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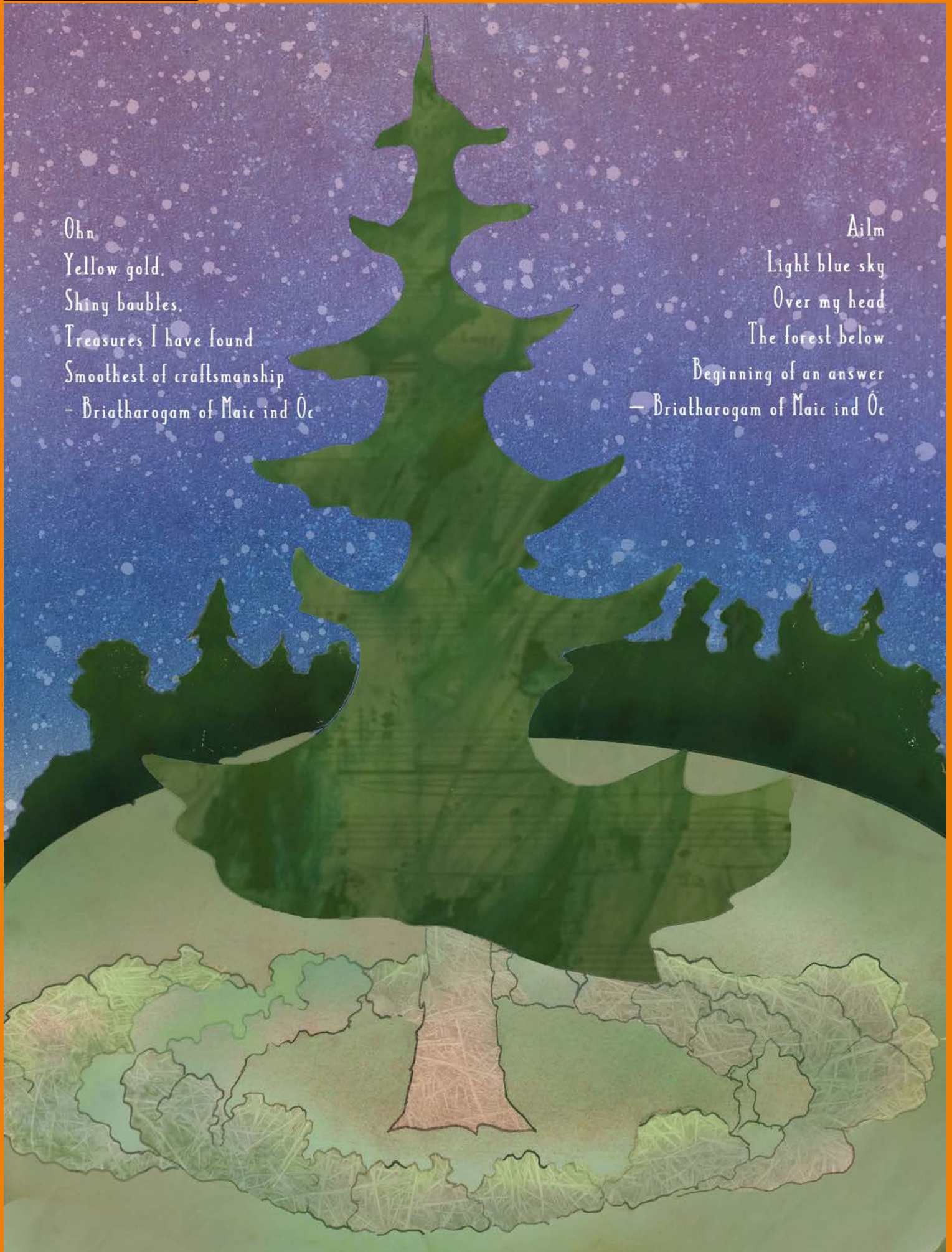
The Quarterly Journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin

Fall 2015 ~ Issue No. 70



Ohn
Yellow gold,
Shiny baubles,
Treasures I have found
Smoothest of craftsmanship
— Briatharogam of Maic ind Óc

Ailm
Light blue sky
Over my head
The forest below
Beginning of an answer
— Briatharogam of Maic ind Óc





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Fall 2015 • Issue No. 70

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Chronicler: Manny Tejada

Editor-in-Chief: Rev. Melissa S. Burchfield

Managing Editor: Bill Thomas

Editors: Rev. Melissa S. Burchfield, Grey Catsidhe, Donald “Domhn” Drake, Deb Field, Jay Foulds, Lesley Hooper, Brenda Lively, Bill Thomas

Layout Director : Piper Perry

Art and Advertisement Director:
Rev. Melissa Hill

News Director: Chris :)

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Subscription Service Dept.
ADF
P.O. Box 17874
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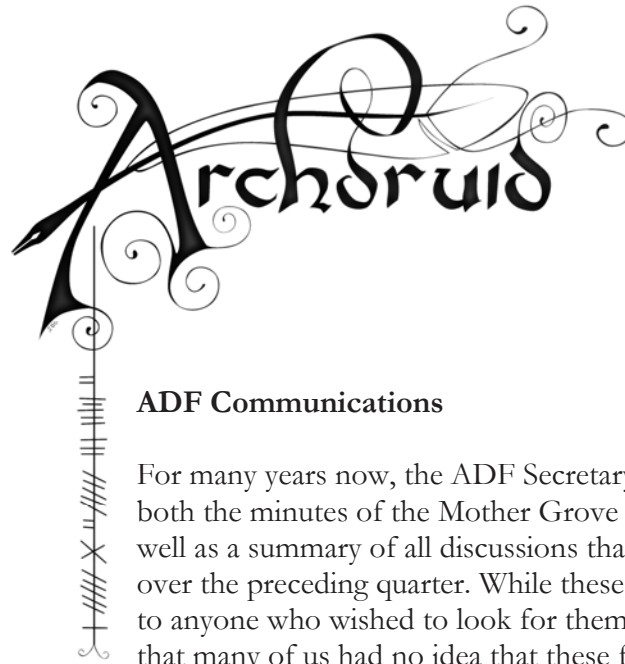
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ADF Communications

For many years now, the ADF Secretary has been posting both the minutes of the Mother Grove (MG) meetings as well as a summary of all discussions that have taken place over the preceding quarter. While these have been available to anyone who wished to look for them, there is no doubt that many of us had no idea that these files even existed.

Just before Wellspring this year, the MG passed a new communications policy, which we hope will help with this problem. In the future, any time the MG considers amending the ADF Bylaws, notice will be sent to the membership at least two weeks prior to the meeting (and any possible vote) with a link to the agenda and any necessary explanatory notes. There will also be a link where any member may send their comments on the proposed change.

While we assume that there will be discussion about any Bylaw changes on our Forums, Lists, or even on Facebook, these will not be considered when the MG makes its decision. Only comments sent to this new link or directly to MG members will be accepted as input.

During recent discussions, we received complaints from people who felt bullied by some of our more vocal members, so the comments sent to us will only be viewable by the MG and not by the general membership in full confidentiality. In other words, these member opinions and comments will be kept private in the hopes that all our members will feel safe in speaking up.

All members of the MG are volunteers doing the best we can to support ADF. May the Kindreds continue to uphold all of us in ADF and support us in our practices as we work to create a safe and vibrant church. So be it!

-Rev. Kirk S. Thomas
Archdruid, ADF



Hearthfire Sanctuary:

A Respite from the Festival

By Rev. William E Ashton, II

With an ominous weather forecast for the weekend and a Subaru Forester packed to the gills with all necessary gear for a seventy-two hour Fire vigil, our Protogrove's chief magical officer/interim bard and I set off for Beltania Festival (www.beltania.org), one of Colorado's pagan festivals, hosted by Rev. Joy Burton and her team at Living Earth. Beltania started as Living Earth's seasonal rite but soon transformed to a pagan-spirited music festival. While there are many presenters of rites and workshops, one of the main focuses of the festival is maintaining the 3-day concert vibe.

I first attended Beltania Festival in 2013 where Teo Bishop and I were asked to present a small panel on pagan theology and another workshop presented by me on Druidry: Ancient and Modern. Let me qualify by saying that I had never been to a pagan festival prior to Beltania 2013 and have only been to a small handful since...I felt like a babe in the woods. Having had a chance for three days to walk around the festival site, talking with many of the folk, and allowing myself some time to process my arising feelings of a certain something being missing, I concluded that there was no place to pray... or better yet, to make offerings as a folk.

You see, not being a festival veteran and hearing much conversation about the rites and workshops attended, there was no place to support the awakenings, confusion, challenges, and emotions that arise from those experiences. Most workshop presenters aren't prepared, or trained, to hold that kind of space with someone, especially right after they finish presenting. The feelings that were arising in me centered on how I could be a part of the change I wished to see (thanks, Gandhi). At the time, I was getting close to wrapping up CTP1 and had plans to enter into service for my community as a shiny new ADF cleric, not just for the ADF folk in my budding Protogrove, but for the folk of this area, the area in which I 'druid', the Northern Colorado Front Range pagan-folk area.

We attend festivals for myriad reasons, not the least of which is to surround ourselves with people of like, or at least similar, mind; however, I found that there was no location on the grounds for the religiously-obsessive... like me. I wanted a place to pray and make offerings. I wanted a place to talk to clerics and trained religious professionals about challenges I was having in my process. I wanted a place to step aside from the clothing-optional, fertility-ridden insanity of the festival and enjoy a few moments of sitting with a sacred Fire, celebrating in a space of contemplation. At the same time I was finding myself wanting this experience, I also saw myself wanting to provide this experience to others.

I wanted a roadside temple.

Taking the opportunity to offer something that I felt was missing in my local community, I contacted Rev. Burton, and asked if I could hold a Fire vigil during the 2014 festival. Sharing the vision of it being a sanctuary for those in need, and being staffed by a newly ordained ADF Druid, and other leadership members of Mountain Ancestors Protogrove, as well as some dear Heathen friends, I awaited her response.

It came just before the 2014 festival. HearthFire Sanctuary was born.

Finally getting the go-ahead and blessing of autonomy needed, I rushed around, pooling my resources, contacting friends and allies who identified as hard polytheists, as well as other ADF'ers in the area. Before you knew it, we had a team of five people who were willing to stay awake and fast for seventy-two hours, feeding a sacred Fire, and willing to sacrifice time, resources, and energy in service. (Hail and blessings to Gage, Casey, Sin, and Aoidhean - without y'all, I'd have been out there alone. Thank you!).

Everything fell into place, and while there could have been improvements, we had to approach this first run as a grand experiment and test of our collective pious will. I'm of the opinion that we passed with flying colors.

This place of respite received nearly 1/3 of festival goers offering a caring ear, omens, Waters of Life, counsel, warm smiles in the cold, and a warm fire at any time, day or night. HearthFire and its volunteers received high praise and blessings from all who came to our Fire, and was invited back for the following year's Beltania to serve the folk.

It seems this was something our local community was needing.

Writing this piece, I find myself reflecting back on



View from the Sanctuary by: Bailey Harper

my experience of that first HearthFire Sanctuary... and aside from weather, I wouldn't have changed a thing. Sure, we were all exhausted, hungry, and cold, but even through that, we found the Fire replenishing for our spirits, the near-constant flow of offerings satiating, and the company of a diverse team dedicated to service, warming.

This year's festival was at a camping conference center owned by the United Church of Christ, and they graciously offered the walled-in courtyard of a beautiful chapel to host HearthFire Sanctuary. Before beginning our set-up, we went into the chapel and made spoken offerings to the Kindreds

of that place, thanking them for welcoming us, and for giving us the opportunity to practice being good guests. Shortly thereafter, in the shadow of a huge Southwestern style memorial chapel, we kindled our Fire and opened the Gates (Thursday, May 14 at 1pm).

Perhaps it's the timing of things when one is in liminal space, or perhaps it's simple serendipity, but once the Fire was burning, people began to come. Slowly at first... gently... like they were experiencing this kind of opportunity for the first time. Their coins fell into the well, the Seer's words came naturally, and the blessings were imbibed by each of our guests in our customary way, over and over. So similar to the first HearthFire Sanctuary in structure, but being in a new space, and having new folk come to offer at our Fire was what made this year unique.

An ecumenical group of young pagan men came to our Fire during their community rites-of-passage to make offerings and receive blessings. Those mourning the recent passing of loved ones came. Folks from one end of the pagan spectrum to another came: Heathens, Wiccans, Eclectics, Recon-folk, those claiming no name, nor title, nor boundaries—the folk came in all their diversity and beauty. We were blessed and honored to simply receive them, and send them back to the festival revitalized.

What's really amazing is what arose for each of us: the clarity that comes with service, the moment one realizes why we call it religious 'practice.' We take the time to have our daily observances and home-shrine customs so that when we're standing face-to-face with someone who's sharing their hurt, their joy, their confusion, their losses, their elation, and their grief, it is no longer time for practice. It is time to be present in a space where none of it is about you. It's only about them.

To the Druid, it's never about us... it's always about the folk and the Kindred Three.

Period. That's it.

It is vigilant service to others that awakens the Druid's connection to Virtue.

It's not that we can't find deep moments of practice in our quotidian, daily shrine-task; it's that in these moments of vigil for the sake of the folk, there is nothing else BUT that Virtue.

In those moments, we become emissaries of blessing, representatives of the Kindreds. We know we're not professional therapists, but we don't need to be. We simply need to be present with another person in that moment without concern for anyone but them.

Practicing being present sounds easy enough, but if we're attached to something that another shared with us in such a way that we're just waiting to dispense our own similar experience, we're not present. If our minds are wandering after the 50th person comes to the Fire in a row, or when someone returns again and again seeking further details about earlier omens, we're not present. If we're not consciously choosing to simply be with that person in that moment, we're not present.

When we're being fully present with others, we're not engaged in comparing our own experience to theirs. It's difficult to be present with someone and not have 'solutions to their problems' arise, what they 'should' be doing, or saying, or being. 'Should' is born out of a place where it's more important to be right (also read as 'helpful') than it is to simply be present with someone where they are.

It is our goal when in service at HearthFire that the accursed word "should" doesn't enter into our consciousness, and if it does, we let it pass like a cloud in the sky or a car on the road. You see, judgements make it hard to be present with those at our Fire.

I'm certain there is much of my own bias in my privileging of being present and mindful. This stems from my educational experience at Naropa

University, a Buddhist-inspired institution. However, we as Druidic pagans can explore the relationship between being present/mindful and our own Hospitality-rooted practices.

When our minds are elsewhere, we cannot know what is the right offering, be it for one of the Kindreds, or a guest at our homes, or our Fire. It's the religious equivalent of being handed an apple martini after sharing with someone that your preference is bourbon, neat. If we are mindful, closer relationships can be built, deeper connections can be made... and people feel heard.

What's this all got to do with creating a semi-permanent, fully-staffed temple at pagan festivals? In short, it's what some folk have been quietly waiting for. It is through being present with them that we step outside of ourselves, and when they see us doing that, true community is created, and our worth as ADF'ers shines. We are a unique lot. We have tremendous opportunity to practice religious ecumenism in the pagan community. We are the creators of community.

We are Druids.

Druidic service is to not only embody the study and learning from our rigorous coursework, it's to know which tool to use in which scenario—and to know when you're not talking about inanimate things like nuts and bolts, but instead, to know you're talking about people. The challenge of Druidic service is that we're not working with THINGS; we're working with PEOPLE. This is where all our academia and study takes a hit if we've nothing to offer the folk but data. In other words, there's a huge difference between sitting with someone who is suicidal, bearing witness to their process, being their ally, holding sacred all they share, and telling someone why they're feeling suicidal and prescribe them a statistically-proven course of actions to not feel that way anymore. This whole process isn't about our comfort, it's about theirs.

If we look at 'Druids' as the religious leaders in a

Druidic service is to not only embody the study and learning from our rigorous coursework, it's to know which tool to use in which scenario—and to know when you're not talking about inanimate things like nuts and bolts, but instead, to know you're talking about people.

community, then it shifts our paradigm from the practitioners of druidic paganism to actual, modern Druids. In a sense, it's our obligation to serve in this capacity. We know the expectations of academic excellence ADF has set, and we know the training others in the general pagan community receive (to a greater or lesser degree). Born out of this knowledge is what I call the "Challenge of Druidic Service." By the very nature of Our Druidry, our collective toolboxes are stuffed full of tools that many of our pagan siblings do not have. It would be like having the perfect tools to complete a job, and not using them to their fullest to help those in need. We move throughout our respective communities as beings who are invested in something greater than ourselves, greater than our small groups of exclusive ADF'ers, greater than Our Druidry... gods be good, we move through our communities as examples of excellence, hearing their needs, and being invested in seeing those needs met.

That's what setting up a "24/7" community temple looks like to me, and that's what it's gonna keep lookin' like for a while... until the Kindreds or the folk show me another way. Gods be good, we can hold spaces like this for our non-ADF pagan siblings' festivals. If anyone can, we can.

Live for the folk... remember, our way is about service. Community-level **ghosti*, dig it? May our gods bless us all, that we may do our good work, and hold space for all to attend our Good Fire.

Blessings, y'all.

Born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, Rev. Ashton attended Naropa University in Boulder, CO where he graduated with a degree in Religious Studies, minoring in Psychology. Currently residing in Longmont, CO, he is the Grove Organizer and founder of Mountain Ancestors Protogrove. First joining ADF in 1997, Rev. Ashton shortly thereafter went on religious walkabout for nearly a decade, taking time away from his polytheist practice. After much soul searching, he returned to ADF in 2009 with renewed perspective and awakened passion. On February 8th, 2014 he was ordained as a priest in ADF. He enjoys playing mandolin, writing sermons, community service, activism, and sharing his larger vision of how a polytheist perspective can lead to human understanding and diversity acceptance.

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Hold Shrine Blessing

By Jennifer Seaton

Light the Orange Candle

Holda, hold this hearth in your hand,
Make joyous all the hearts on this land,
Male warm the hopes that feel this fire,
Grant this home all it may require.

Light the White Candle and a stick of Incense.

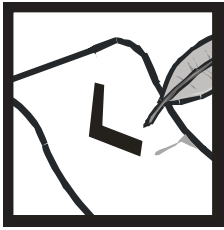
Mother Holda who blesses the hearth,
I would have cauldrons that never boil over,
I would have food that never burns,
I would have all the spirits of the household
Work through my hands to feed my family
Only the best that can be made,
And waste nothing in the trial.
Grant me a sacred kitchen,
A hearth worthy of our blessing
And worthy of my family.
I shall pledge to be the keeper of this temple.
May your blessings be upon this home, this
kitchen and this hearth.

Keep the kitchen clean when not in use. Light incense to honour the kitchen spirits regularly and offer a portion of each meal to them.

Broom Blessing

Steed of ancient fertile field
Mother of ancient fertile home
Holda's hunting horse that sweeps
All clean as we together waltz
Bless our home with every stroke.





Doing The Woo

Trance and the Type-A Personality

By: Rev. Jenni Hunt

A decade or so ago when I was struggling with the meditation requirement for the Dedicant Path, I wrote in an article (“Meditation and the Type A Personality”) that if I could manage to meditate, anyone could. On any given day, I would have much rather engaged my brain in a scholarly text or discussion than meditate. Since then, meditation has since become profoundly easier for me.

However, if you had told me a decade ago that I would be pursuing the Initiate’s Path – the “Path of Esoteric Woo-Woo,” as I sometimes call it – I would have had a good belly laugh. Yet here I am, doing The Woo. And enjoying it, I might add.

Because my approach to learning typically begins with research rather than experimentation, it was necessary to justify my excursion into the world of the esoteric arts of Trance, Magic, and Divination in a way where I could apply logic and objective data. Much to my surprise, there are several very good reasons to “Pursue the Woo.” Of course, Trance 1 and Trance 2 are requirements in both the CTP and IP. Even so, trance work has profound physical and mental health benefits, all of which became clear to me as I began to study the physiological process of trance.

The Science

At its most basic level, the brain goes through four different stages during trance: Beta, Alpha, Theta, and sometimes Delta. During most of our waking time, our brains are in rapid Beta waves ranging between 13-40 HZ. Beta is the state in which we best function for our everyday tasks – not to mention the state in which I am writing this article. However, as we relax and allow our minds to slow, our brains shift to more gentle Alpha waves ranging between 7-12 HZ, known as “the Schuman Resonance,” the resonant frequency of the earth’s electromagnetic field. This state of trance is what I seek in my daily “mindfulness” exercises where I (re)connect myself to the Earth Mother. Knowing that I could match the frequency of my brain activity to the

electromagnetic resonance of the Earth provides all the motivation I need to practice light trance each morning.

When we relax and our brain waves slow to a Theta state, ranging between 4-7 HZ, we are almost sleeping. It is when our brain activity lies within this range that we are most creative and receptive to vision work. It is the Theta state that I enter for most trance work. There I can journey to familiar places and with familiar allies, as well as seek new allies and explore other places in the spiritual world. It is that state I seek when performing divination or generating ideas for poetry or song.

Finally, the stage commonly recognized as deep sleep, is Delta, its waves ranging between 0-4 HZ. This is the state where the most effective healing takes place because our minds are more receptive to healing and transformation. It is the Delta state that I enter for deep purification, for healing of myself and others. It is most similar to REM sleep, the phase of sleep that our bodies need each night.

In trance work that reaches Delta state, our bodies and minds are thoroughly cleansed, and we can seek transformation of spirit.

As we progress through each of these four states of trance, we become more relaxed and less alert to surroundings.

At the same time, we become more receptive to otherworldly experiences and insights. You might expect our physiological conditions to slow as our brain wave frequency decreases, but just the opposite occurs.

Physically, as we begin trance, our heart rate initially slows, but then it increases when we reach Theta and Delta states. Moreover, our blood pressure drops and chemicals produced by our brains change.

Chemical changes that take place during trance include a reduction in neurotransmitters associated with stress, such as Adrenalin, Noradrenalin and Cortisol, while naturally produced opiates, Beta-Endorphins (which are actually more powerful than morphine but without the addictive issues), are released. Endorphins are the same chemicals produced with sustained exercise (“runner’s high), during childbirth, and even when eating hot peppers. These endorphins alleviate pain and can cause a sense of euphoria.

The Woo Trance with Rhythmic Stimuli

Vibrations and rhythmic auditory stimuli are very effective in driving trance. One method of achieving a trance state involves auditory stimuli: sonic driving. While sonic driving can employ chanting a mantra, singing, or toning, most modern Neopagans use the repetitious sound of a drum or rattle.

This method of inducing trance was heavily employed by shamanic practitioner Michael Harner (notwithstanding his experiences with hallucinogens), usually in the form of monotonous drumming at a particular pace. The steady, monotonous, repetitive rhythm – usually 4.5 beats, or cycles, per second since it corresponds to theta brain wave activity – can induce a deep trance state. Belinda Gore and others usually recommend a steady beat of 200 to 210 beats per minute for a 15 minute duration using a rattle or drum. Harner’s Core Shamanism requires the use of drums or rattles.

In any case, the monotony of steady drumming or chanting provides both auditory and palpable stimuli that allow us to relax and enter a trance state.

Just as ancients have done before us for centuries, in trance, we open ourselves to experiences and beings that we cannot encounter in a normal state of consciousness. Aside from shamanism and Neopagan uses, sonic driving is evident in the

“trance” music often heard in dance clubs, in “jam bands” such as The Grateful Dead, and in religious services that are chanted in whole or in part, such as a Pre-Vatican II Roman Catholic Mass.

You may be able to use a drum or rattle yourself to induce trance; however, most find it much simpler and convenient to use a recording. I like to use recordings by Frauke Rotwein, some of which are 15-minute sessions and others 30-minutes.

Another methods of achieving trance is Kinesthetic Driving, wherein trance is induced by focused attention to the movement and feeling of the body or body parts in order to bring about altered states of consciousness. For example, one type of kinesthetic driving requires the focused attention on breathing – the length, depth, and rhythm of breathing and varying these variables. Some types of breath work involve

hyperventilation or loud music combined with focused body work.

Trance dancing is another method used to induce trance. With freestyle (unchoreographed) dancing, a state of altered consciousness is induced

by moving in rhythm to music.

Yoga and Tai Chi both use mindful breathing paired with specific movements to induce a trance state. In each, awareness of particular body parts and focused concentration on movements or poses can situate practitioners in a state of trance.

Physical exercise – especially when accompanied by music with a strong rhythm – can also drive trance. The repetition of running and the sensation of feet hitting the pavement can bring about an altered state of consciousness, though is more likely (and safe) when running on a treadmill rather than in, say, a park. Likewise, repetitive cardio-vascular exercise using stair climbers, cycling machines, and elliptical machines can be very trance inducing and can even extend one’s endurance.

Because my approach to learning typically begins with research rather than experimentation, it was necessary to justify my excursion into the world of the esoteric arts of Trance, Magic, and Divination in a way where I could apply logic and objective data.

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In my own unscientific observations using an elliptical trainer with and without music, I have found my endurance and strength while focusing on music far outpace exercising without music.

Believe it or not, I have also learned that typing from copy or dictation is extremely trance-inducing. Wearing a headset to listen to dictation especially brings about a deep trance where there seems to be a direct connection from my ears to my fingers, freeing up my mind to an altered state of consciousness where problem-solving occurs.

Ecstatic body postures have been used since ancient times to reach a state of deep trance. Particularly when they are combined with rhythmic stimulation such as sonic driving, these experiences can be especially powerful. Dr. Felicitas Goodman specializes her studies in ecstatic trance and ritual trance. Her interest first stemmed from research on speaking-in-tongues when she wondered whether it were possible to reach the physical changes that occur in trance without the glossolalia she had been researching. She found and experimented with archeological and pictorial representations of postures from hunter-gatherer and horticultural cultures.

Goodman's suggestions for using body postures include preparation (a breathing exercise) and practicing the posture exactly. She recommends rhythmic stimulation, suggesting specifically rattling at 200-210 beats per minute. Body posture trance can be part of a ritual or a ritual in itself, though my experiences indicate that doing this sort of trance work is most effective as a part of or following ritual. Just as important as it is to mimic the posture precisely, journaling and discussing your experiences during trance are necessary to learning the features and purposes of various postures. Many postures require or can be enhanced by using accessories such as hats, jewelry, or body painting.

One thing I've come to understand is that trance is easier to accomplish with practice, and it doesn't require a separate time, place, or situation to achieve a trance state that is both centering and productive.

I also learned that magical workings can be simple or complex, planned or spontaneous.

The act of styling my hair, if done in the proper meditative, purposeful state of mind and in a context of mindful piety can be a magical recreation of the cosmos – if I mindfully choose to make it so. Trance can transform and heal us, as well as nourish and sustain us.

Rev. Jenni Hunt lives and trances in central Ohio as she works to live in harmony with the Kindreds and the Cosmos.

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Oak & Ash

By Jennifer Seaton

Of Oak & Ash the leaves doth fall,
swirling to the ground.

Of Oak & Ash the leaves doth fall,
Yggdrasil's glory found.

Of Oak & Ash the leaves doth fall,
the Ancestors' home abound.

Of Oak & Ash the leaves doth fall,
my resting place is crowned



I Seek, An Omen

By Rev. Jean Pagano

There are many ways to prepare oneself as a Seer to take the omen in an AQF rite.

Some people will try to clear their mind before they select three tiles/cards/glyphs.

Some will concentrate on the questions, such as a) has our sacrifice been accepted; b) what can we expect from the Kindred(s); and c) what will the kindred expect of us.

Some may see a stream of ogham – runes – glyphs pass by their mind like the spinning of a roulette wheel.

The omen is an important part of the ritual, in some ways the keys to the blessing. For me, I find that I can combine the use of two Bardic skills to assist and accomplish the task of taking the omen and passing along the information in a form that a member of the audience can understand, learn from, and carry forward with.

For me, the omen is really a story. It isn't the answer to a series of questions, but the gift of insight from the Kindred(s) to the Seer in a stream of images represented in the reading medium selected. I feel that perhaps the use of a Bardic Art as a preparatory tool might be useful before the omen is called, so I wrote a brief poem/prayer entitled "I Seek: An Omen" to help me focus and remember the Realms, the Hallows, and the Kindred(s).

I seek,
An omen,
In a rushing stream,
In a dark well,
In a flowing river,
In a placid lake:
In every one, a surface to cross,
A depth to find,
An answer to seek.

For me, the omen is really a story. It isn't the answer to a series of questions, but the gift of insight from the Kindred(s) to the Seer in a stream of images represented in the reading medium selected.

I seek,
An omen,
In a single tree,
In a marsh of rushes,
In a copse of trees,
In a forest, dark and deep:
In every one, a trunk to hold onto,
A foundation to discover,
An answer to seek.

I seek,
An omen,
In a dawn come to life,

In a sky that is endless,
In a rainbow above,
In a panoply of stars:
In every one, an expanse to consider,
A distance unknown,
An answer to seek.

Between each stanza, I take a breath and think about the images that have just been relayed. At the end of the piece, I feel very centered and very grounded and ready to select the omen for the folk assembled in the rite – or for myself. Once I have drawn the omen, I consider the three bits of information in front of me in relation to a) their independent meaning, b) within the context of the purpose of the ritual, and c) how they feel to me. I then employ another Bardic skill to relay the information to the folk, or in the event of solitary ritual, to myself.

I employ the use of storytelling to convey the meaning of the omen. I have always said that a reading is a "story within a story" and the omen is no different. I take their independent meaning, their context within the ritual, and my own, personal sense of their meaning and I craft a story which will convey the meaning of the omen.

This is a good example of Bardic Alchemy where one takes a magical event, like the omen, surrounds it with Bardic workings, in this case poetry and storytelling, and create something more refined than the separate components.

Rev. Jean (Drum) Pagano is a frequent contributor to Oak Leaves. He is a member of the Order of Bardic Alchemy, for which this piece is written. Drum is an active participant in the ADF Study Programs, a Senior Priest, a Master Bard, and the Vice Arch Druid.

Late Fall in Megalopolis

by Phoenix Rose

The last of the harvest has been
frozen and canned,
As farmer's markets get packed away
The jet stream brought south by
Cailleach's hammer
Biting wind bringing down the last
vestiges of color
And still I hesitate closing the cracked window

As I say goodbye to autumn, I yearn
I yearn for a fireplace, a Hearth fire,
a cozier connection
To the Ancestors, to our Oneness with
Sacred Earth
And yet inside my concrete abode,
Only a ceramic oven provides food,
vents warmth,
And glowing boxes await gazing pleasure

So the cat and I sit for as long as we dare
Next to the cold window
The harsh wind scares him,
Yet for me it brings imbas
I have no physical fire,
But the Fire of Inspiration is
There for the asking

Create the stories and songs,
Craft with your hands,
Spend time with your kin
If physical fire is lacking,
Use the Fire of Inspiration
To connect and to comfort

The winter is long and dark,
Aye, but it need not be dreary
Hail the Fire Within!

Frau Holle

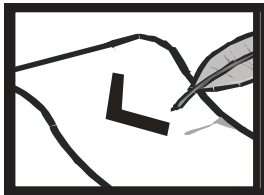
By Jennifer Seaton

Personal Invocation

Frau Holle, Good Mother,
Lady of the Hearth, Mother of the Winter
Goddess of the wheel of finely spun wool.
Lady of the needle, the cooking pot
And mother of the Yule,
Bring forth your abundance and radiance.
Let your light, love and fire flow.
Bless this hearth, this home and me with your
divine presence
Your earthly beauty and winterly being.
Maiden, Mother and Crone all in one.
Protector of children,
Leader of the yuletide wild hunt,
Hold, Goddess of Witches
Mother of the Fae,
Ever Soft and ever long
You spin the wheel of thread,
Bless this hearth, bless this home,
Bless this place of rest.

End of Summer by: Christina Marvel,





Early Welsh Bards

Taliesin and Aneirin – Christian Bards or Pagan? Part 3

By GR Grove

In the first two installments of this paper, we have investigated the background and social environment of our two poets. It is time to look at their surviving work.

The Poetry

Having considered the possible religious atmosphere in which our bards sang, we will now turn our attention to their songs. As noted above, praise was the poets' function and their currency, and flattery was a necessary part of their work (Bartrum 593).

It goes without saying, I think, that non-Christian references would have been unacceptable (or at least impolitic) in a song to a Christian king, but profound religious sentiment such as that found in the work of the later Medieval Gogynfeirdd ("Poets of the Princes") would not necessarily have been either expected or required.

Most of Taliesin's surviving poems are in praise of his kingly patron of the moment – chiefly Urien of Rheged – but one is a *marwnad* (elegy) for Urien's son Owein. Religious references occur in five of the eleven or twelve poems, and may be summarized as follows:

IX (Dadolwch): [BT 65]: "*namyn y dyw vchaf nys dioferaf*" (Williams liv; 11; 111) – "except to the most high God I will not give him [Urien] up".

VIII (Yspeil Taliessin): [BT 62]: "*pasc*" (Williams 9; 94) – "Easter".

X (Marwnad Owein): [BT 67] "*enait owein ap vryen*": (Williams liv-lv; 12) – "the soul of Owein ap Urien".

XI & XII (Gwallawc): [BT 29 & 63]: "*en enw gwledic nef*" (Williams lv; 12-15)

* "in the name of the lord of heaven"

In "*Dadolwch*" Taliesin is trying to make peace with Urien, whom he seems in some way to have offended, and the religious reference merely emphasizes his determination to keep Urien as his patron until the end of Urien's life.

In "*Yspeil Taliessin*" the poet casually mentions "*pasc*" ("Easter") as part of a description of the beauties of spring.

In "*Marwnad Owein*" the phrase "the soul of Owein ap Urien" forms the beginning and end of the poem, the body of which is devoted to praise of the deceased Owein's warrior virtues and generosity to his bard.

In the two songs to Gwallawc, the phrase "in the name of the lord of heaven" begins each song and is the sole expression of religious sentiment in what are otherwise two conventional (if difficult to translate) praise poems.

Indeed, in these two examples, the religious phrase could easily have been added or substituted by a later reciter or copyist; in XI, it is true, "*nef*" is connected by internal rhyme to the last word in the line ("*ydrefynl*"), but such is not the case in XII.

These few religious references stand in marked contrast to Taliesin's work as a whole, which deals largely with warfare, ravaging, and the courtly joys shared afterwards by king and war-band.

It is clear that in his view – and in that of his audience – any religious sentiment comes a poor third to bloodshed and the acquisition (and distribution) of loot.

The second of the Cynfeirdd, much more of whose work survives, was Aneirin, the chief bard of the kingdom of Gododdin.

The body of his poetry, which is called Y Gododdin, is contained in a thirteenth century manuscript called Llyfr Aneirin—the Book of Aneirin—and is entirely elegiac, being a series of marwnadau for a band of young warriors who died fighting against the Anglo-Saxons of the neighboring kingdom of Deira.

Aneirin's work displays many of the same features as Taliesin's, but also two differences.

First, the praise of the fallen warrior is in many ways the same, stressing his beauty, his fierceness in battle, and his generosity in peacetime (e.g. Marwnad Owein, mentioned above).

A much greater personal element, however, appears in Aneirin's work; the loss of the heroic youth is felt much more grievously by the bard who knew him well.

The second difference is the almost total lack of Christian sentiment in most of Aneirin's work, as opposed to its minor formulaic presence in Taliesin's.

In the over one thousand lines of Y Gododdin, there are little more than a dozen brief and often incidental mentions of religion, some of which may have been added by later copyists (Jarman lvi-lvii).

These include the following:

Five mentions of heaven ("nef") [lines 163, 316, 433, 773, and 895].

Two mentions of warriors going to church to do penance ("penyd") [71, 82].

One reference to communion ("cymun") [617].

Two mentions of an altar ("allawr") [63, 362].

One reference to the Trinity ("drindod") [326].

One mention of souls ("enaid") [772].

One of the features of the manuscript of Llyfr Aneirin which should be mentioned at this point is the fact that the copyists (two hands are involved) were apparently working from more than one version. As a result, some sections of the poetry (called the A and B recensions) are duplicated, but in slightly different wording and orthography, the B version being older than the A (Huws 34-35).

Charles-Edwards provides a recent and comprehensive discussion of the textual problems involved in evaluating the manuscript (364-378), but it is noticeable that such Christian references as do occur are in the newer A version; the older B version has none (Koch Gododdin lxxxviii).

In summary, the work of our two bards shows a relative paucity of Christian words and concepts, and some of those present could be attributable to scribal meddling—in Y Gododdin, for example, the word "thechut" ("flee") in a B version stanza has evidently be changed to "phechut" ("sin") in its A version equivalent (Jarman lvii).

Christian poetry = Christian bard?

Time, perhaps, to return to the original question posed by this paper, and to recapitulate the evidence so far. We have here two famous early historical bards, speakers of a Celtic language and inheritors of a Celtic tradition of praise poetry, but by all indications working in an environment and for a clientele which was at least superficially Christian.

Their poetry, which may have been modified in transmission to some unknown extent between its original sixth century performance and the thirteenth century manuscripts in which we have received it, contains a modest number of Christian terms and references, but no pagan ones. Whether or not any belief in the Old Gods lingered in our poets' minds, it clearly seems to have disappeared from their vocabulary.

Yet the subject of their religious affiliations has been raised more than once, if only to be dismissed (e.g., Koch Gododdin lxxxiii-lxxxviii; Jarman, lviii), and not only by Neopagans. Why, then, does this question arise at all?

Neither history nor archaeology can help us, it seems. It is time to resort to magic.

Having considered the possible religious atmosphere in which our bards sang, we will now turn our attention to their songs.



Awen = imbas?

The place to start, perhaps, is with Gildas. In his comprehensive denunciation of five contemporary sixth century CE British kings, he pauses briefly to share with us his opinion of their court bards:

*Your excited ears hear not the praises of
God from the sweet voices of the tuneful
recruits of Christ, not the melodious
music of the church, but empty praises of
yourself from the mouths of criminals who
grate on the hearing like raving hucksters
– mouths stuffed with lies and liable to
bedew bystanders with their foaming
phlegm (Gildas 34).*

Gildas probably wrote *De Excidio Britonum* (“The Ruin of Britain”) c. 530 -545 CE (Charles-Edwards 218) – possibly at the earlier end of that range, as he does not mention the catastrophic climate event of c. 540 CE, nor the ensuing advance across Europe of the bubonic plague. This would place his famous denunciation of the bards who sang at Maelgwn Gwynedd’s Welsh court perhaps a generation before the *floret* of Taliesin and Aneirin. Why, though, did he so dislike them? Let us try two more quotations.

*“Pren onhyt yw vy awen gwen” – “My
holy awen is my ash spear.” - Taliesin
(Yspeil Taliessin): [BT 62]: (Williams
9; 96-97)*

“I, yet not I, Aneirin – Taliesin
knows it, skilled in expression –
sang *Y Gododdin* before the next
day dawned.” (Jarman 32, lines 480
-484).

If the bards claimed inspiration from a non-Christian source, it might well explain Gildas’ detestation of them. The Welsh word *awen* (“poetic inspiration”) is very close in use and meaning to the *imbas* of the Irish *filid*. Later stories attached to the legendary persona of Taliesin (and to a lesser extent Aneirin) presented them as prophets and magicians – the inheritors, in fact, of the powers and functions of the other two branches of the old Celtic priestly caste.

In the fourth branch of the *Mabinogi*, the master Welsh magician Gwydion disguised himself twice as a bard, and in one of the later *Llyfr Taliessin* poems the legendary Taliesin persona refers to his creation by Gwydion through magic (Bromwich 401). Myrddin, too – the Welsh original of Merlin – was regarded by the medieval Welsh bards as one of the *Cynfeirdd* (Bromwich 469-474), and connected with both poetry and prophecy.

And in Ireland, magical powers were widely attributed to Irish poets and to bards in general (Kelly 44-45). One of their divinatory rituals, *imbas forosnai*, which is described in Cormac’s *Glossary*, has clear connections with pagan practices. Chadwick (98) quotes Meyer’s translation as follows::

*The Imbas Forosnai sets forth whatever
seems good to the seer (file) and what he
desires to make known. It is done thus.
The seer chews a piece of the red flesh
of a pig, or a dog, or a cat, and then
places it on a flagstone behind the door.
He sings an incantation over it, offers it
to the false gods, and then calls them to
him. And he leaves them not on the next
day, and chants then on his two hands,
and again calls his false gods to him, lest
they should disturb his sleep. And he
puts his two hands over his two cheeks
till he falls asleep. And they watch by
him lest no one overturn him and disturb
him till everything he wants to know is
revealed to him, to the end of nine days,
or of twice or thrice that time, or,
however long he was judged at the
offering.*

Chadwick delves deeper into this question, and ends – no surprise – by pointing out equivalences between Amergin and the mythical Taliesin. If Gildas, who seems to have been an exact contemporary of St. Columba’s teacher Uinniau, with whom he corresponded about moral theology (Fraser 70), was aware of this sort of practice among the Irish *filid*, his detestation of their British equivalents becomes more understandable.

While bard-craft may not have been entirely incompatible with Christianity – St. Columba

himself was said to have trained as a poet in his youth – the Irish bards were clearly still in the process of reaching an accommodation with the Christian church (Koch *Gododdin* lxxxviii). This may have applied to the British *Cynfeirdd* as well.

Conclusions

This paper has gone a long road; now it is time for some conclusions. That the courts in which the *Cynfeirdd* – and specifically Taliesin and Aneirin – sang their praises of their patrons were at least nominally Christian seems undeniable, given the historical and archaeological evidence we have inspected. Their poetry also indicates a familiarity with the vocabulary and usages of Christianity, and contains no mention of pagan gods or practices. Yet just below this tranquil surface, the magic of the Old Ways may still have been lurking, part of their bardic inheritance from their Celtic past. Their personal reconciliation of this situation is unknown, and probably unknowable; indeed their very existence is doubted by some. But my *awen* tells me that they existed, and sang at least some of the songs which bear their names, and I believe that they carried the Old Magic still in their souls.

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G. R. ("Gwernin") Grove joined ADF in December of 2009 after a chance encounter with a member in Ireland, where she was researching paleo-druids and visiting sacred sites. Since then, she has completed her DP work, the Generalist SP, the CTP-Prelim, and most of the Liturgists Guild's second circle, and is one of the Bardic Guild's four Master Bards. She is currently Arweinydd (Vice-Chieftain) of the Welsh Kin and Archivist of the Scholars Guild, a reviewer for the Generalist SP, and a DP mentor. Outside of ADF, her interests include the Welsh language, the SCA, and her writing and storytelling. She has published four historical novels (with a little magic) set in 1st and 6th century Britain and Ireland, and four collections of poetry. She lives in Denver, Colorado, and is owned and managed by two cats.

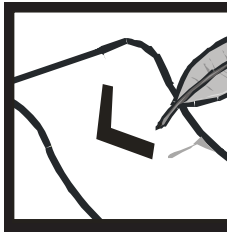


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Antlered Gods and Mistletoe

An Exploration of the Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Gaul

By Síthearain NicLeòid (S.P. MacLeod)

Many Pagans are familiar with the image of the venerable druid wearing a chaplet of oak leaves and mistletoe holding shadowy rites in the secluded sanctuary of a sacred grove. This scenario, on many levels, is a very ancient one, brought to us courtesy of Greek and Roman authors like Caesar, Pliny and Strabo who wrote about the ancient Celts between the first century BCE and the first century CE. Some of their reports are first-hand observations, while others are more of a ‘telephone’ game – written accounts based on verbal testimony (or other written records) of ‘people who knew someone who actually met an ancient Celt.’ While some of these writings reflect the cultural bias of the time, they are nonetheless still valuable sources of information about the pagan Celts living in Britain and in Gaul (which was roughly equivalent to modern-day France and Belgium).

Celtic religion involved a vibrant polytheistic system, and the Celts are known to have worshipped hundreds of gods and goddesses. Some of these deities seem to have widely venerated, while others were more local in nature. Some deities were associated with features of the landscape; others were associated with aspects of society and culture (wisdom, healing, skill, protection, etc.). Many Celtic deities seem to have had a wide range of attributes, the organization of which may sometimes be a little hard to understand from the modern Neo-Pagan perspective.¹

Before the Roman invasions of Gaul and later of Britain, the Celts do not seem to have generally been in the habit of making images of their deities. Once the Roman occupation was in place, however, artisans began to make Classically-inspired altars to the Celtic gods.

In some cases there was a blending of the names and attributes of native deities with those of Roman gods and goddesses (for example, an altar invoking Sulis-Minerva). This new hybrid tradition preserved in stone (and in writing) the names of many ancient Celtic gods and goddesses. (Hey! What have the Romans ever done for us? Well, in addition to building the aqueducts, they preserved a great deal of valuable information about the pagan Celts.) This information helps us to understand indigenous beliefs pertaining to the gods and goddesses of ancient Gaul, as well as the native religious system of the Gaulish Celts, the druids and the practice of ancient Celtic magic.

Celtic religion involved a vibrant polytheistic system, and the Celts are known to have worshipped hundreds of gods and goddesses.

One of the most widely venerated deities in ancient Gaul was the goddess Epona, whose name means ‘Divine Horse Goddess.’ She was often depicted riding sidesaddle on a mare, sometimes with a foal standing nearby or

surrounded by several other horses. She appears to have been a goddess connected with the protection of stables and with horse-breeding as well. A powerful and beneficent goddess, Epona was also shown with symbols of abundance, like fruit or loaves of bread. She may have also had an aspect as a goddess of healing, as she was venerated at several Gaulish healing springs and was sometimes depicted with a dog (whose symbolic attributes included healing).²

The veneration of goddesses associated with horses is well-known in Celtic religious imagery, and this type of imagery may indicate that the goddess in question possesses attributes of the Goddess of Sovereignty.³ This powerful goddess archetype was associated with a wide range of attributes, including life and death, fertility and destruction, abundance and warfare, and shapeshifting and magic.

The Sovereignty Goddess can appear as a beautiful woman, a female warrior, an old hag or a scald-crow or raven. One of the most important aspects of the Sovereignty Goddess is that she embodies the power of the land, including its abundance and its sovereignty. She may approach potential candidates for the throne in disguise, testing them to see if they are worthy. The king can only rule successfully with the approval of the Goddess of Sovereignty. Without her blessings and power, neither the king, the land nor the people can prosper.⁴

Epona also was associated with passages between this world and the Otherworld, including those connected with the journey after death. In many Celtic tales, the horse serves as a sort of 'ferryman' (or –woman), bearing people to the Sacred Realms where they invariably experience some sort of encounter, ordeal or adventure. At one Gaulish site, Epona was depicted on a funerary plaque, accompanied by sea-monsters and celestial symbols (which in Roman iconography would support her role as a psycho-pomp). In another example she is depicted riding her mare, followed by a human being whom she appears to be leading (perhaps to the Otherworld or the Land of the Dead). At several other Gaulish sites, Epona was depicted with a key, which may symbolize her power to 'unlock' the Otherworldly portals. Her many-aspected guise is typical of Celtic deities – and especially, of the powerful Goddess of Sovereignty.⁵

If the iconography of Gaul is any indication of her popularity, Epona may have been one of the most widely venerated deities in the Celtic pantheon. In addition to being worshipped in ancient Gaul, she was also venerated in Britain, Bulgaria, North Africa and Rome. This widespread worship was due (in part) to the fact that she became popular among the Roman cavalry, who spread her cult in their travels. Epona was so widely worshipped and respected that she was even given a feast day in the Roman calendar (December 18th).⁶

Another widespread deity type in ancient Gaul was the horned or antlered god. In fact, ancient Gaul is one of the primary sources of knowledge we have for the deity known as Cernunnos.

This god-archetype seems to draw on religious imagery known in other parts of Northern Europe and which may date as far back as the 8th century BCE. In many cases, the horned god is depicted with either bull or deer horns, and is sometimes shown holding a type of neck-ring known as a torque. He is often accompanied by birds or animals, and sometimes holds a ram-headed serpent in one hand (probably signifying fertility, strength, healing, wisdom and transformation).⁷

There is a great deal of religious imagery associated with the horned or antlered god throughout Gaul and Britain, yet his name is found in only one inscription. A representation of the horned god, with bull's ears and two torques hanging over each of his horns, was found on a relief in modern day Paris. Part of the inscription was missing, and only the letters 'ernunus' were clearly visible on the altar. In early drawings of the inscription, however, the first letter is more visible, and linguists have suggested that the first letter was a 'C' – giving us the god name Cernunnos ('The Horned One').⁸

The horned god is often depicted in a sort of cross-legged or squatting posture, which may reflect the seated pose of the Gaulish hunter at rest in the forest, or may indicate some sort of religious posture.⁹ His aspects included fertility, abundance, prosperity and healing, as well as strength, protection, warfare and commerce.¹⁰ Here again we see the multi-layered aspects so common in Celtic deities.¹¹ This deity archetype was so important that there were even horned or antlered goddesses. A Romano-Celtic bronze statue of an antlered goddess holding a bowl and a cornucopia is believed to have come from ancient Gaul, while another made from clay and dating to the first century C.E. was discovered in Britain.¹²

Another popular Gaulish god was Lugus or Lugos, who was also worshipped in Britain. His name is cognate with that of the Irish god Lug. The meaning of this god-name is unclear, perhaps deriving from from an Indo-European root-word meaning 'bright' or 'lightness' (although this interpretation is far from certain). Lugus' name was commemorated in the Gaulish place-name Lugudunum, now the modern city of Lyons.¹³ Not surprisingly, Lugus had a variety of attributes, including wisdom, magic, skill, battle and protection.

He may also have been associated with the raven. Lugus appears to share a number of attributes with the Irish god Lug and the medieval Welsh figure of Lleu.¹⁴

Many of the Gaulish deities seem to have been invoked independently, yet some appeared in connection with a divine consort. The goddess Nemetona, whose name means 'Goddess of the Sacred Grove' (or Sacred Place) was often depicted with a male deity called Leucetius (whose name includes an element meaning 'bright' or 'shining,' possibly related to a word for 'lightning'). Nemetona was worshipped at numerous sites in Gaul, including healing springs, as well as at the sacred springs of Aquae Sulis in modern day Bath. A very popular goddess, inscriptions to Nemetona were found in many other parts of Continental Europe.¹⁵

Another widely worshipped god from ancient Gaul was Maponus (or Maponos), whose name means 'Divine Son.' Dedications to Maponus seem to suggest that he was associated with poetry and music, as well as with hunting. It has been suggested that Maponus may be connected with the Welsh figure of Mabon, whose name also means 'Divine Son.' Mabon was associated with the hunt in the medieval legends of Wales.¹⁶ In ancient Gaul, Maponus was sometimes associated with Apollo, and therefore may also have been connected with healing. A document dating to the year 1090 CE mentions a sacred spring associated with Maponus near an abbey in France. In Britain he was commemorated in the place-name Lochmaben ('the lake of Mabon') as well as a megalith called Clochmabenstane ('the stone of Mabon'). This interesting stone marked a site where local gatherings were traditionally held until well into the twentieth century.¹⁷

The rivers of Gaul were also considered to be the abode of divine beings. These were invariably the home of (and the personification of) female divinities in particular. The river now known as the Marne takes its name from the goddess Matrona ('Divine Mother') and the Seine was named after the goddess Sequana. She was sometimes depicted in a boat whose body was that of a water bird. A large Romano-Celtic temple dedicated to Sequana was built at the sacred spring located at the source of the river, where the Gaulish Celts had long

made offerings to her. Images of people holding dogs were offered to this goddess, as well as images of parts of the body in need of healing.¹⁸

Throughout the Celtic world, people worshipped water deities at sacred springs, pools, lakes and rivers. Women were especially active at some of these sites, evidenced by offerings of spindle whorls and wooden images of breasts. The local deities associated with these local shrines, like Bormana, Telo, Stanna, Icovellauna and Aveta, were also venerated by Romano-Celtic populations as well. The goddess Damona was venerated at a shrine and a sacred pool and spring, and was depicted with a snake (symbolic of healing and regeneration) and ears of grain (symbolizing fertility or abundance). One inscription from Damona's shrine indicates that pilgrims actually slept at the site, seeking a vision or dream of the goddess and her consort Borvo (another spring-god) during the healing sleep they hoped to experience. This may have also been a practice at Sequana's temple, for her large religious complex also included dormitories for pilgrims.¹⁹

Another powerful god from ancient Gaul was Taranis, whose name means 'The Thunderer.' He is mentioned in Lucan's *Pharsalia*, along with two other Gaulish gods named Esus (an epithet meaning 'Lord') and Teutates (another epithet meaning 'God of the Tribe').²⁰ Taranis appears to have been associated with protection, warfare and strength. In Celtic tradition, the head was perceived as the abode of the soul, and so it is undoubtedly of great significance that the heads of those slain in battle were offered to Taranis. He was sometimes associated with sacred creatures like the horse, the raven, the goose and the eagle. As a god of the Upper World, he was often depicted with a wheel (a symbol of the celestial realms) and a weapon or lightning symbol. The eagle was often associated with sky gods in Indo-European tradition, as was the oak tree; both of these were also connected with the god Taranis.²¹

Another fascinating goddess from ancient Gaul was Sirona, whose name means 'Divine Star Goddess'. She was worshipped at a number of healing springs and other sacred sites throughout Gaul, as well as in Austria, the Rhineland and Hungary.

She was sometimes depicted with a consort (usually a Romano-Celtic variant of Apollo, such as Grannus or Belenus), but in many cases she was worshipped as a powerful and independent goddess in her own right. She was often depicted with a snake and a bowl of eggs, symbolizing her connection with healing, fertility, renewal and regeneration. In one case she is even shown with a snake curling around her arm. Sirona was also depicted with a lap-dog (symbolic of her healing attributes) and with images of grain and fruit (symbolizing prosperity and abundance).²²

The meaning of her name may suggest that she was associated with the night, perhaps connecting her with the goddess Arianrhod ('Silver Wheel,' probably a Celtic moon-goddess) or the Roman Diana, who was associated with women's cycles and childbirth.²³

In addition to preserving information about the Celtic pantheon, the Romans also wrote extensively about the Druids of ancient Gaul, whom they apparently found as fascinating as we do. Classical commentators like Caesar, Cicero, Strabo, Pomponius Mela and Diodorus Siculus described the beliefs and practices of the druids in some detail. Along with the bards and seers, the druids were evidently held in great esteem in ancient Gaul. They were said to officiate at religious ceremonies, supervise public and private offering rituals, and expound upon religious questions. They also provided training for druidic initiates, much of which appears to have focused on the use of memory, rather than the written word.²⁴

The druids were also described as natural philosophers who engaged in a great deal of discussion about the stars and their motion, the size of the earth and the universe, the composition of the world, and the strength and power of the gods. They believed and taught that the soul was immortal, passing after death from one person to another. The druids were considered to be extremely wise and just, and therefore served as judges and arbitrators. They were experts in communicating with the Divine, and their expertise was sought in most religious rites and rituals. One teaching of the Gaulish druids was to show reverence to the gods, do no ill deed, and behave with honour.²⁵

The Druids also appear to have also been magicians. In his *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder describes three magical practices utilized by the Gaulish druids, all associated with the gathering of sacred plants. The most famous of these has to do with the gathering of mistletoe, especially when found growing on an oak tree. Both plants were extremely sacred in Gaulish religion, and the foliage of the oak was apparently always present in their rites. Mistletoe was gathered with great reverence, preferably on the sixth day of the moon, by a druid dressed in a white robe. It was culled with a gold-coloured sickle (probably made of bronze) and gathered into a white blanket. Mistletoe was apparently called 'All-Heal' in the Gaulish language and was used as an antidote for poisons and to impart fertility.²⁶

The plant known as Selago (club moss) was gathered by a person clad in white with bare feet washed clean. An offering of bread and wine was made beforehand, and the plant was gathered without the use of iron, by placing the right hand through the left armhole of the tunic. Like mistletoe, it was also carried in a white cloth. A plant known as Samolus (brook-weed) was gathered by a person who was fasting, although this was collected using the left hand. The person gathering the plant was not to look directly at it, nor set it down anywhere except into a drinking trough. Here it was crushed and the water consumed by ailing pigs or cattle.²⁷

Other magical practices were also known in ancient Gaul. Pliny stated that magic 'had a hold on Gaul' and that Britain was 'mesmerized' by it, practicing it with great ceremony.²⁸ Several magical or religious inscriptions from ancient Gaul have actually been discovered in the last century. One of these was found at Chamalières and was retrieved from a sacred spring where it had once been placed. It consists of a prayer asking for the assistance of the god Maponus, who is invoked in his chthonic aspect. In Celtic tradition (as well as in many other native cultures), deities were associated with both the Upper and Lower worlds. The inscription names the individuals who made the prayer, and also includes an oath they have taken.²⁹ The prayer may represent a sacred ceremony in which a group of men is undertaking the religious initiation of another group of male initiates.³⁰

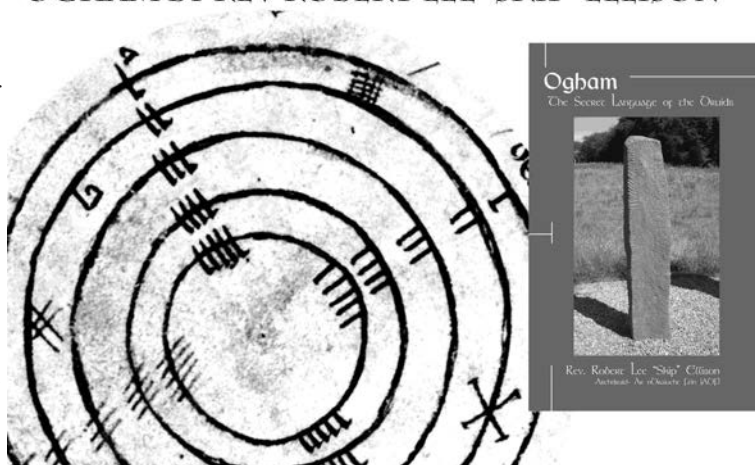
The second inscription is from Larzac, and this time is associated with a group of female magicians.³¹ This magical inscription refers to a group of women religious practitioners, at least one of whom is referred to as a 'seeress'. The text also mentions the use of 'women's magic'³² and appears to say something like this (my translation):

In this tablet is a magical spell of women, with their special Underworld names
 The charm of a seeress, a woman-seer creates this for Adsagsona [a goddess]
 Severa, daughter of Tertios, is the writing-magician and spell-weaver
 These two manifestations [powers] are maintained below [i.e. in the Underworld]
 She [Severa] sends down [or releases] this incantation.

The text goes on to list the names of the women in the 'underworld magic group', (Banona, Paulla, Aiaa, Potita, Severa and Adiega). Severa seems to have been the primary magical practitioner, however, as well as the person who made the magical tablet. In fact, the grave in which the inscription was found may have belonged to her. If so, this would be remarkable physical testimony to the existence of a Celtic seeress and magical practitioner from ancient Gaul who worked in a tightly-knit group of female magicians, performing divinatory rites and offerings associated with the sacred Underworld realms which exist beneath our own.

As we can see, a number of potent images and archetypes still resonant in Neo-Pagan circles have their origins in the little-known world of pagan Gaul: white-robed druids, the mysterious power of mistletoe, the horned or antlered God, and the sanctity of the oak tree. We often equate some of these images with more familiar Celtic territories like Britain or Ireland, and it may seem strange to envision them in connection with the region now known as France. There are many parallels between the symbolism and beliefs of the various Celtic countries, however, including the veneration and ritual use of sacred wells, lakes, groves and hilltops, and the existence of the certain deity archetypes, such as the multi-talented god known variously as Lug, Lugos or Lleu.

DISCOVER THE SECRET LANGUAGE OF THE DRUIDS
 OGHAM BY REV ROBERT LEE "SKIP" ELLISON



The strength, independence and legal rights of Celtic women were well noted by Classical authors, and this respect for the Divine Feminine manifested in certain religious and magical practices (including the women's magical group mentioned above). It is especially evident in the widespread veneration of the powerful and many-aspected Goddess of Sovereignty. She was invoked by many powerful names, such as Epona, Macha, and the Mórrígan - as well as by other sacred epithets, some of which are still known to us and some of which have long been preserved in the sacred memories of those who walked the path before us.

1. This often reflects the Indo-European division of society (including divine society) into three groups. The first is comprised of rulers and holy people, the second of protectors of society (warriors), and the third of farmers and herders, those who work the land. This is a very ancient religious concept, far pre-dating the suggestion made by poet Robert Graves in his 1949 work *The White Goddess* that female deities reflect a three-fold symbolism of Maiden, Mother and Crone. Celtic deities, as well as Norse, Greek, Roman and Hindu gods and goddesses, often possess attributes which reflect their powers in several (or all three) of these important areas of symbolism.

2. Miranda Green, *Celtic Goddesses*, George Braziller, New York, 1995, pp. 185-186

3. Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain*, Academy Publishers, Chicago, 1996, pp. 286-287; Proinsius

MacCana, Celtic Mythology, Hamlyn Publishing, London, 1970, pp. 54, 94.

4. Proinsius MacCana 'Celtic Goddess of Sovereignty' in Elisabeth Bernard and Beverly Moon, ed., Goddesses Who Rule, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 85-99.

5. Green, 1995, pp. 112, 185-186.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 184-185.

7. Ross, 1996, pp. 172-176, 181-182.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 184-187.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 195-215.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.

12. Ross, 1996, pp. 278-279; Green, 1995, pp. 167-168.

13. Ross, 1996, p. 319; Calvert Watkins, Dictionary of Indo-European Roots, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 2000, pp. 47-49.

14. Ross, 1996, pp. 319-325, 457.

15. Ross, 1996, pp. 57, 62, 207, 228-229; Green, 1995, p. 98.

16. Ross, 1996, pp. 276-277, 453, 466.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 458, 464.

18. Ross, 1996, pp. 47, 370-3, 424; Green, 1995, pp. 90-93.

19. Green, 1995, pp. 91, 104.

20. David Rankin, Celts and the Classical World, Routledge, London, 1996, pp. 264-265.

21. Ross, 1996, pp. 99, 181, 252, 260, 344, 347, 349.

22. Green, 1995, pp. 102-104, 125, 134-135, 169-170, 178.

23. Green, 1995, pp. 102-104; Sharynne MacLeod NicMhacha, Queen of the Night: Rediscovering the Celtic Moon Goddess, Red Wheel / Weiser, York Beach, ME, 2005, pp. 169-186.

24. Stanley Ireland, Roman Britain, Routledge, London, 1992, pp. 181-186.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 189.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

29. Joseph P. Eska and D. Ellis Evans, 'Continental Celtic' in Martin J. Ball and James Fife, ed., The Celtic Languages, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 39; John T. Koch and John Carey, The Celtic Heroic Age, Celtic Studies Publications, Oakville, CT and Aberystwth, Wales, 2000, pp. 2-3.

30. Personal communication with Professor Joseph P. Eska.

31. Eska and Evans, 1993, p. 39.

32. Koch and Carey, 2000, p. 3.

Sítheagain NicLeòid (S.P. MacLeod) is a Canadian writer, teacher, Harvard-trained Celticist and Gaelic singer of Scottish, Irish and Welsh ancestry. She is the author of Celtic Myth and Religion: A Study of Traditional Belief (McFarland), The Divine Feminine in Ancient Europe (McFarland) and Queen of the Night (Weiser), as well as numerous academic journal articles on Celtic religion, mythology and cosmology. Her current projects include the study, retrieval and transmission of authentic Celtic ritual, song and chant through internationally funded research grants, working with academics and tradition bearers in Ireland and Scotland. She has taught Celtic mythology, folklore, literature and culture at the university level (Smith College and UMass extension) and is the founder of Senchas: Celtic Religious Studies Association.



Mother Holda: Hearth Mother

(Daily Invocation)

By Jennifer Seaton

Blessed Holda, Mother of the Hearth:
I beseech you watch over my family and home.
Bless this hearth and this home,
May we walk wisdom and grace with you.
May I ask that I never have a cauldron that
boils over;
That I never have food that burns;
That I would have all the spirits of the household
Work through me, not against me;
May they help my hands to feed my family and
Waste nothing in trial and error.
Grant me a sacred kitchen Frau Holda,
with a hearth worthy of my family and of your
blessing.
Here I pledge to be a keeper of this temple, this
hearth.
May your blessings be upon the home, kitchen
and hearth.



Saturn Seeks Sanctuary

by Garren

After having been forced to flee Greece, Saturn arrived at Janiculum, chief city of Latium. He was told to go see its ruler, Janus, right away. Janus was found in the market square. Once greeting formalities were completed, Janus said, "We could converse in the temple or possibly down by the river where you might have the chance to meet my eldest." He paused before continuing, "But it is very muddy down at the river. We'll go to the temple then."

Saturn muttered under his breath, "He doesn't know whether he is coming or going."

Evidently, Janus did not hear him for they walked on. "I have been told you are seeking refuge. As I understand it, you were forced out of Greece by a familial rebellion, such ungrateful children. I have heard different versions of what exactly happened." When he took his next step, he quickly lifted his foot back up, "Ouch!" A sharp stone had gotten into his sandal. "Better to have a stone in your shoe than one in your gut." Despite doing his best to maintain a neutral expression, Saturn briefly grimaced. Janus replied, "I see."

Changing the subject, he said, "I have been blessed with a wonderful wife, Camise, and loyal and respectful children." Then he leaned over conspiratorially, "Though some speak ill of my eldest. They say Tiber just likes running through town to the sea and is all wet. I'll admit he has his bad moments. I definitely wouldn't cross him when it's stormy because he can get pretty rough."

Wherever you are trying to get to, it is not worth drowning in his anger."

"So does your wife rule as well?"

"No. Once long ago, I had someone I co-ruled with. We were very close, but sadly he died."

Saturn thought to himself, that is a shame, for he is an intelligent, handsome man. I wonder if he goes both ways...Best not to be so bold so soon.

As the two entered the temple, Saturn remarked, "I had been told you were two-faced, but you seem to be an honest, sincere fellow."

Servants came to wait on them. "Would you care for anything to eat or drink?"

"Not at the moment, you never know what in your food could make you sick."

As Janus dismissed the servants, the visitor asked, "Could we close those doors opposite each other? They create a chilly draft in here?"

"Only once we get matters settled peacefully," Janus replied firmly.

They went on to speak more of Saturn staying in Latium permanently. Janus was open to granting him refuge. However, as a leader should, he is sensibly cautious, as if having eyes in the back of his head. "So you are well versed in sowing and good with a sickle. And you are willing to give the knowledge and skills of farming to my people in return for my granting of sanctuary." He found the offer a fair repayment of his generosity. This could be one noble and wise enough to pass on rule to in time. Janus was of two minds about it. Looking backwards, Latium was tranquil, prosperous, and in a golden age. Things were well. Also, they have just met and Saturn's honor is yet unproven. And, there are usually more causes for losing your throne than just an upstart son's rebellion. However, one should always look forward. He was getting up there in age and would rather choose his successor than leave it to fate. His son was a good man but he had a tendency to just go along as the landscape dictated. To be a good leader, one must be willing to make his own way, if necessary.

It was worth the chance to get to know him better and take a measure of his character. Janus had made his decision.

"I will grant you refuge. We have seven hills here. The smallest is currently unoccupied, so it is yours and we shall see how things go. You can even build your own town, if you want."

"Thank you so much," replied a grateful Saturn. Then he asked, "Could we close those doors now?"

Song for My Ancestors

By Jennifer Lawrence

My father was Irish and Scots, English and German, French-Canadian and Cherokee;
My mother a heady blend of Polish, Hungarian, Roma, Ashkenazi Jew.

His parents, and their parents,
set foot on this land long ago,
settling in North Carolina,
mingling their foreign genes with those of one of this country's original peoples.



My mother's people came over from Eastern Europe before the Second World War; canny folk, they saw which way the wind was blowing, and got out -- some of them, anyway -- while the getting was good.

Some days I wonder how many granduncles and aunts and cousins I lost to the camps.

My father taught me how to fish,
My mother shared her love of gardening and herbs;
My mother's mother taught me to bake cookies and savor the sweet, calming goodness of tea;
My mother's father showed me the value of hard work done with your hands -- hammer a nail, measuring a plank twice before cutting it -- and the serene joy of classical music.

My father's parents died before I was born, and I know very little about them, but still I ponder on the little things, both good and bad, they might have left me in their genetic inheritance. I know my paternal grandfather died of cirrhosis of the liver; did he, as I do, love drinking just a bit more than was prudent?

My father's mother's maiden name was O'Neill, and through her I can trace my family lineage back to Neill of the Nine Hostages, a gift worthy of awe indeed.

Past those two generations, I know nothing but rumor: perhaps we are related to that Admiral Lawrence of the War of 1812:
Don't shoot until you see the whites of their eyes!

Perhaps one of my forefathers was the man who wrote "Lady Chatterley's Lover," or the British Army officer whose exploits in Arabia were immortalized in print and film.

I may never know, just as the ties I bear to those further back and further still will no doubt remain a mystery to me, until at last I pass beyond the final doorway, to greet them in the After and speak with them at last.

I hope I have made them proud.

I hope the way I have conducted myself in life -- and, when it comes, at my death -- has found favor in their eyes.

I hope I have never brought shame upon the names of those families -- blended together like the flour and eggs and vanilla in my grandmother's favorite cookie recipe -- who became my family, and me, and that of my children.

We are the best and worst of those who came before us, and leave the best and worst of ourselves to those who follow after us.

We are nothing without the gifts they have given us, and the frailties, and the talents, and the flaws. No recipe is perfect; even the best cookies may crumble, or burn in the oven, or fall.

We are each of us a melting pot.

To Veles and Perkons

by Ceisiwr Serith

Dweller beneath the hill,
Veles, bless all that grows in the dark;
Dweller on the peak,
Perkons, bless all that flourishes in the light,
that all of my enterprises may grow and flourish.





The Dolmen

by Catherine Wanko

Who were you?
Here interred
Beneath the teeth

And bones
Of the Earth Mother.

Who do we honor?
We come from Germany, Wales, Spain, America
And other lands so far away.
Yet we know not your name.

How did you live?
In such contrast
To a disposable society
Eager for a photograph of you.

You, who they do not understand
Nor care enough to honor
You of the stories and the music
And the traditions of the ancients.

Lovers embracing
With you as their background
Life meets death
Silly laughter fills the air
With the only care being,
"Was that a good shot?"

What do you think?
Would you be offended at
The lack of sanctity?
The lack of joy for your life?
The lack of sorrow for your
Suffering and death?
The drive to continue on
To the next photo-op?

So still
So lonely
Mere blocks of rocks
As a monument
To someone
Sometime

The Hill of Tara

by Wayne Keysor



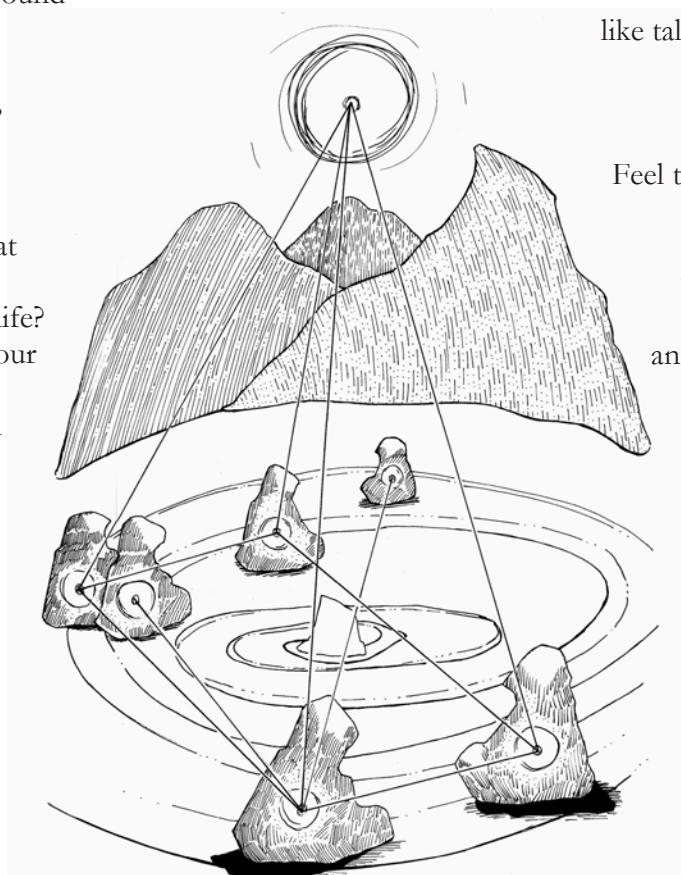
One hundred and forty-two kings
as ancient and as broken as the standing stones;
bones long-ago scattered like seeds
across a dark and waiting land,
fed by the inexhaustible waters
of suffering, need, and struggle.

One hundred and forty-two kings,
the just and the unjust,
the cruel and the merciful,
the foolish and the wise,
here they waited;
ears straining for the first subtle shift of air
that would signal the movement to-
wards something greater.

You, who walk here now
upon quiet, shaded tracks
holding tightly your cameras
and your cell phones
like talismans against the coming
of something unspeakable,
let go.

Feel their ageless eyes upon you.
Wait as they waited.
Listen to the trembling air
with a hushed anticipation.
Open to the vastness;
an immense, yawning mouth
waiting to speak.

Forget, and by forgetting,
remember,
remember.





Wellspring Bardic Chair 2015

By: Rev. Melissa S Burchfield, ADF Master Bard

The Wellspring Bardic chair has just completed its seventh year, and it is still running strong!

This year's Bardic Chair was awarded to Rev. Jan Avende, Bard of Three Cranes Grove, Initiate, and current Chief of the Bardic Guild. She has been working in the bardic arts since she was very young and brings many strengths and talents to this growing list of award-winning performers. Her pieces included her rendition of "Song of Awen" by Damh the Bard, a poetic recitation of "Artemis, the Moon Burns Too" by Demetiers, and a tale entitled "Rabbit's Song" by SJ Tucker. She also sang an original piece during her victory performance entitled "All Things are Sacred."

Congratulations to Jan, and best of luck to next year's contestants. May the Fires of Awen burn brightly in your hearts and minds!

Kindreds Lullabye

Rev. Jan Avende

♩ = 108

Voice

To the Kin - dreds three I'm call - ing out: Now I'm go ing to sleep. M-y dreams will come I pray to you:

7

V.

Watch o - v - er me. To the An - ces - tors I'm call - ing out: you of blood and bone. wi - th life and breath I

14

V.

pray to you: Watch o - v - er me. To the No - ble Guides I'm call - ing out: of fur and feath - er and stone. With my

21

V.

roots ground strong I pray to you: Watch o - v - er me 'To the Shin - ing Ones I'm call - ing out:

27

V.

Love and Wis - dom bright. wi - th Fi - re and Wat - er I pray to you: Watch o - v - er me. S - o

33

V.

Kin - dreds Three I'm call - ing out: I lay me down to sleep. As I drift a - way I pray to you: Watch ov - er

40

V.

me.

The Warriors Path

by Michelle A Bassett

Darkness travels by my side, my partner to balance the light.
But, when the scale tips too far,
the shadow becomes night.



In the night, I find my strength, bathed in the moonlight rays.
The healing Goddess drowns me with her all-encompassing grace.

Morrigan's raven leads the way to battle against the audition to my life.
With each seemed defeat, I gain fortitude.
I come back stronger and more humbled by my progression.
I am ready for the next battle, looming in the unknown.
Yet, I remain present in the moment, so my stride does not break from the jagged rocks of my yesterday.

Three Slavic Invocations

by Maria Stoy

Bardic



Stribog, Lord of the Winds
Your children and grandchildren
call out to you
Let our voices soar on the winds
Let our voices rise like the mist on
the sea

Let our voices resound with the roar of the fire
Awaken our minds that we might remember our history
Awaken our hearts that might remember where have come from
Awaken our courage that we might speak with beauty and with truth
Stribog, Lord of the Winds
Accept our offering



Gatekeeper

Dazhbog, Radiant One, Giver of Gifts
Father of princes
The children and grandchildren of your homeland
Call out across the sea.
Heed our call, come to our fire, and accept our offering

Dazhbog, join your magic with ours
Let your radiance burn in our flame and light the way
That our prayers and offerings may rise to the holy ones

Let you memory flow in our well and awaken our sight
That our prayers and offerings may carry to our ancestors

Let your lightning strike our tree and connect the heavens and the earth
That our prayers and offering may echo in all worlds
Through all times!

Dazhbog Let the Gates Be Open!

Invocation to Perun

Perun,
The children of Earth call out to you!
We hear your voice in the bellow of the bull
And the bleating of the goat
We see your might in the charge of lightning bolts
We sense your energy in the electricity that tingles just before a storm
We feel your presence in the touch of the axe blade.

Perun,
Your Grandchildren remember your name and call out to you
Thunderer,
Purifier,
Fruit-bringer,
You who oversees order,
Join us where all worlds and times are one.
Be welcome at our table
And accept our offerings.



Ceres Autumn Equinox

By Maria Stoy

Autumn Equinox Rite Honoring Ceres Sassafras Grove, ADF

devoted to worship in peace and friendship (cense the circle) (Maria Stoy)

TIER ONE: BEGINNING THE RITE & ESTABLISHING THE GROUPEMIND

Bardic Invocation

Consecration of Time

I call to the Spirits of inspiration
You shining deities whose celestial music sings
order into chaos
You poets who traveled far and wide
Bringing tales of other lands to enrich our myth
and culture
You mothers and fathers who shared the tale
of home and family
That your children might know the story
of our beginnings
You singers who kept alive the lore of heroes
That we might learn courage from their deeds
Ovid, Virgil, Cicero, Plautus, Seneca
You who wrote the stories of your people
That later generations might know and remember
Honored dead, spirits of inspiration
You whose names we have forgotten
And you whose names live still in our memories
Be welcome at our fire
Lend us some small portion of your wisdom
And let our words be pleasing to the gods
and kindreds.
Spirits of Inspiration, accept our
offering! (Maria Stoy)

Nine Knells

Opening Prayer: We come to honor the Ancient
Ones

Consecration of Space and of Participants

Blessing: Participants will wash their hands with a
bowl of water (sea) that has rue (land) floating in
it. Incense (sky) will be lit next to bowl.

Warding of the Site/Acknowledgement of Outsiders:

By the might and power of the land
we claim this space.
All darkness and unease we hold at bay
May all who enter here come with pure and
radiant bodies,
devoted to worship in peace and friendship
(Sprinkle salt around the circle)

By the might and power of the sea
we claim this space
All fear and cowardice we hold at bay
May all who enter here come with pure and
radiant hearts,
devoted to worship in peace and friendship
(Sprinkle water around the circle)

By the might and power of the sky
we claim this space
All trouble and wrath we hold at bay
May all who enter here come with pure and
radiant minds

Earth Mother:

Tellus Mater!
It is in your fertile soil that we plant our seeds
It is your cool waters that sustain them
It is your love that protects them
You are all Nature
Lightening and Earthquake; Breeze and Shower
All that lives
Comes from you
All that dies
Returns to you
Tellus Mater
Your life gives us life
And for this, we honor you
Tellus Mater, we honor you! (Deana)

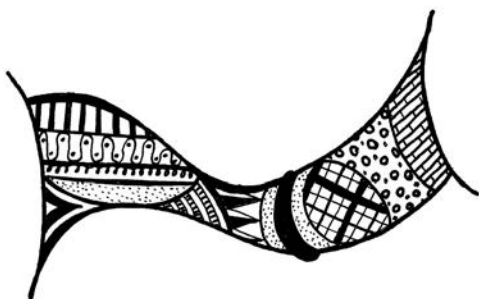
Vesta

Vesta! Goddess of Rome!
Goddess of the Hearth
Keeper of the Sacred Flame
You insure light in the darkness
You insure heat in the cold of night
You are comfort to those in need
Though your Virgins may no longer tend your flame
We who follow the Roman path keep your flame
In our Hearths
In our Hearts
In our Homes
Vesta! You were a source of hope and joy to our Ancestors
We ask that your flame continues to shine brightly for us
Vesta! Accept our offerings! (all repeat)
Vesta! Be with us now! (all repeat) (Deana)

Ground/Center/Merge: Two Powers Meditation

Declaration of Intent

It has been six months since Spring Equinox when we first planted the seeds of our intentions. Now, the dark half of the year is upon us and it is time to harvest the fruits of our labors.
We call to Ceres, who attends to all aspects of sowing and reaping and we honor her at this rite as Queen of the Harvest, who gathers the grain and distributes it to her people. We give thanks for our bountiful harvest. We bring that harvest into our homes and hearts. We also acknowledge that our work is not complete, that we must honor and protect the gifts we have received that they may continue to bring us hope and contentment and to nurture and nourish us throughout the dark months to come.



TIER TWO: RECREATING THE COSMOS & PRELIMINARY POWER RAISING

Creating the Vertical Axis:

We open the mundus
The Well below
Gateway to the underworld
Home of our honored Ancestors (place offerings in the Well)

We look to the heavens
The Fires above
Where the mighty Gods reside
And their stories are written in the stars (light incense)

Here we stand in the center
Birthplace of the Great City
Surrounded and protected by the seven hills
Along side the Numina
Above the honored Dead
Below the mighty Gods
Center of all places
Center of all time
Connected now, before and after
Connected here, above and below (offering of oil)

All Repeat:

Connected now, before and after
Connected here, above and below (Deana)

Creation Myth

In the beginning, the world was chaos.
Wind and storm, flood and drought, famine and pain.
Natural forces without reason or logic, uncontrolled by mortals.
Then came the first gods.
They taught the first people the first rituals.
And this brought order to the chaos.
Over time, much of the old gods were forgotten.
But their rituals were not.
As long as the people performed the rituals, Order would be renewed and restored.
“As I give to you, so you give to me” was the contract.
And the people kept it well.
Then came new gods.

Some were from our land, while others came to our land with their people. The new gods took the attributes of the old gods and became part of the rituals. There were the gods of the sky that controlled storms and rain, growth and harvest, fortune and birth, contracts and oaths.

There were the gods of the underworld that our ancestors joined upon death. There were the numina who lived among the people on the land and in their homes.

And the rituals were kept by the people as the old gods taught them.

Passed on father to son and mother to daughter for generations.

The contract was kept and order was renewed.

And now we, the new people, keep that contract.

We perform the rituals and keep the order of our world,

We keep chaos at bay as the old gods taught us. (Deana)

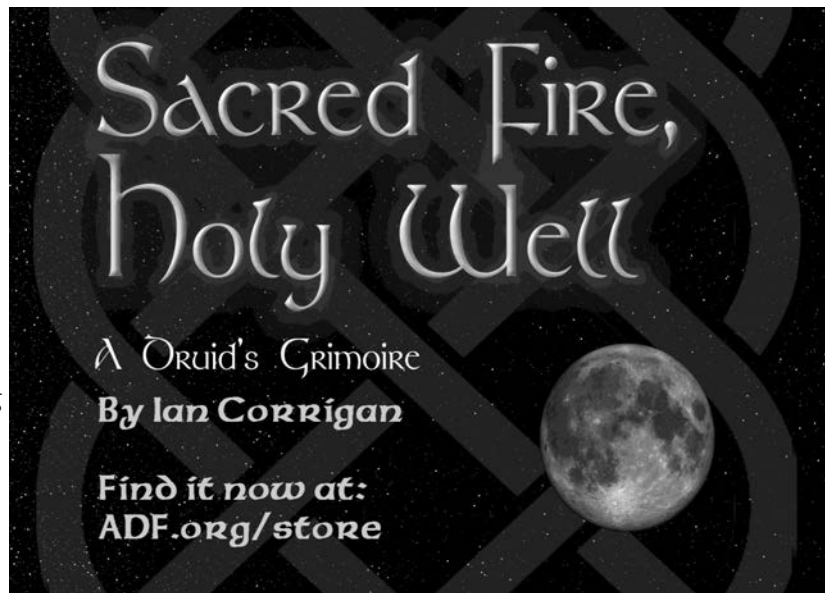
Invoking the Gatekeeper and Opening the Gate(s)/Creating the Threshold

Gateway/Gatekeeper: Proserpina

Proserpina, we call to you,
Bright child of spring
Hope of Gods and Men
Proserpina, we call to you,
Golden maiden of summer
Full blossoming of womanhood
Proserpina, we call to you,
Noble lady of autumn,
Muted silver, shadow rider
Proserpina, we call to you,
Dark queen of winter
Divine mistress of the Underworld

Proserpina, ever-changing
Who crosses the veil,
Who walks between,
Who sits enthroned,
Join your magic to ours!

Let the Well open as a gate that we might know
the wisdom of the Ancestors



Let the Fire open as a Gate that we might know
the blessings of the Divine

Let the Tree open as a Gate that we might know
the wonder of this World and All Worlds

Let all worlds meet here in our sacred center
Let the Gates be open (Maria Stoy)

Filling Out The Cosmic Picture: The Kindred Invocation Triad

Nature Spirits:

Nature Spirits, Worldly Sprits, Spirits of Place.
All creatures that dwell with us in the middle
world of form,
And those who dwell with only one foot in our
world.
We call to you
Those Spirits that live in our homes.
Those Spirits that dwell on our lands.
Those Spirits that have died so that we may live.
All Worldly Spirits, We call to you!

Ancestors

Ancestors of our Blood
Those that have come before us.
Those that through their struggle and sacrifice,
paved the way for a better life for their
descendants.
Ancestors of our Hearth
Those that worshipped our gods before us
You who first knew our gods and began the bond
between them and us
Ancestor of our Spirit

Those that have touched our lives
Directly by our meeting or
Indirectly through your stories
You help guide us to a better way of life
Ancestors all, hear our call and look fondly upon
us.
Ancestors all, We call to you!

Deities

Deities, Shining Ones, Radiant Ones.
All Gods and Goddesses that we honor now
And those we have honored in the past.
We call to the mighty Deities of Rome
Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Janus
All gods worshiped in the Empire
We call to the Deities of our hearths
All those represented here today
We call to the Deities of our Ancestors.
Those they gave honor to in their lifetimes.
Those that protected them and gave them strength
and comfort.
All Gods and Goddesses, We call to you! (Deana)

TIER THREE: MAJOR SENDING OF POWER TO THE BEING(S) OF THE OCCASION

Invocation to Ceres:

Ceres Mater, The children of Earth call to you
Ceres Mater, Across the seas we call to you
Ceres Mater, Across the ages we call to you

Queen of the Plow, Who cuts the Earth
Queen of the Earth, Who harrows the fields
Queen of the fields ,Who sows the seeds
Queen of the seeds, Who quickens the grain
Queen of the grain, Who weeds the crops
Queen of the crops, Who cuts the wheat
Queen of the wheat, Who gathers the harvest
Queen of the harvest, Who fills the storehouse
Queen of the storehouse , Who protects the
bounty
Queen of the bounty, Who distributes its
blessings

Ceres Mater
Look upon us with favor, turn your gaze to your
children
And hear our call

Ceres Mater,
Accept our offerings, be welcome among us
And heed our prayers. (Maria Stoy)

Offerings and Primary Power-Raising

At this time, participants will come forward for
individual praise offerings to Ceres.

Conclusionary Offering:

Ceres Mater, as you have given to us, we
now give to you
That through our offerings you may be
increased
Mother Ceres accept our offering!

Piacular Offering:

We have come today honor Ceres
To honor the Kindred
And to keep the wheel of the year.
If we have done anything to offend
If words were misspoken
If praise was forgotten
Know that no malice was intended
Accept this offering
And may honor be restored (Deana)

Seeking the Omen of Return

TIER FOUR: RECEIVING AND USING THE RETURNED BLESSINGS/POWER

Preparing for the Blessings

Reground/Recenter:

Induction of receptivity:
A basket of wheat braids has been prepared
beforehand. (Singles sheaves of wheat can also be
used) Officiant reminds the folks of the blessings
and messages received in the omen and calls those
blessings into the wheat braids. The braids are
distributed to the folk.

TIER FIVE: UNWINDING AND ENDING THE CEREMONY

Farewell to Ceres

Queen of the bounty, We honor your name
Queen of the storehouse, We thank you for
blessings
Queen of the harvest, We honor your kindness
Queen of the wheat, We thank you for abundance
Queen of the crops, We honor your grace
Queen of the grain, We thank you for seasons
Queen of the seeds, We honor your goodness
Queen of the fields, We thank you for favor
Queen of the Earth, We honor your name

Ceres Mater
For all you have and given and all you will give
The Children of Earth offer their thank and their
praise

Ceres Mater,
For all you have given and all you will give
The Children of Earth remember and bless your
name

Ceres Mater
Go now if you must, or stay if you will
Your name will be remembered

Ceres Mater,
Lady of the Autumn
Hail and Farewell. (Maria Stoy)

Farewell to the Deities

Deities of our community
Deities of Rome
All Deities here tonight
We are honored by your presence at our ritual
Go if you must.
Stay if you will.
But know that you will not be forgotten.
Deities, Hail and Farewell.

Farewell to the Ancestors

Ancestors of Blood
Ancestors of Hearth
Ancestors of Spirit
All honored Dead
We are honored by your presence at our ritual
Go if you must.
Stay if you will.
But know that you will not be forgotten.
Ancestors, Hail and Farewell.

Farewell to the Nature Spirits

Nature Spirits, Worldly Spirits
Spirits that dwell beside us
Spirits who dwell with one
foot in our world
We are honored by your
presence at our ritual
Go if you must.
Stay if you will.
But know that you will not
be forgotten.
Nature Spirits, Hail and
Farewell.

Thanking the Gatekeeper and Closing the Gate(s)/ Threshold

Proserpina, ever-changing
Who crosses the veil
Who walks between
Who sits enthroned
We thank you for guidance
and your protection



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As we walk the ways between
Proserpina, once more we ask you, join your
magic to ours
Let the Fire close as a gate
Let the Well Close as a gate
Let the tree close as a gate
Proserpina, Let the Gates be closed
The gates are closed!

Restoration of the Ordinary

As we turn our gaze from the underworld
The Well becomes water
As we turn our gaze from the heavens
The Fire becomes simple flame
We turn our gaze to the Tree
And know that we stood here in the center
To honor our Kindred
And to keep our tradition
Let all be as it was before but bettered by our
work

Draining Off Excess Power Unmerging, Regrounding and Recentering

Remembering the Earth Mother:

Tellus Mater
Your life gives us life
Your might upholds and supports us
From you we come, to you we return
Tellus Mater we honor you here and now.
Forever and always.

Remembering Vesta

Vesta
Keeper of the Sacred Flame
Goddess in our Hearths, Hearts and Homes
We have been honored by your presence
at our ritual
May your flame burn eternally for us all
Vesta, we honor you

Farewell to the Bardic Patron

Honored dead, spirits of inspiration,
You whose names we have forgotten,
And you whose names live still in our memories,
We thank you for your many blessings.

As we leave this sacred space, may beauty truth
and wisdom
Continue to guide and inspire us.
Spirits of Inspiration, hail and farewell.

Affirmation of Past/Future Continuity and Success

As it has been done in the past, as we do it now
and likewise as it shall be done in the future, we
have once again forged a link in the sacred chain
of tradition.

Long Live the Tradition!

All: Long Live the Tradition!

Nine Knells



Talking to Nature

by Aisha Khan

I looked up.
I saw the sky.
“Oh sky,” I said,
“What a beauty you are!”
It returned with a ray of sunshine.
I looked down.
I saw the grass.
“What sparkling magic you hold.” I said.
With a twinkle, it returned with a
diamond I saw in the grass.
Talking to nature.

Aisha is 7 and going into 2nd Grade next year.



From Halloween to Samhain

The Best of Both Worlds

By: James Slaven (Seamus Samhain)

The whole autumn season is a wonderful time of year for me. From leaf scuffling and apple picking, to the best seasonal beers, the crispness in the air holds an allure for me. I enjoy the fading of the year, grasping hold of the last warmth of an ending summer, while feeling the impending chill of longer nights. As autumn travels along its leaf laden path, there approaches one of the best nights of the year: Halloween/Samhain. Just I am sure it has for most of us who have joined ADF, Halloween has always held a place of distinction for me in the United States holiday pantheon. Crossing over from the secularized Halloween to the more religious Samhain has been a lifelong conversion, though, and is one that I still have not completed, nor am I sure I ever will.

Growing up in a very Roman Catholic household, the normal holy days of Christmas and Easter generally took precedence in celebratory preparations. My mother's extended family would get together for both of these holidays with day long celebrations. Fortunately, even with its pagan traditions, the secular holiday of Halloween never bothered my parents, and my mom and dad always allowed me to enjoy it as much as I could. Of course, growing up in Indiana in the 1970s, that pretty much meant trick-or-treating on either the 30th or 31st of October. Still, dressing up was great fun and I looked forward to picking out a costume every year. My personal favorite was a homemade Chewbacca (the Wookiee from Star Wars) outfit. While the mask was store bought, my mom spent a lot of time sewing the furry body suit and the bandolier.

So for the first many years, Halloween was a fun way to be someone or something else and get a lot of candy. It wasn't until junior high that my eyes were opened to what Halloween was and where it came from, and that was with the universal key to knowledge: a book.

This particular book was called *The Halloween Tree*, by Ray Bradbury. In it, several boys follow an old wise man throughout time and space to save a

friend, learning about Halloween traditions along the way. Ray Bradbury is one of my favorite authors, and I read some of his dark fiction every year in September and October. The Halloween Tree, though, was my first experience with his work and it opened my eyes up to what Halloween truly was. He did get a few things wrong, most notably calling Samhain a Celtic god of the dead, instead of the name of the holiday. But for a young man of 13, it was the first experience as to the religious aspects of the holiday and it set me on a path to learn everything I could about it.

Even though my studies never stopped, it was only natural that as I went through high school and college, my time spent really poring over it slowed down considerably. I still enjoyed Halloween and still enjoyed learning about its origins, but during this time it was an opportunity to dress up and go to parties and hang out with girls.

After college came a job, steady relationships, and finally the biggest life turning event I've ever had: my daughter. Having an intelligent child is wonderful, but it also means she was never satisfied with simple answers to simple questions; she always wanted to know more. That meant a lot of research on my part, which included holidays, thus rekindling my interest in Halloween. This time, though, I started to add aspects of Halloween origins into my holiday.

As well as having candy on hand for trick-or-treaters, I would put out a bowl of milk for any of my deceased ancestors or any departed, should they happen to come by the house. I started looking up recipes, as well, and while most of them have the trappings of Halloween, these treats are also left outside for any of the restless dead or Fae who happen by. These include cake ball cookies that I've shaped and colored to look like ghosts and swamp monsters, as well as my most recently tried recipe, which is an old family recipe for shortbread cookies that I shaped as jack-o-lanterns. Just recently I was given an Irish cookbook, and I am excited to try Barm Brack this year.

Each year I seem to add one or two more small traditions, some related to modern Halloween and some to Samhain. I listen to specific songs (the list grows longer each year and ranges from classical pieces to heavy metal), look for Halloween themed beers (my favorites are Deathly Pale Ale by Reaper Ales and Harvest Dance by Boulevard Brewing), and my Halloween decorations grow each year (my graveyard needs some new gravestones, but first I'm going to add some lights to go with my fog machine).

For Samhain, however, the traditions aren't so much growing in number as they are just growing in strength. For the past few years I have brewed a special ale or mead for Samhain, which always has some kind of harvest or Halloween aspect. Typically they are some kind of pumpkin ale, stout, or mead, and I make them strong enough that they will last until the following Halloween. While this started as more of a Halloween tradition, it has morphed into a Samhain tradition, as I now do a ritual at the end of the brewing session. I give thanks to the gods and ancestors for a good year and acknowledge the coming long nights. I ask for the brew to be good and last through the year so I can use it the following year. And it is in this most recent addition that I have really found comfort.

The previous year I made a very strong sparkling sack mead with pumpkin flavoring and held on to it for the year so I could open and have the first one this past Halloween night. At the end of the evening, after everyone else had gone to bed, I took a bottle and a snifter outside to my back porch, so I could stare out over the dark yard. I poured a small amount into the snifter and toasted all my ancestors. I raised my glass and told them how things are going, and then drank the mead. I then did this in turn for individual ancestors and deceased friends, calling them by name and letting them know they are not forgotten. I would give a memory I had of them, if I had actually known them in life, or a memory of them told to me by someone else, and take a drink for each one. It opened my emotions quite a bit and I felt drained when it was over, but it was a good drain.

I see no reason to stop celebrating Halloween alongside Samhain. Without the first I would never have learned about the second, which is truly what brought me to the ADF, albeit through a very long

path. I enjoy Halloween and enjoy doing Halloween things with my family. Celebrating Samhain has just brought another level of enjoyment and an added spirituality to the festival.

Bibliography

Bradbury, Ray, and Joseph A. Mugnaini. *The Halloween Tree*. New York: Knopf, 1972. Print.

Biographical Statement:

James Slaven (Seamus Sambain) was born in Indiana and works as a biostatistician, analyzing data for medical studies. He has authored several scientific articles and co-authored several dozen. He has also written for regional newspapers on a variety of topics, most mostly on beer and brewing, although his favorite articles are on the honey bee. After eight years of Catholic school, he realized Christianity left much to be desired and spent many years as a secular humanist. Realizing there was a spiritual deficit in his life; he has started filling the past few years with research into non-Abrahamic religions and has decided that the Druidic fits the best, especially with his very Celtic heritage.

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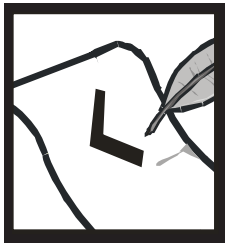


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Ian's Little Room -

A Personal Column on Magic Arts

By: Rev. Ian Corrigan

Banishing Rites & the Druid's Gate

Ceremonial magic includes rituals of 'banishing and purification', intended to render a space claimed and made ready for holy work. These rites are often conceived of as methods of 'driving away ill spirits'. This can be especially so at the end of rites, when tradition teaches that various larvae and shades may have accumulated to seek the work's light. Ceremonial magicians are concerned to avoid intrusions by ill-spirits, and often live in a mythic cosmos populated by 'demons' who might choose to attach themselves and do ill to a magician or his environs.

When ceremonial magicians have looked at ADF rites there has occasionally been a concern that we do not banish at the end of the rites. (see the full script of a simple rite here and here) There is no call to 'depart now to your own place', a custom that lingers even in Wiccan ritual. There is no 'banishing sign' used to shoo away the crowd of spirits. This has dismayed some magicians.

Why do we feel that we are safe and the work is well-done using the methods we do? I think it comes from several basic differences in emphasis between traditional ceremonial magic (maybe as far back as proto-hermetic times) and a tribal, spiritist perspective.

1: The Worship Pact: The entire thrust of our rites (at least our religious rites, rather than magical rites with specific goal-effects) is to welcome all beings to receive their due offering with honor.

2: The Protections of *ghosti: (Can I capitalize that asterisk?) Since we do not divide the spirit world into Our side and Theirs, good spirits against evil ones, we expect all arrivals to abide by the peace of the holy place. Even ill-doers think twice before breaking guest-custom, and all the spirits that come are guests at our fires.



On a more technical level, I think that the Gate Opening & Closing is our equivalent of CM 'banishing' rites. However, it operates using a different metaphor. Rather than thinking of the Otherworld as identical with our perceived space, and 'clearing out' spirits from a perceived area of space, the Gate Opening opens a Way between two conterminous realms. When that Gate is closed contact is not easy. When that Gate is opened the way is clear, and the spirits and mortals are visible to one another. We can quibble about whether and in what way the Gate spell is required in order for one to speak with the Gods and Spirits. However, in a technical ritual sense, the opening and closing is our equivalent of "Now we are open to communication" and "Now we intend communication to end". By closing the Gate we say to the spirits "you no longer have my permission to influence me". In other words, they have returned to their realms, full of our offerings and with our thanks.

If there is an advantage to the Gate form, it might be that we are less likely to insult or offend spirits of place. To come into a place filled with spirits who precede the magician there and demand in the names of your God that all spirits depart, perhaps with implications of uncleanness

or other insult, is a good way to end up needing banishing rituals all the time after that. While we do some basic cleansing rites, and ask spirits specifically unfriendly to stand aside, we are mainly simply 'turning on a light' so that we may speak with the spirits. When we leave the place, we turn out the light and all the local wights are left in peace, with offerings to remember us by.

So that's why I don't worry when I don't end even a serious conjuring rite with a banishing. I am an ally of the spirits, protected by my own familiars and by my own authority. That's not to say that knowing a few charms for sending away spirits isn't a useful thing, but I don't think our Order of Ritual is lacking in good methods of keeping us safe.

Rev. Ian Corrigan is a past ADF Archdruid as well as recipient of the Distinguished Service award for his time as Bard Laureate. He is deeply involved in developing and implementing a modern Druidic occultism, creating rites and training to enhance our growing spiritual work. His books are available at: <http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/tredaradruid>

Song to Tyr

by G R Grove

Meter: Norse *dróttkvætt*. Suitable for any High Day on which the God is invoked as Deity of the Occasion:

Battle-fierce wolf-feeder,
foes you left for crow-meat;
warrior, great of wisdom,
willing gave your skill-hand;
Mimir's friend's unmaker
mighty Garm's death-fighter
caught with weapons cutting;
costly was your loss then.

Aesir's bravest, ask we,
ever-wise ring-giver,
judgment without jesting,
justice-lord, by custom;
wisdom from the wisest
willingly fulfilling
needs unspoken; know you
now the iron-game's hour.

Poppies By: Christina Marvel





News and Announcements

Program & Path Completions

Rev. Amber Doty

Completed: Clergy Program
Ordination Date: Apr 11, 2015

Rev. Jan Avende

Completed: Clergy Program
Ordination Date: August 15, 2015

Avery Jenkins

Completed: Dedicant program
Date completed: April 2015

Molly Khan

Completed: Dedicant program
Date completed: April 2015

Protogrove & Grove Approvals

Orchard Mountain Glen Protogrove

Roanoke, VA
Date founded: April 14, 2015

Whispering Oaks Grove

Florahome, FL
Date founded: April 14, 2015

~Congratulations to all~

Upcoming Events

Starwood Festival

July 7-13, 2015
Pomeroy, OH

Sirius Rising Festival

July 13-19, 2015
Sherman, NY

Summerland Gathering

August 13-16, 2015
Yellow Springs, OH

Festival of the Midnight Flame

Sept 10-13, 2015
Bellaire, MI

Symposium: Grief, Loss, and Transition

—A Pagan Perspective
Sept 18-19, 2015
Lafayette, CO

Chokecherry Protogrove Colorado Retreat

Saturday, Oct 10, 2015
Denver, CO

Visit: <https://www.adf.org/events>

For more festival information.





Word Search: Greek Myths

By: Chris:)

U A P H B C G W C P H G I M U V P P I A Y Z V S S
C D H U T C E N T A U R N C J R K N A C Q I T V E
N Y P Q U M Y R B K C H J D O E H Y N H U M G F S
R P O X M Z S B B T E F K M J A L Y L I C I V G U
H D Y Y Z J S F R E N R E L E U V O O L L O P A M
K Q X E R W A Y A X R T I X K T J W Y L B E I G P
X A Y S U E Z S Z O H U H F Y S Z B K E R V G B R
A N T R K C U E Z E K P S W O H K P W S Z Y Y G H
B P S A E D C I U X S O E K P W R D X F I F Q D P
B E P V E M P S E L C A R E H A Y T Z P E S N Q Y
E R O M H W O M I U G Q C Q P G O Q S L N M J C Z
A S A Y C O M H L N P D D T G W R F F L V I Q O P
U E E Q P G E U B N N F M I N O T A U R P T B G M
T P M D U Z G J O I S E S T U A N O G R A Z K F B
Y H S J N C R S A H Z K Z T C A I A G R O A R I B
B O F M Y G A P P J O M E A Q J S O U Y F X S J M
Q N R R Q J N S U G M P U F M V D M C D K Z A C V
A E K J Y O A L N U V Q E D V S V D U C H I P H I
X P B F H E T T X L N O L Y M P I A N S S A K E T
H H G V V C E H M A E O P H E N E S E P N M E L W
I E K W F V O U P U R A E R L C N C M D J K B E O
Y S R M K F H N Q H F G Y Q G L V N O Y G B D N Q
T H K B B M N D S N S L H Z A S S R J V O M M V J
B D V G O L D E N F L E E C E R A Z F T T Y L U Y
N H G Z Y V A R D X I O V T Y L F K W O V J J V H

Word Clues

HOMER	ACHILLES	PANDORA	GOLDENFLEECE
HELEN	ARGONAUTS	HOPE	FIRE
BEAUTY	JASON	GAIA	PERSEPHONE
OLYMPIANS	CENTAUR	MEDUSA	POMEGRANATE
ZEUS	PAN	STYX	HERACLES
THUNDER	MINOTAUR	MUSES	CERBERUS
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Vice-Archdruid	Rev. Jean 'Drum' Pagano	adf-vice-archdruid@adf.org
Treasurer	Sara Blackwelder	adf-treasurer@adf.org
Secretary	Rev. Crystal Groves	adf-secretary@adf.org
Members Advocate	Desire Cook	adf-members-advocate@adf.org
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Non-Officer Director	Rev. Sean Harbaugh	seanthedruid@gmail.com
Non-Officer Director	Rev. Kelly 'Carrion Mann' Kingston	carrionmann@gmail.com
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Additional Leadership Positions

Administrator	Selene Tawny	adf-administrator@adf.org
Archdruid Emeritus	Rev. Isaac Bonewits	[deceased]
Archdruid Emeritus	Rev. Ian Corrigan	tredara@ncweb.com
Archdruid Emeritus	Rev. John 'Fox' Adelman	john.adelman@trw.com
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Chronicler	Manny Tejada	adf-chronicler@adf.org
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Information Manager	Rev. Rob Lewis	adf-info-manager@adf.org
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<http://www.adf.org/groups/groups-list.html>



Submission Guidelines



Oak Leaves welcomes submissions of artwork, articles, poetry, letters to the editor, and anything else that might be of interest to our Druid 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

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 errors. Also: please include a brief ADF-related bio for all articles and essays.

Written submissions should be sent in one of the following formats: MS Word (doc/docx), Rich Text Format (rtf), or Text Format (txt).

While electronic submissions are preferred (and may be given priority for printing), readable hard-copy submissions may be sent to:

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

Submitted materials will not be returned to the sender.

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 grayscale 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, tiff, etc. Please send them to the Art Director at adf-ol-art@adf.org. Contact the Art Director to inquire whether hard copies of your art may be submitted, depending on scanner availability.

Deadlines for submissions are:

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





Ar nDraiocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship

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

Membership and Subscription Form

One form per person please.



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

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 @ \$30/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: _____



Charter Oak Grove Presents the fifth annual
Harvest Nights Festival

Camp Bonnie Brae in Otis, MA
October 23-October 25, 2014
www.charteroakadf.org/harvestnights

Lake views with wooded trails.
Sacred fire kept in a stone fireplace...
Meal plan included, with vegan &
gluten-free options available.
Join us for workshops, ritual, and
fellowship in a beautiful setting.

