



The Witch's Guide to Life

By Kala Trobe

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Wiccan ethics, the difference between a Wiccan and a non-Wiccan Witch, love, sex, mood swings, eating disorders, suicidal impulses, and the use of drugs are amongst the issues discussed in the first part of the book, along with wider subjects such as the witch's role in global crisis.

Part two explores the history, folklore, and mystical systems relevant to witchcraft as we know it today, including chakras, the Qabalah of the Western Mystery Tradition, and Tarot. The lives of eminent historical and contemporary occultists are outlined, and the image of the witch as reflected in art, literature, and the media is explored as an indication of the changing attitude of the general public to the arts magickal.

In part three you'll find the practical how-to of witchcraft and magick, with comprehensive sections on a witch's working tools, when to cast what, and magickal techniques and spell-casting. Also included are recipes to make every sabbat a tasty as well as magickal experience, tips on psychic self-protection, and advice for coping with adversity. The power inherent in every witch shines forth in this guide to magickal living in the modern world.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Kala Trobe (UK) is the main nom-de-plume of Kate La Trobe-Bateman. She is author of the award-winning work of fiction *The Magick Bookshop* and the new *Magick in the West End*, a dazzling collection of short stories that brim with imagination and come straight from the theatre-lit, gaudy, blinding, yet, bewitching streets of London's West End - and all seen through the eyes of a magically-minded young and aspiring occultist at one of Londons most well-known esoteric bookshops.

Kala Trobe is the author of several works of Llewellyn non-fiction including *Invoke the Goddess: Visualizations of Hindu, Greek, & Egyptian Deities*, *Magic of Qabalah*, *Invoke the Gods: Exploring the Power of Male Archetypes* and *The Witches Guide to Life*, and is also published by Random House UK. Ms Trobe currently divides her time between London and Amsterdam.

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What Makes a Witch?

MAKING YOUR OWN MAGICK IS the essential tenet of being a witch. We do not sit around waiting for the world to offer us our dreams on a plate, knowing as we do that this will never happen. We are proactive, and seek to manifest our heart's desire, even when the odds seem stacked against it. We use the concentrated power of our Will, we Dare to be Different, we seek the Knowledge we need for autonomy, and about our beliefs we are Silent in the company of outsiders. This does not make the witch a dysfunctional member of society. On the contrary, the witch is always ready to help others, he or she is conscientious as to the cause and effect of her powers, and the knowledge she gathers from every religion and every walk of life makes her about as well rounded as it is possible to be. Her mind is always open. She respects all cultures and the essential teachings of all other religions (though their practises may at times test her patience). She is acutely aware of the smallness of her place in the Universe, and in this world, she is grateful to the elements that bore her?and all of us?into being. Earth, air, fire, water, and spirit are never far from her thoughts. She is consequently ecologically aware. She loves nature; not as other people "love" chocolate or skiing, but with the real love of a daughter for her mother. She feels for the cosmos.

Though aware of her minuscule significance in the scheme of things, the witch is not afraid to make waves. She sees the making of her own magick as essential. This is partly because all action is a kind of magick, and if we make no moves, we may as well lay down and die, and partly because her expanded awareness makes her conscious both of what needs to be done, and how it might be possible. She knows that everything is linked by an invisible (to normal vision) electricity, and realises that she is a storehouse of this energy. She learns to accumulate and direct it in order to effect the changes she desires. This requires knowledge of yearly cycles

and phases of the moon (see chapter 9, "The Wheel of Death and Life"), and the ability to strongly visualise and will a situation into being. It also means being semiotically aware (see chapter 10, "Myth and Symbolism").

Witches do not have to go around in long black cloaks and pointy shoes

(though it can be fun) to feel empowered. Being a witch is still not a popular life choice. People may want to burn you and chase you out of town. Normal clothing and demeanour is a handy way of throwing people off the scent. After all, if a rumour starts that there's a witch living down your street, and she turns out to be that woman in jeans and sneakers, you're hardly going to believe it, are you?

Even when stripped of dignity in the outside world, however, the witch knows she has power and grace within. Because she Knows, Wills, Dares, and is Silent, nothing can penetrate her inner sanctum of

confidence. She can be as plain as a pikestaff and still know how to captivate lovers; she can be useless at math and still excel in intelligence.

A quick spell and some applied will could turn her grades around and make her a straight-A student, as well as the most entrancing girl in town.

She also realises that there is more to magick than the mere fulfilment of petty ambitions. Films like *The Craft* emphasise the selfish possibilities of being a witch, and bear little resemblance to the type of person she wishes to be or become. A teenager using her psychic powers as a bludgeon is a scary thing indeed, and she does herself no favours either. Following the example of Nancy in *The Craft*, we stumble into the mire of unpleasant consequences (see chapter 5, "Karma Drama").

The best policy of all witches?white, grey, and black?is "To Know, to Dare, to Will, and to be Silent."

Aleister Crowley's Thelemites are renowned for following the principle "Do What Thou Wilt shall Be the Whole of the Law." For them, magick comes first, morality second. Crowley is, of course, infamous for his lack of scruple both in the Circle and outside it. His "diabolical" behaviour provoked wide condemnation in late Victorian England (see chapter 15, "Who Influenced the Witching World?").

Wiccans and ethical occultists adhere to the creed "An' it Harm None, Do As Thou Wilt." Easier said than done. To truly follow this spiritually watertight method, all motives must be analysed and possible consequences assessed. Is your ceremony or spell really for the good of all concerned? Is it definitely not going to harm anyone in any way, however slight? If both of these questions can be answered with confidence, go ahead and cast your white spell. If not, don't forget that other rule of the "Craft of the Wise": the threefold return. All that we send out will return to us tripled (more or less); so cast good magick if you want to revel in good vibes, and send out hate if you wish to battle your way through this life feeling paranoid. There is no better way for a witch to destroy herself than to attempt to destroy another.

It is a popular belief that we reap what we sow, but some witches would not agree with the concept of threefold return, or with various other commonly accepted aspects of the Craft. Each of us is unique. Definitions vary and are often self-created, and aspects of belief vary with them. We are all individuals with perceptions of equal validity, and there are, in my eyes, no rules except the conscience of the practitioner. A witch, as I see it, is anyone who is aware of the Divine in the midst of daily life, who casts spells, and uses magick.

There is a difference between a Wiccan witch and a non-Wiccan witch. This book deals with the witch as an individual rather than as a product of specific schools of thought. Most of us are influenced by a host of philosophies, and every witch is unique and operates differently. However, a few basic guidelines on the differences between the main schools of witchy thought may be found in the following section, "When Is a Witch Not a Witch?", as many people like to belong to particular traditions or schools of thought.

So, the key points of modern witchcraft are inner strength, resulting in the confidence necessary to change one's circumstance, and spiritual and ethical awareness. Will power combined with effective ritual and moral conscience does not, however, differentiate the witch from any other positive religious person.

What, then, makes a witch a witch? There are several answers to this. One is that the witch does not merely ask for help, but she makes positive moves to bring the desired change to pass. This is a classically Pagan stance. As Hugh Lloyd Jones says of the ancient Greeks: "Faced with a difficulty, a Greek will first pray to a god; but he must then reinforce the god's action on the divine plane by applying on the human plane whatever action he is capable of making." Likewise, the witch.

Secondly, she admires and employs the aid of ancient deities from a huge array of pantheons. Many of these deities have remained dormant for long periods of time owing to the decline of certain empires, the growth of Christianity and other now orthodox religions, and the destruction of the cultures from which they arose. Modern magick has resuscitated many an arcane deity. She may take her pick of which to contact, supplicate, and work with.

Thirdly, at least in the case of Wiccans (Alexandrian, Gardnerian, and solitary practitioners), the emphasis is on the nature gods and the Goddess?both of which are usually held in equal reverence. If, however, there is discrimination, it will be towards the feminine, as the Goddess ultimately presides over the cycles of life and

death. This reflects the fact that Wicca is predominantly a nature religion.

It must be remembered, however, that witchcraft, like any other spiritually effective path, is merely a means to an end. That end? Spiritual ascension. The witch realises that she is placed here, in this particular set of circumstances, for a reason.

That reason is to grow and learn. The outer planes are manifestations of inner circumstance, and the goal is to see through the illusion and transcend it. Ultimately, we are aiming for reunion with the Creative Intelligence, the Ultimate Deity. This God is not thought to be cruel or punishing?we inflict suffering on ourselves rather than have it inflicted on us?but is loving, magickal, and perpetually sending us opportunities to grow closer to the Truth. All spiritual paths may be included in this. All apparently random events come under the same category.

The witch, with her awareness of symbolism, is well equipped to understand and rate her spiritual progress. Her stumbling block is being glamoured by lower psychism.

Spells and magick are excellent tools when intelligently applied, but they can lead to terrible karmic tangles when meddlesome or ill thought-out. It is the first test of the witch to combat the lust for personal power and prestige. Many fail at this early stage. However, with constant application and interaction with earth and cosmic energies, she will accumulate power. If she uses this power for healing (when asked), blessing, helping (but not interfering), and, most importantly, for bringing light and love and positive energy down through the planes to earth, she is doing what she is meant to be doing on the path of witchcraft.

This leads us to another essential factor: the After-and-Beyond life. The witch's very nature dictates that she believes in life after physical death. The witch recognises the perpetual presence of other planes and the entities that inhabit them. She is adept at seeing behind the Veil of dense matter to the subtle etheric and causal levels, and she is acutely aware of the crossovers between levels. Certain sabbats are celebrations of the times when the worlds merge most obviously?Samhain is one example. She can interact with the so-called "dead" at will, but she will only do so when it is helpful to the spirits concerned (leading victims of accidents away from their bodies, for example, and ensuring their well-being before leaving them on the astral levels). She does not meddle with those who do not wish to be called, and she certainly does not expect other spirits to do her bidding any more than she would expect to be able to stop a person in the street and command him or her to be her slave. (Well, OK, some do, but this is not the type of witch it is desirable to become for numerous reasons. Plus, dominating another life-force requires a complete selfbelief and consistent lack of conscience that few of us are, thankfully, able to possess.)

However, the witch is fluent in the languages of many levels. She learns, through years of experience and psychic encounters, that there is no end to the spirit (nor even to many aspects of individual consciousness), and that the flesh is not the material cul-de-sac it often seems to be. Her consciousness becomes a transdimensional crossroad; with her Hecate-self at its epicentre, she may follow the paths to the lands of both the astral (where we go between incarnations, and where more advanced spirits exist), and the higher causal (closest to Godhead). Yet her feet remain planted firmly on the earth. She knows that all levels are of equal importance.

The way that a witch operates can vary completely. Some get together in the classic coven of thirteen; others work alone. Some go through external training; for others this is impractical, and they teach themselves through experience and experiment, or even learn through a correspondence course or the many comprehensive books available today. Some like to feel the gods and Goddess around them by working skyclad, or naked; others go robed, or, for discretion's sake, dress as normal.

There are all-female covens and all-male ones (though the latter are certainly rarer), and covens that meet only on the astral plane. The true witch is an individualist, and her *modus operandi* will reflect this. It is important to state here, at the beginning of the book, that *all witches are different*. Because Wicca and witchcraft are nondenominational, and because covens and individual witches have sprung up all over the world, rarely meeting together, if at all, there are as many opinions on the Craft as there are individual practitioners. Therefore I speak only from my personal standpoint. I take into account

the huge body of work now available on the subject, but there are as many different practises as there are different witches on the globe?and believe me, there are quite a few now! However, all witches employ the sabbats to aid their work, and will remain aware of the seasonal and lunar tides from day to day (see chapter 9, "The Wheel of Death and Life").

This book aims to be helpful to the witch, whatever her personal specifications. It behooves us all to remember that the Craft is a progressive path, not an end in itself. There are higher levels to aspire towards; the point of our incarnations is to ascend. That means to seek the Creative, Benevolent Intelligence?in ourselves, in others, and in all manifestations.

When Is a Witch Not a Witch?

A witch is somebody who casts spells using the natural cycles as allegory and guide. He or she might also summon spirits, work ritual magick, and so forth. These spells can be of any nature at all.

A Wiccan, on the other hand, is a spiritual descendent of Gerald Gardner and/or Alex Sanders (see chapter 14, "A Brief History of Witchcraft") and operates under the tenet "An' it Harm None, Do As Thou Wilt." Although there are many schools of Wicca now?from Faery to Seax to Celtic (the word *eclectic* crops up time and time again in Wiccan self-description)?the general precept is that the Wiccan worships the Goddess and Horned God (usually with the Goddess in precedence).

The Goddess and God are seen as manifest in all other gods and goddesses; the Divine is easily accessed and recognised in many forms. However, this aspect is shared with some other witches.

Essentially, all Wiccans are witches but not all witches are Wiccans. Within the category of witchcraft, there are more differentiations. This includes Traditional Witchcraft, which is animistic and polytheistic like many other types of magickal belief, but which admits no superior entity. The God and Goddess are seen as innate in nature rather than external, lofty forces (most Wiccans will see them as both), although spirits will often be called upon to help the witch meet her aim. These spirits are perceived as equal but different, as is all in the cosmos. There is no hierarchy in Traditional Witchcraft, while in Wicca, deities exist and are obviously our "superiors." (However, this is not in the grovelling, Judeo-Christian/Islamic sense.

The deities are respected as evident in natural things?the trees and earth, for example, and stars and sky?and there is no aspect of fear or punishment in the sense of divinity.)

Wicca tends to be more ritualistic than Traditional Witchcraft, which is simple and often involves no paraphernalia at all. Traditional Witchcraft does not involve casting a Circle, for example, as all places are seen as sacred. The Traditional witch must therefore be naturally fully attuned to magickal thought processes at all times.

A Wiccan or non-Traditional witch, on the other hand, can afford to "be mundane" (sometimes a necessity in this world), knowing as she does that a small ritual will restore her to her magickal persona and create a sphere in which the worlds intermingle.

Wicca is ethical, while Traditional Witchcraft is amoral. In Traditional Witchcraft, emphasis is placed on taking responsibility for one's actions, and on intent. The forces of the Universe are seen as neutral (like weather), rather than good or evil. Curses and hexes are used for self-preservation, whereas a Wiccan would never curse, believing in the law of threefold return and in the ethics of "An' it Harm None."

Like Wiccans, Traditional witches celebrate the seasonal sabbats and lunar esbats. However, no invocations to the Lords of the Watchtowers would precede a Traditional ritual; if protection were needed, spirits and elementals might be summoned to assist, but the mode would not be high magickal. Clothes would be kept on in most Traditional covens, rather than working in ritual robes or skyclad, as most Wiccans tend to do. There are witches that belong to none of these categories, especially as magick and spell-casting have become so popular since the 1960s. Information has exited the broom cupboard and landed in the most public of forums. Thousands of books have become available, leading to this characteristic awareness of natural cycles, the widespread practise of magick, the emergence of new covens, and self-initiation. There are now as many types of witch as there are individuals practising the Craft.

In this book, the word *witch* is used in a Wiccan as well as non-Wiccan way. I believe that religious practises should be ethical, especially those that involve direct magick, but I do not perceive witchcraft as confined to

the precepts laid out by Gerald Gardner and Alex Sanders. So I have used the word to define anybody, whether Wiccan or otherwise, who:

- Acts positively to enhance his or her life using magick
- Worships the old gods, in whatever form, even as simple energies inherent in nature
- Accepts responsibility for his or her own actions
- Follows the cycles of the seasons with magickal and practical awareness
- Works with lunar and stellar tides, and celebrates the full moon, however quietly
- Strives towards self-improvement, often involving "initiation" experiences
- Thinks of him- or herself as a witch

The Wiccan Rede, Verse and Proverb

To get an idea of what Wicca implies, the following are examples of specifically Wiccan ethics and proverbs. Some are based on ages-old principles of witchcraft; others are clearly new concepts. Much of the Gardnerian Book of Shadows, from which this is taken, is popularly recognised as falsely antiquated-sounding.

Bide the Wiccan Redes ye must, In Perfect Love and Perfect Trust;

"Perfect Love and Perfect Trust"?what are these qualities in this context?

When a Wiccan is initiated, he or she undergoes, in the true nature of all initiatory experiences, a symbolic death and resurrection process. In the case of first- degree and second-degree initiation, this is underlined by the use of cords to bind and a blindfold. In order to keep one's nerve during this compromising experience ?bearing in mind that one is traditionally naked as a babe to boot?does indeed require "Perfect Trust" in the Goddess, and in fellow coverners.

So, the initiate is made as vulnerable as possible, but "Perfect Love" for the Mother-Goddess sustains her courage and pulls her through into successful rebirth.

This symbolises the faith necessary to undergo each incarnation without becoming spiritually "warped" by its numerous difficulties. To remain a loving, giving person despite adversity is key to Wiccan faith, which admits no retaliation. "Perfect Love" means that love of self is not higher than that for the Mother, who represents compassion for all living creatures.

It is worth noting that there is scope for abuse of the "Perfect Love and Perfect Trust" clause. Wicca attracts some unsavory persons because of its ritual nudity, the Fivefold Kiss, and the Great Rite, and some of these go undetected by those they do not attempt to compromise. All religious paths are prone to attract the occasional megalomaniac, and Wicca and Paganism are no exceptions. What the clause does *not* mean is that "Perfect Trust" is to be invested in an individual human being, High Priest/Priestess or not. It refers to faith in the Divine, and definitely not the fallible human, however impressive and bona fide he or she may seem.

Live ye must and let to live, Fairly take and fairly give;

This clause is simple enough to understand. It promotes exactly the ethics found in Christianity?to "Do unto others what you would have done unto yourself." However, being a nature religion, it also refers to the earth. Wiccans do not simply strip the land of its resources, but "fairly give" in return. This is done psychically, through thanks-giving celebrations, as well as physically. The "Perfect Love and Perfect Trust" has to cut two ways.

Form the Circle thrice about, To keep unwelcome spirits out;

This of course refers to the casting of the Circle, or the invocation of the elements and Lords of the Watchtowers to protect the proceedings from unwanted influences. This procedure is one of the many arguments in favour of the concept's recent authorship; Traditional Witchcraft did not employ the Circle, as every space was seen as already sacred. Spirits might be convoked to protect the witch, but the Lords of the Watchtowers are a purely modern addition. Much of Wicca is based on mediaeval magickal and alchemical theory, the Circle not least. However, this by no means invalidates the technique, which is one of the most powerful psychological and psychic techniques of the Craft.

Bind fast the spell every time, Let the words be spoke in rhyme.

Binding a spell can be done in many ways: by the words "So mote it Be" and a mental full stop; or by burning, burying, or sending away on water an object used in the spell (such as paper on which unwanted traits or influences are listed, a doll, or any object symbolic of the task at hand). As the word suggests, a spell may also be "bound" with cord or thread quite literally. It does not matter which technique one uses (there are many others), the point is to believe and know that the spell is "done." Absolute confidence in one's abilities is the most powerful binding tool one could possibly have.

The words are "spoke in rhyme" because they facilitate a chant that is easy to remember, mellifluous, and magickally effective. Many of these verses were written by Doreen Valiente, others by Gerald Gardner himself. It is particularly powerful for a coven to author its own rituals and spells, of course, but many choose to stick to the prescribed Wiccan versions.

The main point about any magickal verse is its rhythm. It is this that works on the brain and body of the witch to create a mood suitable to the spell in hand. The chants are often danced to in circular motion, and the effect is aut hypnotic. I do not mean that the participants become zombies?they most certainly do not?but the mood becomes more trancey, more magickal. The mundane world subsides, and excitement and intent become intermingled. If the words rhyme, one is unconsciously transported back to childhood, when cynicism had not spoiled optimistic belief, and when magickal realities were so much easier to access. There is much to be said for naïve verse for this reason.

Soft of eye and light of touch, Speak ye little, listen much;

The first line of this section seems to be for reasons of poetic ambience only.

However, it may also suggest subtlety?and gentleness. To be "soft of eye" is to be kindly and nonjudgemental. "Light of touch" again suggests gentleness. The second clause, "Speak ye little," refers to the vow of silence taken by the initiate ("To Know, to Will, to Dare, and to be Silent"). This obviously befits the witch, who is likely to suffer through indiscretion. It is also a wise bit of advice in any scenario, especially a learning one, hence, "listen much."

Deosil go by waxing moon, Sing and dance the Witch's Rune;

Widdershins go by waning moon, Chant ye then a baleful tune;

Deosil, or clockwise, is the right direction for creative, positive, forward-forging magick, such as would be cast when the moon is waxing. Personally, I usually work deosil whatever the phase of the moon, but the reference to moving "widdershins," or anti-clockwise, occurs because at the waning of the moon, the tides are reversed and the flow is corrosive rather than augmentative (hence the tune being "baleful"). Therefore the time is right to perform magick relating to the past, and to the removal of unwanted obstacles. The witch might move widdershins to represent this "regression,"

but the action must always be counterbalanced by a clockwise movement later in the working.

"The Witch's Rune" referred to is the wonderfully effective verse written by

Doreen Valiente and Gerald Gardner. It is usually chanted during a "ring dance," when coverners hold hands, face inwards, and rotate deosil, at first slowly, but gradually faster and faster until the Priestess deems that the relevant energy has been raised and bids them stop (and sometimes "drop" onto the floor!). It may be found in its entirety, with comments, in the next section.

When the Lady's moon is new, Kiss hand to her times two;

When the moon rides at peak, Heart's desire then ye seek.

These lines refer to the Goddess as Maiden, when her favour is best gained

through gentle workings, and ideas are sown rather than reaped. The hand is kissed "times two" rather than the traditional three because she is still in a stage of incompleteness. Also, two is a number of partnership?the first stage of initiating a project. In Tarot, the twos are cards of developing.

At the full moon, however, the time is right to take the plunge and put full

energy into magickal projects, including requests for love, insight, and the conclusion of any healing work that may have been performed as the moon waxed. It is therefore the Mother who grants the "Heart's desire."

Heed the North wind's mighty gale, Lock the door & trim the sail;

*When the wind comes from the South, Love will kiss them on the mouth;
When the wind blows from the West, departed souls have no rest;
When the wind blows from the East, Expect the new and set the feast.*

This verse adds pseudo-folkloric proverb to the poetic melting pot. The references to the cardinal points are obviously relevant to witchcraft, as is the concept of interpreting the winds.

*Nine woods in the cauldron go, Burn them quick, burn them slow;
Elder be the Lady's tree, Burn it not or curs'd ye'll be;
When the wind begins to turn, Soon the Beltane fires will burn;
When the wheel has turned to Yule, Light the log, the Horned One rules.*

Nine is, of course, the number of the Goddess, being three times three, the triple aspect of the Triple-Aspected One. The Celts attributed the properties of trees to the lunar months, hence the beth-luis-nion tree alphabet. The woods are perhaps symbolic of the main seasonal/lunar cycles, though nine are mentioned rather than the full thirteen. They go into the cauldron of life, for, if literal, the woods would no doubt be *under* rather than inside the cauldron. The cauldron is another Goddess symbol, which stands on three legs. Aromatic fires may be burned, which also serve as incense. This is difficult, however, now that deforestation has rendered fine woods

such as sandal and cedar both overpriced and rare. Personally I love the idea of such a fire, but would feel terribly guilty about it. Burning trees seems anathema to the witch's ecologically aware path, though of course anything that has fallen naturally is perfectly all right. Elder is sacred to the dark aspect of the Goddess, and thus must never be burned, at least by a Wiccan.

The references to the Wheel of Life are obvious. They are mentioned, presumably, to indicate the witch's constant awareness of the cycle, and the next stage in it. Foresight is as important to the witch as it was to the original Pagan who relied on successful seasonal cycles to bring him continued life.

*Heed the flower, bush or tree, By the Lady blessed be
When the rippling waters flow, cast a stone?the truth you'll know;
When ye have & hold a need, Hearken not to others' greed;
With a fool no seasons spend, Or be counted as his friend.*

Ecological awareness is again emphasised in the first two lines of this verse.

Respect the Goddess and her botanical manifestations, and you gain her blessing. The next two lines, however, are vague in the extreme, and, along with those that follow, sound again like an attempt by Gardner(ians) to authenticate his verse with pithy folkloric sayings. There is potential for analysis here?the "waters," for example, may refer to lunar tides and their use in divination?but I do not aim to tackle it here. The final lines are common sense, and sound more like Blake than Gardner?keep good company, lest you be tainted by association! This could also refer to hanging out with nonwitches, and the potential unhelpful grounding that springs from being with those who do not believe. This is particularly relevant at sabbats, or "seasons"?the turning points of the year both seasonally and magickally.

Merry meet and merry part

This has become the accepted witch's greeting and "goodbye"?rather a charming one at that. Witchy websites and chatrooms often abound with "MM!" and "MP!" when a person is logging off (see "The Cyberwitch" in chapter 16).

*Bright the cheeks, warm the heart;
Mind the threefold law ye should,
Three times bad and three times good;*

Again, a reminder of the Wiccan rule of threefold return.

*Whene'er misfortune is enow,
Wear the star upon your brow;*

This refers to the "star" of perception and intuition at the third eye area, which can be used to counteract (or at least, to comprehend) adverse circumstances. It also implies the pentacle, symbol of all things witchy, worn in a ritual headdress. The witch undergoing misfortune is therefore bid to approach the Goddess for aid.

*True in troth ever ye be,
Lest thy love prove false to thee.*

Again, do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

'Tis by the sun that life be won,

And by the moon that change be done;

Symbolic of masculine energy, dominion, and power, the sun does indeed give life on the material planes. It is through "feminine," creative thought, however, that life becomes flexible; so lunar currents are employed to facilitate change. Considerations such as this affect both the day and the time of day a spell is cast; a Monday is best for workings concerning intuition or any psychic endeavour, for example, while a Sunday will work well for wealth, growth, and empire-building.

If ye would clear the path to will,

Make certain the mind be still;

Meditation is necessary before attempting magick. This is one of the many benefits of casting a Circle?it creates a sacred space not only externally, but within the practitioner's head also. Deep, relaxed breathing prior to embarking upon a magickal endeavour (or meditation) gives energy a flying head start. Certainly nothing is less helpful than a mind full of trivia; it is a dead certainty that an unstill mind will fail to create effective magick. This is one of the benefits of chants such as the Witch's Rune?though they may not exactly still the mind, they certainly sideline trivia and create a conducive set of brain waves through their rhythm. This sets the witch truly "flying."

What good be tools without Inner Light?

What good be magic without wisdom-sight?

Well, quite. The author goes to pains here to underline the truth-seeking nature of the Craft. The emphasis, as ever, is on Right Thought and Action, with motives properly scrutinised prior to offering them up to the deities for possible immortalisation.

Eight words the Wiccan Rede fulfill?

An' it harm none, do what ye will.

Spells and magick in Wicca are performed only when the results are guaranteed to be positive to all they touch. The "Do what ye will" part also underlines the unconventional nature of the Craft. In order to perform effectively, the Wiccan must "Dare" to be different, feeling safe in the knowledge that his or her unorthodox practises are indeed harming none.

For witches this be Law?

Where ye enter in, from there withdraw.

Could this be about living in full consciousness, rather than allowing encounters to be haphazard, as most people do? Perhaps. It could also refer to the casting of the Circle, and the importance of ritual at both ends. If a Circle is cast in Wicca, it must also be undone without being broken. Likewise must the Lords of the Watchtowers be thanked for their protection of the sacred space at its close. Ceremonial "withdrawal" is important both psychologically and through sheer politeness to the entities and energies concerned. It also means that loose energies are earthed rather than being left flailing about in an uncontrolled manner. It seems likely that here

Gardner is talking about the necessity of conscious self-discipline to the Wiccan.

An' ye will secure the spell, Cast some silver in the well.

By throwing silver into a symbol of the Goddess, we give back a little of what we continuously take from her. The lunar associations of silver coupled with the water of the well give strong psychic possibilities?focussing on them and willing the spell to come to pass "secures" it. Wishing wells have reflected this thought process for centuries, and it is second nature to many British to throw money into any well or pond they see and make a wish. In magick, the gesture is a significant full stop to a process, which may then be left to the subconscious (represented by the subterranean depths of the well).

Enhance thy trance

With drug and dance.

This shamanic advice is ages old. Spiritual seekers have long employed rhythm, dance, and various substances to achieve otherworldly states. Mescaline, marijuana, magic mushrooms, and a host of other intoxicants (not to forget good old alcohol) have been used for centuries across the globe by the magickally minded. This is one point that has been rejected by Americanised Wicca, now whiter than white and completely anti-intoxicant.

Personally, I think each to her own. Mantra and meditation can achieve similar states, but at a much slower rate, and the results are infinitely less dramatic. It depends on what the practitioner desires, and on her own body and her attitude to it. Drugs can scramble the brain, there's no doubt about that. Perceptions may be less valid when drug-induced, though to the shaman they were more so. Gardner is here implying that the use of drugs does indeed enhance the trance that leads to psychic perception. Aldous Huxley, author of *Brave New World* and *The Doors of Perception* amongst many other fine books, was so convinced that drugs opened the doors to the astral and spiritual that he took LSD as he was dying. His mind was most certainly not scrambled, as his numerous fine intellectual works attest. However, we all have different constitutions and varying levels of the self-discipline necessary to keep unleashed subconscious powers in check. It is certainly not normal or usual for witches, Wiccan or otherwise, to "enhance their trance" this way. Most people prefer a natural approach that, results attained, can be guaranteed bona fide. (See chapter 7, "The Witch and Drugs," for a more detailed discussion of this.)

Upon the Clock, Dependeth Not

Time is manmade, at least in the sense of hours and minutes and seconds. The seasons and lunar cycles, however, tell the true time: the stage of the Goddess and God, and our position in the cosmic cycle. When a Circle is cast indoors, clocks are turned to face the wall, and watches are forsaken by all who enter the sacred space, which is, of course, timeless.

Success pursueth the persistent.

This is simple common sense. Strive, and you are more likely to succeed.

Guilt flees when none pursueth.

This is an interestingly amoral sentiment, as presumably the clean-living, ethically astute Wiccan would incur no "guilt" anyway. Certainly the proverb reflects the idea of "Do What Thou Wilt," though there seems to be an implication of either actually doing wrong thereby, or of having such an opinion inflicted on one. If this "guilt" means the effect of personal conscience, where does that leave us ethically?

Perhaps the idea is that the outside world could inflict a sense of guilt on the unorthodox religious practitioner, but that without this influence, it is possible to carry on pursuing one's own path, "An' it Harm None." However, it seems to me more likely that this proverb was injected by the concupiscent Gardner to excuse various indulgences, particularly sexual ones. It is certainly more the sort of sentiment one would expect from Aleister Crowley, who rebelled throughout his life against imposed social and religious mores.

Power shared is power lost.

It is true that talking about a spell or experience dissipates its energy in a similar way that "a problem shared is a problem halved." Obviously, this is less desirable in the case of magick! Despite the possible truth of this sentiment, many Wiccans would disagree with it and are keen to "share" their "power." The first person to share magickal secrets on a large scale was Israel Regardie, when he published the rituals of the Golden Dawn. Certainly many initiates felt that their ceremonial power was lost thereby, and some members, such as Maiya Tranchell-Hayes, simply gave up the ghost and buried their robes in despair. There is much to be said for the power of discretion, both psychologically and for practical reasons. However, sharing it with the right people can enhance it hugely.

Seek thine enemy in secret.

This again seems a strange piece of advice to find attached to such a conscientious religious path. Hopefully most Wiccans and witches do not have enemies, and would not wish to "seek them in secret" if they did. Certainly the use of the subtle arts is suggested in lieu of confrontation, perhaps indicating the advisability of

approaching a negative situation through magick in a carefully planned and controlled way. However, the implication of underhanded, scheming action is an unpleasant side effect of the way this Wiccan proverb is worded.

Thoughts are things: as a man thinketh, so he is.

If you think small, you become small.

This belief is fundamental to magick. It has also become much vaunted in popular psychology. Many magickal beliefs have filtered into the self-help arena, thanks to authors such as M. Scott Peck and Gill Edwards. Indeed, the idea of "living magically"

through joyous thinking and positive action is now almost as widespread as

the ancient belief that thinking and willing a thing will bring it to pass.

Remember the Passwords: Perfect Love and Perfect Trust, so trust the Universe and be at Home everywhere.

More very modern-sounding advice about faith in Universal benevolence. Sentiments such as this have strongly affected many recent schools of therapy.

If you imagine and fear 'I will get trapped', of course you will get trapped. Fear not, and you won't.

Same as "Thoughts are things . . ." above. Many of these proverbs seem to be unnecessary repetitions of one another. The use of the words "you" and "won't" jar badly when one has been lulled into arcane language at an earlier stage; there is no consistency in the style. "Thou" is certainly more affected, but at least it befits the vocabulary established earlier.

No one person can accomplish all.

This is plain common sense. It also indicates a group spirit in total contrast to the sentiment that "power shared is power lost." No one coven can "accomplish all" either, but it may stand a better chance than a single witch working alone (though not necessarily).

Danger is never overcome without danger.

Is the suggestion here that magick is required in order to effectively counteract danger, and that this magick is necessarily dangerous? Or simply that one should always take risks in a good cause? It is most likely the former, as many evocations to avert danger involve complete self- and external control in the magickian.

This, however, refers to high and mediaeval magick rather than to Wicca, or certainly to modern Wicca.

Gardner, however, was greatly influenced by mediaeval High Magick,

so this is perhaps what is meant by the proverb.

The past is fixed, yet the future may be bent.

Some magickians would disagree that the past is fixed, but neither a witch nor a magickian nor any nonfatalistic person would argue with the second part of this clause. The word "bent" implies the subtle pressure of magick rather than the simple self-assertion most people would apply to their futures.

Where communication fails, confusion follows.

This is so obvious a statement that I am surprised it has been presented in "Wiccan lore" as a proverb. It may be applied to any situation in any walk of life. In witchcraft, it could imply anything from not arranging the coven-moot properly to messing up a group spell, obviously, but in fact, it is probably nothing more than evidence of an attempt to sound wise and pithy with very little actual material to work on.

Some things cannot be understood by mortal man. Many such must simply be accepted.

Here lies the difference between the Wiccan and the alchemist. Where the Wiccan accepts and worships, the alchemist strives to crack the code and master the energies concerned. However, one is left to wonder why the Wiccan, accepting his or her own ignorance, still seeks to change circumstances according to his or her own will. Perhaps the next proverb explains it all:

Rush in where angels fear to tread: the Gods are with you.

It seems that the conscientious observer of Wiccan ways is immune to nasty repercussions when attempting magick, despite the lack of understanding inevitable to "mortal man." The interesting thing about this saying is that the Pagan "Gods" are protecting the Wiccan from all that is

dangerous to Judeo-Christian angels, apparently. Clearly this saying is based on another saying, but it has changed its meaning. Surely it is fools, and not Wiccans, who rush in? Ah, but this is different. Why? Because Wiccans have faith in the Goddess and the Old Ones, of course.

You are never less alone than when you think you are alone.

I love this idea. It has more truth in it?for me, anyway?than many of these other Wiccan sayings. One is most likely to reflect on solitude in an intense way when undergoing some kind of crisis. Indeed, it is at this time that one becomes a psychic beacon, and when beloveds from across the Veil, guardians, and gods can best see us.

Pray to the Moon when she is round

Luck with you shall then abound

What you seek for shall be found

In sea or sky or solid ground . . .

More of the same: ask the Goddess, and she will shower forth her bounty.

Clearly, these gems of Wiccan wisdom are of varied value. However, discernment is an essential tool in magick, and if such sayings help the aspiring witch to attain it, all the better.

The Witch's Rune

Eko, Eko,Azarak,

Eko, Eko, Zomelak,

Eko, Eko, Cernunnos,

Eko, Eko,Aradia!

Darksome night and shining moon,

East, then South, the West, then North,

Hearken to the Witch's Rune?

Here we come to call ye forth!

Earth and water, air and fire,

Wand and pentacle and sword,

Work ye unto our desire,

Hearken ye unto our word!

Cords and censer, scourge and knife,

Powers of the witch's blade?

Waken all ye into life,

Come ye as the charm is made!

Queen of heaven, queen of hell,

Horned hunter of the night?

Lend your power unto the spell,

And work our will by magick rite!

By all the power of land and sea,

By all the might of moon and sun,

As we do will, so mote it be;

Chant the spell, and be it done!

Eko, Eko,Azarak,

Eko, Eko, Zomelak,

Eko, Eko, Cernunnos,

Eko, Eko,Aradia!

Eko, Eko,Azarak . . .

I first heard the Witch's Rune performed during ritual when I was fifteen, and its effect is largely responsible for my interest and later participation in Wicca. Even today, when chanted with concentration, it sends shivers down my spine?the good ones you get when real magick is afoot. It doesn't matter that the invocations at the beginning are nonsensical, and drawn from mediaeval High Magick translated by

MacGregor Mathers in the British Museum; nor does it matter that "Aradia," claimed by Leland, Gardner, and Sanders to be the Italian goddess of the witches, may never have existed at all. Who exactly "Zamelak" is, I doubt anyone would care to conjecture.

But the Witch's Rune works. Why is this? Rhythmically, it is highly compelling. Listening as a child, I could literally see the energy rising as it was chanted. The ending is open, and leaves room for as much repetition as is needed. Often, the High Priestess will raise the pitch of her voice at the end when there is sufficient energy in the group to guarantee successful magick, and her eerie, long, drawn-out shriek will bring the chant to conclusion. The imagery in the Witch's Rune casts a spell of its own. "Darksome night" has a fairy-tale appeal; the "shining moon" may be imagined even if there are clouds (or a roof) overhead. The Quarters are reaffirmed (usually, they have been evoked prior to this stage), the tools are listed (most of them, anyway), and the practitioner commanded "Work ye unto our desire." The God and Goddess, the land herself, the sea, and finally the moon and sun are all called upon to add their power to the spell. The witch mentally adds the impetus of each as she circles, ever faster, through the billowing incense hand-in-hand with her fellow coverners, whose personal energy is also being raised. The power becomes tangible, almost visible. It's enough to turn any fifteen-year-old into a witch.

Does Being a Witch Make Life Easy?

Does being a witch make life easy? Apart from the obvious obstacle of harbouring beliefs that most people still consider superstitious at best, and delusional or even evil at worst, you mean? Well, I hate to admit it, but actually, there are more problems attached to being a witch than there are to not being one. The following are some key examples.

Responsibility

If one believes in magick, and that one has the power to perform it, obviously the question of cause, effect, and subsequent self-congratulation or blame must occur.

Wiccan lore is strong on this?the law of threefold return symbolises the danger of sending out negative emotions or magick, either deliberately or by accident. Every adept witch is almost paranoiacally aware of the results of her actions, however small these may be. She looks right into the heart of any situation, and she accepts that her own interaction in it, especially if magickal, will have an effect for which she is culpable.

Self-blame

Then there is self-blame of another sort. When the chips are down, does it mean that you're a hopeless witch? Whenever I have a problem these days?and believe me, I have plenty of them, just like the next person?nonwitches say, "Well, why don't you just cast a spell to sort it out?" This, of course, makes me feel worse, as it seems I am appearing to them as both powerless in the face of adversity, and hypocritical in that I cannot practise what I preach. Many other witches feel this too. Yet there is much more to spiritual existence than witchcraft, and that is the issue. Let me explain. Witchcraft lends added impetus to doing everything in one's power to make a situation as positive as possible, but, as the saying goes, "In every life a little rain must fall." If life is a learning process?and it seems to me that each incarnation is a training module in a larger spiritual plan?then obstacles are not only necessary, they are inevitable. Some may be countered with magick, others may not. It takes

years to become a truly effective witch, and even then there are things that are simply meant to be, no matter how annoying or painful they may seem at the time.

If a child knew how to change his circumstances using concentrated will, he would most likely use it to grab as much candy as possible, to avoid going to school, and to blast away anybody who annoyed him. The all-powerful infant would end up fat, ignorant, and despotic. Now, as adults, we have more conscience than this?or do we?

Wiccans try to, as does any good human being, but all of us run the heavy risk of abusing our power, either deliberately or by accident. Alex Sanders has told of misusing his magickal ability to gain sex and money?pitfalls that are unfortunately natural to basic human instinct. There are enough people doing this on the material planes, without them doing it on the astral and spiritual ones too, so we have guardians. They only let us go so far. They also continually present us with new problems to overcome.

With each problem we successfully counteract, we become stronger and closer to our true spiritual selves. Yes, this often involves attempts at magick, but we as humans are not insurmountable, no matter what some witches might imply. Keeping a positive attitude and accepting each new problem as a challenge is the ideal standpoint.

Keeping spiritual faith in an often harsh material world is one of the most difficult exercises in this life.

Nobody, not even the witch, or the priest, or the Buddhist monk should punish him- or herself for occasionally losing sight of the Light. We all know of "dark nights of the soul" that often lead, eventually, to radiant new leases on life. Without the utter dejection of a temporary loss of faith, the epiphany would be paler. The contrast factor is a major spur in most people's incarnations.

The intelligent person is designed to question, and the magickal person is designed to be intense. This means that the witch, if she is more than just a sheep (and there are magickal sheep out there too, in coven-flocks of prescribed thought and action), must inevitably suffer both highs and lows (see the section "Mood Swings" in chapter 6).

Many witches, Wiccans, and other spiritual/mystical types are psychologically, if not chemically, bipolar; it is often the lows that have led to the spiritual search. Again, this is the gem to be found in the head of the ugly toad of misfortune. Adversity breeds strength and is a necessary ingredient to epiphany.

Perceptions

Another factor that can make life more difficult is that witchcraft increases one's perceptions. The witch is sensitive psychically and psychologically?she trains herself to be. She is thus easily affected by atmospheres emanating from the living, the dead, the past, and often the future too. That's a great deal to handle in any situation. It requires discrimination ("Is it me, or is there really something going on here? If so, what?") and the ability to earth oneself when necessary.

Astral armour is one of the first tools developed in magickal training?and necessarily so?but it takes years of self-scrutiny to rid it of psychic Achilles' heels, even just the minor ones.

Nobody is invulnerable. If one thinks he is, effective protection may take place for a while, but the degree of self-belief required on a permanent basis is nothing short of self-delusional. This is particularly applicable to working negative magick. (I mention this because those I have met who consider themselves the most invulnerable are all practitioners of "left-hand"?i.e., amoral or even immoral?magick.) The effective witch knows and acknowledges her weaknesses as well as her strengths. She is aware of her own neuroses. She has to be, otherwise they will destroy the magickal

organism that is her mind, body, and soul working together to produce a positive, proactive, and spiritually aware incarnation.

Well-meant Judgements

If magick worked for the individual in the manner that most people imagine (creating an uninhibited path for the practitioner to the top of the social/financial ladder, and donning the witch with powers that impress and terrify in equal measure),

human nature would abuse it. The chance for well-meant misjudgements would also be greater. For example, a witch might decide to save her best friend from dying of cancer, and do so at the flick of a wand. Yet perhaps that friend needed to pass over to progress to the next stage of development.

As it is, covens and individual witches can indeed perform healing at a patient's request, but healing will only take place if it is meant to. In the Wiccan's case, this is because of the proviso "An' it Harm None." If the patient will suffer more by staying here, will be harmed in any way, or if somebody else in the situation will suffer because of the magick, the person will be allowed to die, no matter how much healing energy is directed at him or her. In the case of the non-Wiccan witch who may not have added such a proviso to the working, all I can say is that there are powers out there far greater than the human, albeit a human empowered by magick.

No, that isn't just an excuse to explain away ineffective magick. If I didn't

believe it, through the power of my own experiences, I certainly wouldn't waste my time studying and writing a book on it. The same principle can be applied to orthodox science. We, as humans, can only do so

much. There are larger things afoot in this cosmos than our individual lives.

Certainly, the witch does what he or she can in any given situation, gathering energy and fortitude from her magickal resources. She aims her will and fires?and there will always be an effect, it simply might not be the one she thinks she wants.

Because she is spiritually aware, the witch knows that there are many invisible, almost imperceptible forces at work in the cosmos. At times, these will cause her great personal pain. She accepts that she can only do her best. She never lies down and dies; she strives. Because of this proactive attitude, she often succeeds in the end. Yet being a witch is no cop-out. Magick never was for the faint-hearted.

God, and Other Religions

Most people assume that witches do not believe in God, or that witches presume to usurp God. They might have Pagan deities that they worship, as did primitive man before he realised that the world was big and governed by many purposes, but these are mere demigods, or idols; or the witch worships the goat, as in the Goya depictions, right?

In reality, many witches believe in a Creative Intelligence that rules over the demigods, which are often worshipped as expressions of particular qualities. The god Pan, the capricious lord of the forest, is the nearest most witches wish to get to the goat.

Because she is eclectic, the witch respects all religions, though she may not agree with the expression of some of them. These days, the most popular orthodox religions with witches are Buddhism and Hinduism, as both are pantheistic (but with a supreme Cosmic Intelligence), and both contain creeds of mutual tolerance, reincarnation theory, and generous lashings of philosophy.

Witchcraft has become more than a nature religion or a crude quest for power; it has moved with the times and absorbed the principles and ideas of many other cultures and creeds. It embraces elements of many philosophies that span back thousands of years, a fact appropriate and natural to its initiates, many of whom participated in these ancient religions at the time they were practised.

As mentioned in the opening of this chapter, witches take their beliefs from whatever seems a genuine path to the Light. Admittedly there are some who adhere to the creeds of either Gerald Gardner or Alex Sanders with blinkered determination; there are always those who stick to the rules.

Then there are those who think we are plain crazy?atheists, for example.

Witchcraft is often confused with simple superstition. Yes, there are crossovers, but these have more to do with understanding symbolism than with thinking one will die because her life-saving operation is taking place on the thirteenth day of the month and a single magpie was spotted en route to the hospital. Most witches are semiotically aware rather than superstitious.

Superstitions change so much from country to country that, in these days of global awareness, it is difficult to take them seriously. The Chinese and Japanese, for example, take issue with the number four. The word for it, *shi*, sounds very similar to the Cantonese, Mandarin, and Japanese word for "death." Many East Asian hospitals do not list a fourth floor, and a recent survey showed that Chinese and Japanese citizens are 7 percent more likely to die of a heart-related illness (such as a sudden heart attack) on the fourth day of the month than on any other day. Such is the power of superstition and psychological connection. However, in these climes, four is a number of stability, and suggests unshakable material foundations, as in "standing foursquare." We may be less likely to die on such a day.

It would be possible to argue from this standpoint, as did those involved with the Western Mystery Tradition, that belief systems from other cultures are not applicable to our own environment. In modern terms this would mean that feng shui, for example, is completely incompatible with the Western lifestyle and psychic atmosphere?a fact with which I would personally agree. However, I know some people who claim to have gained great benefit from practising feng shui in their British and American homes. I certainly use a great many Hindu and Buddhist techniques for which the same point may be argued (as did Dion Fortune, W. E. Butler, and

others in response to the Eastern esotericism of the Theosophists).

I feel sure that few would agree that one is more likely to die on the fourth or thirteenth day of the month, but the point is, people do. Here in England, more car crashes occur on the thirteenth than on any other day. People are naturally out of sorts on this day (except for my mother, who has adopted it as her lucky number for some unknown reason!). It cannot be ignored that the belief system has a powerful effect. This is partly due to the impingement of the group mind, partly to the depletion of personal confidence when a thing is deemed inauspicious. It is clear, therefore, that *belief* is everything.

Any system may be applied with effect if the practitioner is completely convinced of it. I am not Christian, but I have seen Christians glowing with serenity and compassion, and having a powerfully positive effect on the lives of others. Nor am I Muslim, but I have seen the power of Islam all but possessing its disciples. A friend of mine who is agnostic witnessed her Transcendental Meditation teacher (a British-born Buddhist with Hindu tendencies) physically levitating, no strings attached. She acknowledged that her instructor knew how to accumulate psychic power, even if the path was not her own, or one to which my friend could fully relate.

Many will see witches as lunatics (we are, of course), as well as occultists of any discipline, and Neo-Pagans, and committed Christians, and Muslims, Buddhists, and all other religious groups. We all believe in unseen powers, and our "proof" is never enough. However, of two things we can be certain: belief and faith can move mountains, and, no matter how different our creeds and beliefs, and they are as different as it is possible to be, all are valid because they affect lives in real time and are paths to the Light.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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The Witch's Guide to Life can be one of your beginner books that are good idea. Most of us recommend that straight away because this book has good vocabulary that may increase your knowledge in vocabulary, easy to understand, bit entertaining however delivering the information. The author giving his/her effort that will put every word into satisfaction arrangement in writing The Witch's Guide to Life nevertheless doesn't forget the main position, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information can certainly drawn you into completely new stage of crucial pondering.

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