

Pagan pens



Summer Solstice 2012

From the Editors

Hiya's and welcome to the birthday edition of Pagan Pens. This will be a 4 yearly E publication, with issues falling on the Solstices and Equinoxes. I hope you enjoy our first issue and if you would like to submit any work be it art or prose we would love to see it.

Regular features of this magazine will be poetry, academic pieces, fiction, non fiction, and for all you kitchen and hedge witchy peoples a gardening section and recipes. One of my favourite areas of the magazine is Ghost stories! Write in and tell us your experiences with ghostly visitors and haunted places. We all love a good ghost story, and this quarterly we have published a story from one of my many experiences with hauntings and house clearings. We would also like to know what you have been doing or going to do in your pagan practices. We would love it if you sent us writings and pics from events you have held or are going to hold. We will happily publish any pagan related event. As this is the Summer Solstice edition and our birthday I would like to mention a bit of mythology from around the world to do with the Sun.

Baltic legends have a Sun Goddess named Saule. She was worshipped by the Lithuanian's, Persian's and the Letts. Her worship involved looking after a harmless green snake, which was the symbol of Saule and ensured your household had wealth and fertility. Mayan Myth has a Sun God which has a twin who is the Moon. The myth is that the Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque defeated the underworld Gods and therefore became the Sun and Moon. The myth is a bit vague on which twin was the Sun and which became the Moon.

Staying in this area we have the mythology of the Aztecs. According to legend, there was a competition announced among the gods for the position of Sun. Tecuciztecatl and Nanahuatzin were up for the position and the first to throw themselves into the burning pyre would be the Sun. Nanahuatzin was successful, and became Tonatiuh the Sun God. He demanded to be fed the blood and hearts of other Gods before he would move across the skies - he thought as he had sacrificed in the fire to become the Sun, then all Gods should also sacrifice.

In African lore, the Bushmen of the Kalahari had the myth of how the Sun lived on the ground in the bush and was just a human like everyone else. When he lifted his arms the light shone out of his armpits, when he put his arms down the world fell in to darkness. One day a wise old woman sent her grandchildren to catch him and throw him up into the sky so that his light could fall all over the world and all living things. As you can see they were successful. :o)

Lastly let's look at Australian Aboriginal Dreamtime. This story is from the NSW area. The Sun Goddesses name is Yhi. She created the vegetation on the surface of the world, she defrosted all the lakes, rivers and seas so fish and reptiles could come forth. She then went in to the earth which was a frozen waste and defrosted this so all the insects, birds and animals could escape from the frozen caves and come out into the land.

So what will you be doing for the solstice? :o)

Bye for now ,
Sue

Editors Note - By SUE GRAY

References: The Encyclopedia of mythology by Arthur Cotterell. Gods of Sun and Sacrifice by Time Life books.
Voices of the Ancestors by Time Life books Myth and Legends of Australia by A.W. Reed.

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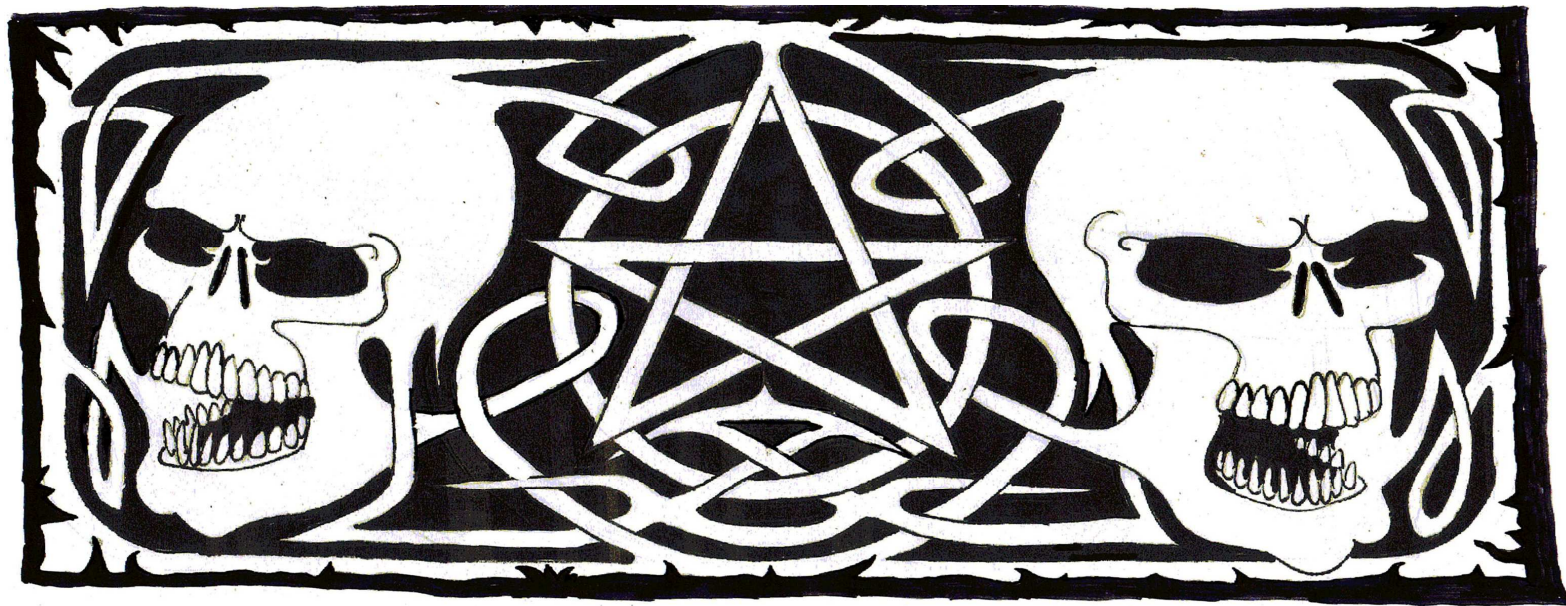
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Submission Guidelines:

Submissions for Edition Two of Pagan Pens will open on January 16, 2013. Edition Two will be published at the Autumn Equinox, approximately March 21. Contributions with an autumn or equinox focus are encouraged, but all contributions are welcome. Please email your submissions to paganpens@gmail.com. Text should be submitted in a word document, pictures should be submitted separately in jpeg format, preferably in a resolution of between 500kb and 3Mb. Please keep articles to 1000 words or less. If longer, they may be serialised. All submissions are subject to editing for spelling, grammar, clarity and accuracy.



Artwork: Dark Winter Ink

The evil Witch and the good Wiccan: Misrepresentation of Paganism in the Media

By PEREGRINE WILDOAK

ONE of the recurring themes within online Pagan and Wiccan forums is the topic of persecution or misrepresentation of Paganism in the media. Sometimes these concerns are quite clear, for example when modern Wiccan groups are defamed and labelled as 'evil' or 'degenerate' despite journalists being given accurate information. Other concerns, directed towards representations of mythic witches, such as the recent 'Hansel and Gretel' movie, are more complex and are what I wish to explore here.

While respecting people's feelings of discrimination and prejudice, and the hurt they must feel having the name of their religion (Witchcraft) associated with evil, much of the problem I feel stems not from religious discrimination but from the conflation of modern Wicca and mythic witchcraft. I would argue however, that this conflation seldom occurs by those representing traditional mythic witch stories, such as filmmakers, but more often by Wiccans themselves. This latter situation occurs due to a misunderstanding of the origins of Wicca, the history of witchcraft itself and the changing meanings of those words throughout time.

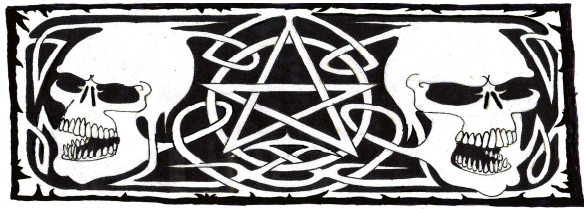
In almost every country and culture throughout the world, from antiquity onwards, there exists a common belief that certain people have the ability and will to use magical, supernatural and diabolical means to harm and generally blight the populace. These people exist as part of the general society and are generally disguised from their neighbours, appearing for all intents and purposes to be normal, practicing their malefic art in secret. They are however seen to be directly counter to the well being of the general society and their presence is viewed as a cause of distress and misfortune. The traditional English name for such a person is 'witch', their practice or craft being 'witchcraft'.

The term 'white witch' has occasionally been used since the 16th century to refer to practitioners of the magical arts, such as cunning folk, who use their magic for positive and beneficial purposes rather than evil. The term was historically used in this manner alone – in no context did it appear to refer to an organised religious tradition. Moreover the term was seldom used by practitioners themselves but mostly by folklorists and other outsiders writing about the practice. The term 'black witch', meaning those who use magic negatively, on the other hand has little historical precedence before the 20th century. The word 'black' would have been redundant – witches by definition were evil and caused harm.

It is important to be clear here that cunning folk, the traditional healers and magic practitioners or 'wise people', were not, in virtually all cases, Pagan religious Witches. Often they were Christians, some devoutly so. Their craft combined a few pagan remnants, classical Grimoire methods and herbalism with Christian prayers and scripture in an effort to bring relief to their clients' health problems and personal concerns. Often this involved witchcraft, but not healing by or practicing witchcraft, rather removing the effects of witchcraft.

"While detective work, love magic and the other services already mentioned were the bread and butter of any cunning-person's business, healing the bewitched was their speciality. They were not the only unbewitchers around. In the early modern period, as has been shown, some physicians and surgeons also offered the service, as did gypsies, and lay and clerical exorcists. But cunning-folk were undoubtedly the most available and flexible, and possessed a wider arsenal of tools. They were, moreover, the principal dealers in preventative charms against witchcraft, and, unlike most physicians, also identified witches. They were, therefore, the only healers to offer a comprehensive package of anti-witch measures."

In his ground breaking history of modern Wicca, Professor Ronald Hutton concluded that out of the various factors he explored in the development of modern Witchcraft, cunning craft was the "least relevant". Despite this however, many modern Wiccans still retain a belief in a putative connection or lineage to cunning craft ('the Craft of the Wise') and see it as the ancestral tradition of modern Wicca. It is obvious from the evidence that not only is



this incorrect, but that many cunning folk would be offended at such a connection if they were alive today.

A further problem arises when modern Wiccans argue that they are the practitioners of an historically hidden magical religion, (whether expressed as 'cunning craft' or not) which was persecuted during the early modern witch-hunts. Evidence is now abundantly clear that the witch-hunts did not target Pagan practitioners, as there were few Pagan survivals at all.

Nor were the hunts mostly church instigated but secular. Nor did they target wise or cunning folk unduly. The victims of this aspect of our horrible past were mostly women who often owned land and who had no living or no influential male relative. They were mostly ordinary Christian folk.

By linking Wicca to the persecution of witches modern Wiccans link themselves to the cultural understanding of what a witch was at this time. The cultural and social understanding that produced the witch hunts also produced the literature, songs and fairy stories in which the witch is clearly evil and malicious. There is no evidence that there were any groups practicing a Pagan religion at this time who called themselves 'Witches'. The concept of witchcraft then, and still today in the majority of extant literature and popular culture, is squarely that of the malefic witch discussed previously. When a fairy story from that time describes a witch it refers to a mythic evil being, not a Pagan religious Wiccan. The only connection is the name: witch and Witch.

It is largely only since the writings of Jules Michelet in the late 19th century, and later Margaret Murray, that Witchcraft become a positive and self-declared label for some people. Gerald Gardner and his (re)creation of Wicca was the most important factor in this new development. Wicca drew on new ways of seeing witchcraft, paganism, nature and sexuality and combined these with traditional western magic and lodge work (largely heterodox Christian) to form a new religion, where the boundaries between magic and religion were collapsed into the icon of the Witch. This Witch icon however retains the traditional associations it always had. And there lies the problem.

If a modern movie producer draws on traditional literature concerning magic, fairy stories for example, they will come across witches. They will not come across Wiccans or modern religious Witches. If modern Wiccans were to react to a movie depicting these witches as if they were Wiccans they would be in error. Similarly if a movie producer was to create a movie set in the 16th century with Pagan Wiccans rather malefic witches, she would be in error. Avoiding this conflation and confusion can save us a lot of frustration and hurt. Evil witches in Hansel and Gretel are not Wiccans and are a response to universal fears of malefic magical practitioners not modern Paganism.

Within the modern Pagan community there is an argument – promoted most strongly by feminist Witches – that the term 'witch' be reclaimed to valorise those aspects of modern life and society most maligned and marginalised: the dark, women, independent power, sexuality and the night. This position has been compellingly argued by such Witches as Starhawk and those involved in the broader 'Goddess Spirituality' movement. This call for reclaiming and valorisation however is nearly always entwined within an anti-historical political narrative of Matriarchy and mythic Witchcraft. It is thus often embraced uncritically and emotionally, which renders null the whole point of reclamation in the first place.

Many Wiccans though are not involved in such conscious political reclamation at all. They prefer to mollify the inevitable cultural linking of the word for their religion ('witchcraft') with evil by recourse to the discredited myth of an ancestral Pagan religion persecuted by Christians as part of the early modern witch-craze. Wicca, this myth runs, is a modern form of ancient Witchcraft, which was persecuted, and therefore misunderstood and maligned. That is why people think witches were evil, but in fact were really good. Naturally any outside observer sees this as an error and forms their own conclusions about our community's intellectual rigour.

Wiccans are not simply religious. We are also magical and from a magical perspective every cultural icon, symbol and motif exists not only in the physical realm as artefacts and stories or the psychic realm as inner psychological structures, but also inwardly in the non physical planes. Here we can talk about the 'egregore', or the combined consciousness and energy of the witch motifs. This is connected, naturally through centuries of use, fantasy, literature and dreams with the word 'witch'. Thus, from a magical perspective the word 'witch', and the various symbols associated with it can act as links to this pre-existing, transpersonal egregore of negative energy. Filmmakers use this principle all the time to elicit fear in their audience, whether using the icons of witchcraft, Nazism or some other symbol of evil. Many modern Wiccans have their own story to tell of how they personally 'went through' the fear and energy the word 'Witchcraft' induced when they first approached the Craft.

The egregore of the word 'witch' however, is not simply evil. It has within all the rich and powerful associations of witchcraft from antiquity onwards: darkness, women, spell casting, magic, the night, nudity and sexual practices opposed to conventional social mores. These qualities and practices associated with the word and egregore of 'witchcraft' are arguably those essential to deep and real experiences of life and ecstasy with the Gods. Certainly without these qualities Wicca runs the risk of becoming a middle-class frisson on a Sunday night.

Therefore, to assuage the cultural linking of evil to the word 'witch' it makes far more sense to consciously engage in a practice of 'reclaiming' and to focus on these qualities than to simply depend on myths of ancient Pagan-Witchcraft masquerading as historical truth. Either way we cannot deny that witches – not Wiccans – were and are evil in traditional literature. We cannot deny the word still carries a deep and powerful charge on the inner levels. We must allow writers and artists to continue to do what they have always done – use extant and traditional cultural myths – without getting upset at the depiction of an evil witch.

Davies, Owen, *Popular Magic: Cunning folk in English History*, (London, Hambledon Continuum), 103.

Hutton, Ronald, *The Triumph of the Moon* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 1999), chapter four.

Starhawk, *Dreaming the Dark* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1981).

See for example, Greer, John Michael, *Inside a Magical Lodge: group ritual in the western tradition* (Llewellyn, St Paul, 1998), chapter four



Photo: Pauline Fisk

In the Circle By ANT ULIJN

*Reach within and find your Truth, as miners hunt for gold.
Travel deep and darkened paths to find the ways of old.
Words are spoken soft and low, chanting now in time,
To the rhythm of a drum, flowing free in rhyme.
Cast your circle, call the winds and seek the blessings true.
Call upon the Universe and It will answer you.
Be sure to make your intent clear, your desire just and pure.
For those who seek to fool The Fates will only pain endure.
Close your eyes and feel the hum, the vibration of the space.
Feel the heat of the Balefire's flames upon your upturned face.*

*Slowly let your mind relax and dissolve into the sphere,
Of energy and loving trust where all shall know no fear.
Water trickles somewhere close, the fire cracks and spits.
Stones that murmur as they shift when the wind ever gentle hits.
As your spirit starts to soar, leaving your earthly vessel still,
Now you know the witches way, the way of all good will.
Raise your heart and raise your voice to call upon the night.
The moon shines down and seeks your skin to fill with Her pale light.
As her orb passes on high and pulls at all you have within,
You will feel the good in her, and know that this isn't sin.*

*We celebrate the passing seasons and we worship as we see fit.
We come together as a family once the mighty Balefire's lit.
As we breathe in scents and sounds of other realms and times,
Our spirits ever seeking peace, for a moment they do find.
The circle now is spent and closed, the energy has faded.
However what we sought to ask will now be strongly aided.
We know the ways of light and dark and we walk the line between.
Knowing that our choices are what make the unseen seen.*

*Fellow children of the earth, children of the sky.
Come with me some other night, together we will fly.
All who seek our council and that wish to know their lot,
Know that we speak only truth, be it good or be it not.*

The place of Shadows

By SANDY GREEN

I enter within
Hear me calling,

In the darkness
Stop me falling,

For now it's time
to turn outside in

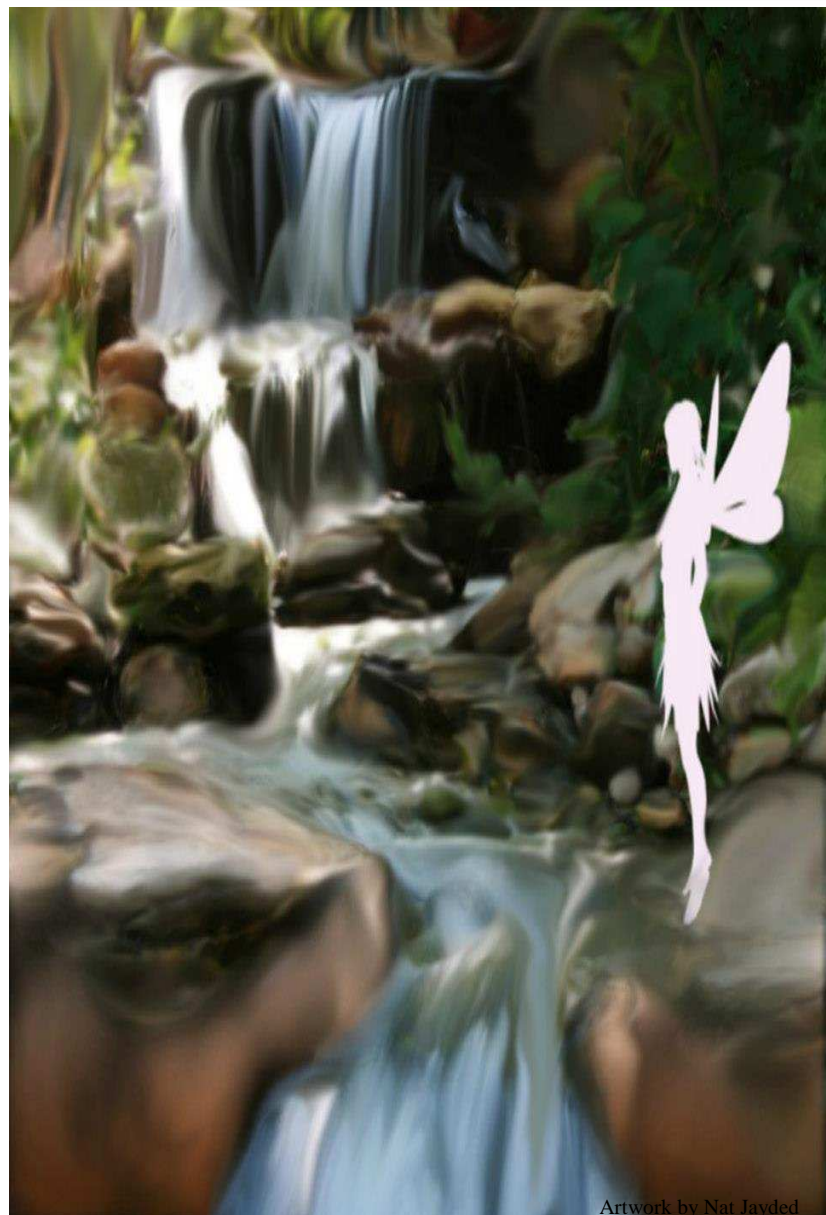
To lift the veil
and go within,

A place of shadows
I must go,

Faith and conviction
Help me grow,

The path is rocky
Darkness lets me see,

Strength and courage
Will set me free



Artwork by Nat Jayded

The Magic of Stone Circles By GORDON STRONG

THE image of Stonehenge is one familiar all over the world, demonstrating the inner recognition that such a sacred site has upon the universal consciousness. Many stone circles are to be found in Great Britain, a greater number than in the mainland of Europe. In England, almost all stone circles, long barrows, and standing stones are to be found in the West Country where I make my home. Although often incomplete, stone circles still remain an intrinsic part of the landscape, a potent reminder of an ancient culture. In the 21st Century we should mark the wisdom of those who built such monuments and respond to the challenge of understanding their purpose.

The problem is nobody knows what that really was. A solar calendar, a lunar calendar, a map of the Heavens? Whatever the reason for their construction – an achievement that would have taken several generations – the ancients ensured that very powerful forces were evoked and retained at these sacred sites. Such powerful vibrations are not exclusively the property of the Neolithic peoples, some of the tribes of North American Indians once built circular monuments called *Medicine Wheels*. Examples of these constructions of wood and stones, contemporary with megalithic sites in Great Britain, are The Big Horn Wheel in Alberta and The Cahokia Wheel in Ohio.

Electricity and magnetism are present in any megaliths that contain granite or quartz. The stones act as accumulators and charge and discharge themselves at will. Research has also indicated that the Full Moon affects the energies around them. Try that out for yourself by visiting a stone circle at such a time – you will undoubtedly feel something! Magnetism has a beneficial effect on the body, a therapy known from ancient times. The magnetic field surrounding our Earth was twice as powerful four thousand years ago. It seems that our “primitive” ancestors” enjoyed an existence of constant awareness, their psychic powers attuned to a much higher level.

Avebury is a very popular venue for rituals, constantly visited by practitioners of every kind of devotions. Once part of a huge complex stretching as far as West Kennet Long Barrow, including Silbury Hill - its magnificence has to be personally experienced to savour the magical essence. The good news is that we have a superb trio of stone circles not far from Glastonbury. Stanton Drew is second only to Avebury in the size of its site and, not being so well known, it is possible to bask in its energies undisturbed. Here, the presence of the guardian spirits that protect such places may be felt too.

An idyllic setting, Stanton Drew is bordered on one side by the River Chew, this presence of water emphasizes the strong feminine qualities of the site. The shape of each circle is irregular, not unlike a vulva, and it is possible rituals took place there involving a symbolic union of god and goddess. This contemporary Beltane chant gives the flavour

of such proceedings:

*Spiral to the galaxy
Spiral to the shell
Spiral to the centre
Bind the lovers well.*

The other magical events that took place may well have been those of initiation - a kind of symbolic death. A ritual loss of consciousness would be invoked to liberate the soul for a journey to the other world. On its return, strengthened by the experience, an enhancement of the earthly life would be bestowed upon the spiritual traveller.

We might imagine that when a woodhenge was in existence at Stanton Drew, prior to the placing of the stone monuments in position, such a scene as this would take place. Each of the nine rings of posts would be screened from the next so that the initiate must pass through a veil to gain the next stage of understanding. Aware of the decorated posts, perhaps hung with garlands and the dancers and others who line the way, he follows a spiral path, getting ever closer to his goal. That he never actually reaches that central point is intrinsic to the initiation. Apart from the priest and priestess, no mortal eyes are permitted to gaze upon the mystery of mysteries.

It is also possible that those taking part in rituals at sacred sites may have been in an ‘altered state’. The shamanic tradition has always involved the ingesting of stimulants. Research has shown that powerful plants - deadly nightshade, henbane, fly-agaric and even marijuana may have been used for this purpose. Carvings and designs on beaker pots are said to have been produced by artists in a heightened state.

The stone circles are a legacy of a unique spiritual and cultural period in our history. It is a wonderful and uplifting experience to connect with the folk who once made these places the centre of their lives, and to imagine how they connected with the otherworld here. After thousands of years these monuments still attract visitors and devotees. Long may this continue.

As well as the Hand-Fasting ceremonies that occur at Stanton Drew, Druidic rituals form part of the more formal happenings and anyone interested may take part. The Dobunni Grove hosts a gathering on the Saturday nearest the Quarter Day, around 10 am: Samhain (Nov. 1) Imbolc (Feb. 1) Beltane (May 1) Lughnasadh (Aug. 1). Wear your most colourful outfit - you will be in friendly and mystical company!

Gordon Strong, international author, speaker and workshop host, has published books on Neolithic Monuments, Arthurian Legends, Tarot, and Magic.

www.gordonstrong.co.uk

The Sacred Stone Circles of Stanton Drew is currently on Amazon.



Pagan Pens ...

Celebrating the Seasons

Arachnid Charge by SUE GRAY

I WORK a bit differently to the average common variety Wiccan, especially when it comes to festivals. I don't normally do Major festivals, as I'm a Witch that celebrates seasons rather than Equinoxes and Solstices, but my take on Beltane/Halloween is a celebration of Arachnid.

The summoning

Earth Mother, creator of all living things. We ask that you may join us in your guise of the great & terrible mother Spider. She who keeps us in connection with our spiritual source and higher self. The bringer of sacred wisdom in our dreams. She who connects us to her crown with her silver web. The spinner of fate and magical charms.

The charge

Great terrible mother, fate weaver, creator of illusion and weaver of the web of life. Your work interconnects all things.
 You give us balance
 you give us creativity
 you give us patience
 you give us nurturing
 you give us wisdom, divine knowledge, magic and intuition.

The American Indian knows you as Grandmother spider, who sang the universe into being by weaving the web of life. Creator of the first Dreamcatchers so we can harness our dreams and bring them to fruition.

In Egypt you were known as Neith, the weaver of the world.

In Babylon you were Ishtar and Atargatis.

In Greece Athena and the fates.

Norse Myth you are the Norns, and Odin rode the eight-legged horse that was you.

In India you are the Spider that weaves life from your own body, and again you are celebrated by the Hindu eight-armed Deities.

The Japanese fear you as Spider woman that ensnares careless travellers and Goblin Spider who shapeshifts.

Africa knows you as God. A trickster who brought culture to the people.

In Peru and South America you are known as the creator of the Universe. Your names are Thought Woman or Thinking Woman, and you are the giver of hunting skills.

Great Terrible Mother, weaver of visions and dreams. Help us to remember that we are the creators of our own lives and that we must take responsibility for the directions we choose.

Great mother we know that if we do not choose our path wisely, you reassure us that we can return to the centre and choose again.

You warn us that to start again, we must close the old doors before we open the new ones. This is turmoil and upheaval, but it is also growth and reclaiming of our power.

Great terrible mother! Spinning your web of life! Our understanding must include that with life is Death and your venom is just.

Tonight we ask that the old and completed are put to rest, and we renew our lives by going back to the centre of the web.

A clean sweep:

Exploring the Besom in symbolism and myth: Part 1

By TREE FOSTER

Besom

Making a clean sweep.

The word besom itself is the Hebrew (noun) word sweeper or to sweep. In old English it is "besma". In modern Wicca it is a word we use to differentiate a valued magical tool from the house or yard broom. It is a tool used to cleanse unwanted energies and for its combined masculine and feminine symbology in spell craft and ritual.

The concept of the besom having more significance than the mundane is ancient. As this quote from the bible shows.

"will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the LORD of hosts". Martin Le Franc's *Le Champion de Dames*
– Isaiah 14:23

According to Scot Cunningham, the besom being used for supernatural purpose is very diverse with this following statement.

"This is nothing new; pre-Colombian Mexico saw the worship of a type of a Witch deity, Tlazolteotl, who was pictured riding naked on a broom. The Chinese worship a broom Goddess (authors note: Sao Ch'ing Niang) who is invoked to bring clear weather in times of rain."

Scott Cunningham, Solitary Practitioner.

Identification with Witches

One of my favourite besom stories comes from a friend who is a legal marriage celebrant. She was conducting a ceremony on a near by island, so had to catch the ferry in medieval dress, carrying a basket of tools, papers and her besom. A small child on the ferry watched her for a while until she got the courage to ask my friend "Are you a real witch?"

Delighted with the answer 'yes', she ran to tell her mother with a huge smile "Mum she's a Witch, and a REAL one". Even a small child can make the identification because of the besom.

The besom is identified with woman as it is a domestic tool, at hand at every home, which in times gone by, was a female domain. Although it is indeed a witch's tool, in the burning times it was a safe tool to keep for a Witch. You could not be persecuted for owning one since it was too common.

Unfortunately the besoms identified with Witches and our culture may have come from derogative connotations. Calling woman a besom was a form of insult in times gone by.

"In Southern Scotch, a street-walker is called a besom, and in French balai (a besom) means the life of a libertine, as Rôtir le balai; Il ont bien rôti le balai ensemble, where balai means a debauch or something worse. No further explanation can be needed or could be given."

Source: Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, E. Cobham Brewer, 1894

So our identification with them may be from the same source that promoted us as having loose morals, haggard, old or even associated us with the devil. All part of the propaganda campaign to disempower women and in particular Witches in a bygone patriarchal society.

This has now come full circle and the besom, as an identification of Witchcraft, is now empowering as we find our place in today's society. Just sight the popular good luck Witch adornments, t-shirts, jewellery, etc, all carrying their broom.



Tlazolteotl

Flying on a broom.

One of the most persistent myths is that we witches love to fly on our brooms. This seems to stem from a couple of different sources.

Phallic riding women promoting fertility in the fields:

Besoms (or similar phallic item such as a staff) were ridden in ceremonial dancing and ritual. Imagine, if you will, a woman of reproductive age, riding a besom, which is a co-joined fertility symbol, blessing the orchard or fields in an act of sympathetic magic. Although the brooms were ridden on the ground, it does not take too much imagination to tell an exaggerated story of this especially by some accounts the riders would be jumping in the fields in an act of sympathetic magic showing the grain how high to grow. Sometimes the brooms were not ridden but set on fire and thrown into the air.

"In Bohemia they say the corn will grow as high as they fling the blazing besoms into the air."

The Golden Bough . J G Frazer.



Ridiculous as it sounds today, witches flying were a matter of debate in court and by important persons from 1324 when the first witch, Dame Alice Kyteler was tried for such, [Francisco Goya's Los Caprichos](#): till around the Salem witchcraft trials in 1692.

Flying ointment:

A second theory of witches flying comes from the use of hallucinogenic drugs. The Besoms were rubbed with 'flying' ointment which would be absorbed into the skin, or vagina. According to Professor A. J. Clark, in The God of the Witches, by Margaret Murray, the ointment contained aconite and belladonna. These drugs give heart palpitations and delirium which "might produce the sensation of flying".



Belladonna



Aconite

According to records, we could ride up the chimney on our besoms to our sabbats. Men would use a pitchfork, another everyday item. We could also sail in sieves to sink ships. Unfortunately nowadays I have to drive my car. Shame the environmental and petrol saving could be a bonus. However I suspect my car is more comfortable and has a radio to boot.

Elemental classification of the besom.

Scott Cunningham, in the Solitary Practitioner claims that the besom is a tool of water (feminine), and hence spells cast with this tool that are about those of love and physic workings. However Silver RavenWolf infers in To Ride a Silver Broomstick that it is a tool of air (Masculine) when she repeats her rhyme ‘sweep, sweep sweep this place, by powers of air I cleanse this place’

The stick of course is phallic, the bristles are yonic. As such it’s powerfully symbolic, especially since the phallic is “wearing” the bristles if you get my drift without being too graphic. If I had to hazard a guess I would say that perhaps it fits into neither of the above classifications but would be the element of spirit as its male and female co-joined representation would make it symbolise the magical spark of creation. However if we think of it as the act of conception, it would fit into the element of fire within the Sylvan tradition. This is because we think of the elements in terms of cycles. Air (East) being thought, fire (South) conception, water (West) gestation and north (Earth) as birth, and so we bring our spell work to fruition.

Whatever your theory is, the besom is both male and female; not many tools are complete in this way. Perhaps it may change the elemental classification according to the purpose it’s being used for.

Part 2 will appear in our next edition.



A witch riding up her chimney.
1579 illustration by Gillot de Givry



Book Review: **Pan's Daughter: the magical world of Rosaleen Norton** (expanded edition)

By PEREGRINE WILDOAK

Rosaleen Norton died over thirty years ago but remains a strong and powerful presence within the Australian magical community. Her art, hardly commercially successful in its day, still produces the same potent resonance and awareness of the otherworld as it did at her zenith. And *Pan's Daughter* by Nevill Drury remains the only meaningful study not simply of her life, but also her magical life. It is therefore a delight to read a revised and expanded version of this wonderful book.

To be an honest reviewer, I was pretty sure I'd enjoy the new edition, having loved the first, published back in 1988, less than a decade after Norton's death. Now thirty years on, the story of her life, her unique magical unfolding and otherworldly yet visceral art is as relevant and as interesting as ever. Only recently I heard two more tales of 'Roie', as Norton was affectionately known; tales that seek to cast the teller with some of the magic and power inherent in this amazing woman.

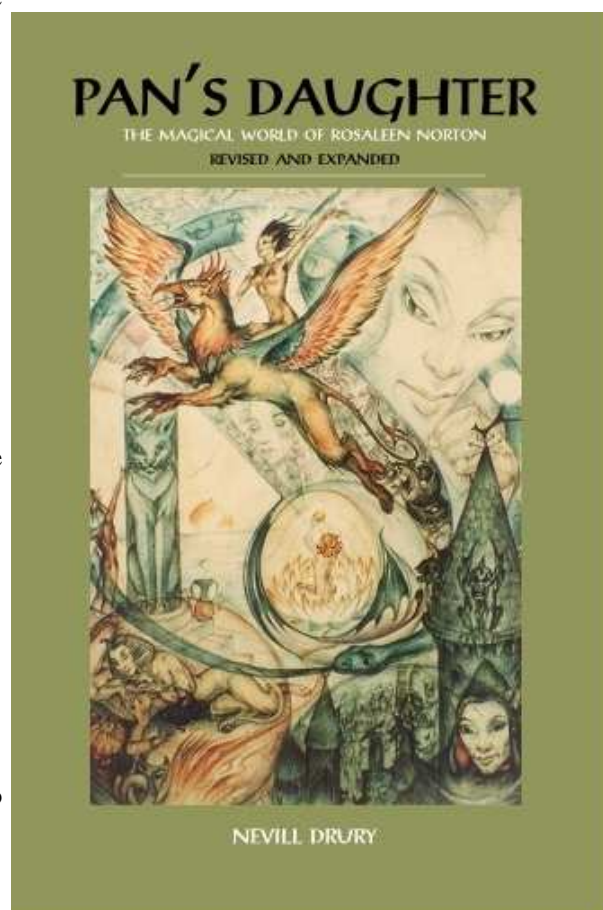
Pan's Daughter is superb as it traces the simple threads of Norton's life to give us a rounded background before focusing squarely on several key themes: sexuality, art, the otherworld and magic. In none of these areas was Norton bound or confined by the thought and theories of the day. She was largely self-created and self-determined, in relationship with her Gods, who she saw as distinctly real, but again within a unique magical cosmology. Yet, as Drury simply and deeply reveals, Norton was not rebelling, as many faux pretenders and rich kids of the 60s and 70s were to do. She was simply unfolding into who she really was.

Drury's writing is engaging and lucid, and his approach to a person who is complex and still surrounded with an aura of diabolism is sympathetic and reasoned. Drawing on decades of experience in the art world, publishing and magical writing, Drury gives background and expertise to help the reader enter the magical world of Norton. He also places her life in the context and stream of two important traditions of modern magic, one which came before Norton and one emerging at the time of her death – sex magic and modern Women's Mysteries. These themes he explores in two excellent appendices, which are worthy of publication in their own right.

Drury shows how Norton, an 'unconventional' child with a 'flair for disobedience', was always moved by her own lights. She slept in a tent in the family garden, befriending spiders and other creatures who entered her domain. While still in her teens she starting developing the style of dark and powerful, somewhat macabre art that would become her hallmark, and later bring her before the courts on a charge of obscenity. In her 20s and 30s Norton was strongly influenced by her reading of Aleister Crowley, Dion Fortune and other writers in the magical tradition. The impact of this study, and the immense inner awakening it produced in Norton led a reviewer to describe her as having:

"...developed a most exceptional ability to actually enter the psychic sphere, to transport her personality to other planes than the physical one, and to sensually perceive that which, to most of us, remains for ever hidden' (p.39).

Drury however, does not simply describe Norton's magical art, her reviews, or art, or even simply recount her own words. He presents all of these, places them in context, gives an interpretative framework and allows the reader to discern for herself just what an amazing psychic vi-



Pan's Daughter by Nevill Drury traces the story of Australian Witch Rosaleen Norton.

sionary and artist Norton was. This is one of the great strengths of the book: its ability to reveal the depth and power of Norton without imposing a meta-interpretation. Chapters each on trance journeys, Norton's cosmology, group magic, sex magic and transformation within the inner realms all display this quality and skill. It was well appreciated.

It should be noted here that Drury gives extended pieces of Norton's own words, describing her unique and powerful magical cosmology and ontology. This is actually quite incredible:

"This extraordinary account of utilising altered states of consciousness to access the magical universe is one of the most lucid descriptions of its type that I have come across. One needs to remember this text was written in 1949, long before such topics as meditation, visualisation and 'consciousness expansion' became popular in the late 1960s' counter-culture." (p. 66)

Anyone, any magician or modern Pagan who takes time to read these notes will be enriched. There is a lot here, much which has never been overtaken or supplanted. Nor, as Drury elucidates was this magical work simply a means of producing 'trance-art' as it is called nowadays:

"Like a traditional Shaman, accessing mythic realms of awareness while in a state of consciously willed dissociation, Norton was endeavouring to transcend the barrier of physical death through her inner plane encounters." (p.68)

Norton's artwork, lifestyle, and sexual magic brought her into conflict several times with the Australian police and authorities. This was an Australia still heavily conservative and restricted, before *Oz magazine* and the hippy awakening. While I would love to see a more detailed and extended study of Norton's sexuality and sex magic, Drury delivers the goods in this expanded version. There is a comprehensive, informed and detailed study of Norton's sexual magic and its manifestations. Owners of the first edition will be well rewarded for purchasing this edition for this section alone. Drury is well placed to review this material and its place in the sexual magic stream of the western tradition. And he does so admirably.



Drury also shows his acumen in reviewing the material concerning Norton in Doreen Valiente's *The Rebirth of Witchcraft*. Valiente was informed about Norton by Leslie Roberts, a journalist who visited Norton in 1959. Rather than accepting some things, such as putative passages from Norton's own Witchcraft liturgy and supposed connection to Celtic traditions, Drury analyses the material, based on Norton's own distinctive style and spiritual connections. He suggests the passages are unlikely to be Norton's own compositions, having a likely 'British origin' and concludes:

"...Norton's ritual practice ... indicate[s] that she was more influenced by the magic of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and *Thelema* than by Celtic tradition." (p173).

Norton's own compositions are as deep as they are evocative, and Drury includes a few such as this one, written to accompany her controversial drawing 'Black Magic', which begins:

Light's Black Majesty : Midnight Sun: Lord of the wild and living stars:
Soul of Magic and master of Death;
Panther of Night... enfold me.
Take me, dark Shining One; mingle my being with you,
Prowl in my spirit with deep purring joy
Live in me, giver of terror and ecstasy
Touch me with tongues of black fire. (p.144-45).

Overall this is a very rewarding and well composed work. Its production values are great, the index really useable and helpful and the copious reproductions of Norton's art, a joy. The only slight concern I had was the name given to Norton throughout the text. Some sections, whole chapters, address her using the familiar and warm 'Roie' nickname, other chapters as 'Norton'. This was a bit distracting and may show a pastiche of previously composed essays. Not that there's anything wrong with that. It was a very minor thing in the scope and sweep of a lovely, engaging and expert work. This is a must have volume for all people – Australians and others – interested in Rosaleen Norton or the manifestation of the magical tradition through individuals rather than groups. It is highly recommended.

Pan's Daughter: The Magical World of Rosaleen Norton by Nevill Drury. Mandrake of Oxford. 2013.

Purchase from: [Mandrake](#) | [Amazon](#) | [Book Depository](#)

Where the Christians get it wrong

By GARY WILMOT

ONE of the unexpected side effects of walking a pagan pathway (well, for me anyway) has been an increasing awareness and understanding of the Christian belief systems and underlying messages. I certainly believe in an historical Jesus, and I tend to believe that he was a spiritual person who had some great things to say to his peers. I also think he would have upset the “establishment” who, like many today, would have been served quite nicely by the status quo and enjoyed an extended ride on the gravy train.

Power trumps idealism every time

At what point his story became a cult, and started to attract a mythology of its own, who can really say? It does seem clear to me however that this was a movement that started out with fresh ideas and something of a revolutionary spirit, only to be hijacked by the establishment and become a new face for the same old body. This should not be seen as surprising, after all we see this time and time again, particularly in politics or any other area involving power and control of wealth.

Embrace, extend and displace

To further the cause of Christianity and to make it more palatable to the masses, there are clear signs that the Christian church shaped its mythology around established practices and festivals. It is hard to imagine any other logical reason for the key Christian dates to align with significant seasonal and solar events; Christmas falls around the time of the Winter solstice, Easter with the Spring Equinox and so on.

The heart of the problem with Christianity

Putting aside any thoughts or opinions on the moral laws laid down by the various Christian churches, the main problem, as I see it, is the fixed nature of the Christian mythology. Essentially we are dealing with a religion whose rituals, rules and beliefs were laid down more than 1000 years ago and more or less set in stone as, quite literally, “gospel truth”.

Think about that for a moment, and contemplate how much the world has changed in that time. How many advancements have we made in terms of science, technology and understanding? How has life changed in general terms, and how different is today’s social context to that of 100 years ago let alone 1000 or more?

Yet Christian traditionalists would have you believe that you can take those rules, rituals and practices from those dim and distant times and apply them to 21st century living. Not only that, the whole mythology can be transplanted from the Middle East across the whole globe! In light of the high probability of Christian festivals mirroring ancient, seasonal practices, this seems even more absurd and is the reason why “Christmas doesn’t feel like Christmas” to many who move from Europe to places like Australia. It IS a winter festival after all.

Pagans are not immune to these issues either

Now I would LOVE to say that pagans do not make these same mistakes, unfortunately I think we (as a community) do. Over time certain things have indeed become set in stone, and of all these I think the wheel of the year concept stands out as the most obvious example. Where the Christians have their birth and death mythological cycle, unchanging and mapped to the pre-existing belief systems, pagans (and especially Wiccans) are in danger of having a similar fixed view of the annual cycle.

This is in part due to the sheer volume of Wiccan and New Age literature that has appeared in recent times, and the explosion of Pagan-related web sites that can be found on the ‘net. It seems that everyone repeats and regurgitates the same traditional wheel of the year model. Furthermore, if you search for information on this topic in relation to the Southern Hemisphere then you find that most (if not all) will tell you to simply inverse or “flip” the wheel. It is this dogmatic approach that has the potential to lead us down the same path as Christianity. If we lock things into a fixed model, establish a standard unchanging framework for spiritual practice then we are in danger of building momentum and eventually becoming the new cult/fad that gets assimilated by the establishment. We are in danger of creating “just another mainstream religion”.

I don’t know about you, however for me much of the attraction of Paganism is the way in which you have to discover things for yourself, the ability to think for yourself, and the evolving nature of the path. Paganism, Druidry, Wicca (and many others) have one eye to the past (reconstructing possible pre-Christian practices) and one eye on the present and future.

My Paganism is a living, breathing spiritual path that moves with the times. I’m sure yours is too!





Merlin and Jung: A psychological and alchemical interpretation. By ANNE NORTH

WHEN followers of Arthurian tradition discuss the literature and text surrounding the legends it is normally in reference to what would be considered the 'classics' of the Grail history. These classics would include the Middle Age masterpieces of Malory's 'Le Morte D'Arthur', the romance of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the poets of the 19th and 20th centuries such as Tennyson and T H White. For this paper a look into the lesser known, possibly apocryphal, texts will be needed. Most notably earlier works will be examined such as 'Roman de l'Etoile dou Graal', around 1180 (some consider earlier, some consider later), attributed to Robert de Boron and the works of Geoffrey of Monmouth, around 1138. These texts consider the legendary character of Merlin as an archetypal being attributed with powers and knowledge which go hand in hand with the alchemical theories of the time. With this in mind it is important to consider that Merlin emerged in literary history with many stories of his life that were forgotten or manipulated in the later myths. In following years the romances of Lancelot / Guinevere and Tristan / Isolde along with the heroics of Percival and Gawain gained in importance and the rather esoteric, symbolic stories of Merlin were left out of the legends.

This paper will look at the life of Merlin and examine some of the myths that appear to have alchemical connections. A Jungian psychological interpretation will then be explored to understand how these connections can tell us more about who the character of Merlin really was. This paper will not go into any lengthy discussion concerning the 'reality' of the actual existence of any man named Merlin. In Jungian understanding 'myth' is considered as important as 'history' and so the author will leave that discussion to someone who cares for it. Rather the content of this article will focus on what the psychological make-up of the character was and how that character connects to universal archetypes as explored by Carl Jung.

The birth and childhood of Merlin

In most ancient cultures it was common for the main heroes in the sacred texts to be given a miraculous birth story. Merlin is no different and his birth and youth tells us much of what is to be expected in his future life, exposing almost a predetermined, divine plan of how important his life shall be. The text of Robert de Boron has heavy religious leanings, it is hardly romantic and the goal of the document is to attain moral understanding, rather than for any entertainment value. The second part of the text is titled 'Merlin' (the first part being titled 'Joseph of Arimathea') it is in the second text that the birth of Merlin begins. In 'Joseph of Arimathea' we learn of how the Grail caught the blood of Christ and was given to Joseph's brother in law Brons, who departs for the West, for Britain, to preach Christianity. When he reaches Britain he must find Avalon 'the apple isle' and await for the wounded King. From this beginning it is made clear to the reader that this story has divine origins and that the characters are deific in nature and from now on the plot has moral and ethical values.

The text of 'Merlin' begins with the devils and demons plotting against Christ. They are angry of the outcome of the death and resurrection of Christ and scheme to how they can manifest their own 'prophet from hell'. They choose a pure maiden, who forgets one night to leave a candle on, her father having told her that the devil cannot stand light. On the night her room is in darkness The Evil One comes into her room and creeps into her and leaves his seed. In the morning the girl realises that something is wrong but can find no one in the room and so realises she has been deceived by the Devil. She confesses to her priest (he is known in later texts as Blaise), and when her pregnant condition is discovered she is sent to prison. When the child is born he is baptised Merlin. The fate of the girl seems dark, yet eighteen months later when she is condemned to death, Merlin miraculously speaks as an adult and appears on her behalf at the trial. Merlin embarrasses the judge by proclaiming that *he* also does not know who his father is, this is later found out to be true, and leads to the girl's acquittal. This delightful tale shows that from the beginning Merlin has secretive knowledge from 'beyond'. It also shows that even though his father is the Devil, the purity of the girl wins over in his ethical decisions.

And so begins his life being one part evil and one part pure. He has divine prophetic



Picture reference: 'Uraltes Chymisches Werk', Pseudonym author : Abraham Eleazar (Actual author : Julius Gerasius of Schwarzburg), 1760,

knowledge and yet is animalistic in his nature. His duality shows in other ways, he is frequently attributed to symbols relating to Mercury (his ability to shape-shift into an animal and his connection to the stag) and also to the symbol of the alchemical *ouroboros* (snake biting his tail – which represents the two-fold nature of self-regenerating transformation). He is often the counsellor or mediator between two opposing factions, which is another attribution to Mercury. Like the Hindu Goddess Kali, Merlin represents light and darkness, good and evil, creator and destroyer. As his birth represents the joining of the opposites coming together as one, he can also be linked to the alchemical ideal of the hermaphrodite.

In the de Boron text after saving his mother from death, Merlin discusses with his mother and Blaise that he must leave to find the people who want his blood. He says that he will find them, but he will not allow them to kill him. Merlin tells Blaise to document everything that he has told him and he recounts the story of 'Joseph of Arimathea'. In this way Merlin is chronicling the deeds of men and the tale of the prophesised King. In this way the document of De Boron's can be seen as a continuation of the works of the disciples, adding credibility and sacredness to the tale. This is considered the end of Merlin's miraculous childhood story and begins his tales with the Kings and Knights of Briton.

Vertigern and Pendragon

De Boron tells us that King Vertigern has achieved Kingship illegally by murdering the rightful heirs. Due to this he feels his position is threatened and tries to build an impenetrable tower. The tower collapses again and again without any apparent reason. Finally Vertigern calls his astrologers to read into the stars how to solve the problem. It is discovered that the tower will survive if the blood of a fatherless boy is mixed with the mortar. Merlin arrives on the scene, the fatherless boy, and convinces the messengers that he can personally tell the King why the towers are collapsing. Merlin tells the King, astrologers and wise men that the reason for the collapsing walls are that under the foundation of the building is a great expanse of water which holds two dragons, one white and one red. Due to the weight of the tower they try to move and so the walls collapse. Merlin also tells Vertigern that once released from the weight of the tower the dragons will fight to the death. Excavations are organised and the dragons are discovered and start fighting, the white killing the red. Merlin explains to the King that the red dragon represents Vertigen who will be destroyed by the rightful heirs, the two brothers Uther and Pendragon who are represented by the white dragon. Vertigern is destroyed, and in time Pendragon becomes King first, who is succeeded by Uther who takes on the name Uther Pendragon. And so Merlin becomes the advisor of Uther and lives sometimes at the court and sometimes in his beloved forest, as his dual nature requires.

In the above alchemical illustration we can see two dragons or 'serpents' in the act of biting each other's tail. The dragon above, which has wings, even has a Kings crown. The red and the white dragon may also symbolise the fall of the old religion, the red and the white symbolic of the mixing of the masculine (sperm) and feminine (blood). Also there is the 'red substance' of alchemy and the 'white substance' of the moon Stein (1984).p.167. In the tale the white kills the red, the feminine 'earth' religion is dying and the masculine patriarchal religion becomes the rule. The important thing here is that Merlin sees all and yet only advises to the King. He knows his place is not to abuse his seer talents. Most alchemical illustrations should not be read as single images. Most come in a sequence of images (ie: see the series 'Splendor solis') that should be read as a story of human transformation, and this image is no different. The next image in the story is of *one* serpent biting his tail which is sometimes labelled '*ouroboros*'. The understandings of arithmetic, especially alchemical understandings are linked with the Mercurius, to which Merlin is attributed. Stein (1984), & Jung (1971) To push the symbolism of the tale further we could read that the time of Vertigen and Uther was of fighting and destruction of the old religion, but this will finally bring about a time of peace through the transformation of Arthur and his Grail quest. Duality becomes one, and Merlin understands that his own dual nature and religion is a thing of the past. He can see the future and he knows that his beloved forest religion is dying.

Jenkins (1975), interprets the red and white dragons to also represent the Saxon victory over the Britons. This interpretation comes from a collection of works from the Welsh monk Nennius, *Historical Miscellany*. In this work Merlin is called 'Ambrosius'. Geoffrey of Monmouth was also a Welsh monk and he must have come across a Welsh legend of a seer called 'Myrddin' and his tale contains the line 'Ambrosius, who was also called Merlin' Jenkins (1975) p. 54. Nennius's work is important also for its inclusion of a passage giving a list describing Arthur's twelve battles. Its importance is due mainly for its indication of a date in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of 488. 'Then Arthur fought against them in those days, with the Kings of the Britons, but he himself was the leader of the battles' Jenkins (1975), p.30



From the *Chroniques of St Albans*. 1470. Jenkins (1975). Merlin explains the significance of the fighting dragons to King Vertigen.

The Knights of the Round Table

The next stage of Merlin's life involves stories that are better known to those who follow the Arthurian tales. Uther Pendragon has been made King and following the council of Merlin has installed the round table. Merlin has already foretold that one space needs to be kept empty for the knight who, yet unborn, will find the Holy Grail. On the first night of the round table the King commands a feast with his main 50 Knights. Merlin leaves to spend time in the forest, he knows what is to happen that night and does not wish to be there, for, as he says, 'Those who are gathered together here must believe what they see happen and I would not that they should think that I had brought it about' Jung (1971). P. 354. That night, of course, brings about the vision of the Holy Grail to the Knights at the table. It is also the night that King Uther falls in love with Ygerne (Igraine), the wife of the Duke of Tintagel, she pays the King little attention. When Merlin returns Uther allows Merlin free reign to his devilish side. Using Merlin's skills in magical transformation, Merlin changes Uther to appear as Igraine's husband so he can bed her and satisfy his passions. Arthur is the child that comes from this union. In terms of Jungian interpretation this tale opens up a whole new side to the character that is Merlin.

So far we have seen Merlin following character traits that we would associate with Jungian archetypes such as the universal 'Wise Man' or 'Prophet'. These figures appear in most ancient cultures and for the most part follow similar personality traits. Merlin is no different. The Seer or Prophet often points out to those in power the problem of the opposites that need to be overcome. It is as if those around them cannot see what is in front of them and it takes the Seer to spell it out and often ridicule their behaviour in the process. In this way Merlin can be seen as one who can bring an unconscious problem of opposites to the surface, almost a 'lightbringer' for men. Jung (1971) p.358. it is important to note that this knowledge has its dark side. This becomes obvious in Geoffrey's *Vita Merlini*, Merlin often has to withdraw from society into the forest as he has times of insanity when he cannot handle the company of other men, it is during this time that he behaves and transforms into actual animals. It is only his sister, Ganiada, who can soothe him back during these times by playing the lyre and singing him songs. On many levels the character of Merlin shares similar traits with the prophet Elijah from the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Jung (1971). Elijah, as a prophet, could see all at present and could foretell of the future. He was the holder of great spiritual knowledge, Elijah along with Ezekiel were the founders of the Cabala. As with Merlin and Blaise, he was the chronicler of the deeds of men and Kings. He would often retreat into the desert, Merlin into the forest, to gain spiritual insight and generally get away from society. Both prophets had connections with the saving the lives of great and important kings. Elijah first with David and then with ben Joseph, Merlin was the saviour of Arthur, along with Morgan when Arthur was terribly wounded and brought to Avalon. On a stranger note the apocryphal texts of Elijah tell of him being remarkably hairy as to exhibit the look of an animal. It is the same with the Geoffrey texts for Merlin in *Vita Merlini*, it is said that Merlin inherited his outer appearance from his father and that those present at his birth were 'horrified by his hairy body' Jung (1971).p.363.

And so we can see that Merlin can be viewed as this type of 'Prophet' archetype. But what of this serious misdemeanour with Igraine and Uther? If Merlin is all knowing and partly divine, why is he stooping to such immoral behaviour? The truth again can be found within the Jungian archetypes. Merlin is here as a character to show us mortals our full understanding of our psychology. Merlin is not just moral prophet and seer, he is also frequently the archetype that Jung labelled as 'trickster' otherwise known as the fool. This archetype should not be taken lightly, the fool is not here to make us laugh or to make fun of our stupidity (although the fool can at times do both). Most importantly the fool is there to change the course of destiny, he 'tricks' main characters into behaving in a certain way to manipulate an outcome of history. Jung(1972). Merlin has debased the King and shown the people that he is ruled by his passions. Merlin also shows us that the King is very human, almost animalistic and will abuse his power. This is in fact the very role of the trickster, to make the King/Church look very human and take their divine appearance away. In this way Merlin has behaved badly, although under the direction of the King, and yet the outcome has been the glorious King Arthur who will bring renewal to the land and peace to Briton. Merlin also knows how to come out of this tale the winner, as payment for the night of Igraine's love, Merlin is allowed to take Arthur once he is born and train him as a Knight. This taking of the child as payment is frequently used in fairy tales and folklore. This tale also reminds us of Merlin's Mercurial links. Being able to change the Kings appearance at will, he is the true transformer of matter. This is high magic which shows his abilities within the 'Seer/Shaman' archetype.

There are many stories of Merlin that could be discussed on a purely symbolic or alchemic level. I have looked at a few and have only touched on the basics of the symbolism. The same could of course be done with the other characters of the Arthurian legend. The female characters within the tale have a deep symbolism that has strong unconscious links to the stories of Egyptian tales. But that discussion will be left for another time.

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Pagan Pens

Fiction Corner

The Other Ghost

a serialised novel by NINA SMITH

FLEEING a failed marriage, October Pickett moves into a dilapidated old house to do the two things she's best at: hide and paint.

She soon discovers she's not alone. Rowan Riley is gorgeous, intelligent, intense – and he's been dead for thirty years.

October's obsession with the ghost draws her into a past where a clash between Paganism, feminism and Christianity once ended in murder – and could again, because someone out there does not want the truth to come out.

Chapter One: Moving In

Two faded pink plastic suitcases sat on the footpath. The paints and easels rested on the verge under the big silky oak. Fire-coloured leaves skidded ahead of the crispy cold breeze; the scent of frangipanni flowers slowly pickled the air while the exhaust fumes from the taxi faded away.

There were no passers-by. No neighbours. No cars. No real estate agent waiting to give her the keys to her house. Just an old rusty letterbox leaning at a crazy angle into the path, looking like the spider webs were the only things holding it up. The for sale sign was older still, but the sold sticker was shiny and new.

The house on the right was quiet, so Jules must be at classes. The other side was a vacant lot covered in weeds and a big spiky oleander. Good. One talkative neighbour would be quite enough to deal with.

Behind the vacant block she could just see a few of the headstones of the Uligugalup Cemetery. Max thought she was crazy, buying a house that shared a fence with a graveyard. He didn't understand Uligugalup was a very small town; practically everybody shared a fence with it.

She lugged the cases onto the front veranda and then, with infinite care, her easel and box of paints. Then she sat down on the cold red concrete steps to look at the garden. Her garden. It was a bit wild. The hibiscus branches were only just short enough that you could walk down the uneven brick path, past the big tree fern and make it onto the veranda without hitting your head. The frangipanni tree right in the centre of everything dropped a carpet of yellow and white flowers on the weeds beneath.

She rested her chin on her knees and smiled. She'd always liked this place. It was old and abandoned and dark and nobody ever went in it.

It was perfect.

"Hello?"

She jumped. "Hello!"

A woman in a dark, tailored suit picked her way carefully down the path, bending to avoid getting her slicked down and yanked back hair tangled in the hibiscus branches. She stopped at the steps and stuck out her hand. "Mrs Pickett? I'm Joan, your agent."

"Ms Pickett. October." October jumped to her feet and shook the hand, feeling quite sure her freckles were breeding in the face of this woman's three layers of flawless makeup.

"October, may I be the first to congratulate you on your purchase." Joan handed her an envelope and glanced over the box and bags on the veranda. "When will the rest of your things be arriving?"

October ripped open the envelope and stuck the key in the door. Her hand shook from excitement. She'd dreamed of this moment for every excruciating minute of making all the settlements and extricating herself from married life with Max. "That's it," she said. "That's everything I own."

"Then it's a good thing we left the furniture in there. I had the fumigators and cleaners come through for you, but the rest was an as is sale, as you know."

October knew. The only house she could ever have afforded was an old decrepit one that had been on the market since before she was born. She picked up her bags and walked into the hall. The carpet under her feet was thick despite its ragged state and patterned in brown and white.

Joan followed her down the hall and into the kitchen, where she opened her briefcase and laid a pile of papers on the table. "Here's the Certificate of Title from the settlement agent, everything's done. I saw the phone and electricity people hooking you up yesterday."

She took out a bottle of wine in a white chiffon bag and handed it over with a flourish. "Congratulations, Ms Pickett, you're the proud owner of Thirteen Roland Ramble. Welcome to Uligugalup."

October took the bottle awkwardly. "Thanks," she said. "More of a return, you know. I grew up here."

"In that case, welcome back. I'll let you get settled in now, but please do call me if you need anything."

"That's very nice of you. I will." October clutched the bottle to her chest and watched Joan close her briefcase and edge around the shadows. After a few minutes the front door clicked shut.

"I'll call you in a blue fit." October looked around the kitchen. She liked it. There was an old green Metters stove that looked like



it might work, a grotty gas stove, a counter covered in peeling blue laminex and the stout wooden table she'd put her bags on. Around the Metters stove were pretty green and blue tiles that made her think of peacock feathers, and above it a mantelpiece. She might paint a peacock up there later. For now, she put the bottle of wine at the very back of the highest cupboard she could find, then brought in her easels and set to exploring the house.

The kitchen led to a bathroom that appeared to be a laundry as well. The big old claw foot bath showed signs of wear around the spider colony living inside it. The vanity was pretty, a sink with leaf patterned tiles around it; there was a wooden medicine cabinet with an oval mirror above it, and a twin tub that had seen much better days tucked into a corner.

She peered at her face in the mirror and studied her freckles to see if they really had multiplied. Not that you could tell. It was a nice mirror though. It didn't make her look pale and sickly like the ones at the bus station had. She poked her curly, mousey hair away from her eyes.

A board creaked out in the kitchen. October left the mirror and went to explore some more. She liked the old wooden floors; these boards might even come up nicely with a bit of a polish. Out through the kitchen she found a dining room that would make a nice studio, and a lounge room with more thick tatty carpet, a fireplace and a dusty blue lounge.

Because there was nobody looking, October did a pirouette into the hall. She opened the first door onto an empty room with wooden floors.

The next door she couldn't open. She shook the handle and pushed the wood to no avail, then shrugged and turned to the door at the end of the hall.

This one opened at a touch and swung inward to reveal a big room lit by motes of sunlight through which the dust danced. The floors were bare wood, the faded curtains had peacocks prancing about the fabric and there was a double bed with the mattress still on it. It was still firm enough to sleep on, no broken springs.

October leaped onto the bed and landed bouncing. She looked up at the roof, where a wrought iron ceiling rose in the shape of a Maltese cross surrounded the one bare light bulb. "Hello house," she said, doing her best to be solemn about it. "I know nobody's lived here in a long time, but I'm here now. I just know we're going to be good friends."

Pleasant silence answered her. She put a hand up to the shafts of sunlight hitting the bed and watched the dust swirl away from her fingers.

Something creaked. October pushed stray tangles of hair out of her eyes and slid to the edge of the bed. There was a wall hanging in the corner, a picture of a woman in a long blue dress holding up a goblet, a full moon behind her, all printed on a piece of fabric. She went for a closer look and touched the fabric gently, in case it was fragile.

It wasn't. It was heavy and the picture was finely done needlework. "Wow," she whispered, running her hand down it. She paused when she felt a lump beneath it. Very, very carefully, she took the hanging down, laid it on the bed and then went back.

There was a door there. She turned the handle and pushed inward; light from a dusty window suffused the space within.

A solid wooden staircase took up most of the small room. October climbed slowly, trailing her fingers through the dust coating the railing. At the top another door was propped open with a heavy black boot. It was dark in there, but she could almost make out the shapes and shadows that meant it was cluttered with ... well, with stuff. Lots of stuff. "This is so cool," she breathed.

Far away in the house the phone jangled. October ground her teeth and considered staying right there in the dark attic with the spiders and somebody else's stuff.

It jangled pretty insistently. She climbed down, shut the door and followed the sound back to the kitchen.

The phone – when she found it, hidden at the back of one of the shelves in the kitchen – was khaki and chunky and had one of the old ring diallers. She picked up the receiver. "I told you not to call me all the time, Max."

He sounded put out. "How did you know it was me?"

She rolled her eyes at the stove. "Because whenever you ring, the phone jangles. For everyone else it just rings."

"That's stupid, October. It's the same ring for everyone."

"Did you just call me up to tell me I'm stupid?"

"No." He sighed. "I was worried. I just wanted to know if you were okay."

"Max, how the hell are we supposed to have a separation if you can't even handle being alone for one day?"

"I don't want a separation. I want you to come back."

October made a face into the phone. "You're drinking, aren't you?"

"No."

"You're drinking rum and coke. That's gross."

"How the hell can you tell?" His voice rose.

"I can smell it."

"You can't smell crap over the phone! God, when are you going to start living in the real world? You won't survive two days on your own, I'm telling you. I'm coming over there to get you."

October stamped her foot. Losing her temper was always a real sudden thing, like that time she got so mad at Max she put her fist through a window and had to go to hospital. Boy, she'd felt dumb after that. "Don't you come near my house, or I'll-I'll--"

"You'll what?" he said it in the slow, drawn out, taunting way she hated.

"I'll throw stuff at you until you go away, you hear? This is *my* house and nobody comes here unless I say so!" She slammed the phone down and kicked the cupboard door, which jarred her toe.

"Ow! Ow!" She hopped over to the table and sat on it, nursing her toe and scowling furiously at the same time.

A door slammed somewhere in the house, making her jump. The pain ebbed from her toes and the fury drained away. There was



no point letting Max wind her up. He was hours away in the city. It was time to unpack.

*

“Berry?”

October straightened up from her canvas and looked around her studio. Yes, she’d meant to unpack, but somehow the canvas had got onto the easel and the paints onto a bookshelf she’d found in the back room. She had no idea how much time had passed since she’d started painting. She decided to ignore the voice and keep going, just until she got those frangipanni flowers right.

“Berry!” Feet stomped down the hall. “Where are you?”

October wiped her forehead and cursed when cold pink paint smeared over her eyebrow. Well, she had to be sociable sometime. “In here, Jules!”

“Where’s here?” The footsteps came back toward the studio and stopped in the door.

October grinned. Jules was chunkier, blonder and brasher than ever in a lime green and orange mini dress and shiny platform boots of some similar dreadful colour.

Jules squealed and grabbed her in a fierce hug. “Oh my God, I can’t believe you actually came back! This is so cool, Berry, we’re going to be best friends again, just like in school! What are you doing?”

October wriggled out of the embrace. “It’s nice to see you too, Jules. I’m painting.”

“Wow, I’ve never seen one of your paintings. Let me have a look.” Jules wandered around to the front of the canvas and peered at it. “Hey, it’s your front garden. Cute! Oh my God, I can’t believe you moved in next door. This house hasn’t had anyone in it since, like, forever. Hey, I brought coffee, I figured you might not have much on hand.”

“You figured right.” October followed her into the kitchen, filled the one cooking pot she’d brought with water and put it on the gas stove to boil. “Did you bring cups?”

“You’re kidding me, right? Oh my God, I’m taking you shopping, are you serious? Where’s all your stuff?”

October shrugged. “It just didn’t seem important at the time. I let him take most of it, since I got more money out of the sale of the house. It was just enough to buy this one outright.”

Jules sat on the counter, crossed her legs and put on a serious face. “Honey, I’m still reeling. I mean, you get married, I don’t hear from you for years and then all of a sudden you call me out of the blue saying you bought the house next *door*. What happened with Max?”

October looked out of the window at the blue flowering hedge. She hadn’t even explored the back yard yet. “How’s uni?”

“Don’t change the subject, Berry.”

October sighed. “Look, it all just got too much. He kept getting drunk and we kept yelling at each other and I’m sick of it. I need some space. We’re having a year’s trial separation and then we’re getting a divorce.”

“So you sold the house?”

“It was all we had left, since he drank everything else out from under me.”

“What a pillock. What’s he doing then?”

October snorted. “Renting a bedsit in the city and living on his half of the sale. He’s supposed to be going to alcoholics anonymous, but I don’t think he made it past the bottle shop.”

“And how are you handling it all?”

She shrugged. “I’m fine. I got this house, that’s all I wanted. Is the psych session over yet, Ms student shrink?”

Jules giggled. “Yep. I’ll send you the bill at the end of the month. Come on, let’s go shopping, you need some stuff and there’s still an hour or two before the shops shut.”

“I’d rather just stay here for a bit.”

“Bollocks you would. You need food and kitchen stuff.”

“I haven’t got much money.”

“That’s what the op shop’s for, honey. Come on, let’s go.”

October took the boiling water off the stove. She knew when she was beat.

*

October sipped a cup of coffee and looked around herself. Hurricane Jules had left no stone unturned making sure she had the bare necessities. When they got back with boxes full of stuff, she’d torn around the house making sure everything was unpacked and put it away. There were sheets and a blanket on the bed, towels in the bathroom, everything she needed in the kitchen and food in a rickety old fridge that would probably up and die on her in a week. All that was left for her to do was to make her studio look more like a studio and less like a dining room with an easel in it. Jules was an angel. Without her, October knew she’d be existing on art and water for weeks to come. She’d just left, promising to be back first thing in the morning to drag October out of bed and help give the house a damn good clean.

October hoped she’d forget. She didn’t want to clean tomorrow. She wanted to go back up into the attic and explore. She wanted to paint some more and then go out in the garden and touch the flowers.

She sighed, left her cup on the sink and wandered up the hall to the bedroom, where the bed was freshly made with her own sheets and a brand new op shop blanket and pillows. She hoped Max was enjoying keeping all that stuff.

October changed into her checked flannelette nightie, turned out the light and crawled under the covers, looking out of the window at the stars that peeped through the peacock curtains. It was all so new, so nice, to be in her own bed and her own house and all alone. To be in control of what happened in her own space. She closed her eyes.



Odd.

People were singing out there in the night. Anyone would think she lived next door to a church. October slid out of bed and pushed open the door.

A bare bulb lit the hall with a glow that was just a little too bright. A wooden cross hung on the wall between the doors of the two spare rooms. She padded softly over the wooden floor; her bare feet made no sound.

In the lounge room an old TV sat where the couch should be. A record player sat on top of it. Speakers crackled on either side; October went carefully over and took the needle off a record that spun noiselessly in the player. The crackling stopped. She laid the record carefully on top of a speaker. There was a picture of John Lennon on the label.

She wandered into the kitchen. The bright orange vase in the centre of the table had plumes of pale blue plumbago spilling over the sides. Leaves lay scattered over the yellow tablecloth.

October touched one of the flowers. It fell from its stem and floated off the table; she crouched down to look for it. There, there it was in the shadows. She carefully picked the flower up and stood.

She was at the back of a church. Odd, she didn't go to church. October cupped the little blue flower in her hand and walked up the aisle. The people in the pews looked at her. The women wore little veils over their faces and the men all looked grim. October shrank away from them, but she kept walking.

There were two long steps leading up to the front of the church. Two big wooden signs on either side of the wall held numbers; she wondered what they were for. A big wooden cross cast a shadow that made her shiver.

She turned toward the pulpit and held out the flower.

October opened her eyes. It was pitch black outside and the air was icy cold even with the window shut tight; winter was definitely on the way. She pulled the covers up around her shoulders and tried to think of other things to chase the dream away. At least there was no singing. The house wasn't really silent though; she snuggled under the blanket and listened.

Were those footsteps? In her house? She squeezed her eyes shut. Yes, those were definitely footsteps. Heavy ones, a man's footsteps.

Right.

She scrambled out of bed, threw her dressing gown over her shoulders and blundered out into the hall to turn on the light.

"Hello?"

Silence.

"Someone there?"

Silence.

"Bloody hell." October turned out the light, stomped back to bed and burrowed under the covers to warm her icy skin. She closed her eyes and put the blankets over her head.

The next time she woke up the air was warmer and lighter and there was a cool breeze tickling the back of her exposed neck. Tiny hairs along her spine stood on end in response.

October groaned. "Not yet."

The breeze tickled again, just as though someone were breathing right next to her skin. This time every single hair on her spine and neck stood up.

She threw the covers over her head. Seconds later she threw them back and peered up at the wall hanging of the woman in front of the full moon. She didn't remember putting it back up. She must have though, to stop Jules seeing the door. The woman looked at her like she knew something, her mysterious little half-smile perfectly mocking.

The tinny old transistor radio on the bedside table exploded into song. October fell out of bed, taking the blanket with her. "Who the hell turned you on?" she demanded.

The song ended and the news started. October hauled herself up and hunted for a pair of jeans and a t-shirt.

"...And in latest news, petrol prices are tipped to rise yet again as political tensions grow in the troubled middle east. Pacific islands are battenning down in preparation for another cyclone system, while closer to home, convicted murderer Charles Newton has been freed after serving thirty years, declaring himself a reformed man. Stay with us after the break for the weather."

There was a crackle of static, a pop, and the radio went silent. October yanked the plug out. "Darn power surges," she said, pulled a shirt over her head and went to answer the door before Jules completely battered it down.

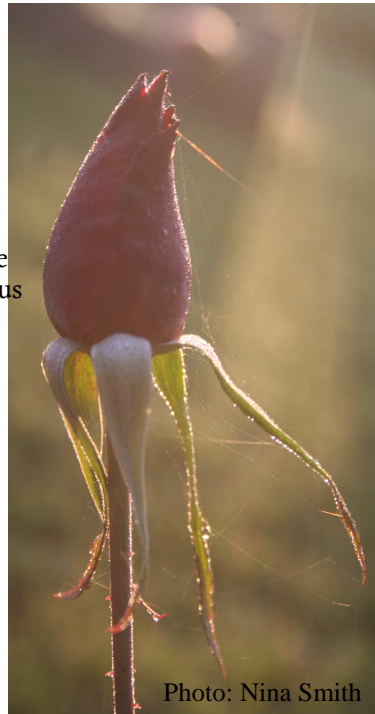


Photo: Nina Smith

Pagan Pens ...

Ghost Stories

Do you have any spooky stories? Here at Pagan Pens we love to hear your stories about haunted Western Australia (or wherever you may be) – so send them on into us at paganpens@gmail.com

Haunted at Millendon

By SUE GRAY

IN the Early 90s I lived in a share house on Campersic Rd Millendon. There were four or six of us living in this house at any one time. It was 10 acres as we all had horses, and it was quite an old farm house.

There was nothing really extraordinary about this house. It had a funny feel to it but I assumed that was because three witches and an Ceremonial Magician lived in it, and were always doing something esoteric, especially the Magician. He gave me no end of grief, as his bedroom was next to mine and late at night he would do ritual and invoke all these things which would then be hovering around the edge of his circle which also happened to be my bedroom. Not Happy Jan! Anyway, nothing special about the house, or so I thought.

Eventually, as in most share houses, people came and went, but what I noticed was the less people in the house, the more we got some strange activity going on. I didn't really pay much attention and assumed it was just the crap the Magician hadn't banished properly, as he had made quite the nuisance of himself with his lack of knowledge on banishing things properly.

One night I got up about 2am to go to the toilet. I was half asleep walking through the lounge room and I bumped into someone. Scared the bejesus out of me as I realised it wasn't a someone but a something. It ran one way and I ran the other! I was awake now, and I knew it wasn't an entity thing but a ghostly thing.

Next morning I commented on this to one of my house mates and she informed me that she had seen it a few times late at night also in the lounge room and in the main bedroom where she slept with her partner. So we just laughed and forgot about it.

After a few months, everyone moved out and I was living there by myself. Nice and peaceful, NOT. Obviously this was a shy ghost and as soon as everyone left, it came out in full force. Whenever I pulled up in my car from work, the curtains of the main bedroom would get pulled back and I would see a face sticky beaking to see who was here. Bit unnerving at first, but I knew that the ghost was harmless, so why be afraid? I also found out by the typical contact methods that the ghost was a male child who had bled to death after an accident with an axe.

Quite often day and night I would hear footsteps running in the front bedroom, door slamming, giggling... Never worried me, but it scared the hell out of my father. A few times he pulled up at my place, saw the face looking out the window and assumed I was home. For a while there he thought he was going crazy until I told him I had a ghost. He didn't take me seriously of course. Not until he had an encounter that saw him vow never to step foot in my house ever again.

One cold winter winters day my father turned up at my place as he did quite often. I wasn't home, so he thought he would light the fire for me so the house was nice and warm for when I got home. The main fireplace was in the lounge room, and he was lighting this when he kept hearing footsteps in the front room. He assumed it was me coming in the front door, and called out that he was lighting the fire in the lounge room. He told me that he was chatting away, concentrating on the fire and heard the footsteps came up behind him and a hand came to rest on his shoulder. Later he told me as soon as that hand touched him he knew it wasn't me and his hair stood on end. He turned around and there was no one there. He said he couldn't get out of that house fast enough. I remember pulling up that day and seeing him sitting in his car, which was unusual as he usually let himself in. He never would go in my house by himself after that day. I moved out about two months later, but not before I moved the spirit on.



Gluten Free Chocolate Brownies

By SUE GRAY



I know this isn't a very Witchy type of recipe, but everyone likes chocolate, and these would have to be the most moist brownies I have had the pleasure to devour. I took them to a pagan meet a few weeks back, and they were a big hit not just among the Gluten intolerant people, but with everyone.

I hope you enjoy them as much as we did.

For those of us who need to keep gluten-free, these brownies will satisfy the chocolate craving.

Ingredients:

200g unsalted butter, chopped
200g dark chocolate, broken into pieces
1 cup brown sugar
3 eggs, lightly beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3/4 cup gluten-free plain flour
2 tablespoons cocoa powder

Step 1

Preheat oven to 190°C. Line a 5cm deep, 18cm (base) square cake pan with non-stick baking paper.

Step 2

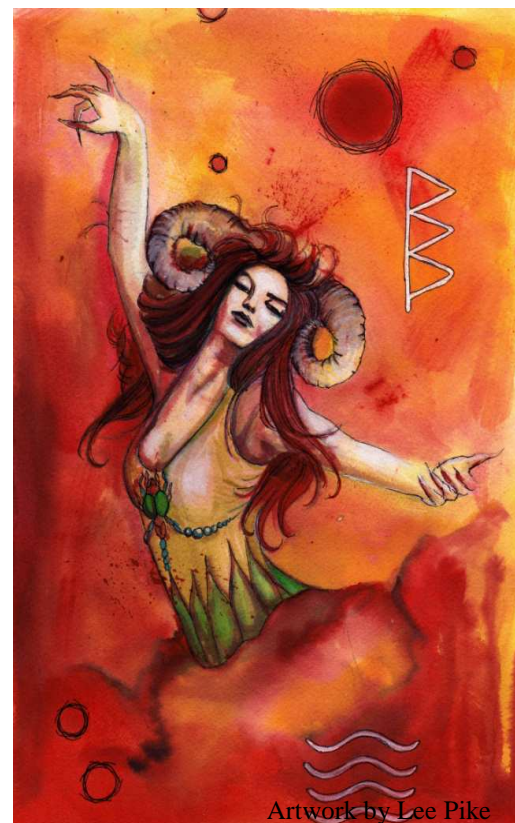
Heat butter, chocolate and sugar in a saucepan over low heat, stirring constantly, until melted and smooth. Transfer to a heatproof bowl. Set aside to cool slightly.

Step 3

Add eggs and vanilla to chocolate mixture. Mix well. Sift flour and cocoa over chocolate mixture. Stir to combine.

Step 4

Pour brownie mixture into pan. Bake for 20 minutes or until just set. Set aside to cool. Once cooled, lift out. Wrap in plastic wrap. Place into an airtight container. Stand for 1 day. Cut into pieces. Serve



Pagan Pens ...

Noticeboard



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Hands of Gaia

We so often hear that when Pagans are facing tough financial times, they feel uncomfortable going to some religious organisations for help, partly because in the past they may have been expected to accept the faith of that charitable body or perhaps because they feel awkward approaching a religious organisation different from their own spiritual path. Most charitable bodies in Australia are not Pagan of course and while most charities do not discriminate against people of different faiths, many



Coven Fintan

has moved to the south West of WA and is opening its doors to new members. An Eclectic group, with a background in the Alexandrian Tradition. If you would like to know more about the group please visit our Webpresence <http://www.covenfintan.org/> or our facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/183129061702793/> Or email me, Sue Gray at bastkitty-cat@yahoo.com



Pagans often prefer to receive support from a faith based organisation that matches their own beliefs. As a result, we'd like to offer a more faith acceptable option for these folks that won't compromise their spiritual and religious beliefs.

Community Church of Inclusive Wicca (Accessed Friday, 30 December 2011)

Hands of Gaia's birth was inspired by the Community Church of Inclusive Wicca's work in this area. We are in the planning stages at the moment, but our aim is to be up and running by 2013.

If you would like to contribute or volunteer, Please go to <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Hands-of-Gaia/211390802279632> on facebook.

We would love to meet you.

Pagan Pens ...

Noticeboard

Pagan Discussion Group South West WA

This group meets once a month in Donnybrook and all pagan types are welcome. Mainly advertised on Facebook, but if you don't have facebook and are interested in coming along, email Sue at bastkittycat@yahoo.com for information on when and where the next meet is.



Beautifully Haunted!

A Gothic Bellydance and Burlesque event.

April 27th 2013

Come and join us for a night of dance at the beautiful Templemore Teahouse situated in Nannup.

Come dressed in your Steampunk, Gothic or Burlesque finery and win prizes for best costumes!

BYO Alcohol and food can be purchased at the event.

Special Guest

Ma'isah from Melbourne will perform her Elsyium style gothic fusion bellydance and the night will be a showcase of Fusion style bellydance and Burlesque styles.

There will be a fashion parade of alternative clothing.

and

Introducing PseudoSkirt 2013!

We will also be offering Workshops over the weekend situated in the Bunbury area.

If you wish to be involved with this project as a performer, feel free to contact me. More information and registration will be offered soon.

See our Website <http://beautifullyhaunted.thewahmzone.com/>

Or our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/messages/100000296976916#!/groups/471321896244657>