

## MERCURY'S MUSE

Maya Doytchinova

It all comes down to Mother Earth. Gaia.  
The blossoming trees deeply rooted,  
the crocuses popping out of every slap of soil tucked in between street corners and busy roads.  
The breath of life, or rather a long-awaited sigh finally being released.  
Mother Earth's magical essence holds her power close to heart.  
Through waves of birth, becoming and mortality.  
A cyclical presence that will behold her absence, only to rise again.

The in-betweenness is captivating, one might say.  
The conscious or unconscious streams of life passing through.  
While ways of knowing, ways of being come in any shape or form, listening holds its rarity.  
The constant need for movement aims to fill a void.  
To rebuild, to requestion an answer that has already been told.  
The questioning, the searching, it might very much be human.

Listening, observing, its silence. Surrendering to the air.  
The answer might be the breeze brushing through the daffodils,  
an early morning gush of wind slightly icy, slightly fresh.  
The whisper of Mother Earth holds her time.  
Her own time, her own magical time to behold for the one who is simply *there*.

Lisa Marie Sneijder

“Do you believe in magic?” A deceptively simple question. One that I admittedly regard with suspicion as answering feels too revealing. I can almost feel my body closing in, preparing defense, as what is more susceptible to ridicule and judgment as exposing one's own belief, especially an assumingly peculiar one? But I persist; I will show you mine even if you do not show me yours. My answer is yes. I do believe in magic. In fact, as the quintessential modern millennial woman, I have created my own job description that works directly with it. So imagine my surprise shortly after agreeing to write on this subject when I realized that I had no clear definition of what magic really is.

Coming back to the question at hand: “Do you believe in magic?” I decided to conduct an “expert” study... a twenty-four hour story on my Instagram page (@maya.doytchinova). I would presume a disclaimer is unnecessary, but we do live in a world where steaming coffee cups are stamped with “CAUTION: Contents may be hot,” so I will simply add that my so-called study does not uphold the official standard for random sampling. Nonetheless, the results came in — 92% of my Instagram community said yes, and 8% said no. Apparently I am not so peculiar after all. This question was followed up by asking, “Have you experienced a magical occurrence?” Messages abounded, mostly composed of “Yes!” “All the time.” “Every day!” Next is where I myself felt most vague: “What is your definition of magic?” Many opinions were pulled out of the treasure trove, presented in a colourful streamer of answers: synchronicities, intuition, serendipity, signs, psychic abilities, manifestation of unseen energy, and seeing the beauty and connection in all things. Some were put into more complete concepts, such as, “working on the elements of materialization through focused intention,” or a whimsical, “when you wish for something and it comes true,” to a simple “believe anything is possible.” And my personally ego-stroking and blush-provoking favourite: “My sessions with you.”

Some stories of magic I received through my inbox were awe-inspiring, completely out-of-the-box experiences that I never would have imagined, like moments of gravity-defying weightlessness and miraculous healings and transformations, but the majority struck another note entirely. Intensely touching were the words of those who had lost someone close, only to be then “touched” by a deceased loved one in another way, bridging them to the boundless love and connection that extends beyond the veil.



↑Photographer: Britney Gill, 2021.

How do I define that? How do I put a single word to magic's immeasurable possibilities? I began by narrowing down the most common ingredients mentioned. Firstly, and most surprisingly to me, was the communication that transcended life and death. Whereas the second appeared glaringly obvious. Perception. Apparently being open to the possibility of magic, makes you a lot more susceptible to experiencing it. As a close second runner-up came intention. Those who believe in magic are actively working with it. Fourthly, there seemed to be a creative element to the process. It is one thing to have an idea, it is another to actually manifest it.

Yet I think these elements are but a few spices within an indefinable soup. Perhaps magic cannot be contained within a noun or verb; it is more archetypal than that. A collection of symbols, words, ideas, and experiences that swim within the collective unconscious that can never be comprehensively known or described because they are never fully conscious.<sup>1</sup> Magic seen through an archetypal lens appears to us in personified or symbolized illustrations and only enters the realm of consciousness by way of myths, meditations, ceremonies, art, and in my personal experience and work, divination practices.

I never would have imagined that magic would unmask itself for so many through the painful process of loss. And so, like anything in this Universe, this story of magic begins with death. Upon reflection, they are inseparable. A shape must change in order to be changed, and dying is the development out of an old form into the potential of potential — this is the foundation of transformation. It is always the uncomfortable guest at the dinner table, but death must be given its due, for what more is life than the breath between death and death. Like magic, it is a dance among chaos in order to move towards chaos again. In Part I, *The Beginning of Mythos* (2017), a vivid retelling of ancient Greek myths by award-winning comedian, actor, and amateur historian Stephen Fry, he asks the fundamental question of time. What was before chaos? Is there a before when there is no time? “‘Before,’ ‘during,’ ‘when,’ ‘then,’ ‘after lunch’ had no possible meaning.” And he goes on to point out that, “When there are no stories, as they depend upon ‘once upon a time,’ there were only principles.”<sup>2</sup>

Throughout history these principles were personified through primordial beings — the original Gods of the Pantheon. Likewise, archetypes are defined as primordial images. These are the elemental building blocks of all further refined formations continually adding more colour, character, and depth to experience and form. Yet it is this “primordial” perception of no past and no future (yet) that is a most fertile ground for advancing creation and its infinite promise. We need not look for further examples than the theory of the Big Bang; the chaos that began everything we perceive as order or life today, with an “unexplainable” formula and no indication of time. I do not know about

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Engler, *Personality Theories*. 9th edition, (Belmont, CA: Jon-David Hague, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Fry, *Mythos*, 1st edition, (United Kingdom: Michael Joseph, 2017), <https://www.amazon.ca/Mythos-Retelling-Myths-Ancient-Greece/dp/0718188748>.

you, but that seems like a pretty magical story to me. And just as quickly as creation can form, destruction can and will follow. One day, when in all probability the Sun explodes and takes every particle of this world with it, every atom of existence will turn to chaos anew. Death prevails again.

Legend<sup>3</sup> says that after the birth of every child there comes an angel.<sup>4</sup> She places her finger over the lips of the newborn, and whispers, “I know you know it all, but for now, shhh.” And with the light pressure of her finger, the indentation of the philtrum was created, and the veil of psychic amnesia placed.

So it is; to feel lost is to be human. To yearn to remember is human. And to want to influence one's own life is also human.

Throughout the ages this has not changed. Yet when I was asked to write this paper, I became almost obsessed with the desire to encounter an exceptionally magical experience, one that would look decidedly... inhuman. When I first mused on magic, I dreamed of faraway places teeming with colour, music (only played by the more obscure instruments such as the harp or lyre of course), and, uh, mist. In short, my expectation was a novel adventure in a mystical land, think Hogwarts, and my reality was Amsterdam in full mask-wearing, social-distancing, lockdown: *avec curfew*.<sup>5</sup>

When there is no out, one must turn in. Instead of a fairytale fantasy or exotic foreign land, I return back to the modalities I have studied and worked with for years, Tarot and Astrology, to see if they carry the answers I seek.

“Language shapes consciousness, and the use of language to shape consciousness is an important branch of magic.” — Starhawk (*Dreaming the Dark*)<sup>6</sup>

Numbered one in the Tarot system's Major Arcana, The Magician represents the art of creation through communication. In most depictions, we see a robed man, one



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<sup>3</sup> An interpretation of a myth in the Talmud and in some later Jewish mythology.

<sup>4</sup> Within the story, Lailah is a guardian angel that guides a person through the transition of life and death. Howard Schwartz, “Mysteries Of The Angel Lailah”, *Jbooks* (2009), [http://www.jbooks.com/interviews/index/IP\\_Schwartz\\_Lailah.htm](http://www.jbooks.com/interviews/index/IP_Schwartz_Lailah.htm).

<sup>5</sup> This refers to the 24th of January, 2020, when Amsterdam was in a full COVID-19 lockdown, masks mandatory in all public indoor spaces, and a nationwide curfew was enforced.

<sup>6</sup> *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex, and Politics* is a 1982 book by Starhawk about magic, spirituality, politics, ethics, and sex.



raised hand holding a wand to the sky, his other hand points earthbound — a display of his connection to both heaven and earth as he manifests his higher-minded intention. He is the only figure in the deck who has all four elements, which are composed of the Tarot's four suits: swords, cups, wands, and pentacles. Through the sword, the Magician expresses mental clarity and focus; through the cup, he taps into his emotions, energizing his intention. The wand is the tool he uses to direct his spiritual nature and infuse life into matter; and the pentacle is the ultimate symbol of integrity; the alignment of inner and outer communication. When a person acts in accordance to their own nature, one aligns with Nature itself.

In every image over decks far and wide, a lemniscate, or infinity symbol, floats directly above the Magician's head, to emphasize the limitless possibility of creation through willpower and intention.

The Tarot's Magician is directly correlated to Mercury, the winged messenger God from Roman mythology, who in a similarly archetypal fashion, ruled over an eclectic list of trades and aspects of life, including communication and, you guessed it, magic. Commonly known as a trickster, often in a "too clever for his own good, but so charming that he became a favourite among many" kind of way. This is apparent through many of his colourful stories as a precocious youth, craftily reasoning his way out of many misdeeds. Yet on a more serious note, Mercury acted as a sort of guardian of the crossroads; his whispers could travel between the worlds and be heard by both mortals and Gods. A chameleon-like translator and interpreter, who could speak any language and adopt any manner, he made the perfect 'chaperone of Death' as he attended the souls of the dead to the Underworld — a place that he alone,

other than Pluto or his wife, Proserpina (their Greek equivalents being Hades and Persephone), could enter and leave without first, well, dying.

It is an interesting parallel to see this mythological figure acting as an intermediary between the living, the dead, and the Divine, connecting the dots throughout which the communicative magic, like that of the Magician, can then weave — similarly experienced by those who receive messages from the beyond.

From the Tarot, to Roman myth, we arrive at the planet Mercury, where in astrology, they (pronoun used loosely, as Mercury was considered to be a gender-neutral planet) is personified and closely associated with his divine counterpart and namesake, Mercury. As the astrological ruler of wit, intellect, information, transportation, and all the communicative arts, the resemblance is uncanny. They are swift and speedy, this time not due to a pair of winged boots, but thanks to his literal size and proximity, he has the quickest orbit around the Sun. Ruling over two signs within the zodiac, expressing two main parts of his multifaceted and androgynous "personality," Gemini and Virgo, their skills are displayed. The first being a mutable air sign that is traditionally considered masculine or yang in nature. Gemini is associated with the malleability of the mind as it is constantly in a state of intellectual interaction and stimulation. Virgo on the other hand, feminine or yin in function, is a mutable earth sign that can transform matter by means of integration and synthesis.

The astrological, mythological, and historical meanings and stories make a vast and seemingly endless rabbit hole to spin into, but no matter how shallow or far you tumble, what is clear is the direct link between magic and the fine art of intention, communication between the unseen and the sensual, and the process of evolved perception and creation. It seems like my Instagram community is onto something. Even scholars, who support the Hebrew etymology, say that abracadabra is a distortion of ebrah k'dabra, meaning "I will create as I speak."<sup>7</sup> The Magician's wand, much like a pen, is a tool — a conduit even, as both a receiver and conveyor. This straight-lined instrument of the messenger connects "as above, so below, as within, so without,"<sup>8</sup> once again centering the integral cross of matter.

Another notorious figure who staked their claim on magic throughout the ages were witches. The "witch" was a charged (pun intended) and largely misconstrued woman of her time. Mystics, medicine women, or simply outcasts of society who lived by their own rules, and did not follow the higher narrative or crowd, were often declared witches. The etymology of the word is debatable, but one that has been largely accepted and seems remarkably 'logical' to me, is the root word that is clearly present within its entirety: wit.<sup>9</sup> A "wit"ch is

<sup>7</sup>  
Rabbi Julian Sinclair, "Review of Abracadabra", The Jewish Chronicle, July 5, 2018, <https://www.thejc.com/judaism/jewish-words/abracadabra-1.466709>.

<sup>8</sup>  
To quote the infamous words of Hermes Trismegistus; a legendary Hellenistic figure that originated as a syncretic combination of the god Hermes, Mercury's Greek equivalent, and the Egyptian god. Eloise Hart, "The Emerald Tablet", *Theosophy-Nw.Org* (2006), <https://www.theosophy-nw.org/theosnw/world/med/me-elo4.htm>.

<sup>9</sup>  
Anatoly Liberman, "The Oxford Etymologist Goes Trick-Or-Treating", *Oupblog* (2007), <https://blog.oup.com/2007/10/witch/>.

one who possesses a keen sense of wit and who employs their own abilities of perception, mental acuity, and resourcefulness. Perhaps practicing magic was so radical as it was the resolution to decide one's own fate. As the old saying goes, a psychic can read your future, but a witch can change it.

So if the wit is one of magic's limbs, then its roots are the ultimate productive force — Mother Nature. Another distinction for radical women, or witches, is "earth women." Similarly to witches, they were (and are) those who live in accordance with the cycles and rhythms of their environment, illustrating the division between white magic and black magic. To put it simply, black magic works against the laws of nature and fundamental rights, while white magic works with them. White magic, the focus of this paper, is about meeting life on life's terms... with a little room for negotiation — or let's call it evolution.

Mother Nature has another means that is central to the manifestation of magic; matter. Even "matter" comes from its base word linked to maternal. The Magician must give magic a container. When we go back to the etymology of Mercury, a possible connection is the Proto-Indo-European root *merǵ-* for "boundary, border," in other words, a *container*.<sup>10</sup> Any potential (like Gemini's information) that wants to become a form needs a womb to gestate in (like the process of Virgo) and eventually be born from. This temporary vessel receives what is divine or intangible and adapts it to survive earthly existence. The "success" of the birth is dependent on the gestation process — and often how long we can leave it alone. Even the Gods take days off and through that rest, and the passing of time or timelessness, all of the elements come together and grow what is not managed anymore.

Do you not just love how every truth distills down to paradox? It goes to show that most of life's greatest questions or mysteries are not problems to be solved but contradictions or riddles to be explored and experienced — whether cried over or savoured.

Unlike designed construction, magic cannot be micromanaged. Magic is the development between intention and manifestation that defies the regular order of logic. Otherwise, it is not perceived as magic. Like Mercury, the traveler between chaos and chaos — his realm is the "in between" and order is his playground to redesign, with a dash of chaos. This concept forces us to confront new possibilities to old questions that are often treated as closed cases.

Intentional magic begins with a need. In Horary astrology, the moment you ask a burning question is considered sacred and therefore essential to seeking its answer.<sup>11</sup> This is the heart of divination; asking the divine nature of the universe to intervene and offer another way. Not to control or predict one's future, but to offer another perspective with alternative routes. We scoff at psychics and

<sup>10</sup> N.V.P. Franklin, *Freemasonry And Rudolf Steiner: An Introduction To The Masonic Imagination*, (Forest Row: Temple Lodge Publishing, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> Horary is an ancient branch of Astrology used to answer specific questions.



← Photographer: Britney Gill, 2021.

astrologers as they interpret someone's life and direction, but every time we jump to conclusions, we are attempting to mind-read. After years of working with clients, giving hundreds of readings, I have seen that people in this day and age, more often than not, just want to know, "Will I be okay?" What this actually means is, will the suffering be worth it in the end? This is a remnant of a deeply ingrained collective doctrine, stemming from religious rule, that life is for suffering and all rewards lie in *heaven*.<sup>12</sup> From my experience, I intuit that magic in motion is about bringing heaven down to *earth* and letting go of *hell*. The same sentence, switching out heaven, earth, and hell, can be said like this: Magic is about bringing the *future* down to the *present* and letting go of the *past*. From this place of freedom, possibilities abound.

You see what you think; eyes are part of the brain. Fear is poor at disguise. Fear is fearful, intuition is calm, and no truth arises out of confirmation bias. Clear perception offers a new pathway of creation... which begs the question: What can magic do? And what is its limit? At this point, I wonder, what can it not do? There is always an exception to every rule. It seems that magic uses intelligence to build and further intelligence, like a scientific predecessor. It is only impossible until it no longer is. Therefore, it is not about predetermination, but invention. Today's magic is tomorrow's physics, but the moment you think you "know" it, it is no longer magic but now physics.

"To do two things at once is to do neither — to do many things at once is to be creative."

— Anonymous, as it seems awkward to quote oneself.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Referring mostly, but certainly not limited to, a generalization of Western Christianity.

<sup>13</sup> For the first part of quote, "to do two things at once is to do neither," I have borrowed from the words of Publilius Syrus, a Latin mime-writer in 1st century BC. STANDS4 LLC, "Publilius Syrus Quotes", (accessed on February 18 2021), <https://www.quotes.net/quote/4289>.

I could continue to state my case for magic and its probable—but never provable—rules, ponder its ineffable mysteries, or just as swiftly could Mercury come in, dressed for a seductively androgynous strip tease, and tantalize us with a cryptic word puzzle. Imagine him, like a shape-shifting jester, holding a captivated court before both Gods and man. In a hypnotic tone, he would lure us in; “Magic has a secret and has chosen you to reveal it. Everything that you thought you knew, forget it, let it go, it need not be repeated. For what is here now is just beginning to get heated. The secret is this, I have to say, it is not a riddle to be solved, but now it is your turn to play. It is here, it is there, but does not stay. Where does it go with no home or place to return to—born from a womb but also a man, is it divine, or merely untrue? Does it matter? If you are open to me; you are here! But you cannot pin me down, and that is everything you fear. Just be honest, rather than grotesque,



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you cannot chase me like a butcher and examine me to death. I am fast, I am elusive, I am free! But I have no will of my own, I am your muse to be.”

No matter what I think or conclusion I reach, magic has its own intelligence that I, and perhaps we, are not yet privy to and may never be. Just like God, the Universe, and all of life’s greatest mysteries, when we try to conceptualize it, it becomes a fantasy.

If magic lives within a realm “in between” then it cannot be isolated, nor is it the ‘ta-da’ at the very end. Taking a trip down memory lane and considering my life up until this point; all the people, events, feelings, twists, turns, surprises, and stories, devastating and sweet, suggests that reality has an uncanny resemblance to even the more peculiar fiction, and it is not even over yet. As I peer through Mercury’s archetypal lens, my perception is taken to another height and dimension. When seen from that greater perspective, it is difficult to not notice the veil of magic that has weaved its own way through it all... and once seen it cannot be unseen. It is from this altitude that I work with my clients, and the view is nothing short of breathtaking, as climaxes of understanding are reached. And much like orgasms, it is not necessary to question their validity with explanation.

When it comes to magic, I am not certain of anything. In fact, when you walk away from reading this, I think that the only foregone conclusion reached is what is undeniable for us all... an eventual death. Yes, I said it. You can imagine how fun it is to be seated next to me at a dinner party. My point is, the function of magic is not to know, it is to, well, I do not fully know. But maybe the purpose (and fun) lies in that mystery. In that sense, I am grateful to that angel, and my philtrum, I suppose, too. When all is said, but not quite done, I am still willing to believe in magic... Even when its definition remains as elusive as ever.

Maya Doytchinova is an intuitive astrologer, tarot reader, + family constellations facilitator, with deep roots, as both student and teacher, in cross-cultural shamanism, yoga, classical & contemporary dance, & a diverse range of holistic therapies. Born in the Netherlands and raised along the wild, natural coast of British Columbia, Canada, Maya is a daughter of Denmark’s myths and folklore on her mother’s side, and Bulgaria’s mystics and medicine on her father’s.

During her own dark night of the soul, she dove even deeper into the realms of mythology, symbology, and the fine line where universal and personal truths coincide. Maya’s reading & teaching style is unequivocally unique, incorporating numerous esoteric & occult teachings. Her main focus is to tap into and recognize all that is unseen, yet affects one’s life concretely, and to facilitate her clients’ transition and advancement.

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