

[Review] Corey Wrenn. *Vegan Witchcraft: Contemporary Magical Practice and Multispecies Social Change*. Routledge, 2025. 222 pp. ISBN: 9781032649719

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In *Vegan Witchcraft*, Corey Wrenn focuses on Western witchcraft as the centrepiece of an analysis that intertwines ritualism and anti-speciesist activism, going beyond the traditional definition of witchcraft as a purely spiritual practice. No longer a metaphor, magic is political. The author, an atheist sociologist, proposes a necessary semantic reinterpretation of witchcraft, arguing that it can and should be experienced in a secular way as an ecofeminist practice that prioritizes self-care, political and caring acts, and multispecies kinship. With this ‘manifesto in the making’ Wrenn makes a theoretical proposal that goes beyond conventional literature on witchcraft, integrating critical theory with autoethnographic details, historical and textual analysis of witchcraft practice, claiming that witchcraft can be not only a symbolic act, but as a real social movement strategy sceptically oriented toward dominant institutions. Wrenn implements her discussion with biographical experience and relations she engaged with in the world of witchcraft. This stance positions the author not only as a competent observer but also as a practitioner in the context of her research. The volume explores how this practice offers mechanisms of autonomy and resilience for political engagement, positioning itself as a tool of inquiry for animal studies

and for the promotion of an ethics of multispecies solidarity within the framework of social change that aspires to be intersectional.

The witch is possibly one of the most powerful symbols of female oppression and, Wrenn argues, of its interconnections with the oppression of non-human animals. Part of the witch's stigma, in fact, is related to her refusal of anthroparchal hierarchies - defined by Erika Cudworth (2011) as a set of relationships that privileges the human and inscribes nature within its domain producing a highly hierarchical social organization - through practices that substitute domestication for partnership and multispecies relationship-building that prioritise consent over control. Most of these practices are based on the witch's work and association with non-human animal familiars. While, to vegan feminist theory, familiars represent the symbolic entanglement of women with nature (and its use for the simultaneous marginalisation of both), Wrenn goes a step further and decisively tackles the paradox of lesser harm, denouncing moral shields that mask non-consensual violence. How can veganism assist modern witchcraft in reclaiming this connection to non-human animals? Veganism in Wrenn's argument becomes both an interpretive lens and an aim of witchcraft. On one side, Wrenn examines the objectification of non-human animals within witchcraft and argues that their symbolic exploitation should be confronted in favour of an anti-speciesist resignification. On the other hand, this resignification involves familiar work itself, shifting from non-human animals' exploitation for human benefit to multispecies collaboration for multispecies benefit. Overall, within this chapter Wrenn argues for veganism within witchcraft as means to strengthen empathy with other animals beyond the bounds of structural barriers that invisibilise non-human suffering.

Wrenn, by deconstructing this practice in the Western context, focuses on exposing the critical failure to recognise the agency and autonomy of non-human animals. In chapter three, the author denounces domestication, often idealized as a 'reward' by central figures in witchcraft, such as Starhawk (1997), framing it instead as a patriarchal assault and a system of total domination over bodies and reproduction. However, the actual practice of Green Witchcraft often presents itself as a fascinating rediscovery of folk medicine and seasonal

rhythms, an invitation to collaborate with nature through the use of herbs, and ancient feminine knowledge for planetary healing. It is precisely this ethical void that, according to Wrenn, allows Western witchcraft to slip into a problematic ‘choice feminism’: here, the consumption of animals is reduced to an individual choice, often justified through a cognitive imperialism that misappropriates native narratives – often in reference to hunting. Wrenn, with the aim of guiding us towards alignment with the ecofeminist principles inherent in the practice itself, proposes that we replace a mythology of patriarchal construction with ‘gathering’, revitalizing ancestral vegan diets and transforming magic into a practice of multispecies solidarity. This transition promotes a partnership with nature understood as a symbiotic and cooperative reality, necessarily implying the recovery of animal autonomy, because it is essential for a magic that truly affirms life.

Veganism, just like a magical practice, radically transforms the body and consciousness, freeing them from the filters of speciesist socialisation. Chapter four illustrates how cooking and food – fundamental political tools – emerge as spaces for innovation and alchemy, where raw materials are transmuted into vital energy and spiritual nourishment. The author dismantles the Eurocentric and colonial narrative that elevates meat and dairy products to ‘ancestral’ pillars, highlighting how this view pathologizes global food cultures that have historically been plant-based.

Vegan witchcraft, according to Wrenn’s research, solves a contradiction inherent to traditional kitchen witchcraft that, through the exploitation of corpses in cooking, introduces the trauma of slaughter, producing a ‘dead magic’. Pragmatically, the author proposes converting magical cuisine and gives some practical examples such as replacing animal secretions with apple syrup. This transition respects the politics of ingredients transforming every meal into a thoughtful act of multispecies connection.

If chapter four examines the political meanings of eating, chapter five, Sabbats and Speciesism, focuses on ritual and cultural meanings of eating and how those play a fundamental role in community building. Witchcraft aligns itself with ecosystems and

natural flows, hence, it views time as cyclical rather than linear and takes as festive occasions (sabbats) moments of change associated with solar, lunar or seasonal rhythms. However, ideas of premodern life associated with these changes leave space to those symbolisms and meaning-making processes that exacerbate the barriers between human and non-human animals through the consummation of the latter.

As festivities constitute the primary occasion for identity formation and community building through shared practices and rituals, Wrenn investigates how values, identities and practices contradict within the witchcraft communities, and proposes vegan alternatives (for example, seeds in place of eggs as symbols of new life for spring rituals) as a way to reconcile the three. Veganism, she argues, aligns with the core values of witchcraft and emphasizes its communal elements.

Witchcraft itself is presented as a practice of resistance that confronts anthroparchal hierarchies and reacts to nihilism and alienation from nature. *Vegan Witchcraft* revisits the exclusion of non-human animals from this magical activism, arguing in favour of the practice's transformative potential and the need to include animals as actors and beneficiaries of the magical collective meaning-making. 'Occulture' is therefore theorized not only as a form of spiritual self-care but as a tool for radical imagination and new ethics of care in the extent that spirituality reshapes how marginalized groups perceive themselves and their role in the world.

Is witchcraft capable of reshaping the perception of non-human animals? According to Wrenn, the answer is yes, in a way, as she presents witchcraft as already intrinsically a vegan practice rooted in the concept of 'do no harm'. By viewing animals as 'comrades instead of consumables', vegan witchcraft provides the symbolic framework necessary to challenge systematic exploitation in its practices. Wrenn has found and properly highlighted the incongruencies between premises and actual practice, while suggesting ways to mend the fracture.

Although Wrenn's autoethnographic reflexivity is profound, we would have liked to see her theory enquire further about ethnographic field practices and conducting interviews with current practitioners, to demonstrate how these ideas extend beyond the individual into a broader social reality. There is indeed, as also shown in the book, a tension regarding whether witchcraft is an individual practice or potentially a communal movement. But rather than seeing individualization as an obstacle, Wrenn argues that witchcraft's rejection of institutional authority can be a social strategy rooted in personal responsibility, where practitioners use their internal power to challenge patriarchal and speciesist systems from the bottom up.

Overall, this book is a manifesto-in-the-making, challenging the witchcraft community to align its practices to its beliefs and recognize the material and political imperatives of animal liberation.

Works Cited

- Cudworth, Erika. *Social Lives with Other Animals*. London: Palgrave, 2011.
- Starhawk. *Dreaming the Dark*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997.