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A blessed Imbolc to all!

It has been a while since the last Pagan World magazine has been published. A lot has changed in this time which resulted in me taking over the chores as editor as of this Pagan World. On the next page I will further introduce myself, but for now let's see which interesting articles this issue has to offer!

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Bright Blessings,

Serge Pax



A word from the editor:

Taking over the chores as editor for a magazine and finding it has to be built from scratch again can be either a blessing or a curse. Unfortunately, in my case it has been the latter so far. Being new to the world of editing without having a template to work from has resulted in numerous delays in the production of this magazine. Time and time again I started all over again when new knowledge was gained on how to improve the overall look of the articles, as I felt the articles deserved looking as good as I could make them.

Then, while working long nights to have this issue finally released on Imbolc, the long dormant (now e-zine) Wiccan Rede was published. Featuring... to my surprise, an article about the Dolmen that was meant for this issue of Pagan World. The article being my revision from the Dutch English original with some minor updates, 'edited' by someone else. Since it has been too long already since the last issue of Pagan World and having a lot of other interesting articles screaming to be published, this issue features the old version.

I am very proud to bring you a very interesting article written by Elena Baldaeva on Shamanism in the Buryatia region. I certainly hope to see more articles from her in the future. A name that will ring a bell to long time readers of Pagan World is Ian Elliot, who brings us another great article 'The Sacred Household' and Elwynn Owl honored us by sending in an article about Baudelaire. I have one Dutch article for you this month, an interview with Frigga Asraaf about her book 'Asatru – een naslagwerk'.

No book or cd reviews in Pagan World this time. Fitting these into the magazine would have caused more delay. I am sure they will be a regular feature in future issues of Pagan World again. A special, special thanks to Rini and Herman for their help. Without them this issue wouldn't look as nice as it is now.

Bright Blessings,

Serge Pax

Member of Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship (ADF), Member of The New Order of Druids (NOD)



The Sacred Household: Rites and Mysteries

**By
Ian Elliott**

to Joseph Brazauskas, a true pagan

The Threshold

The sacred household in ancient and more recent indigenous cultures bears certain analogies to the human body. The front door is similar to the eyes, the hearth to the heart or solar plexus, and the central supporting pillar to the spine. Shrines or altars at these locations were guarded by spirits who were linked with internal spirits in each family resident, and the proper worship of the household guardians involved being on familiar terms with their inner analogues and tending their inner shrines.

This study of the sacred household uses the names of Roman household spirits, but it is based more broadly on a number of other cultures. We no longer live in Roman houses, so some latitude must be taken in locating household shrines; and we are not all of Roman descent, so some attention must be paid to the forms of piety practiced by our ancestors from other lands.

It is not enough to study household rites and set up modern versions of ancient shrines.

Our early conditioning separates us from some pre-verbal modes of awareness, by teaching us to ignore certain readily available perceptions; these must be recovered if we are to properly install our internal shrines and so link them with those of the household. I have called practices that open up these perceptions ‘mysteries’ because having been forgotten they have become secret things.

The Roman god of the threshold was Janus, who has two faces, one looking outside and the other inside the home, as well as forward and backward in time. To enter a house, as H.J. Rose pointed out in Religion in Greece and Rome,ⁱ is to begin something, and so household piety always began by honoring Janus at the threshold. His annual festival was on January 9th,ⁱⁱ and offerings at his shrine were made on the Calends (the day after the dark moon of the lunar calendar), as well as at the beginning of any endeavor, such as a journey; also on one’s birthday.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Romans, even after they came under Greek influence, were by preference an aniconic people; that is, they preferred worship without images. Perhaps this was because they focused on the link between the inner and outer shrines and found external images a distraction. I keep my own threshold shrine simple, hanging a god-face about a foot and a half above a small offering shelf, the shelf set next to the front door a little above eye-level. On the shelf is a candle, a stick incense holder, toy-sized dishes for water and salted grain.

Upon crossing the threshold one always steps over it, never on it, and one should touch the doorpost as an acknowledgement of the threshold guardian and to receive his *numen*. We can tentatively define *numen* as liberating and empowering energy that is unknown or at least unfamiliar.

My prayer when offering to Janus is the same as the one I used when setting up his shrine:

**Honor and thanks to you, O Janus,
for guarding the threshold of my home.
May only harmonious beings enter here,
and may the discordant depart!
Please accept these offerings of salted grain,
water, light and scent,**

Open this week [month, journey, etc.] for me on
blessings,
and teach me to look out and in at once as you
do,
so I may guard the threshold of my inner home;
for I, too, am a threshold guardian.

The god-face for Janus looks straight in, as I prefer to imagine his head imbedded in the wall, with his outer face guarding the outside of my doorway.

¹ Rose, p. 179

² Ovid: *Fasti*, p. lix

³ Bernstein: *Classical Living*, p. 17.



The Inner Threshold

This ability to look out and in at the same time holds the clue to Janus' mysteries, to the pre-verbal mode of perception that will give us the ability to look in the same manner, outward and inward simultaneously. To do this we must 'stand in the doorway,' and the best description of this was provided by Douglas Harding in his important little book On Having No Head. Harding was hiking in the Himalayas and one morning he suddenly saw the world differently:

*"...I stopped thinking...Past and future dropped away. There existed only the Now, that present moment and all that was given in it. To look was enough. And what I found was khaki trouserlegs terminating downwards in a pair of brown shoes, khaki sleeves terminating sideways in a pair of pink hands, and a khaki shirtfront terminating upwards in – absolutely nothing whatever! Certainly not in a head."*⁴

This nothing, however, was filled with everything: mountains, sky, valleys below, extending to the horizon. Harding felt light and liberated.

He had ceased to ignore the sensations of his own headlessness, ending a habit acquired in infancy when told that 'the baby in the mirror' was merely his own reflection.

In addition to his headlessness, he was now attending to the limits of his perceptual field. Consequently, he wasn't tracking on this or that object, as we spend so much of our time doing, using our eyes as searchlights for our impulses and desires. Instead, he was looking at his whole visual field at once, and the lightness he felt resulted from dropping the burden of his eyes from incessant tracking, and of his mind from incessant thinking.

Indigenous peoples are aware of the difference between these two ways of looking at the world. When the psychologist C. G. Jung visited an Indian pueblo in the American Southwest years ago, he had a conversation with the local chief, Ochwiay Biano (his name means Mountain Lake).

"The white man's eyes are always restless," the chief told Jung. "He is always looking for something. We think he is mad."

Jung asked him why they thought that.

"He says that he thinks with his head."

"Why of course," answered Jung. "What do you think with?"

"We think here," he answered, indicating his chest.⁵

There are two potential errors in assessing what Ochwiay Biano said. One is to take his words sentimentally, as if he were merely speaking of 'heartfelt thinking.' The other error would be to dismiss his words as expressions of a primitive, pre-scientific physiology. The Pueblo chief would not have been troubled to learn that Western science has determined through experiments that we think with our brains. This would have seemed to him irrelevant to what he was talking about, namely the sensation of where the thinker seems to be located in the body.

We feel we are located in our heads because of certain muscular tensions around the eyes from tracking, and in our foreheads from ‘knitting our brows,’ and performing other social cues indicative of taking thought. But these external muscular contractions, though spatially closer to the brain, are nevertheless external to it and involve muscles on the outside of the head. The feeling we get from them of being ‘in our heads,’ therefore, is no more scientific than the feeling the Pueblo chief evidently got of being in his chest.

When we look at our headlessness, our chests come into view as the closest part of the body that is completely visible; and when mental talk quiets down as a result of tracking being replaced by restful awareness of the whole available visual field, words are employed only as and when necessary for external communication. The rest of the time one simply looks, listens and understands, and this quieter form of awareness allows feelings to come to the fore since they are no longer drowned out by incessant mental chatter. For these reasons, Ochwiay Biano felt that he thought in his chest, or solar plexus.

⁴ *Harding, p. 2.*

⁵ *Jung, pp. 247-8.*



The Hearth

The ancients associated this part of the body, including the heart, with the hearth, and regarded it as the seat of memory. The hearth was the center of the home as well as the place of contact with ancestors. It was the place where the family gathered and traded experiences of the day, recalling in the process the words and deeds of the past. Without memory there is no family, even if the people living together are all related, as we know now that the hearth has been replaced by the

television or computer as the central focus of the house, especially if meals are taken individually in the living room.

In the old days, the hearth gave heat and light to the home and was also where food was cooked. Nowadays some are fortunate enough to own a house with a fireplace, but they usually have a stove as well, so that the functions of the ancient hearth have become divided, and it is difficult to decide where to place the hearth shrine.

I have no fireplace where I live now, so my hearth shrine is near my stove. My stove is electric, but I keep a large candle in the shrine and light that, together with stick incense, when I want to awaken the hearth guardian. Additionally, I keep there somewhat larger versions of the offering dishes described above for the threshold shrine.

The hearth guardian is both a goddess and the hearth fire itself. In ancient Latium she was called Vesta. She accepts offerings for herself and also passes on some of them to the ancestors, godlings and blessed immortals. Because I cannot maintain a perpetual flame, I have a picture of her in my shrine, and close to her picture is a statuette of my family *lar*. The *lar familiaris* is an ithyphallic youth pouring wine from a wineskin into a chalice. He symbolizes the vigor and luck of my family line, and as such forms a link back to the ancestors, and onward to posterity.⁶ If I want to honor and pray to another deity, I can conveniently place his or her statue in the shrine for the occasion. This saves on shrines.

At the shrine or close by are photos of my parents and maternal grandmother. These are the ancestors who were my caregivers when I was small, and with whom I still share a bond of love. The Romans and other ancient peoples represented their ancestors by small clay figurines on the altar, as seen in some recent films.

When my offerings are laid out, I light the candle saying “Honor to fire, honor to Vesta, honor to the hearth.” Then I light the incense. Then I

pray: "Holy Lady, please accept these offerings of salted grain and pure water, light and scent for thine own dear self, and pass on some to the lares and penates, the di manes, daimones⁷ and blessed gods, thanking them for their good regard for me and my family, and asking for a continuance of their favor." To this basic prayer I add anything special for other deities.

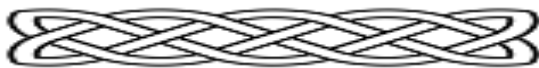
While the fire is lit in the shrine, I call on my ancestors and talk to them. I let them know how things are going in the family with me, my sons and grandson, our concerns, blessings, problems and plans, just as I would if they were still in the flesh. If any of them has appeared recently in a dream, I thank him or her for the visit.

At the close of the rite, I bid farewell to ancestors and deities and extinguish the candle, letting the incense burn down. I say the opening prayer in reverse order, ending with "Honor to the hearth, honor to Vesta, honor to fire." In Roman houses the hearth shrine was decorated with fresh flowers and offerings made at least three times in the lunar month: on the Calends, that is, the day after the dark moon; on the Nones, the ninth day before the full moon;⁸ and on the Ides or full moon itself. In Caesar's solar calendar the Ides was regularized as the fifteenth of each month, which would place the Nones on the seventh.

⁶ Rose, pp. 175-6.

⁷ *The penates guard the stores of food and clothing, the di manes are the ancestors, and the daimones are demigods, such as local gods or those who come and go with the seasons.*

⁸ Bernstein, p. 6



The Inner Hearth

When we practice 'standing in the doorway,' we naturally do not do so all the time, and this provides us with a contrast between the two modes of experience, so that we begin noticing things that were formerly invisible to us because they were constant. Some of these things are external to our minds, such as shadows and clouds, and some are internal. One of the internal things is the synopsis or background summary we take to experience, the mental account we refer to offhand when answering the common question "How is it going?" The synopsis is more readily observed in dreams, because it is different for each dream-story or sequence, whereas in waking life it is ongoing and only changes gradually except in moments of crisis.

When we enter a dream-story we generally enter in the middle of it, provided with a ready-made background that tells us where we are and what we are supposed to be doing. We are provided with dream-memories, sometimes selected from previous dreams (as in recurring dreams), and unless we become aware we are dreaming, we do not question it or the actions of other dream-figures.

Similarly, in waking life we are generally absorbed by the problems and affairs of the moment, as supplied by an ongoing mental summary or synopsis. From this we derive our sense of who we are in the present and what we need to do. The synopsis is based on a selection of memories, and these change gradually unless we are in the throes of a crisis, in which case we need to revise our orientation, sometimes on the basis of earlier memories, in order to cope with the situation. At times our synopsis can become so obsessive that we throw it over in a breakdown and temporarily become disoriented.

Standing in the doorway provides a milder it and our usual awareness brings the operation of the synopsis to the forefront of attention.

Then, as in the onset of lucid dreaming (when we suddenly realize we are dreaming), we become free to question who we are supposed to be and what we are supposed to be doing in the present moment. The process of interpreting present experience in terms of our usual selection of memories is suspended, and earlier memories are able to surface, bringing with them earlier feelings of ourselves and of life, derived from past synopses. This is a familiar experience when we go on a trip, especially if we visit old neighborhoods we haven't seen in many years, and perhaps explains why we like to take such trips after surmounting a difficult crisis.

Vesta's power to call up the ancestors from old memories works in a similar way, and when our focus of awareness has moved to the chest or solar plexus, continual standing in the doorway can help her to perform the same feat for us at our inner hearth, especially if we augment our headless attention with another pre-verbal mode of awareness involving sound.

The first stage is to listen to all the sounds around us, without dividing them into 'background' and 'foreground'. This comes about naturally once our visual attention rests on the limits of the visual field instead of tracking on this or that object. It is easy for the attention to waver, however, so the focus on sounds must be augmented by mentally copying sounds just heard.

Small children learn to speak by mentally copying sounds, and there is reason to believe that animals do something similar. Mentally copying sounds and associating them with specific situations would seem to have been a major part of humanity's pre-verbal thought processes. Once we learn to speak, and to speak to ourselves, mental mimicry of sounds is relegated to a minor role and generally limited to copying sounds for which we have words. When we begin 'thinking with the chest,' like Ochwiay Biano, our minds become quieter and we

become aware of feelings and images for which we have no words, not because they are ineffable, but simply because no words have yet been assigned to those experiences. Consider smells, for instance. We have many words for colors and quite a few for sounds, but our olfactory vocabulary is very limited. If a dog could be taught to speak, he would find himself at a loss to describe the many odors in his daily experience. If he invented words for the many different odors, we would find it hard to understand him, lacking referents because we are purblind in our noses.

In the same way, this particular sound I have just heard has no precise word describing it. We can say, 'that is the sound of a car engine,' as we say 'that is a tree,' and ignore sensory detail in either case. Our everyday minds can deal with such thumbnail descriptions without having to disturb the selection of memories forming a background to our moment-to-moment synopsis. But if we mentally repeat the precise sound of that car that just went by, our memory background is rendered more porous, as it would become in a crisis, so that feelings and images from past memories are able to emerge.



I tried mentally echoing sounds just heard as an experiment in 1972, while walking along

a busy street in Encanto, California. I was also keeping my sunglass frames in view, an earlier version of ‘standing in the doorway’. I did this for an hour or more, and recorded the results in a journal:

“The result of this double exercise was three full days, not counting sleep, in silent awareness of total sensation...At one point the feeling of lightness became like a breeze flowing through my body from back to front. Everything seemed to take on a bluish tinge...By the third day, the breeze had risen to a light wind and was blowing through my memories. My personal history, the sense of who I am, was being shuffled like a deck of cards...By the end of the third day the wind set me down somewhere else in myself; that is, my store of familiar memories was completely revised and my feeling of myself permanently changed from that point on.”

After this experience, my dead grandmother began visiting me regularly in my dreams. I noticed that in many of these dreams I appeared to be younger, and to feel as I did when she was still alive, but my understanding was linked to the present. It was common to realize at the time that I was dreaming, if not at first then as the dream progressed, for I would remember that she had died. These earlier feelings of myself, and of my grandmother when she was alive, enhanced a feeling of harmony with her and allowed us to converse in close intimacy. However, as I had no unresolved issues with her, there was nothing specific to work through. I usually asked her how she was, and she said fine, but she felt tired a lot, and this probably came from memories of her as she was towards the end of her life.

My practices of the threshold and hearth continued over the next several years, and long after my father died I did have some serious issues to work through with him. This took about three years to get through, during which time I was periodically out of work (I was doing contract programming and moving around a lot).

In both dream and waking I agreed with my father to resolve certain problems for good with him in exchange for obtaining help in finding employment. On each of three occasions, I received job offers within twenty-four hours of these conversations. Skeptics may make of this what they will; but taking the view that I was in contact with the spirits of my ancestors, it makes sense that they would find it easier to relate to me after I had recovered earlier feelings of myself and of them which I had when they were still alive.



The Pillar

Before chimneys came into general use in the Renaissance, the old-style hearth was usually located centrally under the smoke-hole in the roof, and the central supporting pillar or pillars were set close to it. The main pillar in pagan times corresponded to the World Pillar, round which the heavens appear to revolve and which links the Underworld, Middle-Earth, and the heavenly realms of the cosmos together.⁹ It also corresponds to the human spine, and the subtle passage therein known to yogis as the *sushumna*. An upright person has a straight spine and thus a direct link to the vigor of the ancestors. He or she can stand before the ancestors unashamed, with a record of honorable conduct.

In the old Roman religion, every man was born with a guiding spirit called his *genius*, and every woman a similar spirit called her *juno*. These were inner spirits, with a meaning originally connected in some way with sexual vigor, but later they became mixed with the Greek notion of a personal *daimon* who guided one through life.

The connection of the genius with sleep and dream is suggested by the *lectus genialis*, located in the atrium just opposite the entrance-door. Rose conjectures that in the

days of one-room houses it probably served as the marriage bed, hence its sexual significance; but in later times it persisted as a sacred furnishing that was reserved for the genius of the *paterfamilias* and never used by the house's human occupants. Presumably the lady of the house had a similar place in the women's quarters dedicated to her *juno*.¹⁰

While we must do without a pillar in modern houses, we can set aside a special area in the home for meditation, and include a shrine to a personal guiding deity,¹¹ giving external form to our indwelling genius or *juno* in the shape of an image if we prefer. A staff can be set up in a nearby corner to represent the pillar, perhaps with alternate red and white bands spiraling clockwise around it from the top to the bottom, like a Maypole. The main thing, of course, is to sit there with an erect spine, the seat being raised by one or two cushions.

If you offer to your patron or patroness (or directly to the genius or *juno*) as at the other shrines, ask for guidance or wisdom in both dreams and waking life. It is also good to do this before going to sleep. If you remember your dreams on awakening, take a few moments to ponder them and try to determine what the deity was saying to you. Even seemingly trivial dreams often contain a message if we take the time to examine them.

⁹ *Eliade*, 261.

¹⁰ *Rose*, 193, 144.

¹¹ *Preferably a deity at home in all worlds of the Pillar, such as Hermes, Hecate or the Celtic god Cernunnos.*



The Inner Pillar

As the World Pillar is the link between the realms of our cosmos and thus with the ancestors, so the inner pillar is our own

personal link with them through memory. As we have seen, memory contains more than the record of events: Vesta at our inner hearth can recall past versions of ourselves, our feelings and impressions, our viewpoints, joys and fears, all the way back to birth, as well as that strange kind of nostalgia, with phantom images, associated with the distant past which we call far memory. Like the rings on a tree-trunk, these vital memories represent different stages of our growth-journey from the realm of the ancestors, and each is vitally available to the present moment.

It will come as no surprise, then, to learn that each man's genius and each woman's *juno* resides in the inner pillar of memory and has the job of guiding, not just our present selves, but each of these versions of ourselves, guiding all of them together. Thus, as Vesta calls back our previous selves and integrates them with our current self, the genius or *juno* shows us the path linking them, the plan our life has been following, and the living form of our self through time, of which our current self is the growing tip. For whereas the ancestors are concerned to help that growing tip, our current selves, with advice and vigor,¹² our indwelling genius and *juno* are concerned with the growth of the whole plant, clear down to the roots. The journey down the inner pillar of memory, taken by the silent, inward-looking self, is not like a train-journey, which leaves behind each station as it travels to the next one. It is rather a projection of awareness from the present back through the past, uniting with the whole trunk of memory as it goes. As such, it is a preparation for the fuller integration that will take place in the Underworld after the death of the body.

In the Underworld the integrated soul will undergo further integration with its selves from previous lives. Thus, the answer to the question, "What age shall I be on the Other Side?" is "All ages to which you have attained." This is expressed beautifully in the Lakota (Sioux) myth of Falling Star.

It seems long ago there were two sisters who wished to marry stars when they grew up.¹³ Then, when they were about to go to bed, two men appeared outside the flap of their tepee:

“They were men, but they were not like other men, for they made the light they lived in, and there was no shadow where they stood. This light was soft and kind, and when the two men smiled, it spread about the sisters so that they were not afraid at all. Then they saw that one man was young and one was very old. The younger one was taller than any man the girls had ever seen; but the older one was even taller. I think he stood above the other like a tree, and the light which he made was that much brighter. He was old, old; but he was young too. I think he was older than the other because he had been young so much longer.”

Journeys down the inner pillar can take place in lucid dreams or in waking moments when inner silence begins to deepen on its own, spontaneously. The latter experience feels like being in an old elevator that has suddenly slipped its cable a little. There is a feeling of being lowered into deeper silence. Present sensations continue, but new senses open up, or perhaps feelings, for which we have no descriptions. These seem to be showing through the current landscape, if we are outside, that is. Time undergoes subtle changes as well, with the mind taking in more rapid details occurring, as it were, between successive instants of time. This continues until one has had enough and decides to re-surface into the everyday present.

Standing in the doorway and mentally echoing sounds just heard help to set up lucid dreaming. Additionally, after closing your eyes at night, instead of becoming immersed in thoughts, watch your phosphenes, the lights and shapes created by the pressure of the eyelids on the optic nerve. As we fall asleep, dream images will naturally become superimposed on our phosphenes; but if we fall asleep while watching instead of

thinking, we shall watch the images in our dreams afterwards and be less caught up in the words of the dream-synopsis. When dream images become superimposed on phosphenes, it is like a door opening, and when it is fully open we are asleep and immersed in a dream. If we have watched our phosphenes change into dream-images, it is only a step further to realizing we are in a dream, when the journey down the inner pillar can commence.

¹² *But through a growing tip they knew in life; see above.*

¹³ *Neihardt, p. 176. The Lakotas were sky-pagans, locating the realm of ancestors in the heavens rather than in the earth.*

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The DolmenPagan Celtic Rock!

By Marloes Visser and Mark Vine

Photography Marloes Visser

"The Dolmen are a Weymouth, Dorset, UK Celtic/folk-rock band that incorporate elements of Celtic, folk, pagan-themed, and historically based musical works into their largely original repertoire. As of 2010, the group members are singer and songwriter founder/member Tony ("Taloch") Jameson, flautist and vocalist Keri Pinney, guitarist Josh Elliott, bassist Kayleigh Marchant with additional percussionists Chris Pinney, Stephen Moverly (the bodhrán), and Drummer Chris Jones. The majority of the band's songs and music are composed and produced by multi-instrumentalist Jameson. Two essential, but non-musician members of the band are lyric contributor and collaborator, Mark Vine, and Kirsty Kelly, long time sound engineer."

Source: Wikipedia

I met Taloch at his house in Weymouth , a seaside port in the County of Dorset, UK. Taloch; a tall man with very distinctive features and long silver hair, dressed in piratey clothes that suited him very well, opened the door to let us in. Us being my friend Eibhlin who drove me over, and myself. Introductions were made and Eibhlin sat down with Mark Vine (lyricist, merchandiser & roadie of the band) .Taloch's wife Joanna and three and a half year old son Connach were also in the living room. Armed with coffee, voice recorder and laptop, me and Taloch sat down at a big old wooden table for the interview.



First off, I had to admit that, to my shame, I did not know the music of the Dolmen very well. I only saw some clips on Youtube, but what I did see I really liked. Very enthusiastically, he began telling me about the chequered history of the band.

In 1989 Taloch came back from Paris, where he had been working for three years assigned to a French record label. As well as producing music for the label in their studio, he also worked there as a musician. "At that time Dance Music took over and anything that wasn't Dance Music tended to go on the top shelf" explains Taloch. Upon his return to England, he did not want to continue in the same line of music as he was previously working in: the Cultish Rock and Gothic scene. Instead, he pushed the folk aspect into his music. He was in two minds as to which direction to take his music when the idea suddenly struck him to provide music to pagan gatherings and rituals. Being a Pagan himself and discovering that after rituals people flocked around the campfire and started gossiping or sniping about other religions or pagan streams, he one day just took his guitar out and started to sing a song. People stopped and listened and so it caught on. The beginnings of the Dolmen band were born! Bringing in other local musicians, it became a band. "An awful band in the beginning" Taloch muses, "So raw. The fiddler couldn't play the fiddle. He learned while playing. He never could play it in the end but he could play the guitar rather well".

At first the band provided music solely for rituals and pagan gatherings, but following a one off gig in a local pub, they were asked to play others in the local pub scene also. They did this for a couple of years, but at a certain moment it got so out of hand that they had about 280 gigs each year and "it almost killed the band." They had managed to keep up with the Pagan celebrations but a commercial market opened to the band as well. They played at several major festivals in England, including the Glastonbury Festival three times. Although they did get a lot of exposure on the whole, this commercial market did not do them much good. Taloch kept promoting Pagan music and because of that they were blacklisted from most of the festivals. Festival promoters generally preferred not to be associated with anything Pagan at that time. In 1998 Taloch got disillusioned with the way things were going. He "lost the roots" and took a couple of years off. Never one to rest on his musical laurels, during this time he wrote and recorded four solo CD's celebrating and exploring his more spiritual side: "The Image of Thoth", "Communion", "Echoes of Tibet" and "The Way of Thelema". It was a theme he would return to again in 2008 with his solo release "Crow Dance", a Native American style album, celebrating his roots through his father's family who are Plains Indians.

In the early 2000's Taloch started gigging with his daughter Keri's band called 'The Elfin'. A short time after that though, the demand for The Dolmen returned. He sat down with Keri to talk about it and they decided to pick up The Dolmen again, only now with a different line-up. The old Dolmen songs that people so enjoyed were played again, but now to a far higher standard. The old fan-base soon returned and expanded with many others who loved this new and exciting style of music.

To date, they have released ten albums, of which "Songs from The Cauldron" and "Winter Solstice" are the two primarily Pagan albums. Their latest release 'Spirits of the Sea' is a pirate-themed album. Taloch states it is "a return to their roots, the more folky music, the music of my youth", "A return to a sort of music that signifies a particular honesty".

It was also a way to bridge the gap between the interests of the Pagan members of the band and those of the non Pagan band members.



“Spirits of the Seas” is a double disc folk album and Taloch ensured that you can dance and “Yeehaaaa ! to it” (and you certainly can!).

The first CD is a compilation of very catchy songs played in the band’s strong electric style with amazing guitar riffs by brilliant young guitarist Josh Elliott. The second CD is acoustic. It’s like “a night in a tavern sat amongst pirates and cutthroats, as you listen to them telling their stories and singing their songs”. All very authentically mastered and recorded in Taloch’s own studio. One can almost smell the tobacco, taste the rum and feel the spray of the salt sea in every song and yarn. For the stories, Taloch turned to Mark Vine (historian, author, lyricist and long time friend of Taloch’s), who co-wrote the band’s previous album (the much acclaimed “Crabchurch Conspiracy”). Mark set about collecting

pirate stories from all over the world, which he then dramatised into short narratives. The stories were then told/acted out by Taloch, Mark and some local celebrities. Among them retired school teacher Bob Paye, who is a direct descendant of the notorious Dorset pirate Harry Paye. Bob is also an uncle of Taloch’s wife Jo and so the historical and family connection to this famous old Dorset character is very strong indeed. The other two people acting out the pirate tales were colourful Town Crier of nearby Dorchester Alistair Chisholm and local radio celebrity DJ Dave Goulden of Wessex FM, who also provided the sound effects for the album through his Media company, Evoke Media.

<http://www.evokemedia.co.uk/home.htm>

In between the stories, acoustic songs are played with guitar and bouzouki, creating an atmosphere of a dark, obscure tavern filled with drunken pirates and their wenches. In fact, the background atmosphere to the second disc is exactly that. The band made a video to promote the album and arranged for Pirate re-enactors the ‘Poole Buccaneers’ to be filmed drinking and carousing with them, as part of the authentic feel. A link to the video is found below and gives an idea of the album’s excellent and authentic atmosphere.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cdE7MCtFcc>



“The pirate music is very much root music to the Folk music; sea shanties etcetera and the pirate theme is certainly an ice breaker.” Taloch explains that when he comes into a room wearing his pirate clothes, people start Aaaaarrrrrring and the atmosphere of the party is set!

Except for three traditional songs; “Raggle Taggle Gypsy”, “Over The Hills and Far Away” and “Whisky in the Jar” they rarely cover songs. The reason they covered these three songs is simply because they like them very much. Taloch explains that he writes his own songs and enjoys the challenge to write songs that sound traditional. The new album is a return to their original concept, providing music for gatherings and campfire nights. Most of the songs you can sing along to quite easily as they are catchy and sound like sea shanties. Taloch and

guitarist Josh Elliot are now working on a new album to be released in 2011. This will be a raunchy Celtic folk rock album featuring popular songs, Pagan and otherwise, that the band regularly perform live. The whole album, although recorded and produced in one of the band’s two studios, will definitely have that live feel to it, that raw power and excitement generated at all of the band’s live shows.

A new album is also planned to be completed in 2011, retelling The Tolpuddle Martyrs, probably the most famous Dorset historical tale. The story of six Dorset farm labourers who, in 1834, were sentenced to seven years transportation to Australia with hard labour for committing the awful crime of daring to belong to a trades union after having their meagre wages cut by an unscrupulous landowner and magistrate.

Taloch explains, “As a band, we love the traditions and folk tales of our native Dorset and the Martyr’s story is known world-wide. So we want to honour them the best way we know how and that is through our music. Mark Vine is currently researching the story and working on the lyrics with me and we hope to be able to do their incredible story justice with the new album”.

A couple of days after my meeting with Taloch I went to the Faerie Ball in Brighton, on the coast a hundred miles east of Dorset, to see The Dolmen perform live for the first time. I am still buzzing from that gig ! The energy and the fun ricocheted off of the stage. Dressed in kilts and pirate clothes, with impressive tattoos and a dynamic stage appeal, they simply blew the roof off the venue. Afterwards they showed just how tightly knit together the band is, relaxing and having fun together, as they watched the other star attraction of the night, Inkubus Sukkubus, perform.

I took the pictures used for this article during the Dolmen gig even though the Dolmen sound is so infectious that I had to refrain myself from dancing! Some of the pictures turned out very wobbly.

The Dolmen will headline the Avalon Fairy Ball in Glastonbury on the 30th of October and the prestigious Witchfest International in Croydon, London on the 6th of November. This is the third year running that the band have been asked to headline at Witchfest after appearing there as the support act to the Medieval Babes in 2007.

All in all a band to take notice of! The Dolmen will perform in the Netherlands next year. Tour dates will be published on their website www.thedolmen.com





Baudelaire's Metaphysical Journey of Self-Knowledge: *Correspondences to the Cosmos*

by Elwynd Owl

Oklahoma, 2010

Contact: elwyndowl@yahoo.com

Charles Baudelaire was born in Paris in 1821 and died in 1867. A *dandy* of the 19th century Parisian *société*, he often shocked readers with his unapologetic description of death and decay and, along with other poets such as Verlaine and Rimbaud, quickly entrenched himself in the “*décadent*” movement of the time. To these poets, metaphysical experience could be brought about either through writing, reading, or both. Rimbaud's poem “The Drunken Ship” (*Le Bateau ivre*) is such an attempt to describe a metaphysical voyage using the ship as a metaphor. These poets lived largely and, as *bons vivants*, experimented with alcohol and other substances to tear down the wall between the mundane and the sublime. Baudelaire presents his version of a metaphysical voyage in his work “*correspondences*” – a poem taken from his tome *Les Fleurs du mal*. The discovery of the key to unlock this metaphysical voyage is very aptly illustrated by literary critic Jacques-Henry Bornecque (my translation from the French):

‘In our being, we are much like theoretical owners, however dispossessed and pathetic, of a palace where we must live confined in a few narrow and encumbered rooms – in need of the key to other rooms, from which we can only sometimes perceive the glimmer of light and of divine music behind the locked doors of our subconscious.’(1) Before considering how Baudelaire presents his theory of departure, the poem is presented (first in the English translation [mine] then in the original French) in order to allow a point of departure.

Nature is a temple where living pillars
Let sometimes escape confused words;
Man traverses it through forests of symbols
That observe him with familiar glances.

Like long echoes that intermingle from afar
In a dark and profound unity,
Vast like the night and like the light,
The perfumes, the colors and the sounds respond.

There are perfumes fresh like the skin of infants
Sweet (or soft) like oboes, green like prairies,
—And others corrupted, rich and triumphant

Having the expanse of infinite things,
Like ambergris, musk, balsam and incense,
Which sing the ecstasies of the mind and senses.



Jacques-Henry Bornecque, « *Rêves et Réalités du Symbolisme.* »
Revue des Sciences Humaines 5-23 (Jan –Mars 1955) : 17.

**L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.**

**Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.**

**Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
-- Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,**

**Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encense
Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.**

In the nineteenth century, the notion of “pantheism” becomes much more interesting for the poet since he attempts to understand the rapport between his own microscopic existence and the macrocosmic universe. This quest takes a spiritual tone because the poet is interrogating not only his psyche but also all of nature that he sees before him. From this quest is born the lyrical tone that is so rooted in romantic literature. As a result, the poet interrogates himself about the possibility of absolute truth that might become known through a secret code during a shared moment between self and the divine cosmos, manifested in concrete nature. This interrogation is organized according to a hypothetical system of subtle relationships between everything that exists on a concrete level, as well as subtler levels in Baudelaire’s “Correspondences”.

For our poet, all that exists on the terrestrial plane has an equivalent in the *au-delà* (the words “heaven” or “ether” do not adequately capture the meaning of this word. I’ll therefore use the French). One is reminded immediately of Plato’s IDEA theory, but Baudelaire’s notion goes much further. It concerns not simply the equivalent of an object in the *au-delà*, but also of *correspondences* that can be evoked (by way of concrete objects) and of relationships that exist analogically between, for example, smell and taste. This phenomenon of the intermingling of the senses known as synesthesia plays an important part for Baudelaire.

Furthermore, in his poem we can also see

analogies between what is visible and what is invisible. As magicians employ an object, a perfume, or even a verbal vibration in order to evoke a harmonic accord on the spiritual level (or in the *au-delà*), Baudelaire performs the same task through his writing. In this manner, the poet serves as a “decipherer” and even as a “priest” for those who dare to examine these correspondences in the world and the universe. Let us now consider Baudelaire’s poem “Correspondences” in order to see in what manner the poet puts this theory into practice.

In the first quatrain, the poet quite simply presents his theory in thesis form; in the second, we see a progression of this thesis through the macrocosm; and in the two tercets, one can see an illustration of correspondences throughout the microcosm. In this manner, the poet serves as a sort of “tour guide” to the reader by taking him/her on a round-trip.

In the first sentence, “Nature is a temple where living pillars / Let sometimes escape confused words;” the reader is struck by the vivid metaphor that both “nature” and “temple” are not simply unified but are the same. One can immediately reference the two pillars of King Solomon’s Temple (Jachin and Boaz).

According to Masonry Defined it is the name of the right-hand pillar that stood at the porch of King Solomon’s Temple. It is derived from two Hebrew words, *jah*, ‘God,’ and *iachin*, ‘will establish’. It signifies ‘he that strengthens,’ or ‘will establish.’ The other pillar was called Boaz, ‘in strength’ – the two words signifying ‘in strength shall this my house be established.’ (2)

By referencing the pillars in this manner, the poet evokes the pantheistic nature of the universe and suggests that by exiting from the two living pillars (the mother’s legs) at birth, each human being is already initiated into the mystery of “Nature”. Everything is, therefore, sacred, and the pillars are living. The alliteration that we hear in the original French “t, d, v, p” in the phrase “La nature est un temple où de vivants piliers / Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;” brings a drum to mind – a sacred ritualistic image.

2 Mackey, Johnston, Masonry Defined : A Liberal Masonic Education (Kingsport, Tennessee : National Masonic Press, 1939) 300.

Additionally, it can be suggested that the heart is now beating and the voyage has begun. Thanks to the words “temple”, “pillars”, “confused words”, one gets the impression that Baudelaire might be suggesting the image of the oracles of Delphi that offer words of wisdom if one is ready and able to decipher them. Life is, in and of itself, a mystery which seeks to understand itself throughout its course. By undergoing this first initiation, the process of discovery is inevitable. In the third line, we see: “Man traverses it through forests of symbols”. This refers to horizontal movement and highlights two things: horizontal correspondences as well as the cycle of the human life. Wo/man is limited by horizontal movement and human life is, in general, of a linear nature. Wo/man is obviously bound to a time-space *continuum*, but by heeding the poet’s message, one can learn to transcend linear restrictions for a fleeting moment. Furthermore, the poet suggests that, most of the time, wo/man passes through life ignorant of these occult correspondences that surround him/her and are found everywhere – both in the outside world as well as inside his/her *psyche*. In other words, wo/man has “forgotten” and become ignorant of the divine correspondences in the cosmos. S/he fails to see him/herself as divine because this information has been lost.

According to James J. Hurtak: “After the first ‘fall,’ the religious sense descended to the level of the ‘divided’ consciousness; now, after the second, it has fallen even further, into the depths of the unconscious; it has been ‘forgotten.’ It is now our privilege to discover the potential dimensions of human existence and face the great challenge of the ‘ascension of consciousness’ through the Man-God-Spirit transformation.” (3)

The forests of symbols suggest the inexhaustible number of possibilities for mankind in the process of self-exploration. These symbols are also the tools by which one can begin to “remember” one’s nature and reunite with the forgotten divine. In other words, there are many paths that must be trod and each is correct in its appointed hour. We are therefore, each of us, psychonauts in the quest of understanding our true selves through the process of identifying our Will. It is interesting to see that the notion of symbology reminds one of Jung’s theory of the unconscious. Jung was attempting to highlight major archetypal moments

in the human psyche; and although Baudelaire precedes our philosopher, archetypal constructs were already intuited. Nevertheless, according to Jung, everything that exists in front of us also exists in a sort of collective human memory. The systems of the eastern magicians call this notion the *Akasha*. According to Donald Michael Kraig, the definition of the word *Akasha* comes from Sanskrit and means: “The records of all that has occurred, is occurring, and will occur in the universe”. (4) Baudelaire’s “forests of symbols” suggest the possibility of aligning oneself with shared information that exists in the *au-delà*.

Attaining the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel is another way of describing this same process. In the last verse of this strophe, we see “That observe him with familiar glances”. The living pillars are personified because they see wo/man and we intuit an often benevolent complicity in the universe for everything that surrounds us. It is possible that Baudelaire suggests the archangels that one might evoke – beings that witness our works in the magical space. Finally, the unification of these two pillars (man and woman) has resulted in the birth of a human being who is being initiated into life. The “familiar” glances suggest complicity and a shared responsibility between the two pillars and the individual who has now passed through them and entered into life. Furthermore, the act of reading is a shared experience and the poet is at work with the reader – a notion that forges yet another correspondence concerning complicity.

In the second quatrain, we see that the echoes become mixed and muddled due to wo/man’s poor perception in the phrase: “Like long echoes that intermingle from afar / In a dark and profound unity”. It is now necessary to have an intermediary (our poet) to interpret these echoes for us. The word “unity” underlines the fact that these correspondences do not reside in a world of disorder but in equilibrium that exists both in the concrete world as well as in the entire universe. This universe is “Vast like the night and like the light”. This phrase brings the Egyptian goddess Nuit (Nut) immediately to mind. Nuit is the vast, starry night sky who invites us to lie in Her bosom for a moment to share Her love.

(3) James J. Hurtak, *Gnosticism: Mystery of Mysteries* (Los Gatos, California: The Academy For Future Science, 1988) 96. (4) Donald Michael Kraig, *Modern Magick: Eleven Lessons in the High Magickal Arts* (Llewellyn Publications, 1996) 523.

Interestingly, the word “nuit” in French is the word for “night”. Since the universe is both vast like the night as well as the light, we see a suggestion of the dualistic principle. The God Hadit is the secret centre of light as Nuit is the vast night sky. This space becomes neutral and possesses both bright and dark qualities. To use another metaphor, we see this concept suggested by the temple dais of alternating black and white cubes. We also see the romantic notion of a duality that is highlighted in the title of the work from which this poem was taken, “The Flowers of Evil”.

A flower is neither positive nor negative; it is wo/man’s interpretation thereof that gives meaning. Nuit reminds us of this duality when She proclaims that She is divided for the sake of union. This dual principal allows us to see how the magician makes his vibrations echo back to him from the *au-delà* due to harmonics. In other words, that which is affected in one world (the *microcosm*) is mirrored in the other (the *macrocosm*), and *vice-versa*. The same notion applies in the last verse of this strophe: “The perfumes, the colors and the sounds respond”. This verse also evokes Baudelaire’s definition of *synesthesia*. Finally, such elements (perfumes, colors and sound) are used in ritual as a trigger by which to attune the psyche to the divine.

In the first tercet, we encounter the phrase: “There are perfumes fresh like the skin of infants,”. Baudelaire suggests once again the pantheistic, living nature of everything. We might also suggest the development of divine man by evoking the image of the babe. This child, known in the Ancient Egyptian world as Heru-Pa-Khrat, represents the developing human in the new aeon.

Therefore, the joining of the dark “Nuit” and the light “Hadit” creates the “infant” as explained by Lon Milo Duquette“. As Nuit’s expansion and Hadit’s contraction are both infinite, so too must be their points of contact. This infinite contact creates the basis of possible vibration (their Child Horus); the field of operation in which the universe can manifest” (5)

Here we see that the perfumes are also “Sweet (or soft) like oboes, green like prairies”. In this phrase we find the sensations of hearing, sight and touch. Each sensation corresponds to another, exactly like the relationship between all things in the universe. In the last verse, we see how perfumes can also be

“corrupted, rich and triumphant”.

The magickal number of three comes to mind. The divine trinity of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit becomes a metaphor for a single living being who seeks to find his/her Will in the forests of symbols of the universe. The unusual adjectives used to describe perfumes “corrupted, rich, triumphant” are being used such that the reader also makes a subliminal correspondence to people, gods, goddesses, or leaders, according to his/her personal experience. May we go so far as to suggest descriptions of the *sephiroth*?

The first verse of the last tercet shows the possibility of correspondences that can be triggered by perfumes: “Having the expanse of infinite things, /”. Baudelaire suggests two levels of existence: *vaporization* and *concentration*. Alchemically speaking, “concentration” is where wo/man spends most of his/her existence. This is, therefore, his/her cell. “Vaporization” represents passage into the *au-delà*. Baudelaire suggests this when he evokes the image of incense rising into the *au-delà*. In this manner, one understands better “the expansion of infinite things” to which Baudelaire refers.

Furthermore, the correspondences are infinite: everything responds to everything else and everything bounces into everything else. One might consider the movement of an atom where each particle has a distinct relationship with another, with another, with another *ad infinitum*. The enumeration of ambergris, musk, balsam and incense suggests several possibilities. The first image evokes the church (which uses incense in its rituals) as well as the tools of the alchemist. Alchemy allows wo/man to transform his/her life with the use of such elements.

We also see a suggestion of vertical movement. Earlier, we saw that mankind was stuck to horizontal movement in this voyage of life. Now, however, we find an alternative: the incense transports prayers toward the heavens. Instead of being glued to the earth, Baudelaire suggests that the reader (who is now being initiated into priesthood) may find a correspondence (or a “trigger”) to lift him/herself upwards.

(5) Lon Milo Duquette, *The Magick of Thelema : A Handbook of the Rituals of Aleister Crowley* (York Beach, Maine : Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1993) 81.

This echoes the very moment during the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram when the magician announces that the pentagrams flame about and the six-rayed star shines within the columns. Although Baudelaire would not have been familiar with this ritual, the archetype of connection between the microcosm and the macrocosm is deeply rooted in human consciousness. Obviously, this magical moment can occur under the guise of many rituals and Baudelaire is illustrating a mystical experience through his writing.

In this poem, we have seen how Baudelaire sees correspondences in all of nature. All symbols, therefore, exist in a world that has now become sacred. This pantheistic view shows how the poet serves as an intermediary and explains these sacred analogies if the reader is ready to be initiated and understand them. In addition, Baudelaire presents his poem in the present tense in order to underline the eternal quality of sacred nature and we see, therefore, that this experience is voluntary. This experience is triggered by objects and symbols at man's disposal. We can see how Baudelaire foreshadows the writing of Marcel Proust, but for the latter, the sublime experience becomes involuntary and sporadic.

Shaman and Shamanism

By Glaringwolf



Nadya Stepanova – Isle of Olchon on Lake Baikal, considered the Sacred Isle of the Siberian shamans

Buryatia is located in the South-central region of Siberia along the eastern shore of Lake Baikal, where Mongolia, Siberia and China meet. The traditional spiritual practice in Buryatia is a blend of Tibetan Buddhism Gelugpa and Siberian shamanism. The Buryats had practiced this path for ages but the shamanic traditions in Buryatia are still so little known to the Western world so that's why I decided to write about that. Even today not too many know that Buryats, Mongols, Evenks, Yakut and many other Altaic nationalities and tribes of indigenous people of Siberia traditionally practiced shamanism for hundreds of years.

There is some confusion about the origin of the word shaman. Some say it originates from Sanskrit some say from Turkic. The truth is that the word "shaman" originates from Evenk language and means "possessed". It is because the job of the shaman is to communicate with the spirits and let them work through their bodies. It is sort of a possession but it's made by the will of the shaman in order to gain the access to the spiritual realms. The Russians colonizing Siberia in the seventeenth century, first encountered the shamans among the Evenk people, that they called Tungus and adapted their local word.

They then used this word for simplicity reasons to describe the shamans of all Siberian people, ignoring local names, such

as *oyun* (in Yakutia), *boo* in (in Buryatia), *kam* (Turkic-speaking people of Central Asia) etc. In contrast, all Turkic and Mongolian-speaking people called a shamaness "udagan". Shamanism is one of the oldest ways of spiritual expression from which all the religions had started. The use of power animals and animal guides, the sacred initiations, the techniques and methods used, symbols and tools and rites of passage are common to all shamanic traditions on the planet that share a deep and intimate connection to the nature, land, the sky, the animals, the energetic universal web and the ancestors.

In modern days after years of religious suppression and persecution by Soviet government, shamans in Buryatia and Mongolia are free to practice again and are maintaining the balance of the environment and the community. In the indigenous cultures of Siberia shamans play an important role in communities and spiritual education of people. Shamans have the rights and conduct blessings, rituals of protection, hunting magic, and divination.



They also cure sicknesses that have spiritual causes such as spiritual intrusions, spiritual pollution, soul loss, and when it is necessary can undo curses. Shamans are also the caretakers of Buryat culture. Because of their knowledge of ancient tradition, their counsel has been sought throughout the ages.

The ancestors of Buryats used to live in yurts, in the steppes, they were nomads and were travelling from place to place, they worshipped the Great Mother Earth and the Eternally Blue Sky, in Buryat language "Huhe Munhe Tengeri", this is where the word "tengerism" comes from that defines better the shamanism in Buryatia and Mongolia. They cherished the Mother Earth and had a deep respect to the Farther Sky ... To honor your ancestors, your elders, your parents, to know the culture, to remember the roots is particularly very important for people in Buryatia.

In many Buryat families you may see the genealogical ancestral family tree representing family relationship with the oldest generations at the top and the newer generations at the bottom. Some of them are dating back years and years ago. In my family for example, there is a family tree dating back to the 15th century in the farther lineage and it shows there were many powerful shamans in the tribe. It is very common for Buryat people to know their ancestors by name some generations back.

It is especially important and necessary to know what lineage you are from when you go to visit a shaman in Buryatia. The first question a shaman would ask you is "Where are you from?" meaning what lineage you're coming from, who are your ancestors, what tribe etc. When people go to visit a shaman they usually take some milk or a bottle of vodka, cigarettes, some goodies for offerings to the spirits, money. All of this has a special explanation and purpose. Milk is used for offerings to the spirits of the ancestors and vodka is mostly for shamanic divination. People come with all sorts of questions to a shaman: getting an advice and a blessing on the business, getting the help of the spirits in changing or getting a new job, marrying, becoming a shaman, soul retrieving etc, which suggests that a shaman besides his psychic powers also has to be a very grounded and knowledgeable person in all the aspects of life.

Shamans don't have set fees for doing their work, but usually people always come with the generous amount of money. Being a shaman is considered a full-time occupation. It is an occupation much like a doctor, teacher, or public official. In fact, because they serve their communities, a shaman is a public figure. In Ulan-Ude there is an association of shamans "Tengeri" where one can find the list of all practicing shamans in the area. They also organize tailagans and many other shamanic ceremonies every year.

Even though the rituals can be held by any shaman it is better to go to a shaman of the tribe that you belong. It is especially important when someone gets shamanic initiations. To become a shaman one should first of all have a family history - utha (from Buryat - shamanic roots), ie to have an ancestor who was a shaman. It is even believed that a shaman can be great (most powerful), only if he has in the family at least 10 shamans among his ancestors, who actually become the guardian protection spirits in relation to the newly chosen one. Evidence of these "chosen by spirits" was a distinguishing mark on the body - tengeriyn temdeg (from Buryat: the divine mark): an unusual spot on the skin, forked fingers, strange behavior. It was believed that a true shaman should have had an extra bone, and that only people whose souls have studied in the other world the shamanic practice, can be good shamans.

To become a shaman at will was not possible. Spirits come only to the chosen ones by themselves, not obeying anyone's will. The exception was if the person was stroked by a lightning and survived, or his descendant if his ancestor was killed by lightning (choice of the gods), even if the dead man was not a shaman. While in the west many are looking for shamanic initiation, want to be a shaman and perceive it as some sort of entertainment or extreme experience, in the Siberian and Mongolian cultures this subject is treated with great fear and great respect.



Usually the people who received a calling to become a shaman are not so happy to find out about their destiny. Many are scared of responsibility and consequences. In Buryatia many believe that the shamanic calling is not a gift, but the burden. The “chosen ones” often find out about it suddenly and it is manifested by a "shamanic illness" they suffer, which outside may look like a neuro-psychiatric illness or very often they become alcoholics.

The person could also experience the incredible physical pain. The disease may last up to several years, accompanied by terrifying hallucinations.

The shamanic illness may start at age of 20-45 but sometimes the crisis begins very early - at age 10 and even 7. The affected one is not feeling well among people and might experience suicidal impulses, he/she sees strange or scary dreams, sometimes losing consciousness.

Getting rid of such mental illness (or long-term mental and physical health crisis) could only be done through the acceptance of the vocation of shaman and the beginning of shamanic activity.

A shaman's training takes a lifetime of work. It takes a great deal of practice

and discipline. There are 9 degrees (levels) in traditional Buryat Mongol shamanism. They represent the nine branches of the World Tree. For each level there is an initiation called a Shanar. It takes years of study and training to reach each level.

Depending on his rank the shaman can have his drum, iron crown, ritual cape and the right to hold more complex rituals. The highest rank - zaarin (9th level) was rare even in the XIX century. The first shamans, according to ancient Buryat legends, could rise into the air and soar through the trees, they actually flew in the clouds on their horses and performed miracles that their modern descendants can't repeat anymore.

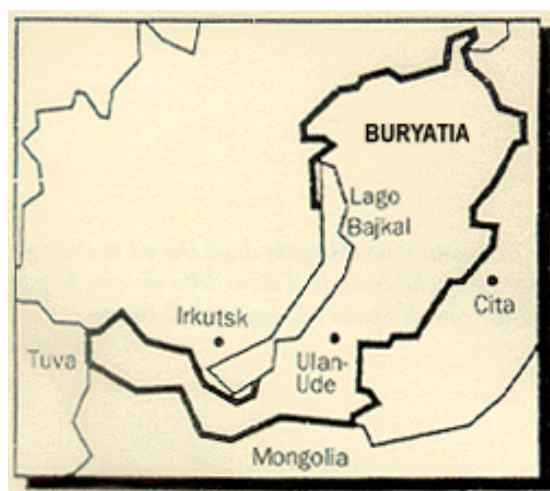
Shaman is the one who is always between two worlds; the invisible world of spirits and our physical realm which is why often he is lonely and is not understood by the society, the one who was chosen to follow this path that he really had little choice but to become shaman.

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Michael Harner : The Way of the Shaman

Mircea Eliade : Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy (Bollingen Series)



“DOREEN VALIENTE AND THE CHARGE OF THE GODDESS”

By Morgana Sythove

On September 13th 2009 there was “The Day for Doreen” commemorating the 10th anniversary of Doreen Valiente’s death.

I gave a talk there about “Doreen’s influence in Europe” and as part of the presentation I discussed the origins of “The Charge of the Goddess”. In my preparation I made extensive notes about the text, which I would like to share with you now.

A Short introduction:

My name is Morgana and I have been a practicing Gardnerian since 1979. I probably first came across the Charge when reading Gerald Gardner’s book “Witchcraft Today”. However it wasn’t until I stood in circle that I first became aware of the beautiful “Words of the Great Goddess” and the impact of the priestess reciting it. “The Charge of the Goddess” is basically a text read or recited by the HPS following the ritual of “Drawing Dow the Moon”. For many people it acts as a trigger – a channel to the Goddess.

Since then I have used the Charge in my own circles and over the years it has become a well-loved text within the Wiccan community. It has also been translated into many languages and this was in fact the spark to initiate the project, “The Charge of the Goddess – a multilingual project”. This has now become a multimedia DVD and will hopefully be available in the near future. (November 2009)

So how widespread has the Charge become?

This led me to a bit of my own research and delving into my own Book of Shadows...

Attributed to Doreen Valiente it is in fact a collection of various texts.

When did it first appear? The first published version that I could find is a partial transcript in Gerald Gardner’s book “Witchcraft Today”(1954) on page 42:

“Before an initiation a charge is read beginning: Listen to the words of the Great Mother who of old was also called among men Artemis, Astarte, Dione, Melusine, Aphrodite, and by many other names. At mine Altars the youth of Lacedaemon made due sacrifice. Once in the month, and better it be when the moon is full, meet in some secret place and adore me who am Queen of all the magics.

For I am a gracious Goddess, I give joy on earth, certainty, not faith, while in life; and upon death, peace unutterable, rest and the ecstasy of the Goddess. Nor do I demand aught in sacrifice.”

Here we see that this is an instruction, or a task, duty – which is one of the meanings of the word *charge*.

In “What Witches Do” by Stewart Farrar (1971) there is the full version many of us will recognise. Stewart discusses the origin of the Charge (p 34) and attributes the first part almost wholly to Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches by Charles G. Leland [1899]:

“Now when Aradia had been taught, taught to work all witchcraft, how to destroy the evil race (of oppressors) she (imparted it to her pupils) and said unto them:

*Quando io sarò partita da questo mondo,
Qualunque cosa che avrete bisogno,
Una volta al mese quando la luna
È piena...
Dovete venire in luogo deserto,
In una selva tutte insieme,
E adorare lo spirito potente
Di mia madre Diana, e chi vorrà
Imparare la stregonerie,
Che non la sopra,*

*Mia madre le insegnera,
Tutte cose...
Sarete liberi della schiavitù!
E così diverrete tutti liberi!
Però uomini e donne
Sarete tutti nudi, per fino.
Che non sarà morto l'ultimo
Degli oppressori e morto,
Farete il giuoco della moccola
Di Benevento, e farete poi
Una cena così:*

Which translates to:

*When I shall have departed from this world,
Whenever ye have need of anything,
Once in the month, and when the moon is
full,
Ye shall assemble in some desert place,
Or in a forest all together join
To adore the potent spirit of your queen,
My mother, great Diana. She who fain
Would learn all sorcery yet has not won
Its deepest secrets, them my mother will
Teach her, in truth all things as yet unknown.
And ye shall all be freed from slavery,
And so ye shall be free in everything;
And as the sign that ye are truly free,
Ye shall be naked in your rites, both men
And women also: this shall last until
The last of your oppressors shall be dead;
And ye shall make the game of Benevento,
Extinguishing the lights, and after that
Shall hold your supper thus:*

Other influences:

The history of the Charge also indicates large portions to have been influenced by Aleister Crowley. On the website Sacred Texts we find the "Gardnerian Book of Shadows 1949": There the following text is found:

The Charge: "Lift Up the Veil" (1949) – also referred to as "Leviter Veslis" or "Leviter Vestris"

"Magus: "Listen to the words of the Great mother, who of old was also called among men Artemis, Astarte, Dione, Melusine, Aphrodite, Cerridwen, Diana, Arianrhod, Bride, and by many other names."

High Priestess:

"At mine Altars the youth of Lacedaemon in Sparta made due sacrifice. Whenever ye have need of anything, once in the month, and better it be when the moon is full, ye shall assemble in some secret place and adore the spirit of Me who am Queen of all Witcheries and magics. There ye shall assemble, ye who are fain to learn all sorcery, yet have not won its deepest secrets. To these will I teach things that are yet unknown. And ye shall be free from slavery, and as a sign that ye be really free, ye shall be naked in your rites, both men and women, and ye shall dance, sing, feast, make music, and love, all in my praise. There is a Secret Door that I have made to establish the way to taste even on earth the elixir of immortality. Say, 'Let ecstasy be mine, and joy on earth even to me, To Me,' For I am a gracious Goddess. I give unimaginable joys on earth, certainty, not faith, while in life! And upon death, peace unutterable, rest, and ecstasy, nor do I demand aught in sacrifice.

Magus: "Hear ye the words of the Star Goddess."

High Priestess:

"I love you: I yearn for you: pale or purple, veiled or voluptuous. I who am all pleasure, and purple and drunkenness of the innermost senses, desire you. Put on the wings, arouse the coiled splendour within you. Come unto me, for I am the flame that burns in the heart of every man, and the core of every Star. Let it be your inmost divine self who art lost in the constant rapture of infinite joy. Let the rituals be rightly performed with joy and beauty. Remember that all acts of love and pleasure are my rituals. So let there be beauty and strength, leaping laughter, force and fire by within you. And if thou sayest, 'I have journeyed unto thee, and it availed me not,' rather shalt thou say, 'I called upon thee, and I waited patiently, and Lo, thou wast with me from the beginning,' for they that ever desired me shall ever attain me, even to the end of all desire."

Aleister Crowley sources

Roger Dearnaley has written an excellent essay on “The Influence of Aleister Crowley upon “Ye Bok of ye Art Magical” (1999–2002). In his introduction he writes:

“Ever since the 1960’s, there has been a rumour circulating that Aleister Crowley wrote the Wiccan rituals for Gerald Gardner. One author has gone so far as to claim to know the price Gardner supposedly paid Crowley: 3 guineas a page. Certainly there are grounds that would seem to support this claim: anyone familiar with both the published works of Crowley and with Gardnerian Wiccan rituals will notice quite a bit of Crowley’s poetry in the rituals, even after Doreen Valiente, by her own admission, rewrote the rituals to remove or disguise much of the Crowley material. However, I hope here to be able to demonstrate here not only that it is completely implausible that Crowley composed the Wiccan rituals, but also that whoever did so, while they took some material from a few of Crowley’s published works, was evidently not very familiar with Crowley’s writings, and seems very unlikely to have even been an O.T.O. initiate.”

The following quotes are concerned with Leviter Veslis. Liber Cordis Cincte Serpente: Liber LXV, Chapter 3, part 62:
“They that ever desired Thee shall obtain Thee, even at the End of their Desire.”

He also writes:

“Most of the rest of Leviter Veslis is ultimately (but, as I have indicated, not necessarily directly) derived Crowley’s channelled work The Book of the Law, which (as mentioned above) was published in The Equinox in Volume I Number VII (London, 1912), in Vol. I Number X (London, 1913), and in Vol. III Number 3 (The Equinox of the Gods, London, 1936), and also in Thelema

(The Holy Books, London, 1909) Volume 3, and as a booklet in Pasadena, California in 1938, and also in London in 1938.”

He includes the relevant sections from *The Book of the Law*.

One of the most recognisable lines is:

*58. I give unimaginable joys on earth:
certainty, not faith, while in life, upon death;
peace unutterable, rest, ecstasy; nor do I
demand aught in sacrifice.*

And of course:

*61. I love you! I yearn to you! Pale or purple,
veiled or voluptuous, I who am all pleasure
and purple, and drunkenness of the
innermost sense, desire you. Put on the
wings, and arouse the coiled splendour
within you: come unto me!*

Later Doreen Valiente would rework the Charge.

In her book “The Rebirth of Witchcraft” (1989) Doreen writes about the Book of Shadows in the chapter “Working with Gerald”; (P 61-62):

“Gerald’s reaction was, ‘well if you think you can do any better, go ahead’. I accepted the challenge and set out to rewrite the BoS, cutting out the Crowleyanity as much as I could and trying to bring it back to what I felt was, if not so elaborate as Crowley’s phraseology, at least our own and in our own words. I felt that the words from Aradia qualified in the respect, so I retained them as the basis for my new version of ‘The Charge’ which I originally wrote in verse as follows:

*Mother, darksome and divine,
Mine the scourge and mine the kiss
The five-point star of love and bliss
Here I charge ye in this sign*

*Bow before my spirit bright
Aphrodite, Arianrhod,
Lover of the Horned God,
Mighty Queen of Witchery and night*

*Diana, Brigid, Melusine,
Am I named of old by men;
Artemis and Cerridwen,
Hell's dark mistress, Heaven's Queen.*

*Ye who ask of me a boon,
Meet ye in some hidden shade
Lead my dance in greenwood glade,
by the light of the full moon.*

*Dance about my altar stone. Work my holy
Magistry,
Ye who are fain of sorcery,
I bring ye secrets yet unknown.*

*No more shall ye know slavery
Who tread my round the Sabbat-night.
Come ye all naked to the rite,
In sign ye be truly free.*

*Keep ye my mysteries in mirth
Heart joined to heart, and lip to lip,
Five are the points of fellowship
That bring ye ecstasy on Earth.*

*No other law but love I know,
By naught but love I may be known,
All that liveth is my own
From me they come, to me they go.*

In their book “Wicca – Magickal Beginnings” David Rankine and Sorita d’Este (2008) they have dedicated a chapter to the Charge “Adore the Spirit of Me” and I would recommend this to anyone who like to know more about the text. They write about the Charge of the Goddess / Lift Up The Veil Charge:

“The Charge of the Goddess, and its precursor the Lift Up The Veil Charge, have played a huge role in the Wiccan tradition as the inspirational words found at the heart of

the ceremonies. Like Wicca itself, they draw from a number of sources to produce a beautiful and effective synergy.”

It is interesting to note too how many different English versions exist. As we have seen Doreen’s first version was in fact in verse.

In the multilingual project the English version is a standard one. There are however several versions for example one written by Starhawk, but I chose to keep to Doreen’s version as close as possible. For this project I collected different translations of the Charge and in several cases found volunteers to recite it in their mother tongue. The result is quite amazing.

Many thanks to everyone who has participated in this project. I am sure Doreen will be very proud to know how many people she has inspired!

Notes:

On LACEDAEMON:

*“At her altars the youth of
Lacedaemon (in Sparta) made due
sacrifice.”*

There is quite a lot of controversy about this line. Regarding the place name Lacedaemon:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sparta>:

“Sparta was generally referred to by the ancient Greeks as **Lakedaimon** (**Λακεδαίμων**) or **Lakedaimonia** (**Λακεδαιμονία**); these are the names commonly used in the works of [Homer](#) and the Athenian historians [Herodotus](#) and [Thucydides](#). Herodotus uses only the former and in some passages seems to denote by it the [ancient Greek](#) citadel at [Therapne](#), in contrast to the lower town of Sparta. The immediate area around the town of Sparta,

the plateau east of the Taygetos mountains, was generally referred as **Lakonia**. This term was sometimes used to refer to all the regions under direct Spartan control, including [Messenia](#).”

And regarding “the youth of Lacedaemon”:

“In [Greek mythology](#), Lakedaimon was a son of [Zeus](#) by the nymph [Taygete](#). He married [Sparta](#) the daughter of [Eurotas](#), by whom he became the father of [Amyclas](#), [Eurydice](#), and [Asine](#). He was king of the country which he named after himself, naming the capital after his wife. He was believed to have built the sanctuary of the [Charites](#), which stood between Sparta and [Amyclae](#), and to have given to those divinities the names of [Cleta](#) and Phaenna. A [shrine](#) was erected to him in the neighbourhood of Therapne.”

Here we see that Lacedaemon is a King/ God. The Youth of Lacedaemon could also have been a priest of Lacedaemon honouring the Great Goddess.

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Occultist, Author and More

Interview with Julian Vayne By Christopher Blackwell

Courtesy of ACTION Magazine/Christopher Blackwell

It was his being in Chaos Magic that brought Julian to my attention from my readers, but he does have other aspects as well that I thought might be interesting to bring out and so I asked for an interview.

Christopher: How would you describe yourself right now?

Julian: As a chaos magician, that is as someone who is interested in an eclectic approach to magick, less fascinated by ‘religious’ ritual than directly transformational practice (though I appreciate that there is no hard and fast discontinuity in these things).

I’d also identify as a chaos magician in that I’m interested in discovering the underlying techniques that exist within various traditions.

Christopher: How and when did you become a Witch?

Julian: I first started working in a ‘radical’ Alexandrian coven when I was 15.

A combination of events led to me acting as High Priest in the second ritual I attended (I was the best qualified to do so in terms of my knowledge of the ritual system). This was in 1984.

I'd always been interested in magick and had been hanging around at psychic festivals since the age of 13. There was something in whole style of witchcraft that I really resonated with. The group I first worked with didn't use the traditional initiation system so I didn't formally take my First Degree until some ten years later with a more traditional Alexandrian-Gardnarian coven in Gloucestershire.

Christopher: What was the occult community like back then?

Julian: Well the biggest difference in terms of culture between then and now is the internet. You can see how this has changed things if you read my contribution to "*The New Generation Witches: Teenage Witchcraft in Contemporary Culture (Controversial New Religions)*". In the book is an essay which compares my experience of getting involved in the Craft with that of a younger practitioner.

In those days most of the information one needed was in books, most of the contacts were via the plethora of underground Pagan magazines that were in print. This was before the Satanic Ritual Abuse craze in the UK/USA and certainly before any official recognition of Paganism as a valid religious movement.

Christopher: How did you start writing

Julian: I wrote my first article for a New Age magazine when I was 13 and was really pleased to see my name in print and to have been able to talk about something I considered important (the article was about the distinctions that are drawn between left and right hand path occultism).

I really enjoy writing and also really like collaborating with other people in that context (in fact of the 6 books I've written 4 have been co-authored and the one I'm working on now will also be a co-authored work).

I like exploring different styles of writing so that in *Magick Works* (my latest book) you can find academic papers, autobiographic accounts of ritual work and poetic pieces all in the same volume.

In some ways *Pharmakon - Drugs and the Imagination*, is my most academic book. I often describe it as my self-imposed PhD thesis. It's certainly got bucket loads of notes and references and took a good few years to research.

With highly theoretical texts I tend to get bored and ask 'so what exactly do you do?' But I also have had enough of 'how to' books on spell casting and all that. That's why my own work is mostly about personal experience.

I like telling people why I do what I do, what I did and what effect it had. This for me is a much more rounded way of describing the experience of being a magician.

Christopher: You went into some controversial things. You wrote books on drugs, Chaos Magic, some written with other authors and some on your own. It was a very different time then. Did your writing just follow whatever you were exploring then?

Julian: Magick is, and should be, controversial! Magick is about exploring the Mystery and this means pushing back boundaries. This does not necessarily give rise to the cult of the bigger and better buzz because lots of magick is about being sensitive.

So, for example in terms of using psychoactives (in this context) you can learn a lot

by fasting, using your imagination and taking only a tiny amount of a power plant (such as sage, damiana or Dittany of Crete).

However the more powerful substances, peyote, psilocybin, ketamine and the rest, all have their place and can provide access to some tremendously powerful experiences. Sure there are dangers but that's why one of the powers of the magician is 'to dare'.

Christopher: What was the difference in Chaos magic that made it so tempting? What made it so controversial within the community?

Julian: When the chaos style emerged in the British Isles in the late 1970s, the idea was to cut through all the mumbo-jumbo occultism of the day.

It was a 'scientific' style project. Look at all the different magical systems and try to draw out from them the operative elements and forget all the superstitious material. It pretty soon became clear that the most important elements of pretty much all magickal systems are the management of altered states of consciousness (Gnosis) and the framework through which the altered state was focussed (Belief).

By learning how to enter and make use of many different states of gnosis, and by being able to shift between different beliefs the chaos magician seeks the void-point, the 'Kia' at the centre of the chaos of the magickal. For some people, I think this approach was seen as superficial, even disrespectful of 'tradition'. I don't think this is the case, and indeed the eclectic approach of much of contemporary Pagans is, in essence, chaos magic.

Christopher: Where did your explorations lead you next? Did you write about any of them?

Julian: I'm doing a fair amount of public speaking these days (you can see me doing both occult stuff and my job as a museum educator if you search YouTube).

I'm also working on a book which is due for publication this year which is going to be both beautifully produced (by Scarlet Imprint) and a ground breaking work.

I've got various strands of work that I'm involved with these days, group magic within the Magical Pact of the Illuminates of Thanateros, lots of yoga and meditation as my personal practice and work with particular people which is often site specific. When I do a major ritual I usually write it up, typically as an essay so there are a number of stories that are, as yet, unpublished...

Christopher: Times change and people change. What are your interests now? When did you become part with the Witchcraft Museum?

Julian: I'm a charitable trustee of the Friends of the Boscastle Museum of Witchcraft. The Museum is the world's foremost collection of pagan and esoteric objects and books. It's a must see if you're ever in Cornwall!

(see <http://www.museumofwitchcraft.com> for more info)

My involvement stems from personal connections through a Devon coven that I occasionally work with. It also emerged from my day job which is a museum educator.

The Friends organisation exists to support the museum in its work, help care for the collections, increase access to them and so forth.

Christopher: How can people learn more about you? Where can they learn about your books? Are you still writing?

Julian: You can find most of my books on Amazon but I'd encourage readers to order (the most recent ones) direct from the publisher:

<http://www.mandrake.uk.net>

My work also seeps out into various esoteric journals - again a search of the internet will turn most of it up. I also do lectures fairly often with forthcoming appearances in Bath & London this year.

Christopher: Is there anything else you would like our readers to know?

Julian: Only that chaos magicians are young and old and male and female. The assumption is sometimes that you have to be a spotty 17 year old (male) Satanist to be into chaos. But chaos is the source of beauty in the natural world, the random fluctuations in simple rules that give rise to the millions of structures that create reality.

I think as a style chaos magic is certainly a challenging one but it is also something that I'm pleased to see more and more people, and especially more women and people from a wide range of back-grounds, getting into. If my own work is helping make the chaos approach more accessible then I'm happy.

Before, Chaos, and After

Interview with **Phil Hine**
By Christopher Blackwell

Courtesy of ACTION magazine/Christopher Blackwell

Christopher: How would you describe yourself?

Phil: I think of myself as a fairly ordinary person, just bobbling along pursuing stuff that interests me.

Christopher: In many of the so called Earth Religions there seems to be this rather romantic and friendly view of nature. Yet the first thing you seemed to see in growing up in Blackpool was that the sea was powerful, not controllable, it was dangerous and could kill you.

I see the same thing here in my desert where life and death or side by side and part of each other rather than separate and different.

In fact all life feeds off the death of something else. If we are going to be what we call Nature Religions, don't we need to really get to know nature and not work from our romantic fantasy view of it, sort of a 'Disneytized' view of what nature is?

Phil: Absolutely, although I think this is a mammoth task. One of the themes I'm circling around on my blog is looking at the extent to which contemporary forms of occultism are rooted in Cartesian dualism - the idea that mind and world are entirely separate. This is why the work on perception and the environment by theorists such as Tim Ingold and phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty interest me so much. I'm very interested in attempting to write about magical practice in a way that doesn't reinforce that inner-outer "divide" you so often find in "western" representations of magic.

Christopher: You have mentioned that what would struck you about nature was its wildness and not being in control of it. Yet many magical systems are about gaining and keeping control, or at least the illusion of it. Are there times when we need to have things out of control, to learn that even in magic a lot of things are not ours to control in the first place and that magic can take us to dangerous and unexpected places? Do we need to understand a wildness in magic, even as we need to understand the wildness of nature?

Phil: Well, control is a very complex issue isn't it? I know for example that one of the reasons I was attracted to magic in the first place was the promise of acquiring some degree of "control" agency if you like over my life, which I felt I lacked. I think that one of the reasons I was so attracted to the idea of "results magic" is the idea that you can effect change in the world without it changing you back, without "consequences" and so reinforcing my sense of being "powerful" in the world.

Not long ago I was put in a situation where I was told I was going to be 'downsized' and there was absolutely nothing I could do to influence the decision. I spent at least a week walking around feeling sick to my stomach the feeling that there was absolutely nothing I could do about this was awful. It passed though, but during that period I made some poor decisions which were largely motivated by that fear.

I'd agree though that recognising that magic can take us to some unexpected places is worth thinking through - for me that's always been the crux of the matter being open to surprise from an unexpected direction. Dangerous though? I'm not sure about that.

Christopher: I know that it was the magic part that attracted to me even into Wicca. Danger is one of the excuses used not to teach teenagers magic...because of their constant roller coaster emotional ride makes for poor choices and decisions. Then there is unexpected consequences. We get results but in some other way than we expected. In Wicca we have a few people afraid of using magic at all for fear it might even accidentally cause unexpected harm to someone.

How much of this fear is overblown from your experience? Have you run into any areas where you felt yourself to be in danger in your magical practice?

Phil: I think in part, it relates to control - and the inherent unpredictability of magic.

As you say, results come "in some other way than we expected". Despite much gassing about magic being a science it still doesn't have that 1-to-1 repeatability - do ritual x and you will have result y - has it?

I actually think it is okay to have concerns about it. Many years ago, whilst I was training to be a therapist, I had an experience which comes to mind on this subject. I was working in a psychiatric department and my boss and I were doing this "guided visualisation" - walking a group of clients into a forest. Fairly innocuous stuff you might think. Suddenly there's a bang and this old geezer is out of his chair, out of the room and down the corridor.

So I checked up on him and he said that last time he'd been in a forest (in similar circumstances to the journey scenario) was in 1940, listening to the rest of his platoon being machine-gunned by Germans. Neither me nor my boss were expecting anyone to react in the way this guy did to what we thought was a "safe" exercise.

This whole danger/safety thing needs further discussion and unpacking, I think. What I had in mind in answering your last question was the whole notion of "If you invoke demons your house will burn down, you will go mad and think you're the reincarnation of Aleister Crowley's pet hamster" which I think is, well, something of an overstatement.

Christopher: Have you run into any areas where you felt yourself to be in danger in your magical practice?

Phil: I certainly used to worry a lot. I once got really worried because I'd been imagining myself doing the LBR whilst lying in bed and fell asleep before I got to the end. And yes, I've done quite a bit of that drama-queen posturing of "this ritual is a symbolic death. I might really die. Please, dear soror, pass on my collection of monographed socks to the British Museum." Ahem.

But yes, I have felt myself to be in danger. Being walked blindfold onto the point of a very sharp athame in a room full of people comes to mind for a start. Certainly I had a moment of “Oh shit, what if...”

Christopher: I know in my own magical experience, there comes a question of how much of what I am doing is necessary, and how much is merely decoration? Usually when we think of magic, we think of ceremony, tools, movement and chants and what have you? It is certainly good theatre, but is all of it necessary? What about magic in day to day life, where it might not be possible to do full ceremony?

Phil: All you really need is to remember that you have a body. Yes, it’s nice to do “big ritual” occasionally in the way you describe, but I really think we need to break down this distinction between ritual space and day-to-day-life space.

Much of the tantra practice I do is oriented towards “day-to-day life” and “big ritual” doesn’t necessarily translate into heightened intensities.

I’ve had some really intense experiences as by-products of really simple rituals, with not much in the way of props and limited space for flouncing around.

Christopher: We humans have this habit of anthropomorphizing, be it nature, animals or the gods. This makes us think all these things act and react much like we do. But they are not humans, not the animals, not nature, and certainly not the gods. How can we find out what they really are unless we stop trying to fit them into a human box?

So I go back to the beginning, the gods are powerful forces. I have no idea of whether they have personalities, or names, or if they need them. I know sometimes they appear to do things in my favour and occasionally help. I don’t know why. What are your thoughts on the god/desses?

Phil: I am a devotee of Lalita (“loveliness”). She is everywhere and in everything; transcendent and imminent simultaneously, I feel her “presence” in all moments of joy, surprise, wonder.

“Let my idle chatter be the muttering of prayer, my every manual movement the execution of ritual gesture, my walking a ceremonial circumambulation, my eating and other acts the rite of sacrifice, my lying down prostration in worship, my every pleasure enjoyed with dedication of myself, let whatever activity is mine be some form of worship of you”

The Saundaryalahari

Christopher: What was different about Chaos Magic from other systems of magic that drew you to it for a while?

Phil: I first encountered what came later to be described as “Chaos Magic” through two texts - Peter J. Carroll’s “Liber Null” and Ray Sherwin’s “The Book of Results” - in the late 1970s, and engaged with the latter text first.

This was because I’d come Austin Osman Spare a few years earlier and found it quite easy to get into the practice of casting sigils. In fact it was Spare’s work which got me interested in magic in the first place. Between 1979-80 I was doing a correspondence course in Qabalah, and was getting ticked off by my mentor because I told him I was doing sigils.

I didn’t really start doing anything with Liber Null until 1981, by which time I was in a Wiccan coven and the High Priestess encouraged me to “find out more about this chaos stuff”. I think what initially attracted me to Liber Null was the idea that all magical “techniques” were essentially similar, regardless of the context they appeared in - and also the idea that you could take material from outside of what’s considered to be the “occult corpus” -such as fiction. I’d already made some

moves in this direction -having done some rituals inspired by Lovecraft's fiction between 1979-80.

I think Chaos Magic was, for me, an arena for experimentation, although it didn't really become dominant in my strands of practices until the late 1980's.

Just to give some more background - I first became interested in Tantra in 1982, following a series of recurring dreams in which the goddess Kali loomed large, but again, this didn't become a dominant theme for me until the late 1980's.

I read Robert Anton Wilson's & Robert Shea's "Illuminatus!" trilogy in 1985, and began to work with the discordian goddess Eris around that time - but I was approaching Eris very much through a Wiccan framework, being still in contact with the coven I'd joined in 1981. In fact I didn't really begin to focus heavily on what was then becoming known as Chaos Magic until around 1986, after I'd left the coven and started to strike out on my own. I'd moved to Leeds by then, which was a kind of melting pot for experimental magic, and got involved with the Chaos scene there - as well as hooking up with people who were experimenting with Lovecraftian magic, Tantra, and politically-oriented Pagan activism. The "urban shamanism trilogy" of chapbooks (www.philhine.org) were written in this period, and, together with a few friends, I started publishing a monthly pagan 'zine - Pagan News.

This was a very vibrant time for me - I was doing a hell of a lot of magical experimentation in different directions - and involved with several groups simultaneously.

In 1991 I moved to London, and because a high proportion of the people I knew were involved in the chaos magic scene down there, Chaos Magic came to dominate my approach to magic. I'd already written two short chapbooks on Chaos Magic - "**Condensed Chaos**" and "**Chaos Servitors**" - both based on stuff I'd been doing in Leeds, but these didn't get released until I hit

London - to be followed (in 1993) by the first edition of "**Prime Chaos**" - which I'd been working on since 1988. I did quite a few workshops, lectures, etc., both in the UK and in Europe/America - latterly through being a member of the IOT.

It was through the American head of the IOT - the late Bob Williams, that I managed to get a deal with what was then New Falcon Publications, who went on to publish "**Condensed Chaos**" a heavily revised "**Prime Chaos**" and my little chapbook on Lovecraftian magic - "**The Pseudonomicon**" which remains my favourite of the three.

All the way through this heavily chaos magic-oriented period, I was still pursuing my interests in tantra, and by 1995 was running, with my partner, a tantrically-oriented group - and were in contact with other tantrically-inclined folk in the UK (AMOOKOS). We were also regular participants in a kind of free-form, dance-oriented pagan group called "the Mad Shamans".

Christopher: At what point did you come to the conclusion it was time to move on to something else?

Phil: It wasn't that simple. One of the reasons I've answered the previous question with so much "biographical" info is to highlight that I've always - until fairly recently - had several irons in the fire at once, and these irons were often related to the different networks of friends I was moving in.

I've friends for example, from my period of being Wiccan-dominant who still invite me to gatherings and I'm sometimes amazed how easily I can slide back into that framework for ritual work - it's like "coming home" in a way.

But, to answer your question, I think I'd hit a point where I'd become dissatisfied with some of the patterns I'd let myself become habituated to. Firstly, I came to realise that a lot of my own practice had

become workshop-orientated - by which I mean that I was doing stuff with a view to turning it into a workshop session, rather than for its own sake. So that had to stop.

Secondly, I left the IOT in 1996 (or thereabouts) and in so doing, lost contact with that particular network of chaos people. Thirdly, my tantric practice, which had become increasingly dominant for me, was what I wanted to concentrate on. This latter point might help understand one of my problems with Chaos Magic as an approach.

One of CM's primary assertions is that magic can be formulated in terms of "techniques" and that the theoretical underpinnings or cultural-historical context in which those "techniques" appear isn't really important. A good example would be the idea of "mantras".

The term mantra is now used fairly widely in books on modern magic to denote any iterative repetition of a word or phrase - so something you'll sometimes see advocates of CM asserting is that singing rune charms and repeating Hindu mantras are essentially the same procedure - the focus being on the repetition of a word or phrase - in order to enter an altered state of consciousness. So mantras are something that gets chanted - and the chanting (i.e. the iteration) is what's important - not the content or the context.

This, to me, is a kind of reductionism. It predicates a universal explanation - that the "technique" of iterative speech is enacted in order to establish an altered state of consciousness in the practitioner - and subordinates all instances which apparently look as though that's what's going on - to it. So for an advocate of CM, there would be little practical difference between, say, chanting a rune poem, repeating the Gayatri mantra, or singing a sea shanty.

This kind of reductionism isn't unique to CM though - it's a recurrent theme throughout a great deal of contemporary magical writing regardless of genre (or "tradition") and, I would argue, has its roots in early 20th century efforts to create universalist explanations of religion and magic as separate categories of discourse. A further problem, in my opinion, is that this kind of reductive explanation is conservative - it reinforces "what we already know" to be the case and elides the possibility of difference.

So, to go back to "mantras" - if you "know" that mantras are essentially about chanting, I'd say that it is less likely for you to try and find out if there is anything else which is interesting about them - like the context in which they appear - what they mean, and what theories inform them. I think this is a classic example of the kind of reductive approach to magical ideas that I have come to be critical of - it's a kind of cultural tourism where subjects such as Tantra are exoticised but rewritten so that that they are made familiar, and anything different is brushed away as being incompatible with an assumed "western" mindset or dismissed entirely as inconsequential.

In contrast, I'd say that actually knowing something about the languages, cultures and histories in which the practices I'm engaged in emerged from not only is interesting generally, for me, it actually enriches my practice. The two feed into each other and support each other. In fact, I'd say that in order to take an approach to Tantra that draws from historical texts (as opposed to formations such as "Western Tantra") then it's pretty much unavoidable - because they're not going to make much sense unless one does attempt to engage with the context around the practices.

I tend to talk about the approach I'm taking to Tantra as being 'hybridised' - because I'm

not trying to just take practices from say, India's "medieval" period and replicate them in a contemporary context- I'm trying to fuse them with some "western" theoretical positions that I feel resonate with them very well - hence on my new group blog project (<http://enfolding.org>) I'm writing about facets of tantra using the ideas of modern philosophers such as Deleuze or Merleau-Ponty, or the emerging field of embodied cognition, which challenges the mind-body divide that so much of western culture is dominated by.

Some other of my current interests - such as how Victorian occult movements - particularly the Theosophical Society - have shaped contemporary occultism, have come about partly because I became interested in how Tantric ideas first streamed into Western occultism, and partly because I was (very briefly) involved in the Theosophical Society during my initial phase of getting interested in the occult.

My most recent writings - apart from the tantra-oriented material, are more historically-oriented - looking at particular "moments" in occult history and attempting to analyse them in terms of their wider cultural contexts. So I've just had published (in <http://www.fulgur.co.uk/abraxas/>) an examination of the life and works of Lobsang Rampa; and have just finished a monograph on the Leadbeater sex-scandals in the Theosophical Society and how they relate to debates about sexuality and the occult in the early 20th century.

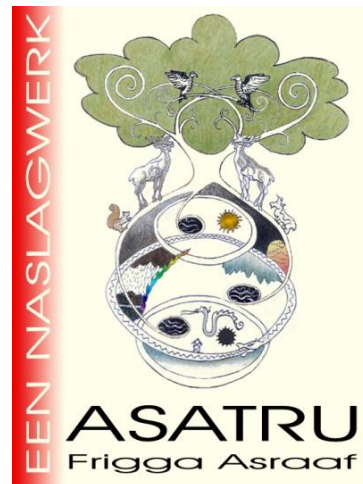
Christopher: Is there anything else that you think might be important for our readers to know?

Phil: I suppose my publishers Original Falcon Press would like me to mention that my books on Chaos Magic - **Condensed Chaos**, **The Pseudonomicon**, and **Prime Chaos** are being made available again.

ASATRU -EEN NASLAGWERK

door Draak

Sinds dit voorjaar is het boek 'Asatru -Een naslagwerk', te verkrijgen. Een goede reden om de schrijfster, Frigga Asraaf, eens grondig aan de tand te voelen.



Voor degenen die de naam Frigga Asraaf niet kennen. Kun je in het kort vertellen wie Frigga Asraaf is?

Op de kop af vijftig jaar geleden zag ik het levenslicht in Midgard. Ik ben opgegroeid als jongste van een gezin met drie kinderen. Mijn ouders hebben jarenlang boten gehad en in mijn jeugd heb ik veel weekenden en vakanties op het water vertoefd. Dat heeft mij liefde voor water en schepen bijgebracht, een liefde die nog altijd aanwezig is. Muziek is en blijft een andere grote liefde die me ook van jongs af aan meegeven is. Op mijn 33e kwam Asatru in mijn leven en een jaar later werd ik getroffen door lichamelijke tegenslag. Het klinkt misschien vreemd om het zo in een adem te noem, maar beide hebben mijn leven sindsdien in sterke mate bepaald. Ondanks alle beperkingen die mijn aandoeningen met zich meebrengen is het me toch gelukt een boek te schrijven, zelfs al heeft me dat jaren gekost. Tegenwoordig duid ik mezelf met 'seidhvrouw' aan om aan te geven waar mijn belangstelling en zeker ook mijn ervaring liggen.

In je boek schrijf je dat asatru aan de basis van jouw levensfilosofie ligt. Hoe zou je jouw persoonlijke invulling hiervan in het kort omschrijven?

Het is dagelijks van invloed op mijn denken en doen. Soms is de invloed van mijn levensfilosofie nauwelijks merkbaar, maar deze is toch altijd aanwezig. Soms is de invloed van mijn levensfilosofie nauwelijks merkbaar, maar deze is toch altijd aanwezig. Het heeft me bijvoorbeeld sterk bewust van de seizoenen gemaakt. Dit breng ik bijvoorbeeld tot uitdrukking door middel van een seizoentafel en het vieren van de jaarfeesten. De seizoentafel is voor mij een krachtplaats. Hiermee haal ik de natuur mijn huis in. Regelmatig offer ik een appel om mijn band met de natuur en de geesten te eren en bekrachtigen. Als mijn lichaam het toelaat doe ik regelmatig seidhwerk in de vorm van een trance-reis of het zingen van krachtliederen. Daarnaast bid ik ook veel tot de geesten om mij de kracht te schenken het leven aan te kunnen en de eenzaamheid en de pijn te verdragen.

Je boek heeft als titel 'Asatru -Een naslagwerk'. Toch is het boek meer dan alleen een naslagwerk met vooral veel feiten over wat asatru inhoudt. Waarom heb je ervoor gekozen om eigen ervaringen en persoonlijke zienswijzen een hoofdrol te laten spelen?

Ik weet niet of ze een hoofdrol spelen, maar ze zijn zeker aanwezig. Toen ik jaren geleden met asatru in aanraking kwam was er veel minder informatie voorhanden dan nu het geval is. Als er al iets was, was dat al helemaal niet in het nederlands. De paar engelstalige boeken die ik had gekregen boden een handvat, maar ik miste van alles. Hetgeen ik in het begin zo node gemist heb, wilde ik in een boek bijeenbrengen. Uiteindelijk is het in de loop van de jaren veel meer geworden dan dat, want door studie en praktijk heb ik een ruime ervaring met asatru, runen en seidh opgebouwd. Een religie of levens-beschouwing is immers veel meer dan feiten alleen.

Welke plaats nemen feitelijkheden in, zoals hetgeen in de bronnen geschreven staat, of

wat er aan archeologische vondsten is gedaan, in je persoonlijke invulling van asatru?

Inspiratie! Om het in één woord samen te vatten. Ik leef in het nu, maar het verleden biedt naar mijn mening op allerlei manieren inspiratie die me kan helpen het heden het hoofd te bieden. Er zijn levenslessen te ontdekken in de mythen bijvoorbeeld.

Denkwijzen van toen zetten me aan het denken alleen al door hoe ze zich tot het nu verhouden. De brokstukjes tekst met betrekking tot rituelen handelingen, seidh en runen in ondermeer de saga's zijn soms uitgangspunten voor experimenten. Afbeeldingen uit die tijd verwerk ik met een eigen draai in bijvoorbeeld borduurwerken.

In je voorwoord heb je het over je ontdekkingsreis door de negen werelden. Kun je daar iets meer over vertellen? Het is een metafoor die ik wel gebruik om mijn ondervindingen met asatru, runen en seidh mee aan te duiden. Als seidhvrouw reis ik door de negen werelden door middel van trancereizen en daarmee is het voor mij haast letterlijk een ontdekkingsreis door de negen werelden te noemen. Elk van die werelden kent immers zijn eigen bewoners, symboliek, krachten en mogelijkheden. Samen met de wereldboom Yggdrasil en de drie bronnen vormen ze het hart van de germaanse mythologie en zijn een belangrijk onderdeel van het hele germaanse veld.

Over welke onderwerpen kunnen wij in de toekomst nog meer boeken van jouw hand verwachten?

Op stapel staat om te beginnen een boek over asatru in het dagelijks leven. Het wordt een boek boordevol persoonlijk ervaringen met betrekking tot rituelen voor de geesten, het vieren van jaarfeesten en rituelen bij hoogtijdagen zoals geboorte en huwelijk. Dit alles wordt aangevuld met wetenswaardigheden uit ondermeer de noords/germaanse mythologie en volksgebruiken uit eigen land. Tegelijkertijd ben ik bezig met het schrijven

van een boek over de voorouders, seidh en spá. Het runenboekje dat ik als ringband heb uitgegeven wil ik ook graag uitbreiden en te zijner tijd als 'echt' boek uitgeven. Voorlopig ben ik nog niet uitgeschreven!

Heb je behalve voor het schrijven van boeken nog andere plannen betreffende te ontplooiën activiteiten?

Door jarenlange ME/CVS ben ik voorzichtig met plannen. Het is altijd afwachten wat mijn lijf toelaat. Maar er is één droom die ik ook nog hoop te verwezenlijken: het uitgeven van een cd met eigen liederen, met name seidhliederen (tover-en krachtliederen). Een aantal hiervan zijn op mijn webstek www.skald.nl te vinden. De cd hoop ik samen met Marjatta Ranta-Iso en Hans Kromme te maken. Er zijn al een aantal proefopname waar ik uitermate trots op ben. Het zal echter zeker nog een paar jaar duren voor het zover is, onder anderen om hiervoor genoemde reden. Verder hoop ik zo af en toe de kans te krijgen mijn kennis van asatru, runen en seidh ook in de praktijk door te kunnen geven. De doe-dagen van Het Rad zijn daar een mogelijkheid toe, maar dat geldt bijvoorbeeld ook voor de internationale bijeenkomsten die ik zo af en toe bezoek.

Hoe zie je asatru zich in Nederland en wellicht in de rest van de wereld ontwikkelen in de toekomst? Ik denk dat asatru zal groeien, maar nooit een enorme grote aanhang zal krijgen. Dat hoeft ook niet, want het gaat er naar mijn mening om dat ieder mens het pad vind dat het beste bij hem of haar past. Ik zal me de rest van mijn leven blijven inzetten voor deze stroming en in bredere zin voor heidendom in het algemeen.

Want heidendom/paganisme zal in de toekomst zeker een steeds grotere groep mensen aantrekken.

ASATRU -EEN NASLAGWERK

Is online te bestellen via:

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www.boekplan.nl

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On a national level, each country has a National Coordinator. This is the person you should write to with all your questions, and you should keep him/her informed of [changes of address or e-mail](#)! If you cannot contact your National Coordinator, you can contact the International Coordinator by email or post.

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