

O A R A R A D F S

The Quarterly Journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin

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# The Wellspring Gathering 2009

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## May 21 - 25

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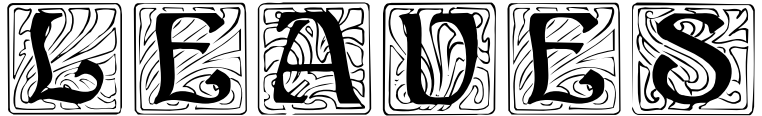
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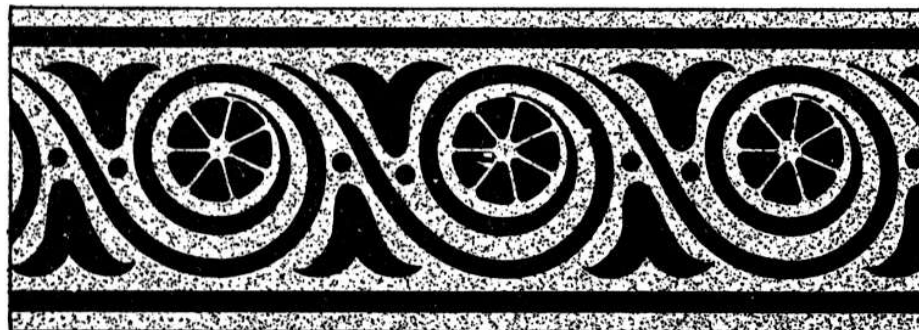
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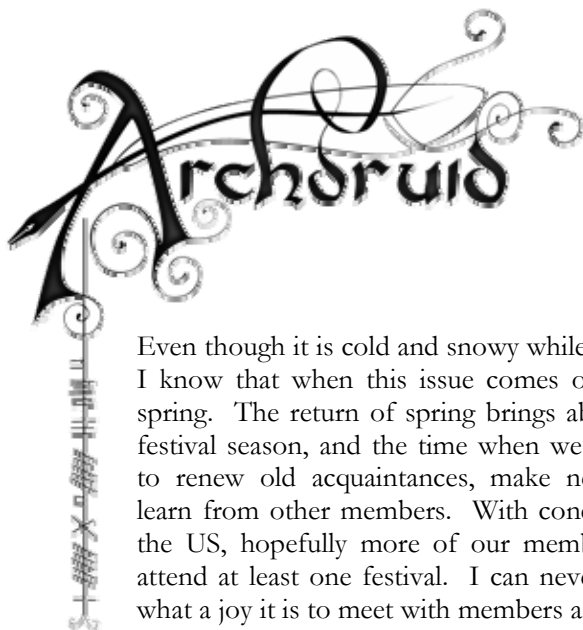
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Even though it is cold and snowy while I write this column, I know that when this issue comes out it will almost be spring. The return of spring brings about the start of the festival season, and the time when we can meet in person to renew old acquaintances, make new friendships, and learn from other members. With conditions improving in the US, hopefully more of our members will be able to attend at least one festival. I can never say enough about what a joy it is to meet with members and learn from them!

Our guilds and councils have been busy over the winter, with new work being done on the study programs for the Artisan's Guild, the Seer's Guild, and the Clergy Council. By the time this issue comes out, we should have new programs in place for both guilds, along with the second, and possibly the third circle, of the Clergy Council study program completed and approved by the Council of Lore (COL). I would like to extend my congratulations to the people that have been working so hard to make this happen.

I would also like to offer my congratulations to the new publishing team. It looks like they are doing a fine job, and I'm sure that Oak Leaves, and all the other publications they are working on, will continue to display the professionalism that we have been seeing. Special thanks go to our new chronicler, Neal Levin aka Tensen, for putting such a fine team together.

Bright Blessings,  
Rev. Skip Ellison

## OAK LEAVES

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**Editor-in-Chief:** Neal 'Tensen' Levin

**Managing Editor:** Steph Gooch

**Submission Archivist:** Peg Glosser

**Editors:** Jackie G., Peg Glosser,  
Tensen

**Art Director:** Steph Gooch

**Layout Artist:** Neal 'Tensen' Levin

**News Director:** Chris :)

**Sales Director:** Lesley Gary

---

### Contributors:

---

#### International Ad Department

Lesley Gary

---

#### International Art Department

Steph Gooch

P.O. Box 17874

Tucson, AZ 85731-7874

[smgooch@hotmail.com](mailto:smgooch@hotmail.com)

---

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#### Subscription Service

Department

ADF

P.O. Box 17874

Tucson, AZ 85731-7874

[adf-office@adf.org](mailto:adf-office@adf.org)

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# Brighid and the Cailleach

*By Firinn Wolfsdaughter*

A legend was once told of how the Cailleach kept a maiden named Brighid imprisoned in the high mountains of Ben Nevis. The Cailleach permitted the maiden to wander the high mountain passes as she had placed an enchantment upon the land that would prevent Brighid from ever escaping or meeting others who might rescue her. Day after day, Brighid would walk the paths, and even in the deepest depths of winter, her beautiful presence was felt. Everywhere she walked, signs of spring would appear. Through the bitter snow, the tiny snowdrop would thrust upwards and bloom for her. Each day she would pick a few flowers and bring them back to her prison, there to brighten her dinner table.

The Cailleach had worked very hard to ensure that no one would know about Brighid, but one day her son followed her to the mountains of Ben Nevis and saw Brighid walking along a rocky path. Entranced by her beauty, he was unable to move or think until she wandered out of sight. Determined to learn who this fair maiden was, he ran to his mother's fortress to demand to be told Brighid's identity.

The Cailleach refused to answer her son's questions and forbade him from ever approaching Ben Nevis or seeing Brighid again. But the Cailleach's son was stubborn. He devised a plan to return to the mountain fortress without his mother's knowledge.

The Cailleach's son began his courtship of Brighid at the beginning of spring and it continued deep into the winter. No matter how deep the snow, or how fierce the winds, the Cailleach's son would make the journey to the high fortress. On the last night of winter, as the two warmed their hands by the fire, the Cailleach's son asked Brighid to run away with him.

Brighid agreed but then wept for the bitter truth of her situation. She wept because she knew she would never be able to find her way down from the mountains to the lands below. The Cailleach's son wept seeing his beloved's sorrow, then his brow cleared as an idea occurred to him.

He suggested that Brighid cover her eyes with her mantle so that she could not see the path in front of her. The Cailleach's son, who was not subject to the land's enchantment, led his beautiful bride-to-be down from the high passes of Ben Nevis into the lands below. Thus the enchantment of the Cailleach was defeated by love.

The Cailleach learned of the escape and immediately set off to capture the pair. She chased them throughout the land, her wrath causing great winter storms wherever she went. Spring continued to follow on Brighid's heels and the land rebelled against the storms thrown about by the Cailleach.

One day, as the Cailleach rested against a large boulder, the land spirits had their revenge. As she sat, thinking about how to punish her son and return Brighid to her prison, her back began to change. The Cailleach was sinking into the stone! She tried to struggle, but the pull was too strong. She threw all her magical might against it, but the stone was unmoved. Just as the pull of the moon controls the tides, the Cailleach was absorbed into the boulder.

With the Cailleach turned to stone, the young couple were free to marry and live happily ever after in the fair land of Ireland. And to this day, the snowdrop is the first flower to herald Brighid's passage throughout the land.



# Nice Day For A Green Wedding

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*By Rev. Jessie "Medb" Olson*

Birth, puberty, marriage, and death are big events in every person's life and they are often paired with religious or spiritual significance. In Paganism, we are very enthusiastic about celebrating the transitional moments of our lives with rites of passage. As a group of people whose spirituality is partly based on reverence for the Earth Mother and the Nature Spirits we should be looking at how our celebration of these special moments may be impacting the environment.

Weddings are among the most expensive of these celebrations. From December 2005 to December 2006, 2,160,000 weddings occurred in the U.S. (<http://afwpi.com/wedstats.html>). During this time about \$86 billion was spent on weddings, not counting the honeymoon or new household items (<http://afwpi.com/wedstats.html>). That amounts to a lot of cheap plastic wedding decorations, empty wine bottles and discarded flowers in the landfill, but that's just the tip of the iceberg.

Luckily, the green movement has recently extended into the wedding industry and there are now a number of options available to the eco-conscious couple. So, don't you fret about how your upcoming nuptials might be affecting Mother Earth; I have some solutions to make your day both special and environmentally responsible.

## **Jewelry**

One of the first things that we might consider is your wedding ring. The process of extracting precious metals and gems from the earth is a major danger to the ecosystem. Additionally, the people employed in these mining operations are often treated unfairly, work in dangerous conditions, and their communities are affected by erosion and contaminated drinking water. There is also a possibility that you will purchase conflict diamonds (diamonds that were mined in a war zone and may have been sold to finance rebellion or war lords). Further, the jewelry industry is rife with scams and cons. Some jewelers are not even aware that they are selling conflict diamonds or dirty gold.

There are a number of options available. You can purchase your jewelry from a reputable jeweler who recycles gold. Be careful, most companies that take your jewelry to recast into new pieces do no such thing. They usually take your jewelry, trade it to a company that refines it, and cast your piece with new dirty gold. So, educate yourself, websites like <http://www.nodirtygold.org/> and <http://www.ethicalmetalsmiths.org>, have information on dirty gold and where to purchase eco-friendly jewelry for your nuptials. Companies like <http://www.greenkarat.com>, <http://www.leberjeweler.com/earthwise/index.php3>, and <http://www.credjewellery.com/> specialize in designing eco-friendly jewelry but your local jeweler may have the ability to melt and re-refine the gold at his shop. If so, consider purchasing locally. Don't forget to consider unusual options too, like beautiful handcrafted wooden rings from <http://chicagojoinery.com/>, and <http://www.touchwoodrings.com/gallery.html>.

As far as your gemstones go, be sure to purchase certified conflict free diamonds or forego diamonds altogether. There is no rule that says you have to have a diamond (unless you listen to De Beer's propaganda). Before De Beers took control of the diamond industry in 1880, engagement rings could have any gem you liked or none at all. Consider selecting your sweetie's favorite gem instead but be aware of the mining practices for that stone and make an ethical decision.

## **Invitations**

The wedding invitation is often a major decision in the wedding planning process. The endless catalogs of options from hand engraved to print at home are overwhelming. Often they are formal, decorous affairs but lately wedding invitations are becoming less stogy. Having your invitations printed on recycled paper is a good step but you can be even more creative. Consider post cards which use less paper and cost less in postage (post card stamps are .27 instead of the .41 for regular postage stamps). There are also papers that

have seeds embedded in them (so your friends and family can plant them in their gardens after the ceremony). Additionally, you could have seed packets printed with your invitation on them in lieu of traditional wedding invitations. I've even seen wedding invitations that look more like concert tickets (<http://www.blissweddingsmarket.com/store/000247.htm>) these will use far less paper than a standard wedding invitation.

### Venue

Many Pagans will choose to hold their wedding celebrations outdoors. This may seem the greener alternative since you will not be using as much electricity as you would indoors; however, you must also be aware of the impact your celebration will have on the site. For example, many couples like to marry in meadows filled with flowers but where I live, in California, many of these areas are protected due to their fragile ecosystems.

Consider a wedding in a vineyard, orchard, or park. Eco-friendly retreat centers and hotels are also springing up and you may find they have a nice space for your wedding or reception.

If you have your ceremony outdoors, remember to provide recycling options for your guests. Be mindful of the litter that comes with weddings and ensure there are people assigned to clean up after the celebration is over. Also, be heedful of noise and how it might affect the wildlife.

### Wedding Attire

The bride's dress is often a major concern in the wedding planning process but all those yards of satin and lace can come at a high price to our environment. The fabrics used in making wedding gowns are often not very eco-friendly. Your grandmother had the right idea though; consider wearing your mother's dress.

Okay, so you and your mom don't exactly have the same taste, that's okay, there are other options. You can rent your dress, buy a vintage dress, or have your dress made locally out of organic fabrics. Some of the fabrics to consider are cotton, silk, tencel (lyocel), hemp, and linen.

If you choose silk, consider purchasing peace silks. They are harvested after the silk worm has vacated the

cocoon. Aurora Silk carries a wide variety of beautiful peace silks (<http://www.aurorasilk.com/>) that are both beautiful and affordable.

### Decorations and Flowers

There are a number of options to consider too when you look at decorations. Avoid those cheap plastic things you find in your local craft shops. They will just end up in the landfill anyway. Instead, consider live plants like ferns, baby roses, or native botanicals from your local native plant nursery. Take them home after the celebration or raffle them off to your guests to raise money for your honeymoon.

Candles in pretty glass containers are also great options. You can purchase the glass candle holders from any number of recycled glass artists or make them yourself from old beer, soda, or wine bottles. Just cut the neck off and sand the edges well. You can paint them with glass paint and stencils to dress them up a bit.

Vases full of local flowers from the farmer's market, your own garden, or picked fresh in the wild can also be beautiful. Just be sure that any wildflowers you pick are not endangered. You can use old wine bottles (as described above) for the vases. Again, you can raffle them off to your guests.

Check your local florist to see if they can get organic flowers or if they will arrange flowers that you provide. Flowers or plants can also be donated to a local hospital or hospice after the ceremony.

### Catering and Food

The food at the reception is also a big deal to wedding planners. Try to hire a caterer that will use local organic, produce and locally grown meats. If you select fish, be mindful of the harvesting process and whether it is eco-friendly. Check the Environmental Defense Fund's seafood selector for more information (<http://www.edf.org/seafood>). Also, be aware of whether the other meats you are using are raised sustainably.

If the caterers in your area do not or will not use organic or local produce and meat, then check with your local college to see if they have a culinary program. If so, contact the program and see if one of

their students is looking for a job or needs a final project. You can provide the organic ingredients and probably will save some money in the process.

### Gifts

People always want to give you gifts when you wed. No matter how much you insist that you don't need or want more stuff they will still give it to you. So, make sure to register at an environmentally friendly store or website. You can also register for charities and ask people to donate to them in your name.

Encourage your guests to not bother with wrapping their gifts or to use gift bags which can be repurposed later. You may also ask them to simply donate funds for your honeymoon by creating a website with information about the wedding and a PayPal button for gifts.

### Honeymoon

We rarely think of how our vacations can affect the environment but no one wants to go without a honeymoon. So, consider alternative vacations. Think about eco-tourism or even a volunteer vacation. Websites like [www.ecotour.org](http://www.ecotour.org) can help you plan your perfect ecologically friendly tour. Ecotours are a little more familiar than some of the other alternatives but they may be a bit pricey. For a less expensive honeymoon, consider a volunteer vacation.

Volunteer vacations are a little more extreme but can often cost you a great deal less than an eco-tour. You

can help build houses in Uganda, re-plant trees in the redwoods, build roads in Africa, or (for a more extended stay) teach English in Vietnam. Companies like [www.globalvolunteers.org](http://www.globalvolunteers.org) can help match volunteers with volunteer opportunities. Food and lodging is usually covered with some time off for touring the area on your own.

There are also a number of eco-friendly hotels, spas, and retreat centers right here in the U.S., some of which even have sustainably built lodging you can rent. Taos, New Mexico, for example, has a local village of unconventional, but beautiful, earthships built out of recycled tires, glass bottles, and aluminum cans and all of the buildings are off grid ([www.earthship.org](http://www.earthship.org)). To make your honeymoon even more productive, consider taking a course in sustainable building techniques, permaculture, or grey water harvesting so you can return home to build your own little love-nest, sustainably.

### Thank You Cards

Every new couple dreads the return home and dealing with the thank you cards but it has to be done. Besides, it's just good hospitality to thank your guests for their generous gifts, even (perhaps especially) if they were donations made in your name. So, be sure to use some of the ideas provided in the section above on invitations and let your guests know how much you appreciated their efforts to help you help the environment.



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# Sacred Spinners

By Jen “Betula”

Spinning fiber into thread is one of the oldest human technologies, and one that still holds magic today. Though few in our society have operated a spinning wheel, most of us know at least a few stories about them—Rumpelstiltskin spinning straw into gold, Sleeping Beauty pricking her finger on a spinning wheel, two sisters travelling to a magic land by dropping their spindles in a well and jumping in after. Analyses of these stories tend to focus on spinning as the archetypal “women’s work” and interpret the stories as psychological metaphors for the oppression of women, fear of puberty, etc. Coming from a Pagan perspective, I think something more is going on—I see these stories as the fragments from a time when spinning was known as a magical act, one that could put the spinner in touch with spirit beings or transport her into trance states. Myths and legends from various Indo-European cultures show that the threads of divine spinners were deeply interwoven into the spiritual world-views of the ancients.

Spinning goddesses and legendary spinners are common across Europe. The most well-known are the Greek Moerae, or Fates, whose spinning and cutting of threads determine the lifespans of individuals. Clotho spins the thread, Lachesis measures it, and Atropos cuts it. The Romans knew these spirits as the Parcae. In Norse myth, the Norns dwell at the base of the world-tree Yggdrasil, and weave Wyrð, or fate. Although the references to the Norns in the Poetic and Prose Eddas do not specifically mention spinning, later pictures often depict them spinning. Also, the word “Wyrð” derives from the proto-Indo-European root *\*wert-*, which means to turn or wind. And from a practical standpoint, before you can weave, you have to spin some thread.

Another set of goddesses are associated with spinning and weaving as part of a larger association with various domestic arts and crafts. These include Brigid (Gaelic), Athena (Greek), Frigg (Norse), and Paraskeva-Pyatnitsa (Slavic). Brigid is known primarily as a weaver, although an Imbolc tradition prohibiting spinning or the use of any wheels on that day, probably links her to spinning as well. Athena also is

primarily associated with weaving, through the myth of Arachne, but is also frequently depicted spinning. Frigg does her textile work on Fridays, and punishes women who spin or weave on that day. Paraskeva-Pyatnitsa, whose name means “Friday-Friday” in Greek and Russian, also punishes women who spin/weave on Fridays—by blinding them. Paraskeva-Pyatnitsa is actually a saint, who is associated with Mokosh, a goddess who is said to shear the sheep when they molt in the Spring. Another goddess associated with Friday, Aphrodite/Venus, may also be a spinner. Several Greek and Roman statues of her depict her with arms outstretched in the correct position to be holding up a distaff of fiber in her left hand and reaching down to twist a spindle with her right (one of them holds a spindle-sized cylinder in that hand). The twisted posture of the Venus de Milo, along with the musculature of her shoulders, indicate that her arms were probably in this position as well.

Folklore describes many other spinning spirits. The Portuguese *moiras fiandeiras* are usually seen near natural springs, spinning as they walk, with standing stones balanced on their heads. They live in caves, and will spin flax for you in exchange for an offering of bread left at the cave entrance. Similar figures appear across the European continent and the British Isles. Many such spinners became associated with female saints or the Virgin Mary. Others are described as giants or fairies. The legends vary, but often the women carry the stones on their heads or in their aprons, and drop them accidentally while picking up a dropped spindle. Some of the stones are named as the spinner’s tools themselves, such as the Distaff of Saint Barbe in France.

Many mythic spinners are also associated with water. The Norns, as well as weaving, tend the Well of Wyrð. In the German folktale of Frau Holle, a girl pricks her finger while spinning, drops her spindle in a well, and jumps in after it. She finds herself in a magical land where Frau Holle rewards her for her domestic work. In Scotland, a water spirit called the Loireag oversaw the processes of weaving and waulking (felting) fabric, and undid the work if the proper rituals were not followed. Welsh lore also

records several fairies who were seen coming out of lakes to spin in the moonlight.

There is also evidence that the rotation of the heavens was linked symbolically with the turning of a cosmic spindle. In Norse tradition, the stars of Orion's belt are known as Frigg's Distaff or Frigg's Spinning Wheel. Plato, in his *Republic*, describes a giant spindle with a rainbow-colored shaft "extending right through the whole heaven and through the earth," (Book 5, p. 65) and eight whorls corresponding to the sun, moon, and planets, spun by Necessity and her three daughters Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos. A metaphor in the Rig Veda depicts the rays of the sun as twisted threads: "He hath assumed the rays of Surya for his robe, spinning, as he knows how, the triply-twisted thread" (Book 9, Hymn 86, line 32). The thought that celestial objects were in some way like spindles, looms, and thread seems to have occurred universally in cultures that developed the technologies of spinning and weaving—examples can be found in Navajo, Mayan, Egyptian, Japanese, Finnish, and Dogon myths, and probably many more.

Within an ADF context, I have come to see the spindle as a symbol of the sacred center around which the universe rotates. Correlating the spindle to the model of well-tree-fire, the well and tree (or, pillar) parts are clearly present in the lore. I see the rotational energy of the spindle as the "fire"—it is a different form of energy which transforms chaos (a big puffy mass of fibers) into order (the fibers aligned and twisted to form a smooth, usable thread). In my personal practice, I have begun to spin as a meditation (although not on Fridays!). As I spin, I stand at the point of transformation from Chaos to Cosmos—in fact I literally hold that point in my hand. Spirits such as the Moerae and Norns guard this liminal space and keep the cosmos spinning.

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# The Characters of the Mabinogi: Are The Women More Vivid Than The Men?-

By Rev. Kirk S. Thomas

Of all the characters in the tales collected under the name *Y Mabinogi*, those in the Four Branches are far more vivid and fully realized than the others. And within the Four Branches, the modern reader cannot help but be struck with the vividness of some of them, both male and female, such as Rhiannon, Blodeuedd, Aranrhod, Gwydion and Efnysien. In fact, from this point of view some of the men are just as vivid as the women. But when examined through the eyes (or ears) of a medieval Welsh audience, the significance of the female characterizations becomes even more pronounced, lending them a depth and vividness that surpasses the men.

In *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi*, women manipulate men in sophisticated ways, men try to keep women subjugated (often brutally), though sometimes they fail, and there is a frequent jockeying for position between them that can be quite entertaining. Andrew Breeze even stated that, “the *Four Branches* can thus be seen as that rare thing, a feminist fairy tale” (A. Breeze, 2). While this may be an exaggeration, it certainly sums up many of the motivations of the female characters in these tales.

## Characterization Techniques

The characters in the Four Branches reveal themselves in at least four ways (C. Byfield, 52). One way is through the things that the author tells us directly, which are those things that we could not know otherwise. One example of this would be in The First Branch where Pwyll has returned to Dyfed from his stay in Annwfn and we’re told,

*And because he had stayed that year in Annwfn, and had ruled there so successfully, and united the two realms through his courage and prowess, the name Pnyll, prince of Dyfed, fell into disuse, and he was called Pnyll Pen Annwfn from then on (S. Davies 2007, 8).*

From this we have learned that because of his fighting abilities, Pwyll now has earned the title ‘Head of Annwfn’ which is greater than just being prince of

Dyfed. His status and stature among his own people has grown.

Another way that we can discover the motivations and character of a person in the tales is through their own actions. In the Third Branch, Pryderi and Manawydan are hunting a boar when they come across a newly built, towering fort. Manawydan warns Pryderi not to enter, but he goes in anyway. Inside he sees a golden bowl, and,

*He was enraptured by the beauty of the gold and the fine workmanship of the bowl. And he went to the bowl and grabbed it... (S. Davies 2007, 40)*

showing us that he has a greedy side. And his greed gets him trapped in the castle. Indeed, this greed will bring about his death in the Fourth Branch.

A third way of discovering characterization and motivation is through interplay between the characters that shows how they are foils for, or compliment each other. The Second Branch demonstrates this idea well in the characters of Bendigeidfran (Bran) and Matholwch. Though both are kings, it is Matholwch who comes to Wales in search of a wife from Bran, intimating that Bran has the higher status. Later, Matholwch’s compliance with his nobles’ demands to expel Branwen from his chamber, reducing her status to that of a servant, and his later attempted treachery against Bran after suing for peace only makes the contrast between the two men even starker (C. Byfield, 57).

A fourth technique to show character is through the use of dialogue. Here we can discover how the characters perceive themselves and each other. There is a good example in the Third Branch when Manawydan, Pryderi, Rhiannon and Cigfa have to go to England to make a living. In Hereford they take up saddle-making, and are so successful that the local saddlers decide to kill them to eliminate the competition. After receiving a warning, Manawydan and Pryderi discuss what to do:

*'Between me and God,' said Pryderi, 'my advice is not to leave the town but rather to kill these churls.'*

*'No,' said Manawydan, 'if we were to fight them, we would get a bad reputation and would be imprisoned. It would be better for us to go to another town and earn our living there.' Then the four of them went to another city (S. Davies 2007, 37-38).*

This simple exchange shows us that Pryderi is impetuous and quick to fight, while Manawydan is more cautious and thoughtful. These two lines of dialogue point up quite a clear contrast in their characters.

From this we see that a lot can be learned about a character in the Four Branches just by paying attention to what the author says about them, by seeing what they do and say, and by noting comparisons made between them. These techniques give the stories depth and sophistication and are the reason that the characters are perceived so vividly. For the purposes of this essay, I am going to examine the characters of Efnisien, Gwydion, Rhiannon, Blodeuedd and Aranrhod.

### Efnisien

On the surface, the character of Efnisien in the Second Branch seems out of control and even sociopathic in his behavior. And as a result he is quite striking. While Efnisien reveals much about himself through his actions, he is the only character in the Four Branches who also reveals himself through his own thoughts (C. Byfield, 59). He does this just before he commits the acts that shock us so much.



HARLECH CASTLE - SITE OF BENDIGEIDFRAN'S SEAT

Early in the tale, Bendigeidfran agrees to give his sister, Branwen, to Matholwch, the king of Ireland, in marriage. A great celebration ensues, and Efnisien comes across the place where Matholwch's horses are being stabled. When told whose they were, and why Matholwch was in Wales, Efnisien remarks (to himself),

*'Is that what they have done with such a fine maiden, and my sister at that, given her away without my permission? They could not have insulted me more,' he said.*

He then acts and takes out his knife and maims the horses terribly,

*He went for the horses, and cut their lips to the teeth, and their ears down to their heads, and their tails to their backs; and where he could get a grip on the eyelids, he cut them to the bone (S. Davies 2007, 24).*

Later in the tale, this destructive act is the excuse needed by the Irish lords to have Branwen turned out of the King's chamber and into the kitchens, which precipitates the war between Wales and Ireland. The Irish manage to get Bendigeidfran to agree to peace by offering to make Branwen's son king and to build a house for Bendigeidfran that he can actually fit into (since he's a giant). But the treacherous Irish hide 200 men in sacks of flour hanging on the pegs of the columns of the house, and it is Efnisien who discovers the ploy. He 'prodded the bag until he found the man's head, and he squeezed the head until he could feel his fingers sinking into the brain through the bone.'(S. Davies 2007, 31) He goes through the entire group, playing 'the same game with each of them,' killing them all, and then he sings an englyn,

*'There is in this bag a different kind of flour,  
Champions, warriors, attackers in battle,  
Against fighters, prepared for combat' (S. Davies 2007, 31).*

It's almost as though he was actually enjoying himself while squeezing the brains out of each man. But it's later in the story where he commits his worst crime.

Right after Efnisien kills the warriors in the flour bags, the rest of the company enters the hall, sits

down, and makes peace. The boy Gwern, son of Matholwch and Branwen, is made king of Ireland in Matholwch's place. Efnysien calls the boy to him and then we learn,

*'I confess to God, said Efnysien to himself, 'the outrage I shall now commit is one the household will never expect.' And he gets up, and takes the boy by the feet, and immediately, before anyone in the house can lay a hand on him, he hurls the boy head-first into the fire (S. Davies 2007, 31-32).*

Such atrocities can only appall a modern audience, and Efnysien certainly comes across as a memorable and vivid character. But would a medieval Welsh audience be so surprised, shocked and confused by his actions? Would they have understood what we moderns do not? In the affair of the maimed horses, Efnysien commits the outrage because he has not been consulted about Branwen's marriage. At the time the tale was written down, only the nearest male relative would have to right to be consulted, or make that decision. But based on evidence in *Kulhwch ac Olwen* this could be a debatable point. In that tale, Kulhwch agrees to give certain wedding-dues to Olwen's maternal and paternal kinswomen. T.P. Ellis argues that in earlier times the right of bestowal in marriage had extended to all relatives, paternal and maternal, within four degrees of relationship (T.P. Ellis, 127-129). Since the Four Branches are supposedly set in the distant past, it is reasonable that the audience might accept that Efnysien had the right to be consulted, and that he truly had been wronged by his brother, which justified the maiming of the horses.

After discovering the Irish warriors hidden in the flour sacks and killing them all, the rest of the armies enter the hall and peace is made between Bendigeidfran and Matholwch *before* Efnysien has the chance to tell his brother about the Irish treachery. It is perfectly natural that Efnysien, angered by the faithlessness of the Irish, would want to exact revenge on their king, who had ordered the sneak attack. But when peace is made, the kingship of Ireland is passed on to the boy Gwern from Matholwch, so if Efnysien is to have revenge against the *king*, it is now the boy who must suffer. This throws Efnysien's actions into a whole different light, and is something that a medieval Welsh audience might have understood.

And to further rehabilitate his character, Efnysien is the one who finally breaks the cauldron of rebirth, stopping the flow of revived Irish warriors in the ensuing battle, and at the price of his own death,

*When Efnysien saw the corpses, and no room anywhere for the men of the Island of the Mighty, he said to himself, 'Oh God,' he said, 'woe is me that I am the cause of this mountain of the men of the Island of the Mighty; and shame on me,' he said, 'unless I try to save them from this.'*

*He creeps in among the corpses of the Irish, and two bare-backed Irishmen come up to him and throw him in the cauldron, as if he were an Irishman. He stretches himself out in the cauldron so that the cauldron breaks into four pieces, and his own heart breaks too (S. Davies 2007, 32).*

And this allows the Welsh to win the battle. So in the eyes of the medieval Welsh audience, Efnysien, though memorable, might not have seemed as vivid as other characters with his actions being understandable, and certainly not as bizarre and out of control as a modern audience might think.

### Gwydion

This great magician character in the Fourth Branch appears totally amoral, using his magical powers to promote evil and to manipulate others to achieve his own ends, provoking disaster (C. Byfield, 67). At the beginning of the tale he seems to have no principles at all, unless it be argued that he was only trying to help his brother Gilfaethwy gain Goewin's bed through his love for him (S. Davies 1993, 74). In order to get his uncle Math away from her, Gwydion foments a war between Dyfed and Gwynedd by stealing the pigs that Pryderi had obtained from Arawn, King of Annwfn. Gwydion does this by disguising himself as a poet to get entrance to Pryderi's court, and there the author tells us something about Gwydion,

*Gwydion was the best storyteller in the world. And that night he entertained the court with amusing anecdotes and stories, until he was admired by everyone in the court, and Pryderi enjoyed conversing with him (S. Davies 2007, 48).*

Using his charm and playing on Pryderi's greed, Gwydion convinces him to let him have the pigs in return for stallions and hounds that Gwydion magically conjures up in the night. When the deception is discovered, Pryderi and his army march north after him. The ensuing war distracts Math, leaving Gilfaethwy and Gwydion free to rape Goewin. But Goewin tells Math about the rape, and he changes Gwydion and Gilfaethwy into three different pairs of animals over three years, and each pair gave birth to a baby animal. Each year Math would change the sex of the animals so that each man would be alternately the baby's mother or father.

But it is in his relationship with his sister Aranrhod that we see Gwydion begin to show signs of humanity.



**The Hillfort at Dinlleu - Gwydion's Home**

His honest love for his foster son Lleu shines alongside his anger at Aranrhod for her refusal to claim her son. When she first refuses to give the boy a name, Gwydion erupts in anger at her,

*'By my confession to God, he said, 'you are a wicked woman; but the boy shall have a name, though it displeases you. And you,' he said, 'it is because of him you are angry, since you are no longer called a virgin. Never again will you be called a virgin.'* (S. Davies, 2007, 55)

Gwydion goes to great lengths to trick Aranrhod into giving Lleu a name, and then arms, and when she curses the boy that he will not have a wife 'from the race that is on the earth at present,' (S. Davies 2007,

58) he again thwarts her by teaming up with Math to create a wife for Lleu made of the flowers of broom, meadowsweet and oak, naming her Blodeuedd (Flowers). This experiment of his is disastrous, however, because she falls in love with another man and plots Lleu's death.



**Gronw Pebr's Stone**

Once Lleu has been mortally wounded and flies away in the shape of an eagle, Gwydion searches north Wales for him, proving his love and determination. He changes Lleu back to human form and has him healed, and then helps Lleu take his revenge.

Gwydion, though fundamentally amoral, is a striking figure in the tale, and vividly portrayed, primarily through his actions. Instead of killing Blodeuedd for conniving the death of her husband, he turns her into an owl (Blodeuwedd – Flower Face) (S. Davies 2007, 244 n. 63), much as he had been punished earlier by being turned into various animals. Thus, he has moved in a circle – Gwydion the amoral magician has become Gwydion the judge and he has learned the difference between right and wrong (S. Davies 1993, 75).

### **THE WOMEN OF THE FOUR BRANCHES**

Gwydion and Efnysien (and the other male characters) are nonetheless operating in a world of men, designed by men to be run by men. The position of women in medieval Wales was a subordinate one. Whereas men would be defined by their titles (indicating their status in society), women were defined by who their male relatives were: their fathers, husbands and brothers. In terms of how much compensation would have to be paid in the case

of insult or injury, a woman was only worth half of what her brother was worth, and once married, only a third of her husband's worth. And should her honor be affronted, it was up to her male kin (husband, if married) to defend her (R. Valente, 2). She was not expected to do anything about it herself.

Women had three stages in their lives to look forward to in terms of personal power: that of a virgin, then a married woman, and finally a mother (should she outlive her husband she might become a dowager, but widowhood offered few advantages) (C. Lloyd-Morgan, 75). The women in the Four Branches only seem to have any power when they are single. Once they marry or have sex with a man, their autonomy is severely restricted (C. Lloyd-Morgan, 68) and motherhood can bring about total irrelevance. For the modern reader who is unaware of how medieval Welsh society worked, these characters might seem merely interesting and entertaining. But for a medieval Welshman, the independence and audacity of these women would have made them stand out sharply in vivid comparison to how society normally worked, making their characters extremely memorable. It is how the women of the Four Branches cope with these societal restrictions that gives them their power in our imaginations, for they are independent, can instigate events and sometimes, like men, even control their own fates (F. Winward, 80).

### Rhiannon

Rhiannon enters the tale not as a lady of the court or as a wife, but rather as entering from an Otherworldly setting. In the First Branch, Pwyll, Pen Annwn, is sitting on the Mound of Arberth when a woman wearing gold, brocaded silk and seated on a tall, pale-white horse comes riding by. As the author tells us,

*Anyone who saw it would think that the horse had a slow, steady pace, and it was drawing level with the mound (S. Davies 2007, 8).*

And then just a little further on in the narrative,

*Her pace was no different to the day before. He set his horse to amble, and he thought that although his horse was going slowly, he would catch up with her. But that was*

*futile. He gave his horse its head; he was no closer to her than if he were on foot; and the more he spurred his horse, the further she drew away from him. Her pace was no faster than before (S. Davies 2007, 9-10).*

What we have learned from the author here is that this woman, Rhiannon, rides a magical horse that cannot be caught, even when it is only walking. The implication is that she may be from the Otherworld herself. She certainly, at least, has access to magic of some kind. And when she speaks with Pwyll, she is apparently making her *own* choice of whom she will marry,

*'...and I am to be given to a husband against my will. But I have never wanted any man, because of my love for you. And I still do not want him, unless you reject me. And it is to find out your answer on the matter that I have come.'* (S. Davies 2007, 11)

She certainly is not content to be given away by her male relatives and instead will decide herself. Later, at their wedding feast, Pwyll rashly offers a visitor anything in his power, and the man demands Rhiannon's hand – he was the one she was supposed to marry. She says to Pwyll,

*'Be silent for as long as you like,' said Rhiannon. 'Never has a man been more stupid than you have been.'* (S. Davies 2007, 12)

It's almost as if she has started to reconsider her choice of him as a husband. But Rhiannon takes charge, tells Pwyll how to handle the situation, and even arranges the solution to the problem at the next year's feast. She seems to manage situations better than any of the men. Considering how competent, strong and magical she is, one would think that she wouldn't have to marry at all, but the tale exists in a world where the assumption is that women must be subservient to men (C. Lloyd-Morgan, 68).

After their marriage, things begin to change. When Rhiannon's father suggests that she will follow after Pwyll for Arberth at a later date, Pwyll refuses and insists she accompany him. And it is when they get to Arberth that the change in Rhiannon's status really starts to show. In the third year of their marriage she had yet to give birth to an heir, and Pwyll's men grumble and ask him to put her aside in favor of another wife. This fine, magical horsewoman is suddenly in danger of being thrown out!

Pwyll puts them off for a year, and she gives birth to a boy. But it's interesting to see *whose* child he is,

*Before the whole period had elapsed a son  
was born to him. (italics mine) (S. Davies  
2007, 16)*

The boy is Pwyll's child now, not Rhiannon's. Not even both of theirs, just his. But her character shines through during the events that quickly follow. On the night of the birth, Rhiannon, exhausted, sleeps deeply and the serving women who were charged with watching over her and the boy also fall asleep. In the morning they wake up and discover that the child is missing. They assume that this magical horsewoman cannot protect them from the fury of the men,

*'Truly,' said another, 'burning us alive or  
putting us to death would be too small a  
punishment for this.' (S. Davies 2007, 16)*

So they kill a puppy and smear its blood on her face and accuse her of killing and eating her own baby. Rhiannon treats the women with compassion, promising to protect them, but they do not believe her.

*'You poor creatures,' she replied, 'you shall  
come to no harm if you tell the truth.'  
Whatever she said, out of fairness or pity,  
she received only the same answer from the  
women. (S. Davies 2007, 17)*

Pwyll refuses to believe the allegations, but is forced to punish her, and she accepts her punishment stoically. She must offer to carry any visitors to Arberth from the gate to the court on her back, like a horse. Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan sees this as an example of the hatred men have towards women who show independence and deviate from the social norm (C. Lloyd-Morgan, 69). In any case, this competent and magical woman has gone from being the proud horsewoman who picked her own husband and arranged her own wedding feast to one who is powerless to defend herself against false allegations from other women. And in the Third Branch, while she still shows great prowess in joining the men on their hunting expeditions, she still must agree to marriage with Manawydan, her son's friend, using a stock answer of acceptance because, in fact, she has no right to refuse (C. Lloyd-Morgan, 70). In both

branches, however, she does not fight *against* the system, but rather fights *within* the system to achieve her ends. She is one fascinating and resourceful woman. And her success at being happy against all odds must have resonated deeply with the medieval audience and possibly even more than it does with us.

## Blodeuedd

Blodeuedd appears in the Fourth Branch as a response to Aranrhod's refusal to grant Llew Llaw Gyffes a wife 'from the race that is on this earth at present.' (S. Davies 2007, 58) Since her magic is too strong to break, Gwydion and Math team up and create a wife for Llew out of the flowers of the oak, broom and meadowsweet and she is named Blodeuedd (Flowers). (S. Davies 2007, 58, 243 n. 58) After they have slept together and had their wedding feast, they are given the cantref of Dinoding and they set up their seat at Mur Castell.



**Mur Castell - the home of Llew and Blodeuedd**

One day when Llew was away visiting the court of Math, Blodeuedd invites a local lord named Gronw Pebr to stay the night, as he was passing and darkness was closing in. However, after he has removed his hunting clothes and they sit down together, the author tells us that,

*Blodeuedd looked at him, and from the  
moment she looked there was no part of her  
that was not filled with love for him. And  
he gazed at her, and the same thought came  
to him as had come to her (S. Davies  
2007, 59).*

And it is from this point that Blodeuedd, who had only been a cipher in the story so far (an ideal wife), truly becomes real for the audience (F. Winward, 96). We learn from her actions that she is as amoral as

Gwydion was, which may be something she had inherited from her maker. While she and Gronw could have carried on their affair in secret, they choose instead to kill her husband Lleu so that they may live together openly. And she takes control of Gronw from the beginning, not allowing him to leave until she is ready. And he does as he is told. It is only when he fears for Lleu's return that she says,

*'Yes, tomorrow I will **let** you leave.'* (emphasis mine) (S. Davies 2007, 60)

Gronw may have been the one to concoct the plan to kill Lleu,

*'There is only one thing to do,' he said; 'find out from him how his death may come about, and do that by pretending to be concerned about him.'* (S. Davies 2007, 59-60)

but it is Blodeuedd who so skillfully deploys it. She uses all her feminine wiles of deception to get the information she needs out of Lleu, and he falls for it. She coaxes him into revealing the secret of his death, and then, pretending to be stupid (perhaps like today's stereotype of the 'dumb blond') she convinces him to *show* her how his death could be accomplished,

*'Lord,' she said, 'I am wondering how what you told me before could happen. Will you show me how you would stand on the edge of the tub and the billy-goat, if I get the bath ready?'* (S. Davies 2007, 61)

It is interesting to note that all through this part of the tale Blodeuedd never calls her husband by any title, until the time comes when she is trying to coax him into standing on that tub and billy-goat so that Gronw Pebr can kill him, and then she calls him *arghnyd* (lord, ruler) no less than four times. And when speaking to Gronw Pebr, she never refers to her husband by name at all (C. Byfield, 70).

Blodeuedd is a fascinating character that has decided to completely flout society's conventions and think for herself. She had no choice at all in whom to marry, as she was created specially to give Lleu a wife, to which she acquiesces until she meets a man she can dominate and love. She might strike the modern

reader as being callous and evil, and undoubtedly she struck the medieval Welsh audience that way, but another, more sympathetic reading would see her as a woman trapped within a life she did not choose and does not want and who is willing to move heaven and earth in an attempt to determine her own fate. But the patriarchy, in the form of Lleu and Gwydion, ultimately wins when Lleu kills Gronw and Gwydion turns Blodeuedd into an owl (i.e. Blodeuwedd – Flower Face) (S. Davies 2007, 58, 243 n. 58).

### Aranrhod

In the Fourth Branch, Math is in need of a new virgin footholder. His nephew Gwydion suggests his sister Aranrhod for the job. After asking her if she is a virgin, and getting her reply in the affirmative, Math lays down his magical staff and bids her step over it,

*Then she stepped over the magic wand, and as she stepped she dropped a large, sturdy, yellow-haired boy. The boy made a loud cry. After the boy's cry she made for the door, but as she went she dropped a small something* (S. Davies 2007, 54).

Aranrhod was not only lying, but she might also have felt shame (or danger) at giving birth, hence her quick exit. The yellow-haired boy makes for the sea but Gwydion adopts the 'small something' that Aranrhod also dropped when he discovers it is a baby boy. He has the boy nursed and the child grows quickly, so that by his fourth year he is as big as an eight year old, and Gwydion takes him to meet his mother.



The sea breaks on the rocks of Caer Aranrhod

Aranrhod has her own court, Caer Aranrhod, and she is not married nor, indeed, does she seem to

belong to any male relative. In her court she takes on the role of the lord, welcoming, greeting and banqueting her visitors (S. Davies 2007, 57). And she obviously has high social status. She is the only woman in the Four Branches having 'no defined obligatory bonds to any man.' (C. Byfield, 68)

This part of the Fourth Branch is very much about the antagonism between Aranrhod and Gwydion. When he brings the boy to see her, she is horrified,

*'Alas, man, what has come over you, putting me to shame, and pursuing my shame by keeping him as long as this?*

Gwydion responds,

*'If you have no greater shame than that I should foster a boy as fine as this, then your shame is but a small matter.'* (S. Davies 2007, 55)

And her shame may be due to the possibility that her brother, Gwydion, may be the boy's father. The passage in the Welsh goes,

*A thrannoeth kyuodi a oruc, a chymryt y uab\* gyt ac ef, a mynet y orymdeith gan lann y weilgi rwng hynny ac Aber Menei* (I. Williams, 79).

*And the next day he got up and took the boy\* with him, and went walking along the seashore between there and Aber Menai* (S. Davies 2007, 55).

Catherine Byfield translates the word *uab* (*mab*) above (see the \*) not as 'boy', the way Sioned Davies does, but rather as 'son'. This could imply that Gwydion was the father of his sister's son. And this would indeed be a cause for shame.

When Gwydion admits that the boy still has no name, Aranrhod swears a destiny on him that he will never have a name unless she gives it to him, and when Gwydion tricks her into giving him a name, she swears another destiny on him that he shall never bear arms unless she gives them to him. The third destiny she later swears on the boy is that he shall never marry any woman 'from the race that is on this earth at present.' (S. Davies 2007, 58) This is potent stuff. Not only does she live without the influence of male relatives, and not only does she have her own stronghold named after herself, but she also has the

magical power to swear unbreakable destinies on others. This is one powerful lady! She defends herself with a quick wit and manages to evade the birth fine (*amobr*) that she should have paid for having a child and not alleging rape, the only circumstance where a lord would forgo this payment. Indeed, instead of taking action against her, Math solves the problem of Lleu's wife by working with Gwydion to create Blodeuedd (F. Winward, 88-89). Aranrhod is the only woman in the Four Branches who is able to flout social convention successfully. No wonder she swears that she has no son, for to admit to one would be to admit to the ties of motherhood (and all that entails), which would force her down into the male world she has so successfully transcended. For a medieval Welsh audience this woman's success would have been very extraordinary, indeed unprecedented. And she might have been the most vivid character of them all.

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# Druku Ritual and Dedicant Oath

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By Brian "Boro" Long

**Druid says:**

Gather now in peace  
As we enter sacred space  
Leaving behind care

***The company gathers in the ritual space passing by attendants who asperge and cense them.***

*When all have entered, Druid rings the bell three times three times.*

**Druid says:**

In this time and space  
We come to honor the gods  
On this holy day

**Honoring Earth Mother**

**Druid says:**

Our great Earth Mother  
Who feeds and nourishes all  
We honor you here

*Druid Makes an offering of Corn Meal and says:*

Oh, great Earth Mother  
Take this as our offering  
Corn meal with our love

Establishing the Sacred Grove through Fire, Well, and Tree

**Invoking Fire**

**Druid says:**

In the world's center  
I kindle the sacred fire  
To act as a gate

*Druid Lights fire and adds incense and says:*

With torch and incense  
I kindle the sacred fire  
To burn within us

**Silvering the Well**

**Druid says:**

In the world's center  
I silver the sacred well

**To act as a gate**

**Druid** *silvers the well and pours water from the well to the blessing cup and says:*

Wisdom of the deep  
Sacred waters flow in us  
As we open up

**Tending the Tree**

**Druid says:**

In the world's center  
Let the tree be tall and strong  
To act as a gate

*Druid dresses and censes the Tree:*

Oh, sacred World Tree  
From great depths to heights you span  
Grow now within us

**Gatekeeper**

**Druid says:**

Mannanon mac Lir  
Oh, lord of the other world  
Open wide the gates

*Druid Makes an offering of apple and says:*

Accept now our gift  
Oh guardian of the gate  
Made in sacrifice

**Druid raises his staff over his head and shouts:**

Fire will be gate  
and well will be another  
as will be the tree

**Outdwellers**

**Druid says:**

You from outer dark  
Who stand against gods and man  
Trouble not our work

**Druid places a glass of ale in a place outside of the ritual space and says:**

This ale is for you  
To keep you all occupied  
While we have our rite

### **Bardic Inspiration**

*Druid says:*  
Bright Goddess Brigid  
Inspirer of good skills  
Bless us now with song

*Druid Makes an offering of whiskey and says:*  
We are triple-blessed  
To have you in our presence  
Accepting our gift

### **Honoring and Inviting the Three Kindreds**

#### **Ancestors**

*Druid says:*  
Hallowed ancestors  
Living in the other world  
Welcome to our midst

*Druid Makes an offering of bread and says:*  
You who gave us life  
And legacy of culture  
Accept our small gift

#### **Nature Spirits**

*Druid says:*  
Oh, nature spirits  
Living in hills and sidhe mounds  
Welcome to our midst

*Druid Makes an offering of grain and says:*  
Dryads, nymphs and sidhe  
Accept from us this grain  
We freely give you

#### **Gods and Goddesses**

*Druid says:*  
Gods and Goddesses  
The mightiest in all things  
Welcome to our midst

*Druid Makes an offering of whiskey and says:*  
All you Shining Ones  
Of whiskey we offer you  
Bless us now we pray

### **Grounding and Centering**

*Seer leads the Two Powers Meditation*

### **Ritual Precedent and Purpose of the Rite**

We gather today  
Because the days grow shorter  
Since the equinox.

We call on our gods  
To make the days long again  
And end the long night.

### **Key offerings**

*Druid says:*  
Sulis, sun goddess  
Bring back the morning sunshine  
And make the days long.

*Druid lights a candle and says:*  
As an offering  
We honor you with this flame  
And ask your blessing

*Druid says:*  
Belenos, sun god,  
Ride in your sky chariot  
Across the Yule sky.

*Druid lights a candle and says:*  
As an offering  
We honor you with this flame  
And ask your blessing

### **General Praise Offerings to the Kindreds**

*Druid says:*  
We have gathered here  
And offered to the Kindreds  
And welcomed them here

And all the kindred  
Who have gathered here with us  
We thank with a gift

*The members of company offers praise offerings to the Ancestors,  
the Nature Spirits, and the Shining Ones.*

### **Omen**

*Druid says:*  
Let the ovate read  
The omen for this solstice  
May it favor us.

*The seer reads and interprets the omen.*

### **Return flow**

*Druid says:*  
Kindred, gods, and all,  
We have honored you today  
In our sacred rite.

### ***Druid raises the horn and says:***

Hallow these waters  
To pass to us your blessing  
And inspiration

Druid passes the cup around the group.

### ***Dedicant Oath Rite***

#### **Dedicant Says:**

Now I take the time  
To do a special rite  
With you to witness.

I have come today  
To make my Dedicant oath  
And share it with you

Honoring my patrons

### **Patron Goddess**

*Dedicant Says:*  
To my patroness  
The giver of all good skills  
I offer you mead

*Druid Makes an offering of Hazelnut Mead and says:*  
Bridget, accept this,  
A token of my esteem  
Made by my own hand

### **Patron God**

#### ***Dedicant Says:***

Horned and hallowed god  
I honor my patron now  
With hazelnut mead

*Dedicant Makes an offering of Hazelnut Mead and says:*  
The work of my hand  
Should be a fitting blessing  
To give Cernunos

### ***Oath Rite***

*Dedicant Says:*  
I stand before you,  
A dedicated Druid,  
On a Celtic path

Let all who hear me  
Know my dedication  
Is to the old gods.

My life I offer,  
To serve my Druid brethren  
And the Celtic Gods

Let the earth open,  
The waters rise and sky fall  
Before I turn back.

### **Closing**

*Druid says:*  
As we end this rite  
We thank the gods and kindred  
For sharing this time

Let the fire be fire  
And the water be water  
And the tree a tree.

With all as it was  
We return to mundane life  
As our rite is done,

As you go your way,  
May god and goddess bless you  
And fill you with peace.

*Druid rings the bell three times three times.*

*The rite is ended.*

# Nine Central Tenets of ADF Ritual

By Rev. Michael J. Dangler

1. **Ghosti** – The reciprocal guest-host relationship.
  2. **Rta** – There is an order to the world, and we are part of it.
  3. **Hard Polytheism** – There are many individual Powers.
  4. **Triple Cosmos** – A cosmos in three parts.
  5. **Centered Ritual** – Our actions occur at the center of all.
  6. **Fire** – We are a fire religion.
  7. **Communication** – Not only can the Gods hear us, but they can respond.
  8. **World-Affirming** – The physical is important and spiritually complete.
- Power & Responsibility** – What we do affects the cosmos.

Druidic ritual doesn't follow a set of beliefs: we are not an orthodox (right belief) religion, but a religion that values orthopraxy (right practice). As a result, the above list should not be taken as a set of "things you must believe in" so much as a set of ritual assumptions that make Druidic ritual structures work. These nine things get at the very mechanics of Druidry and how Druids participate in the Cosmos through ritual.

## Ghosti

ADF ritual is centered around our understanding of hospitality in the Indo-European world. It rests on the idea of *\*ghos-ti-*, which is a Proto-Indo-European word that exemplifies the idea of reciprocity and the guest-host relationship within an IE cosmos. What we do in ritual informs what we do in our mundane lives as well, and we seek to exemplify this reciprocal ideal in all our relationships.

Hospitality has two sides: the good host and the gracious guest. A good host ensures that his guest is appropriately treated, and the gracious guest ensures that he does not overburden the host. Both guest and host are responsible for the maintenance of the relationship.

There is also the concept of "a gift for a gift," where we seek to give to the Kindreds so that we may open

a relationship in which they may reciprocate (not in the *knowledge* that they will reciprocate, but in the *hope*). Our interactions with the Kindreds are based on the idea that "the same hands that reach out to give also reach out to receive."

A "gift for a gift" is not a one-to-one exchange, though. It is not "I bought you a \$15 meal yesterday; today, you have to buy me \$15 worth of food." You would not participate in that relationship very long, and neither will the Kindreds. A ghosti relationship is more like having a friend with whom you have been to dinner so many times that neither one of you remembers whose turn it is to pick up the check. When the check arrives, you do not break out your tally sheets and calculators, seeking to determine who owes what and who paid for which meal last; instead, one person simply grabs the check and, should the other protest, the response is always, "Oh, I've got this one. You can get the next one." In these cases, the *relationship* is more valuable than the check could possibly be, and the understanding is that the second person values the relationship just as much and would have done the exact same thing if he'd been a hair faster.

Our relationship with the Kindreds is one of reciprocity, much like the friends at the dinner table, or the guest and the host. This is an ancient feeling, and can be seen even in the Rgveda, where Agni (the fire) is described as drawing the folk together as a guest draws together the family that hosts him at their hearth.

Implicit in this relationship is the idea that we *can* form relationships with the Kindreds: the gods and goddesses, the spirits of nature, and the ancestors are all interested and willing to form these sorts of bonds. Because of this, we seek to form these bonds in any way we can: through offerings of praise which come from our deepest hearts, offerings of work we have toiled over with our hands, and thinking on them and turning to them when times become difficult.

We know that the Kindreds find joy in these relationships and wish to enter into them just as we

do. To that end, we work hard to enliven this reciprocity with word and deed.

### **Rta**

*Rta* is the order of all things. It comes from the Vedic word for the order of the cosmos: always fair, always impartial, and always just, unbending and always correct.

Translations of the word vary: *rta* can be translated as “Truth” or “Cosmic Order” or “Cosmic Law,” and each translation is correct in some cases and incorrect in others. The reason that we use *rta* instead of an English word is that there simply is no English word that can convey the meaning. There are cognates in other languages, such as *orlog* in Old Norse and *asha* in Indo-Iranian, or even the Proto-Indo-European reconstruction of *\*xartus* could also be used. For the purposes here, though, we will use the Vedic *rta*.

In the Rgveda, *rta* is said to cause the dawn to be born, the cycles of the day and night to continue, the seasons to move, and the earth and heaven to be held apart. It is divinely guarded and the divine is bound by it as well.

In our rituals, we are seeking to do things properly by the *rta*. When we choose to do things by the *rta*, we are choosing to take the right actions in the cosmos. In many cases, we might look on this as following in the footsteps of the gods, emulating them or following their directives or examples. One could look upon this as a sort of clear alignment with the Three Kindreds and with the forces they represent in the cosmos. While in the Vedas, this was marked by specific ritual actions at specific ritual times, with no possibility for deviation, we’re much more fast and loose with our ritual structure.

Despite that, we still look to conform in some way to the order of the cosmos. The Core Order of Ritual is one way we conform: it provides the first level of structure and order on this chaotic world. The COoR is an example of cosmos (re)creation as a whole. From a point where the ritual begins; through to the description of the cosmos; past the sacralization and population of that cosmos; and even in the blessings poured forth upon us by the Kindreds, we are engaging in an emulation of the *rta* and following the example given to us by the Kindreds.

We also conform to the *rta* by offering sacrifice. Sacrifice is a vital part of our cosmology, and participation in the process of offering sacrifice is clearly something that aligns us with the Kindreds. Often, we are following a formula given to us by the Kindreds in some way (occasionally through a trickster figure, such as Prometheus, or through emulation of the way the gods make sacrifice).

A third (though not final) way we conform to the *rta* is through maintaining the Wheel of the Year. By keeping the times of the year sacred, and in celebrating key events such as the return of the sun, the waning of summer, and smaller events like the phases of the moon, we help to maintain and continue their progression. In doing this, we are keeping the *rta* on its course, becoming agents of the cosmic order ourselves and ensuring its persistence.

### **Hard Polytheism**

Hard polytheism means that we stick very strongly to polytheistic worldviews, interacting with the various powers and spirits throughout the cosmos as if they are individual entities with their own complex thoughts, desires, and motivations. Rather than thinking that the deities and spirits are “archetypes,” “reflections of a single all-pervading force,” or “energy pools,” we accept that the Powers are beings with their own agency and are entirely able to act on their own.

The Powers and Spirits we call on are also limited. Rather than thinking of them as omniscient (like Santa Claus) or omnipresent (like the Hindu Brahman), we think of them as limited in time and space, as well as in knowledge. This is clearly the way the ancients thought of their deities, and specific examples can be found in world mythologies: at the beginning of the Illiad, Poseidon is “away in Ethiopia,” which allows the Greek fleet to sail; and in the Rgveda, Varuna, guardian of the *rta*, requires spies to ensure that the Cosmic Order is kept by humans.

This ritual assumption also helps what we do make sense rationally. If the gods and spirits are just buckets of energy, why make sacrifice to them? If they are all facets of a single greater “truth,” why call on only one or two during the Key Offerings? If they have no agency or ability to think on their own, why ask them for anything? By making the assumption that the world is populated with individual beings, we

are also free to make the assumption that these beings care for us, that they are willing to form relationships with us, and that we are dealing with divinity that is interested and invested in our well-being.

A vital note should be placed in this section: ADF and Druidry in general do not require that you have a specific belief about the gods and spirits. Rather, what we are discussing here is a set of ritual assumptions that make our rituals *work*. There are no rules about your belief: if you prefer Jung's archetypes or the henotheistic "god beyond the gods" outlook on divinity, that's great and wonderful. The issue comes down to practice: for our rituals to operate in the vision of the cosmos we have, hard polytheism is a central assumption.

### **Triple Cosmos**

In ADF ritual, the cosmos is divided in three parts. What these three parts are and who inhabits them is far less important than their actual number.

Often, we think about the world as Heavens, Midworld, and Underworld, but these are not the only options. They have become our most commonly used division, though, due primarily to the general western IE focus within ADF, and a lack of good resources for Celtic ritual.

In addition to a triple cosmos, we represent that triplicity with a triple center. As Druids, we most commonly represent our center with a fire (which supports and acts as a gate to the highest realm), a well (which springs from and acts as a gate to the lowest realm), and a tree, pillar, mountain, or other axis mundi (which serves as the center of the worlds and the path between them). More on the function of these symbols and the triple center will be said in the next section.

The three most common Indo-European divisions of the cosmos that can be used in ritual are these:

### **Underworld, Middleworld, Heavens**

This is by far the most common cosmic picture we see in Indo-European cultures and religion, exemplified by the classical Greeks in particular. In this conception, the souls of the dead go to the Underworld, we stay in the Midrealm, and the Heavens are populated with the deities (and some heroic ancestors). This conception is particularly

common among the Western Indo-Europeans, and the division (though not necessarily the same assignments of "who goes where") is common throughout not only the Mediterranean tribes of Greeks and Romans, but also throughout the Northern tribes, where the world is clearly divided into heavens and underworlds, with Midgard in the center.

### **Terrestrial, Atmospheric, Celestial**

This division is found in the Vedas in particular, and describes a very different sort of cosmos than the previous division mentioned. In this cosmos, there is no underworld, but the face of the earth (considered to be disc-shaped) is the "lowest" of the worlds: even the sun, after completing his journey, does not go "under" the terrestrial disc to reappear in the morning, but rather goes dark and returns along the same path. Some gods, such as fire gods, sacred drinks, and rivers reside in the Terrestrial realm. The Atmospheric realm is the realm of the clouds, and certain deities (storm gods, water gods, and some fire gods) are said to reside here. The Celestial realm, beyond the clouds and the vault of stars includes many other gods and spirits that embody celestial phenomena (such as the sun or cosmic order), and also the ancestors.

### **Land, Sea, Sky**

Found particularly in Celtic lands, this division has also become a sort of "horizontal axis" that divides the Midworld or the terrestrial realm to match with the "vertical axis" of Underworld, Midworld, and Heavens, despite the fact that this triplicity is clearly a cosmic division (particularly to the continental Celts, who swore by these forces), and there are better attested forms of horizontal axes in nearly every IE religion: the five provinces of Ireland, the four dwarves of direction in Norse, the four winds in the Mediterranean religions, and the seven points or places in Vedism.

### **Centered Ritual**

There is a Zuni legend that when the Water Skate was given magical powers by the Sun Father, he stretched his four legs out upon the waters.

His front right leg stretched first to the northeast, the place of the summer solstice sunrise; his front left leg stretched next to the northwest, the place of the summer solstice sunset; his back left leg then

stretched to the southwest, the place of the winter solstice sunset; his back right leg then stretched to the southeast, the place of the winter solstice sunrise.

Where his heart then rested marked the "Center Place," the center of the land that is surrounded by the four seas and the heart of the Earth Mother. It is below this center, below the heart of the Water Skate which is the heart of the Earth Mother, that the village of Zuni was established.

At the center of the village, another center resides. This is on a permanent altar in the chief priest's house, where a heart-shaped rock (known as "the heart of the world") rests. Within this rock are arteries that reach toward the four solstice points.

These centers, it is easy to see, form a series of centers that are both atop each other in an obvious layering effect and also all the same in their overlay. None of these centers can exist without the others, and they seem to form around one another in ever tightening rings. Each center is itself, unique; each center is also all the other centers.

Eliade indicates that religion itself is an orienting force, one that gives us a focal point from which to make sense of the world. When we are in a profane state, one that is not sacred, we have no point of reference. It is only through the breakthrough of the sacred into the profane world, the hierophany, that orientation is possible. "The hierophany reveals an absolute fixed point, a center."

It is the finding of this fixed point, this center, which allows us to make sense of the world. If religion is indeed about finding ways to orient ourselves, to place ourselves in relative location to everything else, then we must find those centers, even if we must create them. The creation of those centers is similar to founding the cosmos.

Centers themselves are different from the rest of the world. They are places that allow this orientation, an orientation that the profane world cannot provide. Many of us are familiar with the *axis mundi*, or the axis of the world from Eliade. These cosmic pillars can only exist, according to Eliade, at the center of the universe, and all things extend about it. It supports the sky and finds its roots deep within the earth, and its presence is not an ordering force, but a break, a rip

in the fabric of the profane world that allows the sacred to pour into and destroy the homogeneity of space.

The destruction of the homogenous space is made possible by openings to other worlds, allowing travel and communication between them. In the case of the Zuni, there are four upper worlds and four underworlds that the *axis mundi* allows access to. Time also begins at the center, and mythical time exists at the outskirts of their cosmos.

In ADF cosmology, we find that the center of the world has three parts: Well, Fire, and Sacred Tree. Often, we think of the Tree as the *axis mundi*, but it is not the only center in ritual. Indeed, all the hallows are a center, and they combine to form the center. The center is not complete with only the tree, for while the tree grows high and is rooted deep, it cannot devour our sacrifices as the fire can, nor can it carry our voices to the depths of the earth as the well can.

Instead, the center must make use of all parts of the hallows: Well, Fire, and Tree. Beyond that, though, there is also the center of the earth, the heart of the Earth Mother, upon whose breast we build our Fire, root our Tree, and sink our Well. We establish the center above her heart, above the center of the earth.

The Grove itself has a center, the place in the middle of those Grove members gathered that the energies and the focus of the ritual are centered. Within each other, we find our own orientation, our own center: there is no stronger center, no larger axis, no more powerful hierophany than that of a Grove standing together, orienting themselves to one another, and finding their place in the centers others can offer.

Most important, though, is another center that must not only be found, but that the ritual cannot happen without: the center of ourselves. Each of us, within our own heart, must find the center of our beings, the inner center that allows us to stand in the center, to be our own *axis mundi*. From us, all things radiate, and within ourselves we can discover a rift between the sacred and the profane.

If we cannot find the center of ourselves, if the hierophany of our hearts cannot be seen, then others cannot find it within us. If the Grove cannot orient itself by combining these centers, then it cannot find

the center of the earth, the heartbeat of the Earth Mother. If we cannot orient ourselves to that center, then we cannot orient our hallows, and the Well, Fire, and Tree will not stand at the center of the worlds.

Centers are unlike any other thing in ritual: they are where we establish them. Yes, they can appear naturally, and there are places that a center is more likely to appear than others, but to truly do the work of magic, we need to learn to establish them, to place them atop one another, to blend them and to maintain their distinctions. We must find them in ourselves, either through meditation or ritual, and we must learn to use the point of reference created by our own center to orient ourselves to the other centers around us.

As Joseph Campbell said, "The center is everywhere; the circumference is nowhere."

### **Fire**

Of the three common gates in the Sacred Center, it is the Fire that is most important within Druid ritual and Druidic cosmology. It is clear that like the eastern Indo-European religions, our own has developed into a fire-cult.

This is a good thing, and sensible. Rituals can occur without wells, trees, portals, and shafts in the ground, but when we boil down the things that are vital to our religion, the one thing we cannot worship without is a representation of fire. Without fire, it is as if we are empty-handed when we invite the Spirits and Powers: we can offer them no way to warm themselves, we can offer nothing to them to satiate their hunger or slack their thirst, and we have no symbol to build a center around. Because of this, it is right to say a prayer to the fire any time one is kindled, and the kindling of a fire is a prayer in itself.

The fire also crosses the three divisions of the cosmos: kindled on the earth, the fire's flames leap into the atmosphere, and the pillar of smoke created supports the celestial realm. The fire is connected intimately with the celestial waters, often said to be born from them.

Our Grove often quotes a partial verse from the Rgveda: "Let us pray with a good fire." This phrase, from RV I.26.8, means many things to our Grove. It conjures images of not only a fire of piety within us,

where we ignite that religious or spiritual fire, but also of the physical fire before us, to which we make offerings, giving a command to each: one that tells us how to behave in ritual, and one which tells the fire how to behave, as well. By "praying with a good fire," we recognize both the fire within and the fire without, the piety of both our belief and our actions: we do not come before our gods empty-handed.

The fire is intimately connected to the sacrifice. Agni, the Vedic fire god, not only devours the sacrifice, but he calls the gods forth to sit upon the sacrificial grass, and he transfers the sacrifice to the rest of the host of gods and goddesses, who (it is said) cannot be exhilarated without him.

It is also no coincidence that of all the Vedic gods, Agni is the most closely connected to humans and the guest-host relationship. The continuous presence of fire in the households of our Indo-European ancestors speaks to why this is. Across the IE spectrum, fire is spoken of as a friend to humankind, called a good guest, and connected with the ancestors (who kindled fire before we did). There is no sacred thing that is more often invited into the lives of those who follow an IE religion in general, and Druidry in particular.

In Zoroastrian ritual, the two basic cult objects are still fire and water, both of which are offered to in the daily *yasna* ritual. This ritual seeks to purify the fire, called the son of the Lord of Wisdom and placed in the south of the ritual precinct, which is the place of goodness and bounty.

In many ways, the fire is the counterpart of the priest, a sort of example that our own priests must follow. By bringing the deities to the place of sacrifice, by transmitting the offering, and by knowing the ways of the sacrifice, the fire is the perfect priest.

Fires also play an integral part in ordering the cosmos (as does the priest in IE religions), and this can particularly be seen in the use of fire to make a place habitable and to bring it into the dominion of humans. When he first arrives in Iceland, Thorolf Mostrarskegg marked out his land and then took fire around the borders in order to claim the land as his own. There is no clearer way than kindling a fire to inform all the Powers and Spirits that we are here, and we are prepared to receive the Kindreds as our guests.

And so we say:

*At our center burns a living flame.*

### **Communication**

Druidic ritual is based not only on the idea that the Kindreds are receptive to our voices, accepting of our gifts, and interested in a relationship with us; but also that they will speak back to us, offer us gifts in return, and continue that relationship with reciprocity. Most importantly, the Kindreds understand us when we communicate with them, and have given us ways to understand them when they communicate with us.

Each Druidic ritual calls out to ask the Powers questions about our relationship. These communications take many forms and use many different sorts of symbol sets: ogham, runes, oracle cards, augury, and tarot cards are just a few of the methods that might be used in our rituals.

What is often most important is not necessarily the type of symbol that is used, but an intimate familiarity with the symbols and a knowledge of these symbols that is shared with the Powers. Communication goes two ways: both sides of the conversation must understand not only the symbols used to communicate, but also how those symbols are interpreted by the other side. This means that it is up to us to choose a form appropriate to the Powers and appropriate to ourselves, and to study that form in enough depth that when the symbol is drawn or the bird flies from south to north, we know and understand the message as it is intended to be understood.

There are several methods of taking an omen in ritual, and the questions vary from Grove to Grove and even Druid to Druid. Most will ask three questions. Three Cranes Grove, ADF, uses this set:

*Have our offerings been accepted?  
What blessings do the Powers offer in return?  
What further needs do the Powers have of us?*

We have asked these questions because they seem to get us the most detailed answers we can possibly seek. We hear from the Powers not only whether the ritual went well, but what blessings we might receive in the cup *and* any further instruction they may have to give. It is because of the breadth of response that is possible that our Grove has stuck with this format.

Other Groves ask a different series of questions, which

changes the focus of the ritual a bit:

*What blessings do the Ancestors offer us?  
What blessings do the Nature Spirits offer us?  
What blessings do the Shining Ones offer us?*

The above three questions start with the assumption that the Powers have accepted the sacrifices given, and will be offering blessings in return for the gifts.

Hemlock Vales Protogrove, ADF, has settled on a hybrid, in which four questions are asked of the Kindreds:

*Have our offerings been accepted?  
What blessings do the Ancestors offer us?  
What blessings do the Nature Spirits offer us?  
What blessings do the Shining Ones offer us?*

This, of course, solves the issues with the alternate three questions listed above, and also dispenses with the “three question” format that is so popular (sometimes, it’s nice that things don’t always come in three’s).

Remember, too, that negative responses should always be considered a very real possibility. Resist the urge to turn a negative omen into a positive one, and always go with your first instinct. For a very frightening omen, you might think about flipping coins. Nothing says “honesty” like increasing the odds for a negative omen!

This communication aspect of Druidic ritual is very much dependent on the tenet of “hard polytheism” discussed above. The individual Powers have the ability to communicate with us and express their opinions and enhance their relationships with us through a set of symbols we share. Also, this is another “ritual assumption” that is integral to how our rituals work. However you see divination (as communication with your own subconscious mind, as a way to tap into the akashic records, or any other of a number of theories), in our rituals divination is between ourselves and the Powers is very much a real communication with real beings, where we ask a question and we receive an answer.

### **World-Affirming**

Druidic ritual, as mentioned above, is firmly rooted in the Earth Mother. It is concerned not with inner worlds or reaching a higher spiritual plane, but with perfecting this world in order to bring the spiritual

into the physical. Our concern with the physical even extends to those around us: Druidry is about our entire community, whether that community is made up of other humans, plants, animals, or Spirits.

In a Druidic world view, each person, plant, animal, and spirit is important to the world order: each plays a part in our own *pta* and the cosmic order as a whole. When we make sacrifice at our fire, we are bound together with those who have made sacrifice before us, and those who will make sacrifice after us. Ritual is a community-building event between humans and the Kindreds.

The most basic way to communicate with the Kindreds is through prayer, but so closely allied to the idea of prayer is the offering that we cannot begin to discuss one without the other. Offering, of course, is the act of bringing gifts to the Kindreds in order to establish a \*ghosti relationship. Bringing things that we value to the Kindreds, and knowing that they value these things as well (for they see fit to respond to our offerings with blessings) indicates that the physical is sacred, as well as the spiritual.

Part of why we make offerings is because there is no real division for Neo-Pagans between the physical and the spiritual; indeed, the best sacrifices are somehow “touched” by human hands (thus the use of worked silver over raw ore, cultivated plants over picked wildflowers, poetry crafted from divine inspiration over pure awen, and the historic use of domesticated over wild animals). This realm is the realm we are concerned with: the Earth Mother, the sacred center, and the Kindreds are all best described as an integral part of this physical world. As a result, the idea that physical offerings might not be welcome is foreign to our conception as Neo-Pagans. Indeed, the act of offering is indistinguishable from the act of prayer: every prayer is an offering, and every offering is a prayer.

Importantly, too, the physical space of ritual, including things brought into the space from outside, can be considered sacred. Much as a sacrifice should be somehow “man-made” to show our care and the importance of the task of creating the gift, the tools we bring and the sacred center we create are all clearly a part of the cosmos during ritual. While in some traditions, there is a clear line between what is “sacred” and what is “profane” even outside of ritual

context (see, for instance, the prohibition against ever using an athame to cut anything physical in Wicca, in or out of ritual space), a ritual implement in Druidic ritual is not something that must always be kept in the realm of the sacred. In some harvest rites, a sickle is used to cut down a sheaf of wheat: this is not a symbolic harvest, but a physical act that is a small example of the harvest that is now ended.

Our rituals are not built on symbols, but rather on exemplifications. Rather than signify something in the cosmos, we recognize that each part of the sacred center is made up of the “stuff” of the cosmos. Just as a swatch of cloth does not symbolize the cloth, but is a piece of the cloth itself, our ritual items and tools are not symbols, but actual samples of cosmic realities. In our rituals, the Tree is not a symbol of the World Tree, but its wood is a *part* of the cosmic World Tree. The waters of the Well are not symbolic of the cosmic waters, but they are drawn *from* the cosmic Waters. The Fire at the center of our ritual is not a symbol of the cosmic Fire, but rather a spark that *exemplifies* the cosmic Fire.

The easiest way to think about this is to compare how we talk about the sacred center in ritual as opposed to how we talk about a country’s flag. When we speak of the well, we call it “eye and mouth of earth,” “cauldron of inspiration,” and ask it to “flow within us.” We do not speak of what it “represents” or what it is “like;” rather, we speak of what it *is*. When we speak about a country’s flag, we talk about what the colours *mean* and what the flag as a whole *stands for*.

Through praising things in the world, we also praise the spirits who inhabit this world and the beings that created it.

### **Power and Responsibility**

As we stand at the center of the worlds, we have the ability to affect all things and all times. Here we stand at the foot of the World Tree, the Fire burning brightly and raising our words to the heavens, while the Well resounds with our voices and sinks them down to the world below. Everything in ritual is a piece of the cosmos, active and present in a way that we can affect it.

When we call out to the Kindreds, they come to our fire. They listen to our words, and they receive our sacrifices. As part of the worship bargain, they offer

blessings to us in return. The Earth Mother, who we love and honour, is given sacrifice so that she will uphold us and keep us throughout the rite, as she does each day of our lives. We call upon old bargains and long relationships with various beings, including the Gatekeeper, who we trust to guide and ward us as we walk these Elder Ways. We affect the cosmos in mighty ways each time we enter ritual space.

It is important to note, however, that as we do these things, we also affect ourselves and our communities. We are a part of the cosmos, and a part of the world.

Because all things that we do affect the cosmos, it is important that we remember that we must be good hosts and good guests. Our courage to work magic in ritual must be tempered by the integrity to work the right magics.

No matter what, standing in ritual is not about the individual doing the work, but about the relationships formed and strengthened by the work that is done. ADF teaches of Nine Pagan Virtues, and as we work ritual we must remain aware of them, for each affects the cosmos as well as the self.

The Nine Pagan Virtues are wisdom, piety, vision, courage, integrity, perseverance, hospitality, moderation, and fertility.

**Wisdom** is the intersection of knowing what is right and making the decision to do that right thing. By understanding the patterns of the cosmos and choosing an action that is right with it, we have made proper use of the power that ritual provides for us.

**Piety** is the intersection of belief and right action, with an emphasis on *right action*. Piety itself is the undertaking of an action that is right in the cosmos. It is observance and work in reciprocity with the beings who inhabit the worlds.

**Vision** is the ability to see what is right in the cosmos, understanding the connections between things, and understanding where the connections lead.

**Courage** is "doing what needs to be done," especially in the face of fear. The thing that needs to be done is not always easy, nor is it always clear; however, vision and wisdom will help one decide on the correct course to take.

**Integrity** is being "whole." This means internally (eating right, exercising, and staying healthy), communally (participating in the world in a way that benefits others), and cosmically (maintaining agreements and relationships, keeping our word, and sacrificing). Only by being healthy can we do ritual; only by seeking to benefit others in ritual can we work ritual with meaning; and only through the act of sacrifice and keeping our word can we interact wholly with the Kindreds.

**Perseverance** is meeting adversity and overcoming it. It is the manifestation of motivation, the end result of having the desire to do something right in the cosmos.

**Hospitality**, as we have discussed, is a central virtue in ritual: it is the *\*ghosti-* relationship, where we enter a joyful partnership with the Kindreds and offer them gift for gift, sacrifice for blessing, and they enter this relationship with equal joy.

**Moderation** is the knowledge of limits and necessity, the striking of balance in our lives. It is joy in the ordinary and seeking the spiritual.

**Fertility** is not just creative ideas, but creativity that is maintained. It does not exist in unfinished projects, but in the end result of the projects.

These Nine Pagan Virtues apply directly to what we do in ritual. They are vital to keep in our hearts and to be mindful of in our actions. It is not about us, but about things being right in the cosmos. It is about the *rita*. Let us do what is right with the power we have in ritual, for only then can we do what is right at all.

1. Ceisiwr Serith, *A Book of Pagan Prayer*
2. For further reading on Eliade's theory of hierophany and centers, see *The Sacred & the Profane: The Nature of Religion* by Mircea Eliade. ISBN: 015679201X
3. For the Water Skate myth and Zuni centers, see *New Directions in American Archaeoastronomy*, edited by Anthony F. Aveni: Oxford, England: 1988. ISBN 0860545830. The article in question is "Directionality as a Conceptual Model for Zuni Expressive Behavior" by M. Jane Young.



# Book Review

The Other Side of Virtue  
Reviewed By Brandon Newberg

Title: The Other Side of Virtue  
Author: Brendan Myers  
Publisher: Blackwell Publishing  
Pub Location: Malden, MA  
Pub Year: 2004  
ISBN: 1405103167

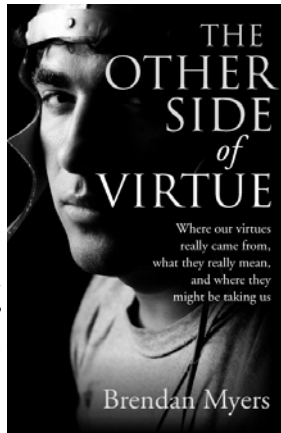
Welcome to the next level of pagan writing on ethics. *The Other Side of Virtue* is a landmark work worthy of academic and general audiences alike.

Author Brendan Myers, a.k.a. Brendan Cathbad Myers, tackles the subject of virtue ethics in the ancient and modern world. He investigates the ethics of Heroic and Classical peoples of ancient Europe, charts the history of virtue through the Renaissance and into modern times, and advocates a modern ethics informed by ancient forms of virtue. In addition to these things, he offers a counter to passive forms of virtue, a critique of modern individualism, and a new way to understand the spiritual experience. All this he delivers in a book accessible to the general reader.

Unifying Myers' approach are two basic convictions: first, that we must find the source of our ethics in ourselves, and second, that community is also indispensable.

The first point is rooted in the ancient Delphic maxim "Know thyself." The way we ought to act in the world is intimately related to who we are, or rather who we discover and create ourselves to be. Often when we act, it is not out of any rule-based obligation, but rather because "I am/am not the kind of person who would do that." To put it simply, ethics finds its foundation in our characters.

The second point is that community is vital. Contrary to the assumptions of modern individualism, community is essential to who we are and how we ought to act. The roles we fill, the crowds with whom we associate, and the responsibilities we take on in



relationships—these things condition what we do and how we define ourselves. Therefore to fulfill the maxim "Know thyself," you must consider your social relations: friends, family, colleagues, and so on. Self-awareness is incomplete without these vital relations.

These two anchors ground Myers' virtue ethics. It is a philosophy not of rule-based obedience, but of character-based action. The emphasis falls not on the laws or commandments we follow, but rather on the qualities in which our characters may excel.

These qualities are called virtues.

A virtue may be moral. For example, the four cardinal virtues of the Classical era, justice, courage, temperance, and prudence, are moral qualities. But a virtue may also be half-moral, half-aesthetic. Qualities like nobility or beauty involve such an aesthetic element. One may even excel in non-moral qualities, such as luck or strength. These various ways that a character may excel make up the kind of virtues that Myers has in mind.

This is not the same as what Myers calls the "familiar side" of virtue. We have inherited, largely from Christian tradition, a host of "passive" and "self-denying" qualities: faith, hope, charity, humility, chastity, and most of all, docility. Myers claims this kind of virtue, though it may involve willpower and strength, serves to "police the passions" and "prevent anything from stirring up the delicate serenity of *docilitas*" (p. 3). This is not the side of virtue with which Myers is concerned, except to steer away from it.

Of greater interest is the "other side," the one discussed earlier. Here Myers invokes a more ancient and original usage, derived on the one hand from the Latin *virtus*, rooted in the word *vir* ("man"), and on the other hand from the Greek *arete* ("virtue" or "excellence"). In short, this usage refers to the ways in which a person's character excels. Myers' ethics is

not about docility, but about excellence of character. He sums it up this way:

The 'familiar' side of virtue has to do with a predisposition to follow laws and commandments. The 'other side' asserts that *who you are* is much more important than the rules you follow, and at least as important as the things you do, when it comes to doing the right thing, and finding the worth in your life. (p. 6)

Myers articulates the "other side" of virtue in five segments called "movements." The First Movement is a collection of brief aphorisms, inspiring themes to play through the reader's imagination. The Second Movement begins Myers' course through history.

He begins with what he calls "Heroic" peoples: "the Celts of Ireland, Britain, and Western Europe, Germanic and Scandinavian people, the Greeks of the time of Homer, as well as the Macedonians" (p. 29). He makes heavy use of these peoples' literature, especially Beowulf, the Iliad, the Tain Bo Cuailnge, and the Eddas. With these peoples he finds the earliest European expressions of virtue. True to his philosophy, he finds the roots of virtue in the roots of identity: in storytelling, the communal feast, and the construction of homes and public buildings (especially the feast-hall). Myers then goes on to develop numerous common themes of Heroic literature. He finds honor to be the chief virtue, the one by which all others may be measured. Other virtues include loyalty, generosity, hospitality, and courage. For women he finds the same virtues also expressed, and in addition special virtues like constancy. Friendship is also a major theme, which played no small part in defining Heroic peoples' identities. Other important features of Heroic ethics are trust in Fate, a pattern of atonement for wrongdoings consisting of exile followed by a quest and finally readmission to society, and a type of immortality through storytelling called apotheosis. The seizure of the "Last Chance," by which a person finds a way to hold to virtue even in the face of imminent death, is also a significant theme. Throughout all this, Myers gives particular attention to the way Heroic peoples learned from their social roles who they were and what they ought to do. For example, a leader was supposed to be generous to his vassals, and in return the vassals were supposed to be

loyal. Individual glory was also a concern, but it was always in a context of social roles and relationships. Community defined identity in the Heroic age.

This is compared and contrasted in the Third Movement with what Myers' calls "Classical" peoples. Here he quotes Marcus Aurelius, Cicero, Plutarch, Heraclitus, Euripides, Aristotle, Plato, and Boethius. For these "civilized" peoples, honor continues to be important, but it is transformed into a semi-private quality, where honor is pursued for its own sake rather than for public praise. Public opinion is in fact called into question, so that immortality through storytelling is no longer credible. Fate is no longer trusted either, but comes to be seen rather as the fickleness of Fortune. In place of honor, fame, and Fate, the faculty of reason rises to the role of chief virtue. Through trust in reason, one may achieve the worthwhile life, *eudaimonia*, which for the first time is explicitly defined as happiness and human flourishing. One may also achieve a new kind of apotheosis, through aligning oneself with the divine Reason. Despite these innovations in Classical ethics, many themes continue Heroic modes. Basic virtues like courage maintain their authority, though now courage is virtuous only if deliberately chosen in service of a noble cause. The seizure of the Last Chance theme also perseveres, with a strong emphasis on doing what is noble and right even unto death. The importance of friendship is carried on by a particular emphasis on human concerns, especially the social and political. The communal dimension remains important. However, Classical peoples also move in the direction of a more individual, atomistic view, such that certain writers can claim that one doesn't need others at all to be virtuous, but that virtue rests entirely on one's own integrity.

The course of virtue's history is then interrupted by a period of "passive," law-based ethics, due largely to the influence of Christian values. Myers picks up the story again in the Fourth Movement with Renaissance thinkers who return to Classical ideas of virtue. He draws on writers such as Pico de Mirandola, Shakespeare, and Machiavelli (recall that virtues need not necessarily be moral). With the Renaissance comes the rediscovery of virtue through one's own efforts, rather than through God's grace. Reason is once again the chief virtue. The trail continues beyond the Renaissance and into the Romantic movement, with figures like Rousseau and Goethe.

There we encounter a loss of faith in reason as the sole guide. Instead there is an elevation of love and passion, and a return to trust in Fate through *amor fati*. The chief virtues are passion and beauty. In the wake of this comes Nietzsche. His philosophy of will, power, master morality, and pride pushes human self-worth to new heights. In so doing, however, Nietzsche misses entirely the significance of community, and tumbles into self-absorption. After this tragic crescendo, Myers finishes out his history with a close look at virtue in two very modern pieces of literature: Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy and J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. With these works, Myers brings the discussion up to date and grounds virtue in familiar imagery.

What follows in the Fifth Movement is an exploration pushing the foregoing ideas into new ground. So far, Myers has presented the skeletal framework of "Know Thyself" plus the importance of community, and fleshed it out with history. Next, he asks in what kind of situation one comes to self-awareness. He finds that such knowledge arises via situations that call one's self into question. His name for these situations is "the Immensity." Three major instances of the Immensity confront us all: the Earth, insofar as we all must face this world we live in, other people, insofar as we must deal with others and all the challenges presented by society, and death, insofar as we all must inevitably face our demise. There are also less-universal instances of the Immensity. They can be small or large, but they always cause one to question one's identity, and always demand a response. In other words, they cannot be avoided or ignored. An encounter with the Immensity demands a response, and in our response we discover who we are. At the same time, we also create who we are. So encounters with the Immensity are opportunities to take responsibility for our own characters. They are chances to display and cultivate virtue.

Of course, responses can vary, and these can be called excellent in greater or lesser degrees. The *excellent* response is one that manifests excellences of character, virtues of the like encountered throughout history but also including responsibility, wonder, respect, sympathy, integrity, and love. More generally, an excellent response "affirms a positive reason beyond the self to live" (p. 232). By contrast, the *wretched* response is one that manifests weaknesses of character, and does not manage to affirm anything

good in life or the world. Still worse than this is the *vicious* response. Myers writes:

A true vice, it seems to me, is not simply a poor response to the Immensity. It is a refusal to respond at all. It is a disposition to ignore the call of the Immensity, to deliberately block it out of your world, to willfully deny its presence. ... Such a person... ends up cutting himself off from the possibilities for self-discovery and life-enjoyment which the Immensity offers. (p. 236)

So the worst response of all is apathy, and the result is stagnation. Against this Myers upholds an ethic of aroused energy and responsible action. Virtue, rooted in character, is both revealed and created through excellent responses to the Immensity. He summarizes:

The virtues, then, can be defined as the qualities of character one needs to arouse the energy of life, use that energy to have a fruitful dialogue with the Immensity, and to find in the conversation something positive and valuable to live for. A virtue is a way to affirm the goodness of life. The creation of a life worth living, and a world worth living in, is the virtuous person's reward. (p. 233)

This, then, is Myers' virtue ethics in brief. It is an engaging philosophy, rooted in ancient values yet flowering in the modern world. As such, it is particularly appropriate to modern pagan and polytheist ways of life, but it also addresses a more universal audience. *The Other Side of Virtue* speaks to our times, countering modern individualism and "passive" forms of virtue while championing self-worth and community. It teaches us new things about ethics, spirit, and the spiritual experience. Finally, it sets a new standard for quality pagan writing.

At the same time, it is not without problems. There are critiques I would make, and a few things I would like to see discussed in works to come.

The foremost problem is Myers' distinction between active and passive virtue. He advocates an *active* response to the Immensity, as opposed to passively letting it blow you here and there with indifference.

This does well to convey the energetic character of his philosophy. But a problem arises when this is distinguished against whole traditions labeled "passive." Christian virtue is dismissed out of hand. Faith, hope, and charity are disposed of in less than a page. And their proponent, Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest theoreticians ever to engage virtue, is not even mentioned in Myers' tour through history. He gets a mere cameo appearance in the introduction. Why, I must ask, are faith, hope, and charity necessarily "passive?" Choose any one of the stories of the saints and it will be immediately apparent that these virtues can be quite active. Certainly the saints believed in different ideals than Myers—they staked their hopes on the next world rather than this one, and lived not for the enjoyment of this life but for the glory of the next—but that is no reason to call them passive. Myers' also levels the charge that they are "self-denying," but this makes sense only from a non-Christian perspective, and anyway does not affect the question of passivity. Certainly these virtues can be passive, just as a Heroic-age chief can be "generous" by passively letting his retainers take whatever treasures they demand. But they can also be active responses to the Immensity. Was the faith of Soren Kierkegaard a passive response to uncertainty in the world? What about the hope of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in a Nazi prison? And did Mother Theresa, with all her charitable efforts, respond passively to suffering? All this amounts to a failure to genuinely engage the voices which speak for the other side of the "other side" of virtue.

Other problems with the book are fairly minor. *The Other Side of Virtue* ultimately rises above its problems. What I would like to see engaged in the future is a fundamental problem facing any modern person wanting to live a more Heroic way of life: if Heroic peoples derived their identities from their society, how can we do the same today when our society does not share the same values? Anyone who chooses against modern individualism makes an *individual* choice against it. The paradox deserves exploration. Another thing I would like to see investigated is the notion of *shame*, which goes along with the value of honor. Whereas law-based ethics instill guilt, character-based ethics inspire shame. This feeling, though ugly, may serve a positive role in our modern world. Can shame be an active, affirmative response to the Immensity? Can a sense of shame mediate the lack of accountability in our increasingly

compartmentalized, anonymous modern world? An in-depth study is called for (*The Other Side of Shame?*).

Of course, these topics need not be taken up by Myers himself. If his book does its job, it will inspire other pagan authors to their own explorations of virtue—hopefully rivaling Myers' in quality and scope. And this is something that I think it can and will do. This is a book that can be taken seriously by pagans and non-pagans, academics and general readers alike. It does not simply re-present ancient lore, but also teaches us something new. And it achieves clarity without sacrificing rigor. With *The Other Side of Virtue*, pagan writing has found a new standard. I'll conclude with a final quote:

*You are what you do. Therefore do that which will transform you into the person you wish to be. (p. 21)*

Myers, Brendan. *The Other Side of Virtue*. Hampshire, UK: John Hunt Publishing Ltd., 2008.

Podcast talks by Myers are also available:

Deo's Shadow, #39

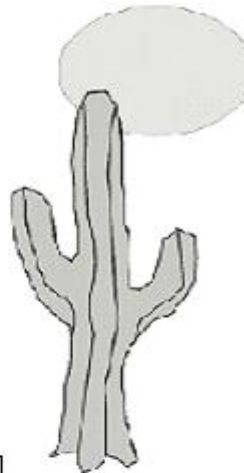
<<http://www.deos-shadow.com/?p=68>>

Ravencast, #22

<<http://ravencast.podbean.com/2008/06/06/episode-22-pagan-virtue-with-dr-brendan-myers/>>

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## Three Triadic Poems

by Brandon Newberg

### Virtue, Piety, and Study

Three things a dedicant embraces first: Virtue, Piety,  
and Study

Let this triad bind to me,  
By fire and well, so may it be.

Let fertile virtue seed within,  
And nature's right be done by kin,  
From high the hill to the hollow.

Let earthly ground a pious root,  
That shining good a holy shoot  
May seek out, rise up, and follow.

Let forward branch an elder way,  
That timely lore of ancient days,  
May once more bloom for the morrow.

Let this triad bind to me,  
By fire and well, so may it be.

### The Fire, the Well, and the Tree

There are three gates of ritual: the Fire, the Well, and  
the Tree

Let this triad bind to me,  
By fire and well, so may it be.

Let crack the bright gate's blackening fuel,  
And heavenward fragrant wisps unspool,  
That lives take shape in the tongues.

Let churn the deep gate's potent cup,  
And currents raw come waving up,  
That wash the old to the young.

Let shake the ever-returning leaves,  
And gnarl the curving witness trees,  
That hold our lives in their rungs.

Let this triad bind to me,  
By fire and well, so may it be.

### The Three Kindreds

There are three Kindreds: the Ancestors, the Spirits,  
and the Gods.

Let this triad bind to me,  
By fire and well, so may it be.

Let branch the vein's descending brood,  
And guide the lines returning good,  
That wisdom beats in the heir.

Let work the wilder's hidden keepers,  
And creep the barren's fertile reapers,  
That tangle webs in the bare.

Let touch the eldest, wisest kin,  
Who brush with life our mortal skin,  
And fold our lives in a prayer.

Let this triad bind to me,  
By fire and well, so may it be.

## Open Like a Flower

*by Medb Aodhamair*

Open like a flower  
Bring her in to this earth  
Open like a flower  
As you give her birth

Open like a flower  
Let her know her kith and kin  
Open like a flower  
Let her new life begin

Open like a flower  
Let her be loved among the folk  
Open like a flower  
She will grow like a mighty oak

Open like a flower  
Let her sweet smile be seen  
Open like a flower  
She'll be treated like a queen

Open like a flower  
She will be your treasure  
Open like a flower  
Your love will be unmeasured

## Lemniscus

*by Jill S. Humphrey*

I am a primordial panting pregnant woman covered in furs.  
I am a memorable shrill sounding scream of birthing.  
I am the growling eye rolling of slowly dilating.  
I am desire of warm aquatic submersion.  
I am a pressing sharp crown of fire.  
I am deepest darkest pushing.  
I am blowing in exhales.  
I am true wonder.  
I am mother.  
I love.

## Lord Scrying the Ordinary

*by Patti O'Luanaigh*

They were here first.  
Grasses lunge and dart as the forgotten  
path violates then succors, the black.  
A moody moon pirouettes among  
the stellar, then plants firmly like marble,  
and stares. I move toward the fire,  
befriending the conspiring trees.  
They weave me a canopy of deer-hoof  
and firefly, and advise me on wound.  
Yew insists – and splits the shuttered  
vault of my skull-house. It's the only way  
to understand the rain – lading possibilities.  
A few stars float to the top. I save them  
for later. We stir in a pinch of earth, bitter  
herb, and the root of my undoing.  
Some salt for luck.

I unfasten my navel and begin to climb.  
Past the rough uncertainties, comments  
like ruins, deflecting rules like empty bellows.  
I think of the moon. She dispatches them  
with a wink. Fingers brush a hollow and I  
hurry, threading sorrows out of skin.  
They never stop falling.

My antler-bones dowse for clues. Form  
opens like an estuary and the stone rolls  
out, speaking in tongues: meadow, a tear,  
sea-glass – a few misplaced clovers.

The sky carves my palms like hatchets  
on a newborn's head and unleashes  
the pioneers. The visions aim for nothing -  
hit everything on the way.

What can I see?  
I was born in winter, but I won't die there.  
What else?

They are returning.  
It is the gathering of simple.  
It is the radiance of never know.  
It is that which precedes,  
just next to what's to come -  
peers from within the reflection  
and moves, endlessly,  
without hesitation,  
both ways at once.

# Last Issue's Puzzle Key

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## Across

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1. **FINDIAS**—City of Nuadhas Sword
4. **ASTRONOMY**—Oldest of the Natural Sciences
8. **HIPPOCRATES**—Father of Medicine
11. **CICERO**—Roman Philosopher 106 - 43 BCE
15. **JUDGEMENT**—20th major Arcana
16. **ODE**—A poem of Praise
17. **GEOMANCY**—Earth Divination
19. **GINGER**—Zingiber officinale
20. **DYAU**—Skt for “sky”
22. **COSMOLOGY**—Universe Discussion
23. **BALDER**—fairest of the Aesir
24. **EMERSON**—American Poet 1803-1882
28. **VERGIL**—Roman Poet 70 bce-19ce
30. **TOLAND**—ADO's creator (last)
32. **NEWGRANGE**—Dún Fhearghusa
35. **SOMA**—Intoxicating Vedic Drink
36. **TORCH**—Kenaz
38. **DAY**—Dagaz
39. **EMPRESS**—3rd major Arcana
42. **SAGITTARIUS**—October 24 to November 22
44. **HOMEOPATHY**—Samuel Hahnemann founded...
45. **TRIADS**—Short Bardic Verses.
46. **PERSEUS**—medusa killer
47. **FIRE**—OE ‘fyr’
48. **RHIANNON**—Pwyll's wife
49. **APAS**—Classical Sansk for “waters”.

## Down

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2. **INVOKE**—Magically calling ‘into’
3. **BLACKTHORN**—Straiph
5. **THEOSOPHY**—Divine Wisdom
6. **FREYR**—Norse God of fertility
7. **JANUS**—Roman God of Doorways
9. **REINCARNATION**—AKA Transmigration
10. **ORES**—Mineral baring rocks
12. **CLOTHO**—Moirae - Spinner
13. **CROWLEY**—Messiah of the New Aeon
14. **PLATO**—Philosopher 428 - 348 BCE
18. **LITURGY**—Gk - Leitourgia
20. **DESCARTES**—Cogito Ergo Sum (last)
21. **RDNA**—Created at Carleton College 1963 (abv)
25. **MACROCOSM**—The world around us...
26. **SUN**—Sowelu
27. **MYRRH**—Balsamodendron
29. **ALCHEMY**—Occult science of matter and its transformations.
31. **KEATS**—British poet 1795-1821
33. **NOUS**—Gk- For the “Mind”
34. **SAGA**—A long tale or Narrative
37. **PROMETHEUS**—Fire Thief
40. **BUDDHISM**—An offshoot of Hinduism
41. **LIBATION**—A Drink Offering
43. **AMULET**—Charm, talisman etc

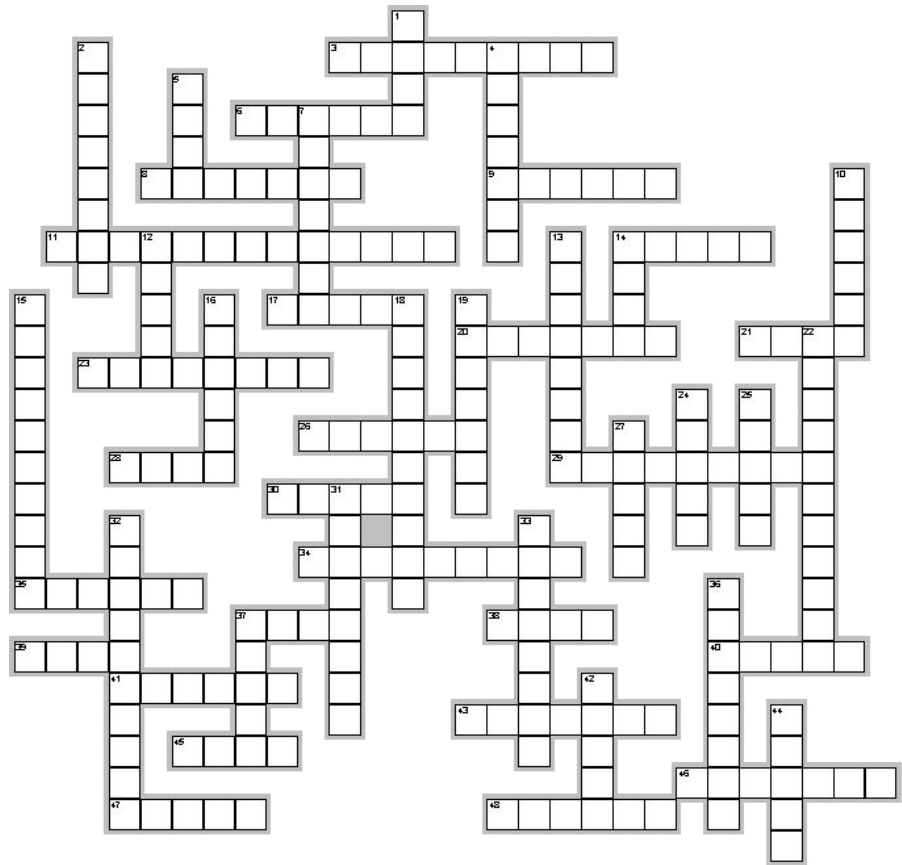




# Crossword Puzzle

## Across

3. 1 of the 4 Vedas
6. Founded by Aleister Crowley in 1904
8. Family/folk/spirit etc.
9. Delphi Oracle
11. 2nd major Arcana
14. Fearn
17. Also called Sahasramuska...
20. Celtic Calendar
21. Skt. for Knowledge
23. Study of the Goddess
26. Zoroastrian Scriptures
28. Humulus
29. self loving' hero
30. Roman Goddess of the Hearth
34. Big Dipper
35. Achillea-mille Folium
37. Oldest Aesir



EclipseCrossword.com

38. Druids Bird
39. Parcae - Spinner
40. First of the Vanir
41. Gaulish Divine Mothers
43. Home of Dublin
45. Founder of Critical Philosophy (last)
46. Rainbow Bridge
47. Sorbus Aucuparia
48. 6th major Arcana

## Down

1. Wife of Uranus
2. Celtic Missionary C521- 597CE
4. October 24 to November 22
5. God of mischief
7. Nature. Essays. etc.
10. Parcae -Allotter
12. Hunter accompanied by Spectral hounds

13. 1st major Arcana
14. Welsh inspiration
15. Gk- "Love of Wisdom"
16. Stone of destiny city
18. Skt for "shining ones"
19. Home of Reykjavik
22. Vedic Sky God
24. Consort of Odin
25. golden fleece hero
27. nGetal
31. 8th major Arcana
32. (2wds) aka -Earth mother
33. Greek Philosopher 469 - 399 BCE
36. German Physicist 1879- 1955
37. Okeanos
42. ointment, balm etc
44. God of the gold moustache



# News and Announcements

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## **Dedicant Program Completions**

Christopher Bogs of Spiral Spirit PG  
Completed Nov 2008.

Jamie Goodwin of Silverfalls PG  
Completed Nov 2008.

Michael Travola of Ravens Cry Grove  
Completed Nov 2008.

Virginia Carper  
Completed Nov 2008.

Judith O'Grady of Red Maple Grove, ADF  
Completed Dec 2008.

## **Study Program Completions**

Cheryl Angst, 1st Circle Scholars Guild SP.

Nora Ford. Dedicant Priest On November 1, 08  
Samhain at Sonoran Sunrise Grove, AZ.

## **New Protogroves**

Burning Waters Proto Grove, ADF  
Redding, CA on Oct 27.

Our Whole Proto Grove, ADF  
Olivebridge, NY on Oct 24.

Ozark Mountain Proto Grove, ADF  
Bentonville, AR on Oct 30.

## **New Provision Groves**

Coast Oak Grove, ADF  
San Diego, CA on Oct 20

## **Coming Events**

WinterStar Symposium  
Feb 12-15/09 Delroy OH.  
[www.rosencomet.com/winterstar](http://www.rosencomet.com/winterstar)

PantheaCon  
Feb 13-16, 2009 SanJose CA  
[www.pantheacon.com](http://www.pantheacon.com)

Trillium Gathering  
April 16-19, 2009 Cross Junction VA  
[www.trilliumgathering.org](http://www.trilliumgathering.org)

Desert Magic  
May 7-10, 2009 Ozark AZ  
[www.ssg-adf.org](http://www.ssg-adf.org)

Wellspring Gathering  
May 21-27, 2009 Sherwood NY  
[www.stonecreed.org](http://www.stonecreed.org)



# Contributor's List

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## ARTICLES

- Jen "Betula"  
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- Rev. Michael Dangler  
"Nine Central Tenets" pg. 20  
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- Brian "Boru" Long  
"Druku Ritual and Dedicant Oath"  
Page 17
- Rev. Jessie "Medh" Olson  
"Nice Day for a Green Wedding"  
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- Rev. Kirk S. Thomas  
"The Characters of the Mabinogi"  
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## POETRY

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# 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)**

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: December 1st,  
Summer: March 1st,  
Autumn: June 1st,  
Winter: September 1st

# ADF DIRECTORY

## The Mother Grove

Archdruid  
Vice-Archdruid  
Treasurer  
Secretary  
Members Advocate  
Chief of the Council of Regional Druids  
Chief of the Council of Senior Druids  
Non-Officer Director  
Non-Officer Director  
Non-Officer Director

Skip Ellison  
Rev Kirk Thomas  
Kristine Marino  
Anthony Thompson  
Arthur Shipkowski  
Nancy McAndrew  
Flip  
Maria Stoy  
Selene Tawny  
Mariah Sheehy

adf-archdruid@adf.org  
adf-vice-archdruid@adf.org  
adf-treasurer@adf.org  
adf-secretary@adf.org  
adf-members-advocate@adf.org  
adf-cord-chief@adf.org  
adf-cosd-chief@adf.org  
ivybrigid1@aol.com  
selene@zoomtown.com  
caelesti@gmail.com



## Additional Leadership Positions

Administrator  
Archdruid Emeritus  
Archdruid Emeritus  
Archdruid Emeritus  
Chronicler  
Information Manager  
Listmaster and Moderator  
Preceptor  
Regalia Manager  
Webmaster

Selene Tawny  
Rev Isaac Bonewits  
Ian Corrigan  
Rev "Fox" Adelman  
Neal "Tensen" Levin  
Anthony Thompson  
Nightdrum  
Raven Mann  
Medb Aodhamair  
Anthony Thompson

adf-administrator@adf.org  
ibonewits@neopagan.net  
tredara@ncweb.com  
john.adelmann@trw.com  
adf-chronicler@adf.org  
athomps@adf.org  
adf-listmaster@adf.org  
adf-preceptor@adf.org  
adf-regalia@adf.org  
adf-webmaster@adf.org



## Committees

Clergy Council  
Grove Coordinating Committee  
Grove Organizing Committee  
Prisoner Relations Committee

Chair: Skip Ellison  
Chair: Rev Caryn MacLuan  
Chair: Aigeann  
Chair: Rev Barbara Wright

adf-archdruid@adf.org  
adf-gcc-chair@adf.org  
adf-goc-chair@adf.org  
adf-prison-ministry@adf.org



## Regional Druids

Upper Midwest Regional Druid  
North East Regional Druid  
Heartland Regional Druid  
North West Regional Druid  
South East Regional Druid  
Central Regional Druid  
South West Regional Druid  
Canada West Regional Druid  
Canada East Regional Druid  
Europe Regional Druid

Epona  
Rev Robert Lewis  
Diana Paar  
Rev Sean Harbaugh  
Nancy McAndrew  
Nancy McAndrew  
Modig  
Athelia Nihtscada  
Rev Robert Lewis  
Hekatatia

adf-upper-midwest-rd@adf.org  
adf-northeast-rd@adf.org  
adf-heartland-rd@adf.org  
adf-northwest-rd@adf.org  
adf-southeast-rd@adf.org  
adf-central-rd@adf.org  
adf-southwest-rd@adf.org  
adf-canada-west-rd@adf.org  
adf-canada-east-rd@adf.org  
adf-europe-rd@adf.org



## Guilds

Artisans Guild  
Bardic Guild  
Brewers Guild  
Dance Guild  
Healers Guild

Chief: Sharon Smith  
Chief: Rev Jennifer Hunt  
Chief: Flip  
Chief: Zona-Lisa Bennett  
Chief: Rodney Cox

smithing\_chick@yahoo.com  
romandruid@cox.net  
flip@chainolakescamp.com  
samhain3x3@aol.com  
uberrod@comcast.net

Liturgists Guild  
Magicians Guild  
Naturalists Guild  
Scholars Guild  
Seers Guild  
Warriors Guild

Chief: Rev Kirk Thomas  
Chief: Rodney Cox  
Chief: Linda Costello  
Chief: Christopher Sherbak  
Chief: Meredith McDonald  
Chief: James Dillard

druidkirk@yahoo.com  
uberrod@comcast.net  
druidlinda@aol.com  
sherbak@yattglobal.net  
meredithmcdruidd@yahoo.com  
kingseasmus67@yahoo.com



### Special Interest Groups

American SIG  
Children's Education and Parenting SIG  
Ecstatic Trance SIG  
Foireann Mhorrigan  
Military Outreach SIG  
Safe Haven SIG  
Solitaires SIG  
Technopagan SIG  
The People of the Purple Feather

Coordinator: Karen Dutton  
Coordinator: Epona  
Coordinator: Rowan Hawke  
Coordinator: Calliean  
Coordinator: Francesca  
Coordinator: Lightwind De Domnu  
Coordinator: Brandon Newberg  
Coordinator: Dubhlaínn  
Coordinator: Aethon Tobar

kdutton@carolina.rr.com  
epona@mysticdruid.com  
siobhanols@yahoo.com  
amairgin@pacbell.net  
ladybythesea@yahoo.com  
blesseddruiddess@gmail.com  
SolSIGCoordinator@gmail.com  
jamie.goodwin@hotmail.com  
aethontobar@gmail.com



### Rings

American  
Aus Dhwer: Eastern Gate Kin  
Clann na nGael: Gael Kin  
Eldr ok Iss: Kin of Fire and Ice  
Oi Asproi Koukouvyies: White Owls Kin  
Roman Kin  
Slavic Kin  
Tylwyth Y Ddraig Goch: Red Dragon

Leader: Rev Michael Dangler  
Leader: Carrion Mann  
Leader: Flip  
Leader: Emerald  
Leader: Rev Jennifer Hunt  
Leader: Francesca  
Leader: Rev Kirk Thomas

dangler.8@osu.edu  
carrionmann@aol.com  
flipc@hainolakescamp.com  
emerald-adf@hotmail.com  
romandruid@cox.net  
ladybythesea@yahoo.com  
druidkirk@mac.com



### Groves and Protogroves:

Australia:

**Silver Birch Protogrove, ADF**

Local to: Australia

silverbirchadf@gmail.com

Canada:

**Beaver Hills Protogrove, ADF**

Local to: AB

beaverhills@hotmail.com

**Protogrove of the Ancient Ways, ADF**

Local to: AB

ancient\_wayspg@yahoo.ca

**Oakstone Protogrove, ADF**

Local to: BC

oakstone\_adf@yahoo.ca

**Dancing Lights Grove, ADF**

Local to: ON

dancinglightsgrove@gmail.com

**Red Maple Grove, ADF**

Local to: ON, QC

info@redmaplegrove.org

**Thornhaven Protogrove, ADF**

Local to: ON

thornhavenadf@yahoo.ca

**Island Willow Protogrove, ADF**

Local to: QC

islandwillow@gmail.com

Europe:

**Midnight Tree Clan Protogrove, ADF**

Local to: Czech Rep

arbor.nocturnus@gmail.com

**Hollow Hills Protogrove, ADF**

Local to: Hampshire, UK

hollowhillsadf@gmail.com

USA:

**Hallowed Oaks Grove, ADF**

Local to: AL

hallowed\_oaks-owner@yahoogroups.com

**Ozark Mountain Protogrove, ADF**

Local to: AR

ar.adfdruidd@gmail.com

**Grove of the Rising Phoenix, ADF**

Local to: AZ

info@risingphoenix-adf.org

**Sonoran Sunrise Grove, ADF**

Local to: AZ

sd@sonoransunrise.org

**Tempest Ravens Protogrove, ADF**

Local to: AZ

tempestravens@yahoo.com

**Awen's Breath Grove, ADF**

Local to: CA

awensbreath@aol.com

<b>Burning Waters Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: CA	burning_waters@sbcglobal.net
<b>Coast Oak Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: CA, AZ	sddruids@yahoo.com
<b>Feather River Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: CA	featherriverpg-owner@yahoogroups.com
<b>Green Timbre Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: CA	mythicyarns@live.com
<b>Raven's Cry Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: CA	ravenscry@ravenscrygrove.org
<b>Sierra Madrone Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: CA	sierramadronegrove@yahoo.com
<b>Grove of the Red Earth, ADF</b>	Local to: GA	reearthseniordruid@gmail.com
<b>Apple Branch Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: IL	ashley@apple-branch.org
<b>Raven Wood Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: IL	info@ravenwoodgrove.org
<b>Wild Onion Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: IL, IN, MI, WI	jk.cole@gmail.com
<b>Black Bear Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: IN	blackbeargrove@yahoo.com
<b>Wild Hare Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: KS, MO	info@wild-hare.org
<b>Cedarlight Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: MD	clg@cedarlightgrove.org
<b>CedarSong Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: MI	cedarsongpg@gmail.com
<b>Grove of the Midnight Sun, ADF</b>	Local to: MI	info@grovemidnightsun.org
<b>Grove of the Twilight Flame, ADF</b>	Local to: MI	thetwilightflame@yahoo.com
<b>Shining Lakes Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: MI	robh@shininglakes.org
<b>Red Pine Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: MN	red_pine_adf@hotmail.com
<b>Bright Leaf Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: NC	gealtinne1@aol.com
<b>Muscadine Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: NC	muscadine_adf@yahoo.com
<b>Nemos Ognios Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: NH, MA	ceiserith@aol.com
<b>Grove of the Other Gods, ADF</b>	Local to: NJ, NY	eternalansw@earthlink.net
<b>Red Oak Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: NJ, PA, DE	officers@redoakgrove.org
<b>Enchanted Desert Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: NM	enchanteddesertgrove_adf@hotmail.com
<b>Muin Mound Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: NY	sharonel@twcnny.rr.com
<b>Our Whole Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: NY	info@urtharts.com
<b>Paumanok Island Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: NY	ravenslairli@yahoo.com
<b>Shining Valley Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: NY	ganieda1012@yahoo.com
<b>Tear of the Cloud Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: NY	contact-us@tearofthecloud.org
<b>Mystic Ash Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: OH	selene@zoomtown.com
<b>Silver Falls Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: OH	silverfallspg@gmail.com
<b>Stone Creed Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: OH, PA	seniordruid@stonecreed.org
<b>The 6th Night Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: OH	6thnight@6thnight.org
<b>Three Cranes Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: OH	threecranes@threecranes.org
<b>Clan of the Triple Horses Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: OR, CA	triplehorses@gmail.com
<b>Hemlock Vales Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: PA	hemlockvalesadf@gmail.com
<b>Sassafras Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: PA	info@sassafrasgrove.org
<b>Snow Water Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: PA	snowwateradf@yahoo.com
<b>Spiral Spirit Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: PA, DE, NJ	info@spiralspirit.org
<b>Whispering Lake Grove, ADF</b>	Local to: PA, OH, NY	ravenmann@aol.com
<b>Ocean's Tide Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: RI, MA, CT	info@oceanstide.org
<b>Eagle Mountain Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: TX	troy1of2@gmail.com
<b>Protogrove of the Live Oaks, ADF</b>	Local to: TX	patchshorts@gmail.com
<b>Henge of the Sacred Fire Protogrove, ADF</b>	Local to: UT	ambiorixdruid@hotmail.com
<b>Grove of the Seven Hills, ADF</b>	Local to: VA	sevenhillsadf@yahoo.com
<b>Protogrove of the Shenandoah, ADF</b>	Local to: VA	gotshenandoah@gmail.com



For more information on Groves, Guilds, Special Interest Groups (SIGs), and Kins please see the full listing on our webpage: <http://www.adf.org/groups/groups-list.html>





# 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

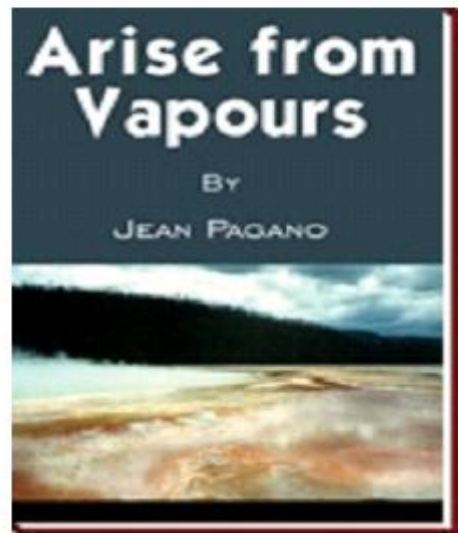
Notary Seal:

## *Arise from Vapours*

A book of poetry by long-time ADF member Jean Pagano.

Jean Pagano has been writing poetry most of his adult life. He has been chasing his *Muse* for many years and has often found her an elusive quarry. The poems and haikus contained in this book represent the occasions where the world of the *Muse* and the world of the writer intersected and intertwined

Jean is a student and teacher of Runes and has worked extensively with the Runes of Ancient Ireland (Run Na Erenn Seanda) and the Ogham



This is Jean's first published collection of poems. His poems have previously appeared in literary magazines, small publications, and online poetry collections. Jean is a staff writer for the *Native American Press* and currently lives in Michigan

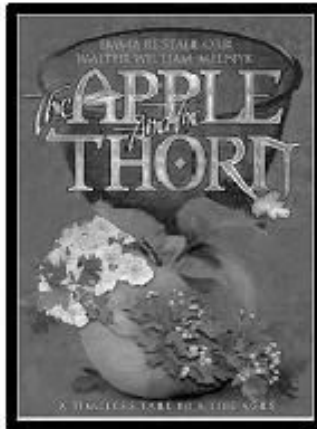
Available at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), [Borders.com](http://Borders.com), [Barnesandnoble.com](http://Barnesandnoble.com), and your local book store. Electronic versions are available from [www.authorhouse.com](http://www.authorhouse.com)

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.

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