

Introduction to 'The Magical Housekeeper'  
By Starhawk

Among the ancient, European magical traditions there have always been two main approaches, that of the ceremonial magician, and that of the kitchen Witch.

Ceremonial magic uses rare and expensive objects, created or obtained in rituals so exacting and time-bound that it's hard to imagine any practitioner having time for the mundane necessities of child-rearing, crop-tending or housecleaning. Perhaps that's why we tend to think of them as old men, locked in dusty towers, subsisting on crusts or tended by faithful servants.

But kitchen Witches use what comes to hand—the herbs drying over the fire, the broomstick in the corner, the moment of time left after the kids have been put to bed. Not surprisingly, we think of them as women—wisewomen, herbalists, healers—but men, too, wash floors, nurture children, and can benefit from Nagel's wise advice on how to cultivate spiritual transformation by performing all these daily acts with intention.

The magical/spiritual traditions of the Goddess, which underly all of European civilization and long predate Christianity, see the sacred embodied in life, in nature, in human culture and interactions. There is no separation between the sacred and the mundane. Our sacred mysteries are the most common things in life: birth, growth, healing, love, death, decay and regeneration. They become sacred when we approach them with awe, wonder, and gratitude.

Occultist Dion Fortune defined magic as "the art of changing consciousness at will." In this book, Nagel shows us how to shift our consciousness around the tasks that are often most despised, the daily acts of tending, cleaning and nurturing that make a home and keep life liveable. The jobs remain the same lowly tasks they have always been, but when we shift our consciousness, the 'low' becomes the place of honoring the earth, of true humility—a word which shares origins with 'humus' or earth. The Goddess—the great transformative energy of birth, death and regeneration—is present everywhere, and the actions of cleaning, sorting and tending can become a daily spiritual practice that brings the Divine alive in our homes.

Nagel has written a book filled with humor, delight, and charm—literally, for to make a 'charm' is to imbue an ordinary object with focus and energy, so that it becomes an activated symbol, reverberating with forces that can stimulate some change in the world. She conveys the core magical teaching—that everything begins with intention. And she shares the combined wisdom from the extended network called Reclaiming, a Goddess tradition dedicated to linking spiritual growth with action in the world. And so she asks us to consider the impact of even our small daily practices on the larger world around us, and become truly responsible for the healing of the earth.

I'm looking around, now, at my dusty altar, at a pile of unsorted laundry, my crammed desktop...hmnnn. I need this book!

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