating liver every day. Chiron figured that if he was in pain already, another being should be free of pain. Chiron traded places with Prometheus, maintaining the balance of the Underworld, life for life. It was not just, not fair, that an elder god seeking to bring enlightenment to humanity should be eternally punished in this way, and Chiron sought to rectify the balance, even though his own situation was not fair. Chiron also gave Hercules the clue to defeating the boar, telling him to drive the boar into the thick northern snow. Hercules did so, and successfully captured the boar. Chiron was eventually released from his bondage by the gods, who raised him up as the sign of Sagittarius.

Witches are continuously concerned with balance, be it the balance within, or the balance between the worlds. One of our thirteen traits is to "achieve" balance, in ourselves and the world. Libra is the sign that teaches us how to find the balance.

Exercise 57

"I Balance" List

In your journal or BOS, make a list of statements starting with "I balance," and complete the sentence with all the things you feel you balance. What are the things you successfully balance? What are the things you struggle to balance? Are you balanced between the inner and outer self? Are you balanced between work and home? Are you balanced in your partnerships and relationships?

As witches, we walk the middle path, yet many of us don't understand the middle path of the witch. Everything in moderation, including moderation, is our key. Unlike the Buddhist middle path, seeking the mean at all times, we know the middle is an average, and everything has its cycle and seasons. We do explore extremes of light and dark, but find balance in that exploration. Nothing stays perfectly balanced and static. Balance must be dynamic. Things continually go from one extreme to the other, finding balance between the two, just as the cycles of winter and summer are mediated by spring and fall. The spiraling wheel is our teacher. We move with the tides of life and the tides of consciousness. We explore the dark and the light, death and life, the shadow and the sanctified. In the end, all is taboo, holy, and profane.

Another powerful image of the scales of balance claimed by modern paganism comes from the Khemetic, or Egyptian, traditions, through the Goddess Ma'at. Ma'at is a strange goddess, both personified with an image and considered to be an abstract concept of truth, order, and balance, and modern cross-cultural studies compare her to the Eastern Tao or European wyrd. The sacred king, embodied by the Pharaoh, was responsible for making sure that the will of Ma'at was fulfilled in the land. In Duat, the underworld of Egypt, the dead were judged in the Hall of Two Truths. The hearts of the dead were weighed against the single Shu feather of Ma'at. Those hearts deemed unworthy, as overseen by Anubis, were devoured. Those deemed worthy were sent

to the lord of the dead, Osiris. Balance is key to the power of Ma'at. Working with the gods of balance can help you find where you lack balance and understand how to achieve it.

Exercise 58

Hall of Judgment

1. Perform Exercise 1: Inner Temple as a Mystery School Meditation, steps 1–4 (*LTOW*, vol. 1, page 45), to get to the World Tree.
2. Go down into the Underworld with the intention of finding the Hall of Judgment. Ask your animal guide to take you there.
3. You might find yourself crossing a desert and then a river before you come to an Egyptian-style temple.
4. Enter the temple to find the gods of balance. There will be a set of scales waiting for you. The gods of balance will urge you to fill both sides of the scales with your life. Reach into your heart and place the symbols of your life on the scales.
5. What goes on the left side, in your personal world? What goes on the right side, in the public world? Are they balanced? Judge your life and the balance of your life. Do the gods offer you any words of wisdom about how to gain better balance?
6. Take back your life, in a new, balanced way, and place it back into your heart. Thank the gods of balance, and make your way back to the Middle World, returning the way you came. Finish exercise 1, steps 8–11, to return to normal consciousness.

This meditative experience should not be confused with the mythology of the Hall of Two Truths, or a funerary rite, but applying the concept of Ma'at in a broader framework can help balance your current earthly life.

Since Libra has a broad nature, some other archetypes have been applied to this sign. In the classical model of the Olympians, Hephaestus, the forge god and husband of Aphrodite, is the ruler of Libra. Known as Vulcan to the Romans, the forge figure plays a role in Libra as the craftsman, but also shares some attributes with Chiron, both being wounded. He makes the beautiful treasures of his wife Aphrodite, as well as the tools and weapons of many of the other gods. He is also credited with freeing Athena from Zeus's brow with his axe, and then demanding her as his bride. He frees the justice and wisdom of Athena from Zeus.

In the esoteric astrology of Alice Bailey, the esoteric ruler of Libra is Uranus, while the monadic ruler is Saturn. I find this pairing very interesting, as they represent the planets of freedom and limits. Uranus bursts free of the limits imposed by the classical seven planets and helps individuals express themselves uniquely. Part of the Venusian aspect of Libra is an attraction to the arts, culture, and artistic expression, yet the arts of Libra are intellectual when compared to the more sensual Venusian arts of Taurus. Libra is concerned with the idea behind the art, its statement as well as the art itself. Saturn, to balance, is the power of contraction, of restriction and restraint. As a sign of justice, on the highest level, judgment must be restrained and focused, without any undue or outside influence.

Justice

As Libra's scales are tied to our concept of justice, we must look at how we understand the concept of justice, of what is fair and right, in the context of our spirituality. There are several ways we can interpret justice. Many simply look to the law, and whether an action falls within the laws of a given society. Is an action deemed acceptable or unacceptable in your society? As there are many societies in the world, and each changes over time, there is no one standard of what is acceptable. Laws change as the people in the society change, and what is "right" can seem arbitrary. There is also the spirit of the law versus the actual letter of the law to consider. The law is intended to govern how people should behave in relationship to one another. Yet the language of the law can be imprecise. A law can embody a principle and idea, yet those who are clever enough to find the

"loopholes" in the law's wording can make behavior that was intended to be illegal perfectly legitimate, unless the wording of the law is changed to close the loophole.

The air element of communication and language is the medium through which the justice of Libra is codified, yet language can also have drawbacks. The same language can protect many from harm as well, and it is important to interpret the language of the law as written. If we simply went on the intentions that inspire laws, a vocal majority of a population would be able to push its own specific interpretation of the intention of a law, when that specific intention is not written into the law itself. We use a strict interpretation of the law to prevent the popular opinion of the moment from ruling society with the potential detriment to the minority. Many look to the Founding Fathers of the United States and see a devout group of Christians with the intention of developing a Christian nation with a Christian morality underlying it. This segment of our population envisions a future overtly Christian nation. Others look at the Founding Fathers with a Masonic background and see deists—not necessarily Christians at heart—who fully intended to separate religion from government and wrote the laws to demonstrate that. They quite clearly see the division of church and state providing a framework for all religions to peacefully coexist. Both sides of the argument have strong and forceful advocates, but in the end, we can only go by the interpretation of the laws the Founding Fathers wrote and what has been amended to those laws, rather than what we think their intentions were, because our own interpretations are clouded by our viewpoints and beliefs.

When we look at "law" through a religious lens, we could interpret it as morality: not necessarily the justice of the land, but the codes we create when informed by our spirituality, and embraced only by those of a particular religion. Technically only in theocratic governments do religious laws equate with state laws, yet the mainstream dominant religions tend to influence secular society. As witches, our spiritual laws are not as intimately known or understood by secular society, in the way such "laws" as the Ten Commandments of Judaism and Christianity are. As we entered the twenty-first century, there were still debates on the validity of having the Ten Commandments in a legal courthouse, but you have never heard such a debate with the Wiccan Rede or Laws of Thelema.

Though the codes of morality are not secular laws, they do influence how we view justice. I think that witches in particular can have a difficult time with the codes and restrictions of traditional society, as our path takes us into the taboo, the embodiment of both the sacred and profane, to find our power and spirit. We explore new models, new ways of thinking and acting that are not always accepted in mainstream secular society. Sometimes they are not accepted in mainstream pagan society, for many of us are seeking to fit in with what we perceive as "normal," forgetting that our only law is "An' ye harm none, do as ye Will." If one of us chooses to explore something we consider fringe, we must support that individual's right to do so, even if it is not for us. Pagans are exploring modes of relationships and ways of living that are not really new, but hark back to our tribal ways of living. They can seem new and frightening to many in the mainstream, because they embody concepts most of us were not raised with. Explorations of polyamory, communal living, cooperatives, and sacred sexuality, to name just a few that are simple to put into words, are trends more easily explored in pagan spirituality than in other religions. Breaking traditional social codes and mores has an immense power to free psychic energy and awaken new levels of consciousness.

One of my favorite modern witchcraft scholars to contemplate ethics, morality, and justice from a pagan perspective is the beloved Doreen Valiente. Her work is practical, thoughtful, and global in perspective, and her words continue to inspire me after her death. In *Witchcraft for Tomorrow*, she compares the inner morality teachings of both the "cult of the witches" and Aleister Crowley with the moral structures of Hinduism and Buddhism. While many perceive the Eastern traditions as a complete renunciation of the material world, she draws from a Buddhist teaching known as the Ten Equal Things.

> *They imply that once a person has attained to spiritual enlightenment, and become in their heart a true follower of the* Dharma, *the ancient wisdom-religion which was from the beginning of time, and of which all the Buddhas have been exponents, then it matters not whether that person observes conventional codes of conduct or no, and whether or not he or she takes part in worldly activities and pleasures. Having attained mastery of mind, such a person will act from non-attachment and therefore will not err.*[1]

1. Doreen Valiente, *Witchcraft for Tomorrow* (Blaine, WA: Phoenix Publishing, 1987), 45.

When the mystic has a certain level of self-mastery and self-knowledge, the conventional codes no longer apply. In fact, from a witchcraft perspective, the exploration of life beyond those conventional codes can be the very thing to confer a level of mastery, as we are a contrary path, steeped in shadow to bring light to the darkness. The exploration of desire can bring about an alignment with divine will and a non-attachment to anything not of a divine will, but it can also bring about the potential to enjoy anything. We are in the world, but not of it, as the popular saying goes. We enjoy the world to its fullest extent and see it as a manifestation of the divine teacher, but our nature is not solely of the world. The Greek Orphic saying contains a similar mystery embodied by the phrase, "I am a child of Earth and starry Heaven, but my race is of Heaven alone."

Yet at the same time, this is not a blank check to do whatever you want, with no regard to yourself or others. This is not a license to hurt or harm yourself or others—physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. Those who break traditional codes and societal understandings often have the most strict personal codes of ethics. The mystic of all traditions is the follower of "sacred law." Totem figures such as crows, and the crow goddesses associated with them, are said to hold the medicine of sacred law, of what *is* right, not necessarily what is right according to human interpretation, which changes as society changes. Yet mystics must interpret sacred law through their own understanding, so we never truly know what is sacred law. Common sense and the patterns of nature give us our clues to understanding sacred law. In many ways sacred law is much simpler than our human laws. It's in the proper application to our lives, as members of a greater society, that we are challenged. Though the "law of the jungle" is natural and sacred, the code of such wild animals is not wholly appropriate for humans in society, yet there is wisdom to be gleaned from our animal teachers. We must know what aspects to draw from and what to leave. Our striving to find sacred law, understand it, and live by it is our quest for our own personal justice, to do what is right in every given situation, in harmony with the sacred, with our gods and with our own spirit.

Valiente continues onward with this wisdom:

Our base is the Divine Life of the universe. Our means of keeping in touch with it cannot be any man-made dogma, but through nature, which man did not make. Men's hands wrote all the holy books and sacred scriptures; only the book of nature was written by divinity.

We cannot put the clock back to the days of the old paganism; but we can build a new paganism, which will take account of humanity as it really is, with its dreams, its frailties and its needs. Perhaps by that means humanity can advance towards what it might be.[2]

Exercise 59

Ethical Codes

Beyond the ardanes and codes of Lesson Seven (*LTOW*, vol. 1), what are your own personal ethics and interpretations of sacred law? What are the lines that you will not cross, and why not? Have you crossed them in the past? If so, to what consequence? Are these ethics imposed by mainstream society? If so, do they reflect your pagan spirituality? Would there be any virtue in breaking them, to understand the taboo? How do they bring balance and harmony? What is your sense of spiritual law, or spiritual justice? Write down the answers to these questions in your journal or BOS. Articulate your own personal code of honor and ethics.

Relationships

If justice is the primary concept associated with the scales of balance, the lesser known, but equally important, side of the scales of Libra is relationships. Ruled by the planet of social attraction and love, Venus, Libra teaches us the wisdom of a balanced relationship. Libra is the sign of partnership, including romantic partnerships, business partnerships, and social relationships. Having healthy and harmonious relationships is a key teaching of the zodiac wheel and the lessons of life.

2. Ibid, 46.

Witches are often called upon for aid in relationship magick. When people find out that you are a witch, one of the first requests you'll get is for a love spell. Usually it involves the spells to attract the right partner, as one of our Goddess's gifts is to have success in love. Some modern witches have changed the wording of this gift to include spells of love, romance, and seduction. Love potions are the province of the *venefica*; the root of the word is found in the goddess Venus. But we are also called upon to guide and counsel our clients on sustaining love and healing damaged relationships. We are called to bless relationships in handfasting rituals. Love, sex, and all relationships are such fundamental parts of life, and people seek out magick to help satisfy these basic needs. One of the classic bits quoted from *The Charge of the Goddess* is "All acts of love and pleasure are My rituals," informing us how we find the sacred through our acts of love and pleasure.

While we could look at Libra strictly for the lessons of romance, the sign rules all one-on-one relationships. The relationships we have in modern society are naturally a part of our imbalance. We do not have healthy models on which to base our relationships—our friends, our business associates, and most importantly our romantic partnerships and marriages.

I look at our modern Western world, and the foundations we have built upon, and think we need to find new models. I have found so much in tribal lore and indigenous wisdom, or at least the modern interpretations of these, to be helpful in constructing new models of thinking and living as I try to integrate the philosophies into my life. In terms of relationships, and understanding the energetic reality behind relationships, the Andean model, outlined in the book *Keepers of the Ancient Knowledge* by Joan Parisi Wilcox, has been very helpful in shifting my relationship paradigm. Much of the energetic philosophies of the Andean tradition have helped me understand my healing practice and magick.

Andean philosophy is based on the underlying principle of noncompetition, dividing relationships into three levels or three stages. The first is called *Tinkuy*, the encounter when two individuals first meet, and their energetic fields connect. The second stage is *Tupay*, the confrontation or comparison between two individuals. At first glance, it would appear that there is competition in this noncompetition philosophy, but the difference is in the resolution. It is a natural human reaction to try to

understand yourself through looking at others, even when you hold a spirit of noncompetition. Comparison and even competition are not unhealthy, but it is the attitude surrounding them that unbalances relationships, and thereby society. The resolution comes in the third stage, *Taqe*. Taqe is the resolution of the conflict through cooperation. It's hard to understand from a popular culture perspective, as our normal mode of operation would be determining a "victor" and who is superior. To the Andeans, if one of the pair is proclaimed the "winner," the superior individual in a particular skill or talent, it then becomes the winner's duty to teach his skills to the other, so the society later has two equally gifted individuals. Winning is not the preferred option to the Andean mind, but reaching the "finish line" together in the spirit of cooperation is.

The spirit of noncompetition does not prevent us from competing in athletics or being recognized for our talents and accomplishments. This philosophy simply transforms the spirit in which we approach competition. When we seek to "destroy" our rivals, or build our self-esteem upon the defeat of others, without a sense of giving back to the community, then the relationship contracts our consciousness, and it can become toxic. The thought process of true Libra consciousness is to hold the paradox of duality, the reality that there is a "me" and a "you" in any situation, from competition to romance, yet also create the "we" and simultaneously identify with the "we" and the "me." The scales are one tool, one symbol, yet they consist of two major points and a connecting force. To be like the scales, we must balance both sides, and also look at the whole. Only then can we apply this lesson to the "we" of the greater community.

It seems strange at first, and particularly when we start with a discussion of romantic relationships, yet all our one-on-one relationships have difficulty when we compare our power to that of our partner or friend on any level. Our jealousy, our need to feel superior, and our tendency to base our concepts of value on being better than others are the root of many of our future problems. Those who feel they are superior in some way often feel a sense of entitlement, that they should receive more in a relationship, based upon this sense of worth. On the other end, those who do not have the superior sense of self will use the sense of inadequacy to create relationships in which they need more and continually receive more from another. The teacher is not a mentor and aide, but the relationship becomes one of enabling, of coddling. With the idea of true teaching, the "teacher" seeks to support and empower the student, while

simultaneously seeking to learn from the student, even though it appears the teacher is in the "superior" position of skill or knowledge. We can all learn from each other, and sometimes the lessons from our students are both surprising and needed. All good teachers learn as much from their students as they teach. If we could transform our spirit of competition into a spirit of cooperation, we'd have a much healthier pagan community, and overall community.

The teacher or mentor archetype is important, because it brings us to the other side of the imbalance for Libra. As many feel they should receive more, and engage in relationships in which they do receive more, others will give too much in relationships. In a subculture of healers and empathy, many pagans err on the side of giving too much in any relationship, feeling that they are being spiritual, loving, or evolved, but they continually give, until their cup runs out and they are empty. This is just as much of an imbalance as it is for one who takes too much. Those who feel that they are spiritual are actually enabling others to take too much, and they do so because it serves their own sense of self—the desire to be needed, the sense of selflessness and martyrdom, as most who give too much don't do so silently or in joy, but it gives them something to complain about to others. If we hold the paradigm of mentorship and reciprocal relationship, we will have complementary relationships. Sometimes, despite a spirit of noncompetition, there aren't always two equally talented individuals. Some of us are skilled at certain things, but we do not necessarily desire to be talented and developed in all areas. The key is to build relationships on all levels where there is a balance between giving and taking, where the two complement each other, rather than compete or remain in imbalance.

As Libra is an air sign, air is the great teacher for us to master its lessons. The mind helps us understand language, the law, and justice, as well as communicate our needs, problems, gratitude, and boundaries in relationship. If two people in a relationship cannot effectively communicate, then there will be no possibility of balance. When the relationship is getting out of balance, or lacks harmony, at least one person in the relationship must bring it to the conscious attention of the other. Only then can the problems be addressed, and only then can understanding occur. Sometimes the problems cannot be addressed in the manner the vocal person desires. Boundaries and compromises are also a hallmark of good relationships. One person cannot always get his

or her way in all situations. Needs and wants in the relationship can be voiced, but absolute compliance cannot be expected or really desired. Couples must also be able to voice what is going well, and how they appreciate the other person in the relationship—"positive" reinforcement on both sides to know what does work, and what is appreciated.

Many times, relationships experience traumas because one person doesn't understand how the other is showing love, affection, friendship, or good will. The placement of Venus and Mercury in your natal chart can show how and where you express these things. Some people express affection and caring vocally. They speak about it. Others will show it through material goods, buying gifts. Another can express it through deeds and caretaking. If you do not know the "language" of this affection, you miss a lot of subtle communication. If the language isn't totally satisfying to you, you also need to be able to express how you want your partner to express his or her feelings to you. While some people need to hear this in words, others feel words are cheap and need to be shown in actions. If you are not receiving what you need, you have to figure out what you need, speak up, and express your needs to your partner, while being open to your partner's needs and style of relationship. People express themselves in the ways they want affection shown. Talkers want words or poetry. Gift givers want gifts. Doers want something done for them. Be open to all forms of communication, beyond speaking and listening.

Developing counseling skills, which includes both listening and speaking to others, is important in order to be a high priest/ess or minister. The balance in communication comes from these two functions, being capable of both listening and speaking, and also helping others learn to truly listen and speak is very important. Many who feel they are communicating are actually thinking about what the other person is going to say while the person is talking, rather than truly listening, digesting what was said, and responding from a true place of understanding. Many who try to counsel and help mediate often don't have these skills and need to develop them if they are going to be of service to others.

In particular, pagan ministers are called to perform handfastings for pagan couples and those seeking a ritual in a more alternative format. Our rituals of joining and partnership are handfastings, where the hands of the two lovers are bound ceremonially

with cords. While many resources are available on helping to devise handfastings rituals, fewer resources are available on counseling the couple venturing into this next step of relationship. The ministers of mainstream religions perform pre-marriage counseling to help them mitigate the need for counseling during the marriage. In the rush of romance, many assume that love is enough, and that the details will work themselves out, but typically they do not. It's important for a couple to have an understanding of each other's envisioned life paths, expectations, and dreams in order to effectively plan a life together.

Here are some topics a good minister should help a couple contemplate before handfasting. Though they seem simple and straightforward, you'd be surprised how many will walk into the office of a minister and not have any idea of what their partner is thinking or feeling. Unfortunately these questions can raise some problems when counseling a couple, but it's better to have problems and work them out before going further, so that each person knows exactly what he or she is getting into. Our romantic notions are astrologically influenced by Leo, yet the adult side of relationship, of true communication, compromise, and complement comes from Libra.

Legal or Just Spiritual Handfasting

In many traditions, a handfasting is first performed to last a year and a day, and the couple, after this time, has the option to renew their vows, for another year and a day, or for a permanent marriage. Is the couple clear on what type of ceremony this is and what it means? Will it be a legal marriage, with a marriage license from the town where the ceremony will be held? As the minister, are you legally ordained or have you fulfilled the requirements to legally perform a marriage in your state and city? Check with your local officials.

Home

Where does the couple plan on living and for how long? What are their ideas for future housing? Does either person have hopes and dreams of living in other places, and if so, where? If one person is rooted to where he or she is now, and the other has plans to live in another location, there can be an added stress later in life that was unexpected.

Pets

Does the couple have pets now? If not, does either person want them? If so, what kind and how many? Who will care for them? What happens when the couple wants to travel?

Children

Does the couple plan on having children? In their ideal scenario, when and how many? If so, how will the childcare and working relationships be balanced? Will one parent have primary care responsibilities and the other parent have primary income-generating responsibilities, or will both responsibilities be shared by both parents?

Family

How involved is the couple with their parents, siblings, and extended families? If children will be a part of the family, how involved will the grandparents and aunts or uncles be in the raising of the children? If the couple plans on heavily involving their families in the childcare, do the family members know that? What are the long-term plans with regard to elderly parents if sickness or disability develops?

Name

Will one spouse take the last name of the other? Will both take hyphenated names? Will an amalgamated name be created? Many assume the mainstream tradition of the wife taking the last name of the husband, but that shouldn't be assumed, particularly with pagan couples, and it is not the only option.

Career and Finance

What are the long-term career plans and goals of each spouse? Is either in debt? How are their credit ratings? Are there any financial difficulties or assets the other should know about before tying their credit history together?

Sexual and Emotional Fidelity

What is the agreement between the couple in regard to sex? Many assume traditional roles of monogamy, but that can't always be assumed. Some don't equate sexual fidelity with emotional fidelity. Some actively pursue polyamory. Though this is the furthest

thought from the minds of most couples who are intense and passionate, while preparing for marriage, such things should be discussed at some point. If one partner breaks the fidelity agreement, then what are the consequences? I've had one couple discuss how one would simply kill the other if there were any infidelity. They really meant the marriage was over. It's fine and totally acceptable to end a marriage if there is infidelity, but that should be made clear to all involved.

Ending

If the relationship should end, how would assets be divided? Will there be any prenuptial agreements concerning the potential ending of the relationship and the division of the assets?

Miscellaneous

Are there any other issues you think the couple should discuss that have not yet been covered? Ask the couple if there is anything that has gone unspoken that either would want to know if their positions were reversed.

With a strong foundation before the marriage, the relationship will grow in a much healthier way than if these questions are ignored before the commitment ceremony.

Witchcraft and the Modern World: Legal Rights

As witchcraft becomes more known in mainstream society, the issue of our place in civil society, and our rights, or lack thereof, takes center stage. Many witches are involved in the struggle for civil rights, both for witches and pagans, and for all oppressed or disenfranchised minorities. Though I'd like to say that there is no chance that anyone would experience violence or lose their jobs or custody of their children because of their identification as pagans or witches, or because of the practice of magick, at the time of this writing, it's simply not true. Those of us who are living in liberal and tolerant locations often forget the conservative segment of both the United States and the world. There are many countries, considered "modern," where witchcraft is still a

crime punishable by death. The places we consider to be liberal and tolerant today are only that way because people, through great personal risk, have done the civil-liberties work and education to inform both the public at large and government agencies of the reality of witchcraft.

Many, such as Leo Martello and Laurie Cabot, have founded organizations and networks dedicated to this work. Through the work of Gavin and Yvonne Frost with the Church and School of Wicca, and Oberon Zell-Ravenheart through the Church of All Worlds, we have Wiccan and pagan churches recognized for religious tax-exempt status in America, "legitimizing" them in the eyes of the government. They have been some of the first. Though there can still be conflict over the use of pagan symbols in the armed services, military chaplains have at least some education on paganism and Wicca, and members are allowed the same rights to worship as any mainstream religious practitioner. Technically Wicca is the most legally recognized form of our faith by mainstream institutions. The words *paganism*, *heathenism*, or *witchcraft* might not get you the same legal recognition and rites.

While many witches are content staying private and "in the broom closet," most of us have come to the Craft because someone was brave enough to be "out" to tell us something, teach us, or write a book. If it were not for their actions, we would not be on this path today. Though I respect the right of everybody to make the decision that is correct for them and their family, about how public to be as a witch, pagan, homosexual, or someone in any other social "closet," I do think that the greater community is served when one can be public and openly contribute to society as a witch. For many of us, this involves publicly educating communities by informing them about stereotypes and potentially offensive images, but stronger still is the quiet statement of living a healthy life, as a witch. One doesn't need to shout one's identity as a witch from the rooftops, yet one doesn't hide it. How many people do we see openly wearing crosses, crucifixes, and Stars of David and acting as valuable members of society? Yet many pagans feel they need to hide their pentacles, or wear more "disguised" symbols of Celtic knots or Egyptian images to maintain a low profile. In this day, one of the most powerful societal statements you can make is to model a happy, healthy, sane life as a pagan and be open about it, yet not necessarily a public figure. I have many friends and students who have evoked the following response from mainstream community

members: "I had no idea you were a witch. I guess I thought it was something else. You seem so normal and happy."

We are a path of the dark Underworld and the crossroads, so we will always attract a fringe element, and the fringe takes us deeper. We will always have our radicals and warriors, and this is good for our pagan community, yet we also need the quieter, more mainstream pagans to stand up and be seen in daily life. Just as all Christians are not preachers and workers in their church, not all pagans wear black and are interviewed on TV or in the newspaper at Halloween. Thank the gods we do have people who are public and vocal about their traditions and beliefs, but it's the quiet members who make up the bulk of any religion. People need to see that pagans are much like anybody else, but with a different belief structure and religious practice.

The key to our evolution in the arena of civil rights is the balance between our more radical and vocal segments and our quieter, subdued members. The more mainstream ones help our community relate to the larger world, and help those in the larger world understand and relate to us. The warriors on the edge perform a sacred duty, pushing society's perception of us, and our freedoms, further and further out, until we finally do live in a land where "do as ye Will" in spirit, if not in fact, is the law of the land, and we are all free to pursue our highest will in any religion we choose without being marginalized or discriminated against. If it weren't for radicals, none of the civil rights movements would have any effect. It's a radical thing to stand up for your rights, and not take no for an answer. It was radical for Rosa Parks to refuse to sit at the back of the bus. It was radical for Martin Luther King and Gandhi to pursue the agendas they did, with their nonviolence techniques. It is radical for someone to stand up, wearing black all the time, with a bright blazing pentacle and looking the part of the witch priestess, and not back down or apologize. Only when one person successfully does it do we suddenly have the right to do it if we so choose. In truth, such garb is no more outlandish than the worldly dress of Catholic priests and nuns, but since their religion has been institutionalized as a pillar of society, while our paganism has not had such recognition, then the pagan priestess seems foolish at first glance. Somehow their dress is viewed as a sign of devotion, while ours is considered silly.

What are you doing to further the rights of witchcraft in your community? Where do you fall in the balance of quietly educating by example and openly educating and

fighting for civil rights? How do you balance the two? Where do you fall on the issues of civil rights for all—women, racial minorities, GLBT communities, the handicapped, immigrants, and the poor? Paganism has been the religion of the oppressed and those who identify with the oppressed and their struggle. Magick has been the province of those seeking equality in a world of inequality. These are our allies, for they are also our sisters and brothers. Have your actions reflected your beliefs with regard to being involved in community efforts to ensure civil rights?

Ritual of the Judge

Our Libran figure can be the judge, the giver of justice, the bringer of balance and harmony among the many archetypes explored in Libra. Which type of figure calls to you in your practice? Learn to find this harmonizer within you and achieve balance.

Commune with the Libran deity in your pantheon, and design a ritual to honor and explore the mysteries of justice, balance, harmony, and relationship. You can meet with this deity in meditative vision or shamanic journey, or if you already have a connection to your chosen god, you can try a direct invocation (*TOSW*, exercise 19). In this ritual, you will either ask yourself the three questions listed here, or the deity will ask you at least three questions regarding the lessons of this zodiac gateway. You will have to answer each of them before you are allowed to pass on to the next lesson and gate. The questions for Libra are: What is the natural order? How is it maintained? What is your part in maintaining balance? When you have completed the ritual, make sure you continue to honor and work with this deity over the course of the year. Use this connection to better understand your own sense of balance and harmony.

Homework

- Do exercises 57–59 and record your results in your journal or BOS.
- Perform your master spell for this lesson.
- Review one myth from one of the cultures outlined on page 31.
- Review one religion as outlined on pages 29–30.

- Choose one figure from the biography list on pages 32–33, and learn all you can about that person.
- Continue with your final project.
- Work with the Libra judge deity from your personal pantheon.
- Obtain the Libra gem for your "breastplate" charm bag, if you haven't done so already. Work with the Libra stone this month.
- Work with one of your thirteen tools, re-consecrating it. Seek out its spiritual equivalent in the Otherworld, and know its mysteries.
- Optional: Make a fluid condenser (*TOHW*, chapter 9) out of a high-grade, flammable alcohol for this zodiac sign. Research appropriate plants for that sign, and choose the one that is right for you (*OTOW*, chapter 13).
- Optional: Find a small stone with a flat surface that you can mark with the zodiac sign of Libra. Cleanse it, mark it, and charge it. You can also use it like a talisman, along with or in place of the Libra gemstone.
- When you complete the trials of this chapter, tie another knot in your witch's cord in a ritualized manner.

Tips:

- How do your relationships and/or sense of social justice fit into your year-and-a-day goals and final project?
- Continue working on your own BOS, adding appropriate material to it each month. Write and perform these rituals when appropriate. You could write one of the following:

  Esbat for the new Moon in Virgo, or for the full Moon in Aries, its opposite sign.

  Sabbat of Mabon.

  Rite-of-passage ritual for a handfasting/marriage.
- Explore the gateway of harmony in your inner temple (*ITOW*, chapter 14).

Lesson Fifteen
The Wisdom of Scorpio

The "witchiest" time of the year is when the Sun enters Scorpio. This sign is the most mysterious, and its key words are usually summed up as "sex and death." Our most holy holiday, Samhain, takes place when the Sun is in Scorpio, and our mysteries of understanding life and death, this world and the next, are explored through our living connection with the ancestors, through our flesh and spirit. In this season, everything is dying. The leaves are turning beautiful colors, but their life force is withdrawing into the depths. The grasses and plants are dying, to be renewed again next year. Animals are beginning their hibernation cycles, withdrawing their life force into themselves, and their attention into the inner world of dreams. Humans have picked the grain and fruits, and traditionally this was the time for the slaughtering of the herd and smoking or salting the meat to be preserved over the winter. With all this death, the veil between the worlds is particularly thin as the life force turns to the Underworld. But

with the gates open, we can commune and even visit with the spirits already on the other side.

Gender: Female
Triplicy: Fixed
Element: Water
Image: Scorpion
Season: Fall
House: House of Transformation, Letting Go, Sex/Death/Taxes
Key Phrases: "I Transform," "I Desire"
Theme: Change
Blessing: Powerful
Challenge: Obsessive
Archetype: Guardian
Ruling Planet: Pluto, formerly Mars
- **Exalted:** Uranus
- **Detriment:** Venus
- **Fall:** Moon
- **Esoteric Ruler:** Mars
- **Monadic Ruler:** Mercury

Classical Deity: Ares/Mars
Angel: Zuriel
Colors: Black, Scarlet
Metal: Iron
Stones: Diamond, Obsidian, Jet
Body: Reproductive and Eliminative Systems
Labor of Hercules: Death of the Lernaean Hydra
Gift of the Goddess: To Sense, Conjure, Converse with, and Command Spirits
The Thirteen Goals of the Witch: Celebrate Life
Alchemical Operation: Dissolution
Cell Salt: Calcium Sulphate
Tarot: Death

Continuing the cycle of elements and qualities, Scorpio is the sign of fixed water. In nature, our best example of fixed water is ice, frozen water. Ice is both reflective, showing us how to look out at ourselves, and mysterious, obscuring whatever is behind it. Scorpio is considered an occult sign in the truest sense of the word, as occult means "hidden." This is the sign of mysteries. Another image of fixed water, the stagnant water of the swamp, is a great example of Scorpio, and resonates with its creepy and hidden imagery. No one knows what lies beneath until they stumble into it. The mystery can be beautiful and deadly.

The Way of the Guardian

Scorpio is one of the most misunderstood signs, for its theme is transformation, particularly the transformation from flesh to spirit, and as the sign of transformation, its imagery changes accordingly. The classic image known to most people is the scorpion. When you delve deeper into astrology, and learn that it is fixed water, the question arises, what does a scorpion have to do with fixed water? It's a desert creature, stinging and deadly. Those associations seem fierier. If water is emotion, a scorpion doesn't seem overly emotional. Another totem given to the lore of Scorpio is the serpent. A serpent comes closer to the water associations, living in the swamps, coiling like a wave as it moves across the water or land. What do a scorpion and a snake have in common? The animal is not as important for the totem of Scorpio, for its true nature is venom. Both animals have poisonous venom. Venom transforms us. In large doses, it is deadly, physically killing us, transforming us from flesh and blood to spirit. In minute doses, it frees the spirit temporarily, giving healing powers, visions, and insights. All of the active ingredients in a witch's flying ointment were toxic herbs, but taken in combinations and amounts that would prevent them from being fatal. The witch had to have a relationship with toxins to find the right doses and combination.

The final totem of Scorpio points us to this truth. Described either as an eagle of spirit, or a phoenix, the highest octave of the Scorpio energy is the ability to fly free, crossing the threshold of all worlds. The bird can fly above and see all things using its power from the perspective of the higher self.

Ironically, the process of transformation seems antithetical to the fixed nature of the sign. Aren't fixed signs supposed to stay static and be stubborn? They occur when the Sun is in the middle of the season. The chief mystery of Scorpio lies in the fixed nature of the sign. On the plane of the scorpion or snake, it is fixed in its energetic quality, stuck in the terrestrial realm. People with strong Scorpio energy in their personality can exhibit a strong sense of desire, and a stubbornness concerning what they desire, what they want, excluding other possibilities. This is the fixed energy of the personal self, and the personal will. The transformation of Scorpio leads to another fixed nature, the eternal Bornless Self. The terrestrial self ultimately lives, grows old, and dies, changing, while the higher self, the spirit self, is really the eternal self, unchanging, unborn, and never dying. The desires and will of the personal self lead to the venoms of the world, the agents of change, and to the understanding of this eternal and higher self. Hopefully the witch, magician, and mystic undergo this death in a metaphoric and initiatory way, and can return to the terrestrial life with this eternal and expanded point of view.

Scorpio's image is multifaceted, and it doesn't fit neatly into any one godform. The archetypal image I've chosen to work with in the Scorpio lesson is the guardian. The guardian is like the venom itself, defending the threshold, determining who gets into the Otherworld, who doesn't, and who gets out after having crossed the threshold. In astrology, the planet Mars was originally associated with Scorpio before the discovery of the outer planets. The desire nature, the personal will, is encoded in Mars, and the associations of blood, potential death, and, as a warrior, guarding boundaries of territory fit Scorpio and the original scorpion image. The myths of the scorpion usually involve a hunter of some sort, a martial figure. With the discovery of the outer planets, Pluto became associated with the sign. Despite modern astronomy no longer considering Pluto a planet, in astrology, the power of this binary dwarf planet can be felt as much as any other. Pluto is named after the Roman lord of the dead. While we don't think of the king of the Underworld as the guardian or gatekeeper, it is ultimately on his authority that people come to and leave the Underworld. He controls the transformation from flesh to spirit, calling us to the Underworld and from spirit to flesh, letting others return with the mysteries. While the esoteric ruler returns control to Mars in our modern Theosophical slant of astrology, the higher, or monadic, ruler of Scorpio is Mercury. Mercury, as the Hermes messenger figure, is the psychopomp,

leading the souls of the dead to the Underworld and leading new souls to the land of the living and birth.

In the stories of Hercules and his journey through the twelve labors, we can assign several myths to Scorpio. While the capture of Cerberus, the guardian hound of the Underworld, would fit nicely with the image of the guardian, I choose to explore that myth with Capricorn and look to the death of the Lernaean Hydra for Scorpio, for the toxin of the Hydra plays such a vital role throughout Hercules' labors.

Hercules was charged to slay the many-headed monster known as the Hydra. This serpentlike primal creature was said to be a sibling of many of the monsters of Greek legend, including Cerberus and the Nemean Lion. Each represented a primal, earlier chthonic form of creation. The Hydra's breath and blood were toxic. Hercules and his companion Ioleus entered the lair of the Hydra, covering their mouths with a cloth to protect themselves from the toxic fumes, and shot flaming arrows in the lair to draw out the Hydra. Once the monster was out in the open, Hercules used a sickle to decapitate its heads, one by one. As each one was cut, two grew in its place, giving it a somewhat botanical nature, like a plant cut and branching out with two stalks. Ioleus then suggested branding each neck stump as it's cut, so that a new head could not grow back. Hercules did so and defeated the Hydra. He dipped his arrows into the blood, to have a deadly weapon to use against future enemies, but found himself forced to use his arrows on the centaurs, wounding Chiron and eventually precipitating his journey to the Underworld, as detailed in the previous Libra lesson. Hercules also used the arrows on Nessus, slaying the centaur because he tried to rape Hercules' second (some sources say third) wife, Deianira. Nessus quickly plotted revenge before his death, telling Deianira to gather his blood and semen, and if she ever feared Hercules was unfaithful, to apply the mixture to his tunic and he would be faithful. She later did, but it did not induce faithfulness. Instead, Hercules burned his skin, and when he removed the tunic, it tore the flesh from his bones. Nessus's bodily fluid also contained the Hydra's toxin, once he was shot. Hercules chose death and had a funeral pyre built for himself to end his suffering, and through the fire, his pain and mortality were burned away, and he ascended to Olympus as a true demigod.

The Hydra is linked so strongly with Scorpio because Scorpio represents our primal, chthonic desires for life, sex, and power. Such emotions breed like the heads of

the Hydra. We think we quell one, and two more rise up to take its place. These desires appear toxic at first, and in large doses they can be. That is why many traditions seek the renouncement of anything that can ever be toxic. Yet, to the shamanic hero, for that is truly what Hercules is, it is necessary to face the toxins of the personal will, for they provide the key to transcendence, to reach the higher or deeper planes of the immortal self. These toxins reside in the dark, in the cave of our subconscious, and we have to both protect ourselves and fire our signal flares or our own fiery arrows into the depths to draw them out. Scorpio embodies the work of the shadow, both its toxic touch in our lives and its ability to open the gates of life and death, and give us a new, expanded perspective. The gods of the dead and the Otherworld, the horned hunters leading the Wild Hunt of the European myths, are all the guardians of the threshold of life and death, and all have quite a bit in common with the shadow self and Scorpio. In that sense, the shadow is the gatekeeper, the guardian, the dweller at the threshold. Each key unlocks a new mystery, a new power, and a new fear to face.

The key statement of Scorpio is twofold. Older lists of correspondences will have "I desire" as the key phrase of Scorpio. In the astrological mandala, Scorpio rules the Eighth House, the house opposite to Taurus's Second House. The Second House is the house of possessions, of what you have and how those things help you in the journey of life. The Eighth House is first the house of desires, of what you want, and how that desire helps you. Many will look to the two houses as "holding on" and "letting go," respectively. The Second is what you have and control as a resource, and the Eighth is all the things you cannot control and cannot necessarily have when you want them—it's controlled by a higher will. Older astrology texts refer to it as the house of sex, death, and taxes—three things that we cannot control. Our final fate lies with another, or a higher power, when it comes to these three things. The process of the Eighth House is the transmutation that occurs when we let go of what we cannot control with personal will, surrendering to the higher will. In astrology, the rulership of Pluto is the key. While Mars is your personal will, Pluto is your higher will, and the destruction that occurs in our lives, the "deaths" we experience when we are not in alignment with our higher will. It is the destruction that occurs when we need to clear away what doesn't serve our higher self, our ego aspects that block us from our higher purpose. The Eighth House is the way of the magician, the sorcerer, and the witch, for

we explore desire, the dark, and the taboo, bringing them to the light to be examined and transformed.

Exercise 60

"I Desire"/"I Transform" List

In your journal or BOS, make a list of statements starting with "I desire," and complete the sentence with all the things you desire. What do you want? When you reflect, which of these desires are personal, prompted by your ego will, and which are the yearnings of your soul, your higher will? It is important to be honest and understand both. Then make a second list starting with the words "I transform." What do you transform and transmute? How does this list relate to the "I desire" list? Do you transform any of your wants and needs? If so, how?

Secrecy

One of the hallmarks of Scorpio energy is secrecy. Those with strong Scorpio energy love to explore secrets, to learn about the mysteries, to seek out things that others do not know. It is the desire to know the secrets that prompts us to explore the dark, the shadow, and the Underworld, for few of our kin go there voluntarily. In mundane ways it expresses itself both as a desire to investigate and a desire to keep personal affairs private. Scorpios have a mysterious flair as well as an ability to find things out.

Secrecy has always been associated with witchcraft. Even in the pagan eras of Greece and Rome, the magicians who gathered at the crossroad, who practiced the illicit religions without a temple, practiced with a certain amount of secrecy. In the era of Christianity, the secrecy of whatever branches survived was even more necessary. In the modern era, witches do not clearly agree upon the necessity of secrecy, in general and with particular points within the tradition. Gerald Gardner called for it, and oaths of initiatory traditions demand it, but Gardner himself, as well as many others, broke such oaths at their own discretion, inviting the media in to their events and taking questions. Today, many witchcraft-rights advocates are not in favor of secrecy and are even more open than was Gardner, in order to prevent misunderstanding and

distortions of the Craft. You are able to observe most other religions' ceremonies in public, and have the opportunity to see if they are right for you or not. Public speakers advocate the same for pagan traditions.

Today, secrecy has its pros and cons, and determining how public or private you are about your practices is a personal, or group, decision, and all facets should be examined.

Those in favor of secrecy look first and foremost to the prevention of witch persecution. If someone doesn't know you are a witch, and doesn't know what you practice, then you cannot be accused of doing something wrong or evil. Though we would like to think the days of witch-hunts are completely over, there are many places not only in the world at large, but in the United States specifically, where it is dangerous to openly declare yourself a witch. Our world is still dominated by a Judeo-Christian-Muslim mainstream, and many advocate the literal interpretation of holy books that demand the persecution of those labeled witches. Traditional witches in favor of secrecy look at modern pagans with their large pentacles, black robes, and bumper stickers and don't understand why people would openly make themselves targets, rather than blend in, particularly if such public advocates say they are open to being accepted.

Secrecy affords the protection of sacred information, both the spiritual mysteries and the powers of the witch. Witches fear that those who learn too much of the mysteries—the rituals themselves and what to expect in the rituals—will not undergo the proper psychic tension to experience true initiation. If you are blindfolded, brought into the circle by swordpoint, and scourged, but you know each step of the ritual and what is coming, there is no mystery, there is no sense of personal tension (the danger that is inherent in most magickal operations), and you do not find your consciousness fully catapulted into the proper frame of mind. To this day, we can only really guess what was done in the ancient mystery schools, because initiates were sworn to secrecy to prevent spoiling the ritual for those who would come later. Initiates of ceremonial lodges and British Traditional lineages are asked to take an oath, similar to the Masonic initiation oaths, with vows like "and swear that I will always hail, ever conceal, and never reveal, any of the arts, parts, or points of the hidden mysteries," or "solemnly swear that I will ever keep secret and never reveal the secrets of the Art, except it be to a proper person, properly prepared, within such a circle as I am in now, and that I will never deny the Secrets to such a person if they be vouched for by a Brother or Sister of

the Art. All this I swear by my hopes of a future life, and may my weapons turn against me if I break this my solemn oath."

In terms of the powers of the witch, the ability to do magick was guarded by those who were knowledgeable, to prevent those who didn't have the training, ethics, or sense of the mysteries from abusing the power. You wouldn't teach someone how to kill unless it was in self-defense, yet with the knowledge of magick you could very well be giving someone a loaded gun. When looking to the Druids as our spiritual ancestors, you find a tradition that did not write much down, except if it were a minor thing. The true secrets of magick, the mysteries, and life must be learned from a mentor, and set to memory, so they would be learned properly, not in a fragmentary way and potentially misused. The Druids held a tradition that was better lost than misunderstood and misused, and we are challenged to try to piece together what little they left, with no hope of truly reconstructing ancient Druidism.

Lastly, the secrecy of the traditions is meant to encourage you to advance in your own tradition, under your own teachers, without interference from others or comparing yourself to other students and other traditions. Maxine Sanders reported at the Gathering of the Tribes festival in 2005 that students of different teachers of the Craft were not allowed to talk until a particular point of their training was complete. Due to the circular nature of the mysteries, different teachers started at different points, and students comparing themselves to others might wonder why they were not learning something that the others have already mastered. Each teacher and each tradition has its own way. It's easy to compare yourself to another and feel that you are not measuring up, while missing the point of the teaching you are supposed to be focusing on at the time.

Those opposing secrecy in the Craft have their reasons as well. They say the only way to prevent persecution again is to be transparent, to reveal our presence and our traditions to the light of cross-cultural and interfaith comparison, so the mainstream can see how much we have in common with other faiths that have been more globally accepted, such as Hinduism, Shinto, Taoism, Buddhism, and Native American traditions. If we encourage secrecy, we encourage fear and misunderstanding. Secrecy also raises the fear that valuable traditions and understandings can be lost. While we look to the wisdom of the Druids' oral tradition, for example, we have completely lost a

rich part of our heritage because of their policies, and we can only speculate on what they might have done or base our assumptions on secondhand accounts of the Romans, who, seeking to conquer the Celts, had a biased opinion of their practices and culture.

As for the mysteries and the power, they have been revealed in our academic texts as well as our how-to manuals of the New Age. We can speculate on the rituals of the mystery schools and go step by step, dissecting the rituals popularly published in Wicca, but the intellectual knowledge is no substitute for the experience of undergoing the mystery. Reading about traditional ritual initiation does not confer initiation; the training that leads to initiation and the experiences the training creates are truly what transform us. The ritual is a passing on of an energetic current, the connection to a tradition's egregore, and is both a recognition of training and graduation, and the start of a new process as the new level of magickal energy courses through you. Reading about the transfer of energy is not the same as receiving the current, and the current of energy is what does the initiating.

People have collected spells and rituals for quite a long time, as spells from ancient Greece, Egypt, and India have survived, as well as folk magick and customs from all across Europe. If people want to do harm with magick, then they are going to do harm with their will, regardless of the spellbook or lack of a spellbook. The "evil eye" or a curse can be cast by anyone of sufficient ill will and energy. It doesn't require training. The books can provide potential education on ethics that would not otherwise be considered. You can write something with all the information and all the safeguards in it, and if someone chooses not to read and follow those ethics and safeguards, due to ignorance or through willful disregard, then it is no longer your responsibility. You can teach someone and swear him or her to oaths, yet that person can still disregard the ethical system of magick you have taught. We have to learn that individuals are responsible for their actions. If you choose to teach people how to use a gun for self-defense or hunting, you are not responsible if they choose to murder.

Secrecy can be used in training as a control over naïve students. Many "teachers" of the Craft set themselves up in positions of authority, with teaching styles in which they are not to be questioned. They can use fear of magickal power and promises of the mysteries to manipulate students. It is only in examining the teachings against other

traditions that the students can realize if the material is truly authentic and spiritual. While one can be a very good and moral teacher in a secretive tradition, and swear students to oaths and pledges, that same teacher can also answer questions, address concerns, and provide supporting material to give the teachings context. Any teacher who outright forbids questions, outside reading, and outside contact with other magickal students and teachers; who can recommend no other elders in the tradition for you to commune with if you are uncomfortable; and who dangles the "mysteries" like a carrot before you with vague threats and promises is someone who is using secrecy to further a personal sense of power over others. This person is not very helpful on the spiritual journey, other than as an example of what not to be when you become a teacher.

Many are not nearly that malicious, but they use secrecy for ego enhancement, with the idea that they are better, smarter, more magickal, or more enlightened because they know and experience something that others around them haven't. While that's understandable, it's not the point of the mysteries. While each tradition's mysteries are different, ultimately they all bring you to the same point, and one who has deeply experienced the mysteries does not generally lord that fact over others who have not, or state that his or her given path to fulfillment is better than another's, just different. Personally, I've found that those who have had deep experiences in the mysteries are the most generous with information and sharing, even without breaking vows and oaths of secrecy. Rather than share the specifics of ritual, they will share their personal experience, and the things they felt were most important to do in order to have that experience, which is far more valuable than the specific mechanics or words of the ritual itself.

One of the proverbs quoted, even in witchcraft Books of Shadows, is "power shared is power lost," yet the most powerful people I know share their knowledge, and wisdom, at no detriment to themselves. They hold an abundant attitude, believing that if everybody fulfills their True Will, then everybody wins and the world is a better place. Hoarding power is like hoarding money under the mattress. It provides you with a certain measure of personal security, but it's ultimately useless, because if you continue to hoard it, you can't use it and enjoy it. You simply have it and can't tell anybody else. When you share your good fortune, or wisdom, others are more apt to

share with you, and you mutually benefit. Hoarding anything contracts our consciousness and energy. Most prosperity magicians will tell you to clean your house before doing prosperity magick. Give away anything you don't plan to use. Share and it will return to you. Make room and new things will enter your life. When we talked about hoarding power, my friend Rosina quoted her grandmother to me, with the wisdom of "a clenched fist cannot receive." Wisdom for all of us to live by. When you hoard power or knowledge, you can retain it and feel special, but you close yourself off to even more power and wisdom because you are not open to receive. I like the analogy of spiritual power and wisdom as the candlelight. A candle can share its light with another candle, and it loses none of its own light in the process.

Some traditions of magick believe that, before you die, you have to pass your earthly power on to at least one other person or your spirit will be troubled. I've noticed that many who enter the rank of a teacher or high priest/ess in an initiatory tradition where a lineage current is passed to them, and do not take at least one student to pass the power on to, find that it becomes somewhat toxic in their own lives, and they often leave the tradition in search of something else.

For my own work, I tend to err on the side of openness and being public. My calling has been to be a public witch, to be involved in the education of both witches and society, to be available, and to build bridges to other communities. I believe we are entering the Aquarian Age as the age of light, where all is revealed, yet revelation is not always the same as experience. Once the way has been shown, we have to choose to enter the mysteries. With the mysteries being shared in that way, I believe the problems of the past ages' hierarchies and abuses of hierarchies can be avoided, yet a whole new range of challenges will be revealed, to be tackled in the Aquarian Age.

Secrecy and openness must be balanced and reconciled by each witch, determining what is best for your given life path. We are most influenced by our teachers. If our teacher valued secrecy, and our training was helpful and benign overall, then we too will value it. If not, then we look to the other end of the spectrum. Silence, the fourth point on the witches' pyramid, goes well with secrecy, for sometimes simply not speaking on something is appropriate, though there is no specific action to hide things. I recently spoke to a witch who thought the silence of the witches' pyramid was symbolic, and not literal. For both the magick of spell casting and the mysteries, I

think silence does mean silence, because silence is called for in our practice. Emptiness of noise is a virtue to the witch, and it is part of our secrecy. Learning the similarities and differences between secrecy and silence is also very important. There is great wisdom in the part of the Wiccan Rede that says, "speak little, listen much." To the witch, listening skills are just as important as speaking, if not more so, for we must be silent to hear the mysteries of magick.

Exercise 61

Vow of Silence

For your next major magickal working or ritual, involve a vow of silence, a speaking "fast," as part of the ritual. Like an expansion of Exercise 19: Time of Silence in Volume One, choose a day when you can mitigate contact with others, possibly on a day off from work, and explain to your family and friends what you are doing beforehand, but experience the day with a vow of silence, not speaking from awakening until the ritual. Notice how it affects your perception and awareness for your magickal working. Silence can be a valuable ritual ally when you are seeking to open the gates of magick, along with fasting, isolation, and traditional meditation techniques. The virtue of silence has been greatly underplayed in our modern, noisy multimedia era. Silence also refreshes and rejuvenates our spirits to better handle the world of form.

Death

One of the thirteen attributes of the witch is to celebrate life, and one of the ways we celebrate life is by not ignoring death. While we have the stereotypical image of those involved in death cults and Underworld shadow mysteries as being dark, gothic, serious, and morose, most people I know who are truly involved in and understand the mysteries of death are bright, optimistic, joyful, spontaneous, humorous, and fun. To know death is to know that any moment could be your last. Do what you want to do. Say what you need to say. Live life with no regrets, because tomorrow you might be dead. Toltec shamanic practitioners call this practice having death as your ally, companion, or informer. The spirit of death is truly a guide and ally to the living. Enjoy

life while you have it, for even with reincarnation, you will never be given this same opportunity, this same body, place, and time again. Relish it.

As ministers and counselors, we come across those dealing with death, dying, and grief issues, and it's our understanding of death, of change, that spiritually informs us on these issues. Many pagans and nonpagans alike end up on our doorstep only when they have run out of all other hope, and our job might simply be to ease them in their transition from the world of flesh. Many witches specialize in this hospice work, formally in a hospice or hospital setting or informally by aiding others who come to them on a case-by-case basis. The magick and rituals are secondary to the companionship and emotional support.

It is important to remember that just because we have experienced the mysteries of death, and see death simply as a change or transformation, that not everybody, even those identifying as a pagan or witch, has experienced the same mystery. Even if they have, it's important to realize the mysteries are really on that higher, transpersonal level, and no matter how "enlightened" you may feel you are or should be, a personal loss is a personal loss. While we are on the wheel of cycles, grief is as natural as the winter. We mourn, we remember, and we move on, so that we can continue to walk the wheel. Those who are enlightened by the mysteries do not avoid the sting of Scorpio, of pain, loss, and grief, but the touch is known to be passing, and the knowledge that it is temporary can dull it a little.

In understanding our own process, and when working with others, it is helpful to have a model of the process, and one of the most popular models is the five stages of grief. The system was proposed by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her 1969 book entitled *On Death and Dying*. It outlines five separate stages that one goes through when facing tremendous loss, and it has been used by those who are terminally ill, grieving over the death of a loved one, or even in momentous life changing experiences such as divorce, accident, or the end of a career. Originally the system was designed for those who receive a terminal diagnosis. While there are five stages, Kübler-Ross acknowledges that they do not always happen in order, nor do all five steps happen to everybody in all of these situations. The model is a map to help mourners understand where they are, but not a barometer to judge whether they are "grieving on time" or behind schedule. There is no one timeline and model that fits all. While the five stages and Elisabeth

Kübler-Ross both have their share of critics, and anybody who has gone through a serious grief process will tell you that life is not divided into five neat categories, the model has become widely accepted and is a good place for you to start your study of the grief process so you can help others with it.

1. **Denial.** One denies of the reality of the situation or believes that there must be some mistake, that the loss cannot possibly be true.
2. **Anger.** One questions "why me?" and often directs anger toward another, such as the divine, the deceased, or oneself.
3. **Bargaining.** Rather than being angry with the divine, a process of bargaining can occur. One will offer something precious in exchange for a change in the situation, such as more time with a dying loved one, or longer life if he or she is the one dying.
4. **Depression.** One enters a stage of defeat, feeling that the grieving process is too much to bear and that it is impossible to work through the process.
5. **Acceptance.** One truly accepts the loss and ceases to struggle with it, integrating it into his or her reality.

In working with others going through the grieving process, there are many magickal rituals that can be performed. There are rituals for the dying and dead themselves, to aid them in their journey. There are rites for the remaining family. They do not take away the pain and grief, or even speed it up, but put the grief in the context of the sacred. Some do have a practical purpose, as the energy of death and dying is very specific, and if it is held on to, it can cause all manner of problems.

Crossing Over

Sometimes the dying need to know it's okay to go. Their family or minister has to tell them it's okay. Only then is a peaceful transition possible. Some need to be guided when it's time. Though I've only done it a few times—psychically opening the way by calling my own spirit guides and ancestors—using guided imagery to help the transitioning person let go when the body is failing is very helpful. The imagery is based

upon the person's belief system. If you are working with a Christian, describing the staircase to heaven or calling upon the angels might be the best method. If a pagan, focusing on a particular pagan afterlife, such as the Blessed Isle of Avalon or the Eternal Summerland, can be the best image. For those shunning any kind of storybook afterlife imagery, simply using a bright prismatic white light to enter into is the best route. Such rituals are sometimes formalized and called Rites of Withdrawal or Rites of Crossing.

Putting the Dead to Rest

After the body is dead, some spirits will need aid crossing over. One of the many soul selves (*LTOW*, vol. 1, Lesson Seven) may not know what to do or where to go, so the same process of guided imagery can be used after asking the soul self if it wants to go and wants help. I don't believe in forcing a spirit to cross over unless that spirit is being destructive to others. We all take our own time to process and move on to the next phase. If the imagery does not easily work, you can do a full ritual, casting a circle around the place in question. As the spirit is in the circle, and the circle is between worlds, it is easier to call guidance and help the spirit to another level. I like to light a white pillar candle, and call a pillar of light from the Upper World, down through the Earth, around the candle, and down into the Underworld. The spirit can ride it like an "elevator" and go to whatever realm is most appropriate. If the spirit is truly harmful, a formal banishment can be done, forcing the spirit, through your divine connection, to the realm that is appropriate. It's important to note that many reported hauntings are not actually ghosts, or even empty shells of the remaining spiritual bodies that believe they are still alive, but most ghosts are echoes etched into the ethers of a place, endlessly replaying some past event. They can be disrupted and banished.

Cleansing the Home

Doing a home-cleansing ritual after the death of a family member is a good way to lighten the energy of grief from the family, especially if the person died at home. When the soul transitions, it leaves a particular energy. For some, that energy is pleasant, particularly if the person died at peace, but if there was extended pain, illness, or sudden shock, then the energy can be heavy and needs to be cleansed. All the tradi-

tional cleansing tools are appropriate, but I particularly like using "light" herbs and scents, such as rose water and the scents of orange and lavender.

Letting Go Ritual

Funeral rituals are for both the living and the dead. They provide a momentum for the dead to let go of life and move to the next phase of existence, while they provide a forum for the family to grieve and process the loss. Ancient pagan cultures have had a variety of funerary rituals, from Viking funerals to Egyptian mummification. I have to say I've never truly officiated at a pagan funeral. Most of the grief counseling I've done has been for the pagan members of a family, when the "official" funeral was from another religion and it left them wanting. So we performed a ritual of both remembrance and letting go where they could be more directly involved and feel that their own spiritual beliefs were validated.

On the magickal side, we prepare for death through initiation, so we can cross the gates to the next world more consciously. Our myths and mysteries make up our bardos, our manuals for crossing into the next world, our books of living and dying. Magickal civilizations have intricate instructions for the soul crossing over. Most famous is *The Tibetan Bardo*, used by Tibetan Buddhists, though most pagans favor *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, also known as *The Book of Coming Forth by Day*, with its decidedly more pagan flavor. One is guided through the realms of the gods and given the "negative confessions," where the soul must proclaim to specific gods what sins were not committed in life. The Egyptians, who embraced so much of death in life, can be excellent guides in our own understanding of death from a pagan context. You can look at the Descent of the Goddess through the seven gates and the seven Celtic castles as other bardo texts. Each is a map to detach from the physical world, to not be tied down to what one might call "karma" today, and make a conscious choice about the next stage of consciousness and life, in harmony with the paths of the universe and the will of the gods.

Our initiation into this level of spirit and our shadow work is intended to prepare us to face death. Witches conquer both fate and death, not because we are exempt from either, but because we work consciously with both. Our mysteries can be embodied in

fate and death as Goddess and God, as the triple weaver and the horned god of death and resurrection.

Exercise 62

Preparing for Death

Perform at least one, if not all three, of these preparation-for-death rituals:

1. Imagine you are dead and write your own obituary. Look at your life. What would you like to have remembered? If you died right now, are there things that would be left undone and incomplete? Do you have regrets? Are there things that you wish you had said or done, particularly with the people in your life? Read your obituary to those close to you in life. Ask them if they feel it is accurate. Did you forget anything? Would they have written it differently?

2. On traditional ancestor altars, one puts the photos, objects, drinks, food, colors, and other symbols that were favored by specific ancestors. What would you want on your ancestor altar? What would be your favorite drink? Usually an alcoholic drink is preferred, because literal liquid spirits help us commune with the spirits of ancestors, as the vital "fire" of the drink is taken by the spirits to feed their link with you. What colors would be used? Do you have a particular photo you prefer? What kind of help do you think you will be able to offer future generations? Build your own ancestor altar, to yourself, and meditate there. Seek to commune with your future ancestor self. What will the future you tell the present you to prepare? When you are finished, dismantle the altar. Do not leave it up. Never put your own photo, or any other living person's photo, on your ancestor altar, because that can be an act of sympathetic magick to send that person closer to the ancestors.

3. Spend some extended time in a graveyard, particularly at the grave of an ancestor, if possible. If none of your blood ancestors are buried in the graveyard near you, spend time by the highest monument in the graveyard, or near a crossroads in the graveyard. Performing a night vigil in the graveyard is ideal,

but due to trespassing laws, it might not be possible, so determine when and how long you will stay in the graveyard, amongst the dead. Be comfortable with the dead and with their energy that permeates the land, and take notice of what emotions and thoughts move through you during this time. You don't have to do any formal rituals, but it would be respectful to bring an offering to your ancestors, as well as the guardian of the graveyard.

Don't forget the mundane preparations for death. If you don't have a last will and testament, seek out a lawyer and prepare this important legal document. If you don't have proper documentation on how you would like the medical community to handle an extended, incapacitating illness, and how you would like your body to be disposed of, make all the necessary legal arrangements. Make sure that your religious wishes in terms of funeral arrangements are clear. Many families will plan a Christian burial of their pagan family members because it is easier for them, even if it goes against the faith of the deceased.

One of the powers of the witch is "to sense, conjure, converse with, and command spirits." Much of the witch's association with spirits is with the dead, yet most modern witches are fairly neglectful of ancestor reverence. We learn our Craft with a deep reverence for the dead one time in the year, Samhain; yet if you look at other cultures, ancestor reverence is a part of yearlong spirituality, not just one season, even if it is emphasized in a particular season. If you look to the ancient world, what is called necromancy, trafficking with the dead, is a big part of the arts of the witch, though there are some branches of the Craft, old and modern, that focused strictly on life and the living, rather than the dead. But as Scorpio shows us, sex (or creation) and death are intimately tied together, and you can't really have a holistic theology without looking at both.

In many cultures, the living relatives were responsible for the welfare of the dead in the Otherworld, making offerings so they have everything they would need. In Asia, money, model homes and furniture, and in the modern day even "credit cards" would be burned as offerings, to send the dead to the ancestors in the next world. Likewise,

the dead were responsible for the welfare, prosperity, and protection of a family in life, bringing good fortune.

In modern witchcraft, we have a reverence for the dead of both flesh and spirit. An ancestor can be of our genetics, of our blood, but also of our lineage and tradition. There are four classic "lines" of ancestors we can commune with:

Blood Line

Blood ancestors are the genetic family to whom we are directly related. For some, the line of blood involves solely the mother's lineage, sometimes called the Distaff Line, as many cultures focused on the mother's line of birth, since one was never certain of the father's line.

Milk Line

These are the ancestors who nourished us, such as an adoptive family, or those who were not blood relatives but caretakers. They include family friends, nannies, best friends, and those we consider family even with no blood connection.

Soul Line

These are the ancestors we feel connected to on a soul level—our soul family. Our bodies may have no genetic connection, but we are "related" on another level.

Wisdom Line

These are the ancestors of our specific religion's tradition. They can be ancestors in a larger sense, such as all witches, or ancestors of a specific lineage. For example, Alexandrian witches would claim Alex Sanders as their ancestor from the wisdom line. If you are not an Alexandrian initiate, you do not have the same connection to Alex Sanders as the initiates of his tradition. The same would go for all the major modern witchcraft founders.

Sometimes our relationship with the ancestors can depend on their genetic heritage and the culture from which they come. For European paganism, it's interesting to note that those cultures from a more temperate climate have more "friendly" dead, culturally predisposed to aid them. The idea of placing the dead into the ground and then

witnessing the verdant plants rising from that ground is part of the teaching that the ancestors are "pushing up" blessings for us. Such traditions hold that those who are not priest/esses in communion with the gods directly should go first to the ancestors as intermediaries for the gods, doing magick through asking the ancestors for help and making offerings. Working with the dead is a first step to deeper magick with the gods directly, yet one doesn't then forget the ancestors. I realized much later that one of my first contacts into the world of magick was my deceased great aunt, who led me to question my scientific worldview and then seek out witchcraft as the answer for me. It was only later that I truly learned to work with her as an inner-world contact.

Other cultures with less fertile land or in harsher climates, separate themselves from the dead. They have the "unfriendly" or "sleepy" dead. I know of some friends who, when working with ancestors from a Norse or Saxon background, get a response from the ancestors like, "What do you want? Is it Ragnarok already?" It's interesting to explore our blood lines, and the mix of ancient pagan ancestors with relatively recent Christian ones, to see how each relates to our heartfelt call to spiritual communion.

Many modern traditions of witchcraft have popularized the concept of the Mighty Dead, the powerful witch ancestors. Traditional Craft has brought us the notion of the Hidden Company, and both the Hidden Company and the Mighty Dead are akin to the enlightened ancestors, the Eastern bodhisattvas, the Hermetic secret chiefs, or the modern ascended masters.

One of the problems with modern witches and ancestor work is the issue of reincarnation. If we are honoring the ancestors, aren't we preventing them from reincarnating into the next life? Or preventing them from resting in the next life and enjoying paradise, Avalon, or heaven? If we believed strictly in one soul, then perhaps, but from the shamanic witchcraft perspective, there are many souls, and some parts of us move on and recombine into new life and some don't. When we are beyond the physical world, we are in touch with our multidimensionality, and can be in many places at the same time. When we work with living people, we can commune with their higher selves, no matter where they are physically (*TOSW*, exercise 17). When we work with the ancestors, we can work with a wiser, multidimensional aspect of them, yet their personal selves can be reincarnated. That is why many who make contact with the ancestors find their own issues with those ancestors, if they knew them during their lives,

melt away. Pains, abuses, and misunderstandings typically (but not always) dissolve from this wiser perspective. The personality remains to help us understand whom we are communing with, but it is a transformation of the highest aspects of their persona, much like the scorpion becoming the eagle. From our perspective, the transformation doesn't always happen immediately. If you have a recently departed ancestor who was violent or abusive, don't seek that ancestor specifically. Ask for the ancestors who are right for you at this time, and "see" who comes forward. Though they exist in a realm beyond our concepts of time, they still need time to adjust, heal, and learn before they are useful contacts for us. Sending them blessings, healing energy, and love specifically, or to your line in general, can speed their healing process on the other side of the veil.

The other main question for modern pagans regarding ancestor reverence is *why*. Modern witches question why we honor the ancestors. We have a respect for them at Samhain, but why should they play a role in our yearlong spiritual practices? Those who have already communed with the gods, or successfully done magick, can see the ancestors as spiritually irrelevant, and for some they do not play an important role. Yet if we have a theology that embraces the connection between everything, including the living and the dead, then our spiritual practice must embrace that connection. We have a reciprocal relationship with the spirit world, and each of us is charged to build and maintain bridges with one or more realms. Some witches are linked to the fey, who, in traditional faery lore, were also associated with the dead. Others witches are linked to the angels, and still others specifically to plant, animal, or mineral realms. The ancestral realm is simply another world we are linked to, and many of us are called to establish and nourish those connections. We "feed" the ancestors, and they "feed" us with their blessings.

Many perform ancestor work not only for the spiritual connection and the magickal aid, but to "redeem" the ancestors. Much of what is described by less-than-credible fortunetellers as family curses are simply family energies that are passed on from one member to the next, until someone has the strength to transmute that energy into something healthy. This dense energy can manifest as physical or psychological illness, "bad luck," or a variety of emotional issues. Families repeat patterns they learned from their elders, continuing the cycle and perpetuating a problem until a family member is born who is more aware, who can use his or her power to transform it. Many hear

these teachings and are aghast, feeling that such a theory either blames the innocent, forcing the individual to take on the issues of the ancestors, or gives the ancestors a scapegoat, rather than expecting them to take full responsibility for their actions. These teachings claim neither. They simply state that we are all connected, but in particular, we are directly connected to the ancestors. Actions we take to heal ourselves here and now also help heal our blood line, including both our ancestors and our future descendants. It is not a teaching of blame or escape. It is building a relationship of mutual reciprocity and love, to benefit both sides of the veil. Many teachings of ancestor reverence, and how it relates to faery seership, can be found in the work of Orion Foxwood, particularly in the book *The Faery Teachings*. I also suggest reviewing the material of *TOSW*, chapter 9.

Exercise 63

Ancestor Altars and Shrines

If you don't have an ancestor altar up in your home all year round, consider building an altar or shrine where you can honor the ancestors throughout the year. Most put it in a different room than the main temple or altar, to prevent any "crossed" energies of having two altars up and going at the same time in the same room. Generally, ancestor altars have candles, objects of your cultural heritage, photos of the ancestors, offerings of their favorite drinks and food (to be returned to the Earth after a short time before they go rancid, leaving them out only long enough to be energetically consumed), their favorite colors, and perhaps inheritances and heirlooms you might possess. Typical in many cultures is the concept of putting at least one clear glass of pure water on the altar as a connection to the west, to the element of water, and to the land of the dead. You can have a subtle altar that might not be noticed on the mantle of your fireplace, or a macabre altar with death and skull imagery, depending on what works best for you and the ancestors. Light your candles and incense, and make your offerings regularly, depending on how connected you are to the ancestor work. I try to make my offerings a part of my seasonal work with the eight holidays of the year.

Ancestor reverence in the modern Western world has been revived by the Spiritualist Church, which in turn has influenced modern Theosophy, Wicca, and the general New Age movement. Though it's classically considered necromancy to speak with the dead, the word has such a Hollywood image of something dark and dastardly, such as reanimating the dead in a horror movie, that today we use the terms *medium* or *channel* to describe one who communicates with the dead. Yet by old-world and Biblical standards, our modern mediums on television talk shows would be considered necromancers and witches.

Many modern witches have learned séance and mediumship techniques to aid others in their work with the ancestors. Much of our modern ancestor reverence is intended to repair something that was lost with the rise of the mainstream Western religions. From a pagan perspective, this wouldn't be considered ancestor work at all, because the work hasn't started. Many people simply need to commune with the ancestors through another, having what they feel is a verifiable experience—receiving a name, date, or some other information that can be corroborated, to "prove" life after death and that consciousness survives the death of the body. It gives great comfort to the living to know the dead are "okay," but it also helps alleviate the fear the living have of dying, to know in some way that death is not final. Mediumship and séances can be performed in a modern, nonreligious context, or in the context of pagan magick. Here are some ideas to explore if you are called to this work. They all build upon techniques you have already learned in your witchcraft training.

Mediumship can occur generally in two main forms—the ritualized séance and the more modern direct reading. Both have their advantages and disadvantages. Modern reading usually requires the reader to be in a direct line with the client, though some do it over the phone quite successfully. A tactile reader likes to hold the client's hand, or an object belonging to the ancestor the client wishes to reach. With the connection forged with the client energetically through this touch, sight, or sound, the medium will enter a meditative state. Modern witches can use their instant magick trigger (*ITOW*, chapter 6). The medium will then silently, or out loud, ask the ancestors of the client to come forward, potentially calling upon her own ancestors to act as intermediaries and guides between the two. One of my favorite images is to view the ancestors around the client, as if they are all in a room together. The ancestors can

often "appear" as a nonspecific crowd. Imagine a podium or something similar in the room, and ask the first ancestor with a message to "step up to the microphone" so you can hear the ancestor. The medium then receives psychic messages through one of the psychic senses, and these messages can have a literal meaning or symbolic meaning. Those with clairaudience can hear direct messages, and possibly even the voices of the client's ancestors, and describe to the client the personality attached to each voice. Others will receive images through clairvoyance, with direct meaning—images of the ancestor, the ancestor's possessions or house, or what the ancestor did—or symbolic images, such as a rose to represent love, or a wedding ring to indicate a spouse. The symbols can appear in the personal symbol language of the medium or the client, and it can take practice for the medium to be able to decipher which is which through intuition. Other mediums just know information without pictures, words, or other sensory input.

While theologically we look at ancestors as either being in the Underworld or Upper World, or simply the Otherworld, mediums often report no sensation of the message coming from up or down, but all around the client, saying that the ancestors are right with us, right behind us, or all around us. Such imagery is profound and useful to apply not only to the ancestors, but also to our entire concept of the spirit world, being all around us rather than just above or below. From the moment we are born, we are in the land of the dead. As we grow up, it grows stronger around us, until it finally claims us. Our ancestors are the closest spirit contact we have, for they are most like us when compared to the angels, animals, or fey. They understand us the best.

The ritualized séance found in spiritualism usually has a small group of individuals sitting around a table with the medium, often holding hands to create a psychic circuit, right over left, like a witch's circle. The atmosphere is usually dark, aiding the psychic's ability to shut out other distractions, and sometimes an oracle device, like a pendulum, Ouija board, or pen and paper for automatic writing, is used in the experience. Otherwise the medium receives messages from the ancestors and spirits, or fully invokes the ancestors to speak through him or her, much as in the case of deity invocation. The ritual of the séance is different from direct readings, because either the group or a particular individual in the group helps guide the medium, who goes into a much deeper trance, and the group or individual acts like a battery or relay station for the medium.

Spiritualists who work in pairs or regular groups, a battery and receiver, often have much deeper and more profound experiences with their clients than those performing modern readings.

From a shamanic perspective, you can journey to the Underworld and speak with the ancestors directly, return, and relate the message to your clients. Your own ancestors and totems can guide you to the right ancestors for your clients. This form of connection is less interactive, but powerful nonetheless.

My friends Apollon and Hyperion, who have a background in a form of British Traditional Witchcraft, Santeria, and a Christian form of spiritualism, combine the rituals of paganism with more traditional forms of séances using a cauldron fire of salt and alcohol to act as an interface with the spirits, plus incense and altar images of both death and life, such as an animal skull and fresh flowers. Either Apollon or Hyperion works in partnership with the other as a medium, the two guiding each other, trading off in responsibilities, and keeping watch when one invokes a spirit, asking questions of the spirit. During such rituals, there are many people involved, and those leading the rituals are not the only ones who receive a "part" of the message; when everybody in the community shares the message, a full picture is developed as to what the ancestors are saying to that community.

Exercise 64

Mediumship

Explore a form of mediumship to work with the ancestors. Ideally, start by speaking with your ancestors in meditation. Then, if called to do so, be a bridge to the ancestors for another person, and see how the experience works for you. You might discover that ancestor work is a great calling for you, or that it is not your path at all. Though ancestors play a strong role in my personal work, and I've taught students how to develop the psychic skills to not only conduct their own ancestor communication, but also do it for others, it is not a big part of my professional practice as a healer and witch.

Psychic work will always bring its share of criticism, because no matter how verifiable an experience might be, it is never accurate 100 percent of the time. There is always

room for interpretation, and those who seek to disprove the experience see obvious frauds while those who seek to believe see the same demonstrations and find genuine spiritual practitioners.

Many critique traditional séances as out-and-out frauds and modern forms of mediumship as "cold reading." Cold reading is reading the expressions of the client to determine the next message or question, leading the client to give more information, and then using that information and some common sense to dazzle the client into thinking that a psychic experience has occurred. While cold reading does occur, there are still many genuine mediums and psychics. To avoid unconscious cold reading as a genuine psychic, for mediumship or even a rune or tarot reading, I suggest not looking at the client directly. When I read cards, I'm reading cards and looking at them for my focus, or I have my eyes closed when doing a psychic reading. I don't look for reaction, I don't ask questions, and I usually request that clients don't ask questions until the main message has been delivered—then we can talk and look deeper. But I want the original message to come through as clearly and unbiased as possible before we apply human judgment and interaction to the interpretation.

Witchcraft and the Modern World: Sex

Scorpio is the power of delving into the taboo, that which is both sacred and profane and not easily understood. One of its main provinces is sexual energy, for sexual energy has all the sensual qualities and fecundity we associate with the world of form, matter, and life, yet this energy can rise through our awareness, through the arts of sexual tantra and sexual magick, to expand our awareness, transform us, and bring us to the timeless view of reality. The enlightenment of sexuality is like that of the transformation of Scorpio. The root powers of the snake and scorpion are potentially deadly and obsessive with desire, but they ascend through the purifying power of spirit to become the eagle/phoenix of the next world.

For our modern society, sexuality is like a many-headed Hydra, with each head presenting a new challenge to what we consider "normal" or "good." Even as witches, coming from a cult of fertility, we can struggle with our sexual identity, mores, and beliefs. While many will say that the fertility of modern Wicca is symbolic on many

levels, and that would be true, it is also fertility and sexuality in the most obvious sense—sex. We shouldn't be afraid of embracing sexuality while we expand upon the definition of fertility.

As with most topics, witchcraft and pagan society do not have one solid, neatly defined position on all aspects of sexuality. As modern witches, our spiritual guideposts on the topics of sex and relationship are "An' ye harm none, do as ye Will" and a frequently quoted line from *The Charge of the Goddess*, "All acts of love and pleasure are My rituals." Generally pagans are accepting of sexual identities, behavior, and relationships that are based upon mutual consent and harm none. Yet, what harms another is debatable.

While some Wiccans have been perceived in days past as homophobic, emphasizing the British Traditional line of fertility, of male to female or female to male initiation and strict gender roles for priestess and priest, much of what can be considered homophobia has been shed by the modern pagan community, even in such lineage traditions. Modern witchcraft has created a fluidity in our society that allows people to expand traditional roles and experiment. People may also look to traditional roles, but they should respect the rights of those who seek to expand and experiment with their roles. One can be part of a more formalized gender role tradition without being personally or socially prejudiced against others, but like other aspects of society, there will always be those who hold to older prejudices. Generally those in the GLBT community have not only been accepted, but in some traditions of magick, actively welcomed and embraced. Those who identify as transgendered have found acceptance in both mainstream and pagan societies more difficult, depending on where they live and the general social liberalness of the area, but overall pagan society moves toward not only tolerating, but also actively accepting, those of a minority identity. Most witches can identify with being in the minority and being persecuted for being different, whether the difference is obvious or not.

While unconventional sexuality and gender identities have been explored in paganism, unconventional relationship arrangements have also been explored. Many in paganism look to the ancient world tribal ideals of community, rather than the modern images of the nuclear family. Particularly due to the influence of Oberon Zell-Ravenheart and Morning Glory Ravenheart of the Church of All Worlds, polyamory has been a lifestyle explored in paganism. Polyamory is a sexual and romantic relationship not limited

strictly to a couple, but with multiple partners. For some it is simply a sexual experience, yet the term *polyamory* implies in its very name the loving connection, not just a sexual one, and it is usually indicative of a relationship, not a one-time encounter. Many form unconventional families with lovers, and particularly in paganism, this is not restricted to one man having many female lovers, as in more traditional polygamy. While polyamory has been explored in paganism, it has by no means been embraced by all pagans personally, or even accepted by all pagans. As those involved in polyamory experience misunderstanding and discrimination in the mainstream society, they can find the same issues in the greater pagan society. Yet, with our "laws" of "harm none" and "all acts of love and pleasure," the majority of pagans have a live-and-let-live attitude and believe that if everyone is consenting, then there is no problem.

Other "taboos" that should be at least contemplated by modern pagans include pornography, prostitution, fetishes, and BDSM. Many use sexual energy in magick. Some criticize Gerald Gardner for fetishising witchcraft with ritual nudity and scourging, yet there is a power in breaking normal societal taboos and a magickal history in using such practices. Modern magickal practitioners will explore aspects of BDSM—bondage, discipline, sadism, and masochism—and come away with great insights about themselves, having magickal experiences with the techniques.

While pornography doesn't seem so controversial to the modern pagan, there are those in the pagan community who are against most forms of pornography. Looking at pornography as something that devalues and dehumanizes women, they feel any Goddess-reverent tradition would not embrace pornography. Feminists and feminist spiritual tradition have seen that, in a society where women are not equal, many without better opportunities get involved in pornography and/or prostitution because they have no other options. While social inequality can be a factor, many people, male and female, straight and gay, can enter the pornography industry because they desire to and have made a conscious decision. Most witches would look to the teaching on free will and harming none, and believe that if you choose to do something and it's not overtly harming you, then we are not to impose our own personal beliefs on it.

The same argument can be applied to prostitution. Many look at it as a societal ill, but in ancient pagan societies, the role of the prostitute was very different from what it is today. Some who engage in the sex industry do so not only for financial reasons, but

also spiritual reasons, in some ways reclaiming the practices of the ancient sexual priestesses as best they can in the context of our modern society. While those not involved or educated on this type of path could scoff at such a notion, and think that this is simply someone trying to justify a harmful decision, we cannot really judge. Think of how many mainstream religious groups would look at pagans as misguided and ultimately hurting ourselves—sending ourselves to hell, according to their beliefs, and totally misunderstanding and misjudging our experiences. Can we afford to do the same to others? I don't think so. While we can decide something is not for us personally, particularly in regard to our sexuality and bodies, we cannot judge another person. I have known more than one priest/ess who has been involved in pornography, prostitution, or what I might call an extreme sexual fetish, yet has been a loving, capable, together, and responsible member of the clergy. These priest/esses look to their sexual experiences as shaping themselves, their magick, and their ability to be clergy. With their example, I've learned to keep an open mind, because you never know when the gods will call you to cross your particular comfort zone, to face fears and prejudices you never faced before, through the exploration of a taboo.

And it shouldn't have to be said, but in exploring magickal and spiritual sexuality, one should always remember magick protects you from STDs and other health concerns only when followed up by real-world action. Talk to your partners. Know your status. Get tested often, and act responsibly in all situations.

Ritual of the Guardian

The guardian is the gatekeeper between life and death. So many of the deities of witchcraft are the guardians of the thresholds, the crossroads, and the in-between places. They are the torchbearers, light stealers, and keepers of the keys. They are both guardians and guides to the mysteries. Which figure calls to you in your studies of the gods? Commune with the guardian deity in your pantheon, and design a ritual to honor and explore the mysteries of life, sex, death, and the ancestors. You can meet with this deity in meditative vision or shamanic journey, or if you already have a connection to your chosen god, you can try a direct invocation (*TOSW*, exercise 19).

In this ritual, you will either ask yourself the three questions listed here, or the deity will ask you at least three questions regarding the lessons of this zodiac gateway. You will have to answer each of them before you are allowed to pass on to the next lesson and gate. The questions for Scorpio are: Which of your desires are toxic? Which of your desires are noble? How are you transforming the world with them? When you have completed the ritual, make sure you continue to honor and work with this deity over the course of the year. Use this connection to better understand your own sense of guardianship.

Homework

- Do exercises 60–64 and record your results in your journal or BOS.
- Perform your master spell for this lesson.
- Review one myth from one of the cultures outlined on page 31.
- Review one religion as outlined on pages 29–30.
- Choose one figure from the biography list on pages 32–33, and learn all you can about that person.
- Continue with your final project.
- Work with the Scorpio guardian deity from your personal pantheon.
- Obtain the Scorpio gem for your "breastplate" charm bag, if you haven't done so already. Work with the Scorpio stone this month.
- Work with one of your thirteen tools, re-consecrating it. Seek out its spiritual equivalent in the Otherworld, and know its mysteries.
- Optional: Make a fluid condenser (*TOHW*, chapter 9) out of a high-grade, flammable alcohol for this zodiac sign. Research appropriate plants for that sign, and choose the one that is right for you (*OTOW*, chapter 13).
- Optional: Find a small stone with a flat surface that you can mark with the zodiac sign of Scorpio. Cleanse it, mark it, and charge it. You can also use it like a talisman, along with or in place of the Scorpio gemstone.

- As the guardian stops you at the threshold, ask yourself these two questions, and take action based upon your answers:
  1. What challenges prevent you now from fully becoming a high priest/ess?
  2. What are you doing about them?
- When you complete the trials of this chapter, tie another knot in your witch's cord in a ritualized manner.

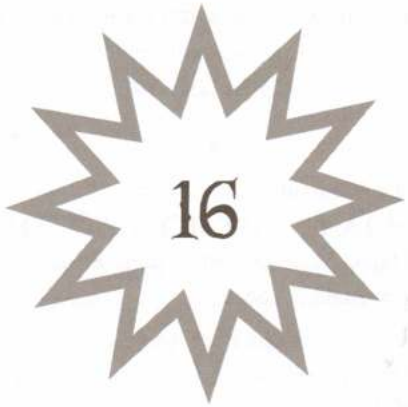
Tips

- How does the theme of what you desire and can't control—particularly sex, death, and secrecy—fit into your year-and-a-day goals and final project?
- Check to see if anyone is listed as a pagan or Wiccan minister at the local area hospitals. If so, try to make contact and offer support if you feel called to do healing and grief ministry. Since very few pagan ministers do this kind of work, if someone is already filling that gap, I'm sure that person would love the help, and you would benefit from his or her experience and insight.
- Check in with your shadow self as you work with Scorpio energies. Have you maintained and continued to evolve your relationship with your shadow self, or is it being neglected?
- Continue working on your own BOS, adding appropriate material to it each month. Write and perform these rituals when appropriate. You could write one of the following:

  Esbat for the new Moon in Scorpio, or for the full Moon in Taurus, its opposite sign.

  Sabbat of Samhain.

  Rite-of-passage ritual for a funeral for the family, friends, and community remaining, and/or a ritual of crossing over/withdrawal to help someone transition from this life to the next and be at peace.
- Explore the gateway of ancestors in your inner temple (*ITOW*, chapter 14).



Lesson Sixteen
The Wisdom of Sagittarius

The time between Samhain and Yule, the transition from Scorpio to Sagittarius, is truly a time beyond time. Though most of us think of it as the end of the fall and the start of our winter seasons, to witches, Samhain marks the New Year. But the year doesn't begin to wax again until Yule, when the Sun enters Capricorn, so this period is one of preparing for the winter through introspection, reflection, and, ideally, slowing down. The work of the harvests is done, and this is a personal time. However the energy of Sagittarius, while philosophical, is not what I would describe as slow and sedate. As a mutable fire sign, Sagittarius is about action and the variety of life. Unlike the inner intensity of Scorpio, Sagittarius directs the energy outward, and in its highest ideal, the individual on the quest for identity seeks to know his place in the world through exploring the world, its culture, and its philosophies. It's a quest to find where

one belongs, and the ultimate answer is simply the world, not any one single place or culture.

Gender: Male
Triplicy: Mutable
Element: Fire
Image: Archer/Horse/Centaur
Season: Fall
House: House of Higher Education, Philosophy, Religion
Key Phrases: "I Understand," "I Seek"
Theme: Education
Blessing: Optimistic
Challenge: Arrogance
Archetype: Teacher
Ruling Planet: Jupiter
- **Exalted:** South Node
- **Detriment:** Mercury
- **Fall:** North Node
- **Esoteric Ruler:** Earth
- **Monadic Ruler:** Mars

Classical Deity: Artemis/Diana
Angel: Barchiel
Colors: Purple, Blue
Metal: Tin
Stones: Sapphire, Lapis, Turquoise
Body: Thighs, Liver
Labor of Hercules: Shooting of the Stymphalian Birds
Gift of the Goddess: To Conjure Good Fortune
The Thirteen Goals of the Witch: Apply Knowledge with Wisdom
Alchemical Operation: Incineration
Cell Salt: Silicea
Tarot: Temperance/Art

Our modern society fills this time with the busy preparation and excited anticipation for the holidays. It is a time of recreation and hopefully joyous activity. It is the time of travel and trying new things. This joyful activity, a multitude of tasks and actions, is the power of Sagittarius.

The Way of the Teacher

Many archetypes apply to Sagittarius because of its mutable, changing nature. Some describe Sagittarius as the explorer or adventurer, because a drive of this sign is to explore other cultures and lands, seeking out things that are new and different. The philosopher archetype is also appropriate, as the exploration is not just of the lands themselves, physically, but the cultures, philosophies, and religions associated with them. The priest and priestess archetypes are suitable as well, because it is necessary to apply these philosophies in practice, not just intellectual study. But I have chosen the teacher archetype, not because those with strong Sagittarius energy are always teachers, but because they are eager and willing students, and the drive to learn inspires those influenced by this sign to then become teachers. Teachers often learn as much if not more from their students as the students learn from them.

Sagittarius rules the Ninth House of the astrological mandala, the house ascribed to higher education. For some, higher education is defined as college, but for others it doesn't refer to the career preparatory training of most colleges today, but to true education, which exposes students to a wide range of topics, cultures, and ideas. The Ninth House is one of philosophical education, the higher ideas that guide humanity. Religion can be included in this house. Its shadow, the Third House, ruled by Gemini, governs the basic education and communication skills, the things we learn close to home, while Sagittarius and the Ninth House rule more complex education, the things we usually learn far from home, geographically or intellectually.

Sagittarius is ruled by the planet Jupiter. Deemed the "greater benefic" by medieval astrologers, as the planet of good fortune, Jupiter's expansive nature is associated with the expansion of consciousness that is gained through higher education. Jupiter's gregarious nature is indicative that such education is meant to be enjoyable, yet Jupiter

can challenge us with its expansion, as we don't always want to widen our perspective or let new information enter our consciousness.

As a mutable fire sign, the elemental image of Sagittarius is hard to define. What is adaptable, changing fire, if fire by its very nature changes and adapts? The lightning bolt, the symbol of the storm king Jupiter, is an appropriate image for Sagittarius. Though not fire exactly, the lightning strike can create fire, and for those not versed in the science of lightning, it can appear to be a fire from the sky descending in a random bolt. The bolt or shaft of light is also akin to the arrow, for Sagittarius is the sign of the archer. Though we relate Jupiter to it now, the Olympian associated with Sagittarius was Artemis, as the huntress and archer, with the crescent Moon as her bow.

The figure of Sagittarius is not a simple archer, but has also been described as the centaur—half-man, half-horse—from Greek mythology. The centaurs were considered great archers and marksmen. They were free and wild creatures, aligned with their horse nature and giving us insight into the sign, for those with a strong Sagittarian energy want to be free and untamed, to go and do as they please, unrestricted by convention. They want to be free to explore.

The tale of Hercules specifically links Chiron to this sign. Chiron ascended to the heavens for his noble sacrifice to free Prometheus, becoming the sign of Sagittarius. Chiron was even felled by an arrow of Hercules'. He is a mentor and guide to many of the Greek heroes, including Hercules, teaching the arts of astrology, medicine, and divination. Unlike the other centaurs, Chiron was said to be kind and well educated. He was not prone to violence or drunkenness. He was possibly a god figure in Thessaly, and he was absorbed into the Greek pantheon as a mentor to heroes and demigods.

The labor that relates to Sagittarius as the archer is the shooting of the Stymphalian Birds. Described as the birds of Ares, horrible man-eating birds with brass claws and metallic feathers, toxic dung, and a violent temperament, they settled near Lake Stymphalus in Arcadia. One of Hercules' labors was to rid the land of these birds, which were terrorizing the locals and devouring the crops and fruit trees. The dense forest surrounding the lake made hunting the birds very difficult. Athena and Hephaestus aided Hercules with an idea and a tool. Hephaestus forged brass clappers to make a loud noise, to scare the birds into flight. Hercules could then easily pick them off with his bow and arrows, shooting them down. The few that survived never returned to

plague the people again. The origin of the myth might come from the constellations Lyra, Aquila, and Cygnus. When the Sun is in Sagittarius, these three constellations are rising. Aquila is an eagle, and Cygnus is the swan, but Lyra, now considered a lyre, was originally a vulture figure, linking the birds with the archer sign.

Not only does Sagittarius have the mentor connection with Chiron the centaur, but also the story of the Stymphalian Birds has what could be considered Hercules' other mentor and guide, Athena, aiding him yet again. The archer imagery is the flight of the arrows, free and unconstrained, but also the momentum and direction one must have when exploring other cultures and religions. One must have the desire to be educated beyond the basics. Many people never take that step.

The key phrase of Sagittarius is "I understand," for a good teacher helps students to not only memorize facts, figures, and formulas, but also truly understand the ideas, the context, from which the information is derived.

Exercise 65

"I Understand" List

In your journal or BOS, make a list of statements starting with "I understand," and complete the sentence with all the things you understand, or at least believe you understand. Not as easy as it sounds, is it? Understanding requires a depth of knowledge, to the point where we can question if we truly understand anything or simply believe we do. Contemplating what we do understand, and what we clearly don't, helps prevent us from making false assumptions about ourselves, others, and the world.

The experience of mentors, teachers, and guides, who have walked the path and struggled with the same questions, can be quite helpful to us. We follow established traditions because we know they have a lineage and a proven ability to take us deeper into the mysteries. Our teachers act as guides to help us navigate the journey. A good teacher will not have the answers for us, or at least not all of them, knowing that we each have to answer our own questions, but the teacher can point out when we appear to be on the right track and urge us to answer questions that will help get us to the next step.

Neopagan Theology

As the ruler of the house of higher education, including religious education, potential pagan ministers have to pursue a deep exploration into pagan theology. Many students are surprised to hear that I teach theology, because they automatically equate theology with dogma, and assume it is something inherent only in mainstream institutional religions, not witchcraft. Theology is simply the study of the sacred, of the divine, of God(s). Spells, rituals, and meditations are not enough. They help us experience our divinity, but having the vocabulary to explain our beliefs to others in terms they can understand is essential to our role as bridges to the greater community, as well as educating our own community. Many people seek out witchcraft or paganism with no real understanding of the belief system, other than that it is a nature religion. Many slap the general overt concepts of paganism onto a very Christian worldview and believe they really understand paganism, yet there are deep implications in the pagan worldview that are very different from those of most mainstream Christian paradigms. Educated pagans take the time to understand and reflect upon the philosophies of paganism beyond the basic rituals and spells.

Pagan theology has two stumbling blocks to its study. The first is that, in order to find the vocabulary for what we believe, we often have to compare our religion with others that have a more developed theological language. Constantly describing yourself in reference to what you are not, as found in mainstream religions, is frustrating, but it is in the mainstream religions that most people have some understanding or background. The second stumbling block is that there is little in the way of a cohesive, unified theology that pertains to all witchcraft traditions. In this day of modern eclecticism, there are as many traditions as there are practitioners, but there are some major currents that we can explore. These currents help us to understand most traditions, and help us as individual practitioners to more neatly define what we do or don't believe in.

Here are some of the basic concepts that must be understood in a pagan theology. Ultimately they are just terms to help us understand our philosophy and our relationship with the divine. The various definitions and interpretations can differ among philosophers and cause great debate.

Polytheism

Paganism is usually defined as a polytheistic religion, meaning a belief in many gods, when compared to monotheism, a belief in a single god. Ancient pagans looked to pantheons of many different gods, each with their own distinct names, personalities, and attributes. As cultures developed and interacted with other cultures, with differing mythologies, some gods absorbed others, just as some cultures absorbed others. Often gods of one culture were equated with gods of another culture as basically the same entities with different names. A Sun god in one tribe would be similar in nature to a Sun god of another tribe, even with differing names and stories. Polytheism generally celebrates a diversity of divinity, and modern pagans accept and acknowledge the reality of all the gods of the ancient pantheons. Some traditions equate the gods of one culture with the gods of another, looking at them as archetypal beings wearing different cultural masks, or as godforms. The Sun god is the Sun god, but he takes a different form in the Greek tradition than he does in the Celtic tradition. Other neopagan traditions see each god as individual and distinct.

Monism

While we call modern paganism polytheistic, it cannot be defined strictly as polytheism. Many forms of paganism have a monotheistic slant, referring to all gods as one god or some hidden divine force behind all gods, and behind all of creation. Monotheism is most strongly associated with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, though you can also arguably see aspects of monotheism in "pagan" Platonic concepts of divinity. As ceremonial magick has embraced theological teachings from Judaism through the Qabalah, mystical Christianity, and Platonic philosophy, and has in turn influenced the modern neopagan revival, such philosophies have crept into neopaganism and modern Wicca. Many cite the work of Dion Fortune as the strongest influence in this regard, yet the initiation rituals of Gerald Gardner, borrowing heavily from the Keys of Solomon, can also be a root of our Wiccan monotheism. True pagan reconstructionists, relying solely on the ancient texts, usually reject this monotheistic notion in favor of true polytheism. Those who identify with Norse or Saxon traditions usually prefer the term *heathen* to *pagan* to separate themselves from the monism and dualism of Wicca. The monotheistic current that is trying to be reconciled in modern paganism can more

accurately be described as monism. Monism is the philosophy that basically everything is made of one essence or substance, and ultimately there is only one kind of this substance. The reconciliation of polytheism with the monism current can be found in Hinduism, which holds a large pantheon of deities, yet states that all are one, and the illusion of separation is the maya, the illusion of reality. A similar sentiment can be found in Hermetic magick, which states that all is the Divine Mind, yet it has many projections, the various forms of life and spirits on the Tree of Life. Many witches look at the monistic current as the "web of life" that inherently connects all things. Monotheism in the modern context usually refers to religions that believe in one god as the creator, rather than many gods, but that god is seen as separate from the creation. Even self-avowed monotheistic traditions have aspects of polytheism, with angels, saints, and other intermediaries that share striking archetypal qualities with pagan deities.

Dualism

Many view Wicca as inherently a dualistic religion. In contrast to monism, with the concept of one spirit or substance that is all things, dualism sees everything consisting of two fundamental forces, usually described as Goddess and God, Lady and Lord, female and male, or negative and positive. While modern Wicca is definitely dualistic, it holds a paradox by also containing aspects of monism and pluralism. Some forms of Wicca really rely on a trinity structure, of both Goddess and God with a third androgynous spirit, such as the Great Spirit, which supports them both. While Christianity is generally described as a monotheistic faith, with one god, sects of Christianity that emphasize the battle between the forces of good and evil, God and the Devil, could arguably be called dualistic, as they are drawing upon theologies from Persian dualism found in Zoroastrianism and the dualism of some forms of early Gnostic Christianity.

Immanence

Pagan religions are described as religions of divine immanence. Divinity is found within the world, wherever you are. There is no sense of divinity being beyond you or beyond the material world. God is within you and all around you. Many interpret divine immanence as the divine manifest in the world through nature. It is described in contrast to transcendence, a belief that divinity is outside of you, and beyond you. In

transcendence, divinity is separate from the universe. The creator is said to be separate from the creation, as in most forms of Gnostic religion. I once had a student share a beautiful quote with me, attributed to the Christian Greek philosopher Athenagoras: "If the world were a well-tuned instrument played in rhythm, I would not worship the instrument but him who made it and played it." Though it's a nice saying, I realized that my student misunderstood the concept of divine immanence, because to most witches, there is no separation between the "instrument" and the builder/player of the instrument. The Goddess created the world, the instrument, out of her own body. The creation and the creator are not separate. Because of this, we believe the world and our physical bodies are inherently divine and must be embraced as a part of our spiritual path, rather than denied or transcended. This gives us a spiritual relationship with our environment and ecology.

Pantheism

"God" or the divine is the material universe. Divinity isn't simply in nature, it *is* nature. The world we know, all things on the planet including humanity, and the physical universe beyond the bounds of our planet, is divinity. Human judicial laws and morality arise from natural law, and there is no absolute or transcendent force beyond nature. Pantheism is a philosophy of divine immanence.

Panentheism

Panentheism states that divinity is immanent in the universe, but it also transcends the universe. God is both the creative force of the universe and the animating force in the universe. Neoplatonism can be considered panentheistic, and so can some interpretations of Hinduism. Panentheism is the philosophy that reconciles the paradox of both immanent and transcendent divinity. It is the term that most appropriately describes my own experiences and philosophies in witchcraft. Most modern pagan traditions have aspects of both immanence and transcendence, as we see divinity in us, and in everything, but also as something visionary and transcendent, communed with through psychic ability and spirit communication. Pagans see the world as the Goddess, but there is an aspect to her consciousness that we can commune with, which transcends our physical experience of the world and nature.

Entheoi

Entheos shares the same root word with panentheism, and it refers to the indwelling deity of the panentheistic philosophy. From a pagan perspective, entheos doesn't entirely work, for we are also polytheistic. The plural form of the word, *entheoi*, is more appropriate, referring to "the indwelling Gods, the Ancient ones who live and move in our hearts today as they did for our earliest ancestors."[1] Many modern practitioners of psychedelic plant rituals believe that the spiritual intelligences we commune with come right from our own DNA. This theory harmonizes ideas of ancestral memory, sacred blood, and panentheism.

Animism

Animism is a pluralistic view of reality where everything is said to have a soul or spirit, including what most outside of an animistic spirituality would consider inanimate objects. Everything has consciousness. Spirits are the indwelling consciousness of everything. Everything is alive. We are living in a wide community of many beings, only some of which are human. The others are animal, plant, and mineral, as well as the beings of clouds, the Sun, lakes, rivers, mountains, and crafted objects. Animism gave rise to polytheism, as the spirits of various "things" eventually became known as gods that ruled over those phenomena and qualities. Animism can also recognize the spirit of things that were physical, but are no longer, such as the spirits of the dead.

Personal Divinity

Most pagans believe that divinity can be experienced in a personal way. As both immanent and transcendent, you can commune directly with divinity, and through altered states of consciousness, you can receive a response back. For most pagans, the personal relationship with divinity, often experienced through one or more specific gods or goddesses, is at the heart of the tradition. Though many pagans act as priests and priestesses in a formal context, and they can be guides and teachers, no intermediary is necessary to commune with the gods.

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1. Judy Harrow, *Spiritual Mentoring: A Pagan Guide* (Toronto, Ontario, Canada: ECW Press, 2002), 27.

This vocabulary gives us a good place to start in discussing our mysteries, and relating them theologically to others. With these words we can try to understand what our spiritual ancestors believed, and how that applies to us today. Most forms of neopaganism can be considered both polytheistic and panentheistic.

Modern mystics and scholars will look back upon ancient pagan cultures and conjecture that although outwardly polytheistic, the priest/ess knew of the one force behind all the gods. In Egyptian lore, particularly as related in E. A. Wallis Budge's translation of *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, we have reference to Neter as "God," the supreme creative force, and Neteru as the "gods." It then becomes easy to make that assumption about all ancient and magickal cultures. Because this one-god/many-gods teaching is a part of our own theology and mystic experience, we assume that is the way the ancients saw it. One could argue that the mysteries are the mysteries, and once you get beyond the exoteric religions, they are the same for all. It's "obvious" that the ancient magickal priesthoods would see divinity the way we do. It's a practical assumption and one I usually share, but we have to also remind ourselves that for all practical purposes, these religions were developing in cultures that would be totally alien to us today, and all our understanding about them culturally, let alone religiously, is only our best educated guesswork. We can't assume anything with certainty. Historic research and personal psychic revelation can only take us so far, because we are still looking at the information from our current perspective.

Our theologies get even murkier when we go beyond the singular/plural questions of divinity and start asking questions such as "Who are the gods?" or even "What are the gods?" and "Can there be new gods?" When you survey religions, as you are asked to do each month in this course, you start to notice that the relationship people have with their environment greatly influences the way they see divinity—from transcendence to immanence and questions of plurality. Religions that develop in fertile lands create fertile, abundant gods and a belief that the world and nature are inherently good and spiritual. Religions that develop in times of suffering or in hard terrain, such as arid deserts, have angry and harsh gods, separate from nature, and the world is seen as a place of difficulty to be escaped. The foundation of Buddhism was laid when Siddhartha Gautama, the prince who would later become Buddha, leaves his palace and experiences the four sights—an old crippled man (old age), a man ravaged with disease

(illness), a corpse (death), and an ascetic. I wonder what religion Gautama would have founded if he wasn't sheltered from life in the palace, and his four pivotal experiences were beautiful fragrant flowers, an orgy, ice cream, and a child playing ball. Our pivotal experiences shape our worldview.

Inherent in my understanding of theology and the mystery traditions of witchcraft is paradox. Techniques for altering consciousness can involve an aspect of overwhelming the mystic, in order to surrender to the altered state and the mystery experience it presents. Strenuous yogic posture works the body and energy centers to prepare for deep meditation. Circle dancing exhausts the body, and the dancers collapse, fall into a trance, and journey to the Otherworld. Ceremonial magicians overwhelm their minds with complex foreign rituals until they experience the divine directly. Paradox holds the same power. When we are confronted with two seemingly opposed views, and have to reconcile them in our consciousness, a gateway opens to the mysteries. Our magick is the reconciliation of dichotomies. The mysteries threaten to drive us mad because we must go beyond what is linear and rational, beyond the senses, beyond logic, beyond emotion, and beyond what is understood by exoteric society, to get to the heart of the mysteries, the pure experience of our true nature. It is in the experience of the mysteries that the truth is revealed.

Our paradox is the one of spirit and matter, transcendence and immanence. Life and death are intimately linked. The mysteries teach us that we are all immortal, yet we are all going to die. We all walk the wheels of life through birth, growing up, maturity, decline, and death, as well as being bornless, ageless, perfect, and undying. How can we be both? Yet we are. We hold the paradox of individuality and unity. We are all separate and individual beings, with our own wills to work, our own thoughts, ideas, drives, and bodies. We are all one. We all belong as cells to the body of the planet, and the planet is but a cell in the larger body of the cosmos. We are all individual spirits. We are all projections of the one. We are everything. We are nothing.

More traditionally minded witches, pagans, and heathens, focusing on a true and solely polytheistic model of divinity, derail the modern witch's concept of "All gods are one god" drawn from the ceremonial roots of Dion Fortune, and state that all gods are individual and different, just like people. They believe that is the true way of our pagan ancestors. Anything with an influence of the New Age has the taint of Christianity in it

and should be stripped out of paganism. Still, equating gods of different cultures with each other, or synchronizing one main deity with the names of many other goddesses and gods is an ancient pagan practice, and not just something found in modern occultism and Wicca. You need only to look at the writings of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. You also see the strains of monism in the writings of the philosophers of these cultures. Those pagan cultures that we could argue were truly polytheistic and not involved with monism or dualism don't have the same scope of surviving literature written by their philosophers and mystics. Most modern critics don't realize that the Hermetic mage or witch is really also saying all people are one people, all trees are one tree, everything is everything else, and at the same time, everything is individual and unique. Most of us embrace the paradox, intuitively if not overtly. We assume the initiate in the ancient pagan lands, in fact the entire world, came to these same conclusions of union and individuality that we have come to, yet we don't know that. So as modern witches, we have to simply find the theological teachings that are right for us, our experiences, and the world we want to help create.

Because of our ability to seek out the paradox, we can absorb and reconcile many of the mysteries and teachings of the ages. Witchcraft has survived, in one form or another, because of our ability to absorb and reconcile. As a cult of both life and death, we are a scavenger religion, able to absorb the best of whatever crosses our path. Though we have theological differences with religions like Voodou, we share the ability to absorb and reconcile the traditions around us. Because of that, we will survive and adapt as human consciousness changes and adapts. Our challenge of the next aeon will be crafting our new global view, creating a harmonious whole while at the same time honoring the separate traditions and cultures from which we weave our whole.

Neopaganism has drawn from traditions of both the East and West to find wisdom. We use ancient ideas and modern science, yet make our foundation from magick. No matter what you call it, magick has always been here and always will be. Magick trumps all religions and philosophies, for it is a mystery. We apply our intellectual and cultural trappings to it, but the how and why is less important than the experience. Magick is the force that reconciles the paradoxes. Ours is a magickal spirituality, with the balance of both receiving, through our psychic ability, and doing, through our spellcraft and ritual.

Exercise 66

What Are Your Theological Views?

Take some time to write out a theological description of your own views as a witch. What words and philosophies would best describe your beliefs? Imagine you were trying to present your religion to a group of divinity students from a wide range of religions. Do your beliefs, or what you have been taught by mentors and books, match your own personal experiences? If not, in what ways do they differ? Are there other theological vocabularies that would fit your experiences? Do your views fit what is traditionally considered neopagan? As an aspiring high priest/ess, articulate your theological views. Now sum them up in a few simple statements for the nonpagan mystic who asks you in day-to-day conversation what you, or what pagans, believe.

This exercise, along with a survey of other religions, is an important one to pagan priest/esses. Many find that when they really examine their inherent beliefs and experiences, they are not really pagan at all. They have to reconcile their own beliefs with their pagan practices and community, or find a personal synthesis that works for them. Some find their path through interfaith work, and see paganism as one part of their overall spiritual paradigm, not the whole. Others still leave paganism and seek out traditions that are more in harmony with their beliefs and experiences. Paganism is not a tradition that seeks recruitment. Pagans don't believe their ways are for everybody. We do not proselytize nor seek conversion, even as ministers. More practitioners does not equate with a better tradition. We'd rather have fewer practitioners who are really called to the tradition than lots of practitioners who aren't suited to the practice.

While it is important to look at the language of our beliefs, particularly if we are to be ministers and teachers, I have found that the deeper I'm involved in the Craft, the less I have to truly "understand" and put something beyond words into words, and the more I have to simply experience it for myself and use the techniques to help others have their own experiences.

Reconciliation

One of the hardest parts of practicing a pagan religion is living in a society that does not view paganism as mainstream in any way. How does our own worldview fit into a post-Christian era when the basic tenets of Judeo-Christianity, overtly or covertly, are still the guiding principles of our civilization? Many of us choose to deny the reality of other religions that do not fit into our worldview. Yet they are out there, part of our collective consciousness, and as many modern mystics would say, "Everything happens for a reason." We must ask, what is the reason? To reconcile our view of the world, rather than completely deny this mythology, we need to understand it. Many witches I know can quote and explain the Bible from a scholarly perspective better than professed Christians. Only by understanding the Bible can we reconcile ourselves and our roles in the new era as representatives of one of many global religions.

Sometimes we gain a better understanding of our specific beliefs by comparing tenets from other religions. Though I'd like to look at paganism on its own, without the constant contrast to other religions, we don't come from a pagan-dominant culture, so many of the themes of paganism are not familiar to the new student. The following points are based on common questions that new and even experienced students of witchcraft have asked me. They mostly arise from those coming from a Christian worldview, and in my experience, particularly Catholic. Comparisons help clearly define how we are different, but they can also point out some similar roots, or show how concepts developed and then split into different philosophies.

Grace

Do pagans have grace? I often end my spells with "I ask this come with ease, grace, and gentleness," but in that case, I'm defining grace a bit differently than the religious term. For me, in spellcraft, grace is equated with a graceful manifestation. I ask that the spell come out in a harmonious way, like a graceful dancer landing on her feet. Grace can also be defined as blessing a meal before consuming it. As pagans, we do bless our food and give thanks to both the gods and the beings giving up their earthly life for our food—both animal and plant. Theological grace is defined as unearned favors given to us by God or blessings and mercy we are not worthy to receive. By that definition, I would say that grace really plays no part in neopagan theology. The premise of having

to earn favor or that we are unworthy or undeserving doesn't play into our cosmology. Can we ask for things, or do magick to manifest them? Sure. Do some forms of worship involve making offerings to the gods and spirits, as an exchange of energy? Definitely. Our concept of immanent divinity does not separate us from the divine, so we can't really see ourselves as unworthy of anything. We can co-create whatever we want that is in harmony with our True Will. Pagans giving honor to the cosmology of the Greeks and Romans have the three Graces, three goddesses of beauty, mirth, and cheer, but this is very different from the Judeo-Christian form of grace.

Faith

Is faith a requirement of neopaganism? If we are defined as a religion, does not a religion require faith? Well, like grace, it depends on how you define it. Faith is often seen as a belief or trust that is not based on reason or logic, but based on a less tangible and less defined relationship with some unseen and unproven divine force. Since we cannot empirically prove the transcendent aspect of our gods, then there is a measure of faith in neopaganism. Most outside of paganism would assume that all of our beliefs would have to be based on faith, as the occult aspects of our Craft have yet to be recognized by mainstream science of society. Yet to the practitioner of a magickal spirituality, faith is not the vital component that it is in other religions. Many must proclaim belief in a figure and its power, such as faith in Jesus Christ as lord and savior, based on the mythology of the Bible. Those of a magickal spirituality can enter into the religion in a much more skeptical way.

I began my journey as a skeptic and debunker. I had a friend who I felt was foolish for calling herself a witch, and I learned what I could about witchcraft, so I could "prove" it was nonsense or sleight of hand. The more I learned, and had a direct experience of magick and the "paranormal," the more deeply involved I got, until I found myself embracing the religion of witchcraft. It did not require me to have faith in anything, or believe anything that I didn't have an experience with. It simply asked for an open mind and willingness to experience. Direct experience of both immanent and transcendent divinity through ritual, shamanic journey, and meditation is what "converted" me, not a proclamation of faith. Though many pagans are tempted to look at mainstream religions as religions of only faith, and not experience, many practitio-

ners of these religions have profound mystical experiences that are at the root of their practice, not simply blind, inexperienced faith. And there are many pagan practitioners who have faith in the gods as the cornerstone of their own spiritual practice.

Sin

None of the neopagan traditions have the concept of sin as defined in the Abrahamic religions. Though some would use the term sin to define any moral lapse or unethical behavior, sin in a religious context is an action that violates the moral code as established by the monotheistic God. Sin is often defined as breaking one of the Ten Commandments, or any of the other dogmatic codes and regulations of the traditions. Committing a sin requires either punishment, in this life or the afterlife, or atonement for the sin. Each denomination of the Abrahamic religions has different views on sin and divisions of sin. Many believe that humanity has a natural inclination to sin, and there is a force tempting humans to sin, personified by various devil mythologies. Pagans and witches do not have one absolute moral code given to them by the gods. Though some traditions have redes and ardanes, they are not absolutes. Even the Wiccan Rede cited by most modern pagans is a rede, a suggested guide, not an absolute moral law. Though we have a cause/effect belief, described as the Law of Return, there is no real moral quality to this teaching. It does not describe punishment from a god upon high, but simply the consequences of an action. Energy of a certain quality attracts energy of the same quality. We have no theology that states we are inclined to sin, nor any entity that tempts us into sin. We find moderation and balance to be virtues, not restrictions. In particular, pagans have no concept of original sin, because that is not a part of our mythology.

The Fall

Various mythologies of the "Fall" reference a disconnection between life and divinity. One fall details the separation of the archangel Lucifer from God through a war in heaven. The Fall also refers to the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, as they fell from God's grace and were forced to leave the Garden. Judeo-Christian mythology is not a part of pagan mythology. Though much of the Old Testament is based upon Middle Eastern pagan myths, this interpretation of humanity's

creation plays no role in our traditions. Many would cite this story and its interpretation as one of the fundamental flawed teachings destroying humanity and its relationship with both the planet and divinity today, as this doctrine of separation and shame has been a guiding underlying principle in Western civilization. If there is a Garden of Eden, witches believe we never left it. We simply forgot how to recognize it all around us. There are several places where the prevalent "Fall" mythology has been worked into some pagan traditions. Some look at the tales of Atlantis or the transitions from the Golden Age as the Fall. Others see the Isle of Avalon, the Garden of the Hesperides, or other fabled westernly lands as the spiritual cradle. Qabalistic traditions often see the sephira of Malkuth as falling from the position that Da'ath occupies on the Tree of Life. Some underground traditions of the Craft use Christian mythos, defining witches as the descendants of Cain, sons of Adam and Lilith, Adam's first wife who left the Garden of Eden before Eve was created.

Salvation

Though paganism has many figures that are sacrificed and resurrected gods who have been compared to the figure of Jesus Christ, modern paganism does not have a savior in its theology. Salvation is unnecessary, for we don't have concepts of sin separating us from the divine. We do not need to be redeemed. We might seek balance and harmony, and always evolution of consciousness, but we do that fully in the presence of divinity all the time. We don't need to be saved, for we are not in peril. We don't need to find anything, we simply have to wake up to the fact that everything we need is present around us already. In most Christian traditions, Jesus is an intermediary figure between the community of the church and God. It is through Jesus that one reaches God. Our theology tells us that no intermediary is necessary for having a relationship with the divine. We can have a personal relationship directly with the divine. Some of our gods may act in a manner similar to Jesus, as an intermediary with the vast transcendent creator force behind all gods, yet belief in or relationship with any one of them is not a requirement in our religion. I have a pagan friend who is a great admirer of the mystical teachings of Jesus, and he not-so-jokingly refers to Christianity as a lazy religion, because its followers believe that someone else will save and redeem them. Through Jesus's death and resurrection, conquering sin and sacrificing himself, no further sac-

rifice is necessary, only a belief in him. Jesus becomes viewed like a doorway through which his followers pass. My friend believes that this was not Jesus's teaching at all. He was guiding the way, but each of us has to go through our own death and resurrection experience. From a pagan mystery perspective, we each have to go through death and resurrection, like the harvest god or descending goddess, and experience them firsthand. We all must reach the "Christ" consciousness of Tiphereth on the Tree of Life. The mystery cults used ritual to bring the initiate through this experience. Simple belief without experience does not confer the same enlightenment. Jesus encouraged his followers to do all that he has done and more.

Sacraments

A sacrament technically means a rite or action that is considered sacred. The term *sacrifice*, with the same root, is to make an offering, to make something sacred, or recognize its inherent sacredness through the offering. In that sense, neopaganism has the sacraments—rituals we consider to be sacred, in which we find sacredness through both the giving of offerings to the divine and the reception of blessing from the divine. In Wicca, the Great Rite celebrated through cakes and ale is our primary sacrament. In a Christian context, the sacraments are usually defined as outward rituals that bestow an inward divine grace to the recipient. Like all theologies, the Christian traditions are divided as to the nature, number, and importance of the sacraments, but generally the rituals of baptism, confession, communion, confirmation, ordination, matrimony, and anointing of the sick are considered sacraments. While paganism has a variety of rituals, usually called rites of passage or life-passage rituals, and the Christian sacraments most likely derive from the ancient pagan versions of these rituals, they differ theologically. Not needing "grace from God," our rites of passage indicate community events, where public blessings, declarations, and celebrations are held. Modern paganism generally recognizes the following rites of passage: child blessing/Wiccaning, coming of age, initiation, handfasting, elderhood, and crossing.

Scripture

Neopaganism has no set scripture or holy book. Though we look to both modern and ancient texts for inspiration and ritual material, we do not believe that any text was written

directly by the divine. We admit that writers find divine inspiration, but we declare no text to be free from error or applicable as law to every pagan. Our scripture and holy texts are found in the cycles of nature and are both eternal and ever changing.

Judgment

Judgment is the belief that the soul of an individual is judged after death and, usually based upon that person's actions in life, rewarded with the joys of heaven or punished with the torment of hell. In Christian mythology, judgment often refers to Judgment Day or Last Judgment. At the end of time, with the return of the Messiah, the soul will be reunited with the body and physically resurrected to receive judgment. The various denominations of Christianity, as well as Judaism and Islam, have differing theologies and beliefs about judgment of the soul. The majority of these theologies play no role in paganism. We do not believe in one single afterlife. Most pagans believe in cycles of reincarnation in some form. Many witchcraft traditions postulate the existence of not one soul, but multiple souls, which is not factored into the concept of Judgment Day. We do find the image of Judgment Day in some pagan traditions. Though technically not solely pagan, the traditional Rider-Waite tarot and its derivatives depict Judgment Day as the twentieth trump of the major arcana (fig. 8). The card is ruled by Pluto, the destructive power that aids us in understanding our True Will. The card can be indicative of a personal redemption of sorts, a starting over or rebirth. It is also about discernment, the proper use of our judgment in a given situation.

We find images similar to Judgment Day in the Norse Ragnarok, the fate of the gods at the end of the world. Norse scholars will be quick to point out that Ragnarok differs greatly from the Christian Armageddon, as it is not a battle of good versus evil, and both sides are decimated, leaving room for the rebirth of the world in another cycle. Egyptian mythology has the individual judgment of the soul in the afterlife. We have the powerful image of the scales of judgment weighing the heart against the feather of Ma'at. We have a declaration of innocence in what is known as Spell 125 in *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, where the soul must recite a list of denials of wrongdoing before Osiris and his forty-two judges. Only then will the soul be blessed and brought to the next realm. The list of denials bears a form strikingly similar to many of the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament. We also have concepts similar to an

Figure 8: Judgement Card

end-of-the-world judgment in *The Prophecies of Merlin*. Beyond the neopagan traditions, you find the concept of the world ending in Theosophical literature, Hindu teachings, the Hopi prophecies, Aztec mythology, and the Mayan calendar.

Evil

Neopaganism has no concept of absolute evil in its theology. The dualism of our traditions is complementary, as God and Goddess, or noncompetitive, in terms of creation and destruction, or mercy and severity, but it is not the duality of good versus evil. We have no Devil, no tempter. As our theology is informed by nature, we see no source of absolute evil in nature, simply the forces of creation and destruction. One is not inherently good and the other evil. Both are necessary for the universe. Some have misunderstood and think that neopagans do not believe in the concept of evil at all. We don't have a theological concept of absolute evil, but we do believe people are capable of evil. Evil occurs when people are not in connection with their divinity, their own nature, and their True Will. Evil is not an absolute power, but a choice that humans make. Seeking a scapegoat to blame for evil actions denies our own responsibility for the evil that we create. From our perspective, the Devil figure of Christian mythology

is simply the collective shadow of our consciousness. When we acknowledge our own personal shadows, there is no need for the Devil mythology. We also believe many entities can choose as humans choose, and therefore can choose to be what we would call "evil spirits," but they are not the divine author of all the ills in the world—simply entities that have made disconnected choices.

One of my favorite stories of the pagan's perspective in relationship to the People of the Book—a collective term for Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, all being based on the same prophetic material—has been passing around the Internet for many years, usually but not always attributed to the pagan pioneer Oberon Zell-Ravenheart. The story has many versions, but it basically goes on to describe two Christian missionaries visiting a pagan household, seeking to spread the Good News of their religion. They are invited in and proceed to tell the pagans about original sin, the Fall, and salvation through Jesus Christ. The pagans then tell the missionaries, "Oh, that doesn't apply to us. That's only for you people." The missionaries look perplexed and go on to tell the pagans that everybody needs to be saved by the Lord. The pagans respond by reviewing the story of the Garden of Eden. Once Cain slew Abel, he was sent to live with the people of the East, in the Land of Nod. We are the people of Nod. Adam and Eve weren't the first people on Earth, as many believe. They were simply the first people in Yahweh's Garden of Eden. If Adam and Eve were the first people, and Cain and Abel were their first sons, then where did the people of Nod come from? And if they are not descendants of Eve, then they can't have original sin. To the pagans, we are not Yahweh's creations. We were created by other gods, and the rules of the Book don't apply to us because it's not our god. We don't need salvation. We don't need grace. We're fine the way we are.

Through looking at the illogical inconsistencies in Christian mythos when interpreted literally in any way, pagans can understand and even integrate Christian mythos as one view in their larger paradigm, but they do not have to make it the central focus, which it has become for most of our civilization. For a world that has those who want to seek salvation and deem it absolutely necessary, and those who don't, we now have an interpretation of the mythos that can accommodate both worldviews.

We are not only challenged to find our place in a nonpagan society, but many of us come to paganism after great difficulties with the traditional religions. Part of the path of healing as a pagan is to make peace with your birth religion, so the rebellion and escape from it is not the sole characteristic that defines your own tradition. Though many look to the figures of divine rebels as a part of the witch's mythos, the true teaching of the Promethean figure is not just rebellion against others, but being true to your own self, and your quest for light and your ability to share it. Those who continue to define themselves by their perceived enemies never grow beyond the predefined role. Such evolution beyond antagonistic roles is necessary for completing the Great Work.

Rather than simply living their lives, many modern witches suffer from persecution complexes. This comes out in large and small ways, but there is a sense of paranoia, of others out to get them. There is good reason for it. Those who identified as witches, or those who have been labeled witches, have traditionally been persecuted. Though there is evidence to show that the witch trials and our modern name, "the Burning Times," did not amount to the holocaust that many witches have traditionally described, it is not a fiction or figment of our imagination either. The reason why burning, hanging, and drowning of witches and proclaimed heretics is so vivid in our collective psyche is because it happened on some scale. There is the collective worry in the witchcraft world that it could happen again, and witches struggle with the idea of remaining safe and hidden, or bringing witchcraft out in the open, so it will never happen again. While we would like to think that persecution on such a large scale would be impossible to reoccur in this day, many people are still threatened socially, economically, and physically for being in a minority, be it a pagan, gay, or racial minority.

Witches often see the People of the Book as their proclaimed persecutors, due to the interpretation of some Old Testament religious scripture, particularly Exodus 22:18, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," and Deuteronomy 18:10, "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch." The translations, cultural context, and political bias of such passages can be debated, but it still doesn't change the fact that there are many of a conservative nature who interpret these phrases as not only religious license, but encouragement to kill witches

despite the commandment "Thou shall not murder." Only through secular law is such action prevented. One need only look at Christian conservative websites to see such interpretations.

Preparing for the millennium, Pope John Paul II issued a formal apology to Protestants, Jews, and Muslims for the crimes of the Inquisition, yet he failed to address pagans or any indigenous people. Leaders of the modern pagan movement sent a letter to John Paul to rectify this prior to the release of the official policy and were never directly addressed. It's easy to understand why pagans would feel both fearful and angry at dominant religions. Many witches become zealous in their conversion to the Craft, and they become just as narrow in their perception of its tenets as conservatives and fundamentalists in other religions. Swinging to the other end of the pendulum does nothing to aid our cause or promote understanding.

Witches are called the "hidden children" of the Goddess, or "Diana's darling crew," and there are many reasons for why we feel persecuted. We feel a kinship with those of the Burning Times, even if we have no direct link to them, for most witches today come to our tradition because we are different. We are the unusually sensitive, psychic, and artistic. Our experiences and beliefs don't fit into conventional society. Even those who self-identify as pagan, and not specifically as witches, are throwbacks to a previous era that is no longer well understood. Part of our mythos of the last age, starting in Greek society and building momentum until the Inquisition, is the persecution of witches for their illicit religion, beyond the bounds of society. We must now define what our mythic theme will be in the next age. Rather than persecution, what is the theme that will unite us, balancing our role as the Goddess's hidden children, yet also bringing us not only out into the light, but bearing the light for others? The images of the torchbearers, gatekeepers, and spiritual midwives will serve us better than the image of the persecuted in the next aeon.

A smaller segment of pagans don't have the same problem rebelling from mainstream religions. Their issue lies in reconciling their remaining connections to their previous religion with their newfound paganism. The philosophies of paganism speak to them, but they never felt the need to renounce and leave their birth religion. Can such traditions be combined? It depends on what you do, why you do it, and whom you ask.

Those who are coming to witchcraft from Christianity often struggle the most with this. Some witches come from a Jewish background and seek to keep cultural rituals and traditions, even though their personal theology is more pagan. Controversial scholars will suggest that the original Hebrew culture was pagan and polytheistic, with a pantheon of Semitic gods as it developed parallel with other polytheistic pagan traditions of the Middle East. Only later would it be interpreted as monotheistic, and the mystic teachers of this Qabalistic tradition make it quite compatible with modern forms of paganism and magick. Friends of mine who have reconciled their Jewish heritage and Wiccan beliefs have affectionately renamed themselves "Jewitch." Although I'm sure they are out there, I've not found a lot of practitioners from an Islamic background attempting to reconcile their faith with modern paganism, but perhaps as Islamic culture becomes more integrated with Western society, where neopaganism is easily accessible, we will see those of the Islamic faith seeking out the roots of their culture in their older pagan traditions.

One could look to the traditions of Voodou as a successful merger of African indigenous traditions with Catholicism. That merger was done for the survival of the native religion in some form, not by choice. These African traditions also had something in common with Christianity: a fundamental monotheistic worldview, despite a pantheon of spirits known as lwa.

Contemporary paganism leans more toward polytheism, making the blend more difficult. Catholicism is often seen as a Christian form of paganism—though it is outwardly monotheistic, it has a trinity expressed in the monotheistic god, and a hierarchy of angels, archangels, and saints acting as intermediaries with the one god, giving it a very pagan flavor. Christianity has influenced the magickal traditions of Western occultism, making the Christ mythos the dominant sacrificed-god theme, and it has crept into Qabalah, alchemy, and a variety of secret societies. Older Christian theology, particularly the emphasis on nature found in the work of St. Francis, aligns well with these mystical philosophies. It is this form of Catholicism that flourishes in places with a strong magickal tradition, such as South America. It is through these teachings that indigenous people reconciled the Catholicism that was thrust upon them with their own traditions, creating an amalgam that would probably be considered heretical to the mainstream Catholic Church. Many look to Mother Mary as a pagan goddess

form, and Jesus simply as her son. The feminine reverence of the mother becomes more important than the Christian theology.

From a strict theological perspective, you can argue that the theologies are incompatible and mutually exclusive. Either you see nature as inherently divine, the creator or at least part of the creator, or you see the creator separate from the creation. Yet the theologies surrounding Christianity do not necessarily come from the direct teachings of Christ, as we know them today. If one defines Christianity as simply being "Christlike," then it is quite possible to reconcile paganism and Christianity, since Christ himself was not a Christian in our current theological sense.

Strains of Christian Wicca have developed to explore these questions. Practitioners would claim the goal of Christian Wicca is not a theological one, but one of identity and how you live your life. Many pagans, proclaimed Christo-pagans or Christian Wiccans, spiritually "get" the Christian philosophy better than many proclaimed Christians, for they are living a Christlike life, living through love and tolerance.

The reason why one is exploring blends of Christianity and paganism is important to consider. Is it truly out of a love of Christianity, Christ, and a harmony with the theology? Or is it nostalgia? Is it not letting go of what is comfortable and familiar? Is it not wanting to be different? It is fear? Yes, fear. Christianity can be emotionally indoctrinated into us, even though we intellectually choose paganism. Are you hedging your bets, keeping a toe in Christianity because you fear damnation? One of my first teachers shocked me by confessing that silently she always calls upon Jesus in circle, not because she loves Jesus as a spiritual figure, but because she didn't want to reach the end of life and find that, well, yes, the Bible was right and the pagans were wrong, and she pissed off Jesus and God and was going to hell. So this was to keep on friendly terms with Jesus, just in case. No one could say she renounced him or forgot him. She didn't really see the inherent flaws in the plan, and it was at that time that I sought out another teacher.

If you are seeking to blend your birth religion with paganism because of any of the reasons above, you should seriously reflect on your motives and seek healing for your relationship with your birth religion before you seek to incorporate it into your current path. You might find that, as you heal, the need to incorporate conflicting theologies subsides as the conflict within you subsides. You can appreciate philosophies and

traditions without necessarily making them a focus for your own practice. I was raised Catholic. I admire the man known as Jesus, assuming he was a literal person, and take some inspiration from him and the concepts of unconditional love, yet I don't have him as a central focus of my theology. I feel the same way about Buddha, Confucius, and Pythagoras.

Exercise 67

Making Peace with Your Birth Religion

Many of us feel completely disconnected from our birth religions, still feeling judged or persecuted. Many pagans make jokes about churches or temples falling down on them if they dared enter now, but a mystic knows that a holy place is a holy place, and regardless of your theology, divinity doesn't judge you based on your outer practice. With your level of training and awareness in this fifth degree, explore something from your birth religion, assuming you were raised with a religion, and see it through new eyes. Notice what is similar to your own practice and what is different. Take notice of the participants. For me, it was going to a wedding, after struggling with the decision, because I truly intended never to set foot into a Catholic Church again. I watched the beauty of the ceremony and felt the love of the participants. Though this might not bring immediate peace with your birth religion, it does offer a new way of perceiving it. No longer are you running way from it, but you are returning as a priest/ess in your own right. While most Catholic priests would not look at me as a peer, my self-perception as a peer to them, a minister to our people, has given me a new way of relating to them, rather than from the perspective of a frightened child.

You can take this healing a step further by doing ritual to spiritually commune with the forces that govern your birth religion. I once read a bumper sticker that said, "I had to become a pagan to find Jesus," referring to finding the power of love not through Christianity, but paganism. I agree. I actually had a meditation where Jesus visited me, and I made my peace with the religion named after him. As a Catholic, I had never had an experience with Jesus where he actually talked back. It took the magickal training of witchcraft to have that kind of exchange. With our conversation, I transformed much of my lingering anger and resentment toward Catholicism. I still harbored ill will toward

the religion of my birth because I felt rejected by the church as a gay man and witch. With this transformation, I could move on, free from the persecution complex.

If everything is connected, and if everything has a purpose, then, when I think of the purpose for the theology of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in our collective consciousness, I wonder if they present a balancing factor for the pagan traditions, and how this theological pendulum has swung so far to the side. Our response to the issues is not to swing the pendulum back, but to spiral it onward, evolving the cycle to a more expansive collective consciousness. The traditions of animism and paganism had a wide range of focus, a diversity in which some people lost sight of the broader picture and did not see the collective whole. The laws of nature are harsh. When we look at the animal and plant worlds, "kill or be killed" and "life feeds life" are the rules of the day. Our pagan philosophies gave way to monotheism and the dualism found in Zoroastrianism and Gnosticism. As Christianity arose, the key teaching, whether it was followed or not, was love. Compassion and unconditional love were the teachings of Christ, regardless of the philosophies of his later followers, and that love has been the hidden heart of the tradition ever since, present for those who have a willingness to find it. Though modern pagans paint a rich past with a loving and abundant Goddess, I'm not sure that ancient pagan traditions had such an emphasis on love. We know that our concepts of Perfect Love and Perfect Trust, at least in these words, are fairly modern. Perhaps the rise of Christianity occurred because that principle needed to be seeded strongly in humanity's collective psyche, for us all to draw on. In this coming age, we need to restore the highest ideals of all the world religions, for each tradition holds a part of the greater mosaic of life, necessary for our continued survival and evolution.

Witchcraft and the Modern World: Religion

I learned witchcraft as a science, art, and religion, and it was with the religion that I struggled the most. I, like many pagans today, feel that religion is too strongly associated with hierarchy, dogma, and institutions, all the things I was leaving behind when

I left Catholicism. I didn't want to trade one form of dogma for another. I preferred to call witchcraft a science, art, and spirituality. But in our secular society, religion and spirituality have two different legal statuses. Our inability to be perceived as a valid religion is what has led to so many of our problems, starting with the ancient Greeks and Romans who considered those who did not worship in a sanctioned temple as practitioners of an illicit religion. The practitioners of the crossroads were divided from those in the temples.

Today we face the same problems. Most witches are not associated with any legally recognized body of religion. Some organizations in the United States have worked very hard to gain the tax-exempt status of a church under the banners of Wicca or paganism. When defined as a religion, we have legal protection in areas where anybody would be protected from discrimination based on religious grounds. When we are defined as spirituality, we don't have the same legal protection.

I highly encourage my students and readers to define their practices as religious. For those who are uncomfortable with the term *religion*, for the reasons stated previously, I think it's important to distinguish a prophetic religion from a mystical religion. Prophetic religions are based upon the scriptures of prophets. One person has a mystical experience, proclaims his experience is for all, and either writes it down or his followers write it down. These scriptures become the basis of the tradition, and the interpretation of the scripture guides the religion. The scriptures often involve predictions of the future. The People of the Book are involved in prophetic religions. Mystical religions might use texts as a guide, but are focused on the personal experience of the individual with the divine. They are still religions and have theologies that guide them, but it is the direct experience that is important. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all have mystical traditions within the greater institutions, such as Kabbalah, mystical Christianity, Gnosticism, and Sufism, but those mystical traditions are not always available or encouraged for all practitioners.

Though we come from a strong dislike of hierarchical institutions, as paganism grows, there are many situations we need to address in our community that are not being handled well through the individual coven and solitary practitioner systems we have today. Our first activities have been concerned with civil rights and discrimination, but as we evolve as a community and become more widely accepted, we also

have to look at social services. I've received many e-mails and phone calls from concerned witches seeking contributions to aid an elder who was in financial difficulty, often due to poor health, and had no social service to help beyond the basic, and often substandard, services available through the government. Most churches have resources to make sure their parishioners, and even nonparishioners in the greater community, receive food, visitors, counseling, transport, and other social aid. We have few direct associations with or involvement in medical services, funeral services, cemeteries, and charitable organizations. We have few places dedicated for our worship and services, land put in trust, or temples, where we can easily and safely gather. We are often involved in other people's spaces and services, but have little to directly address our own community's needs. The needs might not be grave at the moment, but as the community grows, the ministers of paganism will be called to resolve these problems. Some pagan organizations and traditions are already working on social needs. We need to continue with this work and develop new models that give us legal, financial, and societal power, without following the dogmatic hierarchical structures of other religions. We need to find ways to not lose what is unique and valuable to paganism, but grow with the growing community. One of the ways that we start is through the development of legally recognized, nonprofit religious organizations.

Another reason for us to be open about being a religion and build common ground with other traditions through interfaith exchanges is that we are often mistaken for a cult. Technically we are a cult, for the original definition of a cult is a group devoted to a religious practice. In older literature, you will find references from witches about the Cult of Witchcraft, and it does not have a negative connotation. In fact, many orders and religious groups could be considered cults in this sense. Today, *cult* is a term used negatively to denote a small group of individuals devoted to beliefs considered to be far outside the mainstream of society. Again, we still might be considered a cult by this definition, but the modern usage usually infers a harmful aspect of a cult toward its members. Their beliefs and actions put them so at odds with the mainstream that they cannot easily function within a secular society and often sequester themselves from the wider community. A cult unduly influences the opinions and actions of its members through techniques that are considered mind control or brainwashing; it discourages self-authority and decision making; it exploits its members financially; it demands

breaking all contact with family and friends outside of the group; it has a charismatic leader claiming special abilities or divinities; and members cannot freely leave if they decide they want to. As you can imagine, what is or isn't a cult is debatable, and many would see established groups such as Catholics, Mormons, and Scientologists as cults as much as small fringe groups.

When modern paganism, Wicca, and witchcraft are openly compared, it becomes quite obvious that we lack the hierarchy, structure, or central unifying force to be considered a cult in the modern "negative" sense. Some small groups that have the outer trappings of paganism can operate as a cult. The cult ethos is antithetical to paganism, as our individual will is paramount. The more open mainstream and well-functioning groups can be, educating the public about our practices, the less likely people will be drawn into cultlike groups claiming to be pagan. Through this work, fears and misunderstandings about our traditions can be cleared up, making them more available to those who genuinely seek them out.

Ritual of the Teacher

The teacher deity in your own personal pantheon could be your own Master-Teacher, or another figure who has a strong teaching or mentoring mythology, similar to the Chiron archetype as a wise mentor, or even having a strong Jupiterian influence as a guide looking down from above to offer perspective.

Commune with the teacher deity in your pantheon and design a ritual to honor and explore the mysteries of education, religion, and spiritual understanding. You can meet with this deity in meditative vision or shamanic journey, or if you already have a connection to your chosen god, you can try a direct invocation (*TOSW*, exercise 19). In this ritual, you will either ask yourself the three questions listed here, or the deity will ask you at least three questions regarding the lessons of this zodiac gateway. You will have to answer each of them before you are allowed to pass on to the next lesson and gate. The questions for Sagittarius are: What beliefs are most important to you? What would you do to follow your beliefs? Could you live without your beliefs? When you have completed the ritual, make sure you continue to honor and work with this deity over the course of the year. Use this connection to better understand your own experience of the divine.

Homework

- Do exercises 65–67 and record your results in your journal or BOS.
- Perform your master spell for this lesson.
- Review one myth from one of the cultures outlined on page 31.
- Review one religion as outlined on pages 29–30.
- Choose one figure from the biography list on pages 32–33, and learn all you can about that person.
- Continue with your final project.
- Work with the Sagittarius teacher deity from your personal pantheon.
- Obtain the Sagittarius gem for your "breastplate" charm bag, if you haven't done so already. Work with the Sagittarius stone this month.
- Work with one of your thirteen tools, re-consecrating it. Seek out its spiritual equivalent in the Otherworld, and know its mysteries.
- Optional: Make a fluid condenser (*TOHW*, chapter 9) out of a high-grade, flammable alcohol for this zodiac sign. Research appropriate plants for that sign, and choose the one that is right for you (*OTOW*, chapter 13).
- Optional: Find a small stone with a flat surface that you can mark with the zodiac sign of Sagittarius. Cleanse it, mark it, and charge it. You can also use it like a talisman, along with or in place of the Sagittarius gemstone.
- When you complete the trials of this chapter, tie another knot in your witch's cord in a ritualized manner.

Tips

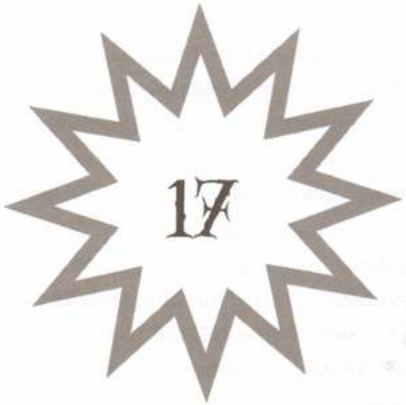
- How do the themes of education and theology fit into your year-and-a-day goals and final project?
- Check in with your Master-Teacher guide as you work with Sagittarius energies.
- Continue working on your own BOS, adding appropriate material to it each

month. Write and perform these rituals when appropriate. You could write one of the following:

Esbat for the new Moon in Sagittarius, or for the full Moon in Gemini, its opposite sign.

Rite-of-passage ritual for an initiation or ordination as a priest/ess. Though many look at the final ritual of this book as their final initiation/ordination, I experienced a separate ordination ritual when I became legally ordained. Rather than focusing on personal initiation, it included vows of service. What would your ideal ordination ritual be? You could incorporate this ritual into your own legal ordination ceremony if you choose to join an organization that can confer that status upon you.

- Explore the gateway of journey in your inner temple (*ITOW*, chapter 14).



Lesson Seventeen
The Wisdom of Capricorn

In the darkest moment of winter comes the birth of the God as the Child of Light, the Child of Promise at Yuletide. Though our astrological year starts with Aries, the start of the witch's year really begins with the winter solstice. Samhain is our new year, following the Celtic tradition of starting the day with sunset rather than sunrise; the true start of the cycle comes at Yule. The birth of the god initiates the wheel's movement once again, and the sign that embodies the witch god is the goat Capricorn.

Gender: Female
Triplicy: Cardinal
Element: Earth
Image: Sea Goat
Season: Winter
House: House of Vocation, Career

Key Phrase: "I Use"
Theme: Purpose
Blessing: Authoritative
Challenge: Rigid
Archetype: Father
Ruling Planet: Saturn
Exalted: Mars
Detriment: Moon
Fall: Jupiter/Neptune
Esoteric Ruler: Saturn
Monadic Ruler: Venus
Classical Deity: Hestia/Vesta
Angel: Advachiel
Colors: Black, Dark Gray, Brown, Wine
Metal: Lead
Stones: Onyx, Garnet, Jet
Body: Bones, Connective Tissue
Labor of Hercules: Capture of Cerberus
Gift of the Goddess: To Know and Find Hidden Treasures and Truths
The Thirteen Goals of the Witch: Keep Your Words in Good Order
Alchemical Operation: Fermentation
Cell Salt: Calicium Phos (Lime Phosphate)
Tarot: Devil

Capricorn is the cardinal earth. When I first learned astrology, cardinal or initiating power and earth did not seem compatible to me. The first earth is the mountain, with the earth plates pushing together and rising up, reaching higher. It is the new earth aspiring to the heavens. The totem of the mountain goat climbs the cardinal earth, aspiring to the heavens, yet it is linked intimately with the land, like the witch god. Many witches see the god as a dual force, a Lord of Light and a Lord of Darkness. The signs of the light half of the year, particularly Aries and Leo, represent the light god, seen as a young child of the Sun, who grows into the youthful Jack of the Green to finally mature as the Sun and Grain King at the peak of the year. He battles his shadow, his dark

half, and relinquishes the world to his dark half, the horned god of the animals, the hunt, and the gateway of death. The light god is sacrificed to be reborn through the Goddess at Yule, but the horned god rules the Earth in the winter and darkness. Some myths portray their relationship as combative, as in the Celtic myth of the Oak King battling the Holly King at the solstice. Others see it as a partnership, and one gives stewardship and the responsibilities of the mantle of godhood to the other for a period of time. Though the young king is technically the "victor" at the winter solstice, those who see the two in partnership view the horned god as still protecting the world in the winter, not retreating to the Underworld fully with his Wild Hunt of warrior spirits until the light child walks the Earth as the Green Man. The older father god protects the newborn son. With this aspect of the mythos in mind, the horned father of Capricorn makes a very appropriate guide for the sign that initiates winter.

The Way of the Father

The father is a familiar image of the divine for most religions. The mainstream religions look at the creator god as the father, as the shepherd and caretaker of the world, but the image of the divine father is not unique to the monotheistic religions. The pagan god figures were the first divine father figures. The Sun, sky, vegetation, and animals have all been associated with the father force in pagan lore.

In witchcraft, the strongest god image we have is the horned god. Though the horned animal associated with the god changes in different cultures and time periods, including bulls, rams, and stags, the most famous of these figures is the goat-horned, goat-footed god. The popular image of the goat-horned Pan became a prime ingredient in the Christian image of the Devil, hoping to make the horned pagan gods less popular among those who still followed the old pagan ways.

The zodiac sign of Capricorn is described as a goat, specifically a sea goat, and the universal archetype of Capricorn, and the Tenth House that it rules, is the archetype of the father, as protector and provider. The sea goat seems like a strange image for an earth sign. What is a sea goat exactly?

The most popular image has the front quarters of a goat and the hindquarters replaced with the tail of a fish. This association could come from the fact that the area of the sky the constellation occupies was at one time known as the "sea." Capricorn

might have at one time been considered a water sign. In Sumerian mythology, the divine figure Enki (Ea in Babylonian myth) is linked with Capricorn, also mixing the earth and water imagery. Enki is generally known as the "Lord of the Earth," yet he is not a god of land, but a god of the sea and water. He rises out of the seas and establishes order, civilization, balance, technology, and even humanity.

In Greek myth, Pan was chased by the monster god Typhon, and in order to escape, he jumped into the Nile River. He transformed himself into the sea goat to be able to escape Typhon's wrath. The sign is also associated with the divine she-goat Amalthea, who provided milk to Zeus when he was hidden from his father, Cronos. Cronos's Roman counterpart, Saturn, is the planetary ruler of Capricorn. While Cronos/Saturn is the villain in the story of Zeus, he ruled as a benevolent father figure in his own Golden Age, breaking from his own tyrant father, Uranus. Like many who assume they will be nothing like their own father, Cronos followed in his father's footsteps, and his children repeated the pattern, too, with the younger generation of Olympians overthrowing the Titans of Cronos's generation. Amalthea's broken horn was turned into the cornucopia, the horn of plenty, and both the milk and food associations link Capricorn with nourishment. While we would associate a she-goat, milk, and food with feminine mysteries of nourishment, as we did with Cancer in the zodiac structure, the tenth sign of Capricorn is about providing the money, home, food, and shelter that give life and nourishment.

The traditional Olympian associated with Capricorn is the goddess Hestia, which seems strange, but Hestia is the goddess of the hearth and home, not so much the embodiment of the mother, for she is a virgin. Nor is she the embodiment of the food as grain and vegetation, but rather the security and comfort of the home. She is credited as the goddess of security, protecting the boundaries of the home.

The "sea" area of the sky where Capricorn's stars are found is also associated with the Augean stables, and the accumulated dung of the stables can be associated with the dark karmic forces linked with Saturn as the planet of karma, but it is the labor of the capture of Cerberus that we will study for the lessons of Capricorn. Some say the final task of Hercules was to descend to the Underworld and bring the hound of Hades, Cerberus, back alive. Cerberus is the guardian of the gates of the Underworld, depicted as a man-eating, three-headed dog with a serpent's tail. He allowed the dead to enter the realm of

Hades and Persephone, but would not allow anybody to leave. The fearsome creature is the child of Orthus and Typhon. Orthus was the two-headed hound that guarded the Herd of Geryon. Cerberus's siblings and half-siblings include the Chimaera, the Hydra, the Nemean Lion, and the Sphinx. Hercules was not allowed to slay the dog as he had slain some of the other monsters in his trials. He was required to bring it back alive. This was not only a test against the dog monster in a feat of strength, but also a test of his power with the ruling gods of the Underworld.

Hercules approached this labor differently from the others, seeking counsel and training rather than using brute force. He sought out the mysteries of Eleusis, the mystery school founded on the legends of Demeter and Persephone. He hoped to learn the mysteries of how to enter and leave the Underworld safely. After his initiation into the Goddess cult, he sought out the aid of Athena and Hermes. Athena showed him the wisest way into the Underworld. Hermes led him down into the Underworld and helped him pass Charon. Near the gates of Hades' realm he found the king of Lapiths, Pirithous, and the hero king Theseus. Hades had bound both of them to rocks as punishment for attempting to kidnap Persephone and bring her to the world of the living as Pirithous's bride. Depending on the version of the myth, they were bound by serpents or chains, or the rock chairs were bonded to their flesh. Hercules was able to free Theseus, yet ripped Theseus's thighs, explaining why his descendants, the Athenians, have such lean thighs. But Hercules was not able to free Pirithous, for as he attempted to free the king, the land shook violently. Instead of simply capturing Cerberus, Hercules went to King Hades himself and asked for permission. Hades gave Hercules permission to take Cerberus for a time if the dog came to no harm. No weapons could be used. Hercules managed to wrestle and subdue the guardian, though Cerberus's snake tail bit him. He managed to bring Cerberus to Eurystheus, to fulfill his obligation of the labor, and then he safely returned the hound to the gates of Hades, with no harm. Some say that Hercules was the first to show kindness to Cerberus and did not battle him. It was his kindness, not his superior wrestling skills, that won the day.

This labor demonstrates some interesting themes concerning Hercules. In a Capricorn fashion, he first assesses the situation. The prospect is grim, and he uses the resources available to even his chances, calling upon the gods with whom he has a good relationship for aid. He does a little research before going into the land of the

dead by studying the mystery rites of Eleusis, to be better prepared for whatever faces him. He seeks to absolve himself of the death of the centaurs through the purification rites of Eleusis. He uses forethought and strategy in his planning. The journey gives him two interesting applications of power and authority. In one instance, he exercises his own judgment and authority, feeling compassion for Theseus and Pirithous, and he pronounces his judgment by freeing Theseus. He realizes that his resources are not infinite, and he cannot release both of them, so he makes the decision that he can't help Pirithous and moves on with his own quest, rather than getting mired in a situation with no possible resolution. He submits to the authority of the Underworld, seeking an audience with its ruler. As the son of the god ruling the sky realm, he seeks an audience with the ruling god of the depths, who is also his uncle. Hercules visits with Hades. He explains his plight to his uncle, even though they do not have a personal family relationship. Hades respects Hercules and gives him permission to take his guardian as long as he is not harmed. He also sets up a challenge for Hercules. If he is able to take Cerberus without harm, then he is worthy of it. If he is not, then he is not worthy. Either by force or by kindness, he is able to exercise authority over Cerberus and take him to the land of the living and complete his twelve years of labors.

The key phrase of Capricorn is "I use," for it is the power to use whatever resources, skills, talents, authority, and materials are at hand to make your way in the world. Those who live on or near mountains waste nothing, and know the harshness of life firsthand, and they use everything in the most economical manner possible. The spiritual practitioners strongly associated with mountains, such as the Tibetan mystics and Hindu yogis, are strong, hard and disciplined in their practice, much like the energy of Capricorn. They are continually striving, driving to climb higher and be better.

Exercise 68

"I Use" List

In your journal or BOS, make a list of statements starting with "I use," and complete the sentence with all the things you use in your life. The word "use" can apply to physical tools, but make sure you look at the tools and assets you have that are not easily defined. We each have assets, skills, and other resources we use that are not tangible.

When we think about all the resources we use, the scope of our assets can be much broader than we might have imagined. We may not even believe that we use some of them, yet we still exercise our authority and power over them to get what we want. Do you use people? If so, who? It's a hard question, but one worth asking. *Use* doesn't necessarily mean "take advantage of" or "harm," but you should be aware of your actions. One could argue that everybody uses people, intentionally and unintentionally. Everybody uses everybody. Many in the service industry are there to be "used." Most of our jobs entail duties where we are used by our employers, and we "use" those beneath us. But do you go into an experience treating a person like any other tool or asset? You might not think so, but if you really reflect on it, you probably do. Do you want to change that? If so, how can you enter into those interactions more consciously and clearly? Understanding how you use your power is an important first step to using your power responsibly.

Witchcraft is a tradition where we use everything that is available to us for the highest good. We don't shirk from our power, but use it consciously to create our lives and aid others in fulfillment of the highest will. The image of Capricorn is of one who uses authority and power in the world to create, and hopefully to lead others to a better world. The ability to use your power in the world is a fierce prospect. Many people, even those involved in witchcraft, shun their power out of fear. They fear the use of divine power, because they see how it has been abused in many mainstream institutions that have great temporal power. Many religious organizations have great wealth, land, art, and economic power in the world. Though it is often used for good, there are times when it is abused, and their societal status and power make it harder to hold these institutions responsible for their abuses.

These same institutions view the divine as male, as God the Father, and often reject the notion of the divine feminine, or give it a minor role. Many of us are attracted to witchcraft and paganism for the strong divine feminine current in the tradition, so much so that we often reject masculine images of divinity, or create an entirely feminine central mythos to our religion. While we need to address the imbalance of the last age looking solely to the masculine, we will not find balance by simply tipping toward the opposite direction, but by working with both energies, Goddess and God together, and by moving beyond many of our traditional gender roles. We sometimes

fear the images of the gods of witchcraft, for they have been tied so deeply into the collective Western psyche with the image of evil, of the Devil. Many are quite afraid of the horned god in vision, but once they are open to experience, they may find that the horned hunter figures are much "easier" in temperament than many of the goddesses they love. Through witchcraft they can see God the father as sensitive, loving, and kind, and not always the distant authoritarian figure. He still has power and authority, but it is not disconnected or punishing in the way many view the male god of mainstream institutions.

God the father has many faces and many mysteries. Though usually neatly divided into gods of light and gods of dark, the God embodies not just those two poles, but also the mystery of the transitions between them. He is the mystery of life, death, and resurrection. He is the mystery of self-sacrifice for a greater good and the sacrifice of ego that must come if you seek the greater good. He is both the hunter and the hunted. He is the mystery of fatherhood, a different, but just as necessary, nurturing principle to be partnered with motherhood. He is the sacred king, the good father of his people and steward of the land. The God is all these things and more. "Hoof and Horn," a popular pagan chant mingled with "We All Come from the Goddess" that celebrates his mysteries as both god of life and god of death, was penned by Druid Ian Corrigan.

Hoof and horn, hoof and horn
All that dies shall be reborn
Corn and grain, corn and grain
All that falls shall rise again

I've found it pivotal for witches to make "friends" with the divine masculine, rather than ignore it. Many simply pay lip service to the God in ritual, but don't actively work with the Godforce in their personal meditations and pathworkings. You truly need to heal any rift you have with the masculine, finding it within you along with the divine feminine, and move toward wholeness. The following is a deepening of the meditation to the Goddess and God found in *OTOW*, chapter 5, focusing specifically on the God.

Exercise 69

The Grove of the God

1. Perform Exercise 1: Inner Temple as a Mystery School Meditation, steps 1–4 (*LTOW*, vol. 1, page 45), to get to the World Tree.
2. Go down into the Underworld with the intention of finding the grove of the God. Ask your animal guide to take you there.
3. You might find yourself crossing a threshold of some sort—a hedge, a river, or a clearing. Feel yourself drawn to the God, and you will know where to go.
4. You will see a campfire in the center of a large grove of trees. By the campfire is a large male figure. The God waits to speak with you. Join the God by the fire and let the flames illuminate how you see him. What form does the God take? Is it the father god you have chosen to work with in your personal pantheon?
5. Speak to the God and listen to what he has to say. He is the father of all witches. How do his fatherly words affect you? You might find yourself reflecting on the relationship you have, if any, with your own father. He might feed you in this grove, cooking something on the fire, or share his drink with you. He might have a cauldron of plenty with many wonderful foods inside it.
6. When your conversation is completed, thank the God. He may give you advice, symbols, or even a gift. If you are so moved, return a gift to him, creating an even stronger link
7. Make your way back to the Middle World, returning the way you came. Finish exercise 1, steps 8–11, to return to normal consciousness.

Mission

In Lesson Six, we explored the concept of dharma, your "right action" in the world, and how the mysteries of finding and executing your True Will permeate the teachings of magick. Manifesting your will in the physical world is the work of Capricorn, and the skills of the horned god father help you bring the ethereal and immaterial into manifestation in the physical realm.

Capricorn rules the Tenth House in the astrological mandala. It is the area of the astrology chart that rules your vocation. What is not only your job, but your career, your calling? Archetypally it is paired with Cancer and the Fourth House. Cancer is the Mother, and the Fourth House is the place of home and nurturing. Capricorn is the Father, and his house relates to our place of power outside of the home, going out into the world to earn our keep. The day-to-day mundane jobs are the sphere of the Sixth House, but what you are truly here to do, to shine and act as a leading example, is ruled by the Tenth House. The cusp of the Tenth House is also known as the Midheaven, the highest part of the sky, and the sign on the Midheaven when you are born can help show you how you will act in your vocation. Though technically marked with the direction of south on the astrological chart, this can be thought of as the North Star we referred to when learning about dharma (*LTOW*, vol. 1, Lesson Six). As a witch god, associated with both horns and the growing light and grain, we could call this the domain of the breadwinner, the one who provides for the home and family of the Fourth House. You do this, nourishing yourself and others in all ways, but also finding your True Will, your mission here on Earth.

Knowing your True Will is hard enough to do, but then actually implementing it is even harder. To be successful in manifesting your will, you have to find an extremely important balance between divine aid and real-world planning. Those whom I have been honored to know, who have implemented their will in the world, have had a very open and intuitive attitude, knowing that they are simply the coordinators for their higher self or patron deity, following "orders" as it were. Their spiritual practice is what helped them be open to, listen to, and understand the opportunities and changes as they occurred, for the manifestation of our True Will is often very different from what we think it will be. The final "product" is usually very different from our first

vision of it. Along with their spiritual vision and intuitive communication with the divine, these people had real-world plans and skills, and to cover areas they were not expert in, they were open to finding experts or getting education. Now, the divine intuition played a part in bringing the right people together at the right time and guiding their recognition, but it still took a lot of real-world action. Many feel a drive to start a metaphysical center, nonprofit organization, or education group as a part of their True Will, and the project never manifests or never succeeds, because they go into business, rent, mortgage, and tax dealings with a naïve sense that it will all work out spiritually, and that no effort on their part needs to be put in to learn about these areas. If the divine wants it, the divine will work out the details. Yes and no. Those most successful at manifesting these things find a balance point between the two extremes of relying completely on spiritual boons and the rigid planning of business. A Sufi saying that I have found extremely helpful is "Be in the world, but not of it." Sufis are not cloistered monks, but must be in the world, practicing a valued profession, being of service to their community. They hold the paradox of being in the world and doing mundane things, yet looking at everything as divine, even their daily labor. Witches must have this attitude too. Few of us are cloistered away in temples anymore. We must be in the world, and we must make our work in the world a part of our spiritual practice. We know the physical world is divine, yet it is only one of many divine worlds. Many people, witches and those of other religions, often look at their spiritual lives and their daily lives as completely separate, but you will find that your greatest understanding of the mysteries and your best opportunities for magick come when you are living a seemingly ordinary life.

Witches should not shy away from temporal power, our ability to create visible change in the world. We plant seeds in the soil of time in order to watch them manifest. Saturn, the ruling planet of Capricorn, is the planet of time. Pictured as the Grim Reaper in some traditions, and celebrated at Yule with the Roman Saturnalia, Saturn's face as the reaper reminds us that we only have so much time to manifest what we have set out to do. Though our spirituality has no laws against power or wealth, one of the gifts of the Goddess is "To know and find hidden treasures and truths." In Capricorn, both treasure and truth are highly valued, as truth is a kind of treasure. By working with your truth, your True Will, you find the resources to manifest your will.

The mountain of Capricorn is rich in wealth, which is the potential power to make something happen. Saturn was not always the Grim Reaper. In ages past, he ruled over a Golden Age of perfection, and today the dark and heavy power of Saturn, as the planet of karma, also teaches us that we may enter the Golden Age again, if we do our own "work" here on the Earth. If everybody everywhere fulfilled their True Will, the entire world would be transformed. The evils and ills of our current world come from the disconnection between ourselves and our True Will.

The powers of Capricorn that bring our will into manifestation are the powers of strategy and forethought. From the vantage point of the mountain, the goat can look down and see things from a greater perspective, to choose his actions with greater awareness. Rather than just charging up the mountain without looking, like the ram, the goat will plan out the path of jumps, intuitively weighing risk and benefit, and slowly but steadily make his way. The mountain has been a metaphor for both the spiritual climb toward enlightenment and the climb of the ambitious person up a ladder of promotion and success. Capricorn uses long-term planning, for its ruling planet Saturn measures time. When one is acutely aware of the limits of time, then the blessings of time, of cycles and seasons, are also apparent, and a long-term perspective on timing is developed.

Because of the mountain climb, Capricorn energy is hierarchical in nature, and those with strong Capricorn energy tend to be leaders, though the leaders who guide through administration, much like a businessperson running an organization. This leader directs all the parts and pieces to operate with smooth efficiency. All the resources of the organization are devoted to the goals of the organization.

Our own lives are like business organizations. Though that sounds antithetical to the free-spirited nature of paganism, many of the most successful in our community have a certain methodical business approach to their own lives, and they apply that to the organizations and groups they are in, to make such organizations more effective. I was advised by the highly successful scholar and author Patricia Monaghan to look at my life more like a business—setting goals, agendas, and policies to reach those goals. This was not only for my life as a writer, but also my spiritual life and my personal life, because they cannot all be separated. What happens in one affects the others.

To better fulfill your mission and life, and find balance, health, and happiness, ask yourself the following questions:

- *What is my mission statement for my True Will?* If you had to put your True Will, as best you know it now, into a statement that defines the direction of your life, what would it be? Your mission statement can start as lofty or nebulous, but as you continue with these questions, you will find yourself creating more definable goals. Your mission statement, and all of these subsequent questions, can be broken down into several parts, perhaps modeled on elemental symbolism. What is your mission in the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual areas? The mission statement sets the tone and helps you establish where you are going, and the "attitude" you have on the journey. Everybody's statement will be unique, to suit his or her personality.
- *What are my life goals?* Your life goals should include the entire spectrum of your life, including career, home, relationships and spirituality.
- *What are my specific goals?* Make specific goal lists for one year, three years, five years, and ten years. As you complete the goals and move through the years, the list may adjust, as three-year goals become two-year goals. You are creating a long-term timeline of things that should happen to achieve your mission statement and life goals. Be aware that they will change many times.
- *What are my resources?* What do you have available to you now? I think of this as a gratitude list, as well as a resource checklist. What am I thankful for, that is a resource for me? This isn't just financial assets. On my resource list, the things I am thankful for are relationships, family members, my home, my spirit guides and gods, my talents and abilities, my body, and my Craft. They are not necessarily things you can put a price tag on, but things that are a support for you.
- *What are my intakes?* What things in your life bring value? They can be financially valuable or personally rewarding experiences. Home time is an intake for me. Writing—the very act of writing, not necessarily the royalty payment—is an intake for me, for I feel happy and alive when I am writing. The

money is an additional intake. Time with friends with whom I have balanced relationships can be an intake. And of course, regular income and other financial compensation are an intake.

- *What are my expenditures?* What are the things that lose value? What are your expenses, both financial and personal? Expenses are not bad. They are necessary to get what you want, but sometimes we lose a lot of our resources without really recognizing that we are losing them. Personal expenses can be spending time with people you find draining, or doing things not for enjoyment or out of necessity, but out of a sense of obligation or guilt.
- *What are the departments of my life?* If you divided the "business" of your life into departments, what would they be? Are they all equal in the organization, or does one take priority over the others? Is that priority intentional? Do you think of something as belonging to one department when it really belongs to another? Sometimes the simple act of reorganizing these departments and responsibilities can change your entire outlook on a task that needs to be done. I used to see housecleaning as a part of my time at home. I get so little time at home that I was resentful to have to do housework on my day off, so I didn't. Now if I schedule time to do cleaning that is not connected to my time off, I'm okay with doing it. Certain writing assignments, such as many of the articles I write, I really think of as promotion, not creative spiritual work. If I do them in the time I've budgeted for marketing and promotion, instead of the time I budget for writing the books I love, I can get them done.
- *What are my policies for success? What do I need to do to make these goals a reality?* This can include reminders of what you need to do in certain situations. I had to set a policy of not accepting every job offered just because it was a job. Not every job is right for me. You can also set a schedule for what you need to do and when. I had to set a policy of booking personal time and treating that time as seriously as business commitments I booked. In an effort to be businesslike, don't forget magick and meditation as a part of your policies for success. You might want to take each goal and do a spell to make it succeed, putting your energy in alignment with your written goals.

- *What do I need?* What resources, information, or talent do you lack to complete your mission, and what do you need? Clearly defining what you need is the first step in obtaining it. Then you can attract the resources and people you need to help you manifest your mission in the world.

This is really expanding our year-and-a-day goals (see page 9) into a life strategy to help us manifest our true mission in the world. I start developing these goals on Samhain, and have the time from Samhain to Yule to review, modify, and change them. Once Yule hits, I try to stay with these goals and reevaluate again in the fall. I put the list of statements, goals, and policies on my altar and read them as a part of my morning altar devotional (*OTOW*, chapter 9) whenever I can. These are particularly powerful techniques for people who are self-employed or run their own business, but the techniques can be applied to all, for we all run our own lives.

Make these statements as short and concise as possible. Make them as clear as possible. If you had to hand them off to someone else, would they make sense without your explaining them? This list is like a contract with the universe, a form of spellcraft, and we all know that the more precise we are in our spellcraft, the better the results.

Responsibility

Responsibility is a key word in understanding the lessons of Capricorn. Those with a strong Capricorn energy have a strong sense of responsibility, tied to their concept of honor. The Capricorn ideal is to do what is "right," regardless of the personal cost, but what we define as "right" is not always clear. Our societal misunderstandings of responsibility lead us to a lot of headaches, heartaches, and problems that can be avoided when we truly understand the nature of responsibility.

Though it may sound selfish, the one person you are responsible for is you. That's right, you are in charge of your life and only your life. Of course, there are exceptions. Parents of minors have made a commitment of responsibility to their children. The same can be said about pet owners. But generally, we fall into misunderstanding when we adopt too much responsibility for others, or when we let other people feel responsible for us and dictate to us the terms of our lives.

The witch god teaches us all about honor, responsibility, and sacrifice for a greater good. As god of life, he is sacrificed with the harvest, and the horned god continues onward to guard and guide the world in the dark half of the year. He then relinquishes responsibility to the newborn lord of life, to repeat the cycle. The gods teach us that it is in our nature to change. No responsibility is eternal and unending. Life is the journey of change. If we stay the same, we become stagnant and die. We must continue moving along the wheel, or climb the mountain.

The image of the horned god through the Devil figure teaches us much about responsibility. The Devil tarot card gives us an interesting lesson. While many read the card as depicting dark forces, torment, and torture, it has a deeper meaning. The card is really indicative of the power to change if you so choose. In the traditional Rider-Waite-based images, the Devil is a horned-god figure perched upon a double cube, like the ceremonial magician's cubic altar, signifying the microcosm and the macrocosm. He holds not a weapon, but a torch of illumination in the black background that surrounds him and two human figures. His inverted pentagram symbolizes the mastery of the four elements dominating spirit, the material world suppressing the fifth element. His hands are in the same pose of benediction as the Hierophant, giving blessing and secret initiation. The two figures, a pair resembling Adam and Eve, are demonically twisted with horns and tails, and chained to the cubic altar. The Devil does not hold the chains. There is no evidence to show that he was the one to chain them in the first place. He is just holding a torch. In the best depictions of the card, the chains are loose around the neck, like long necklaces, and could be taken off at any time. The pair is in bondage because they choose to be. Their lesson is that we are never stuck. We are never in an unending situation of torment. If we appear to be, it is because we have chosen to be, but we can always choose to change.

As a tarot reader, I've found that this card describes my clients in jobs and relationships where they feel there is no way out. They cannot change it. It's impossible, and they are looking for some magickal cure from the local witch. In truth, they can quit the job or end the relationship. When that's suggested, they have a million reasons why they can't. They have chosen, and they are simply looking for reasons to feel better about the choice, to feel that they had no choice at all. The truth is, they chose their miserable situation. Even in situations where there is not a clear choice, such as

an illness or tragedy, you have a choice in how you respond to the situation, and after a period of denial and mourning, you can choose a life of happiness or perpetual misery. It's up to you.

While the Rider-Waite tarot has one of the best traditional images of the Devil, many modern decks, such as *The Universal Tarot*, miss the point, and put the chains on too tightly.

Other depictions of the Devil card can be interpreted as representing the black sheep of the family, or the scapegoat. These versions describe individuals who are following their own bliss, as mythologist Joseph Campbell would say, marching to the beat of their own drum, and seemingly shirking the "responsibilities" their families expect of them. These rebels have realized that their "job" here in the world is to manifest their True Will, their dharma, not what other people think is their dharma. No one else can tell you your life's path, even family, friends, mentors, or teachers. It is meant for you to explore and experience.

Exercise 70

Creating Your Timeline

To understand the nature of your changing life, your own personal journey, it can be helpful to construct a timeline. You have already created a spiritual biography (exercise 36), which is more of a narrative—your story. The timeline is not so much a story, but a look at the chain of events. Saturn is described as forging the chains of our actions, of our karma. By looking at the chain of cause and effect in your life, you can see the patterns that have led you to where you are now and the patterns that could lead you where you will be going in the future. By becoming conscious of the past, you can forge the next link with clear intention. Your timeline can be in text, in art, or even in music, but it must clearly depict a series of linear events in your life, the pivotal life-changing experiences and epochs of your life. In different eras of my life, I had a dominant theme or interest, and that has helped divide my timeline—art, science/school, music, witchcraft, teaching, and writing. Ask yourself what are the major events and eras of your own life that have shaped you. Make your timeline and, if possible, record it in your journal or BOS.

Part of the problem in understanding our specific responsibilities in witchcraft comes from our understanding of hierarchy. The image of Capricorn implies a certain level of hierarchy, as some climb higher on the mountain than others, or amass more experience, power, and responsibility than others. We come from a tradition that has inherent hierarchy but also rejects hierarchy, depending on the branch of witchcraft that first attracted your attention.

Traditional forms of witchcraft have an inherent hierarchy. Covens are usually very structured, with everybody's roles and placement within the order neatly defined. There is structure to the schedule, rituals, and training, usually handed down by the leader or leaders of the group, the high priestess and/or high priest. While there are very personal relationships that develop in such groups, there are also a formal series of relationships and a social protocol that can develop out of these relationships.

In eclectic groups of witchcraft, there is much less hierarchy. Training comes from books, one-on-one mentorship, small study groups, and ritual groups known as circles, which are usually run democratically. Peers gather together from a wide variety of backgrounds, and those with a variety of experience levels work together. Usually those with more knowledge and experience are honored and deferred to, but they are not necessarily in charge of or responsible for the group.

Both approaches have their benefits and their drawbacks. Each requires us to look at responsibility in different ways. Understanding what kind of group you are in, or what kind of group you are seeking to create, and what its operating structure is, becomes essential if you want to develop an enduring, effective group of practitioners. Many seek to apply the dynamics of the one group to the style of the other, and they create difficulties for all involved. Issues of hierarchy, power, and authority come up all the time in the modern Craft, usually in reference to people abusing power or forcing their notion of order on others. Some who are a part of what appears to be an eclectic circle try to establish the order of a traditional coven. Though they can be well intentioned, the authority of the new "leader" is likely to be questioned, because the structures of these new orders are not often firmly established, and power is merely transferred from one recognized authority to another. Members who feel that the organization was less formal and more free flowing resent the change in status quo. On the other end of the spectrum, those in established authority roles might tire of the

responsibility, and seek to create a more informal group. However, when the group delves into areas that the leader doesn't like, she or he is often quick to snap up the reins of power, rather than let new processes guide the group and resolve any conflict.

In all of these situations, communication is the key. One of our thirteen goals of a witch is to "keep your words in good order." If everybody understands their role, and has agreed to it, then the relationships are clear. As the Devil card shows, if people don't like their roles, they can either attempt to change them or leave and find other opportunities that suit their souls. Roles in magickal groups are not eternal. They must change if the members are to grow.

Here are some structures for both the formal and eclectic groupings. Structures of formal covens will vary depending on the tradition, but generally they will have the following:

High Priestess and High Priest. Both act as leaders and teachers. In some traditions, the status of both are equal. In others, the high priestess is more revered, and she is the final arbiter on matters. Regardless of age, the high priestess and high priest often act as the parental figures of the group, guiding, counseling, training, and doing healing work with others in the group.

Inner Court. The inner court consists of witches initiated into the group. They are of varying initiation ranks, with most traditions using a three-rank system. The high priestess and high priest are usually the only ones of such rank within the group, for traditionally when individuals reach that rank, they "hive off" and start their own covens, making room for new members of the inner court. The skill levels, training, and requirements of each of the ranks is clearly spelled out for those progressing through the levels, and the more experienced coven members provide training and guidance to the less experienced. Many traditions look for an even number of men and women to "balance the energies," though not all covens have that requirement.

Maiden. The maiden is an office within the coven usually appointed by the high priestess, for the maiden is a priestess in training showing great promise. She usually acts as the high priestess's assistant in the rites.

Summoner. The summoner, also known in some traditions as the Man in Black, is an office for a young priest in training. Traditionally the summoner would gather the

coven members to meetings and would be the only one who knew the identity of all the witches in the area, being able to pass communications back and forth between other elders and summoners.

Guardian. The officer concerned with both the physical and psychic safety of the group is called the guardian. In some traditions, this was also the role of the Man in Black. For others, a separate guardian, warder, or gatekeeper fulfills that function.

Council of Elders. The council of elders can be a group of experienced witches in the coven, or elders in the tradition, but not necessarily in the specific coven, who are called on for guidance and aid in conflicts and major decisions.

Outer Court. The outer court consists of people involved in the coven, but not initiated or oath-bound to it. Usually members who attend the open Sabbats and gatherings, as well as spouses and lovers who attend ritual gatherings but are not a part of the inner mysteries, are considered to be part of the outer court. The inner court finds its members from those in the outer court who have proven to be sincere and honest in their seeking. Members of the outer court who have dedicated themselves to the coven and started training but are not yet initiated are called seekers or probationary members, and they report either to the high priest or high priestess, or to the inner court member who sponsored them for membership.

Lineage Holder. "Lineage holder" is a title sometimes used for the eldest of the tradition, not in years, but in experience within the tradition itself. It is the official or unofficial "head" of a tradition, a mantle of power and connection to the tradition's egregore that can be passed on from the founder to a successor. Sometimes a power object or a Book of Shadows, sword, or wand from the founder of the tradition is the symbol of this office.

While this is a well-recognized structure, other covens can create other offices and roles for members. In eclectic organizations, the roles are not as neatly defined. The following are important overarching concepts for eclectic groups to consider:

Membership. Membership may be marked by a ritual or initiation, though some groups have no formal recognition or ritual to enter or leave the group. While traditional covens range from three to thirteen, open eclectic groups can hold membership of much larger numbers, freely mingling what would be considered the inner court and outer court. The inner court is not defined as such, but can be found among the members who take on more responsibilities and interest in the group.

Democracy. Usually such groups are run by consensus and democratic principles. Some simply operate by majority vote, either by a show of hands or by secret ballot, while others work through a two-thirds majority or specifically defined quorum. Some do not make a decision unless it's unanimous by the group, but such unanimous decision-making processes seem to work best in very small groups.

Offices. Offices and roles can be defined by a number of magickal or non-magickal models. Some use the typical business/government organizational model, with a president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary. Elemental roles of fire, water, earth, and air can also be used, defining responsibilities of leadership, emotional counsel/support, material matters, and intellectual/record-keeping responsibilities. Larger groups might use the planets, chakras, or zodiac as their basis for offices. Roles can be chosen based upon personal abilities or Sun signs, or by vote.

Rotation. Responsibilities, particularly for ritual leadership, often rotate, either with each gathering, or over a specified time of year. In my own eclectic coven, each member is responsible for co-leading at least two rituals a year, as predetermined by volunteering in our yearly planning meeting.

Bylaws. Groups that are simple gatherings of friends and peers might not have formal bylaws governing the organization, but other larger and more long-standing groups have found it important to clearly spell out the structure and policy of the group, so that all current members and all future members understand what is happening, what is expected of a member or officer, and how to settle disputes should they arise. Without rules clearly in place, the details of history can be quite easily forgotten, confused, or altered in people's memory, and new rules appear or old rules are forgotten. This can lead to many disputes because there was no one guiding document for the organization.

While this account portrays the two extremes, many groups navigate somewhere in between the two, making clear communication even more vital, so all members understand

what their responsibilities are and what they aren't, and so clear decisions can be made upon joining, contributing, continuing, and even leaving a group. For an excellent and in-depth guide to covens and larger organizations, I highly recommend Amber K's *Covencraft*.

As for the questions of authority, who has it, and how they got it, I've found that the best leaders, teachers, and elders show us who they are by example of what they do and how they conduct themselves, rather than by the titles they hold or the pedigree they claim. If you find yourself in the role of leader and organizer, make sure the group you are a part of has a clear structure and clear communication to avoid many of the problems that plague the pagan community. It is very easy to assume a position of authority in our community and become a tyrant or monster—all the "negative" associations we have with the Devil card, as power and authority have the tendency to corrupt those who wield it. That is why having personal honor and ethics is a huge part of Capricorn's lessons.

Witchcraft and the Modern World: Children in the Craft

As the horned god is both protector and father, it is appropriate to explore the role of children in the Craft. Witchcraft and paganism are hard roads for many to travel in the modern world, as witches are the target of prejudice and intolerance. How do we raise our children and protect them from such injustice and harm?

When I began my training, it was clear that few of my elders encouraged children in the Craft. It was something adult, with adult responsibilities and concerns. One was not trained, let alone initiated into the Craft, until at least the age of eighteen, the legal consenting age of an adult in our modern society. Even though I was allowed to begin at age eighteen, I was told quite plainly that it was not until I finished the Saturn return—when Saturn returned to the place it was when I was born, a cycle of roughly twenty-nine-and-a-half years—that I would be considered a cosmic adult and fully recognized in the tradition. When I was younger, my future teachers did not even reveal to me their studies and training in the Craft, fearing it would provoke questions they could not, or would not, answer.

Most of us come to witchcraft from another birth religion. But what happens when one or both of your parents are from a pagan faith? The struggle of if and how to raise children in the old ways is growing as pagan parents are building their own families.

In the old family traditions, this wasn't such an issue. Information was passed on to the children, bit by bit, in small ways they could understand. Children were not exposed to the rites of initiation and the deeper mysteries, but they were not ignorant of the family's ways. They learned myths at the holidays and saw their parents do magick in the kitchen and garden. It was part of a way of life being passed on to the next generation. One cannot pretend to follow one way of living and then suddenly expose a child to a whole new tradition upon adulthood and expect him or her to take to it. In many ways, there is a culture of witchcraft that is passed on, because it is not just a collection of rituals and spells, but a way of life and a way of looking at the world.

In neopagan families, where pagan traditions are new and reclaimed, parents have a particular sensitivity to religious tolerance and openness. Feeling that their own explorations were often suppressed and a dominant family religion forced upon them, they have no desire to do the same to their children. Because of this, many pagan parents don't raise their children pagan, believing that the children can choose their own religion when an adult. Either religion is a personal topic, and not one usually discussed in the family, or the children are exposed to a wide range of religious beliefs to give them a wide palette to explore later in life.

Though I understand both approaches, I think they cause problems later. Those who exclude religion from the household keep an important part of their own lives from the children. The children never learn the benefit of a spiritual tradition, because they don't really see it in action. Parents believe that keeping witchcraft away from the kids will prevent them from being ostracized or being different in school, but sometimes protection isn't better than honesty. If kids are raised not to think it's a big deal, and their friends are exposed to it like any other religion, we can go a long way to fight prejudices early on. Those who are exposed to a wide range of religions and traditions do get a rich diversity, yet there is a sense of not belonging to any one culture or tradition. If children are asked what religion they are, what do they say? We have a healthy need to belong to something older and bigger than what we are as individuals. We need to feel that we are walking a well-worn path along which others have found

meaning and enlightenment, even while we blaze our own way much of the time. Without that connection to something tried and true, we can feel rudderless, even with a rich multicultural study.

If you do decide to raise your children in a pagan tradition, that brings up a lot of other issues. There will be a sense of being different from the norm of society, and the kids will have to deal with those feelings as they grow up. But kids of any other non-Christian tradition also face the same issues, so your children are not alone.

Finding out what to teach exactly, and when, is tough, because there is no clear-cut model. You cannot use the yardstick of your own experience if you were not raised pagan. You have to create your own family traditions and find out what works for your own children in the context of your own traditions. Many pagan parents find themselves having to learn their own craft even better so they can accurately articulate it to their children.

Magickal spirituality brings up a can of worms, for many kids are attracted to the concepts of magick, but they have not yet developed the moral framework to take responsibility for their actions. There must be an understanding of what magick is, separate from our television and movie depictions of it. Many will read a comic, see a television show, or watch a movie and think that magick works the way it does in fiction. The line between fiction and reality can be blurred more easily at this time in life. Magick carries dangers and responsibilities, and children are not exempt from them simply because of age or ignorance. Suddenly the normal trials and traumas of childhood and adolescence are magnified by the ability to use magick. An innocent crush can easily result in the obsessive love spell. The solution to the bully at school becomes a curse. If magick is taught to children, the strictest ethics governing how and when to use it must also be taught. Magick for personal change should be emphasized with children, as opposed to magick for major changes of others and the outside world. Some would argue that the energy systems of children and teens are not able to handle the flow of energies without damage. I'm not sure if that's true, as I've found some very talented and psychic teens, but like everything else while they were in puberty, their magickal gifts ran a bit wild and they had little control. Not going through rigorous training to clear the psyche and become aware of the shadow, the gifted psychic's impressions can be filtered through a clouded mind, either with rose-colored glasses

and ideal optimism or with the darkness and depression of many teens' experience, and the genuine message does not come through clearly. Coupling magickal training with some physical discipline, like martial arts, yoga, or dance, can be very helpful to ground and focus the aspiring teen witch.

Though I don't have children myself at this time, I find myself confronted with many of these same issues. If you plan on teaching as a part of your ministry, you might also be facing these issues. Often teens will seek out mentors and teachers beyond their parents' reach, and seek to learn the Craft. Some are genuinely called, while others just like it because it's scary or different, or because their parents would disapprove. I'm a firm believer that the religious education of a minor is up to the parent, even when I might not agree with the tenets of the parent's religion. To meddle in the parent-child relationship is both illegal and immoral. Many religious conservatives are against the idea of pagans raising pagan children, but we now have the legal right to do so, so we must respect the legal rights of parents of all religions. If a minor seeks me as a teacher, the only way I will take that person on as a student is with the parents' permission, and usually with the parents' attendance in the class.

I do believe that as we grow as a tradition in the next aeon, we have to find ways of both educating our children in our traditions and making them a part of our practice, without losing our focus as a mystery tradition, exploring the inner depths. We also have to give them a foundation of a tradition to belong to, but we must do so in such a way that they do not feel forced or restricted. When a child wants to explore other traditions, or no tradition at all, there must be a freedom to do so without judgment. Many pagans joke that it will be their luck that their child being raised pagan with the "cool" liberal parents will end up becoming a nun or a priest in the Catholic Church to rebel against them. Rebellion and breaking way from a family or parental identity is a big part of growing up, and it is a part of life no matter what religion you are raised in. Part of our own Wiccan ethos of "And it harm none, do as ye will" encourages us to give everybody, including our children, the freedom to explore whatever they want, as long it doesn't harm themselves or others in the process.

Ritual of the Father

Invocation of the father, particularly the horned father of witchcraft, is a very powerful experience, not to be taken lightly. Look at the Capricorn god you have chosen for this lesson, or the one who appeared in the previous journey, and prepare to learn the mysteries of this father god.

Communicate with the father deity in your pantheon, and design a ritual to honor and explore the mysteries of responsibility, mission, and fatherhood. You can meet with this god in meditative vision or shamanic journey, or if you already have a connection to your chosen god, you can try a direct invocation (*TOSW*, exercise 19). In this ritual, you will either ask yourself the three questions listed here, or the deity will ask you at least three questions regarding the lessons of this zodiac gateway. You will have to answer each of them before you are allowed to pass on to the next lesson and gate. The questions for Capricorn are: What are the responsibilities you have agreed to? What are the responsibilities thrust upon you by others? What do you gain by keeping them? When you have completed the ritual, make sure you continue to honor and work with this deity over the course of the year. Use this connection to better understand your own responsibility, truth, and power.

Homework

- Do exercises 68–70 and record your results in your journal or BOS.
- Perform your master spell for this lesson.
- Review one myth from one of the cultures outlined on page 31.
- Review one religion as outlined on pages 29–30.
- Choose one figure from the biography list on pages 32–33, and learn all you can about that person.
- Assuming you started in Aries, you should be close to completing your final project. Do the necessary work to bring your final project closer to completion.

- Work with the Capricorn father deity from your personal pantheon.
- Obtain the Capricorn gem for your "breastplate" charm bag, if you haven't done so already. Work with the Capricorn stone this month.
- Work with one of your thirteen tools, re-consecrating it. Seek out its spiritual equivalent in the Otherworld, and know its mysteries.
- Optional: Make a fluid condenser (*TOHW*, chapter 9) out of a high-grade, flammable alcohol for this zodiac sign.
- Optional: Find a small stone with a flat surface that you can mark with the zodiac sign of Capricorn. Cleanse it, mark it, and charge it. You can also use it like a talisman, along with or in place of the Capricorn gemstone.
- When you complete the trials of this chapter, tie another knot in your witch's cord in a ritualized manner.

Tips

- How do the themes of mission and responsibility fit into your year-and-a-day goals and final project?
- Check in with your Master-Teacher guide as you work with Capricorn energies.
- Continue working on your own BOS, adding appropriate material to it each month. Write and perform these rituals when appropriate. You could write one of the following:

  Esbat for the new Moon in Capricorn, or for the full Moon in Cancer, its opposite sign.

  Rite-of-passage ritual for elderhood (croning or saging).
- Explore the gateway of purpose in your inner temple (*ITOW*, chapter 14).

Lesson Eighteen
The Wisdom of Aquarius

Of all the zodiac signs, Aquarius is the one that causes the most confusion, yet its teachings are some of the most important for modern magicians and witches. The name Aquarius implies water with the term *aqua*, and the title is the water bearer, yet it is a fixed air sign. The symbol of Aquarius is not the water being poured from the mythic cup or jug, but the one who does the pouring. Those zodiac signs with the most human symbols are usually air signs—the twins (Gemini), the scales (or more importantly, Lady Justice who holds the scales of Libra), and now the water bearer Aquarius. The only other sign to have a human totem is the Corn Maiden in Virgo, ruled by the airy planet Mercury. Only humans, those with the blessings of air, have the ability to speak.

Gender: Male
Triplicy: Fixed
Element: Air

Image: Water Bearer
Season: Winter
House: House of Social Consciousness, Friendship
Key Phrases: "I Connect," "I Know"
Theme: Contribution
Blessing: Progressive
Challenge: Elitist
Archetype: Rebel
Ruling Planet: Uranus, formerly Saturn
- **Exalted:** Mercury
- **Detriment:** Sun
- **Fall:** No Traditional Fall
- **Esoteric Ruler:** Jupiter
- **Monadic Ruler:** Moon

Classical Deity: Hera/Juno
Angel: Hanael
Color: Electric Blue
Metals: Uranium, Lead
Stones: Opal, Aquamarine
Body: Nervous System, Ankles
Labor of Hercules: Cleaning of the Stables of Augeas
Gift of the Goddess: To Understand the Voice of the Wind
The Thirteen Goals of the Witch: Keep Your Thoughts in Good Order
Alchemical Operation: Multiplying
Cell Salt: Natrium Mur (Sodium Chloride)
Tarot: Star

The confusion continues as many of the symbols associated with Aquarius are also non-air. The holiday celebrated when the Sun is in Aquarius is Imbolc. It is a frosty time of year, traditionally filled with snow and ice, more in line with fixed water than fixed air. The festival of Imbolc is sacred to Brid, also known as Bridget, and it is a fire festival, for Brid is the goddess of flame. Candles are lit in the name of the Goddess, to

awaken her from her winter slumber so she may rise at Ostara. Fire images continue in Aquarius, for the nature of Aquarius is inspiration. One is struck with the inner fire of insight and inspiration, or illuminated with a new idea like a bolt from the heavens. The water bearer is said to not pour out liquid, but waves of inspiration and waves of communication. They are described as waves of energy, of light. The air of Aquarius can be related to the airwaves of communication, for the glyph of its ruling planet, Uranus, looks quite a bit like an antenna. Understanding the inspiration of Aquarius is vital if we are to enter the Aquarian Age fully conscious and prepared to manifest our True Will on Earth in the global community.

The Way of the Rebel

Like the elemental associations of Aquarius, the archetypal image is also perplexing. The actual water bearer figure is usually associated with Ganymede, the young cup bearer and lover of Zeus, who pours out ambrosia to fill the cups of the Olympians. Zeus transforms himself into an eagle and snatches up the youth, carrying him to the home of the gods, associating Aquarius with the eagle totem. Eagles are seen as the messengers of the gods of the heavens, imparting divine wisdom or inspiration.

The planetary ruler of Aquarius is the "modern" planet Uranus. Uranus is named after the sky father of Greek mythology, son and consort to Gaia, though astrologers have disputed this archetype name for the planet. More radical astrologers prefer the Titan figure of Prometheus, and the image of the divine rebel stealing the fire from the heavens. The planet itself is a rebel in the solar system, with quite a few unusual features. Its axis is tilted 98 degrees, making the planet lie almost on its side. Its axis points east-west, as opposed to Earth's north-south axis, causing the Sun to shine on one of Uranus's poles first, then the other, for a period of forty-two years at a time before shifting sides. The entire orbit of the planet is eighty-four years, but Uranus's "day," or rotation on its axis, is seventeen hours and fourteen minutes long. Uranus also rotates in the opposite direction of all the other planets. The 1986 Voyager 2 mission discovered nine rings around Uranus, but the material composing the rings is not made of ice, like Saturn, but a much darker, unknown substance. Voyager also identified a magnetic field in the shape

of a corkscrew that stretches out for millions of miles. Uranus's magnetic field is unlike the magnetic field of any other planet in the solar system as far as we know at this time.

Because of its strange features, Uranus is considered a rebel in the solar system, and many feel that the rebellious Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods, is a more appropriate figure. Symbolically, Uranus represents freedom and escape, as it is the first planet to "escape" the tight rein of Saturn as the previous limit of the known solar system. When discovered, it coincided with revolutionary forces in culture, both the American Revolution and the early Industrial Revolution. Planets are said to be discovered when their true energy is discovered by the human psyche. Astrologers also believe that the name of a planet won't "stick" until the archetypally appropriate one has been chosen. Originally called the Star of George after the King of England, Uranus can fit the breakaway rebel archetype because, in Greek mythology, he is the first being to break away from Gaia and claim his own role. Together, they create the rest of the gods and creatures.

Before the discovery of Uranus, Saturn was the traditional ruler of Aquarius. While today we see Saturn as stoic and stern, he led the rebellion against his father Uranus, with his mother Gaia's help. He broke away from the established order, and set up his new order with his siblings, the Titans. The pattern of the revolutionary father evolving into the stern patriarch continued, and Saturn/Cronos was usurped by Jupiter/Zeus.

In esoteric astrology, the ruler of Aquarius is Jupiter, for both deal with the expansion of consciousness to see a larger perspective. The monadic ruler of Aquarius in this system is the Moon, linking Aquarius not only to these masculine rebellious archetypes, but to the powers of the Goddess, to the soul, for the antenna image that is the glyph of Uranus is really the antenna of the soul. While today the glyph has a stylized *H* image, many astrologers favor the straight lines to be drawn with crescents, to symbolize the soul power that this planet picks up (fig. 9).

In the system of twelve Olympians, the goddess Hera/Juno rules Aquarius, which I find very interesting. In many of the myths, she is portrayed as the rebel and trouble-maker, doing what she wants, defying Zeus's rule. Goddess-reverent pagans believe she is a sky or Moon goddess in her own right, co-opted by later Greek mythology and made into Zeus's jealous and vindictive wife.

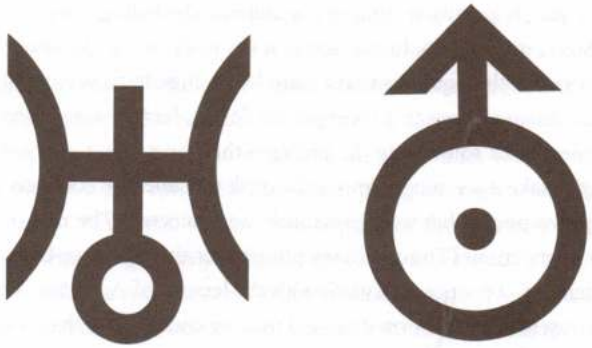


Figure 9: Glyphs of Uranus—Traditional and Esoteric

The water bearer image is connected to the myth of the Great Flood, found in many cultures, which believe that the waters came from the heavens, from the gods, to drown civilization. The image of the water bearer can also mark the return to the Golden Age before the flood, which is why our Aquarian mythology is so important at this time of transition. Even though the most conservative calculations give the date of the Age of Aquarius as 2150 or even 2660, much of the consciousness associated with Aquarius is being activated now.

Another water-bearing myth comes to us from Hercules' labors. In a single day, Hercules cleaned the fabled Stables of Augeas. Augeas, king of Elis, owned stables with the greatest number of cattle. These cattle were divine, immune to illness and disease, so the amount of filth that accumulated did not affect their health. Because of this, the stables had never been cleaned. This labor was chosen for Hercules in an effort to degrade and humiliate him, and King Augeas added to the challenge, stating that if Hercules could do the job in a single day, he would give 10 percent of his cattle to Hercules. Hercules did so, by rerouting the rivers of the Alpheus and Peneus to flood the stables and wash out the filth. Augeas reneged on his promise, so Hercules killed him and gave the kingdom to Augeas's son, Phyleus.

This story can be viewed as a metaphor for the darkness of winter being associated with sin and filth, which must be washed away before the year begins to get lighter.

Though the year is already waxing by the solstice, the light grows noticeably brighter while the Sun is in Aquarius. In that sense, it is a story of a "light bearer."

More importantly, Aquarius is associated with ingenuity, personal genius, and the ability to see things in ways that most people do not. It is the sign of individual inspiration. Hercules sees a solution to the problem that most won't, and his personal skills and strength make a seemingly impossible task possible. He connects the rivers with the stables, two points that were previously unconnected. The role of Aquarius is to make new connections. Though many phrases for the sign have been debated, I prefer the statement "I connect" to work with the lessons of Aquarius. The divine rebels are always disseminating information and making connections that others wouldn't or couldn't make. They reveal secrets and share new ideas.

Exercise 71

"I Connect" List

In your journal or BOS, make a list of statements starting with "I connect," and complete the sentence with all the things to which you connect. It's an unusual thought, but Aquarius is all about the unusual and unexpected. With whom and with what do you form new and original connections? Where and how do you make these connections?

Connections imply sharing, a communication, for Aquarius is an air sign. You probably weave far more webs of connection than you realize. It's important to look at where your actions are unorthodox, individualistic, or rebellious, because those are some of the most important connections you make. When you do something because you feel you have to, to remain authentic to yourself, despite what repercussions it may have socially, you tap into a current of the divine rebel. How do you join a group yet retain your individual identity? The key is realizing that you can only be your most useful to a group when you are your individual and authentic self. The rebel isn't always as rebellious as we may think.

As we develop this potentially rebellious nature, it leads us to more equal relationships, not only with those around us, but with our spirits, guides, and gods. We often trade the position that our parents, society, or government had in our lives for the

pagan gods, and see them as parental figures. They are, but there comes a time in the life of every responsible adult when we transform our relationship with our parents from parent-child, to mutual adults. We must eventually transform our relationship with the gods and spirits and accept both our growing spiritual maturity and responsibility. They don't always know what is right for us. Sometimes we have to make our own decisions and our own mistakes. Like teens going through a rebellious phase, it's perfectly normal. When you see the gods as parents, then it's easy to go through emotional phases with the gods as you have with your own parents. This leads to testing limits and boundaries and our sense of individual identity. Then you can reforge your relationship together in a lateral, not hierarchical, way, which is the hallmark of Aquarius. This doesn't mean we as humans have become as powerful or wise as the gods, just as we don't immediately become as powerful and as wise as our parents, but we enter into an adult relationship. Only through experiencing the rebel can you do this. The true secret mystery of Prometheus, Lucifer, and all the rebel figures is this truth. But eventually the rebel has to grow up and join the adult's table.

Inspiration

Aquarius is the sign of divine inspiration. It is the sign of being in tune with the Divine Mind, the endless source of ideas. The divine rebel is really the one who can clearly hear the small, still voice within, and do what is needed, inspiring others to do the same. Witches are said to understand the Voice of the Wind. The Voice of the Wind refers to many things—spirit communication, divine wisdom found in nature, the wisdom of silence and the inspiration that comes in all of these moments. To hear that voice within yourself and within nature is to have the key to the mysteries, to connect the wisdom of the heavens with your experience on Earth.

The rebellious figures are always associated with the heavens, the stars, and fire. Like the lightning of the storm igniting the first fires of humanity, Aquarius is the sign ruling the Star card of the tarot. The Star card teaches the lessons of finding the place in the world where you shine, where you find an inner happiness and peace shining at the center of your world, like the star in the theology of Aleister Crowley's Thelema. To be the star, you must not only be in touch with your True Will, but also have the

flow of inspiration move through you. The flow of awen, the inspiration, must feed the fire in the head, the divine illumination of the star.

Those in the flow of this Aquarian inspiration current seek out new ways of doing things. They usually educate themselves in the old ways, but they want to explore unorthodox innovations to do things differently. They seek to create with the heavenly inspiration that they receive. One way that the inspiration of Aquarius was described to me was through Einstein's famous $E=mc^2$ equation. One day Einstein went to bed feeling like he was on the verge of understanding all the concepts he had been thinking about, but he still didn't quite understand. Then he woke up the next day feeling "the greatest excitement" and began the fast and furious work that led to his famous equation. Something came through to him in the sleep state, and then this inspiration had to work backwards to prove and flesh out what he suddenly understood. Aquarian inspiration starts in such a way—a flash of insight, a dream, a sudden understanding, an inner voice—and then that vision from beyond must be brought into manifestation in the world. There is a need to share this gift with others, and that can only be done when the intangible idea is brought into form.

Witches, shamans, and magicians are very intimately linked with all forms of art. Our first works of art in human culture were the cave paintings, which today we assume have religious and magickal meaning, and are not simply a form of Stone Age graffiti (fig. 10). Our first stories, songs, and dances were drawn from the shaman's vision of the Otherworld. Touching the otherworlds, and then trying to bring that experience back to the rest of the tribe for their own understanding of the sublime Otherworld, results in artistic and creative expression. The advances and insights of human culture with breakthrough technology and medicine are attributed to Otherworld visions and spiritual aid. Many cultures spring up with advanced abilities and knowledge, apparently not from a long, slow period of building, but through a sudden and intense inspiration and the application of that new knowledge. In our view, civilizations such as the Egyptians and Sumerians appear to "spring up," when compared to the civilizations that were around them, with advanced concepts of math, engineering, medicine, and astronomy. Where did they get this sudden influx of information? We're not certain, but perhaps it was the Otherworld.

Figure 10: Prehistoric Art—"The Sorcerer"

Today we can still go to the divine, to the spirit world, for illumination and inspiration. When you seek inspiration to fuel your creativity, your path, and your work in the world, perform this journey and be prepared to manifest your vision in the world.

Exercise 72

Source of Inspiration

1. Perform Exercise 1: Inner Temple as a Mystery School Meditation, steps 1–4 (*LTOW*, vol. 1, page 45), to get to the World Tree. You can also perform Exercise 30: The Five Gifts (*LTOW*, vol. 1, page 292) prior to this meditation, to attune yourself to the flow of inspiration.

2. Climb the World Tree to go to the Upper World. Seek the highest realms of the Upper World. Hold the intention of finding the source of inspiration in the highest realms.
3. Feel yourself drawn to the source of inspiration. How do you perceive it? It can appear as the Holy Formless Fire in the center of the universe, the Cauldron of Inspiration, the Invisible Winds, the Illuminated Stone, or even a goddess, god, or muse of inspiration. The way it manifests will tell you how you perceive inspiration in your life, for the true source is beyond all of these images.
4. Ask the source of inspiration for a vision. If you have a particular need or intention, state it, but also be open to whatever gift is given to you in the form of inspiration. Though it is a gift, it is also a mission, for it is your job to take this inspiration and manifest it to share with others. If you do not, then whatever you received will not be a part of the manifest world and only live within your heart.
5. Make your way back to the Middle World, returning the way you came. Finish exercise 1, steps 8–11, to return to normal consciousness. Take whatever notes you need from the experience, and begin your work in manifesting this inspiration.

Teachers, healers, and religious leaders should keep in mind the wisdom of Aquarius and the Star card. While we've given the example of the teacher filling the cup of the student, a far better analogy for the Aquarian teacher is the fires of inspiration. The teacher must light, or stoke, the inner flames of the student. Teaching involves first the inspiration to create the spark and get the fire going, but then it involves teaching the techniques to the student to keep the flames going and burning brighter. It is the air of the Aquarian current that truly feeds the flame. The best teachers are the ones who inspire their students to radiate their own light, find their own purpose, and not mimic the teacher's. Traditions are carried on, but the best traditions balance the stability and support of a path with an openness to encourage evolution and creativity. Those with

a strong light and fire, radiating like a star, then go out and inspire the next generation.

Inspiration is the hallmark of the rebel god. And light plays such a strong part in the mythos of both Prometheus and Lucifer. Though we mostly think of Lucifer in Christian terms, the original being was a Roman god of light and illumination. This is the true Lucifer of Aradia's Gospel. His association with the star of Venus gave him an unfortunate link with the Christian concept of the Devil.

How does the Luciferian rebel god fit into more mainstream witchcraft theology? If we have the Sun Child/solar king in the Upper World, the Green Man/Grain God in the Middle World, and the god of death/Horned Hunter in the Underworld, then the rebellious fallen god is the thread of light that binds them together. He is the filament continuously falling from the Upper World, through the land, and into the Underworld, bringing illumination and awareness. Those in the Left Hand Path traditions do not aspire to worship the rebellious devil figure, but be like him, and in many ways, we do too. We seek to identify with the part of us that is the flow, the thread, between our higher, middle, and lower selves. Rather than orient our consciousness in just one perspective, or aim for only the higher self, we truly aim to be conscious and alive in all three worlds simultaneously. That is the challenge. Yet those who are in the flow of divine inspiration are doing just that. While many traditions aspire to become the empty vessel to be filled with the divine, we aspire to be that which flows to fill the three vessels of self.

Community Building

Aquarius naturally rules the Eleventh House of the astrology chart, the place of social consciousness. Social consciousness is a pretty broad term, and includes things like friendships, companions and social groups, mentoring, and even activism and groups working for social change. The dynamics of social consciousness and group work is one of the most important issues facing modern paganism today. As we break out of the more rigid molds of hierarchical and traditional secret coven structures, we are forced to find new models of group working and new ways of functioning in the public without losing our sense of the mysteries.

While it is quite possible to be a very magickal and successful solitary witch, even the most staunch solitary witch will occasionally seek out others of her own kind, if not for group work, then for companionship, to find someone else who understands the path and can share in discoveries and insights. We all seek support and community in some way from time to time. Ours is a tradition that mixes both solitary tendencies and need for community. A true mystery tradition attracts followers comfortable with the solitary path, even in the formal mystery schools, for only you can enter the mysteries, and you truly do so alone, regardless of others who may be present in the ritual. Likewise, even when we practice alone in ritual, we have a sense of a lineage, historically broken perhaps, but a lineage of witches, of wise ones and healers who stretch throughout history. We know we are but one link in a much larger chain. We continue the work of those who have gone before us, and our work will be furthered by coming generations. When we cast a circle, we feel the presence of these spirits who have gone before at the edge, silently supporting us.

A powerful phrase in our tradition, "Merry meet, merry part, and merry meet again," sums up the wisdom of our community in many ways, though modern pagans often dismiss it as a quaint folk saying out of modern favor. We think of *merry* as meaning pleasurable, agreeable, or happy, but there is a wider range of meaning to the word. It has been used to refer to bounty, sexuality, and the distortion of time that occurs when we experience things that are pleasurable. Time seems to "fly." Working magick and ritual leads to a similar distortion of time, where we perceive things as taking much longer or shorter than they actually do. Faery seer Orion Foxwood associates the word *merry* with the realm of faery and enchantment. When we say "Merry meet, merry part, and merry meet again," on one level we are saying that we meet in happiness and joy, we part the same way, and we will come together again. If we kept this saying in our hearts, there would be few of the community "witch wars" or personal squabbles. Yet the deeper meaning of the phrase is that we meet on many levels. Through the associations of magick and enchantment, the saying means we have met for a reason, and we will come together again with that same magick. By divine magick we have met, parted, and will meet again. Witches from ages past seek each other out in subsequent lives. If we do not meet again in this life, we will meet again in

another, or in the spirit world. On a deep level, we seek that kin and companionship of our peers, our sisters and brothers of the Craft.

We seek out our kin for a variety of reasons. As a tradition of outsiders, it is nice to find a place where we are welcome and not on the boundaries of "normal." Groups create a place where all are sharing intimate experiences that we cannot easily share with those who are not witches, pagans, or magicians. This is something we need to experience to understand, and sometimes we need the company of those who share those experiences. We can learn a lot from others that we can't learn in books, not only technique and factual information, but also flavor and how to live all of our lives as witches. No book replaces seeing a successful, happy elder and sharing time with her. No book replaces the magick of being with an experienced teacher who is willing to share hard-earned wisdom.

Coven work creates a group mind, and magick done with a harmonious and well-run group mind can be more effective than solitary work. Magick done with a disharmonious and poorly run group mind is much less effective than solitary work, so the power of a group is a double-edged sword. If you are joining a long-standing group, or a group from a long-standing tradition, and you are ritually initiated into the group, you become joined with the current of that group, and you can draw on a certain level of energy that was previously unavailable to you. Many find that not only magick, but also much of life, is easier, because the psychic burden is shared in a closely bonded group. Again, like magick, that bond can cut two ways, and someone in the group who is having problems can affect the entire group. Many are called to work in a group not for personal reasons, but because the gods or spirits ask for it. Some ritual work is best done in a group, with the support of others to aid your workings. Rituals to work directly with the spirits of the land are aided by having anchors to hold the space, while others commune directly with the deep intelligences of the land. Some forms of invocation naturally work best with partners. For all of these reasons, we look for magickal community.

Community building can come in many forms. Before you go setting out to find or make community, think about your needs, your goals, what you have to offer a group, and realistically how much time you have to give to a group. Here are some potential kinds of groups, each with its own group dynamics:

Informal Companionship

Informal companionship involves gathering together with others of a similar level of experience to share information, experiences, and eventually friendship. Over the years, there have been many healers and witches who were involved in all areas of my life but were not necessarily deep and intimate friends. But we'd meet for lunch every few months, hang out, share stories, and gain a sense of normalcy for what we do and who we are. It was great fun to be able to openly and honestly speak to someone who understood, but wasn't necessarily involved in my coven, classes, or family. Sometimes these companions could be the most honest with me about my own practice or behavior, because they were not so involved in my day-to-day life.

Networking Group

Networking groups gather together to create a space for practitioners to meet and form relationships outside of the group, from friendships to more formal magickal groups. Pagan "coffee talks" and mixers held at coffee shops and bookstores are a great no-pressure way to meet those in the community and see who you click with.

Informal Celebratory Group

Many groups gather together in a simple circle to celebrate the Wheel of the Year with like-minded people. They are not necessarily covens, and often there is no formal plan. Sometimes one, two, or a small group of celebrants lead a ritual for the community with a class or workshop on the holiday, and sometimes a donation is asked to compensate those involved. Other times the celebration is freely open, with no leader, and whoever shows up and wants to do something gets to do something, creating a very eclectic rite.

Formal Celebratory Group

This is a specific group of people who have made a commitment to celebrate the Wheel of the Year together. Sometimes the focus is not on the seasonal wheel, but Moon Circle celebrations. Groups can be run in a variety of ways (see the previous lesson), but the commitment is only for these celebrations.

Formal Magickal Group

Formal magickal groups, including covens and lodges, are those that have made a group commitment, share a group identity and collective magickal consciousness, and are devoted to a magickal practice. The practice can be personal and operative in nature (all individuals get to do spells to better their own personal lives and those of their loved ones), spiritual in nature (with training and initiation into a mystery tradition), or celebratory in nature (celebrating the seasons and/or Moon in a specific tradition), or it can include any combination of the above.

Support Group

Some seek a group of magical practitioners for a serious support group. They need help dealing with the strangeness of psychic and magickal abilities, and they are not finding that help in mainstream society, or they fear ridicule or institutionalization if they bring their issues to the medical profession. While most calm down and find balance with a little support from others, if one is in serious need of support, an experienced teacher, counselor, or healer is needed, who will be able to refer the individual to appropriate professional assistance if necessary. A support group should not be the sole support for someone undergoing frightening magickal experiences.

Peer Group

A peer group can be considered an extension of informal companionship, a group of practitioners that gathers together regularly. This is a particularly good arrangement for those who hold positions of power in their own community to gather with peers outside of their community to find support, perspective, and fellowship. I was part of an informal ministerial group that was not particularly pagan oriented, but it was one of my best experiences of community. I find similar peer support among author friends, and we all tend to be a close-knit group, as few can understand the specific challenges of writing, promoting, traveling, and teaching in the way we can.

Activist Groups

Magickal practitioners can gather together not only for personal reasons of support and practice, but also for transpersonal issues. Groups can form to devote themselves

to outreach and interfaith work, education, political action, environmental causes, and peace. Many pagans today find activist work, particularly environmental work, to be a primary way to express their spirituality.

Mentor

You can seek community when you are really looking for a mentor. We all have this romantic idea of the witch at the edge of the woods who finds us, takes us in, and teaches us all her secrets. Though I'm sure it happens, it hasn't happened to me. If you are looking for a mentor, and you think you have found one, you should be clear in your intentions and desires in the relationship. Many people who are picked to be mentors often don't know it and don't think they are anything more than friends, which leads to a blurring of boundaries, misunderstood expectations, and many disappointments. Though mentors can be great friends, this is a specific type of relationship that must be mutually agreed upon, and in terms of witchcraft and spiritual study, formally discussed. Everybody must be clear as to what they are getting into.

Family

People often come to the Craft looking for a second family, sometimes to replace one that they are unhappy with. While covens and circles can develop a relationship that is like family, you cannot expect that with each group. Such family relationships grow organically over time. Many members of magick-working groups would be less effective if they were intimately involved in each other's lives on a daily basis. Sometimes it's best to have distance from your fellow practitioners outside of gatherings and meetings. Spiritual love does not equate with familial love, and if you join a magickal group looking only for a family, you can find yourself easily disappointed.

By determining what you are looking for in a community and what you are honestly willing to offer, you enter into a community relationship with more authenticity and realistic goals. Many start with really ambitious plans to be involved in community, and they have high ideals of what community should be, fulfilling a multitude of needs, yet the reality can be harsh and fall quite short of their expectations.

If you don't see a group in your community offering whatever you are seeking, perhaps there are others looking for the same thing, and finding the same void. As a high priest/ess, you could be called to create whatever you feel is lacking. I've had a hand in founding most of the community groups I've been involved in, because I had a need I wanted fulfilled, and I had abilities and resources to share. Being the founder of a group brings its own range of challenges and compromises, but it also gives you a chance to set your vision of community in motion. In such situations, I try to remember the quote attributed to Gandhi: "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." If you don't do it, who will? We often think that taking such steps is up to other people, to important people or those with experience, but everybody has to start somewhere. If someone didn't take a risk and try something new, our community would never grow and evolve.

There is a dangerous trend developing in the pagan community. As we grow and information and experience become available to a wider range of people, many different viewpoints spring up. There is a conservative or traditional element of our community that seeks to deride those who do not meet its standards of seriousness. The popular derogatory name is a funny one, referring to these newer and more playful pagans as "fluffy bunnies," meaning that their magick has no substance or depth. If it were said in love and jest, it would be one thing, but it is usually used to ridicule. Whenever you have a larger group of practitioners, there will be differences in opinion, experience, and seriousness on the topic. I think diversity is wonderful, and I also love to respect tradition as I move to the future.

If you don't want to read someone's book, or do a ritual with them, don't. I'm fine with that. There are many times I feel the same. Yet to personally attack someone, or to define and attack a whole group of people who do things differently than you do, gets us into the trap that all religions have faced. We are too small a community to have the turmoil and conflicts that have marked the Catholic and Protestant Christians and the Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. It's silly to think of a British Traditional versus eclectic conflict with grave social repercussions for the world, but who would have thought that the Christians and Muslims would so divide? Regardless of the tradition, what brings us together as a community is far stronger than what separates us. To believe that there is only one true way, and to seek to have others conform or leave,

even if now the conflict is limited to personal diatribes, starts sounding like pagan fundamentalism. As a personal, mystical tradition, we have no need for a fully dogmatic, fundamentalist viewpoint. That is why we are pursuing alternative religions. Having no need to be "right" for anybody but ourselves, we can practice what we please and grow. If you disagree with someone or something, explain your views, but don't make it personal or feel the need to label an entire segment of our community as worthless.

I've found that those individuals who become so vehement in their dislike for another group, when there are so many other serious situations in the world to be concerned about, are really dealing with their own personal shadow issues. They so strongly disassociate with that segment of the community, looking for a scapegoat for what they see as wrong in paganism, that they are not looking at what is already out of balance in themselves. If you are truly comfortable with yourself and your own relationship with the gods, then you don't care that much if others are doing things differently, as long as they aren't hurting anybody else. Often it is the "fluffiest" practitioner who is inspired to go on and truly be a force for magick and good in the world, but that person had to go through this phase. We all follow our own path and make our way through the spiral in our own time.

Public Work

If we are to educate the greater community on the blessings of paganism, and create a sense of community with diverse pagan groups, there will be a need to be involved in some way with the public. This isn't a calling for everyone, yet many people who would not choose this work personally are called to do it spiritually.

Once you step out into the public eye, even in little ways, the dynamic shifts. The certain level of autonomy and privacy you have as a solitary practitioner or member of a private group is transformed. It's not to say that you cannot retain your privacy and autonomy, but you suddenly have a public image on top of that. While you can shape your public image through your own actions and words, you don't entirely have control over your public image. Even if you say and do everything in the way that you intend, people will interpret your actions and words based on their experience of you. While this is true for everybody and in every relationship, when you are a public figure,

your public exchanges, and even many of your private exchanges, are shared with the larger community. You can't control what people say about you, or how they perceive you. And after great struggles with this issue myself, and after hearing the stories of other witches, it's my firm belief that you shouldn't even try. You can be aware of the public persona, but all you can really control is your own actions and words, and you must have faith that if you are living with integrity then that integrity will be evident, even if controversies blur it for a time.

Public witches have two aspects of their public image to be aware of, that of the pagan community and that of the mainstream community. The pagan community operates much like any other subculture; we have our networkers and our gossips. People join a community to feel connected to something greater, and one of the ways to feel connected is to talk, to share, and to discuss what is going on in the community. Usually this is not only harmless, but also good, because it encourages dialogue between different individuals and traditions to form a greater sense of community.

The difficult aspect of such networking is that the nature of verbal communication is imprecise, and humans generally have an inclination to color stories in the repetition and interject their own interpretation. A great example of this, demonstrated in classrooms all over, is to have a large circle of people where one whispers a story into the ear of the person to the left. The story is repeated in whisper, person to person, until it reaches the first person who started the story. The final version is typically a distortion of the original, with important details missing, others added, and an entirely different emphasis. The story changes slightly as it is passed by each person. While this can be a great way to develop a myth, it poses a lot of problems in community building. Simple stories get repeated and transformed into epic battles between community members. I've been both amused and horrified at some of the stories I've heard about myself, and I've tried to trace them back to the actual events that barely resembled the stories.

It becomes very easy to form an opinion of someone in the community whom you've never met, whom you've never heard speak, or whose work you've never read, and instead base your opinion only on what other people have told you secondhand. In an unconscious effort to bond with those in the community with whom we do identify, we can find ourselves adopting the opinions of others. Just because your friend, covenmate, or teacher doesn't like someone, it doesn't mean that you should have those same feelings,

but it can be hard to form your own opinions and hold them when those around you differ. Part of our work as divine Aquarian rebels is to base our opinions on experience, and to be able to offer our perspective even when it is not the popular opinion.

Pagans are by nature an opinionated lot. Those who do offer themselves to serve the public community are both simultaneously embraced, because we need more teachers and leaders, and ridiculed, because people will ask, "Who do you think you are? What qualifies you to teach, to read, or to lead? Who put you in charge?" Those with specific theologies or magickal theories that are not in harmony with your own can take issue with you. When you publish or teach a particular opinion or tradition, you will receive criticism, both good and bad. My standard response to such critics would be "Where's your book? Or when will you be teaching and sharing your own ideas, rather than criticizing mine?" And while I have had a tendency to take things personally, that is not entirely fair to the critics. Those of us who choose or feel called to be public in some capacity have to open ourselves to criticism. It's just the nature of the beast. Those who do not want criticism shouldn't be in the public eye. Critics are found, and needed, in many disciplines including art, music, and science, to help guide others, who can have less education and insight, to figure out what material is genuine, helpful, controversial, or ill conceived. Critics who do so simply to soothe their own ego and shortcomings become readily apparent, as their critiques are personal and have little to do with the work. Critics who are thoughtful and balanced, who communicate well, are valued in a community. Critics offer opinions, but it doesn't necessarily mean they are right, or right for everybody.

I was told something by my very wise soul sister, Kala Trobe, echoing what the Goddess has told me in many meditations: "If everybody likes you and agrees with everything you are saying, then you probably aren't saying anything important." Innovators, groundbreakers, and leaders have a history of being controversial and misunderstood in their own time. That's not to say that you should strive to have all your actions be controversial and misunderstood. Simply follow your True Will and maintain your own authenticity and integrity, and let people have their opinions and reactions to you. It's wonderful to receive praise and be accepted by your community, but that shouldn't be the motivation for your work.

Sound wisdom in a quote attributed to Elbert Hubbard is, "To avoid criticism do nothing, say nothing, be nothing." Today modern witches are quick to judge those controversial figures that have come before us—such as Gerald Gardner, Alex Sanders, Robert Cochrane, Robert Graves, Margaret Murray, Marija Gimbutas, Z. Budapest, Starhawk, Laurie Cabot, Leo Martello, and Herman Slater—and while they can be criticized academically or personally, they should also be honored, for each has made major contributions to the pagan community we know today. We might not be here, practicing the way we do, exposed to the traditions we know, if it were not for their work. All major revolutionaries will be controversial, and just because they make a significant contribution, it doesn't mean they are perfect personally. One could critique the personal lives of such revolutionary figures as Martin Luther King, Gandhi, and Mother Teresa, but they still changed the world they lived in for the better. If you want to be a leader in your community, to build something lasting, to say something important, and to be someone who pioneers new models, you must be open to criticism in both your lifetime and posthumously.

Beyond simple criticism, those in need of help can construct elaborate relationships with public figures that have only a limited basis in reality. Like everything in the public sphere, sometimes this is helpful and other times it is harmful. You never know the effect your work can have on another, whether through writing or a lecture for a large audience. People who connect with your work will often believe they have a personal relationship with you. If that conception helps them evolve and go deeper, then it is a wonderful thing, but if they put too much emphasis on the personal aspect, and not the work, boundaries can dissolve on their side of the relationship and create some unrealistic images and expectations of you. Trying to live up to such unrealistic expectations is a huge mistake.

People can attend a public ritual or an evening workshop and be very moved by your work. They can be inspired and continue their study, and they can view you as their teacher, minister, or mentor, even though your personal one-on-one time with them may amount to less than five minutes. If they have personal expectations based on that five-minute exchange beyond whatever information or experience they gained from the ritual/workshop, and you fail to fulfill them, they become disillusioned. You cannot hope to fulfill others' personal expectations, so you become a teacher to these

individuals on another level, teaching them eventually that it is about the work, not the personality.

Some students, even long-term ones, will ascribe vast supernatural powers to their teachers, because a teacher demonstrated previous psychic or magickal talent. I had one student who complained that I didn't respond when he was in the hospital calling me. I told him I didn't receive any messages at home, on my cell phone, at the office, or by e-mail. How did he try to contact me? He responded that he psychically called me with his mind and wondered why I didn't feel him. Other students will assume that because you have psychic ability, you know their deep, innermost thoughts automatically, and they don't need to communicate verbally with you. Part of your job as a teacher or mentor is to dispel such superhuman illusions, and create an image of yourself as both human and magickal (for the two are not mutually exclusive), but not omnipotent.

Beyond the pagan community is the larger society to which we all belong. Being recognized as a witch in the larger community is a blessing and also a challenge. In the days of the old village witch, most people who visited the cunning one for remedies and divinations were not witches themselves. They were part of the lay community. In this day, we still serve in that capacity. The vast majority of my clients seeking healing and readings are not witches, and many do not even identify as pagan. Most would describe themselves as Christian or lapsed Christians. Yet they come to the witch for help. Being publicly known opens those channels. Those who are called to work with you on their own healing and spirituality can find you, yet not necessarily commit to the training of a witch.

The backlash of being a public witch is opening yourself to potential discrimination. Discrimination for being a witch or pagan is alive and well, and the need for anti-defamation groups and legal action groups is still here. While there is much more freedom today than ever before, areas that have conservative social, religious, and political groups foster behavior that is discriminatory and, in some places, potentially even dangerous. To think that persecutions are completely over is to be sadly mistaken. Many organizations do outreach, education, and civil rights work for pagans to make the popular pagan saying, "Never again the Burning Times," a reality on all levels.

Though you might not have any desire to be involved in a public group, you could still find yourself in that position as a part of your ministry. I know I had no desire to lead public circles and gatherings, but a small coven gathering with guests grew into a larger open Samhain circle in my backyard. That led to being invited to fill in for a public celebrant when she couldn't make a Sabbat and then eventually becoming the celebrant for what has grown into a large public Wheel of the Year ritual community in the Boston area. There was no plan to do any of this. There was no training, just what I observed from other public rituals. I was led step by step. I had no aspirations of leading large circles—in fact, I suffered from "stage fright"—but these rituals have played a very important part in my own growth as a minister and in public service.

Public rituals do not have to be fully public, depending on your area and comfort level. A high priest/ess or coven can make a ritual open by invitation. My own coven still celebrates the Sabbats this way, keeping other meetings private for the coven members only. Truly public rituals usually require a community notice of some sort, so those beyond your circle of acquaintances can find out about them. They are particularly good at helping new pagans, or those new to the area, make connections with the community. Large public events should be held in conjunction with an organization or even a bookstore, metaphysical shop, or community center to help publicize and give the event a public face that is not necessarily your own individual face. Such events can be combined with both educating the pagan community about the event or ritual and reaching out to the greater community, so others are aware that pagans are in their community and not doing anything harmful. Public events are a great way for friends and family members to observe or participate in rituals to better understand what their loves ones are involved in.

If you are leading or a part of a public ritual, here are some points to keep in mind.

Involve Others

Even if you are in charge of leading an event, don't feel that you have to do it all. A good public event is not a production of one with a large audience, but an event that takes the coordination of many people. If you are doing a traditional circle, have quarter callers, potion anointers, and smudgers to clear the energy of the space and participants prior to

the ritual. There are many tasks to be done. Your job as leader is to coordinate. You can even team up with another high priest/ess to have a partnership and share the burden. Be open to the input of others. One of the detriments to community is when one person shoulders all of the responsibility, either because that person is a control freak about ritual, or because community members discover they can just show up and be taken on a spiritual joy ride, rather than ever commit or serve. If you are a community ritual leader, it is nice once in a while to just show up and be taken on a "ride" by others, but we all have to find balance and contribute in ways that we can.

Sacred Drama

The larger the group, the less you can rely on the small, intimate forms of ritual. Big public rituals that require passing a chalice or potion can become long and tedious with so many participants. Making your motions large and dramatic so everybody can see, projecting your voice, and otherwise behaving as if you were in a stage show is appropriate and not disrespectful. The best large rituals are those with a ritual play, giving all the participants something to focus on and feel involved in, but not necessarily giving them each an individual action.

Music and Dance

The use of music is an important way to engage the community. Though silence is a virtue for the witch, not everybody in a large group will have the same meditation skills and focus. Background music, light drumming, or chanting can help keep focus during the longer parts of a ritual when the mind tends to wander. Chants are ways to have everybody add energy and power to a ritual and keep focus at the same time. Along with music, dance is an excellent way to get a large group involved in the ritual. It facilitates an altered state of consciousness, it raises energy, and it can be a lot of fun.

Different Energy

The dynamic in a large public circle is very different from that of a coven or solitary experience. The mix of very different energies and people can be unnerving until you get used to it, particularly if you are leading the ritual alone and holding the space.

Nervousness

It's totally normal to get nervous or experience "stage fright" before a ritual. My friend Leandra refers to it as PRS—pre-ritual syndrome. Like any performance, you simply get through it, and you can even use the nervous tension to create a spectacular ritual. Channel the energy you have into your work. A little nervous tension can be a good thing. I find that when I'm completely comfortable for an event, I tend to get sloppy, while a little bit of nervous energy keeps me sharp.

Pagan Etiquette

As a subculture, we have our own sense of etiquette, particularly ritual etiquette, but there is no one set standard that is universally accepted. If you have a standard for your circles, make it clear from the beginning. Is the ritual formal or informal? Is there laughter and talking, or is it solemn and serious? Is there a dress code? Many circles require you to wear all black. Are there specific movements? Many require you always to move or turn clockwise at all times, even when passing a chalice. Will wine or other alcohol be a part of the ritual? Will everybody be expected to partake, or can they politely pass? Will there be scent—incense or oil? Let people know in case anybody has an allergy. Are children allowed? If not, what is the cutoff age? If so, do they need to be accompanied by their parents at all times? What time will you be starting, and will the ritual actually start on time? Pagans have a sense of time beyond time, and in these cases, it's affectionately referred to as PST (Pagan Standard Time), meaning that whatever time something is scheduled, it's sure to start at least a half-hour late. I am not a big fan of PST and believe that if you say you are starting at a certain time, you are starting. I usually introduce public rituals with a little speech, to give latecomers a chance to get to circle, but once we start, the circle is closed, and if we are indoors, the door is locked.

Traditional Style Versus Accessibility

There is a tough balance that must be reached between keeping a tradition and style authentic to its roots and making it open and inclusive enough to be comfortable as a public ritual. Many traditions have outer court and inner court versions of their own rituals, to keep oath-bound material from the public eye, while having a consistent

format for all to learn. The level to which you make the ritual accessible is up to you. You don't want to "water it down" so much that it is no longer recognizable as witchcraft or pagan. If someone isn't comfortable with the idea of divinity as God, and only wants to focus on the Goddess, yet your ritual involves both, do you accommodate that individual? If someone isn't comfortable with the image of the horned god, do you omit him? If someone isn't comfortable calling on angels for the quarters, but that is your tradition, do you make the quarter calls generic? It's up to you. I started making things very open and nondenominational, but over time I have found that the people attracted to my circles want a witchcraft experience, so I don't water it down or change it much anymore.

Control

You can't control everything that goes on in a public event. Mistakes will happen. Things will be forgotten. Candles will blow out. People will forget their parts and you'll have to improvise. Go with it. While you can help create an atmosphere of support, you can't make everybody in the group get along, nor should you try. You cannot control the behavior of others once they make connections and leave the event. Be wary of those who might attend while on illicit substances, particularly if you feel like that would not be conducive to the group experience. You can also be wary of those who attend public events as sexual or psychic predators, but you can't necessarily stop their behavior or even completely bar them from events. Sexual predators sometimes seek what are ultimately consensual, yet still exploitative sexual relationships. Psychic predators are often seeking control and power over another, usually based upon supposed magickal or psychic prowess. Such predators are not necessarily breaking laws, but they are using people. Open to the public means open to the public. Organizations and community centers can have a stated policy of refusing entrance for any reason, but such policies need to be clearly stated. If you can't bar someone you feel is inappropriate to the gathering, you can make other members of the gathering aware of the situation in order to both warn the predator's potential victim and act as a buffer between the predator and victim, but even then, it creates a very difficult situation detracting from the purpose of the gathering. You could be completely misjudging

people and their motives. Thankfully, in my own experience doing public circles, over several years, this issue has rarely come up.

Personal Practice

Running public celebrations is not a substitute for your personal practice. During public rituals, your job is to create a community experience, and ultimately guide that energy for the purpose of turning the wheel if it's a Sabbat ritual. You must still take time to go within and do your personal work. Your own personal experience is secondary to facilitating the group experience when leading a public ritual.

Exercise 73

Public Ritual

Write a ritual intended for a larger public group with varying levels of experience and knowledge. If you were asked to run a public Moon or Sabbat ritual, and you have no real idea of how many people could be there, but the ritual space can hold fifty people, how would you be prepared for those fifty people? What activities would you make part of the ritual? How would you facilitate the experience? How "witchy" or "mainstream" would it be? Even if you never plan to do this, it's an important thing to work on, just in case. I know I never really planned on doing public Sabbats, but it happened as a part of my ministry.

Problems in Community

Though our souls may yearn for kinship, it's our personalities that get in the way. Paganism draws a lot of powerful, independent, willful, and proud people. On one hand, that is an excellent thing, but when such individuals come together in community, they often find it hard to compromise their vision in the creation of community. Disagreement, dissent, and politics are natural parts of any group, even a spiritual and religious group. You find it in all denominations of religion.

Many of us leave the political infighting of an institutional religious organization to find paganism and then idealize paganism to be free, open, loving, and accepting at

all times. While ideally it is, that doesn't mean everybody who is in the pagan community will embody all of those values all of the time. You can just as easily become disillusioned with the pagan community for the same reasons as you do in any community. But with paganism, you can opt to be a solitary practitioner, your own priest/ess for a while. Leaving a community is not the same as leaving the faith or worship.

We even tend to idealize other cultures, such as the Native American spiritual traditions, and those of us looking from the outside see a noble, peaceful, and spiritual tradition, yet we forget that from centuries past to even now, tribes would gather and conflicts would arise. Conflict is the nature of the human condition at this time and an unfortunate reality, but a reality we must deal with nonetheless. Hopefully we can handle such difficulties with grace and integrity, but problems to overcome will always arise. Here are some things to keep in mind when dealing with problems in your community, be it a coven or a large group.

Miscommunication

The vast majority of problems occur through simple miscommunication. Most people have very bad communication skills, and they either lack the ability to articulate what they truly mean or the ability to understand what others are trying to articulate. We are often taught to look at communication as a win/lose proposition, not a win/win, so we formulate our responses in our head while the person we are supposedly communicating with is still talking. How can we effectively respond if we are not even giving our full attention? We often fail to ask people to explain themselves more if we don't understand, or to repeat what they have said to make sure we have heard it correctly. We color the communications of others with our own fears, insecurities, and other issues, hearing inflections that were never intended, and taking offense at things that are not offensive. We all have done it. I've found it effective to use meditation and breathing techniques to ground myself during difficult communication exchanges, stay present in the moment, and respond to what is being said. A key teaching for me was learning the difference between reacting and responding. Though they appear quite similar, it helped to differentiate between my unconscious and automatic reaction to a communication as opposed to the thoughtful and secure response formulated once I had "digested" the information. I also learned from a very wise witch that in extreme

cases, particularly with online correspondence, it's a good idea to use the "twenty-four-hour rule" of formulating a response, but not sending it for twenty-four hours. If I still felt the same way after this time, then I would send it, but more often, I did change my mind and realized my first reaction was not going to help the situation.

Everybody Doesn't Have to Get Along

You can't like everybody. You can't agree with everybody. Strong personalities don't always get along, and they can rub each other the wrong way. It's not an indication that either of you is not "spiritual" or "good" enough; it's simply a current incompatibility. That can change with mutual work and time, but unless you feel very strongly about it, it's not necessary. You can choose how you respond, and hopefully respond with restraint and integrity when you feel you have to be in each other's presence, but you don't have to force yourself to spend time together when you don't really want to do so. I've known of supposedly "enlightened" Eastern gurus who disagreed vehemently with each other over theology and practice, but showed each other professional courtesy. Sometimes energetic vibrations are not very harmonious. I look to the natural-world teaching that gardeners call "companion plants." Some different plant species like to be near each other and thrive. Others don't like to be near each other, and they wilt and fail, even if you water, fertilize, and do everything "right." They just are incompatible near each other. People are the same way. Some people just don't "click," but take a lesson from the plant world. One plant doesn't go around insulting or gossiping about the other once they are separated. They each simply go their own way and flourish. That we insult and gossip because we feel the inability to be compatible says something about us. Rather than take the blame, we try to put it upon the other person. There is no need for blame. Simply part in peace.

Boundaries

Issues of boundaries—emotional, personal, sexual, and energetic—are always hot buttons in magickal communities. Conflict arises when the boundaries are not clearly established between individuals and within groups. You must be clear in what you are offering and what you are not offering, and when a line is crossed, you must speak up and reestablish the line clearly. This seems to put the onus on the individuals who may

feel their boundaries being violated, but you are the only one who can set your boundaries. Individuals without firm boundaries take on a lot of responsibilities and multiple roles with others, and then when they can't fulfill those duties they create conflict because people feel they haven't fulfilled their expectations. Say no when you cannot commit, and ask for help when you need it. The purpose of community is that no one person should have to do it all. I find it very helpful for groups, from small circles to larger organizations, to have clearly defined bylaws or a governmental structure. It seems to go against freedom, rebellion, and spontaneity, but such documents create clear boundaries. The group as a whole can change them as needed, but they provide a framework necessary for people to understand their duties and the responsibilities and benefits of the group. No one can say their role was unclear if it is written down and they asked no questions when they accepted it.

Fear of Change

Many people are afraid to change, grow, or let go of the old to prepare for something new. This inability to change can create tension and conflict in community. Eventually elders must make room for younger students to take on some responsibility. Teachers must give their students opportunities to lead and teach. Teachers cannot do everything all the time. Groups must end so other groups can begin. Names change as the energy and intention of a group changes. If you hold on to things and demand they stay the same, you prevent evolution, and the group becomes stagnant and corrupt. That is when community starts the process of becoming toxic.

Willingness to Apologize

A major source of friction in the pagan community is the inability of people involved in conflicts to take responsibility for their part in those conflicts and apologize for their actions or words. Many of us are too proud to admit "defeat" by saying we were wrong. If we as people in community would recognize that no one is perfect and that we do not need to be right all the time, we would create more harmonious groups.

Perfect Love and Perfect Trust

An ideal in many modern witchcraft traditions is that we are asked to keep the spirit of divine love and trust not only in our circles, but in everything we do. One issue that has come up time and again in regard to public rituals concerns the old initiation passwords for entering a circle.

> *Magus: "For I tell thee verily, it were better to rush on my weapon and perish miserably than to make the attempt with fear in thy heart."*
>
> *Initiate: "I have two passwords: Perfect Love and Perfect Trust."*
>
> *Magus lowers the sword, saying, "All who approach with Perfect Love and Perfect Trust are doubly welcome."*

We are supposed to enter the circle with Perfect Love and Perfect Trust or not at all. You don't have to impale yourself on a sword. Just don't enter. Yet this was based on a coven initiatory standard, not necessarily for public rituals. When you are entering a public community ritual with someone you don't like, can you truly be in Perfect Love and Perfect Trust? I think so. Perfect Love is different from personal love, which is different still from personally liking someone. Perfect Trust is divine trust, trust in the gods, not necessarily trusting all members of the circle with your life.

This passage from the Book of Shadows is about the fear of initiation and overcoming this fear as much as it is about any personal relationships between coveners. It was written from the stance of coveners protecting each other and operating like an extended family, not from the stance of large public circles. You can enter a circle with someone you don't like, and yet divinely love that person. This is like the Hindu term *namaste*, which is popular in modern metaphysical circles and usually translated as "the divine within me honors the divine within you." It's used much in the same way that a pagan will use "blessed be." That is closer to the sentiment of Perfect Love and Perfect Trust for the public circle. I can recognize the divine in you, but at the same time I think that, on the personal level, you're acting like a jerk. But I can rise above that, and enter a state of consciousness, of Perfect Love and Perfect Trust, and put those differences aside in the circle. Being able to hold both of those truths simultaneously can help us from demonizing or ostracizing each other in community. This is part of

witches' qualities, to keep their thoughts in proper order. If you hold Perfect Love and Perfect Trust as a personal love and trust, then you put community leaders in a position of having to choose who can or can't be invited to an open circle because someone else has harsh feelings. Once we feel we cannot be a part of community because someone we don't personally like is attending or, worse yet, think we have the authority to bar those we don't personally like from open community events, we've lost the spirit of community.

Overly Dramatic

Many pagans live a life of high drama, particularly those who ascribe to the outward aesthetics of pagan life but are not necessarily regular and disciplined practitioners of the religion. I'm a firm believer that "those who do not act out sacred drama are forced to live it." People who do regular ritual and meditation are usually pretty grounded, happy, and peaceful. Pagans who don't do such rituals see life through the lens of science fiction/fantasy novels. We all hope to have a life with a sense of adventure and excitement, and feel that what we are doing is important and matters, but it is quite easy to cross a line into unhealthy behavior where our lives are constantly colored with life-and-death decisions, magickal attacks, and important messages we must share with the world.

If you thrive on a certain drama and that is a helpful motivation for you to do your spiritual work, there is nothing wrong with it, but be conscious of your situation, your own actions, and the effect of your actions on those around you. It's easy to get manic and swept away in the excitement. Melodrama kills off many groups and covens, because everybody cannot continue to live at the same manic, high-intensity pace without stress. Those with the highest level of drama naturally see themselves as group leaders. You must have a certain level of grounding and self-knowledge to be an effective community leader. If you don't, work on yourself first, hopefully under the direction of a reputable teacher, and then you can take a greater role in community.

Witch Wars

Though I hate this term and personally would like to see it stricken from our pagan vocabulary, it neatly sums up the dynamics of a toxic pagan community. Witch wars

are the open conflicts between prominent individuals in a community, or prominent groups, who are in dispute. Rather than simply agreeing to disagree or avoiding one another, each individual or group seeks to discredit and malign the other. Some engage strictly in social "wars," while others actively cast spells and curses against each other in the misguided belief that they are actually doing good and protecting the community. The practice of the spiritual tradition becomes secondary to the conflict, though the conflict may be framed in spiritual terms. Sadly, most revert to the Christian polarity of good versus evil and assume themselves to be good, so their supposed enemy must be evil, and their opponents become demonized. Such polarization is not a part of our theology, so it should not be a part of our community.

Witch wars happen for a variety of reasons, but usually at the heart is a misunderstanding or miscommunication that results in some form of insult to an individual or group. There can be disagreements over tradition, theology, lineage, or public actions that reflect on the entire pagan community. Gossip and hearsay lie at the heart of most, if not all, conflicts, though communities can have their individual community killers, those whom a friend of mine colorfully describes as "shit-stirrers." These individuals delight in creating trouble and causing conflict by spreading rumors and lies and then watching the conflict erupt. Sometimes witch wars occur because one leader in the community seeks to institute regularity or conformity in ritual under his or her guidance, akin to an institutional religion, and those who disagree suddenly become the enemy. Many people who gain a little respect and responsibility in a community become ego driven and seek to amass what they think is power by controlling others. One of the surefire ways to unite a group that a leader feels is falling apart is to give them an enemy to bond together against. This classic form of group manipulation will backfire once the community members start asking questions. It takes a long time for a community to heal from witch wars.

Cult Dynamics

Pagan communities have to be wary of cult dynamics. Powerful and dramatic people lend themselves to cults, and many spiritual seekers are looking to give up their power to someone who will take care of them. Witchcraft and paganism are typically misunderstood as a mind-control cult to begin with, so we must be vigilant in not involving ourselves in

such practices. Groups that engage in cult mind-control techniques are generally led autocratically by one charismatic leader, and they discourage contact with family and friends outside the group; require unending financial support rather than payment for specific services such as workshops; and restrict what you eat, what you read, and when you sleep. Initially such groups build you up first, supporting you and helping with your self-esteem by giving you a place where you feel you belong and are understood. Once you commit to the organization, the group slowly tears down your self-esteem so you can't conceive of an independent life without it, and it controls more and more of the details and action of your life. Though this type of cult environment is something to be wary of in the pagan community, it is not as prevalent as the media would have you believe.

Pagan Immersion

When we are immersed in a pagan community, it can make it quite difficult to relate to other communities and to the mainstream society. I know that after being surrounded by spiritually oriented, magickal people for most of my days, it is hard to deal with those who have such a radically different view of life and reality. It becomes harder to deal with those who do not understand that their actions and thoughts have a direct effect upon their lives, that they are not victims but active participants in life, and that they are part of a greater web of life. Depending on our family and work situations, we must be mindful of balancing our pagan community values with the mainstream social norms. I have found that a big part of ministry is simply leading by example in the "normal" world, and if people ask questions, I'm happy to share, but otherwise I lead a quiet life in my day-to-day existence. Having compassion for others who are not on a magickal path, and don't necessarily want to be on one, is important.

When entering communication with others, particularly if you feel like there is conflict or tension, spiritualize the experience. If both of you are pagan, and both of you are open to it, start with an evocation to the gods, and to your higher selves, and ask for clear communication. If both of you are not open to it, simply say this evocation silently before you begin. Approach the exchange as a spiritual, not just a social, experience.

In situations where communication has broken down, do magick to reestablish the lines of communication, and to create a situation where both parties are understood

and their needs are met. You can connect directly with another person's higher self (*TOSW*, chapter 8) to gain greater insight into the situation, but realize that when you are personally upset, that can color your communication, so don't assume that what you experience is completely correct, although it is a good starting place. If you get back into actual contact, it can be better to find a neutral arbiter, a minister with some conflict-resolution skills to aid both sides in coming to a peaceful resolution.

In extreme situations, where you feel that resolution is not possible and complete separation is necessary for spiritual and personal healing, there are rituals of banishment that can be done. Like most binding and banishment spells, this should not be taken lightly, and I think that, at the very least, the twenty-four-hour rule, if not a two-week rule, should be applied once you have decided to do such a ritual. Wait that amount of time before you do something you might later regret. Even if you are certain that you won't regret your action in the moment, it is a very serious step and should only be done when other possibilities have been exhausted.

Exercise 74

Banishment

Take a white taper candle, and carve the full name of the person you need to banish on the candle. Use any distinguishing names, titles, or the glyph of this person's zodiac Sun sign. In a sacred space, "baptize" the candle in the name of the person. Name the candle with the target's name, and anoint it with salt water or a protection potion/oil. You can even formulate a specific banishment blend for this purpose. Call upon the God and Goddess to remove this person from your life. I think it is important to ask that you also learn everything you can from this situation and release it fully. If the banished person was really serving a higher purpose in your own spiritual growth, you will often immediately attract another very similar person right after the banishment, in order to fulfill that purpose. I've also added the condition that the ritual be for my highest good, or if circumstances should change for the highest good, the banishment will end. I've banished people out of pain or anger and had it work quite well, but thankfully added that part to the end, and ten years later they have come back into my life, totally different, and the situation was able to be fully healed.

Light the candle and let it burn for a few minutes. Talking to the candle as if it were that person, explain that he or she is released and banished from your life, that your lives will no longer cross and touch each other ever again. Then turn the candle upside down and snuff it in the ground or a bowl of sand. Release the sacred space. If you are outdoors, ideally somewhere you do not normally go to do magick, bury the candle. Some people leave the bottom half sticking out of the ground. You can also bury it with more protection potion, oil, or herbs. Turn around and leave the candle there. Don't look back, and don't return to that place, or you could break the banishment. If you are indoors doing this spell, go to someplace remote and dispose of the candle, again, never looking back once it's buried and never returning.

A less harsh and permanent way of dealing with such situations is what I call the "You're dead to me" method of conflict resolution. Its principles should be applied after any formal banishment anyway, but you can use these principles without the ritual to permanently sever links, to cool down a situation and stop feeding a conflict your energy. Simply take a vow to not mention the name of the one you wish to have removed from your life. You don't say that person's name. You don't think of him or her. You get rid of pictures and personal items. You act as if the person were never in your life at all. Like the Romani (Gypsies) who never mention their dead, and burn all their possessions upon death, you treat this person as if he or she were dead, without necessarily going through the banishment ritual. The more you give a relationship energy, the more it grows. When you starve it, it withers.

My best remedy for most conflicts in the pagan and even the outer mainstream society is to treat everybody at least like your peer, if not your elder. If you are wrong, their own words and actions will help you see that, but for now, give them the benefit of the doubt and err on the side of caution. Many of our problems can be found in people thinking they are better, more powerful, more magickal, more special, or more enlightened than another. Many believe their own traditions, training, or path is better than others, and either seek to convert others subtly to their ways or hide their secret knowledge and play the role of superior. By sharing what you have done and what you know, but assuming that others have information and experience that is just as good, you create a lateral relationship in the beginning, and you can base it on mutual re-

spect. I find this to be the Aquarian ideal, where we are all valued within the circle, for if any one of us were missing, the circle would be incomplete. You never know who has experienced the mysteries and trained deeply in magick, or who remembers from lives past. Regardless of their age, I give others the respect of a peer or elder, assuming they probably know more than me, unless they do something to lose my respect and prove me wrong. Starting out this way, rather than with the "prove it to me" attitude, has made my relationships in the community much smoother, and I've been blessed to find wise ones and elders all around me.

Witchcraft and the Modern World: Activism

Activism is a huge part of the Aquarian/Eleventh House work. It is a force of societal consciousness, and society only changes when people are actively seeking change. It involves public work, and we must actively work to birth the next aeon, rather than sit back and let other forces shape our world as we remain on the sidelines. While witches were once in the shadows and working behind the scenes, many modern witches have made public activism, public projects, and both working within traditional social agencies and founding new organizations integral parts of their spiritual practice, particularly witches such as Starhawk, Leo Martello, and Laurie Cabot. One cannot claim to revere the Earth and not be actively working for the protection of the environment. One cannot claim to believe in freedom and then roll over when people's rights are being eroded. But you can choose how you get involved in activism, and everybody will choose to contribute in different ways. Some choose to engage in political movements, while others focus more on social or environmental issues. But the lesson of Aquarius is to teach us how all of these things are tied together and cannot be separated, yet each of us is called to do our own part, and cannot tackle all of the ills of the world simultaneously. What does your True Will call you to do?

Activism comes in many shapes and sizes. I used to erroneously believe that activism was always controversial and confrontational, protesting and dissenting. Activists were "against" something rather than for it. While some activism does develop in that

manner, that is not the only form of activism. In terms of influencing current public policies and laws, activism can take the form of the traditional public protests to bring both media and governmental attention to a particular issue. More intense forms of public protest can involve civil disobedience. Most pagans I know who are politically and socially active do not advocate public violence in their protest, though you can find some extreme forms of protest among many activist groups. Today there's a fine line between a freedom fighter gaining the sympathy of the public to alter policy and a terrorist, and few people want to have our faith linked with violent public protest. Other less confrontational methods of activism include letter writing to both politicians and media groups to make an issue known, and campaigning politically, either for candidates who support your issue or in support of legislation that addresses the issue.

Less visible forms of activism also exist. You do not have to be in the public eye or risk arrest to be an activist. Economic activism is one of the most powerful tools we have to create change, and it's a tool being used by many conservative religious groups. By boycotting those companies that sponsor efforts that run contrary to your social vision, and instead providing economic resources to those that take a favorable stand on your issues, you give them support beyond words or intangible energy. Whenever an organization that favors gay rights is targeted by religious conservatives, I not only write the organization a letter in support, to offset the mail it is receiving from those opposed, but I make sure to patronize the establishment or purchase its products. Financial contributions to charitable organizations are also a way of providing community support. Ideally activism means just that, to be personally active in the effort, but sometimes an organization needs operating funds more than another live body in the office. Choosing wisely where to put your dollars affects your society.

Activism can work on an individual level. Many people simply take stands on issues in their personal life, and either educate others on their stand one-on-one, or lead by example and wait until someone asks them why they are taking such a stand. Vegetarians and vegans who follow their lifestyles for moral or spiritual reasons are choosing this form of activism. Every time they have a conversation about why they have chosen to be vegetarian/vegan, they are performing a service. Witches who wear a pentacle proudly and answer questions when asked about it, or who ask for the pagan holidays instead of the Christian holidays off from work, are performing an educational activ-

ist service as well. Ideally, in the cases of both vegetarians and pagans, we have a more receptive audience when people ask us about our beliefs, rather than having to educate people who do not want to listen.

Experimental social groups that embody cooperative efforts to create new paradigms also practice a form of activism. New methods of community living, spiritual retreats, educational centers, craftsman groups, and farming cooperatives are performing activism. I have one student, Jocelyn, who lives on and runs a green farm, meaning that she lives as environmentally friendly a life as possible, and, with a wind turbine, she even generates enough of her own electricity that she sells the surplus to her local electric company for others to use. She has open houses during the year to allow people to see her farm and how it works, being part of a larger network of such farms, and she is happy to educate anybody who wants to know how to live greener in their own home without great expense or harsh living conditions. From saving electricity to using environmentally friendly cleaning products, she educates people on all the ways they can walk lightly on the Earth. Environmental activism can include everything from planting trees to cultivating endangered species of plants and herbs.

Today's media lends themselves to many new methods of activism. In earlier forms, art, music, and dance could lend themselves to activism. Protest songs, poetry, and artwork, by those with the talent to take their inspiration and find the medium to share it with others, effectively educate while they entertain. Many people won't seek out activist resources, but if they like a song and then wonder what it is about, or if they become engaged in a book that also teaches new paradigms, they become interested. Multimedia, e-mail, websites, and social networking online offer great opportunities to get the word out, and they weave together areas of political protest, campaigning, letter writing, and education.

Magickal activism is the last avenue for pagan activists, but it should also be the first. The use of intention, energy, and spells to shape your work is an important task. Witches often send magickal energy to war-torn areas and those struck by natural disasters. Many are less apt to send energy toward manifesting the victory of a political candidate or law, feeling somehow that this is "cheating" or unethical, but those of other faiths will pray for their leaders' victory and the policies they feel strongly about. Why should witches do differently? Activist critics say that magick is not activism. You

Figure 11: Peace Symbol and Crow's Foot

have to do something, not wish for it and sit back. Like all good spellcraft, you must follow up with real-world action. But I do think it is highly ethical, and more so desirable, to do a spell for your intended outcome, and then go do your physical activity—join the campaign, protest, or organization. Set up your world energetically through the magick, and then do every real-world action in your power to make it happen, just as you would in spells for jobs, money, love, or healing. Activity must take place on all the planes of existence, but by doing the magick first, you prepare the world energetically for what you desire to create.

Art and magick can be mixed in creating a change in social consciousness. In many people's minds, the archetype of the Age of Aquarius is synonymous with the late sixties and the peace activism that occurred in the United States against the Vietnam War. Witches will see similarities between the popular peace sign of that era and the protective symbols known as the Crow's Foot (see fig. 11), as well as the Norse rune Algiz, the rune of the elk. Modern magickal activists are quick to use this symbol in their work, evoking both meanings and powers. It's amazing to think of the synchronicities that occur between symbols from different generations and times.

Group magick, and simultaneous magick among many groups, can be a powerful method of transforming society, but it's hard to pull off, or to get everybody to have the same intention. I've been involved in pagan magickal activism groups when members disagreed if we should curse the candidates who were against our ideals and issues, or bless and manifest success for those who were in alignment with our issues. You can't force cohesion or cooperation. You can only do as your True Will directs you

and see who is in harmony with your intention. In the end, you might find you are alone in your views, but part of the Aquarian lesson is to stand your ground and be your true self, even if no one stands with you. That is the spiritual rebel.

Ritual of the Rebel

Learning to work with the rebellious gods, the light bearers and fire stealers, the ones who connect the heavens to the Earth in their own unique ways, is necessary for us in our own lives. We must each follow the beat of our own drummer and fulfill our own unique life mission. Doing so doesn't always please those around us who are not in tune with their own unique missions. Learning how not to conform to what others expect is important for all modern witches, for we walk a path where we seldom conform to what is expected.

Communicate with the rebellious deity in your pantheon, and design a ritual to honor and explore the mysteries of following your own mission in your own way. You can meet with this god in meditative vision or shamanic journey, or if you already have a connection to your chosen god, you can try a direct invocation (*TOSW*, exercise 19). In this ritual, you will either ask yourself the three questions listed here, or the deity will ask you at least three questions regarding the lessons of this zodiac gateway. You will have to answer each of them before you are allowed to pass on to the next lesson and gate. The questions for Aquarius are: Who has mentored you? What is the wisest thing you have learned from your mentors? How are you passing on what you've learned to the next generation? When you have completed the ritual, make sure you continue to honor and work with this deity over the course of the year. Use this connection to better understand your True Will.

Homework

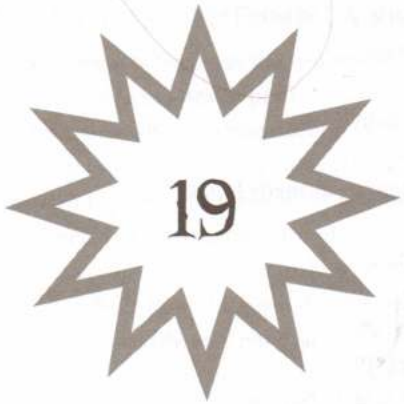
- Do exercises 71–73 and record your results in your journal or BOS. Exercise 74 should only be done when needed.
- Perform your master spell for this lesson.
- Review one myth from one of the cultures outlined on page 31.

- Review one religion as outlined on pages 29–30.
- Choose one figure from the biography list on pages 32–33, and learn all you can about that person.
- You should be close to completing your final project.
- Work with the Aquarius rebel deity from your personal pantheon.
- Obtain the Aquarius gem for your "breastplate" charm bag, if you haven't done so already. Work with the Aquarius stone this month.
- Work with one of your thirteen tools, re-consecrating it. Seek out its spiritual equivalent in the Otherworld, and know its mysteries.
- Optional: Make a fluid condenser (*TOHW*, chapter 9) out of a high-grade, flammable alcohol for this zodiac sign.
- Optional: Find a small stone with a flat surface that you can mark with the zodiac sign of Aquarius. Cleanse it, mark it, and charge it. You can also use it like a talisman, along with or in place of the Aquarius gemstone.
- When you complete the trials of this chapter, tie another knot in your witch's cord in a ritualized manner.

Tips

- How do the themes of divine inspiration and rebellion fit into your year-and-a-day goals and final project?
- Check in with your Master-Teacher guide as you work with Aquarius energies.
- Continue working on your own BOS, adding appropriate material to it each month. Write and perform these rituals when appropriate. You could write the following:

  Esbat for the new Moon in Aquarius, or for the full Moon in Leo, its opposite sign.
- Explore the gateway of guidance in your inner temple (*ITOW*, chapter 14).



Lesson Nineteen
The Wisdom of Pisces

The last of our twelve star teachers is Pisces. Being a mutable, changing water sign, Pisces has the symbol of the fishes. Though most people think of the image as a single fish, integral to the lessons of Pisces is the dual nature of the sign, demonstrated by two fish. The two fish are said to be tied together, but one is swimming toward the heavens and the other is swimming toward the world. The push and pull between the idea of the heavens and the reality of the world creates the spiritual motion that is found in Pisces.

Gender: Female
Triplicy: Mutable
Element: Water
Image: Two Fish
Season: Winter
House: House of Merging, Hidden Enemies, Institutions

Key Phrases: "I Merge," "I Believe"
Theme: Divine Union
Blessing: Idealism
Challenge: Martyrdom
Archetype: Ecstatic
Ruling Planet: Neptune, formerly Jupiter
Exalted: Venus
Detriment: Mercury
Fall: Mercury
Esoteric Ruler: Pluto
Monadic Ruler: Pluto
Classical Deity: Poseidon/Neptune
Angel: Cambriel
Color: Sea Green, Violet
Metals: Tin, Pewter
Stones: Amethyst, Aquamarine
Body: Lymphatic System, Glandular System, Feet
Labor of Hercules: Capture of the Horses of Diomedes
Gift of the Goddess: To Predict and Control the Weather
The Thirteen Goals of the Witch: Meditate
Alchemical Operation: Projection
Cell Salt: Ferrum Phos (Iron Phosphate)
Tarot: Moon

The ocean, the home of the fish, is a literal form of mutable water. The water of the ocean is constantly changing with the waves and weather. The water evaporates, changing form, and precipitates down again, filling the rivers and returning back to merge with the ocean. The ocean is the cycle of beginnings and endings. It is the womb, supporting the development and evolution of life, but it is also the dangerous, watery tomb that will return us to the cycle of rebirth. The Sun enters Pisces at the end of our astrological year, before the Sun's zodiac rebirth of Aries in the vernal equinox. The end of one cycle brings the promise of a new beginning.

The Way of the Ecstatic

Pisces embodies the lessons of being between, as the two fish are never wholly in one world or the other. This state of between-ness is perfect for those exploring the mysteries of witchcraft, considering that witches, shamans, and seers from all cultures are described as liminal beings, with one foot in the spirit world and one foot in the material world, much like the two fish. Practices that focus on this between state, particularly the ability to free oneself from the material world, are known as ecstatic arts. Most think of ecstasy as a sexual experience, but it truly means to be "free from the flesh." Even though one is being freed from the flesh of material existence, the methods that are considered ecstatic are usually very physical, and they sometimes involve physical pleasure to reach a state of spiritual bliss. Music, dance, sex, and perception-altering food and drink are all ecstatic techniques. Even self-inflicted pain through ritual scourging, isolation, and fasting can lead to the ecstasy of the mystic. The flesh and spirit have an interesting symbiotic relationship, as each holds the keys to the mysteries of the other. One uses physical activities to experience pure spirit and the other uses spiritual experiences to live in the world. The exhaustion that occurs after using many ecstatic techniques creates a state of gnosis where the sense of "I" dissolves away in an ocean of spirit and the mysteries of divine unity can be experienced.

The modern planetary ruler of Pisces is Neptune, the planet named for the sea king. Known as Poseidon to the Greeks, he rules one-third of creation with his brothers Zeus and Hades, having dominion over the waters and seas, but also being associated with earthquakes. Water, and particularly the sea, is an allegory for the spirit world. The surface of the water is the veil separating the worlds, visible yet ever changing, sometimes reflective and other times cloudy. The depths are the other world, where light is strangely distorted and new perceptions are made. In the Western mysteries of Europe, the Atlantic Ocean in the west is also a symbol of the spirit world, and journeying to the west is a symbol for going to other realms of spirit. In modern Qabalistic correspondences, Neptune is related to the all-father principle of Chokmah, the male creative principle, the cosmic seed of the cosmic ocean of Binah/Saturn. The mystery of Chokmah is the ecstatic creative principle on a cosmic level, the male mysteries to be united with the cosmic female in ecstatic bliss.

In classical astrology, before the discovery of the outer planets, Jupiter was the ruler of Pisces, as well as Sagittarius. Just as Uranus has Promethean associations, Neptune is frequently linked with the figure of Dionysus or Bacchus in modern astrology. As the son of Zeus and either Semele or Persephone, depending on the version of the myth, Dionysus is twice born. In one myth, as the son of Zeus and Persephone, he is devoured by the Titans, leaving only his heart that was implanted in Semele. Dionysus dies and is resurrected in divine power, becoming the god of wine and ecstasy, patron to a cult of wild ecstatic women known as the maenads. He was mostly likely a Thracian god absorbed into the Greek and later Roman pantheons. Depending on the version, he has a special relationship with Rhea, Demeter, Athena, or Persephone. His cultivation of grapes and wine equated him with a civilizing force, yet he also had a dark and wild nature. He is the patron of wild things, including satyrs, centaurs, and other nature spirits, who raised him. He could induce peace or madness. Like Hercules and many of his half siblings, Dionysus was plagued by a jealous Hera. Dionysus is very beautiful, sometimes depicted as androgynous, and to escape Hera, he dressed in female attire to hide from her wrath. Eventually he was made one of the twelve Olympians under Zeus's rule. The mystery cults dedicated to Dionysus were similar to the Orphic mysteries, and might even have been connected, involving the mysteries of death and resurrection. Differing from most Greek gods whose followers felt the gods to be outside themselves, distant on Mount Olympus, worshippers felt the presence of Dionysus within themselves during rituals and offerings. He was linked with the flesh. Later traditions look at parallels between Dionysus and Jesus Christ, both being gods associated with death, resurrection, and wine. He was also equated with other resurrection gods, such as Osiris of Egypt.

In the myth cycle of Hercules' twelve labors, only the capture of the Horses of Diomedes remains to be explored. Diomedes was the gigantic king of Thrace and the son of the war god Ares. He owned four ferocious man-eating horses. Hercules was charged to capture these horses from Diomedes. They were chained to a bronze manger to keep them from escaping and harming anyone. In one version of the tale, Hercules was unaware of the dangerous nature of the horses and brought his male lover Abderus and other youths to aid him. Hercules cut the chains, and they took the horses. He left Abderus in charge of the horses while he fought Diomedes, and

the horses quickly ate Abderus. After defeating Diomedes, Hercules fed him to the horses in revenge. In another tale, Hercules, fully aware of the danger, cut the chains, chased the horses to the highland of a peninsula, and used an axe to cut a trench across the peninsula, making it an island. Hercules fought Diomedes with the axe and, after defeating him, fed him to the horses. This made them much more calm, and he was able to bring them to King Eurystheus to fulfill his labor. Many variations of the final fate of the horses exist, including that Eurystheus dedicated them to Hera, and now permanently docile upon the death of the master, roamed freely. Another version contends that Eurystheus instead sacrificed them to Zeus, who rejected them and sent wild animals to eat them. The horses may also have survived long enough to have a foal, which became the progenitor of Alexander the Great's own horse.

Horses have a strange relationship with the sea and ocean gods, even though this myth has no explicit link with the sea gods. Poseidon is the patron of horses. He pursued the goddess Demeter, who transformed into a mare. He became a stallion and their mating produced the talking horse Arion. In the Homeric Hymns he is known as a tamer of horses as well as a patron to ships and sailors. He gave horses to Athens. His chariot is pulled by the hippocampi, horses with fish hindquarters and webbed "hooves" that swim naturally in the water, being a blend of horse and fish.

The Celtic god Manannan MacLir is both a sea god and psychopomp, and had a chariot driven by horses that could ride upon the ocean as easily as the land. The journey aspect of horses fits nicely with the shamanic imagery of the ecstatic. Many tribal shamans envision riding to the Otherworld on a shamanic "steed" of a horse or whatever four-legged galloping creature is appropriate for their land and climate.

In the Hercules myth, the flesh/spirit connection that is more overt is the death nature of the horses. They are flesh eaters, freeing the spirit. They are both ferocious and docile, depending on circumstances, giving them a dual nature. They are bound and they are freed. The hero must create a boundary for them, using water, like the veil of spirit, to separate them, much as the shaman or magician must erect boundaries to contain, open, and close the spirit world, like a magick circle or triangle of evocation. Shamans all over have methods for ritually setting the space for their journey.

The key phrase of Pisces is traditionally thought of as "I believe," dealing with religious and spiritual matters, as ecstatic mystics cannot prove their experience, but build

belief systems from their visionary experiences, or follow the belief systems based upon the visions of others written down in scripture. I learned the key phrase of Pisces as "I merge," for the true nature of Pisces is union with spirit through the ecstatic arts. Water deals with the lessons of boundaries, and while previous water signs were about establishing boundaries (Cancer) and transforming boundaries (Scorpio), Pisces is the merging of self beyond all boundaries, but with the lessons of the previous two water signs firmly established. Pisceans have the ability to come back from the merge and share the vision with others to be of service to the community, much like the water joining the river that eventually flows back to merge with the ocean, only to rise again as vapor and return to the land as rain. It is only on the final journey beyond all lives that we completely merge with the source of all.

Tuirigin is a Celtic concept associated with rebirth, brought into popular neopagan consciousness by the author Caitlín Matthews, in her book, *The Celtic Spirit*. Tuirigin is often thought of as reincarnation cycles, as it is defined in Cormac's glossary as "a successive birth that passes from every nature into another... flowing through all time from beginning to end." Modern pagans think of tuirigin not as reincarnation, as refining the individual soul, but as the birth of our true nature, a level of enlightenment where the soul merges with all—all people, all of nature, from the start of time to the end of time. Through this "birth," one is in communion with all things and truly becomes wise.

Though tuirigin can sound like the Eastern concept of nirvana, union with the all, nirvana as it is understood in the West implies a transcendent and discarnate union, the end of personal existence, while tuirigin implies bodily union, while still living in space and time as an "individual." One in this state of consciousness can be incarnate or discarnate, depending on perspective. The Irish seers, such as Fintan and Tuan mac Cairill (*LTOW*, vol. 1, Lesson One), who held the memories of the ancient worlds and invasions, are in a state of tuirigin, and they return reborn to their people to tell their tales. For many witches, this is the union of consciousness with the first sorcerer, the first witch, the one true initiator, the firstborn and lastborn of the witchblood in true union with all of nature.

Exercise 75

"I Merge" List

In your journal or BOS, make a list of statements starting with "I merge," and complete the sentence with all the things you feel you have merged with. It's a strange question to ask yourself, but there are sublime moments in our lives when we feel we are one with someone else, someplace else, or something else. We experience this merging in some forms of shapeshifting and invocation, both ecstatic arts by which we are blended or merged with other entities. We can merge and blend with nature and the land. Sometimes on the path of the ecstatic, we have experiences when we feel one with everything—brief glimpses into the nirvana of the Eastern mystic. Reflect on these experiences. The well-disciplined mystic, master of the previous eleven zodiac powers, will be able to enter these states of merger more easily and return with blessings and wisdom to use in the material world and share with others.

The symbiosis of flesh and spirit, or the material world and the transcendent world, and the ability to cross and blur the boundaries between the two, is a pivotal part of ecstatic magick. Those who want to remain wholly on one side or the other of the veil are missing the point of the spiritual journey. Those orders that sequester themselves from the world to focus on spirituality exclusively are missing the richness and vastness of life. Why be in the material world at all, if you are not going to be truly in it? The world, the physical universe itself, is one of our greatest teachers. Yet don't get so immersed in the material reality that you are closed to the transcendent spirit world. The balance between the two, and knowing that your roots and foundation are actually transcendental, not physical, is the lesson I take from "Be in the world, but not of it." I think of this as similar to the Orphic mystery teachings saying, "I am a child of Earth and starry Heaven; but my race is of Heaven alone." A similar idea of coming from the heavens or spirit world is in the *Hanes Taliesin* (Book of Taliesin), where, in his introduction, the Welsh bard states that his "original country is the region of the summer stars," yet he recites all his verses describing his time in the material world.

It's easy to want to sequester yourself away when you are learning the lessons of Pisces. Pisces naturally rules the Twelfth House of the zodiac chart, the house associated with

such charming titles as the House of Endings, House of Institutions, House of Hidden Enemies, and the House of Madness, as well as being the House of Spiritual Experience or Merging. Classic astrology places mental institutions, convents for those taking holy orders, and prisons in this house. The dark associations with this house and sign come from its ruling the unconscious, the dream state, and it is here that we are most likely to sabotage ourselves, or see enemies and blame others for our problems and faults, real or imagined. Only when we bring the unconscious issues out into the light of day, into the world, where we can work on them consciously and actively, applying our spiritual lessons, do we defeat the demons of the Twelfth House.

Today many witches, like any subculture, want to claim our own communities, our own villages of like-minded people. Traditionally, groups that are different from the mainstream gather together. You find members of ethnic groups gathering together in urban environments, creating and recreating aspects of their culture in their new home; you find it in Jewish communities, for cultural and religious reasons; queer people gather together in neighborhoods noted for their artistic and theatrical communities, such as Greenwich Village in New York City, West Hollywood, and the Castro of San Francisco; you even find intentional communities of pagans and New Agers, and in the town of Salem, Massachusetts, you find a community that has brought paganism to the forefront of the tourist trade, building upon the tragedies of the past to create a bright and hopeful future where witches can wear cloaks in public with little ridicule, hold public services, and create temples and community groups.

While gathering together in a subculture can be an important step, we should not let such moves isolate us from a greater society that doesn't understand us well. I have to admit it's easy to be surrounded by magickal people and shut out the mainstream world, but we have to be in this world to truly apply our spirituality in a real and meaningful way. Traditional witches will use the word *cowan* to denote a non-witch, and today, after the popularity of the Harry Potter books and movies, the term *muggle* has been used by modern pagans to denote a "non-magickal" person. A cowan originally referred to a mason who was not an initiated Freemason, and that is how it most likely was adopted into witchcraft, as a non-initiate of the Masonically influenced coven structure. While I understand the use and need for the terms, and the need to find an identity as a community, different from others, I sometimes fear that we are

"ghettoizing" ourselves and, in an effort to feel special ourselves, putting down others. While certain people are more magickal than others, I don't think of anybody as non-magickal. Some people are simply open to magick or not, but we are all spiritual beings. We all have some potential to cross the threshold of spirit. In the lessons of Pisces, we must be able to merge with all, seeing the similarities as well as the differences. A kundalini yoga teaching states, "If you can't see the God in all, you can't see God at all." Pisces holds a similar tenet, as we are all flowing from the same force, all part of the Divine Mind, yet we are each different expressions of it.

As Pisces deals with the power of return from merger, it rules over the mysteries of reincarnation and the afterlife. After a period in the Otherworld, we must return to this one, be it a return from shamanic trance, or a return from the time between lives. The aspect of return is a central teaching in the witchcraft mysteries. The important lessons from the Legend of the Descent of the Goddess include the lesson of return:

> For there are three great events in the life of man: Love, Death, and Resurrection in the new body; and Magick controls them all. For to fulfill love you must return again at the same time and place as the loved one, and you must remember and love them again. But to be reborn you must die and be ready for a new body, and to die you must be born; and without Love you may not be born; and that is all the Magicks.

We have a chant that can be used in ecstatic rituals to raise power and induce trance that is very simple, yet very powerful, speaking to this teaching. There are many variations of it, merged with other chants, but the original four lines are attributed to Morning Feather/Will Shepardson on many pagan Internet sites gathering our lore and music.

> We are an Old People.
> We are a New People.
> We are the Same People,
> Wiser than Before.

Wiser is sometimes replaced with *stronger*, *deeper*, or, in gay pagan circles, *queerer*. The chant affirms our identity as a pagan people, followers of the old ways, but it also

unites us with the new world, because we are able to learn new ways. We are separate and returned, yet in the world with work to do. Things have changed, but also stayed the same. In this mystery of change and eternalness, we find our place in both worlds.

Ecstatic Magick

The magick of the ecstatic has always been a part of witchcraft, with our image of the witch's Sabbat filled with dancing, chanting, and feasting. While much of our book learning is based on the way of Apollo, and many of our traditions are solemn and ceremonial, it is in the way of Dionysus that we find the merger of the individual with a higher power, through the ecstasy that frees us from the flesh to be one with spirit. Ecstatic magick is an essential part of a panentheistic tradition. Not only do we see the gods in the Otherworld, but also like the ancient followers of Dionysus, we find the gods within us. As a tradition that practices invocation (*TOSW*, exercise 19), we must practice the techniques that open the way to feel the gods within the flesh.

Ecstatic magick can come through pleasure, but also through pain—ordeals, isolation, fasting, scourging, and binding. Most modern witches prefer the paths of pleasure, but both have their place in the turning of the wheel. Each is part of the eight-spoked wheel of raising power (*ITOW*, chapter 5).

The way known as opening the gates—the path of wine, incense, oil, and drugs to raise power and induce altered states of consciousness—is one of both pleasure and pain. A version of the Alexandrian Book of Shadows, containing wisdom sayings under the heading of "Various Aphorisms," tells us to "Enhance thy trance, With drug and dance," giving us a clue to opening the gates of the witch's Sabbat that involves both plant substances and movement. Drug and dance are enjoyable, but also ordeals to be endured to receive the keys of altered consciousness. The rituals of modern witches can lack either drug or dance, for the traditional knowledge of these ways is not often known or explored.

Exploration of intoxicants is a dangerous practice, as much of the ingredients are highly toxic or illegal. Because of this, many modern witches seek out Native American traditions that use psychedelic substances to enhance trance, or look to the descendants of the 1960s psychedelic culture. Generally the terminology has changed over

time from *hallucinogenic*, implying that the experience is not real, but a hallucination, to the more appropriate *psychedelic*, referring to a psychic experience, or experience with the psyche making the mind "manifest." More popular now is the term *entheogen*, referring to its spiritual context to reveal the "god within." Each of these terms reveals our modern culture's growing understanding of the nature of plant substances in spiritual pursuits. Seeking the "god within" fits quite well with our modern pagan theology of panentheism.

Books are not likely to reveal precise instructions because of both safety and legal concerns for both author and publisher. Such knowledge is best passed on from teacher to student by those who have a personal relationship with the plants and the plant spirits. Though I don't encourage unsafe experimentation with toxic substances, and I discuss a wide variety of safe substitutes for the witch's flying ointment, including nontoxic variants and flower essences in *TOSW*, chapter 13, I think that modern witches should have at least an intellectual understanding of the types of plant substances used in the ecstatic arts, and why they are used.

Wine

Wine and other forms of alcohol are completely legal intoxicants used in magickal practices. The use of alcohol is not universally acknowledged and accepted, even in pagan traditions. Some find that any amount of alcohol shuts down the chakras and prevents a deeper spiritual experience. Many traditional forms of witchcraft encourage the use of some forms of alcohol, such as wine, as a sacred drug, but they prohibit hard liquor from being a part of ritual. They will use herbal wines and mulled wines in ritual and healing. African diasporic traditions use rum profusely in ritual and don't find that it inhibits the spiritual experience. In my personal experience using wine to open the gates, I've found that one glass is often quite inspiring. The whole bottle leaves me unfocused and somewhat delusional about the spiritual events transpiring.

Artemisia

Artemisia is a large genus of plants named for the Greek goddess of the Moon and hunt, Artemis. Many of these plants are strongly associated with witchcraft, spirits, and psychic powers. Mugwort, *Artemisia vulgaris*, is used to enhance psychic ability and

astral travel when drunk as a tea or burned as incense. As a wash, it consecrates ritual tools, particularly mirrors and crystal balls. The herb and oil can be used in dream magick, to open the gateway of dreams and increase their intensity. Take a few drops of a mugwort tincture or put it in a dream pillow. Wormwood, *Artemisia absinthium*, is its popular cousin used for making the alcoholic, bitter green drink, absinthe. Absinthe is called the Green Faery, and those who drink of it are said to experience visions of the faery. In magick, it is used as an incense to call the spirits to the ritual. Consumed, it is a purgative used to killed parasites. Sagebrush, which can be any of a wide variety of *Artemisias*, is used in sage bundles to purify and smudge, to banish the harmful spirits and energies, while enticing the helpful ones. Though they are often called sages, they are not to be confused with the genus *Salvia*. Mugwort, wormwood, sage, and a number of plants contain the chemical thujone. This chemical is believed to be dangerous to pregnant women, and they should avoid it. Thujone was considered to be the active psychedelic ingredient in absinthe, yet modern research disputes this theory and indicates that thujone does not have hallucinogenic properties. Though absinthe has not been proven to be more dangerous than other alcohols, its ban in the United States, at least in certain forms, has been lifted only recently. When compared to other substances to open the gates, the use of the *Artemisia* genus in incense, oils, and teas can be the safest alternative to the more chemically potent, and illegal, psychedelics available.

Marijuana

The *Cannabis sativa* plant produces a psychoactive chemical most popularly smoked in its herbal form or resinous form (hashish). It can also be ingested, extracted in a tincture, or mulled in a wine. Its active component is tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC. It has a long history of medicinal, spiritual, and religious use, dating back to the Neolithic Age and having prominent use in India, China, Syria, Scythia, Thrace, and the Cult of Dionysus in Greece. It may have even been used in early forms of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Despite what many see as its relative safety, it is illegal to use, possess, or distribute marijuana in the United States. Some British Traditional lineage Books of Shadows have ritual instructions governing the use of marijuana, alone, in incense, and in ointment.

The Belladonna Alkaloids

One group of psychedelics that is traditionally associated with European witchcraft is the belladonna family of alkaloids, found in many members of the Solanaceae botanical family. While the family included such benign plants as potato, tomato, pepper, eggplant, and tobacco, all powerful plants in their own right, it is the psychoactive alkaloids atropine, scopolamine, and hyoscyamine found in deadly nightshade (belladonna), henbane, mandrake, and datura that concern us. Many of these were used in the traditional witch's flying ointment recipes (*TOSW*, chapter 13). *Datura inoxia* is the plant that is the most widely used in the American Southwest for shamanic purposes, popularized by the work of Carlos Castaneda, while its cousin on the East Coast is *Datura stramonium*. Both have similar properties and characteristics, and being the most available and easiest to grow, they are the ones modern-day shamans experiment with the most. The psychedelics of the belladonna group are also known as the tropane alkaloids or Solanceous drugs, and they are described as having a primal earth force animating them, personalized as feminine or Underworld, coloring the experience of those who journey with their aid. The botanical name of belladonna, *Atropos belladonna*, gives us a clue to how deadly this group of plants can be. *Atropos* is the name of the Greek Fate who cut the line of life, while *belladonna* means "beautiful lady," referring to the use of the plant to dilate the eyes of high-court women, making them more beautiful. Together, they give us beautiful Lady Death. Most modern practitioners consider these alkaloids too dangerous to experiment with in doses sufficient to open the gates, because they very easily leave a person dead. Even when they don't, they can create stupor, amnesia, several-day periods of sleep, and eventual madness, leaving them not the most practical of sacraments for the modern witch.

D-Lysergic Acid Amide

D-lysergic acid amide is the natural relative to LSD found in a variety of species of morning glory seeds. It is used in the healing and shamanic rituals of Mexico, particularly with the species *Rivea corymbosa*, whose seeds are known as *ololiuqui*. North American practitioners have experimented with other species, such as the Heavenly Blue morning glories, or *Ipomoea violacea*. A generally effective dose is three hundred seeds brewed in a tea, though many have taken a much higher dose. While it is not illegal

to grow morning glories, it is technically illegal to ingest their seeds. Seed companies coat their seeds with a toxic purgative to prevent such actions, though the actual use of morning glory seeds is very purgative to begin with, and many who do experiment find the process too difficult. Similar compounds are found in much higher doses in the Hawaiian Baby Woodrose, *Argyreia nervosa*, and the Southwest native plant Sleepy Grass, *Stipa robusta*. Neither have a developed shamanic history, though Sleepy Grass is used as a sedative. It gets its d-lysergic acid amide from a symbiotic fungus called *Acremonium*. Albert Hofmann, the original discoverer of LSD, synthesized it from the ergot fungus *Calviceps purpurea*, which grows on ryegrass. Speculations abound on ergotism, the disease caused from ergot, as the source of hysteria for the witchcraft trials, claiming the hallucinations, pain, spasms, and gangrene as the witch's curse. Others think that the initiates of Eleusinian mysteries found a way to synthesize a safe form of an LSD-like substance for their mystery rites of the grain goddesses. It's important to note that none of the natural substances create quite the same intense effect as synthesized LSD. Mexican practitioners working with ololiuqui, taking what is considered to be a subdose in terms of chemical effect, usually only thirteen seeds, report grand visions of the spirit of the vine and otherworldly allies, suggesting that perhaps the ritual use and reverence is more important than the chemical level, and amazing things can occur with subthreshold or even homeopathic doses of plant allies.

Mescaline

Mescaline is the psychoactive alkaloid found in both the peyote cactus (*Lophophora williamsii*) of North America and the San Pedro cactus (*Trichocereus pachanoi*) of Peru. Peyote is currently illegal in the United States, unless you are a member of the Native American Church, which has peyote-based sacramental activities. San Pedro, on the other hand, is not illegal in the United States, but it contains a much lower dose of mescaline than peyote. Both are considered unpleasant to eat, and both can cause extremely unpleasant nausea, vomiting, and dry heaves, though advocates of peyote will say that the level of sickness is indicative of the level of spiritual purification one requires, and experienced peyote users have little to no sickness.

DMT

DMT stands for dimethyltryptamine, a chemical that is naturally produced in our brain in very small amounts, and used in larger amounts as a psychoactive substance. DMT is most popularized today with the use of ayahuasca. *Ayahuasca* is a Quechua Indian name for it, translating as "Vine of the Dead" or "Vine of the Soul," but it is really a mixture of two potent plants, not just one. In fact, many plants can make up this brew, as each traditional practitioner has his own recipe or may vary it depending on the purpose. All true ayahuasca brews contain two types of chemicals, the beta-carboline, usually through harmine and harmaline from the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine, and the tryptamine alkaloids, such as N,N-dimethyltryptamine or DMT, from the bush *Psychotria viridis*. Neither of these plants is psychoactive when taken orally by itself, but the combination of the two sets of chemicals produces this effect. DMT requires an MAO inhibitor, and that inhibitor is found in the harmine alkaloids. A variety of tribes in the Amazon area all learned this particular combination of plants. Though the concept of trial and error with all the available plants in the forest seems ludicrous to all but the most conventional scientist, the shamans will tell you that they learned this directly from the plant spirits themselves, as well as a specific diet, fast, and regimen of sexual segregation to prepare them for contact with the Vine of the Dead and the spirit world. Ayahuasca is not a recreational drug, and it can be very dangerous to the user, particularly if the guidelines are not followed. The MAO inhibitor makes it dangerous to combine with other substances, including any amphetamine drug, including peyote, San Pedro and the street drug ecstasy (MDMA). Many are trying to find analogous combinations of the two chemicals in plants that can grow in North America, including the grass *Phalaris arundinacea* for DMT and Syrian Rue, *Peganum harmala*, for harmine. There are also smokable forms of DMT from *Phalaris arundinacea*.

Psilocybin Mushroom

Psilocybin and its relations, psilocin, are the psychoactive alkaloids found in the traditional "magic mushrooms" brought to popular consciousness in the 1960s. Though Timothy Leary's first psychoactive experience was with psilocybin, he then turned to LSD. It is the work of Terence McKenna that really promoted the magic mushroom as a shamanic and spiritual ally in the United States. While all psychoactive plants have

their blessings and dangers, many consider the psilocybin mushroom the safest, and most pleasant, psychoactive plant ally to work with.

Fly Agaric Mushroom

The *Amanita muscaria* or fly agaric mushroom, red capped with white spots, is native to the Northern Hemisphere and often associated with witchcraft and shamanism. There is a lot of variable information on this mushroom, ranging from its being a deadly poison to a powerful psychoactive agent. The potency and danger of this mushroom vary considerably depending on when it is picked and what the growing conditions are.

Diviner's Mint

Diviner's mint, or *Salvia divinorum*, is a minor psychedelic used in Mexico in healing and divination ceremonies. During ritual use, it is said to produce powerful visions, and in the Mazatec Indian traditions, one must master this mint before moving on to morning glory seeds, and then must master the morning glory before moving on to psilocybin mushrooms. The elusive catalyst of the plant is very unstable, so it is best to use a fresh specimen.

While I think it's important for a witch to know these topics, for many people consult us when seeking to venture into the land of psychedelics, this is not a call for you to experiment with all the groups listed here. In my personal practice, I'm far more conservative. I am a very strong believer in building skills to enter other realities without being dependent upon other substances, but then, when necessary, developing spiritual relationships with such plant allies and using them to aid in particularly important or intense rituals. Everyday use can be psychologically addictive, if not physically addictive, and repeated use can be quite dangerous.

If you have a serious interest in finding safe methods of experimenting with these plants, but no living teacher available to you, I suggest the book *Psychedelic Shamanism: The Cultivation, Preparation and Shamanic Use of Psychotropic Plants* by Jim DeKorne, as well as all the work of Terence McKenna.

Another safe ecstatic tool is mulled herbal wine. This is a blend I make, particularly for journeys near Samhain. While I've used it myself and with many students who have

no prior allergies to wine or herbals, some find it controversial that a small amount of American mandrake is used in it.

Journey Wine

Bottle of red wine
1 teaspoon chamomile
2 teaspoons mugwort
1 teaspoon scullcap
2 teaspoons vervain
1 teaspoon nettles
3 teaspoons cinnamon
1 pinch American mandrake (mayapple)

Seven herbs, one for each of the seven magical planets. Chamomile for the Sun, as well as for relaxing the body. I was going to use St. John's wort, but I know that it can cause a drug interaction in a lot of people who are on medication, so I chose something more gentle, yet illuminating. Both herbs protect you during sleep and shamanic journey. Mugwort was the heavy hitter, to open the Moon gates to the Underworld and alter consciousness. Scullcap was chosen for insight, being an herb of Mercury, but also so the journeyer will remember the journey in detail. Vervain, a Venusian herb with other planetary associations, is for many things—love, protection, wisdom, and power. I love it. It's the witch's herb. I used blue vervain because it is more available in the United States than the European white vervain. Nettles are ruled by Mars, and although used in protection magick, they are quite a relaxing tonic herbally, and have some associations with spirit communication, particularly with the faery races. Cinnamon is for Jupiter, for wisdom and because it's tasty with all these other herbs. Lastly, just a pinch of mandrake. Not as potent as the European species, American mandrake still carries a Saturn power, and because of this, many don't use it because they believe that it's dangerous. At this dosage level, it is perfectly safe for a normal, healthy human with no medical issues, but use it at your own risk. But I have found that just a token pinch is fine to have the plant spirit's magick there.

Ask the spirits of the plants to be present in your wine. Also call upon the power of the grapes that made the wine. Charge each ingredient as you add it to the pot. Let the wine simmer on low heat in an open saucepan on the stove until it cooks down to about two-thirds of its original volume. Let it cool, then strain and bottle. It is ready to use in ritual. Take anywhere from a sip to a cup to aid in your journey to the Otherworld.

Dancing is a major part of ecstatic work, whether it is solitary or group work. The reveling dancers are found in tribal celebrations, ancient mystery schools, and the witch's Sabbat. The part of the body ruled by Pisces is the feet, and the intuitive and unconscious power of dance is in alignment with the powers of Pisces. Dancing has played a big part in the Craft, though few solitary and eclectic witches get to see the traditional dances. The Spiral Dance, popularized by Starhawk with her book of the same name, has become a classic in modern circles, as a chain of participants spiral inward and then spiral outward, looking into each others' eyes. A more traditional dance is the Meeting Dance from the Gardnerian Book of Shadows, which is similar to the hand-in-hand Spiral Dance, but the hands are on the waist and there is kissing between the opposite genders as they pass each other.

To perform the Spiral Dance (fig. 12), you really need at least thirty people to create a good spiral, and unlike many other rituals, it can be done quite successfully with over a hundred people. Start by standing in a circle, holding hands. The leader frees the left hand and begins spiraling inward clockwise, facing toward the center. Upon creating about three loops in the spiral, depending on the size of both the group and the space, the leader then turns to face the person holding her right hand, and follows the spiral outward, moving counterclockwise and looking into the eyes of those spiraling inward. Upon exiting the spiral, still holding hands, the leader can then wind back into the clockwise spiral, creating an endless cycle until the ritual is brought to a conclusion. The Spiral Dance can be done for its own sake, to see the divine in each other as you pass by, or as a way to raise power for spellwork or turning the Wheel of the Year.

I am also a fan of the circle dance called the grapevine step. The grapevine consists of a ring of dancers holding hands together, moving in a circle to raise energy. From a standing position one sidesteps, usually moving the circle clockwise, steps across in

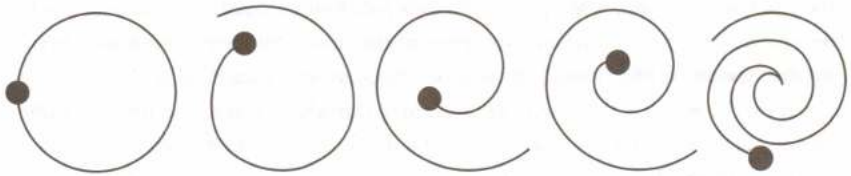


Figure 12: Spiral Dance

front of the support foot, sidesteps again in the same direction, steps behind the support foot, and repeats the pattern.

The Maypole dance celebrated at Beltane, with dancers holding ribbons and traditionally male and female dancers going in opposite directions, interweaving their ribbons as they wrap the Maypole, is another pagan dance to raise power and celebrate. Many modern ritualists will use freeform tribal dancing with intense drumming, rather than specific dance moves. A powerful dance for smaller groups is cord dancing, detailed in the following exercise.

Exercise 76

The Mill Cord Dance

The Mill refers to several different circle dances that are ritual enactments of the cosmic mill, turning the wheels of creation, grinding down forms and forces into their basic components, like the way a millstone grinds grain. Sometimes they are done counterclockwise and other times clockwise, depending on the tradition and intention. Variations of the Mill include dancing around a central fire or stang, dancing freeform or holding hands, dancing with specific steps or with shuffling feet, or dancing with cords like the spokes of a wheel. Cord dancing is a powerful way of uniting the group for magick and journey. It is usually done in a coven setting, as a larger group could have some difficulty coordinating it.

One witch will take her cingulum cord and loop it, holding both ends. Another will place his cord through the loop, also holding it at both ends, uniting the two loops. The remaining participants will continue the process, adding on to the first two, until

there is a center with many "spokes" of cords radiating outward, and each being held by a witch. The "knot" will be in the center of the circle, and the dancers will be holding the "spokes" of the "wheel" turning the wheel as they dance. The "Mill of Magick" chant can be sung by the group while turning the wheel, but it doesn't have to be chanted for the dance to be considered a Mill dance. Like most circle dances, the pace quickens and builds to a frenzy, culminating in either raising the cone of power, using the power in other spellcraft, or using the power to push the witches into a shamanic journey. Traditionally a leader will signal the end of the dance. When the crescendo is reached for the dance and chant, the cords are dropped and the work is done.

Mill of Magick

Air breathe, Air blow,
Make the Mill of Magick go.
Work the will for which we pray
Io, Deo, Ha He Hey!

Fire flame and Fire burn,
Make the Mill of Magick turn.
Work the will for which we pray,
Io, Deo, Ha He Hey!

Water bubble, Water boil,
Make the Mill of Magick toil.
Work the will for which we pray,
Io, Deo, Ha He Hey!

Earth without and Earth within,
Make the Mill of Magick spin.
Work the will for which we pray,
Io, Deo, Ha He Hey!

Another version, attributed to the witches of Devonshire, has slightly different poetry, replacing the line containing the word "pray" with the lines "Turn the power we send

to you," "Spin the power we send to you," "Grind the power we send to you," and "Send the power we send to you" in each verse, and ending each verse with the words of power "Eman hetan, hau he hu!" instead of what appears to be the more Qabalistically inspired "Io, Deo, Ha He Hey!"

Witchcraft and the Modern World: Mental Illness

Pisces and the Twelfth House are both associated with mental health and mental illness, being the sign of the institutions and authorities that decide if a person is able to function in society, or if that person must be removed from society. Truly, the spiritual lesson concerning this sign is navigating the boundary line between the seen and unseen, what is traditionally accepted and what lies beyond the boundary of normal consciousness.

Witches have to deal with these issues all the time, because there is much of our spiritual practice that could easily be construed as a product of mental illness by those not involved in the practice. Judging the line between sanity and illness, for ourselves, and as ministers, for others, is a tricky prospect. Shamans and cunning folk were considered crazy or at least half crazy by their fellow villagers, because they dealt with issues and worlds that most people could not perceive. But if their techniques were not effective in helping people, then they would not have been sought for aid. Many initiatory stories have the potential magicians descending into madness and escaping into the wilds, with only animals, plants, and nature as their company and companions.

Today we might feel as if we go through our own periods of isolation and madness, feeling separate from society and even questioning our sanity when our psychic abilities become more active. Although I had to struggle to awaken otherworldly sight, there are many who have a spontaneous awakening, and their struggle is to be able to shut it down, or at least control the level of intensity and activity to be able to fully function in society. I truly believe that many people whom our society labels as mentally ill have simply awakened to another reality, but lack the ability to return to "normal" perception at will. Those of us who have found the Craft, or another spiritual tradition that encourages training in the psychic arts, are blessed. Having covens, mentors, friends, and family

who are versed in our practice and supportive can help keep us grounded and warn us when we start to stray from realms of mental health into imbalance.

High priest/esses are called upon to act as healers and counselors within our community and for those in the mainstream community who seek out nontraditional aid. While the cunning one of the tribe held the role we now assign to professional psychological counselors and mental health care workers, there is still quite a bit of crossover in the roles of the modern pagan minister and the clinical counselor. While we cannot mistake our magickal training and understanding of the mysteries for the qualifications of a psychologist, the lore we study does give us insight into the workings of an individual and how he or she relates to others. Pioneer Carl Jung drew upon the metaphysical world, particularly alchemy, in formulating his own theories of the human mind, which continue to be popular and studied today, if not wholly embraced by the mainstream scientific community. Our study of classical mythology, the elements, the levels of consciousness embodied by the chakras, astrology, tarot, Qabalah, signs and omens, and soul anatomy gives us models that are as applicable to humanity today as they were in the ancient world. Drawing upon these models and our magickal/meditative techniques, we can be very helpful to those in need of counsel and wisdom. Simply by applying some of our magickal models, we can give others a road map to help them understand how they arrived at their current situation and how they might get out of it.

As a pagan minister, I've found it helpful to have an understanding of some basic terms when working with people. They come from the "magickal" language of our modern world and simply give us another system to work with. The terms I've found most helpful for me and my clients have been borrowed more from the popular realms of psychology, rather than the most academic and clinical realms, but they can give you an understanding of how our culture views these issues and how to talk about them, and a gauge to measure when you are not capable of helping someone.

Denial

Denial occurs when one is confronted with a reality that is too difficult to accept, and instead rejects the reality despite evidence that it is true. Denial is considered to be a self-defense mechanism to protect you from reality that is too painful to bear at the moment when it is presented. There are many stages of denial. One can completely

reject the reality outright as falsehood, or accept that reality as true while denying the seriousness of the reality, or simply denying the responsibilities that come with the reality. Denial plays a role in many healing processes, including grief recovery (see Lesson Fifteen), addiction, and coming out of the closet.

Projection

Projection occurs when we apply our own undesirable thoughts, feelings, and qualities to another person, place, or institution. We deny our own qualities, and can only see them in other people, even though those same qualities may or may not be found in the one we have "projected" them onto. For example, if you don't admit to your own issues of fear, yet you find yourself observing and becoming agitated by many people you judge to be cowards while you perceive yourself as being fearless, you could be projecting your own cowardice upon others because you cannot see it in yourself.

Displacement

Displacement is an unconscious defense mechanism where thoughts, feelings, and ideas are redirected to a substitute perceived as being safer. A classic example of displacement is hitting a pillow in anger, rather than hitting the person who made you angry, displacing your anger to a safer substitute. Social displacement can occur when people direct frustrations upon minorities with low levels of social, political, or economic power, creating a scapegoat. Displacement can also happen in personal settings, when one directs anger from one relationship to another relationship that has nothing to do with the source of the anger.

Transference

Transference is when one unconsciously directs feelings from one person or object to another. People will transfer the feelings they have for their parents, siblings, or lovers to other people in their lives, expecting the same relationship because they have transferred those feelings without intellectually understanding them. Often clients or students will transfer the feelings they have for other figures in their lives to their therapists, ministers, or teachers. Therapists have to be aware of counter-transference, or transferring their own feelings to clients unconsciously and becoming entangled in their lives emotionally.

Co-Dependency

Co-dependency is when a person engages in an inappropriate level of caring behavior for another who is dependent upon him. The co-dependent believes he "needs" the dependent as much as the dependent needs him, though the co-dependent's need is usually psychological in nature, to avoid his own feelings, maintain control, and avoid balanced and intimate relationships between equals. The co-dependent often creates a situation with no chance of improvement for either individual, thus providing an excuse for the dependent not to change and take personal responsibility for health, happiness, and fulfillment in areas of life outside the relationship.

Passive Aggression

Passive-aggressive behavior is a pattern of "negative" behavior involving passive resistance in interpersonal and/or professional situations. Resistance can include sarcasm, procrastination, resentment, stubbornness, complaining, lying, obstruction, forgetfulness, and blaming others. For example, someone exhibiting passive-aggressive patterns can agree to go to a dinner party with her partner but not really want to go. Rather than directly refusing to attend, she simply takes so long to get ready that they show up late to the party, when it's almost over. She gets her wish to not attend the party, yet upsets her partner in the process.

ADD/ADHD

Attention deficit disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder are popularly thought of as childhood conditions, but they can be lifelong disorders. Generally thought to be a neurological disorder present from childhood, ADD is characterized by forgetfulness, distraction, and poor impulse control, and in the ADHD form, it is coupled with hyperactivity. Profiles of adults with ADD/ADHD can vary from those of a child. In adults the disorders can manifest as problems with time management, self-control, future planning, and persisting toward goals. Usually the hyperactivity abates in adulthood if it was present in childhood. While ADD/ADHD are a well-known disorders today, they are controversial in the sense that many believe that the medical profession is quick to diagnose an active child simply for acting like a child, and prescribe medication, rather than recognize that children generally have a short attention span and are prone to bursts of activity.

Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are defined as eating behaviors based on complex compulsions that disrupt physical, emotional, and mental health. They can include excessive eating, restricted eating, normal eating punctuated with purging, cycles of binging and purging, or even the ingestion of nonfood substances that can be potentially toxic to the body. The most common forms of eating disorders include anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. Though most commonly described as afflicting women under thirty, they can be found in both males and females and among a wider age range.

Self-Sabotage

Self-sabotage is an unconscious mechanism that arises when an individual does not feel worthy or accepting of personal success and takes unconscious steps to inhibit that success, even though consciously the person desires success and fulfillment. Extreme cases of self-sabotage are self-destructive, for the unconscious behaviors enacted can harm the health, well-being, and success of the individual.

Anxiety

A wide variety of anxiety disorders has been categorized by modern psychology, including general anxiety disorder, social phobia, and panic disorder, as well as specific phobias and anxieties. Anxiety disorders consist of extreme and chronic anxiety that disturbs the individual's mood, behavior, or physiological activity. Anxiety can be triggered by a specific stimulus, for instance separation anxiety, after leaving home or being separated from a person or people who have strong emotional attachments to the individual, such as one or both parents.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

This specific anxiety disorder is characterized by an individual's obsessive distressing thoughts and the specific actions the individual takes, through the form of repeated actions or rituals, to neutralize the obsessive thoughts. These rituals seem unnecessary to anyone else. Though someone who is meticulous or has perfectionist tendencies can easily be labeled as obsessive-compulsive in our society, this is not obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). The obsessions and compulsions are judged to be excessive both by

the individual and conventional societal standards, consuming excessive amounts of time, creating distress, or impairing functioning in day-to-day life. Those who suffer from a stressful obsession with germs and repeatedly wash their hands to excess might be suffering from OCD, and those who must always arrange books on the shelf before leaving home could be demonstrating OCD traits.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Also known as PTSD, posttraumatic stress disorder can occur after an individual experiences or witnesses a life-threatening situation, including an accident, violent assault, abuse, military combat, natural disaster, or terrorist incident. Most people who survive such trauma adjust and return to their normal level of stress in time, but for some who experience this high level of stress, the stress reaction does not go away, and it may even get worse over time. Long-lasting nightmares and flashbacks to the triggering event, sleeping difficulties, detachment, and estrangement can all be signs of PTSD. Some who have not directly experienced trauma but have been impacted indirectly can also experience PTSD. PTSD is considered a form of anxiety disorder.

Paranoia

Paranoia is an excessive and irrational fear for one's safety and well-being. It is sometimes characterized by a persecution complex or a belief in conspiracy theories, often centering on the individual.

Personality Disorders

Personality disorders include a wide range of behaviors, and they can be very difficult to diagnose and treat. They are associated with excessive irritability, or hostile, fearful, demanding, or manipulative behavior.

Disassociative Identity Disorder

An individual suffering from disassociative identity disorder (DID), also known as multiple personality disorder, has at least two distinct personalities, each with its own way of interacting with the environment and other people. The two or more personalities routinely switch "control" over the body. Usually the initial disassociation and "splitting" of the personality is caused by trauma. Rather than having an entire break from

reality, the part that is not able to handle the trauma dissociates from the situation, while the other part remains to deal with the trauma in some fashion. Those who experience DID can have far more than two distinct personalities.

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is generally described as an impairment in perceiving reality to the point of creating behavior or social problems for the individual. Schizophrenia can manifest in many different ways, including visual and auditory hallucinations, and other delusions. While the term *schizophrenia* comes from the Greek words for "splitting the mind," it is not the same as disassociative identity disorder.

Addiction

Addiction is defined as the physiological or psychological dependence upon a substance or action and its compulsive use, even when the given substance or action is shown to have detrimental effects upon the user. Most practitioners distinguish between those substances that are physically addictive, altering biochemistry in an addictive manner, and those substances that are simply psychological in nature, yet the issues and treatment are often the same. The theories and sources of addiction are varied, including such a diverse range as genetics, physical/psychological illness, or societal conditioning. If one is given to compulsive behavior that doesn't hurt the individual or anyone else, it may simply be an unhealthy compulsion, but when the actions have severe detrimental effects that change the quality of physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual life in the short term and long term, that is considered an addiction.

Clinical Depression

Clinical depression is a state of severe sorrow, despair, or melancholy that disrupts and impairs daily life and successful functioning in society. Though many suffer from low-level episodes of depression from time to time, it is not the severe and chronic condition of clinical depression. Clinical depression is characterized by a depressed mood, an inability to enjoy life coupled with fear or an inability to feel any emotion, changes in eating routines with weight gain/loss, disturbed sleep patterns with either excessive sleep or insomnia, fatigue, indecision, guilt, isolation, memory loss, feelings of abandonment,

and potential suicidal tendencies. It's important to realize that clinically depressed individuals do not have to exhibit all of these signs, and a reliable diagnosis can only be made by a qualified health care professional, as many believe the cause of clinical depression is biochemical and not psychological.

Bipolar Disorder

When an individual suffers from alternating periods of clinical depression with a state of mania, or a less severe hypomania, that individual can be suffering from bipolar disorder. There are many variations of bipolar disorder, and many rates of "cycling," when the change from one end of the pole to the next occurs. Those who deal with bipolar disorder can be more prone to suicide as well as psychosis, where they lose touch with reality during the manic phase of the cycle. The root of bipolar disorder is often biochemical, but the disorder can be coupled with past trauma or abuse and triggered during periods of stress and tension.

Self-Harm

Self-harm occurs when individuals who cannot process or relieve unbearable thoughts and emotions attempt to relieve them through attacking or harming themselves, often by cutting shallowly with a blade, or by other means such as burning and head banging. There is no one root for self-injurious behavior. It can be a means to control extreme mood swings, the result of self-loathing, a form of self-punishment for feelings of guilt, a way to interrupt emotional numbness, a compulsive behavior, a way to gain control and overcome powerlessness, or a means to get attention when individuals cannot communicate their needs verbally. Self-harm is not necessarily related to true suicidal impulses, despite the general assumption. Self-harm in such cases can be considered a suicidal gesture to get others to notice their situation or problem without directly asking for help.

Suicidal Tendencies

Suicide is the willful act of taking one's own life. Although some cultures condone suicide in a medical context when a person is suffering exceedingly, it is generally considered a taboo in most societies. Those who attempt and fail at suicide and do not suffer permanent debilitating injuries often attempt again. Those who suffer from extreme depression,

bipolar disorder, substance abuse, addiction, severe physical or emotional pain, financial loss, disfigurement, or unresolved sexual and romantic issues might be more at risk for suicide than others. Though it can be quite normal for a healthy person to consider suicide momentarily, those who dwell on it, plan it, write a suicide note, or otherwise take steps toward suicide should be considered at risk and in need of professional medical help. From a spiritual minister's perspective, all suicide threats and attempts should be considered to be genuine, and appropriate mental health care should be arranged for the individual.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is a nonconsensual, undesired sexual act imposed by one person on another. Sexual abuse is generally referred to as molestation, and when it occurs between family members, incest. Often a sexual abuser will use a position of trust or authority to impose unwanted sexual behavior upon another. This usually occurs in child sexual abuse, with an adult using a position of power over a minor. Even if the minor consents to sexual contact, the U.S. government does not give the minor the legal right to choose sexual contact with an adult until reaching legal adult age. Forced physical sexual behavior is called rape or sexual assault. Sexual abuse can also include psychological forms of abuse, such as stalking or harassment. Many who come to paganism have suffered sexual trauma or abuse, and seek out paganism to find healthy sexual models of divinity as well as healing.

Organic Brain Disorders

Organic brain disorders appear to be like many other psychological disorders, but are rooted in physical organic illnesses. They can include diseases such as Alzheimer's, the damage caused by strokes and accidents, and even virus activity, such as the AIDS dementia complex, where the brain cells are damaged by HIV. Medical treatment and rehabilitation are the recommended course of treatment for such disorders, though magickal aid can supplement these activities.

This crash course in pop psych terms does not make you a psychologist. This list can give you useful ideas of what to ask new counseling clients, to either address or rule out these major issues. Having a copy of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR)*, or a similar resource is helpful, but with so much information, we often tend to think everyone we see, including ourselves, is mentally ill if we go by lists of symptoms. This section of the course is simply giving you a language to use in order to work with others, and to potentially work with mental health professionals. Where once such counselors would urge their clients to stay far away from things such as witchcraft, today you might be surprised by the number of professionals who are exploring new avenues. When my own clients venture into any territory where they could be a danger to themselves or to others, I immediately refer them to a health care professional who is better equipped to assess their status and needs than I am, as a spiritual counselor. While I can apply spiritual principles to help them with their problems and issues—and for the vast majority of people that I encounter, this is very helpful—there are times when I'm over my head, and I must insist that they see a medical professional.

My most amazing clients have been those who had both clinical therapy and experience with traditional support groups, coupled with forms of shamanic or energetic healing and even witchcraft training. Their therapists have been amazed at the progress, while I was comfortable working with them, knowing that they had medical support in place in case anything went out of balance. If you look at shamanism, and the traditional categories of soul sickness (*TOSW*, chapter 15), you can find many parallels to modern psychological conditions. By looking at the root of problems not solely as mental issues, but as soul issues, you can go quite far in finding permanent cures with your clients. The techniques of psychic cleansing and psychic self-defense (*ITOW*, chapter 9, and *The Witch's Shield*) work very effectively in real cases where self-defense is needed, and for those who are paranoid or delusional. In either case, psychic techniques change their energy. For those looking for a map "out" of their condition, the Tree of Life, and its virtues, vices, and vision, provides an excellent context for understanding many of our modern problems and gives us magickal correspondences, rituals, and ideas for dealing with them and encouraging healing traits and qualities.

Some traditions of magick forbid the teaching of those with any condition that could be construed as mental illness. Others encourage it, thinking that many of the old shamans were considered mad by their people. I walk a middle road, and will be happy to work with anybody who has a sincere desire and dedication, as long as they have the support systems in place that I require. Some people require one-on-one attention in private lessons rather than group classes, where their personal issues will

overshadow a group experience. I've found that for many who suffer from a psychological condition, depending on the condition, either ritual or meditation will be more effective, but not both. For many who suffer from delusions, ritualizing their practice, making it physical, rather than exclusively internal, is effective. Others with compulsive actions find that shamanic journeying and pathworking, where the end is not predetermined, is more effective. Sometimes it's trial and error to find the techniques that are most healing and balancing.

Ritual of the Ecstatic

Embracing the ecstatic god can be more difficult than it appears. Letting go, losing even part of our individual sense of "I," is difficult for us as humans to do, as we usually define ourselves by that sense of self. The last two signs explored the opposition of the individual "I" of Aquarius, and losing that sense of self in Pisces. Yet we must have both of those powers to truly enter the mysteries and then return.

Communicate with the ecstatic deity in your pantheon and design a ritual to honor and explore the mysteries of ecstasy. You can meet with this god in meditative vision or shamanic journey, or if you already have a connection to your chosen god, you can try a direct invocation (*TOSW*, exercise 19). In this ritual, you will either ask yourself the three questions listed here, or the deity will ask you at least three questions regarding the lessons of this zodiac gateway. You will have to answer each of them before you are allowed to pass on to the next lesson and gate. The questions for Pisces are: What are the illusions you hide behind? What do you gain by hiding behind them? What would you gain by breaking them? When you have completed the ritual, make sure you continue to honor and work with this deity over the course of the year. Use this connection to better understand your True Will.

Homework

- Do exercises 75–76 and record your results in your journal or BOS.
- Perform your master spell for this lesson.
- Review one myth from one of the cultures outlined on page 31.

- Review one religion as outlined on pages 29–30.
- Choose one figure from the biography list on pages 32–33, and learn all you can about that person.
- Complete your final project.
- Work with the Pisces ecstatic deity from your personal pantheon.
- Obtain the Pisces gem for your "breastplate" charm bag, if you haven't done so already. Work with the Pisces stone this month.
- Work with one of your thirteen tools, re-consecrating it. Seek out its spiritual equivalent in the Otherworld, and know its mysteries.
- Optional: Make a fluid condenser (*TOHW*, chapter 9) out of a high-grade, flammable alcohol for this zodiac sign.
- Optional: Find a small stone with a flat surface that you can mark with the zodiac sign of Pisces. Cleanse it, mark it, and charge it. You can also use it like a talisman, along with or in place of the Pisces gemstone.
- When you complete the trials of this chapter, tie another knot in your witch's cord in a ritualized manner.

Tips

- How do themes of ecstasy, merging, and mental health figure into your year-and-a-day goals and final project?
- Check in with your Master-Teacher guide as you work with Pisces energies.
- Continue working on your own BOS, adding appropriate material to it each month. Write and perform these rituals when appropriate. You could write the following:

  Esbat for the new Moon in Pisces, or for the full Moon in Virgo, its opposite sign.
- Explore the gateway of dreams in your inner temple (*ITOW*, chapter 14).

Lesson Twenty
Final Initiation

You have completed the preceding nineteen lessons in this fifth level of witchcraft. You have gone through and studied the seven gates of initiation. You have balanced yourself through the twelve stations of the great wheel. You have been given the opportunity to deepen your Craft, go further with your spirit, and delve into all the hidden parts of yourself and the universe. Now, like the goddess Inanna, you are asked to descend once again, stripping yourself of all that you have come to think of as "you." You are asked to strip yourself of your knowledge, learning, and experience, and find the Holy Formless Fire that resides within the core of all things, the sacred fire that burns bright within the torches of the Goddess of Witches. Once you are in communion with it, you will need no other light to guide you in this world, or any other.

The Nature of Initiation

Initiation is one of those few topics that can't really be put into words, like sex, love at first sight, déjà vu, or the death of a loved one. You must experience it directly to understand it, and those who have experienced it have a common bond. In magickal orders, and in particular modern witchcraft, there is great concern over initiation. Who has it? Who doesn't? What is a "valid" initiation? And what does it all mean?

Initiation can really be divided into two distinct types. There is the earthly initiation between a teacher and student. The teacher, through ritual, passes the "current," the energetic link and thoughtform, to the student. This new energy can increase the student's abilities, open new avenues, and precipitate new spiritual developments. Each specific tradition, even in such a category as witchcraft, has its own "flavor," its own particular view of the mysteries. Each tradition is composed of the energies of all those who have come before, so it makes sense that each tradition's energy will be different. These traditions attract different kinds of students because they are on different frequencies. They each have a different vibration. Each grows and evolves in its own way.

In most lineage-based traditions of modern witchcraft, what is known as British Traditional in America, or Traditional Wicca, referring most often to Gardnerian and Alexandrian traditions and their various offshoots, there are three basic levels of initiation. Many scholars believe that this division of three levels parallels the first three levels of Masonic tradition. The Masonic lore entered the Western magickal traditions through the Golden Dawn, Crowley, and then Gardner, which in turn influenced the modern witchcraft revival.

Though we refer to each level as an initiation, a purist would say that the first of these rituals is the only true initiation, that you can only ever have one initiation, and that the subsequent rituals are termed "elevations" as you are being raised, both through higher ranks or degrees and in spiritual vibration. Yet the mythos played out in so many of these rituals is the descent, the death and resurrection story, be it of Inanna, the great goddess of Sumer, or the Rosicrucian mythos of Christian Rosencrantz. One is always descending before being elevated.

Some would describe the three rituals for the three worlds of the tree, working with the energies of the Middle World, Lower World, and Upper World, to elevate

one from seeker to witch, witch to priest/ess, and priest/ess to high priest/ess. Maxine Sanders of the Alexandrian tradition described her experience of the three levels, and the early Alexandrian teachings as penetration, initiation, and celebration. At the first level, one penetrates the mysteries for the first time. The witch is then initiated into the mysteries he or she first penetrated with a fuller knowledge of those mysteries. Lastly, the elevation to high priest/ess is a celebration of all that has come before.

The second type of initiation is one of spirit directly, without human agency. Seekers experience something that is so radical to their consciousness that their old shell, their previous limited sense of self, is forced to expand to meet this new radical experience. This is the shamanic initiation, the mystery behind the veil where one is devoured and reborn anew. This is the magician's direct contact with the higher aethyrs and secret chiefs. This is the mystic's union with the divine consciousness, in perfect harmony with all life. It takes many shapes and forms, and it can happen repeatedly, each experience simultaneously deepening the initiate further into the mysteries and elevating him or her higher than the stars. How the initiate handles the experience is what separates the witch and magician from the madman and mentally ill.

One of my favorite teachings on initiation comes from the chaos magician Grant Morrison, in his comic *The Invisibles*. I find myself quoting this passage often in ritual and class:

> All times are the same time. The initiation of a sorcerer reveals this. That is why they say a true initiation never ends. How can it end when it takes place outside of time? The moment of your initiation is a ripple in the bubble of time. You'll see well enough. You have already seen. The mystery will open up to you and you must reach out of time, grasp its heart and make your bargain with it.[1]

Inanna descends with no teacher or agent. She experiences the gates and guardians of the gates on her own. Her sister is her dark shadow, and her death and subsequent resurrection are what empower her to truly be queen. In the most ideal circumstances, a teacher becomes the agent for these otherworldly forces, yet for many of us, it is life that becomes the great teacher. Our death and resurrection experiences are not

1. Grant Morrison, *The Invisibles: Apocalypstick* (New York: Vertigo/DC Comics, 2001), 133.

engineered by a coven or lodge, but by the great lodge of the Hidden Company, the inner convocation of spirit teachers that arranges for life to teach us the ways of initiation, through our own circumstance, family, friends, lovers, dreams, meditations, and solitary rituals. We then realize that every moment of every day was an initiatory experience. It never ends. Every moment is a moment to perform high magick. Every thought, word, and deed reweaves our lives over and over again, if only we had the eyes to see it. The initiate does. Our training reveals and prepares us.

In the book *Born in Albion*, authors David Williams and Kate West say that Inanna first "failed" to ask the appropriate question of her dark sister, what these authors describe as the "Question of all Questions, the great Initiatory Question, which in this case can be phrased as 'Sister what ails thee and what can I do to relieve thy suffering?'" That is the question we must ask the shadow, the gatekeeper, and the lords and ladies of the Underworld. We have prepared for that by asking it of our shadow in the third level of training. Now we are prepared to serve in a deeper and more meaningful way. It is similar to the grail seeker's question of the Fisher King, "Uncle, what ails thee, and how may I be of service?" or "Whom does the grail serve?"

Inanna must embrace the wisdom of the witches' pyramid, the laws of the magus, to complete this initiation. She knows the ways into the depths, and wants to know the deep mysteries. She dares to go, leaving behind all her comfort and power. She has the will to both descend and return again, putting forces in motion for her return, even unconsciously knowing her impending fate. She is silent in the depths, surrendering to the darkness of her sister and trusting that she will be returned. We too must master the four ways to find the fifth hidden thing, the power to transform us. To be served by the divine we just serve the divine. The question for us today, in initiation, according to Williams and West, is "What can I give of myself?" rather than the more frequently asked "What will it do for (give to) me?" For Americans, this is a religious version of the patriotic theme of John F. Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." In the mysteries, our country is really the divine, and it is the divine we serve.

We have all the tools we need. We have all the wisdom. We have all the guidance. Initiation simply opens those doors so we can claim them fully and consciously. One of my favorite pieces of poetry on the inner wisdom comes from the Chaldean Oracles, in

a section known as the Epiphany of Hekate. Hekate or Hecate, the Goddess of Witches, was seen in many ways over the course of history. Most think of her as the dark old crone goddess of the Underworld, though there is evidence she was much brighter in early civilization. In the Chaldean document, she is equated with the soul of the universe, the immanent consciousness in all of creation, mediating humanity with the transcendent divinity. In this way, she cosmically fulfills her role as guardian of the crossroads and mediator of souls and openings, yet the Chaldean texts see her as more celestial than chthonic, and they associate her with the Upper World more than the Underworld. In either case, she can be seen as the great initiator, the great awakener.

The Epiphany of Hekate

Having spoken these things, you will behold a fire leaping skittishly
like a child over the aery waves;
or a fire without form, from which a voice emerges;
or a rich light, whirring around the field in a spiral.
But [it is also possible] that you will see a horse, flashing more brightly than light,
or a child mounted on the swift back of a horse,
a fiery child or a child covered with gold, or yet again a naked child;
or even a child shooting arrows, standing upon a horse's back.

If you say this to me many times, you will observe all things growing dark,
For the curved bulk of the heavens disappears
and the stars do not shine; the light of the Moon is hidden
and the Earth does not stand steady. All things are revealed in lightning.

But when you see the sacred fire without form,
Shining skittishly throughout the depths of the Cosmos,
Listen to the voice of the fire.[2]

She is revealed in the sacred fire without form, the fountain of sacred fire without form, the Holy Formless Fire of creation. She is the voice within the fire, revealed in the dark and the flash of lightning. Her symbol, a wheel image (fig. 13), is sometimes

2. Sarah Iles Johnston, *Hekate Soteira: A Study of Hekate's Roles in the Chaldean Oracles and Related Literature* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), 111.

Figure 13: Hecate's Wheel

equated by modern Hecate devotees with the Sun at midnight, the true midnight in the Underworld, and it can be used on toplike tools to induce trance, as well as a symbol for the revolving nature of time, the Otherworld, and the Goddess herself.

In the Declaration of the Ingress, the First Rite of Sabbatic Craft, as detailed in *The Azoëtia* by Andrew D. Chumbley, we have both witch god and goddess as initiators, and all initiates of these mysteries identified with the One Initiate.

Hail to the Unknown Initiator of all Magick,

Eternal Goddess and Eternal God, revealed and worshipped by countless names and rites of power, unto whom the whole earth hath given veneration. Love and Honour is

given unto Thee by the Spirit of the One Sorcerer, the First and the Last-born of Witch-Blood, the Living Totem of all Nature.

Hail! To All that are present at this Rite: The Living and the Dead of all Bless'd and Wise: One Initiate, of One Ancient Tradition, of One Sublime and Arcane Mystery.

Hail! Order Without Name![3]

When we look in the *Poetic Edda* at the initiation of the Odin, or "Othin," to learn the mysteries of the runes, we learn that he hangs himself, wounded, on the World Tree for nine days and nights. He offers himself in sacrifice, to himself, Odin to Odin, to be initiated into the mysteries.

I ween I hung on the windy tree,
hung there three for nights full nine;
With the spear I was wounded, and offered I was
To Othin, myself to myself,
On the tree that none may ever know
What root beneath it runs.[4]

Though sacrificing yourself to yourself seems strange, Odin was the "All Father," and there was no force higher to sacrifice himself to. Yet Odin's truth is our truth. Our own divinity is what we make our prayers and sacrifices to, and it is this force that initiates us. Odin's sacrifice to himself can be interpreted as being similar to Inanna's sacrifice, because she sacrifices herself, willingly or unwillingly, to her sister, who is often seen as simply another aspect of herself. Our sisters, brothers, teachers, and ritual initiators, as well as the gods themselves, are simply gateways for that divine inner initiator. They aid us in sacrificing our self to our self. Dion Fortune looks to both Goddess and God in the ways of initiation. One of her guiding teachings that has greatly influenced modern witchcraft and ceremonial magick, to the chagrin of strict polytheists,

3. Andrew D. Chumbley, *The Azoëtia: A Grimoire of Sabbatic Craft: The Sethos Edition* (Hercules, CA: Xoanon Publishing, 2002), 31.
4. Henry Adams Bellows, *The Poetic Edda: Translated from the Icelandic with an Introduction and Notes* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1936), st. 139. http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/poe/ (accessed February 16, 2009).

comes from her novel, *The Sea Priestess*: "All the gods are one god, and all the goddesses are one goddess, and there is one initiator."[5]

The initiator is us. See it as your higher self, your divine self or Bornless Self. See it as your personal divinity, your concept of the Great Spirit. We are all a part of it, and it is all a part of us. It is the Secret Fire that resides within each of us. This is what sparks and awakens the inner fires when we first stir to the call of spirit. This is the torch of Hecate that guides us in the night, protecting us in the dark, warming our souls, and softening us to allow our spiritual metals to transmute, flow, and be reshaped by our thoughts, words, and deeds. When a teacher initiates us, it is truly his or her own fire within initiating us, but that is no more divine than when those in our lives unknowingly conspire to create trials that initiate us. For their inner fire knows what it is doing. When we have profound solitary experiences, we are reaching into the heart of that fire, and it initiates us as well. Outside. Inside. Others. Self. Traditional. Eclectic. Spontaneous. Planned. None of it matters, for in the end, it is all initiation. Once you experience it, you know something that all others who have not yet experienced it do not know.

The Temple of Witchcraft tradition seeks to bridge the gap between the two types of initiations, providing structure, planning, and opportunity for individual experience. It divides the three classic levels into five, to truly extend the training, the range of experience, of the potential high priest/ess. The first two degrees, fire and earth, are somewhat similar in spirit, if not in exact form, to the first two traditional degrees. The third level is really divided into three sublevels, as the degrees of water, air, and then spirit. The Temple of Witchcraft provides a structured training format, and in its own way, it has a group energy, a current, consisting of all those who have followed this path, yet the initiations are not always earthly, passed from teacher to student, but passed from the Hidden Company, the allies, the gods and goddess of the Otherworld, through direct experience of the mysteries. Thus the witch learns that initiation is lifelong and never truly ends.

The final gift of the Goddess in our modern rendition is "To possess the knowledge of transformation." This power comes through initiation, and the first true transformation is of the self.

5. Dion Fortune, *The Sea Priestess* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1972), 169.

Preparation for Initiation Ritual

Everything you've done up until this point has been your true preparation for this ritual. Technically you need to do nothing more than perform this final ritual and pathworking. But here are some things to keep in mind prior to that working.

The Thirteenth Tool

What is your remaining, thirteenth tool that you are working with this year? Reconsecrate it as you did the rest. Does this particular tool hold a special significance for you in the role of initiation? Meditate upon it, and why you saved it, consciously or unconsciously, for last.

Cords

You can use the nineteen-knotted cord as a tool in this initiation ritual, reminiscent of the cord guiding you back from the labyrinth. This is your complete witch's ladder, with the nineteen knots signifying the past nineteen lessons and the number of years in the solar-lunar Meton cycle. Also have your fifth and final belt cord prepared. You can weave it together with your previous four, and wear it as the measuring line for the sixth gate/second chakra temple. The fifth cord is often black, white, or purple, woven together with the red, green, blue, and yellow of the previous degrees of study.

Astrological Timing

Use your knowledge of the cycles of the Moon, Sun, and planets to choose the most appropriate day and time for your initiation ritual. Once you have set a date, stick to it, and move all your energies toward fulfilling this ritual.

Naming

As in other initiatory rites, you might decide, or be called, to take a new name. In most forms of Wicca, such naming is about what you want to become, who you aspire to be, so the name is often taken from mythology or cultural heroes. In other traditions, names are more concerned with finding your inner core, your true name, a sound and identity beyond shape and form, at least as close as you can get to it in this life. Names are power. To have the name of something is to have power over it. Yet to find the true name liberates

you. None may truly have power over you, for you are in alignment with your true self, your true essence. The true name often doesn't make sense in a linguistic or cultural sense. It can be more akin to "un-naming," for it strips you down to your essence, to get beyond any one culture, family, or association. Contemplate this in regard to your final initiation of this training. Do you wish to take a new name? More importantly, are you called to take a new name? Is it a name based on what you aspire to be as a high priest/ess? Is it a true name, getting to the heart of your self, the core of your being? Will it be a public name or a private name, between just you and the gods? I prefer to keep my private name between me and the gods, and those who are my lifelong kin, and no others, but that is just my preference, coming from an old-world belief that such names are private and not shared with public groups or e-mail lists. Many would consider my beliefs outdated, but they are what work best for me at this time. You might not have any idea of a name to choose, but you might be given the name in the ritual and know that it is true. Simply think about the concept of initiatory names and be prepared.

Tattoo or Ritual Marking

If you have chosen to get a tattoo, a ritual marking to culminate this initiatory experience, you should finalize the design and meditate upon it before the ritual. I suggest not getting the actual tattoo done until the ritual is complete.

Silence

As this ritual is very important, and preparation for the ritual is also very important, some would take a vow of silence before the ritual, either the twenty-four-hour period prior, or from sunrise to the ritual's beginning. Take at least the day to reflect, to prepare, to get yourself totally focused on the task at hand. Take a ritual bath. Abstain from television, radio, and Internet. Bring your focus within.

Fasting

Along with the vow of silence, it is traditional to fast before the ritual. Each of us has different body needs and different levels of stamina, so do what is right for your own body, and drink plenty of water, but either a full fast for the day, or only light, simple eating, would be appropriate to prepare yourself for the ritual.

Cakes and Wine

Have bread or cakes prepared for the ritual. If possible, bake them yourself, or have a mentor, guide, and friend on the path make them for you. If you do make them yourself, think about the Miracle of Bread and the stages the grain goes through, in relationship with the land and humanity, to become bread. Prepare wine, mead, cider, or pomegranate juice. Though it might not be possible to distill your own wine, think on the mysteries of distillation, and the resurrection of the spirit of the wine.

Sex

Though this is obviously a solitary rite, or a rite that can be supported by a group, it is not a sexual initiation. Yet sex, or at least sexual energy and imagery, is a big part of many traditional initiations. For many of us, this step is akin to "marrying" the gods, our patrons, and our role as high priest/ess for the Hidden Company of past witchcraft adepts. Cora Anderson, in *Fifty Years in the Feri Tradition*, suggests to her students who are not undergoing a direct sexual initiation in the Feri tradition to dedicate their next sex act, their next lovemaking, to the initiation. This both seals and celebrates the energy of initiation. A partner who is not necessarily actively involved in the Craft is still involved in this act, and your life as a high priest/ess. The wonderful thing about this practice is that when you truly understand the nature of initiation being timeless, then you realize that all acts of sex and lovemaking are a part of initiation. They always have been and always will be.

Labyrinth

Part of the initiation ritual is the descent into the labyrinth. While ideally we would all have a large hedge maze set up in our backyards, this is usually not possible. If you are able to perform the rite outdoors, set up a labyrinth using stones, small candles in paper bags with sand, or cut out of tall grass, so you can walk the maze and enter the center for your ritual. As with the hedge maze, outdoor ritual is not a possibility for all of us. If you cannot work outdoors, you can have the labyrinth pattern etched on a stone, piece of wood, or even a piece of paper, as constructed in Lesson Nine, to meditate on as your Troy stone, and trace your finger on the path to help deepen the

trance. Some commercially crafted labyrinth finger mazes are also available and do the job quite nicely.

Although this is written to be a solitary initiation ritual, the experience can be adapted for group working, where one person acts as the initiate, and all others give support to that initiate. If being supported by a study group, circle siblings, or coven, the group can be responsible for casting the circle and calling the quarters, and participants will stand in a circle at the edge of the space. One can take the role of narrator, reading the myth of descent, while the initiate envisions and experiences it. The "voice" of the narrator is in boldface italics, while what the initiate is required to say is in simple italics, usually following the direction to speak. Each member of the group can take a role as the guardian of a gateway, requiring an object to be given before giving permission to pass, rather than having the initiate commune solely with the spirit of the gate in vision. All participants should do their best to invoke, to spiritually embody, whatever force, whatever gatekeeper, they are portraying. If you cannot have the gatekeepers in a labyrinth setting, a simple path with seven stations is ideal, particularly if it's in a forest grove or other secluded place. The order of gates going up or down is fairly arbitrary. Most of the descent rituals I've participated in start with the crown and move down to the root in terms of chakras, yet some individuals might feel that this should be reversed, "descending down" to the crown of light. If that's your belief, feel free to adapt the ritual as needed.

With these thoughts in mind, you will be fully prepared for your final initiation in the Temple of Witchcraft.

Initiation Ritual

In this ritual, you will be creating sacred space to experience the ritual descent into the Underworld, through the seven gates you have studied. Much of the text style is borrowed directly from the Sumerian account of Inanna's story, as translated in the book *Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth* by Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer. The repetition and flow of the poetry is quite hypnotic, yet if the format is not comfortable for you, please feel free to adapt it as you see fit, with the same spirit and intention to

the ritual. Yet, I do urge you to try the old poetry. Even in English, there is a power to the words that have been used before, connecting you to a thread of tradition. You will also find bits of poetry from Doreen Valiente, Gerald Gardner, Dion Fortune, Aleister Crowley, and numerous other sources that have worked their way into my rituals.

I also encourage doing as the spirit moves you, so if you find the flow of inspiration coming to you in ritual and other words are coming out, go with your inspiration. Have the ritual written out in your Book of Shadows, in dark ink and in a size big enough to see clearly, so the words may be recited with ease.

For the ritual itself, you will need the traditional ritual tools for setting up sacred space. I would suggest having your thirteen tools of import on or near the altar, representing the work of the past year. You will also need your seven tools from the seven gate lessons—the robe, measuring cord, bracelet, breastplate, double-stranded necklace, single-stranded necklace, and crown.

If you prepared zodiac fluid condensers of a high-grain alcohol as a part of your twelve monthly lessons, mix equal parts of them together, enough to fill a small cauldron, to act as your cauldron "fire" in the ritual, releasing the blessings and powers of the twelve signs. If you haven't, you can use a high-proof alcohol such as Everclear alone, or a cologne with spiritual significance, such as Florida Water. You can also use a candle instead. If you are using a physical labyrinth, have the cauldron fire in the center of the labyrinth, rather than on the altar, for it must be lit at the end of the pathworking. Make sure to have matches with it.

If you have twelve zodiac stones as a part of your year's work, you can use the stones as a border for your magick circle. If you are constructing a physical labyrinth to walk, place the stones around the labyrinth, with your altar outside of the labyrinth, before the gate. If you are not able to construct a physical labyrinth, as most of us will not be able to do, simply place them in a circle, to mark your boundary of the ritual. Cleanse the space with salt and water, fire and smoke, before starting the ritual. Perform any necessary banishings of the pentagram and hexagram if your practice includes their use. Ask the spirits of the land, outside or inside, for both their permission and aid in this work. Make an offering to the land spirits.

Once your space is set, prepare yourself. Take a ritual purifying bath. Smudge yourself with cleansing smoke. Do a short meditation to align yourself, and focus on your intention. Now you are prepared for the initiation ritual.

Start the ritual skyclad, with your seven tools before you, on the altar, or on a cloth before the altar, in easy reach.

Cast a magick circle, calling the quarters and the gods, in whatever way is appropriate for you.

Call upon the twelve gods of the starry wheel, the twelve gods you have worked with over the course of this year, through the signs of the zodiac. Take a few moments to call each of them, to thank them and ask for their blessings, guidance, and protection in this work. As you call each god, reflect for a moment on that lesson and all that you've learned.

Consecrate yourself with any protection or blessing potion.

Creation Story

In the first days, in the very first days of creation,
In the first nights, in the very first nights of creation,
In the first years, in the very first years of creation,

In the first days when everything needed was brought into being,
In the first days when everything needed was properly nourished,
When sacred bread was baked in the shrines of the land,
When the heavens had moved away from Earth,
And Earth had separated from the heavens,
And the name of humanity was fixed;

From the Great Above she opened her ear down to the Great Below,
From the Great Above the Goddess opened her ear down to the Great Below,
From the Great Above the Lady opened her ear down to the Great Below.

To solve all mysteries, even the mysteries of death,
Our Lady abandoned heaven and Earth to descend into the Underworld.
The Goddess abandoned heaven and Earth to descend to the Underworld.
She abandoned heaven and Earth to descend to the Underworld.

Stand before the altar and say:

I am like the Goddess, our Lady.
I seek to solve all mysteries, even the mystery of death.
I abandon the temples of heaven and Earth to descend into the Underworld,
To truly learn the ways of magick.
I seek to be initiated into the ways of magick, the ways of the witch,
To be a high priest/ess in fact as well as name.
So mote it be.

Preparation of the Seven Holy Powers

Hold the robe, wear it, and say:
I abandoned my Temple of the Root to descend to the Underworld.
Reflect on the mysteries of the root and the body.

Hold the measure, then place it around the waist and tie the robe. Say:
I abandoned my Temple of Trust to descend to the Underworld.
Reflect on the mysteries of the belly.

Hold the bracelet, and place it on your wrist, noting left or right, and say:
I abandoned my Temple of the Power to descend to the Underworld.
Reflect on the mysteries of the solar plexus and the hands.

Hold the breastplate, place it on your chest, and say:
I abandoned my Temple of the Heart to descend to the Underworld.
Reflect on the mysteries of the heart.

Hold the double strand of beads, place them around your neck, and say:
I abandoned my Temple of the Voice to descend to the Underworld.
Reflect on the mysteries of the throat.

Hold the single strand of beads, place them around your neck, and say:
I abandoned my Temple of Vision to descend to the Underworld.
Reflect on the mysteries of the third eye.

Hold the crown in your hands, place it upon your head, and say:
I abandoned my Temple of the Heavens to descend to the Underworld.
Reflect on the mysteries of the crown and the highest chakra.

She gathered together her seven powers
She took them in her hands.
With her power in her possession, she prepared herself.

She spoke with her spirits, those who have given her constant support, wise counsel, and who fought by her side to overcome all. She instructed them to weep and mourn her if she did not return, and to seek out the gods, who know the Food of Life, the Waters of Life, the secret of life. Surely, they will not let their child die in the Underworld before knowing the mysteries of life.

You should take this time to call upon your own spirit guides, totems, and guardians. Ask for their aid and advice. Though they cannot accompany initiates on this journey, they still send spiritual support and will be there if the journey cannot be completed alone.

Descent

The Goddess set out for the Underworld.
She abandoned the gods of the sky and Sun.
The Goddess abandoned the gods of grain and green and goodness.
Our Lady abandoned the gods of the living world.
The Goddess set out for the Underworld,
And the light within the heavens and Earth followed suit.

If you have a physical labyrinth, walk it now. Then, in the center, get comfortable for a visionary pathworking, which you can choose to do either sitting or standing. If you don't have a physical labyrinth to walk, look at an image of the Cretan maze. Follow it with your finger or eyes. Visualize yourself walking into the labyrinth. Imagine yourself walking some form of inverted Glastonbury Tor, descending its mirror image to

the depths. Imagine yourself walking into the heart of the mysteries, going into the Underworld. All labyrinths are the same. Each leads to the heart of the mystery.

I enter the labyrinth.
I have never left the labyrinth.
I have always been in the labyrinth of the mysteries.
I am in the labyrinth of the mysteries.
I will never leave the labyrinth of the mysteries.

First Gate

With your eyes closed, go in vision through the tunnel of inky blackness, and come to the first gate of the Underworld. There is the guardian. The guardian of the first gate is the guardian of the crown. This is the gate of Caer Sidi, the Castle of the Stars. Though it's the Underworld, the guardian is dazzling with a multicolored glow. Look deeply into that light. What do you see? Who or what is the guardian of this gate? How does it relate to the mysteries of the crown chakra? The guardian might take the form of a spirit you know, a loved one, teacher, or enemy. The guardian requests your crown as payment for safe passage to the Underworld. While still in vision, with your eyes closed, take the crown off your head and place it on the ground before you. Reflect for a moment on what you have given, what the crown means, and what you have learned. Release your connection to the stars, to the heavens. As you are given passage, the guardian then informs you, ***"The ways of the Underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned."***

Second Gate

You come to the second gate of the Underworld, with a second guardian. This is the gate of Caer Pedryfan, the Revolving Castle. This gatekeeper glows faintly with the colors of indigo and purple. Look deeply at the guardian, into the light. Who or what do you see? How does it relate to the mysteries of the brow chakra? The second guardian requests your single-stranded necklace as payment for safe passage to the Underworld. Remaining

in vision with eyes closed, take off your necklace and place it on the ground before you. Reflect for a moment on what you have given, what the necklace means, and what you have learned. Release the power of your vision. As you are given passage, the guardian informs you, ***"The ways of the Underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned."***

Third Gate

Though you have given your vision at the second gate, you can still see the dim images of the Underworld. You come to the third gate of the Underworld, the gate of Caer Fredwyd, the Castle of the Perfected Ones, with a third guardian. This one glows faintly with the color of blue. Look deeply at the guardian, into the light. Who or what do you see? How does it relate to the mysteries of the throat chakra? The third guardian requests your double-stranded necklace as payment for safe passage to the Underworld. Remaining in meditation with eyes closed, take off your double-stranded necklace and place it on the ground before you. Reflect for a moment on what you have given, what the necklace means, and what you have learned. Release the power of your voice. As you are given passage, the guardian informs you, ***"The ways of the Underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned."***

Fourth Gate

Continue through the tunnel of the Underworld, toward the heart of the Underworld. You come to the fourth gate of the Underworld, with a fourth guardian. You come to the gate of Caer Rigor, the Royal Castle. This one glows faintly with the colors of green and pink. Look deeply at the guardian, into the light. Who or what do you see? How does it relate to the mysteries of the heart chakra? The fourth guardian requests your breastplate as payment for safe passage to the Underworld. Remaining in meditation with eyes closed, take off your breastplate and place it on the ground before you. Reflect for a moment on what you have given, what the breastplate means, and what you have learned. Release the power of your heart. As you are given passage, the guardian informs you, ***"The ways of the Underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned."***

Fifth Gate

Continue through the tunnel of the Underworld, going deeper. You come to the fifth gate of the Underworld, with a fifth guardian. You come before the gate of Caer Goludd, the Castle of Gloom. This one glows faintly with the colors of yellow and gold. Look deeply at the guardian, into the light. Who or what do you see? How does it relate to the mysteries of the solar plexus chakra? The fifth guardian requests your bracelet as payment for safe passage to the Underworld. Remaining in meditation with eyes closed, take off your bracelet and place it on the ground before you. Reflect for a moment on what you have given, what the bracelet means, and what you have learned. Release your power. As you are given passage, the guardian informs you, ***"The ways of the Underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned."***

Sixth Gate

Move deeper into the Underworld, to the sixth gate, the gate of Caer Fandy-Manddwy, the Sea Castle. Stand before the sixth guardian, who glows faintly in orange light. Look deeply at the guardian, into the light. Who or what do you see? How does it relate to the mysteries of the belly chakra? The sixth guardian requests your measure as payment for safe passage to the Underworld. Remaining in meditation with eyes closed, take off your measure and place it on the ground before you. Reflect for a moment on what you have given, what the measure means, and what you have learned. Release your trust and intuition. As you are given passage, the guardian informs you, ***"The ways of the Underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned."***

Seventh Gate

Journey to the seventh and final gate, with the seventh and final guardian. This is the gateway to Caer Ochren, the Castle of Dread, the first and the last of the seven keeps. This gatekeeper glows faintly in red light. Look deeply at the guardian, into the light. Who or what do you see? How does it relate to the mysteries of the root chakra? The seventh guardian requests your robe as payment for safe passage to the Underworld. Remaining

in meditation with eyes closed, take off your robe and place it on the ground before you. Reflect for a moment on what you have given, what the robe means, and what you have learned. Release the power of your body, your physical vehicle. As you are given passage, the guardian informs you, ***"The ways of the Underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned."***

The Underworld

Enter the throne room and center of the Underworld, where the rulers of the Underworld dwell. Come naked before these dark gods and look deeply upon them. See perhaps the King or Queen of the Underworld, or both, sitting side by side, for they are the two who move as one in the love of the Great Spirit. Commune with the gods of the Underworld. Listen to their messages. Ask your questions and answer the questions they pose to you. When you are ready, say:

> *I sacrifice myself to myself,* (state your name) *to* (state your name). *So mote it be.*
>
> Look deeply into their faces, into their eyes, ever shifting like mirrors of liquid mercury.
> In the reflection of their eyes, see yourself.
> See yourself as you are in the world of shape and form, your Namer.
> See yourself as your child, playful, your Shaper.
> See yourself as your shadow, your Darkest Self.
> See yourself as your highest self, your angelic or Bornless Self, your Watcher.
> See the faces of everyone you love.
> See the faces of everyone you have known in this life.
> See the faces of all those you have never met, from now, the past, and the future, all passing before your eyes.
> See everything you need to see. Allow the gods and spirits to speak to you and through you in this moment, for as long as it is needed.
> Let them all flow into one mercurial fire, where all blends into one central light, with many flickering flames.

The Goddess stood naked before the gods of the Underworld.
Only then did she know her true power.
Only then did she know the mysteries.
Only then did she know the paradox of giving and receiving,
The paradox of life and death,
The paradox of union and separation.
Sacrificing herself to herself and learning the mysteries.
All gods are one God and all goddesses are one Goddess, and there is one initiator...
As it was, as it is, as it ever shall be.
So mote it be!

Light the cauldron containing the alcoholic fluid condenser or cauldron candle. This is the Holy Formless Fire of the Goddess of the Witches. This is the fire you see from the eyes of the gods of the Underworld.

Say:

As I light this cauldron,
This grail of truest light and sacred fire,
I see myself as the grail, the vessel of sacred flame.
I ask myself,
"Whom does the grail serve?"
I look to myself and the worlds within and the worlds without and ask,
"What ails thee, and how may I be of service?"

Listen to the Voice of the Inner Fire and meditate on these questions.

Initiatory Blessing

Kiss your hand and then touch both your feet, saying:
Blessed be my feet. They have brought me to this place.
Put on the robe again.

Kiss your hand and then touch your belly, saying:
Blessed be my belly. It has held the gifts of trust.
Place the measuring line over the robe and tie it.

Kiss your hand and then touch your solar plexus, saying:
Blessed be my fire. It has held the gifts of power.
Put on the bracelet and touch the bracelet to the solar plexus.

Kiss your hand and then touch your heart, saying:
Blessed be my heart. It has held the gifts of love.
Put on the breastplate.

Kiss your hand and then touch your throat, saying:
Blessed be my throat. It has held the gifts of voice.
Place the double-stranded necklace around your neck.

Kiss your hand and then touch your brow and the back of the head, saying:
Blessed be my brow. It has held the gifts of visions and dreams.
Put on the single-stranded necklace.

Kiss your hand and then touch your crown, saying:
Blessed be my crown. It has held the gifts of the starry heavens.
Place the crown upon your head.

Say:

I call forth my breath and bone,
The same breath drawn in by witches in all lands, in all times,
Carrying the Voice of the Wind,
The same bones, made from the body of the Holy Mother,
The same fire fed by the breath, the spark of the Holy Father.
I call forth to my blood and souls.
I call forth my blood and souls to remember what was, what is, what ever shall be.
Let my witchblood crystallize with light and remember.
There is no part of me that is not of the gods.

Acceptance of the Powers

Upon the Serpent's Path I walk,
Where I have known and I have willed.

I have dared and I have kept silent.
I have woven my own fate with her helping hand.
Turning the Wheel of Time.
I have fared forth in this world and found my allies of spirit, flesh, sap, and stone.
I have descended to the depths, where my blood runs red and green,
And faced the Shadow.
I have climbed to the heavens, where my blood runs gold with light,
And communed with Watcher.
I have accepted the four gifts of stone and sword, spear and cup.
I wear the Crown of Humility, and within my veins is the royal blood of stars.
I have passed through the seven temple gates of challenge
And hold the seven holy powers within me.
I have walked through the twelve stations of stars, and learned the ways of the gods.
I have learned the ways of spring through the Warrior, Steward, and Trickster.
I have learned the ways of summer through the Mother, Artisan, and Servant.
I have learned the ways of fall through the Judge, Guardian, and Teacher.
And I have learned the ways of winter through the Father, Rebel, and Ecstatic.
I am the key that opens all gates,
And I am here to serve.

I accept the blessings and powers of the witch,
Gifts given by the Mother and Father to their Secret Children.
I vow to use them for my own good, the good of my people, and the good of all worlds.

I accept the power to bless and curse.
I accept the power to bring forth beauty.
I accept the knowledge of the secret signs.
I accept the power to speak to the animals.
I accept the power to cure.
I accept success in love.
I accept the power to traffic with spirits.
I accept the power of good fortune.

I accept the power to find hidden things.
I accept the Voice of the Wind.
I accept the power of weather working.
I accept the power of transformation.

Final Blessings

I am blessed in the mysteries of life, death, and paradox.
I am a high priest/ess of the Mysteries of the Witch,
For we are the cunning ones, the wise ones versed in the art of magick.
We are the guardians and stewards of the world and of the veil.
We are the children of the Earth and the starry heavens,
Betwixt and between, walking the edge of all worlds.
We stand in the crossroads, with the sacred keys to the universe in our hands.
We stand in the center of the ever-turning wheel.
We wait in the center of the Web of Wyrd, where all things are possible.
We stand beneath the branches of the great World Tree.
Our breath and bone, blood and burning brightness feeding the tree.
We drink deep from the Cauldron of Inspiration and rebirth, ever inspired and renewed.
We are the teachers, the healers, and turners of the wheel.
We are the torches in the night and the guides to the mysteries.
We shine with the light of the seven rays,
Holding the wisdom of the seven-pointed star.
With the five gifts within us, and the twelve stars upon our heart and crown,
We move with True Will.
We are the kin to the Otherworld.

Tonight I join the ranks of the Hidden Company, the Unnamed Order,
Fleshed and upon the Earth,
And upon death I seek to join their timeless tradition.
I join the ranks of the witchblood yet again,
As the first to be born, the last to die, and all the lives in between.
I am a witch.

I am blessed in the mysteries of life, death, and paradox.
I am a high priest/ess of the Mysteries of the Witch.

Touch your single-stranded necklace.

Each of these beads is like a mystery.
To be understood, they must be experienced.
Together we face the mysteries of birth, life, and death.
Together we are reborn again.
The line that runs through these beads, that runs through these mysteries, is love,
Perfect Love and Perfect Trust.
Once we find this line in the great web, it is never lost again,
And we take our place as a keeper of the mysteries.

Envision yourself walking through the seven gates that open with ease, with no guardian to block your way. You are your own gatekeeper, free to come and go through the gates as your conscience dictates. Walk out of the labyrinth and stand before the sacred altar.

If you desire, perform the Great Rite with blade and chalice, and bless the cakes. Drink the Waters of Life from the chalice of a consecrated high priestess. Eat the cakes or bread as the Food of Life. Remember the alchemical mystery and the Miracle of Bread and how you have been ploughed, planted, grown, milled, baked, resurrected, and reunited.

Thank your spirit guides and the land.

Thank the gods and goddesses and the Great Spirit.

Release the elemental quarters and the circle in a manner appropriate to the method you used to created them.

Ground and center yourself.

Celebrate.

Some students will favor the imagery of the descent of the god, saying that when they seek to penetrate magick, they are male, the penetrating force, and once they become one with the magick, they become female, the receptive force. The classic Descent

of the Goddess myth used in Wicca has the Goddess descending to meet the lord of the Underworld. As an initiate, I think you can identify with either your own gender, or the other. Many initiates don't identify solely with one gender at all because of an intuitive soul understanding of these mysteries. We are between total extremes by our very nature. You can choose to rework the gender roles if you want, but I've found that male students have no problem following the Descent of the Goddess. The concept and experience are what are most important.

Post Initiation

"You are free to come and go as your conscience dictates," says Alex Sanders.[6] This is said to many initiates during modern initiations. Not only is it true, but it has always been true. Initiation simply awakens you to fully realize this fact. We are and always have been responsible for whatever we do. We are free. We come and go as we please. We move through the world with infinite power and resources to fulfill our True Will. The founders of the Feri tradition stress that "a witch was the ultimate authority, autonomous from the control of others and free from the negative influence of culture."[7] This is the same concept in a different form and tradition.

Upon full realization of initiation, one becomes not only the guardian of the crossroads, but the crossroads themselves, a nexus point between the world of form and flesh and the world of spirit. In a ritual, my husband Steve once said, "The Craft teaches the importance of crossroads, places where divergent paths meet. It also teaches us that we always stand at the crossroads, our path eternally meeting countless others, branching into potential moments. Our initiation, this initiation, this new dawn, never ends." The crossroads shows us all potential paths and potential moments, as we see what was, what is, and the many paths of what might be. All of the paths of initiation we discussed at the start of this book, the paths of Apollo and Dionysus and their many branches, intersect, and from the crossroads we see that all paths have a value, and lead to the center. The outer form becomes less important to us, though we re-

6. Alex Sanders, *The Alex Sanders Lectures* (New York: Magickal Childe, 1989), 28.
7. Storm Faerywolf, ed., *By Witch Eye: Selections from the Feri Uprising, Volume 1* (Antioch, CA: Faerywolf/Carnivalia, 2005), 162.

spect specific paths and traditions. We see into the heart of all and see the heart of the mystic, regardless of specific religion.

The otherworldliness of the crossroads is one of the reasons why witches are both loved, because we are a gateway to the unseen realms, and feared, because we open the door to the unknown. Those around us are opened to the possibility just through sheer proximity to us, to our energy. Because of this, our gods are the gods of the crossroads, of the in-between spaces. As we grow, we become more and more like them, and like the psychopomps we become guides, guardians, and teachers, sometimes beloved and sometimes feared. Though we'd like to believe otherwise, even in pagan societies where magick was normally accepted, witches, and their gods, still were not. One need only look at the ancient Greek writings to see the fear of witchcraft among those who would otherwise accept magick as a part of life. We are the dark mirror, those who aid the divine in opening and closing the way. We show what people don't always want to see, but need to see.

As the nexus point between here and there, between flesh and spirit, we have a flow of energy available to us. We are in a zone of consciousness where things that we need flow to us, including all potential energy and blessings, and things we no longer need easily flow away from us. The crossroads are like a revolving door. This constant flow keeps us in constant communion with our divine will, with our Bornless Self, and with the gods. I think of this flow as the flow of awen, the Celtic bards' flow of inspiration from the gods, where the words of the divine flow from their tongues, the tongues that cannot lie, for every word they speak becomes truth. This is the greal of Ceridwen's cauldron, or the mead, the honey wine of inspiration of Odin, conferring magick, inspiration, and seeming madness to those who do not understand.

Many people come into this flow of awen, particularly those in touch with their own creativity and divine genius. Writers, artists, musicians, and particularly athletes find this flow, of simply being in the right place at the right time, doing the right thing, naturally aligned with the divine force. They are not in competition with others, though in the exoteric world they might appear to be. They are like the hollow bone through which the divine awen flows, and is received by those who watch and listen to them. They become the conduit, the gateway, for the blessing of the otherworlds.

Marilyn Ferguson describes it as a field of living energy in her book *Aquarius Now*. "When athletes say, 'I lost it,' they aren't talking about losing the game, or the race, per se. They lost *it*—their link to the present moment, their connection to the field. At its most blatant, a connection to the field translates into star quality, charisma, the little light that shines briefly through all of us from time to time and pours from some people like a Vesuvian fountain."[8]

Witches, magicians, mystics, and shamans awaken to the reality of this field, of this flow of inspiration, to be "in spirit." I've had one student who has had major health problems describe it as a tingle flowing through her as she awoke to the role of the high priestess and began to teach her own students. It even rekindled her sexual energy and awakened parts in her that she had thought were long dormant. Another student didn't awaken to this immediately upon graduation, but a few months later, as she transformed her relationship with her depression, and her vast psychic ability, and reoriented her life. Hers was a more gradual awakening.

It is this process of being "in spirit" that is the consciousness of the adept, of the high priest/ess. A Qabalist might equate it with Tiphereth consciousness. It is this level of awareness that confers our lofty titles of *Lady* and *Lord* before craft names. It is a level of self-mastery devoted to the service of the land, the gods, and the people. That is what one who is a gateway is dedicated to do, to mediate these universal forces. I don't personally use the title of Lord in my spiritual work, because I met a wise woman early on in my training who discouraged the practice, believing that, in our history, the "lords and ladies" of the European courts were the ones to let witches and pagans become downtrodden, enslaved, and persecuted. But I aspired to the highest ideals of being a lord in the sense of the high priest/ess.

Just because we have reached a level of consciousness that allows us to be "in spirit," it doesn't mean we become superhuman demigods devoid of all problems, issues, or ego. We don't. We simply become more conscious of them, and gain a greater perspective. We realize that we have a personal view and a transpersonal view, and acknowledge both as parts of our whole. We don't get stuck in the personal view and think that there is no solution to our problems at hand, nor do we get stuck in the

8. Marilyn Ferguson, *Aquarius Now: Radical Common Sense and Reclaiming Our Personal Sovereignty* (Boston, MA: Weiser Books, 2005), 98.

transpersonal view and deny personal problems and pleasures. Witchcraft is about the flow between the two states, and the paradox of maintaining them both. That is part of what it means to be a creature "between worlds." This state becomes more and more natural for us, though it doesn't mean it's personally easy. We can fall in and out of the flow of awen. Like the athlete, we know when we are in the zone, and when we are not. Yet like the cycle of the wheel, we know it will return. All the skills you have learned in these five witchcraft courses help you reinstate yourself into whatever level of consciousness you choose to enact your True Will.

The Witch's Magickal Life

Witchcraft is a day-to-day practice. It is a part of every moment of every day in the life of the witch. Becoming a high priest/ess is like earning a black belt through the study of the martial arts. Once you get there, you realize that it's only the beginning, and you realize how much you have yet to learn and how much work you have yet to do. It can be a daunting realization, for many witches look at this final initiation as the last step, not the first. But it is an important step. You break through a new level of consciousness where you become akin to a force of nature. You are capable of accomplishing your True Will, but only now does your True Will become even clearer.

Such knowledge and practice differentiate us from the mainstream, separating us from others, and while that can be a lonely prospect at times, we'd have it no other way. There are solitary times for the witch. No wonder so many of our myths and the images of the shamanic healer depict us living by the edge of society. Yet there are times of community, when we gather together in ritual, in the flesh and in the spirit. The paradox of being alone and also being together is only one of many we face as witches.

We are the keepers of the old ways and the weavers of the new ways. When we look at the four gifts of the sphinx, the four points of the witches' pyramid—To Know, To Will, To Dare, and To Keep Silent, I think of the apex of the pyramid as To Weave or To Create. We are the midwives of the next aeon, called by the Earth to usher in her new time. We are the ancestors, the old people, returned in a new way. Many traditions believe that if there is not someone in this world to bridge the gap between here and the

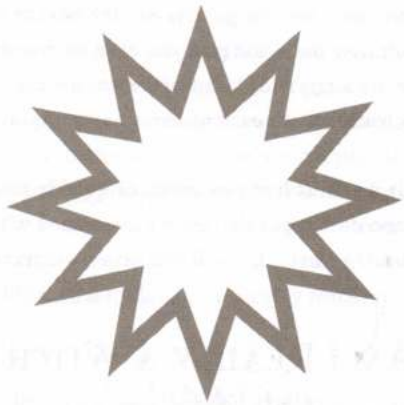
Otherworld, someone to turn the wheel from this side, then the world will end. If we don't keep the old ways and integrate their wisdom into our lives, then the world is truly doomed. Many indigenous cultures have been keeping the wheels within wheels going, and it is now time for those of us in the modern Western culture to do our share.

You have learned the main branches of the Great Tree, each branch holding a particular temple of the mysteries, like a nest in the leaves. You have learned the visionary, fertility, ecstatic, and Gnostic mysteries, all bound together by the main trunk of service, of ministry, connecting the heavens, Earth, and Underworld. Each of these temples is really like a nest, like a launching pad, a starting point, into deeper experience and exploration. As witches are intimately associated with trees, it is up to you, through exploration of your Magickal Will, to find which branch you spend more time on, which branch leads you to where you need to be to fulfill your work in the world, and which temple brings you the experiences that are the most magickal.

As witchcraft is really a twenty-four-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week experience, it becomes part and parcel of your daily life. You might forget it's there as it becomes so intrinsic to your life. Witchcraft is really a calling. It's not so much that you learn witchcraft, but that the teaching awakens something in you. As a teacher who works with many different esoteric communities, I hear people say, "I used to be a witch." Though I understand where they are coming from, meaning they explored the practices of witchcraft or some other magickal spirituality, they are wrong. If you are no longer a witch, you never really were one in this lifetime. It's a lot like me saying that I used to be black, or a woman, or Spanish. Being a witch is a part of your identity, or what makes you "you" in this lifetime. Though we can talk about those who are transgendered and have medical procedures to change their physical gender, one could argue that they were always that gender spiritually, for that is how they identified, and the medical procedures simply aligned body to soul. Witchcraft also goes beyond just the body, and involves both body and soul. Witchcraft involves bloodlines, spirit lines, and those who are called by the gods. Many who identify as a witch in this lifetime feel that way because they did so in a past lifetime, or are born into a family with the talent. Many simply know they are witches, or discover it as time goes on, just as gays, lesbians, and bisexuals know their own identity. Coming out occurs on many levels, to many different people. Witches must come out of their own broom closets, and yet,

once they embrace their identity fully, they must get to a place of balance and function effectively in society while they work to change society.

Even still, the word *witch* might not be comfortable for you. For me, it's extremely important to claim it and work with it, as it has become the word that helps identify and bring so many of us together. Yet the archetype of the witch has so many facets—magician, priest/ess, warrior, healer, hermit, shaman, seer, mystic, minister, edgewalker, stargazer. The list can go on and on. If *witch* doesn't work for you, yet you do this spiritual work, choose the name and title, if any, that works best for you. Let the words serve you as you serve the world and the divine. One of the reasons that I particularly love the word *witch* is because it embodies all of these different facets. Where others feel limited by the label *witch*, I feel liberated, for I'm free to define it as I see fit in this moment of time. Even if you don't use the word *witch*, the important thing is to live the life of the witch—to have one foot firmly planted in this world and one foot firmly planted in the next; to act as a bridge between worlds, grounded yet open, human and divine; to make magick, commune with the spirits, honor the ancestors, and heal; and to serve the self while serving the world for the evolution of the world.



Epilogue

What's next? That's the first question I get after my Witchcraft V students graduate from the very same course you have completed in this book. What's next? That is not for me to answer. There is no Witchcraft VI in this system, though I'm sure that at some point I'll codify some advanced workings and trainings. You have everything you need. You have a thorough introduction to all the major branches of modern witchcraft and magick, and you should have a solid understanding to help you decide where you want to go next. At this point, I suggest my students do what I did. Practice what you have already learned. Use it. Though we are always students in life, don't get trapped in always being the student without also learning how to be the teacher, learning how to be of service in your own unique way. If you have been following the entire Temple of Witchcraft tradition and series, you have just completed a major undertaking. Give yourself some time to rest, to relax and integrate. Then go out and study other related topics from the perspective of the witch. Integrate your new tools into your practice. Synthesize your own systems and traditions. Share them. Continue to evolve and grow, but always keep your roots, your foundation, in mind. If this has truly been an initiatory experience, it is a beginning, not an ending.

For those looking for more specific guidance to the next step, I can only share with you what other students have done and give you ideas to deepen your practice for the next level. All of these are suggestions, not mandates for the tradition. You will find where your own spirit leads you, as each of these paths requires a certain amount of specialization.

First are the pitfalls we must learn to avoid, or quickly overcome, before we get stuck. They are common difficulties that even experienced witches encounter. To be aware of them is like having a map that will help you avoid them.

Am I Really a Witch?

I'm always amazed at how many incredibly magickal people who have had intense, personal, transformative witchcraft experiences can then doubt if they really are witches, particularly when they're confronted by some sort of traditionalist who judges them as unworthy. Many of us, including myself, have gone through this when confronted by someone who seems to possess some knowledge, lineage, or energy that we don't have. It's easy to feel inferior when shaken by someone with an elitist attitude, but hold strong to your convictions. Whether or not one is a witch is between that individual and the gods, and no other! If you know in your heart that you are a witch, if you have gone through all these experiences, then let no one shake your identity. Always seek to learn, yet hold on to your foundation as a witch. In the end, it doesn't matter what others think. If you are good at what you do, it will become apparent and eventually earn respect, even from those who might originally intend to discredit you.

Orthodoxy

Orthodoxy leads to the "more witchy than thou" syndrome. Once you have learned a system, it can be tough to move beyond the system. Once you find a way that works, it can be hard to be open to other ways that work. Many get trapped by what they learn and become rigid, evolving into the very orthodoxy they sought to avoid when learning a mystic tradition. They become more like a practitioner of an institutional religion than a of living mystery tradition open to change. Though I'd like to think that the very principles of the Temple of Witchcraft system would prevent it, I've come across students who have said that other ways are wrong, simply because they were not the way I taught it. I had to remind them that I also taught that there is no one way to do things. The test is whether the magick works. You can do magick however you like if you get the results you intended. Only when it repeatedly fails is it wrong. One who is not stuck in orthodoxy should be able to take this foundational material and add to it, expanding it in personal ways and passing it on to others. Don't get stuck in stagnation and endless repetition. Don't be afraid to change and grow. Make sure that yours is a living, breathing, vital tradition, not empty ritual.

Alienation

For some, initiation doesn't lead to a sense of completeness or belonging, but only further illustrates how different and alienated the witch is from the rest of society, including friends and family who have not experienced the same mysteries. Depression can follow suit. The only remedy for this is to celebrate the differences and enter a role of service with humility. To do otherwise could lead to orthodoxy or ego expansion.

Overburdened Responsibility

The role of the high priest/ess is a serious one, but it does not resign you to a life of all toil and responsibility. Spiritual service, True Will, is joyous. You know you are one part of the plan, not responsible for everyone and everything. Ministry should not feel like the weight of the world upon your shoulders. Though we all go through these phases, we must take care of and be gentle with ourselves so we don't burn out before we've even begun.

No Support

The solitary path is hard enough, but the path of the solitary high priest/ess presents its own challenges. Now that the primary education has ended and work has begun, the lack of structure and support can lead to no practice whatsoever. Witches need to have both discipline and creativity to revitalize the practice and keep it flowing.

Ego Inflation

Without constantly being mindful of the ego, it's easy for initiates to let experience and abilities go to their heads, ever expanding the ego. Such witches believe that only they, individually, can "do it," whatever is at hand, and they lose sight of training and empowering others to share the experience. Ritual becomes a theater where they star and satisfy their own ego, providing service to the community and mediating the Otherworld energies. One who develops the ego over the higher self will lose the flow of awen, the Crown of Humility, and will no longer be able to serve the gods and the world effectively. One must be aware of ego through maintaining a personal practice as well as supporting the community and world.

Lack of Esteem

Even after all this training, it is possible for initiates to feel unworthy, especially when comparing themselves to teachers and other community leaders. This feeling benefits them, allowing such witches to avoid claiming their power or responsibilities. They do not take on students, perform open rituals, or share anything they have learned, because they don't feel they will do it as well as others. Someone "better" should do it. You will never get better if you don't take the steps to do so. We learn by doing, and we all have a role to play, right now.

Forgetting Your Tools

With everything you have learned, both in this tradition and on your path, it is easy to forget many of the tools in your spiritual "toolbox" when encountering a question, problem, depression, or illness. Always go back to the foundation of your magickal practice, the things that have worked best for you, but don't forget everything you've learned. While I tend to rely most on the *ITOW* and *OTOW* material for daily work, I have to remember to use more of the techniques in the other books when needed.

The Golden Key

There is no golden key to the mysteries. Even after accomplishing major personal transformation, there can be a lingering belief that someone out there has some special key to the mysteries, some secret knowledge that is unavailable in books and classes. If you do not have traditional coven training, you might seek it, believing this mysterious key is there. If you do have traditional coven training, you might seek out other, less mainstream traditions for the key. I've gone through this. I've had many friends who are ministers and teachers go through it. No one can open the gate for us. No secret knowledge, tradition, or training is the "be all, end all" to magickal enlightenment. No true secret can be written or spoken, but it must be experienced. Training can help us go further and give us new techniques and understanding, but eventually we must embrace what we have and synthesize it for ourselves, rather than flip from tradition to tradition without doing the work that comes after such initiations.

Next are more specific ideas on how to continue to grow. They are wide reaching, so pursue one at a time. Don't try to tackle all of them at once. Each offers a rich training on its own, but now you must be your own innovator, your own teacher and author, creating the path before you and blazing a new trail from the hidden paths that lie overgrown. In turn, you lead the way for others.

Spirit Contract

The following is based upon a dream one of my students, Mark, had just prior to graduating from the fifth-degree training. In this dream, I am speaking to graduates of the fifth degree, who are about to embark upon their own ministry. I ask them first to review what brought them through to level five, particularly if they didn't think they would get that far. What helped them, supported them, or inspired them to complete these studies? I asked them to keep it in mind, for it will continue to aid, support, and inspire them. I then asked, "What is your commitment to your spirits, your gods, and your tradition? Go out into the world. Think about this. Meditate upon it. Commune with your guides. What is your commitment? Write it down like a contract, an agreement between you, your gods and spirits, and your tradition." I found this dream very

inspiring and was so glad Mark shared it with me. I encourage you to answer these questions. What is your mission? What is your commitment to the work? Then draw up a contract, like the spirit pacts of shamans and witches, or the initiatory oaths and letters of more traditional groups. Yet this contract is between you, the spirit world, and your highest self.

Repeat the Temple of Witchcraft Cycle

Start again with the material of *ITOW* and, through repetition, master all the skills in the teachings. When we begin, there are many teachings that we simply get through, but do not fully absorb on an intellectual or energetic level. This is a time to comb through past teachings and glean new gems from them.

Mastering Difficulties

Pick one aspect of the five levels of witchcraft you had the most difficulty with—intellectually, emotionally, or magickally. Set goals and endeavor to improve significantly in this area.

Embracing Teachings

Pick the one aspect of the five levels of witchcraft you resonate the most with, and devote yourself to deepening that practice. Many find that they focus on a shamanic witchcraft practice, while others focus on the ceremonial side. Some opt for tool-free meditative magick, while others are devoted to the green witchcraft of folk magick. It may not be one of the specific branches of witchcraft outlined in these six books, but an even more specialized form, such as ancestor magick, traditionally known as necromancy, or fusing medical herbal healing with magickal herbal healing. Weather magick, not simply as an act of specific magick, but dedicating yourself to working with the spirits of the weather, observing the weather and bringing yourself in tune

with it as a way of life, can be deeply fulfilling. Find what works best for you, what excites you most, and work your Craft on a deeper level.

Reality Map

Use your reality map from *TOHW* as your own personal study mandala, and design your own training course and program around it. Go over the foundational material with your own personal paradigm in mind, and add to this map the teachings that you are drawn to, but go beyond the material in these six books. For example, through your world map, you might integrate a physical exercise into your practice such as a martial art, or intensify your study of a magickal system, such as the runes, because it plays a strong role in your reality map.

Classic Magickal Model

Choose a classic magickal model and symbol system, such as the Qabalistic Tree of Life, planets, tarot cards, or runes, and use it as a guide for a deeper and more intensive study, beyond the five elements of the Temple of Witchcraft series.

Healing

Going through the five levels of witchcraft can simply open a door to show a witch how much healing—physical and spiritual—needs to be done. Make a list of the issues you want to heal in your life, and begin a magickal program to tackle those issues. Your next level of education, from books and classes, will serve the goals of this list. Seek out healing facilitators and practitioners who will aid you as well. Each will help your magickal and spiritual evolution.

Advanced Elemental Workings

You can design your own practice with a strong foundation in one of the four classic elements. By first learning about all of the elements, you might then choose to work deeply with an elemental energy and tailor much of your practice to it. Choose the element that either resonates most deeply with you, or presents the greatest challenge for you.

Blood Ancestry

Research your genetic heritage and learn a tradition of magick associated with your ancestry. If possible, study with a living teacher of the tradition. If not, do the intellectual research and reconstruct and adapt the information to the best of your ability. If there are modern Craft traditions associated with your ethnic subcultures, explore them. There are thriving traditions that have already done great reconstruction work.

Spiritual Ancestry

On page 32, you were given a long list of past and present figures in witchcraft and magick, but you were only required to research twelve of them formally. Learn about the others, and the teachings of all these figures. Choose those who have traditions that speak to you, and learn their practice firsthand, not just their history.

Commune with the Spirits

Commune with your Master-Teacher and patron deities, and together make an outline for a new course of study. Ask for guidance to find the materials and people to take you to the next step, and be open when that step comes along.

Artistic Craft

Merge your magick with any art you are skilled in and passionate about. Learn to make magick through your poetry, art, singing, music, or storytelling. Emulate the bards of old with new and modern techniques and equipment.

Advanced Natural Workings

Devote yourself to the exploration and study of advanced workings with nature. Advanced workings can consist of really communing with the spirit of a particular aspect of nature. Research the traditions of the original natives of your region. Indigenous cultures hold great keys to the mystery of the land. Know who lived upon the land, and what wisdom teachings they have. For many in America, this involves researching native tribes and potentially connecting with living descendants. Another example of advanced natural workings is to explore the magick of the sea if you live near an ocean, doing rituals on the beach and making offerings to the ocean spirits and deities. Some witchcraft traditions make offerings of small model boats, lit with candles and filled with precious metals, herbs, and resins, cast forth to the goddess of the oceans. Rather than the seas, you might devote yourself to the mountains and getting to know the spirits of the mountains where you live. Any aspect of nature can be communed with deeply. A traditional way of bonding with the land is to make an offering of blood or sexual fluid, but do not make this connection lightly. Do it only when you and the land are in agreement and you are ready to commit to the land, much as you would commit to a marriage. Star magick is another form of advanced working, strictly timing your actions to the zodiac and planetary influences, working with the cycles of the stars. Advanced workings can take as many as twelve years to complete, working through the energies of each sign for a solar year.

Pilgrimage

Though modern witches tend to draw from a wide range of cultural sources, the British Isles are arguably the motherland of our modern concepts of Wicca. Many other

religious traditions involve sacred pilgrimage to lands of historic and spiritual significance. While we recognize the divine everywhere, traveling to the motherlands of our traditions can be incredibly helpful in forging deeper links with our spiritual ancestors and the terrestrial powers with which they worked. If possible, arrange a spiritual trip to visit the sacred sites of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, with time to not only explore history and see sights, but also to do meditation and ritual. The land, wells, and stones hold great wisdom for those who are willing to sit and listen. I've had some of my most profound moments in Glastonbury, on the Tor and at the wells. If you come from another cultural line, such as Italy, Greece, or Germany, explore the pagan sacred sites of that country.

Spirit Alliance

As one can be merged with the land, one can merge at a deeper level with spiritual allies. Shamanic traditions speak of a spirit lover or spirit bride/husband for the shaman, an otherworldly spouse with many of the same intense commitments a physical lover/spouse has. Faery traditions speak of the indweller, the faery queen/king bonded in a marriagelike relationship with a seer. Voodou traditions have marriages to certain lwa spirits. Even some modern Craft traditions, emulating imagery found in Catholicism, see the high priest/ess married to the Goddess and/or God, in their service. Beyond the spousal-style relationship, one can be bonded to other spirits, creating an alliance and bridge between spirits in the Upper World and Lower World. I find myself in strong alliance with the Hidden Company of our tradition, doing their teaching work in the physical world. My relationship with them continues to deepen my own spiritual practice. This path can be fraught with the dangers of mystic delusion, so be well grounded in all your practices and earthly responsibilities before you even consider pursuing it.

Vocation

If you truly see being a high priest/ess as a vocation, think of it in terms of a career. It might not be the career that pays the bills, but put the same amount of thought, effort, and intensity into it as you would put into a worldly vocation. You might be surprised when the gods call you to the vocation full-time and find ways for the work to support you, but at least you will be prepared. Think about the normal questions you would ask concerning a career. Who are you working for? Who is your "boss"? Is it "Spirit," "the Goddess," or a specific patron? Ultimately we might all be working for Spirit, yet our immediate supervisor can be a patron deity. Who is it? What is this deity's work? How do you work to fulfill that mission? What is your mission statement? With a mission statement in mind, what are your specific goals to fulfill that statement? What resources do you need to fulfill that statement, and how do you go about acquiring them? What resources do you already have? Realistically, how much time will you put into those goals? What policies must you establish in your life to fulfill these goals? Make your spiritual "business plan."

Academic Study

Take a deeper look into the philosophies and writings of the ancient pagan world and the subsequent traditions that were inspired by them. Directly study the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans, if you have not done so already. Explore the translated texts and history of Egypt, Sumer, and Babylon. Study Neoplatonism and related schools of philosophy. Explore alchemy in both its Eastern and Western forms. Look to the influence of the Druidic revival in Britain and its influence on modern paganism. There is a whole host of academic texts to pursue in your study of paganism.

The Trap of Continuing Education

While it is important to always further yourself with new information and experiences, it is easy to fall into the trap of following one system or teacher to its completion, and then immediately jumping into another intensive training or study with a demanding

teacher, rather than taking the time to apply and integrate what you already know. Rather than growing stagnant, by all means continue your education and find teachers and mentors as you find necessary, but also make sure that you step up to the responsibilities of being a high priest/ess in your life and community as you see them.

Ordination

Though most go through this training for their own development, if your ministry is now taking you into realms that require ordination, seek out an organization with legal credentials to ordain, and determine its requirements for training. Some ordination programs are so simple that they can be done online or by mail. Others provide a bit more support and maintain criteria for ordination. Others have very comprehensive training programs. Find the path of ordination that is right for you and your needs.

Starting Your Own Tradition

Many take the skills they learn and start their own traditions, emphasizing the aspects of the Craft that are most important to them. Making your own tradition goes beyond simply writing rituals and pathworkings. The best suggestion I can make for creating a specific tradition is to do it in partnership with the spirits, gods, totems, and ancestors. Ask your inner-world contacts who wants to be involved in this work, and how. Establish your inner-plane contacts before worrying about the outer-plane work. Then with the inner-plane support, create your outer-plane structure, rituals, and teachings. Call upon specific deities, spirits, or totems as a part of the tradition. Build an egregore, a powerful thoughtform, that is the keeper of the "current" of the tradition. Have both your students and inner-plane contacts add to that egregore by using repeated imagery, style, and concepts, to differentiate your own tradition from another. Names, sigils, crests, and unique workings all help build a unique tradition.

The Hidden Path of Service

Much of this book is about the outer exoteric path of service: teaching, healing, reading, public rituals, and living a magickal life every day. But many witches devote much of their magick to not only keeping the cycles of the Earth spinning, but to improve upon them in the face of our modern dilemmas, our social and environmental crises. They continually do magick for peace in war-torn areas, to aid those hurt by natural and man-made disasters, to clean the environment, and to evolve the human race in harmony with the planet. It's not that they don't devote themselves to finding real-world solutions and taking physical action, but their magickal practice, their dharma, is also focused on fueling their inner-world power to achieve these goals, which in turn can inspire others psychically to take action. Their work aligns the proper forces, so all things are in their right place and right time to help the world change. In many ways, the path of service—both hidden and revealed, veiled and unveiled—is the calling of the witch. Many create small groups devoted to local, national, and global aims. Some of these groups will have elemental themes, keeping the peace of the planet in terms of earthquakes, floods, storms, and fires, and offering healing magick to those areas where disaster cannot be averted and only healing can be done. Others are the "keepers of the flame"—those who literally and spiritually keep a flame going with magickal intention devoted to healing, inspiring, or transforming the world.

Support Groups

I highly encourage high priest/esses to found or find support groups of other spiritual practitioners with the same level of depth and commitment. These are not necessarily covens of practitioners, but could be. The important thing is that the teaching in such small groups be mutual, and not dependent upon any one person; there should be a sharing of information and experience rather than a leader/follower or teacher/student relationship. It should be a gathering of peers. Cross-traditional groups can be quite helpful. My own support group includes Hindus, ceremonial magicians, and a quite "ordinary" Christian minister who doesn't maintain a magickal practice but has an amazing vocation in ministry, and we can relate to each other quite well. Such

groups, which simply provide you with personal support and friendship, can be part of the path of service.

These are but a few of the paths before you. Ultimately we must each walk our own way and find our own path. We must each take the next step and live the magickal life as we see fit. Blessed be.