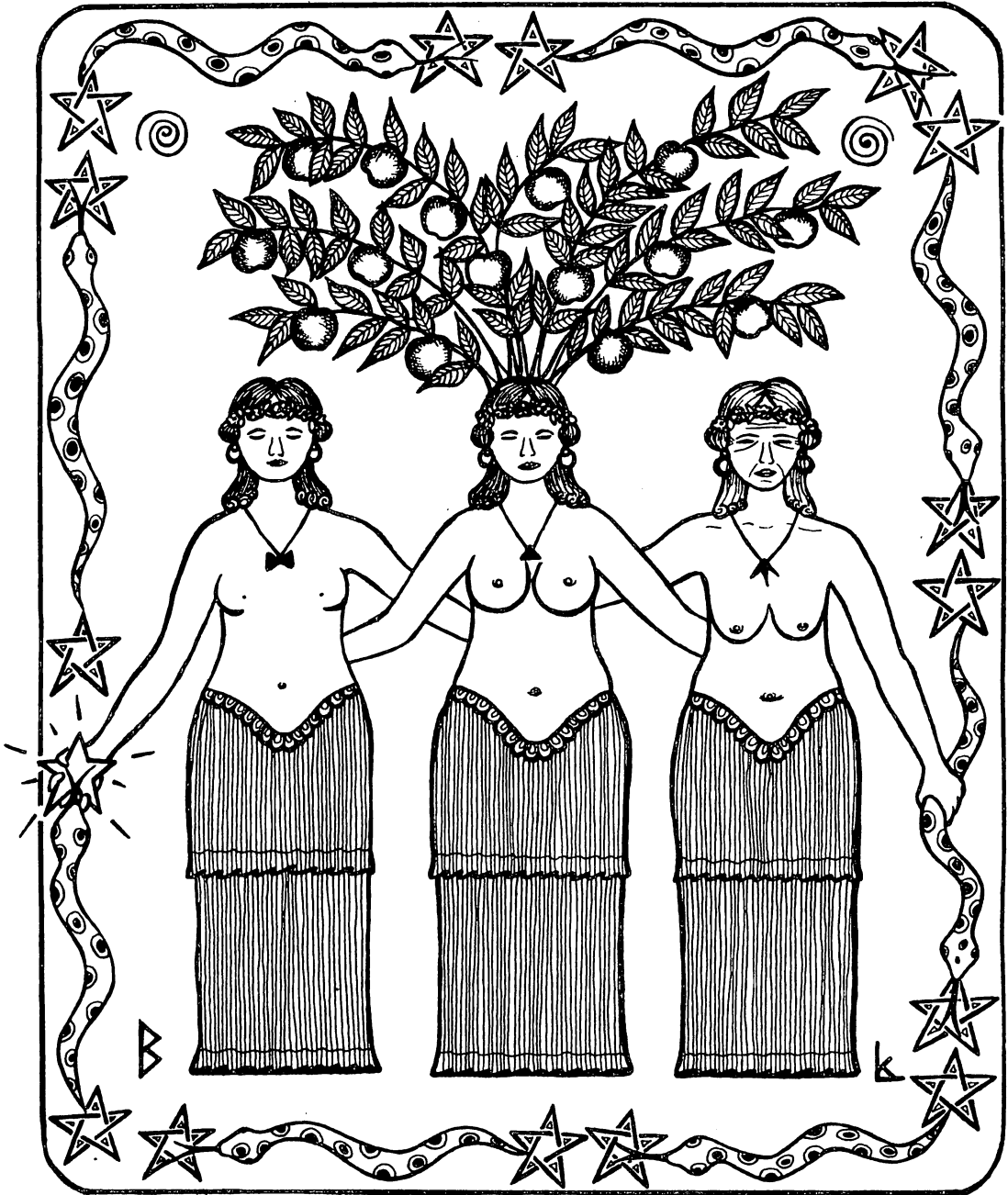


Reclaiming Newsletter



Fall 1991

#44

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Reclaiming
A Center for Feminist Spirituality
P.O. Box 14404
San Francisco, CA 94114

Newsletter Submissions: The Newsletter encourages people to submit articles, letters, or graphics related to political, pagan or spiritual issues and happenings. **Graphics are ALWAYS welcome!**

We may edit for length, spelling, punctuation and grammar; we do not alter poetry.

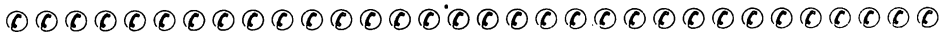
While we are pleased to print letters or articles on ethics, we will not print personal charges or countercharges.

All submissions, whether we print them or not, eventually find their way into our cauldron, so keep copies for yourself. Please do not ask us to return them.

Submissions are due on or before the deadline. The Newsletter staff has sworn off its lamentable co-behavior and will not chase down late submissions. We really mean it this time.

The views expressed in articles and advertisements in this Newsletter belong to the authors and advertisers . . . not to the Reclaiming Community or the Newsletter Staff. Some of us don't even like some of the stuff we print.

Fall Deadline is Wednesday, November 6, 1991



Reclaiming Events Line ☎ (415) 849-0877

This recording (listed under "Reclaiming" in Berkeley) carries announcements (and updates) of events organized by Reclaiming and others. Often, these come up too late to be put in the newsletter. Call us with events and announcements to add to the message. They can also be mailed to the Events Line at the P.O. box, but this is slower. Please allow plenty of time, and remember to say where we can reach you with questions.

—The Recording Faerie

TTY ONLY Reclaiming information and inquiries: (415) 237-6207

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Printed on Recycled Paper

Reflections on the Ball Dance: Sunday, 2 June '91

by M. Macha NightMare

[At the end of May the author attended a Pagan festival called Ancient Ways at Harbin Hot Springs, California. Among the many Pagan organizations who presented workshops and rituals at Ancient Ways, BloodRose of San Francisco created what they called a "ball dance" during the middle of a bright day in an open fire circle, visible to all. Following is the impressions that this ritual made on a Witch of the Reclaiming tradition.]

Watched most of the preparations for a "ball dance" put on by BloodRose from a distance. Swaying and playing in my Treeboat hammock, laughing and occasionally watching the celebrants.

For two hours people prepped others, sewing objects, mostly primary-colored balls about the size of tennis balls, onto the skin of each other. They appeared to be using iodine and surgical gloves, for which I was relieved, and fishing line. I found out later that the thread used to attach the objects was silk. They did this in the shade of trees in the North quadrant of the circle.

One plump woman had tied her rather large breasts in bright scarves almost like tourniquets; her nipples were pierced with gold and a golden chain was fastened between the piercings. Onto her back were sewn about six or seven silver and red sleigh bells.

A man wore gold piercings in his septum, nipples, navel and at the tip of his penis. His upper back and chest were sewn with colored balls hanging on silk thread.

Another woman in bare feet wore balls sewn to her back and pectoral muscles, and a wolf tail on her rump. The wolf tail was attached to a ritual purple cingulum which she wore around her waist.

A heavily tattooed man had his back covered with silver balls to which appeared to have been attached white and black ribbons. My companion called this man the recycling fairy because he seemed to be wearing aluminum and because of

all the help that fairies give to folks who believe.

I watched these proceedings with great interest and curiosity, sincerely feeling a bit ill at ease. I deliberately chose not to be a participant in the circle because I will avoid cutting out of a circle at all costs and I was uncertain of how I would experience the ritual. Of course, everyone is uncertain of her experience of all rituals, and that is part of the point and the risk-taking. Let's just say I was not whole-hearted in my enthusiasm.

While the dancers were preparing their regalia, quiet drumming coming from the South side of the sunlit circle filled the air. There in the shade celebrants who were not dancing the ball dance swayed with the rhythms.

As dancers were prepared, they walked slowly and seemingly aimlessly about the open, sunny part of the circle. I assumed they were praying or communing with another world or generally getting into the trance of it and feeling the stimulation of their flesh change their awareness and consciousness.

The woman who was to priestess the rite had the feathers of several birds sewn to her body.

About 10 or 12 people danced. Perhaps 40 others participated in the ritual.

The preparations had begun at 11:00 a.m.; the casting of the circle and calling of the quarters began at 1:00 p.m.

One of the drummers, a well-known practitioner of such things as the Amerindian Sun Dance and other bizarre mortifications of the flesh, named Fakir, wore a bone through his septum and thick eyeglasses. The dichotomy was bewildering.

The High Priest, Gabriel of BloodRose, wore high-tech hiking boots, presumably to protect his feet from bruises and cuts of stones. Several other participants wore clothes, sunglasses and other protective gear while at the same time performing a ritual which creates deliberate and intentional physical pain. I found this a very

strange and weird contradiction.

Beginning at 1:00 p.m. the circle was cast, the quarters were called and the deities invoked. Cerridwen was called as the main deity to bless the proceedings. The High Priestess, (whom I worked with the night before in my first BloodRose ritual and whom I found to be quite competent and impressive), embodied Cerridwen and accepted the dedications of the dancers.

One at a time each dancer approached Cerridwen to articulate his or her dedication, praying for Her blessings and asking Her for the strength and stamina to perform the sacred rite, requesting that their prayers be received, heard and answered.

By this point in the ritual, my companion and I had moved very close to the perimeter of the circle, placing ourselves slightly behind the Priestess and facing the dedicants. I was fascinated to observe each visage at close range, and to attempt to appreciate his or her state of being and motivation.

While all seemed to be sincere, the dancers seemed to range in purity of motive. At first this surprised me, but after I thought about it, it seemed, "of course." Some appeared to me to verge on the exhibitionistic, while at the other end of the spectrum, at least two women appeared truly enraptured.

One of the enraptured ones, the one wearing the wolf tail, sought healing between herself and her biological mother, and wisdom in being a mother to her children.

The other, who wore an amazing blissed-out smile, danced in gratitude for all the gifts she had been beneficiary of in this life, and to continue doing the Mother's work. She was a rather straight-looking woman with a trendy asymmetrical haircut.

I happened to look at my watch when the dedications were complete and found it to be 1:35. The drumming picked up in intensity and the dancing began. Almost immediately balls began falling from the dancers. They bounced on the hard-packed dirt of the circle floor like tennis balls, and non-dancing participants rushed to

pick them up. Things got to be rather jumbled in the center of the circle.

The dedicants' prayers were believed to be accepted when the balls broke free, but in this case the balls broke from the thread and not the thread from the flesh, as whatever is fastened to the flesh does in older, non-European traditions.

Gabriel began to hurl his upper body backwards and forwards, bending at the waist, with great vigor and intensity. Most of the balls had fallen, but one hung on and he seemed to be trying to get it to break free. In any case, he was very far out there.

Then, before I knew it, the drumming and dancing stopped. The brevity of the dance and the abruptness of its conclusion startled me and I checked the time again, to find that it was only 1:45. I was truly amazed that they had only danced for ten minutes!

Many years ago I had a friend in a life drawing class, a very quiet man named Myron, who often wore a blood-stained leather vest. I once asked him about it and he said that the stains were blood, his blood, and that he was a Rosebud Sioux who had pledged for seven consecutive years to return to the reservation in the Summer to perform the Sun Dance. I had great respect for the man, though I didn't understand his ceremony. It was clear to me that he was sincere and committed in his practice.

Some months later when I was reading about the Sun Dance in a National Geographic book about Amerindians, I saw a close-up photograph of Myron doing the Sun Dance. He had bones through his pectoral muscles to which were attached leather thongs; he was blowing an eagle feather whistle and, although it wasn't visible in the photograph, he very likely wore some kind of rattles on his ankles and carried a sacred rattle in at least one hand. The look on his face was very far away; his eyes were closed and he was not in this world. He was enraptured. Perhaps the photo was taken with a telephoto lens, but in any case, he was completely unaware of anything other than the experience that he was totally immersed in. The photo, beautiful as it was to me, seemed an invasion—albeit one that could never

express where he was. I do know, however, that these Sun Dances go on for hours, even days, and are preceded by purification and fasting and prayer. They last until the bone breaks free of the flesh.

I also know that in Western European traditions many sacred rites, particularly the shamanic ones, last for very long periods of time. Many Hindu rites last 10 to 12 hours, too.

There was something that seemed trivial, or perhaps shallow, about this "ball dance." Here were well-fed and well-clothed white people seeming to attempt a recreation of a potentially very powerful and very sacred rite. It's true that I could say that about nearly all Neo-Pagan religious practices. But they are not nearly so extreme.

I am puzzled by the motivations for performing such rites. On the one hand, mortification of the flesh seems so Christian.

It could be said to desensitize the flesh because one would have to leave the body and its sensations to endure the pain; that would certainly facilitate altering one's consciousness, if that is the object.

It could as well be said to hypersensitize the flesh. I personally would not go for that because I feel my body is as sensitive as I can take it.

If anyone who reads this has been a participant in a similar ritual or was a participant in the ritual at the Ancient Ways gathering and is inspired to offer her or his motivation to do it and to relate how it worked or didn't work for herself or himself, I would welcome her or his opinion.

This is of particular interest to me for several reasons. One is that BloodRose is a Faerie-derived tradition of Neo-Witchcraft, as is my tradition, Reclaiming. Another is that I am dedicated to the Dark Mother, most particularly in Her manifestation as Kali Ma. A third is that I am very involved in building community within Craft and in continuing the process of defining ourselves and who we are, what we do, how we do it, why we do it, what kinds of transformations our rites afford.



Equinox

*Sleep harder
to throw off*

*now: dull weight
of covers, dreams*

*loosen and
fall to the*

*floor, nothing
is very tidy.*

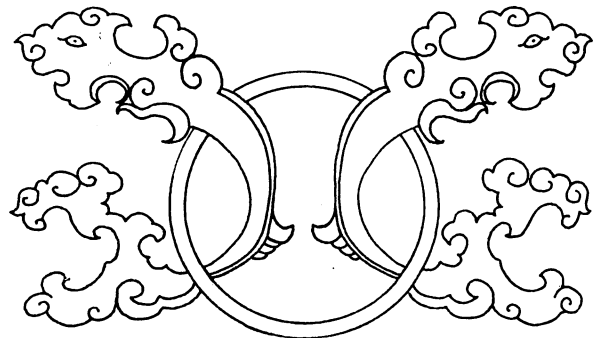
*Dying crickets
collect in*

*corners behind
old socks; below*

*the house, spiders
shift their webs*

*up away from
the cold earth.*

Anne Hill



The Ordination of Sabrina (or Confessions of a High Priestess)

by *Zsuzsanna Emese Budapest*

It was Candlemas, a time in nature where unseen powers are at work, the sap is already pumping in the trees, the Goddess is stirring in the heart of living things.

I am a witch High Priestess, I wear in rituals a silver crescent crown, in the honor of the Moon. A crown is an unlikely decoration in these times when women are seen just the opposite: unimportant, unappreciated, underpaid and overworked, uncrowned by glory.

In order to keep my crown, Dianic Tradition dictates that I must initiate other women into the Dianic Tradition, (Women's Mysteries) and at least once a decade I must ordain a new High Priestess. This mission has been most difficult.

The tradition of the Goddess is now followed by thousands of women in the USA and Europe. But to become a High Priestess takes more than attending a few seminars, taking a class here and there, gathering together with a few women under the bright full moon, maybe even teaching a beginners' class or two.

To become a High Priestess one must dedicate one's entire life to propagate the worship of the Goddess, Gaia, Mother Nature. Not just a few years while it is fashionable, not just work with groups who treat you well, not only when you get paid for teaching, not just your younger, more energetic years, but your entire life span.

It has now been ten years since I have ordained Rhianonn in L.A. and I am behind in the ordination work which allows me to keep my H.P. crown in this decade.

I am looking anxiously into the eyes of the new initiates: do you, do you, do you have the calling???

They all say, yes they do, of course. When I ask them to please convince me, they say the usual things, I love the Goddess and always will. I always was a Goddess woman. I always felt nature was my god. I am very interested in

teaching. I am good at prophecy or healing. I can feel things. I can prophesize.

But my heart sinks, because none has mentioned leadership. Leadership is the burden and blessing, leadership is the test, leadership is what makes a witch into a High Priestess. In my tradition, I as an Elder I must pass this fate/power down to others; my personal blessing is necessary to ensure the continuity of the elders.

Women have great ambivalence about female leadership. We have been told we cannot or should not do any of it, unless it's male approved, such as a woman endowed with a Ph.D., or some certificate issued by men. There is no Ph.D. for High Priestess work except the recognition of another High Priestess.

We nervously suspect every female leader is trying to put an ego trip over the others, fears we do not foster quite as readily when it comes to male leadership. We fear those of us who have some talent in the leadership department and we are careful not to endorse her. Inside our minds we may even whisper, "If I am not leading nobody else should." Or, "If she is a leader she must prove to me that she is perfect." "If she is not perfect right away, it is better if she didn't lead anything." Leaderless groups are fashionable nowadays, even though leaderless groups have no longevity. They die of dissent mostly, petty "processing" fights.

"Who are you?" women ask. "What makes you so special from me?" I get a lot of admiration from others but also I feel I am set aside, separated from the group. This is often painful for me.

The pain, the neglect, the abuse, the wounds of centuries and our own childhoods make us vicious to our own leaders. We pass down the stone of mistrust, maybe going back as far as the witchburnings. All oppressed groups hate each other, blacks hate blacks, women hate

women. **The entire edifice of patriarchy depends on this hatred/lack of trust amongst women.** It uses up our energies against each other, we hate each other for being prettier, smarter, luckier, slimmer, etc.

To find a woman who wants to do this thankless, unpaid job, being a H.P., a leader of women, manifesting the glue amongst us which is Goddess, is almost impossible. I can find women who will do workshops for the Goddess, write books, but to create sacred space and lead the worship with good counsel and allowing all to participate for free, is not easy.

This year I got lucky. I didn't have to search, Sabrina found me. She was one of the students in my priestess-training class—animated, dark-skinned—she gave me the right answer.

"I came to serve. For life." she said simply.

Because that is what leadership really is.

Sabrina and I always liked each other. Both of us are Aquarians; there was this star sister affinity between us. We did understand what this commitment meant. In the priestess-training class she completed her assignments for initiation, and after a year and a day passed, she embarked on her leadership role.

While I was touring in Europe last year, Sabrina opened a Women's Spirituality Center in Monterey. She attracted a wide variety of women to come and own the center's purpose and work together. While I was teaching in Germany, Switzerland, Hungary and Austria, Sabrina created a mailing list, a newsletter, met her payments and dealt with the patriarchy about a non-profit organization. And all the while she conducted the full moon circles on the beach, taught about past lives, taught classes and other teachers, she took up the work. She didn't need to ask me for her next step. When I came home, she organized a large Goddess festival in the university, and I only had to take my place and give my speech to her already assembled crowds. Now here was a leader and a priestess. She traveled with the real world and the sacred world equally well.

Her ordination was held on the *ninth* of February, in the Unitarian Church in Monterey. Most of the sisters from her class came to congratulate her, she received the blessings from women of all races. She invited Voodoo priestesses and African Yoruba priestesses to witness her commitment.

I was, of course, calling Rhianonn in L.A., my last such ordained spiritual daughter, to refresh my memory about the ritual.

"What are the vows again?" I asked her. "It's been so long."

"I promise to serve the cause of the Goddesses everywhere I go. I promise to create her sacred space wherever I am. I promise to teach, lead, protect and propagate the traditions of women." She laughed now thinking how scared she was at the time when I ordained her.

That's right!

And then comes the presentation to the four corners of the universe. The sisters lift up the new H.P. from the ground, turning her to East, South, West and North, each time blessing her to endure, and initiate, to burn with the passion of fire, and never give up, to spread love and understanding, and console those who are in need, to prosper and be strong, and to realize and finish her dreams.

But now it was happening. I was facing this young woman, giving her the list of her powers and limitations, handing her over the consecrated tools.

"It is from now on in your power to bless and curse, to heal and to banish. To marry and to bury."

"I accept this power." She whispered, hardly audible.

"You must lead by example and never by force."

"I accept this blessing."

"You have the power to include or exclude into or from your circle."

"I accept this power."

Now I am anointing her lines in her hand.

"I bless your lifeline that you shall have only few obstacles in your work.

I bless your love line that you shall be happy and have company on your journey, never alone."

"I accept this blessing," she answers.

Finally I crown her with my own crescent silver crown, she will get her own later, it was too much to get together for the ordination. But again, it is the thought and spirit that counts, the props are only symbols.

"I crown you in the name of the Goddess to be her lifelong representative. Lady Philea from now you shall be known in all your works."

"I thank you for your trust, Lady Medea, and I accept this ordination as said."

I present her with her staff, a wonderful driftwood, twisted and decorated with green and crimson leather strips, beads from Africa and Egypt, the pentagram on top from the sea, a star fish.

The ritual ends as always, the priestesses thankfully dismiss the spirits they invoked at the beginning of the ritual. We all embrace. Sabrina, Lady Philea, makes a small thank you speech. There is hot food, the drums begin to drum a dance beat and we seal the ritual with a wild dance.

I managed the impossible: to ordain another High Priestess. I am now relaxing in a chair, munching on some rosemary bread.

I feel the first step is still changing the women globally, because when the women change for the better the world changes for the better. This is the cause that Sabrina and I devoted our entire lives to.

That night in Monterey is far away. It is summer time now. Sabrina is still continuing in her leadership sucessfully, teaching/leading groups of women. Now she is in Hawaii setting up a new Dianic center. If we had more women like her we could speed up considerably the Age of Aquarius.

Zsuzsanna Budapest is a pioneer of the Goddess Movement, teacher, author of the Holy Book of Women's Mysteries, and The Grandmother of Time. Her new book Grandmother Moon will be out by Holloween. She is also a High Priestess at large teaching ritual work all over the world. Her television show "13th Heaven" is syndicated on seven cable stations. Contact P.O. Box 11363, Oakland, CA 94611.



Discovering Queer Archetypes

by Bert Provost/Corona

In talking with other queer men involved in the Craft I've been distressed by the number of people who invoke deities that have no connection to either their inner or outer lives. I've grown tired of the divine heterosexual couple of contemporary Paganism. While I continue to invoke a variety of spirits, both male and female, the emphasis is on linking them to my queerness. I might invoke the Goddess as the Sacred Bitch, Dyke Sister or Mother of Faggots. Her relationship to male spirits is anything but "traditional." The God I call has a variety of names. He is the Rising Pillar of Flesh, the Open Hand, Boyfriend, Lover and Gate of Pleasure. These ideas are the result of my work as a member of the Sons of the Bitch, a Kansas City-based coven of Faggot Witches.* They also reflect my discussions and ritual work with other queer men involved in the Craft in the Midwest. In recent years, the focus of this work has taken a new turn into the exploration of the relationships between the spiritual self-image and the Queer archetypes.

As queers, our spiritual self-image has as much to do with the internal messages we give ourselves as the deities we choose to honor. It combines elements of dream, body image and the feelings we hold about our individual self-worth and sexuality. All of these interact in complex ways. For example, if we invoke powerful spirits in ritual but outwardly live from a place of self-loathing, the impact of our work will be negligible. In a like manner, to invoke deities that reflect nothing of our lives as queer men is doing ourselves a disservice. It perpetuates a process of spiritual alienation by denying ourselves any connection to the Sacred.

Developing this internal self is important for a number of reasons. It holds a mirror up to the inner life of the psyche and gives it value. Through it we each experience more closely

what is going on inside of us emotionally. Building a strong spiritual self-image provides us with a platform for making deeper journeys into the unconscious. Within this realm we can make contact with the Queer deities, the archetypes of our spiritual experience. They in turn connect us with the sacredness of our daily lives and relationships.

In order to have a relationship between a Queer archetype and our individual self-image, we need to understand the differences between the two experiences. As I mentioned earlier, the self-image is made of a variety of forces; it's also intensely personal. Each of us has our own way of building this image. It contains our adult values and experiences, as well as our childhood emotional past, woven together. Where the self-image is a personal process, the Queer archetype is a transpersonal experience.

The Queer archetype plumbs the depths of the collective queer psyche and offers up imagery that profoundly moves us beyond our individual experiences. It might best be described as a group experience of an "Aha" moment. Where the image being called upon or visiting awakens each of us into collective recognition of its power and presence. This can transform us by expanding our perceptions of who we are and our place in the universe.

So, how do we go about discovering these archetypes within our lives? One of the first places to begin is by assigning spiritual value to our daily existence. To make the mundane an expression of the Sacred. Special attention needs to be given to the gifts our sexuality presents to us.

The second stage in the archetypal process involves body image and awareness. For me as a Faggot Witch, the body is the drum and the Queer deity is the hand that strikes it. Our bodies are primal spiritual metaphors. As we

cast the circle, our bodies define the edges of sacred space. They contain all emotional experiences from infancy to adulthood. Each time we invoke, we make an invitation to the physical self to acknowledge its connection to the Sacred. Our bodies express the sacred power of the Erotic in its infinite forms.

Emotions are part of the third phase of this process of discovery. Having the internal supports to own our feelings within ritual and everyday life enriches our spiritual experience. No amount of ritual skill or intellectual knowledge of the Craft can compensate for a lack of personal emotional development. We have to be able to express our needs clearly if we wish to work with others in understanding the subtleties of these archetypes.

The final stage in the process is the examination of our rituals, mythology and invocations to see how much of our lives are reflected in the metaphors that we use. This can be challenging. If we don't see our lives reflected in the imagery and language that we use, then obviously some change may need to happen. It may mean letting go of some "traditional" ways of understanding the Craft. A concerted effort to explore new ground either individually or within your coven might be needed. As queer men, a good place to start is with the image of the God. If you find yourself in a constant process of translation to make the imagery fit, then there is a problem.

In ritual we can begin by creating new invocations to call the Faggot Deities. If this seems too difficult, you can simply make an invitation or offering every time you do ritual to the Queer ancestors or spirits. You might consider building an altar to these spirits so that they have a place to reside. In the beginning, their forms and faces may be unknown to you. Continue to focus on them and they will gradually reveal themselves. A simple libation, offering of food or incense might be all that's required.

Barriers to this process are worth mentioning. A lack of self-esteem and a poor body image

can be major obstacles to overcome. These are not simple problems that can be resolved overnight with the use of a positive affirmation. For some, it may mean finding a qualified therapist or recovery group. Emotional well-being and spiritual development are the warp and weft of the Faggot Witch. If you can't support basic emotions like joy, anger, fear and grief within yourself or your relationships, then searching for a powerful Queer archetype may be confusing. Traveling to deeper layers of the unconscious is an unfolding process and you can only experience that for which you have support.

Another barrier for some gay men involved in the Craft is breaking from the standard straight, white European images of the Goddess and the God. To let go of these romanticized images of quasi-Celtic origin is to open ourselves up to the beauty and complexity of the Queer Deities.

Why do we need these Queer archetypes? They offer a queer spiritual model of our lives and embody the deepest core values of our culture in the multifaceted images. As expressions of our Sacred mystery, they teach us that our daily lives are imbued with tremendous meaning. Their presence mirrors our individual lives on a cosmic scale. Without them, we are boats without rudders, drifting in a desperate search for any spiritual image or practice that will validate our existence. They become the guideposts to our queer individuation, showing us the stages in becoming more complete individuals. In another sense, they are the poetic maps to a Faggot Witch's interior search for a broader experience of life.

As our communities are shaken with grief and rage in the face of the AIDS epidemic, these archetypal forces can reaffirm the sacredness of the faggot body. They invite us to come into our bodies fully, both emotionally and physically. By experiencing the wonder and fragility of physical existence, we can uncover the need for a sense of connectedness and responsibility to

one another. Queer deities exemplify the essential unity of spirituality and sexuality so desperately needed in our rituals and mythology.

My own efforts to understand the relationship between my spiritual self-image and the Queer archetypes continues to be a major part of my work as a Faggot Witch. This journey has opened up new aspects of my inner life and challenged me to go beyond traditional categories within the Craft. Each time I move into ritual space, I now feel the presence of the Queer Deities whispering to me in the darkness.

***Faggot Witches—**A Faggot Witch is a gay man who finds political and spiritual dimensions to his sexuality, a queer man who combines Paganism, faggotry and Earth-centered values.



✉ ✉ ✉ **Letters** ✉ ✉ ✉

April 7, 1991

Dear Star and Reclaiming:

I was interested by your article on Pagan beliefs and CO status (Spring 1991 issue). The following thoughts did give me pause, however:

—“... to kill a human is to commit deicide as well .”: isn't this what many Pagan traditions do each summer, around the time of Litha or Lammas? The harvest is the sacrifice of the Lord.

—“... to take someone else's life before their time is a denial of the sacred life force .”. This statement may contradict other positions Pagans may have regarding both abortion and the right to die, so consider well before using this in a statement which the collective as a whole may endorse. Some of us may have friends or family struggling with terminal diseases, and I feel Pagans should support an individual's choice in choosing to terminate their suffering in such cases, especially if a person is asking for help in so doing.

Blessed Be and thanks for helping to get the discussion started.

Runach

[Note: the publication of this letter in this issue rather than in the last issue of the newsletter is a perfect illustration of Reclaiming's process and efficiency discussed in the article, "Disclaiming," page 22 of this issue. You see the date the letter was written. The nice mail person passed it on to A Certain Person, with a note asking her to read it and then give it to the newsletter. This Certain Person Who Lives Down the Hall put it in my mail box Today, August 29, exactly 13 hours before I will deliver this copy to Electra Typography. And eight of those hours should be spent sleeping. You see what I mean?—rmd]

The Goddess and the Politics of Energy

by Kevin

An ecological tragedy now unfolding could mean the end of the last pristine lowland rainforest in the United States and also threatens to forever silence extant Native Hawaiian religious beliefs held for millenia. On the big Island of Hawai'i, in the Puna District, massive geothermal development is destroying a remarkable rainforest with a biologically unique habitat which exists nowhere else in the world. More upsetting is the fact that the United States government is continuing its long history of ignoring the importance of Native earth-based culture and religious beliefs in favor of ecocide for corporate profit. How this issue is resolved is of great concern to all Pagans, because of the potential for our own rights and beliefs to be violated. In addition, the U.S. is setting a bad precedent—how can it tell third World nations like Brazil and Malaysia to preserve their vanishing rainforests while it is trashing its own?

The Rainforest.

The Wao Kele O' Puna rainforest is a 27,000 acre parcel ceded to Native Hawaiians by the state, to be held in perpetuity for present and future generations of Native Hawaiians. It was designated a Natural Area Reserve, Hawai'i's highest protection status, because of its irreplaceable biological value. Ninety-five percent of the flora and fauna here exist nowhere else in the world, a much higher percentage than even the Galapagos Islands. Unfortunately, Hawai'i has the highest rate of disappearing native ecosystems. Biological invasions by non-native species that have seriously threatened the ecosystems of other Islands have not yet occurred in Wao Kele O' Puna. The forest has managed to maintain its biological independence and integrity: In a land where vulcanism is a part of life, plants and animals have adapted to lava flows as they have to the hot sun and heavy rains. The forest regenerates after lava flows, and the rainforest reseeds the cooled new lava.

Pele brings forth the lava to both destroy and create, and her sister Hi'iaka is the green one, the regeneration process.

In 1985, an illegal land swap was conducted by the Hawaiian Department of Land and Natural Resources, exchanging Wao Kele O' Puna for an adjacent 25,000 acres at Kahauale'a, further upslope on Kilauea Volcano. Privately held Kahauale'a was the original geothermal site. The swap was bitterly contested by Native Hawaiians in court as illegal, because no one was properly informed, no vote was taken, no town meetings held. The reason for the swap? Originally selected by engineers because of the "minimum chance of geological disruption," 12,000 acres of Kahauale'a is now covered with freshly erupted lava. 5,600 acres in this swap are promised to expand Volcanoes National Park, 1,200 acres have been woodchipped, leaving only 6,200 acres of forested land for the Hawaiians. The land swap was clearly engineered to protect geothermal development interests.

Geothermal hazards.

Planners call geothermal power plentiful, cheap and clean. Steam is harnessed underground to drive turbines, generating electricity. Politicians claim that this source of energy will make Hawai'i less dependent on foreign oil. However, the vulnerability of geothermal power to lava flows would require reliance on backup energy sources, namely oil. Final plans call for a 500-megawatt facility that will send power to Maui and O'ahu via transmission lines traveling through areas periodically inundated with lava, and underwater cables placed on seismically active areas of the sea floor. The problem is that these underwater cables will be record length, record depth—in other words, experimental. The Big Island meets its current energy needs at the present. The existing wells and proposed wells are being built on the most geologically unstable land on earth, where earthquakes and

lava flows are commonplace. The new site of the 200 proposed wells is located downslope from the old site, now covered with 12,000 acres of lava, Pu'u O'o vent and a large lava lake. This is the 48th eruptive phase of a continuous nine year eruption! (The 550,000 cubic yards of lava discharged daily from Kilauea Volcano is enough to pave a highway 8 feet wide and 3 feet thick from Honolulu to New York.) The proposed cost to get geothermal power online is over four billion dollars (three times the original estimate, funded by Hawaiian utility users and taxpayers) and fresh lava flows are inevitable. Health hazards are many—venting geothermal wells release hydrogen sulfide gas. In small doses, it is irritating and causes respiratory problems, and in large doses it is more deadly than hydrogen cyanide. No emergency procedures are in place in case of accidents, health monitoring and enforcement are practically nonexistent, no air or water quality standards have been set, so local folks fear for their lives. Also, Environmental Impact Reports have not been conducted or required! Democratic Senator Daniel Inouye has been pressing for an EIR for some time now.

Blowout.

At 23:25 on June 12 of this year, a serious accident occurred at the geothermal test site. Well KS-8 experienced a “blowout”—an uncontrolled venting of hydrogen sulfide into the atmosphere. Clouds of hydrogen sulfide drifted over populated areas, and the noise accompanying it is likened to a 747 jet at full throttle. Thirty-one hours later, the well was temporarily capped by pouring cement down the gaping hole. As of this writing, the well is somewhat under control, though gases leaking underground could threaten other wells in the vicinity with blowouts, and contaminate groundwater in the process. No one expected the blowout, and no safety measures were in place to handle it. Investigators cited inadequate drilling procedures and lack of safety precautions as the reason KS-8 blew—in other words, human error. Well KS-7 blew in February but was brought un-

der control in a relatively short time. A number of people were treated for injuries on both occasions. As you might expect, Puna inhabitants are pissed off and very frightened.

Pele the Monkeywrencher?

Kilauea Volcano is sacred to the followers of Pele. The mists, vapors and steam, lava and rock are Pele's body, her domain, her *ha*—life breath. Hawaiians see geothermal as mining their goddess. Roman Catholics would be shattered if the Sistine Chapel were destroyed, and Muslims furious if the Ka'aba in Mecca were burned. So it is with the Hawaiians. Even the geothermal developers agree that geothermal is exhaustable, not renewable. Pele is slowly being killed, and in turn, the last vestiges of Hawaiian religion are dying with her. Pele followers are members of kinship systems and clans centuries old, with genealogies reaching back to Tahiti and Samoa. Tute Pele, or Madame Pele, as she is frequently called, is one of the *'aumakua*, or ancestors, of the Pele Clan. Pele names are given to infants. The name carries *mana*, or spiritual power, that Pele imparts on her namesake. A carrier of Pele's name must honor it and protect it. Hawaiians with Pele names, such as Ralph Palikapu Kamoali'i Dedman, are doing just that. Palikapu, a founder of the Pele Defense Fund, has been fighting both geothermal and the proposed NASA Spaceport. Palikapu, along with others, has noticed how Pele is handling this assault to her body. The nine year continuous eruption began when Campbell Estate and the State of Hawai'i announced their plans to generate electricity from the volcano in 1983. Pele erupted right in the center of the Kahauale'a land. Pu'u O'o vent and a new lava lake now cover the original site of the geothermal wells. Locals believe Pele to be responsible for a 6.2 earthquake that opened a deep crack less than 45 feet from a proposed well. O'ahu suffered a recent earthquake just as the ship that will lay the underwater cable left Honolulu on an experimental voyage.

Native Hawaiians believe that Pele is re-

claiming her land. The town of Kalapana and Kaimu Bay, both covered with lava, are now memories. The locals attempt to propitiate Pele with offerings and pledges to halt the drilling forever. Sightings of Pele occur occasionally, and vary: Pele appears as an old woman, sometimes younger, but she is almost always accompanied by a small white dog. Her appearances are usually warnings of future eruptions or changes in current eruptions. Pele continues to make it clear that her wrath is not directed against the forest or the locals, but rather, the forces of industrialization. The Hawaiians need no convincing, but state officials and developers still don't get it.

An intact rainforest is vital to the healing traditions of the Hawaiians. *Kahuna la'au lapa'au* (herbal practitioners) depend on Wao Kele O' Puna for medicinal plants of a quality and potency that cannot be found elsewhere, to treat and cure such ailments as diabetes, hemorrhages from miscarriages, sore throats, tumors, migraines and other maladies. Some Hawaiians depend on the flowers and vines of the land to make leis and prepare the *kuahu*, the altar, in honor of Laka, goddess of the hula, and Hi'iaka, the beloved sister of Pele. Others use native woods to craft various traditional utensils. And still others hunt the feral pigs that roam the forest to feed their families. We, as Pagans, have a responsibility to help the Hawaiians save their land; they are in the same canoe as we are, and most of us have seen the irreversible destruction to our own local places of ritual and retreat. Theirs can still be saved.

The Situation Now—and what you can do.

As of August 1991, the geothermal project's expansion has been put on hold pending further investigation. The fight is not over, but geothermal development has been dealt a serious blow. Local residents are uniformly against geothermal—local government's response is that the jury is still out, but they are beginning to recognize and acknowledge the health hazards threat-

ening their constituency. You can help by writing Governor John Waihe'e in Honolulu, Senators Inouye and Akaka in Washington. Mention that you enjoy the forests on the Island of Hawai'i, and will probably never visit Hawai'i again (with your lustily sought-after tourist dollars) if geothermal flattens the forest. Also, you can help in direct action by contacting three action groups that are deeply involved in maintaining the integrity of Wao Kele O' Puna (see below), and you can visit Hawai'i in person. I was at Wao Kele O' Puna July 14th for the latest demonstration. It took me a while to find the forest the first time, since Wao Kele O' Puna isn't marked on any map. At the end of my rope, fearing I would miss the demonstration, I changed to Pele or any local deity who would listen to help me. Five minutes later, a woman appeared on the road hitching a ride to Hilo and led me right to it! (*She Listens!*) A group of Hawaiians secretly jumped the fence and examined the forest for more signs of destruction. A court order has halted any new bulldozing but that doesn't mean that True Geothermal or Ormat Energy Systems will obey it. True was fined \$16,000 for bulldozing several additional acres months ago. After a group of speakers energized the crowd of over one hundred, 92-year-old Bill spoke eloquently about the destruction of his home of almost a century. We were moved by his plea to stop this madness. We all sang *Hawai'i Pono'i*, the state song, and took ti leaves, flowers and other plants and wove them into the cyclone fence. A Hawaiian guard on the other side of the fence began to protest. "Brah, what ya wanna do THAT?," complaining that he was just going to have to remove the foliage later. He was curtly answered by a Hawaiian on my side of the fence with "It's your land too, brah—this is what you want to do to the '*aina*'r (land)?" I wanted to say to the guard that perhaps you should think about OUR side of the fence as you remove our offerings to Pele. However, I remained silent, because the guard was intimidated enough by the Hawaiian protesters. While weaving a ti lei

into the fence, I chanted a Reclaiming favorite, as well as Hawai'i's state motto that says it all: "*Ua mau ke ea o ka 'aina i ka pono o Hawai'i*—the life of the land of Hawai'i is perpetuated in righteousness." The whole experience reinforced in my mind that we are all connected—what is happening in Hawai'i affects us on the mainland. Encouraging public opinion polls over the past four years have swayed dramatically in favor of protecting the environment. But we still have a long way to go. Let everyone know how you feel about the wanton destruction of a rainforest and its people—tell politicians, parents, friends, people at work.

Pele is there and waiting for geothermal's next move. Let us hope that the state and the geothermal interests will have the wisdom to leave her alone; raw, pristine and strong. Hawaiians believe when geothermal is permanently scrapped, the current eruption will stop, Pele's present work finished for a while. Tutu Pele is a powerful force—she is the goddess of volcanoes, who will ultimately have the last say in the fate of the forest.

My thanks to Annie Szzvetcz, Rainforest Action Network, for her assistance in compiling this article.

For more information, contact:
Big Island Rainforest Action Group
P.O. Box 341
Kurtistown, Hawai'i 96760
(808) 966-7622; 965-9262

Pele Defense Fund
P.O. Box 404
Volcano, Hawai'i 96785
(808) 935-1630

Rainforest Action Network
301 Broadway, Suite A
San Francisco, CA 94133
(415) 398-4404

or drop a line to Kevin, c/o Reclaiming
Collective



Brenda Aris
W-288867 Miller A 18L
Frontera, CA 91720
July 12, 1991

Dear Editor,

My name is Brenda Aris. I am currently incarcerated at the California Institution for Women, serving a sentence of 15 years to life for killing my husband of 10 years. I am a battered woman who killed her abuser.

During our marriage, my husband broke my jaw, cracked my ribs, slit my eye open, and gave me more black eyes and assorted bruises than I can even count. I was beaten so many times that I can no longer remember the specifics of each occasion. I lived in fear and pain for 10 years.

You are undoubtedly aware that the governors of Maryland and Ohio have granted clemency to a number of women who were in prison for killing or assaulting their abusers. Various political and social groups are attempting to accomplish the same thing in other states. I myself have written to Governor Wilson, asking that he consider reviewing my case. I am hoping that you might consider lending your support to my request.

There are many women here like me, all victims of violence, abuse and hopelessness. They range in age from 24 to 76, each a sad and terrible variation on a horrifyingly common theme.

Living in an abusive relationship is a terrifying nightmare of pain and endurance and fear. I know that I am lucky to be alive today. I make no excuses for my action, nor do I expect anyone to condone it. I struck out in a misguided attempt to save my own life. I believed that I had no other choice. And now the death of my husband is one more horror that I have to live with for the rest of my life.

I made a terrible mistake that I must now pay for with my life, just as I once had to pay for the "mistakes" my husband said I made.

I am not a violent person, nor am I a threat to society. I am a victim, just as my three daughters are victims. My husband was a victim, too. I am not looking for an easy way out. I will live with this tragedy every day of my life, no matter where I am.

All the battered women here are victims who have paid for their mistakes with their bodies and souls, and are now paying with their lives. Society need have no fear that we will not be sufficiently punished, as we will live with the nightmare every day of our lives. We are asking only to return to our children and loved ones so that some healing may begin.

If you feel that you might be able to lend your support to my request to the Governor, I would be most grateful. Any thoughts or ideas that you might wish to share would be very welcome. I thank you for your time and any other consideration that you may wish to extend to myself and other battered women.

Sincerely, Brenda Aris

The Samhain Cycle: Reclaiming's Plans for Halloween '91

by *Starhawk*

Friday October 25, 8 p.m.; Saturday October 26, 8 p.m.; and Sunday October 27, 8 p.m.;

S.F. Women's Building, 18th St. between Guerrero and Valencia

Each day \$5-\$10 sliding scale, \$15-\$30 for all three days. Tickets available mail-order from Reclaiming, or at the door.

Childcare provided by pre-arrangement (send information with ticket order). Children welcome in rituals, too.

Wheelchair accessible.

Drug and Alcohol free, please.

Like last year, we are again presenting three related rituals on the weekend before Halloween. Each will be a complete ritual in itself with a specific focus related to this season of death and rebirth. All are participatory rather than performance-oriented, low-tech, and relatively small in scale (limited to 300 participants).

• **Friday October 25: The Beloved Dead**

This ritual will focus on our personal friends and loved ones who have died, as well as all those who have died in the continuing wars and epidemics of the last year. We will journey together to the land of the Dead where we can ask for help and inspiration for our personal struggles and our work of preserving the life of our communities and our earth. We end with a spiral dance.

Send us: Names of your *personal* loved ones who have died this year (since last Oct. 31.) (Procrastinators, call Macha at 415-454-4411.)

Slides of your beloved dead (from any year). Please send copies only as we will **not** return slides.

Bring: Photos (or xeroxes) of your beloved dead for the altar. Please, nothing too precious as there is always a slight chance of loss.

• **Saturday October 27: Invoking the Ancestors of Many Cultures**

This multicultural ritual is being planned in conjunction with other groups and individuals, to reflect the diverse heritages of the Bay Area. Together we will create a vision of a world in which all races, cultures, and ancestral lines are respected and valued. We will also confront some of the pain as we acknowledge how far we have to go to make that world real. A spiral dance empowers our vision.

Bring: An offering for your ancestors (a flower or a small piece of not-too-messy food, such as a nut, a handful of seeds, herbs or grain, tobacco, etc. Nothing illegal, please.)

• **Sunday October 28: Building Our Vision of the Future**

This season is our New Year, a time of power and potential. We confront our fears about the future, and our hopes. Children help us transform powerlessness into inspiration and action, culminating in (just for a change) a spiral dance.

Send us: Names of children who have been born since last October 31. For late names, call Macha 415-454-4411. (Make sure you tell her they're newborns, not beloved dead.)

Bring: Something to give away, meaningful rather than expensive, that represents a vision you have made real this last year. You will **not** get this object back.

If your children want to help in the ritual, call Judy at 510-843-0722.

Tickets will be sold mail-order from the Reclaiming P.O. Box, a few of the shops that carry the newsletter, and possibly at the door. To insure that you can come on the night of your choice, please buy tickets ahead of time. Each ritual costs \$5-\$10, sliding scale. Tickets

for all three rituals cost \$15-\$30, sliding scale. We encourage people to attend whichever one or ones most call to you this year.

Send a self-addressed stamped envelope to:
Reclaiming Samhain Cycle
P.O. Box 14404
S.F. CA 94114

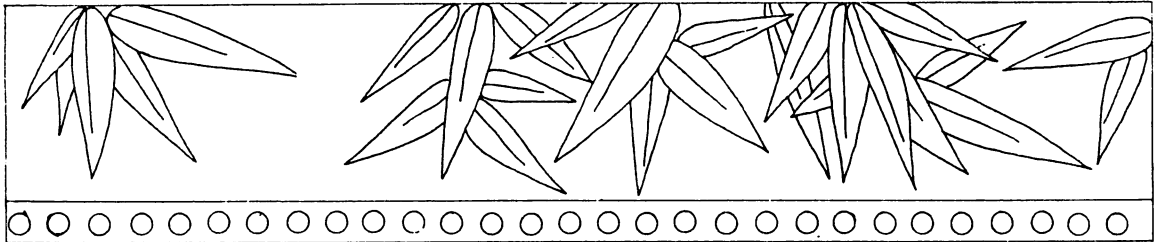
Include a check or money order, and be sure to tell us which night/s you want tickets for. You may also include slides and names of beloved dead or newborns—please be sure they are legible.

Please mail your order by October 16 to ensure that you will receive your tickets in time.

Procrastinators: Call the Reclaiming Events Line at 510-849-0877 for last-minute updates on ticket availability.

Work Exchanges are available. We will need people to help with the ritual, dragons (security people), ticket takers and coat checkers, someone to run simple spotlights, and lots of clean-up people. It's a great way to get to know people in the area and get involved with the collective and get invited to parties where you can meet potentially consenting adult Witches of the gender of your choice. To volunteer, call Judy at 510-843-0722.

All three rituals are benefits for Reclaiming, and Prevention Point, San Francisco's openly clandestine needle exchange program which has been working to stop the spread of AIDs.



Reclaiming **C**la

MOVING BETWEEN THE WORLDS ON SAMHAIN EVE, Thursday, October 31

Drumming, dancing, connecting with our beloved and mighty dead on the eve when the veil is thinnest. We plan to do as much of the ritual as possible outdoors but we'll need an alternate indoor meeting space. \$10-\$30, sliding scale. Call Beverly at 388-3413 for registration and information.

MOVING BETWEEN THE WORLDS: RITES OF PASSAGE taught by Beverly Frederick and Jody Foster, Yemaya as student teacher

We will heighten our abilities to trust and support each other through movement, drum trance, singing, chanting, chakra vocalization and symbol drawing. From that safe sacred space, we will challenge each other and create rites of passage to break the chains that bind us! Six **Thursdays** beginning **November 7**. \$60-\$120, sliding scale. Call Beverly at 388-3413 for registration and information. If you want a women-only class, *call now!*

INCENSE, BATH SALTS, FLOOR WASHES AND POWDERS

A two-day weekend workshop focusing on the creation and magickal use of these basic spellcrafting tools. We will cover correspondences and recipes, and make several to take home with us. Price includes supplies as well as literature. Workshop will be held from 10am-4pm on **Saturday & Sunday, November 30-December 1**. Contact Margaret (885-0774), Carol (550-0920), or Jody (282-2161). \$23-62, sliding scale.

CHARM-MAKING WORKSHOP

A one-day Saturday workshop in October focusing on the making and use of magick charms. Contact the Events Line (849-0877) or Jody (282-2161) for more information.

MAGIC AND THE TAROT: THE MAJOR ARCANA for men and women taught by Pandora and Cybele

We taught a "Tarot and the Elements" class this summer, and it went *so* well, and it was *so* popular, and we had *so* much fun we decided to continue it. In this class, we'll work magically with the major arcana cards of the tarot, using meditation and ritual. Again, we intend the class to be accessible to beginners, but useful for advanced students. Bring a tarot deck. Students who were in the last class will be given first shot at this one; be advised the last class filled up Extremely Quickly, so if you're interested, let us know immediately. San Francisco location. 7 weeks, **Wednesday** nights, starting **November 6**. \$70-\$140, sliding scale. Call Pandora 771-4905, or Cybele 648-3908 for information.

NOTICE:

An **ELEMENTS OF MAGIC FOR WOMEN** class will be forming in Marin County. Call Events Line, 849-0877, for further details.

Classes and vents

PENTACLE FOR WOMEN—teachers to be announced

Using our magical skills, moving and shaping energy, transforming ourselves through trance to explore the five points of our inner pentacle: Sex (primal energy), Self, Passion, Pride (self-esteem), and Power (effectiveness in the worlds). Prerequisite: Elements of Magic or equivalent experience/study. \$60–\$120, sliding scale. This class is being organized to be held between Samhain and Solstice, in San Francisco. **Call the Events Line, 849-0877, in late September** for information on teachers, dates, and registration information.

CHANTS AND ENCHANTMENT taught by M. Macha NightMare

Using our bodies, breath and voices, we will explore the tremendous potential of enchantment (intense, prolonged chanting and/or singing) to effect personal and social transformation. We will offer both devotional chants to particular deities and “working” chants to change inner consciousness and, thus, outer reality. The facilitator draws material from Eastern meditational and traditional Pagan sources, as well as from contemporary “living” neo-Witchcraft. Wear comfortable clothing. **Wed., Sept. 25, 7:30 p.m.**—East Bay; **Wed., Oct. 2, 7:30 p.m.**—South Bay; **Wed., Oct. 9, 7:30 p.m.**—SF or North Bay. \$5–\$15, sliding scale. Two to three hours. We need a space with carpeting/rug/cushions, as most of the work will be done with participants either sitting on the ground or standing, and with minimal distractions. I can accommodate up to 20 people. If you wish to volunteer a space or to enroll, call 415-454-4411.

THE SAMHAIN CYCLE: Reclaiming's Plans for Halloween '91

Like last year, we are again presenting three related rituals on the weekend before Halloween. Each will be a complete ritual in itself with a specific focus related to this season of death and rebirth. All are participatory rather than performance oriented, low-tech, and relatively small in scale (limited to 300 participants).

- **Friday October 25, 7:30 p.m.: The Beloved Dead**
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- **Sunday October 28, 7:30 p.m.: Building Our Vision of the Future**

San Francisco Women's Building, 18th Street between Guerrero and Valencia. Each day \$5–\$10, sliding scale; \$15–\$30 for all three days. Tickets available mail-order from Reclaiming, or at the door. Child-care provided by pre-arrangement (send information with ticket order). Children welcome in rituals, too. Wheelchair accessible. Drug and Alcohol free, please. See the article, “The Samhain Cycle,” on page 15 of this issue, which is an expanded version of this announcement. It will give you **ticket information, volunteer information**, and suggest **what to bring** to the rituals. All three rituals are benefits for Reclaiming, and Prevention Point, San Francisco's openly clandestine needle exchange program which has been working to stop the spread of AIDs.

☆ Starhawk's 1991 Schedule ☆

*For more information contact HARMONY NETWORK, P.O. Box 2550, Guerneville, CA 95446
(707) 869-0909*

SEPTEMBER 13-15, 1991: Toronto, Canada *with LUISAH TEISH
"Harvesting the Creative Power of Women"
Contact: Applewood Center 613-968-2703

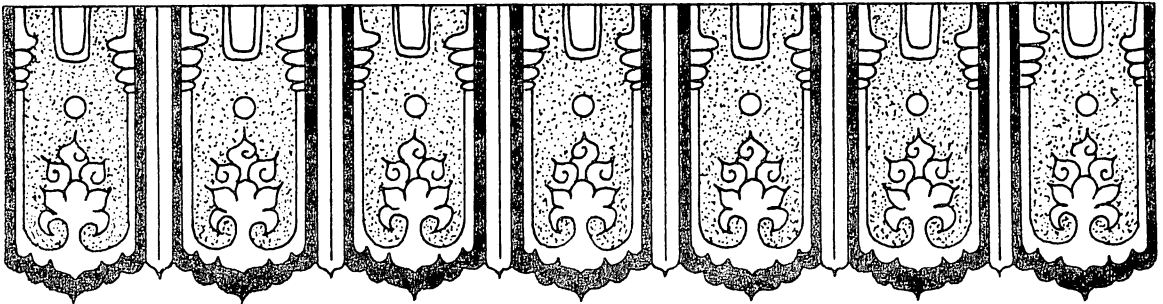
OCTOBER 4-6, 1991: WATSONVILLE, CA
"Rites Of Passage" Workshop for Men and Women
Contact: Mt. Madonna Center 408-722-7175

OCTOBER RECLAIMING SAMHAIN CELEBRATIONS
Contact: Reclaiming Events Line 415-849-0877

NOVEMBER 8-10, 1991: MEMPHIS, TENN.
Mixed Workshop and Talk
Contact: Susan Taranto, 2714 Union Extended, Suite 410, Memphis, TN 901-323-2078

Upcoming Events To Be Announced
December: Montreal, Canada
January: New York, NY

**Check with Harmony Network for
information on
1991 Women's Goddess Sites Tour of Greece!!**
Contact: Harmony Network • P.O. Box 2550 • Guerneville, CA 95446



Hannah's Household Hints



Well, I must say I'm shocked. *Just shocked.* In the course of trying to clean up the mess Hannah left behind in her ignominious departure from Reclaiming, I have been re-reading the household hints columns she produced over the last seven years, and have discovered the following:

Fall 1984: In her first column, Hannah tells you to cut the wax drips out of your altar cloths, and bind the edges of the holes with your hair.

Winter '84: Hannah tells you to sell your ear wax as holy salve.

Summer '85: After explaining to you that there is no way to get rid of mice, Hannah tells you to shellac the bathtub.

Fall '85: Hannah bitches about witch camp and tells you that advanced meditation is done in lazyboy rockers in front of the television.

Winter '85: Mindful of the Holy Season, Hannah tells you to always cook with butter, but not to eat the cardboard on the gingerbread house.

Spring '86: Hannah suggests doing your spring cleaning by running a hose through the house, though she mentions taking out the furniture and shutting off the electricity first.

Summer '86: Hannah tells you to put the spiders in the basement and the bones under wraps when your mother comes over.

Fall '86: Hannah states that camping is best done in Winnebagos, as tents get dirty and must be thrown out.

Winter '86: Hannah explains to you that glitter is the medium best used to hide dust. That was the season, if I remember correctly, that members of the Reclaiming editorial board sent a glitter bomb package to Hannah in the mail, which created one hell of a mess and upset the dogs.

Spring '87: Hannah being in recovery in Arizona, I am called in to write the column, which I do, giving the advice that you not follow Hannah's hints at all, thereby providing the first note of sanity since the beginning of the column.

Summer '87: Hannah offends a faithful reader by explaining that the reason he sat down in gum

on the BART train was that his pants were already dirty.

Spring '88: Hannah announces that many household problems, including broken plumbing, can be fixed with paint.

Spring '89: Hannah advises you to buy a new bucket.

Summer '89: Hannah tells you to give up on fixing the plumbing yourself and to call in a professional.

Winter '89: In the wake of frantic letters after the Big Earthquake, Hannah tells you to buy a broom and rent a dumpster.

Summer '90: I rebel.

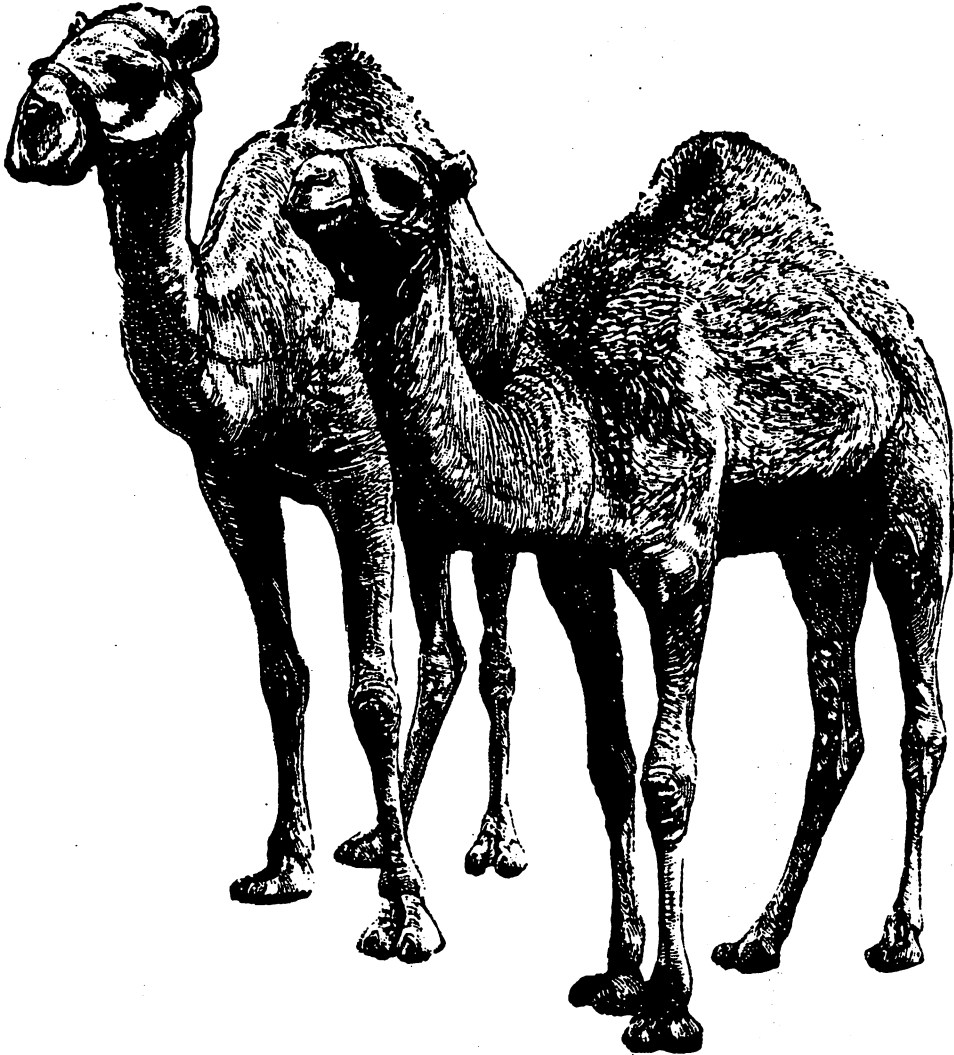
Were any of you paying attention? Did any of you notice that these were Not Good Household Hints? Did you try to tell the Reclaiming editors? Did they ignore you? Put you off? If any of you tried any of these hints, and there are lawsuits pending, let me know, and I will make my files available.

Actually, you *must* have known, right? Or I wouldn't have won the election.

Anyway, I am currently interviewing new applicants for the household hints column—I can't write this forever, much as I'd like to, of course. This time, however, I am insisting on seeing the houses that applicants actually *live* in, in order to determine whether or not they are actually *qualified* to write a household hints column. Seven years ago, when Hannah was hired, Reclaiming was young, the newsletter was rather unformed, and, well, Hannah was the best they could get. But we now need a household hints column for the 90's. Times have changed. We need a now, sort of happening, columnist to address the problems we really have, like whether or not the vacuum cleaner is environmentally sound, or which incenses, exactly, we should not let the cats and babies eat.

You're all encouraged to apply, if you like—I see no reason to restrict our choices to disembodied entities—but do *not* apply if you happen to think of glitter as a cleaning agent.

Cheers, Pandora



DISCLAIMING – More talk about our Collective

by Rose May Dance for the Reclaiming Collective

On this dreary August day it is not too hard to imagine that it is October, the month many people begin to think about Witchcraft, the month many of you may look to this newsletter to FIND THINGS OUT. If you are curious about the living Craft, or curious about WHAT STARHAWK DOES, or curious about the mysterious Reclaiming Collective, you may make an attempt to fathom the depths of our organization.

We have a marvelous and worthwhile Collective, but we often disappoint those who want SOMETHING from us. I will attempt to explain what we are, and what we are not, so you won't keep sending us those desperate inquiries.

Reclaiming (see definition, back cover) is a loose Collective of maybe 18 individuals who are feminist Witches. We are: Beverly, Carol, Cybele, David, Geoff, Jody, Judy, Kevin, Laura, Macha, Margaret, Pandora, Pleiades (on sabbatical), Rose, Roy (on sabbatical), Suzanne, Starhawk, and Vibra. We've all read at least part of Starhawk's books, and Starhawk herself has read all of them. Some of us joined this Collective years ago after we took classes from Starhawk or from people she had helped to teach. Others of us joined because we were ritualists who had worked on Spiral Dance rituals or other Reclaiming projects. Many of us have done political action together. Some of us have lived or do live together. Some of us have slept together. Some of us HAVE NOT. Some of us are in covens together, and some of us are in covens with other people. Some of us are solitary Witches. We are surrounded by something we refer to as the Reclaiming Community—people who attend our classes and rituals, organize our events and projects but do not choose to come to our general meetings, relatives, friends, and fellow travelers, and former members.

All of the Collective and Community are volunteers. Some of us can choose to draw a \$6.00 an hour stipend for performing menial tasks. The bulk of the work is on a strictly volunteer

basis, a labor of love. We have no building or classrooms or temple. We have a post-office box which is periodically visited by Margaret, who distributes our mail to us when she sees us. She also keeps our books. We have no one officially in charge of correspondence, because we often have no answers to the questions asked of us. All of the Collective members have jobs which are not related to Reclaiming. Many of us have families and children. All of us have other interests and pursuits beyond Reclaiming. Some of us, particularly Starhawk, travel a bit to give lectures and workshops related to feminist spirituality and Witchcraft.

The Collective meets four times a year, between the quarters and cross quarters. We operate by consensus, and value its lengthy, thoughtful, and creative process. We are divided into task-oriented groups, and work in these groups with Community people. One group works on the Newsletter 4 times a year. One group teaches classes. These classes are taught in living rooms, advertised in the newsletter, and the teachers tithe 13% of their fees to the Collective. Another group teaches Witchcamp, which does not tithe to the Collective because of the low pay and great effort involved. There is a group working on a new tape of songs and chants. At Collective meetings, we talk about the holidays and see if there is interest in holding public rituals. If there is, we gather other interested people, have meetings, and plan the rituals. We have an events line where we list the classes and events Reclaiming creates, as well as other Craft-related and political notices. This line is a service offered by two of our very good friends, as a gift to the Collective and the Community.

Often we receive letters asking if people can come study with us. It is hard to study with us because we are not a school. Classes are offered from time to time when there is local interest and someone free and willing to teach. We began

holding Witchcamps so that we could teach people who do not live in the Bay Area. We receive many requests to meet and talk with people who are travelling through our area. Often this is hard for us because of our already full schedules.

There is a particular kind of mail we do not know how to handle: we are not organized in such a way that we can give advice or counseling. We do not want to do spellwork or other magic for people's personal problems, although we're always grateful to hear about national spells and group efforts. And we never quite know what to do with long letters telling of personal journeys and confidential matters. And we are bewildered when people send us their books of shadows or other diaries. We also get a lot of crank letters.

We often receive complaints that someone sends money in for a tape or a subscription, the check gets cashed, and the tape or subscription does not show up for a long time. This is because one person is opening the mail and distributing it, another person is going to the bank, and another person is handling the mailing of tapes or the updating of subscription lists, each working out of his or her home at a leisurely and irregular pace. The newsletter subscription list is only updated 4 times a year at each publication. We realize this is frustrating for people who are used to more businesslike practices, we apologize, and we're working on it, but we will essentially remain a volunteer organization which does not work very hard at the mundane level. We do give every inch of our energy at rituals, in classes, and in this lovely publication.

Please write letters to the newsletter, send us your articles and artwork. It is important that Witches and Pagans keep informed about each other, and have access to information. We hope to see you in our classes and at our rituals, and we thank you wholeheartedly for your support and friendship. Please accept our home-made efforts in the spirit in which they are offered, a gift to the Goddess in each other. Blessed be.

BOOK REVIEW

Hi—

I'd like to let people know about a valuable book for those of us who use astrology as a tool of transformation. It's *Earth Mother Astrology* by Marcia Starck, published by Llewellyn. There's information about elements in your chart, and how to balance excess in one element, house, or sign using herbs, gemstones, music, color and oils. For people who follow transits, this book is worth its weight in gold. The author even gives foods to eat to balance the intense energy that comes through at times. Figs, corn, and leafy vegetables are good for Uranus transits. Besides, corn chips are fun to eat. There are planetary correspondences for oils, etc. There's even a section for rituals to do at full moons, equinoxes and solstices.

Blessed be!

Firebird



Starhawk's Fifty Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth: Numbers 1-8

by *Starhawk*

Tired of simple solutions to complex problems? Still not convinced that all we need to do is save our aluminum cans and shop green to make it all okay? Try Starhawk's Simple Seven-Point Plan for Planetary Alignment.

1. Recycle The Government

Yes, it's creaking along and it doesn't work the way it was supposed to, but don't just toss out those aging politicians. Make sure the most corrupt are disposed of only at appropriate toxic waste disposal sites, lest they further pollute the atmosphere. Many others can still be put to good use in many karmically fitting tasks—cleaning trash from our streets and beaches, washing graffiti off public walls, entertaining shut-ins with song and dance routines. To aid in this program, begin by proposing a Ban On All Campaign Advertising. Laws that regulate campaign financing are all very well, but they don't begin to curb the incredible waste of time, paper, electronic impulses, and intelligence that goes into political campaigning. And as long as politicians can spend money to improve their image or influence the voters, they'll be dependent on those who can give them money, i.e., the rich bloodsuckers who got that way by profiting off the current earth-raping system. Limit candidates to public debates carried on radio, PBS and local newspapers, and the same for initiatives and referendums. And if nobody listens, or bothers to vote—well, most people aren't voting anyway!

2. Dismantle the Big Corporations

Let's face it, government is only window dressing on the real powers that run things. Now I admit I don't have a complete plan as yet for how to accomplish this step, but at least embarrass them whenever possible by throwing public light on their worst mistakes and criminal errors. Readers, other suggestions?

3. Replace the Economy

Replace it with a system that takes into account the real costs of things, environmental and human. For this we need a new unit of measure. In place of the gold or silver standard, or the dollar, I recommend we take the calorie as the basic economic unit. (Many of us have already been counting them for years.) Under calorie-based economics, everything would be valued according to how much energy (human labor, fossil fuel, wind or solar power, etc.) is expended to produce it and replace the resources it uses up. Renewable energy sources would generate discount calories. Pollution would become impossibly expensive, conservation would be profitable. And every human being would have access to capital; her or his own energy.

4. Recycle the Military

Also known as "beat your swords into plowshares." Make useful items out of all that hardware, carefully dispose of toxic and dangerous substances, and give all those sincere and brave young people a chance to do something truly socially useful; building homes for the homeless, growing food for the hungry, cleaning up the mess we've made of the earth.

5. Discard Racism, Sexism, Homophobia, Ageism, Ableism, etc.

A necessary precursor to steps 1-4 is to get rid of the injustices and inequalities that underlie our government, corporate and military power, and our economics. I know, I know, easier said than done, and we've already been working at this one for a while, with only spotty successes. Clean up your own act, to begin with, and hang in there! Don't try to recycle these thought-forms; like mildewed rose clippings, they aren't even safe to compost lest they spread their disease. Just get rid of them.

6. Support a Right-to-Life Amendment

Amend the constitution to say that the earth and the ecosystems that sustain all of our lives themselves have an absolute right to life that supersedes individual or corporate ownership or profits, that a government's first duty is to preserve the air, water, soil, the diversity of plant and animal species, and wisely conserve the energy resources that make all other endeavors possible, that any government which fails to do so can no longer legitimately rule. Also, that every child born has a right to plentiful nourishment, physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual, to a secure home, to freedom from abuse of any kind, to education, health care and opportunities for truly useful work in her or his future, and until we achieve these goals we do not have the moral authority to even discuss whether or not we as a society can coerce the unwilling into carrying unwanted pregnancies to term.

7. Give the Land Back to the Indians

Or how about beginning by giving native peoples control of native lands and their own sacred lands, even if this would result in some inconvenience to the corporations or the military who might have built golf courses, firing ranges, nuclear test sites, geothermal installations, uranium mines, etc. on said lands? But as you can see, this program will greatly aid the accomplishment of goals 2 and 4.

8. More to Come, Think Up Your Own

(And if you can't think up anything else to do with them, send them in right here to the ever-hungry-for-material Reclaiming Newsletter.)



Home

*It is too far I have returned, from the North and West
To this place of my beginning
 this little mill-town in the South
To stand so distant from myself
lost in this dead skin of time
 these remnants of my roots that feel for buried, broken ends
 ... severed how many worlds ago*

*I have circled
 and reentered
 this fitful caldron of my birth
To hover like an anchored spirit, just above this strange
 and most familiar earth*

*My mother's kitchen haunts me
Her table holds me in a spell, outside
 the cries of mockingbirds outside,
 outside the smell of fresh mowed hay
 and the faint suggestion of a breeze from
 the pale, humid sky of May*

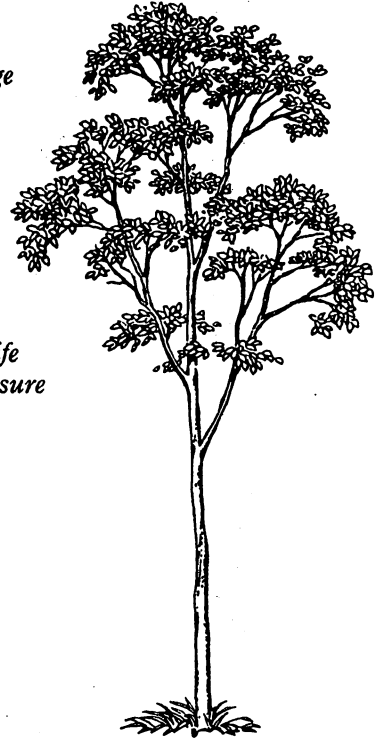
*Have I fled so very far to stand here just outside this life
A local ghost, transparent and afraid, in this town so sure
 of the substance of its dream, of
 the texture of its tidy lawns, the
 polished paint on its new cars, of
 its god, its flag, its law
 its dreary cadence of routine, of
 reflections from the mirrors mounted in its halls*

*In this town of firm belief in fragile, tempered lies
I flicker like a secret flame in a forest of dead trees
 in vigilant pretense they're yet alive
I imagine, any breath, they will extinguish me
 pull me beneath the surface of this
 fetid lake of Southern dreams*

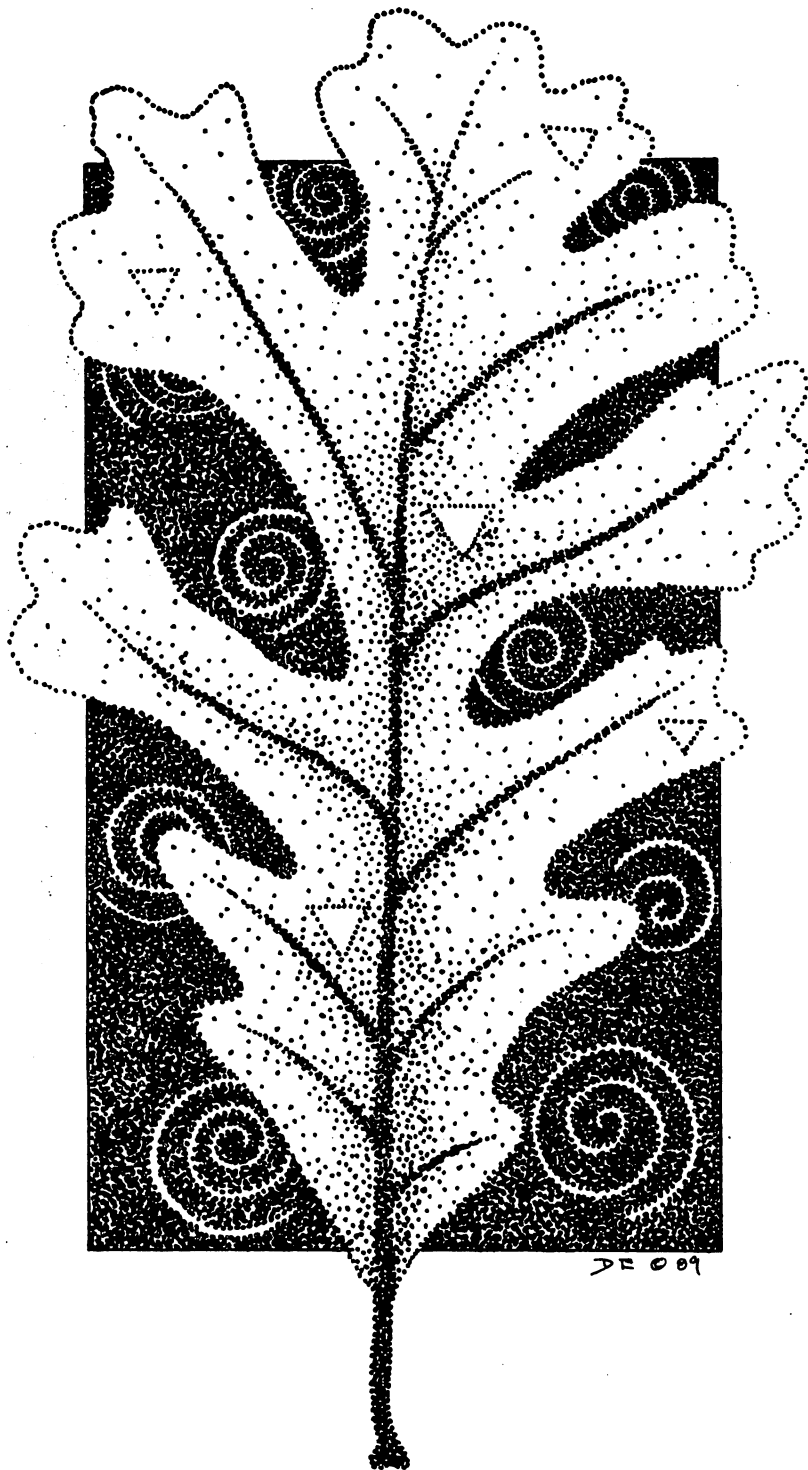
*So, will I flair in rage on a sudden gust of unforgotten pain
 and set their brittle masquerade of life-in-death ablaze
 to reveal the true and living hell
 so much preached of and prophesied*

*Do these tangled webs of time draw closed into
 a prison around my clouded hope of flight
Or will they focus to a searing ray of culminating vision
A diamond passage yet to be revealed*

Do I come back here to torture or to heal



Roy King



DE 009



BOOK REVIEW

We Are Not All Gardnerians One Witch's Opinion on Aidan Kelly's Book

by Leah Samul

Aidan Kelly's book, *Crafting the Art of Magic: A History of Modern Witchcraft 1939-64*, has only recently been published by Llewellyn, but it is already causing controversy. The book's title might lead one to believe that it is an over-all history of the Craft during the stated years. In actuality the book focuses on the Gardnerian tradition of Witchcraft, started by Gerald Gardner. It is important to know that as part of his thesis, Kelly redefines all of modern Witchcraft as Gardnerian Witchcraft. As a non-Gardnerian Witch, I would like to go on record to say that I find Kelly's redefinition of the Craft extremely convenient.

Kelly feels that all the current Craft "activity derives from widespread imitating of Gardnerian practices, and from no other source." (p. x) The field work necessary to back up that statement in a rigorous, scholarly way would be truly staggering. It would mean interviewing thousands of Witches of every persuasion in each of the 50 states. It would further entail comparing the information from those interviews with the information found in Gardner's books, to see how many of the practices of all these solitaries and covens could be said to have come from Gardner. Kelly didn't do this.

What he did do was to compare Gardner's writing with published sources of information that were available at the time Gardner became involved with Witchcraft. Kelly concludes that Gardner, with the help of others, wrote the rituals and laws that Gardnerians had previously been told were surviving remnants of an ancient tradition discovered by Gardner. But there is a huge difference between saying, on the one hand, that all of Gardnerian Witchcraft was based on existing sources, and saying, on the

other hand, that all of the Witchcraft currently being practiced is based solely on Gardner and no other source. As a non-Gardnerian Witch, I take umbrage at this idea. Especially since some of the concepts that Kelly presents in the book as Craft "beliefs" are ideas I had never heard before. If we are all imitating Gardnerian Witchcraft, why is it that these ideas are so new to me? Moreover, even the Gardnerians I talked to feel that Kelly did a less than solid job representing their tradition.

And as a Witch, I was especially put off by this unfortunate statement that closes the book: "Let me merely extend an invitation: if you, dear reader, can no longer stomach being in communion with Cardinal Ratzinger—or whoever the Chief Son-of-a-Bitch of your particular persuasion may be—then come circle with the Witches." (p. 184) Regardless of what Kelly thinks of the Cardinal, implying in print that he is a son-of-a-bitch is childish. Comments of this sort have no place in a history book. I hope the non-Witches who read Kelly's book are aware that most of the practitioners of Witchcraft would not feel it necessary to be so crude. Both Kelly and his publisher, Llewellyn, are out of line.

©Leah Samul, Compost Coven, 7/31/91

(Compost Coven was originally formed in the late 70's, with Starhawk as the High Priestess. In 1979 Valerie Walker took over the HP duties and trained new people. The current members of Compost are so opinionated that Starhawk probably wouldn't want to come near us with a 10-foot pole. Compost Coven has its roots in the Faery tradition. If we are simply imitating Gardnerian practices, well, it's certainly news to us!)

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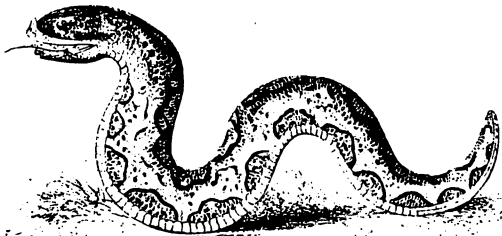
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Announcements

☛ **Personal:** To the person who kindly sent me the tooth powder in response to my previous article, thanks. It's just what I need, because that bad Starhawk went and told everybody to give their spiritual teachers chocolate and now lots of people send me candy which only contributes to my dental problems. In gratitude, The Good Starhawk.

☛ **Seventh Annual Harvest Moon Celebration** will take place at Pierce College in Woodland Hills on **October 12 and 13, 1991**. Guests include Paul Beyerl and Kenny and Tzipora. For further information, contact The Pallas Society, P.O. Box 18211, Encino CA 91316, or call (818) 407-4533.

☛ Firebird and Fran were trysted under a waxing Scorpio moon on August 19th on their 12th anniversary (thereabouts). Jane Lowe, Women's Spirituality Forum, performed the rite at a Bay Area beach. The ceremony included many blessings, a broom jump, and reading poetry written for each other. Blessings.

☛ The plunder of Native American lands is nowhere more imminent than at Big Mountain, where traditional Dineh (Navajo) and Hopi have resisted relocation since the 1974 Navajo-Hopi Relocation Act. Bush's recently appointed Commissioner of Navajo-Hopi Indian Relocation has stated that his first priority is to remove all Navajo from the so-called Hopi Partitioned Lands. Beside the poverty that afflicts all Indian reservations, people of the Big Mountain area are facing increased livestock confiscation, water diversion, police harassment, and visits from "relocation counselors." Nevertheless, hundreds of families are resisting these tactics, determined to remain on their ancestral land. Their resistance has inspired a broad spectrum of support. For more information, call the Veterans Peace Action Teams at 415-753-2130, or the Big Mountain Support Group/Weaving Project at 415-664-1847.

☛ **Global Calling**—Citizens from all over the globe are signing the "Earth Covenant," a pact among peoples to respect the planet and the life it sustains. Drafted in September 1989 by representatives from a number of concerned organizations, including Audubon President Peter A.A. Berle, the treaty has since been signed by several thousand people from more than 40 countries.

The Earth Covenant calls on people to "act and live in a way that preserves the natural life processes of the Earth and respects all species and their habitats." It recognizes the right of all people to a healthy environment and calls on signatories to work for laws that protect the environment. Signatures to the treaty will be presented at the 1992 World Conference on the Environment in Brazil.

If you'd like more information on the Earth Covenant, write to Global Education Associates, Suite 456, 475 Riverside Dr., New York, N.Y. 10115.

☛ **Goddess Gathers** A Monthly Community Gathering of Womenspirits! Come share your journey, connect with sisters, commune with the Earth . . . **Time:** The last Sunday of each month, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. **Place:** The Barn, 104 S. Park Way, Santa Cruz* **Donation:** \$5.00 per person (more if you can, less if you can't). **Facilitated by:** Shekhinah, long-time local wise-woman. Also: Presentations from Local Luminaries, Meditations, Healings. For more information call: (408) 423-7639 or (408) 426-7923. (*Address subject to change—please call.)



☞ **Women in Prison** Are you aware of any *good* programs at your institution? I am helping to write a guide book about useful programs for women in prison. The book will be used to develop new programs using the best existing ones as models. Though this guide won't create immediate changes in prison conditions, we think it can *lead* to better programs in the areas that matter to you. If you know of programs in the areas of health care, counseling, education, job-training, pre-release or work-furlough, art and creative writing, family and children, drug treatment, or any other area *you think is important*, please write to: Tatiana Schreiber, Education Development Center, 55 Chapel St., Newton, MA 02160. Also, write if you have any questions about the project. Thanks! (This project is funded by the National Institute of Corrections, a government agency.)

☞ **HELP! We Need Your Blood!** If you can donate blood into Reclaiming's account (#1913) at Irwin Memorial Blood Bank (567-6400 for information/appointment), please do so. If you or a loved one needs blood for surgery, etc., contact Rose at 821-3336 for transfer. If the Goddess blesses you with good health, please share and give the gift of life. **And many thanks to our donors.**

☞ **Cambridge** is an international non-profit correspondence organization mostly for teens but also open to adults. Based in America with members from all around the world, Cambridge informs people on how bad the environmental status is and how to change it through the way we live and the respect that we need to show to the earth. Write to Cambridge for more information at: Cambridge, P.O. Box 1926, Casper, WY 82601-2.

☞ A recent Supreme Court Decision opened up Public Schools to meetings by student christian prayer groups. This of course means that a group who wishes to meet to study Witchcraft may do so. The Association of Cymmry Wicca is offering a free active ACW membership to any Pagan religious group who wishes student members of its congregation to meet in a Public School *and* will agree to abide by their Bylaws. For more information, contact Association of Cymmry Wicca, P.O. Box 674884, Marietta, Georgia 30067 (404) 423-9585.

☞ **"13th Heaven,"** the first-ever goddess cable TV show starring Zsuzsanna Budapest is playing all over the Bay Area. This entertaining and educational show on the Goddess hosts different guest artists and rituals every month. Call 444-7724 for station listings and times.

☞ **P.I.R. Newsletter** is a new publication for Pagans in twelve-step recovery programs. Contact: **P.I.R. Newsletter, c/o Bekki, 6560 S.R. 356, New Marshfield, OH 45766.**





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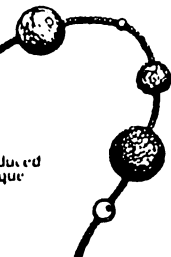
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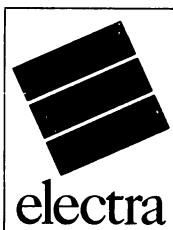


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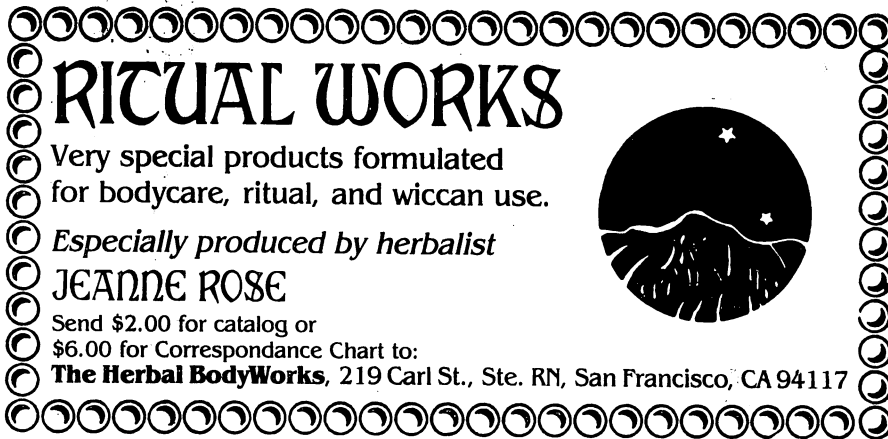
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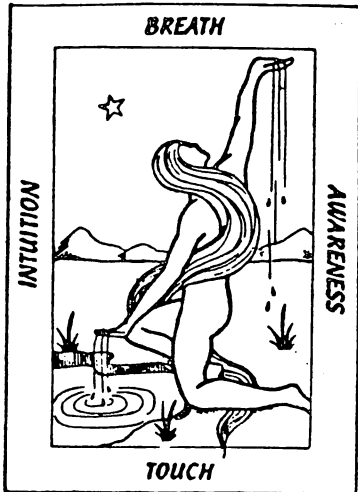
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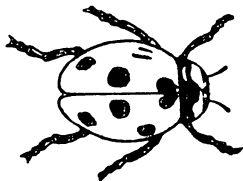
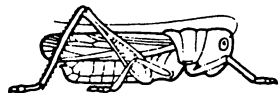


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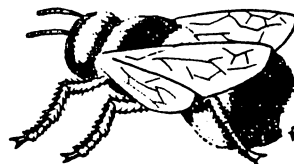
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