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Fall 1985

# Iron Mountain: A Journal of Magical Religion

Vol 01, No. 03

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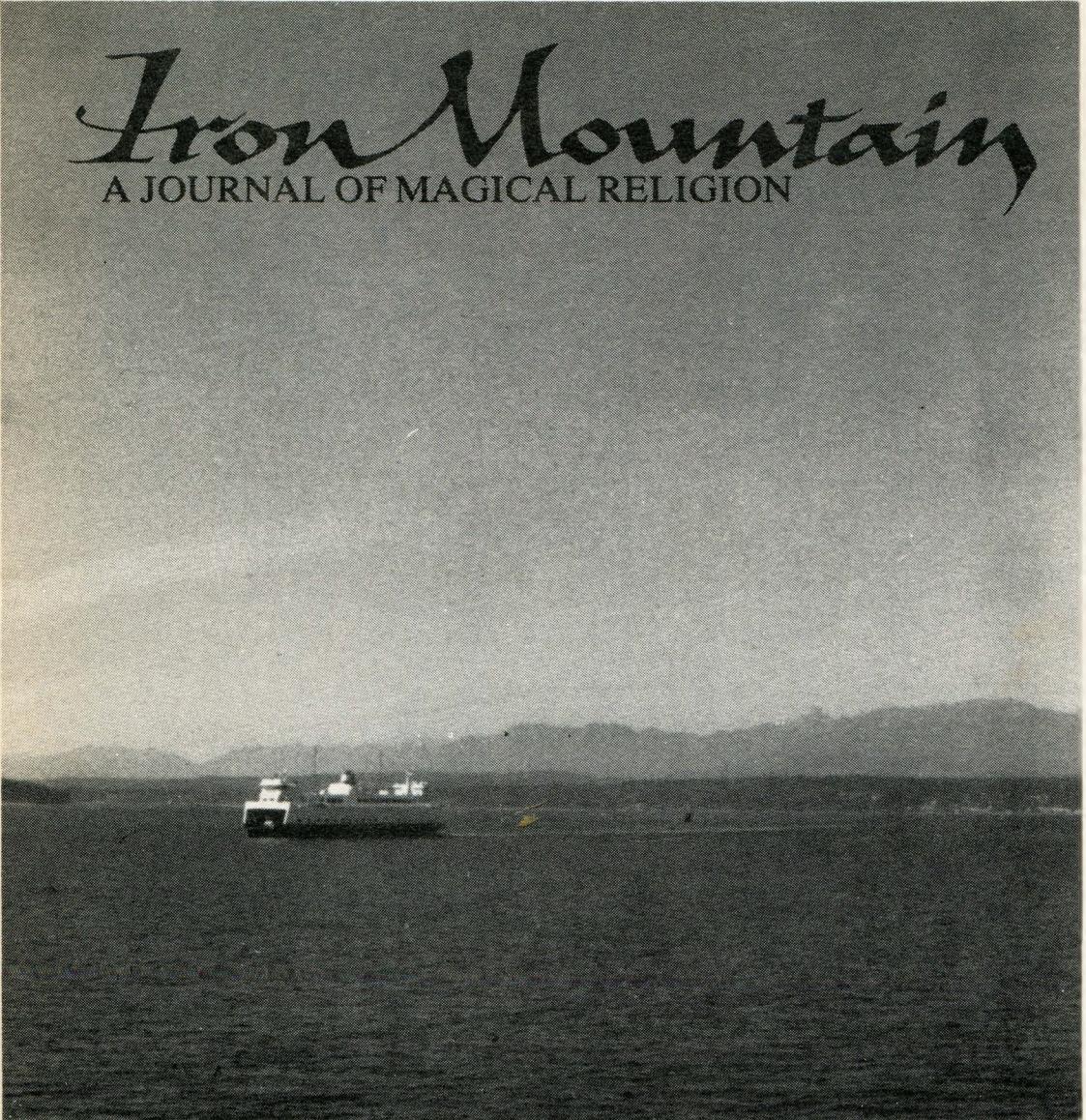
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# *Iron Mountain*

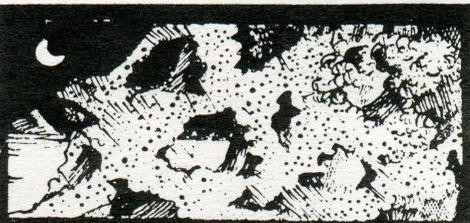
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**Fall 1985**

**Volume I, Number 3**

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*Iron Mountain* welcomes scholarly, informed journalistic or literary work relating to magical religious traditions and practices worldwide. Potential contributors should send a long, stamped, self-addressed envelope for the *Iron Mountain* writer's guide before submitting material.

# *On the Slopes of Iron Mountain*

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This issue of *Iron Mountain* reflects our change to a fall-spring publication schedule which seems to mesh better with the rhythms of the typical academic year. The editorial rush periods can now perhaps coincide with *summer* and with the mid-winter holidays and January doldrums.

A great deal has been written about the forms and functions of ritual, but rarely does one encounter as pragmatic and nuts-and-bolts explanation as Isaac Bonewits's recent talk to a Denver audience, reprinted in this issue as "Designing Effective Rituals." Laced with wry humor, it is "technology of the sacred" as one might encounter it in a night class at the Sacred Technology and Vocational Training College.

As a complimentary piece, we offer New Yorker Judy Harrow's thoughts on her clerical role as Wiccan priestess, also originally delivered live to a meeting of the local chapter of the Feminist Theological Institute.

Nothing we published in the first two issues of *Iron Mountain* has attracted as much informal comment as the paper by Aidan Kelly (now of the University of San Francisco), "Inventing Witchcraft: The Gardnerian Paper Trail" (Vol. I, No. 1: Summer 1984). In this issue's letters column, Kelly is taken to task by Doreen Valiente of Brighton, England, who was on the scene during at least some of the events discussed in Kelly's paper and who has written or contributed herself to several significant books on British Witchcraft.

Approaching Kelly's territory from a different perspective, Chas S. Clifton's essay in this issue, "A Goddess Arrives," examined a literary precursor and model for a number of the ideas and practices that later appeared in Anglo-American Neo-Paganism, namely the works of the English novelist and occultist Dion Fortune (Violet M. Firth).

As a change of pace, however, we also offer Rochelle Lynn Holt's long poem on the life of the *starets* (holy man) Rasputin. Perhaps in this day of commonplace flamboyant guruship Rasputin's life in late Tsarist Russia doesn't seem so startling; at same time, his ideas could be said to have reflected the flowering of a branch of Orthodox gnosticism before the Iron Curtain clanged down on the Russian church.

In the near future, *Iron Mountain* would like to publish more material on Afro-American magical religions from North and South America, such as Santeria, Voudoun, Shango and Umbanda. We welcome letters and manuscripts from researchers, writers and participants in those traditions.

Anyone wishing to reach the editors by telephone should note that the new number is (303) 939-9067.

The Editors

# Letters to the Editors

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To the Editors:

The readers of *Iron Mountain* may be surprised to know that at no time has Aidan Kelly made any effort to contact me in order to verify the assertions made about the part I supposedly played in the formation of "Gardnerian" Witchcraft. (See "Inventing Witchcraft: The Gardnerian Paper Trail," *Iron Mountain 1*, Summer 1984.—Eds.)

Admittedly I belong to the older generation, so perhaps my views on what constitutes scholarship (or on what constitutes common courtesy) are rather old-fashioned. Nevertheless, I should have thought that the first duty of anyone purporting to be a scholar was to make every effort to check all available sources of evidence before they go into print with a theory.

All Mr. Kelly needed to do to contact me was to write to me via my publishers, St. Martin's Press in U.S.A. or Robert Hale in London. I would have been perfectly willing to assist him in any way I could, short of violating the confidence of other people, because I too am very interested in the origins of what has come to be called "Gardnerian" Witchcraft. Indeed, I have recently collaborated with Janet and Stewart Farrar in their book *The Witches' Way*, in which they publish and examine the contents of the "Gardnerian" *Book of Shadows*, using the materials in my possession and including a photograph of the old *Book of Shadows* which belonged to Gerald Gardner, and which he gave to me.

I have never made any secret of the fact that *some* of the material in the present-day *Book of Shadows* was written by me. Why should I? I am proud of my contribution to the revival of the Old Religion; but that contribution is by no means as extensive as Mr. Kelly alleges.

Mr. Kelly's failure to attempt to check his

facts has resulted in him starting from a series of false premises. The first of these is that Gerald Gardner was "dyslexic." Now, unless "dyslexic" means something quite different on your side of the Atlantic from what it means here, this is nonsense, as Mr. Kelly's own article proceeds to show. Over here, "dyslexic" means "unable to read." This is the very last thing Gerald was! On the contrary, he was an omnivorous reader. Mr. Kelly tells us that he found 18 notebooks filled with notes on the books Gerald had read. Quite an achievement for a person who was dyslexic! Moreover, he was able to inspect Gerald's personal library, which he calls a "healthy selection of what had been published on Witchcraft and the occult between 1890 and 1950." What would a person who was dyslexic have been doing with any sort of library?

What Gerald Gardner really was, as anyone who ever met him knows, was a wildly erratic speller who was in the habit of setting down his thoughts rapidly with little regard for the niceties of grammar or punctuation. He used to make jokes about this and say that he spelled like Shakespeare. (I believe the surviving copies of Shakespeare's signature show many variations in the spelling.) This, however, by no means prevented him from writing the books attributed to him. It simply meant that whoever re-typed the manuscript and got it ready for the publishers had to do some editing.

The person who edited the manuscript of *Witchcraft Today* was the late Ross Nichols, whom Gerald thanks for his assistance in the foreword to that book. This is what Gerald told me, at any rate; and he also told me that the person who typed the manuscript of *High Magic's Aid* for him was the late Madeline Montalban (Dolores North), who was an old friend of his. There was no secret

co-author of either of these books, nor any need of one.

Mr. Kelly's second false premise is that the document he found among the papers from the museum in the Isle of Man, entitled "Proposed Rules for the Craft," was the origin of the "Craft Laws." He is totally wrong about this. I do not merely *think* this; I *know* it — *because I typed the document headed "Proposed Rules for the Craft."* It is nothing to do with the "Craft Laws" and never was. On the contrary, it is exactly what it purports to be; namely, a document containing a series of proposals which were put up for discussion but never actually adopted.

Thanks to the assistance of a friend from U.S.A., I now have a photocopy of Mr. Kelly's longer MS. entitled *The Invention of Witchcraft*. This contains a photograph of this document, which I recognised immediately. I can therefore be quite certain upon this point.

As a writer myself, I feel rather sorry for Mr. Kelly, because he has expended an enormous amount of time and trouble in propounding a theory which is groundless. However, if he had contacted me before publishing or circulating his thesis, he would not have found himself in this position.

With regard to the "Craft Laws" themselves, I have already stated in the Farrars' book *The Witches' Way* (pp. 303-4) that I have never regarded this document as being authentic, although it *may* enshrine fragments of traditional material handed down orally. (Unfortunately, we did not have the copy of Mr. Kelly's MS. in time to make any reference to it in *The Witches' Way* ). Mr. Kelly's informant "Floyd" (whoever he may be) was quite right in dating the appearance of the "Craft Laws" in their present form to the period after the 1957 division in Gerald's coven, but quite wrong in assigning their authorship to me. The fact that he does so indicates that his depth of knowledge about these matters is not very great. I think myself that Gerald

wrote them after the division referred to. As I have stated in *The Witches' Way*, (p. 304), "The verses 51-80 inclusive used to be in old Gerald's book, but not the rest." Around 1957 Witchcraft was taking a lot of stick from the gutter press. There was a real danger that the old Witchcraft Act would be revived. Gerald was desperately anxious to convince people that our cult was harmless. Hence the almost pacifist tone which appears in the "Craft Laws." (But as for the sexist twaddle—well, this was before the days of Women's Lib!) In the meantime, I and others were trying to convince Gerald that the simplest way to avoid the attentions of the gutter press was to refrain from giving interviews to its representatives. It was because Gerald would not accept this that the division occurred.

Mr. Kelly's belief that "the Gardnerian claim to historicity" must stand or fall on the "Craft Laws" is therefore another false premise. The oldest "Gardnerian" material I know of is the initiation ritual Gerald published in his novel *High Magic's Aid*, which first appeared in 1949. (Mr. Kelly gives three different dates for the publication of this book and none of them is right.) Not only did I not write this ritual; at that time I did not even know Gerald Gardner. Nor was I the first "Gardnerian" high priestess. When I was initiated in 1953, Gerald already had a coven working in London, to which I was introduced.

May I in passing also mention the fact that I did *not* originate the material included in my book *Witchcraft for Tomorrow* (pp.15-20), but with the permission of the real author (who has written a number of subsequent articles in British publications), included information referring to "Old George" Pickingill and the part he is alleged to have played in the history of British Witchcraft? I reproduced this material because I recognized its historical importance and hoped for some further confirmation (or disproof, as the case might be). Alas, all it produced was an hysterical

outburst of personal abuse against me in a publication which I understand has since folded, accusing me of being the real author; why, I have no idea. I treated this with the total contempt that I felt it deserved. Nevertheless, I am told that some people still believe I wrote the George Pickingill material. Perhaps I should also state that I did not write the *Necronomicon* or the *Voynich Manuscript* either.

A further false premise of Mr. Kelly's is his statement that he has found all the facts needed to demonstrate that there is nothing in the "Craft Laws" or the "Gardnerian" *Book of Shadows* "that could possibly be part of a tradition received from a pre-1939 coven." On the contrary, he has only arrived at this conclusion by ignoring evidence already in print. The existence of a pre-1939 coven in the New Forest area does not rest upon Gerald Gardner's word or mine. There is quite independent testimony about this in Francis King's book *Ritual Magic in England*. It was given to Mr. King by Louis Wilkinson (who wrote novels under the penname of Louis Marlow and was a friend of Aleister Crowley). Louis Wilkinson told Mr. King that he had been acquainted with some of the members of this coven. He believed it to be a "fusion of an authentic surviving folk tradition with a more intellectual middle-class occultism." I hope that readers will consult Mr. King's book for themselves (I believe it has appeared in U.S.A. under a different title), because in the notes to his article Mr. Kelly mentions this book but does not mention the chapter containing the references to the old New Forest coven. As Francis King does not treat Gerald Gardner favorably in this chapter, the material it contains is all the more interesting. Mr. Kelly does give a passing mention to Louis Wilkinson in his longer MS., but airily dismisses him as "obviously interested in aggrandising Crowley's memory," a remark which seems to me both uncalled-for and irrelevant.

I have contributed an appendix to *The*

*Witches' Way* detailing my own attempts to check on Gerald's story by tracing "Old Dorothy" Clutterbuck, the high priestess who initiated Gerald in 1939. The lady whose Witch-name was Dafo also lived in this area. Contrary to some people's beliefs, she was a different person from "Old Dorothy." I know this because I knew her personally.

Where Mr. Kelly has done a real service to the history of "Gardnerian" Witchcraft is by reproducing in his longer MS. the text of the initiation rituals in "Ye Book of Ye Art Magical." These are similar to, but not precisely the same as the ones in *High Magic's Aid*. They were of particular interest to me, as the calligraphy in the old *Book of Shadows* that Gerald gave me is the same as that on the specimen page of which Mr. Kelly includes a photograph. It is rather amusing to reflect that, while trying to insinuate that I am not telling the truth about Gerald giving me his old book, Mr. Kelly has inadvertently succeeded in proving that I am. (Its contents are discussed further in *The Witches' Way*, as mentioned above.)

The first I ever heard of "Ye Book of Ye Art Magical" was in July 1982 when my publisher forwarded to me a letter from a man in Toronto who wrote, "I have come across a hand-written manuscript entitled Ye Book of Ye Art' in two different hands of writing. One of these is verifiably Gerald Gardner's and the other is allegedly yours. The present owners of this book have a letter from the noted Craft scholar Aidan Kelly which suggests that this is Mr. Gardner's personal Book of Shadows." The letter went on to ask what I could tell the writer about the manuscript in question. He asked me to excuse him from revealing who its present owners were.

I replied that I had no recollection of ever having written such a manuscript, but that if my correspondent could send me a couple of photocopied pages I would soon tell him if they were in either my writing or Gerald's. His answer corrected the title of the

manuscript to "Ye Book of Ye Art Magical," but regretted that it was doubtful if he would be able to supply the photocopied pages as requested.

There the matter remained; but I was interested and decided to contact Mr. Kelly. However, none of my contacts in U.S.A. could supply an address for him. Then last year a friend who was visiting Britain showed me his famous MS., *The Invention of Witchcraft*, and all was revealed! I learned for the first time what a starring role I am supposed to have played in the present-day revival of Witchcraft. If this were true, I would be very proud of it; but truthfulness compels me to say that it isn't, and that Mr. Kelly is just plain wrong.

I must also tell Mr. Kelly that, from my own knowledge, he is wrong when he says that "there was no emphasis on the Goddess as a major deity and on the high priestess as the central authority in the coven until after 1957." The worship of the Goddess was always there and according to Gerald always had been there.

Also, to my own knowledge and belief, Alex Sanders was *not* initiated by Patricia Crowther in 1963 or at any other time. Mrs. Crowther has been a friend of mine for yours, and she has always hotly denied ever having initiated Alex Sanders. She told me that Sanders asked for initiation into her coven, but was refused. Once again, this is a case of Mr. Kelly asserting something as a fact which he has never verified. Why didn't he ask Patricia Crowther before so confidently telling us what she is supposed to have done? She too could easily have been contacted via the publishers of her books.

Frankly, I am amazed that Mr. Kelly has succeeded in getting such a tissue of mere supposition confidently asserted as fact taken seriously by so many educated people on your side of the Atlantic. I am grateful to you for giving me the opportunity to put the record straight.

Doreen Valiente  
Brighton, East Sussex

**EDITORS' NOTE.** Doreen Valiente's newest book is *Natural Magic*, published in the United States by Phoenix Publishing of Custer, Washington. A highly romanticized biography of Alex Sanders, *King of the Witches*, by June Johns, was published in 1969 by Coward-McCann Inc., New York. Patricia Crowther's most recent work, *Lid Off the Cauldon: A Wicca Handbook*, is published in the United States by Samuel Weiser, Inc.

To the Editors:

Aidan Kelly's account of his meeting with "Floyd" in "Inventing Witchcraft" reminded me of Charles Leland's description of "Maddalena." For the sake of future scholars, I want to put it on record that "Floyd" is or was a real person and that I am the "mutual friend in the Craft" who introduced them to one another.

I met "Floyd" at a sabbat in San Francisco at which he was a guest and I was the officiating priestess. We had dinner together and a long talk the next night, and another conversation about a year later during his next trip to the City. I could not with propriety ask him gossipy questions about the internal workings of Gardner's coven because I am not an initiate of the Gardnerian tradition. (Gardnerian secrecy and British reserve, alas.) I can vouch at least that "Floyd" was a sincere and reasonably knowledgeable Witch by my standards, and of the right age and likely social class to have been a member of the Gardnerian mother coven.

Deborah Bender  
San Francisco

**EDITORS' NOTE:** According to the 19th-century American folklorist Charles G. Leland, "Maddalena" was a Tuscan Witch who provided him with material on a variety of Italian Witchcraft centered on the goddess Diana and her daughter Aradia. Leland published his findings in *Aradia: Or*

*the Gospel of the Witches*. (London: David Nutt, 1899).

### Aidan Kelly replies:

The most astonishing sentence in Mrs. Valiente's letter is her claim that "I have never made any secret of the fact that some of the material in the present-day Book of Shadows was written by me." That's a real jaw-dropper, because this is the lady who kept her Gardnerian initiation a secret for 25 years, from 1953 to 1978. During that period she wrote two books in which she claimed (at least implicitly) to be an independent witness to the truth of the Gardnerian historical claims. That is the behavior of a true believer, not of a historian or an investigative journalist. I really cannot help suspecting that part of the reason why she has now come so far out of the closet is that she had heard about what I have been able to prove from the documents, and is trying to mount a counter-argument.

I am sorry that she considers my failure to write directly to her to be discourteous; it was not intended that way. But since she did not admit until 1978 that she was a Gardnerian, I had no reason until then to think she had any special information. And I now cannot consider her statement that "I would have been perfectly willing to assist him in any way I could" to be perfectly sincere. The question I had been asking since 1971 was, "Are the Gardnerian historical claims true?" She was one of the major persons promoting those claims. Suppose I had written to her and asked, "Are the claims true? Was there an earlier coven?" she would have replied, "Yes, of course"—but I would then have known no more than before. The problem is that she is not an independent witness, not just another writer, not a historical researcher—in brief, podner, she ain't an innocent bystander, she's one of the culprits.

Most of her attempts to pick holes in my arguments are not important; she

misunderstands some of my terminology and dating—so I will clarify them, and thank her for that contribution. For example, I use "dyslexic" in the current way was a term for a person of above-average intelligence who nevertheless cannot cope with spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc., as Gardner could not; it's an anomaly that needs to be dealt with. But she did inspire me to think through my current understanding of what happened, and, as I will explain in detail in my book, when it comes out, I believe what happened is this:

In September 1939 (or thereabouts) Gerald Gardner, Dorothy Clutterbuck, and others of the occult community in the New Forest area decided to start a coven by reconstructing the religion Margaret Murray had described in *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*. That was the group as known to Louis Wilkinson, who, as a novelist and a follower of Crowley, was probably a member of that group or of the occult network surrounding it, and probably contributed in some measure to the creative thinking that went into the novel *High Magic's Aid*, and who therefore cannot be considered an independent witness for the existence of the coven before 1939, something that, in fact, he did not assert to Francis King. Anyway, by the time Doreen Valiente was initiated by Gardner and Dafo (I suppose) in 1953, she felt like a newcomer, a second-generation member, and she seems never to have quite overcome that feeling, even though she has clearly been the single most creative member, except maybe for Gardner himself—and I think her contribution may in the long run be the more important of the two.

I don't think I need to expand here on what I have been able to prove about the "Proposed Rules" and the "Craft Laws." I argue only for her influence on the Laws, not literal authorship. Let me point out that most people do not understand the power of modern biblical scholarship, which has enabled us to establish the dates, authorship,

audience, purpose and theological stance of documents written in Greek almost 2,000 years ago, well enough to arrive at a consensus on these questions among thousands of extremely skeptical (and often non-believing) scholars. Using these techniques to discover dates, authorship, and suchlike about documents written in English only 30 or so years ago is something like dynamiting fish in a barrel.

I don't know why Meredydd Barrowman-Harper [whose letter appeared in the Winter 1985 issue] wants to attack me personally: her letter is full of loaded terms. Perhaps I look like an easy target. I hope she enjoys studying at the GTU as much as I did. I suppose one of the first things she will learn is that, in the terminology of historical studies, "primary sources" are written documents, not people. Hence, when she accuses me of having overlooked primary sources or of making "erroneous assumptions," she has already demonstrated that she does not yet know what she is talking about.

Aidan A. Kelly  
Alameda, California

# Designing Effective Rituals

By P.E.I. Bonewits

*The following is an edited version of a lecture delivered on 14 May 1983 at the First Unitarian Church of Denver, Colorado.*

## Two Primary Approaches to Magic

I make a distinction between two primary approaches to magic. There is the "thaumaturgical" approach and the "theurgic" approach. The thaumaturgical approach means wonder-working — from the Greek, "thauma," wonder, and "ergos," working. A thaumaturgist is someone who is interested in getting results on the earth-plane level of reality. It's the attitude of the witchdoctor or medicine man who claims to be able to heal the sick, make the rains come or go or otherwise do magic, but knows too he'll get lynched if he fails.

A theurgist takes a different approach. The word "theurgy" comes from Greek roots as well and it means "divine working." A theurgist is someone who practises magic as a form of religious activity, as a discipline. He or she is doing it to obtain some form of personal enlightenment or salvation or growth. To a theurgist it's really irrelevant whether anything happens when he or she casts a spell because the religious, artistic experience of the ritual itself is sufficient.

I've been a Pagan priest in the Reformed Druids of North America since about 1968 and I've also been an initiated and practising Witch for quite a few years and I have a very religious attitude towards magic. At the same time, however, I started out as a

thaumaturgist. My belief is that if you have a friend who is sick, in the hospital, and is going to die if your healing spell doesn't work, it matters very little to that sick friend what a delightful and inspiring religious experience you folks have if it doesn't work. I have seen many occasions over the years where "the ritual was a success but the patient died."

There are a lot of problems in the field of magic. We're practising in the United States, in the 20th century, surrounded by a culture that doesn't believe in magic much in the first place, and in the second place doesn't believe it's anything more complicated than "Samantha" wiggling her nose [Samantha, played by actress Elizabeth Montgomery, was the central character in the mid-1960s television comedy "Bewitched."] on television, and Boom!, 50,000 ergs of energy have suddenly rearranged themselves in a very complex manner with not the slightest trace of energy leakage, psychic effects or anything else. I tried to years to learn to wiggle my nose and I can't even wiggle my ears, so I've decided there's probably a little more to it than that.

Magic is a science; it is a discipline; it is a technology, a philosophy, and above all it is an art form. If you're going to learn to practise magic, you have to be willing to put at least as much effort into it as your kid brother does into learning to play the clarinet in the grade-school band. magic is hard work. It's also a lot of fun. Getting a coven, a lodge, a temple, a working group of

people to produce effective rituals is at least as much effort as conducting a string quartet. Everybody has to be in practise; everybody has to be in shape; everybody has to be willing to cooperate with each other in getting the main result. There are different kinds of musical groups: there are tightly structured classical string quartets, and there are loose and laid-back jazz jam groups. It's a flip of the coin as to which of those two approaches is the more difficult for the individual musicians, but none the less you have a combination of freedom and discipline. Getting a ritual to work properly requires both freedom and discipline, plus a strong sense of aesthetics and a sense of humor on the part of the people involved.

The following material is a step-by-step explanation of a Neo-Pagan Witchcraft ritual as performed by many groups with an account of what is going on psychically at each step. I am not prescribing this as the way you, the reader, should do it, just as I would not tell a room full of jazz musicians how they should play their own clarinets, drums, saxophones, pianos and whatnot. These are observations I have made of what happens when groups of people produce "beautiful music" together. You can pick and chose which elements will be useful in your particular situation. Every single group of people that ever gets together to do magic or music or any other creative activity is utterly unique. It's the Law of Infinite Universes: everyone is in a totally separate universe from everyone else. The techniques, rules and procedures that work for one coven are not necessarily going to work for another coven, but maybe they will.

### **Personal Cleansing**

Everybody takes a bath, preferably with herbs in the bathtub, with a little consecrated salt, whatever is their personal technique for becoming psychically "clear." In effect you are "exorcising" yourself. Are you exorcising yourself of evil? No, not

necessarily—it's only the Christians who seem to believe that "exorcism" automatically means getting rid of demonic energies. If we had done a weather-working ritual in this room a couple of hours ago, and we now wanted to do a healing ritual, it would first be a good idea to exorcise the weather energy of the place so that we could then put new energy into it. It just like washing the supper dishes before you put tonight's spaghetti on them; if you don't bother to wash them, after a while they get pretty gross. That's also true of energy patterns. You've got to clear yourself of everything you've been doing beforehand. You take a bath or shower, you put on all clean clothes, you put on your favorite amulet, necklaces, cords and other paraphernalia: you are psyching yourself up. You are taking off the old world that you're no longer part of and joining the "other land." You're getting ready inside your own psyche first to make that step.

You forget about the fact that the cat has worms and you've got to take him to the vet; you forget about the fact that your spouse just dented the fender again; you forget about the fact that you're having an argument with one of your best friends; you forget about all the day-to-day hassles of the mundane world and you say to yourself, "For the next few hours, I am not Joe Blow or Josephina Blowina; I am a powerful priestess, magician, et cetera; I am a special person. You put on your magical personality.

When you get to the place where the meeting's going to be (if you're not already there) everyone changes into the clothes—if any—that they're going to wear.

### **Setting up Sacred Space**

The priest and priestess and any other primary officers in the ritual should have a chance to go to a separate place and quietly meditate, center themselves, ground themselves and become focused on doing the

ritual. Once the scene has been set up, once you've got your altar wherever it's going to be, the next thing to think about is the circle. Now some people, whether they're indoors or outdoors, like to mark the circle. They like to have a physical circle marked on the floor or on the ground. I happen to agree with that. How fancy your circle is all depends on how much time, money, and commitment you have. If you have an entire room in your house that you can set aside for nothing but magical working, you may want to paint the circle on the floor. Use the appropriate colors, make the elemental symbols in the quarters that your particular tradition ascribes them to, put whatever names in whatever fancy script you want; set up a very nice circle on the floor, permanently. That means that you really do have to dedicate that room to be your temple room and not much else, because you're not going to want people walking in and out of what is essentially your permanent sanctuary.

There are other alternatives. Some people use chalk to mark a circle on the floor and wash it off after the ritual. Some people will use flour or corn meal or some other powdery substance to mark out a circle. One person I knew had a brilliant idea: she happened to be skilled in folk crafts and she hooked a rug, a gigantic, nine-foot, circular rug with all the quarters marked in and names done in Theban script around the outside. When it was time to do a ritual, she threw it out on the floor, then they did the ritual and when it was over they took the rug out and shook it, rolled it back up, and put it in the closet until next time.

If you're outside, you have the option of marking your circle on the ground in a quasi-traditional way. That is to say, you take one of the tools that has a sharp point to it, and stick it into the ground at the point where the center of your circle will be. Then you attach your cord to this, measure out the diameter you want your circle to be, and then tie a staff or a sword or something else

with a sharp point on it to the other end, and walk around and mark your circle on the ground. Some people will cut a circle three inches wide and remove the turf and put it back again when they're finished. The point is that you mark the circle so that it is *physically visible* on the earth plane.

You've got to decide as a group, "When is a circle not a circle?". Is your circle existing in one dimension, two, three, a dozen? Many people including me consider that the circle is actually a sphere and that the circle on the ground or floor is a plane going through the center of the circle. When you do that, you not only want to invoke to the north, south, east and west and the center as usual, but to up and down, tying in all six directions. If you do that you bring in archetypal energies connected with shamanism, with Yggdrasil, the tree that goes between the worlds.

Saying to yourself, "OK, now it's time to do magic," is a large part about what all these preparations are concerned with, because you don't control your own magic. The little boy or little girl inside your head who's still ten years old, they control the magic, or at least they're the ones who can open gates to let it happen. You, the adult figure, can give all the wonderful enlightened instructions you want and your High Self can have all sorts of ability to help you focus and shape this energy, but if your Low Self, your "subconscious," the little kid inside you doesn't want to play, you're out of luck. Taking a ritual bath, putting on special clothes, casting the circle, can all be viewed as a set of cues for the Low Self. Then your subconscious remembers and says, "Oh yes, I remember. We did this the last time we did this."

If you have musicians on hand, now they begin to play. There is confusion as to whether these musicians should be stationed inside the circle or outside, or in and out depending on what part of the ceremony you're in. Still, live musicians are an incredible addition to any ritual. Every

healthy living Pagan tradition on the planet has music for its rituals, even if it's just people talking in rhythm, chanting or singing plainsong. Anyone who's made it past third grade is capable of playing a tom-tom, shaking a rattle, and making some sort of music. And if something goes wrong in the ritual, it's the drum master or harpist who can pull it back on the line, who can bring everybody back into focus again when some major or minor glitch has occurred to disturb people's concentration.

Many covens begin with a "spiral dance." It begins with the people facing the outside of the circle, holding hands. They start dancing around the circle widdershins, or counterclockwise, chanting their traditional chant. After at least one circuit has been made, the high priestess lets go of one hand and starts spiraling a line into the center of the circle. When the line of people is wound up reasonably tight, she curls it around, kisses the man next to her, and then starts unwinding it clockwise. Each person kisses the person of the opposite, or as the case may be, same gender as they pass by. The result is the circle unwinds, evoking the whole spiral archetype of death and rebirth, and they finish with everyone back on the perimeter, facing the center. The result is that everyone has made personal contact with everybody else; there's laughing and giggling and good humor in all of this, and that is part of what makes the Craft the Craft.

It doesn't really matter what you do so long as you do something that involves every single person there.

Most people when they visualize a magic circle going on with people, let us say, standing around the outside, they think of the connections between those people primarily sideways—the person holding your right hand and the person holding your left hand, and that's your primary connection. You should also have connections going to every other person in the circle. What you want is a web, a network, connecting

everyone in the circle with everyone else. The "nine-foot circle" is one of those classic bugaboos of the Craft; it doesn't matter what size your circle is. The size of the magical circle depends on the size of the group.

If you're doing some kind of a dance that involves movement back and forth through the center of the circle, now is the time that the two or three people who've been delegated to do so will go get the altar, pick it up and carry it into the circle. You haven't, after all, "cast" your circle yet; all you've done is draw it on the earth plane. So you can carry things back and forth across the boundaries of the circle. Depending on your group's tradition and purposes, that can go in the center or at any one of the four quarters. Decide also if the officers who are going to be working at that altar are going to be part of the main circle, or are they going to be a smaller circle or crescent inside it.

What happens next is that people will "exorcise" the four elements and the tools they're going to use in casting the circle. Now the concept of "casting the circle" is one of those extremely vague concepts that everyone in the Craft more or less thinks they know about, but isn't very well explained in any of the available literature. As near as I've been able to figure, what you're doing is you're taking each of the four elements—Air, Earth, Fire and Water—that are a central part of the unconscious mind of everybody in the Indo-European culture. As a matter of fact, it turns out that when we analyze Proto-Indo-European linguistic roots we find they fall into four categories that seem to be connected with solid, liquid, gas and energy. Consequently, the Air, Earth, Fire and Water system is built into the languages we speak and it really rings a lot of bells on a gut level. Once again it's your unconscious that's involved, your deep unconscious that goes out and links up and becomes what's called the Collective Unconscious.

You have marked your circle on the

ground physically, now you're going to do it ritually and ceremonially so it will have its impact on your Low, Middle and High Selves—all the aspects of your being and of everyone else's in the group. Now you don't really have to "exorcise" the elemental tools. What are you doing with salt? Salt is salt; it's a symbol of the element of Earth. When you draw a pentagram over it and say, "I exorcise thee, O creature of Earth," as some do, all you're doing is announcing to everybody that here is salt, symbol of the element of Earth. You're announcing your awareness of the sacredness of the universe around you. This is one of the things that distinguishes Pagan theology from non-Pagan theology. We do not see a separation between this physical, mundane world "that isn't very important" and this vast and infinite spiritual universe that's "all-important." The Universe can count higher than two, and for Pagans everything in the physical universe is as sacred as everything in the "spiritual" universe because they all interpenetrate. What you're doing with each of these four elements when you acknowledge—or consecrate or exorcise—they, you are announcing ritually and symbolically the sacredness, the numinousness of the universe. You're saying, "With the power of our *recognition* of the sacredness of the universe we are going to consecrate this particular segment of the universe." And so you go around the circle with each of your four elemental symbols. Some people add a fifth elemental symbol for Spirit. If you are using a "sphere of power" rather than a "circle of power" you may decide to come up with two more symbols—Time and Space, for instance.

When you create a magic circle you decide that for the time being that that particular spot is the Center of the Universe. Part of the shamanistic tradition of the World Tree is that everywhere is the Center of the Universe. Most tribal peoples have or had a rock, a lake, a particular spot that for them

is the Center of the Universe. If you are at the center of the universe than you can go to the Other World and interact with all the different levels of reality. When you make a magic circle you say, "For the time being, my living room is the Center of the Universe." This is the nexus of Craft magical technology, because every circle is the Center of the Universe and every circle interacts with every other circle and every spot in the universe is also the center. Which means when you are sending energy to cast a spell, you're not sending it off someplace outside of the circle, you're feeding it into the center of the circle, where of course it immediately goes through some "eighth-dimensional space warp" to the place you want it to be.

Now you have blessed your sanctuary; you have defined sacred space. At this point the high priestess or priest will frequently perform a ritual anointing, taking oil or water or wine and consecrating each other with the symbols of their degrees, or whatever personal sigils are their sign of clergyhood. By doing so with the coveners as witnesses they announce to everyone's unconscious again that on this occasion in this sacred space they are, literally, the ringleaders, the masters of ceremonies.

At this point you may be said to be beginning to "cast a circle." Now, many people will tell you, they invoke the Lords of the Watchtowers. Is there anyone who can tell me in 25 words or less what on or off earth a Lord of the Watchtower is? Nobody knows. It is a phrase apparently picked up by Gerald Gardner and other mid-20th century English Witches from the Freemasons. You can learn a lot about the history of the Craft by studying Masonry—after all, the term "the Craft" also refers to Masonry in some quarters. But for our practical purposes the Lords of the Watchtowers can be thought of as the chief elemental beings, from the old idea that in charge of all the "salamanders," the elementals of fire, there was a Chief

Salamander who gave orders to all the rest. If you wish then you may think of the Lords of the Watchtowers as being the elemental overlords of the four elements. They are frequently symbolized as an eagle, a lion, a serpent or some other totemistic animal associated with the element. You take your Lords of the Watchtowers and think of them as primary concentrations of elemental energy, one in each quadrant of the circle. Think if you wish of these entities creating yet another wall outside the circle. We are, after all, one the ground floor of what could become one of the major religions of the 21st or 22nd centuries and we should take that as inspiration to be creative.

Some people invoke specific patron gods and goddesses, which while making sense from the Pagan point of view gives you additional choices to make. What your group has to have done is worked out an attribution system. Make lots of charts—men especially love doing this. The trouble is, your pigeonholes need to be constructed with semi-permeable membranes because divinities have a nasty habit of refusing to fit into anybody's pigeonholes, especially the theologians'.

Those people who gave the Craft its present form varied, with some of them being big on Greco-Roman deities and others specializing in Celtic folklore, giving us today a mixture of Mediterranean archetypes with bits and pieces of Celtic divinities. These don't always fit too well because they came from two different mindsets, two different ecological niches. I think it is better to pick one culture and stay within its group of gods and goddesses, some of whom are easier to get ahold of than others, depending on how long it's been since their clergy was exterminated. As a general rule, Irish deities do not work well with Chinese deities. And your average African deity does not work all that well with your average Polynesian deity in the same ritual.

If they're not all from the same culture

there should be something that links them. For example, I've done weather magic in which I would invoke a thunder-and-rain deity from five different cultures, one for each direction and one for the center. As a matter of fact it worked reasonably well. How much of that was beginner's luck, and how much other factors I don't know yet.

And if you are willing to learn Irish Gaelic, for example, you will get a hundred times the psychic and spiritual response from a Celtic divinity if you invoke him or her in a Celtic language. There's no substitute for it. If you're going to work with Roman deities you should learn Latin. And so on. It's another aspect of the Law of Similiarity: you establish another way in which you resemble the deity you're trying to contact, whether you think of him as coming from "up there"—a Christian holdover we're all saddled with—or from your unconscious. People within the Craft haven't thought about this too much. Most original Pagan deities are not omnipotent or omniscient and they don't automatically know what it is you're trying to tell them. If you evoke old deities in a language that is at least a modern descendent of the language that their original worshippers spoke, the response you get is liable to stand your hair on end.

"Drawing down the Moon" is another of those concepts that has lots of possibilities. After you have set up your circle and invoked the entities that are going to guard the four quarters from distraction—the general psychic smog of the big city, plus the static that comes from inside the circle. Now it's time for the central magical act of the ceremony, other than the spell of the occasion, and that is the drawing of the persona of the Goddess into the priestess. There are groups that also will draw down the Horned God into the priest; that is done exactly the same way, so I won't go into it separately.

There is an important distinction between two technical terms, "possession" and "inspiration." The concept that many in the

Craft have is that the Goddess possesses the priestess, that is to say that she takes over the priestess and speaks through her. I have seen genuine possessions in my time and I guarantee you that the last thing a genuine god or goddess is going to do upon possessing a human is have them read a pretty speech, "The Charge of the Goddess," or its equivalent. What usually happens in a case of possession is that the person starts acting "odd." They go into almost an epileptic seizure; they moan, move their bodies, chatter in a different language, usually the language of the possessing entity. At that point in the religions that have this on a regular basis, such as Voudoun, there are procedures to be followed: the deity is greeted, offered his or her favorite food, special ritual regalia put on the person's body, and some time is taken to "mellow out the deity," to make the interface smooth between the human and the divine.

The god or goddess then wanders around the ceremony, talking to people, giving blessings, good advice and so forth. That's what happens in a religion that's set up for divine possession, which at the present time the Craft is not. Most people in a Craft circle don't know what to do when a real possession occurs, even though it's vaguely expected. The Craft ceremony is designed rather for "inspiration." What's supposed to happen is that the priestess is supposed to open a clear channel in her mind between her conscious mind and her unconscious self on one hand, and the goddess she is invoking on the other. The goddess can then speak through the lips of the priestess in the sense of inspiring her with good things to say that will be useful information for the members of the group to have. When in doubt, you've got traditional material already written; "The Charge of the Goddess" as written in somebody's book is supposed to be a last resort.

The primary reason you might not succeed in getting the god or goddess to come through is vagueness. The Craft is a

religion on the borderline between being Meso-Pagan and Neo-Pagan, that is to say, when it started out it was heavily influenced by Judeo-Christian concepts of "religion." Among those is monotheism. The Goddess in many Craft traditions is a synthesis of every goddess ever worshipped by any group of human beings anywhere on the planet. In the same way, the Horned God is a synthesis of all the male divinities. That's too big to fit inside anybody's head. The groups that do that sort of working successfully—that do Drawing Down the Sun or Drawing Down the Moon—are invoking a specific god or goddess by name and attributes.

Part of the third degree training and initiation in several groups that I know of is that the priest or priestess-to-be has got to settle down on one major deity, usually connected with the Craft name they choose. They make themselves devotees of that particular divinity; they practice *bhakti yoga*. Aleister Crowley had some good advice on that—I believe it was in *Magick in Theory and Practice*. Suppose that Pele the volcano goddess is the one you choose to work with. That means you learn Hawaiian; you find out what kind and color of clothes she wears, what her favorite food is, what she normally likes to do at a ritual, what her traditional songs are, and so on and so forth. Depending on your choice, you may find the information readily available from historical or anthropological sources; you may have to do a lot of research; or you may have to do a lot of trance work. If you want to work with the original Horned God of the Neanderthals, you may have to spend a lot of time eating deer meat, wrapped up in a hide in a dark cave somewhere, communing with that entity! If you truly have a calling to be that entity's priest or priestess, that entity will talk to you.

If a genuine inspiration has occurred, something "inspirational" for the congregation will happen. Divine communication of useful information is one of the major functions of a religious ritual.

The divinity might say “Here is a song you need to know” and teach you a chant, or turn around, eyes closed, point to someone and say “You need to take care of your kidneys.”

That’s what supposed to happen with Drawing Down the Moon and similar rituals.

### **Casting the Spell**

The next thing that usually takes place is the casting of the spell. This too is a hangover from medieval concepts of Witchcraft that 20th-century Witches like Gerald Gardner looted and changed for their own purposes. The “Gothic” concept of Witchcraft was that the Devil appeared at these rituals and instructed his minions in how to do magic. He would lead them in certain spells. That’s precisely what Gardner decided should be done by the priestess when the Goddess had appeared, is to lead people in doing certain spells.

That gets us into the Cone of Power, another extremely vague concept, courtesy of “Uncle Gerald” and the New Forest coven in Hampshire in the 1940s. My impression is that this was not a ritual technique with a group of people building a psychic thoughtform of a cone, but rather that they had groups of people connected in little pyramids of energy, each of which fed that energy to somebody else. They were using a cell group structure.

In the typical group ritual, everyone is supposed to be feeding energy to the one person, usually the priestess, who is going to direct it on that occasion. Where the confusion comes in is in the distinction between an abstract concept of a pyramidal cell structure and the theosophical concept of a thoughtform—that you are creating an energy “cone” that rests its base on the horizontal line of the circle. At some point the cone “peaks” and the energy is sent off somewhere—or so people are thinking. It all depends on the personal imagery you use for

magic. I have known people who create a magnificent psychic cone of power in the room, and when it was time to cast the spell, this “laser ray” of psychic energy would go off in the direction of the “target.” That’s doing it the hard way! That’s wasting three-quarters of your energy. Remember, in the process of making a circle you defined the center of the circle as the Center of the Universe ... and every Center of the Universe is connected to every other Center of the Universe. This means that the target of your ritual is also the Center of the Universe, and the shortest distance between two centers is the center.

What should be happening is that people are generating energy and that energy is being directed to the attention of the master of ceremonies for this occasion, and that person is taking the energy and going to feed it into the center of the circle, when it has been properly shaped. The center of the circle isn’t floating there in the center of the room, but it’s there in everybody’s heads: they’re thinking in terms of what the center of the circle is. That energy goes into the center of the circle and appears at the other center of the circle, which happens to be where your target is.

There is a distinction between “target” and “goal” to be made here. Your goal might be to stop a particular tornado from hitting your town this afternoon. Your target might be a particular spot in the funnel cloud.

Anything that gets you excited can raise energy you can use for magic. Your goal in Craft work should be methods of raising energy that improve the group mind rather than distract it. Singing, for example, is an A-Number One powerful method of raising energy. The most powerful ceremonies I have attended in my life have been those where from beginning to end there was singing and chanting and drumming. Rhythm instruments are really important. Drumming can create a group mind in about a minute and a half, when people’s

heartbeats start to synchronize.

Call-and-response work is nice—the concept of litanies. The priest or priestess says something and everyone has a standard response. Waves of energy begin to build.

There's always dope. The usual drug that's used in Craft ceremonies is wine. That has a very old and traditional history. You get everybody *slightly* schnoekered. Same thing if you have a group that smokes marijuana: you make that a ritual; you have a consecrated pipe and you do it in a special way.

Dancing is supposed to be the witches' traditional way of raising energy. There is a distinction between dancing a ritual circle dance or square dance—and they were originally ritual dances—or any other patterned dance, and holding hands and skipping and stumbling around the circle while trying to sing something. Don't try to sing and dance at the same time unless you're doing a real simple rhythmic step dance that everyone can do in their sleep.

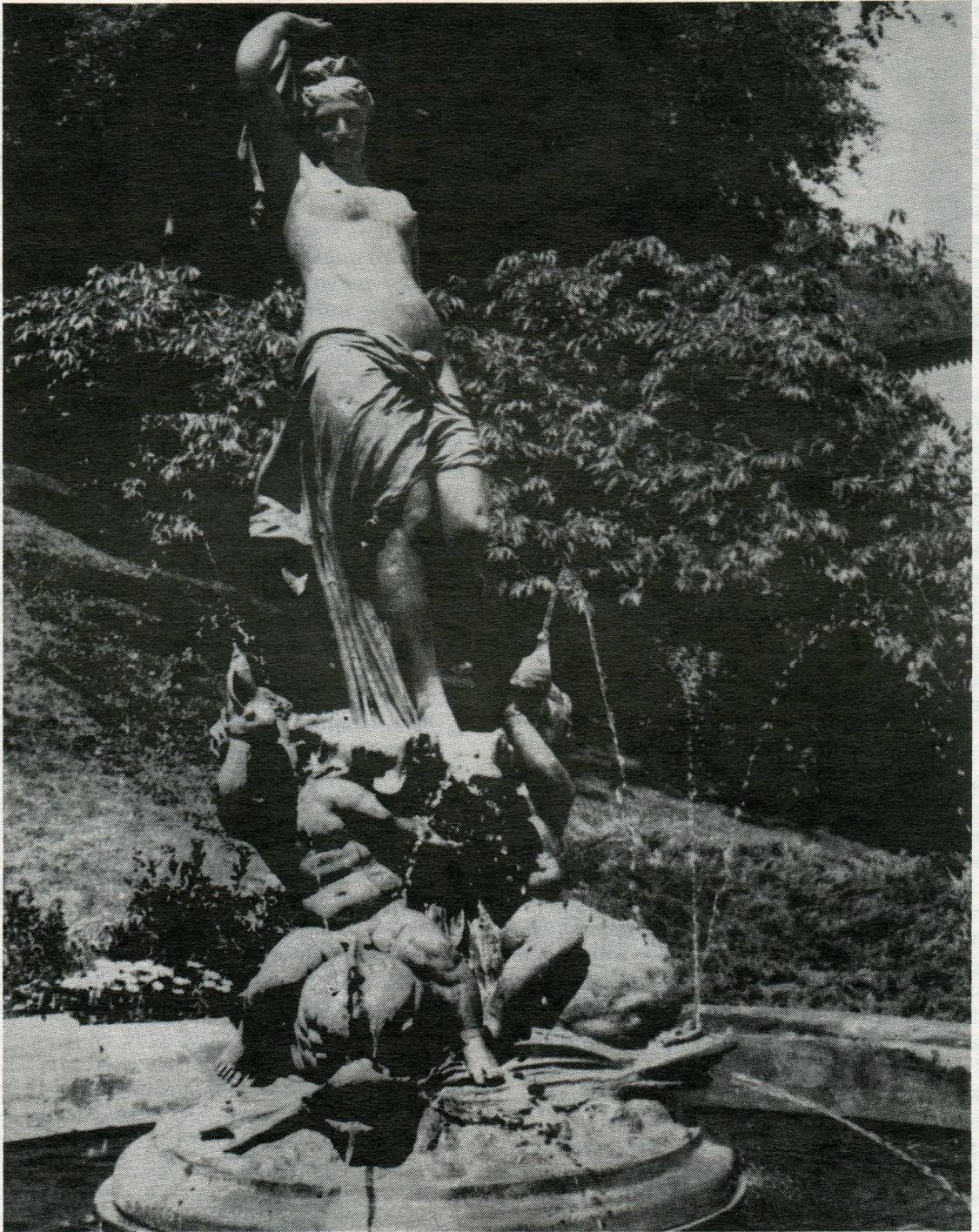
### Closing the Circle

In many sports like golf and tennis we hear the term “follow-through.” If you've made your stroke with the golf club or tennis racket and you stopped, nine times out of ten (if you don't wrench your back) you've destroyed the trajectory of the ball. So you follow through. In a ritual context “follow-through” consists of affirming your success. Everyone says “Yes, it's going to work,” and you slowly and with dignity remove yourself from the psychological ritual space. You do in reverse order all the things you did before: dismiss the guardians

of the quarters, thank the elemental powers, and do those things we call “grounding” the circle. Any excess energy is drained into people's magical tools, which is commonly done, or drained back into the earth itself, so that no one walks away overloaded. Then you have a ritual ending of the ceremony—the circle is cut or a bell is rung and it is stated, “This ritual is over.” A small ritual meal within the circle—what's often called “cakes and wine”—is not the time to start chattering and sharing gossip. It's better to be totally silent or to talk quietly about impressions you got during the ceremony. It's a time for quiet thinking and meditation about what you did. You're reaffirming your own connections to the earth; you're recharging yourself and regaining your psychic equilibrium. You begin to separate yourself from the group paradoxically at the same time you reaffirm your connection with them through communal eating and passing of the cup. Separate pieces of bread and separate swallows of wine are going around the circle.

After you've “come down” a little bit you break your circle up and you give a ritual ending. You establish “closure.” The ceremony is over and you can stop thinking about it. Then you throw your party, if that's part of the plan.

I recommend post-mortems on rituals, but you should wait at least 24 hours. Get together later and discuss what went right and what went wrong. Have a friendly, relaxed, happy discussion about it. It's like running a “little theater” group; you've got to have that same mix of conflict between artistic egos and yet cooperation at the same time.



# Moon in My Blood

## The Story of the *Starets*\* Rasputin

By Rochelle Lynn Holt

“I think perhaps the moon has gotten into my blood.”

*The Mists of Avalon*

Marion Zimmer Bradley

### THE DEATH SHIP

“What turbulent times we are living in,” writes the Empress to her husband on February 11, 1917.

“What can I do? I can only pray.”

*...aid the hungry and the poor  
so that the people may not lose faith.*

a plea for bread & peace  
Advice the heart ignored.  
Rebels and revolt lead a Tsar to abdication and unrest.

On the steamer *Russ* past Pokrovscoe  
royal prisoners passed the peasant's village  
debased, dejected and dethroned  
both a kingdom and its clone in ashes  
en route from Petrograd to Siberia, “the friend's” home.

*...many tortured creatures, great heaps,  
crowds of bodies. The Neva red with blood.*

*Starets—a holy man, popular saint.*

Ends a fairy-tale in *danse macabre*  
where talking horses sing mutes  
and summer eve weaves kremlin's shadow  
with the bones of twilight's haunting ghost  
as Charon bears the dead souls  
to dismal fate o'er a Russian river...

*ISTINNAIA VERA—The Pure True Faith*

Wild and unruly child, son of a carter, Grish,  
(rapt in old Efim's Savior-tale)  
before the Tura nearly drowns boy  
transformed peasant to a seer:

You stole the horse! You are the thief!

Vision of Virgin Mary in noonday rays of golden sun  
while young Grigori drives student to Verkhoteur  
and hears joyful gospel of heretical creed,  
"Khlysty" and other sectarians.

Not Orthodox believ in no salvation for a sinner  
but precept of hope, Danila Filipich's secret—  
that divinity is found anew  
in living repentant prophet  
reincarnated on earth, the Nazareth birth,  
if unholy living body only first dies  
before mystical resurrection.

Risen to new nature, at once God and man,  
omnipotent human power to rescue and save  
both mightly and simple depraved.

Thus, Radaen's advent of decades past,  
illuminates Rasputin to be redeemed the same  
and tread perfection's path like Christ  
the inner wandering "stranniki" way.

*I am going on a pilgrimage  
no sign of life to show.  
I will not write to family or wife  
to children or my friends.  
To become "podpol'nik," the underground man,  
I go.*

*BROTHERHOOD OF THE WANDERERS*

Freed from external bonds and dispossessed of Love,

eternal vagabond becomes as “starets” and wise monk  
who roamed the peasant villages of Russia  
in mystic dance of disciples ‘round a living Ghost  
with the sensual goal of “sinful encounter.”

Only he who is holy passionless  
can slay the inner man of boasting passion  
until his sin of pride becomes humble virtue  
in the casting off of carnal sin.

Returned to Pokrovskoe, the new man was visited  
like a shrine or saint (Redemption through sin  
in contradiction to traditions of Orthodox faith!)  
Father Petr dubbed him “devil in the cellar,”  
his shrill screams outpiercing ringing bells in street  
to prompt church petition ‘gainst “spell of Antichrist.”

But pale and wan, penitent emerged  
as if made of yellow wax, his nose sharp & long,  
his cheeks absurdly hollow and worn  
with beaming blue joyful eyes.  
Cellar preacher took road to forest rising  
behind the steppe to disappear  
into depths of a kingdom divine.

Hermogen, Bishop of Saratov, liked Siberian *muzhik*,  
for selfish political reasons,  
invited him and Feofan to meet Iliodor of Tsarytsin,  
despotic ruler, whose Mount Tabor “transparent  
tower” for sermons was never complete; thus, he cursed  
“the Holy Devil” when “clod sham” succeeded where  
he could not,  
arousing a sleeping prince to life  
with fantasy of talking ponies and a prayer of faith.

*Even the flowers of the forest's trees  
have a soul which sings to each other.*

### *SUNSHINE'S FRIEND*

To Nikolai's coronation, the people had thronged,  
made merry until myriad bled and died  
merely celebrating the crowning of a Tsar.  
Oblivious to famine, despair and revenge of war,  
the rulers bridged their fear with a wall  
and built a magic dome of bliss to shield and protect  
as they prayed for an heir to their joy.

But Alesha was a frail boy;  
slightest touch would turn him blue.  
One day, off a boat on the marshes, he slipped and fell,  
struck his knee against a stone.  
Only the holy pilgrim brought him back to life  
which is how "the dirty one" became the Friend  
of the Emperor's wife, Sunshine Alix of Hesse.

She made a copy of the "the Great Sinner's" letters  
in morocco-bound album with diamond-studded pen  
as she rewrote his pilgrimage account  
*in the monastery at Kiev:*

I went to the caves where martyrs sleep  
in simple wooden coffins."

*from Odessa to the Ocean:*

"When the waves rise high, soul is uneasy  
for the rising sea is like man's inner mind."

She believed he could control  
even the forces of nature after he cured her son.

*on the Mediterranean journey:*

"The Temple is empty;  
the spirit lives not in Catholic Church."

*in Jerusalem:*

"Only through love can we find our way to Heaven."

But the self-satisfied monk was never refused  
gifts of wine, fish, money or women  
while detective-spies reported his debauchery  
in other "staircase notes" passed through votes of  
ministry

### *SUPPLIANT PETITIONS STRANGELY FULFILLED*

When the nursing nun Akulina was attacked  
by convulsions and tremor, Grigori knocked  
at her cell, penetrated the source of convent dis-ease  
to drive out the evil from her gate and well.  
When Olga Lokhtina, the State Councillor's wife,  
proclaimed Iliodor tried to seduce her,

Rasputin knew the cause of that dishevel too and sanctified touch  
to abuse and flush the madness from poor starved body.  
Always closeted in secret in his little room,  
Efimovich "initiated" novices anew  
into his doctrine of "redemption from sin."

*And now you are one of my intimate apostles*

he may have whispered in all his women's ear  
from Munia to Dunia except for Vera Shukovskaia  
who described the *very holy* chambers in her journal so true:

*"Only come to me often, little honey bee,  
and you will understand everything...  
Go next week to Communion, and then ... while you  
still have Paradise in your soul, I will show you  
the passage through sin.*

Then Crazy Olga stormed in gesticulating wildly.  
Strings of multicolored rosaries dangled from her neck;

and she was stuck in old broken boots that were *his* own.

*'You are mine and I am yours.  
However many women you take,  
no one can rob me of your soul.'*

But Rasputin growled denyingly adding insult to curse  
until I inquired why he did not forgive  
when Munia glided past like a fish  
clutching something shiny in her thin hand.  
They argued about the value of his gift,  
the difference in a watch.

*'He can't use such gold State trash,'  
Madame Lokhtina lashed. 'Only rubies,  
diamonds and emeralds will do.'*

Another veiled Polish girl told me her tale of woe:

*'As I fled from such sensual salvation, I was caught  
in his savage, animal desire;  
he tore off my clothes and defiled me.  
Then standing there naked, he looked down  
and smiled between a beard and a frown.'*

I left St. Petersburg next morning  
and did not return for more than two years..."

### *THE DANCING STARETS*

His black hair and great beard would fly  
like a gypsy from one side to the other  
at sound of his favorite song, the "Troika."  
Nothing made Rasputin so sublime as dancing  
when he climbed about the pleasures of body  
to the melancholy of infinite mind.

*I go, I go to her, to my love.*

When words were not enough, he leaped  
into his "sermon in dance" and sang  
a strange chanted pious prayer:

*'Drink to the last drop,  
Only lose not your head!  
Drink, my little bee  
While God send humility  
And the joy of love.*

Amid his own women disciples, he also would hum  
softly while preaching "mysterious resurrection"  
then spring like a feather of imperial ballet  
to stamp and sway nearer to their flesh  
which bent and melted in his erection  
of mortal instinct to saintly clairvoyance.

*Yes, yes, my dears, I know you.  
I can read your souls.*

In Russian shirt of cornflower blue or ripe-red silk,  
he jumped and pranced, clapped his hands,  
while downing greedily a few glasses of wine.

*Come, my lovely mare.*

He recalled the horses in his father's stable.

*Follow me to the great freedom of Siberia.  
We will catch fish and plow the fields.*

He handed cryptic maxims to each maiden:

“God loves work.  
Your honesty is known to all.”

Once, the orgy invading starets' brain,  
he undid greased top-boots and black velvet  
wide-legged trousers to let the naked peasant stand,  
“Voice of the People,”  
until a shot rang through the drinking night  
and he remarked, “My enemies do not love me still.

### *REVOLT AGAINST THE HOLY DEVIL*

Father Feofan called Rasputin “the incarnation  
of Antichrist.” Iliodor knew of Elena,  
the carter's buxom wife, and her sensual exorcism.  
With a smirk on his lips, above the crucifix,  
he cried in triumph,

*I have driven the devil from her!*

To possess the possessed was Grigori's way  
as the truth of rumors became known.  
Now even shamed peons protested  
in hateful, bold abuse  
while Alix and Nikolai calmly rejected,  
proclaiming, “Believe me, you are misled.  
A saint is always reviled.”

Thus, the jealous lost “Knight of the Heavenly  
Kingdom”  
set out to St. Petersburg to unmask Satan,  
enlisted aid of even Mitia, the miraculous idiot.  
Yet again the enemy was banished.  
In Norway, he composed accusing pamphlet  
under title of “The Holy Devil,”  
formed “committee of action” to procure  
Kionia Guseva, morbidly neurotic whore  
persuaded to avenge the Friend's “vicious deeds.”

On June 28 before World War I, she made her pilgrimage  
to Pokrovskoe, held out her hand, begging for alms.  
When Rasputin reached down into pocket,  
she drove a knife through his abdomen;  
he pressed strong hands o'er the gash  
and again saved himself before collapsing  
inside his own demesne.

Foiled one more time, each and all attempts;  
would-be assassins and deranged planners arrested  
or evicted by victim-victor  
until the last plot thickened at Great Fish Suppers—  
the scheme of the climax, the murder.

## *MURDER WITH THE GYPSY GUITAR*

### *Part 1*

Khvostov, Minister of the Interior, brooded on his  
scheme  
to lure Rasputin to house of one female admirer  
before police in disguise would direct his car  
to barren coast where chloroformed ghost,  
buried in snow, might wash away to sea  
in the spring.

Chief of "Special Police" agreed, while hinting  
that strangling might better keep their secret;  
however, Beletski, in breathing agitation,  
spoiled intrigue, confessed plot of poisoned wine  
and foreshadowed its demise.

Then, on an afternoon when Munia Golovina  
invited Prince Felix Yusopov to tea  
to change handsome man's biased opinion  
'gainst her 'holy father,' most dutifully  
all the memories of his dead brother  
the girl chose once to marry  
blew up like a storm in war mind  
which now vowed no compromise.

The rich and noble Tatar, already wed to Irina  
Alexandrovna, niece of the imperial Emperor,  
strummed evil thought inside him:

*The poor can hope for wealth,  
the unloved for love  
and the lowly for elevation.  
But in aristocrat's prison of boredom,  
I, Felix, do yearn for freedom.*

*I will murder Rasputin!*

Thus, a prince spoke to his villain self.

*With the song of my gypsy guitar,  
I will slay the holy dragon.*

## *Part 2*

Asking the help of Grand Duke Dimitri,  
a devote of Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray*,  
Prince Felix devised subtle perfidy  
to carry out his treacherous murder.

On the 16th of Decemver, Rasputin complied  
to be led like a lamb to invisible wife  
at Yusopov's palace to wait for Irina  
as the gramophone played softly American tune.  
Cyanide-frosted chocolate cake ready to be tasted  
as the prince reached for his gypsy guitar.

*Oh, do play something gayt. I love  
to hear you sing.*

Why did not the poison take effect?  
No doubt bullets would perform his magic best.

Later, Felix explained his party:

“Someone killed a dog in high spirits,  
and there's the path of blood.

Matriona, Rasputin's daughter, recalls being asked:

“Do you identify this golosh, size 10,  
as the property of your father?”

But the deed was done when the Neva ice shattered  
so divers could search for the slain body  
bound and thrown over Petrovski Bridge  
while clearly the man still breathed and lived.

## *THE GHOST IN PARGOLOVO FOREST*

*Help the poor and feed the hungry  
so that the people may not lose faith  
in love of their Tsar and the country.*

Echo of Rasputin's ghost pierced revolt from afar.

On March 22 in the Park of the Palace so guarded  
rebel soldiers raided dead man's grave,  
seized the coffin and carried it to forest  
where a great pyre was erected,  
They soaked in petrol his decomposed corpse  
then burned him to ashes,  
crucified like a slave  
but not without glory,  
the monk-martyr Grigori.

Winter chills the bones  
of any who wander or recall  
the mystery of the holy devil  
and the substance of his fall  
as the scho of wind like some phantom  
haunts Pargolovo Forest with this song:

*The dance will never end, nor the hymn be silent,  
if only the world will know  
all poor sinners can be pardoned  
for the Holy Ghost reincarnates  
and will always be among you.  
If only you believe in love  
to live loving boldly.  
Now my flesh and soul are pure and holy true sacrifice.  
I am the wind and the sanctified trees.*

Acknowledgement is made to *Rasputin, the Holy Devil*  
by Rene Fulop-Miller (New York: Frederick Ungar  
Publishing Co., 1969) as source to verify this  
reincarnational memory.

# ***A Goddess Arrives: The Novels of Dion Fortune in the Development of Gardnerian Witchcraft***

*By Chas S. Clifton*

## **Introduction**

One growing religious motif in the West during the past four decades has been a renewed interest in the feminine principle of divinity, in modes ranging from the most abstract to the most polytheistic and personal. In the most recent past, roughly the last fifteen years, this has often been seen as a direct outgrowth of the feminist movement, and has sparked within that movement occasional bitter denunciations by women whose orientation is purely "political" against those whose orientation is also "spiritual," with the latter accused of consuming the well-known opiate of the people.

But it is a mistake to start the chronology there. One could just as easily go back to Thomas Lake Harris, a Swedenborgian mystic who in 1850 began to claim a series of revelations that from the first included the idea of a bisexual divinity, the

"two-in-one," divine love made flesh in the union of the sexes and who initiated his own esoteric religion. About the same time, the Fox sisters of Rochester, New York, set in motion the Spiritualist movement that continues to this day. The examples of Jemima Wilkinson, the "Publick Universal Friend;" of Mother Ann Lee the Shaker foundress; and of Mary Baker Eddy might also be placed with Harris. It was also in the mid-1850s that J.J. Bachofen published *Mother Right*, which gave us the concept of "peaceful ancient matriarchies," a concept that haunts feminist religious studies today. As Robert Ellwood of the University of Southern California has written in his discussion of "excursus" religion, that is to say, a religious quest that leads away from the ordinary and established religion:

"Especially in America, a significant symbol of excursus religion is feminine leadership and even feminine identity in the divine. ... More important still, the

characteristics of these movements clearly include signs of a quest for an authentic feminine spiritual identity—a quest reflected in the concepts of divinity itself, as in the bipolar masculine and feminine divinity of the Shakers and the Christian Scientists...”[1]

As described below, in the early 1950s an apparently new (but with claims of antiquity) goddess-worshipping religion proclaimed itself in England and, soon after, in the United States. This religion, Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, particularly the portion of it called Gardnerian Witchcraft, sees divinity as having a masculine and a feminine aspect, and its rituals are led by priestesses. One notes, however, that this feminine divine emphasis is missing from documents central to the tradition, notably the English, Scottish and French witchcraft trial documents which the archaeologist and folklorist Margaret Murray used to buttress her argument for the existence of a pre-Christian Pagan religion in Western Europe—a religion the modern Witches claim to carry on.[2]

If one employs the “hermeneutics of suspicion” and looks around for other evidence of a goddess arriving in the middle of the 20th century, a variety of evidence presents itself. This evidence ranges from the founding of the Church of Aphrodite on Long Island in 1939 by a Russian emigre, Gleb Botkin, son of the Czar’s physician,[3] to Robert Graves’s writing of *The White Goddess* in 1944. Parallel and contemporaneous with Graves is Gertrude Rachel Levy’s *The Gate of Horn*, which treats much of the same material from the viewpoint principally of art history.[4]

*The White Goddess*, with its thesis “that the language of poetic myth anciently current in the Mediterranean and Northern Europe was a magical language bound up with popular religious ceremonies in honour of the Moon-goddess, or Muse, some of them dating from the Old Stone Age, and that this remains the language of true



Dion Fortune. (*Helios Book Service*)

poetry...” has been enormously influential among modern Pagans, as has to a lesser extent *The Gate of Horn*. Although Graves wrote that this language “was still taught ... in the witchcovens of [medieval] Western Europe,”[5] it is not my contention that Graves and Levy supplied the dual divinities of Gardnerian witchcraft in their books, both of which were first published in 1948. Instead, I will suggest that much of the concepts were laid out in the works of a slightly earlier English writer, Violet Mary Firth.

Before turning to Firth, or Dion Fortune as she is better known, it is necessary to summarize the history of the movement itself.

### **The Re-Emergence of British Witchcraft**

The repeal by the British Parliament in 1951 of the Witchcraft Act of 1735—largely at the urging of the Spiritualist churches,

who objected to its anti-mediumship language—led unexpectedly to the emergence into public view of a religious tradition thought to be extinct: Witchcraft.[6] This law was a successor to the Witchcraft Act of James I, passed in 1604 and repealed in 1736.] These British Witches defied the definitions of the term common both in the popular language and in anthropology textbooks. They were of both sexes, all ages, and were not isolated practitioners of maleficent magic; rather they claimed to be inheritors of the islands' pre-Christian religions. Their religion was duotheistic: they worshipped a god, called Cernunnos, Kernaya, Herne and other names; and a goddess, sometimes called Aradia or Tana. Of the two divinities, sometimes seen as manifestations of a non-personal godhead, the goddess had the greater importance and her earthly representative, the coven's priestess, had greater ritual authority.

Greatly condensed, this is a description of what came to be known as "Gardnerian Witchcraft," after Gerald Gardner (1884-1964), who retired from the British colonial customs service in Malaya in 1936, returned to England and, as he described, was initiated into what he himself thought was a dying religion in 1938.[7] This was not an overnight occurrence: Gardner had been fascinated for many years with magical religion and "practical mysticism." A recognized avocational archaeologist and anthropologist in Malaya, upon one of his rare visits to England in the 1920s, to investigate the claims of British spiritualists, trance mediums and the like as well. As he wrote:

"I have been interested in magic and kindred subjects all my life, and have made a collection of magical instruments and charms. These studies led me to spiritualist and other societies..."[8]

Gardner wrote three books about the religion of Witchcraft: one novel and two nonfiction works. The novel was *High*

*Magic's Aid*, [9] a stirring tale of medieval English coveners dodging secular and clerical foes with something of the feel of *Ivanhoe* or Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Black Arrow*. Interestingly enough, the religion portrayed in *High Magic's Aid* differed in some respects from what later is called "Gardnerian Witchcraft;" for example, the goddess was de-emphasized in favor of a more Qaballistic form of ceremonial magic typical of the Renaissance. His next two books, *The Meaning of Witchcraft* [10] and *Witchcraft Today* are more definitive of the tradition. (All three remain in print; an earlier novel, with the suggestive title *A Goddess Arrives*, is long out of print.)

The idea of a pre-Christian religion tenaciously holding on in the British Isles had actually been advanced two decades earlier, however, by the noted Egyptologist Margaret Murray of University College, London. Professor Murray, better known at the time for her work with Sir Flinders Petrie in Egypt, began her researches while convalescing from an illness in 1915, when World War I had interrupted her excavations in Egypt. As she wrote in her autobiography, *My First Hundred Years*:

"I chose Glastonbury [to convalesce in]. One cannot stay in Glastonbury without becoming interested in Joseph of Arimathea and the Holy Grail. As soon as I got back to London I did a careful piece of research, which resulted in a paper on Egyptian Elements in the Grail Romance. ...

Someone, I forget who, had once told me that the Witches obviously had a special form of religion, 'for they danced around a black goat.' As ancient religion is my pet subject this seemed to be in my line and during all the rest of the war I worked on Witches. ... I had started with the usual idea that the Witches were all old women suffering from illusions about the Devil and that their persecutors were wickedly prejudiced and perjured. I worked only from contemporary records, and when I suddenly

realized that the so-called Devil was simply a disguised man I was startled, almost alarmed, by the way the recorded facts fell into place, and showed that the Witches were members of an old and primitive form of religion, and the records had been made by members of a new and persecuting form.”[11]

Murray’s researches into medieval and Renaissance Witchcraft trial documents from Britain, Ireland and the Continent (including those relating to Joan of Arc and Gilles de Rais), led to the writing of three books, *The Witch-cult in Western Europe* in 1921,[12] *The God of the Witches* in 1931[13] and in 1954 *The Divine King in England*. [14]

Murray never ceased to assert throughout her works that a pre-Christian religion centered on the Horned God of fertility (later deliberately labeled as the Christian Devil by ecclesiastical authorities) survived through at least the 16th century in the British Isles. This conclusion lies behind the following, one of many citations of Horned God-worship from *The God of the Witches*.

”The first recorded instance of the continuance of the worship of the Horned God in Britain is in 1303, when the Bishop of Coventry was accused before the Pope of doing homage to the Devil in the form of a sheep. The fact that a man in so high a position as a bishop could be accused of practicing the Old Religion shows that the cult of the Horned God was far from being dead, and that it was in all probability still the chief worship of the bulk of the people. It should be also noticed that this is one of the first records in which the old God is called the Devil by the Christian writers of the Middle Ages.”[15]

As Mircea Eliade wrote, “Murray’s theory was criticized by archaeologists, historians, and folklorists alike.”[16] Pointing out some parallels between medieval witchcraft and Indo-Tibetan materials, Eliade goes on to approve of part of Murray’s work, with qualifications:

“As a matter of fact, almost everything in her construction was wrong except for one important assumption: that there existed a pre-Christian fertility cult and that specific survivals of this pagan cult were stigmatized during the Middle Ages as witchcraft. ... recent research seems to confirm at least some aspects of her thesis. The Italian historian Carlo Ginsburg has proved that a popular fertility cult, active in the province of Friule in the sixteen and seventeenth centuries, was progressively modified under pressure of the Inquisition and ended by resembling the traditional notion of witchcraft. Moreover, recent investigations of Romanian popular culture have brought to light a number of pagan survivals which clearly indicate the existence of a fertility cult and of what may be called a “white magic,” comparable to some aspects of Western medieval witchcraft.

One may thus argue that the existence of Murray’s three works “paved the way for Gardner’s reformation,” as J. Gordon Melton of the Institute for the Study of American Religion put it.[17] Gardner’s reformation had both a liturgical and a theological aspect. The works he and his associates produced give both a style of worship together with a new set of ritual texts—and an increasing emphasis on the goddess as the tradition progresses.

Before speaking more to this emphasis, however, we must deal with some matters of nomenclature.

### **Witches and Neo-Pagans**

Any discussion of Gardnerian Witchcraft inevitably brings one question: Why did this group of people rally under the label “Witch,” a term almost universally pejorative until that time, and still ill-favored more often than not. Linked to that may be the rehabilitation of the term Pagan, which now embraces even more people than describe themselves as Witches.[18]

It is not my intention here to digress extensively on psychological or sociological reasons for the reclaiming of what had been seen as an abusive term.[19] Only two writers, both quoted below, have attempted to deal with its use as self-description by contemporary American Witches. Gerald Gardner and later exponents of his tradition, such as Stewart Farrar, have tended to take the term as a "given" and to concentrate on giving the "correct" definition, that of a follower of a magically oriented pre-Christian religion.

The greatest confusion arises, however, when between the meaning used here and what may be called "anthropological witchcraft." That version is built upon the ecclesiastical definition of a witch as the enemy of the Church. For example, a newly published anthology, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion*, [20] labels one of its groups of selections "Witchcraft, Sorcery, and Other Forces of Evil." This portion of the book begins with a recent paper on Nigeria in which "witchcraft" is seen by Nigerians of the Ibibio tribe as the source of "all the evils which afflicted the Ibibio." [21] The same paper goes on to speak of the "diabolical machinations of witches and witchcraft." Giving what is by now a standard anthropological definition harking back to Evans-Pritchard and other pioneers, the author writes, "a witch is any person who behaves abnormally; that is, outside the expected patterns of behavior ... In general, witches are mean-looking, mean-acting, or otherwise socially disruptive persons whose behavior deviates significantly from cultural or community norms." [22] A similar definition is often encountered in anthropological materials dealing with other tribal cultures around the world. Small wonder United Press International, as noted above, finds the word potentially libelous except when modified by "self-proclaimed."

In dealing with "loaded" words, I often find it useful to consider their origins. When one considers the term Witch

etymologically, however, one finds what in essence is a circular definition. "Witch," one might say, has its roots in a Proto-Indo-European word meaning "witch." This is despite the efforts of some modern Witches to trace it to roots meaning "knowledge" (as in the Old English meaning of "wit") or "to bend (reality)." [23] *The American Heritage Dictionary* traces the former ("wit") to the PIE root "weid-," while the second meaning, as in "witch hazel," comes from a root "weik-" meaning to bend or to wind, hence a tree with pliant twigs.

It is still another "weik-" that the etymologists place as the root of "Witch" (and also of victim, meaning a sacrificial animal). This is defined as the root of "words connected with magic and religious notions," among which are "guile" (French) and "wile" (Norse), both meaning cunning. [24] This brings us almost back to "knowledge," but philologists separate the two roots.

In Old English, which had grammatical gender, the masculine form was "wicca" (probably pronounced "witch-ah" or "weech-ah") and the feminine was "wicce" (perhaps "witch-eh" or "weech-ay"). Gerald Gardner referred to the religion in which he was initiated as "Wica" (with one c). Except among a few linguistic revanchists who have attempted to revive the gender distinction, the term heard most frequently now as an alternative name for the religion is "Wicca" (pronounced "wick-uh"). Sometimes its followers call themselves Wiccans, again with hard c's.

Informally, Wicca is often referred to as "the Craft." This probably is a direct borrowing from Freemasonry, [25] but the term "Craft of the Wise" also appears in a historical novel, *The Silver Bowl*, published in England in 1948. [26] It should be obvious also that the term "Witch" is used equally for both sexes.

More important in modern Witchcraft than etymology, however, has been the

straightforward “otherness” of the term. The medieval image of the Witch as a powerful female was seized upon in the late 1960s and 1970s by some feminists as a potent symbol to be placed in opposition to religious patriarchy—especially when the opposition could be strengthened by setting the woman Witch’s more benign reputation for herbal medical knowledge and skill in midwifery against the male-dominated medical establishment.

To some Witches, this “otherness” is a source of strength. Miriam Simos, a San Francisco Witch better known under her pen name Starhawk, has written as follows:

“The term *Witch*, people tell me over and over again, has negative connotations. It is a word that scares people, a word that shocks or elicits nervous, stupid laughter.

“If you’re a Witch (heh, heh) turn me into a toad.”

“Why be redundant?” I sometimes respond.

“Yet I prefer the word *Witch* to prettier words, because the concept of a Witch goes against the grain of the culture of estrangement. It *should* rub us the wrong way. If it arouses fear or negative assumptions, then those thought-forms can be openly challenged and transformed, instead of molding us unseen from within our mind. ... Nothing *does* change, unless its form, its structure, its language also changes. To work magic, we begin by making new metaphors. (Emphasis in the original.)”[27]

Margot Adler, author of a sweeping survey of American Neo-Paganism during the mid-1970s, *Drawing Down the Moon*, recorded several modern Witches reaction to the term:

“Among the Wicca, there is a division over this word *witch*. Some regard it as a badge of pride, a word to be reclaimed, much as militant lesbians have reclaimed the word *dyke*. But others dislike the word. ‘It has a rather bad press,’ one Witch told me. Another said, ‘I did not plan to call myself

Witch. It found me. It just happened to be a name—perhaps a bad name—that was attached to the things I was seeking.’

“...And Ed Fitch, a Craft priest in California, told me, ‘To be a Witch is to draw on our archetypal roots and to draw strength from them. It means to put yourself into close consonance with *some ways that are older than the human race itself*.’ I felt a slight chill at the back of my neck on hearing those words. And then I remembered a quotation from Robert Graves’ *The White Goddess* that ‘the true function of poetry is religious invocation of the Muse,’ that all true poetry creates ‘an experience of mixed exaltation and horror that her presence excites.’ (Italics in the original.)[28]

The term “Pagan” has a less complicated history. It comes from the Latin *paganus*, which first meant a country-dweller, and then in Roman military slang, a civilian, i.e. a hick. When the Army of Christ began to borrow metaphors from the Army of Rome, it turned “pagan” into a term meaning one who is not a “soldier of Christ,” although Pagan still appears as a Spanish surname with what is probably the root meaning.[29] To modern ears, it usually means a non-Christian person or what is for some the same thing, an irreligious person.[30] Gore Vidal’s novel *Julian*, about Rome’s last Pagan emperor, treats the new usage by having a character, the Pagan orator Libanius, record in his journal after attending a Christian funeral, “There was a certain amount of good-humored comment about pagans’ (a new word of contempt for us Hellenists) attending Christian services...”[31]

Although G.K. Chesterton used the term neo-Pagan in 1904 to describe a certain romantic evoking of the past found in the works of Walter Pater, Algernon Swinburne and Lowes Dickson,[32] it was popularized as the label of a cluster of modern Pagan religious movements by Tim Zell, co-founder of one of them, the Church of All Worlds.

“Pagan religions are characterized as being ‘Natural,’ both in origin and mode of expression, as opposed to the artificiality of constructed philosophical religions. Paganism emerges out of the processes of Life and Nature, and continues to evolve as a living, growing, organic entity. ... Paganism contains Witchcraft ... It includes the native religions of the American Indians, the Africans, the various Island peoples, many peasants in the hills of Asia, the Aborigines of Australia, and, at one time, the Gauls, Teutons, Norse, Celts...[33]

Therein lies the most useful definition for this paper, that Witchcraft in the sense employed here is a “subset” of Neo-Paganism. As Margot Adler wrote, “Neo-Pagan Witchcraft is seen here as one of a number of modern polytheistic religions.”[34]

Of course, a “neo-” implies a “paleo-.” Many Neo-Pagans accept the categories developed by P.E.I. Bonewits, author of *Real Magic*, cited above. In his taxonomy the old Gauls, for instance, would be Paleo-Pagans, while the quasi-Masonic “Druidic” orders of the 19th century, such as still parade in England and Wales, would be “Meso-Pagans.”

### A Practical Occultist

I turn now to Dion Fortune, whose contribution to the post-1940 development of Gardnerian and/or Neo-Pagan Witchcraft I believe has not been sufficiently acknowledged, despite the fact that there is in my experience hardly a British, Irish or American Witch within our definition of the term without one or more of her works upon the bookshelf. (I daresay the same would hold true in Canada, Australia or New Zealand.)

In the 1970s Carlos Castaneda introduced us to the concept of “erasing personal history,” as allegedly taught him by the sorcerer Don Juan Matus, but Violet Mary Firth, better known as Dion Fortune, beat

him to it. Her biography has never been published, and information in print about her is hard to come by, despite the fact that she wrote numerous books: the *American Books in Print* lists twenty titles by her in the current edition, all originally written in the 1920s and 1930s, while the corresponding volume for British publishers lists sixteen.[35]

In the view of the literary establishment of her day and since, she was an obscure genre writer. Neither her book on psychology, *The Machinery of the Mind*, written in the 1920s, nor her works on occult philosophy nor her five novels and one collection of short stories received much critical notice. Such notice as was received was almost worse than none. A 1934 *Times Literary Supplement* review of *Avalon of the Heart*, begins, “The author tells us that she is the last of the Avalonians—of those who were drawn to Glastonbury as a centre of ever-renewed spiritual and artistic inspiration,’ whatever that may mean.”[36] And clearly the reviewer was not interested in finding out.

Born in 1891, Firth—or Fortune, as I find it easier to refer to her—grew up in a Christian Science household, which may be significant in view of Robert Ellwood’s comments above. She apparently showed some psychic or mediumistic abilities while in her teens, and became interested in the new ideas of psychoanalysis. She became a lay analyst and worked for a time at the Medico-Psychological Clinic in Brunswick Square, London, apparently in the early 1920s.[37] She was probably the first writer on ceremonial magic and hermetic ideas to draw upon and acknowledge the work of Freud, and later, Jung. In the novel *The Goat-Foot God*, published in 1936 and dealing simultaneously with the effects of psychological repression and karmic debt on its central character, Hugh Paston, Paston asks someone else:

“Are the Old Gods synonymous with the Devil?”

“Christians think they are.”

“What do you think they are?”

“I think they’re the same thing as the Freudian subconscious.”[38]

To continue her brief biography, Fortune was married to a Dr. Evans, and died in 1946. Frank N. Magill writes in his *Survey of Modern Fantastic Literature* only:

“Violet Firth was one of the inheritors of the mystical and magical practices of the Order of the Golden Dawn, a Kabbalistic organization whose first-generation members included such distinguished names as William Butler Yeats and infamous [sic] ones as Aleister Crowley. Firth herself was a member of the Order for a time after the death of its principal founder, S.L. MacGregor Mathers [d. 1918]. Thereafter she formed her own organization, the Fraternity (later Society) of the Inner Light. It still functions in London, transmitting the teachings that are the background of Firth’s fiction and presumably still practicing forms of ceremonial magic (or magick, as it is sometimes spelled to distinguish it from legerdemain) developed out of the Golden Dawn rituals.”[39]

Firth’s pen name derived from the magical name she took (as did all Golden Dawn initiates), Deo non Fortuna, or roughly, “By God, not by Chance.” Her involvement with the Order lasted roughly from 1919 to about 1922, and while these were the sunset years of the Golden Dawn, which had been founded in 1888, they set for her a significant pattern of what an esoteric order should be.

That Fortune also eventually went over more to the Jungian school is also apparent in her work, although she was always an occultist first and a Jungian second. Since her time there has been a great deal of discussion of the “gods and goddesses” by such neo-Jungians as James Hillman and Charlotte Downing. Surely Fortune’s blending of psychoanalytical ideas, hermetic philosophy and ceremonial or Qabalistic magic with a predominately Christian

mysticism in the Society of Inner Light prefigures Hillman’s question, “Can the atomism of our psychic paganism, that is, the rash of individual symbol-formation now breaking out as the Christian cult fades, be contained by a psychology of self-integration that echoes its expiring Christian model?”[40] But I doubt she would have gone on as dogmatically to continue as Hillman does, “The danger is that a true revival of paganism as *religion* is then possible, with all its accoutrements of popular soothsaying, quick [sic] priesthoods, astrological divination, extravagant practices, and the erosion of psychic differentiations through delusional enthusiasms.”

Where she did agree with Jung is that Western methods are best for Western people. Jung wrote:

“Instead of learning the spiritual techniques of the East by heart and imitating them ... it would be far more to the point to find out whether there exists in the unconscious an introverted tendency similar to that which has been developed in spiritual principles in the East. We should then be in a position to build on our own ground with our own methods.[41]

Compare Fortune’s chapter “Eastern Methods and Western Bodies” in *Sane Occultism* in which she stated:

“The pagan faiths of the West developed the nature contacts. Modern Western occultism rising from this basis, seems to be taking for its field the little-known powers of the mind. The Eastern tradition has a very highly developed metaphysics ... Nevertheless, when it comes to the practical application of those principles and especially the processes of occult training and initiation, it is best for a man to follow the line of his own racial evolution. ... The reason for the inadvisability of an alien initiation does not lie in racial antagonism, nor in any failure to appreciate the beauty and profundity of the Eastern systems, but for the same reason that Eastern methods of

agriculture are inapplicable in the West—because conditions are different.”[42]

It is clear from Fortune’s novels that a “true,” that is psychologically informed, Paganism, was indeed what she was after. Time after time she returned to plots that mixed the therapeutic and the magical, drawing characters who mixed psychological acumen with non-ordinary wisdom. She defined her ideal mixture thus in *Sane Occultism*:

”A knowledge of [occult] philosophy can give a clue to the researches of the scientist and balance to the ecstasies of the mystic; it may very well be that in the possibilities of ritual magic we shall find an invaluable therapeutic agent for use in certain forms of mental disease; psychoanalysis has demonstrated that these have no physiological cause, but it can very seldom effect a cure.”[43] The picture I would draw is of someone who shared a significant degree of philosophical accord with Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, but who in practice was doing something quite different. I have said her contribution to the growth of that tradition has not been sufficiently acknowledged; there is one exception, the works of Janet and Stewart Farrar, *English Witches* who since 1970 have in three books become the most widely read and most lucid exponents of a less dogmatic and less hierarchical form and who frequently refer readers to Fortune’s work. In a recent instance, having laid out a ritual based on one in Fortune’s novel *The Sea Priestess* and received permission from the current mentors of the Society of the Inner Light to do so, they write:

”In their letter of permission, the Society asked us to say that Dion Fortune was not a Witch and did not have any connection with a coven, and that this Society is not in any way associated with the Craft of Witches.’ We accede to their request; and when this book is published, we shall send them a copy with our compliments, in the hope that it

may give them second thoughts about whether Wiccan philosophy is as alien to that of Dion Fortune (whom witches hold in great respect) as they seem to imagine.”[44]

My suggestion that Dion Fortune may have been an influence on Gerald Gardner and on the formation of the influential Gardnerian wing of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft is based partially on circumstantial evidence. That it could have done so was brought home to me while reading *The Goat-Foot God*, a novel first published in 1936. It follows the “therapeutic” plot pattern referred to earlier in which a person down on his or luck and near psychological collapse is rescued by a powerful magician or priestess and re-integrated socially and psychically.

Hugh Paston, quoted above, is a wealthy Londoner on the verge of a nervous breakdown following the death of his wife and her lover, Paston’s erstwhile friend, in a car wreck. While aimlessly walking the streets Paston stumbles across a used-book shop run by a scholarly occultist who becomes the catalyst for Paston’s psychological integration. This psychological integration includes finishing some actions put in motion during Paston’s earlier incarnation as a heretical medieval prior. Jelkes, the bookseller, who begins the process by guiding Paston’s reading, tells him, “Writers will put things into a novel that they daren’t put in sober prose, where you have to dot the I’s and cross the T’s.”[45]

Now Fortune’s literary output was divided between “sober prose” and novels. Besides *The Machinery of the Mind* and *Sane Occultism*, her “sober” titles included *Practical Occultism in Daily Life*, *The Cosmic Doctrine*, *Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage*, and *The Mystical Qabalah*. Robert Galbreath, in a bibliographic survey of modern occultism published in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, defined her message as “spiritual occultism.

”Spiritual occultists state that it is

possible to acquire personal, empirical knowledge of that which can only be taken on faith in religion or demonstrated through deductive reasoning in philosophy. Further, this knowledge, arrived at in full consciousness through the use of spiritual disciplines, is said to reveal man's place in the spiritual plan of the universe and to reconcile the debilitating conflict between science and religion. The goal of occultism, therefore, is the complete spiritualization of man and the cosmos, and the attainment of a condition of unity.”[46]

The novels, however, convey a parallel but somewhat different message, and they do it using a different vocabulary, a more consciously Pagan vocabulary. While the published statements of the Society of Inner Light insist that it is “established on the enlightened and informed Christian ethic and morality,” its founder's novels say repeatedly that Christianity has had its day and a new Renaissance is dawning.[47] After his experience of inner integration Hugh Paston muses:

“It is a curious fact that when men began to re-assemble the fragments of Greek culture—the peerless statues of the gods and the ageless wisdom of the sages—a Renaissance came to the civilisation that had sat in intellectual darkness since the days when the gods had withdrawn before the assaults of the Galileans. What is going to happen in our own day, now that Freud has come along crying: ‘Great Pan is risen!’—? Hugh wondered whether his own problems were not part of a universal problem, and his own awakening part of a much wider awakening? He wondered how far the realisation of an idea by one man, even if he spoke no word, might not inject that idea into the group-mind of the race and set it working like a ferment?”[48]

Likewise, in *The Winged Bull*, set not long after the end of World War I, Colonel Brangwyn the magician tells his new student, one of his former junior officers:

“It [Christianity] has its place,

Murchison, it has its place. It sweetened life when paganism had become corrupt. We lack something if we haven't got it. But we also lack something if we get too much of it. It isn't true to life if we take it neat.”[49]

Later Brangwyn during a ritual quotes Swinburne's poem “The Last Oracle” in praise of Paganism past—it was this aspect of Swinburne that Chesterton called mockingly “neo-Pagan”—making Murchison remember “that great pagan, Julian the Apostate, striving to make head against the set of the tide,” and Murchison thinks to himself:

“And the trouble with Christianity was that it was so darned lop-sided. Good, and jolly good, as far as it went, but you couldn't stretch it clean round the circle of experience because it just wouldn't go. What it was originally, nobody knew, save that it must have been something mighty potent. All we knew of it was what was left after those two crusty old bachelors, Paul and Augustine, had finished with it.

“And then came the heresy-hunters and gave it a final curry-combing, taking infinite pains to get rid of everything that it had inherited from older faiths. And they had been like the modern miller, who refines all the vitamins out of the bread and gives half of the population rickets. That was what was the matter with civilisation, it had spiritual rickets because its spiritual food was too refined. Man can't get on without a dash of paganism, and for the most part, he doesn't try to.”[50]

The notion of injecting a key idea into the collective unconscious of Western humanity re-appears over and over in Fortune's novels. It is not surprising that the writer who had two favorite hermetic maxims—“A religion without a goddess is halfway to atheism” and “All the gods are one god and all the goddesses are one goddess and there is one initiator”—should repeatedly call for attention to be paid to the Great Goddess. In one of his soliloquies quoted above, Hugh Paston thinks, “Surely out of all her

richness and abundance the Great Mother of us all could meet his need? Why do we forget the Mother in the worship of the Father? What particular virtue is there in virgin begetting?"[51]

A key concept shared by both Fortune and the later Neo-Pagans then is that Christianity has had its day and, furthermore, that it is not always "right" for Euro-Americans.[52] It is occasionally introduced by Stewart Farrar, the post-Gardnerian English Witch who lives in Ireland and who writes, "Scratch the topsoil of Irish Christianity, and you come at once to the bedrock of paganism." [53]

### Drawing Down the Moon

This brings us again to reintroduction of worship of the Great Goddess, seen in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft both as Queen of Heaven and Earth/Sea Mother, depending on the context. The best evidence for Fortune's influence here lies in the construction of the key Gardnerian ritual of "Drawing Down the Moon." [54] In that ritual, which was developed and/or modified by Gardner and his contemporaries, the Goddess is invoked by the priest in the body of the priestess. It is expected that inspiration, if not actual possession, of the priestess will result. It is a key part of every Gardnerian ritual circle—and its purpose and elements are easily discernible in Fortune's novel *The Sea Priestess*, which she self-published in 1938.[55]

Although Gardner only hints at the workings of the Drawing Down the Moon ritual in his books, his successors, the Farrars, explain it fully in *Eight Sabbats for Witches*. It follows the drawing of the ritual circle, a conscious creating and demarcating of sacred space, defined by the four cardinal directions and purified with symbolic representatives of the four elements of hermetic philosophy, fire and air (incense), water and earth (salt). While the priestess

stands before the altar (in a Gardnerian circle she holds a wand and a light scourge in her crossed arms, like a figure of Osiris), the priest kneels and blesses with a kiss her feet, knees, womb, breasts and lips. Then, a shift occurs, both in his language and her action. He ceases to address her as a woman and begins to address her as the Mother Goddess, beginning with the words, "I invoke thee and call upon thee, Mighty Mother of us all..." [56]

When the invocation is completed, the priestess is considered to be speaking as the Goddess, not as herself. Normally she then goes on to speak a passage (authored by Doreen Valiente, whose role I deal with below) that is based on the material collected in the 1890s in Italy by the American folklorist Charles Leland,[57] including these words: "I am the gracious Goddess, who gives the gift of joy unto the heart of man. Upon earth, I give the knowledge of the spirit eternal; and beyond death, I give peace, and freedom, and reunion with those who have gone before. Nor do I demand sacrifice; for behold, I am the Mother of all living, and my love is poured out upon the earth." [58]

She may, of course, speak spontaneously; Janet Farrar comments that as priestess "she never knows how it will come out.' Sometimes the wording itself is completely altered, with a spontaneous flow she listens to with a detached part of her mind." [59]

Dion Fortune believed that a re-introduction of both ritual and psychological approaches to the Great Goddess would even the psychic balance between men and women, a theme that has been carried on by a number of feminist psychologists and writers today, although with scant acknowledgement. She wished every marriage to take on some of the aspect of the *hieros gamos*, and it is there that her parallel with Wiccan ritual lies, since each Wiccan ritual turns on sexual polarity, both symbolically and literally, and usually includes a symbolic *hieros gamos* within it,

following the Drawing Down the Moon rite and other workings and considered to “ground” the power raised earlier.

Both rites were anticipated in Fortune’s Goddess-oriented novels. For example, in *The Sea Priestess* Fortune wrote “...in this sacrament the woman must take her ancient place as priestess of the rite, calling down lightning from heaven; the initiator, not the initiated. ... She had to become the priestess of the Goddess, and I, the kneeling worshipper, had to receive the sacrament at her hands. ... When the body of a woman is made an altar for the worship of the Goddess who is all beauty and magnetic life ... then the Goddess enters the temple.”[60]

The sacrament here described is ideal marriage, but nevertheless Fortune has provided a virtual schematic of the Drawing Down the Moon ceremony and the climactic Great Rite, as the *hieros gamos* is referred to. As the Farrars state, “The Great Rite specifically declares that the body of the woman taking part is an altar, with her womb and generative organs as its sacred focus, and reveres it as such.”[61] I would suggest that when the Farrars openly built a new Wiccan ritual upon *The Sea Priestess*, the “seashore ritual” mentioned earlier, which forms Chapter X of their new book *The Witches’ Way*, that they were openly admitting a debt to Fortune which the tradition has always carried on its books.

Some important chronology buttresses the circumstantial case. Gerald Gardner’s initiation into a New Forest coven in Hampshire took place in September 1939. In the late 1940s he “received permission” to publish some things about Wicca in his novel *High Magic’s Aid*, which appeared in 1949 and which had little of the Goddess element in it. However, the Great Goddess is more important in his later nonfiction works and is absolutely central to Wiccan ritual as it developed in the 1950s. She does not, however, appear in Margaret Murray’s work on the alleged undergrown Pagan religion of the Middle Ages, but does appear in the

American folklorist Charles Leland’s book about 19th-century Italian witches, *Aradia: or The Gospel of the Witches*, published in 1896 and now widely recognized as one of the literary sources of the Drawing Down the Moon ceremony.[62]

The person who gave Gardnerian ritual much of its form is now seen to be Doreen Valiente, who still lives in Brighton, an English resort area, and who has written four books on Wicca under her own name. Valiente’s contributions to the ritual texts and the sources of some of her and Gardner’s borrowings are discussed at length in *The Witches’ Way*. Although by no means the only one of Gardner’s original coveners (i.e. after he moved away from the New Forest coven, most of whose members were succumbing to old age) still living, she has been the only one publically involved in a critical re-evaluation of the tradition’s beginnings.

Although Gardner and Fortune were contemporaries, Doreen Valiente has said she does not know if they ever met.[63] She does, however, say that she is “very fond of Dion Fortune’s books, especially her novels *The Sea Priestess*, *The Goat-Foot God*, and *Moon Magic*. It is notable that her outlook became more pagan as she grew older.”[64] Whether this is a tacit admission that she drew upon Fortune’s ideas it is hard to say. Gardnerian Witches, however, walk a fine line between secrecy and disclosure and are known for oblique statements.

Given England’s size, its intellectual centering upon London, and the relatively small number of novelists dealing with Pagan themes, it seems unlikely to me that Valiente and Gardner were not aware of Fortune’s work at that time they were giving the tradition its present form. As we have seen, Gardner was himself engaged in a conscious search for magical learning in the 1920s and 1930s, and it was in the 1930s particularly that Fortune’s novels began appearing, while the chapters of *Sane Occultism* were published serially in *The*

*Occult Review*, a British journal it is unlikely that Gardner would have overlooked.

Valiente, meanwhile, was initiated by Gardner as a priestess in 1953 and left Gardner's coven to form her own in 1957, while the last of Fortune's novels to be published, *Moon Magic*, was, as mentioned above, published posthumously in 1956. With such a coincidence of subject matter, place and dates, it is difficult not to see Dion Fortune as a hitherto unadmitted but significant influence on the development of Gardnerian Witchcraft.

Today the Goddess revival seems to have its "applied" and "theoretical" wings, with the avowed Neo-Pagans filling the former category and the Neo-Jungians and some writers on "feminist spirituality" falling into the second. With her combined psychoanalytical and ritual training, Dion Fortune could be considered a foremother of each, but to people who think as James Hillman wrote, that the religion of Paganism would mean a throwback to an undesirable state of atavism, she must seem somehow tainted for having abandoned the therapist's armchair for the ritual enclosure.

#### NOTES

1. Robert S. Ellwood, Jr. *Alternative Altars: Unconventional and Eastern Spirituality in America*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p.40.
2. The feminine influence is central, however, in the work of Charles Godfrey Leland on 19th-century Italian survivals of Paganism. Writing in the 1890s, Leland came essentially to the same conclusion as Ellwood, above.
3. "Church of Aphrodite, Goddess of Love, Is Chartered in New York." *Life*. 4 December 1939, p.101.
4. G. Rachel Levy. *The Gate of Horn: A Study of the Religious Conceptions of the Stone Age, and Their Influence upon European Thought*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1948).
5. Robert Graves. *The White Goddess: A historical grammar of poetic myth*. (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1966) p. 12.
6. Raymond Buckland. *Witchcraft from the Inside*. (St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 1971) p. 55. This law was a successor to the Witchcraft Act of James I, passed in 1604 and repealed in 1736.
7. J.L. Bracelin. *Gerald Gardner: Witch*. (London:

Octagon Press, 1960).

8. Gerald B. Gardner. *Witchcraft Today*. (London: Rider & Co., 1954) p. 18.
9. London: Michael Houghton, 1949.
10. London: Aquarian Press, 1959.
11. London: William Kimber, 1963, p. 104. The title is no exaggeration; she was born in 1863.
12. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921, since reprinted.
13. London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co. Ltd., 1931, since reprinted.
14. London: Faber and Faber, 1954.
15. *God of the Witches*, pp. 33-4.
16. Mircea Eliade. *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions: Essays in Comparative Religions*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 56.
17. J. Gordon Melton. *Magic, Witchcraft and Paganism in America: A Bibliography*. (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1982), p. 105.
18. Except where used otherwise in a direct quotation, I prefer to capitalize the words Witch and Witchcraft as proper nouns referring to followers of the contemporary religion known variously as Wicca, Witchcraft and the Craft.
19. That is seen as abusive may be demonstrated by the fact that during the 1979 murder trial in Texas of a Neo-Pagan Witch, Loy Stone, the national wire services consistently described him as a "self-professed witch." I questioned an editor at the Dallas bureau of United Press International about the usage and found that it was used to avoid the possibility of libeling someone as an (evil) witch. Stone, incidentally, was acquitted.
20. Arthur C. Lehmann and James E. Myers, editors. *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion*. (Palo Alto, California: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1985).
21. Daniel Offiong. "Witchcraft Among the Ibibio of Nigeria." *Ibid.*, p. 152.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
23. The reality-bending argument is made most strongly in P.E.I. Bonewits's book *Real Magic*, (Berkeley: Creative Arts Book Co., 1979), pp. 104-5.
24. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., 1973) p. 1548.
25. For example, in the "Cyclops" scene of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, set in Barney Kiernan's pub, "the Craft" is used in the Masonic sense.
26. Hugh Ross Williamson. *The Silver Bowl*. (London: Michael Joseph, Ltd., 1948).
27. Starhawk. *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982) pp. 25-6.
28. Margot Adler. *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers and Other Pagans in America Today*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979) pp. 42-3.
29. *American Heritage Dictionary*, p. 942.
30. There is an obvious parallel with the change in meaning of "heathen," meaning one dwelling in uncultivated land; the words encapsulate the social history of early Christianity and its relations with

indigenous religions.

31. Gore Vidal. *Julian*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1964) p. 497.

32. Gilbert K. Chesterton. "Paganism and Mr. Lowes Dickinson." *Heretics*. (New York: John Lane Co., 1904) pp. 153-160. "Paganism" to Chesterton was Hellenistic philosophy and the "rational" virtues, to which Christianity added faith, hope and charity.

33. Tim Zell. *Neo-Paganism: An Old Religion for a New Age*. (St. Louis: Church of All Worlds, no date) (Obtained, apparently new, in 1974.)

34. Adler, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

35. Her books have for the most part been reprinted by Samuel Weiser, Inc., in the United States, and by The Aquarian Press in Britain.

36. London: Frederick Muller, Ltd., 1934.

37. This biographical information comes from the *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology*, edited by Leslie Shepard (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1978).

38. Dion Fortune. *The Goat-Foot God*. (London: The Aquarian Press, 1971) p. 89.

39. Frank N. Magill. *Survey of Modern Fantastic Literature*. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Salem Press, 1983) pp. 1375-7.

40. James Hillman, "Psychology: Monotheistic or Polytheistic." Appendix to David L. Miller. *The New Polytheism*. (Dallas: Spring Publications Inc, 1981. [First published by Harper & Row, 1974]) p. 125.

41. C.G. Jung. "Yoga and the West." In *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*. (London: Pantheon, 1958) Vol. XI, p. 534.

42. Dion Fortune. *Sane Occultism*. (Wellinborough, Northants.: The Aquarian Press, 1967) pp. 161-2.

43. *Ibid.* pp. 25-6.

44. Janet and Stewart Farrar. *The Witches' Way*. (London: Robert Hale, 1984) pp. 95-6.

45. *Goat-Foot God*, p. 89.

46. Robert Galbreath. "The History of Modern Occultism: A Bibliographical Survey." *Journal of*

*Popular Culture*. V:3 (Winter 1971) p.728/100.

47. The statement quoted above from the Society may, however, be posthumus.

48. *Goat-Foot God*, pp. 352-3.

49. Dion Fortune. *The Winged Bull: A Romance of Modern Magic*. (London: Williams & Norgate, Ltd., 1935) p. 169.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-6.

51. *Goat-Foot God*, p. 349.

52. The latter idea is handled circumspectly, however, to avoid being tarred with the brush of Nazism.

53. Janet and Stewart Farrar. *Eight Sabbats for Witches: and rites for Birth, Marriage and Death*. (London: Robert Hale, 1981.) p. 15.

54. A term that deliberately or otherwise echoes Platos description in the *Gorgias* of "the Thessalian witches who draw down the moon from heaven."

55. It is an interesting comment on her times that the two novels with the strongest Goddess elements, *The Sea Priestess* and its sequel, *Moon Magic*, could not find commercial publishers in her lifetime. *Moon Magic* came out in 1956, eleven years after her death, and she was forced to self-publish *The Sea Priestess*, which was rejected even after her other novels' publication.

56. The exact terminology may vary from time to time and from coven to coven; the Farrars here give Gardner's favorites.

57. Charles Godfrey Leland. *Aradia: or the Gospel of the Witches*. (London: David Nutt, 1899).

58. *Eight Sabbats for Witches*, p. 43.

59. *The Witches' Way*, p. 68.

60. Dion Fortune. *The Sea Priestess*. (London: Wynham Publications Ltd., 1976) pp. 160-1.

61. *Eight Sabbats for Witches*, p. 49.

62. Stewart Farrar wrote the introduction to a recent edition, published in London by C.W. Daniel, 1974. Otherwise see note 57.

63. Letter to Chas S. Clifton, 11 March 1985.

64. *Ibid.*

## Small Group Ministry

By Judy Harrow

*The following is the text of a talk delivered to the New York Chapter of the Feminist Theological Institute on November 29, 1984.*

I'm really excited about being here. Your invitation to speak about my ministry is a kind of recognition and validation that I crave, because of my legal problems. For five years now, the ordained ministers of the Covenant of the Goddess literally have been fighting City Hall for our right to perform marriages in this city. [NOTE—That battle was won, largely thanks to the New York Civil Liberties Union. On January 15, 1985, I became the first person holding ministerial credentials from Covenant of the Goddess allowed to register with the New York City Clergy Registry. Two more of our ministers have registered since.] But for now I'd like to indulge myself and do what will make your acceptance concrete for me. In this society when somebody is a colleague and an equal, we talk shop with them. I want to do what it says in the program, and talk shop with you.

As many of you know, I also produce a weekly radio feature called "Reconnections," an ongoing report on religious activities. It's my "excuse" to talk with Christian and Jewish religious activists, as well as Witches. In doing so, I've noticed that one thing I thought was unique about my tradition is really going on all over the place. More and more people are choosing to practice their religion in small intimate groups, as Witches always have, instead of in massive institutions. It's like the difference between symphonic music and

chamber music—and I have to tell you that I always liked chamber music better because each instrument can be heard sharp and clear. Our covens are now mirrored by your base communities and *chavurot*. I'm not saying you learned it from us—hardly!—but that all of us are driven by a real human need for visibility and intimacy.

One of my Craft sisters calls it living room religion. We have independently invented it at least three times by now. We seem to hunger for it, as our original families and neighborhoods are torn apart by market forces. Modern society pays lip service to the free individual, then turns us into rootless, faceless interchangeable parts. Listen to some people talk, and you'd think that anybody reluctant to leave their family and community ties on the chance of finding work in the Sunbelt is simply lazy!

In the intimacy of family (or intentional family, like *chavurah*, base community or coven) the individual is seen and supported. The style of living room religion is open, sharing, free of authority and hierarchy—precisely because intimacy is the goal and every person matters. And so, those of us who minister to small groups that meet in living rooms get to deal with this paradox: we are the leaders in a structure that is, ideologically, leaderless.

I'm the High Priestess of Proteus Coven, a miniature congregation of just twelve people. I have to tell you that when I first came into the Craft, I was very put off by the term "High Priestess." Real grandiose and pretentious when your group has just six

members, like the coven in which I was trained! Actually, it's a very different kind of statement, but it took me a while to catch on. The point is that *every* initiated coven member is a priestess or priest. The only thing I can do that any initiate cannot do is to initiate other people. I have no other special ritual role.

And I don't do a lot of what other clergy members do. I have no budget and no fund-raising to do. There's no building for me to maintain. I don't supervise a custodial or clerical staff. My living room isn't a major community center housing a whole range of special-interest groups. There's no separate religious school. I don't run Saturday night dances to keep our young people from getting involved with their young people. Church and synagogue leaders manage large, complex organizations. The leaders of chavurot, base communities, and covens do not.

So, if I'm not a ritual leader and I'm not a manager—just what do I do to earn the title of "High Priestess?"

Actually, a lot! I speak from my own experience, nearly five years as High Priestess of Proteus Coven, and hours of conversation—of shop talk—with coven leaders from all over the United States. Some of it will sound very familiar to you, and other parts may seem totally alien. Maybe we can get into a discussion of our similarities and differences, and get to know each other better.

The first thing I am is a *Gatekeeper*. In a large church or synagogue, people approach the Sacred primarily as individuals. Anybody can come, sit in a pew making appropriate responses, and leave when the service is over. Even when a sense of community does develop, the worshipper who leaves before the coffee hour does not disrupt this. But our small groups are about intimacy, and the visibility of every single person, and the dynamic blending and balancing of personalities.

We say that a person may be right for the

Craft, but yet not right for a particular coven. Usually a person who doesn't fit will lose interest and drift away, but not always. My job is to judge when normal group process is not working well enough and to intervene. Once, in five years, I had to tell an applicant with severe psychological problems that I felt he would be disruptive in a small group. Once, in five years, I had to tell a member that his chronic unreliability was hurting our work. Both of these confrontations were painful; both were my responsibility.

I'm a *teacher*, or maybe I'm not. Every religious tradition has its own set of stories, symbols and ritual actions; and these create the sense of identity and belonging. A group leader is presumably somebody who knows that content well; at least some people joining the group will be absolute beginners. But living room religion is also homemade, participatory religion. Our people don't get to sit and listen while we do it for them. And because they do their own ritual making, it's even more important than usual that they learn the basic symbolic vocabulary that defines our respective traditions.

But a non-authoritarian teacher—what Carl Rogers, a personal saint of mine, would call a student-centered teacher—is there to help the student learn what she or he feels the need to know. So, sometimes I am a teacher, introducing topics, making sure everybody has the basics. But more often I'm a resource person, answering questions from my own knowledge, and suggesting books, and—best of all—sending them to each other.

And so, I'm a *facilitator*. When I started Proteus, I realized that every single person there knew more about some relevant topic than I did. One was an expert on the archaeology of ancient civilizations, another a professional musician, a third a physician who could help us create appropriate visualizations for our healing work, and so on. My special skill—what I went to grad school for—is group facilitation. So I

defined my job as creating an atmosphere in which each person would be encouraged to explore her or his own special interests and to share them with the rest of the group. (I'm no fool; that way I got to learn from all of them!) Their diverse inputs give us a more richly textured group experience than I could ever provide alone.

The way we do it is by taking turns. Each member of Proteus Coven conducts a meeting when he or she has something to teach, some working to do, something to confront or celebrate. (A couple of times a year, I even take a turn myself!) Besides sharing their specialized knowledge, this gives each of them hands-on experience with group leadership—the skill I'm supposed to be teaching them. They also take turns in creating and conducting rituals at our traditional festival times. This gives each person experience in ritual making and the whole group a series of different perspectives on how those traditional festivals relate to modern life. My job is to keep the schedule and to make sure the basics get covered.

It's also my job, as a facilitator, in an open, consensus-based decision making process, to hear and voice the forming consensus. Distinguishing the will of the group from my own personal preferences is no small challenge, but it is my job.

Finally, I do *quality control*, and that's the hardest of all to reconcile with an egalitarian ideology. Our community is growing fast. We need a lot more teachers and group leaders, and we need them yesterday. In this situation, it's common for covens to train people and then graduate them—we call it "hiving off"—to start new groups of their own.

When a member of Proteus is ready, we do what we call "elevating" that person to the "third degree." In our tradition, a third degree person can initiate others, and so can start their own coven. This means that when

I elevate somebody to third degree, I am saying that this person has the knowledge and the wisdom to lead a coven well.

When you think about it, that's an uncomfortable amount of "power-over." I can give or withhold a recognition they work towards for three years or more. This makes my opinion of their work somehow more important than that of other group members, a bad idea in a small, intimate group! And yet, I am also responsible to the larger community, and especially to the potential future students of my students, to make those decisions as best I can.

Charlie Murphy, in his powerful song, "Burning Times," gives us this description of a high priestess: "In the center often stood a woman equal with the others and respected for her work." That's my inspiration and that's my model.

All of us want our covens to work like healthy families, places of intimacy and sharing, where each person matters. It's contradictory, then, to treat people as interchangeable parts, even though this may be "politically correct." Our groups should be an environment in which each member, including the high priestess, can develop their own particular talents and interests as far as possible. Then we can come together as strong, free people, to share enthusiasm and joy. Then we can pool our skill and knowledge to create family and community vibrant with the complexity of life.

A high priestess is no more holy than anybody else and no more important. But leadership is a talent, like all the others, to be trained and responsibly used and celebrated. Because we have that talent and because we have dedicated it to covens and our community, we have earned the right to be high priestesses, equal with the others and respected for our work.

Thank you!

# Book Reviews

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## An 'Occult' American Sampler

THE OCCULT IN AMERICA: NEW HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES. Edited by Howard Kerr and Charles L. Crow. Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1983. 246 pages, index. \$16.95, clothbound.

The editors of *The Occult in America* selected ten essays by scholars in different disciplines in an attempt to make a "serious presentation of the occult presence throughout the nation's past." Of course, there is the problem of defining just what is "the occult." Kerr and Crow begin by saying that they're not sure; they take the grab-bag approach that it "inclusively denotes esoteric belief systems such as those based on Hermetic or Eastern lore; practices such as astrology, 'dowsing,' and magical healing; and supernatural and paranormal 'phenomena' such as ghosts, ESP and UFOs." Tracking that range of topics through American history would require several volumes!

The book opens with a provocative essay by Robert Galbreath on "Explaining Modern Occultism" that attempts to arrive at working definitions for such terms as "occult," "esoteric" and "metaphysical" in order to give these studies some community of discourse. Galbreath criticizes the superficiality and facile generalizations of both popular and academic understanding of modern occultism, arriving at a definition of occultism that is more useful than his editors', based on its original meaning of "hidden" and extending that to extraordinary "intrusions" into the mundane world, to the secret teachings of mystery schools, and to matters that are "hidden" to ordinary cognition but that are nonetheless believed knowable. He also

re-examines common conceptions of "the occult" as being anti-scientific, irrational and anti-progressive.

Other essays, devoted to specific eras or groups, examine 17th-century Massachusetts witch trials, the growth of popular magical practices among black slaves and the white working class in the early 19th-century, Spiritualism, Theosophy, the magical roots of Mormonism (since this book even more exposed by publication of some of Joseph Smith's early treasure-hunting correspondence), Swami Vivekananda's visit to America in the 1890s, the role of women in alternative religion, popular stories of apparitions of the dead and living, and the history of the UFO movement.

Each of the constituent essays is probably the germ of a longer work, and they are themselves only a sampling of the topics the editors indicate exist to be covered. As the editors point out, "the continuous interest in such matters forms a distinct pattern in American history."

## A Voodoo Pilgrimage

VOODOO CONTRA. By Robert Gover. York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1985. x + 177 pages. Glossary. \$6.95, paperbound.

Although best-known for novels that turn on picaresque clashes of white and black culture (i.e. *One Hundred Dollar Misunderstanding* and *Here Goes Kitten*), Robert Gover has since childhood nursed a desire to investigate the belief system of Voodoo, to determine, as he puts it, "How did a West African word meaning God get translated as meaning evil black magic?." His interest is not only Haitian Voodoo, but the entire complex of West African-derived religions in the New World, including

Santeria, Candomble, for to him "Voodoo" is an all-inclusive term for "a cultural mind-set derived from Africa but transformed when transplanted in the Western Hemisphere.

Gover works his way south—"down" the map and "down" through his mental layers—visiting Voodoo clergy in Oyotunji Village, South Carolina, in Trinidad (the Shango cult, it's called there), on the island of Cayenne, and in what another writer called the Voodoo Vatican, the city of Bahia in northeast Brazil. He begins to blend technological and magical realities, writing in his notebook, "Modern science is the old gods rediscovering themselves in new symbols. Voodoo and science are both forms of magic. Both are based on theories that find evidence of themselves," and, "To appreciate the basic beliefs of Voodoo, you must step beyond the beliefs your culture conditioned you with; one of which is that the unscripted religions of illiterate people are inferior to the scripted religions of literate people; and another of which is that primitive, illiterate people are fast becoming extinct."

This leads into the subject of possession by Voodoo deities. Gover has already said that "To validate the theories of the Voodoo belief system, it is necessary to enter the Voodoo culture and experience it"—but first the conditioned beliefs mentioned above must be removed. Only then can it happen. The author becomes less a detached researcher and more a guide to the ways between worlds. Unfortunately, after the long, interesting lead-in, *Voodoo Contra* ends abruptly after Gover's first possession experience, so the reader will not know how what happened in Bahia was absorbed into his ongoing life. Part theory, part testimonial, *Voodoo Contra* remains a valuable first-person narrative, an exemplary tale, to be ranked with Maya Deren's *Divine Horsemen*.

## Crystals' Power

CRYSTAL POWER. By Michael G. Smith. St. Paul, Minneapolis: Llewellyn Publications, 1985. 232 pages. \$9.95 paperbound.

Some time in the late 1970s, quartz crystals became more than something to hang in a sunny window, but rather became the focus of "New Age" workshops on healing, shamanism, and the like. Anthropologists and magicians alike of course had seen something "special" about rock crystals, or had seen how others used them for such things as divining the origins of disease. Now, however, instead of finding them yourself or buying them from a leathery old desert rat in a roadside rock shop, it was possible to obtain quartz crystals (at triple the price) in metaphysical bookshops and at various sorts of retreats and gatherings.

Michael G. Smith describes himself the type who would interrupt Edgar Cayce-style tales of crystal power in vanished Atlantis and that sort of thing to ask, "Tell me exactly what your rod of power looked like. What kind of materials was it made of? What kind of stone was in your headband or crown? What was it used for?" And so on. *Crystal Power* gives easy-to-follow directions for building a variety of devices that Smith says utilize the psionic power of quartz crystals; in other words, they allegedly magnify one's ability to heal, set up "force fields," communicate with other realms of existence and otherwise manipulate reality. These devices include the "Atlantean crystal headband," "energy rods and staffs," the "force knife" and others. They are presented within a grim prophetic worldview of coming changes in which the "natural healers" will be the survivors, while those dependent on more conventional technology will be the losers, combined with mentions of ancient astronauts, vanished wisdom and so forth.

A lot of the writing about the actual

employment of these devices is as evasive as the instructions for building them are clear. Smith is fond of such statements as "Other experiences have taken place using Energy Rods to beam particles into contaminated and polluted water and air to removed the contaminating particles. There is a planetwide network of people engaged in these activities on their own." After presenting himself as a man who asks the hard questions, Smith leaves an awful lot more unanswered. But it's a funny thing about quartz crystals (and others): it's hard to have them around and not think that they could *do something*. Perhaps what is needed is for people to build these gadgets and find out, one way or the other.

### **Pagan Rituals Compiled**

**MAGICAL RITES FROM THE CRYSTAL WELL.** By Ed Fitch. St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 1984. 148 pages. Glossary, reading list. \$13.00, paperback.

Identified as a former Air Force officer and now an aerospace engineer, Ed Fitch probably is better-known to the potential readership of this book as a Gardnerian Witch who in the late 1960s helped develop a set of Neo-Pagan rituals known as the Pagan Way that was widely published and excerpted. Off and on from about 1965-1975 he also edited a Pagan magazine called *The Crystal Well*. In this book he has re-worked that and other ritual material to produce a ritual cycle based primarily on Central and Eastern European lore, as well as that of the British Isles. The rituals are designed to be self-teaching, as it were. The ritual and other material is open-ended enough that people can modify them to fit their own times and needs; the cycle is complete and notable for its ease of working.

Humanity's relationship with Nature is one of these rituals' main themes, and despite John Goodier's romantic Art Nouveau-style illustrations, the relationship

isn't all "flowers and bunny rabbits." "The Pagan endeavors to be in tune with the forces and rhythms of nature in order to broaden wisdom and understanding," Fitch writes. "Contrary to what some irresponsible scholars have said, Pagans do not bow down and worship the Sun and Moon and other natural phenomena. What this does mean, is that we can see the nature of divinity symbolically manifest in these."

In note of the essay elsewhere in this issue on the influence of Dion Fortune, we must note that some of the poetry in the wedding rite included here is lifted directly from her novel *The Sea Priestess*, another tribute to its long shadow across the Neo-Pagan movement.

As a wide-ranging ritual handbook, *Magical Rites from the Crystal Well* encapsulates the beliefs and practices of contemporary mainstream North American Neo-Paganism.

### **Anthropological Witchcraft**

**MAGIC, WITCHCRAFT, AND RELIGION: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE SUPERNATURAL.** Edited by Arthur C. Lehmann and James E. Myers. Palo Alto, California: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1985. 416 pages, index. \$18.95, paperback.

This anthology collects a fascinating group of anthropological approaches to question of religion in magic, including classic pieces by scholars such as Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner and Bronislaw Malinowski, combined with more recent works on such topics as religious aspects of the health food movement, baseball magic and new religious movements.

What *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion* unhappily demonstrates at times is the inapplicability—or so it seems—of the insights gained among more remote peoples to situations of modern urban peoples. One on hand, following the by now standard

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Evans-Pritchard model, we are told in the editors' introduction to the section on "Witchcraft, Sorcery and Other Forces of Evil" that "witches" are either people who innately cause evil—or people who don't exist, but are postulated to explain why bad things happen. Yet later on in the volume, "witches" are members of Anton La Vey's almost anti-supernatural Church of Satan or merely anyone who investigates the corpus of ceremonial magic, or readers of *Fate* magazine. On the basis of slim anecdotal evidence, we told such things as "Contemporary America is presently undergoing a witchcraft revival," yet the particular writer cited never mentions the Neo-Pagan Witchcraft groups, which considerably outnumber the so-called black magicians and are considerably more public. Marcello Truzzi's oft-cited essay, "The Occult Revival as Popular Culture," is included in the collection, yet it dates from 1972 and reflects the 1960s most of all.

When one is reading about North American urban culture, more precise

methods—and more current data—would better serve the undergraduate audience for which this work presumably is intended.

The editors have also included an article from *American Scientist* that takes the familiar position that belief in "the occult" (there it is again) or supernatural anything is anti-scientific mushymindedness. One feels a certain determination to root out any sacred dimension of life in these selections, confining it to people in other lands, or sufferers from "deficiencies in science education."

The book's foreword promises to "show us 'the strange' not only in exotic circumstances but also in a society with which are extremely familiar." Surely to go looking for "the strange" is a certain path to distortion, sloppiness and misunderstanding, not to mention the erection of intellectual barriers between "them" and "us."

### **IRON MOUNTAIN Back Issues Available**

No. 1, Summer 1984. Contents include: "Spinning the Medicine Wheel: The Bear Tribe in the Catskills," plus a poem by noted Native American editor Joseph Bruchac; "Inventing Witchcraft: The Gardnerian Papertrail," by Aidan Kelly, presenting Gerald Gardner as co-creator rather than inheritor of revived British Wicca; and "Pagan Renaissance and Wiccan Witchcraft in Industrial Society," a paper by George Kirkpatrick, Kathryn Rubi and Rich Rainey. Also included, a chapter, "Myth, Ritual and Symbolism," from Janet and Stewart Farrar's *The Witches' Way*.

No. 2, Winter 1985. Contents include: "Carlos Castaneda: A True Shaman After All?" by Phil Carson; "The Sorcerer's Apprentice: Interview with Jose Cuellar;" "Magical Autobiography and Its Practitioners" by Chas S. Clifton; "When Magic Fails: Rationalization in North American Shamanism" by Linda Van Blerkom, plus letters and book reviews.

Send \$5 (includes postage) for each issue desired to Artemisia Press, P.O. Box 2282, Boulder, Colorado 80306.

### *Other Publications of Interest to Iron Mountain Readers*

**THE CAULDRON:** A Pagan journal of Wicca and the Old Religion. Send US \$6 (currency only) for one year subscription (8 issues) to Mike Howard, 4 Llysonnen Cottages, Llysonnen Road, Medrim, Carmarthen, Dyfed, Wales, SA33 5ED, U.K.

**CIRCLE NETWORK NEWS:** A quarterly publication for Witches, Pagans, Shamans and Magicians. 24 pages of articles, rituals, meditations, illustrations, invocations, contacts, reviews, herbal formulae and news by members of Circle Network. \$13 per year 1st class mail; \$9 per year by bulk mail.

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**HARVEST**, a Neo-Pagan journal devoted to bringing together the fruits of many traditions and belief systems as well as covering news of interest to the Pagan and Wiccan community. Publishing since October 1980. Thought-provoking articles, letters, networking, reviews, rituals, songs, recipes, art and poetry. \$2 sample copy, \$10 per year (8 issues). Harvest, P.O. Box 228, S. Framingham, Mass. 01701. People interested in submitting material should enclose an SASE for list of suggested topics and guidelines.

**KINDRED SPIRITS QUARTERLY** aims to present modern Paganism to environmentalists, and similarly, environmental issues which relate to the ideals of practicing Pagans. One year, \$4 (Australian). Kindred Spirits Quarterly, P.O. Box 101, Bega, New South Wales 2550, Australia.

**PAGANA**, newsletter of the Pagan-Occult-Witchcraft Special Interest Group of Mensa. Articles, news, letters, more. \$12 for six issues from Pagans SIG, P.O. Box 9494, San Jose, California 95157 USA.

**PANEGYRIA:** Pagan newsletter, published 8 times annually by the Aquarian Tabernacle Church, Inc. Subscriptions \$8 per year for surface mail; \$12 for domestic airmail; \$16 foreign airmail. Sample copy free on request—send large self-addressed stamped envelope (2 oz. postage).

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