



The Wichtower

THE WICCAUK MEMBERS MAGAZINE

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Inside this issue

Cover Art - Beginning	1
Contents & contacts	2
Editorial & Cover Art	3
Moot Information	4
Imbolc	5
Blackpool Weekend	6
Poetry Corner	7
Archaic Witchcraft	10
The Cliff	13
Anam Cara	18
Inanna	20
Ask Obsidiana	22

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The Witchtower is produced every 6-8 weeks and is distributed free online and in selected shops.

The Witchtower is produced by unpaid volunteers and members of our website.

We welcome submissions from any source. Articles or essays, poetry, book reviews, practical advice on aspects of the Craft are all welcome.

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Editorial

Welcome to the first 2004 issue of the Witchtower.

The WiccaUK website has been undergoing some major changes recently. The Forums system has been completely upgraded to provide a much more easier to use interface. In the near future a full working portal should be in place to make navigation of the forums even easier still.

It has also been an exciting month for the Witchtower. Recently the Witchtower Minisite (<http://witchtower.wiccauk.com>) was launched in order to provide an archive of back articles and past features from the WiccaUK magazine. It is also a source of information about the magazine how to

play a part in its future.

In this issue of the Witchtower we have an article on Archaic Witchcraft by Steve Wilson as well as an article on Anam Cara by Irrelian (formerly CelticVision). As well as the usual features of the magazine this issue we have a story by Anna McKerrow.

Many thanks to Annemarie for allowing us to use her beautiful artwork which is also viewable at <http://www.zwackart.com/>

BB

Sparks

Witchtower Cover Artwork 'Begining' by Annemarie Zwack

My inspiration for this work came from hearing Joseph Campbell speak about the significance of the mandala, a circle within a square. The circle is a whole, an entirety; and therefore can represent the self. I did a series of paintings in which the circle was central within a square, usually with the arc of another circles intersecting. I became fascinated with the relationship between the arcs. The influence and gravity one exerts over another, the balance they sometimes found and the tension created when not all of the circle is seen. Sometimes a large presence looms just out of view. Sometimes all can be seen except a sliver of the whole. The simple language of geometric shapes allows a vast

array of association from macro to microcosmic. I was looking at pictures that were coming back from the Hubble Space Telescope at the time I was making these paintings. I created the under paintings using my body prints (done in acrylic) which gave me a cloud of imagery to begin to work with. Sometimes I drew out the circles first and interacted with them as I did the body painting. In other pieces I allowed the body prints to suggest the circles. I completed the paintings using oils. In some cases I allowed the body prints to show through and in others only the motion is left.

<http://www.zwackart.com>

WiccaUK Moot Information

London Moot
8th February

Portsmouth Moot
28th February

Leeds Moot
21st February

Bristol Moot
7th March

Brighton Moot
21st February

Blackpool Weekend
12-14th March

Manchester Moot
28th February

East Anglia Moot
28th March

Organising a Moot



If you're thinking about running a local Moot or other event, let us know!

Email events@wiccauk.com with what you've decided so far, and we'll try to help as much as possible with the rest.

We'll mention it on the site and, if we have enough notice, mention it in newsletters, both our own and other people, and in this magazine.



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Imbolc

Also known as Brigid's Day, Oimelc, Imbolg, Candlemas, Festival of Bride and Festival of Bridget.

Imbolc is the Sabbat that occurs on the first or second of February. There are some traditions that say that this Sabbat marks the beginning of spring but this does not hold under scrutiny. Imbolc marks the middle of winter, just as Yule marked the beginning and Ostara marks the beginning of spring at the Equinox.

The word 'Imbolc' means 'in the belly' while the word 'Oimelc' means 'ewes milk'. Both refer to the fact that many ewes are pregnant at this time and in a mild year, the first lambs will be born about now. In fact, Imbolc or Oimelc was the ancient Celtic festival celebrating the birth and freshening of sheep and goats, the Feast of Milk.

The Celts marked this Sabbat as Brigid's Day. Brigid is one of the few Pagan Deities to have survived as saints in the Christian religion. In legend the goddess was associated with learning, poetry, prophesying, healing and metal working and was in general the most pleasant Irish deity. She could also be a battle goddess, the particular patroness of the armies of the province of Leinster where her cult centre was situated at Kildare. She may therefore have begun as a local tutelary goddess but some modern writers have preferred to view her as a pan-Celtic deity and linked her to the Romano-British Brigantia. Brigid may already have been linked to Imbolc or it could be that the festivals association with milk drew the saint to it, because of a popular medieval Irish legend that she had been the wet-nurse of Jesus. The festival of Imbolc must be pre-Christian in origin but there is no direct testimony as to its early nature or concerning any rites, which might have been employed. Whatever did happen, the feast was important enough for its date to be dedicated to Brigid.

Today we look upon this Sabbat as special as it is the time when the Goddess, who gave birth to

Yule, is now transformed into the Maiden again. The God is now seen as a young man, full of vigour and his pursuit of the Maiden starts at this Sabbat.

This is the Sabbat where we can plan ahead for what 'seeds' we will 'sow' in the coming year and how we plan to nurture them for a successful harvest later. Imbolc is also the time when the last of the Yule evergreens are removed. In addition, at this time of new life and growth, it is appropriate to plant bulbs or flowers, or to sow seeds. Imbolc is also a time of purification - clean out the home, pay off debts, settle old scores, let go of what doesn't work anymore and get ready for new directions in life.

Customs include having lit candles in every window of the house and keeping a perpetual candle on the altar to Brigid. Straw can be woven into Brigid Crosses and then hung from the corners of rooms, over doorways, and over beds for fertility, prosperity and for the blessing of the Goddess.

The usual colours for Imbolc are white and yellow. White contains all the colours in the spectrum and therefore embodies all colours and is a symbol of all possibilities. Yellow has always been a colour associated with the sun.

Some other ideas that come to mind to do on this Sabbat are that as we celebrate this day with candle, an excellent project would be to make your own candles. There are many kits sold these days at quite reasonable prices and many are very easy to make. In many parts of the British Isles, you will find wells dedicated to Brigid or Saint Bridget. If you are lucky enough to live near one why not pay it a visit on this day. If you do visit such a site and wish to leave an offering, please make sure that it is something that will return to the Earth. For example, you could leave a circlet of grass plaited while making a wish or a hair from your own head, offered as a form of sacrifice.

Sam

WiccaUK Blackpool Hotel Moot

We've booked a hotel in Blackpool by the seaside for a weekend in mid-March, which coincides with the Pagan Federation North West Conference too.

The nights booked are Friday 12th to Sunday 14th of March.

The Sutton Park Hotel on Woodfield Road, Blackpool South Side is a B&B close to Blackpool's seafront, and there are two ticket options

£25 for a single night's accommodation
£40 is the two-night (Friday and Saturday) fee

Bed & Breakfast is included, as is a buffet on Saturday. This price does not include entry charge to the Pagan Fed conference, which is currently £12 in advance, or £15 on the door. Coming along to this is optional of course! You're very welcome to stay in the Hotel or sample all the delights Blackpool has to offer.

To book a space, please submit payment as soon as possible.

Cheque and postal order made out to WiccaUK can be sent to Blackpool Moot, BM WiccaUK, London, WC1N 3XX. PayPal payments should be made to info@wiccauk.com. NoChex payments to casp@wiccauk.com. Payments will be refunded any time up until 5th March should you need to cancel your place.

Space is limited, so please reserve a place as soon as possible.

Mother Ephesus

She came from the earth,
Her name Anahita.
And walked on the river,
To enter Ephesus.

They called her the goddess,
They blessed her with honour,
The mother abundant,
In garlands of apples.

She took from the Zodiac,
Nursed from the netherworld,
Fostered the faithful,
From Siwah to Jalalpur.

Honoured as Artemis,
Midwife to deities,
Lost her great temple,
To terrible flame.

She called to the east,
And her godson came marching,
Restoring the matriarch,
Saving her throne,

Sons of the father,
Invading her hearthland,
Unworked her glory,
And buried her down.

Aegean Fishermen,
Casting a trinity,
Thought of the maiden,
And made her Theocrat.

All men owe love to her,
Everything owe to her,
All irresistible,
Spirit of life.

Gaia unstoppable,
Mary immaculate,
Artemis bountiful,
Great Anahita.

Mother and maiden,
Bringer of life.

By Andrew Wheeler

Magic Spot

When I'm in my magic spot,
Or sitting up a tree,
I'm looking down on rabbits,
Who are looking up at me.

I wonder what it must be like,
To live your life in fear,
And then before I blink my eye,
The rabbits disappear.

They run and hide right down a hole,
And stand their ground so firm,
Until their peaceful home's disturbed,
By a curious little worm,

He tunnels down from up above,
And falls upon the floor,
And then while munching on a leaf,
He kisses rabbits paw.

He says good day to you my dear,
I'm sorry to surprise,
But I was running from a mole,
And I haven't any eyes.

The kindly rabbit looks down to him,
And gallantly declares,
You can come and live with me,
My aunt and cousin hares.

So off they go into the field,
As happy as can be,
And I walk off to find myself,
A buzzing bumblebee.

By Rayne

Poppies in the Wind

The poppies blow in the wind
Surrounded by thick grass standing still and proud in memoriam
The breeze meanders through the tall stalks
Gently kissing the skin of the lady standing still in the field
Looking out: waiting for her true love to return

But he won't come....
He died many years ago, when bullets studded the night's sky
And gas destroyed the lungs of young.

She stands - A silent steamy tear falling down her cheek
The poppies - the souls of the dead smile at the sun

But the darkening clouds role in
Over the hills they come with such malice
And with such speed she falls to the ground
She cries for the one she loves – out there somewhere
Her voice echoes over the hills piercing the silent waves
A flash of blood screams at her, a cry in the wind that is not hers

- Though she knows it well
The fruity tone, the seductive murmur
It is he -, His soul calling, Echoing begging over the distant fields
No birds sing - death is in the wind

And she knows it, but still she stands and waits for the footsteps
Waiting for a smile that never comes
The trees pale in sickness and in a vomiting motion shed their leaves
The souls of soldiers, of lovers long dead fly - Fly in the wind
The sun hides behind a cloud.

The years speed by without mercy, and the lady greys
Slowly till her brittle bones break under the weight of loss
Until finally she succumbs to the earth
Finally again into his arms
They are the lovers, The voices in the wind.

By I_Luv_Willow
Written for Obsidiana

Archaic Witchcraft

When Gerald Gardner devised Wicca, as it is now known, he did so upon what was then a fairly consensual opinion in the circles that he moved in as to what witchcraft was. Firstly, based upon the work of Margaret Murray, he decided that it was a religion. He further agreed with Murray that the male god of the witches was an antlered deity (although referred to as "horned") which all ancient Europeans had once worshipped and whose worship was continued underground after the arrival of Christianity. He further added to this a triple goddess of the moon described in Robert Graves' book "The White Goddess".

He also provided Wicca with a list of eight types of magic derived from both the ceremonial magic he was already involved in (co-masonry, Druidry and the OTO) and folk magic. However, many of his suggestions for how to work magic as witches were abandoned (dancing quickly replaced scourging for example) and Alex Sanders later added in even more ceremonial aspects.

In the late 1950s another, less famous witch, Robert Cochrane, devised a further system of witchcraft based upon folklore research. He too followed Margaret Murray but claimed roots in "old village covens", claims which, unfortunately, most of his modern followers tend to believe. Compared to Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca, "British Traditional Witchcraft" does not mention its founder so often to initiates.

Witchcraft is now very popular with young people who may nevertheless be slightly disappointed with what they find when they look for "the real thing". This is largely, I believe, because the three main strands of the Craft listed above are based on outdated and erroneous material.

Margaret Murray has been thoroughly discredited. There is no room here to go into just how many errors she made. Robert Graves was writing about poetry and did not expect his book to be considered historical. Folklore researchers of the 1950s and previous decades were over-influenced by Sir James Fraser's "The Golden Bough" which, like everything else about pre-Christian religion emerging from Victorian culture (although published early in the 20th century), vastly overstated the importance of fertility in past faiths.

With this in mind, and with much more information about, and subsequent experiments in, making magic, Archaic Witchcraft looks to before Murray and Fraser at what people thought witchcraft was, where such ideas are likely to have come from and whether they could relate to real magical practice. From this emerges a system of initiatory witchcraft that can be practised first in groups and then alone that brings the Craft into the new millennium. While certain aspects will remain known to initiates only, for secrecy has its own special power (not that there's much secrecy left nowadays elsewhere, the following can be said:

There are aspects of witchcraft found all over the country, the continent and the world that are either not highly emphasised or missing completely from Wicca and British Traditional Witchcraft (the Cochrane Tradition) that are restored and emphasised in Archaic Witchcraft:

1. Archaic Witchcraft is not a religion and is open to people of any (or no) religion provided that religion permits the practice of magic, and permits that practice with people of other or no religion.

2. The deities worked with in Ar-

chaic Witchcraft are considered to be powerful spirits rather than masters/mistresses. Much modern pagan reverence for deities is based upon Christian attitudes towards their God.

3. The power of harnessing dreams is a major aspect of Archaic Witchcraft in furtherance of the work of Italy's Benandante, sometimes wrongly referred to as Strega.

4. The making of pacts and fidelity to those pacts is a major method of magical working. These pacts are made with spirits of nature, of place and also with the great spirits often called Gods and Goddesses by some and demonic forces by those that have opposed witchcraft and magic. Oaths are central to Archaic Witchcraft, do not expect to an "Archaic Book of Shadows" published, even in America, where oaths, such as signatures on treaties by Presidents, often seem to count for nothing.

5. The making and keeping of a familiar spirit by each witch. This does not refer to a pet animal.

6. The making and keeping of a group spirit by each coven.

7. The telling of fortunes by everyday means, rather than special magical packs of cards, although we have no objection to those methods.

8. The continuance of ancient ceremonial practices that are known.

9. The making of various types of talisman from the materials of nature. These are usually to be worn secretly, not as jewellery.

10. The making of magical "potions" (not of a medicinal nature, we have a Health Service now).

11. Communion with the dead, with animal and other spirits including by mediumship and possession.

12. Flying. Why be a witch if you can't fly?

How these methods are carried out will remain secret. They have been developed from decades of practice with methods ranging from Wicca to Sufism, from Tantra to Voudon. Other methods may be used from time to time. Some that will not are:

1. Use of ceremonies borrowed from Freemasonry. Nothing against masons, just each to their own.

2. Use of "ecstatic" dancing that make ring-around-the-roses look like break-dancing.

3. Scourging, nudity, binding, the "Great Rite" and other methods of group-bonding relevant to repressed and leering generations that are, like, just SO last century.

4. Chants that sound like suicide notes.

5. False claims about antiquity. Archaic Witchcraft is a 21st Century development with roots in ancient practice but which makes no claims on initiatory lines. Archaic Witchcraft's initiatory line starts now, and although several lines of initiation come down into it none of them validate it.

6. Ceremony for its own sake. No matter how enjoyable, Archaic Witchcraft is aimed at making magic that works. Everything else is just a party (not that there's anything wrong with parties).

7. Magic for its own sake. If there's an easier way to achieve a result than by magic, do that instead.

8. The use of gossip, slander or libel to denigrate other systems or individuals. What works for others works for others. Archaic Witchcraft aims to master witchcraft, but not to own it.

9. False "morality" developed to assuage public opinion. An it harm none my a**e! If a thing needs doing it needs doing and Archaic Witches will be expected to follow and develop their own conscience and sense of innate morality rather than obeying advice as though it were law.

10. Making claims that witches are just ordinary people with an amusing hobby to assuage public opinion. What we do is simply nobody else's business unless we break the law (which we won't) or they ask us to intervene magically on their behalf (which we will do after consulting our consciences). We are not, however, "normal" or "average" and such people need not apply.

11. Using false etymologies to assuage public opinion. Witchcraft is the craft of twisting, not of "the wise".

12. Doing everything Deosil. This is a hangover from the Christian magic of the Golden Dawn. Since Wicca claims, after Murray, that old country superstitions about "the Devil" actually refer to their horned god, it seems odd that almost all such superstitions involve walking or dancing widdershins.

13. Magical tools that are obviously magical tools. Broomsticks and cauldrons were everyday items once, and if used magically could, in the event of discovery, be explained away. They are not everyday items today and scream "witch" at anyone who sees them. Wicca can use athames, we will use knives!

The grades of Archaic Witchcraft will be those of any other craft that was organised in these isles – Apprentice, Journeyman/woman and Master or Mistress of the Craft. This is not a borrowing from Freemasonry, they borrowed it from the other guilds that once organised training and acceptance into all skilled crafts.

To become a Journeyman/woman an Apprentice will have to be able to prove that they can lead the work of a coven. To become a Master or Mistress of Witchcraft a Journeyman/woman will have to produce a masterpiece of magic, that is, perform a magical act with a stated intent that then comes to pass. Leading the work of a coven is something that will be shared, not limited to the equivalent of a High Priest and High Priestess (as in many forms of Wicca).

In the event of Archaic Witchcraft developing enough covens for it to be necessary, a Guild of Archaic Witches will be formed and a Guild Court formed from the Masters and Mistresses of the Craft – but this is unlikely:-

Quite simply, we do not expect that Archaic Witchcraft will be very popular. Dressing up and wearing "occult" jewellery, removing clothes and dancing (or walking briskly with held hands) while singing miserable chants seem the main focus of witchcraft today. Wicca can be learnt from books, though 3rd degrees desperately explain that only person-to-person training and coven membership really count, as they carve out their personal empires from the platforms of various conferences around the country. Why bother learning to do magic properly when an American book can give you a sweet little rhyme for every occasion, from gaining love to removing acne? (often the same chant will do for both).

The idea that witchcraft might involve more than memorising a few lines of bad verse and reciting them in front of others will put many off. Those few who are interested in witchcraft that works may contact me via Wicca UK by Private Message. The first meetings with regards to forming a coven of Archaic Witches will begin in early 2004, with Beltane Eve the target date for the creation of the first coven.

Steve Wilson

The Cliff

I became disabled living in the city. It wanted me out and it got me. It was my fault; I was living in a façade of safety, a voluntarily blind woman. I was blind by choice, thinking I was impenetrable, this bastion of strength in a raincoat, this city-wise streetwise lady thinking nothing of her edgy surroundings; the surroundings that my estate agent sold to me as up-and-coming. In an assumptive colonialism I strolled past the deranged, the aggressive and the lost people as part of the landscape. I even felt that they were friendly towards me, that I fit in. I was living in a Dickensian fantasy. The criminal was a mere cad, "Up to no good, that one," old ladies would mutter, and as he caught my eye he would tip his hat ruefully, with an appreciative "Evening, Miss," because wasn't I the dream of the man on the street, the scruffy and down at heel? Wasn't I the uptown girl they all wanted and dreamed about, but could never have?

The man stepped out of character. To me, that was most surprising, still dumbly not realising that he had never consented to be in it in the first place. I had decided the role and the boundaries in this relationship, only I hadn't told anyone else. It was common courtesy to leave a lady alone, wasn't it? Surely we were all reasonable adults. Surely we knew that.

The shock of him approaching me was huge, but the amazement at myself was more consuming. How could I have thought being alone at this hour in this place was safe? This street, which was so commonplace, I suddenly realised

was just waiting for the day to come. It was inevitable. Cometh the day. Cometh the hour. Here was my man.

He asked for money, and I said no, of course. He asked for my phone, which I refused too, blithely and absolutely. My pride was still there. How dare he. I still ruled the empire. This was my land. This was my right of way.

He pulled a knife out of his pocket. His features were dull and empty. There was no openness to appeal to, no reason. He wasn't the wry clever criminal of my cosy thoughts. I couldn't flirt my way out of it; in fact, if I did, things might go worse. This was his land and his was the face of the conqueror. I had no right of way here, no rights in this situation.

I found the road and it found me. Suddenly, pain was my saviour. I ran in front of a car. It skidded but it didn't miss. I was perversely glad, and I saw my attacker between the cars, flickering dangerously like a candle about to set fire to a curtain. I felt an overwhelming desire to close my eyes and blacked out.

After the accident, I was told that my legs were healing, slowly, but they would always be stiff in cold weather when the breaks, healed over but knobbly and shiny inside, would throb and cry. If they healed properly I might still get arthritis. Arthritis at 29. It seemed ridiculous. Where had my life gone? What about my work? It soon became apparent that my position was not being held open and they managed in some way to make me

redundant. So now I was totally useless. Apparently when my legs were broken I must have had a lobotomy too for all the intelligence that was assumed to have leaked out my ears during my ordeal.

At first I kicked against moving away (only symbolically of course) and sat resolutely in the new chair, rubbing the bruises on my knuckles where I'd banged them in impatience, moving through unflinching doorframes. I degenerated in my flat, wheeling myself from room to room and jumping at the noises that went past my windows; arguments shouted from stairwells to the car park, crying babies, men shouting, drunks singing, and occasionally, the front door handle turning surreptitiously. I had never noticed the noises too much before, but now I was indoors all the time I felt the walls grow papery, like a weak membrane. What an easy enterprise it would be to break in and find me in bed, cowering under the duvet, desperately pressing 999 on my mobile. How easy to penetrate through these sac-like walls at me, a helpless insect inside.

I could no longer sleep at night and only napped in the daytime for fear of breaks. It frustrated me that someone had to make a special journey to take me out of the flat – on occasion, a well-meaning friend but more often a surly nurse called Janice who lived on the next estate. Janice objected to the fact I lived on the third floor and it was a job to manoeuvre the chair down the stairs because the lifts were always out of order. She acted as if it was my fault that I had never considered the possibility I might be in a wheelchair in my meditations to buy something on the third floor.

I couldn't get out on my own and when I did it was with Janice and an endless list of housework she had to do when she got home. It didn't help to cheer me up, but I hated being in by myself.

After two weeks of Janice and her threatening hernia it seemed I had no option but to give up and ask for help. I called my sister Sherrie who was living in my grandmother's old house in Cornwall. She was surprised to hear from me but arrived the next day in an estate car with rock cakes wrapped up in foil for the journey on the dashboard. It was with no regret at all that I locked the door behind me and let her wheel me away.

*

It is dark, before dawn, and I stand with my back to the house that stands a dingy white against misty hills. My feet are firm on the ground and my mind is still, breathing the same rhythm as the tide – washing slowly in, sucking out. It is the curious silence before the sun where birds shut their beaks. I wear nothing under my robe which whips around me with the wind on the rocky cliff. Near to my toes pebbles dislodge and drop down into the sea, though I can't hear them when they fall.

My strength is returning so that when I feel rested I can walk a little way and stand awhile. I know it won't last long though and my fingers cross to my wrist where the mobile phone sits smugly waiting for me to call for help. My morning vigils greeting the sun are intrinsic to getting better for me. My legs scream at first but I pursue movement. The doctor says, after a time, it will be best to exercise.

I perceive a lighter shade to the morning after a while, and a rustle in a nearby tree. That tree, my sister says, was an old hanging tree; it dangled the bodies of vagabonds upon it in olden times. Had it heard their last confession? I think about my attacker with his blank expression and the knife which I knew he would use if he had to. Had travellers once dreaded passing over these cliffs for fear of attack? How the wild places moved and morphed from one place to another. What was once a lawless wilderness was now a quaint retreat for a girl with healing on her mind. What was now the up-and coming Sodom I had lived in was once the preserve of the family with maids and butlers, charwomen and visitors with calling cards. In the eternal flux of things it would change again. The hanging tree would be cleansed of its blood by the steady roar of the elements. Would I be cleansed too, in time?

The sun is breaking through now, sweeping away the void before form. As I feel the first rays I stretch out my arms to touch them, for them to touch me. I fling my arms out and up in a salute, a welcome, and feel the thrills of awakening glisten on my back. The day has started, and I am here to see it. Under the pinkening sky, with wreaths of peachy clouds across the horizon I feel the power of the new day surround me.

She comes up behind me then with the chair, right on time. The phone is for when she oversleeps. "It's a good sunrise" she says as I sink into the chair. "You're humouring me," I say and ig-

nore her protests. Sherrie is not given to fancy, but her prosaic comfort is a huge help. She talks of breakfast and cups of tea as she tucks a blanket over my lap. My sister wheels me back into the house. I feel like Lazarus.

I spend my first days in grandmother's old place reading cookbooks with Sherrie. Ten green leather bound volumes standing on a shelf in the kitchen when Sherrie moved in. She never thought of moving them. They had more right to the space than she did. Grandmother's cookbooks, written in her scrawly handwriting with drawings or pictures cut from magazines and pasted in. Journal; ticks or crosses by the titles of recipes she liked or didn't like, or perhaps the ones that worked and didn't work. There were occasional tributes to family members where grandmother wrote comments such as "Victoria's favourite" or "Malcolm for Christmas" in the margins.

In the books, the neatness fades – the strict ingredients list, method and timings, religiously begun in volume one are abandoned, become more scrappy. The last two volumes are my favourite. Every page is a profile of someone in the family – there are even photos stuck in. I find my father's profile and Sherrie and I sit over it. Father liked salad, too much in grandmother's opinion, and didn't eat enough sprouts. His favourite dinner was steak and kidney pie, but only grandmother's recipe.

After we read the books Sherrie decides we should try a few recipes. It will keep my mind off things, she says, referring to my dramatic bouts of self pity and failure.

I disagree. I am a terrible cook. I have my morning vigils at sunrise and the rest of the day all I want to do is sleep, eat and read. I am so tired, but I don't know why. I understand that my legs are healing, but this is a kind of spiritual tiredness. It is as if all the time I lived in the city I was running on pure adrenalin, running on empty. My natural resources were low when I got here. Until I sleep in the warm wide bed where grandmother had cuddled up next to grandfather I don't think I have really known sleep – at least, not for a long time. The quiet of the house and the lulling of the waves is a lullaby, the waves whispering me home.

Sherrie gets her way about the cooking, however, and we start to work through the first book. I learn to balance the mixing bowl on my knee and make pastry with clean, cool hands. I pass it up to Sherrie who rolls it out on the counter and cuts pie bottoms, lattice tops, mince pie casings and Danish pastries. Many of the recipes require special ingredients that we have to gather ourselves, strange ingredients I have not heard of before. I like doing this where possible, though it isn't always. I love raspberry picking in the large rambling back garden, though. I roll up and down the rows, balancing a mixing bowl between my knees and gathering squashy berries with greedy fingers. It is heady in the sun among the raspberry bushes, the heavy laden branches already sticky with juice.

It is meditative work, baking and stirring, blending and rubbing-in, and my mind slows to the rhythm of the waves outside and is regulated by the intractable discipline of cooking: measuring and mixing,

the push and pull of force and the alchemy of heat, the catalysts of baking powder and yeast. I start to be able to estimate weights just by looking and feeling the ingredients in my hands. They start to become more precise instruments, and grandmother's knowledge fills them, embodies them in careful repetition.

I think more about grandmother. Grandmother who divided her thick gold ring into two for us, the girls that she passed her knowledge to in the end. Reading some of the cookbooks, I realise that there was more here than pounds and ounces. These books contain a lot of unconventional methods.

As the moon glints in through the kitchen window as I sit there one late night I really start to wonder. It is a moon trap, the kitchen, windows angled to collect the smooth silent light in a river of inspiration. I know this was where and when grandmother wrote her cookbooks: in this moon temple, in the late hours when the moon was high and full and streaming down onto her. Full moon and high tide, heard crashing against the rocks. Full moon in the clear, clean skies of the coast where the horizon is dark and the strong winds blow any wreathing clouds away. No intermediary, no distance at all in this wild time between her and the starry places.

One night as I lie in front of the fire in the lounge with a book, I look up and Sherrie is standing there wearing a strange purple wool robe and bare feet. I ask her where she found it. "In grandmother's treasure chest" she says, and twirls herself around in it for me.

"Very nice" I say. How is it that I haven't heard of the treasure chest before? "It's in her room, come and look" says Sherrie, and she plops me in my chair and manoeuvres me up the stairs, not without with a bit of effort. I haven't been in grandmother's room before – there has been no reason to, as I have just made clear to Sherrie, who has a good sweat on after humping me and the chair up here. Once I am in the room, though, I realise that the house is unfinished without it – this is the hub of the place. I thought it was the kitchen until now, but this mystical boudoir, this is the centre, the apogee of the wheel that spins around it, making life real, blending the particles, spinning the web, throwing the power out all around it. All of life in this house centres on the energy in this room. The grandmother we saw in the cookbooks is a dim reflection of the woman in this room; a woman with exotic perfumes still scenting velvet throws and silky wall hangings; of a sense-inspiring exploration of colour; colours resonating deeply in my solar plexus vibrate pure notes of harmony.

Across one wall is painted a mural of brilliant blue and green hummingbirds. Prints of the Virgin Mary and mythical personages fill every space and two long gold painted shelves line the walls. These are filled with books, many with no titles. "I've looked and a lot of them are notebooks, like her recipes" says Sherrie, "but they've got different stuff in them. Weird stuff. Moon phases, Belladonna, Deadly Nightshade" she chants in a melodramatic tone. She holds one open for me to see and there are indeed intriguing diagrams there with grand-

mother's unmistakable scribbled notes. "I don't think we should be looking," I say and put the book back on the shelf. But of course the temptation is too great and I pull it down again, a blue velvet book with large thick creamy pages. The first page has a quote, or perhaps it is a maxim of grandmother's, which catches my eye and speaks to me, down the generations:

The sun at rise, the sea at tide
The moon full and the heart wide.

By being in this house, reading grandmother's books and making her recipes, being warm in the sun, having my hands in the soil and sitting in the moon rays at night, all mediated by the crash and fall of the sea, I have entered a world that grandmother knew well, and these energies, these elemental strengths have given me strength again, cleared the dross, made me shining bright again like the clothes hanging on the line and smelling of blossom. The dirt has drained away into the soil, been blown away on the cliffs, been pared away like a rotten apple to start again. I am resurrected, I am the life, I am the truth, I am come alive again.

Anna McKerrow 2004

Anam Cara: Our Souls Friend

Anam Cara is a wonderful spiritual concept based the Celts, and is quickly become very popular among the modern Celtic revivalists and the pagan community in general. It's been made popular by the Catholic scholar John O'Donohue, writer of *Anam Cara: Spiritual Wisdom from the Celtic World*, and Kenneth Leech author of *Soul Friend*.

Where we are today

The world is no longer what it was; the ways and beliefs of religions such as the Celts have nearly passed us by. In place is a mass of wiring and electrons, religion seems meaningless amongst it all sometimes, but if the Gods were once with us then they still are, only most of us choose not see.

When time dawned and we were created, we came forth, moulded from the clay as two halves. Scientists can tell us different, but in our heart and mind we know science alone can not answer everything, and struggles on something so common as the soul and its origins.

Scientists tried to find the soul, they poked and they prodded, dissected and experimented, but they could not find it. The ethereal concept of the soul fails utterly on everyone's tongues even those that believe they know. The scientists concentrated on the Ego, (the physical mind), and still they could not find sign of a soul, but at the same time they have not, and never will be able to prove the soul does not exist.

Our souls stand, but only in part we are complete, we are not whole, for we emerged in two parts, and we are never complete until we are once again close in mind and spirit to our sister or brother of clay.

What is Anam Cara?

Anam Cara refers to the Celtic spiritual belief of two souls connecting and bonding to become one.

In Celtic Spiritual tradition, it is believed that the body is contained within the soul, and not, as scientists tend to believe, inside of the body. The effect could be seen as an aura which is a common sight in these growing and evolving times of new age spiritualism and magical practices. When you connect with another person and become completely open and trusting with that individual, your two souls begin to flow together. Should such a deep bond be formed, it is said you have found your Anam Cara, or soul friend.

Our Anam Cara

Our Anam Cara, that one person that was created from the same clay is infinitely special to us. With our Anam Cara we are one; whole again, even across immense distances there is completeness, once two souls are reunited.

They feel some of what you feel, if you are having a hard time, deep down they will know. Like wise if you having a good time, they themselves share in your hap-

piness. This connectivity is what allows our other halves to always be there for us, supporting us no matter the situation.

"With the 'Anam Cara', you could share your innermost self, our mind and your heart. This friendship was an act of recognition and belonging." – John O'Donohue

It need not be a romantic, nor familial, though for some it can take these forms. For others it could be a random person on the street, or across the country or on the other side of the planet, someone you just make a connection with someone you have not necessarily met yet but feel you are part of them, and they of you.

The connection is something very basic, and within us all, which sadly we rarely hear because of modern society, partly due to the pseudo emotions we find invading our senses and corrupt the soul's own senses. Our lives are surrounded, so we stop listening.

"There is no cage for the soul. The soul is a divine light that flows into you and into your Other." – John O'Donohue

When the time is right for you, you will open up, and trust, and let your soul breathe, let hear and experience the world around you. The connection is there, faintly even now, and when you find your Anam Cara the connection will be un-ignorable if your heart and soul are open.

Once you feel the connectedness it will

be as though your life has been empty and incomplete up to that point.

"The art of belonging awakened and fostered a deep and special companionship. When you love, you open your life to another. All your barriers are down. Your protective distances collapse. This person is given absolute permission to come into the deepest temple of your spirit." – John O'Donohue

It is a feeling unrivalled, not even by romance, it is a feeling not mistaken once found. With this and with your Anam Cara you are one, and you are finally aware of the true nature of the world is not deafness, but in listening, and loving.

"'Anyone without a soul-friend is a body without a head' - attributed both to Brigit, and to Comgall

Irrellian 2004

Anam Cara: Spiritual Wisdom from the Celtic World – John O'Donohue
<http://www.jodonohue.com/>

Soul Friend – Kenneth Leech
<http://www.art-kennethleech.com/>

Inanna and the Descent into the Underworld

(inspired by a talk given by Vivianne Crowley at the Pagan Federation Scottish Conference 2003)

Introduction

Myths of descent are common to many ancient cultures and are rich in symbolism and meaning. Generally, they concern the journey of a deity into the lands of the dead, from where they are then reborn. The psychologist Carl Jung treated these myths as an expression of “the psychological mechanism of introversion of the conscious mind into deeper layers of the unconscious psyche”¹.

One of the most popular and well known myths of descent is that of Inanna and her journey to the Underworld, which is retold below.

Inanna's Descent into the Underworld

The Sumerian goddess Inanna is one of the most important ancient Mesopotamian deities. She was known as Ishtar to the Akkadians and the Phoenicians named her Astarte. Inanna was held to be the daughter of the sky god An, but also of the moon god Nanna, which suggests that she may be an amalgamation of two earlier goddesses.

Inanna's journey into the underworld is one of her best known myths. In this myth Inanna can be taken as a representation of the conscious self, which deals with the everyday world and known emotions. She hears the moans of her sister, Erishkigal, who rules the Underworld. Erishkigal is the representative of the inner self and the unconscious, and her moans tempt Inanna into finding out what lies in the Underworld or within herself. Inanna knows the passage to the Underworld will be dangerous so she takes steps to protect herself. She wears her crown, jewellery, robe, breastplate and she carries a rod and line. Moreover, Inanna has been blessed by the god Enki with the fourteen me or blessings of power. All these things can

be compared to the walls and barriers built in a person's mind to protect it from others and possibly even itself. She also informs her friend, Ninshubar, of her intentions and tells her that if she fails to return after three days she should seek the help of the elder gods. Then Inanna begins her descent.

Inanna descends into the earth until she reaches the gates to the Underworld. There she demands of the doorkeeper to be allowed to enter.

“Here gatekeeper, open your gate to me,

Open your gate for me to come in!

If you do not open the gate for me to come in!

If you do not open the gate for me to come in,

I shall smash the door and shatter the bolt,

I shall smash the doorpost and overturn the doors,

I shall raise up the dead and they shall eat the living”²

The presence of such a splendid and powerful goddess scares the gatekeeper and he rushes to tell Erishkigal. Erishkigal is angered by Inanna's presence and tells the gatekeeper to let Inanna through the gates to the Underworld. However, each time she passes through a gate he must remove one item of her royal garments, essentially removing the layers of defence between herself and her subconscious.

The gatekeeper returns to the first gate and lets Inanna through after removing her royal crown and so on until Inanna enters the Underworld naked of all her symbols of power and completely disarmed. Erishkigal then attacks

Inanna:

“Disease of the eyes to her,

Disease of the arms to her,

Disease of the feet to her,

Disease of the heart to her,

Disease of the head to her”²

Inanna becomes a rotting corpse and is hung from a hook on Erishkigal's throne room wall. Her subconscious self in the form of Erishkigal has just judged her and destroyed her. In cases of depression, this can be compared to the utter despair the individual feels; they feel powerless and unable to escape from their own personal hell.

Inanna's friend, Ninshubar, is representative of the part of the self that remains aware and active during depression and introspection. She is the part that still has the ability to ask for help and so she waits for three days and on the third day after Inanna's descent she puts on her clothes of mourning and sets out for the temples of the Elder Gods. Meanwhile, Inanna's absence from the earthly plane has a dramatic effect – the land is no longer fertile and everything begins to rot and die. The people have no food and begin to starve.

Ninshubar visits Enlil, who refuses to help Inanna because he has no power over the Underworld. She then attempts to get help from Nanna, who refuses also. Finally, she visits the temple of Enki, who agrees to help Inanna. He fashions two creatures out of the mud from under his fingernails and instils them with the food and water of life so that they can restore Inanna to life.

The creatures fly to the Underworld, sneaking through the cracks in the gates and eventually make it to Erishkigal's throne room. There they find Erishkigal lying naked on the floor and

writhing in pain. The creatures sympathise with her and name her pains back to her, which results in her blessing them once she feels better. This illustrates the self acknowledging problems and thus empowering themselves to do something about them. In this case, Erishkigal offers the creatures any gift that they desire and they ask for the corpse hanging on the wall. Erishkigal gives it to them and they use the water and food of life to bring Inanna back to life. Inanna is now a much stronger entity for she has faced death and uncertainty and has ultimately triumphed.

However, Inanna still has the eye of death upon her and the judges of the underworld rule that she must find someone to take her place before she can truly be free of the place. Inanna returns to the earthly plane accompanied by some of the underworld judges and she begins to seek out someone to take her place. Everywhere, Inanna sees people mourning her loss, and she cannot bring herself to put the eye of death on them. However, once she returns to her palace she finds her lover, Dumuzi, sitting on her throne being pampered and not looking in the slightest upset. Inanna becomes angry and places the eye of death upon Dumuzi and decrees that he must take her place in the Underworld. However, before he can be carried away Dumuzi's sister, Geshtinanna, refuses to allow him to be confined to the Underworld forever and she offers to take his place for six months of the year. So the story becomes not only a metaphor for introspection and depression, but also one for the turning of the seasons. When Dumuzi is in the underworld the earth is barren and dry, but when Geshtinanna takes his place the rainy season arrives and the earth becomes fertile again. This double meaning is similar to that found in the story of Demeter and Persephone from ancient Greek mythology.

The Concept of Descent within Paganism

The theme of descent is one that is very prominent in modern paganism. The idea of descending into one's inner consciousness and returning to the material world armed with new

knowledge can be applied to meditation, path-working, initiations and dedications. Especially significant are dedications and initiations, where the old self is essentially discarded and the individual reborn as a dedicated/initiated witch.

In everyday life, descent can be encountered in many guises. It is natural for people to spend time in quiet introspection and then re-emerge more prepared to deal with matters in the "normal" world. Depression occurs when the individual descends into their personal underworld and loses the power to leave. They stay trapped there, feeling hopeless and helpless, until they find the ability to look for help. Eventually, they can progress back into the "real" world and face up to things once more.

The idea of descent and rebirth can also be applied to stages of life, especially a woman's life. A woman's life moves through stages marked by the onset of reproductive maturity, the birth of a child and the menopause, tying in with the idea of the threefold goddess – maiden, mother and crone. These stages can have a profound effect on a woman resulting in a period of introspection where she readdresses her role in life. It can also be an incredibly grounding experience resulting in the emergence of a stronger and wiser person.

MoonRaven (ThistleWitch)

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Ask Obsidiana

Without emotion, man would be nothing but a biological computer. Love, joy, sorrow, fear, apprehension, anger, satisfaction, and discontent provide the meaning of human existence.
Arnold M. Ludwig---1980

Is there a link between depression and the Occult?

Hi all hope everyone is well since the last copy of Witchtower was released. This month we have been looking at some research to try and understand something and believe that some of the results may be of interest. Apologies if my column seems like a ramble this month but it's been an eye opener trying to draw conclusions on this one.

Thanks To Amber K for her help on this who also had the same burning need for answers. Since being a member of WiccaUK I have come across a lot of people who suffer from depression in different forms. I've also learnt that "Depression" seems to be a word that lots of people with lots of different severance's of symptoms seem to be dumped into when in reality depression is a very complex and personal condition.

My experience of depression has been far less profound than others and I always believed that self-talk is a fantastic tool in increasing levels of serotonin. The results of my research would suggest that there are so many classifications of depression it is almost impossible to find a "cure all" remedy.

I decided the best place to start my research would be to find out if there was any link between finding Occultism, and suffering depression as a result. The reasoning behind this was simply due to the number of people who are, have been or still do suffer from depression.

The reasons I was interested in this topic came from a quote by Israel Regardie although I understand other authors have quoted similar in the past. Israel wrote that anyone taking up a course of magic should also seek to take up a course in therapy. Cris Monastre in his introduction to Golden Dawn Edition 6 reflects back on the Jungian nature of Regardie and his belief in the psychological advantage of following a magical system.

I firstly assumed that quote to mean, that anyone following a path of magic needed therapy because they turned to occultism as a result of a low mental state. Now of course, I understand that psychology and magic are more closely linked than I had first seen and draw the conclusion that what Israel Regardie meant, was that to find the true inner higher self, one has to study ones own psychological nature. Depression it would seem is part of a person's make up as opposed to part of a person's belief system.

All of my conclusions up to this point emphasised my belief that when following an occultist religion people are by virtue, looking deeper into themselves. The logical conclusion to me would be that when people look deeply they don't always like what they see and could this be a reason that I am witnessing a lot of people who appear to suffer the symptoms of depression?

Well, after researching depression and the many varying forms – I have to say my "theory" has been completely turned on its proverbial head! Perhaps there could be something in the fact that people may turn to a path because they are feeling depressed and are looking for something beyond themselves, but there is no conclusive evidence I have found to suggest that people become depressed after finding an occultist path. On the contrary it would appear that more people are able to get over depression more quickly (there are exceptions but this seemed to be the general consensus.)

The conclusion I came to was that really there is no conclusion! Depression seems as indi-

vidual to a sufferer as the individual lines on a face and one cure or reason for suffering is never the same as another. Even cure all anti-depressants are prescribed in different doses to individual sufferers. There is no solution anyone can offer to cure anybody's depression because no one cure suits two people the same. What we can do is explain some of the varying forms of depression and the symptoms associated and then in the next issue of Witchtower we will offer a combination of solutions that have worked for others, some of them magical and some of them clinical or homeopathic. I would really appreciate anybody's experience on what they have found to be beneficial in preparation for the next article.

As depression is an individual illness it's pretty much up to the sufferer to find what works best for them. A dear friend of mine will at this point be saying "I told you so!"

Forms of depression

Atypical Depression

Atypical Depression is really quite common and can lead to bouts of depression mixed with an ease of the symptoms when a positive event happens in life. Atypical depression is often onset at an early age and some of the symptoms include sensitivity to rejection, overeating, requiring the need to sleep excessively and a general feeling of heaviness in the limbs. Atypical depression has common symptoms of mood reactivity although research suggests this is mostly common in females. Weight gain and lethargy are classical symptoms of atypical depression.

Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder (aka manic depression) can be a severe and debilitating form of depression, which leaves the sufferer euphoric one minute and completely depressed the next. It often begins in adolescence and if untreated can worsen throughout the course of a sufferer's life impacting friends, family and loved

ones. Symptoms include being euphoric with over optimistic views and unusually high self-esteem one minute to severe and chaotic emotional feelings the next. Euphoric symptoms include rapid speech, inability to feel settled or concentrate and increased irritability. In the depressive stage the symptoms involved include persistent feelings of sadness, thoughts of suicide, changes in sleeping patterns and weight loss or weight gain.

Bipolar II Disorder

Bipolar II disorder involves the alternation of major depressive periods with periods of so-called hypomania. Hypomania is a state of elevated energy and/or mood that falls short of outright mania. Hypomaniac individuals do not become frankly delusional or require hospitalisation. It differs from Bipolar disorder in that the swings aren't nearly as severe in the manic stages but are debilitating all the same.

Typical symptoms during the depressive phase of type 2 bipolar disorder include persistently depressed mood (nearly every day), hopelessness, poor concentration, increased or decreased appetite, increased or decreased weight. The mechanism for this improvement is unknown. However, other disorders associated with impulsivity, such as antisocial personality and substance abuse, also tend to burn out around the same age.

Whilst researching different types of depression, I came across all different classifications and causes of mood swings and depressive symptoms, however to list them all would simply be too time consuming and costly for Sparks to print! Depression is, it would seem a symptom in itself of anything from personality disorders to sickness to genetics and it's only in recent years that people have started to realise this fact.

So from the symptoms alone you could conclude that Occultism cannot "bring on" or "worsen" some forms of depression due to

the very nature of the symptoms and causes. Neither in some cases of genetic or Neurotransmission affected disorders can it "treat" depression either, although from the research on the site alone it does seem to help people feel better about themselves in general.

Another consideration to make of course is that when people say "I'm depressed" do they truly mean they are experiencing prolonged signs of clinical depression or are they just reacting to the fact that life isn't what they want it to be right now. A perfect quote would be "I'm so depressed about going out tonight, nothing fits over my large rear" Laugh you may but the odd feelings of being down or upset as long as they don't manifest into something larger are not true signs of clinical depression. The word in itself, like a lot of other "Umbrella" terms is over used.

I end on a food for thought, which is not far from reality, but a little scary all the same. Perhaps then the conclusion might be that Occultism helps us to reach beyond society, thus replacing the stresses and strains that drag us down in the first place, but only in the case of non-clinical depression. I'll let you decide.

Imagine a society that subjects people to conditions that make them terribly unhappy, then gives them the drugs to take away their unhappiness. Science fiction? It is already happening to some extent in our own society. Instead of removing the conditions that make people depressed, modern society gives them antidepressant drugs. In effect, antidepressants are a means of modifying an individual's internal state in such a way as to enable him to tolerate social conditions that he would otherwise find intolerable.

- Theodore Kaczynski

Thanks to 'Amber K' AND MORGASSE for their help researching and completing this article, who also had the same need for "answers".