Reclaiming Newsletter





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

When requesting information from Reclaiming, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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, February 5, 1992

Reclaiming Events Line 2 (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

Reclaiming Newsletter

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Cover Graphic by Donald Engstrom

Pentacles: Cybele, Hilary, Xy, Karen, Anne, Rose

Viciousness Workshop by Laura and Stacy

This issue produced out of thin air by Anne, Cherie, Jody, Karen, Laura, Rose, David M., Margaret & Stanley.

Printed on Recycled Paper

Yule/deep ember

breath of morning.

by Bob Thawley

Orb of congealed flame. wheeling red and shrunken, solitary on the western gate, the shortest day done and the sun closes up, tightens as our hearts into a balled-up fist and goes inward, the earth as ourselves contracts into itself, into foetal position, dense in the benthic bottom-of-the-sea dark rocked with tidal-swells and green bioflourescent flashes of its own griefs and pains, of a year's worth of blood drawn-off, drawing strength after deaths and disasters, genocides of general disregard, of generals and tanks, plagues and persecution, we in the silence of a tilted perihelion anticipate the long swing towards spring and the resurrection of dawn, the fist of the sun arising in strength from pain, our hearts crest the narrow side of night bursting horizon and desperation incandescent hope reborn, with the stuttering



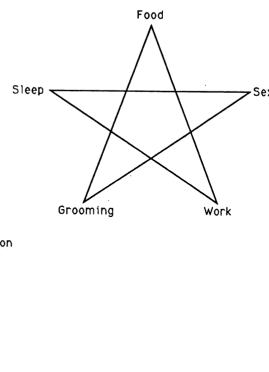
Eclipse

by Andres

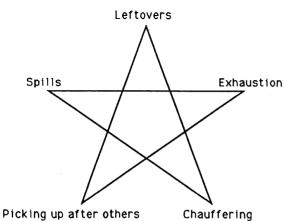
At youth the map was dreams
Thru inner evocations by now turned to memory
Silent moments of nostalgia and experience
I turn to the window and see the inextricable lines
of the brain of the city clustered with buildings
and traffic lights covered with fog
The smoke of the cigarette in turmoil
flying as the disintegrating, vanishing mind
Dizziness in the pulse of eye picking the petals
of a crystal rose to sand and dust
Effortlessly the eclipse has overshadowed the sun
leaving in myself a garden of a thousand black flowers
The delusion of the day has lost its sustenance.



Pentacle of Daily Life



Pentacle of Parenting





The Rebirth of the Sun A Winter Solstice Story for Children



by Starhawk

It was the middle of winter, and the sun had grown very old.

All year long the sun had worked very hard, rising and setting, rising and setting, day after day. All year long the sun had fed everybody on earth, shining and shining, giving energy to the trees and the flowers and the grasses so they could grow and feed the animals and birds and insects and people.

All year the sun's gravity held tight to the spinning ball of the earth and the twirling ball of the moon and the eight other whirling planets as they traveled around and around and around, until the poor sun was dizzy watching it all.

Now the poor tired sun could barely make it up in the morning, and after a very short time, needed to sleep again. So the days grew shorter, and the nights grew longer, until the day was so short it was hardly worth getting up for.

Night felt sorry for the sun.

"Come to my arms and rest, child," she said. "After all, I am your mother. You were born out of my darkness, billions of years ago, and you will return to me when all things end. Let me cradle you now, as I shelter every galaxy and star in the universe."

So Night wrapped her great arms around the sun, and the night was very long indeed.

"Why does the dark go on so long?" asked children all over the earth. "Won't the sun ever come back again?"

"The sun is very tired," the old ones said.
"But maybe, if you children say thank you for all the things the sun does for us, the light may return in the morning."

The children sang songs to the sun. They thought about all the things the sun gave them.

"Thank you for growing the lettuces and the corn and the rice and the wheat," they said.

"Thank you for growing the trees of the forests and the seaweed in the oceans and the krill that feeds the whales." "Thank you for stirring the air and making winds that bring the rain."

Every time a child said thank you, the sun began to feel a little lighter, a little brighter. Wrapped safely in the arms of Night, the sun grew younger and younger.

At last the children had to go to bed. "We will stay up and wait for the sun to rise again," the old ones said.

"Can't we stay up, too?" the children asked.

"You can try, but you will get too sleepy," the old ones said. "But you can each light a candle, because all fire is a spark of the sun's fire. Put your candle in a very safe place, and let it keep vigil for you as you sleep and dream of sunrise."

So the children lit their candles and put them in very safe places, and each flame was a little spark of the sun's fire. And the sun peeped out from between the arms of Night, and saw all the little fires, and began to feel warmer and brighter and younger still.

Early in the morning, the old ones woke the children. Together they climbed a high hill, and faced to the East, the direction of sunrise. They sang songs to the sun, and ran around trying to keep warm in the cold of night. They waited and waited to see what dawn would bring.

The sky began to turn from black to indigo to blue. Slowly the sky grew light. A golden glow crept over the horizon. Night opened her great arms, and in a burst of brightness, the sun appeared, new and strong and shining.

For in the long night the sun had rested well and grown young from the songs and the thanks of the children, young as a brand new baby, born out of Night once more.

Everybody cheered, and the children jumped up and down.

"The sun has returned! The sun is reborn!" the people cried. And they danced and sang to celebrate the birth of a new year, and then went home to breakfast.

THE END

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Invocation to the Lord and Lady When You Miss Your Lover

by Francesca Dubie

You who are so sweetly in love come to me now.

I ask you to walk with me sit with me eat with me so that your love for each other will console me so that your love for each other will fill me so that your love for each other will strengthen my love in this absence.

Blessings on your love.

And thank you.

Since you are inviting them to eat with you it is a good idea to then feed them. Only polite, right!? Don't insult them!

Also, don't be surprised if shortly after using this prayer you get a call from a good friend asking you to have dinner. Or perhaps you bump into an old buddy who walks with you for a while as you are on your way to work. Or your pet cat who loathes being petted becomes very cuddly and sits in your lap all day keeping you good company. You have asked the Lord and Lady to eat with you and to walk with you and to sit with you—perhaps they might do this through a person, or a pet. The Gods have any number of interesting ways to answer requests—anything from a cat acting for Them to something as subtle as a sense of well-being that you gain after your request, either immediately or in a while.



samhain/lluvia de los muertos

by Bob Thawley

Dark chatters down early now, in voices of violet and amber, receding sun surrenders winter, her first rain raises dark smell of damp earth, fertile incense full of womb and grave to mix with liquid ease, surcease and sustenance. Chittering crab claws of memory, babble of spirits perceptible in ebb and flow of this liquid chorus a forest of green sighs laughter and taunting and whispers, slick branches in rhythm, danced upon by ancestor-skin-bone-vapour wind-whipped to deposit a benediction of shimmering sentience and sheets of sound and above and below are one, complete the cycle from sea to cloud to land, absolution and transparent veil through which ghosts walk and the dead are heard to speak syllables of life.

Dear Reclaiming,

I was deeply moved by the Samhain cycle. Bits of poetry, images and chants are still echoing in my head. I am a better woman because I was there. Thanks to all who created the rituals.

There was one part where my own belief system and experience with magic grated against the voice of the ritual. I have done quite a bit of magical work claiming and drawing limits with my (dead) grandfather who sexually molested myself, my aunt and mother, and at least three of my cousins, while we were children or teenagers. I have never gotten very far with the good ancestor/bad ancestor images which predominated on the second night of the Samhain cycle.

In my grandfather's case there are parts of my heritage I want to claim through him. He, with his grade school education, was scorned by his wife (my grandmother) and other "Ivy League" family members. Through him comes my direct line to the Irish farmers and mill workers who moved from Europe to New England still close to the land and a simpler, older wisdom.

For me the center of the mystery is that my good and bad ancestors were one and the same, just as I am neither hero nor traitor. Our mother who did not allow her daughter's sexual parts to be cut out may have been the same woman who sold captives into slavery. Our humanness binds us to them and to the future. How about focussing at least part of the ritual on the fact that all our ancestors were, by definition, survivors... at least until childbearing years.

"I stood motionless by the waterhole as darkness fell... I leave you your tiny hairs, with the wisdom to stand up in the cold.

I carried our water five hundred feet up the cliff face every day... I leave you the pump and sing of your blood when you work hard.

My sisters and I sorted the corn, grain by grain, to get the moths out of the storehouse... I leave you the swiftness and accuracy of your fingertips.

That year, the river rose and dirty water flooded our wells . . . I leave you your miracle immune system."

I know the intent of the ritual was to focus some healing on the history of injustices between cultural groups, and remind us that all cultures have heroism and shame in their stories. But maybe we can do this without slipping into the dualism which opens the door to self-hate.

Thanks again for the wonderful rituals.

Hilary Valentine

Samhain Cycle Report

We have not yet determined the amount of money we raised at the Samhain Cycle, but since we sold out at each ritual we feel we were successful. The Reclaiming Collective, at its November retreat, agreed to give 60% of the profits to Prevention Point Needle Exchange. The remaining 40% of the money will help Reclaiming launch a new tape project, we hope, and will make possible partial scholarships to Reclaiming classes, as well as helping with the publication of this newsletter. Thank you all for your generosity and continuing support and enthusiasm.

Dragonbirth

(from my shadow-father)

You set me on a road through hell raping, twisting my new baby body smothering trust, murdering joy

And by your force fed religion of fear
your demonic god
aimed and shot like an arrow
your pathetic guilt
your jealous persuasion
to hold my life in a tormented prison
Just one more perverted, incestuous invasion

You darkened my sky, my dreams and my sight You stained our existence, by day and by night

I buried my soul away from your theft Resisted your bondage with indifference Opened only to let my hatred shoot through Stopping you, binding you hurting you, breaking you

I did what I could to cripple your power a small boy, alone against his own father

But your venom had stung me too deep inside
I had swallowed too many poisonous lies
I took in your life
and grew weak and lame
I crawled off to hide
far away from your pain
to conjure the man
I had to become

When finally my rage burst into flame my mind was exploded my body consumed Devoured and disgorged I endured only as fire

I roared with the hell-born
a fiend with no face
as your poison boiled and screamed in my veins
echoing centuries
of torture and slavery

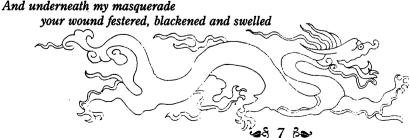
My gut coiled tight as a ravenous snake my skin sprouted spikes my heart grew sharp fangs Something unknown to terror enveloped my spine

New eyes formed and opened inward, then outward No more could be hidden what had been forgotten

I waited alone, with no breath of hope an internal desert, a frozen expanse I found a deep spring of strength hidden there I drank my fill from that dark, silent well

I walked on in sunlight companions in hand naked, through cities wearing your brand

I worked in the darkness
dark moon through dark moon
transmuting your poison
sealing your tomb



Reaching down ever deeper into calm, healing waters
I stumbled beyond the galactic borders
falling from earth
an immeasurable depth
tumbling through chaos
with nothing to grasp
I opened my wings
and heard the old dragon laugh

Your prison is shattered your hell has grown cold you are freed from my curse I have broken your hold

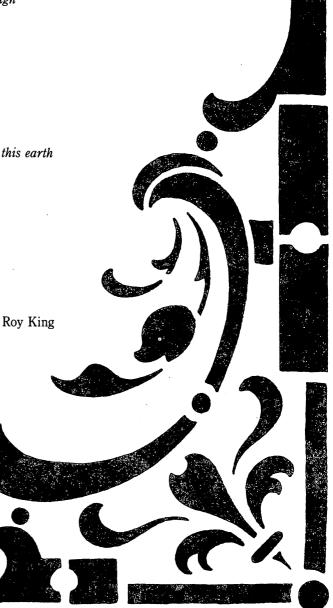
Bred by the oldest, brightest white stars

I was formed in the womb

of the great spiral arms

to emerge from the ruptured shell of this earth
a wondrous creature
winged
serpentine

To burst from the egg of sad humankind a glistening beast a breather of fire a vessel of vision a new dragon child



All Beings of the Earth: Songs & Chants of the EarthSpirit Community by Mothertongue, 1991

Reviewed by M. Macha NightMare

Over Labor Day weekend I had the good fortune to attend MerryMeet in Massachusetts as a representative of the Northern California Local Council of the Covenant of the Goddess (NCLC-CoG). Among the many blessings of that trip, I had a chance to renew my acquaintance with some folks from EarthSpirit Community, a Boston-based Pagan organization harmonious with Reclaiming Collective, and to meet more people who are associated with this vibrant community.

Since I generally knew of the quality of their work, most particularly through their publication *FireHeart*, which I find to be truly one of the finest pagan rags extant, I immediately purchased their new tape, unheard.

Upon arriving home in California after 14 hours of travel and delays, and being biologically in another time zone and wanting to unwind and just be home, I lay down and put on this new tape. Although I wasn't exactly surprised because I have come to expect good things from EarthSpirit Community, I was indeed delighted.

Not only is it well engineered, but, more importantly, the songs and chants are eloquent, powerful and inspired. I was most taken with five chants. "The Moon is High" is a haunting chant which EarthSpirit uses to open their Samhain Circle (The Moon is high at the Witching hour...), and its complement, "Between the Worlds," used to close the same circle.

Good God chants are in short supply, in my experience. They often either make the God seem wimpy or emphasize qualities to which I don't much relate or which, in my worldview, belong more to the Goddess. But this tape has a God chant which works beautifully for me. It's called "Herne," refers to Him as the "Watcher at the Gates of Winter" and it comes from an upstate New York coven called Circle in the Greenwood.

I find that the title chant, "All Beings of the Earth," expresses tremendous potential for healing. It is maintained by the fire throughout the entire three days of EarthSpirit's Twilight Covening, a ritual to enter the Dark Time.

Side Two consists entirely of only one chant written by Andras Corban Arthen, "We Are One..." The chant is "We are one with the soul of the Earth, Mother Earth." That's it, and when it's "sung repeatedly, can bring us to a deep awareness of ourselves and the Earth and one and sacred."

In addition to containing beautiful harmonies, these chants are based on a foundation of magnificent drumming.

This tape, All Beings of the Earth, is excellent, right up there with last year's Lunacy from Kansas City and Reclaiming's own chant tape. All of the chants on the tape can easily be used by magical practitioners, and even adapted to their own specific needs. Besides, it's exciting and empowering to know that we are everywhere.

Do yourself a favor and buy this tape. Send \$9.95 plus \$1.50 postage and handling to The EarthSpirit Community, P.O. Box 365, Medford, Ma 02155. Or buy it at your local occult or new age store. And while you're at it, ask them to carry Reclaiming's chant tape and the Reclaiming Newsletter and EarthSpirit's FireHeart if they don't already carry them. I guarantee you'll be glad you did, plus you'll be shining up your aura and acquiring good karma.



Kids and Wicca

by Sage

I'd like to summarize a discussion held at Witch Camp in the hopes that this might serve to nurture the threads of a web of people interested in issues related to witchcraft and young people.

Discussion at Camp seemed to focus around five major areas:

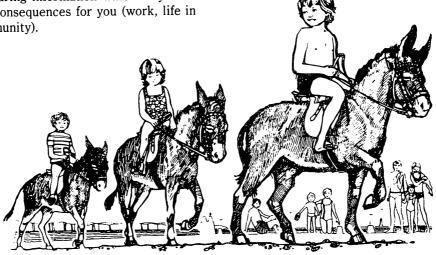
- 1. Resources for growing up Wiccan—locating and creating stories and other material which express our worldview and provide an alternative to the Christian and patriarchydominated material available in most schools and libraries. Three specific titles were mentioned:
- **H.A.M.**—a youth magazine published by *Green Egg*,
- A Mountain in Tibet—a picture book about reincarnation, and

Emil's Magical Journey by Jane Roberts.

- 2. Backlash—preparing kids for honoring and celebrating our beliefs and heritage within an environment which may be hostile to them. (Somewhat like the task of introducing healthy concepts about sexuality in the age of AIDS.)
- 3. Being dragged out of the 'broom closet'-kids (your own or your friends) enthusiastically sharing information which may have detrimental consequences for you (work, life in a small community).

- 4. Ritual—developing ritual which provides opportunities for young people to get out of ritual what we get out of ritual. There was a clear sense that this may mean different activities, with similar intention. Suggestions included:
- ✗ giving even very young children real roles to play during the ritual
- ** providing format (perhaps location) for children to opt in and out at will
- * choosing sabbats which already have particular appeal (Samhain, Beltane), or have stories with which young people can identify.
- 5. Rites of Passage—one clear message was that we must ensure that young people have the rite they choose, not the one we wish we'd had! There was also discussion about single parents with opposite-sex children. Mothers of adolescent boys would love suggestions from Wiccan men.

I hope I've accurately represented at least some of the major points of a lively and lengthy discussion. But even more, I hope this article will inspire others to participate in the discussion and begin a networking to share ideas and resources.



The End of the World

The end of the world comes in increments each barely noticeable at the time a day of no rain "beautiful weather" we say a wind from the wrong direction unseasonably warm

sometimes the end of the world shakes us up not the bridges' and freeways' collapse we expect that but how easily all the lights go out

or the end of the world is invisible as radiation it's in your food, in your lungs in the upper atmosphere it fells trees it floats in the ocean snaring birds by the feet and neck

there is no safe place to sit out the end of the world New Zealand issues ozone warnings in the Arctic Eskimos concentrate PCBs in their flesh

everything seems so normal when the world ends you drive to the health club take a shower you're chopping broccoli or thinking about another cup of coffee when the flames roar down the hill I used to be afraid of nuclear war in bad dreams
I watched from a high place as bombs fell

now smoke clouds half the sky as the world ends the light is cold, crystalline ash falls in my garden as the hills burn across the bay

later, survivors
will sift the ashes
for charred teeth
a splinter of identifiable bone
chimneys stand sentinel
over streets
silent as any battlefield
but no enemy did this to us
only "beautiful weather"
we still say
and a wind from the wrong direction
at the end of a dry, dry season
after five years of drought

we will rebuild
forgetting
how the temperature steadily
rises
how all the winds and seasons
are changed
another beautiful day
will come
and a wind unseasonably warm

the hills will burn again one more increment of the end

Starhawk October, 1991

Persistence of Vision

by Leslie Tilley

That first blind moment looking out my mind wanted what it knew, not these trees like heads of singed hair,

this cemetery of chimneys, the cars like models made of foil, trampled by a child who a second later focused

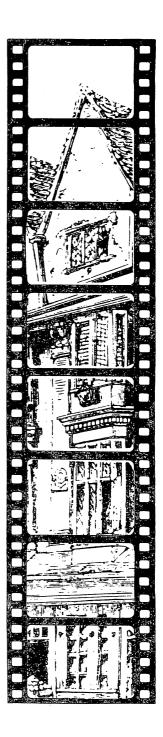
his lens upon an ant hill and watched while the tenants writhed or fled.
But already I cannot remember

how it looked. The house across the street is a pile of dishes fused by heat, a skeleton palm guarding the front

of door's ghost, a solitary mantlepiece stranding the ceramic figure twenty feet above the ground. A squirrel bobs

and glides among the ruins; the image of what was refuses to return. Instead, I see the bones of these hills,

their curves beneath the streets and rubble, the courses of ancient streams, and grasses bowing before a clean wind.



Spiral Fund

to aid members of the Pagan community affected by the fire (several uninsured renters were burned out.)

Make check payable to:

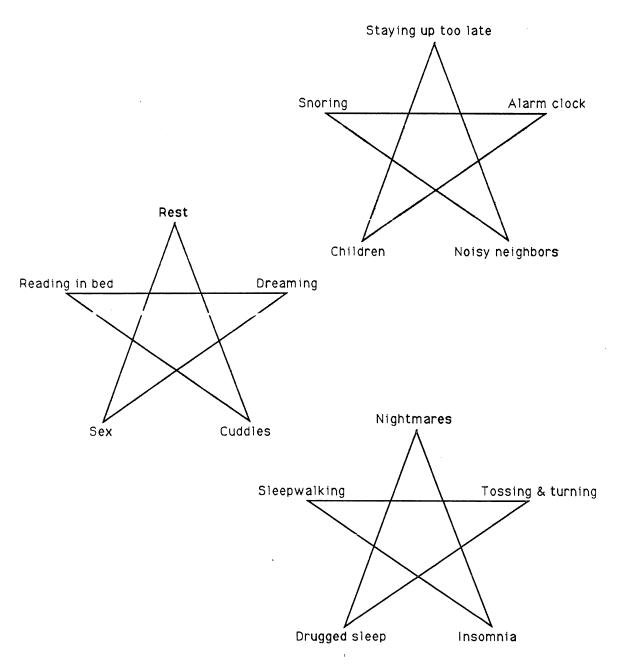
"Fellowship of the Spiral Path"

and earmark it for:

"Disaster Relief Fund."

Send to: Spiral Treasurer
10701 Estepa
Oakland, CA 94603

Pentacles of Sleep





ELEMENTS OF MAGIC FOR WOMEN by Carol and Pandora

With the art of magic, we deepen our vision and focus our will, empowering ourselves to act in the world. In this class we begin the practice of Magic, Witchcraft, and Goddess spirituality by working with the Elements of Magic: Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Spirit. Techniques include: visualization, sensing, and projecting energy, chanting, trance, creating magical space, spellcraft, and structuring rituals. Beginning six-week course, **Wednesday** evenings, starting **February 5**. Call Carol at 550-0920 for information, registration, and location. Sliding scale \$60-\$120.

LOOKING AT YOUR ASTROLOGICAL BIRTH CHART by Judy Foster

Do you have a chart but no clue how to read it? In this class, I will show you how to structure your own interpretation for continuous self-exploration. After all, who knows you as well as yourself? Prerequisites: some familiarity with the Western esoteric symbolic system, and your birth chart (or a computer print-out of the data). Six **Monday** evenings in the East Bay. Begins **January 20**, 7-9:30 pm. \$60-\$100 sliding scale. For details call 510-843-0722.

A WEEKEND OF MOVING BETWEEN THE WORLDS—exploring authentic movement and sound, taught by Beverly F. and Jeff Moony

What can we learn from our bodies' painful or "stuck" places? We will focus on accepting our bodies and empowering them to create a ritual that is specifically ours, heightening our abilities to trust and support each other within sacred space by forging tantric energy circles and sharing symbol drawings. We will also work with our breath through chanting, singing and chakra vocalizations. We need to pick a weekend in **January** so call early. \$35–\$70 sliding scale. For registration and location call Beverly 415-388-3413. (Also possible as a weekend sleepover at the foot of Mt. Tamalpais.)

RITES OF PASSAGE FOR WOMEN by Hillary Valentine and Rose May Dance

The rites of Passage focuses on dreams, myths and language, using traditional and nontraditional tales and techniques to create a personal rite of passage. Through storytelling, trance, release work and dreams we receive our challenge(s), meet our helpers, work through our blocks and emerge renewed, reborn. This class culminates with a ritual created by the students. Prerequisites: Elements of Magic or equivalent experience/study. Six **Thursdays** starting. **January 13**. Call Rose, 415-821-3336, for registration and location in SF Mission District. \$60-\$120 sliding scale.

Velmuary

sses and Events

RECLAIMING RECOMMENDS

BREATH AND BODY CLASS FOR WOMEN SURVIVORS OF INCEST & ABUSE by Cybele

This class focuses on your relationship with your body, working with the issues survivors share: shame, self-disgust, fear, lack of boundaries or shutting down and checking out of the body. We will work in sacred space to reclaim our ground, our voices and our boundaries. We will begin to integrate bodily life as a place of pleasure & power. We will learn and use grounding practices, movement work, body maps and breathwork. This class strives to connect physical states, emotions, and habits of attention to facilitate healing within ritual space. Class is open to any woman survivor interested in using ritual and having a spiritual focus in her recovery/healing process. Ongoing support (therapy, bodywork and/or 12-step program) is strongly suggested during this class. Eight evenings, \$80-\$160 sliding scale. Call Cybele 415-648-3908 for information and registration.

EXPLORING ENDARKENMENT for women only, with Pleiades and Panther

Come and dive deep into your body's wisdom. Our emphasis will be on opening up to sound, touch, smell, taste, and feel, rather than sight, to strengthen our inner foundations. We will explore ways of magic inspired by fog and night. A magic of actively allowing things to happen; of expanding into trees, sky and even buildings for protection or knowledge; of trusting the perceptions of feet and skin to find one's path and walk firmly on it, and much more. Our format will focus around a specific Deity for each class. Six **Tuesday** nights starting **January 14**. Sliding scale \$60-\$120. If money is a problem call and we can work something out. Call Pleiades 415-922-1382 for registration and information.

SEARCHING FOR THE GREEN MAN with Brook S., Charles D., and David M.

A one day workshop for 10-12 men: mask-making in the morning and ritual in the afternoon. Our search will likely center on the bogs of Ireland and England, the woodlands of northern Europe, and the rainforests of Senegal. Call David or Charles at 282-8397 for information and SF location. Some ritual experience helpful. **January 11** from 9am-5pm. \$10 materials fee.

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☆ Starhawk's 1992 Schedule ☆ -

For more information contact HARMONY NETWORK, PO Box 2550, Guerneville, CA 95446 (707) 869-0989

*Several events are not yet confirmed at deadline time.

Please write or call HARMONY NETWORK or call the Reclaiming Events line. Thanks.

JANUARY 24-26, 1992: New York, NY.

Friday: "Challenges into The 21st Century"—Talk Saturday and Sunday: Workshop for Women and Men Contact: The New York Open Center 212-219-2527

FEBRUARY 14-16: Tallahassee, Florida

Friday: Public Talk

Saturday and Sunday: Workshop for Women and Men

Contact: Harmony Network 707-869-0989

APRIL 23-26: Albuquerque and Santa Fe, NM (to be confirmed)

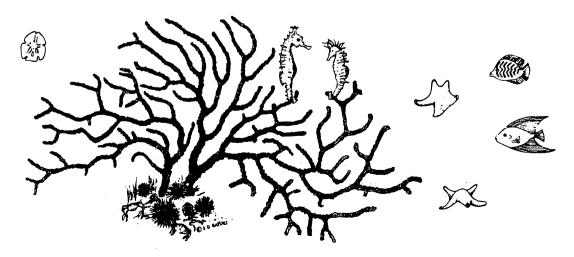
Thursday: talk at the University in Albuquerque

Friday-Sunday: Retreat for New Mexico Foundation for Human Enrichment

Contact: Harmony Network 707-869-0989

Upcoming Events in British Columbia and Winnipeg, Canada and Boston, Massachusetts

Check with Harmony Network for information on Women's Goddess Sites Tour of Greece!



Hannah's Household Hints

Hello, my dear and sacred readers. Thank you, all of you who have written in, applying for the position of household hints columnist. Although we cannot answer each letter personally, we appreciate the trouble that each and every one of you has gone to, and we appreciate the generosity that you are all showing, too, since we don't plan on paying you a damn thing.

Now comes the time, my beloved readers, when I must tell you that the next column will be the last Hannah's Household Hints column, as least as far as I know. So if you have anything to say, anything you want to see in print in the column, any questions you always meant to ask but never got around to it, any complaints, I guess, or even if you wanted to say something nice, you must say it now or forever hold your peace, because if it does not get into the Reclaiming post office box soon I will never see it. Thank you.

Hannah, as you know, is indisposed—the latest news is that she has taken up permanent residence in the Gaeltacht and is translating her collected works into Irish—but I have here a letter to her, which I print in its entirety. I did not make this up. Not that I expect you to believe me.

Dear Hannah.

I am writing to you with a Big Spiritual Problem. You see, there were a lot of Sacred Mosquitoes at Witch Camp last summer. As a result, I now find that I can only go into Trance when surrounded by the aroma of Holy Insect Repellant. Unfortunately my coven mates are not so Highly Evolved and Enlightened and find the entire concept to be Repellant.

I am Deeply Troubled by this problem. What can I do?

By the way my Profound Inhalant Experience has blessed me with a new Sacred Name...

Blessed be, Deet



I must say that it always amazes me, how easy it is for you all to forget that you must Suffer to Learn. Obviously, the solution here is that the insect repellant addict must stop wearing it, in order to ease the spiritual growth of those less fortunate than she; the others must allow her to wear it, in order not to cause her to stumble on her spiritual path. Then they must all go for counselling. Soon, the coven will break up and there will be recriminations. Others will get involved, on account of being So Fond of the people involved and wishing to be helpful, and after a while there will be letters written to Reclaiming, pretending to be about politics or theology, but really about the person who wrote the original letter. This is life.

All of this could have been avoided by my neglecting to print the letter in the first place.

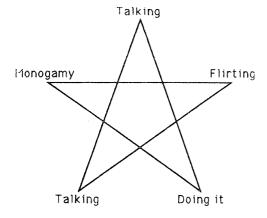
Love, Pandora



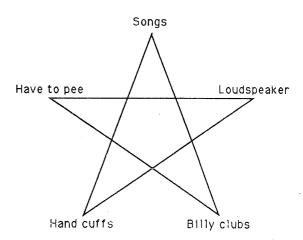
WARNING!

The terrible little Witches presiding over the Reclaiming mail are thinking nasty thoughts and muttering incantations under their breath at the people who do not include self-addressed, stamped envelopes in their letters. We refuse to be responsible for the warts you are likely to grow on your hands and noses. And if you write us asking how to get rid of those warts, send a SASE, batbrain!

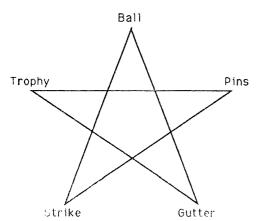
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High Priestess/Deep Priestess

by Hilary Valentine

It was an article in last quarter's *Reclaiming* newsletter which got me thinking about what a high priestess is. I'm a priestess, and I'm quite sure I'm not a high priestess. On the other hand I know some women who surely are high priestesses (Reclaiming has them too, but we don't give out special hats). What exactly, I wondered, was the difference?

Both myself and a high priestess do the same kinds of things. We heal, we find what is lost, we comfort, we take leadership in the mysteries of birth, initiation, marriage, and death. We teach, we rejoice, we honor the God and Goddess, we help those who ask if we are able.

In the hierarchical culture around us, a high grade is better that a low grade, a high mood better than a low mood, a high floor of an office building more prestigious than a low floor. This is sky religion imagery—high is better. So is a high priestess a better priestess? A more talented, a more dedicated, a more holy priestess? Maybe sites a more powerful priestess.

This answer doesn't hold up for me, because my experience contradicts it. When all is in order and I feel the Goddess' energy moving through me unobstructed, nothing could be more powerful, more holy, or inspire more dedication. I am not a high priestess, but I am not a less priestess either. The source of my power and the high Priestess' is the same identical source, and it does not lie in me or in her.

Yet I was still sure that there was such a thing as a high priestess, and it wasn't me. I needed to probe more deeply into what being a priestess means to me. Here I would find my answer.

For me the heart of being a priestess lies in my complete willingness to surrender myself to a process of self-transformation through ecstatic union with the Goddess. Alongside this and equally important is faith in a law of magic which states that what is between the worlds affects all the worlds. As I transform myself through magic, I transform all the worlds. A healthy priestess

makes all things whole. Every act of integrity, courage, and hope, whether witnessed or utterly anonymous has a ripple effect which reaches every corner of the universes.

So now back to the question of the high priestess. I would like to suggest that certain priestess' assignments from the Goddess place them so that when they change themselves, those most immediately affected for good or harm are *other priestesses*. These are the high priestesses. Others of us are so situated that when we change ourselves, those most immediately affected are other humans. Others of us may affect at the first circle plants, or animals, or inanimate objects.

Imagine for a moment a woman, a biologist, whose life work is the protection and propagation of the food plant of an endangered species of butterfly. She works for a public agency in the field almost every day, walking the steep hillsides of the Bay Area, checking patches of *Lupine Albifrons* gingerly collecting seed, propagating, checking the butterfly larvae, teaching groups of schoolchildren, signing trails so hikers don't disturb the clumps.

Surely this woman's work would be held up in shining beauty among us, she would be one of the great. Suppose she came to an occasional ritual, becoming lightly involved in our community, maybe taking a class or two, and drawing comfort from being with others who are focussed on healing nature within and without. Maybe she asks for and received initiation, or maybe she initiates herself.

This is a made-up story, made-up for the purpose of suggesting a new concept. Just as a healthy tree has a deep root for every high branch, let me suggest that a healthy craft community has a deep priestess for every high priestess. For every woman or man in the center of our communities whose personal integrity and commitment changes those other community members round about, so we need women or men whose personal integrity and commitment affects primarily those

outside our community, whether human, animal, plant, or inanimate. We also need a powerful trunk connecting roots and branches, because we need sunlight and starlight, but also deep, dark, wet earth for growing.

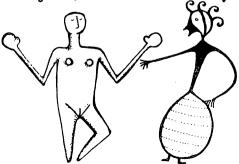
Where we as individuals are placed in this complex depends on the challenges the Goddess has placed in our individual lives. We can't each be field biologists, write books on Goddess religion, care for the sick, and young, and old, offer therapy

and bodywork, teach the children, plan rituals, grow food, create the beautiful objects which inspire us and the musical instruments we play. Some of us must do one task, some are assigned by gift and luck and will to others. Goddess willing, it is not ambition and competition which chooses the high priestess. Thanks be for the high priestesses, the deep priestesses and all those along the trunk. Let us hold one another in the highest honor.

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- *Convince overly nice comrades to cross the street to avoid you... at parties, rituals, retreats, etc.
- DON'T CALL FOR INFO. FEE: WHAT'S IT WORTH?
- *When: January 1st, 6.00 am, 850, Bryant, on the steps.



A reply to Macha Nightmare's view of the Ball Dance (June 2, 1991, at Harbin Hot Springs)

Dear Macha.

We were deeply troubled after reading your "Reflections on the Ball Dance" We are concerned about your perspective, the "mind set" you were in during the event. We wonder, were you really open to a new experience, the ritual of those with other backgrounds, or were you preconditioned by your own expectations and a strong dose of Judeo-Christian upbringing? Did what you SEE affect your emotions more than what you FELT being radiated by the participants?

As one supposedly dedicated to the Dark Mother, especially as Kali Ma, how do you feel about use of the body, your body, in ritual? Is the body something worthless to "mortify" (that is sacrifice, a Christian concept) or is it something wonderous to celebrate and give us ecstasy through its erotic energies (a tantric concept)? Can we use the body to explore our spirituality, or is that taboo (Temple of God, do not mess with it, Judeo-Christian concept)?

It seems to us (the bringers of the Ball Dance to neo-Pagan circles) that the dancers of the June 2 BloodRose Ritual, as physically non-conformist, tattooed and pierced as they were, amply demonstrate their position on "use of the body." But you seemed to take exception to the fact that they were "well-fed, well-clothed white people" and seemed to feel body rituals are historically reserved for emaciated, ill-clad Hindus or red-skinned Native Americans (by the way, several of the participants were of Native American blood). We disagree. We feel body rituals are the property of anyone who will use them for reclaiming, transformation and healing.

If you have problems with the depth and intensity of the ritual, remember, these dancers were mostly novices who had no prior cultural or personal experience in body ritual. One has to start somewhere, even if it looks trivial. Macha, please be more informed about the revival of body rituals for reclaiming. We would be pleased to show you extremely prolonged and intense body rituals now being practiced in groups like the Faerie's Black Leather Wings (1990 and 1991 gatherings) or in the 1985 documentary Dances Sacred & Profane. They equal or exceed the seriousness and intensity of the rituals you mentioned in your "Reflections"

Fakir

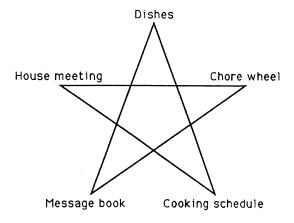
("practitioner of such things as the Amerindian Sun Dance and other bizarre mortifications of the flesh")

Carla.

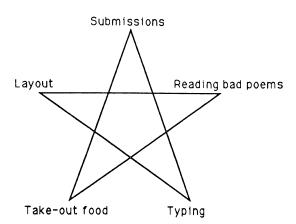
("plump woman (who) had tied her rather large breasts in bright scarves almost like tourniquets")



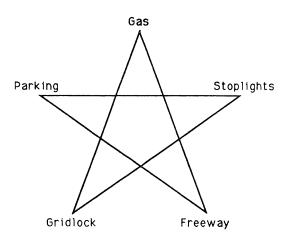
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Announcements

- PERSONAL to Lori who wants back issues of the newsletter. Please write again, I have lost your address. Rose.
- FOUND at Samhain Cycle Rituals on altar: string small Nepalese bone skull beads, string reddish mauve round stone beads, silver ball on black thread—jingles when shaken, round bowl-vase glazed on inside—natural beige clay with red streaking on outside, couple pieces red cloth with bold red black yellow patterning. Call Judy 510-843-0722.
- Call for Listings for Networking Guides. Circle is now accepting listing for the 1992-1993 edition of the Circle Guide to Pagan Groups, a directory of Wiccan, Pagan, Goddess spirituality, Shamanic, Pantheistic, and other Nature spirituality groups, centers, networks, churches, periodicals, stores, and festivals throughout the United States and other countries. Circle also is accepting listings for a new project, the Circle Guide to Pagan Arts, a directory of Wiccan/Pagan/Shamanic writers, illustrators, musicians, dancers, ritual tool makers, and other artists. Listings in both guides are free, but must be submitted by December 31. 1991. If you are interested in being listed in either or both guides, contact Circle right away for more details: Circle, Box 219, Mt. Horeb, WI 53572; phone: (608) 924-2216 weekdays 1-4 pm central time.
- The 1992 School for Priestesses will be held July 10-15, 1992 at Circle Sanctuary in Wisconsin. This weeklong retreat includes workshops, rituals, and a vision quest and is open to women facilitating Goddess spirituality groups and rituals. For more information, contact Circle, Box 219, Mt. Horeb, WI 53572, phone: (608) 924-2216 weekdays 1-4 pm central time.

Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp is still alive... and they need support!

- Despite the removal of cruise missiles, Greenham retains all the infrastructure of a NATO premier first base. They haven't gone— Why should we? We've been reclaiming this land for ten years—come join us!
- Greenham is now a stand-by base to serve Welford—the biggest conventional weapons store in Europe.
- As recently as the Gulf War, Greenham was used to fly out equipment which was directly responsible for killing people.
- Greenham is an international focus for women involved in peace and justice issues.
- It's one of the few, open, permanent, fairly accessible women-only spaces in Britain; also one of the few full-time peace camps in Britain—and the only women-only camp.
- Cruise is just one symptom of a society which allows the war machine to continue; Greenham is a place where we create alternative ways of living.

Women are more than welcome to come and visit or stay at any time. Just bring yourself, personal sleeping bag, and warm, waterproof clothing.

Donations are welcome and needed! Money is in short supply and needed to print and mail a newsletter, for the camp vehicle, for plastic, paint, boltcutters, and to enable women to come and stay.

For international donations: Obtain a bank draft from your local bank, convert it to British Pounds, then send it direct to us, or to our bank—Newbury Branch, Nationwide Anglia Building Society, 75 Northbrook St, Newbury, Berkshire, RG13 IND, U. K. (Account name—"Greenham Women are Everywhere," No. 0355 700398005)

Our address: Blue Gate, Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, Burys Bank, Newbury, Berkshire, U.K.

The twelfth annual Pagan Spirit Gathering will be held in southwestern Wisconsin, June 15-21, 1992. This multicultural, international celebration of Summer Solstice will include rituals, workshops, sweatlodge, drumming, dancing, children's program, bazaar, and more. Also included will be the second annual School for Ministers, a special training program for priestesses, priests, ministers, and group facilitators from many Nature centered paths of spirituality. For more information, contact Circle, Box 219, Mt. Horeb, WI 53572, phone: (608) 924-2216 weekdays 1-4 pm central time.

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, jobtraining, 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.)

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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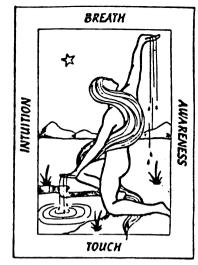
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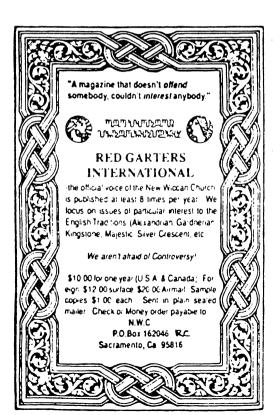
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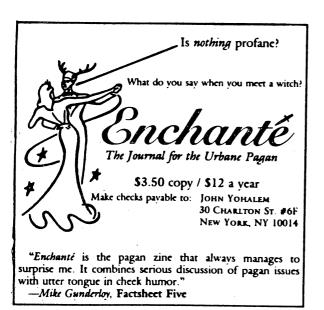


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The RECLAIMING Newsletter now costs \$2.00 if you get it at a store or an event. The Newsletter runs at a deficit, and we're trying to cover a higher percentage of our expenses. Additional contributions are welcome.

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