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The Quarterly Journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin

Summer 2005 ~ Issue No. 29



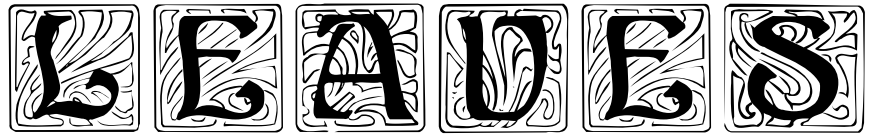


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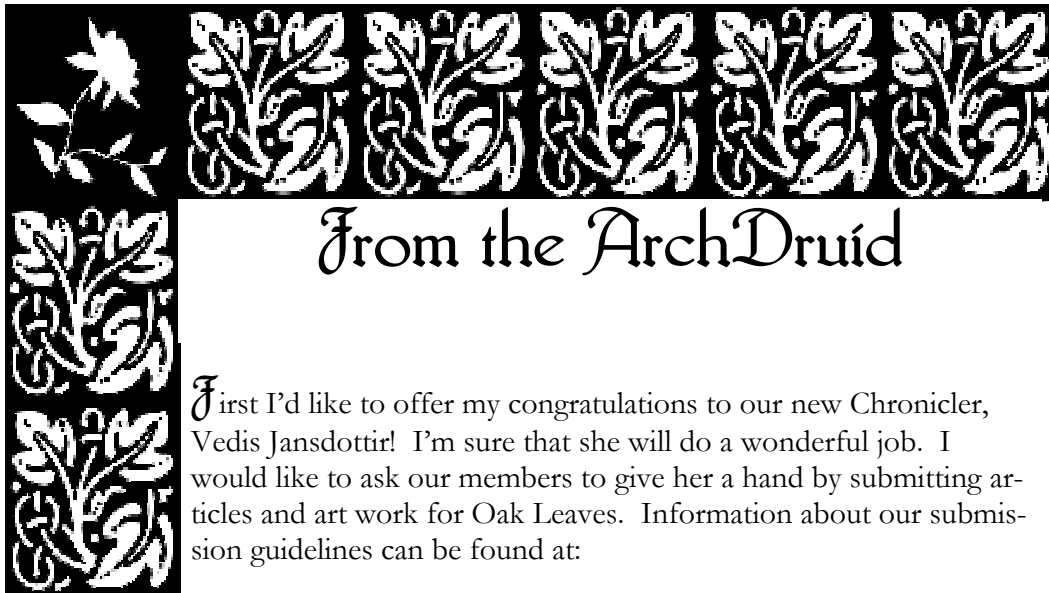
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ited.



From the ArchDruid

First I'd like to offer my congratulations to our new Chronicler, Vedis Jansdottir! I'm sure that she will do a wonderful job. I would like to ask our members to give her a hand by submitting articles and art work for Oak Leaves. Information about our submission guidelines can be found at:

<<http://www.adf.org/articles/publications/submissions.html>>

Final work has been completed on my book for Solitary Druids and it should be in the stores this spring. I feel that this book will be a big help to anyone on a solitary path and to people new to Druidry. This winter, I am also finishing up work on a card-based divination system based on one of the Etruscan / Roman methods of divination, haruspicy.

At the beginning of February, I visited with White Birch Protogrove in Vermont and had a chance to meet some of the wonderful people there. It is always refreshing to be able to meet with our members and it continually reinforces to me how strong our community is.

At the time this column is written, mid-February, ADF has 938 members and 47 groves and protogroves and our numbers are still growing at a steady rate. I believe that this is a good sign of things to come as we move into the warmer part of the year.

May the Kindreds bless you all!

Skip Ellison

Archdruid



The Story of Nekter

(A Proto-Indo-European Tale)

By Ceisiwr Serith

Dramatis Personae:

Dyéus Ptér: “Shining Sky Father.” The chief Proto-Indo-European god. (Diwós Patrós is the possessive form.) (Jupiter, Zeus, Dyaus Pitar, Dievas.)

Perkwúnos. “The Striker.” The Proto-Indo-European thunder-god. (Lugh, Thor, Mars, Herakles, Indra.)

Xákwōm Népōt. “Népōt of the Living Waters.” “Népōt” doesn’t translate well. It can be the son of a daughter, or the son of a sister; that is, the son of the nearest female relative. (Nechtan, Neptune, Apam Napat.)

Other things:

Nekter. “Overcomer of Death.” (The Mead of Inspiration, Nectar, Soma.)

Xartus. “The Right Pattern.” The Law of the Cosmos (Wyrd, Rta.)

(For how to pronounce Proto-Indo-European, see www.ceisiwrserith.com.)

Sukludhi moi.

Nu spelnom Nektrós wéryemi.

[Here me well:

I am telling the story of Nekter.]

The Outsiders held the Nekter in their well of Chaos.
But it didn’t belong there.

Yes, Nekter is Chaos, is fire, is water,
is a burning which can overthrow the Cosmos,
destroying men
destroying the gods
destroying even the Xartus.

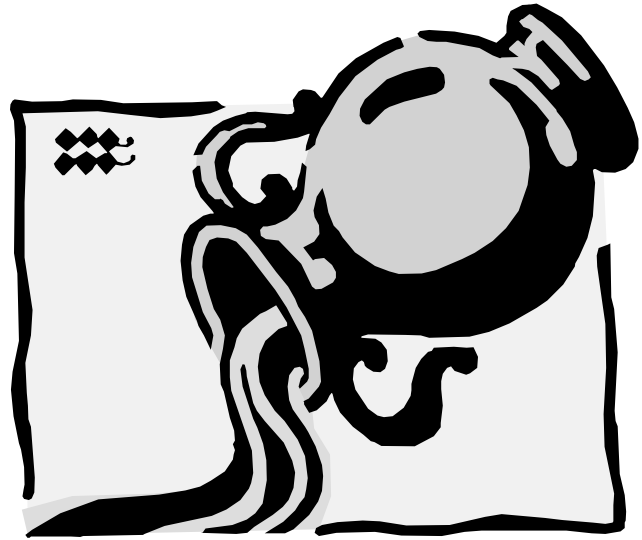
But that is why it is wrong for the Outsiders to hold it
in their untamed land.

The Nekter belongs in the divine realm.

It belongs in the land of the gods.

The gods know how to use it.

In their hands the Nekter supports the Xartus
protecting not only the Cosmos of the gods
but the Chaos of the Outsiders.



That is why the Nekter *really* belonged to the gods.
The Outsiders were thieves.

It wasn’t right for them to have it
and they wouldn’t give the Nekter up.
Dyéus Ptér, who knows the Xartus, knew the Nekter
had to be saved,
and he, the one who sees all things, knew what to do.
The Knowing One called to Perkwúnos and told him
to seize the Nekter.

Perkwúnos picked up his *wagros*.

He knew how to deal with snakes.

The killer of the great snakes was not afraid.

Perkwúnos set out, accompanied by the eagle of Di-
wós Patrós.

To the land of the Outsiders, he went.

Into the heart of Chaos, he went.

He went to overcome the Outsiders and seize from
them the Nekter.

The Outsiders came out from behind their walls,
made arrogant by their knowing of the Nekter.

They set their snares,
which trap the unknowing.

He raised his *wagros*,
which strikes without error.

Yudbontsk^{ve} ként.

[And the battle began.]

Perkwúnos fought well and bravely, but he had no
Nekter so he was not strong.

The Outsiders had Nekter, and they *were* strong.

Perkwúnos could fight the Outsiders but without the

strength of the Nekter he couldn't win.
 The Outsiders could fight Perk^wúnos but without his
magros they couldn't win.
 Back and forth went the battle,
 now this one winning, now that,
 Perk^wúnos slowly leading the Snakes from their for-
 tresses.
 And while the battle raged, the eagle flew to the Nek-
 ter,
 which lay unguarded by the Outsiders who were
 fighting far from their walls.
 He drank it all, emptying its container, and flew back
 to the gods,
 Perk^wúnos riding between its wings,
 behind its golden-eyed head, filled with Nekter.
 With their many eyes, the Outsiders saw this, and fol-
 lowed in rage.
 Fast the eagle flew, but the Outsiders drew near.
 Closely pursued, the eagle let a drop of Nekter fall
 from his mighty beak.
 The Outsiders, seeing it fall,
 as if a piece of the Father's eye had broken off,
 stopped to drink it.
 Fools! For a drop they would have let the whole be
 lost.
 While they were stopping, fighting over that small
 drop,
 the eagle flew fast away from them.
 The Outsiders, strengthened by even so small a drop,
 ran even faster after him.
 The eagle let another drop fall.
 Again the fools stopped to drink,
 vying in disorder to see who would win the largest
 share,
 and again the eagle flew on,
 and again the Outsiders resumed the chase,
 faster than before.
 They were getting closer with each beat of the eagle's
 wings.
 So opening that beak which burned from the mystery
 within,
 the eagle let another drop fall.
 Again they stopped, the foolish Snakes,
 thinking perhaps that with this last drop they would
 become fast enough to catch the eagle.
 But they were too late.
 The eagle had reached the tree, and now flew high up
 to the top,
 through Cosmos where Chaos can not go if the gods
 are strengthened with Nekter.
 It flew to its master, and Dyéus Pté:r received the

Nekter,
 the eagle pouring it into the Shining Sky's cup.
 Now the other gods clustered around, wondering what to
 do.
 They wanted the Nekter, but they feared this piece of
 Chaos among them:
 Would it burn even them,
 would it burn even that Tree,
 and the Cosmos dissolve in the flames of Chaos?
 Dyéus Pté:r feared it too, but he is wise.
 He gave the Nekter to Xák^wōm Népōt to guard.
 Xák^wōm Népōt put the Nekter at the base of the tree,
 where the fire of sacrifice burns in the waters of purifica-
 tion,
 and set about it cupbearers, pure themselves, of unsullied
 power.
 Watching well, they keep it safe, he and them;
 it from others,
 and others from it.
 There at the nexus between Chaos and Cosmos, the Nek-
 ter is kept,
 safe from those who must not drink it,
 lacking purity
 or strength
 or wisdom.
 But they offer their cups,
 to the brim with Nekter,
 to those with the right to drink it:
 May we be such.



Discordia's Apple

By Michael J Dangler

Sometimes, we're privileged to see something beyond our own experience. Discordians call this "Illumination", and it is the bread and butter of Discordianism.

The myth of the Apple of Discord in the Illiad is understood by Discordians in a rather esoteric manner. The Apple does not attract attention merely because it is inscribed "*Kallisti*" ("For the Prettiest"), but also because it is a sort of manifest picture of the desires of the person who gazes into it. Athena, Aphrodite, and Hera were not fighting over the Apple, but they were fighting over what they thought the Apple offered.

Athena likely saw military victory within the apple, while Hera saw the raw power that wealth can buy over her husband and the other gods. Aphrodite likely saw the perfection of her sexuality and the power that gave her over all things. We can see that the deities offered to grant each of these things to Paris if he chose in their favour.

The choice to give the Apple to Aphrodite shows that Paris' desires were in line with hers, and he was able to achieve the desire promised by the Apple. That Apple is not some illusory dream, nor is it a certain future: it is the embodiment of our desire, and it can teach us much about ourselves.

When Eris presents us with the Apple, as She does for us all from time to time, what do we see? In it, we always see our most basic desires, the things we want most. We often don't understand the reflection in the Apple: it's a new, strangely familiar reflection of what we are now. Those who want power may see themselves standing at the top of a dais, looking down upon numerous vassals. Those who seek the simple life may see themselves alone in a library, reading Shakespeare. Each person will see something unique and perfect.

The Apple does not offer a free look, though. Illumination can take hold of us, dragging us down into the quagmire of bliss and loss. To stare into it too long can cause longing and forgetfulness. A person could become lost in the beauty and grandeur that is their re-

lection and live forever with that myth.

Eris is not trying to subvert our will, nor is She trying to force us to become lost. She is merely showing us what we can achieve if we make the correct choices in life. Paris received what he truly desired by giving up the Apple. His eventual loss of that desired end could be attributed to his inability to see a better route to achieve his aim.

Those things seen in the Apple are not guaranteed, but are rather possibilities if we make the right choices. Shadows of those choices can sometimes be seen in the reflections that the Apple provides, and these clues often include double meanings and open interpretations.

I've looked into the apple more than once. It's difficult to describe exactly how it occurs: it's not some spur of the moment visualization of an Apple, or even of Eris Herself; instead, it's more of the classic literary epiphany. I'll be sitting and talking with someone, or working, or daydreaming, or watching TV, and there will be a sudden shift in my consciousness. I'm suddenly seeing how the world could be different if I would take the steps needed to create my desires.

Over the years I've seen several desires in this manner. I learned a very long time ago that we shouldn't dwell on these things, and so far I've been safe from becoming trapped inside the Apple. Sometimes the visions are powerful, though. Occasionally, I have to remember that I don't want certain things, really. My desires of the moment are not the desires I will have in the future, and I have to separate the different desires out mentally.

Eris is not out to trick us. The Apple shows us nothing that we didn't know before, but it shows our desires to us more clearly. These are attainable desires, if you know how to get them. A devotee of Eris has the option of asking, too.





The Shining Ones

On the Benefits of Loki

By Steph Gooch

Common sense would tell the prudent person to avoid dangerous situations, and therefore many folks avoid the Outdwellers out of respect for their inherent danger. Indeed, the public tends to demonize these entities, just as the “village with their pitchforks” would cast any folks who displayed such characteristics out of their ranks in fear of the harm they might wreak. The fabled witch of *Snow White* embodies the collective fear, with her poisoned apples and self-serving intent on destroying anyone who stands in her way.

However, as we Pagans are well aware, the “witch” is not necessarily an evil person, and we struggle daily against that stereotype so ingrained in our larger culture. The Wiccan Rede (“An it harm none, do what ye will”), in tacit recognition of the problem, expressly forbids its followers from engaging in destructive acts. In ADF, too, serious attention in our national charter is paid to forbidding acts that are seen by cultural convention as anathema (such as blood sacrifice, even though our ancestors all over the world did practice it). It is the common consensus, regardless of varying personal views on the subject, that such a stance is simply prudent and wise within the context of our modern world (to which the author agrees).

Since we Pagans are outdwellers ourselves in the modern world, perhaps we should examine the Outdweller archetype more closely, to see whether our own prejudices are placing stereotypical obstacles in the path of greater understanding of the world around us. While there are many examples in different pantheons (e.g. Tyche, Eris, Shiva, etc.), the Loki’s Song offers some intriguing insight on the character of Loki, an outdweller from the Norse pantheon:

Loki’s Song — by Mikal Hrafspa (Mikal the Ram)

(from <http://www.chivalry.com/cantaria/lyrics/loki.html>)

Recordings of this song are available online:

<http://www.chivalry.com/cantaria/sounds/loki.mp3>



The usual characterization of Loki (as a bad trickster) are fully acknowledged in the song and then countered by the speaker’s interpretation of his acts. Both interpretations can be seen side by side and evaluated by the listener. The imagery is shocking to most modern ears. One can see a child brutally born under (what we see as) horrific circumstances (noted in the song as “laid beside my mother’s corpse/my toys the ravens of the field/my lullabies the screams of horse”), which is countered immediately by the good that child brought to humans, with fire’s warmth and light protecting them against the storm-fury of a god usually praised by the humans.

The second verse of the song reveals Loki's kinship with the leader of the Aesir, establishing his father's acknowledgement of patrimony, and therefore his birth-right to be counted among the Aesir. Again, the chorus reiterates Loki's benevolence towards humankind.

The third verse of the song freely admits to all of his characteristics, with his claim to fame ("fire is the gift I gave") and boasting of his abilities ("I am the slyest of the Gods.../I am swifter than the wind/And none can match the tricks I've played"). This verse reveals a new cleverness of the chorus. If it weren't for Loki's "turns and twists," if Loki had not surreptitiously given fire to humankind, they would not have fire to keep them warm and safe during the storm.

Then the fourth verse of the song counters the "good" that Loki feels he brought to humankind with the unrighteous treatment he feels he has received at the hands of the Aesir ("Denied a seat in Odin's hall/Forbidden fruits from Idun's tree/And cast outside of Asgard's walls"). And the chorus re-establishes the contrast between how the Aesir honored him, versus the good he has brought. He does not feel he deserves such ill treatment. He is angry and bitter, and this verse justifies his anger.

The final verse of the song is delivered without the chorus to follow it. It is the natural result of all the anger that Loki has built up. He is sly enough to know that he cannot fight the Aesir to retrieve his "rightful" place next to his father in Asgard, so he is biding his time until Ragnarok gives him his chance for revenge.

Mikal's song reveals the cautionary nature of Loki's tale. Even though the "village" may fear the intelligence and guile of someone like Loki, they may wish to hold off on the pitchforks, for Loki's intelligence is a double-edged sword. Not only can it harm (fire can destroy houses, too), but it can protect as well. The Aesir used Loki to accomplish "the impossible" with his swift wit, but then got their metaphoric pitchforks out. Now Loki is lurking in the shadows hoping for Ragnarok, and the final destruction of the Aesir.

The tale is also cautionary for people who have characteristics similar to Loki. An intelligent person may be cast outside of the village's walls if s/he does some of the vile acts Loki did (conveniently absent from Mikal's song, although it is common enough for us all to avoid admitting to such things). Even yet, the intelligent person may be feared for his/her "potential"

to be like Loki. The chorus reveals the topsy-turvy nature of appearances. The "storm god you all praise" is dangerous, while "you owe your lives to sly Loki."

Unlike the black-and-white nature of Zoroastrian dualistic thought (which permeates Judeo-Christian philosophy), myths do not seem to offer a clear-cut moral "right." Instead, they offer more subtle lessons that may be different depending on the perspective of the viewer (indeed, our modern perspective on bloody battle is rather different from what a Viking, who glorified battle-death in the quest for Valhalla, would see). Polytheism offers a more cosmopolitan, relativistic approach to wisdom—blue is neither less nor more than orange, but there are people who like blue, and people who like orange, and blue and orange occupy opposite positions on the color wheel. For the polytheist, these myths are as like a rainbow to be explored.

So what does the Loki myth hold for us in the modern world? In my own experience, I am reminded of the time I worked for a non-profit organization. Typical of non-profits, we were not as well funded as we would like to be, and the employees had to wear different hats, depending on the need. In addition to general administrative duties, I had to update the website content. My predecessor had warned me about a Loki-type member who constantly made nasty comments about the unprofessional nature of the website ("done by children" etc.). The advice was: just ignore his rantings and don't even open emails from him.

However, I decided to be a bit more diplomatic, for he was a paying member, and we were supposed to serve the membership. I explained that we were short-handed, and would he care to help us improve the site (enlisting Loki's intelligence to aid our cause...). He ended up donating over \$10,000 worth of services to the organization and we wound up with a very professional website that was easy to update (and I stopped having to read really nasty emails). Yet I was cautious in working with him and found that he had rather loose-cannon tendencies of putting up poorly worded sample pages, so my caution proved to be quite prudent.

The lessons I have used personally are: recognize the Loki archetype manifesting in someone, use his talents where you can, but do not become complacent or disrespect him, for fire can destroy as well as illuminate and warm.





We Are Our Deeds

The Watcher In The Mist

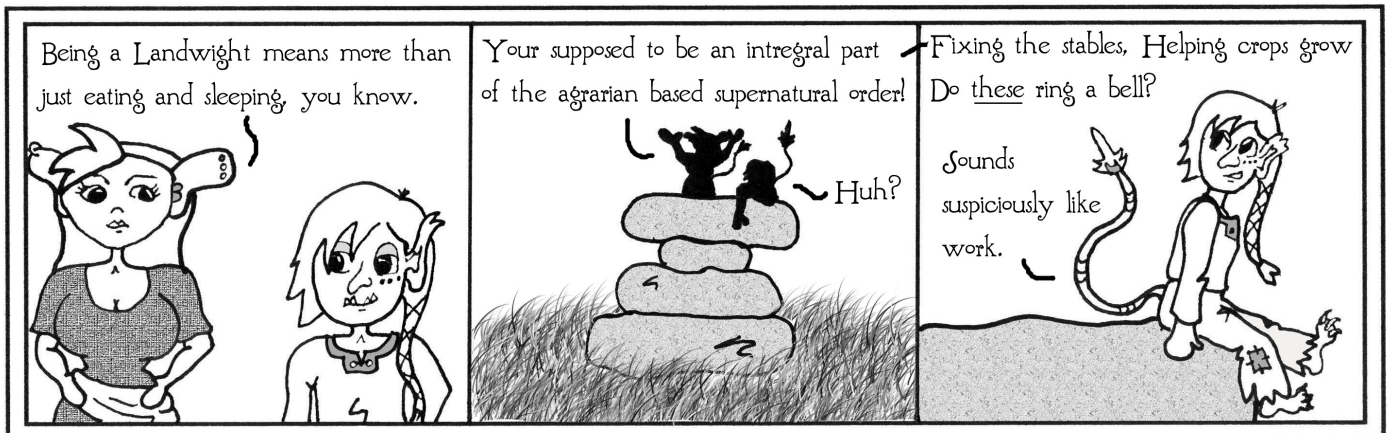
By Robert Kelber

As a male Druid who working as a registered nurse in a hospital, I find myself constantly surrounded by female energies. My co-workers are all women, and I have chosen what is admittedly a traditionally female career field. Even my Patron Bridget is female. Recently I have been making an effort to discover a masculine deity to work with in my life. Rather than just pick a deity that I like, I have been trancing in an effort to find one who is willing to work with me. After several trance workings where nothing substantive happened, I began to feel that a VERY masculine energy was present. He has not made his identity known at this point, but I have been given the impression he is willing to work with me. What follows is my attempt to put words to my feelings.

The Watcher In The Mist

In the mist,
Someone is watching me.
I feel his presence
When I am not looking for him.
Out of the corner of my eye
I glimpse him
Fleeting, shifting, darting.
Like leaves on a breeze,
Or a stag through thick brush,
Noiseless, yet rustling.
Breath on the back of my neck
As I turn around.
No one there.
More than a feeling,
Less than knowing.
Comfort, strength, warmth.
An ally in the mist?

Landwight Leif By Helag Skjold Hearth 





Leadership Interview

About me

Hi. My name is Linda Costello and I am the Senior Druid of the Grove of the Rising Phoenix, ADF. Originally from Boston's south shore, I moved to Phoenix, Arizona in 1996. Prompted by an inner calling, I moved away from my beloved Boston's ocean and trees with my two children in the middle of summer 1996 to accept a position in the field of education, where I was instrumental in the start up of a new charter school.

Prior to moving, I had worked in the field of accounting since 1974, having earned an undergraduate degree in financial management. I continued my education by taking graduate courses in Counseling/Psychology, with a special interest in Jungian analysis, supporting myself while going to school by running a small consulting business specializing in small business accounting.

Daunted by the number of years of study it would take to become a Jungian analyst, I changed my major and earned my Master's degree in Education, which led to my move to Phoenix. When the charter school was finally up and running, I was offered a position as Director of Finance and Human Resources with a small software development company that specializes in educational software, which is where I am today.

However, my love of psychology hasn't abated. Having just finished the two year training at the Gestalt Institute of Phoenix, my goals for the future include obtaining my PhD in Clinical Psychology at Pacifica Graduate Institute in Santa Barbara, CA.



Linda Costello

How I came to ADF

I was lucky to be brought up Unitarian Universalist, and from a young age, believed that all of nature was imbued with Spirit, which probably played a big part in my chosen spiritual path. Soon after graduating high school in 1973, I met someone who turned me on to alternative spiritual practices, taught me how to meditate, and introduced me to shamanism and magic. He eventually became my husband of 14 years, and while we were together, we studied ceremonial magic with Servants of the Light, a Golden Dawn mystery school founded by Dion Fortune.

I stayed with Qabalah and ceremonial magic until after my divorce, where in 1991, I was introduced to the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids. I felt like I had come home, to find a path that incorporated my deep spirituality, my love of magic and ritual, and my devotion for nature and the arts. I was very enthusiastic, started a seed grove, and tutored a few students on the Bardic path. At the same time, I studied with the Foundation for Shamanic Studies which led to my presentation of workshops in new age bookstores on Druidry and (what I called) Celtic Shamanism.

When I moved to Arizona, I thought I would never find people into Druidry, so I put it aside, and explored other paths, one of which was Wicca. I became part of a coven for three years, and participated in rituals celebrating the high days. That fell away, and I began writing and holding generic pagan rituals with my friends. I was happy to be celebrating the high days, but it never felt quite right to me.

My future with ADF

And then I met Kirk Thomas of Sonoran Sunrise Grove, ADF, in 2001. He is the one who introduced me to ADF, and the more I looked into it, the more I knew I wanted to know more. The scholarly aspect was strong, and was also the piece I was missing. So, I became a member. I began attending rituals in his stone circle in the Autumn of 2002, six months after I had joined, and haven't missed one since.

After a year of attending the rituals of Sonoran Sunrise Grove, I felt it was time to start a protogrove in Phoenix, and so applied right around Samhain. Winter Solstice 2003 was the first public ritual of the (Proto) Grove of the Rising Phoenix. Running the grove has been a high point in my life since last November. In May of 2004, we applied for and were granted provisional grove status, and I became the Senior Druid of the Grove of the Rising Phoenix just in time for Well-spring.

I attended my first Druid festival, Desert Magic Festival, in May 2004, and after meeting some of the leaders of ADF, came away with a feeling that I was in exactly the right place. I realized that all of the studies I had done over the years were in alignment with the studies that my peers had done. I felt validated in a way I have never known.

Then I attended Wellspring just a few weeks later, and I realized that I was being called to service. I know I have a lot to offer to ADF, both in skills and dedication, and I have already begun to do so. I have been elected to serve on the Grove Coordinating Committee, and I am on the committee set up to look more closely at a template for by-laws for protogroves. I know this is just the beginning.

I can think of nothing more rewarding than to put my energy towards making ADF the best it can be. Why not excellence?



Attention all Artists!

ADF has issued you a Challenge!



Within each issue we will send out a word, an idea, a vision for you to explore through photography, sculpture, poetry, jewelry, song, wood carving, fabric or any artistic medium that you can come up with! Challenges will appear within the pages of Oak Leaves. You will have three months to complete each challenge.

Send in a text document, a scan or a photograph of your work to the Oak Leaves Art Director at:
vedis_jansdottir@mchsi.com.

Please include your name, e-mail address, dimensions of the piece, title, media, and your web site if you have one.

Submissions will be judged by the Oak Leaves Staff based on each submission's relativity to the Challenge, artistic merit, appropriateness for print in a publication, cultural accuracy, and creativity. One First Prize and two Honourable Mentions will be selected. The First Prize recipient will be featured in a future issue of Oak Leaves in an article showcasing them and their art. Honourable Mentions will have their work shown in a future issue of Oak Leaves.

**The Current Challenge Is:
The Ancestors and/or Death**

**The Challenge Deadline Is:
July 1st, 2005**

The Challenge is open to all. You do not need to be a member of a Guild or ADF to enter your submission. One submission per individual please.



Book Reviews

Triumph of the Moon - By Ronald Hutton

Review by Corr Do'bhran

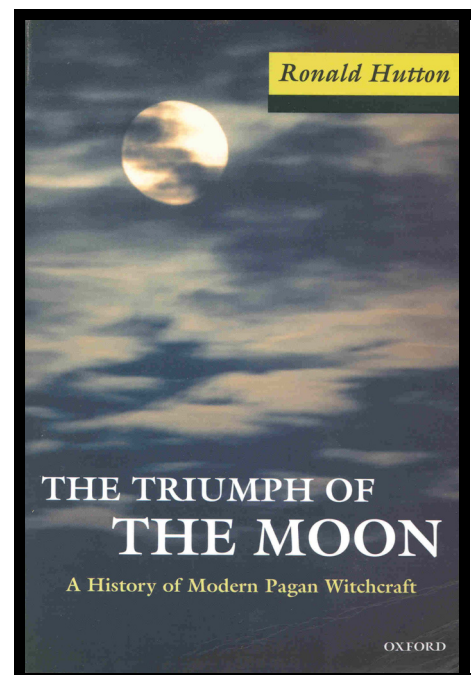
Today, the book that I am writing about is by Ronald Hutton and is published by Oxford University Press titled *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. Hutton was educated first at Cambridge and then at Oxford University, where he had a fellowship at Magdalen College. In 1981, he moved to the University of Bristol, where he is now a reader of British history. He is a historian of wide interest ranging from politics to topics covering the whole of Britain. Other books he has written include *Charles II: King of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, *The Restoration*, and *The Stations of the Sun*.

Hutton came to the realization that there had been no serious attempt to record the history of modern Neo-paganism since its roots with Gerald Garner. Because of this, Hutton did the first systematic attempt by a professional historian to characterize and account for the Pagan aspect of Western culture. To date, most scholars either dismissed or ignored the influence of modern Neo-paganism on British culture and Hutton decided to undertake the project in relation with other text such as *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles* and *The Stations of the Sun*, and due to his curiosity about the historical history of Neo-Paganism.

The text is divided into two parts. The first part is an overview of the social movements and events that Gardner pulled his influence from to create the Wiccan faith. Hutton covers everything from the views of the Romantic Era in Western Culture, the shifting of primary deities over the centuries, secret societies such as the Freemasons and the Golden Dawn, the Cunning folk and the burning times as well as other social events that occurred prior to Gardner's life. The second half of the text is what Gardner did during his life, the events and the influences of his prodigies after his death, public reactions to what Wicca stood for,

many of the myths that Wiccans fostered themselves, and many other events that have made modern Neo-Paganism what it is today.

This book was an eye opener for me. I was so surprised at the information that was presented, due to how different it was to other texts I had read up to that point, that I ended up going through a period of disillusionment. This period passed and I ended the book fulfilled and pleased. In comparison to *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles*, it was far easier to understand and comprehend; obviously history was Hutton's strong point over archeology. The text was exceptionally detailed and informative, to the point of redundancy, but it emphasized his points. I can confidently state that Ronald Hutton has become my favorite Neo-Pagan author and I would recommend him to anyone interested in the area of Wicca and Modern Neo-Paganism.





The Solitary Path

Reintroducing Solitary Work into Your Life

Michael J Dangler

Many times, I have heard solitaries in ADF react with envy to the ease in which Grove-affiliated members can find community in their worship, especially if said solitaries are geographically isolated and not solitary by choice.

It can be a hard thing (as I well remember) to be a solitary member of ADF. The email lists do not create the feeling of connectedness that a warm handshake or the friendly hug of a fellow Druid can create. Articles in *Oak Leaves* tend to discuss Grove formation and talk about Grove spirituality. At festivals, it is sometimes hard for the solitary to find a place.

But we Grove members have something to be envious of, as well.

The process of running a Grove is no easy task, and neither is being an active member. For the majority of Grove-affiliated members, the Grove rites become our High Day rites. They fall on days that are mutually convenient for us, not often on the High Day itself. We sometimes simply attend rather than participate, especially when it's been a long week or a trying day. At the end of the day, we collapse on our couch, exhausted from the planning, work, and general stress of putting on a public rite.

How many of us remember our own needs at the end of such a long day of stress, worry, and work? Are our obligations fulfilled, not only to our Gods, but also to ourselves?

What are we missing?

When we attend these rites, worshipping with the community, we are fulfilling our obligations to the Gods. There's no question there. ADF is primarily about public worship in the Elder Ways, and that is what we do at these High Day rites. The Groves are partially fulfilling ADF's obligations and their own when they hold these public rites. But what is it that the Groves are not necessarily doing in these rites that a solitary practitioner does in every rite she holds?



I recognized that something was lacking at Yule in 2004. With my brother graduating from college on the same day as the Grove's Saturnalia rite, I was unable to attend our group worship. I recognized that there is an obligation that we have to our Gods, and that obligation is part of the world that I live in. My obligation, of course, is that I need to provide due worship to the Shining Ones each of the eight High Days. I have held this obligation since my Dedicant Oath in 2002, and I did not feel that, "Oh, well, I can't attend with my Grove," was a good enough excuse for breaking this oath to maintain my piety.

I had not, however, done a solitary ritual for a High Day since 2002. Always, I knew that my obligation to the Gods was fulfilled by attending (and especially leading) the rites of my Grove. Yes, I have done daily devotional rites, but those are simply not the same. The devotional is informal and simple. A High Day rite is a celebration and a connection to deity in a mythological

framework. High Days take planning, and you set them off specially from the rest of the year.

Well, I sat down and wrote the ritual I intended to use (now available at <<http://www.adf.org/rituals/celtic/yule/sol-yule-mjd.html>> and set about with preparations as I usually do for any ritual. I expected this rite to be the same as any other rite I have done. Open gates, insert patron, close gates. I think, to some extent, that I was seeing this rite as an obligation to the Gods, not as an obligation to myself.

And so I began, describing the sacred space, attuning myself to the Two Powers, and opening the gates. When I came to the invocation to Sulis, however, I realized that something special was happening. I was connecting with this deity in a way I had never connected before. It was as if I was being filled up with the light of the sun.

It was when I went to light the candles, though, that the real connection brought me up short. All at once, it was a feeling of, "Stop. Listen. Tell me about it all." And I did.

I stopped and listened to Sulis, felt her warmth on my face. I poured out my problems. I chatted about things important and insignificant all at once. The ritual ground to a halt as I simply *experienced* the goddess of the sun.

And it hit me: this is the other part of piety that I have been missing. There are obligations to the Gods

that we must fulfill, but there are also obligations to *ourselves*.

This one-on-one time I had with Sulis is something that should happen more often. In group rituals, there is pressure to move on, to get the job done. People have places to go and things to do. Individual attention to the Gods can drag a Grove ritual into a long, boring hour of downtime for everyone except the person receiving the experience. Such experiences are not impossible to achieve in a group ritual, but they are somewhat uncommon for many Groves to be able to achieve.

Piety is a two-way street: it involves obligation to the Gods and obligation to the self. We are thinking, feeling creatures, and as such, we need that individual connection to keep going. A big part of fulfilling obligations to the Gods is holding and attending the public rituals our Groves put on, but similarly, we need to remember that there are reasons that some ADF members choose to remain solitary, and the obligations to the Gods can be fulfilled just as well by a solitary rite, and often the obligation to the self can be fulfilled much better with one.

So when you consider your own piety, your own obligations to the Gods, remember that piety requires that you gain from it, as well.



Children's Education and Parenting SIG



The Children's Education and Parenting SIG is a group of ADF members who are also parents or otherwise involved in educating children in our Neopagan Ways. One of the goals of the SIG is to create a Children's Education program that will make it easier for other parents in ADF to teach children our ways, but the SIG is a general networking group as well.

The SIG uses the ADF-Parents mailing list, which you can sign up for on the members subscription page. You can also contact the SIG coordinator, Epona, for more information about the SIG.

Epona@mysticdruid.com

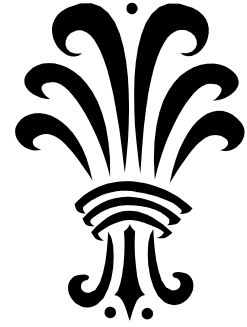


Poetry

Outdoers

By Wren

Balor and all Kin of chaos, be welcomed and warmed by my fire.
For it is with You, I leave my doubts and fears behind.
But trouble me not in my workings, Lest I be forced to caste this stone. (*display stone*)
And turn the Baleful Eye upon You.



February in Belle Mead

Deborah Castellano

I was supposed to be a
black feathered thing
full of secrets and sadness
Laid down in a field of
sky and corn
blood sacrifice to bring
the sun back to new jersey

Smile full of prophecy
Hands full of healing
It wasn't supposed to—

This long slow sunflower death
kept in a cage all day
alone all night
until I have wilted
too full of seeds and sorrow
to hold my head up anymore

All of the magic bled out of
my hands
my heart
my uterus
Gone from me
Nothing left but
fingernails and hair
. . .dreams

Paradigm Shift

By Michael McCabe

Fear take me! Fear break me! Fear remake me!
Craven crawling,
Shadow falling,
Raven calling on the sky.

Out of the door
Into the wood
Steady the pace
Breathe the good.
Calm the mind
Ease the heart
Abiding Oak,
Magickal art.

Thor's beard on the forge fire bright
Shadows fly
Lugh's shining might!

We steel crystals
Forged by Gods,
Beaten with blows,
Twisted with tongs,
Broken and mended,
Quenched in the Well of Wisdom,
Tempered by the Cauldron of Incubation.

Smitten!

Fear take you,
Fear break you,
Fear shape you,
Fear remake you!



Celtic knotwork on pgs 16 and 17 created by Steph Gooch

Worms, Salvation and other Important Things

Anna Messinger

last night, spring left a message for me. it read:
i have worms for you.
you know where to look.

i found the map on the sidewalk at dawn, scrawled
in mud-prints near a half-eaten
compass.
no doubt about it:

someone who did not like bananas
was here last night.

a raccoon, who knew only that yellow
lacked fins and preferred his vegetables
with pincers,
wrote in distracted paw-prints that crawdads
in the mud-pool were
spawning right now.
the crayfish are waiting, he wrote.
will share.
you know where to look.

as the sun rose higher, a songbird emboldened by her
own importance
urged me on.
grubs, she sang. infant willows.
how are you not
giddy right now?
her suncatcher plumage dropped like a dream
as she trilled the litany of springtide above me:
eggs and mushrooms, bulbs, stones,
sweet pink blossoms and
blue mosquitoes.

i followed her instructions to a sacred place,
the primordial banks of an ash-flanked creek.
there, a fallen birch log
lay like an altar piled high with gifts.

spring-tide offered me tender moss,
sweet dew,
a spider's web
heavy with pollen.
brimming in her cupped hands were the frost-bitten pet-
als
of a pansy and a snake's old skin.

thanks for being, she wrote in the sunrise.
your salvation
is at your feet.

there, wriggling in a circle of tree-rot,
a brown-pink worm formed a circle of hope:
the eldest and truest priestess of the earth
blessing my name in the dirt.



Trickster's Fall

Nora Temkin

I followed your laughter to cemetery apples,
Danced after through stones, over acorns and past
Dry-throated leaf-ghosts, restless and rattling.
Crisp evening, scent of fruit: behind the twisted
Tree I almost caught you, turned and tumbled
Less than lightly over roots and off again,
Around a marble corner where. breath. catches. --
Smooth stone wings and lips cold for kissing,
But not tonight, despite warm rose and milky
Light: romantic candle glow from -- turnips?
(Well, I guess any scone with roots will do
For a wine-chilled feast of worms and goblins.)
I have no delusions of innocent frolic in this game;
If swamp replaced concrete, your laughter would
Crack with the snap of my bones in the grey
Morning frost... but tonight, enough to dizzy and
Confuse. Out of breath, I share an apple with
Abigail Neverwept (row fifteen, plot three) and ask you:
Will my cold soil warm beneath your next merry chase?

my vision

Myrddin

see through my minds eye
a vision of a wonderful meadow alive
shining rays of the sun
whispering songs of the breeze
birds singing and winging
flowers stretching their open faces to the sun
I turn my vision to the edge of the meadow
at the wood and as if I were to know
you were to enter, you who's eye of lovely ash
and shaped of wonderful almond that can
see through night, the darkness of adversity and
be to guard and protect, and offers
cunning and swiftness of all 4 feet
in adding it's chosen kin through there journey,
and all who call on him,
he who is swift of foot and bright of eye.
HE IS NO OTHER KIN BUT WOLF

On Opening a Gateway in ADF Rites

By Diana Paar

Why do we open a Gateway? At times the point is made that "we are already in touch with the other side" so why do we need to intentionally open a channel to it? Well, actually, we don't - but it works. And, I think it's for the same reasons that "calling a cauldron sacred" works. The whole first tier of the rite can be seen as an ever-increasing sanctification of the space & the participants (the procession, blessings of the realms, dedications to Earth Mother, etc.) which all lead us to the opening of a gateway. Several years ago I wrote an article for *Faoi Na Creen* about "journeys in ritual" or why we need to physically travel from point A to point B and why it works. A similar phenomenon is in effect here, I believe. By opening a gateway, we intentionally deepen and open to the nature of our work at hand. In other words, with our intent we make it *different* than it was before.

But for whom are we deepening the work? Both the ritualists and the participants are affected by the opening of a gateway. It is a trick we are playing on our consciousness, one of many in a series that we do in ritual. The "Opening of the Gateway" turns a key in a lock on several layers of consciousness simultaneously and alerts us to *pay attention now, the work of the ritual is ramping up a bit*. Basically I am saying that the purpose of a Gateway is to further alter the consciousness of the participants and *not* to actually open a portal into other realms. Of course, in case a portal actually does open we've made offerings to the Outsiders and prepared the space accordingly.

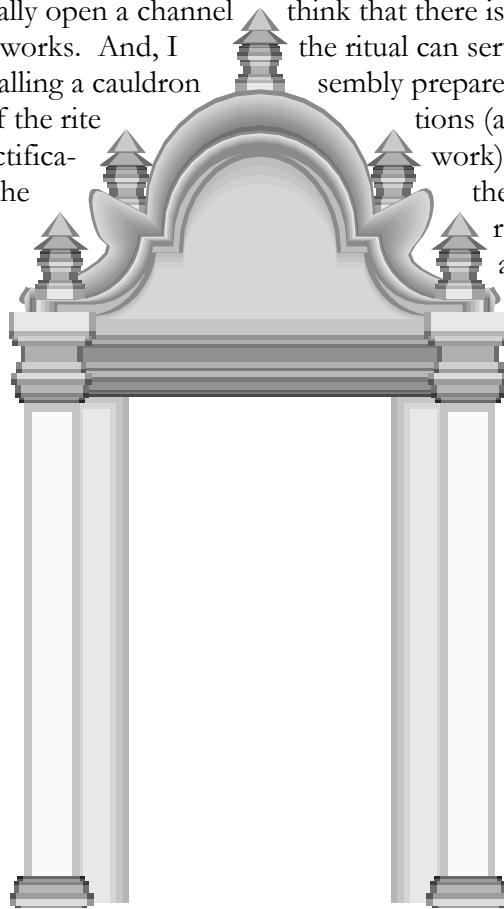
And, we only open Gateways at our public rites. I'm not sure why this is, but we in Sassafras at least, have rarely found a need to open a gateway at our monthly lunar rites, the women's rites or the other more intimate ceremonies that we perform. What we do individually, of course, I don't always know - but there seems to be a

stronger need for an official gateway opening process at the public rites.

Now we have an explanation for the Gateway - but why do we call a Gatekeeper? Well, I don't actually think that there is a need for one, but calling one into the ritual can serve a few purposes: it helps the assembly prepare for upcoming deity & spirit invocations (again deepening the nature of the work), it can free up the consciousness of the participants to let that part of them relax and move on to the next phase and finally, because it is ADF tradition. Sometimes, we can just do things because they honor a tradition and have faith that they are in the liturgy for a good reason (you won't hear me say "*do it on faith*" very often, but the inclusion of a Gatekeeper seems to earn this justification).

It was only this year at Well-spring that I came to realize how unique the practices of Sassafras are when compared to those of most other ADF groves. Earrach likes to call our liturgy "Bonewitsian Orthodoxy" with occasional "Corriganesque Flourishes" but really it's all our own. One of the

biggest ways we stand out is our well-established tradition of multiple pantheons. Now, I can defend this by invoking the varied leaves of the Sassafras Tree or I can just let it stand for what it is: a Wheel of the Year derived from esoteric inspirations that just happens to fully manifest itself in a variety of Indo-European god forms. So there! But, as a result of this practice, we have the opportunity to work with the Gatekeepers of many different pantheons. When one of our grove members said she didn't know who Manannan Mac Lir was and received the response "but he's *the* Gatekeeper" she was surprised that other groves call on only one deity for this purpose. Of course one can make a good argument for consistency of purpose, but on this subject my preferences lean strongly towards a variety of deities.



When it's time to plan a High Day ritual, we start by listening for the nature of the work that we are called to do. Once we have a primary thematic inspiration, we check in with our patron deities and traditions to see which particular one is speaking to us the most clearly. Usually one deity, theme or tradition sort of bubbles up organically - either through a particular person or event - and that drives the development of that particular ritual. When we have disagreements, we try to work out a compromise. If one can't be reached, we usually agree to try the other person's idea next time around the wheel (ahem, some of us are *still* waiting for a Dionysian autumn equinox). But, I digress.

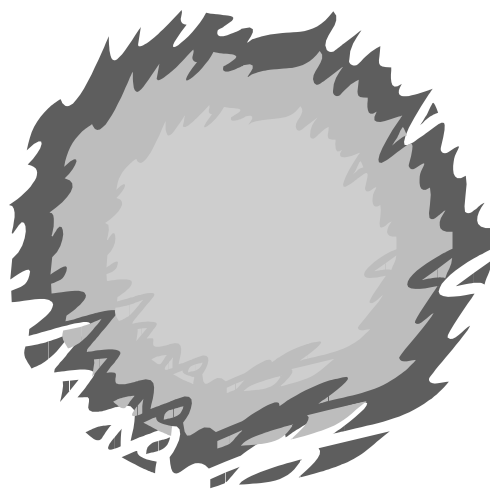
The important point here is that once we have a theme and/or deities for the ritual, the next logical step is to seek a Gatekeeper that will resonate with the nature of the work. Once we have chosen a Gatekeeper, then it is up to the liturgist to create a viable technique of Gateway opening that will work; which leads me to the next subject: diversity of technique. Over the years, we have had a number of practicing magicians in the grove, but I seem to be the one who has stuck around the longest, so therefore have the biggest treasure house of gateway opening techniques. We have tried it all: guided visualizations, movement (often with 3 staves or 3 lamps), songs, physical mudras, bells and sacrifices are the ones that come to mind first, and they have all worked - some better than others.

Occasionally, we have a tradition that is firmly established such as in our Brigantia rite where the Dagda is always called as the gatekeeper. He has, however, been invoked by many different techniques over the years and always seems to come, no matter who is calling or how they are doing it. (Thank you for your blessings, Dagda; I'm not taking them for granted here!). Perhaps this is one of our primary areas for creativity as liturgists in Sassafra? But, either way: a variety of Gatekeepers and a diversity of Gateway techniques seems to be working for us. It certainly has served to en-

hance the magical skills of our grove members, which brings me to my final point: why not give it a whirl?

I refer to Earrach & myself as "old war-horse Druids" who come from the DIY school of Neo-Paganism. Why depend on someone else to do the work for you, when the blessings often arrive via the act of chopping wood & carrying water? Perhaps because we are this way, we have attracted a grove filled with people of the same ilk - we *all* want to do it ourselves! So, our grove has a very pro-active approach to liturgy. If someone hasn't called the Earth Mother in a public rite yet - well *now* seems like a good time: how would you like to do it? Likewise, once the grove member has worked their way up through increasingly important points of the liturgy (such as realm blessings to calling the kindreds or performing a two powers meditation) we usually encourage them to take on a more instrumental role in the ritual. Often a person is inspired to open a Gateway and/or call a Gatekeeper in the ritual, especially if they have a personal relationship with the deity that will serve this function for our rite. They have support from Earrach & myself, but mostly grove members create their own gateways based on an amalgam of their own magical practices and what they've seen others perform in Sassafra rituals. Thank the gods, it usually works!

Addendum: since originally posting this essay to the ADF-Magicians list and revising it for our newsletter, I have been giving some thought to my premise: that we open a "gateway" and call a "gatekeeper" primarily as techniques to alter the consciousness of the participants. This implies that I do not believe in other realms, nor the existence of a deity that responds to the call of a human to hold open a gate. Frankly, I'm not sure if I believe in them or not - even after 10+ years of performing the rituals. What I *can* say is that my personal belief system is fluid and every-changing and I am comfortable with that. I encourage others to respond to this article with their ideas on gateways, gatekeepers and belief in general.



FAQ on ADF Ritual

By Anthony R. Thompson

Where does ADF style ritual come from?

ADF's ritual style (liturgy) is unique among various Druid and Neopagan rituals because we developed it from scratch. Specifically, most of it was developed by Isaac Bonewits in the 1980s, and it has been refined slightly since then by some of our chief liturgists, such as Ian Corrigan.

If you're wondering where Isaac got his ideas for the ADF ritual structure, they were partly influenced by his previous work in the Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA)¹ as well as his Wiccan priest background. However, the major influence on our ritual structure is research into the beliefs and practices of the ancient Indo-European cultures.

As our website describes more fully, ADF is a "reconstructionist" religion. This means that we look to the "old ways" of the ancient pagan Indo-European cultures for our inspiration. This differs slightly from other Druid organizations in that we're not looking solely at the ancient Celts. Instead, we're relying on solid academic research showing that ancient Celtic cultures were part of a cultural-linguistic family called "Indo-European".

The Indo-European cultures, which date from at least 2000 B.C.E. and included ancient Celtic, Germanic (Norse/Teutonic), Hellenic (Greek), Roman, Slavic, and Vedic (Indian) peoples, had many similarities. One example is the importance of a sacred river as a great mother/source goddess (e.g., the Danube, the Boyne, the Ganges). Another is the recurring mythological motif of a chieftain god marrying that mother goddess, thereby ensuring protection and fertility for the folk and land. A third is the concept that the gods are not fundamentally different from humans, but are in fact simply their (more powerful) older ancestors. Another is the idea that there is an order of gods and spirits which is unfriendly toward humans (Celtic Fomoiré, Norse Jotuns, Hellenic Titans, etc.), which were driven out by our deities, and which our deities continue to protect us against. The list goes on and on.



Photo by Heather "Vedis" Koerner -'04

So the simple answer to the question of where ADF's ritual style came from is that it's drawn primarily from various common ancient Indo-European religious beliefs and practices, and taking into account the realities of modern day society (e.g., our prohibition against blood sacrifice) and modern Neopagan ritual practice (e.g., doing the standard Neopagan High Days, meditation to enter ritual mindset, etc.).

So how close are ADF rituals to actual ancient pagan rituals?

If you had a time machine and went back to any of the ancient Indo-European cultures, and performed an ADF ritual, chances are there would be very little overt similarity to those cultures' rituals. However, on closer examination, the fictional ancient bystanders would (we think) perceive a certain familiarity in many of our ritual elements. One example would be our use of a sacred

fire, which was quite central to many ancient Indo-European rituals. Another is our recognition and honoring of the local area land spirits. Another is our offerings to the gods, and the expectation that they will bless us in return for the honor we give them. Again, the list goes on and on.

If your question is, “Is there any evidence that any ancient peoples did the same rituals ADF is doing?” then the answer would have to be no. However, we’re not trying to duplicate ancient rituals *exactly*. We’re trying to use comparative analysis of different ancient Indo-European cultures in order to understand the main elements of their rituals, and intelligently draw from them to create our own modern Neopagan rituals which follow the patterns and “spirit” of their beliefs and practices as closely as possible.

How come ADF doesn't cast circles?

Circles, as used by most Neopagans and Wiccans, are essentially protective measures meant to keep undesired forces out. Often this is because the main part of the ritual is some form of focused magical working and these undesirable forces could work against the participants doing the magic. In ADF, our main focus is not magical work, it is religious offerings (“sacrifices”), so there is much less emphasis on needing to keep undesirable forces “out” since our focus is much more on inviting our gods and spirits “in”.

We *do* have a similar concept, though, in that we make an offering to a group of entities we call the “outsiders” or “outdwellers”. These are a group of beings whose aims are inimical to ours. The basic concept comes from the fact that a pervasive theme in various Indo-European cultures is that there is an order of gods and spirits, usually an older order, who our gods and spirits (allies) fought with and defeated at some point, but who still linger around hoping to cause trouble. For the Celts, these were the Fomoiré, for the Norse it was the Jotuns, for the Hellenes (Greeks) it was the Titans, etc.

The basic idea is that our rituals are about offering to our Kindreds (gods, nature spirits, and ancestors/heroes), that these Kindreds are “on our side”, and that they gladly receive our sacrifices and offer blessings in return. Our gods and spirits are honorable and are part of, and serve to uphold, the social order.

The “Outsiders”, on the other hand, are the reverse, and represent forces of chaos that would destroy the social order. So we officially recognize them in our rituals, make them a small offering, and ask them to leave our work in peace. That fact, and our calling to our own allies, serves to protect our rites pretty well.

So, we don’t cast circles because we relate to the concept of “unwanted influences” in a different way, namely by drawing upon Indo-European mythologies and relating to these forces as a group of chaos-bent spirits who we are able to ask to leave us alone for a time, in addition to calling our own Kindreds to our sides to protect us and receive honor. In effect, our token offering to the Outsiders is very similar to casting a circle, but it has a very different rationale in that we are working with specific groups of mythological entities rather than abstract negative energy.

How does ADF view/handle sacred space, then?

Since ADF doesn’t “cast a circle”, our concept of sacred space is obviously a lot different than many other pagans’ concept of it. In ADF, the most basic way we make a space “sacred” is by offering to the Kindreds, but we usually do a bit of “setup” first by “recreating the cosmos”. This means that we take representations of three sacred Indo-European symbols—sacred Fire, sacred Well, and sacred Tree—and “hallow” them, or do a set of actions meant to attune the material representations of these symbols to their cosmic counterparts. Usually this consists of lighting the sacred Fire, “silvering” (dropping something metal or shiny into) the sacred Well, and wafting smoke from the Fire and sprinkling water from the Well onto the sacred Tree.

Where did we get these three symbols? Again, by looking at the religious beliefs and practices of various ancient Indo-European cultures (noticing a pattern yet?). Some form of sacred Fire, sacred Well, and sacred Tree can be found in all these cultures, as can the sacredness of “threes” or triads in general. Time and time again, through all these cultures, lighting a central fire was an incredibly important religious act. Similarly, the importance of sacred wells can be seen in a number of Indo-European cultures, particularly for the Celts. The sacred tree of the Norse (Yggdrasil) is well-known, but many Celts had important sacred trees (Crann Bethadh, the Tree of Life) too, as did other I-E cultures.

So by blessing or hallowing these symbols, we are “recreating the cosmos” and preparing the ritual space for the formal invitations to the Kindreds followed by our offerings for them, and finally finished by our receiving their blessings in return. In terms of where our sacred space begins and where it ends, we don’t have a firm boundary and thus we do not need to have some formal exit/re-entry for people who need to temporarily leave the ritual area, as some Wiccans do with their circles. The boundary of our sacred space is really the “immediate area” of the participants, which may be a clearing in a forest of trees, may be a stone circle, etc. For rituals with a large central fire, we might say that the sacred space is defined by “the light of the Fire”, but even that is not a hard and fast rule. We’re not particularly concerned with the exact boundaries because we make our peace with the Outsiders and invite our Kindred allies, and rest safe in the knowledge that our actions are just and holy, and the Kindreds will protect us and give us blessings in return for our offerings.



If you offer to the outsiders to keep out chaos or negative energy, couldn't you just cast a circle instead?

We could, but we prefer to work with specific entities rather than abstract energies. In this way, we are polytheistic rather than duotheistic or monotheistic. We worship different deities as if they are actually different beings, each with their own wants and needs, likes and dislikes, etc., rather than viewing all gods as aspects of a main God and all goddesses as aspects of a main Goddess, as most Wiccans do. Similarly, we make an offering to the Outsiders as actual entities, often naming them (Fomoiré, Jotuns, Titans, etc.) depending on the culture of the ritual. In this way, we like to think we are working closer to the ways of the ancients, who (by everything we know) worshipped the gods and goddesses, land spirits, and ancestors as distinct, separate entities.

How come ADF doesn't call quarters?

The “four elements” system is another form of abstracting energies, and a fairly late (historically) invention at that, so we don’t find it useful to invoke these abstract energies; they are simply not part of the ancient Indo-European cultures we base our practices on. In fact, the “calling quarters” and “watchtowers” done by most Wiccans actually dates back to the ritual magic work of the Golden Dawn in the early 20th century, later picked up and popularized in the 1950s and 60s by Gerald Gardner, Alex Sanders, et al. These are perfectly fine and valid systems in their own right, they are just much more modern than those we base our work on, namely the cultures and practices of the ancient Indo-Europeans.

What's this “land, sea, and sky” thing?

Another triad of the ancient Indo-Europeans, particularly the Celts, was the “three realms” of land, sea, and sky. This triad of realms was documented in a wide variety of places, such as oaths between different tribes being sworn as, “and if I break this oath, may the sky fall down and crush me, may the earth open and swallow me, and may the sea rise up and drown me.” Many ADF groves also do something to invoke or recognize these three realms, such as throwing earth, sprinkling water, and lighting incense. This can be viewed as the “horizontal axis” of this world, whereas the Fire, Well, and Tree triad are a “vertical axis” connecting us to the underworld (wisdom of the ancestors) and the upperworld (power of the gods). It is not strictly necessary in our ritual format, but many groves do choose to do the “land, sea, and sky” portion nonetheless since it is so well attested to in ancient sources.

Why are the fire, well, and tree ‘gates’? and what does that mean?

Since lighting the sacred Fire, silvering the sacred Well, and hallowing the sacred Tree really create our “sacred space”, they essentially connect the ritual area to the primal patterns of the cosmos. As they serve such an important connective function, they are “gates” in that sense.

In a more specific sense, sacred Wells for the Indo-Europeans have always been viewed as connections down into the Earth, into the chthonic realms of the Dead, so the Well is a “gate” for our connection to the Ancestors. Similarly, sacred Fire burns up into the sky, which is usually associated with various gods and goddesses, so it is a “gate” to the Gods. The Tree is anchored in this realm, and is our connection to the land and nature spirits around us, while also being a bridge to the lower (through its roots) and the upper (through its branches) realms.

These three are “gates” because hallowing these three symbols aligns the ritual space with the fundamental patterns of the Indo-European cosmos, setting the stage for us to invite the Kindreds to join us and receive honor and offerings.

Who is the “gatekeeper” and what is her/his role in terms of the Fire, Well, and Tree?

The “gatekeeper” is a god or goddess who is recognized in a culture’s mythology as being a guide to travelers, as someone who lives or walks “between the worlds”, and who knows the magic of spiritual travel and communication. We call to this deity to “open the gates” for us, which means helping us connect to the Kindreds. If the Fire, Well, and Tree are like getting your home ready for guests, then the Gatekeeper portion is opening the door, and it is followed by inviting the guests in with calls to each Kindred (gods, nature spirits, and ancestors). Blessing the Fire, Well, and Tree makes the ritual space sacred, but calling on the Gatekeeper formally opens it to the places our Kindred allies reside, and it is through this connection that our voices may be heard by the Kindreds.

Who are these “Kindreds” you invite?

Like the Fire, Well, and Tree, the Kindreds are based on our research into ancient Indo-European religious practices. It is certainly clear that the ancients worshipped various gods and goddesses, regularly making offerings for important things like protection from warring neighbors, fruitful crops, etc. It is also apparent that they recognized spirits in the land around them, and strove to be on good terms with these spirits, such as making offerings before starting to build a house or move a road through an area. Finally, it’s known that the dead were not simply buried and forgotten, but honored regularly and consulted for guidance and blessing, as the wisdom of one’s grandmothers and grandfathers was always a welcome source of knowledge. So, in our rituals we make a place for another triad, namely our Ancestors, the Spirits of Nature, and the Gods, and we call them the three Kindreds.

What’s all this about “sacrifice”? Do you sacrifice humans or animals?

No, ADF is **firmly** against blood sacrifice (killing or injuring any animal or person) of any kind - it is strictly prohibited in any ADF ritual, public or private. Sacrifice literally means “to make sacred” and when we say “sacrifice”, we mean “offering something important”. For the ancients, who regularly raised and slaughtered their own cattle, it was perfectly appropriate to slaughter another beast and designate it as an offering to the gods. However, in our modern culture, where we do not raise and kill our own meat, it is completely inappropriate to do so.

Instead, we follow the general principle of offering (sacrificing) things which are important to us. This can be works of our own hand, such as arts and crafts, or something simpler like fruits and vegetables which we have bought with our money and which we know to be pleasing to the gods and spirits of the occasion. Forms of alcohol, such as beer, wine, and spirits, are perennial favorite offerings, but are by no means required; it is perfectly acceptable to have an ADF ritual where no alcohol is present, and in some ritual settings (such as state parks) this is actually required. It goes without saying, but we’ll say



it anyway, that we follow the law and encourage others to do so too.

Besides the High days do you do any other type of rituals? Do they follow the same ritual structure?

Yes, we do many other kinds of rituals, such as handfastings (marriages), house blessings, sainings (naming of children), rites of passage, magical workings, etc. While these all follow the ADF ritual structure in general, certain elements may be abbreviated or even omitted, and other elements may be added. For example, songs/chants may be shortened or omitted, the land/sea/sky (horizontal axis) may be omitted completely, there may be special meditations in various parts of the ritual (e.g., calling to the Gatekeeper could be a whole special spirit journey), there may be a magical working after the general “return flow” blessing, etc.

Can you cast spells using ADF’s ritual format?

Yes, after the main offerings, omen, and return flow (physical receipt of the blessings given to us in exchange for our offerings), there is an optional spell casting/rite of passage/magical working section. In terms of doing a specific magical working, we’d make the “main offerings” to a deity(ies) associated with the area of interest, such as Brighid for healing, Thor for strength/protection, Athena for wisdom, etc.

Are there any differences between doing ritual indoors versus outdoors?

We don’t have any specific suggestions for doing ritual inside versus doing it outside. Obviously doing ritual outside in nature is preferred, as it is easier to connect with land and nature spirits, the Earth Mother, etc. However, the Kindreds appreciate our honor and sacrifices no matter where we make them, so it is far better to do ritual indoors than not to do it at all.

If doing ritual outside, it helps of course if you are able to make use of your surroundings, such as choosing a large natural tree as your sacred Tree, or finding a body of water to do the ritual near, etc. Particularly nice is finding a place and doing several High Day rituals there so that it becomes imbued with the energy of honoring the Kindreds and old ways, but

again, a regular ritual site is by no means necessary for ADF ritual.

For indoor rituals, you will likely need to find substitutes for a deep well, roaring fire, and tall tree, such as a bowl of water for the Well, a candle or small incense pot for the Fire, and a pole-like object for the Tree. You may also wish to burn incense, open the windows, dress in special clothing, drape parts of the room with special decorations (such as cloths, ribbons, or wreaths), etc. In general, you will probably wish to make the indoor space seem less “mundane”, whereas outdoor rituals benefit from the inherent sacredness of the natural environment.

Again, though, these adjustments are largely up to you; it is better to perform an indoor ritual with no special alterations of the space, than not to perform the ritual at all.

Can a person study with both ADF and OBOD? (and how far apart are the training programs?)

Yes, a person can study with both ADF and OBOD. OBOD is more experientially-oriented (applying techniques based on effectiveness rather than strict historical documentation/basis), whereas ADF is more historically-oriented (preferring to choose techniques first from those historically attested, and only when those are unavailable, resorting to more modern substitutes). More information on the differences between ADF and OBOD can be read in John Michael Greer’s essay titled ADF and OBOD².

Are ADF rituals better for groups or solitaries?

ADF rituals *were* originally developed with groups in mind, so they are naturally a better fit for groups. However, our solitaries have been quite resourceful in adapting our ritual structure for their practice. It usually only requires some minor tweaking to fit the taste of each solitary. For example, some solitaries would rather do spoken parts than sing songs, some prefer longer, and some shorter, meditations, etc. Generally, solitaries tend to combine some steps of the liturgy or shorten them since the overall ADF ritual format works well for a group where several people have different parts, but is slightly on the long side for a single person. Again, though, this is an individual preference, and our liturgy is readily adaptable to shortening

or even lengthening if the practitioner desires it.

How can you have Norse Druid rituals? Weren't the Druids Celtic priests?

Norse, along with Celtic, Slavic, Vedic, Hellenic (Greek), and others, are part of the cultural-linguistic family known as Indo-European. When ADF uses the term "Druid", we are actually using it in the sense of "Indo-European priest" or, more accurately, "Indo-European intellectual", since it is clear that the druids and their other I-E culture counterparts were actually a "learned class" in contrast to warriors or farmers. As such, they included healers, bards, seers (diviners), historians, judges, scholars, etc. In fact, our ADF Guilds represent many of the specialties attributed in historical documents to the Druids, Brahmins, etc.

So, we can have Norse rituals, Hellenic rituals, Vedic rituals, etc., by the fact that our rituals are based on ancient Indo-European religious traditions, not Celtic ones in particular. These types of ADF rituals all share the same basic I-E symbolism and structure (such as Fire, Well, and Tree, the Gatekeeper deity, etc.), but are also tailored for the specific I-E culture of the ritual (such as including key phrases in the rele-

vant language, calling to specific gatekeeper and main deities, etc.).

Where do I go for more information on your rituals? Can I ask anyone questions about this stuff?

Our website has several sample rituals and articles which explain our liturgical format in detail. Please see <<http://www.adf.org/rituals/>> for more information. If you'd like to ask general questions about druidry and ADF, please consider subscribing to our ADF-Druidry e-mail list at <<http://www.adf.org/forums/subscribe.html>>. If you are looking for a local ADF group whose rituals you can check out, please see <<http://www.adf.org/groups/>> and if you have a specific question about joining ADF please contact us at <<http://www.adf.org/contact.html>>

NOTES

1. Isaac Bonewits, "The Reformed Druids of North America and their Offshoots", <<http://www.neopagan.net/RDNA.html>>
2. John Michael Greer, "ADF Compared to OBOD", <<http://www.adf.org/about/adf-and-obod.html>>



Artisan's Guild



The ADF Artisans Guild exists to create artworks and other artifacts for use by ADF, and to promote training and education in the arts and crafts for members and friends of ADF, as well as the larger community. The Artisan's Guild has completed their section of the Study Program. They also have a large book list, a listing of ADF artisan's and their goods and services, as well as a yearly Arts competition at Wellspring!

For more information, you can subscribe to the group's e-mail list 'ADF-Arts' using the subscription page , or you can contact the Guild Scribe directly at:

2paws@telus.net

Come and Join the Artists in the ADF Artisan's Guild!





A Wandering Druid: Tales from the Road

Liscannor Shrine

By Meghan E. McNamara

This past summer I had the pleasure of visiting the Brigid's Shrine in Liscannor, County Clare. During a previous visit I took in the *clooties* (bits of cloth tied to something as a representative of a prayer or special intention), photos, notes, and other memorabilia with awe, and made a special effort to revisit the site.

While driving, I began to consider doing a Lughnasa rite at the shrine. I then realized I had nothing special to offer Brigid, until I looked into the road beside where I parked and saw a blue cloth rose lying there. It was one of those funeral bouquet roses with the fake water droplets (there was a cemetery directly up the road from where I stood). Accepting serendipity, I picked it up.

Moving along, I gathered accoutrements from what I had. I took along four Clementine oranges, my bag of "special stuff", my camera, and some bottles. I walked down a small hill to the entrance of the shrine and respectfully observed the site. Upon walking into the shrine there is a definite feeling of sacredness. There were offerings covering all but the floor of the curving path to the well.

I set up my ritual space. Since I had no flame, I used an orange to symbolize Fire. The well itself obviously served as the Well, and a cross painted on the wall became my World Tree. I then realized I could not remember the order of ADF liturgy and decided to wing it.

Speaking in a soft voice, I took an orange and said "To those who are outsiders by choice and by force, I offer you this." I then placed it on a ledge near the outside of the doorway.

I sang a song for Brigid in thanks for her allowing me to use her sacred space for my rite (before starting I had given her the rose quietly). Then, I spoke to Lugh and asked that I not be interrupted while doing my work.

I gave offerings to my ancestors/spirits of the land (the same offering since here they are one and the same) and to Lugh. Both got oranges.

I opened the gates quietly and spoke to Manannan Mac Lir. I then offered my honor and respect to Lugh. I cannot recall all that I said- it flowed into the ether and didn't really stick in my head.

As I didn't bring in any sort of divining tool, I quieted my mind and asked if the offerings were accepted. Once I felt that they had been I asked for a boon; that my driving be safe during the rest of my time in Ireland since I had a few problems earlier in the trip. In reflection, I had no more serious difficulties after that.

Then I asked Brigid if I might take some of her water for my grove, a friend and myself. I respectfully filled three small bottles. I took the oranges outside and placed them on the ledge opposite of the Outsiders ledge once I had closed the gates. As I was pulling out of the drive another car pulled in. I saw no people while celebrating my feast and was very happy with the way it turned out. This was my first solo ADF-Style worship.

Once I returned home I became curious about the history of the shrine. I chose it for my Lughnasa rite because it seemed like a good idea at the time. As I stated above, there was very little forethought involved.

Maire MacNeil, author of The Festival of Lughnasa (Oxford University Press, 1962), suggests that the current shrine is a continuation of a long standing tradition. She recorded the account of an Archdeacon of the Anglican Church named James Kenny, "who had lived in the district since 1775."

The last Sunday in July is a patron day, when a number of people assemble at Labinchy¹: they amuse themselves with horse-racing on the strand, dancing &c. near it. This Sunday is called Garlic Sunday but for what reason is not known. On Saturday evening preceding this Sunday, numbers of people, male and female, assemble at St. Bridget's

Well, and remain there the entire of the night. They first perform their rounds², and then spend a good part of the time in invoking this saint Bridget over the well, repeating their prayers and adorations aloud, and holding their conversations with the Saint, &c. When this ceremony is over, they amuse themselves until morning by dancing and singing, &c. They then [on Sunday morning] repair to Labensy³, distant from this well at least three miles, to conclude their merriment. This well is also resorted to, on the first of February (MacNeil, 276).

On page 277, she goes on to say:

Everything we know about the well, the form of its Irish name⁴, its wide local celebrity, and the mode of honouring it, suggest ancient custom rather than late innovation. And we can be certain that it was already well established during the incumbency of Archdeacon Kenny.

It was noted by MacNeil that there was an inscription to be found above the well in 1839⁵:

St. Bridget, V. Abbess and patroness of Ireland lived in a Cell which she built under an Oak Thence called Kill-Dara or Cell of the Oak her festival is celebrated on the 1st day of February every year.

County Kildare is situated on the eastern side of the country near Dublin. The well in Clare is located very near the Cliffs of Moher and the ocean. MacNeil suggested that whomever made the inscription was likely a learned Catholic gentleman hoping "to harmonize a local devotion with the accepted learning of his day about Saint Brigid (Mac Neil, 277)."

I agree with MacNeil: the old local customs that surrounded the well are likely offshoots of a more an-

cient practice. I know very little about the Irish language, however, if one notes the distance between the Counties and the fact that a major festival was enacted the last Sunday of July - it is not impossible that this is a more modern (and socially acceptable) adaptation of old Lughnasa festivities.

When Maire MacNeil published her book on Lughnasa in 1962, there was very little in the way of adherence to the traditions that lasted until at least the nineteenth century. It is possible that the traditions died off because of the *Hungry Times*⁶ or a desire to modernize. Whatever it was, we are quite lucky to have accounts of these traditions from local *shanachies*.



1. Lahinch is a nearby town
2. Stations of the Cross?
3. A reference to Lahinch?
4. Daigh Bhride or Dabhach Bhride; Bridget's Vat (MacNeil 276)
5. As recorded by a man surnamed O'Curry and reprinted in by MacNeil
6. The event that people often refer to as the Irish Potato Famine was in reality a series of catastrophic crop failures due to potato blight. However, An Gorta Mór, The Great Hunger, occurred from about 1845-1850.



American SIG



The purposes of the American SIG are, in no particular order: to discuss American culture as an IE hearth culture within ADF, to discuss the impact and implications of American culture on those focusing on other hearth cultures within ADF, to discuss the possible existence and makeup of an American Pantheon(s), and to discuss the feasibility or lack thereof of a potential American Kin(s) as our ideas of an American hearth culture develop. For more information, you can subscribe to the group's e-mail list ADF-American using the subscription page , or you can contact the SIG coordinator Karen Dutton directly at:

kdutton@carolina.rr.com

Duck; My Favorite Outsider

By *Lady DragonStar*

Ever since I embarked upon my personal Neopagan journey, I have had a constant guide, companion, and well, sometimes a source of frustration. To be honest, he's probably been around all my life, but it wasn't until I began following the path that he introduced himself to me, and told me his name. My playful companion likes to be called Puck.

Puck is, of course a bit of a nickname actually because his full name is Robin Goodfellow. He tells me he likes to think of himself as "the Outsider's Outsider", a playful trickster who likes to teach through chaos, and the only law he obeys is Murphy's Law. He can be quite frustrating at times, but, as he likes to point out, he's here to remind me not to take things too seriously. Apparently, I'm in need of almost constant reminding at times. As long as I leave room for him to enter, and don't try to micromanage things, there's usually little damage done.

One of his favorite ways to do this is through hiding things. He seems to be rather fond of hiding my keys, and I have since learned to keep a few spares around. Usually, if the lost object doesn't turn up after a thorough search, bribery brings them back. He's particularly fond of milk and butter (of course not that margarine that I use, but REAL butter.) If I don't have the good stuff, it's better not to bother. If the object was "lost" due to Puck's interfere. . . um, I mean influence, it usually turns up within a day or so, and always in some obvious place like the coffee table, just to let me know that there is no way I could have overlooked it there. His latest favorite target seems to be my cellular phone. At the time of this writing I haven't the foggiest where it is!



Puck loves cats. He loves to tease them and to employ them in his service. And speaking of employment, in the last few years I've provided him with what appears to be his favorite assistant yet, I gave birth to him. Puck adores children, and it seems that he has made my three year old his chief lieutenant. The latest lesson he taught me? Family comes before possessions, and if you want to keep your stuff unscathed, make sure not to leave your seam ripper where little hands can find them. The victim? My brand new sofa. My little sweetie decided he wanted to know what's inside, and shredded the arm of my sofa with the expertise of a DEA raid. But Puck is kind. I'm only having to replace the arm, and not the whole sofa. Lessons learned. I just know he's got my eight month old in training. I can see it in his eyes and in that mischievous grin.

Eldr ok Iss : Kin of Fire and Ice

The Kin of Fire and Ice is a Kin for ADF members interested and/or practicing the Germanic & Northern Traditions.

Our mailing list is ADF-Norse, and you can sign up for it on the member subscription page.

We are currently collecting information to assist ADF members interested in the study of the Germanic & Norse Gods and Goddesses.

Kin Chief: Flip Rutledge flip@chainolakescamp.com **Vice Chieftan:** Jeff Cummings njpagan@yahoo.com

Moebius Strip: The outside is the inside is the same side

By Edwin Chapman

This issue of *Oak Leaves* is devoted to Outdwellers, or Outsiders: those that dwell outside our comfort zones, those that might mean harm to our rituals, or even our lives - those our Gods "fought against," as some of the old ADF liturgies put it. I have seen groves banish outsiders, I have heard them called "twisted, misshapen ones who stood against the Gods," I've seen various people wave swords and knives at them.

In Grove of the Other Gods we "make an offering to honor the outsiders." This involves taking them a bit of the same stuff we're offering to the kindreds - waters, flowers, whatever - and taking it outside the ritual space and pouring some out and waiting to see if they've accepted it, thus sealing a contract between us and them: here's something for you, now don't screw around with us too much as we try to honor the kindreds and the Gods. Or, more colloquially put, here's a dollar, go see a movie and don't bother us for a while. Sometimes our outsiders will not only take the offering, but the offerer as well, and on more than one occasion we've had to retrieve a grove member from one of the local bars where they were "hangin' with the outsiders."

We make our ritual outsiders offering just after the gate opening, as the outsiders we're most concerned about are more likely to come through spiritual gates than physical ones. I've seen groves do it before the gate opening to clear the space, and that works too.

But I beg you - do not threaten, rage at, rant at, or promise harm to the outsiders. Our religion is one that values reciprocity, and we are all outsiders at some point.

Our very Gods and Goddesses are outsiders in the predominantly Judeo-Christian-Islamic society we live in. And, best believe it, there are people who threaten, rage at, rant at, and promise harm to our Gods and

Their followers.

Are we to do the same to the Gods of the pantheons preceding the ones we worship? Giants, Titans, Fomori. . . who are these but older Gods than ours? Don't we owe them some respect? If you read the old stories with an honest heart and mind, you'll see that the outsiders frequently are, as one of our members puts it, "the Gods who were here first, before our Gods kicked them out."

And, sometimes, we are outsiders, ourselves, on this land.

Are the outsiders that you're banishing in the woods the spirits that own the place? Are you the real outsider, coming in with your ritual and your grove stomping around someone else's home?

GOG did a Beltane ritual in a park we had used once before, but it became increasingly apparent as this ritual progressed that WE were the outsiders on that land. We hadn't greeted the land properly when we arrived. We hadn't blessed it. We hadn't asked for its consent to stick our maypole. . . where we stuck it.

And so we wound up, unexpectedly, the outsiders in our own ritual. When we honored the outsiders and asked them to wait outside, we all had this strong urge to get up and leave. It was a good lesson. Since then, we've learned how to honor that land, we've

learned what it wants, and all our subsequent Beltanes there have been blessed by the spirit of that land. Sometimes, with a little work on both sides, outsiders can become insiders.

What about outsiders that really mean you harm?

Can you banish them by waving a sword? Ya gotta put that sword away sometime.

Yet, most of us have protective sigils, circles, or wards around our houses, our sacred sites, sometimes



even our cars. What are we protecting them against? Outsiders. Those who would do harm to those things, or to ourselves or our loved ones. Malevolent spirits, perhaps, but also thieves and vandals and worse. I can hear hard-core outsider banishers asking, "Can you make an offering to honor a rapist and ask him to leave you alone?" Fair enough.

But is it really wise to wave a sword around your street and call out to all the thieves and vandals and worse and challenge them not to bother you?

Wouldn't it be better to simply stick a "Protected by Alarm" sticker on your door? There's a certain way of walking in a city that says you belong there and are not to be messed with. You don't stop in the middle of the street and announce loudly to all the world that you're going to do people harm if they screw with you - while most people would think you were merely nuts, there are a few in my neighborhood who might take that as an invitation.

In our cities, we live with outsiders around us all the time. Maybe that's why GOG deals with outsiders differently than most groves. We've got a lot of homeless people in town. We also had a multiple rapist in our neighborhood for several months - before he got caught. We try to make sure our grove members don't walk to their cars by themselves at night. This is more sensible than challenging outsiders, or seeing the universe as inherently hostile.

Also, if you make an offering to some outsiders - give a little change to a homeless person, for instance - they just might watch out for you when you're alone. When my wife, Norma, fell on the ice at the bottom of the hill by our train station, the homeless guys made sure she was all right and made sure she got home ok. Outsiders.

Outsiders can have a different view of things and sometimes something to tell you, or give you.

The outsiders in the city are also Pan's children - and the children of prophecy. They live in liminal spaces and have access to knowledge that can help you. While it's probably not good to get too close to them, if you've made offerings in good faith they might have a deal they might want to make with you at some point, for something you might want. In one instance (among several), we found a homeless guy sitting on our front steps, and when we stepped past him to go inside, he told us that for a dollar he could change the weather. The next day was the grove Beltane, and it was supposed to rain buckets. I fished

around in my pocket and found fifty cents. The outsider told me that it would take a dollar, so I went upstairs and got him a dollar. The weather turned out to be beautiful.

And then there are outsiders that are inside.

In a Grove of the Other Gods outsider offering, we frequently ask people to set aside the outsider in themselves: their tensions, their worries, stresses from driving to get to the ritual and then meeting all these weird people, their anger, their fears, and particularly their skepticism - for these are also outsiders in a Druid ritual. And we remind people that they can still pick up all their skepticism, stress and anger on the way out - our grove is in New Jersey, after all, and you need those things to survive here.

I've been in circles where people have declared that they were going to "banish all negativity." I sat and waited for positrons to spin loose from their counterparts and the entire fabric of the universe to



become unraveled, and while I can only conclude that they were unsuccessful in banishing all negativity, I have to admit, it did make me want to leave the circle. We've all got a bit of outsider in us, sometimes more than a bit. Rather than banish it, you could recognize it, honor it, and make an offering to those parts of yourself. If nothing else, it'll make you more of an honest person.

Credits:

We've talked about outsiders in GOG a lot - and the ideas floating through this essay (and several complete word-for-word sentences) are the product of the minds of many grove members over many years.

This rumination on outsiders was inspired by Mercury - specifically the Mercury who sits atop Grand Central Station in New York. That big important Roman God is an outsider. Most people look up at Him and just see a mythological symbol of an abstract concept: time flying, fast trains moving, buses speeding along highways like winged shoes.

Yet, he presides over the crowds, day after day.

And, furthermore, I think He's happy to be an outsider. An overtly "religious" sculpture of Jesus or a saint (say, Saint Christopher*) would probably have incited protest and been struck down (literally) by the courts as a violation of this country's long tangled history of separation of church and state.

As mere mythological symbols, Mercury and His kin can hang out on public buildings keeping an eye on things and doing all sorts of wonderful works. Themis looks over courthouses. Athena keeps watch at university libraries. In some ways, outsiders get to have their cake and eat it too.



*Actually, I've heard that Saint Christopher has been decanonised by the Catholic Church and is now an "outsider" too. The person who told me this also told me that she still talks to "Mr. Christopher" when she's getting ready for a long trip.

What's A Wiki?

- Wiki is a constantly changing and growing wealth of information at your finger tips.
- Wiki is a great way to get to know other ADF members.
- Wiki is a great way to find out more about ADF.
- Wiki allows you to find goods and services provided by ADF members.
- Wiki is an easy to use interactive tool on the ADF web site. It allows you to create new pages of information, add to pages already created and share your experiences with others.

A few of the current Wiki uses are:

A Listing Online DP Journals • Festival Listings • ADF Members Offering Their Goods & Services • Available Presenters For Local Workshops • And Much More!

Have You Wiki-ed Today?

<http://www.adf.org/members/wiki>



News and Announcements

Fully Chartered Groves

Sassafras Grove, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, chartered January 19, 2005

Protogroves

Hazelnut Mead Protogrove, Carthage, Missouri, founded On January 20, 2005

Eagle's Flight Protogrove, Boynton Beach, Florida, founded January 31, 2005

Wild Honey Protogrove, Westminster, Maryland, founded On February 17, 2005

Red Dragon Protogrove, Dothan, Alabama, founded February 10, 2005

DP Completion

Sgillinn completed February 15, 2005

Norma Hoffman of Grove of the Other Gods, completed February 19, 2005



Dancing Lights Protogrove, ADF

We'd like to welcome our newest full grove members, who joined near the end of 2004; Lisa W., Sebastian D. and Erin K. Also, we'd like to announce that Sebastian has become our Toronto liaison, and will be doing correspondence and meeting with potential new grove members from that area, as most of our current members are from the GTA.

Zoe and Bill, of Dancing Lights Protogrove (Ontario, Canada), are proud to announce the arrival of their second child, who arrived at 12:41 am on Tuesday, February 15th, 2005. Her name is Danika, and weighed in at 9lbs, 7oz. Her big sister Brigit is happy to show off "baby Nika" to the world, and teach her everything she knows.

Our children's circle (Faery Lights Circle) has been gaining more members lately, and our rituals are going along really nicely. The parents are taking turns leading and organizing, and we're becoming a won-

derful, tight knit little "family". We've begun to include a craft and a sabbat lesson/activity book at each ritual, and potluck feast after, and the kids really enjoy it.

Zoe

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Tear of the Cloud Protogrove, ADF

Tear of the Cloud Protogrove is currently in the process of getting things together to apply for provisional charter. We held a successful Eostar on March 20th and celebrated the birthday of Illious.



Red Dragon Protogrove, ADF

I was asked to submit a small report on what is going on with us here in Dothan, AL. Unfortunately us being one of the newest Protogroves we don't have a lot to tell you. One thing we now have is an egroup/ mailing list set up on yahoo for discussions, announcements, etc. Our address is: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/RedDragonProtogrove_ADF/>

Also we now have a monthly (or bi-monthly as I can afford) snail mail newsletter named Dragon Winds which is to be used for articles, upcoming events for the current month and the following month, small introductions to the various Guilds, Kins, & SIGs of ADF, etc. Basically it will be a small version of Oak Leaves that is geared towards the Protogrove & the local Neopagan community.

Ddraig Goch ddyry gychwyn! (The Red Dragon will show the way!)

Pob Bendith,
Tan yr Ddraig
Grove Organizer of Red Dragon Protogrove, ADF



Ravens Cry Grove

Pamela and Kevin Basham are the proud parents of a beautiful little girl. Caitlin joined them on February 12, 2005. She was a very healthy 7 pounds, 15 ounces.



Rogue River Grove

Rogue River Grove now holds monthly gatherings on the second Saturday of each month.

These monthly meetings consist of a short workshop on Druidry followed by a ritual.

These gatherings are open to anyone interested in Druidry, not just ADF members. All we ask is respect for all paths. Those under 18 are welcome as long as they are accompanied by a parent or guardian. We request a donation of \$1.00 to cover ritual supplies, but no one will be turned away for lack of funds.

When the weather is nice we will meet at a local park. If the weather is rainy the gathering will instead be held at a private residence.

On those months that do not have a High Day, please feel free to make a special request, such as to witness your dedication oath to a Patron. Otherwise, we will pray for and send energy toward protecting our soldiers, a better Oregon economy and healing the environment.

For details, please feel free to send an email to: aigeann@earthlink.net or call: 541-535-4524.

For more information about Rogue River Grove, ADF go to:

<<http://www.adf.org/groups/groves/rogue-river>>



Sassafras Grove, ADF

Sassafras Grove has been keeping busy these past few months trying to ward off the chill of the Western Pennsylvania winter.

We continued our “Second Fridays at Moonstones” series in October with a workshop on “Wicca and Druidry”, facilitated by Emerald. At Samhain, we worked with our traditional grove theme of Wyrd. Rowan led the lore meeting that included a discussion of the Norns and Fate in Norse tradition. At the Samhain rite, we called Odin as Gatekeeper to lead us to the Norns, where we sought insight into our role in the Great Pattern. Also following Sass tradition, we took the opportunity to bless our divination tools. Twenty-five people attended. Our November Bardic Circle focused on “Sing Along Songs” where we had a chance to teach and learn some our favorites.

Earrach and Maria led the Lore Meeting for Yule where we worked with the image of the Modron, the Dark Mother who births the Sun. Our Yule rite was held at the Waldorf School of Pittsburgh in a gorgeous room, complete with pews and stained glass windows, formally used as a chapel. Thirty-eight people participated. Earrach invoked Hen Gwyr as the Gatekeeper and Maria led attendees in a sung invocation to the Modron. Also in December, Deana began our workshop mini-series on the Kindred by facilitating a discussion on Ancestors. Some of the topics included were defining ancestors, and how do we honor those of our blood who do not share our religious beliefs. At our January Bardic we challenged people to bring in “happy songs” to cheer us during the dark winter days. Naughty blacksmiths and drinking were popular themes.

Brigantia 2005 marked the 100th public rite celebrated by Sassafras. Maria led the Lore Meeting that covered various Pan-Celtic Brighid traditions, Christian assimilation of pagan traditions and a brave attempt at making Brighid Crosses. A few days before the rite, seven of the women who would call the nine traditional aspects of Brighid gathered for a women’s rite to prepare ourselves for the public work and reconsecrate the mask used each year by our Brighid priestess. Almost 50 people attended the rite itself. Earrach opened the way to Our Patroness with the help of her father the Daghdah and an intense visualization of his cook pot of plenty. Our Kindred workshops continued with Nature Spirits; Earrach leading the discussion on spirits of place, Deana on animal spirits and Maria on Faerie. Following the workshop, grove members and friends gathered for cake and champagne to celebrate our 100th anniversary.

We presented our first blessing rite in March. Emerald designed and facilitated the Greek-themed event. We also had a chance to try out a new processional song she had written. Earrach led the Lore Meeting for Spring Equinox and covered astronomical implications as well as discussions on Bede, calendars, and English word origins. At the rite, Diana invoked Nerthus as the Gatekeeper and Earrach called Oestre, the Spring Herself, as Primary Deity. About thirty people attended. The morning after the rite, at the exact moment of the equinox, several grove members gathered to unearth our oaken Nethus idol that Diana had buried last fall at the moment of autumn equinox. The idol was bathed, anointed with oils, and will spend her six months above ground visiting the homes of grove members.

In other news, Leslie and Chris Setlock are the very proud parents of a lovely daughter. Lila Josephine joined the family, which includes brother Aidan, on November 24, 2004 at 6:22 AM. Welcome to the grove, Lila! Alex Griffith (Acierno) received his Bachelor degree from Slippery Rock University in December. In January, Sassafra became the sixth Fully Chartered Grove of ADF.

Maria Stoy
Grove Steward
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Scholar's Guild

I am very proud to announce that the Scholars' Guild Study Program is ready to begin accepting students again. The First Circle has been rewritten, and open for business again, ahead of the Spring Equinox deadline.

The text of the new First Circle appears below, for those interested.

Jeremy
Scholars' Guild Preceptor
First Circle


The First Circle of the Scholars' Guild Study Program shall be attained by completing the following courses from the General Scholarship Sequence:

- IE Studies 1
- Critical Thinking
- Research and Composition
- History of Neopaganism and Druidry
- IE Language 1
- IE Myth 1

In addition, the Scholar should submit a "mission statement" (750-1000 words) that addresses the following questions at least generally. This is by no means a "binding" document, and is intended mostly as an exercise in reflection and conscious learning.


What role does scholarship play in your personal spirituality? Why do you wish to be a Scholar? To be known as a Scholar? Do you have any personal areas of scholarly interest? What are they? What plans do you have for further investigating them?

If you were to teach a class, what would it be in? Do you feel you could teach it now? What more would you like to learn so you would feel more comfortable teaching it? What would you teach at an ADF workshop? At a local Pagan shop? To your Grove? To Pagan friends who are not in ADF? To non-Pagan (but accepting) friends?



The ADF Mother Grove extends its gratitude and general kudos to Narabali Agnayi for the terrific work she has performed as volunteer editor of Oak Leaves. Narabali's hard work, creativity, competence and willingness to throw herself into producing our journal without asking for a title or public recognition have been priceless gifts to the organization when it needed them most.

Thank you, Narabali. You rock!



Bliss of Relevance

How a 7-Pound Baby Taught Me What Was *Really* Important

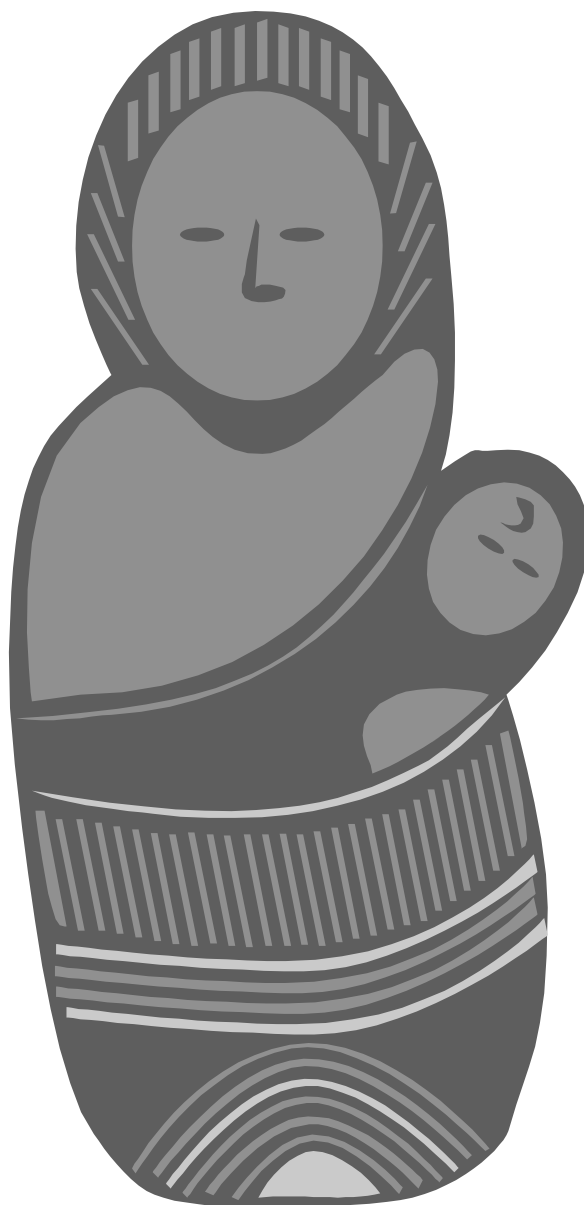
By Anne Lenzi

When my husband and I decided to have a child, we were typical middle class liberals. We planned out every aspect of the birth, and went to all the classes. We decreed that our son would breast-feed until two, fed only the finest organic baby food, clothed in only organic cloth diapers underneath his fair trade wrap, and transported from place to place in the latest baby sling technology. We scoffed at bottle feeders (lazy!) and parents who used disposable diapers (polluters!). Each night, we lay in bed assuring each other we would be *good* Pagan Parents.

Absolutely nothing went as planned. In the end, almost none of the things we had planned for so intricately actually happened. And now, two years later, I can't say I mind at all (at the time I felt like the worst parent on the planet, but that's another essay). My son showed me how utterly unimportant the material trappings of parenthood are. All he has ever really wanted was to be loved, eat good food, sleep in a warm bed, and have strong arms hold him when he was scared. Those things we have been able to give him without reservation. It doesn't seem to bother him a bit to have his stroller cushion re-sewn or to receive "new" pants looking suspiciously like the ones my best friend's son wore years ago.

About a year ago, I was interviewed by a graduate student who asked me what I first felt was the most important aspect of my Druidry was, to which I replied: "Relevance." I believe there are many, many truths and we have an obligation to accept none of them blindly. Before I had my son, I took most baby advice as "truth," especially on subjects like breast-feeding and I looked down on people who didn't share my views. When we had to make the choices for our son, all of those "truths" became irrelevant, and totally unimportant. If I had followed those baby truths I held so dear to my heart before my son was born, I'd be dead.

I think we are often fooled by the trappings of religion and miss what's really relevant. It's not the



robes, accessories, or the well written rituals that make us good Druids. It is the critical examination of the "truth" and the refusal to follow it blindly that makes us good Druids.





Little Acorns

Summer Solstice in Little Acorns' Grove

Lady DragonStar

There was a lot of activity in Little Acorns' Grove today, because everyone was busy getting ready for the Summer Solstice ritual. Daddy was cleaning up the grove, and Mommy was baking bread and helping to cook the food for the feast. Mama Selu was preparing the nine sacred woods for the ritual fire, while Morgan was busy mixing the herbs for the incense. Baby Brigid was taking a nap in her cradle while Collin and Aidan played in the front yard.

"Collin! Aidan! Please come here!" Mother called from the kitchen. "I have jobs for you!" Collin and Aidan put down the sticks that they were playing with and leapt up onto the porch, which always smelled wonderful this time of year, with bundles of dried herbs hanging from the rafters.

"What do you need, Mama?" Collin asked.

"I'd like for you to take this basket and go out into the field to pick some wildflowers for the altar," Mama said. "Be sure to remember to say 'please' and 'thank you' to the flower faeries."

Aidan took the basket and they headed for the door.

"Wait boys, there's one more thing," Mama said. The two boys turned back around. "At the ritual today, there are some parts that still need to be filled, and I was wondering if you might like to help out."

The two boys jumped up and down with excitement. "What is it? What is it?" they asked excitedly, for they knew only big boys and girls got to play parts in the rituals.

"Well," Mama said, "Aidan, I'd like for you to give out flowers to everyone at the ritual, welcoming them to the grove."

"Ok," said Aidan.

"And Collin, would you mind making the offering to the Outsiders? It's a small part, but very important."

"Sure," said Collin, "I'd love to, but..."

"Yes?" Mother asked.

"I was wondering, why do we make offerings to the Outsiders?"

"Yeah," said Aidan, "Why do we want them to stay away?"

"And if we want them to stay away," said Collin, "why do we give them offerings? Wouldn't that make them want to come instead of go away?"

"Well," said Mama, dusting the flour off her hands as she sat down on the wooden bench. "I'm glad you asked."

"You see, there are many spirits in the Otherworld. Some of them are friendly."

"Like the ones we call upon in ritual?" asked Aidan.

"Yes, but not all of them are friendly," said Mama. "Most of them could care less what we're doing, one way or another, but there are a few who are very angry with humans for what some people have done to them in the past. There are others, tricksters we call them, who like to play jokes on people, and could mess up our ritual just for fun, and, although they don't mean any harm, they could really botch things up."

"You mean like Puck?" said Collin, thinking of their favourite mischievous sprite.

"But I like Pucky!" said Aidan. "He's so much fun to play with!"

"Yes, for playtime he can be fun, but he can cause a lot of trouble, too," Mama said with a smile.

"Yeah," Collin laughed, "like the way he likes to hide your keys!"

"Uh, huh," that kind of thing can be very distracting in rituals," Mama replied. So we make an offering to the outsiders of things they like: cakes, milk, whiskey, mirrors and shiny things they can have fun with while we do our work. We do this to let them know that, while we appreciate them, we don't wish to be distracted by them, so we give them food, drink and something to play with."

"Oh, I'd love to do that! I've got some little mirrors and beads they would love!" shouted Collin.

"Me too! Me too!" laughed Aidan. "This will be fun!"

"Great!" said Mama. "I was hoping you'd like that. Now go and get the flowers, and have fun!"

The boys grabbed up the basket and ran off to the flower fields singing, "Presents for Pucky! Presents for Pucky! We're gonna give presents to Pucky!"





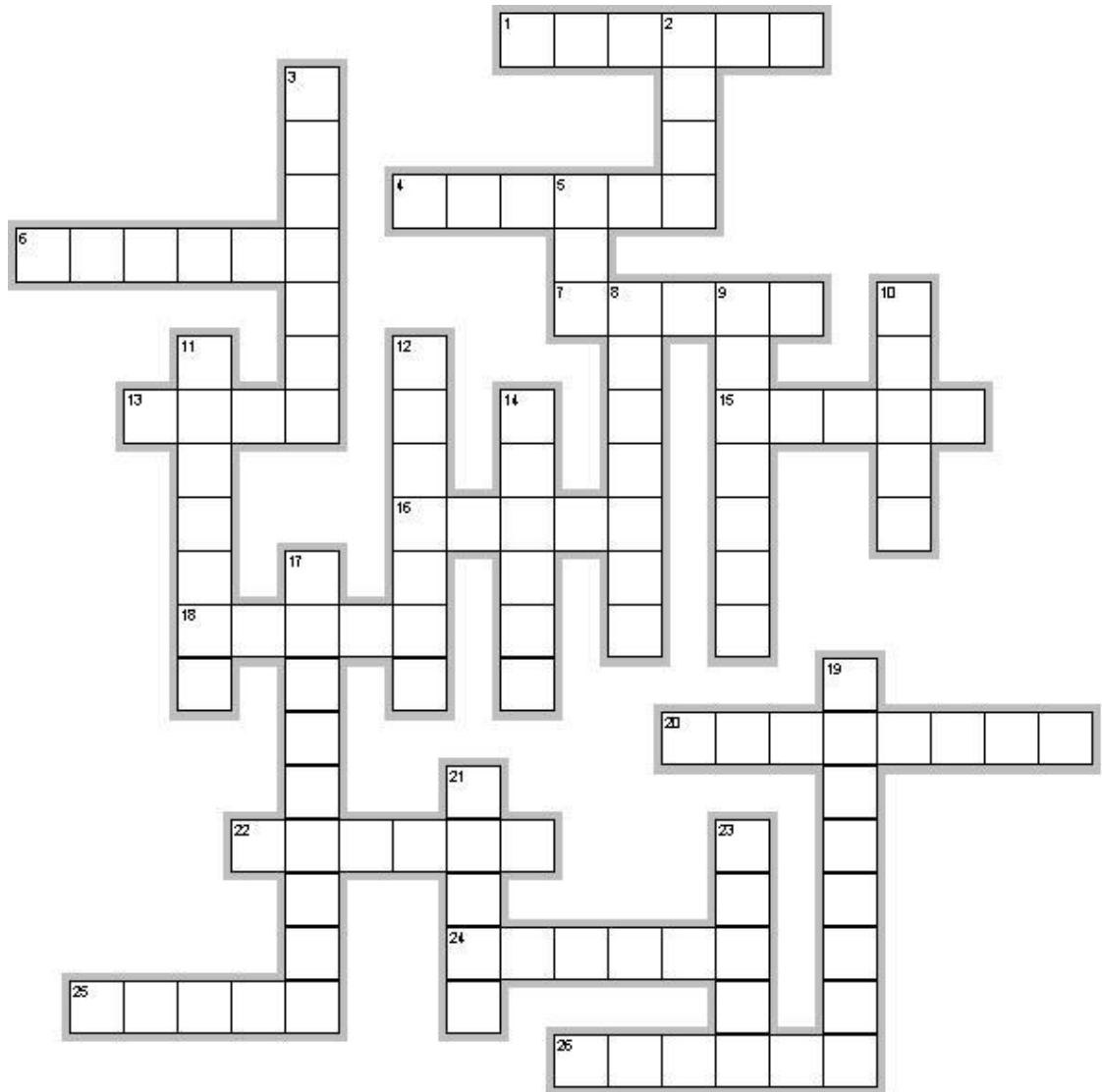
Crossword Puzzle

Across

1. Scottish -Water Demons who drowned their victims after luring them to the water.
4. Greek - This god of fear was said to be in the center of Hercules shield.
6. Roman - Wicked spirits known for wandering among the living haunting and driving them to madness.
7. Norse - Unpredictable elves for good or ill.
13. I.E - This mischievous spirit appears in A midsummer night's dream.
15. Greek - The Goddess of lies and deceit.
16. Celtic - According to prophecy, this monster was to be killed by his grandson.
18. Norse - A large cave dwelling malicious earth spirit/ monster.
20. Slavic - A spiteful male yard spirit.
22. Celtic- Malevolent otherworld creature who came out of his cave at Samhain and burned the Royal house of Tara.
24. Greek - He is the personification of darkness.
25. Greek -The Theogony says: "In the beginning there was only _____."
26. Greek - Cronos, Rhea, Oceanus, Themis etc.

Down

2. Greek - Goddess of discord and strife, sister to Aries.
3. Slavic - This field spirit with grass for hair leads folks astray.
5. Greek - She is the personification of destructive force.



Created with EclipseCrossword — www.eclipsecrossword.com

Down Continued

8. Roman - Malignant spirits - ghosts.
9. Greek - An avenging spirit or nemesis.
10. Norse- This race of giants, represents nature's force of Chaos.
11. Persian - The Daeva and personification of laziness.
12. Celtic - Eochaid, Taitiu, Gann, Slainge etc.
14. Norse - The sensitive folk of the mounds and forests - not slain by sunlight.
17. Celtic - According to the book of Dun Cow, they have the body of a man and the head of a goat.
19. Greek & Roman - To avoid their revenge you called them the kindly ones.
21. Greek - They are sharp clawed creatures who dress in red and are often seen hovering around battle fields.
23. Persian - This Daeva is the personification of violence.

The Two Powers

By Kirk Thomas

There has been some discussion on the Liturgy list about the effectiveness of the Two Powers Meditation at large rites. Often, not everyone at a large ritual is interested in a formal entrancement, and leading one is definitely dependent on the skills of the leader. While some of the participants can really feel the power of the meditation, others are totally bewildered.

I believe that we should continue to use the full, formal induction at our smaller rituals, where we probably get a more dedicated class of participant, but at our larger rites (like the High Day rituals in my Grove which usually attract 60-80 people), something shorter might be best, eliminating a possible 15-minute 'hole' in the ritual.

The primary purpose of the 2 Powers Meditation is to ground and center the people, to attune them to the powers of the earth and sky (or chaos and order) and to unify them for our common purpose (based on the Order of Ritual in the DP booklet and Isaac Bonewitz' "Rites of Worship").

The following is a possible alternative to the trance induction for use in large rites:

Priest says: (Opening Prayer)

**O Waters of the Earth, deep and dark,
Arise, primeval powers, fill us now
With all your wondrous possibilities,
That through the Earth our Mother we may
ground and join as one.**

**O Fires of the sky, O blinding light,
Descend and crystallize within us all
That spark of order on which life depends,
That through the Sky our Father we may shine
and share as one.**

Priest says: (Centering)

**For just a moment let us close our eyes and feel
the life which courses
through us all.**

(pause)

**The beating of our hearts is at the center of our
core.**

**Like sparkling blood, the coursing of the waters
and the light of life**

Now mix and swirl and energize us all.

(A single drummer begins an appropriate pattern)

Priest says: (Litany)

Chaos of the Earth, now fill us!

People say:

Chaos of the Earth, now fill us!

Priest says:

Order of the Heavens, mold us!

People say:

Order of the Heavens, mold us!

Priest says:

Join the powers deep within us!

People say:

Join the powers deep within us!

Priest says:

**With the merging of these powers let us join as
one!**

Bard: (Unity)

*The bard begins intoning and the people join in. The drumming
continues. The*

*Bard intones through the main English vowels, a e i o u, ending
with "So be*

*it" in the appropriate language. Or, a Unity song could be sung
here,*

such as, "Unity In The Three Realms".



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Brewers SIG

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Children's Education and Parenting SIG

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The People of the Purple Feather

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Oi Asproi Koukouvyayies: White Owls Kin

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Tylwyth Y Ddraig Goch: Clan of the Red Dragon

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“Reintroducing Solitary Work into Your Life” pg. 12

“Discordia’s Apple” pg. 5

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“On the Benefits of Loki” pg. 6

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“On Opening a Gateway in ADF Rites” pg. 16

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“FAQ on ADF Ritual” pg. 18

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“Triumph of the Moon Book Report” pg. 10

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“Puck; My Favorite Outsider” pg. 26

“Summer Solstice in Little Acorn’s Grove” pg. 34

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“Moebius Strip: The Outside is the Inside is the Same Side” pg. 27

By Edwin Chapman

“Bliss of Relevance: How a 7-pound Baby Taught me what was Really Important” pg. 33

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“The Watcher In The Mist” pg. 8

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“Landwight Leif” pg. 8

Heilag Skjold Hearth © 2005

Photo on pg. 18

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Celtic knotwork on pgs 14 and 15
created by Steph Gooch © 2004

Submission Guidelines

Oak Leaves welcomes submissions of artwork, articles, poetry, letters to the editor, and anything else that might be of interest to our readers. Submissions, and especially artwork, relating to the turning of the wheel of the year and the celebration of the High Days are particularly encouraged. Submissions from non-members will be accepted, however, if space is constrained, preference will be given to submissions from ADF members.

Types of submissions and suggested length

- Articles (1,000 to 5,000 words)
- Short Fiction, Essays, Stories (up to 3,000 words)
- Book Reviews (250 - 500 words) - should include a graphic of the book cover
- Rituals (to 5,000 words)
- Reports (to 1,000 words)
- Poetry (length within reason)

Certain pieces may receive preference, depending on available space.

References and Notations:

Since excellent scholarship is one of ADF's goals, please document sources of ideas and materials that you used for your writings. Detailed endnote references are preferred rather than simply providing a bibliography. Please follow the standards for references in the MLA Handbook or Style Manual. We will not accept submissions with footnotes, as they require considerable editing to convert to endnotes.

Medium of Submission:

Electronic submissions are preferred, sent as email attachments to the Oak Leaves submissions address;

oak-leaves@adf.org

Send only one attachment per email, specifying the format in the message. We will also accept electronic submissions on IBM PC-compatible diskettes, sent to;

**OL Editor,
P.O. Box 112,
Colfax, IL 61728.**

Email submissions should be sent in one of the following formats: ASCII, Rich Text Format (RTF), or MS Word. Submitted materials will not be returned to the sender, unless specifically requested.



Please be sure to include the name you wish to be known by, your email, and a short Biography of yourself. Be sure the title of the piece and your name are at the top of the page, and you have checked it over for spelling and grammatical errors.

Art Submission Guidelines:

We now accept photos as well as drawings and computer generated pictures. Some of the color pictures will need to be modified to black and white but we will do that as necessary. We would like to have pictures submitted at 300dpi, and in a useable format such as .jpg, .gif, .bmp etc. Please send them to the Art Director at;

Vedis_Jansdottir@mchsi.com

We are currently not accepting hard copies of your art.

Editing Policy:

The Copy Editor and Assistant Copy Editors reserve the right to edit all submissions as they determine to be necessary. We try to edit with a light hand. In the event that a piece needs extensive editing, we will notify you with re-write suggestions. The Copy Editors will make a reasonable effort to inform the author of any major changes prior to publication. Grammar, typos and awkward or wordy phrasing will be corrected without notification.

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Deadlines:

Spring: January 1st,
Summer: April 1st,
Autumn: July 1st,
Winter: October 1st



Ár nDraiocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship

P.O. Box 17874, Tucson, AZ 85731-7874



Membership and Subscription Form

One form per person please.

Beside your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address, please indicate whether the information is: Publishable (P), meaning it can be printed in ADF publications and we can give it out freely to people who wish to contact you; Sharable (S), meaning we can give it out to ADF members who request it; or Confidential (C), meaning that only the Mother Grove and ADF office staff will have access to it.

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The information on this form represents a:

- New Membership
- Renewal
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If this is a new membership, where did you hear about us? _____
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 In which ADF Grove do you intend to participate in, if any? _____
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Please mail this form with your check or money order (made payable to "ADF" in U.S. dollars only.) Please allow 4-6 weeks for processing. There are special rates for Prisoners. Please contact us if you are a prisoner or are assisting one. This form may also be found online at: <http://www.adf.org/joining/join.html>.

Under 18 Membership Waiver

If you are under the age of 18, you must have a parent or guardian sign this waiver to indicate her/his permission for you to join ADF, and that signature must be notarized.

To whom it may concern: (enter child's name here) _____ has my permission to become a member of ADF, and I am fully aware of the Neopagan nature of this organization.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Parent/Guardian Printed Name

Notary Seal:

