



encyclopedia  
of  
spirits

the ultimate guide  
to the magic of fairies,  
genies, demons, ghosts,  
gods & goddesses

JUDIKA ILLES

# The Encyclopedia of Spirits:

*The Ultimate Guide to the Magic of Fairies, Genies,  
Demons, Ghosts, Gods, and Goddesses*

JUDIKA ILLES

 HarperCollins e-books

*For Leor Warner, Ascended Master (20 July 1941–13 September 2007)*

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## Introduction

### THE PUBLIC FACE OF SPIRITS

Fairies, demons, Djinn, devas, dybbuks, dakinis, Nymphs, mermaids, ghosts, nagas, Orishas, Iwa, *mystères*, Elves, dragons: that's just a few of the many kinds of spirit beings. Considering how many people vociferously refute their very existence, the extent to which spirits permeate modern human culture is astounding.

You don't have to believe in spirits to be surrounded by them. In fact, it's pretty hard to avoid them. Let me repeat: *spirits permeate human culture*. References are so all-pervasive that it can be easy to overlook their original meanings.

#### SPIRITS PERMEATE OUR LANGUAGE

Do you want to flatter a woman? Call her a goddess. If a woman is beautiful, small, and lithe, she might be called a sprite or sylph. If you find this woman inspirational, she's your muse. If she's irresistible, she's a siren. Sprites, sylphs, muses, sirens: these are all categories of spirits.

Names of individual spirits permeate language, too. Want to flatter a man? Call him Adonis or an Apollo. If he's a musician, call him Orpheus. Maybe that beautiful woman isn't small and lithe; maybe she's voluptuous or statuesque, Junoesque, in other words. Coming up with these references is no Herculean task; just a little thought and effort and you, too, will be thinking up dozens. Here's a few more:

The name for the physical condition of an erection that refuses to recede (sometimes to the point of medical emergency) is priapism, inspired by Priapus, a Greek spirit, who, as his votive statues attest, sports a permanently erect phallus. Do you have an enemy, someone who is gunning for you? That person is your nemesis, named for the Greek goddess of justice and vengeance. Ever described being stuck in the office, stuck in an elevator, stuck in a traffic jam or hospital emergency room as like being stuck in hell? You've just evoked Hel, Norse guardian of the realm of death. Trying to seduce someone? Try an aphrodisiac—something evoking the power of Aphrodite, alluring goddess of love and sex.



*Nemesis*, *priapism*, and *aphrodisiac* are elegant words, indicative of a fine vocabulary. Spirits permeate all facets of speech—obscenities, too. Ever muttered, “Oh, Frigg!” in a moment of frustration or told someone harshly to get away from your frickin’ car? That word’s not just a soundalike substitute for a stronger obscenity: it’s the name of yet another Norse goddess, alternatively spelled Frigg or Fricka. A modern obscenity for women’s genitalia evokes the name of Kunti, a very ancient goddess of India, although honestly it’s doubtful whether most of those who use the word have a clue as to its origins or that the word emerged in sacred contexts.

Jumping Jupiter! By Jove! Names of spirits permeate modern marketing and brand names. Before Nike, Mercury, and Saturn named shoes, cars, or even planets, they named deities. It is not that manufacturers necessarily believe in these spirits or consciously wish to pay homage, but that the essences of these spirits have so permeated our cultural vocabulary that all it takes is their names to evoke visceral reactions en masse. For instance, I own lipsticks named after biblical seductresses: Salome, Jezebel, and Astarte. Go ahead and guess whether these lipsticks are bold and bright red or pale pink and sedate.

#### SPIRITS PENETRATE OUR CULTURE

They permeate literature from its earliest days to today’s best sellers. Enheduanna, oldest known author in history, composed hymns to the goddess Inanna over four thousand years ago. Her work remains in print, now in English translation.

Spirits of one sort or another are significant characters in recent favorites like Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* trilogy, Neil Gaiman’s *American Gods*, and Gaiman and Terry Pratchett’s *Good Omens*. *The Da Vinci Code*? Fascination with Mary Magdalen knows no bounds.

Sometimes references to spirits are intended literally; sometimes they serve as allegory or metaphor. Sometimes a spirit’s name is expected to do nothing more than evoke a mood or emotion, create some ambience.

*Maybe* folklore can exist without spirits, albeit in truncated form, but mythology definitely can’t. Worldwide mythology is accurately defined as stories about and involving spirits. An entire literary genre—*fairy tales*—is named for a branch of the spirit world.

Literary classics are populated by spirits (*The Aeneid*, *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *Faust*, *Macbeth*, or *The Tempest*). So are comic books: Morpheus, the Erinyes, Uma, Circe, and Lilith are but a few of the spirits who prowl through their pages, as do Brunnhilde the Valkyrie, hammer-deity Thor, and virtually the entire Nordic pantheon.

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*Folklore isn’t only old. Brand-new folk tales featuring La Llorona, the Weeping Woman, and Bloody Mary, the killer in the mirror, emerge daily. Hawaiian volcano goddess Pelé is the subject of modern urban legends and old myths.*

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Poems are full of spirits: again sometimes the allusions are intended literally, sometimes allegorically. Consider Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* or Christina Rossetti's *The Goblin Market* or various poems by William Butler Yeats. I'm pulling these out of the air, somewhat randomly, in no particular order: thousands of others, maybe millions, could just as easily substitute.

If you have a taste for classical culture, then you may know that the very first official ballet was inspired by the witch-goddess Circe. It was but the first of many. Other dancing spirits include *La Sylphide's* winged Scottish Fairies, *Swan Lake's* secret swan goddesses, and *Giselle's* willies, an alternative name for *vila*, seductive, sometimes deadly, forest Fairies. (Vila guest star in the Harry Potter novels, too.)

Spirits permeate opera: for starters, *Undina*, *Maria Padilla*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and Richard Wagner's entire *Ring Cycle*. (Speaking of rings, spirits are intrinsic to the plots of J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and the *Ring* series of novels, movies, and manga.)

Styles of art, literature, and music may come and go, but the spirits are eternal. They pervade popular music as completely as classical: "Stupid Cupid!" "Cupid, draw back your bow!" "Venus": a hit song twice, years apart, for Shocking Blue *and* Bananarama; "Venus in Blue Jeans"; Bob Dylan's "Isis"; Christina Aguilera's "Genie in a Bottle."

Sometimes references are metaphoric but not always. Sarah McLachlan's touring festival of women's music celebrated feminine power via its very name, *Lilith Fair*, honoring Lilith, rebellious demon-goddess and first woman. Fleetwood Mac's "Rhiannon," ostensibly a song about a Welsh witch, actually evokes a Welsh goddess. Listeners unfamiliar with African-Diaspora religions understood Desi Arnaz's trademark "Babalu" to be a fun novelty number rather than a tribute to a potent West African deity. (See *Babalu Ayé*.) Likewise, the macarena is not just a dance craze but a spiritual tribute, in this case to La Macarena, favorite Madonna of Spanish matadors.

Spirits permeate the visual arts so thoroughly that discussion is almost pointless, it's so overwhelming.



Images of spirits surround us. They are *everywhere*. Cemeteries are filled with images of assorted psychopomps, those spirits who escort human souls to afterlife realms. Garden stores offer stone sphinxes, plaster gnomes, and a vast selection of Aphrodites on the half-shell. Look in store windows and calculate how long until you encounter the ubiquitous image of Maneki Neko, the Japanese beckoning cat, who reputedly attracts customers as if by magic. Mermaids grace the labels of products like wine, tuna fish, and sardines, not to mention Starbucks coffee. Recent trips to the supermarket netted me a bottle of Japanese rice vinegar with a label featuring the smiling face of

Okame, goddess of mirth; a jar of Laxmi brand coriander chutney, named in honor of India's goddess of good fortune; and a bottle of Spanish Rioja wine with a label depicting Ares, that helmeted lord of war.

Visit virtually *any* art museum, except those devoted solely to abstract art, and just try to avoid the spirits. They're pretty omnipresent in museums devoted to history, too. Look at an Egyptian mummy case: it's covered with pictures of spirits. Go visit crafts museums, quilting exhibitions, sculpture gardens: odds are, you'll find some spirit lurking in the works. If the spirits aren't on display, their images are almost guaranteed to be in the gift store, waiting for someone to take them home.

Once upon a time, Western art was entirely "religious": what that means in plain English was that the only officially acceptable art featured images of Christian religious figures: Madonnas, for example. During the Renaissance, as restrictions loosened and artists were permitted to create work that wasn't exclusively Christian, they didn't so much change their subject as broaden it: images of Pagan deities were added to the repertoire. Think Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* or Pieter Pauwel Rubens' epic painting, *The Rape of Europa* (the name of that continent honors that goddess). Even centuries later, the subject of spirits never seems to grow stale: it remained a favorite theme of the Salon Painters, Pre-Raphaelites, and Symbolists and remains popular today. Goddess images permeate the work of modern artists like Nancy Spero, Mayumi Oda, and Niki de Saint Phalle. The Iwa (spirits of Vodou) dominate Haitian art no less than angels and saints once dominated European art. A large void is created in Tibetan art should one remove all depictions of the divine Tara.

Some religions (Islam, Judaism) banish imagery to varying degrees for fear that *any* image may be construed as sacred and thus venerated. In fact, as we'll see, spirits do come in every possible permutation: in the form of humans, animals, hybrids, fantastic creatures, plants, even household appliances.

Frankly, it may not be humanly possible to eliminate spirit-based imagery; they insinuate their identities into geometric shapes, too, most famously the cross, but also others. (Before crosses signified Christianity, they were Aphrodite's special emblem.) The symbols indicating Mars and Venus (&male; and &female; respectively), now frequently serving as a universal code for men's and women's restrooms, identified deities long before they represented genders.

### **SPIRITS ARE RELIGION**

Religion may be defined as veneration of at least one sacred being or deity. Buddhism and Confucianism are often described as philosophies, not religions, precisely because veneration of a deity is not crucial, although neither denies the existence of spirits. Buddhist art is filled with spirits: like pre-Renaissance Western art, it is intrinsically spiritual in nature.

In a museum, objects are neatly and clearly labeled. Although some ancient objects are discovered complete with intelligible inscriptions (much of what we know about Europe's Celtic deities derives from these inscriptions), in general, ancient images are unearthed without labels. Many ancient artifacts, whether depicting rotund women



(the Venus of Willendorf and others of her ilk), recognizable animals (Celtic or Scythian artifacts), or fantastic beings (dragons, griffins, snake-women) are widely interpreted as portraits of the sacred. These assumptions are not wrong.

Throughout time, apparently from our earliest beginnings, people have been inspired to create images of spirits. Spirits may be ubiquitous now; they were ubiquitous way back when, too. Wood, stone, clay, and metal survive best, but vestiges of other arts survive, too. Some of the earliest documented tattoos, for instance, from ancient Egypt, were inspired by images of deities like Neith and Bes. Mummification preserved ornamented flesh so that tattoos survive as testimony to devotion to these spirits.

To this very day, sacred imagery constitutes an extremely high percentage of tattoos. I have a tattoo design book, published recently in Japan; 155 pages are exclusively devoted to tattoos of spirits, multiple images per page. It's only one of many such books (which are not merely recycling the same images). The ancient Egyptian image of the Eye of Horus retains its popularity. Dragons and mermaids permanently grace many arms and legs. Kickboxers favor tattoos of their patron, monkey spirit Hanuman.

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*Synonyms for religion include spiritual tradition and spiritual faith. Some religions/spiritual traditions incorporate references to spirits into their very names: Shinto means "the way of the spirits"; Santeria means the religion of the "saints," a euphemism for once-outlawed African spirits more accurately called orishas. Vodou literally means "spirit." Spiritualism and Spiritism/Espiritismo are systems of contacting and honoring spirits.*

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Spirits aren't snobs: they permeate kitsch and fine art alike. Gift stores are filled with little, inexpensive Fairies, pixies, and mermaids. Virtually every Wiccan, Pagan, or occult-oriented store around the world sells reproductions of ancient statues of deities, as well as jewelry and gifts inspired by these spirits. Catalogs representing a wide variety of spiritual traditions sell goods inspired by an ever-growing number of spirits. Collectors of Lladro porcelain can purchase images of India's elephant spirit, Ganesha; Lakshmi, Goddess of Wealth; and the Medicine Buddha. If you prefer Wedgwood fine china, you can collect images of Aurora, Goddess of Dawn; the Horae, Greece's dancing goddesses of the hours; and Aphrodite, Lady of Love. Did someone say Santa Claus? Let's not even go there. Discussion of Santa's legion of images requires its very own encyclopedia.

There's also virtually no point in attempting a brief discussion of spirits in the movies. It's impossible: the list is endless. Up until now, I've avoided that special category of spirit: ghosts. Once included, that previously already endless list increases *exponentially*. Without ghosts and demons, the hugely popular genre of horror films is reduced to little beyond mad scientists, psychopaths, and slashers.

Fairy tales aren't the only literary genre named for spirits; ghost stories rank among the earliest surviving pieces of literature. The ancient Egyptians *loved* them, as did the

ancient Chinese. Their appeal remains undiminished. Travel around the world; study the folklore of every culture. It's hard to find a place lacking suspenseful ghost stories.

The spirits aren't going away. We are not outgrowing them. They are not passé but are keeping pace with modern innovations.

On a spiritual level, Ogun, West African spirit of iron, and Brigid, Irish spirit of smithcraft, no longer have enough smiths to keep them busy. Tireless, energetic beings, both now demonstrate interest in modern technology, especially if it involves metal. Having trouble with your computer or your car? Call on either one for help. (See their individual encyclopedia entries for further details.)

On a popular level, eliminate vampires, ghosts, demons, and extra-terrestrials (yes! See the entry on page 396 for more details), and how many television shows have also fallen by the wayside? *Supernatural*, *Medium*, *Dr. Who*, *Charmed*, *The Ghost Whisperer*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, and lots more. Computer games, manga, and anime? All totally permeated by spirits: *Spirited Away*, *Demon Diary*, *Age of Mythology*, and *Hell Girl* are just the first to randomly come to mind.

Pokémon characters are based on ancient Japanese spirits. Yu-Gi-Oh!, another juvenile phenomenon, makes *constant* reference to spirits of old Egypt. Video games without spirits? Again, you've just gutted an entire genre. As anyone fascinated by spirits can attest, online research is virtually impossible as attempting to conduct a search via names of even the most obscure spirits results in sites devoted to role-playing games, video games, and Dungeons and Dragons, not the anticipated scholarly works. Clearly, spirits are important to people, one way or another, for one reason or another, even if only for entertainment.

Spirits have traveled with humans from our earliest days, maybe even from Day One. Just try to find a creation myth from anywhere in the world that doesn't involve a Supreme Creator, spirits of creation, or at the very least, some assistance from a spirit.

Spirits create the universe. Spirits hang the sun and moon in the sky. Spirits *are* the sun and moon *and* the sky! Typically, spirits create us.

Agriculture? Weaving? Medicine? Fire? Freshwater? Check the myths: inevitably anything important is a gift from a spirit. The alphabet? The Egyptians credited it to the primeval spirit Thoth. The calendar? Ditto. The Egyptians said Thoth created that, too. First book in the world? Once again, the Egyptians gave credit to Thoth.

Something may be mystical or practical, crucial or extraneous; regardless, there's probably a myth ascribing its origin or transmission to one or more spirits. Even our ability to reproduce, according to myth, is dependent upon the spirits: an Indonesian story suggests that people were basically too stupid to figure out childbirth without spiritual intervention. Men were cutting women open to extract babies, performing primitive, invariably fatal Caesarean sections. A crocodile spirit complete with doctor's bag came to our rescue, explaining natural childbirth. Alternatively, myths from Africa and Asia suggest that snake spirits physically demonstrated childbirth techniques directly to women. Vestiges of the shimmying motions they taught survive in Eastern dance (belly dance), yet one more art form with profound ties to spirits.

Spirits are involved with creation, birth, and every aspect of life. Literally our spirit guides, they journey through life with us, teaching us, protecting us, haunting our dreams, inspiring us, sometimes scaring us, accompanying us every step of the way and beyond.

Consider death. What happens to us? Where do we go? Myths about death lacking spirits are about as common as creation stories without them. Virtually every heaven, hell, or other traditional realm of death is populated and supervised by spirits. Never say never, but I can't think of a belief in an afterlife that doesn't involve some sort of sacred being, from Saint Peter at the pearly gates to angels floating on clouds to the aforementioned Hel to Zuni dance halls of the dead to the roadhouses of the Pagan Irish Otherworld where guests drink and feast to their hearts' content. How do we get to these afterlife realms? How will we know the way? Invariably a spirit is there to guide us.

Yet historically, spirit-human interactions have not always been happy and pleasant, not because of demonic attack but because people relentlessly persecute other people for their beliefs in spirits. A historic fact for at least the past couple of thousand years (not a mere blip in time) is that people exist who will torture and kill other people and make their lives miserable because of the spirits they venerate or the spirits they *won't* venerate. For example, the Spanish Inquisition, the witch trials that intermittently gripped virtually all of Europe for centuries, and the violent persecution of indigenous religions on *all* inhabited continents.

While there's less spirit-inspired violence in secular societies, still spirits are expected to stay in the space allotted them, which is usually commerce. Medusa is the face of Versace, its corporate logo. You can buy a T-shirt or lunch box displaying images of Kali but if you openly discuss believing in the true existence of these spirits, you will make many people very nervous. Your sanity or at least your level of education may be questioned.

Organized religion tends, at best, to be ambivalent toward individual human-spirit interaction. Why this is so will be discussed later; however, suffice it to say that mainstream society in very many places on Earth discourages overly enthusiastic veneration of spirits. It's okay to put their images on food labels or other products, providing these are considered mere ornamentation. Learning the "truth" about Santa Claus—that he doesn't exist—has become a modern rite of passage.

So why won't spirits go away? Why don't we forget about them? Why is our fascination with them so persistent? There has been a popular resurgence of traditional spirituality (read: interaction with spirits) in modern industrialized nations, yet this does not nearly account for the sheer *pervasiveness* of the spirits around us. If anything, spirits are *more* pervasive than they were fifty years ago. New forms of media, technology, and entertainment have created portals for these spirits that previously didn't exist. Spirits are legion; they surround us; they are *everywhere*.

Days of the week? Named for spirits. Wednesday is Woden's Day; Thursday is Thor's Day. Not just in English, either: *Mardi* ("Tuesday" in French) is the day dedicated to Mars; *Mercredi* (that's Wednesday) invokes Mercury, also a traveling spirit of magic,

just like Woden, with whom he shares the day.

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*“Folk religion,” which emphasizes spirit-human interactions, as opposed to a more impersonal, abstract emphasis on ethics, is generally considered déclassé and is discouraged or actively repressed by authorities of all kinds.*

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Months of the year? Once again, named for spirits: January for Janus; May for Maia. Juno, a very important spirit, gets two months: June and February, named for her title, Juno Februata, variously interpreted as Juno of the Fever of Love or Juno the Purifier. That’s why marrying in June is considered so lucky: Juno is the goddess of marriage. Marry in her month and obtain her blessing. Again, this isn’t just some English language affectation: the Hebrew month of Tammuz commemorates the goddess Ishtar’s doomed divine lover.

Names of months not evoking spirits seem consciously named so as to deliberately *not* invoke them. Often they lack names but are merely numbered: October is literally the eighth month; November the ninth; December the tenth, as in the *decimal* system, a numeric system based on a count of ten. (Yes, October, November, and December are now respectively the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth months of the Western calendar, but the names derive from a time when March, Mars’ month, was the first month of the Roman calendar. The calendar was revised, but the names of the months were not.) Either spirits are crucial to humans or, based on our vocabulary, maybe our imagination is just really limited. We can’t seem to think of creative names without dipping into the well of spirits.

The cities we live in? Yep, named for spirits—lots of them! This is partly out of affection and respect, but also partly because, like marrying in June, honoring a spirit by naming something important after it was once commonly believed to invoke, even force, a blessing from that spirit.

- Lyon, France, honors Celtic deity Lugh.
- Paris: one theory of the name’s origins suggests that it means “city of Isis.”
- The Moroccan city Tangier is named for the local goddess Tingis.
- The list of places allegedly named after Neolithic goddess Car includes Carthage, Corsica, and Carcassonne, just for starters. (Yes, the words *car* and *chariot* are also believed related. Look at her entry on page 316 for more details.)

Planets? Once again, named after spirits. Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto name our planets as well as some of the most significant members of the Roman pantheon. Perhaps you consider Pluto a “dwarf ice planet” now or an asteroid? No matter; even those are all named for spirits, too: Vesta, Juno, Ceres, Pallas, and so forth.



Pretty much everything in space, unless numbered, like those months, evokes a spirit: Chariklo was the name given to centaur number 10199. (Centaurs are a kind of icy planetoid located between Jupiter and Neptune. See, even brand-new space phenomena—like *dwarf* ice planets—are named for old spirits.) On the other hand, the extra-solar planet (meaning, beyond our solar system) now technically termed HD 209458 b was once informally called Osiris.

A trans-Neptunian object discovered in 2003 has been named Sedna. We've ventured far from the Roman pantheon that dominates most of space, yet the name still evokes a spirit, in this case, the Inuit goddess of the depths of the sea. Space phenomena that may or may not even exist are also named for spirits: for instance, the theoretical Dark Moon Lilith or the yet-to-be-discovered planet, Vulcan.

But really, there's no need to look to the heavens. Just go outside and look down at the ground. Our very own planet's name, Earth, honors a Germanic goddess, Herta, also spelled Eartha.

Why are these spirits so pervasively ever-present?

Well, at the very least, spirits, whether you believe they genuinely exist or are figments of our collective creative imagination, enrich our lives. They fascinate and enthrall us. Myths, legends, and stories comfort us and provide solace in times of need. They entertain us. They bring us fun. Clearly, considering the number of artistic works they inhabit, they are inspirational. Does anyone seriously believe that the ghost story will ever be eradicated?

Fun, entertainment, inspiration, comfort: that's actually quite a lot, certainly enough to justify millennia of attention from all over the world. The spirits in this encyclopedia represent every inhabited continent, deriving from many cultures, eras, and spiritual traditions. Some of these spirits currently possess millions of devotees; others are barely remembered.

Within this book you'll find individual spirits of varying degrees of power as well as types (genres) of spirits from all over Earth:

- Astarte, Azazel, Baal, Asherah, and other spirits of the Bible
- Mermaids from every corner of Earth
- East African Zar, Irish Sidhe, and Burmese Nats
- Japanese kami, kappa, oni, and onryo
- Pomba Giras from Brazil
- Spirits of Vodou, Santeria, Umbanda, and Candomblé

Awaiting you among these pages are spirits of fertility, birth, healing, love, death, and destruction; spirits of disaster relief and those of good fortune; spirits whose

primary purpose is to relieve world suffering, as well as a few who really enjoy stirring up trouble.

Meet spirits of disease, cat goddesses, dog demons, vampire pumpkins, guardians of children, and guardians of cadavers. Discover suppressed Celtic goddesses, secret goddesses of the Kabbalah, female Buddhas, Demeter's *other* daughter, African Powers, Dragon Queens, White Ladies, Black Madonnas, the Green Man, the Peacock Angel, lots and lots of ghosts and Fairies—some helpful, some not—and many, many more.

You'll find a host of rainbow serpents, Dragon Kings, night walkers, party animals, and *Kel Asuf*, Tuareg Spirits of Solitude. Primeval spirits rooted in the mists of time mingle with brand-new spirits only now emerging.

Their myths and legends will entertain and move you. Some may provide moral guidance and inspiration; others offer welcome chills of horror. Hopefully, many will provide creative inspiration so that the list of books, movies, music, and art in which they star continues to expand exponentially. If this is sufficient for you, then this encyclopedia's over one thousand spirits await you. No esoteric knowledge is needed to enjoy the pleasures of their company.

However, if this is not enough for you, if you seek more from the spirits, then keep reading. We've just skimmed the surface.

#### THE SECRET LIVES OF SPIRITS

What more *could* you want from spirits? Well, what would you like? What do you need? What is missing from your life?

- Your desires may be material (money, prosperity, a better job, a home).
- They might be emotional (true love, an acceptable spouse, a child).
- You may seek a cure for an ailment that defies conventional solutions.
- You may need protection (from an abusive spouse, partner, or relative; from enemies, ghosts, eviction, bad influences, or even from yourself).

You may need a miracle. You may seek comfort, vengeance, reconciliation, or justice. You may not *want* anything per se: maybe you just crave the company of spirits. Perhaps you long to feel the presence of the sacred. Maybe you'd just like to personally unravel some mysteries of the universe: to truly *know* whether or not spirits exist.

Maybe there is a spirit who calls to you, who fascinates and enthralls you (Rhiannon, Lilith, Oshun, whomever). You'd like to bring this spirit deeper into your life; you'd like to experience its presence firsthand. All this and more can be had.

Name your desire, secret hope, wish, or fear: a spirit exists who can fulfill or prevent it as needed, who can help you make your dreams come true. Somewhere out there, one or more spirits are waiting to work with you. Working with spirits is not exactly like finding a genie trapped inside a bottle or rubbing an old magic lamp, but those legends do possess a kernel of truth. Spirits really do protect and provide for people.

Here's an open secret: spirits do more than pervade literature, advertising, games, myths, and movies. They also walk among us. Some may find that statement shocking or surprising, ludicrous or laughably absurd, but for *many* people, all over Earth, coming from *all* walks of life, unconventional and conventional alike, it's a statement of basic, obvious fact.

There has *never* been a time when a substantial number of people did not consider the presence of spirits to be part of normal reality, including right now. There has *never*, ever been a time when people and spirits did not communicate and interact with each other, including right now.

Among those who work with them, the presence of spirits is generally perceived as positive, a *blessing*, rather than the opposite. Interaction and communication with spirits is usually beneficial; at least from the perspective of those who actually know them. Those who loudly proclaim otherwise tend to be religious disciplinarians with a vested interest in other peoples' spiritual choices.

Working with spirits is a shared and universal human experience. *Every* group of people *everywhere* on Earth has some history of spiritual interaction, whether or not it is publicly acknowledged, whether or not it is currently celebrated, condemned, or suppressed.

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*Spirits are world travelers. They mingle among us everywhere. Spirits travel with people to new places where other local spirits await. If you were searching for common denominators shared by all people everywhere, chief among them, aside from the most basic biological needs, are experiences with spirits.*

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Right now, somewhere on Earth, on each and every continent, people are actively, consciously venerating, petitioning, thanking, channeling, communicating with, interacting with, and/or pleading with spirits. What do they seek?

- Healing
- Protection
- Prosperity
- Happiness
- Power
- Direct contact with the sacred

People haven't been doing this futilely for thousands of years because there's nothing else for them to do with their time. Spirit veneration has survived and thrived despite thousands of years of brutal opposition because it produces joy, success, and positive results. In fiction, people run from vicious spirits, but in real life, people actively seek

their presence and have historically suffered tremendous persecution in order to maintain relationships with spirits because the rewards are immeasurable.

Thousands of years of propaganda to the contrary, encounters and experiences with spirits are generally positive. That's why people keep seeking them out. Rather than wreaking havoc, spirits help, protect, and guide us. They rescue us from all sorts of disasters, performing miracles, and providing lifelines when conventional solutions fail.

Requests for contact, personal encounters with spirits, and rituals honoring them are occurring *right now* in modern, highly populated, sophisticated cities as well as out in the boondocks and everywhere in between. I feel absolutely confident writing that no matter when you are reading this, people are engaged in some sort of spiritual interaction.

Yes, some of the people engaged in these activities may be poorly educated or of low intellect, but others are academics, engineers, physicians, and other highly educated professionals of all kinds. Presumably some *are* delusional, but most are not (and anyway, plenty of certifiably delusional people fervently deny the existence of spirits, too. There's no proof in that, one way or the other.)

Those acknowledging the existence of spirits subscribe to every possible religious and political persuasion. (Despite Marx's aphorism about religion being the opiate of the people, many Italian Communists claim the Black Madonna as a fellow traveler.)

Those who venerate or work with spirits don't consider themselves "believers": they *know* their own experiences to be valid and true. Others, having had no experiences with spirits (or being unable to recognize them), do *not* know this to be true and may assume—and insist—that what isn't true for them can't possibly be true for anyone else.

It is possible that not everyone experiences the world in exactly the same way, and so there's no point in arguing: tolerance may be the wisest course of action.

- For those who are already devotees, no explanation is necessary.
- For those inclined otherwise, no explanation may be sufficient.
- For those who are curious or "on the fence," familiarize yourself with the rules and methods of spirit working and find out for yourself.

#### **THE FIRST LESSON: ANYONE CAN HAVE DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE DEITIES, NO MEDIATORS REQUIRED**

If you consider all the implications of that statement, then you will understand why authorities of all kinds, secular and religious alike, have historically attempted to suppress spirit working and its close relative, shamanism. Working with spirits instills independence and personal responsibility; it does not encourage passivity. Working with spirits offers each individual direct access to the higher powers.

*This* is why people can't forget the spirits. *This* is why people won't abandon them, despite persecution. *This* is why stories, legends, and myths about spirits have been recounted for thousands of years. *This* is why people are willing to die for them:



- During the European witch craze, veneration of spirits like Diana, Freya, Herta, and Hulda was forbidden on pain of slow torture and death. Yet Inquisition records show that, for centuries, many defied these restrictions.
- Kidnapped Africans, sold as slaves in the Western Hemisphere, were forbidden, on pain of horrific torture and death, to venerate their old spirits. The proof that they continued to do so anyway is demonstrated by the survival and vitality of various African-Diaspora spiritual traditions.
- The Bible records the number of times the image of the controversial Hebrew goddess Asherah was removed from Solomon's Temple. Clearly someone kept putting her back.

Why? Because whenever times are trying and tough, people turn to spirits. Not because we are foolish, superstitious, and ignorant, but because over millennia, spirits have developed a track record.

#### **BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH SPIRITS**

- Spirits and the process of working with them bring joy
- To be in the presence of spirits is to be in the presence of the sacred.
- Working with spirits is a conduit to ecstasy.
- Spirits help us fulfill our dreams, save us when we're in trouble, and provide healing when conventional medicine throws in the towel.

Apparently our fascination is mutual: spirits have consistently proven to be as interested in us as we are in them. (At least some of them; those with absolutely no interest in humans are probably of no concern. You are unlikely to ever encounter them.) It's not just that we can't forget them; they can't seem to forget us, either, or leave us alone. And, in general, as many people know, that's an extremely good thing.

Yes, every once in a while, negative experiences occur: a ghost gone astray or an angry spirit encountered. Some spirits are less pleasant than others. Yet this shouldn't be cause for panic; these situations can be effectively dealt with, *if* you know what to do.

This book is a practical guide to spirits, identifying many by name and type. It contains information regarding what to expect from spirits and methods of venerating and working with them (or avoiding them, if you choose). Before any of this can be accomplished, however, let's first establish: what are spirits anyway? Let's explore the *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why* and, maybe most crucially, the *how* of working with spirits.

#### **WHO OR WHAT ARE SPIRITS?**

Spirits are powerful, independent entities who resist human efforts to define them.

That's the absolute most simple and most basic definition—and ultimately the only one you really need to understand in order to work with them. More complex definitions exist, too; lots of them. For millennia, mystics have cataloged complex, esoteric cosmologies explaining the true nature of the universe including spirits. If this fascinates you, a lifetime can be happily spent in study and exploration. However, this is not necessary for practical interaction with spirits any more than really understanding exactly how the lymphatic or endocrine systems work is required for close, personal, satisfying relations with other people.

Spirits are ephemeral, volatile, fluid; they can be hard to pin down. Spirits have specific names, personalities, and responsibilities, but sometimes spirits masquerade as each other. Sometimes one spirit answers to many names. Sometimes one name may be used by several spirits. Sometimes several spirits share one image.

Confused? Then you're on the right track. Working with spirits is not like buying a carton of milk. Requesting a miracle is not like requesting a time-share or bank loan. As familiar as spirits can become, they are *never* commonplace, but always awe-inspiring. Although an intrinsic part of our world, spirits always remain out of the ordinary.

A common synonym for *spirits* or *deities* is *mysteries*. (It's even more common in French and Spanish: *mystères* or *misterios*.) Spirits are among the universe's true sacred mysteries. If you are looking for something easy to define, control, comprehend, and pigeonhole, well, forgive me, but you're in the wrong place.

Spirits resist easy categorization. Spirits challenge standard modern axioms of space, time, and reality. There are valid reasons why so many have a hard time accepting their existence. But, be that as it may, as those who have had direct experience with them can attest, they are genuinely here among us.

Modern scientific method requires predictability, uniformity, standardization, and the ability to reproduce results on demand. Modern scientific method is a human construct, created by people to fulfill human needs, goals, or desires. The spirits don't play by those rules. Some mysteries of the universe defy human control and complete comprehension, spirits foremost among them.

Contrary to scientific method, spirits offer results as they please, when they choose. If anything, *we* are *their* lab rats. Sacred texts, myths, and legends recount innumerable instances of spirits testing humans. The most famous examples derive from the Bible, most explicitly in the Book of Job. Odin travels the world personally testing human hospitality, as does the Prophet Elijah. The myth of Santa Claus checking who's been naughty and who's been nice is a vestigial memory of spirits testing humans before deciding whether to dispense gifts or punishment.

Spirits are living, intelligent, sentient, and willful. They live *outside* our imaginations. We didn't invent them or make them up, although we have certainly embellished and twisted many of their legends.

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*You don't need to memorize every detail about every single spirit. However, you do need to*

*familiarize yourself thoroughly with any spirit with whom you wish to work.*

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Spirits are alive in their own way, which is not exactly the same way people or animals are alive (especially those ghosts). No existing word may adequately express the manner in which spirits are alive, but that is an inadequacy of language. Attempts to surmount this inadequacy have led to common paradoxical terms like *undead* or *the living dead*.

Spirits are animated, capable of communication, travel as they please or are ordered, react to stimuli, and demonstrate individual personalities and emotion. Not all spirits are immortal, but in general, even those who are not possess life spans so long that, for all intents and purposes, at least from our perspective, they might as well be.

Spirits possess their own kind of consistency. They are true to their own selves. They possess their own rules, but generally those rules have existed for hundreds, if not thousands of years. If you familiarize yourself with individual spirits *before* working with them, there should be no unpleasant surprises.

Those spirits who are temperamental, prone to violence, perpetually grouchy, or pranksters make no pretense of being otherwise. They are who they are; they make no secret of their nature. Loki, Papa Legba, and Mercury are unabashed tricksters (Norse, West African, and Roman spirits respectively). Kwan Yin, goddess of mercy, is forever patient and loving, but sacred harlot Pomba Gira makes no such promises.

Some people keep their deepest desires secret, but the spirits' own needs, desires, dislikes, and predilections tend to be up-front and on the table. Information required to work with many of them is straightforward. Spirits may appear in different forms or manifestations, but each still has a basic nature, a true essence, that remains consistent.

- The Barons and Gédés, Haitian spirits of the dead, adore profanity and ribald humor.
- Yewá, a cemetery spirit, despises vulgarity. If you utter an obscenity in front of her altar, don't expect favors.

Spirits are generally invisible, although many can make themselves selectively visible when they choose. All that open space surrounding you? That seemingly empty air? Many claim that it's actually filled with all kinds of spirits. The Talmud suggests that it's a good thing that spirits are invisible: if we could actually see all the myriad spirits constantly surrounding us, we'd drop dead of shock, awe, or fright.

Spirits most often show themselves to people in dreams, but sometimes people see spirits while they're awake, even when other people present are unable to do so. This may be because the spirit wishes to communicate only with that person or because, for one reason or another (high fever; intense hunger or emotions;entheogens), the filters that normally prevent us from seeing spirits have, at least momentarily, slipped. Visions are also sometimes shared; spirits may manifest themselves to groups of people,

simultaneously or not. I once lived in a house where several people saw the same ghost. We all shared the same experience, but independently, not at the same time.

Some special people possess the power to consistently see spirits even when others can't, with or without a spirit's permission. Sometimes people welcome or actively seek this power, which may be the conscious result of intensive spells and rituals. (Some spirits also bestow this ability.) Others just see spirits, whether they want to or not. This person may possess specialized vision or lack standard filters.

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*The little boy who sees dead people in M. Night Shyamalan's 1999 movie The Sixth Sense is terrorized until he understands his gift and learns to interact with the ghosts, rather than vainly attempting to flee from them. Once the ghosts are accepted and understood, they stop being so terrifying for both the boy and the movie's viewers.*

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Some cultures and traditions perceive this power as a sacred gift: people are taught to use and control their abilities for their own benefit as well as for the community at large. Other cultures and traditions perceive this ability as dangerous, scary, diabolical, a mark of Satan, or alternatively as preposterous and unbelievable, hence a sign of mental illness. In fact, it *can* be very traumatic to consistently see what others cannot, especially if living among those who fear, despise, deny, or disparage this talent, and most especially if lacking the knowledge to control this power.

Many spirits shape-shift, meaning they assume different forms. In general, specific spirits consistently manifest in specific, recognizable forms. They own different forms the way you or I own different outfits. Some have more extensive wardrobes than others.

It is crucial to remember that, regardless of how they appear, whether in grand or humble form, these are really sacred beings of spirit and energy. They may resemble a person, animal, bird, or bug, but that guise is a cloak. Most spirits are aware that humans generally find it difficult to communicate with anything except another human—or at least something resembling one. Hence, when spirits wish to communicate or make their presence known, many do so in a form that we can understand and handle. (Of course, there are also those spirits who don't care and may even enjoy being terrifying.)

There are some stupid spirits. (Again, no surprises: their reputations precede them.) Some possess vulnerabilities that make it easy for humans to manipulate them, but in general, spirits are smarter and stronger than people. They truly possess the magic powers of our fantasies and dreams.

There are many different types of spirits. Not all spirits are of equal power. Some spirits profess to be supreme creators (of all or part of the universe; of us). These spirits may or may not be one and the same, just using different names in different places and