Living in a Magical World
Volume Five

Enchantment is all about us

Beatrice Walditch
In *Enchantment is All About Us* Beatrice Walditch reveals that much of what we often think of as real in the modern world is an enchantment woven by profit-driven businesses and nefarious politicians. Drawing upon a wide range of traditional worldviews, she sets out ways of mentally ‘banishing’ such pervasive enchantments and empowering the reader to create their own enchantments. Many of the suggestions develop and weave together ideas discussed in her previous books.

*Enchantment is All About Us* is the fifth book in the *Living in a Magical World* series. These books will challenge you to recognise the traditional magic still alive in modern society, and empower you with a variety of skills and insights.
Previous books by Beatrice Walditch
from Heart of Albion

*You Don’t Just Drink It!*
*What you need to know – and do – before drinking mead*

*Listening to the Stones*
(Volume One of the Living in a Magical World series)

*Knowing Your Guardians*
(Volume Two of the Living in a Magical World series)

*Learning From the Ancestors*
(Volume Three of the Living in a Magical World series)

*Everything is Change*
(Volume Four of the Living in a Magical World series)
Living in a Magical World:
Volume Five

Enchantment is All About Us
Beatrice Walditch

Heart of Albion
Contents

Around as well as about 1
Sigils and avatars rule the world 2
Give me the child… 4
Facts and ideas 5
We like people who are like us 8
Ritual trances 9
The demon of causality 14
The present alters the past 15
Confusing cause and effect 16
Papering over the chasms in causality with coincidence 18
Knowledge is a particular kind of belief 18
Causality is the relic of a bygone age 19
Past and future only exist now 21
Everything is always now 21
The illusion of self 22
Knowing is akin to storytelling 24
Meet your selves 25
Allow your selves to develop 26
Off is more important than on 28
Individual and individualism 28
Let it get on with things 106
Focus, focus, focus 107
The core ‘components’ 108
Wrapping up 109
Where next? 109
Acknowledgements 111
Sources 113
Dedicated to the memory of

Michael Howard

1948–2015
The Cauldron of Rebirth. Illustration by Ian Brown.
Around as well as about

Whichever way you understood the title you are right. This is a book which reveals that enchantment is all around us and also that enchantment is all about what we do. This is a book in which you will learn that ‘sleight of mind’ – of saying one thing but allowing another idea to come in under the radar of our conscious awareness – can be used to our own collective benefit rather than simply being used for the benefit of others.

This is the book in the Living in a Magical World series which really does show how we live in a ‘magical world’ of other people’s devising – and how we can take control of that magic. The first part of this book looks at how we live within an enchantment woven around us. I then discuss how you can banish such illusions before setting you off down the path of being in control of at least some of the powers of enchantment.

The enchantment which surrounds us works because it maintains the illusion of something called ‘reality’. We are led to believe there is a ‘real world’ which can – at least in principle – be examined directly. Yet this notion of reality is ever-shifting and ever-changing. What passes for reality has no more substance than ‘good manners’ or wearing particular types of clothing. Different social groups, cultures and subcultures have different notions of reality, just as they have different beliefs about the relative status of men and women, or whether members of the group should wear birkas or Fred Perry shirts or Armani suits.

The reality of the modern world is an ever-mutating illusion. Now think back to the fairy tales of your childhood, or the more traditional tales you tell your own children or grandchildren. They too are about the ‘glamour’ or shape-shifting of fairies and
their kin. This ever-changing, shape-shifting process by which society creates the illusion of reality is indistinguishable from the magic of ‘fairy tales’. Just the reality-making processes of Westernised societies have cast a spell to make us think otherwise.

**Sigils and avatars rule the world**

This insight has been reached by many other people. Buddhists know it as *satori*. In the late 1990s the Wachowski siblings made it the central premise of *The Matrix*. A few years later the author Jason Louv came up with his ‘Rule Number One of living in the twenty-first century’:

> Whether or not you believe in magic or not, and whether or not magic is viable as a scientific discipline, and whether or not magic is ‘real’ or not is your own opinion, but it *doesn’t matter one single bit*. Because politics, pop culture and advertising don’t work along any rules except the rules of magic.

The all-important logos of leading brands are in all respects indistinguishable from the sigils of an occultist. The concept of ‘corporations’ originates in late medieval times as non-corporate legal entities with, initially at least, shared some of the same rights as real live (‘corporate’) people; this rapidly evolved into corporations having considerably more rights than living people. But the underlying concept of ‘non-corporate entities’ is exactly the same as a Western occultist’s avatars or a Third World culture’s concepts of supernatural guardian beings, in whatever manner of ‘other-than-human’ guises such entities opt to adopt. Everything we recognise as the world of commerce uses these ‘sigils’ and ‘avatars’. And the same is equally true from political parties to pop-culture personalities and bands. The power of brands is indistinguishable from the power of magic.
Reality is culturally-constructed and as such is culturally constrained. We simply cannot think outside the bounds of what is deemed to be ‘real’, and are expected to think and act in ways that are ‘normal’. Anything deemed ‘paranormal’ is by definition suspect and transgressive. Anything beyond that is ‘lunatic fringe’. Turn this around and we see that the ostensibly real world is the projection of egotism and megalomania, bound together by all manner of ‘mutual appreciation societies’, of which the mass media and, increasingly, online social media act as the principal conduits. There is no core conspiracy – just a kaleidoscopic process of reflecting back each other’s prejudices until everyone agrees. Think how newspapers mirror their readers’ biases and bigotries to provide an audience for the organisations which make them happen – the advertisers peddling the unquestionably illusory glamour of their wares.

Traditional East Anglian protective ‘sigils’. Think of these magically-empowered glyphs as the ‘logos’ for one or more protective beings. They function as non-anthropomorphic avatars. Drawings based on originals by Nigel Pennick.
Give me the child…

Children are woven into this spell by inculcating all manner of ‘assumptions’ and behavioural expectations. Peer-pressure – the collective mirroring process – has gained power by the time a young person has finished preschool, and becomes all-consuming over the next decade or so. And yet by adolescence there is often some awareness that there is more to life than schoolteachers’ shoehorning of aspirations. Abuse of alcohol and drugs is recognised as a way to ‘get out of your head’. But the never-asked question is why young people feel that their own thoughts are acting as a mental prison, as if their heads are not their own.

The first few years of our lives determine how we will think the world ‘works’. The Jesuits bragged that if given a child for his first seven years, they would give you the man (trained to be a Jesuit priest, if he was up to the grade). While we quickly recognise the religious and sexist biases in that boast, there is nothing abnormal about the underlying assumption. Every primary school the length and breadth of the world achieves the same, whether overtly faith-based or founded on a belief in secularism.

Christopher Hyatt perhaps over-egged his when he wrote that ‘Almost everything people believe in as grown ups consists of lies they were told as children. Culture is nothing more than agreed upon lies.’ Lies are, after all, just a subset of illusions, ones that have been intentionally created. Teachers generally do not lie to their pupils, but instead work steadfastly to enchant their charges into a society’s ‘spells’ and cultural enchantments.

Facts and ideas

The inevitable outcome is that Western education produces ostensibly educated people who cannot distinguish a fact from an idea. Social media is awash with opinions proffered as facts.
Even in the best of higher education few students actively engage in the difference between a symbol and whatever the symbol represents. The reason is quite fundamental – universities are limited to constructing and repeatedly reconstructing the symbolic representation of knowledge, not ‘knowledge’ as some pure, direct experience.

There are less profound ways of thinking about this. The philosopher who inspired the hippie generation and first taught them about Eastern religion, Alan Watts (1915–73), was moved to observe that ‘reality is only a Rorschach inkblot.’ Someone who moved in similar territory, Robert Anton Wilson (1932–2007), used a slightly more up-to-date metaphor when he said that ‘reality is ontological silly putty’.

The ink or putty which allows this pliability is language. Those who have sufficient grasp of more than one language know that there are certain words which do not have direct counterparts in another. A bête noire is not the same as a pet peeve, and a bon vivant is such an un-English way of life that the nearest counterparts all have derogatory connotations. Schadenfreude is not masochism and Zeitgeist is not mood.

The manner in which language constructs and constrains our thinking is far more subtle and pervasive. Our mother tongue literally limits what is thinkable, although not necessarily what...
can be experienced. Almost all aspects of language involve ‘frozen metaphors’ that are taken as literal, or at least ‘as given’. Any attempt to identify the ‘reality’ which languages purport to represent rapidly gets lost in an etymological maze. Interestingly, the core concepts of all languages are almost entirely ways of directly experiencing the world. These core concepts are then used metaphorically to refer to less tangible experiences and ideas, often with many iterations of allusiveness.

The consequence of this is that even our most private thoughts and emotions are not actually our own. Our experiences and memories can only be ‘processed’ in terms of languages and metaphors shared in our society by continually evolving words and metaphors. The flip side of this is that a small number of experiences are ‘ineffable’. That is, they stand outside what a specific culture recognises as a valid experience. We are mostly ‘resolve’ such seemingly-anomalous experiences by labelling them religious.

In reality – and I use the term in whatever way you want to understand it – religions are best thought of as stashes of categorical errors. But Western society does not provided the right words by which a range of experiences can be pigeon-holed. Or the experience is simply so expansive and category-
conflating that it is deemed to be a mystical experience, along the lines of seeing a whole ocean in a single droplet. The metaphor and allusions of poetry are where languages explore their own limits. Not all poetry, of course, but this is where we are most likely to be lead towards the hitherto ‘unthinkable’.

Zen koans, such as ‘What is the sound of one hand clapping?’ aim to take the mind directly to the unthinkable. Western counterparts tend to be fantastical, as when Alice descends into

Alice: ‘How long is forever?’
White Rabbit: ‘Sometimes, just one second.’
the realm of the White Rabbit and has to contend with endless logical inversions, which often arise out of acting literally. Once within Wonderland we quickly come to understand why Alice is moved to say ‘I’m afraid I can’t explain myself, sir. Because I am not myself, you see?’

We like people who are like us

Paradoxes often draw attention to implicit dualisms. When sitting in boring meetings learn to ‘step back’ and identify what is excluded from one person’s remarks – or even the overall scope of the conversation. Sometimes the exclusions are blindingly obvious, sometimes less so. When you have at least some sense of both the included and the excluded (even if there is not an exact word for one or both) then try to conceptualise what it is that combines the two. Again, there may be a handy name or there may just be a vague sensibility which is hard to express.

Any sort of conversation – even ones accidentally heard when in cafés or on public transport – can be analysed in this way. Inevitably some are more rewarding than others. Learn too how to ‘unpack’ how people use language and metaphor. This is an essential skill for counsellors, sales people and managers. Indeed, for anyone who needs to persuade others.

Now turn that around. These skills have been taught for about thirty years. There are a great many people who are capable of using them to persuade and ‘enchant’ you… The reason is
simple. We like people who are like us. In other words the more I can reflect back the ways you think and use ‘your’ language then the more likely you are to like me. And the more likely you are to buy into my ideas (always good if you are a manager) or to buy from me rather than a rival (excellent if you are a sales person). A counsellor is, strictly speaking, not trying to ‘sell’ his or her ideas to you, but does need to have a good grasp about what you are excluding from conscious consideration and any patterns and habits of thought that are causing problems. Not for nothing is one school of therapy inaccurately dismissed as merely ‘changing the metaphor’.

At this stage I am simply trying to give you to the tools to break the enchantment, not empower you with the ability to enchant others. Learn to recognise the ‘excluded other’ in other people’s conversations. Then turn the focus to your own speech. As it were, listen over your own shoulder to what you are effectively not saying or including. Initially at least you may need to do this retrospectively – for example, after a tricky meeting try to take a ‘time out’ to dissect the exact remarks that both of you used. The solution is rarely to overtly refer to what is missing, but instead to bring it in ‘under the radar’.

But I am getting ahead of myself.

Ritual trances

Back in 1984 the professional hypnotist Dick Sutphen described how American ‘revivalist preachers’ used many of the techniques associated with hypnosis.

Go to the church or tent early and sit in the rear, about three-quarters of the way back. Most likely repetitive music will be played while the people come in for the service. A repetitive beat, ideally ranging from 45 to 72 beats per minute (a rhythm close to the beat of the human heart), is very hypnotic and can generate an eyes-open altered state of consciousness in a very high percentage of people. And, once you are in an alpha state, you
are at least 25 times as suggestible as you would be in full beta consciousness. The music is probably the same for every service, or incorporates the same beat, and many of the people will go into an altered state almost immediately upon entering the sanctuary. Subconsciously, they recall their state of mind from previous services and respond according to the post-hypnotic programming.

Watch the people waiting for the service to begin. Many will exhibit external signs of trance – body relaxation and slightly dilated eyes. Often, they begin swaying back and forth with their hands in the air while sitting in their chairs. Next, the assistant pastor will probably come out. He usually speaks with a pretty good ‘voice roll.’

A ‘voice roll’ is a patterned, paced style used by hypnotists when inducing a trance. It is also used by many lawyers, several of whom are highly trained hypnotists, when they desire to entrench a point firmly in the minds of the jurors. A voice roll can sound as if the speaker were talking to the beat of a metronome or it may sound as though he were emphasizing every word in a monotonous, patterned style. The words will usually be delivered at the rate of 45 to 60 beats per minute, maximizing the hypnotic effect.

Most Western people spend a significant proportion of their lives in light trances. How much of your life do you spend driving, watching television or films, and playing computer games? That’s the minimum amount of time you are in varying forms of light trance. The most insidious is watching television, where the aim is to fire so many suggestions ‘under the radar’ that some are going to stick. Forget explicit advertising or even more subtle product placement in ‘soaps’ and such like as you may well spot the ‘message’.

Instead, think how the characters in soap dramas deal with the endless controversies – there will be a direct conflict of two
character’s opinions plus a small number of differing points of view from other characters. And that’s it. All the complexity of the real world reduced to tokenism. Soaps do not tell you how to think, they simply set limits on what is thinkable.

Explicit advertising usually has at least one subtext. Arguably one of the best was back in the 1980s when Guinness ran a long and varied series of adverts which did not include any words, not even the name of the product. Think about it. This was so that the viewers regarded themselves as clever enough to spot the brewery’s intentions and appreciate the irony. Guinness was the drink for people who were smart and ironic. Of course there were very few people who were not smart enough to ‘get it’ – but very few who were not, at least initially, taken in by the false flattery.

Women in ‘submissive’ or sexualised postures still abound on the advertising pages of fashion magazines. Adverts for expensive metal boxes with a wheel in each corner play any number of subtle tricks to associate the brands with illusions of luxury. Since safety and environmental legislation dragged the makers to the same level there is no point in even mentioning that these vehicles can get people from A to B more safely or in any other practical respect better than cars of a similar price. Read the ‘blurb’ which accompanies the images for exemplars of how get subtle longings implanted into the mind without any explicit reference.

Sit and watch any news programme on the television. Keep focused on one question ‘Why are they telling me this?’ Rather too often the only answer seems ‘To make me worried about terrorism.’ Indeed. News programmes are made up of ‘news stories’. At least that takes no decoding. They are indeed stories. Stuff happens, but it only becomes a news story once a journalist has identified a key protagonist – whether a hero or villain. Often they will be a conflict of opinions – Tweedledee must have his Tweedledum. There will almost always be a clear starting place and time and a sought after ‘resolution’. In the case of missing persons and murder enquiries this may keep the story line going for some time.
Journalists have long been taught how to make the vagaries of the real world fit neatly into classic storylines. The news may not be fiction but it is written and edited according to ‘rules’ and customs which are as tightly defined as the narrowest of fictional genres. Get used to it – ‘news’ is a construct. And it is constructed for a reason.

News programmes used to warn of nuclear annihilation. Now the instil fear of climate-related disasters, financial instability and corruption, the need for ‘wars’ on drugs, or ‘terrorists’, or Islamists, or the current foe-of-the-moment. These threats can only be averted or thwarted by yet more legislation, yet more erosion of an individual’s ability to be individual, and many other permutations of the false causality which underpins modern politics: only by delegating decisions to politicians and giving them the powers we once gave to gods can we be saved.

_Tweedledee and Tweedledum._
Once upon a time social misfits prophesised imminent disaster which could only be averted by earnest prayers to God. Their God, rather than any one else’s of course. Thankfully these prayers were always successful and the messy ending for humanity was averted. The same correlation confused with causality is played out on the world’s political stages many times over on a daily basis. Politicians are past-masters at emulating religious prophets of doom. The end is always nigh, according to the latter-day prophets who prefer to be called politicians or political activists, unless we follow their creed. And only their creed. There is no alternative.

Approach news programmes in the same way you would a dubious religious cult. And regard newspapers as the spawn of which demon you most detest. Disenchant yourself! Banish these prophets of endless logical inversions, the Mad Hatters and Red Queens of an illusory Wonderland, the Dadaesque mirrors of Fleet Street.
The demon of causality

News stories not only require protagonists, they also require a logical progression. ‘This’ caused ‘that’ which resulted in whoever doing whatever whenever it might or might not have taken place. Sixty-minute made-for-television murder-mysteries, crime dramas, crime scene investigations, and all the rest – not to mention their pulp fiction origins and spin offs – all come to a neat denouement. There is one or more victim, clearly defined perpetrators and a very neat-and-tidy ending. The viewer or reader has the satisfaction that the world operates according to neat and tidy causality and is indeed a safe place to be. The formulae was set with *Dixon of Dock Green* in 1955 and continues through endless crime-scene investigations in urban America through to all-white English villages with an amazing propensity for murders.

Everything about these tales is pure fiction. Real-life crime often blurs distinctions between victims and protagonists, and all too often there is no neat and tidy resolution. The greatest fiction is that ‘life’ progresses according to well-greased causality. This is the Big Lie that the authors and scriptwriters of these works perpetrate.

Journalists impose story-lines on amorphous, ever-shifting events to help us comprehend. We cannot escape stories. Our consciousness creates a seemingly-continuous narrative with a sense of ‘I’ at the apex. Whenever we string words together into a sentence we are story-makers. We consume the stories of others; some people devour them gluttonously. Above all, we live our lives as inhabitants of multiple narratives, both our own and those created by those we encounter, however briefly. The more complex stories are labelled ‘history’ or ‘drama’ or ‘novels’, others are called religions or science. Even the act of setting out knowledge is in large part the telling of a tale, if only how that understanding evolved and changed. Complex stories mostly straddle several of these labels.
The present alters the past

Most months there are press reports of exciting new archaeological discoveries. In essence some newly-discovered fragments of the past have come to light and made the experts think again about what the past would have been like. This process of re-inventing the past has been evolving more-or-less steadily since seventeenth century antiquarians. There seems little prospect of this process ever reaching an end. The past is ever-changing. Certainly the stories we invent to understand the past and give meaning and significance to the artefacts and monuments are set to continue to change, sometimes quite radically, as new discoveries are made.

The same is essentially true for historians as well as prehistorians. As long ago as the nineteenth century Samuel Butler (1835–1902) wryly observed that ‘It has been said that though God cannot alter the past; historians can; it is perhaps because they can be useful to Him in this respect that He tolerates their existence.’ About a hundred years later, in a book published in 1992, Peter Carroll was a little more direct: ‘History is bullshit; it is as indeterminate as the future.’

Archaeologists increasing the past’s indeterminancy (West Kennett Avenue, Avebury, 2014).
Confusing cause and effect

Carroll has expressed the underlying issue more clearly than anyone else:

I am about to reveal what this fundamental contemporary belief is. Most of you will think it is so obvious a fact that it can, hardly be called a belief. That, however, is a measure of its extraordinary power over us. Most of you will think me a madman or a fool to even question it. Few of you will be able to imagine what it would be like not to believe it, or that it would be possible to replace it with something else. Here it is: the dominant belief in all Western Cultures is that this universe runs on material causality and is thus comprehensible to reason. ....

What is deemed to be causality is an illusion created by retrospective narrative which links events together with the
apparent certainty that one caused the other. If several dozen people gather together on a train station at about the same time do they cause a train to stop at the platform? No, of course not. There is a *correlation* between people gathering on the platform and a train arriving, but the people do not *cause* the train to appear. Yet most of the time we simply do not recognise the reverse logic. All around us – in education, mass media, and everyday conversations – is an illusory certainty established by confusing correlations with causes. We believe the world is inherently rational, and only rarely unpredicatable or irrational.

Western people live within that belief system. Except we don’t call it a belief system, but ‘common sense’ – that rarely-challenged set of assumptions which are shared by a culture or subculture. As Carroll appreciates, anyone who questions this risks being regarded as mad. However not so long ago everyone was mad. Right into the Christian era people who thought that the world was rational only so much as the gods – or a God – could be bribed to act in the interests of humans. Pretty much anyone who lived before Plato or outside the influence of Classical Greek philosophy was, in this sense, ‘mad’.

The greatest proponents of this belief system consider themselves to be scientists. Yet most scientists are poor at predicting the outcome of change. Scientific research is essentially about greatly restricting the complexities of the real world and creating ‘controlled experiments’. Causality may be demonstrated by the most successful of such experiments. But remember the vast number of such experiments do not ever get published because they failed to demonstrate causality. And even those that do often provide limited predictability once the controlled conditions are removed.
Papering over the chasms in causality with coincidence

‘There’s no such thing as coincidence’ as a good friend of mine is wont to say. He’s right. The term coincidence is used by rationalist-materialist types to paper over the cracks in their imagined causality. But there’s way more ‘cracks’ than solid substance in their edifice. Either coincidence is what holds the small patches of causality together or there is something seriously wrong with the whole ontology of this model of reality. The folktale of the emperor’s new clothes comes to mind...

Peter Carroll offers some more concise observations:

Few people are content to accept that blind chance plays a large part in their lives. They seek causal connections even where they do not exist. The human mind is adept at imposing order according to in-built or imagined patterns. Mystical beliefs are especially good at offering such causality – the less one understands, the more one can explain.

Knowledge is a particular kind of belief

Scientists claim that they have higher access to truth and therefore their models of the world are not a belief system. Hard-fought intellectual debates in the 1980s failed to make much of a dent in this flagrant megalomania. Scientists consider themselves to have The Truth in exactly the same way that medieval theologians did – by attempting to set up a ‘feedback loop’ which established who has the ‘right to know’. In medieval times it was monastic schools of learning, which evolved into Enlightenment universities which evolved – almost unchanged – into the twentieth century university system. Indeed, until it was quietly dropped around the 1960s, anyone
who wanted to attend Oxford or Cambridge universities had to be a practising Anglican. No access to the professions, such as law or medicine, for Catholics or atheists. Even Non-Conformists needed to conform for the duration of their studies.

As David J. Hufford once wrote ‘knowledge is a particular kind of belief.’ How we think we know is a still deeper belief. Who we think ‘really knows’ is a carefully constructed social illusion. Scientists claim this right unreflexively whereas politicians perform any number of contortions to justify their claims. A significant number of people are content for religious leaders to make the decisions on their behalf. And a truly remarkable number of people are happy to get their ‘facts’ from popular writers and journalists. The reality is they are buying belief systems, usually carefully crafted to appeal to their prior predilections and prejudices.

‘Do you believe in God?’ and ‘Do you believe in global warming?’ are essentially the same question. We ‘know’ the answer to either question from complex epistemological processes that weave ‘knowledge’ from ambiguous and often unverifiable interpretations which are claimed as ‘facts’. In other words, beliefs are no different from enchantments.

**Causality is the relic of a bygone age**

The reason we are so easily bamboozled by illusory causality is that the way words are linked together in Western languages imposes a subject and an action. But these grammatical
structures conflate cause and effect. Not only can correlations pass for causality but so too can coincidences. As Alan Watts put it back in 1972, ‘… “cause” and “effect” are simply two phases of, or two ways of looking at, one and the same event.’

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was the philosopher who sharpened up Enlightenment thinking. Three categories of experience were deemed to be independent of experience: space, time and causality. These were deemed to be the fundamental foundations of what could be deemed real. Within little over a hundred years of his death modern physicists had determined that the first two concepts were anything but fundamental aspects of reality. In the following decades causality was established to be equally chimeral.

Kant’s twentieth century successor, the English philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) considered that, since cause and effect play no fundamental role in physics, they should be removed from the philosophical vocabulary altogether. ‘The law of causality, like much that passes muster among philosophers, is a relic of a bygone age, surviving, like the monarchy, only because it is erroneously supposed not to do harm.’

Left: Immanuel Kant. Right: Bertrand Russell.
Our cognitive processes create concepts of space, time and causality which are good enough to live our lives. To that extent Kant was correct. But that does not make our concepts ‘real’ or even ‘true’. Although we may believe they are...

Past and future only exist now

The past exists as memories re-experienced in the present. The future exists as expectations or fantasies or fears, again created in the present. Despite any number of narratives and stories which contrive to delude us, human experience only exists in the present moment. Before documents and cameras the past was essentially the collective memories of a society. Even today we imagine what the past was like in manners very close to how we imagine the future might be. There is material evidence of the past – houses, roads and so forth – and immaterial evidence such as customs and beliefs. Everyone of us has a countless number of forebears – we too are a ‘product’ of the past.

There is abundant evidence of the past but this does not ‘define’ the past any more than the material world right now constrains the options for future change. To a surprisingly great extent, the past is being continually re-invented, not least when something newly-discovered ‘alters’ the past. Think of how many times in recent decades an unexpected archaeology discovery has ‘rewritten’ prehistory, both the ‘big picture’ as well as in specific contexts.

Everything is always now

If everything is always now then we can understand more fully why the Norns could see the past, divine the present and foretell the future. These are not three different things. The Norns were part of a worldview which saw everything in a constant state of emergence – this is the view of the world which I explored in the previous book in this series, Everything is Change. In that book I used the metaphor of a constantly-simmering cauldron in
which reality was constantly reforming and renewing. Chinese and Greeks around 2,500 years ago regarded rivers as the more relevant metaphor.

If you can situate yourself at the place of origin for all that change and emergence then you are well-placed to foretell the future. You simply need to be at the ‘here’ and ‘now’ of everything that is relevant.

The illusion of self

Except there is no ‘you’. ‘You’ are also very much part of that process of emergence and recreation. However you think of ‘yourself’ is only one aspect of how ‘you’ are, have been and could be. Frankly ‘you’ is merely a convenient illusion to allow your brain to deal with the multiple sensory and cognitive processes working in parallel.

Rivers are constantly reforming and renewing. Little surprise that ancient Greeks, such as Heraclitus, and his near-contemporary in China, Lao Tsu, are remembered for saying ‘Everything is change’ and ‘Let reality be reality. Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like.’
The fifth direction, centre – or ‘here’ – is recognised as far apart as Ireland and China.

Left: Four quarters of Ireland. At the centre is the ‘fifth quarter’, Meath (which means ‘middle’).
Right: The mahjong tile for the fifth direction, ‘centre’.


The Norns foretold the future by situating themselves in the ‘here and now’, the central axis mundi, the emergent flow of reality.
Once you step back and recognise that self-identity too is always part of that ‘state of emergency’ then any distinction between ‘I’ and ‘not-I’ begin to collapse. Remember how a few pages back I talked about recognising what is excluded from conversations and such like? It all starts getting decidedly mystical – or downright scary – once you start collapsing the dualisms associated with self and other. Not for beginners, or those with any sort of identity ‘issues’.

Once again it is language not ‘reality’ which is key. When we say ‘I believe this is real’ or ‘I think that is imaginary’ or ‘I hate uncertainty’ – or, indeed just about any sentence starting with ‘I’ – we give them impression there is an ‘I’ who has these thoughts, beliefs, desires and disinclinations.

But what about ‘It is snowing’ or ‘It is raining’? What is the ‘it’ in these constructions? The snow is snowing and the rain is raining. We see this clearly when we refer to ‘The snow is falling’ rather than the less likely construction of ‘It is snow falling’. The ‘I’ of ‘I am thinking’ (and the many, many related phrases) is a grammatical contrivance. The thinking is, among other things, creating the illusion of a unified self-identity. Similarly, who is the ‘I’ in ‘I know’? Knowing creates the ‘I’ and not the other way about.

Knowing is akin to storytelling

As Tim Ingold, put it, knowledge is the continually emergent product of a process. He went better than that and simply stated that ‘knowing is akin to storytelling’. One of his specific examples is that we should think of the name of things not as ‘static’ nouns, but instead as verb-like. This would be entirely intuitive to a Chinese-speaker, as the Chinese word for cup has the sense of ‘cupping’. Indeed most Chinese words straddle Western distinctions between nouns and verbs.

There are any number of English nouns which take on a new sensibility when ‘–ing’ is added at the end. Seeing naming as an activate process – even as ‘activating processing’ – is the
beginning of revealing the networking weaving everything together. A stark contrast with static nouns that divide the world into seemingly discrete and timeless categories and items.

Knowing as akin to storytelling links directly to my earlier remark about causality often being little more than selective retrospective narrative. More specifically, the supposed logic which creates the idea of an ‘I’ is part of such storytelling. Any sense of ‘I’ is as fictional as the characters in a novel. Simple thoughts and complex ones, such as a sense of self-identity are seemingly created by us. We simply do not step back far enough to recognise that our sense of who we are is a creation of those thoughts. As one of the pioneers of consciousness research, Daniel Dennett, put it back in 1991, ‘Our tales are spun, but for the most part we don’t spin them, they spin us.’

**Meet your selves**

We need this illusion of self. It allows the multiple brain processes going on consciously and, to a much greater extent, otherwise to ‘pull together’. Furthermore we can project a unified sense of identity onto other people in an effort to predict their behaviour. Psychologists refer to it as ‘theory of mind’. In practice it’s fairly flawed as people do not always respond in the way we predict. Indeed, we may respond in ways which are contrary to the expectations of others. The illusion of a unified self is, in practice, rather illusive. We all respond to situations in more complex ways than a ‘theory of mind’ based around strong individual identity anticipates. In other words, each of us responds as a ‘we’ of different personae rather than a simple ‘I’.
In the 1990s neuroscientists understood that the sense of a unified self – and indeed our sense of ‘consciousness’ – is sustained except under somewhat extreme non-normal ‘states of consciousness’. This sense of self is reflected back-and-forth when engaging with each other and, indeed, all aspects of the world. But it is not actually how the brain works. Technically, this sense of self is wrong all the time. We all live our lives though an illusion.

When we want to stay friends with other people, we automatically compensate and conform to their expectations. We narrow down who we are in specific social contexts. It’s a subtle process played out every time a group of people meet. We ‘play’ at being consistent. Yet with a different group of friends we may ‘play’ in a different way, allowing different aspects of ourselves to come to the fore. A good example would be a person being more aggressive when taking part in a team sport than when in a business meeting or having a meal with their family. We become adept at ‘partitioning’ ourselves in these ways. Taking part in ritual activities allows yet other personae to come to the fore – and to be ‘switched off’ afterwards, as I have discussed in previous books in this series.

Allow your selves to develop

As the wording of the previous paragraph reveals, it is remarkably easy to shift from thinking about ‘one’s self’ to ‘ourselves’. Sure, the shift was because the grammatical context had changed to ‘we’ not ‘I’. But actually your thinking will become a lot richer – and sometimes a lot clearer – if you mentally ‘twitch’ every time you hear yourself uses sentences starting ‘I’. Without sharing your thoughts with anyone else present, try to ‘take time out’ to replace with ‘I’ with ‘we’. In other word, think of yourself as a loose collective of every-shifting ‘I’s.
One thing is certain. If you actually start using sentences starting ‘we’ rather than ‘I’ to other people you will seriously confuse them. If you try to explain why they will probably just freak out – expect to spend an hour or so with a specialist police officer trying to establish if you are a danger to yourself or society (and the consequences of a wrong impression are, at least in UK law, being sectioned under the Mental Health Act). This exploration of yourselves must remain a thought exercise only!

What is likely to emerge is that you begin to recognise a variety of distinct ‘personae’. Most of them will overlap in some respects, although those at different ends of the various ‘spectra’ of attitudes may have little in common. What they do have in common will be deep-seated anxieties and fears, and the avoidance and coping strategies associated with them. This is important self-awareness (or selves-awareness) but save that for the future. For the moment, once you have become more aware of your selves, ask yourselves which ones need more time to come to the fore, or just time to ‘play’.

‘Work:life’ imbalance will almost certainly try to drown out any such analysis. But persist. Some personae really do need to be left in the office. But others can both work and play. Most of us, certainly myself, will identify non-work ‘selves’ which could usefully be brought into play as part of employment, although it may require a change of employer or career to allow them to achieve their potential.

Having identified a series of personae already ‘co-habiting’ in your mind you will probably be drawn to more-or-less intentionally developing more. This in itself is not a problem. What is a problem is not being able to switch at will between them. Intentional ‘on’ switches are desirable. Emphatic ‘off’ switches are essential! Work and sports-related personae are usually associated with specific ways of dressing and, probably, changes in the ‘register’ of how we use language – in all probability more formally at work than elsewhere, or with lots of jargon and ‘in jokes’ among fellow team members and the like.
Off is more important than on

Learn to sharpen these distinctions into clear boundaries. Develop parallels for other personae. Use specific pendants or other jewellery only for specific reasons. This can be a good way to bring an ‘emergent’ persona to the fore. Use some sort of ‘ritual’ behaviour – in the widest sense – to turn personality traits on and off. The original experts in this field recommended such simple gestures as touching the side of the nose or jaw with a specific finger, or tugging three times on a specific ear lobe. The ‘magic’ is that you would only do this gesture intentionally. For the magic to work there needs to be a well-rooted association between the gesture and the persona or personality trait.

A famous occultist of the early twentieth century reputedly switched between being a vegan pacifist and an aggressive martial arts combatant simply by touching a different finger ring. Presumably other rings were linked to an equally contradictory range of personalities. You may well think that is rather extreme. However an acquaintance of mine has a walking stick with eight small gemstones mounted close to where his fingers fall when holding the knob on the end. By using one or more finger tips he can invoke one or more of the attributes of each of the gems.

If you don’t fancy such a walking stick then think of a ‘charm bracelet’ made up of such gemstones, or specific ‘charms’, or a combination. These ‘charms’ can be combined into a pendant, as worn by those who maintain Italian traditions of stregheria. Keys work even better as they have ‘built in’ abilities to unlock at the start of a rite then lock up again at the end. Adapt the principles to your own purposes and personae!

Individual and individualism

Much as I prefer to avoid pendentry, the Western way of thinking all-too-frequently confuses an individual with individualism. So far as I am aware all human societies have a
Above: The gemstone staff.

Top right: Ready-made charm bracelets have long been regarded as ‘tacky’. But homemade versions are a very practical option for wearing amulets.

Centre: The cimaruta pendants worn by followers of the Italian stregheria tradition are close kin to charm bracelets.

Bottom: Black ribbon tied to a naturally-holed ‘hagstone’.
Keys are especially effective amulets. They can be ‘charged’ with specific ideas in the same way as sigils, and these associations can be ‘unlocked’ at the start of a ritual. At the end of the rite, be sure to lock them again.

Top: In Christian symbolism, crossed keys denote St Peter, who is the ‘psychopomp’ who unlocks the Pearly Gates into Heaven. The photograph shows an Anglo-Saxon carving at Bromyard, Herefordshire.

Centre: The Latin name for the collar bone, clavicle, has the literal meaning of ‘little key’. It is somewhat like a ‘blank’ key and folk traditions once held that it was the key to life and death.

Bottom: The fused clavicles of birds are commonly known as ‘wishbones’.
sense of individual people, no matter how strong the ties which bind them to social groups. In the West we are ‘bound’ to a greater number of social groups so the ties are mostly much looser.

In complete contrast, over the last hundred or so years, the West has created a sense of individualism, by which I mean independence of thought and action. This is exceptionally rare in pre-modern societies. My remarks in this book are about the more general sense of individuals and have little relevance to individualism except that only in an ‘individualistic’ society can people readily explore different personae.

**Your multiplex of selves**

Feel free to ponder on that last remark if you chose. But the thought I want to share with you is that an ‘individual’ is best thought of as a multiplex of identities. Just as some folk seek to be ‘gender fluid’ and so forth and so forth, so we need to be fluid about all the other ways of being human. But to do so in ways that don’t confuse the daylights out of friends, work colleagues and all the other people whose brains can only construct a theory of mind based on more constant personality traits. Think how you would struggle to respond to someone who is different every time you meet them (and there are of course people who do have multiple personalities in a way which they find difficult to ‘manage’).

Jeanette Winterson, in an article for *The Art of Fiction*, recognised this:

> I think people are often quite unaware of their inner selves, their other selves, their imaginative selves, the selves that aren’t on show in the world. It’s something you grow out of from childhood onwards, losing possession of yourself, really…

Peter Carroll, as usual, pulls no punches:
If you consider yourself an ‘individual’, in the sense of ‘indivisible’, you have not lived.

If you merely consider yourself as a single being capable of playing various roles, then you have yet to play them in extremis.

[...] The belief in a single self stems from religious monotheisms having only a single god. Let us throw out the baby with the bath water.

Who you are and, more importantly, could be is not simply the sum total of a multiplicity of social variables such as age, ethnicity, sex, gender, class, social status, religion, education, aspirations, and so forth. You are all possible permutations of these variables, not some constant lowest common denominator. Thinking of yourself not as ‘myself’ but as ‘our selves’ is a first step towards breaking the enchantment of the illusory ‘self’.

Ritualised visualisations

But don’t go running off giving everyone of those different selves unlimited playtime until you’ve learnt to ‘walk back home’ again without any uncertainties. Ritualised times and place, and an all-important ‘off switch’ are the starting point, not something to hopefully discover along the way.

Physical rituals inside defined ‘magic circles’ – however non-literally you may want to interpret that idea – are wonderful. But finding the right place and time can cause constraints. Much of the same can be done using ‘guided visualisations’. I suspect that anyone who has got this far with this book has some experience of ‘pathworkings’, focused meditations or all the many synonyms. If not, there are plenty of web pages and books that will help.

When I started, back in the late 1980s, I made my own cassette tapes by reading out a script while suitable music was playing in the background, and placed an assortment of tinkly bells and
such like within easy reach. These days any computer can record your voice and blend it with music and sound effects. But try to do as much as possible yourself rather than merely editing readymade sound samples. The ‘making’ is as important as the ‘doing’.

The crucial reason for making such recordings is to have the same ‘entry’ into visualisations each time. Literally. Once you have a good ‘entry’ into the mental ‘space and place’ then copy it for other visualisations. And likewise, the return journey needs to be signalled by several sharp bell sounds which will cut through, and then be repeated at key stages on the ‘return journey’ to normal awareness.

What you do between the entry and later exit I will keep open. This is where your various personae will be explored, not mine! But whatever you do there is developing a key skill which I will be calling upon later in this book. You will develop skills at visualising. And fundamental to being able to visualise in this way is to be able to focus your attention. And being able to focus your attention to visualise also creates the ability to focus your intent. And that, as I will reveal, is key.

So guided visualisations do several things all at once – they get you used to ritualised thinking with a clear entry/exit (or ‘on’ and ‘off’ switches as I more broadly call them), allowing your personae to ‘play’ and grow, developing visualisation skills and enhancing abilities to focus attention on a specific intent.

The zest of the game

By way of light relief I would like to sum up the last few pages by quoting Alan Watts. Back in 1966 he wrote a book called *The Book: On the taboo against knowing who you are*. It includes this paragraph:

> You have seen that the universe is at root a magical illusion and a fabulous game, and that there is no separate ‘you’ to get something out of
it, as if life were a bank to be robbed. The only real ‘you’ is the one that comes and goes, manifests and withdraws itself eternally in and as every conscious being. For “you” is the universe looking at itself from billions of points of view, points that come and go so that the vision is forever new. What we see as death, empty space, or nothingness is only the trough between the crests of this endlessly waving ocean. It is all art of the illusion that there should seem to be something gained in the future, and that there is an urgent necessity to go on until we get it. Yet there is no time but the present, and no one except the all-and-everything, there is never anything to be gained – though the zest of the game is to pretend that there is.

Since childhood Watts had been deeply influenced by Buddhism. Had he lived into the mid-1980s he would have fully concurred with Tulku Thondup, a Tibetan Rinpoche, who summarised Nagarjuna’s *Mulamadhyamakakarika XIV* in these words:

> Since they have no essence, phenomena do not exist as true or false, as delusion or non-delusion, but because the mind has identified the objects, saying, this is a faculty, these are senses, and this is a house; and it discriminates and clings to them as subject and object.

### Multiplex other-than-human persons

Previous books in the series have discussed ‘otherworldly’ guardians, ancestor guardians and a variety of other-than-human persons. In *Knowing Your Guardians* and overlapping parts of the other books I discussed these as ‘individual’ entities. But I want to sow the thought-seed in your mind that these too can be regarded as ‘multiplex’ beings.
There are at least three broad ways in which guardians can be regarded as ‘multiplex’. Firstly, you may think of there being many individual and discrete guardians. Alternatively, you might want to think of specific manifestations as being ‘aspects’ of the same guardian entity. A good example would be the way Catholics think of ‘Our Lady of so-and-so’ as a local aspect of the one-and-only Blessed Virgin Mary. A third option is to think of local deities as intercessionaries for some Greater Power, which is the way that saints fitted in to pre-Reformation Christianity (and still do in Orthodox faiths).

I don’t want to be over-prescriptive about this. Instead it is for you to be aware of these options and think them through in due course. For what it’s worth I find it most useful to have a number of well-focused intercessionary ‘spirits of place’ and task-specific avatars. For me, having other-than-human persons each with multiplex personaes just starts to get a tad confusing. But you may be less easily confused than me.

**We see what we believe**

I touch on this idea lightly as it leads on to something which does need to be raised. We live our lives talking about sunrises, moonsets, waxing moons and all the related phrases. Yet we know that the sun and moon do not rise, set, wax or wane. Instead this is just a convenient way to refer to the complexities of the constant rotation of the Moon around the Earth and the Earth around the Sun.

These are not the only instances of saying and doing one thing but believing another. A great many people put their religious faith at least partially ‘on hold’ in the workaday world. This may lead to being aware of, say, moral and doctrinal conflicts. Some people are pragmatic about this – even though it may lead to accusations of hypocrisy – while others find it difficult to ignore their beliefs. ‘Conscientious objectors’ are not just people who refuse to join the armed forces. Which approach is right and wrong is irrelevant to the point I am about to make.
Any recognised objections, compromises or confrontations are only a small part of the overall situation. There are a great many logical inconsistencies between what we think and what we do that ‘just happen’ without being aware. We simply cannot step outside the worldview we were brought up with. These worldviews are like the lenses in spectacles – we look through them but rarely stop to look at them. This book is all about stopping to look at the various types of lenses, and making some attempt to cleanse your perception. But in a few thousand words I can only point to some key issues.

Without realising it you probably already have a variety of worldviews among your different persona (and I’m thinking about the ones you had before you read this book). But, because none of us recognise the deep assumptions in a worldview without at least a little prompting, then we are unlikely to have much conscious recognition of the way they contrast or conflict. We simply use these as the implicit foundations for what we habitually do. They are hard to distinguish from any given culture’s notions of ‘common sense’.

Jeremy Narby hit this nail on the head when he wrote:

> We see what we believe, and not just the contrary;
> and to change what we see, it is sometimes necessary to change what we believe.

**Multiplex realities**

What would it take to have personae with fundamentally different worldviews? People do achieve this – and without it becoming pathological! At the risk of being overly-flippant the term ‘weekend pagans’ has long been bandied about. People of other faiths also tend to become focused on relevant doctrines and practices on the days most associated with observances, whether that is Sundays for Protestants, feast days for Catholics, Saturdays for Jews, and so forth. Wearing specific clothes,
avoiding doing certain things, meeting up with people who are part of a specific ‘social scene’ and so forth are all part-and-parcel of ‘doing religion’ just as much as the rites led by the clergy.

If you have a spectrum of ideas about the nature of deity – for example, if you were brought up with a faith with one or more transcendent supreme beings but are drawn to religions with multiple and more immanent deities – then think through how different personae could hold different beliefs or worldviews yet work alongside each other – even though each of these persona occupy quite different fundamental realities. Identify, so much as you can, the conflicts and compromises this might cause. Then think through whether creating different personae helps to reduce the problems. At the very least think through whether this strategy would add to the problems!

If it sounds bonkers then you have yet to recognise the extent to which your normal ‘unconscious’ actions try to paper over the cracks between different beliefs and assumptions. On the one hand I am trying to make you aware of the ‘lenses’ you continually look through. And, equally importantly, I am trying to make you aware of the possibility of giving each of your personae time to develop. Or maybe it’s the other way around. Maybe you have moved on from some of these personae. They need to be sent on a long holiday.

If you think I’m making all this up then use an internet search site to explore the phrase ‘poly-ontological cosmology’. Just be prepared to encounter writing idioms which are much more scholarly than mine! Probably helps to know that ‘ontology’ is the technical term for the nature of ‘being’ or ‘reality’ (although has been hijacked for different purposes by exponents of artificial intelligence) and, in this context, ‘cosmology’ means the study of the way societies structure the universe as an ordered system and fit the human realms into those of animals, deities and whatever else (although astrophysicists use the term in a very divergent way).
Pantheons of paragons

Major religions generally have one or more Supreme Beings. The major exception is Buddhism, but that has armies of semi-divine beings instead. Supreme Beings are the universe viewed in anthropomorphic terms. But, just as there is no ‘I’ in ‘I am thinking’ so there is no Supreme Being separate from the universe. The universe is the ‘Supreme Being’. Except there is only ‘being’ as any personification is illusory – although perhaps a necessary illusion which helps human cognition.

However you think of a Supreme Being – including any beliefs that such Beings do not exist – is just that, a thought or belief. Or, as I would say, an enchantment. Religions are adamant that their personification of Supreme Being is the only correct one. Yet the list of such One True Ways fills a large encyclopedia. We create deities according to our personal desires. They are coping strategies for our fears and uncertainties.

We’re all suckers for powerful mythic superheroes. If you must personify the Supreme Being – and I have to admit that I feel that need – then create a useful variety of mental ‘manifestations’. Make sure some of them don’t take themselves too seriously. Dragons, invisible pink unicorns and Tigger are at least as useful in personal pantheons as all-forgiving father figures, irascible ‘smite thine enemies’ types, faultless mother figures, time-and-space-warping supermen, and all the usual cast list.

Enlightenment is only another dualism

We can only think about the universe by making distinctions. Human thinking automatically makes exclusive either:or and this:not-this distinctions. From such dualisms unfold more distinctions until we have created the ‘diversity’ that our
thinking can comprehend. But the diversity is the product of deeper and less conscious processes of cognition.

All such dualisms are part of human thinking, not inherent in the ‘reality’ of the universe. But, without distinctions, the universe is not only ineffable but also unthinkable. Stop and think about that. Fundamental and innate aspects of human cognition are the only way we can make ‘reality’ thinkable. We really and truly create our own reality. We rarely recognise this because the key learning processes happen so early in childhood that we have no direct memories. Every time a toddler calls all birds ‘ducks’ or struggles to distinguish cats from dogs you are witnessing the later stages of these processes. By the time the child is at school then their life is deeply immersed in all manner of epistemological subversions and strategies.
The realisation or recognition that everything is an illusion is known to Buddhists as *satori*. Attaining *satori* means you become an enlightened being. If you have grasped much of what I have been getting at then, in principle, you are now enlightened. You probably don’t feel a lot different to how you did a few moments before, except perhaps a little bewildered. And that is entirely appropriate. Because, if everything is an illusion, then enlightenment too is an illusion.

Remember what I said about recognising ‘excluded others’ and collapsing the dualism. Enlightened and non-enlightened states of mind are just another dualism to collapse into a greater whole.

Buddhists know this too. There are many metaphors for this ‘post-enlightenment’ part of the Way. My favourite is the
aphorism ‘At the end of the path grows the parsley’. In other words, having followed the Way or dharma for long enough, you end up back in the most mundane parts of the ‘garden’ of life.

Writing in 1937, at the age of twenty-one or twenty-two, Alan Watts expressed it like this:

> Between the greatest height of spirituality and the most ordinary things of the world there is no division. We shall study every philosophy, search through all spiritual exercises until our minds are swollen with the whole wisdom of the world. But in the end we shall return to the surprising fact that we walk, eat, sleep, feel and breathe, that whether we are deep in thought or idly passing the time of day, we are alive. And when we can know just that to be the supreme experience of religion we shall know the final secret and join in the laughter of the gods. For the gods are laughing at themselves.

**From disenchantment to re-enchantment**

Someone who can express things more clearly and incisively than I am able to is Peter Carroll. In the mid-1980s he wrote:

> ... means stepping outside of one’s own culture, society, relationships, family personality, beliefs, prejudices, opinions and ideas. It is just these comforting chains which seem to give definition, meaning, character, and a sense of belonging to most people.

>[...] Someone who can think, believe, or do any of a half dozen different things is more free and
liberated than someone confined to only one activity.

[...] The most powerful minds cling to the fewest fixed principles. The only clear view is from atop the mountain of your dead selves.

Carroll’s thinking underpins a great proportion of this book, although his way of ‘practising’ those thoughts differs in almost all respects from mine. Nevertheless we share the same overall strategy – becoming aware of the way we have been ‘enchanted’ by a whole web of social processes and pressures and how that awareness can be used to empower our own aims.

Some years before neuroscientists had published similar conclusions, Carroll wrote that ‘Our subjective experience consists of our various selves experiencing each other.’ Where Carroll differs from neuroscientists is that he sees himself not as a scientist but as a magician. Inverting a well-known aphorism of Arthur C. Clarke, Carroll maintains that any sufficiently advanced form of magic is indistinguishable from science. If you prefer, science is simply magic which is easily repeatable.

By way of example of how Carroll’s ideas overlap with the underlying approaches of this book here are two more quotes from his early work:

However innocuous they might seem, habits in thought, word and deed are the anchor of personality. The magician aims to pull up that anchor and cast himself free...

The magical self has no centre; it is not a unity...

Three threes

Carroll identifies three ‘actions’ which are fundamental to magical praxis:

Firstly, making a connection between things-as-they-are and things-as-wished-to-be. The classic example is when a curse is
focused on the hair clippings or fingernail cuttings of the victim. Or when a simple ‘poppet’ is made to be the surrogate for the real person. While best-known for their use in curses, there would have been plenty of occasions when such connections were made for beneficial purposes.

Secondly, the ritual requires a focusing of attention. Anyone who has experience of meditation (though not the ‘empty the mind variety’), guided visualisations, and such like is developing the necessary skills. If you get the opportunity to be part of a group with at least one experienced visualiser then be prepared for unexpected images to ‘just happen’ or for previously agreed-upon images to shape up in unexpected ways.

Since my early teens my life involved hobbies, college training and then a career which required seeing complex objects accurately in my ‘mind’s eye’ and then developing those thoughts on paper. In my late twenties I went on a weekend training course organised by the British Society of Dowsers at the not-then-famous Hawkwood College, subsequently learning much from the people who at that time made up the East Midlands Dowsing Group. Dowsing only ‘works’ by focusing attention on whatever question you want to address.

My professional visualising skills transferred easily to focusing on dowsing enquiries. After a year or so, my dowsing abilities opened up a whole new way of experiencing the world. I still have no idea how dowsing ‘works’ though. What is important is that dowsing taught me how to focus my attention in ways which are just as appropriate for ‘enchantment’ as they are for ‘divination’. I will be returning to this overlap later.

The third aspect of magic practice which Carroll considers essential is putting ‘energy’ into the rite. He has his own preferences. I have mine. There are some overlaps. But not many. But the differences are all in the ‘how’ not the ‘why’.

Other people who have delved deep into magic practices have come up with analogous ways of expressing this. Robert Cochrane (1931–1966) recognised that ‘Force’ (which he generally referred to by the Indian word *prakriti*) is more
Above: The twelfth century font in Avebury church showing two ‘dragons’ either side of a bishop.

Right: A drawing of the right-hand ‘dragon’.

Although conventionally referred to as ‘dragons’ I prefer the Old English words wyrm and wyrmas because they carry none of the baggage thrust upon words like ‘serpent’ or ‘dragon’. Wyrmas, like serpents, can be sinuous and active or coiled and slumbering. There is much to be gained from recognising the ever-present interplay of these aspects. An overall sense of the wyrm as the ‘way’ is a powerful concept, more so when combined with sinuous and coiled manifestations of wyrmas, and further empowered by the concept of the wyrmas’ leac breathing in and out in an active/passive cycle. When I need to visualise leac I call up the wyrmas on this font – or, more accurately, versions I have carved myself on staffs and knife handles.
important than form. In other words, rituals and deities and just about anything else you care to mention can take different forms. But all need a ‘Force’. We might want to think of it as a ‘life force’ or a ‘holy spirit’ or whatever. But that is to start to give it a specific form.

Many people reading this will wonder if I mean the same thing as the various types of numinous ‘energy’ which are encountered in New Age writings and such like. Ever so slightly ‘yes’ but really an emphatic ‘no’. Why? Because the word ‘energy’ has all sorts of connotations of something which is akin to electricity or mechanistic notions of kinetic energy and what have you. This is giving specific and misleading form to something which needs to stay formless.

My own thinking is not of an ‘energy’ but of ‘potency’ or a charismatic ‘gift’ (in the way we speak of a ‘gifted child’). But these terms still risk giving too much form. Because Western modernism denies the existence of such a ‘potency’ then modern English lacks a word which corresponds to this mix of ‘energy’, potency, ‘giftedness’, charisma and numinosity. However most other languages do have such a word – prakriti, shakti, kami, ch’i and mana are perhaps the most-often used, but there are plenty of African counterparts which make their way into the diaspora of central America and the Caribbean. Although Cochrane borrowed the Indian word prakriti, I am happier using the Old English word leac (discussed in previous books in this series).
Three rites

Connection-focus-energy is the first magical ‘trinity’ I want to share with you. The second ‘triumvirate’ comes from Cochrane too, while Carroll’s published work has much to offer about its second two aspects. Although there are numerous variants of intent and praxis, Cochrane argues that there are three fundamental rites.

The most important is the one for getting into the flow of *leac* or, as Cochrane thought of it, communing with the mystical energy he termed *prakriti*. ‘Drawing down the moon’, ‘Getting your mojo going’, ‘Raising *ch’i*’ – there are any number of metaphors and allusions. Reiki teachings help in this respect – mentally drawing a sigil to bring ‘ki’ (or *ch’i*) from ‘out there’ to where it’s needed. Magic works because of this potency and works by engaging with or changing the so-called ‘energies’.

Poppy Palin used an excellent metaphor when she referred to magic as being like throwing a pebble into a pond – the ‘magic’ is the ripples spreading out all across the surface. Throw two or more pebbles in quick succession and the ripples create complex patterns. The same happens when raindrops land on

Left: A Roman sculpture depicting the Dea Matronae.
Right: The visualisation used in Reiki to ‘raise’ *ki*.
still water. The leac – or whatever you prefer to call it – is the magical potency which causes one or more ripples to form in what we think of as reality. Depending on circumstances the leac can be directed either by visualisation or by magical tools.

Unlike Reiki practitioners, Cochrane and Carroll are raising ‘ki’, prakriti, getting their mojos going, and all the rest for two reasons. No surprise that one of these is for rites of enchantment. The third category is rites of divination. As I will discuss shortly, there is less of a difference between enchantment and divination than is generally supposed. So, when intending to divine rather than enchant, devise rites which enhance the distinction.

Few people giving or receiving such wedding day tokens realise that ‘luck’ sounds like the Old English word leac. The gift is not some much of ‘good luck’ but the ‘gift’ – in a broader sense – of ‘potency’.
The third trinity

Before I fully explain the previous remarks, allow me to complete the trilogy of threes. Connection-focus-energy was the first and empowerment-divination-enchantment is the second. Now think how European deities tend to come in threes. Even the monotheistic Christian church had to adapt and came up with the doctrine of Trinitarianism.

The ‘attributes’ of the three members of such divine trinities can, of course, be as varied as you like. However if, like me, you are naturally inclined to ‘triple-up’ your spirit helpers and the like then you may find it helpful to create personae for these other-than-human-beings which link in with these three ‘functions’. I discussed the Dea Matronae in Knowing Your Guardians and

A modern depiction of the Three Mothers, or modra.
have mentioned them in the other books in this series. Forget the Maiden-Mother-Crone aspects invented by Robert Graves in the 1940s. Traditionally this triumvirate were often – though not always – thought to represent Fate, Destiny and Eternity.

With only a little mental agility it is possible to ‘enhance’ the traditional trilogy of Fate, Destiny and Eternity into something which also encompasses notions of enchantment, divination and leac. As will become clearer, enchantment is about imposing one’s own ideas on one’s ‘fate’ as destiny and divination are two sides of the same coin. The one aspect of leac and the like which distinguishes it from ‘mortal existence’ is that it exists throughout time and space, available to be ‘drawn down’, ‘focused’, or what have you.

The Christian Trinity combines two ‘archetypal’ patterns of male behaviour with the Sanctus Spiritus – the Holy Spirit which is a close counterpart to prakriti, ch’i, leac, kami, mana and so forth. It is an ‘eternal’ potency which acts as the ‘breath of life’ and much else.

In Classical Mediterranean cultures images of such three-fold deities were erected at the meeting of tri via, or ‘three ways’ (yes, this is the curious origin of the word ‘trivia’). Three-legged or ‘tripod’ stools, trivets for supporting pans and kettles in a fire, and many other triune objects were also associated with the
cults associated with female prophetic cults. Three-lane ends are still regarded as ‘suspect places’, more so than the folklore associated with four-way crossroads.

A physical and tangible manifestation of three female guardians who embody all these ideas are of great help me. I also have much more portable amulets with simpler versions of these triple beings. You may have a different way of focusing your intentions, a different way of ‘manifesting’ the threesomes which hold the keys to rest of this book.

**Traditional rituals**

Much of the rest of this book will discuss rituals for empowerment, divination and enchantment – the three rites regarded as key by Cochrane. However anyone from a traditional society would think of this as decidedly odd. They would be with most familiar with rites associated with raising crops, hunting, cooking and feasting. There may be strong taboos associated with some or all – in other words rituals are not only about what should be done but also about what should not be done.

Some taboos appear in nearly every culture, such as not eating certain foods at certain times or at any time, avoiding sex or menstruating women, and avoiding ‘unlucky’ words and using euphemisms instead. English people have an aversion to eating horsemeat and, until recently, referred to pure white horses as ‘greys’. These are the last relics of an Iron Age cult when horses in general, and white ones especially, were sacred.

Fasting is probably the most widespread ‘taboo’. Usually it is linked at the hip with a feast. Back in the day, Christians who avoided meat on Fridays saved the best meal of the week – a ‘meat feast’ – for Sundays. In the English-speaking world Christmas and ‘harvest home’ celebrations towards the end of September are now the main annual ‘food feasts’, the latter replacing ‘first fruits’ feasts once held in early August.
Devising rites

This is not a book about religious customs or even ‘folk customs’, as they are often deemed once religion has moved on a step or three. There are plenty of occasions when customs still come to the fore, especially at rites of passage such as naming, coming of age, marriage and – most inevitable of all – final passing. Somewhere along the way Anglophone cultures lost one of the more important of all: knowing the correct way to honour ancestors and the guardians of the locality.

I raise these to sow seeds as to when you may feel a need to ‘ritualise’. I have no intention of offering you scripts or such like. The whole devising and planning of rites is key to focusing intent. I can’t devise a rite for you any more than I can step inside your mind and focus your attention. I can however offer some inspiration and ‘helpful tips’.

My first tip is to avoid ‘borrowing’ ready-mades from other people otherwise you are not stepping outside their enchantments. Yes ‘ready-mades’ are important, indeed essential, when doing group rituals. But not when doing rites which have little or nothing to do with the enchantments those groups want to reinforce.

Rites for what?

Why would you want to devise a rite? There’s a simple answer: for whatever you feel needs ‘empowering’, understanding or perhaps changing. However simple answers are not always the most helpful. Why do I feel a need to devise rites? Well, the answers may of course be different to you. But the fall under four broad headings:

- divining
- empowerment by guardians, raising leac, honouring ancestors
Divination, prophecy and the like are often thought to be just aspects of ‘fortune telling’. Tarot cards, runes, horoscopes, *I Ching*, clairvoyance and a whole host of other techniques are widely practised. The overt intention is to ‘read’ the future. But the future is not cast in stone. Any attempt to read it allows for the future to be changed. Even the act of prophecy will change the future. For example, a woman told that a tall, dark handsome stranger will appear to solve all her problems is going to respond to meetings with such people in a different way to short, blond acquaintances.

Because they [the spirits] are much wiser than we. They know something that we in the West all too often forget, namely that the ordinary and the other reality belong together. (Goodman 1972: 324)

Traditional societies seek to learn about the future by asking ancestral spirits. This is direct continuation of how these ancestors would have been asked for advice while still alive. The ancestors are also the ‘protectors’ of the family lands so annual rituals will ask them to ensure a successful harvest. The overlap of divination and protection is inherent. For this reason in pre-conversion north European and Scandinavian societies the preferred location for divination and prophecy was at ‘ancestral shrines’, known to archaeologists as ‘burial mounds’. I discussed the Scandinavian rite of ‘sitting out’ at such ancestral places in *Learning from the Ancestors*.

To read the future with any accuracy you need to focus attention and situate yourself as near as possible to the ‘cauldron of creativity’ – the ‘here and now’ where everything is most emergent. You need to become part of the flow of the ‘breath of life’, raise your *ch’i*, get your *leac* flowing. Exactly as you would as part of an enchantment – although divination rarely ‘sends’ the *leac*. 
All divination techniques come with their own rituals, including how the diviner engages with a ‘client’, no matter how informal the relationship. There is no clear line between reading the future and changing the future. If you raise the levels of \textit{leac} beyond those required for divination you will quickly slip into the realms of enchantment. That’s a warning for those with little experience and a key for those with considerably more.

Remember too that dowsing for water, buried archaeology, lost items and such like is also a form of divination. Ignore ‘energy dowsing’ and all its flakey manifestations and focus on ‘physical’ dowsing. They are overlapping skills but learning how to reliably dowse for such things as water needs to be achieved before more airy-fairy types of dowsing and before any other divination technique. Yes, you understood me correctly – learn to dowse for water and archaeology before you take on the Tarot or whatever. Sadly many people who offer to teach dowsing start with energy dowsing rather than ‘physical’ dowsing, so it is not as easy to find a suitable teacher as it was when I started in the 1980s.

\textbf{‘All things in the world are interrelated’}

I keep making the point that rituals are all about raising \textit{leac} or whatever word you want to give to this complex sense of ‘potency’. How do you go about this? If you have a way that works then read the rest of this section out of curiosity but do not feel compelled to change. If it’s all new to you then the answer is simple: you engage with the local guardians of place and draw the \textit{leac} through them.

This is all described, along with plenty of examples, in \textit{Knowing Your Guardians}. What that book does not state is why. Now you know. The Chinese have known for millennia. There, divination is – in essence – asking the advice of the ancestors, who are also guardians of the living. A far cry from modern life where anyone
under forty deems anyone over forty to be so out of touch as not to get it. I have referred previously to divination working best when you can situate yourself in the ever-emergent flow of creation. Your ‘blood lines’ – your biological relationships with your ancestors – are not metaphorical. Your ancestral lines are among the most manifest of all the many ‘emergent flows’ which make up your life.

Ethnographers such as Edward Sapir have understood that this is exactly what defines traditional cultures – not mere a collection of knowledge and customs but a ‘way of life’ (Guédon 1994: 63). Ways of life that are themselves alive and ‘flowing’ and ‘emergent’. It is simple enough to comprehend, while seeming to be entirely different to how modern Western societies think of their own cultures. Russell Willier a Woods Cree medicine man from northern Alberta

... experiences his dreams as the way things are moving. He perceives meaningful signs in events that some people would consider trivial.... nothing happens by chance. All things in the world are interrelated and mutually influence each other. ... People are the victims of fate only when they do not understand how to react to the ‘pattern’ in the things happening around them. (Young et al 1989: 15)
This Cree approach to living seems to be almost taken from the pages of early Daoist literature and would be ‘taken for granted’ by most Chinese people alive today.

**Identifying your ancestral lands**

One of the ideas in *Knowing Your Guardians* is that guardians of place cannot be distinguished from ancestors. This is often tricky as people have moved about far more in the last century or so than in the past. Sometimes it’s more a case of identifying with ancestors of tribe (however you wish to define ‘tribe’) than with biological antecedents. How you resolve such conundrums has to remain open. But find a way whereby you have identified ancestors who you feel a need to honour. They are as much your guardians as the guardians of place. Ideally they will be one and the same, but ideals are not always attainable.

If you know that your family – or at least one branch of it – originate in a specific place then try to spend time there getting to know what might have been special places in their day. In Native American thinking these are your ‘ancestral lands’. Mine are in Staffordshire. Not far from some minor places which sustain my ancestors’ surname is the ‘moot site’ or meeting place for the late Anglo-Saxon administration which preceded counties. That place is still open fields, although nothing exceptionally attractive. I have only been there once but nevertheless is central to my thinking about ‘ancestral lands’.

Discover your own ‘ancestral places’, if you do not know them already. Or just adopt a place which has equivalent significance for your sense of ‘tribe’. The first book in this series, *Listening to the Stones* is all about engaging with places, with the emphasis on using all your senses (not just listening) and engaging with them as they are, rather than how you think they should be.

Frankly, with just a little bit of wit then sitting on a park bench ‘working on the inner planes’ can achieve as much as a rucksack of ‘ritual kit’ on a barren mountain top. Get real about this! Most people, myself included, will make some pragmatic
decisions about where is safe and appropriate and how much ‘gear’ to try to carry. Wearing (or carrying in some other way) suitably-charged amulets plus appropriate offerings (see *Knowing Your Guardians*) are essential. Pretty much everything else is optional.

**Drawing down the moon or drawing up the leac**

Once you have established a close identification with a specific place and its guardians then you can start to use the location and its other-than-human-dwellers for at least some of your rites, not least those of empowerment. Some people are lucky and have comparatively easy access to such places. Others live surrounded by urban and suburban sprawl and may struggle to identify such places, doubly so locations where they can safely go and not be observed. Essential practical advice has been covered in *Listening to the Stones* and *Learning From the*
Ancestors. In those books I said very little about why such rites might be needed. I hope you now understand that these are places where you can most readily situate yourself in the ‘emergent flow’.

Few people have prehistoric burial mounds or other ancestral places within easy walking distance. I am privileged to be one of these few. Nevertheless I still need portable ‘power sources’ when I am away from home. In the 1980s there were numerous beginners’ guides to paganism which provided guided visualisations for imagining yourself as a tree with roots going deep into the earth and drawing up ‘energy’ from the roots. I suspect many people reading this book will be aware of such visualisations and, in all probability, have used it on a regular basis.

Other people may have been, or still are, part of pagan groups which ‘draw down the moon’. In other words, draw ‘energy’ from the full moon – with a corresponding rite (possibly more with the emphasis more on ‘banishing’ or cleansing) at the new moon. About six years ago I was introduced to another variant, which was to imagine drawing up the magma of the Earth into a metal ‘vessel’ deep under your feet, with a pipe – complete with heavy-duty valve – leading up. The visualisation was in two stages. Firstly to ‘dump’ all your ‘energies’ into this cauldron-like ‘vat’ and then, after a pause, to draw back up as much ‘energy’ as you need.

If you are about to do a healing ritual – or indeed any other sort of rite – then draw up the ‘extra energy’ that you need. You can dump excess ‘energies’ back later. This visualisation sounds a little mechanistic compared to the more romantic ones of trees and moons. But the advantage is that it works anywhere at anytime. No need to wait for the full moon, or feel incongruous imagining tree roots when on the tenth floor of a block of flats!

All such visualisations need to be practised in a fairly elaborate and detailed manner initially. But after a time you can ‘cut to the chase’ and get through the essentials quickly. There will be plenty of times when you need to raise your ‘energy’ levels.
within moments rather than minutes. Go through the more elaborate versions when you have the time. I must admit that the occasions when I am most likely to do the longer version of the visualisation is when I am seeking self-healing, or some inspiration for a creative project. When asked by someone else for help or guidance then the ‘instant top up’ comes into its own.

Note that I have used the words ‘energy’ and ‘energies’ in the previous paragraphs. These are the sort of words traditionally associated with the tree visualisation and drawing down the moon. I have kept them in scare quotes in an attempt to bridge prior familiarity and, what to me, is inappropriate language. As discussed before, what you are drawing into yourself is leac – or kami or mana or prakriti or vim or any number of other words which do not refer to ‘energy’ but to a combination of charisma, potency and gift. None of these comes from you, they only manifest through you.

Blessings and healing

Some people think there’s a big difference between healing someone and merely offering them a blessing or good luck. I’m not one of them. To heal someone you need, among other things, to raise their leac. It may be wordplay but ‘good luck’ and ‘good – or healthy – leac’ do not need to be distinguished. Chinese medicine, to take just one example, does not distinguish between a good flow of ch’i and good bodily health. They are not the same but neither are they separable.

The world is awash with do-gooders offering healing to other people. They offer it because it makes them feel better. Such wannabe healers have their own ‘issues’, which to varying extents they may have overcome, and really, really, really want to help other people. They end up draining their own, often already depleted, ‘energies’ without having sufficient awareness or skills to avoid or resolve the problem. Do you really want to be healed by someone who is themselves in need of healing?
Often these enthusiastic but inept folk compound problems by venturing into realms of counselling in ways that are highly inappropriate. They lack even a basic awareness that sentences along the lines of ‘If I were you I’d do (or not do) this, that or whatever’ are strictly off limits. If you must, must, must offer any sort of help to others then at least read a basic introduction to counselling and get firmly fixed into your mind what not to say or do.

Be sure to check early on that someone is not an immediate danger to themselves or others. If they are you have only one option: get professional advice urgently, if necessary by calling the police. If these last two sentences surprise you then you really haven’t thought through that ‘helping’ people isn’t always a fluffy-bunny chat over a cup of tea. People’s lives sometimes need to be radically turned around – just don’t make it into an uncontrolled spin followed by a major crash into all the bystanders and ‘scenery’.

In complete contrast to these wannabes there are people of my acquaintance who have healing skills which are quite remarkable. Only one of them has demonstrated their abilities to me, even though I was not seriously ill at the time. The experience was powerful yet inexplicable and, as you gather, memorable – even though it took place in 1987. One of the few things these people have in common was that you would probably never know they were healers, least of all especially good ones.

The deal is simple. Develop the skills of divining problems and raising leac. But never put yourself about as a healer. And ‘never’ means ‘never’. On the other hand, never refuse someone who, even in quite unlikely circumstances, asks for your help. Allow the Greater Force at Work to weave you into their way of doing things. You will be asking them to weave that web to your advantage many times, just be prepared for a little ‘give’ as well as lots of ‘take’.
If you can’t curse you can’t heal

Healing often requires ‘banishing’ an infection or other unwanted process going on in the body. It isn’t going to go away by talking nicely to it. A doctor might prescribe antibiotics – the word has the literal meaning of ‘anti-life’ although is understood to mean ‘anti-microbial life’. If you’re much more seriously ill then expect to be given one or more courses of chemotherapy – medicines which are targeting at killing cancer cells, although usually causing considerable collateral damage along the way.

Contrary to oft-repeated shite uttered by newagey types, there is no such thing as a ‘white witch’ who only blesses. My question to anyone who utters such remarks is to ask if they take part in a ritual to help a friend going to a job interview. They usually say yes, perhaps qualifying it with some remark about whether they think the job is suitable for the person. My next question is along the lines of ‘Would they curse the other job applicants?’ To which they throw their hands in horror.

In case you’ve not got there already, what’s the difference? If you really are capable of helping your friend get the job (which is probably doubtful) then you are to all intents and purposes doing ‘dark magic’ against the other applicants. Maybe there’s a Greater Force that wants the web to weave that way, but you probably won’t be aware. Enchantments help in some ways and hinder or hurt in others. What’s white to you is at best grey to others.

Even the parish priest uses an exorcism when baptising a child – to drive out the demons which Christians believe are innate in every newborn’s soul. I happen not to share this ‘original sin’ mentality but raise this simply to show that even something as innocuous as baptising a child comes with a brief moment of ‘bell, book and candle’ magic (though I think the bell is no longer part of this liturgy).

If you are a ‘witch’ of even the most limited capabilities then you can curse. How else can you rid someone of an illness if
you can’t curse the damned thing? How effectively you can curse depends on how much leac you can put into the rite. As this is a book intended to be sold on the open shelves you’re not going to find explicit instructions on putting together a potent curse ritual. Work up to it by practising with some pokey leac-raising rites which seek merely to raise ‘good luck’, and wait till you’ve got plenty of feedback as to the effectiveness of what you aimed to do.

These skills are versatile. Blessing children or adults is not that much different to blessing homes, vehicles, or even fields. Focusing intent and making a connection are key, along with the ability to draw down some leac. Healing any of the above requires more leac – and the ability to send it the right place rather than the wrong one – but is not fundamentally different. Blessings and curses are just two different names for almost identical ‘tools’ which are an essential part of any such ‘tool kit’.

**Giving oaths some clout**

Oaths can be uttered for many different reasons. They are a special sort of promise. The only thing which all oaths have in common is that they cannot be broken. Not even trivial ones. So be careful, very careful, about what you agree to do. Or not to do – oaths are as much about taboos as they are about commitments for action. In this respect they are as two-sided as blessings and curses.

The most likely time you will be asked to take part in rites which involve oaths is handfastings. If at all possible don’t even mention oaths and just go for a less demanding form of promise. If the couple really won’t settle for less than an oath then make sure it is for a finite time – the oath can always be renewed!

Oaths are a contract with the universe, however you think of ‘it’ or ‘they’. Traditionally oaths were sworn in the name of the three most powerful supreme beings. Christian ‘oaths’ still are – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. In Scandinavia and those parts of Britain settled by the Vikings, the names of Odin
The Lia Fail or Stone of Destiny at Tara, Ireland
This stone was used during the inaugurations of medieval Irish kings, making it the counterpart to the Scottish Stone of Scone, which became part of the coronation rites for British monarchs.

(or Woden), Thor and Frey were among the most likely. These were deities with the most powerful leac. Literally, as there are two alternative words for leac – wod in Old English and óthr in Old Norse. Arguable Woden is the Anglo-Saxon deity with ‘wod in’ and Odin – or Óthinn as it should be spelt – is the Scandinavian deity with ‘óthr in’. In other words Woden is ‘full of wod’ just as Odin is ‘full of óthr’. And the Holy Ghost or Sanctus Spiritus is the Christian counterpart, at least before evolving into later doctrines.

The leac, wod, óthr, potentia and whatever needed to manifest into something which could be touched as part of the oath-making rite. Gold or silver neck rings were commonly referred to as ‘oath rings’. Similarly the sword or spear owned by a tribe’s leader might be used. For the inauguration of tribal leaders there may have been a special stone, known in Old English as a leac stan, used specially for the purpose. The Stone of Scone originates as just such a stone and has been used for the
coronation of British monarchs since Edward the First captured it in 1296; it had been used for the inauguration of Scottish kings for an unknown period of time previously.

Christianity originally swore oaths on the relics of saints but after the Reformation the Bible was substituted. Every legal oath sworn in Britain today uses the Bible or some accepted substitute.

For reasons probably unrelated to oath-swearing you will acquire a piece of ‘ritual equipment’ which becomes the focus of your leac. This might be a staff, handmade knife, perhaps a chalice-type bowl. It doesn’t have to be ‘pretty’ but it does have to be ‘pokey’ (see photograph on page 46). You may deliberately seek out or make such an object or it may just ‘come to pass’ that you acquire it. You will know when it happens; perhaps it already has. Whatever it might be, keep the leac simmering – you never know when you might need it urgently.

And for those who think that such a leac object has to be a sword then all I will say is ‘Just how big a plonker do you want the rest of us to think you are?’ Putting your insecurities and megalomania on display doesn’t improve your street cred one tiny amount. Swords just might have their place in some group rituals but not as personal ‘status symbols’. Think of the old adage that men who drive sports cars have little willies – swords say the same with insecurity and immaturity thrown in.

Practical tips

In case you have got distracted, the trajectory of this book started with specific examples of how modern society enchants and en-trances and then moved to broader generalisations. The discussion has moved on to how you can take an active part in the enchantment and I am moving from broad principles towards specifics. The following sections offer some specific tips. As already stated, one of the ways of focusing intent is by devising specific rites. So, apart from one partial exception. you
will not find step-by-step instructions. Instead I am offering you some building blocks based on personal experience. As a result these suggestions are in no special order, apart from the first ones being aimed at those with least experience.

Take from my suggestions what you think is helpful at this stage, and use them as you see appropriate in whatever rituals you feel moved to devise. Come back to these remarks when you have more experience as by then other suggestions may become helpful. Try to avoid getting too ‘hidebound’ by writing rituals down and doing them the same way. Keep them ‘fresh’, even though some core aspects of the rituals – especially the ‘ons’ and ‘offs’ – by their very nature need to remain fairly constant.

**The interface**

I share Timothy Leary’s view of the world as existing in three ‘zones’:

1. One’s interior personal world.
2. The external world of artefacts and others.
3. The interface – the sensory and affective channels through which we perceive and manipulate the external world.

Leary specifically said that ‘The experience of self/consciousness resides at the interface, able to look within or without, toward "imagination" or "reality". Self is a semipermeable boundary.’ Now reread Leary’s sentence with the idea of an individual self replaced by the awareness of multiplex selves, as outlined previously.

That is the basis for what follows.
Our inner guardians

Our sense of self or selves comes with some impressive instincts for self-preservation. A million years and more of evolution have fine-tuned this instinct simply because the better they worked for our antecedents the more likely they stayed alive long enough to reproduce.

The downside is that these instincts give us the heebie-jeebies. Literally. Every time we think about doing something we’ve not done before we get ‘the butterflies’. Standing up to talk in front of a roomful of people is hard for most people the first few dozen times. Driving a car for the first time comes with all sorts of uncertainties. Then a few years later we ‘just do it’ without any undue concerns. You can probably think of a personal example from your own life when you have gone from something close to full panic mode initially to not being able to wait for the next opportunity. Sometimes it might be sheer adrenaline rush. But public speaking and everyday driving do not normally come into the same league as, say, extreme sports.

Why do I mention this? Because if you have never done a guided visualisation before, or a ritual, then your ‘inner guardians’ kick in automatically. You can’t help it. Even without thoughts that at least some of your friends might think you weird – or worse – if they knew, there is every reason for your brain to go ‘Ooh, eer, not at all sure about this… ‘.

Teachers and mentors are one answer. The other technique is something I will discuss next under the heading of ‘sleight of mind’. The answer is to have amulets and guardians. Your inner guardians have already got used to them, there’s no longer an ‘ooh, err’ feeling about them. Use them to ‘lead’ you in. Sure, they have other uses and roles too, but this is why they are essential rather than optional.
Sleight of mind

Every stage conjurer needs to develop slight of hand. There’s any number of ways of actually fooling the audience into paying attention to the hand which is not doing the magic trick – and ‘ patter’ comes into play.

If you need to perform a little ‘magic’ on your mind then you need to develop mental ‘distractions’ to transfer the fear of the new. The fear needs to be tricked into looking ‘the wrong way’. Although visualisations and such like are ‘all in the mind’ (but bear in mind Leary’s concept of how permeable that phrase really is) they may well make you feel uncomfortable. The answer is often to change the metaphor to something that is more familiar, or where you have a greater sense of control.

There is much more to sleight of mind than making yourself comfortable. There are a great many ways of ‘coming in under the radar’ of other people’s thinking. Books which provide details (rather than bland overviews) of NLP techniques are especially useful. Derived from those are the CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy) techniques which are flippantly referred to as ‘changing the metaphor’. To even summarise NLP and CBT would take up too much of this book. Instead, read O’Connor and Seymour’ introduction to NLP – it may have come out back in 1990 but it says far more than any book on NLP published since – and put the many different techniques to work in your day job and social life.

Danser’s five directions

Rituals and guided visualisations allow visualisations and rituals to come in under the radar of our own thinking. Which means that taking part in other people’s rituals and visualisations allows their assumptions and such like to come in ‘under the radar’. Which may or may not be a good thing – at least there is a clear ‘on’ and ‘off’ with such rites and meditations (and if there isn’t
have some serious thoughts about why not!). Overall group rituals are a good thing. But if things ‘don’t feel right’, either at the time or afterwards, then try to become aware of what is going on outside your conscious awareness.

Pagan rituals often ‘call the quarters’ as part of the opening and closing of rituals. As such they are the ‘liminal phases’ of these rites, when ideas and assumptions most easily slip under this metaphorical radar. East as air and inspiration, South as fire and energy, West as water and ‘washing away’, North as earth and darkness and death. But who says? And how does this all fit together into a greater image? And where is ‘here’ in relation to the four ‘theres’?

Simon Danser resolved this very seductively. In a ‘true story’ published in 2011 but describing a ‘walking meditation’ on Alderley Edge at the midwinter solstice (a truly liminal place and time) in 2000, he describes how he had failed to connect with the four directions as I have outlined them. During his solstice walk he was ‘offered’ a more coherent system which embraces the five directions. As already noted, civilisations as diverse as ancient China and medieval Ireland all thought ‘here’, or centre, was the fifth direction. In European occult traditions ‘here’ is the axis mundi or the World Tree.

Danser’s directions form a ‘cosmogram’, a diagram of the cosmos. This is a cosmos which entirely embraces emergence and creativity. He sees east as the ‘sunrise’ of all ideas, where inspiration first begins to manifest as thoughts. These ideas increasingly manifest towards the south, where they gain their greatest form and energy. Things and ideas then diminish towards the west, where they then fall below the horizon into the realms of memory. West is where we should send all the thoughts and ideas which have gone past their ‘use by’ dates – our fears and anxieties, grief and bad habits, and such like.

So far nothing too dissimilar to established symbolism about the directions. Where Danser’s cosmogram really differs is with north. This is indeed the ‘dark realm’ – the one associated with preconscious thoughts, whether desires or fears. This is the
Enchantment is All About Us

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North</th>
<th>East</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dark matter and intuition</td>
<td>Air and the breath of inspiration</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>West</th>
<th>Centre</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water and washing away anything past its ‘use by date’</td>
<td>Earth, here and now</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fire and fully manifest</td>
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domain of inexplicable divination or dowsing responses. We cannot directly see, hear or even feel this realm. And yet it deeply influences our lives.

Just as east and west are the two extremes of a cycle of creativity, from initial inspiration to final ‘disposal’ – via the ‘manifestation’ in the south – then so too south and north are the two extremes of the manifest-and-conscious and the immaterial-and-unconscious axis. Danser deems north to be the realm of the astrophysicists’ ‘dark matter’ and ‘dark energy’ which makes up so much of the universe but which is difficult to detect. I think of north as being like a cave in which other-than-human beings are ‘mining’ a wealth of immaterial ideas and emotions, only some of which we humans will ever be aware of.

I am not aware of anyone else having adopted Danser’s cosmogram. All I can say is that it works well for me. As a metaphor for an ever-emergent cosmos it works even better than cauldrons and rivers. I have combined it with the ‘magma’ visualisation as part of my ‘instant empowerment’ rite, and its longer and more elaborate counterpart.

For what it’s worth I add to Danser’s cosmogram some ideas I picked up from Bill Liddell. He was drawing on a French tradition which refers to the four quarters as ‘castles’. The main attributes are:
| North | earth     | ram  |
| West  | water     | stag |
| South | fire      | bull |
| East  | air       | goat |

If you don’t already have existing associations of ‘beings’ at each of the cardinal points then I can strongly recommend Liddell’s quaternity of cornate quadrupeds.

Interestingly, during the summer the henge at Avebury is home to the Wiltshire breed of horned sheep, making Danser’s sense of Earth and ‘centre’ fit with an adaptation of Liddell’s scheme, leaving Danser’s north to be occupied by a non-manifest (in other words, imaginary) cornate quadruped – specifically invisible unicorns. Works for me!

All is change

One of a number of reasons why Danser’s ‘five directions’ work well for me is that there is a perfect fit with a view of the cosmos as always in a state of emergence. This was the central theme of the previous book in this series, *Everything is Change*. As I hope you have already realised, in many ways the book you are reading ‘pulls together’ the previous four books. But my intention is to do more than ‘sum up’ what has gone before. Instead I am trying to explain why the previous books contain the ideas and suggestions that are in them. Perhaps the reasons why will not always be obvious to you. However, the more you put into practice what I have previously proposed the more readily you should discover the connections for yourself.

This is intentional. You will already have prior ideas about how ‘everything fits together’ and, in all probability, ideas about how to put that view into practice in rituals and daily life. I can only add to that mix, just as I have taken from the ideas and practices of other authors and friends. What you cast aside is in some ways more important than what you retain – just as what I left...
out of this series of books makes them manageable and, I hope, digestible.

There is no one-and-only, fixed way of reading and understanding this series of books. As you change so you will recognise different ideas – and, almost certainly, different ways of linking together the ideas and recommendations. Once you have read them all, not too long afterwards go back to the beginning again and see the initial ideas from the perspective of the later ones, especially those in this book.

The metaphor of a river is perhaps apt. Just as a river is ‘always there’ yet always made up of different water contained by the banks then so too a book ‘contains ideas’ but what your mind makes of those ideas changes in the same way as the water in a river.

That is about as far as I want to go with more profound and philosophical perspectives. I hope I have initiated you into an
ongoing process of dis-enchanting you from the ‘spells’ woven by mass media and social media in the modern world. The rest of this book offers some more ‘building blocks’ you might find helpful for re-enchanting the world in ways which empower you rather than commercial enterprises and their even slimier associates, the politicians.

The chants of enchantments

First and foremost think about the word ‘enchantment’ itself. Central is ‘chant’. The power of the word is indeed central. The Icelandic word for magic, galdr, is derived from a word meaning to chant or sing. Magical staves and sigils are galdrastafur and galdrmyndir, revealing that it was incantations which empowered Icelandic staves and sigils. Furthermore, the female seers, known as volva, could only prophesise if the correct songs, or varthoikkur, were sung correctly.

There are many commercially-successful recordings of Buddhist rites and Benedictine plainchant. They have an ‘otherworldliness’ which Christian hymns entirely lack – although attending an Orthodox Christian service reveals that not all denominations have been purged of affective liturgies.

The right sort of language, and associated gestures and other aspects of performance, can be transformational. This is as true of a ‘timeless’ Buddhist, Taoist, Shinto or other traditional rite as it is of a pop music gig or a political rally. Religious rites tend to use ‘archaic language’, as with the King James Version of the Bible which used words and phrases which were already archaic at the time the translation was prepared in the early seventeenth century. Before then the Latin of the Catholic Church used the same ‘trick’ as the most sacred part of the Mass, the Kyrie Eleison, retained the original Greek even though the rest of the rite was translated into Latin. The Greek phrase means ‘Lord have mercy’ and, intriguingly, was probably used as a blessing long before its incorporation into Christian liturgy. Archaisms incorporate archaisms and all that.
Modern pagan rites have a tendency to use archaisms such as ‘thee’, ‘thou’, ‘whilst’, and ‘amongst’ and sentences with what might be deemed ‘Shakespearean constructions’. This is little different to the King James translation. The technical term is ‘register’ of language. Most of us grew up using a different register when talking to our ‘elders and betters’ than when talking to mates. Not just the omission of swear words and slang but even the way we use more formal sentence constructions. The same would be true of job interviews. We unconsciously slip between different registers several times a day.

The register associated with enchantment may include archaisms. But more probably it includes active sentences which prescribe rather than describe. Pretty much the same sort of register you would most probably use when giving orders to someone. A Somerset curse, published in 1894, includes the following:

Wishing thee neither to eat, drink, sleep or rest
Until thou dost come to me and do my request.

Think of this example from traditional East Anglian magic to ‘prime’ a ‘sprite trap’ (more commonly known outside the region as ‘spirit traps’). I have translated several dialect words to make the meaning clearer:

Thread tie up this sprite
Free us from its spite
Tangle up the bane
Let not a trace remain.

It rhymes and has some sort of metrical structure. If you’re good at that sort of thing you may come up with something as powerful as this curse:

These be seven curses on a judge so cruel:
That one doctor will not save him
That two healers will not heal him
That three eyes will not see him
That four ears will not hear him
That five walls will not hide him  
That six diggers will not bury him  
And that seven deaths shall never kill him.

And if you think that’s traditional then think again. It’s a little-known song seemingly written by Bob Dylan around 1963. Counting is a key technique – counting forwards to increase the effect and counting backwards to diminish, as when trying to overcome an ailment.

As with much else in folklore, three-fold repetition is de rigueur. ‘Vanish, vanish, vanish!’ is good, but the archaism ‘Begone, begone, begone!’ just sounds so much better. Sometimes nonsense words will do, as with the Anglo-Saxon chant which starts ‘Tigath, Tigath, Tigath’. Presumably Tigath, or a similar-sounding word, meant something in an older language. But, although it had become meaningless, it was nevertheless used by speakers of Old English as a ‘word of power’.

The triple expression ‘Erce, erce, erce’ which starts a different Anglo-Saxon rite was perhaps meaningless by the time this chant was written down at the end of the tenth century. But most likely it is a corruption of the Latin ecce, meaning ‘behold’.

The most common three-fold repetition is the names of deities. Most of the Old English chants come down to us in the form which translates along the lines of:

   Up sun high. Down moon low.  
   This bruise will be quite well very soon.  
   In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

There are endless suggestions as to the pagan precursors to the Christian Trinity. Examples from the surviving chants include ‘In the name of God and Wod and Lok’. ‘God’ is an Old English word which was in use before the conversion and just happens to be the word used to translate references to the Old Testament deity. Old texts from areas of England influenced by Scandinavian settlement from the late ninth century onwards use such triple invocations as ‘Thunor, Woden and Frig’. Tiu or
Tew (as in Tuesday and Tescos) is less often one of the thee. Very rarely the names of Germanic deities survive, most commonly Ing, also spelt Ingui.

The Curse of Busla

If you want something more authentic then how about the Curse of Busla from the Scandinavian Bósa Saga, written down in the early thirteenth century:

O’er thy chest such charms now chant I shall
that evil asps shall eat thy heart,
that thy ears henceforth shall hear no more,
and thy seeing eyes leave their sockets,
[...]
If boat thou sailest, shall burst the ropes,
if boat thou steerest, shall break the tholepins
shall the sail-cloth be slit and sag downward,
and all the tackle be torn asunder,
[...]
Shall the reins ravel when thou ridest forth,
shall horses go halt and nags be hamstrung
shall both highways and bridle-paths
take thee where trolls may tear thee straightway,
[...]
May thy bed be for thee like burning straw,
thy high-seat unsteady like heaving sea-wave.
Yet woe awaits thee much worse by far:
if with maid thou meanest a man’s joy to have,
shalt lose thy way then. Doest wish to hear more?
[...]
Shall trolls and elves and tricking witches,
shall dwarfs and etins burn down thy mead-hall
shall thurse hate thee and horses ride thee,
shall all straws stick thee, all storms stun thee
and woe worth thee but my will thou doest!”
This is supposedly a translation into modern English but the translator has opted to translate the Old Norse using many archaic words and constructions, or even retain words like ‘etins’ and ‘thurses’ (preternatural beings who have no counterparts in modern English, although etins were probably giants, but not the same as giants referred to as *jotuns*).

**Protective chants**

When plaiting together three cords for amulets and ritual staffs I find myself automatically ‘weaving in’ a three-fold protection for the wearer or bearer. This can be in addition to any other ‘charges’ put into the amulet itself. So you might want to add an animal tooth and charge that with protection of the wearer. This does not mean hunting some living animal – ‘fossilised’ sharks teeth are fairly easy to obtain and look suitably aggressive. I have come across boar’s tusks in flea markets from time to time. Teeth from a carnivore are of course far more appropriate than those from a more sedate animal. The cord might involve a separate ‘protection’ against the amulet being lost or stolen.

There is no point in being ‘nice’ about things as protection chants are out-and-out curses:

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In the name of Odin, Thor and Ing
If [name of amulet] is stolen
May the thief’s life be misery
May they feel only pain
May they profit not by their own endeavours.
Make this happen three times over
Each time worse than before
May no one lift this curse.
In the name of the three Old Ones
So may it be.
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Feel free to come up with your own three deities and your own three-fold three-times ‘outcomes’. Whatever, don’t forget to say it like you mean what you say! If it doubt, repeat it three times, or even three-times three.
Sometimes the most effective action might be to curse an unpleasant perpetrator with the worst aspects of themselves – repeated three-fold, ‘each time worse than before’.

Note that these chants are a ‘call to action’ but, in addition, they set out a mini-narrative. If this, then this, then that...

Chants of blessing

Lest it be thought – what a wonderful archaism! – that I only weave curses then rest assured that is not the case. I suspect few people will have difficulty finding words and phrases which offer a blessing. For example, the cord for an amulet before going on a long journey could be plaited together while repeating the following words:

May I never falter
    with stars ahead to guide
May I never stumble
    with soft grass to tread
May I never tire
    with the wind at my back
May I never chill
    with the sun on my brow
May I never swelter
    with the breeze in my hair
May I never hunger
    with bread in my belly
May I never thirst
    with mead in my veins

If the amulet is for someone else then use their name rather than ‘I’ and ‘his’ or ‘her’ instead of ‘my’. Try to keep a clear picture of their face in your mind while doing this. Visualise them walking – or however they plan to travel – lit by sunshine with a smile on their face and visibly ‘having a good time’.
If you are just ‘charging’ a general purpose amulet, especially if you have little or no idea who might wear it, then choose words which promote health, wealth and happiness – surely the three ‘aspirations’ most fundamental to human existence!

How to chant

I am no musician. But verses comprising of chords endlessly returning to a dominant may fit in with worldviews which see the universe as a ‘timeless’ one-off creation. But they have too many associations with the braying of hymns and the ethnocentric supremacy accorded to western Classical music. And, frankly, I’ve just heard way too many lack-lustre self-penned songs from earnest modern pagans.

Understand how the modal system of plainchant ‘works’. Research how modal systems of music use variations on a ‘ground’, not chord progressions, as their structure. From Scottish *pibroch* to Indian sitar playing, this is how music was made before the Renaissance. And much of the world’s best sacred music is still.

The internet makes it easy to hear old recordings of the Sami tradition of improvising a *joik* (pronounced ‘yoyk’), with vocal ‘tricks’ which extend the human voice into places that not even Björk managed to get (although her Canadian Inuk collaborator, Tanya Tagaq, more likely has). Meridith Monk is an experimental musician of the previous generation whose recordings may offer considerable inspiration, as too those of Sami singer Mari Boine.

Magical chanting does not need to sound ‘pretty’. Indeed, as I have already suggested, the main requirement is for the words to sound like you mean what you say. A certain ‘gravitas’ – which includes speaking slowly and clearly, and using a deeper tone of voice than normal – is often appropriate. Sometimes, especially when there is an ‘audience’ for your rite, speaking quietly so the words are only semi-audible provides a similar sense of
Beech trees on an ancestral mound near Avebury.

‘theatre’. Such use of *sotto voce* is best used when addressing other-than-human beings, rather than the ‘audience’.

Recordings of traditional magical chanting reveal that many of the people change the shape of their throat so the sounds
become very ‘tight’ and restricted. Often they straddle different ‘registers’, for example on the cusp between normal voice and falscetto or between normal and a *basso profundo*. Once again, an example of ‘liminality’ – not quite one or the other. A great many popular singers straddle one or more registers, especially in rock, blues and jazz. Search out online videos of Janis Joplin performing if you’re not already familiar with her ferocious vocal abilities.

Whether in a building or outdoors select a place which has the richest resonance. Even a clump of trees adds complex echoes which create a sense of ‘presence’. Even more complex echoes can arise in a large room with closely-spaced rafters. A simple rhythmic pulse from a pair of ‘rhythm sticks’ or small and non-resonant drums quickly becomes complex ‘fluttering’ sounds filling the entire room. This is known technically as a ‘standing wave’. When you – or anyone else – speaks or chants the voices merges with this ‘everywhere and anywhere’ sound, enabling any number of ventriloquist-style effects. Standing waves can be set up by experienced players of didgeridoos or a small group of people using the traditional instruments known in English as ‘bull-roarers’.

**What to chant**

You are giving instructions – maybe even orders – to other-than-human entities. Keep it simple and direct. If there’s a series of things to be done, then weave in a narrative so it is more like a story. Practice three-fold repetition, counting forwards or backwards, and other ‘formulaic’ constructions until they come naturally.

To start with you may spend considerable time working out in advance what to say. That’s OK, at least for a while. It is all part of focusing your intent. But don’t get hung up on remembering it word for word because you will stall if you ‘forget your lines’. Don’t even think about making the words into a properly-constructed song, still less a poem. Rhythm, alliteration,
For about a decade I regularly attended the eight-fold annual rituals of a Druidic grove in the East Midlands. As the person who usually baked the bread I was often asked to bless the loaf prior to it being circulated with the newly-blessed mead. Working out what I would say tended to distract me from much of the earlier parts of the ritual. But the Grove was good at raising levels of ‘creativity energy’ – being Druids they called it awen rather than leac. After a while I simply drew this awen into me, stepped forward and improvised. Believe me, they were the better blessings than the mentally rehearsed ones.

repetition all have their place – even rhyme might be appropriate. But none are essential. Keep the words focused on your intent and on words to ‘prescribe’ rather merely ‘describe’.

With a certain amount of practice you should be able to ‘just do it’. Well, not quite. There has to be a preliminary ritual which sets the chant apart from the everyday word – and a corresponding ‘off switch’ at the end. Calling the quarters and honouring the ancestors of place is about as minimalist as I suggest you get. A quick banishing rite right at the start will never do any harm. Crucially you need to draw up (or down) some leac, or whatever you prefer to call it. Only after this can you do ‘the biz’.

After a while you should be able to ‘ride’ the leac in a way that a surfer rides a wave. Just as a surfer cannot plan every twist of the hips in advance neither should you plan every word in
advance. Just as a surfer develops the skills and expertise to ride bigger and longer waves, so too you will have a ‘repertoire’ of words, chants and gestures which you can bring together ‘in the moment’.

Believe me, after a little practice it is so much easier just to ‘jump in’ and do it! You really do need to stay focused – which is what you need to be anyway. No risk of ‘unfocusing’ to try and remember some previously-contrived ‘script’. In the heat of the moment – the full flow of the leac – you will spontaneously come up with much better images and more powerful words than you ever will in advance. You will probably keep things shorter and more intense too! If it seems too short then repeat key phrases three times, possibly adapting the words or the delivery each time.

You can be freer and less self-conscious when working alone, while rites which require being with someone – usually to help heal or otherwise empower them – are probably best based on familiar and to some-extent ‘well rehearsed’ chants and gestures.

**Gestures as shortcuts**

Priests of various faiths and cultures make extensive use of ritual gestures. They are all part of the ‘theatre’ of the rites, just as much as the right words and prayers. But gestures work two ways. They also act as ‘keys’ to unlock specific states of mind almost instantaneously. They can also function as mnemonics for standard phrases. At a pinch they could ‘stand in’ for the words.

You will naturally adopt certain gestures as part of rituals you perform on a fairly regular basis. They may be nothing more elaborate than specific ways of holding your hands and probably the most dramatic will be arms akimbo when ‘calling the quarters’. Kneeling and prostration are almost impossible for my arthritic joints. But I’ve never felt inclined to honour deities in such a manner anyway. If you feel otherwise, go ahead.
Being able to ‘process’ in a dignified manner is a skill worth developing. Neither too fast nor too ponderous, it is different to normal walking. The purpose is the processing, not simply reaching the destination. Indeed, often the processing is to establish a ‘ritual path’ towards an improvised ‘shrine’ or to bless or otherwise empower the bounds of a temporary sacred space. For example, when at pagan camps I feel a need each morning before the workshops and talks have kicked off to take a ritual staff and walk, so much as is possible, a complete circuit around the inside of the ‘bounds’ of the camp. In this case the walk is both the gesture and the ritual. Apart from staying focused on why I am processing this way – although not to the exclusion of saying hello to fellow campers I meet – there is no need for further words or chants.
We are all aware of the range of gestures used by priests, pop musicians, business leaders, politicians and the like. Even a handshake can be a momentous moment, and is never without significance. Some singers are all-but inseparable from their stance at the microphone. Body language is one of our most powerful ways of communicating, but few people are able to ‘read’ it. You’re not a magician until you can read it, use it and – in some situations – suppress or subvert it.

Learn to use a selection of gestures as ‘shortcuts’ to specific words or wishes, to quickly flip in – and out – of mindstates while riding the leac. Unless you really do have some serious performance skills then avoid making it look like a contemporary dance workshop with limbs akimbo in all manner of directions every few moments. Gestures are just as pokey when they’re subtle, so long as they are focused on the desired intent.

**Gestures and sigils**

Think of gestures as close kin to sigils – sigils which are drawn in the air. Sometimes if there are people around you might need to simply visualise doing the gesture rather than actually perform it. That’s fine, so long as you can visualise clearly. If you know the basics of Reiki you will be doing this anyway. By the way, this works the other way too – if you have a powerful sigil then you may want to ‘draw this in the air’. I know someone who, when she really feels a need for an ‘energy boost’, uses her whole body to dance the mental images which are central to Reiki.

With practice a whole series of complex thoughts and actions can be reduced to a ‘sigil’. That does not necessarily mean something drawn. It could be something drawn only in the mind’s eye, or a short phrase or an emphatic gesture. If you’re more musical than me it may be a specific whistle. I’ll share an example.
One of my short phrases is ‘Follow the White Rabbit’. For me this is much more than a quote from *The Matrix* – which in turn is referencing *Alice in Wonderland*. All that is relevant. But for me that phrase instantly ‘summarises’ most of the ideas in the first half of this book, plus some well-rehearsed and oft-repeated ways of putting them into practice. In essence, those few words are an ‘on switch’ for focusing my intent prior to getting on with the ‘next step’. What some of those next steps might include I’ll come to in the rest of this book.

**My way of doing things**

As stated, the remarks in this part of the book are not intended to add up to a complete ritual. Instead they are some of the ‘building blocks’ needed to put together a wide variety of rites. But it is probably helpful to know the order in which I normally put them together!

In my way of doing things I ‘centre’ myself and make myself fully aware of my surroundings. This includes deciding if there needs to be candles or tealights (and whether they are safe), what incense I need to prepare and light, and what – if any – ‘magical tools’ I might need. Sometimes, when away from home, I become aware of the absence of something that would be helpful. Or that the weather really isn’t going to allow for candles or such like. Improvise, substitute or simply visualise.

I have an ‘instant banishing rite’, which I will describe in the next section. In practice I do this visualisation several hundred yards away and then use the walk to the ritual spot to further focus my intents. When I get to the specific place – one revealed to me by a long-dead friend who showed me what healing really could do – I settle into the ‘feel’ of the place for a minute or so.

I then ‘call’ the five directions, starting in the east. I have very specific visualisations for the four cardinal ones which ‘enact’ the properties of emergence and inspiration, full manifestation and ‘washing away’. I end facing north as most of my rites require me to be in touch with the ‘unconscious’ and ‘unseen’
aspects of my thinking. However there are times when the other directions are more relevant, in which case I would face in that direction.

I then briefly honour the ancestors of the place and my tribe. As my ‘main rite’ for this is done in places other than where I normally do the ritual I am describing this is more a quick but intense visualisation rather than a drawn out ‘episode’ in its own right. See Learning from the Ancestors if you need to know more. This is pretty much the same as ‘charging’ a magical tool. There is a difference: once a tool is ‘charged’ you don’t need to redo it as part of every rite you use it for – on the contrary its ‘potency’ is topped up by being used in such rites. In contrast the ancestors need to be honoured as part of every rite.

Next is a visualisation of the molten magma deep in the earth, and a ‘dumping’ of my leac into that ‘recycling centre’. This usually makes me weak at the knees so leaning on a staff which is as tall as me is essential. But then one of my ‘dumpings’ is the arthritis in those knees. Once you feel ‘cleansed’ then visualise the magma’s energy rising up and revitalising you. Depending how much energy you might need for the rite then keep on drawing up energy. Don’t ‘shut off’ this visualisation – keep it going ‘in the background’ as it were so you can quickly top up your leac as and when necessary.

This is a rite I normally do in daytime, although at an especially pokey place in the Avebury henge. Yes there are tourists around, but standing there on my own, eyes mostly closed, with a strange-looking staff, they always keep their distance. If anyone seems too curious imagine a metallic bubble around yourself, which reflects their thoughts back to them, and ‘push’ the necessary amount of leac into that bubble.

At or around full moon I would draw down the moon’s leac – although I usually do this only when I have a specific reason, not just to ‘top up’. When leac needs to be sent on a journey, especially to someone who I can’t associate with a fairly exact location, then I ‘transmute’ the leac into a wyrm which can go off and do the necessary. When done right, this is an especially
pokey version of the rite – so ‘careful what you wish for’ and all that.

Next up is usually a divination along the lines of ‘What do I need to know?’ No matter how much a specific issue is burning in your mind, never assume you already know enough to choose a course of action. Keep the questions as simple as possible – ones requiring a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ are ideal, although not always attainable. Focus on the question, as you would when dowsing, and allowing the mind to remain ‘free’ for thoughts to bubble up. I keep my eyes open, especially for the activities of wild birds. The colony of jackdaws which live at Avebury are never far away. I ‘read’ them, such as counting any that suddenly take to their wings the moment after asking a question. Odd numbers for ‘no’, even numbers for ‘yes’, uncountable quantities for ‘maybe’.

Other unusual behaviour can also be taken as a sign. Clouds, sudden shafts of sunlight, even the odd ways tourists unexpectedly behave, can also be ‘read’ as answers. So long as what happens is sudden and could not have been predicted before asking the question then it is a valid portent. Otherwise I just rely on keeping a still mind so that unexpected thoughts will form clear ripples.

After a few cycles of questions and portents I move on to ‘the biz’ of raising more leac and directing towards the intended purpose. It may be to heal my own aches and pains, or someone else’s, or to raise inspiration for a new ‘project’, to bring new life and a sense of progress to a stalled project, send ‘health, wealth and happiness’ to those I think most in need, or any number of one-off actions.

I then either draw up more leac or dump off an excess – especially if the ritual has brought on sensations of a ‘thick head’– then ‘close the quarters’ and wait until it feels right before moving off. For pragmatic reasons a walk around the perimeter of the henge follows. For those less familiar with Avebury I would recommend such a perambulation before doing the rite.
Never underestimate the potency of ‘just walking’ at a suitably powerful place, while trying to keep your mind free of unwanted thoughts – best achieved by focusing on a visualisation of what thoughts you do want! The ‘right sort of walking’, both urban and rural, is a ritual in its own right. Just don’t confuse it with strolling around chatting to friends.

I make no claims that my way is the only way. However clearly defined starts and finishes are not optional. Rushing straight into ‘doing the biz’ without honouring the spirits of place or asking what you need to know is simply unrestrained megalomania. If you have ways of working in ritual spaces that already work for you then, understandably, these will carry over. But – as with my acknowledgement of the ancestors – important as these might be don’t allow anything too complex to distract from the core purpose of the ritual. Use a ‘shortcut’: a visualisation, a gesture, sigil or ‘logo’, an amulet or other magical tool, or a few focused words of power.

**Instant banishing**

Staying with the *Matrix*, I’ll give an example of how a quite complex idea can be focused down into a single ‘image’. In this case a ‘banishing ritual’ to exorcise the enchantments of the modern world, as outlined in the first half of this book can be focused down to the image of a red pill.

‘You take the blue pill, the story ends. You wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.’

Morpheus’s words to Thomas Anderson in the opening sequences of the first *Matrix* film are rich with meanings and references. But I suspect that I am one of the few people that adopted these remarks as a banishing ritual. Yet as a way of banishing the enchantment of modern society then the ‘gesture’ of taking a red pill is about as focused as it gets.
In case it’s not already blindingly obvious, I am recommending that you visualise swallowing such a pill, not actually doing so. A more traditional occult banishing rite might involve drawing complex magic circles, preparing single sigils, or arcane genuflexions. The modern day ‘opposition’ – the demonic forces you are trying to banish – operate their magic with logos.

All these different methods have their uses, but sometimes the quickest option is needed. When time is not of the essence, include the red pill visualisation as part of more complex banishing rites. Also mime something akin to putting a pill in your mouth. If you can snap your thumb against your fingers at the moment you would have transferred an actual tablet to your lips then that will greatly reinforce the potency of the gesture. Clicking your tongue against the roof of your mouth is another option.

Once you have ‘reinforced’ that visualisation and gesture a number of times, so it is linked inseparably in your memory with the rest of the ritual, then a quick ‘instant visualisation’ followed by the ‘mime’ and audible click will act as an effective trigger.
for ‘all the rest’ of the rite. By all means keep doing the longer ritual when you can, and reinforce the association with the ‘shortcut’. Don’t forget to put some energy into the mini-rite.

I have described this specific example in considerable detail. Apologies to all those readers I am merely teaching to such eggs. In a short book such as this I have no intention of going into such elaborate detail for the other suggestions. I’m assuming you already either have or are willing to develop the skills needed to work out both a longer rite and a potent visualisation, sigil or ‘logo’ and associated gesture (preferably with an audible component – although it can be one or more ‘words of power’ or a whistle rather than body sounds).

What do I need to know?

In my way of doing things I referred to an opening divination, even if the main purpose of the rite was enchantment. When the ritual is primarily a divinatory one then it is even more important that your first question is ‘What do I need to know?’

Why? Self-evidently you are doing a divination rite seeking answers to one or more questions which you don’t know the answer to. Self-evidently there is an implicit belief in some sort of ‘greater force at work’ which does know. Join up the dots… If you don’t know enough to know the answers, why presume you know what the questions are?

Which is not to say you don’t need to focus your intent. But that focus is on ‘resolving a conundrum’, not leaping in with presumptions of knowing what the ‘problem’ is, or presuming that the answer is just a neat-and-tidy yes-or-no question away.

My own preference for divination has long been the *I Ching* (or *Yijing*) which gives answers which may include ‘crossing the great water’. In other words some sort of major journey – whether physical or mental – needs to be undertaken. Whatever ‘system’ of divination you prefer, take heed of any hints that
time is needed for things to be play out or be sorted. Don’t be impatient and expect clear signs right now, even in the next hour, and maybe not even tomorrow.

If at first you don’t get clear answers to key questions, ask a series of yes-no questions about whether you can ever know the answer, or how many hours or days might be needed. If you have experience of dowsing with a pendulum then this protocol of step-by-step questions will be familiar. A pendulum gives clear ‘yes’ and ‘no’ responses, along with a ‘maybe’ or ‘ask me another way’ indecisiveness. With experience the pendulum becomes optional. And, as already suggested, there may be other potents to follow too – although these are often less effective for a series of quick-fire queries.

Don’t be afraid to blur the boundaries between divination and enchantment. As previously discussed, the boundaries you think are there are only in your mind. Immerse yourself in the emergent flow to both ‘know’ and to ‘change’.

Health, wealth and happiness

There are many reasons for sending specific blessings and healings to people. But don’t forget the ‘big picture’ too. Asking for, say, any solution whatever to financial woes is not
appropriate. Is the unexpected death of a close relative who leaves the necessary amount of wealth really what you had in mind? Probably not. Be careful what you wish for…

Remember to always ‘round out’ specific blessings with an overall request for ‘health, wealth and happiness’ or something equally all-encompassing. If you have no specific reason for sending ‘good luck’ to someone then what better to offer than ‘health, wealth and happiness’? And if that prompts the thought that the person does need something extra then, hey, that formulaic phrase has already done some useful work.

**When and where**

In this book and previous ones in this series I have talked about liminal times and places – the boundaries between ‘here’ and ‘there’, and ‘now’ and ‘then’. Almost all societies have traditions associated with ‘rites of passage’, such as birth, death, coming of age, marriage and so forth as these are liminal times in each person’s life.

These boundary zones in place and time – neither ‘here’ nor ‘there’ – often carry with them a sense of danger. The ‘witching hour’ is the time when one day becomes the next. For several centuries this has been midnight. Before then it was just after sunset – the ‘violet hour’ as the ‘dark rises’. This has always been my ‘witching hour’, long before I had any conscious awareness of paganism or such like.

There is a corresponding liminal time at sunrise. You don’t need me to tell you that both these are closely associated with modern day paganism – after all tens of thousands of people gather at places such as Stonehenge and Avebury each summer solstice in the hope of seeing the sun rise. But, largely for pragmatic reasons, most of the year pagans gather for rituals in the evening, at or soon after sunset.

Up to a point this is alright. But never doing rituals at sunrise means you get no opportunity to understand and work with the
very different energies at this liminal time. Living near Avebury means I am easily able to visit both the henge and most of the other prehistoric monuments at different times of day. The times when there are visitors around – mid-morning till teatime – are when the stones and other sites have little or no energy. Sunset is powerful, especially at the Bronze Age burial mounds which encircle the Neolithic henge. But dawn is when the stones inside the henge ‘come alive’. Literally, as there a many of the stones reveal simulacra at this time of day, although each one usually only ‘shows its face’ at fairly specific times of year. One ‘smiley face’ can only be seen for a few days around midsummer.

When standing inside the henge bank the sunrise is delayed by at least five minutes. When it does burst over the bank it can be intensely bright as, by then, it has risen above any distant cloud banks which get in the way when the sunrise is seen from higher ground. There were probably several reasons for creating the banks, but one reason must have been to add considerably to the drama of sunrise, in a way comparable to the morning sun shining through the stained glass in the east window above the altar in almost any church.
The hours of darkness too have their own energy. But it is much more about places ‘pulling in’ energy – as it were ‘recharging’ in time for the dawn. This is time for rituals which require a letting go, a banishment, the suppression of some types of illnesses. Clearly sitting in your living room feeling warm and cosy, even with the lights dimmed down, isn’t what I have in mind. I’m talking about getting out into woodland, perhaps near to burial mounds, perhaps crossings of bridleways. Take care for your physical safety, and do read and take on board *Knowing Your Guardians*.

If you already use ‘sacred sites’ as part of your rites, but only go there during daylight hours, then get to know them at dusk and dawn too. Only if you feel it is right go there in the dark. If the site is simply not suitable for ‘out of hours access’ then consider ‘adopting’ a different site which you can access unobtrusively and safely.
Why liminal times?

Why are these ‘witching hours’ so important? Well magic is itself liminal. Partly because it is considered to fall between what is acceptable and what is risqué or downright forbidden. More importantly because magic works best when ‘tipping the balance’. Working in places and, more especially, times when things are neither quite one thing or its other is entirely consistent with getting into the flow of how things might become.

The twilight between dreams and reality is incredibly potent. This potency is emulated in extended guided visualisations and, with experience, more ‘instant on’ versions of such visualisations. This ‘twilight’ of the imagination is little different to how we remember something or someone who is not in our field of vision, or envisage how the future might pan out. The only important difference is a greater focusing of intent.

These ‘twilight’ times are for divination as much as for enchantment. Many people regard ‘fortune telling’ as something distinct from ‘casting spells’. But knowing the future gives you time to influence the future – either to thwart unwelcome events or to encourage welcome ones. Once you have worked with what divination actually enables then you will begin to recognise that divination and enchantment are just two extremes of a spectrum of activities. Not least because it would be wise to divine for the appropriate enchantment before deciding on a course of action. Or, if the action is deemed essential, to divine for the eventual outcome. Divination along the lines of ‘what would happen if…’ may reveal some unexpected side effects or ‘collateral damage’. The enchantment may need to be modified accordingly.
Divine short, enchant long

One helpful tip I picked up nearly twenty years ago is that divination works best if you try to look no further than the immediate future. This is because more than a few days hence the possibilities may become so complex that almost anything may happen. Of course you may be divining for the here and now – ‘Where are my damn keys?’ – or even for knowledge of the past, as when dowsing at an archaeological site.

In contrast, enchantment works best when you allow time for the universe to adapt according to your requests. Asking for a new house or new car is unlikely to be resolved later today as we all know that the non-magical ways of obtaining these take frustratingly long times. You may be able to speed things up, but such requests may take a few months to play out. Believe me, from personal experience, I can vouch for some quite dramatic

‘Sir Isaac Newton’s Apple’ at Wyndham Park, Grantham.
‘outcomes’ to such requests. But there was about four months between the ‘ask’ and the unexpected ‘get’.

Peter Carroll described this principle in four nifty words: ‘Divine short, enchant long.’ He also advised using magic to influence things which could go either way, or many different ways. Using magic to attempt something which rarely happens anyway is much less likely to succeed. I seem to recall him saying that it was easier to persuade an apple to fall from a tree into your hand at the right moment than it was to persuade an apple to rise from your hand and re-attach itself to the tree.

That said, don’t get too hung up on supposed causality. Correlations are just fine when working magic. Just don’t go for the bullshit of ‘It’s just a coincidence.’ The word ‘coincidence’ is a fudge which is needed – rather too often – when trying to make Western models of causality fit the evidence. I’ve discussed this earlier. ‘Cause and effect’, and the paper-over-the-cracks notion of coincidence have no place in magic or divination. Instead, immerse yourself in the emergent flow of creativity. Learnt to ride and, in limited but nevertheless powerful ways, control some aspects of it.

Bird watching

Be prepared to improvise. When out and about, especially in more rural places, keep your eye out for what the birds are doing, which direction they are flying in. Kestels and buzzards ‘speak’ quite clearly. Magpies are so well established as augurs that the rhymes associated with them are still widely known. There are many versions of counting songs for magpies. One of them goes:

One for sorrow  
Two for joy  
Three for a girl  
Four for a boy  
Five for silver  
Six for gold
Seven for a secret, never to be told
Eight for a wish
Nine for a kiss
Ten for a bird you must not miss

Making up your own variants is allowed. But don’t keep making them up! As I don’t usually need to know whether a boy or girl is to be expected I have a few ‘context-specific’ variants along the lines of an even number for one half of a dualism and an odd number for the other half. The overall rhyme is a healthy reminder that all such pairings are merely part of a more complex whole.

The littler birds too can have their ‘say’. Are they happily feeding and singing out for a mate? Are they easily disturbed by you or a concealed predator? Are they curiously absent from places where you would normally encounter some?

Some people carry a Tarot pack everywhere, or consult the I Ching before crossing the road. I am not, as you might gather, one of them. So long as there are three similar copper alloy coins in my pocket I can improvise. But more often I just use all my senses to engage with a place, to ‘listen’ for portents. It’s all part of ‘listening’ to a place with all your senses, as expounded in the first book in this series.

**Raising leac**

Enchantment only works if you inject enough leac. Chant, dance, even get angry if it seems appropriate – whatever seems most relevant. ‘Hijack’ other people’s energy. This might be done consensually through group rituals. It’s what happens every time a church congregation prays – although in my experience the energy levels are rarely sufficient to achieve very much, least of all the grand ambitions of some of the requests.

In contrast pop concerts, football matches and political protests or rallies generate copious amounts of such energy. Is it little surprise that the associated ‘enchantments’ are so powerful?
Most people regard the hijacking of such energies for magical purposes to be decidedly dark magic. But it’s not the hijacking as such which is ‘off colour’ – only if the intents of the hijacking are not to the common good could it be deemed ‘black’ magic.

**Magic is amoral**

There is nothing about magic which is inherently good or bad. Magic is amoral, by which I mean it is neither moral nor immoral – it just works in ways which stand apart from human conceptions of morality.

Many of the techniques in this series of books could be used for good or ill. The same could be said about driving cars. Most of the time they are used for good reasons. But just because there are some unfortunate accidents, and the occasional intentional death or serious injury, does not mean that cars are deemed to be the work of the Devil.

Personally I think that the enchantments spun by corporate organisations, whether commercial or political, are far more pervasive and morally reprehensible than any sort of ‘black magic’ existing outside the pages of fantasy fiction. Most people simply demonise that which is other to their belief system, which means that much is deemed to be ‘witchcraft’ when it is merely a saner way of seeing the world. Each to their own, and all that.

**Ritual transformations**

When I have written about using alternative personae in rituals – and, with suitable care, in other situations – there has been an implicit assumption that this is essentially a visualisation, perhaps augmented by wearing special clothes or amulets. Frankly, most people do something that when every time they attend a religious rite – whether pagans togging up in cloaks and crystals, or Christians putting on their ‘Sunday best’. 
But there is an even more powerful way of transforming personae. That involves using masks. I’m not thinking so much of commercially-made ones as ones made for ritual use by specialist craftspeople and ones you have made – or at least heavily adapted – for yourself.

Ritual use of masks and transformative face painting is very much part of British culture. Depending whether or not you think of Santa Claus and pantomime as ‘ritual’. Of course they are. And quite magical too. Seemingly perfectly ordinary people – especially men – don false beards or ladies’ dresses and ‘pancake’ make up to act as Father Christmas or panto dames. And often transform their personalities quite radically in the process!

And this is both the advantage and, unless recognised, the danger of masks. Put on a mask and you quickly forget who you are in what passes for the ‘real world’. Masks are among the most potent of magical tools. Taking a mask off usually starts the process of return – but it can take a surprisingly long time. You may need to specifically ‘turn on’ a different persona as well as physically removing the mask. But, used with experience, masks allow for some powerful rites as they allow both an instant switch of persona and also a liminal transformation stage afterwards when you are neither the mask’s identity nor yourself.

Some words of advice. The making of the mask is itself a major ritual. Before you start have a clear idea of what you want the mask to do, of ‘who the mask is’. Do not try to blend in too
many different options into one mask. If you really can’t make your mind up then you make several masks, each with a specific role.

Don’t ‘play’ with a mask. Create a quick ritual (with the all-important ‘on’ and ‘off’ components) to explore the mask’s personality. You will probably find that while wearing it you will start to move and talk differently, perhaps even use words in a different way. That’s all good. Many people create and use animal and bird masks. Predictably they try to emulate the movements and sounds of the relevant species. Don’t be too surprised if you find it hard to use language in a ‘joined up’ way, or simply resort to yelps and chirrups. Just learn to make the mask expressive!

Once you’ve come out of the ritual just put the mask in a special place. Only wear it again within another ritual. Above all, don’t allow other people to play with it.

Just as animals are often fearful in unusual situations, so too expect that your mask will open up a whole spectrum of

Mask-like Twelfth century corbels in the nave of Tickencote church, Rutland.
emotions. Most will be associated with excitement. But be prepared for some intense and potentially frightening thoughts.

Once you have ‘explored’ a mask a few times and begun to understand how its personality is expressed through you then step back. You need to have some sort of sigil or gesture or other ‘instant rite’ which enables you to come back to a dominant persona quickly. The outside world might unexpectedly interrupt you. Or you might find the emotions ‘conjured up’ by the mask to be overwhelming. Prepare a visualisation that allows you to ‘send’ the mask’s personality to a safe place, or to mentally put it in a cage or such like. And follow that with calling up your guardians and dominant persona. Within a well-prepared ritual this should be the dominant persona you most normally adopt within a rite, not necessary the vanilla one you adopt for the everyday world.

Should you ever feel a need to invoke (as opposed to evoke) deities – I never have – then masks are ideal because of the ability to take them off. Even a single deity might have more than one mask to allow different aspects to come to the fore. After all the more magical deities, such as Mercury and Odin, are often regarded as tricksters who can ‘flip’ their *modus operandi* as necessary. Anyone who has watched a traditional Chinese actor perform the multiple mask-changing routine will be able to visualise an especially dramatic version. Truly wonderful masks are integral to classical Japanese theatre and opera. Above all, make sure your ritual clearly plans how you will ‘uninvoke’ as well as invoke!

Masks intended for use in group rituals and theatre are best when they don’t cover the mouth, otherwise it will be hard for other people to hear what you are saying.
Thinking about deities

You may be wondering why I feel little need to evoke deities, still less invoke them. The short answer is that in my ontology such beings are best approached through intercessionary other-than-human beings, such as guardians of place. Previous books in this series, especially Knowing Your Guardians and Learning from the Ancestors say much more.

Whether divining or enchanting, get used to the idea that you are asking a vast sentient being to help. I make no attempt to visualise that being. I am happy to visualise, or even manifest, images of ‘guardians’ and ancestors and such like which will intercede on my behalf. Medieval Christians knew them as saints and in recent times they are often thought of as angels.

Some people try to imagine that supreme being in anthropomorphic form, or at least some specific form. Others

‘Madonna and Child’ by Peter Eugene Ball. Photographed while on loan to Southwell Cathedral July 2008.
create several such specific forms. Some, like me, are happy without the Greater Force taking form. Interestingly, all three ways – one, many or none – seemingly work equally well. Somehow it doesn’t seem to matter whether this Greater Force has form or not. Odds are we simply could not imagine what it is ‘really like’. So long as we focus our intent then that being can meet us half way. That’s all it takes to ‘ask the universe’ – have a consistent and well-visualised intermediary ‘image’ or concept.

Just don’t fall into the trap of thinking that such an image has to be a perfect father figure, an immaculate mother, a swaggering superhero, or such like. The supreme being has a sense of fun too. Believe me when I tell you that dragons and invisible pink unicorns work well as intermediaries…

**Using avatars**

Flip back. The greater force meets us half-way through imaginary or manifest ‘intercessionaries’. There is a need for some consistent ones who are always there to help. But specific tasks can be focused onto specific intercessionaries. Such specific helpers fall under three terms: avatars, amulets (also called talismans) and sigils (which may be gestures or even more akin to logos). Frankly there is not a huge difference. After all an amulet or even an avatar may have some sort of ‘sigil’ inscribed on it, although not all do.

All three enable you to focus your intent on specific outcomes. Use them somewhat interchangeably until you become comfortable with creating and ‘charging’ them with your intent. Don’t confuse things by asking one avatar, amulet or sigil to do two different things. Sigils really should not be ‘recycled’ – even if you need to repeat a specific request then create a new one.

If a task has been fully completed then do a little rite to thank the avatar or amulet. But there is a risk that you may only think the task has been completed – there may be ‘consequences’ which still need to be ‘sorted’. Certainly while a task is ongoing (and
some, like ensuring good health, really do need to be ‘timeless’) keep things well-focused by using avatars, amulets and sigils for one purpose only.

Avatars made from natural materials will naturally degrade over time, and that may be part of the rite. Amulets which are worn have a tendency to get lost accidentally. Just accept that as part of their ‘life cycle’. Perhaps they have gone past their usefulness, or need to be elsewhere to perform their role.

Which avatar – or whatever – to use?

If sending blessing and healing and such like to a person then ideally use an object they have given you. Ideally hold the avatar at the key stages in the ritual. But sometimes an avatar just comes into the mind’s eye without any conscious selection. It may even be a strong image of something you don’t physically own. Go with it. Remember, there’s no such thing as coincidence.

Sometimes it helps to make an avatar specially. In common parlance the item is usually known as an amulet. In some
instance it would be deemed a poppet. Go back to the earlier book in the series, *Knowing Your Guardians*, and re-read the section on making amulets. The whole focus of that book is protective guardians and amulets. But protective amulets are just one type of avatar. Allow the ‘intent’ of that book to broaden and encompass other roles for avatars.

‘Charging’ avatars

There are some basic principles for ‘charging’ avatars, amulets and sigils. Spend time focusing on exactly what you want to change or achieve or whatever. Think about the knocks on and possible ‘downsides’. Minimise the chances of misunderstandings by visualising desired outcomes.

Unless you are already well-experienced in starting and ending rituals and making suitable offerings then have some clear plans, including a list of what actual items will be needed. The location for the rite, an avatar – if used – and such like may also need to be decided in advance. Often somewhere is fairly obvious in the first place – blessing someone’s new home tends to take place in that building, for example – and an avatar may self-select, as with using a gift from a friend to ‘bless’ that person. The process of thinking through may lead to
spontaneous thoughts of where, what and when. Follow such thoughts through if practical.

The actual rite needs to have a clear space and time, as with all rituals. Define the boundaries – perhaps a classic ‘magic circle’, perhaps by walking the boundaries of a specific place. Honour the spirits of place, its guardians and ancestors.

Draw through the *leac* you need. Hold an avatar or visualise a counterpart. Hold that visualisation in your mind’s eye, or focus all your attention on the physical manifestation. Say *exactly* what you want out loud with all the intent you can muster. Repeat the visualisation and ‘enchantment’. And a third time. Stay as focused as you can for a few more moments. Thanks the spirits of place and ‘close down’ the ritual space. ‘Ground’ your own energies through the spirits of place.

If you have used an avatar or physical object then it needs to be given a suitable home. This is often intrinsic to the object – an amulet will probably be worn in some way (if only as a key ring or such like). An object used as part of the blessing of a house will be given to the occupants who will have their own ideas of where it should live. In contrast, avatars used for distant healing tend to go back on the shelf with the others. If you don’t use something they have previously given you then you may want to consider sending the object as a gift. Just don’t explain that it has been ‘charged’. Just send it is as simple gift.

**Let it get on with things**

That’s it. Yes, it really is. Literally. You’ve done the rite, you’ve empowered an avatar, amulet or sigil. There is no need to confuse it by ‘remembering’ it, reminding it or otherwise nagging it. To all intents and purposes let things just happen. Move on to the next reason for such a rite, if there is one. Don’t come back and tinker, even by giving undue thought to the avatar or sigil.
If things don’t seem to be going according to your intentions then maybe do a little divination. Start with some basic yes/no questions: ‘Do I need to allow more time?’ ‘Did I understand the problem correctly?’ And, all importantly, ‘Do I need to do anything more?’ Depending on the answers you may need to do a second empowerment, but in general use a different manifest form. There are exceptions when the amulet creates close connections with the desired outcome. In these cases ‘clean down’ the amulet and start again.

Focus, focus, focus

There are three things which are important for such rites: focus your intent on the intended outcome, focus your intent on the intended outcome, and focus your intent on the intended outcome. Got it?

Friends of mine were looking to move house and collected pictures of the features they wanted they house to have and pasted them on a large sheet of card. Some of those features were unusual – only a few houses in several thousand would have any one of them. One of the features could only be shared by several hundred houses in the whole country. And they wanted to live within a few tens of miles of where they were. Anyone in their right mind would say that the combination could not be achieved in any one house.

I was not aware of this until after they had moved. The first time I visited them I was blown away by the idyllic location. They then showed me the sheet of photos which made up their ‘wish list’. Everyone one of their ‘asks’ – including the one which could only apply to a few hundred homes in the country – had well-and-truly been matched. It was at that point that I realised that ‘asking the universe’ could work serious magic.
The core ‘components’

In the second half of the book I have discussed a number of specific techniques and suggestions which may help you plan and perform rituals. But the risk is that all these examples and for instances simply distract you from what is most essential. So to briefly recap:

- Become accustomed to opening and, more importantly, closing ritual times and spaces.
- Locate yourself in the ‘here and now’, the flow of ever-emergent leac.
- Practice visualising and staying focused on an image or intent.
- Ask ‘What do I need to know?’ and, if appropriate, ‘What should I do?’
- Divination works best for the past, present and imminent future. Enchantment works best if you allow time for ‘stuff to happen’.
- Enchantment works best if you aim to ‘load the dice’ rather than ask for the near-impossible. Be patient and allow time.
- Establish a close connection with the intended outcome. If a physical ‘token’ is not possible then visualise the intended outcome as clearly as possible.
- Enchantment only works if you inject enough leac.

Finally, there is no need to ‘know’ how all this works. Frankly, you never will. On the one hand you could simply believe that it works anyway. On the other hand you need not ‘believe’ in it at all. But, so long as it is done with intent and ‘energy’, it will work...
Wrapping up

If enchantment works for politics, pop music and the endless permutations of fashion reflecting back off social media then it can work for Brand You too. It’s not arbitrary and its not effortless – but it ain’t ‘rocket science’ either.

The more you can understand about how you are woven into other people’s enchantments – those of science as much as religion, those of commerce as much as politics – the easier it is to break out of those enchantments and step out of the illusions and spot the ‘sleight of mind’ tricks that attempt to weasel their way into your mind by ways that avoid conscious recognition and the inherent risks of conscious rejection.

And, rather helpfully, the more you understand about how ‘they’ do it the easier it gets for you to do it too, to enchant others. But bear in mind the words of Robert Cochrane: ‘Magic is the rejection of illusion in favour of what may be a greater illusion still.’ I have never said there are no risks.

Where next?

Way back in an earlier book I mentioned how some of the British pagans in the late 1980s talked about the need to become our own grandparents. Those of us who were actively involved then are undoubtedly of an age to be grandparents. The five books which make up the Living in a Magic Word series have several objectives. But paramount is outlining an essentially indigenous English tradition, one which attempts to understand what the worldviews of the pre-conversion Anglo-Saxons could plausibly have been.

As such it has little in common with Scandinavian-inspired ‘heathenry’ and even less with post-Reformation notions of spirituality which underpin just about all aspects of modern paganism, from Wicca through Druidry to the vast armies of
self-initiated ‘hedgewitches’ and whatever. I have tried hard to avoid making direct comparisons between the Anglo-Saxon outlook and the many various versions of modern paganism. That would simply generate several books worth of ‘waffle’ and endless debates about details which hold absolutely no interest.

Two decades ago Peter Carroll opened my mind to what magic could achieve. In recent years the scant surviving words of Robert Cochrane have suggested just how ‘minimal’ the core ideas can be. But the aim of this series is not to ‘commemorate’ their ideas, nor the ideas and practices of a great many other friends. The aim is to open up new possibilities. In other words, to inspire and empower you.
Acknowledgements

As with all the books in this series my ideas have been inspired by a great many authors – who may be dismayed to see their ideas paraphrased without any reference to their own names. However in such a brief book then such ‘niceties’ must, regrettably, be omitted. Nevertheless, the relevant works are cited in the list of sources.

The ideas in this book have evolved since the early 1980s when my awareness of Tibetan Buddhism and New World shamanism was enlightened by rather belatedly encountering the work of Alan Watts. He opened the door to Taoism – although I was later to realise this was a very Wattsian ‘take’ on Taoist ideas. Subsequently, and in parallel, I delved into Western occultism and pioneering NLP (before it became all-but-indistinguishable from a pyramid-selling scam). The works of Peter Carroll came to my attention not long after this. I was intrigued by the way he used Taoism and NLP as part of a magical system. However I did not share his enthusiasms for either Thelema or H.P. Lovecraft. Some of the other people influenced by his ‘creed’ of Chaos Magick, notably Jan Fries, also inspired me.

Taoist scholarship has moved on radically since Watts’ death and I have attempted to follow developments in the understanding of early Taoism. For about fifteen years I had frequent opportunities to use NLP techniques as part of my day job, and less frequent need to use them in the fifteen years since, although they retain their potency. Taking part in numerous pagan and Druid rituals and workshops has shown to me how different people ‘do’ magic. In parallel I have had the privilege of personal friendships with Michelle Axe, Jamie Blackwater, Anna Franklin, Emma Restall Orr, Poppy Palin, Nigel Pennick and others operating in and around the ‘modern pagan scene’ who have influenced my thoughts and awareness – quite probably more than I am consciously aware.
A number of authors not known to me personally have provided key ideas and are named in the main text, although a few others are named only in the sources. In addition several contributors to The Cauldron, edited by Michael Howard, provided insights into the thinking of Robert Cochrane and how his ideas have influenced a number of people sustaining the traditional ‘nameless arts’. I think of these authors as among my ‘ancestors of tribe’, although at the time of writing this book I’d had no direct contact with living bearers of these traditions.

Without Michael Howard publishing these articles, and also writing several books about the ‘Cochrane legacy’ many of the ideas central to this series of books would not have come so sharply into focus. I make no claims to be part of such a legacy – indeed I am aware of numerous fundamental distinctions – but quite simply without Mike this series of books would not have shaped up in anything like the way they did. Sadly he died on 25th September 2015. This book is dedicated to his memory. Indeed his death was the impetus to write this book in the manner it manifested.

These acknowledgements would not, of course, be complete without acknowledging the inspiration and guidance of ‘Our Ladies of Kennet’ and the land wights and ancestors of Avebury and north Leicestershire.
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Also from Heart of Albion

**Listening to the Stones**

Beatrice Walditch

*Listening to the Stones* teaches you to ‘listen’ – with all your senses – to revered places. Beatrice Walditch uses the prehistoric henge and stone circles at Avebury as her main examples, but wants you to explore and ‘listen’ to sacred sites near to where you live.

This is the first book in the Living in a Magical World series. These books will challenge you to recognise the traditional magic still alive in modern society, and empower you with a variety of skills and insights.

Knowing Your Guardians

Beatrice Walditch

Knowing Your Guardians provides advice and inspiration to help understand the various ways of thinking about protective guardians. Beatrice Walditch mostly explores the traditional ‘spirits of place’ in Britain, although also shows how similar ideas and concepts are found elsewhere in Europe and beyond. She shows how these guardians have long been thought to have a ‘potency’ or ‘luck’. The final sections of the book explain how to make amulets and ‘charge’ them so that they act as personal guardians.

This is the second book in the Living in a Magical World series.

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Beatrice Walditch

In almost every traditional culture throughout the world, including Europe until comparatively recent times, there have been ways of ‘honouring’ at least some of the dead, those who were regarded as key founders and ancestors. Learning from the Ancestors shows how such traditional ways of thinking – and doing – are of benefit in the modern Western world.

Beatrice Walditch mostly explores the ancestors of England, although also shows how similar ideas and concepts are found elsewhere in Britain and beyond. She explains how ‘listening’ and learning from the ancestors should be done in a ritual manner, not necessarily in ways which would be appropriate in other situations.

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