

Samhain 1995, Issue 30

\$5.25

Hecate's Loom

Canada's International
Pagan Magazine



On Being a Witch • Starhawk Interview • Magic of Tarot

Welcome to Hecate's Loom



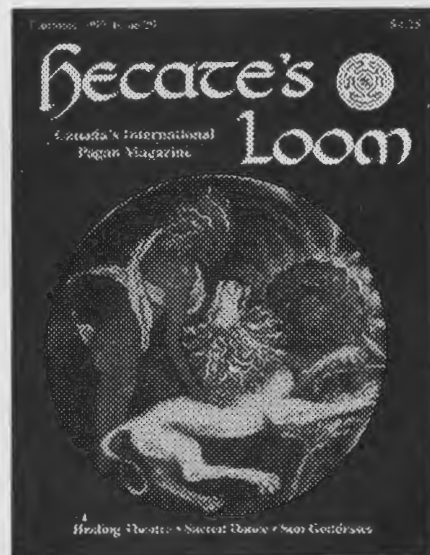
Weaving the Tapestry of Pagan Arts



Cover - Hecate's Loom Lammas 1986

As the final leaves drift from the trees and the remnants of the harvest are cleared from the gardens, our thoughts turn to Samhain. It is the winnowing-- a time to return the last gleanings of energy to the earth to be renewed (or, in modern terms, recycled). We are honouring those who have gone before us in our awareness of the death of the Greenman, with promise of rebirth. In the damp decay of the soil a seed lies ready to burst forth with new life. So it is with anticipation that we at *Hecate's Loom* wait to see how the seeds we have planted will spring forth.

Hecate's Loom is now officially Hecate's Loom Publishing Inc. We still work as a collective, and the *Loom* will continue to be produced by us, in house. As with all growth,



Cover - Hecate's Loom Lammas 1995

some decisions must be made, balancing desire and necessity. Raising our cover price to \$5.25, to reflect the rising costs of paper and pages, is one of them. At the same time, we feel it is necessary to continually add to the quality and substance of *Hecate's Loom*. With this issue, we have increased our standard number of pages and further streamlined our format.

The Craft, and Paganism generally, is a path of creativity. Once dismissed as a "fertility religion," Paganism brings a new message to the creative chaos of the millenium. The life of magic recognises that there are many forms of fertility and that life, itself, is High Art. For that reason, the *Loom* continues its focus upon the arts, recognising their origins within magic and Shamanism.

Communications from abroad, an interview with Starhawk, an article by Paul Beyerl (*The Master Book of Herbalism*), and some great news from Pete Pathfinder of the A.T.C. are included in this issue. Our hope is that the *Loom* continues to serve as a source of information, entertainment and connection for the Pagan community world-wide.

Diana Michaelis, President
Yvonne Owens, Publishing Editor

Back Cover Artist:

Diana Michaelis is a writer, photographer, shamanic healer, Priestess and co-founder of Thirteenth House Mystery School. The photo is part of Diana's series on Divinity in Nature, and was taken at sunset in East Sooke Park, British Columbia. Diana currently works as graphic designer and President of *Hecate's Loom*. She resides in Victoria, British Columbia.

Front Cover Artist:

Alison Skelton is a mixed media printmaker and painter. "Self Portrait" is one of a series of commissioned magikal portraits of nine women. Alison combines archetypal images, magical symbols and abstract form to produce powerful transformative images. As well as being an artist, Alison also teaches the Tarot. She resides in Victoria, British Columbia.



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Statement of Purpose: *Hecate's Loom* exists for the purpose of providing a forum for the creative expressions of Paganism inclusive of Witchcraft, Goddess spirituality, Gaia Consciousness, Shamanism and other Earth-based religious philosophies. We maintain the belief that Divine Nature includes both feminine and masculine aspects. (both Goddess and God). We endorse no particular form of Paganism but support tolerance, communication, and the freedom to explore individual paths. Our collective goal is to perform transformational magic within the Pagan community, by way of contributing to knowledge and understanding concerning Paganism and the Craft.



LETTERS

Discussion • Debate • Information • Opinions

The Name Game:

Why choose a new name? A practice that arose during the Burning Times was for members of a coven to take on pseudonyms or "Craft names" as Kevin Marron notes in his book, *Witches, Pagans & Magic in the New Age*. The idea was that if a member of a particular coven were caught by Witch hunters he would not be able to reveal the names of his associates.

"The use of Craft names is still common in Witchcraft, partly as a way of preserving the privacy of people who for professional or other reasons do not want to be publicly identified as Witches, and also because the taking on of such a name when being initiated as a Witch symbolizes a rite of passage, the assumption of a new spiritual identity."

Indeed, it is a required part of initiation to take on a new name. In the only published initiation ritual I've uncovered, Starhawk writes: "The blindfolded apprentice is helped into the tub, washed by other coveners and chanted over. She is told to meditate, purify herself, resolve any doubts, and look for a new name."

The initiate is introduced to the Coven and to the God and Goddess by this new name. The new name becomes the way of identifying the initiate and she becomes a new person during this initiation.

Craft names appear to exist for two reasons; privacy, and out of respect for the path of the Goddess.

Many Craft names come from tradition. Names of sacred trees (Ash, Rowan); figures of legend (Morgana, Gwydion); Gods and Goddesses (Apollo, Brigid) and from modern science fiction (Muad'dib, Gandalf) are common Craft names. Other names come from symbols or experiences of

importance to the bearer. "... I began using the name Starhawk, which I took from my dream about the hawk and from the Star card in the Tarot, which represents the Deep Self."

Sometimes Craft names are given to us by our parents. In Z. Budapest's *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries* a Naming Festival is described where the maternal family of a newborn meet to ask blessings on the child and to utter two names for the child.

"One is the child's legal name; the other is her/his Secret Name, and must not be uttered again, even to the child, until her/his initiation ceremony."

Occasionally our legal and Craft names merge such as those who legally adopt chosen names as a way of divorcing themselves from negative experiences. A friend of mine adopted a beautiful name that suits her perfectly as a way of leaving behind an abuse filled childhood.

I write anything relating to my faith as Starfire. She is who I am in relation to the God and Goddess and those people I associate with through Wicca. I write letters to my childhood friends as Pauline because that is who they know me as. I write magazine articles in the style of an Erma Bombeck as Pamela Farrell because she is the wife and mother of that family and I write from her point of view. And so it goes... to my father I am "Leente-O," to my sister "Poey," to my ex-flance "Princess," to my lover "Darling," to my grocer "Ma'am" and to my cat "Mee-om."

Embrace and use a Craft name, whatever reason! The important thing is, that whatever name you use, YOU are still YOU!

by Starfire
Edmonton, Alberta

Dear Editors:

By coincidence your various artists and reviews in the Beltaine issue of *Hecate's Loom* addressed some very similar questions to my article in *Wood and Water* no. 50, a copy of which I attach. I begin to feel in view of your Full Moon Fever column, John, that research to-and-fro across the Atlantic is completely non-existent! Most folkies (if not most Pagans, alas) here know: a) That *Jack-in-the-Green* was written in the 70's by Martin Graebe; b) That *Circles* was written at about the same time.

In addition all folkies, and most of the religious broadcasting unit at the dear old BBC know that *Lord of the Dance* was written in the 60's by Sidney Carter, as an overtly Christian song. It was written for an EP dealing specifically with characters in the crucifixion story, and its crucial verse runs:

I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black,

It's hard to dance with the Devil on your back.

They buried my body and they thought I'd gone,

But I am the dance, and I still go on.

Carter himself used the (traditional?) Shaker tune *It's a Gift to be Simple* to carry his words. Any other "Lords/Ladies/Groundhogs of the Dance" are wittingly or unwittingly pastiches of Carter. I wonder if you could make this clear in *Hecate's Loom* somewhere, as I begin to worry quite seriously about attribution of songs. I don't think any songwriter (except possibly Paul Anka) minds how their song is developed once it's out in the world. But I do think that acknowledgement (and the occasional royalty) is greatly appreciated. As Pagans we should, I think, acknowledge people's

creativity. I am particularly grieved for Martin Graebe's reputation, since I consider that *Jack-in-the-Green* is a work of genius, and should be acclaimed as such - on both sides of the Atlantic (UK popular culture acknowledges only Lennon and McCartney among its home-grown songwriters).

As you may infer from some of the above, various groups in the UK with overlapping interests do not appear to be aware of one another. I belong to both the Pagan and the folksong movements. I also try to keep in touch with debates in folklore, anthropology, mythology, drama, women's studies and fantasy literature. The wide gap between the folksong movement and Pagans is particularly sad. As you imply, Yvonne, there may be singers who are also Pagans - I'm thinking particularly of Martin Carthy and Roy Bailey here - but they have not stated this publicly. Mind you, they have also not stated publicly that they are members of any political party; but their songs tell you quite clearly where their affiliations lie.

Generally, I'm inclined to agree with you, Yvonne, that we should begin creating again for ourselves. I've been immersed in "the tradition" in the UK for about 30 years; and the one thing I've learned is - don't tamper with it. If a song comes down to us with Pagan and Christian elements (e.g. *The Lykewake Dirge*), then sing it as it comes. That way, we don't let down the many generations of anonymous creativity - by both Pagans and Christians - which have shaped it. If we begin to have theories about its Norse origins, then we are setting up as one of the we-know-better-than-the-unlettered-rustics-who-are-singing-this-song brigade. Use it as a jumping-off point for our own creativity - sure! Acknowledge our debt to it - sure! But leave it for future generations, so that they can make up their own minds about it too.

The other general point I would like to make is - please let's have as full an information swap across the Atlantic as possible. Let's keep researching and sharing our findings. Let's not do it the way traditional Academia has been known to act by doing exclusive, one-subject centered research. Let's

be international and eclectic, and who knows where we might fetch up?

Blessed be,

**Jan Henning
Wood & Water,
Kent England**



Mail Order Fraud?

This may have happened to you. You see an advertisement in one of the metaphysical magazines for a certain magick shop telling you to send for one of their catalogs. This catalog can cost anything from free to about five dollars American. That doesn't sound like much but when you consider the value of the Canadian dollar it starts to take a bite out of your wallet. You may write a cheque or go to your local postal outlet and mail a money order.

Now you sit back in anticipation and wait. And wait and wait and wait. After about two or three months you write them a letter stating that you have paid for your catalog so you would like to receive it. You never do. Now I'm speaking from experience here. I spent about eighty dollars Canadian and ordered twenty two catalogs. Out of the twenty two I received only eleven. So I wrote my letter. Where's my catalog? Four more trickled in. The other seven catalogs I never did get even though I wrote follow-up letters. Now if you consider how many people pay for catalogs and never receive them, someone is making a tidy little, or should I say big, profit.

Then, there is the other extreme. You do receive your catalog, so you gleefully thumb through it picking out all the nice magickal goodies you want to order. You pick out several items costing approximately two hundred dollars American and off you go to the local postal outlet for your money order. You step up to the counter and tell the clerk you would like a money order in American funds for two hundred dollars. The clerk types the order into the computer and hands you the bill. At this point it feels like someone just hit you in the back of the

head with a club. The two hundred dollar money order is going to cost you nearly three hundred dollars because of the exchange. Grudgingly, you hand over close to three hundred dollars. The order is sent and you go home to wait.

Now most catalogs say it will take anywhere from six to eight weeks before you receive your goods. Take for example the situation I ran into with Ritual Creations, of Norfolk, Virginia. After fifteen weeks went by I got edgy; so I wrote a nice letter to the company saying I sent them an order and I was wondering if they received it and when would they be sending it. After another ten weeks went by I was damn right angry so I sent another letter; where are my goods or send my money back. Another month went by so I did a money order search through the post office; I found the money order had been cashed, but no goods were ever sent.

So beware who you deal with. My advice is to make the first order a small token one to see if you get the items ordered. Now don't get me wrong. There are plenty of reputable catalog dealers out there who will go out of their way to give you good service. I know this from experience also, because I am dealing with them.

Before sending away for an item you may want to check your local stores to see if they carry it in stock. That way you can get the item immediately without the six to eight week wait and you are also supporting the local economy.

And in closing I would like to make a comment about John Threlfall's *Full Moon Fever* column in the *Lammas* 1995, issue 29. I totally agree with John. I think the *Bewitched* series in the mid 60's had a lot to do with promoting Witchcraft. I know, I used to watch it everyday. And here I am writing an article in a *Pagan Magazine*. Now I'll just wiggle my nose and instantly end this letter.

Merry meet and merry part, and merry meet again.

**The Beast,
Distribution Director,
Hecate's Loom**

Editorial policy: All letters sent to the *Loom* will be considered for publication unless otherwise clearly stipulated. The editors reserve the right to edit for length, punctuation, grammar, and inflammatory content. Letters should not be longer than 200-300 words. Please include with your letter your name, address and phone number where you may be reached during the day.

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hot tub?
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coven.**

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NEWSBITS

Events • Discoveries • Issues • Innovations

Freedom to Read (Surrey, BC)

This suburb of Vancouver was the scene of yet another attempt by a private citizen to use official channels to hinder the positive image of Witchcraft. Heather Stilwell, former school trustee and concerned parent, recently requested the Surrey school board to ban Barthe De Clements' juvenile novel, *No Place For Me*, which features a positive and sympathetic portrayal of a Wiccan character. The Surrey school board met on July 13 and rejected Stilwell's request by a narrow vote of 4-3, with some board members feeling the book did in fact proselytize while others felt it was harmless. Stilwell's initial complaint stemmed from her belief that the book promoted a specific religion within the secular public school system, which would be in contravention of the BC School Act.

Witchcraft is not the central focus of *No Place For Me*, which in fact is a story about the trials of a teenager with an alcoholic parent. It has also been reported that the author, Barthe De Clements, is not a practitioner of Wicca. The question of Witchcraft only enters the plot in the form of a helpful aunt, who happens to be Wiccan. Speaking to *The Vancouver Sun*, Stilwell claimed that she took issue with the novel because "[the] book is emotionally manipulative. It has the real potential to undermine the work a parent is doing at home". Surrey trustee Jim Chisolm disagreed, however, feeling that "banning the book from schools infringes on the rights of parents who want to offer children a variety of literary materials".

While this may seem like a victory in the ongoing battle for the presentation of positive Wiccan imagery, Stilwell's opinion on the board's judgment strikes a rather ominous note. As noted by *Sun* writer Gudrun Will, Stilwell, a member of the Christian Heritage Party, felt this decision will help "prompt [people] to come forward with other religious books they want added to School libraries." ❄

Freedom to Worship (Palm Bay, Florida)

While The Church of Iron Oak has won their initial case against the city of Palm Bay, their struggle to preserve religious freedom in the United States still goes on- only this time in Federal Court. Readers of the *Loom* and most other Pagan magazines will be familiar by now with the efforts of Iron Oak, an English Traditional Wiccan church affiliated with both the Covenant of the Goddess (COG) and the Aquarian Tabernacle Church (ATC), to ensure the right to home worship in the United States following their unwarranted citation for operating a Church in a residential area.

Despite scanty evidence primarily based on rumour and heresay against them, the City of Palm Bay proceeded to take legal action against Iron Oak. Realizing the result of a ruling against home worship, Iron Oak suddenly found themselves supported by 14 local Christian ministers. On November 21, 1994, a ruling was unanimously brought down in favour of Iron Oak against the city, which had spent \$45,000 US of its taxpayers' money in pursuit of its case. Meanwhile, Iron Oak ministers Jacque Zaleski and Roger Coleman found themselves with a victory that had cost them \$22,000 US.

Rather than stop the case at this point, Iron Oak made the decision to take their case to Federal Court under the Reli-

gious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) in order to ensure the future rights of all religious groups to worship, Pagans included. Unfortunately, to carry this to the Federal level, Iron Oak now finds itself needing an additional \$20,000 US. "If you worship at home, this affects you," says Rev. Coleman. "If you are Native American, Neo-Pagan, Islamic or Jewish, your religion may not have a church in which to pray. If we cannot have friends over to worship...then there is no freedom of religion."

Why should Canadians be interested in the efforts of an American church? Beyond the simple fact that they are part of the overall Wiccan community, their case could have far-reaching implications for all Pagans, regardless of national



allegiance. A victory for Iron Oak in US Federal Court would result in continued official recognition and greater legal support for our faith, making it harder for future groups or persons to indulge in Witch bashing. And, like it or not, American affairs often affect Canadian attitudes and opinions. With a court date set for July 1, 1996, Iron Oak needs your support now. To raise funds, they are selling t-shirts with images by well known Pagan artist Nybor, featuring the two messages of the Iron Oak legal defense fund: "Keep Home Worship Legal" and "Never Again the Burning". Prices range between \$17 and \$30 US and the shirts come in black ("Home")- and white ("Burning"). Iron Oak, through ATC, is also a tax-deductible church in the US.

To order a shirt, make a donation to the defense fund or for more information on The Church of Iron Oak, contact them c/o PO Box 060672, Palm Bay, Florida USA 32906-0672 or at (407) 722-0291 (voice) or (407) 724-9693 (fax) or IronOak@aol.com (internet). ❄

Freedom To Lead (Index, Washington)

The Aquarian Tabernacle Church (ATC) announced recently the election of ATC founder Rev. Pete Pathfinder Davis as the president of the Interfaith Council of Washington State (ICW). In the excited words of the ATC press release, "It is unquestionably the first time ever that a Wiccan priest has been elected to head an Interfaith organization anywhere in the world!" The ICW, started in 1990, is a nonprofit organization with official representatives of many religions including Baha'i, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Muslim, and, of course, Wiccan, amongst others.

When asked by Seattle Times religion reporter Lee Moriwaki how he felt about having a Wiccan president of the ICW, co-founder Rabbi Anson Laytner said, "It is not a big deal...I think the challenge is less what faith the president is than what his abilities are and what the council can accomplish." The ATC, started by Rev. Davis in 1979, is an open attendance Wiccan/Pagan Church recognized by the US government at city, county, state and federal levels.

Beyond offering outreach services to the overall Washington state community, the ATC is also active in assisting institutionalized Wiccans and Pagans. The ATC also operates affiliate Churches in both Canada and Australia.

Speaking to Moriwaki, Rev. Davis said that "If you can get people to understand what the belief systems are, none of them are that far apart. [It] amazes me that people don't seem to realize that we are all trying to do the same thing... basically to understand something that is incomprehensible and offer worship to him, her, it, however you see it." For more information on the Interfaith Council of Washington, the Aquarian Tabernacle Church or Rev. Davis, contact the ATC at PO Box 409 Index, Washington USA 98256 or call (360) 793-1945 (voice) or (360) 793-3537 (fax) or AquaTabCh@AOL.com. (internet). ❄

- JT

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Submissions!

The themes for future issues of *Hecate's Loom* are as follows: **Imbolc issue** - Poetry and Literature, **Beltaine issue** - Erotic Pagan Expression, **Lammas issue** - Ritual Theatre, next **Samhain issue** - Witchcraft and Healing. The deadline for submissions to the Imbolc 1995 issue is December 1, 1995.

For information on submitting articles, fiction, art, etc, please write for our writer's guidelines in exchange for SASE or SAE and IRC (International Reply Coupons). We are not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts and due to rising postage costs we are unable to reply to queries without SASE.

Advertising reps are needed, especially in Ontario and the United States. This is a volunteer position requiring only a few hours a month, and is a good opportunity to meet your local Pagan supporters and help keep the Loom going. Contact Dean (604) 383-0410 for more info.

PAGAN FEDERATION/
FÉDÉRATION PAÏENNE
- CANADA REPORT

LEXICON PROJECT

As part of our ongoing endeavour to build communication links, to foster understanding within the Pagan and Wiccan communities, and to facilitate clarity and unambiguity in our dealings with governmental agencies such as Corrections Canada, we have decided to put together a lexicon of Pagan and Wiccan terms which have consensus of meaning and use within our communities as well as those variations in meaning and use which also occur with regularity. To accomplish this, we need your help. We need to know what YOU mean when YOU say what you do.

Of the words listed below, which do you use? To mean what? What words are missing? Are there words you don't use, would never use? Which words would you prefer to use? Why? In what context?

We feel that this endeavour is necessary because we find that in an Ecumenical and Pastoral environment, clear definitions are a must for free and fruitful interchanges. Muddy linguistic usages simply foster unnecessary arguments and misunderstandings.

We will be printing your responses (anonymously if you wish) in the next issue of *Hecate's Loom* (Imbolc 1996) and we welcome any comments this might generate. Please address your correspondence to Lucie DuFresne, c/o PFPC.

APPEL AUX FRANCOPHONES

Il nous serait très utile de pouvoir constituer un lexique francophone des termes utilisés en Wicca. Employez-vous les termes anglais ou avez-vous pu trouver des termes français qui vous plaisent et qui convoquent les mêmes informations et sentiments que les termes anglais? Seriez-vous prêts à faire partie d'une équipe de recherche qui aurait la tâche de développer un premier lexique francophone?

Avez-vous pu trouver des textes en français sur la sorcellerie, la Wicca, le Paganisme contemporain? Est-ce que des "Book of Shadows" (Grimoires?) existent en français? Avez-vous déjà essayé d'écrire des textes de rituels en

français? Voudriez-vous en voir dans les pages de *Hecate's Loom*?

Envoyez moi vos commentaires, att: Lucie DuFresne, PFPC.

Merci.

THE WORDS / LES MOTS

coven, grove, outer/inner court, circle
dedicant, initiate, non-initiate, temple
priesthood, priest/ess, high-priest/ess, church
laity, cowan, non-priesthood, Wicca
pagan, paganism, neo-paganism, Wiccan
witch, witchcraft, sorcery, mystery(ies)
rites/rituals, god, goddess, the Gods/desses

For more information on PFPC, or Canadian Paganism in general, feel free to contact us at PAGAN FEDERATION / FÉDÉRATION PAÏENNE - CANADA, P.O. Box 32, STN "B", Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6C3, e-mail us via:

dave@fozzi.ocunix.on.ca or
khaled@p1.f45.n243.z1.fidonet.org

or fax us at (613) 231-5833. Our phone line declines to distinguish between faxes and voice calls, so we have set it to fax only while we get it fixed. Our apologies for any inconvenience.

Membership, which includes a subscription to *Hecate's Loom*, is \$20 Canadian per annum for individuals, \$25 for couples sharing a single subscription and open to anyone over 18 years of age who agrees with these three Pagan principles:

1) LOVE FOR AND KINSHIP WITH NATURE: reverence for the life force and its ever-renewing cycles of life and death.

2) THE PAGAN ETHIC: AN IT HARM NONE, DO WHAT THOU WILT. This is a positive morality, not a list of prohibitions. Each individual is responsible for discovering his or her true nature and developing it fully, in harmony with the outer world.

3) ACCEPTANCE THAT DEITY IS BOTH MALE AND FEMALE: honouring both male and female aspects of the Divine Reality which transcends gender, without suppressing either the female or male principle.

To join, send details of yourself and your interest in Paganism to the address given above. Until our incorporation is finalised, we cannot cash any cheques or money orders made out to PFPC; please make them out to Lucie Dufresne instead. ☸





The Journal

Gypsy Road Queens Ride the Rainbow to the Southwest

by Kathrin Darling

Mise-en-scene: three witches, a blue 1979 Chevy van and an open highway. It's midnight and the wyrrd sisters (myself, Anna and Kate) are finally on the road. Hurling over the rainbow bridge at Niagara Falls, a loud chorus of "Yeeehaah" booms from our breasts as we escape the border without a hitch or a search. Our primary destination: the Rainbow Gathering in New Mexico. But first we had to get there....

There's something very special that happens when you travel with witches; magic finds you. Or, in our case, falls right on your lap at every turn. We stopped for some slumber at one of the many interstate highway "rest areas" somewhere in New York state. The next morning, Anna arose to discover we weren't far from a teacher she had been working with last summer by the name of Twyla Hurd Nitsch. We gave her a call, and she graciously invited us to come and see her.

Spending the day at Grandma Twy's was like entering a separate cube of light, space and time. Grandma Twy is an eighty-three year old Seneca elder of the Wolf Clan who lives on a reservation in Irving, New York. She shared with us the gift of her knowledge through teachings about

ourselves, the earth and where we are headed as a world community.

After lunch, Anna gave us a tour of the reservation grounds. They'd built a lodge in the shape of a medicine wheel where they held various types of circles and councils. A little over to the left was a perfect circle of whispering pines where Anna shared some stories about the Star people. She explained to us that in aboriginal cosmology, we all originate from the stars and, looking into her sparkling, shining eyes, I believed her. The afternoon definitely had a profound effect on each one of us and set the tone for what was already becoming a voyage of the spirit.

The following day, en route through Indiana, we stopped off at a Grateful Dead concert. It turned out that the concert itself was canceled due to a group of angry gate crashers who were tear gassed at the concert the night before, so we ended up spending the afternoon in the "Deadhead village". For entertainment, there was an ancient testosterone ritual

which involved young men lighting up fireworks and pinging them into the nearby pond/cesspool.

Throughout the afternoon, I could distinctly hear the voice of Grandma Twy asking the question "where is the spirit here?" A question I was struggling to answer. It seemed these people were very removed from the actual spirit of peace, love and community that I'd been given to understand was the premise of these mini-caravaning tribes.



Kate in front of the Double Rainbow

Waking up in New Mexico was like waking up on another planet. Suddenly, the endless miles of flatland of yesterday were a world away and, in the words of Dorothy, we weren't in Kansas anymore. We were the munchkins, dwarfed by the rolling red ochre hills surrounding us on all sides but, like Dorothy, we were still searching for the Rainbow.

"The Gathering" was couched in a large valley in the middle of the mountains of Tres Piedres, about thirty miles outside of Taos. We arrived at the central gates to a large white school bus topped with a "Welcome Home!" banner. We hung out for a while with the welcoming committee (the people who you shared your first joint with), played some guitar and proceeded into "bus village" where you parked your vehicle and prepared your bags for the two and half mile hike into the central camp.

Walking in, everyone we passed greeted us with warm smiles and "welcome home" or "hello sisters". As we entered the main site, I was stunned by the intense beauty of the place. This was a truly magical world, something akin to my imaginings of Faerie land with a native twist. The hills were a green Goddess lying supinely across the seams of her own spine. Her arms and legs embraced the many, multicoloured campsites dotting the hillsides. And on her belly, wild horses ran around a large circle of white tepees. She was radiant and bristling with energy.

The Rainbow gathering was spawned in the late sixties in an attempt to create a free, loving and peaceful "gathering of the tribes," uniting to pray for world peace. Or a world party, I couldn't tell. I could not help but ask myself how this "gathering of the tribes" came to be such a singularly white event or why none of the elders at this event seemed to be teaching the younger ones about how to take responsibility for themselves. Food is free at the various soup kitchens and this meant that there were lots of kids following the rainbow trail from state to state and never really learning how to take care of themselves. The old adage "give a man a fish...." comes to mind.

There is no alcohol allowed at the gathering (except in "A" camp, a small sequestered group of strictly party people) but they more than make up for it in the way of substance abuse. There were countless, lost faces wandering around trying to elicit "doses" (of acid) from passersby and a campsite with a pair of boots on the roadside with a sign saying "trade boots for bud" was not untypical. Grandma Twy had taught us some subtle but powerful alteration in our vocabulary. She said, "Don't believe, belief has the word 'lie' in it. Instead of saying 'I believe', say 'I know.' Instead of saying "I hope" say instead, 'I trust'." I couldn't believe in the Rainbow Utopia, so grand and lush and yet so removed from the outside world, but I knew I had to trust in what it had to teach me. It turned out that trust was exactly what I was there to learn about.

Like the kids from the Grateful Dead show, these people had volumes to teach me about "home". If there's one thing you learn from being on the road it's that home is EVERYWHERE. Home is where the heart is...your heart. Being a Witch, this was an especially rewarding thing to learn. A solitary practitioner, I finally felt as if I was being initiated not into a coven, but into the world community.

After three days at the Gathering, Kate and I decided we'd "experienced" enough and shot off to beautiful Santa Fe for three days of comfort (a real shower and toilet) and carousing (The Santa Fe race tracks, Santa Fe Opera, Cowgirl Hall of Fame bar and The Oasis Cafe). All this courtesy of the generous hospitality of Kate's girlfriend Samara who was then working with the Santa Fe Opera

company's costume department. On the first morning of our stay, I decided to embark on a long walk. Downtown, it turned out was more than just a few miles away so, I headed for a tall angel-like structure I spotted on the road ahead.

It turns out that here, in the boonies of Santa Fe, amidst rows of trailer parks, was, in fact a Buddhist temple, the Kagyu Shenpen Kunchab Bodhi Stupa to be exact. I had arrived just in time for a guided meditation with one of the teachers. Upon entering the Stupa, I was struck not only by the magnificence of the wall paintings, but also a tsunami wave of the most blissful energy I'd experienced in my entire life. Coincidence? Maybe in the *Celestine Prophecy* way that reveals that nothing is really a coincidence. All I can say is I'm now practicing Buddhist forms of meditation and am permanently weaving it into my craft work.

Speaking of non-coincidences, no one could have prepared me for the things that took place at Chaco Canyon. Un-coincidentally, we arrived at Chaco Culture National Historic Park on the day of the BIG FULL MOTHER MOON. Un-coincidentally, we also arrived in time to connect with some people who were attending a ceremony for the reunification of the red and white peoples. Somewhere atop an enormous canyon was a circular, tenth century Anasazi (the ancient ones) pueblo ruin. Each group seeking the ceremony had their own vague story about a native prophecy; something to do with a crystal re-emerging when it was time for this reunification to take place. As it happened, no one really knew specifically where it was taking place so Kate and I just followed our bellies to the place we felt the strongest pull.

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Elemental city! Bright flashes of blue, red, orange and yellow burst out intermittently all around us like flashing Christmas lights. Not to mention the actual, in your face, spirit presences peeking out of the caverns and cliff dwellings along our moonlit path to the pueblo. The ceremony didn't officially happen, but what did occur seemed more natural and more fated than any pre-ordained meeting. Over a two hour period, roughly ten different people arrived of their own gut sense to the site that Kate and I had found/

chosen. So we had our own gathering of the tribes. Huddled up together in one of the only remaining four walled structures, we each removed our socks and shoes and had a "foot fire" for warmth. We huddled, sang, taught, talked and shared until dawn. We were all strangers but we each made a consummate, trusting and loving decision to be together and share the most truly full moon I've ever experienced.

After such a superlative evening, we felt we'd seen everything we needed to see of Chaco and it was off to Arizona in search of you guessed it, that tourist mecca, the Grand Canyon. En route, there seemed to be a huge collection of black cumuli in the sky overhead. In anywhere but the Southwest, this would be the portent of a whammy rain storm. But here, no matter how ominous the sky appeared, the rain seemed to dry up before it even hit the ground. Well, it rained just enough to create a very lovely roadside attraction.

As we sped along the highway, I suddenly told Kate to stop the van. We stepped out onto a flat red field, and there, across the road was the most impossibly large and awesome rainbow. As we danced around and whooped with joy at the sight, it turned into a double rainbow before our eyes! It's hard to describe the effect of a moment like this on the road weary, impressionable mind but to Kate (a.k.a. Iris, goddess of the rainbow) and I, it was and is one of nature's most awesome and stunning gifts. At that moment we felt completely full and knew instinctively that this was a sign of the journey's close. We were somewhere over the rainbow, and the whole world was our backyard.

We parked the van for the night on the roadside leading into Grand Canyon Park, drank some watery beers, ate, read tarot cards, laughed, sang, played drums and finally, with warm hearts and sated bellies we passed out for the night. The following morning, we drove into the park. It was here that Kate buried her past and where I was to receive my spiritual name.

The Grand Canyon is the most incomprehensibly vast and frustratingly beautiful place in the world. Frustrating to artists and writers alike, who find its subtleties and enormity impossible to replicate through mere mortal craft. It was precisely its grandeur that persuaded us that it was a place that could swallow pasts and divulge spirit names. Perched on the edge of the canyon, feet dangling, I felt very old and very, very young. Time stood still. Crows cawed and circled overhead as if to acknowledge or welcome us. Once again, the mother held us to her gentle breast and whispered, "Here...here is where the spirit lies, in the heart of the greatest rock, in the broad expanse of blue overhead, in the cawing of the crows, and in you. Every child of mine holds the key of creation...." Pregnant with the seeds of the Great Spirit, my spirit sister and I were ready to embark on the long road home. In her glittering, smiling eyes I saw my own reflection and understood finally that home really is everywhere. ❧



The PowWow - Songhees Reserve - Victoria, B.C. August 1995

by Jillian Player

The PowWow, the coming together of all the tribes to sing, dance and drum. Things are different now - P.A. systems, disc jockeys and video cameras are commonplace but the energy is still the same. The big chief couldn't make the PowWow yesterday because he was working with the weather, making sure it didn't rain on the dancers.

A fellow stands beside me dressed in moccasins with bells and animal skins hanging all over him, the biggest of which was a full wolf hide. The head of the wolf worked as a hood, hawk feathers sticking out of the mouth of the beast mysteriously covering the man's face, the rest of the hide flowing down his back. Turns out it is his brother's costume. He's wearing it in honour of him; he fought in the Gulf War.

It's time for the grand entry. Things get quiet. We all stand. The circle of ground is empty, slowly the drum beats out its heartbeat rhythm and the prayer begins. It's in a language I don't know but, at the same time, I recognize the place in my body that resonates to it, the place where all prayers go, into my heart.

The sun is setting and the sky is big, clouds are rolling across the horizon. It's a new moon, it's going to be dark tonight, but in this modern world, we have spotlights all around.

The grand procession starts. First the flag bearers. On either side an American and a Canadian flag. In the middle are native flags covered with ribbons and feathers. Behind these, from all across the nation, are the elders, the warriors, the women dancers, boys and girls, and finally the wee children, all walking to the same slow beat of the drum.

The prayer is screaming out of the speakers and the wind has stopped. Slowly the procession is building energy while creating a giant spiral. The drums sound like thunder and the voices are shrill like keening gulls. The women's voices scream over the men's low moans. The sun has now set, the lights go on and everyone is standing still, anticipating what comes next.

The spiral of costumes is awesome. It feels like I've been flung back in time. "This is what it was like", I'm telling myself awestruck. The pride and confidence surging from these people is hitting me full in the face. "See us, this is really who we are. We dare you to recognize us".

An old grandmother stands at the head of the spiral. She invokes the directions, calls upon Great Grandmother and Great Grandfather to bless us and keep us healthy and the weather good. She talks awhile about being all one family, that we all belong. She ends her prayer with "amen".

As the competitions roll on, I begin to look around the outside of the circle. Each of the clans gathers around their central drum, the heart of the group.

The young warriors are strutting in full regalia, decked in feathers from head to toe and faces made fierce with paint. They make a terrifying yet very sexual sight. In their prime, they have preened themselves for spiritual display.

The young girls in their fancy shawls and beaded moccasins, hair tightly braided into complex designs, wear feathers situated to enhance eyes and cheekbones. They all make a beautiful sight as they dance around each other. Giggling, shoving and rubbing the toe of a moccasin in the dust, shy girls laugh nervously as boys from other tribes notice them.

It dawns on me then, this is where an important rite of passage may have taken place in the past. The tribes would get together and the young people would perhaps find their potential husbands or wives from other bands. You were able to get all dressed up and dance and show off. Families were able to meet each other and, if you were lucky, you could have your first love affair. This is how the tribes stayed friends, deals were made, young ones were betrothed to each other, gifts were given and there was peace for another year.

No wonder the potlatch and PowWow were outlawed. This is where the spiritual essence was displayed, marriages and alliances made, and peaceful politics were played out.

Meanwhile, as all this is whirling around in my head, I turn back to the circle. The young women are doing a fancy shawl dance, twirling their shawls and kicking up their heels. Running between them are little girls trying to follow their older sisters. Other young girls and boys on the side are feeling the first stirrings of the dance move their feet.

Somewhere deep inside, perhaps imbedded in their very DNA, is the dance, the individual dance of their family alone. What a feeling of belonging there must be, to have your very own family dance, colours and design. This seems to be a constant scenario around the world, thinking of the Scots, Australian aborigines, the Polynesians and many others.

The little children dance and play through the crowd. The parents don't seem to be concerned. Whereas the typical Western parents are so scared these days of their children being stolen, these native parents are assured that they are not alone in the childminding. The children belong to the community. The teenagers, while trying to do their grown-up thing, would play or stop and carry a child that happened to be tugging on him or her.

Both genders took time with these tots, from children barely big enough to carry a little one, to the young warriors in full costume, they would be twirling a child or carrying a baby back to a parent. They all looked to be enjoying this immensely, unlike other teens who usually can't stand having younger ones around to cramp their style.

I was quite overwhelmed by this huge family affair, this

community that I could never be part of. When I was feeling a little envious that my own children will never have a family song or dance, that they will never have this freedom of family and community, this intimate web of security, I got to thinking about the Craft.

People of the Craft come from all walks of life. I am Anglo-East Indian raised Catholic in Canada. People are coming to the Craft because they, for one reason or another, have felt no sense of belonging in a Christian world. We have been steadily creating a community throughout the world. The children have been learning the songs and dances and, as the generations progress, maybe my great grandchildren will be born with the song of the Goddess and the God in their hearts.

I thank the people of the Songhees Reserve who cared enough to let outsiders into their sacred community, to give us a peek at their life and show us how, as a world, we could come together and belong. As the slogan on their program, stated, "We've been neighbours for 150 years, isn't it time we became friends". I say "Yes".☸

Going Public a Mixed Blessing in St. John's

by Drumwoman

A fuzzy phallic microphone and a hostile radio host put an unplanned-for spin on a Summer Solstice Sunrise Ceremony at Cape Spear, Newfoundland - the most easterly point in North America.

A group of Wiccans who gather regularly decided to share their circle by having the first-ever publicly-advertised Wiccan gathering in the St. John's area...maybe even in the Province. A limited number of notices went up, mostly in bookstores and friendly-seeming places. The idea was to put the word out without making a loud noise.

But the notices were seen by Alison Butler, a reporter with the St. John's CBC *Radio Morningshow*. She contacted one of the organizers and was told that, while the group would really hope the media wouldn't come, it's understood that when you advertise a public event to be held in a public place, the media can't be barred. However, Alison was asked that if she did come, she would participate rather than spectate.

The organizers had no idea what would happen, but by 4:45 a.m. on June 21st there were 18 people gathered in a sheltered corner of the magnificent landscape of Cape Spear. In addition to the reporter, there was also a technician with an over-sized microphone, covered with a fuzzy wind-sock against the decidedly-cool wind that blows forever over the wild rocks.

There were many new people, men and women, some older, some younger, some members of the organization circle....We stood in a circle and the technician, who was only doing his job, stood in the center of the circle, pointing

his mike. It was intrusive and made it difficult to find the energy flow.

But the sunrise is more powerful than small human concerns. We chanted and drummed, cast a circle, and stood together watching the sun rise like a Phoenix from the mystic Mother Ocean. It is a moment to carry us through the coming cold of dark winter. When it was over, several of us went for breakfast before going home to listen to what it would sound like on radio.

The report itself was fine. Alison Butler had taken part, had lived the experience, and understood and reflected that understanding with professionalism and spirit.

But the host, Peter Gullage, didn't get it and didn't want to get it. He kept interrupting Alison with cynical smirky comments and questions. At one point he started singing a fragment of one of the chants and told the radio audience he was standing up and doing the Spiral Dance. "Hey. I got it. I can do it!" he told the folks at home.

But as so often with people like that, the hostile host did himself in without any help from anyone. Alison Butler kept saying things like "It was really a good experience. It was quite beautiful." She answered his attempts at ridicule with honesty and simple truth. Instead of sounding clever and sophisticated, Gullage was an embarrassment to himself and to his local reputation as an incisive investigative journalist.

So what's to be learned? Ultimately it was a good experience. We made contact with several people who have been working as solitaires, not knowing how to make contact in a place like this where there are no public Pagan gatherings. We shared something beautiful with those who came, and we created a small presence in the public mind.

Another time it would be an idea to spend more time grounding and sharing energy, to counteract the strangeness of the experience that was new to some, the strangeness of sharing this with a lot of people we don't know, and the strange energy of knowing that two of the people were not there privately...but were members of the media....a conduit to many more thousands who will hear without experiencing.

The whole experience was much like remembering back to the very first time I ever cast a circle, all by myself as a solitary...a little scary, very powerful, a little self-conscious until I let go and started to understand the energy, the constant miracle that She is there, and She is always there. Blessed be.☸

(Drumwoman would like to know others' experiences with holding public celebrations, especially if the media came.)

News from the Ottawa Valley - Summer 1995

by Laurie Foster-MacLeod

Just following the Summer Solstice, I attended a Women's Weekend held at Gina Ellis' farm at MacDonald's Corners, in the beautiful Ottawa Valley. It was the first of what I hope will become an annual tradition. Pam Fletcher planned it (she also is at the center of the organization of "Minifest" held every August at Gina's farm) at a very reasonable cost, with catered food by Jane Gray, and lots of great things to do.

So - there we were - about 18 women, on a warm, sunny June weekend, ready to share, relax and go wild! At the opening ritual we created the Goddess in the sand with lots of the Earth's (dried) bounty: rose petals, lavender, cornmeal, lentils, shells, etc. She really was a lovely sight to see. Pam's idea was that She would grow and change over the weekend as we added things to Her, and then be dispersed back to nature at the weekend's closing ritual. However....we hadn't accounted for the forest critters, who figured we'd set out



Clay Goddess workshop - Women's Weekend, MacDonald's Corner

this bounty for their nighttime snacking! She teaches us in many ways.

Over the weekend a variety of workshops and rituals were offered. None ran concurrently, so everyone who wished to could attend. As a third of our number were leading workshops, it meant we didn't have to miss anything, although women did take breaks to relax, swim and socialize. Activities included a healing ritual, clay Goddess-making, reiki, belly-dancing, chanting, drumming, and seminars on midwifery, women and AIDS, celebrating our bodies (with the aid of body-painting), and a discussion on how to speak your mind if you disagree with a lecturer/workshop leader at a gathering. Jane provided delicious fare, and the Saturday night feast was pure pleasure.

At the end of the weekend I went home feeling tired but refreshed, a wiser woman with new friendships I hope will grow in the future. My thanks to Pam and company for a job well done, and here's to next year! ❄️

Avalon East Pagan Gathering August 25 - 27, 1995

By Drumwoman

Another time, another place, I might not have realized I was seeing fairy lights in the trees. I might have thought it was the stars of a new moon sky peeking through the canopy of the birch grove. But because of all the other magical happenings that were seeming so normal, I understood as I lay back from the fire and looked upward, that I was seeing fairy lights.

It was the final night of the Avalon East Pagan Gathering held on an old family farm deep in the heart of the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia from August 25th to 27th, 1995. In their wildest dreams the organizers had expected maybe fifty people. More than one hundred and twenty came to camp for the weekend and to discover and share. Many were from established covens and gathering circles, from different Wiccan backgrounds. Some were Asatru, a Norse/Viking form of Paganism. Some were solitaries who have been practising the Wiccan way alone, and were sharing ritual for the first time.

But for all it was magic, right from the opening ritual on Friday night when the one who had called the West, released the West saying "Behold the rainbow"! And there it was, not

seen till that moment when we all saw it together ... the water energy, power of renewal and rebirth, the rainbow, with one end disappearing into the mist and the other touching the earth at the entrance to the land that was our home for those few magic days.

Saturday was major workshop/discussion day: introduction to Gardnerian Wicca, to Runes, to astrology, to Asatru, spinning and the Goddess, creating sacred images. The song and chant workshop brought together a couple of dozen people, many of whom had never sung three-part harmony before. The discovery and delight at what happened resulted in the group singing at the feast/bardic competition later that night and there are plans to continue as a group with the possibility of making a recording.

The main ritual on Saturday night was huge ... more than one hundred people joined in the circle. The space was so big it was hard to hear what was being said and in the fading light it was hard to see what was being done, but the energies and powers were there. On Sunday there were more discussions - on Pagans and the media, urban Paganism, an herb walk, and the closing ritual.

Two others from our Gathering Circle and I travelled to the Avalon East Gathering from Newfoundland, drawn to experience a larger community. We brought our drums and chants. We have not found any teachers where we live, so we work intuitively. Drumming and chanting are a major source of energy raising and communication.

I was surprised to learn that many of the Wiccans from larger communities didn't use drums in their rituals and many had not partaken in ritual with drums before. It was a wondrous energy for us to share our drumming with people experiencing the power of ritual drumming for the first time.

In return it was a major discovery for me to experience the power and energy of High Magic in ritual. Our Circle in Newfoundland is all women. We have not been able to find or make contact with any men who are practising the Craft, so all my experience has been with Goddess energy. It was so difficult to understand the Green God, the Horned One, when all my life I have only known the Judaeo-Christian God.

And just as I hungered after the Goddess before I even knew Her names, so have I been longing for the God, to experience Him in all His names. With no embodiment He was unknowable. At this gathering there were gentle men who practise the Craft, who honour the Goddess and the God, and who shared their energy and power. It was the first time I have done ritual with men.

I would not want to stop being part of an all-women circle. It is an important vital place and space that I need and long for. But as part of the necessary balance, I personally feel the need to share male energy in the Craft and, for the first time, I experienced it in the woodland gathering.

The final night, after the closing ritual, after most had gone except the organizers and a few who leave in the morning, in the deep night around a small fire, the drums, the drums, and the chanting ... Isis, Astarte ... the names of the Goddess from the lips and hearts of women. And back from the other side of the fire, male song, chanting the

names of the God to the same familiar music. Male song naming the God, the essential male energy and power so difficult to find and understand and love in a dangerous patriarchal world. Back and forth the chanting went, across the firs, across the universe, across time.

The whole weekend was time out of time. The organizers did it by daring, by caring, by clearing brush for campsites and by cleaning the buckets in the outhouses. They opened their hearts, connecting vision with hard work and they created sacred space.

There are already plans for another Avalon East Pagan Gathering next year. There are worries that it will be too big, that too many will come. But those are worries for another time. Now is the time to remember the magic that happens when magic happens ... the Goddess and the God well met in the greenwood. ❧

Greetings from Comox Valley

by Linda J. Doerksen

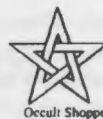
Our little circle is adding some drama to our gatherings. We have several masks underway, made of plaster-impregnated gauze; paint, feathers, and what-not-is-yet-to-come.

Lammas was more exciting this year than last. We followed some principles in *Seasonal Dance* by Broch and MacLer and our own ideas. We met indoors to make items needed for the circle, and then went down to the beach, resplendent in our coloured dresses and wildflower head-wreaths. We started a small fire and ringed the outside of the circle with candles. We created a very formal circle, complete with challenge; as we normally create a simpler circle, the formality helped to stress the feeling of being between the worlds. So all this, with the singing and dancing, and feasting, made for a wonderful night.

A note for those who want to make a Grain God...Ours was made with biscuit dough. Hint: the more dough used (such as for an arm), the greater the expansion of that part. One of our members was ambitious enough to tackle the Cernunnos figure; it worked!

Our circle may be expanding. Some more people have expressed an interest in learning about Wicca through a study group. We will meet to find out how everyone relates to each other, and what they are reading or whatever each person has done; then we'll decide how to proceed. Blessings to you all. ❧

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On Being a Witch



Ethos and Ethic - Michele Favarger

**by
John
Threlfall**

You have, or course, heard of busy people burning the candle at both ends? Based on the usual schedule of Michele Favarger, I'd say her candle is little more than a puddle of wax by now. Trying to find any free time to chat in Michele's average day is like trying to get an unscheduled appointment with the Pope to discuss female clergy - not bloody likely.

Over an unexpected lunch of gefeltefish, kugel and blueberry blintzes ("This is where I come when I've got a lunch meeting with any clergy," she says with her typical dry humour) at the local Jewish deli, Michele grudgingly agreed to discuss her least favorite topic - herself and her work in the Wiccan community. Of all the Wiccans I've ever met - be they clergy, celebri-

ties or solitary - Michele is the one most unwilling to blow her own horn. "I'm just working away in the background, making quiet progress," she tells me between blintz bites. "I believe in more work and less bickering."

More work is what she gets as the Right Reverend Michele Favarger, Elder and Arch Priestess of the Aquarian Tabernacle Church (ATC), head of the ATC (Canada) and recognized as Visiting Clergy for the William Head federal medium security institution in Victoria, where she performs rituals and meets weekly with her study group. Michele also provides counselling to inmates at other Federal and Provincial correctional institutions in British Columbia, works a full-time job at the University of Victoria and with her husband runs Ravencroft Farms, Vancouver Island's only commercial producer of organic catnip. "We've got great new packaging - it's got a bar code and everything."

Like I said: busy.

Openly Wiccan at home, work and with her family and friends, Michele has received references from the UVic Interfaith Chaplaincy office, has performed many handfastings (the first of which was in a Federal penitentiary), and in 1993 performed the opening circle for 180 people at the Spring Mysteries Festival in Washington state. She is also currently on the ground floor of an interfaith group in Victoria, similar to that of the Interfaith Council of Washington State, of which longtime friend and ATC founder Rev. Pete Pathfinder Davis was elected president this year.

Her first contact with the Craft took place when she was just six, "a skinny runt of a girl with allergies", and her mother and grandmother took her from Montreal to Winnipeg to meet her dying great-grandfather. While in the west, a distant relation took pity on the

"snotty-nosed" child (one hopes from her allergies) and worked magick to alleviate at least one of her afflictions. She had no idea what was happening or why, but was abjured not to speak of it. It wasn't until she was older that she discovered what was being done, why and, more importantly, how.

Spin the clock forward some years to Alberta when, recently married, she was fortunate enough to meet an elder who took Michele under wing, gave her lots to read, taught her and introduced her to modern Wicca. Despite the rumours of Victoria being a hotbed of Witchcraft, when Michele and her husband relocated here in 1985 it was quite some time before she came in contact with other Pagan folk. She still smiles to think on the days when she was too embarrassed to meet Robin Skelton after seeing his picture in the local paper, pentacle blazing. Favorite memory of those days? "Walking into a local silversmith to inquire about having a pentacle made and watching the jeweler step back six feet and cross himself."

Eventually she made her way to the ATC Spring Mysteries Festival, where she met Pete Pathfinder Davis and, after much work on her part, was invited to join the ATC Inner Circle as a first level initiate. "The ATC is not for everyone," Michele warns me. "It demands public commitment and a lot of energy."

With 18 affiliated recognized churches throughout the USA, Canada and Australia, it is to this sixteen year-old Wiccan organization that Michele attributes a lot of her skills. "In addition to extensive studying and public work, to advance in the ATC you must do a lot of training, including volunteer work on a crisis line."

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Spirituality and the Future

An interview with Starhawk

by Andrea



Photo by Roy King

From *Dreaming the Dark* by Starhawk, Beacon Press, Boston.

Recently, one of Wicca's foremost teachers and guides came to Toronto to do a workshop on Women and Spirituality, and I was fortunate enough to be able to steal a few minutes of her time. It was our first meeting, and I was thrilled to encounter a woman of great depth, spirit and intelligence. She is the author of a number of classic books on modern Wicca, a Priestess, a teacher and a warm and loving human being. She is, of course, Starhawk.

With her was another woman of exemplary strength and character, a film-maker and artist whose life has been devoted to the exploration of spirituality and the female essence within us all--Donna Read.

The following is an excerpt from a fascinating and enlightening conversation we had over the course of some very short hours. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Starhawk and Donna for sharing their thoughts and their time with all of us.

What do you feel the relationship of Paganism and Wicca is to the development of a world spirituality?

Starhawk: I guess what I see happening right now is that there's a kind of a crisis in the overall "Metaculture", if you can call it that....and that is a kind of a division between a world view that sees the earth as something essentially not alive, something that is--even to call it dead implies that it was once alive--but that is mere material that can be endlessly

exploited versus the kind of spirituality that sees the earth as a living being. And sees us as part of that living being and says that our relationship with the earth is the core of our spirituality.

For me, that's also what Paganism is all about. To me, a Pagan world view is the view that says the earth is a living being that has a consciousness that we can communicate with, and are a part of the being. We're not separate from that being and neither is our consciousness. The sacred is that living being and we're all part of it; there's no separation. It's not outside the world somewhere--it is the living world.

How do you view Paganism or Wicca today in a modern context?

To me, Wicca is a specific branch of the larger Pagan movement. Basically, the word itself [Pagan] comes from the Latin root which means "countryside", and it referred to all the people who kept following the old earth-based traditions after Christianity came in, and so today it tends to refer to those of us who are attempting to revive or to rediscover or recreate the earth-based spiritualities--particularly the ones that have their roots in Europe or the Middle East.

"Paganism" seems to have a derogatory sense. Is it a term you're proud of?

It can, if you're looking at it from a Christian context... But for me it's a very positive term.

How does this burgeoning cult of the New-Age fit into it all? Can Paganism and the New-Age be linked together or do you see a difference between the two?

I think there are ways in which they overlap, particularly in the understanding that the human mind and consciousness encompasses a much broader range of abilities and possibilities than our culture has led us to believe, and that there can be great value and great healing potential in opening up those possibilities.

I think where we diverge is that often what gets identified as New-Age entails a lot of ideas taken out of other cultures or out of context. Ideas somehow shift and take on different meaning when you take them out of context, and (they) can sometimes lose some of their dimension and depth.

There tends to be, in the New-Age, this sort of "you create your own reality" thinking. This is all very well, but it's only a piece of the truth which is that you create your own reality out of conditions you're given; that you didn't necessarily create, and that can become a very victim-blaming philosophy.

I think Wicca tries to be a bit more grounded since we have such a history of persecution against our tradition. We know from our own historical experience that there are a lot of things that happened to people that were not their fault, that they didn't create, and that somehow you have to account for that in your world view.

You can't just blithely assume that if you think right nothing bad will ever happen to you.

How do you see Wicca developing into the next century, into the next millennium?

Well, Wicca right now is developing. It has been growing tremendously over the last decade, since we started coming out of the "broom closet", and I know what's happening to my own community. I think that we're maturing a bit. You know, Wicca has tended to....attract people who see themselves as some kind of "outsider", and who often kind of like that position - kind of like being an outlaw religion.

But a lot of us are getting a bit older. Many people have children they're raising, and it's very difficult to raise children as outlaws. You raise children and you start encountering things like: how do you teach your child about your religious practices and traditions and also at the same time tell them they can never talk about this outside the home because you could be run out of your job, or they could be taken away from you, and you start to realize "oh, this is not just a whole bunch of fun and games to be outsiders, this is oppression".

Do you think that's a realistic outlook?

Oh, absolutely. Certainly in the United States, I know people who have lost their jobs...especially if you get involved in any kind of custody issue - it's a very real concern. And so I think there's more of a push for education, there's more of a push to say to people "hey, we have as legitimate a spiritual tradition as anybody else; our concerns deserve to be heard and to be taken seriously. We don't deserve to be dismissed or left out or ridiculed..."

What do you see yourself doing with your life in terms of your own spirituality? Would you say your focus is still Wicca? Do you have a goal in mind?

Well, for me, my connection is definitely Wicca - that's my tradition, that's what I'm trained in, that's what I teach.

I also have a strong identification with being Jewish, because that's how I was born, that's how I was raised.

I find myself drawn to a lot of the Middle Eastern Goddesses and traditions as I get older. But my personal spiritual practice in terms of my daily practice is to maintain my connection with the earth, and to go out in my garden every day and just spend some time there; not meditating, not invoking anything, not doing any ritual, but just being there - opening my eyes and watching....to go out on our land in the country and spend some time there to work with the earth.

What made you take up "public" craft? I mean, what made you take that step to become the figure that you are...being as much a focus for the community that you are?

Well, when I took it I never realized that that was what I was doing exactly! (laughs) But I started out actually very, very young. I was teaching the Craft before I knew anything about it - when I was seventeen. That was how I learned about it.

My friend and I decided to do an anthropology project in college and we decided we would teach a class in the Experimental College, which at that time was set up that anyone could teach and anyone could take a class and there were no credits or requirements. And we just got people together and said, "Well, we don't really know anything about this, but we're interested so let's all learn together.", and people would research and go out and come back and find things out.

And so I knew that this was something that really drew me, that really fed me and fit with my own sense of spirituality. I was also writing in my early twenties and as I was thinking about things, I decided to start writing about the Goddess, and that was what became "The Spiral Dance", and once that came out, the rest followed.

How do you see yourself fitting into this growing, burgeoning Wiccan movement in 1995-96, in this era of FAX machines and day-care centres....as it moves from sixties expressionism into nineties expressionism?

Well, the role that I see myself playing right now is continuing to be a writer, somebody who helps formulate the theology (with an "a") and the practice of the tradition. I like to think that

I'm a good liturgist, so some of what I've been working on has been writing.

You know, we are a tradition that tends to be very spontaneous, that doesn't have a lot of written liturgy, which I think overall is good, but one of the projects my collective is working on now is to actually put together a liturgy for death and dying and funerals.

This was a project that came to me after my mother died when I realized, you know, when you're in grief, you don't feel like being spontaneous, you don't feel like creating wonderful ritual; what you want is something laid out that says this is what you do and this is how you do it. And you can choose to do it or not do it, but at least you've got something to bounce off.

I'm also working on a book with two other women on raising children in the Goddess tradition and working on rituals and stories in particular. I'm putting together a cycle of stories to tell at the different holidays, which has been a fascinating project; and also, if you start to do that, you realize that "oh, if we're going to teach this to children, we actually have to have a coherent theology! This actually has to make sense!" (laughs)

And more and more, I find myself not teaching, but teaching other people, training other people to carry on the tradition so that it can spread beyond me. And doing as much as I can to make myself unnecessary...as you get older, as you become an elder, your job is to pass it on and to teach people how to pass it on, and there's never been a Pagan concept of a great Guru figure. It's always the teaching and the practice and the work that's important, not the personality.

So tell me about the work you're doing here in Toronto. Tell me about the film.

Well, Donna and I are working on a film about the life of Marija Gimbutas, who was, of course, the archaeologist who was so influential in discovering so much of the early history of the Goddess in Europe and speaking out for it against a tremendous amount of opposition.

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ANCIENT SECRETS OF THE GODDESS

Part II

Interview with Rev. Jessica North
(Continued from Hecate's Loom #29)

by Diana Michaelis

certainly experienced an integration at the heart centre, the heart chakra, a kinship with all Creation.

I felt very welcomed and loved by that community in general. And I definitely did have room to develop an affinity with the Earth, because I had come out of the city and had never lived in the country before. I also began my (short-lived) midwifery practice there as a pregnancy care advisor.

Also, that community was where I picked up another label, feminist, which was okay because I did not feel exclusive. I didn't feel I was excluding men, though I was aware of myself as representing the Feminine and aspects of the Feminine. I was aware of myself as a representative of the Goddess honoring the God in men and definitely as being equal to the male. But basically I saw myself just as a human being working on my own self-healing. I was involved in a lot of personal therapy at the time.

At what point did feminism begin to form your Craft outlook?

Much later I discovered the works of K. Esther Harding and went on from there to researchers such as Merlin Stone and Geraldine Thorston. I just sat down and drank from this well of feminine knowledge and feminine research which inspires me still.

At that time (I was twenty-eight) I had my second initiation. There was a period of fifteen years between my first and my third initiations, during which time I also became interested in the

When did you adopt the name of "Witch?"

I have always had a hard time with labels, because people tend to dismiss what can be categorized without really taking the time to investigate, to get to know something more fully. By the age of fifteen, however, I just couldn't stand the popular Hollywood image of the Witch anymore and I was able to find within myself a resonance with the word. I felt that I really wanted to redefine in truer terms what I felt "Witch" represents.

That was the beginning of my development inside the label of Witch. The next ten to twelve years were spent very personally, exploring myself, my beliefs. I became a counselling apprentice at about the same time that I had my first initiation, at eighteen. I studied herbology and worked with it. I moved to a rural community that called me "Witch," though I never openly referred to myself that way.

They meant it in a very friendly way so I never had a personal sense of persecution associated with the word. People came to me for advice about things, or to discuss things, or to review their own issues.

With regards to the Craft, what brought you to this path and how did you develop within it?

I really had a difficult time accepting what I saw as the position of women in our society, and accepting the concept of a deity that was so removed from its Creation, (also being a specific gender--not mine!), passing judgements about who I was supposed to be.

I was very young when I became conscious of the inequity in the (Judeo-Christian) belief system and the social structure. That was the beginning of my personal journey within a spiritual context, or as part of a spiritual path.

I spent two years pretty much as an atheist; I did not have a concept of Divinity at all. I knew there was "something out there," but to call it "divine..." I envisioned it more as a computer gone awry. There was something very much amiss, like pieces of a puzzle that didn't fit together.

At the age of nine I experienced a real integration of a lot of things during an intense numinous occurrence. I can't say the puzzle was solved but I

philosophy of Tibetan Buddhism. With regards to the Craft, though, I was basically a solo practitioner. Looking back it was a time of a lot of "personal growth" work interspersed with service to others.

A few years ago, an artist friend of mine had a dream. In the dream she saw a little book, a tiny tiny book design, and the title of the book was "What is a Witch?" She made the book and gave it to me for Yule that year. It is one continuous page that opens out like an accordion, each page containing a word. The acronym of the words - which are Wise, Intelligent, Teaching, Caring, Healer - spells "Witch." That pretty much sums up how I feel about it, too. I thought that was a pretty inspired vision on her part.

What are some of your views of Feminine/Goddess energy?

It is absolutely essential for us to acknowledge, to become acquainted with, to integrate and to move with Feminine energy at this point in our evolution. The Goddess represents a historical linking back, a historical reference point for all people.

We have all this information about various Goddess representatives from many cultures around the world, which in themselves are keys to the Feminine functions, the Feminine energy. They are archetypes, they exist within our psyches, though sometimes they're dormant.

Sometimes these archetypes are so commonplace that we forget, we just take them for granted - like preparing a meal for somebody, or caring for somebody's needs, or participating in getting to the bottom of an issue or expressing anger or knowing that a situation simply must change. These are all aspects of the Divine as embodied in the Goddess archetypes, not to say that the archetypes don't exist in the Masculine Mysteries as well. But theoretically half the planet is female and I think that women need to be reminded of this in an externalized fashion.

When an archetype is presented as something that is outside of oneself, or something that we can observe or relate to (women generally being related), then that changes the way that we look at it and think about it. It also changes the way we evaluate it. Then

begins the work of reintegration, or recognizing those externalized aspects within ourselves.

I think it's also very important for men, precisely because they have never had to contend with being female in a male-dominant social structure, they've never had to experience the feminine reality. They've only experienced it vicariously, through their relationships with women. So to find those points of commonality within themselves allows them access to the deep Self.

This is what the journey to the Underworld represents, in part - going into the deep Self and finding those aspects that we see in the myths repre-

**What is a
Witch?**
 -
**Wise,
Intelligent,
Teaching,
Caring,
Healer**

sented as aspects within oneself. This is how we become awakened to our paths as well as our potential.

From a more political perspective, I think that societally we have lived with a masculine standard and values for so long that we tend to devalue the feminine perspective, the feminine ways and the feminine gifts. It has become very important for us to re-evaluate those aspects simply because if there are no "women," (if we continue to elevate the masculine perspective and standard above the feminine), there are no people. Bottom line.

If there are no "women," a lot of the gifts or developments of civilization in its best sense, which we now know are primarily the works of women-oriented

cultures, would be lost and the world would suffer tremendously. Women developed many skills because of our biological need to take care of our young and also to meet the needs and demands of our communities.

What do you see as the externalised roles of the Feminine and Masculine principles in society?

The difference between the masculine perspective of government and the feminine perspective is that a feminine government is directly concerned with the needs of its community and a masculine government is concerned with acquisition and hierarchy - a very different focus.

As long as there are people on the planet, we have to be concerned with their well-being and that is why it is absolutely critical that we regain the feminine perspective--so that we can take care of those of us who are here (and I mean the greater us, animals, plantlife, etc.--not just humans) in the most practical way possible, without destroying ourselves or making the planet uninhabitable for us and for our descendants. ❄

Jessica North is a Mother, Shaman, Priestess and Educator with a practical background in Jungian psychology, astrology, numerology, Tarot, symbology, dreamwork, mythology, music and Ritual. She is a published author, founder of WildCraft School for Universal Mystery Traditions and a founding Priestess of The Thirteenth House Mystery School. She currently teaches Ritual Dance and Movement in Victoria, British Columbia, and is available for workshops, lectures and presentations.



THE MAGIC OF TAROT

An interview with Alison Skelton

by Michela Scheuerman

Alison Skelton has a Bachelor's Degree in Visual Arts and works as a mixed media printmaker and painter. She has performance experience in singing, acting and dance. Alison has been studying and practicing the magical arts for 19 years. She is a founding Priestess of the Thirteenth House Mystery School. She encourages self-understanding and creative expression through Tarot, Colour Therapy, and ritual.

When did you become interested in pursuing a study of the Tarot?

About nineteen years ago. I started studying by myself with a small Rider-Waite deck, doing practice readings with the aid of a book, for my friends. Later I studied, in a casual, ongoing class, with Jean Kozocari. There I studied magic in general, which made me realize that the study of the Tarot is not an isolated pursuit, but connected to all other magical work. I also did a little work with a friend who was interested in the Cabala, so I got a bit of a slant on that too, at quite an early age.

Did you feel an immediate affinity with this method of divination when compared to others, like the Runes or Astrology?

I felt a definite pull towards the Tarot because I am very visually oriented. I had seen Tarot

cards, as well, when I was a child at home. I recall somebody drawing the Death card, and I remember being quite taken aback by the sight of the grim reaper; it was quite graphic.

I was very young. I would sit on my own and make art rather than being with other people, and it was my escape and my means of expression in a situation where I was often told to be quiet. My quiet activity would be to draw, so I was very attracted to symbols and to pictures. I don't think that, at that age, I had really explored runes and astrology, but for me astrology, as an invisible, intellectual construct, is very abstract. If I can't see it, to me it is very abstract.

As an artist would you say that Tarot interpretation is more of a technical or artistic craft?

Oh, well, I think it is both; it is partly technical because when I think of technical I think of technique, and technique is a very personal thing. Something that I've learned as an artist is that it is very important to have a good grounding in technique, and then one can take off from there, one can abstract.

As with drawing--one needs to learn life-drawing as a technique, or in print-making, one needs to know the technique, and then one can start breaking the rules. You can start putting your own interpretation into it, and get more personal.

I think it is the same with the Tarot. There are basic archetypal meanings there, but the way that you interpret those archetypes or



Photo by Linda Gibb

My creative bent has always been very visual, and I have made art since

those symbols (once you know the basic structure), can be quite personal.

There is a vast store of symbols, or interpretation of symbols, available to us, and sometimes the symbols may mean something to us, subconsciously, that is not necessarily universal. But it is no less valid, because it's us reading the cards, not an abstract "them" who makes the rules.

There is a structure and there is a technique, and there is a basic pattern and archetypal meaning, but beyond that I think that it is more important to find the meaning that "sings" to you.

As far as Tarot interpretation being an artistic craft: it certainly is. There are different visual languages for different cultures and different psyches. That's why it is nice that there are so many decks out there, so that you can find one which really speaks to you...these cards (the Rider-Waite deck) I have been using for nineteen years, they have a lot of energy in them.

Do you prefer specific decks, and why?

It depends on my mood; it depends on what kind of a reading I'm doing. Sometimes I'll even use more than one deck in one reading. Sometimes I'll use just the Major Arcana of one deck, and then I use the full deck of another kind, depending on how in-depth the reading needs to be.

Sometimes I'll get the querent (the person for whom I am doing the reading) to pull out a card from the Major Arcana of one deck, and that will be their Significator, and then I'll do the rest of the reading from another full deck in case that card needs to come up again--and sometimes it does. It has an energy about it that needs to come up again. It works for me.

The whole art of the Tarot is finding a way for it to express your own way of being, your own way of doing, or your way of healing, or your way of understanding the world. If it is not coming from you then it remains a structure, not an interpretation.

On what magical principles does the Tarot operate? For example, you seem to agree on the influence of archetypes and the collective unconscious, that there are symbols meant to draw knowledge from inside of us...

Yes I think so, but I also believe that there is going to be an individual and personal approach, because there is an individual and personal unconscious, as well as a collective one. Some decks out there are pretty abstract, and although they may speak differently to different people, the basic meaning is the same.

Intent is very important; be very clear (you the reader) before you start the reading, that you know precisely what the structure of the reading is going to be, what information you are trying to access, and that you are very clear about what the cards mean to you, before you start.

Would you say that there is an alchemy happening between the reader and the querent in the interpretation of the cards?

The whole art of the Tarot is finding a way for it to express your own way of being, your own way of doing

Oh, the process of interpretation is definitely an alchemic one.

What advice would you give to the beginner student of the Tarot; many people are interested, but do you think that there has to be a vocation?

I don't think that there has to be a vocation. I think that anybody can learn to read the cards if they have the desire to do so, and I think the most important thing, as I said before, is to get a good grounding in the basic symbols of the deck(s) that you have chosen

and be clear that the deck(s) you have chosen be the right one(s). Learn as much as you can, but don't rely on books only.

I find that I always learn best from doing, from experiencing, and verbalizing, learning while being taught by a person, rather than from a book.

After you learn to be comfortable with the basic symbols, then you can start doing meditations, letting your mind go with the principles and ideas, and letting concepts expand and expand....The symbols in the Tarot are almost infinitely expandable to encompass all sorts of ideas and concepts which may not be immediately visible or apparent in the text of a book.

We know that the cards don't actually predict the future; what do they do, exactly?

They show dynamics at work in a person's life, and what is likely to be the outcome of a situation if one is willing to implement the changes expressed by the cards. Sometimes a reading will just confirm that the querent is already on the right path of action, and to continue on it.

Do you find doing a reading psychically enhancing or draining?

It all depends on the reading. It is draining when someone is "stuck" on an issue, or if they are not willing to actualize changes to improve their situation. It is the querent's responsibility to make the changes.

Does your intuition play a great role in the reading's interpretation?

Yes. Often I make a psychic contact with the person that I am reading for, and sometimes I'll get bodily symptoms which will give me an indication of what the querent's energy is like, or about their mood or state of mind. It is also important for one, as the reader, to know oneself, and to learn to separate one's own issues from those of the querent.

If I am in a particular state of mind, I won't do a reading. To know oneself is what life is all about; the reason why we are all here.

Are there Tarot meditation techniques?

You can incorporate the Tarot into many kinds of meditations, or you can

do guided visualization, which is one of the things I teach my students in my Tarot class.

*I don't consider
the cards to be
good or bad; they
are what they are.*

For instance, take the card of the Fool; the guided visualization begins with inviting the student to mentally enter the card while imagining that they were entering an egg shell, and to 'see' what it is like inside the egg, and what it is like to break out of the shell. They are encouraged to describe their surroundings, the colours, the textures and to gather as much tactile experience as possible, and to go on the journey of the Fool, perhaps with the aid of an animal guide, over the cliff, to fall and explore the place where they land. It's all about risk-taking and trust. You can learn a lot about the intrinsic energy of a card by doing that; you enter into the archetype and make it yours.

Do you do these meditations with the Major Arcana cards only?

Yes, most of what I am talking about is related to the Major Arcana. The Minor Arcana are interesting in themselves, but they do not hold for me as much richness of archetypal meaning as the Major Arcana do. The Minor Arcana are very elemental cards.

Do you have any suggestions for daily meditations with the Tarot?

What might be interesting would be to start with a card and self-motivated visualization, entering the card and seeing where it leads. Another approach in visualization is to start exploring from a safe place, into the card, then into its meaning.

For example, in a meditation involving the card of Strength, one may begin by envisioning oneself in a safe place; a room, with its own decor, sym-

bols and atmosphere. Then introduce a lion into the room, and choose the interaction. Are you the lion? Are you going to play with the lion or open its jaws? Whatever the choice, the memory of the experience is going to be stored in the subconscious, and made available when needed.

When, in your opinion, is it almost necessary that a person have the Tarot cards read?

When one feels one has lost touch with the Self, because that is a very frightening place to be, and even dangerous.

Other times are when one is grieving, or in despair, even just depressed, or confused, or having a crisis of faith and clarification is needed. The Chakra reading is particularly effective in pointing out the cause and nature of a depression, for example, and to provide a reason for the experience at a spiritual level, which can be quite reassuring. This layout is also very body-oriented, and is one that I am very comfortable with.

You can do a reading with just the Major Arcana, or all the cards, and it is a very expandable kind of a reading. I read the seven cards from the bottom to the top in a straight line.

I never read Major Arcana cards in reverse; generally I look at a card, and I feel that if reversed, it does not indicate negativity, but a transformation.

I don't consider the cards to be good or bad; they are what they are. With the Chakra layout you can do cross-family readings, with seven cards per each member of the family, and look at the interaction of different wills and situations.

Can you cast spells with the Tarot, and can you suggest a few easy ones which a person could incorporate into everyday life situations?

There are a couple of simple ones; one suggestion would be to carry a certain card into a pouch around the neck as a talisman. The card depends on the purpose; for example, a pregnant woman close to delivery, might want to carry in the pouch the card of the Empress, which would make the birthing a loving experience, as opposed, for example, to carrying the

card of the Tower, which would bring about a violent, sudden cathartic kind of birthing which may not necessarily be what one wants....

The other suggestion involves doing a little ritual using the five elements, which would be set up around a specific requirement or dynamic that you may want to establish in your life. You might do that on an altar, by setting the cards with the symbols of the four directions, and corresponding coloured candles, first.

For example, for an artist looking for inspiration, the colours of the candles might be green to reflect creativity rather than to correspond to the elements. I would add the tools of the trade; if one paints, a canvas with brushes and splashes of colour would be appropriate. Use your imagination.

As for the four directions, starting with the EAST (Air), I would place the card of the LOVERS, corresponding to the astrological sign of Gemini, which embodies communication and the relationship between the subconscious and the spirit, expressed to the conscious mind.

In the SOUTH (Fire), I would place the card of TEMPERANCE, which is an alchemical and motivational card, meaning that it takes the elements and moves them around, transforming them.

In the WEST (Water), the place of the subconscious, one might want to place the card of the EMPRESS for its Venusian qualities of love, nurturing, and giver of life.

In the NORTH (Earth), the place of manifestation and magic, of arts and composition, the card of the SUN, or that of the WORLD, are effective to get something finished. That of the DEVIL would be geared towards practical and monetary gains.

In the CENTRE (The Spirit), the card of the STAR will provide spiritual inspiration. This is the place in which the magic is created by the interaction of the spirit with the four elements.☉

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"The Oak and the Stones," pen and ink by Denise Cornwell

Astronomical Sources of the Pagan New Year

[Excerpt from *A New Philosophy of Witchcraft and Ritual Practice*
by Yvonne Owens]

In the ancient world, from Neolithic times up until the dawn of the Christian era, ceremonial, astronomical calendars were used to determine auspicious times for ritual observances and collective activities. Agriculturally, they served to determine correct times for planting and harvesting. Little distinction was made between ritual, ceremonial festival and mundane events, as all endeavor was considered part of the sacred round of life.

The original standard for daily and seasonal time-keeping was the lunar cycle. The first calendars, in cultures all over the world, were moon-calendars. The reasons for this are obvious; the trajectory of the sun across the sky is difficult to determine, but the shape of the moon changes nightly as it waxes and wanes. Ancient Sumerians, Babylonian, Hebrew and Canaanite calendars counted nights (as starting from sunset), not day, for nights are when the moon is visible. Our modern word, "month," means "moon," and is a vestige of this system.

Indigenous European cultures left behind visual records of their lunar calendars in the form of pictographs, carvings and cave paintings. The prehistoric artifact misnamed "Baton de Commencement" is one such. This is the long bone of a large grazing animal with the fourteen days of lunar waxing and fourteen days of waning clearly rendered along its length. As such, it far more clearly resembles a menstrual calendar than a chieftain's power fetish.

Hollywood "Indians" who speak of

"many moons" are only partly exaggerated, as time was measured in lunar cycles by the aboriginal peoples of North America as well as those of Europe. Islamic and Judaic custom still calculates sacred days and festivals by means of lunar calendars. Christendom, on the other hand, observes a strictly solar system of values and time-calculation in all but one respect; the Vatican determines the date of Easter by calculating the first Sunday after the first full moon after Spring Equinox each year.

Pagan England divided the year into a "light" half and a "dark" half. The Light half was ruled by the Goddess and the dark half by the God. Later, the Oak King ruled the light portion of the year, while the Holly King was thought to preside over the dark half. The change-over points were at Beltain and Samhain --which we now observe on the eve of May and the eve of November.

Samhain (pronounced "Sow-ain") was the ancient Celtic final harvest festival. It was the time of winnowing and the beginning of winter. It also marked the Pagan New Year. Samhain later came to be called "Hallow Eve," or Hallow'een. Originally, Samhain was timed for the first, last-quarter moon to occur after the Autumn Equinox. For witches, Samhain still marks the start of the New Year.

The lunar calendar consists of thirteen, 28-day "months," with one day left over. Thirteen 28-day months add up to 364 days, and the extra day synchronizes the lunar year with the 365-day solar cycle. The "Year and a

Day" still the customary period of time for contractual agreements, apprenticeships, and other initiatory trials in Scottish, Welsh and Irish folk traditions.

The "Year and a Day" shows up in folk and fairy tales as the period of heroic journeying - the spiritual or magical testing that proves the shamanic ability of the heroine or hero. What most people don't realize, even folklorists, is that this is a remnant of the lunar calendar of pre-Christian Europe.

The imperial, "Solar" philosophy of the early, Roman Church demonized lunar values and customs, including the very number, "13." The reason some skyscrapers built in the mid-twentieth century don't have a thirteenth floor reflects this bias, now degraded to superstition. The number itself is thought to be "unlucky," or even "evil."

The real reason for its defamation, however, is that "thirteen" is the sacred number of the lunar, matricist belief-system of earth-based, Goddess religions. This type of world-view predominated in Europe for perhaps as long as thirty thousand years before the advent of patriarchal ideologies.

While Witches' covens are thought to consist of thirteen Witches, this really reflects a vestige of the system of observing thirteen lunations, each of which also signified a tree of the pre-Christian "Sacred Groves" of some cultures

Trees were holy to the ancient Celts, and to the indigenous peoples of

Europe who preceded them. In the "Ogham" script in use in pre-Roman Europe (adapted to magical use by the Druids and other shamanic orders) all of the consonants connote a month of the "Sacred Wheel," or lunaryear. Each month also correlates to a tree of the Sacred Grove (In two instances, to two trees - Apple and Blackthorn each share months with Hazel and Elder), and to its planetary "ruler" and divinity.

For instance, the Ogham letter, "Fearn," means "Alder." Alder-tree and alder-month are both associated with the totemic, clan ancestors of ancient Britons, Bran and Branwen, Celtic divine siblings. "Bran" also means "Alder."

Alder month occurs in the influence of the "Saturn-ruled" constellation, "Capricorn," whose most ancient (Babylonian or "Chaldean") form was the sea-beast or horned dragon, along the lines of the "Leviathan" of Hebraic lore, Tiamat of ancient Mesopotamia, and the Loch Ness Monster or "Ogopogo" of today. Classical Greek mythologists translated his features into the horned beast they were most familiar with, that being the goat, and gave him a fish's tail to account for his aquatic dimensions.

Bran's archetype is related to the "Pendragon," or "Head of the Dragon," the head being the "chief" and the Dragon being the tribes of Wales. Uther, Artur, or Arthur signify the "Little Bear," the constellation (Ursa Minor) which leads Draco (the Dragon) in its rotation around the celestial hub, clearly visible in winters skies.

Bran's magically decapitated head was thought to protect Britain from invasion from the East, and its disinterment by Arthur was thought to have permitted the Norman invasion. The Dragon is the heraldic beast of Wales, and signifies the magical lineage of Bran and Branwen, who are also symbolized by the totemic birds, Raven (also Crow and Rook), Kingfisher, and Starling, all of them "underworld" messengers.

The classical Greek (correlative) is Cronos, who is said to be "sleeping in the Western Isle with his companions," dreaming the world into being - the "Western Isle" being Britain. The Tower of London still houses Ravens, to serve as the protective, totemic presence of Bran. Recently, one of them was at-

tacked and killed by a police dog. The stewards of the realm made sure that the dead raven was replaced immediately so as to maintain the Tower's full, protective complement of ravens.

Bran's month of Alder, or "Fearn," is the third month of the archaic Celtic lunar year and the first month of the later Celtic solar year. It commences after the Winter's Solstice, within a few days of where the Christian world celebrates New Year's and begins January. The current, Christianised custom of marking the "new year" at the point when the sun returns from its nadir in the Northern Hemisphere (at the solstice) reflects the solarization of European culture by Roman occupation. Pre-Romanized Europe marked the new year at the festival of Samhain.

These cycles colluded with the lunar, or "men-strual" (meaning "moon-way") fertility cycles of women, and women, as "gatherers," were the natural inventors of agriculture.

All Hallow's Eve (Hallow'een) is the eve of the first month of the lunar year of trees, which is "Beith," or Birch month. Astronomical calculations could have been behind the building of those megalithic structures and stone circles which function as solar clocks, such as Stonehenge and Newgrange. This implies that such knowledge was not then esoteric, but a practical means of determining appropriate timing within the agricultural cycle.

M. Esther Harding, in *Women's Mysteries*, underscores that Samhain was the antique Briton's New Year, and that it constituted their primary festival as the advent of winter by the lunar system.

"Hallow's Eve" actually means "Sacred Eve." The festivals meaning is

roughly equivalent to "All Saint's Day," "All Soul's Day," and the Mexican "Day of the Dead." (Dia de los Muertos) All of these sacred festivals commemorate ancestors, or "those spirits who have gone before," and all are celebrated within the same time-frame.

The names, "Hallow's Eve" or "Hallow'een," also make reference to the "Thirteen Hallows of Britain" which Arthur undertook to claim from the "Fisher King" of the "Underworld," or "Anwynn." The Fisher King is a later version of Bran, as portrayed in the Medieval Romances.

The "Hallows" are seen to descend into the underworld at Hallow's Eve. Arthur (the Sun King) makes a descent into the underworld in order to reclaim them and bring them back to the world above (our world). This symbolizes the renewal of the land at the advent of the sun's return after the winter's solstice. He does so under the tutelage and auspices of Merlin, said to have been fathered by a Dragon, and really just another version of Saturn/Bran/Capricornus. The entire tableau represents the rebirth of the sun (Arthur, and life itself, in the form of Spring) from its nadir at the darkest time of the year.

The constellation of the Pleiades sets below the horizon at Hallow's Eve. The "Seven Sisters" and their "Nine Priestesses" (or Muses) are prominent in the Celtic lore of the lunar year. The rising and setting of the Pleiades, starting with All Hallows, marked the sequence of the agricultural year. The fertility cycle was measured by placement of the lunations against the celestial map, for purposes of winnowing, fallow periods, planting, and harvesting. Colleges of Priestesses were the first agrarians - concerned with the conservation, storage, fertilization, and planting of seed grain. These cycles colluded with the lunar, or "men-strual" (meaning "moon-way") fertility cycles of women, and women, as "gatherers," were the natural inventors of agriculture.

Though New Age hype claims all manner of Pleiadean, extraterrestrial interventions for an apocalyptic "age of Aquarius," the true reason for Pleiadean Mysteries is quite a bit more practical and mundane, while being simultaneously "divinely" inspired. The shapes

and patterns of the moon's transformations against the Celestial Hub gives us a model for seasonal cycles of fertility, both physical and poetical, while at the same time reflecting greater, "astral," resonances.

Ancient, agricultural Temple complexes realized divine harmonies by actualizing their patterns within the lunar wheel of the year. "As above, so below" takes on new meaning within the "Chop wood, carry water" application of Cosmic patterns and principles. The movements of the moon and stars in the heavens were the original timeclock for a natural, magically and practically empowered life, for far many more years than a solar clock has serves as such.

The solar events, the solstices of winter and summer, and the equinoxes of spring and fall, are four of the sacred festivals of the Celtic Wheel of the Year. The astral events (festivals in observance of the movements of the Pleiadean cluster, the Pole Star, Venus, Ursa Major, ursa Minor and Canopis, among other constellations) make up the other four, constituting an eight-spoked year wheel. These are the festivals we know as the Fire Holidays: Samhain (or "Halloween"), Imbolc, Beltaine, and Lammas (or "Lughnassa").

The eight points around the wheel are often symbolized in the image of the Cosmic Spider in her web, similar to Mother Maya - the spinner/creatix of temporal reality, or time/space. She is also called "Mother of Time," the "Weaver," or the "Virgin Crone." She is the origin of Athena, Anathena, Anath, Anat, Metis, Neith, and the thirteenth fairy in "Sleeping Beauty." As such, she caused the heroine to prick herself on a Crone's spinning wheel and fall into the illusory "sleep" of a mundane (un-"magical" or non-sacred) experience of the physical world.

Maya is called the "Mother of Illusion" because her creation, the temporal world, can appear to the uninitiated to be more "real" than the dance of energy that produces it. We now interpret this "scientifically" in the formula, $e=mc^2$, Matter is postulated to be the result of interference patterns of mobile, energetic wave-forms, the warp and the weave of Maya's loom, or web.

Maya, as the Spider, is the totem and divinity of the lunar tree-month,

Ivy (or "Gort"), within the influence of the constellation "Virgo." Ivy has the ancient Celtic significance of "the Self," and its symbol is the spiral. We, too, are considered (in this belief system) to each contain the sum of cosmic resonance possibilities within us, and to hereby be "made" in divinity's image. The DNA spiral, the spiral shape in which Ivy grows, the spiral of time, and the spiral form of galaxies are seen to be one, great, universal harmonic, and the individual life simply a variation on the theme.

As the lunar year of tree-months progresses toward its end, we enter the Autumnal phase. After Ivy come Reed-month (or "Ngetal," pronounced "Ing-tal," named for the god, "Ing," and the Nordic Rune, "Ingwaz," meaning the spiral inward to the core of Self, signifying penetration of Universal consciousness) and the thirteenth month, Elder (or "Ruis," cognate with Runic, "Raido," signifying "Sun's journey," soul's journey, or migration).

Myths surrounding Elder are many, including the idea that Witches live in them. Folkloric belief postulates that it represents the height of folly to chop down an Elder without its permission, as the tree may curse such an inconsiderate harvester with catastrophic luck for years to come.

The magical significance of Elder tree and Elder month is Death/rebirth. The soul is seen to be a migratory bird, a crane, heron or Ibis, symbolic of the transmigration of the soul through life, lifetimes, and realms of the spirit. Ideas of reincarnation, and the Crane who augurs a birth or a death, typify the character of this tree-month. Elder occurs in the influence of Libra, whose early form was "Maat," the Egyptian deity of Justice, who weighed the departed soul against an Ibis feather to gauge its burden, or "Weight."

The "Day," at the close of the Year and a Day, is Samhain, or "Hallow's Eve." The departed spirits are acknowledged and thanked for their contributions during life. They are seen to still be present, within our ancestral and genetic memories, and honoured as an ongoing part of the collective and personal self. At the same time, whatever is obsolete, regressive or outgrown is composted - released to be transformed into new expressions of life. Hallow's Eve is a

bittersweet occasion. There is a poignancy about it, as well as a healthy, irreverent jollity that is best seen in the attitude of Mexico's "Day of the Dead." On this occasion, the spirits of the dead are affectionately mocked, and remembered with celebratory meals consisting of the favorite foods of the departed souls. "Offrendes," or offertory shrines for the deceased, are constructed.

Upon the offrende altar are placed mementos, photographs, objects beloved by the deceased, and food offerings. Candles are lit and, most importantly, those who are no longer within a mortal life are given the gesture of remembrance - important for us to do and, one must suppose, for them to see - at least the part of them that lives on in us. More than anything else, at Hallow's Eve we give ourselves messages of continuity, transformation, and resurrection - the true significance of adopting new personae, or "masks."

Birch month begins the New Year occurring in the influence of Scorpio, with significances of mystical death, resurrection and rebirth. The ancient world's symbol for the constellation of Scorpio was the hieroglyph for "snake," who sheds her skin and is regenerated. As the starting of the dark part of the year, Samhain starts off Birch month with the "darkening of the light," a turning within to conserve energy for winter, the beginning of hermetic withdrawal and introspection. Earth's energies draw deep within, in order to re-emerge, renewed, in Spring. The Birch is a supple, youthful, slender tree, which stands in the forest like the image of renewal. Other images appropriate for Birch month are the eagle or Phoenix, significant of new life rising out of the ashes of the old. ☸

Yvonne Owens is a writer, musician, cultural theorist, and art critic. She is the author of The Cup of Mari Anu (Horned Owl), and co-author of The Witch's Book of Days (BeachHolme). Yvonne has contributed to Hecate's Loom for many years, and now serves as Publishing Editor.

The Kintail Witches

By Shelley Boettcher
as told by Rod Gillies



Illustration by Randie Feil

My grandmother's family came from the Highlands of Scotland, where many of them still live. Roddie first told this story to me when I was a little girl. This August, I returned to Scotland and visited him again. He is in his late eighties now, but still full of stories about magic, faeries, witches and healers.

Approaching the beginning of the last century (I can't remember the year), Donald McRae, of the village of Glenshire on the shore of Loch Drulich, was out fishing. A terrible storm blew up, and the bow of his boat was badly damaged. It became necessary to go ashore and find a perfectly shaped piece of wood to repair it.

He went to the forest on the west side of the loch. Shortly upon entering the woods, a thick fog suddenly settled down, and Donald McRae could not find his way out.

The day passed quickly and it became night. Finally he spied a light from a cottage window in the distance. He walked toward it and knocked on the door. In his years of living in this district, he had never seen this dwelling before. A strange old woman answered the knock.

He explained that he had become lost in the fog while searching for the

perfect piece of wood to repair his boat. She listened to his story and then drew him into the house. Here, she showed him to two other old women, whom she introduced as her sisters.

They fed him and gave

him ale for his thirst. Finally, very late, they suggested that he spend the night in their cottage, as the fog had not cleared. Donald accepted their offer.

Some time later, the bedroom door opened and in crept the first old woman that he had met. She peered thoroughly at Donald, who carefully pretended to be asleep. After reassuring herself that he was not awake, she opened a trunk at the foot of the bed. Inside was a red hat that she placed on her head. She then announced in a loud voice, "London far off", and immediately disappeared. One after another, as the night progressed, the other two sisters entered the room, repeated her actions, and vanished into the night.

The incident intrigued Donald. After the third sister disappeared, he rose from the bed and looked in the chest. Inside, he found another red cap. He quickly dressed himself, then put the last red hat on his head and repeated, "London far off", just as they had done. He felt as though his body was being torn apart, but within minutes, he found himself wandering on the Strand in London.

He began to walk. After awhile, he came across a small pub. Looking in the window, he spied the three old women seated at a table eating. He

entered the room and sat down with them. They ordered him a meal, which he ate and then thanked them. Curious at his surroundings, his eyes wandered around to the many different people who were seated at the other tables around him.

Soon, the waitress approached and handed him the bill, but Donald had no money in his pockets. Startled, he looked around to give it to the old women, but they had once again disappeared. Without any money, Donald was in trouble, and the police were quickly summoned. He was taken into custody and charged with having a meal without intention of paying.

When he told his strange story, he was charged with being a male witch. At this time in history, the penalty for such a charge was death by hanging. Donald was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death.

On the day of his execution, he was taken to the place of hanging and the noose was tied around his neck. The executioner approached him and asked if he had one last wish. He said he would like to wear the little red hat one more time. The executioner agreed, and the cap was placed on Donald's head.

Without wasting another moment, Donald called, "Kintail far off", and vanished. Once again, his body felt as though it was being torn into pieces, but he awakened in his own wee cottage. The hangman's rope was still around his neck, and attached to it was the top crosspiece of the hanging stand. It was the very shape of wood that he needed to repair his boat.

Though he searched the nearby glen many times after that, Donald never saw the three Kintail witches again. I have been told that Donald was a relation of my mother's brother. ❀

Voices

La Toussaint: All Saints' Day

by Josee Lafreniere

Witchcraft is a religion that grows out of the interaction of human beings and their environment. The Sabbats we celebrate are the milestones in the year's cycles, and come to us from ancient cultures based on agriculture. Today, I identify myself as a Witch, even though I live in a city and have only plants and herbs that grow in my apartment window to keep me in touch with nature's rhythm. And now, there are other milestones in the year that I choose to celebrate in my practice of the Craft. La Toussaint, for example, has become a yearly tradition that incorporates my cultural past with my current pagan beliefs.

La Toussaint is French for All Saints' Day and is observed in the Catholic church, which was the church of my parents and their ancestors for many generations. I am French Canadian. Historically, Catholicism has been a major influence on French Canadian culture, responsible for such features as large tribe-like families, and strong community ties that developed to shield the minority French culture against English assimilation.

I eventually rejected the traditional Catholic values I was raised with and then became involved with Wicca, which I found to have a positive attitude to life, women and self-growth. But my involvement with Wicca distanced me from my family and their traditional celebrations of the year and with time, I found that I missed many of the nurturing aspects of my family's life and culture.

I decided I wanted to share some of my celebrations of the year with my

family and friends who are not pagans, and I wanted again to share in the aspects of my culture that I enjoy, and which tend to manifest themselves best during the shared celebrations of the year. This was not an easy realization, for it entailed re-evaluation of my priorities and deciding to accept some compromises.

At that time, I came across literature on Voodoo. It made sense to me, this pagan religion integrated into Catholicism, or was given a facade, if you prefer. I recognized in it certain shared elements with my family's version of Catholicism, especially the cult of the dead.

The Catholicism practiced by my ancestors, is full of worship of saints, who behave like gods and goddesses, or archetypes. It also contains the belief in the continued presence of the dead, and rituals of healing and - dare I say - magic.

My grandmother tells me that when women of her generation gave birth, they chewed on images of St. Anne during labour, St. Anne being the appropriate saint to contact in that particular situation.

My mother still speaks to her father who died almost thirty years ago and she is certain that he hears her and speaks to her as well, by signs, omens, and dreams. My mother's father was a skilled healer, able to stop the flow of blood with special incantations.

Because of these pagan remnants in my family's Catholicism, La Toussaint was an ideal meeting point between my faith and that of my family. When I was a child, La Toussaint, on November 1 (and to a lesser extent The Day of the Dead on November 2) were observed and explained as the day you prayed for the dead and the repose of their souls.

It was also a day when they were nearby and could hear you more clearly than usual. This knowledge of the proximity of the dead filled me with awe. Around Halloween, it didn't take much to set my spine tingling, especially since my birthday is October 30. I always felt a special affinity to this time of year.

Today Samhain is my favourite time of year. I try to secure a few days off to celebrate the end of my age year,

and of the Wiccan year. As well, I organize a feast for La Toussaint in honour of the dead. I invite friends and relatives. Everyone brings a dish that is the favourite of a dead person they love and admire. Everyone also brings a symbol or picture of something or someone they have lost in the past year, or something they wish to let go of. We name these things, talk about the dead, have a moment of silence where people can pray as they wish. Then we eat.

It is a simple ritual, one that brings together different traditions, cultures and individuals. Importantly for me, it is a way of celebrating my beliefs with non-pagan people who mean a lot to me.

I believe it is a strength of pagan religions that they are adaptable. I am curious to know how others build bridges back to other past societies and welcome any dialogue on the subject. ✽

Pagan Evolution Growing Up: The Odyssey of Community-Building

by Anahita-Gula

In the realm of personal musings, I find myself warmed with the realization that in some areas, Neo-Pagan community is coming of age. Any group will eventually find itself in a point of crisis, where institutions will either flourish or fail (anyone who has watched the political machinations of things like Science-Fiction Con committees, or Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) organizational groups, has watched this in action). With perseverance and an acceptance that all of us are fallible and prone to the mistakes of the flesh (like mislabeling personality conflicts as devious political machinations), we can grow beyond the name-calling and finger-pointing that all communities endure at various points in their growth.

From my Cross-Canada research in the summer of 1990, I came up with a few strong feelings about the Neo-Pagan landscape of Canada. Most importantly, if a community was large enough to support one coven, it probably had three different practicing Neo-Pagan groups (at a minimum), all blissfully unaware of each other's existence. In just about every case, my hunch was proven true.

I found that people join Neo-Paganism through the vehicle of other interests. Those that enjoy fantasy pastimes (Role Playing Games, SCA, Science Fiction/Fantasy) usually drifted towards variations of what is being called British Traditional Wicca (e.g. Gardneroid, as one friend of mine coined the term). If the interests were more woman's issues (single-mother rights, day care, poverty), the individual probably found him/herself involved in Goddess-worship type groups. If the focus of spirituality emerged through health-food shops, social activism (environmental issues), and yoga or vegetarian diet groups, the practitioner was often found in Ecopagan groups.

It is precisely because different world-views are drawn to Neo-Pagan practice, and because they find different groups to practice with, that we keep finding "community" a difficult exercise to achieve. Just because one believes in the Goddess and/or the God does not mean the practitioner is ready to embrace others who may only have that basic belief in common. We see this clash every time a feminist Goddess-worshipper comes to loggerheads with a British Traditionalist as to what Wiccan is or is not.

Given that we Neo-Pagans are coming from very disparate viewpoints on what is and is not our belief system, how do we create a community? Or for that matter, is a sense of community desirable?

I for one firmly believe that Neo-Pagans need a sense of having a community. That community may not always function as one would wish it to (e.g. personality clashes and suchlike), but at least it is there. There are times in every grown person's life that s/he needs someone to confide in, to ask personal questions of, and to cry with. It is comforting to know there are oth-

ers "like" oneself — ask any Neo-Pagan living in isolation what it feels like to be the only one. Being alone in a sea of "non-believers" is a very scary thing. Having grown up as a non-Christian in a sea of Roman Catholics and Protestants as a child, I know that this feeling of isolation can be overwhelming at times.

It is so easy to "Pagan-bash," to gossip, and to indulge in the destructive pastimes that so many of us learned in our dysfunctional families of origin. Why take responsibility for something that may have been (at least in part) our fault when we can look for a scapegoat? This is not a healthy way to cope with problems between individuals; it tears down our community in a way that is far more effective than what any anti-Pagan writer could ever achieve. When Neo-Pagans show a divided front, contradicting each other in public forums (e.g. tv interviews or on-campus debates), we achieve nothing but the destruction of any image we might have hoped to create as rational beings.

Groups split off from parent-groups, and that is okay. Look at the Gardnerian practice of "hiving off" new covens — it is in part aimed at quelling dissension in a coven by allowing those who do not agree with their High Priestess' decisions to move on while still preserving a modicum of peace between all parties. In Toronto, a group of former Wiccan Church of Canada priesthood moved on from that Institution to form T.T.Wi.G. (Toronto Temple of the Wiccan Grove), a new group with very strong Odyssean similarities. This sort of growth is healthy for our sense of community when we can accept that dissenting opinion is one of the linchpins of Neo-Pagan belief and should be encouraged!

How does community occur? Often by consent of those who choose to identify themselves as "within" that community's boundaries. Some Neo-Pagans will always choose to be outside those walls, whether due to personality clashes with individuals, or because they choose to keep silent about their presence (truly Hidden Children of the Goddess).

For those who choose to bond together to support each other, whether they practice their religion in the same

way or not, it is a hard task but worth the effort. Wide definitions must be established, and there is always a need to revise those definitions when new needs arise. As Kerr Cuhulain says in *Hecate's Loom* 25, "We're not a revealed religion ... If we can recognize the truths in each others' myths, then we can all see that we have different versions of the same thing. Then maybe we'll all get along together." (p. 25)

As long as agreeing with another will not compromise your sense of right and wrong, as long as making peace does less HARM to more people than making a point in an argument ('An ye harm none, do what ye will), then decide to say yes even if you do not necessarily agree. Sometimes playing peacemaker makes far more sense in the long run than scoring points in a personality clash or petty argument. We do have differing viewpoints, different "baggage" from our families of origin and backgrounds, and we do clash. It is when we learn to rise above the petty squabbles and the minor theological arguments, that we can weave a community; forcing and arguing and institutionalizing a community will not work. The word "community" comes from common — when it is the will of the common membership, then and only then will community be forged.

Remember, there are thousands of people from dissenting viewpoints looking for ways to destroy Wicca and Neo-Paganism. It has been tried time and time again (the Burning Times is not just a quaint fiction), and the last thing we need is to hand them our bleeding hearts on silver platters. No matter how severe a personality clash or theological clash we may suffer with another Neo-Pagan, it is doubtful it can even hold a candle to what some of the anti-cult propagandists would like to serve up to us (or serve us up as?).

I am constantly warned to watch the Ottawa Neo-Pagan community as it grows and flourishes. Because it is where I live, it is the one I have watched ever since Pashta Marymoon was known as "the Witch of Ottawa," long before occult supply stores had ever heard of the city. The city has seen many stresses come and go, personality clashes, theological crises, leadership questions, and so on. The city has managed to bridge some of the

his mike. It was intrusive and made it difficult to find the energy flow.

But the sunrise is more powerful than small human concerns. We chanted and drummed, cast a circle, and stood together watching the sun rise like a Phoenix from the mystic Mother Ocean. It is a moment to carry us through the coming cold of dark winter. When it was over, several of us went for breakfast before going home to listen to what it would sound like on radio.

The report itself was fine. Alison Butler had taken part, had lived the experience, and understood and reflected that understanding with professionalism and spirit.

But the host, Peter Gullage, didn't get it and didn't want to get it. He kept interrupting Alison with cynical smirky comments and questions. At one point he started singing a fragment of one of the chants and told the radio audience he was standing up and doing the Spiral Dance. "Hey. I got it. I can do it!" he told the folks at home.

But as so often with people like that, the hostile host did himself in without any help from anyone. Alison Butler kept saying things like "It was really a good experience. It was quite beautiful." She answered his attempts at ridicule with honesty and simple truth. Instead of sounding clever and sophisticated, Gullage was an embarrassment to himself and to his local reputation as an incisive investigative journalist.

So what's to be learned? Ultimately it was a good experience. We made contact with several people who have been working as solitaires, not knowing how to make contact in a place like this where there are no public Pagan gatherings. We shared something beautiful with those who came, and we created a small presence in the public mind.

Another time it would be an idea to spend more time grounding and sharing energy, to counteract the strangeness of the experience that was new to some, the strangeness of sharing this with a lot of people we don't know, and the strange energy of knowing that two of the people were not there privately...but were members of the media....a conduit to many more thousands who will hear without experiencing.

The whole experience was much like remembering back to the very first time I ever cast a circle, all by myself as a solitary...a little scary, very powerful, a little self-conscious until I let go and started to understand the energy, the constant miracle that She is there, and She is always there. Blessed be.☸

(Drumwoman would like to know others' experiences with holding public celebrations, especially if the media came.)

News from the Ottawa Valley - Summer 1995

by Laurie Foster-MacLeod

Just following the Summer Solstice, I attended a Women's Weekend held at Gina Ellis' farm at McDonald's Corners, in the beautiful Ottawa Valley. It was the first of what I hope will become an annual tradition. Pam Fletcher planned it (she also is at the center of the organization of "Minifest" held every August at Gina's farm) at a very reasonable cost, with catered food by Jane Gray, and lots of great things to do.

So - there we were - about 18 women, on a warm, sunny June weekend, ready to share, relax and go wild! At the opening ritual we created the Goddess in the sand with lots of the Earth's (dried) bounty: rose petals, lavender, cornmeal, lentils, shells, etc. She really was a lovely sight to see. Pam's idea was that She would grow and change over the weekend as we added things to Her, and then be dispersed back to nature at the weekend's closing ritual. However....we hadn't accounted for the forest critters, who figured we'd set out



Clay Goddess workshop - Women's Weekend, MacDonald's Corner

gaps between the types of Neo-Pagans I mentioned earlier, although many of the Goddess-worship groups still choose to isolate themselves from the general God/Goddess community at large (and again I reiterate: it is their choice and they must be honoured for that choice).

I have heard stories of other cities as well in Canada, and their struggles with community-building. Some have focussed on facilities on university campuses, others through women's bookshops. Still others have tried to communicate through more novel tools such as computer bulletin boards (bbs's) and e-mail.

Without a doubt, Neo-Pagans are like other humans in this respect; we crave a sense of belonging. Still viewed as marginal to society and/or deviant (in the sociological sense of deviance), we need to join forces within our own groups in order to form a sense of belonging.

Let us not put the cart before the horse. Before we focus in on the differences between (for example) Gardnerian and Alexandrian or Reclaiming, let us look at that which makes us a family: a community of worshippers of the Old Ones. When we broaden our sense of who is part of our community, we will find the community itself will form around us like a comfortable blanket. And, as we create community, we will be less the Hidden Children of the Goddess and more the Hidden Family of the Goddess.

As we are able to bury old differences and rejoice in our sense of commonality, so we will move from child to adolescent. Only then will the institutions of Canada be able to view us as a mature community of religious worshippers, instead of disorganized squabbling individuals.☸

Anahita Gula is a longtime member of the Craft community in Canada and is well-known for her study of Pagans in society. She is based in Ottawa.



A Witch in a Business Suit

by Ann Lee

A Witch in a business suit may seem like a strange image, but it is more common than one might think. Witches are in all walks of life. They are doctors, lawyers, homemakers, police officers, writers, herbalists, and members of every other occupation imaginable.

I am a self-employed professional woman in an essentially conservative line of work, which shall remain nameless. I am also one of the founding members of the Thirteenth House Mystery School tradition and part-owner of two openly Pagan businesses. For obvious reasons, I remain largely in the broom closet as far as my profession is concerned. Although I wish that it was not the case, I am sure that my business would suffer if my involvement in Witchcraft became known. There are no overtly Pagan symbols in my office, although my home is full of them.

There are times when the apparent contradiction between my spirituality and my profession is difficult. I operate in a profession where I deal with the power structure and bureaucracy. My personal opinions must often be kept private, even when the desire to speak my mind becomes overwhelming. It is, however, surprising how many instances there are in which my philosophy of life can be presented, in somewhat couched terminology. Because my involvement in the Craft suffuses my entire life, it is impossible not to sometimes let who I truly am show.

It is sometimes difficult to deal with knowing that I am not only outside the power structure but, in many ways may be a threat to it, while I am working within and appear to be representing the structure. I know that people look at me and think me a conservative middle-class person who is part of the system. I know that the system needs to be radically changed and that, essentially, I do not believe in it although I do use it. Although I do not wear my

pentagram openly it is always part of me.

In my business, as in the rest of my life, I avoid doing anything which would conflict with my beliefs. That sometimes means that I turn away work which I would not, in good conscience, do. Even though making a living is important to me, I cannot do anything which would be opposed to what my heart and my soul tell me.

Whether it is because of who I am or not, I am amazed by the number of my clients who tell me that they have consulted psychics, astrologers or tarot card readers. Society is changing and many of the Old Ways are again being accepted as valid ways to look at the modern world.

Eventually, I hope that there will come a time when I can be open about who I am. Christians and others can openly wear the symbols of their faith. I can wear only the subtler symbols of mine. The world is changing but, unfortunately, patience is required until it has changed enough to accept that some Witches wear business suits.z

Peeking out of the Broom Closet

by Linda Doerksen

Are you in the broom closet? **Have a look in mine...** The community that I live in is relatively small, especially compared to cities such as Vancouver or Victoria. There's no anonymity here, though you may not know everyone personally. For the most part, I wear my pentagram hidden; of course, its small size helps to make for some subtlety.

Even as a child I have been a pacifist. Is this improper in a Wiccan or a Pagan? How does one stand up for and represent one's beliefs without inviting conflict? Or is conflict necessary? Is it possible to create acceptance in society simply by existing? Does a larger population center reduce chance of conflict, of censure? Wearing the pentagram is certainly no guarantee

that people will know who you are, or what the symbol represents. If mine is seen, I answer any questions with, "It's an ancient symbol of protection". I'm obviously taking the easy way out, not wanting to confront, or even encounter fundamentalism. The fear is still there.

There are still people who see the pentagram as a symbol of Judaism (a currently acceptable spiritual system). And there seems to be a fad that has people wearing the symbol without knowing its metaphysical and spiritual connections. Many times I have seen someone wearing the pentagram and asked, "Where did you celebrate the solstice?" Of course, getting a blank look in return suggests they have no idea of the connection of the celebrations with Paganism. Yet, I keep asking those questions on the off chance that they may have beliefs similar to mine. ❄

Family Traditions

by Aidan Pan Arthur

Whenever I tell anybody that I'm a Witch, they either laugh and say, "Yeah, right! And I'm a vampire," or turn four shades paler than they already are and back up towards the closest exit. A member of the long-established Lysbethian family tradition, I was "born into the Craft". My brother and sisters are Witches, my parents are Witches, my great-great ever-so-great grandparents were Witches, and I have always been a Witch. Furthermore, I'll always be a Witch. It's in my blood, as surely as if I were a Gypsy or a Jew.

Conceived at a Wiccan rite, I was born and brought up a witch. As a kid, I was always allowed to attend the sabbats and it didn't occur to me that disclosing my heritage to my friends might lead to my being considered an outcast of society. But as I grew older I discovered that Witches are not popular in Canadian society, and it was a little difficult to figure out why I was an outcast. We're basically good people. Sure, there are some flakes who are

attracted to the Old Religion. Unfortunately, there are fanatics in every religion, every cause, every profession. Mercifully, however, there are few Wiccan fanatics, and most of my pagan friends are cool.

Why do Canadians freak out when they figure that you're a Witch? It seems you can belong to any religion you choose in this country -- except Wicca. And that's not fair.

My great-grandmother was a Witch, as was her grandmother before her. My grandmother didn't use the word "Witch", nor would she have referred to herself as such; but people in her native London, England who knew of her impatience with conventional religion no doubt referred to her that way. She initiated my father into the Old Religion in 1966 when he was in his early twenties, during her final trip to Canada. The Old Religion is rooted in the aboriginal religion of England, of Europe, perhaps of all the world.

My parents tell me that I was actually conceived on Samhain, or "Halloween" 1974, the most important day of the year for the Old Religion. Although I was "born into the Craft", the first time I remember being invited to a Circle was in Alberta when I was 6. I had a new floor-length gown, brown, with a hood, made for me by my mother. My younger brother was 2 years old at the time, and wore one of my father's T-shirts cinched with a cingulum for a floor-length gown. My older sister had a pretty, floor-length gown with split sleeves and ribbons, and my mother and father wore black gowns with red lining (they also had purple ones for other rites). My father wore a set of antlers on his head as a symbol of the Great Horned God.

My mother always led the rituals in the Circle. I have always known her to be a High Priestess, and she has explained to me many times the Tools of the Craft and the way they are used. Today's Wiccan tools are very different from those my great-grandmother would have recognized. Gerald Gardner, who my great-grandmother knew but did not follow, borrowed from a good many traditions in his description of Witchcraft, and following his lead others have more-or-less "standardized" Witchcraft so that it has become a widespread movement with

recognizable language, tools, rites and rules. Our family tradition is still quite distinct from Gardnerian Witchcraft, but for the sake of harmony and communication with the larger, burgeoning Wiccan community, we have adopted some Gardnerian icons.

Our tradition focuses more on wands and besoms than on knives. Although the athame is recognized as the most powerful of tools, the raised finger will suffice for the Gardnerian black-handled knife or a coven sword. Verbal evocation and salutation are more important than knives to welcome the positive spirit realm to the Circle and to banish all negative forces. Similarly, the white-handled knife is a Gardnerian addition to our tradition, much more practical than a black dagger and very useful for whittling wands. We have also borrowed from Gardner the accoutrements of the altar which in our tradition is always in the middle of the circle. The "Book of Shadows", alien to our own tradition, contains all the secret rituals that my mother has been collecting for many years. It is basically a ritual recipe book.

The altar is illuminated by several candles, a tall, white one in the middle, two shorter blue ones on each side, and a number of other candles of different colours depending on the purpose of the ritual. Candles are a major part of our family tradition, and believe it or not clay pipes were a part of it too. Other tools include a large bell, ornate rings (but not earrings), incense, a paten plate for cakes, chalices or goblets for wine, ornate containers for salt, water, herbs, spices and aromatic oils, cingula or knotted ropes, and a cauldron. Three-legged stools were also traditional, and one whole room was dedicated to ritual rather than having a specific marked circle. The "circle" was deemed to embrace the entire room, or in the case of my great-grandmother, the entire cellar.

The pentacle or five-pointed star, which has become the main symbol of Wicca, was not at all a prominent symbol in our tradition of the Old Religion. Nonetheless, we have adopted it too, and in fact our extended family coven has a standardized pendant incorporating a pent that every member wears most of the time. Usually, a Witch wears a pentacle around his neck or on

his finger as an identifying mark of the Old Religion, and these days we are no exception.

When my father was a boy in the late 1940s and early 1950s, "Witchcraft" was banned in England where he grew up, and my great-grandmother's religion was frowned on by the rest of the family. But in 1952 the "Witchcraft Laws" were lifted, and my great-grandmother gradually came out of the closet. Back then, there were very few Witches anywhere, but now we are found literally from coast to coast. Today, Wicca is said to be the fastest-growing religion in North America.

My father and mother sit on a good number of Pagan boards, hoping to protect the true nature of the Old Religion. In 1994, our family conducted the Opening Ritual in an international pagan festival in the U.S., leading 200 priestesses and priests from around the world. My brother and I, dressed in black gowns with red silk lining and holding huge athames, were honoured to be the Gatekeepers of the Circle, guarding the entrance.

Here in Canada, acquaintances either love me or hate me because I am a Witch.

There are many thousands of Witches, however. I know, because not only am I a Witch, most of my truest friends are too. All of us believe in the Old Religion and are sworn to honour and protect nature and the elements. It may be old, but I wouldn't change my religion for the world.☸

Aidan is a practicing Witch, within a family tradition. He resides in Victoria, and graduated from High School this year.



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Dear Members of the Canadian Neopagan Witchcraft Community:

My name is Sfan Reid and I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at Carleton University in Ottawa. My area of study is neopagan witchcraft in Canada and I will be undertaking dissertation research over the next few years. I have been involved in the Craft for the past 12 years. The first stage of my research involves the distribution of a survey, which is printed here. It will be followed by some face to face and telephone interviewing with those of you who choose to volunteer.

What has struck me consistently, as I have done research leading up to this point, is how little good information there is available about participants in neopagan witchcraft in general, and Canadian neopagan witchcraft in particular. Therefore, I'm looking for information on basic sociological variables such as age, income, marital status, education, area of residence, religious socialization (childhood), etc... I'm interested in *who* you are and what you do in your life, in very general terms, not in the specifics of what you do in circle or what you believe.

What sort of information do I hope to end up with? I'm hoping to be able to make some comparisons between the neopagan profile as it is revealed in my responses, and the general Canadian profile, as well as to profiles of members of other religious denominations. I hope to develop an understanding of neopagan witchcraft that locates it squarely in the literature regarding modern responses to religious questions, rather than the literature dealing with deviance, as is too often now the case. I hope to clarify the process and motivations through which people become involved, and remain involved, in the Craft. I hope to expose the variety of attitudes and coping strategies around being Craft in a cowan world.

This survey is anonymous; surveys are not numbered or marked in any way that would allow me to identify any individual respondent. I'm not interested in knowing your identity. In terms of how the data will be treated after they are collected, for reasons of confidentiality, I have made the decision *not* to make my raw data available to other researchers. I will produce tabulated data for them, if they are interested in specific breakdowns, but because of my own concerns that some people's answers might be distinctive enough to identify them to other people, my raw data will remain with me.

If you would currently identify yourself, in your own mind, as a practitioner of neopagan witchcraft, Wicca, or the Craft, under any of the labels in which these are sometimes presented, and you are resident in Canada, I would urge you to support this research by taking the time to complete this postage-paid questionnaire. To return it, fold it in half and tape all the way along the other three edges. If it is not completely sealed, Canada Post will not deliver it. If you have previously completed the questionnaire, please pass this copy along to a friend. If you have any questions, require additional copies of this survey, or would like to volunteer for the interview stage of this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at one of the addresses below:

Department of Sociology, Carleton University
B750 Loeb Building, 1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, ON. K1S 5B6
slreid@ccs.carleton.ca

149 Thornbury Cres.
Nepean, ON.
K2G 6C3

Important Notes: You are eligible to complete this questionnaire if:

- 1) You currently identify yourself, in your own mind, as a practitioner of neopagan witchcraft, Wicca, or the Craft, under any of the labels in which these are sometimes presented; AND
- 2) You are currently resident in Canada.

You and the Craft

Important Note: In the questions that follow, the word involvement will refer to dimensions of religious activity or practice and the word commitment will refer to dimensions of religious belief.

1 How long do you consider yourself to have been involved in the Craft?

less than one year OR
_____ years

2 How old were you when your involvement began? _____

3 Were you involved with other religions before the Craft?

yes no

If yes, which ones and how long? (please try to list in chronological order wherever possible. eg: Anglican, 5 years; Roman Catholic, 2 years; Scientology, 8 years...etc)

4 Do you currently self-identify as a member of a religious tradition(s) other than the Craft?

yes no

If yes, which one(s)? _____

5 How did you first come to be aware of the Craft? (school, friends, fiction books, movies, newspaper, etc..) _____

6 How did you first become involved in the Craft? (bought a book and just started, went to a meeting with friends, etc...) _____

7 To the best of your recollection, when you first became involved in the Craft, what were the three things that appealed to you most about it? (please keep descriptions brief, ten words or less per item) _____

8 What are the three things that appeal most to you now?

9 Were books important in getting you involved in the Craft? (Circle one number only)

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4
yes, very yes, somewhat no, not really no, not at all
important important important important

10 Are books important in maintaining your *involvement in* the Craft?

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4
yes, very yes, somewhat no, not really no, not at all
important important important important

11 Are books important in maintaining your *commitment to* the Craft?

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4
yes, very yes, somewhat no, not really no, not at all
important important important important

12 Which three books do you think have most influenced your Craft?

13 Were other people important in getting you involved in the Craft?

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4
yes, very yes, somewhat no, not really no, not at all
important important important important

14 Would the statement "I always knew I had a religion; I never knew it had a name" come close to describing your feelings at encountering the Craft?

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4
yes, very yes, somewhat no, not really no, not at all
close close close close

15 If you had to put a label on the style or tradition of Craft you *currently* practice, what would it be? _____

16 What other styles or traditions of Craft, if any, have you practiced?

17 Have you ever been initiated?

yes

no

not applicable

If yes, what is the highest level of initiation you have ever received?

18 Have you ever worked with a group?

yes

no

If yes, are you currently working with a group?

yes

no

If yes, are you currently working with multiple groups?

yes

no

On average, how large is the group with which you work the most frequently?

19 What percentage of the time you have spent in the Craft has been spent working with one or more other people? _____

20 Is working with other people important in maintaining your involvement in the Craft?

1

2

3

4

yes, very
important

yes, somewhat
important

no, not really
important

no, not at all
important

21 Is working with other people important to maintaining your commitment to the Craft?

1

2

3

4

yes, very
important

yes, somewhat
important

no, not really
important

no, not at all
important

22 Could you name five activities which are, to you, specifically Craft related?

23 On average, how much time do you spend on specifically Craft-related activities each week? (can be those you listed, or others) _____

24 How likely are you to discuss your religious beliefs in some depth, when asked...
(Circle one for each scenario)

– at a party attended exclusively by friends?

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4
definitely probably probably definitely
would would would not would not

– at a party attended primarily by strangers?

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4
definitely probably probably definitely
would would would not would not

– with your co-workers?

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4
definitely probably probably definitely
would would would not would not

– with your family of origin (mother, father, siblings, etc...)?

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4
definitely probably probably definitely
would would would not would not

– with a member of another religion whom you believe will be open-minded?

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4
definitely probably probably definitely
would would would not would not

– with a member of another religion whom you believe will be hostile?

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4
definitely probably probably definitely
would would would not would not

– with a casual acquaintance about whose possible reaction you are uncertain?

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4
definitely probably probably definitely
would would would not would not

– with a neighbour about whose possible reaction you are uncertain?

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4
definitely probably probably definitely
would would would not would not

- with a prospective employer?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4
definitely probably probably definitely
would would would not would not

- with a police officer assessing your credibility as a witness?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4
definitely probably probably definitely
would would would not would not

25 How open are you about your Craft affiliation within the Craft community?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4
very open somewhat open not really open not at all open

26 How open are you about your Craft affiliation outside of the Craft community?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4
very open somewhat open not really open not at all open

27 How would you list your religion on the Canadian census?

You and Your Other Interests

28 How many books, on average, do you read per month (excluding books read during the regular course of your paid employment)? _____

29 Do you have regular access to a computer? yes no

IF YES: please continue with the section below, if no, go to q. 30.

Are there any restrictions on your access to the computer, or the kinds of things you can do with it? yes no

If yes, please list: _____

What do you use the computer for, other than your paid employment?
(word-processing, games, record-keeping, etc...)

Do you use a modem? yes no

If yes, what do you use it for, other than your paid employment? (interactive chat, buy and sell, newsgroups, etc...)

Do you participate in any pagan BBSes or newsgroups? yes no

30 Do you subscribe to, or regularly purchase, any pagan periodicals?

yes no

31 Outside of the Craft and your paid employment, what other activities, hobbies or organizations are you involved in? (name three, if possible)

You and Your Family

Important Note: *In the questions that follow, mother and father refer to the primary female and male caregivers with whom you lived while growing up. These do not have to be your biological parents.*

32 Were you adopted as a baby or a young child? yes no

33 Did your mother have any religious affiliation while you were growing up?
 yes no not applicable

IF YES, please continue with the section below, if not, go to **q. 34.**

What was this affiliation? (be as specific as you can – orthodox Jewish is a better description than Jewish, evangelical Lutheran is a better description than Protestant) _____

How active would you say your mother's religious involvement was?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4
very active somewhat active not really active not active at all

How committed would you say your mother was to her religious beliefs?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4
very committed somewhat committed not really committed not at all committed

34 Did your father have any religious affiliation while you were growing up?

yes no not applicable

IF YES, please continue with the section below, if not, go to **q. 35.**

What was this affiliation? (be as specific as you can — orthodox Jewish is a better description than Jewish, evangelical Lutheran is a better description than Protestant) _____

How active would you say your father's religious involvement was?

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4
very active somewhat active not really active not active at all

How committed would you say your father was to his religious beliefs?

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4
very committed somewhat committed not really committed not at all committed

35 Would you say that there was some effort made to raise you within a religious tradition? yes no

36 Would you say that, in general, you had a happy, normal home life as you were growing up? yes no

IF NO, please complete the section below, if yes, continue to q. 37.

Do you consider any of your parents or guardians to have been physically abusive? yes no

Do you consider any of your parents or guardians to have been emotionally abusive? yes no

Were any of your parents or guardians substance-addicted (alcohol, illegal or prescription drugs)? yes no

You and Your Personal History

37 Of your closest friends, what percentage would you describe as Craft? _____

38 What percentage would you describe as pagan? _____

39 Do you have a spouse or domestic partner? yes no

IF YES, please complete the section below, if no, continue to q. 40.

Would you describe them as Craft? yes no

Would you describe them as pagan? yes no

40 Did you spend most of your time while growing up in areas you would characterize as (choose one):

- primarily urban primarily suburban
 primarily small town primarily rural?

Important Note: *The remaining questions in this section ask for 'sensitive' personal information. Although it is most useful to me if fully completed responses returned, if you are uncomfortable with these questions, please either skip them entirely and proceed to the General Information About You section below, or only complete those with which you are comfortable.*

41 Have you ever been in therapy for longer than 6 months?

yes no

If yes, what for? (brief description only, eg. shyness, alcohol dependency, bereavement etc... personal details are not required)

Was this before or after you entered the Craft?

before after both

42 Have you ever been sexually abused or assaulted? yes no

If yes, was it before or after you entered the Craft?

before after both

43 Have you ever been arrested? yes no

If yes, what for? _____

Was this before or after you entered the Craft?

before after both

General Information about You

Important Note: *The information in this section is being collected for the purposes of comparing the respondents to this survey to other groups of Canadians. Under no circumstances will it be used as a means of identifying individual respondents.*

- 44 Are you: male female ?
- 45 What is your year of birth? _____
- 46 What is your sexual orientation? (choose one)
 heterosexual homosexual bisexual
- 47 What is your legal marital status? (check only the most recent)
 legally married and not separated
 legally married and separated
 divorced
 widowed
 never married (single)
- 48 Are you currently living with a common-law partner? yes no
- 49 Are you a registered Indian as defined by the Indian Act of Canada?
 yes no
- 50 What province or territory do you currently live in? _____
- 51 Would you characterize the immediate area in which you live as:
 primarily urban primarily suburban
 primarily small town primarily rural
- 52 Who currently shares your present accomodation? (names are not required, only their relationship to you. eg. male spouse, child of male spouse from previous marriage, two children of current marriage, boyfriend of one child, unrelated boarder, etc...)

53 What is the highest grade (or year) of secondary (high school) or elementary school you ever attended? (Enter highest number, 1 - 13, of grades or years, excluding kindergarten)

grade _____ OR

never attended school / attended kindergarten only

54 How many years of education have you completed at university?

none

less than one year (of completed courses)

_____ year(s)

55 In the past nine months, did you attend a school, college or university? (Include attendance at elementary or secondary schools, business or trade schools, community colleges, institutes of technology, CEGEPs, etc., for courses that can be used as credits towards a certificate, diploma or degree. Mark one box only)

No, did not attend

Yes, full time

Yes, part time, day or evening

56 What certificates, diplomas or degrees have you ever obtained? (Include all qualifications obtained from secondary schools or trade schools and other post-secondary institutions. Mark as many boxes as apply.)

none

secondary / high school graduation certificate or equivalent

trades certificate or diploma

other non-university certificate or diploma

university certificate or diploma below bachelor level

bachelor degree(s) (eg. B.A., B.Sc., LL.B.)

university certificate or diploma above bachelor level

Master's degree(s) (eg. M.A., M.Sc., M.Ed.)

degree in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or optometry

earned doctorate (eg. Ph.D., D.Sc., D.Ed.)

57 What kind(s) of paid work are you currently doing? (for example, medical lab technician, accounting clerk, manager of civil engineering dept, secondary school teacher, supervisor of data entry unit, food processing labourer, fishing guide.)

OR not performing paid work

58 Have your previous occupations differed from your present one?

yes no

If yes, please list your previous three occupations:

59 During most of the past year, did you perform paid work full-time or part-time?

(Mark one only)

- full-time (30 hours or more per week)
- part-time (less than 30 hours per week)
- did not perform paid work

60 During most of the past year, did you perform unpaid work full-time or part-time (eg. childcare, eldercare, volunteer work, etc...)

- full-time (30 hours or more per week)
- part-time (less than 30 hours per week)
- did not perform unpaid work

61 What is your best estimate of your personal income from all sources last year?

(Include employment income, tips, commisions, bonuses, pensions, dividends and interest, social assistance, scholarships, etc...)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> no income | <input type="checkbox"/> 25,000 - 29,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> under \$2,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> 30,000 - 34,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2,000 - 4,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 35,000 - 39,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5,000 - 9,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 40,000 - 44,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10,000 - 14,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45,000 - 49,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15,000 - 19,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 50,000 - 59,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20,000 - 24,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 60,000 - 74,999 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> 75,000 and over |

62 What is your best estimate of your family income from all sources last year? (Include as family for the purposes of this estimate those people who are related to you, by blood or marriage, and living at the same address)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> no income | <input type="checkbox"/> 25,000 - 29,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> under \$2,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> 30,000 - 34,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2,000 - 4,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 35,000 - 39,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5,000 - 9,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 40,000 - 44,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10,000 - 14,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45,000 - 49,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15,000 - 19,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 50,000 - 59,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20,000 - 24,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 60,000 - 74,999 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> 75,000 and over |

63 Are you a Canadian citizen? yes no

64 Are you a citizen of a country other than Canada? yes no
IF YES, of which country(s)? _____

65 Were you born in Canada? yes no
IF NO, how long have you lived in Canada?
 less than one year OR _____ year(s)

Thank you for your time! Please feel free to make copies of this survey and distribute them to others whom you believe would be interested.

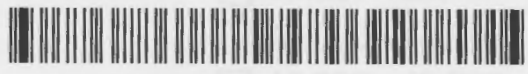
11. How long have you lived in Canada?
 less than one year
 1 to 2 years
 3 to 5 years
 6 to 10 years
 11 to 15 years
 16 to 20 years
 21 to 25 years
 26 to 30 years
 31 to 35 years
 36 to 40 years
 41 to 45 years
 46 to 50 years
 51 to 55 years
 56 to 60 years
 61 to 65 years
 66 to 70 years
 71 to 75 years
 76 to 80 years
 81 to 85 years
 86 to 90 years
 91 to 95 years
 96 to 100 years
 over 100 years

12. What is your best estimate of your personal income from all sources last year? (Include employment income, tips, commissions, bonuses, pensions, dividends and interest, social assistance, scholarships, etc.)

no income
 under \$2,000
 \$2,000 - 4,999
 \$5,000 - 9,999
 \$10,000 - 14,999
 \$15,000 - 19,999
 \$20,000 - 24,999
 \$25,000 - 29,999
 \$30,000 - 34,999
 \$35,000 - 39,999
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 \$70,000 - 74,999
 \$75,000 - 79,999
 \$80,000 - 84,999
 \$85,000 - 89,999
 \$90,000 - 94,999
 \$95,000 - 99,999
 \$100,000 and over



MAIL POSTE
 Canada Post Corporation
 Société canadienne des postes
 Postage paid Port payé
 if mailed in Canada si posté au Canada
 Business Reply Réponse d'affaires
 0283563000 01



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SIAN REID
 149 THORBURY CRES
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Ethos & Ethics - Cont. from page 17

Michele firmly believes in having one's Earth altar in order. "It is difficult to focus on the spiritual when you're worrying about where you're going to live next month or if you can afford groceries. Effort must be put forth on all levels to achieve the balance required to lead healthy, happy, spiritual lives."

Helping Michele achieve her own balance is the wonderful love and support of her husband, without whom none of the work, or catnip, would be possible. The glint in her eye as she reminds me that, "the Gods help those who help themselves" reinforces her insistence on humour in all aspects of life. When she goes on to say that "life is not a destination, it is the journey," I begin to wonder if fortune cookies come with the lox.

I ask her about working in a Federal prison. "The best way to work in a rigid system is to work from within, following all the rules and regulations, creating friendships as you go." Michele is elated that William Head recently approved an outdoor sacred Circle space in which the study group may perform their rituals and meditations. "It is crucial to be a good role model; that goes far beyond the prison walls. Our religious views can be more easily accepted if we are seen as neighbours and co-workers, normal people who live next door. I have nothing to hide and that is how I conduct myself."

I recall being at a meeting with Michele where she and another participant got into a heated discussion over the use of the "W" word. Has she changed her views any? "People have a hard time seeing past a freaky image and we don't need additional barriers. For that reason, when I must label myself, I use the words Wicca or Wiccan. Why put up brick walls when we have to work all that much harder to remove them?" Michele stresses that these are her views and those of the ATC. "They are not a judgement of anyone else, for all paths are valid."

This blaze of fortitude reminds me that underneath Michele's good nature and wacky sense of humour runs a streak of iron. When she gets that look in her eye and that set to her jaw, fun time is over. "It is important to balance

ourselves, to recognize and work with both the dark and the light. Not everything in life is 'sweetness and light'."

Michele is never afraid to act as arbiter in tense situations, I have witnessed first-hand Michele's remarkable talents as a fair and impartial negotiator. Perhaps this concern for fairness factors into her belief in the importance in working with polar groups, utilizing the talents of both male and female people, archetypes and God forms.

"If you had told me in 1980 that in fifteen years I'd be acting as Wiccan clergy for a prison, running a catnip farm and holding down a full-time job, I'd have said you were crazy."

I think it's a safe bet that today Michele Favarger wouldn't balk at any predictions for future endeavours, religious or otherwise. Her only request would be some free time to spend with her growing list of friends, her family and her catnip farm.

"So, how do you like the new catnip packaging? It's got a ziplock top, you know." The fact that I don't have a cat doesn't seem to overly concern Michele. ☸

After spending the past decade practicing the Craft, John Threlfall finally realized that it had nothing to do with yarn or popsicle sticks. Undismayed by this revelation, he continues to spend his time writing, finishing a degree in History, and continuing his life long quest for the perfect omelette. John recently rejected a Disney offer to animate his life story and has had to console himself as Managing Editor of Hecate Loom.

Starhawk Interview - cont. from page 19

We see her story as the story of a woman who saw things that nobody else would see and look at. She got tremendous criticism and persecution in return, but stood up to it and as a result has made tremendous changes in our thinking and our understanding of our history. She provided some real, solid evidence for the Goddess tradition and the history we were actually claiming before we even knew about her work. So that's been a very exciting project.

How long have you been involved in it?

Oh....about a year or so. After we finished "Full Circle" we started on this. But mostly we're in the fundraising stages, which, if people are at all familiar with film know that that's the most difficult and challenging part of making a film! (laughs)

Donna: I think that the collaboration between Starhawk and I has been a very fruitful one, in that the three films that we've done together, which, although we're financed mostly through the National Film Board of Canada - certainly were inspired by Starhawk's work.

She was consultant, mainstay writer....you know, we really worked on it together throughout the years that we did them, and I think that it's that kind of collaboration, artistically, that really embodies a lot of the Pagan spirit and ideals that I've learned since I've been working with Starhawk. Starhawk and I took up the banner along with a lot of other people who helped us financially to finish the project.

That was the beginning of what we're trying to do now, and I think that what happens when you try to do a project like this is that...first of all we have professional people who will make a professional product so that the product can be shown on national television, as the trilogy is shown consistently now on PBS in the United States and certainly here in Canada on Vision TV.

It sounds wonderful! Are there any comments, in conclusion, that you would like to make? Anything that you would like to say to the Pagans of Canada?

Starhawk: Well, I think that Canada has a tremendously vital Pagan community and it's very exciting to see that. I have done a lot of work in Canada....(smiles). ☸

Andrea Brosgall runs one of Toronto's largest Occult shops, Oracle, and is a Handmaiden of the Temple of Starfire in Toronto.



Depression, Alchemy and Transformation

by Michela Scheuerman

The first time I experienced an anxiety attack I was seventeen and totally unaware of the existence of such terms as "panic attack" and "clinical depression".

I was born and grew up in a middle class family in Southern Italy, where misconceptions and ignorance about mental health issues abound perhaps even at professional medical levels. The government health care program covers anything but psychiatric care.

I was raised with the erroneous notion that there are "normal" people, and there are people who are "crazy". To my parents, and most adults around me, the latter adjective had a broad range of connotations. It was often a substitute word used to describe non-conformist behaviour, the expression of creativity, curiosity, independence or the rejection of orthodox religion. This was especially true if these traits were present in a girl or woman.

By the time I was in my teens I had exhibited all of the above signs of deviance, and I was often taken aside and given a pep talk by one of or both of my parents. It would go something like this: "There are nerves in your brain and you must be very careful because, every time you yell or throw a tantrum the nerves might overlap, and that's when you snap. When that happens, there is no turning back."

Because I was often admonished

and refrained from expressing myself, I yelled back quite a bit and I began to live in fear that I could "snap" anytime, and that there would certainly be an insane asylum in my future. Even now that I know that such places no longer exist, I have nightmares about my mother committing me, as she often had threatened to do.

As I grew and became educated I saw the ludicrousness and frailty of my parents' notions about madness. Then, one night in March 1981, I suffered a powerful panic attack, and an ensuing period of misery. To my shock and dismay I had to admit that I'd finally become the madwoman my parents had always foretold. I had manifested a "self-fulfilling prophecy."

I felt as though I had stepped into another dimension; I was on one side of life, a terrifying, vacuum-like place, and I was looking at the "normal" side as though through an unbreakable glass wall. I thought that I was actually "imagining" life: nothing seemed real, people included; they were, through my distorted perceptions, no longer persons, just empty shells of humanness. I sank into such loneliness, hopelessness and desperation which, at seventeen, paralyzed me to the point that I could barely get out of bed. I was never hungry, and I missed a lot of school. I had always loved to learn and I was good at it; now, even that was being denied to me. I hoped I'd die so

that the inexplicable suffering would end.

My mother began force-feeding me while I sat at the table staring into nothingness. I saw that she was scared to death that soon my already thin body would waste away, just as my mind had begun to. I wanted to get better to end my suffering and hers, but I felt powerless. As shattered as my loved ones were, they blamed me for the state in which I found myself (and these are people who fuss over a simple cold). Teachers, friends, relatives and acquaintances fed greedily off the phenomenon of my sudden madness, which became gossip and grounds for alienating me further.

I was pitted, "she was such a bright girl...", ridiculed, chastised, and kept at a distance. Most of all, I was feared, or at least my mysterious illness was.

As the months went by I began to feel better; I was slowly "feeling" others becoming real again. I returned to school, regained my appetite and I was able to sleep through the night without hearing gunshots go off in my head. Still, I obsessively thought about what was going on inside my brain; why it had happened and would I ever be totally free of it. I had had thoughts so bizarre that they defied rational explanations. When I was well enough to ask for help, my family physician cryptically said that "It would all go away."

One year later I graduated from high school with top grades. Friends became less frightened and came around again, some even expressed admiration for my having been able to pull myself together. But they were still not able to understand my problem, which was also the greatest mystery of my life.

In 1983 I met Dean, my Canadian husband. Although I was reluctant to leave my home country, I trusted my instincts about this man, moved to Canada and married him. We now have an eleven year old son and a beautiful marriage.

We planned our child early into our relationship and, when I became pregnant, the hormonal changes in my body hurled me into another episode. This time I received psychiatric care and, for the first time, I discovered that this "thing" which had come back to haunt me had a name: clinical depression.

The psychiatrist explained to me that this is an illness occurring when the brain chemistry goes awry on account of mis-firing neuro-transmitters. Put plainly, it had been a chemical imbalance in my brain which had had the power to alter my life, and myself, so dramatically and which was, again, putting me and my new family through so much pain.

Genetics often plays a role in a person's predisposition to this illness. After skillful probing, I discovered that a depressive syndrome was the hidden malaise on my father's side of the family.

As for the duration of the illness, the doctor said that it runs its course usually over three to six months, but everybody is different. It might recur at anytime, or never again. I was stunned at hearing that I would be forever at the mercy of the "thing" and I naively asked about a cure. I was told that there is no cure for depression as yet, but that treatment is available in the form of psychotherapy and medication.

Because I was in the third trimester of my pregnancy, medication was not an option. I suffered it out until the birth of my son and, for about a year afterward, I felt well. I was going to school, held a part-time job and enjoyed taking care of my baby. At that

point depression struck again, with a vengeance.

I was hospitalized for two weeks and I remember the anguish of being separated from my son and my husband, who was, and is, extremely loving and supportive. I was administered a powerful anti-depressant drug which, over the following twelve weeks, compounded by psychotherapy, began to lift my spirit and to make me feel hopeful for a recovery. I have had different therapists since then, and I still am on a mild anti-depressant medication for maintenance.

*There is a
whole sister-
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brotherhood,
of people just
like me, who
have beat the
odds by get-
ting help
rather than
succumbing to
suicide*

As a woman I discovered that, as in Italy, most people in Canada did not understand the chemical nature of my illness and my need for therapy and for medication. They mistakenly thought this consisted of sedatives.

Among the many unpleasant memories of what people had the insensitivity to say to me, one stands out. It came from an elderly relative of my husband's, who, while discussing my recovery over dinner at my house, re-

proached me for getting sick, because, to quote her "...You were of no use to Dean in that state." Dean and I both flinched, looked at each other knowingly and chose not to comment.

It was then that I realized that, once again, I was being punished for getting ill because, as a woman, I was not supposed to; my only worth was in being the care-giver, the little robot who cleans, and cooks and nurtures others. "What about me?" I kept thinking with rage and sadness, what about what I had suffered, and what I still had to cope with?

Soon I noticed that as I became more assertive and stood up for myself, people who knew I had been ill blamed my behaviour on the illness, as though it had impaired me. We decided to move to a different city, away from those whose words and actions were killing the both of us slowly.

In 1986 I enrolled in University and four years later I graduated, and held several jobs. Some of these I lost when the employer discovered I was on medication for depression, in spite of my performance on the job. I finally realized that I am a writer, and always have been. I decided that my vocation should become my career.

I have recently "graduated" out of therapy and am now at a high point in my healing, having been able to let go of the guilt and the sense of inadequacy that being different has caused me. Since 1986 I have been reading anything I could possibly find on the topic of clinical depression, and the most outstanding piece I have found to date is the book *Darkness Visible*, by William Styron, which is an account of the author's own bout with depression.

The book made me realize that I am definitely not alone; that there is a whole sisterhood, and brotherhood, of people just like me, who have beat the odds by getting help rather than succumbing to suicide.

Although definitely not religious, I have always been very spiritual in a rather unorthodox way for my cultural background. The study of Eastern philosophies, metaphysics, of women's roles through time everywhere in the world and, most of all, the study of the Goddess tradition, opened wonderful paths of visceral understanding within me of who I am, and of my place in the

world.

Being ill and progressively recovering and learning, has helped me to

I have been forced by the illness to seek out knowledge, and knowledge is empowerment

put my life into perspective, and to face the issue of the emotional abuse that I suffered for eighteen years in my parents' house, and which I thought was normal. I believed that all kids grow up being belittled the way my parents did me and my siblings.

I have been forced by the illness to seek out knowledge, and knowledge is empowerment; I know myself now, I like myself now. I look at my existence and focus on my many achievements, and the choice I always have to make positive changes in my life, anytime I want to, as opposed to the times, before and after my early episodes of depression, in which I felt powerless, weak, ashamed to be me, angry at the world and full of bitterness towards my parents and all those who hurt me.

Now I feel that I want to be kind; I look forward, and the past no longer matters, neither does whether or not others understand me and my illness. They have the responsibility of facing their own demons, just as I had to face mine. I have the love, the respect and the support of those I love and respect and support, and I have come to view

myself not as being different in a negative way, but as being special.

Discovering and accepting the Witch in me has been as joyful and as liberating as finding out that the "thing", the illness, had a name and was not exclusive to me.

I recognize my flaws and accept them as being a natural part of my humanness; I look upon my good qualities as hard-earned stepping stones in the process of my spiritual growth.

I have learned to be more sensitive to other human beings, not to prejudge them, and to be more forgiving. I appreciate life, down to its simplest pleasures: the sunset I was trying to enjoy when my illness wouldn't let me; the starry night, the poetry of which was denied to me; the laughter of children, now vibrant and lyrically beautiful to me.

I am in touch with myself at many levels. I am able to read physical and emotional warning signs of a panic attack, or a depression spell, which, I know now, can be triggered by allergies, or be linked to seasonal changes. With my physician's help, I am often able to prevent a spell of depression by altering my diet, and the medication dose.

I have learned to breathe properly, to exercise and to meditate, and I find that listening to music and/or concentrating on something, makes me feel better when I have to cope with a period of emotional low. This process is High Magick in its own right.

I love my husband and son, I love my friends, and I have come to forgive those I resented just when I quit trying. I feel like I know something, a beautiful secret about life that they do not, and that I wish I could share with them, like the feeling of being brand-new after periods of my soul cocooning and transforming itself in the darkest places of my being.

I feel now almost empathically connected to people, I have a sense of harmony and of belonging to the human race and to the universe. I am no longer the freak, the weakling, but a wonderful being among others. Sometimes happy childhood memories and sensations surface spontaneously and unexpectedly, flooding me with feelings of warmth and joy.

I love what most people consider

ordinary. Now more than ever, I do not understand violence, self-destructive behaviour, sexual, racial and social discrimination, and hate. Everyday I ask myself how it can be possible that some of us fail to appreciate the miracle we all are.

Reaching the Self, loving ourselves, is a spiritual high; communing with other Selves at deeper levels than the physical, by being loving, compassionate and happy that they exist, is the religious experience.

I cannot honestly say that I would have been better off without suffering depression; although I still live at moderate levels of uncertainty, I have also had to recognize that I love the person that I now am, and I do not know whether this person would have come to exist, or even have survived adolescence, without the awakening jolt of depression.

I know now that I can survive anything; everybody can, if they are willing to help themselves, to inform themselves and to fight this illness relentlessly. I "snapped" and came back, stronger and healthier than before. I definitely do not fear death, which I have come to see as another rite of passage to different levels of existence, and which is meant to bring us closer to our Great Mother. ❧

Michela Scheurman was born in 1963 in Naples, Italy. She has been residing in Canada since 1983, and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Anthropology. She is a Witch, a writer, and Associate Editor of Hecate's Loom.



Herbal Healing

with Ritual Baths

by Paul V. Beyerl

In working with the four elements as we know them (air, fire, water and earth), there are numerous ways in which to draw upon one or more element with which to promote health and healing. During my training in the 1970's, we were strongly urged to use one method to ensure the absence of colds and other common diseases. This process involved a quick immersion in cold water (usually following one's bath or shower) on a daily basis. Before your flesh shudders, stop and think about the many peoples who go from sauna to snow, or those who sit in the hot tub surrounded by winter's glow. It's not so strange a concept if you can but stop shivering. And yes, I followed this practice and it did seem to make a difference. But as my herbal skills grew, I replaced the cold water (which I usually dumped over my head with a large container) with my holistic herbal philosophy and practices.

Water has been used as a remedy in many ways over many generations. What quickly comes to mind are all of the mineral springs which have drawn countless individuals who maintain that bathing in the waters has helped a long list of conditions. Water cures exist in other forms as well. *Healing with Water* by Jeanne Keller is an excellent text capable of opening one of the elemental forms of healing. Our library copy is a 1968 edition and I'm not certain if it is currently in print, but I have long considered it a most valuable text.¹

There is a less mundane approach which employs water for healing as well: since ancient times people have turned to sacred springs and sacred wells seeking cures for ailments of body, soul and mind. It is with careful

thought that I add water from Lourdes or from the Apollonius Spring in Germany (dedicated to Apollo during the Roman occupation) to my herbal remedies.

For magickal people, one of the more underrated forms of healing is the ritual bath. For many of us a ritual bath is part of our preparation for lunar and Sabbat rituals but, at other times, the bath becomes an expedient shower: something functional for the outer skin of the temple of the self. Considering the quick popularity of aromatherapy, it surprises me that few seem to make the connection of breathing in the molecular magick of the selected herbal remedy while soaking one's body in a luxurious ritual bath. In this sense, the bath itself has become the ritual, not relegated as a prelude to subsequent magick.

This method offers one of the simplest approaches to healing magick with herbes. There are few cautions and less dangers than most forms of herbal healing. In fact, I can think of but two: one is to avoid placing loose herbs in the bath. They tend to cling to the skin when you stand up and can easily clog the drain, requiring a call to a plumber. The other is to avoid any herbes which are toxic and poisonous (e.g. Aconite) and which have a strong recommendation against internal use. A certain amount of the toxins may be absorbed into the skin and, subsequently, into the blood stream. Do not take risks. Apart from these two concerns, there is little to stop you from exploring this art of healing.

How do you avoid the plumber? Many texts, including my own, recommend placing the herbs in a gauze bag or even a tea strainer. I've since turned

to making a strong herbal infusion. It only takes about a cup of liquid and, when thoroughly strained, adding the liquid directly to the bath. One can also use herbal-scented bath preparations such as bubble baths or bath salts but the majority of commercial mixtures contain synthetic scents and artificial colours which are counterproductive to the healing process.

An herb need not be categorized as a "bathing herbe" to be worthy of use. There are myriad herbs which one turns to for internal use. Why not immerse one's self in their natural magick as well? If one is dealing with cancer or with HIV, why not add a cup of birch bark water to your bath? If you are struggling to uplift your spirits, why not bathe with eyebright? There are few herbs I would personally avoid. Even with an herb considered "dangerous" like Aconite, a single, fresh flower floating upon the water's surface is well within safe limits for an adult (thought follow the guidelines when handling the entire plant when gathering the flower).

What transforms a bath into a ritual? There are many possibilities, so many that one's imagination can begin to spill over like a brook. Traditionally, one would add a sprinkle of sea salt to the bath water as well, not wanting to miss the cleansing of body and spirit which priests and priestesses have used since the Age of Artes. (In a pinch, any table salt will do.) There are many ways to bring in the four elements, to ask of the Universe that you learn what is necessary to promote healing; there are infinite ritual forms one can create. Trust your imagination.

What is most important is to avoid the temptation of turning a ritual heal-

ing bath into a long soak with a good book. Recreational reading is not bad, but it does not sustain the focus of your spirit. If you wish to read, focus upon a healing text. We have used *The Child of Light* for nearly fifteen years of healing work within The Rowan Tree Church.² You could adapt passages from *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran or write your own text which calls upon the powers of the Universe. Meditation is another tool at your disposal, working with carefully planned and highly focused healing images.

At the bottom line, you may not attain miracles....but then you may. You are also invoking the magick of the Universe and asking for change. Not only will you have access to the properties of the healing herbs you have selected but you will be working with the magick of transformation and of change as well.

The amount of healing is directly related to the amount of work and the level of mental focus you can maintain. Disciplined focus does not mean that your bath should be void of joy and pleasure. Take time to contemplate the element of water during your planning stages. What does it take to draw upon the energy of water? Take time and do careful research when selecting your herbs. Know them well. Be able to identify their scent and, should you use more than one, to distinguish among them. Explore this art of healing and let me know your results.☘

Paul V. Beyerl, *The Hermit's Grove*, 9724 132nd Ave NE, Kirkland, WA, 98033. (206) 828-4124

¹ *Healing with Water*, Jeanne Keller, foreword by Sabine Koch, M.D., Award Books, NY and Tandem Books, London, 1968.

² *Blessed is the Child of Light*, adapted from Dead Sea scrolls. Edited by Rev. Paul Beyerl. \$7.00 plus \$2.50 first class or \$1.50 book rate shipping. Washington residents add 57 cents sales tax. The Rowan Tree Church, P.O. Box 691, Kirkland, WA, 98033.

Paul Beyerl is author of the enormously popular *The Master Book of Herbalism* (Phoenix Publishers). He also writes on many other topics of interest to healers and occultists. Paul resides near Seattle, Washington.

Persephone's Descent

as

Voluntary Transformative Magic

by Ann Lee

Persephone heard the dead wailing. There was no one to receive them and show them the way to the underworld, no one to counsel and guide them. They were lost, bewildered souls. Persephone felt sorry for them. She decided to make it her work to guide the dead down the path into the underworld. She voluntarily became Queen of the Underworld, Ruler of the Land of the Dead. The dead could now go on to their next life. They no longer had to linger as shadows in the Land of the Living.

This is the way it was when the Goddess had her place in the religions of the world. Persephone's descent to the underworld was voluntary. Then the patriarchal religions took over and the myth was changed.

Now, Persephone was peacefully gathering flowers when Hades saw her and lusted after her. He raped her and carried her, kicking and screaming, to the Underworld. She was not the sole ruler but was co-ruler with Hades, the God of the Underworld. She has to spend half of every year there and half of every year in the Land of the Living.

The story of Persephone deals with the land of those who have died physically. However, it also deals with those who undergo the descent to the underworld when they are alive. In life, one

is given opportunities to make this journey voluntarily - to chose to make the descent to hell.

Our culture does not accept this as a rational choice. We are supposed to be happy all the time. If we are not happy at any time, there are drugs to make us so. Being unhappy means that something is wrong. Women are often told by total strangers to smile because it is not acceptable for them not to.

If one chooses not to make the descent to hell voluntarily, one will be carried there against one's will. A major illness or severe depression will be employed to force the journey to begin. In the past, women would "take to their beds" and pull up the covers. Their husband and children would not disturb them until they had made their journey and voluntarily returned.

It is our choice, we can follow Persephone of our own volition or be taken against our will.☘

Ann Lee is an self-employed professional, a writer, Wiccan Priestess and co-founder of the Thirteenth House Mystery School. She is also co-owner of Hecate's Loom.



FICTION

Fables • Poems • Tales • Narratives



Sandra Lockwood, from her C.D., "Shell," photograph by Miles Lowry

"Wounded beyond measure, Arthur took the way below to the court of the Fisher King where the royal virgin, Morgan le Fey, tending his wounds, keeps his healed body for her very own and they live together.

"The eternal nymph heals, nourishes and revives him, making him immortal, as one of Faery. He stands without armour, but fearing no fray. So they rule from the Underworld, where the other half of the world is theirs."

Yvonne Owens
(adapted from "Le Dragon Normand" and "Gesta Regnum
Britanniae")

Poetry Muse



To Hecate

Blue flame,
White candle,
Flying Raven,
over the sky.
Black moon,
dark night.
Cold winds blowing.

I am porous,
black light fill my soul.

Dark dog,
gleaming teeth,
your eyes moonlight.
You leap at me
from out of the night,
Howling, Howling,
echoes in a cavern.
You have freed your
hounds,
tear me to pieces,
there is nothing more to hide.

I am whole,
lying on the ground,
naked I rise,
to stand before you.
Gleaming breasts,
you bare your chest,
Warrior woman.
Your hair is wild,
The Wind is howling,
it tears from me my breath.
Through my soul,
wind and rain,
tearing, cleansing, power.

Old woman, crone,
eyes of midnight blue.
I stand alone.
You dare me to judge.
Three roads,
crossing,
My path to walk,
wild trees,
wild woods,
cold grass.

Diana Michaelis

Dream

I dreamt I sat astride
the barn floor-scraper
and flew wither I would;
up through the thickets,
skimming the tops of trees,
then high over wooded hills
into the night sky
under dark clouds
and the wind
and the height
made me giddy

but my hand was firm;
on I flew
and the land fell away below me.

Had I risen
above the clouds
I could have flown
right into the face of the moon.

Fennis

HEL'S HALF ACRE

by Jessica North

The Divinities grew bored and restless one Eternity and decided amongst Themselves to have a small competition, the prize being consensus agreement to whatever whim might entertain the Winner for whatever period of Being.

Hel - that most severe, most humorless, most untidy of the lot - got wind of the Idea and made haste to the Heavens, a territory which She seldom visited being Goddess of the Underworld, after all.

It was with great dismay that the Gaming Crew set eyes upon Her, She of the snarly locks and steely gaze.

"Ah!" exclaimed the Mistress of the Depths. "Now surely You were not thinking that You would game without Me, with so great a Prize at stake!"

They shuddered, knowing full well what She would demand as Her Prize should She prove to be the winner of the Event. Nevertheless, here She was and here She would stay; They were stuck with Her.

For a brief moment some of Them entertained the possibility of cancelling the Idea, but then it was a Word most obviously in motion and none of Them really wanted to be responsible for suddenly changing the Flow of Events. Who knew What could be called into manifestation should that occur and besides, there was always the distinct possibility that Hel would not win after all.

"On with the Game!" it was finally decided. And so it was and They Thought that it was good.

Now Hel is no slouch, as anyone who has ever had any

truck with the Lady most surely knows. Clever She is, and quick and wily, so it was She, of course, who won the little contest and She Who was then entitled to the Prize.

Hel wanted a piece - a modicum - of land above ground, with air that was fresh and trees that would rustle in the breezes under the azure blue sky, a place where

humans walked without the apprehension and trepidation they always exhibited when they approached Her realm, silly things!

There was an uproar; the Divinities could not imagine it, Hel walking the Earth as though She belonged! But She had won and so, of course, the agreement had to be honored.

After much deliberation it was finally decided among all Participants that Hel would indeed hold a piece of land in the Upper World, but because Her housekeeping left something to be desired, She was forced to settle for a moveable territory, the idea being to keep any one piece of land from completely falling into total disrepair (as though She would ever allow such a thing



Illustration by Tony Remington

to happen!).

And so it was that Hel got Her moveable Half Acre, which everyone of us complains about running all over to this very day.

But the Lady is nothing if not shrewd and little did the Heavens realize that Hel also managed to secure for Herself a permanent half acre in Texas, clearly marked on modern maps.☼



Regular Features

The Herbal Witch

by Dianne

Everybody's Everyday Make-at-home Products:

By Samhain the herbal witch has gathered and dried most of the herbs needed for the winter. Although the work of a herbalist is never done now comes a time to try new ideas.

Several years ago, I began trying to make my own cosmetics and home products mostly to see if I could do it and to find cosmetics that were chemical free. The degree of complication in producing body and home products depends on if you wish to make the base products yourself or use ready made products. This issue I would like to give some simple (easy-to-try) recipes for different home products. Please excuse that all the measurements are not metric.

Remember that it is best when you are making cosmetics to use glass bowls and containers and wood or plastic utensils rather than metal. It is best to keep anything you make in a clean, closed container and in the refrigerator.

Facials: Deep clean (helps deal with blackheads) - apply cooked oatmeal to the face and let dry fifteen minutes. Remove with warm water

Moisturizing for Winter skin - add a few drops of olive oil and lemon extract to a mashed avocado. Apply to the skin for ten minutes. Avocado is rich in vitamins needed for healthy skin and nourishes the skin. Remove with warm water.

Perk-up for tired complexions - Combine half a mashed banana with 1/4 cup of apple juice and three drops of peppermint oil (if you don't have oil mix in 1 or 2 tsp of dried mint and let sit for ten minutes). Add enough cornstarch to form a soft paste. Leave on ten minutes rinse with warm water.

Chamomile hand lotion (1/2 cup) - Mix 1/4 cup (50 ml) of chamomile infusion with 1/2 tsp (2 ml) of borax until the borax is dissolved (this may require gentle heating). Add 1/4 cup (50 ml) glycerine, 5 tsp (25 ml) witch hazel both purchased at your local drug store and 1 tbsp (15 ml) of almond, olive or safflower oil. Shake vigorously and store in a tightly closed jar and shake each time before using.

Herbal shampoo (mild enough to use everyday) - make an infusion of rosemary or chamomile (pour 1 cup (250 ml) boiling water over 2 tsp (10 ml) dried herb or 2 tbsp (30 ml) fresh herb. Steep mixture overnight and in the morning strain through a filter. Use a base of a milk or baby shampoo and add the infusion. Shake well. The infusion will blend with shampoo but will make the shampoo thinner.

Fruity bath salts - put 3 tbsp bicarbonate of soda in a bowl and add 12 drops of sweet orange or neroli (orange blossom) essential oil and 6 drops of strawberry perfume or potpourri oil. Add food colouring if desired. Mix well. Pour in a clear jar, use 1 tbsp to bath.

Leafy aftershave - Place 3 tbsp of dried strawberry leaves in heat proof bowl. Bring just over 1/3 cup of distilled water to a boil and pour over the leaves infusing 4 to 5 hours. Heat 1/2 cups of rosewater (from the drug store or make your own) in a bowl set over a sauce pan of simmering water. When hot add 1 tsp of borax stir very gently until dissolved. Remove the bowl from the heat pour in strained strawberry leaf mixture. Pour liquid into a suitable bottle.

Blue cornflower eye bath (eases sore tired eyes) - Put 7 grams of dried cornflowers in heat proof bowl. Bring 200 ml (1 cup) of distilled water to a boil and pour over the cornflowers. Leave to infuse 1 hour. Strain carefully through a filter. Chill in the refrigerator. Soak cotton pads and place on closed eyes for 15 - 20 minutes. Should be used fresh - don't use after 4 days.

Geranium soap balls - Grate 1 (300 g) large bar of plain unscented soap (Ivory is what I use but can get soap at a health food store) into a bowl. Heat 1/4 cup of rosewater and pour over the grated soap. Add 2 drops of grapefruit essential oil and 2 drops of geranium essential oil (and 3 drops of yellow food coloring, if desired). Mix thoroughly. Let mixture stand for 1 to 2 days then divide into even sized pieces. Roll the pieces into smooth balls and allow them to dry thoroughly. Polish with a cotton ball dipped in rosewater. (Replace geranium with 5 drops of carnation essential oil and 1 drop of clove).

Hope these recipes encourage you to try other made-at-home herbal products. Take care.☘

Dianne is an herbalist who resides in northern Alberta. She is a regular contributor to Hecate's Loom.

Profiles

Paul Fenris

By Castalia

Paul has a face familiar to many Ontario pagans who knew him at the Toronto Occult Shop in its early years on Queen Street West. Many things have developed out of his experiences working at and running the shop. But instead of looking over a counter at customers, Paul is designing and creating magical items that are catching people's attention across the country.

Paul doesn't appear to fit the stereotype of the pagan artisan. Although his workshop is in the basement of an old building in Hamilton, it is neat and clean, and magical items in various stages of completion are arranged in orderly rows. When I commented upon this phenomenon he grinned and said "We pay someone to do that." Smart. Very smart.

What also is different is that Paul isn't the solitary craftsman forging away like some modern day Hephaestus. His ideas have spawned a business that incorporates the talents of many people, who work cooperatively. On a swelteringly hot July day, we discuss the past, the present and the future.

The first craft item Paul made was for himself. He says "I was trying unsuccessfully to copy a really nice athame that Richard James owns, a very beautiful piece. I wanted one like it and it wasn't available. Richard advised me that I could use his shop to try and build one.

"He gave me the material. It didn't come out exactly, but I did enjoy making it."

Paul made a few of the items for sale at the occult shop a number of years ago. "There were a few products that we wanted and one of the local suppliers was unable to supply the handmade stuff."

Paul credits the patience and talents of many of the artisans that were working in the community in the early eighties in helping him develop appreciation for materials and design. "I have been close to many artists in the community and they've always come down to the shop where I was working and use Richard's joint facilities. I learned early to grab a coffee and shut my mouth and watch, and I learned just through watching other people. Frankly I don't remember where I learned to do a lot of this stuff."

Now, over ten years later, his efforts are showing up in the beautiful things emerging from the workshop of *Caer Lloer Dyn*, the name of his company and his coven. Paul states over and over the importance he places on making available good quality tools and accessories at moderate prices. "I think the Craft and the people in it deserve access to good ritual tools properly made and without outrageous expense. That is one of the major commitments that got the company rolling as a whole."

The beginnings of the company were serendipitous, and rather romantic. Some would call it practical. Because of an injury, Paul was forced to take time away from his trade in air-conditioning. His partner and High Priestess, Morgan, needed some magical tools. "I decided to make my priestess some items that she wanted when I had the time. I hadn't been inspired until I saw the response to the first few things that I made."

He made more items and enthusiasm grew. "People started seeing them and buying them. That's how the company came about."

Paul wears a look of delighted surprise when he talks about the response there has been to his creations and when he reflects on the first year of the company.

"We had a good time doing a lot of the design and buying the materials, the exotic woods and stuff. It started in a walk-in closet in the kitchen. That was the whole shop!"

Now Paul's life is quite different, and he's a happier man for it. Sometimes it takes the encouragement of others for a creative person to do what they were meant to do. Paul has found that the business has kept him in touch with his spirituality on a daily basis.

"I find it personally a very comforting way to start the day. We do a little ritual to *Goibban* downstairs and we start, and no-one's lopped off a finger yet! We have names for all our tools. And somewhere someone's happy because of it, so it's something tangible I can see."

Paul finds that being part of a creative collective to be equally satisfying. "*Caer Lloer Dyn* products is the company of our coven *Caer Llor Dyn*. We are the artists.

Everyone in the coven is involved in the business one way or the other. I feel privileged to be a part of it."

Although much of the routine work is contributed by other members of the group, Paul has certain things he likes to do himself. "I like to count the runes before they go out. There's nothing worse than being short a rune.

"Some of the processes we do are dangerous, some of the etchings. Some of the chemicals aren't too nice, so when it comes time to suit up and do the toxic stuff I generally do that myself. I also like to do the final sanding on athame handles and packaging to make sure everything got done. Things get missed. Tarot boxes go out with two bottoms glued on and no lid, and the indignant customer saying "Okay so what's the catch?"

"I love to do the R&D, designing a new product. I like talking to other Wiccans saying "hey, what would you like?" Some people have really given me excellent advice, and I very much enjoy sitting down and laying out the first of a product line.

"I do all the Golden Seal products which are one of a kind things. Our cost is more because the whole R&D process is never reclaimed: I've had not had any price complaints yet so I am doing something right in that respect."

I asked Paul about his views on the future of paganism and of plans for Caer Lloer Dyn. He looked thoughtful as he responded to the first question.

"I think it's diversifying in a positive way. It's representing itself in a more responsible and better educated format. People seem now much more clear on what they believe and why when representing ourselves to the general community. I've noticed a fair degree of acceptance in the community towards the craft and to people who practice it. Obviously we've cast off some stigmatic images that have long plagued practitioners of the craft.

"I've seen the craft represent itself well and the artists have made living, physical representations of the beauty of their faith and of their deities, and have managed to represent themselves through societies that are meeting points between mainstream society and craft. You have your SCA. It is not a really craft organization but a whole lot of people that are interested in Wicca and the Craft go there. Certainly the 'Gaming' has done its share for the craft and its exposure."

There is a catalogue that is soon to be distributed. In it will be found the athames, bollines, rune sets, oil racks, tarot boxes, furniture and jewelry that Caer Lloer Dyn has become known for.

Paul is planning to add many unusual items to that catalogue in the future. He muses about his plans. "I wish to make a Wiccan equivalent of a Faberge egg. I'd also like to supply the magickal equivalent of 'The Den for Men.' We can make kabalistic pencil sharpeners, and Greenman penny banks that sing Greensleeves. Not with irreverence implied but we like to make items that move people even to humour. That's one of the things that we really want to do.

"And children's puzzles and blocks. Our next design is children's building blocks that feature the Theban and English alphabet and the Sabbats on them, to stack them

up and build a kabalah. We are going to lose out shirt on it but we just want to put this out!"

Caer Lloer Dyn has set a precedent for doing unusually work. Paul says "When it comes to crafting craft products there is nothing too absurd, large, or ridiculous for us to seriously consider offering a very good price to build. We did this huge maiden-killer book of shadows on a bet more than anything else. Then there was the Enochian chess set with hand painted Egyptian art forms, style one from the golden dawn. It was ebony and holly squares. The customer was surprised at what we did to do the job. We just wanted to say we actually built one of those. If you have a good idea, we are always willing to correspond and do things like coven necklaces for people. We consider it a privilege to do this sort of thing."

I asked Paul about his experience at Wiccanfest this year. He told me a story. "I rented a truck at more than I could afford and didn't realize it had air conditioning. When I got to the festival I offloaded all our stuff and set up our display, so that I could relax because I was so tired. I said to myself: 'It's so sticky and hot, and I've got so much money riding on this promotion, all I want to do is have \$1000 in my till by eight o'clock and to see my breath in the air from the cold.' Well, we had \$1750 in the till on thursday and it was freezing! Overnight this thermal came in. I wasn't too popular around the cabin."

The success at Wiccanfest continues to show that Paul and Caer Lloer Dyn are on to a good thing. "We had something for everybody and just about everybody bought something, based on sales."

In my conversation with Paul I found him surprisingly modest about his achievements and his creations. Here's a man who is manufacturing beautiful items cooperatively with his coven, and his only real area of conflict is the weather! He is thoughtful when he comments: "My talent, I think, is never saying that it's too much work to do something. I learned watching Steve Hazzard work. What I used to think was a ridiculous amount of work and effort to make something unfold was exactly what was required. And just did the work and watched the item unfold; the better it looked the more it unfolded. Sometimes when I make a piece its a representation of how much I actually like my faith and care for my gods and it's a living expression of that." ❧

Catalogues from Caer Lloer Dyn can be obtained by writing P.O. Box 83025, Hamilton, Ontario, L8L 8E8

Castalia is a professional musician and teacher, living in Ontario. If you are a Pagan artist, writer, musician, or dramatist and would like to be profiled in Profiles, call (905) 525-5618 or write P.O. Box 68024, Blakely Postal Outlet, Hamilton, Ontario, L8M 3M7



Thirteen Questions

An Interview With Ariel O'Sullivan

by Miles Lowry

Ariel O'Sullivan is a poet and performance artist. She teaches classes in trance and divination techniques, and is a co-founder of Thirteenth House Mystery Tradition.

1. Who would you like to say hello to?

Wonder Woman.

2. What do you most dislike?

Invasion - the interruption of a person's personal space or musings.

3. Who do you admire?

Keats - for his level of devotion.

4. What is your greatest gift?

A discerning ear - though I'm not always listening.

5. Which do you prefer - Trick or Treat?

Treat - to be honest.

6. What's your favorite Fairy food?

Beech nuts.

7. What's your favourite line from a poem?

"The moon, methinks, looks with a wat'ry eye
and when she weeps, weeps every little flower
Lamenting some enforced chastity." - Shakespeare

8. What is your least favourite?

"I think that I shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree--I rewrote that recently as: I think that I shall never see a poem as lovely as your tree."

9. If you had to escape, what would you take with you?

My children, my grandchildren, my cat, my dog and my computer, and oh yes, my glasses.

10. What are you reading?

The Dictionary.

11. Where does your inspiration come from and when does it come?

My inspiration comes from my condition. I'm inspired all the time but I don't always know it - unless I sit myself down - like a good parent - for a few hours a day and allow myself the opportunity to remember.

12. Where would you most like to travel and by what method?

Space. My preferred method is Mental - I don't like vehicles or regular modes of transport because of the feeling of being contained.

13. What are you looking forward to in the New Year?

Living the same way I write - that is with more spontaneity - I want to discover things more through serendipity - by chance.

Miles Lowry is an artist, sculptor, photographer, writer and published poet. He is a designer and Resident Artist for Suddenly Dance Theatre, Victoria. Miles is a regular contributor to Hecate's Loom.

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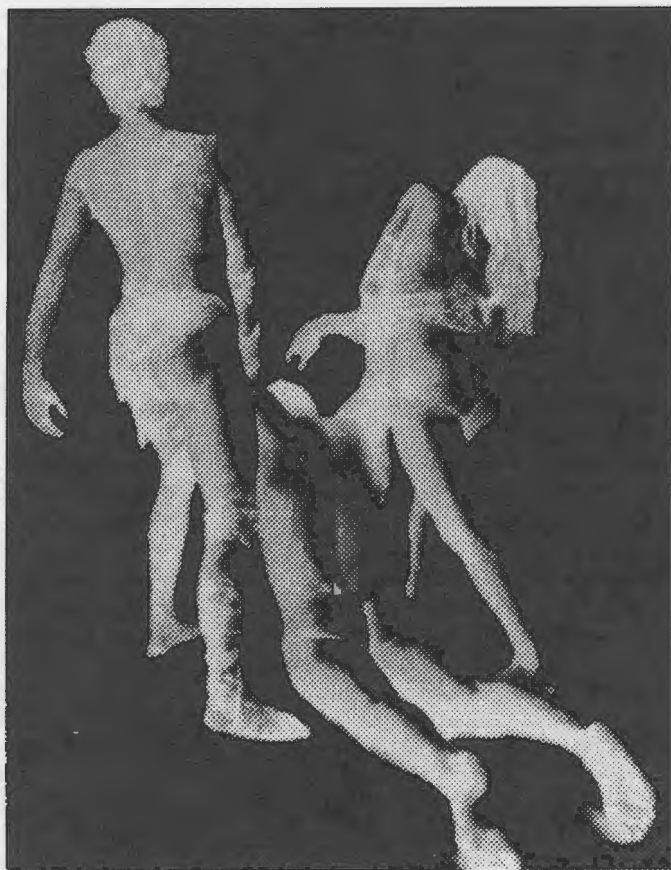
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REVIEWS

Music • Theatre • Books • Seminars



Foursight Theatre Company in Association with Cath Kilcoyne. Directed by Kate Hale. Performed by Stephanie Jacob (Boadicea), Sue Pendlebury (Voada), Katherine Ratcliff (Voddiccia) and Simon Thorp (Marius).

Most would agree that the theatrical event of the 1995 Victoria Fringe Theatre Festival was Foursight Theatre Company's stunning production of *Boadicea, the Red-Bellied Queen*. Based in Britain, Foursight has captivated Fringe audiences in previous years with such superb shows as

Smoke in the Vatican.

Having seen their shows in previous years, I rushed off with a couple of friends to see *Boadicea* on the first night of the Fringe. As I sit down to write this, I have seen 13 other Fringe shows in the interim, many of which are fast fading from memory - yet I can still vividly recall many of *Boadicea's* electrifying moments.

Foursight Theatre has been in the business for seven years now, in the business of rampaging through history, as they put it, finding strong female characters and telling their stories on the stage. This sounds all very well and politically correct, but the magic is in the mesmerizingly the-

Boadicea, The Red-Bellied Queen

Reviewed by
Michael Hoppe

Frankenstein's Mothers, Bloody Mary and the Virgin Queen (the most brilliantly funny Fringe show I have ever seen; I only hope that they will remount it one day), and *Pink*

atrical manner in which they tell these stories. Rarely are historical plays this immediate, this passionate, this vivid.

Boadicea's story goes like this: Circa 60 A.D., upon her husband's death, the bodacious Boadicea proclaims herself to be Celtic Queen of the Iceni. The Romans, refusing to acknowledge a woman's authority, proceed to torture Boadicea and rape her two daughters, Voada and Voddiccia.

In response, Boadicea takes on the Roman Empire. She manages to gather together an army of some 200,000 men and together they seize London and St. Albans; 70,000 Romans are slaughtered. The Romans retaliate, marching over Boadicea's troops, with the ultimate result that Boadicea commits suicide.

What a story to tell! And with only four actors! Foursight commissioned a narrative poem from writer Cath Kilcoyne and incorporated it into this production. Kate Hale directed (she also directed Naomi Cooke's *Slap* and acted in *Bloody Mary and the Virgin Queen*), and the approach isn't a ploddingly chronological one.

Foursight doesn't have a dull feminist axe to grind. Rather, they sharpen a steep rapier and make quick work of stodgy, stale theatrical and historical conventions.

Each of the actors have the vocal power and physical presence to stand alone on a Broadway stage and rivet an audience's attention. Imagine that kind of concentrated theatrical energy, times it by four, and then put it into the relatively small stage area of Open Space. As one friend said immediately after *Boadicea*, "They're a triple threat. They can act. They can sing. And they can *move!*"

Highly skilled in movement, music, song, mime and dialogue, the three women and one man can play musical instruments as well. All on a bare stage with one trunk and a few props; they create the most spellbinding theatre with the simplest of means.

The rape scene, for example, is not done realistically, but rather stylistically: all the actors breathe and gasp rhythmically in and out of sync with each other.

The abstract intensity builds and builds and it starts to become horrifyingly concrete in our minds when - wham! - suddenly the tone shifts to much lighter, comic scene in which *Boadicea* is writing her own version of the rape scene and her daughters are alternately embellishing the tale and criticizing her for not sticking to the facts.

This is one of the brilliant ways Foursight makes the audience aware of the fact that we are being told a story, an alternate version of history. It may or may not be altogether true. Just as the version of history we were spoon-fed as children may or may not be true.

Boadicea shows us the many different voices that go together to make the sloppy stew we call history. Their theatre is Brechtian in the sense that they can create the most convincing theatrical illusion at the drop of a hat, but they never let you sit back and forget that they are creating this illusion for a reason. This is more than just good theatre; their deconstruction of history is intellectually instructive and creatively inspiring.

Boadicea, The Red-Bellied Queen singed my sideburns. ☸

Michael Hoppe is a movie programmer and theatre critic. He resides in Victoria, British Columbia.

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TWO DAYS IN THE LIFE OF MAGIC

A Workshop

Reviewed by Beast

I was very fortunate recently to be involved in a weekend workshop in *Living the Magical Life*. The workshop was presented by two of Victoria's more prominent Witches, Elizabeth Connolly and Alison Skelton. Both Liz and Alison are founding Priestesses of the Thirteenth House Mystery School.

Saturday morning was bright and sunny, so I rode my motorcycle down the long winding road which ended in the laneway of a beautiful beach front house. The living room balcony overlooked a sandy beach and the straits of Juan de Fuca. I was greeted at the door by Alison and Liz and was quickly made to feel at home.

The rest of the students began arriving after 9:30 a.m. There were six students altogether; three ladies and three men; plus our two instructors. This made eight. A nice magical number.

Orientation started precisely at 10:00 a.m., with Liz and Alison explaining what was on the agenda for the next two days. At 10:30 a.m. we were all led out into the yard for a bout of stretching exercises. While in the yard I saw a garter snake which I perceived as a good omen.

After rediscovering old aches and pains; and then creating new ones, we were led back into the house where Liz guided us through a meditation read to us from a book called *Embracing the Beloved* by Stephen and Ondrea

Levine. The rest of the morning was spent in a circle listening to Egyptian music while we jumped, danced, twisted, did pelvis thrusts back and forth, shook all over, sighed and deep breathed and did more stretching.

Being that we had created a temple-like atmosphere; we were asked to observe a period of silence before each meal. During this time we could read or meditate; or anything else as long as it was in silence. All the meals were vegetarian and prepared by Alison. Each one was a work of art. This is another skill that can be placed on Alison's list of many talents.

After lunch we again circled and Liz led us through a process of creating sound vibrations from our inner selves. We were once again led through a guided meditation. At the end of the meditation Liz went around the circle and anointed everyone's seventh chakra areas with special chakra oils made by a shaman and his son in Egypt.

A well-earned break came at 3:00 p.m. It was now Alison's turn to take over as teacher and she led us through the Chakras. In front of each one of us was placed a cube of clay. Closing our eyes we proceeded to mold the clay with our hands. Some very interesting art forms were created. After this we were guided through another meditation. And as if one lot of jumping and shaking hadn't been enough Alison

now led us through a Saudi Bedouin Dance.

Then more meditation. This meditation consisted of looking into an imaginary fire and seeing the cat of our desires leap out and having it absorb into our solar plexus region. We all then stood in a circle holding hands and roaring to our hearts content. I'm sure the people on the beach didn't quite know what to make of all the roaring coming from within the house. This didn't bother us though as we were too busy finding our inner selves.

Our next break was 5:15 p.m. which evolved into our half hour of silence before supper. Supper lasted from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. After supper we again circled; invoked the four directions and then sat and discussed how we liked the workshop so far; or anything else that met our fancy. At 9:15 p.m. the circle was opened. Some like myself took the long winding road home while others stayed overnight.

Day one was complete. Day two, Sunday, found us working with the throat chakra.

The throat Chakra deals with sound so it was only fitting we sang several lines to Row, Row, Row your Boat, Gently Down the Stream; to which we all got mixed up creating much laughter; another throat Chakra sound.

Next came the brow and crown Chakras with Alison again guiding us through a meditation. Once everyone had returned from this meditation we were all handed a multi-coloured, egg shaped piece of cardboard. Everyone wrote their names on the egg in front of them and then passed their egg to the person beside them. The person beside you then wrote their impressions of you on the egg you had just handed them.

This happened eight times until the egg had traveled the full circle. When you finally received your own egg back it was very interesting to see how others perceived you. It was now once again time for our silent period and then lunch.

2:00 p.m. found us back in the circle with Liz now speaking to us about what we had done so far and what it should mean to each one of us individually. After this we went around the circle pairing us eight times so that we could personally feel the energy of each person there. 3:00 p.m. brought another break and then at 3:30 p.m. we invoked the directions and then sat around and made personal, magical talismans. Energy was then transferred from the circle into our talismans. The circle was then opened and the workshop was over.

I had never been to a workshop like this before and I must say I thoroughly enjoyed myself. Not only did it help me on the path to finding my inner self; but I also met some wonderful people with the same interests as my own.

And in closing I just have to say, merry meet; and merry part; and merry meet again. Blessed be. ☸

The Beast rides a Harley Davidson and likes his herbal tea hot. He is an artist and creator of magical objects. Beast is Mailout and Distribution Director for Hecate's Loom.



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Pagan Dawn

THE JOURNAL OF THE PAGAN FEDERATION

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"Pagan Dawn"

*The Journal of the Pagan
Federation*

Review by John Threllfall

I'm always intrigued when a new Pagan magazine finds its way through the maze of the Loom collective to my desk, and although Pagan Dawn isn't a new publication, it has a freshness and vitality about it that makes it seem new.

From what I can gather, Pagan Dawn has been around for about ten years (until four issues ago, under another name) acting, as its banner suggests, as the journal for the Pagan Federation- the original British Federation, that is, not the Canadian Pagan Federation which graces our own pages.

Pagan Dawn grandly transcends its humble task of being the journal for a specific organization; from the variety of news, articles and opinion pieces, at 39 pages it could rival most of the North American Pagan magazines. I

Hecate's Loom No. 30

perused the Lammas '95 issue and was particularly impressed by the large number of listings in the Pagan Events, groups and Networking section, not to mention such wonderful articles as "Trance Dance and the Fetish Cult" and the sublimely odd "Fear and Loathing at the Chelsea Flower Show".

In the strange coincidence department, there was a short history of "The Legendary Atlantis Bookshop", where such occult luminaries as Gerald Gardner, Dion Fortune and Aleister Crowley used to hang out and where I once spent the better part of a rainy afternoon, after getting lost in London, looking for the British Museum. I found this wonderful shop

tucked away on a side street. I was unaware of its spectacular history until Pagan Dawn came my way, so thank you to Caroline Wise for illuminating me with her article.

Also worth noting is the "International Newsbites" column which filled me in on the goings on beyond our continent. And I am somewhat embarrassed to admit that I had no knowledge of the events covered in "A Kwakwilt Chief: Indian of the Pacific Northwest Coming to Meet British Pagans", despite the fact that the chief in question is from Vancouver Island.

You'd think that the Loom would know about such things without having to read about them in a British publication, but then I wouldn't have had the pleasure of discovering this gem in Pagan Dawn.

Be sure to pick up Pagan Dawn if you're the slightest bit interested in what is happening with Paganism in our religious homeland. You can reach them by writing to Pagan Dawn BM Box 7097 London WC1N 3XX England. They seem like friendly folks, so drop them a line and let them know what's up in the colonies, but be kind and enclose a SASE with international reply coupons. ☸



"The Company of Wolves"

A Virago Theatre Production at the Victoria Fringe Festival, Kaleidoscope Theatre Adapted and directed by Deborah Foley

Reviewed by Don Brennan

This local theatre company takes a big bite in presenting an ambitious adaptation of Angela Carter's retelling of "Little Red Riding Hood." It's a fine idea, though the rendering doesn't quite match it for bravado. Like the young woman on her way to her grandmother's, it tends to dawdle along without focus or intensity. Still, the largely inexperienced cast lend a fresh-faced sincerity if not a whole lot of conviction to a production suffering from raw, inexperienced direction.

This is a pity, because the story has more levels of depth than the one this production concludes with.

The ancient tale of an adolescent girl, a crone, a walk through the woods, a wolf and (sometimes) a huntsman has more than 31 different literary versions and a forest of psychological and psycho-sexual metaphors.

The sexual connotations alone of the wolf's appetite and the eating of the girl with the basket of goodies, so that she becomes one with the wolf, make for ripe picking ground for scholars. But metaphors alone can make for pretty thin fare, and it is as a story that "Little Red

Riding Hood" has survived and entertained people. Angela Carter's emancipated version ("Company of Wolves" was just one of a few versions she wrote) is one of many in a long line, the most well-known of which are the Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm versions. Perrault took the oral folk tale of "The Grandmother" and projected the main character as innocent, helpless and susceptible to forces of nature, which in his time of the 1600's, meant the forces of nature were allied with the devil.

Perrault's audience identified the wolf with werewolves, insatiable lust and with chaos, so the story was in fact a grisly warning to prevent young women from becoming Witches and being "susceptible to nature." The cultural code that informed Perrault's storybook version made it plain that order and discipline have to reign to keep young girls "safe" from inner sexual drives and outer natural forces, and as such, the tale became a particular favourite of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie.

It was the Brothers Grimm in the nineteenth century who put the particular spin on the tale to portray Little Red Riding Hood as helpless, susceptible, and disobedient; disobedient because she breaks the pact with her mother to not talk to strangers. At the same time, the Grimms implied blame on the girl's part because she had a nonconformist streak and wanted to break from the moral restraints of her mother, and of society.

In Perrault's original, (Carter also edited his in *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales*) the werewolf has a jolly time eating everyone up, case closed. In the Brothers Grimm rewrite, law and order are emphasized with the timely appearance of the hunter-gameskeeper. Male governance is the rescuing agent.

In either one, the story is a morality tale. As scholar Jack Zipes pointed out in his exhaustive study of "Little Red Riding Hood" that was later dedicated to the memory of Angela Carter, whom he knew and influenced, the tale is a long-running one of men's fear of women's sexuality.

In the conclusion to his essay "Little Red Riding Hood as Male Creation", Zipes has this to say, pointing out optimistically that in the twentieth century there are signs of change in radical adaptations: "It took two hundred years of hunting Witches and werewolves to give birth to the traditional helpless Red Riding Hood and restrictive notions of sex and nature, then another two hundred years to establish the proper bourgeois image of the obedient Red Riding Hood learning her lessons of discipline; it may take another two hundred years for us to undo all the lessons Red Riding Hood, and the wolf as well, were forced to learn.

One would think this tale would have become a little threadbare after so long and so much picking over. (The joke "politically correct" version circulating around office fax machines and the Internet points to the ridiculousness of facile and sterile rewriting.)

However, Angela Carter's brilliance injected new life and interpretation in the story. She helps undo the "lessons." Her retelling is a reflection on the internal fantasies of a young

girl at the moment of her adolescence when there is the first intimations of sexuality.

To most people who have seen her film (or heard the BBC radio play she created, or read the original short story of hers) it is clear that behind her version of the tale lie old-world animistic beliefs in the presence of the supernatural. Carter taps into these to show a young girl's interior psychic needs in a larger social setting.

In "Red Riding Hood" a la Carter, the girl cannot be rescued by the hunter because the wolf is the hunter. The girl has to rescue herself. The young girl in the Virago Theatre production (Sarah Susut) plays to the hilt the idea that she cannot show fear, first by brandishing a knife and then when that is unavailable, by freely kissing the wolf after responding to the "All the better to eat you with" line with a feisty comeback, "I'm nobody's meat."



Understand that this is a woman who not only runs with the wolves but lies down with them, turning the tables with sexual initiative, and then one has the key to Carter's retelling. The beauty of Carter's story is that though the wolf may be shown on one

that male heroes are necessary to a woman's welfare.

The wolf, interior and exterior, becomes the lamb when faced with what Margaret Atwood aptly described as "gift as opposed to plunder". On the morning after, the wolf is forced to become tender and loving. This aspect is unfortunately lost in the Virago Theatre production.

Christopher Castle plays a rather wooden wolf, and there is a suggestion that the young woman was "lost" when she took the sexual initiative, thereby casting her into an abyss of forsaken innocence and those darn old natural forces.

Some of Carter's lines come through, such as the old woman advising that "we keep the wolves outside by living well," but overall, much tightening up is needed to make this production resolve satisfactorily.

Visual touches, such as having the young woman's red cloak, stand in as the virginal bed and a folk music soundtrack featuring Rosemary

level as the male sexual wolf on the make, there are no simplistic premises that all men are beasts nor, conversely,

The Pagan Path

Janet & Stewart Farrar
and Gavin Bone

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- The Rainbow of Paths
- God and Goddess Forms
- The Global Village
- The Way In
- Questions and Answers
- and more



As well as as large section on the results of their worldwide survey of pagans, also included is a chapter on pagan humour (great fun!).

The Farrars previous works include *The Witches' God*, *The Witches' Goddess*, *Spells & How They Work*, *Eight Sabbats for Witches*, and *The Witches' Way*.

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ruses, one side the Wood Sprites and the other the Wolf Pack Spirits. These bring a chanting continuity to the action.

Fidelity to Carter's crone narrator (Monika Majewski) helps to remind us that the teller of these tales was typically an old woman literally spinning yarns by the fireside. It may be a struggle at times, but more venture-some work like this needs to be encouraged.

When the unknown terrors of the outside are known, then fantasy becomes more subversive desire than irrational fear. The wolf is no longer at our door. ❧

Donald Brennan is a writer, musician and drama critic. He resides in Victoria, B.C.



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"Fall of the Pomegranate"

*Written by Mariette Sluyter
Directed by Gail Hanrahan
A Spinstergirl Production at
the Victoria Fringe Festival,
Open Space Gallery.*

Reviewed by Don Brennan

What if Persephone, the quintessential fallen woman, was a keynote speaker at a "Fallen Women Anonymous" Support Group? What would she have to tell after an eon of "playing house" in Hades and having blame and guilt heaped on her?

Mariette Sluyter's sharp and witty play takes on the Homeric interpretation of the myth and tangles with Freudian analysis and stereotypes of the archetype en route. This is dynamic theatre of "feminist re-vision" that shouts "I know the truth, and it's wearing a skirt!"

The 29-year old Sluyter is slightly uncomfortable with the idea of "revision", with its implying a rewriting and changing of history and myth, but in the sense of "remembering", this work amply suggests what the myth originally meant. As she says, Persephone was always a goddess of grain and fertility; it was Homer who allied her with the underworld of Hades that has since become not a place of beauty but of punitive suffering.

Homer made Persephone subservient to Hades. Sluyter takes us back to the beginning around the time of chaos, "the original chaos - not the last time you tried to make dinner before

the aerobics class and the kids were running around."

Persephone is a blonde bopper in a gold tutu with high heels telling the story of who begat who in the dawn of the gods. As the daughter of Zeus and Demeter, she "shares" with us her rape and abduction at the hands of the ruler of the underworld, dear old uncle Hades, who had made a deal with Zeus that he could "have" her despite Demeter's known objections.

Hades gets his chance when Persephone is out one day alone picking flowers. "Never walk alone" becomes one of Persephone's resolutions after she's carried off. Her eventual partaking of the pomegranate fruit (the only food in the underworld) has the consequence of supposedly allowing Hades to claim his rights as husband, because the eating of a single seed while she's in his house constitutes marriage to her lord-of-the-dead uncle.

"One little seed is a reason to marry?" she queries. "Not even a ring, which you can melt down after the divorce."

Having "humiliated her family by

snacking", Persephone laments that she is now condemned to being forced underground for six months every year and her sullied self is no longer permitted to wear white...and I'm winter!" she walls into a mascara-stained tissue.

Mother Demeter tries to come to her rescue, but her flight "has a layover in Limbo" and she misses the connection. Rather than bemoan her fate, Persephone undergoes a clarifying ritual, a "Song to Recant" as a kind of Hopscotch Mantra whereby she forswears "glamour length false nails for action length," vows "not to wear mascara on weekends," and gives herself over to "a power greater and thinner than I...Vanna! (White)"

The conclusion of the 12-step program and the conclusion to her Sharing with the Sisters of Fallen Womanhood (Medusa, Lilith and Lady MacBeth are waved to in the audience) is to make herself "ready and willing to become plain."

Off comes the blonde wig and onwards she moves in the next several scenes to self-knowledge and "empowerment", a catharsis that makes her transcend "plain" by her righteous anger at her treatment and the eventual sensual sharing with a lover.

Three facets or stages of Persephone come forth in Sluyter's play; Persephone as a guileless maiden (Valley Girl-style), a whip-cracking dominatrix with an attitude confronting Hades, and the awakened lover; the fallen woman falling in love.

The beauty of Sluyter's Persephone falling in love is that she does so with one of the dead, a spirit, and therefore a non-gender specific essence, so that the loving can encompass hetero and homosexual love.

The metaphoric possibilities of falling, fallen and Fall are explored in this work. The whole is wonderfully complemented by Tate Shimazowa, who hangs in the air on a climbing harness on stage right, providing a spider-like presence to the main action and moving in concert with the voice-over monologues.

We follow Persephone through her signing up at the "Camille Paglia Workshop Weekend for the Shirley Maclaine Package" and her speaking in tongues to her "Inner Tramp." A

channeling of a raging "Sheila of the Underworld" leads her to some "anger issues to work through," and a confrontation with her abductor-uncle: "Hades, you popped the tire on my chariot of fire!"

The much-maligned Pomegranate (fruit of the womb) is rightfully placed in context; "A Pomegranate is about life, birth, fertility - not nuptial hell!"

Homer comes under fire with this interesting question: "If a woman falls in the forest and Homer is the only one to document it, does she fall freely?" And lastly, the interspersed scenes of Persephone with her analyst are summed up with the vehement accusation that every sensitive woman has wanted to make: "You couldn't handle my power! You're a freaking fraud, Freud!"

The transformation of the ditzzy blonde bombshell with high voice and low self-esteem, incapacitated and inarticulate, to the beyond-plain, dynamic, fully realized woman is satisfyingly virtuosic. The ending note is one of celebration, paganistic reclamation and new-found confidence: "Fall is about renewal...you still have to land and start again - the fall is actually the beginning."

With Persephone's final affirmation that she is going to "keep on falling every year" and a last tableau of another leap off Mount Olympus, the Quintessential Fallen Woman turns the idea of fallen women on its ear. Even Mother Demeter has tempered her anger at the world somewhat, what with evergreens - symbol of mom's acceptance.

Mariette Sluyter is an experienced actor who wanted to create new work with cutting-edge originality rather than rely on the previously tried and true. Experience with theatre in Indonesia helped fuel her drive to co-found Spinstergirl Productions in Calgary and to help her believe she could write and perform something in a poetic form.

Judging from "Fall of the Pomegranate", her second play, Sluyter has a sharp talent for presenting contemporary issues with refreshing and lively approaches to mythology and "herstory."

Hanrahan's direction and excel-

lent use of a single item of furniture, a chaise lounge that becomes bed, analyst's couch and cliff face, is superbly deft.

Saucy humour is plainly one of this company's strength's in presenting the stages of Persephone.

"Women have to take a similar journey," Sluyter said in an interview. "In Persephone's case it's a little exaggerated - I never wear gold lame," she adds. ❄

Book Reviews

"The Cup of Mari Anu"

by Yvonne Owens

illustrated by Kevan Lane Miller

Horned Owl Publishing

34 pages, 6 colour illustrations

\$12.95

Reviewed by Michela Scheuerman

As I was reading Yvonne Owens' story, *The Cup of Mari Anu*, I realized that this could be the kind of book which becomes a milestone in a child's life - one of those stories like we all have tucked away among our childhood memories, that one cherishes and will always recall as a safe place, magical and full of warmth.

Owens' narrative, which is very clear and "child-friendly," while retaining the elegance and flow of adult choice fiction, harmonizes perfectly with the colourful, rounded and captivating illustrations by Californian artist Kevan Lane Miller.

Together, word and image conspire to transport the reader in a wondrous mythological past full of beauty, and the spiritual wisdom of the ancient world.

The story begins in the Middle East and centres around the character of LuSin, a mute little girl who becomes the spiritual beacon of her nomadic desert tribe.

LuSin is initiated into the mysteries of womanhood, of life, of death and of rebirth, by the onset of menstruation. She embarks on a journey which takes her to Northern Europe, back home and away again, in a quest for wholeness of Self, and of her people's collective Self.

In *The Cup of Mari Anu*, the fact alone that a mute little girl becomes the guide and the Voice for her tribe empowers all children, not just girls. Through LuSin, children stand out as individuals who are able to transform themselves and their reality, by the power of their will and of their actions.

The story is full of dreams, prophecy, enchantment and clever metaphors which lead to the discovery and the reverence of the feminine essence in everyone. Owens successfully combines skilful writing, bursting with images, with careful but subtle historical, anthropological and geographical research - and her own spiritual contribution to the story as a Woman, and as a Witch.

You will find that *The Cup of Mari Anu*, as a whole experience of narrative and art, can take your child (and yourself) into a realm of wonder and loveliness, while nourishing both your souls with primal wisdom and a sense of centredness that cannot be otherwise taught. ❄

"The Pagan Path"

by Janet and Stewart Farrar,
and Gavin Bone

Phoenix Publishing Inc.,
1995 \$17.95 241 pages

Reviewed by Yvonne Owens

This is an excellent book, beautifully written and meticulously thorough. It presents a clear picture of history, mythology, magical practices, philosophy, ethics, magic and cultural anthropology. And the clear picture on the cover is a photo taken by our own managing editor, John Threlfall.

In *The Pagan Path*, the Farrars combine their voices with that of Gavin Bone. The result is a seamless blend of fact, theory and informed conclusions. Bone's style of conjecture and reflection is consistent with the progressive and open-minded approach I've come to expect from the Farrars. Bone expands upon the good grace and generosity of spirit which is traditional Farrar fare, creating a lively and engaging, phenomenally well-researched body of findings.

I remember the survey questionnaire the Farrars handed out to everyone they encountered during their tour of North America in 1990. It was a comprehensive and accessible interview, designed specifically for those already upon the "Pagan Path." The questions were intelligent, respectful and honouring of personal and traditional idiosyncracies. That tone of tolerance is carried out throughout *The Pagan Path*, invoking the sensation of belonging to some great, sprawling, mostly functional family. We are interconnected, in spite of our many differences.

Indeed, I met many people and groups I know in the pages of *The Pagan Path*. Over twenty issues of contemporary significance are addressed in what amounts to a sociology of Paganism worldwide. The tribal nexus of Pagan practitioners does (it would appear) share some basic ideals. The Farrars' and Bone's lovingly compiled evidence of this is grounding in itself, centering us in our diverse unity.

The implications of our developing identity as a group are reassuring. It seems we do have a sound ethical structure, a cohesive cultural base, and a viable philosophical model. We will survive as an ideology, living beautifully upon the Earth, spreading branches into the twenty-first century and bearing magical fruit. We will continue long after other, more nihilistic systems of beliefs have given up the ghost. The inherent, diverse logic of our "Rainbow of Paths" will lead us to this eventuality, whilst sparing us the boredom and conformity of Utopia. All is well with the world. Thank you, Janet and Stewart Farrar and Gavin Bone, for this healing vision of our shared destiny.

Besides offering this particularly therapeutic idea, *The Pagan Path* is an excellent reference and source book. ❧

"The Kitchen Witch's Cookbook"

by Patricia Telesco
Llewellyn Publications, 1995
\$16.96 US, \$23.50 CAN 369 pages

"A Witch's Brew"

by Patricia Telesco
Llewellyn Publications, 1995
\$16.96 US, \$25.50 CAN 269 pages

Reviewed by Yvonne Owens

What a gorgeous set of books! *A Kitchen Witch's Cookbook* is a passionate display of foodlore and magical cuisine, lavishly presented. There have been such works of culinary magic published in the past, but never on so grand a scale. The pages of the book are beautifully organised and designed, with a folksy, Victorian look. This makes sense; Patricia Telesco is the author of *A Victoria Grimoire* and *The Victoria Flower Oracle* (as well as *The Urban Pagan*, and the upcoming *Folkways*).

The 300-plus recipes are clearly laid out, seasoned here and there with epicurean nuggets such as, "The discovery of a new dish does more for the happiness of mankind than the discovery of a star." One must certainly admit the truth of that.

A lot of love went into this collection of recipes and tasty wisdom, garnered from many ethnic traditions of food preparation. (The book is dedicated to Gaia, in memory of Scott Cunningham.) History, aesthetics, contextual background and symbolic correspondences are supplied for enchanting menus and recipes. The acts of preparing and serving food are declared magical and become so, reclaiming the art of cooking from mere function and restoring to it a meaningful aesthetic, a ritual quality and an ideology to boot. According to Patricia,

"Each meal can become a magical escapade, brimming with innovation, insight, and intuition."

I tried out some of the recipes for "visionary vegetables." The results were delicate, subtle, delicious and pleasingly exotic (like Babylonian "Brussels in Spice"). The "Witch's Dishes" include "Sweltering Stew."

Just exactly what is a "Witch's Cookbook" anyway? How does it differ from any other kind of cookbook--I mean, substantively? For one thing, it restores cooking to its ancient place, central to the magic of the hearth, feeding the eye and esoteric intellect, as well as body and soul.

A Witch's Brew does the same for beverages. With recipes for "Divination Draught," "Metamorphosis Punch," and "Black Currant Compassion," this book amply equips the Sabbat hostess or host for transporting revels. Patricia has gathered 236 recipes for both alcoholic and non-alcoholic "potions." The "magical attributes" and "variations" are listed for all. Among the gems of wisdom quoted under "Tonics" is my favourite, by William James:

"Genius, in truth, means little more than the faculty of perceiving in an unhabitual way." ❧

"The Frog, The Prince and the Problem of Men"

by Geoff Dench

Neanderthal Books, 1994
\$12.95 (CAN) 251 pgs.

Reviewed by Yvonne Owens

This book is such a perfect product of the feminist backlash that I was inspired to write an essay on the subject. Stay tuned to these pages, in some future issue, for my analysis of a regressive, social phenomenon. (Dench is violently opposed to the ordination of female clergy.) My analysis of this book is that it is essentially worthless, (unless you count the entertainment value of paranoia and unwitting humour). ❧

Music Reviews



"Season of Holly"

by Leanan Sidhe. Cassette, 60 minutes, \$11.95.

Reviewed by Rob Von Rudloff

This is the premiere release from duet Shelagh Mason-Ebenal (flute and recorders) and Naomi Sharon Lester (non-pedal harp, recorder and Tibetan bells), with guest artist Yvonne Owens (vocals and percussion). There are 17 pieces of Celtic and other early European yuletide folk music, going back to the 13th century C.E. The musicians have researched their music well, and give snippets of historical information on most of the songs; they probably could have written a lot more, but there are space limitations on cassette foldouts. Included also are

two songs composed by Lester; drawing upon old songs and themes, these fit in very well.

Leanan Sidhe emphasise instrumentation. The recorders and harp produce a rich medieval feel, conveying the acoustics and playing style that one might associate with a banquet or small concert hall. Unfortunately, while the recording quality for the instruments is quite good, that for the vocals is somehow lacking: having heard Owens sing on stage a few years ago, I think this tape doesn't do full justice to the richness and clarity of her voice.

This tape does not fit into the usual category of "Pagan music," as most of the songs are recognisable foremost as "Christmas carols" and the lyrics tend to emphasise Christian themes. This, of course, is the case for most traditional music associated with Yule. The artwork (a stunning yet peaceful work by Miles Lowry) and liner notes similarly do not betray the leanings of the musicians. As such, it certainly would make a good present for the non-Pagans in your family. However, as so many elements of Christmas are Pagan borrowings anyway, fans of traditional music as played either by period-instrument ensembles or folk groups can certainly appreciate this recording as a very enjoyable recovery of Pagan folk music.

For ordering or booking information, write: Leanan Sidhe, c/o box 8543, Victoria, B.C. V8W 3S2. ☽



Rob Von Rudloff is a musician, with a background in classical music. He holds a M.Sc in Physics and a M.A in Classical Studies. Rob was a co-producer of Hecate's Loom for many years and now acts as consulting advisor.

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Temple of the Lady

Ongoing public Sabbat celebrations and family picnics in Victoria and the Lower Mainland. Contact: (604) 595-6348.

Monthly Lecture Series

First Tuesday of every month in Victoria. Various topics and speakers: dreamwork, geomancy, astrology, etc. By donation. Contact: Triple Spiral Metaphysical, #3 - 106 Fan Tan Alley, Victoria, B.C.; (604) 380-7212.

Alberta

Covenant of the Gaia Church of Alberta

Ongoing circles and classes in Calgary presented by various groups. Contact: C.G.C.A., Box 1742, Station M, Calgary AB T2P 2L7; or Sandy, (403) 283-5719.

Saskatchewan

Saskatoon Pagan Fellowship

Bi-weekly "Coffee Cauldrons." All Pagan paths and traditions are welcome. Contact: (306) 242-0983.

Ontario

Wiccan Church of Canada

Ongoing classes, coffee-houses, weekly and sabbat circles. Toronto: (416) 781-2123; Ottawa: (613) 231-4138; Hamilton: (905) 523-8433.

Toronto Temple of the Wiccan Grove

Ongoing public circles. Contact: Dea, (416) 636-0934.

Womynspirit Festival

October 27-29, 1995. The Womynspirit Festival celebrates the artistic and creative aspects of womyn's culture, spirituality and healing. Womyn's circles, poets, storytellers, writers, musicians, singers, dancers, artists, therapists, bodyworkers, and others, are invited to offer performances, readings, or workshops in order to share their work. There will be some time for spontaneous

performances/workshops/drumming. The retreat is located at the Ecology Retreat Centre of Hockley Valley surrounded by 200 acres of natural forest. Sacred ceremony every evening and Samhain ritual Saturday night. Costs: \$190-100. Registration deadline Sept. 15, 1995. For more information contact Sherril (416) 597-6829 or Kate (416) 630-0660. Write: Womynspirit Festival Collective, 390 Harvie Ave, Toronto, Ontario, M6E 4L8.

California

Bay Area Pagan Assemblies

Ongoing events. Contact: (510) 656-GAIA.

NROOGD

Ongoing public celebrations. Contact: NROOGD, Box 360607, Milpitas, CA 95035.

Delaware

Between the Worlds: A Grand Magickal Congress

October 24-27, 1996. Convocation by The Assembly of The Sacred Wheel to build dialogue and foster interconnections between magickal Traditions and Paths. To be held at the downtown Holiday Inn, Wilmington, Delaware. Selena Fox to be among the guest speakers. Contact: Ivo Dominguez, Jr, Rural Route 2, Box 511-G, Georgetown, Delaware, 19947, USA. Phone/FAX: (302) 855-9422. Email: wicawheel@aol.com

Florida

AutumnMeet '95

November 9-12, 1995. AutumnMeet '95 to be held at Jacksonville, Florida. For more information contact: AutumnMeet '95, c/o LifeSpring Gathering, 2190 Traymore Road, Jacksonville, FL, 32205. PH: (904) 396-9637, FAX: (904) 399-1964.

Winter Lights Festival & Holiday Sale

December 2, 1995. Winter Lights Festival to be held in Citra, Florida. For more information contact: Croness' Cradle Conserve, P.O. Box 1207, Citra, FL, 32113. PH: (904) 595-3377.

continued . . .

Pennsylvania

Philadelphia Pagan Meet

November 17, 1995. Philadelphia Pagan Meet to be held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. An evening with Selena Fox & Dr. Dennis Carpenter, includes Urban Paganism workshop and ritual. To receive more information and to reserve space contact: Roxanne at (215) 425-7880 - leave your name, address and phone number.

Yule Festival

December 16, 1995. Yule Festival at Circle Sanctuary in southwestern Wisconsin. Events to include Yule log ritual in the stone circle, Yule tree decoration, magickal gift exchange, workshop, potluck feast, etc. Bring at least 3 cans of food for Circle's annual charity food drive. Children welcome. Pre-registration required. Contact: Circle, P.O. Box 219, Mt. Horeb, WI, 53572. Ph: (608) 924-2216; FAX (608) 924-5961.

Pagan Spirit Gathering

June 16-23, 1996. Pagan Spirit Gathering in southwestern Wisconsin. Celebration of summer Solstice and Pagan culture. Flyer with additional information available Spring 1996. Contact: Circle, P.O. Box 219, Mt. Horeb, WI, 53572. PH: (608) 924-5961.

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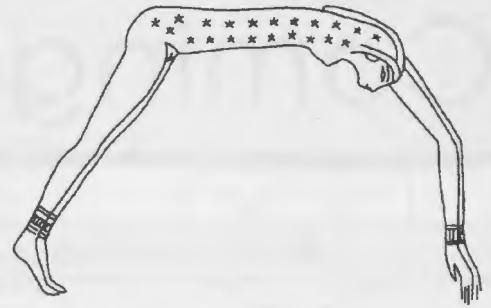
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Black Madonna Metaphysical, Ariel O'Sullivan, Wiccan Priestess, is offering classes in Trance and Divination. Contact her at: Triple Spiral Books, #106 - 3 Fan Tan Alley, Victoria, BC. Ph: 380-7212.

VILJA, Baltic Tradition, seeks contact with individuals and/or groups, traditions from eastern and northern Europe for mutual exchange and fellowship. Write to: Romuva/Canada, P.O. Box 232, Station D, Etobicoke, Ontario, M9A 4X2. Would also like to make contact with Pagans living in the west end of Toronto. Ph: (416) 237-9831.

Ritual Dance and movement classes are on-going in the Victoria area. For more information, please contact Skywalker, P.O. Box 40018, 905 Broughton St., Victoria, BC, V8W 3P9.

Alison Skelton is available for **Tarot readings** through Triple Spiral Metaphysical, #106 - 3 Fan Tan Alley, Victoria, BC. Ph: 380-7212.

"Mother is the name of God on the lips of children everywhere...". The new future of the Old Faith lies within and belongs to our children growing up with pagan values. As parents, we ultimately serve our Gods by passing their ways on to our offspring. A new **Pagan Parents Network** is forming, and we would love to hear ideas about what children's services are required/available within the pagan community. Examples: pagan daycare, toy/clothing exchange, children's Sabbat festivals, antifamation/public information, babysitting co-op, ad infinitum. Let us know what you want to see. Enquiries and comments are welcome at: Pagan Parents Network, c/o Teakan, #140 - 7231 Scott Road, Delta, BC, V4C 6P5.

Elizabeth Connolly is offering sessions in **Foundational Therapies** which focus on experiential process and magical counselling to facilitate healing. She may be contacted

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The wonderful and surprisingly large community in and about **McDonalds Corners** serves the Ottawa-Montreal region and offers open circles, Mini-Fest, workshops and referrals. Contact: Gina Ellis at RR1, McDonalds Corners ON K0G 1M0 (613) 278-2688.

I am a young womyn, recently turned **Pagan**. I am hungry for more knowledge and seeking other Pagans in the London, Ontario area that would enjoy teaching, guiding, and enlightening me, as well as sharing knowledge, experiences and friendships. Write to: Brooke Hutton, 157 Broughdale Ave, London, Ontario, N6A 2K6.

I am new to **Wicca** and would like to correspond with Pagans from anywhere and of any tradition. Please don't be shy, contacts are not easy to make. Angeline Waldo, #3580 Elliott Rd, M2C3, Westbank, BC, V4T 1N9.

Interested in contacting others in the Portland area who are **researching their Lithuania heritage**. Contact Marianne Barisonek, 10790 NW Copeland St., Portland, OR, 97229. Ph: (503) 641-2729. E-mail Marianne Barisonek at pdxm/1, mentorg.com.

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Solitary pagan and **student of mythology/folklore** seeks correspondence with persons of similar interest. Ecology, philosophies of life, pagan living in a Judeo-

This is a free, non-commercial listing of groups and individuals who offer services or seek contacts/information in the Pagan community. Want to be listed? Send your name, address and/or phone number and other information (services, media contact, networking, etc.)

Christian society. Contact: Charles Spratling, #170334, 1790 E. Parnall Rd., Jackson, MI, 49201.

Sky Ranch is open women's land in the Lakes District of British Columbia. Women and children visitors are welcome; to help with the farm, live in harmony with the wilderness, and celebrate our Pagan spirituality. I am a Wiccan, lesbian, part-time farmer, always interested in Pagan contacts. Judith Quinlan, C4 Site 20, RR#2, Burns Lake, BC, V0J 1E0. (604) 694-3738

Kathryn Millar: Wiccan Priestess and Artist. Classes, workshops and lectures. Monthly column on Wicca in *The Nanaimo Times*. Media contact, networking, ritual art and objects, counselling services, public Solstice Gatherings, Site 16, C-26, Gabriola Island, BC, V0R 1X0; e-mail Millark@mala.bc.ca

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continued . . .

Tammy Coxen requests help from the Pagan and Wiccan community that reads *Hecate's Loom*. She is putting together a Pagan Cookbook and is collecting Sabbat Recipes, Pagan artwork, and anecdotes, and information that you would like to share about your Path or group: Tammy Coxen, 3-128 Central Ave., London, ON, N6A 1M5.

Celtic Wita coven accepting applications for membership. For information: T.D.M., 1208 E. Grove Ave., Rantoul, IL, 61866. Rantoul, IL area.

Of interest to Pagans who would enjoy receiving a **newsletter in Finnish**. The cost is \$8 US for 2 issues with the next issue out in October. For more information write: Tulikeha, PPL, c/o Kivikonkaari 17 A7, 00940, Helsinki, Finland.

The Ancient Religions Society is a student run religious organization focusing on the diversity of Earth-based religions. We provide educational information, networking, and social contacts for pagans, neopagans, Wiccans, and other non-mainstream religions. We are not a group out to convert people; rather, we want to give interested people a chance to learn more about these

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Young, uninitiated pagan **seeking teacher/circle** and new friends in the Fergus Ontario area. I would love to get acquainted with any and all pagans in Wellington County. Please write Jen Steele at 525 St. David Street, South Fergus, Ontario, N1M 2P9.



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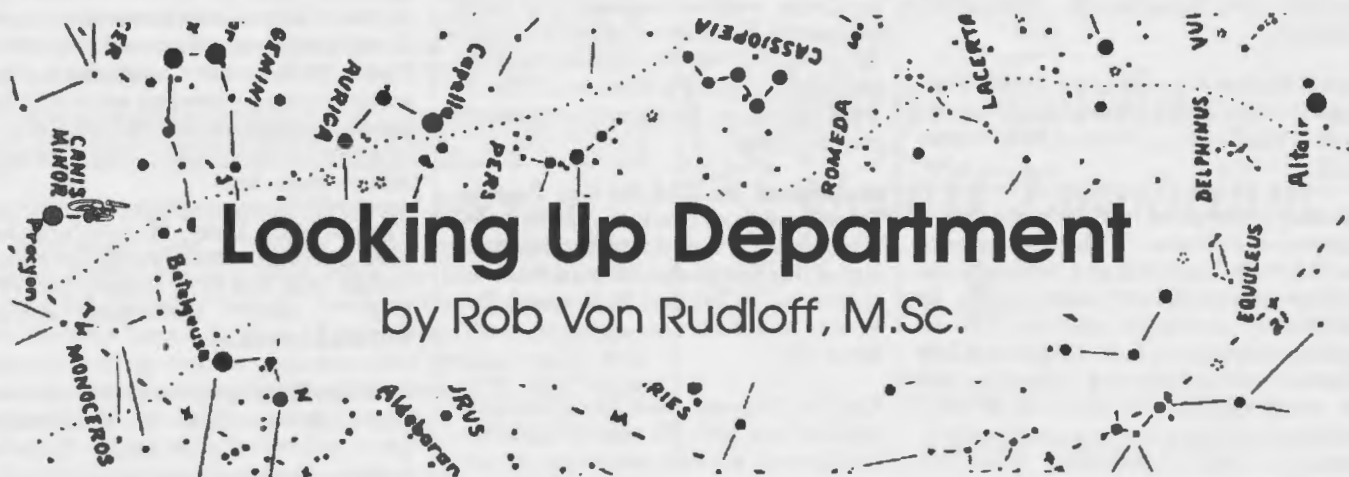
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Full Moon	Nov 6, 7	23 20	02 20	New Moon	Jan 20	04 51	07 51
New Moon	Nov 22	07 43	10 43	Full Moon	Feb 4	07 58	10 58
Full Moon	Dec 6	17 27	20 27	New Moon	Feb 18	15 30	18 30
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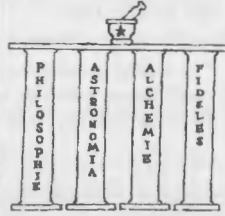
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Full Moon Fever

A Column
by John Threlfall

When I sat down to write this column, I found myself faced with a dilemma: do I follow my usual fall format and write something warm and witty about my yearly sojourn in northern B.C., or do I follow the theme of this issue and try to make some bold statement about myself "being a Witch"? Faced with such a conundrum, I took the truly Canadian way out- I made some tea, vacillated wildly and finally decided to avoid a decision and write about both.

Being a Witch means being myself, in whatever circumstance or location I happen to find myself. There is no separation between me as a person in the real world and me as a Witch in circle. Nowhere is this more obvious than the past three summers I have spent working in Wells, a tiny little town about ten hours north of Vancouver. How tiny? You have, of course, heard of "ghost towns"? Let me tell you, Wells isn't even a "creepy feeling town".

Part of being myself in Wells means being the local Witch. While the rest of the summer employees are known as students, actors or restaurant workers, my formal job appellation always comes second to my sensational "nom de dieu"- the Witch. So part of my task every summer, apart from interpreting 1870's history to the tourists, is to interpret modern Wicca to the locals. Who I am, how I behave and what I say to a large part defines their perception of a modern Witch. As a result, some of the best PR work I do is not in the newspapers, on television or on the radio, but in merely getting to know people and letting them see that there is nothing terribly strange about myself, and consequently my religion.

The idea that each of us is responsible for our own PR-our behaviour as people reflects our image as Witches- is something that most of us are taught during our formal training, or that we pick up along the way. That is why personal responsibility is such an essential part of the Craft; we each are responsible to the greater Wiccan community for proving that ours is a non-threatening faith followed by normal people. This kind of subconscious representation is not something that should only be left to the "experts" or elders or appointed spokespersons. It is something for which every Witch is responsible.

We are the Craft, each of us, every hour of every day, not only when we step into circle or call the Goddess. Like the saying goes, "As within, so without"; ultimately, who you are as a person is more important than how well you invoke.

Ethics are not something that can be put on with your robes (or as your clothes come off, as the case may be), then cast aside after the ritual. Our lives as Witches extend beyond the circle, onto the streets of our towns, to the doors of our neighbours and into the homes of our friends.

But back to Wells. This summer, for the first time, I happily found that I was no longer the token Witch- defying the statistical odds, there were three other Wiccans who found their way to that obscure corner of the province. We dubbed ourselves the "Wet Witches of Wells" (or "Team W for short), in honour of the 87 straight days of rain that kept my gumboots soggy and the woodstoves burning well into August (alas, however, The Tale of Team W must be left for another issue, as it doesn't really fit into the matter at hand). I found that it was only because of the lack of separation between my church and my state of mind that Team W met and did not become an "almost was" experience.

As it turned out, I was the most experienced member of Team W and as such I found myself in the position of passing on what understanding I have of the ethics, responsibilities, and expected behaviour of a Witch. Perhaps not unexpectedly, I found that there was little separation between what I believed as a person and what I practiced as a Witch. Sadly, however, I could think of no books which outlined the finer points of the ethical responsibilities of the Craft.

Even as I write these words, I am realizing the importance of personal contact in the Craft and why it may be good that everything isn't available in paperback. Perhaps it all comes back to living by example and being a living example of the Craft, both to the curious public and to future Witches. What does being a Witch mean to me? It means being a friend, a lover, a man, an ex-husband, a priest, a son, a brother, an uncle, a godparent, a Canadian, a reader, a writer, a student, a stage manager, a dreamer, a speaker, a listener and a human.

And it means knowing when to say goodbye. Rather than try to wrap everything up in a neat bundle, I'll just say, "This above all, to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man."

I think Shakespeare is probably the only person I'd let close my column for me. Leave it to him to have the last word on being a Witch.

The Cup of Mari Anu

by Yvonne Owens, illustrated by Kevan Lane Miller

Mute from birth, LuSin is sent when still a child to the Temple of Mari Anu to serve as priestess. The people of her tribe consider her "different," not merely because of her silence. Though mute, LuSin understands the language of the desert and its inhabitants. She wanders without fear in the wilderness beyond the village, with her wild dog.

When the most precious relic of the temple is stolen, the sacred spring of the Goddess dries up. The land is cursed with drought and LuSin decides she must lead her people to safety. She embarks upon a quest to retrieve their lost treasure, the Cup of Mari Anu – a magical, silver chalice that had long blessed the People of Mari Anu with water, fertility, beauty and abundance. When LuSin undertakes to restore the blessings of the Cup to her people, many fabulous events befall her on her journey westward to the sea, and beyond.

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Herbal Healing

with Ritual Baths

by Paul V. Beyerl

In working with the four elements as we know them (air, fire, water and earth), there are numerous ways in which to draw upon one or more element with which to promote health and healing. During my training in the 1970's, we were strongly urged to use one method to ensure the absence of colds and other common diseases. This process involved a quick immersion in cold water (usually following one's bath or shower) on a daily basis. Before your flesh shudders, stop and think about the many peoples who go from sauna to snow, or those who sit in the hot tub surrounded by winter's glow. It's not so strange a concept if you can but stop shivering. And yes, I followed this practice and it did seem to make a difference. But as my herbal skills grew, I replaced the cold water (which I usually dumped over my head with a large container) with my holistic herbal philosophy and practices.

Water has been used as a remedy in many ways over many generations. What quickly comes to mind are all of the mineral springs which have drawn countless individuals who maintain that bathing in the waters has helped a long list of conditions. Water cures exist in other forms as well. *Healing with Water* by Jeanne Keller is an excellent text capable of opening one of the elemental forms of healing. Our library copy is a 1968 edition and I'm not certain if it is currently in print, but I have long considered it a most valuable text.¹

There is a less mundane approach which employs water for healing as well: since ancient times people have turned to sacred springs and sacred wells seeking cures for ailments of body, soul and mind. It is with careful

thought that I add water from Lourdes or from the Apollonius Spring in Germany (dedicated to Apollo during the Roman occupation) to my herbal remedies.

For magickal people, one of the more underrated forms of healing is the ritual bath. For many of us a ritual bath is part of our preparation for lunar and Sabbat rituals but, at other times, the bath becomes an expedient shower: something functional for the outer skin of the temple of the self. Considering the quick popularity of aromatherapy, it surprises me that few seem to make the connection of breathing in the molecular magick of the selected herbal remedy while soaking one's body in a luxurious ritual bath. In this sense, the bath itself has become the ritual, not relegated as a prelude to subsequent magick.

This method offers one of the simplest approaches to healing magick with herbes. There are few cautions and less dangers than most forms of herbal healing. In fact, I can think of but two: one is to avoid placing loose herbs in the bath. They tend to cling to the skin when you stand up and can easily clog the drain, requiring a call to a plumber. The other is to avoid any herbes which are toxic and poisonous (e.g. Aconite) and which have a strong recommendation against internal use. A certain amount of the toxins may be absorbed into the skin and, subsequently, into the blood stream. Do not take risks. Apart from these two concerns, there is little to stop you from exploring this art of healing.

How do you avoid the plumber? Many texts, including my own, recommend placing the herbs in a gauze bag or even a tea strainer. I've since turned

to making a strong herbal infusion. It only takes about a cup of liquid and, when thoroughly strained, adding the liquid directly to the bath. One can also use herbal-scented bath preparations such as bubble baths or bath salts but the majority of commercial mixtures contain synthetic scents and artificial colours which are counterproductive to the healing process.

An herb need not be categorized as a "bathing herbe" to be worthy of use. There are myriad herbs which one turns to for internal use. Why not immerse one's self in their natural magick as well? If one is dealing with cancer or with HIV, why not add a cup of birch bark water to your bath? If you are struggling to uplift your spirits, why not bathe with eyebright? There are few herbs I would personally avoid. Even with an herb considered "dangerous" like Aconite, a single, fresh flower floating upon the water's surface is well within safe limits for an adult (thought follow the guidelines when handling the entire plant when gathering the flower).

What transforms a bath into a ritual? There are many possibilities, so many that one's imagination can begin to spill over like a brook. Traditionally, one would add a sprinkle of sea salt to the bath water as well, not wanting to miss the cleansing of body and spirit which priests and priestesses have used since the Age of Aries. (In a pinch, any table salt will do.) There are many ways to bring in the four elements, to ask of the Universe that you learn what is necessary to promote healing; there are infinite ritual forms one can create. Trust your imagination.

What is most important is to avoid the temptation of turning a ritual heal-

ing bath into a long soak with a good book. Recreational reading is not bad, but it does not sustain the focus of your spirit. If you wish to read, focus upon a healing text. We have used *The Child of Light* for nearly fifteen years of healing work within The Rowan Tree Church.² You could adapt passages from *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran or write your own text which calls upon the powers of the Universe. Meditation is another tool at your disposal, working with carefully planned and highly focused healing images.

At the bottom line, you may not attain miracles....but then you may. You are also invoking the magick of the Universe and asking for change. Not only will you have access to the properties of the healing herbs you have selected but you will be working with the magick of transformation and of change as well.

The amount of healing is directly related to the amount of work and the level of mental focus you can maintain. Disciplined focus does not mean that your bath should be void of joy and pleasure. Take time to contemplate the element of water during your planning stages. What does it take to draw upon the energy of water? Take time and do careful research when selecting your herbs. Know them well. Be able to identify their scent and, should you use more than one, to distinguish among them. Explore this art of healing and let me know your results.☘

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¹ Healing with Water, Jeanne Keller, foreword by Sabine Koch, M.D., Award Books, NY and Tandem Books, London, 1968.

² Blessed is the Child of Light, adapted from Dead Sea scrolls. Edited by Rev. Paul Beyerl. \$7.00 plus \$2.50 first class or \$1.50 book rate shipping. Washington residents add 57 cents sales tax. The Rowan Tree Church, P.O. Box 691, Kirkland, WA, 98033.

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Persephone's Descent as Voluntary Transformative Magic

by Ann Lee

Persephone heard the dead wailing. There was no one to receive them and show them the way to the underworld, no one to counsel and guide them. They were lost, bewildered souls. Persephone felt sorry for them. She decided to make it her work to guide the dead down the path into the underworld. She voluntarily became Queen of the Underworld, Ruler of the Land of the Dead. The dead could now go on to their next life. They no longer had to linger as shadows in the Land of the Living.

This is the way it was when the Goddess had her place in the religions of the world. Persephone's descent to the underworld was voluntary. Then the patriarchal religions took over and the myth was changed.

Now, Persephone was peacefully gathering flowers when Hades saw her and lusted after her. He raped her and carried her, kicking and screaming, to the Underworld. She was not the sole ruler but was co-ruler with Hades, the God of the Underworld. She has to spend half of every year there and half of every year in the Land of the Living.

The story of Persephone deals with the land of those who have died physically. However, it also deals with those who undergo the descent to the underworld when they are alive. In life, one

is given opportunities to make this journey voluntarily - to chose to make the descent to hell.

Our culture does not accept this as a rational choice. We are supposed to be happy all the time. If we are not happy at any time, there are drugs to make us so. Being unhappy means that something is wrong. Women are often told by total strangers to smile because it is not acceptable for them not to.

If one chooses not to make the descent to hell voluntarily, one will be carried there against one's will. A major illness or severe depression will be employed to force the journey to begin. In the past, women would "take to their beds" and pull up the covers. Their husband and children would not disturb them until they had made their journey and voluntarily returned.

It is our choice, we can follow Persephone of our own volition or be taken against our will.☘

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