

The Wichtower

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The WiccaUK Magazine

Issue 10 - Beltane 2004

**Pop Culture -
A Form of Magick?**

**Crystals - Who
Are We Fooling?**

**History of Covens
and Witches**

Introduction to Reiki Healing

The Weaver & The Smith

Museum of Witchcraft

Equality in Paganism

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The Witchtower

Issue 10 - Beltane 2004

ISSN 1741-5691

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All contributions are welcome - feature articles, short columns, advice sections, letters to the editor, events listings etc. Please include an SAE if you wish to have anything returned.

Issues are released every six weeks. At present, our deadline is 3 weeks before release date, which is 3 weeks after the previous issue - this deadline may be reduced in the future as the magazine expands, please submit contributions as far ahead of the deadline as possible.

For Editorial guidelines, advertising rates and stockists, please see the Witchtower website at <http://wichttower.wiccauk.com/>

Printed by Catford Print Centre
020 8695 0101 www.catfordprint.co.uk

Advertising Rates

The following rates apply to one off adverts. Booking for multiple issues gets a discount. WiccaUK Full Members receive 25% discount.

Quarter Page: £5
Half Page: £10
Full Page: £20
Back Cover (Colour): £60

Editorial

Welcome all to the Beltane issue of The Witchtower,

The pagan community has been a hotbed of activity this past month as communications to various government departments have been opened up for the first time via a new representative body called Pebble. This committee contains representatives from major pagan organisations such as the Pagan Federation, the Council of British Druid Orders, Pagans in Public Service and ourselves, WiccaUK. It is hoped that this body will be able to open further lines of communication with the government to try and bring about changes which will benefit everyone. The committee is currently composed of these four groups however it is hoped that as word of the group spreads more organisations will want to join. More information about Pebble can be found on the WiccaUK website.

This issue has been crammed full of interesting articles on a whole variety of subjects. Steve Wilson talks about the magick of weaving and smithing whilst Julia Philips writes about the origins and importance of covens as well as solitary work. Penny Little also reports from her visit to The Museum of Witchcraft in Cornwall. Rowan talks about the 'crystal madness' currently sweeping the country and the damage this is causing to the environment, the principle of Reiki, Morgan Willowmoon talks about the dilemma of duality as opposed to equality and finally Taylor Ellwood describes her path of a pop culture magickian.

As well as the articles mentioned above other articles can be found by Jonathon Lawrence as well as Sams issuely low down on the sabbat. Steve Wilson has also replied to Fred Lamonds letter from last month in Letters to the Editor. In the back of the magazine information about moot for WiccaUK as well as other pagan events can be found as well as our newly established book review section.

Once again welcome to The Witchtower,

Marcus

Cover Artist

'Greenman' by Twilight Girl

Twilightgirl (aka Melanie) describes her work as is a personal expression of what she is experiencing at the time, be it emotionally, physically or spiritually. When creating her art, she first begins by deciding on a series of colours or words that express what she is experiencing, from there shapes and images emerge according to the feeling. Twilightgirl says her imagination tends to lean towards a surreal edge with a dark or fantasy element and she loves textures, architecture, scenery and nature.

Twilightgirl created this cover piece from the words fertility and green man.. "to me these two words combined to create a series of colours and emotions. I knew I wanted to create something similar to the green man image, but incorporate a femininity within it to

express female fertility, hence the image of a "female green man"

Along with digital art, Twilightgirl loves to express her self through web design, poetry, writing stories, filming, editing and producing videos. She has a wide range of interests and hobbies ranging through from fetish to tarot reading, right down to mountain biking. As well as working full time, she is studying for 12 part-time diploma's in alternative therapies and also provides WiccaUK with a Membership Secretary.

Twilightgirl finds that she is much more fulfilled when she has a visually creative outlet, and enjoy thinking "outside the box". You can view Twilightgirl's range of creativity at <http://www.sensorychaos.co.uk>

WiccaUK Newswire

WiccaUK Newswire is a new addition to our website; it's an open source, open content and copyleft based news system. Basically, anyone can visit the website and publish news they feel is important to them and will be of interest to our visitors. We won't edit or censor any news pieces except for those which break copyright or libel laws or are completely irrelevant to WiccaUK's interests.

News is displayed immediately on our newswire section, and all visitors can leave comments relating to your story. We are committed to open content and copyleft ideas, so you should be willing to allow us and others to use your posts elsewhere without paying royalties, though always giving credit. We will pick out the best stories and turn them into "Features", which promotes them to being displayed down the center of the newswire site, broadcast them on WiccaUK Radio and print them in The Witchtower.

To read news or to publish your own story, please visit <http://news.wiccauk.com>

Stonehenge Tunnel Proposals

"The proposed road severs the spatial plane, depriving visitors of the ability to experience its connectedness," said Susan Denyer, of the International Council on Monuments and Sites UK.

"Stonehenge was inscribed on the World Heritage list as an entity that has integrity.

"Some parts of the site cannot have greater value than others."

Speaking for the Council for British Archaeology, the Prehistoric Society and the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, Brian Davison claimed the joint funding arrangement between the department of media, culture and sport and the Highways Agency for the 2.1km tunnel was a quick-fix solution.

"Our objections to the published scheme concern its long-term adverse effects on the Stonehenge World Heritage Site," he said.

"We are also concerned that the much-vaunted

cross-departmental funding for the scheme could create an unwarranted and, in our view, dangerous precedent for the future, not just for heritage interests but for almost any other environmental issue.

"We view with horror the prospect, in the event of the scheme being implemented, that the biggest single visible monument in this 5,000-year-old landscape of world value will be an early 21st Century roadway, primarily designed to relieve traffic congestion, the benefits of which cannot be projected beyond 30 years."

Trainee Vicars Learn about Wicca

On Wednesday, 7th April, the Isle of Avalon Foundation provided speakers on Wicca and Shamanism for a visit to Glastonbury by twenty trainee vicars who are part of the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme (STETS).

Kevin Saunders, who teaches the Wicca for the 21st Century course, along with Howard and Elsa Malpas, who teach the Warrior in the Heart



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Website Updates

Shamanic Practitioner course at the Foundation spoke to the trainees about the work they do and their belief systems. The exercise was part of the STETS programme providing a look at a number of alternative contemporary religions. For the Foundation it continues a new innovative programme of education that started last month with a three-day programme of talks and demonstrations by its tutors for a group of religious studies students from Canterbury Christ Church University College.

Isle of Avalon Foundation Director Rick Arrandale, until recently a Senior Lecturer at Canterbury, has been behind setting up these new initiatives.

Mr Arrandale said today: "The trips have gone amazingly well and are helping to build an understanding of some of the contemporary 'new age' spiritual practices prevalent in Glastonbury as well as helping to build bridges with the established Church. The Foundation is in a unique position to offer this service to Universities and other establishments throughout the country because of the nature and history of mystical Glastonbury."

Kevin Saunders, a High Priest and author of two books on Wiccan Spirituality, said today: "Talking to a group of trainee vicars was certainly an unusual audience for me, but they seemed to appreciate the talk immensely and were very respectful of my own beliefs. I hope that it has helped to spread the message that Wicca is a perfectly serious and legitimate form of spirituality and isn't the evil and dangerous practice that is often condemned for."

The Foundation will be extending its new field trips over the coming years. They will help provide an important resource for University religious and social studies units as well as bringing welcome business to the Town.

<http://www.isleofavalonfoundation.com>

This month we've been busier than ever on the website! There are a number of new sections we're excited to tell you about.

WiccaUK Newswire - This is a new system we've set up to allow our site visitors to publish their own news stories! There's no editorial control by site administrators, and the only times we'll edit stories is to add more information or links, or to correct spelling or grammar. Any site visitor can hit a Publish button, enter details of their story and have it appear live on site within minutes. So long as it's on topic we'll leave it up there. News from the NewsWire will be used both in this magazine, in our regular email newsletter and be broadcast on WiccaUK Radio!

Yep, we've launched a streaming radio station! As well as the best of pagan and new age music, we have a number of shows created by our members especially for us, including "...Think Differently", "The Creative Edge" and "DJ WiccaMan". We also have a number of syndicated shows, including IndyMedia UK, Free Speech Radio, Democracy Now, Net Chart 20, The Horror Library and much, much more!

Anyone with a connection from 56k or above can tune in, simply visit <http://radio.wiccauk.com/> and follow the instructions there. Users will have to register for a live365.com account but this is a very quick process.

We're also working on our Book of Shadows website, for which we'd love original content submitted by members. Anything from how-to guides, poetry, recipes, chants, simple rituals and so on can be submitted. We're also archiving the best threads from the past 2 years on the forums, so if there are any you remember as being particularly useful, let us know! You can see the site so far at <http://bos.wiccauk.com/> and please email contributions to bos@wiccauk.com.

If you're not already a member, don't forget to check out our vibrant online forums at <http://forums.wiccauk.com/> where there are around 3000 members posting on all sorts of topics, you're sure to get your questions answered there!

The Three Planes Consciousness model, as described by Ram Dass based on Indian (middle eastern) philosophies

This is something I read about a while ago, it's something I'd like to share with everyone.

Imagine someone took a picture of you, and it came out three times, one for each plane you have an identity. There are three you's..... which should be viewed personally as three I's.

Number one, this is the Ego. Which is more than I'm the best, all member of the opposite/same sex adore me....The Ego is the administrator for the physical plane. It's the Ego that is the experiencer of the incarnation. This is usually the only I, that we recognize, because it is what we see before us, it is our bodies, and our conscious thought, it is our manifest likes and dislikes. We each pay homage to our souls by indulging ourselves in likes and dislikes regardless of the soul. In essence it is the "I" that is the body, the mind, and the personality, all those things we think we are.

Number two, this is the soul. This is the deeper sense of who we are. This is where we reside, this is where we are pure and can see the world for what it is. This is where our real emotions flow from. It's also where we are truly able to explore the world around us. This is the "I" that as been around egos before this ego, and will be around after.

Number three, is called only number three. There has always been contention as to what to call this, so it is really only referred to in this model as number three, thus whatever you in your beliefs wish to call it is not constrained. It is nothingness. Nothingness isn't a negative thing. Nothingness is where everything resides, the ego, the soul, the earth, the air, everything. How can this be nothingness? Nothingness is everything not made manifest. Everything is connected, everything is one, everything is pure, and everything is corrupt. The mystic "I", this is where we will see there is only one. "Your Number Three isn't merely like my Number Three --- They're the same thing." "Sub ck" which means, "it's all one."

There are more planes above and beyond these, these three are the vertical planes the world as we know it, physical, energy, and consciousness (if you class it as something different from physical and energy), exist on.

There are other planes of existence, these follow an horizontal line and each have their own vertical planes associated with them.

Too many people are caught up in their ego's problems, the thinking mind tries to constrain us to just operating on the one plane. These are generally the thinkers in the world, quite often they may come across as pessimistic viewing from the lowest level. Those that are open to life, and/or spiritual tend to view things from their higher plane, and still are grounded on well in their ego's. They have an ability to teach and be taught, things tend not to pull them down in such a way as they can not get up. The third and final plane is something achieved rarely, and even rarer to say that you actively exist there. Meditation is one way in which we achieve this, though there is a tendency to pseudo forgot the lowers planes by people that try live by meditation alone.

The ideal to the mind of many is to balance the three, live in the spirit, view the world through our avatars, and go into nothingness when we truly need to feel connected with everything. To find balance would be to live life to the full.

With this conceptual ideology, also comes a new social consciousness. No longer would be helping others, to help ourselves, no instead we our helping "ourself". When burn our hand, our other hand pulls it out of danger instinctively. This is the experience of oneness, as Ram Dass described it "a different consciousness".

Quote: Jonathan: Treat your enemy as your friends

A friend: Wouldn't that make them your friend?

Jonathan: Exactly
We are all one.

Ram Dass has a website at:
<http://www.ramdasstapes.org/>

PM: **NotSoWise|Sage**

Beltane

Beltane, also known as May Day, is celebrated on May 1st and is the second most important sabbat in the witches' calendar after Samhain. It is the festival of the Celtic fire God, Bel, who has been worshipped for thousands of years in all parts of the world. Traditionally Beltane would be the night on which the old hearth fires were extinguished and the new were kindled from the Bel fire. These fires were placed on top of hills and produced a chain of beacons that ran across the land. Cattle would be driven between the fires and people would leap over them to ensure fertility for the coming season.

In the myth the friendship of the Maiden and the Young God becomes courtship and they join together in the Great Rite (sexual union). The Goddess takes on her robes as Mother and the God reigns besides his Queen. Because of the union of the Goddess and the God the sabbat is also a major fertility festival. It is a time to celebrate their union, not only physically, but also spiritually. All lovers should come together and exult in the joy that lies at the core of being. Central to the celebration of Beltane is the Great Rite. At first it appears that you cannot perform the Great Rite alone, but this is not so! The words of the invocation make it clear that the Chalice and the Athame themselves represent the Goddess and the God, so that their union can be celebrated by any witch, weather in company or when working solitary. If you are too young to be having sex as part of your celebrations, recognise the beauty and sacredness of love and procreation instead. Have a huge party with all your friends and rejoice in being alive.

At Beltane any results of divinations should always be approached with caution. Beltane is a time when more mischievous spirits may take advantage and the Gods have a sense of humour too.

Beltane is also a traditional time for witches to handfast.

If you are fortunate enough you may well find a May Day celebration taking place near

you, in which case it is worth attending. For however watered down our old traditions might be, they still contain the seeds of the old ways.



Beltane incense.
2tsp's sandalwood
Handful of dried rose petals
1 tsp. galangal powder
1 tsp. cinnamon
6 drops of neroli oil

Beltane ritual.
This was taken from Witch - A magical journey by Fiona Horne.

Cast circle.
Call upon the Goddess and the God by saying;

Great Goddess of the Moon and God of the Sun
Tonight I celebrate my divinity
As born from the eternal passion of your union
That strokes the fires of creation and blesses me on this sacred night.

Go off and have a wonderful night!

PM: **Sam**

Complete

The touch of a candle, the kiss of a flame,
Silently, softly, I touch the athame.
Moody is the incense, caressing the air,
Dressing the room, with long, fine hair.
The china bowl, filled with water,
Pulsates with life,
While silently, softly, I touch the knife.
The salt's being sprinkled, the circle's complete,
And now, in turn, comes the possible feat.
To raise the power, to change the fate,
Not a minute too early, not a second too late.
The energy's swirling, the stars shine too bright,
The moon is smiling, right into the night.
I feel Their presence, it's building up here,
And here comes the swell, I have no fear.
I feel the rush, leaving the earth,
Shaking the core, with the magick's birth.
I sink to the ground, in happy defeat,
As I kiss the flame – my Ritual's complete.

Gillian
PM: **Waterflame**

Sea Mysteries

Come to her when the moon is full
Raise hands higher, chant undine lore
Toes in wet sand grip the sea floor.
Salt spray leaves diamonds in its place
Waves mask your land legs
The sea wears her pretty face
As she caresses the rocks with her long loving fingers; Over mysteries her depth lingers Masking somnolent worlds.

Quiet now the songs at the sucking mouths of caves; Lost melodies roll under the waves.
Lighthouse eyes at the shore flicker
With an intoxicated, landlocked call:
The roiling, bitter, black and boundless sea Stella Maris, Isis, Astarte;
one and all Walk over the waves, answer, appear!
Lady of the velvet, blue-black tides
The jewel of the full moon is here.

Count the days back to the dawn of time
Invoke her Name, voices carry behind the veil
When all is still as the sterile lake and The white womb in the dark before the light came; Lady of death in life and life in death We implore you, speak your Holy name!
Thousand-jewelled mistress of the stars:
On moon-bright tides lunar light shines
Soft on the circle of flames.

Anna McKerrow
PM: **aphrodite**

Letters to the Editor

Feedback on the content of any past issue is welcomed, please address letters to: Witchtower, BM WiccaUK, London, WC1N 3XX or email to wichttower@wiccauk.com.

Archaic Witchcraft

In Response to Fred Lamonds letter to The Witchtower last month Steve Wilson replied to us saying,

I was flattered that someone of Fred Lamond's Wiccan pedigree felt my article worth commenting on, even if the actual content was predictable. Fred is welcome to believe the "nakedness gets us close to nature" and "binding causes altered states" cliches if he wishes, but this is an opinion, not a fact, and it is also an opinion that does not appear to be shared by any notable ancient pagan cultures whatsoever.

As Professor Ronald Hutton pointed out at a recent Moot With No Name, nakedness normally only appears in historical paganism during initiations, and then only rarely, as a "transgressive" state, in this case intended to make initiates feel vulnerable. As for binding the body, this comes from the Freemasonic 1st degree ritual (where it is far less ardently performed) that Gardner borrowed so much from (including terms such as So Mote It Be) and is intended to symbolise a state of spiritual bondage from which Freemasonry frees the initiate.

One of the points of Archaic Witchcraft is that it is to look back earlier than Freemasonry (and 20th Century Naturism). In my opinion the effect of these rites is for group bonding, and I leave it up to everyone else to make their own mind up which of these opinions is correct.

Steve Wilson

Emerging from the Underworld: The Two-Spirit Way

Dear Editor,

I was very interested in Andy Cairns article "Emerging from the Underworld: The Two-Spirit Way".

As an interested bystander I have wondered how GLBT people cope with the issue of the polarities of gender in some forms of paganism. Although I am straight, I don't identify at all well with the prevailing "feminine" archetype and I've often thought that this must be even more difficult for people who are LGBT. Or perhaps not. My friend, who is lesbian, seems to have fewer troubles with this than I do, so maybe the issue is more complex than it at first appears.

I am grateful for Andy Cairns raising the issue. As he points out, pagan communities can be very accepting of the uniqueness of the individual. But my guess is that we still have some way to go before GLBT is as much a part of paganism as the polarities of heterosexuality. I would love to see the pagan world showing the way in this.

Sincerely,

Fairy Hedgehog

Covens and Witches

In 1662, Isobel Gowdie of Auldearne made four separate confessions of being a Witch, and in the process, gave the word "Coven" to the world.

Although there is no other historical evidence for this word, it has proven to be one of the most lasting facets of Witchcraft - ask anyone today what Witches do, and the answer will almost certainly include the fact that they meet in groups, called "Covens".

So given that a number of modern Witches do, in fact, either run, or belong to, a Coven - just what is its purpose in 20th (and 21st) century Western Civilisation? Why has this word of such dubious historical veracity survived over three hundred years? Is there a place in our modern world for a social group which, as far as we know, occurred only in 17th century Scotland?

The very fact of its survival for over three hundred years argues that there is a place for such a group. In my own case, I have been a member of, and run, Covens of Witches for a number of years, and it is a social model which fits extremely well within modern society.

The structure of a coven varies, but generally has one or two leaders, and a number of members of varying levels of experience. In a sense, the modern Coven has replaced the tribal family, and its members often fulfill familial roles, which are no longer available to them in the family in which they were born.

Some researchers have commented that many modern Witches come from a background which was disrupted; i.e., did not provide a safe family environment during their formative years. As I know a great many Witches for whom this was

not the case, I think this is only a partial reason, and only for some people.

Humanity itself seems to be inherently tribal; any common bond between people will generally result in the creation cults or sub-cultures, where those of a like-mind will bond together. They will evolve their own social order (generally hierarchical), have their own common language, and often are identifiable by their demeanour and appearance.



Witches gather together in Covens for very much the same sorts of reasons; we are apart from general society by virtue of our beliefs and practices. Meeting with others who think and feel similarly to ourselves gives us the opportunity to share ideas and skills, as well as being able to practise our Craft.

A modern Coven provides a family-style environment, where the "Elders" can, by virtue of their experience, give

encouragement, support, and advice to those seek to learn about witchcraft. As with all families, Covens have very unique and individual ways of approaching this. Just as no two families are the same, neither are any two Covens.

Some Covens are run by people with an academic bent, and as would be the case in any family, this characterises the way in which their "children" are brought up. Other groups are oriented towards a more simple approach, and the oral traditions play an important role in the way in which the Coven is structured. Some combine the these two approaches, and the variations upon the basic themes are endless.

For any "family" to exist harmoniously, everyone within the group must feel a part of the group, and wish to learn and grow within that group environment. With a path such as Witchcraft, with its emphasis upon personal growth and development, it is likely that individuals who may at one time have been happy within their family group, will change, and wish to move away. This is a perfectly natural process, and the wise coven leaders will send those people off with their love and blessing. Trying to keep them would be like trying to keep your sons and daughters tied to your apron strings forever!

Ultimately, and despite the popularity of the word "coven", I do believe that most Witches are solitary in nature, and will generally spend at least part of their lives without being a member of, or running, a coven. I think the inward exploration during these periods is vital to self-development, just as we believe it is important to encourage social-awareness in children. However, I also believe that at some stage it is important to learn the practices of Witchcraft from another person; to be an apprentice, if you will;

because the act of passing knowledge from one person to another cannot be replicated by books, correspondence courses, or be self-taught. This may seem an almost impossible task to some people, but as all the magical traditions teach: when the student is ready, the teacher will appear! What's more, it's true!

Julia Phillips

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The Weaver and the Smith

In most books about paganism, and the craft in particular, great emphasis is placed upon planetary deities (which includes sun and moon, these being astrologically defined) as well as earth deities (including the guy with the antlers). I'm sure that we are all aware that there were other deities that our ancestors worshipped, but from the 19th century onwards these have often been relegated to minor positions or ignored completely. But to people of the country two deities will have been far more important than Mercury, Jupiter or even the Moon, and these are the Weaver and the Smith.



The association of both of these crafts with magic is well documented and very ancient - as old as the crafts themselves, I suspect. There is a time discrepancy - weaving is some 4,000 years older than smithing (although soft and precious metals were worked before the Bronze Age) - but by the time that the first writing appeared both were well established.

Weaving and smithing were established parts of village life from Norfolk to Nigeria and a number of superstitions attach to them. In Classical and Germanic mythology the smith plays a special part, with specific gods associated with the craft, such as Wayland and Vulcan (the two names may be connected, the Romans would have said "Wulcan". It is notable that the Anglo-Saxons, in the brief period between the pagan and xtian periods,

bothered to rename a Stone Age burial mound "Wayland's Smithy". Smiths were often considered to be magicians, plain and simple, as this old English folksong "Two Magicians", about a male magician attempting to "seduce" a female magician, demonstrates:

"She looked out of the window as white as any milk
And he looked in at the window as black as any silk
Chorus:

Hello, hello, hello, hello you coal
black smith
You have done me no harm
You never shall have my maidenhead
That I have kept so long
I'd rather die a maid
Ah, but then she said and be buried all in
my grave
Than to have such a nasty, husky, dusky,
fusty, musky
Coal black smith
A maiden I will die

She became a duck, a duck all on the stream
And he became a water dog and fetched her
back again

Chorus

She became a star, a star all in the night
And he became a thundercloud and muffled
her out of sight

Chorus

She became a rose, a rose all in the wood
And he became a bumble bee and kissed her
where she stood

Chorus

She became a nun, a nun all dressed in white
And he became a canting priest and prayed for
her by night

Chorus

She became a trout, a trout all in the brook
And he became a feathered fly and caught
her with his hook

Chorus

She became a corpse, a corpse all in the
ground

And he became a the cold clay and smothered
her all around

Chorus"

There are many variations on this song from

both England and Scotland.

Weaving is associated with the fates, spinning, measuring and then cutting the threads. In the East Tantra is specifically associated with weaving, the Tan and Tra being the Warp and Weft (or vice versa). Here weaving is associated with uniting the human and the divine, sexual Tantra being just a small part of Tantric practice (and not in all forms of Tantra). Many folktales involve weaving and witchery, from Rumpelstiltskin to all those princesses who prick their fingers on a spindle.

Traditionally the weaver is seen as female and the smith as male, but this is not always the case. In constructing Archaic Witchcraft what has been far more interesting is the magical implications of these two crafts, which have a great deal in common.

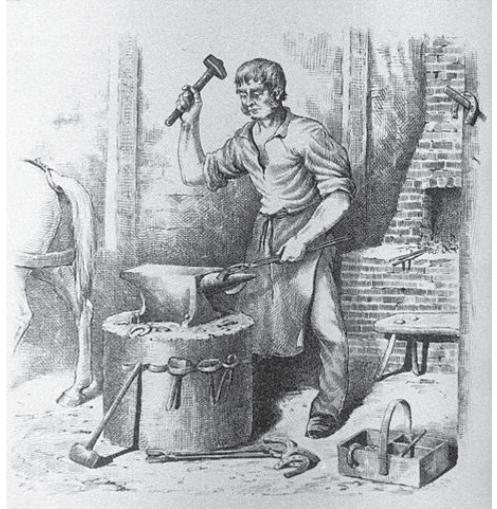
While there were many crafts that required skill, smithing and weaving could appear truly magical. Both, before the modern period, would have involved the entire process from raw material to finished product being carried out by the same person or people. Smiths particularly were eager to keep the secrets of their valuable craft secret from outsiders, and in the City of London the correct term for the Clothworkers Guild is "The Master Wardens and Commonalty of Freemen of the Art or Mystery of Clothworkers of the City of London".

To the outsider, baskets of various vegetable materials would have into the weaver's croft and out would come woven cloth, in various patterns of various colours. Only later would spinning, dying and weaving become separate crafts in their own right. Into the smithy (who would until a few centuries ago have smelted his own ore) would go rocks and out would come swords, chains, nails and needles. One early accusation against witches is that they could curse people so that they would vomit up pins and needles - the point at which the art of the smith and the weaver unite. Iron was seen as a protection against dark forces, though to see the fair folk one should never carry iron into a fairy circle (hich is why Archaic Witches will use wands/staffs rather than athames).

So not surprisingly the smith, with his raw materials, his hammer and anvil and his finished products, became an analogy. The Gaelic post-

Druid poetical system of the Filidhs explains why Brighid was a Goddess of both smithing and poetry, since the poet must collect his material in summer (by taking in the glories of the countryside) but turn it into poetry in winter. The fates do not only measure the length of human life, but weave the destiny of all in the web of wyrd.

There are analogies for spinning and weaving, as well as for the hammer and the anvil, the



needle and the nail, and anyone interested in Archaic Witchcraft might like to imagine what these could be. If you are interested, send me your researches into the subject. For bonus points try and find analogies that do not involve sex.

In Archaic Witchcraft we shall:

spin and weave,
temper our blades
to make our own fortune
in deep forest glades.

How we shall do that is, well, a mystery. A mystery you may wish to master.

Steve Wilson 2004
PM: **Sethur**

A Visit to The Museum of Witchcraft

Last year I headed, once again, for the magical land of Cornwall, searching for the elusive Stone Circles. But that destination was not to be. Instead, I was guided to a place where I saw and read something that reached out and touched me deeply.

I had always wanted to visit the Museum of Witchcraft in the small village of Boscastle and several times had the opportunity to do so, but something always told me that it would not be a visit that I would enjoy. Always before, the thought of seeing the torture instruments made my blood run cold, and stopped me from visiting, but today I told myself that I could walk past them without looking. You see it would be impossible to look at them without remembering the women. Women just like you and I, wives, mothers, sisters, and lovers, who for the vaguest of suspicions, were arrested, tried, tortured and executed. Executed for doing what millions are doing today, practicing witchcraft, with relative freedom.

I was nearly at the end of my visit when I came upon a velvet-covered, coffin-shaped, box. I almost passed it by without stopping as the time to meet my husband was quickly approaching. Again, something told me to stop and read the notice there. When I did, I was deeply saddened by what I discovered.

This is what I learned. Joan Wytte, born in 1775 did not die at the hands of the Inquisitors. She lived in Bodmin and was the local witch, renowned for her clairvoyance and her accuracy. She also was known to hang rags on a tree, for healing, near the local holy well. However, Joan had the misfortune to develop a tooth abscess causing her to become both aggressive and impatient with people. Those of us who know that particular pain can assure you that it is cause enough to make a saint

swear. People called her the 'fighting fairy woman', and after hitting out at someone during a local brawl, she was arrested and imprisoned for causing grievous bodily harm.

She died in prison in 1813 of bronchial pneumonia, no doubt caused by the abscess and the poor quality of prison life. With no one to claim her body or pay for her funeral, her body was used as a medical specimen. After the medical profession had finished ravaging her body, her bones were wired together to re-form her skeleton. She was put on display, probably as some hideous 'come and see the witch' side show. The coffin and her remains were once used at a séance, and it is said that the lid flew off and poltergeist activity occurred. It was after this event that an antique dealer became the next person to 'own' her.



Many years later the museum at Boscastle acquired her remains where Joan stayed wired up in her box, until a few years ago. One October

night, the museum staff took all the linkages from her body, wrapped her in soft calico and placed her in a woven, hazel casket that they had made, further securing it with hazel wood. She was taken in the darkness of that autumn night and buried, with respect and love, near the churchyard where she now rests under Holly, Rowan and Thorn trees. Her life cut short at just 38 years, hers is a sad story, isn't it?

In loving memory,

Penny Little
PM: **Penny**

Now or Never

Pagansim for the past few years has been rather stagnant. Gone are the days when being a pagan meant something more than a religion. Through many many people's efforts in the past we've earned the right to exist, and through the efforts of completely non-connected people's, we need not fear discrimination, as we can act against it.



The only real movement has been growth, but quantity is by no means quality. However quantity can be a good tool for selected purposes, the key is in knowing how to use it. There needs to be quality to back it up, there needs to be quality to highlight the quantity. The quality are shepherds and border collies, the quantity are carnivorous sheep waiting to be led somewhere.

We've not been going anywhere though. Many believe we are in the perfect grazing fields. As a result paganism is becoming diluted, with no sense of purpose, no goals, no dreams we find ourselves getting fat. This has been happening for years. There are still those that remember the days of going somewhere, fighting for something, having a reason to grow and exist. There are those that remember trying to hold celebrations at Stonehenge in the 80s when the police came in heavy handed, there are those that remember fighting for the right to be there... a right that pagans now take for granted.

Things like Thornborough are the chance to repeat the same call for a purpose, but read the Friends of Thornborough mailing list, and you'll see it's marred by internal politics and in-fighting. This is not a rallying call, it's just an attempt at copy catting previous events... a worthy cause, and one that anyone with care for our historical culture should follow, but in terms of paganism, for paganism's sake, we must look elsewhere for a purpose.

To quote Frank Herbert, The sleeper must awaken. Paganism if it's to last the test of time must learn to pick it's battles, learn to answer the calls for action, no matter what form the action takes, the stagnation will strangle of our spiritual lives, the numbers will drop, and everything that has been fought for in the last 50 years will be undone.

This is the exciting bit of what we're seeing now. Many who read this are members of WiccaUK and will be aware of what Steve Wilson, and many others are working towards in terms of government recognition and consultation. It is a sign that there is something to aim for, something to rally behind, something to grow through. This is the current and next generation's chance to be part of Pagan history... this is something that in twenty years time you can turn round and say, "I was there when a few forward minded pagans made our lives even more possible and livable." I just hope, and pray, that pagans do use this chance properly, and that they do show their support, and I hope that the sheep don't fight with each other in hopes of getting a better grazing spot, and in the end failing to make it.

Now is the beginning once again, thousands of pagans need to hear the call, and answer it.

Jonathan Lawrance
PM: **NotSoWise|Sage**

Crystals - Who Are We Fooling?

This article was written by Rowan for the Samhain 1994 issue of "White Dragon" magazine. See <http://www.whitedragon.org.uk> for more information on the magazine

Am I the only pagan who feels a need to heal other people's crystals? I ask this because I have become increasingly concerned over the past few years at the (as I see it) unwarranted prominence given to crystals in so many new age and "pagan" publications. They seem to have become a sort of sacred cow of neo paganism. You know - the "a real pagan has shelves full of crystals" or "crystals were the secret power source of Atlantis" approaches. Well, sorry, but this is a load of crap. Let us stop for a moment and compare the romantic fantasy about crystals with the oh-so-unromantic reality.

The fantasy appears to work upon the sad belief that all crystals which are sold in new age shops, whether in their rough or polished state, have been collected from the banks of some long lost river in an untouched-by-Western-"civilisation" Amazonian rain forest paradise by a native shaman (what's one of those when he's at home?) in a between-the-worlds trance - which is about as realistic as the plot of a Barbara Cartland "novel".

The reality is that of a multinational mining company descending on the hitherto unspoilt Amazonian paradise, coercing the natives into cheap bonded labour and blasting "crystals" out of the earth with dynamite or high-pressure water hoses. These sad rock fragments are then transported down to the seaports, loaded in bulk onto a freighter, shipped to wholesalers in the western world, bought in bulk by the proprietors of new age shops and end up being plonked in to a box on the counter under the glare of spot lights. And then what happens? Some Sad Case of a new ager or neo-pagan comes into the shop, rummages through the box to find the prettiest bit of rock, takes it home,

plonks it onto the table and demands "Heal me!!" Poor little bugger!

Let us get one thing straight. The widespread availability and use of "crystals" has only become possible because of mass-mining methods derived from industrialisation during the past couple of centuries, the exploitation of natural resources, the oppression of native peoples who have been driven from their ancestral lands - and the gullibility of those who should know better. Meanwhile a lot of people have made a lot of money out of peddling a fantasy.

Crystal Madness on the present scale is, in this country at least, a relatively modern phenomenon. This becomes all too apparent when you look to the accounts of the use of crystals by our ancestors. For example, one of the most famous healing talismans of Scotland was a small sphere of rock crystal (in other words - quartz) which had been hand ground into a near-perfect sphere and set in a claw mount. During the Middle Ages it developed a formidable reputation as a healing talisman throughout Scotland and was even "borrowed" by the city of Newcastle during the 1665 plague at a surety of £6,000 - an enormous sum of money for those days. I think the modern equivalent would be about £750,000. The stone was dipped in water and the water drunk by the person or animal concerned. Unfortunately the talisman appears to have been lost in recent centuries.

The surviving accounts which describe the practices and beliefs which surrounded this handful of early crystal talismans tell us that, far from being common, they were regarded as so precious and rare that those seeking a cure for their troubles or diseases would travel vast distances to touch the stone or to drink a few mouthfuls of the water in which it had been dipped. If any old bit of quartz would have done, people would not have walked from one end of Scotland to another for the sake of a particular stone.

So what would our pagan ancestors in this country have used? One thing seems certain - although a few individuals may have possessed an exotic crystal it would have been because they brought it back from foreign wars (several legends about healing crystals and other talismans of the middle ages tell of their having been brought back from the Crusades) or because they were rich enough to pay a high price for a rare and valuable item.

Of course there are native crystals - fluorite octohedrons for example, which are a byproduct of lead mining in the north Pennines, calcite from Cumberland, carnelian from the Yorkshire coast and cuprite from Cornwall - but those crystals and minerals which are most avidly collected by New Ages and neo-pagans are exotic imports which would have been completely alien, indeed unrecognisable, to our ancestors. Some of the tribes which have invaded these islands over the ages may have brought with them their tribal healing stones or talismans. While the Romans and Egyptians did have an extensive belief system about the powers and efficacy of crystals, believing that amethyst could prevent drunkenness, for example, the beliefs which surrounded such stones were imported along with the stones themselves.



Virtually all writers, whether from a pagan or from high magick background, are agreed that magick is an act of Will and intent. It should therefore be immaterial what we choose to use as a focus for our Will; we should be able to work with a lump of dogshit as happily as with the prettiest bit of amethyst or turquoise. More to the point, is it usually agreed that magick requires effort on the part of the magickian and I would suggest therefore that one of the key factors in using a physical focus for our Will is that we should have found the object

ourselves. Scavenging and beach-combing are excellent ways of becoming sensitive to a natural environment and of becoming more perceptive.

When I lived in Norfolk I had the enviable choice of several substantial areas of post-glacial woodland (from which I managed to collect wonderfully twisted bits of wood, feathers, the tip of a squirrel's tail and various animal bones and skulls) and a number of remote and unspoiled beaches; one of the latter presented me with a beautiful, though worn, neolithic flint arrowhead ("elf-shot" as our ancestors called it) which goes everywhere with me. You also find, if you haunt a particular site, that the powers of that place become more trusting and giving when they realise that you are prepared to make the effort to develop a relationship with the place and are not motivated by an idle curiosity; when that happens there is no telling what they may share with you.

The folklore of the ordinary people of former centuries, who were the pagan ancestors of most of us who are native to these islands, is full of mentions of hagstones, pieces of the wood from a tree chosen for a given magickal purpose, native herbs and plants or dried bits of animals. It is this almost-lost knowledge of our ancestors which we should seek to reclaim - paganism is much more to do with finding our roots and developing a relationship with the sacred landscape than with collecting pretty bits of rock brought to us by multinational corporations.

And yes (before anyone accuses me of living in a glass house) I too have a few crystals - a small quartz cluster, a few fluorite octohedrons, a small cluster of sulphur crystals bought many years ago because it "looked nice". However I look upon them with shame and embarrassment when I think of how I too helped to foster that immoral trade and supported the multinational mining conglomerates. I keep them as a reminder of my thoughtlessness and, frankly, stupidity.

Rowan
PM: **Fellraven**

Reiki Healing

Reiki (a Japanese word pronounced ray-key) is an enlightenment system and a healing art. Some practitioners focus more on one aspect than the other ie. Some teach Reiki only as a healing system while others may teach it only as a spiritual system. Both are valid, either is Reiki. In the Western world reiki is most often used as an energy healing system.

The word reiki can be literally translated to mean spiritual energy or universal life energy. 'Rei' meaning spiritual/sacred and 'ki' meaning energy.

Just as there is more to Yoga than exercise there is more to reiki than simply healing. Reiki can be successfully integrated with all religious paths/traditions. It is not a religion itself although some modern schools such as spirit reiki do have strong religious associations.

Where did it come from?

The system now commonly known as reiki was founded in the early 1900s by Mikao Usui (1865-1926). Usui (pronounced 'oo-suee') was a Shingon Buddhist growing up and became a Tendai Buddhist later in life, and this greatly influenced how he perceived and practised reiki, although he did not name his system 'reiki'. Reiki exemplifies the Buddhist principle of "wei wu wei", doing by not doing. By doing nothing, everything is done. There are now many different lines or schools of reiki all of which can be traced back to Mr. Usui's original teachings.

Reiki as practiced in the west comes from the teachings of Chujiro Hayashi (a retired Naval Officer and student of Mikao Usui) and his student, Mrs. Hawayo Takata.

Chujiro Hayashi modified Usui's system to have a greater healing emphasis and a greater emphasis on the symbols and attunements rather than the spiritual practices and empowerments. The system moved from a slow developing steady journey to something that could be learned very quickly.

Many more have added in much material in the west since 1980. Some have added in Tibetan materials, "reiki guides", crystals, breathing techniques and many other practices that are often taught along with reiki but are not part of reiki itself.

The Principles of Reiki

There are many versions (translations) of the Principles of Reiki, which are thought to have been received by Dr Usui in meditation some time after he received his spiritual attunement to the Reiki energy system. They are very similar to other affirmations and determinations found in many Japanese/Buddhist practices.

Just for today do not worry

Just for today do not anger

Honour your parents, teachers and elders

Earn your living honestly

Show gratitude to every living thing

Most reiki practitioners recite these precepts everyday as a part of their practise along with hand positions such as Gassho, which you may know as Namaste or simply prayer pose.

How is it practised?

At its most basic level, Reiki is a set of five principles for living, a set of hand positions for treating the self and others, and the receiving of an attunement to connect to the reiki energy.

Reiki healing works by simple laying of hands and intent. It needs no visualisation techniques, although the practitioner often enters a meditative state when administering reiki.

The reiki energy is not the energy of the person giving the treatment it is channelled. Sometimes reiki practitioners may be referred to as 'reiki channels'.

Symbols are used to help channel the energy; a reiki master usually gives these to a practitioner on attunement. Some reiki masters/traditions say the symbols should be kept secret and never shown to a non-initiate while others use them freely.

How does it work?

As modern science can confirm, everything that surrounds you is made up of energy or ki in the Japanese tradition.

The reiki energy is channelled via the practitioner and re-aligns the body, clearing away obstructions in the body's own energy field and strengthening it.

The client (person receiving the reiki) will sit or lie and the practitioner's hands will be placed on the body or just above it depending

upon the preference of the client. There is no need to remove any clothing at all. It is advisable to drink at least one glass of water after a treatment to help continue the clearing out initiated by the reiki. A professional reiki practitioner is generally someone who has least a level two attunement.

All illnesses can be treated with reiki; as well as healing physical pain reiki can be used for worries and other mental and spiritual conditions too. Animals as well as humans can benefit from receiving reiki and many practitioners regularly use reiki with their own pets.

Practitioners have found all sorts of uses for the energy besides physical healing and there are many anecdotes passed about amongst masters about what their students have been up to. Reiki can be used to energise food, water, cleanse rooms and even get a car with an empty tank to a petrol station! The only limit is the imagination.

There are no contraindications for reiki healing although many practitioners will refuse to work on anyone who is in the first trimester of pregnancy simply as a precaution.

Attunements

To 'do' reiki you need to receive an attunement from a reiki master/teacher. This can be done in person, or via distance.

Attunements are sometimes also called or referred to as 'initiations'. As with many initiatory spiritual traditions different degrees or levels may be attained.

A Reiki Master is a person that has learned complete system of reiki. It is someone that knows all the symbols, attunements, and has been trained specifically in passing the symbols, training and attunements to others

There are three levels in the Western system of Reiki;

- At level one, you learn the reiki principles, the hand positions and then receive an attunement some masters also teach one symbol.
- At level two, you learn the three different reiki symbols their uses, meaning and associated mantras, how to enact distance healing and receive another attunement.
- At level three (master level), you learn the reiki master symbol, the attunement process, how to teach, and receive the master

attunement.

Another course may need to be taken in order to teach reiki or it may be incorporated into level three; this depends on the teacher.

As well as giving access to the reiki energy attunement may also increase psychic tendencies but this does not happen for everyone. People have psychic experiences when they are ready to receive them not simply because they have received attunement.

Many pagans are already experienced with energy work and will take to reiki training like the proverbial duck to water, often needing less instruction than students of other paths. Those sensitive to energy easily pick up energy sensing/interpreting techniques such as 'biosen'.

Don't worry if you aren't sensitive to energy though as it will 'work' as long as you have been attuned. The symbols are there to help you put the reiki where you want it.

Reiki has for some become associated with 'New Age rubbish', and to be honest some of the newer reiki traditions are New Age.

They all build on and interpret the original teachings of Usui differently with some taking leave of them completely to suit their own spiritual practises. The Usui teachings are easily linked with and can be complimentary to many types of paganism especially for those such as hedge witches who are already on healing related paths. It may be appropriate for some people to teach reiki in tune with an existing degree system in their spiritual tradition. It may also be useful to tailor it specifically to that path perhaps by channelling further symbols, this is how many of the different traditions already in existence came into being.

For more information:

- Web - <http://www.reikiassociation.org.uk/>
Help finding a master/practitioner.

- Web - <http://angelreiki.nu/>
A Comprehensive Guide to Usui Shiki Ryoho, manuals for all Usui levels as well as the Karuna Ki tradition. Listing of teachers.

- Book - 'Essential Reiki' by Diane Stein

Stein broke with tradition by publishing the five healing symbols of Reiki. Prior to the publication of this book the symbols were passed only from teacher to student. A good book for all students and practitioners.

Kath Glover is a level 2 reiki practitioner as well as following an Egyptian pagan path.

Book Reviews

The Real Witches Kitchen Kate West

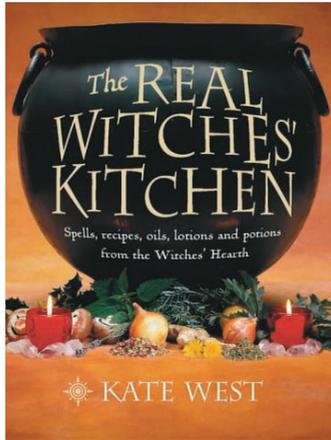
This book aims to give 'practical advice on ways of enriching and expanding your Craft experience' and includes recipes for oils, lotions, soaps, herbal remedies and ointments for healing, magical and beauty purposes; food and drink to celebrate the sabbats and instructions for making your own incense and candles.

To start with, the layout of Real Witches' Kitchen is very much like your ordinary cook book, with recipes organised under several common-sense headings, making the book itself very easy to use as a reference text. Each section is started with a little blurb explaining the chapter and its contents in terms of magic and Craftwork as well as giving some helpful tips and pointers for your own experimentations. Practical directions for use, for example how to use oils to anoint candles, are also included in the relevant sections, making the information given applicable to those with little or no Craft experience.

Kate West writes in a casual and easy to follow style somewhat reminiscent of the American writer Silver RavenWolf. Her simple instructions are littered with personal anecdotes, which gives the book a friendly feel which some readers may appreciate.

The first chapter gives some information on Witchcraft itself, which allows this book to be used comfortably by those who are not practising witches. This gives the book a more 'novice' feel, and the general

tone is very simple and basic. The amount of specific information given however is beyond that which is normally found in 'beginners guides'. The book manages to avoid the common 'spells on a plate' feel by providing the information to make your tools without accompanying them with strict instructions for their use, and providing useful information for making your own concoctions.



The chapters concerned with the Wheel of the Year do not go into too much depth about the festivals themselves, although brief histories are given. The main focus here is on how to celebrate them, with a list of recipes for a whole meal including drinks and a page of ideas for 'making merry'. This is obviously aimed at people new to the Craft who are unsure about how to go about observing their newly

adopted festivals.

The book is entirely non-specific when it comes to talking about religion- which it hardly mentions throughout- making it applicable to anyone interested in kitchen witchery. It contains a large amount of information covering many popular crafty topics, and would be useful for anyone starting to experiment with making their own tools and remedies.

In summary, Real Witches' Kitchen is an easy-to-read book in a pleasant enough style which contains a large amount of practical Craft ideas. It is a good beginners guide to kitchen witchcraft but perhaps lacks depth for those who already know the basics.

Solitary Witch: The Ultimate Book of Shadows for the New Generation Silver RavenWolf

I initially bought this book because I thought it would make a really good reference book to refer to rituals, herbs, crystals etc as & when I would need to. Although I have read the other three books in the 'New generation' witchcraft books, I did feel that maybe this would be just the 3 books moulded into one. I was quite wrong, although there are parts that have been mentioned in her others I personally feel that 90% of the work is not so.

It is so good how it is spaced out into sections so that if you are a more experienced witch you can skip the parts you may not need to go over and delve straight into the parts that you need to, it is also excellent for the new witch in that you can read the whole book and it is a great way to start learning about witchcraft as I did find this book on the whole fairly comprehensive. Once you have read it (for the newbie) and there are things that you need to go back over you can just jump straight to the section you need to.

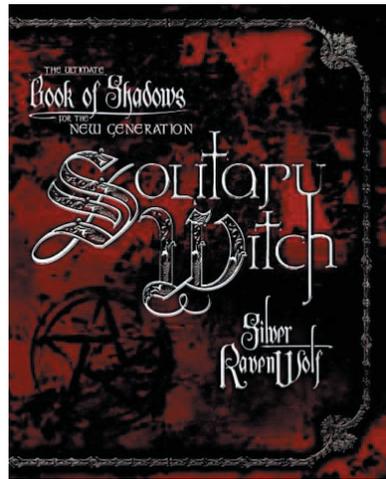
For Ronald Hutton to review the work I think speaks for itself, someone of that calibre involved is excellent.

For an overview of witchcraft there is an extensive part on Tarot, which although I do not study Tarot I did find particularly useful as it went into some detail on the minor & major Arcana. I did feel that more could have been written on runes, but if that's what you are interested in she does recommend further reading at the end of each chapter.

There is a large amount of information on herbs and also crystals which was very useful, and a number of spells, although I do feel its better to write your own spells,

so you could use the ones contained in this book for inspiration to write your own.

On the downside I think it is more aimed at teenagers (which is good if you are a teen) and I wouldn't solely rely on this book, it is as I said excellent for reference but, I would, and do use it purely for that, for other aspects of witchcraft I would use it in conjunction with other author's work. But, all in all this is an excellent piece of work from Silver, I would even say its her best work yet.



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The Myth of Equality in Paganism

Paganism focuses heavily on polarities, and these are said to be "separate but equal." However, it is my belief that you can't have it both ways. If duality implies the notion of opposites and equality means everything is the same, these two concepts cannot exist simultaneously. In order to figure out what I truly believed, I decided to question certain Pagan tenets with a healthy dose of curiosity and skepticism. This is only meant as another viewpoint for consideration and contemplation, not to change anyone's mind.

Take a look at the benefits of diversity in an educational context. Positive discrimination is separating someone from the mainstream population, in an effort to help them be successful in the long term. Negative discrimination is exclusion on the basis of something that has nothing to do with job or school performance (race, religion, physical disability, appearance, sexual orientation, etc.) Here are examples of positive discrimination: If a student exhibited a learning disability and couldn't read by third grade, I'd place them in a remedial program to give them the skills necessary until they could catch up with other classmates, thereby avoiding struggles and difficulties down the road. If a student was diagnosed with mental retardation, I'd put them in special education so they could learn academics at their own pace while getting needed life skills. If a student was found to be exceptionally intelligent, I might put them in an accelerated program where they would find learning enjoyably challenging, not monotonous. If a student was found to be artistically gifted, I'd place them in a visual or performing arts school where their talent would be nurtured. If a student proved to be an excellent athlete but was confined to a wheelchair, I'd select them to be in the

Special Olympics so able-bodied runners wouldn't have an unfair advantage over them. The reason why all these programs exist is to meet and accommodate students at their unique level of growth.

The potential for negative discrimination exists, and in certain cases, it must be skillfully dealt with rather than rebelled against. You can't hide the fact that you're African-American, but you can choose to not wear Pagan jewelry to a job interview if you are aware you might receive unfair judgment. The majority of society may not accept Paganism as a religion, even if it's recognized as such by the government. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that you would like equal rights, opportunities, and treatment, not that you are equal to everyone in the world.

Now let's talk about religion. I classify myself as Pagan, but half the population might beg to differ. I care about the planet but don't own a bumper sticker with "Save The Whales" on it. Clothing-optional rites aren't my thing, so I don't dance naked under the harvest moon. Because of unconditional acceptance by deities, I don't purify myself before ritual. I express gratitude, but I'm not about to go and bury food in the backyard because I don't feel it's obligatory or even necessary. There's no rule, law, or regulation saying you have to offer anything. The Charge of the Goddess says, "I demand aught of sacrifice." The Rede states "fairly take and fairly give." Every human and deity is going to have a different definition of what constitutes fair, and since there's no scientific proof that Gods exist, how can you know for a fact what they want, if they desire anything at all? If you believe an offering is required to ease your conscience, go for it! If you believe heartfelt and genuine words can show

gratitude as well as deeds, that's okay too. The world won't fall apart, regardless of whether you decide offerings are required.

Deities can be viewed as beings with human personalities and emotions. They can also be seen as perfect, devoid of human flaws and negativity. They can exist in material objects, the natural world, spiritual realms, or all of the above. Deities can be thought of as energy, but how that energy is manifested depends on your personal preferences and whether you view the Gods literally or figuratively. If anyone is imposing restrictions on your beliefs, then what they are really doing is limiting the way you want to experience and view deity. Imagery is necessary for me to grasp symbolism, so I need a literal representation of the exact appearance of Morgan Le Fay, who happens to be my Goddess, as well as a powerful Witch in Arthurian legend. Contrary to popular belief, Morgan and Morrigan are two completely different deities. Since I felt Morrigan was too harsh for my taste, I was never drawn to her.

A major tenet of Paganism says, "As within, so without." This might imply there's no difference between deities, humans and animals. However, if we were equal to deities, we'd be omniscient Gods and Goddesses ourselves without having to constantly reincarnate. If we were meant to achieve balance effortlessly as nature does, we'd be trees. If we are going to pursue a goal, we must make it possible for everyone to successfully accomplish that goal. Humans have free will, so perfect balance is impossible. If there were a single correct method of achieving it, we'd have found it. It seems that the sole purpose for an animal's existence is to mate and procreate for the survival of their species. Because I am human, I can choose who to marry, if I wish to wed anyone at all. I've never desired children because I know myself well enough to realize that I am unwilling to put in the

time, energy, and sacrifice it takes to raise them. I simply enjoy my freedom.

Another tenet says, "As above, so below." If this is true, why is it that people say our souls are in a "better place" after death? If all worlds were equal, no place would be better than another. I believe negativity doesn't exist in spiritual realms, so you only get the benefits of life without the drawbacks. The spiritual world offers eternal happiness, while the physical world contains challenges, responsibilities, tests, obligations, and difficulties. There's a reason why they say "rest in peace."

The concept of Paganism as a believe-what-you-want religion is what attracts people to it in the first place. Personal religious viewpoints should be acknowledged for what they are, not squelched to satisfy the majority of Pagan tenets, since nobody has monopoly on the ultimate truth. If we claim acceptance is unconditional and universal IN THIS FAITH, we should practice what we preach. I would never have the audacity to walk up to a Christian and request they examine their religion, simply because they attend Mass only on holidays or fail to contribute to their church community.

Equality has a logical basis in theory since everything is made up of spirit and energy, but I feel the only common ground shared by all is the need for survival. I hope this essay has provided you with clarification as to why equality is impractical, unrealistic, and nonexistent. Because we are on different intellectual and spiritual levels, we are similar, but not equal. Our life experiences, religious beliefs/practices, spiritual development, and personality traits are what make us unique.

Your comments are always welcome. May the Lord and Lady bless you on your journey!

Morgan Willowmoon

WiccaUK Moot Information

For up to date information of all events from WiccaUK please visit
<http://events.wiccauk.com>

London

2nd Saturday of each month, 2pm-late
The Old Kings Head, Borough High Street,
SE1, by London Bridge station.
Contact: casp@wiccauk.com, 0845 456 1870
(No London moot in June, see back page)

Cambridge/East Anglia

Held every over month. Time and venue varies. See the forums for latest details or call 0845 456 1870

Manchester

Last Saturday of each month from 2pm
New Aeon Books, 95 Oldham Street, Manchester
A talk held at New Aeon for a couple of hours, followed by a visit to a nearby pub.
Contact: amber-k@wiccauk.com, 07745 739010.

Scotland

Glasgow - Monthly on the first Saturday of each month. See events.wiccauk.com or call 0845 456 1870 for venue details.

Edinburgh - Monthly at Pleasance Bar.
Contact arual@wiccauk.com or
onagh@wiccauk.com or call 0845 456 1870 for more information.

Bristol

First Sunday of the month. 2pm-evening
The Engineers Arms, St John's Lane, Bedminster
Purely social moot. No talks. No entrance fee.
Email: bristol@wiccauk.com

Yorkshire

Leeds - First Saturday of each month.
12.30pm-evening.
The Hogshead, 157 - 158 Lower Briggate,
Leeds. Map
York - Third Saturday of each month.
Contact leeds@wiccauk.com or call 0845 456 1870 for venue details.

Midsummer Masquerade

12th June
A night of midsummer mischief! We have a large central London venue, a huge fully stocked bar and loads of friendly (but masked) faces. An opening ritual, celtic bards and a Pagan DJ.
Tickets £8, £10 on the door. £5 for WiccaUK Full Members. See back page for details.

Thinking of Starting a moot?

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

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

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

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Pop Culture - Viable Form of Magick?

When I tell people I'm a pop culture magickian they look at me and ask why? Sometimes it's because they genuinely want to know why and other times it's because they're not sure if they should take me seriously or laugh. I am quite serious when I call myself a pop culture magickian, but I realize that many magickians are not yet used to the idea that pop culture can be a form of magick. So the reactions are understandable, but now I'd like to explain the advantages of pop culture magick and what a person can do with it.

Pop culture magick is based off of pop culture and what pop culture is, is what ever happens to be new and different, and yet not part of mainstream culture. Pop culture defies the conventions of the mainstream culture and brings something different into the mix. An example of pop culture would be Britney Spears. She is often in the news, constantly reinventing herself, and thus bringing energy to her. People pay attention to her. We might not approve of what she does or the music she sings, but when you hear the name Britney Spears, you know who that is and you know she doesn't represent mainstream culture, which is blah. Compare her to Christina Aguilera, who you rarely hear about in the media and you have a difference. One person has been absorbed into the mainstream and another person has not.

Now I don't work with the energy of Britney Spears myself, but she's a useful example of demonstrating what pop culture is. It's on the edge, and it represents everything mainstream culture does not. Another example is Star Trek, which has never been duplicated and has always represented a specific segment of the population as opposed to the entire population. People who enjoy Star Trek are called Trekkers, because they are devoted to the show. And because of those people and their continued devotion Star Trek is pop culture, outside the grasp and bounds of mainstream culture.

What pop culture really is though is energy, raw, strong, youthful energy. It is also our cultural context. Any of us can identify with pop culture far more easily than we do with ancient cultures for a very simple reason. We didn't live when the Greek gods were worshipped full

force and even if we have access to the ancient mystery rites, most people don't know ancient Greek and so we lose out on the original context of the culture.

But we do live here and now, in this culture. And this culture has it's own god forms, and it's own culture and we understand that culture because we live in it. We all know who Britney Spears is and while she's not my idea for a god form, someone could certainly use the persona she's created as a god form. Pop culture is our culture and it gives us a plethora of god forms to work with. Anyone who is considered pop culture is a viable icon, because what you're working with is the energy that goes into the icon, as opposed to the person, who merely embodies that icon. And that energy is the belief of all the people that actually pay attention to that icon.

It's important to remember that a pop culture icon, a god form, can be anything. It can be a real live person who is currently famous, or it could be a cartoon character like Bugs Bunny. It can be anything that is part of contemporary culture, but does not subscribe to the norms of mainstream culture. And whatever it is will work because the energy is fresh, it is now, and it is vibrant with life. Pop culture god forms exist because we pump energy into them every time we watch a show, read a comic book, or talk about the god form. Our belief gives them life and in return they give us energy to us, energy to work with, energy to manifest reality. And these pop culture god forms are so vibrant because we can understand them contextually in ways that we cannot understand the ancient gods. Our pop culture exists now with us and so is part of us. We use our pop culture to explain the way our culture works, and changes, even as we use it to critique our culture. Instead of a god of thunderbolts we can have a god form of the internet, or a god form of divination (I used Miss Cleo as a god form for that) or even a god form of magick with Harry Potter as that god form.

My point is that we have available to us an entire culture of god forms that live, breathe, and exist right now and we can any of them. Of course some pop culture god forms fade as

they lose relevance. I don't work with the Miss Cleo godform I created years ago because Miss Cleo is no longer a center of attention. The energy has dried up and gone to some other godform. But as long as you are aware of that pop culture is a very viable form of magick.

Another way that pop culture is a viable form of magick is through the practical techniques you can adapt from it. By practical techniques I mean techniques that you can use without necessarily needing to involve a god form, but which will be oriented toward a practical usage, a way of conforming reality to the will.

I've used pop culture in a variety of techniques. For instance I've noted that lots of students in college, like to make collages out of magazine and newspaper articles. And while this art form has been around for a long time, it is nonetheless an art form that can be used as a magickal spell. The collage can form your ideal reality, and you can have that magick spell embodied in the collage, charged every time someone looks at it. The collage will draw on the magazines read by so many people, feeding off the energy that those people invest in the magazines.

Another technique, one I developed recently, is charging sigils through the video games you play. A sigil is a condensed statement of desire. You charge it, fire it (cast the spell) and then promptly forget about it. I have chosen to charge my sigils playing video games, visualizing the sigil as the character I'm playing and with each push of the buttons on the controller, I program the sigil into a desired, manifested reality. When I'm done I put the controller away and go about my day.

Some practical techniques will be inspired by what you watch. For instance I enjoy watching lots of Japanese Anime (cartoons). One series in particular, Yu Yu Hakusho has inspired me to try out some practical magickal techniques based off the ideas in the show. One of the latest ideas in the show is the concept of the territory. The territory is an ability a person has, but this ability is restricted to a set distance around the character. The territory allows the person to influence a law of reality. For instance one character can stand on the shadow of another person and stop that person from acting. Another character has the ability of taboo, where if a particular word is

said then the person who spoke it loses his/her soul. The ability of the territory is governed by what the person likes.

I've taken this concept of territory and applied in two ways. First I've applied it to the magickal workings I do with power spots. Power spots are natural pools of energy. They can be created by tapping into the energy of the land and connecting those points where you tapped the energy, so that you form a power spot out of the points. You connect the points of energy through ley lines. I do this by walking the land and at points, which I feel strongly resonate with my energy, I tap that energy by offering something of myself, usually a personal item or even a fluid from my body. In this way I create a connection between myself and the land. In a sense I create a territory.

Once a power spot is created, you can mesh your energy with it and through that begin to shape reality. This does take some work though. First you have to learn how to mesh your energy with the power spot. This involves connection, where you project your energy into the power spot and then connect the energy of the power spot, and your own energy together. Once this is done it is easy to work magick through the power spot. My workings so far have been oriented toward warming myself during the wintertime, by circulating the energy of the power spot through my body. Because I've only begun to work on this technique it requires some refining. The disadvantage of working with a power spot is that it's bound by the distance you've walked to create it. So it extends only to a certain distance, although that distance can be extended.

The other way to apply the concept of territory is to just apply it to your own energy. If you think about it, we all have our personal bubbles, and those bubbles represent our comfort levels with other people as well as reality. But we can actually infuse that concept of the personal bubble with energy, creating a field of potential probabilities and then shaping those probabilities to manifest a needed change in reality. Have you ever had to catch a bus, but you knew you'd be late arriving at the time of the bus stop? Shape the reality, by slowing down time around you, and speeding up time for yourself so that you get to the bus stop right on time to catch it. I've done this before and it always works. And all of this magickal

working was in part inspired by a television anime show. You won't find books on the occult about this kind of working.

What's the real lesson here? Pop culture offers any person creativity and novelty in their approach to magick. Whether you work with a pop culture god form or develop a technique off of something you saw or read, the key is creativity. A lot of the fun I have with pop culture is through figuring out how adapt something I saw on television to fit into a workable technique. The thrill of pop culture is that it offers us a wide variety of mediums to work magick with and all of those mediums are contemporary to us.

Author Bio

Taylor Ellwood is currently pursuing his PH.D in Literacy, Rhetoric, and Social Practice at Kent State University. He is the author of Pop Culture Magick and the co-author of Creating Magickal Entities. Taylor is currently writing his third book Space/Time Magick as well as more articles. Check out Taylor's webpage at <http://taylorellwood.chaosmagic.com> or his livejournal at <http://www.livejournal.com/users/teriel>. Taylor can also be contacted at ashmage@hotmail.com.

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WiccaUK is a non-profit organisation, run by committee and financed by our members. Profits from the sale of this magazine and other merchandise help us fulfil our aims of promoting acceptance of Paganism as a belief system within the UK and providing a safe and secure networking platform for those who practise those beliefs.

Becoming a Full Member of WiccaUK not only helps support the organisation financially, but you also get the following benefits:

- A Membership Pack, with details of local moots, events, groups and shops around the country
- Personal Membership Card, which gets you reduced entry to WiccaUK Events
- Eight copies of The Witchtower per year, upon request
- Access to restricted areas of the wiccauk.com website
- A chance to have a say in the running of WiccaUK

Full Members are given full voting rights at our Annual General Meeting, where issues can be raised

and discussed with other members and the management committee. Members can also stand for election on to the committee. You can also suggest what kind of work you'd like WiccaUK to become involved with, and nominate projects, organisations or events for us to support.

WiccaUK is truly a membership based organisation, and if you want to help shape the future of it, please become a full member today!

Rates are £20 to join and £10 for renewals. Students and unemployed are £14 for the first year. Renewal dates are one year from the cross quarter date following your application. Membership is open to all over the age of 16 (16 & 17 year olds applications require parental consent).

For a form, please visit <http://full.wiccauk.com/>. If you don't have internet access or a printer, please call us on 0845 456 1870 or send an SAE to BM WiccaUK, London, WC1N 3XX.

Pagan Events Listings

There are a huge number of pagan events taking place on a regular basis all across the country. WiccaUK is pleased to list these events for free in The Witchtower. If you run an event, please send details to events@wiccauk.com. Include a small description, contact details, dates and frequencies, location and any other important information. We need these details to be updated every six months to ensure listings are accurate.

30th & 31st May Beltane Bash

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square
Sunday 30th May + Monday 31st May
Kicking off with the 7th annual Pagan Pride march around Bloomsbury at 10.30am (free for all), the event continues inside Conway Hall with a variety of talks, lectures, workshops and a huge number of great stalls! All are welcome. Profits go towards the Ravens Wood conservation. Tickets are £11 for a single day or £20 for two days, available on the door or in advance. See www.paganfestivals.co.uk

3rd June

Gemini Zodiac Seminar with Maggie Hyde. Calling all Geminians. Listen to a talk and meet others with the same sign. Everyone welcome, whatever your sign. To be held at County Hotel, High Street, Canterbury, Kent. £5. 7.15pm - 9.15pm. For further information tel: 01227 372427 or e-mail admin@coa.org.uk. <http://coa.hubcom.net>

4th - 6th June

The Wessex Gathering Isle of Purbeck, Dorset. Summer Witch Camp. A fantastic programme of workshops, speakers & entertainment. Saturday night ritual for all to join in, no matter what path or experience. BBQS allowed. Families & well behaved dogs welcomed. Bring your tent and camping equipment. Shop

and shower facilities available. £37 per person (£32 for COA Members) £6 under 16s Under 3s Free. Info: phil@greenman.org.uk www.greenman.org.uk

5th - 7th June

Glen Affric Walking Festival Scotland.
Info: www.treesforlife.org.uk

6th June

Magonia Readers' Group A monthly social meeting at the Railway pub, Putney, London, just opposite Putney station (about 15 mins. from Waterloo). We start meeting about 7.15 pm, and carry on until closing time at 10.30. Join us for chat, serious discussion and gossip about all the subjects dealt with in Magonia. <http://magnolia.demon.co.uk/>

12th June

Sinister Business at the Crossroads
Looking at non/pre Wiccan Witchcraft in Britain. Jack Daw has been a practicing Witch for over 20 years in which time he has been researching and giving talks on old tradition folk magic of Britain, with a particular focus in the South West of England. Omphalos, Bath Alternative Moot Talks at the Batheaston Scout Hall, Batheaston, Bath 7.30-9pm £4/£3 concession Info: omphalospaganmoot@yahoo.co.uk

14th June

The Psychology and Parapsychology of Alien Abduction Experiences With Chris French. The Anomalistic Psychology Research Unit at Goldsmiths College, University of London is currently engaged in a project investigating the alien abduction experience (AAE). The project, funded by the Bial Foundation of Portugal, will result in data relevant to psychological accounts of AAEs but will also probe further into the wide range of additional anomalous experiences reported by

those reporting AAEs. A SELFS talk held in the conservatory of The Mitre Tavern, 291 Greenwich High Road, London SE10 8NA. Talks start at 8.00pm and cost £2.50/£1.50 cons. www.selfs.co.uk

19th - 20th June

Leamington Peace Festival More info at 08707 704 098, email info@peacefestival.org.uk or visit www.peacefestival.org.uk

Pendle Witch Camp Summer Solstice Camp in the shadow of Pendle Hill, Lancashire. Info: hometown.aol.com/bonawitch/PWC.html

20th June

Midsummer Stave Course Training and practise in Seid and Galdre aspects of Stav, plus time to explore and socialise. Place: Orkney. www.iceandfire.org

24th June

Exploring Consciousness A Sophia Centre Conference at The Forum, Bath UK. Info: www.bathspa.ac.uk

1st July

Cancer Zodiac Seminar with Maggie Hyde. Calling all Cancerians. Listen to a talk and meet others with the same sign. Everyone welcome, whatever your sign. To be held at County Hotel, High Street, Canterbury, Kent. £5. 7.15pm - 9.15pm. For further information tel: 01227 372427 or e-mail admin@coa.org.uk. <http://coa.hubcom.net>

9th - 11th July

Pagan Federation Summer Camp At Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant, Powys, beside one of Europe's highest waterfalls. £25 PF members in advance, £30 non-members and all at the entrance. More info from Steve Ludford, 01691 679066.

15th - 18th July

Druid Wisdom Camp Forest of Dean. Details: www.druidnetwork.org

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