

Green Egg

Beltaine
2007



Legendary Journal of the Awakening Earth

GREEN EGG MAGAZINE, BELTANE 2007

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EDITOR'S PAGE

By
Ariel Monserrat

Sitting on our front porch, Tom and I spotted the first hummingbird of the year. Immediately, we both ran to fill up the feeders, thinking the little guy must be exhausted after his long flight north. We filled up the other bird feeders, too, with sunflower seeds for the bright red cardinals, the tufted titmice and chickadees. That night we also saw our first lightning bugs of the year. We rejoiced that at last, spring had returned and we welcomed it all back; the wildlife, the growing things, the smell of warm, damp soil...the Goddess was giving birth. The trees were filled with blossoms, the bees were buzzing and we even saw a few butterflies. The horses were galloping across their pasture, tossing their heads and literally kicking up their heels, happy just to rejoice in the warm, fragrant air of Spring. Spring had inspired us to plant 11 new rose bushes.

But then something strange happened, which dampened all our enthusiasm. We woke up 3 days later and the ground was completely covered in the sparkling simplicity of snow. While we welcomed the snow, we wondered greatly about how it would affect the flora and fauna of our land, the land we have named "Wolvenwood". Would the leaves come out again? Would the trees be unable to bear fruit because they had lost their blossoms? What would it do to the millions of tiny insects, the 4-leggeds and the winged ones?

We set about doing everything we could think of to help the little creatures and the growing things that grace our woods. We put out butterfly feeders, since there weren't any flowers for the butterflies to feast from. We took our potted plants indoors to protect them from the harsh weather. I put extra straw in the horse stall, so they would be warm enough on these cold nights, where temperatures drop down to 4 degrees (F).

Spring here in the Appalachian Mountains is extremely important because the winters are long, lasting 5 months at least, and the landscape is barren. Only brown and gray colors are to be seen. When spring comes, everyone and everything here rejoices. It was as if someone or something had interrupted the great cosmic orgasm of the Mother reawakening.

The cold snap lasted for two weeks, freezing the frog pond and covering everything with icy frost. Finally, about a week ago, Spring returned. Since then, we've seen the return of the goldfinches, one bee, no butterflies, a few new green leaves and the return of our beloved bluebirds. The bluebird population is dropping, so last year Tom hung a blue bird nesting box in the back of our garden. We can see it from the kitchen window. About halfway through the cold snap, while I was coming back from the barn, I saw what I thought was the female bluebird. The females are difficult to differentiate because they are not blue and are rather ordinary-looking. The next morning, I spotted our pair of bluebirds in the nesting box, building their nest. I believe they are the same ones from last year. We love to watch the bluebirds out of the window and cheer them on as they build their nest.

Spring is a time of giving birth. This Spring, Tom and I have been building Green Egg, so to speak. And it has been just like childbirth, with all of the attendant painful moments, joyful times, hard work and surprises that occur during any pregnancy. And, just as in childbirth, it is a labor of love, inspiration and devotion. And, just as our flora and fauna are trying to recover, so is Green Egg. There have been many setbacks along the way to resurrecting Green Egg. Pregnancy and birth take a lot of work and nurturing. Tom and I are enjoying it as much as any parent who gives birth. Is it possible to have too much fun? Time will tell.

For further information on bluebirds, see:

<http://www.lowpockets.com/wild/bluebirds.html> <http://bluebird.htmlplanet.com/>

For further information on fireflies, see:

<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/caer/ce/eeek/critter/insect/firefly.htm>



Wow, we're already past the Sabbat of the Rabbit, and it's time for yet another Legendary Green Egg Forum. The wheel of the year spins crazily on a bent axle and where it stops nobody knows. Looks like we all might be in hot water here on Earth.

Most of this Forum is taken up with responses to Michael Gorman's piece 'Our Pagan Elders.' I guess the squeaky wheel gets the grease. Any thoughts on the other material appearing in the last issue? It's never too late to post something here.

Some of these letters were originally posted on CAW related lists and are published here with the permission of the authors. Thanks. In general, I'd like to see some of the lively discussion going on in lists and small groups find a wider audience here in the Forum, especially discussions of issues that affect our larger Pagan community. So please, if you have any interesting threads going on in your list, feel free to forward to us. It's time to get the ball rolling on some of the discussions that have made the Forum oh so Legendary.

Ian Lurking Bear, Earth Day 2007

Please send Forum letters to lgeforum@greeneggzine.com. Please include any contact info you wish to share with your signature.



Our Pagan Elders Respond

Hello Everyone,

I can understand Michael's anger, and there is some truth in his characterization of the Pagan community. However, there are additional truths out there that Michael is not aware of, or does not mention.

"No leadership training seminars... no seminaries, universities... no community centers... I dream of the day when a child in our community can say, 'My grandparents got handfasted right here in this stone circle, and I'm going to get married here too.'"

Well, there is the annual Leadership Institute that COG offers every year prior to Merrymeet. As to seminaries, how about Ardantane, Cherry Hill, ATC's Woolston-Steen, and RCG's Women's Theological Institute, among others. As with other places, Ardantane serves to some extent as a community center as well, and we have had handfastings, Wiccanings, COG Local Council meetings and other non-class events there, and expect to have many more. Maybe one of the couples handfasted at Ardantane will turn out to be the "grandparents handfasted right here in this stone circle...."

In terms of permanence, Ardantane is a non-profit 501c3 corporation, which will be here for many generations to come. Like some of the other schools mentioned, it was first organized and incorporated more than 20 years ago. And organizations like Covenant of the Goddess and the Pagan Federation are older.

I guess what I am saying is that Neo-Paganism is a young set of religions, even though we have ancient roots. It takes time to build the whole infrastructure that Michael is talking about. Were it not happening, I would be bitter and angry. But it is happening.

I liked the story about St. Francis moving the rocks, because Ardantane's campus is in a rocky piece of high desert in New Mexico. Our Blessed Beavers (volunteer construction corps) move rocks all the time. Never had we had a "Bernardo" standing and watching; instead, we have volunteers pitching in, picking up those rocks, building a campus, making the dream real, creating a future for our Pagan faiths.

Blessed be,
Amber K

Greetings!

Indeed, as Amber points out, there are trainings, seminaries, etc. The fact that Michael didn't know about them is interesting, making it seem to me that what he sees in others he fails to see in himself. It seems he doesn't merely want such training and seminaries, but he wants lots of them and he wants them right where he is. He complains that people in the community don't do work for the community, but he didn't seem to do even a small bit of research work himself. I just did a web search for "Wiccan Seminary" and received over 100,000 hits.

Further, he seems to equate spirituality with permanent things, from rocks and painted fences to universities, social service organizations, etc. All of those things are worthwhile, but are such permanent institutions that what Neopaganism is all about? Being just like Christian churches? Is having a degree in being a Pagan something to be desired so that some organization can determine who is and who is not a Pagan?

If someone is upset that the community isn't planting trees, go plant a tree. If someone is upset that the community isn't visiting hospitals, visit a hospital. If someone is upset that the community isn't helping people in need, do it yourself.

I would contend that part of the notion of the "Aquarian Age" is that we each are leaders, not followers. If something is wrong, right it. Don't wait for others, do it yourself. Take a woman and child into your home when they've been abandoned by the male who had supported them and they are now indigent. Support them until they can get on their feet. I have. Take someone who has been physically abused by their spouse into your home and support them. I have. If someone needs counseling, counsel them. If you don't know how to do counseling, learn. It doesn't take a community to do these things, it just takes you. If you need to learn any new skill, learn it. "Specialization is for insects."

He's upset that Pagan clergy are not supported well by the community. In many instances this is true and I have seen people who are upset about this. My question, however, is: "What are your goals in being clergy?" If it's to have a big building and a big pocket book, become a televangelist. If it's to honor the Goddess and God and be in service to Them, why are you expecting to get paid at all?

I'm not saying that members of the Pagan clergy shouldn't be remunerated for their work. I am saying that if that is your goal, as opposed to honoring the Lord and Lady, chances are you're going to be disappointed.

Michael holds up as positive the minimal example of living in Appalachia, receiving a salary, having a place to work and live, a place for children to study and learn tradition with song books a choir and someone to clean up. If that is your goal, your ideal, or your model, then I would suggest that you start a church out there.

I believe that Neopaganism is not like Christianity, Islam, or Judaism. We proudly say we are not patriarchal, we don't believe in the Devil, etc. If we are not like them, why should we measure our success by their standards? Isn't that saying that we're not successful until we're just like them? And if we're just like them we're not Neopagans at all. If your particular tradition of Neopaganism is into money and buildings, I think that is great! But I would respectfully request not generalizing to all Pagans what works for some.

My temple is the trees and the stars. My social service organization is me helping others. If I can't do it by myself I find those who can help me do it. Contrary to your statement, I don't claim "superior enlightenment." Although there may well be some who do so, I don't know of any Pagans who make such a claim. Rather, they claim a difference, not superiority. At best, Paganism is optimal for them as individuals.

What else should we do to be like other major religions? Proselytize from door to door? Sponsor wars? Incite hatred of those who differ from us? Those, too, are some of the things many of the new religions do.

YMMV,

Don Kraig

Patience, Don, Patience. Just give the Pagan movement time, and we too can have our very own dingbat terrorist fanatics just like the other religions. These things take time to root deeply. -- ILB

Gorman Responds to the Elders Responding

With all due respect, Amber, I suspect very few people outside of COG know about this institute to which you refer, or the Merrymeet that follows it, and that is part of the point of this article. We can name a few local examples, and many of us are trying, usually the very leaders I am defending here, but when are we going to have the courage to step out of our local comfort zones and recognize that we are being attacked by the right wing right now, with impunity, and we have no foundation as a people from which to respond or defend ourselves because we are so willing to settle for a few isolated projects to which most Pagans have no real access. We are satisfied with our own provincial events and

never address the entire community. Also, you might want to re-read the following passage from my rant.

I can already hear the thoughts some of you are thinking. Go ahead, desperately search your mind for examples of each of the things I have listed. But once you have your list and your righteous indignation to thrust under my nose, do a little exercise to put this into perspective. Ask yourself this: how many churches and temples and synagogues are within 5 miles of your house that have classrooms, designated worship space for a community of believers, offices, meeting rooms, and social services? Now think; how many such Pagan groups are there within 5 miles of your house? How about within your city? Your county? How many within your state? Your country? I am one of the most connected Pagans I know, and I can name only a handful in the world, and none of them is well funded or loyally supported over years by the same people.

As long as we justify our provincial focus we will never be able to serve our people effectively. And why is our reaction to criticism always defensiveness? Why can't we assess ourselves without engaging in tit for tat arguments? Why can we never say, "Wow. Looks like we have work to do!" Once we throw out our small picture claims, we are then free to sit back and do nothing to address the big picture.

As for your comment I guess what I am saying is that Neo-Paganism is a young set of religions, even though we have ancient roots. It takes time to build the whole infrastructure I am deeply flattered. They said the same thing, as you may recall, to Martin Luther King Jr. I am honored to be included in his company, though I don't consider the honor justified.

Respectfully,
Michael

Who You Are Calling Provincial?

Michael,

Hmmm. I just don't remember King writing emails and posts. I do remember him doing the work

himself. I also remember him being a Christian Reverend, and operating within that paradigm. I just respectfully disagree that we should be the same as other religions, especially considering how well the major ones seem to have done for our planet.

I would suggest an alternative paradigm, perhaps along the lines suggest by Bey in T.A.Z. instead of being just like the "churches and temples and synagogues... that have classrooms, designated worship space for a community of believers, offices, meeting rooms, and social services," as well as internecine battles over archaic dogma, people seeking power and money and control.

I would suggest that denouncing those who disagree with you by saying they have a "provincial focus" ("provincial" in this usage means unsophisticated or narrow-minded, esp. when considered as typical of people in regions outside of major cities) is no different than those who insulted our forebears by discounting their opinions and actions, saying hey were just people of the fields and heaths: Heathens and Pagans! Can't we discuss and disagree without name-calling?

And I would agree that for many an immediate reaction to criticism is defensiveness. I would hope that we might see such in ourselves when it comes out.

"O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us" --Robert Burns

Blessings!

Don Kraig

Thank goodness the Pagan community has been spared from "internecine battles over archaic dogma" and "people seeking power and money and control," unlike those other religions who are so plagued. ;-) As to the T.A.Z. (Temporary Autonomous Zone), I'd like to see the TAZ's thrive until at last we have the permanent autonomous zone (PAZ), peace. I believe our global goals can only be met as the sum of many "provincial" efforts by autonomous local groups. --ILB

[Hakim Bey himself on the PAZ](#)
[Wikipedia on the PAZ](#)

More Pagan Clergy Respond

Greetings,

I seldom post to this list, but I do read the posts. I am the Consistory Executive (Principal Priestess) of the Re-formed Congregation of the Goddess-International. (RCG-I) We are a women's religion started in 1983. I understand that some pagans do

not consider feminist witches to be "real" pagans, but if you ask us what our religion is we do answer "pagan."

I was feeling sorry for myself, complaining about the lack of support we get from our community when I read the Pagan Elders post. I have to say it

provided a lot of perspective for me. I'd like to share some information about RCG-I. I don't offer this information for comparison or as bragging. I offer it for two reasons. One, because I would like for this list to know we exist and what our resources are and, two because so many of the things stated in the Pagan Elders letter are not true for RCG-I.

Here's some information about RCG-I...

-- RCG-I has a membership of over 2650.

-- We own our own space and have since 1998. It is paid off with no mortgage. It is a modest house 4 bedroom, two-bath house with a kitchen and a large backyard. In addition to the house, "RCG-I Mother House" used to be a "Mom and Pop" grocery. The old grocery space is a 60 x 50 room used as a temple. The living room and dining room are used as workspace as are two of the bedrooms. Additionally, we have a 2500 volume reference library. Because we are a 501 (c) (3) pagan organization, (one of the first) we do not pay property tax on this structure. We can sleep 9 if needed.

-- For a modest fee, the Mother House can be rented for community meetings. Not just for members of the Congregation, but by the larger pagan community. We have hosted Pagan Pride meetings, men's groups meetings, and other local pagan and community meetings over the years.

-- The Mother House has been used as "safe haven" for members with domestic abuse issues and as a respite for members caring for elders with Alzheimer's on an as needed basis.

-- Our central offices/temple are handicapped accessible and have been so since six months after we bought the building.

-- We have a seminary; The Women's Theological Institute (WTI) has been in existence since 1989. We have outstation campuses in PA, TX, WA, IN and a central headquarters at the Mother House in WI. WTI is a rigorous six-year program. More than 70 women have graduated and 32 of these have been ordained. One of the core curriculum components for all WTI participants is leadership development.

-- I have been paid a living wage since 1988, plus insurance and retirement.

--RCG-I has had a stable publicized

- address since 1983.
- a contact person since 1983.
- phone since 1987.
- web presence since 2001.

--We have 5 Circles for whom RCG-I is an umbrella organization. These Circles are chartered by the Congregation and share our tax-exempt status. Two

new Circles will join this year.

-- Last year one of our ordained Priestesses died of cancer. Our community donated around \$12,000 to her for healthcare and funeral expenses.

-- When one of our Congregations is hospitalized, injured or seriously ill (a leader or a member) organizes a "Share the Care" (www.sharethecare.org) group that responds to the need.

--We host two Congregation wide Gatherings a year at a Campground we have been renting for 15 years.

-- We have a Community Support fund. It is small, but we have been able to make donations to members who have had fires, several who have been ill and others who have lost their jobs.

--We receive between \$2,500 - \$5,000 a year in grants.

--Someone comes to clean once every two weeks and someone does all the yard work in the summer. Most often it is someone bartering for something.

Yes, I often work 60 to 80 hours a week.

Yes, the work is never done and never enough.

Yes, some women are unappreciative.

Yes, some women's expectations are skewed.

Yes, some women are mad and disaffected.

Yes, we are frequently questioned about decisions we make.

Yes, I have been accused of everything from malfeasance to sexual misconduct.

Yes, we are often struggling to balance finances.

In the women's spiritual community RCG-I is not alone. The Goddess Temple of Orange County (goddess temple of orange county.com) also has a temple space in which there are regular meetings, rituals and classes. And, The Temple of Goddess Spirituality Dedicated to Sekhmet. (www.sekhmettemple.com) stands across from the Nevada Desert Nuclear Test site keeping watch while providing rituals and employing a Priestess.

Over the years I have been asked many times how it is I keep doing this work. I reply, "I just get back up." I've gotten knocked over by gossip, innuendo, horizontal hostility and just plain meanness more times than I can name. We're not that far outside the pagan norm. I've had bad days of desolation and despair about our community too.

People have also asked me what I hope will happen with the Congregation. I say, "I want to leave a legacy for our daughters." Although at times this seems like a distant vision, I have hope that the foundation we have laid will be enough for RCG-I to reach into the future. And, for those of you who have been working to make some of this a reality in

your community I wish for each of you the strength to "get back up."

Jade River

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The article by Michael R. Gorman entitled *Our Pagan Elders* sparked quite a discussion in our Temple. I was amazed to discover that this was an issue that widespread as I had thought it was one that was limited to our group. Thank you Mr. Gorman and Green Egg for publishing this article and for bringing this issue into focus. It is quite sad that we can not seem to get our collective butts together and work towards a common goal. We seem to be a Faith of mostly Solitaires and have very little Faith wide solidarity.

Look at what is happening to the Christian Faith. They are starting to fall apart because they are losing their solidarity. the same thing will happen to us if we don't start learning to work better together. We will not get any further than where we are right now unless we ALL pull together to achieve our common goals. This article was an eye opener for me and I hope it is the same for Pagans around the world.

Nydia Walker

High Priestess
in service to Temple Ankh
<http://www.templeankh.com/>

This is a very interesting article, and the author makes some very good points. Although I have only been a part of the Pagan community for a few years, I have seen both, when someone needs help and very little is given, but also when people come to their aid and do all that they can. The Coven I belong to here in Florida is more like a family than anything else. If one of us is sick, we are there. If someone needs help, we are there. If someone needs a ride, we are there. If someone is having financial trouble, we are there. You get the idea. I have been on both sides of this coin. I have needed help and received it, and I have been the one giving the help. I guess what I am trying to say is, that while forgetting to help our own, may be the norm in our overall community, there are some who give as much as possible. When it comes to our Elders and leaders, they are sharing their knowledge and experience with us. If they need us, we should do as much as we can to help them out. I feel a little

help to them is a small price compared to what they give us.

I wish we did have the resources of the Christian and Jewish communities, but unfortunately we don't. Just recently there was a situation here in St. Pete, Florida where homeless people were being evicted from their "Tent city", by the city govt. It went so far as the Police being ordered to use knives and cut their tents up. I must also add, that this was done at one of the coldest times we had in the area this year. The land this "city" was on, was donated by a local Christian church. When this happened, fortunately, the church people, were able to go on T.V, and ask for support and assistance. Aside from the people being outraged, the church received many donations to go to these mistreated homeless people, and a lot of volunteer help from the public was given. Now I can't say for sure, but I would be willing to make a small wager, that if this had been a Pagan "Tent city", we would not have had the same media coverage or opportunity to publicly ask for assistance. I also believe, if and when we were able to get the word out, the amount of help would have been minimal in comparison to what the Christian church received, and we have one of the largest Pagan communities in the country. I do know for a fact though, that many Pagans here did help them out, which I am proud to say. One of my Coven Sister's mother works closely with the homeless and my partner and I gave her like six big garbage bags of clothing to donate to them. Being that I am disabled and have no income, I gave what I could.

I feel it is time for us as Pagans to realize that as far as public support goes, we are on our own. We really need to come together, and support our Elders, Leaders, each other and the community as a whole. Remember, Pagan Pride is not only a one day festival, it is something that we need to live every day.

On another note, the submission "Rebirth of an Egyptian", written by Nydia Walker was wonderful. It really gives someone who is unfamiliar with the Egyptian path, a very clear look at our beliefs concerning our journeys into life after death.

Brightest Blessings,
Astara SatAset
Clearwater, Florida

May the wings of Aset protect you from harm, and her smile forever light your way. Dua Aset!

Thanks to all you hard working clergy out there who serve our communities. I am not worried about whether you are doing enough, I know you all serve as well as you may. As well as being a young community, we are one that hasn't been that large until quite recently. Just 25 years ago, there

weren't even 10,000 of us nationwide, so it's a little soon to bemoan the lack of vast campuses and a community center in every town. Meanwhile, let's treasure what we have and support those who are doing the work. --ILB

In response to Michael Gorman's article in the Ostara '07 edition: although I agree that we could do more for each other in pagan communities, for individuals in need as well as for our leaders, I do have to point out in response to the Green Egg column that we are a young community - in median age as well as in terms of the entire "movement." Christianity, for example, didn't build its first formal structures for worship until 300+ years after the beginning of their faith, and their early history is full of schisms and debates over key points of doctrine, just as ours has been. I'm not saying we should let things slide for a couple hundred years - paganism is nowhere near as suppressed a religious minority as early Christianity and certainly not faced with the same level of obstruction to building such framework - but the infrastructure of church communities is something that has developed over 2000 years, and it's ridiculous to expect that in less than 50 years pagans would have built the same level of organization.

Lisa

altered-intersect.blogspot.com

Not all he says is true. In the Reclaiming tradition, which I am a part of, our "elders" make thousands of dollars for their weekend classes, core leadership training is available through witchcamps and core classes, which are again mighty pricey. An average weekend seminar/class/intensive cost \$100 per person, witchcamps are \$300 per person before scholarships, with the exception of a few, which are still \$500 after scholarships. Our elders make more money once a week than I make in half a year. I ask advice and send small things when I can, what most people like him don't see is the level of poverty some of we "pagan" folk live in. I'm unemployed right now, and at my last steady part-time job I

made \$6.25/hr worked less than 30 hrs/week. How could I possibly afford the nearest witchcamp that cost \$500 after receiving scholarship aid?

The part about pagan schools is sad I know, but there is pagan owned and pagan cared for and even pagan used land, It's called Diana's Grove, it's a few miles north of Columbia MO. They do a year long Mystery School there, witch includes weekends at the Grove, as well as a Witchcamp once a year in the summer.

For more information on witchcamps visit:

www.witchcamp.org/index.php?section=home&id=1

For info on Diana's Grove visit:

www.dianasgrove.com/

For information on Dreamweavers (the community that host Witchcamp at Diana's Grove) visit:

<http://www.dreamweaving.org/>

Blessed Be~

Crystal

Thank you Michael for your article on Pagan Elders. While reading the column I certainly noticed similarities in my own life, and yes I am also guilty of a lot of the problems we now face as a pagan community. I have been a somewhat active member of the local community here for a few years now. I say somewhat active, because it seems like we have to pull teeth to get anyone together. How are we to form ties and relationships if we never meet or even talk to each other? Your article certainly touched my heart and even made me question myself and whether or not I think I am a "good" pagan. I thought the article was very though provoking, you certainly motivated me to get off my lazy a\$\$ and do more than just talk about our problems. We certainly do need to find ways for all of us to be active daily in our faith, not just on certain holy days! We need to take care of each other, respect each other and fight for our right of freedom of religion. If we don't do it, who will??

Respectfully,

Annette Breaux

CAW Elder Weighs In

In a discussion like this, I recommend keeping in mind the differentiation between doing something because you are called from within yourself to do it, and doing something in order to meet the expectations of others, or as a means of achieving power over others and/or the elevation of yourself to a position of perceived superiority (obtaining the dubious reinforcements of ego inflation).

It is also useful to bear in mind George Bernard Shaw's wise observation that any countercultural

movement attracts to itself not only those who are "superior to the demands of the existing society" but those who "are inferior to the demands of the existing society."

The Buddhist tradition of social activism advises you to BE the change you wish to induce in the world around you. Exhorting others to do what you think is right and then condemning them when they fail to do it is a reliable recipe for becoming a crispy critter, as well as being unpopular at parties. The

best course is to do what you think is "right action," and invite others to join you. If they don't think what you are doing is "right action" for them, then they can't have any.

It helps to have compassion for yourself and others if you carefully observe your own cognitive and behavioral inertia and acquire full respect for its power in yourself, and therefore the ability to understand and feel compassion for this in others. The answer to the question of why other Pagans aren't out creating enlightened green communities can be found in the reason you aren't doing so.

In respect to leaders, the Buddhists advise that efforts to lead through the ego are always a sure recipe to the leader being a crispy critter and the effort not turning out very well. Their meditation techniques aspire to making one conscious of one's own cognitive and behavioral habits/inertia, and then seeing through these to the field of universal consciousness which the ego consciousness obscures. When you are in the flow state of nirvana, it is said that you act spontaneously and with far more intelligence than you can manage by trying to think out what best to do in a given situation. Over several decades I have certainly found that trying to think a problem through just confuses me, but if I refer my conundrum to the deep intelligence in the crawl space of my consciousness, creative solutions often pop out and in any event, I feel relaxed and happy by letting go of my ego's pit-bull-like worrying of the problem.

At this point in my life, I am very leery of leaders who say, "I know what to do. Follow me!" I am far more comfortable with people who say, "I know what I need to do. Would you like to accompany me?"

Aquafraternally,
Lance Christie

Darn it Lance, you're being so calm and reasonable. How are we going to get people all riled up and writing voluminous rants to the Forum that way? This could lead to extreme outbreaks of moderation. Couldn't you at least get egotistical about moving beyond ego or something? --ILB

Blast From the Past

Imagine my surprise when I saw the first issue of the new Green Egg, and even more when I read a letter that I had written so long ago. My address was given as Lake Junaluska, NC., and since that time I have moved 7 or 8 times. But one thing still remains constant, my love for CAW, and my friend and mentor, Tim aka Otter aka Oberon. Congratulations on the new revival.

NT,

Don Wildgrube

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Any reactions to what's here? Send mail to lgeforum@greeneggzine.com. Make yourself heard! Please include any contact info you wish to share with your signature.



What grows springs from the earth. We are a part of it all! Like the plants, trees, flowers, and animal life – we are living and growing amongst it all. How are we contributing to the beauty of this garden? Whether it is with our work, or our art, or our kindness, we have opportunities daily to bring glory to this planet.

-- Goethe (1749-1832)



The Role of Elders in the Pagan Community

by M. Macha Nightmare



What Is An Elder?

I think there is a difference between an Elder of a particular Craft or Pagan magical tradition, and an elder in the Pagan community at large.

I belong to, and have been active in, an organization of Witches called the Covenant of the Goddess (CoG). In CoG, an elder is defined technically as one who is qualified to carry on her¹ tradition, i.e., to teach it to others, to lead a coven, to initiate others, one who has qualified and attained all degrees of her particular tradition.

But, of course, there are many one-degree traditions. In those, the Witch takes vows and formally dedicates her life to walking the Lady's path and to worshipping Her, to celebrating Her seasons, phases, gifts. By the time one has received an initiation from her "elders" in these kinds of traditions, one has already demonstrated unmistakably and sincerely her abilities to conduct magickal work—to cast circles; to call quarters, invoke deities, cast spells, alter one's consciousness; to give strength, love and healing to others; to raise power; to ground; to conduct herself ethically. Presumably she is also able to transmit this body of knowledge to others, which indeed is a thing she may have been doing on an apprenticeship basis prior to her taking vows.

So in the most basic way, I use CoG's definition of an Elder of the Craft—one who is qualified to and capable of transmitting her tradition to others.

But on the other hand, are we not perhaps being a bit less than elevated about our standards when we use such a loose definition? You'll notice that it is a definition which

has nothing to do with age. Nor, ultimately, with accountability.

I honestly have mixed feelings about lots of young and middle-aged Witches going around calling themselves elders, even though I myself did it in my younger years, since I was in my 30s.

While it's true that many of us may have highly developed magickal skills and may be quite competent at teaching those skills to others, what we do lack is life experience. No matter how much I hear of someone's past life experiences, I seldom see, in those who claim them, evidence of the maturity one might expect such past life experiences to afford.

For CoG's legal purposes, I accept its definition of Elder of the Craft. But I think this present exploration requires a deeper look into what elder means. So I move to my second question:

Who Is An Elder?

As I mentioned, I think a person who is described as being an elder, or who describes herself as being one, should have some mileage on her.

In "native cultures" (and I use the term very loosely to mean, in general, ethnic cultures which have not been over-cultivated or which have not been too transformed from their origins by so-called "civilization"), age seems to be one necessary and indispensable characteristic of elder status (as the word "elder" implies).² Perhaps one of the blessings of age is that one is still alive and of this

world—the world of matter and Earth and material and substance—when most of one's contemporaries have crossed over to the other side.

The older I get, the broader my perspective. I don't know how one achieves this perspective without "doing time" in this game of life. Perhaps there are other ways of achieving it; one now and then encounters souls who seem very ancient, or wise beyond their years. On the other hand, if these old souls are truly old souls, they have acquired patience and can comfortably wait till they're older in years. Those who are always in a rush, even though older, have yet to embrace the virtue of patience. But for me, the only way that I seem to have been able to achieve perspective is to have *lived*. You know the old word—experience. (Remember that old "best teacher"?)

So if we accept that an elder has the skill and knowledge to competently pass on her tradition—as Craft elder; and that an elder must have lived, with or without having practiced some magical tradition for all of that life, to some state at least beyond childbearing years, what other qualifications must she have to function as an elder? And what, in fact, is the function of an elder?

I propose the following qualifications:

✦ **Age and experience, not alone, but combined into "seasoning," or "ripening."** We all know older people who seem not just youthful, but immature. Many of us in this culture are as affected (or perhaps "afflicted" is an apter word) by the youth culture which the media promote. We

pathetically try to hold onto whatever semblance of youth we may retain: The middle-aged man who courts younger women and discards older women (or woman) with whom he has had a long relationship, presumably with a shared history; the frantically trendy woman who behaves like her daughters, who takes pride in being told she looks like her daughter's sister, who is truly flattered at being told, "you don't look 50." To that supposed compliment, I answer in the words of Gloria Steinem: "This is what 50 looks like."

A primary learning experience which contributes to our seasoning (i.e., having turned with the Wheel of Life many seasons; steeping in our experiences) is parenting—successful parenting of thriving offspring. I do not limit the definition of parenting herein to biological parenting, rather nurturing of young beings.

Other experiences which season our lives are: mistressing skills; suffering illness, loss, injury, mishap; hard labor; successes and losses; wide exposure to the creatures and sights and sounds of this world.

So age—with some grace and seasoning and humor and perspective—is one qualification. But age alone does not an elder make.

♦ **Grace under pressure.**

No need to freak out; everything levels out in the long run. Calm, compassion and reason, in balance with wisdom. By this I don't mean aloofness and distance, but an understanding of a situation which is informed by the memories of one's own youth—and youthful follies, if you will—and by a certain compassion and empathy for the specific crisis being addressed, either to or by the "elder."

Other ways to express or conceive this quality are grounded adaptability, or centered pliancy.

♦ **Skill in crisis situations.**

A "qualified" elder needs skills at defusing crises, while not trivializing them. She requires the ability to lessen the immediate heat of the situation, to keep the parties to a crisis from attacking one another. But she still must face the very real feelings of all parties, and she must hear them and help them to be heard by the other parties to the situation, something most parents learn in the course of their child-rearing.

♦ **Respect and trust of one's peers.**

This is a much more difficult and elusive quality, both to define and to reach agreement upon. How does one acquire it? What does

one do to earn it? What quality demonstrates that one has it?

Other than by taking a popularity poll (and, of course, popularity does not necessarily imply respect and trust), by what criteria can we judge the respect and trust in which a person is held by her community? After all, none of us is perfect. All of us have some kind of skeleton in our closet, or some kind of unpleasant experience with another co-religionist. We have all made mistakes. It is human to be flawed; we would be imperfect humans were we "perfect." So this particular quality must, of necessity, be relative.

Perhaps trust and respect can be held to have been earned by one having done years of community service, or years of competent, effective, potent, efficacious "priestessing" (creating appropriate, powerful rituals for specific magickal purposes, presiding at rituals).

Perhaps trust and respect are earned by having been consulted for counsel, and having been entrusted with private vulnerabilities, and not having broken that trust, but

having helped the one in crisis to overcome the situation, to triumph over adversity; a parenting skill.

Perhaps trust and respect are earned by some merely by their having been a "good listener" and emanating "good vibes" in both ritual and non-ritual situations with one's co-religionists over a period of years.

Obviously, one's individual, personal history in our community(ies) has significant bearing on her acceptability to her co-religionists to function in the capacity of elder.

Assuming that we as a community accept the definitions and qualifications put forth above, what do we do with it? Do we attempt to form a more formal eldership? Is the concept of eldership useful to all Craft organizations and Pagan traditions?

I believe it could be useful, particularly in light of the strong organization and solidarity of the Christian right. We Pagans need our own solidarity. We need our own organization (and I don't mean by that an organization, but being organized³). We need mutual trust and respect, both within traditions and inter-traditionally.

To complicate the issue, this presents us with the problem of reconciling how purportedly non-hierarchical groups/traditions might deal with the concept of eldership? In non-hierarchical traditions such as my own, there may be an unacknowledged or unnamed eldership. If there is, how do we acknowledge this fact while still maintaining no official hierarchy?

In addition to the qualities I've suggested for defining who is an elder in the wider community(ies)—age, experience, grace, calm, compassion, reason, wisdom, grounded adaptability, centered pliancy, crisis skills, respect and trust of peers, perspective, personal history in community—non-hierarchical groups need to beware of separation, or unwarranted, unearned, undeserved elevation.

Our special skills and experience can benefit the community, yet they are nothing without community.

I don't feel prepared to propose any answers to the question of non-hierarchical elderships in this writing. The subject has been brought up, and so far I, for one, have no ready solutions.

In the meantime, I would put forth the question of what is the value and purpose of having a Council of Elders? And my primary answer would be as above—to foster



mutual trust and respect, intra- and inter-traditionally, throughout Neo-Pagandom.

Then what would this Council of Elders

do? What kind of authority would these elders have? Moral authority? How would they function as a body? To whom would they be accountable?

A council of elders might be charged with resolving disputes, mediating "Witch wars." The elders might be convened to redress a misdeed, such as abuse of power (sexual or otherwise), to name an error and its perpetrator(s), then to recommend compensation to the wronged.

Elders' moral authority must come from within the individuals who comprise the council as well as from the empowerment of it by its community(ies). Elders might employ magic and/or divination techniques when appropriate. They must be willing to give freely of their highly developed specialized skills in service to council and community, with a balance of both pride and humility. These offerings can only benefit our community(ies) insofar as community actually exists and supports its elders—in decisions; in carrying out decisions; in honoring its collective wisdom, discrimination and judgment.

A council's functioning as a body must be determined by its

members, from within the council, not by anyone outside, yet a council is ultimately responsible to its community(ies).

Though it is not too early to examine these questions within our community(ies), there is no way I, one Witch, can put forth the definitive solution to meet the needs of our growing subculture. I hope that the definitions and qualifications that I have offered can be a stepping-off point for our continued collective self-definition, with the heartfelt prayer for mutual trust and respect, intra- and inter-traditionally, throughout Neo-Pagandom. **GD**

Footnotes

¹For purposes of this article, and as an acknowledgement of my Dianic tendencies, I will be using the feminine personal pronoun throughout.

²This is even true of the institutions of the Christian churches!

³Which so far no one could ever accuse us of being—whatever else they might accuse of us, eating babies or whatever.

M. Macha Nigh: Mare has studied Witchcraft with NROOGD, Reclaiming and others. She has been a member of Reclaiming Collective since its beginning. She has taught many classes and trained covens, has worked extensively with the magickal technique of chants and enchantment, and is a student of mental, physical and spiritual sexuality. She is active in local and national CoG [Covenant of the Goddess], writes, and recently edited and designed a Pagan manual on death and dying. Passionate about sex, death and literature, Macha's Matron is Kali Ma.



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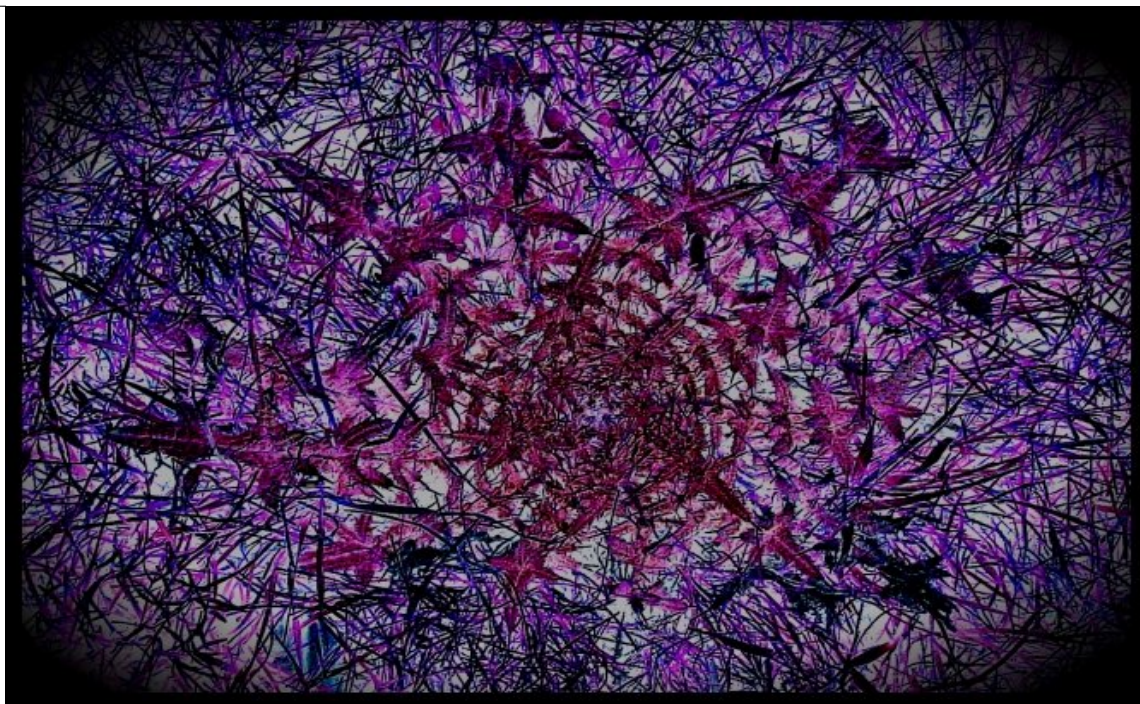


Photo by Jymi X/O

Powders & Potions © Andi Fisher

African Medicinal Plants

By Andi Fisher, Cape Town, South Africa

Clivia Miniata

Bush lily (English) – Umayime (Zulu)



Medicinal Properties:

Treats fever
Helps with childbirth
Snake-bite remedy
Pain reliever

The whole plant is used,
including the leaves, roots & rhizome

***Metaphysical properties:**

To calm tempers
Eases painful transformation
Neutralizes negative energies

Caution!

Powders & Potions articles contain general information about medicinal plants & their uses. It is not intended as medical advice for self-treatment. Many of the medicinal plants described are highly toxic and may cause severe allergic reactions or serious poisoning. Neither the author or publishers can be held responsible for claims arising from the mistaken identity of plants or their inappropriate use. Do not attempt self-diagnosis or self-treatment. Always consult a medical professional or qualified practitioner.

BRIEF BITS: Legal Topics for Pagans
By Dana D. Eilers, Attorney and Author

PAGANS AND THE LAW: UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS

TOPIC: LEGAL RAMIFICATIONS OF SPELL CASTING

Recently, a little news item out of San Antonio caught my eye. The title read "Police arrest self-proclaimed witch." Please see:

<http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/metro/stories/MYSA030807.witcharrested.KEN3197d25e.html>

Admittedly, the "self proclaimed witch" business has always rankled me. No one ever says "self proclaimed Catholic" or "self proclaimed Jewish person." My first thought was that here was someone who had sprawled over the door of a business in protest of something; so, I went to the website to have a look. A witch protesting poor ecological or economic policies? Not hardly. The police had arrested a woman for felony stalking. The woman named in the news story had declared herself a witch and was apparently harassing someone with whom she used to work.

The harassment took the form of sending letters to the old co-employee, of talking about running the old co-employee over, of asking the old co-employee if she had ever thought about being beheaded, and about using a Taser gun on her. (This last bit could have possibly just been talking about using a Taser gun---the article was not terribly clear on this point.) And, oh yes--the arrest affidavit also stated that witch had left chicken parts and rubber animals at the victim's home.

The self proclaimed witch was arrested for felony stalking. In layman's terms, this means that there is a statute in Texas which makes it a felony to stalk someone. (For a look at the actual statute, please see

http://www.ncvc.org/src/main.aspx?dbID=DB_Texas176.)

The witch in question was probably arrested under that statute.

Granted, there is more at issue here than just casting a spell and as I read it, the spell casting is implicated by the chicken parts and the rubber animals left at the home of the old co-employee. There are some other rather colorful aspects to the felony, such as sending letters and of talking about various ways to kill and injure the intended victim. Take those aspects out of the equation, and one wonders if the police would have issued a felony warrant for leaving dead animal parts and rubber animals at the home of the old co-employee.

The fact remains, however, that a legal vehicle does exist for arresting potential spell casters on criminal charges: i.e., the state criminal codes which make it a crime to stalk someone. There is an excellent resource on line to view your state's criminal statute on stalking. It is The Stalking Resource Center at:

http://www.ncvc.org/src/main.aspx?dbID=DB_State-

[byState_Statutes117](#) There are also federal stalking statutes. To see these, you may refer to:

http://www.ncvc.org/src/main.aspx?dbID=DB_Federal_Law_Summary889

So, what is stalking? It usually refers to behavior that is harassing or threatening in nature and which is engaged in repeatedly. The harassment can take the form of actual physical stalking or cyberstalking. Physical stalking usually involves following someone, showing up at someone's home or place of employment, vandalizing one's property, leaving written messages or objects, and/or making harassing phone calls. Please see the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, "Fact Sheet 14: Are you Being Stalked," at <http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs14-stk.htm#5>. Actual definitions do vary on a state by state basis. For example, in some states the law will require that the stalker make a credible threat of violence. In other states, the conduct need only involve an implied threat. Please see the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, "Fact Sheet 14: Are you Being Stalked," at <http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs14-stk.htm#5>.

In the San Antonio matter, the circumstances obviously fit the stalking criteria. Even without the hints at beheading, the Taser gun, etc., the chicken parts and rubber animals—which I take to be the remnants of spell casting—fit the stalking criteria.

In addition to the criminal ramifications, there are civil side effects, as well. A person who believes that spell has been cast upon them and who has incurred significant emotional distress has recourse to a tort action known as the intentional infliction of emotional distress. If successful, the Plaintiff in such a case would win monetary damages from the Defendant. Of course, proving the connection between the spell and the emotional distress would be, in my opinion, the sticky wicket in such a civil suit? Even so, how many of us want to see our name in the local news as a "Self Proclaimed Witch named in civil suit for damages from a curse gone right"?

There were real reasons why, in the old days, silence was so important. And today, as fluffy bunny as it is, there are real reasons why responsible spell casters do not perform curses and cast only beneficent spells with the permission of the person for whom the magic is performed.

Dana D. Eilers is a 1978 graduate of Smith College and a 1981 cum laude graduate of New England School of Law. She holds legal licenses in three states and for nearly twenty years, she worked as a civil litigator in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Now retired from the active practice of law, Dana is the author of THE PRACTICAL PAGAN and PAGANS AND THE LAW: UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS. She has written extensively on the web and in print on the issues of Pagans and their rights.

BUTTONS THE CAT

by San, April 10, 2007

Years ago, I adopted a small, scared, red 4 year old tiger cat from the SPCA. She was really nervous, and I knew the cages in the community room would terrify her, so I took a chance. It took awhile, but Buttons (the name she came with) eventually became my best cat friend, and I was her favorite person. She was my constant companion when I was at home; she survived several moves, a growing teenager, a divorce, and several lovers. She even became a little friendly with the "good" people, though she chose her friends judiciously; for instance, she usually turned her back quite deliberately on my soon-to-be ex-mother-in law, no matter how much she wheedled. We both found it to be hilarious.

Buttons was always there to comfort me, and to take her comfort from me. One of her most endearing habits was to walk a protective circle around my bed before settling in at night; this happened every night, even after I moved in with Peter, my wonderfully cat loving husband (he had 10 cats of his own when I met him). We kept Buttons and her adopted daughter Zoe separate from the herd, as she was a grand old lady of 20 years by the time I took that particular plunge, and he had several big tomcats I was sure would terrorize her. She included Peter in the circle, and walked it faithfully every night.

At the age of 22, Buttons, who had been fading, lost her ability to stand or walk, and lost

control of her bladder. In her quiet, old-lady way, she looked up at me with a sweet old cat smile, and let me know that she was ready to go. We tearfully took her to the vet for the last time, and she passed easily, with grace and dignity. A few months later, when Zoe followed her (I think she died of a broken heart, as she was a youngster at 16), we mingled their ashes and buried them under a pine tree in our front yard. A small sculpture of two entwined cats marks the spot.

About two weeks after Buttons died, I became ill with diverticulitis, and had to be hospitalized. I was miserable, a little scared at my prospects, and depressed as I settled in for the night. The IV was attached to my inner arm, near the elbow, which made sleeping uncomfortable. I hadn't allowed myself to mourn properly, and in my weakened state, the tears began to flow, and I had a good cry; when I was finished, I decided to honor Buttons with a meditation of her, to remember the beauty of our life together. As I did this, the most remarkable thing happened: I felt her jump up on the bed, and walk her circle. She walked slowly and deliberately, in her spirit form, then settled at my head, as she had done for 16 years, and began to purr. I closed my eyes and fell asleep to the sound of her purring.

I never heard, or saw Buttons again, though I occasionally feel her watching.



Painting by San

Animal Intelligence

by Tom Donohue



Religions differ as to whether animals have souls. An old joke suggests that philosophers (in spite of all their differences) fall broadly into two classes: Those who own dogs, it is said, are confident that dogs have souls; those who do not (own dogs) deny this.

-- Francis Crick

Under carefully monitored conditions of temperature, pressure and relative humidity, an organism will do as it damn well pleases

-- Anonymous

Q: What is the soul?

A: The soul is a pure spirit having intellect and free will.

-- The Baltimore Catechism

Lowell was abuzz. Well, the Science department was anyway. The energy in the air was palpable. We had just received a phone call from Jane Goodall who had called to ask if we could schedule an assembly wherein she could address our entire student body. She was coming to visit the Alma Mater of her late friend and colleague, the author of *Gorillas in the Mist*, Dian Fossey. (Lowell High School, class of 1950) She was also recruiting student membership for a wildlife conservation organization she was forming, *Roots and Shoots*. <http://www.rootsandshoots.org/>

We science teachers had been seated around the conference table, (Actually three classroom tables pushed together end to end.) in the unused classroom that served as our department office, when the phone rang. Our department head, Marion Gonzales, reached for it with some annoyance.

Who, she wondered, was interrupting our meeting this time. We watched her facial expression change from minor irritation to wide eyed wonder. Her mouth agape with astonishment, she nodded vigorously saying only, " Yes! Yes! Of course! Mmm hmm! Sure! Yes! Will do!" and every other affirmative answer she could think of.

"That," she said, as she hung up the phone, " was Jane Goodall. She'll be arriving next week."

The scheduled day arrived to find the auditorium packed to capacity with excited students and educators. As the houselights dimmed, the audience settled into near reverential silence. The spotlight fell upon the diminutive, grey haired woman standing at the podium.

"When I look out at you ," Dr. Goodall said, " I am reminded of what my old friend, David Greybeard would have said when confronted with such a large number of strange primates, "HOOHOO-HOOHOOHOO, YAA, YAA, YAA, YAAA!"

Her classic, "pant hoot" call of an adult chimpanzee, was perfect. She continued her

lecture alternating between her own delicate ladylike voice, tinged with its proper British accent, and the voices of her many animal friends. To say that she imitated the calls and cries of a great many species would be understatement. She was, quite literally, fluent in a number of animal languages.

As a child, she told us, her personal heroes were Tarzan and Dr. Dolittle. She told her mother that when she grew up, she wanted to go to Africa, live in the jungle and learn to talk to the animals.

"If that's what you really want," her mother responded, " that's exactly what you will do."

Such prophetic words are seldom spoken. At the age of eighteen, Jane took all of the cash she had earned housecleaning, bought a one way ticket to Tanzania and set off on the adventure that would last for the next forty years. She lived among the chimpanzees at Gombe stream reserve, studying their emotional lives, their social interactions and, perhaps most significant, their intelligence. It was she who first noticed the chimpanzees' use of modified plant stems to fish termites from their mounds.

<http://www.discoveringchimpanzees.com/cousinwild.htm>

In the nineteen fifties, one popular definition of humanity was, " Man is the animal that makes and uses tools." When Jane informed her mentor , the paleoanthropologist, Dr. Louis Leaky, of her observation, he made the now famous remark, " We are going to have to change either our definition of man or our definition of tool." Dr. Goodall's participatory primatology became the model for the next few decades of field studies including Dian Fossey's well known work with mountain gorillas and Birute Galdikas' research on the Orangutans of Borneo. Among biologists these three young women came to be known as "Leaky's Angels."

<http://www.webster.edu/~woolfilm/dianfossey.html>

<http://www.nndb.com/people/622/000097331/>

<http://www.webster.edu/~woolfilm/janegoodall.html>

For the remainder of that morning, she entertained and enlightened us with tales of the lives and loves,

trials and tribulations, of her anthropoid friends. When the lecture ended, the students returned to their scheduled classes and a few of us from the faculty made our way to the Meyer library for a reception and luncheon in Dr. Goodall's honor. I wish that I could report the witty conversation and incisive questions that I uttered as I sat across the table from one of my childhood heroines, but the fact is, I was too awestruck to think of a single thing to say.

After lunch, most of us on the faculty had to leave to teach our afternoon classes. Walking down the hallway, I was joined by one of my colleagues who shall remain nameless.

"Do you really believe this crap?" he asked me.

"Hunh? What crap?"

"All this bullshit about these friggin' monkeys having thoughts and feelings just like humans. I mean really; this stuff is imaginary. This Goodall is supposed to be a scientist yet she comes out with the same kind of sentimental drivel that people are always telling me about their pets, "Oooh, Rover is feeling depressed today." or "my cat Mitzi is jealous of the new baby."

"They seem to really believe that dogs and cats understand what we say to them, that they have complex feelings and are anything more than simple stimulus response mechanisms. I mean gimme a break. Envy? Resentment? Anxiety, curiosity, love? Didn't these fools ever hear of instinct?"

"Do you have any pets?" I asked.

"No!"

"Then where the hell do you think you get the right to presume to know more about them than those of us who do?"

His response doesn't bear repeating.

Real science always begins with observation, most perfectly, one's own personal observations. None of us has the time to observe all the phenomena of this world so most of the time we have to settle for second best, that is, communication from other direct observers. Best, of course, is personal subjective experience corroborated by the observations of experts. If you want to know something about hair ask a barber...or a stylist....or a dermatologist. Ideally, all of the above.

Question Authority!

There is very little disagreement between scientists who have made formal studies of various species, and those of us who keep dogs, cats etc., as companions or familiars. Both have observed very high levels of conscious intelligence, and emotional lives that are filled with complex feelings and subtle nuance.

And yet, I keep encountering people who dismiss all input from those who live with or study

animals, as sentimental, imaginary, delusional or otherwise not credible. People with no experience of nonhumans seem to believe that their **lack** of experience somehow makes them authorities on the subject. Their most common accusation is anthropomorphism, the projecting of human traits or values onto animals.

Admittedly, many scientists really are guilty of occasional anthropomorphism. For example, the renowned French naturalist, Georges-Louis LeClerc, Comte de Buffon wrote that:

Of all quadrupeds, the pig seems to be the ugliest animal; its imperfections of form appear to influence its nature; its habits are clumsy, all its tastes are filthy; all its feelings amount to no more than violent lust and brutal greed which make it devour indiscriminately anything it happens to find.

This is pure anthropomorphism, a litany of human prejudices and values in the guise of observation.

<http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/history/buffon2.html>

My first break with Roman Catholicism occurred at the tender age of eight, when a nun who was teaching catechism, told me that dogs didn't go to heaven because they had no souls. She further stated, that we knew this because they lacked the faculties of the soul, intellect and will. (To these I would like to add consciousness and feeling.)

The belief that only humans have souls, does not have its origin in scripture or even ancient religious tradition. It was a pronouncement of the French philosopher, Rene Descartes, the creator of cartesian dualism.

<http://www.philosophypages.com/ph/desc.htm>

Descartes claimed that the world was made up of two distinct realms, the world of matter and the world of the spirit. This philosophy was an attempt to resolve the turf battle between science and the church. He went on to declare that the world of matter was the province of science, and matters of spirit were to be addressed by the church. This, in fact, is the origin of the idea that science cannot address meaning, purpose or morality. He believed that the soul inhabited the body like the driver occupies a vehicle, a principle now referred to as the "ghost in the machine." He believed that non-human animals not only lacked thoughts and emotions, but that they didn't even experience physical pain, that any expressions of pleasure or pain were just mechanistic reactions to stimuli. He is even guilty of performing vivisections without anesthesia in the belief that animals were incapable of any suffering.

Descartes never had a dog!

Here is another case where an individual with NO direct, personal experience of animals somehow sees himself as an expert. Unfortunately, his presumption almost defined western philosophy for

the next three and a half centuries.

Voltaire, on the other hand, did have a dog; he understood their emotions. He refuted Descartes' thesis with: *Judge this dog who has lost his master, who has searched for him with mournful cries in every path, who comes home agitated, restless, who runs up and down the stairs, who goes from room to room, who at last finds his beloved master in his study, and shows him his joy by the tenderness of cries, by his leaps, by his caresses. Barbarians seize this dog who so prodigiously surpasses man in his friendship. They nail him to a table and dissect him alive to show you the mesenteric veins. You discover in him all the same organs of feeling that you possess. Answer me mechanist, has nature arranged all the springs of feeling in this animal in order that he should not feel? Does he have nerves to be impassive?*

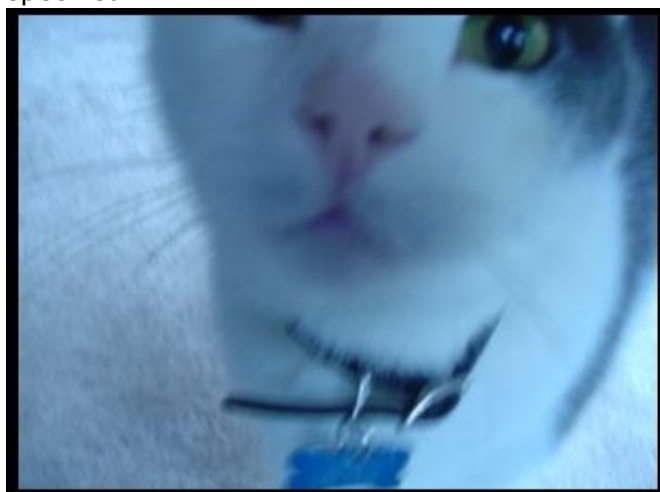
Anyone who has ever lived with a dog has witnessed their complex array of emotions. We have heard them howl in loneliness, growl as threat or warning or bark to call attention. Who has not seen a dog's dance of joy when his human returns home, or his gloom and disappointment upon learning that some treat is "all gone?" Dogs clearly express guilt or shame. I remember a friend who could always tell if his dog had been sleeping on the couch (forbidden in that household) by his expressions of guilt. One reason humans and dogs are so close lies in our mutual ability to read and respond to each others feelings. I've noticed dogs hesitate, head tilted, apparently thinking, before deciding on a course of action. If animals were simply stimulus/response mechanisms then all stimuli would be deterministic, that is, the same stimulus would always elicit the same response. This is true of neither humans nor dogs, nor any other living thing. No organism is completely predictable. Instincts exert a powerful influence but behavior is, ultimately, a matter of choice.

While life scientists can generally predict the responses of most members of any given population, there are always a few deviants. Some individuals will choose a slightly different course of action from the majority, a few the exact opposite. Any choice, whether wise or ill-advised, is an act of will.

Another indication of the complexity of canine consciousness is the fact that they dream. We can tell that a dog is dreaming by twitching of their paws or tails and the quiet little barks, growls and whimpers that they utter in their sleep. It is at these times that they exhibit the rapid eye movements that let us know when a human is dreaming. All mammals apparently dream, but what they dream of we will probably never know. There are those who insist that we cannot really know if dogs are dreaming during times of rapid eye movement because they can never describe their

dreams to us. If REM indicates dreaming in humans it is a pretty safe bet that it also does so in dogs and other mammals. Nature tends to be consistent. In both science and magic we frequently hear the admonition, "Things are not always what they seem." This maxim has been so often repeated that we tend to apply it too much of the time. In reality, things are usually just as they seem.

Dogs excel at communication. Not only can they express their needs to us quite effectively, they understand much of what we say. Estimates of dogs' listening vocabularies run as high as four hundred words, probably an exaggeration, but if they understand only forty words it is still more than we understand of their language. This is not limited to simple, one word commands. When I was a child my mother used to send the family dog to wake each of us in the morning. "Go get David." she would say, or "go get Marsha" etc. Tyber, a boxer, would, unerringly, awaken the child who had been specified.



Igor the Cat by Jymy X/0

Cats are no less intelligent. When I lived in the city of Berkeley, I only allowed my cat to go out for limited periods of time, but I never had to call to get him to return home. I would simply tell him, "I want you to come home in an hour." He always did. If I told him that I wanted him in before dark he would return just as the sun was setting. I know of a cat who used to wait patiently at the bus stop every day for a little girl, then walk her the six blocks home. Cats have been taught to use the toilet instead of a litter box -- and flush it. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_Mfec1iBgg The list goes on and on. Anyone who lives with a cat has a story or two to contribute.

"Science" dismisses all of this as anecdotal evidence, mere hearsay because it can't be replicated in a laboratory. At what point does the sheer preponderance of anecdotal evidence become proof? This is one of the shortcomings of the scientific method. I am reminded of the phenomenon of ball lightning which scientists have

only taken seriously enough to investigate in recent years. Over six thousand reports from various individuals were recorded and compiled before laboratory studies were finally begun.

Most people are familiar with Koko the gorilla who was taught to communicate using American sign language. <http://www.koko.org/world/> Less well known is Kanzi, a twelve year old bonobo who communicates by pushing marked buttons on a keyboard. His vocabulary includes about six hundred words.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5503685>

For me, one of the most profound indications of the personhood of other animals, is the fact that they have various personalities. I was once in charge of a herd of about thirty goats. Some were feisty, some cooperative. Old Will'm was a Ferdinand the bull sort of guy, who would rather lie in the sun than butt fight. Howdy was so wrapped up in ramming heads with other males that he never even noticed that his more pacifistic brother mated with all of the nanny goats. Lady B. was an overprotective mother. Zsa Zsa the herd queen was a bully. Curly enjoyed stealing things from people's pockets. Jughead would sneak up on other goats, nip their ear and run away.

High levels of intelligence are not limited to mammals. Dr. Irene Pepperberg has been working with her thirty five year old African gray parrot, Alex. Alex has attained the cognitive level of a normal four to six year old child. Not only has Alex learned abstract categories like color and shape, he has learned them fairly easily. Once Alex had learned the categories, he could spontaneously answer questions like "what color?" or "what shape?" about objects he'd never seen before. If Dr. Pepperberg shows him a square piece of blue wood and asks him its color, he says, "blue." If she asks him its shape he replies, "four corner." Alex has now been trained to count items in a grouping and even to add and subtract small numbers. A recent television documentary showed Alex holding a conversation with Jane Goodall using complete sentences.

<http://www.123compute.net/dreaming/knocking/alex.html>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3430481.stm>

The fact that all mammals (and probably birds) are conscious, emotional, intelligent organisms is evident from their behavior, but because they can't tell us about their actual experience of consciousness it remains a mystery. We can predict some things about the consciousness of various other species, but we can't get confirmation from the animals themselves. Recently a truly remarkable woman has been able to shed light on the subject. Temple Grandin PhD, is an associate professor of animal science at Colorado State University. She is also autistic. While autism still can't be actually cured there are ways to overcome some of its effects. Dr. Grandin herself

discovered one of these treatments.

<http://www.grandin.com/inc/visual.thinking.html>

She always had a much greater affinity for animals than humans. Somehow, they just made more sense to her. Her first career was as an animal handler, not small laboratory animals but cattle. Sometimes cattle have to be moved around like they were on an assembly line for processes like dipping for fleas or immunizations. If the process doesn't go smoothly, cattle become what can only be described as hysterical. In order to calm them down they are led into a device called a "squeeze chute." The sides of the squeeze chute move inwards and hold the cow or steer with only enough pressure to restrain them. After a minute or two they are calm. Occasionally slipping into a hysterical or panicked state is one of the effects of autism. Temple made the observation that what she was experiencing was similar to what the cattle seemed to be experiencing. So she tried the squeeze chute on herself. It worked! It worked so well that she built one more appropriate to her dimensions and used it to treat herself.

<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/498153>

Dr. Grandin became increasingly aware of the fact that her mind seemed to function like the animals that she came into contact with. She considers autistics and animals to be in a state of "hyper-specificity," that they are so sensitive to detail that they can't see the forest for the trees. This can be a talent as well as a deficit. Humans tend to see only what we are looking for. There is a famous experiment by a psychologist named Daniel Simons, head of the Visual Cognitive Lab at the University of Illinois, called "Gorillas in our Midst" For reasons that will soon be obvious, participants are not told the title of the experiment until after it is over. It demonstrates just how limited peoples visual awareness can be. In the experiment, they show people a videotape of a basketball game and ask them to count how many passes one of the teams makes. Then, a short time into the tape, while everyone is busy counting passes, a person wearing a gorilla costume walks onto the screen, stops, turns, faces the camera and beats his fists on his chest. Most people who watch this video never notice the gorilla. Animals and autistics would probably always see the gorilla.

<http://viscog.beckman.uiuc.edu/grafs/demos/15.html>

Temple also says that animals are visual thinkers; this will not come as a surprise to those people who live with cats or horses.

The human brain seems to have an interpreter that filters out detail leaving people blind to much of the reality that surrounds them. We only see what we are looking for or paying attention to. Maybe this *inattentional blindness* is the brain's way of filtering out distractions. Apparently our brains do a lot of processing before allowing something into our consciousness. Animals and autistic people don't

see their **idea** of things; they see the actual things themselves. In fact, they can sometimes be overwhelmed by perceiving too much too clearly.

Dr. Grandin also compares autistic savants and animal savants. Savants, formerly referred to as idiot savants, have specialized mental abilities that are truly astounding. *Rain Man*, the title character in the movie by the same name, could remember every card that had been played in a game of blackjack. Other savants remember all the baseball scores in recent history or are capable of calculating what day of the week people were born on based only on their date of birth. They do it unerringly and apparently instantly. It seems that many animals are capable of great feats of intelligence in very specific fields of endeavor as well. Guide dogs for the blind or helper dogs for the deaf are some examples. Anyone who has watched a border collie herd sheep is aware of their level of intelligence.

As we learn more about how our brains function similarly or differently from those of other animals, and as we learn ever more about their communications, we are approaching the point where some animals might be able to tell us directly about their feelings and thoughts. We should listen; they have a lot to teach us.

Most people agree that our vertebrate kin, at least, have minds, that there is a conscious individual inside each of them that perceives their sensations and chooses and initiates their actions. Someone is inside doing the driving, some person, with consciousness, feelings, intellect and will. I like to call this inner being a "person", but "soul" or "spirit" describe it as well. I don't mean to imply that other species are piloted by human consciousness. Horses have horse souls. Cats have cat souls etc.

Many Wiccans say that the pentacle represents five elements, earth, air, fire, water and spirit. Many others call all five of these elements while casting the circle with the material elements as the four directions and spirit in the center. Aristotle called this fifth element the "active principle." Whether one calls it the soul, the spirit, the mind, the self, the psyche, the atman or, like Alfred North Whitehead or Teilhard de Chardin, the interiority or the great within, it is clearly present.

The ancient Celts believed in an animate universe. So did most Native Americans. To quote the character, Pocahontas, from the Disney movie by the same name, "I know every rock and tree and creature, has a life, has a spirit, has a name."

If communication is an indication of intelligence, insects operate at a high level of intellect too. Honey bees and their kin communicate both the direction and distance to remote flowers via dancing; many insects communicate chemically by the secretion of pheromones (also known as

exohormones because they are secreted by one individual to influence others.) Worker bees function with obvious purpose and are able to vary their routine in response to changing circumstances. <http://www.beesource.com/pov/wenner/mankind1991.htm>

The ability of many species of spider to weave intricate webs, even in high wind, also bespeaks intelligence. Flatworms have been trained to navigate mazes.

<http://www.olympusmicro.com/micd/galleries/darkfield/planaria.html> Squid are skilled predators with sophisticated visual systems. An octopus can communicate with other members of its own species via a swirling pattern of colors inside its body. They are also impressive in their ability to escape confinement. <http://www.this-magic-sea.com/MEMORY2.HTM>

In my own observations of one-celled animals like *Paramecium spp.* it seems that they too move purposefully and consciously as they seek food and avoid predators. While I can't prove it, many types of protozoa certainly seem to be enjoying themselves when engaged in sexual activity. Even bacteria exhibit some sort of rudimentary consciousness; entire colonies somehow know how to grow towards potential food sources.

Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird, in their book, *The Secret Life of Plants*, report that plants also respond to their environment and may even be psychic. Their experiments involved the use of lie detector technology to measure changes in the electrical conductivity of stems. Even thinking about harming a plant seemed to elicit a response.

Trees can see! Sight (not vision) is defined as light perception. The individual phototropism of leaves indicates that each responds separately as well as collectively to the sun. Visual acuity in humans (and other animals) is defined in terms of Snellen letters Eg 20/20, 20/80, 20/100 etc. The next level of (reduced) vision is "finger count" at a specified distance. The third is "light direction". The subject can point in the direction of a light source. The lowest level is "light perception" I.E. is the light on or off -- as in, is it day or night? Virtually all green plants from algae to trees have "light direction" the second level of sight. More and more is being learned about human (animal) photoreceptors including things such as the stimulus of one turning off another. If each leaf on a tree is an individual photoreceptor, like each rod in our retina, a tree has all of the information necessary to form images.

However elementary their intellect, organisms generally exhibit some form of interiority, that is, they perceive things from their environment and respond appropriately. We are surrounded by conscious beings.



The Worship of Bast

By: Nydia Walker

The worship of the Great Goddess Bast, daughter of the great God Ra, is widely thought to predate recorded history. She has been known throughout the centuries by many names such as the Tearer, Goddess of the Rising Sun, Lady of the Midnight Fire, the eye of Ra and Lady of Bubastis, which is where her main temple was located.

Her name is listed as Bast or Bastet, with the original form being Bast. The "et" was added during later times to show that the "t" at the end of her name was to be pronounced as a "t" and was not silent. Throughout the ages she has acquired many other names in other nations. To the Greeks, she was Artemis and the Romans knew her as Diana. Bast also has the distinction of being the only Egyptian Goddess mentioned in the Christian Bible. Ezekiel 30:17 calls her city Pi-beseth and says that the young men who worship her shall fall by the sword and be held captive because of their worship of her.

The following table will give you an idea of what to use in the worship of Bast.

Cult Center – Bubastis in the delta

Birthday – March 21 (Spring Equinox)

Chief Festival – April 30 (most popular festival in all of Egypt)

Festivals – Sept 27, Oct 27, possibly April 15 & May 15, shared with Horus; November 16 – Grand festival of Bast; August 27- Procession of Bast; September 22- Feast; The Festival of the East Star – the first full moon on or after the spring equinox

Statue – a woman with the head of a cat, a domesticated cat,

Family – Daughter of Ra and Mut, Mother of Khensu and Ma'ahes. In some legends she is the wife of Ptah, in others she is the wife of Horus.

Cardinal Point – East

Element – Air

Herbs – Aloe, Apple, Banana, Caraway, Catnip, Catmint, Cattail, Cedar, Cherry, Cinnamon, Coriander, Cypress, Daisy, Dragons Blood, Eucalyptus, Gardenia, Ginger, Grape, Heather, Hibiscus, Jasmine, Lavender, Lemon, Licorice, Maple, Marjoram, Mimosa, Mugwort, Mustard, Oak, Onion, Parsley, Pear, Poppy, Rose, Sage, Slippery Elm, Spearmint, Tansy, Tomato, Vanilla, Violet, Wheat, Willow

Crystals – Amber, Ammonite, Aventurine, Green Calcite, Celestite, Citrine, Diamond, Emerald, Garnet, Hematite, Jade, Kunzite, Lepidolite, Moonstone, Onyx, Opal, Quartz, Pearl, Peridot, Rose Quartz, Selenite, Sodalite, Sunstone, Tourmaline, Turquoise

Metal – Copper, Silver

Wood – Cedar, Willow

Color – Green

Incense – Apple, Banana, Jasmine, Lavender, Pine

Day(s) – Friday

Time(s) – Dawn

Season – Spring

Bast rides with Amen Ra by day in his sun boat. At night, she kills Apophis making sure that the land would have warm light tomorrow.

As the eye of Ra, Bast personifies the gentle, healing warmth of the sun, as well as protector of the home. She was the Goddess of joy and happiness and the protector of pregnant women, as well as the family structure. As the eye of her Father, she is a Sun Goddess, but she is also a Moon Goddess. She carries a sistrum as she is also a patron of the arts, especially singing and dancing

Her Temple in Bubastis is the only one known to have had a grove of trees in the center of the Temple, with the shrine of Bast being in the center of the grove. Avocado and Acacia trees were sacred to her. Wands were made from Avocado. She considers cats sacred and to intentionally harm one is to commit a great transgression against her, which she takes personally.

Bast's festival was the most popular in all of Egypt and was a three day festival that began on April 30. The ancient historian Herodotus tells us that that more wine was drunk during this time than in all the rest of the year and more babies were born nine months later than at any other time of the year. Every Egyptian looked forward to this festival, when all work stopped to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of this Great Goddess Bast. Hundreds of Thousands of people would flock to her main Temple at Bubastis from all over Egypt and the known world.

In modern day Kemetic Temples, these Festivals are still celebrated, giving credence to the power, glory and immortality of this Great Goddess. May Her name live forever in the hearts of Mankind.

Other Names: Artemis (Greek), Diana (Roman), Freya (Norse), Durga (Hindu), Mary Magdalene (Christian)

Hymn to Bast

Most Revered Goddess, Lady of the East,
 Eye of Ra, Goddess of the Birth Chamber,
 Mother of Kensu, Artemis and Diana.
 I light this candle in honor of your many names.
 As the smoke from this flame does rise,
 May it carry my prayers to your ears.
 I ask that you look upon my soul
 With gentle thoughts, knowing that everything I do,
 I do in your Name and for your Glory.
 For you are the creator of my soul
 You blew the first breath of life into my body
 And it will be your arms that I shall return to
 When the last breath is taken from me.
 My soul is yours for eternity.
 Forever dedicated to your service and your worship.
 May your name live forever in the hearts of man.



VALLEY OF THE WOLF SPIRITS

Writing By: Steven (Valley of Wolves) Johnson

Flames lick at the soot covered ceiling. Three forms sit motionless around the orange and red flames of the crackling fire. Hints of the slightest movements can be detected by watchers. Soft chants and humming fill the chilled air. The flaps covering the cave opening bear the forceful wind, blowing them further and further with each gust.

Scratches and indescribable figures adorn the walls and floor, as if done in a spastic organized manner. Snow dust seeps by the tanned flaps, seemingly searching for the source of heat.

Suddenly, a piercing howl fills the air. Coming from every corner, deafening the silent cave. One form rises to it's feet. Human? Stepping forth into the fires heart. A few heart beats are all that fill the air. Again the piercing howl fills the air. Another figure rises and joins the first. Seemingly immune to the flames scorching touch. The third figure arises and joins the others amidst the fire of flames.

Standing within the fire, the trio begin to dance. At first each moving as an individual, then slowly, as if liquid, they begin flowing into each others movements. Slowly becoming one, One figure dancing alone, with the roaring fire. As the cherry glowing coals begin the descent to ash, the figure steps forward from amongst the flames softly, as if testing the cave floor. The blowing wind seems to slow with each step he takes forward. With a shake of his head and body, the fire simply

disappears, leaving nothing more than a warm circle.

The watchers sit in silence as they watch the Wolf head towards the flaps. The Chanting now ever so soft, seemingly drives the Wolf forward. Stepping between the two flaps , now stilled from all movement, the view is breathtaking. An icy filled stream, starting at the mouth of the cave, flows slowly towards a beautiful sight. A tremendous Valley. Untouched, pure snow carpets the ground. Black specked bark of the birch trees add just the slightest hint of stimulation.

In the crook of one Birch tree the Squirrel chatters a welcoming approval to the wolf's presence. Wolf hears a raven calling, beckoning him further into this majestic Valley. Whitetail bucks stop drinking, and watch as Wolf cautiously ventures forth. The ground begins to gently rise by the side of the stream. A small outcrop of rock can be seen just a bit further ahead, and atop the outcrop is a stump of a very Old Pine tree. Sitting upon the stump is Raven, in all her shimmering hues, glittering from shiny black to purple to reddish blue, cawing beckoning Wolf to join Her upon the outcrop. Unknowing the draw to sit with Her, Wolf sits upon the rock, overlooking a vast valley of snow covered pine trees, standing guard over the "untouched" Valley. With the soul stealing forces of man"kind" left behind.



LIE UPON THE EARTH

by Michael R. Gorman

Where once a wide, well-worn path
 Parted the rich green underbrush,
 There is now but
 A hidden separation
 Between bushes
 Imperceptible until the walker
 Plunges ahead between branches
 And finds his feet unimpeded
 On the path below the undergrowth
 Though his legs are pricked and
 whipped
 By the tangle that hides it still.
 The grove itself
 Lies hidden behind a wall of trees
 And time
 And vines
 And thrusting green grasses
 Weaving themselves silently through
 Holes in laurel and dogwood.
 Cool, shadowed and silent
 Most often now
 The holy grove
 Of the great Horned Consort
 Of the Mother Earth
 He who is called Cernunnos
 God of the greenwood,
 And grove also of the Goddess,
 Of Erin and Gaia and Liffey,
 Grove of the lover poet Oengus Og
 Of Brigit and of Lugh
 And the laughing old Cailleach
 Waits
 And waits
 Humming with lusty whispers
 From less frightened times.
 Ancient feminine giggling
 And cicada clicks
 Blend as
 The croaks of frogs punctuate
 Timeless purring groans
 Sweeping with the wind
 Across wood sorrel and heather.
 The scent of rotting wood
 And the lingering smell of musky
 sweat

Unite into one sensuous perfume here.
 The dark hollow slash in the redwood's
 base
 And its ribbed turgid height
 Testify silently
 To more fertile ages.
 But silence is not sadness
 And the naked god
 Sits half in shadow and
 Suckles upon ripe grapes
 And the breast of the goddess
 Smiling in remembrance
 Smiling in anticipation
 For the revelers return always
 After their initial flight of fear
 Born of the religion mongers
 Or the disease diviners
 Or the apostate water witches of hidden
 shame
 For in the end
 The flutes are sweet
 And the fruits of the grove
 Life-giving
 And gentle-making
 Joyous
 And good.
 So come children of shame
 And shed your heavy gray garments
 Drape yourselves in shining silks
 And flowing cottons
 Red and gold
 Blue and purple
 Green, yellow, and moon-silver
 String the maypole with ribbons
 And let your hair and clothing
 Blow and swirl
 As you circle its phallic shaft
 Light the Beltane fire
 And dance the ancient dances
 Let the vernal waters flow.
 And if
 From out of the folds of cloth
 Should peak a shy breast
 Or a rising cock of the morning
 A tuft of curled hair

Or a milky belly
 Do not wince
 But sing
 Do not cringe in modesty
 But twirl in abandon
 To your nakedness
 To sun and water and breath
 of life
 Rolling down from the
 mountain's flank
 Into the damp, warm, grove of
 celebration.
 Put your mouth to the flute
 Stroke the dulcimer's strings
 Caress the harp's,
 And they
 Like lovers
 who turn their pleasure
 Into melody
 Will reward your devotion with
 song.
 Stroke the furred legs of the
 great god Cernunnos
 Caress the soft thigh of Gaia
 Kiss their copper nipples
 And drink their wine
 Lie upon the fragrant earth
 Welcoming into your arms
 Love
 And pulsating freedom
 Do not be afraid
 But come
 Do not be ashamed
 But come
 Come
 Lover
 Friend
 Daughter
 Son
 God
 Goddess
 Blessed be
 Blessed be
 Blessed be



THE NATURE CHURCH

by Robert St. Cyr, HP

The Nature Church is an eclectic Pagan church. The Church obtained its original charter from the Universal Life Church, Inc., in 1970 and was registered with the MA Secretary of State at that time. In 1977 the church broke with the Universal Life Church and was renamed The Nature Church. The main focus of the Church has always been to provide a place of communion and fellowship to similarly minded individuals of all Pagan spiritual traditions and all who come with an open heart and mind.

Being both Pagan and nondenominational, the Nature Church has no set dogma, a situation analogous to the state of the Christian community during the first century of the Common Era. No two church members hold identical beliefs. The Nature Church does not dictate belief. Instead, the focus is on developing a personal relationship with Deity.

Few, if any, of our group believe in the transcendent Deity found in the Judeo-Christian-Muslim tradition. Most hold beliefs in Deity which are immanent or some combination of transcendent and immanent. Some are monotheistic and some polytheistic. Most believe in some form of female deity. We find Deity in nature, in the cosmos and in the people around us.

Our ceremonies and holy days are attuned to the rhythms of the heavens and the Earth our Mother. Their focus is not so much worship as in giving communal thanks for the blessings of life bestowed upon us and to draw on the life-giving energy of the sacred.

Inspiration for our ceremonies comes from many sources, but particularly from ancient Celtic tradition, the wider Pagan community and even the Judeo-Christian-Muslim tradition. Over the years a largely Celtic Pagan focus has developed.

We hold communal saunas on or near the full moon. These are relatively informal gatherings aimed at fostering community in which Church members and guests can relax, chat, laugh and give thanks for the gifts of life.

Our larger, more formal holy day celebrations usually begin with a ritual purification of each individual by water followed by creation of a sacred circle around a bonfire. The presiding priest or priestess speaks on the meaning of the holy day, which is always tied to the natural cycles of the earth and sky, of life, growth and death and of gratitude for the blessings bestowed upon us.

After the presiding priest/priestess has spoken, each participant is given the opportunity to speak if they wish. A chalice of water, one of our Mother's life-giving blessings, is passed around the circle. Then words are spoken concluding the ritual. The sacred space is opened and the potluck feast begins.

Feasts were held in the former meetinghouse or outside depending upon the weather. Most were a combination of the two. The feasts and ceremonies both helped to build a sense of community. Our feasts were accompanied by joyful chatter, the frolicking of children and serious debate.

We often engage in spiritual discussion, not with the goal of forcing others to agree, but to open a dialog for greater understanding of spiritual matters and to foster individual growth. There is no one path to understanding and communion with Deity. Our fellowship's aim is to support each member in their quest.

Organically grown food from the church garden often is included in the feast, as are wild edibles gathered from the land. In the past, chickens, goats, pigs and sheep were raised on the property.

It is not uncommon to find many Jews and Christians at our gatherings. Many attend on a regular basis as guests. They too find spiritual sustenance from the positive energy found in our community.

Church business meetings were held in the meetinghouse/residence. Rooms were often rented at a nominal fee or given free of charge to needy individuals.

The property includes 2.6 acres of land, a barn, a sauna, one dilapidated shack and the charred remains of the meetinghouse/residence. Most of the property is wooded. A stream runs through the property at the bottom of the hill near our sauna. The cleared areas include a large garden, the ceremony site, and a hillside that was formerly used as a pasture. A dairy farm borders our land to the south and west and a forest owned by a logging company lies to the east. A wide variety of wildlife frequent the land. The property was bequeathed to the Church in 1978 by one of the four original co-founders.

There was a stipulation in the deed which stated that if the property ceased to function as a

church, it would revert to the heirs of the original donor. When the donor passed away, a lawsuit was brought against the Church by the donor's daughter seeking the property. The courts found in favor of the Church, and the daughter failed to file an appeal. She now holds no legal claim against the property because of her failure to appeal.

In early September 2006 I was voted in to replace Christopher Zentgraf as High Priest. Christopher was in the nursing home and expected to die within three to six months. He passed away September 29th. He was the last of the co-founders. Due to Christopher's illness, things were being neglected at the church, and the membership had started to drift away in the last few years of his life. New elections were held in early October.

We felt that we needed to put our decades-long period of isolation from the mainstream Pagan community behind us. We immediately began reaching out to the local community. Church information was put online and local leaders were invited to the church. We held a Samhain celebration attended by 35-40 people. Yule, which we failed to advertise adequately, was attended by a dozen people. On January 28th we held an open house and about 40-45 people attended. A great amount of interest was generated by all of this networking and activity.

After years of mismanagement, we were trying to make the church financially stable by renting out the land and meetinghouse to other groups. Some of our group, myself included, never felt right that the daughter of the original donor was left without a stake in the property by her father, and we had every intention of contacting her once we were financially stable. Her father's artworks and personal items had been gathered together to give to her. These were moral obligations which we felt we had toward her. We were under no legal obligation. We feel that the violent acts committed against us on February 1st and 2nd absolve us of any responsibility toward the woman.

On Thursday, February 1st she drove up to the church and attempted to kill me and smashed the windows and doors of the church. I did not know the woman. When the police took her away she said she would be back.

She was released on her own recognizance the next morning and went straight back to the property where she waited for hours in near-zero temperatures. Later that evening, my roommate had to leave to pick up his three-year-old daughter. The church president, who was helping us watch the house, left to purchase pepper spray a short time later. Ten minutes after that I left to attend a family meeting because my mother had passed away several days before. For ten minutes the church was left unattended.

Seeing her chance, she entered the building,

spread accelerant, and set it ablaze. Only the basement of the addition survived.

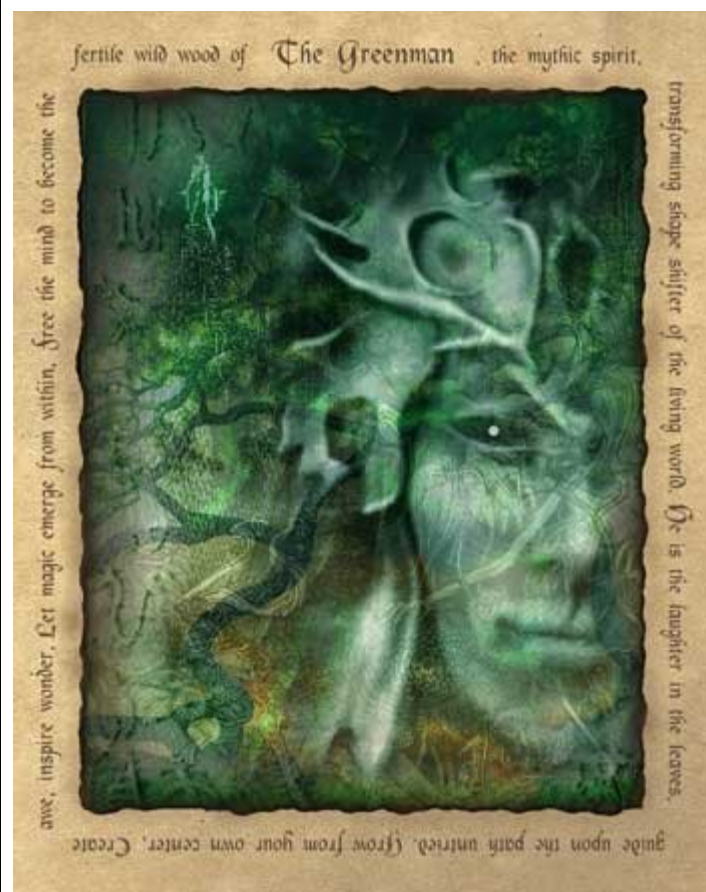
My roommate and I have been financially devastated by these events. I have encountered religious discrimination from co-workers and the local Red Cross has ignored my calls for assistance.

The other church members and I feel that we have both a moral and a civic responsibility not to give up in the face of violent criminal acts. The perpetrator readily confessed to everything after being apprehended down the street. The last thing she said was "So the land is mine now, right?"

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

In light of these events we feel more than ever that we must continue with our original plan of creating a Pagan center that will be of benefit to the entire community. We have the opportunity to build a new, more functional structure, and we have something that most groups don't have -- Pagan-owned land. We welcome all elders and clergy in the region to join us in our mission.

The benefits to all parties would be many. First, it would ensure the survival of the Nature Church, because the local community would have a stake in the Church's survival. The energy, resources and expertise of the entire community could be brought to bear in both rebuilding and reviving the Church and enjoying the facilities for teaching and for community celebrations.



Second, the Church will be responsive to the needs of the local community because the leaders of the community will be our partners and co-facilitators.

Third, bringing in local clergy as our partners gives all of us the opportunity to learn from each other about the various groups' beliefs, ceremonies and traditions, and fosters a sense of community in our region.

The tentative construction plans being worked out call for a two-story rectangular structure to be built over the intact basement of the old addition. This will contain the restroom, kitchen, office and two bedrooms.

Attached to the rectangular structure will be a large, circular meeting hall with a conical roof. The walls of the hall will be made of cob with a frame and support beams of logs cut on site. The cob can be made using straw, sand and mud from the site. A masonry heater can be constructed for the cost of the materials. The materials for the rectangular structure will come from a demolition site. The entire structure can be completed relatively inexpensively and will have minimal environmental impact.

What we need right away is a back hoe or bulldozer and a dump truck or dumpster. The old structure needs to be cleared away SOON.

We need pickup trucks, hand and power

tools, roofing materials, flooring, and electrical and plumbing supplies.

We also need a plumber, an electrician and experienced builders, as well as many unskilled laborers.

Most of all we need money. Whatever materials are not donated we have to buy, and there is still the matter of local taxes. The IRS says that we are a non-profit (ID # 04-3553653), and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts acknowledges that we are a non-profit, but we still have to pay local taxes of \$543.00 per quarter. Obviously, no rent has come in on the rental rooms since January.

We will probably have to hire some contractors though we would like to avoid that.

Undoubtedly there will be many materials that we will need to purchase. We hope to be able to rebuild for \$100,000 or less. If at all possible, we want to avoid mortgaging the land.

We feel that it is important that our church succeed, and the land remain Pagan-owned, so that Pagans from our area and everywhere may come to learn, to teach and to celebrate.

Sincerely,
Robert St. Cyr
High Priest for the Nature Church
rstcyr@amherst.edu
sweetpottoo@yahoo.com



Dear all:

Some of you may remember seeing this article back in February.

<http://www.masslive.com/hampfrank/republican/index.ssf?/base/news-8/1170578453109070.xml&coll=1>

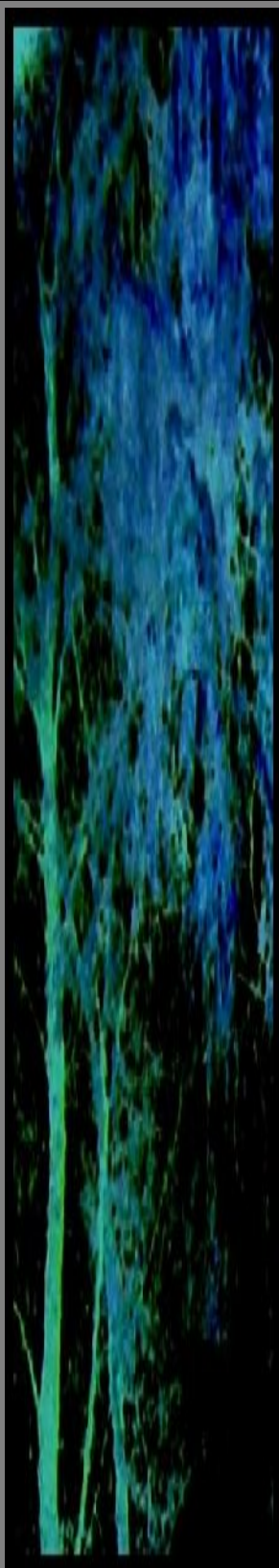
The fire happened about five minutes away from my house. I have recently connected with these people and now that some of the old "hippie" element are gone, there are some very sincere people working to rebuild this church. They are a Pagan church and they have 501C3 status. They follow an eclectic path of honoring all Pagan traditions and they hope to become a teaching center. The current need is to remove the charred remains of the building. They plan to build a large circular structure so that the Pagan community can gather there. (The arsonist is safely behind bars now, and charged with assault with a deadly weapon).

I have taken it upon myself to ask for funds for these folks. They need a lot of help. If any of you can help please make checks out to THE NATURE CHURCH (Tax ID# 04-3553653) and you can mail the checks to me at:

EE Hopman
POB 219
Amherst, MA 01004

thanks,
Ellen Evert Hopman

~~~~~  
Ellen Evert Hopman, herbalist, author and Druid Priestess  
author of "Priestess of the Forest: A Druid Novel" (Spring 2008)  
See her books, videos and audio tapes at  
<http://www.celticheritage.co.uk/EllenEvertHopman>  
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Celestial Midnight

Thy moon shone still on the path.
Your bright rays put upon the dew filled ground.
Peacefully,
And quietly you creep across the midnight sky.
Thou art beautiful,
And bright.
Thy moon goes into and above the stars,
Carrying the wishes of pixies and goblins.
Faeries dance upon the soft ground.
All in a circle following the next.
Bright wings fluttering,
And little faces smiling.
The waters of the soft rippling river,
Move quick and fast,
But not to bother the soft sound of crickets chirping in the silence of
the night,
The white rapids near the waterfall thrashing through,
Making the soft roar of the water hitting the jagged rocks beneath.
The soft glimmer of the water,
From the ripples made by the wind,
Carrying the scent of wildflowers,
And blueberries,
From the nearby field.
The high grasses swaying in the breeze,
The soft scurrying of the field mice finding seeds to eat.
I walk beneath the moonlit sky across the sea of golden wheat.
And find a place close, near the old willow tree,
And dance to these sounds of the midnight ritual.
Off in the distance I hear the familiar sound of drumbeats.
The loud boom of the big deerskin drum,
And the soft pat of the smaller ones.
I sway in the wind,
To these sounds of a celestial midnight.

Sage Rabbit
(Jessica Humpston)



Leviathan Battles the Kraken

A bull sperm whale (physeter catodon) struggles to surface with his ancient prey, the giant squid (architeuthis).

This scene is depicted as it would appear through the sonar sense of another whale.

MIND BENEATH THE SILVER SKY

by Otter G'Zell, CAW

(This article was originally written in 1980 for Magical Blend. Unfortunately, I missed the deadline and only the graphics appeared. It was finally published a couple of years later in Earth First!, but without the graphics. So here, finally, is the whole thing, updated slightly for GE:)

You are floating in perfect weightlessness, perfect balance. Between the silver ceiling above and the grey rocky floor far beneath, you perceive your world with crystal clarity, for the utter transparency of your space extends a thousand miles in all directions, with no horizons until the floors rise to pierce the ceiling. You feel the minute differences of temperature, the movement of subtle currents, the delicate flavors and aromas of myriad creatures and places. All things in your world are known to you, from the minute organisms that drift in the upper currents to the great tentacled monsters that lurk in the deepest canyons. To your senses, all flesh, even the very mud that carpets the floor, is translucent to transparent. You know the location of all of your own kind throughout your world, their names, life histories, the condition of their health, and the development of the young within their mothers' wombs. You can sing with the others in complex gargantuan symphonies and solemn solos, or exchange rapid bursts of information with the little click-whistlers who are smaller than one of your limbs. You know them all, and understand all their speech. Your perceptions can be extended into a full sphere, or focused into a tight beam, and can penetrate to the very core of anything between the floor and ceiling of your world. And your ceiling is not an impassable barrier, but merely the shimmering portal between your weightless world and another realm of light and gravity, into which you can leap, only to fall back ever safely into your own domain. You are 50 million years old...remember? The songs of your people contain the sagas and memories of all your ancestors who have ever lived in this clear and weightless immensity, back to the dawn of your species, and beyond. You remember epic battles with the vast hordes of kraken that inhabit the abyssal deeps.

You recall the coming of others from beyond the sky who, like you, must draw their breath from the upper world. Some have possessed intelligence, with clever paws far more dexterous than your own fingerless flukes, and could pick up stones from the floor with which to crack open the shelled animals they loved to eat, as they lay on their backs upon the silver ceiling of the world. And you remember the time, more than ten million years ago, when a new creature came down from the world above—long-limbed tailless beings, who played and

loved with your smaller cousins and with the tailed shell-crackers. Over the millenia you watched them, as they lost their body fur to become as smooth as your People, and as they learned to use pebbles, rocks and bones for tools, and grew in intelligence. Eventually, they returned to live in the upper realm, but continued to visit your domain to play, and to tell of their earthly paradise. The little click-whistlers were proud of their friendly pets, and pledged to protect and rescue them whenever they got into trouble in the world beneath the silver sky. All the four score and more People of your world honored the covenant between the worlds above and below, and even the fiercest refrained from attacking the tailless ones. And you remember the times when great fiery mountains plunged through the silver sky, rending the rocks below and turning your homeworld into an inferno of agony; when the floor split open and flaming death erupted upward, and your People died by the millions, and lions, and much was forgotten.



survived and recovered, and the ancient memories returned, for the voice of the Great Mother spoke to you and through you...for you were of an eternal people...

But all is not well now, for in the last few centuries the smooth tailless ones have inexplicably undertaken the brutal annihilation of all the Peoples of your world. They have attacked with weapons of monstrous horror, metal missiles which explode within your bodies, and the cries of your dying kin reverberate throughout the furthest reaches of your once peaceful realm. They come in unbreakable vessels riding upon the sky, and they come not to speak with the Peoples as of old, but only to kill. And you cannot know their purpose in so doing, though the questions are pondered among all the Peoples, from the pods of children to the council circles of elders: Why have your one-time pets and playmates turned against you, and why with such ruthless savagery? Have you not honored the Covenant? Have they cause to feel wronged by the People? Can they not feel the pain of the Mother, nor hear Her anguished cries? No one can answer, and

every year there are fewer left to try. Unless the killing stops, very soon, the People will be no more, and the kraken will rise. And when the People are gone, gone too, will be the memories, the songs, the wisdom, the knowledge and the consciousness that is the mind of the Mother of All Life. For you hold her memories, in the brains of all the People, and when you die, the wellsprings of all Her great wisdom will run dry.



This Labor Day (1990) marks the 20th anniversary of my personal revelation of The Goddess as planetary organism—a perspective that is beginning to gain popular acceptance as The Gaia Hypothesis (a term suggested by novelist William Golding, and popularized by British atmospheric biochemist James Lovelock). My own arrival at the Gaea Thesis (which I termed “Theogenesis”) was derived from the observation that each of us, as human individuals, begins our existence as a single cell—a zygote—which eventually multiplies, specializes, evolves and matures into an adult organism comprising some three trillion cells. And yet we, as aggregate collections of the trillions of cells, continue to function and perceive ourselves as single organisms. This is because of the continuity of protoplasm and DNA which from the miniscule amount provided in the original zygote infuses every one of the cells in our bodies, thus insuring that we remain an organic whole. For this reason it is possible to clone another individual from the nucleus of any cell in a body.

Just so, there is overwhelming evidence to indicate that all life now on Earth (with the possible exception of some viruses) is derived from a single original cell which formed around four billion years ago. The basic amino acids and the DNA in every cell of every plant and animal on our planet are made up of exactly the same molecular components. Strip away the cell walls (containing the antibodies which serve to maintain organismic integrity) from cells of a human and a carrot, and they will flow together, merge and continue to function as a hybrid *chimera*. Thus we may look upon these past four billion years of evolution as the maturation of a vast living creature 7900 miles in diameter. In the body of such an immense being, we and all other individual animals and plants would be analogous to the individual cells of our own bodies. If such an analogy may be drawn, then what sort of cells might the members of our own species correspond to? “In man,” says James Lovelock, “Gaia has the equivalent of a central nervous system.”¹ I had originally made an identically anthropomorphic as-

sumption in saying "Just as in the human body the brain and nervous system is the last organ to develop, so in Terra the last biotic to develop is the Noosphere, comprised of Earth's aggregate population of homo sapiens."² However, subsequent studies I have read on the brains of cetaceans have convinced me, instead, that humans may be more modestly equipped to serve rather in the manner of peripheral neurons and ganglia (communication networks) than as the planetary "brain" itself (data storage and processing). Those Tolkien-inspired Neo-Pagans who call themselves The Elf Queen's Daughters have taken the notion of our role in the planetary nervous system one step further and refer to people with left-brain dominance as "motor neurons" and those with right-brain dominance as "sensory neurons."

Princeton psychologist Julian Jaynes has proposed the startling theory that the ancient pantheons of deities existed in actuality as manifestations of the collective right cerebral hemispheres of their worshippers, in the same way that our conscious minds are products of the speech centers (Wernicke's area) of our individual left brains.³ Writing elsewhere,⁴ I have discussed in this context the phenomenon known to the ancients as the Triple Muse (three distinctly feminine voices "heard" singing in unison) and suggested that this Muse represents the perceptual voice of the Triple Goddess. Going a step beyond Jung's "collective unconscious," I further suggested that the Triple Goddess may indeed represent the collective awareness of a community, country, or people. For it is of course my contention that this vast being we call Earth is not only alive, but sentient. And it is the very soul of our living planet that we have known from of old as Gaea, Hertha, Mother Earth.

Dolphinologist John Lilly⁵ has pointed out that whales and dolphins are equipped with two organs of vocalization—one in each half of the dual blowhole—and as a consequence, they can carry on two separate simultaneous communications with other cetaceans on either side of them, or a harmonious exchange in stereo, utilizing both sets of vocal apparatus in synchronization. The obvious implication is that the "speech" and "language" areas in the cetacean brain are equally developed in both cerebral hemispheres. What fully functional Wernicke's areas in both sides of the brain would imply in view of Jaynes' theory of the bicameral mind is beyond the scope of my present speculation, but I must point out that the brain of a dolphin may have up to 40 percent greater cortical areas than a human brain, while the brain of a whale may be many times that. Since the major vocal activity of these gentle leviathans appears to be the composition and performance of elaborate vocal symphonies, might not the sweetly feminine unison voices of the Muses (and perhaps even the haunting songs of the legendary Sirens) have been broadcast to ancient poets and sailors from the minds of

whales? Certainly there is ample indication from myth and history that cetacea were once held in special esteem.⁶ Delphi, the site of one of the most ancient oracles of the Earth-Mother, means both "dolphin" and "womb." Paintings of dolphins form a recurring theme in murals from Crete, Etruria and Carthage. The "friendly whale" is included in shamanic drawings revealing the "Mysteries of the Earth Mother" among the Cuna Indians of Panama.⁷ And countless legends hint at an almost symbiotic relationship between dolphins and our own ancestors, as well as more recent and well-documented tales such as that of Pylorus Jack.

It is my suggestion, then, that within the body of Gaea, our planetary organism and Earthly Mother, the analog of the cerebral cortex is to be found in the dolphins and whales. I further suggest that a symbiotic "neural" link between our respective species was forged millions of years ago, when our pre-hominid forebears fled to the seas to survive the twelve-million year long Pliocene drought, and so lost our body hair.⁸ This ancient covenant is still honored by



85 species of cetacea, whose history was already 40 million years old when we first climbed down from the trees to flounder in the primordial surf. To this day, we remain the only swimming primates, and sea otters and dolphins remain the only wild animals on Earth to seek our companionship as friends and playmates. But in the past few centuries, mankind has ruptured this bond most grievously with the unrelenting slaughter and genocide of our oceanic elders: otters and seals for their pelts; mighty whales for oil, lipstick and dog food; and playful dolphins for competing with commercial fishermen.

I have elaborated elsewhere⁹ upon the nature and effects of the planetary cataclysm which occurred 3500 years ago, setting us on the path of alienation from the Earth that Western civilization has pursued ever since. 1500 BCE was the ending of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Age of Iron; the time of the Exodus, and the rise of Sky-Father monotheism; the eruption of Thera, and the obliteration of the Minoan thalassocracy; the Aryan invasion (Aryan meaning both "iron" and "meteor," for the first iron

weapons were forged about this time from meteorites) and the destruction of Mohenjodaro. It was the twilight of the Goddess, and the dawn of patriarchy. And what would be the impact of planetary cataclysm upon populations of cetacea? Certainly it is not difficult to imagine the consequences of major undersea earthquakes and vulcanism. Water heated by such geothermal forces would rise, creating surface temperatures far exceeding the toleration limits of air-breathing homeothermic creatures whose natural habitat in icy seas had caused them to evolve thick layers of insulating blubber. In all areas of the oceans that were subjected to the particularly intense geothermal activity (which would include much of the Pacific, the mid-Atlantic, the Indian, and a good part of the Arctic and Antarctic as well) the whales would be, if not boiled alive outright, at least suffocated by intolerable heat. And the baleen whales, whose diet consists of tiny crustaceans and mollusks called krill, as well as plankton, would find the available supply of such surface-level organisms severely reduced from the increased surface heat, to which they would be particularly vulnerable. And in the decimation of the whale populations that would have followed inevitably from cataclysm, the Earth Mother would have suffered radical lobotomy, removing the presence of Her consciousness from the new Age of Iron that followed. If not dead, the Mother at least remained unconscious long enough for the new Sky-Father Gods (Zeus, Yahveh, Indra, Thor) to conquer Her surviving children, and every flickering of the Awakening (*re-nais-sance*) that has occurred since has been ruthlessly suppressed and obliterated by the agents of the celestial patriarchy.

In this context, then, how are we Pagan, pantheist, and Neo-Pagan peoples to regard the continuing and relentless extermination of the whales and dolphins? Certainly an act of genocide on any scale is heinous enough, but in this case we are witnessing not merely the eradication of a single human community, nor even of a whole race of humanity, but of dozens of entire species of great and wonderful beings, far wiser and more ancient than the totality of human experience, with a record of total benevolence towards us throughout our recorded history. Moreover, if it is true, as I hereby suggest, that the whales and dolphins house within their complex and superior brains the very mind itself of our entire planet, then their destruction must be perceived as the deliberate lobotomizing of our own dear Mother. Can a body live when its brain has been destroyed? Perhaps, as a drooling idiot or a raving maniac, it could. But can we, who know, love, and serve our Mother, permit this fate to overtake Her without doing everything in our power to prevent it? I hope not. When one sees one's own Mother being raped, tortured and mutilated, is it sufficient to file orderly petitions with the sadists politely requesting that they desist? At some point it becomes necessary to throw one's own body into the fray, to

Set's Serenade

by: Nydia Walker

A storm is brewing on the horizon.
I can hear the thunder
And feel the electrically charged air,
As it moves ever closer.
The raindrops beat a savage serenade
On the leaves of the trees around me
As the Great God Set approaches.
The thunder increases its tempo
Until it sounds like the pounding
Of the hooves of the thousand horses
Which make up the army of Set.
The lightning flashes,
Sending me to my knees
In praise of this powerful God,
Who rules the storms of chaos.
The wind strengthens,
Making the trees sway in time
To the heartbeat of this Great God.
Dead and dying branches are blown
from the trees to make way
For new growth.
And then, with a crash, an old tree falls,
Making way for 5 young trees to take its place.
The old tree shall lay in silence,
feeding the soil and the forest creatures
as it slowly decays.
Set is working his magic,
Allowing new life to spring forth from death,
Renewing our forests and our lands
Through his Chaotic forces.
Set grabs nature and makes her scream
In pain and pleasure.
Then he moves on
For his work is never ending
And he dare not tarry
In one place long enough
To cause total destruction
As long as even one small breath of life remains
Existence is possible.
And all those who hid from his passion
And screamed in fear of his touch
Shall emerge in sorrow for their loss.
But, those who boldly faced his truth
And cried his name in praise
Shall reap his rewards
And be protected.

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Contributors' Showcase

Tom Donohue

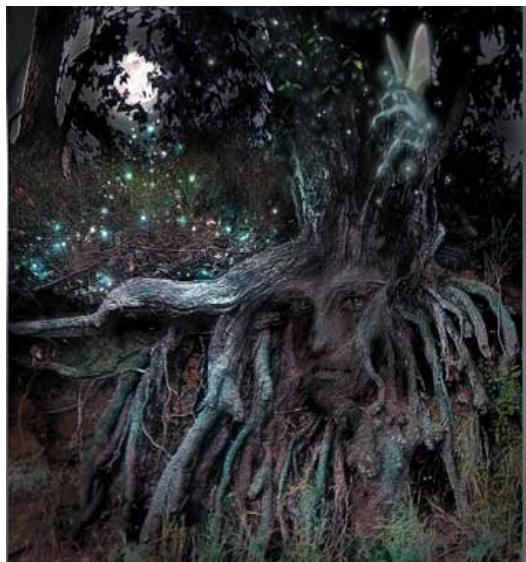
Animal Intelligence

Tom Donohue is a recently retired teacher from Lowell High School in San Francisco, where for twenty years he was best known as "Mister Donohue". In the years prior to that, he was a Public Health Microbiologist, first in Bacteriology then in Virology. He has also been a researcher on telomerase at the Blackburn Lab, UCSF. He has been a member of CAW for over twenty years but considers himself Pagan since the age of seven. He also has an identical twin brother who is also Pagan.

Micheal R. Gorman

Lie Upon the Earth

Michael is the Chief Druid Emeritus and Founder of the Sacramento Grove of the Oak, Inc., an eclectic Pagan community that gathers regularly in Midtown Sacramento, California. He is the national Lambda Literary Award winning author of the innovative biography of Jose Sarria called *The Empress Is A Man*. His writing covers a range of genres; journalism, poetry, lyrics, playwriting, short stories, and non-fiction scholarship. He holds a bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts degrees from California State University, Sacramento, and has since his formal studie become a student of Celtic Druids out of Lewes, England, a teacher, and an ordained minister. He currently is working on a biography of Irish poet and Druid, Ella Young, and a book of Celtic philosophy. He lives in Midtown with his partner of 10 years, "Dr. Dean" and their black cat Sabbath, whom Michael calls his "reluctant familiar." You can contact Michael at PoetGorman@aol.com or visit his website www.groveoftheoak.org.



Ariel Monserrat

Editor's Page

Ariel was born and raised in the Hollywood Hills in Los Angeles, California. She has a Master's in Counseling Psychology. Her past careers have included six years spent as a flight attendant and 15 years as a

psychotherapist. She has been a Pagan, a Witch and a member of the Church of All Worlds for over 10 years. She and her mate of 4 years, Tom Donohue moved to the mountains of Northeast Tennessee almost two years ago, where they live on 11 acres of woodlands with their 2 horses and 2 cats.

Andi Fisher

African Medicinal Plants

Rt. Rev. Andi Fisher: As a young child she was surprised to find that not everyone shared her gift of clairvoyance. Her father, a dedicated and gifted Christian, encouraged her to seek divinity in all ways that rang true to her, never imposing his own views on her. In April 2001 she followed through with a vision that had deeply motivated her to reach even higher. Andi believed that it was possible to gather representation from the Four root Tribes of Man(kind) to stand firmly and peacefully in their individual faiths, together within one space and time. Proudly dignified in their beliefs without the need to defend or protect these beliefs, therefore secure to respect and acknowledge the same of other - perhaps conflicting - beliefs in people who shared the circle with them. The goal was to discover whether indeed it was possible to create religious and racial tolerance and acceptance amongst mankind - even if only for a brief moment in time. The Four Tribes of Man(kind) was an extraordinary success, attracting visitors and guest speakers from many corners of the globe to share in global spiritual unity. This was the first step in what has become Andi's mission on earth. Finding and focusing on the commonalities, the golden threads of truths that are woven throughout all religions and spiritual paths, instead of focusing on the differences that exist amongst colour and creed. To this purpose the Universal Spirit Sanctuary was recently birthed, a global vehicle with which to teach, learn and commune with mankind these common threads of truths that prevail. Members are from all paths, and are encouraged to learn of one another's spiritual paths in order to cultivate tolerance and understanding. Ordained in the CNCI, Andi is 3rd degree Archpriestess and Elder. She recently accepted an appointment to represent the CNCI as Chief Director and Chief Priestess CNCI South Africa. She is looking towards obtaining her Doctorate in Divinity next. She considers herself a Universal Maverick, rather than representing one faith, and does not enjoy labels as these imply limitations. It is Andi's goal to co-write books and produce multi-media educational tools in order to widely spread the message of global spiritual unity. Born and raised in South Africa, Andi will always flow to the pulse of Africa in her veins. However, she is planning on immigrating within the next few years to either the USA or the UK where she will be further empowered to continue her greater spiritual work and to take it to the next level. Visit Andi's Universal Spirit Sanctuary web site at: www.uss.za.org.

Dana D. Eilers is a 1978 graduate of Smith College and a 1981 cum laude graduate of New England School of Law. She holds legal licenses in three states and for nearly twenty years, she worked as a civil litigator in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Now retired from the active practice of law, Dana is the author of *THE PRACTICAL PAGAN* and *PAGANS AND THE LAW: UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS*. She has written extensively on the web and in print on the issues of Pagans and their rights.

Nydia Walker

Worship of Bast, Set's Serenade

Nydia's interest in Ancient Egypt began as a small child and is evident today in her work as a freelance writer and as High Priestess of Temple Ankh. When not working, she relaxes with her family on their Kentucky farm and chats with Temple members on the Yahoo groups message board. She can also be found at Pegasus Production Psychic Fairs working as a Psychic and Lecturer at their fairs in Evansville, IN and Owensboro, KY.

Jymi X/O builds websites, produces small-press 'zines, draws, spends too much money on electronics, and takes more photographs than should be legal. Her portfolio can be (sort of) seen at: <http://www.dreamsoverzero.com>

