

RECLAIMING

NEWSLETTER



SPRING 1992

46

\$2.00



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

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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.

Summer Deadline is Wednesday, May 6, 1992



Reclaiming Events Line ☎ 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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Cover design: Bob Thawley

This issue was patched together in San Francisco, Sebastopol, and at Harbin Hot Springs by Cherie, Michael, Anne, Margaret, Basil, Rose, Roy, Robin, Patti, Karen, Stanley, and the beloved Proofreaders: Karl, Craig, Marian, and Kathy. Let this issue be a healing spell for the eyes, necks, shoulders, arms, hands, etc. of the staff.

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Remembering Brigid, Awaiting Kore Seasonal Musings and Weather Report

by Rose May Dance

It has been a brilliant morning between the storms, a holiday morning for what Moher calls Dead Presidents' Day, a holiday I don't celebrate, unless you call typing for the newsletter celebratory. But it *is* holy work, since it's work I do for the community. I've been thinking about community. In a few days I will have been initiated into the Craft for ten years; I reflect on my life and work as a Witch, and the direction of that life and work. A decade is a relatively short span, but I have a hard time remembering the life I led before I was involved with Reclaiming and with the anarcho-pagan community of northern California. The only help in remembering I get is from the friends who still call me Gweneth, and those weekly phone calls to Mom and Dad in Toledo.

[The sky is now darkening by about 3 shades as clouds move in from the west; there are so many colors — blue, grey, white, gold and purple in the sky; diffused light makes all the new green in the garden shining, fluorescent, as if inner-lit. Croci are up. Primroses a brave show. One coral poppy. And the plum tree, eight days late in blooming, wonders if today will be the day. I think the next rain will be here before it gets a chance to blossom. I'm torn between writing this and stripping the leaves off the loquat prunings to put in the compost.]

On the eve of Brigid I gathered with my community at the Women's Building, where we had gathered for so many Brigid's. I made a crash landing at the ritual, coming from 10 days in the People's Republic of China, which ran directly into my covener Deborah's wonderful delivery of her and Kelly's baby. [This was not the first crash landing I've made at a Brigid ritual. I seem to remember arriving from a Cape Canaveral Trident 2 action, in high pneumonia fever, to make my pledge by Brigid's well years ago.] But this time I was at least capable of a little work: the planners asked me to explain the ritual. This task I did, after a bit of coaching, and the result was that after the closing everyone

thanked me for the ritual, which I had nothing to do with. I had forgotten to bring the planners and priestesses forward, so I'd like to do that now. Many thanks to Carol, Pandora, Macha, Theresa, Cybele, Kelly (who missed the ritual because of the birth of Casey), and Margaret. And thank you to the circles who called the directions, to Star for her drumming and meditation, the musicians, Kate and Bill at the anvil, Judy, and all who did the detail work.

The focus of the ritual was community, and how we return to community over and over, make the trip back to Brigid's well to be nourished. And to nourish. The ritual became a very personal meditation of thanks and dedication for me as soon as the quarters were called. I realized that I have been a midwife for the birth of each of the four circles calling the quarters — I had taught classes for each of them and they had formed working circles from those class groups (with the usual additions and subtractions of members). This fact had me in tears as I called the center of the circle, the center is all of us, what we make together, our community.

After we had called Brigid, we all walked, not holding hands, widdershins around the room, meditating on the winter, meditating on the dark through which we walked, meditating on the past year. It had been another hard year for many of us. This time last February we were in a war, glued to the television when we weren't out on the streets protesting. For me, it had been a year of hard work on my job — the first year of committed full-time work at the task I've done for a long time, and a pretty stiff schedule of going into the field to interview, educate, and perform HIV testing and results counseling with drug shooters, week after week instead of the more intermittent scheduling of past years. But also it had been a year of finding my own balance, learning to deal with the stress, learning how, why, and when I get tired, learning how to dare to rest without guilt.

And so I walked, widdershins around the circle. The ritual plan was that we should begin to feel, as we walked, what pulled us to Brigid's well. [It's raining now, but I just talked to my friend who lives at the beach who says that this weather blew over her house 20 minutes ago and now it's sunny there.] I walked, and began to remember the events of the previous few days.

My coven had met Tuesday night January 28th, as we've met weekly for 11 years! We met at Deborah's, and marvelled at her full moon belly, 5 days past full in fact. We really didn't see how she could get any bigger, and she drank a cup of coffee in a feeble attempt at birth-weight management. We pressed her "let- down" points on her hands and feet, fed her some blue cohosh, burned a pentacle candle holding all our wishes, and I went home to bed for a fitful sleep, listening for the phone.

It rang at 6:15 the next morning. Deborah's bag of waters had broken and she and Kelly, very excited, were going to the hospital for a check. When they got back home she began labor and I went over to their house. After a few hours we made our way, with coolers, boomboxes, pillows, and a suitcase full of altar gear, to the birth center at UC. Slowly the rest of the Wind Hags and Kelly's circle drifted in, as we took over the huge family birth room and made it our own. Starhawk had been in Los Angeles taking care of her mother after surgery, but when her mother heard Deborah was in labor she kindly urged Star to fly on up here, and she did. At first the hospital staff looked at us askance — so many people trying to light candles (against the rules) and holding hands. They assigned us the labor nurse with the nose-ring. (What a find! Thanks, Lola.) But soon they were calling us "the good vibes room". The doctor said she was impressed by any people who would bring that much food to a birth.

We cast our circle and raised the power, and I looked around at these faces who have become my family and more over the past 11 years: Deborah, Kelly, Robin, Arachne, Bill, Carol, Starhawk, Pandora. As soon as we put our hands together and breathe there is a circle; as soon as we begin a song there is sweet powerful harmony. The love in the circle was palpable, and tears

streamed down our faces. We'd been through such struggles with Deborah and Kelly in their efforts to make a family, so many disappointments. And now the moment had come.

We sang and chanted and tranced through the night. Arachne's daughter Bethany came, a grown up young woman whose coming of age we had celebrated, (and Star had chronicled), such a capable person lifting and turning Deborah, soothing her brow with cold compresses, and finally, tucking us all into chairs with blankets to catch an hour of sleep, promising to take care of us when we are old. Another round of tears.

Toward the end of the night, awake again, I looked at Star and said, well here we are again, sitting up late in a crowded room in an institution, waiting for something, just like we have so many times. And Star said, yeah, but this is much nicer than jail, kind of like the Winter Solstice. But it's like jail, too. And Lola the nurse said, ok, what is this, what *are* you guys. And I said, well we're Witches. She had guessed that, but was puzzled by the jail talk. And I said well it was protestor jail, slightly embarrassed that I couldn't say bank robbery or other exciting crimes. Lola followed with a flood of questions and we gave her a newsletter, and heard about her healing work with crystals and desires to become a nurse-midwife. And then the doctor said it was time to set Deborah up to push.

[The sun is peeping through the clouds, throwing a shaft of light on the plaster rabbit under the plum tree.]

The doctor gave a little speech about how it is not unusual to push for three or more hours, and that this was normal, and in general got us ready for the next stage to be tedious. Imagine our surprise when Deborah, 40 minutes later, (8:12 AM 1-30-92) pushed that 10 pound three and a half ounce boy out. The weeping, the cheers, the jumping up and down! When we extricated Casey Cooper Quirke from the nursery a while later, we sang again and gave thanks for this triumph and opened our circle.

And so I was thinking about these things as I walked widdershins around Brigid's Well, and the people I love were calling me to the well. And I was likewise thinking of

the groups who had called the directions in Brigid's circle, and I thought of my role as a teacher in this community. The Reclaiming Teachers had recently had a retreat, and have been carefully examining how and what we teach, and how it can improve, and how we can train more people to teach. We took a look at our work over the years, and we are proud of the creative material that has happened in our classes, but we also want to preserve the basic training some of us elders received in the beginning. We have plans now to make sure we all know these basics, and to make sure we are all exposed to each others' teaching, and to create a teachers' training program here in the Bay Area similar to the ones we offer at our Witchcamps. All this takes hard work and commitment. I felt this work pulling me to the well.

We were supposed to turn and circle deosil when we began to feel what it was that brought us to community, to Brigid, to our pledge. And so I turned, joining hands in the large group circling the center, going with the sun. We raised power for our intentions, and began making our pledges. In tears again, I muttered a few words about deepening, and the hammer struck the anvil, sealing my pledge. Brigid knew what I meant.

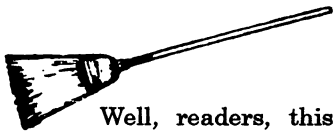
And in the coming weeks I have learned more about what I meant. I knew I meant to focus on what is before me — my job, needle exchange, Reclaiming, my house, and my relationships. And immediately all these things seemed to fly out of control. I didn't have a minute to spare, and was playing catch-up. But then the Goddess told me a true thing: I was tired. Tired from travelling, witnessing birth, and working my job and my volunteer jobs at the same time. And then she told me another true thing. It was perfectly all right to be tired. I could rest. I could do the work as it came, and at my pace. She would take care of me. And the way she manifests taking care of me is that my community, friends, family, students, co-workers share the work, and they love, nourish, amuse, and reward me.

So I'm happy to be putting together the Newsletter on a rainy day. [Yes, pouring rain again, no sign of the sun, puddles forming on the garden path.] Because I've remembered that when I work, I get results, products, crops. All this rain pouring on the ground is going to make Kore rise. Some day soon I'm going to celebrate another holiday, where I hold an egg aloft and ask again, "What lies at the heart of the mystery?" And the egg will open. The Goddess holds a promise before me. Despite whatever trouble the year may hold, she promises renewal.

I understand my pledge to Brigid. It was simply rededication to her, with the hope of reaching the sweetness which lies at the heart of the mystery. As the rain soaks in, I watch the garden, knowing the changing light will soon reveal the shoot, the swelling, the bud, the blossom, the fruit.

[As I proofread, I spy a dozen white blossoms amongst the topmost branches of the plum tree. Blessed be.]





Hannah's Household Hints

Well, readers, this is it. Due to the vagaries of life, chance, and the job market for medievalists, Pandora will no longer be writing this column and you will have to figure out how to clean your houses all by yourself.

We tried to find another household hints columnist for you, but had no luck. Hannah is still living in the Gaeltacht, as we said earlier, and doesn't plan to come back any time soon, though she may write letters to the newsletter sometimes. Perhaps she'll come back some day, full of household hints she learned in Ireland, and that will be very nice and somebody else can channel her.

Perhaps somebody could sponsor a Hannah-Channelling contest, or workshop, even better, and empower oodles of people into Hannah-Channelling, and probably make some money, too. That would also be nice, and also useful. Hannah could be Reclaiming's answer to Michael.

Pandora won't mind; she'll be Elsewhere.

So. Hail and Farewell, and here are the Last Hints:

1) Never buy meditation cushions that don't match the cats.

2) That moldy stuff in the refrigerator is Extremely Holy and the reason you keep getting more of it is that you aren't appeasing it correctly. Correct procedure involves feeding the leftovers to the Dead, instead of pretending you are going to eat them later and then hoarding them.

3) Do not burn candles on top of the computer; they properly go alongside.

4) When in doubt, vacuum.

But, most important of all:

5) Glitter does not disguise dust; it just looks messy and pathetic. Those of you who were Fooled By Hannah must now change your entire world view. Workshops in this being offered someday when the teachers' cell decides it's time.

But not by Pandora, because, as we say, she will be **ELSEWHERE**. Good-bye.



Conception Song

That day I called to you, with wild
grass seed in my hair, I was
hoping you would follow
me into the thicket. There
we feasted on green
acorns, and feathers from the red
tufted woodpecker, and we ended
up tangled in a sweaty
mess outside that small
round door in the ground. You
left an offering, said I looked
eighteen again, and I
laughed at you, the way the bees
buzzed around your shoulders. The
door opened and your gift was
dragged inside by the crazy-haired
lady who lives there. I hear her
cackling in my sleep when
the crickets are silent, she is mixing
our hair together again in her deep
pot. Root stew, baby
greens, pond water; it will be
our breakfast one morning. We
will feast for days
on that small mystery, like
a footpath strewn with
flowers, a print of blood on
the ground, a door which opens
once and then disappears.

Anne Hill



The Bicyclists

Your wide ribs pulse
beneath my fingers;
such unlikely skin there,
amber in the glow
of the streetlamp outside
your perfect window.
Below us, bicyclists
at the stoplight backpedal,
still as upright shadows,
waiting for the slow
turn of green to sanction
their careful ride down
these streets, lined
with doorways and dying trees.
The cyclists pause, after
the green, bargain
with the unlit street ahead,
then, pores dilated
in the silence,
they slip out of sight.
I trace the curve
of your belly, noticing
the steady hum of blood
under your skin, as we talk
softly of stoplights,
and doorways, and what
sleeps in the dark,
ahead of us.

Anne Hill

A New Dream, A New Life

by Kevin Roddy

This is the first in a series of articles about spiritual life in rural Hawai'i

It never ceases to amaze me the mysterious ways in which the Mother works. Feeling my job was going nowhere fast, mired in city life for 15 years, I took an inventory of what I really wanted in life — to be closer to nature, to have a challenging job that promotes learning, and helping in the preservation and perpetuation of culture. Knowing that “your ship can’t come in, unless you’ve sent one out,” I worked very hard for change in my life, and asked the Goddess for help and guidance. My perseverance (and remarkably, my patience) held out; the Goddess gave me the Shaka Sign (“hang loose”) and changed my life forever. Nine years of undergraduate, graduate and professional library experience paid off in a 2-minute call from my future employer, asking when I could start. My first utterance was to thank the goddess for her blessing (after I let out a scream of joy, causing looks of surprise from library patrons!). My new home is now the Puna district on the Island of Hawai'i. After 15 years of life in San Francisco, it was time for a change. But saying goodbye to my Reclaiming family and friends was difficult. I was moving from what I believe is the world's hub of Witchcraft to the most isolated group of Islands in the world. How would that affect my spiritual practice? My ties to Witches I had grown immensely fond of? The social and political change I fought so hard for? Fortunately, I wasn't going alone. My companion of 12 years, also a pagan of a very personal tradition, shared my quiet desperation in the City, and the immense sadness we both felt at the loss of so many of our friends. Shortly before my good news, he had good news of his own — after 19 years he could leave his drone job at Ma Bell due to massive downsizing with a nice separation package. We were given the chance to dream a new dream — to do our dream. Coincidence?? I don't think so.

After long goodbyes and promises of visits, we departed with our three parrots in tow. We found a house in Puna, and I set-

tled into work. I'm a solitary with a very Heinz 57 tradition, and I brought my huge altar with me — including all of my leis that I brought back from previous trips. They were long since dried, and I gave them back to the forest just outside our door. When I unpacked my altar and set it up, it didn't FEEL right. My altar was just too BUSY. To me, altar-building is an unconscious art. I found myself building something very different, more simple. Here I use the ample foliage to adorn a very simple space, or *kuahu*, in Hawaiian. Ti leaves are excellent for a wide range of uses — lining the *kuahu* space, making leis to frame god and goddess images, wrapping offerings to the deities and even for scrying! Though I love my little crystal ball, a ti leaf works just as well. New ancestors joined old ones — a picture of Mary Kawena Puku'i, a famous Hawaiian ethnologist, now resides next to my picture of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the father of modern Hebrew. Ben-Yehuda feeds my spirit as a linguist-by-training, as he almost single-handedly brought back Hebrew as a living language after 2000 years, while Puku'i feeds my ethnologist side, the preserver of tradition and language. Most of my mainland altar is now packed away.

The directions of the elements changed. Living on the Windward side (east) of the Big Island, East became Water. The South, the direction of the Kilauea volcano, home of Pele, is Fire — she is in her ninth year of continuous eruption. West is Earth, where Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea volcanoes meet, the epitome of Earth, and the tallest mountains in the world (from the sea floor, 31,796 feet). North is Air; our trade winds blow in from the Northeast, bringing heavy rains and cool breezes. North and East work together, uniting two elements that have been refreshing and rejuvenating these islands since their formation millions of years ago. The islands formed of Fire, Water and Earth, while the Air brought life: plant spores, birds, insects and animals, and the first Hawaiians centuries ago, in their *wa'a* or outrigger canoes.

Deities also changed. I never had secret God and Goddess names in my solitary practice. I could never decide. I liked them all: Irish, Indian, Egyptian... Before coming here permanently, I visited Pele many times at her residence in Halema'uma'u crater in Volcanoes Park. I left frequent offerings to her, alongside the offerings of others, asking her that if I was worthy to live here, help me find a way to get here. She provided. Pele is respected by all paths here, from Jehovah's Witnesses to Mormons to Buddhists and Catholics. Many Native Hawaiians consider her *aumakua* (an ancestral or family goddess) and many are "given to Pele" at birth. She shares her domain and tempestuous nature with her occasional lover Kamapua'a, the spirit of rain, moisture and growing things, who is half man, half pig. Poli'ahu, the snow goddess of Mauna Kea, and rival to Pele, lives in that cold, windy domain 14,000 feet above the sea. Namakaokaha'i, goddess of the seas, is locked in an eternal battle with her sister the volcano goddess, as Pele's hot lava enters the sea, where it is cooled and hardened into new land. La'iekawai, goddess of rainbows, displays her brilliant artistry after the frequent rains of the Windward side. Lono, god of agriculture, Papa and Wakea, goddess and god of all, are remembered and revered. I honor them all and utter their names with respect and love. There are many other Hawaiian deities to remember, to honor and to cherish. The various plants and animals of this unique land, are the *kino lau*, or "body forms" of the gods, and are sacred. Desecration of Hawaiian lands is a perverse, rude violation of the *i'aina* ("land") and an offense to the gods. When picking foliage and flowers for the *kuahu*, or for use as adornments in the *hula*, or fruit for a meal, a quiet prayer of thanks is uttered to the gods as a reminder that all of nature's bounty comes from the *i'aina*, their bodies. This is a ritual practice of nature Hawaiians and Hawaiians-at-heart.

So much for me to learn! The challenge of learning the Hawaiian language, which is now experiencing a resurgence and renaissance; the challenge of learning the *hula* (which takes many years of study to do well), and the chants, or *oli*, of the Hawaiians, the only poetry I have ever read that has truly moved me to tears. I will spend years learning the *kaona* or "hidden meanings" of these poems, some thousands of lines long; and further learning the way in which the Hawaiians lived in harmony with nature. But please, understand my attitude. I do not pass myself off as Hawaiian, do not want to intrude on their personal cultural practices, their *kuahu*, their *heiau* "temples" or their philosophical beliefs. Like traditional witchcraft, I entered Hawai'i humbly, with perfect trust and love, and "put out the call" that I was here. If the gods and goddesses find me worthy, they will provide. Just as when I began my path on the mainland, Witches came out of nowhere to help me, advise me and guide me. The Goddess determined I was ready, and provided. If something is meant to happen, it will happen. *That* took me so long to fully understand, accept and appreciate. Now at 36, I am finally learning how to live, and how to give, and I love life like never before. Blessed be, my friends and readers — *Aloha nui loa no kakou*

Ahui ho — until next time,
Kewena



Buffalo Woman Comes Singing

A book review by Mary Ann Murphy

For all its pretensions to spreading white light, the booming New Age publishing business casts quite a shadow. Nowhere does that shadow loom larger than in the marketing of Native American spirituality to non-Native readers — usually to the material benefit of non-Native authors. A wonderful exception to this brand of exploitation is “Buffalo Woman Comes Singing,” by Native American teacher and healer Brooke Medicine Eagle. The book would make a valuable addition to any Witch’s library, and it contains tools suitable for deepening just about anyone’s spiritual practice.

That’s saying a lot, since the mining of Native American traditions by non-Natives is almost always problematic. Speaking for myself (a California Witch of Irish descent), I’ve long struggled with an attraction to Native rituals. I suspect the reason for their pull is that the heart of Earth mysteries is connecting with the land beneath your feet — and the land my feet customarily tread fairly hums with the spirit of the Native peoples who were its caretakers. Yet in all conscience I can’t just merrily co-opt what is not mine by right.

Medicine Eagle solves this kind of dilemma for non-Native readers by presenting a brilliant synthesis of multicultural teachings on immanence or embodiment of spirit — a synthesis that is deeply rooted in the Native worldview of relatedness with the Earth and all Her creatures. In “Buffalo Woman Comes Singing,” you won’t find clues for performing a painless version of a Sun Dance or otherwise ripping-off revered Native ceremonies. Instead, Medicine Eagle describes ritual methods she has developed to heal the rifts in ourselves, with one another, and with all our relations. These rituals and techniques feel like the real thing to me: the sense I get is of a powerful distillation of Native teachings that leaves the secrets intact.

It’s clear that Medicine Eagle’s access to her spiritual heritage was hard won. She describes herself as a “metis,” meaning a person of mixed Native and European an-

cestry, and she notes that her blue eyes proved to be a stumbling block with some Native Elders. The integrity that must have won her the teachings she sought informs every page of her book. For example, she refuses to call herself a medicine woman, apparently because her healing work combines Western and Native practices and therefore does not fit into any traditional mold.

Written as a spiritual autobiography, “Buffalo Woman Comes Singing” offers a candid and often fascinating account of the author’s journey toward an Earth-centered awareness and healing/teaching vocation. Each chapter constellates around a specific issue or series of events that marked a milestone in Medicine Eagle’s life — from forming (and sometimes rejecting) relationships with certain Native teachers and Elders to organizing her first ceremonial teaching camps. At the end of each chapter are exercises designed to help readers learn and embody the lessons of right relationship Medicine Eagle had to master.

What I liked best about the book is its insistence that personal healing is not sufficient for the planet to survive the twentieth century. Medicine Eagle drives home the point that “although working within ourselves is the primary task, we cannot wait until some theoretical moment when we have perfected ourselves to give to the larger Circle of Life.” Among many other suggestions, she recommends drawing up a written contract to perform an “Act of Beauty” for the benefit of others (human, animal, vegetable, or mineral), then signing the contract. That in itself is a powerful magical act.

“Buffalo Woman Comes Singing” is published by Ballantine Books and costs \$12.50 in paperback.

Heart of Darkness — A Meditation

by Francesca Dubie

Francesca performed a ritual adaptation of this on October 31, 1991 at the San Francisco Women's Building.

In the breast of the Mother beats a loving heart of darkness.

In the chest of the Lord beats a loving heart of darkness.

In my chest beats a loving heart of darkness.

In your chest beats a loving heart of darkness.

Within each flower, rock, and breeze
beats a loving heart of darkness.

Within the fabric of the universe itself
beats a loving heart of darkness.

Your dark heart longs for something — what is it?
Figure it out.

Now whisper your desire,
whisper the desire of your loving black heart,
whisper your desire whisper it to the Mother
for the desire of Her black heart is that you be fulfilled.

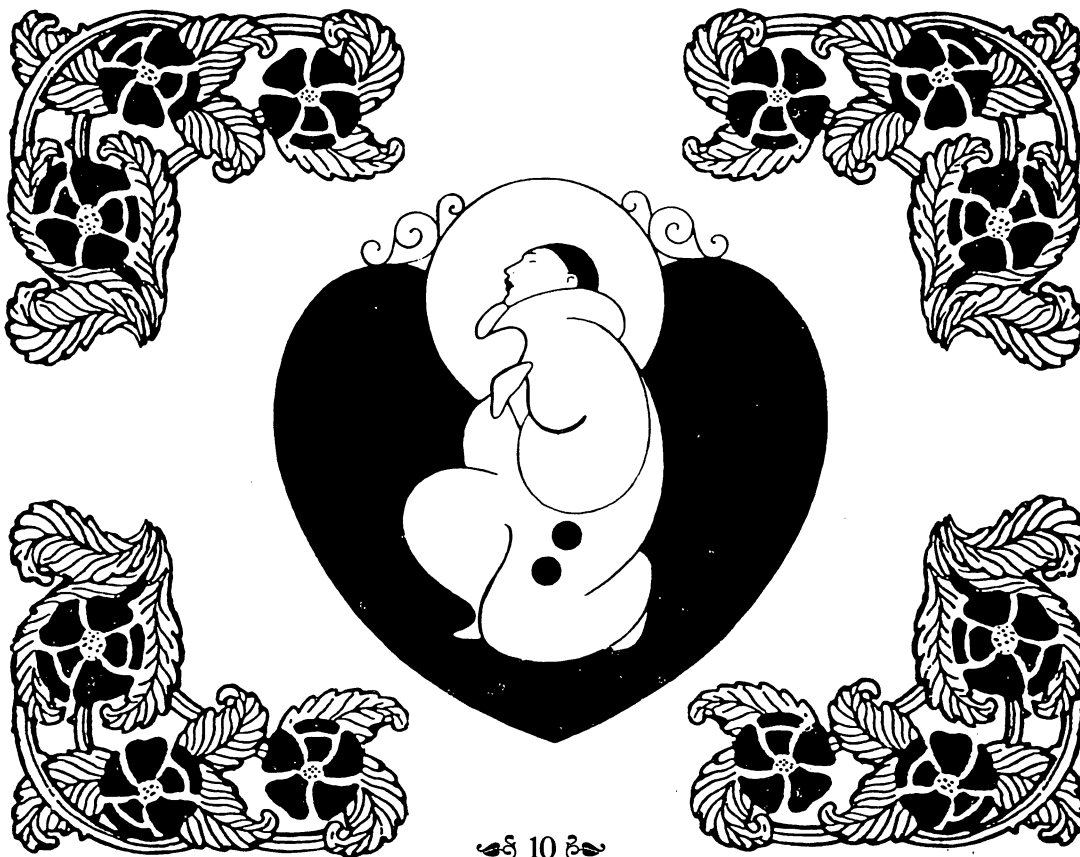
Whisper your desire,
whisper the desire of your loving black heart,
whisper your desire whisper it to the Lord
for the desire of His black heart is that your prayers be met.

Whisper your desire,
whisper the desire of your loving black heart,
whisper your desire whisper it to me
for the desire of my black heart is that your prayers be met.

Whisper your desire,
whisper the desire of your loving black heart,
whisper your desire whisper it to yourself
for the desire of your own black heart is that you be fulfilled.

Whisper your desire,
whisper the desire of your loving black heart,
whisper your desire whisper it to each flower, rock, and breeze
for the desire of their black hearts is that you be fulfilled.

For each thing that beats with the pulse of the Mother
and ALL things beat with the Pulse of the Mother
are caretakers of Her love
chosen by Her to give you the desires of your heart of Darkness.



Community/Culture: Gathering Green Men

by Robin Gall

When I first saw the book Green Man: The Archetype of our Oneness with the Earth by William Anderson and Clive Hicks, I was intrigued. Peering from page after page of photos of old European churches and cathedrals was a familiar leafy face. What was he doing there? What was he trying to say? Tantalizing blurbs by Marija Gimbutas, Mathew Fox, and Rupert Sheldrake promised an earthly treasure.

I received it as a gift and was delighted. Here was a bit of pagan culture flourishing right in the midst of Christian architecture. And in it was a green key to unlock a golden door.

Written as art history, this book offers a lot to pagans. It acknowledges the inner connections of the image of the Green Man with the various Fools, Robin Hoods, St. Georges, and Jack-in-the-Greens of European folk custom, while updating the ideas of early folklorists with more recent scholarship. It explores his antecedents in the art and myth of Celtic, Roman, Greek, and Germanic cultures, and also makes connections with the great Islamic world. It links his rise as a motif with the return of the Mother as Mary. It shows us how to see levels of meaning in the art of a time before industrial capitalism had undermined our language of communal expression. It follows him into modern times.

In the artistic tradition explored here, the Green Man is a male human head, surrounded by foliage. He takes several forms, showing him to be an image of the intelligence or spirit of the Tree of Life. In one, his face and features are made of leaves. In another, greenery sprouts from his mouth, telling us that he speaks through living nature. In a later form his head is the flower or fruit of vegetation. Time, transformation, renewal, inspiration, and the abundance of nature are some of the realms through which he journeys. He "signifies irrepressible life."

The sculptors and masons of medieval Europe developed symbols of great richness and depth. In the holy places of their com-

munities they gave voice in wood and stone to the mysteries of life. The Green Man was an icon of their own task of expressing and praising the exquisite variety of nature.

It is this god who proclaims nature's praises who speaks to us now. He shows us that his great energy can open the way to a deep and common language, a language of oneness with the earth. So when I heard of the workshop "Searching for the Green Man" with Brook, Charles, and David, I was enthused. Mask making and ritual seemed a perfect way to take up our task.

The structure of the day was simple. We gathered together and set out a wealth of leaves and flowers. We checked in, reviewed the day's plan, learned some songs. We began to work.

The workshop was small (three organizers, three unrehearsed participants) too small, really, for casual conversation. Although we had planned to discuss the Green Man as we built and decorated our masks, the plaster/gauze shells on our faces soon set an inward mood. I worked slowly, beguiled by the wild harvests along the edge of the room, picking leaves, berries, bark. Time escaped. I wanted some of everything, but the material sets limits. I scaled back my project. We worked and sang, drifting between the community of song and the privacy of our tasks. We shared food and heard stories.

Too soon the creative trance was broken and another ready to begin. I stared at the blank stretches of my mask's plaster and quickly daubed them with green paint, temporarily satisfied.

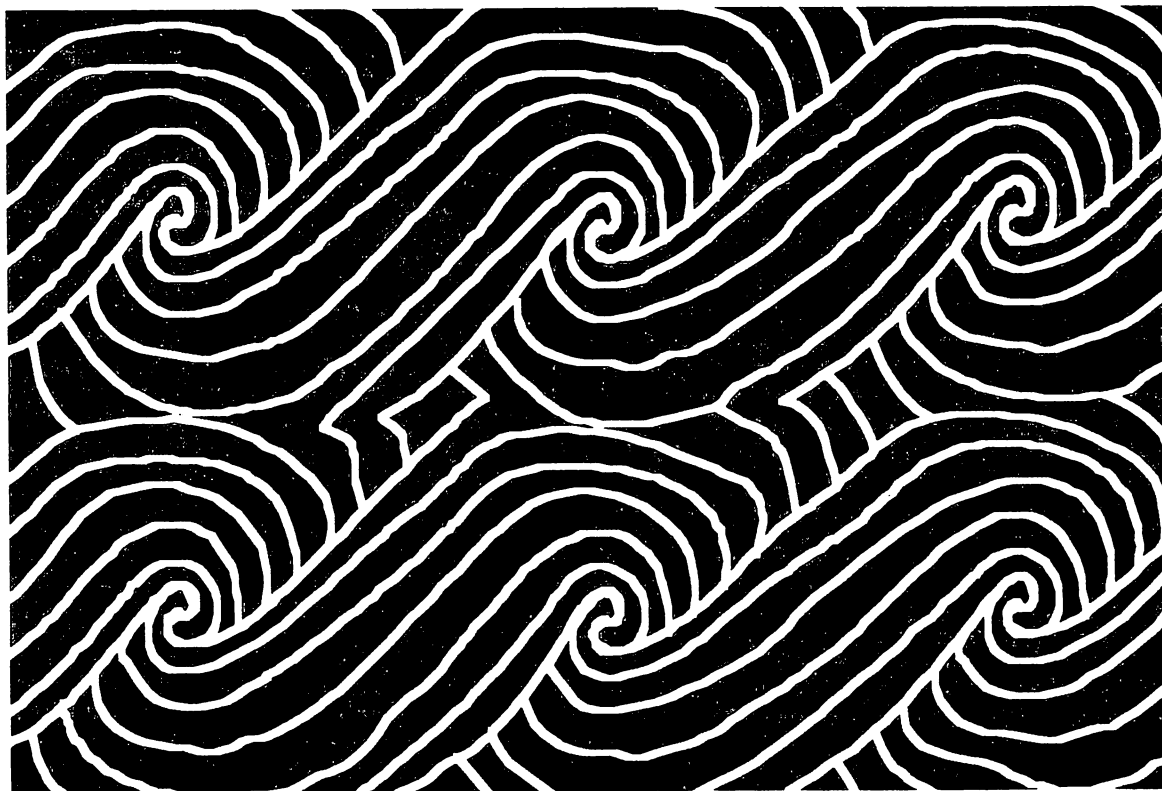
Drums started to play and for a short time the masks were ready to live in this world. The energy peaked and ebbed. We paused and then we followed them into the other world.

Sometime during the ritual there was a shift. Perhaps a seed case was broken, or a root set forth. What had seemed too few participants became enough. What had been a shared privacy became a common feeling. Our feelings became words. We discussed

some of our difficulties as men with attending the god, our needs to nurture ourselves and to be informed by the concerns of women, our hopes for being together as men.

It's difficult to come together as men, often easier to be with women. To face a gender questioned and shamed, to sort through its strengths and failings in our own lives, to reach for the god's joys and sufferings, and to offer this to other men, is a daunting task. But what we don't take up ourselves will be taken up for us by the culture at large and our needs will be shaped not in conversation with our peers, but in a dialogue between consumers and mass marketers.

This workshop was a beginning, a gathering and planting, a step towards raising our common vision and voice. My thanks to Brook, Charles, and David for their efforts in putting it together and their attentiveness during the day. As we wound down, I looked again through the leaves of my mask to its plaster background. It needed more color. Just before we left, I copped some extra paint off Charles. My work with the Green Man goes on.



© 1992 nan macmahon

out of the swirling cauldron of the goddess, out of the womb of earth,
ideas become shape, love becomes life, she materializes in all that is.
blessed be.

Perfect Love

A woman appears before a man, in a remnant of the goddess. You want me, her eyes say to him, you can't deny it.

He can't deny it. His desire has jumped the fence and is running wild through luminous fields and mysterious forests.

They don't speak for a while. They just study each other.

"I can see that you have a heart of gold," she says, "give it to me, that we may increase our love."

He spreads his arms, more than less in disbelief. "Lady, you honor me beyond my worth; of what use can a candle be to the sun," he replies, as politely as possible.

"To light the dark side of the moon," she laughs, stepping closer, into the arc of his arms.

"All sides of the moon are visible to the sun," he says, "One side is unseen from here on earth, but the sun lights it fully when the moon is dark to us." He knows a lot about the moon, and he wants to make sure she knows it.

"But one side or other is always dark," she says, then quickly, casting her voice into another key, "but I am of this earth, and of many dimensions beyond your perception of this earth." As she speaks he becomes aware of previously unnoticed and subtly wonderful spacial perspectives, like spheres within spheres within spheres, especially in the area of her body now being slowly encircled by his arms, but extending on into every corner of the suddenly very living world.

"Yes," is all that he can manage, "I can see that you are."

"And I can see your golden heart," she laughs, "give it to me, that we may increase our love."

"It sounds a little better now, than when you asked but a moment ago."

Her voice has become bells and birdcalls, and her eyes are glowing with colors he cannot quite remember. "You are reawakening to beauty; it has always lain before you. And yes, my dear, you have always shared my love, to the fullest level of your trust. Yours may be all the joy of all the realms of my lifespirt for as far as the stars extend."

He is silent. This stretched credulity beyond some hidden boundary erected in him long ago. His memory gropes for some gap in this great wall, so long encircling his kingdom. He remembers a cold, dark era of war, constant fear of attack, obsession with betrayal, vicious contempt for weakness, grievous losses, bitter, determined courage. These memories flash through his mind instantaneously, imperceptibly, but move him worlds. She becomes as a mortal woman to him.

"You know, you're really a bit of a new age air head, but I really like you," and simultaneously to himself, 'what a dumb fucking thing to say to her.' "You are so beautiful," he blurts out, as he searches for, and finds, imperfections in her face. But as his brain rattles on, his body pulls her gently to him, experiencing an irrepressible jolt of joy as her breasts touch his. "I can only offer what is free to give," he says, "you cannot ask for what is yet unborn in me."

"Why not? Are you so afraid of birth? Or that you may blossom and grow? Or perhaps that I will garden you? Prune you into some strange shape of my own desire?"

With her words he sees that he is afraid of exactly that, and he says, "No! But I need to move freely, please don't plant me, and I'll bare you such fruit as I can."

"My garden is greater than your dreams, my dear, infinite, in fact. None have complained there of confinement. You may grow there forever into unbounded love. You are ready for this change, are you not?"

He snaps back into her realm, but retains his ordinary self. "Well, since you put it that way, Lady, yes, I'm ready. I mean I'm ready to try," and adds to himself, 'again.' "I mean I might need to turn it off once in a while, and on again, you know. Sort of cycle in and out."

"That's how it's been for so long now, almost always, it must seem to you. Now I offer you the possibility of continuity." She continues to smile into his eyes, filling him with unimagined delight, but his mind continues to squirm.

"Yes, well, that's an intriguing possibility all right, I'll have to admit, but I feel I might be losing some essential part of myself."

"Only your fear, and the burden of exclusive ownership of soul, and your bondage to unremembered pain. I offer you joy, simple and sure."

"But this world..."

"Needs as much joy as possible. And rather urgently."

"But I'm ...I'm not worthy..."

"You are as you know yourself to be. Let your knowing form your pathway, not your prison. I am here as your birth passage, into a living world of spirit. Contractions have begun, ready or not, little one."

This flatly embarrasses the hell out of him; a pit of panic opens deep in his gut. But in the same instant, as though he's become two separate selves, he emerges from a dead into a living universe, consisting in spirit of such magnitude that a bare glimpse is of awesome grandeur.

His mind is shocked somehow into belief, and his heart is at peace, though beating fast. He slowly kisses her lips for what seems like a long, long time. When he returns from her mouth, the sky has darkened and the stars have all come out, and he notices her garment is missing, or maybe she never had one...

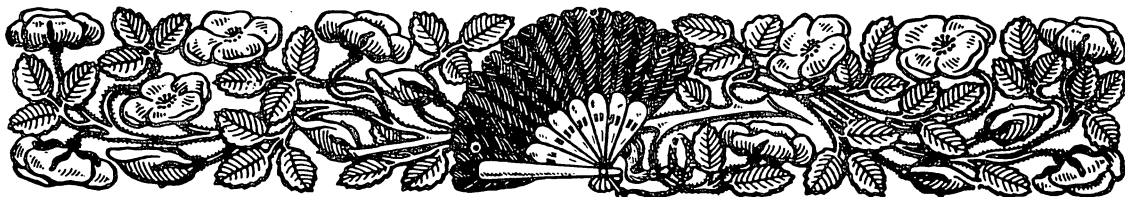
But before he can expand his confusion, she enfolds him, he is within her, engulfed in ecstasy.

"Yes, yes," she whispers, "you are coming, golden heart. And it is only beginning."

Falling, he spreads the wings of his heart, and flies with her.

In this vision he lives forever.

Roy King



Reclaiming Classes and Events

EVENTS LINE AREA CODE CHANGE: The new area code for the Reclaiming Events Line is 510. Call (510) 849-0877 for events.

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). **Four Monday evenings in San Francisco, starting April 13 — 7 - 9:30 pm. \$30 - \$60 sliding scale. For details call (510) 843-0722.**

ELEMENTS OF MAGIC FOR WOMEN by Hilary and Cybele, student-taught by Leaf. 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, six Tuesday evenings, starting April 21 in San Francisco. We ask that all applicants be committed to attending all six classes. Sliding scale \$60-120. Call Cybele, (415) 648-3908 for information, registration, and location.**

PENTACLE FOR WOMEN taught by Rose May Dance, Pandora, with student teachers Beverly and Theresa

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). We ask that all applicants be committed to attending all 6 classes. **Prerequisite:** Elements of Magic or equivalent experience/study. **Six Wednesday evenings beginning April 22 in San Francisco. \$60-\$120 sliding scale. Call Pandora, 771-4905, for information and registration.**

PENTACLE FOR WOMEN IN MARIN taught by M. Macha NightMare and Suzanne
See above description of Pentacle for Women Class. **Six Wednesday evenings beginning April 22 in Marin. \$60-\$120 sliding scale. Call Macha, (415) 454-4411, for information and registration.**

WITCH CAMP '92

Reclaiming teachers will offer summer intensives again in both British Columbia and Michigan. Come spend a week immersed in magic, ritual, and pagan community. The theme of both camps this year is **SACRED STORY/SACRED DRAMA**, focussing on trance work. Each camp will offer three tracks, although all students will take part in some of the thematic work. The Elements of Magic is for beginners, the Sacred Story track is for experienced students, and the Teachers' Track is for a limited number of advanced students who wish to teach and who have attended another Witch Camp.

VANCOUVER WITCH CAMP: Near Vancouver, BC, Canada, **July 30 - August 6**. Teachers will include Starhawk, Carol, and Pandora from San Francisco, Sharon and one or two other local teachers, and several student teachers. Contact: Pat Hogan and Sharon Jackson, P.O. Box 66155, Station F, Vancouver, Canada V5N 5L4, (604) 253-7189 (Pat) or (604) 929-0429 (Sharon). The Vancouver Witchcamp will be immediately preceded (July 21 - 28) by a Sappho Camp for lesbians and women who support lesbians, held at the Witchcamp site. Information about this camp will be given to all women who apply to Vancouver Witchcamp.

MIDWEST WITCH CAMP: South Central Michigan, **August 23 - 29**. Teachers will include Starhawk, Rose, Cybele, Suzanne, Beverly, and Fern, as well as several student teachers. Our dear Adrienne has moved away from the Midwest, and has handed her organizing duties to perpetual campers Patti and Cyndy of Earthmagic. Contact them at Earthmagic, 1101 South Second, Springfield, Illinois 62704, phone (217) 744-2914.

Both intensives are open to women and men. Fees are based on a sliding scale and will range from under \$275 U.S. to \$450, depending on location and type of accomodation. Some scholarships are available.

Teachers' Track Students: *After* you have secured admission to one of the camps, apply in writing to the teachers track, explaining why you want to be in the track, and what your qualifications may be — what work have you done in groups, your Wiccan studies and activities, your political activities, etc. Remember, only students who have attended a Witchcamp may be in this track. Write Teachers Track Reclaiming, P.O. Box 14404, San Francisco, 94114.

RECLAIMING RECOMMENDS

BREATH AND BODY CLASS FOR WOMEN SURVIVORS OF INCEST AND ABUSE

Ongoing class cycles of bodily-focussed work facilitating contact with Younger Self while teaching the adult self how to work *with* her body in the healing process. Grounding processes, movement exercises and body maps are utilized. Spirit is incorporated through focusing within the breathing body and in the simple creation of sacred, safe space. Instructor is a survivor, and a certified Lomi Practitioner. Next class begins **Tuesday, June 23** — eight-week class. Sliding scale. Call Suzette Roachat (a.k.a. Cybele) (415) 648-3908 for info/registration.

Starhawk's 1992 Schedule

**For more information contact Harmony Network
P.O. Box 2550 Guerneville, CA 95446 (707) 869-0989**

April 23 - 29: Albuquerque, NM

Thursday: Talk and public ritual

**Friday - Sunday: Gay and Lesbian Retreat for New Mexico Foundation for Human
Enrichment**

Contact: Jean Thompson (505) 758-9522 for weekend retreat

Contact: Harmony Network for Thursday event

May 7 - 10: Winnipeg & Brandon, Canada

Thursday: Winnipeg — to be confirmed

Friday - Sunday: Workshops at Brandon University

Contact: Kathleen Matheos (204) 727-9604

July 10 - 11: San Francisco, CA

Evening talk and ritual with Luisah Teish

Saturday workshop on the Sacred Feminine

California Institute of Integral Studies (415) 753-6100

**For information on Reclaiming Summer Camps, please contact
Reclaiming at P.O. Box 14404, San Francisco, CA 94114.
Events Line (510) 849-0877**

**Check with Harmony Network for information on
Women's Goddess Sites Tour of Greece and Turkey
with Marija Gimbutas and Starhawk!!**



A Ritual Prayer to Feel The Mother's Grace

by Mark Roblee

Say this prayer after washing up, either in the morning or before bed. Light a special candle and burn some sage or rose incense as a love offering to the Goddess. Take a long slow breath. Be aware of your center and how well you are supported by the earth. Then, say the prayer aloud, if possible, directing it to your feet, to the place where you are, and to the earth. When you finish saying the prayer, blow a kiss to the sky, the sun or stars, and lightly touch the earth. Then, give yourself a hug, rocking yourself gently, the way a loving parent might hold a child who needs comfort, or how you might want a lover to hold you. All of these movements and gestures should be tender and slow. When you are ready to finish the rite, say your name in a soft whisper. The prayer is made.

The prayer:

Lady, I know that you are my Mother, that my glorious self is a gift from you, that I am awake, in you, because of you. Help me to nestle more deeply into the safety of your love for me. Help me to be open to the flow of your will and to remember who I am. I need you now to take care of me, to guide me, to feed me, to hold my human and frightened hand. Walking with you Mother I learn to trust the power of your gift of self and to surrender to your Triple will.

Notice to our Beloved Subscribers:

MOVING ? MOVING ? MOVING ? MOVING ? MOVING ?

When you move, if you do not send us a "Change of Address" card, you will miss an issue of your newsletter

WHAT HAPPENS????

Well ... the post office puts the little yellow address sticker on your newsletter and sends it back to us (and charges us postage again!) Sometimes not until months after you've moved and your subscription has expired.

Send US your change of address card as soon as you move so we can make sure you get your newsletters.

Thanks!

Reflections Upon Reflections On the Ball Dance

In the Fall 1991 Reclaiming Newsletter we published M. Macha NightMare's "Reflections on the Ball Dance" about a ritual given at the Ancient Ways Festival in the Spring of 1991. The Winter 1991 Reclaiming Newsletter contained a reply to Macha's article, from Fakir and Carla. The Samhain, Yule, and Brigid issues of the Covenant of the Goddess Newsletter contained articles and letters on the same subject. Reclaiming has received numerous and lengthy offerings about Macha's article and about the Ball Dance (and we have forwarded these to Macha). At our recent editorial meeting Reclaiming Newsletter decided to print only the introductory paragraphs of Macha's detailed reply to letters she received about her article, and to print or excerpt two letters which were fairly representative. If you would like a copy of Macha's entire letter, send \$1 to cover postage and copying to M. Macha NightMare, PO Box 150694, San Rafael, CA 94915-0694. Please address further responses about this matter to Macha at that address.

from Macha:

My thanks to all of you for responding to my "Reflections on the Ball Dance." Dialogue within the community about what we do, how it works or doesn't work, how we do it, is what I was hoping for in publishing the article.... So I appreciate your taking the trouble to respond.

I would like to point out that my article was called "reflections" because I meant it to be just that, and not a definitive evaluation of the ritual. I could not possibly have done such a thing without having participated directly.

....I was open to new experience, but I am concerned with what is done in the name of Witchcraft — not in the name of Voudoun or Hinduism or Shaivism or whatever. What I saw informed my feelings....

One of the things about the Wiccan worldview that appeals to me is the honor of the body — the energy of the Earth — in balance with the energies of Air, Fire and

Water. I believe that the Great Rite is truly that, that it is through our miracle bodies that we can perceive the world and all its tastes and smells and colors and textures. In my religious pursuits, I seek the unity of the body, feelings, mind and spirit. I believe in one's right to one's own reproductive decisions, one's consensual sexual behavior, one's dietary habits and policies (excepting cannibalism), one's honoring one's own flesh with any decorations, scarifications, tattoos (my own favorite permanent thing to do on my body) and other individual symbols of power or allies. In my personal experience, I know of nothing to come near in intensity and profundity to the simultaneous communion and transcendence achievable through the practice of the Tantric arts.

... [I tried] to give a clear description of what I was seeing so that the readers, the vast majority of whom are entirely unfamiliar with such rituals, could visually know what was going on. There was very little to be heard, so the visible was all I had to go on. I was completely honest about my limits. That's one reason why I asked for feedback from participants.

from Gail Lichtenberg:

I, too, attended the Ball Dance at the Ancient Ways festival this past spring, and when I read Macha NightMare's account of what occurred, I was incredulous. While it is true that no two people can experience the same ritual in precisely the same way, my own impression of the Ball Dance was so far removed from Macha's, I was mystified by her reactions.

I had next to no knowledge of what the entire ritual was about when I walked into the sacred space. I knew the whole concept was inspired by a man named Raven Ceridwen who had recently died of AIDS (not, incidentally, by BloodRose). And I knew that I was intrigued, and a little anxious (I had never observed piercing of this nature before).

The preparation of the dancers took some time. There was drumming throughout this period, as I recall (I have to admit that my

memory is not perfect — it has been several months since the ritual...). Drums and beat are particularly potent for me, and so for a time I played with that energy, bringing it out of myself, swaying to the beat of the drums. I was on the far side (South) of the circle from the piercing activity. At one point I wanted to join in on the drumming, and so borrowed the drum of someone who had grown fatigued. Unfortunately, not having drummed much, and realizing that I was not able to follow the sophisticated beats being created by the other drummers, I soon stopped, not wanting to disrupt the palpable energy field that they were weaving. But I was drawn to participating. The energy of the space was very inclusive, and it begged me to involve my own.

In response to this urge I decided to approach the other side of the circle, where the dancers were being prepared, after ascertaining from one of the drummers that it would not be considered intrusive. I was anxious, yet fascinated. When I drew very close to the piercing activity I was hit by a shock-wave of energy. And suddenly I understood. While we were not seeing any drama, or being directed in some activity, the ritual had already begun. I wanted to offer my help, but having no experience the best I could do was weave the energy the drums were raising inside of me into their purpose(s) for being there, supporting them. I observed the piercing for a short while before realizing that, while I was not considered an intruder, I was a stranger watching something far more private than I had originally understood. Far from being "exhibitionist," these people were undergoing a very internal, powerful experience. They were hardly aware of their surroundings, let alone anyone who might be watching. I returned to the South side of the circle.

After some time (I usually don't pay attention to "time" while in a ritual) the dancers were ready. At this point my memory becomes very fuzzy. I remember Cerridwen being called, and her presence was incredibly powerful. I remember the dancers coming up to her, stating their purpose(s). I have to say that in my recollection they were all sincere. I didn't get the sense that they were doing this just for show. Some were louder and more exuberant than

others, but I would chalk that up to their astrological rising signs, not to their motivations.

Then the dancing began. For me, this was a time out of time. It could have been 10 seconds, or 10 hours. I don't know. And, frankly, I don't care. The peaking of the energy raised in the dance was obviously a culmination of the energy being raised during the hours of preparation. It was so incredibly intense that I realized the next day that I had drummed my thighs until I bruised them and not even noticed. But most importantly, this was a ritual of healing, and I came out of it with a clear sense of having been touched with a healing hand.

Raven Cerridwen's name was very linked with this ritual. In fact, I believe there was a moment or three near the closing where we were silent in his honor. A man I had never met. And yet his presence was so strong at the end of this ritual, as to be completely tangible. A few months before I had experienced a traumatic death in my family. Somehow, in experiencing Raven's touch I knew that I would have to dance this Ball Dance in honor, and closure, of the death of my loved one. And this Samhain, I danced with nine balls sewn to my skin at the Dance of the Black Sun, nearly a full year and a day since my grandfather's death.

Macha, I've only met you a few times. I've always thought you were one cool lady. I don't know what ritual you observed, but it certainly wasn't the one I participated in. I hope that this might shed some light on your observations.

from Ganymede Cupbearer, High Priest of the Dragonstone Coven North, Producer of the Ancient Ways 1991 Ball Dance:

....The Ball Dance at the Ancient Ways Festival (on Saturday, June 1, 1991...) was the third time I have danced with the balls this way. I have several times assisted at Ball Dances where I did not dance. This time was a culmination of many significant interactions between myself, my teachers, my students, and my peers.

I was extremely privileged some years ago to participate in a private ritual... led by the Fakir whom you mentioned. Over a long weekend, ...he shared with us what had for so long been his very secret and

private domain. Being a loner, a self-made shaman, and a person of total inner truth, he was very wary of exposing the transcendent, ecstatic rites that he created and adapted.

....Since that time, Fakir and other practitioners of similar rites have been receiving more exposure, especially in the SM and Gay communities. These latter seem quite receptive to the shamanic aspects of practices already familiar. The sex-magic undercurrents long tumescent in the Radical Faeries (quite distinct from the magical Faery tradition of Anderson et al.) formed fertile fields for such visionary seeds, and a new tribe of shamanic, Pagan, Sex/Magic-positive ecstatic individuals was born, called Black Leather Wings.

At an earlier Ancient Ways Festival, Robb, a student in my coven, became involved with Raven, an elder of Bloodrose coven, who was a leader in his circle and prominent in the community. Raven accompanied Robb to the first Black Leather Wings gathering, held at the Radical Faerie Sanctuary in Oregon. He was amazed at the power of these rituals, and by the incredible integrity and passion of the people performing them. He was inspired to bring the Ball Dance back to his coven.

The Dance of the Black Sun at Halloween, 1990 was the result of his inspiration. Raven dedicated his effort to healing fear about AIDS, which he suffered, like so many in our family. He coordinated members of Bloodrose and my coven, Dragonstone, to create a semi-public event, to benefit the Quan Yin Herbal Program. It was principally a Faery-tradition ritual, with Fakir et al. helping to create the Ball Dance in a somewhat restricted fashion.

Despite some amount of prejudice and misconception, this event was successful and well-received by the community. It is evidence of remarkable cooperation between covens and diverse groups. I was pleased by what I saw as increasing interaction by different segments of our modern Pagan communities. The Radical Faeries possess a tremendous alternative consciousness which I believe should be preserved, as much as native cultures. I refer to the consensus process, the Heart Circle, the Speaker's Token, the basic perspective of attunement

with the earth and the seasons, etc. (Ask your rad faerie drag queen friends.) The SM people have a freedom and consciousness which is unique and valuable, and I think quite relevant to the Witches.

Raven and I began to feel that the Bay Area Pagan community — that's you, Witches — needed to be exposed to some of these ecstatic and shamanic rites. Of all the ones which Fakir has brought to us, and others we have discovered/created, the Ball Dance seems the most potent to reach the "average" person (Pagan or otherwise). The Kavandi, the Sundance, the Okeepah, the suspension by piercing — all these seem too "far out", too much "bizarre mortification" in the minds of the non-cognoscenti. The Ball Dance, however, is accessible, not too shocking, not too tortuous, perhaps; it is a group rite, where the others are intense individual experiences.

So after the first Dance of the Black Sun, Raven and I agreed to produce jointly a Ball Dance at Ancient Ways. Tragically, he died of AIDS the following March, and the Pagan community lost a great and noble leader. So I took over production of the ritual, and it became a memorial and testimonial for Raven as much as a healing and educational event. Since we made this quite clear in the ritual, I was disappointed that you did not even mention Raven's name. Several people in both covens took this on as a very personal mission; the bonding of communities that resulted from his passing has been a blessing and a great gift. Let me quote from the purpose, as we printed and presented it at that time:

"...A sacrifice of flesh as an offering to the Great Spirit... to transcend pain, to experience trance, to seek divine guidance, and to ask for healing.... The Dancers here are praying for healing and for their beloved departed. This ritual is presented with love by Dragonstone Coven North and Bloodrose Coven in the memory of Raven Cerridwen."

You must understand, Macha — this is a very difficult ritual to produce, even when a whole day is allocated.... At first we were told we could not hold the ritual anywhere that might offend the delicate of heart. (We

have to go hide to do our shameful, weird rites!) I compare this to the prejudice that "ordinary" Pagans receive from our dominant and repressive religious regime. When we were finally allowed to use the fire circle, we could only have the space until a two o'clock handfasting. Several of us were eyeing our watches as frequently and and nervously as were you, Macha. It is indeed difficult, as you implied, to compress such a powerful ritual into a fixed (and small) time slot. (As we finished, the wedding party nervously watched us removing sutures and swabbing with alcohol!)

My top priority was to ensure a smooth and successful ritual, one that would create sacred space and entice all the participants, dancing or not, to experience the sublime energy that could arise. We had a very finite amount of time in which to pull it off.... The morning moved slowly, and there were some delays and misunderstandings. Yet things were going smoothly enough by noon, people were very enthusiastic, and the energy felt supportive.... Fakir pierced me with the sutures, as I had done to others only moments before. The piercings were not painful at all, in fact I desired them, savoring the sensations that I knew could lead to bliss. It was never a part of the ritual as I first saw it to lose the balls. Indeed, sometimes, we used sterile stainless wire instead of silk sutures, and you could not lose them! It is the wearing of the balls, carrying them in the dance, to be removed when done, that I first knew.

As I danced my third Ball Dance, I slipped back and forth between the worlds. My left brain attended to the psychic space, to the circle I had swept and carved, to the time that ticked by so quickly while we were trancing. My right brain was swept up in the passion of the rising above fear and pain. For the first time, I was there, and I was not there. Short though the dance was, I managed to attain a level of trance I had not experienced before. It was healing, sublime, and it restored my faith and my sensibilities. I thank Raven for my dance.

An important part of my experience was knowing that I am a link in a large, interconnected chain. Fakir, to me, to Robb, to Raven, to Bloodrose, to Ancient Ways, and to the great spirit beyond. This ameliorates

the prejudice and persecution I experience for being "on the fringe" sexually, spiritually, and socially. I am rooted in my personal integrity and truth, and find great satisfaction in helping forge new communities of individuals similarly inclined. One of the "enraptured ones" you mentioned, with the "blissed-out smile", had come from far away, unaware of the intended rites, and insisted on participating.

What you so provocatively call mortifications are not nearly as bizarre as the violence we encounter at hand every day in our "civilized" (Christian?) cities. The purpose of our sensory transactions is not to punish or injure; there is no indiscriminate torture. We certainly do not want to suffer needless injury while in a trance induced by deliberately and carefully applied sensations. Your interpretation reflects a distinctly Western, anti-pain and ultimately anti-sensation bias. I am glad that you have aired your views, so that we can respond, hopefully to educate....

....Our initial premise [was that] people in general and Witches in particular need to be exposed to these true energies in a safe and responsible fashion. I feel our experience was very successful and good, and I am glad to have created this ritual at least once at Ancient Ways....

dated *Almost Yule*, 1991

spirit of the flame
breathe through me this hour
that i may hold this pain
in both my hands

take from me
my fear
that i may weave of my tears
a blanket
that i may come to understand

Beverly Frederick



RECLAIMING COLLECTIVE PRESENTS

THE TIMELESS WOMAN



THE GODDESS AND OURSELVES

Deborah Ann Light, 56, M.A., Hedgewitch, casts the circle and in the sacred space presents women's poems about women's lives. As we hear about The Nymph, The Nurturer, The Amazon and The Crone, we re-cognize our rites (rights) of passage and celebrate our selves.

T*his presentation is open to women and men, the space is wheelchair-accessible, and children (especially adolescents and preadolescents) are welcome, but parents must be aware that there is no separate space for childcare.*

Sponsor: Reclaiming Collective

*Location: Gifts of the Goddess, 973 Valencia Street,
San Francisco, CA 94110, 415 647-8406*

Date: Friday, May 8, 1992 • Time: 8:00 p.m.

Fee: \$3 - \$13 sliding scale

D*eborah Ann Light, performance artist, collects poems from many sources with which she pieces verbal quilts to confront, commemorate and comfort the realities of human lives. She is clergy of the Covenant of the Goddess and has an M.A. in Religious Studies from Vermont College of Norwich University, 1985. She has lectured at colleges and universities, as well as Unitarian Universalist churches, throughout the New England and the Eastern Seaboard. She has also performed or given workshops at many Pagan gatherings, women's studies associations and women's music festivals throughout the U.S. We are privileged to have Deborah for this rare West Coast appearance.*



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to distribute *Reclaiming Newsletters*
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Announcements

May 1, 1992 is the deadline for a call for papers for the **13th Annual National Association of Drama Therapy Conference**. The theme of the conference is: "From the Sacred to the Profane ... The role of Aesthetics and Spirituality in Drama Therapy". Drama therapists and professionals in the fields of creative arts therapy, psychotherapy, performance/theatre, spirituality, medicine and education are invited to apply. The conference will be held November 6-8, 1992 in San Francisco. For more information call: (415) 648-6864 or write PAPERS, 77 Waller Street, San Francisco, CA 94102.



The Aquarian Tabernacle Church (ATC), an American tradition of Neo-Pagan Wicca, announces the receipt of Group Exemption status from the IRS. ATC focuses on providing opportunities and facilities for public worship. ATC's high level of activity and community involvement includes: publishing the Pagan religious journal *Panegyria*; representing Wicca with three delegate seats on the Interfaith Council of Washington; a recognized prison outreach program; a community outreach program and a recorded hotline; involvement in anti-defamation work both locally in the Northwest and internationally; and support of the Center for Non-Traditional Religion, a Pagan ecumenical educational outreach program which co-sponsors the August 1992 "Pagan Church Conference" near Seattle.

ATC is now able to extend its Federal tax exemption to other Pagan groups with similar goals through affiliation with the ATC Tradition. Inclusion is simple and immediate for qualified independent Pagan church groups in the U.S. For more information contact Rev. Cindy Ravensong Davis, Archpriestess and Director of the Council of Elders, Aquarian Tabernacle Church, P.O. Box 57, Index, WA 98256, (206) 793-1945.



Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp is still alive...and they need your 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 1ND, 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.



HELP! We Need Your Blood! If you can donate blood into Reclaiming's account (#1913) at Irwin Memorial Blood Bank [(415) 567-6400 for information/appointment], please do so. If you or a loved one needs blood for surgery, etc., contact Rose at (415) 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.**



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 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, NY 10115.

+

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 programs, 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, (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 week-long 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, (608) 924-2216, weekdays, 1-4 pm Central Time.

+

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 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.)

+

The plunder of Native American lands is nowhere more imminent than at **Big Mountain**, where traditional Diné (Navajo) and Hopi have resisted relocation since the 1974 Navajo-Hopi Relocation Act. Bush's Commissioner of Navajo-Hopi 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.

+

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.

+

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 the earth. Write to Cambridge for more information at P.O. Box 1926, Casper, WY 82601-2.

+

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.)

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P.I.R. Newsletter is a new publication for Pagans in 12-Step recovery programs. Contact P.I.R. Newsletter, c/o Bekki, 6560 S.R. 356, New Marshfield, OH 45766.

+

The Reclaiming Workbook is soliciting horror stories of spells that backfired. If you can share your experience for publication (anonymous or otherwise) please mail to Reclaiming, Attention: Beverly, P.O. Box 14404, San Francisco, CA 94114.

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"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.

+

Call for Submissions: *The Sword and The Staff, The Cup and The Cauldron: Lesbian and Gay Perspectives on the New Paganism*

I'm collecting material for an anthology on Paganism and the lesbian and gay experience. I need original and/or previously published articles, recollections, poetry, invocations, insights. Why are you Pagan? How do you deal with issues of gender, balance, polarity? What are your good and bad experiences with other Witches? Who are your special Gods? Are there Queer mysteries? Is there a Pagan perspective on AIDS? What is the relationship between your lesbian or gay identity and your Pagan identity?

I am both gay and Pagan myself. Deadline for submissions: April 1992. Send SASE for submission guidelines to Ian Horst, P.O. Box 1618, New York, NY 10013, USA.

+

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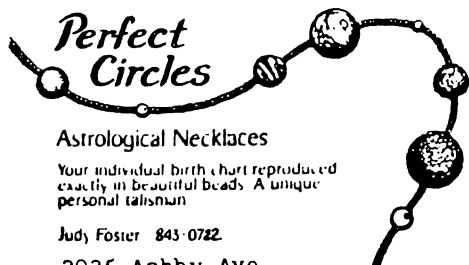
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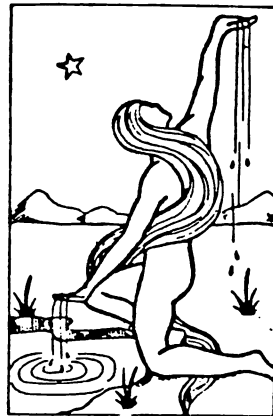
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