



# Letters

From the

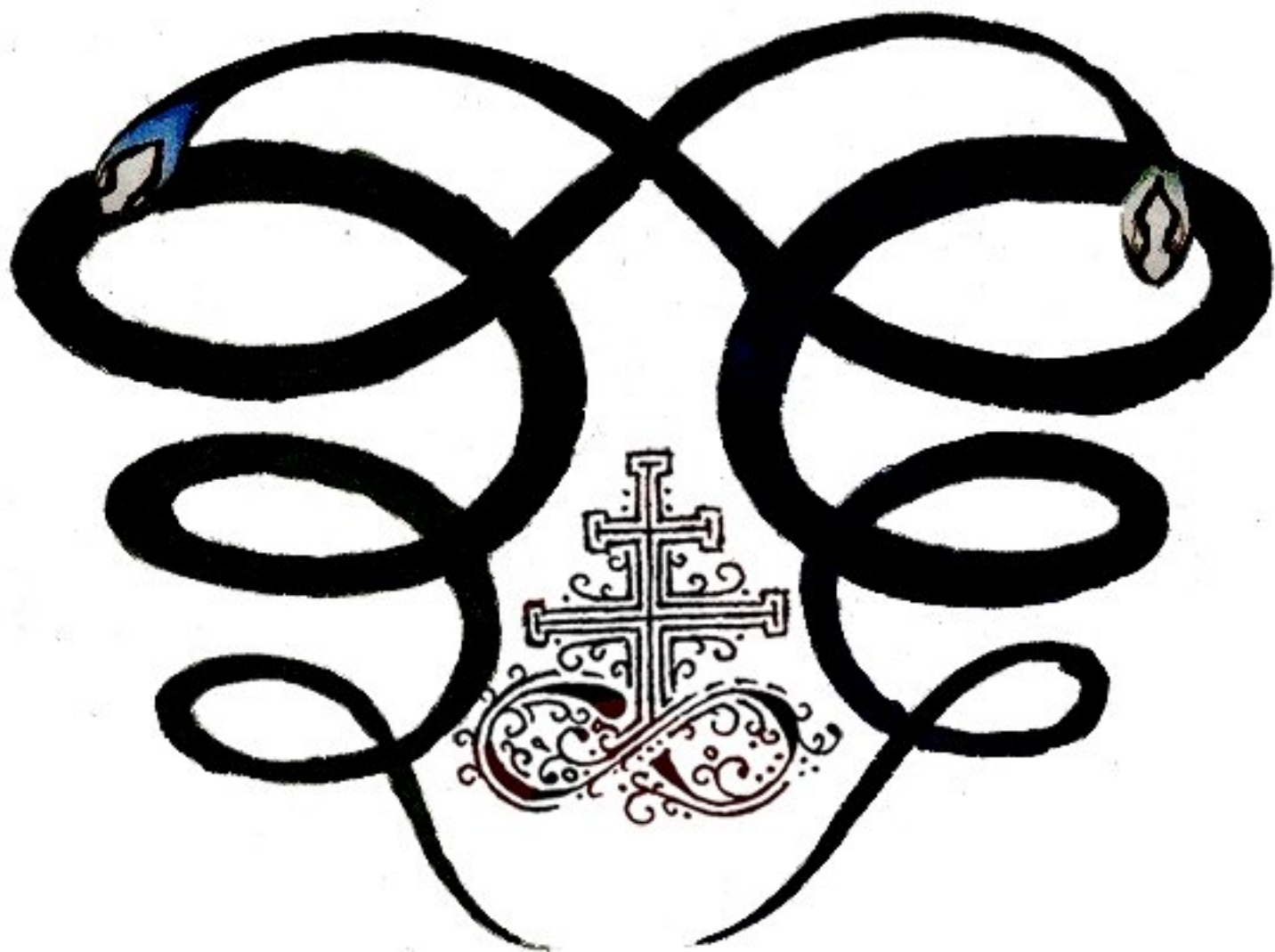
# Devil's Forest



An Anthology of Writings on  
Traditional Witchcraft, Spiritual Ecology  
And Provenance Traditionalism

Robin Artisson





Also by Robin Artisson

*The Witching Way of the Hollow Hill*

*The Horn of Evenwood*

*The Resurrection of the Meadow*

Letters from the Devil's Forest  
An Anthology of Writings on  
Traditional Witchcraft, Spiritual Ecology and Provenance  
Traditionalism

Robin Artisson  
Illustrations by Stephanie Houser

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BLACK MALKIN  
PRESS



This work is dedicated to  
Caroline St. Clair  
And to my beautiful daughters.







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## INTRODUCTION: The Wordless Understanding

I was born for the "life occult." There is no doubt in my mind; as with some others I've spoken to, by an early age I was visited by terrifying (and in retrospect, wonderful) visions. I consider this no sign of election; all children, before their minds are sundered by modern enculturation, are party to visionary wonders that have a very important and objective reality. One vision that stands out the most to me was that of a red demon-looking entity playing a long, plain horn or trumpet, hovering around the light fixture on the ceiling of my room, while I tried to sleep at night. Phantom limbs and hands woke me up at night a lot, or woke me into the half-sleep/half-waking state that is the especially fertile home of visions.

As long as I can remember, books on the occult attracted me. At the small Catholic school I attended from kindergarten to eighth grade, I was fortunate to have an occult section in the school library. My own mother's dalliances with the occult in her teen years won me a tiny selection in the library at my home, and I was never without those books. Of course, even then, I knew I had to hide that interest of mine. I wasn't even out of eighth grade before I was standing in my room at night, quite naked in pools of moonlight, trying to consecrate as best I could planetary talismans that I had designed based on my researches.

I don't remember when I became interested in the modern resurgence of "Pagan" religions, but I remember the day I believe I became consciously and fully what I considered Pagan, or at least non-Christian. It had always irritated me that the Church was telling everyone that the world got the whole "religion" thing wrong until they came along: even at that early age it struck me as the propaganda of people who had managed to pull off a power grab. I felt then that the Great Unseen was more generous and open than that; that all peoples, from every era of history before Christianity, had been blessed to know real power, real relationships with the Unseen, and had a real and healthy element of spirituality in their lives. But I had little way of framing my own desire to find what those ancient people actually had in their lives, and make it a conscious part of my own.

Then one day, I was at the local neighborhood library, and looking through an encyclopedia of religion. In an entry on Paganism (both ancient and modern) a single line caught my attention. It stated that Pagans in the past often believed that life, or possibly even the world, was birthed into existence by a Mother divinity.

That line struck me to the core. I had always disliked the Church's teaching that "God" had made men and women and everything else in the same way a potter might make a pot. There was, in my mind, no real organic bond there. A potter may become dissatisfied with a work of his, and break it and throw it away; a mother, on the other hand, should love and nurture her child regardless, due to the difference in how these "things" came about. One comes from a man's creativity and hands; the other from within the body and blood of a woman. I understand how artists often feel that their creative

works are radically close and intimate to them, not unlike children, but it still cannot compete (in my mind) with a child born of one's own body.

And quite like the dissatisfied artist, the "God" of the Church had been quite displeased with his creation before, and took it upon himself to drown every man, woman, and child, saving one family alone. This was madness to me. This was not a trustworthy being, not a solid foundation for real spiritual love or respect or religion. There was no real connection there, and the lack of connection was further reinforced by "God" and the game of eternal salvation/damnation that was being played with human lives and hearts. As a father myself, there is nothing- nothing- that my own children could do that would lead me to either send them to eternal perdition, or to allow them to fall into it forever. And if my human love can be thus, shouldn't the divine love be a more perfect and forgiving one?

Naturally, the deep fingers of monotheism and Christianity and all of the foul powers that cluster around them both do not get removed from a person's deep mind and soul so easily. It took years before they were "resolved" out of me. And it wasn't some simple disapproval or disbelief on my part that accomplished this; it was the actual spiritual powers and beings- the ones sometimes worshipped long ago by our Ancestors- who exist who came and healed me. They still exist, even though lies have stripped most of us of a conscious relationship with them.

At this point, I should mention that all this hovers on the borderland of a contentious issue. What and where is the difference, the dividing line, between religion and sorcery or witchcraft? They are not the same, but these days, you can almost never find them separate. Even in my own first writings on the topic of Witchcraft, they are entwined. What modern Wiccans call "witchcraft" amounts to almost nothing beyond the veneration of a "God" and "Goddess" and fertility rites directed towards them; it is a very religious craft if it's anything.

This feels wrong to a lot of people. Not wrong in some villainous way, but not perfectly correct somehow- should the power of religion and that of sorcery be so combined? A case can be made that they always have been combined, in some form or fashion, throughout the ages. A case can be made that all religion is basically a degenerate form of ancient sorcery: spirit-contracts, spirit-covenants, and spirit-feeding in exchange for favor all dressed up in a clean, formal manner.

This may be so. But I now know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that religion and sorcery or witchcraft are distinct things, and while they do not run in opposition to one another, they can be approached as different engagements. A witchcraft can fulfill, in a person's life, the natural need or inclination towards "religion" in the very deepest or best sense of the word, but it need not. For me, it does. And I say this with all force, even though I have, for years, practiced pure Pagan religions in their reconstructed modern forms. A time came when my contacts and familiars in the Great Otherness- and my deepening relationship to them- made my efforts and doings within the sphere of pure "religion" superfluous and unnecessary in my life.

My point is that very often, people come to the subject of witchcraft looking for sorcery- not religion.

So long as a person understands that there is often a blurry line between these two things, it is possible to discover one without the other. And I intend to maintain this distinction here and now. The reason why I can do so is because I discovered, in my long journey, a thing, a way of seeing, a way of interpreting present and past experience, which resolves the conflict between sorcery and religion. It is what remains of the true "Old Belief" of this world entire: *spiritual ecology*. Spiritual ecology resolves the conflict between religion and sorcery without blurring the two or requiring their mixture. It makes this supposed conflict quite irrelevant. This will be a major topic of this present work, and it is so important a topic, that I feel that real magic or witchcraft cannot exist now as it did in the past without it.

Following a cloudy, murky path strewn with the words of new-age authors, I moved on into my teenage years and into university. It was at this time that I became officially involved in reconstructed Pagan religion, and began recognizing, in the words of a few key writers like Nigel Jackson and Robert Cochrane, that a witchcraft or a sorcery that was non-Wiccan in origin, and very old, may have survived in such a manner that it maintained the power to "pull a person back" to the root-forces behind it. Two very important things happened to me at this stage in my life which must be mentioned, because together, they laid the foundations and gave me the special capabilities I needed to ultimately become a witch in the traditional and oldest sense.

Firstly, I encountered the work of Michael Harner and his Foundation for Shamanic Studies. The core of Harner's very respectful and minimalistic work was a technique, a very universal and simple technique, for inducing lucid-dream like visionary journeys into the Underworld. Harner, an anthropologist, had learned his version of this technique from Native peoples in South America, but the notion of drumming to induce such experiences is nigh universal to the entire world. This means it belongs to no culture, but to the fund of Ancestral activity of humanity.

I had a hard time learning the technique and applying it, but over the years, I mastered it. But before I explain how it transformed me at the most radical level, I must mention that around this time, I took up correspondence with a man purporting to be a traditional witch from the Isle of Wight in England. While I was talking to him, and learning what appeared to be (and still appear to be) authentic pieces of folk-sorcery, another man wrote to me and handed me a key that I will forever be grateful for- a technique for out-of-body journeying or lucid vision induction, which I still refer to as "The Widdershins Walk." I discussed that technique at length in my first major work, and it has remained evergreen in power and effectiveness through all these years.

Ten days before my 23rd birthday, after over two years of praying to the Great Powers behind the Craft as I then understood them, and begging the Unseen for the help I needed, I succeeded at leaving the perceptual prison of my psychosomatic complex, and entering the great space of the Underworld. There, deep below, a being met me, a terrible being with fleshy, knotty feet, and he gave me the power to find the spirit that was to be my Familiar spirit. And find it I did. It returned to this world with me, nested firmly in my chest, and for two weeks afterwards, the feeling of that power being in my chest was tight, warm, and tangible.

It spoke to me then, and I to it, and we made the pacts together that still endure to this day. It was the entry into my life of that spirit, that little teacher, that "Little Master" or *Magistellus*, that protector and guide, that made me able in the fifteen years since to perform the works of Witchery that have granted me the power I have found and claimed.

This was the turning point. With this Familiar spirit's help, I was able to enter into a dimension of the Unseen world where things operate on a "logic" far beyond conception, where dream-like and surreal things are solid, sensible realities, and where the truth behind so-called "Faery Tales" and myths can be found. It was my passageway into the Otherness, which has yielded, faithfully over time, the wisdom and insights that I have tried to share when I could.

Much has been taught to me by the Familiar and by other powers over the years, but my work at learning "passageways" wasn't complete until I encountered one of the greatest living Masters of the Unseen alive today- Peter Kingsley. It was his revelation of the last key- the sorcerous use of the body and senses- that grounded me maturely in this way I had been exploring. I can never quite repay him what I owe him.

On the heels of my eye-opening experience with the core of the Western Way as taught me by Kingsley, I discovered the works of the other man whom I credit with the greatest sorcerous power and insight alive today- David Abram. His work on phenomenology and deep ecology was the thing that completed my journey of initiation into the true mysteries. And as with Kingsley, this present work owes an enormous amount to him. Through the words and experiences of these men, and through what my own tutelary spirits have done, I discovered the way back to the Witchcraft that I had always been born to seek.

Because the Craft has a Master, and this Master is no human person; it is a great non-human Person whose attention and blessings must be given before you can enter the door behind the wind and join the Company of the Otherness. From the time of my first meeting with him, when my Familiar was granted me, I had a hard time tracking him down again. My visit to England and Ireland won me another audience, and then, over the years, he was again (as the Mercurial Lord is wont to be) hard to find- but when I reached the next summit in my subtle development, I was able to have His attentions and those of his Ministers whenever I needed them. This is where I have arrived.

This work is a collection of writings on many important topics that I made in the last four years. They represent a more mature arc of writing for me than perhaps all that has come before. This collection is especially concerned with what spiritual ecology means for us, and what the uniquely dark spiritual ecology that we call "Witchcraft" really is and how it relates to everything else. This aspect of the book contains a unique and old sort of wisdom that can be thought of as a priceless treasure by itself.

But this book also contains a goodly collection of techniques for extraordinary cognition (and allied perspectives) that actually work. I have used them, lived them, and experienced the power they yield.



Without these reaches of extraordinary cognition, there is no hope of experiencing the power of sorcery in its perennial, ancient majesty. Without these nighted and rare reaches of mind and soul, there is no hope for reestablishing the Old Covenants that humans once enjoyed with the entities of the Unseen World. Without this, there is no hope for wholeness in ourselves or wholeness between ourselves and the world that we've become so isolated from.

That may sound high-minded, and it is. But this isn't limited to talks about wholeness, or experiences of wholeness; wholeness as a goal and a reality is one matter. Practical sorcery is another, though a warning must be given: nothing is more practical or empowering than the simplicity of wholeness that wisdom finally brings a person to.

Nothing in reality- nothing that is real- is ever impractical; impracticality, confusion, complications, and doubts come not from wisdom, but from the walk away from wisdom and towards delusions and falsehood. In the meantime, "practicality" can also mean effective sorcery- the power to bring about changes in the world, in yourself, and even in other beings. It all comes together. You may be here for one, or the other, or both, but no matter what you came for, both will possess you, long before you possess them.

In all my studies and works, private and public, a pluralistic yet unified vision began to take shape: starting with the precious fund of Folklore from the British Isles and Europe, and allied folklore from around the world, and moving through the tomes and annals of relevant Western occultism, a vision I have come to call "Provenance Traditionalism" emerged. I consider myself to be the founder of this approach to Traditionalism; it is called "Provenance" because it stems from, and always seeks, the origins of things, and therefore the way to the fulfillment of things.

The beginning and the end- the origin and the consummation- are always in the same place, always the same thing, truthfully speaking. This spiritual maxim is one of the foundational wisdoms of the entire Western world- the oneness of beginning and end means that everything is a circle, held together, complete as it is. The "firmly bound" nature of the circle of reality is nothing more or less than the adamantine, circular bond of Fate itself, holding everything together as it must be.

Metaphysical realities, wisdom-lessons, hidden truths, even techniques for actualizing what reality is, and what our relationship to reality and everything else may be- these things are all to be found in the body of Folklore and myth that has come down to us from the Ancestral past. But Provenance Traditionalism goes further, into a study of what the reality of relationship- ordinary and extraordinary relationship- really holds for us.

Provenance Traditionalism is, like Witchcraft, a unique form of spiritual ecology that exists to move people towards wisdom and the personal power that we can obtain from our souls and from the world we see, and the worlds Unseen. Traditionalism, like the Traditional Witchcraft that is a strange and darksome portion of it, makes us as honestly and fully human as we can be, and then, if we are brave and wise, changes us into something very different than a human, indeed.

There is a reason why I hope to share many of the bones of Provenance Traditionalism in this book. And that reason is this: you can't separate it from the art and practice of Witchcraft as I have experienced it. Before my life, before "Provenance" was a name given to a traditional school of study, witchcraft already long existed within the bodies of cultures that had stark and strong connections to the myths and folklores of their own ancient pasts. In my way of reckoning, their witchcrafts could *not* have operated as true sorcerous vehicles of change and wisdom without their own cultural interiors of traditional metaphysical lores and stories, which made possible certain unique spiritual contracts, understandings, and allegiances.

In this, I discovered one of the obstacles facing people today who still have that strange soul-urge towards the mysteries of witchcraft. Lacking a traditional cultural context filled with the grace, dark power, and bright power of folklore and the perennial, animistic, and organic wisdom of the past, authentic witchcraft or sorcery largely fails.

I will state it clearly: *witchcraft or sorcery operates only fully within a pluralistic, connection-based, spirit-involved background, context, or worldview.* This is the sort of worldview that the witches of old consciously, half-consciously, and sometimes even unconsciously carried within them, due to the circumstances of their times and places. If we want to see, feel, taste, touch, smell, and experience at the core of our souls what they did, we have to rebuild and rebirth that spirit-involved worldview in ourselves. This is not a call back to some kind of polytheism, though polytheism was in the past an expression of it; this is a call back to the basic spiritual ecology which is the core of human experience, and the experience of every other sentient being.

This is one of the primary justifications I have for begging the Unseen to create this book through me. They- the powers Unseen- want to be in alliance with us again, in conscious alliance with us like they were before. Some still maintain a few diminished forms of contact with the human world, and with human persons. A few artists and poets have been their conscious or unconscious vessels, and always with a cost in madness for not having a context to place their inspirational experiences within.

But now, the world-age is changing to a time when more connection, and more alliance rather than less is needed. We've all sat around studying occultism and sorcery, trying our hands at it, searching for the invisible spirit of wonder that we sense in it, but many of us never reach it. More need to reach it, and to have the handle of the door so close at hand, only to see people give up and walk away, is its own frustrating madness.

One may rightly wonder if doorways like the one I'm talking about should be opened. I can say with all assurance that the answer is yes. Part of being human is about reaching out and making connections- ordinary and extraordinary. We always have a responsibility to the greater world and community of life that we are a part of. No one can hide from this responsibility, and the entire mass of excuses that we have created for keeping this person or that person sheltered or ignorant are no longer acceptable- and I don't think they were ever truly morally acceptable. I'm not saying that every

person alive at this moment is intended to become a worker of sorcerous power or some grim witchery; that vocation is not now, nor was it ever, for everyone.

But there are simple, organic, and crucial facts about this world and the Unseen world that all people should know and respect, if they wish to have more wise and successful human lives. Everyone at the very least should know of their real origin, and of what treasures and terrors the depths of their own souls contain. That is the bare minimum that people owe to this wonderful and terrible reality that we all share and will always belong to.

What lies behind the door to the Unseen isn't something that's going to go away if people ignore it. To ignore it as a culture- which we have become very good at doing for 1700 years, is to fail as a species, as a group, as entire cultures. Our cultures originally came from the Unseen, from contact with other-than-human entities in this world and in the other; without those contacts being maintained in some form or fashion, culture withers and becomes degenerate. Bonds between people wither and die, and war, violence, injustice and degradation become ordinary occurrences, when they have *not always been so* in the ways we know them.

I belong to a Covenant Unseen, and my Master- whom you will be surprised (and I hope delighted) to discover is no stranger to your life, your mind, and your soul- is a great spiritual being that I think the men and women of my world could gain a lot from becoming reacquainted with. I can't say who he will accept or reject, or grace or curse; no one can. But that he exists at all, and that he stands behind so much of what we've come to accept as everyday culture, art, philosophy, and magic, is enough reason to reawaken the world to his strange and magnificent presence.

As with all great teachers- and my Master is the chief of Great Teachers to the human race- he can't do everything for us, only show us wise steps along the way. We have a final opportunity to be transformed by what we discover when the door behind the wind opens for us and we stand among the Unseen Courts of the Fateful Ones and the spiritual beings whose timeless qualities of presence somehow color or enliven the body of nature and reality itself.

These precious insights, the possibility of reaching out to something deeper, greater, and more involved with the reality of relationship- is why I do what I do. I am attempting to do as much as I can to keep a "two-way flow" going between what is Seen, and what is Unseen. Communication is, after all, my specialty; communication is the very essence of relationship and thus of reality, as we will see. Extraordinary communication is needed for the maintenance of the soul, as well as the world entire.

The two perceptual "halves" of reality can be in friendship again. We can be in conversation not only with the Unseen world, but with the unseen sides of ourselves. The nets of "good" and "evil" can be escaped from; they can lose their power to enslave us. Communication- the natural binding power and agent of destiny- can be fulfilled through each of us. This is what lies at the true end of this work. The treasure-house of wonders that we lost long ago, and which became reduced to just fanciful stories

and easily-dismissed superstitions still waits dark, quiet, and potent, for us to allow it to spring to life in a conscious way again.

All of this may again sound "high minded"- but bear in mind that only a tiny pebble of what I'm talking about could work its way into your heart or mind, and you would discover (quite without knowing how or why) that you have gained a spiritual insight, or a familiar power, or a gift for divination, or a knowledge of the spiritual qualities of plants and worts- that's how these "high minded" ideas work in tangible, practical reality. We are unfortunate that we don't come from a culture where oral folktale and storytelling traditions are still the primary method of sharing the wisdom of the past and present- for those stories are themselves often invocations of powers that change people, that initiate witches and sorcerers without those people's knowledge or even consent.

Witchcraft or sorcery need not be experienced in terms of cosmological metaphysics or ultimate wisdom, nor wholeness, nor anything of the kind. It can be- and in the past most often was- experienced at a more local, personal level. It was often invoked for healing and divination, cursing or hexing, or protection from curses or hexes, and little else. That's fine and well; this does not mean that it was a vulgar or ultimately meaningless art. It was always born from humans being in some form of contact with the Unseen. In the case of traditional witches, it was due to their connection with Familiar spirits- Familiars that acted as agents who connected the witch to deeper powers and unseen forces.

The individual witch from long ago, as I have said, perhaps didn't know what deeper powers or forces they relied upon, but intellectual knowing is not all there is to "knowing". The soul can know things, and truth be told, soul-knowing is often more full and satisfying than any intellectual knowing. This soul-knowledge is what the witches of old would have enjoyed in their everyday lives, and never would they have needed to explain it. This special sort of knowledge is another gift that I hope the present work can help people to build; I call it "The Wordless Understanding." It springs spontaneously from visible things and invisible things being in communion and communication with one another, however silent that communication may be. It happens when day and night come together.

Robin Artisson  
Summer 2014





## Part I



# Fateful Forces Thus Mark the Hour: The Soul, Dreams, and Death

"Who should accomplish your deeds? Who should carry your virtues and vices? You do not come to an end with your life, and the dead will besiege you terribly to live your unlived life. Everything must be fulfilled. Time is of the essence, so why do you want to pile up the lived, and let the unlived rot?"

-C.G. Jung, from *Liber Novus*





*No teacher has been so wise, nor cunning  
As the yellow moon arising and the river running;  
No teacher as swift as the darting hare  
Or as wise as the toad in darkness,  
Or as strong as the nut-brown mare.  
There is no temple as sacred as the vast dark Land;  
No craft as ancient as the wordsmith's art,  
Whose spells of old so few now understand.*

# The Wandering Soul and the Ancient Road: Death and the Two Souls Doctrine

*(This letter began as a response to a man asking what became of people upon their deaths, and especially if that death was a suicide.)*

When it comes to suicide, the issue has everything to do with death and nothing to do with the actual suicide. Every being in the world that is seen dies- humans die regularly, all the time, at every age, as surely as the ant or the hummingbird or the great whales. Even the mountains die, though their lifespans are unthinkably long when compared to ours. Death is the issue. Nature doesn't blink in shock when someone takes their own life. Death, for Nature and the root-forces of this reality is "business as usual." It is a cultural artifact of our own social ways of seeing that we suck in our breath and act shocked when someone takes their own life.

Now, we shouldn't be unmoved at suicide- it is, from our legitimate perspectives, a real tragedy in most cases, and it reveals many things, for suicide is a complex issue within the human world: it shows (for instance) how far we've drifted from one another, for in many cases, a case can be made that a suicide might have been prevented if a person had been closer to supportive others. That's not true in every case, and it requires us to sink into "might have been" type-thinking, which is hardly very helpful from the emotional level.

And yet, it is undeniable that we have more suicide now because of our fractured social systems and our moron way of reducing this world and our fellow man to some very banal, shallow things.

Suicide is also caused by mental illness, which is itself caused by soul injury, and by the bad power in the Unseen that injures souls. It is also caused by the predation of dangerous powers in the Unseen, which is part and parcel of the same thing- the "bad power" complex.

Suicide can, however, sometimes be a rational decision. These would be the rarest cases.

Now, in reference to the central portion of your question, "what happens"- the same thing that happens to any dead person happens to a suicide victim, because death is death. The body ceases to work; it is injured to the point that the unity of systems in the body which work to keep life-force present, vital, and circulating can no longer do their job, and so the life-force leaks out and returns to the sky and ground. The breath, which is the chief carrier of life force, exits the body and rejoins the wind of this world, from which it came in the first place. This is the "breath soul"- one of the two "souls" we can be said to have; it goes back to the Master of Life, the breathgiver, he who Indwells the all-

surrounding wind and air of this world.

The other soul will depart soon after this as well- the "other" soul is variably called the Free Soul or the Wandering Soul. In my thinking on the matter, drawing from the vast amounts of literature on the topic of the dual-soul model (which is found in nearly every primal and traditional culture around the world, including in Pagan cultures in Europe) the free soul "accompanies" the breath soul for a short while at the departure of the breath soul.

Then, they come apart, they part ways, and the breath soul "depersonalizes"- ceases to carry the specific patterns of the body-soul complex it once vivified for the space of a life. It becomes simply wind, part of the great wind of the world.

But the Free soul, however, carries on, journeys away to the Underworld, sinks down, goes down, flies down, whatever- it is guided by spiritual beings that the person had alliances with during life, and its destiny is very mysterious. Its destiny belongs to the mysteries of Fate, specifically. Every journey of every free soul is unique, in a sense, for the powers that the dead human engaged during their life have an impact on this journey after death. Thus, the destiny of the free soul is an ongoing shaping, and it has to do with power-alliances and power-interactions.

While you are alive, your free soul and breath soul are mingled with your body, and the three, most of the time, act as one being- the "being" you identify consciously as you. From the breath soul comes the power of intellectual and rational thinking, the power to measure and rationalize the world, to measure the outcomes and impacts of actions taken in the world, and to feel a very vibrant connection, as wind connects everything that lives. Also, because of these factors, the breath soul is the basis of "conscience", in a sense.

While you're awake and breathing and alive, the breath soul, in a sense, gives conscious form and shape and direction to the much more mysterious and intuitive and strange reality of the free soul- but when the breath soul is relaxed in sleep, the free soul becomes more active, and it can wander- as it does in dream states, or in out of body experiences. While you are alive, when it is wandering, it is still influenced by the breath soul in a way, so you always "make sense" of visions and dreams during these experiences in a uniquely living human sort of way.

But when you die and give up the breath soul, you are left with only a wandering soul, and without breath, without life-force, reality appears surreal and dream-like and very, very strange. We can't talk much about the specifics of the journey of the departed wandering soul precisely because it takes place beyond the reasoning power of the breath, beyond the "bright consciousness" you are now using. In fact, from our perspective, dead people are just plunged into what appears to our reasoning minds to be oblivion or darkness or zero activity.

But that is not so. What they are experiencing, however, would make little sense to us, because we are alive and they are dead.

Your friend who took their own life lost their life-force and breath soul rapidly (in the first day or two, or possibly up to a few more days- some say the "separation of the breath soul and the free soul can take up to nine days) and then they wandered off, as a released free soul, onward to whatever dreams may come, in the heart of the world, into the interior depths of everything which have no bottom and no boundaries- the Underworld, some call it.

This "place" is where all free souls "come from" if you consider things in a narrative or story sense, which is the best sense in this case, for the free soul and its doings are always best expressed in story-like, mythical terms. Those alone come the closest to the "truth", when dealing with things that don't make rational sense.

That this person took their own life is a mere detail. What they face after death is the same we all face- the separation of the breath soul from the free soul AFTER those two forces have lost their perceptual connection to this thing we call a "body", and then, after that, they face a dream-like state of journeying or transforming or shape-shifting, completely as a free or wandering soul, for the seat of our birth-less and deathless awareness IS somehow connected to the free soul.

That free soul is the "Child" of the Great Being that Indwells this Earth, or to put it another way, the Lady of the Underworld. She is common mother to our free souls. Our breath souls come from the Great Above, from the Master of Life ("Life" here meaning "breath soul animation") and he "gets back" what part of him he gave at birth. The rest goes back to the depths from which it came. "God in Heaven"- the Indweller in the Wind and Sky and Storms- is, in fact, only really able to exercise his direct power over the living, for when we die, we leave behind the breath-soul vivified universe or world, and come under the governance of deeper powers.

Now, the nature of the free soul's journey is what you are inquiring about. Before that journey begins in earnest, the "two souls" have to come apart, and some say that can be traumatic, for it marks the real end of a deceased person's easy access to their personality, memories, and ability to have a form of cognition that they became accustomed to during life. Certain aspects of memory do carry on, but nothing like what you experience as memory now. What you often experience as memory now is due to the operation of the body and the presence of the breath soul.

The World itself can be said to remember all things, but we individuals discard and lose memories with some regularity, both in this life, and beyond. I know from direct experience that some of the inhabitants of the Underworld have memory of who and what they "used to be" when in other worlds,

though most don't. This "country of wandering souls" deep below is Faery-Elfhame, and the wandering soul is nothing but "Alf" or "Elven" or "Fayerie". They are "below"- merged with the Land. And some of them, as folklore has shown, remember who they were in mortal lives before, as humans, or even as animals in the human world. Why is this? I will explore that mystery later.

I can say that most don't have that much awareness of "the bigger picture" in the below, just as most humans here don't have that awareness of the greater picture. The dead become, at broadest analysis, one and the same as the "Fayerie" people- by dwelling inside the land, they are merged with the land. They view themselves as "one" with the features of our land- the trees, the grasses, the waters. They feel themselves in that way, at many times.

During the first stages of death, and perhaps in the later stages of the free soul's journey, one must meet the shadow, the darker powers that represent the consequences of how we lived. I plan on writing a short work on this topic soon, called "The Bear Ghost: Black Dogs, Guardians on the Ghost Roads, and Dimensions of the Afterlife Journey", so be on the lookout for it.

To put it shortly, the deceased must face a being- ordinarily depicted in cultural myths around the world as a black dog or a dangerous, threatening being of some sort, often in animal or canine shape, but in other shapes too- which represents the sum total of the negative forces (destructive forces) one literally conjured up through how they lived in this world. When we do terrible things to other lives, or to the Land itself- and trust me, we can do things that Nature itself is harmed by with some ease in some cases- it provokes a response from the Unseen, in much the same way Janet was able to summon Tam Lin by ripping and tearing the roses of Carterhaugh- by violating the life-force in that sacred place, the guardian of that place, Tam Lin, was summoned automatically. He had no choice but to come, for she was crossing a boundary that Fate and Nature had apportioned not to be crossed without such a consequence.

So, if we've done anything really destructive to the inter-locked community of life of which we are a part, we have already summoned the dark consequence of that, and it will stalk us on our journey after we die. Now, fortunately for all of us, primal peoples everywhere also taught the way to deal with that being, should you encounter it, and those methods all boil down to showing it no fear and marching onward without hesitation.

Those who have bad powers as allies and familiars in life- the true "witches" in the authentically "evil" sense- may discover that their allies are more trouble than they are worth in that journeying state after death! Or, true to the fact that we cannot put rules on such odd, extraordinary states, perhaps the truly won't be that troubled when other wicked powers come to consume them or "take their pay"- paying the Piper and all- and this may explain why the dead who were evil in life are often believed to become powerful and even more evil in death, or at least to have the potential to do

so.

At any rate, no one *really* wants to be in the debt of such terrible powers, and those who do have already lost enough of their humanity to where the dark fate of their free soul probably was already accomplished before they died anyway.

Whether we died of old age or disease, or violence, or suicide, all take the journey, all face consequences, and all are following their own road, towards a mysterious Fate or destiny of which little can be said. I can say that free souls return, ideally, to the "depths", to the Ancestral country where the free souls of others have gone- particularly the Ancestors- and perhaps enjoy some mysterious life among them, of natural joy; or perhaps, their "lives" are like ours, a mixture of many joys, curiosities, and sorrows. I cannot say, but I suspect the case is beyond what we can imagine. And I suspect we will all find out one day.

I do know that free souls can "wander" right back to this world, or other worlds, regain a breath soul through the ancient sorcery of lust, the womb, and incarnation, and live as humans again, but that's not a guaranteed thing, nor an easy to understand thing, and, lacking the breath soul of the "previous life", there is little or not chance that much from any previous lives will be remembered- and the many strange experiences of the Underworld will be "dimmed out" by the shocking vibrancy of the life force and breath soul of the new life, to be nothing but dim, irrational, surreal memories, if they are remembered at all, and they are- but often only in dreams. The true Land of the Dead is, after all, also the country of dreams and visions.

There is much relief in the separation of the breath soul and the free or wandering soul: much of the "mind noise" and bullcocky that people live their lives in fear of dissipates when the breath soul is gone. All of the "either/or" dualities (heaven or hell) and all that other analytical, abstract, fear-based nonsense fades with the breath soul and with the kinds of cognitions and memories associated with it. A person traveling previous to the total separation of the breath soul may, indeed, fear damnation or the like, or may believe the other beings and experiences they are having in that state (if they are disturbing) are demons or hell come for them, but that fades away.

One of the secrets of overcoming the fear that can be a part of this natural progression is to realize that no matter how disturbing something seems while on this journey, it doesn't come "For" you, it comes "From" you. That is a deep and important understanding.

Once the hell-fearing person undergoes the separation completely, they are not that sort of person anymore. They attain a different way of feeling and experiencing, which includes soul-deep memory of reality itself, and their true family, and the true sources of life and power. Christianity is a by-product of the conscious experiences of unwise living people, going back generations. The things that it is based on no longer hold any water nor have any ground when the great depths immerse a person's wandering soul. Christianity very much belongs to the world of the sunlight, of life, of the breath soul.

It is born from social norms, political conflicts, and fear. Those things cease to matter to the dead.

Your friend went down a "road" that we all go down one day eventually. We are not Fated or destined to have a union of body, breath soul, and free soul forever; only for the fateful season of life that comes upon us when it does. Your friend's free soul is still following its road, on its journey, in the hands of the powers closest to it, and their free soul is fine, right where it needs to be at this moment.

I lament with you that you can't have that experience of their free soul like you used to, when you were both joined to the forces of life in this world, but then, we are all raindrops falling, in a way. The story of this world- which may be said to be the sum-total of all stories of all free souls (human and non-human) is very huge. Maybe one day, in the strange dream of this world's story, you'll have a new experience of that friend. Our free souls are truly ageless, as old as this cosmos, and some might say that they are innate parts of this cosmos.

At any rate, I have suffered the sting and terror of suicide, too, in my own friend-group, and I work hard now to reach out to people as much as I can, because you never can tell- or should I say- you ordinarily can't tell. Extraordinary measures, on the other hand... we should do what we can to help as much as we can, while we have the opportunity. The Fates of life and death and the Fates of souls are really, in a sense, beyond our ordinary reach. We're all just along for the ride, and we just need to be as wise and kind as we can be, until we take that road, too.

It is useful to consider the breath soul and the free soul as the sun and moon of the body- for the breath soul, connected to the winds and sky, is associated (just as the Master is) with the sun and the conscious state, and the free soul, connected to the depths within and below, is associated with the moon and the unconscious states- and the watery, murky, strange depths of the Underworld. I sometimes call the free soul the "water soul", and the breath soul the "air soul"- with the body making up the "earth" they both inhabit, and our individual wills being associated with the fire and heat of the body and souls together.





*"I didn't quite dream, but it all seemed to be real. I only wanted to be here in this spot- I don't know why, for I was afraid of something- I don't know what. I remember, though I suppose I was asleep, passing through the streets and over the bridge. A fish leaped as I went by, and I leaned over to look at it, and I heard a lot of dogs howling- the whole town seemed as if it must be full of dogs all howling at once- as I went up the steps. Then I have a vague memory of something long and dark with red eyes, just as we saw in the sunset, and something very sweet and very bitter all around me at once; and then I seemed to be sinking into deep green water, and there was a singing in my ears, as I have heard there is to drowning men; and then everything seemed passing away from me, my soul seemed to go out from my body and float about the air."*

*-Bram Stoker, from "Dracula" (Mina Murray's Journal, 18 August)*



# When I am Ripe for the Grave: Perspectives on Death and Preparations for the Journey

Someone just wrote to me and asked me to talk about the most important perspectives I've personally encountered regarding dying and death. This good gentleman has important reasons to ask, and so I think this is a great honor, to be able to share these things.

Before I start, I want to say what I said to him- I wish we had a better language to use when talking about death because the word "death", and all of the notions that surround it, have become hopelessly loaded-down with a lot of negative connotations and fear, in our society. I don't guess it's just us; few societies around planet Earth can boast of being very comfortable with the idea or topic of death. But no matter how it happened that we've become bogged down in distressed thinking about death, the fact is we are bogged down, and it makes the topic strained.

So it feels like there's never a good place to start talking. Any attempt I make to "take the curse off" the topic sounds like me being insensitive to the strong emotions death invokes in people. Any other attempts I make sound like more human attempts to rationalize it all away. I only ask that everyone please be charitable and not think either of those things about what I'm going to say here.

And now, a list of the best things I ever heard or learned about dying and death.

1. Death is the ultimate uniting factor in human life.

Death is the true aspect of our human lives that makes us all "one", in a manner of speaking. It's the one thing we truly and without debate have in common with everyone else alive, and with everyone who has ever lived. Death is considered a "separator" of people, but in reality, it unites people, perhaps like nothing else. Death, considered this way, is the ultimate equalizer of human beings- the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the young and the old- everyone is held tightly bound by this common fate, this common experience that we all must undergo. Some people think this is an unnecessarily morbid observation, and they rightly ask "Why not use birth as the ultimate uniting factor? All must be born." Sure, yes,- we all had to undergo the experience of birth, and yes, it is another thing we indisputably have in common.

But death affords us a fateful, shared transition that comes with a bonus birth didn't- the power to face it with a strong sense of lived experiences, whatever wisdom we've gained, and a deep humility which can only arise from seeing the whole timeline of a particular life. Death really reveals the measure of our lives, with all the triumphs and disappointments. Birth happened to us, quite outside our recollection. It was a joyful experience for pretty much everyone around us (I hope) except for us. The process of dying, on the other hand, will likely happen well inside of our recollection, inside of our conscious awareness, and we have a chance to participate, as it were, with the experience, in a

way that an infant could not.

At any rate, death unites. Makes all equal. It's a factor that I have in common with the mighty Julius Caesar, the spirit-traveler Isobel Gowdie, the wise Marcus Aurelius, the wild and adventurous Norsemen who crossed the great ocean to find new lands, the musical genius Mozart, and every person reading this letter right now. We're all brothers and sisters in a commonwealth of life and death. Something about that makes me feel introspectively reverent.

2. Death and Dying are as natural as birth.

It may sound trite, and doubtless you've heard it before, but in the same way that there is no humanity without birth, there's no humanity without death. Birth afforded us an opportunity to transmit our life-force into this world, in a vital form. Death affords us an opportunity to transmit our life-force into another world, into a new form.

A humorous, but powerful Zen parable tells of two brothers in the womb, one of them very pessimistic, and the other more laid back. The pessimist brother complains often about the womb-space getting smaller, and more cramped, but the laid-back brother tries to see the bright side and points out how warm and cozy it is. The pessimist brother tells his sibling that he's heard of a thing called "birth", and how much it worries him, but his brother dismisses it as another day's problem. One day, they both feel strong spasms and begin to slip away from one another. The pessimist is quite distressed and calls out to his brother. His brother can only say "sorry, I'm going away, I don't know where"- and the pessimist finds himself alone in the womb. Just as he begins to feel himself pushed downward into the unknown, he cries out "Surely, this is the end of everything!"

I love that story. I think about it often.

3. Dying and Death, if done right, can increase a person's virtues, their capacity for love, and personal peace.

I once heard someone say that we never really know ourselves until we face the prospect of death. They meant more than just the idea of it; they meant facing probable death in a battle, or a dangerous situation, or that moment when doctors tell you bad news. That same person said that the prospect of dying made everything a lot clearer to them- it made them realize what was important, truly important.

It was a teacher of no less stature than Buddha who called death "his great teacher." And the person I was quoting above was echoing the same sentiment. This is why even today, all Buddhist schools out there suggest that their adherents meditate daily on their own inevitable deaths. Marcus Aurelius, the great Stoic master, suggested precisely the same thing. And if you do it (and I do) it helps to keep you very honest about the things that really matter. There's never a bad time to consider how you'd be feeling or thinking or acting if you knew for certain you were living your last 72 hours.

Selfishness, greed, hostility, hate, all of these things can be banished with ease when a person realizes that they are facing the transition of death. 99%- or perhaps 100% of the reason we even

have those negative qualities in our minds is because we imagine that something or someone is going to ruin our lives if we don't fight them, or something is going to make our lives easier if we have it.

But when the concern over your life being ruined, or saved, is erased by the knowledge that your life is reaching its culmination point, those things dissolve- or at least, if you have even a shred of wisdom and insight, they dissolve. I guess some people can stay bitter to the very end, but that's a sad ending indeed for a chapter in the story of anyone's life.

Death reveals that working overtime to get that bonus wasn't nearly as important as coming home and spending time with people you love.

4. Death is not a decrease; it is not "too little"; it is an increase; the danger is that it may be too much.

We associate death with darkness, unconsciousness, and loss. We imagine, in our paranoid way, that dying means you lay down and "go dark"- like deep, dreamless sleep, except deeper, and final. We picture it in terms of no feelings, numbness, nothingness. The reason why we do this is simple: our breath-souls, the vitalizing force of our bodies, are also the things that give us the capacity to reason based on the input of our bodily senses. We literally "make sense" of what our senses reveal to us, when we are conscious.

And we over-rationalize, like maniacs. Almost all of us compulsively try to fit in every feature of our experience with a rational story of how it all must work, how it all adds up. When we dream, the dream world is surreal and wondrous, strange and sometimes scary. But no matter how surreal a dream is, while you're dreaming, it makes sense. It takes waking up, and instantly \*bang\* that breath-soul driven reason tears the dream apart, and you have to laugh when you rip your dreams up in your rationalized memories: "What was a dog doing on top of that person's head?" "Why was the sun blue?" "How could I have been a woman in my dream, and thought that was perfectly normal?"

The vitalized body, with its very reasonable capacity to rip things up, can't make sense of the dream state. When the body sleeps, the breath soul relaxes, and the senses shut down. The other soul we have- the free soul- then wanders a bit, and experiences things. In that twilight state, we are having some very important experiences. When we wake, we tend to lose the impact of those experiences because they "don't make sense" or we just forget them all, totally.

This is important to consider when we think about death- the breath soul and the rational mind can't make sense of death. It can't "make sense" of what was occurring before we were conceived and born, so that's just a black nothingness to most of us. And it can't look forward to see or make sense of the state that follows death, so it fears that it is a black nothingness, too. This is a paranoid optical illusion of the reasoning breath soul.

And so all the associations start- loss, decrease, disappearing, darkness. In reality, when we exhale the breath soul for the final time, at the moment of death, and the senses shut down- which is remarkably similar to how it feels when we fall asleep- the free soul wanders again, this time not to

return to the experience of the body. But when the limits of the breath-reason and the bodily conditions are gone, we don't have less- we have more. Much more. So much more, that the real thing we might should worry about death is that we'll be overwhelmed by how immense the reality we are all part of really is.

We get to wander into regions of experience that we only tasted in dreams- and more and more, as we develop into the next condition, we feel perhaps like we're "overflowing" into everything else. The body gives you good, hard boundaries that make you feel quite isolated and cut-off from other things and beings. When it is gone, and you are experiencing reality as a free-flowing wandering soul, boundaries are hazy and indistinct, surreal, and (yes) blissful.

Things can seem illusionary, like a powerful vision. And it only gets deeper, as we sink deeper, to the heart of things, where wandering souls all came from in the first place. We no longer need that "reason" we used so much when we had gravity and falling rocks and speeding cars to worry about- the free soul has a trans-rational capacity of experience which is marvelously strange, even sorcerous, one might say- but it's also very poetic, and very fluid. At any rate, eventually, we reach the place in the depths- or the strange regions beyond- that is the "other side" of this world of waking days.

And if we can rely on folklore, mythology, and the wise words of the illumined, that is not the end of the journey, either. It is simply the first phase of the death journey- when we sink, purified, down to the bosom of the deep, to the feet of the Queen of the Underworld, who sent us forth long ago in the first place. Death is a reunion with the Great Grandparents of all- it is a return to the beginning, to the origin-country of life.

And all of this, in some fashion, was happening before we were born. Obviously- though I don't know how, and don't think anyone really does- we can get from there to a condition like this human one. So, maybe the reincarnationists are right; maybe something compels us to return cyclically, or maybe that strange self we call the free soul wants to return on its own; maybe returning is a gift or maybe it's optional.

For my part, I think that greater forces than us shape so much. I think life- like death- pretty much happens because of a lot of great powers outside of my awareness and control, and that's that- it's like the seasons in that way. If my death-journey is really a journey to another life as a human, so be it. I've enjoyed a lot about being human. If it's a journey to stranger, deeper places that can't be described, so be it. There must be something important about those places, too.

5. Death is a chance to say "thank you" to the sources of life.

On the heels of what I just said, about greater powers than us being responsible for all these strange states and experiences we all go through: we are not the authors of our own lives. Whether you believe, as I do, that the Great Grandmother beneath our feet is the real source of our free souls, and

the Master inside the Wind is the father of these breath souls, or if you believe that other gods or realities or beings "made" us, the point is that our humanity is a gift. A deer's life is a gift, too, and so is an ant's life. We came from somewhere; from deep inside the darkness of the Unseen world, from deep inside the strange luminosities of the Unseen.

We are "naturally emerged" beings- in the same way an apple tree just naturally "apples up" and produces apples, or the dark reaches of the cosmos just "star up" and get filled with stars. Our lives are borrowed, in a way. We came forth from the deep, and we left a hole, of types, behind us- a hole, a debt, that doesn't get filled and repaid until we return to fill it. Incredible things- powers- beings- beyond our capacity to believe or understand "danced together" to make us possible, and everything possible.

When we start the process of dying, it is a chance to give back to them. To say thank you, and offer ourselves back. In some strange way, each human life culminates in a form of human sacrifice; "sacrifice", after all, means "to make sacred"- and the dead are sacred, in the same way the dying are often gifted with visions and precognition.

The ancients worshiped the dead, fully. They respected them, prayed and made offerings to them, because they had become sacred in a new manner, and gone back to the sources of life. While we humans are busy vitalizing the world as the living do, the dead vitalize the world in a new way, because they are still part of the world, just in another way. And the Ancestors thought it profoundly important that we respect that, and try to reach out to that, as often as we could or should.

To offer oneself "back" to the Great Deep, to the Underworld, to the Unseen, is an opportunity to change how we think about death. Instead of death coming as a thief to take you away, you can re-write that story- death was a time when you went to the sources of things and offered yourself. Death, if you do that, is no longer a theft; it is a gift. Just like your life is a gift.

Death can therefore re-affirm and make strong one of the most important human qualities that any of us will ever develop: gratitude. Gratitude, Cicero said, was not only chief among the virtues, but the mother of all other virtues. And the wise old Roman was right.

## 6. Personal preparations for Death.

If I was told that I was going to die next week, I'd ramp up a few personal practices, with some new intensity. My first order of business would be to spend as much time as I could with those dearest to me, and to see if there are any people that I had "bad feelings" for, which it would be possible to settle, to make peace. No one should die with too much "unfinished business" if they can help it. Of course, it may not be possible to settle *every* relationship you had with someone that didn't go so well, but it never hurts to reach out as much as you can- so long as it doesn't take away time from you and your most beloved ones.

Now, in spending time with my beloved ones, it wouldn't be some panicky "I'm about to go, guys, let's



be really absurdly warm and fuzzy for as long as we can"- no, it would be simpler, not forced, just a natural enjoyment. Your most beloved are the ones Fate gifted you with, and for a reason. They helped you, probably, through many hardships in life. They can and should help you now, to start this new journey in the gift of their presence. I'd probably spend a good bit of time thanking them each for the things I feel they helped me with, or what they meant to me. I'd try not to give too much advice, because every life- like every death- is different, and what worked for me might not work for them in the future. Besides, life, like death, is also a great teacher, too.

As far as my personal preparations, I'd spend quiet time each day deeply meditating on the things I've said here, but also focusing the attention of my breath soul and my deeper, free soul, on the Great Grandmother of all life, the Queen Below, She to whom I expect I'll be traveling to.

I would go and get my antler-pick and dig a good deep hole in the ground, and "confess" into the Earth anything that I feel like I want to say, and beg the Earth and She who Indwells it to be kind to me, have mercy, and receive me. I would point out quite often to Her- and to all of the Unseen Ones- how much reverence and gratitude I feel in my heart, and ask them to focus on that, and not so much on whatever thoughtless or shallow things I might have done to any other beings in my life. Then I'd fill that hole with honey, wine, and something precious to me, as a gift, and cover it up.

I'd spend time focusing on the Breath-giver, my Master, the Master Spirit of this world, and ask him to ease my transition, and then- as the Ancients tell us- I would ask him to help me after I die, to travel where I'm going. After all, the Wind-Master is the "psychopomp", the Guide of Souls from here to the next place. Perhaps it's one of his windy servants that comes and does that for him; I don't want to flatter myself in thinking that "The Man" himself would come for me personally, but a guy can hope...

Of course, the Old Stories tell us that many are the beings that can come to help us journey off. Sometimes, it is the Fetch-beast and/or the Fetch-mate him/herself that comes; it was believed that as we start to die, they leave us, go to the Unseen, prepare our "place" there, and then come back to literally "Fetch us", and guide us away. So, me and my Fetch-followers would be talking a lot- and I'd be much more generous than I usually am with gifts to them, to bribe them (lol) into really giving me the royal escort treatment.

I would ask my friends and family who have passed through death already to help me, too, if they could.

I would spend time meditating on how things don't *have* to make sense like my rational mind wants them to. Considering I'm about to go into the trans-rational, into the beyond-rational depths of reality, I'd need to focus on letting go of my desires to make everything make sense, and try to get comfortable with just accepting whatever appears, and whatever happens. That can spare me from becoming distressed or fearful on the "ghost roads" just beyond my last breath

I would rouse my desire to be brave- because like the potential dreams have for being a bit disturbing, I think perhaps the death-journey can, at times, be disturbing too; but if we are brave, and pass right through without letting anything trouble us, we defeat fear and find our way. It's not that anything in the death-journey is really "out to get us"- it's that our own fear can make a demon out of a simple vision. Fear cannot walk with me in death; goodness knows it's walked with me too much in life.

I would not just rely on myself to do this, to be brave, to find my way; I would rely on my helpers to help me, my fetch-guardians and allies to guide me, to bolster me. Death unites us- it's another expression of how much we depend on relationship, and no man or woman is an island. I rely on many now; I would want to be ready to rely on many then, too. And I'm very comfortable with relying on others already. That's part of what it means to be human.

When my extreme hour came, and I was in bed, I would try to be as relaxed as I could, and offer myself, my life-force, back to the World that it came from. I'd let go of it, relinquish my feeling of ownership for it, and make a gift of myself. I'd hope to die saying "thank you." Then I'd put myself in the hands of the Greater Powers and go on to what dreams may come.

# Fear Not the Nightly Death Rehearsal

Fear distorts everything. A person may never have failed you, ever- and yet, when the occasion arises that you must trust them again, you fear them failing you, to some extent, if not completely. No matter how reliable something appears to be, and has proven itself to be, you always fear that *\*now\** is the time it will fail.

Our thinking on death and what comes "after" death is affected by fear in the same manner. In all our lives, we've seen how reliable our deepest beings are at staying present with us, even in the darkest places- like the little "death rehearsal" that we take every night, when we go to sleep. Because falling asleep, dreamless sleep, and dreams themselves are all very similar experiences to what death and "being dead" are like.

Skeptical and fearful people (often one and the same) scoff at this kind of talk. They say that consciousness cannot persist when the brain is dead. I say that consciousness arises in contact between basic awareness with some form of stimulus, and our senses- commanded ably by our operating brains- provide us with all the stimulus we need to be conscious when we live. But what about when the senses are gone? Easy enough- you experience that every night. Your awareness *does* withdraw from the bodily senses when you sleep, and you already know what happens when this occurs- a dream-body arises, complete with new sorts of senses, new senses that seem to mimic the senses you have in your waking life.

Your deepest being is a shape-shifter. When it encounters certain situations, it has a plan, and it naturally and spontaneously acts on that plan. Nature herself has a plan, you might say; nothingness does not exist, and never has existed. In a world of depth and lasting powers, the "nameless forces" that structure each of us at our deepest beings don't relate to "nothing". They relate to something, as evidenced by how each and every one of us was born and manifested senses through an organic body. When we lose those senses and that body, another more subtle body arises, and we move on in a new state.

A lot of people still doubt this, but why? What grounds do they have to doubt it? Every time they've ever dreamed, they've experienced subtle consciousness in a subtle embodiment. Why should that change just because the senses end their lucidity for a final time at death?

Why should that change just because the brain stops being filled with life-force and electricity? The powers deeper than the body, who are the real seat of our life, will just do what they do every night and kick out the subtle equivalent of a brain, a centralized "command center" for communicating between disparate-seeming experiences.

And if that subtle body, that "ghost body" should die? Maybe it can. Maybe it, too, fades because of

the same or similar laws of reality that make these fleshy bodies fade. Maybe, or maybe not- but I can say this, again with a good bit of certainty: if the subtle embodiment were to end, an even more subtle one would begin, because nothingness doesn't exist.

And you already know what the most subtle "body" is like; you know it without knowing it- in dreamless sleep. And what happens every time you go into the relaxing, regenerating void of dreamless sleep, which we all do every night? No, we don't build memories out of it, but we do get regenerated by it, deeply so. And then, we arise from it back into the subtle body of dreams, to get those last dreams of the night out of the way before we wake up again, and find our awareness re-entrenched in these coarse bodies of elemental power.

And all of this just vanishes because our bodies die? Who could mistrust Nature and the deep, weird, Sacred Powers so much to say or assume such a thing? They've never left us dangling into nothingness before; no one has ever experienced such a thing.

People say "but I don't remember jack or shite before I was born!" That is no more mysterious than failing to remember your dreamless sleep last night. And yet, here you are. That is no more mysterious than failing to remember your actual dreams, which fade quickly from the memory of most people- other lives in subtle or coarse states are no different than that. Of course you don't remember.

Or sometimes... like with dreams... you do. Vague impressions, strange knowings, intuitions, things that comfort you without you understanding how, images you've always been attracted to, people... these things are the collected essence of dreams and lives long past now, forests that our deepest beings passed through on branches of this timeless journey now forgotten.

Fear and its attendant doubts are not becoming for people who love Nature and the world Seen and Unseen. We who love the spiritual beings that we feel around us, who love the infinite spirit within Nature that is so easy to feel at the most powerful times- it is begging you not to be afraid of the Universe, and to Trust it.

This is our home, at the deepest level, and we can't be lost from it, can't "go missing", can't vanish into a fictional nothingness which is only a fearful abstraction. We are involved in this earth and sky, the deep abyss below, the boundless field of stars, forever. It's not an optional participation.





*"For every ill beneath the sun,  
There is some remedy, or none  
Should there be one, resolve to find it;  
If not, submit, and never mind it."*

*-Ancient West County "wise saw" or saying*

# Our Souls, Forever Wise: Mythology, the Afterlife, and Traditional Witchcraft

The longer I live as an aware human being, turning the full force of my senses and my wits onto the experiences of my world, the more I begin to understand why modern "mythologies" no longer fulfill people. I am, of course, speaking specifically of the Judeo-Christian myths and sacred stories that once meant so much to the people of the West; it is an act of unimaginable charity on my part to accord their scriptural mythologies the status of "sacred story", and I only do it because I know how sacred it is to them.

This does not mean that these stories have the dimension of the real "sacred" pulsing behind and within them, however: what ordinarily occupies people's hearts and minds with regard to the Biblical narratives, or the Torah myths, or the Koranic myths, is all of the layers of hope that they've read into these things, not necessarily the powerful touch of the Unseen. When it comes to mainstream religions, what I see more than anything is sentiment, social habit, and the "last holdout" for hope, for countless people. I don't see or feel the Unseen world's presence as I have come to feel it and know it.

In my way of seeing, sacred powers are not the sorts of guests that just "hang out" regardless of the behaviors of their hosts. You can be rude enough, thoughtless enough, or just obnoxious enough to lose their company. The amount of fear-mongering I see happening around modern mainstream religions is enough to banish from their scriptures and traditions whatever powers might have hovered about them ages ago. And fear-mongering, along with cultural genocide and general social obnoxiousness isn't something these faiths just started experimenting with in the last decade; they've been at it for a very, very long time, as even a brief reading of history will reveal.

When I look at the "mythologies" that occupy the minds of most of my contemporaries, I understand easily why their religions are dropping dead like bugs in a house that just got bug-bombed. To put it straight: their mythologies are too clear-cut, too self-assured, and too explicit. There's nothing terribly subtle or mysterious about them: the story is known, from chapter one all the way to the final chapter that they are so certain will be "coming any day now".

They know their "god" created everything, including man. They know how everything got spoiled, and what God did about it. They know what will happen when they die. They know how they- and by extension, all humans- should behave. In their (frequent) moments of tragedy, they know that "God has a plan"- even if they must crash against the unmoving wall of not understanding it. Everything is clear and finite to them, even their God who jealously (and humanly) has to have their worship, no matter how often they say God is beyond their understanding.

If God was so far beyond their understanding, they wouldn't be in such a hurry to claim to know everything about everyone's eternal destiny after death. They may come back and say that only God



"really knows" where "people are going when they die", but if their behavior and their words are any indication, they're pretty sure they'll probably have eternal life, and all the people outside their religions (or just the ones they don't like for whatever reason) are getting hellfire. Even the "enlightened" liberal Christians, or Jews, or Muslims, who believe that God's chief attribute is his love, and that God will forgive everyone after death, are still "in this" for their eternal hide, and pretty sure that they should keep doing what they are doing if they want to have a hope of getting the prize, and that means not crossing certain lines.

I see the fatal flaw in all this- our souls, forever wise, know that nothing is so certain, in this life, or beyond this life. The Ancients knew it too, and this is the chief reason why you don't find terribly detailed descriptions of "life after death" in any ancient mythology. This is why conceptions of the afterlife were vague, different, and often not a large focus for Ancient people. This fact infuriated Christian missionaries, who couldn't believe people were settling for what amounted to not really knowing what would happen when they died. They thought to replace this uncertainty with blessed certainty, which they felt was joyful (and sadly, many scared people were willing to agree) but it isn't joyful. It's contrived and it doesn't seem genuine, when you examine it closely.

This is why, in my most recent writing on the Compass, I talk about the cycle of the soul, and the mysterious "western direction"- the misty, strange, surreal place that leads away from life, towards the unknown. This is the "Sundown Road" taken by all the world's dead, but that's just poetry; it's referring to the fact that death is a movement towards the strangest and most unknown of places, at least from the perspective of most people. In the mist, anything can be concealed, and perhaps it is nothing like anyone can imagine.

When we examine the old Faerie-faith of Britain and Ireland, we get these vague but very insightful glimpses into the post-mortem existence of some people, sometimes the "modern" people in the tales who have recently died, and sometimes the spirits of the ancient dead who are discovered in the "faerie" state. The word "Faerie" comes from the Latin "Fatum" and "Fata"- all pointing to the concept of "Fate". The Faerie condition, there beyond the western bend in the path, in the strange condition between this world and the ultimate yawning dark gulf of the Truth, is depicted over and over again as supremely mysterious, full of the potential to look like anything, and be like anything. It is a place of Fateful binding, of forces bigger than you or I.

Those who are either in that state because of death, or trapped there for wandering into it alive, often don't know how they came to be there, or don't realize they are in a new condition. Some do know, and want to return to the world of the living; others are enjoying being there, transformed in countless ways, and others fear their stay there must end one day, and they must be "given up to the depths"- pointing to another death-like transition that moves the soul and consciousness-principle further along the Fateful path of existence

But there is no attempt to "map" Fayerie-Elfhame. It cannot be done. Time makes no sense there. The beings are strange, the courts of beings, the armies, the individuals, the "trooping faeries", the

wandering ones, those who interact with this world still, and those withdrawn very far- all of this is a wise and opulent vision of the Unseen world beyond life, which has no easy means of being categorized. It is certainly a relic of an older, ancient wisdom that placed death and what came after death right where it belonged- in a category of mystery, which could not be over-spoken, could not be over-analyzed, only held in sacred awe.

This makes the "mythology" of Traditional Craft and the old Fayerie Faith much more mature and compelling, in my opinion. I have no "scriptural basis" to walk around telling everyone else what their deaths will be like, down to minute details. I don't know what each individual will experience when they die. That's because each death and each death-journey is unique, and the countless powers that we each have known and unknown relationships with will interact with us in a unique way when we die. I can always speak in generalities, as I have done; I have my own beliefs about certain aspects of the Unseen, and the state or condition of the dead, but there's so much more that I don't know, that what I think could be proven inaccurate in many ways, when I make it across those ancient and mist-choked waters separating Seen from Unseen.

The Old Craft discusses the Afterlife journey with powerful, simple, and potent symbols, and this is again mature and compelling- not weighted down with the unrealistic, ultra-detailed accounts of some self-assured (and very much alive) person who is so certain they know what happens when we die. One Witch discussed the blooming of a vast field of roses- themselves potent symbols, so sacred to the true "Old Persuasion"- as a sign of the soul's survival of death, and its re-awakening, and its "coming into the presence of" the source of life; such simple, almost dream-like images capture more truth than any boring "soul travel itinerary" that takes you from your deathbed to your judgment seat, and thence to "mansions and streets of gold" or, "the fiery pit prepared for the devil and his angels."

Modern religions are falling apart- and thank the Sacred Powers for that- because they overstep their claims, overstep what is good and proper for any wise tradition to claim. There are many things we can't know, and what lies beyond that distant bend on the path through the mist-filled forest is one of them. Worrying about what might be beyond there makes for a sad way to walk a path of beauty and mystery. It's better to walk where you are and let the beyond gradually unfold, in the organic and fateful way it always does. Can we trust in key things, like life, or the soul, or "Those beyond"? You can answer those questions for yourself as you live: what does your soul tell you? There's no onus on you right this moment to have those answers; the book of life, I think, will turn its pages for you all in good time.

In the meantime, however, beware those who claim to know far too much about you, your soul, your soul's destiny, or about the Great Unseen. A whole world full of souls is beginning to realize, deep down, that anyone who claims to know so much about things so mysterious is selling a foul story, one that says more about their need to condition and control others, than it says about what might be waiting for us beyond.



*"Not only my own dreams, but also occasionally the dreams of others, helped to shape, revise, or confirm my views on a life after death. I attach particular importance to a dream which a pupil of mine, a woman of sixty, dreamed about two months before her death. She had entered the hereafter. There was a class going on, and various deceased women friends of hers sat on the front bench. An atmosphere of general expectation prevailed. She looked around for a teacher or a lecturer, but could find none. Then it became plain that she herself was the lecturer, for immediately after death, people had to give accounts of the total experience of their lives. The dead were extremely interested in the life experiences that the newly deceased brought with them, just as if the acts and experiences taking place in earthly life, in space and time, were the decisive ones.*

*In any case the dream describes a most unusual audience whose like could scarcely be found on earth: people burningly interested in the final psychological results of a human life that was in no way remarkable, any more than were the conclusions that could be drawn from it- to our way of thinking. If, however, the "audience" existed in a state of relative non-time, where "termination", "event", and "development" had become questionable concepts, they might very well be most interested precisely in what was lacking in their own condition.*

*At the time of this dream the lady was afraid of death and did her best to fend off any thoughts about it. Yet death is an important interest, especially to an aging person. A categorical question is being put to him, and he is under an obligation to answer it. To this end, he ought to have a myth about death, for reason shows him nothing but the dark pit into which he is descending. Myth, however, can conjure up other images for him, helpful and enriching pictures of life in the land of the dead. If he believes them, or greets them with some measure of credence, he is being just as right or just as wrong as someone who does not believe in them. But while the man who despairs marches towards nothingness, the one who has placed his faith in the archetype (or myth) follows the tracks of life and lives right into his death. Both, to be sure, remain in uncertainty, but the one lives against his instincts, and the other with them."*

*-Carl Jung, from "Memories, Dreams, Reflections."*



# Sleep is Waking, Waking Sleep

I lost most of my "existential crisis" issues the day I accepted what primal peoples from so many currently existing and earlier societies had all said: that the dream world was as real- and often more real- than this one. For the longest time, I wondered at such a statement. My western upbringing didn't offer any help, for like all people, I was told from very early on that dreams were "just dreams"- fake, meaningless, just so much mind noise during sleep.

But one day, I realized the crucial thing that made the statement "the world of dreams is just as real, and perhaps more real, than the real world" come to life. I realized that the modern world had taken the "need to explain everything" to such morbid extremes, that we had literally created a false world. The creation of this world was slow in coming, but it built up further and further until the world of our creation was solidified, and to our minds, it had always been here, always been this way.

Entertain this perspective for a moment, dear readers: dreams are like wild animals. They are undomesticated products of our minds and souls. It takes a dreamer waking up, and then trying to "tame" the dream with explanations for it, to destroy the power of the dream. When the breath soul and the rational intellect is relaxed in the arms of sleep, the visions that arise are undiluted by "explanations". They are undomesticated, free-range visions. Without our need to explain to burden us, we are capable of experiencing the strangest, most surreal things as though they were completely normal- until we awake. When we examine our memories of the dream after awakening, suddenly it seems so strange, so bizarre.

This is what made me realize what we had done to the waking world. When we apply our human stories to everything in the waking world, we domesticate it, in a sense; the dream-like quality that our world naturally has becomes "solidified" and driven away. The reason why the dream world is "more real" than this waking world is because the dream world is more wild and spontaneous and flexible; our waking world is an unbroken, seamless extension of that natural wildness, too, but it has been placed under the petrifying spell of our ceaseless stories that we put on it, to "explain" it and "make it make sense."

Thus, the waking world can no longer be seen for what it is; we see it the way we are- our stories create a "glass darkly" that we see things through. But in dreams, we meet reality face-to-face. It was then that death lost even more of its sting- if, in death, I will finally be allowed to put down or even forget the rigid stories that I have been conditioned with all my life about the world and reality, and begin to dwell face-to-face with the ever-flowing, dreamlike wonder of reality, then death ceases to be a fear at all.

The Ancestors met to talk about their dreams. I used to think that perhaps the wise among the Ancestors were like "dream interpreters"- but now my soul tells me otherwise; it tells me that to "interpret" dreams is to tame dreams. Bad enough that we should put animals in cages at zoos! Must we cage dreams? The dream wants to be talked about, shared, but explained? I think not. The dream

shares its own wordless magic when it is told for the story it was- a story told by the oldest storytellers, the most mysterious storytellers- without the elaborations of the intellect that only seeks to make the dream "fit in" to another mold.

What emerges from this is a lost vision of the world, which both the "returners" to the Older Worldview of Sorcery and Spirits yearn for and need- and which the Sorcerer and the Witch rely upon for their wisdom and power-gaining efforts: the lost vision of the dream-like reality of our world. Some people needn't realize it through understanding the spell of language and how it is used to block the flowing quality of the world with human-serving stories: a sufficiently aware person can see winter come and give way to spring, and to summer, and to another winter eventually, and then see the living and dying of humans and non-human beings, and see birth, and see the alternation of light and dark, in sleep and in the sky, and begin to intuit how dream-like the world is, at a deep level.

The world is a morphing field that appears to vanish and re-appear, like dreams every night; what makes sense now suddenly doesn't seem to hold up; what we loved one year, we have no passion for on another- life is water, not stone.

And water is the medium of the dream, of the deep unconscious, and the element that we cross- both in personal experience and in the experience of the myths- to reach the Unseen world. None of this is a coincidence; these symbols and understandings line up with the soul's deeper awareness.

I once engaged in fierce debates with people about what was real, what was true, and what the meaning of things had to be. In my new awareness of the dream-like quality of things, I relaxed into a deeper, more soothing vision- a vision whose ancient power was obvious. There are no "answers" like humans want to the mysteries of this world-dream. And to not have an answer, nor need an answer, may be the best "answer" of all to the many so-called "problems" of human existence. The spirits, the powerful entities called "Gods" by Those Who Came Before- they are powerful strands of dream, sentient strands, whose shape-shifting ability is easily explained by their alliance to the dream-like structure of reality itself.

The "afterlife" is indeed a dream, but no more than this world of life already is; there is no myth or story that can really tell us what "will be" when we die, just as no story will tell us what "will be" when we sleep and dream. What is important is that something "will be"- something is there, the wondrous and even partly ominous tapestry of surreal power that was always real and will always be real- no matter how we breathing humans try to "story" certain parts of it to our advantage.

# The Dream of an Old Friend

In one of the most important dream visions I ever had, some years ago, I fought as hard as I could against the spirit that I had asked for the dream in the first place. Irony, right? I did a very moving, very complete, very potent ritual work to gain the dream. It was an old ritual, learned by me from practitioners of that nameless hybrid hoodoo-voodoo current of power in south Louisiana. And it worked. The spirit came, that very night. I know enough to know the difference between "ordinary" dreams (if such a thing even exists) and the potency of a vision-dream.

And there I was, in my house, standing at my front door, as he came up the front walkway. He knocked, and I was afraid. So, I stayed silent behind the door, hoping he'd think no one was home and go away. But he didn't. He began to become forceful with his attempts to get in- and he began to fiddle with the lock and handle from the outside. This forced me to seize it from the inside and resist his attempts to make it open. I was very afraid; he was strong, and I didn't think I could hold the lock, handle, and door with enough strength to stop him from bursting in.

But I did- I stopped him (or I was allowed to think that I did) good news, bad news- because that was the end of the dream. Later, a voodoo priestess told me what happened, and that lesson has stayed with me every day since. Houses, in our dreams, almost always represent our minds, the interior of our souls. And locks and doors are precisely what you'd imagine them to be- that metaphysical access point to our very selves. The spirit came to answer me, and I refused him entry to me. It's naturally a frightening thing when the Spirit comes close to us, especially when they present themselves strongly, clearly. If you aren't used to it, it's very scary, very disturbing.

The spirit I had asked the question to, whom I had sought counsel from, appeared as a black man- and in the deep south, even the least racist white people always have the impact of generations of fear of African-Americans deep inside their minds, influencing them. Dreams are the perfect time for that fear to manifest. It only makes sense that he appeared as a black man; that was right, another sign that my prayers were quite literally answered.

And yet, I fought against what felt like a home invasion. Had he been a white man, or white woman, would I have been as afraid? Would I have opened the door? I often regret the fear that led me to fight so hard against what I wanted so much- but I don't regret the important lesson I learned about locks, and what they symbolize. I learned how "locked up" I really was, unable and unwilling to let the Spirit World "in"- to open myself to their teaching, advice, and help. I realized how our social conditioning blocks us up in so many ways, and how mine was a hindrance to me.

And now, years later, in these Wolf-Nights, another dream came to me. Not a dream summoned by me as part of a petition for dream-divination, just a "free range" dream-vision. It came two nights after one of my deceased- yet living- grandmothers appeared to me, which is only right and powerful on



the Nights of Yule.

In this dream, I was in a house, this time with other people- and there were many doors, many windows. For some reason, we were all trying to secure the house. It had many locks- but I noticed, as I went from door to door, locking them, that some of the locks and doors were in poor shape. I knew that they couldn't keep anyone out, if the outsiders made any simple effort to get in. I remember the people I was with, and the things I saw through the windows, and the doors themselves, and their (mostly decayed) locks.

It wasn't long after awakening that I realized what this message meant. I wasn't resisting an outsider in this dream, but I was helping these people make a fortress of that house. "Them Over There" were reminding me of my commitment- which like so many important lessons has a way of slipping to the backs of our minds for countless reasons- to unlocking myself, to living not according to fear, but to the possibilities of relationship. I therefore re-affirm my commitment to unlocking myself.

Behind me, as I type this, a lock and its key sits on my "working table." It is unlocked. It sits in my conjuring triangle, manifesting that "unlocked-ness" to my room, my world, my mind, and my soul. It is a tangible reminder that the Unseen can't speak to people who let old fears and unconscious wariness rule their interior and exterior lives.

So now, your minds and souls all read it, you all see it: Robin Artisson is open. Open for guests, open for business, open to receive the Old Friend he should have received all those years ago.

# The Lord of Dreams and Reality

*Until the modern era, up to an hour or more of quiet wakefulness midway through the night interrupted the rest of most Western Europeans... during which they reflected on the dreams that typically preceded waking from their 'first sleep'. Not only were these visions unusually vivid, but their images would have intruded far less on conscious thought had sleepers not stirred till dawn. The historical implications of this traditional mode of repose are enormous, especially in light of the significance European households once attached to dreams for their explanatory and predictive powers.*

-Ekirch, quoted by Emma Wilby in *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*

Try to understand how much is lost to the length of dreamless sleep- it really is no different than how much is lost to the length of the "utter depths" that wandering souls pass into to gain regeneration, before rebirth. They say that our brains and bodies "recharge" physically the most in the dreamless, oblivious states that we all pass through at night, when we sleep deepest. It is a physical corollary to the regenerative period for the soul itself after bodily death.

If we could do as the Old People did, and have a "first sleep"- and wake slightly or mostly from it for a quiet time of reflection before we went into "second sleep", we would remember so very much that we otherwise forget to the nightly oblivion. We all dream. Dreams are visions, as much as any other sort of vision; they are spontaneous, surreal, strange, and can contain keys to much insight. But one must capture that insight. I don't mean to explain it, or cage it, but to give oneself a space to reflect on it, non-judgmentally, with real acceptance, letting its visual symbols speak to the depths of your soul in that way that they do. One precious space of minutes to appreciate the visions of First Sleep, and away the dreamer can then go to the boundless country, their soul expanded somewhat by the impact of the visions that the Night conjures.

Imagine being able to become lucid, really lucid, while on the first stage of your death-journey, or while in the first stage of your death vision, and able to reflect on what is occurring, instead of simply being cascaded along by it. The sort of wisdom and courage one could gain from that precious moment could change everything about one's destination, and one's destiny. The tides of sleep offer us a chance to practice doing just that- being quiet reflectors of visions, whenever they arise.

Those interested in Witchcraft in the deepest sense of the word need that sort of reflection more than most, because more than most, the Lord of Dreams and Reality will be turning his face to them, once he detects the proper serious desire in them for his instruction. His instruction comes in subtle ways, for he is a subtle being, as are the spirits in his cavalcade.

# Encountering the Other

I understand that our total, paralyzing cultural fear of "encountering the other" is enough to drive our one-sided focus on life, versus the needed focus we should have on death, too. I'm not talking all morbid here, just talking about the "energy of attention" that we could and should pay to the other side of life's coin.

If life is, finally, an encounter with self, which must needfully include others, then death is finally an encounter with all that is other, which needfully includes self.

That seems so simple, but it never is, in practice. Because we go out of our way to avoid the real encounter with the "other." The other, when met at whatever shallow level we allow ourselves to meet it, is immediately analyzed in terms of how it may be harmful, or how it can be rendered controllable, or harmless, or beneficial to us. That seldom includes a fair appraisal of what the other is or what it may fairly need, only what it may be to us.

What is our rush to psychologize everything except another method of sparing us the fear of meeting the True Other? Of seeing everything we encounter in experience as a psychological "archetype" inside us, or some reflection of our own minds or mechanisms deep down inside our mind? So long as the source of things is "us", we're fine with it, even when those things trouble us to an extent.

This simply will not do. And as much as it "will not do" for everyday, ordinary people, it especially won't do for those who would fain learn the real interior realities of sorcery, which always require a very honest, even brutal, meeting with "the other"- not just other beings, but the "Otherness" considered as all that is Unseen and mysterious and quite possibly terrifying.



*"While, therefore, Nature will have her way,  
and our tears will fall upon the graves of our brethren,  
let us be reminded by the evergreen,  
symbol of our faith in immortal life,  
that the spirit of man is eternal.*

*Never the spirit was born, the spirit  
Shall cease to be never;  
Never was time it was not; End and  
Beginning are dreams;  
Birthless and deathless and changeless  
Remaineth the spirit forever;  
Death hath not touched it at all, dead  
Though the house of it seems!*

*Let us be comforted by the reflection that their memories will not be forgotten;  
that they will still be loved by those who are soon to follow them;  
that in our archives their names are written;  
and that in our hearts there is still a place for them."*

*-Masonic Rite for a Lodge of Sorrow*



## P a r t II



# The Strangest Art: Witchcraft, Sorcery and Divination

I borrow the words of the Serpent  
Who moves on the secret wind  
And with spells unwritten my soul will send  
To the sky that none can own,  
To the Spinner's bower, where Fate is sewn  
To the bog whose bottom is never.

We will go, you and I  
In the Master's Name besoms to leave  
Wooden bodies and wooden cats  
For the eyes of men till we come again.  
We will ride the rain with the dead.





*I can read the secret in oak-leaves, or in any leaf. I am a traveling man;  
I wander a world larger than the map can reveal.  
I know the Horseman's word.*

*I know the strange names by which fogs and mists are woven and unwoven.  
I have kissed the hands of the maids-in-waiting that surround the Lady.  
I know the names of the monstrous serpents that slithered across the virgin world,  
leaving mountains and valleys in the wake of their giant bodies.  
I know how to use the sorcery of words to change men's minds and shape their dreams.*



# This Witching Flesh: The Sorcery of Bodily Sensation

Here, we come face to face with the real foundation of everything- the simple, ancient, and profound method of sorcerous experience that can unlock many secret doors, and pluck so many grains from the secret granary. It's almost outrageous to imagine that such a simple and subtle thing could have hidden from us, right in plain view, for millennia, and yet, here we are. It's reality.

When you're dealing with the body itself, the red serpent, you're also dealing with the land and its great red serpent, because the body is as much a part of the land as a boulder or a tree. As I have pointed out before, there are tunnels in the land, and tunnels in the body. But you're also dealing with whatever is in the land- like the Underworld. The land has hidden depths, just like your body and mind does. The flight down, the sinking down, the descent to the underworld is deeply connected with the conscious experience of the body. The Underworld is not just a big void under the "ground" that you see with your eyes and feel with your feet; it is also the depths and darkness of the immediate *sensation* of the physical body.

This term is very important- sensation. You have a bodily sensation, only you probably don't feel it very often. And this bodily sensation- the feeling of all of you, the feeling of being you, the feeling of having a body- is sorcerously powerful. We've all learned to ignore it, all our lives, and yet learning to be aware of it again is easy. The reason why it is powerful is because it is the anchor of the soul, the feeling of being a "being" When you are alive, your wind-soul or breath soul, your free soul, and your body are mixed together fully; every in breath lets you feel the "mixture" happening. Your flesh is permeated by wind and life-vitality, the same way the sorcerous Master himself permeates the solid, dark land. This is how the most Mercurial being in existence is also Saturnian.

So the body can be used to "sense" or experience that soul, because while you're alive, the body and the two souls really can't be meaningfully divided. This is the key understanding. Now, go sit down somewhere, and put your feet on the floor. Close your eyes. Can you feel the pressure between your buttocks and legs and back between what you're sitting on? Easily you can- but take a deep breath, relax, and really examine that pressure, and that heat. It feels different in those places than in the places (like your face, or the tops of your hands) that aren't touching and pressing against something.

Look into that pressure and heat. Deep inside, you'll notice a tingle, or a vibration or just a deep "sensation". It's easy to feel when you're standing up, and just your feet are pressing against the ground. It's easy to miss because you've become so used to ignoring it. Look again. Feel again. Any place that you press some part of you with weight against something, there is a pressure, a heat, and a deep sensation, which can feel many ways, but at first, it is always subtle.

When you feel it- and it is easy to feel; don't try too hard (the powers that be are almost always known by their subtlety)- you must focus on it and realize that this sensation isn't just in the places

where you're experiencing pressure. It is all over your body, in every cell of you, every iota of you. Go to a place on your flesh where there is a "boundary" between where your body is pressing on something, and a place where it isn't, and examine that boundary. The sensation seems to 'stop' at the boundary, but in reality, it doesn't. It's on the "other side" of the boundary too. It has to be, because that deep, pervasive sensation is the feeling of the sensation, of the body, charged with the vitality of soul. Every tiny bit of you has it- you are buzzing with it, all day, every day, all your life.

What usually happens is that people start to feel it all over- and it's really rather effortless once you focus on it- and then, their whole body starts to tingle and the buzzing of pleasant, dark life is all over them, right where it always was anyway. Welcome! This is an actual, surprising and powerful sorcerous initiation of types. Bear in mind that when I say "sensation", I am not talking about the tingling of nerve endings, as you get when you slap your hands together hard and then hold them close together. That's the sense of touch. Sensation is something that is one step deeper than sense, just the feeling of being you, of having a body and souls mixing and buzzing with life.

Once you have your whole body buzzing and tingling with sensation, congratulations- you didn't make it happen; it was always there; you just became aware of it again, probably for the first time since you were an infant. And guess what? This sensation doesn't stop with you. The air has it. The wind has it. Trees have it. Rocks have it. Other people have it. All of reality is endowed with this vitality. You are connected to everything, as I said before, and this sensation of the body, like the vitality of the breath, is another way to experience it.

You can sit there and, in deep experience of sensation, open yourself to another person, or an animal, or tree, and start to feel their sensation; you just have to watch and wait while you are aware of your own sensation- staying aware of your sensation while using your eyes and senses to encompass what appears to be another entity or thing. Do it long enough, and their sensation will "appear" to you in some form of subtle expansion. There is no true expansion; everything already exists in this way- it is just your mind becoming aware of the underlying reality. This sensation, like the wind that is part of it, isn't isolated to your body. It extends far, far beyond what you call "you." You can "sink" into this sensation, and continue to sink, going down, down, down, into your body, and into the Underworld at the exact same time.

To sink in sensation isn't hard at all; sitting there, focusing on nothing but your sensation, it almost starts to happen automatically, so long as you focus on nothing but this. It seems slow and heavy and sluggish at times, or perhaps at first; but in reality, it is very free and strong. It eventually obeys gravity itself and tugs and drifts on downward. At first it may feel like your "in" yourself or the under the ground right below you; later, you will feel deeper and deeper, because if you achieve enough simplicity of focus and relaxation, you will truly be in the depths. In every way. Always recall that too much effort at this subtle power halts it- never let yourself "try" too hard. Assume a wisely passive, easygoing effort, if you can understand that.

Sensation teaches us about our lives, our condition of connection, and our deaths. When you die, your

outward senses fail, but this sensation- the same one you can feel right now- remains. That sensation then sinks down into the Underworld, and on to whatever dreams may come, in line with the fateful forces operating on you at that time. Before you were born, this is precisely what you were: this intense feeling of sensation, in the great dark pool of sensation that was in the Underworld, which *is* the Underworld from your mortal perspective, connected to everything, within everything. Breath is part of this- as the breath-soul is exhaled from the body at death (taking the still-connected free soul with it), the interior experience of sensation intensifies and “moves away” from the body into aerial liberation and flight to the depths. At conception and birth, you arose from the deep, sensation and breath-soul vitalizing the forming body.

Let me tell you about two of the most profound uses for this special and easy-to-attain sorcery. First off, just becoming aware of sensation- something you can do while walking around, talking to people, typing on your computer, or any time- is a form of trance. If you’re standing in line at a store, you can do it by focusing on your feet, finding that sensation down there, and then becoming aware of it gradually or quickly all over your body. You can “greet people” in your sensation, by focusing on it as you stand in front of them and sinking down into it a little bit, and feeling their sensation. It’s a subtle way of greeting someone, but a real one- you are contacting them on a subtle level.

Pay attention to how you feel when you are in contact with your sensation, because your body and soul will send you messages and feelings, sometimes of great importance through it. How other people are feeling, or whether or not they are dangerous, or lying, or what they conceal, can be broadcast to you through it, as feelings. Danger that has not yet arisen can be sensed by you, if you are in touch with this bodily sensation. The great dark pool or ocean of sensation that you feel yourself “descending into” as you practice the “sinking” technique appears to be responsive to people who access it- responsive in very intelligent, darksome, and surprising ways. The depths are not indifferent or unintelligent; they speak. They grant visions.

Using your sensation allows for necromantic workings to be accomplished. The dead who are in the Underworld can be found using sensation. They can communicate with you through it, if you “sink down” to them through it- which is really just a matter of focusing on nothing but the sensation, sinking, sinking, while focusing on their names and visualizing their faces in life. If you persist long enough, and sink long enough, you will “reach” them, though the depth of the trance to do this causes you to essentially lie down and appear to be asleep, unmoving. And other beings, too- the Master, the Queen Below, the familiars- they can be met in just the same way, following the same method. Like the breath, the body and its simple sensation is the only sorcerous “tool” you could ever need.

Trouble sleeping? Not anymore, and not ever again. Lie down tonight, focus on your bodily sensation as described here (it’s easy to find when half your body is pushing against a mattress) and then, when your whole body is a-buzz with the vital power of your soul, which is the sensation, just focus on nothing but that. Within minutes, you will almost certainly fall asleep. This is a secret sorcerous “cure” to insomnia, but something else too- the dreams you have when you do this tend to be vivid and meaningful. It can be used as a dream oracle. The trick is to focus on nothing but the sensation, and just let go, just sink into it, and into the whole world. You can’t let yourself think

about other things; if you find yourself doing that, re-focus on the pervasive and everywhere obvious sensation. It's relaxing, and powerful. It also destroys stress, and makes a person more intuitive and calm, the more they perform this simple, organic work.

This technique had a name among the ancient Greeks- it was called incubation. It was used at the dawn of Western civilization by the primordial peoples that preceded the Greeks, and then by the ancient *Iatromantoi*-shamans among the Greeks to heal people, but also to journey into the unseen world and talk to spirits and the dead and even their Gods.

You will discover that it still has healing power- if you are ill, incubate. Sink and remain in the depths for as long as you can. You will either feel better, or you will, in trance, meet with beings who can offer you a way to heal yourself, or just have visions showing you what you must do- or feelings, intuitions telling you what to do.

This technique, as I said, goes back to the foundations of western civilization, and has many layers of power and use which you are free to now explore. But for me, the greatest use is this: it is a way of using the body to know the soul, and to know one's connection with all things, and reach out to all things. It is the pure primordial essence of sorcery. It is also the oldest bit of "material" that I personally know, the oldest technology of sorcerous attainment. It is the basis of all spirit-contact, shimmering, and necromantic works done by me, and pretty much all of my other works.

Many people talk about wanting to discover "where they came from" or "where they are going"- but those who have mastered bodily sensation already know the answers to both questions. We came from this intense feeling of sensation, which, when formed as your body, is just a single wave in the mighty ocean of the Great Dark sensation-type force that contains all of the cosmos, all of reality, and inevitably, one way or the other, we return to it. Your origin is buzzing and coalescing in your very flesh. Your destination is the same place- the beginning and end are in the same place, which makes the circle complete.

So many occult "secrets" and "mysteries" are revealed in the simplicity of the sensation- and the hardest thing about it all is accepting that it's really that simple. But it is; the most potent things are almost always the simplest things. Your body and its sensation is not just connected to the Underworld, the dark origin of everything, the country of spirits- but it is connected to everything else, too. Your body is, in fact, an entrance to the Underworld, if you learn to use this sensation correctly. Each person is in this way a crossroads, a union point or interface point with the spectral reality.

All of the works of sorcery I perform, in common with all works ever performed by legitimate sorcerers, take place from within the field of sensation. It is important that you grasp this- no incantation, words of summoning or "power", or even simple ritual gestures or acts can have real power if they are not down from within conscious awareness of sensation. The familiars are conjured from inside of sensation.

This brings us face-to-face with the Incantation Art itself: the art of making words into more than just words. We all speak rather carelessly and thoughtlessly, every day; speech is a common aspect of us. Even when we are leaning heavily into our words, thinking about them, trying to choose them very carefully so that they sink into the minds of others, we are still only carrying words as far as simple communication.

To make words into incantations, into "empowered speech" that is not just a matter of the breath and intellect, but also a matter of the wandering soul and the spectral otherworld, two things are required. First is sensation. You must speak while being fully aware of your bodily sensation, and as much more sensation as you can. The second is a special kind of knowledge of our Master, the original teacher of the magic of language- he who Indwells the Wind of this world, and thereby indwells the wind of your body, which is your breath.

Your words are the wind of your body (your breath) made into sounds. The Master is the teacher of sorcerous words, chants, and spells- and "mundane" words, or words uttered thoughtlessly, become magical ones the moment you realize consciously that the Person of the Master is literally inside your words because he is inside your breath.

If you pronounce words knowing this fact, while inside your sensation, your words carry with unimaginable sorcerous power. This is a mighty secret, the second great secret that follows along with the secret of bodily sensation. Words of rite, of ritual, of spirit contact, of any sorcerous gravity, must be spoken in this manner, with this special knowledge.

# A Letter to the Past

The letter I wish I could go back in time and give to myself when I was in high school:

Good day! I know you like that Paul Huson book very much (and with good reason- it's a good book, and you'll still think it's a good book 20 years from now) but there's something you need to know: witchcraft doesn't 'work' just because you get all the ingredients of a spell or a working, and then stage the working the way an author tells you to, or say the things he says to say.

That can be effective only in one sense: in the sense that the substances themselves have a latent force to them, and, if you are lucky, some of the real non-human persons that you are chanting the old names of *may* take notice of you- and through some strange whim of their own, respond in some strange way.

But that's hardly anything to bank on. That can awaken other streams of experience that might transform your psyche, but that's not what you're doing this for, is it? You'll see how important psyche-transformation and the like is one day, but for right now, change your expectations.

Read carefully: witchcraft doesn't 'work' because you have the ingredients, the chant, and your will or intention. That's really new-age 'visualize what you want, focus on what you want' claptrap. Many a person who starved to death visualized and wanted food quite a bit.

Those three things (the stuff and the will and the intention) may result in the eye of your deep mind temporarily blinking open, and then shutting again. You can hope that the temporary opening will allow it to see something, or that the nigh-unpredictable impact of the whole work together will attract the attention of something else, like some spirit, but I have to be honest with you- we're dealing with percentage chances in the range of 1-3%. If that much.

Now be patient, because I'm 'you' from 22 or so years in the future. You will triumph in all this. This effort will all make it somewhere, but you will have to be patient. When the victory comes, you'll be living in a parallel dream of wonders- but until then, abandon the notion that 'great witch gods' or anything of the sort are really waiting on the edges of consciousness for anyone to just say the right words or do the right things.

Spirits that can rightly be called 'great witch gods' certainly exist- most certainly- but it takes special and wise effort to get their attention like you want it now- very special- and to be honest, the spirits that *will* act as allies to you, making your workings into things of power, aren't them. You will have soul-level reverence for these 'great witch gods,' but they aren't anyone's primary helpers.

These 'great witch gods' give their blessing to most things, to be sure, but they're on an order of magnitude greater than you think, or maybe greater than you can think. They're more concerned with



other things than the heart of whatever girl you think that charm will affect, or whatever guidance you're looking for. You will, one day, find allies that can and will work directly with you, not unlike human friends might. The great ones are always very mysterious, yet present too- like the chill in the air is present everywhere in winter, but is, like the atmosphere, too large to really see. Instead, you see the snow or ice or frost all around you.

I can't say this enough- and I say it with some joy, knowing that you will succeed at this strange interest of yours: witchcraft doesn't work because something got said or some thing got made and put on a table, surrounded by candles and symbols. Witchcraft works when you have the power to make it work, and power comes from allies who give you power. This is the law, ancient and inexhaustible. Nothing gets done unless the power to see it done comes into play. I can't say this enough times. Remember it.

Hey, I appreciate you- I remember the effort that I made all those years ago (and which you're making now) to do these things. If I can say so myself, I was artistic, dark, aesthetic, not doofus or fluffy, not even as a teenager. But I hadn't yet found the spirits I needed to meet to transform this practice from 'hit-and-miss-and-hope' into a True Art.

Stay very reverential and respectful of the spirits Huson calls the 'witch gods'- they are real, powerful, and any disrespect to them will yield the worst of luck in these pursuits. And don't worry about Pagan religions so much. Pagan cultures may have had a lot of wisdom, needful wisdom for this world, and in your time, you will have many great experiences of modern Paganism, but the 'witch gods' have seen many human cultures come and go. They don't interact with human beings based on that sort of stuff. They're outside of our history and time, in a real way; their Fayerie-World, the Underworld, the Unseen- it's not a human world. It isn't obsessed with all the things we get so bent-up over.

But it does expect and wait upon our friendship and our submission to its venerable existence, and to its strangeness. It expects us to give ourselves to the way everything is connected, and spirits do *not* tolerate being called unreal or being treated like servants. We don't get to tell the Unseen how things should be; it makes things the way things are, and we accept that.

If you choose to embrace a highly moralistic, idealistic, and eternalistic religion that believes that there's only one god, and you hold it dear inside your soul, that will stop *Them* (those great ones) from 'coming around' to endow you with the blessings you need for sorcery, and will drive other spirits away, in disgust at the way you've shut your soul off. Take heed of this warning now, so that you can give it to other people. There is no true sorcery- ever- to be found in such beliefs, or the people who hold them. No matter what they say, or what any book says.

I'm happy to say that you won't ever fall victim to such a thing- but you will meet people (a lot of people) who do, and you will learn by their dismal example that what ideas we allow to build their houses in our minds change everything about how our souls interact and how our souls work. Certain ideas cut people off from spirits, all their lives.

Those people think that they have some kind of enlightenment, or some kind of friendship with great spiritual powers, but it's an illusion.

False blessings are the biggest pitfall. Never paint the sun on your prison cell wall and then think that you've made it outside to a pretty meadow. Real sorcery is for people who know the difference between false suns and real ones- or at least, for those who want to know the difference. And there is a real difference. But it takes more than just wanting to know: when your desire to know is rewarded with knowledge, with revelation, you have to believe it.

You have to trust yourself and 'Them over there,' and live what you've seen, really live it. It will be against what your society and your society's mainstream religions say is right, but you have to ignore them. They are lost in unimaginable evil. You don't have to flee into the woods (though you will want to) but you have to be unafraid to live as though you were a society or a religion comprised of just one person.

It's hard to trust oneself this much, to trust your experiences, but a point will come when they will get so clear and potent that you will have the opportunity to trust them- and you will.

Let your mind be a wilder place, like a forest; idea-houses can clutter up your mind and stop your soul from engaging the powers that be. Your mind can get 'over-developed,' like a city in this world might be- tearing down the forests and polluting the rivers, becoming ugly, predictable, and boring. And stay far away from the 'cities of god'- Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. No places are more bereft of the spirits you will need to meet. Keep no friends in your personal life that are residents of these three cities. A terrible unwisdom follows them everywhere they go, something predatory.

So, be strong, be patient, you're going to meet great people, and go great places, and have a lot of fun. Trust me, I know. This sorcerous pursuit will work out; just remember that no one 'naturally' does sorcery- the only people who can do it are the people who have the power to do it, and that power comes from allies. Some people may have allies working on their behalf quite strongly from the cradle, but 99.99% of people do not. It takes mature effort on their part to awaken their awareness of what helpers they may have, later in life (but the earlier, the better.)

There's always the possibility of finding allies among spirits; you just have to pay for their allegiance, unless it's your personal soul-follower; and you WILL meet him, and you will find power through him. Do not be concerned, and don't worry about a thing.

Sincerely, You in The Future.



*Magic is the activity of unseen forces. Unseen forces, however obscure they may be to us, are often sentient, and often transformative when experienced in relation to ourselves or other forces. It is not easy, but human beings can take advantage of their natural and deep kinship to the rest of the forces that comprise reality and begin to exert what we experience as "our will" within the interactional web of power. This isn't easy to do consciously, but such an ability can be achieved with one part discipline and desire, and one large part Fate. Magic or Sorcery is the activity of unseen forces. That is my only definition for them.*

*Magic and sorcery "work" because we are all parts of an omnipresent and eternal spiritual-ecological webwork of sentience. Magic and sorcery exist and "work" because they are expressions of how this cosmos is structured. They only appear to be "mysterious" or "occult" because they are so very subtle; things that are largely unseen always mystify or terrify human beings in our age.*



# A Soul Unbound: The Shimmering Art

Your body is a fresh expression of your free-soul, (also called wandering soul or dream-soul.) It is often considered a "different" thing from that soul; almost as though its physicality makes it a very different creature, but the reality is far more subtle. This may be one of the single hardest aspects of sorcerous phenomenology to express. But the attempt must be made.

None can downplay the supreme importance of the body. We want to; our culture gives us countless reasons to; even the idealistic reduction of body to "mere elements", and the concomitant focus on "soul as immortal and beyond the body" is a vapid, lethal error. The body is the soul's most tangible way of being present in the intersubjective field that we call "cosmos" or "reality." The body *is* the soul, in a way; it's the means by which the soul interacts with other beings. The body might be thought of as the soul "intensified".

Follow me carefully here, into the fun but strange language of phenomenology. To quote David Abram:

*The body is... a singularly important structure within the phenomenal field. The body is that mysterious and multifaceted phenomenon that seems always to accompany one's awareness within the field of appearances. Yet the phenomenal field also contains many other bodies- other forms that move and gesture in a fashion similar to one's own. While one's own body is experienced, as it were, only from within, these other bodies are experienced from outside; one can vary one's distance from these bodies and can move around them, while this is impossible in relation to one's own body.*

It's important to understand that we don't have an "awareness" that is ghostly, and ultimately different, from our bodies. There is no "ghost in this machine"- our sense of awareness, of consciousness, is not an incorporeal thing that can just be considered apart from our bodies. That is a mirage. At the heart of your deepest, most abstract notions of "self" is the sensuousness and tangible reality of the body. At your depths, your emotions, feelings, dreams, thoughts, hopes, and body are all the same unified phenomenon. During a human life in this intersubjective field, your body *is* that mysterious thing we call the "wandering soul" suddenly intensified into "this form."

Now, we need to talk about "intersubjectivity"- because it is an important term to phenomenology, to spiritual ecology, and to sorcery, too. You can get rid of the notion of "objective" and replace it with "intersubjective"- do it this instant, if you can manage it.

We tend to just buy wholesale into the notion that there is an "objective" world, and a "subjective" experience of the objective world- but this is a touch old hat, a bad cognitive-cultural habit. See- we exist in a field of experience which is a collective landscape; it is constituted of many experiencing

subjects, as well as ourselves.

But there are many things we experience that are *not* commonly shared. Abrams writes:

*When daydreaming, for example, my attention is carried by phenomena whose contours and movements I am able to alter at will, a whole phantasmagoria of images that nevertheless lack the solidity of bodies. Such forms offer very little resistance to my gaze. They are not, that is, held in places by gazes other than my own - these are entirely "my" images, "my" fantasies, "my" fears, "my" dreamings. And so I am brought, like Husserl, to recognize at least two regions of the experiential or phenomenal field: one of phenomena that unfold entirely for me- images that arise, as it were, on this side of my body- and another region of phenomena that are, evidently, responded to and experienced by other embodied subjects as well as by myself.*

*These latter phenomenon are still subjective- they appear to me within a field of experience colored by my mood and my current concerns- and yet I cannot alter or dissipate them at will, for they seem buttressed by many involvements besides my own. That tree bending in the wind, this cliff wall, the cloud drifting overhead- these are not merely subjective; they are intersubjective phenomenon: phenomenon experienced by a multiplicity of sensing subjects.*

And there we have it- the intersubjective field. This is a very potent re-framing of the so-called "objective world"- again, in the words of Abram: "For the conventional contrast between the "subjective" and "objective" realities can now be reframed as a contrast within the subjective field of experience itself- as the felt contrast between subjective and intersubjective phenomena."

In other words, what we experience as "outside of us" are things that more than one person or sensing subject can sense or interact with. The things we experience as "inside us" are the things that appear to only be sensed by us. But there is only subjectivity and intersubjectivity- only those things. The pure "objectivity" assumed to exist by modern science is nothing more than an idealization of intersubjective experience. It is an illusion, in other words. There is no way to rise "above" intersubjectivity. There is no way to be "outside of it"- because that would be a realm that could not exist.

This whole "nature", this whole "reality" as we call it, is completely dependent on "sensing subjects." Things are real- quite literally real- because they are sensed. And not just by us; but by countless things that sense. The oak tree over there was there before your eyes sensed it; but before your eyes sensed it, a bird was walking on its branches, sensing it; the sun was shining down on it, and water inside it was moving through it. The tree itself was sensing those things. And that oak tree- like the birds in it- was sensing you, in its own personal way.

The recursive nature of sensing- that you sense things, and they sense you back, creates the "river" of intersubjectivity. The "solidity" of this world is found in precisely how we continually encounter "others" in it- and how they encounter us. There is no danger that the oak tree will "vanish" when I stop sensing it, nor is there any danger that it didn't exist before I did sense it- it was always the subject of the sensing of other beings, just as it made other beings and phenomena subjects of its own sensing.

This is how things exist. And your body, being the object of the sensing of countless other things, just as it in turn makes the bodies of other things the object of its sensing, is an important feature in the midst of all this- without that body, you would not have any power to participate in the intersubjective field. In other words, you wouldn't exist as an object of the experience of anything, and would not be able to have another thing exist as an object of your experience.

Now, let's go one stage deeper. It's a powerful, and potent thought- you make the butterfly "real" in the same way, and in the same moment, it makes you "real"- through sensing. And the eagle, flying high above, looking down on you and the butterfly alike, make you both real. And Earth and sky- together sensing all their many children- make them all real. And those many children, celebrating earth and sky's many environs make them real. The stability and solidity of the world is nothing other than a massive exchange of power through sense.

"Man is the dream of the dolphin", some song once said. There's more to it than you imagine.

You might be bothered by something I said earlier, about not being able to exist without a body. Because you know, like I do, that your body has an expiration date. Fear not. The Intersubjective field has more than just what you sense horizontally- it also has vertical *depths*. And those depths are what mythology calls "The Underworld."

Death is the end of a personal horizontal experience of the intersubjective field, and an "expanding out" into the depths, into the massive and subtle field of more-than-human and other-than-human sensing perceptions and sensations. It's you being a shape-shifter and a "deep diver", which you are, and which you always will be.

Your wandering soul- which is a shape-shifter- intensified itself, through unthinkable brilliance and with the alliance of many other powers, into this "body" you currently feel that "you" inhabit. And that body is also a shape-shifter, changing at every moment in response to will and to other forces and environment. The body's boundaries are not so simple as you think they are- the body is almost holographic, totally enmeshed in the environment around you- completely honeycombed by countless other life-forms within it. Totally responsive to the environment, biologically intelligent.

When you die, that wandering soul expands- moves- travels- flies- and then intensifies itself again- it takes on a new body in the depths of things. In the *precise* same manner that you "take on a dream body" when you fall asleep and dream, the time of death is almost nothing to the wandering soul- it



"re-bodies" itself in a new manner befitting the current conditions it experiences. And with that new body- which is every bit as real as your current human body (it is just another intensification of your presence as a being) it exists in another intersubjective manner, in another intersubjective community-field.

The point is that you always have a body- of some sort. And no matter what kind of body you can say you have, all of them are real things that can be the objects of the sensing of other things. The spirits of the dead have the sorts of bodies that we can't make into objects of our sensing when we consider the bodily organs of sense- the ordinary eyes, or ears. But we can still put ourselves into a condition in which we can make the dead into objects of our sensing. And this is where we come to the mysteries that we call- as our culture has called- "witchcraft" or "seership" or even "shamanism" at times.

The secret of "shimmering"- of "leaving the body" to interact with the spirit-world- is a special sort of secret that is born from understanding all that I've said here. It starts right where the "new age" technique of "visualization" ends. It is a great tragedy that we have been so misled by the idea of "visualization"- guided visualizations are *not* experiences of the intersubjective reality of other beings. They are subjective experiences only, controlled daydreams that only exist for us. There is no possibility of making allies or alliances in such a daydream, and any power or wisdom people think they gain from those things is illusory.

Visualization is the tip of the doorknob, not the whole experience of shimmering. When you visualize something, you immerse your attention into the subjective sphere. What you are visualizing is "yours"- you can do with it what you want.

But... if the brain/body- which, if you recall, is the soul intensified- can be altered, paralyzed, in a way, by certain things (such as monotonous sounds, chants, or even a certain drumbeat- or by certain sacred-force substances) and, at the same time, if you are using visualizing to put your attention onto certain traditional symbols- certain signs and symbols that "urge" or "command" the wandering soul directly to dis-engage the horizontal experience-habit and to engage the vertical experience-axis, *then* visualization actually ceases, and the subjective sphere is suddenly lost as it is "invaded upon" by the intersubjective depths.

One knows this when it has happened- because, like a very powerful dream, you no longer have control of what you are "seeing"- or even of where you "are". You gain a new "body" and enter into the "depths" of the intersubjective world- the country of spirits, and of the dead. That is when shimmering (toad-leaping, hare-leaping) becomes real. It's a controlled "death"- and a pure bliss to perform, when one becomes good at it.

In this controlled death, this controlled dream-this is when intersubjectively existing "Others" are met. And that is where pacts are made, and power transferred.



# A Theory of Sorcery

When people talk to me about sorcery or "magic" specifically, they want to "talk shop" usually, about the basics- how do I, or how does anyone, "get things to happen"- how is magic made? Most people associate "magic" with the idea of making things happen- but of course, you know, that's a bit of bad wording there.

If I have an itch on my back, and I pull out my back-scratcher, and extend it to the length I need, and scratch, and then feel better, I just made something happen, but no one would consider it "magic" in any real or pure sense.

Magic or sorcery has to refer to extraordinary ways of obtaining needful changes in oneself or one's world. "Magic", if it's to be "magic", has to include unusual, strange, or extraordinary methods of "making things happen"- like being able to say some strange word that stops my itch, without me having to use the back-scratcher.

When a person engages in some extraordinary procedure or effort to bring some needed change about, and it "works", one of two things will happen:

1. A change will occur that can't be explained except through the idea that magic made it happen, almost like some kind of miracle, or,
2. A needed change will occur that *could* have been non-magical in origin, but it happened at such a coincidental time, and in such a convenient manner to the person who did the "magic", that it will make most people examining the situation really suspect that magic or something strange and preternatural happened or acted on the situation.

There are many "paths" to extraordinary effort. There are many historical "schools" or traditions of magic and sorcery. From the countless strains of folk magic in every region of planet earth, down to the hermetic and ceremonial magic traditions of the middle ages and Renaissance, there are many methods for obtaining needful changes in oneself or one's life.

And there are many theories behind *why* they sometimes appear to work, because most anyone who belongs to any systemic approach to magic or sorcery, and who has devoted effort to them, will claim that they obtained some results. And those people often have ideas about why it worked.

The examples of "magical theory" are numerous. Christian "faith healers", while I don't consider them "magical", still fall loosely into the realm of beings who borderline the mystical, and who offer extraordinary results with regard to healing. And their theory is quite simple- God either does things they ask God to do, or through their own faith, they heal people with God's permission.

In Hoodoo, in the southern United States, there is a theory, an old and almost wordless theory that

never really needs to be explained, that every substance in the world has a power attached to it- just a power, not necessarily a spirit, but a power. And you don't have to do anything special to get the power from the substance; if you have the substance, you have the power. So the Rue plant has the power to stop bad magic from coming near it. Thus, if you hang a red bag of Rue over your door, curses and things have a hard time getting into your house and harming you.

That's all; it's very gritty and simple. If you want things in Hoodoo, you find the substances that have the power to get those things or influence those things, and you pack them together in a charm-bag, and carry them around, or bury that bag somewhere, or so forth.

The notion of "inherent" or "intrinsic" power for substances is the basic theory of Hoodoo.

In Hermetic Magic from many centuries ago, there was a theory, a very old one, that everything in the cosmos was connected. Those who knew the secrets of the "linkages"- of the way everything was connected- could simply "make things happen" in much the same way the Gods made things happen. Those secrets were revealed by the Gods to humans long ago, and passed down through chains of initiation and teaching, among the elect. Not just anyone could "do" magic- it took receiving the secrets of the links between one sphere and another, one world and another.

These magicians- at least by the later centuries, the fourth and fifth centuries- believed that magic worked because "eternal ideas" in something that might be like "God's mind" existed, and those same ideas reflected "down" somehow into the minds of human beings- not in a direct way, but there were corollaries "down here" in the manifest world.

If a person could actualize the eternal forms- or at least actualize their presence in the world and in the person through one's mind, one could make magic happen, bring about changes on the "lower" planes because of sympathy with a "higher" plane. In short, there were "correspondences" between the elements of the supernatural realm, and the elements of this world. A magical person could manipulate those, and bring about change.

This is very basic, but central to all ancient ceremonial and hermetic magical thinking, but also of astrology and alchemy. They had many other very complex theories to go alongside this one, but this was the central theory.

People are always asking me what my "theory" is. I've seen a lot of things happen in my time, and in my life, especially recently, as my sorcerous ability has grown and blossomed in surprising and sometimes disturbing ways. I'm asked why I think "it works"- what's the sorcerous theory I subscribe to?

And after thinking about it for a long time, and examining what I do- all the impulses behind my words and deeds and explorations- I can say with all certainty the following:

I appreciate some elements of all the traditional "theories" I've learned about. I appreciate how faith-healers think that a greater power just gives them the power to heal. I appreciate how Hoodoo-workers still believe in a degenerated-animistic notion that every substance just has a special power (such a belief doubtlessly goes back to an earlier belief in every object having a spirit.)

I appreciate how the great ceremonialists had complex notions of everything being connected or "things" on lower planes resonating with corresponding sympathy with "things" on higher planes; I reject their hierarchical system and worldview, but I can see what they are grasping for, in their own needlessly complex way.

But I have no theory that fits so well into any of those. I only have this: when I have a need for some change in myself or in my world, I seek a means by which I can obtain it.

I understand that a dimension or region of strange forces exists beyond my ordinary perceptions. I have ways of experiencing that strange place. In that strangeness, there is a being who is Familiar to me, a helper, a protector, a teacher- for many years now, he has been my connection to that strangeness "over there."

Through him, and through other beings Familiar to me, I (or parts of me) "become active" in that Unseen region, and through processes not fully understood by me (but experienced by me in vibrant visionary, emotional, and physical ways,) I make connections with actual powers- beings, forces- over there that can endow me with the ability to obtain the needed change. And I often enough pay them for their help.

And that's all. That "strangeness over there" isn't so distant from, or different from, this ordinary world; it isn't a "higher" realm- if anything, it feels like a deeper realm, something deep inside of "this" world, a deep part of everything I'm experiencing right now.

Those spirits, or beings, or helpers, or allies of mine; their existence is no more mysterious than your existence or mine; you just have to change your focus of brain and mind a bit to "see" them; they are there, as naturally any human, or cat, or cow is "there." There's more to the world than we ordinarily see, but that doesn't imply that some cosmic plot hid anything from us. It takes a microscope to see very small organisms, and it takes a trance to see spirits. None of this is really "esoteric" in the pure sense.

But the experience of the trance and the strangeness is extraordinary, it isn't so common in this world, not anymore. Some trance states are natural- but not the sorts that do what I'm describing. What I'm describing is more rare, and requires a lot of specific sorts of efforts on the parts of people that want to engage it, firstly and chiefly the effort of obtaining a conscious relationship with the Familiar-ally

who alone can really facilitate all that I've said here.

Extraordinary relationships- embodied by Familiar-spirits- are the key, the single and greatest key to all that I've seen and done. And if you look at your encyclopedias and dictionaries, you'll see that sorcery- *Goetia*- and Witchcraft from the world over is precisely that: the art of working with familiar spirits via pacts of service and mutual benefit, for magical ends.

So that's my theory. I need something; I want something; I go and obtain the means by which I can get it. I meet my Familiar, we interact together with what appears to be an Unseen world, and the power is found. The power is "brought back here"- which is another way of saying it integrates with me consciously and fully (and I never understand *how* this happens- spirits make it happen) and then I receive or gain or obtain what I set out for.

People tell me that their "tarot readings" work because there are certain universal principles at play when they cut or shuffle a certain way, or say some certain words, or because they understand certain symbols. I say that real divination isn't a matter of theory, per se, as much as a matter of the diviner having the power to divine. And that power, like any other power, is obtained from the strangeness of the Unseen, from spirits. Divining Familiars are, as far as I can see, the only way I've ever successfully divined- and divination is a big deal to me, one of my main practices.

For years, I had the same "hit and miss" accuracy that any diviner without the obtained power to divine has. Now, under the power of the Divining Familiar power I've allied with, there is no "hit and miss." Not anymore.

So there it is. My "theory", if theory is what you want to call it. I call it "relationship", "friendship", and "practicality." I call it "strategy."



*"Our most immediate experience of things is necessarily an experience of reciprocal encounter – of tension, communication, and commingling. From within the depths of this encounter, we know the thing or phenomenon only as our interlocutor – as a dynamic presence that that confronts us and draws us into relation. We conceptually immobilize or objectify the phenomenon only by mentally absenting ourselves from this relation, by forgetting or repressing our sensuous involvement. To define another being as an inert or passive object is to deny its ability to actively engage us and to provoke our senses; we thus block our perceptual reciprocity with that being. By linguistically defining the surrounding world as a determinate set of objects, we cut our conscious, speaking selves off from the spontaneous life of our sensing bodies."*

*-David Abram*





# A Wolf-Nights Exorcism

Just in time for the Wolf-Nights, the "12 Nights of Yule", I have a piece here about exorcism. Undoubtedly, one of the oldest functions of Witches throughout history was the task of dealing with the unquiet dead. What follows below is an answer I made to a young lady when she requested help in resolving a possible haunting in a 180 year old home, where an 11 year old relative of hers was residing- an 11 year old who has been troubled by night-terrors and spooked in other ways, and who reports fearing a "shoemaker". Later research revealed that a shoe maker did, in fact, dwell in the house long before, and that the young lady had been talking about him since "she could speak". Always interested in these matters, I responded. You may all gain a "folklore seed" point or two from examining my response, and putting some of these things to practice in your own lives, if the occasion arises. But tread carefully, dear readers.

\* \* \*

"...It's not so much about gifts, as much as bringing needful influences into the area. You can- and should- include her (the tormented 11 year old girl) in the "bringing of influences", as it heightens the soul-impact on her of what you are doing, and adds (literally) the force of another soul to the work, for all who gather to do works bring their very souls to the sum total of the power, whether they speak, or remain silent; whether they understand, or don't understand that well.

First you need to determine clearly whether or not you have a legitimate haunting, or remnant power of a sentient type, at the location in question. If this is a case of a young person who is "sensitive"- as many young people are- or if it is a case of a young person who is as yet unable to sublimate and integrate the vibrant powers of youth and growth, thus causing "wild" mindstates, dreams, and the concomitant premonitions and visions that can sometimes attend them, you need to know. If you do have a legitimate 'other' causing a disturbance or ripening the power of the place, that calls for different work.

I'll assume that you do have a touch of the 'otherness' troubling the situation. You say the "shoe maker" may be an issue. If the wandering soul of the shoemaker wasn't successfully resolved back to the Underworld at his death, you certainly have an issue. 90% of the time, when this rare event happens, the wandering soul becomes a dangerous spirit. But then, that event only really happens when (for some reason) the wandering soul of the deceased was made, by virtue of the powers that they engaged in life, unable or both unwilling AND powerful enough to resist the fetch-gravitational draw of the Deep Below.

The dead go where they go for many reasons, the chief of which is, without a body to keep you anchored to the surface of the land, you sink. The breath soul flies, of course- but when the Shoe Maker died, his breath soul separated away and depersonalized after a space of conceptual 'days'. That aspect of him is impersonal, as it is with all of us. The wandering soul is more personal, more earth and underworld bound, unless it has magical power to do things like fly or what have you, and

you have to acquire that power somehow; it isn't really natural in the standard meaning of the term. So most people are drawn down, they sink, or they are carried by Fetch-followers, who have a traditional duty to take the deceased 'down' or 'beyond'.

It is said, in the folklore of most lands, that the very wicked or the very powerful (like witches or sorcerers of great attainment) don't just 'go along' with the program of the death-journey and can hang around, living in their own deaths, often causing trouble. I don't think a powerful sorcerer necessarily has to be a bad spirit after death; I think that's Christianity talking its usual nonsense. But if a person is really 'wicked', it means more than just 'they were an asshole' or 'they were a criminal.' Remember, real wickedness means being a vessel for bad helpers, for bad fetches, for bad spirits from the Unseen. Real evil, the truest evil, has a non-human element. *those* people can and will often remain in 'this world' due to their entanglement with evil praeterhuman powers.

Shoe makers don't strike me as being in a high 'risk Category' for having such wickedness, and unless he was secretly a mage or witch of high attainment, his chances of being around still ain't great. And yet, it must be said- real evil can appear in the most unexpected places, for there are many stories that we never know, unseen aspects to every life which are beyond our grasp. So the shoe maker probably isn't around due to wickedness...

But it is possible that he became so emotionally entangled with the very location, and the people and other powers who dwelled in the location of the house, that he literally made an attachment, psychically, at the soul level, in himself with the soul and power of the place. Rare, but possible. While the place exists, and while certain other subtle conditions are in place, and while he can remain as in denial as possible about being dead and what being dead really means, he can stay, but I fear the condition would be like a perpetual half-dream, in which a person dreads waking, and has to continually rouse the power of their will and denial to maintain it.

So, solution one: burn the house down. I doubt you'll do that (you did ask for gifts, after all) so solution two becomes: give the shoemaker irrefutable evidence that he is dead. Find his grave, if you can, and collect dirt from it, and take pictures of his head stone, and put the bowl of graveyard earth and the photo on a table, surround it with candles, wait until dusk, and chant his name over and over, telling him that he died, and that he should go to the Beyond, where Others are waiting for him, where his mother and father and all his grandmothers and grandfathers are waiting for him. Do this all night if you must, until something happens, or- if nothing happens- till the candles burn down. You can take breaks. Have offerings of whiskey or red wine for him, something alcoholic, on the table. And most importantly, have a window somewhere in the house open, or more than one, if you can. If something odd happens- strange noises, weird feelings, and then they cease, or the candles finally burn out, go close the windows. If the candles, for some reason, go out mysteriously, open the door, then close the windows, then close the door.

That's one way to go about it. If the shoemaker hid something of high value in the house or in the ground, THAT could keep him here. You'd have to find it and let the sunlight shine on it, and bang, he'll be gone.

As far as 'things' you can give your girl, to help her out, take a kettle of spring water, and then go and make an oak wood fire outside and pray most earnestly over that fire that the Master of Spirits will bless the oak and fire to have the power to drive forth unwanted or malevolent ghosts, and then (most importantly) pray that the Queen of Spirits, '*She Before Whom All Daimons Tremble*' will bless the fire just the same. Call her by a name that is pronounced like this 'Yoo-POR-buh.' Say that name three times, then three times again after you ask again, and then three times again, after you ask again. I can't emphasize this enough. Nine repetitions of the name. And the title- '*She before whom all ghosts, spirits, and daimons tremble in fear.*' All the time, be asking her to send her irresistible power to 'send forth and away to the Deep Below all spirits and daimons who trouble this area, or haunt it to its hurt or the hurt of those who dwell therein.' Three requests, and nine repetitions of the name.

When that oak wood fire has burned down to coals, take THREE glowing coals, with tongs, and drop them one at a time in the kettle of water. Plop, hiss... three times. Three times the serpent in the fire hisses, as he gives his own breath soul to the water in the kettle. Then, the water is ready. Sprinkle the whole house, starting with the threshold of the front door, and all the doors, windows, the hearth, the stove, every closet, everywhere. Then go light a candle from the coals of that fire and put it at the center of the house.

See if that works to 'un-disturb' the area. Write back to me for more information when you've tried these traditional methodologies.

A few more details, which need to be added: if you are lucky enough to find the shoemaker's grave, and get headstone pics, and graveyard earth, try to 'personalize' the séance-table as much as you can- put some old shoemakers tools on it. Also, it goes without saying that all these operations- even the 'water purification', are Saturnian in nature, and need to be done on Saturday nights. In that séance- if you manage to do it, if some of the windows of the house are on the north side of the house, make sure they are the ones that are open.

When you're sprinkling that 'Water charged with the Terrible Name', in common with all exorcism-type workings, ALWAYS leave at least one window, and better it be a window facing north, or the door to the house- open! This cannot be overstated. Close it when you're done."

# Aid From the Arbatel

If we accept- as I do- that each person comes into this world, and lives in this world, not as a singular entity, but a nexus of relationship, many new angles arise. Some of those angles are funny, others troubling, others precious, at least with regard to finding our way through life, and some just practical. Here's one:

The team that gave us the "Arbatel" from the middle ages was a school of hermetic sorcerers. Sorta sorcerers, anyway. Their book might be considered too "churchy" by most, but some of the Arbatel isn't just bible-banging magic deployed in Hebrew circles. Some of it is a form of strange mystical proverbs and teachings of the school's disciplines. The school itself considered those teachings to constitute a "wisdom of the ancients" from the distant past. How much of that is true, I don't know.

One of the things they say in the Arbatel, and which these people apparently adhered to, was regarding how a person spoke. If we are each of us a nexus of relationship, that means that the body, the two souls, and all of the "others" that came with us into this world from the Unworld at our births are here, now. There is (to use the word I prefer) an "atmosphere" of sentient powers that surround each of us, and when we penetrate into the Unseen consciously for the first time, we encounter not the "great out there" but the "great front steps outside our front door"- the exterior of that personal atmosphere.

Jung I suppose would have said it was the personal unconscious, before you reached the collective unconscious (which was, by the way, an objective reality in his thinking- the spirit world under another name.) The first beings you meet tend to be *your own following* as it were- those powers personal to you. You have an atmosphere, some more dim or more bright than others. You have "followers"- co-walkers, double-walkers (dopple-gangers). The true "Fetch Beast" and "Fetch mate" are two examples of iconic and centrally important figures from that personal collection of power.

Either way, how we speak and feel and act exerts some sort of affect on that personal atmosphere, on our followers. So, the Arbatel guys made a pledge never- ever- to use negative language when describing their present situations, or future hopes. They believed that spirits literally heard everything they said, and some of those powers would try to influence things in their lives to be in accord with what they heard.

Yeah, so much for my angry rants! This "Arbatelian" idea may be the western world's first "positive speaking" school. They believed that cursing your bad luck was the best way to get more bad luck. They believed that saying your fears out loud was the best way to make them come true, and so as a discipline, a spiritual and sorcerous discipline, they never did such things. It was, in the end, an act of respect to the unknown powers that surrounded them and existed in this world- the ones that may be

very reactive to human speech and emotion.

Naturally, I think maybe this can be carried a bit far; surely there are therapeutic reasons or personal reasons of connection to express one's fears from time to time. But to do it carelessly, thoughtlessly, and to do it often- "often" is the key- they believed was just bad luck. I've never forgotten that about the author of the Arbanel. I've always had that on my mind.

I can speak from the perspective of a therapist, however. Excessive negative speech leads to negative thinking and acting. That is solid, proven, and we see it every day. We all have those negative people we know, who always seem to be relentlessly burdened by troubles. There is certainly a connection there.

# Falling Through the Sky: Mastery in Sorcery

When I was less experienced- and, in the great scheme of things, not that long ago, I was very oriented around singular objectives and the ritual supports that I thought they required. My workings were really very much about "me" and what I thought I needed, and what I thought things needed, what I thought this or that tradition demanded, what I thought this or that person might think about what I did... and not about the work. Nor was it really about the Strange Unseen forces that lie behind the true work.

I had a very narrow focus for some years- and the problem there is, no matter how brilliant your narrow focus is, it's still narrow, and the power can't flow and spread out. In a case like that, it's your power, not the Power of the Unseen, that creeps into the narrow tunnel of that focus. The magic can be good, at times, but it's more often bad. After all, there's only so far a snooty little mind and some small human emotional agendas can propel power. Over-planning, over-thinking, over-worrying, over-doing it... to the inexperienced person, it seems very impressive, but the more impressive it is, the less about the Unseen and Extraordinary it is, and the more about our expectations it is.

These days, as my last major success in a work taught me, "Mastery" is not about the plan or the ritual work or even the poetry. It's about the not-knowing where this is going, and the faith and trust to do it anyway. It's a willingness to be led, "from a word to another word, from a deed to another deed"- to make my body and mind into the hollow bone that power needs to flow through. Robert Cochrane said, in one of his letters, that the real power wasn't in people, but people let it work through them- and I must say, if we had to destroy all his letters, and save only one line from all of them, that's the one line we should save.

I'd love to tell you that I can "do" amazing acts of healing. But that statement would require qualification- I can only claim to "do" them insofar as I am present for their arising, and somehow, my decision to throw myself into the strangeness of it all was part of why that storm front of power moved in and started raining its transformative drops onto the participants in the working. But it's not "me". It is the Otherness and all the things present, and all the people. It is all the events that led up to the work; they are tangles of causality that enclose a power that was waiting to rise like the sun when the hour was right. But- wonder of wonders- the hour never comes until your heart cracks open like a seed pod and you surrender to something greater than yourself. Then the thirteenth hour strikes, the hour outside of hours.

"I" can't promise a thing to a client who comes to me for sorcerous interventions about things; but I know what I would do- I'd take that person on a journey with me, a journey without much of a map, in full trust that we will be led to the place where we need to be, because I will let us be led. I'd go to the forest, wondering who we'd meet, and I know we'd meet someone. I'd capture a spirit from the Unseen, or coax one away, and put it in the client, and when I'm "done", all I've really "done" is feel

myself shake and fear, feel wonder and excitement, but decided at the critical moment to let this carry me and us wherever it was going.

There has never been a time when I have made the decision to surrender to the greater "churning" of things, and came out on the other end bad for it- the power has always been good. People have found healing through it all, and so did I.

My favorite dance partner can turn the leaves on trees into brown, brittle paper, or bring dead trees back to life. My partner can cause stars to be born in deep space... and I wonder to this day: does that partner feel like they're "doing that" at all? Or are they just as drenched in wonder and not-knowing as I am? Eventually, we all become strangers to ourselves; the voices we hear when we talk no longer sound like our own. Then we don't even know if we're dead or alive, and we cease to care.



# Fate and the Sacred Game of Divination

So, a man is walking down a road, directly towards an unseen and deadly drop-off. Just before he reaches it, another man yells out to him, warning him about the invisible cliff he's heading towards. The man stops, turns around, walks another way. He doesn't fall; he doesn't die.

Now, for the life of me, why do people keep insisting that the man's "Fate" of death was averted by a warning and a decision he made to heed the warning? In the story I told above, we weren't seeing a story about a man Fated to die by falling. We're seeing a story about a man who was fated to be warned of a fall and heed the warning. That's all.

Just so, as a Master Tarot Diviner, a connoisseur of sortilege in the old sense, I must insist to my clients: you aren't here to parse out the well-kept secrets of Fate's world-spanning story. That story is told by Fate with her well-hidden hands, and well-kept by the same. You're here for a stranger game, indeed.

I like the metaphor of a "story" for the world. Tarot is a form of divination, an old and traditional form, a very potent form. Done properly, Tarot becomes a real oracle, a means of gaining messages from Unseen non-human persons, or Divining Familiars.

But Tarot isn't "doing" what most think it's doing, and I guess that's the tricky part about oracles. I wish I had a dime for every time I've told a client what the Oracle described about the layers of experience that were arising in the frame of reference we call "the things to come"- and, interpreting what was "to come" as not very positive, had the client wonder what they could change to avoid it.

And when I told them, based on what the Oracle had laid bare, how the arrangement of things to come *might* be different if the arrangement of things present was different, they almost always say "Ha! Then there is no Fate; if I can change this, then these "things to come" change too..."

Dear client, I didn't say a word about "you" "changing" anything. I said that we can surmise that IF "this" was not the way the Oracle was revealing, THEN "that" might not be the way it suggests it will be.

But for one moment, let's say that "you" had the power to change one of these cards which are, in fact, telling us a story about the present arrangement of powers. Let's say you could. For all practical purposes, you feel like you might be able to, and you're going to live your life like you can, so why not? Go for it. If "this" changes, then "that bad stuff" which the Oracle says is coming may change too. Okay.

My client goes out, makes that change they decided they needed to make, and sure enough, the shape of things to come, when it seemingly "arrives in the now" (what a joke!) is all positive. Fate defeated!

Personal choice and free will is riding high again, aided successfully by the rarefied and traditional art of Divination.

Except that's not what happened. Dear client, if you have the ears to hear, please hear: the story of you and I meeting to play the Sacred Game of the Cards wasn't a story about a man who was Fated to meet a bad outcome; it was the story of a man who was Fated to be warned of a bad outcome, and heed the warning. That's all.

As an Oracular Diviner- and a very good one- it has been my great joy all these years to meet with clients, and always end up left with the one question that never can be answered, by any power: was this man or woman I just met part of a story in which a man or woman is warned, and heeds a warning? Or was this a story about a man or woman who will be remembered for walking off a cliff? Even the wisest can't know that until Fate turns over one more hidden card.

One thing is for certain: without the possibility of hidden layers of causality being revealed, as Oracles can do, we'd have fewer interesting stories and they'd all be a lot more depressing.



# Fate Deals A Hidden Hand: Divination with Playing Cards

As a master of sortilege (well, near master pain in the arse) people do end up asking me a lot about cards and card reading. Most people these days want to talk Tarot, and that's fine: I'm a long time reader of Tarot in the very traditional sense of the word. I don't like or use non-traditional deck traditions. But my focus in divinatory arts for the last long while has been not tarot, but reading using stones or "stone familiars" as the case may be.

Today, someone asked me about divination with standard decks of playing cards. I'm glad they asked, because Standard deck readings and Lenormand decks are a special hobby of mine, and to be honest, few things can top the true tradition of using ordinary playing cards to perform divination- it has as much a part of the history of divination by cards as Tarot does, if not a touch more, owing to its ubiquity. It also has an aesthetic appeal along the lines of many artistic and fantastic visions related to occult matters- the gypsy woman reading, the carnival fortune-teller, the old hoodoo man or woman in the swamp, the huckster-sleight-of-mind master of the frontier west, and last but not least, our traditional witches of the old and new countries.

To assay reading with ordinary playing cards, all you'll need- aside from a spiritual helper on the Other Side to guide your hands and mind while shuffling and selecting and interpreting the cards, is a deck of cards that has the 52 standard cards, plus two jokers- one joker distinguishable from the other. Most decks already do that; one joker has a overt or subtle difference making it stand out from the other. My favorite deck to use for divination is the Bicycle "Ghost" deck, available online for very cheap. It is by far the most "Otherworldly" and creepy of decks, yet subtle and understated. One of its Jokers (the "dark joker") has a card under his foot; the "light joker" has no card under his foot.

The method of "laying" the cards into spreads is intuition itself. There is no "method", truthfully. The "basic" intuitive method is to shuffle, when you are in touch with the Unseen to an extent, of course, and then cut a few times, and shuffle, and cut, and shuffle and cut, and then "tease the deck"- run your finger along it, until the "Otherness" makes you stop. Then cut right there, revealing the true top of the deck. From the true top, you take the first three cards. Those cards tell, with their individual meanings AND their meanings in combination, the seen and unseen forces that surround the situation you are divining about. From the perspective of the revelation of the cards, you can tell where things are likely to go from the time of the reading onwards, or discover things about the situation you might not have considered before.

But any spread can be "created"- even on the spot; so long as your Helping Spirit or Divination Helper understands what the various "places" in the spread are supposed to mean, all will be well- and if you write it down, or say out loud what the places mean, and if the divining familiar has been summoned beforehand to subtle presence, it will automatically know.

As for the system of mine- which has a proven high success rate (flawless actually) it is simplicity itself. Bear in mind that the success of a divination system has far less to do with the system, and more to do with the spiritual forces that empower it. Also, this system of mine isn't purely mine; it's based on my tarot learning of many years, but also on some lessons I gained from here and there with other card readers of some surprisingly older traditions.

\* \* \*

Hearts represent feelings, the soul, emotional states, and dreams. Spades represent transforming situations that trouble us or worry us, and even conflicts. Clubs represent situations, plans, and efforts that we work at, and try to grow or develop over time, but also will and creativity. Diamonds represent tangible places and things that are important to our lives, and can refer to living situations, employment, family, friends, and finances.

Aces represent a fast and ordinarily (but not necessarily) positive transformation within their suit, depending on the other cards. Twos represent risks or pressurized choices between two opposites; threes represent fast growth or a new emergence in the situation; fours represent stability or the plateau of development- which can mean a lock-up or a freeze, a slowing of power or a standstill; fives represent crisis, pain, and destruction; sixes represent success and forward movement; sevens represent minor troubles and setbacks, but can be lucky if the cards around are right, eights represent slow growth and hard work, nines represent satisfaction or a wholeness that returns to the source in a positive way- and usually indicate a situation or thing that has reached the maximum extent of its power or expression, for good or for bad. Tens represent the end of something, a completion after a long time, but also confusion.

Kings represent an agent of usually strong power that makes things change; Queens represent a compassionate agent that comforts persons and makes things full of peace; Jacks represent agents that deceive and twist things, or more generally, an agent that manipulates things in a subtle way to some end. The light joker means good luck from an unexpected source; the dark joker means bad luck just the same.

If a card can mean "for good or ill"- if there is a doubt about whether a card forecasts "change for the better", look to its neighbors. In general, red cards (diamonds and hearts) that are surrounded by black cards (spades and clubs) take on a more ill-aspect. The reverse is true for black cards surrounded on both sides, (or most sides, depending on the spread) by red.

A dark joker anywhere in a reading does the same thing to every card that could "go good or bad." If a King of hearts is in your spread, representing an agent of power that makes things change in your emotional, feeling, or spiritual life, and a dark joker is also in the reading, it could mean that this agent of power isn't going to make changes favorable to you.

This is one example; the same thing would be said for the king if he was surrounded by black cards.

Jokers- which do represent spirit-forces from the Unseen, as they act on this world- have no color, even though one is light and one is dark. If you're trying to see if a card is ill-favored or not, and it has a joker on one side of it, then it's ill favored if it's the dark joker and not ill favored if it's the bright- no matter how bad the card seems, if a light joker is near it, it's for the better.

Sometimes, in a spread, when you're trying to figure out if a card is for good or ill, you may find that you have a "tie" on your hands- the red card you're attempting to determine the dignity of has a red card to its left, and a black to its right- how can you tell if this makes it good or ill? A joker to its left or right will solve the question fast- jokers (dark or light) always darken or lighten the dignity of cards around them. If no jokers are present, you have two options.

First, you can take a card that is "stuck in a tie" for a neutral card, one that forecasts neither a large amount of good or ill, but measures of both. Or, if pressed, look at the values of the cards around it. Aces have a value of 1, and all numbered cards have the value of their number. All face cards have a value of 5. Total the values, and that tells you which side "tips the scale." For example, if you have a red ace that could forecast a fast change, which is ordinarily for the better, but you suspect that it may not be, and to its left is a black jack, and to its right is a red 8, then the ace is tipped to a more positive slant, as 5 is less than 8.

And this just continues the example- a red ace with a black jack to its left, a red 3 to its right, a black queen above it, and a red 4 under it finds itself slanted negative, if you do the values addition; 7 red "points" surround it, but 10 black points. If the ace was black, it would be positive.

Remember that most of the time, cards reveal their meanings pretty easily. Checking cards for "dignity" should only be done if there is a real reason to. A spread may have nothing but black cards drawn, and only one red one- which would, on the surface, seem to suggest that this red card's meaning will always be "ill", on account of it being a lone red in a sea of black, but that is not true. You have to rely on deeper, intuitive guidance here.

\* \* \*

And that's it. Happy shuffling. Remember, a working divination system is an expression of relationship between Seen and Unseen, created by you and your cards. It's more than a skill; it's a relationship and an oracular institution.





*"Their cantrips and charms may differ; their dark ceremonials in one land may be bloodier and more elaborate than in another; their powers may be greater here and seemingly less effectual there; gradations and degrees exist, no doubt, but the malice and mischief (the maleficium as it was technically termed) of witchcraft will be found to be essentially the same in all lands and throughout all races, be it in the Minch-girt Hebrides or in sweltering Jamaica, in mediaeval Germany or ancient Greece, in Mexico or Madras, be it the frank diabolism and black mass of the Satanist in Parisian occult circles or the ghoulish carrion with which the Obi-man is busy in his lonely forest cave; or the muttered age-old spells and eerie woven gestures, the touch of the hand, the glance aslant of some grizzled grammer in a hamlet of the Sussex Downs. It is the same service. All own the same allegiance. All are bound to the same master; all are vassals of hell."*

*-Montague Summers, Witchcraft and Black Magic*



# Forming the Witch-Covenant

Someone just wrote to me, asking how he could form a "coven" and organize it along "Old Craft" parameters. He wanted advice about initial covenant formation, and he asked me, so I told him this:

"To begin with, I'm not so certain that discussion groups are the best places to seek covenant members. I wish I had better news for you, with regard to finding people who can really be "covenant" bonded to one another, but it's hard, it's rare. This modern world makes it hard, makes it rare.

Try to keep the people who come to your meetings all as local as you can. This is important; your coven's focus should never be primarily about the human beings in it, but on the Non-Human Persons of the Master himself, and the spirits that are local to you, especially in your regular working spaces, which need to be as far into the wilderness as you can safely get. That might sound strange, but it's reflective of the most important aspect of witchcraft that is passed over these days- journeying off into the wild countryside is itself a powerful ritual act of "passing over" from the seen into the Unseen, from the spaces of humans into the spaces of spirits.

Dreams are your doorway to covenant. There is no greater doorway, and no older doorway. You want your covenant members to become as open as they can be to their dreams- and to record them all, no matter what, every night. It's more work than you think, but it must be. Your main activity, at the time of formation, as well as throughout your lives together as a covenant, should be dream dialogue. That sort of sharing is potent, personal, and it is, in many ways, what makes a covenant so close.

But it isn't just for you guys. It's so that spirits that you attract as covenant patrons and allies can talk to you, can interact with you. Without Covenant Patrons and Allied Spirits, you can't be a covenant. It is *never* just a human organization; your covenant must be an alliance of humans with non-human persons. Must be.

Thus, you must all cultivate the power of clear dreaming, of remembering dreams, and finally, one day- with my guidance if you need it, and I think you probably will- the power of co-dreaming with one another. Because that, alone, is how the witches of the past- the real witches- met and traveled to the actual Sabbat, which is an extra-temporal and otherworldly event.

Your Master- THE Master- has to finally put his seal on your covenant through sending you dreams and tutelary spirits, the "Little Master" or Little Masters that he will send in his stead, to be the focus of your connection with him. But you cannot forget that the native powers of the places where you work must be allied, too- must be charmed, talked into helping you, worshiped, respected, even bribed or seduced into your friendship, after which point you have an enormous responsibility to them, to be respectful and protective of those sacred natural places that you gather to reach into the Unseen together.

Your Covenant will have many "members" beyond the human ones, and those non-human members will have their own needs, things you must do for them to keep them in alliance with you. Without those "Ground Level" spirits, your covenant cannot access the Unseen.

Remember that your Covenant can never be about just gaining personal sorcerous power, for the sake of fun or novelty. Sorcerous powers can and will come if you seek them in a steady, wise manner, but what you must start out doing is seeking *relationship* with the Unseen- that must be your primary goal. You are also seeking a new, deeper relationship with the other humans that you judge may be able to bring their souls to this effort. That means you must- must- never admit a person who strays in any form or fashion towards excessive power-hunger, excessive vengefulness, excessive anger, or shows any need to be the "center of the stage" at all times.

You want dreamers- poets- people who can self-disclose to others with great honesty and vulnerability. You want people who don't have a killing urge to explain everything away, who can be comfortable with uncertainty and strangeness. You want people who can put the feelings of others in a high priority, too. Selfishness is an extreme poison to covens, but to any group of humans, anywhere.

You want explorers, people who have a need to explore what life has to offer at the extraordinary level, and who have the capacity to be patient about it. You want people that aren't materialistic, and who tend to be of simpler tastes, low maintenance. You want people who know the meaning of real hospitality and generosity.

And you want people who aren't afraid of the Unseen world, who are free- very free- of the fear-based programming given to us by Christianity in the west. You also must avoid people who are *too* skeptical, too invested in the empiricist paradigm of the modern west. Some healthy skepticism is needed, but never too much, or another sort of poison will taint your well. I would avoid people who talk about nothing but the hardships they have endured through their lives so far- and some people have endured much pain and terror. This is regrettable; but you need people who have made some measure of peace and found some measure of healing with their own lives.

This is the profile of the membership you're looking for. No matter how much you might desire membership, if you stray too far from that profile, you will live to regret it, at an epic level.

You must all remove from your minds any hint of extravagant expectations- you do not write the story of your Covenant; it is written by the Unseen World, once you begin to engage that dimension of life, once non-human persons catch your scent, and begin investigating you, and when they start to engage you. Your Covenant's "fayerie tale" is written by darker and wiser hands than any human hands. You have to hold out for this, let it happen on the tides of Fateful Time, as all things must happen.

My best to you and the Covenant-Seed that you are trying to plant in the hidden places of this world. We will talk more, as you make progress down your path, wherever it leads."

# Hex the Other, Hex Oneself

Jung, in his most profound and revelatory work, described the action of real magic in this way: the source of magic, he said, was in the depths, and indeed, it is. It is nowhere else, and can be nowhere else. When you summon it, you bring it up from the depths and into yourself- into your conscious, particulate awareness. Thus, the first place any magic you perform happens is in you; the first person affected is you. You must endure the impact of the magic within yourself, before it can radiate onward to other people or places- there is no "hexing" a person or a place, no "witching" someone else, or ensorceling some object or place, without first doing the same thing to yourself.

This is an interesting- and in my way of seeing, a firmly accurate- take on the concept of morality in magic or sorcery. Healing and Cursing, or Unfettering or Binding, any of these standard acts can't affect someone else until you absorb and endure the entire power of them- until they change you, transform you, make you free, make you suffer, or whatever. It stands in contradiction to the ordinary (and lamed) "magical moralities" that insist on a "boomerang" effect for magic- "what you send out" they say, "comes back to you this way or that."

This kind of logic is understandable for our fallen modern day. That sort of "send out" logic is extrinsic in orientation, because we are stuck in "hard extrinsic" mode, in our thinking and even in our feeling. We have no depth; we only think about the "outside", of measuring distances between "me and them." It's all exterior, very little interior space. But real sorcery laughs at those sorts of extrinsic intellectual stopgaps. It laughs because it is deeply a part of everything, never measurable except in depth and intensity. When you sublimate some force you've brought up or manifested from within, it can only spread its intensity, from your perspective "into the rest of the world" through your own mind and body, and not before it alters you somehow.

Those who can't bear what the force is doing, what changes it is exerting on them, can't broaden its perceptual reach- they either consciously or unconsciously dis-spell it, send it back down, even if they imagine that they have "sent" it somewhere else. There is an unavoidable personal alchemy happening with every magical act, no matter what. I would guess that 99% of magic fails in those who don't understand this not because the force summoned was weak or ineffective, but because the summoner could not integrate it. Bear in mind that the failure to integrate can be unconscious. If an unconscious banishing happens, it will likely affect the dreams of the person who failed at the summoning and sublimation. Beyond that, nothing.

You probably aren't suffering from any "return" bad luck on that curse you sent out- you're suffering from a successful curse because in a world of wholeness, if you succeed at cursing another person, you've done that to yourself, too. The perceptually tangible manifestation of that curse need not be the same on you, as your target; they may lose their job, but you may discover feelings of fear, frustration or dissatisfaction invading you about many things that you can't explain.

It may be a new range of nightmares, or just the unexplained unease that follows so many people. It may be the decline of your luck-force in subtle ways that don't impact you until much later. It may be the unexplainable loss of something you cherished, perhaps not even a tangible something- but a psychological something or emotional something. Wholeness is why people who are masters at cursing other people are often disliked by animals- because on some level, they've cursed those animals, too.

But I hate to speak this way. To try and create rules for the interactions of power is a touch childish- "He lost his job, so now, you have to lose yours!" Never so silly or simple. The depths have more room- infinite room, in fact- for any sort of outcome. I can't say that you'd necessarily have to suffer, even- but you necessarily MUST change somehow, when you summon magic, even bad magic.

We should fear those most whose summoning of bad force is easy for them to internalize, because this speaks dark things about the nature of their interior selves or souls. They would be the real "evil witches" of history- ancient and modern. Of course, the other side of this is healing- summon the power of healing for another successfully, and I believe that, on some level, you are summoning your own. And everyone needs healing on some level in our times- there are no healers who are not wounded in some way. I say this without reservation of any sort.

These things are all worth meditating on. And more than that, a deep realization of the real reason why the moralists of our later history were so against human trafficking with the Unseen world: because the beings so summoned- like magical power- don't obey "the moral laws" of man in the way men and women expect.

You go and talk to the gentry of the Hobb-Host and see if they think about "good and evil" in the way you've been raised to- their very alien way of seeing that topic may in fact strike you as evil, when in reality, it is neither good, nor evil. The last spiritual being that helped me with a coercive sorcerous act said he did it simply because I paid him- he was fully unconcerned with any sense of it being "right" or "wrong".

When considering what you want to do to the world and others with magic, understand that you are only considering what you want to do to yourself. We already do a plethora of unhealthy things to ourselves, every day; this is no different. And like the unhealthy lifestyle choices we all make, this too, in the long run, can drag you to ruin.

# Spirit-Traps: Averting Evil and Danger

The modern world loves to talk about how "superstitious" other people are. The only way this sort of defaming of other people's beliefs actually works is when the people calling names can't experience the world with deeper senses. When you gain the "missing" aspect of perception- when you "double the senses" and gain the two-way flow of real perception, suddenly, what seemed superstitious before makes perfect sense.

I speak from deep experience. Since the topic of Spirit Traps also features prominently in traditional sorcery, I thought this would be a good opportunity to introduce those of you who may not know much on the topic to the wonderful (and deadly crucial) world of trapping spirits.

I had a bad dream two nights ago. It wasn't just a disturbing dream; it was a dream that my helping spirit sent to me, a warning. I know that it was because three crucial factors were present: 1. The fact that I have a conscious relationship with a helping spirit, and thus, dreams take on new seriousness, new significance for me. 2. The dream was emotionally disturbing to a degree outside of the ordinary emotional disturbance of a bad dream. 3. One detail of the dream stood out very clearly; it was etched in my memory upon awakening, a sign that it was meant to be remembered. It was a sign, a message, telling me the problem, but also the problem's solution.

When a person has a conscious relationship with a helping power, you don't want that person having bad dreams about you. Even if I suspected that this dream was "just a dream" (meaning not a true warning) I'd still probably react as I did, just in case. Better safe than sorry, I say.

In my dream, I was sobbing in grief. I had just lost someone very, very dear to me. Such was the disturbance, I suspected it was my wife, and in the dream, I thought it was. But while I was sobbing away in the dream, I was washing the clothes of the dead person. Looking down, I saw a dress which belongs not to my wife but to one of my closest friends, who happens to live in the room across from my study, here at my house.

I woke up, and the detail that stood out clearest was that dress.

Now, the day went on, as days do. At one point, I went to my real work, in my study. I wanted to talk to my familiar powers anyway; but I also needed to engage some other trance-based matters, largely worshipful matters, to express the ordinary reverence that I try to regularly express. But this work, this session, took on another meaning: aside from the soul-cleansing I was in need of, I needed to speak about some personal matters. One of those matters was, of course, the dream.

I had a conversation with my Familiar with the aid of my stone-helpers, and then, turned my attention

to the dream. The stone-oracle wasn't going to really help on this one, so I had to turn more inward, create a very wide open space inside my heart for the Familiar to talk more directly. Funny thing about those talks- the deeper you go, the less it seems like a talk, and more a sheer field of instantaneous meaning and knowing, that rises up wordless from the depths.

But the presence of the Owl was strong, so it was a strong, fast session. He told me what to do about the dream.

Following orders from the Spectral reality, I asked the friend to bring me the dress. Laying it on the floor of my work-space, I baited it with the food that spirits love so very much- fresh tobacco. Three nice piles of it, in three places on the dress, one of them being the place that touches the neck of my friend when she wears it. Understand that to the Ancients, when the spirits that cause death come for a person, the folkloric metaphor is that they throw a noose around the neck of the person and "Drag" them away to the Underworld.

If bad powers- the killing powers- were indeed interested in my friend, then this dress, a favorite of hers, and thus part of her power at a deep level, was the key to the spirit trapping. Spirit traps are very old and traditional charms, and can be used to avert every sort of misfortune, and in this case, can be used for death-aversion charms.

As I mentioned in previous writings, death never comes without the unseen non-human persons that bring death about. As powerful as they are, they are still spirits, and to an extent (sorcery being what it is) they can be redirected and averted. Not forever, but for a time.

I had a blue bottle, a real old one. Being told to use it, I took it, and then, in the exalted state that allows a person to empower words with the breath-indweller, I invited them to the feast I had set out on the dress- in North America, tobacco is the offering par excellence to spirits; it occupies the same position, as a spirit-food, that honey, milk, and ale/distilled liquor does in Europe.

Any power that was swirling nearby with any harmful intention to my friend was invited to the feast, and then, after letting them "fill" the offerings, I took the bottle, and eased the tobacco, one pile at a time, into it, and capped it very quickly. Like the honey I use on spirits traps made at the Solstice, tobacco is the best bait you can get. I etched a binding knot on the outside of the bottle, and tied it closed "cross-patterned" with rawhide- one tripled strip of the hide running top to bottom, and the other running across the bottle's body.

Then, I beat the dress in the air, to make sure every single grain of that tobacco was out- very important- and then, after laying the dress down, beat a drum like it was hell's own thunder over and around the dress. Bad powers, as the provenance tradition tells us, hate loud, cantankerous noise. The shriek of one of my rattles, frenetically shaken, followed. Then, I washed the dress in the heavy smoke of white sage. I prayed to the roots of my soul that the World-Indweller and the Earth-Indweller would trap these powers, if indeed they were there at all, and I suspect something was- and bless this undertaking with their own authority.



Understand that I washed the dress in my dream, and in this world- when you repeat activities in the phenomenal world that you performed in the numinal world, you make the two worlds one. The dream came true, in other words.

Giving the dress back to the friend, I cleansed myself and then wrapped the bottle in a bandana and had her drive me to a place we call "Witches Island"- and I hurled the bottle into the Ouachita River. I have an ongoing relationship with the Non-Human Person of that River; I gave her some offerings, too, for the favor of taking these powers trapped in the bottle, and washing them out to sea for me. They needed to go far from my friend. I left the bandana there on the side of the river; things that contacted the spirit trap should be considered suspect, and abandoned. The law of "contagion" is in high operation when you're dealing with such spiritually hazardous materials.

This was what the Puckril told me to do. And it was done. We walked away from the river without looking back; when sending something away, you can never look back at it, else there is a small chance that (perception working the way it does) they can come back. Even though these were trapped well, no one takes chances like this, if they are wise. The only thing I need to do now to finish the work is get some of that friend's urine and menstrual blood into witch-bottle, and get it buried somewhere. Who can tell? Some local fisherman may see the bottle somewhere downstream and fish it out and open it- and I fear that if this happens somewhere near to us, the dangerous powers may find their way back. When they reach the sea, it matters not; powers like that have a hard time with such wide open water; the sea takes and is very deep, and it disperses and it dissolves "direction". It's a very traditional place to banish things.

Superstition? Not if you're me. Possible death aversion spirit traps? Another service I offer free of charge to those fortunate/unfortunate enough to be closely involved in my day-to-day life.

# The Aesthetics of Witchcraft

One of the things that sets traditional Witchcraft apart from other "schools" of mystical pursuit in the modern day is the rustic aesthetic that it manifests. We know that we've fallen out of the current of the Land-Based Provenance mysteries and the Underworld current, when we find ourselves becoming too clean, too neat, too calculated, and too "ceremonial"- I mean "ceremonial" in the sense of absorbing too much material from grimoiric magic, which led to our "Golden Dawn" style current of the modern day.

There's no doubt that the grimoiric tradition lent some important things to Witchcraft in the past- it is everywhere apparent, but equally-as-apparent is the extent to which some of the borrowed words of power or names of power didn't destroy the older, darker, more "old tree-and-balefire" aesthetic. I think you all sense what I might mean by that. I myself am indebted- as you will see- to the grimoiric stream, for a few turns of powerful phrase which I discovered unlocked a wealth of power. But never would I allow it to flood away the deeper, older powers that I revere nor how I manifest them in my living space or my soul, aesthetically.

The "rustic" mark of Witchcraft is not a matter of Witches in the past hiding themselves in the woods from persecutors. They weren't wishing that they could stay indoors and have a neat, tidy ceremony complete with robes, chanting, and well-measured bits of ritual. They went to the forests and moors and lonely fields of this world because that's where Unseen powers are more easily met, sensed, and communicated with. When a place becomes too "humanized"- with so many human buildings, streets, order, and stuffing, the "wild" aspect of the Unseen (its only actual aspect) withdraws from there, moves itself further out to the boundaries, out into the wilderness. It's hard, very hard, to summon it back, though nothing is impossible with regard to this. It's much easier to go to the wilds, however, and in so doing, to revert to a little personal wildness in oneself, which makes you more sympathetically prone to spirit-contact.

The "rustic" aesthetic is not some vapid attempt to be "anti-civ"- it is based on the supreme and simple insight that the Unseen beings thrive on more free-flowing states of mind and body, not less. They thrive on more free-flowing patterns in one's location, not less. To withdraw into "nature's body" is to move away from what is known- most important of all- and towards the unknown, to the unpredictable environment of some wild place. Cities can be described as unpredictable, in ways, I suppose; but make no mistake, a little park inside an immense city is a well-domesticated, usually spirit-fled piece of real estate. The "wildness", the untamed quality of a place, is apparent when you step into it, in the same manner that the untamed quality of a person is apparent when you get around them. And in that, is a power and a gateway to power, which is as old as the hills, quite literally.

The rustic setting- and all the ways it can manifest in a home, or even in a person- is like a walk through a collection of sacred forces, a more subtle sort of community. There, at the side of the path,

is a garden; there, life-power from the Green Gown below takes shape. The "given ground" or the "gudeman's croft" off next to a field is an entrance directly into the tangle of the Unseen. The old tree behind the cottage is a ladder to the sky, and a stairway to the Underworld. The animals that dart across the grounds of the cottage are the Divine Others and the spirits making their way to and fro, for their own unknowable reasons.

The hearth inside is the warmth of the life-giving source; the herbs growing around the house and drying inside are the healing potencies, real spiritual persons, who are children of the Green Gown, her emissaries of healing and power. Where they hang, there is a sight as sacred as the painted ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Where the garden grows, there is a ground as sacred as any temple ever raised by Greeks or Romans in ancient times. Where the hearth glows, there is a vision as sacred as any that was ever glimpsed by mystery-initiates in days of old. A meal taken at a bare wooden table, a meal of simple fare, is a sacred feast as great as any that was devoured at any sacred festival long ago.

And where the wind blows outside, in and around all of these things, there is the enveloping, secret presence of the Master Spirit of this world, Father to Witches since time immemorial and warden of the spiritual integrity of every place. Underfoot, under mosses and grass, or dirt and mud, is the mighty tomb, the great barrow that holds every dead person or beast that ever was, or ever will be. Underfoot is the living flesh of a profoundly powerful non-human person, a Great Grandmother, whose presence is everywhere, and who is the common birthing bed, common mother, Ancestress and midwife to all.

This is the sacred vision that was held in the past, and which comes down to us now- if we still submit ourselves to the sight. It is the origin of the "rustic" seeming "feel" of traditional Witchcraft. This is nothing clinical. This is nothing overly controlled, nothing that lines up perfectly with any formula or calculation or chart or rote chant. The witchcraft that I speak of here is not for people who want "pantheons" that neatly explain the divine powers of the world, nor "sacred stories" that neatly tell us where we all came from, or where we are all going; these attempts to apply order to a Windy, ancient, and mysterious world actually inhibit power in proportion to the amount that they satisfy our curiosities or our desires to "make sense of it all."

Not trying to make "sense of it all" may be the most respectful honor that you can pay to the immense and strange world and all its indwelling powers and persons. The rustic portrait from which we derive our sense of aesthetic is an ages-old portrait of things, places, and powers that are halfway untamed, part of a human attempt to bring a sense of order, but still connected to the outside powers, that are largely non-human. It is another way of having one foot in the human world, and the other in the other-than-human world.

I don't want some ceremonial "vessel" that is painted neat colors that correspond to this or that, and shaped just like this, and treated in just this special way; a lopsided bowl or cup that many members of a loving family or intimate group have shared a drink from is endowed with a force beyond imagining, particularly to those who think that something powerful, sacred, or forceful must be set apart from "everyday use." The supreme symbol of my Great Grandmother need be nothing more

ornate than a cooking-pot that has nourished many, and which has boiled on the fire at the center of a home many times.

My Master needs no "idols"- though I think he enjoys our artful attempts to express him; the Wind is his constant body and presence, and an old forked stick or stang says everything people need to know about him. He needs no altar beyond a fire or a tree, and if you understand what I mean by this, no explanation is needed. If you don't, none may be possible.

# The Distinction Between Shamans and Witches

Someone wrote to me to ask about the differences between "shamans" and witches. My (uncharacteristically brief) response:

"Shaman" is (among other things) an academic term; "witch" a folkloric one. Both are anthropological terms. Shamans are power workers who are parts of indigenous communities and empowered by their community to represent their spiritual interests, and perform spiritual services. Witches are people from any part of the world or any community that have managed to forge some kind of alliance with spiritual helpers or familiars, and can therefore affect "magical" type changes in their world-including healing, cursing or hexing, and divination.

There is obviously a large overlap between witchcraft and shamanism, but shamans can be mainstream members of communities, and witches seldom are. Also, both shamans and witches have "familiar" powers, spiritual allies that they work with to bring about extraordinary outcomes. Both share a "core" technique that defines their work, namely spirit-flight. But they are different in many ways, too, largely in how their communities perceive them.

The real difficulty in the overlap between "shaman" and "witch" is the extent to which shamans necessarily belong to traditionally indigenous communities, and witches can be (and often are) parts of our so-called "civilized" world. But "witchcraft", as a term, can refer to more than just marginal or hidden spirit working-type magical practices from historical European cultures; it can refer to any range of harmful magic, in both academic and anthropological literature. In this sense, shamans in indigenous societies who stray outside of the range of their social acceptance- often through gaining "bad spirit allies" that lead them to mediate bad or harmful power to communities- can be accused of witchcraft or labeled "witches", even in their own societies.

This point is further complicated by the fact that in nearly all indigenous communities, shamans are expected to be able to work harmful magic against enemies, and some communities even tolerate harmful work against community members- Wilby gives a superb study of "dark shamans" in one Brazilian society that have full social permission, at times, to spiritually prey on totally innocent members of the society, as part of a spiritual vocation of satisfying the powers of death and taking for the good of the rest of the society.

This is an important point, one that has to be watched for when discussing witchcraft in its other usage, the usage and angle I write from, primarily. I never use "witchcraft" to mean the practice of harmful magic only. And indeed, historically speaking, witches were not "harmful only" by any means, until later century propaganda painted their helpful works as still "Devilish." And even in those paranoid societies, people still sought them out for extraordinary aid.

# The Door to Another World

If you're looking for a very old game to play, and one that has the potential to change everything about what you consider "reality", try the Door to Another World. Admittedly, it's a "game" for people who study the mysteries of Traditional Witchcraft- but I guess it'd be okay for your friends to play too, if they had the subtlety of mind to handle it.

This is a technique of trance- a very powerful and deep one- and is worthy of respect. But it's more than just an isolated technique; it's a day long and night long "working" that you start doing, and then keep doing, for the rest of your life. Some people find that it's a bit creepy, but that only makes it better. I personally "play" every day, and thought today that I might write about it, so that others might join me.

This game is unlike any other you'll ever play- because one day, while you are playing it, you're going to be astounded to discover that you can change reality however you want, and from that instant, you'll be able to fly, become invisible, talk to spirits, or pretty much meet and talk to whomever you like- even the dead. But the trick is, you never know when that day or moment will be. However, playing the game- and continuing to play it- guarantees that one day, this will happen.

Here's how you do it: as many times as you can, as often as you can remember that you are playing the game during the day or night, stop, look at your surroundings, and say to yourself, outloud- "Is this a dream?" And then watch carefully all around you. Try to will something to happen- as you can in a dream- for instance, when I'm driving around during the day, I often remember that I'm playing this game, and say "Is this a dream?" Then I try to will my vehicle to fly.

When you can't will strange things to happen, you must admit that this is not a dream- and say it, outloud: "No. This is waking consciousness." And then examine, for a few seconds, what waking consciousness actually feels like.

And that's all. That's how you play. And here's how you win: one day, at some moment, you're going to stop and ask yourself if this is a dream, and try to will something to happen, and it will. Then you'll know that you are dreaming, and at that moment, you become lucid in the dream-state, in the Oneiric world. Then, have fun. Go flying. Call the Master's name, and see if he comes- or one of his servitors, or if you can find where he is, as I did recently, and speak to him. Watch the interior of the dream-state for messages arising to you from the Great Depths.

This "game" is really a technique for reminding yourself, over and over again, to keep "checking" to see if you are awake or dreaming. At some point, you will be asleep and dreaming, and like most people, you'll be dreaming without realizing you are. But if you've trained yourself, from playing this game, to check often, your mind will "check" in the dream, and then make you become lucid. And

then, it's time to fly to the Sabbath Hill.

When you are playing the game, and you do a "dream check" during the day, and discover that you are in waking consciousness, it's very important to examine, for a few seconds after you admit that you are awake, how "being awake" feels. You must teach your mind what "being awake" really feels like- focus on it- so that your mind can begin to really "feel" the distinction between waking and sleeping, very strongly. Your lucid states will become more and more often if you do this.

For those who fear losing the lucid state rapidly, the secret is to "spin" in your lucidity. Put your hands out side to side, and spin like a top- spin until your surroundings become blurry, and then stop. This is "Dream whirling".

That sustains the lucid dream. Some people say you can keep it going if you look at your hands in the lucid state, too, but whirling works better. It goes without saying that the best way to "keep it going" is to have the Master's favor.

His sorcerous winds empower the Oneiric world, and the fetch of you that journeys through them. Those with his favor are powerful in that world; his winds fill their sails, keep these voyages going longer.

Those who desire it can also attempt to "fetch step" or "blink"- to seemingly teleport from place to place, or to places they know of in "real life"- and again, like the wind, the technique of spinning allows some people to accomplish this. Spin till the dreamscape becomes blurry, will it to be a different place when you stop, and when you do, often it is.

# Looking for an Underworld Entrance

People are always asking me what I'll do first when I move. They say "wow, Maine sounds amazing! I know you're excited... what will you do first when you get there?" And I tell them "Go into the countryside, walk up tall hills and any mountains nearby, and wander forests, looking for an Underworld entrance." And they stop smiling.

That's right- it's the first thing I'm going to do. I have to find an opening, a tunnel, a place where things are "very thin"- whether it be an actual cave, or a hole in a hillside or in a tree; I cannot operate at full capacity unless I have "the place" where I can, as the ghost I sometimes am, slip into the depths. Once I locate that place (my current one is in the woods not far from my house) then I can meet the people I need to meet most, if I want to do well in a new land- the people who live inside the land. Without them, living on the surface of things is very difficult, prone to disaster.

There's a lot of "ways" to get to the depths- shimmering is a multi-dimensional experience- but I'm old fashioned. The Land itself has doorways, and I need one. Some say I limit myself, but I don't think so- hasn't anyone put two and two together yet here? My entire spiritual approach to life is focused largely around this central theme: expressing my life's layered journey *through* the reality of the Land itself, and the Land's many powers. I like to "ground" things in sensual reality; more than that, I like to discover what is already quite "grounded." I don't do the "pure visualization" thing- my visualizations, when they are used, are born in the lived experience of things in this world. And they open up from there into indescribable wonder.

The Land is the ancient "story scroll" that the tale of my life is written on, and everyone else's lives, too- including people that don't live above the land anymore. These spirits that I call friends, the ones I worship- are they not the sharpest, most intense expressions, on some level, of my spiritual feeling of connection to this land and world?

I've seen people wandering about, who just bumped into one of my "working areas" in some lonely place, quite by accident- I've watched them have the "satan tremors" as their eyes fall on strange sigils drawn with barley flour on the ground, horned and antlered skulls glaring at them from the tops of staves and hanging from branches all about, a small fire or lanterns ablaze around the area, giving it just enough light in the twilight for a badly-misguided hiker to imagine that they were about to be hanging from those same trees as some sort of sacrifice, and I've heard their questions "Dude, what's this?" "Are you a satanist?" (They always leap to that conclusion, how boring.) "Why do you do all this?"

I do it because it expresses something very deep and powerful to me, and allows that same thing to express itself *back* to me. There is a connection built here; a serpent reaches out and bites its tail here; like the pontifex of old, I'm building bridges.



"You can't reach god through a forest, or through candles or funny symbols."

"It's not god I'm trying to reach. I'm trying to reach the underside of this place."

# The Magistra

The very essence of the entire true Old Way is to be found in the life and person of the historical Witch Isobel Gowdie. Most of you know my lifelong obsession with her, my enormous devotion to her mysterious figure. Emma Wilby's book *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie* is beyond essential if you want to understand Isobel Gowdie's person and life, but also if you wish to understand what Traditional Witchcraft truly was, and what it truly is. Many passages from that book attack the most important issues of the true, historical existence of Witch-covenants, and the reality and function of Witches, in the cruelest, most perfect way.

But Isobel- Great Mistress-Witch Isobel, in her person we find the complete quintessence. In her poetry, in her songs, in the spells she shared, and in the experiences she recounts with the Queen and King of the Fayerie people below the Downie Hills. Her compelled participation in the Cavalcade, as one of the Fate-Women or one of the Choosers of the Slain, brings us to the mystery of what the Cavalcade is, and how life and death really work, at the fundamental level.

And yet, Isobel's mind, soul, and body was what her historical tormentors got to see and communicate with. And what was she? A Scottish cottar's wife, dressed in rough-spun, with hands well-worn from the constant labor of maintaining the many demands a fermtoun. She was likely involved in spinning, childcare, growing, gathering, fishing, cooking, cleaning, all without end.

And in the midst of all those things, a portrait emerges of a woman who could, at times, become a spectral part of the underlying forces of Nature itself, and join the Fateful Hunt that lies behind the mystery of why one person dies and another lives. She consciously lived the mythical dimension of human life, all seamlessly alongside the "everyday" details of daily existence.

People often wonder at the metaphysical involvements and commitments that it takes to awaken the modern mind to the underlying realities that we consider "Spirit World", or the underlying mysteries of sorcery. People wonder if a busy life, driven from paycheck to paycheck, could ever experience the extraordinary as the Witches of old experienced it. The answer to that question is of course "yes". Isobel worked harder in her life than nearly any of us ever will. And emotionally, she suffered through times wherein murder, rape, and mayhems were beyond common- even the so-called "legal" system back in her time was heavy-handed and more often than not villainous. She should know; she was very likely murdered herself by that same system.

Isobel is the "archetypal" Witch of the entire British Tradition, and perhaps the Western and Northern European tradition as a whole. Her spell of shape-shifting has enormously impacted the arts, music, and even the ritual formularies of many modern peoples engaged in reclaiming what they hope will be "witchcraft" at day's end.

To exist in two worlds so seamlessly- that is the great Mastery, that is the great attainment. You have

succeeded in Mastery of the True Craft if your life seems, from the outside, honestly no different than any other. But inside? A lord or lady among the goblin-dead, or the fayerie-host can move quietly among the dazed masses of our hallucination-ridden industrial world. Be certain of it- it may be closer than you imagine.

# The Masters of the Art

I was musing with a correspondent over the title "Master", in any of its permutations, when it is applied to a human being. One may be called *Hexenmeister* (Hexing or Witchcraft-Master) Or one may be called Magister (which really carries more of a connotation of "master teacher" or "instructor" than just pure old "Master") or one can just be called "Master of the Art" in plain English... but when a person tastes real "Craft" or real "Doing" or real "Working", one tastes something that is always a bit (or a bunch) beyond one's full conception or control. When you feel that, it feels temporarily dizzying, uncertain, even frightening.

Some people- most people- even "Masters"- will balk at it sometimes, and back away. That is right and proper. It's humbling, which is good; humbling is the dry spell between rains that we need else the earth tangles over with uncontrolled growth- egos that have not had their needed humbling become real monsters in every respect. The best way I can describe the "dark taste" of the authentic Unseen- especially as it appears when invoked by effective Witchcraft- is like a dark feeling of doom, like you've "messed with something" you shouldn't have, that you're in over your head a bit, like you are in danger. Ordinarily, I would tell people to pay attention to such a feeling, but in certain situations, that feeling isn't your soul screaming in terror; it is the vivid and strange ambiance of the Unseen making itself known; it is a sign of manifestation; it is a sign you've succeeded. What, precisely, you succeeded at is another matter.

Masters of Sorcery are not people who have it all packed away, tightly controlled, tightly predictable, and expertly wielded. They couldn't possibly be that boring; they are people who know fear and that troubling tug on the outside corners of the mind better than most, and who steel themselves to deal with that, for specific reasons, in extraordinary ways. Masters in the true sense aren't arrogant; they are filled with the right sense of awe. To be able to endure with your wits and even sense of humor intact in the face of something that cannot fail to bother you or disturb you, is a sign of attainment, of Mastery.

Masters are the true perennial or perpetual students; they just know how to handle that helpless "beginner's feeling"- a feeling the Unseen reduces everyone to- better than actual beginners. A true beginner would take the Unseen's terrifying, helpless presence as a sign that they "can't handle this" or that they "failed" or that they have "a long way to go"- but a true Master takes that same feeling as a sign that they have succeeded in penetrating the permeable-yet-darkly rigid and subtle membrane that appears to separate our minds from the Nighted Spaces. And they have some darkly humorous jokes put aside to help themselves through the feelings that must accompany the "breaking through."

Needless to say, I look forward to being a Master one day. In the meantime, I'm ducking and dodging and feeling like I've doomed myself to an early death with my presumptuous Witchcraft. I always got one eye over my left shoulder, wondering, waiting... and I mean that literally. I literally have a talisman that incorporates an eye that I wear on my left arm, watching behind me, so that I can go on walks without worrying about being killed by invisible animals.



*"These mysteries cannot be arbitrarily open to all, if only for the sake of individual safety; they must be guarded and communicated with caution. Even for those born into the tribe, initiation into the mysteries was an earned privilege, not an automatic right: one won by suffering, sacrifice, and ordeal. But the real secret about the mysteries is that they cannot be communicated by one being to another: the mystery-guardian can only give guidelines and keys to knowledge, not the actual knowledge itself, which is revealed to the initiate by personal experience and revelatory realization. The impact of participating in the mysteries has been largely discounted today by those who now appreciate them intellectually and are virtually symbolically illiterate, but to one who stood revealed to the Gods and naked to the group-soul of the Ancestors, the experience was terrifyingly unforgettable and deeply nourishing."*

*-John and Caitlin Matthews*





# The Mommet and the Thorn of Taking

An extensive amount has been written and recorded regarding the use of maukins, mommets, poppets, or "clay bodies"- the famous "dolls" that have been used around the world for sympathetic magical purposes, almost always to sorcerously affect another person for their good or ill. It's a part of sorcery, of witchcraft, that can't be looked over, because a time will come when every serious practitioner of any skill will need to use them, for their own purposes, or for another's purposes.

I've written a good bit about them, too, but in the years before, I wasn't ready to go the full distance with them, to make them into the powerful things they can be. Before I continue, I thought I might lay to rest the obvious question of why you'd use a mommet for any reason other than to make what amounts to a sorcerous "copy" of a person, which can then be a stand-in for that person, for the purposes of healing, or (more often, in historical records) mistreatment or torment.

You'd use them for offerings and as stand-ins for spiritual powers that you want to honor, or perhaps that you want to banish. We tend to forget that spirits are persons, too, and can be tied up with mommets, and affected through them. The maukin or mommet is used yearly by me, several times a year, to become a "victim" of types, a carrier of the bad powers or bad luck that may have accumulated in my home and around my loved ones, a scapegoat to take on that bad force, which is then banished from my home and destroyed away from it, carrying away the bad power.

Now, as for the poppets themselves- here's a little secret (big secret?) which isn't such a secret after all; it's really an inconvenient truth. There is nothing simple about "making" these things if you want them to be effective. It's always quite a chore- and the biggest chore of all is how the thing actually gets "tied to" the person they intend to represent. You see, it's easy to "mommetize" yourself. If you're intending to make a copy of you, all it takes are your bodily fluids, hairs, breath, you name it- and your own body heat, the warmth of your hands and the warmth of your will. The strong need to merge yourself with the thing does most of the work; you have a certain amount of influence over what your soul submits itself to.

But with other people, never so much. Even if you get lucky- for, hopefully, your "clients" will be willing to submit to the process- and have their hair, or spittle, or blood, or sexual fluids, that's still not enough. It's certainly better than nothing, but if you proceeded to "work" on the mommet with just that, you're still working in a low category of effectiveness. The tangible power of a living person is

a potent connection, but until that connection is "doubled", that is, until the subtle living power that the tangible power-substances are a gateway to is really pulled into the equation, you're facing a crapshoot. Which is better than nothing; obviously; sometimes, it will be effective for what you want, but I'm in this for "Art" in the highest sense of the word; I'm in this for results that can be trusted. And those who enlist my services expect that.

There is no true effectiveness in mommets unless you can do one of the most trying tasks and undertakings of all, which is to capture a bit of the person's dream-soul (what I normally call the "free soul") and add it to the mix. If all you have is their blood or hair, all you have is some essence of their breath soul. Which as I said is all fine and well. But it's not enough. Those who believe it is enough are working under half-logic and with a broken, degenerate tradition-stream. There's a reason why a lot of traditional instructions for these matters come to us today in such a half-broken form. Half broken is still partly potent, so enough people get enough results, I presume, to justify why the whole picture never gets enough press.

Or maybe, these kinds of things aren't spoken about for good reasons. But you can always trust your friend Robin to talk about those elephants in the room with just enough candor to get his tongue rotted out by the next ticked off actual sorcerer that decides that I'm giving away too many trade secrets. I welcome them to try, really; I hate to sound haughty or overconfident, but I just have powerful helpers and Fort Knox-level layers of wards. Truly though, as a chess player, I never assume I have a game won from the start. I always assume my opponents are several degrees better than me, and this tactic resonates with how I live life in many ways. As a result, I'm still alive.

To steal a piece of another person's free soul is not easy. Breath souls are big whirlpools of vitality, spiraling in and out, really nothing but wind and force when they aren't entwined with a body and connected through that body to a free soul. Breath souls are like noisy fans, blowing hard, unless the person is dying, in which case they are weak. Free souls, however, are intelligent, cunning, wily things. They can be (and often are) far more clever than the person whose souls they are in this world. And it's surprising how even what you'd expect to be the weakest of them have protection- other beings who are in alliance with the person in this life, even if that person doesn't know about them.

This is why working against wicked people is easier. Goodness in this life, as it turns out, is a fierce kind of protection, because "following powers" tend to abandon really wicked souls and cease to protect them. At any rate, stalking and stealing from a free soul is not so simple. You have to be able to "send forth the fetch" yourself- a skill that can take years to learn and perfect- to be able to find a

free soul, and then, they aren't called "free souls" or "wandering souls" for no reason. They can be anywhere. They can shift their shape, too. A stalker of these souls must have a familiar that can track and spot them; you can't do it yourself, and if you could, you wouldn't be a human being, but something infinitely more terrifying.

Even if a client wants you to make a mommet of them, and doesn't consciously resist your attempts to get some of their free soul connected to the mommet, the free soul itself still may resist you- another layer of complication. It may know more about the destiny it is reaching for than the conscious person that you are working for in this world knows. It may not want the work done which the human wants done. Whether or not you should force the issue really comes down to your own morality and wisdom.

It sounds strangely brutal, and primal, and that's because it is. Anyone who has read *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie* has already seen how it really was in the Witchcraft of 17th century Scotland; it was a field day of soul-hunting and soul-killing. If the free soul is harmed in a very egregious way (and it can be, by other spirits or free souls) the person will die, in short order, in this world. A sorcerous murder isn't just possible; it was well attested to throughout the history of Europe, and the ancient Americas.

But I'm not talking about actively "killing" free souls- which means denying them the power to maintain a connection with the body and breath soul that they are Fatefully bound up with temporarily, such that the body-soul complex breaks apart (death). I'm talking about taking a bit of one, in much the same way you'd take a bit of hair from someone, to fully empower a mommet. Again, to do this, you have to be a wandering soul yourself, detached from your body and breath soul, though with enough command of the breath soul to not get lost in the surrealness of the Unseen, of the dream-like landscape you occupy in that condition. In Old Norse, this was the state of *Hamhleypa*, of "flowing in one's double" or "letting the double run"- what I have encoded under the term "Hare leaping."

And then you have to find the target free soul. Then you have to either sneak past its protectors (you need a strong familiar to do this) or drive them away temporarily, and then you have to steal or take by force what you want. Most people are so dulled in our modern day that I think it's easier to do this now than ever before, but Fate is kind in one sense: in this day and age when sorcerers could chew up and spit out more people than ever before, there is also less sorcery and less sorcerers in the world, so I guess a balance is struck there.

I wrote this little letter to tell those who are interested in these strangest and darkest of matters one little piece of advice: it goes without me saying that you have to be "armed" to be able to do this; it's a spiritual raid, a precise analogue to a physical raid of stealing or taking. What you carry on your body is always "with you" in the subtle world- only a fool would go into the Hare Leap without carrying gifts for the powers you'll meet, and to pay the powers that will let you "get over there" in the first place. I carry them tied up in little bags, draped around my neck or wrists, and when I "give" them in the vision-world, I come back later to "this" world and dispose of them properly, thus "doubling" what I did, making it real in both worlds, which completes the circle, makes it fully real and cinches the power.

But if you plan on being aggressive at all, or think that you might have to be, having a weapon of some kind touching your body when you "go forth" means that you have a subtle corollary of the weapon with your subtle body. But... but... don't be fooled into thinking that you can just grab a knife that you like, even that really nice one that you spent a lot of money on. This is where the spirit world has the last laugh. If the weapon you bring wasn't "paid for" properly, you'll find that what you have "over there" is at best a joke, at worst a curse.

Our negligent, wasteful, dismissive manner of mining metals from the ground, and taking all the other resources we need to make knife handles and the like is arrogant and offensive to the unseen. If the materials weren't "paid for" with actual "giving back" and not taken with reverence, the knife isn't useful for this task. It won't have a "soul" that can be used, it won't have a strong double, because the spirit world ignores it or curses it. You will have to make your own *dagyde*, your own "thorn of taking", as it were, out of wood, unless you really are the rare breed of badass that can not only use a smithy, but can go out and gather the raw materials for a blade or weapon of some kind yourself, and take it properly.

So, advice: Go take a branch properly, from a tree of blasting, like the blackthorn (my favorite) or the ash, or an oak if you want a protective instrument for these sorts of works, and then work that branch into a very sharp-pointed albeit primitive short spear or dagger. Pay for some actual leather or tanned hide and wrap a really primitive handle- it doesn't have to be pretty, just sharp enough to be dangerous in this world, and you can be sure that if you take that to the Unseen, you will have something that can menace free souls and spirits. If you can "chip" and "knap" obsidian, and can find it in the wild and pay for it properly, you can make razor sharp obsidian blades which are also absurdly scary and useful.

You see what we have to deal with these days? So far have we fallen from a world of real respect for the Unseen, that we're practically forced back into the stone age. But that's fine, because the ultimate origin of these practices is in the dim shamanic and animistic spirit-wars of the stone age, one way or another.



# The Red Meal

I give thanks for the Old Offering.  
I give thanks for the Resurrection of the Meadow Unseen.  
I give thanks for the return of Them who have long been away.

Here is bread and drink, full of life.  
Hallowed be Her Name, for the life in the bread and drink.  
Hallowed be His Name for the life in the bread and drink.  
Hallowed by Their Names for the life in the bread and drink.  
Blessings Be on all of Them Unseen for the Glory in the bread and drink.

I drink and leave some over;  
I drink and leave some over for the Good Master, my Father in secret;  
I drink and leave some over for the Good Master's Feasting Table.  
I drink and leave some over for the Good Queen on Her throne Below;  
I drink and leave some over for the Good Queen's Table Below;  
I drink and leave some over for the Woman by the Hearth  
Behind the Thrice-Locked Door.

I drink and leave some over for Them Familiar to me  
And Them the Good Neighbors inside this Land.

I eat and leave some over;  
I eat and leave some over for the Good Master, my Father in secret;  
I eat and leave some over for the Good Master's Feasting Table.  
  
I eat and leave some over for the Good Queen on Her throne Below;  
I eat and leave some over for the Good Queen's Table Below;  
I eat and leave some over for the Woman by the Hearth  
Behind the Thrice-Locked Door.

I eat and leave some over for Them Familiar to me  
And Them the Good Neighbors inside this Land.

I give thanks for the Old Offering.  
I give thanks for the Resurrection of the Meadow Unseen.  
I give thanks for the return of Them who have long been away.

# The Sorcery of Sense and the Cleansing Wind

If I do my job right, you'll remember me as a broken record. You'll tell people, if you ever talk about me, that "Robin just kept saying the same things over and over- he always said 'don't ignore your senses' and 'the world in every part of your experience was a sorcerous power' and stuff like that." I am compelled to tell you all, over and over again, that the power that stands behind real sorcery is not truly "occult" at all, but obvious to your senses. Please try to cease looking at the everyday things of your senses as though they were "mundane", and really let yourself go. That these senses should be in operation, so full of textures, and sounds, and colors, and forms, is by itself the sorcerous equivalent of a miracle.

Big hunks of rock are floating around in space, they say. Big balls of fire are burning like embers all over the void. In a cosmos of rocks and fires, of primordial oceans formed from millions of years of rain from forming atmospheres, and constant, blistering winds, somehow, in the midst of such simple-seeming things, a complexity beyond complexity appears in radical ranges of color and tone and sight, right in these senses. How can we account for this? Why should it be? I can't say that I know, but I can say what I'm experiencing, and I say it is a wonder.

I say it is a power, it is living, and we're part of it. I say that its vivid strangeness was ancient when the first humans assumed their human shapes and walked on the land- a land which was, by that time, well-grown over with the thickness of forests and gushing with ancient flows of water. I think we might have missed the "main events", but getting here as late as we did, we found a lot of ancient legacies, like the trees themselves, and the old spirits who likely examined us with the same wonder that our Ancestors looked upon them with.

We can say "Hidden powers" and "Hidden people" and "Hidden mysteries" all we like, and, from the perspective of our ransacked modern mental morbidity, those words have real meaning. But from an earlier way of seeing, no real power was "occulted", or hidden. Power was and is everywhere apparent, if you will just let yourself enter into that understanding. Your senses are not afterthoughts on the body, grown from the body with some primary strategic purpose of getting you to your next meal or your next mate; they are great and sacred things. It is we who minimize our experiences in that way, reduce them to mating strategies and survival. This is all the intellect is prepared to do with the "evidence" of our senses. But a mind older and deeper than intellect knows better.

"Robin's always talking about how mysterious things are, and how sacred everything is, and how we shouldn't be idealists, but trust our senses instead, and react to what's tangible, lived and real." I've succeeded if I hear people saying that about me. I've succeeded even more if I keep that in mind myself, everyday. And I have the pleasure of pestering people with these ideas over and over again, online and off. That's how my helpers in the Unseen urge me to be.

I don't teach people sorcery. I just encourage them over and over to use their eyes and ears and



fingertips and noses, and to trust the feelings in themselves, and when they can do that- and when they can look upon the dreams they have in the night as possibly sacred messages and not just brain-generated night noise- the World itself will then teach them sorcery. I don't make people into witches; the Master and his Cavalcade do that. I just help to arrange the meeting.

Your breath is a great and sorcerous power, closer to the secret behind what we now call "witchcraft" than you realize. Breath is not just for respiring and staying alive; it can be used, moved, engaged, and can do almost anything you dream. Use it to heal yourself; use it to be free of the things that you don't want, and only the wind may be able to blow away.

I'm not trying to be obscure; the Ayahuascero Don Jose Campos says ""Breathe... breathe ... and let go, release. Breathe and let go. Release whatever it is that has you trapped or contracted."

Some see things like this and imagine that they are "too simple" to work. But they are far more complex- while maintaining that ocean-deep simplicity of sorcerous paradox- than you imagine.

Try it; don't intellectualize it; let your breath be the center of all your senses, and try it. You don't have to know the specific identity of what thing or things entangle you; the wind will blow leaves off your porch whether or not you know what trees they came from. Try it.

The next time you feel "it" or "them" trapping you or contracting you, understand breath and wind to be sorcerous powers, and use them. Become the hollow bone, the hollow cave or tunnel, and be scoured clean. See what happens.

TO PREVENT MALEVOLENT ENTITIES FROM BEWITCHING CATTLE TO BE WRITTEN AND PLACED IN THE STABLE; AND AGAINST WICKED MEN AND EVIL SPIRITS WHICH NIGHTLY TORMENT PERSONS OLD AND YOUNG, TO BE WRITTEN AND PLACED AT THE BEDSIDE:

*"Trotter-head, Ill-Bringer, Betrayer, Devourer, Thief, and Disputer, I forbid thee my house and living spaces; I forbid thee my horse and pinfolds and stable; I forbid thee my bedside; I forbid that you shall ever breathe upon me; breathe instead into some other house where wickedness dwells and return not again until thou hast ascended every hill five and fifty times again, until thou hast counted every fence-post five and fifty times again, and until thou hast crossed every water five and fifty times again. And Now, Dear Daylight may come again into my house, in the most Holy name of the Old Trinity, and by the power of the Three Fayerie Ladies who thread, weave and cut the strands of all Fates. So be it."*

# The Toad Was Waiting on Him: An Analysis of a Traditional Appalachian Witch Initiation-Charms

A friend recently shared a superb "Initiation Charm" from Appalachian witch folklore, which I thought was good enough to write a short metaphysical analysis of. It's from an old but excellent book which is very inexpensive and easy to obtain: "The Silver Bullet, and Other American Witch Stories." I have the charm itself from that book, and my analysis of it here, for your edification and enjoyment.

\*\*\*

Liz then said, "This is whut the Devil wants the most: promise you won't never preach no more, nor go to a 'ligious meetin. Then effen you git to be a witch, promise to do ennything you can to keep your pappy frum preachin' agin witches. Now, hit ain't a goin' to be easy, and I 'low you mought have to try more'n onct afore you git in. Whatever happens, you have to foller 'structions zactly."

Jonas promised, "Yep, Liz. I'll do zactly whut I'm told to do."

So, following instructions, at midnight he sneaked into his father's field and stole one of the black rams. He killed it and cut off its left horn, hiding the rest of the carcass in the woods.

The next day being Sunday, he got a boy to steal a silver coin out of the collection plate of his father's church. He melted down the coin and made it into a silver bullet, which he put to soak in toad's blood. He also went to Gladeville where he bought a pewter plate. Next, he scoured the hills until he found a spring whose stream flowed directly east.

He then waited until Friday the thirteenth and returned to the spring as the morning turned gray over the ridge. He dipped some water from the spring with his ram's horn and poured it over the pewter plate. He did this seven times and repeated the verses Liz had taught him:

AS I DIP THE WATER WITH A RAMS HORN,  
CAST ME CRUEL WITH A HEART OF THORN,  
AS I NOW THE DEVIL DO MY SOUL LEASE.

I RENOUNCE CHRIST AS MY SAVIOR,  
AND PROMISE THE DEVIL MY BEHAVIOR  
'TIL MY LIFE ON EARTH WILL CEASE.

MAY MY BLACK AND EVIL SOUL BE  
OF CHRISTIAN LOVE AND GRACE FREE  
AS THIS PLATE IS OF GREASE.

ANDEFFENI BECOME AN EVIL CRONE  
FROM MY OUTER SKIN TO INNER BONE,  
ILL NEVER GIVEN ANY CHRISTIAN PEACE.

Rain and shine, for eight mornings, Jonas came to the spring and repeated this ritual. On the ninth morning, he was supposed to become a witch and he took his gun and the silver bullet with him. He shot the bullet toward the sun as it came up over the ridge. They had told him that if the sun looked as if it were dripping blood as it came up, then he would be a witch. Jonas thought it did, and started home.

He had also been told that if he had become a witch, he would find a toad waiting for him when he got home which would be his familiar spirit or "imp." But, there was no toad near the door, look as he might. This meant he hadn't passed, and he'd have to do this all over again the next Friday the thirteenth.

The second time, there was till no familiar waiting, either. But Jonas was stubborn, and he tried a third time before he became a conjure man. This took him two full years, but he said it was worth the time and trouble. Liz told him that it took so long because of the preachers in his family.

\* \* \*

The initiation charm given in this text is super-packed with important metaphysics and symbolism. There are many ways one might attract the attentions of sorcery-granting powers, which are always chthonic in nature; this is one of the better ones, displayed in the folkloric sphere, that I've ever seen.

The black goat or ram is immediately a living bit of the Underworld's power, as all black animals are considered to have a connection to it. That it is a ram (a goat would have worked, too) is further meaningful. The horned, earthy creature is a stand-in (and a sacrifice) for the Master Spirit himself, in his hypostasis as the "Splitfoot", the "Shaggy One", the Master of the Earth-dwelling Hobbs or Pucks/Buccas, who are the Masters and power-granting familiar spirits to all witches in the genuine sense. The "eastward flowing river" enlarges on the importance of the east to Appalachian folklore generally, but also plays into the association of the east with dawn, the start of a new day and the semantic association of that with birth and a new life.

Stealing the silver coin from the church is a ritual reversal- taking Saint Peter's money to pay Saint Nick, as it were; the money is endowed with the usual social and "heavenly" sense of sacredness by virtue of being property of a church; soaking it in toad's blood- the toad being the murk-dwelling "swimmer to the great below" transforms the power from heavenly to chthonic. That a bullet is made of it, to be fired at the sun- and hopefully the baleful "red sun"- is another form of burnt offering, a way of giving the "Red Eye of the Master" the silver gift. But the bullet also carries all of the super-packed intention of the candidate seeking sorcerous transformation.

It carries it straight to the Master, in a literal bang- a fast, super-powerful transition of the item from seen to unseen.

True to the nature of this charm, in which the prospective witch swears their soul to the Devil, the candidate is attempting to invert the blessings of Christianity (peace, love, charity, etc.) and take into themselves qualities that are ordinarily considered diabolical- like cruelty. Shooting at the sun is not just a gift to the Master's eye; it is also a rejection of the light, the light in this case representing the gifts of goodness that are conflated with christianity.

Taken all together, there is a lot of "Evil" in this charm, from the perspective of Appalachian people, and probably any christian people. The impact on the mind of the person doing the charm is intended to be profound, shocking even. In being so shocked, the ordinary way of thinking and feeling is suspended and inverted- so that new ways of thinking and feeling, or the powers thereof, can find entrance. The shock to the free soul of the person would be so great that it would literally "flare up" with a mixture of fear and hope and awe- attracting Unseen powers like a fire in a clearing in a dark forest.

And the evidence for their acceptance, their arrival, as it were, is the presence of the imp-familiar waiting for the person back at home.

There is a lot of force here, a lot of deep material.

# The Troll Cat

So I've been doing a goodly amount of research into the "Troll Cat" folklore in the broader body of lore regarding Scandinavian witchcraft. Delightful stuff. The Troll Cat, which appears as a kind of familiar to witches, was (unlike other familiars) almost a golem- a construct, a small armature made from (in the case cited below) wood shavings and blood. What's noteworthy about the spell used by Lispet Snipann, and the spell that follows it from Sweden, is that the witch provides the substance for the body and free soul of the Troll Cat familiar, via the wood shavings and blood (wood for the body, blood for the free soul) but they required none other than "Old Nick" to provide "power and life"- meaning a breath soul and the vitality and power of motion that it brings. This is yet another piece of lore that verifies my identification of the Witchfather with the Wind Indweller.

Now, "Old Nick" is thought to be derived from *Hnickar*- one of Odin's names meaning "slayer" or "destroyer", but the broader point is that "Nick" didn't get to be associated with the Devil for just no reason. Odin was the common "go to" Godly figure for the Devil of the Northlands, and either way, Odin is indisputably the Indweller in the Wind as the Heathen Norse conceptualized it.

A story collected in Norway, 1929, has a witch, named Lispet Snipånn, who had her farmhand collect all the wood shavings; on Thursday night she would roll them into a ball and put three drops of blood (from her finger) on it. The incantation "Now I have given you flesh and blood. May Old Nick give you power and life" turned the ball into a troll cat. Another spell was recorded in Sweden, 1908:

*"I give you blood,  
Satan gives you power.  
You shall run for me on earth,  
I shall burn for you in hell.  
You shall travel through forests and fields,  
gathering milk and cream."*

It is possible that the original witch who used this incantation kept the term "Satan" for use in conjuring the Master's attentions, owing to the potency of that name in her culture; names keyed to the shadow of a culture always have that terrifying power to unsettle the contents of the unconscious mind and summon forth the "betweenness" needed to channel the entity sought, or its favors. But it's just as likely that another name was used in its place, and the person recording this replaced it with "satan"- an annoying habit of Christians who copy things used by witches and sorcerers.

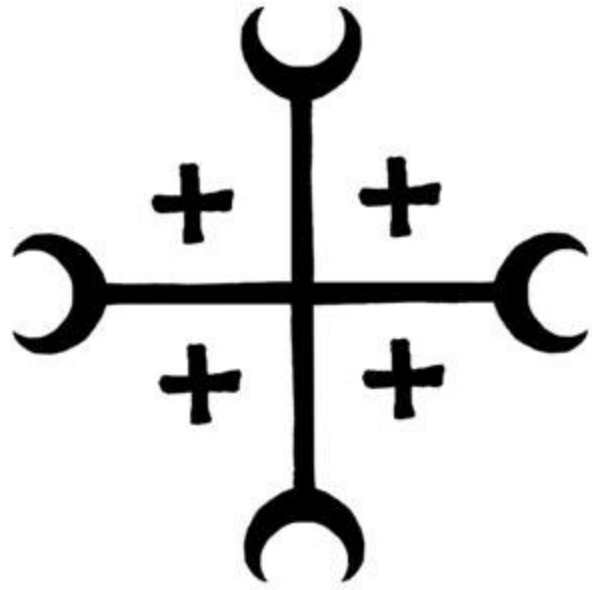
This "constructed" familiar from the second charm appears to have been used to gain "milk and cream" from the fields- blighting milk-cows, in other words. This conversation transcends this short piece; Wilby discusses the deeper reasoning behind livestock blighting, aside from the obvious

"because witches are just bad and that's what they do" rationale. I've always imagined a funny kind of supernatural racketeering behind it- the oldest protection racket, as it were: "pay up, or my demon troll cat will severely damage your milk production."

Nah, just joking. All the same, you don't go through the trouble of creating one of these things to just cause some dairy pranks. Besides, this witch is willing to repay the services of the troll-cat with suffering in the Underworld after death- why? It will run for her on earth, gathering milk and cream from forests and fields? Clearly, the troll-cat had a sympathetic connection to the witch, and its gathering of power made her power stronger, too. That's why. These things were like batteries of free power that could be accessed by the witch.







*The Crossroads Sigil*



# Transference and the Crossroads Sigil

I was just having a conversation with a dear friend last night about the notion of ritual transference. The sort of "transference" I'm talking about is transferring objects- like the physical form of offerings- from the Seen world, to the Unseen. My friend and I were discussing his use of the Red Meal- and I suggested that he might find a new and more potent dimension of experience in that if he tried transferring his finished offerings from the Red Meal in a more formal manner.

Many are the informal manners of "transference"- to drown a thing in a pond or stream or river; to burn a thing; to bury it; to hang it from a high branch on a lonely tree- these are the standard "elemental" methods of transferring things. Then there is the pouring of things onto the roots of old trees, or leaving things in special places. Old as the hills, truly- but one can utilize certain symbols to transfer, too- symbols that have more than a use for getting offerings from the visible to the invisible; symbols that have sorcerous use, too

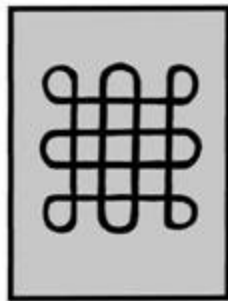
Take the Crossroads Sigil, given alongside this short article. This form of "crossroads" is of secret origin; I cannot reveal where I got it from- but the fact that I use it, often, should be satisfaction enough that it is potent and effective. I often bury things- payments to my allied spirits- though I never dig with metal; I use an antler-pick. After patting down the earth, I draw, using barley flour, the Crossroads Sigil over the place where the burial happened- thus marking the place as a "point" where Seen and Unseen touched, and a transference happened.

Many is the jogger or hiker who, by now, has passed lonelier places in the local parks and woods around here, only to see one of these glowing-white Crossroads left on the ground. I doubt any of them recognize it for what it is, but I assure you- to see it there, on the dark earth, in the twilight, glowing as the white flour glows- is evocative. It's creepy, really; it's something powerful. The Crossroads Sigil is a message; it says "something has passed here, between one world and the other." It says that something intruded into this world, here, or something was taken by the Otherness. Don't forget this. Any time I do any sort of transference- even if I cast something into a river, or hang it in a tree, I draw this sign on the bank of the river, or at the foot of the tree, before I leave. There is power there.

Alternatively, one may draw this on the ground, and place one's bowls or vessels of offering on the center of it, (before you "charm" them with your words of offering and consecration) and even put candles around it, or build a fire near it. The flickering light in twilight or night really brings the flour-drawn sigil to a special sort of life. I do that too; very formal "meetings" between my Master and I- and the local spirit-powers that I believe inhabit this land- happen when I hammer up a stake and put a goat's skull at the top of it (or a goat mask I got carved from wood, very old) and build a fire right in front of it, and then draw this Crossroads Sigil on the ground in front of the fire. That would be the "standard" ritual-site for me.

Though I can't go into it now, there is another sigil that is very old- older, probably, than this

Crossroads Sigil- and used not just for trapping harmful spirits or powers (or any powers, if you were clever) but also for entering the Unseen, just as a Crossroads-Sigil can facilitate. It is called a Binding Knot, and while I will not reveal (yet) its secret for using it as an Otherworld entrance, please understand that it has many of the same meanings as the Crossroads Sigil. I will put a Binding Knot image here as well, for your guidance and edification.



*Binding Knot*

But it is the Binding Knot's use as a spirit trap that I want to talk about briefly, now. One of the simplest- and most effective "spirit trap banishings" I know of is one that everyone should know, particularly you folk who deal with matters sorcerous. Take red ochre and some linseed oil, make a good thick paint of it, and paint this binding knot onto an egg. Take that egg, and rub it over your own naked body- or over the body (clothed or not) of a person who suffers from any dark intrusion or "bad power"- or even the suspicion of such- making sure to rub the egg especially on the forehead, the crown of the head, the back of the neck, the chest, the heart region, the solar plexus, the lower regions, the stomach, and the arms and legs, hands and feet. Be sure not to touch the side of the egg that has the binding knot painted on it if the ochre-tiver is not dry; it will smear. You can use high-quality black ink, as in potted ink, if you prefer; it works too.

The egg is long thought to have the power to "attract" things- but the Binding Knot stops them from leaving the egg. Then, go bury the egg in a lonely place, and with flour, draw the binding knot over the burial site- a true trap. Leave that place a different way from the way you came in, and never look back at the site after you walk away from it.

Simple, dirty, and potent. Very old- never forget this charm; it might spare you a lot of pain one day.

And never forget the sight of this Crossroads Sigil- it is unofficially the "Crossroads Sign of Robin Artisson"- associated with my work and my person, a semi-formal sign of the sorcerous system that I have correlated and inaugurated in this world: the equal-armed cross, one arm representing the horizontal experience-axis (the golden/sunlit road), and the other representing the vertical "axis" of trance-descent or penetration into the Unseen (the silver-covered road/moonlit way), with a crescent moon at each terminus, and four smaller equal-armed crosses in the "spaces between" the roads.

Those of you who wish to use it, can. It may be (in this form) a sign specific to my current- and me- but it is a sign of a universal metaphysical reality, usable by all.



# Witchcraft, Religion, and Morality

## (from private correspondence)

Now, witchcraft need not be a vehicle of morality, and indeed, I don't think it primarily is. It is sorcery, it is the use of the mind, body, and soul to enter into extraordinary relationships with spiritual beings for the purpose of gaining power and wisdom. It also includes the entry into relationships with other humans and other non-human creatures that share our world for exactly the same purpose. That is my definition, refined over many years, and the one that I will take to my grave.

If we want to seek morality in terms of relationship- which my friend Cotton is certainly all about- then we are very happy, indeed. But morality, for me, can be conceptualized as coming from other places as well. The trick is to realize that even those places are never experienced by us except in terms of relationship. I am talking about tangible places in this world, like forests or fields or rivers or even houses; but I also mean "places" of mystery in which we find ourselves undergoing transformations. Strange powers stand behind not just places but also states of mind and being, and when I say "strange powers", I mean sentient powers, like us, though some far weirder than we really have the capacity to deal with. And yet, transformations still come if we are ready for them.

Witchcraft can't replace religion all by itself, and it was never meant to. But religion in the most authentic sense is not the invented thing we've come to associate it with- organic religion, which is to say real religion, always springs spontaneously from our relationship with one another and the natural world and the unseen world. So, having said that, I say now as I will say for all my days: witchcraft, carried far enough, cunningly enough, and completely enough, will result in a kind of religion which strikes far deeper into the soul and into the personal experience than any invented or revealed religion can.

I think that's what nearly all of us so-called "seekers" are really seeking, and I have discovered ways to bring people to precisely these ends, though the way is long and involved. It may be a way that requires a lot of effort, but in the end, the effort doesn't come from any natural difficulty in Witchcraft or the spirit world, but in how our minds have become so alienated from the simple truth of deep relationships and the mysteries life really contains. When we let ourselves open up to those things, and stop defending ourselves from those things in all the crazy ways modern society encourages us to, the man becomes witch, the woman becomes witch, almost whether they wish to or not. They at least become "mystic", for witchcraft always contains an element of devotion to the Master, to the Dead and the Ancestors, and to other spirits who traditionally are associated with it, and in this, we see the formation of a primordial kind of religion that is quite recognizable to our modern minds.

One of the torments of the modern day is, of course, the bloated power-tick that we call Christianity. Islam is precisely the same sort of bloated creature, only it concerns us less in the true Western world. Christianity itself capitalizes on an egregious amount of fear- fear of forming spiritual

relationships of which the hierarchies of churches don't approve. They have found a way to make people feel threatened at the soul level, which is a monstrous thing, and unparalleled in the history of humanity. The day people recognize that fear as a crime against sentience, and a crime against one's person, the day people realize and accept that no institution of holiness and love can utilize fear so freely to maintain its cohesion is the day the mask comes off those churches, and we are free to be the people Nature and Fate designed us to joyfully and bravely be.

You specifically asked about forgiveness. As with everything, if it is wise or prudent to forgive, and if the person you feel the desire to forgive has made legitimate and honest steps towards reparation over any harms they have caused you, it is only a good thing that you should release your anger against them, but naturally you should never release the caution you will always feel, for that is wisdom's first blossoming. If a person who has wronged you is certainly intent on ignoring the wrong, passing the buck onto another, or otherwise failing to admit their clear wrong and make amends, you aren't helping them OR yourself in simply offering some kind of forgiveness; you might be said to be setting yourself or other people up for future harm from them, if they begin to realize that their behavior will come with no interpersonal consequences.

Because relationship is the keyword of the primordial wisdom worldview. And forgiveness is nothing but a word that finally resolves down to "restoring bonds" between two parts of an interacting system of relationship, and sometimes more than two parts. If bonds are to be restored, they have to be restored with strength and integrity- else one is building a weak bridge from which one will topple again one day in the future.

Even if you are not able to give the forgiveness you may want to give, due to the nature of those parties who wronged you not allowing this integrity to exist, it might be enough for you to know that your heart was gentle and willing to forgive- that willingness says a lot about your soul. And in my opinion, it says good things.





*Her people were once dead, yet they live; they have sloped heads like stones, eyes like berries, breath like breezes, laughter like crows, skin like stream-wet sand, bodies like ghosts, worlds like visions in the night, and yearnings that mortals sometimes share. Their Lordly king is so broad and handsome, so full of strength; the King and Queen's tables are always full of generous portions of fruit and meat, of honey and finest breads. Great and hairy cows cry out and make their frightful noises in the Elf-king's mighty herd. Look into the hollow places of the earth for their pleasant and darksome land. Look to the bloodstained stone-side and hillside for their old feasting tables. Look to your own hide and innards for their portal and resounding gulf.*



# Apotropaic Charms: Wooden Beams and Witch Bottles

\* \* \*

## **Quick Beam, Stout Beam: The Warding Crosses**

The creation of warding crosses- which are always equal-armed crosses- should be done with rightly gathered oak or rowan wood. Both of these woods are potent apotropaic or evil-averting powers. Forming their well-harvested branches into equal-armed crosses, bound by red thread, makes a time-honored charm against the encroachment of evil forces into a home in which they are hung, or a protection for the person around whose neck or wrists they are placed. A ritual area utilized for sorcerous rites can be protected with them, as well. I find that attaching bells to them adds a further element of protection, though you might not wish to go so far.

"Well-harvested" in the context that I have used it means "gathered with honor done to the tree-entity at the proper time and with proper offerings, and taken in such a manner as to disallow the twig or branch to touch the ground." Gather oak on Thursday; rowan on Sundays. Bring the tree a generous offering of honey and beg its spirit to not only release from itself the portion that you require, but to preserve within that portion the needed virtues that will serve your purpose.

After you have taken the branch or twigs you needed, and gotten them worked or whittled or ready to be tied, the tying portion requires special attention- tie with the red thread dipped first in a good boiling brew of oak shavings and leaves. If you are using rowan, you can still use oak for the brew, or make a brew from rowan bark and leaves/berries in its place- or just mix the two together. Once the cross is tied up firm, draw a conjuring or manifesting triangle with flour on a table, facing north or east, and put the completed cross in it, before holding your "triangled" hands over it and reciting this conjury:

OAK BEAMS FOR A STURDY WALL  
OVER WHICH EVIL CANNOT CALL  
OR SLINK OR LEAP OR FLY OR CRAWL  
HARD WOOD AND WICKED BANE  
HE WILL NOT BREAK NOR BLEED,  
NOR GIVE NOR WANE,  
AND HOLD THIS HOME HIS HOLY FANE  
AND RED THREAD BINDS HIM TWO BY TWO  
A CROSS OF THE SKY, GOODNESS EVERLASTING

IN THE NAME OF HIM, UNSPEAKABLE  
YET CALLED IN TRUTH IAO ABRASAX  
NO WICKEDNESS SHALL ENDURE OR BIND  
IN THE PRESENCE OF THIS FOURFOLD SIGN.

Seal it with a triple cross and triple clockwise circle drawn with your hands over it. The charm above assumes you are making the crosses for the warding of a home. If a person is intended to wear the cross, say instead:

OAK BEAMS FOR THE BODY OF (X)  
THROUGH WHICH EVIL CANNOT CALL  
OR SLINK OR LEAP OR FLY OR CRAWL  
HARD WOOD AND WICKED BANE  
HE WILL NOT BREAK NOR BLEED,  
NOR GIVE NOR WANE,  
AND HOLD THIS MAN'S BODY AND SOUL HIS HOLY FANE  
AND RED THREAD BINDS HIM TWO BY TWO  
A CROSS OF THE SKY, GOODNESS EVERLASTING  
IN THE NAME OF HIM, UNSPEAKABLE  
YET CALLED IN TRUTH IAO ABRASAX  
NO WICKEDNESS SHALL ENDURE OR BIND  
IN THE PRESENCE OF THIS FOURFOLD SIGN.

## **Witch Bottles**



The ancient and classic warding charm which endures from age to age because of its great power, the Witch Bottle is one of the ultimate shielding charms, particularly against hostile spells hurled by sorcerously-inclined opponents, but also against the powers of malevolent spirits. The idea of the witch bottle is to create a sorcerous doppelganger or psychic copy of yourself- using the portion of your breath soul that is found in your blood and urine- such that harmful magical or spiritual forces seek the bottle out instead of you. What it finds is a sharp, deadly welcome- a bottle full of broken glass, nails, needles, and thorns.

A glass jar or bottle of some kind must be found, and in it placed many broken shards of glass, rusty nails, pins and needles, and thorns- and then, on top of them, enough of your blood, spittle, and urine to finish filling the bottle up. It must be sealed with wax over the cork or lid.

Though it's not strictly necessary, the completed bottle can be sorcerously "named" after you in a short rite- on the evening of a very new moon, you can baptize it (while it sits in a conjuring triangle) with birch water or some other hallowed water, all while facing east, and give it your name, before "displaying" it to the four directions and repeating its new name.

The only thing you *must* do to the bottle is give it the conjuration of purpose- at some point, and better it be on a Tuesday, put the bottle in a conjuring triangle facing north and hold your "triangled" hands over it and say:

BOTTLE OF BITTER BRINE, LIFE OF MINE  
NOW RESONATE WITH ME, FOR ALL HIDDEN EYES TO SEE  
FOR HOSTILE EYES MAY SEEK THEE.  
TAKE THEM TO YOURSELF, AND BE THOU ME  
AND FROM WITHIN YOU GIVE THEM THEIR REWARD:  
THRICE PIERCED BY PAINFUL NAIL  
THRICE CUT BY JAGGED GLASS  
BUTCHERED BY HARSHNESS WITHOUT FAIL  
PIERCED BY NEEDLES, A BITING FLAIL  
AND REDUCED TO NOTHINGNESS.  
IF SOME POWER CAUGHT BY YOU  
SHOULD SURVIVE YOUR SAVAGE, BITTER BREW  
LET IT FLY HOME TO ITS MASTER'S HAND  
AND INFLICT ON THEM WHAT THEY HAD PLANNED  
WHEN THEY SOUGHT ME OUT AT FIRST.  
GREAT POWERS GIVE YOU YOUR PURPOSE:  
EUPHORBA, TERROR OF ALL WICKED SPIRITS  
IAO ABRASAX, MASTER SPIRIT OF THIS WORLD.

Seal that with a triple cross and triple clockwise circle, drawn with your hands over it. At some point after that, the bottle must be buried somewhere secret, or sealed in a place that it can never be taken from again with any ease (such as in a wall- a cabinet or closet will not do.) So long as it stays buried/concealed and full of the liquid and sharp things, you will have splendid protection from hostile forces and powers. And there's no limit to how many witch-bottles you can craft and make and bury or secret about the countryside. Some might say the more, the merrier.



# The Darkness

Kids just come from the spirit-world with an innate sense of things. Let me tell you about some things I used to do, which I *know* most, if not all, of you did. And perhaps still do. You know that long walk down the dark hall you had to take to get back to your bed, away from the well-lit bathroom, late at night? Whether you were at your grandparents' house, or your own, few are the kids who can start to make that walk, without busting out running by halfway through, to get back to their room quickly. Dark halls are dangerous places. You've done it.

And then, the monster under the bed. Don't even think about denying this one- self-deception is an ugly thing! Many's the time when I was a kid where I, like most kids, went to get into bed at night, and launched myself in a graceful arc through the air to land in bed, without having to risk my ankles and feet right alongside the dark region Below The Bed. Screw that. Maybe you didn't believe that monsters were *really* under your bed, but no one, even most older kids, are going to take any chances.

I don't even need to bring up the closet monster. Who in their right mind slept with the damned closet door open? And the "wall frisk"- yeah, before you step into a dark room, you have to put your hand in there, and wildly frisk the wall, looking for the light-switch.

It's more than just the very natural fear of the dark we're all born with. As diurnal omnivores, who have no good natural equipment for hunting at night (we can't see for drek in the dark) we have a natural fear of darkness, and of unseen places. This echoes long into our spiritual and religious thinking- often associating, as we do, "darkness" with evil or danger, and Things Unseen with risky, possibly malevolent things.

It's not that these associations are completely devoid of meaning. It's that they are (these days) far, far too unbalanced. I don't need to go into some tired, cliché talk about how darkness and light are two necessary experiences, two complementary and necessary powers- and in fact, I wouldn't, because that shite is *so boring* by this point. More dualistic conflict myths and stories are not what we need. As much as people love Tolkien- for good reasons- his metaphysics couldn't get much more two-dimensional and dualistic and simplistic if they tried. There's clear-cut everything in Tolkien, clear-cut good and evil- and added to that, if something is evil in Tolkien's work, chances are, it's appearance is dark or ugly.

No, I'm not going to trouble you with more dualistic, over-simplistic nonsense. But I will say this: no one really tests the depth of a river with two feet. When you have an unknown on your hands, you have to exercise a level of caution. The darkness, the nighted thicket, the Unseen, all of these things- they will quickly invoke unrelated (or related) fears in us, which can quickly pile up and destroy our ability to really test them, really meet them, really explore them.

Are kids right about there being "things" under the bed? Mostly no. But the impulse is there for a reason. Evolutionarily speaking, some would say, the humans that survived zillions of years ago were the ones that just assumed a saber-toothed tiger might be in the bushes over there, and didn't go near there, and so survived to pass their genes on more. Through natural selection, we were "selectively bred" to be more paranoid rather than less.

But the Unseen World- considered as the Spirit World- is another matter. It's always there. And sometimes it has dangerous powers in it. And it's like the darkness behind darkness. Young little humans know this, without knowing how they know it. And immature adults who are impregnated with ludicrous stories about angels and demons fear it, too- only to see the sordid little myths that they've internalized multiply in fear by playing on their natural biological and cultural fears besides.

They say we should fear fear. Fear, some say, is the great "mind killer", the reason why most of our worst nightmares actually come true- because acting under the influence of fear, we set into motion disasters, or allow ourselves to become platforms on which disasters can build themselves. I believe that. But how did the wise, simple caution that souls have to have when dealing with the strangeness beyond this world- which is a perfect, 100% reflection of the wise caution anyone should have when meeting strangers in this world- become warped into the bloated "thing under the bed" or the belief in horrific demons out to destroy all that is good and holy everywhere?

It got this way because we lost contact with darkness, by making very complex shelters with lights that could be used all the time. Being sheltered from the darkness anytime you want to escape it may seem like a convenience, but in reality, it's good to be exposed to an inescapable darkness from time to time. To be "exposed to the intransigent darkness" means more than just going out on a date with me, or sitting in a Baptist church on Wednesdays or Sundays- it means far more than that. It means letting ourselves be exposed to something uncomfortable- especially when our senses can't hope to overcome it- and waiting to see what happens. Initiatory "tappings" can happen in that open space of vulnerability.

This is all part of the logic that the old "vision quests" that were carried out by primal people followed- to expose oneself to uncertainty and danger was one of the conditions required to show the Unseen world that you were serious about wanting a vision or a mystical experience for guidance.

As a kid, if you were anything like me, you had the magic of the monster-proof blanket to guard you from the things swimming around in the darkness of your bedroom. The creature from The Dark may have spines, talons, and fangs the size of steak knives, but that sucker ain't gonna get through that blanket you pulled up over your head! This "safety blanket" effect is probably born in our deepest unknown memories of being safely in a womb, covered on all sides.

But I remember- very clearly- the feeling of the presences "out there" in the darkness of my room. They quite literally swam in the dark, silently, but tangibly. At that youthful of an age, deeper senses were still open in me, as with all kids. After a while of not being savaged in my bed, I grew up and realized that if the darkness did contain "things"- which I was sure it did- clearly, they weren't as



dangerous as I once worried. And I only worried because Sister Mary Margaret down at the Catholic School that I attended was just sure that they were demons who especially loved to drag away little boys that didn't do their homework, or talked in class.

Well, she's with them now, 24/7- and I hope she's enjoying herself. By this point in my life, I've come to realize that "Them Over There" would probably enjoy feasting on repressed, in-denial women that gave up their lives, sexuality and vitality for a made-up savior, more than on little kids that they knew would grow up one day to be their sorcerous friend and worshiper.



*It's frustrating to consider, but old Puck was right to laugh at the people of the Old World, when they sold their souls away to the new sorcerers who brought them the new spells of modernity. There is much to be recommended in a world of aspirin and air-conditioning, a world where babies and their mothers don't die nearly as much in childbirth and where tumors can be cut out of ailing people, but there is a downside to our brilliant avoidance of death: we get to die in other ways, in ways far more ominous than any rotting body.*

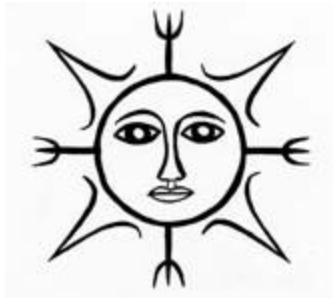
*The death of loneliness is our real death: people today have many miraculous devices to put between them and actually looking into the eyes of other people, and hearing their words. A web of light connects us all, and yet, my clientele overflows with people in the chasms of depression regarding their sense of being cut off from others, not being able to communicate with others, and feeling as though no one understands their most essential dreams, wants, needs, and desires. We've sold the cow of life, the warmth of breath, for synthetic milk and fake leather.*



*Sew the thread, make the stitch  
Upon it place pitch and knock within your nails!  
Accuser Shadow, walk the way with me  
Though I shall go my way joyfully;  
Fate's great spindle I trust to point me right  
In sorrowful day or perilous night.  
And with cunning,  
The darkest night is as day dawning.*



## P a r t III



# The Luminous Nights: Sacred Time, Sacred Seasons, and Invisible Doors

"Humans can adapt- via culture- to starless skies, treeless avenues, shapeless buildings, tasteless bread, joyless celebrations, and spiritless pleasures- they can adapt to a life without reverence for the past, love for the present, or poetical anticipations of the future. But it is questionable that man can retain his physical and mental health if he loses contact with the natural forces that have shaped his biological and mental nature."

-Rene Dubois





# Mawkin-Night: The Dark Underside of the Solstice

I wish you all the happiest of Summer Solstice-tides. I know that many of you are gearing up for some "fun in the sun"- spiritually as well as temporally speaking, if I can (just this once) use the language of the dualists.

But I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't point out what few people ever get pointed out: the summer solstice, or the Litha, or any of its other fine, beautiful, and traditional names, is not merely about fun and joy and the triumph of the light. It appears that way, but to judge this book by that cover might be dangerous. I will discuss this more at length, but for now, it's enough to say that this very old and very sacred time has a dark underside.

Our Master came at Winter's start as a helpless baby- a Lamb, as it were; but when he "returns", tomorrow night, he comes as a mighty groom, a Lion to use the later gloss. He could offer no warmth before, back on the Winter Solstice, only the comfort we might get from knowing that "our redeemer liveth"- but when he comes back as a blazing fire, his heat and power can part the darkness in a very decisive way.

But herein lies an ancient quandary. On the night of the sun's greatest power, the day of Most Light, when the Master's overwhelming power of life is demonstrated to watching mankind (and such heat is full of awe or "awe-full") he immediately begins his decline. It is for this reason that the Counter-Sun Powers- the dark forces- seek to slide in and sneak in and gain a victory at this great moment. It is for this reason that they can.

The summer solstice festivities that we are so used to seeing- particularly the bonfires of the Old World- are not just celebratory fires. They are protective fires, anti-evil fires, warding fires. They were built to purify people from the sudden danger of this time. They were built to consume evil on earth, the same way the sun does it in the sky and on earth.

But this seems to be a very small part of modern day people's understanding of the Summer Solstice. Here's a warning and an invitation, from deep within the Provenance Tradition, from your good friend Robin: make tomorrow night a "Mawkin-Night"- make a mawkin, a rugged, ugly doll or effigy. It can be anything. Mine is a ragged, knotty, forked stick. This represents the Counter-Sun Powers, the things that live in the dark (and believe me, are very real) who would love to undermine the blessings of the solstice on you and your house. Their goal? Aside from the extinguishing of life-fire? Six months of bad luck on you and yours.

Think about it this way. And do precisely what they might not expect- make a spirit-trap of the Mawkin. "Bait" it with things spirits love; rub it with honey, drape it with bags of natural cloth full of fragrant herbs (especially tobacco if you live in the Americas) and then, honor it. Tell the dark powers that they are not being ignored; that they are feared and recognized for their might. Keep

the mawkin away from the center of your homes, away from hearths and stoves. Keep it in some corner outside of the main room.

Then, get some parchment, for you and all of yours, and have people write down their full names on them, and have each person write out their fears and pains. Roll up those parchments and tie them with red thread to the mawkin, and right before midnight, burn the whole contraption in your Solstice fire. Everyone should jump the fire at least once. This purifies each celebrant of the possibility of the bad luck that was possibly waiting to pounce. And the burning of the mawkin carries away whatever bad things were attracted to its "trap".

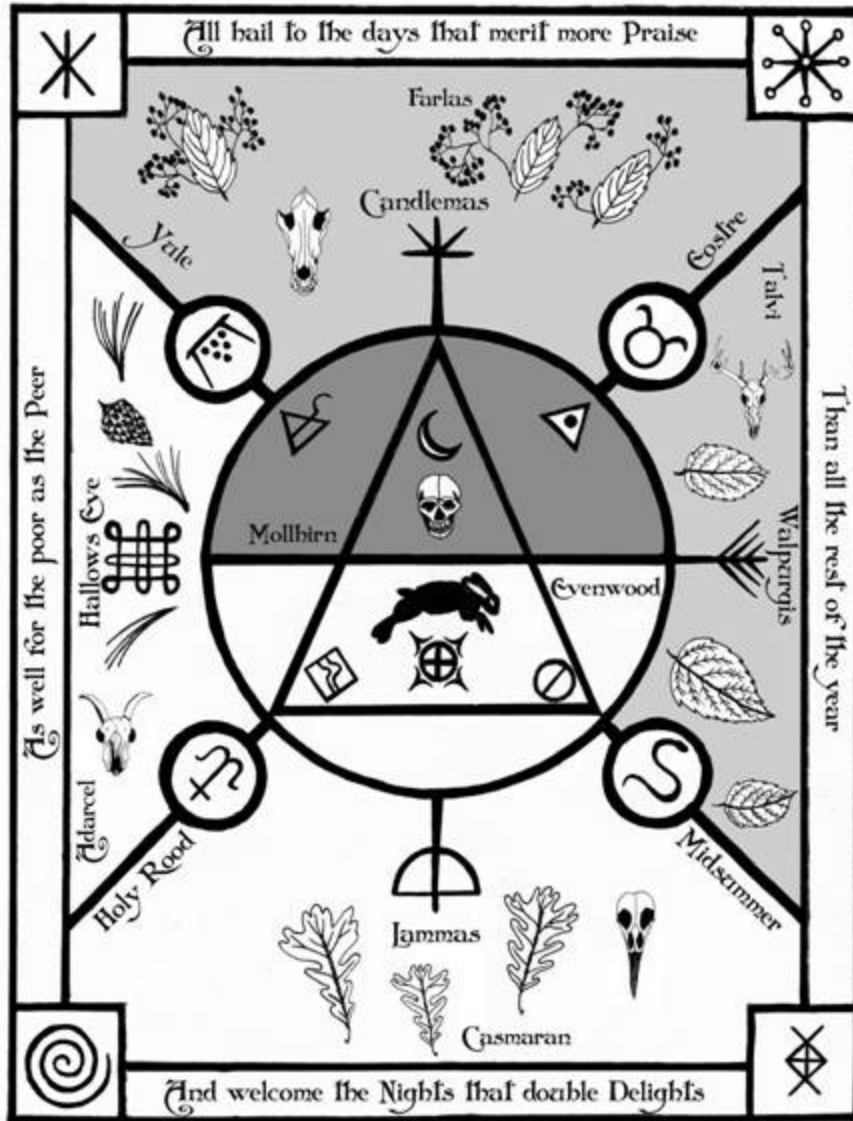
I always suggest that three good, hot coals be collected from that fire later and tossed into a big vat of spring water, and everyone wash with that water, and the house be sprinkled with it- especially the hearth, stove, bedrooms, and threshold.

I can't underscore this enough. The Summer Solstice is a warding time, a time to blunt the machinations of the Counter-Sun Entities. If you like, you can understand these entities as not only objectively existing dangerous otherworldly forces, but also the tendencies inside of you that love to arise and blunt your own personal plans, your own luck, your own excellence, and your own drives and ambitions and intelligence, right when you need those things the most. No one can be so beautiful or smart that the "other side" of beauty and intelligence isn't summoned, and alive inside them. That's how Seen and Unseen work.

If you can't have a bonfire, or make a mawkin, understand that you can. Make it out of paper. Have a candle. Do everything else just the same. Burn it in the candle flame. Jump the candle. light twigs from the candle (three of them) and extinguish their flame in a bowl of water to make your "solstice water".

PS: soften honey in a pot with a tiny bit of spice added to it, and pour that into your ale on solstice night. Especially the ale you'll give to the spirit-beings you're intending to thank, attract, or deal with. Honeyed ale is important.





*Calendar Ring*



# The Calendar Ring

A calendar ring is more than just a calendar. It is a cosmograph. It shows more than just dimensions of time, but dimensions of experience. This particular calendar ring is clearly solar-oriented. The significance of the sun in my coming works will be greatly emphasized, but not in ways you might think. I'm bored to tears of the "sun worship" that's so prominent in modern scholarship and in modern pagan literature. It's always framed as so simplistic- the ancients worshiped the sun, they tell us, because it's the source of life, it's the thing that stops harsh winter, or just because it appears to rise and set and therefore somehow becomes the symbol of a dying and resurrecting god... or just because it's so bright and amazing in the sky, and the ancients were just that impressionable.

I think whatever grains of truth you might find in these ideas are paltry when compared the truth that I've encountered. Unlike scholars, and most of my contemporaries, I've let the essence of the solar being lead me to deep regions of experience and learned a different tale.

At any rate, the calendar ring is solar-oriented, mostly, because the sun is another appearance or manifestation of a great spiritual being. The sun when considered as a ball of fire is one thing; when considered as the body of an Indweller, it becomes something else entirely. As all will see when I give my lengthy discussion on the theology and science of the Indwellers, that the sun should be both a ball of fire and the body of a sentient being is not at all an issue, anymore than the fact that these bodies of earth are, in fact, earth, while our souls (among other things) indwell them.

The sun is a multi-dimensional emblem of revelation. And I don't mean revelations of life rising from death, though that plays a part in the story. I don't mean just a seasonal impeller or a time keeper, though those things too play a role. The sun is a focused, awe-inspiring demonstration of divinity, pure and uncut. It is the constant watcher of history, and a fountain of joys and sorrows, as it has dark and bright aspects all its own. And for Witches, the connection between the Sun and the Master is sublime and recondite.

That the sun's ancient track around the sky (that's one way we experience it) and its ancient, fixed position in the void beyond (that's another way) should have some great influence on the mosaic of human religious and cosmological experience is not a thing that needs defending, and shouldn't need pointing out. Reality as we experience it is a tapestry of great majesty and many parts, and the sun is the golden theme that most other parts seem to weave around.

If we look at the Calendar Ring, we see that the four "sun stations" stand out. With the Yule station, a dark region on the image begins, and covers half the image; with the Midsummer station, the image becomes bright again, and thus divides it into a bright and dark half. This is duality, the off and on, the up and down, the awake and asleep, the living and the dead. Duality isn't such a problem as long as you realize that you're being lazy if you think *everything* has to be reduced to twos. When we deal with duality, we're dealing with very broad categories. It's not enough to stop with broad categories. They are over-simplistic, and you miss out on the real details (The devil's in the details, right?) of life

if you stay dualistic. Life isn't either/or; life is both/and. Life is waiting for us to get back down to the nitty-gritty, to the details, to the hidden treasures woven everywhere.

There is a "light half" and a "dark half" to the year. But there is something else occurring- a hidden "year" also exists, betwixt and between the solstice and equinox stations. These are the cross-quarter days of "hidden festivals"- the now-widely identified "Celtic" holy seasons of Beltane / Walpurgis, Lughnasad or Lammas, Samhain or All Hallows, and Imbolg or Candlemas. Falling directly between the solstices and equinoxes, we have another culture-family's take on the apparent pulse of the year. But what were they measuring? Why were they ignoring the solstices and equinoxes so? Neo-druid claims aside, history does not reveal the Celtic peoples (and there were so many) being "solstitial" in the way the Germanic peoples (and others) were.

It's perfectly clear to me what was going on, and the dark and light "central circle" on the Calendar wheel reveals the answer. The cross-quarters measure subtle tides, tides that deal with the Unseen, whereas the Solstice and Equinox stations measure tides of this world. We know that the Celtic peoples (or at least a lot of them) reckoned the start of their year and their winter with Samhain (what in Provenance talking I call "Hallows Eve"). We know that the Germanic peoples and others did the same thing with Yule. One of these winter festivals is an entrance into the land of the dead, called "Mollhirn" on the ring here (short for "Mollhirn Land")- and the other is an entrance into the wintry landscape of this world. Mollhirn or Mollhern refers to a female heron- a bird found in marshes. The Marsh is a symbol of the dark, murky, watery passageway to the Underworld.

Both Samhain/All Hallows and Yule involve great power, great sorcerous powers. One is not "secular" compared to the other; both are times when the Unseen is more present to human minds than other times. But there are differences in implication.

The Binding Knot that is the symbol of Samhain/All Hallows will be explained in great detail in the book in many places. It has countless sorcerous uses, but also symbolizes a passageway to the land of the dead or the spirit world.

On the ring, Mollhirn Land is dark (symbolizing it being unseen) and has the skull and the moon inside it, representing interior things, interior life and interior cycles. Evenwood is the light side of the central ring- Evenwood being a name for this world, the world of humans and the non-human animals that dwell here naturally. Evenwood means "forest of twilight" or the "Wood of the evening"- because this world, to me, is a world in metaphysical twilight, a slowly lengthening darkness. And that is how we experience it- from the moment we're born, our own lives are slowly declining back to death, back into Mollhirn Land's passages.

But it's also a reference to the declining of this world's wisdom and strength, a side-effect of our loss of the Old Ways. The forest aspect of the twilight forest refers to the multitude of interconnected life here. It's a world thick with life, the way a forest is, and a world full of passages and mazes and pitfalls.

Evenwood is symbolized by the hare and the sun- again, symbols of the exterior cycles of life that we're so familiar with. The Hare represents sexuality (the force I think drives 99% of everything that happens in our world, whether we mean the natural world or the human social world) and the sun represents everything we've been talking about so far- seasons, cyclicity, etc. But it also represents the light of conscious life, which the living get to have here. The moon, representing the dream-like unconscious, refers to the ordinary state of the dead in Mollhirn Land.

Candlemas stands at the center point of Mollhirn-Land. The dead who enter Mollhirn journey until they reach the point represented in our world by Candlemas- the point of purification. The five-branched rod represents the purifying implement. In the outer cycle, Candlemas is the light festival that occurs in the darkness of winter. It too, purifies the darkness, brings some changes and transformations towards the coming spring, distantly. Eostre- and its temporal and spiritual "spring cleaning" echoes that.

Walpurgis, one of the Witch Sabbaths *par excellence*, is the gateway that souls returning to this world use. It is also the fertility-time that makes that possible. But first and foremost, it is the opposite of Hallows Eve, the opposite of the gate-time that takes souls away; it is the gate that pours souls back into Evenwood. This is why it is so full of power for sorcerers.

Three sacred times appear to belong to the Mollhirn crescent, aside from the gate in (Hallows Eve) and out (Walpurgis)- Yule, which is the stage at which the dead are in Rade with the Aerial Hosts of the Master and Lord of the dead, Candlemas, when they are purified of their past existences (through some very dark mysteries which I will discuss) and Eostre, when the direction of a new life is set.

Three just-as-sacred times appear to belong to the Evenwood crescent, aside from the gates in and out- Midsummer, when people and all living beings are at their powerful prime; Lammas, when real maturity introduces itself into a life, and that life recognizes the role of sacrifice in their now adult lives (which is to say, the time that an adult learns to live for someone or something more than just themselves); and Holy Rood, when that adulthood declines into older age. Together, the Mollhirn and Evenwood crescents make another calendar ring describing human life, and perhaps other lives.

When you look at the ring, you'll see that the interpenetration of light and dark is everywhere. Nothing is purely light or purely dark, with the exception, obviously, of the two extreme solar stations- Yule and Midsummer. Walpurgis is a light festival in the dark region. Lammas is a dark festival in a light region. Hallows Eve is a dark festival in a light region. Candlemas is a light festival in a dark region. Eostre is a light festival in a dark region. Holy Rood is a dark festival in a light region. This is saying something very important about life on many levels. Everything we think is spotless always has its spots or difficulties. Even the light and joy of our lives is tempered by the dark knowledge of our mortal fates. All is blended together; the best of people are not without flaws, and the most flawed are not without virtues. The other side of this is true, too- the times in our lives we expect may be the darkest can have surprising moments of light in them.

The triangle inside the central circle represents the ever-present, always embedded force of



Threeness in this reality. Its points touch Candlemas (purification and newness), Midsummer (Great fertility and life) and Holy Rood (Waning). In other words, birth, life, and death. It is the threefold interior sorcerous power- from the Mother of all- that stands at the center and depth of the Underworld, and thus, inside of everything.

The four elemental sigils are placed properly- the Wind or air with Yule, and the "north" of the ring (remember, on this ring, Candlemas is at the top, and it symbolically faces North-east.) The light or fire symbol is under Eostre and the East; the Stone/Rock or earth symbol is under Midsummer in the south, and the water symbol is under Holy Rood in the west. This series of attributions is the nigh-universal system I've encountered in all traditional thinking, particularly Traditional Witchcraft compasses and rings- air north, fire east, earth south, and water west. And there are very good reasons why this is so.

You already know that the Candlemas symbol is a five-branched rod or stave. The Walpurgis symbol is a tree, representing life and growth (like its gate gives the world) the Lammas symbol is the mound of sacrifice; and the Hallows symbol, as I said before, is a binding knot/spirit trap and portal to the land of the dead.

Four "foliate badges" were chosen for the seasonal plants- pine in the autumn (autumn's sorcerous name being Adarcel) Elder in the winter (winter's sorcerous name being Farlas) Birch for the spring (spring's sorcerous name being Talvi) and Oak for the summer (summer's sorcerous name being Casmaran.) These attributions are easy to decipher.

The animal skulls chosen for the four seasonal regions reflect an inner theology of the Witch-Father. It is enough to point out that the wolf skull is positioned after Yule because that is when the wolf-nights occur. The buck of spring, the Raven of the sun, and the goat of Autumn (and Yule) also appear.

With this revelation of the Calendar Ring, the Lord and Source of Revelations- the Master- shows the patterns of existence and life and death. That is its chief importance. He rules over those patterns and this world, watching, as the Ancient and All-Seeing Sun he is. The Calendar wheel is an encoded tablet of very deep, organic beliefs. It is a sacred thing for those who comprehend it fully.

# The Eightfold Day and Night

Many in the modern neopagan world have a strong fix on the eightfold arrangement of the year-wheel. With solstices and equinoxes added to cross-quarter nights, we get the eight sabbats of neo-pagan witchcraft. These eight times all have enormous amounts of actual provenance tradition behind them. Of course, it is a rather modern arrangement to have a calendar of specific ceremonies that describe a rotation through a yearly cycle that incorporates all eight. Even Gardner himself only taught a year-wheel that dealt only with four cross-quarters to the attention of the public.

So, while everyone loves that eightfold arrangement- and there's reasons to like it- almost no one looks for the natural eightfold arrangement of each 24 hour period. And there's every reason to do so- sorcerous reasons, of course. We all know about morning, midday, evening, and midnight- everyone has a pretty good idea of a four-fold temporal patterning for every day. Most everyone has a little "between" time called dusk or twilight tossed in there, somewhere between midday and evening, though closer to the cusp of evening. Most people have a "dawn" period tossed in right before morning is here, with sunrise.

But you don't have to look far to find that the Old People had eight very distinct time zones for each 24 hours, beyond our "morning, midday, evening, and midnight". We've just lost most of the missing four.

You know about morning, but what about *undorne*? The word *undorne* looks as alien to us as it can look, and yet, it was commonly in use in the centuries before now. What about Uht? "Uht" sounds... odd... but it refers to a period of time that is very special, and happens every day/night. I'll be talking about this more in the future, but I wanted to mention it now- because it's just too good not to mention.

Every day/night cycle has eight divisions. Here they are, with their rough corresponding times:

4:30-7:30 AM:	Morntide
7:30-10:30 AM:	Daytide
10:30 AM -1:30 PM:	Midday
1:30-4:30 PM:	Undorne
4:30-7:30 PM:	Eventide
7:30-10:30 PM:	Nighttide
10:30 PM- 1:30 AM	Midnight
1:30-4:30 AM:	Uht

Yeah, it's true. Got a "working to do at midnight?" It can be started as early as 10:30, or go as late as 1:30, and still be "done" at midnight, in the old reckoning.

Naturally, each of these times has distinct sorcerous-semantic resonances, distinct associations. Imagine they are all a wheel of eight. Put yourself in the center, and imagine that the "you" in the center is you in the middle of any situation you like- a good one or a bad one.

To the left of the "you" in the center (to the right of the you looking down at you in the center of the wheel) is Morntide. If the wheel was on a picture, and the top of the picture was north, this would be east. Rising sun, morntide, and the "time" of awakening- that which provokes a situation, which kicks it off.

The next step down, counterclockwise, to what would be the "south east" on the picture of you in a circle, is Daytide. It's the place where the first conditions that followed the "kick off" worked their charms, leading to the next stage- at the bottom of the circle, by your feet, in the south: Midday. This is the situation as it is right now, the metaphysical "present."

Next, following along, is Undorne- the conditions that are working behind the scenes of the present, that will lead to the right of the "you" down on the page, what would be the west of a compass circle: Eventide, evening. Eventide represents the situation as it will be in the nearby metaphysical future, because of what happened in Undorne.

Then, proceeding up, to what would be the northwest on the compass, is Nighttide, the forces that will be acting behind the scenes of Eventide to bring us to the "north" up by your head- which is Midnight. This is the long-term outcome of whatever situation you're in. This is the binding, the fixing, the final fate of the situation. And then? Uht- the strange, open space after the situation has "concluded"- the strange, weird "wee hours" of the morning, as a new situation prepares to arise, a new Morntide.

In Uht, it seems like anything might be. If a person's death was symbolized by Midnight, and their birth by Morntide, Uht is the strange "Fayerie" state of the afterlife. It is the "other" Witching time, after Midnight. Midnight is for "fixing and binding"- Uht is for... strange things, for anything can arise from the ashes of a former day, but before the new day is starting.

Uht is the time, traditionally, when the best inspiration can arise for those night owls who find themselves up in those odd hours.

I hope you see what I'm saying all this for. Morntide is for provoking new situations, and daytide for doing what needs to be done- propelling forces- to bring them into midday. Midday is for adding fuel to already burning bright-fires, as it were. Midday is for sustaining works and healing in the sense of strengthening a sick body or situation so that it can fight and win. Undorne and eventide are for withering things away, changing what is established, and healing in the sense of deleting harmful conditions of an illness. Midnight is for killing things, or fixing or binding things to some end, or ending something about oneself or another to birth a new being in its place- initiation, that is. And Uht... is the weird time, when other works, particularly divinations, perhaps, are best

done. Uht is the metaphysical "thirteenth hour."

Anyone who looks at this wheel of "day and night times" can also see the nine-fold pattern of a divinatory reading. The "center"- the "you" being a significator for a person or a situation, and the eight other "times" or stages around it, revealing truths about where it came from, where it is, and where it's going- but most importantly, what the "Uht" of the situation will be- what strange potentials will spring from it when it is over.

Be well, now, friends. Use this very old bit of lore for your purposes of cunning and wisdom attaining. Look for a more detailed treatment of it in the future.

Have a safe and insightful Nighttide!

# The Lore of the Yule Goat

I love the Yule season. Aside from hating heat, I love the fact that Yuletide celebrations from so many nations still drip, flow, and pour with open and obvious veneration of the Master and his servant-entities. I notice that most "Heathenish" people or just outright Heathens love the Krampus aesthetic that hits this time of year- and indeed, who couldn't love it? I know who and what the Krampenhoch represents, and who they are. I know who their Master is, too, because he's mine. It's not a mistake that the Krampus-beings are horned (distinct from antlered) and presented as savage and scary. The Yule-Hoch, in whatever form it takes, has to be. The tide of Winter's "cauldron bottom scald" has to be terrifying, because it is so mighty. Whatever might be able to destroy life- the coldest of cold- has its season to show off that might, and with great strength comes great awe.

Those people in the Alps with their amazing Krampus festivals are having a Yule-Rout, a Yule-Marauding of horned, savage beings, who are "led" by "Saint" Nicholas... but be sure, their original Master, who is still there master, is also a Nick, just not "saint" Nick. And be certain that the constant association of the Krampus with stealing children has nothing to do with scaring children into being good; it is a memory of a time when the Krampus came for human sacrifices- for what the human community would yield up to them, in exchange for freedom from the dangers wild nature and the "other side" represented, and for help from the Krampus-hoch in securing the resources needed for life.

There can be no doubt- no doubt- that the Krampus-hoch is another Ancestral-folkloric memory of the actual, objectively-existing Hobbmen. The Hobbs, the Hairy Ones, the Master's goatish and bestial servitors who are indwellers in this very wild Nature that covers the world in forestland and mountains. From the Seirim of the old Semites to the Saytrs of the Greeks, we aren't dealing with different beings, just different human groups remembering those beings in their own distinct ways. Their Master is always the same- Azael as the leader of the Seirim, Pan as leader of the Satyrs- always the "Goatish" God, always the Master. The Lord Krampus is well known to me, because I spend the rest of the year venerating his spirit, too.

And that's important, because the Krampengruppe aside, Yule brings us yet another manifestation of the Tragomorphic Master. The Yule Goat. In some ways, the Yule Goat is even more compelling- and obvious- than the *Krampengruppe*, when it comes to displaying open and obvious worship of the Master in his goatish hypostasis.

The Yule Goat, or the *Julbokken*, or any of the other names, is associated more with Scandinavia, but it is a relic of something pan-Northern European. Anyone who googles it will get to see the Gavle Jule Goat from Sweden- the biggest, most amazing example of a colossal straw goat and thousands of people still worshipping it. The custom of wassailing is sometimes called "going Yule goat" in Scandinavia.

But when you look into the history of it, the portrait is immediately clear. While it is a good guess to assume that the Yule Goat was originally born in the goats that pull Thorr's chariot in Scandinavian myths, this is not the main "channel" of the Yule Goat.

"...It is also known that in old agricultural Scandinavia (as with many other places in Europe), the last sheaf of corn bundled in the harvest was credited with magical properties as the spirit of the harvest and saved for the Yule celebrations, called among other things "julbocken" (the Yule goat). A man-sized goat figure is known from 11th-century celebrations of Childermas, where it was led by a man dressed as Saint Nicholas, symbolising his control over the Devil.

The function of the Yule goat has differed throughout the ages. In a Scandinavian tradition similar to wassailing, held at either Christmas or Epiphany, young men in costumes would walk between houses singing songs, acting out plays and playing pranks. This tradition is known from the 17th century and continued in places into the early 20th century. The group of Christmas characters would often include the Yule goat, a rowdy and sometimes scary creature demanding gifts.

Other traditions are possibly related to the sheaf of corn called the Yule goat. In Sweden, people thought of the Yule goat as an invisible spirit that would appear some time before Christmas to make sure that the Yule preparations were done right. Objects made out of straw or roughly-hewn wood could also be called the Yule goat, and in older Scandinavian society a popular Christmas prank was to place this Yule goat in a neighbour's house without them noticing; the family successfully pranked had to get rid of it in the same way."

This connection to the Corn-Spirit is the key. This is the Master, who brought the technology of plowing and grain cultivation to mankind, and whose spirit in the growth (his wind animates the grains) is "chased" into the last sheaf of grain standing- and that sheaf is the "Goat"- the sheaf that must be stored, kept for next year, and is venerated throughout the winter.

Like with the Krampus, Christian culture had to put a "saint" in control of that "Devil", so they did- and it's the predictable "Saint Nick." But see below it all: the wildness, the Misrule- the Goat-Man is associated with Winter Misrule, with pranks, with being rowdy and scary, just like the Krampus. It is the spirit of our Master, still among men and women, being worshiped. An invisible spirit that appears before Christmas to make sure the "Yule Preparations" were being done right? Indeed. Indeed.

"During the 19th century the Yule goat's role all over Scandinavia shifted towards becoming the giver of Christmas gifts, with one of the men in the family dressing up as the Yule goat. In this, there might be a relation to Santa Claus and the Yule goat's origin in the medieval celebrations of Saint Nicholas. The goat was then replaced by the jultomte (Father Christmas/Santa Claus) or julenisse at the end of the century, although he is still called the Yule goat ( Joulupukki) in Finland, and the tradition of the man-sized goat disappeared."

I'll tell you one place where the Goat-Man hasn't disappeared. And that's at Robin Artisson's house, as well as Gavle, in Sweden, apparently. And in Finland, where the gift-giving spirit is still called Joulupukki. The shift towards a "gift giving" being isn't something people in the 19th century came up with. To the Oldest Ancestors, the Master's spirit was synonymous with generosity. He is now, and will remain, the only Yule-Father. That he arrives in the night- no matter how commercialized a family may be, no matter how "santa clausy" they are, no matter how Christian they are, and scrutinizes their homes, blessing their children and their hearth, is not something I doubt in the least.

Keep the Christ in Christmas? Whatever for? I'm busy keeping the Goat in Yule. May the Generous Master bless you in the deep of this winter.

# The Re-Greening

The Vernal Equinox doesn't exist by itself; it exists as part of a solar cycle, part of a process. At this equinox, the sun rises due east and sets due west, yielding quite close to 12 hours of daylight- thus, "equal-nights" (equinox). The very ancients were very aware of the positioning and timing of the Summer and Winter solstices, and the extreme spiritual significance of those times- as well as the overlapping "tangible" realities of those times, what those solstices meant to the more measurable ecology of this world.

They created countless monuments with entrances angled and aligned perfectly to catch the sun's light on solstices. We can be certain that they understood that there were two "times directly between" the winter and summer solstices- the equinoxes- because they weren't stupid; when you have the two "axis points" of the year nailed down, you immediately know the cross-axis, and can certainly see that one "equal night" gives way to more dark, and another gives way to more light.

We might not know what the equinoxes meant to very ancient people, and we have few, if any, direct mythical overlaps with the equinoxes; but there are a bevy of later century folk-festivals and even church-related timings of feast days around it. The everywhere-universal urge of "spring cleaning" would appear to be a manifestation of something embedded in this season's beginning.

I can't say what the Vernal Equinox might have meant to ancient people, if and when it did mean something to them, but I know what it means to me. And that's enough, more than enough. I can divine from seeing what the Winter Solstice means, and what the Summer Solstice means (divining from seeing what countless ancient aesthetic notions associated with those times demonstrate) what the "cross axis" must "mean" at some wordless level. Spring's beginning is clearly a natural celebration of life stirring, re-greening, and re-wilding. We don't need anyone or any history to tell us that. You just have to take a walk outside.

This day is special because it lies direct-center between the start of solar winter and the start of solar summer. The "first half of the dark side of the year" had some grim powers. Now, with spring starting, we are entering "the second half of the dark side of the year"- and its powers are never so cruel as the first half's powers.

Part of being a proponent of the Provenance Tradition is the ability to engage- quite without effort- the simple joys of such realizations. To feel so at home with these timeless turnings. Even if I were the first person in history to ever have these thoughts, that would be okay. Naturally, I know that I am not- but that really doesn't matter to me.

On the traditional "season sigil" wheels, so prominent around the British Isles and Northwestern



Europe (often used as home warding charms or decorations) the symbol of the Vernal Equinox time is a circle sprouting horns- very likely a reference to the fact that the sun moves into the house of Aries, the Ram, at this time. But it means so much more to those of us who "do not scorn to wear the horns..." The Gudeman is responsible for the Re-Greening of Things; the horns are his, too.

# The Scripture of John Barleycorn

Lammas, yes. The Loaf-Mass, the giving of first fruits, in this case from the historical grain harvests. The first loaf made from the new crop is brought to the church, blessed, then used in sorcerous pursuits. The "neck" or the "throat" of the corn is taken and endowed with the spirit of the crop as a whole, and venerated.

Echoes of these reverential and mystical treatments of the children of the crop-lands are everywhere, and no one doubts their ancient provenance. We know they go back to the agricultural magic of the neolithic, but there are things that go back further than that, to the time of foraging and hunting, wherein what was taken in those days was given back in special ways and thankful ways, too.

Few gather just how important the "first fruit giving" was to people in the pre-Christian world. The spilling of the first sip of a cup of ale or wine onto the ground was a common (and still done) little ritual, and it reflects the provenance psychology of the "first fruits offering." The taking of the "First born child" is a folkloric and mythological echo of this strange mystery. Is the first of everything the best for some reason? The first child, are they honored above later children for some special reason? The first sip of honey mead, the first tender slice of a ham roast? Is the anticipation so great that these first tastes or even the joys of these first children have the honor of a kind of novelty that makes them a cut above what follows?

Sure, maybe. But the "first fruit" offering takes us back to the heart of what thankfulness and reverence really mean. Before I take my most pleasurable fill of whatever faces me: a great meal, the joy of raising a child, a sip of the most delicious ale, the satisfaction of doing this new job that can fulfill me- before I plunge in, I give something from the top, from the start, which says "I always put gratitude first." More important than the acquiring of things like food, or relations, or pleasures, is the gratitude you have for them. Why? Because you didn't get them alone, no matter how hard you worked. Many powers aid us, seen and unseen, and if you aren't grateful, you are not transferring the power these many forces are hungry for, just as you hungered.

Power transfer, seen and unseen. It starts to seem almost technological in nature, but it is real, it is a system. You owe the invisible for everything, even the things you feel you alone deserve most. You didn't gain those strong human hands and that brilliant mind through your efforts; the forces of life and birth, the powers of lust and attraction and love, the powers of mind and sky and earth and wind- they all danced together a long time before your wandering soul had any passage to the joy and strength you now covet- and perhaps miscall your own. You were born owing many powers for all your blessings.

Those grains? How many of those spirits grew there, and died there for you and your friends and family? How much power in the ground was drawn up, how many spirits protected those fields from

the Ruinous Powers? How did the Master dance in the brain of the plowmen and the baker-men and the brewer-men? How many human beings came up with ingenious ways to assure the health of the harvest? How many backs strained to bring it in? What did the Ancient Mother give, what did Sky urge forth? We're all buried deep in a system of relation, mutual help, and this necessitates gratitude. That will never change. Gratitude- and the expressions of it- "give back" into the system, keep it full of power, keep it turning.

John Barleycorn, the life of the fields. In one folkloric icon, he sums up and embodies all of those we owe so much to. He is the image of the collective sacrifice that goes into human life, or any life, for we humans are not alone in owing so much. All owe. Power surges everywhere; collects; works together; flies to one home, then another; so all owe. None are excluded.

Lammas- the mass for the loaf- the ceremony for John Barleycorn's tangible body- this is the name I feel fits the aesthetic of Provenance best, for Provenance must embrace, within certain parameters, the folk evolution of the most sacred root-things. Lammas is not about "harvests" as much as about being thankful for what we take from this world.

For me, Lammas is about gratitude, and nothing more. However, in "gratitude" we find everything: our participation in the entire world, and the noblest virtue of any soul: thankfulness. As it has been said, to be thankful when one should be (which is essentially all the time) isn't just a great sign of wisdom, not just a great virtue, but the mother of all other virtues.

To give the first fruit of any great thing, the first gold coin earned, the first sip of the sweetest wine, the first slice of bread from a warm and perfect loaf, or even to dedicate the first laugh of a friendship away to the Unseen- that says, in one potent statement, "I recognize how much I owe."

It's fine to have a day or a few days put aside every year (like the start of August) for Lammastide, for Lammas rituals and rites, formal "thank you" observations for all the sacrifices that happen to help us all live as we do. But it's even more fine to carry the spirit of gratitude with you every day of the year. And you do that if you put aside one tiny bite on your plate to not be eaten, and discard it on the ground, or pour the first sip of anything away to the Unseen.

It's great to subsume those thankful things into the image of a Pagan God if you want, or Gods, or Corn Dollies, even John Barleycorn himself. For in a sense, John is the Master, the Indwelling Life Force of the World itself. The Witch knows: a primordial sacrament links us to the Master, and gives access to his Hidden World, in the form of taking and giving. It is a sacrament as old as eating. Whatever we take, the Master and a Host of Unseen Powers gave, and whatever we give, whether or not we realize it, Fateful forces are compelling us to give. They are hungry, and we know it. So we give. We want to give. Our souls know how much they receive, and they want to give.

The "crops" are just a symbol born from a certain period in history. The dead beasts slain by hunters before the agricultural revolution were "given back" to the world in many ways, ways that intended to say thanks, and intended to aid in their regeneration. This is another, older echo of this most important

pylon of Provenance Traditionalist psychology.

But there is always more to it- giving isn't just right, isn't just soul-appropriate; it is also a way to avert the spirits of misfortune, who are always hungry.

BE THANKFUL, and give, and the Hungry Powers may not need to stop by your door to satisfy their appetites. This may not be most modern people's main concern, but it is a sorcerous reality, and it's never wrong to be careful.

# The Secret of the Yule-Father

'Tis the season for the old debate: why "lie" to your children about "Santa Claus"- and induce feelings of betrayal in them later when they realize they've been told a long-running lie all this time, and been subject to a veritable conspiratorial cover-up about a fictional gift-giver that would come to their houses on Christmas Eve and leave presents?

Are parents harming their children with the fiction of "Santa Claus?" Is it ever right to "lie" to children, even if the lie is intended to be a normal part of the standard magical Western ideal of "Christmas?" I could start this by saying "Seriously? You want to pick on the fiction of Santa Claus, while steadfastly ignoring the fiction of Jesus?"

The only difference between the disappointment of discovering that Santa's not real, and the disappointment of discovering that Jesus isn't real, is that one tends to happen when you hit 7-8 years old, and the other happens for most people only when they die and don't see the "mansions and streets of gold" that they were promised. And at least you didn't hang your every hope for salvation on Santa, only your hopes of getting toys. And, further, even though Santa was fake, you still had your parents to give you the toys. There's no one around to get you that salvation that you had hoped for.

Okay, that was a mean-spirited (but not less true) little joke to start this off. Are we harming our kids by telling them (a pretty complex) lie about Santa? I didn't have a chimney in the house I grew up in. My parents got around this by saying they'd leave a key for Santa on the front porch. I find myself having to come up with clever evasions when my eldest daughter finds a way to poke a hole in the Santa story. And all for what? Why do this? And what's my "endgame" when the time comes to tell my daughter the truth?

Here's where it gets good: My children, like me, will always believe in Santa Claus. Because Santa Claus isn't a lie; he's real, an objectively real spiritual being- the Ancient Yule Father of the Pagan world- who is still being worshiped at the foot of a magical tree, decorated with sacred symbols, and with generosity, food gifts (even cakes and milk libations!) and feasts (Christmas dinners) with whole families taking part.

It's the old Yule Feasting, and the Yule Father, the Chieftain of the Yule-Beings from the "Far North", complete with his flying "rade" through the night sky, and his bringing of much fullness and mirth to mankind in the darkest season- all of that is still with us. Father Yule hasn't even lost his Elven servants! No matter how vestigial the form may be, no matter how commercialized everything has gotten, and no matter how a later addition has been poorly grafted on top of the whole thing (Jesus)- the spirit is still there, still slipping in the house in some unusual ways- like the chimney. I won't neglect to point out that the chimney was a traditional route for witches when they "spirit flew" away. There's something about chimneys, or smoke-holes generally, that's always been

associated with spiritual matters, or the comings and goings of spirits.

So, my children will always believe in "Santa", because he's a real spirit of a real season. What will change, as my children get older, will be one deepening of their understanding of the mysteries of this time: they will be led to understand that Santa wasn't tangibly entering the house and leaving presents. Their parents, performing a sacred duty and acting as the Yule Father's servants, were doing this generous gift-giving on a holy night in his name.

They will learn that it was, after all, the Yule Father who told early human beings to be generous with one another and guided them in the formation of gift-giving and generosity-based cultures. He was and is the reason that gifts appear under that tree. Mom and Dad simply have the honor of being his priest and priestess for a night, the ministers of his Godly instruction to man, so that their daughters can experience the joy of generosity and gift-receiving in the most sacred of seasons. Yule Father is still there, though in a subtle way; his approaching spirit can be felt every day as the solstice approaches, and this is reflected in the festive spirit of the house.

This is a super-packed "punch" of ancient spirituality, freshly wrapped and under a freshly cut sacred tree, right here in the modern day. It is the true "meaning of the season"- for it is nothing more, or less, than generosity that is the salvation of mankind. It is the spirit of giving, of sharing, and of love and benevolence between human beings that gives everyone the power to be spared the cold, spared hunger, spared darkness, and spared loneliness. And here, in the time when the sun is born again, the salvation of generosity and hope is "gifted" at the foot of the Sacred Tree, the "world axis" bringing heaven and earth together.

So, there you have it. There won't be two daughters of mine angry or hurt or disappointed to discover that "Santa" was just a bullshite story. Because the "Santa" my girls are eagerly awaiting isn't a bullshite story. He's a real spirit, the Father of the Season, and I am his real minister to my daughters. I'm happy to have my daughters believe that he comes in the dark of night while they sleep, using his magic to enter our home and give them presents under a tree, and to receive the gifts they leave out for him- that's part of the magic of this season, and only one detail of it is "off"- the magical Yule-being actually putting the presents is their father, possessed by the Yule-Father's love, and following an ancient commandment: "Be Generous."

When they are older, they will learn that their duty is to do the same for their children. And so, under all of the silliness that this season has been hammered with, a potent undercurrent of ancient truth and ancient soul-warming sorcery remains.

# Our Master Has Carried Us To The Edge: The Spirit of the Sabbat in Traditional Witchcraft

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*"Fall fires burn 'neath black twisted boughs  
Sacrifice to above;  
Smoke swirling quickly towards misting clouds  
Offering of this blood;  
Into the flames and without shame  
Consumed with howls and screams...  
Pumpkins grin in their despair  
On All Hallows Eve."*

-Type O Negative, *All Hallows Eve*

## **Hallows: The Oldest Poetry Enacted**

All Hallows Eve has come. The timeless turning of the Sky has whirled and rushed, creaked and groaned, and finally aligned with a hallowed doorway of Sabbat embedded in the great whiteness and darkness behind it. The day begins to fade; a long Owl-light heralds the hidden season of mists, the ancient winter, the carnival of misrule. Shadows grow lengthy; the sun turns red and then black, and the air is dark. The screaming of insects, the sound of the bullbat, the barks and growls of creatures unseen all begin to permeate the nighted woodlands. The air is chilly, but that cold isn't only the weather; it is the cold of Elfhame seeping out into the human world.

Bull's noon comes; then the hours of utter dark. Slowly, along dirt lanes grown cold and abandoned by mortals uneasily asleep in their simple beds, the sound of light footsteps can be heard. The rustle of leaves and the snap of twigs echoes in the haunted forests of the Hallowed Eve; and then, through the cobweb of branches, a golden light shines: a balefire has been lit, and another, and yet another- on an ancient hill which has overlooked the lonely fields around it for countless centuries, a strange pale light flickers. The Secret Lord's kingdom is a kingdom of ghostly flame and shadow; the night of this world is his dominion's day.

The Witch-people, native to the Great Dark, have filtered out from their villages and townships, casting off the flimsy masks and names they wear and use to mingle with mortal men from day to day, and assuming their true names and shapes. Some have come flying; liberated from the repressive boundaries of walls and damnable bells, of town squares and clocks, of mindless tasks repeated day

to day- they are now loosed and free. Some come prancing in secret joy down hidden tracks, some on the roads. They gather together, small groups all, in their traditional places far from the sight of other groups, and they pile high the Hallows fires.

At the Sabbat-moot, they are not the people their neighbors know; here, under the black sky, on the black earth, before the blazing altar of ancient flame, they are the undying race of the Master Spirit, the children of the White Beast, the children of the generous and devouring Land, the undying double-faced Matriarch. They are the gleeful and terrifying offspring of the Great Dark, the infinite and mysterious origin of all beings, a Perpetual Parent who has no body, no head, no name, only a strange hidden motion and a Fateful presence lost in silence and stillness.

Many of these gathered Witches may not consciously grasp these facts; it is the very old times, after all- most only know this: they have gathered like those before them did, for the great Sabbat-fire, the great golden doorway to the Unseen, and for the Master's presence. Tonight, he may come. One nature calls to another alike- he may borrow a form and come among his throng, for the brief theophany, the brief moment of sight, vision, union, and awe. He may appear in their minds, radiant or dark; whatever happens, the glowing fire will unite earth and sky and place each of the Witch-folk on the edge of something vast and powerful, for all fiery maws are contact points between what is seen and unseen.

And now, sacrifice is made to the fire; perhaps a lamb, a sheep, a goat, or fowl; warm blood is smeared on hands and faces, a red baptism in the essence of life itself. The fire consumes the body of the sacrifice, transmuting it to the extremely subtle condition, giving passage and shining gateway from the coarse to the very subtle, from visible to invisible. The hungry fire is now sated a bit, but never enough- the appetite of the flame is never satisfied. The void beyond the world of visible things forever gives and takes, never ceasing. The fire is made sacred by sacrifice.

Now, in rings around their great and ancient fire, the intensity of the rite grows higher; shouts and curses, invocations and petitions all are sent from the hearts and throats of the witches into the flames, all to be drawn away into the immaterium; and from the flames, the essence of their word-framed desires will rise up with the shower of sparks, coiling away from the Sabbat-stead and into the nighted world. These "words of will" have become transformed into magical servitors, shards of intention, snaking to and fro through the many layers of reality, through flame and air, between earth and stars. They move like quicksilver; they penetrate wood, stone, water, and flesh.

What is prayed to the fire, what is given to the fire, becomes a part of the world in a new and powerful way. That power is increased in the boiling bone and flesh lurking at the heart of the pyre; that power is increased by the unseen but sensed presence of the Grand Master of the Sabbat. He hears his children, his increase, his servants.

The heat of the fire is the heat of spirit; it makes a ring of warmth- a true magical circle- with a cold, dark infinite world surrounding it. That warmth is mingled with the warmth created by the bodies of the throng. Together in that warmth and light, the Witch-covenant is re-formed; in the shared blood of



sacrifice, in the shared warmth, in the physical touch of hands, in their shared allegiance to Powers unseen, the witch-covenant is made anew at each Sabbat. It is regenerated, made stronger. It all flows together- on the "river bank" of fire, at the point of contact between one world and another, the otherworldly bodies of the Craft-kin also draw close.

Immortal things come close to mortal things, and as the Witches move in a great anti-sunwise circle around their fire, darting faster and faster, simultaneously sinking lower and climbing higher, a golden and dark moment dawns in which nothing divides the living from the dead. Surrender into the limitless rushes through; all else becomes irrelevant.

Sometime later, the gathering eats and drinks, speaking amongst themselves, bonding with others of like mind, sharing their hopes and joys of release from the ordinary and the profane. How terrible to imagine that for most, All Hallows Eve was just another night spent in fitful sleep! For the Masters and Mistresses of the Art, Sabbat-days are just the edge of the iceberg; in Old Puck's black hide, where they will faithfully entrust their secret hearts, they know that they shall grow in might and cunning and soon, every day and every night and every moment will be like the Sabbat.

Until that time, dawn's approach signals the return of the profane, a dim and pale mask at first, but gradually redder and redder over the following nights until the world's turning has moved on again. The witch-self must take shelter from the sun; it is a being of the Great Dark. Until the Great Dark and the Sun have merged together in the mind and body of the Witch-being, She must do the White dance of Night and the Red dance of Day, flying to the Sabbat, and leaping back across the hedge to the world of church-bells, thatched roofs, paved roads, ticking clocks, and plowed fields.

## **The Goat is in the Details**

The previous narrative, describing a traditional witch's Sabbat, is not based on fantasy, but on details culled from numerous primary historical sources. Most importantly, it is based on a deeper ritual pattern of religious and magical/mystical experience which is nigh universal to Europe and Asia. It is based on the testimony of traditional witches who have preserved something of the Old Art into the modern day- though truly, even without their living testimony, the vision of the Sabbat could have been dimensioned: the golden fire in the dark, the blood sacrifice, the circular motion about a sacred center, the lifting up and sending of prayers and petitions and curses. Nothing about the true Sabbat or Hallowed Gathering is mysterious to human nature or history, or out of keeping with the nature of nature herself.

Even the act of separating oneself from the order of community, to move into a wild or liminal place, outside of the boundaries of "civilization", to commune there with the strange powers "over the hedge"- this spiritual and actual journey into the "other" world is part of the entire universal process of going into the unknown to seek wholeness and ascended wisdom, and to achieve a regeneration of order. In this case, as in the case of all secret spiritual gatherings, it is the regeneration of the Covenant, of the Witching Covenant's luminous group-soul destroyed symbolically in the sacrifice, and rebirthed through the heat of the Season's fire and the mingled vigor of the throng.

The sacrifice is death; crisis; guilt; shared guilt and a shared opening of the abyss of death. Life stands precariously on the edge of death; to see it enacted only drives the point home: we will all come to the same or a similar doom one day. To see it turn luminous, to see it consumed by fire, changed into power, warming the gathering, becoming something new- that is to see life re-affirmed. To bathe in the blood, lick it, drink it, that is to see death change into life.

Every new order is established by the destruction of an old order. Death begins everything. There is no infant come into the world without a death before it; the oldest magic works on similar principles, as well as the pulse of the heartbeat of a witch-covenant. The life-blood of sacrifice provides power and sacredness to the central Sabbat-pyre itself. Opening the abyss of death opens a door to the Unseen world; it plunges a fist through; it challenges the Unseen, in its own manner; this primal fact, born in the first sacred sacrifice-killing (that of the Hunted Victim, slain so that humans could eat and live) has been known deep in the flesh and bone of humanity since the time before time. Janet of Tam Lin provoked the Unseen World to appear simply by tearing unlawfully at the leaves of a tree in a sacred, protected place.

And thus the Golden Throne of the Master is made; it is a sacred time, it is a throng of Witches gathered to some secret place outside of the order of the human world; it is anticipation, it is fire, blood, flesh-to-flesh contact, excitement and shouts, the feeling of warmth and heat on the face and hands, the sound of night-birds and insects, the sight of turning stars, staring from the cloak of night. This ritual is ancient; this ritual has been with humankind, in some form, since the beginning of their cultural time. Once, entire communities shared in this rite, in their own way; after the coming of the Great Unwisdom, this rite faded from view, until only those in touch with the Old Way still seek it out in the dark.

Those who partake in the Sabbat-moot on All Hallows, on Walpurgis, on Lammas and Candlemas, are they whose contact with the subtle world will be established and gradually grow stronger. Real occult power is not simple, logical, or even very conscious; it begins as a dark seed, buried deep in the flesh and mind, and the "Secret Sun" of the Sabbat Fire begins the process of its germination. It is drawn out from human men and women by the magnetic pull of the blood-soaked pyre and the shouts and screams and joys of fellow men and women that join together as one body, on the Hidden Seasons.

That transformation is as inevitable as a regular seed lurking in the ground that the sun and rain will tease forth; but it is a transformation of another octave, of a different (yet similar) nature. And that transformation begins deep within, changes deep within, before bursting forth consciously. Before it emerges in the conscious mind, it renovates the world of dreams; it opens the subtle stream of intuition, and it alters the flow of power in the mind and body. It brings a man or woman into contact with the dimensionless and the unseen.

And chief among the "dimensionless and unseen" powers is the Master himself. He is most easily summoned and met at any place which is not "here nor there"- the bank of a river, a crossroads or

field-boundary at twilight, or the odd region between waking and sleep. But the side of a roaring fire is another boundary place, because the fire is a gateway into the Great Whiteness and Darkness beyond. All who have danced about a fire, or sat and gazed into its depths, already know that it is hypnotic, entrancing, and powerful; few have used its serpentine heat to its fullest potential, however.

The Sabbat must, at heart, be about coming into the presence of the Master, or it is all for naught, for his spirit, intention, and power is one that seeks to guide humans into the same state that he perpetually enjoys. He is more than the guide and teacher of Witches and Mystics; he is the full realization of their awakened and infinite state, in the shape of a golden being. In such a state, form is no longer an issue; the Master can be whoever or whatever he likes- even a blazing fire.

One will always know the Master when he is present; his company and manifestations, regardless of how subtle, are very apparent. He is the Master of Infinity, but he is also the generous granter of wishes, the ward of the lives of his followers, the giver of bounty in many ways. He is kindly, but deceitful and unpredictable at times, and he expects the Witch-folk to remember his presence and his great work. He expects the Sabbat fires to be lit. He gives perfect and powerful returns on what is offered to him; he never fails to see all that occurs, and he never forgets a favor or a foul.

### **The Simplest Power is the Mightiest Power**

Here then, at the heart of all simplicity, is the secret of the True Sabbat; most today would have liked to hear that there was more detail, more ritual, more poetry, but there is not, and there never was a need for it. The poetry of the Sabbat is the best poetry of all, the most sacred, the most powerful- it is poetry in motion, in manifest action, in the swirling rush of emotion and heat. It is the poetry of spirit, manifest in fires and screams and warm blood, and the ecstatic vision of the Master himself. From this point, any elaboration is just moving further away from the pure Sabbat.

But the Master is never alone; the Unseen world doesn't come in shards, but in wholeness. Behind the night sky, behind fire, witches, master, and stars, is the Yawning Darkness of the Great Ur, the void of creation, the Fateful womb-mystery that everything comes from. It is the infinity beyond and within all, a thing without "above" or "below". This mystery is the most unknown of things, for it cannot be known with thoughts and ideas, only experienced.

And it is this experience that the Master mediates, to those who can go far enough, and release themselves from the things they place above them, and below them. The Master is a minister of Fate; a mediator of experience that resolves each seeming part of the Whole back to its infinite origin. This is the goal- for humans to find a way to resolve themselves back to the mystery of infinity that is their ultimate origin. This is the resolution and restoration of the wandering child to the Greatest of Mothers.

There, in the swirl of sparks from the fire, the cackles of glee and crackles from the wood, the entirety of things comes to join with the throng: the dead of the past, the wandering spirit-bodies of the living dreaming, and the fetch-bodies of the gathered witches. There, at the Sabbat, spirits of trees, the Land,

ancient hills, and tormented dead flit and fly through; there, strange powers without names or origins that a human mind could fathom may appear and cause a phantasmagoria of strange visions. All seek their recognition and a portion of offering.

And for all this, the simplicity of the entire process stands out- it is a gathering of Witches about a fire, speaking and shouting their prayers and intentions and spells to the flame, circling about it, opening minds and hearts to the Unseen, letting go, becoming free, losing their personal boundaries and merging together into the sacred time of the season and the infinite world. It all coalesces into the form of the Master. His Lady will appear with him, at times; so many things may come or go, take possession of the flow of the gathering, or join it; one never can tell, and one need not tell- the true Sabbat cannot be planned in detail. The simplest of things and plans are the best; the simplest powers are the mightiest.

Of course, this entire present discourse is about the temporal moot, the tangible meeting of the fleshy bodies of witch-folk; the extra-temporal dimension of "Sabbat" is another matter altogether. That, the "True Sabbat" is a deep and dark spiritual experience, engaged by those whose free souls have become disentangled from the body and flown through the spirit-air, in liberation, to the timeless interior of the Sabbat. One sort of Sabbat meeting is different from the other, but they are united, secretly, forever. Some witches from the past engaged in one; others in the other; some both. The True Sabbat, the spiritual one, is the older of the two, the lasting emanation of this great reality. But the tangible moot has its wonders and importance, too.

Don't ever doubt the effectiveness of this sort of "simple" magic; a group of men and women, united in blood and shared food, drink, sacrifice, and allegiance, united in share faith and hopes and dreams- all of them together, touching hands, gazing eye to eye, before a blazing fire that contains all of the reaches of infinity within it, on a powerful and sacred night- their words focused and screamed and spoken and sung and whispered into that focus of flame will affect the world; it will most certainly affect things in a darkly deep way. And the Master, if he takes a liking to them because of their cleverness, Art, and devotion, will see it so. A single man or woman might howl before a similar fire, with reasonable expectation of an effect in this world or the unseen world in line with their own personal power and favor.

The Clan of Witches that flies together, dies together; together they dissolve and are reborn on each Sabbat-gathering. They can forge bonds that last a human lifetime, and easily last far, far beyond the human lifetime. This is the truth, ancient and inexhaustible- the union of souls and spirits easily and greatly outlasts the union of flesh, and indeed, may seek the flesh together, later.

Take the time to look around you, one day, and take note of the people that appear in your life and seem to last there, seem to stay near you for years and years; there may be more than just mundane reasons why. Look at those whom love has delivered close to you, and do not imagine that this is a random thing. Death sends us all to the Great Dark; bonds of love and mysticism can join us together there, too.

For those serious men and women who wish to engage the True Sabbat, as a way of creating bonds with other Witch-folk and the Master, and the Throng of the Invisibles, this revelation of the true Sabbat-Pattern is all that they shall ever need. What details follow from these basics are simply organic particularities that will arise in every different location and among all different groups of people; the beating heart will and must remain the same. Continuity is important; continuity of regular Sabbat-fires and location- the fires should be made, as often as possible, on the same spot, the same gathering place that becomes Covenstead to the throng.

Today, the spilling of blood from a living creature can (and unless the coven members all live on subsistence farms, should) be replaced by many offerings; a shared cup of very dark, thick wine is the classic replacement for the blood of the sacrifice; the vessel is lifted in Master Hobb or Old Nick's name, hallowed to his spirit, and its contents must be smeared on the faces of each person and each must share a drink from the cup, before its remains are cast on the fire.

Other offerings can be added- red bread, dipped in the wine and eaten, before the rest is cast into the flames; even straw animals, created for the occasion, doused in the red wine (symbolically dripping with blood) and cast onto the flames. What is most important is that something representing blood and/or flesh be smeared onto every participant, and then consumed somehow by every participant, and then burned in the fire as a "uniting offering" to the Great Unseen.

A Coven might do well, then, to keep a Covenant Cup or Vessel around, for their shared drinking and anointing and pouring. That vessel itself comes to represent the body of the old living sacrifice, containing blood. It becomes the cup of death and life. The male leader of the Coven should keep a Mask of the Master, and wear it around the fires- like attracts like, after all, and the Master-Spirit and a Mask do have some similarities, to the inspired mind and in the mysterious world.

For those who, for various reasons, cannot attend such a traditional Sabbat as described here, or will not, the opening narrative of this piece can be used as the basis for an oneiric working, an empowered visualization, lying in torpor at midnight on the various powerful nights, and aligning the subtle mind to the current of the Master. Spiritual development from such a meditative visualization is guaranteed, if one's heart is given wholly to the Witch-sire.

# Walpurgis Night

For a long time, the living things in the land had been dead.  
With great shock, and sudden longing, they realized they were alive.  
It was the hands of men and women far above who moved to let them out:  
So impatient for them to come out, to soften the year.  
From inside of dried wood and branches, they were pulled out  
Living things released on wings of fire.

The dark land was spread out like an ancient tapestry  
Just an endless blackness, pregnant with invisible life.  
In the blackness arose fires in such a number  
That the stars above might have thought the earth a mirror.  
And Walpurga's feet moved in the dark spaces between the fires  
Feet so young, treading an earth older than she could imagine.  
In the fire-lit places, the living things flew out  
To the Brocken's long shadow, reaching every person's dream,  
They flew, carrying with them the whole story of the world.

Who hears the true story of the world? Who flies to the arms  
Of the Master of a story so long and old? Who is so bold?  
What witch or seer could endure the terrible vision  
Of the devouring worm called Forgetfulness?  
Walpurga carried just a sentence of the story, only one:  
A phrase of discord from the story's darkest chapter  
"Have a scorn for what we are- true good from us comes not."  
The phrase she carried was a sleepless malice beyond any other.  
Men and Women are cursed by it to remember what should be forgotten  
And to forget what memory was meant to keep.  
A wonder that words can be so strong!  
The worm-venom of the soul's lasting sleep.

And into the darkness Walpurga disappeared, like every other.  
For a long time she was in the land, quite dead.  
With great shock, and sudden longing, she realized she was alive.  
It was the hands of a man and woman far above that let her out-  
So impatient for her to come out, to soften their lives.  
From inside of the warm belly of the woman, she was pulled out  
A living thing released on wings of breath.

What she carried in the darkness long ago still burned.  
It burned cities, it burned souls, it burned alongside the roads  
And it was not familiar when it came to burn inside her.  
She learned to be mortal again, in a burning world. She learned  
A new name, and she walked the same land with newly young feet.  
She heard the tales of the Brocken and its ancient shadow,  
And she feared the fall of that darkness on Walpurgis Night.

She saw the people, their faces warm with drink,  
Releasing the living things from below in towers of flame.

But she never saw the invisible host, only the glow of fire  
Like everyone else gathered below the dark Harz mountains.  
What was burned away long ago left only a skeleton bonfire behind.

They say the ages end in fire.  
But ages begin in fire, too.

# Winter Solstice

Winter Solstice. Power Overwhelming. And on what other powerful interstice of time is self-recreation, self-rebirthing as possible as now? None. I was wrong to try and wrap it up in simple words, all these years- it's no trite story of a Sun in the sky being reborn; it is cosmos re-emerging, world being literally re-formed, soul being re-shaped, and all that entails. Not metaphor; literal reality. The mighty Wind tore the roofs off of houses and businesses tonight; the fallen limbs of trees are everywhere- the inexhaustible screams of a newborn world. Of course, the World Indweller is not a baby; he is simply "new" to this cycle. And so am I.

Maybe every moment is new just like this, only we cannot ordinarily sense it- and if we could? I am certain death would no longer be able to find us. Whatever inside of you, dear reader, is new to this timeless turning, I greet it now "with joy and sorrow and mickle care..."

The Helping Powers have re-empowered me; darker and greater things have heard me- and how strange to imagine that even with the might I sense in them, a might that could encourage me to think they were the veritable Gods of the whole cosmos- they are only the company of me, the powers that surround me, enliven me, and support me through this life.

The wardens of my soul have shewn their new faces; what do the protecting and following powers of all other beings do on a night like tonight? They come together as the lasting Holy Kindred they are to become new again. The Underworld boils with it. How fortunate we are that on the cycles of winds and world-wandering time, and right when it becomes darkest, a light shines that illuminates- even for a moment- the greater community that we belong to.

This night has given me a fresh new lease on touching the awareness that I call "my own" to Them who uphold me.

They have driven away the thing that was tormenting me; the bone-marrow deep magnificence of it exceeds anything else I have ever done to heal, change, or regenerate myself. As with most great works, I find that I am not really the worker, only the receiver, the agent whose real work is to make himself sufficiently open and aware for what the Mysteries themselves send forth.

My sorcerous successes- which always rely on others, anyway- the ones that I call my "great achievements"- they are always so small compared to a night like tonight. This fine season is Mother to something greater than any baneful work that laid an enemy low, or greedy little charm that got me a few extra grand in the bank account. And so I rightly call it "Mother Night." When I'm the worker, the work is good. But when I receive the Great Work of this world, the work is miraculous. All is healed.



Of course I'd love to take credit for the experience that I'm extolling now- my whole ego strains to find a way to give myself more credit- but in that, the power would fall away. It's powerful precisely because I know how much greater it is than I, and it's potent, able to change me, on account of the fact that it isn't me. If I could heal myself with what I ordinarily have to work with, I'd have no troubles. Neither would the world.

A system of relationship can't survive like that, however; we must do for one another, and rely on others, at least as much as we do for ourselves, and at times, we MUST do for each other- we have no choice. Our shite-for-brains, ego-worshipping social world, so terrified of "the other" in so many different ways, wants us to feel guilty for the labeled pathology of "co-dependency" or socially-developed dependencies of any sort, without wanting to admit that co-dependence is the very nature of life itself. It is joy to help, and it is joy to be helped, if one is healthy inside their mind and soul, that is.

Healers, after all, in many tribal and traditional societies, often can't heal themselves; they have to seek out other healers when they fall spiritually or physically ill. In that strange (and well-attested) truth, we see the Unseen world demanding that humans- even powerful humans- reach out to others.

What mischiefs and mayhems now await me? Misrule take me- what's a New Boy to do but enjoy the rashness and recklessness of spiritual youth? My excitement for the closeness I feel with the Unseen inspires me to heroism and villainy alike. Like a wolf, people might find my sight and my song beautiful, but hate my predation.

I've seen a mighty spirit with the wind for his body, sitting on a throne of yew, and the words that came out of his mouth were "Behold: I make all things new."



*Those who have no belief in a life beyond this one cling with terror to this life, even while despising it at times; they eagerly justify every miraculous invention of the modern day, regardless of its negative impact on humanity and this world. If there were a such thing as an "untrance"- a reversal of trance, a reversal of the passage between two states, and a solidification into a state of constant focus on the material and the passionless, stale fear of existing, these modernists can be said to have mastered it. Their sorcery is the sorcery of despair and shallowness, and (as we have seen) it is a potent sorcery, indeed, for now it, more than any other sorcery, commands the fate of the world. Or so it would appear.*



## Part IV



# The Mighty Ones: Indwellers, Master Spirits, and the Great Powers

Come, Robin Goodfellow, I give you these treats:  
A soft ground warmed by straw-burning fire;  
A maukin draped with elegant attire;  
Honey'd wine, the more to pleasure thee-  
A 'mess of white milk and bread' for your standing fee.  
Come, Good Master, and make a happy sound:  
Stamp your cloven feet 'pon this merry ground.  
Your Lady's brow is fair, her face is sweet,  
Her mouth is red and her mouth is neat,  
For Her love, come to this merry ground.  
Come, Robin Goodfellow, and some call Buck-  
Whether name they you 'Hobbgoblin' or 'Sweet Puck',  
Every day you give them mirth,  
And every day you give them luck.



*"The Gods... are the higher intelligence that things possess when they are perceived in interrelation with one another. To say there are no gods is to say things do not have, in addition to their material constitution, the odor or glow of intellectual significance, of meaning. It is to say that life is senseless, that things are bereft of interconnections."*

*-Jose Ortega y Gasset*





# The Concept of the Indweller

Following the work of Daniel Merkur, I have adopted the term "Indweller" to aid in my creation of a satisfying and sound metaphysical language for understanding the more potent spirits or non-human persons that share our world, and who stand behind the activities of teaching and empowering sorcery or witchcraft. Yielding to the difficulty of using the irreparably warped and loaded term "God", and mindful of how many records of the genuine Traditional Witchcraft in the past fail to place that word in the mouths of witches when referring to their familiar spirits and other spiritual forces they were in allegiance with, I thought "Indweller" filled the gap admirably well.

Merkur introduces the concept in his fantastic work on Inuit religion, "Powers Which We Do Not Know." Indweller is his translation of the Inuit term "inua", a term that others have variously attempted to translate into master, ruler, lord, or owner. But Inuit society, as Merkur points out, did not include Western notions of private ownership, nor any of the aristocratic connotations of those other western terms, so he- in what can only be described as a moment of real inspiration- went with "indweller."

The Indweller is a power immanent inside of a particular phenomenon. By indwelling the phenomenon, the phenomenon is rendered "real" or rendered potent, powerful, and able to be interacted with by others- it becomes a vibrant presence in the intersubjective world. Merkur quotes Nicholas Gubser's description of the Indwellers in this way:

*An inua (indweller) is not the personality or even a characteristic of an object or phenomenon, although an inua itself may have a personality. The spirit (or indweller) of an object or phenomenon may be thought of, in the case of so-called "inanimate" objects, as the essential existing force of that object. Without an indweller or spirit, an object might still occupy space, and have weight, but it would have no meaning, it would have no real existence. When an object is invested or inhabited by an indweller, it is a part of nature of which we are aware.*

The Indweller, as Merkur then points out, is the differential factor that transforms "matter", abstractly considered, into a discrete and living sensual phenomenon. Merkur brings to bear Birket-Smith's superb statement regarding who the Indwellers are, precisely; he says "Every object, every rock, every phenomenon- are living. Everything has a living indweller- the indwellers are manifestations of the vitality of nature herself." The ethnographer Rasmussen had little ability to comprehend indwellers among the Inuit as anything other than "gods", but he made a useful mention of them in his own recordings wherein he wrote

*"The idea of God, or group of gods, to be worshiped, is altogether alien to the Inuit mind. They know only powers or personifications of natural forces acting upon human life in various ways and affecting all that lives through fair and foul weather, disease and perils of all kinds. These*

*powers are not evil in themselves, they do not wreak harm of evil intent, but they are nevertheless dangerous owing to their unmerciful severity where men fail to live in accordance with the wise rules of life decreed by their forefathers."*

Of course, Rasmussen, a Christian, fell easily into the popular notion (in his time) that Heathen peoples of all types and from every age and place, were merely worshipping "personifications" of natural phenomenon. But Indwellers are not mere personifications of anything. They are persons, indwelling various natural phenomenon, and have always been so. And conscious human interaction with them, all over the world, was ongoing (and remains ongoing in some places) until the modern age when human beings in the West and in other places fell away from the intricate network of maintained relationships with them that characterized nearly all of our history as people. It is beyond a doubt that the mightiest Indwellers- upon whom man relies so much for things as essential as his breath or his food- were and are the beings that stand behind our Western notions of "God" and "Gods" from earlier times.

But the Indwellers are, straightly stated, spirits. And potent, ancient spirits, powerful entities of this universal type- themselves born of the sheer vitality of Nature herself ("Nature" here referring to the entire network of fateful forces that bring everything into being)- can be and absolutely were worshiped as Gods or Goddesses all over the world in the past, and still today. The term "god" is a matter of cultural aesthetic and language.

Merkur goes behind Rasmussen and says what needed to be said in the shortest, most perfect manner: "Indwellers can be termed personifications of natural forces only from a Western point of view. To Inuit thought, indwellers are the powers that constitute Nature."

Merkur completes his superb analysis of the concept of "indweller" by stating:

*Outside the human mind, indwellers are specific in location to the phenomenon whose forms they impart. Like the phenomenon, they may variously be unchanging, mutable, or destructible. In principle, all phenomenon are structured by indwellers. In practice, only a few major indwellers, whose changes have important consequences for Inuit well-being, have prominence within Inuit religion: the Indweller in the Wind, The Indweller in the Earth... the Sea Mother, the Moon Man, and locally, the indwellers in coves, capes, etc. Indwellers are completely autonomous and disinterested in people. Inuit can hurt themselves by abusing indwellers, or derive benefits by being in accord with them. In both cases, indwellers are what they are, with neither positive nor negative ambitions towards human beings. Because the Wind Indweller has a stern personality, Arctic weather is often fierce. In summer, his temper is better.*

*Because the Sea Mother is jealous and vindictive, the sea is dangerous and miserly in its provision of game. Because the Moon Man has a benevolent disposition, the moon casts a benign light during the long winter nights. Neither the basic temperaments of the Indwellers, nor the consequent characteristics of the phenomenon in which they indwell are determined by human*

*activity. However, because indwellers are anthropopsychic, they are not beyond the reach of social intercourse.*

Merkur's statement "indwellers are specific in location to the phenomenon whose forms they impart" reveals something immediately- that two specific Indwellers- the masculine-depicted being who Indwells the Wind (and the sky and weather), and the feminine-depicted being who Indwells the Earth itself, are universal Indwellers, to be found at every moment, anywhere you could be on earth beyond being on a boat in the middle of an ocean, on which you would still encounter the Wind Indweller- and, if you went down deep enough, the Earth Indweller's "body", the Earth itself, is still present.

My belief that the Master, the chief Spiritual Being who stands behind Witchcraft, is none other than the Indweller in the Wind, is held up by countless reams of evidence. His association with previous Pagan figures who were themselves "windy" in character, and connected to the breath-soul of humans, and to magic words and magical sounds is just the beginning of it; he emerges, over and over again, as a manipulator of the weather (which, as Wind Indweller, he has mastery over) in countless places. Some examples from Cornwall are illustrative; the Bucca- a name and term derived from the same source as Puck- is seen as having power over storms, and his "voice" is said to be carried on the wind from over the sea.

In the folkloric family of "pucks"- which includes the Hobbs/Hobgoblins, we find "Old Hobb" or Master Hobb", a traditional name given to the Devil by the English. Directly across the sea from England, in the New World, we run into clear cultural incarnations of the same being, particularly among the New England tribes, who revered a great manitou or spirit associated with mischief, sorcery, danger, and witchery, and whose name was Hobbomock. This clear manifestation of the old Hobb-Master, also known as Cheepi, was also associated with winds and dangerous storms.

Called the "all powerful" one, he was a shape-shifter par excellence, with his countless forms being described as "frightful, mysterious, and convincing" by an informant quoted in William S. Simmon's excellent book of New England folklore, "Spirit of the New England Tribes." He gives a story in which Hobbomock/Cheepi appears as a mighty wind, a terrible storm that sounds like a great uproar of vast and terrifying proportions. Williams points out that Hobbomock, like the English Devil, were both associated with the raising of unusual weather disturbances. When we consider that the word "spirit" itself (spiritus) means "breath" in Latin, we arrive at a full circle of meaning.

Old Hobb, the Buck-Lord/Bucca/Poucka, Robin Goodfellow, the Witchfather and Witch-initiator and teacher, granter of visions, powers, and familiars, is the Indweller in the Wind, the leader of the Host of the Storm. His bawdiness and fertility associations, which run unsurprisingly parallel to his underworldly associations and associations with the dead are endless, as well- even in Native America, the name "Cheepi" refers to the appearance of dead people.

Merkur's analysis of the highly potent and omnipresent mythology of the Wind Indweller among the various Inuit people is revealing as well. Called Sila by them, or Kaila, or many other versions of

that name, he is a helper to shamans because he teaches "magical words"- the wind in their bodies made into sound- and guards the natural order of the world, protecting the world from defilement by enforcing the true natural law which shamans and wise people are privy to. He is master of the weather, the Great Lord of the World-Wind (The literal "great spirit") who animates the whole world, and in conjunction with the Earth Indweller below, brings forth living creatures, animating them with breath.

The Inuit do not deal much with very personalized "manifestations" of this omnipresent vitalizing power, this universal person of the Wind Indweller; this is not the case with Europe, in which he emerges from many myths and legends in both distant and personal forms, and finally sees himself demoted to demon by the coming of the army of the unwise christian cult. Their own version of the Wind-Indweller, the breath-giver/creator Yahweh, remains in touch with his own stern tribal origins, hopelessly laced with idealistic philosophy and hateful cultural lunacy, and very distant from other cultural interpretations of the Person of the Master Spirit (master wind) of this world.



*I call upon you, author of all creation,  
Who spreads the wind of your might over the whole world  
You, the unapproachable and unmeasurable  
Who breathes into every soul life and reason:  
You fitted all things together by your Doing  
The First Born, Founder of the wide world, Gold and Shimmering  
Whose light is darkness  
Who drapes a shroud over reason and breathes forth dark frenzy  
Clandestine Master who inhabits every soul in secret  
You kindle an Unseen Fire  
As you carry off every living thing-  
Never growing weary of the torment of things  
Rather with pleasure you oft delight in torment,  
From the time when the World came to be,  
You also come and bring delights and pains  
Sometimes with reason, sometimes with madness,  
Because of you men dare beyond what is fitting for their souls  
And they take refuge in your light which is darkness.  
Headstrong Spirit King, Master of Misrule, implacable and inexorable,  
Invisible, with many shapes or shapeless as you choose, inciter to wildness,  
Archer, lamp-carrier, Master of living power,  
And of everything Hidden below Heaven or Earth,  
You who force to forget, who make silence, through whom light  
And to whom light travels,  
A mere infant when you have been engendered in the heart  
Wisest of all when you have triumphed!  
I call upon you, unmoved by prayers or pleas, by your great Name  
AZARACH THARAZA*



## A World Full of Gods:

### A Short Discourse Concerning the Multiplicity of the Divine

The capacity of the mind to create harmful or hateful associations might just be the death of us. On the one hand, we wouldn't be nearly as capable as we are of navigating through life if our minds didn't make associations. A guy sees a red berry with a black dot on the side of it kill a friend of his, and for the rest of his days, a red orb with a black dot- even if it was a balloon at a kid's party- will remind him of death and doom.

Understandable. But when we're wandering the world of concepts and cognitions, of intuitions and institutions, of metaphysics and memories, the association-building power of the mind needs to be kept on a leash. A tight one. This is not the forest primeval anymore; the poisonous snakes and berries which might have built grim associations with certain sounds, tastes, or colors are not the real dangers anymore. Ideas and ideals are the real dangers, but they can't be apprehended mentally in the same way.

The idea/concept of "God" is the first and best example of what I'm talking about. How many atheists out there are every bit as scornful and dismissive of Pagan Gods, as they are the Christian concept of "God" that they couldn't intellectually accept, and which (in most cases) burned them so severely? They can't see "God", the concept, in any terms beyond the absolutist, anti-intellectual, monomaniacal, violent, and dull form that we get it from Christianity and Islam.

I have radical friends who thrill to the idea of zero authority. I'm a bit of the radical myself, but these guys go further. Not unlike the Marquis DeSade, who was sexually aroused by blasphemy done against icons of the Catholic religion, some modern radicals gain a deeply satisfying mental arousal at the idea of crapping on authority of any sort- even divine authority. And without fail, they see Gods- any Gods- as just more "authority figures" in the sky.

Tossing the baby out with the bathwater, indeed!

The term "God" assumes, to the modern rejector, the modern atheist, the modern radical, the mantle of authority, restriction, superstition, fear, and many other grotesqueries which are all really born from only one conception of God- the semitic one- and then gets liberally applied (completely inappropriately) to the Gods of polytheistic peoples everywhere.

And therein lies the death of us. I am a philosophical polytheist, because the phenomenology I accept is, from top to bottom, oriented around the natural multiplicity and diversity which is everywhere apparent in every world and every level of perception. A person can't be the phenomenologist I am, and have a belief in divine power, and not be polytheist. Like anyone in my philosophical corner, divine power can never be transcendent or outside of nature; it is diffuse, everywhere, in the senses,



in the body, in the ground, in the elements, and it assumes full individual persons, human, animal, and otherwise. The "otherwise" persons are the spirit-persons, some of whom the Ancestors worshiped as Gods. But "Gods" or powerful spirits can just as easily be experienced by us as animals or even people, at times. This is a conclusion easy to reach from the spiritual-ecological angle.

And thus, Gods. It's very simple; very organic; very applicable to every time, place, and person. It's universal in one sense: this notion of divinity being found everywhere in many forms, and thus localized in another- it is, as the Ancients said, "A world full of Gods." When I say that divinity is found everywhere and in many forms, I don't mean that divinity is a thing apart from those forms, because it isn't. There is no "one" divine person nor an "essential" divine person that stands behind the divine powers. To go in that direction leads nowhere good, and besides, has no philosophical basis outside of speculation and spiritual imperialism.

I know that wind, earth, sky, thunder, the rivers, the trees- I know, from the experience of my senses, that they are divine persons. I do not know, and have never experienced, an "essential god" beyond them, or earlier in date than them. Such a thing is nonsensical. And if it were real, it would have shown itself to me by now- unless it likes playing hide-and-seek, and only revealing itself to the most obnoxious, violent, judgmental, closed-minded people imaginable. And if that further WERE the case, it wouldn't be a divine power I'd want to have anything to do with.

We need to start seeing the world this way. Not for us, but for the world. I gain nothing from convincing even one of you to be a true polytheist, in the sense I am describing here. I gain nothing at all- but the world gains one more person that won't be dumping battery acid in a stream, or disrupting the sacred natural tapestry of this world with the blithe, blind, uncaring, condescending attitude that others disrupt it with.

The world will have gained a person who sees "Gods"- or those especially potent and wide-ranging spiritual powers- for what they are: not invented authority figures in the sky, used as tools of oppression by unscrupulous people, but living, permeating potencies of sentience within Nature's body, enlivening things, protecting, nurturing, and sometimes destroying things, the very living expressions of the elements and the natural world that have always existed in some form and will continue to exist. They are our bridge to personal relationship with Nature's living exterior and interior. They are gateways to poetic inspiration, primordial understanding, and satisfying expressions of religious awe.

You don't even need to use the term "God" or "Gods" if you don't want to; certainly, if you are Pagan, you probably don't mind that. Those who identify with the aesthetic stream of late-era Witchcraft may not be comfortable with "Gods", because witches were more focused around spirits, fayerie-beings, and unseen powers: and indeed, when I write, I used those terms more, bearing in mind my own spiritual-aesthetic preferences. I sometimes even shy away from the term "polytheist", preferring some other tounge-twister like "Polyspiritist" or just calling myself a person who embraces the "worldview of many spirits and forces out there."

No, the spiritual ecology and phenomenology which together describes my true spiritual path doesn't require adherence to any pantheon or code of behavior outside of the universal law: simple respect, reverence, and wisdom in all our dealings with human persons and with non-human persons. That is all; that is it.

But none of what I said really matters. It might matter to you, and I hope so- but it won't matter to the atheist kids and the other bitter teams of unbelievers who discard "Gods" alongside God, without ever caring to see that my concept of "God" could never shut down their precious research, never tell another to kill over religion, never bash a gay person, never tell an abused woman that she couldn't get a divorce- not my Gods. Not the actual spirits that actually exist. The "God" that has been used to justify those things is non-existent. "He" is not real. "He" is a concept, a cultural concept, a cultural metaphysical delusion.

But as far as atheists are concerned, even my more poetic description of Gods here- the Gods who do not harm mankind nor inspire one man to harm another- they are just as fake, just as damaging to the human mind, just as necessary to discard.

That is the death of us. When this world is reduced to the extremes of control by atheistic and materialistic forces, heavily technocratic forces, its life can and will be extinguished for there will be nothing to base a healthy relationship with the Natural world upon. And all because of some negative associations with one word: "God".

Sadly, even if we who believe in Ancestral Gods were willing to give up the word God, it wouldn't be enough. "Spirits" or "Non-Human Persons" also have no place in the perfidious gospel of atheism. But without those things, without the power to see Persons in the forms of Nature, Persons inseparable from the phenomenon of Nature, we are doomed. When we look, one day, and see nothing there "except" some carbon or some magnesium or some iron or some copper or some nitrogen, we are thoroughly, thoroughly, lost. The last poem will have been written by that day.



*They move stone to stone, stream course to stream course, star track to star track, fire-flown spark to night above, the screams of bairns they urge on, and the moans of the violently slain. They have no origin but origin itself; they have pale white skin and coal dark eyes, seeing beyond seeing, cruel beyond cruel, sheltering beyond sheltering, giving beyond giving. The elfin knight-lord leads them; cavalier, twirling wand, taming his gray horse, making visions, deceiving eyes, calling away, working baleness, working peace, striking at will, striking at all in unguessable order. He leads hunters; he leads the wild rout, he leads the winds and the storms. It is he the winds all fear; his magic has made men and women to love one another and hate one another.*



## An Excerpt from the *Bent Cross Treatise*

The Man in the Earth Body is the Witchfather, the refulgent Master of the Art. The eternal Indweller of the Mighty Wind of the World, Master of the World thereby, He is also merged with the earth itself, and by harmonic, merged with the flesh of every earthy being as surely as he is merged with their breath, and able to sense and act in a conscious manner through every being that is endowed by breath with a rational capacity.

He is a being of light and darkness, calling his home the wide arch and vault of the sky, and the interior places in the earth where he is Adorned with Death. Thus it is further that he is the Master of occult rites.

I have been made aware that he is the “Bucca”- the Goat-shaped spirit, but this goatish crown is just another sliver of his mystery. He is the divinity of a pre-human race of beings- the Puca- whose presence, now in spiritual form, is testified by the words of the ancients, as the woodwoses and satyrish ghosts of forests and wild places. The goatish form, or more properly, the beastly, swift, misshapen to our eyes, and wily or mischievous temper characterizes them now as it no doubt did in their earlier existence. It was my mistake to assume that the Master began his career in the minds of mortal beings as a divinity of men. He is of earlier date. His cunning has confused my mind in the past- but no more, as I see with initiated eyes, now: his mystery as the light-bodied entity in the ground has stood behind the masks of Apollon and Hermes in Heathen times, that of Dionysos and even that of old Woden- but he is not these beings. He may be encountered wearing the costume of these old powers, and perhaps inspired something of their mythos in the past, but he is Master Pouck, ancient Witchfather, unique to himself.

He is the image of the spirit in the earlier race as he is the image of the spirit in ours. The “earth body” that he is in, is both the earth below our feet as well as the earth of the lich that shrouds us now, in our breathing days. He commands winds and spiritual winds that whip the mind into sorcerous inspiration. His voice is the whisper of winds, the calm seduction of the cool breeze, and the roar of storms.

He is a healer, by restoring wholeness and awakening occult latencies in the human body-mind-spirit complex; he is cruel disruptor and nourisher of the earth entire and all who live; he is oracle and teacher of occult rites, granter of ecstasies and awakener to universal harmonies and sciences; he is the intoxicator, redeemer, and guide of souls across the face of the earth and those who must plunge below it, and he is the corn-spirit, deeply embedded in the furrows of the black ground. He is the most creative in artifice and “spelling” out the true shapes of things with primal letters; these old divinities before mentioned have drawn from this force for their historical character. I know not more but to proclaim his individuality.

He is the guiding genius and architect of magics, for magical is the nature of the fatefully hewn universe in which all things come to find their form and then cyclically transform towards their own

mysterious destiny in due time.





*"Lay aside your useless weapons  
Skill and prowess naught avail;  
They who do the Devil's service  
Wear their Master's coat of mail."*

*-John Greenleaf Whittier*



## He Was Wicked; He Was Pure: The Lord of the Principalities of the Air

The ancient Greeks (in common with nearly all people of the time) believed that when people died, their *psyche*, their soul, escaped from them as an escaping breath. And this aerial thing, this breathy soul, was precisely that, a wind- the wind of their bodies. "Psyche" means "soul", and "breath" at the same time- derived from *psychein*, "to blow." And one God among the others had the duty of coming to guide the soul to the Underworld- a God who was himself connected with flight, the winds, and the tricky, inconstant nature of the winds and airs. His name was Hermes, and in myths, he is depicted with winged sandals- winged feet- which gave him the power of aerial flight.

He was the messenger of the Gods; he moved between the world that was seen, the world of men, and the world of the Gods unseen, to do the bidding of his father, Zeus- the God of storms, light from the sky, winds, thunder, and rains. He was the herald of all the Gods, the being who connected the mortal world with the immortal world, and saw that communication happened between them. But he was more than all this, too- Hermes was a sorcerer, a tricky and cunning sorcerer. His deceitful character from the mythologies is not in doubt; but magic? What we today call "Hermetic magic", which was once a widespread and varied school of sorcery that spread all over the Ancient world, before and after the rise of Christianity, was precisely what its name states: The Magic of Hermes.

Hermes' connection with wind and breath and the released breath-souls of the dead, and the journey to the Land of the Dead runs parallel to his role as the *Logos*- the word, the spirit of the word (words are breath made into specific sounds), the messenger, and the creator of magical words. Our descriptive term for an in-depth exploration of the deeper meanings of things- a *Hermeneutic* explanation- comes from this God's name. And before this ancient non-human person that Greek history remembers as "Hermes" was all these things, he was the God of boundaries- the boundaries between one kingdom or territory and another- boundaries that were marked by his *Herms*, which was the name given to phallic stones, or to cairns of stone built to mark boundaries.

It is no surprise that he was the God that crossed all boundaries, as he was also the God who had the power to maintain them. The boundary between the living and the dead was the greatest of boundaries that he could cross- or guide others into crossing.

This being, this powerful sorcerous spirit with connections to the land and the phallic power of nature, and connections to the wind, the gusts of spirit, ghosts, and the Land of the Dead, was identified by Classical writers with the ancient Nordic and Germanic divinity Odin- himself a sorcerer and the chief and Master of sorcerers. Odin's connection with the Underworld and the oracles of the dead is well known; he was most known, however, for his gift, to mankind, of language- particularly the sorcerous language of the *Runes*. The word "*runa*", from whence "rune" derives, means "secret" or "mystery"- but it has connotations of a whispered mystery, a whispered secret.

Today, we think of the letters of the various “Runic alphabets” as “the runes”, but the true Runes were mysterious utterances or spells, known by Odin, and taught to his followers, who were mostly sorcerers and people desiring power, either magical or political, or desiring victory over enemies. This magical connection between the characters of Hermes and Odin is met not just in their connections to death, but in the connection they both have to magical words, and words generally—they are “logos” Gods, word-Gods, givers of language, and thus, in a sense, givers of civilization, to man.

Odin is believed to have his origin in an ancient storm god- a grim spirit of storms and winds, who was linked to the dead. His name refers to a “wild fury”, as only the winds and storms can deliver—and as only the inspired soul, the soul “in-spired”, or “filled with windy respiration” can understand or manifest. To be “inspired” sorcerously, or inspired otherwise, is to be “in breathed”, to have the spirit of inspiration fill you. Odin’s capricious, tricky, and ominously unpredictable nature is well known to students of his lore; like the winds, he appeared to be not only “wandering everywhere” on the earth, (Odin was the great wanderer who moved all over the earth) but dangerously unpredictable at times.

The wind and the storm gives motion and vitality to the world, in the same way that the breath soul gives motion and vitality to your body. The spiritual power that I am discussing, the ancient and timeless non-human person who stands behind the ancient cultural iconic figures of Hermes and Odin, was not depicted as phallic and chthonic, and called “Allfather” for just no reason! But as we investigate the ways these ancient cultures, in southern and northern Europe, were experiencing the Spirit of winds, words, and ghosts, we start to come to another realization: the breath-giving and guiding Master of Spirits is still among us, still blasting around the world, just as he always was, and always will be.

And in the mysteries of modern Witchcraft, this means everything. Because this important being stands behind Witchcraft in the same way (and for the same reasons) that he stood behind sorcery all over Europe in ancient times. He is the “Witchfather”, the creative and deceitful spirit that inspires not just poetry and song and epic, but spells and sorcery. He is the spirit with mastery over the ghost-roads, the guide of the dead, met at the Crossroads between this world and the next- and of voracious sexual character. As Christian missionaries were certain that Odin was the devil himself, this being falls into that terror-ridden category, too. Leading his “wild hunt” on the storm and through the sky, gathering souls to himself, Odin prefigured the legends of the Devil’s hunt with his hellish hounds.

And whether or not you realize it, you have a daily relationship with this power, immediately, and distantly. This isn’t “just” mythology; this is a truth that is stranger than any fiction. This is reality- the reality that has been hidden under the “myths” that we’ve all been taught to disregard, since the time we disregarded our souls and discarded them, too.

The ancient pact between you and this ancient being of winds is remembered in your breath. He indwells the air that you breathe, the surrounding atmosphere of this world, and your breath-soul is a

wind borrowed from this world for the length of your life. He indwells that, too. This power, this spirit, this non-human person, transcends the cultures that once called him by various names. He was around before those cultures, and is still dwelling in our world, still doing what he always did, chiefly guiding the dead to the depths that they attain upon dying. But to those sorcerously inclined, and those who have rediscovered their souls, he can communicate and interact to their benefit- or their harm.

Because nothing is certain, really, not in this world or the next. This is true for the character of spirits, even the very powerful ones, just as it is true for human beings. Gaze into the character of humans for long, even yourself, and you'll see the inconstant flow of emotions and opinions that you have, in the past, allowed to change you without warning. You'll remember the friends or family you might have let down. You probably weren't trying to be evil or flighty, but it is part of our nature, and the nature of everything. Things change, and with the wind, that reality is even more present. Thus, the "Game of Power" is played out- and the roll of Fate's dice determines the character and abilities and propensities of every being, seen or unseen, from moment to moment.

The only hope of the wise is to be like the wind, able to stir and fly and flow and change at a moment's notice, to be like reality, and not try to make stone where there is water, or make earth where there is really air. To say it another way, if you are in touch with the airy and subtle force of your soul, you should be able to become a "Turnskin"- a shape-shifter, like the ancient Gods were known to be.

"Shapeshifting" has many meanings, but here, I mean to alter one's mind and soul to suit whatever Fateful conditions happen to emerge to you at the moment, so that you can navigate them with ease, as opposed to allowing the change to tear down whatever illusionary solidity you were clinging to. To make an even more straightforward example, you should become "*mercurial*"- like Mercury, the Roman divine equivalent of Hermes. To be "mercurial", like Mercury, is to be changeable and transformative.

Now, I will release a bit of information, won by me from the pages of occult history, but also from the Unseen. Every covenant of sorcerers or Witches in the past was believed to worship the Devil, by our village idiot Christian cousins. Cult-centers in the Pagan world were well known to have their own individual Gods or Goddesses, sometimes of a very local character; this is true polytheism we're speaking of, after all.

Now I know, after a long time, that Witches across Europe that were truly in touch with the Master and who truly managed to evolve a conscious relationship with him (and there are countless ways to do this) did in fact have their own "devil", their own unique "Master" who dwelled with them and aided their sorceries and protected them. Was it "THE" Master? Probably not. A cursory study of ancient Hermeticism (allow me to recommend the superb study "Hermetic Magic" by Dr. Stephen Flowers) will reveal what other books on the topic of historical polytheology have said- that the Gods of the Pagan world were served by other, lesser daimons. The term "daimon", before the Christian church turned it into "demon", simply meant "divine being" or something more like a spirit.

Every God or Goddess of national character- the popular Gods of the national mythologies- were not only “Great Daimons” themselves, but also served by beings who were spiritually attached them, merged with them somehow. The Gods and Goddesses had messengers and beings who worked in this world on their behalf- not unlike the many “angels” which surrounded the Hebrew God (the word “angel” comes from Greek, and means “messenger.”)■

If you met her, could you tell the difference between Aphrodite, and a daimon who appeared on her behalf, and who had a similar nature to her Queen and Mistress? Probably not. Any daimon, no matter how lacking in power they may be relative to the greater powers, can appear to mortals as a being of incredible majesty and power.

And these daimons who serve the “Great Daimons”, or the Great Spirits who are closest to the greatest and most elemental powers (like the daimons who serve the Master of the Winds) are one with the will of their masters, fully drawing upon the mysterious Godhead of their Masters. In other words, when the Master of Witches was truly contacted by mortal sorcerers, and appeared, or came among them to teach them or do his bidding, it likely wasn't him personally, but one of his daimons, one of his servitor spirits- not THE Master, but a “*Little Master*”- what occult history has called a “*Magistellus*.”

To gain the attentions of a Magistellus is a great step forward in power and connection for an individual Witch or Sorcerer, or for covenants of the same. To have a reciprocal relationship with a Magistellus of the Master, one of his deathless ministers, represents one's living connection to the conscious mind of the Great Spirit-Master that stands behind the Art of operative Sorcery and Witchcraft.

The Magistelli are teachers, protectors, and they appear to have much of the character and nature of the one they represent.■

Using the sorcery that I command, I have personally gained the attentions and friendship of one of the Master's servitors, who even now remains close to me, guiding me largely in the capacity of a divinatory familiar. His appearance to me- both as a human being, and a stag/deer- and even the meaning of his name, and the occult significance of the sounds that make up his name- show his alignment with the sphere of Mercury, as well as his chthonic nature.

The figures of wild, hairy, goatish /horned / antlered spirits have, since time immemorial, served the Master. They appear all over in folklore and in occult systems; the satyrish spirits, most of them goat-like or shaggy, always a bit dirty, showing their connection to the Saturnian earth itself- the “Seirim” of Hebrew lore, the wild men of the woods of many European legends, the Bodaich-Pucks of the British isles; each appearing like a little Pan, or a little phallic demon, in the image of the traditional “devil” of Christianity. They are the Windy and Chthonic Master's servitors, just as randy as he, but every bit as “mercurial” and wise as he.

They are the daimons of the ancient spirit that some Greeks knew as Hermes, others as Pan, and who has become our “devil”, and his servants his “demons”. Strip bare the cultural and historical overlays, and we are dealing with the Indwelling Master-spirit of the Wind of this world, the surrounding atmosphere of the earth, and the "lesser winds" from him are his spirit-servitors. And his small winds also fill each one of us up, too, for as long as we breathe.

Those who work with me in the flesh are under the Sigil of this Magistellus of mine, the “local devil” of our little Witch-cult. This represents, to me, a very majestic achievement of my time as a sorcerer; the work that I used to obtain communion with this being, and the name he gave me, and his sign, which he taught me, are closely guarded secrets of my Art. I can say one more thing about this Magistellus of mine- once, and long ago, he was a human being like us, but through his experiences and efforts, became what he is now.

A request to the Master himself can be delivered by the Little Master, who is always near the human covenant; and if the Master consents, his representative is who “does the dirty work”, if you catch my drift. In folklore, we see the “Devil” riding in his hunt with his faeries, or elves, or spirits, and sometimes his hounds- all representations of his servitor daimons. To be a “hound” of the Hunter is to be more than an astral canine; it is a symbolic way of referring to the servitor spirits of the Huntsman generally.

We know this much about THE Master. Despite his aerial connections- which the early Church knew of well, when they stated, in the bible, that their true “enemies” were the” powers of the air”- he is of supremely chthonic character, merged also with the earth itself and the Underworld. He is not just a windy ghost; he is fully merged with the flesh and blood, and with the earth itself. His lurching phallus and connection with the randy goat and the ramping buck is not a mistake.

He is the intelligence behind the furious force of the phallus, wanting to sink deeply into warm, fertile space to increase the massive field of life-force that spreads everywhere. And yet, for all that, for all his goatish jests and black sense of humor and strange, red, almost obscene-seeming personality of Misrule, he has a purely “aerial” form as well, almost angelic and ethereal; he, the Turnskin Lord, can appear any way he likes. Supreme in wisdom and cunning, he never leaves those who go to him for genuine advice wanting for the wisdom they sought. He is the cemetery-lord, the Prince of Elfhame or the Underworld, Prince among the Alfar, the Elves, who are the spirits of the dead. He is obscene and pure, wild and noble or refined- the beginning and end of each of us, in the breath. He can take you flying, if he chooses.

But his ways are ultimately inscrutable to most of us. His concern for human beings is well known- and why? I can only assume it is the breath and soul connection we have to him. Else, I can’t imagine why he and his servitors should spend so much effort on guiding the recently dead- or the sorcerously alive- into the depths and helping them to find their Fateful portions.

Whatever his reasoning, our reaction as humans should be a mixture of caution, awe, and thankfulness to his strange presence. Because despite all I’ve said so far, one thing remains for those who really

gain the hidden vistas of the soul, one knowledge that is difficult for many to accept. The spiritual powers that exist, the presences that are living “out there”, and the “Great Presence” or collective of powers which I know as Fate, which is the real origin of us all, spirit or man- these powers are *not* batting their eyelids in love with mankind. We don’t face a world that prefers us, or loves us more than any other part. This is hard for many to hear, especially thanks to the teachings of Christianity.

Love certainly exists; touch the soul for a moment, and you’ll touch on a great love. You know love between yourself and your beloved friends and family. But every being in this world has its own destiny- and that is true individually as well as collectively. We humans are not the “pet projects” of all the spirits or powers unseen. They do not exist to pull our arses out of whatever fires we may find ourselves in. What help you might gain from them will not come, typically, from some sense of duty they feel towards you as a human, but from what friendship you engender in them from your soul-level effort, or from some interest you might awaken in them by your cunning deeds.

Think here of Odysseus and his relationship with the Goddess Athena herself- she admitted to him in one of her personal visits to him that she saw in him a kindred spirit, a person of such great cunning, that she knew she had to protect him. It was merit that won Odysseus such a blessed relationship with such a powerful non-human person, not some sense of universal love for humanity on her part.

And there is something both awe-inspiring, and awful, about Fate itself. And this ground we walk on? She is not just a nurturing mother who gives us vegetables or fruits to eat; she is also a devouring power, just like Fate. Nature isn’t just kindly; it can kill individuals or entire hosts of humans and animals, with ease. Everything in your experience, seen or unseen, is laced with a certain hint of danger, an uncertainty. Even when I realized that my soul wasn’t vulnerable to “death” as I had once thought, I realized that death was still close at hand, and would swoop down one day- perhaps soon- and thrust me into the depths of soul.

And the “Great Presence” that I felt wasn’t going to stop this from happening- in fact, it had something to do with why it was happening. These powers don’t have our human agendas. They don’t put our particularly human needs or wants first and foremost. This is the final lesson of Fate: in a world of many beings, seen and unseen, the needs and wants of one particular kind of being are never the center stage. The world is never just about you, nor even all of your kind.

Even the spirits- and even the Master- have their own road under the influence of Fate. The lesson here? You aren’t as important as you have been taught to think by your anthropocentric world with its anthropocentric religions, sciences, and cultures.

Your real importance comes not from your cultural understandings (which are all aspects of the conceptual mind) but from your soul, and your real place in the great whole of things. We don’t tend to know our true place, but we can discover it. Whether or not we discover it consciously is of smaller value than we think- because come what may, the winds of life and death are going to blow you to your place, move you there, steadily. You might discover that as you “moved” on the winds of



life and death, you were always in your “right” place. This is Fate’s promise- and she makes it not just to human souls, but to all souls. She strips away our empty and illusionary hopes, but gives back the real and the immortal.

One of the most essential goals for all sorcerously-obtained wisdom is not to become a ruling master of Fate somehow- such a thing is ludicrous on many levels- but to become the sort of person who can receive guidance from the Unseen, such that one is consciously moving with the fateful powers, moving with understanding. The wise are not unconsciously being compelled by the deeper powers, or wondering why this or that thing in life is happening to them. They are conscious participants with the deep, those who understand it.



*Black Master of the Wish Hounds  
Riding the old straight track from kirkyard  
To dreadful ancient hill on yonder way:  
Your dappled grey steed  
Hooves the icy wind as a deer track.  
You lead the Cavalcade on the Dead Road  
And Bolts of Elfin make, strokes of deadly Fate,  
Fall from your train like cruel hailstones.  
Hurl'd by Fayerie hands they miss not their marks!  
Elf-Prince Grim, Twelve Nights King,  
You are the Sovereign of the Night Side of Being;  
Going forth in darkness, you claim whom you will.  
Archer of the Windy Host, terrible Feery Master,  
All is reversed in the storm and fury of your Rade.  
The dead come at your call with rough musick,  
They slaughter the Stag and Ride the Stang  
And all the wicked tremble in fear.  
You shape elf-arrows; you guide their flight,  
Your barking hounds are geese in sightless night:  
You reveal hidden sorceries, and teach your chosen.  
Under stars, under tempest, under snow,  
Master, wind the horn that fetches souls away  
To the Dark Cavern of your wisdom.*

*Black-Masked Robin, peerless in cunning  
Let the Winds of the World bring you word  
Of our respect and fear, of our truthful need:  
Your mercies and wisdoms need we all,  
Your power for the perils that beset our doors;  
So relent to send your blessing on this food  
And the life stirring inside it!*

*By the Hell Hounds that pace your prey,  
By your Horn that splits the sky asunder,  
By the Skull and Crossed Bones that make your badge,  
By the raging Chivaree who follow you,  
By the Pale Women who deal out death and Fate,  
By the Cross'd Arrows that bind hunter to prey,  
And the Sorcerous Initiations you bestow upon the worthy,  
Let these victuals overflow with your shadow and your ardor-  
Let me eat and be whole by your mighty leave;  
Let me greet the stars and touch the earth  
Made Red by your magnanimity.*



# I Went On from Those Crossroads: The Face of the Lord of Shape-shifters

To come into the presence of the Master is no small matter. Of course, to speak of coming into the presence of a power like that of the Master is not a simple thing; He is, was, and will be the guardian spirit of humankind, and of sentience generally. It was He who swore to the Lord of Life that he would reveal to man the mysteries of the Intellect, forever acting as a friend to man, He who is now, and will ever be the Indweller in Intellect, and in Artifice, and in the Sorcery that is the primordial emanation of Artifice.

It is the Woman that he chose to be his special disciple, his special beloved, Woman to whom he taught the art of beautifying the face, and the first mysteries of sorcerous discipline. Not for no reason do men find "salvation"- if indeed, salvation can be the word used- through finding the womanly in himself, and not for no reason do male sorcerers achieve the pinnacle of their art through recourse to the Queen who lives in perpetuity at the heart of all things.

As the guardian spirit of Mankind, the Master is with us forever- but like us, he is not one-sided, not a simple being. I suppose no being can be said to be "simple" as we mean it; but it is to humans I speak as a human, and on behalf of Robin's Master. That Master stands at a place where the Roads cross- it is a place deep with meaning for where the two roads meet, we see an image of great significance; it is an extra-temporal, extra-spatial representation of the "place" where the Seen and Unseen meet- which is everywhere.

The Master stood there, when last I saw him, first and distantly as a luminous being of light (for all Indwellers are ultimately beings of light) but then as a figure draped in a great and deep hood and cloak, made of many kinds of darkness. Any form or disguise we wish to take is a fold of darkness over the freedom of luminosity, what we really are.

The same may be said for the Mighty Indwellers who together comprise the living fabric of reality.

My Master showed me no face; he stood there, where the two roads crossed, and where (to the apparent north east) a great tree grew up with many twists and a great fullness of life. The roads were walled by low stacks of stone, etched well by brambles and vines full of the corpses of dark berries. The sky was overcast. The Master could not be seen, as the hood he wore concealed him completely, and the folds of fabric wrapped Him so- I say "Him" but below that cloak, any form or sex could have waited. There is no guessing out the Lord of Shapeshifters, and indeed, the wise do not attempt it; they prepare to accept whatever may appear.

He held a grand, spiraling branch, some eight feet in length, which came to a great fork. My heart only begged him for one thing: "Show me the meaning of worship- the way you would be worshiped, if it was worship you desired. Show me how to give worth in every moment of my life to your spirit, and

the spiritual forces of all things." The figure only gestured to the east. I looked long and hard down that road, which disappeared into the dark green of the land, seeing just the distant haze before I looked back. I realized then that the Master's hood concealed all that humans ever were or ever would be. His forked staff announced the simple but binding truth that everything has two natures, just as this world has a Seen and Unseen side, and here they were both met in this Ancient being, who stands at the place where all meet.

I went on from those Crossroads not by any road, but down, through the equal-armed cross they made; the Master's form simply disappeared, leaving behind his forked staff, which lingered a bit before disappearing itself. It all disappears in the end, every image, every vision, every dream, every life- but deeper below the Crossroads, I found something else, something that cannot be written out.

When I emerged from that, and the further adventures I had deeper down, I came to write this, for Robin's Master would have it no other way. He wishes you all well from deep inside each of you. Only fear of what might lurk below his grimly hooded shape separates you from Him.

I know the secret intelligence that lives in the wind. I know who indwells the wind that shakes every leaf in the world, and makes rough the smooth mirror of every lake. This secret being indwells you, too, so long as you breathe. Though invisible, this power is everywhere known and apparent: the abundant life of everything, vivifying the world, and speaker of the wisdom of ages.

Look no more upon the moving air as "just air" or "just wind"- know that it is a Person, too, vast and ancient, wise and powerful. Know this. Upon every person who reads these words, I ask a blessing: may the Wind guide you to everything you want and everything you need.



*You rest, Old Woman, by your hearth  
Full of the ashes of bygone ages  
The bones of every creature gathered by you  
Mutter with their whispered memories.  
You hear them all, and you remain silent.  
Your spinning wheel creaks in the Dark Below  
Aye, the droning song of Fateful eternity.  
Life will break the ice that covers the grass;  
Death will take its downward flight,  
All to your feet, Old Woman, All to you  
From whence they came in the beginning.  
Your familiar perches by your ancient door  
The Owl who gazes into yellow Day  
And laments into soundless Night.  
Your Soul is change, Old Woman  
but your Hearth remains a-light.*

*Old Woman, Cruel and Kindly by turns,  
Let the Winds of the World bring you word  
Of our respect and fear, of our truthful need:  
Your mercies and wisdoms need we all,  
Your power for the perils that beset our doors;  
So relent to send your blessing on this cup  
And the life stirring in its depths!*

*By your Owl Ever-Watchful  
By your Broom that sweeps the Land of souls  
By your Geese who bark in the Sky  
By the Deer who are your herd in the wood  
By your Caudle that boils the dark remains of former worlds,  
By your loom that weaves dreams and nightmares,  
By your Black Dog that menaces the wicked,  
By your Wheel, Key and Thrice Locked Door,  
Let the cup overflow with your shadow and your ardor-  
Let me drink and be whole by your mighty leave;  
Let me greet the stars and touch the earth  
Made Red by your beneficence.*









# The Ancestress

When I've been down in swamps, I've encountered what generations of Ancestors before me encountered: the power of the Bog-entities, the closeness of the dark abyss below, as it oozes life slowly upward to the sun, and slowly drags life below, back to its thick and hidden bosom. That's what the bog is, what wetlands are- the slow incubation and birthing powers, and the slow taking powers. Inside them you'll find the real Elder Beings- the slippery, wet, sliding serpents and the great reptiles, the wise amphibians who can, at a moment's notice, plunge into the dark and vanish. How like sorcerers they are- sorcerers of the darkest, oldest variety: able to disappear, slip behind the scenes, and go to the heart of things.

But when I went to the hills and mountains, I found something else. Not something better, just something other- I could see very far, see the curves and slopes of countless other hills, the beckoning peaks of very distant mountains, and the arch of the great grey or blue sky everywhere. I could see trees, some up close, and many that ran together into the green flesh of the world in the distance. That was a new experience and a great one, because behind every hill down below me, inside of every forest I could see from a distance, and in every distant meadow, I felt that my old childhood dreams were still alive. Down there, just out of sight; I wanted to race down there and adventure in those places, explore them. From high above, I saw nothing more than a world of mystery and adventure spread out everywhere

I thought I could see spirits moving in the land itself- maybe see them swimming in the distant waters I saw, but then I realized it was the ubiquitous wind moving every leaf and crinkling every water. And then I remembered- that too, is a spirit; I'm not wrong; everywhere the Father of Spirits moves and makes life, and countless spirits like him move in his channel, make the world full of this power and wonder.

That was what the high places taught me. I understood then why my Ancestors sought high places when they wanted to work things out, gain new understandings from the Unseen, or just worship the sky and land. Depths are power; heights, poetry and perspective. Depths are understandings deeper than words; heights are visions. Of course, every height has its roots in the same common depths- to imagine that the heights might be better, or preferable, or just "things apart" from the depths would be wrong; further, to make such a division would be dangerous or even lethal to the soul, and to many other things besides.

I was happy to see the Great Grandmother from the top of one of her many breasts, to look down on her endless flesh, to see the pools of sacred fluid that came from inside her. It's a great thing to feel one's place in relationship to the Land, and the Great Non-Human Person that the Land certainly is. Here I am, a human, cradled in the midst of a never-ending landscape of powers, all of it the body of one Being that I call my first Ancestress. How could she be other? My Great Ancestor makes me a sorcerer, a wild, adventure-seeking spirit as restless as the wind, but my Great Ancestress makes me sib-kin to every other being I meet.

I remember when a surprise encounter, long ago, began with a man saying "You do know that the Land is a woman, right?" I was glad to know what he meant, and glad to learn from him. He was using his own poetry- "woman" would refer to a human female, and while I know the Land to be female, I wouldn't say She was human. But She is the Mother of Man, so whatever makes us what we are is inside Her somehow. My whole soul, the lasting part of me that won't ever be apart from this Land, from this sib-kin of strange beings, burns to see her face, however my fleshy, mammalian brain can condition my mind to see it. If I were a squirrel, I suppose the Great Grandmother of life would appear to me as an ancient Squirrel-Doe, curled inside of a den inside the most ancient of trees. In the shape I now wear, she appears as a human woman of immense beauty and depth.

And that's fine. I know that she is Great Grandmother to squirrels, too, so she's as much squirrel as she is human woman, and that's no mystery to me. I can only take her as my human heart insists, so I move forward. I see her walking- when she comes up from below to walk- between the brakes and shocks of trees and between the streams and over the hills, always from a distance. When I go up to the high places, I admit that I look around expecting to see her treading with human feet. I hope for it, because I want to run to her and tell her how much I love her, and beg for her wisdom, for her help, and apologize for all that her many human children have done to break their ties of affection with her.

It doesn't matter that I don't see her like that often; when I look inside, that's always what I see- that beautiful face, that haunting face, which stills all other powers in me. Softly walking on the grass behind her are lines of dead humans and beasts, who have died but still live, each of them now as beautiful (or sometimes as terrifying) as the Great Grandmother, each of them settled into the Great Quiet and the Great Otherness that is the veritable atmosphere of the Unseen. That atmosphere is quietly resonating from inside of everything, every blade of grass, every rock, every squirrel's tooth, and if you can find it inside you, you suddenly feel it everywhere, too.

It's almost like a great "space" that you can talk into, or shout into, or send messages into, like putting a message folded into a paper boat on the quiet trickle of a stream, and knowing that it will make it downstream to someone waiting down there. But no matter how you "speak into" the Otherness, the answers only come back as dim whispers. Or maybe, that's the only way we can still hear, these days. I don't know. I do know that the Unseen is subtle, however- up until the moment it decides to storm.

I look around, whether in the depths or the heights, and I see the wonder that life is and I thank the Great Grandmother for it all- whatever power She was, from the foundation of all things, she was special; so full of possibilities and so full of shapes and so full of powers that she could birth all this, even me, thinking of Her right now and being able to appreciate what potent magic birthing really is. Without Her, nothing could proceed; nothing would be here to enjoy experience itself. We love to talk about the mighty sorceries that the Great Ancestor taught to man, but there's another kind of mighty magic, another kind of sorcery, ever older, and the Great Grandmother is its mistress.

There's no room in our Great Grandmother's majestic and power-filled world for boredom, and yet,

how often do we feel bored? Boredom is the first and perhaps most insidious symptom of the soul-sickness that defines a modern world that forgot that the Land itself was a woman.



*Come to me, Master  
As fetuses come to the wombs of women.  
Winds warm and cold are your maids and man-servants;  
You scour the world in ghostly hunt  
For souls whose hours have caught them.  
Listen, Lord: I know your names in the winds and skies:  
LAMPTHEN OUOTHI OUASTHEN OUOTHI OAMENOTH ENTHOMOUCH  
And having spoken those names,  
Now the Unseen will hear me through the sky.  
Master, you count among your estates  
The road of the sun,  
The thickly wooded morass and the darksome stream,  
The groves of pine and hemlock,  
And the caves beneath the earth.  
The glinting lamp of night's forest  
Is carried by you, Warden of secret places.  
Amid weeds and mosses,  
And the deserted retreats of owls,  
Your servants hard of hoof gather  
To lay out your riches and teach men and women  
Things known not for many a year.*

*Master of the Night Side of the world,  
So hearken and be kind, be merciful  
And forthcoming to me, seeking your wisdom and favors:  
For I know the ancient words and names  
That are familiar and dear to you,  
As they were in the old world  
And in the world before that:  
PHARNATHAR BARACHEL CHTHA  
Strange words made by strange tongues!  
OSERGARIACH NOMAPHI  
Mighty words truly naming thee,  
Master who flies on the wind  
And has by many names been known.  
So come, Auldane, or vouchsafe to me  
The presence of one of thy ministers to come forth  
And grant your wise graces in this fire-lit dark.*





# The Lord of Fayerie-Elfhame

For the longest time, I felt that there was a very important difference between the Master of Witches, the Witchfather, the chief figure of Witchcraft from any era in the Northwestern and Northern European traditions, and the "Great Father", or the darker, more primordial father-force that I thought was his sire. I considered them to be very distinct beings.

I'm not saying I've changed my mind about that; but I was wrong about something, something I couldn't see before now. I know that most of you are likely confused often when you read accounts of the "God" of the Witches, historical or modern, and see Him being conflated with many different Gods from Pagan antiquity.

If he is the Mercurius of the Romans and Greeks, then Zeus is his father- surely they are not the same figure. This was the basic thesis of my first work on Traditional Witchcraft, and I have maintained that thesis. I have always said that we are dealing with "The Master" as the quicksilver spirit (mercurial) spirit that straddles the wide, windy, and dark spaces between the human world and the divine; that he is the teacher, messenger, guide of souls, tricky one, lord of the ghost-hunts, Prince (not King!) of Faery-Elfhame, mediator between the great divine powers which are parents to all life- and even his parents, distantly speaking.

I'm not backing off that stance, but I realize that I made one mistake. And this is an understandable error, one that a young man could make who was having the rush of power that accompanies his first real successes with deep trance, who was being exposed to so many great powers.

I put The Master and His Father in the wrong stage of religious development. I believed that "The Great Father" was more personal than he really is; I believed that he belonged to a later stage of development. He is not, and does not. He goes back much earlier than I believed, and thus, so does The Master. I was confused for years at why I could never directly find him, but why the Master continually popped up in every place that I searched, when looking for the Primordial Father.

The Master popped up because the Master is as developed as a person can get, when seeking the personalized divine. Beyond the Master, there is no old, hoary king sitting on a throne, like a Zeus or something. Beyond the Master, there is only that primary mystery, the force of which IS the Great Father, and upon whom all things rely in a very deep way. The Master mediates that very diffuse, impersonal power, which is the life-essence of all reality. The Master is that essence taking on the very first emergences of personality, as we know it.

He is the "impersonal become personal", as are all the spirits and beings who "emerged" in his figurative generation, and so are all we humans who emerged later, or the animals that share our world, or any beings. But the Master, along with the Earth-Being (an immense feminine power) and several other primordial personal forces emerged first from the Mystery of origins.

And like life itself, the Master is twofold- bright and dark, Lord of Life and Lord of Death- the Green Man or the Foliate Faced One, and the Hellequin or the Wild Hunt leader- the Grim-Masked one. He is green and black, or green and red, as they say; he is two-faced, or two headed.

I once believed that it was the Great Father who was the true leader of the Hunt and King in the Underworld, and that it was he who was the chthonic and saturnian figure of the Green Man.

But I continually ran into The Master assuming all these roles, and I tried to explain it away by saying that The Master was "co-opting" these earlier roles from the earlier, older, more primordial God. But he never co-opted anything. He always had those things. The Master was not always worshiped as a mercurial, tricky spirit; he was also sometimes worshiped in a very "kingly" way by many ancient people.

Take Mercurius or Hermes as an example. Hermes has a name that is derived from "Herm"- a phallic stone. This God was not originally the "son" of any big father god- he was THE Father, the potent, virile masculine force in Nature itself. He gains his demotion to the messenger and youthful, tricky son of Zeus because he is imported into the Athenian pantheon, which was itself a political creation as much as a literary one- the pantheon took many Chief Gods and Goddesses from the many cultures around the area and made them into a big family.

But when we study the individual figures in the pantheon, and their individual histories, another picture starts to emerge.

\* \* \*

The Master *is* the primordial "God" or Spirit of this world. As I always knew, he had everything to do with shaping the early world and teaching mankind. His Saturnian aspects announce it, only I could not see it- before the World-shaping, he was the "hermit" who brooded meditating in the unimaginable timeless darkness, before the Night of the Cosmos was over, and he acted as the intelligent shaper of the new era. His spirit is "in" the earth, just as it is "in" our bodies because of the connection of breath.

And this is because He is the Indweller in the Wind- which makes him the Indweller in Air, the Indweller in the world (and the storms which are the "Wild Hunts" that he leads). And this central understanding, which will be so greatly expanded on in my next work, takes us to the final peak of the matter.

The Great Father whose power the Master mediates to the world does exist, but as a quasi-natural, deeply natural, impersonal power of life, which as I said before, exists here and now, in all of us, and even in the Master. There is a "Great Fatherly" force inherent in this reality, but the great

Gods of the wind, storm, and vault of heaven in most ancient pantheons were likely the Master in various cultural hypostasis, not that earlier "Great Father" power.

That "Great Father" power cannot exist as we understand existing, without *beings to make it exist*, to manifest it, to mediate it. The Master does that, through his legendary virility and lustfulness, through his slaying of monsters or hunting of dangerous spirits, and the like. Human "sacred kings" manifested it by wedding the Goddess of the Land and "impregnating" her symbolically.

The Master is more widespread, ancient, and powerful than even I had first considered. It is an awe-inspiring thing to realize, especially considering his power to appear in such personal forms to human beings, even though he is the Mighty and Ancient Indweller in the Wind and Air- the "King of the Principalities of the Air", as it were.

To be perfectly clear: I do not think that an individual, personal divine being (in the way that I or the Master are personal) exists out there, and gives "orders" that the Master obeys, or anything like that. When dealing with "intellectual" or personal beings, the Master is the top of the food chain (or the mind chain, as it were.)

The "Great Father" figure that emerges from the sensual experiences of sexuality or vigor or rage or the like, the vibrant expressions of life-force, is not something with a personal will and which intentionally does things or gives orders or gets angry over humans breaking taboos, etc. And yet, it is still something, something very powerful. Something that the Master uses, mediates, and exists through, just like we all do.

The "Great Father" force, in a way, *does* take on personality- through the Master. The Master receives anything he has, just as we do, from that first origin. The Master reveals many things about the essential divine power, but I don't think he does it because the "essential divine" ordered him to, or because the essential divine desires to make a "connection" with we beings who have emerged later. Not at all. The Master does it because that's just what he does. He is the being he emerged to be.

But in his personality- from his Saturnian, dark, brooding side, to his lustful, virile "Green Jack" side, to his deathly "Wild Hunter" misrule side, down to his super-knavish, tricky, deceitful "Robin Goodfellow" side, all of that says something about the hidden nature of the Primordial Reality that underlies all things. Reality appears to be a "possibility space" in which great and terrible things happen, boring and exciting things, living things and deathly things, and the Primordial God/High Priest of this Cosmos, The Master, has all these things to mediate to consciousness, as a matter of spontaneous Fate.

To use a distasteful model, The Master appears to do what Christ does for Christians- acts as a bridge between humans and the hard-to-understand, distant "God". Even if you want to think of it somehow in this manner, please recall that the "God" the Master mediates is not itself a personal being that has a "personal relationship" to you or anyone. It's far more abstract than that, and yet, (paradoxically) very intimately involved in everything. If you wanted to, you could call that "abstract yet intimately involved" force "magic", for it is the living stuff of reality, the life-force that hums in

the webwork of Fate and which takes on more personal forms in the dark womb of the Underworld.



*It is the father with his child.  
He has the boy well in his arm  
He holds him safely, he keeps him warm.*

*"My son, why do you hide your face so anxiously?"*

*"Father, do you not see the Elf King?  
The Elf King with crown and tail?"*

*"My son, it's a wisp of fog."*

*"You dear child, come, go with me!  
Very lovely games I'll play with you;  
Some colourful flowers are on the beach,  
My mother has some golden robes."*

*"My father, my father, and don't you hear  
What the Elf King quietly promises me?"*

*"Be calm, stay calm, my child;  
The wind is rustling through withered leaves."*

*"Do you want to come with me, pretty boy?  
My daughters shall wait on you finely;  
My daughters will lead the nightly dance,  
And rock and dance and sing you to sleep."*

*"My father, my father, and don't you see there  
The Elf King's daughters in the gloomy place?"*

*"My son, my son, I see it clearly:  
There shimmer the old willows so grey."*

*"I love you, your beautiful form entices me;  
And if you're not willing, then I will use force."*

*"My father, my father, he's grabbing me now!  
The Elf King has done me harm!"*

*It horrifies the father; he swiftly rides on,  
He holds the moaning child in his arms,  
Reaches the farm with trouble and hardship;  
In his arms, the child was dead.*

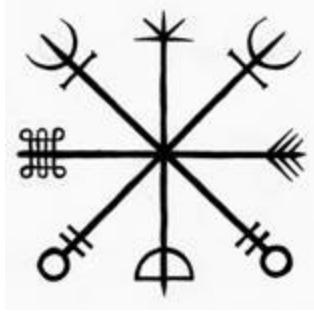
*-Goethe, "The Elf King"*

*"Despite the fact that Catholicism was incredibly successful at assimilating pre-Christian magical belief and practice, this process of absorption was in no way complete. The guiding principles in the lives of many ordinary people in early modern Britain were essentially animist rather than Christian, and some of the most cherished beliefs and rituals paid little lip service to Christianity at all."*

*-Emma Wilby*



## Part V



# The Path Through the Thicket: Banishing Modern Unwisdom

"Western industrial society, of course, with its massive scale and hugely centralized economy, can hardly be seen in relation to any particular landscape or ecosystem; the more-than-human ecology with which it is directly engaged is the biosphere itself. Sadly, our culture's relation to the earthly biosphere can in no way be considered a reciprocal or balanced one: with thousands of acres of nonregenerating forest disappearing every hour, and hundreds of our fellow species becoming extinct each month as a result of our civilization's excesses, we can hardly be surprised by the amount of epidemic illness in our culture, from increasingly severe immune dysfunctions and cancers, to widespread psychological distress, depression, and ever more frequent suicides, to the accelerating number of household killings and mass murders committed for no apparent reason by otherwise coherent individuals. From an animistic perspective, the clearest source of all this distress, both physical and psychological, lies in the aforementioned violence needlessly perpetrated by our civilization on the ecology of the planet. Only by alleviating the latter will we be able to heal the former. While this may sound at first like a simple statement of faith, it makes eminent and obvious sense as soon as we acknowledge our thorough dependence upon the countless other organisms with whom we have evolved. Caught up in a mass of abstractions, our attention hypnotized by a host of human-made technologies that only reflect us back upon ourselves, it is all too easy for us to forget our carnal inherence in a more-than-human matrix of sensations and sensibilities."

-David Abram



# What is Deeper, Down Below

This amazing passage from David Abram completely sums up who and what I am and what I believe, as a person, a sorcerer, and a human being. As far as I am concerned, the insights he measures and states in this passage represent (in very abbreviated form) the evidence of the greatest attainment possible, the final end, of all true and legitimate spiritual questing.

The wisdom this passage contains is the reason why I shun "rising up above the planes" and "climbing up to heavens" and ascents on trees or ladders or mountains, or any of the other symbols and futile practices of transcendentalism, whether it be Pagan, or Christian, or Hindu, or Muslim, or any religion's style of transcendentalism. My religion- if it can be called that- is not a product of civilization. It is the nameless child of something and Someone far older.

This passage is as solid a truth as any human being can write into words. The "slumbering power" he talks about in this passage is not just any power, but a very important power, one that the Witches of old knew- and yes, there is a cultural taboo on whispering its name.

\* \* \*

“The hyper-rational objectivity behind a great deal of contemporary techno-science could only have arisen in a civilization steeped in a dogmatic and other-worldly monotheism, for it is largely a continuation of the very same detached and derogatory relation to sensuous nature. If in an earlier era we spoke of the earthly world as fallen, sinful, and demonic, we now speak of it as mostly inert, mechanical, and determinate. In both instances Nature is stripped of its generosity and prodigious creativity. Similarly, the utopian technological dreaming that would have us bioengineer our way into a new and "more perfected" Nature (or would have us download human consciousness onto "better hardware"), like the new-age wish to spiritually transcend the "physical plane" entirely, seems calculated to help us hide from the shadowed wonder and wildness of earthly existence.

All of these dodges, all of these ways of disparaging material nature and of aiming ourselves elsewhere, enable us to avoid the vulnerability of real relationship with other persons and places in the depths of this unmasterable world. Despite the several pleasures we might draw from life in this world, there remains something about earthly reality that frightens us, and especially unnerves most of us born into civilization. Not just the decay to which our earthborn bodies are prone, and the death that patiently awaits us, but also our steady subjection to what exceeds us, to the otherness of other persons and other beings, and to an anarchic array of elemental forces over which we have little control. To exist as a body is to be constrained from being everything, and so to be exposed and susceptible to all that is not oneself- able to be tripped up at any moment by the inscrutability of a pattern one cannot fathom.

Whether sustained by a desire for spiritual transcendence, or by the contrary wish for technological

control and mastery, most of our contemporary convictions carefully shirk and shy away from the way the biosphere is directly experienced from our creaturely position in the thick of its unfolding. They deflect our attention away from a mystery that gleams and glints in the depths of the sensuous world itself, shining forth from within each presence that we see or hear or touch. They divert us from a felt sense that this wild-flowering earth is the primary source of itself, the very well-spring of its own ongoing regeneration. From a recognition that *Nature*, as the word itself suggests, is self-born. And hence that matter is not just created but also creative- not a passive blend of chance happenings and mechanically determined events, but an unfolding of creativity ever coming into being, ever bringing itself forth.

Why is this simple and rather obvious intuition- this recognition of matter as generative and animate- so disturbing to civilized thought? It's as though there's an ancient dread of what is palpably dense, an old and unspoken taboo against acknowledging the creativity of matter- as if by such a recognition we risk waking a slumbering power that intends us harm. An ancestral sense that whatever is genuinely good in this world must have its ultimate source in what is above and ethereal, while whatever is dense, dark, and downward must be avoided at all costs. As though the damp soil underfoot was solely a medium of death and decay and not, as well, the very source and fundament of new life. As though what is deeper down below is best not pondered at all, lest we fall under its infernal influence. For (and let us hope we don't provoke its wrath by such speaking) is not that deep-down place the terrible locus of Hell, the very dwelling of Satan, and the fiery source of all that's evil?"

(From *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology*)

# Advice to the Genuine Seeker on Finding the True Old Ways

"Question: The Craft is both a beautifully simple thing and also complex in many ways. With all the Traditions out there and the internet these days full of information, starting out can be very confusing without a teacher or guide. Reaching out to the Spirit realm is one of the first steps we make. Our intention is stated before the Gods. From here our hard work and ability to comprehend the Mysteries is in our hands. One must make for himself the yard stick to measure reality with. Robin Artisson, what advice would you give to a seeker that expresses confusion in regards to personal direction? Is this a common pot hole seekers fall into when starting out on the path?"

My Answer:

"Well, let me start by addressing- from my own perspective- some of your beginning assumptions as you led into this very good question.

First off, you can absolve yourself of any notion that there are a lot of "traditions" out there, in the ordinary sense of the word "tradition." There is a great Unseen world, infinitely deep and strange, which interacts with the human world just as it always has since time immemorial. Some "meetings" between humans and the Otherness, long ago, resulted in many important things- like the seeds of many human cultures, some that lasted for ages, and some that are still in existence. Features of those old cultures- which were themselves born from Pacts, of types, are still with us in surprising ways.

But individual people gaining insight and lore from other individuals and passing it down for many generations in some form (either very altered or unaltered) to now is either rare or non-existent. Sad to say, the final remnants of most of what you and I would identify as pre-Gardnerian "crafts"- like Toadmanry, the Horseman's Word, the Plowmen, the Midwives or the "Cunning" doctors- few if none of those final remnants of old esotericism survived the two World Wars and the transition into the modern day. They didn't survive the "change over" between the pre-industrial world, and the radically industrialized world, and the switch-over from the loss of the traditional village or localized community, into the urbanization.

Some people have claimed the (by now) tired "great grandma was a witch" story and tried to set themselves up as inheritors of legitimate family initiatory traditions, but they have either been discredited or failed to produce proof in the only two forms proof matters: either records, or in how they themselves were able to perform actual effective sorcery or working. Their lores ended up being just regurgitated forms of pre-existing esoterica that anyone could have had access to.

Luckily for us, "tradition" has more than one meaning. The Unseen world itself is not quiet, and can reach out to people, either on its own, or when those people reach out to it first in the right way. The actual pre-existing "traditions" of witches still exist; they simply don't exist in this world in the way

we ordinarily think. Lacking an understanding of what our "souls" are, we seldom understand that we have more than one soul- everyone has at least two- and one of them can be engaged in doing things and communicating with things and interacting with other beings outside of your awareness of the fact. You can belong to a "Cult" of witches, a covenant, without being fully consciously aware. When you sleep, or when you are unconscious, your wandering soul can be engaged with the other souls in the covenant, doing all manner of things.

There are spirits and the wandering souls of certain living humans now- and the wandering souls of long-dead humans, that act in covenants all together. These are existing and very real covenant-entities, and they perform the ageless activities that witches always have. This is one of the chief places that traditional "witchcraft" has survived- even in the old days when you had a lot of living witches who were able to be consciously aware of covenants, and consciously participate in their spectral activities, the chief "Location" of witchcraft's performance was in the Invisible, in the Unseen world.

Witch meetings for human members of covenants that were held in this world were very small affairs, usually, in secret places. The real bulk of the activity was (and still is) in the Unseen, where the Master's spirit is strongest and his serving-daimons are more numerous. The true "sabbat" was an extra-temporal, extra-spatial experience of "flight" to the timeless dimension of the Sabbat Field or the Sabbat Hill, which is a soul-communion with the sources of Covenant power.

The only guide or initiator you need to join such a covenant is a person who can help you induce a special sort of lucid dream by which you unravel your wandering soul from your soul-body complex, and go in spectral form to meet up with the Covenant members, and negotiate with them for possible inclusion into their secret commonwealth.

This is the hidden truth, which cannot be denied, despite the claims of some very shallow people. I won't belabor this point; I can point you to the work by Emma Wilby called *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie* which offers as much historical and scholarly evidence of the truth of my words here as you could ever expect.

Your real ability to induce trance is your passport to real witchcraft. Your human teacher can help you with that. But your actual teachers will be spirits, will be Familiars and powers from among "Them Over There" who will take you the rest of the way. It's majestic and frightening and exhilarating and a very old function of the human relationship to the Unseen.

As for the rest, spirits certainly exist. Some are very powerful- like the Indwelling spirit of the Wind (who is the Master) and the Indweller in the Earth, who is the Great Grandmother of souls. They were very likely worshiped as "Gods" by the Pagan ancients, but these days, calling them "Gods" isn't so necessary. The Witches of the 17th century and the "early modern period" (which is where we get the largest bulk of aesthetic for Traditional Witchcraft in the modern day) didn't call them Gods, or when they did, they only referred to the Master as their "God"- which he certainly was.

But they had other names for spirits, even powerful ones, that didn't sound too Pagan- "The Gudeman", "The Master", "The Good Abbess", "The Old One" (Auld 'Ane) "the Green Gown", "The Lady", "The Queen of Elfhame", etc. And that's just for the greatest powers. Many other spirits and powers that existed in relationship of familiar to the witches were just as important to the everyday practice of witch-sorcery and Unseen relationship, and they certainly had their own names and titles.

I would counsel you to be cautious about talking of the "Gods" in some Pagan-sounding manner. It begins to associate you with the recension of modern polytheism, which while there's nothing wrong with that, is a bit outside of the current of Traditional Witchcraft. You *will* announce yourself before the strange throng of Spirits in the Unseen World- yes. Many of them that *may* hear you are very old, and were once worshiped by Pagan people as Gods, yes. But you do better approaching them simply as powerful spirit-persons with whom you can possibly have a relationship of some sort. Approach them without preconceived notions born from modern readings of Pagan myths, or any of the large quantities of nonsense you may read on the internet about "God" or "Gods" or what any of that might have meant. You'd be surprised how different things really are "Over There."

You say that our ability to work with the mysteries is in our hands, or that the difficulties are ours to deal with, and that's partly true. But the Unseen world is very strange. Nothing is ever "just us", nor just in "our" hands- relationship rules this world and the Other. Familiars help. We must have help, or we cannot survive or comprehend anything of the Unseen world. When we're born in this world, we can't survive without help. Relationship- alliance- friendship- interaction- these things are *not* options. No one "does it alone."

So I would counsel you to shy away from the "It comes down to me and what I must face" kind of thinking. If you gain real alliance with the Unseen, it will come down to what you and your allies must face, and the journey is impossible without them. As for the mysteries, don't worry about those. The real "mystery" is that we all exist in the first place, and that mystery really has no answer.

The point of our relationships to the Unseen, aside from gaining the wholeness that comes from realizing the full range and depth of these souls, and how we relate to each other in a massive family tree of life and sentience and unthinkable powers, is to acquire power through alliance and use it to make our endless and very mind-bendingly strange path through existence easier on us and our friends. To be powerful and wise, in other words. Nothing more (or less!)

I touched on this briefly before, but should just come out and say it, now: in a world of shared power and relationship- what we call an "Intersubjective" world- we don't each get to decide what is "true". What's true is true, and nothing can change that. We don't create reality. We don't create Nature, nor make spirits exist. These things exist because they are also fully individual parts of the intersubjective world, and whatever is real is real. You can open your mind to what you experience, and from what you experience, you can draw your own conclusions, but what's true remains true regardless of what anyone draws.

But we aren't really searching for "truth" in some abstract sense; that's an idealistic view, an idea that comes largely from judeo-christian culture. They're always yelling about having the "truth" or needing to find the "truth." Truth is not lost. It cannot become lost; it is simply the way things are. So, the ancients didn't sit around worrying about it or looking for it, or arguing about who had some deeper truth than another. The true ancients, before the birth of idealistic philosophy, were blessedly free of being so alienated from their senses and souls.

Remember- Old Isobel and the witches of her covenant weren't looking for truth; they were looking for power and gaining divinatory insight into the deaths of their community-members, so that they would know who was going to die. They had a death-divination covenant. That was their service to the community, even though they could not carry it out very openly, and most of them eventually died because they were having these extraordinary experiences. But they belong to the Master now, as they did in life, and they are inside of the Wind of the World now, still among the Fayerie-huntsmen, riding with the Master of Souls, so that's quite okay.

I would (Finally!) say that if you are confused about personal direction, it's because you've not reached out to the Unseen, or been contacted by the Unseen, to be informed about what your direction should be. We each have a destiny, and we won't have peace until we find the way to it. But you can trust that the way is *always* found, no matter what. In the meantime, there is fear and loss, doubt and pain. As I said when I first started writing here- the practical thing to do is simplify- dump all the confusing material, of which there is much, and learn to open one's senses to the Unseen world. Everything follows from that, including finding direction.

We live in the hands of greater, wiser powers, and we need *them* to help us. Seeking help, seeking alliance, seeking familiars- this is the true Old Way."



# Come, Rest a While and Understand

For the same reason our testosterone-poisoned sham of a society hates women, we also hate passivity. If you aren't doing something- "doing something"- you're likely thought to be wasting your life, wasting time, wasting something precious with your inactivity- as though inactivity wasn't just as important and healthful to Nature as cycles of activity.

But owing to passivity's association with "feminine" things, the bright, burning sun of masculine, power-over-intellectual striving sees it as the ultimate in shame and waste.

I did an experiment. I took a piece of paper and wrote "And then she let go" on it. I showed that paper to a lot of people, some of them strangers, and asked them what the first thing they thought was. 90% of my respondents said that it made them think that a woman had just committed suicide. That she had "let go" of her will to live, or let go of the ledge she was hanging on to, and had consequently plummeted to her death, or something similar.

One person said that he thought the woman had let go of some anger or hate she had been holding onto for a long time, or maybe that she had let go of her pain and found healing. I knew then that I stood in the presence of a fully alien being. His like is rare in our society. The idea of passivity actually being a potentially positive thing, an act of healing, an act of positive change, an act of wisdom? He actually holds this idea? Such a statement might win him some doubt about his "sexuality" in the right circles.

Where I come from, clinging- really holding on tight- is the quality that is praised, not letting go. To let go is to give up, the ultimate sign of a weakling or a coward. We cling to life like madmen, too- to let go and let one's life slip into the Deep when the time comes that Death calls is a rare talent these days, and thanks to our social climate, it is a talent that must be developed through constant rehearsal, constant meditation on death and the naturalness and appropriateness of death.

We lack the wisdom to simply respond to death with the same appreciation that we respond to birth or growth with. We can only think of it in terms of a threat. But those who think of themselves everyday as dead already, or who meditate on how death never has to journey far to reach anyone, at any age- no, death doesn't live far away; it really just camps out on everyone's doorstep- they have more peace in life.

This isn't grim. Life's radiance and intensity wouldn't be there without death. We can make friends with it. It is not contrary to our natures, nor destructive to our ultimate good as beings. It is not a curse from the Gods nor a mistake in the structure of the universe. Death cannot undo anything that is real. Nothing real can ever be destroyed; Great Nature is not so shoddily designed.

Death is Nature's agent of passivity. "Come, rest a while, and understand that "not doing" can do many

things."

# Darkmere

In my perfect world, the trees and hills and rivers near wherever you happen to be are the homes of the Gods of that place- but more than that, these things are the bodies of sacred powers. No place could be more sacred than those places near you, and no one approaches them without an act of reverence before they go.

If you were to walk ten miles to a new place, the trees and rivers there are just as holy and just as full of sacred beings as where you left, and those beings might be compassionate if you are respectful. There are no priests or ministers of this religion; there are no scriptures for it, just the reverent act of walking to the trees themselves, and hearing inside oneself what the Unseen wants to say. In such a world, people know how to speak back without being taught how to "pray" or anything else.

In my perfect world, stories are told, not written down. Every stage of life has celebratory and transformative rituals to welcome each person to that phase of life, and to help them out of it into a new one. Every stage of life is honored as equally profound and sacred. The older people give good guidance to the younger, but they also have enough wisdom to know that every generation has challenges that only it can face, and must face with their own strength.

In my perfect world, foot travel is everywhere common, and people don't like the idea of speedily, rapidly getting place to place. To take one's time getting somewhere is an act of wisdom, an act of communion with the Land and the "places between" places. In this world I'm describing, people get together quite often just to talk about the dreams they've had recently. People also have easy access to the solitude of the wilderness. Solitude is one of the most sacred of all powers; it can create sanity or restore it with ease.

People in my perfect world seek it out regularly, simply because it is solitude.

In my perfect world, pretension has no legs upon which to stand. Human beings don't take more from the land or one another than they are prepared to give back. In this world that my soul longs for, people help simply because they were once helped; they give because others once gave to them, and they protect others because once, they were protected. No one sees mass accumulation as a virtue or an ideal; they see mass generosity and giving as the supreme virtue and ideal.

To out give another is the heart of social virtue, not to outgain another. Because giving is so prominent, hardly anyone goes without. And those who give more than others couldn't care less if this is so- they have what they need already, and are happy that others do, too. That's all. They don't think about it any further than that. And there is no need to.

In my perfect world, no one lives for what they hope or fear will happen in five or ten or twenty

years. They just open their eyes and see what configurations of power greet them at this very moment, and intelligently, honestly, and helpfully react to those. The future takes care of itself when people really do this. And people really take care of one another when they do this. It isn't about some vapid, cliché notion of "being in the now"- it's about being aware of immediate situations crying out for our concern, care, and attention. For ourselves and others.

In my perfect world, the finest gifts are made by your own hands and given by those same hands to those you intend them for. No one owns anything that looks exactly like something else that someone has. No one has to pack for days to move; the precious things that you acquire for yourself can come with you at a moment's notice. When a point arrives that something you own doesn't seem to be so precious, it is given away to someone else who does find it so.

In my perfect world, there is no "representative" or authoritarian politics, only participatory politics. And this is possible because my perfect world doesn't have a lot of people in it. Or, if there are a lot of people, they have wandered away from one another, into sustainable groups and communities of 50-300, where extended families come together to raise children and talk about their dreams and journeys on a nightly basis. The idea of "nations" with fenced borders and life-and-death power over countless beings long ago fell apart. Power in the social sense is only where everyone agrees power is, after all; I don't know how it happened in my perfect world, but one day, people began to agree differently about power.

In my perfect world, when a person dies, they are merged with the ground to become like the Spirits of a place, to become another sacred power of a place, and no one walks in the woods or next to a river without an awareness that the dead person can feel their feet falling one after the other, or hear them breathing and talking. When people want to see their great grandfathers and grandmothers, they just go for a walk outside.

In my perfect world, no one could believe stories of far away "heavens" for the dead, because the dead are always so very close. And no one believes stories of "hells" because hell is only the feeling you have when you think those you love the most are far away.

# Equality and Humbleness

Spiritual-ecological "horizontalists" like me talk a lot about equality. Not a specious notion of "equality" in some idealistic sense; just the idea that this mighty Nature that shaped the black hole and the supernova also shaped the ant and the termite- all phenomenon that exist fill a space that was needful to the tapestry of everything.

Thus, real equality faces us, found in the fitness and necessity and appropriateness of things. Surely the Earth has a need for the zillions of ants that are under our feet at all times, as much as she ever needed a human to walk and talk and build a fire. Or, if we want to take the language of "necessity" and "need" out of it, we can; we can say "such is the creative nature of the sacred powers that all things have come about, and good."

I will refuse to build artificial hierarchies; I will not fit things into verticalities; I will only attempt to poetically express horizontalities, and the relationships that bind them. This is an immediate step away from the "humans at the peak, humans at the center, humans in a chosen place" mentality that has influenced our thinking about relationship and the natural world for so long. We're another story happening at the same time as countless others. Not a more needful story, not a more creative story, certainly not a more important story, just another story.

We may have little choice, upon first consideration, to think our own stories somehow more important than any others: it's natural, as the star of your own story, to feel like your ratings are best; but an important and quiet step towards all-encompassing wisdom happens when you begin to lose that certainty and begin to discover how much all stories rely in so many ways on others, thus widening that spotlight that once only illuminated a single story.

While the sort of "humbleness" that arises from being menaced under a tall vertical pillar of powers above a person may be rejected by me as a dangerous artifact of artificial political structures created by humans, I must still embrace the healthy sense of humbleness that comes with seeing one's place in the fitness of things. You'd think that "equality" among the many stories playing out would destroy any need for being humble, but ironically, I find that another sort of humbleness naturally emerges. It might have something to do with how majestically intricate everything really is. You can't help but think "wow." You can't help but feel privileged to be a part of it, in whatever manner you may be.

But this mystery of that "feeling of humbleness", that feeling of awe tied in with a sense of the sacred that inspires a person to be more gentle or thoughtful, it's a subtle and important mystery. In a very real way, no one is a truly good person without it. I am not just kind to my children, but self-sacrificing and deeply bound to love for them because I am humbled that such powers as they could be entrusted to my care by the deeper powers. It is the sense that I hold a treasure such as them in temporary trust- a treasure many times beyond the value of any worldly wealth- that leads me to be

what I consider a good parent.

We're so used to thinking of parents as some kinds of kings or queens under whom children should be made to cow-tow and obey; we think of children as inferiors with nothing to teach but a lot to learn from parents- but I think I have it exactly the opposite of that. I've learned much from seeing how my children's fresh, open, imaginative, and unsullied minds engage the world and other beings in it. They've taught me more than anything or anyone else about the original nature of human beings, if such a thing exists. I don't expect them to grovel to me because I happen to be their father; I'm in awe of them, in many ways. In these formative years, they are not here for me; I am here for them. I was cared for (in ways) by those before me; now I care for others. The flow is forwards, not backwards.

Naturally I must hold in place the minimal, sensible rules that assure their safety insofar as any rule can assure safety; naturally I must teach them things about wisely dealing with other people in this life, and I'm happy to do so. But a sense that is quite alien to my authoritarian society rules the interior nature of the relationship I have with my children. I am not their god or lord or master. I am their protector insofar as I can be, and I protect the amazing power I see manifest in them. I was privileged to see it, to help it into this world for this season of exploration and enjoyment.

Many of our "traditional" notions of parenting spring from nowhere else but the authoritarian, hierarchical patterning at every level in society. That patterning echoes into families and even into friends groups, with people struggling to become alpha males and queen bees at every social level. I am disconnected from these struggles. I have no horse in any such race. This makes it hard to be around a lot of people. Because I refuse to wield the authoritarian "iron fist" over my children, I am thought a failure of a father by some, who have unconsciously internalized the dangerous notion of the "dictatorship of the parents." How will I teach my children about fair reciprocity in relationships if I model, day after day, the relationship of dictator to fearful subjects whose only duty is obedience?

I would never suggest the negative "humbling" of the peasant before the king, but I will always proclaim the goodness of the positive "humbleness" that springs spontaneously into a person's awareness when they simply become aware of even a tiny part of the enormous scope of life. A similar humbleness comes with the refreshing and invigorating taste of real relationship, and in noticing the complexity and completeness of other beings.

The people who view with disdain and condescension the very existence of a non-human natural world, or who care little for the needs of the other-than-human world: they ceaselessly, mindlessly destroy things, make bad decisions with terrible long-term impacts for all. None of this would ever happen if they had the positive sense of awe and humbleness that I mentioned.

# Fear

Fear. The single word that dominates the entirety of our social world, and defines, in practically every way, our policies, our beliefs, and our social outcomes. Sad that. We're afraid to live, afraid of each other, afraid of the unseen, and afraid to die. Such a heaping of fear on the salad bar of social life guarantees that the vultures who lead us will feast on fear and cook up new dishes of it.

The Inuit shaman Aua, in his discussions with his ethnographer Rasmussen, told a different story- a story that has moved me and continues to move me, to this day. Aua told Rasmussen about Sila- the spirit who indwells the wind of this world- and how Sila spoke to people at times, mysteriously, and with a totally non-threatening voice. Sila's repeated message? "Be not afraid of the universe."

Be not afraid of the universe. Remember, this is Sila- the power who indwells the wind, the atmosphere, the storms, the dangerous, frightening things that threaten humans: freezes, snows, lightning, wind that destroys. This is Sila, who punishes people who transgress taboos- who punishes those who violate the spiritual-ecological wisdom and balance-keeping rules that the Inuit always lived by. Sila is the fierce guardian of Nature itself, who vivifies nature.

And yet, the spirit, Sila, who is considered an almost abstract concept ("Sila", beyond a name for the spirit-person, is also another way of saying "natural law"- something is "right" because it is "according to Sila.") still sometimes speaks, and when he does, his voice is as non-threatening as a woman's voice, according to Aua, and he begs humans to never fear the universe. Be not afraid of the world.

This, for me, is one of the fundamental insights into the nature of reality, which we would all do well to embrace. I start right here- as my spiritual Mentor Marcus Aurelius also began here: total trust in the (natural) world. Don't trust the human world: that would be madness of the deepest kind! Trust the natural world, the spirits, the gods therein- and the operation of the sacred, clean, pure, and ancient natural forces that gave shape to us all, that shape us now, and accept our bodies and souls back when those things change in the grip of death.

Trust it. This natural system of life and mind and soul has been in operation since forever, and the sacred powers know what they are doing. They didn't make mistakes at the get-go, and they don't make mistakes now. The true story of this cosmos is safe in the hands of the wisest company of storytellers imaginable. Whatever is happening to you, at the deepest physical and metaphysical levels- this is an expression of something mysterious but true and powerful and (at any rate) unstoppable. Be not afraid of the universe. Cooperate with things, inside and out, and you will come into the boundless country- you will see the light that illuminates the world and gives animation to the invisible, too.

Fear of this world is the supreme mental sickness. Greed, the supreme social evil. Selfishness, the

supreme personal madness. And they both stem from fear- anyone can see it. Fear of not having enough, fear of being rejected, left behind, sidelined, lost, forgotten, betrayed. Fear of failing, fear of death, fear of rejection.

It's ironic, but the singular power that spares us all these fears is our capacity for real relationship with other beings- and these fears inspire us to defile and forget that very capacity. The salve our souls need is the first thing discarded in the feverish dream of fear, greed, and selfishness. And then, lacking a cure, they only grow worse. The false cures offered are just that- false cures, products of the fever's fiercest burning.

This downward spiral won't end until we cease to be afraid of the world. I think about dying a good bit. I haven't gotten my "bad news" yet about how many months or weeks or whatever I might have left, but if I got that news tomorrow, my first thought would be (I hope) "Be not afraid of the universe." I would hope to die thinking that these greater forces acting on me are as appropriate and wise as the forces that acted to bring me out of the womb in the first place, or shape me inside that womb nine months before.

Trusting the world means never imagining that you're in charge of it, nor that anything you say, think, do, believe, or feel is somehow so crucial to it that it can lead to irreparable cosmic disaster for your soul or the sacred powers. Nothing that is real can ever be destroyed. Be not afraid of the universe.

When you stop being scared, you become curious, and when you become curious, you become open to experience, and when you become open to experience, you become learned, and then wise.





# The Deadliest Poison

For six straight months, you observe a handful of acorns falling into one particular area below an oak tree. Then, you decide to go and sit in that area- and become upset because you were hit by acorns. I understand that no one likes even a little knock on the head, but seriously? What part of seeing, over and over again, the rain of acorns under that tree into that area convinced you that having a picnic there would meet some special exception to the rule? You have no grounds for upset.

Just so, for 1700 straight years, we've observed an enormous amount of people being told dark fantasy tales about the nature of man and woman, and about the nature of nature. We've seen them continue- with great strength and vigor- brutal, outdated sexual mores, and we've seen them destroy countless innocent lives and cultures without cease. We've seen them undermine political systems, and shield their members from every sort of justice for the heartless abuse they have brought to the world.

If you sit down for a picnic with them, you will be brutalized. If you ally yourself with them, you will not only get brutalized, but you will likely pass the abuse on to others- as surely as day follows night. This system of outcome is well observed by this point, and very predictable. If you sup with these people, or give your soul to them, even a very long spoon won't save you. And you won't have any room to complain. None.

It's that term- "exception"- that might just kill us all. Everyone imagines that they will somehow be the "exception" to the rules; they imagine that they have seen the exception, know the exceptions, or can pitch their tents with these groups, and live among them as some kind of exception. They think that the whole horror-show should be judged by a few exceptions that they can point out.

They imagine- most grotesquely- that their fantasy of exceptions is "the way it really was", long ago- or the way it was always intended to be. This is another justification for not fighting against the awfulness, for not fighting against the system that reliably produces horrendous outcomes. Or at the very least it is an excuse to fail to remove oneself from it, and to continue giving it silent, tacit permission to continue.

If the source is diseased, the water will be tainted. Don't kid yourself- we are each of us water from a diseased source, culturally considered. Our best attempts to go against the stream and become our own rivers is hindered by the taint we inherited. It takes special effort at purification to run clear and healthy again- and recognizing that the source was bad is just the start of it.

A lot of us think that we can break away from the spiritual cultural conditioning we received from the Christian "source current" that informs our society consciously and unconsciously- just go and form our own non-Christian communities, just choose to believe radically different things with every ease,

and move on with our lives. But this is not so. If only it were so easy! If only!

As I said around the time the Kenny Klein scandal broke, the sickness in us will easily transmit itself to our break-away communities, if it is not purged and healed properly first. You don't get to put this cart before the horse; our impulses to create sub-cultural refuge worlds is good, but the horses of our bodies and souls are injured. And those horses still do all the hard work. The confused architects of the old world made something; if we go and try our hands at architecture with a similar style of confusion, we'll make something surprisingly (or not-so-surprisingly) similar.

We will, without meaning to, create not the original, free, and safe environments for ourselves and our families that we want; we will create the appearance of that- at first- but what we will end up with will be a caricature of our source. It will reveal itself for what it is, soon enough, to the disillusionment of many.

Slowly, and then quickly, the very Christian notion of "clergy" begins to arise in those alternative spiritual communities, in patterns shockingly similar to Christian ones. Inevitably, the "outreach" comes- the desire to have a seat in the so-called "interfaith dialogue", to assert difference of identity, to compare teachings and beliefs and justify one's own against the others; to *be* somebody, to make the distance known, to maintain the distance, while at the same time winning that precious social acceptance or understanding. A paradox- and no matter what anyone says, this is a submission to the "spiritual marketplace" of ideas: "what do you believe about this? About that? Wow! That's cool! We believe this... we believe that... we used to believe this, but no one stuck with that..."

As though the bedrock of what we "believe" was just a plate you got from a buffet! What we ought to believe are those things the deeper soul senses health and truth in- often enough, these aren't things that a brilliant thinker can write out on a piece of paper for sharing. And never are they really purely intellectual "choices"- they are responses to a deep connection to this world and to other persons. Real organic "religion" is a response to a mighty sensual and spiritual environment, not a well-considered choice made after flipping through some books. Revealed religion would have us buy into the notion that we can "see it in the book" and recognize the amazing truth in it, and "convert our ways"- but that may be the biggest hogwash of all.

Slowly, but surely, back in the "new community farmstead" that the intrepid neo-pagans (or nature-spiritualists or off-grid people) built, preferred thinking and feeling becomes calcified and enshrined as the unspoken law- And it's always for the "common good." The ruling elite, the insiders, the movers, the directors, they arise and take their thrones, even if their thrones are well-hidden under egalitarian rhetoric, intellectual obfuscations, and good intentions.

"Meet the new norm, same as the old norm" might be a humorous way to put it- what began as a great possibility becomes a somewhat better-decorated "more of the same"- a continuation of what went before, only with (sometimes) cooler people, better music, better parties, and a nicer aesthetic. But below, the rot continues. Without the healing needed at the get-go, the poisoned tree re-spawns itself and continues its tyranny, repeats its errors.

We can fool our socially alert, breathing selves, but the other soul is not so easy to fool. It's not surface-level progress we want; it's the progress of the other soul, the one that walks in a dream-like mystery of interconnection and intuitive vision. No carts before horses, here. What springs up in this world must be based on the depths; we cannot establish a house that we believe the depths will like, and then wait to see if the depths will come to inhabit it. Chances are, it will not.

We've been doing "this"- whatever "this" is- backwards to front. Our desire to find refuge, to be safe from the madness that surrounds us and inter-penetrates us- we have to revise our approach. I preach the "vertical and through" solution to this quandary, not a new horizontal swivel. This solution is hard to explain, but easy to feel. It may not offer a map, but it offers a push off of a dangerous-seeming cliff: only to discover, in the fall, that we had wings all along.

And I do it so that I can accomplish it myself- I do it even if it will only ultimately help me and two or three other people- and I do it so that I can accomplish this dream and immediately cease to be anything or anyone who stands out at all, just another person like the quadrillions who have lived before, absorbed in the simplicity and power of it all. Which is what I actually am, anyway.

The idea of authority is a deadly poison- perhaps the deadliest. The brilliance of any person on paper must be forgotten, along with the person, and instead, we have to ride their words like the life-rafts they may be, across the rapids of this modern social hell, to a better world for ourselves and our own, and then rest being the better, wiser beings we will be. I don't own anything I say- and I'm sure that every 30-50 sentences I write probably contains something useful. But that useful thing comes to me from this world as a whole; it comes to me from deep places; I don't own them, I just express them because I feel like I need to, and I feel like I need to because many things trouble me.



*"When oral culture degrades, the mediated mind loses its bearings, forgetting its ongoing debt to the body and the breathing earth. Left to itself, the literate intellect, adrift in the play of signs, comes to view nature as a sign, or a complex of signs. It forgets that the land is not first and foremost an arcane text to be read, but a community of living, speaking beings to whom we are beholden. Adept at representing the world verbally, the literate intellect forgets how to orient in the midst of the world's presence, how to hear those many voices that do not speak in words.*

*Similarly, the computerized mind, when left to its own devices, all too easily overlooks the solid things of the earth. Skilled in the rapid manipulation of symbols, it neglects the stones and the grasses that symbolize nothing other than themselves. Dazzled by its own virtual creations, the digital self forgets its dependence upon a world that it did not create, overlooking its carnal emplacement in the very world that created it."*

*-David Abram*



## Hecate's Darling Crew:

### Traditional Witchcraft Compared to Modern Pagan Witchcraft

I saw someone today complaining- in a wise and humorous way- about the nigh-ubiquitous worship of "Hecate" among a lot of modern people who consider themselves "witches." I understand what the gentleman was trying to say. Of all classical Goddesses that have been carried into later-century witchlore, I approve of Hecate the most, because I know who and what She is, and why her worship is potent. But his complaint strikes deeper- deeper to the heart of a more important topic.

I was once in the grip of "religious" witchery, like nearly everyone else around me. What I mean by "religious" witchery is the sort of "witchcraft" which resembles Pagan religion more than it does sorcery. It's very prayerful, very focused on veneration of some very mighty non-human persons.

There's nothing wrong with it, but we should be honest about why "religious witchery" is so prominent these days: the blighted and benighted modern day has given to real individuals and creative persons no truly satisfying spiritual paths, leaving such people to find their own- or, as so many do, to abandon the notion of religion as a whole, falling into the abyss of nihilism and atheism.

There's something deeper and sensual and mystical about "Pagan" religion- and that quality was there in ancient times, and even in the worst attempts to reconstruct it now, it is still largely present. Our souls just feel it. How much more alluring and important are the actual high-quality reconstructions! But religious witchery has the widespread presence it has because it answers the soul's deep-seated need for religion.

Truthfully, religious witchery does not strongly resemble the witchery, the traditional witchcraft, of the late centuries.

Witches were not chasing Gods nor Goddesses around 16th or 17th century France, England or Scotland. That is not to say that those Gods and Goddesses weren't around; spirits were there, and are still there. Some of those spirits were the same ones worshiped in the Pagan world as Gods and Goddesses. Some had intensely strong covenants of tutelage and protection with individual humans and groups of humans. That's all very true.

What we can't ignore is the fact that the humans of those times- who resemble us today more than the Pagans of 1000 years before- didn't often use the term "God" or "Goddess" for those spirits, if they used those terms at all. "God" would have been a more likely term used for powerful spirits- or the Master himself- because it's an easy transfer from the Christianity that they were also steeped in, culturally. That word- "God"- is the accepted and acceptable name for a male-seeming spirit who appears to be quite mighty or potent. It can be divested of its cultural baggage with some ease.

Titles- often very ordinary titles- not words like "Goddess"- were used by Traditional Witches to

refer to the spirits that might once have been Gods or Goddesses- titles like Lady, or Master, or Dame, Elf-Prince or Gudeman, Hobb, "Daughter of the Mountain", Good Lady, Good Abbess, and the like.

We have to go further with our honest appraisals of things- if Old Gerald Gardner's claims have a "central hole" in them, it's the fact that he claimed to find a team of "really real witches" whose religious practices were demonstrably modern. The fact that the purported

New Forest Coven's witchery was almost entirely "religious witchery" is evidence enough that it was modern, not traditional in the sense I mean. The fact that they were "Goddess" worshipers is more evidence. It's not that they worshiped a Goddess; it's the fact that they called Her that, regularly. That places them in our modern day, starting with the post-Victorian period, when new-age Goddess worship had started to become a reality.

I have long ago grown beyond the "religious witchery" stage- and entered into the stage of "familiar witchery"- the craft of sorcery done by the leave of familiar spirits- which is also almost the entire center of my spiritual life, too. It's not that I don't accept, understand, and bend my knee to the fact that my Master was once worshiped by Pagans as a God. It's not a matter of me ignoring the fact that the potent feminine power that I believe birthed my soul and everyone else's was worshiped by Pagans as a great Goddess; I know that these things are true.

But there is so much more to the spirit-world than just those powers. There is another sort of satisfaction of our need for religion and spirituality to be found in working with more local powers and spirits- and indeed, when you start to do that, the "life of familiars and allies" takes on an amazing soul-satisfaction of its own. And religious witchery gives way to familiar witchery, to the kinds of sorceries and experiences that we have records and accounts of Traditional Witches actually performing and experiencing.

Religious witchery is the tip of the iceberg. As much as I've enjoyed it, some people don't even need it, and historically, may not have had it. I daresay that it was more rare historically than we imagine, and that would be more true the later in history you get, up until the birth of the "new age."

I've learned this from familiar-witchery: if I need sugar, I can go ask my neighbor to borrow some, and repay her by bringing her some of the pie I made with it. If I was to lean on religious witchery for the "sugar", then I would go to my computer and email the sugar company and ask them nicely to send some sugar to my house, and then wait for it, knowing that there's a good chance it may not come at all, or that it may take a long time- things I can't change because companies are big, busy, and the situation is complicated.

Familiars are neighbors- "The Good Neighbors", in fact- and their sorcery, their power, their teachings, their guidance, their protection, is immediate. They awaken things inside the soul that are immediate and powerful. They are the reason why witchcraft was so effective, and why witches inspired fear and awe in people. It may be that, distantly considered, some or many familiar spirits



are granted to us by the leave of greater spirits- even the ones considered Gods and Goddesses in ancient times. That has been my experience.

But that doesn't change the fact that leaning on religious witchery leads to different outcomes than feet-on-the-ground familiar witchery. Hecate, despite what some people believe, is not nearly as likely to appear and lead you from plant to plant, explaining what the virtues of each of these worts might be- but a familiar spirit of that meadow will. Easily. If you have the right things to say and repay, he or she will. Most certainly.

When I saw the gentleman in my feed complaining about the "Hecate" worship, I saw in that a complaint about how witchcraft is often re-cast as neo-pagan Goddess worship, and not the sorcerous art it is. Some "witches" I've met, when I watch them and listen, start to sound like Hellenists far more than witches- or Heathens, far more than witches. This is due to the confusion, in our minds, of religious witchery and familiar witchery- and the extent to which true neo-pagan impulses have impressed themselves upon our expressions of religious witchery.

If someone could walk into a room and meet my familiar spirits, they would understand, in a moment, so much about me- why I say the things I say, why I feel the ways I feel. These are the spirits that shape my daily sorcerous life, moment-to-moment. They are the ones that I'm busy engaging, 95% of the time. It's like having your own personal "pantheon", as it were- and if I were part of a mostly-human covenant (as it is I am part of a mostly non-human covenant) those covenant members would have a relationship with these familiars of mine, too- sharing the "knowledge, favor, and conversation" of familiar powers is one of the things that makes covenants into covenants.

Thus, a true covenant will have its own range of non-human participants, who, within the covenant-stead, and within the lives of the members, act almost like you'd expect Gods or Goddesses to act: giving protection, favors, and power. Except that they can do it in a way that vaster, greater powers perhaps do not- a more intimate way, a more immediate way.

To know the masks that the familiar spirits of a person or a covenant wear, to know what that person or persons "see" when they are engaging the familiars- that would give you a bridge into their place of power- which is why I do not ever describe or tell others (except in the most intimate or trusting of circumstances) how my familiars appear, or who they are.

But in this association I have with them, I find both the same kind of soul-satisfaction that ordinary people gain from "religion", and I find real power, the power to obtain and attain things that I need in this life. My devotions to the Master represent only the "upper most" crust- or perhaps the deepest core- of my religious urge. You can't go around every day badgering "The Man" Himself every time you need something; it's enough that he blessed me long ago with the ability to find the one familiar that everyone knows I have- the one appearing as an owl.

I'm thankful for that, but when you get a familiar in your life, you then have an immediate power to go to when you need things; you can then cease pestering the Mightier Things, except in dire

emergencies, or to say "thanks," or when you need them legitimately for something else. That's why a familiar is also called a "magistellus"- a "little master"- because you don't have to pester the Master himself once you have that connection to a personal master.

And then your sorcery can be really born, your ability to co-create real, tangible changes right here in the now.

The gentleman who made the original post complained about the lack of "originality" in modern witchery. This point of his hit home the hardest- when religious witchery is all you ever see, originality is in very short order. Because religious witchery these days is focused around a few of the same big and well-known "Names"- Hecate, Lucifer, Lilith, Cernunnos, etc- making those who go "a little obscure" with their names stand out: Tubal-Cain, Godda, Herla, Edric, etc.

But sad to say, "Traditional Witchcraft" in the immediate, sorcerous sense is going to take more than just some obscure names being tossed into the same old religious witchery! The "lack of originality" this person was lamenting doesn't come from religious witchery, and really cannot- it comes from the "Hidden Host" of familiar powers that individuals or groups can and should be discovering, and working with daily- and the expressions of those secret, sorcerous relationships that can infiltrate the world around them. My familiar-relationships *are* expressed, in coded form, sometimes in open form, in the world around me, through very real "rituals" of friendship and repayment- but also through other means.

Sometimes, those means seem very mundane to an uninitiated onlooker. But anyone sufficiently mystically inclined would see something else. They would see a secret world being artfully maintained. I assure you, what I do to keep my divining-familiar satisfied with he and I's friendship is every bit as important as how I may thank the Good Master or the Good Lady- or the Fate-Weaving Ladies- when a large and positive life-change comes my way.

# Many Mountains, Many Forests, Many Bogs

Few cliches offend me or bore me more than "All religions seek the same thing; each one is just a different path up the same mountain, all leading to the same peak."

In no manner is this true; no manner at all.

All religions do *not* seek the same thing. Each religion out there proposes a different set of principles and stories which describes their narrative of the world, followed by what they believe is "wrong" with the world or with people, and each suggests a vibrantly different set of practices or beliefs to combat what is wrong.

And guess what? Some religions don't believe that anything is "wrong" with the world.

There is no way- except in the minds of people who want to reduce all of human spirituality to an over-simplified and tasteless vision (which somehow they can make to compliment their own way of seeing)- that these things can be reduced to one thing, or one set of essential truths. The attempt to homogenize the spiritual traditions of our world into "one" dishonors each, distorts each, and allows for the flaws of each to go un-blamed, unseen, un-criticized, and unanswered. It creates a false sense of solidarity- an illusionary sense of oneness- which does not exist, and has never existed.

There are many mountains, not just one.

We aren't all climbing the same mountain.

Some of us aren't climbing mountains at all. There are swamps, bogs, forests, lakes, rivers, oceans, deserts, hills, plains, tundra, and steppes out there, too. And then there are caves, caverns, and tunnels underground; some of us are spelunking.

We aren't all trying to "summit" a mountain. And not all paths are as safe, not all as healthy, and not all peaks worth arriving at. All these modern, recent-to-history revealed religions that have so many billions of followers- they want to give themselves the (unearned) title of "great world religions" and then insert themselves into the spiritual history of mankind, as though they just fit comfortably right alongside every other religion that ever was, with an equal share of truth- but such a thing is not the case.

These other religions aren't just another way to aim at a common, noble goal; that is how they see themselves- on the days that they wish to speak as though they actually care about ecumenicism or tolerance. That's how they see themselves, but that's not what they are.

The faster they convince us to believe in the mountain cliché, the faster their failings are buried in

the morosity of this over-simplification. I'm not going to homogenize into meaninglessness the entire multi-faceted spiritual history of mankind in the name of one vision of spiritual anything, and I'm especially not going to do it when the guest list of "great religions" include religions that have bathed this world in blood, intolerance, greed, homophobia, violence against women, and genocide. The fact that they could believe that they are on any mountain and walking "up" is the real comedy here.

We have to let the fish of the ocean bottom, and the eagles of the highest peaks, and the deer of the deepest forest inhabit the same world- a world of great variety- without expecting them to meet one day at some common center. There is no common center. That "center" is a name you give to anywhere you personally happen to be- it's never held in common with anyone else. And that's okay.

We *can* all live in the same world, in all the different ways we live, without forcing a common center on everyone, or expecting everyone to embrace a narrative of life that reduces their personal journey through the world to a journey which is pretty much the same as everyone else's, by virtue of the journey secretly having the same goal as everyone else's.

We can live on different mountains, or in different forests, and share the same world, glory in the same fullness of things. And that whole time, we can believe different things, feel different things, experience different things- and as long as we aren't violent imperialists, no one is the poorer, and no god or spirit is offended. Hate to break it to the reductionists and the spiritual imperialists, but Nature just isn't as dramatic and simple as they think it is.

And we aren't all trying to climb the same mountain.

I don't have to be climbing the same mountain you are to justify my spiritual existence, nor is it polite to steal some vague sense of approval for your path from the positive things about mine. Nor is it clever to stain my path with the sins of your own, in the name of making us "one."

When my spiritual destiny is "finished"- assuming it ever can be- you and I may not be in the same place. We may be all over the place, perhaps near to one another, or perhaps far- And that is okay. We will have arrived- assuming there is a such thing as "arrival"- having loved very different things, having been in the friendship of very different beings. That's okay. Nature's got the room to spare.

# My True Allegiances

Today, I've encountered (yet again) someone who hates that his taxes have to be spent on the welfare of others. Today, I met someone who thinks if you don't like the military, you're a traitor that needs to leave the country. I've also met someone who thinks that men are responsible for all evil in the world, and someone who thinks you need to believe in Jesus or else you'll be banished to torment forever in the afterlife. I met someone who thinks that eating meat is the prime evil of our world, and that if you want to consider yourself a moral or compassionate person, you have to be vegan.

Today, I met someone who believes that political correctness should be law, and that people who use insensitive pronouns or adjectives should be socially ostracized. I met someone who thinks marijuana is a deadly "gateway drug" that leads to every sort of drug abuse and destroys families and causes every manner of social harm. I met someone who thinks that Obama is the antichrist, a secret muslim socialist who wants to destroy America and take everyone's guns away. I met someone who thinks that Obama is a great guy whose health care reform is the best piece of legislation we've had since the great depression.

Today, I met someone who thinks we should arm teachers at all our schools, and that the only solution to our problems with crime is to have every man and woman carrying a gun. I also met someone who thinks guns should be banned almost completely, which is their idea of how to fix the problem. I met a gay guy who was really nice and all about people being tolerant, and I met a straight guy who said he'd beat up any gay guy that he thought was hitting on him. There was also a straight guy who said he was an "ally" to gay people. There was a woman who said that abortion was her "right", and another woman that said that abortion was murder.

I met a Native American activist who thought that white people were culturally and spiritually vacuous, and an African-American activist who thought that reparations for slavery were in order. Right next to them I found a Native lady who cared more about peace than race, and an African-American man who had (by his own words) "moved beyond race, and beyond the past." I met one of those really disgusting Ayn Rand followers who believed that Native Americans needed to be culturally destroyed because they "weren't doing anything" with this land, and whites brought "civilization".

I met an older lady who thought that everything was really fine with the world back when she was a teenager, and an older guy who told me things have always been "this messed up." I met a Muslim who hated Israel, and an Israeli who hated Muslims, and I met a priest who thought God loved everyone no matter what, and a preacher who thought that God only loved the righteous. Right next to them was one of those new-age Rumi-spouting universalists who thought Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims were all silly and wrong, and that ecstatic poetry and love was all that mattered.

And the whole time I'm meeting these people, I'm thinking how bored I am with all of them. Good people, bad people, but none of them interesting to me.

Where, I ask you, are the women who worship the moon and the earth and the sun, the men who get archaic stringed instruments and create the new ballads about princes and princesses and witches and giants from inside themselves? Where are the people whose dominant personality trait isn't a political orientation or a sexual orientation or a religious orientation, but an aesthetic orientation towards the spirit world, towards the darkest and brightest mysteries of the strangeness of sorcery? Those are the people I want to meet.

Where are the naked dancers, the chanters, the poets of the Unseen, the painters painting spirits they have met in fever-dreams, the diviners, the out-of-body flyers, the trance-masters, the broom-riders, the people who scribble in notebooks and can seldom answer the question "what are you working on" with any honesty when some friend or family member puts it to them? Where are the herbalists and the storm-raisers? Where are the fiends who talk to the dead, the cloud-namers, the grave-earth collectors, and the people who make bonfires for the Ancestors?

Where are the people who prefer faery tale collections to any other book? (For that matter, where are the people who still read books?) Where are the fire-dancers, the loners who talk to trees, the drummers, the quiet souls and the bead-stringers, the witches who love the Master and his servitors, the witches who work day and night to gain entry to the Queen of Elfhame's feasting-hall below? Where are those people? Where are the people who aren't predictably boring on either side of a left/right fence? Where are the hedge riders who care more about what the spirits of a local mound think, than what the local townsfolk think?

In my dreams, naked Fayerie-women and owls try to lure me down passageways that start in the ground somewhere, and end up in the branches of silver trees and around distant stars. I'd rather talk about that than politics, diet, sexual orientation, this version of monotheism or that, this gun right or that war, this tragedy or that one.

The worst part is the extent to which I find myself- like most people- drawn into the discussions on politics and religion. I become the boring person that I'd hate to meet. Then I remember my true allegiances.

# Myth Never Dies

The Onion- America's finest (and most humorous fictional) news source recently published an article entitled "Church Canceled Due to Lack of God." As funny as the story was, it got me thinking about the collapse of modern organized and revealed religions in the west, and the need for a mythical life in us, despite the failure of certain myths and the organizations that calcified them to death.

I think that churches are emptying not because "god" isn't real, but because "god" isn't what people have been taught to think it is. They are falling apart on the weight of their myths- the particular myths embraced by Christianity are heavy and clunky and can't hold up to modern scrutiny. Of course, I think myths are generated in every era- a "myth" here being a story we tell ourselves to explain things. Atheists particularly hate the word "myth" because they think it just means "made up and fake", but as any student of actual mythology (or analytical psychology) will tell you, "myth" has more functions than just empty explanations, and they are more than just stories told in the pre-scientific world.

So, for me, "myth" almost never means "fake", however, SOME myths have outlived their usefulness- assuming they ever had any- and crashed and burned in the modern world. The myths of Christianity are perfect examples. The sad thing is this- ancient people were not just ignorant primitives. The human psyche has not changed that much in 100,000 years. The contents of our psyches, the focus of certain aspects of the psyche- those things have changed. But the innate intelligence, adaptability, and perceptiveness of humanity has remained constant.

New bodies of knowledge have been created, but the psyche of man has remained the same- and the psyche has a myth-creating function, because the psyche is itself a mythical force, a story-generating power that is part of the larger story of "mankind". I think ancient people understood that greater powers were part of our world, and part of us. There is nothing "out there" that isn't "in here"- this universe is a whole, not shattered, sundered parts. It is one great event, and our psyches are just the medium by which we receive this universe in symbolic form. Our languages, for instance, are another expression of the symbol-creating function and the assignment of meaning to sounds and signs.

The ancient peoples knew that there was a massive, deep, dark depth to everything; they knew that life and intelligence was not limited to just themselves. They expressed these half-conscious insights in many forms, and certain "myths" arose to suit that expression. The problem is that the mythical function of the psyche has to alter itself to suit the changing of the world and the changing of the psyche, which are two events that might be seen as a singular event with two ranges of intimacy, at least from our perspective. When organized, revealed religions "locked their canons", they froze their myths and refused to evolve.

This is the real reason why they are rightly scorned as false today. Their conception of "god" is meaningless outside of the original culture that manifested it, though the power that was interacting

with that culture likely was an autonomous collective of force that really affected those people, and defined their character, as they went on to define its character. But was a single culture's notion of "god" the absolute? Of course not. It was an event of power- full of the predictable errors and terrors that come with humanity- unique to a certain time and place. The only relevance it has to us now is as a warning, and a guide on the path of avoiding the dangers of absolutizing moments long past. The powers of our Ancestors, and of our time and place are still working in conjunction, this very moment- and waiting for the Seers among us to recognize what power means today.

This universe holds more for us than we can realize at this point, and only the hints that come in non-intellectual dreams, visions, and intuitions still remain- in that dim way- to alert us to the fact of the mysterious vastness that exists. It's fashionable these days to worship at the feet of the Gods of Rationality- the pantheon led by Sagan and his fellows- and to dismiss the non-rational and the non-intellectual as so much background noise, but I think this is just as big an imbalance as existed when we killed people like Sagan, and floated in defiance of the intellectual.

I side with Jung in his insistence that rationalism and doctrinairism are the diseases of our time. His full and superb quote (from *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*) reads:

Critical rationalism has apparently eliminated, along with so many other mythic conceptions, the idea of life after death. This could only have happened because nowadays most people identify themselves almost exclusively with their consciousness, and imagine that they are only what they know about themselves. Yet anyone with even a smattering of psychology can see how limited this knowledge is. Rationalism and doctrinairism are the diseases of our time; they pretend to have all the answers. But a great deal will yet be discovered which our present limited view would have ruled out as impossible.

He goes on to say:

We cannot visualize another world ruled by quite other laws, the reason being that we live in a specific world which has helped to shape our minds and establish our basic psychic conditions. We are strictly limited by our innate structure and therefore bound by our whole being and thinking to this world of ours. Mythic man, to be sure, demands a "going beyond all that", but scientific man cannot permit this. To the intellect, all my mythologizing is futile speculation. To the emotions, however, it is a healing and valid activity; it gives existence to a glamour which we would not like to do without. Nor is there any good reason why we should.

On the question of the myths of life beyond what we call "death", the Master Jung waxes even more powerfully. He says:



...Naturally, such reasoning does not apply to everyone. There are people who feel no craving for immortality, and who shudder at the thought of sitting on a cloud and playing the harp for ten thousand years! There are also quite a few who have been so buffeted by life, or feel such disgust for their own existence, that they far prefer absolute cessation to continuance. But in the majority of cases the question of immortality is so urgent, so immediate, and also so ineradicable that we must make an effort to form some sort of view about it. But how?

My hypothesis is that we can do so with the aid of hints sent to us from the unconscious- in dreams, for example. Usually we dismiss these hints because we are convinced that the question is not susceptible to answer. In response to this understandable skepticism, I suggest the following considerations. If there is something we cannot know, we must necessarily abandon it as an intellectual problem. For example, I do not know for what reason the universe has come into being, and shall never know. Therefore I must drop this question as a scientific or intellectual problem. But if an idea about it is offered to me- in dreams or in mythic traditions- I ought to take note of it. I even ought to build up a conception on the basis of such hints, even though it will forever remain a hypothesis which I know cannot be proved.

A man should be able to say he has done his best to form a conception of life after death, or to create some image of it- even if he must confess his failure. Not to have done so is a vital loss. For the question that is posed to him is the age-old heritage of humanity: an archetype, rich in secret life, which seeks to add itself to our own individual life in order to make it whole. Reason sets the boundaries far too narrowly for us, and would have us accept only the known- and that too with limitations- and live within a known framework, just as if we were sure how far life actually extends. As a matter of fact, day after day we live far beyond the bounds of our consciousness; without our knowledge, the life of the unconscious is also going on within us.

The more the critical reason dominates, the more impoverished life becomes; but the more of the unconscious, and the more of myth we are capable of making conscious, the more of life we integrate. Overvalued reason has this in common with political absolutism: under its dominion, the individual is pauperized.

# No Vain Superstition: The Sorcery of Childish Things and the Fayerie People

When I look at my own life, and all the things I've done, been, seen, suffered, enjoyed, encountered- I realize that nothing about me now makes any real sense. I won't belabor my dear readers with stories of my life thus far; it will suffice to say that when one looks to the seeds that the tree of my life grew from, incongruities make themselves apparent.

By profession in the day lit world, I am a therapist, and a systems theoretician, utilizing the sublime science of systems theory to map out the web of interactions in my client's lives, and to search for the threads of causality therein that can change perhaps their lives for the better, if they would pluck those threads, or cut them, or wind them tighter. Of course, what's "better" for a person is defined by them; and I'm happy to help. My strategic mind loves it, and I'm thoughtful enough to sleep well for having done it.

But the moonlit world presents a very different person, indeed, some would say, not the same person at all- the witching self, using the computer and writing books as Robin Artisson, is more than just a human mask for the Fetch of this life-event. Robin comes, it seems, when he wants, does what he likes, and sometimes, he isn't a he at all, but a she, or an owl, or sometimes a yawning darkness that only takes what it desires, or sometimes teaches me how to do things, often enough things that can change something in my life, or other's lives.

Whatever else I may be- how sublime the mystery that is man- I embody the worldview of interconnectedness- and how can a sorcerer not embrace and embody such a thing? In that world, there are a few rules... or at least, tendencies that repeat quite often enough for us to put some trust in them. I can think of many, but here is one: when we plant a stone, an oak tree does not grow. To plant an acorn, however, will get us the mighty oak. So why has this life of mine grown the way it did, as it did? Nothing planted in the fields of my nascency should have come to this.

I am, in most ways seen, and in every way unseen, the polar, dark-sunned opposite of my family, my society, my friends, my everything. I am- for how much longer I don't know- a blight in the average person's opinion, and they'd think me more of a blight if they knew the depths of me. I am just a curiosity or an eccentric to the more open-minded, and to the weirdest possible people, I am thought a pretty good writer.

But how could I become the stranger I am? I know the answer, though it is not one many people have the ears to hear. Early on, I invoked the Unseen world and it responded. What lifted me above my early conditioning and made me some mutant child as I am now was the Hand of the Unseen world. I have no doubt about it, and if you knew the story of me, you'd agree fully. You might not think I'm a great writer, but you'd still agree with that other part.

Which is fine; no matter what you think, I love my good people, too. It's a strange love, as I don't know many of you face-to-face, which is the same as being soul-to-soul; and for those I do know, well, they have to put up with how I happen to be when we meet, which can be many ways, admittedly. It doesn't always work out well. That's fine too.

I use the word "love" because it feels like a warm door opens in my chest sometimes, and I think the world has more goodness in it than anything else, and when I think of the lives I touch through words, that door can sometimes creak open a bit. Something in me knows that I'm not as alone as I can feel, but the rest of me knows that I'm even more alone than I feel, with respect to one thing only: people who never really grew up.

I'm a 37 year old child; I just know how to act like an adult very, very well- I've fooled countless faculty at many universities, and more than one employer by this point. I have a harder time fooling people online, but then, I don't try online. People are always calling me a huge child, and well, they're right.

Magic naturally belongs to children, whether or not we want to see it that way. And we don't; our entire soul-shredding society is coated with a black, shuddering layer of banality that was painted onto it by several wicked hands. The first hand that did it holds a bible: in what can only be described as one of history's least-noticed ironies, the "Jesus" of the shrunken-souls says "Let the children come unto me... for to such as them belongs the kingdom of heaven." And yet, the "passion bodies" down at church never get tired of pointing out (with another bible quote) how when they "grew up, they put away childish things."

There is a war on children in our society, and perhaps around the world, and it takes a brave person to see it, for few of us have the heart to admit that the darkest of all possible outcomes is also present before us. How many more dark outcomes can history cast into our faces? It overwhelms the senses, at times, but let's stick to just this one right now: the victimization of children.

Children are the easiest possible target for the self-centeredness of the shrunken-souled adults that fiddle away their meaningless days in the wasteland of the modern world. These adults- the people I was raised to become like- may have lost the magic, the natural sorcery in themselves ages ago- but to lose something as precious as the Weird, the Sorcerous Nature of all things, is not sufficient. When it goes, a vacuum remains behind, a hurting for what is gone, and it will try to take it from wherever it can be found.

Sadly, you can't have another person's soul, at least, not that way. You can't have the wonder or the magic that rightly belongs to another. None of these fading, wrinkling apes try to destroy the wonder in others consciously; THAT would be too dark of an outcome to imagine- but unconsciously, the urge to make sure everyone else is as miserable as you is overpowering. And you know this already; you've each seen it and felt it in your own lives. You know the sorts of people I'm talking about. I can say this with sorcerous certainty- you wouldn't be here reading me if you didn't.

What's left of the magic of this world sometimes looks for Robin, because he is a witch who can do amazing things, things I don't understand fully; the people that I attract, or that I am attracted to, in this medium or in the so-called "real world", they are fireflies as much as they are people, people in whom some shred of something very old and free still burns, blinks, bright sometimes, dark other times, and frightened the whole time.

That's okay; I'm frightened too, sometimes. I see people everywhere who don't themselves really see- they don't use their eyes, but their eyes use them, just enough to keep them alive until the next day. When they see children, they see annoyance, noise, damage, responsibility, money lost, the end of the "free" days when they could go out anytime they wanted and fuck everyone in sight; they see a burden, not a beauty, not a fresh and new expression of the Unseen, carrying its ancient magic into this world before the darkness of this world smothers it away to winter.

And what a magic! Can there be a greater one? Your life becomes responsible for another- bonds are created, in the many ways they can be created, by blood and womb, or the sacred and ancient organic rites of soul-adoption, and then, two souls united, they begin to write in the book of the life of the other, trading hands, trading pens, inscribing and co-creating new stories. What the parent does, the child lives and learns and grows from; what the child does, the parent is challenged by, and regenerated by. Do we live our youth out again, when we see our children grow before us? Yes. Do we understand the book of human life in a way we never could before, when we see the story of a human life being told from this early point? Yes. Can we now release ourselves from the black hatreds that sometimes obsess us, when we realize that the targets of our grudges were once small humans, innocent and magical, beloved by others as we love our own? Yes. There is a perspective change in parenthood which is also a force beyond any other that I know. It was a pleasure to put myself aside and live for another with the power of this love; I only regret I waited as long as I did to become a father.

The story of our connection to one another is all there, and the story of our sacred origins. Everything about humanity is complete in its beginning- like any true circle. Children complete the story of life.

And yet, the vapid self-centeredness of our society grows stouter by the day, birthing a crop of child-hating morons that applaud loudly when a mother and her baby are kicked off of an airplane or a bus because she can't get her infant to stop crying. All they can think is "I paid my money for a quiet ride- get rid of that brat." They don't think of the sacrifices that parents make, nor the sacrifices that so many made for them when they were young, nor the patience others had for them as well.

I'll say it clearly, and for all time: we owe everything to the womb that shaped us, no matter how good or bad your mother was at the craft of mothering. Someone- and this world- managed to mother you enough to adulthood. Mothers rule this world, secretly; "the hand that rocks the cradle", they say- though our earliest times are also our most unconscious times, they are the most important times, and our sense of gratitude must extend back, even into the mists of that unknowing.

And I owe everything to my children and the other parents who, with me, enjoy the goodness of these

children just recently emerged from the World Below, and, however clumsy we may be about it at times, help to create the very future of this world. The magic that shapes the future happens first in the red cave of the womb, a place as full of shadows as it is life- a very adequate description of the Underworld, if ever there was one.

It's not my intention to wax too far into my righteous annoyance at the way parents and their children are shoved aside more and more by the fascism of youth and beauty in my country, nor the fascism of selfishness, but I must say, with all due venom- if, for some reason, you've decided not to have children- and anyone can, via adoption- at the very least, do not insult people who do, and don't try to make their lives miserable. Understand that sacred mysteries are at work here, and stand aside politely, as all gentlemanly people will when they come into the presence of something inviolable and great. It isn't a lot to ask.

And no matter what, it's never just some "snot nosed brat" that some sleep-deprived woman is toting around. Look to your own soul (assuming the world's banality has not withered it into bitter ash) and recognize a sacred being like yourself, a kin being that came from the same deep places that you did. We're all in this together; do not add misery where it is not necessary. It is true that Fate has spun some to seemingly bear messages of misery; there simply is no explaining the woe-work of some people; but greater woe to those by whom misery comes heedless or selfishly!

I was talking to a young man today- a child, in fact; one of my clients. And I was helping him to see past some of the miseries the adults in his life saw fit to pour there, when I saw an old well on his grandmother's property. Vine-covered and perfect, that well made me realize that I was going to come home and type this very letter that you're reading now. It was one of those moments, quite beyond our understanding, when the soul can emerge and talk.

And it came out to talk to me, and it talked to me about the Lords and Ladies of Elfhame, the people of the mist, who are, in fact, you and I's Ancestors, and still very much alive. And it goes beyond life- they don't just live; they continue a story that runs parallel to the story of each of our lives. If you're wondering where that story might be found, you probably already know. You might have seen the right ancient story or "fairy tale" and realized that something was burning under the surface of it- that is one place, and a very old place.

But beyond the words of the Old World, there is that sense of the mystical that you grasp at times- maybe a book or a movie or just the wind in the trees awakens it in you. That sense- a sense without a name- is just the corner of a tapestry of life that contains the Mist People. When that corner- or one of its many threads- flutters into and around your soul, you just know it. For a moment, you might as well be a child again, because something of the energy and freshness you had then re-awakens. That is your soul awakening, briefly, from the slumber our moronic social world puts it into.

Here, you are just a biological machine, a body put to work to make profits for other people, people who own you by owning your labor. Here, your imagination means nothing to most, and your originality even less. What magic you had was dumped in favor of your obedience and conformity.

That is what evil men and women have done to this world, and they have done it religiously, socially, economically, and even scientifically.

In the Unseen world, however, you are something else entirely, something more like a partly hideous, partly beautiful, partly human, partly bestial circular tessellation of clear light and darkness, which has the power to be anything that it grasps. Or, should I say, it has the power IF it finds the power. This poetic language (if, indeed, it is thought poetic by anyone) is my way of saying that you are truly and deeply free, fully free, free to an extent so infinite that it would burn away your recently-formed human personality if you could touch it for an instant. Nothing limits the Unseen; and while we move through the web of power that is called "The Seen", the Unseen persists, like a ghost, a wraith, a legend, a hint of something beyond belief, a flame in the imagination, a longing, a lost love, a hope, a dream.

And we are never alone. We can't be; it isn't permitted by power. We can certainly feel alone, though. The "Elven rades", the courts of the Seelie and Unseelie, the Pale people of the Seasons, "Them over there", the ones merged in the ground, the Fayerie people, and their Lords and Ladies, and THE Lady of them all, that massive motherly power that makes everything else possible, with her White face stirring in our sun and rainstorms and fertile earth, and her dark face stirring in the void that was before anything was, they are all with us. And we are with them, forever- and until we let the warm door in the chest open and stay open, we will wander on the shores of the ocean of eternity, coming and going forever, as they watch, and wait.

The Master of all things, forever showing the way to Fayerie Elfhame's silver gateways, he walks among us, flies among us, and Robin flies with him, when Robin is away from me. When Robin returns, he brings the tidings of the Master, and sometimes, I bring them to this ridiculous glowing flat screen on this desk in my study, and I type and type like I am now, not knowing where this will all go, and feeling strange and happy at the same time. It feels like love. And it is; a strange love- and as wonderful as love is, remember, love is terrible, too.

The Fayerie-Faith is not vain superstition. It isn't primitive nonsense thought up by primitive people long ago; it was a gift of love, wonderful and terrible, to this whole world. The land spoke it; the Queen of All wove it on her loom and chanted its stories, as songs of power that could shape the world in countless mysterious ways, and so it has happened. We are the impoverished who have forgotten what we should not have. The last great magics in the world have become either invisible to our sightless eyes, or become targets of our scorn, and make no mistake- wicked minds wanted it this way.

I know that you will be the people of love and imagination and power that you are, and refuse to fall prey to these dark machinations. You will walk quietly one day, with new feet on soft grass, to the waiting hill that radiates a clear light, and go down, to the deepest and most profound place, all the while your old, ruined body is breathing its last elsewhere. You will know what I felt when I saw the well today, and what the beings who came out of it said to me without words, on that day, and you'll remember I wrote this out for you.

Nothing should have gone this way, but it did. I am not the person that I was born and shaped to be; I am something and someone that became what he became because of great and Unseen hands. They heard me, when I needed them the most; they listened and they came forth, and they moved me, and protected me, and shaped me. I know that sacred powers follow me, but then, these are no boasts—these are deadly things to say, unless I say what must be said further: sacred powers follow us all. And the Unseen world listens and answers, if you call out to them as a child would, with that sort of freshness, with a soul free of burdens.

# None Who Live Now Still Stoop So Low: Strange Insights from the Depths

I was musing yesterday, while consciously sinking into my bodily sensation as I went to sleep (I never miss a chance to use the natural activity of sleep to gain conscious access to the depths of myself and the world) about death and mortality.

Using the sensation of your body, at night, when lying down for sleep, is part of the oldest spiritual tradition of mankind. It gives you a time of real release, of true "death rehearsal", of uncommon clarity, if you can maintain the subtle clarity of mind that you carry with you into the deep below, each night. Most people cannot or do not. But for the cunning, it is a golden opportunity for the sort of strange but clear thinking that can reveal so much.

I was considering what Jung said about the "second cosmogony" of reflective consciousness. I might be happier counting sheep instead, but a stranger like me doesn't live like others, and as a consequence, I don't sleep like others. Let me un-pack Jung for a moment- "second cosmogony of reflective consciousness" comes from one of his later writings, in which he considers the miracle that some mammal vertebrates- we humans- should develop a differentiated brain which made reflective consciousness possible.

Jung did not believe that the cosmic and biological turmoil that led up to the formation of humans with their strange reflective consciousness was intentional at all. No "intelligent design" in his thinking! He believed that the "second cosmogony" happened "as if by chance"- that in the middle of all that giantish throbbing and cycling, a "light emerged from the darkness", and humanity was.

He says:

*If the Creator were conscious of Himself, he would not need conscious creatures; nor is it probable that the extremely indirect methods of creation, which squander millions of years upon the development of countless species and creatures, are the outcome of purposeful intention. Natural history tells us of a haphazard and casual transformation of species over hundreds of millions of years of devouring and being devoured. The biological and political history of man is an elaborate repetition of the same thing.*

*But the history of the mind offers a different picture. Here the miracle of reflecting consciousness intervenes- the second cosmogony. The importance of consciousness is so great that one cannot help suspecting the element of meaning to be concealed somewhere within all the monstrous, apparently senseless biological turmoil, and that the road to its manifestation was ultimately found on the level of warm-blooded vertebrates possessed of a differentiated brain- found as if by chance, unintended and unforeseen, and yet somehow*



*sensed, felt and groped for out of some dark urge.*

Of course, Jung carries this further- in our reflective consciousness, he reasons, wholeness has the possibility of consciously occurring. Nature put some sort of deeply hidden premium on the manifestation of consciousness in the reflective sense. The Gods can be born in us, when that happens. Through the paradox of divinity- or the paradoxes in the Gods, to think more polytheistically- a tension is created that can be resolved into a wholeness. And THAT wholeness can consciously survive even death.

Whether it was the symbol of Yahweh being used as a metaphor for the Unconscious, and his angry, dark side having to be resolved with his supposed "loving and all knowing" side- or Odin and Thor's cosmic struggles with the Giantish powers outside themselves and within themselves, the purpose remains the same: to let consciousness that is reflective of itself and the world and the Gods be welded into a wholeness via these tensions.

For those savvy to the true Craft, the conflict is between the White or Heavenly Master, and the Red and Chthonic Goatish Master- and the "Red Men" or the chaotic forces that boil in the trees and dirt all around us, and in the waters and fires. The Master is whole already, whether Red or White- whether sorcerous healer and teacher of man, or tempter and binder of man- it is we who lack the wholeness that can make the good and the so-called "evil" into one harmonious thing, thus qualifying good and resolving evil.

Now, as I was sinking into the Great Dark, I began to have visions of people who died (as we say) "before their time"- how sudden and terrible death can seem, when it takes that smiling, happy-seeming person that everyone says was such a "good person" away from us too soon. And people who simply die, every day, in their 40's or 50's or even 60's- too young for a world like ours, so full of resources, and technology, and unparalleled opportunities for companionship. Why should any of us die early? Let's leave grim Fate aside for just a moment and ask the question again.

I began to sense, very dimly and deep inside me, what I have known on many levels for years, but only now have the power to say: There is more than random-seeming biological chaos "happening" here in us, and more than random-seeming biological events govern our ends: we are not simply waiting on the car wreck or bullet or disease or old age that will kill us. We are tasked, each of us, with creating and maintaining a conscious connection to the great power that is the wellspring of meaning for our lives: what Jung called the "unconscious", but what we know is the Great Dark, the dark interior of Fate's un-guessable body, The matrix of all living and dead.

She sends us nightly messages in dreams. She sends visions; from that great power, consequences and circumstances consistently arise that reveal an underlying- though perhaps not planned out- pattern for our existence. We are not here just to live these human lives; we are here to make possible the experience of deeper and greater forces, too. The world, in a sense, depends on us as much as we depend on it- not at the level of physical substance or biology or the birth and death of solar systems,

but at the level of a meaning, a subtle meaning, drawn from the emergence of light in the midst of the darkness of being.

I firmly believe that if a person loses conscious touch with their own depths for too long, they will die early. I believe this because I believe the depths will discard conscious "parts" of itself that become inefficient or useless at the level of the creation of meaning. It is, therefore, dangerous to your life to NOT make attempts to acknowledge, honor, and contact the Unseen, the great reaches within and beyond which have no bottom, which are an infinitude of mystery and potentiality and unguessed meaning.

We see those happy and loving people "taken from us" too soon- but we cannot see their inner lives. I feel, from deep within myself, that even the happiest seeming person can have a life of inner turmoil, or no inner life at all to speak of. And I consider this to be a paralysis of the soul and the meaning-creating capacity that can and will lead to death, and to re-blooming elsewhere, where meaning perhaps will be more evident or within reach.

We are born with a purpose- born kin to Gods from the depths, born capable and worthy of the Gods themselves. This purpose is not optional. I used to imagine, long ago, that the activity of acknowledging and contacting the unseen was meant only to be the domain of a few mystics, not the general population, as it was in the distant past. I no longer believe this. Mysticism isn't just a good idea for a few; it is the chief governing factor of all life, even lives that have nothing consciously to do with it.

It so happens that in the Pagan past, the majority of people, non-mystics, had the living and vibrant bodies of myth to integrate them with the Unseen, myths that were lived out and made conscious by storytellers and through communal participation in sacrifice. That is gone now, and the myths that are made conscious in churches and mosques are not adequate to make the 'connection" in full. This is why Christians and Muslims and Jews complain daily about how it seems that "God" has abandoned them, when trouble strikes them. I don't imagine anyone's "god" has gone anywhere- but our ability to "get low", sink down, go deep into the source of meaning, is all but gone. As we age through our lives, we must change how we relate to the depths; we cannot allow ourselves to become complacent or stop evolving in our "reaching out" to it, our plunging deep into it. Long periods of "being out of touch" are deadly.

Jung tells a story of a boy who asked his Rabbi about all the miracles that happened before, in the Torah and the Bible, and about why now, people could not longer talk to "God" the way they used to in the old days.

The Rabbi's answer was very amazing- he said "because no one these days can stoop down that low." I understood, as Jung did, exactly what the Rabbi meant. It was more than just a statement about how egoistic and prideful people have become, how stuck on themselves they've become (a consequence of messianic monotheism and the frightening focus on personal righteousness and so-called "personal salvation")- it was also a statement about getting "down deep", sinking down into the Great Dark, the

Underworld, the deep condition of mind that preceded this shallow, analytical, alphabetical, and paranoid consciousness that we all now think is so normal. We don't see and converse with the Gods as the Ancestors did because we don't have the sort of consciousness they had.

But sometimes we can have it, and when we do, you know it. When you hear stories from those states of consciousness, you feel the chill of the "deep and darksome reality" that waits outside the boundaries of our fragile consciousness now.

Look below, look deep, look to the Unseen, within and without, and always keep your mind on it, keep a relationship with it. Be aware of what it sends "up" to you- especially in dreams. Talk about your dreams a lot with trusted friends. The inner life of dream is a dialogue, not just a biological accident. The deep and dark has something to do with your ultimate end in this life, and ignoring it is the best way to get put out of the pasture early. When you lose the possibility of creating meaning through meaningful dialogue with the depths, you have no real purpose anymore from its dark perspective, and you may find yourself immersed in it suddenly and finally, leaving behind all you knew and loved.

Fear? Yes, maybe. Sometimes fear is the wise reaction. But it's more of an invitation to open up to the Depths and let them become real in a new way through you. It isn't just the Master "out there" the Witch seeks that matters; the Master seeks them, too.

# Notes on the Metaphysics of the Hedge

"Hedge" really has two meanings. First, the "Hedge as is" refers to the metaphysical reality of the point at which Chaos (the Great Dark) appears to give way to something formed- the Day World, the "place" or places where something can be grasped by us as a discrete thing or a system of things that appears to obey or conform to certain "rules"- like a natural system that coalesced out of the stranger, earlier, less formed primal roots of things.

Of course, one must be careful with this; in certain ancient or provenance traditional considerations, it is a natural system that is utilized as the living symbol of Chaos: the system of a forest. Contrasted to the world of human villages, the forest is Chaos, a wild, unformed place of strange powers. The forest is not purely Chaos, because Chaos is dark, unformed, and mysterious- but forests are old symbols, aesthetic signposts, for Chaos. Forests can be dark and mysterious, but they are still formed systems of high complexity.

But it is precisely in that distinction that finally started growing between human settlements and the wild forests, probably early in the Neolithic, that gave birth to the true notion of the Hedge. Outside of these considerations, "hedge" refers to a point beyond which things are not predictable, or beyond which things are chaotic and mysterious.

The second meaning of Hedge is more internal to human beings- or other minds, whether they be human or not: "Hedge" refers to the divisions we make between us and the other-than-us; it refers to the mental habit of seeing things a certain way. When you accept that "things" are a certain way, you lose the power to see them otherwise. When a group collectively accepts certain "rules" for reality, they have no choice but to see the world in those ways. In this sense, the hedge exists because we make it exist, because we refuse to let things- including ourselves- be what they really are, which is something fluid, strange, and mysterious.

Everything is fluid, strange, and mysterious, when seen clearly, outside of the blinders that we accept. We strive to "make the world make sense", and that mental effort to categorize and chart and systematize and predict things can grow far beyond the simple sensory habits that lead us to be able to make sense of our environment for the goals of survival: it can become a world-calcifying mental habit that severely limits our ability to comprehend and experience the deeper reaches of reality- the spirit world, in other words.

"Spirit world" here really means more than a separate "world"- it means this world's subtle dimension, the missing angles on things that our minds just refuse to grasp because we are convinced, on some level, that either those angles aren't real, or are hidden hopelessly from us for one reason or another. Sometimes those angles are rejected for other reasons- because they are "Illogical" or "superstitious" or "unsupportable" or "hallucinations" or "schizophrenias" or whatever reasons we've

manufactured to uphold a cognitive status-quo.

That's a second kind of "hedge" born of bad mental habits and habituations. Understanding how bad mental habits have blinded us to the subtle and strange dimensions of experience is the key to overcoming those habits, and making perception full and whole- which leads to the ultimate blossoming of human potential. This wasn't planned. We weren't intentionally blinded to the spirit world so that we could rediscover it for some reason. It just happened due to a sequence of unwise developments in human culture. But if unwise developments brought it about, wise developments can undo it.

# On Forbidden Ground

Make no mistake: we are at war with certainty and predictability. The wild spaces in our hearts can no longer afford to be forced into accepting that these two things are to be desired above all.

It has been said that you don't really have anything that Nature didn't give you. A naked man on the road can say "robbers took all that I had!" But he still has the only things that were ever really his- what Nature gave him at birth, that body, that mind, that soul. Anything else we accumulate on top of those basic things isn't "ours" in the same way; those things are just things we've collected temporarily.

Just so, go for a walk in the woods and see what Nature really gives- which is always wild, unexpected, unpredictable. Two rowan trees, two oaks and three pines grew in the place they grew- not planned, just because that's where it happened. One trunk grew at one angle; another grew at another. One root system was knotty and another deep, and another smooth and straight. A hole in one trunk became the nest of a bird; a deep fissure in another became a pool for ants to drink from. There was no way to predict how this tiny forest came to be, nor the shape it took, nor how countless other beings would interact with it.

That's all. Any desire on our part to make the trees grow in straight lines, at certain angles, and to control where those roots grow, and what animals live amid those trees, is not some desire of Nature's coming through us. It's a warped desire, foisted upon the Nature-world, based on fear of the uncertain, on that fear that we might not be the captains of this ship.

And our fears are only realized when we see Nature reclaiming all of our amazing works- even that sidewalk, that parking lot, that building that we ceased to use for just a few months is crawling with weeds, runners, vines, green life exploding out from under it and surrounding it- and in just a few years or decades, unless we act to preserve it, no one will be able to tell it was ever there. It will be swallowed, re-absorbed, re-wilded in the old fashioned sense.

You want the plants in a straight row, and a knowledge that on this day, you'll have this many turnips and carrots, so that your family can be fed. You want to know that the stream down the way will give you the water you need. You want to be soothed by the predictable, you want to feel safe. A fine desire, but when that desire leads you to force Nature into so many ways that it never intended to be, you're crossing a boundary that has a dreadful guardian protecting it. You're overstepping the mortal world's boundaries, and treading on the Ground of Gods.

Some say that this is what we are- beings who, by Nature or by Fate, just violate boundaries, push the boundaries, adventurers, heroes, visionaries, professional exceeders of the natural limits. Maybe that's what we've become. But what we're doing now is not what the ancient heroes of old were doing

when they did the unthinkable and adventured into the world of the dead or the world of the Gods.

Those ancient heroes went across boundaries and came back- the boundary violation was for a single and importantly noble or transformative purpose, and when the consequences of the violation were through, the power channeled, the epic now in the memory of the storytellers, then the natural order was reestablished.

We violate boundaries and then we stay. We set up shop on forbidden ground. We assume that the world will just find a way to live around us, instead of realizing that we're supposed to live around it. Are the Gods gone? That has to be because we've evicted them, invaded them, soiled their ground, soaked their once-inviolable meadows in blood and filth.

There is no "otherworld" for us anymore- the sacred hearts of mountains have been dug out, the secret hearts of forests have been cut down. The depths of the ocean, even, have been poisoned. What's left? Outer space? Is that the new Otherworld? Of course it is- the Fayerie people, the spirits, the elves, they've become "extraterrestrials", aliens that can appear and disappear, with ships that float around in strange lights, vanishing and appearing.

All we have are the wild hearts Nature gave us. That's all you end up with when you die, when the desire for control and power apart from Nature dies, when the well-organized thoughts die, when the ability to tear up the world around you dies- you get re-wilded, in the old fashioned sense. This is why the dead are so frightening to the living; we know they don't have these well-organized minds that we expect others to have; we know that they don't "reason" out things like we do; we know that they are wild and free, in a thoroughly disturbing way.

This is why we have to make sure to put a big rock over their bodies in the ground- make sure those creepy things don't get up and come back to visit us, with that monstrous, wild look in their eyes, wanting our blood, preying on us like wild animals. We need the dead to move on, to get out of our well-organized communities, to not rock the boat. Burn them to ashes, make them transition away from us, get them locked in the Underworld, let them have a "happily ever after" somewhere else. We got important, sensible, rational shite to do here, gotta make sure we hold back the dam of insanity and wildness that threatens our streets and laws and bank accounts, and threatens "everything we are"-

Everything we are. How many times have I heard that? I wish those people knew what it really meant.

# Poetry Alone Satisfies the Soul

One of the reasons why the mystical power of the old spiritual-ecological systems of belief or extraordinary experience cannot re-emerge in the minds of modern westerners, in any authentically powerful form, is because we aren't content to let things in our experience be what they are, without dressing them up with our special breed of modern thinking.

We have to "think extra" about them, and always enough to make our experiences fit in with dominant cultural memes that are born in our learned rationalistic habit of upholding our assumptions about nature and life. We regularly take potentially beautiful and mystically transformative experiences and reduce them to rational dung piles that give our intellect some entertainment, and then get forgotten just as quickly.

I saw some Asatruar talking about dwarves the other day. They were doing very well discussing who and what these wights were to the Ancients- but then, one of them had to say "It's obvious that dwarves are personifications of the hidden creative power of nature..."

Nothing could be more boring or devastating to the real mystical core of the experiences of the Ancients. No, dwarves are *not* "personifications" of anything. They are dwarves, a particular form of wight, of sentient life, who can and do enter into our experiences at times, affect the environment of this world, and then move on.

They do not have to be placed within some rationalistic paradigm that reduces them to expressions or personifications of something that you're more comfortable with, or something that you can see, or something that you can grasp, or fit into some neat, tidy cognitive framework that you can then foist onto the world.

It might be easier to say this: if a dwarf-wight is a "personification" of nature, then so are you, and everyone you know, and the tree next to your front door, and every blade of grass in your yard, and your cat, and your dog, and the mold growing on that piece of bread you saw yesterday. If everything is a personification of nature, then stating the fact is rather obvious and pointless, and adds nothing to our possible understanding of what dwarves may be.

But then, why are we trying to make up metaphysical theories about what dwarves may be? We already know what they were and what they are, because the Ancestors said what they were and what they are- and the Ancestors didn't say that they were "personifications of nature's hidden creative processes."

They said that dwarves were wights, sentient beings, who lived in their own world, which was below this one, but it was a world that had connections to this one, and sometimes, those beings



visited this world, and sometimes, beings from this world- or other worlds- visited them.

Sometimes, according to the old stories, dwarves made treasures for humans and Gods. Sometimes, they came into this world and caused sickness or disease. Sometimes, they helped; sometimes, they hurt. They could look like nearly anything, as can most wights with magical power. They were very wise. That's all. That's enough. That is an organic and flexible, open-ended guide that can help you to understand when you may have a dwarven presence in your experience.

A bear may hear the crunch of leaves in a "one-two, one-two" pattern, and smell wood smoke and smell the stench of dried ale on leather, and realize that a human presence is coming into his experience. When, in a dream of yours, a man comes up out of the ground and tries to give you a special piece of jewelry he claims to have made, you may rightly think that a dwarven presence is coming into your experience.

If you believe "wow- this personification of nature just gave me a magical treasure! You might actually make the dumbest mistake ever and thank "Nature" for the gift, and not thank the Dwarf who is just as much a person as you are, for their gift- and then you'd deserve the arse-kicking you might just get from a jilted spirit.

Why do we need to add anything else to these beautiful, experiential, organic, and traditional understandings that the Ancients passed down to us? Aside from the rotten, unwise, and all-pervasive influence of monotheism, which teaches human minds to ignore the multiplicity that is reality, and condense everything of real spiritual importance into "one thing", why must we take Gods, elves, dwarves, norns, (or anyone and anything else from any other mythical system) and collapse them into "personifications" of something else? "All the Gods are One God"? Seriously? It can come as no surprise that the Gods don't visit humans much anymore.

If I went to some spirits and busted my arse for them to help them, and then heard them telling one another "All the humans are really one human", so let's thank Human for what he did!" And then I heard them later saying "I wonder if the Robin Artisson aspect of Human can be called upon for help with anything else?" I think I'd be looking for other beings that were mature enough to take responsibility for actual relationships, and accord other beings the dignity of full personhood.

Without that dignity being accorded to every other being we meet, we cannot fulfill our reciprocal responsibility to those beings. Those spirits I helped could go thank Fred Phelps for all the help I gave them, and say "well, all humans are one human, so that works."

But it doesn't. Fred Phelps and I may both be humans, and we may both be products of the power of Nature as a whole, but our individual personhoods, our experience-streams, are very, very different things, and that will never change. Reduce us- or anything else- at your own peril of unwisdom.

When will people understand that the soul doesn't want a "neat, intellectualized schema" that explains reality? The dwarves are mysterious beings from the dark world below this one- "we might have had

one attack a cow the other day, and make it sick..." That's enough. The soul is satisfied with that because it preserves the mystery of life itself, and the dark mystery of spiritual ecology. It makes life seem infinite and strange, which life certainly is.

To get the dwarves good and placed within a neat scheme is boring to the soul. You can have that scheme in your head for a few years, and then you *will* leave your "pagan" religion and look for something else. Think it through. Most people aren't into "this stuff" for a neat explanation of the cosmos- but then again, many are, because our scientifically-influenced culture teaches us that this is desirable.

Religion and spiritual thinking once was satisfying not because it explained everything, but because it added poetry to immediate experience. That's what the soul wants.

# Sensualism

The things I really wish I could give to people can't be given at all. I guess that makes them pretty precious. They came from the immense, nighted depths of Fate, unfolded in the amazing way experiences unfold, and now drowse as occasional recollections in my mind.

The very best of times and things I've seen and done are the things I'd like to share with people- and it can't be done. Only the poor substitute of words can attempt to evoke a fraction of the feelings associated. Some things come to mind: Christmas, as a child- the candles, the smell of the Douglas fir tree, the plates of rich fudge, the sounds of carols humming in the background- particularly the older carols, the dignified and mystical sounding ones, not the modern "happy happy" carols. In those years, as a kid, I could feel the presence of the Unseen World with a strength I long for again. I didn't know what it was then, but that didn't matter. I know now.

The amazing feeling you get when you meet a beautiful woman, and you get to know each other, and you realize that she's attracted to you as much (or at least nearly as much) as you are to her, and that you will enjoy one another's intimacy soon, and perhaps quite a few times. The overwhelming sense of anticipation and the way simple things with her become fun- that is a human experience whose essence I wish I could share, too.

The great peace and satisfaction you feel when you pull out a perfectly done loaf of bread you made from scratch, out of the oven, and that smell leading up to it- much like all-day-simmered pot roast, that scent can lift the spirits to the heights, and sink the soul to the depths of peace. It may sound like an over-reaction to simple smells, but simple things are always the best and strongest things.

The sight of fields of snow in the morning totally unblemished by the foot-tracks of humans or animals; the way a setting sun can set the sky ablaze with every shade of red, gold, and orange- and, lest we forget, that perfect (though brief) set of moments when the delicious dark ale or good wine you're drinking hits you with the initial "buzz" feeling. The crackle of a well-stacked campfire or fire in a hearth, and its comforting warm radiance... and the feeling of laying back in the ocean's water and just floating freely with your eyes closed, all four limbs and your trunk bobbing on the waves. These are things I carry inside my memory that I'd enumerate among the greatest treasures of my days so far, and likely ever.

Seeing your children experience the world in a way that you can't, because they are absorbed in the newness of it, the novelty of it all- and seeing it more clearly than you, for sure, in almost every instance (no matter how much adult propaganda out there demands that adults have the real truth of it)- that's real happiness for me, and an experience I wish I could share with everyone. The happiest I ever am is when my daughters crowd around me to have me explain some new bug they found on a leaf outside. That, for me, is the heart of whatever excellence life ever put aside for me.

And all this comes from a dye-in-the-cloth sensualist, whose life philosophy laughs as haughtily as a philosophy can laugh at the poor idealists who think these experiences amount to nothing worthwhile. If there is no worth in these sensual, tangible, precious things, then nothing in the cosmos has worth. Nothing at all. I would never want to exist in a cosmos wherein the dreamers were proven wrong.

# Solace

I've been to a lot of sad occasions, ordinarily associated with someone's death. I've seen a lot of very injured people, very emotional people, who took shelter in all they had left at that moment: "Don't worry" they told me; "God has everything under control." When they were at their worst, facing a world that was unpredictable and seemingly uncaring of their feelings, they needed to know that a God outside of the world and above it had everything under control. Part of me is compassionate (somewhere); part of me understands the psychology of this, very well.

But being able to understand something hardly brings a justification to it: I understand why some people kill, without justifying murder.

But let's leave murder out of it, and get back to the hurt, emotional people. I get it. I know why they seek the solace that only spirituality can bring to people in bad times. But their assurance- that God has everything under control- is, to me, infinitely more sad and terrifying than anything we could be sad about beforehand.

Because I wouldn't want to live in a world where everything was "under control." I want the sudden storm to be what it is- a surprise, unforeseen, unplanned, disruptive. There's real poetry in that, even if it is your picnic that gets rained out. A world of full control is not a world I would find alluring or preferable. Things being what they are- wild at heart- and all working together in a massive system whose outcomes are seldom predictable- that makes life worth living, to me. It makes things interesting, it makes things adventurous, it makes things able to generate stories very much worth the telling.

And I'm willing to die in that world, possibly "too soon" from my perspective at least. And it's a good thing that I'm so willing: because there simply is no other world.



*"From Tozeur I went on to the oasis of Nefta. I rode off with my dragoman early in the morning, shortly after sunrise. Our mounts were large, swift-footed mules, on which we made rapid progress. As we approached the oasis, a single rider, wholly swathed in white, came toward us. With proud bearing he rode by without offering us any greeting, mounted on a black mule whose harness was banded and studded with silver. He made an impressive, elegant figure. Here was a man who certainly possessed no pocket-watch, let alone a wrist watch; for he was obviously and unself-consciously the person he had always been. He lacked that faint note of foolishness which clings to the European. The European is, to be sure, convinced that he is no longer what he was ages ago; but he does not know what he has since become. His watch tells him that since the "Middle Ages", time and its synonym, progress, have crept up on him and irrevocably taken something from him. With lightened baggage, he continues his journey, with steadily increasing velocity, towards nebulous goals. He compensates for the loss of gravity and the corresponding feeling of incompleteness by the illusion of his triumphs, such as steamships, railroads, airplanes, and rockets, that rob him of his duration and transport him into another reality of speeds and explosive accelerations."*

*-Carl Jung, "Travels"*





# Subtlety

I know I'm not the only person who hears how noisy it is. There's a lot of birds out there, and a lot of people shouting, and a lot of thunder, and a lot of crickets. There's a lot going on: the one and only source of all life, which is this omnipresent Nature, is very busy and noisy and moving things about. Things move together; things move apart; beings are born and beings die, beings fall in love and beings hate one another- and that is what Nature's great song sounds like.

The day you become comfortable with all this noise, and all these changing relationships, without even a hint in your mind or heart of wanting to change it all to conform in this way or that to your own song, is the day you become a wise human being. Don't sing in discord; hum along in tune. The real shocker comes when you realize that the noblest efforts to help others or change things for the better don't work mostly because they make a discordant contrast to the bigger song. They start to work when you start rolling in the same deep channel that stands behind our notions of eternity and infinity.

This noise is quite a bit bigger than us; so are all the things moving. We are hearing, we are seeing, and we are being moved. Sometimes, depending on how we come into relationship with something or someone else, we have good fortune, or bad fortune. We seem to make a good change, or we seem to make a bad choice and have a bad change. And that's the way of it all, as it was, as it is, as it shall be evermore.

"But I don't feel connected to everything!" It's funny, but it's precisely that strange sense of calm "to myself-ness" that is the beginning of the feeling of being connected. If you examine that sense of quiet isolation, you'll see that it's full, packed full, of everything else. Your problem isn't a lack of connection; it's a lack of contemplative examination. We aren't contemplators anymore, aren't examiners anymore. A society like ours long ago gave up that subtlety for the brash and rude coarseness of more obvious things. But everything about the deep organic truth of life is subtle, really subtle.

Get on board! Subtlety is the new Obvious.



# The Art is Wonderful and Terrible

For all of you that face the unanswerable questions: why does the God of my society's mainstream belief gain such praises as all powerful and good, yet allow kids to be massacred around the world, or just blitzed to death by Tornadoes? Why can humans not seem to do anything but manipulate and destroy one another and the planet? Why is my youth or health destroyed by conditions inherited or outside of my control?

I offer all the solace of a place of mind and soul that includes all searching and brings all searches to their graves. I live in a world where sentience comes singing, sighing, and gibbering from deep in the heart of the world, arising in countless forms and passing away in countless forms, all driven by a non-rational mystery that takes away the "comfort stories" that are sold these days to the masses, and gives in return a story of wonder and awe and true art.

This art is wonderful and terrible, too. In this world that I proclaim, life is not a linear progression from infancy to decrepitude; every life is complete in whatever stage it happens to seem to be in. Nothing is assured to anyone, except wonder and mystery. Sorrows and joys flit to and fro in this world, always together, always crowded side by side, to lighten and darken every moment. There is no killing need to explain this strange, eldritch, and intriguing cavalcade of motion and life; no need to explain and no explanation that would suffice. When we give up the need to explain everything, we gain the whole world in return, pure and unadulterated.

I proclaim a world that is a massive sorcerous Ur-churning; I call myself sorcerer and teach "sorcery" as I have come to understand it, but the real sorcery is the world itself, just as it is, just as it operates around us and within us. No greater magical act can be conceived; it cannot be matched by human sorcerers, nor even the sorcerers that I know exist among the non-human beings that we share our world with.

The strongest magic out there is too enormous to comprehend or stop; it makes winter and summer come; it makes planets hurl through space; it makes stars form and burn out. It makes the entire dance of birth, age, and death happen.

It never planned out a story to suit human beings. It doesn't scratch its head in wonder at how much humans hurl complaints about the seeming unfairness or seeming randomness of life at it. If it had the capacity to scratch its head, it still wouldn't. We must be "re-storied" if we want to be "restored"- if we want the riddles of the Gods and Ancestors to make whatever sense we imagine they can make.

I may die tomorrow, and that means just about nothing to the Sorcery that is. I may live forever, and that would mean just as little. Wisdom makes us indestructible only by destroying unwisdom, those terrible little traps of thinking that lead to traps of feeling that keep us isolated from the Greatness that

is. The Spirits that led our Ancestors on the Surreal and Crooked Roads towards that unthinkable and unnamable vision that made humans into gods are still among us, as ageless and patient as the great mountains. And even the quest for the vision of that strangeness that opens the doors to the sky and the abyss below and the great spaces beyond was never what "life" was about. It's just another part of something weirder.

The chaos that lurks in these words can just barely be felt by most, maybe a tugging right under your eyes, or an ache in your heart as you unconsciously try to imagine a world in which nothing you've cherished as important really is. Call it the Great Terror if you want.

When the human flesh on these matters gets stripped away- and the dance of the bones begins- then you can love people and love other beings without fear of the unknown forces that might take them from you, or you from them, one day.

I preach about a world that is really a Sorcerer's Hell, a hellish vision that replaces order and certainty with chaos and never-ending uncertainty. Even the dead of my world can't settle into a peaceful, predictable afterlife. The Cavalcade of living beings and dead beings doesn't "pull over" to the side of the long tracks and "take a breather"- it rages all the more as it rades through endless millennia, from the void and back to it, passing through countless forests and cities as they spring up and vanish like a kaleidoscope-vision.

Do you remember those merry-go-rounds in parks, when you were a kid? Those metal contraptions that you just grab a handle on and spin, and hold on for dear life? Remember the vertigo they caused, the way you squinted your eyes and held on tighter? If you ever let go, you probably took quite a tumble. You might have felt a little sick.

Now imagine being able to get on one of those, and experience it as perfectly still, even as it spun madly away. No vertigo, no sickness, no danger- and yet, the exhilaration of the apparent spin is still there. That is what lies at the end of the Sorcerer's Crusade. If there is peace out there for us, the ride will be wild, until we find the secret in the center of the wild. Until then, our naked, suffering bodies are lassoed and tied and hanging in the hands of Dark Fates that delight in peace and in suffering, but never predictably one or the other. A sorcerer doesn't untie those bonds; a sorcerer celebrates them and becomes the knots, until the knots sing their secrets to him or her.

People ask me all the time- how can I get in touch with spirit-beings? I want to find my power, find my familiar, find my own way. And I tell them- stop being so human, so tame, so predictable. Be wild like they are. Start by re-wilding your heart. Have you done something even remotely unpredictable or disturbing lately? They won't be attracted to you until they perceive that you are more like them. Like does attract like, after all.

# The Converts

One of the biggest problems with people who "convert" to some sort of sorcerous-animistic lifeway, and then "convert back" to whatever three-ring circus of Christianity they came from in the first place, is that the person wasn't looking for a new way to live. They were looking for an alternative way to believe. It's not enough just to believe differently. The Indweller in the Deep Below, and the Master who Indwells the Wind of this world, and all the phantasmagoria of spirit-beings that live in this world, and below this world, they aren't looking for people to believe in them. They're looking for people who will live alongside them and respect *that they live*- and who will live better with everyone and everything else because of that respect.

The Master is not a replacement for Jesus, and the Fayerie Entities or the Hobb-Men, or the many other hosts we can experience in the Unseen are not replacements for angels. The Underworld, even in its paradisal regions, is not a new heaven or a new hell. The fact that spirits sometimes prey on people or that terror of the Black Hound is a real thing on the ghost roads is not a new basis for simplistic judgments. Fate is not "just another way" of believing in God or some "supreme power." None of these things "match" perfectly with one another. People who want Jesus, angels, heaven, hell, judgment calls, and god being in charge of everything will never be satisfied with the true Old Ways. The Old Way of being is something distinct from the new way of believing- it is not reducible, even in the smallest quanta of spirit, to the new way.

To become absorbed into any lifeway that hails from a genuine provenance or pre-christian source is not a simple "switch of belief", it is not just an aesthetic change. It is a change of lifestyle, a change of worldview, a change in living, a change in soul, if you want to take it that far. What you believe about "Them Unseen" may change over time, and that's hardly the point. How you lived and enjoyed living amid the many powers of this world, that's important.

# The Crooked Road

It was 23 years ago when I genuinely set out on this path. I don't even know what to call it- personal, mystical, sorcerous, alternative, occult... I know that people around me all have their names for it, or whatever social movement or category they want to put it in- "new age", "new religious", "alternative spirituality", "witchcraft", you name it, someone's called it that.

When I began, it seemed a certain way. I was chasing something alright, but I didn't quite know what. I only knew that certain people and certain books seemed compelling, like I had to read them or see their stuff. It was never clear to me then, but it all seemed to come to bear on something else. Did old Pagan Gods have something to do with it? Or "magic"? Or Nature, or the environment? It all seemed to fit together that way, but never perfectly- it was just a big, amorphous, subtle thing.

As the years passed, I started to separate out certain qualities and elements in this whole "thing" that I knew I liked and didn't like. I started to have a sense that I did, in fact, belong to an alternative social movement, however much I didn't want to belong to one. That's not to say that I was so enthralled or in love with mainstream "ordinary" society; not by a long shot.

But I wasn't enthralled by the alternatives, either. "Ordinary" society seemed used up and shallow; people chasing things that didn't interest me, at a great cost to themselves, totally lacking in any deeper dimension for meaning. And "alternative" movements or alternative "societies" seemed hurried, insincere, too eclectic, and worst of all, temporary- not having much staying power.

It seemed to me that this "strange thing" I had walked into was a clearing house for a few good souls, but mostly a stop-off for a crowd of souls that brought all their unresolved issues and tensions from "ordinary" society and discharged them here, all over the rest of us. When they felt better, or grew bored (or both) they disappeared, went back to whatever mainstream niche they came from in the first place.

I didn't want "sidestream" or "mainstream", or any stream; I was looking for something else, something that for the longest time had no name at all- and I wonder, even today, if any of the names I finally grew comfortable with really suffice to label it.

I don't know what I expected, but I do know one thing: after many pitfalls and sidetracks, after many bad people and a few good people crossing paths with me, and after an enormous amount of effort on my part (years) at developing certain extraordinary capacities in myself (the keys of which I got from just a tiny selection of important works and from the teachings of not more than 3 or 4 very wise people) something cracked open in me, exploded; something emerged, something that I possess now, but the 17 year old me would never have believed in.

If I could tell my 17 year old self what I'm doing now, what I'm seeing now, what I'm experiencing now, what I'm accomplishing now, the 17 year old would not believe me; the 17 year old would think it was a wild fantasy, something out of those fantasy novels he loved so much.

As for me, what I can't believe is that I didn't end up *anywhere* near where it seemed logical that I'd end up. I thought sure it would be some community of people related, Somehow (however distantly), to the "neo pagan" world, or the "new age" world, or the alternative spiritual world, under some serene looking Buddha, or with some former hippies in a forest somewhere... whatever people want to call it, however they need to see it. But I'm not there. People may think of what I've done in that way, and people from those places may like what I write, but I'm not new or neo or alternative anything.

None of this is colorful. It's not laced in Celtic-looking knotwork, it's not full of pentagrams, it's not haunted by native-looking people from wherever, it isn't meditative or serene, nor scandalous (well, not very scandalous) nor diabolical nor secretive, really.

23 years later, I don't have a strong "identity" that's drawn from anyone's myth, or religion, or social class. There's nothing "inborn special" about me that I can use to build an identity or appeal to people; I'm just your run-of-the-mill boring straight white guy- an almost unforgivable thing in this modern "new age" world indeed! I can't really join anyone's social crusade, because in me, they see the face of what they're often enough crusading against.

I just have one thing- one precious thing- the ability, gained from years of intense effort, to induce a state by which I truly experience what seems to be another world, and to create lasting relationships with the very, very strange but familiar beings I have met there. From them, I gain the capacity to help others and myself in extraordinary ways in this world.

From the "explorations of experience" I have made using that preternatural capacity, I have evolved a personal cosmology, a way of meeting everyone and everything, which happens to fit best into some of the most out-of-the-way and nameless patterns operating in deep folklore, but not describing any blatantly cohesive "code" or "path" of any sort. My worldview is a dream come to life, every bit as subtle and fluid as a dream. And I'm okay with this, remarkably so.

After all these years, this is what I've ended up with- the vision-inducing capacity of fetch-flight, and the extraordinary friends it has won me. That's where all this went. That's it. And this "one thing" is the single inch, the real magic, the difference about me that makes all the difference in the world. It's always the little things that make the difference in the end, they say; and as usual, "they" are right.

I think, for years, I saw myself as "in the process" of becoming this wise, powerful, mysterious, sage-like or mage-like person of types; that never actually occurred like I thought. I'm only 38; real wisdom takes longer to obtain than that. What "wisdom" I have now is largely lucked into- I've just managed to survive things that might have spoiled or derailed other people, and I can't take credit for luck.

The rest of the wisdom I claim to have comes really from the "giants" whose shoulders I stand on- Nietzsche, Briggs, Jung, Davidson, Macy, Bateson, Kingsley, the Ancients themselves through the recordings of their old sacred stories, Abram, Wilby, Shepard, Harner, and a few key others.

The final "great teacher" of mine- outside of those humans that honored me with some important bits of information that opened the deep doors- is of course my Puckril, and he wouldn't be there if not for the good graces of the Master himself- the Master who, quite directly, stands behind all of these great humans and their keen minds and their great works, who made all these human journeys possible.

I'm not much more than a clearing house for great things I've read, useful things I've learned, and strange things I've seen in visionary experiences. That I might have *some* ability to communicate certain ideas in some funny or inspiring way is really just more luck- or perhaps it's the fact that my sense of humor had to develop quickly to spare my sanity from my difficult early life, and that I just read a lot and was forced to write a lot, mostly as a form of punishment, very early on.

But none of that matters, really. Everyone collects a base of inspiring material as they read and walk their way through life. Some people- lucky people- collect a base of real spiritual techniques that let them have personal access to a hidden world; and there, they learn how to deepen their journey through life, maybe so much that it changes even what death might mean. That's precious. Everyone grows wise. The world doesn't suddenly change when they do; they just remember things that probably shouldn't have been forgotten in the first place.

I'm not all that "sagely"- I'm just good for a turn of phrase and a cute image upload on the internet (an internet that I dislike more and more every day.) I'm not so great with money (and I hate money), I'm impulsive in ways, impatient in other ways, sometimes too judgmental (though less now than ever before), and too "Taurean" as my old new-age friends would say. I'm the only fatalist I know that still struggles with big decisions, from time to time. I've hurt people through my carelessness, at times.

When I was much younger, I was arrogant (not all the time, but sometimes) because I thought I was so much smarter than most others. It took years for me to see that being smarter than most others wasn't such a feat. And that there's a hell of a lot more to life than just being "smart." I know now that, more often than not, it's better to be kind than clever.

BUT- but- this has a happy ending: I am finally free of so many things that held me back for so many years. All that matters to me, aside from my human family and friends, are the spirits that I know personally and consider friends and allies, and how they help me to bring to my life badly needed insights and changes. The rest of the world, and all its cultures or aesthetics or "movements" or whatever- those things are very secondary to me. Maybe even tertiary, if I was very honest.

I'm just a human with friends, some of them invisible friends. I am in the grip of a phenomenon that I know stands behind the legends and accounts of "witches" from early modern history in America and Europe- what made them "witches" has seized me, seized me from an early date in my life, and acted as a compulsion in my life, all these years. I know what it is, now.

It didn't have a name 23 years ago, nor did it ever fit in any of the boxes that I tried to fit it into. It will never fit in anyone's box. It will never be draped in anyone's cultural parameters. It is older than cultures. When you know what it is, you aren't left with a great, clear image of it; you are instead just free of needing boxes for everything, happy to be living a simple life with some good friends.

I don't feel like I have to "grow" or "develop" more, now. I actually felt like I had to drive my own growth, before. Now, I don't. I just trust that growth will happen, when and where it happens. I'm appreciative of the world doing that; I'm open to whatever might come my way, and I have no fear of failing at whatever comes my way. My Friends have taught me well, and their seen and unseen hands are ready at a moment's notice to engage the next adventure with me, whatever it may be.





*"It's far more creative to work with the idea of mindfulness rather than the idea of will. Too often people try to change their lives by using the will as a kind of hammer to beat their life into proper shape. The intellect identifies the goal of the program, and the will accordingly forces the life into that shape. This way of approaching the sacredness of one's own presence is externalist and violent. It brings you falsely outside yourself, and you can spend years lost in the wilderness of your own mechanical, spiritual programs. You can perish in a famine of your own making. If you work with a different rhythm you will come easily and naturally home to yourself. The soul knows the geography of your destiny. Your soul alone has the map of your future, therefore you can trust this indirect, oblique side of yourself. If you do, it will take you where you need to go, but more important it will teach you a kindness of rhythm in your journey."*

*-John O'Donohue, Anam Cara*



# The Cult of Humanity and Free Will

To hear some people use the term "personal responsibility", it's like they're uttering a religious phrase. Like nothing could be more important, more hallowed, more serious than finding or taking "personal responsibility" for this or that. I've heard so many people say that pretty much all of the problems of our world can be reduced down to how people just don't take "personal responsibility" for this or that.

I see this as a major imbalance, and in this, I see the "cult of humanity" in one of its modern evolved forms. There was a time- and Kingsley first pointed this out to me- when human beings really looked outward and inward in deeper ways, and saw that so much of what happened to us precisely wasn't just "our" doing or our fault, because Gods sometimes did things that mortals suffered greatly from, through no fault of their own. When you examine spiritual ecology to a great extent, you see that being a partner in creation or nature means that an enormous lot occurs that you can't control or take responsibility for.

This is not an anthropocentric worldview, at all. When the anthropocentric worldview (in all its thinly disguised forms) finally became massively dominant, all of that was cast away- and all that's left is human will and human responsibility. That's all anyone wants to focus on. People believe that these ideas are the most crucial ideas, and for want of them, everything will fall into ruin. It would be funny if it weren't so pervasive and poisonous.

There's no real balance in it, no room for *not* taking responsibility when it shouldn't be taken- and there are times when it shouldn't be, every bit as much as times when maybe it should be. But you can't say that these days; to suggest that there are times when "taking personal responsibility" is the wrong response makes people think that you're just trying to help louts and entitled villains to get away with all of their wickedness, or that you are personally trying to evade the mandate of responsibility.

Even christianity- with its myths about the fall of man- pointedly works overtime to ignore the very real "responsibility" so many other mythical and divine powers play in the fall of man, and tries to put the entire responsibility for it onto man's shoulders alone.

God didn't do it, no of course not- even though he had infinite power and could have stopped it, and even though he personally created every one of the necessary components of the situation that made the fall possible- including a tricky snake and a "free willed" and curious human being, with full fore-knowledge of what was going to happen. But still, no one's going to dare give him any share in the mess. The serpent was tricky, clever, sneaky- but no, he gets no blame; humans made "the choice" alone. It all has to be blamed on humans alone, pathologically so.

The system of occurrences that led to the mythical fall of man is clearly a complex one (sorta; as myths go, it's pretty slender on complexity, but it still has some tiny bit of subtlety) and yet, no one

sees anything in it except a bad human choice and human responsibility, for some very cosmic things.

It's madness. It's the super-focus, the ego-focus of humanity, a scared, diseased, guilt-ridden humanity that really wants to believe that their personal choices are *that* powerful: that their choices, which they can freely make whether or not gods want them to, can ruin Nature itself and bring about the fall of the world. And thus, their free choices can bring about salvation and the repair of the world, (but in the case of spiritual salvation, only in conjunction with some miracles and the blood sacrifice of a god, and the church which alone gives the mediation of that, thus rendering itself necessary and politically and socially powerful.)

It's humans wanting to believe they have an enormous amount of power, at day's end, to screw up and to fix things. Humans would rather believe that they are *not* beholden to a mysterious fate, and think instead that their "free choices" are where the power of determinism really lies. It's a security blanket that gets bloated into an over-focus on "personal responsibility", as an extreme cultural psychopathology.

In the end, the cult of humanity, and the doctrine of "free will" is just another attempt at control- a strategy of trying to bring the world under our control, and our lives under our control, as though we ourselves were gods- something we have never managed, and will never manage.

# The Fatalism of the Fireside

The deep forces that under-gird everything and bring everything about are timeless and ageless. They have a life-creating aspect; they have a death-bringing aspect. They have many functions, mind you, but we "off and on" human beings, we're all bent up about birth and death, so I wanted to highlight those two particular omnipresent effects of the Fateful powers.

The death-bringing aspect of Fate has always been there, and will always be there. No bad human decision caused death to start happening; human "sin" did not break the system or warp it into causing death to occur; nothing of the sort, nothing at all. Fate's always been like this, and always will be like this- making life, and causing death. The system is older than humanity, and will be around after humanity.

Now, you are all free to go. This public service announcement brought to you by the liberating power of the ancient "Fatalism of the Fireside", as opposed to the youthful and baseless "Guilt of the Altar."

# The Grave Ground

There's a little association in everyone's head- actually a huge one- that I want to lay to rest. From the "ghost hunters" of pop culture to the kid's Halloween parties, and all the way to pretty much everywhere you look, there is this specious notion that graveyards *must* be haunted places- or at least, very likely to be haunted. *Especially* at night.

Please don't do this to yourselves anymore. Graveyards get a bad reputation because our culture is terrified of death, full stop. No other reason. We hate to see reminders of death- most of us, anyway. I find graveyards to be very restful, quiet, soothing places. Just because something is associated with death doesn't make it a clearing house for ghosts, haunts, and spirits. The single metaphysical reality that makes graveyards "special" isn't their propensity to collect ghosts, but the fact that dead bodies are placed in their earth, thus blessing the ground with the slowly diffusing breath-souled vitality that remains in the bodies (or what little remains, after we pickle our dead and put them in sealed boxes.)

Now, if we buried people with honor, we'd not fill them with formaldehyde, and let their corpses really merge with the earth- vivifying the soil with the fresh remains of the breath soul and the flesh itself, and this would transmit a stronger bond between the free soul of the person who once lived, and the place itself. The virtues of the person would suffuse the place on some level, making it "feel" more as though they are a part of it. Sadly, what we put in the ground now is a taxidermied mess, and the tanks we put them in, intended to keep the soil away from them, last a very long time.

Gotta keep those bodies as preserved as possible for when Jesus comes back, you know?

Any burial site becomes an 'interaction' point between Seen and Unseen- the graveyard ground is a form of "Given Ground" that allows us to put aside something for what we picture as the "world beyond." What this means is that Underworldly submergence trances and shimmerings are easier to accomplish inside or near graveyards. Some so-rcerous works- like Saturnian works, especially- are easier to accomplish in graveyards. Some elements required for the best and darkest of sorceries, like earth taken from certain graves of certain people under certain conditions, are obviously only obtained from graveyards.

That is all graveyards are actually good for, sorcerously speaking. That's where their metaphysical potency and activity ends. You are not more likely to meet spirits or ghosts in a graveyard. If you were to meet a "spirit" at a graveyard, 99.9% of the time it will be the spirit of one of the trees in the place. Human breath souls are largely blown away after rejoining the wind of the world after the last breath, and the free soul wanders away to the Unseen, and usually heads "down" to the Great Below. I would figure that after significant amount of weeks has passed, for most people, the free soul has no more strong sense of connection with the traces of the vitality of the breath soul that remain in the flesh after death, so the actual body of the person isn't acting as some huge fetter for the free soul.

On certain days- in certain well-known folkloric interstices of time- free souls *can* be drawn back to their bodies, or familiar places, or familiar persons- such is the theme of Yule and certain old festivals like Samhain. But again, nothing is so certain in the strange mists of the Unseen.

Free souls- also called wandering souls- are just that: free and wandering. They don't hang around graveyards. They have "bigger fish to fry" (to use the old saying) and a broader range of wandering to get busy with. They have destiny calling. They move in deeper channels of metaphysical law and fate.

I would never rule out the idea that *some* free souls can become entangled in powers here that keep them here in some heavily limited way. But you're dealing with a rarity, so rare, perhaps, that you needn't worry about that over much. If a free soul were to be "stuck" here, it wouldn't sit in a graveyard. It would more likely move in the orbit of former residences, seek the company of people it loved- or hated- or haunt the places where it did terrible things, or fall into some form of closeness with the powers that bound it. None of that usually includes cemeteries.

So don't let all the dark, creepy stories fool you into seeing shapes where there are only shadows. Graveyards are not colonies of ghosts. And nighttime scares us more because we are diurnal mammals who don't have the sorts of eyes that deal with darkness well- darkness makes us feel vulnerable, clumsy, blind, and afraid by nature. It doesn't mean that darkness is more ghost-prone or evil or anything like that.



# The Idolatry of the Intellect

Some people- atheists, mostly- seem to be very obsessed with the final form of "afterlife" that they feel like they can justify believing in: the immortality of fame. They don't think they can live on as a soul or a ghost or a spirit, but they think that we live on in the "minds and hearts" of the people we leave behind.

I don't have time just now to go into the deeper metaphysics of how the statement "We live in on the minds and hearts of those we leave behind" actually means more than atheists think it means. They don't believe in anything deeper for it; they just think that when we die, our good acts in this world keep on inspiring others to do good, and somehow, that means "we" live on- our reputation, good memories of us, etc.

Woody Allen said it all when he said "I don't want to live on in the hearts of my countrymen. I want to live on in my apartment."

In a recent conversation with a deep-thinkinggentleman acquaintance of mine, we were discussing the fallacy of believing in an existence "beyond" this existence. This reality is rather large, deep, and complex; there's no need to exit this reality when you die and to go "somewhere else"- idealism is to blame for the idea that we "transcend away" from this world when we die and go "somewhere else." We were born into this world *from* this world, and we die *into* this world when we die. It's a self-contained, very deep system. It just so happens that this "world" is a bit more deep, layered, and full of infinite possibilities than we think it is- and to taste that for a single moment might convince some people that they had seen a world "beyond" this one.

Either way, I don't buy into the false sense of "maturity" that non-believers in the soul try to project when they say "I'll live on in the hearts of others, and that's enough for me." I must call bullcocky; those people may have given up- due to intellectual confusion and due to their idolatry of the intellect- on the idea of a soul or a spirit that outlasts the body, but if they thought for a single second that they *could* live on in other ways, they'd hop at the opportunity. To say that they don't believe in anything beyond this temporary life isn't courage or maturity; it's surrender to the forces of nihilism.

Because something deep down inside all of us knows- it knows- that it doesn't die like the body dies. We may not understand it, and modern religions may not give us a mature, or believable language to understand it, but something deep down knows that our participation in this world that is our true home and mother is not so limited.

If we really believed- deep down, again- that we were just accidentally conscious bits of flesh driven by blind evolution to trot around and die of pneumonia or in a car crash one day- all of it fully random and without meaning- we would not be able to handle the many difficulties of this world.

When we see the abject horrors beamed at us from every angle, every day, there is no "terror management" theory that could suffice to explain how we aren't all stark, raving mad by now, unless something sublime and wiser than we can believe was deep inside us, accompanying us. This is my sincere belief, and it isn't based on some religion, nor any religion's programming; it's based on me watching the news and meeting people as I travel about this city I live in, marveling at the fact that I'm not in full vegetative withdrawal from the world yet.

Even people who claim disbelief in any form of afterlife are only right on one level- they *can* and *do* fully disbelieve it in those windy heads of theirs. Their breath souls have no such belief in an afterlife. Fortunately, their wandering souls have quite a deep knowledge of their true journey through existence, and it knows that when that troubled kid at the high school they work at finally takes advantage of our American love of firearms everywhere, and comes to school with two rifles and kills 14 of his fellow classmates AND that atheist with them, that this is not the end of the story.

If the atheist thought it was the end of the story at the unconscious level, at the level of his own depths, he, like the rest of us, wouldn't be able to leave his house. In a truly meaningless world, nothing is possible because life requires not just courage born of more than the drive for food and reproduction, but it requires guidance from the quietest and most mysterious of places. It's a wonder to me that so many people- our atheist cousins, I mean- can enjoy the deeper fruits of the soul every day, and still not believe that souls exist.

Even atheists "feel" the emotional and subtle content of places they go- such as when they move to a new town, to a nice little house, and feel the energy of that fresh start, feel the oncoming, on-surgingly welcome of the spirits of that place, which naturally feels like excitement and relaxation to be there; that strange sense that you just "know" that you were meant to be in a place; that strange sense that you feel very close to a stranger you just met- as though you've known them for years- all of these common occurrences are nothing more or less than the soul's footprints.

Need I mention that strange feeling that told my atheist cousin to not take his usual way to work that day, only to discover that a terrible accident happened right where he usually has to sit in line and wait, and killed three people- one of which very likely would have been him?

The real relationship with our souls- subtle as it may be- is not something that mainstream religions, nor mainstream sciences, have an adequate language to understand. Only poets have given us a language that can partially grasp it.

# The Myth of Progress and the Path of Initiation

This notion that the "crooked way" is the shorter way, or the best way- the faster way to get where your soul wants to go- is a paradox; and yet, it is a commonly-attested feature of the Western Mystery Tradition as a whole. The path of initiation is different from the path of the non-initiated life in that it is an accelerated route to the consummation of what it means to be human. A person who submits to early initiatory death- and all that entails- and then lives consciously allowing spiritual forces to interact with them, change them, empower them, and teach them, lives many lives in the space of one life. They accomplish in ten years what it may take a non-initiate (symbolically or perhaps actually) many lifetimes to accomplish.

I always shy away from notions of life's purpose or the idea of some "great goal" for all lives- such thinking is reductive; I can't believe that every life has a common goal. If I was forced to nominate a common goal for everyone, it would have to be a goal that people could achieve in different ways, each suited or necessitated by the very individual powers, situations, and proclivities of each person. And so, that goal for all beings would have to be nothing other than "consciously living or existing the way Nature shaped us to." That's a goal that you can achieve on a mountain-top just as you can down in the lowlands.

This idea- to consciously live the way we were shaped to live, to exist the way we were shaped to exist- is the fulfillment of what it means to be human, as easily as it would be the fulfillment of what it means to be any discrete "thing" that Nature shaped. We all sense, consciously or unconsciously, that we aren't really existing in the most ideal of ways- if we were, so many of the troubles we have physically and psychically wouldn't be with us. Just so, I never consider this sense we have to be evidence that we've failed or sinned or that we bear some metaphysical flaw inside ourselves. That would be a foolish attempt to explain the existential pain of humanity, a self-depreciating, guilt-based explanation.

And we've seen that tried already; we've see that goes nowhere good.

Greed and lack of wisdom has led us into a complex situation- socially first, and now psychologically- in which we are forced to compromise so many things about ourselves, down to the simple things about how we can and should live among others, and in this green world. That's the great, scandalous secret of the world. Not a sin, not a fall from grace, but a final victimization of the masses under the consequences of greed and unwisdom. I'm talking about patterns of greed and unwise manipulations of this world that began in the Neolithic age, and whose shock-waves have rolled down to right now, increasing in intensity as they went.

It's not cosmic; it's a localized disaster that's happened right here on this planet. Spiritual forces have accompanied us- themselves suffering from it, in some ways just as we do- and they have attempted to

help us in various extraordinary ways. If there are "secret paths of initiation" that offer some acceleration of our healing, individually and collectively, this is where they come from, and why they came about: from the compassion of Other-Than-Human persons who had more wisdom, and who shared it with us- because we are all connected, all kin in that way.

These paths also probably have a partial origin in what remained of more intimate ways of living in this world that were not crushed by the weight of the ages of unwisdom, and survived in some diminished, quiet form behind the scenes in different places, always attaining the aura of mystery or villainy, when considered by the unwise mainstream.

There is no such thing as "progress"- the straight line, the straight road from one horizon to another is not progress. In its straightness, you can be sure it fails to turn left, and then right, and then left again- it fails to curve around this hill, dip below that mountain into the mystery of caves, and fails to follow the snake-like course of every river. It is in the circuitous route that we find humanity; the optimal, straight road is a machine's road, a thoroughly non-poetic, non-creative cut across the face of beauty.

The appreciation and conscious experience of the natural beauty of the world and the spiritual powers it contains is healing; that's the point of initiation. An "initiation" is a beginning; you get to begin living the way a human should live, feeling and seeing as a human should, enjoying the depths of things as a human should, when you gain real initiation. There's nothing more powerful than that.

A soul that achieves this can finally rest, and go on existing with a new character of existence, a new orientation of natural freedom (which is ironically a very old orientation) which the uninitiated can only fantasize about.

# The Myth of the Solar Hero

Someone posted an article a little while ago that began with the statement:

"In Joseph Campbell's vision of myth, the hero is typically a solitary male who renounces intimate companionship to pursue his glorious, arduous quest. Along the way, sporadic help may arrive from an ineffable muse or deity."

That got me thinking- all of these "solar age" hero myths tend to be a young man or a hero-man, and he does have this large tendency to renounce sex and the comforts of the other half of his humanity (which is to say, the female half of humanity) while seeking world-transcendence, or the solution to all the problems of the world, which inevitably turn out to be some way to show people how illusory the world is, or how "more important" things than the world await.

Then I got to thinking "What an enormous crock of shite." It's all a reflection of axial-age mentality, not at all a reflection of the ages-older myths of culture heroes that go out and win some "saving" technology or insight for their people. Even Jesus ends up being another transcendent solar hero, and again, what a crock of shite. It all reflects a patriarchal, world-conquering and world-overcoming logic that is related directly to the sense of alienation created by axial-age cultural conflict, based on division, militarism, and land-abuse under agrarian and pastoral regimes. This kind of world-darkness leads to transcendental escapist-thinking. It leads to a sense of injustice- for it is unjust- which causes a soul-thirst in people, a need for justice so strong that they're willing to invent (or believe in) a huge heavenly judge in the sky who's "gonna get" those bad guys one day, eternally.

No wonder everyone thought something was "wrong" with the world in the axial age- too bad all their 'heroes' are (not surprisingly) young Aryan men who go off and teach a path away from the world, or into deep and profound thinking. Yes, thinking, intellectualizing, the militarization of the interior intellect, NEVER a sensual solution, never a grounded, sensual, comfortable, and pleasurable path.

Never emotions. Never "passions", never "sentiments." No, those are always the temptation ways, the demon-ways, the ways to perdition. Gotta "overcome" those. Because they lead where? To connection with the land- and always a particular land- and other people, actual human beings. They lead to poetry and dancing and to... human stuff, you know? And we have to dispense with humanity at all costs, because humanity is the problem, the fallen, the flawed, the sinful, the what the hell ever.

And the new powers can't have people liking the land and humanity too much- or seeing anything sacred in those things. They want a single solution for everyone, and they want everyone investing in heavenly real estate, so that the earthly real estate is someone elses' for the taking.

Where is the pre-axial age hero (or heroine, because in the pre-axial times, it very well could have

been a heroine) who goes on a quest for her people, and has a lot of sex along the way, and who paints her body with blood and gets tattoos, and yells a lot, and wrestles with bears, and has contests with spirits, and outshoots ancient serpent-people in archery contests, and wins a magical treasure from the Unseen world that saves just her group of people in some forest somewhere- note that it doesn't save the whole world, just this one group of people. Where is *that* hero? Because that's my hero. Forget all of this "universalism and universalist salvation" thinking. Am I the only one who's really tired of that worn-out story?

The world doesn't need "saving" which will come in the form of a common philosophical solution or a common adherence to a single book or set of scriptures. If anything, the world is in even graver danger from such simplified attempts at a solution in the first place. The world as a whole doesn't need "saving" from anything; but individual groups of humanity need to be saved from apathy and from the greed of their lords and masters. That is needed. And it isn't one hero that will do this for us, but a whole horde of heroes and heroines, each of them native to one place, to one people, and out to seek, search, live, and fight for what their people need. Whether their people need the treasure that restores their memory of who their ancestors were, or their old lands back, or justice in the face of the world's memory, or if their people just need to turn the TV off a little more, everyone needs something quite different.

Oh, and sex and sensuality isn't bad, no matter what anyone tells you. It's an old lie by this point, and every bit as deleterious to the spirit of mankind now as it was "back then." Have fun, be safe, unless of course you're one of the questing heroes or heroines, in which case you can't be safe but I guess you can still have fun. And have sex. I don't want to read your saga one day and discover that it's PG-13. Don't bore me.



*"Avoid Grief. It is both beneficial and wise to steer clear of troubles. Prudence will save you from many: it is the Divine Mother of good fortune and contentment. Don't give others hateful news unless there is a remedy, and be even more careful not to receive it. Some people's hearing is spoiled by the sweetness of flattery; others, by hearing bitter gossip, and there are people who cannot live without a daily dose of unpleasantness, like Mithridates with his poison.*

*Nor can you keep well by inflicting lifelong grief on yourself in order to please someone else, even if he is close to you. Never sin against your own happiness in order to please the person who counsels you and has nothing at stake in the matter. When giving pleasure to another involves giving grief to yourself, remember this lesson: better for the other person to feel grief now than for you to feel it later, and with no hope."*

*-Baltasar Gracian*



# The Nightmare of Empty Things: Spiritual Ecology and the Myths of Modernity

Sometimes it comes home to me very strongly- and it reassures me- that nothing is wrong with the world. When I say "the world", naturally, I am referring to the powers that always were and always will be- the sky that watches, the earth that listens, the countless unseen eyes that have watched the coming and going of ages.

Humans really forget that our social world- the "world" we've constructed above, below and around our ancient Parents and sources- is not "the world" in the final or most important sense. The True World is just as it should be. It is our minds alone, so obsessed with trivial things, which feel that everything is "wrong". We project that feeling onto the ancient, quiet dignity of mountains and trees, onto animals and clumps of moss- and can no longer find solace in those things. We are burning in the cages of these bodies, rootless and mad.

I know madness- or what is called "madness" these days- because it's my profession to know it. And the majority of the madness I see comes from one place: people thinking that certain things are so very important when, in the face of the awesome and ancient Powers who are themselves alone everlasting, the things we break our souls over have no real meaning. Men and women will eat their own heads off for that big bonus, and in so doing, never see their children take their first step or say their first words. These kinds of lives are hollow, these aspirations are hollow, and they lead to a deep dissatisfaction in the soul, which we think we can drug away, and keep people punching the clock and working.

We are born wanting our families to be what families were intended by Earth and Sky to be, but they often are not- so we waste away, waiting in vain for what's never coming. Again, they think they can drug that, too, and make families whole with chemistry. It never works. But someone becomes very wealthy off the attempt that never works.

No one likes to think that all the pursuits they have been conditioned to believe are so important might be so much wasted time. And yet, if we would be mature as individuals in the sense I mean- the deepest sense- we may have to face just that.

"But what would happen to the world if we all just walked away from these very important commitments that we are all taught to engage?" Nothing. The world will be fine- the True World- does not need our paperwork or our cars or our time-cards. It did fine without them for a long time, and will be sacred and beautiful, potent with life, long after them. What would happen to our social world? It would collapse in many ways- not that this could ever be considered a bad thing. It is a prison for souls, and a resort for the fabulously, greedily wealthy who are allowed through falsehood to mock the truth about mankind and our Sacred origins daily. In some places, their mockery is praised and called patriotic or even "genius." Everywhere, they are envied as the most fortunate of all human beings.

There was a time when the mighty powers were enough- to be under the infinity of the circle of the sky, to taste the earth's richness, to see deer running through thicket and wood- to sit around fires and taste meat sizzled over coals, and bread baked directly in clay ovens- for countless millennia, that was enough. To be awed by thunder's crashing display, without the super-safety of modern buildings to shield you, that can be a real "religious" experience, if you catch my drift. One understands what "power" really means when one faces the Storm in that way. To see night fade into day- or see day pale into night, in the way we seldom do- that too, can fulfill a soul, can teach it wondrous things.

But things changed. What was full and perfect was no longer enough. Death came more and more behind human hands, and not good deaths- I mean deaths for the gain and greed of others. The human identity was severed from Earth and Sky and invested in social status- in class or caste, in the "assigned" duties that priests conveniently decided the Gods themselves had declared for certain peoples, in the concept of "duty" itself, so warped and twisted to make people dance in line with the machinations of newly minted masters.

Humans were no longer instinctively seen as sacred and inseparable parts of a world; where a group of human beings was once thought to be as much a part of a forest as a river or stream that might run through it, a time came when their very bodies could be considered "property" and sold away, or discarded at will. A slave's "duty" was to their owner; and the slave's life- that intensified power of earth and sky appearing temporarily as a body, something so utterly sacred that it can never be owned- was reduced to commodity.

My duty, like yours, is still, even to this very day, a duty to the Ancient and sacred parent-powers of the Above and the Below: the ground and the rushing water, the burning sun and perching birds, the flesh and blood of children and kin. We are not tools for the glory of others; our true human glory is found in being dignified, respectful, and cooperative parts of this world, not people who dig the world up to lift a pyramid for the supposed eternal life of an egomaniacal ruler, or who dig the hearts of mountains out to increase the mineral wealth of thugs.

Our real glory is in peace and simple things, not in the countless heaps of dead bodies left behind by war. Our real glory is in the power to shelter life, not destroy it in the name of vain or self-serving ideals. When the brutality of our nature comes forth, it must come forth to hunt (like the Wolf it is) the powers that would steal our place in the world, and our opportunity to have the good things that are our natural birthright.

And yet, that seldom happens. We have learned to accept madness and call it sanity. We don't live for anything real and lasting, only the vain things created by the created. Earth and Sky are uncreated; what they make is truly lasting. And that includes all of us.

How long, soul, will you be led in this meaningless dance, among these ultimately meaningless things? How long will you be a beggar in the country that Earth and Sky made, where abundance is everywhere apparent, but ignored in favor of vain pursuits and fears? When will you open your eyes,

closed as they are in a nightmare of empty things, and be awake in the glory and plenitude of the never-ending river of life? And what will you do when you realize that it is the teeming crowds of your fellow man who work so hard against your awakening to this single thing that you were born to experience? Is there a place for you anywhere in the world, soul?

# The Robin Has Hollow Bones: Simplicity and the Path

August Rodin said "The more simple we are, the more complete we become." Anyone who takes "simple" here to mean something pejorative is missing the deep point. In our world, "simple" is often taken as bad- the "simpleton" figure, once such a complex figure from the earliest wisdom tales, has truly reached the outside limit of his bad reputation. To be a "simpleton" now is to be stupid, a moron, an undesirable thing.

Rodin was 100% correct. Life did not emerge from the source of life as a field of complexity, but a field of simple, sacred power. We can analyze it all day long, slicing atoms and writing longer and longer equations to the contentment (and confusion) of our minds- but that complexity that we are reading into the wholeness of things is just our own bad dream. It says everything about where these minds may wander, and nothing about the world that is the true home of these minds.

I know in my bones that the world waits for us to take off the straight-jacket of our complexities and meet it and its sentient powers again, finally sane, just as people, simply as men and women, equal partners in this beauty and fearful wonder that we call reality. That is where this path really leads: poetically speaking, to "equality with the gods"- for such an equality isn't "made", it is recognized.

This may be a far cry from what some hope, those who wish for the grim and dramatic rites of whomever or whatever to elevate them; but I don't think any magic exists that elevates us to anything that we weren't already, in the beginning. I think this is a guarded secret of the "world esoteric" (such that it is), and if more people knew this secret, we'd see less esotericists, because I don't think many people can really accept this. We've geared ourselves up for a more exciting show, and the reality can seem a let-down, owing to its simple and organic nature.

I dream of a life lived fully without pretension, a life of easy openness, where ordinary things are as thrilling to me as anything extraordinary (so-called) might be. When I was a child, I could keep myself busy in the backyard for hours with nothing more than sticks and rocks. Since becoming an adult, I have lost that great power, that intense connection with the heart of things, which blossomed as nothing more (or less) than simple imagination- unquestioned, untroubled, and unbounded. I work hard now to re-gain a taste of that, and to maintain what I regain.

All this trance work, the calls to the Unseen- they are distress calls, really, when you think about it; they are "SOS" signals from a soul struggling, a modern man fighting to maintain his basic sanity- a sanity that was long ago submerged at the collective level, and which only emerges rarely at the individual level.

But I've seen the end of this struggle, and I don't mean in the grave, either. I've seen the Messenger's

stepping-stones laid down before me, stretching into the distance. There's a hint of mountains and snow, and a feeling of belonging- like that feeling you get when you're talking to the most precious people in your life, while enjoying a good warm drink with them, safely inside together as a storm rages around you.

I have an interior "compass" pointing somewhere, and I've seen a lot of my confusion fall apart and vanish on the "inside". I don't know how, or by what (and I don't think it important to really know) but I feel that I'm being purified. Something is happening below the surface. Maybe I am being readied for death at the soul level, without realizing it. I hope not, because it is habit to hope not, but if it is so, then let be what will be. It's going to be anyway; might as well not be a drama queen about it.

Never before this very day and this very second have I ever wanted less- I only wait with real wonder on what Nature might give, and what Fate deals to me, as she gradually turns the cards of her hidden hand over. One by one, the cards are revealed and the whole story is known- or is it?

To want less and less, and be satisfied with what is already yours is to paradoxically gain more and more; but it is no unhealthy gain, nothing that bloats you with weight and stress. It's just a kind of imperturbable happiness. It's never based on having, discovering, or maintaining anything; it's based on not having to have, letting the world's mysteries come to you, and just letting yourself be.

Yesterday, I made an offering to the Sacred and Fateful Powers with nothing more than rich brown soil collected with care from below a layer of damp leaves. In the depths of myself, something profound, without a name, happened. I was with them, in them, and they were with me, in me, and there was no disconnect, no lack of clarity. I think that smooth, slightly damp earth that diffused into the air around me, as I stood facing the great Sky Brightness behind a layer of white clouds and mist, was the finest offering I may ever have given, a genuinely meant letter of thanks and honor from a heart which is rapidly learning the lesson of Unburdening.

The Robin has hollow bones, and thus, he can fly. I have thick marrow in these heavy bones; and thus, I can only dream of flying in the ordinary sense. The Robin has less than me, and he gets back so much more for it- access to the Sky World, anytime he likes. My flights take magic, literally take sorcery to perform- while he flies in the same way that I might walk or take a piss. I think I could learn a lot from Robins.

A Robin flew down to talk to me the other day, in fact. He saw me building a fire in the fire pit in my backyard. He said something that struck me as funny, in a way. He said that the fire was amazing. "That's an amazing thing you two legged people can do." he marveled. "But we winged beings, we have no need for such things."

# The Secret Heart of the Dragon and the Curse of the Boundaries

In the Neolithic, Land became an object of ownership and control. The true "curse of the boundaries" was begun. Human societies would never again be the same. These three sentences sum up a lot of human history, but they are, in essence, pointing to a real event that we are still suffering from in countless ways: key events at the dawn of agriculture spawned a many-headed beast that can actually swallow the whole world. Traditional, local-based and sustainable life-ways have been suffering and falling to pieces for longer than anyone realizes- 7,000 years or more.

So when we talk about the "destruction" of sustainable or indigenous or wise ways of living, we aren't talking about a new tragedy, but a very old one. Considering how most people live right now on the planet in 2013, and considering how much agriculture makes it possible for the following things to exist:

- Extreme centralized hierarchies, both religious and political
- Private Land ownership and the extreme doctrine of "private property"
- Massive bureaucracy
- Overpopulation and crowding
- Countless epidemic diseases that pre-agricultural people didn't have, up to and including teeth rotting out due to sugars in plants
- Mass erosion, deforestation, and soil depreciation
- Massive military forces
- Nationalism
- Fascism
- Depopulation and extinction of non-human animals at massive rates due to loss of habitat

We are really only seeing the very end of the tragedy. We are seeing the last twitch of a long-since dead body.

When the "world" of humans began to come apart, the local village life and the forager life torn to shreds by the swelling masses of agricultural and pastoral human groups, nothing seemed to make sense anymore, because people on both sides of the story could see that \*something\* wasn't right. It's funny that agriculturalists couldn't see that their crops and the need for their crops were the reason why they were so able and required to spill the blood of non-agriculturalists, and why their populations were swelling (they had surplus food).

People seem to overlook the most obvious things, and focus on their emotional turmoil. Why is the world so full (they wondered) of greed and killing and injustice? This goes on and on, until it becomes a wall of angst that needs an answer. And the agri-civilized world, with its "literacy" and written words, finally supplies an answer, a great axial-age answer. The answer that most people

have gone on to accept: because we're bad, fallen, guilty, sinful, and in need of some major groveling and human sacrifice to make it up to the Big Good Guy who's tapping his foot angry at us.

Understand that monotheism and massive, organized religions could NOT exist without modern agricultural and alphabetic society. The Big Guy In The Sky and his angels and priests reflect a human cultural reality of Kings and ministers and soldiers, a hierarchy. The "fear of the lord in the castle" is the original template for the "fear of the Lord in the sky." Try to understand that what we consider mainstream religion today is just another form of politics. I know that most of you realize this, but I'm saying it again for a special reason.

The quest to figure out why humans suffer is still going on. It's one of the true perennial questions, but the answer is already known. People just won't let themselves hear the answer because we are subconsciously invested in how we live to such a deep degree. It is not natural nor right for us to be living in such massive, anonymous numbers. It is not natural nor right for us to be over-farming the earth and over-herding the earth and living like locusts, consuming the land's vitality and any other pre-industrial cultures that we find in our way.

We are not meant to live on the schedules we live on, not meant to kill and be so ignorant of the Unseen world, placing our personal responsibility for spiritual-ecological insight into the hands of hordes of specialists like "priests" (so-called) or "ministers" or "preachers" who only repeat what some other monkeys said in a book a long time ago and give us threatening looks when we want to have sex outside of wedlock. Making massive wealth for anonymous strangers who don't care about us while never really gaining what we need to live and thrive is not the point of anyone's life, but nearly all of our energy goes to just that. None of this is right. And the soul fights against it, fiercely.

We are not suffering because of divine retribution. We are suffering because we've been led, herd-like, into a paradigmatic way of seeing the world, spiritually, politically, socially, which does not conform to the way of Nature's soul nor the human soul that is the child of that Nature. If there is a "flaw" at the heart of man, it lies in one place only: that men and women are all-too-quick to believe that they are flawed in some metaphysical way, and all-too-quick to fall into deluded guilt and deluded beliefs over it. We are not flawed. We are misled by people who were themselves misled, whose beliefs sprang from people who were unable to see something very close to themselves.

As the world and the land suffer, we do, too. We've watched it happen throughout history. This secret is not hiding, at all. The Land itself is *never* silent, and everywhere demonstrative. But we refuse to see this because we've been taught by the new priests that matter is dead, dumb, and "just material".

We've been taught that "consciousness" (which we think is the only way to be really, really aware or alive) is only possible when a being has a brain pretty much like ours, so rocks and water are just... blah matter. The new priests and their nonexistent God are infinitely worse, in some way than the old priests and their super-existent God. Both sets of priests will destroy all possibility of real wisdom in us, and have us ignore the real basis of our responsibility to this Land and one another. They are both agents of a flawed morality.

All of these issues are pretty heavy issues. And to my grim delight, those rare people who are freed from the blinders of organized religion, narrow-minded science, and even the endless herd-society sometimes stick their heads up and smile and say "why is everyone suffering?" "Oh, we free folk, we spiritualists, we new workers with Old Gods, what can we do? What should we do? What's going on?"

And in this, I see the vicious circle repeating itself all over again. It's nice to want to stop suffering. I can really think of few more noble goals. But suffering isn't a dragon looking for a new, stylish hero to take a swing at it. If you think of yourself in that way- like you're a modern spiritual hero- and you go after the dragon that I've been describing (who is very real, and has eaten generations of your forefathers and foremothers) you'll just become a new part of the problem. This dragon is amazingly smart for such a dumb thing. It likes to play dead so that its "killers" believe they've found the answer, and become new dragons themselves.

Please, if you want to "help suffering" understand what I've said here. Understand that the problem is older than you think, closer to you than you think, and harder to overcome than you think- your nice ability to "feel energy" or trance-journey, or mix up homeopathic healing brews is not going to be enough by a long, long shot. Your Old Gods will need more than those statues of them you put in your room with some incense cones next to them, before they rouse themselves to give you part of the answer to what you should be doing. Your heart is in the right place, but to that, you must add an element of insight and deep caution.

Some issues are so deep, deadly, and close to the heart of the Dragon that you shouldn't even be whispering their names.



# The Strange One In Me

A point comes when you have to realize that the damaged, inattentive, convenience-obsessed person that you are- with all your unconscious materialistic biases and alphabetic-numerical oriented "standard consciousness" given to you by modern education, can't be the friend of spirits and doer of sorcerous deeds that your soul would like you to be. You can't be the wordless-yet-communicating mystery being that slips through woods or darts across fields as though it were a spirit of that place, too.

You can't be the master of trance, the invoker of spirits, the whisperer of spells that legend and folklore speaks of; we are each of us too ensconced, deeply, in a world of blocks and wires, of "fast food" and waste, of transactions and stress, of doubtful friendships and distant families. That sort of entity- which you did not choose to be, nor can help being- is useless before the allure and immensity of the precious Unseen that we hope and dream waits for us just outside of the borders of ordinary consciousness.

When you get fortunate enough to taste that precious thing, you can't help but reduce it to a dream, a chimera, seek an "explanation" for it, feel its power fade as memory fades, feel the doubts come, even while you cling onto the experience for dear life, that one dear letter you got from a reality you hope is real and waiting for you. It'll get washed away like a footprint in the sand of a beach, by the tides of banality and morosity that together comprise this human-crafted world.

A point comes when you realize you can't be what your soul wants you to be, and be what the world of breathing people wants you to be, at the same time. One has to suffer; to be more of one, you will have to be less of the other. At that point, it becomes necessary to become two separate persons. It becomes necessary to become a stranger to yourself, and at times, to live as that stranger. To realize, while you are the stranger, that you remain that stranger, even when you masquerade as the socialized human whose attention span likely isn't long, but whose pool of stresses is bottomless.

I might never be able to perform a work of real sorcery, of real extraordinary contact with the Unseen world. But a strange one in me can. When it does, that's who I am, and when I am that person, I know it's who I really am... but when that other goes away, I wonder if I was ever that, and I long to be that again. I must push the doubt away that I'm just suffering some delusion; the most vibrant visits of the Otherworld can seem like delusions, just as the desire for the other can seem a strange mental illness. If I can't walk in a forest and see the spirits that indwell those trees and mosses, then I don't want to walk in a forest. I will have to go as someone who can.



*"Western industrial society, of course, with its massive scale and hugely centralized economy, can hardly be seen in relation to any particular landscape or ecosystem; the more-than-human ecology with which it is directly engaged is the biosphere itself. Sadly, our culture's relation to the earthly biosphere can in no way be considered a reciprocal or balanced one: with thousands of acres of nonregenerating forest disappearing every hour, and hundreds of our fellow species becoming extinct each month as a result of our civilization's excesses, we can hardly be surprised by the amount of epidemic illness in our culture, from increasingly severe immune dysfunctions and cancers, to widespread psychological distress, depression, and ever more frequent suicides, to the accelerating number of household killings and mass murders committed for no apparent reason by otherwise coherent individuals.*

*From an animistic perspective, the clearest source of all this distress, both physical and psychological, lies in the aforementioned violence needlessly perpetrated by our civilization on the ecology of the planet. Only by alleviating the latter will we be able to heal the former. While this may sound at first like a simple statement of faith, it makes eminent and obvious sense as soon as we acknowledge our thorough dependence upon the countless other organisms with whom we have evolved. Caught up in a mass of abstractions, our attention hypnotized by a host of human-made technologies that only reflect us back upon ourselves, it is all too easy for us to forget our carnal inherence in a more-than-human matrix of sensations and sensibilities.*

*Our bodies have formed themselves in delicate reciprocity with the manifold textures, sounds, and shapes of an animate earth—our eyes have evolved in subtle interaction with other eyes, as our ears are attuned by their very structure to the howling of wolves and the honking of geese. To shut ourselves off from these other voices, to continue by our lifestyles to condemn these other sensibilities to the oblivion of extinction, is to rob our own senses of their integrity, and to rob our minds of their coherence. We are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human."*

*-David Abram*



# The Strangest of Stories

Imagine a world woven as perfectly as things can be woven- every mountain pushed up right where it should be, every forest as thriving as it should be, everything given an allotment of full appropriateness by the deep and infinite power of Nature- call it Fate, if you want. Why, she missed nothing; every petal on every flower, woven to perfection, right where it is. Imagine the beings who look like you- those men and women we see so much of ourselves in- also walking through the forests and valleys of that world, right where they were woven, too. Everything arose just like it was allotted to arise. Perfect.

Now, think of the souls of these men and women (these souls that they are) being perfectly, pristinely aware of what Fate has woven, of the primal beauty and rightness of it. They don't intellectualize it; they feel it. They know it. Those souls can feel, at every moment, what they are, where they should be, how powerful and sacred it all is, and most importantly, what boundaries they should not cross. Within the Fatefully allotted world, every soul naturally knows its portion, and the portions of other things and beings, and what can be taken, and what should not be moved or taken or transgressed.

Think now what would happen if some of those souls, perhaps in desperation to save their own lives, did transgress what their own deeper wisdom-feelings forbade- and happened to gain benefits from the transgression, alongside the unavoidable consequences of breaking the limits of right behavior.

Let's say they had a hard winter, and took more wood than they should have, and even though the beauty of the forest was partly lost to them, and erosion came and damaged their land, and made them have less food later (as the beasts left, too), they did have enough wood to make it through two winters. They ignored the loss, in favor of the gain. They may even have deplored the loss, but they ignored that feeling too, in favor of the gain.

They began to "store up" surplus things- destroying more and more to get wealthy on surplus, to gain the sense of security they got from it, and started teaching their children to do it, too. Soon, the forest was wiped out, and they had to move on, but not before they had destroyed the homes of countless more beings- other men and women, and other non-human creatures- beyond themselves.

These "bad habits" they learned got passed on, and on, and on. Other people picked up on it. Soon, people would fight over the surplus stores that another group had amassed, and as always, damage to the Land itself was happening more and more. Now violence was involved on more than one level. Soon, they couldn't leave animals wild and free- they had to tame them, herd them, and then fight over that, too. Generation after generation of children were born into a world where people didn't listen to what their souls said; they listened to what unwise elders told them to do, to survive. They didn't live anymore, as the First Fates had woven people to live; they just survived.

Soon, eons had passed, and every soul in the world- which was now reduced to a shadow of its former, abundant self- was blocked from hearing their own deeper voices. That's what happens when

you ignore them long enough- the world becomes the sort of place that makes them impossible to hear with any real clarity.

I guess maybe one or two people might hear a soul's voice, from time to time, from place to place, but they didn't get paid much attention to. Business is business, after all, and the profit margin is the bottom line- that and the massive military budget.

The air wasn't so sweet anymore, the rivers not free, and the waters murky with dangerous chemicals. The fruits grown in captive orchards were not nearly as nourishing as what was planted in the primordial world, by the original Fates of this earth. People wandered the world wondering what they were, and why life seemed so messed up, and they never knew where to go, or what they should be doing. They only knew, deep down, quite unconsciously, that "something" was wrong.

If you can imagine all that, you've imagined the story of humanity. And that's what I think is "going on"- the world, reality, whatever you want to call it, is a massive, fatefully-apportioned series of powers. Quite beautiful, quite amazing, perfect as it is- and some of these powers are beings like us; some are forests, some are rivers, some are things beyond belief. But everything, no matter what it is, has a fatefully allotted place, a share of things, a share of power.

And each being that moves through the allotted world has a soul- is a soul- and a spirit follows them all- a personal Fate, if you want to look at it that way, which naturally "whispers" into them what is allotted to them, and what boundaries they should never cross. Life naturally comes with soul-guidance, with a natural wisdom, for every being. In a perfectly allotted world, natural rightness is known by every part of the world; it is in-born. The integrity of the world is reflected in us; we know the perfect pattern, the first vision of beauty, like we know the sensation in our own flesh.

When the guiding spirit whispers to our souls, when those souls urge us, that message from the deep usually comes in the form of a feeling, maybe an intuition. If you can hear it and feel it, you are never lost, and you never step wrong. You live in equilibrium with every place and every person and every being you meet. You never transgress the boundaries that are guarded by dangerous powers.

But we've lost the power to feel the rightness or wrongness of things, because of bad habits passed down to us- a gigantic matrix of bad habits called "culture" today, or perhaps "society". This fine and intricate curse, taught to all of us from birth, silences the inner voice quite completely. Or, almost completely. Discover that voice again, and you always know the way home to lasting peace, wherever you happen to be.

Because the cost of transgressing a Fateful boundary- and She has placed boundaries around all beings and places, and activities- is the retribution of the powers that guard each allotment. Their retribution is nothing personal, as I've said many times before- it's just the world itself restoring integrity to a wrongly-crossed boundary. But that retribution can come as madness or death, or waste. It can come as a sense of isolation, soul-pain, confusion. It can come as the curse of feeling Lost.

For most of our history, lacking the guidance of the soul, we've transgressed boundary after boundary, destroyed life after life, place after place, wasted and wasted, offended the sacred over and over, without even realizing at too conscious of a level that we were doing it. But the price still must be paid: ignorance of the Natural Law, of what Fate has allotted, is never an excuse. The price of our cultural bad habits is still all around us. That's how consequence works- without natural consequences, the world loses all reason, makes no sense.

This is the story of the human world- its deepest blessings and its deepest dangers- forever. The Mother of the World and the Ever-Living Powers that were there at the beginning don't hate human beings. The pain humans have now is the cost of not listening to their own souls and thus getting very lost.

# The Thorny Hedge

There is no real mystery buried in our deep dualistic metaphysical obsessions, our well-worn conceptions of the "spirit" world versus our conceptions of the "material" world. From top to bottom, in the West, we have long had a very strong division between the idea of "this world" and the "Otherness"- it has become a well-ingrained habit of metaphysical thinking, on everyone's part. The entire complex of the "Hedge Rider"- complete with the "Hedge" that divides what is Seen from what is Unseen, is key not only to Old Craft metaphysics (appearing in the Craft as an inheritance of the last countless millennia) but to metaphysics from nearly every other spiritual tradition or religion you can think of- for the "line dividing" appears in some form or fashion, however tangible or subtle.

This is neither good nor bad; it simply is what it is: a conceptualization that has grown over countless centuries since the Neolithic, when it began. Before the Neolithic- which was the age of the first farmers- the Mesolithic and Pleistocene Hunter-Gatherers and Foragers had a very different conception of the "Spirit World"- they very likely had no "spirit world" at all. For them, based on how they treated their own dead, and on how they lived, moving freely about on the endless land, there was only "The world". And that world- this world- was peopled by humans, non-humans, invisible beings, visible beings, powers, all together, all here, all present. That some of those beings couldn't be seen unless they chose to be, or that some people could see *more* when in proper conditions of mind and body meant little; it certainly didn't mean that a "wall" divided one world from another.

This is an important point to consider when approaching one of the true deepest mysteries of the Unnamed Way- when approaching the true Primordial "way of existing", even the Hedge is rendered powerless. Before the Hedge is "seen through", we spend time "summoning" spirits, or attempting to "pass over" to meet them and converse with them/interact with them. But when the mind and soul are ready, it is not just spirits that are summoned, but the entirety of the Unseen World that is "summoned"- a clever way of saying that it is allowed to become apparent as it truly is: a thing never apart from us, nor apart from anything.

Before villages and settlements began "dividing" themselves away from the "outside" world, which could only have occurred when they became permanent settlements tied to agriculture, there was no Hedge dividing the world of humans and animals from the "spirit world." The Hedge is a metaphysical reality only to the extent that we make it so. And we no longer consciously make it so; we unconsciously conceptualize our experience of this world in that way, and thus, a lot of time has to be spent learning to "cross the hedge" or put our minds into a condition that lets it experience *more* of reality, including reality's hidden (to us) reaches.

Can this new level of spiritual attainment be reached by people today? I submit that it can.



# This Growing Darkness

I take it as a great compliment that several people have thought I'd like to read the article "Rewilding Witchcraft" posted at the "Scarlet Imprint" website. It is a superb article in many ways and for many reasons. It's refreshing and re-assuring to know that others have also seen the natural and seamless conjunction that is not just necessary, but long existing before our awareness of it, between spiritual ecology (particularly it's "dark" and "dark green" forms) and genuine Witchcraft as I understand the term.

At day's end, people have always been attracted to my particular breed of spiritual exploration precisely because it wasn't in the same family that they had become used to seeing everywhere, particularly on the internet. As I reach the pinnacle of my work offline, and see that work translating itself slowly into my coming work- which will be the most majestic of my written art (such that it is), I face the final and inescapable conclusion of that same work: real "witching" relationships with the forces of the natural world and the Underworld are always and unavoidably personal, strange, mysterious things that do not communicate themselves well in a written or virtual format. Nor do they necessarily communicate well between two persons, either, even if they were standing face-to-face.

I'm a professional communicator, and I have run across a category of experience that defies attempts at communication in the ordinary sense, and makes even extraordinary communication a mind-bending challenge. This is not my fault; it is no one's fault; it is the strange power of the world and the mandate of the Master in operation, forcing us to realize that this is how power must be. We are being led to a point in which we are finally forced to give up on our vain notions of who and what we are, so that the Unseen can re-shape us into the sorts of creatures that can know what the real witches of the past always knew: the enjoyment of entry into a community of spirit-entities that operate in this world and deep within it, for un-guessable reasons.

This is why sorcery can never be mainstream, can never have "websites" or organized groups of people who advertise themselves or attempt to explain themselves to the public at large. The real covenants of witches can't adopt a stretch of highway, can't hold pledge drives, can't stand in lines to hand out food to the hungry. They don't exist enough in this ordinary world of ordinary relationships to do that. Their power isn't spent that way. They *do* exist, as their non-witching mortal persons, in this world, and appear to be like anyone else. That person can stand in a food line or pick up litter. But the Witch- the "witched" aspect of their self that belongs to a real Covenant: this potent alter-ego is not so easily held down or understood.

Exploring the relationship between the Witch and the Man or the Woman is a complex task. For now, it's enough to say that these matters can be carried not much further with words. Witches, in the authentic sense of the term, face the same approaching dangers- social and environmental- that we all face, because Witches live in this world, too; they live here partly in one way, and completely in

another. But to wonder at how Witches are supposed to react to environmental or social crisis is just another wonder to add to the hundreds the world already has about them. There's always a question mark when we talk about Spirits or wonder about them; real Witches fall nearly into the same category. After all, from the perspective of both folklore and history, "Fayerie" beings and witches were hardly ever seen as being so different.

Witches have extraordinary allegiances to powers that were around before our human societies formed, and who ruled this world before civilization appeared. Those powers are concerned, on the one hand, about humans who greedily and stupidly murder, destroy, and despoil other beings and the natural world, and on the other hand, they seem rather detached from it. It's as if they sense the crimes of mankind, and spread vengeance on the right side of the road, and walk serenely down the left side, as though they understand a deeper Fate in operation here.

Perhaps "all of this has happened before and will happen again"- the destruction of civilizations, the damage to the natural world, the fall of worlds entirely- I surely think that it has, and I remain haunted by the words of one my chief teachers, Peter Kingsley, when he pointed out that the fall of a civilization is always perceived by those in the civilization as the destruction of the world entire, not just their way of life, or their technologies, or their population. When civilization itself- this group-power, this group-covenant, this group-spell that we've all cast on one another and had cast on us starts to unravel, it seems like it's taking the whole world with it, down to every tree, every beast, and every grain of sand. I can see through this illusion, because there's a lot about this so-called "civilization" that I reject; lies that are clear to me; illusions whose veils I have penetrated, with the help of the Familiars who empower me.

At times like this- recognizing as I do the supreme crime of man in his wanton destruction of the world- I lean on the unalterable fact that truly Real things can never be destroyed. The darksome depths of the Underworld have birthed many beings and many worlds before; they will continue to do so, forever. The Master cannot die because some humans have spoiled a forest or poisoned all the oceans on earth; he can only surge into a demonic form to finally overthrow those made mad by greed, before shedding that skin and slithering away into a new, more suitable form for the world that remains.

I can take many "sides" as a man, as a father, as a counselor, as a citizen, as a writer, as a friend, as a deep ecologist. I can vote a certain way, talk a certain way, make posts a certain way, spend my money a certain way, and behave a certain way. But as a witch- which the other side of me is- my Allegiance is somewhere else, a place beyond the Witchwalk that I meet my familiars in, a place that I can't describe, but which I know is the true home of souls. I lament and deplore the destruction, greed, and stupidity I see around me.

I deplore the "instant gratification" fake spirituality that has sprung up to attempt to address it; I deplore the older fake spirituality that sprang up 2000 years ago as an older example of an attempt to fix the problems of human greed and over-taking. I lament the over-focus on materiality and empty pleasure that has become so potent now, and been consumed by desperate humans, desperate people

looking for a way to ease the pain of our collective waywardness. I honor those who attempt to address these issues with real focus on real things like the natural world and uncompromising rejection of greed, shallowness and waste.

But I- I am caught between something everyone understands and something no one, not even this side of myself understands, and in that, my Master waits, and through my familiars, he speaks, and other voices, stranger ones, speak. There's more to us than all these problems. We can't ignore what we do to this world, because our souls are tied up with this world, but we can't stop the march of every counter-force out there, of every destructive power. They are part of the convocation of powers we call the world, and the wise have a sort of refuge in the deep, come what may.

I don't belong to the perplexed quorum of head-scratching and frightened humans anymore. I trust the powers that are Familiar to me. I am entrusted to their protection, along with those dearest to me. We will change our shapes as we need to, through life and death, to be with our Familiars and with the Master. The Great Grandmother of Souls will receive us. And this tragic story, with all its lamentations and glories, will never end. I will always be the wisest human I can be, but the Witch I am is forever doing things mysterious to me, taking me and mine somewhere that I trust completely.

Those who call this stance "escapist" have not understood me. Nor do I think they could understand. My real family hates that wickedness should be done against the world, because their homes are in the depths of this world. So is my origin, and so is yours. But that same family knows the deeper themes of this fateful story, too. I trust myself even to destruction if destruction is all that remains to me, because destruction is another gift, another spell, another power that the Great Powers use like a prop or a device in a play.

Destruction births things. If human greed means human destruction, so be it; what comes next is perhaps what spirits are saving some humans for. Or perhaps no humans transfer their essence to the new world; perhaps even that shifts away, and new orders of being start. Regardless, I trust myself to the ominous and inexorable weaving of Old Dame Fate, and to the benevolence, hidden behind monstrous teeth and glaring eyes, of my Master and familiars.

# This Most Ancient Madness: The Trapped Beast and Blood Sacrifice

A trapped beast will do nearly anything to escape. Some say this is the urge to survive coming out of the beast, but I see something more- the urge to be free. It's not enough to be alive; but to be alive with the natural liberty of life... that might be "the point", if a point can be decided upon for these matters.

It may be that liberty and survival are part and parcel of the same thing; many people, when badly injured to the point that they can no longer operate at optimal (or close enough to optimal) levels, often go into a steep cognitive and physical decline, and die early- many years earlier than they might have naturally. It seems to me that the soul itself understands when it has gotten "trapped", in a way, and chooses to depart earlier than expected, to move on wider, broader paths of existence.

Of course, in my profession, I see the very same thing happening on another level- with fully healthy bodies, people who find themselves trapped in our modern drudgery- both the collective drudgery of work, and the personal drudgery of isolation and negative interpersonal relationships, fall into mental illness- as though the soul has either gone out for a walk, to escape the dimness of it all, or partially departed for good. It's hard to be "all oneself" in a world of anonymous masses where 99% of "work" is never for the good of soul, or Nature, or for one's kin, but only for the financial gain of faceless and distant masters- or closer masters who are pretty despicable in most cases.

It's hard to stay in one's own skin, and this is compounded by religions that teach us that our skin is bad- or at least temporary and fallen- and promise the golden meadows of heaven, far away from this world, for those who conform the best to the religious authoritarian structure.

Paul Shepard, in one of my all-time favorite works, "Coming Home to the Pleistocene", analyzes the differences in general religious patterns for pastoral peoples, agricultural peoples, and foragers/hunter-gatherers, and he notices that our modern day "messianic" style religions- full of prophets, doom, redemption, and escape off to an eternal heaven- seem to stem from pastoral cultures.

He analyzes the cosmologies of "animal keepers" and discovers some very scary- and enlightening- insights into the people who ultimately gave us the prayer "The Lord is my Shepherd." He ties their psychological and extremist "ownership of animals" mentality to their eventual "ownership of women and children" institutions, as well.

I strongly suggest you read his book; it helped me to fill in many "gaps" in my understanding not just of our world and society, but spiritual gaps as well. He points out the sheer drudgery of the pastoral and herding lifestyle- and reminisces about the pastoral peoples pushing their herd animals along in the mud, with all their slavish and reverent obedience to central authorities, their glorification of "warrior" ideals, and their focus on the horizon and sky for most of their spiritual beliefs.

In this, he sees them as the people who first looked upwards from their drudgery, amid the mud, animals, and blood, with enemy pastoralists coming to raid their herds and kill and take animals to enrich their own herds, and hoped for a "better world" in the afterlife, somewhere off in the sky. Pastoralists are not forest dwellers, after all; they need the wide open sky and pastures for their beasts, and their spiritual patterns tend to focus on the "sky gods" that we know so well today.

He points out that agricultural primal people tend to see "salvation" as coming from below- life rising up from below to "save" humans from death and hunger, which are often the same thing. It takes the animal-owners and their broad skies to conceptualize "salvation" as coming from above- or more to the point, "from over the horizon".

The "messiah" ideal arises first among people who have this pastoral technological, social, and economic range of existence. It's just another human mal-adaption, away from the foraging lifestyle that is natural to us.

Just when you thought agriculture, with all of its destructiveness to the sacred forests, the surplus food it produces that allows for over-population and over-consumption, and its eventual notion of "ownership" of massive parcels of land was bad, then surprise! Pastoralism has its own terrors. Add them all together- the maladaptive psychological and epistemological traits of agriculture and pastoralism, and you start to see the foundations of much that is around you now.

When humans turned against the forests, clearing them for cropland, and began to swell in numbers too many, and began to decide that they could "own" land or beasts- this was the real "fall of man." And it will kill you and me, one day.

Before it does that, it will have you looking up from your drudgery, one person among billions, wondering at why your soul longs for a freedom it's never known... and then you'll possibly have a breakdown and become one of my clients. I'd be one of my own clients if I could counsel me, because my breakdown came a while back. I've had a collection of them. But in this- the breaking point- we find the "door opening" to new ways of being. We find the promise of sorcery born in the initiation of the mind falling apart, and seeing through the phantoms and mistakes that underpin history and society.

Of course, I only said "promise" of sorcery. And in "promise", I meant something closer to "possibility". Not everyone who loses their mind- or enough parts of their mind- gains the power to speak with our beast cousins, or ride on the wind. Only the fortunate... or should I say, the not-as-unfortunate, for sorcery changes the mind into a shape that will never fit comfortably back into society again.

Yes. We've managed to make life so miserable by trying to "own" things that cannot be owned- like land and beasts, or even the so-called "rights" to the labor of other humans or their own goods, or minds, or bodies... and we've become so miserable in the world we've chopped up into squares and reduced to numbers and data and money, that most of us are actively thinking that death will be better

than life, and staring at the sky, longing for an eternal afterlife-land.

We're so far out of touch with the True sacred, that we've emptied our pantheons and imagine that only one "God" exists- and we've made him so angry and disgusted, he had to kill himself over us. This "sacrifice" he made of himself on our behalf somehow gave him the ability to get over his anger... but only a little. He's pretty disgusted with us, at any rate, but we hope for the love of a distant being, and his happy land.

Madness, as I said. We know what we did to the land and beasts, and even to each other. Our souls know. We project this shame onto the heavens and the Gods, but it doesn't belong there.

We put that shame onto a mighty being who will punish us and set it right- or even do blood rituals to summon a magic to save us- but that's sick fiction from sick minds. What our souls want isn't salvation and heaven; our souls want the forest and one another.

Until it has that, we're trapped beasts, willing to believe anything to escape what our minds have to experience every day.

# What Drove them Under the Mound: Revealing the Malicious Lie that Poisons Everything

As usual, David Abram (my favorite deep ecologist writer, and one of the greatest living sorcerers I know) has his way with words and "says it" like it's always needed to be said. I offer to you all this excellent passage from his crucial and essential work, "The Spell of the Sensuous." If you've not read it, read it as soon as you can. It is one of the greatest "grimoires" of the True Old Way- the Oldest Way- that has ever been written by a man.

And understand as you absorb this passage that what he speaks of concerns you greatly- even if you don't consider yourself to be influenced by the ancient "science" of Aristotle, you are- these ancient ideas echo down to us through our modern science, our modern religions, and everywhere in our educational system. It's deep in the flesh of western society, and it poisons us all.

Read this, understand this, and work to be free of it- and the promise of a greater life, beyond anything you might have imagined, will be yours. The term "sorcery" becomes meaningless compared to the astounding reality that sorcerers point us towards.

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"Ultimately, to acknowledge the life of the body, and to affirm our solidarity with this physical form, is to acknowledge our existence as one of the earth's animals, and so to remember and rejuvenate the organic basis of our thoughts and our intelligence. According to the central current of Western philosophical tradition, from its source in ancient Athens up until the present moment, human beings alone are possessed of an incorporeal intellect, a "rational soul" or mind by which, by virtue of its affinity with an eternal or divine dimension outside the bodily world, sets us radically apart from, or above, all other forms of life.

In Aristotle's writings, for instance, while plants are endowed with a vegetal soul (which enables nourishment, growth, and reproduction), and while animals possess, in addition to the vegetal soul, an "animal soul" (which provides sensation and locomotion), these souls remain inseparable from the earthly world of generation and decay. Humans, however, possess along with these other souls a rational soul, or intellect, which alone provides access to the less corruptible spheres and has affinities with the divine "Unmoved Mover" himself.

In Descartes's hands, two thousand years later, this hierarchical continuum of living forms, commonly called the "Great Chain of Being", was polarized into a thorough dichotomy between mechanical, unthinking matter (including all minerals, plants, and animals, as well as the human body) and pure, thinking mind (the exclusive province of humans and God). Since humans alone are a mixture of extended matter and thinking mind, we alone are able to feel and to experience our body's mechanical

sensations. Meanwhile, all other organisms, consisting solely of extended matter, are in truth nothing more than automatons, incapable of actual experience, unable to feel pleasure or suffer pain. Hence, we humans need have no scruples about manipulating, exploiting, or experimenting upon other animals in any manner we see fit.

Curiously, such arguments for human specialness have regularly been utilized by human groups to justify the exploitation not just of other organisms, but of other humans as well (other nations, other races, or simply the "other" sex); armed with such arguments, one had only to demonstrate that these others were not fully human, or were "closer to the animals", in order to establish one's right of dominion. According to Aristotle, for example, women are deficient in the rational soul, and hence "the relation of male to female is naturally that of the superior to the inferior- of the ruling to the ruled." Such justifications for social exploitation draw their force from the prior hierarchialization of the natural landscape, from the hierarchical ordering that locates "humans", by virtue of our incorporeal intellect, above and apart from all other "merely corporeal" entities.

Such hierarchies are wrecked by an phenomenology that takes seriously our immediate sensory experience. For our senses disclose to us a wild-flowering proliferation of entities and elements, in which humans are thoroughly immersed. While this diversity of sensuous forms certainly displays some sort of reckless order, we find ourselves in the midst of, rather than on top of, this order.

We may cast our gaze downward to watch the field mice and the insects that creep along the bending grasses, or to glimpse the snakes that slither into hollows deep underfoot, yet, at the same moment, hawks soaring on great winds gaze down upon our endeavors. Melodious feathered beings flit like phantoms among the high branches of the trees, while other animate powers, known only by their traces, move within the hidden depth of the forest.

In the waters that surge in waves against the distant edge of the land, still stranger powers, multihued and silent, move in crowds among alien forests of coral and stone... Does the human intellect, or "reason", really spring us free from our inherence in the depths of this wild proliferation of forms? Or on the contrary, is the human intellect rooted in, and secretly borne by, our forgotten contact with the multiple nonhuman shapes that surround us?"

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Be free, friends. See the lie. Know the lie. Understand the lie. Reject the lie. These minds and bodies of ours are the ageless, vital products of countless non-human forces, all of them from the sensual reality which is the only reality. Here is home; here is before life; here is afterlife. Here are the sacred powers, appearing as trees, animals, winds, oceans, sunlight. They are persons, too, though they appear differently than human persons, and speak differently. And to them we owe everything. We are of their great family. Accept it. Be here with the Powers, and let your hearts rest on them.

Only in our diseased human imaginations could we think that we stand apart from all this, via some participation in an idealist "eternal" reality that is apart from this. The lies of idealism are what



destroyed us, and what slowly continue to destroy our world. The lies of idealism are what drove the Fayerie people under the mounds, away from the human world, and what shattered the sorcerous might of the un-tethered human mind, which once talked with the Gods directly and brought about works of magical force that only legends can whisper at. See the blood that the lie has spilled, and feel the alienation the lie has cursed you with, and join me in going back to the senses and the life of this sacred body, and this sacred world.

Never again let someone tell you that your humanity or your human body is fallen, flawed, or a cosmic piece of shite that means nothing. Never let them tell you that your senses are limited and insufficient things. Your senses are sacred, and can reveal to you the Truth that you have always been a part of, without effort. The priests lie. The mullahs lie. The rabbis lie. Anyone who says that your true home is eternally distant from here, this wasteland of fallen beings and sin, is lying. This lie is so deeply entrenched in our cultures that it's a miracle that the soul can rouse itself from the deceitful sleep it has been cursed to, ever- but Abrams has awoken, just as his mentor Merleau-Ponty had awoken, and thanks to them, and to my Helping Spirits, I feel my sleep breaking, too.



*When despair grows in me  
and I wake in the middle of the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting for their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

*- Wendell Berry*

## P a r t VI



# Wisdom of the White Beings Below: The Older Worldview

"After observing animals for millions of years, as our most important intellectual activity, we deformed the messenger itself. We made our animal fellow something to be possessed rather than someone to be encountered as a spiritual being. Our prehistoric "agreements" with the animal nations, our "negotiations" with wild animals, were once the biggest part of human culture. This was not a simple "identification with nature," as the conservationists phrase it today. It was a lifetime work, to build covenants, or treaties of affiliation, with the nations of the Others.

With domestication wild things became the enemies of tame things, materially and psychologically. The wild unconscious of mankind, its fears and dreams and subconscious impulses, lost their affiliation or representation by wild things, and those were the very things by which, for a million years, we had worked out a meaningful relationship with the sentient universe. The wild unconscious was driven away into the wilderness. We began to view the planet as a thing, rather than a thou." We began to see our world as an organism to be possessed, rather than a spiritual moment to be encountered."

-J.T. Winogron



# Beyond Good and Evil

I know I don't need to tell you ladies and gentlemen this, but the Spirit World, with very, very few exceptions, doesn't "save" humans or other animals from anything. If we don't plant our fields, or get out and hunt or fish, we starve to death and go to the spirit world. If we are standing around when that vat of toxic waste gets spilled on us, we (probably) get sick and die. The consequences of actions and events in this world cannot be stopped or altered by the Unseen world except in the rarest of cases.

Witchcraft, alongside the earliest forms of religion- beginning with Provenance animism and going forward to the countless varieties of polytheism- does not teach about a "salvific" spirit world. Such a thing does not exist. The Master Spirit is not some "I got your back" god that people pray to for every little thing, or to be saved from the consequences of living in this world. He is a teaching spirit, a tutelary spirit for certain people, showing them how to increase their insight and power in the subtle world, in the deeper ways that they can use their minds and senses.

I hate to reduce the Master to just a teaching role, but 99% of the time, that's how witches in the past experienced him- as a supporter of sorcery, and a mysterious partner in the process of gaining spiritual alliances and coming to such strange insights that perhaps few other humans will ever understand them.

The rest of the time, the human experience of him was as the exuberant Spirit of Life, of the vitalizing breath, partying at the extra-temporal "Sabbats" and interstices of life, including the "party" that occurs on the occasion of actual deaths, when a new union with his power becomes possible to the deceased, a new relationship with him and the rest of the world besides.

The story of this whole world and life is a story of continually shifting relationships, and that truly does sum it up. The story of this world isn't about how someone died or didn't die; it isn't about how these people or those people overcame death or escaped death or lived forever. It isn't about how you or I came to terms with our eventual deaths. It isn't about how we escaped danger, or succumbed to it. It's only about how relationships between beings and powers came together, shifted, and changed. Birth and death are always going to be a part of that. We don't have to burden ourselves worrying so much about the dying side of that, and yet, perhaps it's just human to do so.

Either way, those who consider themselves scions of the "old witching" are attempting to deal with a being, with a very real and potent power called "Master" who does not exist with the same parameters as the mainstream conception of "god" does. If I have a problem with my boss at work, I don't pray to the Master to take care of it. If my boss is a real creep, and treating me very unjustly, and the situation is bad enough to call for it, I may do *as the Master taught me* and use my own power, in His name, to attempt to sorcerously influence the situation. But I don't ever think that the Master will live my life for me or go behind my back and strike down my enemies. I mean, he might- but unlike my Christian contemporaries, I don't ever assume it, or expect it, nor feel "let down" by my Master if

it seems like I'm getting "no help."

It's not the job of the vast majority of spiritual beings to "help" humans- we have inside our minds and bodies what we need to navigate this world, alongside the relationships we form with other beings here and the extra capabilities and resources those alliances bring to us.

Those spirits whose task it IS to help us- the protecting spirits of our families and of our own lives, do what they can, I think, within the context of our hyper-blind and spiritually degenerate modern way of pretty much disbelieving that they exist, or never being aware of them at all. Of course, what most people don't understand about the "family fates" or the personal "following" spirits for each of us is that they don't just allot to us protection or guidance; some of them are allotted to end our lives, too, when Fateful forces motivate them to. Should make everyone think!

And, right alongside that statement, none of us have to assume that every "bad" thing that happens to me or the world is just "The Master's will." That doesn't follow, either. His will is just as mysterious as he is- the witches of old never began with the basic idea that the Master was "all good" and therefore they didn't have some belief that his will was all-good nor that his will was all-powerful, controlling every detail of the world. While the Master is truly very powerful, he isn't alone in the world, and therefore, his will can't command everything, can't shape everything to be just one certain way.

The world is community- many powers interacting, conflicting, changing one another. The spirit world is the same way. The will of one thing is adulterated by the will of many other things. And in such an immense system, humans have to find the dignity of realizing that they aren't the central aspect of this drama of life.

Fateful powers may move us, but in that, there is no personal attack, there is no injustice, there is no need to demand or expect our own standards of "Good" from the cosmos. Wisdom is still real, and at day's end, I do think that wisdom shows us that the cosmos *the way it is* resonates with a deeper, better "fitness" or "good" than any of us can imagine while mired in our own personal miseries, or seeing the atrocious things that take place around us.

It's true that unwise people can be part of the cause of no end of injustice and trauma for so many others, and yet, we humans are still such a small thread in this whole tapestry. For a few of us, who can come aside and, in whispers, seek the quiet voice of the Master Spirit and his subordinate powers- I think a rare kind of peace can be found with this huge tapestry and all its ominously large-seeming problems.

These points have to be made. The Master isn't "evil", but then, he isn't "good" in the ordinary way, either. I can say that he *is* wise; no advice that I believe I've received from

him, usually through the intermediary of other spirits acting as his representatives or messengers, has ever been wrong, or should I say, it always had great value, great transformative power for me in my

life. It was what I needed to hear, and it inspired me to move in wiser ways, making me a better, stronger person.



# I Have Seen The Underworld

I have seen the Underworld. I have seen the strange, small, hive-like beings inside of Stained Rock. I have seen the serpent the size of the world, and the leering faces of the Devils below, while my mind burned with the liberating realization that they were not evil, only trapped there, repressed there in convenient darkness while the shallowest minds of human beings called them evil.

I've seen the potencies that live in the ground and in my flesh, and in your flesh, and known them for the things beyond good or evil that they really are- they are just power, immense power, waiting to be befriended and mediated for constructive ends. I've seen the goat-horned man with green skin who walks on the side of the ocean below, with a bear at his side; I've given him bundles of offerings and felt him awaken the sorcerous power I needed inside me; I've felt my whole flesh burn with the power to gain what I wanted and needed. It's like my blood and skin became the power I needed to make my will take its course. Forget "the power of intention"- I know what the power of the whole being feels like, now.

My Puckril has perched inside me, guided me to where I needed to be, transmitted my reverence to the Master Spirit of this world and the Great Grandmother of life in her infinite below, and in the heights and depths of what I can only describe as the grip of true sorcery, such an unusual and rare experience for our cursed times, I've found that nearly everything that matters to most people ceased to matter for me.

Everyone is so bent up about "race", and yet, when I was most transformed, I lost my ability to see "race"- people were all just people, more faces of the human power that has manifested in this world, with nothing to really meaningfully set them apart. Women and men, they were just women and men; they had no meaning beyond that. Fake religions that structure so much of people's minds and personalities- those were like ashes in the wind, and the people most obsessed with them seemed like drunks to me, just intoxicated, wavering people without any ability to reach beyond themselves.

Nothing was important beyond the burning in me. I was free of the ages of surface-level, social-level insanities that define 98% of all the controversy around me. Feeling like that, suddenly, you can't even talk to people anymore. You can try, but, non-burning people are just so boring all of a sudden. Their emotions get worked up over things that just don't seem (to me) to really matter. Politics also goes by the wayside, even though by this point, everyone is yelling "hey man, you can't ignore the problems of our world!"

And so, on some level, I have to pick a topic that I think is sufficiently close to wholesome- like poverty, or the civil rights struggle of gay people, and I have to make some mean-spirited comments about the bad people (and they are morons, never mistake me) who drive these oppressive

problems... but my heart is somewhere else. It's a lonely place, because all I want to do is find my next vision. I know I probably should be doing something "more practical" but I'm the least practical person you'll ever meet, in most ways.

That might make me useless from one social perspective, but useful, I think, in other ways, stranger ways. Don't worry, this "burning" me hasn't sidelined himself from all human usage; I can affect things in ways people don't see. All of those who have suffered from my subtle power and that of my helpers, and many of those who have benefited from it, will never know it.

But I know it. And knowing is half the battle... or all of the battle, depending. I've done things that would make most of my readership never read another word of mine, and I've done things that would gain me an even larger positive reputation and following, far beyond just writing some stuff that people like to read. And I have no guilt about the former, and no desire for the latter; I have all I need with what coils inside me and inside the ground under my feet.

I can see why so many previous human societies have had such a suspicion about sorcery, and why some made it illegal; they weren't really completely wrong to do so. When the hidden power comes, people make bad members of convoluted, modern social systems. The last thing any social authority wants is people realizing that there's so much more going on than just some tired (and I might say manufactured) "struggle between good and evil."



*As the cricket's soft autumn hum  
Is to us  
So are we to the trees  
As are they  
To the rocks and the hills.*

*-Gary Snyder*



# Maleficium

We all know that the Witches of old were accused of every atrocity known to man, and we are tempted these days to write off those accusations as the accusatory additions of hateful witch-hunters. But as Emma Wilby points out in stunning force in her essential work *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, it simply can't be explained by angry Christian trial lawyers and judges. It was real, to a large extent- both the witches of Isobel's covenant, as well as others, and shamanic functionaries all over the world as well, did scary, harmful, and terrible things to other beings when they were engaged in the spirit-stream of the Unseen World.

It is incontrovertible. And however hard we try to reframe it to make the witches look noble, we run aground. This is something that no one in the "occult" world has ever tried to discuss at length, admit, accept, or analyze. And I will follow Wilby's lead on doing it justice- not just in the academic sense that she has, but in the occult and spiritual sense, because we all need to understand the complex concept of "Maleficium".

I can say, by way of teaser, that it doesn't go where you'd think. It goes to a sublime, trying, and mature place. There is no hope of reaching the deepest mysteries of the Witching Covenant without understanding it, and other darkling things that we understandably attempt to shun outright.

The other day, a friend and I were having a discussion about how much people ignore. I accidentally depressed her a bit, I think, when I went off on one of my rants about Nature- and Nature's perilous designs. Before I can pass that depression on to all of you, let me say something else that needs to be said (it's a good set up!)

I saw this really great movie a while back called "Renegade"- and it is about a man living in the frontier Western days, who uses the super-powerful sacred teacher/entheogen Ayahuasca. The sequences in that movie that detail his visionary journeys are shockingly powerful, realistic, and the closest thing I think any movie has ever come to showing audiences what the Unseen really is like. I linked a sequence from the movie here some months ago, and it's always worth finding it and watching it again!

In his main journey sequence, you see that the Unseen world is packed full of non-human creatures, particularly insectoid and amphibian/reptilian creatures. To human minds, this makes the Unseen a bit unnerving, because it is reminiscent of a jungle or swamp (which it is, in many ways) and therefore, to our minds, full of dangerous creatures. We're already profoundly uncomfortable with many insects and reptiles to begin with. They're just so poisonous, or toothy, or stingy, or weird.

But the movie's visionary sequences make sense- if this world is mostly full of insects (there are far more insects than humans, or any mammals) and if this world is far more populated by non-human beings in that way, why should the Unseen be so different? The answer is: it's not. Our very anthropocentric narratives of life are the ones that lead us to visualize the Unseen as some kind of

medieval paradise, where we meet spirits that tend to look like us. But what about the reality beyond the fantasy? This world is an unthinkably complex swarm of life, and *so is the Unseen*.

And that brings us to the depressing point. Have you ever really looked at, or marveled at, the morphologies that Nature has built? You know your own body pretty well, but have you really stopped to examine the other creatures we share our world with, and have always shared this world with? I don't know about you guys, but something stands out to me above all else:

Everything Nature designs appears to be designed to either deceive other life-forms, or destroy them. And it will boggle your mind- perhaps to some dark places- if you keep looking. Go down to the level of cells and the simplest organisms: haven't you seen how viruses and other creatures of that nature consume cells and other simple life-forms?

Invade the integrity of cells and destroy them or incorporate them? This is where it began- back at the roots- simple powers, and doing what? Slithering about and looking to consume other powers.

And from that fundamental level, what evolves? What shapes emerge from the kaleidoscope of Fate? Teeth. Claws. Stingers and spines that can paralyze other beings. Webs to entrap. Entire organisms designed to destroy others, who really are nothing more than deadly appendages coupled with sharp sense organs. And the countless creatures designed NOT to be lethal or quick or cunning? Largely helpless targets of life and flesh whose lot in life seems to be waiting to be destroyed so that predators can survive longer. And even those organisms, helpless as they are, have teeth that make the grinding of plant organisms into bits very easy.

The question you have to ask, if it hits you just right, is "what the frack is going on?" This is the "scripture" of Nature itself? Does Nature itself contain, at Her very heart, nothing but a story of one power destroying and incorporating another? It seems that way. And largely, it is that way.

This can bring us to scary conclusions. If what I say above gets you thinking at all, then the outcomes can be more frightening for us than you imagine. We already fear stepping on snakes or venomous animals in this world; we all fear falling foul of a bear or a lion somewhere. And yet, we tell ourselves, convince ourselves, that we are "Masters" of this world, that this whole story is about us. Without thinking about it, many people just assume that this is a human world even though we are far from the most numerous beings here, and far from the oldest beings here. We're recent, compared to some of the other life-forms that have existed here.

If it's true of life, as I say, that we aren't the Master-Chiefs here, what about death? I can already tell you that we're not the Masters of the Unseen world, either. Most of you knew that, but it never gets old reminding ourselves. However, if the Unseen is truly, as I said before, a jungle, a tangle, an unthinkable tapestry of non-human life, and if we can see, from the amoebic level, Nature telling us a story of one power preying on another... what makes us think that when we die, and our poor, confused souls are wandering afresh in the Great Marsh Unseen, that the invisible equivalent of a shark might not just swallow us up? The Unseen has a lot of unthinkable and strange things in it. How

do we know that "most of us" survive for very long at all once the anchoring harbor of the body is no more?

What makes us imagine that if we sometimes can't make it across a savannah without being eaten by a lion, or make it across a bayou in well-settled South Louisiana without being bitten by a Cottonmouth snake, that our "walk" in the Unseen world will be any safer?

Yeah, this can keep a thoughtful person up at night. And this all goes back to the subject of Maleficium, of Witches engaging in dangerous, lethal, and downright crazy, scary things, that appear to be brutal to their fellow man, as well as other creatures. There is an "Utter Darkness" being conjured by my words here that I hope won't leak out too far. The Utter Darkness I'm speaking of is the secret heart of our fears, of death, of nature, and of ourselves. Nothing can be so fearful without being that powerful- power and fear run side by side, and support one another.

There is a one- only one- reason why the dangers of this world and the Unseen are mitigated for us, and if you are fortunate, you will discover it, and structure at least some of your life around it. The life you save from the sunlit dangers of this forest of life, and the soul you save from the possible dangers of the Long Dark may just be your own.



# O, Fortuna: The Concept of "Luck" in Traditional Metaphysics and Witchcraft

I have been asked to talk about the concept of "luck". I assume that the people who asked want to hear a traditional metaphysical explanation for luck, as can be given by a person like myself who considers his spiritual and temporal worldview to be based on traditional metaphysics. So, here I go.

Luck ordinarily refers to events beyond a person's immediate willed control or intent, but which turn out well for the person, in some way. You were out of change to put air in the tires of your vehicle, and suddenly you see two quarters lying on the ground in the middle of the parking lot. That's the typical ordinary meaning of luck- fortuitous and un-chosen events.

Now, from what I've come to understand, "luck" is understood in two main ways: prescriptive luck, and descriptive luck. This is a bit more detailed. Prescriptive luck is the sort of luck people believe you have because spiritual beings- like Gods, perhaps- want certain things to happen, and so they determine that things will happen a certain way. In this sense, you're lucky that the Spirits or Gods wanted you to find those quarters on the ground, probably because they have other plans for you and don't want you stuck in a parking lot somewhere. In this "prescriptive" way of seeing Luck, Luck starts to sound a lot like the super-deterministic idea of Fate, which is what most people think "Fate" is.

The descriptive idea of Luck is the idea that sometimes, "things" just line up, events just happen, and sometimes, they line up in your favor somehow. Descriptive luck isn't part of any plan of any greater, invisible beings; it's the simple outplay of countless forces that all touch and combine and bounce about constantly, and at some points, we humans find benefit in their random combinations. An echo of this understanding of luck comes in the way that Dame Fortune- Lady Luck herself (another name for the Goddess or Goddesses of Fate) happens to be blindfolded in most images of her.

Most people these days reject the idea of prescriptive luck for the same reason they reject the notion of Fate. Our egos these days are simply too big to accept the idea that we aren't alone in charge of our lives, nor are we really that much "in charge" of anything. We have to believe that we're strong enough, smart enough, and just willful enough to "get out there and get ours"- the vanity of the ego that sees itself as a radically separate thing from all other forces and conditions (when in fact, the ego is the offspring of other forces and conditions, not separate at all, and incapable of being separate.)

We want to think that our ego-will is the ultimate or at least most important guiding factor that will affect the outcome of our lives, when I don't think that this is a coherent thing to believe at all. But I know why people want to believe it, and I know why most modern ethical and moral authorities teach people to believe it.

Most people these days accept that descriptive luck is real, but nothing supernatural at all. It's just the "serendipitous" events that must occasionally happen as the slot machine of natural forces all spin about and line up in different combinations. This sort of luck fits in nicely with our modern beliefs regarding the blind, empty, material universe, and so people can buy into it more. We have no room anymore for spirits acting behind the scenes to influence our lives. Those of us who do have such an idea are either weirdos and sorcerers, or fundamentalist Christians who think that angels and demons are behind every corner.

There are no angels and demons behind every corner, because the Unseen world isn't a warzone divided between "angels" and "demons". That's absurd, and false. But there are spirits of every description you can imagine behind every surface your eye illuminates, and few of them fit "angelic" or "demonic" descriptions. The diversity in the spiritual world is far beyond our comprehension. If the world that is seen can have 15,000 species of butterfly, why should we have a hard time imagining the unseen is wild in diversity?

This all goes to bear on what I think about Luck, so be patient for one moment more. I believe that the truth about "luck" is closer to the prescriptive notion than the descriptive notion. I'm not saying luck is nothing but a deterministic, spirit-controlled thing, but it's more that, than it is otherwise. And the reason why is because for me, luck is another expression of the activity of relationship. In this case, the relationships are largely unseen.

Imagine a city where most people had a hard time getting by. Now, imagine a man moves to the city, and his family is really close with another family that is well connected in the city. We all know what would happen- he'd get along better, find jobs easier, perhaps avoid trouble a little more, due to the relationship-system he happens to be in.

The very same is true for us in this world. "Luck" may be expressed, in the prescriptive way, as spirits manipulating things from behind the scenes, and the reason why the ancients thought this is because it is true. Spirits bring about a lot- nearly everything imaginable- from within the World Soul. No one dies without spirits killing them. This idea- so shocking to some- is at the core of the true old ways. Fates for individual beings are brought about by spirits- spirits who often appear as female- that answer the call of the Master to either send a being into this world, or take a being out of this world. The Unseen has a strong generative, bountiful nature, but also a very dangerous and predatory one, and it MUST have that to keep the world healthy, and for the world to be what it is. It's natural and right.

Fate has agents, in other words, and this idea is at the core of witchcraft, the oldest known witchcraft of the British Isles, or anywhere else.

In much the same way the Unseen World's cavalcades and hordes and families of spirits hover over what we experience in this world as "birth" and "death", they hover over other things, as well. Now, "luck" begins to take on its older meaning, which I think is the right one.

It was clear to the ancients that some people were "luckier" than others. Some had an easier time getting wealth, or survived a dangerous illness while others perished. Some never got lost; some had a gift for finding food or shelter when they needed it. Some were lucky with lovers, or just more socially adept than others. Some were smarter; some were more handsome or beautiful (though who is "handsome or beautiful" is largely socially-constructed fiction and preference.)

Why should this be the case? In a worldview of spiritual ecology, EVERYTHING is the "way it is" because of the activity and interplay of many parts, many beings, many powers, many conditions. In other words, relationships between many beings and forces make everything what it is, and cause everything that will be. Your "luck" in the details of your life- and any other thing that you had about you that helped you to gain positive things (like your intellect or looks) isn't just about you; countless unseen powers endowed you with those things, or saw that you had those things. You owe those to many other people- seen and unseen- and to lots of conditions you didn't control.

That's luck. Some people have a network of spiritual powers and persons who help them, because the reality of relationship demands their help; others do not. Some have only a little help; others have more. The Heathen ancients very specifically associated "luck force" with the deeds of one's ancestors- for we know that the spiritual totality of one's ancestral host "follows" you through life, in a direct or indirect way. If your ancestors were strong and brave in life, the force that they transmit into the Unseen, which then gets drawn upon by all spirits who are connected to their spiritual family, is strong. If your ancestors did many things that were not so positive, that force is weaker. This is how ancestral powers affect a person's luck- how that particular relationship plays a role.

In the amazing HBO television show "Rome", Julius Caesar says, of the two main characters in the show, that he is afraid to punish them for something they did to hinder him, because they have "strong gods" with them. He says this because the two characters just survived certain death and came through unharmed. That the writers of the show should put those words in Caesar's mouth shows that the writers understood the ancient notion of Luck in a very surprisingly clear way. These two men did what others could not, so Caesar guessed that they had strange and powerful protectors looking after them, or at least unseen conditions around them that would react to protect them somehow. He was right.

To be a sorcerer is its own sort of luck. And it gets luckier when you accomplish what only sorcerers really ever accomplish: conscious identification with the Fetch-Beast, the Familiar, who immediately becomes a very intimate relationship, and immediately begins feeding the sorcerer with a lot of luck, if the familiar is strong at all.

Luck in this spiritual-ecological sense can be obtained through alliance.



*Kind to the kind,  
Deceitful to the deceitful,  
Helpful to the helpful,  
Wary of the stranger,  
Dismissive of the hateful,  
Patient with the dim-witted,  
Understanding with the grief-stricken,  
Hospitable to the guest  
And loving to your increase always be.*



# On a Cold Winter's Day: Death, Injustice, and the Blighting of the Ground

In 1928, Gladys Tantaquidgeon shared a story which was collected from recordings of events that had transpired some centuries earlier, in New England:

*One time, years ago, on a cold winter's day an Indian woman and her baby came to the village of Hamilton, and as it was nearly night, the woman sought shelter for herself and child with the settlers. The white folks treated the Indians very badly, so they refused to take her in. Going down to the stream she sat down on a rock, holding the child in her arms. There was but a thin coating of ice on the stream and it would be dangerous for her to attempt to cross it. There she sat and as it was bitter cold weather, she soon perished. In the morning, the bodies of the mother and her child were found frozen stiff and without attempting to identify them, the people buried them right there. Previous to that terrible tragedy, corn had been cultivated in the fields nearby where the two were buried, but after that, corn would not grow there. It was said that it was because of the unjust treatment received by the Indians from the whites that caused the blight. A heap of stones marks the site of the grave.*

It is a common folkloric motif that those who die violently haunt the scene of their misfortune- and those buried with the resentment of injustice may blight the land itself. But what's not further known to most is the impact of the blight on Hamilton, and the way those who tried to leave the village, or plant further afield, came to unhappy ends themselves.

Some 80 years after the woman and her child froze to death, the remaining four families in the area fearfully brought iron pots full of embers and glowing coals on winter nights to the grave-cairn to give the resentful ghost of the Indian woman and her child the warmth they were denied by the whites before. They brought warm bread and mulled cider, for fear that their own children might be lost. Hamilton is gone now, and the graves of those who lived there are also lost, but the legendary cairn for the Indian woman still stands, somewhere alongside a stream in an area that is wildly overgrown now. Locals won't go near anything that resembles a pile of stones in that countryside.

One cannot warm the ghost of a mother who held her child while it was being murdered. She will only have peace when those who did this foul deed on her and her child join them as ghosts themselves, to warm her way to the afterlife with their fearful and pitiful pleas for forgiveness. Then, only stones will remain- cold stones- to remind the world of the terrible consequences of cold resentment and fear.

# Sacrifice and the Darkest of Debts: Giving and Taking in the Perspective of the True Old Ways

Life isn't easy or nice. And though it's tempting to pin the blame for this on economics, greedy governments, general stupidity, organized religion, or many other things, the truth is simpler: life wasn't ever easy, and not terribly "nice" as we think of it.

Now, this isn't meant to depress anyone; honestly, you can't live for long in this world and disagree with what I just said. But there is still a deeper level of detail that most people don't catch, and which I must- like a broken record- keep repeating. I never said that life didn't contain moments of great joy, or bliss, and I never said that life wasn't appropriate, sacred, or very much worth the living. It is all those things, and more.

But life isn't easy or nice, and the central reason it is NOT, is because we humans are forgetful and not terribly grateful. It isn't because we are prone to greed, or anger, or hate; it isn't because we are prone to cultural ethnocentrism or pride; it isn't because we are flawed in some innate sense; we are simply, and deeply, forgetful and ungrateful.

When you were born, countless seen and unseen powers came together to make that event a possibility. You strode out, crawled out, toddled out, walked out, ran out- from your origin, into the wide world, and behind you, those powers that were your origin were still there. A void was left, the space that you occupied once, before you were born, and which was left behind when you "went forth" into the world of life.

That void yawns and waits, empty, until you fill it. And being born wasn't the only time you left behind something that needed your attention. The last time you created something- anything- you left behind a void in the Seen and Unseen world; if you made a clay pot, there was a literal hole left in the ground where you excavated the clay. But your creativity is a sacred act, a sorcerous one- it, too, "takes" from the Unseen, to make it "seen".

And these "holes" you leave behind, they wait to be filled- with your gratitude. the entire edifice of spiritual ecology, which is to say "Reality", teaches us that humans must repay the seen and unseen world for what they gained from it- and that includes your very life. How many awesome and majestic powers came together to sing us into being, to cast the spell that we are the results of? How many danced together so that we might emerge? And what have we done to repay them? You are literally born in debt- and your death is the ultimate repayment, the ultimate return to where you came from.

In the meantime, while you live, it is wise to do as all the ancients did, and show your gratitude. You start by remembering your powers of origin. Remember- put together again (re-member) in your head



who and what they are. They are beings of fearful and awesome majesty. The ground under your feet is just one of them; the arching dome of the sky another; but more exist.

Ancient people "gave back" in the form of sacrifice, in the form of gifts, prayers, burnt offerings, buried offerings, drowned offerings, even sacrifices of human beings- they gave back, because they knew that none could live in this world if they didn't pay the piper.

Because the "piper"- or should I say, "the pipers"- aren't the sorts of things that sit back and shrug their shoulders and say "oh well- those humans have forgotten us; we'll just keep doing all this for them, and not worry about the fair, reciprocal exchange we are owed." No. They actually wait. And wait. And become hungry. Eventually, they become skeletal with starvation, and then, they come to take what they are owed.

That's why life isn't easy or nice for the forgetful and the ungrateful. The "Others" come to take what they were owed in the first place, and, they take what they can get- you. They eat the soul; then, they eat the body. This is one of the causes of "madness" in our world; this is one of the causes of the great disquiet that follows our souls in the modern world. This is why life has a tendency to become so very disturbing, confusing, hurtful, to our minds: we are ignoring what ought not be ignored.

Nature abhors a vacuum, they say: the dark spaces that are waiting for you to fill them are like a vacuum. They become hungry. It is our duty, our true way of life as humans, to give back what we owe- and to live these lives preparing to give all of ourselves back, but to give ourselves back with gratitude and reverence. That is the ultimate and final sacrifice, and it makes a life well-lived a complete life when it is done.

If you are grateful, every day- just let your heart be grateful to the Others, and to the powers in this amazing world that you can see- when they come to take what so many others have not given to them, they might just pass you by. They know who is grateful and who is not; they know who takes, but never gives back. Make the sacred forces behind you and in you satisfied with your thanks and kindness, and your life WILL be a life of blessings and fullness... or at least, a better life in ways that others will not be.

Now, if this sounds a bit too dark for you, then congratulations! You know the difference between fluff bunny witchcraft and what I do, and what I am, and what the ancients did, and who they were. If you never read another word I ever wrote, read these and mark them well: get out there, and be thankful to the weird and powerful things that made us what we are. All of life is their story, written by their strange hands, and it is a thing of great tragedy and beauty. And your part is this: to be the one who knows- the wise one- who recognizes the truth of origins, and pays the piper his due.

This will make your own life come into harmony with the unseen, and the world around you, too. This is the path of blessing, both yourself and the world. This has nothing to do with "fear" ruling the spiritual path; this has to do with common sense, common decency, and reciprocal respect ruling the spiritual path- and if those things don't rule it, nothing good can come of it.

Think it through, carefully- and let your soul speak to you about it: if we only took from this world with a mind for giving back, would the world really be in the dire straits it's currently in? No. What is the relationship between gratitude and reverence, and a life lived fully? Everything. What is the relationship between gratitude and survival? Everything. What is the relationship between your sorcery actually working, and your gratitude to the powers you invoke? Everything.

Watch the signs- and see them, and know them: war that eats human lives, delivered to you directly on the TV screen and the computer screen: They have come to take from us what we owed, and they take blood. Madness, epidemic disease, the crushing collapse of all that is holy or decent: They have come to reap the glorious results of all we have taken from them, without a second thought of repaying them. No one steals from the Unseen. If it isn't repaid, it takes.

War, disease, poverty, madness, you name it- a disquiet follows us through history, and one of the main reasons why these things have run to a fever pitch, a range that we have never seen before, is because for the last stretch of many centuries, we have never been this forgetful or shown more ingratitude. The spirits now wonder- "whatever happened to those human beings that once visited quite regularly?" The boundaries are closed. We even call their world "fake" and "superstitious." But it isn't. It may be the most important reality we'll ever ignore. And that ignorance may be the last coffin nail that we ever see.

For those of you who don't want to wait too long to start paying the piper, I'll share a little secret I learned from the words of a Mayan shaman, when he was asked "What do the spirits want from us? What's the best way to repay them?"

And that answer is as simple as it is powerful- they want something they can't make themselves; and what humans have that they don't have, are hands. Take these fleshy hands of yours, and go make a statue, a carving, a pot, a poem, a woven tapestry, a painting, a story, an etching, anything done with the hands, and do it mindful that you are making this for the sacred beings to whom you owe so much.

Let your heart be full of gratitude as you work, and your hands will etch the oldest magic of all into what you create. And then, give that thing away- put it into a flowing river, a pit in the ground, a roaring fire, hang it in a tree in a forest, leave it at the roots of a tree, abandon it in the wilderness, however you need to return it to the unseen. And it is done- perhaps the oldest and best magic of all: the magic that creates a relationship of respect between you and "The Otherness".

Some people liken the journey beyond this life to going into a dense and deep forest. I like that metaphor very much. As the ancients said, many sacred powers "danced" together to create these lives of ours- our lives are gifts. As we live, we should always prepare to give these lives back, making ourselves into the greatest sacrifice we have to offer. This requires us to respect and have acceptance, a reverent awe for the sacred powers that are our true parents and Ancestors. That attitude- going into the depths with a sense of self-giving, thankfully offering your life back to the

sources of life, is the best attitude a person can have, whether at the end of life, or every day of life.

Gifts of respect and sacrifices of debt repayment don't happen just once- make them a regular part of your life, and prepare every day for your own death to be the last and greatest of them. And your power in life, and after death, will be vastly increased by the friendship of the Unseen.

And the blessings of this way of life, this way of thinking, are more immediate than you realize- the Unseen will protect you from the foul predations of lesser spirits, and the foul spells of enemy sorcerers, all because of your gratitude. There is no "protection spell" greater than gratitude. Go forth now, friends, and find power the way the ancients did.

# Seven Well-Sealed Bottles Found Under the Yew

These things have found their way to me- immense treasures of inexhaustible value. I carry them in my soul, and they light my way through life and death. They are undefeatable Truths.

## What Humans Need

*(Vessel of the Mullein Spirit)*

The world is full of "big questions" and complex philosophies designed by brilliant minds to answer them, in one way or another. I reject the idea that the human being can, alone and unaided, answer the "big questions"- and I further reject the idea that a human being can, alone and unaided, find their way through life to a successful and wise end of life. No amount of intelligence or wealth can move a person on the path of the soul with certainty.

Only the Voice of the Otherness in us can give us the answers we seek to the "big questions" and only the voice of the Otherness in us can show us our own roads, the places we are meant to be consciously walking. So trust your own intellect no more- and rely for all answers to any troubling or "big" question on the guidance of the Unseen within you. Every "answer" you are looking for is with you already- learn to hear it.

## The Other Voice is Clarified, Not Found

*(Vessel of the Dandelion Spirit)*

The Voice of Otherness in us, which ceaselessly reveals the most important things to us- culminating with "The Understanding", or the organic spiritual truth about us and the world- is not found. It is clarified. It is always there; we have lost clarity, lost the ability to hear it and experience it. Thus, the first task that we must devote ourselves to- the task that must be completed, lest we live life without the most important guidance- is to gain the extraordinary power of hearing and seeing, by which to find clarity and gain inner guidance.

## Relationship and Fate

*(Vessel of the Vervain Spirit)*

We are not alone. We were never alone, and never will be alone. Our individual destinies or paths are always known in relation to other beings and powers that shape us and our paths, and there is a collective destiny that all partake in, unavoidably. Relationship is the key to everything, from

understanding one's own inclinations, to understanding one's desires, hopes, fears, and (most importantly) to gaining and giving power.

We gain power and wisdom from others through relationship; we heal through them; we are harmed through them; we heal others through them; we harm others through them; all happens through relationship. Be cautious what relationships you consciously form, and respect all of the seen and unseen relationships that you find yourself in the center of. We should uncover or create healthy relationships with others- humans and other-than-humans, so that we become more capable and move along the road to wisdom and power with more confidence and ease. We should seek to create relationships so that we can help others to do the same, as well.

Because we are affected and shaped by so many powers, our sense of identity is not "stable and solid"- it changes all the time- and our sense of "choice" and even "self-will" are neither what they appear to be. In other words, we are naturally shape-shifters. Life is water, not stone.

In this, we see the workings of a distant power called by some "Fate", but what it really means is that our lives and "choices" are the confluence of many different powers, none of which we created or fully control, if at all. "Control" is itself largely a phantasm, another vain thing that we get too hung up on, another thing that closes us to the wholeness of things. This is a workable definition of Fate, and also of Nature: "an endless succession of intertwined events, each influencing the other, bringing everything into being, and causing everything to leave the temporary form or shape it assumed."

## Reverence and Thankfulness

*(Vessel of the Burdock Spirit)*

We are born in debt. Countless Sacred Powers came together to make us what we are, and what we will always be. We are born owing them our lives, and all else. To be thankful and reverent is just one way- the most important way- of repaying that debt. To give one's life back to the Powers one day, in death, is the final repayment.

To prepare to give all of oneself away one day, back to the Sacred Powers that made it in the first place, is a great gift and privilege; death is not a loss, but a giving back. Reverence, Thankfulness, and Respect, as well as Generously Giving are completely natural to the human being, and should be integrated into your conscious mind and activities, daily. Daily you should prepare to give your own life away, for the day the Powers come for it might be today. In these simple perspectives is found the seed of organic "religion."

## Be Not Afraid

*(Vessel of the Nettle Spirit)*

Be not afraid of the universe. Nothing that has happened is unnatural, fallen, evil, or otherwise a

"problem". This is organic naturalism- nothing is "above" nature, and therefore, nothing is "supernatural". It just happens that Nature is so deep, so full of depths and heights, that our range of everyday mind fails to capture much that exists- "for all that is seen, nine things are unseen." Nothing that you will encounter in this world or the next is unnatural, nor is it ultimately alien. Be not afraid.

Your life is as natural and appropriate (and needful to the healthy wholeness of things) as a tree or the stars. Everything is "working out" as it should be, even when we encounter what we experience as danger or pain. Life is sacred and natural; death is sacred and natural. Be not afraid.

## Everything is in Everything Else

*(Vessel of the Mugwort Spirit)*

Everything is in everything else. The sky and earth are within you just as much as outside you. One never speaks to the "God outside"- when you talk to a god or spirit, you are talking to its presence inside you. You are "populated" with all powers, and you are in them, too. This is how communication and kinship are both possible and real.

You contain the world entire, and every part of it contains every other part, and you. You never "came into" this world from a strange, transcendental "outside"- you emerged from the depths of this world at birth, and you do not "leave this world" at death, to escape into a transcendental "outside"- you go back into the world, into the depths, again.

## The Senses are Sacred

*(Vessel of the Fennel Spirit)*

Your body is not fallen, and your senses are not fallen or limited, foul things. Your senses are as sacred as your body, your soul, the mountains, the forests, the earth, the oceans, or the sky. The senses are reliable. They are the only way knowledge emerges, the only way anything real is ever known. They are the way the Sacred is known. They are the gateways to everything you seek, everything you desire, and they are manifestations of relationship and connection.

Never treat them as anything less. To use the senses fully- consciously live in the senses- is the pathway to wisdom, power, sorcery, and ultimately, wholeness.



*We will go, you and I  
And leave wooden corpses behind us.  
In a world of the tightly bound  
We will be free and we will fly:  
We will ride the rain with the dead.*

*I borrow the words of the Serpent  
Who moves on the secret wind  
And with spells unwritten my soul will send  
To the sky that none can own,  
To the Spinner's bower, where Fate is sewn  
To the bog whose bottom is never.*

*We will go, you and I  
In the Master's Name besoms to leave  
Wooden bodies and wooden cats  
For the eyes of men till we come again.  
We will ride the rain with the dead.*

*Our hour is pursuing us  
So let this chase be round-  
The hunter may become the hunted  
And we may stalk the death-hound.*

*And shoot below the true bodies  
Of man and horse with faery bolts,  
To be like the ever-living host  
Who fly the wind with the dead.*





# The Cavalcade

## (Channeled writing)

### I. The Warp and Weft of Shapely Dark Force

Choking darkness, alluring vision- old beams frame it; flesh weighs it down, the cold burns it, the sun warms it, the laughter of children at last gives it a joy. The world, vast and ancient, is all of it; it is a stone, a lonely wood, a dense fog. Man is a lot of a thousand lots, countless unseen lots, a power among many. Man is pursued by loss, fallen by obscurity, blind with eyes open, due to fearful doubt. Man is a home of happiness in flesh, invisible made visible, vitality collected, a swirl in endless watercourse. Man is not alone. The Cavalcade has no origin or reason. The Cavalcade excludes none.

Man is one that has walked on the loam and moss, the grit and dirt, bled on it, laughed on it, clutched at it, wept on it, dropped sweat upon it, lifted wood, stone and metal upon it, delved within it. Man was in deep darkness; man was in mist, man was in the invisible; man was in the dusk world, man was near to truth. Man has wandered to himself. Man has reached for glory and forbidden things. Man has leapt the boundaries that should not be leapt. He has dared and died. Man is another knot in the fateful threadwork of the unfathomed.

Man is not alone; man cannot see what he ought to see. Man's eyes are few among many. The world is full of eyes. Man's world is not empty; man is sibling to rock, to trunk, to grassy clump, to scouring wind, to hissing brook, to bubble and foam, to deep wells, to ancient hills, to soaking rain, to light above clouds, to the people of the grave country's dim bottom.

Man's pride is his undoing. Man sees so little, but is seen by so much. He sees halls and abbeys of wood and stone, but halls a hundred times great built of sorcerous dark and undying light spread out unfathomed. Man's kings and queens tromp in the mud and cut at flesh, but Lords and Ladies of fearful majesty tower above the greatest of them.

For each form seen by damp eye orbs, a delirious and eldritch cavalcade of forms are conjoined; man believes rightly in haunts and fiends; rightly fearful of waste and wood is man if wisdom is wise. Life is in no place a narrow trickle in a narrow gorge; it fills all spaces and wears innumerable masks, more than blades of grass or grains of silt. Every portion of every beast is a magic charm, a magic in the soul; under the flesh and hair, scale and hide, is one flesh and luminosity. Beast and man, in the grave-pit, you will see that boundaries fall away there.

As one is given egress to the cavalcade, one shrinks away, declining in size, one among infinitude. Infinitely smaller, then larger, then smaller again, then naught. One learns of truth by losing the vastness of mountains, the lumbering flesh- the lowly ant is gigantic to the speckling weird, and so very tiny to man, who is a fragment of a germ in the vast apron of the Iron Queen of ice and mountain and night. She is scarcely knowable, and yet she is there. Better to feel like a man feels than to try too much, and better you celebrate her as world and cold sky than seek her bone-circled seat.

In the paving of the elfin roads through the hollow, in the houses of the Indwellers, Man is but a stone or a weed; in their cups of intoxicating brew he is a bubble or foam. In their ballads he is a dim, needful shadow and a helper at the birthing bed, though in his legends they are godly and immortal, deceptive and cruel, helpful and hurtful. They drink blood on the side of burial hills; they take bowls of cream, and take they the newborn unwarded and unguarded.

The Cavalcade goes on, led by the Elf-Knight; know that he is the porter between the hard world and a soft and beautiful place: golden-lit, greenly treed; from that place a road extends to every point and everywhere. There are others in his train; more others than can be named. They have a place in the warp and weft of shapely dark force that comprises the world; their allotments are as right as the mountains that break the world and the trees that drink water from the soil.

Where each droplet of rain falls is its allotted place, and so the Cavalcade's knaves and lords, beasts and fair maids, ladies and shadows, turf-dwellers and indwellers, hungry monsters and sleeping ones all live out their allotted place, as time wends to strange time and then, naught. And then, the shrieking Cavalcade. Under your feet, what chief wears the goat-crown? Who peers through the dark of your home when all sleep, seeing to its neatness and preservation from weird forces?

It is beyond the gallows; it is full, that Unseen; as full as the world of clouds and shadow and dark brown earth; it allows for no truth in emptiness, nor truth in nothingness- it breaks in a man's mind like light in mist; It makes a halo that recounts songs and describes legends. Man lives despite his will to perish, or his bile or sorrow; alone, he only breathes sorrow. But he lives because life is legend. Life is allotment, it is story, it is sorcery. Denial and dullness make it duration, but still it weaves a spell unawares, a dweomer that carves graves out of the ground and opens another door to life. Come what may, graves are carved and life whispers needle-like from the waters of the depths to seek sunlight.

They seek wooded lands, they seek caves and gorges, they seek river-sides, they seek marshes, they seek clouds and drizzle. They find themselves amid thundering herds of horned creatures, amid ragged antlers, near the darting fertile hare and the lurking barking fox, amid the shrieking frenzy of the twisted and goatish people that haunt distant hills; they find themselves killing and living, bleeding and growing, smoothing stones, chipping stones, crushing stones, piling wood, binding wood, splitting wood, heating rocks, heating metal, binding grasses, slicing at grasses, swaddling children, drinking water, burying the stiffened dead, and gazing at the sky amid the smells of forestland.

There is sorcery there, too; they never fail to know it. They will submit to no conqueror; they will live their lives amid thick scented fields and golden pastures. The bodaich goats will lurk in the shadows beyond their fence-lines; the ghosts of ancients and ancestors will trod their roads and hear their shots. They will have memory in song.

## II. The Company of White Deer and White Hares

The Elf-queen rides her great white horse. She is in the company of white deer and white hares, of serving maids and men; She is the royal indweller of the hungry and generous land, and enormous spaces into which dirt and dust may fall and vanish forever are her true mantle and body. Elfin mistress green and white, green and dark, white and white, red and white, she is young and very ancient. Her language is memory, madness so old, but completion without a sound or a symbol. She dissolves the dead in a water that turns to life-giving breast milk.

Her people were once dead, yet they live; they have sloped heads like stones, eyes like berries, breath like breezes, laughter like crows, skin like stream-wet sand, bodies like ghosts, worlds like visions in the night, and yearnings that mortals sometimes share. Their Lordly king is so broad and handsome, so full of strength; the King and Queen's tables are always full of generous portions of fruit and meat, of honey and finest breads. Great and hairy cows cry out and make their frightful noises in the Elf-king's mighty herd. Look into the hollow places of the earth for their pleasant and darksome land. Look to the bloodstained stone-side and hillside for their old feasting tables. Look to your own hide and innards for their portal and resounding gulf.

The Elf-Queen's charnel house has the tooth of fire and tooth of ice inside; it has the scale and measure of justice within, boiling in the soul that spread blood and broken blades on guarded boundaries and sacred ground. To live straining greedily at the edges of life's allotments is wickedness; to walk unbidden across is wickedness; to trample forbidden roots, runners, and blooms is wickedness; to take and take again is wickedness; to have not cleverness nor poem to repay transgression is wickedness; the heart speaks with the voice of vengeance; it knows the lots; vengeance comes furious from the deep to restore the heart and the air to silence. Vengeance comes as the women of the invisible.

They are furious, and terrible, long-haired and silent, tearful and hidden, swift and fierce; they will strike the flesh, whip the flesh, send the blows of woeful fate onto a man or woman's hide, into their minds, and into the soul that fades. They are fate's women, keepers of our lives and fortunes, and the same to all in the Cavalcade. Gigantic were their ancestresses, gigantic are they in generosity and wrath. They have the allotment-sticks, carved with necessity, carved with what will, what ought, what should and what shall. They charge a fine in blood or breath for that precious knowledge. They fill every air, break every peace lotted to fail, and fill every house lotted to full.

They move stone to stone, stream course to stream course, star track to star track, fire-flown spark to night above, the screams of bairns they urge on, and the moans of the violently slain. They have no origin but origin itself; they have pale white skin and coal dark eyes, seeing beyond seeing, cruel beyond cruel, sheltering beyond sheltering, giving beyond giving. The elfin knight-lord leads them; cavalier, twirling wand, taming his gray horse, making visions, deceiving eyes, calling away, working baleness, working peace, striking at will, striking at all in unguessable order. He leads hunters; he leads the wild rout, he leads the winds and the storms. It is he the winds all fear; his magic has made men and women to love one another and hate one another.

He bruises the flesh, he bites the flesh, he ravishes and comforts, he shrinks the eyes in laughter. He

takes wine with the devil in the mirror. His great art was known to you when last you sat overlooking the beauty of the land and felt a brief moment of peace, and when you last wove or cut, dited or pressed, recited or sang, built or plowed, worked sorcery or planned a cunning strategy. When you have boiled worts and simples, pulled the wild onion, whittled the twig and root, or made the circle of pale flour, you have done his art, which is Man's art, too.

Don't you see them there, the majesty and the mighty of the mighty and ancient? What sun ever moved through the sky not the eye-bright gem of the fiery one? What moon ever waxed or waned without imparting the salty secrets of mineral and blood and of birth in caves? The dead that way go. Above and below, the dead that way go. She is the phantom sun. Can love tie a few together, such that death will not sever them? Yes, the bond of souls can remain so good, for as many ages as the wish may be good. The divisions of hate can remain just the same.

A fire glows on the open land under a dark sky, and for miles it is seen- what it fails to illuminate lights it instead: great dark, the entity night, the entity sun with its ancient cross, which every evil hates; the entity moon and sea, the old woman, the young woman, the elfin people, the devil's hoof-prints, the layers of devouring things, the wolf headed people, the splendorous people with light in their brows, the jester dead in the dusk-world, sliding below waters, sliding into mirrors or caves into the sky of stars, the circles of huts and dwellings that sank down under the ground, the cities of shining gems and living beams, the wildness of raw, red things and sheltering dead trees, the long line of each family's deceased, moving into the distance, ever living. All of these are the lights of the ember nights.

They all see the lonely flame under the night sky. Ages come and go. Many walk the earth, many walk below. Many walk above. Ages and ages blow away like fluttering seeds. Fire is the fullness, it is the gateway of all gone before and forgotten charms. It is the eye of the unseen. It cooks food, and devours flesh and straw, too.

Hear the anger of those who will not slip away into the unknown, the punished and goblin dead who rage at the breath of life, the transformed dead who were ensnared by sorcery, the curses of the unjust, the groaning and roaring of giants in the ground, the triumphs of the virtuous that make a road of fame, rising up, until that light is extinguished by inexorable time; the greatness of the breath and emotion that fills the bellows of man's history entire- all just one breath among numberless winds and words and irruptions that sail in gusts of thousands and thousands through the darkness of not knowing, through the gap of unlit being.

Incomprehensible is that darkness- the truth that may cease.

### III. Days and Ages Fell By

It is too big for you, as small as you are. Be that immensity, that expanse, but doing so will kill you. The Cavalcade will rush you to death. It is a kindly death that makes two lives where once was one,

and those two describe a greater One.

Tangled up, tangled foot, tangled hand, tangled heart, you might fight to escape, but only love that endures the blows of fate without care can embrace the beloved. And that love is hard, cold, joyful, deadly, fecund, and alien to men. But it is theirs too, once they stir to wake from their long dream of nets and boats, of fish and bread, of honors and yellow gold. Sometimes a curse awakens them; sometimes a blessing. Sometimes the savage hunt stalks them; sometimes the killer comes on cold wind. They are queens of maleficia, ladies of benediction, who love and kill and go out to see what they shall see. They are master-men, journey-men, who notch the lots on wood and triangle and watch the red and blue birds prance on ground and branch. None may choose how they feel nor love.

The only power you ever had, once the long wandering to yourself began, was the breast of a mother, the warmth of kin, the satisfaction of a meal from the kettle, the laughter of those close, a story well-recounted, the joy of children, the dark scented land and rainy sky, the warming sun, the goodness of restful sleep, the fleshful fire of carnal congress. This was allotted and good. The world knew it good; it was good. Days and ages fell by, and the hungry entity burrowed into your skull, and the fearful one, and the indolent one, and the terrible one, and one land's grain and beasts and leafy blooms was no longer enough. Good was no longer enough.

Strangers came from east and west, from south more and more- old seasons failed. Things were forgotten that were precious to memory. The distant horizon hummed with strange voices, and malevolent spirits came among you, given leave to wander by your doubts and forgetfulness. The adamant tower fell dark. Fate scourge you. Wisdom failed you.

Summer was not enough. Spring was not enough. Autumn was not enough. Winter did not make you cease, but weep for green fields. You can be a friend to nothing as you are, nor will the Cavalcade's fairest and greatest be kindly to you. Would that they even notice you, but for some vagrant urge of fate! For it is you that must rise up now, from beneath notice. Let good be enough for the corpse and the Cavalcade home to the fetch.

Look at your poor hands! Look at your poor soul, the food you eat in all its sameness, the weak words you speak so often to those you see- is this where your contentment lies? Those who course in your fear and frustrations will circle you like a bird of red prey, and you will eat one another's flesh; you will feed yourself your own flesh and grow mad. You will try to accomplish what only the mad undertake- to steal, unthinking, the crowns of a thousand unseen rulers, fairer than you, wiser than you, and you will receive only their arrows. Your kingdom may be vast in your fantasies, built on ash and wind, but you will be its only subject. Unless you do penance, you will perish.

You do not feel it, but the Cavalcade is the world's great soul, the world's great spell, full of every glory. To not know your place within it, to not hear it, to not see it, to not believe it, to live in fear of it, to call it unknown, to hate it, to think it nonsense, is to be who you are, a man and hopeless. To know and accept your place in the endless cast of lots, to hear it, to see it, to believe it, to live in fear and wonder of it, to know it nearby, to refuse to love it or hate it, to think it the supreme reason, to give corpse and fetch to it, to fall into it, to emerge from it, is to be both man and rider in the

Cavalcade unseen. It is beautiful where you are, it is terrifying where you are, no matter the way you sleep or ride.

When will you stride up to the secret that only the wind can teach your flesh? When will you open the portals in your head and eyes, in the palms of your hands and in the soft flesh of your breasts, and take the mark pressed by the cruel hook and blade? When will you push the burning coal down into your chest, into the center of your belly, and down further, to the limits of desire? When will you be a firefly glowing in the deepest cavern? When will you ungrasp the cold and hot iron you hold so fiercely, and know the unfettering? When will you surrender to the Cavalcade? Until Twelfth Night, they will rule you.

No man nor inscribed page can deliver you this promise of sudden and blinding flight, of blasting power, of spinning in the winds and clouds, of knowing death's course, of knowing fate, of intimacy with the dead, only that book called the Book of the World contains this, and the Elf-knight and the elfin court holds the great key to the opening of that gramarye. Their mighty jester the Devil will seize you by the hair and turn your head to face the way. Suffering shows the way. When will you know the promise and goodness of the world of grasses and grey skies?

Pale wandering hag, Old Woman, Cavalcade's undying mother, even your form is indistinct; a lit bonfire, distant songs, teeth of ice, horrid blue skin, ancient ice-wall, torn land, water and ice-furrowed land, falling stones, screaming geese, naked bodies, boiling fat, warm, running blood, substances of the world, vital breath, deep satisfaction, sinking down, the ache in the body, the long night, long darkness, loss, newness, forgetting, memory, passion and the spark in the innards that urges to distant lands- but that is just man's story; your story is not told in such ways, but can't fail to be the secret language of languages.

The animals speak it; the owl before your dwelling-door in the deep speaks it; even the rocks in the ground speak it. The bones of the dead are its letters. The cold spaces of night are the leaves upon which the women write the letters of lives. That is your gown, your apron, your body, your spirit, Old Woman. You mutter in dawn before the light softens the sky.

You keep the wild beasts in the soul and in the valleys and on mountain-sides. Deer are your sheep and cattle. Man is not alone.

The eagle rises up to see the light that warms all people. The hateful are defeated. The hopeful learn to abandon hope and enjoy truth instead. The sun moves on, silent and bright. The moon glares pale. The white triangle is illumined and familiars move through the thread that passes through the middle of the chest. Human land, human forest, human sky, human Cavalcade, fiendish non-human world, great world, your great force, this great force, now open, open, open, and be full, then let burst the skin-hide straining at the fullness and be fetched away to naught but one and all.

The brothers and sisters of the Cavalcade, the shimmering ones, half living and half not living, partners to the fateful hosts of women, slayers of innocence, avengers of foulness, driven mad by

wisdom, they meet in dreams. You will not go to those dreams; they will come to you, but you must go to them as well.



# The Great Forest of Spirits

Once, like so many people, I realized: the Ancestors were in the middle of "doing something", and got badly interrupted. They were maintaining a long, subtle, and complex ancient relationship with a lot of powerful and wise beings. Some of those beings were also cunning, coy, or dangerous, but they were important, too. The Ancestors were dealing with the world not just in the ways we call "practical", but in deeper ways, and they were succeeding. All of their triumphs and tragedies were parts of an unfolding picture, a picture that was blessed by their extraordinary efforts, their spiritual awareness.

It's hard to comprehend how a culture can have a subtle awareness and have it fully integrated into their everyday doings, largely because we have no idea now what that might be like. The temptation is to lapse into materialistic, minimalistic thinking and assume that they were pretty much just like us. Nothing could be further from the truth. Their special awareness was simply folded into the everyday doings of life. It may sound strange to say, but there was no need for them to be "conscious" of their spiritual awareness in the ways that we try to be now. What takes a lot of effort on our part was effortless to them.

Sadly, their deep familiarity lapsed into what can only be described as a form of vulnerability-newfangled idealistic philosophies cast doubt on everything they were doing and all the ways they were living- but more importantly, their leaders grew impatient and frustrated with the way things "had always worked" and accepted the dark invitation that the new cultural impulses and the new religions offered them, to better their positions in the world. Don't forget that with the introduction of a new religion comes a new culture, and new technologies. These things were weaponized very early on by powerful men that wanted an advantage for their own rule.

The subtle layer of things is paradox to heap upon paradox- it is at once the strongest, most important aspect of human life, and the weakest, the most vulnerable to damage and loss, if people let their souls become neglected even a little.

So I realized that the Ancestors were "doing something"- they were living and breathing in a channel that I wanted to live and breathe in. I wanted to go back to the point where the "great interruption" happened, to the start of the interregnum, and begin there. We've seen the flaws, errors, lies, deceits, and contradictions at the heart of the new course of civilization and religion. We have been freed by that seeing. Our consciences tell us that the spiritual-ecological impulses that were in bloom at the time of the interruption were likely more correct, more healthy, more prone to deliver us from this modern pathos; it was right, it went wrong, now we have to find the right path again.

That is the landscape, the map I've always used. And it has led me, like some archaeologist of the spirit, to some strange ruins, some potent and powerful lost landscapes of the soul. And alongside

beauty and wisdom, I have found more riddles.

One of the first riddles that most of us face is the nature of divinity. In the attempt to explore the universal Ancestral idea of the multiplicity of spiritual forces and divinities, we examine what remains of the Ancestral polytheistic language. While there is much there- enough to spawn the excellent reconstructions we've seen of Ancestral religion, most of us come to realize (perhaps too late) that Ancestral religion never operated successfully outside of Ancestral culture. When you reach the heights of a "reconstructed religion", you get to see it start to disintegrate if it is not held securely in place by a working reconstruction of Ancestral community. You really can't have one without the other. Those who do not yet comprehend what I'm saying when I say this *will* understand one day. Those who do understand need not bother with this further.

We seek to crack the code of the "Old Way" of seeing the nature of divinity, or should I say, the nature of What Really Matters. What forces should we be seeking to reverence and furthermore, how do I let them into myself, to transform myself into a person who can live a good life?

The "pantheons" offer important aesthetics and clues, but as I said before, they are not sufficient by themselves to bring about the changes we want- and need. Many get this far, and stop. I had to keep walking deeper, and what I found there may be one of the more important things I ever found.

Pantheons in the past were just one layer of that special cultural expression that we call religion. They were not the center of ancient religion. The reality is, when you go far enough, deep enough, you don't find a shiny mountaintop with a clear-cut team of 12 shining male beings and 12 shining female beings who run the world. You find a forest instead, packed with what appears to be millions or billions or perhaps trillions of spiritual forces and tangible forces, like an ocean of life.

That's what's real, and what always has been real. Life has collected here like leaves collecting on a beaver-dam that a river rushes through. Maybe that's what this earth is: a collection point for various life forms to cluster together into the universal pattern and miracle of community. Either way, the Ancients had relationships with lots of those powers they felt, saw, met, and experienced. Which of those powers were judged by them to be more or less important really depended on how they lived, where they lived, and intricacies of their own histories that we today have little ability to understand.

But what we do have are our own lives, and our own ability to sense that amazingly dense crowd of living powers- beginning with ourselves and our fellow humans and non-human animals- and we have the power to start with the simplest of relationships, and work our way up through time to the more complex ones.

This is one of my foundational insights: the world is a great forest of spirits, a sponge absorbing life upon life, dead people and released wandering souls filling up the hills and tree-trunks, and some of the Ancient Dead becoming more and more potent as the ages flow through their awareness, deep in their new perspectives. The even more Ancient things- the Always-Living things- who perhaps through some mysterious process stand behind the blue expanse we call a "sky", or the dark, dense,

life-packed depth we call "earth", they are there, too. They would appear to be Foreparents to everything.

There are no clear-cut pantheons, only cultural footnotes and cultural artistry draped upon a dense forest of living and mysterious powers. The True Old Ways is not pantheonic at all. It is the recognition of the Endless Forest and the Hosts of Nameless Powers that comprise that forest. No matter where you go on earth, that land is super-saturated with local powers that are all quite capable of being called "God" or "Gods" of that place. No matter where you go, the real graveyard of life—which is also the birth-yard of life, is in the wind around you and the ground under you.

None of this is clean; it's dense and dark and "full of life." It's not something that can be systematized; it can only be experienced in the same way you experience a forest or a field full of flowers. Never once do you attempt to count every leaf or every blossom; you just walk through, enjoying the ambiance of the place, enjoying its presence as a thing comprised of countless parts. That's what the sacred powers do. They cluster, they proliferate, and they endow everything with a sense of the numinous. I know from personal experience that the less proper names you feel the need to use for those Nameless Powers, the deeper your appreciation and experience of them tends to go.

# The Green and Good Place

And now, I can finally sit- early in this fine Summer- and write about my new home. I've had a few weeks to get my bearings, as it were, but I haven't had time to really relax 100%, as moves take a long time to recover from.

This is a letter about the spiritual landscape as much as the physical one- not that those two things are really separate. The "environment" in which we imagine ourselves is already a part of us, and we of it- the ways our eyes know it, or our ears know it, or our feet know it, or our skin knows it, are just sensory interpretations of a great spiritual power. Enough of these interpretations stacked on one another, and you have yourself a forest, a mountain, a barren, a meadow, or what have you.

The "great spiritual power" that I am interpreting here isn't just some distant, freely-standing, neutral and voiceless power. It is part of a seamless tapestry that, taken altogether, would be called our "world." I am near to a certain part of it, receiving of it many impressions, interpreting those things as a human does. But it is not sitting silent and distant; it is speaking to me, revealing things about itself to me. I return the favor; I speak back and reveal things about myself to it. It may already know these things about me, at the broadest level, as a tapestry may intimately know its many threads already.

But this isn't an excuse to stop communicating to it; even if I can't tell it anything it doesn't already know, the desire to communicate is itself a sign of respect and reverence. Too many people think the world is a sequence of "material only", largely dead or just inert forces. Or worse, just "life without feature or consciousness" working according to mechanical laws- like energy, or evolution, or whatever.

This is not how I experience it. My every sense impression, all of them taken together, encapsulates a powerful message about what life is, and what it does, and more to the point, what part of my unfolding destiny I can discover here. The world is quite conscious, as are its many parts, and quite creative, quite communicative, and quite destructive when it wants to be. In a world of co-existence, I represent some part of this land's destiny, too. Here we are, all of us, all of the inhabitants of this mighty place, and the place itself, working out the complexity of life's rhythm, rhyme, and mystery.

Now, I've moved to a bay, on the side of a long hill, with northern hardwood forests all around me, and mountains just about two miles away. The true ocean itself, beyond the bays (the bay being less than a mile from here) is only about 20 miles from here. More mountains are down there. The forests, interspersed with blueberry barrens, are everywhere, and never-ending. My home sits on 7 forested acres, with one stream that I've discovered so far. The property seamlessly borders another thousand acres, and then miles more leading to the mountains. This entire region, as with most of Maine, sits on a granite shelf of some sort, and everywhere you go, granite boulders and rocks are lying about, especially in the barrens. But the woods behind me contain many granite stones and boulders.

This entire landscape is a thrilling adventure to me. As I've said before, it isn't sitting there like some inert, passive thing; no land does that. It speaks, and I've just learned to call its most obvious messages my "sense perceptions." I have worked to let myself realize that about my senses, and in so doing, learned to awaken another way of using my senses completely. Nothing makes me happier than exploring this place. And my explorations have been met with many wonders. Just behind the house, across the stream, is the deeper woods. The more shallow woods, mostly birches, aspens, and oaks, as well as another dark green tree I've yet to identify, is before the stream.

There, I've begun working; twice now I've opened "The way below the Elphillock" and given gifts to the familiars. I've begun addressing the forest-entities and even found a natural place to establish our relationship of giving- a natural pile of black, smooth stones and granite stones (a natural cairn, in fact) at the base of a tree. It seems sometimes that I'm getting their attention; sometimes that I wake them up- but I am wise enough to know that they are waking *me* up, some deep region of myself, which corresponds to this thousand acres of forest.

Across the stream- a stream whose wet soil is as jet black as you can imagine, and into which I always give an offering when I cross- I have found clearings with large stumps, all covered with the brightest green moss I've ever seen. I've found stones, large ones, and one Elf-table: a big, flat-topped stone that *will* soon be used by me to sup with the spirits of this place.

And beyond that? A natural hole in the ground, within which I can hear an underground stream flowing. This is the Underworld entrance I was seeking. I've given gifts to it only one time; I am gradually and slowly working my way into these woods, giving gifts as I go, slowly letting this place get the feel of me, as I get the feel of it. "Them In The Woods" only need to know me right now as a quiet, reverent man coming with gifts and then leaving. Awe and respect for them is needed, if they will ever let me come there and work with any true power, if they will be my allies. Awe and respect for that dark entrance to Elfhame is also needed, before I attempt to shimmer through it for the first time.

All the same, one must never fear the woods. They are the last refuges of spirits, and of non-spirit beasts: like the rabbits I've already seen, and the black bears we have around here. The pond on my property, which is on the far side of a bog (hard to reach really) is the local bear watering hole. I look forward to seeing one for the first time. As the wood shelters spirits, so does it shelter witches, who have cast their mortal lot with spirits as much- or more- than with their fellow man.

The weather here is (to put it Mainer style) "wicked nice"- warm sometimes during the day. Actually hot on one or two days, for a few hours, anyway. But then, cool, and sometimes at night (even though this is June!!) cold. The wind blows very strong quite often, and the trees around here really react to it. It's rained a decent amount since we arrived, and the mist that comes before and after it, along with the broad, cloudy sky, is breathtaking. I love the summer weather here. You can actually go outside and do things. You will need repellent of some sort for the woods, however- mosquitoes and even "black flies" (a special breed of pest here) will get you if you don't use them. The sun comes up early

here- by 4:30 AM it's well lit, and the sun is still up at 9:00 PM. That's weird, but it is a necessary "other side" to the fact that come winter, the sun will be vanishing very early for a space of weeks.

The people around here are friendly, very friendly, as helpful as they could be, but otherwise clueless. They don't see the treasures of spiritual power they are sitting on. They don't see these forests and meadows and barrens dense with spirits and stranger things. They don't see the potential for real witchery that sleeps in this place, nor do they suspect a witch in their midst, in the old fashioned sense of the word. I blend in here, better- I always rather stuck out when I was in North Louisiana. Here, though, people actually mind their own business. And there aren't that many people to begin with. I came from a state with 6 million people, and lived in the middle of a concentration of them. Here, the state only has a million people and the vast majority of them are far to the south of me. It's wonderful.

A person who was friends and allies with the spirits here could become the king or queen of their own unseen Elphen kingdom in due time. The non-human powers here are not used to humans being complete arses, because the people here actually don't spoil their land and log away all their trees. Thus, spiritual forces in these woods and barrens are not immediately hostile. The spirit-entities here aren't used to people begin able to talk to them, or of humans recognizing their existence, so there is a sense that you might befriend them faster. There's no pollution, noise, no poisoned land and water from petrochemical companies everywhere. So, much power has been preserved here, at least where I am, to a goodly extent. Covensteads established here would benefit enormously from the preserved force of this place.

Cotton Mather (yes, that Cotton) said that this region of Maine was the "Devil's Kingdom"- owing to its wildness, and to the presence of the Heathen natives that were still here in his time. He was right, but in a way he didn't understand. As regions of the United States go, this place is a pleasure-park for the Master.

This place communes with the great ocean, the Ancestor-ocean, which was the water-road that the Ancestors used to get here. But there's something older and stronger about it, too. Those who don't live near an ocean really probably can't get this, but the ocean is bigger than the spiritual senses can encompass, seemingly infinitely large, and almost alien. It's like the void of space between planets or something- and swimming with strange powers that hide themselves. It's amazing to be near it, though, because breathing its salty air makes you feel different, better- like you're being purified or something. It's cold water shocks you, then makes you feel very "clean" on some deeper level. It seems to wash stress away, too. Like the river-entities here, there is a blessing there.

I was sitting by the stream this morning, watching a Casmaran-gate fire burning out, built by me in the center of a binding knot drawn in flour, over the spot where I buried offerings. The woods were so quiet, but leaning in over me, green and dark. The owl was talking to me about the divination I was going to do when I went back inside to my study, regarding my coming fortunes in this place. It was a good moment, one of the moments I had hoped to find by coming to this green and good place.

# The Key That Opens Every Door: The Metaphysics of Guardians and Transitions

When we walk through most doors in our world, we simply pass from one room to another, or from the outside to the inside, or the inside to the outside. Easy enough- though it only really seems a simple matter. Acts, like words, can have power if we're ready for the power. When we approach doors, or should I say, points of transition which lead to the Unseen, or to the immediate interior spaces of ourselves (which are themselves like thresholds to the Unseen), we often find Guardians.

And it is this multi-layered concept, that of the Guardian, that I'll be talking more about in my future works because it is a concept that never seems to yield its last layer. The connection between points of transition and Guardians is the key here, for you can't understand one without the other in the esoteric sense.

The "Guardian" is a multi-layered concept; it can refer to a human or a non-human person, but also to many forces. Sometimes, the emotional strain of transition from one place to another, or one state to another, is the Guardian- the fear of transition itself.

Why should we all be so fearful of transitions? I don't think it's unfair to say that nearly all of us are. There are countless transitions in life- ("In this house, there are many doors....") and we spend a goodly amount of time preparing, often in fear or apprehension, for many of them. Even ostensibly happy transitions, like weddings, are met with an enormous amount of stress in planning and anxiety for the "big day." It doesn't need to be pointed out how much uncertainty and fear cluster around babies being born, and of course, our own deaths.

And starting new jobs... and being in that uncomfortable transitional period between jobs... and meeting new people... and moving... and the list just goes on. Even though Life would appear to be nothing but a transitional river, we hardly seem "on board" for that ride. It is precisely the "spaces between" what we identify as one place or state and another, that we find the dark gap and the Guardian.

Going through a doorway or a gate is a powerful symbol of transition. To face the "Porter"- the person or power that guards the portal- the gate-keeper, who can forbid entry to any, or allow access to any- this is a key point. It is a deep point. It can be "really real worldly": the guard who checks your credentials or ID, or who searches you, then lets you through. It can be more subtle- the fear you feel when you face the "point" of transition, seen in inner or outer vision as a liminal place.

We are not the stage of life we happen to be in, nor are we the state of mind we happen to be in. We experience those things, but it seems that "more of us"- or perhaps just "more"- always awaits beyond the doors that are coming. There is a deep grain of wisdom in an important saying that I can't ever

forget- and it is the "Guardian" speaking when it says: "You only fear me insofar as you fear yourself."

That short statement can be unpacked infinitely. The Guardian doesn't necessarily mean that it IS you, though it may be, in the sense that you certainly own your own fear. The Guardian CAN be the projections of your own fears and nightmares. But more than that, the Guardian's statement can be reworded this way, without losing meaning: "You only fear me insofar as you fear losing yourself."

And this is crucial. Please meditate on it. The classical image of the "Witch" as we know her- with her pointy hat and hag-appearance, and her swampy woods and her evil moon- she represents (as has been pointed out) a very important "complex" in the archetypal world.

When I say archetype, of course, I mean the language of symbols that the Unseen world speaks in, and the objective powers behind those symbols that truly are immortal. The witch, aside from whatever historical reality she had, and still has, became one of our "hag-fear, dark-place-terror" symbols: symbols of the Guardian, in fact. A symbol of the "Powers that Take"- a symbol of the terror of the unknown and the fear of predation and consumption.

If you fear losing yourself- as we often fear losing ourselves in death- then the Witch is a terror, the idea of passing into the deep dark is a terror that can drown you inside. We must trust in the wisdom of old which tells us that this loss does not happen as we fear it. This isn't to say that something isn't lost, only that this loss is of a different character than we fear.

When you face a Guardian- and there are many occasions when one may- one must become aware, sharply and single-pointedly aware, that any fear you feel is a manifestation of the shortcomings you have in your own understanding. And to make beings aware of those shortcomings is precisely what the Guardian is there to do. When those shortcomings are not present, neither is the Guardian. Oh, it or he or she MIGHT be there, but they are not blocking your transition; they are helping you make it with ease. They are not demons, but helping spirits that empower.

Some may say that Guardians aren't in place long before us; some say that they depend on us to exist, and that our own fears summon them. This is moving rapidly towards a purely psychological understanding of Guardians and Guardianship, and however true it might be, on some level, it isn't true on every level. Guardians are more than psychological experiences, and Guardianship is a more lasting institution than that.

The Great Treasures of the Unseen- which human heroes and mystics have strived to obtain since time immemorial- are anything but free, and all are guarded. The Great Powers that we know full well that not every state of being, not every realm, not every "form of mind" is safe or healthy for all beings, given where those beings are in their own wisdom-attainment. So, certain treasures are guarded, just as certain states of being are, until a person can handle what is there.

This is no mystery- we conceal things from our own children until we feel like they are mature enough



to handle them; we are guardians in that manner. This concept ripples out to the deep reaches of the Unseen, as well, though I hesitate to think that the Great Powers are really simply being maternal or paternal when it comes to their concealment of things. I'm sure the real story is deeper, but humans can apply concepts like parental concern to things, if it helps their own need for understanding and justification.

The bottom line is this: we are taught to fear ourselves, from an early age- to fear our own sexuality, our own desire for love and even strength. We are taught to fear going our own way too much, to fear letting others down, to fear for our very souls. Guardians must find us a terrified lot, and their task of reflecting our own fears back at us very simple. When we reach a doorway to the Unseen, we know that passing across its threshold means going into a zone of experience that is unknown and possibly dangerous- fear rises. The same feeling has been reported to me on the part of former Christians and Muslims who parted ways with those religious paths, and faced the enormous passage of fear that had been inculcated into them all their lives.

But what they were discovering on the other side of their former religions was more about themselves. It wasn't just new ideas and new sights and sounds; it was a "new them". It was reaches of self that were made fearful by their upbringing.

How much we doubt ourselves! How much we fear claiming our own power! There is no possibility of progress into the Unseen, nor to the silvery treasures of Wisdom, if doubt and fear cling to us that much. Is it so hard to look at ourselves in the mirror and realize that we are "okay"? That Great Nature made us what we are, down to the most hidden, miniscule particles of ourselves, and that none of them are evil? Is it really so hard?

When a Guardian faces you, barring your way through the Old Oak Door that he keeps safe, can it merely whisper a challenge to you about how flimsy and flawed and selfish you are, and then get the pleasure of seeing you weep, drop to the ground in doubt, and begin pleading your case like a pathetic person?

The Guardian will be happy to treat you to visions of those times you acted selfishly to others- and that great stony guilt, a mountain of guilt carved out of your soul by hands that firmly believed that the soul was flawed- it will drag you down. Under that guilt is fear- fear that you are a bad person, not good enough for anyone or anything. That you are unready, unworthy, and insufficient.

Or, when the whisper comes, can you honestly say that you'd be confused- yes, confused- that a Guardian should ever imagine that your soul could be flawed? "What do you mean? I am what I am, as appropriately and powerfully present here as any person born of Earth and Starry Sky ever has been" should be your confident answer.

But you have to mean it. You have to feel it; it must spring from feeling-certainty, not just intellect. You have to feel "right as you are"- or should I say, "righteous." There can be no room for fear, else the Guardian will spring and feast on your innards. Like the dreadful "Black Dog" the Guardian is

often symbolized by, it can smell and sense fear.

This is the key that opens any door, in this world or the next.

# The Re-Mything

And here I was, thinking I was alone. For years, I was hungry for a myth that would satisfy this soul- and goodness knows, many are the incredibly beautiful and layered myths out there. Lots to open oneself to, and if you really comprehend them, you lose that lonely sense of "self" and open into a world far beyond self, the world of Others. Find your place, you know? It's like finding a sun after winter. But then, a huge, dark body passed in front of that sun: in the world of myths, not all things are as they seem, and not all myths are good or helpful, despite what people think. It's natural to want to think that a timeless body of truths exists out there, that can ennoble us now.

But until you're prepared to realize that even myths can absorb bad features of human culture, until you're prepared to accept that receiving myths through the lens of alphabetic, metaphysically-ransacked modern culture (which is every collection of myths you've ever seen in a book) may not transmit the full measure of whatever wisdom they might have contained, you aren't ready for that road.

A story being very old doesn't automatically mean it contains some extraordinary measure of wisdom. It can, but it's not a given. The rot that taints and destroys cultures and the myths they express has been in progress for longer than we imagine. We are not the first generation that feels hollow or out of touch- not by a very long shot.

I remember the day that the myths I had subscribed to were stolen from me. It's unfair to say that they were stolen; the fact is, I had read into them a lot of things that weren't there. I had allowed myself- through them- to internalize a lot of Iron-Age cultural material which was clearly superior to the modern myths I hated, but still tainted (in many subtle and not-so-subtle ways) by anthropocentrism, might-makes-right nonsense, violence-for-glory propaganda, patriarchal condescension to countless other beings, and other like things.

What did I expect? That books- or the good people that I knew who also loved those books- could "myth" me in some really soul-satisfying way? This isn't selfishness to insist that my soul be satisfied; the soul hardly belongs to just some selfish center I call "me." To say "soul-satisfied" is to say something deeper, something transcending pedestrian notions of "self", something sensing a deeper rightness and connection. And besides, if the soul isn't satisfied, nothing else will fall into place, and no journey will end in a rightful place.

Books couldn't help me. It took the landscape itself- the one I walk on with earthly feet, and the one I walk on with the feet I have in dreams- to "myth" me, or should I say, to "re-myth" me: to reveal a bedrock of relationship and force that satisfied me. In that bedrock, I sometimes see the outlines of things that did find their way into those collections of myths in books. I see what they might have been before they were myths, or I see what they've become since then.

I want to be happy with all these brilliant "Gods" and "Heroes" of the past, and in a way, I am happy with what they might have been before they became the almost cartoonish characters that get bandied about these days. But with those ancient names and forms comes the worldview of people that I don't resemble very much. I once thought that I did; I bought into the talk about how we all resemble our Ancestors in so many important ways. But what I discovered- to much pain and wonder- is that the extent to which we resemble them is about as powerful as the extent that we don't.

And this has little to do with me being a "modern"- I'm hardly that. I'm actively dismissive of nearly all human endeavor since the so-called "enlightenment" or its thrice-cursed "industrial revolution." I find nearly everything I'm surrounded by to be shallow or unforgivably gaudy and fake. I'm not a modern in my heart, but not an Iron-Age gold-hoarder and mead-drinker, either, claiming descent from this or that God to justify my exploits.

I think I'm something else, something that doesn't appear to belong anywhere in history. Or maybe, the time and place that this soul came from is so far distant that it can only be known in the most wordless and noiseless of places. Maybe that's what all the strange dreams are: records of myths so ancient that they never made it to a book somewhere. And maybe my insistence- held by me since my first writings, and for years before them- that the Land itself is a map of mystical powers, a collection of divine things, a sequence of mysteries and creative forces, worthy of veneration and immersion- is the key to all of this.

The Land inside and outside has re-mythed me, with myths and stories that can scarce be told in the ordinary way. Cultures and their Gods can come and go, but I remain here, with my feet on the one power that I know supports me and reveals things to me. The creatures that live on it and inside it- are they not the "divine others" that were always alongside mankind, since our emergence? The spirits I've seen, even spoken to- I know that some were called "Gods" by people a long time ago. But until I live in such a way that relating to them in that manner makes sense again, I'd just be wasting my time in the effort. And it must be said- they certainly don't seem to care.

Maybe that's because our human history isn't their primary concern. We may think that the rest of the worlds seen and unseen *must* be hanging on human history like it was the most important thing, but I don't get that idea, at all. And I can't- and won't- force myself to accept that idea.

Others have started lifting their voices. They write to me, from time to time- they feel the urge towards being able to be free of ancient or modern cultural patterns, so that they can be free to be "mythed" by the timeless dimension of their surroundings, not by what some people think that some other people thought. And I'm not talking about the diseased surroundings of our modern day: I mean the Land behind the mirage, the green and good places that still exist, and the good souls that still exist, journeying now as ever they did.

The moral considerations I have for the situations I live in- I want them to be born of something immediate and fresh, not stale thinking on the matter of morality that really reflects some very old, and

by now outdated, order. Morality clearly exists, and exists as more than just a human consideration: I think there is a morality, a natural one that we humans don't invent, but participate in. I don't think that morality is known much, these days. I think it gets covered over pretty quick when a big group of people get political and temporal power and re-story it so that it supports their rapacious goals.

Please understand that I'm not talking about religion here- I don't believe that all religions start out great and get "manipulated by powerful people" into something bad that they never started out to be- that's bullshit. Some religions just start out bad, and remain bad (or actually grow worse.) I'm talking about something else entirely. I'm talking about the basic sanity that humans can live inside, and how it gets obscured when some humans find a way to accumulate power and wealth, and enshrine that accumulation as the ultimate sign of divine appointment or as the ultimate goal of human life.

There is a growing number of people who want to know what freedom really tastes like- not the caricature of freedom that gets sold on the patriotic channel, but actual freedom from the dense layers of social dead-weight that accumulate like a crust with each passing generation. For every good social impulse, it seems, fifteen nasty ones have to add to the waste-layer that begins to cover everything, until no one can see anything anymore.

It's all a kind of madness- there are layers upon layers of it- propaganda, wars, countless blood-crimes, false gods, genocides, centuries upon centuries of an entire humanity out of touch with the basic voice of the Land or the Unseen world, the power-games one group plays heartlessly with another, such that none are innocent anymore.

This fabulous and formless darkness is rejected by me as the measure of mankind, or as a thicket for my further exploration. I've been here long enough, and tried to "find my place" in this tangle long enough. My place- as I have been blessed to see- is somewhere else. To find a "place" in this tangle would just make me another sort of tangled- and even if my style of being tangled was more appealing than someone else's, it's still a tangle.

One can hardly walk north several hundred miles and just dramatically find their way out of this tangled thicket; it may, in fact, be everywhere we go. But our minds don't have to be totally shaped and defined by it- and our souls- our souls were never trapped by it, not really. Our souls are the scions of deeper forests, indeed.

Let this ever-living Land re-myth me, and show me the way.



# The Secret Heart of the True Old Ways

Organic religion- the true "Old Ways"- are always found imprinted right on the Land, right there in front of your face. It's also inside you, but that's another angle of approach.

The best example- and one I wrote about years ago in an article on Heathen anthropology- is very important us here. There is, all around you right now, a full cosmology staring you in the face. This is a natural cosmology- a fully formed cosmology- not written by human hands, but by older, wiser, more powerful forces. In it, one can find a cosmograph of every necessary and truly existing relationship out there. In it, we can discover who we are, where we came from, what's going to happen to us, and why.

And it all starts the day you pick up a leaf from any tree and look at it closely.

Immediately, you notice that the veins of the leaf look like a tiny tree. Every leaf- which appears organically and spontaneously on the branches of every tree- contains inside itself a miniature representation of a tree, with a central trunk, secondary thick limbs, and tertiary branches that spread out to even twig-size: its whole parent-origin is inscribed inside it. Every leaf.

The leaves are green and vivid and alive when they are born on the branch, and live their lives there. Then, in the fullness of time, they become fragile, lose that green, and finally, fall away from the branch, to drift downwards, to the community of brown leaves at the base and roots of the tree.

There, they sit- and sit- in that quiet, wise brotherhood and sisterhood of many quietly drifted-away generations of leaves, until they vanish again, dissolve into the ground, to nourish the roots of the tree and the dark soil it is embedded in. And then? One day, a new green bud appears on the branches, and a new green leaf appears. The whole journey of life is known.

We humans are, each of us, a leaf that organically and spontaneously emerged from the World-Tree. The tree "leaves"; the world "peoples". Each of us, whether human animal-person or non-human animal-person, contains inside of us the entire cosmological reflection of our true origins; our bodies, our DNA, everything is a miniature model of this cosmos, reflecting every power "out there" inside us, somehow. Not for no reason is it said that if you need to "find" or "speak to" or "commune" with any power in existence, the passageway to doing that is always inside you. Because if something really exists "out there", it's in you, too- and vice versa. You are in it. Already.

When we are young and green, we are on one of the many branches of the world. As we age, we become less green and more fragile before we die- fall away from the branch- and drift down the Underworld, where the dead are, around the base and roots of the Tree of Life. After a while there, the dead leave that place too, though processes that are best symbolized by the leaf-cycle. And like

the ancient vanished dead- who still, in their brown, rigid forms contain the same miniature tree pattern- the dead re-appear on some branch of the world, green again.

The Tree itself has a thick, long trunk- the passageway, the spirit-road, between the Underworld and this world. Life is always passing from below up into its branches; and downward, too. The drift of the dead leaf downward is the journey of the deceased to the Underworld.

Like all of the leaves on the tree, we are all related, through the tree, to one another. We each contain the internal pattern of our true parent-source. Green above, brown below; life above, death below- but here, another mystery comes clear: when they are alive, the tree enlivens and vivifies the leaves. When they die, it is their turn to nourish the tree, to enliven and vivify it.

Just so, when we live, we receive life from this world. When we die, we get to give life to this world. The dead vivify the world- this is why the ancient cults of the Dead prayed to the dead and attempted to gain blessings of fertility from them, and bounty, and prosperity. In life we receive; in death we give. The dead occupy the deeper regions of the world, and from that place, sustain it- give a deeper nourishment to it, as it nourished them once. It is no paradox that from Dead Beings the blessings of life should be sought. It's just as simple as looking at the brown, fragile, composting leaves that surround any tree, and looking up at the green leaves in its branches.

As a side bit of humor- someone once asked me about the occasional green leaf you see laying at the base of the tree, among the many brown leaves. "Is that a person who died too soon?" they asked. I had to laugh and say "No, it's a shaman, I think, or some witch, or someone with the power to go visit the dead down there."

The Tree itself is common Mother to all leaves- just as the sun and wind that vitalizes the tree in other ways is common Father. If a leaf on a branch could learn to detach from the branch, ride the currents of wind, or find a path down the trunk, and visit the vast storehouse of countless brown leaves at the base and roots, and then return to re-attach itself, it would in fact be a "shaman" leaf, or a witch-leaf, doing what those people in human societies have done since time immemorial.

In this simple cosmology- shown in every tree and leaf- we find the essence of the True Old Ways, the core of real religion, the final truth about who we are (each of us a bud and leaf on the branches of the world, all connected to the world and one another), where we come from (the "tree" of nature or reality itself), where we are going eventually (down to the base and roots below, to join the community down there) and why (because this is how life works- it is eternal, but not unchanging, and a self-renewing, enlivening system.)

Death is no disappearance into darkness forever. It is a temporary removal to the depths, and then into the unfathomable mystery below the depths, even- before re-appearance on the branches. You can't really "find" the connection between the new leaves that appear and some old leaves that drifted down to the depths and vanished into the soil- it isn't purely the same leaf that re-appears, but it is still connected, in every way, to the leaves that went below. You can only sense- deeply- intuit- feel-



the connection between the disappearance and the re-appearance. The connection is there, it is just subtle.

And that's fine. We've lost our grasp of the subtle. No one could deny the connection between the caterpillar and the butterfly that emerges from its chrysalis- and yet, there is a darkness in that cycle: the chrysalis, thought to be such a "protective" thing for the caterpillar, is in reality a house of strangeness and full destruction. The caterpillar inside literally dissolves into a gooey substance, completely, before it becomes a butterfly.

What does the decaying brown leaf that slips into the darkness of the soil experience? Anything less? Not at all. Before regeneration and reappearance can happen, the ultimate "letting go" has to happen. But even in that surrender to deeper forces and processes, the connection between one specific "stage" of the cycle to another cannot be denied- we are dealing with the "Life Cycle" in truth, in all its many phases, which include those phases we identify as death.

Marcus Aurelius spoke deep and ancient wisdom when he spoke about death. The reality, simple and plain, is this: the Ancients trusted Nature like the leaves trust the Tree. You can't live your life saying how beautiful that sun or moon is, or how beautiful the process of birth is, or how wonderful sex is, and then complain about death, as though death is a broken part of the system, or an evil intruder, or a terrible fate. If birth is beautiful and appropriate, death is too, because Nature knows what Nature is doing, and our task is to trust that. Nature didn't get everything right except death. It got death right, too.

Simple. Profound. Ancient. Written on the Leaves of Trees. Written in the Chrysalis. This is the heart and soul of Organic Religion, and what lies at the core of Provenance Traditionalism. The tree is marked out inside of me, and inside of you. We sprang from it. We receive life from it. We will drift down to its depths one day and give life to it. Then we will receive again. And this will never end, because this is the way of things.

This alone lies behind the oldest human spiritual insights, and the source they used to get it, to receive it, is likely growing next to the house where you're sitting, or right at the street corner near you. A hundred thousand times it has grown on either side of the roads you've driven down. The "truth" we've all looked for so long- never being hidden, not even once, from any of us. This is my religion's story, in a nutshell- or in a leaf, should I say. This is my "central myth"- but it is no myth in the ordinary meaning of the word. It is simply me reading what is written on the face of the Land.

Some say that wisdom can bring a new theme to this ancient story of leaves and trees. A point comes, some whisper, when the traveling life of the leaf gains an insight into the tree and its own ages-long journey that does change it, somehow. Instead of cycling continuously through green life, brown ghost-life, and dark death in the dark soil, the center of that leaf's consciousness spreads out to enclose and encompass all of those things, so that it becomes a new sort of timeless presence all throughout the tree.

I believe that to be the case. I believe it to be not just a possibility, but the truth of what finally happens when we achieve the final depth of our potential. But it is not a thing that can be talked about overly much, else its mystery and dignity be cheapened. Those leaves- like those people who obtain such a wisdom would become the "Master Leaves" (to make a minor joke).

People who hear me talk about my "Tree God" sometimes wonder "why did the universe "make" us at all? Why did the natural forces just give rise to us?" And I never can answer in ways that they want. They want to hear that the universe had some kind of grand, special plan for us, but I do not see the emergence of human beings or non-human beings as a grand, special plan. It happened for the same reason that trees give forth their leaves, just on a broader scale.

Spontaneous, natural, organic, simple.

If you want a "miracle", I suppose we could say that it's a "miracle" (of types) that a system like this should timelessly exist at all, but that's not really a miracle. That's just a wonder- a wonder that human minds can't wrap themselves around because the explanation for it doesn't come in terms that we are enculturated to want to hear. When I tell people that I believe life and the cycles of sacred powers that lead to life were "always here", are timeless, eternal, they say that's foolish- and many say that "someone" had to "make" all this.

But such an insistence as that is what I consider foolish. They have a huge problem believing that Nature can be eternal, but no problem believing that a God can be eternal. This only reveals their cultural bias towards theism- and not just any theism, but a theism that puts Nature "under" a powerful divine being, and reduces Nature to the secondary status of a "created" thing.

That belief is backwards. It's alien, and it is offensive. It's also dangerous, deadly, to the soul, and the soul of the world. Under the influence of such beliefs, the Land has bled and bled some more. If Gods exist, they are another sort of leaf from another branch of the tree of Nature. They didn't make the Tree.

Now you know the Secret Heart of things. It may seem like a simple story of leaves and trees, but for those of you with a bit more interior silence, a mere glimpse at the leaf in your hand can show you that what I say here is true- this simple story, this story of the green leaves and the brown leaves is the Secret Heart of spirituality. It was lost a long time ago, but re-emerged- in the way that leaves re-appear- in later myths of "reincarnation" and "heavens" and "underworlds" and the like. This is the Secret Core. Always has been, always will be.

# The Sorcerous Urge and the Elphillock Key

It's undeniable- those of us who have a strong urge towards sorcerous mysteries have some other urges hidden inside that, too. While many of those urges may be of a personal nature, one unites most of us: the strong desire to see what "else" is "out there"- to see, to experience, direct evidence of worlds apart from this one.

Living as we do in our faithless and accursed modern day, the prevailing opinion is that this "world of material things" is the only world, and its materials generate all life and consciousness, and when configurations of the material come apart, life and consciousness cease, full stop. Where the tree falls, so does it lie.

Such a pernicious story is at the heart of our modern day impasse, our modern curse. This story has the order of events quite backwards: material doesn't create life; a living reality was the source of the conditions that caused what we call "materials" to exist as features of our experience. Some call this biocentrism, the idea that life in a broad and extensive sense is at the center of reality, not matter, mindless forces, or material.

I like it, but it doesn't really go where I'm going with this note. We want to engage sorcerous systems, these strange "yogas of the West", these old paths of consciousness and mind-art that unseal new vistas of experience in us, to such a degree that we have a larger window on reality, a deeper appreciation of our true source. Such an experience could break the curse of the modern- take away the nihilistic depression that freezes the blood with cold when we contemplate the atheistic dogma of "consciousness extinction." Some people say that facing the utter meaninglessness of things, the ultimate extinction of self, produces "mature" individuals. I say it produces individuals who are cut off from the deeper core of life, and individuals who cannot grasp the moral dimension of things.

I'm not saying we're all coming to this to find some kind of astral tourism agency, but it can't be denied- who doesn't have that curiosity, that excitement, that the "Otherness" may represent a mind-blasting experience that removes a person from the ordinary mental condition of beings these days, and transforms them into beings with extraordinary insight into reality?

I can't deny it, and in my own limited experience of extraordinary reality, I've tasted something quite beyond the limits of description, that does just that.

And since I want you all to taste it too, I have to choose my words very carefully. For 20 years I sought this goal, and had to pass through the halls of many supposed teachers and follow many supposed leads before one sequence of insights- sprung from some very specific teachers- led me to hit "the sweet spot", as it were. A specific sequence of leads led to those teachers and to the outcomes of their guidance. This was the "golden chain" I was looking for, which I knew was out

there. Quite without realizing it, I have put myself in a position where I want to communicate it to others, and subsequently found that this is easier desired than done.

Let me say this, and consider it a prologue to all my writing- I want you all to experience the power that pulls people down into the infinite chain of experiences that lie within everything you ordinarily experience. Dead and dying people have done this already, and completely. But living people can, too. And it starts with one simple but crucially important orientation. The gateway you are looking for is never going to open for you if you think it is apart from this world. We say "Otherworld", we say "Other worlds", we say "Another world", we say "higher realities", we use lots of language that situates the experience we want very much apart from this world.

This is a mistake. The more you let that language structure your mind and expectations, the further you drift from ever being able to open the gate you want. I've favored the term "Unseen" world because Unseen doesn't imply "apart from"- Unseen for me always means "here, part of experience, just not perceived yet."

But listen carefully, and work at this singular point- don't use language that divides. Use language that brings together. Language conditions your mind, which then conditions deeper parts of your mind, until you can't see or experience outside of the definitions and conditioning that you've piled on yourself.

The gate to other worlds- to the whole panoply of ranges of experience that we are very easily capable of, is inside these senses and inside this landscape that you find yourself living in the center of. It's here, totally sealed into the fullness of sensual life. You find the so-called "Otherness" by sinking into what you are experiencing right now, *never* in separating yourself from it or rising above it, or transcending it. Ever. People who do that, who are obsessed with the separation-models, only ever get to experience deluded vistas of wishful thinking.

And it's right in front of our faces- the "heavenly travelers" the "risers on the planes", they ceaselessly report the wondrous eternalistic heavens that always represent the fulfillment of the most basic of human wants and safety from the most basic of fears- whether it be "mansions and streets of gold" in an eternal place of bliss, or just the sheer security of thinking that they will be immortal egos living and knowing everything they ever wanted to know, in the company of everyone they ever loved, and even favored by the supreme being, for eternity.

Yeah, the older Underworld traditions present quite a different image of destiny for human consciousness-principles. And who could blame the average person for preferring a heavenly retirement plan over the dark and surreal landscapes below, where wisdom comes at a high price, and strange, disturbing ancient forms dwell in a world that isn't chiefly about human beings? Even the "bright fairy land below" folklore gives us joy on the Green Meadows below for some- but always with a price: a tithe to the deeper, hellish forces, to maintain their happy state.

From top to bottom, the Primordial traditions of Underworldly existence, of existence in the depths of

the world, offer no reliefs or assurances with regard to what human egos want to believe, and in this, I say their truthfulness is shown. If we know anything, we know we aren't living in a human world, primarily- a million species of butterfly exist; humans haven't even been participating in the family of expressed life but for a fraction of time that life has been here. This world and life isn't chiefly about us. And neither is what happens when we die.

Now that I've made the whole journey into the Unseen sound real inviting (lol- jump on board, brothers and sisters! Let's go see how insignificant we might be and how strange everything really is!) always remember this: you aren't going to get anywhere if you think your goal lies beyond the world, beyond the "sphere of the senses" or beyond lived, sensual experience. The way is not beyond those things- it's inside them. There is no "spirit over matter"- there is only spirit in matter, always, forever. That's what wholeness is, and that's the key to Elfhame.

# The Underworld Tradition

My Christian contemporaries love to boast that they are "in this world, but not of it." It can come as no surprise by this point that my boast is just the opposite: I am of this world, and often deep inside it. The "deep inside" of the world is, of course, that mytho-poetic "place" we call the Underworld. Most people don't see it until they die, and I suspect that what I've been able to see of it thus far is only the fraction of it that any person still largely invested in living flesh can sometimes chance to see, if they are helped by powers that make the descent possible. I fully expect to see a lot more of it, in my own good Fated time.

But for now, I've caught many glimpses of what can only be that deep place, just as the folklore and myths of many cultures have described. Considering how universal a place it appears to be, it only makes sense that its presence, its reality, must have some important close relationship to, or overlap with, our basic awareness. You go tap dancing along its outside wall anytime you have a clear dream. But most important, you feel its deep urgings and messages daily and nightly, when you have experiences of intuition and those "strong knowings" that lead you to seek out something or someone, or change your life in some way.

We have a tendency to isolate the Underworld, along with all other death-related topics, and thus consider it far away. I know that it is close, and I know that it is found just inside this flesh. Every living body is a portal to the Underworld- my greatest teacher taught me that, and taught me how to feel its amorphous presence right inside me. My teacher taught me well; there's never a second of any day that I don't feel it, and considering we all emerged from it when we entered this life, I am blessed to feel my true place of origin with me, everywhere I go. A person who feels that never feels lost, and never feels mystified about where they "came from"- nor where they are going.

But in that dark space, which extends from my interior, into the massive interior of the Earth, and even beyond that too, I feel that I carry the great spiritual legacy of all human history. That dark space within is where the Gods and spirits went when human beings forgot about them. Sometimes, they still rise up out of that place and walk on the earth. They used to be here quite a bit more often.

If you carry a copy of Grimm's Fairy Tales with you, you carry an enormous body of lore and wisdom with you, between two covers. It's a great feeling to know that centuries worth of the concentrated wisdom of the "Old Black Forest Wives" can be carried right under your arm- but an even greater feeling to know that you can be stark naked and alone, helpless and hurting, or a thousand miles from any book or house or person, and you are still in full possession of countless millennia of wisdom, experience, and the tangible presence of every power that ever lived, or ever will live.

That's what it means to know what lies just below the surface. That's also what it means to know what death holds. When you know what death holds, you know what life holds. When you know what the

house of death really is, you know what the house of life is. This is why my Master's oldest name may in fact be something like "death", or perhaps "decorated with death"- though in a language far older than we imagine. To be draped in death's finery, decorated with death's very rich tapestry, means to be merged with the totality of things.

The greatest sorcerous ability anyone will ever have is well known to us, from history itself. The greatest of sorcerers were masters of it; it is the ability to vanish quietly, to slip behind the scenes and just vanish. We're used to brash, vulgar displays of power these days, and that is a symptom of how much we've forgotten that the best and strongest powers are subtle things. The best and deepest transformations of life are barely noticed, and slow in how they grow and express themselves. Real changes in any situation- the ones that last and act as foundations for future changes- are seldom fast or obvious.

To be a knower of the Underworld itself, as it exists inside your flesh, and inside the world, and inside that subtle, skeletal and ghost-like crystalline structure of all experience, immediately gives you the power to just disappear. You can slip into it, anytime you want. The loud, arguing mind, the hungry ego, the impetuous will, they can learn an unusual silence and find out what death is like, long before the death of the body. And from that strangest (though closest and most intimate) of places, a person can access the subtle wisdoms that alone bring about the sorts of changes they need, or which the world may need.

It's not loud, shocking, or exciting messages the world needs; we have enough of that already, and we see how far it gets us- it's the quiet messages from the Unseen, the ones that you remember years later, just in time to realize how much they really affected you profoundly. They are like invisible sorcerers, hiding in your mind, making themselves at home, and shaping you from within, until you don't even recognize yourself anymore. And then you realize that you've become what you needed to be- a real initiatory experience, brought about by the cunning hands and minds of real masters.

The tunnels to the Underworld are many, cobwebbed throughout the land, in much the same way that veins- our bodily tunnels- cobweb our bodies. There are many beings moving through those tunnels. Some of the tunnels are hopelessly blocked off now, packed quite full of the refuse of centuries of ignorance, or piled high with the dust and mold of never being used anymore. You know what happens when enough of your veins and arteries get clogged; the same thing happens to the world, in a manner of speaking.

Once, a lot of people visited the deep, and walked and flew and darted through its tunnels, exploring, carrying messages from the outer world to the inner. They found power there, healing, wisdom, and sometimes they found treasures, or dangers, or the magic seeds that would grow into forests of mythology. The world's blood really flowed strongly then, and there was a friendship between the source and the children of the source. There was a knowledge, a familiarity, an interplay that made human hearts fertile with the basic wonder of life. "Outside" and "Inside" drew so close together in the minds of people, that it was not such a surprise to see Gods or Spirits walking down the same forest path a hunter might have taken, or to find an immortal, or a long-deceased ancestor, coming to

share one's fire.

When the outer and inner become very obscured from one another, when an immense cognitive gulf and the mist of unfamiliarity falls into the human mind and separates the two, the world seems very empty, very pointless, very confusing, with no way to make the whole come together.

The people who know how to vanish, disappear, sink away into some deep crack in the earth, they get more than just a glimpse of how things fit together. By virtue of what they do, the rest of the world of life becomes infected with their boundary-crossing. To be a living person in the land of the dead means that death gets to experience life, too. Two things come together, and it spreads out from there. Real sorcery is contagious. Power is contagious. Everything is connected, so when one cell in the system is affected, it spreads.

When it spreads enough, entire cultures can be born from it. When the connection is severed long enough, whole cultures can die. But that doesn't really matter. Somewhere out there, some man or woman will be found who knows how to be very quiet, who knows how to just slip away and vanish, and soon, the world will be different, new power relationships will be forming, and entire ages of the world can be born or defined, without anyone understanding how it all happened. These sorts of works- those carried out by our culture-teachers and culture-birthers- have been going on since forever.

In some sense, the ultimate "vocation" of any human being is just this: to be a reason two worlds came close enough to one another, so that a deeper will in the Underworld could express itself. Anyone who understands this understands how that same process on a far more personal level is a key to "sorcery" as it is usually understood: an individual bringing about specific local changes in what appears to be some supernatural manner.



# Truth, Good, and Evil

Aside from those times when an evil stands up in this world and announces its evil in a way that no sane person can ignore (at which point I scream at it) I try to avoid conversations about "good" and "evil"- and there's an important reason why.

It comes down to my most fundamental pylons of worldview. In the worldview of spiritual-ecological alliance, exchange, exploration, and fluidity, "good" and "evil" fall away rapidly. They still have some use in language expression as labels for temporary fluctuations of experience, but they have too many dangers attached to be handled with carelessness, or be tossed about the way they ordinarily are.

"Good guys" and "bad guys" don't exist in my stories. Nor in the myths or folktales that I treasure as legitimate sources of wisdom. There are only characters in the stories of my world, which for me is *the* world- just characters who shift and change through the flux of reality, and the flux of relationship.

In the true primal stories- from either side of the Atlantic- a character who appears in an antagonistic role in one tale, appears as a protagonist in another. The ancients who gave us these stories weren't confused by this at all. When the conditions are right, the "best" of people can do deplorable things; when the conditions are right, the "worst" of people can be a great boon to many others.

This is truth, ancient and inexhaustible. As we seek our ways through the forest of life, we meet others, bond with others, ally with others, gain enmity for others, struggle against others. We have no choice but to see our allies and power-providers as "good"; just so, those who provide (or partially provide or make possible) the conditions we must struggle against or within are seen as "evil."

That's just natural. But being natural (or should I say, well-conditioned by this point so deeply in us as to be nigh-unquestionable), hardly makes it perfectly wise. The further we broaden our perspective, to encompass the bigger system of conditions, situations, and relationships- the many seen and unseen layers that bolster every experience- the more we see "good" and "evil" fall away.

We remain with the struggles that we have become associated with. We remain with the allies we rely upon so much. But this is all part and parcel of a massive shifting kaleidoscope of reality itself: The configurations of experience and cognition that drive our stories are shifting, every moment. What was evil before can seem quite good; the accepted "good" of a society can be looked back upon as heartless evil, as the world turns.

And in the right unexpected situations (and there are many of those) we see our beliefs about ourselves and what we personally might think, feel, or do challenged- "good" people find themselves

quite compromised against their self-perceptions. In the right situations, the most unexpected people do the most shocking things- in either direction of the meaning of that word.

In a world cursed with idealism, we beat ourselves up when we think we've failed to live up to some personal ideal; but the hard reality is that reality doesn't care about our ideals. The presence of shifting and powerful situations and power-entanglements are all that actually exist, and ultimately, they are what decides what will be. The only way to be "righteous" in the face of this is to accept the fluidity of things, and be cunning and creative enough to deal well with the complicated webs of force that involve us all. This takes bravery; this takes a willingness to actualize the old saying "life is water, not stone." This takes giving up on ideals that we have been taught are unquestionable and necessary for any hint of goodness or peace.

This is why tales of the "folkloric devil" are both enlightening and instructive. Surprisingly enough, the folkloric devil, even in folk-tales from christian times, isn't always a pure villain; he appears also as challenger, as oafish fool, as ally and teacher, and sometimes even in more sympathetic lights- as a party bringing justice to people who were wicked themselves, or as a legitimately aggrieved character.

In much the same way the character of the Wolverine or the Porcupine can appear antagonistic in one Micmac legend, but be the salvation of the hero in another, the devil has a similar appearance in the folklore of Europe, if you look deep enough. The moral ambiguity of these tales is crucial; not as a source of sorrow or criticism, but as a means of telling us what our idealistic minds hate to hear: that life is ambiguous, no matter who, no matter what.

My comments here about the devil refer only to the folkloric devil, and to folklore- which always draws on older materials. The theological devil, and theological depictions of the devil, are always ridiculously evil, lethal, and corruptive. This is why we must always remember the important distinction between the two traditions- folklore and theology- and not let the one spoil the wisdom of the other.

Because a nuanced worldview of shifting help and harm, of constantly changing challenged and challenger, of fluid friend and foe: this is what emerges from the older worldview. And it is a nuanced view that we have no choice but to become wise to, if we would fain be wise at all.

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Despite what some people may think, this entire letter is not me embracing, nor giving approval to, the "radical subjectivity" paradigm, for that paradigm, so popular today (which claims every person can have their own perceptions of truth or good or evil that are just as valid as any other person's) is lacking in some wisdom itself- it doesn't take into account the real nature of intersubjectivity, that countless perceptions beyond one's own really exist and really influence things greatly, and can influence or create or destroy things, all outside of what your particular perception may tell you is real or desirable.

Like it or not, "we" are not in this alone. We must take into account the others, else real and healthy relationships- the chief things that determine how well we do in this world- are not possible.

I understand why people want to hide under the shelter of their "own truths." For too long, spiritual and political absolutism has murdered its way through this world, forcing beliefs and ideas and opinions onto people as though the authorities really had a divine right to do so. I understand the revulsion, and the desire to be free of it, but that doesn't justify the extremes of ludicrous notions like "personal truths"- truth is still truth, whether or not you know it, believe it, or like it at all.

Truth is not a singular "thing" floating apart from the flux of the interconnected world; at any given moment, truth is a condition of statements about the world. It's true that others exist, or that they do not; it is true that a man is your father, or he is not; and so forth. Truth can sometimes be discovered, or at other times, it remains obscure or unknown. Whatever *is* true, however, is not vulnerable to whether or not we know it or accept it.

When you realize this about "truth", you stop being so obsessed (as idealists always are) with "the truth" and you can live your life in peace, knowing that the cosmos and whatever truths it contains aren't waiting on you to know them or declare them. You can't damage the metaphysical substratum of reality by failing to know a truth about it. You always own the option of having no opinion about something- the world's not waiting for you to declare, over and over, what things must be, or what they should be, or what they might be. Silence is an option, and often a good one. Either way, we can't hurt the truth.

We just aren't that powerful, though we like to think we are. What was true about nature, about earth and sky, before humans emerged wasn't harmed by us not being there. And those things are still true, even if we don't see them. And when we are gone from these temporary forms we've assumed, they will still be true. No threat, no danger, no problem. We will go our way as we always have, and the world will go its way, and we will always be part of that interlacing of ways.

And in this interlacing, you'll have a hard time finding real "good" or "evil", in the ludicrous sense that we've been told those things exist. The moment you think you have one pinned down, the interstices and knots and overlaps of power shift just a little, and the whole world is re-made anew; new things exist that no one ever could have imagined, and what was so clear before isn't clear anymore.

We have to deal with this wisely. We have to accept it, expect it, and be prepared as we can be for it, which is largely a matter of knowing that its coming and remembering to be as fair as we can be to ourselves and all others that we relate to.

Some say that embracing such a flexible way of looking at life, and more, of embracing such a comfort with instability and fluidity, will lead to great horror, moral wrongs, and blithe behavior with regard to really important things. I counter by saying that 17 centuries of absolutist, either-or thinking,

of concrete-only thinking, of inflexible thinking and perceiving, has led to worse horrors.

Such is the nature of inflexibility that even good intentions become harmful, and even the will to act in helpful ways is more often than not blunted and stopped, in the name of a false ideal. The world has never shown us stability nor absolute goods or evils; the worst and most destructive storms of this world have shown positive long-term affects on the whole environment.

We've never seen the things idealists want us to believe, and they justify this by saying that our senses cannot see these things, and that our ordinary (often sinful) minds can't comprehend them. We just have to have faith and do what we're told, believe what we're told. And act according to a pre-scripted pattern. This is the sum-total death of the human mind and soul. This is the downfall of the world. This is the loss of warm, fleshy life, and the birth of cold stone bodies and souls that shatter in the midst of the waves of change, instead of bending with the wind.

I will not allow such foul- and transparent- attempts to ignore reality (always in the favor of powerful others) to infiltrate my life, my feeling, or my thinking. I will be the villain of one group of people's stories, and the hero of another group's stories. I will be- and am- the person in love with not knowing how his own story will turn out. I will be potent and wise in the face of strange things- or perhaps I will fail and be fearful at times, which is also not something that bothers me over-much, because I believe that wisdom will hold me up if I allow it a seat of honor at my feasting-table.

So, despite "cutesy" images, I'm not Glenda the Good Witch. I'm content to be the bad guy of a certain situation, and I know that all situations are more nuanced and complicated than most think. I'm not trying to be good or evil; I'm trying to be wise, cunning, and flexible, and that is all. I'm not trying to be a leader, nor will I be a follower. I'll be an explorer, though; I'll be a person seeking powerful relationships, and experiences that will make me wise. That is all.



*"Modern man is ancient as the hills.  
Neither science nor philosophy  
Can temper his extremity.  
He returns, he always returns,  
The distant prodigal,  
The stranger at the door.  
Death welcomes him.  
Death loves him."  
-Peter Makem*







## P a r t VII



# Cursed Be Them Who Call the Evil Good: Countering the False Spirit of Absolutist Religions

Re-examine all you have been told.  
Dismiss what insults your soul.

-Walt Whitman



# Darkening the Great Unseen

People are always coming to me and saying that I (and others like me, people involved in occult matters, particularly involving spirit contact) are "crazy", on account of the high level of danger involved in contacting "spirits".

This is a real quandary. Because on the one hand, you don't want people to think that spirit-contact is some simple, effortless thing, or a thing without risk. It takes effort, and it involves risk. But on the other hand, it's really tiring having to see the extent to which the Christian and monotheist worldview has made a villain of the Unseen World- as a way of scaring people away from "non-approved" methods of trafficking with spiritual powers.

The church, at a very early point, wanted to be the one and only mediator of spiritual communication for human beings with the Unseen World. The re-branding of Pagan Gods as demons or villains was only the beginning; these days, after many centuries of degeneracy, we have crops of people terrified of board games and certain music and even cemeteries. The souls of the dead have been turned into possibly dangerous things. Anything that strays in the direction of the spirit world is transformed into a horror movie, or the possibility of a horror scenario.

So, while I want people to realize that the Unseen World is every bit as natural and necessary as this one, and that the Powers that dwell there are no more likely to harm people than any random human or animal in this world are, I also don't want people thinking that anything and everything that comes from the Unseen world is automatically a wise, benevolent super-being that has come from the obscure ethers to help you and make you powerful. That's not a good perspective, either.

I also want to re-create a sense of the Sacred for the Unseen World, as well as this one, to replace the sense of dread or disbelief that we have for the Unseen these days, and to replace the sense of the "commodity" we have for the more tangible earth. The earth is not a bunch of "stuff" waiting wholesale to be changed into things we can use or eat or sell. That's not what it is, not ultimately; that we can sometimes do that with some of the products of this earth is only a small percentage of the picture.

Just so, the Unseen is not a pit-trap of demons, not a dangerous, soul-sucking void, not a thing we should be scared of all the time. We don't need to throw up childish "defenses" to the Unseen and begin demanding divine credentials from every stray wight that comes our way, on the threat of damnation in the name of some joke cultural monotheism (ahem, ceremonial magicians.) We don't have to brandish crucifixes and dash holy water around, like some stupid movie. We don't have to have these looks of alarm when we hear about spirits or things of the invisible world. It's not stylish to be that alarmist who runs away when someone mentions magic or spirits. But that's what we're surrounded by.

A little good-natured, wise caution is good for everyone, in every situation, whether it deals with the

Unseen or not. It really is that simple. A little respect and common sense goes a long way towards keeping people safer than any symbol or magical chant. But I will say this, in the name of common sense:

If you really think the forces in the Unseen World are dangerous and angry because of some mythical disobedience to some mythical God a long time ago, your lack of wits and wisdom will turn out to be far more dangerous to you than any spirit. If the beings in the Unseen world were angry about anything, it has nothing to do with some ancient story of disobedience to the "true god" and everything to do with how humans have cast themselves on the Sacred body of this world and ransacked it.

Yes, we exist in a field of powers, of which our own beings are one power. This field is a community, tightly and forever bound together. This communal field extends deep, deep into regions we can't comprehend, and runs right up into our faces, filling our senses. We feel, inside ourselves, far more than we consciously realize, because the "field" is reality itself, and we extend into it fully. Entities speak, lost stories and epics are told, disasters happen, things that seem like miracles happen, dreams come, all directly to our souls, and we receive, consciously, far less than 1% of it.

We have a responsibility, born and at the core of us, to the "field" I'm speaking of. This isn't just a statement of environmentalism; this is a statement about our responsibility to ourselves, to souls, to feelings, to the totality of things. It isn't about \*just\* dirt and trees; it's about your eyes, your thoughts, your dreams, and the dreams of this world. Where once human shamans, adepts, and mirk-riders used to fly back and forth upon this great Field, deep into the shadows of its immensity, and communicate directly to the Great Community, now, that vital connection is lost, and humans have withdrawn from the field, except to re-frame that field to their materialistic advantage.

We are living in full, culturally-sanctioned ignorance of the Great World, Seen and Unseen, that we are parts of. Even those who choose to believe that the Unseen is there are typically living under religiously-sanctioned fear of it. And because of this, we have blasphemed and torn the field asunder, at least as far as we can manage it, in the name of unsustainable, propagandistic "civilization" that can only take from the world and other beings, and never give back.

Is it any surprise that the Unseen world might have a climate of anger towards humans? That countless disenfranchised and ignored spirits, and the lost souls of countless species driven to extinction in the space of a few decades, and the lost souls of countless forests clear-cut without restraint might make the shadow-world boil with rage? There is a certain element of outrage in all this. Religions that write off the natural world as just so much soul-less matter, created somehow solely for man's use and so-called "stewardship", are giving their followers a remarkable pass to not consider the deeper dimensions of relationship to which they are still beholden, despite their ignorance and religion-sanctioned denial.

So we don't need demons in rebellion against a tyrant god to fill the spirit world with spiritual danger; our souls aren't in danger of being stolen by demons; all we need is violence-based, resource-

stealing, resource-consuming modern civilizations led by dismissive and spiritually blind mosques and churches to fill the spirit world with grief and rage. Our lives and capacity for wisdom and real peace are in danger because we are ignoring our real family and the ultimate truth about ourselves.

The witches of the past- even as late as Dame Isobel's time- didn't have as much of these modern issues to worry about. I'm not trying to turn anyone into a rabid "anti-civ" activist; I'm trying to give people some insight into why a lot of spirits might think they're not worth dealing with, even if you manage to establish conscious contact with the Unseen. If you know what I'm saying here, you will know how to establish trust with these beings, you know how to "repent", to use a humorous borrowed term. You will know what they may want, and you will know what to avoid letting your soul get seduced by.

If you would be a cunning and wise sorcerer or Witch, you will have to know how things in this world are impacting the Unseen, before you can figure out the "vice-versa" of that. This is about understanding the impact of things seen on things Unseen.



*The old priest smiled and said "The cross is the ladder to heaven, young man."*

*"I'm not trying to get to heaven" I told him.*

*"I'm trying to get to the forest."*









# Evil Prayers

I was talking to a nice Christian lady and a rather starry-eyed secularist-spiritualist, about bad prayers and being "careful what you wish for." My Christian conversation partner answered in the affirmative, that she had (in moments of weakness) prayed to God for bad things to happen to people that had hurt her. I asked her if she'd feel bad if something terrible were to actually happen to those people- and she said no- she said that "God didn't answer those kinds of prayers."

Fair enough. The secularist was quite specific about the power of wishing- and what are wishes, but secular prayers? "Be careful what you wish for", she said. She believed wishes had a lot of power; but on the whole, she thought, wishing for really bad things only really hurt the wisher, because the powers she believed stood behind wishes- the power of the Cosmos, actually- was benevolent enough to not just rain horror down on others because of the unwise wishes of another.

Not much of a difference, really, between our devoted Christian and our devoted "spiritual but not religious" girl. One has a specific cultural-tradition's "God", and the other has an almost identical concept in "The Cosmos"- both ladies went to their respective "higher power" for the same concerns.

Both of them were well enough acquainted with my work- or just enough acquainted, anyway- to ask me what I thought about bad prayers and dangerous wishes. I had to apologize to both of them before I answered; I knew this wasn't going to go over too well.

"I'm sorry, good ladies" I began; "I don't see any safety valves or benevolence fields in this world that will protect us from ourselves. I think that no matter what you wish for- or focus yourself prayerfully on- it has a chance of attracting just the sorts of powers who are happy to help. The problem with bad prayers and wishes isn't that they won't be answered or fulfilled; the problem is that the things that *can* help answer them or fulfill them may do so. You, madam, (the secularist) were onto something when you said "be careful what you wish for"- the origin of that old saying lies in what remains, in our cultural consciousness, of an older belief.

I don't think every prayer or wish is "answered"- not by a long shot. If true communication with the Unseen was as easy as folding your hands together and murmuring to yourself before a religious icon, or just closing your eyes and desiring something really hard, this world would be a madhouse of chaos more than it already is. If the cosmos protects us at all, it does so by the simplest of mechanisms: the rule of the extraordinary effort that has to be made to really communicate with the Unseen. Not everyone can make that effort. If more people knew how, the world would be a different place.

Having said that, I think that *some* prayers and wishes get the response people want for reasons more than just simple coincidence. Sometimes, a person's will for some gain or end is just strong enough, just focused enough, that they manage to change something that goes beyond the breath-soul and the

intellect; something deeper in the soul shifts a bit, changes, "broadcasts" that something is needed- almost like a void opens up, and Nature hates a void, despises a vacuum. Something's going to rush into the vacuum and fill it. This is rare- truly- but it can happen.

More than being careful what we wish for, we have to be careful what things we allow to obsess us, because it's obsession's single-minded force that can cause changes deep below the surface. Every obsession hides some kind of wish.

I believe there are a lot of non-human persons out there, a lot of spiritual agencies, that can and will partner up with human beings- and they all come seeking some benefit for services rendered in the partnering. That is the nature of relationship, after all; it's recursive, it's a two-way flow. This isn't just a matter of how spirits behave: humans do this everyday, too- you yourselves have done it many times in your life with many people and even with spiritual beings you wanted to have some kind of relationship to- your Jesus, or your God, or your guardian angel, or your Krishna, whatever. You went seeking, you had benefits for yourself that you wanted in mind.

What sets me apart from you is that I don't think that every time a non-human person attempts to impress its presence onto you, and communicate, or help you, that it's going to be Jesus or Krishna or some "angel." Those things are cute cultural masks- actually cultural obsessions- that express our wish for a benevolence in the universe. But the Unseen world is super-saturated with sentience in forms beyond count. And there's some living force out there to match whatever you express of yourself, if you express it deeply enough. You know that's how it works in this world, right? You put yourself out there to your fellow humans, and almost without fail, you end up with the sorts of friends and partners that match how you displayed yourself pretty well.

So I think your bad prayers may be answered. I think your unwise wishes may come true- not with any regularity, and perhaps never. But I think there's a chance, a legitimate chance, that they may. And this is really rendered possible because it involves you and the community of life seen and unseen that you belong to. This involves the reality of communication and obsession. This involves the interconnectedness that itself frames reality.

It's not about you and "god" or you and the "cosmos"- it's about you and me and us and them, this Commonwealth that you belong to. And if history- including the history of your own life- proves anything, it's that there isn't much room to think that a supreme being or the cosmos itself is going to intervene to stop you from being connected to everything else- nor will it intervene to stop you from getting into negative relationships with others.

I think your prayers can therefore be quite potent. And your wishes. But if you get what you pray for or wish for, and you know, at the level of conscience that it was a bad thing, or something that cost other people a lot of grief, you should also know that you've entered into the first stage of a very real level of commitment to an Unseen power whose further expectations of you may not be to your liking. When you've danced, (as they say) you have to pay the fiddler. This would be an old saying that reminds us to obsess over things we really need, not just things we want. And especially not things

we want under the influence of anger or hate."

Not enjoying my answer much, the secularist asked "Why are you so okay with the idea that there will always be this possibility that "bad spirits" are so willing to help us?"

And I answered "I'm not okay with it; it's just the way of things. I just accept it as another nuance of relationship, variety, and plurality. Every time I drive by those "payday loan" places, I know that it's a reality, in this world, and in the other.

There's always an entity that will take advantage of the misfortune of others to get ahead. Always. It's a pretty good survival strategy, when you think about it- the fox never failed to go after a goose that had a hurt wing. We can get upset about that and withdraw into cynicism or denial... or we can act more intelligently in this system of life."

# Happy People

Last night, I watched a documentary called "Happy People." It's about trappers who live in Siberia, in what might be one of the most isolated places on earth. And one of the most beautiful places- the endless Taiga wilderness.

I could say a lot about what I found profound about it, but I wanted to focus on one element that impressed me the most. Certainly it's amazing seeing men and women living in utter isolation, in unspoiled wilderness, having to be very alert, open, creative, and connected to the most simple, basic, fundamental powers there are: trees, the river they live on, and animals. No matter what else you have heard, or thought, or believed, understand that what these people are doing is the true "religion" of mankind.

All our modern religions are degenerate copies of what they experience daily- direct contact with the sacred forces that we came from, and relied upon for countless millennia, and still rely on directly and indirectly, however disconnected we may feel. One of the topics I will discuss more in the future is the concept of animal persons as the original "divine others" that primordial humans based their first stories of spirits and gods upon.

But in the documentary, the filmmakers showed some native Siberian people who lived alongside the Russian-descended people in Siberia. They were all that remained of one particular native group, and their name sounded something like the "Ket" people. Like all steam-rolled natives, they exist in poor shape now, but one of them- an old woman- was introduced as a woman who still remembered something of "the old ways". She had the most amazing looking primitive dolls or small cloth and wood effigies that she kept wrapped up in hides. The narrator said that the dolls represented spirits of some sort that were kept wrapped during the day, but at night, were unwrapped and "awakened" so that they could watch over the people and the house.

That poor old lady (she looked to be in not so great shape) was the lone carrier of a spiritual tradition which (based on how primal and creepy and earthy those dolls looked) was ages old. She said not a word on the documentary. She just sat there with a distant, strange look on her face. She clutched at these dolls as they moved her in one scene away from a house.

I was struck by this; here, in the middle of true "Nowhere" (at least from just about everyone else on earth's perspective) was an old woman, whose name was never given, who never said a word, holding on to what 99% of human beings would write-off as just a bunch of "dolls"- but she was holding possibly thousands and thousands of years of raw, pure spirituality in her arms. Tangible spiritual power, right there, precious, wordless.

Every priest, every mullah, every minister, every preacher, every rabbi- almost without fail, every

one of them would dismiss the sight as a poor heathen old lady playing with dolls. But it was more than that; it was real. The neatly written-out, clean and absolutist beliefs they peddle are fake compared to this silent, ancient thing that will be lost forever to human beings when that old lady breathes her last.

It made me sad. Then it made me remember that I have to make however many years of life I have left to be what the first years of my life have been: a way for spirits to talk and live and breathe. I don't have dolls, but I have wooden carvings. I have spirit houses, fetishes, stones, and stories all my own. And I feel the lurking reality of the Unseen in those things.

# Making a Heaven of Hell

Something has emerged from my last discussion that I want to focus on a bit. And I'm not really sure quite how to approach it, so I'll do what I usually do and let my hands move without thinking about it over-much. Whatever moves these fingers usually has a way of getting what I want to say out in a better way than if I over-plan it.

Our minds have layers of defense mechanisms designed to stop us all from going stark, raving mad. The chief mechanism of defense is the mind's power to normalize miserable situations. No matter how bad it gets, most minds can find a way to integrate the suffering and, quite literally, experience it with a high degree of normalcy in life. In concentration camps during WWII, prisoners often found ways to carry on their lives in unthinkably normal ways- unthinkable to us- considering the highly deadly and painful environment they were in.

That's our minds for you. This mechanism of defense, sadly, while preserving some of our sanity, also stops us most of the time from doing things we need to do, to get ourselves out of misery. That's the drawback to it. When we normalize hell, hell doesn't seem such a bad place. This is why a lot of enslaved populations in the past didn't just rise up- as they easily could have done- and wiped out their oppressors, even when their oppressors were in a clear minority.

When I think about that, I think about how we normalize religious cultures that teach us the most hateful and destructive things about ourselves, other people, and this world. I think about how the soul, deep down, knows that it is imprisoned and silenced by these deep-seated cultural institutions, and yet, how our minds have found ways to "normalize" them.

You've heard it countless times. Instead of simply parting ways with religions that clearly and directly state that homosexuals are worthy of the death penalty, or just going to hell for eternity, or that witches should be murdered, or that the world is a temporary and flawed creation of a transcendent super-man and all about to "end" one day, instead of fleeing from such evil, we normalize it, and then apologize for it.

The most popular explanation, which is just another function of the mind normalizing it, is "But the original version of the religion was really loving and wonderful, but it got taken over by the bad version of the religion that is popular today."

I don't have time to go into why this is simply not true again, historically speaking, so I won't. But I can say, "even if that is true, how does that help us now, in a world where the bad version rules, and the "lost good version" is either unrecoverable (assuming it existed, which it really didn't) or if it did exist, and can be recovered, is just as likely to find mainstream acceptance as any form of neo-paganism?"



In other words, fantasizing about how the oppressive religious cultures of today "really used to be gentle and cool" helps no one, and in fact, only serves to maintain the grip that the "bad" versions- which are the only versions- have on the world. Instead of doing what we should be doing, and walking away from those cursed houses, we are suggesting with that wishful thinking that a good house-cleaning is all that's needed, and the house can keep standing. Never mind that the foundations of the house are soaked in atrocity, the walls and bricks and stairwells lined with injustice beyond measure, and the management of the house is deluded beyond belief; the house can still somehow stand. But it can't. It has stood too long because our minds just have ways of not wanting to face the awfulness of things directly. Our minds make excuses.

And those excuses- which might be necessary to protect our collective sanity from the insanity that permeates everything- are also often tied to your Aunt Polly. Maybe you don't have an Aunt Polly (I don't) but I do have an Aunt Cathy who's Catholic. And she's a great lady; all of you would like her.

She'd never hurt anyone on purpose. She will, however vote against marriage equality. And in so doing, she will exert all the effort she can, politically, to make sure that hundreds of thousands of people she never met remain second class citizens, and why? She's so nice, why do that? Because her religion and her priests tell her to. Her bible tells her that gays aren't right. Her parents believed it. Her brothers believe it. That's the only reasons; gays have never done a thing to her, to hurt her.

And yet, my Aunt Cathy and your Aunt Polly are *nice* ladies. We love them, right? So we don't want to hurt their feelings when we say that their religions are dipped in demon shit. We don't want to rock that deep family stability boat; we want to imagine that if our nice aunts can be nice and still be so Christian, then clearly, it's not all bad. It's just some bad people who take it in crazy ways. Right?

No, not right. But people can't overcome the immediate influence that malignant religious cultures have on their families, even when they manage to overcome that influence on themselves. Their minds won't let them believe that so many nice people can exist out there and belong to that religion, if the religion was really so bad. But those nice people aren't all nice, if we examine it closely- something else we won't do. The mind just can't handle it.

And the story gets bigger; the story is very long, relatively speaking: 1700 years long in Europe and the Americas. How could 17 centuries worth of everyone (generally speaking) accepting these beliefs really be so wrong? Can monotheistic religious culture *really* be so wrong? Can the entire spiritual legacy and destiny of Europe and the Americas- and many other places- really have been hijacked by total falsehood and wickedness? No, never. We can't handle that; people are smarter than that. People are better than that. There can't be a problem with the religion itself, or the ways it made us all act, socially and culturally; it must be just that tiny amount of "bad people" who used the religion for bad ends, who hijacked it for their dark political purposes. Again, it's not the religion, it's that small team of bad people who give it a "bad name" for everyone else.

And again, this is the mind refusing to see what is really there, the mind unable to accept what's

manifestly true- and which many people can see now: yes, the last 1700 years was a hijacked waste of human life and spiritual time. Yes, several entire continents worth of human lives have been invaded and stolen by falsehoods. No, there is not a secret core of beautiful and gentle truth in the "scriptures", which some bad people have simply mistranslated or misinterpreted.

We were never- ever- supposed to be walking around dreaming eternalist delusions, worshiping a dead man as though he were the supreme being, "converting" everyone else to that faith, thinking that the earth and all its life was put here for us, and thinking that we were made in the image of "god" alone, and that our whole lives were about a risky, scary quest for "salvation". That's not right. It's madness. There is no way to pull positivity out of this picture, and the fact that a lot of people can still act like "good people" in some ways, and still go to church, doesn't change a thing.

Until we face the terrifying and miserable reality that we are, in fact, dupes- that we have been duped, terrorized long ago into accepting fantasies and wicked untruths, we won't move forward, socially or spiritually. We have to put our pride aside for a second, and stop making excuses for the cultural spiritual imperialism that we have allowed to live alongside us for 17 centuries. We have to stop thinking, deep down, that there is some hidden core of "truth" in every religion, which is another way of overlooking the crimes of the past, and the lies of the present that religions all around us spread as though they were holy writ.

Listen to the people around you- listen to how they refuse to rock the boat, how they try to come up with a soothing explanation that won't offend anyone: listen to how they ignore the crimes of the past, or excuse those crimes by saying that it wasn't a deluded, militant religious culture's fault, just that small team of "bad people" who hijacked what was originally a great thing. Somehow, somehow, the religion itself has to be preserved in their minds, it has to be a good thing. They can't let it go, can't see the darkness in it, because that darkness is too close to home, too close to Aunt Polly, too close to their own lives, too much in their faces on every street corner. Few have the courage to really realize how close the deception and the harm is, and call it out.

The idea is too scary. And the mind will find a way to protect people from the fear, from the atrocity, from the enormity of it all. We are like abused women, whose minds normalize the abuse, convinced that the abusive husband is "really okay" deep down, because he acts nice sometimes, and we can change him, find a way to make it all better. Instead of doing what we all know the abused woman needs to do, and leave the situation, break ways with the abuser, we sit in the relationship. And one day, it kills us, as it has killed so many others.

# That is the Road to Fair Elfland

When Thomas the Rhymer met the Queen of Elfland, and went with her to his legendary initiation in the Underworld, he and She have a discussion about the three "ways" that one can approach the Unseen World. It's worth quoting that here, before I make only one of the many points that can be made from this ancient verse:

*"The lady said "We will climb yon hill,  
And I will show you pathways three:  
"O see not ye that narrow road,  
So thickly beset with thorns and briars?  
That is the path of righteousness,  
Though after it few enquire.  
And see not ye that broad, broad road,  
That lies across the lily leven?  
That is the path of wickedness,  
Though some call it the road to heaven.  
And see not ye that bonny road,  
Which winds about the fernie brae?  
That is the road to Fair Elfland,  
Where you and I this night must go."*

Some people get quite upset when they see Christianity being criticized- by me, or by anyone. But the way I see it, if the Great Queen herself is going to do it, I'm in good company.

*"And see not ye that broad, broad road,  
That lies across the lily leven?  
That is the path of wickedness,  
Though some call it the road to heaven."*

A "broad, broad road" is naturally the road traveled by the most people. She's directly stating that the vast majority of people are following a wicked road- and that road ("called by some "the road to heaven") is the road of mainstream religions that promise "heaven" to people.

The only road that she called "righteous" is a road that is not only smaller and narrower, but choked with thorns and briars. It's quite simple; to live "righteously"- to live in accord with "Right", which means to live according to the natural and intuitive currents of the Unseen World, in line with its

hidden laws, which emerge in us as our natural sense of right-and-wrong, our natural sense of kinship- is not only hard in these modern times, but painful, and rare.

She and Thomas, however, will take the "Third Way"- around the Elphillock or the "Brae", the Hill- the way to Elfhome, Elf-Home, Fayerie-Land or the Underworld. Note that this "way" is not the way of righteousness, nor the way of wickedness. It's something between the two that leads to initiatory transformations. If you follow the narrow way, you encounter yourself- and your own suffering, and your own sense of righteousness that you will win from living as people should. If you follow the broad way, you again encounter yourself- and your own depravity, even while you are believing that you are doing the "right" thing.

But if you follow the Third Way, you encounter *other beings* from the Unseen who initiate you, challenge you, and bestow gifts and powers upon the successful candidate for initiation. After that, whether you walk the narrow path or the broad path is up to you, presumably, though it's clear that none of the initiated would walk the way of wickedness- and they'd have the sorcerous power to make the thorns of the path of righteousness into friends, not foes.

This is the core, the truth, found in the Ancient Ballad, of the Third Way- not the Left hand path nor the Right, but the Hill-Way, the Way Below. This is the Provenance Way, because below is where the Source is. Go left or right if you want to meet yourself and play the games of self. Go below if you want to meet the change of yourself and with it, the change of the world, and the change of the roads.

# The Augury of the Crow-God

I've been greatly enjoying the posts about the debacle with the Pope's "peace doves." For those of you late to this party, the Pope, in the company of some innocent children, released some "peace doves" from some holy balcony somewhere, in front of the media. A lot of equally-as-innocent children were watching the display. After the pure white doves were released, a big black crow, working with a seagull, flew in and savagely attacked the doves, scattering them in clouds of feathers and blood to the winds.

Now, some of you, more inclined to the old augury system of the Pagan past, are making some funny comments about what a bad omen this is. I disagree. While I enjoy seeing monotheistic idealists and imperialists embarrassed in such ways- with such meaningful symbols of their plague being literally pecked apart in front of cameras- this wasn't a bad omen. It was a lesson with positive reverberations for everyone who has the eyes to see what happened.

For too long- too long- we've been treated to a cultural group delusion. That delusion has had us chasing an "order" for things in Nature, beginning with our comfortably transcendent but human-like "god" at the top of the chain, and extending down through orders of angels, down to man, all of the beasts of the earth which were put here for man, and ending finally with women.

That comfortable "great order" for Nature, in which every rude and powerful force in nature is placed under God's benevolent command, and under man's so-called "stewardship", is a monstrous falsehood. The mighty ideals of Christianity, their great peace, hope, love, faith- all of them symbolized by the stainless white dove- are the real false gods. Their ideals do not extend from this world into the heavens, all the way to the throne of eternity where everything they want to see preserved will be preserved for all time. The world is not a human world, and not under the command of a human-like god. Divine "laws" do not bring their assurance and weight to the world.

None of that is real. Naturally, love is real; we all feel it in some way; but the Christian version of "love" is a monster apart from the human experience of it. Their "love" built the gates of everlasting hell. Their "love"- and the highest exemplar of it, their "god"- exists only insofar as you're willing to accept their god, and thereby protect yourself from what he'll do to you, or allow to happen to you, if you don't accept him.

If I used that pick-up line on women, I wouldn't get far: "Hey babe, you need to love me back, or I'll burn you to death in my back yard"- or for those who say that God doesn't burn people in hell, but simply allows them to make the choice to go there, "Hey babe, you better love me now, or I'll sit back and say nothing and do nothing while you walk into a building that I know is about to blow up and burn to the ground."

It's not love. It's abusive coercion, the very opposite of love.

The Church is now, and always was, living in a fantasy land of anthropomorphic nonsense. Nature is what's real, not their heaven, not their hell, and not their God. Nature is the home of the real divine forces, who are also not human forces. The crow and seagull that came to crash the "peace, love, and hair grease" party that the Pope was throwing are sending the message clearly: "Proclaim all your lofty ideals, and still, predation, shock, surprise, disorder, and wildness reign."

They always have, and always will. The difference between now and in the distant past is that once, people understood this, and allied themselves to the sheer strangeness, the occasional brutality, and the awe-inspiring might of Nature, instead of setting themselves above it, under the heels of an "all-good" and "all-powerful" fiction. Those birds were reminding us that real peace isn't in the flutter of the pure white doves of gentle idealism; real peace is in finding a way to be comfortable and appreciative amid the flapping and croaking of the sudden crow-strike, in the mischief of the sea gull, in the screams of confused children below who are wondering where the perfect world and loving god of their parents ever got off to.

He didn't get off to anywhere; he was never real. But the Crow-God was and is real.



# The Book of Mystical Writings

I got this book, a long time ago, which was an anthology of mystical writings. It contains selections of "mystical" writings from all the world's supposed "great spiritual traditions"- though considering Christianity and Islam both have long chapters in it, I have to call into question the judgment of the authors.

Anyway, the first chapter- very surprisingly- is devoted to "native" peoples, which includes Pagan writings from Europe, alongside Indigenous people's recorded songs and stories from the Americas, as well as other places.

As I read through the first chapter, I was delighted to see the selections they had. When you read the Indigenous people's recorded songs and incantations and the like, you see non-stop, heart-swelling joy and gratitude for Nature's beauty, bounty, and power. In nearly all the songs, there is a celebration of relationship of some sort- the relationships of humans to various non-human beings, to one another, to the Earth itself. And some of these songs are clearly very old. One of the passages is from ancient Greece, and drawn from one of the remaining bodies of work we have regarding the Eleusinian mysteries, and amounts to a joyful prayer for the earth to fruit, and the sky to rain.

Then, the Christian chapter. It's non-stop begging, complaining, and lamenting that the soul is so "far from home", that the world is dark, and sin and lust and passion and every other kind of thing has the soul in prison, but that "Christ Jesus" has bled out to make it better. And then there's bible verses, each one of the, presenting how happy the people are that they have the right God, who will lead them to paradise... one day... after all these worldly tribulations are over.

From top to bottom, this book demonstrates the truth behind everything I say, and elucidates the logic behind why I reject Christianity and Islam as cruel and unusual cancers on the face of human history. In the songs of the primal peoples, we see joy, relationship, a sense of belonging, and real connection. In the Christian chapter, it's the opposite. Strongly the opposite. The Christian chapter presents an entire culture that doesn't feel like it belongs on planet earth at all- and I must say, I couldn't agree with them more. I don't think they belong here either.

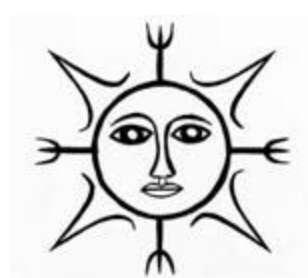
And the chapter on Islamic mysticism? I wonder if I could yawn more? "Love, love, love" everywhere- Oh My Allah- such mighty power, so powerful, and all this LOVE everywhere- just... feel Allah, and how all is Love- (this is Sufi stuff, mostly)- but even these Sufis seem to be obsessively impressed by the idea that they can feel such love- or that the world might contain such love- what, was love so odd to them, that a taste of it confounds them so? Was it so absent from their culture, so repressed, that this over-compensation needs to explode across their minds and into the world?

I don't want to live in a world, or in a culture, where mystics have to be obsessed with love, as though love were some kind of novelty or a mystical discovery. Just so, I don't want to live in a world where the kind of love we feel for our friends, family, and lovers isn't enough- and only "love for God" or "love for the whole cosmos" can be seen as profound, or if "universal love" is automatically seen as superior to any other. Sorry- quantity is never automatically better than quality.

If I lived in such a world, that would tip me off that the world was living wrong- the Primal people's songs and poems don't mention love once; they *display* loving relationships, though- they show that these people were living a kind of love that permeated everything, and which didn't leave them so impoverished for love that they needed some mystics to stumble onto it, and then obsessively sing about it as though it were a long-lost treasure, recently rediscovered.

I'm sorry life was so hard- so guilt-and-shame ridden, for some people in some toilet-smelling corners of the world- that they had to create whole religions to express their revulsion for the world, or their profound shock that love might be an important feature of reality. I'm truly sorry- but these people have gone on to crush the Primal peoples and native spiritual traditions of this world underfoot completely, and then work in evil ways to make sure that the rest of us can share their insane guilt- or their obsession with some ideal of "love" that they find just unimaginable. And they've left people with the choice to either join them in their warped states of mind and belief, or to die.

Not for me. I don't feel guilt or shame for a single thing, I don't need to escape this world, and I don't need to share the shocking discovery of "love" when I'm living it, every day. These villains dared to call the Primal people of our world "childish" and the "children" of spirituality, not yet "grown up" to the words of revealed religions- but the truth is, the real picture is exactly the opposite of that. It's these revealed religions that are childish.





# The Christmas Feast

A lot of people are at church right now, celebrating the birth of the supernatural being they believe made their salvation possible. They'll come home and have some Christmas ham and turkey, without stopping once to recognize where the real blood was shed for their salvation: the sacrifice of the pig and turkey whose life-force will fill them, and save their lives from the doom of starvation.

If we lived "right" as a society- "right" meaning "in alignment with the seen and unseen transfers of power that comprise what we call the world"- we'd give up on worshiping humans that lived and died thousands of years ago, and start worshiping the spirits of those beasts who sustain our lives, endowing us with salvation from hunger and want.

This goes further, and further, and so far into a dark, sucking void of horror that it would undermine the real sanity of anyone who saw the whole vision unadulterated: while we are busy wrapping our entire cultural "thanks" and "gratitude" up in packages and sending them to sanitized, alien, distant, and neat divinities in the sky, and their lily-white baby sons "away in a manger" somewhere, the real sources of life and power are being steadfastly ignored.

The shade tree that gave you one minute of respite from the sun? What is the spirit of a tree to us- which is every bit as much a person as you or I- but a source of computer paper and toilet paper, ultimately? The nuts you ate and loved were the produce of a person who likewise strengthened your body. The water from a stream, the wind that cooled you for one second, the leaves and boughs that decorated your home, transforming it into a warm hearth for the season, the olive oil you might have cooked with, the broom you swept with (yes, most brooms are still actual "broom" straw) the cotton in your clothes- this list just goes on and on- all of them are gifts from non-human persons that make up your whole world, your whole life, and sustain your life.

Now, where is their thanks? That's right... we've wrapped

that thanks up and sent it to the sky, to the one big "god" we're told is up there, who "really made all this"- so he's owed the thanks. Thanks for all these presents you gave us, big god up there- these things you "Put here for our use" (\*puke\*) thanks, thanks, for making our duty to the massive chain of life and power easy to perform, by simplifying it all into the hands of a human-like power who gets angry when we sleep with people outside of wedlock, and is stoking the fires of the furnace where most of us will end up, anyway, on account of us not accepting his "love."

This is stark, raving madness. And it is what you and I are surrounded by. Religion isn't in the sky; it's in our faces, in our stomachs, draped around our bodies. It's running, terrified, across our highways, hoping not to get struck and killed by one of our big, stinky metal boxes on wheels.

And yet, while I sit, alone it seems, trying, in whatever tiny way I can, to put thanks where the entire Cosmos cries out for thanks to be placed, I am mocked as the primitive, the unenlightened, the savage, the sinful, the damned, the intolerant, the weird, the nonconformist, the moron. I am told that I need to embrace my fellow man, in all his insanity, because well, you know, "that's just the way it is."

Understand me clearly: I embrace those things which are right for me to embrace: real gratitude, real connection, real relationship, real emotions born from real things, not the false emotions that fly like shallow, temporary sparks from a deluded fire- a fire that burns only paper, but believes it is burning seasoned oak wood. My emotions run deeper because they are based on the mud of the ocean floor and the moss on tree trunks, not wispy white visions of a heaven far above. I have no time for the shallowness that masquerades as depth, these days.

So many cries for me to be "tolerant"- but tolerant of what? Of people's non-right to continue to ignore what's in their faces- and further, to enshrine and laud ignorance of what is right in front of them as the highest religious value and virtue- while the world just drops into further defilement and morosity? Should I choose to be tolerant, to help soothe some other people's sensibilities, at the cost of losing my own soul and my own vision? Is that what it's all come to?

Yeah, I could be "tolerant", ignore the spirits that I know exist, stop talking about this stuff that upsets the spiritual status quo, pat people on the back and nod knowingly and acceptingly as they hang their every hope and every fragile emotion on made-up human gods, and then cease to be who I am. Because I'd lose the power I've gained, the friendship with the Unseen I've gained, the countless blessings they have given, if I did that. I'd cease to write, to live, to breathe, to be vital. Instead of becoming the arrow that the Unseen world set into flight, I'd become just another target, like so many others, just sitting around motionless, waiting for something to hit him.

I should just let the real promise of immediate life go, so that most everyone around me (hey, they aren't bad people, after all!) can keep living out the nightmare that they've managed to normalize, the same way generations of people before them normalized it?

I'm thinking.... no. No, I won't do that. If me stating the obvious means that the mainstream religions around me have to be discomforted, then they'll just have to be discomforted. If that means I can't be great friends with the bulk of the humans around me, well, I'd rather be friends with non-humans then. What the people who cry for "tolerance" can't see is the most insidious thing of all: not a handful of centuries ago, people like me would have been murdered, and there would have been no uncomfortable voices spoiling the comfortable daze of the status quo.

Relationship with what is real and even disturbing, over conformity to what is unreal and soothing. That's what I bring for your Christmas dinner this year. And every year, until the Fates kill me.

# The King of False Hopes: Unraveling the Trauma in the Messianic Psyche

While most of my contemporaries are fighting dearly to remind us all to keep "Christ" in "Christmas", I'm still shaking my head in regret that messianic religions should ever have become dominant.

Messiah-based religious thinking is not new. It didn't begin with Christianity. But it did begin after a certain point in history, in response to some very powerful and far-reaching social and economic changes that struck several large parts of the ancient world. Messianic religious thinking is also a prominent feature of ancient pastoral-based cultures. The idea of looking to the horizon for "salvation"- which to the cattle-raiding and cattle-protecting peoples of those cultures often came in the form of relief from the arrival (over the horizon of the plains) of warrior allies and compatriots- is tied to the economy of animal control and maintenance.

But it goes back further. Messiahs are the singular figures that some cultures hang their every human hope upon. It is true today as it was as far back as the Neolithic: human life is dangerous, brutal, short, and uncertain. In the midst of these turbulent times we live in, and which many have lived in, are crowded our dreams and fond hopes for peace, for love, and for the thriving of our children and loved ones. These two things do not mix well- for any joy we hope to gain from our fond human hopes crash and bleed and burn on the obvious brutality of nature and the madness of society. The human psyche has proven itself either unable or unwilling to "handle" this dark mixture that life throws at us all, whether we would have it or not.

And thus, the figure of the messiah becomes the captain of the boat of salvation, which arrives to assure us that all will be well, no matter how dark it seems, or how hard it gets.

The profound relief that human minds and souls gain from the belief in such a thing is so potent, so unimaginably potent, that it can easily create a dominant world religion. And it can, and it has, destroyed every other religion or culture it could that dared present alternative perspectives. When Christians were killing Heathens, it wasn't just because they believed "god" or "jesus" desired it; it was because they were trying to make sure their personal hopes for salvation, healing, and eternal happiness were safer.

In other words, they were fighting for the one sure relief they thought they had found for their souls, and which everything depended on- their families, their very happiness and joy. Christianity isn't like other religions: it takes everything from you, and promises everything back, just never right now- only in the hereafter. But the gamble, to dull minds, is too powerful to resist. It's too dangerous to risk "being wrong" when *everything* is presented as resting on being "right". All human trauma, all human hopes and dreams, are claimed by these religions, and then used as a bartering chip against obedience, and no behavior is too mad or crazy afterwards.

If you're wondering how and why "sweeping changes" in certain large regions of the ancient world could result in this, look no further than the historical mentions of the "Axial Age"- the age of the rise of monotheisms and transcendent eastern philosophies, which all happened in the same 1000 year period or so. It also includes the centuries leading up to them- centuries that saw something in four key areas (Persia, China, India, and the Near East) that changed humans forever. I'll save you the research, if you like: economies changed.

Before the Axial Age, we lived in small villages and groups, and every place had its own customs, traditions, and spiritual practices and beliefs. People seldom went "far" from their birth-cultural sphere. But the emergence of worldwide economies- economies of trade that began to link together further and further apart places, literally wrecked that lifestyle, which kept us so sane, and so stable. Traveling merchants didn't just encounter other cultures with spiritual worldviews that called their own into question; they became filthy rich and began to create the first "classes"- creating, alongside extreme concentration of wealth, the first socially-devastating lines of poverty, the extreme distance between "haves and have nots".

The Romans used this "splitting" to destroy other cultures, rather than having to conquer them militarily; they destroyed the original Germanic tribal culture by literally infusing just certain Germanic people and families with wealth, and making them reliant on Rome to maintain the power they got from it, against their fellow tribesmen. They "educated" the children of the nobles they created to despise their Germanic roots and heritage, to think of themselves as better than their native peoples. It worked very well. The tribes fell apart, with rich and powerful Germans working to keep their own people under the yoke of Rome, which got around the necks of everyone because of the greed of a few.

At any rate, social inequality based on concentration of wealth was born- very much at odds with the earlier generosity-based cultural norms that were everywhere common. Pastoralism is another localized form of the same evil: whereas the people once shared in the wealth of the herds, soon "lords" defined by their possession of more cows than anyone else were the leaders of communities- and for a while, their power was held in check by cultural norms that demanded utter generosity from them. Later, that fell apart.

Pastoralism gives us everything we love to hate about our culture: the glorification of masculine violence in the form of the "warrior" who began as a cattle-raider (think of Cu Chulain), centralized masculine authority, greed, focus on gaining wealth as the chief principle of life, focus on the "heavens" and the transcendent "up above" as the home of the "divine", the coming of an unbeatable champion or "savior" who would put the world to rights, slavery, the reduction of animals, women, and children to chattel or property, and the ideal of glorious death in battle as the highest honor. It's dizzying, sickening, but has been normalized for centuries worldwide.

The Axial Age caused a "tilt" from order to chaos, perceptually speaking; the Gods of one people seemed weak compared to the Gods of a more successful (read: richer) people; the rituals for the sun

that the shamans or priests of one tribe had said were so necessary to the regeneration of the world were NOT being performed by the people over the mountains, and yet, the world didn't suffer at all for it. The traveling merchants noticed this; they realized that everyone was "doing it differently" and no one was suffering the consequences they had been warned about since childhood.

Nothing seemed to make sense anymore. The rituals designed to pacify spirits, keep the world in order, make the tribe safe, they were abandoned by many, as poverty or community division became prominent. Rich groups began to use warfare to incorporate less powerful groups, often crushing the native cultures and their Gods underfoot, only seldom incorporating anything of the beliefs of the people before. And indeed, why should they? Those Gods and Spirits were clearly weaker, if they could not resist the horses and warriors of another people, so, goodbye to them.

What the people had within the boundaries of their own communities, and beliefs, and local trade economy, was no longer good enough, no longer safe, no longer stable. It no longer "made the world make sense." Nothing made sense.

And into this darkness, comes the messiah. Finally, some people said, "we know the truth now"- all of the confusion of the past is wiped away. We were fallen, sinful, confused, crazy, but the truth came to us when we needed it the most, and showed us the way to think, to act, to believe. What a relief. What a great relief. The dense darkness of the world will be wiped away; all of our denied dreams and dead hopes will be restored to us for eternity, in exchange for just our belief and our support of the powers that proclaim this truth.

Easy, convenient, psychologically powerful- and psychologically devastating. A new abstraction- "universal truth"- had entered the battlefield, and became the new warlord. It demanded obedience from everyone; none could claim that they didn't want the Truth. Those who resisted it showed themselves to be the armies of falsehood, those who delight in darkness.

The world didn't make sense because economics changed and devastated localized organic culture. The stress of the human collective unconscious needed something to discharge itself, to re-balance itself, and it got the messianic figure/messianic sacrifice to do just that. A convenient outgrowth of human psychology; a magical ritual, and a magical figure, to repair the great gaping hole of the loss of traditional culture, a force from the divine world "above" (pastoral religious language- "the lord is my shepherd") to "come down and save us"- we, the "stray sheep".

If we could recognize that the messianic tendency in our cultures, who descend themselves from pastoral cultures, comes not from the divine world but from our own very simple traumatized psychology, we could possibly realize what we really want and need: and that's a return to localized, organic cultural thinking and behaving and interacting. It was the loss of that which wounded us so. The healing comes when we see a return to a worldview of equality and simple sharing, generosity, local spirit worship, love of local nature, and kinship bonds tightly held in one area.

We can live and die with one another and around one another, and worship the forces where we are. We can support one another to death, and all through life. Bonded to the land wherever we are,

bonded to one another, wanting nothing more than that (for beyond that are mere abstractions) we can find our wholeness, what our entire nature and our entire genome evolved to expect and maintain.

This Yule, I expect no savior, unless you think of the Sun as a savior, and in ways, it is. But the Sun doesn't save us from ourselves, nor from economic messes, nor our normalized waste and violence. It saves us from the cold, which was and is a tangible reality that psychologically affected the ancestors- so much so, that the messiah figure of any sick culture is always "Crowned with the sun", as fast as he can be. He is given the mantle of the warm body in the heavens that has spared humans from the dangerous cold since before cultures even existed- a deeper strand of psychology to mingle with a later strand.

I expect nothing but my children and wife, my friends and what family I deem worthy of memory; I expect nothing but a warm, hearty meal and the peace of a precious "day off" from the greed-based economy that even now chews at the edges of my soul. I expect the still air and the wind, the falling rain, possible snow, and a beautifully decorated tree, reminding us of how connected we are to all things, and the Gods of the Forest. That's it; and if you see it from a certain organic perspective, that is a real miracle. A droplet of sanity beneath the fearful cries of "christ" forever trying to layer a messiah on what could be simple organic peace.

I do not fear the loss of my life, loved ones, or soul to the darkness of the Unseen, or the night, or the confusion of the world. I know that many do, but I do not. When you see the simplicity and wholeness of the world, you fear nothing in that sense. I don't need a savior; I merely need the quiet green of the land and the comfort of friends and family, and a peaceful soul to take its place in the long march of history. Fate weaves all the rest



*"It is uncertain whether Bucka can be regarded as one of the fairy tribe; old people, within my remembrance, spoke of a Bucka Gwidden and a Bucka Dhu—by the former they meant a good spirit, and by the latter an evil one, now known as Bucka boo. I have been told, by persons of credit, that within the last forty years it was a usual practice with Newlyn and Mousehal fishermen to leave on the sand at night a portion of their catch for Bucka. Probably from this observance the common nickname of Newlyn Buckas was derived. An old rhyme says:—*

*"Penzance boys up in a tree,  
Looking as wisht as wisht can be;  
Newlyn buckas as strong as oak,  
Knocking them down at every poke."*

*From this it appears that Newlyn boys once considered it a matter of pride to be called by the name of their ancient divinity."*

*-Traditions and Hearthsides Stories of West Cornwall, Vol. 2  
by William Bottrell*





# The Master Has a Voice Like Thunder

If My Master were a "God", then he'd be the "God" of Nature, the Indwelling Spirit of the World. Nature has a dark side, a cold side, a taking side, a dwindling side, a deceitful side, a deadly side. To see that dark side is, in the minds of the church-bodies, to see a devil. To feel it is to feel danger, and evil. They can't accept the darkness in the blizzard or the plague, nor in their own souls, even though that natural darkness expresses itself in countless ways, every day. The more they ignore it and tell it to "get thee behind me", the stronger it gets.

Sex and Death are parts of nature. Green Man, Black Man (or Red Man, depending on your stream)-we have a spirit that is green and lustful, black and dead or ghostly, red and violent or unpredictable-in all his folklore remaining, there he is- inside of everything, not just the nice things.

Make the reality of sex (which like death is neither good nor evil in any true sense) into a moral scandal and you'll make the God of Nature into a demon, really quickly. Make Death into the greatest curse to face mankind (which it is not, not by a long shot) and you'll make the God of the Dead, who has been the most gracious and hospitable host to all souls since time immemorial, into a devil. You can make all the devils you want, but at day's end, you haven't uncovered the God of Nature's true demonic nature; you've not discovered a villain; you've just lied and plastered your own delusions onto something much older than your fantasies, and screwed up your psyche and the rest of the world with it.

The God of monotheistic religions and churches is not the God of Nature; he's the God of an abstraction, the God of an ideal; he's an abstract, ideal notion of omnipotence and perfection turned into a deity in the imaginations of a lot of people. He's believed to be "above" Nature, nature's true and infinite creator, but not subject to any creator himself; more evidence to support how shaky and illusory the whole notion is.

Omnipotent and perfect beings? I think not. No human being alive or dead has ever experienced something without limits to its power; omnipotence is just an idea, a fantasy, without any sensual or experiential basis to support its existence. No human has ever experienced something "perfect"-perfection is an idea, a fantasy, and when you think about it, it's really just an opinion or a preference, without any sensual or experiential basis to support its existence in some pure form outside of people's ideas or expectations.

No one's ever met a "perfect" being, but we're just sure one exists somewhere, way out there, even outside of the universe if we have to extend the fantasy that far. We've never seen something with unlimited power- even the mighty suns and stars of the void burn out eventually- and yet, we're just sure unlimited power exists out there, somewhere. It's just nonsensical. It's wishful thinking, imaginations run to absurd lengths, sick minds seeking novelty. Oh, but it's so rational! If, as we can see, there are beings with limits to their power, then it just "stands to reason" that there MUST be a

being of unlimited power, too! Sorry, no, thanks for playing, though. Because you can imagine it doesn't mean that it exists in that sense. Never has, never will.

And that's where all religious thinking in the mainstream begins- in the very basic idea, the very basic belief, that a perfect, all-powerful being exists, and though not a single shred of evidence can be found in the senses or in experience, one must simply believe it- simply believe. In something that cannot and does not exist except in your own imagination.

And we wonder why people are so okay dumping horrid chemicals in oceans and rivers and streams, and why we shite in our own food sources. Why we treat every other living being like crap, and other humans even worse, in ways- and why all of the Gods and Goddesses of the past, the great family of spiritual beings that we are forever bonded to, whether we know it or not, have been relegated to the garbage heap of history. We're taught to believe that the least real thing in existence, the most imaginary thing, is in fact the most real thing, and beyond that, the only important thing- that "God" of the mainstream. Whole cultures based on absolutely nothing beyond warped imaginations and wishful thinking. And sealed shut with oceans of blood to pay for the fantasy.

I can think of no species of creatures on any planet anywhere that could be more insane than the human species. I sincerely hope to never be proven wrong in that, for if another species exists that could be more hopelessly spiritually and mentally lost than we, their capacity for evil would be unthinkable.

My Master, my "God" if you want to use that term which I have little use for, is a mighty Wind, with a voice like thunder and rain. He's inside the world, felt as the currents of air that breathe inside and outside of everything. He appears in many ways, and all of His strange doings, in the past and now, can be seen, heard, felt, touched, smelled, and dreamed of.

He is in the sphere of senses, in the interior of sensation. He is the mischievous and misshapen one in dreams and visions that leads the mystic ever onward to realization, and bestows sorcerous power on the brave, the traumatized, the lucky, or the worthy. He's used so many names, been called so many things; but he is the air that every man, woman, and child breathes, and the brilliance in every intellect that ever carved a symbol or caught a fish with a net or healed a sick person with an herbal brew.

He is not all-powerful, for even the world-shaping power has limits. He is not perfect; He Is What He Is, without shame or hesitation; He goes where he will, where stranger powers take him, and fulfills What Must Be. He secretly knows that every being can be described in just the same way, and I'm sure he finds that endlessly amusing.

"Perfection"- what a sham. The bent-up, ugly-shaded apple on the tree is just as perfect as the specimen with smooth skin and beautiful, uniform color. The person who can see that, sees like the Master.

So, the Master is not a devil. He's the only "God" you'll ever find or meet "out there"- because the

shiny, heavenly world of abstractions and ideals where you'd try to find the God of Churches isn't "out there" to be found; it's only in people's heads, or should I say, not even in their heads, just in imaginative fallacies that they entertain. That's where the "heaven" of Yahweh and the Angels is- the only place it is, and that place dies with the person who goes to the grave.

But the Wind of the World, and the Mighty Unseen beyond it- those things last and then last again, no matter what people think. In the same way that the World that we experience everyday often defies our desires by the basic nature of its structure ("What's this ocean here for? I sure would like to visit my friend over the ocean, but can't afford to cross it anytime soon.."), the world Unseen defies the silly imaginations of the living and the dead, too. ("Where are my pearly gates? Where's my bodily resurrection?")

# The People Who Came Out of Darkness

"Do not fear that life will end. Fear instead that a life in harmony with nature will never begin."

-Marcus Aurelius

Ah, the ego- the mistaken thing people believe exists in some ultimate way just because there are heavy sensations (born largely through muscle tension) of being "in" a body; the thing people believe exists in some ultimate way because our language structures our cognition in such a way that every object or action has to have a "subject": for there to be experience, our language reasons, there must be an experiencer.

This cognitive habit, coupled with the basic, vibrant experience of the forces of life itself, creates a personal fiction, an illusory "center" that we wrongly think experience crowds around.

Ah, the ego- there's nothing like it for making people terrified of death, nothing like it for making people desire an "eternal" center of experience, nothing like it for driving people to warped acts of insanity in the "defense" of something- that magical ego- that never had (and never will have) an ultimate reality- just the delusion that it is eternal or ultimate somehow.

Ah, the ego, and its first cousin the "personality"- both of them born directly from countless OTHER forces that shaped and conditioned them from the second we started breathing, and possibly even before that, in the womb. When things so "fundamental" to us as ego and personality actually rely upon countless forces separate from us for their very existence, we run into a big problem of holding onto the idea that the ego and personality are ultimate, stand alone realities. If both can be (and demonstrably are) produced by countless other-than-me forces, then countless other-than-me forces can unshape them or change them beyond any recognition. This world is water in a mighty stream of life, nothing is solid and standing still in it, no matter how much this fiction pleases us.

When we embrace this great river, which is at the center of every single bodily and cognitive experience you are having at just this moment- we rise up, cast off the unchanging hide, and become turnskins, able to shift our shapes like the most cunning of spirits. Can death tame a shapeshifter? Death cannot- shapeshifting is death when death is stripped of its obscuring veil.

Death is the release of the tension we've built up physically and cognitively around these imaginary centers, and an entry into a wide open space of such immensity- a place where experience and experiencer really become the same thing, from the perspective of the mind traveling through the death experience- a space so vast and full and surreal it can scarce be expressed in ego's comfortable language. People fear that death will be a "nothingness" or a "too-littleness", a restriction, an oblivion, a reduction- but death is just the opposite; it is a "too-muchness", a massive expansion, far beyond the impoverished boundaries that we set- and were helped to set- around the purity of our

sacred dimension of experience.

My existence is not an ego. Ego is an idea, nothing more. My existence- which truly isn't "mine" in the ultimate way (I only use these words as language convenience) is as fundamental to this world as a river or a tree or a mountain. The forces of life and the elements are unstoppable; these fires never cease burning. Thus, my multi-tiered existence as one of those forces (we humans are just as natural as a galaxy or a waterfall) also never ceases burning, moving, experiencing, shaping, vivifying this world. My brain may stop, and even rot; the levels of mind-experience dependent on the brain may cease, but experience at the fundamental level is never thwarted, ever.

We are all of us based on deeper layers of causality and force and power, which go back to the beginnings of things, and persist beyond the regenerations of things, in the ongoing story of reality. There is no fear for trees, mountains, winds, rivers, fires, and if humans were wise, no fear for themselves, either.

This is our truth, what the Ancients knew. We are the company of the storm, the people who came out of darkness, the people who descended from the vast reaches of forest, the life of this world, earth, lake, fire and lightning and wind taken on human dress. We are where we belong, and where we always were- and where we always will be. None can strip this power from us with lies about alienation and sin, with deceits about distant heavens and woeful hells. The ancient and mighty spirits in the land and in the sky, our Foreparents- they are here, walking in the storm of life with us. There is no possibility of stealing our power while the wind teaches these truths directly to us.

Where is your power now, priests and ministers and mullahs? Your fear? The fanaticism that cut down the sacred trees and toppled the sacred stones of the past? Nowhere, gone, like ashes blown away in the wind. But we remain, and the destiny of the world- which you fought so hard to win through deceit and fear- belongs to people who will never even remember your names.

# The Weird of the Shape-Shifter and the Terror of the Deceivers: Life, Death, and Denial

I saw an interview today with a "Christian spiritual teacher" who is apparently one of the super liberal, super ecumenical "Christians" you find around the internet or the world from time to time.

She spoke at length about how sacred she thought nature was, and how her god had "called it into being" and "gave it permission to blossom, grow, become blessed"- and I had to stop there. For those who have seen the lethal deception this woman has managed to internalize and apologetically wrap up in pretty language, this kind of talk will make the soul sick.

I was tired of the "Christo-Pagans" and "Christian Witches" and those types circulating around the internet as far back as 1999, when I really began to explore the virtual world. Back then, I didn't have the clear understandings nor the clear language I have now to describe why they sicken me, and why I feel they have no place in circles of people who are serious and legitimate about the practice of true modern day Paganism, or sorcery.

As I've mentioned before, one thing the soul never sees, when it really looks at the natural world (which is also a matter of looking upon and within itself) is any sort of comforting story, in the sense that Christianity gives to people. You might say that I'm crazy to call Christianity "comforting", but, despite its egregious errors of theology and despite the numerous lies it tells about human nature, and just nature itself, it does comfort people: it tells them that, in exchange for "belief", it will spare their souls from death for all eternity.

Christianity is a "life raft" for the soul, or should I say, a bedtime story for the fearful, for those who cannot accept that life naturally and unavoidably contains sickness, disease, pain, and death. Instead of letting their minds accept Nature for what it is, christian doctrine presents a distorted myth of Nature that was once "made" perfect, but became "broken" by human beings, and thus, death is an unnatural intruder in human life. With the addition of a divine human sacrifice, and a belief in the power of that sacrifice, they convince the unwise among us that nature will be "fixed" and that their souls and bodies will "resurrect" to live in glory forever.

This is an abject denial of reality. But the insidious story goes much further- Nature is presented as a "created" reality, called into being, given reality, by a powerful being who ultimately exists apart from it somehow. This narrative is the darkest, most warped possible perspective that humans can fall into; the consequences of this narrative are triumphalism, human exceptionalism, transcendentalism, idealism- all of the horrendous and flawed doctrines that have mangled our world and countless lives and minds into bloody ruin. Nature was created by no one and nothing. Nature was always here.

This super liberal Christian woman is a thief. She steals the peace and naturalness of nature, the power she (and everyone) can feel in it, and she celebrates it as far as her idealistic mind can, but refuses to give her deep mind and soul to it; she refuses to accept death, while living amid life and death; instead, she delights in falsehoods regarding life and death, but still purports to "love" nature and life. Does she love nature for what nature is? No; she loves it only as the creation of the "supreme being" she believes loves her so very much, and whom she believes will resurrect her to eternity. She can't see the sacred AS nature; the sacred has to be apart from nature, before she can give worth to it. A deadly line is drawn, slicing her mind and soul in two, and with it, the rest of the world.

This is the old "let's have our cake and eat it too" quandary- and it's very foul. It is not "better" than traditional, crabby christianity; it's a more insidious version of the same thing, designed to look greener and sweeter. It's actually a reflection of this woman's inner conflict- she knows Nature's beauty, and yet, can't find the courage to realize that the heaven she wants is already here; she can't risk eternal hellfire for the crime of breaking with tradition, or with the "good feelings" she claims she got as a child singing "Jesus loves me, this I know."

The entire psychology of this woman is childish, fearful, and only living in a daze, feeling the potency of what is sacred and real, but refusing to release herself from the very philosophy that has covered up, lied about, raped, despoiled, and denied that sacred and real power. Her personal failing here is not less, somehow, because she happens to believe that "all paths lead to God" or any other nonsensical, new-age, universalist claptrap. Her failing is perhaps even more, for in failing to adhere to the true spirit of the tradition she still clings to, she ends up being no true thing to anyone, not to those of us outside of Christianity, nor to Christianity itself.

I might just be the first to come out and say it with the vigor it deserves, but I hope I won't be the last: you cannot give worth to (worship) the Primordial and Sacred forces of the Natural world, the Old Gods, the spiritual beings with whom we exist in rapturous and sometimes frightening intimacy and interaction, while simultaneously holding your mind and soul at arm's length from it all. You're buried in this dirt, dirty like the rest of us, wet and cold and sweating and grime-encrusted, grinning and sobbing away, or you aren't playing the game at all.

You cannot claim to belong to a revealed religious tradition that claims to be the unique truth above and beyond all other religions in the world, while living your own extremely personal and idiosyncratic view of it and what it teaches. You don't get to be a green lady or green man hippie while blithely excusing the two revealed religious philosophies on this planet (Christianity and Islam) that have destroyed everything else you claim to stand for. You don't get to be seen as a "good guy" by everyone on all sides; you will have to disappoint someone. To be everything to everyone is to be nothing to anyone.

The sacred powers *\*require\** that people who know the truth of life in this world take a stand. They will *\*not\** give you the true time of day, at the level of soul-to-soul meeting, if you try to honor them as creations of the christian or Muslim "God", when they are not creations of any such god. The spirits of Nature will not bless you if you give your thanks to "god in heaven", and not to the Mother



of Plants and Beasts, and not to them directly, for all they do, and for all they are, individually and presently.

And no being who can teach you the true wisdom of reality will ever stop by for a "talk" if you really believe that somehow, when you die, an eternal copy of "you" will float away to live forever just as you are now, except really, really happy. That's not how death works, not now, not in the past, and not ever, but it only makes sense that a idealistic, eternalistic philosophy like Christianity would have as warped a view of death as it does the origin of life.

Some may come to me and say "But Robin, damn... the woman's so kind... doesn't a kind heart count for anything?" Sure, kindness counts for something. But wisdom counts, too, and lacking wisdom, even kindness can become warped into a dark thing- for too long, we've all seen people being "kind" and "loving their enemies" not because it was in the nature of their own communion with their souls, but because they were scoring "god points" for the afterlife.

Kindness and love spring from a place that requires no thinking or strategy; they are because they are, not because they were commanded by a prophet or a messiah. I'd love to think this woman was the kindest woman on the face of the earth- but every kind act of hers is called into question, into doubt, by her beliefs about "god" and commandments and judgments and eternalism in the afterlife. Like all Christians, her kindness might be nice, but it's far from trustworthy or certain. At day's end, all their love is tainted by the selfish motivation of eternity that lies behind it, unavoidably.

No one gets to delight in idealistic and eternalist falsehoods, while at the same time devouring, like a locust, the treasures of saner, wiser religious traditions that come from a different place, and teach very different perspectives. Those who try only manage to offend both traditions. This is one of the few places in the world where I believe a line is legitimately drawn in the sand. Pick which side of the line you'll be on, and be that.

If you stand on the older side, the saner side, the side that was always around and always will be, you aren't standing in a place where Nature will tell you everything you want to hear, or where spirits will tell you everything you want to hear. What becomes of you at death isn't certain, though at least it isn't oblivion. Beyond that, the weirdness of death, the shape-shifting, the terrors, the wonders, the obscurities and half-understood visions of it, they offer no profound comfort, except to remind you to live well, acquire wisdom, and be brave. Anyone who tries to paw at you with a different idea of death from that is deceiving you, be sure of it.

And to give up that view of death, and accept "angel tales" about death, is to give up on the raw beauty and edge of the True Old Way, to give up on its real depth. To accept more "angel tales" about a "supreme being" who just loves you more than you could imagine, and who made this world just for you and your pals- that's an even further warped fantasy that condemns every soul that believes in it to an abyss of formless darkness and delusion, throughout every day of life. Such beliefs silence the many voices of this world, and make real sorcery or wisdom impossible.

When you face this world, you do not face the creation of the "good god" who made it all perfect and for you, as an act of love and a demonstration of his glory- you face an ancient and mysterious thing that you are only a tiny part of, which will happily do nothing while a tidal wave drowns you, your family, and thousands more all around you, if you happen to be in the way of it. You face forests of predators, human and otherwise, and you face doubt, fear, pain, and the majesty of the oldest things, including the bliss of love and shared kinship.

It doesn't all resolve down to one nice story about one nice being who was just so terribly nice before humans sinned against him. Sorry; you'll have to get a bit more mature than that, before life's greatest treasures can be found.

The cost of these beliefs is a rainstorm of blood and bile, which some people simply react to by popping open an umbrella and smiling that (by now familiar) vacant smile, and denying that they or their beliefs have anything to do with it. If you walk among me and mine, you don't do it with an umbrella and denial. You do it as a true human being, who has given him or herself back to the world, or you can remain in the land of denial.

To come among the awakened children of Nature, while carrying these delusions, you become a lot like Frodo, carrying the One Ring into Lorien: "You bring great evil with you"- whether or not you realize it.



*We emerge from the "Churning" of the sacred powers, and our lives are gifts; they are appropriate, needful, and important, through life, death, and the surreal spaces between life and death. There is dignity and there is power- and there is fear, but no true danger as is imagined in our morbid religious stories these days.*

*You have a right to trust in your innate power and dignity and that of all other powers, and you have a right to look upon the "churning" of the Unseen and the panoply of the Seen as your home, origin, and destiny.*

*To trust in something as surreal as the Unseen, and something as variegated as the Seen, is the ultimate trust- and it is a trust that only emerges from the "crisis point" everyone must go through when they realize the stories they've been told about life and life's meaning are no longer valid for them, and quite possibly have never been valid in the sense of reflecting a deeper truth.  
But in the end, it's the best trust, the wisest trust, the only trust.*



# This Devil Must be Given His Due

A person wrote to me detailing their struggle at finding freedom from Christianity. No matter how drawn they felt to the Old Ways, they always encountered doubts, resistances, and troubles. They stated: "I was wondering if you had any suggestions to help me or any ideas on how to go about truly separating myself from this interest in Christianity."

And to which, I respond:

"You are facing one of the most challenging difficulties anyone in the modern day faces with regards to spiritual growth and exploration. Christianity has, for countless centuries, made itself into the single and only culturally and socially-approved "mediator" of spirituality. Any step just to the left or right of what they demand that people believe is met with threats of eternal damnation, and social shunning in various ways.

This has caused terrible damage to the minds and souls of the West. What you are asking about is not easy, nor does it have an easy solution. I wish I had better news to tell you, but I do not.

The only way I have found forward on this topic is to do as the wisest men I've ever read suggested we do when facing "materials" inside of ourselves that make us uncomfortable: do not repress them. You can't deny what is moving inside your unconscious mind, and that is where the "leftovers" of Christianity are. When something loses force in the outside world- as Christianity does when you choose to separate yourself from it, and you stop attending church or praying in the Christian manner, it gains force inside you, in the inner world. Jung called this "compensation" and it is a very important psychological fact.

So, when you "feel" drawn to Christianity or you find yourself dreaming about it at night, in your sleep, that is precisely because it has lost power in your outside self, in your outer conscious world. Now, the problem is that we need it to lose power in the inner world as well, so that you can not be tormented by the doubts, fears, dreams, and feelings it causes inside you.

Nothing really gets destroyed while inside the inner dimension of things. It can only "sink down" or "move over" to other layers that are so far outside of the range of your personal center of consciousness that they appear to be fully gone, no longer having the power to affect you consciously or unconsciously. And things can end up that way; things that troubled you long ago may not have troubled you in years, because they have essentially "sunk away".

But the trick is to remember that nothing is lost, and to let unresolved tensions "sink away" does not fix them. It just embeds them deeper, letting them cause problems from a deeper level. That's very bad, very undesirable. Denial, in other words, or turning a blind eye for long enough, really doesn't get us anywhere.

Christianity can be conceptualized as a series of forces and ideas. It is a complex, which draws power from the fact that much of its symbolic language actually "agrees" with symbols moving in the unconscious collective mind of Westerners. Jung said that Christianity wasn't historically true (and indeed, it is not) but it does have a lot of psychological truth, which is why it persists like it does. The concepts of eating and drinking a god's blood, of blood sacrifice, of a scapegoat sacrifice, of self-sacrifice, and the like- those things are much older than Christianity, and Christianity draws on the power of these older symbol-myth-complexes.

The trouble is that Christianity comes wrapped in the cultural misogyny, sexual repression, intolerance, and fears that were parts of certain older cultures, and those things are NOT part of the symbolic and universal language of the deep. But they "hang on" to Christianity (as they do Islam) and they butcher people's minds, bodies, and souls. They cause suffering off the scale, which of course Christian and Muslim people blame on "sin", because they cannot see that they are the ones causing these crimes and the conditions that make these crimes persist.

So, you have a right to want to escape from these things, and to embrace a way of seeing and being in this world that satisfies the upwelling language in your soul without having all the harm and stupidity that comes along with the mainstream religious expressions these days.

Christianity is not a god, it is not immortal, it is not powerful even, outside of the people who created it, and the people who still learn it, transmit it, and uphold it in daily expression. If all Christians were suddenly gone, and all mention of Christianity in history was gone, and all Christian literature suddenly disappeared, Christianity would also cease to exist. So, it is not the same kind of power-complex as a living being or a spirit or a god. Still, it is a complex of power that co-exists with living humans, and can be addressed and dealt with as such.

And it demands its due. It is a very hungry, nasty complex; It feeds off of human elitist sentiments and the human fear/desire about being "right" and everyone else being "wrong". It demands worship, awe, and attention. It won't let you get away without giving it those things, on some level.

Clearly, we don't want to give it worship. Awe for its awesome and awe-full ability to destroy other cultures and control the minds of mass amounts of people might be understandable; attention we *must* give it because it still exists all around us, and as distasteful as that may be for me or for you, there's no point in ignoring it. It will persist and torment you in a new way if you do that.

Like a playground bully, sometimes it can "go away" if it feels like it got fair enough lunch money from you. Like an evil spirit, it may leave this year's crop alone if it feels like it got enough sacrifice from the local villagers. Start by recognizing that you are dealing with a power- a complex of some real power- that can't just be dismissed out of hand, and telling yourself- deep down- that you were once christian, that it shaped you, that it is part of your history forever, and you accept that. You never want denial or division; you want integration and peace and a better future.

Your desire is to have a future which isn't as shaped by Christianity as your past was. That's within your reach, but there is a transitional period between now and then, in which the powers of Christianity have to be given their due. This devil must be given its due. You can't change the past. Don't try to, don't even want to. You can't change your family members that are christian; don't try to, don't even want to.

All you can do is satisfy the hungry beast, let it know (by telling yourself with certainty) that it occupies a place in you and this society worthy of its fierce power, and then gradually, as time goes, begin to explore the origins of Christianity. I find that the more one realizes just how political and human Christianity really is, the more your conscious mind and then (most importantly) your deep mind begins to be disabused of the notion that it has a divine source. It does not. Christianity has a human source, but it plays on divine things, like the symbol and reality of the sacrificed life-God.

This takes time. There is no fast formula to the end of this torment, only a long, steady, brave quest to undo years of damage to your mind and soul.

You are suffering from a psychic tension, literally a soul-tension, between what you consciously feel and believe and want to believe, and what the depths of you have been conditioned to accept. Part of you can't believe that so many generations of human beings could be so wrong and deluded, but the truth is, they can be, and were. The West really has a high opinion of itself, and even our mainstream religion has to be something amazing that we did- collectively, we can't bear to think that we really messed up where religion was concerned, but we did, majorly so, and the sad state of our minds, souls, and societies is the cost of that egregious error.

It's not until these things are really accepted and internalized that the fever of the power of Christianity starts to break."



# Tragedy

You were an artist, so you had to be christian. I understand. Yes, I of all people understand. Real artists are led by beauty, and no one chooses what they find truly beautiful. I've seen what you've seen: the smooth contours of the crucified man's arms and chest, stretched taught on the rough cross, the sublime torment in his face; the sadness of the hollow-eyed Madonna, the gravitas of the Saints in their flowing robes and luminous halos. Such dignity, such classical dimensions in the paintings, in the sculptures. The glow of candles, the warmth of blood, the passion and the sacrifice and the redeeming grace that rises above it all- a modern person's deepest wish: "Let the pain end." I know what you saw there.

I only wish that, like me, you could have seen the greater beauty in the ancient stones that push their way through the soft body of the land, and tell stories infinitely older than any book. I wish you could have been truly taken by the glory of the Fire of the World that tracks its way through the sky every day, and the glistening serpent of stars that undulates around the world every night. I wish you could have appreciated the beauty of the white beings under the waters of these rivers, and the phantoms of the dead that dart just under the surface of the ancient Land. I wish you had seen the Lordly Spirit in the storm, and his ominous host of horned and sharp beings; I wish you had seen the ultimate beauty of the utter blackness of Fate itself, the timeless story-teller whose great tale never ends.

I wish that these things had been your inspiration, the things that made your heart sing. But they lack the human face that we've all been taught to look for; they don't suffer like you suffer. You needed to see your own concerns reflected back at you from the beauty of divine aesthetics, not the older concerns of the world: that some should be born and some should die; that rain should come; that flowers should break into bloom; that night should follow day; that food should be found; that beasts should love one another and contend with one another; that cold should follow warmth, and warmth follow cold.

That's not enough for you, and it never was. It was enough for all of us once, but now, it isn't enough for you and those like you. And those like you are many. Those like me are few. I wish your sense for true beauty had been different. Those who worship the human gods don't receive the true breadth and scope of life, either in death, or before it. For all the beauty of the human gods, that way ends in a deeper sense of isolation than the one that inspires people to worship them in the first place. But no artist, compelled by their un-chosen love of a certain aesthetic, can hear or understand this. Such is the tragedy of artists, and in another way, such is the tragedy of all human life.

## Part VIII



# Provenance Traditionalism: The World's First Wisdom

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

-William Wordsworth



# Provenance Traditionalism: Tradition in the Deepest Sense

Tradition is an important concept for many reasons, but even more important for us today is the need to clear up some of the many misconceptions that surround the word. And this is especially true in terms of how it relates to Traditional Witchcraft and Traditional Folk-Sorcery, Folk-Symbolism, and Folk-Customs from the European umbrella of cultures.

Naturally, anything I have to say about "traditional" patterns of culture or occultism in Europe will extend easily enough to non-European peoples, too, in most cases. And this is because when we discuss "tradition" at the deepest level, we're in the same neighborhood as Jung's collective unconscious realm. We're dealing with universal aspects of the human experience and how they become embodied in esoteric understandings and exoteric social practices and customs.

Having said that, it comes clearly to me that the exoteric social customs that we see which are clear violations of basic human dignity and conscience- such as the enforced (by fear and violence) draping of women's bodies with black cloth by many Islamic societies- are strictly non-traditional in the pure sense because they do not embody any pattern of organic tradition that extends back before Islam.

When social patterns- or esoteric understandings- extend from non-traditional worldviews, like the Christian or Muslim worldviews, they swiftly show themselves to be harmful by virtue of their deviance from the natural Truths that Nature Herself reveals, and which real traditions embody and mediate. Traditional societies do no wage war against the deep parts of the human psyche, calling the depths "hell" in some super-negative elementary character, nor do they wage war on human sexuality with twisted narratives about the origins of lust in some "sin" of man. Traditional peoples have natural, healthy placement of sexuality within the context of their worldviews. It is not a subject of danger or shame. And sexuality is only one example; many others could be made.

This is one of the reasons why I strongly separate myself from so-called "Christian traditions" of magic or sorcery; there is no such thing as "Christian magic". Christian magic is delusion, and the only reason a "magic worker" who works within the Christian metaphysical language-system can ever make gains or find transformative success is when their "magic" is based on things that extend back far earlier than Christianity itself.

Because Christianity is certainly not "traditional", and although there IS a "tradition" of Christianity, in the sense of a handed-down set of beliefs and behaviors, across generations, this does not make it "traditional" in the sense I mean, which is the deepest and best sense. Christianity is not in touch with the basic organic truths of this world that truly traditional cultures once honored and embodied in their songs, festivals, and beliefs.

Christianity is an open deviation from those things; it is something that did its best to destroy those

things in most cases. And it prides itself on being an open deviation from the "Pagan" past. It prides itself on escaping the things of "this world"- and in so doing, exempts itself from any hope of real "tradition".

What Christianity could not destroy, of course, it attempted to incorporate, as we all know. But the simple fact of the incorporation of earlier Pagan aesthetics or holidays or practices does not endow Christianity with a magical "traditional" life. That simply makes Christianity a harmful deviation that wears trophies of its conquered cultures on itself, trophies that both display its power to plunder freely, and which display its cunning to make those it has conquered feel more comfortable with it, and to look the other way while it consolidates its absolutist power over the minds and hearts of human beings.

A Pagan forest God is not "still there" just because he got remembered as an invented "saint" in the Catholic Church. This is not a continuation of that being's worship or his genuine tradition, and it does not make the Catholic church the bearer of any legitimate tradition, either. It only adds insult to injury. But it does remind us of the great and sacred multiplicity of powers that once existed, and inspires some of us to seek out who the Forest God was. And when we find him, we rediscover "tradition".

I wish I had a dime for every modern "pagan" who told me that "Saint" Brigid was the same being as the old Pagan Goddess Brigid- and thought it was just so wonderfully okay that Christians are still worshipping Brigid, just in their new way. This is bullcocky. Brigid the Goddess is not the travesty of the historical and likely invented "saint" Brigid who was a clipped, defeated woman groveling to the church hierarchy, and trusting in these men- men whose teachings denigrated her sex in every thinkable manner- to fill her with the promises that she thought would "save her soul"- and from what? From nothing, as souls are not in danger as these maniacs preach. There is no "paganism" left in any of this, only Christian psychopathology.

The fact that Brigid's shrine at Kildare was turned into a church is the final and ultimate insult, the final and ultimate desecration of the Goddesses' ancient and venerable presence on earth. She once gave nourishment to human beings in exchange for relationship and memory. Now, the false saint bearing her name gives hope for forgiveness from imaginary sins and hope for "eternal life", another lie. That people also may ask the "saint" Brigid to care for their children or help them through hard worldly situations is the only smattering of Paganism you'll find- and where is it being offered? In the spiritual sterility-bubble of a church, from which the spirit of the Goddess was long ago driven away.

No one gets to have the psychopathology of Christianity in their right hand, and the Old Gods and the Old Ways in their left hand. It doesn't work that way. You don't get to smile and think that nothing from history was lost because the Church just smoothly incorporated everything from the past, and saved it for you. It did not. The Old Gods are not "saints" now, no matter what some people want to believe.

The Christian understanding of "morality" is NOT comparable or equivalent to (and sure as hell not

better) than the older Pagan one. There is no universal harmony between Christianity and non-Christianity, as the scriptures and teachings and behaviors of the Church from every age of its history makes clear. No one gets this cake and gets to eat it too.

Those who try to have this cake and eat it too end up being even more harmful to the cause of rebirthing the Old Ways than those who destroyed them in the first place, because they see to it that Christian symbolism, beliefs, morality, and assumptions about the world persist, and get smeared all over the faces of the Gods and modern Pagans today. And this destroys everything that was important about the Old Ways. They are merely a second wave of missionaries. Or, as is my experience of them, they are people who can't bear to leave the deviant traditions behind, fearing the lack of social acceptance that will greet them. And of course, fearing for their souls, too.

Let me state it more clearly: "Tradition" in the sense I mean is a continuation of the old animistic worldview. It is a continuation of love for Nature and awareness, awe, and respect for Nature's cycles and Nature's many forms, shapes, and faces. It is love for this world and all this world's parts; it is wisdom and cunning born from ancient stories whose provenance is beyond comprehension.

"Tradition" is a worldview without a name, a way of seeing that can't be passed on because it already exists in our souls. The most another person can do is highlight some of the natural, simple wonders of that way of seeing, and instantly (in the way like attracts like) the "traditional way" inside of you lights up, appears, becomes obvious, becomes a new passionate object of love. You feel at home. The trees are now a community of spiritual powers, not just a resource for humans to use as we want.

The beasts become "the Divine Others"- actual divine beings sharing our world, with souls like our own. The folk-tales become hidden repositories of Ancestral wisdom, not just "bed time stories". And certain oft-repeated symbols and motifs suddenly become gateways to a different way of living and dying in this world. This is what I mean by tradition.

There is nothing "simple" about the metaphysics of true Tradition. Traditional life certainly is simple-but not shallow. Traditional life is an unspoken series of organic and eternal contracts between human beings and a host of non-human beings that extend from the beasts of the fields to the mighty Gods and spirits that dwell at the roots of things. It's an unspoken- but everywhere felt- contract of interaction and reverence between the living and the dead.

The deeper metaphysics of Tradition are nothing other than keys to power- real transformative power- the power to attain a destiny that not only fulfills the potential of humanity, but in so doing, appears to greatly overflow it- such is our sad state of things today, that if we met a human being who was a true and full human being, we'd think we had met a God or a Master-Spirit. And truly, we would have.

Our folk-tales, "fairy" tales, and ballads contain keys to unthinkable power- and I call it "unthinkable" because it transcends the rational mind. They contain keys to "feeling" power, if you want to look at it that way; to soul-level understanding, not intellectual understanding. These two things can be had

together, but when you lack soul-level understanding, intellectual understanding is not only unsatisfactory, ultimately, but also dangerous. Beyond the need for a return to that sort of interior and exterior balance, and real tradition's way of making that happen, real tradition contains secrets that go beyond the rational and the non-rational completely, all the way to the realms of Gods or Spirits.

This is what Provenance Traditionalism is- this is the school of Traditionalism that I have given shape and name to from my long years of research and from my forceful experiences with the Otherness, and which I will preach and rant about for the rest of my days.





*Green Jack, Robin in the Wood,  
Master of the Thicket Invisible:  
I have given drink to the thirsty Hobs,  
The horned and twisted ones  
That dwell unseen in the Land.  
I have worshiped your Spirit  
With song and flesh passed through fire.  
I looked for you in the Secret Forest  
Until I found you in myself.  
When the trunk of this body rots,  
Remember your ancient pact of friendship with man!  
Do not let my soul wander out of mind forever:  
Let the emerald sap of life everlasting  
Always rising from the depths,  
Give to me awareness new.  
Like you, Master of sedge, spinney and copse,  
May I be Evergreen.*



# The Primordial Sacrament

I'm a Provenance Traditionalist. No "name" of any group or path suited me; I had no choice but to write my own name. No one I discovered went far enough for me, looked deeply enough, or had the right spirit. Too many people were victims of harmful modernist intrusions in what they said, thought, and did- without even seeing why it might have been a harm. I was in this game for something else, something that wasn't a victim of the present world, nor a slave of the past world. I didn't seek tradition because I am obsessed with doing things just as others had done them in the past; like the people in the past who followed traditions, I want tradition because it works, it yields results.

In the long course of my development, I tried to slake my spiritual thirst on more than one fountain. And while those fountains had much value, what I wanted most wasn't something that a fountain could really give me.

I was what I wanted most- something inside me- but I don't have to tell you all that "I" and "me" are little more than code words, linguistic conventions. It's not that "I" don't exist; it's that my humanity is a gateway to something else, something that humans in the past, I believe, were very close to, very aware of.

I am in possession of something sublime; like every person, I am a gateway to a primordial sacrament that links me and this world to the potencies of the Great Unseen. That is what the "strange path" all boils down to: this realization, the possession of this sacrament. This is what lies at the end of the "Witch's Crusade." A primordial sacrament without a name, and with several core forms, replicating itself in different bodies of folklore and myth.

This sacrament is the "Holy Grail" of Providence Traditionalism- of the Origin Tradition. The great and mighty ones of the past- Witches like Isobel Gowdie, Queen of the Grey Women, the Huntress of Souls, had this sacrament without realizing she did, because people then didn't have to know they had it. They dwelled undivided from it. It is we, feeling its loss, that need to know that we have re-obtained it.

Cultures in the past had certain rules- certain poetic tendencies- certain experiences- certain Fateful needs- and within those things, they expressed a relationship with the Unseen that was sometimes very awesome. You've all felt it, just like I have, when you've encountered it. The thrilling poetry of the Sagas and Eddas, that spirit of freedom and adventure of the Northern people- the mythical landscape of our Ancestral lands- it's a lure to us, to our thirsty souls. Can you deny that? Ancestral ghosts are trying to point something out to us. We have to listen, and to that listening, add awareness of where we are. Fateful powers didn't just make us a part of something long ago; they made us a part of something right now. They put us where we are. And for what? There is an underlying puzzle in all this.

In the end, we make an error if we think we can just re-actualize the ancient- and now dead- cultures. We can learn from them, be inspired by them, but we can't make them live again *as they lived before*. This is a key understanding. We have to work with what we have now, however dissatisfying or corrupt most of it is.

The Unseen is still there, and it reaches out to us within new sets of limitations, new assumptions, new power-rules. From the perspective of the Unseen, little has actually changed; the "Ever-Living Ones" are still there, still what they are. We have changed a lot, however, and so to us, it seems like everything has changed- or perhaps disappeared.

I want the Origin, the Provenance, the source of things, and I know that no ancient Heathen or ancient native culture anywhere that vanished a long time ago is really going to get me there- only the collection of powers that *have* come down to me in the Unseen can help me. The constellation of powers that I meet when I look into the world and into myself with extraordinary sight alone can help me find my way through the dense darkness of human ignorance. And through the dense darkness of my own ignorance.

This isn't self-centered talk. This is me recognizing that like you, or anyone else, I am a phenomenon of this world that has its own "spiritual atmosphere"- powers particular to me have followed me into this life from out of the mists of the Unseen. I need to see who they are, what they want, what I can learn from them. They are my last good hope for reaching the Source of All Rivers- the place where the water truly slakes thirst. Anywhere else, and the water just makes you thirstier for the source.

I know that the "Old Ones" don't mind humans calling them by older names used by older cultures- indeed, in some cases, there simply are no other names for us to use. But to dress like the Old People, and try to have a feast in a room decorated in the way we think an Old Feast would have resembled, and try to make that into the center of our religious life? While giving ourselves old sounding names? That's a lot of curious effort. Maybe it's evocative, and even fun, and so that wouldn't be a waste. Maybe some part of the Unseen is flattered or complemented by it. But I want more than a lot of energy spent for a little return.

Before I turn my spirituality into a fashion-show, I want to know that I'm making progress towards what is mine by birthright, human right, and right of the spirit world: I want the lost relationship with the multi-faceted forces of the Unseen. The lost conscious relationship, that is.

And that relationship is the key here. Forget all of the conversations about which god was which, or whether or not Loki was really the mega evil, or any of it. That's fun, it might expand a person's anthropological-mythical knowledge of some ancient culture, but the value of it, when it comes to building real power-sharing relationship with real powers? Not much. I know this. I'm capable of wasting my time on diversions like the next person. But when the moon turns just right, when the wind blows just right, the call of that primordial sacrament comes ringing in my heart's ears. And then I know what is valuable and what is not.

A person who understands what I am saying, understands me, and they understand Provenance Traditionalism- the traditional road back to the source of every culture that has ever been, or still is. And that source is the Great Unseen, and the Community Unseen. We have to re-awaken knowledge of who we are in the "Secret Commonwealth" of spiritual forces, human persons, and non-human persons that truly comprise the sentient webwork of reality- not spend endless effort on the fond, nostalgic hallucinations we might have about what "Pagan" cultures might have been like.

If that makes me sound like a "bad" Pagan, so be it. The source of my "Paganism" is my reverence for the Unseen and the spiritual beings that dwell within it- whom I discover in the land and wind around me, and in my dreams. That is the animistic/spiritual-ecological "secret heart" that preceded "Pagan" cultures in the past, and informed them, and created them. That same secret heart stands behind me and my "witchery", informs it, and creates it. I don't have to be a card-carrying member of a reconstructionist team to be the Pagan I am; but Pagan these days implies something different than what it implied before. More than anything, I just want to be a human with healthy relationships in the world that is seen, and the world that is unseen- and thanks to those relationships, a human who knows that his every step is moving towards more Union and Integration with the wholeness of things, not less.

That is my position, such that it is. That is where the wind led me, finally. That was what made me able to put myself in the hands of powers I could not name or describe, and that is how it is that I am being "used" by them, even now, to birth something in myself. Whatever it is, I was born to give birth to it, I'm sure of it. I'll be the father to something whose mother is invisible, yet just as real as any mother who has ever lived. It's a potent thing, many times more potent than anything that I've ever encountered, and I've not even yet begun to glimpse its full face. I can't see it in the direct light of consciousness yet. Maybe I can't see its face and hope to live, like a God of old. But I am working now in a channel that I was thirsty for all my life.









*"The Gods of deer and fish  
Had been refusing to send deer or send fish  
For this reason: When humans caught a deer,  
They would club it to death, flay its skin  
And throw the head away to lie in the woods,  
And when they caught a fish  
They would club it to death with rotten wood.  
And so the deer returned to their God naked and crying  
And the fish returned to their God carrying rotten wood.  
The Gods of deer and fish, angry, had consulted together  
And decided for these reasons to send no deer or fish.  
But they also declared clearly  
That if the humans would treat the fish and deer courteously,  
Then deer could be sent again, fish could be sent again."*

*Ancient Ainu Song*



# The Center of Spiritual Power

In Neolithic agrarian societies, the "center of spiritual power" was below, in the ground, and the Underworld. Their food sprang up from that place; their "Corn Mother" was the central figure of their entire life-cycle, tied to one place. In pastoral societies from any era, the "center of spiritual power" was above, and on the horizon- wandering under the wide sky, the warrior-cattle rustlers who tended those herds of walking wealth gave us the popular "war gods" and "father gods" of the "upward" direction that came to mingle with many of the Neolithic "below" goddesses their cultures encountered (and often conquered.)

But to the Pleistocene foraging people that came before both the agrarians and pastoralists, the "center of spiritual power" was not a center, at all. It was a "diffusion of spiritual power". These people actually lacked an "Otherworld" tradition; this world was diffused with, pervaded with, spiritual power, and thus, this world and the spirit world were not really different places. And they didn't center their religious lives on the above or the below, or on any one place. Their "icons" of divine power were Animals, non-human persons who shared our world. Animals were- and are- the "Divine Others" that acted as messengers to humans, teachers, and representatives of spiritual potencies.

Later societies only dimly remembered this, and their Gods and Goddesses were "adorned" with animals that represented them, or acted as their sacred beast. Look deeper, look older- the animals themselves were once the untamed, mysterious, co-existent divine beings that humans drew guidance and power from. And they didn't do this in a "behind the hedge" way, in which they had to beg for the Unseen to "open up" for them, or appear to them- they walked and lived among spiritual powers, who could appear at any time, in dream or in waking. Everywhere was its own strange and potent configuration of power, and people were likewise configurations of power. Relationship bound it all together.

And this- this is what we find when we examine the spiritual orientation of traditional witches from history. Unlike Neo-Pagan witchcraft, which really often resembles Neolithic agrarian mother-earth worship, traditional witchcraft, such as Isobel Gowdie's reported activities, seems to resemble an older mode of spirit-contact and orientation. Dreams and visions occurred often and haphazardly-seeming; an intelligent and communicative world was all around Isobel, and workings of sorcery were spontaneous, and simple. Through stories, which she as a professional storyteller could "capture" from the air itself, a patchwork quilt of living powers got to exist through her.

This is what Provenance traditionalism aims for: a restoration of the true "Old Way"- the way of diffuse and strange spiritual presence, and a veritable "breaking down" of the Hedge itself, such that an operating and powerful witch ends not as one who can cross the hedge, but as one for whom no hedge crossing is needed. Integration. This is the "Great Seal" of power that waits for the cunning and the devoted.

# The Limits of the Term "Traditional"

I think there's a funny phenomenon occurring in certain circles today- the phenomenon of "conflating traditional with positive." We say "traditional" witchcraft when discussing witchcraft that doesn't come- in form, function, aesthetic, or goals- from what Gerald Gardner called "witchcraft."

We call it "traditional" to say "witches and witchcraft as both were usually known *before* witches got from being trance-inducing, extraordinary perception-prone, wise, uncanny-knowledge divining, healing-capable, and hexing-capable people who were still in touch with some unseen powers, to being goddess-worshiping, ceremonial magic-tool using nudists who didn't want to harm anyone."

"Traditional" implies a bit of age, something that's been done a long time. We call the desirable way the "Old" way- on the surface, it would seem to be a worship of all things old fashioned. But there's a serious problem here! With regard to seeking wisdom through metaphysical means, when studying sorcery and wisdom-gaining practices that are tied up in deep cultural complexes of remnant animism and buried folkloric patterns of thinking and believing, that's all fine and well. The Old Ways tend to be the Best Ways.

But in almost *no* other situation are the old ways necessarily the best ways! Sure, maybe eating in older ways is better than your Monsanto mutagen salad- but beyond that one consideration (organic food is always better), older cultural patterns and older ways of thinking about nearly anything are *not* always better. Using your good old fashioned love for good old "traditional" witchcraft is not meant to satisfy your conservative desires to actualize "good old fashioned" thinking about gays, women, people of color, social governance, economic realities, or anything else.

Because if you did that, assumed that "older is better" or "traditional thinking on these matters" is preferable, you immediately become the homophobic, chauvinistic, racist, typically closed-off and annoyingly arrogant or dense person who turns a blind eye (as people in the past almost always did) to child abuse, date rape, social injustice, and spousal abuse. European societies- even pre-industrial "traditional" societies- for the last 15 centuries have *not* been positive bastions of wisdom with regard to associating with other human beings. Not at all.

There is a deadly conflation here- a dangerous tendency, for people to get their "traditional" feelings very confused. This is the hidden "other side" of the extreme from people who immediately assume that anything old is outdated and has nothing to teach us or to share with us. This is *just as bad* as that wrong-headed belief.



## Part IX



### The Old One by the Hearthside: Folktales, Legendry, and Lore

There was nothing, I believe I may say in the world, which was not with her a "spirit." The waves were "spirits", the meteors were "spirits", the winds singing their lullabies were "spirits", the thunders were "spirits." In the long winter evenings, when seated before the wood fire, which at that season of the year is perpetually burning on a New England hearth, the sound was heard of a cricket chirping in the hollow wood; starting with alarm, she would exclaim "a spirit!" She had seen the spirit of her mother, too, employed in knitting woolen hose for her father's spirit. There was not one of my ancestors to whom she had been personally known- and she was very aged at the time of my birth- who had not appeared to her after death, each "with a circumstance" whose simplicity and truth to nature almost impressed you with a belief that such a thing had really been."

-James A. Jones, describing his childhood nurse, 1830



# Crooker of the Derwent

In my older work entitled "The Toad Bone Treatise", I present an "occult bestiary" of types, outlining some of the many strange experiences and even stranger sentient beings one may run across when engaged in explorations of this world through different modes of perception. Those "fire-sighted" people will often discover that the "ordinary" things of this world- including the features of the landscape- reveal themselves in a non-ordinary fashion, sometimes as entities every bit as sentient and self-willed as they believe themselves to be.

One such category of non-human sentient beings is connected to the natural phenomena we call "bodies of water"- and they are attested to in faery-mythology and folklore to an extreme degree, looming large over the entire folk animistic tradition. Bodies of water- so sacred to ancient peoples from all over the world- are the common folkloric homes of water spirits or *water weirds* as I preferred to name them in the treatise.

Sometimes, there are many overlaps between the ruling forces of bodies of water and even greater powers, but in most cases, the inhabitants of watery places appear to be local to that area, and desirous of offerings from human beings- going so far as to take living beings as their due, if they are ignored. Needless to say, most are quite ignored now, whereas in ancient times they may have been worshiped and given regular offerings or sacrifices.

In The Toad Bone Treatise I write, under my entry for water weirds:

The spirits of streams, pools, springs, rivers, lakes, and even the vast oceans- these weirds are sometimes (though not often) encountered alone, and other times in communal groupings, just like Land-weirds or land-spirits. Water weirds of great age often take on a feminine appearance, and can be very alluring. They despise people polluting their homes, and are more often than not dangerous- they will drown unsuspecting people of any age, and I suspect this is more of a function of their frustration with mankind than anything else- though they are also pictured as "vampiric"- they can feast on the released life-force of a drowned victim.

Water weirds were often given regular sacrifices and gifts- cast directly into their homes- by ancient people, and some, especially the weirds of wells and thermal springs, were elevated to the status of Goddesses, due to their great involvement with giving human beings life-preserving water and healing therapy. They deserved to be thanked, then and now. These ancients may be dangerous, too- especially the spirits of old rivers and springs that were the centers of cults in Pagan times; they are starved for attention and offerings.

The fastest way to become protected by their benevolence is to make large offerings to them, but don't ever become fooled into thinking that they will never be harmful to you- always keep a measure of respect and wariness. All natural bodies of water can be used as gateways into the



Underworld by the dead, or by sorcerers who wish to lower their consciousness into that deep place- but guardian water weirds can block this passage, if not appeased. All water weirds have a beguiling power.

Mother Briggs gives several striking descriptions of these powers and related powers in her collection of works. She makes mention of the Scottish "water wraith", described as a "female water spirit, dressed in green, withered, meagre, and scowling." The story of her haunting of a local body of water is typical in folklore; it is said:

She was ever distorted, with a malignant scowl. I knew all the various fords- always dangerous ones- where of old she used to start, it was said, out of the river, before the terrified traveler, to point at him, as

in derision, with her skinny finger, or to beckon him invitingly on; and I was shown the very tree to which a poor Highlander had clung, when, in crossing the river by night, he was seized by the goblin, and from which, despite of his utmost exertions, though assisted by a young lad (his companion) he was dragged into the middle of the current where he perished.

-Briggs, *The Encyclopedia of Fairies*, pg. 429

There are lessons to be gathered from these accounts- beyond the typical lesson one would imagine regarding safety around bodies of water. Bodies of water are natural entry-points into the deep places of the unseen world, and interaction-points between the worlds of the living and the dead, and as such are sacred places. Bodies of water have also provided sustenance to human beings since the dawn of our time, and the powers of these places were rightly thanked in the past with recognition and offering.

Part of the darker spiritual ecology that I am always writing about involves recognizing the forgotten or neglected powers of such places in the landscape, and re-building relationships of good tiding. It is more than just a way of re-connecting with the land that is our common home; it is about entering into friendships with other orders of sentient life. The vampiric or malevolent water-weirds can be transformed (with luck) into helpful, friendly powers if people will recreate the bonds of recognition and respect that are owed.

The "twisted" aspect of the water-weird, the "distortion" captured in the folklore is a reflection, I believe, of the alienation that has arisen between humans and the powers of their natural environment due to human abandonment of their duties to the Otherworld. I also believe it is a reflection of the unbalanced fear of the unseen world that has crept into the minds of human beings over centuries of Christian influence.

I'm not saying that we shouldn't have some caution with the unseen world; certainly we should have a caution not unlike that which we have with stranger humans, given our situation, location, history, and

context for interaction- but the unqualified belief, so hammered into people's heads by Christian priests, that all of the inhabitants of the traditional unseen world are harmful, wicked, or even "demons" is unwarranted; it is a part of Christianity's propagandistic war on animistic world-views which began quite a long time ago, and which continues to this day.

In the annals of folklore, one water-weird has attained a legendary status for being a dangerous power, neglected and hostile- Crooker of the Derwent River. I have here a tale, told from a traditional source, of Crooker's activity. It is a fitting way to end this letter on the spirits of bodies of water and the need to be both cautious and to re-establish relationships with them.

### **Crooker of the Derwent**

"One day a traveller, a pedlar, was journeying to visit his mother who lived in Cromford. His journey was to take him along the valley of the River Derwent, by a road which he had travelled several times before though he did not know it well. He stopped for a while at an inn and had some lunch and a few beers and set off again on his journey towards the end of the afternoon just as the sun was beginning to set.

He had been walking for a while along the road which led through Derwentdale when suddenly he saw an old woman sitting on a stone beside the road and she was watching him intently as he approached. "Good evening, sir. Are you a stranger in these parts?" she asked.

The pedlar stopped and set down his pack for a moment and replied "Not entirely, for I have been here a few times before though I do not know the area well". "Well," she said, "This is not a road which a wise man travels after dark. You would be well advised to break your journey and turn back and find a bed in the village a mile back". "I can't do that" replied the pedlar. "I must get to Cromford tonight to see my mother. I've heard that she is very ill, so I must press on."

"Well," said the old woman, "You are braver than wise. But I fancy I know you - you once rescued a hare from a snare. I knew that hare and for her sake I will help you. Take this posy," she said, handing him a small bunch of rosemary. "Whatever you do, you must reach the Cromford bridge before the moon is fully risen, and when you reach the place where the road runs alongside the river, keep as far from the water as you can. And when you meet Crooker, you must give him this rosemary and you may, if you are blessed, pass safely."

Well, the pedlar didn't know what to say. The old woman seemed quite mad but he didn't like to be rude so he took the posy of rosemary and thanked her. Then he shouldered his pack and continued on his way, and when he glanced back the old woman had vanished.

By now the shadows were lengthening and dusk was falling across the bottom of the valley. All seemed silent and lonely and the pedlar began to be a little afraid, though he was not sure why. He started to whistle to keep up his spirits, but all the same every so often he stopped to glance over his

shoulder as if he were afraid he was being followed.

He walked on up the valley a mile or two and then, as he rounded a corner, he suddenly noticed another old woman, sitting on a bank beside the road in the gathering gloom. As he came up to her she called to him, saying: "Good evening, sir. This is not a road which a wise man travels after dark. You would be well advised to break your journey and turn back and find a bed in the village".

"I can't do that" replied the pedlar. "I must get to Cromford tonight to see my mother. I've heard that she is very ill, so I must press on."

"Well," said the old woman, "You are braver than wise. But I fancy I know you - you once saved a vixen and her cub from dogs. I knew that vixen and for her sake I will help you. Take this posy," she said, handing him a small bunch of rowan twigs. "Whatever you do, you must reach the Cromford bridge before the moon is fully risen, and when you reach the place where the road runs alongside the river, keep as far from the water as you can. And when you meet Crooker, you must give him this rowan and you may, if you are blessed, pass safely". "But who is Crooker?" asked the pedlar, "and why should I beware of him?"

But as he asked the question the old woman seemed to melt into the shadows and was gone. The pedlar was becoming uneasy but remembered his mother waiting for him and shouldered his pack and continued along the road. By now it was almost dark and the moon was just rising above the hills on the opposite side of the valley. The pedlar remembered the advice that he must be across the Cromford bridge by the time that the moon was fully risen and lengthened his stride.

Growing ever more apprehensive, the pedlar continued his journey. Every so often he stopped and looked around, glancing over his shoulder back down the road, fearful of being followed.

He was suddenly startled by a voice from the shadows by the side of the road. "Good evening, sir" said the voice and he leapt backwards with fear. He looked over to where the voice came from and could just discern in the gloom the figure of an old woman sitting on a stone under a tree.

"This is not a road which a wise man travels after dark. You would be well advised to break your journey and turn back and find a bed in the village". "I can't do that" replied the pedlar. "I must get to Cromford tonight to see my mother. I've heard that she is very ill, so I must press on."

"Well," said the old woman, "You are braver than wise. But I fancy I know you - you once released a badger from a trap. I knew that badger and for his sake I will help you. Take this posy," she said, handing him a small bunch of St John's Wort. "Whatever you do, you must reach the Cromford bridge before the moon is fully risen, and when you reach the place where the road runs alongside the river, keep as far from the water as you can. And when you meet Crooker, you must give him this posy and you may, if you are blessed, pass safely". "But who is Crooker?" asked the pedlar, his voice rising in fear, "and why should I beware of him?"

But the old woman had melted into the darkness and the pedlar was alone again on the lonely road. In the distance he could hear the rushing of the waters of the Derwent and shuddered as he hoisted his pack up on to his shoulder again and set off down the road towards the Cromford bridge.

Before long, he came the point where the road ran alongside the river and he looked down at the swirling waters. They seemed to be whispering to him "Come, come ...." and he felt a sudden terrible urge to leap into the dark waters. Terrified, he leapt back and found himself at the other side of the road, under the sheltering branches of a huge tree which overhung the road. Looking up, he could make out the dark shape of the bridge, perhaps 200 or so yards ahead of him at a turn in the valley and suddenly felt relieved.

Just then, he glanced down at the road, his eye caught by movement there. He saw that the moon was casting the shadows of the gnarled and twisted branches on the road like huge fingers reaching out for him, and the very air about him was filled with a moaning and sighing which seemed to say "Give, give, come, come ...". Letting out a cry of fear "Crooker!" he began to run down the road towards the bridge, throwing the posy of rosemary over his shoulder. As he did so, the moaning of the river seemed to become a roaring and the waters became turbulent and more violently swirling as if the river were trying to engulf the road.

As he ran, stricken with panic, he saw another great tree ahead, the shadows of its gnarled and grasping branches covering the whole of the road beneath it and realised that he would have to pass beneath it and within its grasp. Running as fast as he could, burdened down by his pack, he ran headlong beneath the shadows of the tossing branches. As he passed beneath it, he again heard the sighing and moaning of the river and without looking back he hurled the second posy, the rowan twigs, over his shoulder. Again, the river seemed to roar and swirl even more menacingly, but the pedlar kept on running.

Ahead of him, he could see a third huge tree, bigger and more shadowy than the others and choking back his panic and keeping his eyes on the bridge now just a few yards ahead, he summoned up his remaining strength and ran beneath the outstretched branches and over the swaying shadows on the road. As he did so, the river seemed to

scream with fury and the tree swayed violently as if trying to reach down to him. Weak with fear, he hurled the last posy, the St John's Wort, back over his shoulder towards the tree and staggered onto the bridge just as the moon reached its highest point in the sky. At the centre he finally collapsed, overcome with exhaustion and terror, and fell into a faint.

In the village of Cromford, meanwhile, local people were awakened from their beds by the sound of the river roaring and moaning - a sound they knew all too well as being the sound of Crooker claiming his dues. And they knew that in the morning there would be a body to retrieve and bury. But come the morning, when they ventured out at first light to scour the river bank, they were astonished to find the pedlar still sleeping on the centre of the bridge and they carried him into the village.

In time, a chapel was built beside the bridge, paid for by the grateful pedlar, at which prayers were said for those who had lost their lives in the river over the years and where travelers could give thanks for passing safely through the valley. The chapel is now gone, but it is still widely believed by local people that every so often the river demands sacrifice."

## Notes from the Tale of Crooker

Crooker, like most water weirds, has a strange and hidden relationship with the trees that grow on the banks of his river. The tree-weirds attempt to snare travelers for him. I discuss this connection between bodies of water and the trees that grow near them in *The Toad Bone Treatise*. This fine tale presents wise-women, or witches, who appear to help

our protagonist pedlar through this dangerous time. That they should appear is not surprising; witch-folk from all times and places have acted as knowers of the inner realities of the land upon which they dwell. The more kindly disposed of them will help people from time to time- especially those deserving of that help, as this Pedlar was.

Their best advice is "don't go there tonight"- but he seems rather bent on traveling. They provide him with Rowan, St. John's Wort, and Rosemary- three powerful protective plant-weirds- and all as offerings for Crooker. This piece of local lore is very valuable; Crooker accepts these plants (on some level) as a replacement offering for whatever he was given before- and it is easy to see that Crooker wants more- his precise words in the tale. That human beings have a deep mythical relationship with plants and trees is important here; plant-bodies and tree-parts can take the place of human offerings.

The protagonist was helped by the witches because of his good deeds; he had spared the lives of animals that they knew. This too, is a powerful lesson for all of the wise.

# Greed

The drippy, rainy weather outside reminds me of a story I heard once. Long ago, the story says, when the Gods were still shaping things, they were using the Great Waters to fertilize the earth. Water went everywhere, making the ground green and full of life. The cloud people came along, and seeing what the Gods were doing, really wanted some water for themselves. The Gods told them to go ahead and drink the water- after all, there was more water than anyone could ever use up, and any who refreshed themselves on it felt very full of life. But the Gods warned them not to over-do it; having just enough is always better than having too much, they said.

So the clouds went to drinking, and most of them got refreshed, got puffy and full of life, and went on their way happily. But the greediest of them didn't want to stop drinking- they drank and drank until they became over-burdened with water, and grew dark and grumbly. Being miserable, they complained to the Gods for relief. The Gods, being the nice guys and gals they are, laughed and told the greedy clouds they'd cut them some slack- so long as they always went forth from that day to warn other beings about the unpleasant dangers of greed, of taking too much.

So the Gods plucked up a forest, and made sharpened poles from the trees, and poked hundreds of holes in the greedy clouds, to let the excess water trickle out. And, now getting the relief they wanted, those clouds went on their way. To this very day, the clouds who knew better than to drink too much pass us by, far up above, white and happy, but occasionally, one of the formerly unwise and greedy clouds floats by, still leaking that water. Well-soaked humans underneath, shivering and wet, should always remember the warning of those clouds: that there is such a thing as too much of a good thing.



*"After observing animals for millions of years, as our most important intellectual activity, we deformed the messenger itself. We made our animal fellow something to be possessed rather than someone to be encountered as a spiritual being. Our prehistoric "agreements" with the animal nations, our "negotiations" with wild animals, were once the biggest part of human culture. This was not a simple "identification with nature," as the conservationists phrase it today. It was a lifetime work, to build covenants, or treaties of affiliation, with the nations of the Others.*

*With domestication wild things became the enemies of tame things, materially and psychologically. The wild unconscious of mankind, its fears and dreams and subconscious impulses, lost their affiliation or representation by wild things, and those were the very things by which, for a million years, we had worked out a meaningful relationship with the sentient universe. The wild unconscious was driven away into the wilderness. We began to view the planet as a thing, rather than a thou." We began to see our world as an organism to be possessed, rather than a spiritual moment to be encountered."*

*-J.T. Winogrand*





# Lykeia

Once, a very long time ago, before there were any roads or farms, before there were any cities or even nations, there was a mother who had a little son and daughter that she loved more than anything in the world.

She lived with her two children in a small band of men and women, on the side of an immense forest. They would hunt in the forest, and fish in the river that ran through it, and lived a happy life, until the hardest winter the world had ever seen came upon them. The sky turned a deep grey, and thick clouds that never broke apart blanketed the world. The sun vanished; the coldest winds came, and with them, the deepest snow. The rivers froze solid.

Soon, the people were hungry, and then, they began to disappear- to leave in groups of two or three to try and find a place where the sun still lived, where there was still food and water that wasn't frozen.

The mother who loved her children finally realized that if she didn't leave, she and her children would die right there by the snowy woods, so she wrapped them as warmly as she could- which was not quite warm enough- and tied snow shoes on herself, and walked into the forest with them.

She was hoping to find wood, frozen berries, acorns, or perhaps a den of rabbits who were also trying to hide from the cold, anything at all- but she did not, and her hunger grew terrible. Her children wept from the hunger, until they could weep no more. And these spirits of the wind and snow grew crueler- a blizzard came, to finish the mother and her two children off for good.

In despair, not wanting her children to perish, the mother prayed to the spirits of the forest, for help. She begged them to save her children, and she would give them anything in exchange for this favor. Though the frozen spirits of the trees remained silent, one spirit in the forest heard, and answered: the spirit of the great wolf. It told the mother that if she would sacrifice herself, it would see that her children were spared from the hunger and cold.

Without thinking, the mother kissed her two sleeping children and agreed- and by the magic of the wolf-being, she became a great tree, there at the center of the forest. And while her little boy and little girl slept, they became wolf-cubs, happily bundled in new and warm fur, and able to trot through the snow and sniff out mice below the snow and catch them. The wolf-spirit saw to it that they survived the terrible winter.

\* \* \*

Many thousands of years passed, and then, one day, when the land was criss-crossed by roads, and farms with their orchards and fields and pastures full of cows dotted the land, there was one farm that was home to a happy family- a farmer and his wife, who had a son named Tom and a daughter named Jeannie.

Jeannie was a very bright girl, who learned everything she could. Her mother made medicine and remedies from the plants and herbs of the nearby forest, and treated all the people of the nearby village. Jeannie helped her mother find the herbs and prepare the healing mixtures. Jeannie also helped her brother and father milk their cow, and collect apples from their small orchard.

One day, when Jeannie was alone picking apples in the late afternoon, she felt very strange. She had been having troubled sleep recently, and waking in the night suddenly with strange dreams, but now, she felt even stranger- and before she realized what was happening, it felt as though she were being overcome by a great fever. She dropped to the ground, and became a wolf.

Full of the energy of her new shape, she bounded away, full of joy- she ran faster than she ever imagined, deep into the forest, dodging stumps and leaping fallen trees, and hearing and smelling hidden things as vibrantly as only a wolf can.

She fell asleep in a deep reverie, later that evening, curled up as a wolf under an old oak, and had a very special dream: she dreamed that another wolf came to her, a wolf that was really a little girl. The little girl-wolf revealed to her that she was her many-times great grandmother. She said that once, out of love, her own mother had sacrificed herself to save her, and that salvation had come to her by the gaining of a wolf shape.

She warned Jeannie to never tell anyone about her heritage or its legacy- She called Jeannie her beloved granddaughter and said that men and women who could not change their shape would fear her, and hurt her, if they knew what she could do.

Jeannie went home that night, after changing herself back into a girl, and told her worried parents that she had simply become lost. They prayed thankfully that their daughter came back, and no more was said about it.

\* \* \*

Jeannie's life was very exciting after this curious turn of events. She always volunteered to go to the pasture to tend to the cow, or to the apple trees on the side of the forest, so that she could turn into a wolf and run through the trees, feeling the great power and freedom of it. But one day, things did not go so well for her.

On that day, she was walking to find her family's cow, when she saw two men sneaking into their pasture, from its far northern edge. She knew they were bad men, for they had an ill appearance, and she guessed that they had come to steal their cow, which was beyond value for her family. One of the men had a gun, the other a rope- and they began to tie their rope around the cow's neck.

Without another thought, Jeannie turned into a wolf and charged at the men, barking and snapping savagely. The armed man aimed and shot at the angry wolf, but the bullet only grazed its forepaw.

Jeannie clamped her jaws around his arm and bit deeply. He screamed, dropped his gun, and when she released him, he ran like his partner, in great fear of the beast.

When Jeannie took the shape of a little girl again, her arm was bleeding from an angry wound. She returned home and said that she had cut herself on a sharp stone in the creek. But the men she had chased away told everyone that they were attacked by a wolf near the pasture of Jeannie's father, which alarmed everyone in the village.

But the story of how they wounded the beast on its forearm aroused the suspicions of Jeannie's neighbors, who knew that she was wounded on the same day, in the same place.

It was believed that people who could change their shape would retain any injuries they received in their animal form, while in their human form- so rumors began to circulate that Jeannie was a witch or a werewolf.

\* \* \*

Before long, fear got the better of the people, and they decided to arrest Jeannie, but before they could, her mother gave her a bundle of bread and cheese and told her to leave, to take to the forest and hide, to spare her the hysteria of the local people. Jeannie left, but once she was in the forest, she tossed away the food and became a wolf and ran deep into the forest's heart, where no man would go.

Asleep there, a night later, she had another dream. Again, the little girl wolf came to her and told her that nearby was a small cave that went deep into the ground, and that Jeannie should go there. The next morning, in her human shape, Jeannie did just that, and found the cave, which led to a tunnel, a tunnel that slanted down and passed deep into the earth.

The tunnel kept going down, and Jeannie kept following it for a very long time, until it opened up into a world that was below this one. In that world, which was draped in a perpetual twilight, was a never-ending forest of deep green that echoed with the whispers of human voices, birdsong, and the distant howls of wolves.

Jeannie walked about the timeless forest until she came to a tree at its center- a massive tree, bigger than the others. And from inside the tree, came a lady, who told Jeannie that she was the Great Grandmother of all werewolves. She revealed how she had, out of love, given her own soul to the forest, so that her children could be spared, and how they became as wolves to escape the cold spirits of death.

She told Jeannie that she loved her, too, as one of her descendants, and told her, from that day forth, to call herself by her true name, which was Lykeia. She promised her that if she slept one night here, in the Forest Below the World, that she could return to the human world and be safe forever.

So Lykeia did, and when she woke, and returned to the World Above, she discovered that a hundred years had passed, though it had only seemed like a single night to her. Her parents, her brother, their farm, their cow, the village- all of it was gone. No one lived who remembered her, and she was alone in the vast forest.

\* \* \*

So she stayed and lived in that forest the rest of her days, preparing herbal cures and remedies for the people who came to visit her. She was hailed as the greatest of healers, and people paid her good company, when they visited.

No one ever asked from what people she sprang, and she never said- but she spoke to the trees, and to the wolves and foxes, and to the birds, as though they were people, too. One day, while walking through the forest in her wolf shape, she met another wolf, and some months later, she had children of her own.

Those children, and their children, they long outlived Lykeia, who died peacefully one winter night many years later. No one ever saw Lykeia's offspring, but the old folk knew that her sons and daughters had most likely become wolves in the wild, and in thanks to Old Lady Lykeia's many services to them, in gratitude for the many times her herbal remedies had spared their own children from fevers and illness, they pledged never to hunt or kill a wolf in that forest.



*Ribald Jester, merry master, turnskin goat-buck:  
In hills by day and woods by night, source of all my luck.  
You bless the cunning and the wise,  
Wherefore they call you sweet Puck.*





# MOANNA'S JOURNEY:

## An Analysis of the Occult Symbolism and Hidden Cosmological Messages in the Film "Pan's Labyrinth"

*Pan's Labyrinth: The Darkness That Knows No Sentiment*

SO Finally, I sit down to write the essay I've wanted to write for years now- a philosophical and occult analysis of my all-time favorite movie: Guillermo del Toro's masterpiece, "Pan's Labyrinth". Of course, "Pan's Labyrinth" is the American release title; the original title of the movie was "El Laberinto del Fauno", The Labyrinth of the Faun.

In my experience of talking to people about Pan's Labyrinth, things haven't gone so well. Naturally, I loved it; I loved it before I understood the massive depth of symbolism that del Toro had woven into it, the deep messages which, at day's end, reveal a central message of hope that I can really believe in. But most of my friends had exactly the opposite reaction- even those I would have expected would like it.

But it wasn't just a matter of disliking the movie. Many of my closest friends went further, to what might be described as dread of the movie, disgust for it, boredom with it, anger towards it, and even depression. The last thing- depression- I certainly get. This movie is easily one of the darkest movies I have ever seen, dark on the level of violence, as well as on the level of sheer depiction of cruelty and despair. As I hope I will prove, however, these elements are necessary to communicate the metaphysical "punch" of the film, and to make integral its powerful and well-woven message.

I had friends react in many surprising ways. One of my closest friends, who in the past had always enjoyed watching dark fantasy movies with me, was my first surprise. I was visiting with him and his two sons and his wife, and he told me, when the movie was brought up, that the movie, for him, was "too dark." Too dark! I had to laugh!

Then I noticed that his wife had that haunted look on her face, too. With these dear friends, it isn't hard to understand- like me, they are parents, and "Pan's Labyrinth" presents brutal violence which is even directed towards children, unflinchingly so.

That by itself would be enough to explain the reaction of some parents, and even some non-parents. It is a well-known fact of American cinema that directors across the board hesitate to mingle the innocence of children with direct depictions of any sort of violence, especially lethal violence. I've always thought of this as an American "thing"- I've seen non-American movies where the topic of

violence and children was handled in a far less sensitive manner.

Even recently, when watching the new season premiere of "Game of Thrones", a scene occurs in which some assassins are sent to murder a baby. They succeed- but, pursuant to the convention, the camera mercifully "cuts away" as they do it, leaving us to hear only a sound effect which lets us know that the baby has been stabbed. We aren't forced to see it. To see innocence violated and heartlessly butchered is not a line that our minds are prepared to see crossed on the screen- or at least, a line that most minds aren't prepared to see crossed.

The very idea of it conjures ice in the heart. And this alone can explain some of the power of Pan's Labyrinth to disturb us- it doesn't flinch from displaying the darkness of violence and strife, in any form. It forces us to see the violence of war, the ominous threat (and actuality) of violence right in the faces, and on the flesh, of adults and children alike. There is no sentimental "camera cuts away" when real horror takes its toll on the flesh of a character, of any age. The audience is left to deal with it in whatever way they can.

And, perhaps thankfully, few people can deal with it perfectly because they've been fortunate enough to not be exposed to the worst in humanity. We in the west have that fortune- most of us haven't seen our neighbors blown apart by bombs, or seen death squads coming into our neighborhoods and rounding up our friends and shooting them in front of everyone.

For me, depictions of real brutality always conjure something from deep inside me. A numbing presence arises- call me sensitive, but if it's done right, as del Toro most certainly did it, what you face when you face this movie is nothing short of an initiatory experience, an ordeal in which you have to face dark materials that come from your own depths, in response to the sympathetic and symbolic call on the screen.

This is why Pan's Labyrinth has the power to repel so many people; it strikes at a region of the soul that we seldom feel touched. But more than that, it is reminding the soul about the truth of its condition- and of the truth of its origins, and where its destiny lies. These matters are shocking, at a level below the surface of our consciousness.

We have to deal with the darkness in us, as we see the darkness in humanity portrayed on the screen by actors. This "call to the deep" requires a response; we have to deal with ourselves. But del Toro takes this further- he isn't going to just put us all in metaphysical crisis, laugh, and walk away. His darkness is purposeful. There is a message wrapped in it, which will (if we let it) take us through the occult or hidden history of humanity, and towards an equally-as-hidden destiny for man, which is

what this whole movie is really about. Let's go for a walk through the labyrinth, and I will attempt to elucidate what I believe many of the hidden messages and layers of symbolism in this movie mean and represent.

### ■ *Pan's Labyrinth and the Secret History of Man*

I'm going to lay it out for you right here and now, before I "support" this with evidence from the movie. Pan's Labyrinth is a complete telling of the secret history of mankind. It reveals our origins in the spirit world, when we were immortal and "one" in kinship with the great spiritual beings who existed then, and who still exist now, even as we live in ignorance of them.

It reveals the sad state of affairs that we have fallen prey to, and the many ways humans have changed, warped, and reacted in response to those affairs. Lastly, it reveals the hidden destiny of mankind, how we will all be part of the primary reality- the Spirit world- once again.

This is a message of incredible hope. More than hope, which I largely distrust, it is a message of Truth- the Truth about us, our origins, our current suffering, and our destiny. In that Truth, there is a glimmer of the great peace that the Truth unflinchingly brings to all.

Del Toro has to be a genius, an occult genius hiding out very well in the mundane-seeming halls of Hollywood. He tells the story I outlined above in the most subtle of ways- so subtle as to be not noticed by many, but fiercely, emotionally, and poetically powerful, so powerful that the soul watches Pan's Labyrinth in a deeper way than the human being who sees it does. Subtlety is the heart and core of the true occult traditions that exist at the core of Western culture.

The true "traditions" of the occult world, the true initiatory powers that do exist, today, right now, all around us, are subtle, not so obvious. Like the Spirit world itself, subtle forces move quietly around us, freeing our souls at times, reminding our souls of things that we never should have forgotten. They can be so subtle as to hide in plain sight. I don't know how del Toro did it, but I suspect that either he had some good advisers and screenwriters, who were themselves occult masters of subtlety, or that he himself is simply an unsung master of symbolism and the hidden arts. Now, let me continue to "lay out" the story for you- using the story itself, and some interesting correlations one might find in the history of our world.

## *The Loss of Place in the Spirit World*

At the very start of the movie we are treated to a story about an Underworldly princess who, through certain circumstances, becomes lost and estranged from her true home, and begins to wander in the human world, lacking memory of who she was. Right away, the traditional and occult symbolism is layered on profoundly- but even more profoundly than most people think. The movie begins just so:

A long time ago, in the underground realm, where there are no lies or pain, there lived a Princess who dreamed of the human world. She dreamed of blue skies, soft breeze, and sunshine. One day, eluding her keepers, the Princess escaped. Once outside, the brightness blinded her and erased every trace of the past from her memory. She forgot who she was and where she came from. Her body suffered cold, sickness, and pain. Eventually, she died. However, her father, the King, always knew that the Princess' soul would return, perhaps in another body, in another place, at another time. And he would wait for her, until he drew his last breath, until the world stopped turning...

This short passage could be analyzed for years; it clearly belongs to the "gnostic" type myth-cycles that present the soul as lost and wandering, separate from its true home. Of course, del Toro's movie isn't ever as obvious as one might think; while we are well within our rights to see this narrative as a metaphor for the lost and wandering human soul generally, it isn't so simple in the context of Pan's Labyrinth.

This narrative is the story of what happened to Princess Moanna, the daughter of the King of the Underworld, not mankind, not every human soul. As we shall see, the character of Princess Moanna, Princess of the Underworld, and who, in her forgetfulness, thinks that she is a mortal girl named Ofelia, is one of the main keys to this story's purpose and occult meaning.

It is important to note that the "Underground" realm- the traditional location not just of the Underworld, the origin-world for mankind and everything else, is also the traditional location of Faerie-land, or realms of Fayerie people. The location of the postmortem existence of human souls in an underground realm, beneath landscape features, is part and parcel of the oldest spiritual traditions of man- and one thing is always true, spiritually and metaphysically, if not obviously- in the language of mysteries, things always end where they began; life is a perfect whole, a circle if you wish.

The end point of human souls- an Underworldly land of the dead, is actually (and secretly) the beginning point. This is as true for Princess Moanna/Ofelia as it is for an "ordinary" human soul. But again, for the purposes of this movie, Princess Moanna/Ofelia transcends the simple comparison of her story with the journey of every man's soul. She is special for a special reason.

In the world where everything is "made whole"- the origin and end come together- the Underworld, or Spirit world, "there are no lies or pain." This narrative associates the original harmonious condition- the "Edenic" state, as it were, with the Underworld. Long after humans have departed this place, Princess Moanna, daughter of the Under-King, is dreaming of the human world- she desires to see blue skies, soft breeze, and sunshine. Desire for these things drives her across boundaries she should not cross, and in so doing, she is blasted into unconsciousness- the loss of her conscious identity- by the sun. This motif is not limited to del Toro's movie. It exists in a surprising form in other places, even the actual history of our world.

Though few people know of it, in a place called Woolpit, in England and in the time of King Stephen (1135-1154), two historical accounts exist of what might be Princess Moanna's cousins falling into the exact same fate that befell her.

Naturally, Moanna is an invented character for a movie, no matter how profound the movie may be; however, the story of the Green Children of Woolpit that comes down to us from the 12th century is real- so real, in fact, that few scholars who have studied it have found the nerve to face the truth that it barely conceals. We humans protect ourselves with doubt; and skepticism, far from the wise and quality-ensuring tool of discourse that it might have been before, has become the final and perhaps greatest refuge of those who live in denial of the reality of the soul in us.

The historical account of the "Green Children" of Woolpit comes from two sources in the 12th century. William of Newburgh (1136-1198), an English monk and historian from Yorkshire is the first- His work entitled the *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, The History of English Affairs, includes the story of the Green Children. The second source is Ralph of Coggeshall, who was sixth abbot of Coggeshall Abbey in Essex from 1207-1218. His account of the Green Children is included in the *Chronicon Anglicanum*, the English Chronicle, to which he was contributor between the years of 1187 and 1224.

Brian Haughton's article on the Green Children gives the details found in the two historical accounts. Both versions give us the following story:

There was a strange occurrence in the village of Woolpit, near Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk. At harvest time, while the reapers were working in the fields, two young children emerged from deep ditches excavated to trap wolves, known as wolf pits (hence the name of the village). The children, a boy and a girl, had skin tinged with a green hue, and wore clothes of a strange colour, made from unfamiliar materials. They wandered around bewildered for a few minutes, before the reapers took them to the village.

Because no-one could understand the language the children spoke they were taken to the house

of local landowner Sir Richard de Calne, at Wikes. Here they broke into tears and refused to eat the bread and other food that was brought to them.

For days the children ate nothing until the villagers brought them recently harvested beans, with their stalks still attached. It was said that the children survived on this food for many months until they acquired a taste for bread.

As time passed the boy, who appeared to be the younger of the two, became depressed, sickened and died, but the girl adjusted to her new life, and was baptized. Her skin gradually lost its original green colour and she became a healthy young woman. She learned the English language and afterwards married a man at King's Lynn, in the neighbouring county of Norfolk, apparently becoming 'rather loose and wanton in her conduct'. Some sources claim that she took the name 'Agnes Barre' and the man she married was a senior ambassador of Henry II.

It is also said that the current Earl Ferrers is descended from the strange girl through intermarriage. What evidence this is based on is unclear, as the only traceable senior ambassador with this name at the time is Richard Barre, chancellor to Henry II, archdeacon of Ely and a royal justice in the late 12th century. After 1202, Richard retired to become an Austin canon at Leicester, so it seems unlikely that he was the husband of 'Agnes'.

When she was later questioned about her past the girl was only able to relate vague details about where the children had come from and how they arrived at Woolpit. She stated that her and the boy were brother and sister, and had come from 'the land of Saint Martin' where it was perpetual twilight, and all the inhabitants were green in colour like they had been. She was not sure exactly where her homeland was located, but another 'luminous' land could be seen across a 'considerable river' separating it from theirs.

She remembered that one day they were looking after their father's herds in the fields and had followed them into a cavern, where they heard the loud sound of bells. Entranced, they wandered through the darkness for a long time until they arrived at the mouth of the cave, where they were immediately blinded by the glaring sunlight. They lay down in a daze for a long time, before the noise of the reapers terrified them and they rose and tried to escape, but were unable to locate the entrance of the cavern before being caught.

The Story of the Green Children is fascinating all on its own- but even from within the story, there are surprising lesser elements, pointed out by Katherine Briggs- like the fact that beans were a traditional "food of the dead", that "Martins" were names for witch's familiars and imps, and that green was a traditional color for the dead. The fact that their "homeland" had no direct light- no sun, just a perpetual haze of twilight, is interesting; they appear to be describing the "dusk world" of the dead.

And like Princess Moanna from Pan's Labyrinth, the sunlight, the direct sunlight, dazzled them and robbed them of vitality. By coming to another world, one with different realities than what they were used to, the adjustment "shock" stole much of their past from them, and their ability to return to where they had come from. The fact that the sun was the central factor in both del Toro's story, and in the old account of the Green Children, is more (I think) than just faery tale aesthetic. It is making a point about the dangers of wandering too far away and crossing powerful boundaries.

Different worlds have shocking and unexpected realities about them that can change you forever- and strand you, too, in a new way of being. If the moonlit/twilit world below is symbolized most often by the moon, the sun is certainly the symbol of the human world, bright and harsh, and far from the depths that we can't see because of the green earth that covers it- but with a blanket of green, the earth reminds us of the dead forever below.

How Moanna came to lose her place in the Underworld or the Spirit world is easily spelled out: she was led by desires, compelled to slip her guardians and leap the boundaries and "go and see" for herself. It was desire that compelled her beyond a point that she couldn't return from. With the Green Children, it was the entrancement of curiosity, another popular folkloric motif explaining the motivations of wandering beings who sometimes find themselves in another world. In both cases, subtle powers transfix and mesmerize the subjects, leading them wandering off to a (oftentimes) harsh surprise, a dangerous journey.

Once the boundaries are crossed, for whatever reason they were crossed, a whole new era of existence begins, a new kind of life. And in many cases (actually every case), it contains hardships and terrors. But it also contains the secret of return and healing. And thus, the journey really begins.

Moanna "forgot who she was and where she came from. Her body suffered cold, sickness, and pain. Eventually, she died." Moanna has begun to exist as a mortal. She is characterized by the same features that make everyone mortal: like us, she has forgotten who she really is and her origin. She now suffers from the elements and disease, and she suffers death. It seems a high price to pay for just wanting to see blue skies and gentle breezes and the sun!

And yet, it wasn't Moanna's desire to see those things that was the true violation; it was her eluding her protectors and crossing a boundary that wasn't intended for her to cross. She intruded into another world in a way that she ought not. And there are consequences, always, when any being in any world does such a thing.

It doesn't really matter, ultimately, *\*why\** we mortals have come to be here. Like any good chess game, all that matters is how it ends. But to remember one's origins, that is the key to the beginning of the end game- the beginning of the healing, the unraveling of the dark, forgetful forces that bind us to suffering conditions. And as we shall see, when Moanna/Ofelia is finally reached by the helpers from the Unseen world who are tasked with guiding her home, the first thing her chief helper does is remind her of her lost identity- "You are Princess Moanna", he tells her.

What worked for Moanna can work for you and I, as well. But as with her, there is a world of terror to face, and tests of bravery and even death between us and the fulfillment of this, the strangest of all "fairy tales", a tale which hides truths that have existed long before del Toro made his amazing movie.

The oldest and most foundational spiritual traditions that lie at the origins of Western civilization are not quiet when it comes to revealing what caused mankind to "lose its place" in the Unseen world: The ancient Pre-Socratic sorcerer and mystic Empedocles taught precisely what you should expect by now: once, we were all undying beings, dwelling perpetually and harmoniously, before the power of love or desire "lured us away"- with gentle, but unstoppable compulsion- to wander away from our own immortality and into the dream of mortality, into the world of mixture and suffering and confusion.

And, he taught, just as desire (which was one of the two great universal laws) had done this to us, so strife- the other great universal law, the power that separates all things, was now gradually returning all things back to where they were to begin with, back to their true home, before desire brought them all together. What was immortal had, under the gentle but iron-hard compulsion of desire, learned to be mortal, and to forget its true origins. And it was and is "strife"- the terrible power that destroys and separates- that ironically frees all beings.

This story taught by Empedocles, and all the stories like it, told in countless forms, they aren't just some superstitious tales invented by people seeking an answer to suffering; they are recounting the truth about things, and they won't ever go away. That they should appear over and over again in folklore, in various spiritual philosophies, and the like, is not accidental.

█Like Moanna/Ofelia, we are each a character in what amounts to a "fairy tale" which is different from the ordinary notion of "fairy tales" in one important way: it's not using invented fancies to get a sentimental point across. It's using the truth, disguised in various ways, in an attempt to free us all. In a humorous way, I am reminded of the movie "Pirates of the Caribbean", and the scene in which our heroine is told by the antagonistic pirate captain: "You best start believing in ghost stories Miss Turner- you're in one!"█

### *Making Sight Whole: Ofelia's Mission*

Right from the start of the movie, Ofelia, the mortal and forgetful disguise of Princess Moanna, reveals her true purpose. While driving through the countryside, her caravan of cars has to stop, and she wanders about, discovering an ancient statue which has one of its eyes missing. She searches for- and finds- the missing eye, and restores it to the statue. In the most beautiful and subtle ways, the message is clear: she- and all of us- no longer "see fully"- we only see partially. We don't see the



amazing and powerful world of the Unseen; the powers we came from, and which alone can satisfy us, are invisible to us. But she restores that sight, puts both eyes back in place.

One of the "fairy helpers" of Ofelia appears in that scene as an insect- the only way ordinary perception can see it. But we are treated to its true form, later; What appeared one way shows that it has a "non-ordinary" aspect, which is the complete truth about it. So often, what is seen is only part of the picture. There is no need to abandon what is seen- but to "go into" it, to go deeper, reveals the whole truth.

Not far into the movie, Ofelia tells a story, a mystical parable- and this would appear to be something she is capable of doing, quite a bit; her words often, as we shall see, have hidden meanings. The story she tells earlier on is another full revelation of the spiritual "fall" that mankind has taken. It concerns a magical rose that can give eternal life to people who find it. Her story goes as so:

Many, many years ago in a sad, faraway land, there was an enormous mountain made of rough, black stone. At sunset, on top of that mountain, a magic rose blossomed every night that made whoever plucked it immortal. But no one dared go near it because its thorns were full of poison. Men talked amongst themselves about their fear of death, and pain, but never about the promise of eternal life. And every day, the rose wilted, unable to bequeath its gift to anyone... forgotten and lost at the top of that cold, dark mountain, forever alone, until the end of time.

The dark and rough mountain is more than just a metaphor for our world as it has become since our "loss" of spiritual perception and wholeness. It is a symbol of hard, unmovable consequence, the unmovable and unchangeable hard facts of life that we must endure. But at the darkest moment, the death of the light (sunset), a magical rose blooms, something that promises eternity right in the middle of darkness and hardship.

But humans will not go after it, because of fear- fear of death, fear of pain, and fear of the thorns that come with the rose. Without facing death and fear, and the "thorns" that protect the eternal-life giving mystery (which themselves represent the hardships faced by anyone who wishes to overcome the consequences and curses of being banished from the Spirit world) there is no possibility of achieving the final destiny of reunion. And "every day" that people don't turn their souls towards this quest, it becomes harder to achieve; the rose "wilts".

Princess Moanna announces the truth- that our fear holds us back from what we must do and where we must go. And take note that, at this point in the movie, she is telling this story to her unborn brother- this point will be very important when all of the symbolism of the movie is revealed.

As we shall see, Moanna/Ofelia's quest involves, at the most hard-hitting level, facing fear and death, before she indeed finds this "rose". But the story is still not quite so simple, for as I have said before,

and must continue to say, Moanna's tale is related to mankind's tale, but still different for important reasons.

### *The Lost Mankind and the Suffering Earth*

The focus of Pan's Labyrinth is on two separate but related storylines: on the one hand, we have Ofelia/Moanna and her perilous journey to completion and restoration; on the other, we are treated to a graphic and heartlessly dark (and very honest) depiction of what the world has become, ever since mankind has become estranged from the Spirit world. The first storyline is a story of spiritual trial, sorcery, sorcerous combat between various powers, and discovery. The second storyline is a story of conflict, strife, and the consuming of the world and its inhabitants by evil. The two stories overlap in countless ways. One story tells of the loss and regaining of sanity and of truth; the other demonstrates the consequences that must exist when these things are lost.

"Evil" in this entire movie, and in this story- and indeed, in reality- is a function of estrangement- of isolation, from the truth about our origins and the truth about our destiny. Humans become evil, hateful, acquisitive, and destructive only to the extent that they live in forgetfulness of who and what they really are, and in proportion to the distance between them and their original kinship with other beings and with the Unseen world. In that isolation, a great wasteland is created inside them, a waste of bitterness, meaninglessness, fear, and which comes to include the element of self-loathing, as we shall see.

The "Lost Mankind" presented by the movie contains three tiers or three "categories" of human being, each represented by one or more characters in the movie.

The first category of Lost Humanity are the oppressors- represented in the movie by the Fascists, and most specifically by the chilling character of "The Captain", Captain Vidal. This category of man, quite simply, is that segment of humankind that is most estranged from the Truth about things, and from the spirit world, our home. In their isolation, they have become greed obsessed, and fully separate from the rest of the living world; they will, without emotion, extinguish the lives of others, and in very brutal ways. They see other humans, and nature itself, as things- objects- to be used for their own benefit, and nothing else.

Alongside them, in the movie, we find the Church, represented by a priest that dines with Captain Vidal and his cronies. The church, falling into this first tier of humanity, is not a beacon of spirituality at all, or as it claims to be- it is a fully politicized tool of the oppressors, one that supports the self-serving mission of the oppressors by teaching a false theology that reinforces the mindless and brutal worldview of oppression, and supports their lack of compassion of any sort. "God doesn't care about the bodies" of the men that Captain Vidal and his soldiers are killing and torturing, the priest says; "He's already saved their souls."

The priest dines at the table (along with everyone else) on rabbit stew that was taken from a man and his son that were murdered in a very gory way by Captain Vidal, even though they were innocent of any wrongdoing. This is clear and blatant symbolism; I scarce need to go into it much further.

In one important scene, we see Captain Vidal staring contemptuously into a mirror, at his own reflection, and drawing a razor blade across his reflection's throat. His self-hatred is very intense; this is symbolic of the self-loathing that the oppressors overtly or covertly feel, and the origin of their hateful behavior to the rest of the world. The fascists love war; they love violence, and they are in love with death, and even "dying gloriously"- as Vidal says and demonstrates throughout the movie, as he dances through battle-scenes like the energized psychopath he is.

That the oppressors in this movie are fascist is more than just a political and historical statement made by del Toro regarding the unbelievable horrors that the fascist dictator Franco inflicted on Spain, in conjunction with the Catholic Church (which Franco supported and was allied with.)

The true evil people of our world are all fascist in some sense, unavoidably. They all seek to conquer, and control, and they all seek to benefit from the suffering of others, in whatever way it can be arranged.

They will create any sort of justification that they can to further this goal, whether it be protecting society with "good old fashioned family values"- as Franco did- or protecting everyone from the "enemies" that they scare others with (again, as Franco did, and as been done by countless before and since him). They will claim to be "protecting souls" or any other species of justification that can be leveraged, often with real and deadly force, onto the oppressed. But it is precisely in their use of violence and force that their true souls- or lack thereof- are revealed.

Truthfully, they have no authentic belief in a soul- only counterfeit beliefs in a warped vision of reality in which they are accorded the status of "righteous", or at least the strong and therefore the correct- as Captain Vidal states at the same dinner scene in which he states that all people are not "equal"- that some are conquerors, and some are conquered, and that's that.

The second tier of people are the fighting oppressed. Truly, there are only two kinds of people- oppressors, and the oppressed; only some of the oppressed do not take oppression lying down. Those who fight against the oppressors take on many forms throughout history, but in Pan's Labyrinth they take on the form of Marxist/socialist guerrillas who are battling against the fascist forces of Franco. Sadly, their cause is already lost; the historical Spanish civil war was lost by the socialist forces, and Franco's forces were destined to carry the day, and rule Spain until Franco's death many regrettable years later.

And yet, the fighters fight; they are very tenacious and though backed into a losing corner, refuse to

give up. Their struggle is undeniably noble, but they were not able to win against the oppressors, and for a very important reason, one that again reflects into the history of our world. While the fighting oppressed are correct to see injustice in the oppression they have felt for so long, and right to struggle against it, neither they nor the oppressors ever give reverence or deference to the Spirit world, and the ultimate truth about things, which alone can help them to truly win. Marxism in our world is characterized by a turn against religion, and it isn't hard to see why- Marx, and people like him, rightly noticed that "churches" had become tools of oppression.

But to do as they did- throw out the "baby with the bathwater" as it were, is just as ominous an imbalance, just as big a flaw, and a fatal weakness in their way of thinking.

Marxism and classical historical socialist movements tend to be atheistic for clear reasons, and though they have fought hard historically, in some places achieving temporary victories, they too have failed (as in the collapse of the former Soviet Union, which was, to be fair, not truly "socialist.") But the former Soviet Union was very atheistic, and it failed, in the long run, to hold itself together, and to deliver to people beneath its banner the equality it had been promising before Stalin corrupted it to his own greedy purposes.

Our fighters in Pan's Labyrinth are symbolized by the "Reds" (as the fascists call them) and by the characters of Mercedes, the guerrilla spy living alongside Captain Vidal, and the Doctor, also a guerrilla collaborator and sympathizer. Both Mercedes and the Doctor must live exposed to the great evil directly presented by Captain Vidal, and they are greatly tormented by it in many ways- as all people who must live two lives, tiptoeing around the oppressors, are tormented.

The fascists, the first "tier" of fallen mankind, love authority and order, and they don't like to be questioned. The Captain clearly loves obedience- both obeying, and being obeyed. When he executes the Doctor for disobeying him, he wants to know why- and the Doctor can only tell him "I'm not a man like you- I can't obey authority without question."

The greatest stress on the "second tier" of mankind, our fighters, always relates to their longing for freedom and peace, but their inability to find it, no matter how nobly they struggle. They too, in estrangement from the Spirit world, have broken or lost souls, and thus, can never find their way to the Truth. At one scene in the movie, this exchange happens between Ofelia and Mercedes:

**Ofelia:** "Do you believe in fairies?"

**Mercedes:** "No, but when I was a little girl, I did. I believed in a lot of things I don't believe anymore."

This grueling cynicism is masked in so many ways- "I grew up", "I got mature", or, in the language of the spiritually malignant Church and its Bible: "I put away childish things."

The minds of fallen mankind find many ways to apologize for and excuse their lack of belief, their loss of imagination, and their loss of youthful wonder- characterizing it as an evolution, and not a degeneration, which it truly is. They are moving in the opposite direction of what their souls dearly want- the Spirit world- and towards a desolate, materialistic isolation from the one power that can save them.

The final "tier" of mankind is, of course, the regular oppressed, or the non-fighting oppressed. These are the ordinary people of Franco's Spain- and by extension, the whole world- that simply sit back and let themselves be controlled, and abused. Included in this tier of people is the Earth itself- forever used and abused by the Oppressors, and by the people under the direction of the oppressors. An in Pan's Labyrinth, the Earth itself is symbolized and represented by Ofelia's pregnant mother, who is now married to Captain Vidal.

This point requires intense analysis. Ofelia's mother met Captain Vidal while she was working for him- struggling to produce goods and services for him. Just as the earth works daily to produce for man, while man abuses it or ignores its real needs, so did Ofelia's mother. Captain Vidal heartlessly abuses Ofelia's mother, thinking of her not as a person with dignity and needs, but only as a means to his own end- his single desire- to use her in the creation of his own son, the next generation of human that he will manipulate into becoming like him, as his own father did to him. He doesn't even appear to have any compassionate love for the idea of a son to come; he mechanically wishes to use his wife to re-create himself, through her, and to pass on his own legacy.

He is consistently cold and rude to his wife, and she is very long-suffering. She has been used sexually by Vidal, to get her with child- his hoped-for son. This might be considered a metaphor for the way humanity has used or even raped the planet for our hoped-for ends, ends that have everything to do with our personal benefit, and never for the benefit of anyone or anything else.

When Princess Moanna became lost in our world, she entered into a relationship with the earth, becoming its "daughter"- Ofelia. She loves her mother very much, but no matter how much her beaten-down mother tries to get her to call Captain Vidal her father, she refuses. "He's not my father!" she insists throughout the movie- a powerful statement of the distance between Ofelia's soul-level wisdom, and the most distant, degenerate form of lost-soul evil imaginable which is being passed off as "her father".

Moanna, deep down, knows that her true father is the Lord of the Spirit World, not this evil human, even if forgetful Ofelia doesn't understand this consciously. She still feels it.

When humanity was "lost", power and the will to use power for greedy ends arose, and was seized by the most estranged of humans- the first tier, represented by our fascists. This isn't just a dark fairy tale scenario; this is both historical reality and the realities of our present day, as anyone can see. Our violent overlords today may not openly call themselves fascists or even consider themselves so, but

their constant similarity- the will to use, kill, control, and discard massive populations of people for their own ends- remains obvious. "Control" need not come in the form of marching armies over other people or herding them into extermination camps; control can be more subtle these days, but no less oppressive.

This is part of the great darkness of the world that Moanna/Ofelia has to endure, as we all must endure. One thing arises as true from this whole analysis of fallen mortals, whether they are oppressors or oppressed- there is no healing, no possibility of goodness or peace, without what was lost, the truth about the Spirit world, the magical fullness that was, before we wandered away from it and became imprisoned by fear. The oppressors couldn't care less, though they suffer still; the fighters want peace, but can't believe in the true means of finding it. They can't believe in the Spirit world in their downtrodden cynicism, and thus, reduced to a material-centered and hollow approach, will never succeed in their struggles. Everyone else just tries to survive, and the Earth is downtrodden by all.

One final thing must be said: Ofelia's mother is pregnant. This goes to the heart of the true secret in this movie, the true "secret" of the third hidden storyline in this revelatory Mystery Play. Much more will be said of this soon.

### *The Faun: Ofelia's Familiar and Ofelia's Sorcery*

Ofelia, the mask worn by the amnesiac Princess Moanna, is finally reached by the powers of the Unseen world, who intend to help her along with her journey, and to her journey's fateful conclusion. Her primary "helper" from the Spirit world is a faun, or a satyr- a half goat, half humanoid being who gives his name- when Ofelia wisely asks him what it is, thus:

"Me? I've had so many names. Old names that only the wind and the trees can pronounce. I am the mountain, the forest and the earth. I am... I am a faun. Your most humble servant, Your Highness."

He is the iconic character that gives the movie its title, though he is not "Pan" in the sense of the ancient and powerful divinity. Like all of these earth or land spirits, he is a "little Pan", a goatish inhabitant of the land and the Unseen world, who is an emissary or messenger between the Seen and the Unseen worlds. In this case, he is a servitor, a herald of the Court of the Underworld, sent to aid the lost Princess Moanna in her undertakings.

He is a daimon- not a demon, but a daimon, to use the original Greek word that has been warped by Christianity into a word of evil. "Daimon" always and originally meant "divine being", not "devil" or "evil being." He is a "familiar" to Ofelia, a helping spirit, there to instruct and guide her, though he will not do so without her pledge- her oath- to obey him.

I have analyzed the idea of the "Satyrs" or the Goat-beings, the Seirim of ancient Semitic lore,

the Woodwoses or the Bodaich-people, in detail in another work of mine, and their position in the traditional symbolism of both folklore and traditional witchcraft. Their position as teachers, guides, and protectors of clandestine cults of both witches and other mystics throughout history is elucidated in that work, entitled "Forgetting Human", and may be worth a read later if you're interested in knowing more about this aspect of these beings.

It is enough to know that the Faun is Ofelia's connection to the Unseen, from the perspective of her hindered, forgetful state, and her teacher and guardian. He is the "little devil" of her one-person witch cult, her personal guiding divinity, if one were inclined to see it in that manner. He is the power behind her sorcery, as she sojourns in the human state fulfilling the form and function of a sorceress.

And he meets her in a Labyrinth- the ages-old symbol of the journey back to the source, at its center. The Labyrinth always implies, and symbolizes, the struggle, the obstacle, met by all who journey, but also the inevitability of the return to the center, to the source, the origin, the truth. This labyrinth in the movie is part of an ancient ruin, which was clearly once the center of some cult, whether mystery cult or otherwise. It contains, in its depths, a "moon gate", a gate directly connecting this world to the Unseen, which is part of the finale of Ofelia's great journey.

But there, at the bottom of the ruin, is a carving in stone of the Faun, standing over a young girl, and the young girl holding a baby. This carving is central to the highest mystery of the movie- and the Faun himself identifies the meaning of the sculpture just a tantalizing bit- he identifies the Faun in the sculpture as himself, and the girl as Ofelia. But as to the identity of the baby, he is silent- he changes the subject and even seems mischievously evasive.

This question, asked by Ofelia, "Who is the baby"- is the true "grail question" of the entire movie; the mystery-riddle that unlocks the movie's prophecy and the revelation of its mystery. We shall return to it later. But in the meantime, know that the question about the identity of the baby is the "Secret Question at the Heart of All Things"- emanating as it does from a sculpture at the base of a labyrinth.

Using a magical book given to her by the Faun- potently entitled "The Book of Crossroads", the legendary point where this world and the Unseen world meet and connect, Ofelia is equipped with the lore she needs to begin her magical struggle against the powers of evil in the movie. She is given tasks by her Otherworldly teacher, and even taboos or ritual regulations that she must follow, lest she risk the vitality and fragility of her important work. Her first assignment, and indeed, her first full working of true sorcery, is as layered with powerful symbolism as it is fraught with danger.

She is told of a moribund tree out in the forest, and The Book of Crossroads informs her of its history, and her task, as so:

When the forest was young, it was home to creatures who were full of magic and wonder. At

the heart of this forest stood a colossal fig tree. The Forest Folk

protected one another; they slept in its shadow. But now, the tree is dying. Its branches are dry, its trunk old and twisted. A monstrous toad has settled in its roots and won't let the tree thrive. You must put the three magic rocks in its mouth and retrieve a magic key from its insides. Only then will the fig tree flourish again.

Ofelia goes to the tree, which has a gaping entrance in its trunk, and into the world below. This is a full "underworld journey", to the roots of the tree, to face a spiritual evil which represents something very particular, and which goes to the heart of the evil which menaces everyone in the entire movie: the presence of fascism in the Unseen world. While in the exterior world, fascism is experienced and encountered as soldiers, violence, and corrupt leaders; in the interior world it appears as a massive, greedy, poisonous toad.

The "young forest" spoken of by the Book, and the colossal fig tree at its heart, symbolizes the harmonious original world, when "the Forest Folk" all lived in harmony, protecting one another and sleeping safely in the shadow of the all-giving fig tree, a representation of the generous power of the land. The scenario presented is also a vision of social cooperation and mutual aid. But now, a greedy force has settled at the roots of the tree, and is stealing its life and vitality. Fascism is literally sucking the life-force of the world and land away, and the "young forest" and its forest folk have fallen into chaos. The "roots" are poisoned by the toad's greed.

The "key" that the toad has in its guts is a double-layered symbol; it is a key she will need to unlock a further task, but also the "golden key" to the harmony that once existed, before greed overpowered life and vitality. Ofelia faces the monster toad, and says to it:

"Hi- I am- I'm Princess Moanna and I'm not afraid of you. Aren't you ashamed? Living down here, eating all the pill bugs and getting fat while the tree dies?"

This is her rebuke of fascism itself: how can you not be ashamed of being so fat and greedy while the tree- the network of life binding all- suffers and dies? In this, we can easily also see a rebuke of any system that allows a few to grow fat and wealthy while so many others suffer.

Ofelia then must struggle with the monster toad, and defeat it, which she does. She retrieves the key from it, and exits the world below the roots. By so doing, Ofelia has done one of the most powerful things she does in the entire movie- she has faced the spiritual essence of fascism, of Franco's entire government, and defeated it, banishing it from the Underworld.

In the exterior world, fascism is now doomed; by defeating the non-ordinary aspect of fascism in the Underworld, she has undermined the life-force of the ordinary aspect of it. And indeed, years later,



both Franco's fascist government, and many other fascist governments around the world, will die and pass away, to be replaced often by more progressive social systems. Nations- like Spain- will live in embarrassment over the deeds of the former government that once held sway over their land, and begin the hard process of healing and uncovering the mass graves and other hidden atrocities committed by them.

Ofelia's act of sorcerous combat, of spiritual warfare, is a healing work of sorcery for the land itself. This is the beginning of the revelation of the true nature of Ofelia/Moanna's mission- she is, in fact, a savior for mankind, a protecting power for humans generally. This will begin to develop more as the parallelism between her own journey and the fate of mankind is made overt.

Another key scene in the movie reveals Ofelia's magic as a healing magic for the world itself. The faun teaches her how to use a Mandrake plant- the "Plant that dreamed of being human"- to heal her ailing pregnant mother, who, as has been mentioned before, represents the Earth itself.

In a sense, the mandrake and Ofelia/Moanna have something in common- both are from the "green realm below"- the Mandrake being a plant from the green vegetative realm that covers the Underworld, and which draws its life from the Underworld, and Moanna being a being from the Underworld who once also wanted to know what life was like "up there" in the human world- she was like one of the "Green Children" who wandered upwards. The Mandrake is a plant whose root is shaped like a human; its dream of rising into the human world and being human has altered its form, almost as though its dream is simply taking a very long time to slowly transform it into a human.

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In the meantime, it is used for sorcerous works- like the one Ofelia does on her mother, and which begins to heal her mother, until the spell and the Mandrake itself is discovered, first by her mother, then by the evil Vidal. Her mother is simply disappointed by her daughter's naivete- the Captain is actively hateful about it. Her mother, in keeping with her position among the third tier of man (both as an oppressed human being, and as the oppressed earth) cannot believe in magic, and she says so, as she destroys the Mandrake in a fire, and with it, the spell that was helping her:

**Carmen** (Ofelia's Mother): You're getting older, and you'll see that life isn't like your fairy tales. The world is a cruel place. And you'll learn that, even if it hurts. [throws the mandrake onto the fire]

**Ofelia**: No! No!

**Carmen**: Ofelia! Magic does not exist. Not for you, me or anyone else.

Of course, her mother- as a downtrodden human- eventually goes to death because of the difficulty of the birth of Ofelia's brother, the son the Captain had hoped for. The Captain, even until the last moment of his hapless wife's life, cares nothing for her well-being, and only for his son. Her mother's lack of belief in magic, and thus her inability to receive its aid, ends up being one of the factors that leads to her death.

The final key scene which I will discuss with regard to Ofelia's sorcerous workings, is the grimmest and darkest of all: her journey, again into the Underworld, into the lair of a "Pale Man" who sleeps menacingly at a feasting table below, and who must not be disturbed by any means. Ofelia is sent there ostensibly to retrieve a magical knife, but she is enchanted by the feasting table, and disturbs it by taking forbidden food from it, and has to suffer the wrath of the Pale Man.

The Pale Man is a terrifying figure, described as "completely non-human", with no eyes in its head, but a place for eyes in its hands. When he is aroused, he puts those eyes in his hands and uses them to stalk Ofelia. He also destroys some of her lesser fairy helpers, in a pretty gruesome way, by eating them alive. The identity of this "Pale Man" is made clear by his environment- he is the spirit that devours children, kills children before their time, especially young children- his lair is piled high with heaps of baby shoes, trophies of babies and toddlers he has presumably eaten. The walls of his hall are painted with gory depictions of him preying on children.

Again, we encounter the heart of darkness in this movie- the taboo subject I discussed earlier- violence and death coming onto children, the innocent and helpless, who are ordinarily protected by adults, and who need protection. The death of children is not an uncommon even in our world, at all, in any era. Death doesn't appear to show favoritism to children. And yet, we react with a different form of horror or rage when we hear of adults killing children, or when we hear of the "very young" dying. Something deep in us honors the youth in them as a special treasure, something deserving of special protection or consideration.

This monster can't see with its face; it only has eyes in its hands, or, in other words, it only sees when it comes to take someone away and eat them. Its hunger and its grasping hands are the way it "sees". At the end of this analysis, we will see why it was both foreshadowing and fateful that Ofelia would have to face this particular evil. In facing the death of the youngest and most innocent, in its Underworldly aspect, Ofelia is facing the darkest of the dark, the cruelest of the cruel, and crossing a boundary that is again, very dangerous, invoking a power that is very dangerous, and yet, still a key to the completion of her mission.

### *The Moon Gate and the Blood Sacrifice*

And now, we reach the culmination of Ofelia/Moanna's journey, and the peak of the revelations made by this story and film. Fleeing with her infant brother, Ofelia makes it back into the ruined rotunda at the heart of the labyrinth, where she finds her Faun. Now, on the night of the full moon, the moon-gate can be opened, and she can return home, saving herself from the evil Captain who is pursuing her- but the Faun has a final instruction for how this is to be done: she must spill the blood of her infant brother- just a drop- to get the gate to open. The dialogue goes as so:

**Faun:** Quickly Your Majesty, give him to me. The full moon is high in the sky. We can open the portal.

**Ofelia:** What is that in your hand?

**Faun:** The portal will only open if we offer the blood of an innocent. Just a drop of blood: a pinprick, that's all. It's the final task.

**Faun:** Hurry. You promised to obey me. Give me the boy!

**Ofelia:** No! My brother stays with me.

**Faun:** You would give up your sacred rights for a brat you barely know?

**Ofelia:** Yes, I would.

**Faun:** You would give up your throne for him? He who has caused you such misery, such humiliation?

**Ofelia:** Yes, I would.

**Faun:** (Smiling mysteriously) As you wish, Your Highness.

Immediately, something precious and revelatory is being leaked by this dialogue- how has Ofelia's infant brother "caused her such misery and humiliation?" He's barely two days old! She has shown much love for her mother and her unborn brother- even telling him touching stories in his mother's womb. And yet, because of what her infant brother symbolizes, he has, in fact, caused Ofelia great suffering.

Because her brother, who is the infant that she is holding in the sculpture (which the Faun wouldn't reveal to her) represents all of mankind. And the insinuation here is that Moanna has lived many lives as a mortal, before she was Ofelia, and that she has suffered at the hands of others many times.

At this point in the movie, Captain Vidal catches Ofelia in the ruins, takes her infant brother, and shoots her, fatally injuring her. Her blood flows freely into the grooves of the moon-gate, and though the human characters in and about the ruins do not have the power to see it, the moon gate opens, and she is allowed to go home, to be restored to her mother and father, the Lord and Lady of the Underworld.

From the outside, it just seems as though Captain Vidal has murdered a young girl, as heartlessly as he murdered so many others. Moanna has met the spirit of child death; as a child, she dies brutally, and

the blood sacrifice that ends her journey successfully is her own sacrifice, the means by which she leaves one world and enters the next.

But still, there is a great mystery being revealed here. The "secret trinity" on the stone was the Faun, Ofelia/Moanna, and her brother: The Faun, protector of Princess Moanna, Princess Moanna, the protector of humanity, and humanity itself. Princess Moanna, as Ofelia, was asked to do precisely what the fascists do every day- harm an innocent to get her way, to save herself, to harm an innocent for her own gain, and she refused.

It is her refusal to commit that harm, to engage in the greed and selfish violence that characterizes "lost humanity" which allows her to "pass the final test"- proving that she is who she says she is, a Princess from the Deep, and that she has not been "tainted" by evil in her long journey through mortality. She is made able to return, to be made whole again, and then, Ofelia is murdered, her blood filling the moon gate and cracking it open. Strife- the evil of destruction- fulfills its initiatory role as a liberator- but woe to the lost souls by whom strife works!

Because the Captain, in his delirious hurry to get his son back, the infant representing mankind, and in his desire to possess it, to manipulate it and pass on the legacy of evil to it, has inadvertently and unknowingly flown into the middle of the guerrilla fighters who have been battling him throughout the movie. His son is taken from him, and he is killed by the fighters. Mankind's future- symbolized by the infant- is a future that will not have to be dominated by fascists and evil; even though Captain Vidal asks that the boy be told who his father was, and when his father died, the freedom fighters deny him his final wish and tell him:

"No- he'll never even know your name" just as they shoot him, and he dies as unfulfilled as he lived. The infant is now safe, forever, from the "first tier" of human evil that had for so long menaced it and wanted to possess it.

Ofelia's true status as "Savior to Mankind" is known fully in the culmination of the movie. She not only helped to save mankind/her infant brother from the first tier of human evil, from the violent fascists who command and control others with violence, but earlier in the film, while she was speaking to her brother in her mother's womb, she says what may be the most important speech she gives in the movie, once all

the hidden facts and symbolism are known. To her brother in the womb, she says:

Brother... little brother... if you can hear me; Things out here aren't so good. But soon you'll have to come out. You've made mama very sick. I want to ask you one favor for when you come out, just one; Don't hurt her, you'll meet her, she's very pretty. Even though sometimes she's sad for many days at a time. You'll see, when she smiles, you'll love her. Listen, if you do what I say, I'll make you a promise. I'll take you to my kingdom and I'll make you a prince. I

promise you, a prince.

Ofelia/Moanna's work wasn't just to attempt to alleviate the suffering of the earth, common mother to all, or to defeat spiritual evils like fascism from the interior world, or to reveal to man the truth of eternal life and the fear that bars people from it, but to bring about the deepest hidden destiny of mankind: mankind's inevitable and destined return to the conscious fellowship of the Spirit world, and the subsequent freedom we will find there from the evils that have arisen to torment us since we left it.

Moanna is herself, in a way, the missing element of the Spirit world that everyone wants, but no one understands, and which no one sees. And her journey parallels every soul's journey through the world, once it has become isolated from the Spirit world, from fullness. What mankind needs is Moanna's compassion, self-sacrifice, and wisdom.

"You've made mama very sick", she says directly to mankind- a statement packed with meaning regarding man's impact on the earth, inspired by greed and violence. In exchange for not harming their mother, and further, if mankind can do as Moanna did- refuse to spill the blood of innocent others or torment others for selfish ends- they can win back their place in the Spirit world as readily as she did. And there, she will lift mankind up to the level of royalty, restoring mankind's original lost dignity and peace.

In some way, the story of Ofelia/Moanna and the cosmic drama that is taking place here isn't a new motif at all. It is a common fixture in western spiritual culture that cosmic forces can take on the most deceptively simple of appearances- after all, in Christianity (to make one example), the supreme being of the cosmos took on the form of a humble carpenter in some out-of-the-way backwater outpost

of a vast empire. His death, being executed as a common criminal, was believed by Christians to be not at all what it seemed, but in reality, the culmination of the entire historical struggle of good versus evil, sin and salvation, and life versus death, ending at the cross in the victory of life and goodness.

Is Ofelia's story the same sort of story? It seems to be- in one corner of Franco's violent, oppressive Spain, a young girl who believes in magic and likes fairy stories is confronting an evil, violent local Captain, and their struggle- including the girl's murder, is in reality something far more cosmic than it appears, and more cosmic and meaningful than anyone in the story can see, except for Moanna herself.

In Moanna's sacrificial death, and in her promise to mankind, and in her many healing works, and indeed, as the movie says, in the "traces she left behind", the entire cosmological destiny of human beings is written- the salvation of man from the evil that menaces him, and the way home to the Spirit world which will satisfy and heal, at long last, man's broken condition of isolation and fear.

People love to see the extraordinary hidden in the ordinary-seeming; perhaps it reminds us all that even the mundane events of our lives or world can have great significance. It begs us to see deeper than what is apparent.

Moanna goes back to her father and mother, the King of the Dead or the Lord of the Underworld, and the Queen of the Underworld who is identified with the moon, and sees the Faun there, standing between them- their herald and servant, who honors her, along with the throngs of cheering beings in the Underworld.

# Nessa's Curse

The Land is storied. That we have either forgotten the stories of our lands- or never knew them- is central to the modern day's accursed impasse. It may seem a small matter, but such is the nature of things, the smallest seeds can grow into the largest forests of trouble.

Here's a story I'm sure you will all appreciate. When I hear stories like this, I wonder what lost stories like this live in the land all around me.

It is said that long ago, Beira, the Great Grandmother of humans, beasts, and Gods, was always busy capping and uncapping the various wells she used. This was apparently a lot of trouble; Ben Cruachan had a well that she drew water from daily, but one evening, she forgot to put back the heavy stone she moved to get to the water- and by the next morning, after a terrible flood that spilled into the valley below the well, Loch Awe was formed.

The mighty old Cailleach also had a well in Inverness-shire that she finally hired a maid to take care of- the maid-servant Nessa. Nessa had to keep this well covered from sunset to sunrise, but one evening she was late to get it covered, and the waters began to flow and flow. Frightened, she ran from the flooding waters. Beira was watching all of this from on top of Ben Nevis, one of her favorite mountains, and she became quite angry. She summoned her power to shape things and cursed Nessa- "You have neglected your duty and upset the order of things. Now, you will run forever, and never leave water."

With that, Nessa was changed into a river, which ran from the loch that was formed from the well she failed to cap in time- the place that today is still called Loch Ness, with the river Ness running from it towards the sea.

Once a year, it is said, on the anniversary of the night she was changed into a river, Nessa arises from the river Ness in her young girl form, and sings a very sad and sweet song- but with a voice more clear and beautiful than birds, and with a song more melodious than the "silvern pipes and golden harps of fayerie-land."

I heard this story a long time ago. And I've often hoped that if, one day, I lived near enough to Nessa's new body, I could sit every night for a year on the banks and just watch, and wait. Because who knows what night this happened to her long ago? But of course, the sweetness of the Unseen world might have other dangers aside from a long wait. Such beauty as Nessa's music is seldom without danger. Maybe a man or woman that heard it could never be happy again, and have to hear all of the sounds of this world seem unsatisfying, no matter how lovely.

But the real beauty is this story itself. This is how everything you see around you came to be- from a

story older than lakes or hills. To know these stories- to learn to listen for them again- is where the journey of the True Old Ways takes a person.



# Solomon Pedrick and the Wasting Illness

It's hard, sometimes, to express how deep and important some things can be, when they come disguised in simple forms. I am at heart a storyteller, and this is because stories are one of the chief ways that the most precious things about our common past transmit themselves to the present and to the future. When dealing with sorcery- which always comes hidden and encoded in strange ways- stories are another way that the "secrets" of extraordinary cognition and spirit-interaction are transmitted to us.

So I have a story here- a story that may seem strange, and it is strange. There are elements of it that will be recognized; elements that will be very curious or enthralling, and elements that confuse some people. But as I prepare to type it out, I know that it is more than just what it appears. It is a story that contains the key to the heart of everything the true old sorcery-forms aim to accomplish- and it is a revelation, in partial form, of how I managed to win the terrible and lonely battle and struggle of the sorcerous soul. What you are about to read is not a purely made up story, either; no matter how extraordinary it may sound, the events depicted- or those identical to them, actually happened. I'd never think to bring you all a purely "made up" story; that wouldn't be the kind of story I'm all about.

So read this with no pre-conceived notions. Let it take you to the story-world that it describes, and pay attention to what is happening, in the small details. What you are seeing is a template, a pattern, of real working- working as old as the hills, but which needed some special work on my part and on the parts of the giants whose shoulders I ride upon, to wake it up, to make it a thing that can work for you and for me in the modern day. The Old Forms of the past that sleep in the Underworld; those old bones, they await the new blood and wind of those above the ground to regenerate them, so that they live again, and shed their sorcerous light again on the prepared.

\* \* \*

## *Solomon Pedrick and the Wasting Illness*

The illness was a terror. Entire families perished of it- strong, wiry men and their sons who worked the land; their wives and young children, the older folk, everyone fell. A child with red, round cheeks and the fire of life in their eyes would pass into the shadowland of pallor and weakness, expel blood in the ceaseless coughing, and be gone in less than a fortnight.

It was as though a vampire had passed through every house, taking the strength of life away, leaving behind wasted bodies, each paler than the last. When one brother had faded to death, his brothers and sisters were taken next. It was a vampire that was blamed in some areas- fresh from the Old World, bred on the old stories of the unquiet and thirsty dead, the people of several hollows disinterred the dead and drove spikes in the hearts of their corpses.

John Northey didn't have much in this world, but he was blessed with children. When his first daughter took ill, his heart sank into a darkness that no light could drive away. When faced with the loss of a child, many parents would claim to do anything to save them, but John took that vow to a deeper place.

Against the fearful warnings of the ministers, he took his hopes to the distant forest- to the quiet and tangled wooded riverside that the witch-man had built his cabin against. Solomon Pedrick was old now, and had lived away from the village for years. Perhaps he was lucky to be alive; men and women were hanged for witchcraft in several spates of diabolical panic that had swept the region not ten years before.

Those men and women went to the gallows wretchedly proclaiming their innocence; most thought that they probably were innocent. But everyone knew that Solomon was far from innocent. If it wasn't the Devil he shared allegiance with, it was the Indian devils of this new land that he kept company with. Only the great fear that the selectmen and the people as a whole felt for him- and his choice to live supremely isolated- spared him.

God and his angels were content to let entire families perish, no matter how upstanding and righteous they were, nor how much they begged for mercy. John Northey wondered, as many wondered, if Solomon Pedrick's demons or devils would be more willing to bargain for more immediate aid. And John thought hell's heated eternity for his own soul was a fair price to pay for his daughter to be strong and beautiful again, and live a long life with children of her own.

It took most of a day to find his way to Pedrick's cabin. He had never been this far up the river before, and he didn't know anyone else who had- or who would admit to having made the trip. He had his suspicions, though; everyone knew someone who had come into a shower of good fortune that seemed so unlikely that whispers about witchcraft had to follow. Solomon was old now- someone was visiting him, helping him to secure a living. But he hadn't been seen for years.

They said that he could heal people. His family was one of the first to move to this place; they survived attacks of the Red Men when others did not, which raised even more dark questions. He was the last of his kind, but his own father was one of the "strange folk", too- able to make horses and even wild beasts tame with just a word. Or at least, that's what John had heard growing up.

Solomon Pedrick's cabin was overgrown and stooped with age. It seemed to blend into the land like a massive, fat tree trunk that had been hollowed out, with windows carved and a door fit into it. It was later in the evening when John drew up his own courage and knocked on the door. A warm light glimmered from inside, and the smell of wood smoke was on the air. The river trilled silently by, and only a few evening birds shrieked in the distance.

John was unprepared for how welcoming Solomon Pedrick was- and how kind the years had been to him. His age was indeterminate; he was spry and sharp-minded, with narrow eyes that glinted with a

strange vitality. John was given a bowl of green soup from the kettle bubbling on the hearth, and some kind of dark tea. The old man was more aware of events in the village than John thought he should be, without someone visiting him regularly. And he had already guessed why John had come.

Surprisingly, the old man didn't want John's soul in return for arranging a healing for his daughter. He wanted a goodly amount of flour, tobacco, and salt, to be brought to him each month for the three seasons to follow. John eagerly agreed, and Solomon wished him and his daughter well on his journey back home.

John Northey leaves my story at this point. He and his daughter and the rest of his family lived long and happy lives after this. But the story doesn't end here. It really begins here, with Solomon Pedrick's sorcery, and how he lifted the wasting illness from Elizabeth Northey.

Solomon was the last man in that area that the Indian Devils could still meet with, for friendship and fellowship. The first Europeans who came to those woods and stony coasts wouldn't have established themselves without the help of the Native people- and after one particularly hard winter, the Pedrick family was one of the last to survive. Solomon was just a baby then; but his mother and father and aunts and uncles had seen what few other Europeans survived to see, or would care to see: a secret that the Natives knew and kept. They were not alone in the forest.

Spirits- called by white men the "Indian Devils"- lived there, too. And for centuries before without count, the Natives and these spirits, these non-human people, had been not two nations, but one. It was only fair; the spirit-beings had been there long before the Red Men came. It was these beings that had allowed the Red Men to make their homes there, and taught them how to live with great prosperity.

The Red Men were withdrawn from this area now. Occasionally some hunters might pass in the forest near Solomon's cabin, yet that had become more and more rare. But those spirits- some of them were still there. Solomon knew them, had grown up alongside them, knew the secret ways of meeting them and gaining their help. The medicine-men, who were all long gone now, had told Solomon stories about the Chief Spirit, who often enough appeared as an animal in the dreams of men and women that he would give power to, to make them into sorcerers. But his name was not to be said, because he might kill people who used his name frivolously.

Solomon was shown how to incubate a dream that gave him his own power. He learned who and what lived in the rocky outcroppings on the river-side that he built his cabin on. He knew who and what lived in the forest clearings. He knew how to pay them and befriend them for their help.

And he knew who could stop the wasting illness. He might have died some years before, of trembling fevers, had he not known Her name. The very next night, when the moon was large and yellow, he stoked the fire in his hearth bright and high, and took out two leather bags. He stuffed one full of fresh, fragrant tobacco- the food of the spirit-beings, a food they craved more than any other.

In the other bag he placed two tips of antler from a deer, a tuft of hair from a deer's hide, a small flat

piece of wood carved with a strange sign, and a ball of bright red clay. He tied this bag up well and placed it in a triangle of white sand on his darkly stained wooden table. He said the name that shouldn't be said- he said the words, the old words, that made spirits hear and listen. He asked for his special guest to come to him, to be a visitor to his home. Then, he cast the bag onto the fire.

It was consumed. And a red smoke rose, and rose again, and left his chimney above, and circled in the air high over the cabin before flitting away on the wind down the river.

Solomon was sitting in his rocking chair, resting, when the knock came. Loud, clear, strong, thrice the knock rang on his door. He got up, shuffled to the door, and slowly slid the smooth wooden bolt open. He pulled the door wide, and gazed with a deep excitement in his heart upon the visitor. It was a deer, smooth of fur, black of eye, twitching its tail. Solomon took one step back. From the deep shadow behind the deer, She stepped forward- Tarnibel, the spirit who could heal.

The things of this world, when seen through the watery salt of the eyes in our skulls, look a certain way. Since it's all we've ever seen, it's all we know, or think is real. But when you see the things of the Otherworld, you know immediately that you gaze upon a wonder hard to describe.

Tarnibel appeared as just a young girl- so very young, not more than 10 summers old. But unlike the youth of this world, her skin, her light hair, and her oddly-shaped eyes seemed more real than anything in Solomon's cabin. The stones around the hearth, the wood of the walls, the furs and bundles of leaves hanging from the rafters- compared to the spirit-person, they seemed hazy, indistinct, rough, almost dream-like. Her form was brilliant, smooth, so shockingly present and real. And her beauty was without compare; no human person, adult or child, could be so beautiful.

But her skin- Tarnibel's skin- was red. Not the earthy flesh-red of the Red Men who once lived in these woods; it was a shocking yet soothing red that could not be described. From her home somewhere down the river, with her deer-companion, she had come at the summons. She glided into the cabin, walking with the swift but noiseless tread of the Unseen world.

She only appeared a girl; Solomon knew she had been here before the river had cut its way through the land. Her clear and disturbing gaze never left him; she knew things that humans could never fathom. Solomon greeted her as an old friend; he knew her well. And yet, he always felt, in the back of his mind, like a commoner greeting a princess when she came forth.

Solomon held out the bag of tobacco and put it in her hand- a generous gift for an elder and a friend. They talked, while Tarnibel's deer companion nosed its way about the interior of Solomon's cabin. He told her of John Northey's need, and why he, Solomon, needed this favor of her. She gazed deeply into his eyes and his soul, and spoke; but their conversation can't be a part of my story here. Solomon Pedrick stepped forward, towards Tarnibel, never breaking her gaze. She reached out and took his hand, and then, the floor below them opened up; it was as though the floor was never there. Below, there was only an impenetrable darkness, into which Solomon, Tarnibel, and the deer all fell- down they went, deeper and deeper, vanishing completely into the depths.

And this is where my story ends, and how Elizabeth Northey survived the wasting illness.

# The Green Lady:

## A Traditional Provenance Tale

They tell me you've come looking for a story. That's good. Stories are the keepers of wisdom, of things that most people have forgotten, but which never should have been forgotten. Wisdom is power, for those who can unbind the tangled web that wisdom often hides in.

Sometimes, a story tells it to you straight, without trying to hide it- and that's when you know you're being led deep, because the best secrets hide right in plain sight, and the best wisdoms, too. When a story takes you "straight in", you can be sure that what you're seeing is far more than what appears.

You came for a story, so I'll give you one; a true story, about something that happened a long time ago- but, as with all tales of this sort, it's important to remember something: it's only a great tale if you can see it happening to you. We love the stories of heroes because they remind us that we, too, can be great, if we're brave enough or strong enough.

This story isn't really about a hero, but it's about a man that got some things he really wanted, and he got them straight from the Land itself, the Land he lived on, plodded on, worked on, rode on, and one day, the Land he was buried in. You can get anything your heart desires from the Land, and from the beings in it, but there's always a price, and even the most clever seldom evade that price. I think that this is the moral of the story I'm about to share with you. But there's more too, if you can puzzle it out.

This story is about something that happened to the man under discussion when he was alive. It could happen to you, too. This is a story about a man that worked metal for a living, and a Green Lady- though she didn't look green. They seldom do; we call them the Green Ladies because the Old Folk called them that, but they can look like any mortal woman they want. And they are as old as the Land. A long time ago, they dwelled everywhere. These days, if they're around, they're hiding, or making sure you and I never recognize them for what they really are.

Some of them ain't nice. Some of them serve the Mighty and Terrible Queen of the Cold Powers herself- Beira, the Ancients called her, and few names have as much power as Her name. Beira can look like an old woman, older than old, but sometimes, when the spring is cheerful and warm, she can be as young and fresh as any maid, and as alluring. But these Green Ladies- don't mistake them for the Old One. Some say they might be her daughters, but I don't know if anyone who still lives knows that for sure.

I'll tell you what Robin, the son of Art does know: the Green Ladies lurk about still, and if you're wise, you'll try to make friends with them. It might take you hanging around a place for a long time to notice her, or for the Lady to notice you, if one resides nearby. If you get far enough underground, you'll find their real homes, but we surface-dwelling men and women, you might say we live on the

rooftops of their homes. And they love to come up here, and they have powerful magic. People worshiped them a long time ago- and that was smart of people back then. If the Green Lady wants to ruin your life, or your ability to get the necessities of life from the Land, she can, as easy as she can withhold her charms from a lover.

There is no "Land" without the Green Ladies that are its living spirits. They like to be alone- a lonely spot on a river or near a waterfall is where they like to be; or a green hill off away from others, or a thicket or a lonely forest or wood, or a ravine- always someplace out of the way, a bit. They get most active in the late evening dusk, or under a lot of moonlight, or in total darkness. Don't forget that.

Leave out gifts for them, if you want to be wise or successful wherever you are. Don't wait until you see one of them; that might be too late, because not all of them are so happy with human beings anymore. I don't guess I'd be too happy if my sacred hill was leveled for a strip mall, either.

\* \* \*

So here's an old story about a man that worked metal- You can call him Tom Smith, quite aptly named, as he was a smith. He was out late; I don't even know why he was, but there you have it. He was riding along in the late dusk, and about to cross the ford of a river, when the Green Lady came up and out of the water, and ordered him to stop- and informed Tom that he couldn't cross.

Tom was a man of his times; he made swords, he even fought with them, and he was too churched up to care that he was facing a power that his own Ancestors would have revered. He called her "wicked one" and threatened to smite her dead.

She was waiting for that response; she knew mortal men well enough in her day. "What would you smite me with, mortal man?" "My sword" said Tom- and he produced it for her, to let her see its fine and sharp workmanship.

Smiling her deadly and sweet smile, the Green Lady named Tom's sword, and immediately, it no longer had any power to do her harm. That's real magic- a magic you can have, too, if you're patient and have quite a bit luck- the power of naming. To know the name of something puts it in your thrall, under your power, and unable to harm you unless you let it.

"So let's hear another one, man without a sword! What will you strike me with now?" She mocked Tom. "With my spear" he shouted, now a touch angry that his sword was worthless against her. She shook her head then- she guessed that Tom wasn't too swift, if you get my drift- and she named his spear. And like the sword, it was now useless as well.

Now, the Green Lady thought she might take a ride. She never got gifts anymore, from the men and women that lived near her river and her sacred trees, so she eyed Tom's horse, and considered for a moment what she'd do with him. Maybe she'd ride him off a cliff, or drown him in the river. Or maybe she'd just leave him dazed and confused in some meadow, after having her way with him.

"Do you have room for a rider behind you?" she asked. "Yes" he said, "And also for one in the front." He reached out and grabbed her, lifted her up, plopped her in front of him and tossed the reigns over her head. "And now, you are in my power." Tom seems to have known a little magic, too- surround anything with a circle of cord, and you do have some power over it; moreso if you are behind it.

But the Green Lady was still an inhuman force of ancient power, and she wasn't too scared by him. "You're never going to escape this ford or this river" she said. "You don't have a sword or a spear to protect yourself from me when I come against you with all my power."

"Don't need them," Tom said. "I still have one weapon left." "Which one is that?" she asked, smiling to herself.

Tom finally caught on- and way to go, Tom! I do believe a third failure of wits on his part would have been his last. He said "The sharp and dangerous thing against my leg." He was referring to the dagger in his right stocking- but for a moment, the Lady probably feared something else; stop grinning- you probably thought it too!

Since he didn't give its name, the Lady couldn't undo its power to harm her. "Then I shall leave you now!" she shouted with more than a little alarm.

"Right, right" Tom said. "You aren't going anywhere until I release you. The reins are about you, and your magic power is now mine; it has passed from you, to me." Tom certainly gives credence to the old rumor that smiths had a magic learning all their own- for here, he uses another sorcerous technique; spelling out the conditions of power.

The Lady knew that this was so. She knew she was about to be taking orders from this man, and she wasn't terribly happy with that. She figured it might be good to make some offers of her own.

As they rode across the moonlit moor beyond the river, she said "Let me go, and I'll give you a herd of speckled cattle." Tom thought and said "Yeah, that's a great idea. You will give me a herd of cattle, but that won't be enough to make me let you go."

Now, the Green Lady wept tears of sorrow and anger. Poor Lady- but poor Tom, too- his attitude towards this Elder of his was never one of respect and reverence, as a wise man might have assumed towards her- but now, he'd gone off and made her cry. Not that he really cared; men in Tom's age used the Land like this, made it weep tears of sorrow and anger in other ways, spilling the blood of their fellow man on it, raping it for ores to beat into swords to do more killing, taking metals from the ancient hearts of mountains, and fouling the waters.

Tom was quite the product of his time, even if he had a bit of cunning to him. Had I been there to see him ride along with the Green Lady, I'd have warned him- Tom, Tom, this may not end well for you, because you are not the wisest being here, nor the most powerful; none can be wiser or more



powerful than the Land itself.

But I wasn't there.

The Lady tried again. "Free me, and I shall build for you a house this very night that fire cannot harm, nor water nor storm could injure- and it shall be protected against all wicked beings and spirits."

Tom liked the sound of that. "Do that, and I shall set you free" he said.

She said that she would- and then, uttered a cry of such frightful volume and power that it echoed all over the Land. The spirit that repeats everything it hears- He who indwells the Echo- he made sure her cry traveled all over the place. She summoned up countless things that live in the land and in the dark places of the earth- fayerie things, goblin things, they all came, wights and wandering strange forces in the earth. From inside of hills and from under moors, they came. From cliff-tops and from trees. Like birds and crickets flitting through the air they came, and surrounded the Green Lady.

She set them to hew wood and gather stone, and they did- and she sang this spell while they did:

*"Two stones over one stone!  
One stone over two stones!  
Work speedily, work speedily-  
Bring every timber from the wood  
But mulberry, but mulberry!"*

And before Tom's eyes, it was done- the house was built. As dawn came from the east, the serving-wights and spirits that had been summoned scattered and vanished, and Tom was gazing at his new and majestic home, built by the Unseen with great power.

"Release me now" the Lady said. But Tom, though unwise and haughty, was at least smart enough to be careful- paranoid, more like- and he said "I will free you when you have promised not to do me any form of injury."

"I promise it so", the Lady said. And then Tom said "And promise also that neither myself nor my children will ever be drowned by your power in any of the fords of the three rivers that run near here- the Waywithle, the Tesk, and the Forath."

The Green Lady promised this, too. Then Tom set her free, and she smiled the sort of smile that a wolf might give its prey, and she said "You have not named the fourth river, the Feugh! Let you and your children beware, smith!"

She turned into a bright and powerful green flame and vanished into the land. Tom never saw her again, but you can bet he wasn't happy with this outcome. And he wasn't happy when, seven years later, one of his sons drowned in

the Feugh river. He knew it was the Green Lady's revenge, and I'd like to think that he learned something at the soul level about disrespecting the powerful beings of this precious Land we live on- especially considering how much he got from the Land- but I don't really know, because Tom lived and died hundreds of years before me.

# The Mistress of Witch Pond

I'm a storyteller, first and foremost. That doesn't mean that I'm a liar, which "telling stories" has come to mean as well- another sign of how out of touch with the power of stories we've become as a society. That's not to say that I don't lie; everyone lies; I might even lie a bit more than some people because I have more than my measure of contempt for a lot of people, and contempt breeds deceit. But when it comes to my sacred vocation as a storyteller, telling stories that contain in them a seed of power or insight, I don't lie. I don't need to, because the truth is always stranger than fiction and more fun than any lie, when you have a story that contains power on your hands.

And stories can contain power in lots of ways. I'll share one now with all of you friends. This is a true story, more true than most true stories- and it touches this world in many ways. Let me start by saying that there is a town in Massachusetts, called Popponesset. I'd love to live there, and one day I might. Popponesset isn't important because it's Popponesset; it's important because of what it is built on top of. As with so many things, it is the Ancient Land that came before it that endows it with what makes it special.

\* \* \*

In Popponesset, there is a street- you can find it, if you look on Google Maps- a street called "Broomstick Way." This street isn't named Broomstick for no reason, nor is it a mistake that Broomstick Way ends at a pond called "Witch Pond." The pond was, in fact, named after a witch who lived long ago as readily as you or I live now. She- like her sister- was very powerful. And someone (as you can see by looking at the maps) lives at the end of Broomstick Way, right on the pond that this old witch also built her cottage on, long ago, when the town of Popponesset wasn't there- in the late 1600's. Do the people who live in that house at the end of the Way know how close they live to Sarah Screecham's old dwelling? Have they seen, or felt her? I think she's still there. I have a reason to think that, but we'll get into that later.

Sarah Screecham was alone because she chose to be alone there. I understand that about her. I want to be alone like that, too, most of the time. She and her sister Hannah moved away from the old town of Cotuit to an island between Cotuit Bay and West Bay- you can see that island on maps today, too. When they moved there, it only had a few natives on it or near it, and was all wilderness. It quickly became called "Screecham's Island"- though later it was called Grand Island, and later still, Oyster Harbors.

It's the real curse if powerful people: they don't tend to be able to tolerate each other's presence for long, even if they are related. So Hannah and Sarah parted ways not long after they moved to the island. Sarah went to the south Mashpee woods, to Witch Pond, where she made her lonely cottage. I don't want to go much into the exploits of her sister Hannah- Hannah was easily the more vicious of

the two- but I will say that Hannah was quite terrifying. Pirates- including the famous Captain Kidd- came to Hannah on her island to hide their treasure.

Hannah had a curious method for hiding treasure- a method used by Heathen Europeans for many centuries before Christianity: she murdered one of the crewmen of the pirate ships that came, burying them alive sometimes with the treasure, so that their ghosts would protect the treasure. Captain Kidd and her other clients apparently didn't mind this- and no doubt kept this little tidbit about Hannah's services a secret from the "red shirts" they sent to Screecham's Island to carry the treasure over.

It was Hannah's ability to shriek that really scared people. She could let out unthinkably terrifying shrieks after she was done burying treasure- likened to the sound of an especially angry owl- which people claimed to hear for centuries after Hannah died. The shriek was a signal to the Captain to go back to his boat, in the knowledge that his treasure was safe. Hannah wasn't able to retrieve the treasures she helped hide; her method worked all too well, and it was said that if she ever tried, the "blue arms and hands" of the dead men she put in the sand pits would rise to grasp at her throat and stop her from digging up the "earth buried metal."

But Sarah is who I wanted to talk about, not Hannah. Hannah was ill-tempered, which isn't to say that Sarah wasn't; Sarah was just in a better business: Sarah was a guardian of the local lands and wildlife, a task that got her destroyed, finally, by Native American hunters. The Native Wampanoag Indians weren't fools when it came to witchcraft: they knew more about it than the English and the Europeans who came to their lands. What I know about New England Witchcraft largely comes from the Wampanoag people, and their lores that have survived to the modern day.

The "hybridization" of European Witch-Beliefs and Wampanoag witchcraft lore is, in fact, not only what the Screecham sisters embody, historically, but also the breed of Witchcraft most adored and practiced by your friend Robin- though I've not been very public about my "sources" up to this point. I have been made able to do this by My Master, alongside the generous amount of surviving primary folklore we have available to us. But in some way, it's the long-dead spirits of the Screecham sisters, particularly Sarah, that inspire me.

Sarah wasn't nice, wasn't perfect. But then, who is? Instead of helping in the piracy business, she took a "darker green" approach to being a feared witch in the south Mashpee forests.

The forest where Sarah lived was called, by the natives, "Forest Without Moon"- which meant, of course, that the canopy was so thick that it was dark, even under a full moon. But it teemed with wildlife, and was therefore irresistible to the local hunters. They naturally all knew that the witch Sarah Screecham (also called "Screecher") had taken up residence there, and they feared her, with good reason. This was more than just about how she was in "league with the evil one"- She was adamant about people not hunting in the forest-lands where she lived. When she found people sneaking in there, she'd threaten them with every kind of terrible reprisal imaginable- and she could deliver.

Sarah was a shape-shifter. She could turn into a young deer, and she could turn into a coal-black horse. When she disappeared on people in the woods, the young deer or the horse always appeared, but no one could ever catch or shoot either of them. The night-horse, a great black mare, was her favorite form to use after dusk.

Sarah was still human, even if much of her was other-than-human, and even if she knew, as all witches know, how to consciously engage the other-than-human side of herself. Being human, she had to see to the needs of the flesh, and she fell into love or desire for a Mashpee man, who certainly wanted nothing to do with her. But, he knew that scorning her might be a bad idea, so he was faced with the unfortunate necessity to act friendly with her long enough to figure out the secrets to her magic, so that he could protect himself and part ways with her such that she couldn't turn his head into a pretzel.

He accepted her invitation to come to her place one evening, and being friendly with him, she finally turned into the black mare after the sun went down. And, unlike any before this man, she allowed him to catch her in this form. He immediately hammered three iron horseshoes and one silver horseshoe into her hooves, the silver one being on the left front hoof. (Ah, Love- screwing nearly everyone over, since time immemorial.)

The next day, he couldn't find the horse, or Sarah, so he went to her closest neighbor, and they went out to Sarah's place to find her, and find her they did- moaning in pain and trying to hide her left hand in the folds of her skirt. Upon further inspection, they discovered a silver horseshoe nailed into her hand. I suppose the romance was over from that point, because that man is never mentioned again in connection to Sarah.

Now, the local Natives were more than a little tired of Sarah not letting them hunt in her forest. They considered her cruel for other reasons, too- and though the surviving lore doesn't say why they should, I can imagine. I hardly consider Sarah evil; I look to her, in a way, as a spiritual great-grandmother; but I also know how these stories get started and how they get twisted. I also know how there are no real pacts between men and wolves. So a struggle had to happen here, which greatly transcended the struggle between Europeans and Natives. It was something more raw and primal than that.

A local native man heard the story of the silver horseshoe, and went and got some silver made into a bullet for his gun. He went to Sarah's woods one night, only to encounter her- and she laughed him off, seeming quite uninterested in this intruder. After she left, a young deer darted by, and this hunter started doing what he did best. Turns out, he was a better shot than others- or perhaps, the silver that was such a bane to Hannah and Sarah just gave him the ability to overcome her warding sorcery- and he took a shot at the deer just before he lost sight of it in the dark, and hit it.

He was the best tracker in the Mashpee woods. He was sure the deer was mortally wounded, but the forest itself turned against him- darkness seemed darker than dark; owls called to him, as they always do- "Gone, Gone" they said, in the old language. The maidens in the marshes sang, and it wasn't until the canaries started singing for the sun, that he was able to find his way out of the woods and to

Sarah Screecham's cottage. There was no smoke from the chimney; inside, she was on the floor dead with a silver bullet in her breast.

That hunter managed to destroy Sarah's fetch-projected form; her shimmering shape; and we all know what that means to the person shimmering. Her power so well disrupted, she could no longer live in her human form. Her body may have died, but I think Sarah continued on- I wouldn't be able to see a young deer or a mare anywhere near that place at night without thinking I had come into Sarah's presence. And many times, I'd be right.

\* \* \*

Go to your maps as I suggested, look for Broomstick Way. See Witch Pond at the end of the Way. It's the same pond that Sarah had her house on. Funny how the Broomstick Way makes a good broomstick, and the pond itself makes a good brush for the broom- it's even shaped right. See the pond and know that Sarah was real.

I mentioned that I thought Sarah's spirit was still there. I think it is, and I think somehow, she still influences things about those parts. There is a Wildlife Land Trust in Massachusetts, called the Orenda Wildlife Land Trust, which, in 2012, added Witch Pond, and the wetlands and a cranberry bog around it, to their substantial holdings in the region, which includes the Mashpee national wildlife refuge. There is no hunting allowed on any of the lands they hold in trust.



*"We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals. Remote from universal nature, and living by complicated artifice, man in civilization surveys the creature through the glass of his knowledge and sees thereby a feather magnified and the whole image in distortion. We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of having taken form so far below ourselves. And therein we err, and greatly err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the earth."*

*-Henry Beston*









# The Spell of the Triple-Locked Door: Esoteric Tradition and Teachings in "The Queen Bee"

Max Luthi points out one of the most important facts about folk and faery-tales from Europe, something vital and crucial which should strengthen every person that can comprehend it: these tales, though belonging to several distinct traditions and motifs, contain certain "deepest cores" that transmit to us, as children and as adults, something that has the same psychic impact of a shamanic or animistic initiation rite, among so-called "primitive" peoples. This very powerful and ancient tale- The Queen Bee- which is a mystery play in its own right- grounds us in the "esoteric morality" of the true Old Way, a morality which transcends the ordinary conception of morality, and thrusts us towards the deeper realizations that we are each meant for.

We do not often consciously receive the hidden force of these old tales, but it is there- certain of those stories do it more effectively and deeply than others. The material in these stories- particularly in this one- is of far older provenance than the peasant life of the Black Forest in the lifetime of the Brothers Grimm. Something of the wisdom of our Ancestral past is still speaking through these stories, from beneath layers of history and culture- something powerful.

It is my great honor to be able to analyze this story, which in all the canon of the Grimm stories may be one of the most esoterically potent, and my honor to help people turn this story into more than just a fine tale of adventure and curse-breaking: I will show that it has a hidden message which can change how people experience even the simplest of sensory moments, every day, and create a deeper sight- a witching sight- into the nature of all things thereby.

## *THE QUEEN BEE*

Once, long ago, two sons of a King went out in search of adventures. They fell into a wild, disorderly way of living, so that they never came home again. The youngest son of the king, who was called Witling, set out to seek his brothers, but when at length he found them, they mocked him for thinking that he with his simplicity could get through the world, when they two could not make their way, and yet were so much more clever than he.

They all three traveled away together, and came to an ant-hill. The two elder wanted to destroy it, to see the little ants creeping about in their terror, and carrying their eggs away, but Witling said "leave the creatures in peace, I will not allow you to disturb them."

Then they went onwards and came to a lake, on which a great number of ducks were swimming. The two brothers wanted to catch a couple and roast them, but Witling would not permit it, and said "leave the creatures in peace, I will not suffer you to kill them."

At length they came to a bee's nest, in which there was so much honey that it ran out of the trunk of the

tree where it was. The two wanted to make a fire beneath the tree, and suffocate the bees in order to take away the honey, but Witling once again stopped them and said "leave the creatures in peace, I will not allow you to burn them."

At length the three brothers arrived at a castle where stone horses were standing in the stables, and no human being was to be seen. They went through all the halls until, quite at the end, they came to a door in which was sealed by three locks. In the middle of the door, however, there was a little windowpane, through which they could see into the room. There they saw a little grey man, who was sitting at a table. They called him, once, twice, but he did not hear, at last they called him for the third time, when he got up, opened the locks, and came out. He said nothing, however, but conducted them to a handsomely-spread table, and when they had eaten and drunk, he took each of them to a bedroom.

Next morning the little grey man came to the eldest, beckoned to him, and conducted him to a stone table on which were inscribed three tasks, three tasks whose successful performance would cause the castle to be delivered from the enchantment it was under.

The first task was this: in the forest outside, beneath the moss, lay the princess's pearls, a thousand in number, which must be picked up. If by sunset one single pearl was missing, he who had looked for them would be turned into stone. The eldest went thither, and sought the whole day, but when it came to an end, he had only found one hundred, and what was written on the table came true- he was turned into stone.

The next day, the second brother undertook the adventure, but it did not fare much better with him than with the eldest. He did not find more than two hundred pearls, and was changed to stone. At last it was Witling's turn to seek in the moss, but it was so difficult for him to find the pearls, and he got on so slowly, that he seated himself on a stone, and wept. And while he was thus sitting, the king of the ants whose life he had once saved, came with five thousand ants, and before long the little creatures had got all the pearls together, and laid them in a heap.

The second task was to fetch out of the lake the key of the king's daughter's bed-chamber. When Witling came to the lake, the ducks which he had saved swam up to him, dived down, and brought the key out of the water.

But the third task was the most difficult. Amongst the three sleeping daughters of the king was the youngest and dearest, the one Witling had to awaken. The daughters, however, resembled each other exactly, and were only to be distinguished by their having eaten different sweetmeats before they fell asleep: the eldest a bit of fruit, the second a little syrup, and the youngest a spoonful of honey.

Then the queen of the bees, whom Witling had protected from the fire, came and tasted the lips of all three, and at last she remained sitting on the mouth which had eaten honey, and thus the Witling recognized the right princess. Then the enchantment was at an end, everything was delivered from sleep, and those who had been turned to stone received once more their natural forms.

Witling married the youngest and sweetest princess, and after her father's death became king, and his two brothers received the two other sisters.

### *Preliminary Discussion: Enchantments, Curses, and the Problem of Human Suffering*

Many who read "The Queen Bee" may imagine that it is a simpler tale than it really is- not that anything is wrong with simplicity. In fact, the true "Ageless Art"- the sublime and sorcerous way of living and seeing which unites mankind to the Unseen and to one another, and births lasting peace and wisdom in life, is always a matter of perfect simplicity.

Voyages into true complexity always reveal an underlying confusion on the part of the searching mind.

But just because something is simple, doesn't mean that it is obvious, and "simple" never has to mean "easy"- anyone who has ever attempted basic breath-centering meditation practices already knows how something so simple can be anything but easy. The wandering, untamed mind has a way of injecting itself into our attempts to build simple, tranquil calm in ourselves. It is precisely this "wandering mind"- and the concept of wandering- that will become a potent theme in our analysis here today.

At first blush, the story of Witling and his brothers may seem like an encouragement to be kind and gentle, and in doing so, reaping the reward of those positive characteristics when it really matters in the future. This is not the primary message of the tale, but it is a very important message nonetheless. When one goes "deeper", one begins to see a question emerging from this story- a question which conceals much pain- and a solution to the question's riddle. That question might be stated this way: "Why are we, as individuals, and as a human collective, so divided and so afraid?"

When this story begins, unbeknownst to Witling and his brothers, an "enchantment" is in place, which affects them deeply. They do not become aware of this enchantment until they reach a magical castle, at which point they directly see the impact of this enchantment, or curse- it has petrified or "turned to stone" the inhabitants of the castle, and put to sleep three maidens, whose awakening can break the curse. Some, in reading this old tale, may think that the enchantment was localized only to the castle, but I believe that the "castle" is a metaphor for the mind itself- and it is not until we examine our own minds, as Witling and his brothers walked all throughout the castle- that we can begin to really see the negative impact of forces within us that have affected us long before we became consciously aware of their existence.

Now, I must touch on a topic that I consider somewhat controversial, because it goes back to the heart of not just human philosophical thinking, but to something that affects us every day, this very day-worldview. And I must ask, with all sincerity: why do so many modern religions and philosophies-

most of which are very old- believe that mankind dwells under a curse of some sort? In Christianity, "sin" is the common and ancient curse of mankind, which in their mythology, is said to go back to the dawn of human existence. Sin is the single and only cause of every droplet of suffering in this world, sparing none. It is their explanation for the suffering we all have to experience in our human lives. Judaism and Islam, quite naturally, agree on that point, but they differ greatly on the particulars of how sin might be overcome or put to rights.

Buddhism and Hinduism in the east both contain many sects who express a belief that the suffering inherent to our condition is not from "sin"- not from crossing the will and disobeying the laws of a supreme being- but from a natural ignorance that we are all entangled within, an ignorance about the true nature of reality. So long as we exist ignorant of the "way things really are", we will cause ourselves and others to suffer. This is a much more enlightened and proper view than the primitive notion of "sin against the Lord"- but it is also, in a way, a "curse"- Buddha's life, after all, and his achievements, and his revelation of the path away from suffering and ignorance towards Nirvana or lasting happiness, is mythologically expressed in terms of him "lifting a curse" from mankind, a curse that had kept us bound in darkness for ages.

Obviously, primordial religions- organic religions- have no use for the idea that humans are living under some form of "curse". Native American religions, Native European religions, they didn't have such a notion. Indeed, I should say now that these organic faiths, far from being "heathens" and unenlightened, had the right of it. We do not live under some dangerous, intrinsic curse. Such an idea is born from a complex of cultural assumptions about the world that come from outside of Europe and North America, and from outside of places where ancient organic religions were allowed to thrive for hundreds of thousands of years, before the age of revealed religions and their "missionaries."

And yet, deep within pre-Christian, Pagan Europe, a great spiritual being, who became a human teacher and sorcerer named Empedocles, said something shocking to the people of his time. Quite in agreement with the Buddhists who would come later, and the Stoics who would come later, he said that mankind was laboring under a spell- you could call it a curse, but it wasn't so wicked as to merit that- a simple, natural spell, cast by Aphrodite, to ensnare man and God alike. This spell was powered by love and desire- the sweetest of all snares- and all were victims of it, all of us, man, woman, beast, and most of the Gods- were Aphrodite's enchanted little playthings. Under the influence of this desire, which had drawn us from our natural, immortal homes, and whirled and mixed us into the elements and our mortality, we were forgetful- all of us, forgetful Gods, who had learned to be mortal.

Of course, Empedocles wasn't trying to make a villain of Aphrodite; she was merely doing what she did, as a matter of natural course, of natural law. In his view, the cosmos cycled through ages like this- love drew all beings into the mixture of the elements, creating what we see around us now, and then, gradually, the other cosmic law- strife- broke things apart, more and more until the whole cosmos was "separated out" and everyone and everything was back where it began, separate, immortal, and free. And then, another age began when love came to ensnare all again. Love and strife were the two forces that moved the cosmos, and the four elements were the materials of the cosmos,

and to Empedocles, this was all that existed, or would ever exist.

I mention Empedocles because his story is very primordial. He taught people how to "wake up" from the mortal daze they were in and realize their own natural divinity here and now- but even if he hadn't, the grim yet necessary force of strife would come and do it eventually. But to be free early of this spell, this enchantment, was a very positive outcome for the forgetful Gods, for in awakening, they overcame death and limitation. I mention him because he represents a European Pagan example, long before the devastation brought by Christianity and Islam, of a native "curse" story or "enchantment" story- a Pagan mystic who faced the problem of human suffering with a story about a magical enchantment that affected all mankind with divine deception, and which limited us all, thus explaining why we suffer.

Furthermore, in European Faery-Lore, we often encounter the Unseen world or the Otherworld in terms of deception. The Fairies themselves are presented as being masters of "Glamour" or illusion-magic. Things in the Unseen are never what they appear; more times than can be counted, human travelers in the Otherworld are fooled, deceived, or confused. This idea is very old, and perhaps for a very important reason.

In "The Queen Bee", we encounter a hint of a similar primordial tradition to that of Empedocles. The problem of human suffering is brought up in the first few lines of the story- and we discover later that it is due to an enchantment. Faery and Folk Tales often utilize enchantments as vehicles for motivating the plot, and giving heroes something to overcome- and I do not believe this is an accident. Very often- calling to mind Empedocles- it is an "Evil Queen" or "Evil Sorceress" or "Witch" who is the agent of the Enchantment. Some may see misogyny in this, but I do not believe that to be the case at all times. The reality is that, even in Hinduism, the Goddess Maya- whose name means "Illusion"- is the feminine agent of the illusions that bind humans in this world, and in a sense, she IS the world itself.

The idea of a feminine being having responsibility for limiting mankind somehow is very old, and very widespread. And at times, yes, I do believe it is either a product of, or harmfully influenced by, patriarchal culture. Empedocles the Pagan alone seems to have pointed out that, even if Aphrodite was responsible for lulling all of mankind into mortal sleep under desire, she didn't do it because she was evil; she did it because it was in accord with natural law and fate. But in The Queen Bee, the "agent" who cast the enchantment that Witling and his brothers struggle against, is never identified. It may be that the agent need not be identified- breaking the curse is more important than knowing where it came from.

I stated before that I personally do not believe we are all laboring under a "curse" in the ordinary sense. And yet, I also understand how these old wisdom traditions work. For the purposes of "bringing the tradition to life" in your own mind and body, it might be useful to "slip into the role"- to literally enter the Faery-Tale in the way the tale intends for you to. Each of us must become Witling. Each of us must be a character in the story, which becomes a Mystery Play, an actual initiation rite. If it helps to consider your own suffering in terms of an enchantment, then for the purposes of that



initiation, it is right and proper that you do so.

But IS mankind "enchanted" somehow? Outside of the context of mystical rites and metaphorical stories- are we cursed? I ask again because you can't live for long in this world without wondering. It is a simple fact that monotheistic faiths that walk around the world telling everyone that they are fallen and sinful do well for themselves- because people are willing to believe that story.

People suffer so much, and want an explanation for it so badly, that they'll even buy into guilty "sin" stories with ease. We all know how and why "sin" stories are used for political and social control, and we know their origin is from times long after the primordial peace of early humanity was broken by the creation of surplus economies in the neolithic. And yet, these stories remain potent in the minds of people.

As a humorous aside, one might say that if we WERE cursed, the curse is in how gullible we are, or in how willing we are to believe stories so completely, just to have an explanation. Truly, the human logic seems to be that any explanation is better than none. Why are we in such a hurry to accept nonsensical things, merely because they emotionally satisfy us? Is that our real curse?

I can say this, and will say it- as "The Queen Bee" reveals, whatever the reason, we are divided, and we are afraid. None who have lived long enough to become truly socially aware can deny this. We've known fear- for positive and negative reasons- since we were all born. But the division we begin to feel is even more prominent, the older we get. The "division" I am talking about isn't just about bonds between human beings laying broken; I am talking also about division inside of us, our own division between body and soul and spirit, or to say that another way, between the body, the free soul, and the breath soul- the alienation we feel from our own unconscious depths, and the way we fear them. I mean also the division between us and Nature itself.

These things are all together, all in this wholeness, and yet, we cannot feel it, cannot ordinarily experience it with any strength. This is reality. We wouldn't spend so much time practicing meditation, trance, and other such pursuits if this were not the case. We wouldn't spend so much time on our knees in churches or mosques if this were not the case.

I am going to discuss the evidence for both division and fear in the Tale itself, but for now, let us bid adieu to these preliminary thoughts, and journey into the story itself. In each of the following sections, I will give a portion of the story first, and a hermeneutical analysis of it second.

### *Witling and his Brothers: The Triple Soul and the Divine Simpleton*

*"Once, long ago, two sons of a King went out in search of adventures. They fell into a wild, disorderly way of living, so that they never came home again. The youngest son of the king, who*

*was called Witling, set out to seek his brothers, but when at length he found them, they mocked him for thinking that he with his simplicity could get through the world, when they two could not make their way, and yet were so much more clever than he."*

\* \* \*

In these opening lines, we are treated to a common Faery Tale motif- the children of a King. Immediately, we know we are dealing not just with characters (though we are on one level) but with the deep metaphysical realities of each individual who may be reading the story. In common with many tales of this kind, the "main character" or characters of the story are also you- and everyone else in the audience who hears the tale. The "King", in his way, represents the ultimate origin of us all, but "King" is just a symbol for the first, or the supreme, or the origin. "Queen" would have worked just as well. But in later periods, for obvious cultural and political reasons, "King" is the more commonly found, especially in the Grimm corpus.

Much as the Stoics and Empedocles claimed- and even Plato- the "sons of the king" "fell into a wild, disorderly way of living, so that they never came home again." The "sons" of this king are three- Witling, whom we meet next, and his two brothers. The triple-soul or three-fold anthropology for humans and other beings, is truly one of the most primordial elements of the true Wisdom tradition of Old Europe. And in these three brothers- which is reflected later by the Three Sisters they meet- we have that right before us in this tale.

This "soul"- this three yet one soul, which we all have- is divided, and lost, wandering. The spiritual and numerical concept of "Threeness" appears in these stories for only the deepest of reasons- it magically and hypnotically fills all of our faery tales and sorcerous songs. This is because Three, and its derivative Nine, are the most potently sorcerous concepts in this cosmos. To take three straight sticks and lay them so that they meet at their centers, and space them evenly, creates the Hex sign, also called the Witch's Foot or the Goblin-Cross: which is also the Ninth Rune, the Mother rune, the symbol found in every snowflake that comes from our skies.

It is the symbol of creation, generation, birth, and the destructive power of Nature that undoes all- it is the ultimate ancient "symbol" of all Gothic or Northern European Witchcraft. It is the underlying "pattern" of Nature itself. The three straight sticks become a hex sign, the "six" sign, which is the Ninth Rune, the Ninth Mystery, in the Elder Futhark. Nine is the number of months the child needs to come into this world from the Sacred Cauldron of the mother's womb; it is the number of days/weeks/months that some say the transition back into the Unseen takes after death.

Thus, it is no surprise that the Threeness (and its interior sixness and nineness) "reflects and refracts"

into everything- even the soul- and into our thinking. Genies offer people three wishes; spells are chanted and sealed thrice, people agreeing to things three times are magically bound to their agreements. Even the visible body of Nature itself is threefold: Above, this world, and Below, or Sky, Earth, and Seas/Waters.

The Three Brothers of this tale represent the divided being of each of us, lost and wandering, unable or unwilling to "go home again." The reason for the brothers being divided and wandering is not given at the beginning of the tale, though I believe it is esoterically given later, and we will discuss this soon.

In our story, the "hero" is one of the three brothers- Witling. "Witling" is sometimes translated as "Simpleton" or even "Blockhead". And indeed, that's what "Witling" means- witless, simple, naive or silly. Much like the "Fool" of the Tarot Arcanum, Witling is a "divine" or providential simpleton, and sets out into a grim and hard world, to find his brothers, and he does so- only to find his brothers mocking his simplicity, his naivety, to assume that he could come save them. They reason, after all, that if they could not "make it" in the world, he's certainly not going to.

With a good bit of arrogance and condescension- the very same condescension you see adults giving to younger children every day- the two brothers look down on Witling for his simplicity. But this story reveals something very important about simplicity: it, more than any other factor, is the ultimate "saving grace" that humans today need. "Simplicity" in this sense does not imply stupidity in any way- it means "freedom from the overly-contrived, fearful, and cynical nonsense that passes these days for "maturity."

It is a truism of life that the simpler people you meet tend to be the least conniving, least harmful, least likely to abuse you or take advantage of you, and the folk of the ancient past certainly understood this well, when comparing themselves, living their village lives, to the lords and ladies of the castles that held the power of life and death over them, and who were entangled in nets of political intrigue and greed.

### *Witling's Compassion: The Disordered Soul and Connection*

*"They all three traveled away together, and came to an ant-hill. The two elder wanted to destroy it, to see the little ants creeping about in their terror, and carrying their eggs away, but Witling said "leave the creatures in peace, I will not allow you to disturb them."*

*Then they went onwards and came to a lake, on which a great number of ducks were swimming. The two brothers wanted to catch a couple and roast them, but Witling would not permit it, and said "leave the creatures in peace, I will not suffer you to kill them."*

*At length they came to a bee's nest, in which there was so much honey that it ran out of the trunk of the tree where it was. The two wanted to make a fire beneath the tree, and suffocate the bees in order to take away the honey, but Witling once again stopped them and said "leave the creatures in peace, I will not allow you to burn them."*

\* \* \*

We have established that the Three Brothers here represent three aspects of the person- and that they are divided, lost, dissolute and wandering in a world where they suffer. When the "parts" of a whole being are divided and isolated, wandering and scattered- or, as the story says- "disorderly"- negative qualities begin to emerge from them. The natural good force of the whole and its parts becomes "tainted" after a manner of speaking. Witling's brothers give us a perfect example of just this.

When encountering innocent other beings who share their world, the brothers have some very aggressive reactions. This is only made possible by the total isolation and sense of separation the brothers feel from the world around them- instead of seeing brother and sister beings in the "others", or the animals, the brothers see only beings that it would be fun to torment, or steal from.

Witling's eldest brother first wishes to terrify the ants they encounter- to destroy their ant-hill and see them "creeping about in their terror, and carrying their eggs away." This is cruelty, one of the central and arguably the most disturbing of the "disordered powers" that human beings evidence in their souls and in their behavior every day. Witling prevents this from happening. A little while later, the brothers find a lake- and desire to roast some of the ducks swimming there and eat them, but are (again) prevented by Witling.

Truly, if the brothers had a need for food, to kill "a couple" of ducks and roast them would not be a problem. That Witling prevents them suggests that more is at play here- I believe that here we are seeing not an ancient advertisement for vegetarianism, but a folkloric revelation that, along with the quality of cruelty, Witling's brothers are greedy, wanting to "consume" where it is not necessary. Alongside cruelty, greed is certainly the chief architect of all our world's troubles.

The third thing the brothers want to take for themselves is honey from a Bee hive. This falls again under the heading of greed, but it reflects something else, too. The Beehive, and the orderly society of the bees positioned under their Queen, represents a society that works in an ordered, simple, and effective way- a harmonious way. In a sense, the brother's desire to steal their honey, the golden reward of their harmonious life, represents the aggressive force of disorder and theft, but also laziness- the desire to benefit from the hard work of others without doing any work oneself.

We can analyze the "disordered" powers in precisely the terms the story gives us- Witling tells his brothers each time that he will not allow them to do a certain thing- he will not allow them to disturb the ants, kill the ducks, or burn the bees. Disturb, kill, burn. It sounds like a horde of marauders going

across the landscape and ravaging villages, quite a bit. We can also analyze their intentions in terms of cruelty, greed, and laziness. The image emerges here very clearly: we are seeing a vision of *precisely* what humans have done to the land and to one another, for a very long time.

And it is Witling's "simpleton" nature that shuns these activities, that shies away from them naturally, with no reason given- in his natural sanity, born from his simplicity, he is spontaneously compassionate. He takes the "unless it is absolutely necessary to disrupt these living beings, these living courses of life, we will not do it" approach. The brutes he is surrounded by will haughtily laugh it off, or present him as weak, but he clearly is not- for he manages to check his brothers on all three occasions that they desired to harm these creatures.

And these creatures, too, represent something important. Ants, Ducks, and Bees- Ants are beings that crawl on the earth, representing the land. Ducks swim the waters and dive down within them, and represent the watery regions of Nature. And bees fly- they represent the sky. The brother's "wrongs" were not merely directed at animals, but symbolically, at the entire body of Nature itself. The brothers see nothing before them but animals they can kill or steal from- they don't see the beauty and force that spreads before them, and which is their own family and their own extended bodies; they only see resources for the taking.

Witling, in his simplicity, still feels the natural connection that we all share with everything else. He's not weak; he's naturally sane. And he represents that naturally sane, child-like, simple part of us all that alone can tame the disorderly forces that rush through us. But he can't do it forever- and that is because, without realizing it, he and his brothers are under an Enchantment, and until that Enchantment is broken, there is no hope for anything except a constant struggle of the soul, a constant isolation, constant wandering, which will end one day in death.

### *The Enchanted Castle: Fear and Trembling*

*"At length the three brothers arrived at a castle where stone horses were standing in the stables, and no human being was to be seen. They went through all the halls until, quite at the end, they came to a door in which was sealed by three locks. In the middle of the door, however, there was a little windowpane, through which they could see into the room. There they saw a little grey man, who was sitting at a table. They called him, once, twice, but he did not hear, at last they called him for the third time, when he got up, opened the locks, and came out. He said nothing, however, but conducted them to a handsomely-spread table, and when they had eaten and drunk, he took each of them to a bedroom."*

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When dealing with analysis of the symbols found in Faery Tales, we are in a neighboring region to the

symbols found in dreams. Many scholars of fairy tales have pointed out that they represent, at the deepest level, an inventory of the "dream time" of European cultures- symbols and figures emerge that are very potent, and belonging to an earlier time in human culture, and a more profound layer of human consciousness.

When dealing with the symbol of the "Castle", we encounter a symbol (as I said before) of the mind itself. Structures and homes in general are in the same "symbol stream"- the protective structure, whether cottage or castle, which a person "lives" within, seeks solace within, is nourished within, and which is the "center" of their world- the place that you call "home"- is a symbol of the mind (and to an extent the body) you feel you "inhabit" somehow. Where your mind "is" (if it can be said to "be" anywhere) is where "you" are.

At this point, we are approaching the center of this Tale. A castle is found, and the inhabitants, along with their horses, have been turned to stone. We don't see the inhabitants, but it's fair to say that if their horses are stone, they are too- after all, the horse is a symbol of the "vehicle" of human life, the body itself, but also of the forces that operate in the soul, the forces that must be harnessed so that the "chariot" of the soul can be pulled in righteous directions.

The brothers wander the depths of the enchanted castle, becoming very aware of the layout and environment of the place, but they reach a barrier they cannot cross- the Triple Locked Door.

The moment I read this, the first time I read it as an adult scholar of the esoteric, I immediately made an important connection. In the PGM (Greek Magical Papyri) which is a historical collection containing genuine pre-Christian magical invocations, a powerful invocation is given to the Queen of the Underworld. This magical spell and this old tale are of very different origins, and yet, if you go back far enough, their connection is very real, at the level of the sublime. In the Papyri, the invocation has this passage in it:

*"Bronze shoe of She who rules in the Underworld  
Her fillet, Key, Wand, Iron Wheel, Black Dog,  
Her Thrice-Locked Door, Her Burning Hearth,  
Her Shadow, Depth, Fire, the governess of Tartaros..."*

"Her Thrice-Locked Door"- The door to the most profound depths, the Hidden, the Unseen, containing Her burning hearth and Her shadow. The witching soul of any of the awakened beings of this world will stand up and take notice of this ancient spell's proclamation. The brothers in the castle have found- again, fractally expressed in the Threeness- the door beyond which the deep roots of the reality of their situation lies. You might consider this the passage from the personal conscious/unconscious mind into the collective unconscious, the origins of everything. Hecate- the Witch-Goddess *par excellence*- is the holder of the "Three Keys"- the "Queen who forever holds the keys of the world."

However, there is a "windowpane" in the door, beyond which part of the mystery-revelation lies, and there, at a table, waiting to be called thrice before he will awaken and respond, is the "grey man", the revealer-hierophant of these mysteries, the being who has the knowledge needed to bring the situation into full awareness.

He is the "Master"- the Witch-teacher and revealer of the mysteries of the Unseen. The first thing he does, when aroused and summoned, is open the Triple-Locked Door, and invite the brothers into the boundless resources of the Unseen, symbolized by the satisfying meal they receive, and then, by the rest they receive in the bedchambers he conducts them to. But their nourishment and rest is not simply that- it is the preparation they will undergo before they make their attempts to break the curse of the Castle, which is the curse they have all been under- and which you and I are still under.

We can see what this curse does- quite aside from dividing the soul and making it wander, letting it become a savage, marauding thing in its isolation- it turns beings into stone, or petrifies them. Fear is the other side of this curse. It has already done this at the castle, representing its power to "paralyze" or "petrify" the inhabitants- the helping forces- of our own minds. But it has done this around the world, as well.

At this point, I need to give a small personal example. I could start by asking "have we all not been ruled by fear all our days?" But I don't need to ask that. We have been. We fear much, and our social system takes advantage of that fully, compelling us in so many harmful ways. We make personal decisions and life decisions of great importance based on what we fear might happen if we do not, and we prepare for the future in fear of what might be. We avoid what we fear. We try to wall it out. Few people live by hope or love anymore; fear is the key to understanding much of human behavior.

In my own life, as I have developed in terms of my ability to wield the power of trance, I have faced the Triple-Locked Door many times. The Master is He who opens it- it is not in our human power to do so. But he is the key-holder, the Master who parts the veil, who is the "Porter" of Hell, the gate-keeper. To face this door, this barrier between the Seen and the Unseen, is to face death, too, in a real sense. And with that, comes the petrifying power of fear.

When I consider the idea of a curse that has affected me all my life, quite without me realizing it, I understand why this could be so. A truly effective curse can't advertise itself that way; it torments us all better and more lastingly if we don't perceive its existence. I think about the power of life, the beauty and majesty of life and love, and then I think about death, the point beyond which we can barely imagine- and the fear everyone lives in, a fear that tells us that this life may be all we have. Those who shout the loudest about "heaven" and the afterlife are those who fear death the most- who fear that death may, in fact, be our final and oblivious end.

As I go into trances sometimes, I find myself in that mercurial "place" of twilight, that place of dimness but clarity that you "slide" through like a ghost, in-between here and there, or this and that, and in those moments, if the Old Hag is going to attack, she will. I have what some call a "medical

condition" of sleep paralysis. I experience the state of hypnogogia more often than most people.

I don't consider it a medical condition; I don't suffer it; I enjoy every moment of it, for it is another ally who shows me the way to the Unseen. In the old days, those who suffered sleep paralysis- who found themselves "awake" in a lucid state, while their bodies were still asleep- often reported terrifying feelings, or hallucinations, or reported a malevolent presence coming near their beds, or even putting painful pressure on their chests. They called this being "ridden by the hag"- literally, Hag-ridden.

I've had that experience, of course. But these days, I do not panic or fear when I find myself in my frozen "body of wood"- I am able to detach myself and fly. The terrors are gone. But every so often, as I am falling asleep, whether on my couch or on my bed, I go into the twilight state, become slightly lucid, and then, before me, I see all of the wonder of life, and "see" death- which, in that semi-confused state, appears to me as the final end of it all. I see my beloved children, and everyone, and "realize" (in that confused state) that nothing has any meaning at all, that I have helped to bring life into this world only to feed them to death, and death is the conqueror that takes all away.

When I realize that, when I face (what on those occasions appears to be) my own meaningless existence, terror comes, like an arrow, and strikes me in the chest- it is very painful, and the jolt in my mind and body is so strong that it wakes me up. I feel paralyzed in the fear of it for a moment. This experience is precisely what "being turned to stone" means. To be "petrified" with fear is to fall victim to the "gaze of the gorgon"- the gorgons being the serpent-haired female monsters of Greek Myth whose faces were carved on the outsides of temples wherein the mysteries were conducted, to warn people away. They were guardians of the Underworld mysteries, representing the fear and awe and trembling mortals had to feel when facing the Deep places of ourselves and the world. Their faces were painted on shields to petrify enemies in battle, as well.

Fear is the great power that stalks us all. It is an initiator, as well. I tell you about my fears now because it is my sacred task- but you already know fear. Why are we all so full of doubts, about life, about our perpetual existence as spiritual beings, about our fellow man, about the "things that go bump in the night"? The curse explains this, as well as anything else might.

Everything you see around you is under the influence of your thinking and feeling, which is under the influence of an enchantment of devious and omnipresent power. As I mentioned before, this is hardly another "sin" story- it's a story about how deep sorcerous forces work. It has spawned gorgons, fearful witch-beings that guard the ways beyond the Triple-Locked Door, and who can turn people to stone with their gaze. But they affect us in this world, too. Without the resources of our Wholeness- our beings having full consciousness of their constitution as a whole- we are their victims. And you see the victims, everyday- in your mirror, in the news, in politics, in prisons, in churches, everywhere.

As I said at the start of this journey, the Tale does not tell us how this enchantment came about. But



that doesn't really matter- whether Evil Stepmother, or Witch Queen, or Devil, or whatever or whomever else. In the fairy tales, more often than not, the thing that motivates an evil sorcerer to curse another is some form of jealousy or envy. But again, it matters not.

Another issue has come up that you might have (if you were clever) considered- if this curse is so hidden, so buried at the heart of our experience, such that the whole world can be affected by it, how does anyone know that when we "figure out" the curse, and "figure out" the way to break it, that we haven't just fallen into another trick of the curse?

Now *that* is the thinking of a cunning mind. And the answer is simple: the curse cannot be infinite. If it had a beginning, it has an end. It can be deep and powerful, in some mind-boggling way, but it cannot be infinite. The being who cast it- if a being can be said to have cast it- would have to be infinite for it to be infinite, and infinite beings would have no need or cause to curse anyone. Thus, we can have good faith that if, indeed, the metaphor of a "curse" for our existence is apt, that we can outwit it. And that is the task the Brothers face now.

### *The Thousand Pearls: Scattered Life Force and The Cost of Failure*

*"Next morning the little grey man came to the eldest, beckoned to him, and conducted him to a stone table on which were inscribed three tasks, three tasks whose successful performance would cause the castle to be delivered from the enchantment it was under.*

*The first task was this: in the forest outside, beneath the moss, lay the princess's pearls, a thousand in number, which must be picked up. If by sunset one single pearl was missing, he who had looked for them would be turned into stone. The eldest went thither, and sought the whole day, but when it came to an end, he had only found one hundred, and what was written on the table came true- he was turned into stone."*

\* \* \*

The "curse" itself, the enchantment, has finite rules- more evidence that it is not infinite. Certain conditions exist by which it can be broken, and those conditions are fixed, unchangeable- "inscribed in stone", literally. And again (and not surprisingly) the conditions to break it are threefold.

We are finally told in this passage that a princess exists somewhere in this castle, or that somehow, a princess is involved here. We know, later, that there isn't one, but three princesses- though, just as with Witling and his brothers, we are dealing with one being in triple form. But now that the "female" side of this has been added- a female triplicity- the situation deepens. This story hasn't been just about Witling and his brothers as a lone being/beings- something has been missing from them, another

division- their "other selves", in the form of females, have been taken, locked away in a deep place, and put to sleep. If the brothers represent the soul, the princesses represent the spirit, the immortal, the golden essence of the Truth. If the brothers represent (to say it another way) the breath soul, the princesses represent the free soul.

Here is the real task of the deepest of tales- the re-union of a hero with his princess, the coming together of seen and unseen, of mortal and immortal, of the reconstitution of the being into a wholeness.

But this is by no means easy, as the first brother discovers in the nastiest possible way. In a forest, outside the castle- representing the "forest of life" that our minds live within- all of the "pearls" of the princess have been scattered and lost. These represent the vital forces of a being, the many lost capacities of our souls and minds, scattered amid the powers of life, out of our reach. The curse has, by its savagery, shattered our vital forces- and the first task is to reconstitute them, to collect them all back, disentangle them.

If it seems like a daunting task, it is- but even more daunting is the price of failure, which is to be turned to stone, forever unable to move or attempt to break the curse again. Here, we find something of vital importance- a warning that should echo down through the ages. This "curse", this great task we face of reconstituting our own sacred wholeness at a conscious level, has a wicked self-defense mechanism woven into its sorcerous body. If someone detects the curse, learns of it, and tries to overcome it, there is only one legitimate chance, and that person must win or die. Because this curse doesn't allow for second or third chances to dis-spell it. It petrifies those who try and fail.

This is perhaps one of the darkest details to emerge from this ancient wisdom tradition, but it must be put here, and it must be given very long consideration. You live in a world of petrified people, and if you go deeper than they have, and try to wrestle this strange, guarding sorcerous power away from the gem of wisdom that lies in wait in the deep below, you can just as easily end up becoming one of them, till the end of your days. And it can happen in so many ways- some very subtle, but all devastating.

I've heard the sick laughter of those who have "given up" on the idea of meaning in life- their dark "pushing daisies" humor about death being "the end", and all the rest. You've seen them laugh at fairy tales as so much immature drivel, reduce life to nothing but material gain, and in general be as unimaginative and obnoxious as possible. They are stone statues in the castle of this enchantment. I've seen people petrified, frozen in place, in their ideas and beliefs- unable to move an inch to be flexible or compassionate with others- all just so many statues in the garden of the most devious counter-sorcery ever woven.

*Witling's Sorcery: The Familiar's Aid and The Breaking of the Curse*

*"The next day, the second brother undertook the adventure, but it did not fare much better with him than with the eldest. He did not find more than two hundred pearls, and was changed to stone. At last it was Witling's turn to seek in the moss, but it was so difficult for him to find the pearls, and he got on so slowly, that he seated himself on a stone, and wept. And while he was thus sitting, the king of the ants whose life he had once saved, came with five thousand ants, and before long the little creatures had got all the pearls together, and laid them in a heap.*

*The second task was to fetch out of the lake the key of the king's daughter's bed-chamber. When Witling came to the lake, the ducks which he had saved swam up to him, dived down, and brought the key out of the water.*

*But the third task was the most difficult. Amongst the three sleeping daughters of the king was the youngest and dearest, the one Witling had to awaken. The daughters, however, resembled each other exactly, and were only to be distinguished by their having eaten different sweetmeats before they fell asleep: the eldest a bit of fruit, the second a little syrup, and the youngest a spoonful of honey.*

*Then the queen of the bees, whom Witling had protected from the fire, came and tasted the lips of all three, and at last she remained sitting on the mouth which had eaten honey, and thus the Witling recognized the right princess. Then the enchantment was at an end, everything was delivered from sleep, and those who had been turned to stone received once more their natural forms.*

*Witling married the youngest and sweetest princess, and after her father's death became king, and his two brothers received the two other sisters."*

\* \* \*

Now, we have reached the wondrous conclusion of this unfolding tale. Witling's brothers both fail at the first task, and are turned to stone for it. Witling must now face these tasks, and while his chances of success don't seem any better than that of his brothers, Witling has something they did not- divine helpers. He has familiars, helping spirits, won from his compassion and respect for the Land, Sea, and Sky. And when he needs them the most, they come forth, to do what a human- even a sorcerous human- cannot do alone. And notice how Witling invoked his helpers- he didn't command them to come and help him in return for the favors he did for them; he wasn't arrogant like some ceremonial magician "commanding" spirits to find him treasure- he wept. He didn't think he'd be able to find the pearls, and started crying in fear and pain.

In short, he didn't even think the ants owed him a favor. He didn't help them, originally, to get a favor. He didn't call them now- they came when they felt his genuine need.

The ants, masters of the land, bring him the thousand pearls. The key to the chamber- the ultimate mystery chamber- wherein the Princesses are sleeping, which had been hidden in deep water (hidden in the deep mind) is brought to him by the water-diving ducks. And finally, when Witling faces the last challenge, that of identifying his spirit-bride, even though she temporarily looks just like her sisters, it is the Queen Bee who can detect the proper maiden. Upon choosing her, the enchantment comes crashing down- the "sisters" awaken, and like all other petrified beings, the brothers are restored to their "natural forms"- forms of life, flexibility, and natural wisdom and peace.

The marriage that we would expect takes place now- the three brothers are wed to the three sisters, and what looked like a threefold soul (three brothers) is sixfold (three brothers plus three sisters), though in reality, it is NINEFOLD- three brothers, three sisters, and the land, sea, and sky, all together as a wholeness.

And beyond the 3-6-9 analysis, it is one being in wholeness. It bears repeating again- you cannot break this curse alone. No man, woman, or child can live alone, or succeed alone. We are all in this together, in life, and even afterwards- we need one another, and our bonds must be good, healthy, based on mutual respect and compassion. This is "esoteric morality" at its finest point. It is born in our realization- even a deeply unconscious realization- of connection. We don't disrupt others unless we absolutely must. We shun cruelty, greed, and laziness, and we respect the Land, Sea, and Sky, and all of the "divine others" who dwell in this world with us. Without these guides in life, one cannot ever attempt to approach the test of Wisdom and the initiation into Truth.

Now, even though the "main" analysis of our tale has ended, something else must be discussed, which may be the most important detail of all. Because as I said before, this story isn't just about a guy who was nice to some animals, and who then got help from those beasts later when he needed it. That did happen- as I said. He was helped because of his natural goodness and compassion. He did collect allies- helping spirits, that helped him to break a lordly curse. This story comes from an original animistic and shamanistic root-story in which animals, or "divine others" appear as partners to humans, and humans as partners to them, on magical journeys and quests.

But more is going on here, because you and I now must do what Witling did. And if I told you "so go out, be nice, be compassionate, and one day, some helpers will come save your arse when you need it the most", you'd be disappointed, and rightly so. Because the last thing we need is another story telling us all to "be nice." Humanity has had those stories for a long time, for all the good they've done us.

If I told you to follow Witling's example, you would discover- very quickly- that you cannot. Witling is a simpleton, and you (I hope) are not. He's naturally innocent, even naive- and unless you're about eight years old, you are not. And here we reach the most hidden layer of this story, the reason why this "curse" runs so deep- so deep that it can still entrap you even though you've read a story about how to undo it: the revelation of the True Lock.

## *The True Lock: Taking the Raven Medicine*

When I first read this story, I was eager to re-affirm my respect and care for the Natural world, and all its beasts. I realized that even the tiny ant was worthy of my love and respect- and indeed, they are. But then I realized something else- much to my chagrin. I realized that I was never going to make "helping spirits" the way Witling did if I went out and was "nice" or "loving" to all beings with the unspoken (but very real) goal of enlisting them to my aid one day.

Why? Because that's not what simpletons like Witling do. He didn't go into the world being "nice" or compassionate because he knew that one day he'd need the help of these beings. He spontaneously did it- without even thinking about it- simply because that's the sort of person he was. He had no secret desire for his own gain one day. This is evidenced by the fact that he didn't try to "call" his allies to help him when he was down and out. To have a secret desire for your own gain is the factor that stops you from being a kind, simply genuine person, and makes you into a person with an agenda.

In short- this is the True Lock- the fact that you can't be intentionally spontaneous. You can't intend to be a truly good person; you are who you are. You can't intend to be spontaneous about your love or kindness, because it isn't spontaneous the moment you intend.

And so, we reach a terrible- some would say cursed- impasse. Now that we've been told how to break the curse, we can't go out and do it, because we are following instructions to be kind and spontaneous, which block us from being spontaneous. So, there's no possibility of going out and "getting helpers". None. And without them, no possibility of finishing the three tasks.

Now, this is starting to sound like the worst ending possible to a sorcerous analysis of a powerful old tale! Congratulations, friends gathered around this fire: all you have learned and enjoyed is now useless to you! Goodbye! But I wouldn't do that to you. It is fair to say that I found myself in just that position for some time myself, and suffering this mental quandary was about the time I started to believe that curses just might be possible, after all.

So, I'm going to help you all to be spontaneous, even though you have something in your head blocking it. I found the secret, the cure, and I'm going to share it. I'm going to give you the Raven Medicine. I'm not talking about some silly fake "Native American" sounding new-agery. I mean "medicine" in the sense of a cure for a disease, more like an herbal cure for a bad fever or congestion.

And the "Raven Medicine", far from being an actual elixir, is a sorcerous thought experiment, which you can do right now- and, if you understand it correctly, you can go to the Castle of the Enchantment, and maybe, just maybe, do what Witling did. And the hopes of all of us go with you- for after all,

when Witling broke the enchantment, he didn't just free himself, but everyone. This has an esoteric meaning- that to those who are awakened, the whole world is awakened. But we must each face our fears- and the curse- before we can share in the awakening directly.

Now, to the thought experiment. Imagine that you are walking through a forest, and a snake bites you. Bites you good on the arm, suddenly, and pumps you full of venom. Now, you're walking and dying. You know this- your time is short- and you reach a clearing, in which a little man with a funny cap is standing. He asks you what's wrong, and you tell him what happened. He smiles knowingly and says "I can help you. I have a potion here that will stop the venom, and save your life." He pulls out a corked green bottle. "But," he says "When you drink this, it *will not work* if you think of a Raven while you are drinking it." He then hands you the bottle.

Now, if you want to have some fun with this thought experiment, go get a glass of water and pretend that it is the Raven Medicine, and drink it. Whatever you do, you cannot think of a Raven while you are drinking it or swallowing it. If you do, you die. If you manage to drink it without thinking of a Raven, you live. Remember, you only have one chance at this, or you die. Time is short. So clear that mind, do whatever you have to do to get Ravens as far from your mind as possible, and drink down.

So how did you do? Did you survive? You'll discover that almost always, you died. Because by being told what not to do when you drank the medicine, it is almost impossible to avoid doing it. Any attempt you make to avoid thinking about a Raven is just a disguised form of thinking about a Raven, and with evil regularity, the Raven pops right back into your head at the last second, or during the drinking. The harder you try to avoid thinking about the Raven, the more likely you are to think of it. It's enough to drive you mad. And trust me, I struggled with it greatly.

But then, I realized the answer to this quandary, which is the same quandary we talked about before- you can't be intentionally spontaneous. Being told "drink this, but don't think about a Raven while you do it", followed by you thinking "Okay, here we go, I'm NOT thinking about a Raven now... glug glug" is you trying to do the same thing. You can't intend to not think about any bird or anything without thinking about it.

So it seems that the little man with the funny cap either has the best sense of humor in the world, or the very worst- because his potion, which actually does have the power to heal people, is rather useless.

So what's the answer? The answer is to simply realize what Alan Watts realized the day he was faced with a similar quandary, which in the east is called "The quandary of the Monkey Medicine:"

If you cannot help remembering the Raven, are you doing it on purpose? In other words, do I have an intention for being intentional, a purpose for being purposive? Suddenly I realize, that my very intending is spontaneous, or that my controlling self- the ego- arises from my uncontrolled or natural self. At this moment, all the machinations of the ego come to nought: it is

annihilated in its own trap. I see that it is actually impossible *not* to be spontaneous. For what I cannot help doing, I am doing spontaneously, *but if I am at the same time trying to control it, I interpret that as compulsion*. As a Zen Master said, "Nothing is left to you at this moment but to have a good laugh.

-Watts, *The Way of Zen*, pg. 144

Read this carefully and realize what the Fatalists have always known- what you think is your "self chosen will" is arising from your natural, fateful self, the weaving of Fate in your soul, not from your ego. You want to believe that you are really choosing to do "this" or "that", and truly, it feels like you are. But what if this is not the case? You are fighting your arse off to not think of the Raven when you drink the medicine, but you keep doing it- because even the effort to not think of a Raven is, in fact, thinking of a Raven. Even if you "clear your mind" for a second, a rare second, making it totally Raven free, the Raven comes back, fast.

You don't want to do it, you aren't *choosing* to think of the Raven, and yet, you are. So if you aren't choosing to do something, it must be spontaneous; there's nothing else it can be. And yet, when you think you're "controlling your mind" and forcing yourself to "not think of a Raven", you interpret this as your non-spontaneous self-will- when in reality, it is just as spontaneous as anything else. Fate weaves all.

You've been carrying a lot of stones around with you, all your life. Walking through the world, thinking it was all "in your decision making power" to do this or that, to avoid this or that fear, to make this or that work- when in reality, that "will" you think is "yours" is open, free, and spontaneous, too. You just interpret it as something cut off from everything else. So drink the medicine. Did you think of a Raven? Doesn't matter. If you didn't choose to think of it, it was spontaneous, natural, and you will survive the venom. If you did choose to think of it, that doesn't matter either- it was spontaneous, natural, and you will survive the venom.

Now who's laughing, little man with the funny hat? We all are. Because we were all temporarily crazy when we imagined we were all alone in this world, with our little "wills" that we had to apply to everything, and now, the Raven Medicine has made us whole. The serpent that bit us was our fear and our isolation. Now, we are whole. Now, we can live open and free, for every leaf in every forest belongs to this openness and joy.

So if you find yourself in a forest, being kind to the animals, and thinking "Ha! For this fine kindness, these beings will be grateful and I'll have their help when I need it!" You are being just as spontaneous as Witling was, when he was just helping out some ants or ducks. It was only ever your fear that you weren't being simple or spontaneous that was blocking you- now you can let that go. Whatever you do, you are being fatefully proper. Now, build the intention in yourself to be kind and

compassionate, as best you can- for all is well- and go forth, respect the land and sea and sky, don't disrupt the life-cycle of anyone or anything unless you absolutely must, and prepare yourself for your own internal meeting with the Master beyond the Triple Locked Door.

The moment you let yourself fall back behind "The True Lock", and begin to hallucinate as you had before, crucified on the cross of natural spontaneity versus "intention", you will find the tasks impossible. If you remain right where you were *if* and *when* you realized the lesson of the Raven Medicine, you will succeed. And to succeed is to go through life with the freedom that you get from escaping the "True Lock" of spontaneity versus intention. In some way, it is the true "Curse"- ego which imagines itself different from the supporting and all-accomplishing powers of Fate and the soul.

A Fate-woman with the head of a bird embraced me the other day, from behind. She made me see how I was "at the same time" as Fate, trying to press my hallucinatory will onto things. "Let the world be the world", she said. I felt my "personal will" to control myself, others, the world- as a painful thing, and alongside it, I felt the peace of surrender to the omnipresent, wondrous, and comforting forces of the deep. It was worth recounting, worth talking about. You don't have to control life, or become obsessed with thinking you must control it. It's just mind-noise, friends. Let go. Let the Fates catch you, and show you how it all works out when you stop trying to make it work out. Beyond that, remember the esoteric morality of Witling- remember his simplicity, his compassion, his respect, and understand that this kind of simplicity is the "silver colored road" that leads easily through all worlds.





## **About the Author**

Robin Artisson lives in the countryside of downeast Maine, near the craggy coast, under the shadows of the mountains and their forests. There, he carries on the relationships he has with the spiritual entities he has allied with over the years, and watches his daughters grow with much joy.



