

On Cursing

by Phil Hine - a presentation made at UKAOS 1992

People tend to view Cursing in the same way that they view masturbation. There's a hell of a lot of it goes on, but most people aren't going to admit to it, much less that they're any good at it, or have made a careful study of it. Another common factor between the two practices is that those individuals who come to rely too heavily on either, are generally awarded the same appellation Wankers!

But what, after all, constitutes a Curse?

This (2 fingers) is a curse - meaning, 'may your wife be unfaithful to you'.

"Fuck Off and Die" - a curse

"Have you heard about so & so - they've got AIDS" - a very powerful curse indeed.

In popular Occultism, Cursing is pretty definitely seen as 'Black Magick', except of course when you can justify your reasons for doing it - like the Wiccans who once attempted to Magically attack me because I was plugging 'the Left-Hand Way' in *Pagan News*

Cursing is generally held up as being against 'natural laws of magick' - whatever they are, as being rendered ineffective due to the 'law of three-fold return' - whatever that is, or against the moral injunction that a 'good' magician shouldn't need to curse.

All of which flies in the face of a great deal of evidence to the contrary, from historical accounts of wizardry to surviving shamanic societies, that magicians do curse, and occasionally, it even works. The only real distinction appears to be a moral one - if thine enemy curses, it's because he's a 'black' magician. If you curse, it's because of necessary circumstances.

It's a telling point, that Curse Magicks are most sophisticated in cultures where one element of the population is heavily suppressed by another. If fighting back gets you a kick in the face, then a heartfelt curse in the dead of night is often your only recourse to retaliation. If all other routes to power and redress are denied you, what choice is there but to curse? Either that, or swallow your anger & frustration until the bile chokes you. These days, turn the other cheek and you're equally likely to get a rifle butt smashed into it.

Cursing is an area that bears investigation and close study. For one thing, it's hard to explain away, especially by the accursed psychologizers of magick who insist on narrowing our vision with terms like 'auto-suggestion' - that if you don't believe the same things as the sorcerer, then the curse won't work, or, if you're not aware of it being done, then it equally, won't work. The truth is that these pedants cannot face a universe where, regardless of whether you believe in sorcery, and regardless of whether you know it's happening, it can still work. There are plenty of accounts of unsuspecting, unbelieving westerners being struck down by tribal shamans cursing them.

I won't insult you with the blanket assertion that "a good magician should never have to curse someone." The word 'never' of itself invokes too many possibilities. Rather, I would say that in the doing of this, just as in any other magical act, you must define your own morality, and stick to it. I have met people who throw curses about like confetti, and with about as much power; they also tend to imagine themselves under almost continual magical attack by imaginary powers. Which leads me to make another observation; that some people attempt magical attacks seemingly, to throw their weight around. They are often so convinced of their superiority that they cannot conceive that they might get caught out.

Let me give you an example. Some friends of mine 'oop North' used to run an occult business. A few years ago they had a week of threatening & vaguely sinister phone calls, followed by the reception of a carefully compiled 'curse object', which had an immediate and powerful effect on them, causing disruption, gloom, and disaster. They came to Leeds in search of advice and a group of us intervened, placing a zone of protection around the people and their dwelling, and explaining the dynamics of the situation. We then took the curse object, placed it within a triangle, evoked a demon prince from the Lesser Key of Solomon and his 36,000 underlings and instructed them to seek out the creators of the curse object and make sure they didn't do it again!

All of the 'arguments' I have heard over the years against 'cursing' have seemed, on one point or another, specious, apart from one, which goes as follows:

- If someone is behaving in a manner that you deem inappropriate and wish to do something about, then randomly blasting them with a bolt of energy is not going to change their behaviour & attitudes (unless of course you reward them with an early chance to reincarnate into a higher form) - so it may be better to BIND them instead, making sure that they have to deal with that part of themselves which is inappropriate, before being able to move on.

There is much good sense in this argument, and it leads me on to another point about cursing - precision. Magick, in its mysterious way, seems to take the easiest path to fulfilment, so with cursing, as with anything else, it pays to be as precise as possible, otherwise you might wind up getting a result which you really didn't bargain for, or particularly want. If you must let off zaps at people, try aiming instead of firing blindly in their general direction.

What is interesting about cursing is that you're going for a very specific result, and if you can be inventive in your approach, you may find yourself opening up avenues of general magical interest which can be applied to other areas.

A couple of years ago, I was approached by someone who wanted me to perform a magical 'hit' on their behalf. As it happened, I could have far more cheerfully 'hit' that particular individual than their intended target, but let's leave that aside for the moment. I was being offered quite a generous sum of money for this operation, and there is nothing like money to set one's creative wheels turning. Over the years, I have been approached occasionally by people wanting me to do curses for them. I never refuse to listen to a proposal, but then I've never actually carried one out either - if people want to be idiots, then they deserve to be strung along for as long as possible - they always chicken out in the end. What made this particular instance interesting is

that I started musing that most magical operations are 'one-shot' affairs - one focuses desire, will and imagination and 'blam' - off goes the arrow of magick. Instead of this, I began to look at situations as complex interrelations between different variables - physiological, emotional, psychological, & 'external' variables - and of assigning teams of demons to 'tip' each chosen situation in a specific manner. Up came the possibilities of loose stair-carpets, gas cooker explosions, the delicate cellular balance which can gradually turn healthy tissue cancerous, the fleeting thoughts which can grow into monstrous phobias and obsessions. So my thoughts turned to looking at the possibilities of taking several variables in different situations and 'tweaking' them simultaneously and gradually. Of setting up chain reactions where one slight alteration gave rise to another.

And so arose the idea of 'Cybermagick' - a sorcery based on using flowcharts & 'circuit-diagrams', which I am still engrossed in unravelling. By and by, I lost all interest in the original intent of the operation, and started experimenting with the ideas which it had originally flung up, applying it in more interesting directions. I told the 'client' that whereas he'd hoped for a nice quick car crash for his intended victim, a long cancer was probably easier to induce, at which his resolve failed him. Watching someone die of cancer is not pretty, especially when you feel that you're the one who set it off in the first place. If that thought makes you nauseous, then you've no business attempting such things in the first place.

It's understandable that, if someone has wound you up to near breaking point, that you should wish something very nasty to occur to them, preferably with a 'fuck off and die' label attached to it. It's understandable, especially if you count yourself a reasonable adept magician, to reach for the blasting rod as you fume. I have learnt to counter this tendency to blaze away indiscriminately by storming off and thinking of something really devious and 'horrible' - like self-replicating Servitors, for example. I then get into exploring how such an idea might theoretically work and so forth, and usually, as I mentioned earlier, get so caught up with the idea and how to execute it that my anger at particular individuals is forgotten, and I spend the next few months trying the idea out in other directions. Then again, I feel that letting your anger out, and using it for something useful, is often better than holding it inwards. It's no good showing the world a placid exterior by day, if you grind your teeth with frustration & rage as you sleep.

A recent development of Cursing Strategy is to curse elements rather than individuals. This has been explored in two major directions so far - Cursing multinational corporations, and attacking idea-viruses (memes) rather than the individuals who they manifest through. Computers are a case in point, and it appears from several anecdotes that I have heard, that they are highly susceptible to sorcerous attacks. However, one individual I heard tell of, having targeted a major banking consortium with his ire, found that he couldn't find a working cash point machine across the entirety of Central London. This is the magical equivalent of Shooting yourself in the foot.

Large corporations are also susceptible - an interesting example of an anti-corporate curse being the 'Black Djinn Curse' which appeared in 'Chaos' magazine a few years ago - mixing sorcery and agit-prop to create an effect. Another avenue which has been suggested is hitting companies where it really hurts - by attempting to lower their share prices!

The other direction that I mentioned is to separate a particular behavioural element, and attack that, rather than the individual through which that behaviour manifests through. I have observed elsewhere that some magicians are quite happy to work with 'demons' and similar 'orrible things' which can be described in magical tomes, whilst leaving the more 'major' demons - the dark side of contemporary society, to breed themselves unabated. For instance, we might consider the syndrome of 'Addiction' to be a demon, and recognise its manifestation in individuals as addiction to heroin, compulsive sex, murder, or abuse. So we might consider how to limit and confine this demon, so that it is harder for it to replicate itself through human hosts.

A group of us tried this once, taking the behavioural element which causes infested males to demonstrate their power over others by inflicting violence upon them. We had watched this 'demon' manifesting with increasing frequency in our local community - single women being harassed in the street, an upsurge in queer-bashing, and in one particularly nasty incident, ground glass being kicked into a baby's face. This sort of thing makes me wonder, do those who insist that we should never try and directly deal with this sort of thing ever really confront violence and oppression personally?

So we decided to let forth a counter-blast against this demon, rather than any specific individual. The method was simple but effective - unleashing the raw, repressed anger against violence and oppression - unleashing the 'Furies' - spirits of retribution. It was effective, needless to say. It was as though a ripple went through the community - manifesting in those who had suffered daily violence turning it back on the perpetrators, or standing up to it in other ways. And yes, the operation did radically effect all who took part in it - to the extent that none of us would probably do it again - at least not without the situation being at least as extreme.

In some circumstances, I would say that it is more immoral not to act against a situation, if you feel it is within your power to do something about it. However, examining your own role within a developing situation is, as ever, of paramount importance. Matters of ethics are never as simple as some people would have us believe, because life will always be more complicated than pagan ideals and laws.

Turning again to the populist magical idea of the 'Law of Three-fold return' - this is one of the most well-used arguments against cursing, which says that what you send out eventually returns to you, and that if you send out 'bad' vibes (mann..) they will return three-fold.

Again, things are not quite that simple, but there is a grain of truth here. I will freely admit that my first successful act of sorcery was a minor 'curse'. I wanted to throw a scare into someone who had bruised my ego. So I went home and brooded on this - creating a thought-form, which had the desired effect, and I had my first taste of 'power'. Needless to say, this 'power' fed my feelings of being 'superior', 'different' and 'above' others - feelings which I desperately sought to nourish because, underneath it all, I was desperately unhappy, unconfident, and felt acutely inadequate. My operation was based on those qualities, and naturally, its success fed them all - so that I had to deal with them - which I eventually began to, though it took a long while. This sort of reaction is common with cursing, but then it's as common with any kind of sorcery. As the sage sayeth, "there's no such thing as a Free Lunch." Since many of the people who get into cursing in a big way are those that shirk from that which often is the most difficult magical work

of all - personal identity work - it's not surprising that their 'offensive magick' often blows up in their faces.

A person I knew slightly once approached me to help him with a 'magical battle' against a 'black magician' who had lured his girlfriend away from him using 'dark forces'. Oh how some occultists do love the melodramatic! Being somewhat more prudent by this time, I looked into the matter for myself and discovered another angle on the story - that the lady in question had grown sick of this 'White Magician's' pompous posturing, and quit him for another, who was more charming, & less concerned with saving the universe and crossing the abyss before breakfast. Naturally though, the White Magician's ego couldn't accept anything so 'normal' and commonplace, so the whole thing became a magical battle between Good and Evil. If someone is silly enough to threaten you with Cursing - cue staring eyes - why not laugh at them - it's something most of them really can't stand, as they are desperate to be taken seriously. Most people who rave on and on about how 'powerful' they are usually completely ineffectual anyway. The truly dangerous are those that don't have to announce it loudly.

Just as there are those who wish to be thought of as 'powerful', there are those who desperately want to be 'cursed'. I've met several people who think that you're not a good magician until you're in a constant running battle with an imaginary 'black lodge' or two, and will blame anything that happens to them on 'psychic attack' of one sort or another. Such Paranoia often shadows a sneaking suspicion that one is really not that important to the cosmic scheme of things, after all. Though I said at the beginning of this essay that a lot of cursing goes on 'out there', much of it is done by amateurs, as it were, and it is rarely effective. I've only been 'magically attacked' three times in the last sixteen years - that is, magical attacks that I detected, and was able to do something about at the time, and in one of the instances, was able to trace the sender to the point of going round to visit and giving them a good 'ticking off' - to their credit, they didn't try to dodge the subject, commenting "Oh, I didn't think you were that proficient." To which I replied "Well I'm not, but you were rather clumsy with it."

I'm not going to go into the 'how's' of Cursing or even how to defend yourself from supposed Curses. You can work those details out for yourself. What matters is not so much that you've got a thick Aura or whatever, but that you are able to be sensitive enough to know when something is happening, level-headed enough to distinguish between your paranoid tendencies & someone actually putting the zap on you, and be confident (& experienced enough) to respond in the appropriate manner.

I've mainly talked here about Magical Attacks of one sort or another, but we might consider other forms of 'attack' which are just as, if not more, effective. I do, for instance, consider Malicious Gossip to be a magical attack - one that certainly behaves as a viral form and feeds the transmitters feelings of inadequacy, especially when they are doing it to 'get even'. I would even propose that people who continually promise things - but never live up to them, as a form of attack, because it ultimately destroys any confidence or optimism which you might hold towards the rest of your fellows. The tendency that some people have to label others - and then insist that they 'live up' to those labels, is also invasive, as are gratuitous attempts to manipulate through flattery, obsequiousness, or pretended friendship.

To summarise then. The theory & practice of Cursing is a 'taboo' area in modern magick. The idea that you can 'get' people without fear of retribution does attract some people into the occult. It's one of the glammers of magick - and there is a great deal of difference, as no doubt we all know, between glamour & reality. While there is a great deal of accrued dogma around the subject, ultimately, it is for each individual to come to terms with their own morality, and operate within it. Any form of magick benefits when you approach it with a clear eye to precision, unity of desire, and certainty, and cursing is no exception. Examine a situation wherein you are tempted to throw a curse and you might find that there are more effective options. But at the same time, be mindful that sometimes it is necessary to strike fast and hard!