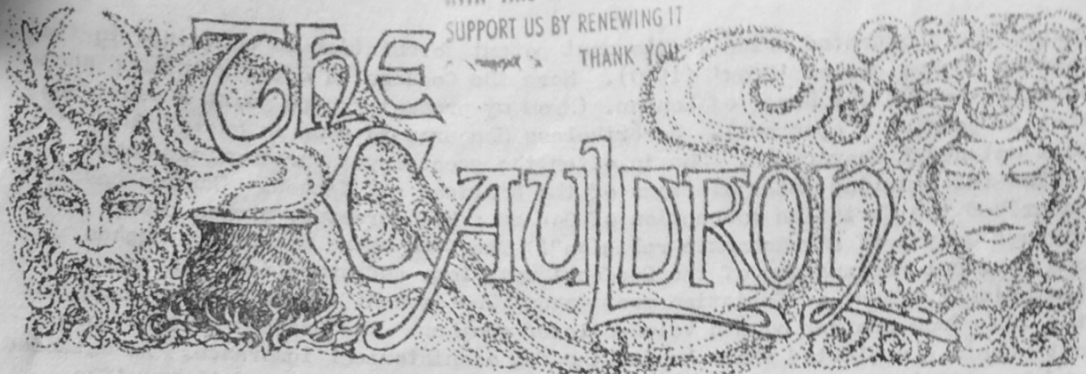


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No 40

PAGAN JOURNAL OF THE OLD RELIGION

YULE 1985

MEA CULPA How many readers noticed the deliberate mistake last issue? It should have been Autumn 1985 not Winter 1985. To prevent further confusion this issue has been designated Yule and everything should be back to normal next time.

TED HUGHES: PAGAN LAUREATE? It came as a great personal surprise for me to see Ted Hughes appointed as Poet Laureate. Betjeman's plummy Christianity appeared to be quite appropriate for the innocuous celebration of Royal events. The timidity of Larkin or the establishment academicism of the Oxford poets seemed to be an obvious and fitting choice. Of course Hughes is undoubtedly popular as poets go but his verse has always been temperamentally alien from the Royal parade of pageant and nobility. What particularly surprised me about his appointment was the pagan character of much of his verse. This was confirmed all the more for me by the incongruous piece he composed for Prince Harry's baptism called 'Rain Charm for the Duchy - A Blessed Devout Drench for the Christening of Prince Harry' (which was published in 'The Sunday Observer' about this time last year). The poem managed to tweak the nose of the Duchy at the same time as it invoked baptismal archangels that bore more resemblance to Norse storm deities than to the usual rubbery cherubim! Hughes' pagan influences are evident from his early volume 'Hawk in the Rain' (1959). The landscape drawn in the early work is at once archaic and vitally alive. Its predominantly animal populace retain the numinosity of the totem. More than this it is Hughes' conception and expression of the natural world that appertains most clearly to pagan sympathies. Hughes' own vision has been noted, I believe incorrectly, for its violence. Its true feature is the unsentimental insight into Nature's awesome destructive power that remains an inseparable aspect of Her enriching and sustaining vitality. Hughes' work demonstrates how the undifferentiation of natural energy composes and engages the heart of mankind. Like a number of his masculine protagonists this confrontation can either tear the soul to pieces or in Peter Redgrove's words "restore you whole". Hughes has remarked how "In the old world God and divine power were invoked at any cost. Life seemed worthless without them. In the present world we dare not invoke them. We would not know how to use them to stop them destroying us. If you refuse the energy you are living a kind of death. If you accept the energy it destroys you. What is the alternative? To accept the energy and find methods of turning it to good or keeping it under control by rituals, the machinery of religion. The old method is the only one." (London Magazine 1971) That last sentence is very telling. Hughes' engagement is essentially a religious quest. His proximity to the soul has always permeated the quality of his verse with the agony and joy of the Divine Presence. The character of this relationship has changed over the years. To begin with Hughes focused his attention on Man's ignorant and arrogant consciousness. He emphasised the necessity of Man's benign relation to the Earth rather than the continuation of his pollutive, self destructive behaviour seemingly endemic to the modern age. Hughes is no secular polemicist; his environmentalism is more clearly understood as an expression of the need for spiritual realignment. The women of his poem 'Witches' are examples of those in direct contact with the vital core of experience, the participation in Nature's greater dynamism that admits of respect, even love. Hughes' own dedication to the Goddess is apparent from the early poem 'Song' onwards. 'O Lady when the tipped cup of the Moon blessed you/ You became soft fire with a cloud's grace/ a marble of foam/a shaped shell'. She is imminent in the beat of the stars, the rhythm of the tides, seasons, plant growth, the vitality of the animals, the push of his own blood. Yet the most recurrent and enigmatic pagan expression is the almost elegiac evocation of the Goddess neglected by an age of spiritual poverty. Egbert Faas has termed this

image 'the desecrated bride'. Its most potent formulation is contained in the poem by Hughes called 'Crow' (1970). Here the Goddess is often a 'dimmed shape' beneath the 'filthy haze' of London. (From my present vantage point a sentiment that is painfully apparent). Nevertheless She prompts song in one of Hughes' most untuneful characters. She is often the greater yet unrecognized power behind the bungling interpolations of the Biblical god Yahweh. (Hughes has described the Christian conception of God as a "man created, broken down, corrupt despot of a ramshackle religion") The poem bears witness to Hughes' own personal reclamation of the Goddess' mythology and symbolism from the 'Satanic' effect of Christian propaganda. The serpent is one obvious example, the fish from another of his volumes later another. The Goddess however does not remain a neglected shape behind the fog of historical ignorance. An extended and beautiful invocation is contained in 'Crow's Undersong' as follows; 'She comes with the birth push/ into eyelashes, into nipples the fingertips/ She comes as far as blood and to the tips of hair/ She comes to the fringes of the voice/ She stays/ Even after life life even among the bones. She brings petals in their nectar fruits in their plush/ She brings a cloak of feathers an animal rainbow/ She brings her favourite furs and these are Her speeches ../ If there had been no hope She would not have come...'. Apprehended beneath conscious life, surrounding and sustaining the fragility of our own being, the Goddess appears in Her ancient Artemis dress. Inexhaustible in creativity, transforming through death, Her celebration through the manifold expression of the natural environment is perhaps the most constant feature of Hughes' verse. The inner accommodation to the demands of that expression has been the conflagratory, yet inspirational, fire throughout Hughes' career. The Goddess exacts at the same time as She generously bestows. Her gifts are always double edged, a labrys. This tormented yet essentially religious expression of the soul is charted most fully in 'Gaudete' and the alchemical/shamanistic text 'Cavebirds'. The latter is the most complete and indicative account to date of the forces that shape and motivate Hughes' quest and is of particular interest to pagans. Hughes himself has described the piece as "a symbolic drama concerning disintegration and reintegration" or more plainly of death and rebirth. The mythic pattern refers, of course, to the Egyptian Osiric structures, the Eleusianian Mysteries and inevitably to our own native initiatory rituals and seasonal celebrations. Ancient ritual, myth and further symbolic reclamation from the usurping Christian tradition are often evident in 'Gaudete'. 'She rides the Earth/ On an ass, on a lion/ She rides the heavens/ on a great white bull. She is an apple/ whoever plucks Her/ nails his heart/ to the leafless tree.' In Hughes' later work fishing has become the dominant expression of the hunter's intimate contact with his god. He relates in a recorded interview how 'Earth Numb' was written as a shamanistic mesmeric charm before the fish were caught. This demonstrates a little of the magical character in which Hughes regards his poetry (the Duchy recieved their own charm!) The verse seeks to magically conjoin Man, the element (water) and its lordly inhabitant. The magic is its vital participation in that communitas. 'Join water, wade in underbeing/ Let brain mist into moist earth/ Ghost loosen away downstream/Gulp river and gravity...' Hughes' last adult collection 'River' confirms that the heart of his poetic vision resides in an incantory expression of communion or, to put it another way, an act of worship. 'And the fish worship the Source, bowed and fervent' (from 'Torridge') 'So the river is a god/ knee deep among the reeds, watching men/ or hung by the heels down the door of the dam.' (from 'River') The intensity of this vision is such that local circumstances irradiate with the caress of the divine finger. This can produce startling effects. 'You stand under leaves, your feet in shallows/ She eyes you steadily from the beginning of the world.' (from 'Low Water') In fact 'River' is really a collection of divine songs. It is a book in honour of the natural environment figured as the face and body of the Goddess. It is an ultimate confirmation of the deep sympathy Hughes maintains with the pagan spirit. 'The river walks in the valley singing/ Letting her veils blow.../ April in the lift of her arm/ December in the turn of her shoulder/ As if her sauntering were a long stillness/ She who has not once tasted death' (from 'Torridge').

Cliff Ashcroft

We hope that you will agree that the above article gives a new insight into the work of one of our major poets. It is hoped that in our next issue Cliff will honour us with a similar article on the work of another poet with pagan tendencies, Peter Redgrove. He is the author, with Penelope Shuttle, of the much praised book 'The Wise Wound' on menstruation taboos which contains material on paganism and the Goddess. Ed

THE ORIGINS OF MODERN DRUIDISM Recent books on Druidism have tended to dismiss the modern revival of the Celtic Mysteries as historically fraudulent. This stance is perhaps understandable in the light of some of the fantastic claims made by Druidic groups today. Genuine Druidic beliefs and practices did survive virtually intact in many of the remoter areas of the Celtic lands until fairly recent times. What evidence is there however for the survival of Druidism as an organised Celtic religion since the conversion of the pagan British to the new faith? As late as the 12th century in Wales there is evidence that Druidism was still being practised in its original form. Contemporary writers make some very specific references to bardic knowledge suggesting it was still officially recognized. In 1171 Hywel, Prince of North Wales, was inducted into the lesser mysteries of the goddess Ceridwen. He wanted to be initiated into the greater mysteries conducted by the bard Gwyddnaw and his son but it seems he never achieved that aim. In a song sung by Hywel he addresses Ceridwen as the moon goddess and invites Her to attend his worship in a sacred grove. It has also been claimed that prior to the Norman invasion in 1066 a Druidic grove met at Oxford. This grove originated from the Snowdonia area of North Wales and were alchemists and initiates of a secret Druidic school. According to the genealogical tree of Druidism compiled by Colin Murray and Dr. Michel Raoult (published in the 'New Celtic Review' January 1980) the Oxford grove was revived by John Aubrey when he founded his Ancient Druid Order in the 17th century. Welsh Druidism per se traces its roots back to the original Celtic form although the first bardic eisteddfod was held at Cardigan (Abertrifi) in 1176 under the patronage of Lord Rhys ap Iffridd. It is true to say that modern Welsh Druidism, in its popular form, was revived by the eccentric scholar Iolo Morganwg (Edward Williams 1747-1826). He was by trade a stonemason (and therefore probably a speculative Free mason), a natural psychic and political radical who actively supported the French revolution. At the autumn equinox in 1793 he convened a meeting in London of the Ancient British Bards at Primrose Hill. This event was attended by the Prince of Wales later King George IV. In 1819 Williams was instrumental in the celebration of an eisteddfod at Carnarthen during which he presented his own concept of using a circle of standing stones as a focus for the ceremony. This he called Cylch Cyngair or the Circle of Concord. In those days it was widely believed, even by academics that the Celts had erected the stone circles. Williams has been accused of inventing modern Druidism and producing faked manuscripts to prove his case for Celtic religious survivals. It is evident however that he was a genuine bardic scholar and drew his inspiration from his Welsh roots. Indeed he may well have exaggerated the extent of the survival of Celtic esoteric knowledge but when he convened his revived Druids in London representatives of genuine bardic groups from Wales, Scotland, Cornwall, Ireland, Brittany and the Isle of Man did attend. Some of these circles may have preserved authentic strands of the old Celtic wisdom teachings. It was not until 1860 that the first Welsh National Eisteddfod took place at Denbigh in North Wales. Few Celtic purists would recognize modern Welsh Druidism as a manifestation of the ancient Mysteries of the Blessed Isles! In her book 'The Sword of Wisdom', which is a biography of Samuel Mathers of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Ithell Colquhoun gives some interesting background information on the development of revived Druidism during the 19th century. She quotes a conversation she had with the late Dr. Robert MacGregor Reid, who was ArchDruid of the Druid Universal Bond from 1946 until he passed to the Summerland in 1964. He suggested that the founding of the Order of the Golden Dawn had been influenced by modern Druidism. Certainly there was an influential element within the G.D. who were interested in the Celtic Mysteries including both Mathers and the Irish poet W.B. Yeats. A special G.D. lodge was set up specialising in the celebration of the Celtic Mysteries and it was called the Temple of Nuada. He was the Celtic god with the silver hand. There are possible but unconfirmed links between this G.D. lodge and the contemporary Druidic groves. Colquhoun claims that during the 1950's 'Pendragon', the official magazine of the D.U.B., published articles on astrology, the tarot and the Cabbala which suggests that Druidism during that period was influenced by theosophical occultism. After Dr. MacGregor Reid's death the existing Druid Order split into two rival factions. The first was the Druid Order led by Dr. Maughan which still meets at Stonehenge (or at least did until this year's unpleasantness!) The second offshoot was organised by Ross Nicholls. This was called the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids and used to hold monthly lectures at Carton Hall in London. It was rumoured that the O.B.O.D. rituals had been written by the late Madeline Montalban, the famous astrologer and magician. Following the demise of Ross Nicholls the O.B.O.D. seems to have faded into obscurity. The third major revived Druid group that is still active is the

the Golden Order Section founded by Colin Murray. This claims descent from Scottish bardic circles and the ancient Celtic Culdee Church. Also in Scotland there is the College of Druidism founded by Kaledon Maddair who has described himself in the past as a 'pagan Christian'. He seeks to revive the Celtic Mysteries in their purest form although it must be noted that the College teaches the study of the Cabbala in addition to more traditional bardic subjects. In addition to the Welsh, Anglo-Celtic and Scottish revivals there was also the establishment of revived Druidism in Brittany during the 19th century. This led to the foundation of the Gorsedd Breizh which is very active today. In Cornwall the Gorsedd Kernewek can claim historical roots dating back to the 1800's. With so much romance and speculation surrounding the Druidic revival it is sometimes difficult to separate fact from fantasy. The founding of Celtic neo-pagan groups in the United States claiming historical links with the motherland only adds to the confusion. In a short article it is impossible to cover all aspects of the popular Celtic revival. The available evidence suggests that genuine Druidic traditions did survive to form the philosophical basis for the revival of the Celtic Mysteries in the 18th and 19th centuries. With recent schisms it is possible that some of the ancient knowledge was lost. With a new generation of Celtic revivalists arising it must be hoped that these links, on both inner and outer levels, can be reforged. It is shortsighted to dismiss, as so many modern writers tend to do, presentday Druidism as a phoney product of neo-Celtic romanticism. Whatever we may think of its claims to historical authenticity in spirit it does represent an important connection with our pagan heritage.

Mike Howard

ROBERT GRAVES passed to the spirit world on December 7th, 1985 aged 90. He has been described as one of the finest poets of the 20th century. Newspaper obituaries contained praise for his poetry, his translations of classical works such as 'The Golden Ass' and his historical novels like 'I, Claudius' which was made into a very successful television series. Pagans however will remember him for his seminal work 'The White Goddess' published in 1948. Although it was criticized for its lack of real scholarship it had a profound effect on the pagan revival of the 1960's. During research for the book Graves met a coven of traditional witches in Somerset but there is no evidence he actively practised the pagan Old Religion. He regarded the Goddess as the classical muse who inspires poets, writers and artists and he obviously had a deep respect and love for Her which shines through some of his poems. Unfortunately this aspect of his work was ignored in the media tributes paid to Graves after his passing. Hopefully when some future biographer tackles the mammoth task of recording his rich and varied life Graves' contribution to the resurgence of the Feminine Principle will not be so lightly dismissed.

PAGAN VETTING The BBC television programme 'Earth Magic' has caused quite a stir and seems to have been an excellent piece of positive publicity for the Old Ways. The programme was screened in the middle of the BBC spy scandal when it was revealed that staff were being vetted by a M.I.5 liaison officer working inside Broadcasting House. Defiant BBC staff took to sticking Xmas tree stickers - allegedly used by the M.I.5 snoop to designate a political subversive on their personal file - on the doors to their offices. Shortly before the 'Earth Magic' programme was screened a number of these stickers mysteriously appeared on the door of the BBC's Religious Affairs department. Why? The story goes that before the programme went out it was sent to the department for positive vetting! As the programme was screened without any fuss we can only presume that either the Religious Affairs department is staffed by liberal types or they did not regard it as a serious threat to their spiritual monopoly! It was unfortunate that a few weeks after this BBC Wales screened a diabolical film on the Craft featuring four letter words and full frontal nudity from the so-called "King of the Witches" which undid some of the good provided by 'Earth Magic'. Clerics in mid-Wales responded to this travesty of paganism by starting a mini-witch hunt against anyone they suspected of being connected with the Old Ways, folklore or the occult.

BORN AGAIN PAGANS? A new book claims that 25-50% of American nuns are either latent or practising lesbians. This has predictably upset the Catholic Church who do not like to admit that sex rears its head behind convent walls. Of 50 nuns who recount their experiences in the book only 5 are still Catholics. The others practice a form of spirituality expressed in 'The Guardian' (17.9.85) as "joining covens or by practising pagan feminism through astrology, Goddess imagery, dream work, tarot, I Ching, herbal remedies, meditation". It was suggested that

to one of the ex-nuns involved that they were caught in a sixties time warp searching for the alternative faiths of that decade which was when most of them became postulants to the Church. Thankfully she denied this simplistic explanation by saying "We are the vanguard." The Church is one of many patriarchal institutions which achieves the warping and confining of women to serve the patriarchy of men. The only options promoted for women are to be of service to men. Women are not seen as whole persons. One reason why women welcome the book is because it says that if nuns can be lesbians women can be anything. It takes two ends of a polar scale and puts them together. It is the ultimate taboo that women can be spiritual and sexual."

MIDSUMMER RITES AT STONEHENGE Following the violent events at Stonehenge during the summer English Heritage has opened talks with various groups who wish to perform pagan ceremonies at the ancient site in 1986. EH say numbers would be limited to about 2000 people and the gatherings would be restricted to the night of June 20th/21st. EH had been heavily criticized by both the media and the public because of the intense police presence at the stones this year when the site was surrounded by razor wire and roadblocks. We understand an initial meeting was held on the 14th October between English Heritage, the National Trust, the Druids, Pagans for Peace and other interested parties. EH insisted that only a very limited Solstice ceremony should be held with tickets being supplied to those who wished to attend (?) and the stones closed to the general public. This proposal was rejected and further discussions were to be held in November. As we go to press we hear that the police are considering dropping all the charges against the majority of the 500 people arrested during the midsummer disturbances at the stones.

GREEN SPIRITUALITY In recent years with the growth of environmental pressure groups the subject of ecology has been projected on to the global stage. While the political expression of the ecological message is a valid way of showing concern for the future of the planet there are some people within the Green movement who regard it as just one aspect of the struggle to change our materialist society. Ecology is not just an environmental issue. It also has a spiritual dimension which tends to be overlooked. In the United States two environmentalists Bill Devall of Humboldt University and George Sessions of Sierra College both in California have written a book called 'Deep Ecology'. This attempts to place ecology within a proper spiritual and philosophical context as a belief system which not only affects material decisions but also influences the spiritual choices we have on the inner levels of being. The idea behind Deep Ecology (which is sometimes also called Ecosophy) is to extend awareness of the material threat to our planet from a political attitude to a deeper more philosophical viewpoint where spiritual and material fuse into a single related reality. This quest for a spiritual dimension to ecology is known already to many pagans who have been involved in the Green movement over the last ten years. Because of the inherently corrupt nature of the System the political struggle cannot in the long term bring about the required changes in consciousness that are so important for the future survival of the biosphere. History teaches us that any form of radical or revolutionary political structure soon becomes integrated into the existing System once it gains power. The simple act of passing legislation to change people's minds is not enough either as both the Racial and Sexual Discrimination legislation has proved. Racism and sexism still exist and manifest in more violent forms because of resentment of laws telling people how they should think on these sensitive issues. The change in consciousness which is needed many pagans believe can only be achieved by personal self growth on the spiritual level leading to what has been termed the 100th monkey situation. Pagans, by following their own spiritual goals within the framework of an ecologically aware, Earth orientated belief system, can bring real changes in global consciousness. It is very easy to criticize this as an egocentric sell out but personal self growth does affect those in the outer world who come into contact with the seeker. Service to humanity has always been emphasised in even the most inward looking esoteric traditions. The average pagan understands that the spiritual and material are indivisible. We incarnate on the Earth plane to learn lessons and the experiences of the physical world are the great teacher. By understanding this simple fact we should have the spiritual maturity to unite both the inner and outer levels without rejecting either. The protection of the environment (Mother Earth) should be the central motivating force within any form of genuine pagan spirituality. The only question is exactly how this concern for ecological

balance can be put into practical action. Obviously individual pagans will disagree on the answer depending on their own lifestyle, incarnatory experience and level of spiritual awareness. However it is a question which must be tackled for we are living in a period of history when it is no exaggeration to say that the future of the human species and the planet may hang in the balance. The dawning of the New Age brings with it an awesome responsibility which those souls which are at present in incarnation must shoulder and we should remember that we are here for a reason even if, in the daily struggle for existence, the spiritual reality of that fact may become obscured at times.

Mike Howard

PAGAN SHRINES DISCOVERED An unconfirmed report says that Italian archaeologists have uncovered a pagan shrine to the Goddess in Southern Italy. The shrine is dedicated to Bona Dea (the Great Mother) and it is said that over 2000 cult objects have been discovered at the shrine. Meanwhile 'The Daily Telegraph' (24.8.85) reports that a team from Manchester University has discovered, in the grounds of a large house in the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire a Roman springhead temple built on the site of a Celtic water shrine. The pagoda shaped temple is described as unique and although desecrated by early Christians enough remains to suggest that it was a very important sacred site. The site was revealed after the owner of the house followed clues in local folklore about a pagan temple and confirmed its existence by aerial photography. Back in Italy scientists are hoping to use high technology to decipher the lost Etruscan language which has been a secret for centuries. In a four year project they will use sophisticated computer techniques to decode over 100,000 inscriptions dating from the 7th to 1st centuries BCE. One of the most interesting books to be translated is a priest's instruction manual which is believed to contain rituals relating to the worship of the Etruscan gods of the sea, Earth and Sun.

THOUGHTS & MEDITATIONS I like to think it is inspiration. It is my personal view, which I believe to be inspired, that we have the Truth within us if we can listen to it. Too many firm dogmatic beliefs can be like cancerous growths on the skeleton of knowledge. But can we try to define our framework for those who are seeking teaching? My knowledge has been supplemented and confirmed by such as Doreen Valiente, Lugh and Starhawk. My own training comes from Gardnerian sources but when the gates were opened I knew immediately that my real pagan sources were way back; early childhood in this life and something before that. It is the 'before that' which is most difficult as it is so individual. We may regard it as from an earlier incarnation or from spirit guides but all that is common is that we receive something from outside our present existence. We should meditate, dream, trance and communicate and listen to each other, to share and increase our sense of the 'before'. The next thought is that we must be pagan. The knowledge of Deity is our perception of the creative and sustaining spirit hidden behind our interface with the Universe. That is Nature, the elements, the Sun, the structure of the Earth, its clothing of soil, air, water, trees and other plants, humans and all animals. The immanent God-ness! The Great Goddess historically pre-eminent - provider, begetter, nurturer, healer and lawgiver; like the mother to any child. Esther Harding and Merlin Stone are commendable sources for further reading. A constant task is to disillusion seekers from seeing the Bible as the word of God and see it as it is, the source book of Jewish myth, history, law, nationalistic indoctrination and propaganda. It represents the age of patriarchy which halted and almost destroyed the religion of the Goddess. Freedom is the antithesis of power. Sexual conservatism under the guise of divine restraint is more subtle and more efficient in the long run than brute force or control of basic necessities (food, land etc.) If the people have flag, flax, fodder and frug then why should they slave or fight? Contented and sexually fulfilled people are useless for enhancing the power and glory of a king, queen, lord etc. The thirst for power is a seed of disaster in all of us. This thirst, often a manifestation of insecurity, may be exhibited by parent, lover, teacher, High Priestess or guru. It can be used for good of course. The only safe way to have power is with the willingness to give it up. Give is the operative word. Power should be given, not taken and let go when conditions change. Change is the theme of our times. All of us find it uncomfortable or threatening at times so we tend to resist it. As we accelerate towards that total destruction of the Earth, an acceleration of change is needed. This is what I believe we should be working for.

Tamuz

HESTIA The Greek goddess Hestia (known to the Romans as Vestia) is the everlasting flame tended by the nine vestal virgins. She stands for unchanged tradition; the rituals that must be maintained in any community. She is the oldest of the goddesses, a Grandmother, keeper of the hearth, the grate, the 'heart' of the home. This open hearth of Hestia has been the centre of human gatherings; a great comfort, a light in darkness, a guard against predators, the centre piece for storytelling, for relating the myths and folk wisdom, for sharing stories and developing language. Fire brings power to humans and symbolises the spark of life. It makes us closer to the Gods and the Goddesses. To look into a fire is to reflect, to develop self awareness, to move from Nature to culture. When we invoke the Goddess of the Eternal Flame, Hestia always brings us back to a recognition of that which is traditional time tested, ritualistic and conservative. She sees that things are done in the unchanging manner that each new generation must learn. It is likely that the first fire was taken from a smouldering lightning struck tree. Fires were always lit from the fire before. This spark must never be allowed to go out or fire would be lost back to the Gods and never regained. At Her temple the vestal virgins tended Her flame. They symbolised the purified woman, the full moon, which is also the pregnant fullness, the fruiting nature of women. Yet Hestia is a virgin and the tenders of Her flame are virginal so this means She impregnates Herself creating Her vital spark from within that fruits as imagination. To make every moment pregnant with possibility death, inertia and dullness must be replaced by vitality and spark. So our everyday rituals of cleaning our teeth, washing our face but more of cleaning the home, brushing the hearth, can be filled with the creative spark. Instead of being bound by social conditioning and habit we enliven the space in which we live by devoting our chores or housework to Hestia and making these tasks sacred. The mundane tasks can be transformed - mundus meaning world - so our worldly or earthly chores should be devoted to Mother Earth. We are Her helpers, the cleaners of the grate. Emptying our ashes on the earth we return Her gifts of warmth as fertiliser. The cleaning of the grate in the centre of the house, at the hearth stone, can become like cleaning the grate of the world. Not letting the fire choke up. Riddling the fire we are reminded of the riddle of the symbolic language of tree lore. Different woods burn in different ways and sing their different songs. Coal is very old compressed wood, sunlight stored below ground in Pluto's realm as his dark riches. As we look into the fire so we become fixed by its dance. The nature spirits of the fire are salamanders. As we learn to watch their dance they reveal a mystery set upon the altar of the grate - that the dancing flame itself is the only image of Hestia we need for focusing and meditation. There were no images of Her in Her own temples in ancient times. When we view the hearth as the altar of Hestia and the dancing flames as Her image then our home is transformed into a decorated temple. We cannot go back to open fires in caves. We live here, we are now. But Hestia still burns and we can still dedicate our heating systems to Her and ask for Her guidance on the proper and appropriate use of whatever form of heating we have. The stove is another of Her sacred places where we can invoke Her, blessing the food we prepare and cook, the food that nourishes our vital spark. Cleaning the stove becomes a ritual to Hestia. We can hang herbs above the stove or have a small stone there to remind us of Her presence. At the time of the fire festival Beltane (May 1st) twin fires would be lit on hilltops and cattle driven through them for purification. If we build our own Beltane fires next year, however big or small, we can light a candle from the fire and carry it upstairs or wherever our sleeping place is, so that the flame can help with our dreaming for the coming year, can give illumination and meaning and make light in our lives.

Su Bleakley

This is an abridged version of an article published in the feminist peace magazine 'Women for Life on Earth' Autumn 1983

THE UNDERWORLD INITIATION The recent review of my book 'UnderWorld Initiation' in TC 39 described it tongue in cheek as an end product of Hawkwood College. In fact the book was written in 1978 as a development of my earlier book on pagan imagery in folksong 'Where is St George?' (1976). My only participation at Hawkwood College was in 1982-83 when I was booked to provide music and song to conduct a visualisation travelling into the UnderWorld from the manuscript before it went to press. I have never been a student at Hawkwood and none of my books are derived from the work of the Gareth Knight school, even though

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PRACTICAL MAGIC By Michael Howard (Javelin Books £2.95) This is a concise and well written introduction to practical magical techniques with a bias towards the pagan cosmic view written by the editor of TC. The book describes the principles of Magic and the use of ritual accessories. Five different kinds of Magic are revealed - Astral, Moon, Natural, Elementary and Planetary - with pathworkings and practical exercises. A comprehensive list of magical correspondences is also included. (Signed copies of this book can be obtained priced £3.50 including post and packing direct from the author at 4 Llysonnen Cottages, Llysonnen Road, Carmarthen, Dyfed, Wales SA 33 5ED. Allow 14 days for delivery)

MUSIC FOR INNER SPACE by Nevill Drury (Prism Books £4.95) This is a guidebook for gaining altered states of consciousness using meditation, visualization and occult symbolism combined with avant garde electronic music. Drury uses the five elements the Cabbala, tarot, astrology, yoga and Ancient Egyptian cosmology as the basis for practical visualization work. Also offered are suggestions for modern music to accompany these including works by Tangerine Dream, Hawkwind, Brian Eno, Pink Floyd, Mike Oldfield and King Crimson. M.H.

PRACTICAL GREEK MAGIC by Murry Hope (Aquarian Press £4.95) Ms Hope offers a guide to the Greek Mysteries suited for the pagan who wishes to tread the Heriote Path. Her book contains both mythological material and practical magical workings. There is information on the Olympian gods and goddesses, minor deities and nature spirits. It is a well written exposition of a little known aspect of Western paganism and can be recommended to those who feel an affinity with the Greek god forms. M.H.

THE OCCULT ROOTS OF NAZISM By Nicholas Goodrick (Aquarian Press £12.95) Here is a scholarly study of the occult and neo-pagan influences which lurked behind the evil of National Socialism. It debunks some of the myths but still proves that the Third Reich was spawned from 19th century secret societies who were steeped in racism, German nationalism, Rune lore, theosophy and the revival of Norse paganism. It was the bizarre occult theories of these shadowy groups which ultimately led to the bestial horrors of Auschwitz and Belsen. This detailed book can be recommended as a dire warning to anyone who seeks to mix extreme political ideas with paganism. M.H.

THE DEVIL'S BOOKSHELF by Christopher McIntosh (Aquarian Press £6.95) Despite its sensational title and lurid cover - which even the author has the decency to disown - there is a competent study of the medieval grimoires and their literary origins in pre-Christian paganism struggling to make itself known to the discerning reader. Pity though that McIntosh has to repeat that hoary old tale that Crowley wrote Gerald Gardner's Book of Shadows. It really would be nice if someone would offer some proof of this claim instead of repeating it ad nauseum. Anyway, ignore all this and enjoy the book for what it is - a good piece of original research on a subject which has not been widely explored to date. M.H.

THE CULT OF THE BLACK VIRGIN by Ean Begg (Arkana/RKP £5.95) Begg's book is the first one to study in depth the mysterious cult of the black Virgin Marys which is centred in ancient Christian shrines all over Europe. He identifies the black Madonnas as pre-Christian images representing the pagan goddesses of sexuality, the Underworld and Nature whose worship was suppressed by the early Church in its puritanical fervour. The statues of the Black Virgin date from the time of the Crusades. They symbolise a manifestation of the semi-pagan Gnostic heresy which revered the feminine principle represented by the spirit in matter and the light in darkness. This cultus was perpetuated in the Middle Ages by the troubadours with their belief in courtly love, chivalry by the proverbial knights in shining armour rescuing maidens in distress and the idealization of women as aspects of the Goddess. Highly recommended. M.H.

BACK TO EDEN by Jethro Kloss and THE BACK TO EDEN COOKBOOK (Distributed in the U.K. by Thorsons Publishers Ltd £3.50 & £2.95) Jethro Kloss was an American herbalist, food scientist, lecturer, writer, teacher and leading advocate of co-operation with Nature's healing resources through direct diet and herbal medicine. Originally published in 1939, 'Back to Eden' is a pioneering guide to herbal therapy, healthy living and a good diet. The accompanying cook book, compiled by the Kloss family, includes both vegan and vegetarian recipes. Both books can be recommended to TC readers interested in herbalism and wholefoods. Linda Dearden-Cobbett

DADDY WITCH & OLD MOTHER REDCAP by Nigel Pennick (142 Pheasant Hill Rise Bar Hill, Cambridge 50p + 17p stamp) This little booklet is subtitled 'Survivals of the Old Craft in Victorian Christendom' and gives details of the wisemen and wisewomen or traditional witches of the 19th century. The title is taken from the popular name for two East Anglian witches who, according to Pennick, helped preserve the old pagan wisdom in post persecution times. M.H.

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I think highly of some of the work produced by Knight and his group. Indeed I am sure that some of the Hawkwood people would not wish to be associated with some of the entirely pagan concepts offered in my book. When I conducted the visualisation for the group many agonised questions were raised about ancestors, phantoms and the relevance of Christian belief or redemption to the material that I had to offer. Obviously TC readers will have their beliefs while Gareth Knight students have quite a different viewpoint.

R.J.Stewart

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