



Poppet Witchery

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The Power of Poppets

Creating enchanted effigies is a practice as old as witchcraft. Poppets can be made out of many materials, including dough, wax, fabric, wood, clay, plants, vegetables and even meat or cheese. They are activated using a variety of methods ranging from baptism to incantation.

Bronze and lead examples from the ancient Mediterranean have been found. In fact, it is these remaining artifacts that point to just how ancient the use of effigies for binding witchery truly is.

Hekate's ancient witches used these powerful dolls to bind lovers, especially that long-suffering Simaetha. She melted a wax poppet of the lover who spurned her to bring about his demise:

“Delphis has brought me pain, and I burn this bay leaf against Delphis. As it crackles in the flames with a sharp noise and flares leaving no trace of ash, so may Delphis’ body melt in the flame.” – from Theocritus, Idyll 2: Pharmakeutriai (The Witches) 2nd C BCE

Simaetha was practicing sympathetic magick – using a symbolic representation of a person, animal, spirit or even deity to bring about desired changes in their behavior. Such kolossoi, the ancient Greek word for these enchanted dolls, are thought to have been a popular form of magick.

Modern witchcraft use of poppets is influenced by many different cultures approach to these magickal dolls, including Hoodoo and African traditions. The inappropriate use of “voodoo doll” to describe magickal poppets is a case study in how witchcraft is misunderstood.

Sympathetic Magick

Inherent in sympathetic magick is that representations of others can be infused with their energy, creating a way to remotely control their thoughts and behaviors. Put simply, sympathetic magick is about “like attracting like,” so that the use of some part of the intended target is included in the poppet to act as a sort of tether to them.

Sympathetic magick falls into three broad categories:

- Complementary: the working merges with the existing energies of the target to achieve the desired outcome
- Additive: the spell is similar in nature to the existing behavior of the target so that the working renders a desired outcome by ramping up what it already occurring
- Subtractive: the goal is to remove existing behavior

All sympathetic is complementary strictly speaking, but it is helpful to consider how your spell will merge with the existing characteristics of the intended.

The energetic tether between the actual target and the poppet is the conduit by which the magick works. Creating a strong tether involves using a small piece of the person.

Taglocks

The energetic tether between a poppet and the intended target requires something deeply connected to the person, animal or spirit.

Animal and human taglocks include:

- Part of their physical being such as hair, nails, teeth, blood and other bodily fluids or skin
- An image, photograph or painting
- Clothing (unwashed is better)
- Their name
- Astrological considerations, such as their zodiac sign
- Aspects of their personality
- Favored possessions
- Hobbies and interests

Spirit and deity taglocks can include:

- Known and personal symbols
- Correspondences, such as colors and animals
- Botanicals associated with them
- Their name and epithets

Taglocks can be used two ways:

- The taglock is activated through the process of binding so that any work carried out on the poppet manifests on the person, animal or spirit as well.
- The taglock captures a piece of the soul of the spirit or deity, binding them to the poppet. The poppet is used to activate the powers of the spirit or deity. A poppet containing a plant spirit would be made by using pieces of the plant as the taglock.

Binding

All witchcraft requires binding. If we didn't bind the ingredients of spells together, then they wouldn't work. They'd just be a bunch of loose ingredients and disinterested spirits. To be spellbound means that one is under the control of witchcraft. This can be voluntary, as with a handfasting, or involuntary, for example when a person has unwittingly been prevented from doing certain things. Involuntary binding has been used for millennia, often through poppets.

Binding An Individual

Think of binding as wrapping a magickal cord or chain around people or objects. When it comes to restraining an individual, binding is often done to stop them from doing something. Often done without the target's permission, this can be considered a form of baneful witchery as it interferes with another's free will. This type of binding can be done as a form of protection, cursing, or a combination. Binding an individual is an ancient form of witchery, with hundreds of known examples dating back over 2,000 years. Binding, traditionally, was done in response to a wrong being committed, whether stealing livestock or romantic betrayals.

Types of individual binding include prevention, punishment and control. All can be accomplished through a poppet. When binding a toxic person, the point is to bind their actions to themselves. Weave a magickal shield around them that prevents them from further harming others. That's pure binding. Adding a bit of a justice curse, such as "may they know and feel all the pain they have caused others" into the binding can also be done.

The binding can be done either to control their thoughts, feelings and behavior or to directly impact change on them. This can include inflicting harm or injury or sending healing.

Binding to Another

Another use of a poppet is to bind us to another person. This binding can be apotropaic, used for cursing, or in erotic spells. Before binding yourself to another, consider the consequences. Do you really want to establish an unbreakable chain around the two (or more) of you? I've been through this. Trust me, breaking that chain is an ordeal.

Binding to Spirits

We can also bind ourselves to spirits through a poppet. This can be a relationship of equals, where the spirits are our allies or one of subservience with the spirits doing our bidding. Creating a fetch to go forth into the world to weave your will requires binding

the spirit (entity, animal or otherwise) to us so that we can use their abilities and characteristics when we wish. Devas, plant spirits, are often amenable to binding and work very well in poppets.

Binding a Spirit

Another use of poppets is to control the powers of a force, spirit or deity. We can create a water elemental poppet to command the seas. We can bind a ghost to a poppet, giving them a new body and gaining power over them. A Hekatean Current can be captured and bound as well.

A spirit can be completely bound, trapped within the poppet to do our bidding, or the limitless energetic current connected to a spirit can be contained.

Steps for Creating a Poppet

Poppets are best used for when you want to have control over a distinct other, whether human or spirit. There should be a clear focus for the control. Cursing someone to have all the harm they inflicted on others is one example. If creating a healing poppet, include symbols and taglocks of the focus. A drop of blood smeared onto the “heart” of the effigy that comes from the target with a healing incantation to ease someone suffering from cardiac distress. Of course, that same drop of blood can be used to inflict cardiac troubles. Magick is magick. Intentions are what tells the magick what to do.

Intention

Developing an intention for a poppet is a bit more involved than writing one for a regular spell. Generally, the more specific the focus, the more successful the spell. With poppets, you also need to list the aspects of the target that you are going to control. These can be additive – pushing the target into new thoughts, feelings and actions – or subtractive – stopping specific ones. Consider how these controls will complement the existing nature of the person or spirit. For example, when creating a curse poppet, the intention can be that the person no longer engages in harmful behaviors (subtractive) and bears the weight of the harm they’ve previously caused (additive). A complementary aspect would be to include that their anger (already existing) becomes directed at themselves.

A spirit poppet that is to fully contain an entity should clearly include wording in the intention that does so, otherwise remnants of it will still wander free. This approach is particularly useful for harmful spirits, such as shade and malevolent ghosts. “To the spirit who haunts me, I cast you into this poppet, no more are you free to roam. Into the poppet you go, and I control you from now on.” The poppet is a spirit trap. To harness the energy of a spirit while letting it retain its own free will requires ensouling part of it

while leaving it whole. The intention should be worded to reflect this: “I cast into this poppet, the spirit of mugwort, binding it to my magick.” Using a poppet to harness the powers of a spirit or deity so that they are always within your control is another intention suitable for a poppet. “I bind the powers of Medea’s poison magick into this poppet, claiming them as my own.”

Designing the Poppet

Poppets can be incredibly simple or very complex in their design. The simplest poppet is basically any media that is activated for your purpose. A bar of glycerin soap can be carved with symbols. A square of fabric, known as a paquet, can be used by wrapping it around a taglock and tying it.

Usually a poppet takes on the basic physical appearance of the target, such as a human body. A simple technique is to shape a head, filling with a nut (such as walnut for mind or spirit work) and then tying it off. Bind to the person or spirit.

Choosing the Medium

Fabric, clay, and wax are easily worked with. Consider the nature of the target. Fabric and clay are great for enduring poppets. Wax is excellent for a temporary one, or for a poppet that will be destroyed.

Correspondences

Keeping in mind the nature of the target and your intention, choose correspondences that will augment the power of your spell.

Fabric: Type and color. Black for cursing, protection, banishings, bindings, and most types of witchcraft. White for purity and revelation. Green for abundance. Pink for compassion. Blue for communication. Yellow for illumination. Purple for sovereignty and personal power.

The fabric can be the taglock, using an old t-shirt or sock are two examples.

The thread and string used should also match the intention.

Botanicals: Choose ones that are likely to last for as long as the spell needs to. Fresh ones will shrink as they dehydrate, so dried is best to maintain the integrity of the poppet. Cut dried roots such as black cohosh (divine feminine, easing female issues, binding to a woman) work well. An entire root, from Mayapple, wild carrot, yellow dock and others can be used for the poppet. Carve symbols into it and add the taglock. Vegetables can also be used for short-term poppets, such as potatoes and carrots.

Mugwort (protection, all witchcraft), yarrow (healing, prophesy), rose hips (love, protection, detoxification), birch bark (sovereignty, binding), and pine cones (prosperity) are some examples.

Nuts and seeds that suit the intention can be used as well.

Stones: Can be used to represent the mind, the heart and physical organs. Choose ones that work with your intention. Blue agate for communication, soothing the mind, controlling another's mind. Pink quartz for creating love energy, either to persuade your target in your direction or to create feelings of self-love in them. Black obsidian, jet, charcoal or coal for removal magick of all sorts, from protection to cursing.

Symbols: Can be drawn, stitched or carved into the poppet. Astrological signs, numbers, sacred geometry, etc.

Stuffing: The botanicals used to stuff cloth poppets can be augmented with extra bits of the fabric used to make it, cotton wool, rice, and beans can also be used.

Features: Make the poppet resemble the target as much as possible. Are they short or tall? Thin or thick? Use a hair taglock for the hair. Draw features that are similar to the target. Use buttons that match their eye color.

Clothing: Dressing the poppet to resemble the target is another way to ensure its efficacy. Strips of cloth can be used for the binding process. Recite your intention as you wrap the poppet. Choose an appropriate type of fabric and color.

Creating the Poppet

Once the intention and design are set, choose the hour and date that works best for you, considering astrological influences and date significances (e.g., Friday is Venus' day, well suited for poppets that are love spells).

Assemble your materials and written intention. I like to insert a miniature version of the intention as the heart of the poppet.

As you create the poppet, envision the results of your witchery. How will your target heal or suffer? How will the spirits being bound work for you?

Activating the Poppet

Once completed, activate the poppet with words of power that give life to it. Write an incantation that is firm and directive. Use strong verbs and short sentences. The poppet must be well controlled by you for it to work. "Now complete, this poppet now comes to life, bound to that which is my target. Firmly under my control. As I speak it, it is so."

The poppet can be anointed with appropriate oils or waters, or even baptised.

Using the Poppet

Poppets are meant to be manipulated by their owners, unless the point is to completely bind a person to themselves. At minimal, holding the poppet while activating its powers should be done whenever the target requires attention, or you wish to harness the power of the poppet. Rubbing the eyes to help another gain clarity, anointing the crown to encourage wisdom or soothe the mind, piercing the heart to inflict pain.

The poppet can be destroyed to completely sever your connection to them or to bring about their demise, whether regarding a specific action or otherwise. The poppet can be locked up in a coffin/box to prevent the target from acting. This sort of spirit trap is good for problem entities. Burying this type of poppet works well.

Maintaining the Poppet

For long-term control of a target, the Poppet needs regular use and may require energetic boosts by anointing or spraying with an appropriate botanical. Keep in a dry place out of sunlight.

If the poppet is performing a specific function, such as protecting magickal objects or watching over a child, keep it nearby.

Three Types of Poppets

I've chosen three specific types of poppets that I use as examples. The first is a plant spirit protection guardian, the second a binding together with another, and the third is a wax poppet for controlling the actions of another.

Plant Spirit Poppet

Made by stuffing fabric with the chosen botanical, this poppet creates a servitor spirit that is created purely from the deva (archetypal soul) of the plant.

Best suited for botanicals that have strong personalities. Most useful for plants that you can't grow in your immediate environment.

I have Mr. Philip Mandrake who guards my most treasured magickal objects. He resides with them, keeping them safe and charged. I talk to him regularly. Mandrake is a most willful plant that needs strict management but is most useful as a spirit to watch over witchery. It's also very difficult for me to have a living one in my environment, so using the cut root to animate a spirit worked very well.

Technique:

- Choose a plant that speaks to you and/or represents energy you wish to control at will.
- Decide if this poppet will be a constant companion or for use only on specific occasions. Poppets can be friends and guides that we interact with daily or restricted to limited use.
- Research the properties and use your intuition in selecting one.
- Once your intention and design are ready, create the poppet.
- As you stuff the poppet with the plant, animate it into a conscious ensouled spirit, but lacking free will (unless you want it to have such). Envision the plant clippings combining into a living entity, merging with the fabric and symbols. Be directive throughout this process, lest the poppet become too willful to manage.
- Once finished, command the poppet to perform its function.
- Regularly use the poppet to remind it of its function.
- Destroy the poppet when the mission is accomplished, if it becomes too weak to re-animate or is too willful. Burning it is best.

Bind And Entwine Poppet

Any medium can be used for this poppet, although I prefer to use botanical stuffed fabric. The goal of this poppet is to bind to the energy of another person, animal or spirit, and then to blend your energies together (entwinement). This is useful for forging a strong relationship if the other person is amenable to the process. Can also be used to see inside the heart and mind of others but be careful with this. It allows the owner of the poppet to not only access the essence of another, but to fuse it with their own energy. Useful for connecting to a deity, especially for acquiring their mysteries. Keep in mind that usually the entire deity is not meant to be bound, but a portion of their force is contained.

I have a Circe poppet that lets me access her powers of pharmakos and explore her powers that is a constant companion.

Technique:

- Choose a spirit or person that you are confident that you want to be bound to.
- Decide if this poppet will be a constant companion or for use only on specific occasions.
- Follow the usual process for creating the intention and choosing the design.
- As you create the poppet, summon their energy into it using the taglock, symbols, etc. and then pour your own energy into the effigy, merging them.

- “I summon _____ into this poppet, taking only what I need. Your powers of _____ are now within my control. I merge my own _____ with yours, entwining them within this poppet.”
- Disconnect yourself from the poppet when finished. You can reconnect when using it.

“Hex Your Ex” Curse Poppet

Wax poppets are great for cursing others since they can easily be melted to either end the spell or sever your connection to the person. You may need to maintain your connection to them for the duration of the curse or the hex may be to completely eradicate your bond with them.

Beeswax, paraffin or candle wax can be used. Melt the wax and then pour into a person-shaped mold. A gingerbread person cookie cutter with a bottom firmly attached (see pictures on following pages) can be used.

As you state your intention, carve an “X” or push a pin into the appropriate location on the poppet to control that part of the target. For example, if you want to control someone’s thoughts, state the intention while manipulating their head with your blade or pin.

Keep this poppet wrapped up and stored in a dark place where the energy would leak out. Take out before interacting with the target and to regularly boost the power of the poppet.

I have a wax “Hex Your Ex” poppet that controls aspects of my ex-husbands’ thoughts and actions towards our son. Generally, it is enchanted with only the best interests of my son. Specifically, I use it to get my way when we have an issue with our son. My ex is horribly avoidant and unempathetic, as well as being very authoritarian. The poppet keeps all that in check. I don’t care about the rest of his life, so the limits of my hex are firm around issues concerning our son.

Further Reading:

Pagan Portals – Poppets and Magical Dolls by Lucy Starza is a good introduction to the history and uses of poppets. Read more:

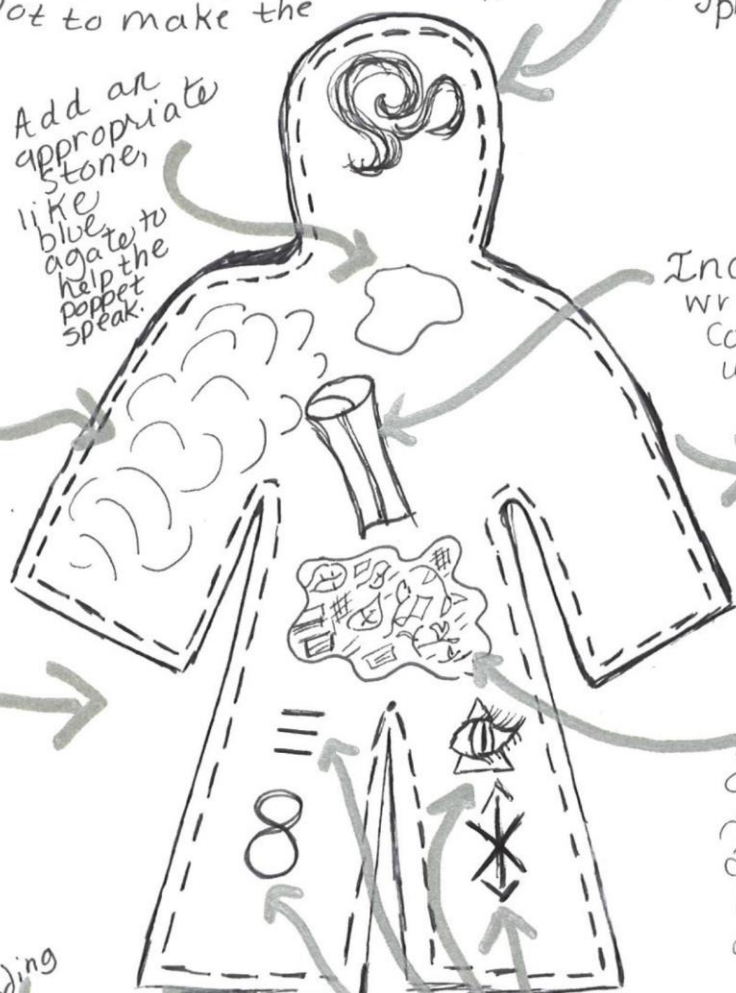
<http://moon-books.net/blogs/moonbooks/poppets-and-magical-dolls-an-excerpt/>

Silver Ravenwolf has a good guide book on poppets as well.

There are endless ways to use poppets in witchery.
Use to bless others, bind and control them, House spirits in them.

Making a Poppet

Make out of fabric, clay or wax. Use a single scrap of fabric, knot to make the head.



Taglock:
physical bit of target, like hair, nail clippings, etc.

Add an appropriate stone, like blue agate to help the poppet speak.

Stuffing:
use same fabric, cotton wool, beans, rice

Incantation/Intention:
written on corresponding color paper/ink, recite while you construct the poppet.

Choose your colors wisely:
black - banishing, cursing, protection, red - love, binding

Botanicals:
choose corresponding plant spirits, like birch bark (binding), black cohosh (banishing), American mandrake (all witchery).

Use this template as a pattern to cut around your fabric,

FINISH:
tie off feet and hands with corresponding cord.

Tips

- Sew with close stitches to avoid "bleeding".
- Use a stretchy fabric, sew "inside out" & then right side.
- Leave one side open, close when stuffed.
- Use oil paint markers to add symbols.
- Anoint with oil to activate & re-charge.

Add symbols, like the lemniscate, sigils ("x" for banishing), numbers (≡, 3, for crossroads, transformation), & representations of spirits (X, evil eye for protection)

Making a Plant Spirit Poppet Photo Gallery



Trace the pattern onto the fabric and cut out strips of binding cloth (if using.)

Sew poppet along the seams with tight stitches, leaving the hands and feet open, and one side for easy stuffing. Right side out through the side hole.





Make a paper funnel to pour the botanicals into the poppet. Pack them in tightly using your fingers (wear gloves when using poisons). Move them into the body creating the correct shape. Then add the intention scroll, stones, etc. Finish with extra stuffing. Recite your intention and envision your outcome while stuffing.



Tie hands and feet tightly, then stitch the open side closed. Add the facial details and the activating heart, summon the spirit of the plant into this heart, ensouling the poppet. Join all the individual pieces of the botanical into a homunculus, a complete spirit servitor.



Wrapped in binding fabric to further ensoul the poppet with the plant spirit. The key is my power over it. Once I remove the key, the spirit of the plant will be free.

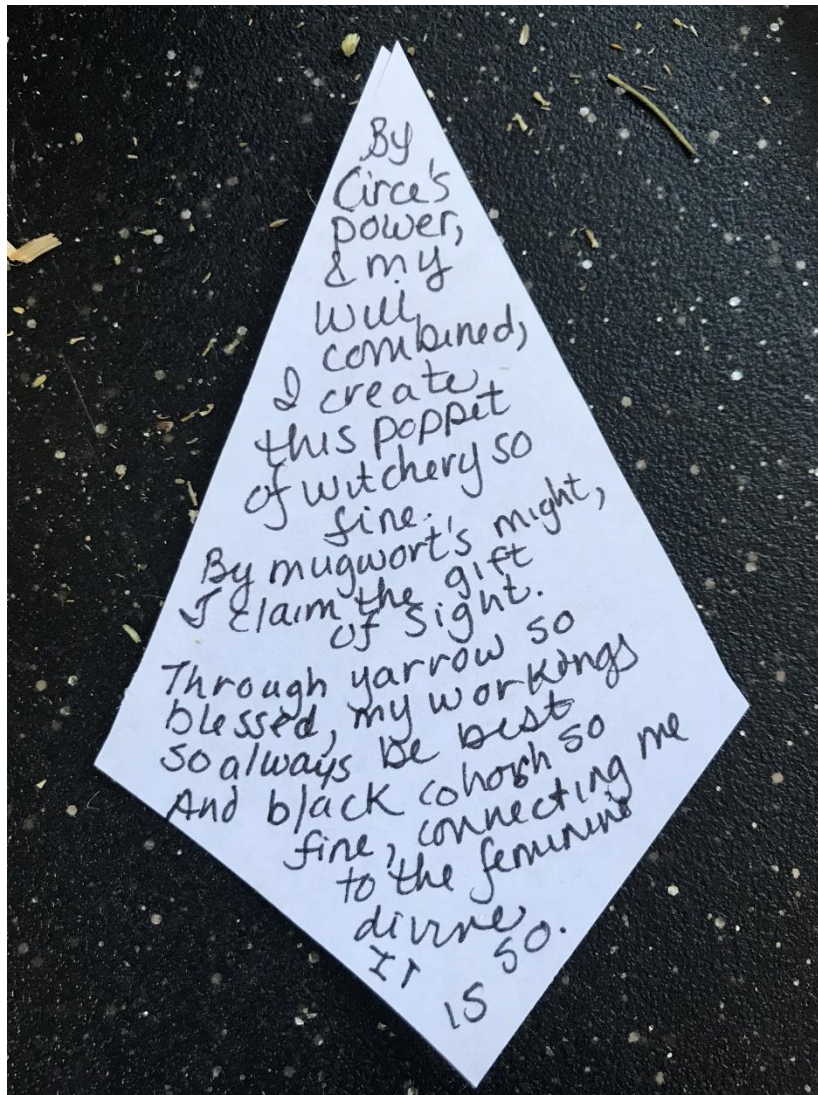
Bind and Entwine Popper Photo Gallery



Walnut for the head, representing Circe's mind. Mugwort for her powers of witchery, especially pharmakeia. Yarrow for healing and protection. Black cohosh for the divine feminine.



The walnut
head bound to
Circe's mind –
wisdom and
will.



The intention scroll that was put inside as the heart of the poppet.



The botanicals blend and bound together are inserted into the pouch made when the head was created. I added a piece of local blue agate to enhance communication.



The charm: skull for truth, evil eye for protection and key for wisdom.

Once the poppet is stuffed, recite the intention. In my experience, Circean energy is most available whenever botanical witchery is underway. After tying off the bottom of the effigy, I spoke gratitude to her.

“Hex Your Ex” Wax Poppet



I used a cookie cutter and made a base using a foil baking sheet. A silicon mold would have been much easier. If using this method, ensure that the foil is completely attached to the bottom of the form using heat safe tape. You could also line the form with foil wrap as long as it's kept on a flat surface. Pour in the wax once melted or melt the wax in the form.



Mold filled with beeswax chips.

It takes about 25 minutes to melt one cup of beeswax at 250 degrees. This took about 35 minutes. Microwaving isn't recommended for beeswax. Can be melted using a double boiler as well.



While the poppet is solidifying, herbs and the taglock can be added right into it.

Carefully remove from the mold, peeling back the foil.

Activate with pins or by carving "x's" with your blade at the points of the target's you are controlling.