

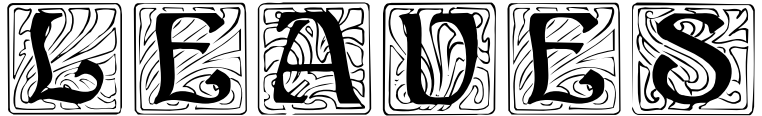
O A R I S F A U D E S

The Quarterly Journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin

Autumn 2008 ~ Issue No. 42







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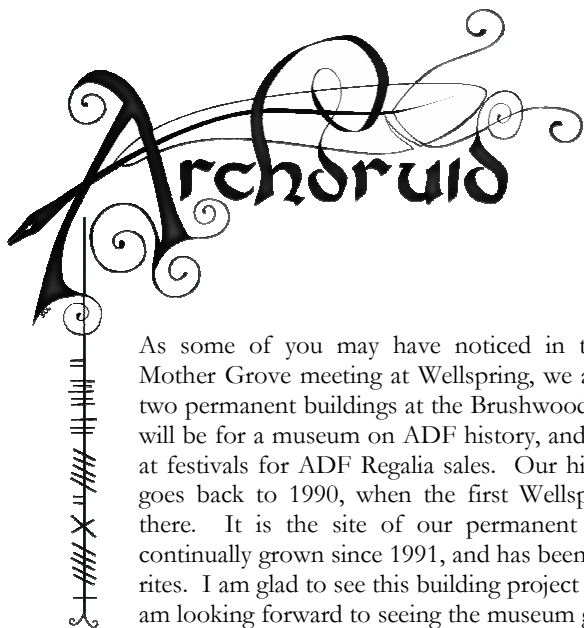
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As some of you may have noticed in the minutes from the Mother Grove meeting at Wellspring, we are going to be getting two permanent buildings at the Brushwood Folklore Center. One will be for a museum on ADF history, and the other will be used at festivals for ADF Regalia sales. Our history with Brushwood goes back to 1990, when the first Wellspring festival was held there. It is the site of our permanent Nemeton, which has continually grown since 1991, and has been the site of many ADF rites. I am glad to see this building project become a reality, and I am looking forward to seeing the museum grow.

While the MG approved the payment for the buildings out of general funds, we would like to see our members step up and help this project out by donating funds to the building fund. This would allow us to put the money back in the general funds to be used for further projects. If you can help, please visit the donation page at <http://www.adf.org/donations/>.

It has been a busy quarter for our Study Programs. We have had the Naturalist Guild and the Bardic Guild Study Programs approved, and have had a new SIG formed. The new Technopagan SIG is actually a revival of a one of our first guilds. Originally, in May of 1994, some of our members formed the Techno-Druids Guild, which lasted until July of 1997. In 1997, it changed into a SIG. The Techno-Druid SIG then lasted until January of 2003, when interest waned, and it was dropped. I am glad to see it come back, and hope that it maintains a high interest this time!

As election time draws near, I would like to take the opportunity to remind everyone to get out and vote. I'm not going to tell you who to vote for, but look back at the last eight years, and see if you want things to remain the same, or if you think it's time for a change. It is not just in the race for president where your vote is important. Many of the smaller elections could be decided by just a few votes, so it is very important that everyone get their vote in to be counted!

Bright Blessings,  
Rev. Skip Ellison

## OAK LEAVES

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# Huginn, Muninn and the Morrígan

By Karon A. Hartshorn

Huginn and Muninn on each shoulder of Óðinn. The Morrígan as Battle-Crow winging over the warring tribe of Ulster, marking certain men for death. To those of Norse or Celtic Heathenism, these two images are powerful, dark and sometimes frightening, often strangely invigorating. But are there any similarities between the mythical world of Óðinn and Thor and the doings of the Tuatha Dé Danann of Ireland, the figures of Lugh and the Dagda and the dealings of kings and heroes? It is possible through the comparison of mythology, folktales, and archeological remains to show a strong connection between Norse and Irish cultures, beliefs, religious symbols and their respective views of the supernatural world. By bringing together all these different types of materials, it is possible to find same or similar patterns in the society of both these cultures.

In both Norse and Irish cultures, much of the religious ritual and spiritual thought was concerned with battle, war and raiding; especially in their connections to natural surroundings and to the supernatural world. In this framework, deities, other supernatural beings and animals take on special powers; as deciders of life or death, victory or defeat, as providers of inspiration or counseling, as conduits to a rich afterlife of feasting and honors after dying victoriously on the battlefield. There was no separation between themselves and the natural world. They revered their dead and practiced various forms of divination, observing the movements of birds and animals, fire and water. They relied on supernatural powers ruling earth, sea and sky to bring them strength and luck and to protect them from

harmful forces. Vigorous animals such as horse, stag and bull along with fierce birds of prey like the eagle and the raven were seen as manifestations of supernatural powers.<sup>1</sup>



One such manifestation, the raven, is a complex figure in the two cultures. Ravens cross gender lines, being outward shapes of warrior gods and battle goddesses. The raven also crosses easily between the natural and supernatural worlds. It is present in battle, feeding on the dead and dying and it is also looked to for omens, prophesying and as a

teacher of wisdom and an arbiter of things yet to come. Ravens are known as shapeshifters, psychopomps and holders of hidden wisdom, and as such are linked to trickery, death and all the hidden realms. These perceptions of the raven which are retained even today come to us from the battle cultures of the Norse and the Irish.

## General Description of Ravens

Raven (*Corvus Corax*), also known as the 'Common Raven' or the 'Northern Raven', is the largest bird in the family *Corvidae* or *Corvini*. Raven's closest relatives in the subspecies *Corvus* include crows, jackdaws and rooks. They are spread mostly through the northern hemisphere, preferring upland and mountainous regions. However, they also inhabit forests, inshore islands, coastal areas, steppes, semi-deserts and plains. They have also been seen in cities and suburban areas. Ravens are larger than crows, about two feet long from beak to tail, with a heavy bill, shaggy throat hackles, long fingered wing tip and a long wedge shaped tail. The feathers are glossy black with shades of green

and bluish-purple in certain areas. The voice is normally a deep harsh croak or a hollow croaking honk. Ravens have a large, complex vocabulary of sounds – including a high "toc, toc, toc", low guttural rattles, a dry, grating "Kraa" and some musical calls. Captive birds have also been taught to speak. They're solitary nesters and are usually seen in pairs or in family parties. Among ravens are non-breeders and they gather in large groups at feeding sites or communal roosting. A wild raven can live more than thirty years.

Ravens are omnivorous eaters, preferring to scavenge but able to kill when necessary. They prefer carrion, but will also eat nestling birds and eggs, rodents, shellfish, insects, seeds, berries and grain. Ravens will also hide and store food for future use and scavenge in garbage dumps.

In northern regions, ravens have been observed to hunt cooperatively with wolves. Ravens alert wolves to prey, wait for the kill, then feed. Wolves and ravens have also been seen to play together; ravens swooping down on the wolves that will chase them playfully. Ravens (as well as other corvids) have a high level of intelligence, flexibility and adaptability. In *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds*, ornithologist John Terres writes, "Corvids have probably achieved the highest degree of intelligence to be found among any birds". According to neurologist Stanley Cobb, birds don't have a complex cerebral cortex such as mammals do, but they have developed their *hyperstriatum*, a part of their forebrain, that can carry out complex functions. Corvids have the largest brain size of any of the birds which would include having the largest *hyperstriatum*. Some consider the raven the highest form of avian life on earth because they have been proven to have reasoning abilities.

**Augers, Messengers and Holders of Wisdom**



In Norse mythology, Óðinn, leader of the Æsir and All-Father of the Gods has two ravens, one resting on each shoulder. They are two of the signatory animals of Óðinn, an extension of himself. One of Óðinn's many names is "Hrafna-Gud", the God of the Ravens. Huginn is Thoughtful (Bold) and Muninn is Memory (Desirous). They are sent out every day at daybreak from Asgard as messengers to watch over the Nine Worlds, returning to Óðinn to relate what they have seen and what they have learned. Thought, as personified by Huginn is made up of the three faculties of the mind; volition, perception and cognition (will). Memory, as personified by Muninn, is more than the simple recall of past events; it is the storehouse of all mysteries, the collective unconscious, the great rune-board.

Óðinn's ravens represent the powers of necromancy, clairvoyance and telepathy, and they were guides for the dead. While most often in the sagas, it is the women who performed most of the shamanic activities (*seiðr*), there is a detailed account from *Ynglingasaga* of *seiðr* being performed by Óðinn.

*"Óðinn could transform his shape; his body would lie as if dead, or asleep; but then he would be in the shape of a fish, or worm, or bird or beast, and be off in a twinkling to distant lands upon his own or other people's business... Sometimes even he called the dead out of the earth, or set himself beside the burial mounds; when he was called the ghost-sovereign and lord of the mounds.... By means of this, he could know beforehand the predestined fate of men, or their not yet completed lot; and also bring on the death, ill-luck, or bad health of people and take*

*the strength or wit from one person and give it to another."*

(*Heimskringla*, trans. Laing 1844/  
Online Mediaeval And Classical Library,  
OMACL)<sup>2</sup>

In the *Elder Eddas*, poem, the 'Grimnismal', a verse refers to Óðinn's ravens and perhaps expresses a shaman's fear of his loss of magical powers.

*The whole earth over everyday,  
hover Hugin and Munin  
I dread lest Huginn,  
droop in his flight.  
Yet I fear me more  
For Muninn.*<sup>3</sup>

Triple goddesses occupy a prominent place in the Irish pantheon. One such triune, known collectively as the Mórrígan, has associations with sorcery and prophecy as well as with battle, death and sexuality as will be seen later. The Mórrígan goes under a number of names – Macha, Badb, Mórrígan and Anu – and they can be seen as different aspects of the same figure. In the genealogies of the Tuatha Dé Danann, the *Banschenchas* and the *Leabhar Gabhála na hÉireann*, they are frequently grouped as sisters, with their craft as sorcery or prophecy.<sup>4</sup>

The word *mórrígan* consists of two elements: *rigan* meaning 'queen' and *mor*. 'Mor' has been taken to mean 'great' or it might derive from an Indo-European root connoting terror or monstrosity, cognate with the Old English *maere* (modern English word "nightmare") and the Scandinavian *mara*<sup>5</sup>. It's in the individual names of the Mórrígan triune that the raven or crow associations appear. In Hennessey, Badb and Macha are given to mean 'scald crow' and 'royston crow' respectively.

The Mórrígan, in the aspect of Badb, has the character of a prophetess of evil and is often

identified as the hag in "The Washer at The Ford". She is a woman by a river washing the spoils of battle, the limbs of the slain or garments taken from the dead. Also, on one occasion, Cúchulainn sees a fair young woman 'moaning and complaining and squeezing and washing purple, hacked wounded spoils on the bank of the ford, and Cathbad tells him that this is Badb and she this foretells the young hero's death in battle<sup>6</sup>. She is both mourning and foreseeing his death. The use of the washer device is in keeping with the Mórrígan's role as prophetess.

In the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, the Cattle Raid of Cooley, the Mórrígan first appears after Fergus mac Rioch has a premonition of Cúchulainn's arrival and at the arrival of the Donn Cúailnge, the "Brown Bull of Cooley" with his fifty heifers. She comes in the form of a bird, probably a raven and perches on top a stone pillar in Temair Cúailnge. The Mórrígan has seen the enemies Ailill and Medb on their way and she tells the Donn Cooley to leave Ulster. In this aspect, she both prophecies Donn's future in battle and also incites him into battle rage (he later tears apart many people and destroys many dwellings). This is the first place in the tales where the Mórrígan appears in avian form<sup>7</sup>.

The Mórrígan role often involves the premonition of a particular warrior's violent death. However, in those that she favors to be victorious, she could also be part of the celebration and prophecy of other things beside death and battle. In *Cath Maige Tuireadh*, The Second Battle of Moytura, the Tuatha Dé Danann achieve victory over the Fomorians and the Mórrígan chants a poem celebrating the victory and prophesizing the future of the Tuatha Dé Danann.

*"Then after the battle was won and the slaughter had been cleared away, the Mórrígan, the daughter of the Ernmas, proceeded to announce the battle and the great victory which had occurred there to the royal heights of Ireland and to its sid-hosts..." "Have you any news?" everyone asked her then.'*

*"Peace up to the heaven, heaven down to earth, strength in each, A cup very full, gull of honey; mead in abundance, summer in winter".<sup>8</sup>*

She also prophesied the end of the world, foretelling every evil that would occur, every disease and every vengeance:

*"I shall see a world which will be dear to me; summer without blossoms, cattle will be without milk, women without modesty, men without valor, conquests without a king...Woods without mast, sea without produce...False judgments of old men, false precedents of lawyers, every man a betrayer, every son a reaver...An evil time, son will deceive his father, daughter will deceive"<sup>9</sup>.*

### **War Gods, Battle Goddesses and Birds of Death**

#### **Lugh and Óðinn: Battle Gods and Tricksters**

Many Irish and Norse deities were warriors, but in neither culture is found a specific battle or war god. Óðinn is closely associated with kings and warriors, but he had many other talents and functions. A close companion to Óðinn in Irish lore would be Lugh, known for his prowess in battle (one epithet is Lugh Lámhfhada, Lugh Longhand for his skill with a spear), but is also more known for his many skills and functions (another epithet, 'Lugh Samhildánach', Lugh Equally Skilled in Many Arts'). Óðinn's great spear could deal out victory or defeat in battle. Lugh had no need to actually wield his spear. When battle was near, it was drawn out; it then roared and struggled against its thongs. Once released, it tore through the ranks of the enemy, never tiring of slaying. The persistent image of the Raven Banner, on which victory in battle depended, may be seen as another link between the raven and Óðinn as giver of victory.

Both Lugh and Óðinn were associated with the crow and the raven, the birds of the battlefield.

Óðinn's two ravens brought him news every morning, perhaps from the battles of the world. Depictions of Óðinn's head with a bird on either side were a favorite motif on scabbards. Lugh also had two ravens which warned him of the approach of the Fomorians. Lugh's connection with ravens has put forth the theory that Lugh was originally a raven god. The link with the raven in both cases may be due to its image as a source of wisdom and prophetic knowledge as well as its correlation with dead bodies as birds of prey. In other aspects in keeping with the raven and death associations, both gods are remembered as rulers of the land of the dead. Óðinn was Lord of Valhalla where he would receive the souls of warriors killed in battle. Lugh was represented as sitting in state in the Other World, attended by the woman who symbolized the sovereignty of Ireland.<sup>10</sup>

Both gods also use deceiving magic, again associated with the trickster aspects of the raven, and in Lugh's case, the wren. Óðinn is associated with trickery, cunning and deception. Most sagas have Óðinn using his cunning to overcome adversaries and to achieve his goals, such as swindling the blood of Kvasir from the dwarves. In order to gain entrance to the court of the Tuatha Dé Danann, Lugh offers many services at the door of the court. He first says he is a smith, then a swordsman, then a harper, then a poet and so on. At each point, he is turned away, as the court has men that already perform each of these functions. Finally, Lugh comes to the door and asks if the court has one man who can do all of these things. The guard and the king both admit they have not, and Lugh, as a result of his cunning, joins the Tuatha Dé Danann.

While there are differences between Lugh and Óðinn, the parallels between the two are impressive. The similarities are not neat and logical and therefore are probably not the result of borrowings between the two cultures during the Viking Age when the Scandinavians and the Celts were in contact. One of the most striking links between the two is their associations with super-

natural women who possess the power over results of battle<sup>11</sup>.

### Morrigan, Badd and the Valkyries: Battle Goddesses and Seductresses

The part played by battle goddesses, battle-maids or valkyries is of major importance in both Scandinavian and Irish tradition and can be traced back before the beginning of the Viking Age. By the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the valkyrie was represented as an attendant of Óðinn; a dignified person on horseback with shield, sword and helmet, who was sent out in battle to carry out the wishes of Óðinn. She was also seen welcoming the fallen warriors to Valhalla. In the early Viking Age, the popular representation of a valkyrie in art was that of a woman holding a horn which she offers to a warrior, thus again closely associating her with battle. In the *Edda* poems and in the *Völunga* saga, the valkyrie appears as the spirit wife of the hero, urging him on to heroic deeds, or as a counselor, teaching the hero what to do in battle.

An earlier aspect of the valkyrie, however, may have been as a primitive spirit of slaughter, haunting the battlefield, rejoicing in the bloodshed and death. In Saxo's Latin version of the lost heroic poem, *Bjarkamál*, there is a passage that seems to refer to battle-spirits of this kind. An ancient Anglo-Saxon battle spell carries strong heroic imagery, with descriptions of mighty women riding over a hill whose spears are causing trouble. An early Germanic spell depicts huge women fastening bonds, holding back the host or tugging at fetters- presumably deciding the fortunes of war and the fates of warriors.<sup>12</sup>

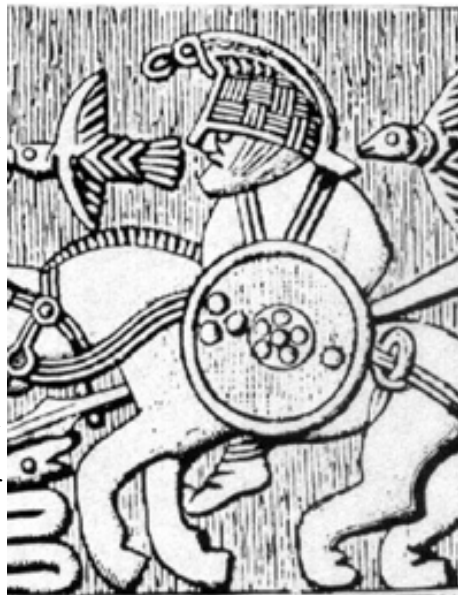
The word "valkyrie" comes from the Old Norse *valyrja* from the words "val" (slain) and

"kyrja" (choose); literally meaning *chooser of the slain*. There is some disagreement among the texts as to whether the valkyries are supernatural deities or human women. Valkyries often appear much larger than human women, sometimes gigantes or trolls taking on aspects of the valkyries, and they also often appear in pairs. In the *Víga-Glúms saga*, a pair of troll-like women acting like valkyries appear before a battle and liberally sprinkle blood from a sacrificial trough over the land:

*"The scatterer of neck rings saw a great troop of divine beings riding over the farms. The time had come for the singing of gray spear, swords will clash in the place where the battle-goddesses, eager for the fray, poured blood over men's bodies".<sup>13</sup>*

In art, valkyries are often depicted upon winged horses, running out into the battle to do Odin's will. However, the phrase *valkyrie horse* is a kenning for wolf. Rather than winged horses, their mounts were packs of wolves. A dream described in *Heimskringla* elaborates on this. A man dreamt of a great army. In front of the army rode a great troll woman sitting on a wolf; and the wolf had a man's body in its mouth and there was blood around its jaws. When it had devoured one body, she threw another into its mouth and she continued this until the wolf had swallowed them all. Another man on the king's ship dreamt of a giant troll-woman standing on an island with a short sword in one hand and a sacrificial trough in the other. All the ships around his were covered in ravens, signifying death.<sup>14</sup>

The link of valkyries with birds is very close, since valkyries converse with ravens and give



dead bodies to the birds waiting for slaughter as seen in the dream of the birds perched on the ships in the poem quoted above. The raven itself is called “chooser of the slain” in the Old English poem *Exodus*.<sup>15</sup> Valkyries call on ravens to enjoy the results of the battle they have brought about.

In Irish tradition, there are also female spirits associated with battle and death. As stated above, they can appear in the tales under the collective name of *Mórrígan* which can sometimes mean a single goddess or a group of three. While the names of the *Mórrígan* are individual; Badb and *Mórrígan* are sometimes used interchangeably. In the glosses, the names are used without articles, suggesting that they are being used to denote a class of beings and none of the female figures associated with the *Mórrígan* are explicitly referred to as deities. Also, in the tale cycles, the *Mórrígan* never actually engages in battle, but only incites it, prophecies it and celebrates it.

There is a strong erotic element in the *Mórrígan* as in the Scandinavian valkyries who offer themselves to warriors. The *Mórrígan* appeared as a lovely girl in a dress of many colors and asks the hero Cúchulainn to take her as his lover. When he refuses, she threatens to harass him in the midst of battle:

*“It will be worse for you when I go against you as you are fighting your enemies. I shall go in the form of an eel under your feet in the ford so that you fall...I shall drive the cattle over the ford to you while I am in the form of a grey she-wolf...I shall come to you in the guise of a hornless red heifer in front of the castle and they will rush upon you at many fords and pools yet you will not see me in front of you”.*<sup>16</sup>

The function of the goddess here is not to attack the hero with weapon, but to render him helpless at a crucial time in battle, like the Valkyries who cast ‘fetter’ upon the warriors. In a prior encounter with Cúchulainn, the *Mórrígan* meets Cúchulainn as she drives a heifer from his terri-

tory. Cúchulainn has a *gessa*, a personal taboo, in which cattle are not to be taken from his land without him battling for it. Without realizing who she is, he insults her, earning her enmity. She makes a series of threats and foretells a coming battle win which he will be killed. She tells him “I guard your death”. The *Mórrígan* is using Cúchulainn's *gessa* against him as an incitement to battle.

In the *Cath Muige Tuired*, the Second Battle of Moytura the *Mórrígan*, as the triune *Mórrígan*, Macha and Badb, attacks the enemies of her people, both magically and physically. In the battle between the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Firbolgs, the Firbolgs are attacked at Tara with:

*‘Enchanted showers of sorcery and sustaining rain clouds of mist and mighty showers of fire and a downpour of blood poured down from the air upon the warriors heads; and they did not allow the Firbolg either to leave or to disperse for three days and nights’.*<sup>17</sup>

In medieval Irish literature, sexual relations between the *Mórrígan* and the Dagda are recounted several times. The accounts are basically the same; the *Mórrígan* is straddling the River Boyne, a leg on either bank, washing herself with her hair unbound. The Dagda (good or great god) comes upon her and couples with her. This seems to have little or nothing to do with bloodshed or war until a passage later on:

*‘Then she told the Dagda that the Fomoiré would land at Mag Céidne and that he should summon the áes dána of Ireland to meet her at the Ford of the Unshin and she would go into Scetne to destroy Indich Mac Dé Domnann, the King of the Fomoiré and would take the blood of his heart and the kidneys of his valor. Later she gave two handfuls of the blood to the hosts that were waiting at the Ford of the Unshin.’*<sup>18</sup>

Her performance helps bring about Indech's death and the Fomorian defeat. Although her encounter with the Dagda is sexual, it has martial

ramifications. The outcome of the tryst is not children, but information, bloodshed and regicide.

### **Sacrifices, Conversations, Patronage**

In the holy places of the Celts, Germans and Scandinavians, regular rituals were performed to renew and strengthen communication with the supernatural world. A communal feast in which animals had to be slain, meat and drink shared with the powers in whose honor men feasted was of major importance. There might be offerings of booty taken in war, sacred animals, part of the harvest or perhaps food and drink set aside as token gifts to the gods.<sup>19</sup>

To some extent, sacrifice was seen as a contract between the god and the worshipper. While the chief cult animals whose meat was used for the sacrificial feast were the boar, the bull and the horse, birds such as swans, cocks and wading marsh-birds were also important sacrifices; especially in regard to battle ritual and fertility rites. The symbol of the bird of prey was of great significance for the Celts. The raven and crow were associated with Lugh and the war goddesses. Cúchulainn kills one raven out of every flock when seeking to avenge himself on Cú Roí.<sup>20</sup> Ravens and hawks were closely associated with Óðinn and cocks sacrificed at Lejre were substituted for hawks.

Birds were sacrificed in the Viking Age both at funerals and as part of the great sacrifice for victory at Uppsala. There are also images of birds receiving and rejoicing over sacrificial victims, particularly the raven. A man hanged on the gallows is described in *Beowulf* as a 'delight to the ravens'. In an early Icelandic poem Helgi Trausti, who killed his mother's lover, the killing is said to be a sacrifice to Óðinn and also to be

offered to the ravens.

'I have given the bold son of Asmoth to Óðinn, bold lord of the gallows, his sacrifice; the corpse is offered to the raven'.<sup>21</sup>

The dead killed on the battlefield were viewed both as sacrifice and as a feast for the ravens, strengthening the link between Valkyries and birds of prey.

Beside skill in fighting and endurance of hardships, the ideal warrior was to have special knowledge and inspiration. Sigurd the dragon-slayer attained wisdom by eating part of the dragon's heart, which gave him the understanding of the speech of birds so they could warn

him of coming danger. In the poem *Sigrdfumal*, Sigurd is taught battle spells and runic lore by a valkyrie.<sup>22</sup> Understanding the speech of birds could give a hero entry into the world of ravens and valkyries, where defeat and victory were determined. In more everyday terms, it would mean an ability to interpret calls and movement of birds, thereby receiving warning of future events.

These aspects of bird lore are referred to in the *Edda* poems and in *Hrafnsmal*, there is a dialogue between a raven and a valkyrie. She considers herself wise because she understood the language of birds. She is also described as "the white-throated one with bright eyes", suggesting that she herself was in bird form.<sup>23</sup>

A note in a Middle Irish manuscript in Trinity College in Dublin lists the various cries of the raven which indicate that visitors are approaching and attention is paid to the number of calls, the position of the bird and the direction from which the calls came. Young warriors may have been trained in these skills; in *Rígsþula*, the language of birds is among the wisdom taught to a young prince, and when the poem breaks off, he



is being instructed by a crow as to what his next move would be. Two birds appear on a tree to warn the young hero Sigurd against the wicked smith. In a prose note to *Reginsmál*, they are called nut-thatches; in one verse they refer to themselves as 'we sisters', which suggests they are Valkyries in bird form. However, the earlier tradition of a pair of birds makes it possible that they were originally the ravens of Óðinn.<sup>24</sup>

The double aspect of the valkyrie seems to be first that of a relentless battle goddess and secondly as a spirit helper who determines the fate of the young warrior and to give him help and counsel. The valkyrie may be attached to the warrior throughout his life, eventually becoming his spirit wife when he is in human form and then to receive him as husband and lover after he dies in battle. In later versions of the Sigurd cycles, she is personified as the princess Brynhild who brought about Sigurd's death rather than see him married to another woman and then killed herself in order to become his wife in the next world. Valkyries are also concerned with the bestowal of kingly powers and in the choosing of a king, especially if the young prince has been wrongly deprived of his sovereignty.

In the *Second Battle of Moytura*, the Mórrígan appears alone at several points in the story. After the leaders of the Tuatha Dé Danann plan the battle and the "three gods of Danú" give Lugh equipment for the battle, weapons they had been preparing for seven years, the Morrigan encourages Lugh<sup>25</sup>:

*"Then she said to him..."Undertake a battle of overthrowing." The Morrigan said to Lugh, "Awake"....*<sup>26</sup>

This is just one of many times that the Mórrígan appears to incite a warrior in poetic form, a common Celtic battle rite. It's suggestive of when the fury of the goddess possesses the warrior, much like Óðinn's fury possesses the Germanic berserker. Lugh also asks the various members of the Tuatha Dé Danann what they will contribute

to the battle and the Mórrígan answers him:

*"Not hard to say", she said. "I have stood fast; I shall pursue what was watched. I will be able to kill. I will be able to destroy those who might be pursued."*<sup>27</sup>

Here, the Mórrígan is in the role of Lugh's patron. While she did not participate in the preparation of Lugh's weapons and equipment, she gives him moral support, encouraging him to fortify himself for the coming battle. She also promises to aid in the best way she can, by pursuing, destroying and subduing. When she comes to the battlefield, she chants a poem and immediately the battle breaks and the Fomorians are driven into the sea.

In *The Book of Leinster*, Second Recension, the Mórrígan performs poetry which is at once a prophecy, an incitement and a trick:

*"It was on that night that the Mórrígan, daughter of Ernmas came and sowed dissension between the two encampments on either side and she spoke these words:*

*Ravens gnaw the necks of men. Men's blood flows...Woe to the Ulstermen! Hail men of Ireland! Woe to the Ulstermen!" She whispered to the Erainn that they will not fight the battle which lies ahead.*<sup>28</sup>

While at first glance, especially based on the examples given above in the section on battle goddesses, it might appear that the Mórrígan's relationship with Cúchulainn begins in an adversarial way and continues in this fashion throughout the tales. However, the Mórrígan may have singled out Cúchulainn as a warrior to take under her patronage such as she had done with Lugh. Her insults may just be the sarcastic encouragement of a friend.<sup>29</sup> Her threats are intended to rouse Cúchulainn to victory. She also stirs up trouble in order to bring about armed conflict, which will ultimately lead to Cúchulainn's great fame. But because Cúchulainn tends to reject all of her ad-

vances, she eventually foretells his defeat and death. When Cúchulainn dies, she alights on his head 'guarding his death' as she has promised. He, too, is the 'chosen slain'. Here she is both the protective female patron of the fallen warrior, but she is also a carrion bird, waiting to dine on the cooling corpse of Cúchulainn. In the end, she mourns him and also revels in his gory death.

## **Conclusion**

Due to a similar way of life, a constant activity of battle at home and away, along with farming and herding at home, give the cultures of the Irish and Norse a general similarity. But the similarities go deeper than the surface level might suggest and the deeper the researcher goes, the more elusive become the neat comparisons scholars always seem to aim for. As the search intensifies, warrior gods, battle goddesses, heroes, ravens, blood, death, war, doom saying and sex all twist and weave, each component being integral to another, revealing a long hidden tapestry of common ancestry between the Norse and the Irish. The elements of the two traditions might appear murky when looked at separately from one another, but when pieced together become clearer because of their relationship to each other. The importance of the raven is only one piece of that tapestry, but a wide-ranging one, in which many different elements of Irish and Norse lore, culture and spiritual life are involved and one in which a clear overall picture of the similarities between the two civilizations can be viewed.

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# My Holes are Broken

By Bert 'Toad' Kelher

A common element in many trance journeys is a voyage to the underworld. At some point in these journeys, especially if they are guided meditations, the participants are asked to visualize an entrance to the underworld. This usually manifests itself as a hole. Whether a hole in the ground, a tree, or at the bottom of a lake, the unifying feature is a hole leading down. Down, down, down into the underworld.

Throughout my practice, I have only had limited success with this visualization. This is not to say that I have never traveled to the underworld; I have. However, at a recent festival, my holes got stuck. During the guided meditation, I closed my eyes, monitored my breath in the usual fashion, and went in search of a passageway to the underworld.

I found many holes, and then something unexpected happened — nothing. I poked my head in several of them, even jumped into one or two — nothing. Imagine, after the guided portion of the mediation is over, when the group is sharing their experiences, and the only thing I had to say was, "My holes don't work." Rather embarrassing, if not somewhat confusing as well.

It was not till somewhat later at the festival, during a presentation on comparative mythology, that the problem suddenly resolved itself. My holes were not broken; they were simply pointed in the wrong direction. In my hearth culture, Irish, the world is laid out more or less on a flat

plane. The Gods did not come from somewhere up in the sky, rather they sailed from "the northern islands of the world..." (Blamires, 23). In the early tales, when the Gods left this world, rather than going down to an underworld, they traveled to Tir na nOg (MacKillop. 405-406). Even in the tales where heroes visit the world of the Fae, the entrances are in the sides of hills, leading in, not down. Simply put, the otherworld is not *down* there, it is *over* there.

Later in the same festival, I participated in another guided trance journey. We were given the opportunity travel to the otherworld by whatever means we chose. I chose to visualize the mists between our world and Tir na nOg. Looking for a passageway I found a hole in the mist. Traveling through

it, I almost immediately found myself in the otherworld. It turns out the holes hadn't been the problem; I simply was not pointed in the right direction.

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# Did Lada Exist?

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*By Briar*

NeoPagans often believe that Lada is a Slavic Goddess of social harmony, especially marital harmony, beauty, Spring/Summer, and ripening crops. Many modern academics, on the other hand, will tell you that Lada was an invention of romantic revival – not too dissimilar from certain inventions and fabrications which Iolo Morganwg propagated for the sake of Celtic revival – and that she had never existed as a historical Slavic Goddess.

This leaves a modern Pagan in a bit of a quandary: On one hand, Lada is an indisputably attractive Deity in a pantheon that seems to lack major Goddesses in general. On the other hand, said Pagan might find herself worshipping a figment of someone's imagination – hardly an attractive prospect.

It would probably be useful, then, to present at least the basic evidence and the considerations that do exist, and let folks decide for themselves.

The first obvious question that arises is: What actual evidence is there for her existence?

Etymological evidence is, perhaps, the most straightforward.

The root “lad(-)” is a legitimate modern word, at least in Russian. It means “harmony,” as well as “manner.” For instance, if two people are said to live in “lad,” they are living in harmony and, possibly, love. On the other hand, if a group of people are singing each in their own “lad,” they are each singing in their own manner. There are many derivative words, with connotations of beauty, strength, being well-built, appropriate and generally good. In fact, one of the derivatives is an exact equivalent of “OK”.

Folkloric evidence, to my knowledge, consists

entirely of the usage of the word “lado,” or, rarely, “lada” in traditional songs. Normally it is used as an exclamation in a refrain. The songs are usually either wedding songs or summer songs.

The documentary evidence consists of several mentions in writings dealing with injunction against pagan practices. Notably, a 16th century Ukrainian document called “Gustinskaya Chronicle” says:

“The fourth idol (is/was) Lado, which is the same as Pluto, hellish (or “in hell,” or “burning”) God, they believed him to be a god of marriage, merry-making, comforting, and all kinds of well-being, the same as Hellenic Bacchus; they brought offerings to him when getting married, so that with his help the marriage would be loving and kind. This Lado-devil, in some countries, to this day they honor at baptisms and weddings, singing (a specific manner of) songs to him, and clapping hands together and on the tables, singing “Lado, Lado” (remembering him) many times.”

Please note that the translation is mine, and is literal (which is why it sounds a bit strange in English), and the words in parentheses are implied by grammatical structure rather than explicitly present in the document.

Several other Polish and Czech documents of the same type mention a similar entity, according to secondary sources (Mainly Rybakov's “Paganism of Ancient Rus”). None of these are earlier than 15th century.

The controversy largely derives from the lateness of the sources. Did the author of the Chronicle have some evidence that an idol such as he was describing had actually existed, or was he merely

proceeding from the conclusion drawn by others – a conclusion based on wishful romantic interpretation of folklore? We don't know.

What may be discussed somewhat more productively, however, is the nature of the folkloric evidence itself.

Those who object to historic existence of Lada/Lado make this argument:

Traditional Slavic songs all have specific meter. It is normal practice to extend the lines with a variety of sound-filler syllables to match the meter requirement. These may be simple exclamations, such as "Oy!" and "Ay!", or compound two-syllable exclamations, such as "oy-da," "ay-da," "o-pa," etc.

It is thought that the word "lado" is/was used in the same manner – that is, as a filler, rather than being an outgrowth of a Deity-name.

Additionally, an argument has been made that the word "lado" is of neutral gender and, therefore, cannot be a name. This line of thought is not without problems: Firstly, the ending "-o" may be both neuter and masculine. There are many traditional Slavic male names with this ending; these may carry an endearment-type connotation. Secondly, the filler words are usually nonsense-words with no intrinsic meaning, or even traces of meaning, which is patently not true for the word "lado."

One might argue, as the original revivalists apparently did, that since the word does have meaning, could be used as a name, and appears in songs where it might at some point have been in the form of an address (one should add here that it might or might not have been an address – it is impossible to tell either from grammar or from context), that it is logical to postulate a Deity with that name and a function appropriate to the name and song context.

At this point, even if we buy into this postula-

tion, it might be somewhat mystifying as to how "lado," which is either neuter or masculine, became a Goddess "Lada". In fact, however, it's not all that relevant, because Slavic Deities/Spirits frequently existed as either male/female pairs (for instance house, forest, and other minor spirits all had spouses by the same name), or changed gender regionally. Additionally, it is possible that, occasionally, the word "lada" was used in songs instead of "lado." Indeed, since the words of the songs in question were recorded from oral tradition by observers, we cannot even be certain which word was used when the second syllable is not accented, as the actual pronunciation is somewhere in-between "a" and "o." Taking that into account, as well as variation in regional accents, and the effect of singing mechanics on pronunciation, it may be hard to determine whether the masculine or feminine ending was used in each particular case.

The greatest proponent of the "Lada" theory was Academic Rybakov – probably the best known Soviet-era historian, archaeologist and folklorist in Russia. The whys and wherefores of his specific argument are entirely beyond the scope of this article. It should be noted, however, that, similar to Mircea Eliade, Rybakov, though expert in his knowledge of sources and context, was wont to look for patterns in religious development, sometimes to the point of stretching the plausibility somewhat to fit his outlook. This tendency did not escape his opponents.

Ironically, it is probably Rybakov's support of the "Lada" theory that put this theory out of favor among the current scholars, at least in part. The problem with Rybakov is that he was an archetypal Soviet historian – which means that his agenda included glorifying all things Russian, as well as holding an extremely evolutionary and materialistic view of history. Unsurprisingly, this view, as well as its proponents, very much fell out of favor in the wake of the Second Russian Revolution.

All of this leaves us in an endless circular debate

without much hope of resolution. A perfect example of this interminable back-and-forth is found in the song that Rybakov used as proof of his theory:

*Lepi Ive trga rože, Tebi Lado sveti Bože: Lado slušaj nas Lado.*

This translates as:

*Pretty John picks flowers to you, Lado, holy God: Lado, listen to us, Lado.*

Now, “Bože” is a vocative form, meaning simply “God.” Rybakov translated this into Russian by using the word “bozhestvo”. “Bozhestvo”, which may or may not be vocative, is translated as “deity”, or “the divine.” This, on the face of it, is somewhat surprising, because the vocative form “bozhe” is used in Russian natively. Why the change? The opponents of the “Lada” theory claim that Rybakov mistranslated the word deliberately to serve his theory (see the Wikipedia article for a slightly more in-detail look at this). However, translating it as he did, Rybakov may not have, in fact, changed the meaning anyway, since, as noted above, “bozhestvo” may be used as a vocative form. What might be argued is that by this slight impropriety of translation, Rybakov emphasized one possibility at the expense of another in the following manner:

Both Russian and Czech (the original language of the song) lack articles, so it is not, and cannot be known, whether the song meant “the God,” or “a God,” or “God.” Any of the three is possible, and the word may refer to John being a God, or Lado being a God, or to the Christian God, with Lado being simply a meter-filler. Parenthetically, the Christian God and Saints often found their way into folk songs, spells and other traditions, sometimes without any apparent rhyme or reason for the inclusion. The Christian God, however, would not likely be addressed as “bozhestvo,” since “bozhestvo” would most accurately be translated as “a God” or “the God.” Again please note the qualifications. None of

this is certain, not even the linguistics, since one might, with some stretch, address the One God as “bozhestvo.” Though it might sound a little strange it is certainly no heresy. The point here is that Rybakov might have adjusted the translation to lessen the likelihood of Christian God being addressed in the song.

Does this in any way help us decide? Not really. However, since we are ultimately looking for spiritual applications, another line of thought is possible.

One might ask this: Is it at all likely that the Slavs did have some Deity that fulfilled the functions ascribed to Lada?

The answer to this is almost certainly “yes.” Following the IE pattern, there should have been a Deity, likely a Goddess, with home/hearth/marital connotation, and possibly other assorted associations.

Who was She?

In truth, the only major female Deity we know with certainty to have existed, at least among the Eastern Slavs, is Mokosh. With Her, however, we have a problem opposite to the problem with Lada: we have very little evidence as to which functions Mokosh may have fulfilled, though it is possible to reasonably guess, with varying degrees of likelihood, that she was connected with fate, weaving, and possibly Moist Earth.

The other female Deities we can attest to with some confidence are the Rozhanitsi – but here, once again, we are uncertain of function, or even their names, since “Rozhanitsi” is almost certainly a title and plural. The only thing that can be derived from etymology here is that they were connected with birthgiving. In fact, Rybakov attempted to show that Lada was one of the Rozhanitsi though, inevitably, this is very much in dispute.

In historical times, eastern Slavs honored a fe-

male Christian Saint named Paraskeva in a manner that would certainly lead one to believe that she was in some way an outgrowth of a more ancient pagan Goddess. Paraskeva influenced fate, crafts, especially weaving, marriage and marital fidelity, and childbirth.

Most historians readily admit that the cult of Paraskeva absorbed the cult of Mokosh – but is it possible that she was an amalgam of Mokosh with the Rozhanitsi, and maybe, just maybe, the Goddess who may or may not have been called Lada?

The next question to ask is: What’s in a name?

We know that many Deities were called by functions and titles, either because there might have been a taboo regarding using a Deity’s “proper” name, or because the name was organically derived from the function to begin with.

The word “lada” is still used in Russian as an endearment, with the approximate meaning of

“beloved,” “beautiful one,” “dear one,” although the usage is somewhat old-fashioned.

In the modern Pagan context we may choose to use “Lada” as a title, and thus sidestep the controversy with scholarship more or less entirely. Since it is reasonably certain that some Deity fulfilled the functions in question, we are basically addressing this Deity, of whose name we are uncertain, by an honorific that makes sense within the Slavic culture.

She might have been Mokosh, she might have been one (or all) of the Rozhanitsi, or she might have been a Goddess in her own right. With all the ambiguities and controversies involved, we have no way of knowing.

Yet nothing in tradition prevents us from using a reasonable honorific to address a Deity whose name we might not know, and if this Deity was an aspect of another, or known by another name in ancient times, well, it would not be entirely unprecedented in history.

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# Gaels and the Solstices

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By Sean Harbaugh

Gaelic myth tells us of the four major festivals in the Gaelic year—Oimelc, Bealtainne, Lughnasadh, and Samhain. There is virtually nothing mentioned in the lore about the solstices and equinoxes, and whether these days of the year held any significance to the pagan Gaels. Yet, with a little digging, we can discover trace evidence that the solstices held some importance among these people. We can conclude through physical findings and filter through fragmented stories that these holidays were at least observed by local Gaelic tribes, and that the remains of these celebrations exist today.

## Winter Solstice

The Irish Mythological Cycle is full of stories regarding the mounds on the Boyne (there are three by the way). Aengus Og was a featured character in these tales, especially regarding his house at Newgrange, the largest of the three. It was originally the Dagda's house until Aengus, the Dagda's son, tricked him out of it. The outside of this magnificent mound is covered in quartz, the inside chamber is full of inscriptions from the Bronze Age, and the interior lights up on the day of the winter solstice in brilliant fashion for only a few moments.

Myth tells us Aengus was born in this mound from an affair Dagda had with Boann. Boann, the river goddess, conceived of Aengus Og, and gave birth to him in Newgrange all in the same day—the winter solstice. One poem even describes the inside of Aengus Og's home/palace as an elaborate ensemble of gold and riches where elaborate celebrations were held. And of course, the Tuatha De Danaan retreated to the three mounds by the Boyne River and live on as the Sidhe.<sup>1</sup>

Charles Squire tells how the Irish were inside

Newgrange during the Iron Age:

"The most famous of such fairy hills are about five miles from Drogheda. They are still connected with the names of the Tuatha De Danann, though they are not called their dwelling places, but their tombs. On the northern bank of the Boyne stand seventeen barrows, three of which—Knowth, Dowth, and Newgrange—are of great size. The last named, largest, and best preserved, is over 300 feet in diameter, and 70 feet high, while its top makes a platform 120 feet across. It has been explored; Roman coins, gold torques, copper pins, and iron rings and knives have been found in it. What else it contained will never be known, for, like Knowth and Dowth, it was thoroughly ransacked by Danish spoilers in the ninth century."<sup>2</sup>

A quote from a study that was performed that indicated that the light from the Winter Solstice was intended to shine into Newgrange:

"The mound itself has a diameter of 80 meters, with a height of 15 meters. The materials used to construct it weigh approximately 200,000 tons, at least three times the amount of materials used at the largest British sites. The passage is 19 meters long and slopes upward, containing 43 standing stones at approximately 1.5 meters in height. The chamber at the end of the passage is cruciform in shape and is 6.5 meters wide, and the corbelled roof consisting of 17 stones rises to 6 meters in height. This chamber has three small recesses, each with a basin stone, and was built in such a way to keep the inside dry, using a natural caulk and by

sloping the chamber outward. This passage was also built to allow a beam of light from the rising sun into the chamber on the winter solstice. Expert studies, which began after a hypothesis was made in 1967, have shown that a sunbeam would have entered the chamber at the time of its construction, but at a width of 40 centimeters, unlike the current 17 centimeters of light. The sun will continue to enter the chamber for thousands of years to come.

"Before entering the chamber, one cannot miss the entrance stone. This megalith has five large spirals, two on one half, three on the other, with a vertical groove separating them. Additional carvings of lozenges and nested arcs cover the remaining face of the stone. Above the stone and the entrance is the roof box. This roof box was discovered in 1963 during minor excavations, and it rests on part of the passage roof. Scratch marks still remain on the base of the box, which were probably from two quartz blocks that moved in and out to open and close the slit."<sup>3</sup>



the Bronze Age, it is obvious that the Iron Age Irish found the chambers significant and important culturally by the artifacts found inside the chamber. The Irish were indeed inside Newgrange and left offerings inside the chambers because of its importance as a seasonal marker—the structure was built to line up with the Winter Solstice. Does it matter if the Irish explicitly acknowledged the Winter Solstice in the Mythological Cycle? The answer is no because we can study the artifacts discovered inside the mounds on the Boyne River, and the importance these mounds held in Irish myth. It is also easy to deduce that this yearly event would hold cultural importance to these people, since the growing sun would kindle hope to a people living in the coldest and darkest time of year. There would be no other reason for Newgrange to be so embroiled in the lore.

Another pre-Iron Age marker of the midwinter is found at the stone circle at Drumbeg in County Cork, Ireland. The winter sun sets over the axial stone and shines through the two portal stones at the winter solstice.<sup>4</sup> This is an example of a midwinter marker in the south of Ireland—far from the mound at Newgrange. The Iron Age Irish would understand the significance of this alignment—even if they didn't construct it—and have relied on this ancient marker of time to mark the coming of the longer days.

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Although the dating of the structure goes back to

### Summer Solstice

Much of the lore regarding the Summer Solstice or Midsummer has been lost through the antiquities of time, yet there are still remnants of the importance of this time of year to the Gaels.

The Isle of Man is associated with the Sea God Manannan Mac Lir. In the Manx tale "Gilaspick Qualtrough," it is explained that Manannan Mac Lir is the patron of sailors and the Isle of Man. <sup>(5)</sup> Moore explains further that the island was founded by Manannan and "he was the first man that had Mann, or ever was ruler of Mann, and the land was named after him," and that "he reigned many years, and was a Paynim, and kept, by necromancy, the Land of Man under mists, and if he dreaded any enemies, he would make of one man to seem an hundred by his art magic, and he never had any form of the commons; but each one to bring a certain quantity of green rushes on Midsummer Eve - some to a place called Warfield (now South Barrule), and some to a place called Man, and yet is so called." <sup>(6)</sup> This tells of how people gave sacrifice to the great sea god on the Summer Solstice at a large hill that is said to be his burial mound. To this day, there is a three-day celebration devoted to Manannan on the Summer Solstice on the Isle of Man every year. <sup>7</sup>

It is said that the first battle of Mag Tuireadh between the Tuatha and the Formorians occurred on Midsummer. In Irish myth, the Tuatha, under the leadership of their king Nuada, defeats the Formorian king Eochaid, but loses his hand in the process. <sup>8</sup> This is a significant event in Irish myth. While there is no lore regarding festivals on this day, obviously this day would hold importance to the Irish. In a mythological sense, the gods of light overthrew the giants that were terrorizing the land on the longest day of the year. Throughout Indo-European myth, the Summer Solstice is regarded as the day when the hero's strength is at its peak. <sup>9</sup> This day is held in importance to present day Ireland by the tradition of lighting bonfires to commemorate the longest day of the year. This is an obvious throwback to pagan times; the actual reasons are

obscured, yet the tradition lives on.

For physical evidence of the Summer Solstice being an important event, we can look to the stone circle at Lough Gur in County Limerick. The summer sun rose between the two portal stones and the light struck the axial stone at the other side of the circle at Midsummer. <sup>10</sup> While this was a Bronze Age megalith built long before the Iron Age Irish, the natives would have realized the significance. Midsummer marked a special time for the harvest, and the knowledge of when to harvest the early crops was a necessity.

In recent times Midsummer is called Sheathuinn, Oiche an teine chanáimh, or Teine Féil Eóinor, or St. John's Day, in the Gaelic countries. The tradition involves lighting a bonfire "exactly at sunset on the evening of June 23<sup>rd</sup>, and "watched until the next morning". There are also communal fires lit in local villages, and the locals will light their own home hearths from it. <sup>11</sup> This tradition dates back to times of antiquity and was later Christianized.

In conclusion, while there is little mythological evidence handed down to the present day, there is enough physical and cultural evidence to conclude that the Solstices were considered sacred to the Gaels. The local Irish population would have found the Winter Solstice event of some importance due to the significant structures in their area. The Irish Celts were smart people: to say that they would go inside the hill at Newgrange, place important artifacts inside, and then ignore the light show every year on the shortest day just does not make sense.

Nor does it make sense that the Gaels would pay homage to Manannan in the lore on Midsummer, and then have modern scholars declare the day insignificant to Gaelic myth. There is ample evidence of Midsummer traditions being observed today in Ireland and on the Isle of Man, and it is easy to conclude that these traditions are handed down from antiquity.

It can be rationalized that the Gaels did observe the Winter and Summer Solstice as significant events. While the lore is short on specifics, there is enough evidence through handed down tradition and physical evidence to make this determination. While these are some of the examples of Gael lore that I used to argue my point, there are numerous superstitions throughout the Gaelic lands that observe these days with various customs to the present day. The Gaels were keen observers of the sky and position of the sun and stars. They used their observances of the seasonal changes in order to know when to plant their crops and harvest their fields. To dismiss their knowledge of these two important days would be assuming these indigenous people were ignorant of their environment—and this was simply not the case.

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# Getting Past the Past

By Lesley Gary

After watching a thread about felonies and sex offenders, I decided to do something that I never thought I would do: I decided to write about my past and how things have changed. For those that do not know, I am a convicted felon.

Seven years ago, I was convicted of forgery. The actual charge was “presenting a known forged item to a federal institute.” Before I go further into this, I must tell you the details. I was young and very trusting of people. I accepted a check in the amount of \$2,450 from someone I thought was a friend. It was going to be a loan to keep a roof over my head and get groceries. I went to my bank and cashed it.

About a month or so later, I had a visitor. The Pasadena Police Department came and informed me that I was under arrest. They were also looking for the others. Well, the others had bailed and ran. I didn't. I found out that the person whose check it was did not press charges; it was my own bank. Man, was I shocked!

Well, after using what money I had left, my folks pitching what they could, and getting a lawyer, I finally had to say enough. I plead “No contest” There was no more money to keep going and no jury to hear my case. I was put on deferred judgment and sentenced to three years of probation. I had to pay all sorts of fines and fees. Although I did not forge the check, I was held responsible because I had signed the back of it. I also could not prove that I had no knowledge that it was forged.

A year went by, and I decided to move from Pasadena to Houston, TX. Both cities were in the same county, only 30 minutes from each other (if that). Well, my life took a turn then that I did not like. My probation officer said that the move broke my probation agreement. I was put in jail. Oh was I scared out of my mind! My parents were in Europe and I could not get a hold of them. I saw the judge the next day.

I thought life had been bad to that point! Then, I heard words I never wish to hear again: “You will now serve 6 months in a state jail,” came out of the judge's mouth. I was given this as the reason: “I am so sick of people breaking probation, you will be my example to others today! Maybe you will learn some thing out of it!”

My life changed from that point on. I served my time. I no longer had to pay any money to the court house or any one else. Instead, I was in jail for six long months! Funny thing; looking back at this experience, it was when I first started taking care of myself instead of leaning on others.

During the months I was incarcerated, I read. I devoted myself to figuring out who I was and what I wanted out of life. I battled day in and day out with depression. I stayed in a room with 59 other women. I basically set myself into survival mode. I wanted out and I wanted to not be the person that let herself get put in there. Now, the crime I was convicted of was a crappy reason to be in there. True someone else had actually signed that check, yet I was the one in



jail. So, I did a lot of self evaluation while there. Over time, I realized that there was alot I could have been convicted on.

I was an addict, alcoholic, thief, and liar. I stole from my family to get my drug of choice – weed. I was not a person to be proud of; I was a person to worry about. I was always the kind, quiet type. You know the kind; the ones you never expect any thing from and then bam – they got you. I was a using, abusing person. I let alcohol and drugs run my life. Truth be known, there were times in my past that I had forged something and just was not caught. So I deserved jail. I knew I did then and know that now.

That was my past. I hate my past. I still do. I learned that it is ok to hate that which I do not wish to be. I had found paganism before I went to jail. Because of it, I found something after jail: Love! I found people that did not judge me; they instead tried to truly help me get better. I was sick in the head and heart, and in finding this religion, I found the antidote I had always looked for.

I began to put some of that into practice. I began to actually live a path of spirituality and found that my life was changing. I found that I did not have to follow a preacher man. I found people did not hurt me as much and I did not hurt others. I then started to find myself reading more and more. I began researching every pagan path, group, or thing I could.

After a year of being out, I got together with my husband. I finally sobered up again. You see, I had slipped back into some habits when I got out and depression would set in; I did not want to feel at that time. But here was a new direction for me. I had begun to love this shell of a body and the spirit within. I even began to love life and others.

After four years, I learned about ADF. I had met Isaac Bonewits at a fair down here in Texas and, with a clear mind, was able to say that is for

me! Well, one more year went by and I joined. Life has never been the same!

If you are like me and have a past that you wish no one knew, you don't have to do what I just did and spill it to the world. You do, however, have to live with it and deal with situations that arise because of it. People judge you because of it. You don't get certain jobs because of it and at times depression sets in that drains you because you live with the knowledge of your past.

Don't let it control you! I know this is much easier said than done. Today, I cried again because of mine. I don't remember who all I hurt in my using and abusing days. I don't remember long time periods of the past. There is almost three years after high school that is barely a glimmer in my memory.

Here is how I get past the past. First, I acknowledge it; I accept it as my past, but I choose to not let it dictate my future. Second, I admit my part in the wrongs that I have committed against others; I apologize to those that I can get into contact with. Third, I allow myself to heal; I have to forgive myself and work on the pain I caused me. Fourth, I help others work through things; I give them an ear or shoulder to lean or cry on.

Now, I personally can not do this with out some tools. Mine are meditation, prayer, friends, and family. I meditate on the virtues and how I can bring them further into my life. I pray to those I follow that they keep me true to heart and path. I pray that they help me instill the virtues into my life. And I go to friends and family when I feel myself craving a joint, alcohol or for the feeling I got when I was doing something I knew was not right. I am an addict and for me, it did not stop at chemicals.

I also get involved in positive things in my life. I work full time now. I make things. I stay busy! Yeah, people have put me in leadership roles, but I am thankful for those roles. They keep me striving to better myself. My groups don't want

someone with them that they could not be proud of! I have hanging up the following at my office:

### Leader Conduct

1. ADF leaders at all levels are held to a higher standard than the general membership and are expected to refrain from poor conduct.

1. This applies to both public and private ADF communications.

2. Poor conduct shall be evaluated by the BOD on a case-by-case basis.

1. Examples include, but are not limited to, failure to perform duties of office, profanity, threat, insult, excessive sarcasm, unfounded accusation, and other forms of hostile communication.

2. Examples do not include respectful expression of dissent or dissatisfaction with the organization, its policies or leadership.

3. The BOD may, with a majority vote, take the following actions in response to poor conduct by an ADF leader:

1. Issue a public or private warning to the leader.

2. Suspend or remove the leader from any or all ADF leadership positions.

It is from the “Standard Operation Procedures” found in the member section of the website. I look at this and ask myself these questions.

1. Have I shown poor conduct in my day?

If so, how? Did it hurt any one?

2. Have I acted with good character in all my actions?

3. Am I someone that through my actions, other members of ADF will be proud of or would wish to move on?

4. Have I given my best or worst?

5. What areas do I need to work on?

6. Is there anyone I need to apologize to?

7. Do I bring honor to my Deities?

8. Do I bring honor to the Nature Spirits?

9. Do I bring honor to my Ancestors and my living family?

10. And lastly, do I bring honor to myself?

These are the questions I ask myself daily. I choose not to let my past rule my future and the only way to do that is to not be the person I was in my past. Even if your past does not reach to the same extent as mine, keep in mind we have all got one. Good, bad, or indifferent, we all have them.

I also have hanging at work, “Why not Excellence?!” I love that motto and strive daily for excellence in all I do. I know that I will never be perfect or excel in everything, but I will sure work 110% at getting there!

If any of this reaches you and you don't have some one to lean on, I give you my email address: [Lesley\\_gary04@yahoo.com](mailto:Lesley_gary04@yahoo.com). I also say this: reach out to fellow ADF members. Some of my closest friends now are in ADF. Some of the wisest people I have ever met are here and have helped me work through things. And this organization is here for all of us. Take advantage of all the tools that are there to help you move forward and out of your past.

May your day be blessed with love,  
May your past be only a memory,  
May your Deities embrace you,  
And may your obtain joy daily!

# On Entering the Year's Dark Half

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By Roger Pomplas

## I – A Prelude to Ragana

By August, you can see it. By now, you can even smell the sweet difference; the late summer air is thick and rich in aroma. And long gone is Žemyna's (our "mother of the earth") gossamer dress of freshness — a crispness that earlier had been dappled with a newly-born array of Rue Anemone's virginal white flowers; and the clear bright yellow that unfolds upon the Forsythia branch, and the Lilac bush covered with tender leaves of unsullied pristine green.

Its late August in southern Ohio, almost September, and Žemyna's [zhe-ME-nah] playful, early-summer dress has transformed into a lush, opulent gown that drips vivid, bold colors. Finely woven regal tapestries, covering her loamy-brown skin, display a vibrant royal violet of Spotted Joe-Pye Weed flowers, crowned with Bull Thistle purple and the buttery-yellow of Sweet Goldenrod.

Yet, even the beauty of Žemyna's late summer will fade, becoming a quiet, brown shroud of dry brittle leaves and empty branches. Blustery northern winds will soon shake the barren forests, leaving them cold and wet. By then, the light of our sun goddess Saulė [SOW-lay] will have diminished daily, as early sunsets race to kiss the autumn's late afternoon — early evening night-sky. Days of frozen snow are awakening and will soon arrive.

## II – The Enveloping Darkness

Only two months earlier, on a very special late June night, multitudes of raganos [RAG-an-os] had flown to a high hill in central Zemaitija (the Samogitian region in NW Lithuania). Converging upon that renowned hilltop, they perversely delighted in viewing the glowing, vibrant bon-

fires burning across the Baltic countryside. Villagers were feasting and celebrating *Rasa* [ra-SAH], meaning dew. This šventė [SHVEN-tay] (holiday), commemorates the powerful Summer Solstice of our dear sun goddess Saulė. But it is that very solar zenith that gave the raganos their own 'perverse' celebratory hope; for from this, their own nadir, each passing day sees the darkening power of Ragana grow.

Occasionally, overzealous youth, with tan torches made of bundled straw, towering five feet high, still climb this hill. In a misguided search, their youthful naïve goal is to find and ward away the raganos. Secretly, even they know that the immense power and voracious appetite of the 'ever present' goddess Ragana [RAG-an-ah] can never be stilled. Any attempt to push away her appropriate 'power of diminution' is only temporary and transitory.

Of course these same young men, with their torch fires burning, might also unknowingly be drawn by erotic passion to climb, with 'a desperate need,' to locate the enticing and intoxicating raganos. Why else would they make this maddening ascent through the night's darkness? What could be their 'desperate' motivation? Numerous are the whispered stories of Ragana's ability to enchant and shape-shift. She seductively overpowers and easily depletes a young man of his life-giving essence. The French would call the man's exhaustion a *petit-mort* (a little death), during which Ragana would capture his vital seed.

And afterwards, swimming in a blissful sea of serene comfort and needed sleep, a young man would awaken find himself being eaten alive by the hungry and raging red-eyed Ragana. Skillfully using her crushing boar-like teeth and razor-sharp badger claws, Ragana would, without con-

cern, spit out his defleshed bones. It is when satiated with the living-blood of humans that she is most especially appeased.

For the young men, who with their inexperienced and misguided courage climbed this dark hill, became ensnarled within Ragana's terrible 'touch' and had fallen under her web-like spell. Their shortened spring becomes but an early frost. And she kisses them as the unexpected kiss of arctic air freezes the first flowers in an apple orchard that shall bear no fruit. They were not old men, or town bureaucrats, or middle-aged farmers; they had barely crossed the threshold of manhood, still shaving the down from upon their chin. Ragana felt especially pleased with this unexpected meal, this valuable prize. Before having grandchildren, before having a child, before even taking a wife, their lives and the future lineage of these men shall now be forever extinct. And Ragana is pleased.

*The embrace of Ragana is different from that provided by other deities!*

- The warm life-giving sun goddess **Saulė**, in whose light crops flourish and demons flee.
- The "blossomer," "the bud raiser," the mother earth **Žemyna**, from whom all life arises and to whom all life ultimately returns.
- **Medeinė**, the guardian of the sacred woods, whose open-arms provide a haven for the innocent and who offers her own thick groves of *ažuolas* [AA-zhuolas] (oak) as a sanctuary for worship.

*The embrace of Ragana is different from that provided by other deities.*

The deadly love-embrace of Ragana is a termination, an end-point. The seed of worshippers, rather than flourishing into new life, empowers death in the ultimate act of finality. She is not a force to be taken lightly. But Ragana, and her raganos, 'crones-in-waiting,' are as much a part

of the world's cycle of Darna [dar-NA] (Harmony), as is the light and warmth of Saulė. All deities play their part in the eternal cycle of birth-death, light-darkness, warmth-cold.

On that special June day, I can almost see Ragana, the Dark Lady. It is dusk, the reddish-pink sky will soon be black; and she stands still, almost life-less, on the hill. Her long-flowing auburn hair, like the mane of a lion, splashes upon her shoulders. Quietly, almost unnoticed, she begins her eternal and annual 'in-breath.' In July, her gasp is almost imperceptible; but by August, after the rye has been cut, the life of the dry grass has already been inhaled. In late September and again in October, her breath deepens as reds and yellows replace the living leaves of green. *Lapkritis*, the Lithuanian November, the month of falling leaves, finds those still living honoring the multitudes of those long dead. And in ground freezing December (*Gruodis*), as her lungs are now almost completely filled, the cold northern winds howl and shake the sacred forests like the death rattle of an old man entering his long climb upon the 'way of the birds.'

Without her presence of loss and her power to age, flowers would continue to bloom, farmers' sheep would be forever pregnant, and boys would never grow into manhood. The sacred Darna of our world would dissipate into chaos. Ragana's cruel and necessary gift is that she brings a termination to spring's blossoms and ends the fecundity of sheep and cattle. Trees stop their bearing of fruit. Slowly, the tender births of a fresh green Spring turn into the maturity of a flourishing Summer and the old age of a chilly Autumn day. Just as she embraces, squeezes, and deliberately consumes the life from her male lovers, so does she, by her constant ingestion of life, slowly transform our world. This is her blameless power. This is her holy purpose. This — is her place within in the sacredness of Darna.

### III – Klemas of Regeneration

The Indo-European first cousins of Ragana are both empowered by and fly on their worn, smooth brooms, and can even be seen soaring upon torn tree branches. Baltic raganos fly on a part of the World Tree, not upon a fabricated broom or on a branch snapped off during a violent storm. For Ragana, her preferred vehicle is the very root stock of the World Tree itself. Flying to a hilltop, on a Rasa [rah-SAH] eve, Ragana laughs and chuckles. She soars through the darkened sky, sitting upon a damp, rotten, mildewed ‘Klemas’ — a stump.

Even today, in twenty-first century Lithuania, one can see winter revelers pulling and tugging an ice-encrusted Klemas [KLEH-mas]. Its spindly roots stick out from its icy-cold body like the legs of a frozen octopus. Dragging their heavy stumps through the snow covered city streets of Vilnius or Kaunas, makes one ask, “To what purpose are they doing this?” Their ultimate Goal — bringing a ‘Death’ to an ongoing Winter, with its long dark nights and weeks of lonely isolation.

But even in the midst of all this hopeful celebration, they know, as we all know, that the coming end to Ragana’s power is only a temporary victory; for she is the constant queen, the eternal ruler of the year’s darkened half. She is the icy monarch of that time when light fades, and streams freeze, and animals seek sanctuary by hibernating within the comforting arms of Žemyna, our dear Mother Earth.

The symbolism and power of the Klemas is more complex than being a mere mode of transportation. One of its diverse functions is to serve as a person’s ‘name.’ What? Yes — a name. “Klemas” is not an uncommon Lithuanian surname. My own aunt Anna married a man named Klemas. And even as a young boy, I certainly understood the humor and would secretly laugh as my teenage cousins would maliciously and mockingly chuckle behind her back and speak of her “obvious” dissatisfaction. Her disappointment must naturally stem from marrying a man who possessed only ‘a stump.’ But even here,

within this small anecdote, one senses the underlying power of sexual energy contrasted with the symbolism of diminution (through a supposed loss of vitality) that exists within the larger image of the Ragana’s klemas.

Yet, the imagery of the stump is even more expansive. It plays an important and potent role in the Baltic psyche. The power and purpose of the stump is profound and deeply affects Lithuanian thoughts and emotions. To fully understand this, one must recall the importance of the sacred forest for Baltic peoples, and for most Indo-Europeans, as *the* holy site for worship, as sanctuary and haven, as a place of beauty, as a source of divine inspiration. There is an ancient saying:

*“As long as forests cover the land, Lithuania exists”*

The symbolism of the klemas has, over time, taken on deep cultural and political significance. From 1795, when Slavic Russia absorbed Baltic Latvia and Lithuania into its expanding czarist empire, there was an effort to crush and ultimately eliminate Baltic culture. Only Russian was taught to children at school and all Latin-based alphabets (including Latvian and Lithuanian) were outlawed. An eventual cultural death and foreign assimilation seemed to be their only future. Ragana’s power of “diminution” covered the land. How did Lithuania respond?

The year 1812 offered a glimmer of hope. And when Napoleonas (Napoleon) crossed the river Nemunas, with his French troops and assorted others, Lithuanians flocked to his cause. Fathers pulled out their pre-Russian uniforms and mothers tailored them for adult sons. Near the town of Šilutė, young soldiers prepared for the coming march on Moscow by praying in the village graveyard. After visiting family plots, the men gathered and solemnly circled an old klemas in the cemetery. There, they knelt upon the ground, prayed, and kissed the fertile-brown skin of Žemyna

*“the Earth — my mother, you have given me life, you*

*feed me,  
you carry me and after death I will rest in you."*

It was there, surrounding a decayed stump that they, as a cohesive group, told their ancestors of the coming battle. The young men pledged to 'find freedom' or soon be permanent visitors.

We all know of Napoleon's ultimate retreat and defeat. And with defeat, how did the next generation react? Antanas Baranaukas (1835-1902) responded with a poem — *The Anykščiai Grove* — that would inspire a nation and would express the Dora [dor-AH], the essential values of the Lithuanian people. This is the poem that all grade school children memorize, and whose verses bring tears to grandparent's eyes. The first word in this monumental work is 'klemas,' — the holy stump.

*"Stump-littered hill, desolate and bare,  
Can anyone believe you once were fair?"*

His poem didn't call for revolt; it merely lamented the cutting of a green forest grove. The grove had transformed and become a place of cut trees, of stumps — a *klemynas*. But the entire nation understood its holy message, its mourning for the loss of land and loss of culture.

Within two years of publication, the Baltic states along with Poland, erupted in the ill-fated *Rebellion of 1863*. Freedom didn't arrive until 1918. But in 1939, Russia returned in Soviet clothing, illegally annexing Baltic lands. Many fled to the West, as dark Ragana energy filled their homeland once more.

The exiled poet Bernardas Brazdžionis (1907-2002), influenced by the spirit of *Anykščiai*, wrote a poem as well — *The World's God: Prayer to a TREE in the United Nations Meditation Chapel*. Mourning the violence and slaughter of nation on nation, and religion upon religion, he writes as if speaking to a holy klemas. He concludes with the words:

*"If you were a Living Tree! . . . growing and*

*rustling . . .*

*If you were an oak from Lithuanian fields —  
Around you would blossom the meadow of the  
earthly paradise,  
And thousands of children would frolic in free-  
dom.*

*Ah, old tree stump,  
Are you indeed the God of all mankind?"*

One may wonder, "how can a nation regenerate? Can life sprout again from a decayed, moss-covered stump?" For the Baltic lands, their forests are once again fertile and expansive; and people live in freedom under their *own* government.

But we, as Druids, also intuitively understand the message of the stump. A klemas is more than the loss of power, or an end to vitality, or even the possibility of undeserved death. The klemas holds within itself the hidden hope of regeneration — that from what appears to be a crumbling, lifeless stump might grow the tender shoots and hearty branches of rebirth.

In writing this article, I happened to look at our own ADF logo. And what did I see there in its very center? The Klemas — the sacred stump. Just as both Baranaukas and Brazdžionis prayed for a Baltic renewal, we see (after long centuries of hidden light) our own Indo-European pagan renewal displayed in Isaac Bonewits' powerful design. Its power — the young tender sprout that grows into a healthy tree from out of an old "*ąžuolas klemas*" (an oaken stump).

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## Headwaters

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*By Chris Wityshyn*

Not too long ago, one of the ADF lists had a discussion about visiting the head waters of your local river. The discussion included how the ancient Celts and other Indo-European peoples held water in high regard (wells, rivers, lakes, etc) and how places like springs, river crossings and headwaters were considered places of power to our ancestors. The discussion intrigued me enough to go looking at maps to trace down the head waters of my local river: The North Saskatchewan. It was a surprise to find that the head waters came from the Saskatchewan Glacier in the Alberta Rocky Mountains. Knowing where the headwaters were on the map, and seeing it for myself, were two different things. The desire to get there was constantly on my mind after that.

A short while later my husband and I had to make a spring trip to British Columbia. Before we left, we talked a bit about locations to visit on the way. Visiting the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan was at the top of the list. We left, and eventually ended up somewhere in the middle of the Alberta Rocky Mountains on the Ice Fields Parkway. (So named because of the various glaciers along the hwy). It is a high, winding, rolling road, which at one point has a location called "The Bend". The bend is, well, a huge bend in the road that can't be missed. It is from here that the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan River can be reached. A short walk from the road side pull out and I was there.

Not surprisingly, the mighty North Saskatchewan

river starts out as a very clear and shallow stream. The waters were in a small valley, surrounded by mountains on all sides, still covered with snow. All around me was a mix of stone and spruce forest. The majesty of the place held me in awe. I looked around for a while, taking in the beauty, then walked down to the waters edge. Being in a National Park, rather than placing an offering, I said a prayer out loud to the spirits of place. I cupped some water in my hands and took a drink (not something that's always recommended - but a benefit of pure glacier water). It was my way to take a little of the spirit of that place away with me. A connection had been made, and I was grateful for that. Later, as I wondered around, I could sense the inherent power and comfortable old age of the place. I found myself not wanting to leave, but of course, that time always comes. Now, the River holds a new meaning and connection for me. When I drive over it or visit its shores, it is no longer just some big, slow, brown river. It is mighty and sacred and beautiful. Visiting the head waters of the North Saskatchewan will always be special to me, and it will be a place I will continue to visit for as long as I'm able. I encourage you to visit the headwaters or sacred water near you. You won't be sorry.

# Rethinking Considdur: Introducing Everyday Pagan Spirituality

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By Noira

Last year, I came across a collection of the original RDNA texts on the Internet and found out about ‘Hasidic Druidism’, one of its weirder offshoots. In school, studying Judaism at that time, I instantly recognized the *considdur* as a paganized version of *siddur*; Jewish spiritual practice. After attending a class about Mircea Eliade, I regretted how desacralized our lives have become. It was about that time, I guess, that I embraced the idea of filling my daily life with simple prayers and blessings.

Reading its scriptures some forty years later, the whole RDNA may seem to be more of a counter-cultural movement of the 60’s, a true child of its era, than a Neo-pagan religion in our contemporary understanding of the term. As Isaac Bonewits writes in *Essential Guide to Druidism*, a lot of it was just youth foolery, but there were some gems of spiritual knowledge.

The idea that “one’s religion should totally saturate one’s life and lifestyle” and that a Druid is “expected to be able to make up a blessing or prayer for absolutely any occasion” is one of them. From a contemporary perspective, it seems redundant to paraphrase prayers of another (monotheistic) religion to the point of parody, but the idea of a holistic, grown-into-daily-life Pagan spirituality is as relevant as ever.

As modern Pagans, we’ve acknowledged the need to mark the special, life-altering ‘big’ events in our lives by the so-called ‘rites of passage’. Most Pagans have at least thought about having a Pagan wedding or funeral; the rites of passage are slowly returning to our lives once again. Thus we observe the key turning points in a life cycle of the *individual*. The great cycles of *nature*, on the other hand, are reflected in the ‘Wheel of the Year’, our liturgical calendar.

In the majority, our lives consist of much smaller cycles, like the cycle of a *single day*, and numerous subtle turning points where the sacred occasionally flashes through the gray reality of the daily routine. In effort to live Our Druidry as a truly holistic religion (“religion of mind, heart and flesh” - *Dedicant Program Manual, 2005 ed.*), we should turn our attention to these small cycles and turning points, perhaps by embracing the practice of *considdur*; tiny occasional blessings and prayers.

It’s not a matter of some supposed religious duty though — I decided to write about *considdur* mainly because I found the practice both deeply satisfying and personally useful and so might everybody.

You may call upon a specific deity, local spirits, ancestors or just the powers.

It may not be scientifically proven that blessed food has more nutrition value or a medicine chanted over more effective, but experience shows they are. Even plain psychology tells us that a pill, wolfed down in a hurry, may do more damage to your stomach than good, compared to the miracles a carefully prepared and bath or tea can do.

Let’s take a look at some turning points of daily life, when *considdur* may be appropriate:

- Daily cycles and bodily rhythms such as getting up, when preparing food, when eating, when getting on a car.
- Health and healing — when preparing a medicine (e.g. a herbal tea), when taking medicine, when taking a bath or applying cosmetics, when taking your pet to the vet.
- Profession — when applying for school

or job, when taking an exam, when making an important business decision.

- The new and the journey — when buying a new piece of equipment, just about anything new — installing a device, software, when opening a new book, when packing for a trip, when leaving for a journey.
- Liminal situations and compassion — when hearing about or witnessing a tragedy, when hearing about birth, when in danger (almost everybody can improvise a prayer at this point!)

I usually say something very simple like “Grant me wisdom, oh wise one, so that I learn from this book” or “Graceful Isis, purify me when I’m taking this bath to your honor” or even “Swift Artemis, you know how important is to have good boots for hunting, let not these new ones fall apart.”

One strong argument for embracing the practice of improvised prayers and blessings is

that everybody will come across a situation badly calling for some intervention, where there will be *no* opportunity of ritual, no Ceisiwr’s book ready at hand and surely no Liturgist’s Yearbook.

One local yogi writes about a woman who witnessed a gruesome car crash. Stuck in the traffic, she chanted mantras to aid the suffering souls. A few months later, she was contacted by a woman with an amazing story; she said that she fell unconscious at the car crash, and she was very puzzled, but the sound of the mantra brought her back to this world. She remembered the car ID and after recovering, sought the yogi.

#### Bibliography:

- *A Reformed Druids Anthology*, Book 5 of The Great Druish Books
- I. Bonewits, *Essential Guide to Druidism*
- *Dedicant’s Program Manual*, ed. 2005

#### Recommended reading:

- M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*

### Ode to Dangler

by Medb Aodhamair

Michael Dangler is a sexy flirt,  
His flirtations can be quite overt.  
His grin is like the Cheshire cat,  
As he smiles beneath his fedora hat.

His eyes are pools of the brightest blue,  
A most amazing, stunning hue.  
His tussled hair truly does beguile,  
And his body’s tall, and strong, and agile.

His mind is sharp and he’s quick of wit,  
And he never seems afraid to share it.  
He likes his harem to follow him around,  
And where he goes, hotties abound.

He fancies Eris, Buffett, and pink flamingos,  
And only other Discordians get his lingo.  
I’d love to get inside his... mind,  
But I’m a little afraid of what I’d find.

His sinuous body gives me thoughts quite visceral,  
But if I go too far, he may get egotistical.  
So here I’ll stop, talking about the guy,  
And simply remember him, and sigh.



# Festival Review

Medieval Madness 2008

By *Linda Costello*

Every year, before the festival season really gets underway, the Grove of the Rising Phoenix kicks it off with our mini-festival campout at the beginning of March. We call it “Medieval Madness” because we combine our three day campout with a trip to the Renaissance Festival which is in town from February 1<sup>st</sup> through March 31<sup>st</sup> each year.

Camping in Phoenix is a bit different than camping in most parts of the country. Here, we are camping in the desert and in March, the weather is already quite warm during the day but still cool enough at night that a big bonfire feels mighty fine. We set our tents up on dirt adjacent to the beautiful, but prickly, desert flora at Utery State Park, the campground that is closest to the Ren Faire. We spend the weekend doing rituals, attending classes, socializing, participating in Bardic night, and just enjoying each other’s camaraderie.



Our third annual mini-festival was held this year on February 29 – March 2<sup>nd</sup>. We had an awesome time! We had eighteen folks attending, most of whom dribbled in on Friday night. We opened with a short prayer for the weekend.

Our first class was held later Friday night. It was a class on Ghost Walking, taught by our own grovemate and Martial Arts instructor, David Smith. He taught us how to set our intentions to be invisible, or menacing, or whatever it was we were trying to create. He also taught us how to sharpen our senses to the unseen approach of others. It was a valuable exercise for all of us to

have more sensory awareness, balance, and control.

On Saturday morning, Nora, Senior Druid of Sonoran Sunrise Grove, gave a talk on Pagan Activism, which was excellent. She stressed the importance of the pagan community uniting to take stands for those rights that we, as a group, depend on and believe in. Just think of the difference we could make if we stand together on such issues as environmental matters and religious freedom!

After a leisurely lunch, I presented my latest rendition of Lady of the Land, a class about the sovereignty of the land, and our role in wedding and thus caring for the land. In our day and age, we can be the best rulers of our own individual kingdoms when we consider our impact on the land. This led into a spirited discussion about sustainable living practices.

Deedra, Senior Druid of Grove of the Rising Phoenix, gave a presentation on Hydroponics, a method of growing that is far more complex than one might first suspect. However, if done right, the crop harvests are astounding. Deedra talked about her experience with tomato plants, and the bumper crop that resulted.

We gathered together for a Unity Rite in the desert. We didn’t have the Unity Cauldron, so we simply splashed aspersing water as we called each grove’s name.

After our main ritual, we had dinner and then

held our very first auction, and managed to raise several hundred dollars, the most we ever made on a fundraiser. The auction lasted quite a while, but we were all treated to some excellent mead a la Gannd, so we didn't really mind. ;)

After the auction, we gathered around the campfire and sang songs, beat on drums, and enjoyed each other's company into the night.

Sunday morning found us taking down our camping gear and getting ready for the Renais-

sance Faire. As we said a prayer to end our time together in the desert, we headed out of the mountains and off to the Faire.

All in all, our intimate, annual mini-festival is a great way of opening up to the larger festivals to come.

If you would like to experience the wonder of spring blooming in the desert, then you will want to attend next year's Medieval Madness, which is tentatively scheduled for March 6-8, 2009.



## Book Review

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The Deities are Many by Jordan Paper

By Jason Cook

The overarching aim of *The Deities Are Many* is “to demonstrate that the ideological bases of non-Western religions, all polytheistic when the effects of Western domination are removed, should be accepted by those studying religion to be as genuine as the monotheistic basis of the Western religions.” The author taking on this task is Jordan Paper, an academic with a large body of work on comparative religious study of Chinese, Native American and other polytheistic faiths. Also as part of his work, he has written on the mystic experience and the feminine aspects of spirituality.

Paper's approach to comparative religious study is that of a participant-observer. He advocates a view that to truly understand a religious culture, one must understand the native language in order to grasp the inherent worldview of that culture and one must participate in the practices of the religion with the presumption that the resulting experiences are valid and real. The author admits that his work has at times skirted advocacy and, in turn, this has driven him to write this general polytheistic theology. Paper is conscious of objections to the participant-observer approach, but argues that countering what he sees as the Euro-

centrism implicit in the study of religion requires “taking non-Western ideologies seriously.” I interpret this to mean that the study of a religion alien to one's own culture requires letting go of the presumptions of one's native culture and adopting the studied religion's presumptions (at least for the duration of the study) in order to fully access that religion's experiences.

It is important to note that from the above that the underpinnings of Paper's theology are his experiences in existing polytheistic faiths and not from reconstructionist or Neopagan religions. The theological conclusions are nonetheless relevant to the Neopagan or reconstructionist as they ultimately rely on an argument from direct personal experience. I would note that Paper's dedication to what I would call a full religious-cultural immersion is consistent with ADF's emphasis on scholarship to understand the Old Gods we are worshipping, though our task faces additional challenges as we can't seek out surviving members of those cultures for consultation, nor immerse ourselves in those cultures.

Similar to John Michael Greer's position in *A World Full of Gods*, Paper argues that polytheism

is inherent in human nature as it arises from human experience, in particular humanity's immersion in the natural world for much of our existence. He describes monotheism as a relatively recent phenomenon and one that is "constantly breaking down." Evidence of the limits of the integrity of monotheism in some faiths is seen in the Christian understanding of a single deity in three aspects, the veneration of saints, the existence of angels, demons and Satan (which also occur in the other Abrahamic faiths). Greer does a better job of defining his terms explicitly, whereas the reader must work at times to grasp Paper's exact meanings.

Paper argues that theology became a central feature of monotheism as repeated schisms over "minute" differences in belief required articulation of sophisticated arguments as each side of a schism sought to prove its "Truth." The absence of theology from polytheism often led to perverse outcomes when Westerners encountered non-Western polytheistic religions, allowing, for example, 16<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit missionaries to argue that the Chinese were proto-monotheists and later, allowing 20<sup>th</sup> century sinologist with Humanist presumptions to argue the Chinese were agnostics or atheists who had carried out rituals without meaning for two thousand years. Paper may overstate the case that theology is totally absent from polytheism, classical Greek religion appears to have developed it, but his point that the Abrahamic faiths have tended to develop more sophisticated theologies is valid.

Paper admits to a belief that all works of theology are essentially confessional and I think it is of note in this regard that the first draft of this book was written in a single month in his cabin retreat. In relation to his belief in the confessional nature of any and all theology, Paper argues that knowledge of the confessee is essential and to that end offers us a summary biography that traces a life with early mystical encounters in nature, an eclectic academic career that wound through undergraduate years spent perusing the

South Asian section of the theological library at his university, getting kicked out of divinity school, and studying Chinese language and Buddhism. He came to feel at home in China and ultimately married a Chinese wife. The experiences of her family's ancestor worship are clearly influential upon the author's views of polytheistic belief. A particularly important experience for the author appears to have been finding his fingers, not under his conscious control, typing a second conclusion to an article on Native American religion that he thought he was done with. This additional conclusion argued that Christian influence has suppressed female spirituality in Native American traditions; a topic of some of his subsequent research efforts.

Paper early on adopted a Buddhist-Daoist mindset that he says still underpins his metaphysics. Additionally he admits that his experiences in various religious traditions have also led him to hold multiple, parallel points of view and that often his conclusions may differ depending upon which mindset he is working from. The development of multiple, yet concurrently held, points of view in polytheism is echoed later in Paper's critique of monotheism.

According to Paper, there are two primary shared characteristics of polytheism. The first is that polytheism is essentially experiential; people come to know deities directly through such modes of communication as mediumism and shamanism. This, in part, gives rise to the diversity of polytheism as people with different personalities and experiences meet differing deities. Faith is not needed because the polytheist has actually met numinous beings "face-to-face." The second characteristic is that relationships with the deities are reciprocal. Nothing is owed to a deity whose favor is not sought and if one deity can not deliver what is needed, another may be asked. If a relationship has been entered into however, the obligations of that relationship must be honored or else we may suffer. Beyond these two characteristics, the varieties of polytheism are determined by the gestalt of a culture's

economy, society, government, terrain, climate, and other material realities, which Paper refers to as “religioecology.”

Proceeding from the thesis of the role of religioecology in determining features of polytheistic faiths, Paper postulates the commonality of a “Cosmic Couple” in most forms of polytheism. Paper argues that the fundamental reality of early humans made them keenly aware of their dependency upon the earth and the sky for life. Earth gives birth to us and nurtures us while the sky is temperamental and distant, though bringing rain and sun which are necessary to create life. He generally uses the monikers of “Mother Earth and Father Sky” in this description, though noting that some cultures reflect this dichotomy in Morning/Evening Star, Sun/Moon, Sun/Earth and how the female/male attributions are occasionally reversed. The next layer of conclusions arising from this approach discusses how humans relate to plants, animals, and the mineral world as numinous entities.

In Paper’s recounting, for most of human existence, our habitations were less separated from nature and were intensely dependent upon the weather, wild plants and wild animals for our survival; none of which were dependent upon us for their survival. We came to understand that we were dependent upon their sacrifice of their own lives for our continued existence and we therefore developed rituals to ask for this sacrifice and offer token sacrifices in return. Humans also came to understand the wide array of powers wild plants and animals possess: in addition to food, they give us shelter, clothing, ways to heal. In the case of animals in particular, they have physical talents far superior to what we possess and humans sought ways to ask these animals to allow us to use these abilities. In this view, according to Paper, humans came to understand that the wild flora and fauna had both a physical and spiritual existence and that in an encounter with an individual creature, be it a tree or a deer, we were encountering not just the individual in front of us but also the totality of its species.

Paper admonishes us to “. . . never forget that all about us are the voluntary self-sacrifices of many numinous beings. Such understanding fills us with awe and gratitude.”

Paper posits that with the shift from foraging to farming, humans did not recognize domesticated plants and animals as divine in themselves, but rather as gifts of the Earth. He cites Native American traditions of sacrificing to the Earth at planting, the Eleusinian Mysteries, and the adoration of the Black Madonna as examples of agricultural rituals honoring Earth instead of the crop itself. He also highlights that domesticated animals came to be seen as something to be sacrificed to numinous beings, rather than numinous beings in themselves and, in some instances, were effectively stand-ins for a human sacrifice.

These different modalities of relating to the divine are associated with different modes of communication with deity according to Paper. In a foraging culture reliant upon wild plants and animals, shamanism is the associated mode of communication, with each individual communicating directly with deities. In such communities, this communication is encouraged from a young age, with practices such as use of psychotropic plants, fasting, meditation, and so forth used to access and build relationships with the deities. Paper is at pains to dispense with certain myths surrounding “shamanism” He stresses that in shamanistic cultures, every individual functions as a shaman, though with varying abilities. The shaman acts not to control the spirits, but to encourage their assistance to the community, and actions are always for the good of the community – these are not individualistic cultures. In fact, Paper stresses that in most of these cultures, the closest thing to a conception of evil is someone using shamanic skills for individual, selfish purposes. (Note: Negative power used against the community’s enemies is a “good action” as it supports one’s own community.)

Paper next turns to ancestor worship. With the

advent of horticulture and permanent settlements, the dead began to be kept nearby, in contrast to being left behind by nomadic cultures. With the dead always nearby and on the mind, Paper postulates that people began to try and consult dead elders for advice and this gave rise to spirit possession as a form of communication with the divine. In Paper's view, ancestral spirits are not deities but are entities with more than human powers whose aid can be sought if they are cared for by the living. For this reason, in such cultures, the family is conceived of as extending in both directions in time. Paper does allow that spirit possession is not the sole means of communication with the spirits and includes practices such as various forms of divination, dreams, visions, and pilgrimages.

Paper's argues that the numinous natural beings became anthropomorphized deities as humans settled in towns and cities and began to live in a human-built world increasingly distant from immersion in natural phenomenon. In China, some deities arose out of the ghosts of the uncared-for dead, whom some humans found to be sympathetic and helpful. As the efficacy of these spirits was demonstrated and their aid increasingly sought, their graves became temples and the temples became grander until these spirits became gods. Likewise, the spirits of those well-known and powerful during their lives became gods over time as their spirits were found to be responsive to entreaties for aid. (This is a striking parallel to the requirements for canonization in the Catholic Church.) Paper also describes how polytheists tend to use images of their deities as focal points for offerings and communication. He points out that these images are not understood to be the

actual deities, but are more than just representations; Paper describes how many televisions in Taiwan are arranged to be easily seen from the altar, but not necessarily for the living inhabitants of the house.

Paper describes how polytheism often features "seminuminous" culture heroes and tricksters who are generally absent from monotheistic faiths. I believe this section of the book is clearly directed at Paper's target of shifting the implicit

assumptions of religious studies scholars away from the Western monotheistic mindset and without this in mind, the chapter is somewhat incoherent. The author cites the Western presumption that myths always describe functional deities; i.e. those whose aid is sought in ritual. Many myths in polytheistic cultures relate to entities who are rarely, if ever, the focus of rituals. These tricksters may have given humans gifts of tools and skills, but

they are also often troublemakers. These tricksters are frequently key actors in myths of the re-creation of the world. At this juncture, Paper moves on to a discussion of how polytheistic cultures often lack a creation myth that cites how the universe first began. Rather, there may be a myth of clan origin or emergence or migration; myths that describe "how did we get to where we are" from some earlier stage of existence. Most forms of polytheism simply don't assume some form of ultimate beginning. Paper cites the Old Testament which holds a re-creation myth (The Great Flood) and a first creation (Eden). (It is worth noting that the Eden myth is considered by Biblical scholars to have been added to Genesis well after the Flood myth.) I would like to point to the myth of Ragnarok, which turns the



re-creation myth on its head a bit by telling how “we” get to the next stage.

Chapter 7, “One or Many: Monotheists’ Misperceptions of Polytheism” is the focus of Paper’s assault on monotheism’s hegemonic position in the Western worldview. He begins by citing that the Abrahamic faiths essentially define their monotheism by rejecting polytheism. For example, the Nicene Creed is nonsense in its aggressive assertion of only one god unless one assumes a context of a polytheistic milieu. Paper then argues that the concept of “polytheism” is a monotheistic intellectual construct because polytheists have no use for such a term themselves as polytheism has been the human cultural norm for most of history: “The only indispensable characteristic that polytheists have in common is not how monotheists identify them, but the very fact that polytheists are so identified.” Likewise, a general theology of polytheism only makes sense in a cultural context of dominant monotheism. Paper concludes: “In summary, to admit that one is a polytheist is to damn oneself in the eyes of other members of Western culture.”

To Paper, if a concept is irrelevant or contradictory to practice, illogical to the logical relationships of all other concepts and violates the logical integrity of the religion as a whole, it cannot be part of the original tradition. For example a single master male deity in an egalitarian culture that lacks concepts of a “master” or “king” is hard to accept. He provides a number of examples where he finds that the Western monotheistic mindset has led researchers or observers to reach erroneous conclusions regarding a culture’s religion; the researchers find exactly what they want to, expect to and never critically question the finding. Paper describes what he calls “ur-monotheists” who assume that polytheistic cultures at one time had “the Truth” of monotheism and lost it. Such ur-monotheist who do hold positive views of non-Western cultures are driven to seek a chief or creator deity in these traditions even if it requires that the presumed chief deity is so beyond day-to-day experiences as

to be totally ignored in myth and ritual. As part of this analysis, Paper also levels a brief but withering assault on the myth of a universal prehistoric worship of a single goddess, what he calls “Feminist Goddess Worship.”

In the concluding chapter, Paper addresses how polytheism does not preclude monistic understandings. Paper appears to use “monism” as a catch-all phrase to describe any conception of deities that reconciles numerous deities into some form of a unity. Examples include mystical experiences of a “cosmic unity”, devotion to a single deity that results in conflation of all deities with one (a common occurrence in Hindu practice), and acceptance of an underlying functional equivalence among all deities.

Paper also uses the conclusion of the book to launch a polytheistic critique of monotheism, which includes the desacralization of nature and the elevation of one gender and sex over another (which in turns permits a celebration of celibacy that can mutate into negative views of the body in general). The quest for a single “Truth” can (but not necessarily) lead to intolerance as there cease to be “grey areas” between values. Out of intolerance can be bred fanaticism, though certainly this is not an inevitable or necessary occurrence. The singularity of truth in monotheism transforms dualistic pairs into antagonists; one opposite must be “good” and the other “evil.” The concept of heresy is not compatible with polytheism, as there is no singular truth. As Paper puts it: “My truth need not be your truth, but that does not in any way challenge nor imperil my truth or your truth.”

In contrast, the deities of the polytheists are morally neutral and do not lay out rules for humans to follow, though a particular relationship with a given deity may include certain obligations. The rules of human conduct arise from family and community concerns, ethical considerations, and the “way of the universe” and therefore the resulting rules point toward living in harmony with nature and society. Deities may be willing to

help us, or not. If one god can't or won't help, you can turn to another. However, the deities are not all powerful (another fundamental problem for the monotheistic Western mindset) and they can not counter fate but can only enhance what the way of the universe permits. The deities are not distant, but accessible in a myriad of ways. Polytheists therefore do not suffer from angst and doubts about our relationships with the divine that the monotheists often do.

A comparison with Greer's work is warranted. The two books ultimately reach common conclusions, but get there from different approaches. Greer proceeds with an argument from first principles to describe the philosophical underpinnings of polytheism. Paper, on the other hand, works from observation and experience to build such a philosophy. That they end up in a very similar place is quite astonishing, particularly as Greer primarily works from a Neopagan point-of-view and Paper's experiences come from unbroken native traditions.

The book is a work of clear, concise writing that

is easily read. I have not touched on many of the examples of religious experience, ritual, and practice that Paper uses to drive home his theological points, but these add a richness of detail and enhance the overall effort greatly. Paper is at pains to demonstrate how mistranslations and cultural misunderstandings have led Westerners to erroneous understandings of non-Western religions; this never detracts from the overall theology, but at times such examples may be oddly placed in the book. The book is not heavily burdened by references to factual research; there is an ample listing of further readings in the back for those so inclined. This is the work of a lifetime researcher who has chosen to step away from relaying scientific observations in order to make a statement of principle and of faith. As such, it succeeds in making a strong case for polytheism as an internally consistent, logical, and coherent approach to our world. Lastly, in a sentiment I and many of the members of ADF will share, Paper endorses polytheism as being more than just useful; it is enjoyable and makes life exhilarating.

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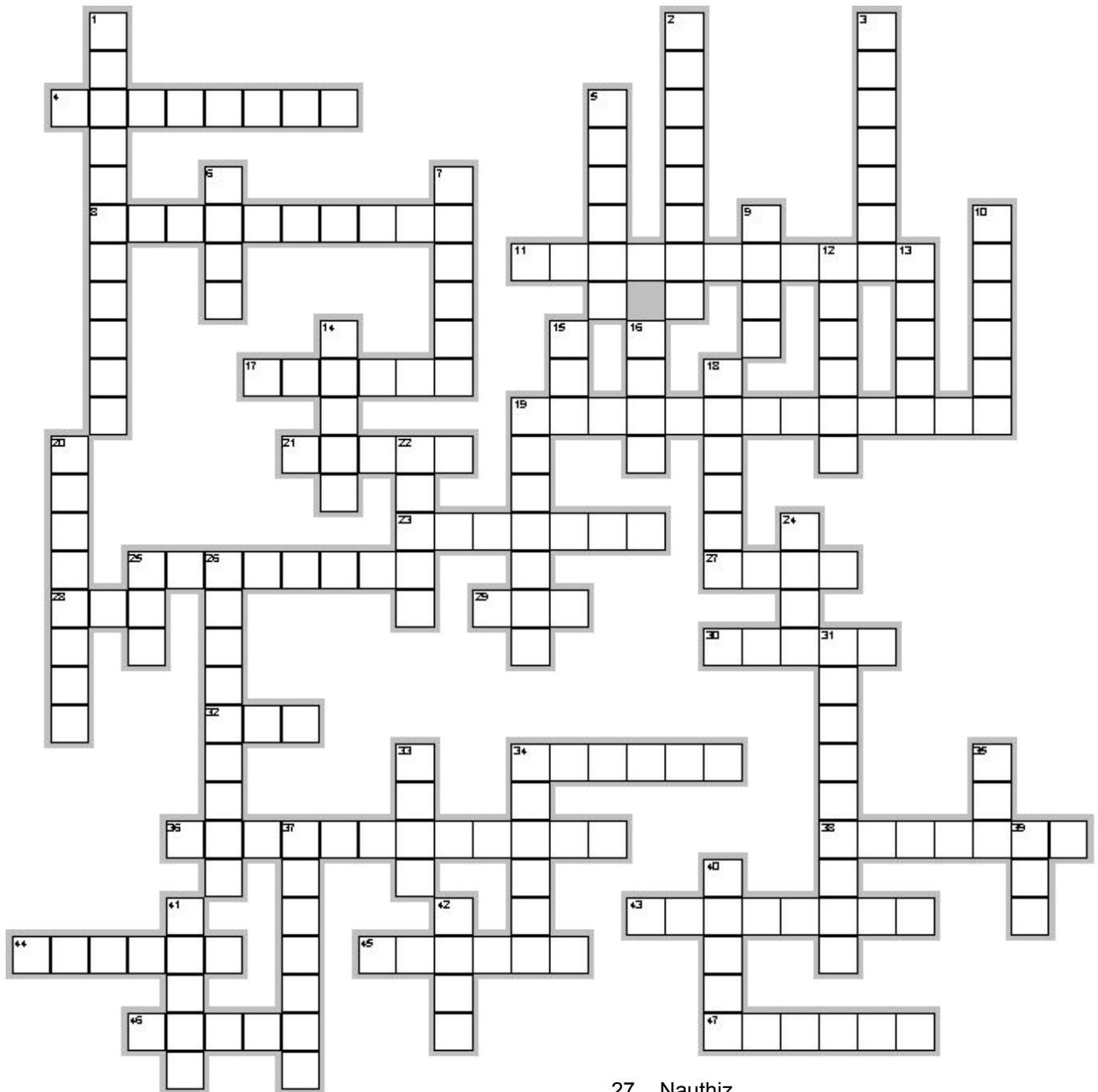
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## Across

- 4. Moirae - Allotter
- 8. The light of the Earth (2wds)
- 11. Magna Mater (2wds)
- 17. City of Dagdas Cauldron
- 19. Psychic Hearing
- 21. Buddhas Tree
- 23. Liturgical Directions
- 25. Sprinkling of sacred water

- 27. Nauthiz
- 28. July 23 to August 21
- 29. Wunjo
- 30. Skt. Deed or Actions
- 32. Gort
- 34. New moon to full
- 36. Boswella Thurifera
- 38. Lat. Equal Night
- 43. Rite, ritual, service etc.
- 44. author -Works and days
- 45. Poem of Faults
- 46. Celtic Prohibition
- 47. Gk. for Wisdom

## Down

---

1. Greek for 'wonderworking'
2. Gardners High Priestess 1953 (last)
3. 11th Major Arcana
5. Offering words to the Gods
6. Field of spiritual energy
7. Discovered by Herschel in 1781
9. Major Arcana '0'
10. 2nd longest river in Europe
12. 9th Major Arcana
13. Luis
14. Sweeping Grass
15. Athenas bird
16. Heroic Poem
18. Origin of the species (last)
19. 7th Major Arcana
20. Religious Study
22. Ehwaz
24. Jera
25. Henry Hurles Creation
26. Chiromancy
31. Viscum Album
33. Famous Scottish Island
34. Tide of Destruction
35. Family...AKA
37. A form of Western Magic
39. Duir
40. March 21 to April 20
41. 16th Major Arcana
42. Male Deer

## Last issue's Crossword Puzzle Answers

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### Across

6. **NEMETON**—Gaulish for Sacred space
8. **MICROCOSM**—The world within us...
9. **GALILEO**—Italian Astronomer 1564-1642 (first)
10. **VOLVA**—Norse Seeress
13. **SIRIUS**—Brightest star in Earths sky
14. **BARD**—Welsh Poets
15. **LOVELOCK**—Gaia Hypothesis originator (last)
18. **VIRTUE**—Moral Excellence
21. **LIBRA**—September 24 to October 23
26. **INDRA**—Leader of the Devas
28. **URD**—Norn - Past
29. **PARIS**—Killer of Achilles
30. **MEDITATIONS**—Marcus Aurelius' book
33. **KEPLER**—3 Laws of planetary motion (last)
38. **GANGES**—Sacred river of India
40. **YEW**—Eihwaz
41. **SCRYING**—'crystal' magic
42. **TREE**—O.E. Treow
45. **ROSETTA**—Stone found in Nile River 1799
47. **JOURNEY**—Raido
48. **MABINOGION**—Welsh myth & legends
49. **RECLAIMING**—Starhawks Tradition
50. **TASSEOMANCY**—Divination by tea leaves

### Down

1. **HANGEDMAN**—12th Major Arcana
2. **WITCHCRAFT**—Canon Episcopi concerns....
3. **JUNG**—Analytical Psychology (last)
4. **KELLS**—Book of Irish Gospels
5. **NICHOLS**—OBOD founder (last)
7. **FORTUNE**—Society of inner light founder (last)
11. **ADEPTUS**—Latin for Skillfull
12. **WIDDERSHINS**—Circumambulation counter clock
16. **OAK**—Quercus
17. **CABALA**—Older spelling of QBLH
19. **ILIAD**—A poem of Homer
20. **ELEUSINIAN**—Gk. Mysteries assoc. with De-meter
22. **AMBER**—Fossilized tree resin
23. **FENNEL**—Foeniculum Vulgare
24. **BURNS**—John Barleycorn poet (last)
25. **PISCES**—Febuary 20 to March 20
27. **URIEL**—Archangel of the Element Earth
31. **AHRIMAN**—Zoroastrian evil one
32. **OVATE**—Strabo's - Interpreter of Nature
34. **EMPEROR**—4th Major Arcana
35. **TALISMAN**—Lucky Charm
36. **CAPRICORN**—December 22 to January 20
37. **HAWTHORN**—Crataegus
39. **DHARMA**—Skt. for "Right Action"
43. **ZENO**—Founder of Stoic Philosophy
44. **DEITY**—A God or Goddess...
46. **YEATS**—Irish poet 1865 -1939 (last)

# Submission Guidelines

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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. 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](mailto:oak-leaves@adf.org)**

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Please send one submission per attachment specifying the format, author's name, your email, and membership status. 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

We will also accept electronic submissions on IBM PC-compatible diskettes, sent to:

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

Please do not upload the article directly to the wiki as this has caused some confusion. Written submissions should be sent in one of the following formats: Rich Text Format (RTF), PDF or MS Word. Submitted materials will not be returned to the sender, unless specifically requested.

## 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 300 dpi, and in a useable format such as .jpg, .png, etc. Please send them to the Art Director at [metrophage@gmail.com](mailto:metrophage@gmail.com). We are not currently accepting hard copies of your art.

## Deadlines for submissions are:

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

# ADF DIRECTORY

## The Mother Grove

Archdruid  
Skip Ellison  
adf-archdruid@adf.org

Vice-Archdruid  
Rev. Kirk Thomas  
adf-vice-archdruid@adf.org

Treasurer  
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adf-treasurer@adf.org

Secretary  
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adf-secretary@adf.org

Members Advocate  
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adf-members-advocate@adf.org

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adf-cord-chief@adf.org

Chief of the Council of Senior  
Druids  
Flip  
adf-cosd-chief@adf.org

Non-Officer Director  
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ivybrigid1@aol.com

Non-Officer Director  
Selene Tawny  
selene@zoomtown.com

Non-Officer Director  
Mariah Sheehy  
caelesti@gmail.com



## Additional Leadership Positions

Administrator  
Selene Tawny  
adf-administrator@adf.org

Archdruid Emeritus  
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ibonewits@neopagan.net

Archdruid Emeritus  
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Archdruid Emeritus  
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john.adelman@trw.com

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Listmaster and Moderator  
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Regalia Manager  
Medb Aodhamair  
adf-regalia@adf.org

Webmaster  
Anthony Thompson  
adf-webmaster@adf.org



## Regional Druids

Upper Midwest Regional Druid  
Epona  
adf-upper-midwest-rd@adf.org

North East Regional Druid  
Illious  
adf-northeast-rd@adf.org

Heartland Regional Druid  
Diana Paar  
adf-heartland-rd@adf.org

North West Regional Druid  
Sean Harbaugh  
adf-northwest-rd@adf.org

South East Regional Druid  
Nancy McAndrew  
adf-southeast-rd@adf.org

Central Regional Druid  
Nancy McAndrew  
adf-central-rd@adf.org

South West Regional Druid  
Modig  
adf-southwest-rd@adf.org

Canada West Regional Druid  
Athelia Nihtscada  
adf-canada-west-rd@adf.org

Canada East Regional Druid  
Illious  
adf-canada-east-rd@adf.org

Europe Regional Druid  
Hekataia  
adf-europe-rd@adf.org



## Guilds

Artisans Guild  
Chief: Sharon Smith  
Mailing list: adf-arts@lists.adf.org <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/artisans/>

Bardic Guild  
Chief: Jennifer Hunt  
Mailing list: adf-bards@lists.adf.org <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/bards/>

Brewers Guild  
Chief: Flip  
Mailing list: adf-brewers@lists.adf.org <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/brewers/>

Dance Guild  
Chief: Zona-Lisa Bennett <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/dance/>

Healers Guild  
Chief: Rodney Cox

Mailing list: [adf-healers@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-healers@lists.adf.org)  
<http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/healers/>

Liturgists Guild  
Chief: Rev. Kirk Thomas  
Mailing list: [adf-liturgists@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-liturgists@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/liturgists/>

Magicians Guild  
Chief: Rodney Cox  
Mailing list: [adf-magicians@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-magicians@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/magicians/>

Naturalists Guild  
Chief: Epona  
Mailing list: [adf-naturalists@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-naturalists@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/naturalists/>

Scholars Guild  
Chief: Christopher Sherbak  
Mailing list: [adf-scholars@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-scholars@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/scholars/>

Seers Guild  
Chief: Meredith McDonald  
Mailing list: [adf-seers@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-seers@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/seers/>

Warriors Guild  
Chief: James Dillard  
Mailing list: [adf-warriors@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-warriors@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/guilds/warriors/>

### **Rins**

Aus Dhwer: Eastern Gate Kin  
Leader: Michael Dangler  
Mailing list: [adf-eastern@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-eastern@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/kins/eastern-gate/>

Clann na nGael: Gael Kin  
Leader: Carrion Mann  
Mailing list: [adf-gael@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-gael@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/kins/>

[gael/](mailto:gael/)

Eldr ok Iss: Kin of Fire and Ice  
Leader: Flip  
Mailing list: [adf-norse@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-norse@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/kins/fire-and-ice/>

Oi Asproi Koukouyayies: White Owls Kin  
Leader: Emerald  
Mailing list: [adf-hellenic@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-hellenic@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/kins/white-owls/>

Roman Kin  
Leader: Jennifer Hunt  
Mailing list: [adf-roman@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-roman@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/kins/roman/>

Slavic Kin  
Leader: Francesca  
Mailing list: [adf-slavic@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-slavic@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/kins/slavic/>

Tylwyth Y Ddraig Goch: Clan of the Red Dragon  
Leader: Rev. Kirk Thomas  
Mailing list: [adf-welsh@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-welsh@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/kins/red-dragon/>

### **Special Interest Groups**

American SIG  
Coordinator: Karen Dutton  
Email: [kdutton@carolina.rr.com](mailto:kdutton@carolina.rr.com)  
Mailing list: [adf-americankin@yahoogroups.com](mailto:adf-americankin@yahoogroups.com) <http://www.adf.org/members/sigs/american/>

Children's Education and Parenting SIG  
Coordinator: Epona  
Email: [epona@mysticdruoid.com](mailto:epona@mysticdruoid.com)  
Mailing list: [adf-parents@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-parents@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/sigs/childrens-education-and-parenting/>

Ecstatic Trance  
Coordinator: West

Email: [spankinpr@hotmail.com](mailto:spankinpr@hotmail.com)

Foireann Mhorrigan  
Coordinator: Calliean  
Email: [amairgin@pacbell.net](mailto:amairgin@pacbell.net)  
Mailing list: [adf-morrigan@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-morrigan@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/sigs/morrigan/>

Military Outreach  
Coordinator: Francesca  
Email: [ladybythesea@yahoo.com](mailto:ladybythesea@yahoo.com) <http://www.adf.org/members/sigs/military-outreach/>

Safe Haven  
Coordinator: Lightwind De Domnu  
Email: [blesseddruiddess@gmail.com](mailto:blesseddruiddess@gmail.com)  
Mailing list: [adf-safe-haven@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-safe-haven@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/sigs/safe-haven/>

Solitaires SIG  
Coordinator: Brandon Newberg  
Email: [SolSIGCoordinator@gmail.com](mailto:SolSIGCoordinator@gmail.com)  
Mailing list: [adf-solitaries@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-solitaries@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/sigs/solitaries/welcome.html>

The People of the Purple Feather  
Coordinator: Aethon Tobar  
Email: [aethontobar@gmail.com](mailto:aethontobar@gmail.com)  
Mailing list: [adf-lgbt@lists.adf.org](mailto:adf-lgbt@lists.adf.org) <http://www.adf.org/members/sigs/purple-feather/>





# Ár nDraiocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship

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



## Membership and Subscription Form

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.

Legal Name: \_\_\_\_\_ P \_ S \_ C  
 Religious Name: \_\_\_\_\_ P \_ S \_ C  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ P \_ S \_ C  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ (mm/dd/yy)  
 Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ P \_ S \_ C

The information on this form represents a:  
 New Membership Renewal Revival of Expired Membership.  
 Information Update (If name/address changed indicate previous)

If this is a new membership, where did you hear about us? \_\_\_\_\_  
 If this is a membership renewal please state your ADF membership number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 In which ADF Grove do you intend to participate in, if any? \_\_\_\_\_  
 I am 18 years of Age or Older: { } Yes { } No (If no, see waiver below.)

### ADF Membership Rates:

Regular Membership \_\_\_\_\_ years @ \$25/year = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prisoner Membership \_\_\_\_\_ years @ \$10/year = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subscription to Oak Leaves - Members \_\_\_\_\_ years @ \$20/year = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subscription to Oak Leaves - Non-Members \_\_\_\_\_ years @ \$25/year = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Due \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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:

# CEDARLIGHT GROVE, ADF



## **Current Witan:**

**Senior Druid:** Crystal Groves - [crystal@cedarlightgrove.org](mailto:crystal@cedarlightgrove.org)

**Vice Senior Druid:** Kat R - [kat@cedarlightgrove.org](mailto:kat@cedarlightgrove.org)

**Pursewarden:** Caryn MacLuan - [caryn@cedarlightgrove.org](mailto:caryn@cedarlightgrove.org)

**Scribe:** Jack in the Green - [jack@cedarlightgrove.org](mailto:jack@cedarlightgrove.org)

**Senior Druids Emeritus:** Will Pierson - [will@cedarlightgrove.org](mailto:will@cedarlightgrove.org)

*CedarLight Grove, ADF is the second oldest Grove in ADF, founded in 1989 by Will Pierson. We established our own physical sanctuary in the fall of 1996, becoming the first Grove in ADF to own its own building. Come see what we've been up to lately!*

## **Recent Events**

In December 2007, CedarLight Grove received an anonymous donation of \$55,000 which was used to pay off not one, but BOTH of our Mortgages. CedarLight Grove now owns its building and land completely!

We also held the first election to ever have multiple people running for each position.

In November 2007, one of our members donated a 565 pound Ancestor's Stone, which we placed in our Sanctuary as our new Ancestor's Altar.

During the year of 2007, CedarLight Grove fought the Baltimore City Zoning Board for the right to hold Church services at the CedarLight Grove Sanctuary and maintain our apartments, and won!

In February 2008, CedarLight Grove held a charity drive of blankets for the Lakota People in Wounded Knee South Dakota and Pine Ridge Reservation. We gathered over 50 blankets to donate!

## **A Random Fact about CedarLight Grove**

*How did CedarLight get its name?*

Many moons ago, on the banks of the Patapsaco River, several druids gathered around a campfire in merriment and ritual. Throughout the wee hours of the morning they drank and frolicked with the twilight, which soon led to their speech transforming into that of Elmer Fudd.

Eventually the sun started to peek out over the golden horizon. It was at this moment that one of the Druid's pointed to the sky and called out, "I see da light!"

And thus, CedarLight (See da light) Grove was born.

**Founded:** 1989

**Patron Deity:** Tailtiu

**Hearth Culture:** Irish-Celtic

**Current Membership Count:** 29

## **Upcoming Events**

**10/17 - 10/19** - Chenille Canopy

**11/08** - Samhain High Rite

**12/20** - Yule High Rite

**Every Sunday** - Rites of Caffiena and Walk with the Old Ones

Baltimore, Maryland  
[www.cedarlightgrove.org](http://www.cedarlightgrove.org)

## **We Dedicate ourselves:**

To create & maintain a safe, supportive, & tolerant religious community within which we may practice, study, & discuss earth based spiritual traditions. We are learning to walk with the OldOnes. To guard & serve the earth, its ecosystem and the diversity of spiritual practice present in the pagan community. We strive to walk lightly upon the earth.

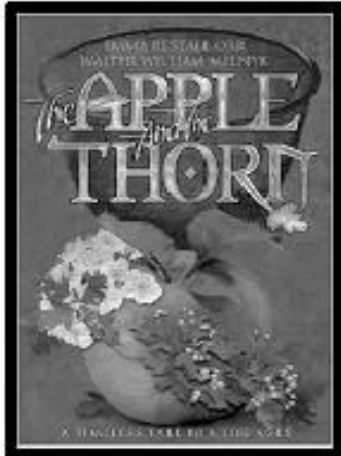


Out of the Ancient Mists Comes the Tale of

# THE APPLE AND THE THORN

BY

Emma Restall Orr, and  
Walter William Melnyk



A work of magical mythology, hanging in the balance between fact and fiction, this tale draws upon the legends and history of our ancestry, and the landscape itself, a story of worlds colliding in love and war. Major characters in the tale are the Chalice Well itself, the Red Spring, and a very special Cup of blue glass.

In the changing times of first century Britain, Vivian, Lady of the Lake, struggles to maintain peace within the lands of Avalon. Broken by the crucifixion of his great nephew, Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea makes his way back to her islands in search of understanding, bringing him more than he realizes.

In this inspiring and heartrending story of sovereignty, power and belief, as the Roman armies draw closer, these iconic figures are forced to confront each other and themselves, leading to choices neither could have imagined.

Emma Restall Orr (Bobcat) is Head of the Druid Network,

William Melnyk (Oakwyse) is a former Episcopal priest in the United States.



Expressing the depth of their own religious visions, the tale is a powerful exposition of British animistic Paganism and mystical Christianity – and what happens when they meet.

**Thoth Publications**  
Leicestershire, United Kingdom  
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[www.TheAppleandTheThorn.com](http://www.TheAppleandTheThorn.com)  
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