

Hoofprints in the Wildwood:
A Devotional for the Horned Lord

edited by Richard Derks

GULLINBURSTI



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A Devotional for the Horned Lord
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Printed in cooperation with
Lulu Enterprises, Inc.
860 Aviation Parkway, Suite 300
Morrisville, NC 27560

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Nornoriel Hóvanel and Alex Volundsdottir for their help in editing and formatting this work. I'm not sure it would of ever made it into print without you both and please know that your help and friendship through this process has been appreciated. Thanks also to Sarah Lawless for the cover image.

Dedication

To The Horned God. May you incite wildness in the spirits of all who hear your call. We are your children, may we preserve your rites.

Introduction

Last year I had a dream. The dream seemed to last all night and was filled with dark jungles, shadowed images, drums, and of course the Horned God. In this dream he told me to start this project and start working on a devotional anthology for him. I told him I knew nothing about doing this sort of thing, to which he responded "Well you better learn then". He would not be moved and later that day in ritual I swore to him an oath that I would see the project manifest. I knew nothing about putting together a devotional, but his request had a sort of "Build it and they will come" quality to it. I trusted that if I put out the call, somehow he would lead me through it.

As I sit down to write this introduction I look back into my journal to see when the dream was. It was dated Feb 15th, 2010 which is exactly one year exactly to today's date. Yeah, this has his hoofprints written all over it! This project was meant in many ways to be an initiatory experience for me. I was given to know that as I compiled the stories and devotions herein a sort of alchemy would be worked in which I would change and my relationship to him would change. I can say that it has definitely done so. Along the way my view of the Horned God has changed so many times. I've even tried giving up his worship, only to be drawn back. I wish I could say that today, a year later, I know him any better than I did that day but I cannot. I think that kind of thing takes a life time (if it is possible at all). Of all the Gods I have known and worked with the

Horned God in all of his many manifestations totally defies explanation or classification.

I wanted this work to reflect the fact that he is a God who moves peoples spirits to this very day. Everything I found on him previously relegated him to just being the consort of the Goddess, or a nature God, or only talked about him in dry scholarly terms. It seemed such a shame, that a God who is the very embodiment of life and death, passion, and vigor would be spoken about as if just a curious historical footnote. I wanted to show the love, devotion, and ecstasy he incites in those who know him. I wanted to show that he is present in the their lives just as powerfully as any other God and is a force which is alive in our world today.

I was humbled by the submissions I have received over the past year. The poetry, stories, and artwork contained in this book reflect my vision, *his vision*, which was given to me. The love and devotion of his followers is evident. In finishing this project I complete my oath to Him. May it serve to honor him well and I sincerely hope you enjoy what you find beyond this page as much as I enjoyed compiling it.

Richard Derks, February 15th, 2011

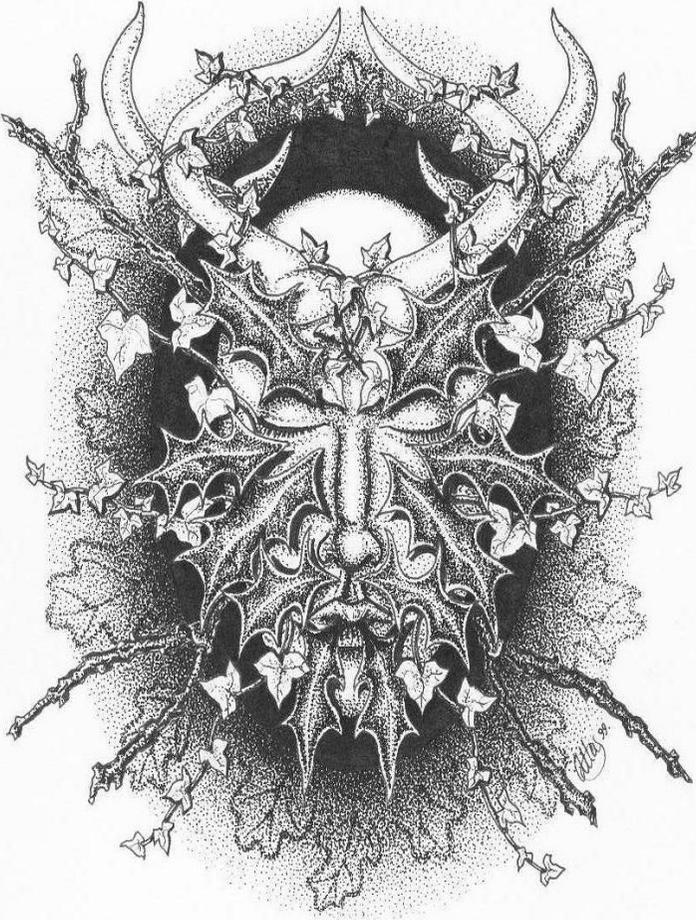
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Winter God by Paul Atlas-Saunders

The Charge of the Hunter

by Daven

Listen to the words of the Great Hunter, he who was called among people Herne, Cernunos, Gwynn ap Nudd, The Horned One, The Master of the Wild Hunt, Mabon and by many other names.

Whenever you have need of any meat, once in the week, and better it be when the season turns to Winter, then ye shall assemble in the green wilds and continue the cycle of Hunter and Hunted. I am the King of the Herd, the one who sustains the People in the times of rest for the Earth, and I shall show you the Ancient Cycles again. And you shall be free from civilization, and as a sign of this freedom, ye shall carry a weapon to take your meat with, be it a Spear, an Arrow or a Knife. You shall creep and stalk across the Land, becoming closer and closer to the Hunted, and understanding the ways of the Hunted. Mine is the Joy of the Kill, the Thrill of the Stalk and the Praise of the Slain. My Law is that thou shall take the weak and the injured, the elderly and the sick, thus to improve the Herd and make them strong. You shall use all of what you Kill and you shall praise and thank the Spirit of that which you have killed, for Death is only part of the cycle of Life, and this child of mine will live again. I demand that you take only what you need and that you replace that which you took whenever possible. My teachings are those of survival and the continuation of the next Generation. I am the Tip of the

Spear, the Arrowhead and the Knife's Edge, and you shall remember that the survival of the Herd is paramount, for if the Herd does not survive, there will be no next generation.

Hear ye the words of the Green Lord; he in the dust of the Earth, the play of the plants, whose body is all that lives.

I am the beauty of the Green Earth, just as the Goddess is. I am the sunlight pouring down upon you all, giving you energy, warmth, and life. Come unto me, and spend times in the Wilds, feeling the Ancient Rhythms of the Universe, knowing that all you see is but a small part of what exists. All things that are around you, inside yourself, expressed in Nature are part of the Natural Order, and if it were an abomination to me it would not exist. I have blown my breath upon the Land and life bloomed, for Goddess and God *together* create. Celebrate that in your days and in your rituals, know that I am with you always and that you are part of those Ancient Cycles as well. Take what you need, and give back what you can is my command. You shall ever find me in the Wilds and in your own heart, talking to you about the days past and the cycles of Eternity. And I shall liberate you from the fear of death, for death is only another state, just as Living is, and you need not fear death, for all things die. And my blessing you shall always have, for you are just as sacred as the rest of the Universe, and you are part of the cycle also.

Gwynn ap Nudd

by Patrick Harvey



"Who calls to me by the crone's black moon
 On the shores of the sounding sea?
 Who dares to cry as the quarry flies
 With whining words to me?"

"I bid you tarry, Huntsman dread
 Who leads the ebon pack
 I would you join, the hunt to ride
 Along the midnight track."

"Why do you seek my shades and me
 On the dark heath all alone
 Why should I not release my hounds
 To rend you to the bone?"

"I seek no more to be wounded sore
 In the games of man and maid
 I seek relief from both joy and grief
 With mastiff, steed, and blade."

"What is left when love is flown,
When desire is left behind?
When even anger burns away
Far away as the fleeing hind?

"What but the call of the horn so cold
Where the mist rises cold and sere
What but the chase to claim the souls
That the humans hold so dear?"

"Who are the ones who rent your heart,
That you seek your death to lose?"
"The joy of my life, the fire of my loins
And the last one I will choose.

"The first I found in the time of youth
And took her for my wife
She offered only contentment
Not the strength of a well-lived life.

"The second lay on the path to joy
From which one ne'er returns
She brought the fire of true desire
That does not heal, but burns.

"The third was less of humankind
Than e'er a man might hold

The joys she gave once fed me well
But now are empty and cold"

"What of the faithful hunting hawk
Who does not return to your hand?
What of the turn of tune or phrase
Which will not come at your command?

"What of the life that passed me by
As I was by my mate betrayed?
The deadly blow not from a foe
But a gentle-hearted maid."

"The price must be another's heart
To leave the world of man
You must choose the one,
And lay it beating in my hand."

"The third one is ever beyond your grasp
The second rides by your side,
The one I choose with blood to pay
Must be my only bride."

"How long may I hope to ride
As you lead in the stormwind's blast
How long until all love and pain
Dies there in the distant past?"

"As long as men submit to bend

To the leash of another's will
As long as they refuse to see,
And to love instead of kill."

You Dance on the Cave Wall

by Michaela Macha

You dance on the cave wall,
Stag-God, Ani-Man,
In flickering darkness
Tallow lights blaze.

The bison starts breathing
In the red glow
The mastodon's fleeing
From arrows and bow

You run with the hunters
You run with the deer
Charcoal chases ochre
Forever with spears

With pictures of magic
Ensnared is the prey
While outside the fires
Keep darkness at bay

And drums echo deeply
Pounding with might
The will to survive yet
Another cold night.

Lughnassad (Lammas)

by Peter J. Watts

Planted during new moon
 The seed is a promise
 We have nurtured it and it has grown tall
 Our fields have grown strong

It's the time to gather
 What the earth has produced
 The Grain King has grown old and ripe
 He must be harvested

It is the first harvest
 All that dies is reborn
 We must prepare for the coming winter
 So we sacrifice Him

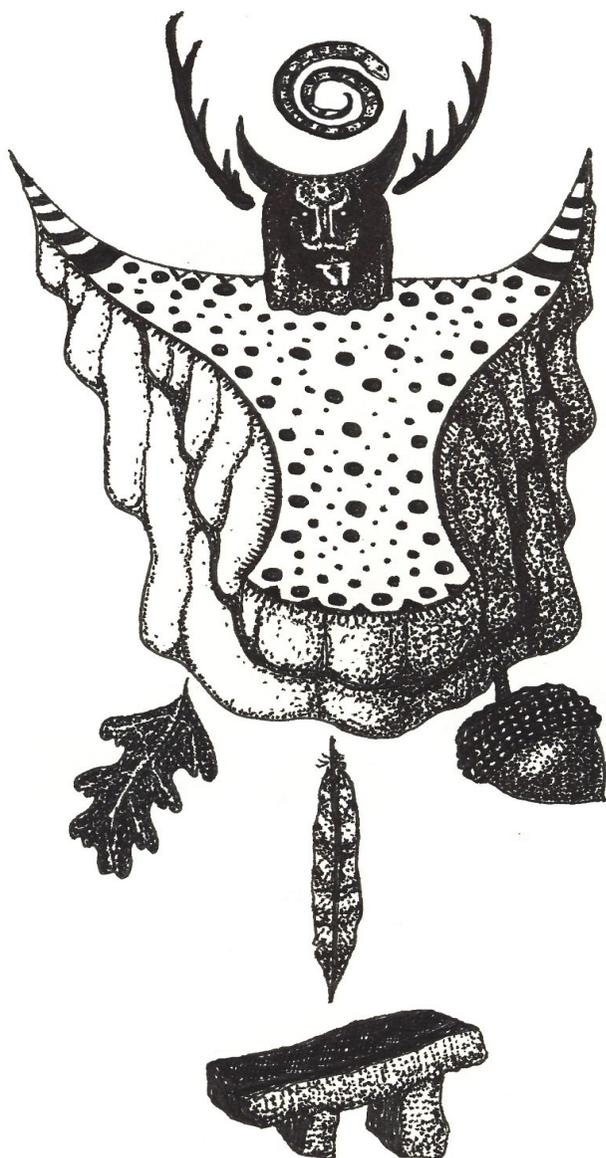
The dark Holly King and
 The Great Mother unite
 In the embrace of that coupling he dies
 Yet the seed, a promise

At that moment they fuse,
 The Holly and the Oak
 Awakened, the Lord, the mighty Horned One
 Rears his great, shaking head

The waning of the year

Food and flocks, loaves and corn
Nourishment, healing in this time of wealth
The seed is the promise

We honour sacred death
So community lives
Sublime, dark mysteries demonstrate love
We thank you for your gift



Cernunnos by Peter J. Watts

My God

by Juniper

I lay scattered in the abyss
Surrounded by a bleak
And terrifying nothingness

The creatures I had trusted
Who naively I had followed
Have torn me apart
And left me in a mess

The shock and horror
Their betrayal
The pain of my dismemberment
Fills my being and all that I am

And then suddenly is forgotten
As I begin to contemplate the blackness
And the fact that though torn asunder
I am still capable of self and thought
I realize that in these pieces
I cannot be more than self and thought

The fear that I will never leave this place
Begins to fill the emptiness around me
I cry out and then I hear myself begging
For release, for a way out of here

A dark figure beyond the black looms
Large and with twisting antlers adorning
He offers me a deal...

I was young and brash, too bold for my own good. I had grown tired of the typical introductory level of Paganism our spiritual movement is inundated with. I was bored. I hungered for something more, something deeper, some mystical spiritual experience, something mind-blowing. Be careful what you ask for.

I coated my naked body with flying ointment; a greasy salve made with hallucinogenic and mind altering herbs. In a small grove within the woods near my rural home I created Sacred Space, called out to the gods and laid down on a blanket.

I Crossed the Hedge, that boundary between this world and the realms of spirits gods and ancestors and met with my spirits there. I followed them in blind trust and in reward for that trust they turned on me as I screamed in terror.

My animal guides, my beloved spirits, left me abandoned in pain and horror. I was utterly lost in the darkness of the Underworld. My soul seemed to be shredded into pieces and I knew not why. I begged for help, promising anything in return, if only I could be made whole again and go back home, safe and sane.

My pleas were answered when above me loomed the Stag Headed God. Cernunnos, covered in green growth, his head a white stag skull and twisting antlers. He comforted me and soothed away my pain. He healed me as best as

could be done at the time. I thanked him and asked to be sent home and was told I could not go just yet. In my pleas for help I had promised to do anything in return. He wanted to offer me a deal; He wanted something in return for putting me back together again, for helping me, for sending me home. Frightened and overwhelmed I asked what He wanted.

Me. He wanted me, my life in service to him. I would be His priestess, His instrument, His servant. Always with free will but with the expectation that I would do what was asked of me to the best of my abilities. There would be no glory, no adoring coven to lead, just a simple life of service. Helping those He deemed in need of it.

As I spoke my pledge to Him I had a strange sense of continuity. As if I had spoken such words in the past, or maybe in the future, or both. He certainly spoke as if this was not the first time we had met, though I was sure I had never encountered him before. Thus began my journey as a priestess of Cernunnos. I use the term 'priestess' for lack of a better word.

Not long after I began walking the road as a priestess of Cernunnos my boyfriend and I took a trip to the Canadian Rockies. It was spring time and the animals were on the move, the bears had recently woken and were hungrily searching for food. The deer and elk were moving to safe calving grounds.

The highway from Edmonton to Jasper was cut through the boreal forest, the roadway was separated from the wild by nothing more than a narrow shoulder and a ditch. What began as a pleasant afternoon road trip quickly

turned into something much more macabre. Every few kilometres there was roadkill. Mostly deer, many probably pregnant does. They littered the shoulder of the highway on both sides, it seemed as though each time we drove past one deer carcass we soon came upon another. Ravens lined the edge of the forest and highway like a kind of surreal honour guard. Those who were not feasting on the roadkill stood on the ground or perched in trees simply waiting for an animal to step in front of a speeding vehicle.

Conversation in the car died, the radio was turned off. My boyfriend, the kind of guy who always drove well above the speed limit, slowed considerably and drove cautiously. Around us mini-vans and semi-trailers hurtled along seemingly oblivious to the carnage on the side of the road. My boyfriend, while an animal lover was a scientist; he did not share my spirituality. However when I asked if we could pull over so I could make an offering, he instantly agreed.

We pulled over onto the shoulder just out of sight of one of the kills. My boyfriend watched from the car as I walked to the edge of the woods and knelt. I placed my hands upon the earth and felt a lot of anger there. The energy of the rumbling road behind me was jangled and distorting. Lighting a small smudge stick of juniper I placed it on a rock and began to pray for the souls of the animals killed on the road, apologizing for recklessness of my fellow people. I poured out water from my well, all that I had on hand to give.

I prayed to Cernunnos to take up the souls of the animals killed here and to guide them safely away from the carnage and then I asked Him what I could do to help the

animals who would try to cross the highway in this day. I was suddenly inspired to grasp the angry energy at the edge of the forest and the jangled energy emanating from the road. I pulled them upwards, visualizing a bright red light rising from the ground and highway to about waist high. I found myself murmuring the words 'caution' and 'slow down' over and over. In my minds eye I could see the word 'caution' written in red along the highway. I released the energies, put out the smudge and on shaking legs walked back to the car.

I do not know if my work there that day saved any lives, but as we continued our journey into the mountains it did seem as people were driving slower. As we ascended into the mountains we were forced to stop by a herd of big horn sheep crossing the road. They were leaving the lower reaches of the mountains where they had weathered the winter and were heading up to the heights of the Rockies. One large animal stopped before our vehicle and seemed to peer into the car at us, bowed a great horned head and then continued up after the herd.

We stayed for three days and throughout the visit saw many different animals and many beautiful sites. The Canadian Rockies call to me like few places on earth. One evening we took a short walk away from our cabin along the river to watch the sunset. My boyfriend was teasing me that we had managed to see, fairly close, every animal that I had wanted to spot. Elk (wapiti), deer, big horn sheep, mountain goats, bear, ravens and coyotes. I smiled and told him there was still one missing from my list, an owl. He snorted and told me that it was highly unlikely that we would be seeing any owls. Mockingly he asked me to do

my witchy-poo magick and ask one to appear. Embarrassed, I refused and told him to knock it off. He walked slightly a head of me annoyed, as I slowed down. I quietly wished that an owl would appear 'just to show him'.

A few minutes later an owl did make an appearance. Suddenly from the trees a large bird flew low over our heads and perched on a branch in a pine tree at the rivers edge. He was less than 10 feet away from me. My boyfriend and I both froze as this massive great horned owl settled himself on the branch and stared right at me.

"Take a picture" I hissed at my boyfriend and then I began to whisper "Oh beautiful owl, thank you for coming by. Thank you for allowing us to visit on your land. You are so big and so beautiful. Magnificent great horned owl ..."

My boyfriend pulled himself together long enough to take a single photograph before the owl took flight, passing directly over my head before veering away and across the river. My boyfriend turned and looked at me with something strange in his eyes: fear. "What did you do?" he asked.

"Just my silly witchy-poo magick, that's all." I replied tartly and sneered at him.

The picture turned out terribly due to low lighting and the wrong camera setting. It was during this trip I decided to leave my on again-off again boyfriend and devote more time to my practice.

Perhaps by coincidence the acreage in Alberta was bordered on one side by a provincial nature reserve, the otherside by a cattle ranch, and another side by an elk

ranch. Further down the unpaved country road was a bison ranch. I was surrounded by many of his animals!

I would return home from work on day to find the mean old bull bison had broken down the fence once again and claimed ownership of the road. I would have to back up my pickup truck and knock on the rancher's door to inform him of the breakout and then wait while he herded the dangerous and stubborn beast back home again.

I got to know the elk herd who shared a fence with me. Eventually they would amble closer to look at me as I watched them. I set up a small outdoor shrine to Cernunnos upon a stump along the fence, overlooking the elk farm.

My own family, on my father's side were largely dairy farmers going back as far as I can trace our lineage. This is the kind of farm my father and his siblings grew up on in England and later Ontario. Various family members have operated different kinds of farms, ranches and kennels over the years. Meaning many of the friends of the family were often also farming and hunting folk. Even if my brother and I lived in the city with my mother after my parents' divorce, we could count on being shipped off to someone's acreage, farm, ranch or kennel at some point during the year.

I grew up surrounded by people who hunted and ate elk, moose and deer. I grew up around cows, sheep and goats. Among my earliest memories is one of my uncles informing my young self to "Stay away from the bull pen, he'll stomp to you death if he can get you."

Many city slicker Witches speak of the Horned God and His animals with a kind of mystical sugar coated glaze.

When He is mentioned in my hearing my nose twitches with the remembered scents of manure, mud, piss, sweat, hide, hay and blood. Bulls are dangerous, stags are dangerous, rams are dangerous, billy goats are complete assholes. They also can be filthy and sometimes the smell of them is overpowering. Near a female in estrus they are singled minded with an intensity that can lead to a blind murderous rage directed at the obstacle in their way; that obstacle being another male, a fence or you.

As a result of my background with animals and the nature of my becoming His priestess I was very cautious with Him. I have become much more cautious than many Pagans who rush headlong into relationships with deities of death, the hunt, and more. I am still careful, though over time I have gradually relaxed and let will let my guard down a certain amount. There are certain things I have always been able to be very open about with Him, such as hunger.

As a Witch who has lived in or near poverty much of her life, on or off the family farm, I have often needed to "make do". Cernunnos has always seemed to encourage my ingenuity and has never demanded I give more than I can spare. Even if all I can spare is a cup of plain rice and a glass of well water. I have gone hungry, something that I feel Cernunnos understands very well. Many times in my life have I felt ashamed or unworthy, for having out of style clothing, for a rumbling and hungry stomach, for a thin and pinched face, for calluses on my hands, and for well worn shoes. Never, ever, in His presence though.

I have served Cernunnos now for a little less than ten years, not long. I am still learning, still feeling my way along. Our relationship continues to develop.

There have been times when Cernunnos has made clear what duties He would have me do. He has called me to care for abused animals before, especially dogs, and I can expect to be called to this service again.

I am His little underdog and as such I often find myself championing the underdog, the unwelcome, the odd, and the misfit, those who may not speak up themselves. Or at the very least, being an understanding compatriot.

There is no glory; often my reward is the opposite. I have never been very popular or well respected. I have little expectation of accolades or applause. A fatherly pat on the head from Him is enough to sustain me.

Most of the time all I do is simple little things, such as the sudden urge to help a new acquaintance move to a new town. My memory is poor but every now and then I find myself able to rattle off a web address to someone who later tells me that site had exactly the information they needed. An overwhelming need to introduce two people or to drag a neighbor to an Open Circle. I have a bad habit of being in the right place at the right time with the right information or stiff upper lip. I am the god's meddler.

He likes it when I help newbies and when I encourage people afraid to dance in ritual by making an ass of myself first. He likes it when I talk about Him, especially at women's rituals where everyone is expressing their love for their matron goddess. He loves it when I drag a shy girl

to a warrior's circle and when I speak up against someone being bullied.

The difficulty in this is how to know when He has a hand in things and when it is just my own ego. Often I receive some kind of sign, after the fact, from Him. Other times I watch amazed as things suddenly fall into place for someone else, all because of some small thing I did. But sometimes I never know the outcome or if I did the right thing.

What He desires most from me though is my own growth, as a person, as a witch and as a woman. He challenges me to face my fears to conquer anxiety. He demands that I step out of my comfort zone time and time again. Cernunnos challenges me in all aspects of my life, not just in my spiritual and magickal practice but also in how I care for my health and body and sexuality. He has high expectations for me intellectually as well.

He demands much of my heart. He urges me to work in animal rescue. He demands that I find it in myself to hold in my arms a dog that has been abused, to walk into a disease ridden puppy mill. To not loose faith in humanity when faced with the cruelty we are capable of.

I have scoured books and websites, read the works of modern Pagans and Witches, read historians and archaeologists, dug through fairy tales and folk lore. I have scrutinized photographs of ancient sites I can only hope to see with my own eyes some day. I have studied and researched and am certain I could do more. Yet the most meaningful way to get to know this god has never been reading books and staring at sketches.

I learned more about Him in a year living upon a mountainside, my hounds at my feet and a digging stick in hand, than in all my years of study. I gained a deeper understanding of Him following the tracks of moose and deer in the snow than I ever did following obscure references buried in academia. I learned a great deal with a bull skull on the roof of my shed, checking it each week to see how well its bones bleached in the sun. I gained a deeper relationship with Him with the act of leaving out salt licks for the deer. By learning to find the places the deer bedded down at night, by feeding a neighbor's goats grain and carrots.

Everything I learned in books and online did help me when I first began to walk into the woods and call him. However no book, no story, no picture, no carving, no website can teach you as much about Him as the Stag King himself. If you seek to understand Him, then I suggest you head out into the woods and meet Him on his own ground.

I have learned much from my own shamanic practice as well. It is Cernunnos who I find in the forests of the Underworld, waiting to lead me down twisting paths. My spirits perch on his shoulders and stand at His side, He conspires with them. Sometimes I wonder if they had plotted that fateful and frightening night together. That night that they led me astray and tore me to pieces, Him waiting in the wings to rescue me ... for a price. I try not to think about it too much.

I don't go to women's Circles and ritual very often any more. They share how they have the energy of their matron goddess and that they can tell who belongs to which goddess. It becomes a little uncomfortable at times.

They turn to me and ask puzzled, which goddess is my
matron? Who is my Mother goddess? I smile sweetly and
say "I am a Daddy's girl."

As above, so below
Cernunnos at my right hand
Herne at my left
A goat foot god
Lights the fire within
And so I dance the frenzied dance
In an imperfect circle formed in trance
I spin like a top
I blaze like the sun
I wheel as the stars above my head
Dizzy, thirsty, hungry, horny
Ah, my twisted love
What agony and ecstasy you bring
That if ever snatched away from me
I should never want to breathe again

Buckator

by Alex Langstone

Oh Great Divine Spirit of land and sea
Feel the hum of the earth and follow me
Through the deepest glen and darkest cave
The highest cliff and the biggest wave!

Androgynous One of the portal deep
Who visits me during restful sleep
Whirling swirling energy dances spiralling round
From the turning tides below this sacred ground.

Buckator clifftop ancient land
Fire through the blood though once you were banned
Serpentine power coursing through the earth below
Visionary scenes to us you may show -

Revealing the hidden, arcane and the strange
The cosmic inspirer may send us deranged
Flowing through rivers, over land and through sea
Oh Fair Buckator's secret proclaim unto me!

This place of misrule twixt dark hills and the sea
Where elemental creatures may hold the key
To the mystic light from the sun beyond dreams
Where again we find all is not as it seems!

Oh Great Horned Bucka rides the wind and the waves
Amongst the shadowy realm where we tread the maze
 Our intangible guide on the crooked path
Whose entrance maybe found in the fiery hearth.

(Written at Buckator, Cornwall, UK)



Greenman by Peter J. Watts

Cernunnos et Les Dioscures

An Excerpt From the Musée d'Aquitaine Visitor's Guide
(English Version)
by Rebecca Buchanan

This engraved granite plaque was pulled from the Boudigau River in the summer of 1945 by a platoon of Allied troops. It is believed that the plaque was dumped in the Boudigau by fleeing Germans, who hoped to keep the treasure from falling into the hands of the Allies, and thus being returned to its rightful French owners. Sadly, this was an impossibility, as the entire Farissol family had already been deported to Birkenau. The Cernunnos et Les Dioscures plaque was instead placed in the Musée d'Aquitaine, where it remains to this day.

The plaque is believed to date from the first century BCE. It may have served as the frontispiece on an altar or been thrown into a river (perhaps the Boudigau) as an offering. The plaque is shaped like an arch, with the center carved in such a way as to create a grotto effect. In the center of the grotto sits a male figure, his legs crossed. There appears to be a torque around his throat, though the details have been lost to time and desecration. In each hand twists a snake, ram horns protruding from their heads. On either side of the seated figure sits a man on horseback, their capes waving in the wind. Each man is blowing a boar-headed carnyx, the war trumpet of the ancient Celts. An inscription was carved around the edge of the grotto, though it is badly damaged; it is completely unreadable in places. Below is the most complete English translation of the text.

I, Metius Stellatinus Diocourides, in gratitude dedicate [...] to Cernun[no]s of the Stag Horns and the Gemini, the Saviors of Sailors.

Hail to the Lord of the Torque!

Hail to the Lords of the Horse!

Hail to the Serpent-Wrangler!

Hail to the Swan-Born!

Hail to the [...] -Hooved!

Hail to the Twin [...]!

Hail [...]!

Hail [...]!

Hail [...]!

Dancing the Hunt

by Herne's Own

I hear the throbbing of the drums
 (Can you hear them?)
 Feel the cool grass between my toes
 (Can you feel it?)
 Smell the smoke from the bonfire
 (Can you smell it?)
 Feel the night wind caress my naked body.
 (Are you there?)

I hear the call of the Horned One,
 bellowing from the woods
 My soul leaps within me to hear it
 My feet begin to stamp out the heart-beat rhythm
 Of the thump-thump-thumping of the drums
 I call back to my God, bellowing out my praises to Him
 CER-NU-NO-O-OS
 Around the fire I dance, head thrown back
 Primal cries ripping from my throat
 Then I hear Him coming
 Sense the presence of my God
 as He joins the dance beside me
 His hooves stomping out the rhythm of the drums
 Thump Thump Thump
 With my God by my side I whirl and leap around the fire
 Silently he asks, "May I enter?"
 Eagerly I shout back...

YESSSS

I am surprised when I feel His Spirit enter my mortal shell

Together we dance the dance of life, of death

Step Shuffle Step

Of light and darkness

Step Step Shuffle

We step the steps of the hunter, the hunted

Step Leap Step

For a time that seems ages we two become one

Lost in the Dance of the Hunt

When the dance is complete, and the drumming slows,

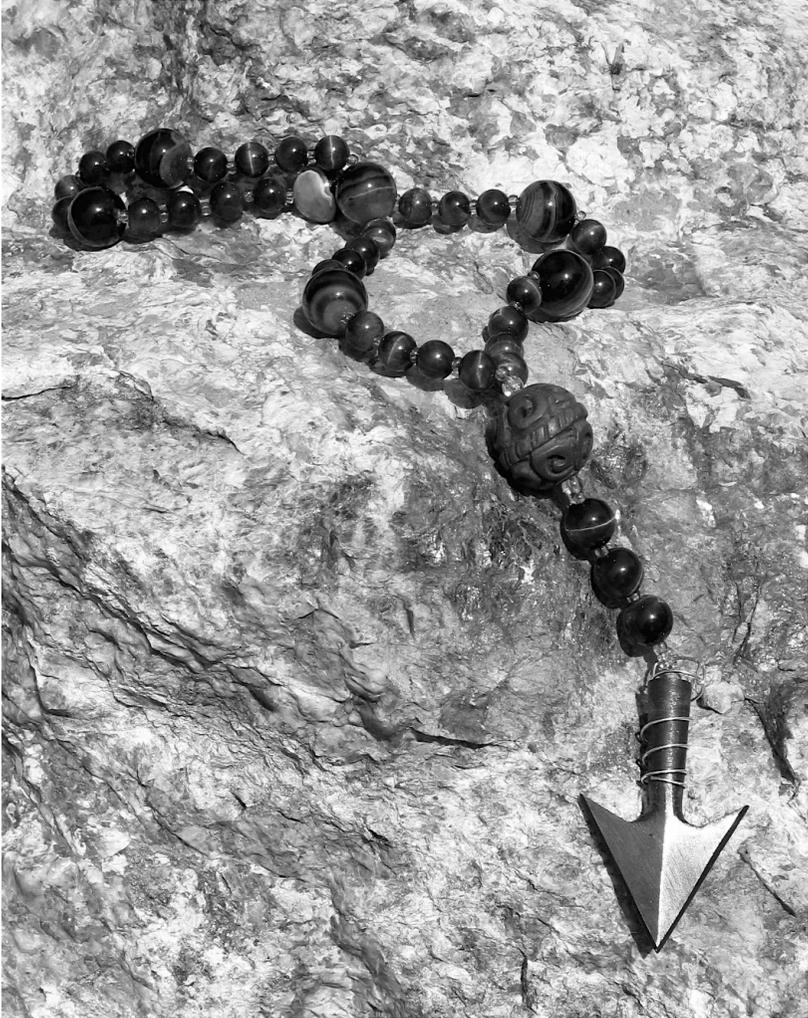
We part company and I weep to feel Him leave

I collapse to the ground in ecstasy

And release

Herne Rosary

by Alex Volundsdottir



Materials: red tiger eye, banded agate, glass, wood, steel, silk

Arrow Bead

By Earth am I made flesh,
 By Water am I cleansed,
 By Air am I freed,
 By Fire am I enlivened.

Ancestor Bead

In the Black Waters of the Ancestors,
 I seek Tradition and Wisdom.

Wight Bead

In the Red Earth of the Landwights,
 I seek Growth and Serenity.

Deity Bead

In the White Dawn of the Gods,
 I seek Inspiration and Passion.

Center Bead

Lover of the First Mother, ecstasy of night's jewels,
 Twin to Plenty, generous Grain-Giver,
 Father of the Wagon-Riders, regal dancers of the Wheel.
 Wood-wise ring-breaker, warder of wilds,
 Death's drummer and blood-singer,
 Rutting stag at soul's edge, swift in sex and sacrifice,
 I do You honor by all Your names, both spoken and secret.

Contemplation Beads (x4)

Run through the wood
 Rush through the wood
 Dance the heat of the hunt in the wood

Invocation 1

Hail Herne, Shaman-Father!

Contemplation Beads (x4)

Run through the wood

Rush through the wood

Dance the heat of the hunt in the wood

Invocation 2

Hail Herne, Hound Master!

Contemplation Beads (x4)

Run through the wood

Rush through the wood

Dance the heat of the hunt in the wood

Invocation 3

Hail Herne, Gold-Gifting Stag!

Contemplation Beads (x4)

Run through the wood

Rush through the wood

Dance the heat of the hunt in the wood

Invocation 4

Hail Herne, Torc's Sacrifice!

Contemplation Beads (x4)

Run through the wood

Rush through the wood

Dance the heat of the hunt in the wood

Invocation 5

Hail Herne, Ram-Horned Serpent!

Contemplation Beads (x4)

Run through the wood

Rush through the wood

Dance the heat of the hunt in the wood

Invocation 6

Hail Herne, Shepherd of Souls!

Contemplation Beads (x4)

Run through the wood

Rush through the wood

Dance the heat of the hunt in the wood

Invocation 7

Hail Herne, Horned One!

Contemplation Beads (x4)

Run through the wood

Rush through the wood

Dance the heat of the hunt in the wood

Center Bead

Lover of the First Mother, ecstasy of night's jewels,

Twin to Plenty, generous Grain-Giver,

Father of the Wagon-Riders, regal dancers of the Wheel.

Wood-wise ring-breaker, warder of wilds,

Death's drummer and blood-singer,

Rutting stag at the soul's edge, swift in sex and sacrifice,

I do You honor by all Your names, both spoken and secret.

Deity Bead

In the White Dawn of the Gods,
I seek Inspiration and Passion.

Wight Bead

In the Red Earth of the Landwights,
I seek Harmony and Serenity.

Ancestor Bead

In the Black Waters of the Ancestors,
I seek Tradition and Wisdom.

Arrow Bead

By Fire am I enlivened,
By Air am I freed,
By Water am I cleansed,
By Earth am I made flesh.

Hail to the Horned One!

by Herne's Own

Sound the horns loudly and beat on the drums!
The Stag King is waking! See, yonder He comes!
The birds are all singing a chorus of praise,
Their love overflowing in each chirp and phrase!
The fields are all donning their grandest attire,
The brooks are a' babbling, a wonderful choir!

Shout Hail to the Horned One, our Lord and our King!
Crown Him with flowers, the bringer of spring!
The Wheel is still turning, there's nothing to fear!
Sound the horns loudly, the Horned One is here!

Hymn to Cernunnos I

by Rebecca Buchanan

Cernunnos!
Most ancient
and potent
Lord of Animals
Ram-Horned Snake
Stag-Rider
Broad-Shouldered Boar
Great-Horned Bull
Most potent
and ancient
Cernunnos!

Hymn to Cernunnos II

by Rebecca Buchanan

he is the double-horned
double-hooved
lord of regeneration
torque of serpents
hissing
whispering

mysteries

Prayer to the Sacrificed King

By Eric Jeffords (Twisting Ways)

Goat-eyed Master, Lord of Light and the Fields,
Servant of Fate, Sacrificed One and Reverser I come before
you with words of worship. I come before you as a Servant
of the Cunning Flame, as a Servant of Fate, and as a Son of
the Art Magical. The Land has been fruitful this many a
moon and now the Land is dying. The food is plentiful, the
powers strong, but the Summer months are coming to a
close. Winter's frigid breath licks at my heels amongst cool
breezes.

As you return to the Land in your Sacrifice may I
also take the journey with You, O King. May my sacrifice
give power to the Land and may I give back to the Land as
it did give to me. As Your body is ripped and torn and
burned and drowned so too may I feel Your pain and
sacrifice. I weep by rivers and streams, upon hills and in
valleys for my Dying Prince, for my Sacrificed King, for
You, my Master.

I revere Your sacrifice for the Land and for Your
People. I stand in awe of your Grandeur. You are my savior
and I put no trust in other things for I know You shall
guide me and protect me as You have always done. The
Land is thick with the blood of Your beautiful body and
from the Land shall come beautiful plants and animals and
all Life. Death comes, Life shall return.

I take of this grain and of this wine knowing of Your
Sacrifice, knowing of your Return. I give this Sacrifice, this
Offering back to the Land, knowing of my Sacrifice, and

knowing of my Duty to Celebrate Your Return! The King is
Dead, Long live the King! So Shall it be by Toad and Hare,
by Crow and Serpent!

Lammas 2010

Herne At Mabon

By Raven Kaldera and Joshua Tenpenny

On the night of the autumnal equinox, we gathered to honor all that dies so that we may live. This was not an open public ritual. It was created as part of a yearly weekend retreat during Mabon weekend, run by the Order of the Dark Moon Rising, and attended only by invitation. We designed it around the theme of the sacred Hunt. Participants were either hounds, prey, or onlookers. Two of us decided afterwards to write separate accounts of how the ritual felt for us.

Raven:

This ritual was especially important to me because I'm a farmer, and I raise and butcher my own livestock. I am keenly aware that actual living animals die so that I can eat and live, and it's vitally important that I honor their spirits by making an offering to the Hunter. I do this by allowing Him, once a year, to borrow my body and accept a symbolic offering. Herne, Kern, Kernunnos, Master of the Hunt... He has many names, and is found in every culture. He may well be the oldest god of all, surpassed only by the Great Mother. He was revered by our oldest Paleolithic ancestors as they hunted with their spears. Neanderthals stacked the skulls of cave bears in His honor. He may even be pre-human; there is something of the Hunter in every predator that leaps and kills in order to live.

In his modern Celtic incarnation, Herne, I have found Him to be an honorable god. When He rides my body, He does not push it past its physical limits. He allows me to watch, and be aware, to some extent. He is stern and implacable, but not lacking in compassion. He understands both hunter and prey, and this is one of His mysteries. In order to hunt, you must become one, mentally, with the creature that you are tracking. You must be so close to them that when they go down, some part of you dies with them. This is why the God of wolves and bears wears the horns of the prey animal. He knows all too well about the moment that they are one.

For this ritual, we had two people who had volunteered to be Prey, and four Hounds. Joshua, my new boyfriend, was one of our prey animals; Allyson was the other. Natalie, Maureen, Vinnie, and my wife Bella were my Hounds, ready to hunt and capture them. We had erected a sturdy archway out of felled trees, with chains hanging from the corners, and put together a cage out of wrought-iron fencing.

As I walked down the path towards our ritual field, I silently opened myself and let Herne enter like water filling me. I'd prepared myself earlier by marking His name on my body with Ogham letters. With each step deeper into the woods, I imagined myself going deeper into Herne's realm. I paused at the field kitchen and threw on my costume—my loincloth of raccoon and fawn skins, my leather shoulder armor with the rabbit and coyote skins (predator and prey), the mismatched leather gloves (one shaped like a hoof, one clawed), my rough woolen mantle, and then my reindeer-horned mask with the hanging beads

and leather fringes. As it slid over my head, He moved into me with a peculiar skillful gentleness, and then I was in the back seat, watching through my eyes as if over his shoulder, while He moved my body.

Joshua:

I walk down the path to the ritual field with my lover. His rituals are always fun, but I've really been looking forward to this one. Running around in the field, pretending to be hunting hounds and wild prey, furs and horns... I could get used to celebrating holidays this way... How long ago was it that I was happily agnostic? A few months? I'm still adjusting to all this Pagan stuff. Trying to reconcile my mundane world with his world. I wrestle with it sometimes. It is so hard to believe it is real, but then it is impossible not to.

My lover goes off into the woods and changes into his costume – the horned mask with the tall antlers, the fur cloak and loincloth made from the hides of many animals. He comes out of the woods. I look at him.

No. That is not my lover. It feels like looking at something painfully bright. I can hardly breathe. That is not the man whose hair I brush and whose flesh I touch and who tells me sweet twisted stories when we are in bed together. I can feel Him, coldly looking at me through my lover's eyes. I find out later His name is Herne. I am about to drop to my knees and bow my head. Not in submission to my lover, but in reverence of Him. No! What am I doing? Don't be so foolish! This is all just theatrics. Playing out archetypes as a way of focusing our minds on...?

...something... I can't even keep it straight now. My head is swimming. In any case, it isn't real. It's just roleplay. Religious roleplay, to honor abstract concepts. Archetypes. Symbols. Theatrics. Still, I keep my eyes lowered. I can't shake off this feeling, but I push it aside.

Raven:

Herne cried out to His Hounds and Prey, and I watched as Joshua and Allyson went to the center of the circle and crouched there together. Joshua had chosen to be naked except for his sturdy boots; Allyson wasn't comfortable with nudity on that night, so she wore a body stocking under a camouflage-tinted shirt and shorts. I remember seeing their pale faces looking at us as if from a long distance away. Meanwhile, Herne called to His Hounds, gathering them about Him for a howl. The moment that they began howling, our prey creatures bolted from the field and ran into the woods.

We howled in triumph, a long howl that rose and fell and rose again. I could see Herne's presence marking each of them, thinking, *My good hounds, My fine pack.* Natalie, the most aggressive, the leader of the pack through sheer energy and teeth, raring to go and chase some helpless thing. Maureen, in animal-print spandex, quieter but still focused, tireless and fast. Bella, sturdy and laughing in her leathers, the trickster of the pack but dependable and solid. Vinnie, the youngest and newest, still not sure of himself, experiencing for the first time the power of the howl and the scent. I/He cried out, "Go, my

Hounds!” and they leaped off like an arrow from a bow and shot, still howling, into the woods.

Joshua:

The other “prey” and I are sent off to the center of the field. She’s in some skimpy camo-print thing. I’m naked except for my boots. This wild thing and I are alone here. We huddle together, crouched low. There is something out there, after us.

There is a signal and we run. I’d taken off my glasses so they wouldn’t get broken. Bad idea. All I can see is vague shapes in the dark. I’m vividly aware of being small and frightened and having something much stronger and faster coming after me.

I am prey. I have to hide. Into the woods, off of this path. Down low by that tree, in the brush. Maybe they won’t see you... They are coming closer—lights, voices. barking? Shh... I must stay very very still. If they hear a noise they will look, and if they look they will see me. I am pale white in the dark brown of the woods. I cannot conceal myself. If they catch me they will kill me. I cannot defend myself. They are close now. Have they seen me? Should I chance running, giving my position away, or wait and let them get even closer?

Raven:

And I waited, with Herne. It didn’t take too long. Natalie and Vinnie ran the he-prey down and captured him, dragging him back and tossing him bodily into the

iron cage. They snarled at him as he crouched, warily, behind the bars. Natalie complimented Vinnie on his nose; apparently the littlest pack member had scented out the male prey. A few minutes later Maureen and Bella brought back the she-doe, slung over Maureen's shoulder, and threw her down under the archway. Allyson had requested that she be killed in the position of a butchered animal, hung upside down from her heels. It was the position that I hang my dead goats and sheep in when I butcher them.

All four snarling Hounds collaborated in lifting her off the ground and chaining her booted ankles to the arch; she hung with her hands trailing the ground, and Maureen knelt and propped her with her body so that the strain was not entirely on her feet. Then Herne stepped in, and He raised my kukri knife and swung it in a perfect arc that missed her throat by only a quarter inch. One Hound poured half a bottle of red wine over her, spilling over her torso and throat, and another caught it in a large silver chalice as if it were her spilled blood.

I heard Herne say, "Lay the carcass over there," and her limp form was pulled down and dragged to the side. Then they fetched Joshua from the cage. We weren't as fancy with him; the Hounds merely bent him over backwards, exposing his throat, and Herne swung the blade again. I watched the whole thing as if it was very far away, trusting Herne to do the right thing... but it seemed that He was not satisfied with only an offering of wine. The blade, in that perfect swing that I, with my merely human reflexes, could never have managed, grazed Joshua's throat just a tiny bit. When we poured the wine over him and caught it in the chalice, a single drop of his blood went with

it. I didn't see it happen, but Bella did (and of course Joshua noticed it), and they told me about it afterwards, and I immediately dropped and prayed my thanks, trembling with gratitude that Herne did not see fit to make more than the tiniest cut. He is, after all, an honorable god.

Joshua:

I hear Vinnie's voice call out. He sees me. Vinnie! It hits me that I am a naked boy in the woods and the thing out there chasing me is Vinnie. It isn't real. It is just a game.

It rushes forward. It is not anything called 'Vinnie'. It is a barking dog with sharp teeth, and another one not far behind. I am running for my life. Back out to the path. I can't see enough to maneuver in the woods. I'm well ahead of them! I can make it to safety. It is all a blur but the path should curve right about here, and then I'm... No! Trees! I'm caught up against the edge of the woods and the dogs are right on top of me. The big one grabs me by the neck and pulls me off my feet.

Natalie. Natalie grabs me. She is not a hound, and I am not a jackrabbit. But she is still much stronger than I am. She drags me off to the fire, where the rest of the folks are gathered and throws me into the cage. The panic of being a wild thing subsides. I am just me, and over there are Vinnie and Natalie. Vinnie playfully growls at me and I snarl back and we laugh. It really is just a game.

They've caught Allyson and are hanging her upside down from a frame. I watch Bella fiddle with the ankle restraints and it brings me clear into mundane reality. Allyson is not a wild thing either. She is not a doe about to

be killed. This is a just a ritual. She is a half naked woman being put in restraints, and she will not be harmed. And then I see Him, and it's real again. He slits the doe's throat and there is blood. The blood fills a chalice and pours all over the ground, and I am a scared wild thing again. They all drink of the doe's blood and I know I am in this cage because I am His next sacrifice. I am dragged out of the cage and thrown before His feet. He raises the knife high, and brings it down fast. My throat is laid open, and it is my blood that fills the cup.

Raven:

With the two sacrifices dead on the ground, Herne lifted the chalice and thanked their spirits, and drank. As He drank, I could feel Him slip away again. He had accepted His offering, and the next part of the ritual would be up to me... as Herne is not a god who gives Life, but Death.

Myself again, I took off the horned mask and led everyone there in a long sustained note to ceremonially bring the limp bodies back to life. They stirred and rose, and we hugged them and cheered them, and broke the ritual to go do other things together.

Every year, I give this gift to the Horned Hunter. Every year, my tribute to Him – celebrating life and death and rebirth. Hail to He who is both Predator and Prey.

Joshua:

As I fall to the ground I'm aware that the knife did break the skin. The cut stings from the wine they poured over me. I half hear words about harvest and death and rebirth. There is some indication that I should get up now. My legs have gone to sleep under me, and I am dazed. The night goes on and I remind myself it was just a game. It wasn't real. How could it have been real? Archetypes. Symbols. Theatrics. ...

But it was real. Entirely real. That was Herne I saw looking at me through my lover's eyes. Not an archetype or a symbol, but a real being. And I was a wild thing caught by Herne's hounds. I was sacrificed and reborn.

It is all entirely real.



Primal by Rod Turner

Dreaming of the Horned God

by Shaun William Hayes

He comes – I feel the reaction in my breast – the thud
thud of his hooves on the floor of my heart

I am in the forest now, darksome trees surround as I
run naked through them. Then I realise this is his forest, so
I stop running. His presence is before me and he booms in
my head “Why do you run”, breathless I reply “It’s all I
have left”, and crumple to the soft ground.

My soul flies from me – it joins – now I am the forest,
I am the googled earth. I feel all the forest, I feel my
boundaries, and I feel the primal desire to seed, to grow, to
expand.

Yet still I am made less, I am reduced by man, I
shrink, I starve and I die, and all of mankind dies with me.
But for what?

Save my forests and save yourselves.

Dance and run and fly with me, join the wild hunt.
Be the wild stag.

Know the truth of life.

We are all hunters and hunted. Life demands
nothing less. Ever must it be if our land, our forests are to
flourish. Fragmented does my spirit wane, yet still I live,
still I yearn for the call of the horn, the baying of the
hounds, the dance of eternity

Then I am alone once more lying on the forest floor
and I return to dreamless oblivion.

In the Forest of the Horned God

by Richard Derks

I dreamed. It was not a restful dream, but chaotic, disquieting. I was not quite asleep, not quite awake either. I was in an ancient forest, far from home. Mist swirled around me. It was not forest on this Earth, but not wholly of the Otherworld either. I was in a liminal place.

My Lord came to me in the guise of Cernunnos. He was behind me. He felt familiar yet different. A bit more wild. Ancient beyond belief. I felt the entire knowledge of the woodland realm in him. Exultation of the predator making the catch. the resignation and pain of the prey. Hunter and Hunted. He was savage, yet not uncivilized either. His hands were on my shoulders. I could feel his strength flowing into me. It was like an old oak. His antlers made shadows on the ground beneath my feet. I knew better than to turn and face him. Though I have gazed upon his face many times, this time was different. This time he was just too terrible to look upon.

I had at my belt an unfamiliar dagger. It had a stag horned handle, smooth to the touch. I took it out and raised it with my arm. Herne's hand was upon my own, guiding every motion. I used it for many purposes. I cast a circle. I cut herbs. I used it to cut an apple, which I then ate. Magical and mundane alike I was instructed in its use. I knew its every nuance in my hands, it was my companion.

His hand never left mine the entire time.

COMPANION

by Colin James

That is not an acquaintance waving,
nor a stranger in adjustment.

The hill to town
offers other opportunities,
however humanly impenitent.
There yet may be gratification
in this energy of hopefulness.
Cernunnos walks beside you as
a purposefully presumptive cure.

Herne

by Jennifer Lawrence

There is an old tale goes, that Herne the hunter,
 Sometime a keeper here in Windsor forest,
 Doth all the winter time at still midnight,
 Walk around about an oak, with great ragg'd horns;
 And there he blasts the tree, and takes the cattle;
 And makes milch-kine yield blood, and shakes a chain
 In a most hideous and dreadful manner.
 --'The Merry Wives of Windsor': William Shakespeare

I.

White; through the woods
 you stride --
 toward and away --
 Leaping
 Flying
 Living
 Dying.

Fierce heart,
 Antlers a crown
 Eyes like fire
 eyes like the ocean
 eyes like the moon.

Feet silver as
 the ripple of fish in the stream
 Fleet one,

adored one,
 majestic one:
 Lover and friend.

I seek you in legend and lore:
 Be with me now
 and forever.

II.
 A rustle.
 Nothing more, but I froze
 Hearing the forest whisper
 Hearing the wind pray
 Hearing the hawk scream.

The loam, the rotting leaves:
 My nose burned with their damp incense,
 Petals speckling the moss.
 Here: hoofprints --
 Cloven, sharp, filling slowly with water.
 I knelt to drank,
 Tasted him
 Closed my eyes
 listened
 followed.

III.
 I know that I hunt the god created.
 The vision not celestial but terrestrial:
 Man-born.
 That makes him no less real.

In my nostrils, the reek of his shaggy head:
 deer's hide
 autumn's crisp bite,
 shadows,
 death.

White stag,
 Antler-crowned,
 The horned god.
 Lord to the Lady.

Waiting for Samhain,
 Waiting for the turn of the year,
 the death of the season,
 the new year.
 Be my lover and be my god, they sing;
 Be my lover, my lord.

IV.

You are not the only one who wears a crown of horns:
 Mithras,
 Pan,
 Cernunnos.

The Christians name you Satan
 and fear you.
 I do not fear you.
 Even your greatest gift,
 The end, the all, the darkness,
 Is only the continuation,
 the consummation,

of the aging of the light,
the fading of the day.

White stag, white:

I see you in the moon,
row of cloud's waves upon wave,
tide in, tide out, breakers roaring.

I see you in the snow,
ice-glazed, knife-sharp, slippery treason,
the crust of November's lace gone old.

I see you in the lightning-flash,
fire-pale, angry, loud, bitter,
your voice roaring fury against the sky.

I see you in the bleached frame of barren bone:
ivory, voiceless and serene,
this, my fate, the fate of all, reduced from charnel reds
to the purity of dust.

O, hart of my heart,
Be my lover.
Ravish me
Ravage me
Savage me.
For I am savage,
Feral kin,
Fit and fitting,
Fit to you and fitted to you,

Engender in me
And in me be consumed.

V.

Yule, and again the wheel turns,
Dark to light,
Not day to night.
Swift, sure-footed,
Lead me, tease me, pursue me, please me,
Past Imbolc when the Lady's fire awakens,
Bright to your darkness,
Life to your inevitable end,
End, as all things end,
In violence, sickness, or age,
And not against that end rage,
But even the light dies.
Why then, not I?

VI.

Within the woods.
The woods within.

In each of us, a forest grows:
deep, dark, stark --
A place of mysteries
of secrets
of madness
of majesty
of legend
of magic.
We find him there,

Waiting
Not patient
Waiting for the hunt
the chase
the race
the sound of the horn.

Wild, we run,
we hide
we fall
we die.

And in that darkness of death,
He is there still,
White stag, lord, horned one,
Part and parcel of that forest,
within and without,

And as He is there,
in the woods,
the woods within
so are we Him.

We are He. Wild. Free.
It is autumn again.

Run.
Run.

The hunt never ends.
The chase begins.

Last Weekend in the Forest

by MacTavish

I debated writing about this “event” at all. But I feel it is my duty – to myself. This is my spiritual journey into the ways of my Celtic ancestors after all. For better or worse!

Even as it was happening I was not sure what exactly it was. I do not know if it means anything other than a reflection of own desires or perhaps, even an overactive imagination...

Last weekend when I was in the forest I heard hooves. Heavy hooves walking slowly, deliberately. The kind of walking that only a very large creature could make. The kind that sounds like a tree stump pounding the Earth. I do not know where the sounds were coming from. I could not nail down the direction. When I faced one way it sounded like it was coming from behind. When I turned around the sound seemed to switch directions as I did (I was in a relatively narrow valley at the time, so this in itself may not be significant). Altogether the “sounds” only lasted a few moments. nothing really remarkable in and of itself. What makes me wonder so much about them however, was that at the time I was attempting, in my own awkward and amateur way, to invoke the spirit of Cernunos, the horned god of the forest. My first such ritual.

I “created” a circle by walking around my campfire three times while placing four objects of special significance

at the cardinal directions: incense (John the Conqueror); Hawthorn & Mistletoe (for the Good Folk of the forest); an Oak walking staff I cut earlier; and my simple Brigid's Cross (for my ancestors). I then called the god's name three times, struck the ground with a makeshift "wand" (the topmost sprig of a downed Ponderosa Pine), and called the god's name three more times. I then asked for the god's assistance in pointing me toward the doors I would need to open in my efforts to grow closer to my ancestors... for any power he could lend me to lead the best life that I could, each day of my life (something I know I have always lacked)... and to help me to feel the same spiritual power that I felt in the wilderness at home, in the city. I dared not ask for more!

At first I did not see anything. I did not hear anything. I did not "feel" anything specific... other than a strong sense of well being. I felt like I had down the right thing. I felt good. Perhaps this is the very essences of magick. Perhaps this is the extent of the gods' interations for some of us... I hope not! I would love to grow closer to the spirits I know are there -but I will always accept what I get. These thoughts are similar to what I was thinking at the time. And that is when I heard the dull, hoof-like beats. In the middle distance. Faint but solid. *Thoomp. Thoomp. Thoomp...*

I will probably never know what it was. It could have been one of the elk that inhabit the mountains. It could have been a hiker with a walking stick. It could have been Cernnunos. It was probably an overactive, overeager imagination... Who knows?

Call of the Wilds

by Nicanthiel Hrafnhild

Wild, wild,
musk and meat.
knelling through the forest,
running with the herd,
king of kingly beasts.

Oh, silver-white
I would follow you
into the between-places
and beyond,
to the dance of the stars
and that wild music
that lies in the heart of everything.

Prancing, feeding,
taking on challengers,
even the Hunt reveres your strength,
unconquered God.
The might of your horns
defends the wain-home
against the chaos and the order
alike,
keeping the balance

Father God, Green God,
breathe on me

and I will run with you
in wild ecstasy.
Red God, Black God,
keeper of that which must be,
lead me into the darkness
of the long and fey wild.
Teach me to walk the forest paths
that lie between and behind all things,
the straight track that few can find

Stag of the Forest,
He who Knows what there is to Know.
He is the God Below,
wielder of the Great Serpent,
Herne the Hunter,
who is also the prey.

A Vanic Creation Story

by Nicanthiel Hrafnhild

And So It Was...

In the beginning, there was the void. Nothing emerged out of nothingness, and there was no life, no Tree, no Gods. Then, the darkness exploded and the tree was born of fire and ice and grew into the great Eormensyl, root of all Worlds. Then was born, in the branches of the tree, the etins, rulers of the wildness that bounds the world. Around the same time, She, the Unnamed One, queen of heaven and the starry night, She danced into the world and blessed it with Her blood. She laid with the etin-folk, and shared in their wisdom, learning magic and fate from the women and rulership from the men. He was born of these unions, Herne, the Lord of the Dark, child of night and nature, and lover of both.

When the worlds cooled and the liquid fire was contained by the dark veil of Earth, the great etin Swearte withdrew to the void to await the time when the fire will dance again with the ice, and the mountains and cliffs, seas and islands, swarmed with new life. The Etin race was powerful in those days, and they brought forth, together with the Star Lady and Herne, the animals and the spirits that inhabit all nature. Finally, they gave unto certain mammals the secret of Fire, nurturing them and being worshipped in return. They called these mammals Man, and Man called them Gods. It was then that Herne left his

abode with the Star Goddess, and dwelt in the land of Men. There, he continued to help the children of Man in their struggle to survive.

As the millennia passed, Herne and the Mother brought many children into the world, tribes and tribes of people. Some of these were great and as powerful as their parents; others were closer to the Men, and removed themselves from the abodes of the etins into a new world, formed of light and glory and magic, and they showed themselves to the Men as allies and enemies, and the Men called them Bright Ones, or Elves, thinking them kin to the gods, and worshipped and feared them equally.

The other children of Herne also made a new world, fashioned of clay and soil, blood and water, and called it Home. Men called them the Wagon-People, because of their carts, and the Joyous-Folk, because they were friendlier and kinder than many of the giants, and taught Men many things that eased their struggle: the Taming and the Growing, the Catching and the Going, the Shaping and the Working, and the Wothing and Witching most of all.

And so the worlds were, until the coming of the Blind One and his brothers, grandsons of the Mother's son, who killed the great etin Orgylmer and separated the world of Men from all others, and set up their own kingdom amid the branches of the tree, and went to war with the Wagon-People, until the walls of their kingdom were destroyed and they made peace with the Wagon-People, and exchanged much wisdom.

A Prayer of Praise

by Herne's Own

Great One! Ancient One! How I long to see Your face!
I have felt You, watching me when I thought no one was
looking
Known that You were with me when I thought I was alone.

You are all I wish that I could be.
You strengthen the weak
Bolster the afraid
Love the unlovable
Heal the unhealable
Touch the untouchable.

In my darkness, You brought me light
In my fear, You brought me courage.
In my despair, You brought me hope.
When I longed for death, You brought me life.

Who but You knows what it is to be hunted
by those You love?
Who but You knows what it is to shed Your blood
to give life?
Who but You knows the secrets
of the unhewn dolmen?
Who but You can dance
when there is no music?
Who but You can sing
when there is no tune?

In my despair, I sought You,
And You were there.
In my darkness,
You brought me light.
In my need, I called out to You
And You gave all I needed.
And so much more.

I will sing to You, Great Lord, when there is no music.
I will dance when there is no tune.

And when I long for death,
I will look to You
for life.

Praise Cernunnos! Lord of Life and Death and all that lies
beyond!



Altar Photo by Herne's Own

The Great God Herne

by Skadi meic Beorh

The Sovereignty of the Great God Herne may prove too much for you. Fidelity to the One may not be what you want. The predictable complacency of the alleged “Christian” earthly kingdom ruled by “the Lord Jesus Christ” - a kingdom of collective humanity having reached an ethical state of utopia after epochs spent concentrating upon lofty, moral anthropolatry - may be all that you desire as you continue to give your mind, your sweat and your blood to the cause of One United World; to the yet-vain construction of the Tower of Babel. Those who will not go along with the majority are singled out, and then outcast for being antisocial; for being unwilling to support the Great Ideal of Peace On Earth. These ingrates are therefore branded outlaws and then hunted like common thieves. They wander about in sheepskin and goatskin, seeking a better Kingdom; yet the world is not worthy of any one of them.

The Ecstatics of the Sovereignty of Herne have always been treated as self-seeking idealists unwilling to provide good to society. Their greatest danger looms when they are led away from their beloved high places by the wounded hand of Dionysus; when they are activated and deployed into the cities to there show that Love is for every soul, if that soul will but submit to Herne. Those thrown to the lions; those murdered at the altar; those burned at the stake; those hunted down in their heaths like animals... all

of these have been the beloved Children of Light and witnesses to the truth of all-conquering Love.

The True Sovereignty of Herne is a terrible truth to the poleis-bound soul, for it is the altogether heathen and unfettered Will of the horrifying Herne, uncontrollable by Man, and viciously inhabited with all manner of wandering soul and creature, nymph and demiurge; solemn alacrity and vivacious restfulness being the intertwined orders of each day, each moment. Howling winds setting fear into your heart; gale forces threatening your dwelling; appalling lightning storms shocking your comfortable place; instinctive conflagrations destroying forest after forest - all of these are symbolic of that stultifying quiet activity ever-present in the Sacred Heart that is at once the Sovereignty of Herne - the Place where those who have been made unafraid rest and work with Him at all times, in day and night, aeon after aeon, world and life without end.

The terror of dark forest; the haunting cry of wolf. This is Herne the Almighty. Do you truly want this? Be sure before you go. The wild gusts bending and shaping that tree, which itself appears repulsive to your eye attuned only to mundane squares and lines of the city, are the breaths of Herne the Lord as He moves among all of His creation, remaking us all into instruments of His harmony. You are incessantly invited into exploration of the Vastness of the Great God Herne. But is this what you desire? The Way of the Poleis - the City - is utterly foreign to the Eye of Herne.

The follower of Herne - the Beloved of Herne - has no fear of what Man can do to him. His way is secure and manifold in beatitude and the shining glory of

righteousness, which is his crown at death and his surety of resurrection into Eternal Life.

Invocation of the Forest Lord

by Rebecca Buchanan

the rocks
your bones
strong and steadfast
the streams
your blood
clean and pure
the trees
your antlers
tall and majestic
the grass
your coat
thick and soft
the flowers
your eyes
bright and brazen
the forest
your self
wild and beautiful



Bucca Duality by Gemma Gary

BUCCA: Horned God of Cornish Tradition

by Gemma Gary

In Cornwall and the West Country, a mysterious and potent manifestation of the Horned God is the Bucca. The name reminds us of other names given to the horned one, the goat -god and untamed spirits; Bwca, Puca, Puck, Buckie, Bec, Becco, Bouc, Boucan and Buc. Such names take us back to the ancient Indo-European 'Bugh' meaning a creature with horns, and 'Bog' meaning God, as seen in the Slavic twin gods Bielobog, or 'white god' and Czernobog, or 'black god'.

In West Country tradition, the Bucca is composed also of dark and light twin-selves. Here we have Bucca Gwidder, meaning 'white god', and Bucca Dhu, meaning 'black god'.

In Cornwall, the Bucca is heavily associated with the weather and the seasons; Bucca Gwidder being associated with fair weather and the summer months, and Bucca Dhu being associated with storms and the dark of the year. When storms are rolling in across the land, Bucca Dhu is said to be riding out with his dark steed and pack of hounds – associating him in turn with the Devil and with Odin. These traditional links with the weather have made Bucca a spirit, or deity, of great importance to fisherman and farmers in Cornwall.

In Newlyn, West Cornwall, there existed something of a cult dedicated to Bucca, so much so that even today people from Newlyn are known as 'Buccas'.

An ancient stone cross once stood in Newlyn, upon a bank beneath a wind distorted Hawthorn tree. It is to this cross the fishermen of Newlyn once came to offer a portion of their catch to the Bucca to ensure that 'the storm-god of the old Cornish' would grant good and safe weather when they were out fishing; the weather being a serious matter of life and death to those out at sea. Offerings were also made to the Bucca on farms during harvest. Bread and ale would be offered over the left shoulder to ensure a successful harvest, and the good weather essential for a healthy crop the following year.

Also in Newlyn, is the mysterious site known as The Tolcarne. This well hidden natural high outcropping of rocks above St. Peter's Church is known also as 'The Devil's Rock', and is speculated as having been a place of ritual and divination far back into pre-Christian times. Whilst the site is little known, it is still visited by Cornish 'Wise-Folk' for rites associated with the Bucca and 'the Old One'. Attached to The Tolcarne are two intriguing traditions. In the legend of 'The Devil and the Tolcarne', we are told of the day the Devil stole nets from the fishermen of Newlyn and Mousehole as he decided to try his own hand at catching fish. When the theft was discovered, the Devil tripped, whilst trying to evade his persuers, leaving his foot print and marks made by the fishing nets embedded in the Tolcarne to this day. In his anger he rose, flapping his great wings, and uttered from his mouth, with much fire and sulphurous smoke, "Buckah! Buckah! Buckah!!!"

This old story, linking The Devil and the name Bucca is interesting, for Cornish tradition often maintains that the black god Bucca Dhu and the Devil are one in the same entity.

Another tradition attached to the site is that of 'The Tolcarne Troll'. The pleasant faced and leather hooded 'troll' known locally as 'Odin the Wanderer' was said to have lived within the rock since the time of the Phoenicians. The Tolcarne Troll could be called upon by reciting a secret Cornish charm whilst holding three dried leaves; one of oak, one of ash, and one of thorn. This charm, like traditional Cornish charms for healing, had to be passed on contra-sexually in order to work. The purpose of calling upon the 'troll' was to gain insight into one's past lives. Once he had been successfully called up, the Tolcarne Troll could grant the enquirer an insight into their past lives by appearing to them in the form they had existed in any given period of history.

Within the circles of Traditional West Country Witchcraft, Bucca is still venerated as a powerful deity of seasonal rites and weather magic. Within the observances of contemporary West Country Crafters, Bucca Gwidder rules the light of the year; from May's Eve to Allantide (known as Samhain by modern Pagans in other areas). Bucca Dhu presides over the dark of the year; from Allantide to May's Eve, and his wild storms provide much power to aid the magical workings of the intrepid Witch who braves the high and lonely places to harness such potent forces.

The duality of Bucca Gwidder and Bucca Dhu is also central to the inner mysticism of the Cunning Craft of the

West Country. 'All as One' and 'The Light Betwixt the Horns' are keys to much power and wisdom. Where all opposites are resolved, the profound realisation that one is truly part of and connected to all may be achieved.

*Bucca Gwidder, Bucca Dhu,
Bucca dark and Bucca fair,
By snake, by toad, by crow, and by hare
We call thee - draw near.
By the way-betwixt; draw with us here!
So shall it be!*

*Bucca Gwidder,
By the white bones of the land within which the serpent coils,
By the mare with the season for her skin,
By hedge, hill, hollow and hag-way,
I conjure thee, I conjure thee, I conjure thee.*

*Bucca Dhu,
By the haunted door 'twixt the worlds,
By the mercurial winds of spirit,
By thy black storm hounds and the midnight call of owl,
I conjure the, I conjure thee, I conjure thee.*

*Bucca, Bucca, Bucca!
Horned androgyne dark and fair,
Regis of the Wise,
Ancient One ever young,
Striker of terror in the hearts of all,
Tenderest lover and seducer of all,
Truth teller and deceiver of all,*

*Mirror twin, and shadow opposer of all,
Father, Mother, initiator and bringer of the crooked path unto the
Cunning,
Trode in darkness and light,
Blessed and accursed,
Behold this vessel of bone filled with thy spirit,
Bucca, Bucca, Bucca,
Quintessence of all nature,
In thee are all dualities conjoined and resolved,
By the light betwixt thy horns,
May thy children attain All-Wisdom!
So shall it be!*



Working Shrine dedicated to Bucca, St Buryan, Cornwall.

Photo by Jane Cox.



Offering to Bucca at The Tolcarne, Newlyn, Cornwall.

Photo by Jane Cox.

Kinship

by Lyn C. A. Gardner

In deepening twilight
I peacefully drifted
Through moon-bright valleys,
Past fresh-water sallies,
By pale mists lifted.

In moon-shadow's shroud
I silently stood,
Before me, a wood -
The forest's dark reaches
Mysterious; peace was
Their whisper that night.

Below the dark forest,
The lake, silver, clear,
Drew a delicate deer
Who gracefully drank
With calm, soulful eyes.

Her gaze, meeting mine,
Drank me, whole, in an instant.
Bounding down silver distance,
My soul leaped inside her!
Such joy, surging, wild -
Two hearts reconciled.

A Dream of The Horned God

by Conrad W. Deitrick

I dreamed I stood at the edge of a playground, a purple-and-blue plastic playground built on a bed of wood-chip mulch and bathed in golden late-afternoon August light. Children played on the playground while I watched. My young son and daughter were there, playing, swinging, climbing and sliding. The laughter seemed faint and far away but only because I stood apart and watched. Older. I watched them protectively, as a father.

Surrounding the bed of mulch was a green lawn, and surrounding the green lawn was the edge of a wood. It stood silent, not menacing, but strictly dividing the playground and the modestly trim summer grass from whatever it was that lay beyond, behind the wall of leaves and underbrush.

Suddenly I turned around and in a instant an electric explosion of dream blasted me awake but in the half-second before I awoke, I saw Him standing there in a thin copse of trees behind me and between me and the street. He stood in shadow, tall and deep and his horns like antlers rose up, intertwined with the naked branches of the trees. I could not see His face, but wrapped around His body was a blood-red robe, mottled with the shadows of the dying leaves of the trees that surrounded Him.

I do not know what this dream means, but do I know I stood in the presence of a god.

Shout at The Devil: Satan, Heavy Metal, and the Great God Pan

by Conrad W. Deitrick

*He's the wolf screaming lonely in the night;
He's the blood stain on the stage.
He's the tear in your eye being tempted by his lies,
He's the knife in your back; he's rage!*¹

You want to experience the Horned God right now? Go and grab a copy of Mötley Crüe's *Shout at the Devil* and put it on the record player. Turn it up. Listen to it. Feel it. Get into it. There he is—lurking under the surface of the music, ready to burst out at any minute with a raging hard-on and an urge to do violence. This is the music your parents were afraid you would listen to, and for good reason. This is Pan's music, and Pan is everything they were afraid of.

Rock music has a long tradition of flirting with the Devil, but with a few notable exceptions, these musicians don't worship the actual Devil of Christianity. The Devil of rock and roll is not really anything like the Satan found in the Bible or in modern Christian theology. Some Christians might be bothered both by the content and the imagery of rock and metal, but not actually because they accurately represent the Christian Satan in a theological sense. The Christian Satan is a fallen angel who is miserable because he is separated from God, and as a result, he wants to make humanity as miserable as he is by tempting them to sin

¹Song lyrics from Mötley Crüe's song, "Shout at the Devil" written by Nikki Sixx

against God and thereby separate themselves as he is separated. That same motivation is often ascribed to the Devil of rock and roll, but it is falsely ascribed. It is a reaction, a fear-motivated impulse that rock and roll deliberately provokes because it pushes people's boundaries and forces them to confront everything that rock and roll and its Devil stand for. But under the surface, it has nothing to do with Christianity's Satan.

The Devil of rock and roll is a different Devil: he is instead the Devil of the occultists, the magicians, and the romantic poets. And whether the Christian Devil was in fact deliberately distorted in the Middle Ages to look and act like a pagan horned god or whether that idea is a modern conceit, the romantic occult Devil, who came much later, was most definitely and intentionally modeled on the pagan Horned God. This intoxicating Devil inspired the poets and magicians who inspired the musicians of the twentieth century. It's no accident that the first real heavy metal album, Black Sabbath's self-titled record, is completely and totally immersed in the imagery of Satan.

This Devil was a god of libido, of power, of freedom, a god of fear and lust, a god of the revel, of nature, of the night, a god of secrets and rage, a god who stands as a guardian of or even a living embodiment of the inexhaustible wellspring of the universe's raw, primal, and sublime essence. His worship ran counter to the Church and its theology, but not because he was a part of the Church or its theology. He was a Devil, but he was not Christianity's Devil: he was in fact Pan—Pan, the horned god of the Greek shepherds, whose music inspired fear and panic and sexual lust, Pan the god of the wild places and

the lonely, magic, dangerous corners of the earth—the Great God Pan.

When the romantics and occultists looked to the gods of the ancient pagans, Pan stood out from all of them because he represented a direct, divine connection to that raw stuff of the universe that the Church of the Middle Ages did its best to monopolize, control, and intermediate. Pan stood out and invited the occultists to come and feel his power directly, through ritual but most importantly through the revel. And heavy metal gives us both, in spades. Heavy metal gives us the real Devil, the Devil that human beings hunger and thirst for.

*He'll be the love in your eyes, he'll be the blood between
your thighs
And then have you cry for more!
He'll put strength to the test, he'll put the thrill back in
bed,
Sure you've heard it all before.
He'll be the risk in the kiss, might be anger on your lips,
Might run scared for the door...*

People fear Pan because Pan cannot be controlled. Pan is wild; Pan is free. Pan is unpredictable and the unpredictable makes us uncomfortable. It doesn't fit in our neat categories; it doesn't follow our made-up rules.

By invoking his imagery and creating music that is a perfect channel for his divinity, heavy metal has served him and worshipped him more purely than perhaps any other modern human endeavor. Heavy metal stands as a dangerous and powerful testament that despite Plutarch's

report and the wishful thinking of Milton and Browning, Pan is not dead at all. Like nature itself, and like his sometime father Dionysus, Pan can never die. Pan returns and demands that we deal with him. Pan has a hold on all of us, whether we like it or not: we are all dark and dangerous, we all have the urge to create and destroy, we are all animals playing at being human. And when we hear a song like “Shout At The Devil” we can’t help but feel who we really are.

*But in the seasons of wither we’ll stand and deliver—
Be strong and laugh and
Shout! Shout! Shout!
Shout at the Devil!*

Feel the swagger, the sexuality, the aggression in the music. Feel it in your body, as your body answers. That is Pan. Pan’s music is rough and savage, but no less powerful and intricate than Apollo’s hymns. Apollo calms us, but Pan arouses us. Pan shows us a side of humanity that is frightening but real, and even essential. It’s not evil—it’s who we are. Modern pagans shy away from talking about the Devil because they are afraid of being misunderstood or maligned. And maybe that’s fair, but I think it’s a mistake. Pan is the Devil, and that’s a good thing. He is the Devil in the best way possible, and I say embrace that. Put the record on. Turn it up. Throw up his sign. You know how it’s done.

Listen to it! Listen, and *shout at the Devil!*

The Forge of the Horned and Antlered One

by Jay O'Skully

I was a witch without a blade. Shortly after moving to this island in the Pacific Northwest, I took a trip to a beach and there encountered the Lady of the Shore, the White Lady, She who is Queen of this island. I was guided to do something I never thought I would do: I wrapped my Athame in a tartan cloth and I threw it out into the bay. I did not regret this action. I was leaving something of my past behind me and acknowledging my new life and I was making a sincere sacrifice. As the Heathens say, a gift leads to a gift, and it wasn't long before I found myself, in my shop working on another blade. This is a brief recounting of that experience and an illustration of how a gift to Her can lead to a gift from Him:

His shadowy presence makes my skin crawl. The hairs on the back of my neck rise. I feel a chill to my core as I reach with tongs into the screaming forge and pull out red glowing steel. With a prayer pulled from some ancient place within me I call to He who is Master of the Forge. Over three days leading to Samhain I have forged this blade, shaped it, and in doing so I have undergone my own transformation. With every blow of the hammer my own bones grow denser, stronger. With the ringing of the anvil, a singing resounds in my heart, the dance of red steel hooves flash in my mind. With every truing blow of the wooden mallet I grow centered, balanced. With the final quench of beer and blood my own skin is hardened. In the

tempering of the blade I become the very edge that can cut through the hedge that separates “this” from “that.” The dark presence of He who is Antlered and Horned inspires fear, but it is in the liminal space of forge and quench barrel where I can hear Him laugh, where He becomes Father and Brother. This knife I make is all of steel: blade, handle guard, hexagonal bar for the handle and a semi-circular heel. All are welded together, not the traditional welding of super heated forge and flux, but the modern welding of arc and wire and inert gas. Now the Mercurial blue imbues what was Martial red. Now lightening is added to the fire!

Then comes the sanding, the abrasive power of Earth that smoothens, that brings out the hidden shine and repeatedly it is dipped in the Watery quench to keep from losing its temper. And in this my own emotions grow steady. He becomes ever less sinister. The Horned and Antlered One is there to bless the Blade, the Athame, the Artavus. His spark is held within it. It becomes a key to our connection, a “familiar” connection and with it I shall do many witchy workings. With it I can cut, I can dig, I can inscribe for His spark will not be extinguished by the “profane.”

Next, a burgundy leather thong is wrapped around the handle. In this way His animal nature is honoured and the burgundy reminds me of the vitality of blood. And next, seeing that this creature is now its own separate being, I meditate with it, seeking its name; I hold it to me; I peer into the white fog surrounding the smithy, the white fog that is His white, ram headed serpent. The name comes to me and I engrave this name, in the Theban script, upon

the blade.

This knife, this ally, this familiar is always with me in fact or in spirit. It has a way of guiding my hand in spellcrafting that is near impossible to describe. I owe its existence to the Master of Art, the Horned and Antlered One, the Holder of the Keys that open the Gates to the Hollow Hills.

The Horned God in the East

by Elenna Rose

I am not a scholar, nor am I particularly experienced. But I was asked to be a messenger, and I shall be. As such my words are nothing you could not find yourself with a bit of surfing and researching. This isn't new information I'm giving you, rather I'm hoping it will shine a light on something that is not often in the forefront of peoples thoughts.

I found the Horned God a long time before I found Paganism in any of its forms. He was always there, but I never had a name for Him. He simply was; a vibrant, essential part of the world around me. None of the names I found for Him felt right to me though. I didn't doubt that He was Cernunnos, or Herne, nor even disguised as Robin Hood; but none of these were names I felt comfortable using. This perplexed me and even now I don't fully understand it. For the longest while the name that came closest for me was GreenMantle (inspired very much by the Charles de Lint book of the same name), but that felt more like a title than a name to me and so my search for His name continued.

Then quite by accident I found a new name that I would never have considered: Pashupati.

And that name felt... right. That the name I should feel most comfortable with is one that is far beyond my cultural roots is odd, but strange things happen every day.

It was this name that made many of the others also suddenly feel more... right.

Pashupati is considered a form of the God Shiva, so how might we connect Pashupati and Shiva with Cernunnos?

In 1856 a railway was being built across the Indus Valley in what is now modern day Pakistan, when workers came across the ruins of a city called Harappa. It wasn't until 60 years later that true excavations began to unearth Harappa, and then a second city called Mahenjo Daro, the 6000 year old culture covering an area twice as large as the Egyptian kingdom. In the ruins of Harappa was found what is now termed "the Indus Valley seals". The seals are covered in a rune-like script that is as yet undeciphered, but more immediately obvious is the image that they depict. The image is of an antlered man with a visibly erect penis, sitting in a yogic pose surrounded by animals. The image is strikingly similar to the image that is taken to be Cernunnos shown on the Gundestrup cauldron that dates from between the 4th and 1st centuries BCE and was found in the peat bogs of Denmark. In terms of space and time the two images couldn't be further apart, which makes their likeness even more stunning.

In the Skanda Purana text, dating from approximately the second century BCE, there is a passage in which the Lord Shiva says: "As I reside here in the forest of Sleshmantra [in the Indus Valley, also called Mriggsthali - it translates as "the abode of deers"] in the form of a beast, my name will hence be known as the Pashupati the world over." Pashupati means "Lord of Cattle" or "Lord of Animals", and was later taken to mean "Lord of Souls". I

personally find it interesting that the text says “the Pashupati” not merely Pashupati. As such it sounds very much like a title rather than a name: the Lord of the Animals, or the Lord of Souls. Both of which describe facets of Cernunnos very well too. On some of the seals Pashupati is shown with hooves, rather reminiscent of Pan!

On the Gundestrup cauldron, Cernunnos is depicted holding a torque (wealth) and a horned serpent (a symbol of fertility and feminine energy) which is patently missing from the Indus Valley seals. However the Indus Valley seals do show Pashupati displaying an erect penis and sometimes prominent testicles, which as well as being an overt symbol of male energy are an obvious symbol of fertility and virility. Though the image is slightly different the same message of fertility is very clear. Although not obvious there is another link between the snake of the Gundestrup cauldron and the image on the Indus Valley seals. In eastern practices the serpent is representative of Kundalini energy that in tantric practice is drawn up through the chakras. The God Pashupati sits in a pose called 'Gorakshasana' - the cowherd posture. This is supposedly an advanced tantric pose to direct the Kundalini energy to the root chakra. While a serpent is not visible on the Indus Valley seals it is certainly possible to see the Kundalini snake implied in the imagery. The animals that surround Pashupati are different from the animals that surround Cernunnos on the Gundestrup cauldron, but this difference in my mind is very superficial - that the Lord of the animals should be surrounded by different animals in different parts of the world would be very logical.

To me this seems clear that we are looking at a God that has been known to many peoples across cultures and time. That he should have so many names is unsurprising. An interesting question is whether Pashupati travelled west and became known as Cernunnos, or whether Cernunnos migrated east and became known as Pashupati? Possibly, as Doreen Valiente suggests, neither happened. Possibly these cultures came to know the Horned God in complete isolation from one another.

While this seems perfectly valid to me I am also enthralled by the implicit mystery of the Tarim mummies of the Taklimakan desert in China. In the mid 1900's in China the bodies of approximately 200 mummies were found. These bodies had been preserved naturally by the salt sands that they were buried in, bearing no resemblance to Egyptian mummification. So perfectly were the bodies preserved that it was obvious that these people were of caucasian origins having red and blonde hair, long noses, and tall "gangly" bodies. Not only were their features obviously caucasian, so too were their clothes - these people wore a material remarkably similar to tartan! When carbon-dated the oldest of these mummies was shown to be 3,980 years old, though many mummies remain undated (The Indus Valley seals are dated to between 2000 and 3000 BCE). When the DNA was tested after much politically charged negotiation they were found to have European genetic markers.

Scholars have tentatively connected these ancient bodies to a race of people referred to in Chinese texts as "Tokharians" and in his article "The horned God in India and Europe" Neil MacGregor Campbell queries whether it

may have been these ancient peoples that spread the worship of the Horned God. Tocharian is a branch of the Indo-European languages, and as such this tribe of people can be considered as cousins to the Celtic peoples that worshipped Cernunnos. These two branches shared a common heritage and it would be realistic to expect similarities that extend beyond those that are found in linguistics and their textile production! To me it seems reasonable to believe that worship of the Horned God spread both east and west from a common source (though precisely where that is is still down to scholarly debate) and so we find expressions of the Horned God in the British Isles as Cernunnos and we find him yet again in the east as the Pashupati.

Today the worship of the Horned God in our western societies, in which ever guise he may take, is something that we Pagans have to reconstruct as so little has survived intact from our past. We are left with a few customs, a few stories, and we are left to fill in the blanks with as much intuition and ingenuity as we can muster. However Eastern practices are rich in comparison. My own curiosity has taken me here to further explore Cernunnos as Pashupati.

Pashupati is believed to be a form of Shiva, the great God of nature's destruction, and this resonates for me as Cernunnos' links to the underworld. That the Pashupati pre-dates the Vedic Shiva is most likely from an intellectual point of view if not a religious one. Whether Pashupati became Shiva is another path of thought that I think, for myself at least, is very worth following up on. However for the purposes of discovering how the Pashupati is

worshipped by modern day followers I am accepting that Shiva is a name that the Pashupati goes by, if only for the reason that Hindi followers believe this and as such their worship of Shiva-Pashupati is still therefore worship of Pashupati.

The Pashupatinath in Kathmandu, Nepal, is one of the main Hindu temples and pilgrimage sites, and as such a holy site non-Hindus cannot enter but may look upon the temple and watch the cremation rites from the far bank of the sacred river Bagmati, besides which the temple stands. Here the worship of Shiva (and as such Pashupati) is highly organised. Before entering the Pashupatinath temple the priest must first visit the temple of Vasuki (the King of the Nagas - "the King of the Snakes" - another interesting connection with the imagery on the Gundestrup cauldron).

Each day the Mul Bhatta (the main priest) and four priests supposedly spend six hours in worship. This takes the form of ritual mantra (the use of sound to attune the soul) and yantra (the use of certain specific geometric patterns used in meditation to retune the soul). Part of the daily ritual involves the bathing of a shivalinga with waters from the Bagmati river. A shivalinga is a representation of a phallus (linga), often in conjunction with a symbolic vulva (yoni). Shivalingas have reportedly been discovered in the ruins of the Indus Valley which would lead to the assumption that the symbolic linga is something that originates with the worship of Pashupati. In the Harappa city culture of the Indus Valley there is also strong evidence for the worship of a mother Goddess hand in hand with the Lord of the animals. That the mother Goddess and Pashupati would have formed a spiritual partnership

seems to be suggested by the union of the linga and the yoni to form a shivalinga. It would seem that the God's lover, though separate, was integral to His story and worship.

Another interesting point about the main shivalinga in the Pashupatinath is that it has five faces that are identified as five different faces of Shiva. To the north is the face of Barun or Vamdeva, the innocent God of giving and of healing. To the east is Tatpurush or Parbrahma - I found this to be the hardest face to research. I found it referred to as "the supreme man" and the ego, but also as the face that sits in meditation and blesses the Earth. To the south is Aghor the peaceful Lord of Death. The westward face is that of Sadjyot that is said to be the face of a child and represents creative power, having connections to the birth of souls and the cycle of life that is both birth and death. The face considered most important is the featureless face on top called Ishan which is the invisible force of the universe, the third eye of Shiva symbolic of transcendental knowledge.

There are the five faces, though there is also mention of a sixth face, that which is not visible, facing down that I have found named Kalangi Rudra. Rudra is another name that often appears as another name for and/or linked to both Shiva and Pashupati. The meaning of the name is debated over, but suggestions of its meaning are "The Roarer", "The Howler" (both of these suggestions obviously stem from Rudra's connection with storms and the wind) "Wild One", "The Fierce God", "The Red", "The Brilliant", "The Terrible" and "The Archer". Rudra is a God of the hunt, fierce and wild with His bow and arrow. Like

Shiva is a God of destruction, Rudra also is called a God of death. "Rudra" can also be taken to mean simply the number eleven, and He is sometimes referred to as but one of a group of Gods (sometimes said to number eleven in total, but not all sources I read agree). As a God of death He also controls disease and is petitioned to remove diseases and keep children safe from them.

Though in the earliest portrayals of Him Rudra is almost a cruel and feared God it is likely that this is because He pre-dates the Vedic Gods and as such would have been seen through biased eyes and would have appeared wild and dangerous leading Him to be maligned (much as with the Titans of Greek mythology). I find Rudra's connections to the hunt and archery (and as such he was considered to be able to tame even the wildest of animals) very interesting as my western ears suddenly hear echoes of Cernunnos and Herne yet again. All these names weave an enormously tangled web and deciding what is and is not of relevance is difficult. Something that has been used by Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists since way back in history is a Rudraksha - 'eye of Rudra' - which is a rosary-like string of prayer beads made from the seeds of the Rudraksha tree which, so the story goes, sprung up from the earth where Shiva's tears fell. The name suggests that this tradition also predates the Vedic mythology. Prayer beads are something commonly used by other religions in the west, most notably the Catholic rosary, but the earliest prayer beads are those found in Hinduism.

The depiction of the Pashupati on the Indus seals suggests that He was also very much connected to the practice of yoga, and the current mythology of Shiva also

tells us that Shiva taught the art of yoga and He is also the Lord of the Dance, often depicted in various dance postures. To followers of Shiva dance is a very exact art form requiring control of the body, mind and the breath. It is Shiva's dance that destroys and creates the world. Certainly there is reason to believe that yogic practice (possibly of a devotional manner?) dates back to worship of the Pashupati from the pose He holds on the Indus seals.

On discovering this I wonder if there was ever any similar sort of worship of Cernunos in the West. My thoughts, quite strangely, turned to morris dancing the traditional dance, often thought of as particularly English (though it appears in various guises throughout much of western Europe) of rhythmic steps performed in modern times by two or more men, often involving sticks, bells and handkerchiefs. There is no documentation of morris dancing any earlier than the 15th century though there is often speculation that it is pagan in its origin. Could be?

The morris dance it seems is often performed to celebrate the returning season of spring. Mummers plays which often involve morris dancing are performed near to Christmas with the themes of death and rebirth. Interestingly this leads me to the Hindu festival of Mahashivariti/The Night of Shiva, celebrated around February in Nepal at the Pashupathinath. The exact date changes each year as the festival is celebrated on the 13th night of the Krishna Pasha moon in the month of Phalgun. In Nepal February comes at the end of winter and the beginning of spring, and so this festival of Mahashivarati marks the ending of the winter months much at the same

seasonal time that we can expect to come across morris dancing.

The festival of Mahashivarati lasts a day and a night. During the daytime there is fasting followed by a night long vigil that ends with ritual bathing in the sacred Bagmati river. For this one night the use of cannabis is allowed as a sacred herb of Shiva. The very least we can take from this is that the Horned God's perceived nature in the East is one of destruction and regeneration, revered during the winter (destruction) and the spring (regeneration). We can infer that this is when He is perceived to be at His strongest. The story goes that Shiva told his wife that this was His most favorite time of year and so for ever more this is when celebrations are held in His honor.

By now in my researching I have a tenuous hold of a whole meandering bunch of threads that I have tried to lay out before you. Is Cernnonos the Pashupati (let's not forget that Cernunnos too is a term that simply means Horned God)? Personally for me the answer is "yes". I feel like I've only just begun to feel around the edges of something too large for me to grasp at the moment, but my how I'm enjoying the trying! My own research in this area has given me wisps of inspiration for how the Horned God might be worshipped, and how He might still be.

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Drinking with the Devil in the Pale Starlight!

By Eric Jeffords (Twisting Ways), Lammas 2010

I drank with the Devil in the pale starlight
 And His spirits danced around me.
 Fear gripped me in their whirling dance
 And ecstasy overtook me.
 I am everywhere and I am no-where,
 I am within and I am without,
 I am deep within the Earth,
 And in the Highest Heavens.
 The stars seemed so much brighter,
 The air seemed so much cleaner,
 When I drank with the Devil in starlight.
 My mind is sharpened,
 My will is strong,
 My wisdom is increased.
 I wait for my Master
 And toast His name
 And share a Holy Feast.
 O, Goat-Eyed Angel,
 Twisted and Horned
 Come forth from the Undying Lands!
 Sit with me and drink with me
 And speak with me in Dreams.
 I drank with the Devil in the Pale Starlight,
 And, O, what visions did I see.
 I shall do it again,
 And when I do
 Perhaps you will dine with me.

Predator and Prey

by Nornoriel Hóvanel

There seems to be two general schools of thought on Herne. One of them is that Herne is the Horned God, where He tends to be treated (though not always) as the faceless consort of "The Great Mother", without a personality, and much neglected in favor of "The Goddess" - seen perhaps as an afterthought. The other school of thought is that Herne is a conglomeration of several European hunter Deities, or perhaps that the hunter Deities were evolutions of an original hunter God.

One of the Gods often sorted under "the Herne umbrella" is Gwynn ap Nudd, a Welsh Deity who is both king of the faeries and leader of the Wild Hunt. When Gwynn first came into my life, I did not think He was the same entity as Herne, as I typically don't see Gwynn with horns, but then I had one visionary experience where He became a monstrous pillar of black smoke with huge black antlers.

So, what of it?

In October of 2010, I was claimed by Gwynn ap Nudd. Up until this point "I don't do Celtic" was my personal mantra; I had been working within the Germanic paradigm, and had been one of the leaders of the Vanatru movement. But Gwynn changed that, and I felt very much like I had been kidnapped and dragged off to a foreign land. After some time I was willing to admit the trade was for my own good.

I only know of a couple of other people who have Gwynn ap Nudd as a primary Deity and I think there are reasons for that; Gwynn is generally disappointed with modern humans, and particularly how we relate to the land. In just a few generations our species really became disconnected.

The few humans that Gwynn bothers with not only tend to have some "other"-ness going on, but also are intellectual, creative types, and carry a sort of "vibrancy" that has been lost. Gwynn really appreciates things like art, poetry, music, as well as the study and practice of magic (particularly of the kind to "open the gates" and bring magic into one's life as a whole, as opposed to a spell here and there to fix things). Also, it's been my personal experience that Gwynn "smells" fear, and is drawn to it.

I have struggled with depression and anxiety my whole life, and believe to some extent I always will. The last few years my depression was more of the apathetic variety than being deeply sad, but it felt like all the colour had been drained from my life. I had been so used to my experience as "normal" and "what there is", that I didn't know of any other way to be.

For the first couple of months that Gwynn was around, I was genuinely frightened of Him. I knew perfectly well what I was dealing with and what He is capable of. In His mythology, He killed a man and tortured his son by making him eat his father's heart. It is also one thing to read about this in mythology and an entirely different thing to know the God yourself, to see and feel Him around you, to be intimate with Him, and know the full extent of the darkness within and that it is much worse

than what the mythology touches upon. Gwynn is a hunter because He likes it. He likes the fear, the blood. He preys on it. It feeds Him. It gives Him power. So I knew He could rend me limb from limb if He wanted to.

Curiously, that made me trust Him *more*, not less. To know that He held me in the palm of His hand, and rather than crushing me to death, treated me like a delicate flower, encouraging me to blossom... was an incredibly healing experience. I also admit I like that Gwynn is “a bad boy” and fiercely protective of me.

Of course, that protection came with the dissolution of several friendships that were toxic for me, moving fully away from one religious community, and having an accident that caused me to confront certain physical issues precipitating that, and working on getting healthier. That protection came with Gwynn forcing me to deal with my personal issues – things that led up to various toxic situations. Gwynn has intentionally prodded some painful memories, and sat there with me as I've processed them, and admitted to dark, uncomfortable truths about myself and various people and situations. This has been something I've needed to do, to work through the pain (especially the pain I hide), but is very hard to initiate on my own.

When the pain comes, Gwynn takes these overwhelming feelings that would destroy others and He transforms it. I've seen His Wild Hunt as being something of a "cleanup" patrol, where He takes life as a form of justice or vengeance, but also brings renewal where He goes. And so it is, that He shares the burden of my pain, and is able to be angry right along with me (as opposed to the self-righteous crap I've gotten from so many people), at

things that have happened to me... and then He transforms it

Gwynn has helped me to feel again, and to get the colour back in my life. Obviously, being able to grieve (as opposed to just a very vague sense of hopelessness) is part of that. But a lot of the "old me" has come back, and with that has come more laughter, and fun, including the desire to make Gwynn smile or laugh. I used to treat my spirituality as being very "serious business", and was quite dour and formal in my approach. I have since found the right balance of mirth and reverence.

For years, my identity had been bound up in being a priestess of Frey, and so Gwynn telling me that He does not want a priestess and does not want me to think of myself as being in His service - He wants my companionship, not my duty - was unnerving. It wasn't just that I had to start thinking differently about myself, but I was so caught up in the "you must do things to prove your worth and earn love" mentality that it was very hard for me to walk away from that and feel accepted as I am. That being said, I think being able to walk away from that has been very healing for me.

My own approach to Gwynn is rather casual; I find as a hunting Deity He doesn't have a lot of patience for ritual, but is more spontaneous and about taking opportunities when they come. Thus my relationship with Gwynn involves bringing Him into my everyday life, rather than doing formal devotions. When there is the calm after some heavy processing, or I am enjoying one of the more "low-key" moments of talking with Him, or letting Him watch my art, or taking a walk with Him... there is joy.

Gwynn helps to restore my sense of wonder in the world, the magic of the fae, and what is good about life.

Despite my casual approach to Gwynn, I am continually reminded that this is a God I am dealing with, as there are some moments when He feels very, very powerful and I feel like I might be consumed by Him, and it is both terrifying and exhilarating. Gwynn still scares me on some level, although not as much as when I first began dealing with Him regularly. He can be harsh, He has a horrible temper, and not a lot of patience, but the times He's yelled at me - not to hide from Him, not to hide from the memory or the feeling, to face these things, to face truths - it's very much like a teacher yelling at their student to pay attention or practice harder. In being hunted by Gwynn, I myself have become hunter, hungry for more out of life, better able to see new opportunities and tackle them, and to face challenges head-on.

To work with a Horned God is ultimately to walk the knife's edge between sex and death, between creation and destruction: to feel the animal urges in one's blood, and the connection to the primeval ancestors and the wild places.

To work with the Horned One is to work with feelings often thought of as "base" and what many Pagans see as antithetical to "enlightenment": lust, anger, and fear. And yet He can be a father figure, a coach, a mentor, a guardian, a strong protector and helper of those who would know Him. He is as capable of love and tenderness as He is of provoking intimidation and forcing you to confront and own your Shadow.

As I write this, I have no idea what the years ahead will bring, and I am excited and nervous at the same time. But if there's one thing Gwynn has taught me, it's that I'm capable of more than I know and give myself credit for, and I must trust myself to follow the call of the wild within, and where it takes me.

Master of Fear

by Nornoriel Hóvanel

I stand in the rain
enveloped by the fog
As the cold air bites my skin
I feel Your Hunt drawing closer
And with it, all of my doubts, all of my fears -
the unknown lying within the mists

I am well used to You haunting me
like a shadow that follows me around
I am well used to You confronting me
with all that holds me back from living
and chokes off my life
turning me into one of the walking dead
I am well used to You
reaching into the shadows of my mind
and touching the sore parts I'd rather hide
forcing me to feel again
and not fight, but surrender to You

I am well used to being drawn to You
like a moth to a flame
like a desert wanderer to an oasis
Despite being burned with cold fire
or drowned in my tears
I cannot resist You
the darkness that gives me rest

and the gentle touch that comes after the pain
the quiet solace that no one else can see
but You and I alone

As I stand in the rain
feeling You approach
I know I could run
I know I could go back inside where it is safe and warm
and try to forget about You
And yet even as I fear what is coming
I also trust
and, even, feel yearning
wanting to be swept away in the Hunt,
enveloped in the fog of the unknown
to ride with You wherever it may go -
even if it takes me into what I fear
In the grey of the storm, there I find colour
in Your presence
As the cold claims the dead,
as You take life,
as the rains fall and refresh the land,
as You give life,
so my own spirit is reborn
and flying free upon the winds

The Stag King Cometh

by Juniper

Stag King!
Lord of the grove
God of the good green Earth
Beneath my feet
Hear my call
And answer me
With heart in hand
And soul on sleeve
I call to thee
Cernnunos!
Come to me!
Come to me!

Join me here in this place
This sacred space
By well and rock
In green grove
Of cedar and larch
Aspen and rowan
Elder and rose
Oh great god
I call to thee
Cernnunos!
Come to me!
Come to me!

I hear the rustling of the leaves
 The chorus of bird song
 The wind picks ups
 And then dies again
 I feel it in the Land
 Rushing towards me
 Sending shockwaves through my bones
 The wild god!
 He comes!
 He comes!

With cloven foot he comes to me
 The whole world shivers
 With each sacred foot step
 I tremble with terror and desire
 Nipples harden and strain
 Against the soft fabric of my dress
 The lover!
 He comes!
 He comes!

The air is filled with a kind of thunder
 I shake and shiver in anticipation
 Quaking like the leaves on the trees
 That surround me
 Crowned seven times
 With seven tines
 He towers over me
 The lord of the woods!
 He has come!
 He has come!

Silent as snowfall
 He gazes at me with the eyes of a hunter
 It is not until the wetness runs from my face
 Onto my hands
 Do I realise that I weep
 Oh Herne!
 He has come!
 He has come!

Pale flesh
 And white hide
 Dark antlers
 And deep eyes
 The Lord has come
 The hunter!
 He is here!
 He is here!

With the breath of new spring
 And the promise of winter's death
 He blesses me
 I bow before him
 Afraid to speak
 There is no need
 He sees into the heart of me
 Oh great god!
 He is here!
 He is here!

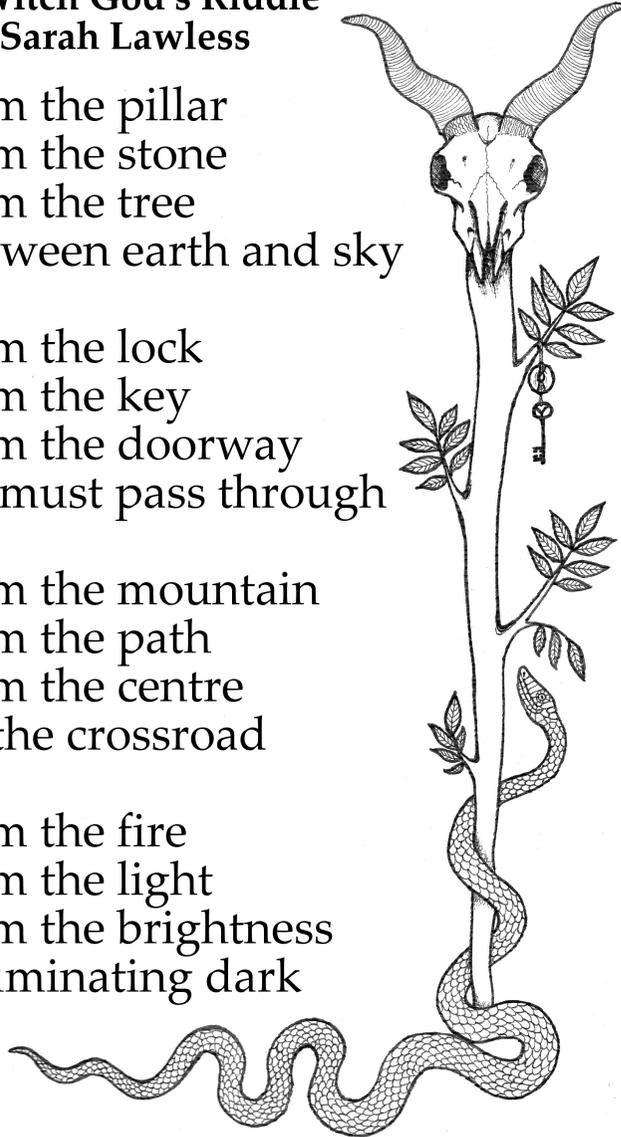
The Witch God's Riddle
by Sarah Lawless

I am the pillar
I am the stone
I am the tree
between earth and sky

I am the lock
I am the key
I am the doorway
all must pass through

I am the mountain
I am the path
I am the centre
of the crossroad

I am the fire
I am the light
I am the brightness
illuminating dark



Goat & Serpent Stang *original drawing by Sarah Lawless*

Of Oaths and Devotion

by Sarah-Jayne Chapman

For days and weeks I had prepared...

I had journeyed back to the place where I had first begun my relationship with Cernunnos in earnest, the same time of the year, years before. I had spent the days and weeks leading up to the rite in deep communication with Him. Performing devotions and ritual, meditations and journeying. With His urging I had crafted special offering oil in which Rattlesnake skin, herbs and resins sacred to Him had been steeped, carefully, under His guidance. I had blended together an offering incense for Him, a pinch of Snake dust (created by grinding down dried Rattlesnake skin, bones and skin), graveyard dirt, ash from the feathers of Ravens burned ritually as offerings in the days leading up to the renewal of my oaths to Him, and tiny shavings of antler from the hilt of my ritual knife were all added. A formula that had been gleaned from Him during the lead up to rite.

On the day of the rite, I rose early and wondered the landscape, listening closely to the Land for any signs, I visited His shrine set in the cave beneath the Hollow Hill, and as the time drew near I withdrew inside to bathe as the Sun set, taking the time to cleanse myself in the waters that spring forth from the same hill in which a shrine to Him now resides... Contemplating... Anticipating...

With the Sun well below the horizon and the Land swathed in darkness, clean and anointed, I leave the house

barefoot to the walk to the place my rite will be performed...

It begins...

The moon is exactly halfway full, beaming down from above, as the musky smoke, curling and twisting in darkly fragrant plumes around my Stang, connecting the worlds... The silence deafening...

Surrounded by darkness, embraced by the night, a shawl around my shoulder I invoke Him... I invoke my Stag King... Lord of Seven Tines... The Goat Horned and Antlered One... Ruler of the Forests, Marshlands and Heath... Gatekeeper... The Wild God at the Crossroad... Lord of the Underworld and Otherworlds... The Witch Father... My Master with light betwixt his Horns... Cernunnos, the Rampant One...

As I chant His name, I fall into a trance, and the world shifts... Nothing else exists... And He comes... The smell of Him fills my nostrils... Damp Woodland, Sex and Death... My nipples grow hard, as a shiver slivers down my spine... Just me and Him... My heart races... Tears well in my eyes, and a sob threatens to break my calm composure... Threatens to choke off my words... The raw power of Him is overwhelming... The uncontained sensuality of Him... The untamed, primal exoticness of His presence floods me... I drink it in... I feel Him around me... Surrounding me... Embracing me... I shiver in excitement and fear... My head swims... My breath catches in my throat...

His stern, calm voice echos through me, reverberating through my soul... "Continue" ... And so I do...

A dark, rustic, freshly baked rye, barley and fruit loaf, is shared along with the wine I had prepared. Libations are poured into the Earth, offerings are burnt in the fire, and smoldered on hot coals. And finally a sacrifice is made. The sacrifice of myself, given freely, to Him in worship and devotion. My finger is pricked with my ritual blade and the scent of burnt blood rises up as it sizzles on the hot charcoal, symbolic of the offering of myself to Him. My oaths are given, and placed upon the torc around my neck. I feel their weight and rejoice in our continued, deepening relationship. Praise and thanks are given and then favours are asked.

Once the formality is over with I let my tears flow freely, an outward release of the emotion that has built up in the days preparing for this communion, for my oathing. They flow forth from me and join my offerings falling into the ground. I cry my salty tears of love and devotion to Him upon His earth. Once they come to an end, it is time to return to the world of the living... I come back slowly... His smell lingers with me the whole night...

The year leading up to my renewal of oaths was a tough year for me. I had moved to the United States and that connection I felt to Cernunnos in England didn't seem to be as strong in Ohio. I had worked hard at it, and Cernunnos had made it clear to me that on my return to England, for a visit I had planned, that I should renew my Oaths to Him, with the addition of a few new ones.

Fulfilling one of my Oaths on returning to the States I rose at the crack of dawn, leaving my wee baby boy and my husband in bed, I slipped downstairs with a spring in my step, got dressed quickly and headed out to the car. I took the half hour drive out to Battelle Darby Creek, arriving before anyone else. I didn't think anyone else would be there just after sunrise. It was silent apart from the chatter of birds, the occasional woodpecker going to town on a nearby tree, a few rustles in the bushes and the gush of water flowing through the creek. And for July, there was even a very welcome nip to the air.

I went with no plans. I just wanted to spend some time there seeking Cernunnos in my new surroundings, to bring Him offerings and carry out divination.

As I approached the creek, there was a mist lingering on the water, giving the whole area a hushed Otherworldly feel. I calmed my breathing, and I could feel Him already. I sat beside the creek, on the damp floor and took off my shoes. I let my bare feet dangle into the water, watching the shadows and light playing out over the rippling water, and I began my morning devotion. Just as I was nearing the end, and preparing to give my offerings to Cernunnos, something caught my eye.

On the other side of the creek, not 15 feet away, was a glorious Whitetail Buck, sniffing the air and looking directly at me. I could have cried, and I nearly did as "that" smell drifted around me... His smell!

Sex and Death: The Lessons of Cernunnos

by Richard Derks

Cernunnos is an enigmatic and somewhat elusive deity. It can be hard to know him, and I personally found it very hard to connect with him at first. The reasons are two fold. First off there is almost no surviving lore about him. At best we have a name and a smattering of images across Europe that may or may not be related. Secondly and similarly, I find that practically no one talks about him on the web or elsewhere or relates their own experience with him. For these reasons I wanted to dedicate this essay to explaining my own work with him and some insights I've come to as a result of that work. Please note this is entirely my own UPG, and should be taken as such.

Cernunnos is a deity whose basic nature can be summed up in two words: Sex and Death. Most people will know him as the Horned God of Wicca. Originally, as put forth by Gerald Gardner, Wicca was a religion of sex and death and thus he was a perfect choice of patron. Also a theory shared by some of the modern day devotees of Vanir (a tribe of Gods once again connected to sex and death) considers him to be a deep ancestral progenitor to the Vanir tribe, and evidence of his current and blood can be seen in many of the these Gods. The beginning of life from conception to the end of it (and everything in between). These are the powerful forces which are made manifest in this God. My own experiences with him have taught me this, and have changed me in many ways (and

continue to do so).

First off although I am a hard polytheist, working with Cernunnos has softened me up around the edges a bit. While I experience him as an individual, he has also given me to know that he is indeed made up of a magnitude of multiplicities. Thus both views of him as portrayed in hard and soft polytheism, in my opinion, are correct. This is one of his mysteries to be solved by the individual devotee to his or her own satisfaction. This can make it hard to connect with him at first, and was one of my biggest stumbling blocks. It made him seem less personable to me. There is a sense of ancientness about him. He has been with man since we first became aware of the divine, and yet he wholly understand out modern needs. Cernunnos is a God of enigmas and seemingly contrasting opposites and no amount of pigeon-holing him as "God of" anything will hold up to much scrutiny.

He comes to me personally as both compassionate and stern. Our very first interactions revolved around him chastising me for being too willing to follow in the footsteps of others and not defining my own path enough, much like a father would a son. A stern reprimand, born out of love, but stinging none the less. This is a lesson he drilled into me from the very beginning of our relationship. He is also very clear and matter of fact in his answers when I seek him out for divination. It does matter if it is something you want to hear or not, he will tell you what you need to hear. He is an excellent councilor if you can take the heat! He is not one to pull punches.

He is intricately connected to the land and the land spirits. To work with him is to accept the fact that he will be

inviting spirits of all sorts into your life and you will have to learn how to listen and communicate with them as well. I have come to the conclusion that they are somewhat of a package deal.

Being a deity connected to the land, I personally believe he is heavily connected to the European landscape. I think this is why it was so hard for me to reach him here in the States. It is entirely possible to do so, but I think those of us in the States may have a harder time of it than someone who lives on the land where he has been invoked for centuries. It just takes more work, but the work is well worth the effort. We tend to forget that in relative terms he has only been worshiped in the United States in any substantial form manner for just under four decades. Compared to the rich deep history of his homeland this is but a fraction of a second to him. However that is changing, and as more voices here raise themselves in his worship, his presence in these new lands becomes stronger.

He embodies all aspects of nature, both light and dark. This includes humans. All too often I see the attitude that humans are not included in "pure nature" but somehow separate from it. As such he is both civilized and wholly wild. I see this best illustrated when I invoke him at my indoor shrine versus in the wild. Indoors I tend to get "civilized" Cernunnos, who interacts with me in a very human and compassionate manner, fully aware of the complexities of modern life. When I invoke him in the wild it is entirely different. His arrival is heralded by a sense of pure, want to tear your skin off, painful, eroticism. Cernunnos is both life and death, and this is very basis of Life itself. In this form he is the rutting stag, life force pure

and vital. For this reason I personally consider him to be a God of ecstasy, and although we can never know for certain, I'd be willing to bet there was an ecstatic component to his historical rites. As I've mentioned before, although they are not the same God, I sense a bit of Dionysos in Cernunnos (and no I have no idea how that works. I'll leave that to the philosophers which I am most decidedly not).

He is also a God of the underworld, and as such connected with death as well. Nature is both harsh and blind. Many of us intellectually know this, but don't really comprehend it in our cement paved, sanitized, air-conditioned world. There is an example I would like to share: A few weekends ago I was working in the garden with my wife and father-in-law on his land. As I sat, planning life bearing seeds into the rich soil, the warmth of the sun hitting my skin and hands in the dark Earth, I felt particularly... "pagan" for lack of a better world.

I thought of Cernunnos and asked him to teach me that I may learn more of his mysteries (the more experienced among you may be laughing at my naïveté). Not more than a few moments later I heard a chorus of tiny little screams as my border collie flushed out a nest of baby rabbits. They scattered, and before we were able to stop him two lay wounded, one with a broken back and the other practically eviscerated.

My father-in-law, the veteran farmer that he is, nonchalantly directed us to a water basin with instructions to drown them. Knowing that it was a mercy did not make it any easier as I had to extinguish the life from those furry little broken bodies. I felt the heavy presence of The Horned

One in his guise as lord of death thick in the air around me. For someone who is essentially an “animal lover” this was one of the hardest lessons I’ve had to learn. Throughout the rest of the day I was reminded of this lesson as the calm was punctuated with even more tiny screams when the local hawks picked off the rest of the bunnies who had scattered out of the nest. Yes Cernunnos decided to teach me his mysteries that day, though it was not an easy lesson to learn.

The lessons of the horned one are not easy. While he is compassionate he is also equally as cruel as nature itself and it would be wise not to forget it. This is not a God who will be sanitized for our easy consumption. He is many things. Loving, yes, but also dark and unforgiving. This is the Lord that I know.

Hunter/Hunted Vision

by Herne's Own

My boyfriend was hospitalized recently. Because of the doctor's fears that his internal bleeding may have come from his gastric bypass surgery, they sent him to a hospital 4 1/2 hours from where I live. He was released a couple of days later and I had to drive to pick him up.

During the drive I listened to a lot of music to keep me awake. There was some tribal drumming too. During one of these drumming pieces I had a vision! The drumming started out slow and then built up to a fast pace about halfway through.

During the slow part, I began having a vision. I was a stag, head down drinking water. Then my vision shifted. Suddenly I was a hunter - dressed only in a loincloth and holding a knife - watching the stag. Suddenly I was the deer again. I hear a sound and quickly lift my head. I catch a scent on the wind and turn to run.

By the now the music is picking up speed. And the vision begins flipping back and forth between hunter and hunted - I am fleeing the hunter, I am chasing the stag. As the hunter, I get closer and closer to the deer. Finally I get close enough and I leap -

All goes black for a second. I am on the ground. I look around for the stag, but it is not there even though I know I was on top of the deer. Then I lift my head - and I have antlers! It is as though when we touched, we merged! And suddenly I am both hunter and hunted! I am

Cernunnos!

I turn and run for the sheer joy of running. On the legs of a man I run with the speed of a deer. All the while I hear the drumming, pounding and driving... and I am running through the trees...

And the music ends and I am me again!

All of this must have only taken a few seconds. Luckily I was on a straight section of road! This was a vision that I will treasure forever!

He Who Dances Dreaming

by Fabienne S. Morgana

Cernunnos, Herne the Hunter, the Horned God... the Sacred Masculine has many names and many faces... I see the Hunter differently, as suits my land, my home; so different from Europe or the UK, perhaps more in line with American plains Indians, but I couldn't be sure. The face I see is not the Cernunnos of the gentle English forest nor the lush Green Man, nor the sensual Pan. Whilst I am in Australia, I can't speak of the Indigenous perspective, I am not in a position to do so. Equally, I can't give an academic perspective... I can only offer my opinion, my experience – when this project came to my attention, I was buried in exams, and could not make the deadline... in due course the deadline was extended and the Hunter I know whispered in my heart that he wanted me to make the commitment, to represent him as I know him.

In a country with no native horned animals, how does Cernunnos manifest? In my opinion, he manifests through texture, skin and hide – and through the various introduced horned species. I grew up on cattle stations, and I can assure you, the Horned God, manifest in Hereford Longhorn cattle, was well respected! My perception of the Horned God may not resonate for others – those who know him from Europe, or the United Kingdom may not recognize him here – this vast country of extremes, a melting pot of cultures and faiths. In an effort to avoid misappropriation of an indigenous culture that I

have no right to represent, I have gradually formed my own relationship with the Gods of my ancestors, adopting to their new forms in this new land, just as my ancestors had to.

I am inspired by my country and I look to it for guidance. My personal experience of my land has shaped the way I view the spiritual world, the associations I use, the way I practice. Australia – as Billy Connelly said, “it’s a weird place”. When the first Europeans naturalists encountered the platypus – this egg-laying, venomous, duck-billed, beaver-tailed, otter-footed mammal, they thought that the scientists that had sent it to them were playing a joke on them. It is unique, but could almost be viewed as a hybrid in terms of evolution. Similarly, I am 5th generation Australian, from English, Irish, Scottish, German or Swiss, and possibly French extraction – a human platypus, if you will – and sometimes people don’t know quite what to make of me, either.

Another Australian native I would like to mention is the lyrebird – so named because of the shape of its tail feathers. A three minute video can be found on YouTube¹, filmed by one of my heroes, David Attenborough (a somewhat cheeky aside here – which God loves his wilderness and his creatures... I wonder who whispers in David’s heart, and if he recognises him?). In addition to having its’ own song, the lyrebird is a mimic – incorporating other sounds, faithfully, into its’ own expression; in this particular video, a camera shutter and a chainsaw, amongst other things. Thirdly, the bowerbird – the male collects objects, usually blue, to attract a mate – and makes its nest in such a way that it resembles a portal

of some kind. I am an eclectic pagan, and a Solitaire – I derive my ideas, tastes, style, beliefs, etc., from various sources, and I am attached to no particular school – in that sense, my personal expression of my spirituality resembles that of the flora and fauna of my land, my home. I am largely influenced by what some of my esteemed American friends refer to as the revival of the indigenous European traditions, but I am also influenced by the spiritual practices from other traditions – eclectically applying or reinterpreting the concepts or ideas, rather than a direct misappropriation of practice. I will take a moment, to clarify, unlike my avian kin, aforementioned, this is not motivated by a desire to attract a mate.

The Sacred Masculine of my childhood was presented via a Catholic mother and then a Catholic boarding school. The vengeful God of the Old Testament failed to resonate for me, Jesus and the various Apostles and Saints also failed to present to me a representation of the Sacred Masculine that I could relate to. At that time, in the all girls boarding school I attended, liturgical dance was a regular feature of the weekly mass.... and I remember listening to one song, "Lord of the Dance"² and thinking, as I watched a slender girl in white dance, that the words were right, but the tempo was all wrong. I think, now, I would like to hear Inkubbus Sukkubus do a cover of that Catholic classic (I heard an Irish folk version, but it still wasn't right for me!).

I grew up in Western Queensland, on the fringes of the Simpson and Strzelecki Deserts. When I read of Herne, and Cernunnos and the Horned God in the literature, I started to see echoes of him in the men and the creatures

around me. Much of this is in hindsight – when I was living out West, I had no framework, no paradigm to explain my path; just a bewilderment as to why the Christian God didn't seem as real to me as the faces I saw in the bark of the trees, the whispers I felt on the wind and through the leaves, in the rain and in the clear, still nights...

I feel Cernunnos in his whirling, playful dance in the strong winds, I feel his sensual embrace in the lush rainforest, the gentle loving of the mild winter sun, and the blistering, energy sapping post orgasmic ennui induced by the heat of summer. The laughing faces of rested cattle dogs, the whiskery kiss from a stockhorse, the virile masculinity of a mature male red kangaroo, the majesty of the wedge tail eagle soaring in the surreal blue of the Australian sky, the proud lift of the goanna's head, the laughter of the kookaburras, and the swift deadliness of the kingfisher: all of these to me as are aspects of the Sacred Masculine, who I relate to as Cernunnos, Herne, Hunter, Horned God, Laughing Lover, He Who Dances in the Heart.

Bushmen refer to him as "Hughie" – as in "Send 'er down, Hughie" - here, the Hunter is also a rain god, hunting in the dessert with lightening bolts and thunder. The electrical storms in the coast and mountains I often consider Divine Lovemaking, which explains the build-up of tension prior and the sense of Blessed Release afterwards in a world made new and fresh, dust settled, perfume of rain lingering in the air in the way that you can smell the essence of sex in a room after making love.

I grew up with men the colour of wood and earth, the older ones with faces and hands gnarled and lined like

the mulga local to the area, and glints in their eyes like sunlight on water. I remember the men coming in dusty and dirty, the smell of dogs, horses and cattle and campfires lingering on their skin, hair and clothes, transformed then at the dances, clean, oiled, scented.... it is easy for me to see the Horned One smiling out from their eyes as they dance in my memory, easy too, to see the Hunter in the farrow of brow, bent in concentration over some task... I see him in the long muscular legs and arms, in the broad shoulders and shaggy hair, just as I see him personified in my Beloved now... a man from another land, with sandalwood skin and long limbs, black brows and shining eyes, flashing teeth and unfathomable depths in his ageless soul.

Again, I will reiterate what I stated originally – this is my view – how I feel Cernunnos in my practice, shaped by my view, my county, my land, my culture and the inhabitants. The land itself is one of the oldest land masses in the world, with one of the oldest indigenous cultures, and an oral tradition of at least 40 000 years, but it is important to realize that there are hundreds of different groups, each with their own language and traditions³ – and I don't belong to any of them, so I cannot appropriate their traditions, their dreamings – so I have dreamed my own, which may or may not sit well with others...

I still have the other Cernunnos, the one I see from Europe and the UK – but he is also transformed, into the form of the laconic stockman, the shamanistic male kangaroo, laughing through the kookaburras, hunting through the dingo, seducing through the sudden orgasmic shock of a cold waterfall whilst white water rafting on the

Tully river, through the sensuous experience of diving on the Great Barrier Reef and the erotic caress of mist in the Northern Rainforests, the fierce stinging kisses of the red dust devils in the desert and of salty winds down along the Great Ocean Road. I see him long limbed, with the loose amble of a stockman, a dingo smile, a laugh that echoes the kookaburras, a battered stockmans hat perched over kangaroo ears and longhorns, clad not in a cloak, but in a long dry as a bone, and cuban heels, armed not with a bow but a stockwhip and lasso, tattooed, and shaggy haired, strong hands and muscular body. I love his other faces also, and I love the visuals of them, but this is how I feel him in my heart-fire, where he dances, how I hear him, how I smell him when he is near, how I taste him. Cernunnos, Hunter, Herne, Horned Lord, Laughing Lover, He Who Dances in the Heart, I honor thee.

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A Meditation on the Horned Spirits of Sorcery and Death

by Eric Jeffords (Twisting Ways), Hallowmas 2010

For Behold! A black goat sits upon a golden throne with a serpent in his hand and flame betwixt his crooked horns. Hail the Shining Serpent! Hail the Master of Sorcery! Hail the Old Goat!

The Witchfather

He may be met upon a lonely road in the form of a black man or he may come to us in vision as a black dog or a goat or a serpent. He is the Master Shapeshifter, the True Sorcerer, and the Pillar between Earth and Sky, Life and Death. He is neither male nor female and yet both. He is the Walker between Worlds, the walker between genders and the walker between man and beast.

I have known him by many names: Master, Bucca, Puck, Robin, Devil, Hobb, Twisted Goat, Azael, Lumiel. He is limited by none of these names and empowered by all of them. He has whispered to me in the forests and mountains and in my chambers and dreams. Though he has appeared to me in vision as a goatish man there was a certain feminine grace with which he carried himself. Upon my working table he is there as the skull of a goat upon which a candle is sometimes lit. I give offerings upon this skull when I can and it always goes with me into the forests to give offerings to the spirits.

The Witchfather is the father of witches; he is the first sorcerer, the first true shapeshifter. He is the Light of the Cthonic Lord of Death. He is the knowledge that witches seek in the darkness, the light sprung from the Shadow, the consciousness sprung from the void. In all cultures there is at least one reference to him. Now, I am a hard polytheist. I loathe seeing others combining Jupiter and Zeus, Odin and Hermes, Hekate with Nicnevin, it is most annoying. However, Witchfather is a title, an epithet if you will. Behind it without the focus of the witch nothing will come to her aid. Odin, in the Norse culture, could very well be the Witchfather for Northern practicing witches. The Witchmother, in turn, could be Hekate to those practicing in a more Mediterranean-based culture. The human mind, though complex, filters divinity to what humans understand in their personal worldview. They, the gods, understand the Mysteries better than humans possibly ever will.

When I call out to the Witchfather and use his titles I do so because I do not feel worthy enough to know his name. It is like if one addressed Queen Elizabeth as "Elizabeth" instead of "Your Majesty". I just have not reached that point in my relationship with the Witchfather.

Let us look at Odin for a moment. Odin, in the Norse culture, is the father of sorceries, the master magician, the sorcerer, the shapeshifter. He hung himself from the worldtree, from Yggdrasil to gain knowledge of magic. He sacrificed his eye to gain knowledge as well. He became the medium between worlds; he is able to cross over. Odin is also able to shapeshift and become a serpent or a goat at will. He exudes many of the same qualities as who the

Witchfather is. Would I personally call Odin the Witchfather? No, I would not simply because Odin, though he does certainly exist and if I made the correct prayers and offerings I am certain I would be in his awareness, is not part of my personal practice. Nor is Hermes who carries many of the same attributes as Odin (being a wanderer and walker between worlds, as well as a master of poetry), or Dionysus or Pan and so on and so forth. The mentioned gods are certainly gods of witchcraft within their respective cultures and they can certainly be called by the epithet "Witchfather".

The Witchfather is the Serpent come down from Heaven to gift man with consciousness. In this he is also tied in with the Promethean flame. Myth spreads from culture to culture by war and trade and nomads so the myth of Eden could very well have passed through Greece and Rome. The Greeks had a myth about an Eden-like place called the Garden of the Hesperides. The apples were said to give eternal life, and indeed so did the apples of Eden, though in a different way than Man may have thought. If Man ate from the apple they would "be as gods, knowing good and evil." The Serpent showed knowledge to women through the apple, through the fruit sacred to the Unseen and the dead. She gave this knowledge unto her husband who gave it to his son and so on and so forth and man was born into awareness and consciousness! In a scientific view this can be seen as evolution. The story of Cain and Abel is the story of the Cro-Magnons and the Neanderthals. Cain (Qayin in Hebrew) means "spear" or "metal worker". In some traditions of witchcraft Cain is seen as the Witchfather, and even sometimes the mortal avatar of the

Witchfather. Abel (or Hevel in Hebrew) means "waste" or "useless". It is my personal belief that the story of Cain and Able is the intelligent overcoming the ignorant and useless persons of the world. There is much speculation that the Cro-Magnon tribes would sometimes destroy Neanderthal tribes. Could it be that Cain's people destroyed the ignorant persons with their superior artifice?

Cain went out unto the land of Nod, east of Eden. East is the rising sun, the place of intelligence and artifice and fire in many magical traditions. Many will disagree with me here but I believe there is a lot of power in the Cainite mythos and lore can be derived from the Genesis myth, though somewhat skewed perhaps, on the origins of the Witchfather.

When I was seventeen I first began working from the sources of Robin Artisson. It was visceral and powerful and one day I decided to give an offering to the Witchfather. I remember it clearly as I see the paper before me. In myth he is always associated with the wind picking up and sometimes a storm. A storm did not break, but the peaceful breeze soon picked up and blew out my little candle and the pressure in the area threatened to choke me! And then it ceased, but I knew I was in his presence. He had become Aware of me and waited for my offering to him. I gave it and in my mind I pictured myself bowing before this powerful being who filled me so with fear and unexplainable joy. Hobb I called him, Twisting Goat, I laughed and sang his praise. And then it was over and I felt myself back in that little glade away from my Master. Later that night I was outside my house with two friends, Bill and July (not their real names, but for the sake of

protection). I suddenly heard this piping, mournful flute music, but when I tried to focus on it the sound vanished. A moment later I heard it again and I noticed that Betty also turned her head to listen. The sound was very clear and close to my ear, and yet distant and across the river. Bill did not seem to react to the sound at all so I felt confirmation in the fact that this was not a hallucination or a recording or something of mortal creation. I followed the sound all the way to the river and felt a pulling sensation in my gut. I could have broken down into tears for want of wishing to follow the Call of the Piper. It was the most gratifying and beautiful thing that I have ever heard and I fear I will never hear its like again.

The Stag King

But there is another power, a deeper power beyond the witchfather. There is the deep, chthonic, distant, almost Jupiterian force behind Death and Life. The Witchfather is the medium between Earth and Sky and the Sky is his father, the Earth being His Mother and the Mother of us all. The Father, the Lord of Death, the Undying King, the White King Below and Above, Edric, Gwynn ap Nudd. He is that chthonic force, the bull and the stag that frightens us in our sleep, whose thunder rolls across the skies, who powers and is powered by the Goatly Prince. Christians may view him as YHVH, but there is something deeper here. The Stag King I call Him, the White King whose name I utter in fear and awe! He is the Guardian of the Door. If the Witchfather is the guide to the door, the Stag King is the one who opens it.

He shares many qualities with his son, indeed they almost seem the same entity at times, but there is separateness there. By the Mystery they are One but Separate. The Father is powerful and chthonic and fearless and protective; I have no other words to describe him. It is almost as though he cannot be described with mere words. Few times have I truly felt his presence and it was only in the back edges of a ritual, watching and observing, nothing too close and yet not far enough way to not feel the power of the Lord of Death.

I have seen him once, but only fleetingly. This was way back in my youth and I decided to take a meditational journey on a wonderful little creek near where I lived. During the meditation I was awoken by the loud caw of a crow followed by robin music and I opened my eyes and fleetingly before me across the river upon an old boulder sat a wizened old man with tall antlers. He sat staring at me with brilliant hazel eyes that had pictures flowing across them and then he was gone with the snap of a twig as my own mortal father came down to find me shirtless with a hand outstretched towards a spirit that had faded into the Unseen.

A Ritual to Contact the Horned God

In the half-light I go to my sacred spot, Thorntree Place. It is a Saturday, a day sacred to Underworld currents and an excellent offering time. With me I have my stang as well as a goat skull. In my pack I have an offering of wine and crackers as well as a bell and a candle and a container of water. I come upon the spot and notice that it has still

for spirits and powers in the sacred name of the Witchmother. My stang is placed to the north to act as a doorway and a focus point.

I begin my invocations to the Master of Sorcery, for I wish to give an offering in his name! I walk around again, very slowly, focusing on the skull in the center. Its staring eyes bore into mine and I am filled with awe once more. Over the skull I ring the bell in the form of a hex sign, a symbol I associate with power. "Undying Prince of the Even, come forth from the Undying Lands, Devil, Goat, Twisted and Horned with the Light between, I call to you as your servant, as a witch and as a human born of trees and stars. Come forth Witchfather, Master, Teacher, Guide, Psychopompic Angel of Light!" I continue in this vein for a very long time always trying to repeat what I said before. I collapse finally from exhaustion and the wind tears around me. He is here; I feel the skull come alive with power and grace. I walk over to it and bow and kiss it.

I prepare the drink and bread. In his mighty name I bless them and take of them. I ask the Master to gift me with a boon and visions of what I must do to complete something. The Drink is warm to my lips and it feels as though I have not drunk in a long time, something I have always associated with the trance and that I am truly In the Moment. I mix the bread and the wine together and hold them for a moment, repeating my intentions once more before pouring the remains upon the skull. I leave a little in the bowl for a separate offering to the spirits of the place for granting me passage.

Then I make my way out of the ritual area and return to the land of the living.

Charge of the God

by Pax

“Hear now the Words of the Great Father who of old amongst mortals was known by many names; Tammuz, Brahma, Osiris, Dionysus, Wottan, Apollo, Cernunos, Janicot, The August Personage of Jade, and by many other names.”

“I who am the Wise Youth and the Wild Man, The Horned Hunter and the Dark Wanderer, the Fury of the Storm and the Gentle Whisper of the Leafs in the Trees, I call upon your minds and bodies to arise and join me in this now sacred place.

“Learn and remember! I welcomed you into this world and promised you a life of both Pleasure and Pain, Joy and Wonder, Fear and Fury; for all of these are a part of my Mysteries, the Lessons that must be learned, cherished, and remembered lifetime after lifetime.

“Know then that whatever tests and trials you face in this life, I have faced before. For I am the Guardian of the Gates of Life and Death, and whatever steps you take and wherever you are within the Spiral Dance, of Birth and Life and Death and Rebirth, I have led the Way. For I am the Lord of the Dance, and to know my Mysteries you must learn to be at one with the Rhythm, the Tao, The heartbeat of the universe, that confluence of outer and inner forces that moves and works upon us all.

“From all things you encounter, all people whose lives you touch, Learn and Give something of yourself in return.

“All learning and wisdom is sacred to me; all quests for knowledge and understanding, all acts of effort, and thought, and willing sacrifice; all of these are my rituals. Know now that sometimes I lead, and sometimes I follow; but as you wind your way through the Spiral Dance, I am always with you.”

This is a work-in-progress as He reveals more of Himself to me over the years.

Green Eyed

by Pax

Great Green Eyed Horned God,
With the Sun Upon your Brow,
Wise Youth and Wild Man
Darkness and Richness of the Earth
And the Blade of the Plow
Skilled of Mind, Skilled in Speech, Skilled of Hands,
And how!
Guide and Guard us your Children
As we seek along the Path to Wisdom.
Blessed Be!

My Journey to the Horned God

by Richard Derks

My own journey to Cernunnos has been one of many starts and stops. I've been hearing his call to the hunt for a long while now. Even though I identify as a Druid I have always had problems relating to Celtic deities. In some ways I feel as if I've been putting my fingers in my ears and saying "Lalala I don't do Celtic Gods, I don't hear you, lalala". When I have tried to connect with him I've had mixed results.

For one, I wasn't sure what to expect. He seemed too large and impersonal, composed of too many elements for me to get a good grasp on. I could find no one else talking about him beyond being the male principle and consort to the Goddess in duotheistic worldviews. It almost seemed like he was defined solely on being "That other one who is not the Goddess". Since I consider myself a hard polytheist and not a duotheist, that did me no good. Who exactly is Cernunnos? I wanted to get to know the real God, not the archetype.

To learn more of him I had to go to the Source. This past summer I spent a lot of my time in the woodlands trying to commune with him. Interestingly enough I could only feel him slightly here, a faint pulse letting me know he was there but no big fireworks or theatrics came. One would think that since this was his domain, I would find him in every leaf and glimpse of deer, yet I felt nothing. I went deep into the woods, to the very heart of them and prayed to him, cried out his name... and felt still nothing.



Altar to the Horned God

I also spent time at my altar trying to connect with him. I found the best way to do this was to put on some drumming music, light some incense (I found that sandalwood or dragonsblood resin worked best), pray, and meditate on his presence. I could feel his presence dark and looming. I could feel the offering of sacred smoke being received but still it was as if there was a barrier between us like smoked glass. Thus I repeatedly gave up, thinking there is nothing to learn here time to move. Then the quiet call would begin again and I would find him poking at me. *Try again, try again. Why do you give up so quickly impatient one? Am I not worth it?* Sure enough, I found that with repeated practice this barrier became less and less.

The real breakthrough came as the seasons changed. Once the leaves began to fall and snow was on the ground

he was with me in full force. This lead me to believe he is a seasonal deity and the Dark Time of the year is his time. His association with the underworld would certainly seem to support this. Or it could just be that he is so multi-faceted that he appears to each person in a different way depending on what aspect of him they are most sensitive to. Perhaps another person would feel him most fully in that summer glade I tried in vain to find him in, and not at all in the winter. Now that I have a better connection to him perhaps I will too this coming summer. It will be interesting to see.

There is an old cemetery on the road nearby that is overgrown with trees. Driving past that early in the winter morning when the morning fog still swirls, I can feel him most profoundly. I can almost feel his presence haunting that cemetery in his role as guardian of the underworld.

How do I feel him? How does he appear to me?

To me, his presence is very primal and ancient. He is totally unconcerned with social niceties. Political correctness would be totally lost on him. He is of few words yet gets his point across with a sharp directness. He is ultimately concerned with survival and death. Wherever he is the scent of blood follows. He is aware that life is hard and unfair. He makes you face this fact without sympathy. To him there is only survival or death. Paradoxically, I have also found him strangely compassionate. He is not totally void of feeling. Indeed I would say that he loves fiercely even. He's not going to coddle you or show grand outbursts of emotion but it is there rippling beneath the surface. It is clear that he does care about humanity, strongly even. However, to him man is an animal just like

any other and he helps us realize and revel in that animal nature. He is guardian and guide to those who seek and are open to this primal experience.

He is also in my experience, pure masculinity, virility, strength, and sexuality. The deer in rut, the musk of sex, the heat of passion. All these are his, and he radiates life force. This includes the pain of love as well as it's sweetness. All aspects of sexuality both the positive and negative are within his domain. He is a god of prosperity. The lush forests and fertile Earth are his home and he bestows their riches upon us, but they must be earned and are not given freely. He *is* nature, and there is no free lunch in his domain. He is also renewing. I go to him wounded and broken and like the animals that seem to surround him and regenerate, I am made whole again. He is fierce yet there is something entirely comforting and reassuring in his presence.

The Horned One in my Own Spiritual Practice

The fact that it has taken time to get to know him has only sweetened the experience. At this point I feel that it's safe to say that he has a permanent place at my shrine. In all my work with him I have not yet been given a Name for him. Sometimes I call him Cernunnos, other times Herne. He answers to both of these yet I still feel that they are only titles he accepts by us moderns, and they do not fully encompass his true nature. As a Druid I feel that he is there to guide me in that area of my spirituality, as if he is my link and guide to the tradition that I have chosen.

His presence in my life is almost a quiet one. He is full of power and majesty, yet there have been no grand revealings, no epiphanies or ecstatic experiences with him. Any link that I have to him has come through hard work, and I am positive that if I were to neglect maintaining that link he would slip away just as quickly and quietly.

One interesting thing I have noticed is that the closer I get to Hekate, the closer she seems to drive me to Cernunnos. I've noticed this on many occasions. For some reason they seem to work very well together! I guess this makes sense when you think about it considering that they share many aspects and overlap in areas of influence. Both are Chthonic deities, guardians and guides in the underworld. Both concerned with nature (you could take this even further by including Hekate's almost synonymous associations with Artemis the Huntress in the PGM and other sources. That hurts my brain too much to think about though.)

Also interesting is that while primarily adopted by two different cultures (Greek and Celtic respectively) both are rumored to have ancient origins in Thrace. Perhaps there is some link there that is lost to history. That is only my speculation however. I do know that since Hekate has come into my life, my bond with Cernunnos has only strengthened.

A Devotional Ritual to Cernunnos

by Juniper



Outdoor Altar by Juniper

This is a variation of my own devotional ritual to Cernunnos. It has been evolving slowly over time. The purpose of this ritual is to create a space where the worlds meet, to open “the door” between and then to invite the god into the ritual space into order to honour him. Its purpose is to give and receive blessings, to make sacrifice, to “spend quality time” with my god, and to continue to

build a relationship with him. Also, its purpose as a devotional ritual is to reaffirm my dedication, or devotion, to him.

First, a Few Notes

It is important to note, I think, that I am a bi-sexual woman. I am also something of a tomboy, someone who has often had difficulties relating to my fellow women. Therefore I come to the god from this perspective. The way I relate to him is informed by this, “equality” or not. Judging from my conversations and shared experiences with people of different genders and sexual orientations, we each will likely have a different relationship with this god. How I may choose to perform a devotional rite to Cernunnos and what I get out of it, the emotions that I feel, might not be the same for you.

It is also important to point out my own Path, as this may differ from your own. I came to Paganism and Witchcraft through solitary Wicca and then Celtic Reconstruction. Finally the Path I now walk is that of a Hedgewitch – a shamanic, nature oriented witch – of a primarily Celtic and Anglo-Saxon flavour. It is expected that if inspired by my own ritual, you will adjust it to suit your own Path and your own needs.

Much of the poetry and suggested spoken parts here are short. Or at least short by this poet’s standards! This is because I often use a simple and easily memorized piece of poetry as a starting point and then speak spontaneously and from the heart. If inspiration does not strike, then I may

repeat all or parts of the poetry until inspiration comes or until I am satisfied.

“Hedge” with a capitol “H” refers the border between worlds, the Veil.

Wherever and however you choose to lay out the ritual space, the stang must be in the centre. This ritual is best performed in a wilderness setting. There should be enough space in the ritual are to move around freely, even to dance.

Implements

The Stang or a stave of some sort:

The stang is a pole that typically terminates into a fork or trident. It is most often used as a symbol of the World Tree. When adorned with symbols of the Horned One or the Stag Headed God it becomes the god-stang, a kind of scarecrow or effigy. Many feel that these horned and antlered deities are part of, or dwelling within, the World Tree and the borderlands of the many worlds. Some even feel the World Tree and the god are one in the same.

If you do not have a stang, then a staff, an actual tree or even a wand will suffice. I have even used nothing more than a small log of firewood with a bull skull placed on top before and had acceptable results.

Stag, bull or goat skull or some symbol of the God:

This should be something that can be hung upon the stave or placed on top of it, if possible. I have a stag head burned into the wood of my stang as it is small and couldn't hold

the weight of an actual skull. Instead I hang a beaded length of leather with an antler tip on the end. This is much easier to pack into the backwoods!

Decorations for the stang:

This may be something of personal meaning to you, such as an item that represents your relationship with Cernunnos. It may also be a seasonal item or something you made for him as a gift.

Food offerings, a meal to share, plate/bowl and cup/horn/chalice:

I find the best food offerings are of something you have hunted yourself. Whether this is meat that you actually hunted or an item that your "hunted" for. An example of this would be such foodstuffs as wild herbs that you gathered yourself, vegetables that you grew in your own garden, fruit gathered from an orchard, or simply a bottle of rare wine that required some searching in order to find. In my own practice I have found the food he prefers the most to be a fine Scotch, whiskey or red wine, dark breads, wild herbs and vegetables and game meats.

The purpose of a ritual meal (by whichever name you may call the ritual meal) is not only to give and receive offerings and blessing. Its purpose is also to share energy, and to help to build a relationship with Cernunnos. To dine with someone is an intimate activity.

Additional Offerings:

Any gifts, sacrifices or offerings you wish to give to the god. Also bring an offering for the *genus loci*, the spirits of the place where you will perform this ritual.

A drum, rattle, bell branch of some instrument:

A common gnosis found amongst followers of Cernnunos is that he is best called by means of either drumming or chanting/singing or both. If you completely lack an instrument or any musical talent do not fret, you can simply strike a stone with a stick, or only chant, or clap your hands.

A symbol of masculinity:

Such as acorns, a phallic symbol, a piece of antler or horn. A good choice may be a gift from an important or influential man in your life. For some this may be a blade, arrow or spearhead; to symbolise not only the phallus but also the violence that men throughout history have had to make and endure to feed and protect nation, tribe and family.

A blade:

For the purpose of “killing” (slicing) the ritual meal.

A candle, lantern or other fire source:

An actual fire pit is best of course.

Incense and censer:

My personal favourite blend for Cernunnos is a mixture of oak leaves, juniper berries, cedar cones, pine needles, and

cinnamon. The leaves of the mistletoe are sometimes added.

A small vessel of water:

For “watering” the World Tree

A few other items I usually have lain out or may bring with me:

A piece of white deer hide, deer fur, my divination set, a knife, a towel for spills, a garden trowel for digging the earth (should the ground be too hard for driving the stang in without aid).

The Ritual Itself

Offering to Spirits of Place

Before I begin I will make a small offering to the spirits of the landscape and the area where I am performing my ritual. I believe in being a polite guest.

“I call to the spirits of this place (grove, park, beach, etc)
 And the rocks and trees and wild things
 Permit me to perform my Craft here
 Have courage for I mean you no harm
 Know you are welcome to join
 If you do so, be it in joy and peace
 Know you are free to avoid my workings and leave
 Until my ritual is at an end
 I offer this humble gift
 In gratitude for your hospitality
 Hail spirits of this place!”

Declaration

Announcing the purpose of the ritual out loud, in a clear and confident manner, will inform the spirits of place what is about to happen. It helps to bring about that ritual mindset within myself as well. These words are always spontaneously chosen in that moment and may set the mood for the ritual.

Light the Incense

I waft the smoke over myself, breathing its scent and then I smudge myself. Throughout the ritual I ensure there is always incense burning, as an offering, as a prayer and to create ritual mindset. Even to help induce a trance state.

“I light this incense
This sacred smoke
To entice a god
To draw Him here
And to please Him”

Light the Fire

Of course it's always a good idea to have the fire ready to light before you start the ritual. If you are using a fire pit you will want a stick you can use as a “fiery brand” at the ready.

“Hearth fire, forge fire, heart fire, sacred fire
You symbolize every fire that has ever burned
To keep humanity safe, warm and fed

You symbolize the cunning fire that burns in my head
 You symbolize the passion of the Wild God
 You symbol the creativity and inspiration
 That bursts forth when humanity and the gods meet
 You reflect the Light of the Sun and the stars above
 I have no need to bless you
 For you are sacred in your own right
 Light the way for Cernunnos
 Hail the sacred fire!"

Laying the Hedgerow

First I will ground and center, then mediate for a time on the energies of the land around me.

Rather than cast a circle or raise a grove as done in other traditions, I like to lay a hedgerow encompassing my ritual area. I create a hedgerow around the ritual area both as a protective barrier and also to help me stand at the axis of the worlds, within the gap in the Hedge.

The hedgerow not only circle the ritual space, but its roots run underneath it and meet in the center and its branches reach over the ritual space and also meet in the center. A spherical hedgerow, the ritual space is the gap within. This is done through basic energy manipulation and visualisation as with any marking the border of ritual space. (I would need to write a whole other article to go into proper detail on this working.)

“Blooms and birds let good spirits in
 Thorns and bees keep the bad away
 I lay this hedgerow with this pledge
 A witch’s work is to be done
 Here at the world’s edge
 Mark a place between time and space
 Herbs and shrubs protect my skin
 Vines and snakes keep evil at bay
 Hail protective hedge!”

Sacred Landscape

A kind of calling quarters or laying the compass, I use features within my own landscape to mark my whereabouts within the Middleworld. I may or may not lay out an item for each direction, light a candle or mark the ground in some way. I also have a “map” of the world and direction burned on my stang; sometimes I will press my thumb against each corresponding direction.

This example is the Sacred Landscape I used when living on the family farm and working in my own grove:

North

“I call upon the Monashee Mountains
 Strength of stone and earth and rock
 I call upon the wild woods
 Home of trees and lakes and wild things
 Hail Peaceful Mountains!” (Monashee means peaceful)

Pond (roughly north-north-east)

"I call upon the spirit of the sacred pond
 Spirit of water and door to the Underworld
 Home to frogs, geese and fish
 I celebrate before your waters this rite
 Hail Sacred Pond!"

East

"I call upon the Eastern Sky
 Eastern horizon, where the sun does rise
 Each dawn a promise of rebirth
 I face the way to ancestral lands
 Hail Eastern Sky!"

South

"I call upon the Southern Skies
 Where the Sun/Moon makes its daily journey
 I call upon the Kettle River Valley
 Sunlit/moonlit valley, river, pasture, garden
 Hail to sunshine/moonlight in the valley!"

West

"I call upon the Western Winds
 That blow this way from distant sea
 Each sunset brings the hallowed night
 And Spring/Autumn rains and Summer breeze/Winter's
 freeze
 Hail Western Winds!"

Center

"I call upon the spirit of the land

The sacred soul of this very place
 Spirit of this forest grove, do not fear tonight
 I welcome you to join my rite
 Hail Misty Acres!"

Planting the Stang

I take up the stang.

"This, my stang
 A modest symbol of something greater"

I hold it above my head for a few moments, standing or
 kneeling over the place I have chosen to drive it into the
 ground.

"Here I plant the World Tree
 To act as a marker upon the crossroads
 To BE the crossroads
 The pillar of the worlds"

I drive the stang into the ground and hold it fast.

"Oh Great World Tree!
 Your roots run deep in the realms of the dead
 Around your trunk the worlds revolve
 Upon your branches we do dwell
 At your crown is the god's abode
 Hail the World Tree!"

I visualize the stang growing, its tine turn to branches reaching high above my head, its root reach deep down into the land.

Adorning the Stang

Now I adorn the stang with symbols of Cernunnos and any chosen decorations. While doing so I may speak of the objects I am hanging upon the tree, such as listing the plants species within a seasonal wreath. I will stroke the stag head burned onto the stang and recall when I put it there.

Then I chant a mixture of epithets and names for the World Tree and Cernunnos while I reverently stroke the stang and pour a small offering of water onto its “roots”.

Example:

“Yggdrasil, Cernunnos, Mighty Ash, Stag King,
Éormensyll, Wild Rowan, Wild God, Bile, Sky-reaching
Tree, Great Oak, Lord of the Hunt, Irminsul, Ancient Yew
...”

Spiralling and Opening the Gap

Now I start walking first in a ring around the edge of my ritual space and then slowly spiralling inwards widdershins to the stang at the center. I drag my feet as I walk. I will clap my hands, shake my rattle or bell branch, or strike my tambourine in time to my steps.

As I walk I connect a little more with the sacred heart of the Land. I visualize a furrow, as if from a plough, or a small ditch, being dug with my steps.

My hands above my head, as they clap or shake the instrument, brush the very ceiling of the Middleworld. Reaching higher and higher.

As I go round I travel ever closer to the World Tree (stang). I feel as though I am wading through water with my feet and legs and pushing through thick underbrush with my hands.

With feet and hands I brush against the fabric of reality. When it feels right I add this chant as I walk:

“World Tree, World Tree
Open up the ways between
World Tree, World Tree
Open up the Gates to me”

When I reach my stang, my World Tree, my God Tree, I place my hands on the ground at its base. I “pierce” the fabric of the Veil; I reach through the roots of the Hedge.

“Here, I create a gap in the Hedge
A thinning in the Veil
A place that is no place
A moment that is timeless
A gate between the worlds
A threshold at the edge of everything

Here I open the door to the Underworld!"

I slowly spread my hands wider and wider, a gap in the Hedge growing between them. When I have reached the length of my arms I mark out the gap's boundaries on the ground using whatever method feels right at the time. (I would need to write a whole other article to go into proper detail on this working.) One favourite method involves using magickal powder or drawing up roots from the hedgerow I created earlier.

Then I stand and reach above my head, above the stang. I "pierce" the fabric of the Veil; I grasp the upper branches of the Hedge.

"Here, I create a gap in the Hedge
 A thinning in the Veil
 A place that is no place
 A moment that is timeless
 A gate between the worlds
 A threshold at the edge of everything
 Here I open the door to the Upperworld!"

I push my hands outwards, opening the second gap wider and wider. When I have reached the length of my arms I mark out the gap's boundaries on the ground using whatever method feels right at the time. One favourite method involves using incense smoke or drawing down branches from the hedgerow I created earlier.

Call to Familiar Spirits

Now I must call to my spirits and to any gatekeeper spirit or deity who I have a relationship with to guard the gaps I have created. I may make offerings to them as well in thanks. Once called I then ask them to:

“Watch over the Gate to the Upperworld
 Let none trespass
 Watch over the Gate to the Lowerworld
 Let none trespass
 Stand guard before me
 Stand guard behind me
 Stand guard above me
 Stand guard below me
 Stand guard to the right of me
 Stand guard to the left of me
 Stand guard within this place
 Stand guard without this place
 Let none trespass”

The Call

The World Tree is adorned and wearing the symbols of Cernunnos, the way through the Hedge is open. Now I am standing before the god-stang. It is time to call to the God who dwells within the Tree. I use whichever evocation, chant or poem feels right at the time. There should be many choices available to you within the pages of this book. He enjoys the sound of drums and this is a good way to call him as well.

I call to him with feeling, with love with desire. I call until I feel his presence, I do not assume a few words of poetry will be enough and carry on. I call until the hair on the back of my neck stands up and goosebumps run down my arms. I call until I can smell his scent on the air.

Offerings

When Cernunnos has arrived I thank him with gifts, by showing Him what offerings I have brought for him and placing it at the foot of the god-stang.

The Dance

Sometimes we dance, spinning and leaping together, flirting, chasing and teasing. Sometimes I sing, and he forgives me for having a poor voice and for being clumsy with my tambourine. Sometimes this leads to an ecstatic dance and trance; while other times it is merely a game. Enticing the Wild God to dance is easy enough, a flip of the skirts, a wiggle of hips, a saucy wink is all it takes.

Honouring & Dedication

At last we come to sit together under the shadow of the World Tree. I hold up the chosen symbol for masculine fertility and/or power and speak to Cernunnos of the men in my life, my relationships with them and my relationship with him. My hopes and dreams therein.

I press the object to my brow, my breast and my genitals, promising to continue to honour him with by honouring the men in my life with my mind, my heart and my body. I press the object to brow, breast and genitals again; promising to continue to serve him with mind, heart and body. I go through the motions a third time, asking for his blessing: insight, love and passion.

Meal

The bread is shown to the god and I take up my knife.

"Here is bread, here is life
 The fertility of the land
 Combined with the skill of the people
 Who ground the grain and baked this bread
 Here is the body of the Earth Mother
 And the seed of the gods
 Without such gifts I shall perish
 I slay thee bread with reverence and joy."

I slice the bread in half, one half for myself and one for Cernunnos.

The drink is poured and held aloft.

"Here is drink, here is life
 The water of the Earth
 Combined with the nectar of the green things that grow
 upon it
 Here is the life blood of the Land
 This cup holds the sweet blessings of the Earth

Without such gifts I would perish
I bless this drink with humble gratitude.”

I share the meal with Cernunnos in reverence, gratitude and joy. I have gone hungry before in my life, Cernunnos has answered cries I have made to him for sustenance. I have worked on farms and gathered in the wilds, I think of the efforts that go into food production as I eat. I think of the part the Sacrificial King plays in creation of food and drink. Each bite and each sip a blessing.

Divination

I will now perform an augury to divine any messages the god may have for me. Always I thank him for any wisdom, thoughts or suggestions he chooses to share.

Farewell

Now I thank Cernunnos for joining me, and also for the many blessing, lessons and challenges he grants me. Then I bid him farewell in whatever manner seems most fitting.

Then I thank whichever guardian spirits and/or deities I have called to guard the gap in the Hedge and bid them farewell.

Closing the Gap

I remove the objects hung upon the stang with careful respect and lay them aside.

Then I place my hands on the ground at the base of my stang. I grasp the edges of gap in the Hedge, banishing whatever was used to anchor it. I slowly bring my hands together, closing the gap.

“Here, I close the gap in the Hedge
 And return this space to the present
 We bid farewell to the Underworld
 Farewell to the realm of the dead
 And return to the mundane
 I close you, oh Gate!”

I often finish with a sharp and final clap of my hands.

Then I stand and reach above my head, above the stang. I grasp the edges of gap in the Hedge, banishing whatever was used to anchor it. I slowly bring my hands together, closing the gap.

“Here, I close the gap in the Hedge
 And return this space to the present
 We bid farewell to the Upperworld
 Farewell to the realm of the god
 And return to the mundane
 I close you, oh Gate!”

I often finish with a sharp and final clap of my hands.

Lowering the Stang

The stang is now grasped firmly and pulled out of the ground. It is laid down on the ground with care. As I do so I murmur farewell to the World Tree, to the God Within.

Example:

“Farewell Yggdrasil, farewell Cernunnos, goodbye Mighty Ash, another time Stag King, thank you Éormensyll...”

Sacred Landscape

The directions are now released. If any marker was placed to anchor them I will remove it. Different traditions prefer the direction to be called and released in a certain order. I typically use the same order I called them as it is simpler.

North

“I thank the Monashee Mountains
And the green wild woods
Hail Peaceful Mountains!”

Pond

“I thank the spirit of the sacred pond
Spirit of water and home to many
Hail sacred pond!”

East

“I thank the Eastern Skies
Where the sun does rise
Hail Eastern Winds!”

South

"I thank the Southern Skies
 And the valley down below
 Hail to fertility in the valley!"

West

"I thank the Western Winds
 And Spring/Autumn rains and Summer breeze/Winter's
 freeze
 Hail Western Winds!"

Center

"I thank the heart of the land
 The soul of the scared grove
 Hail Misty Acres!"

Lowering the Hedge

Taking up my blade (or possibly my sickle) I walk around the edge of the ritual space, slicing the hedgerow. Leaves fall and birds fly away, a kind of autumn or winter happens and it sinks into the land ... then disappears.

"Blooms and birds now go to sleep
 Thorns and bees rest for the day
 I release this hedgerow with this pledge
 A witch's work is now done
 Here where the worlds did meet
 Now to return to the mundane
 Herbs and shrubs go underground
 Vines and snakes can slither away

Hail and farewell protective hedge!"

Fire & Clean Up

Now the fire must be dowsed or banked.

"Hearth fire, forge fire, heart fire, sacred fire
Though you may be put out
You will always burn brightly in my heart
A flame present in the heart of hearth, home and head
Hail and farewell sacred fire!"

Declaration

I announce the ritual to be over and then the clean up must begin.

Thanking the Spirits of Place

When I am ready to leave I thank the spirits of place one last time and then walk away without looking back.

"I thank the spirits of this grove
And the rocks and trees and wild things
Thank you for tolerating my presence
And not disturbing my rite
I bid a fond adieu to all that dwell here
Hail and farewell spirits of this grove!"

In the Copse

by Herne's Own

I live in a small town in southwestern Virginia. I recently moved into a new house, but I used to live in an apartment building. Behind the apartment building is a small copse of trees. There is a house on the other side of it, and I believe the woman who lives there owned it, because I often saw her mowing paths through the undergrowth.

Well, ever since moving into that apartment, I had felt drawn to that little grove. One night, at dusk, I convinced my partner to go with me for a short exploratory walk. It felt so good and right to be there. I felt at peace. I placed my hands on several trees and it felt good.

My partner decided to go back to the apartment, but I asked if he would mind if I stayed and meditated for a few minutes. He didn't mind and went back to the apartment. I felt a strong presence in that copse, so I did a short spontaneous ritual. I raised my hands to the sky and said, "In this season between seasons, in this time between times, in this place between places, I call and summon thee, Lord Cernunnos, Herne, Hu Gadarn, Pan, Sylvanus, Pashupati, Green Man, Horned Lord, Great Stag o' the Wood. Reveal your face to me."

I stood silent like that for a moment, and then I heard it. I heard 5 distinct footsteps in the leaves. It did not sound like wind or an animal or anything like that. It sounded like a person walking through the leaves. I looked around but never caught sight of the sound's source.

Strength from Love

by Jon Y. Dixon (Maonos)

You are there, beauty and strength.

Seen and unseen, Bright Light - a reflection in the Dark.

You have been there before and will be again.

Always with the strength of purpose, you will not be
deterred.

Because your purpose is born of Hers.

We see you in the forest, proud beauty,

Strength beyond man, not vain.

You know the joy of creation, and the pain.

Because you are of Her, created by Her, and for Her.

Your awareness is growing, yet is complete with the height
of the beautiful season,

Green and abundant with wonder.

Your vision is clear your purpose grounded, evident in
your sure step and driven in the will of your stride.

Beautiful, full of passion, the steadfast protector of the
forest and all that live free and roam within it.

We are assured.

We are with you and in you and you in us.

Because we are all in,

Perfect love and Perfect Trust.

Trembling for You

by Maris Pái

Over the barrow mounds and through the ford
and far beyond the cold dolmens unhewn:
there I shall travel to seek ye, my Lord,
tonight in the blackness of the dark moon

Longing, I journey to the sacred place
seeking savage joy in your wild embrace.

I know I shall find a forest so deep
not even the starlight enters inside -
I find my footing: to the path I keep
From You, oh thou Hunter, I do not hide

Tangles of green are obscuring the sky
there is no light at all to seek You by -

Walking here, silent, barefoot, quite alone
increasingly lost and robbed of my sight
surrounded by trees, old and overgrown:
I wait for ye, Hornéd One, in the night

Can You hear my heart pounding in my chest?
Until You find me, I shall know no rest.

They say that the woods are lovely and dark
but darkness is bright anywhere but here.

A noise: but it's just a dog-fox's bark...
 My heart is racing: excitement, or fear?

It's been too long since the last time I stood
 trembling for You, here in the green wood.

You offer refuge from the world of day,
 Hunter and Hunted, divine Hornéd One -
 I come here, offering myself as prey:
 Oh Lord, teach my too-tamed soul how to run

The smell fills my senses: dirt, musk and pine;
 the touch of a hand enveloping mine.

So wicked and lustful, cunning and wise,
 Lord of the Animals, virile and strong!
 Secrets dance in Your devouring eyes:
 Your touch turns my heartbeat into a song

God of the Forest, the Flock and the Field--
 Oh Lord: teach my stubborn heart how to yield.

I am Diana's daughter, lunar-slow;
 You are the Wind blowing upon the Sea.
 I come to learn that which only You know:
 Whisper the secrets of your mystery

Longing, I journey to the sacred place
 seeking savage joy in your wild embrace.



Cernunnos by Barbara C. Kring

From the hearts and minds of every contributor to this anthology we dedicate this body of work to The Horned God as we each see him. Our views of you are as many and varied as our individual paths, yet you touch our lives intimately, each as deeply as the next.

Mighty Horned God, our prayers to you. Please accept this work of devotion in the spirit of which it is offered, in love and praise. May you continue to touch our lives and fuel our passions as you did our ancestors before us. Let the line remain unbroken as we carry your voice through new generations.

Hail to The Horned God.

Copyright Acknowledgments

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