

Call of the Horned Piper:

This book covers the symbolism, archetypes and myths of the Traditional Craft, or Old Religion, in the British Isles and Europe. The first section of the book explores the inner symbology and mytho-poetics of the old Witchcraft religion, this is followed by a section giving a practical treatment of the sacred cycle, the working tools, incantations, spells and pathworking.

There are also sections on spirit lines, knots and thread lore and magic, together with ancestral faery teachings. The text is highlighted with the author's original artwork.

This is a radical and fresh re-appraisal of authentic witchlore which may provide a working alternative to current mainstream trends in Wicca.

"A practical grimoire of the ancient and traditional ways of witchcraft. Highly recommended." (The Cauldron)



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£ 8.95
10.75

ISBN 1-898307-09-1



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Call of the Horned Piper



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THE CALL OF THE HORNED PIPER

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First printed April 1994

Reprinted Sept 1994

Reprinted Jan 1995

ISBN 1 898307 09 1

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Cover design by Daryth Bastin
Cover illustration by Nigel Jackson

Published by:

Capall Bann Publishing
Freshfields
Chieveley
Berks
RG16 8TF

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the following people:

Patti Owens, for indispensable help in preparing the final draft of this work and for her invaluable aid from the earliest stages.

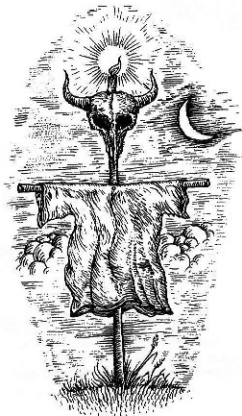
My parents and particularly my mother for computational assistance.

Michael Howard for his enduring encouragement and for helping this work emerge from the realm of potentialities into the manifest substance of middle-earth.

Evan John Jones for his stimulating input on Craft matters over several years.

Finally, thanks are due to those people whose opposition provided me with much-needed creative friction and who helped me light the need-fire.

Faerie Blessings!



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The Sabbat Song

Sleep is waking, waking sleep
we ride the broom across the deep,
fair is foul and foul is fair
by bee and cat, by hound and hare,
the living die and the dying live
we turn the shears and the sieve,
light is darkness, darkness light
to farers through the mystic night,
up is down and down is up
to seekers of the cauldron-cup,
lords are churls and churls are lords
we leap across the bridge of swords,
birth is death and death is birth
we tread the paths beneath the earth,
Bride is Hag and Hag is Bride
between the times we rage and ride,
day is night and night is day
for farers on the witching way.



Historical Introduction

As the millennium draws to its close there is a widespread and pervasive awareness of the ending of an age and the dawn of a new aeon within the human psyche. We can palpably sense the demise of the exhausted and outworn Judaeo-Christian world in a veritable 'twilight of the gods' as the twin demons of reactionary politics and fundamentalist religiosity stalk contemporary society, seeking to terrorise and enslave the free souls of humankind and mould them after their own distorted images.

Yet, as the sterile old order perishes amidst the surfeit of toxins it has generated over the last thousand years we are witnessing a visible manifestation of anakukosis, the eternal return - whilst we stand at the breakthrough threshold of a new cycle of time and consciousness we are paradoxically drawing closer to increasingly ancient mysteries encoded deep within the neural cortex, we are beginning to glimpse the faery visions of gods and ancestors in the primordial age and to re-activate the deeply-buried archetypal patterns which link us with that 'great time' or golden age.

In the foretime, middle-earth and the otherworlds were closer and the channels of interconnection between the realms were more vital and energetic - the sky was closer to the land, men could fly and speak with animals and birds and the ancestors and divine beings communicated easily and mingled upon the Many-Coloured Land. The traditional shaman, witch or wizard seeks to re-actualise these mythic

conditions in his or her own being, to act within the sacred time and space of the paradisaical foretime and to re-manifest the magical powers of the primeval divine ancestors. This work of bridging the realms of middle-earth and Elfhome is still at the core of contemporary Wicce-craeft today. This is the initiatic mystery in which our human and our faery natures or 'souls' are re-united into a balanced whole in an inner hierogamy or 'mystic marriage' which takes place within the hollow mounds of the Sidhe, in the deepest caverns of Annwryn.

If we would seek the historical origins of Witchcraft as a phenomenon of folk-religion and sorcery we must first seek the ultimate origin of the term 'witch' itself. This etymological question has caused a considerable amount of controversy and division with propagandistic interpretations being upheld on both sides. According to Skeat's Etymological Dictionary the word 'witch' has the following linguistic pedigree:

"WITCH. Mediaeval English wicche, both masculine and feminine, a wizard, a witch. Anglo-Saxon wicca, masculine, wicce, feminine. Wicca is a corruption of witga, commonly used as a short form of witega, a prophet, seer, magician or sorcerer. Anglo-Saxon witan, to see, allied to witan, to know. Similarly Icelandic vitki, a wizard, is from vita, to know".

We might relate the Welsh term 'gwyddon' for a 'Wise One', witch or wizard to this derivation. Also the Slavonic 'vjestica' and Russian 'viedma' for a witch. In any case the ultimate root-words behind all these terms are the Indo-European *WID - 'to know, to be wise' and also *WAT - "prophecy, inspiration, ecstasy". Yet other theorists see an origin in the Indo-European term *WEIK - meaning sorcery

and religious matters, especially the earth-centred spirituality of the third estate of the tripartite Indo-European societal paradigm. These were the agriculturalists, fishers, hunters and craftspeople; the common folk who lived and worked close to the land some 6000 years ago. Their shamanistic folk-mysteries were focussed upon the divinities of the fruitful earth and the fertile waters, the powers of fecundity and regeneration, of wealth, pleasure and good harvest. Here we find the archetypes of primal deities of the hunt and the animal herds who are so closely bound to the underworld in classical shamanic lore.

On the deepest levels there were cults of divinised ancestors and chthonic deities of death and rebirth in the underworld, the powers of the night-moon and stars and of the subterranean depths. From *WEIK such theorists derive Anglo-Saxon 'wicce/wicce', 'wiccian' - 'to cast a spell' and 'wicce-craeft' - 'witchcraft' and also Old High German 'wikkerie' - 'witchery'.

It is likely that the mysteries of the Horned One and the Great Queen were old in the heyday of the Indo-European expansions some six to four millenia ago when that group of peoples migrated in successive waves westward from the steppes of southern Russia, their original homeland in the regions of the Don and Dnieper rivers north of the Black Sea. As this ancestral ethnic and linguistic entity broke up into separate cultures such as the Roman, Hellenic, Slavonic and Celtic peoples (and the Persians and Indians in their eastward peregrinations) the mystery-cultus of *WEIK was preserved throughout Europe in various distinctive forms amongst the peasantry and common people. The practitioners of witchery were regarded with some ambivalence but were generally respected as powerful folk-sorcerers and sorceresses flourishing as a shamanic

priesthood throughout central and north-western Europe in the Iron Age with analogues in the classical and southern European sphere. It seems likely that European witchcraft draws upon roots that are ultimately Old European but which were assimilated into the foundations of Indo-European religion and culture in remote antiquity.

One thousand years ago, when the Christian missionaries and evangelists sought to convert the tribal peoples of Europe they primarily concentrated their efforts upon the visible political powers, the total kings and chieftains along with their courts, and warrior-bands, in the belief that society could be Christianised from the top downwards. In reality the intervening centuries would reveal that this process did not occur and that at the level of agrarian peasant life the pre-Christian lore and practices were adhered to tenaciously and boldly by the greater mass of rural folk. It simply proved impossible to eradicate the initiatic patterns of magical consciousness which were so deeply ingrained in the collective awareness of European countryfolk and which constituted an ancient oral inheritance of esoteric knowledge, mythopoetics and magical technologies. This body of folk-esotericism was expressed in traditional mythic lays and faery-tales, in seasonal mumming and guizing rituals and other symbolic dance rituals and processions, in the secretive craft-associations of blacksmiths, shepherds, horsemen, midwives, spinners and weavers, in agricultural rite and custom and in the manic practices and mysterious lore of the traditional witches.

The earliest churchmen who mentioned the 'night-travellers' and 'myrk-riders' of the Witch-cult merely regarded their otherworldly trance-flights in the train of the goddess Herodias as a folly, a delusion which lured people away from the rectitude of Christian piety. Thus at first witches were only sentenced to mild punishments such as

penances or temporary banishment. However, it became apparent by the mediaeval period that such deeply-rooted magical and religious forms, far from diminishing in occurrence, were actually flourishing and growing apace, fuelled by a bold new impulse of spiritual rebellion against the Church, barons and royalty.

By the time of the infamous Papal Bull of 1484 which condemns witches as malefic poisoners the ancient cultus of Wicce-Craeft was being obscured and misrepresented amidst the fogs of ecclesiastical 'diabolism' raised by cleric-writers in innumerable garish tracts and sermons. Men such as Bernadina of Siena in his Roman sermons, the German Dominican author, Johannes Nider and the Inquisitor Bernardo Rategno in his 'Tractatus de Strigibus', worked hard to transform the chthonic cults of the 'night-travellers' with their vision-journeys and worship of Our Lady of the Night and Ould Hornie into an anti-social threat, a pernicious and perverted mirage which is still employed in evangelical propaganda today.

The Dominican writers Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger penned the definitive work of diabolistic misinformation, the notorious 'Malleus Maleficarum' or 'Hammer of the Witches'. This classic Catholic text virtually defined a literary genre which would persist well into the 17th Century and contributed to the torture and sufferings of many thousands of people.

The Old Faith, now under direct attack from above, receded further and further into the marginalised regions of society and persisted under a closer veil of secrecy than ever. Even through the cruel persecutions and insane mob-hysteria engineered by the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Europe it seems that the Craft of the Wise was continued along hidden channels of transmission, often in

old families in remote rural districts, in loose coven groupings, and in the lore of solitary Wyse-wives and Cunning-men.

The 17th Century witch-hunts and executions perpetrated in the Puritan England of the Commonwealth reveal more clearly than ever the socio-political motivations behind the attack on witchcraft. Puritanism, with all its self-righteous 'work and prayer' ethic, its joyless and repressive morality and fanatical enforcement of total socio-religious conformism, appealed mostly to the prosperous and rising merchant classes. The mercantile classes of Cromwell's England were the hard-working, upwardly mobile Puritans who were beginning to own the land and employ the ordinary people. These dreary people were beginning to oppress the traditional peasantry, dissolving the traditional apprentice's rights and exploiting the agrarian workforce. Politically motivated by a desire to intimidate, disempower and break the common folk and their culture, justified by a sour and malicious dogma and maddened by their own lowly social backgrounds, the Puritans embarked upon a veritable frenzy of megalith-smashing, church-vandalising, maypole-felling destruction which reached its deranged crescendo in the torture and hanging of witches across the British Isles.

Within this historical environment of evangelical dementia, social disruption and the atrocities of the Civil War we see Puritans and parliamentarians employing sadistic lunatics like Matthew Hopkins, the 'Witchfinder General', to eradicate witchery and strike terror into the people as part of their overall political scheme of authoritarian control.

This miserable tyranny collapsed after only a few brief years but Witchcraft had gone to earth, receding ever deeper

into the hidden recesses of the folk-consciousness. Amidst the rationalistic 'Enlightenment' of the 18th Century and the materialistic positivism and 'Churchianity' of the 19th Century the Witch-traditions still persisted in silence and obscurity, preserved in many shadowy nooks and corners, now dismissed as mere rustic superstition, quaint relics of a bygone era, collected by scholars and antiquarian vicars as part of the burgeoning science of folk-lore studies.

In the twentieth century we have seen the revival of both an academic and a religious involvement with European witch-lore in which an effort has been made to re-assess the subject accurately, free from the distorting filters of Christian prejudice. This great work really began with Girolamo Tartarotti's 'Del Congresso Notturmo Del Lammie' ('Of the Midnight Gatherings of Witches') published in 1749 in which he rediscovered the pre-Christian nature of the Witch-cult and the 'Brigade of Diana'. At the same time a theme so richly imaginative and vitally irrational as Witchcraft could not help but exert a powerful influence upon the Romantic and Gothic movements in art and literature which were then beginning to flower in Germany and England.

The ground-breaking works of Dr. Margaret Murray in the 1920's caused a furore in academia which was even then infested with clerics and churchmen and her work quickly became a focus for misogynistic resentment in that period. Her examination of the heathen nature of witchcraft was pioneering in its nature and she proved very clearly that this was an ancient religion which had survived into the dawn of the modern era. She erred in underestimating the visionary and shamanic nature of with-spirituality and exaggerated the organisational and congregational side of the Craft as a secret network but she led the way for further developments and provided a stimulus to revivalists along

with the Victorian works of Charles Godfrey Leland whose forays into Tuscan Witchcraft in Italy led to the publication of 'Aradia: The Gospel of the Witches' in 1899.

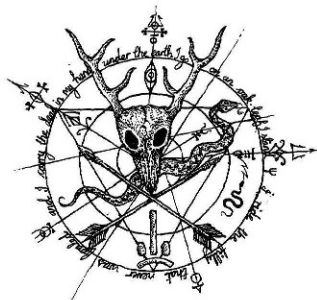
The work of Gerald Brosseau Gardner, Doreen Valiente and Alex Sanders in the 1950's to the 1970's led to the establishment of a particular form of revival witchcraft as a popular mystery-religion in the modern era. Gardner and Valiente elaborated this form of the Craft from the teachings of a traditional New Forest coven, fleshed out with a good deal of literary, occult and folk-lore material from various sources.

Another name to be reckoned with is that of Robert Cochrane who prior to his death in 1966 propagated traditional witch-practices through his group, the 'Clan of Tubal-Cain'. He claimed to have derived his lore from a Norfolk source within his own family but he tended to obscure these simple concepts and practices beneath a morass of personal invention and fabrication. Nonetheless the pure core-practices of the 'Clan of Tubal-Cain' bear the hallmarks of the 'true persuasion' and are continued today by some old members of the group such as Evan John Jones.

Witchcraft studies in the 1980's and 1990's have undergone an intense period of acceleration and great inroads into an academic understanding of the true nature of the historical Craft have been made through the work of scholars such as Hans Peter Duerr in his 'Dreamtime: Concerning the Boundary between Wilderness and Civilization' (1985) and Carlo Ginzburg in his 'Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches Sabbath' (1990). These two indispensable studies contain revelatory research and insights and I have relied considerably upon their findings in my present exposition of the subject as a practical and experiential path of European magic and spirituality.

In addition hitherto unsuspected secrets about how traditional Witchcraft relates to sacred loci, stone stiles, boundaries, and 'spirit-lines' on the ritual landscapes of Europe are being unearthed by Paul Devereux - research which hold tremendous implications for consciousness-work in general and the Craft in particular.

So the time has come to enter into the world of the Faerie Sabbat and to penetrate the tangled and shadowy forest of mediaeval witch-lore with it's lurking ancestral ghosts, spirits and archaic divinities. In that eldritch realm we shall doubtless encounter many strange things but if we let the scales of illusion fall from our eyes we may discern a rare wisdom.



Broomsticks, Grease Birds and The Gandreidh

An owl calls from the dark windswept woods and the tide of midnight draws nigh in the cottage whose chamber is alight with reed tapers. A woman unbinds her long hair and begins chanting her call to the dark robed master and the wild Mistress of the Night. In the flickering gloom her black cat sports restively as the witch's incantation echoes about the low-beamed room. She now begins to anoint her brow, temples and soles of her feet with a goose feather from a small pot of dark green oil, kneeling by a birch twig besom.

Swirling mists slowly begin to wreath the chamber as she enters into the dreaming-trance of the Dwale spirits. The sonorous Sabbat-call continues as her spirit begins to leave her body, it is being sung through her. Her lips whisper the words, "Horse and Hattock, in the Divell's name" and then she is astride the besom, rising upwards through the broad chimney hole. Up into the clouds and the starlight soars the witch, riding through the windy darkness; over meadow, river and dale to the caverns of the Sabbat mountain and down into the netherworld of the Nine Mothers.

This archetypal image of the witch's nocturnal broomstick flight, so deeply ingrained in the European folk consciousness, derives its potency from truly archaic roots. In traditional witchcraft the broomstick is the symbolic means whereby the journey is taken beyond this world and



*The witch shapeshifting into the form of a night-flying owl;
the Striga or 'screech owl' of classical tradition*

into the unfathomable realms of the Underworld. It is essential to understand the magico-poetic code employed here, for in the shamanistic context 'flight' always alludes to trance-ecstasy and the visionary movement of the spirit.

The broomstick is therefore a mystical emblem of the ecstatic night ride of the followers of the Dark goddess, Dame Holda, Diana or Herodias. This shamanic Mystery lies at the core of the Elder craft, as an ancient initiation-pattern transmitted down through thousands of years in Europe. The three customary woods used in the making of the broom handle conceal an inner esoteric significance - the ash handle stands for spirit (Anda) and air through which the witch must journey, the World-Ash Yggdrasil and the shamanic ecstasy (Odhr) through which that spirit flight is achieved; the willow withies which bind the brush stand for the moon and the fog-shrouded waters that must be crossed to enter the realms of death and wisdom; the birch twigs are sacred to the White Lady, Dame Berchta, the Earth Goddess through whom the witch hopes to attain purification and initiatory rebirth.

Thus the ash handled broomstick transforms into a mystical image of the World-Ash Yggdrasil ('The Horse of the Terrible One' - Woden) and aptly symbolises flight into the upper and lower worlds. Shamans of the Siberian Buryat tribes travel through the worlds astride a horse-headed stick as a magical steed, which is ritually vivified with the blood of a sacrificed horse. In Siberian cosmology the universe is seen as a vast yurt (tent) with the Pole Star/Heavenly Nail fixed above the smoke hole. This aperture gives access to the Otherworlds and in trance the shaman rides through it.

In like manner and with the same intention the witch rides the broomstick up the chimney-hole in the Northern

folk Tradition. As 'Frau Holt' is the Elder Mother it comes as no surprise to learn that the witches rode Elder sticks on their nocturnal travels, for the elder, or Bourtree, has a reputation as a 'witch tree'. It's equivalent in Bird-Ogham is the raven, symbolising death-wisdom, flight and the chthonic regions of Annwyn. Scottish witches sometimes sent forth their souls in raven form and the Gaelic word 'Badhbh' signifies both the black crow of the Morrigan and also a witch or Fury. The Portuguese witch, the Bruxsa goes forth by darkness as a huge and sinister night-bird and the nightjar is called the hexe in German folklore being thought of as shape-shifted witches who suck the milk from goats in the night. Swedish witches favoured the shape of the magpie in their aerial spirit-flights.

The airborne cavalcade of the witches was known in ancient Scandinavia as the Gandreidh ('Wand-ride'), the gandr being the Old Norse term for the magical wand or the magician's rod of power. There is a reference to such a 'Myrk-rida' in the 12th century C.E. Law of Vastgotaland where it says;

"Woman, I saw you riding on a fence switch with loose hair and belt, in the troll skin (mask), at the time when day and night were equal."

The Saxon word for witch is Haegtessa, which means 'hedge-rider': the hedge being the boundary between this world and the mysterious Otherworld which lies beyond the parameters of 'ordinary' reality and consciousness. The Old Norse lay 'Havamal' refers to 'hedge-riders, witching aloft'.

In the trial of Lady Alice Kyteler in Ireland in 1224, a description was given of her 'pipe of oyntment, wherewith she greased a staff, upon which she ambled and galloped through thick and thin.' This 'oyntment' was undoubtedly a

psychedelic unguent prepared from the nightshade plant which induced the 'flying trance' of the Mirk riding witch. The 17th century antiquarian Praetorius reported that witches are called 'grease birds' due to their use of such preparations.

In 1608 we find Guazzo describing how the witches 'anoint themselves upon some part of their bodies with an unguent made from various foul and filthy ingredients... and so anointed they are carried away on a cowl staff or a broom or a reed or a cleft sick or a distaff, which things they ride.'

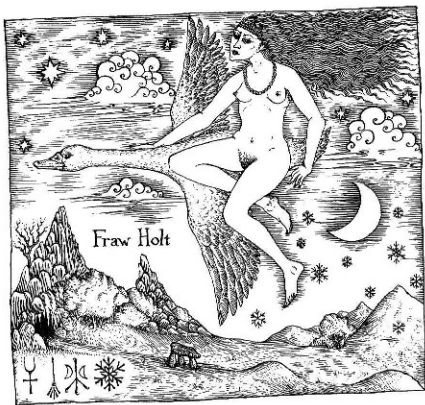
In the 17th century Scottish witches reported that they rode corn sticks and pea straws to the Sabbat which they transformed into horses echoing the Buryat 'horse stick'. An identical shamanic feat is recorded in Finnish mythic lore where the wizard-hero Vainamoinen 'took a stallion of straw, a horse of pea-stalks' to ride into the Otherworld regions. In 1596 the Aberdeen witches were held to have performed a 'devilish dance, riding on trees by a long space'. Mention should also be made to the horse of the ancient British goddess Andrasta which was called the March Maten and was the steed of flying sorcerers.

The herb called ragwort is known as a favourite witch's steed throughout England, as it is said, "as rank a witch as ever rode on ragwort" but Celtic witches in Ireland are said to fly upon stalks of yarrow. The witch shamans of the Hungarian cultural sphere, the Taltos, mounts a reed to travel through the heavens. A remarkable Meso-American parallel is to be found in the Aztec goddess of the moon, female sexuality, spinning and crossroads called Tlazolteotl. In the Codex Fejervary-Mayer, this goddess is depicted upon a broom, holding a serpent in her hand and with a spindle in her headdress.

The theologians and churchmen regarded the broomstick flight as an actual physical levitation made possible by the infernal adversary. This was a crude misapprehension of the symbolic Mysteries of the witches within which the broomstick is the inner vehicle and glyph of nocturnal journeys to the goddess of the Underworld, the winging of the magically liberated psyche from this world into hidden realms of existence.

To ride the besom-broom is to fly through the night, across the boundary between Middle Earth and the cosmic immensities of Annwvyn. The mystical ecstasy of the hedge-riders must be retapped and re-awakened, in order for the acolytes of Herodias to enter into her deepest Mysteries and partake of the Sabbat Feast from her Black Cauldron in the Hidden lands.





Fraw Holt or Dame Holda, the northern witch-goddess travelling upon her sacred goose through the night

Frau Holda, Venus Mountain and The Night Travellers

From the 10th Century c.e. onwards Frankish clerics and churchmen such as Regino of Prum fulminated sourly against the 'devilish' belief of 'certeine wicked women' that 'in the night times they ride abroad with Diana, the goddess of the pagans, or else with Herodias, with an innumerable multitude upon certeine beasts.' This was echoed in the fourteenth century law-code of Lorraine which censured those who rode through the air with Diana. The image of the Wild Ancestral Goddess had a powerful influence upon the mediaeval imagination; the author of 'The Romance of the Rose' wote that a third of the people have dreams of nocturnal journeys with Dame Habondia.

In Northern Europe, the sect of night travelling witches were held to fly through the sky in the retinue of the goddess Herodias or Holda, who leads the ancestral spirits of the Furious Horde in the winter months around Samhain and Yule. Like the Cymric goddess Cerridwen, Frau Holda is the archaic underworld Earth Mother, mistress of death, initiation and rebirth, who rules over the chthonic realm of Hel or Annwyn. In Scandinavia she is known as Hela, the daughter of Loki, of whom it is related that half of her is fair and half black with decay. This signifies her bright and dark aspects as Freyja/Holda mistress of life and death. The Veiled Goddess encompasses the cosmic dualities of day and night, growth and dissolution, radiance and shadow. Her association with the Wild Hunt is strong in Germany where

the ride of the death powers is sometimes called the Heljagd and in Normandy, Mesnee a Hellequin. The Indo-European original of this Witch Goddess is *KOLYO, 'the Coverer' - the funereal Otherworld Queen of the Indo-European peoples from figures as diverse as the Celtic Cailleach and Greek nymph Kalypso are descended.

The life/death aspects of Dame Hela were referred to by the German wizard, herbalist and crystal scryer Diel Breull of Calbach who confessed in 1630 that he had travelled to the pagan holy mountain, the Venusberg, 'four times a year, during the fast.' He had no idea how he got to the mountain. He then confessed he was a night traveller and 'the Frau Holle (to whom he travels) is a fine woman from the front but from the back she is like a hollow tree with rough bark. It was in Venus mountain that he came to know a number of herbs.'

This description corresponds with the female forest spirit called the Skogfru in Old Norse and the woodwife, birch maiden and wild damsel elsewhere who are beautiful women from the front but hollow behind like a rotten log. The woodwives are associated with the Wild Hunt, sometimes being pursued by Woden. ('Woodwife' and 'woodwose' both stem from the Saxon root-word 'Wod' - 'wild, furious, enthused'). Like many native European initiation sites, the Hurselberg was regarded as the gateway to the underworld, the domain of Frau Venus, the classicized Freyja/Holda. From the Hurseloch cave on the mountain eldritch voices and wailing could sometimes be heard, for it led down into the magical realm of the goddess.

The mediaeval tale of Tannhauser is based upon this initiatory lore for he was a knight minnesinger (troubadour) who while riding past the cavern of the Hurselberg at twilight encountered the beautiful and entrancing Frau

Venus, who took him below into the Otherworld regions to be her consort for seven years. In Scottish tradition a related pattern is exemplified by Thomas the Rymer, the thirteen century seer who met the Queen of Elfae beneath the Eildon Thorn and went with her into the world of Faery for seven years.

She gave Thomas a golden apple to eat which conferred the prophetic gift upon him. This is reminiscent of Woden's descent into the heart of Suttungr's mountain where he sleeps with the giantess Gunnlod to attain the mead of poetic inspiration.

Such goddess forms are comparable to the shamanic Clan Mother of the nether-world in Siberian mythology. And we may note that the worship of the Northern Earth Mother Jord/Hlodyn was carried out at hills and mounds, symbols of the womb of the earth. The Furious Horde at Samhain is esoterically linked with the rune Haegl whose primal form '* ' represents the snowflake. This makes sense as Holda is traditionally held to shake down the snow onto the countryside; in the Channel Isles snow showers occur when Herodias shakes her petticoats. Her holy bird, the goose, is also connected with the Wild Hunt, and snow crystals are said to drift from its feathers as it flies overhead. The nocturnal cries of migrating geese are interpreted as the yelping of ghostly Gabriel hounds in Celtic lore and are symbolised by the Bird-Ogham Ngeigh at Samhain. The mystical Ninth Mother-Rune symbolises the nine nights the post-mortem soul takes to travel the Hel-Way, the prototypical Spirit-Road which runs northwards into the Underworld of Helheim.

Frau Holda is the heathen original of Mother Goose, who is remembered at winter tide, and the goose is the magical steed upon which Arctic shamans travel in visionary flight

to the Otherworld. The witch Agnes Gerhardt confessed in 1596 that she and her fellow initiates used a vision-salve 'in order to fly to the dance like snow geese', and went on to describe how she prepared this hallucinogenic ointment by frying tansy, hellebore and wild ginger in butter mixed with egg. Such 'flying salves' (or Unguentum Sabbati) feature prominently in the worttunning of the night travelling witches.

In fact Styrian witches were still using them in the 19th Century. Hartliepp, court physician of Bavaria, gives a formula used by 15th century Northern witches which involves procuring seven herbs on the appropriate days of the pagan week - heliotrope on Sunna's day, fern on moon day, verbena on Tiw's day, spurge on Woden's day, houseleek on Thor's day, maidenhair on Freyja's day and nightshade on Saeter/Hela's day. This magical operation would ensure that the salve would be empowered with the energies of the principal heathen deities.

In 1582 the Archbishop of Salzburg's counsellor, the erudite mathematician and astrologer Dr. Martin Pegger, was arrested under the charge that his wife had flown with the night travellers to the goddess Herodias in the Unterberg. Within the mountain she had seen Herodias with her mountain-ladies and mountain-dwarves and the goddess is said to have come to Frau Pegger's house by Salzburg fish market on a later occasion. The mention of the goddess' mountain-dwarves is significant for they are sometimes known as the Huldervolk; the folk of the Elder, Frau Holda's holy tree.

The association of cats and hares with witches and night travellers may indicate that they inherited many of the magical techniques from the cult of Seidr, the shamanism of 'inner fire' sacred to the goddess Freyja which included

trance journeys and communication with the elves and other entities. According to Saxon lore, Freyja sometimes appears amidst a company of hares and she is known to roam the meadows of Aargau with a silver-grey hare by her side in the night hours. The hare is famed as a totem form in which shapeshifting witches travel.



Freyja, the Teutonic goddess of love, sexuality and mantic sorcery riding a Siberian tiger

It is known that a strong subterranean current of Freyja worship survived in mediaeval Germany. Closely related initiatory Mysteries existing in the British Isles usually centred on the Faerie goddess, the Queen of Elphame.

An interesting late case is the astrologer and Hermeticist John Heydon in the 17th century, who having imprudently predicted Cromwell's death was forced to flee from London to Somerset. There he claimed to have encountered a green-robed lady at a faery hill. She took him within the mount into a glass castle where he learnt much wisdom and mantic lore. This experience obviously took place in an altered state of shamanic perception.

Frau Holda is the feminine counterpart of the Master of the Wild Hunt, and she is essential to a balanced appreciation of this area of pagan spirituality. The night-travelling witches of the Northern Lands, far from being demonically deluded as ignorant and vindictive churchmen said, were in reality the preservers of a hoary Wisdom Tradition and magical world view which is now accessible to us again at the dawning of a new heathen aeon.



Death Mysteries of The Horned Master



The 'charivari', an unruly procession of masked and horned mummers; these 'guizers' enacted the Wild Hunt at Halloween and Yuletide in medieval Europe

During the trial of the Aberdeen witches in the 16th century, Andro Man described a Sabbat meeting at which he saw the Old One, "....come out of the snow in the likeness of a stag." This was an encounter with one of the most primal, archaic divinities of the European folk-soul - the ancestral Horned god of death, fertility and mantic ecstasy, the dark Underworld king whom Welsh lore calls Gwyn ap Nudd, King of Annwryn who reaches far back to the Common Celtic figure of Vindonos, son of Nudnos.

At the start of the winter months he is Master of the Wild Hunt, and his frenzied and ghostly chase is accompanied by his primary totems of stag, hound, raven and snow goose. Old Hornie is the fearsomely rough, strange god who rides out a-hunting during the paradoxical periods of ritual reversal, the 'time between the times'. The Horned One's eerie pack, white of coat and red of ear, are called Yell Hounds - a worn-down form of the term 'Gabriel Hounds'; it is significant in this respect that in mediaeval funeral processions the bier was called 'St.Gabriel's Wain'. Here the archangel with his trumpet has assimilated the heathen archetype of the god of the Furious Host who winds his horn to summon the spirits of the dead.

An ancient name for the Dark One in English dialect is 'Owd Scrat', which derives from Old High German 'Schrat', signifying a hairy wood-dæmon or woodwose. This term is used for the Devil in the old Vulgate Bible; a familiar example of Christian misinformation.

Germanic traditions identify Woden as the Wild Hunter who leads the 'Yule Host'. His very name derives from the Proto Indo-European adjective *WATOS, a specialised expression for trance-ecstasy from which the divine epithet *WATONOS is formed - 'the Furious One' who personifies and grants the faculty of ecstatic inspiration and prophetic

genius to the shaman. We can see this root in various languages such as Old Norse 'Odr' - 'inspiration', German 'Wut', Saxon 'Wod', Gothic 'Woths', Latin 'Vates' - 'prophet', Irish 'Faith' - 'ecstatic bard'. In fact the term Old Nick comes from one of Woden's god names, Hnikkar or 'The Slayer'. Sometimes he is called Hakelberg or 'Mantle Wearer', with his deep blue cloak and wide brimmed hat, whose deathly horde is heralded by the owl Tutursel and is accompanied by ravens, his sacred birds. Places where he stops to let his steed graze become places of power where it is said the wind always blows.

There are also certain ancient trackways along which the spirit host would continually manifest to pursue their hunt at particular times, which were sometimes denoted as 'Woden's way' in Saxon England. In Holland and Germany these spirit-tracks are called Doodwegen ('Death-roads') and Geisterwegen ('Ghost-roads'). Likewise on stormy nights on Dartmoor the Midnight Hunter and his Wish hounds would run on the track known as the Abbot's Way which leads towards Cornwall.

In the old days folk would assiduously avoid these paths, especially round the Fire Festivals, and to have one running through a dwelling place was thought to be disastrous. To meet the god on one of these tracks is to court madness or death. In a house where two or three doors directly faced each other, there was a likelihood of the Wild Hunt passing through them. Thus such alignments were avoided in traditional architecture. All this indicates a geomantic dimension inherent within the concept of the Wild Hunt, relating to ritual landscapes, spirit paths and cyclic magical manifestations.

The white coated, red eared Gabriel Ratchets who hunt with the Antlered King are paralleled by black hounds in

some accounts, such as that in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 1127, when the wild Hunt was seen throughout the countryside around the beginning of February (Imbolc/Candlemass).

The dread beings 'straddled black horses and bucks while their hounds were pitch black with terrible staring eyes... all through the night the monks heard them sounding and winding their horns'. In many parts of Britain the appearance of the Black Dog is feared as an omen of impending death. The spectral beast is called Black Shuck in Essex and the Barguest in Yorkshire. The latter name derives from Germanic 'Bahrg Geist', the spirit of the funeral bier.

The Devil sometimes appears in this guise at the sabbat; a Suffolk witch trial of 1655 states that the "Old one manifested as "...a rough tanny dog playing on a pair of pipes", and the Guernsey witch Isabel Becquet in 1617 saw him in the form of a dog "...with two great horns sticking up". Guernsey tradition knows the Black Dog as Tchi-Co with it's luminous eyes and clanking chain. The connection between canines and the death powers is of ancient origin for dogs are supposed to be able to perceive the goddess Hela.

In some forms of Traditional Craft the Dark God is represented by the stang, a forked ashwood stave which stands in the North of the circle as the Horned Guardian of the portal between the worlds. Sometimes the Stang is formed from a pair of bulls horns mounted on a staff with a linen shirt hung from a cross-beam.

This shamanistic cult object also features in the Northamptonshire folk ritual of the 'Skimmington Ride' or 'Riding the Stang', where it is borne through the streets at

midnight to the cacophonous noise of the Ran Tan band, a bedlam of drums, tins and horns.



The totemic stag stands beside the stang, the horned cultic totem of the Faery King, Gwyn ap Nudd and his Wild Hunt. Overhead fly three psychopompic geese.

This is the ritual invocation of the Wild Hunt and its Lord, enacted to drive out wife beaters, adulterers and malfactors from the village.

At Ashton-under-Lyne a processional used to be known as 'Riding the Black Lad' which has also been interpreted as a Wild Hunt ceremonial. The 'Black Lad' being of course the Old One, whom the North Berwick witches encountered as 'a mickle blak man' with burning eyes at their Sabbat meetings. The Dark Man or Man in Black is the human vehicle and priest of the Horned Master, Gwynn/Woden and mediates his presence; a wild, harsh power of the darkness and cold. This is the sombre and terrifying Spirit Hunter who bestows death, ecstasy and initiation upon his followers; Opener of the Way to the shadowy Underworld for the disembodied soul.

There are some similarities between the Black Master of Northern European lore and the Siberian god of the underworld and Lord of the Dead, Irlik Khan, before whose subterranean hall grows a nine-rooted pine tree. This deity binds souls with chains and is especially prominent in the cultic activities of 'black' shamans who specialise in descents to the nether world. Practitioners among the Eastern Tungus wear a ritual cap which bears symbolic iron antlers, closely resembling pagan regalia in European rites such as the Abbots Bromley 'Stag Mummers'.

At the onset of deep night when the Old One blows his horn and the Furious Host of wild nights passes by the soul is swept from the body and enters into communion with the ancestor-stream in Annwvyn. This is more than just a metaphor for physical death, because it embodies the initiation into the Mysteries of the Horned King of the Netherworlds.

The mediaeval Danse Macabre seems to be a remnant of these practices. In the reign of Henry VI a Dance of Death was enacted at St. Pauls in London with the performers dressed as skeletons, and these processions were popular

spectacles in the Middle Ages.

In Breton folklore the apparition of the Ankou, the wagon of the Death God in which he conveys souls of the dead to the Underworld, links up with the lore of the Wild Hunt, as does the widespread ghost story of the 'phantom coach'.

The darker aspects of the Horned God are sometimes played down in contemporary forms of paganism because our modern sensibilities feel uncomfortable with them. Modern society after all shys away from this taboo subject, preferring fantasies of cryogenic immortality. Our ancestors however faced reality and payed their respects to the death powers with both reverence and fear. The Black Master may be terrible but it is only natural to feel fear in his presence - he is in fact the terror of death itself, continually testing, teaching and initiating us. We must all face the Horned Guardian of the Door and pass through darkness in order to approach the renewing radiance of the goddess. Intimations of his approach can perhaps be sensed in dark windswept woods in early winter, when the roar of the gale shakes the tree tops and cloud-rack scuds over the cold stars - it is then that one truly knows that he is hunting and that no living things can ever escape the airy hosts of the Horned One.



Hag-Way and Sabbat Stone

At the stroke of bull's noon, the witching hour, all the hags and warlocks are abroad, riding along the road to the midnight sabbat; some in the shapes of owls, hares, moths, gees and ravens, others mounted upon pitchforks, besoms, cats or goats. Clouds skim across a gibbeous moon as the dark company of Striga travel swiftly on faery paths into the spirit-world, following the many named mistress who has been called Herodias, Berchtholda, Cailleach, Morgan Le Fay, the Empress Irdeasa. The hexe-way runs across the nighted heaths, stretching into the unknown spaces beyond, the cryptical passage into the world of the Sabbat which is found by journeying northward 'as the crow flies' upon the wings of trance. It is the road along which the Dianic company, the faery tribes and the skeletal Dance of Death move in procession.

The four quarter days are the gateways within time which open onto this dark conventicle, especially All-Hallows and Walpurgis Night (May Eve) when German witches leapt wildly upon the Brocken mountain, the sacred peak of the Hartz mountains, and the Scottish witches entered the hollow Eildon Hills.

The true Sabbat exists in twilight dimensions of consciousness, at the hidden Otherworld loci reached by footworn ways. Traditional Hexecraft and witchery preserved the magico-symbolic maps and signposts which can guide the seeker through the 'hedge' into these concealed regions of the spirit.

The sabbat is a convocation of powers in the Otherworld and also a state of inner communion with deathless root-wisdoms; it is a place where the divine heights and the animal depths of the soul meet together. This is the witch-hierophany which takes place at the crossroads of Dame Hecate, Mistress of the Three Keys.

The celebrants of this nocturnal mystery gather in spirit 'between the times' on the meadows of Hel to honour the Black Goat and Our Lady of Elfland, and to attain the magical numen of the ghost-world. From this realm the discarnate spirit returns to Middle-Earth, enriched with the lore of the ancestors and divine inspirational gifts.

In Italy the witches who follow 'la vecchia religione', having anointed themselves with flying-slve cry out the following call:

"Away, away, through snow and storm,
carry me to the nut-tree of Benevento."

Then mounting a black horned goat they fly to the Otherworld sabbat- stead. In the nineteenth century Italian witch-grimoire 'Aradia: The Gospel of the Witches', translated by C.G. Leland, the goddess commands her acolytes thus - 'And ye shall make the game of Benevento'. In the traditions of Italian witchery, the goddess Aradia is honoured as Domina Ludi, the 'Mistress of the Game'. In 1390 two Italian witches from Vicomercato were charged with having gone 'to join the game of Diana whom you call Herodias.'

In 1669 the witches of Mora and Elfdale in Sweden described their shamanic journey into the Otherworld; after

anointing themselves from a horn of salve at the crossroads they thrice called upon the Devil (Horned God) with the words:

"Antecessor, come and carry us to Blockula."

Antecessor is perhaps a derivation from the Old Norse Ansur - 'god, divinity.' The Devil appeared as a figure dressed in a grey coat, wearing a high peaked hat with a multi-coloured band around it and with a red beard. By his power the witches flew mounted upon animals and staves 'over churches and high walls' to his kingdom, which was situated in 'a delicate large meadow.' They passed through 'a gate painted with diverse colours' to the Otherworldly hall or herrgard at Blockula, the 'Black Peak.' At Blockula the Swedish witches celebrated the eternal delights of the sabbat - sacred dance, feasting, erotic mysteries, magical combats and the acquisition of helper-spirits such as cats and white ravens.

The saga of Thorstein relates how he visited the underworld riding upon his magic staff (gandr). He stole a ring and a jewel encrusted lid from the king of the nether regions and returned to Middle Earth with them - just as the shaman returns to Middle Earth with Otherworldly treasures, magical powers and the lore of dead generations.

The world of the sabbat is characterised by ritual paradox - illumination is sought in darkness, day in night, birth in death.

Esoteric formulae of inverse symbolism hold sway including backward prayer and frenetic back to back dancing in a widdershins direction e.g. against the sun's

path. This is because the world of the dead is an inverted image of the world of the living. Eurasian shamanism teaches us that night on earth is daylight to spirits of the underworld, the earthly right hand becomes the sinister or left hand there, our summer is their winter. In that world rivers flow backwards and trees grow upside down with their roots in the air.

The Germanic sabbat culminates in the opalescent caverns of the Venusberg where the Queen of the Elves reveals visions and knowledge of the magical arts to her followers.

Within the mystic enclosure of Venus Mountain the goddess presides over the pleasures of the Otherworld; male warlocks sometimes related how they conjoined with Dame Venus, an initiatory 'sacred marriage' with the deep mother of Hel. Likewise female witches described their carnal dealings with the ithyphallic Devil. In his 'Compendium Maleficarum', the 17th century author Guazzo describes how the witches light 'a foul and horrid fire' at their sabbats;

"The Devil is the president of the assembly and sits on a throne, in some terrible shape, as a goat or a dog, and they approach him to adore him..."

To the witches of the Valais the Master appeared as a black ram. This is the great archetype of the Horned One, The Lord of the Animals, the destroyer and regenerator in the netherworld whose symbols are the skull and phallus.

This shamanic master of the Beasts derives from the Wild God Vindonos/Gwynn widely venerated in Iron Age Celtia. Before this ancient god, according to Guazzo, the witches bore black votive tapers which burnt with a smoky blue flame. The French witch Jane Bosdeau attended a

sabbat in 1594 where 'there appeared a great, black goat with a candle between its horns', symbolising mystic luminosity in the darkness of Annwryn, the underworld. This is sometimes represented by the candle lit between the tines of the stang or the standard pole (Old Norse 'merkis stong').

At the sabbats of Yorkshire witches in 1664 the god appeared as 'a Black Man upon a Black horse with cloven feet', emphasising his rulership over the realm of animals and horned herds.

Sometimes a curious sacrament consisting of 'red bread and red drink' or wheaten cakes and ale is partaken of. Witches in the Basse-Pyrenees invoked the blessing of the goat god into the bread and when the chalice was raised the ritual phrase "Corbeau Noire" (Black Crow) was intoned, hallowing it to the Celtic goddess Cathu Bodua, 'Battle Crow.' The wine, mingled with sacrificial blood, was sprinkled upon the earth and the gathering to confer new life. The vinum sabbati was held to possess strange properties, for the initiate who drank it 'had all of a sudden the sensation of receiving and preserving within himself the image of our art and the principal rituals of the sect'. This wine is synonymous with the elixir-potion that the witch goddess Cerridwen brews in her cauldron.

The traditional sabbat focuses upon the operations of the cauldron, the magical vessel of spiritual nourishment and omniscience, the well in which the dead are restored to life. The witch's cauldron is a psychic crucible in which the essences of consciousness are subtly fermented and distilled; to set its contents boiling the creative magical heat of Our Lady must be kindled within. This energy is called seidhfire, from the Old Norse 'seidh' - burning - and 'seydir' - cooking fire. This is the feminine flame of transformation and

knowledge which shines in the coiling tongues of the sabbat-fire.

These mysterious Otherworld revels of the night travellers continue through the hours of darkness to the pulse of tabors and the voices of pipes and flutes. Only as dawn approached in the east and the cockerel crows, do the witches depart from the timeless domain of the sabbat, and return to their slumbering bodies in Middle Earth.



The Mark of the Witch

Throughout the accounts of European witchery the 'Devil's Mark' features as a recurring element; this 'witch-mark' seems to have been a coloured character or tattooed sign that the Horned Master or Devil made upon a new member of the company at the time of their admission into Wicce-craeft. This mark was eagerly sought by the later witchfinders of the 16th and 17th Centuries as it was held to constitute irrefutable proof of an individual's membership of the sect. As Reginald Scot wrote in 1594; 'The Devil giveth to every novice a marke, either with his teeth or with his claws.'

The forms which the Devil's Mark took varied from region to region, often consisting of little more than a blue, black or red spot on various parts of the body, often being found upon one of the fingers of the hand. In Somerset the witches were marked between the upper and middle joints of the 'ring finger' or fourth finger of the right hand. In 1597 Andro Man, an Aberdeen witch, was said to have been marked by the Horned One on the third finger of the right hand. A witch at Yarmouth in 1644 told how one moonlit night 'a tall black Man' knocked on her door and told her that 'he must first see her hand; and then taking out something like a Pen-knife, he gave it a little scratch, so that Blood followed, and the Mark remained to that time.'

Elsewhere the Devil's Mark was of a more explicitly symbolic nature and consisted of small totemic glyphs and sigils. Martin Delrio reports that the witches are marked

with secret signs such as the hare's footprint, the rat's footprint or the character of the spider. The hare is deeply connected with the nocturnal mysteries of the moon, the rat appears in ancient Romano-Gaulish iconography of Cernunnos, god of the underworld, and the spider as a weaver of webs is sacred to the spinning goddesses of fate such as the Norns, Parcae and Matronae.

In rural England the mark is sometimes known to be in the shape of a dormouse. Henri Boguet attests to the fact that 16th Century French witches received the 'marque les sorciers' upon the left (sinister) shoulder in the form of the hare's foot. He mentions Jean de Vaux whose witch-mark was 'un petit chien noir', the Black Dog of night death and the netherworld. Amongst the Basque witches of the Pyrenees three marks were made upon the left thigh, the left side and over the left eye. The Devil often marked Basque witches with the sign of the toad or the toad's foot, a most holy amphibian in Wicce-craeft which is associated with the subterranean marshes, caves and chthonic waters of the netherworld.



The Familiar Spirit

The figure of Old Hornie, the witch's god, reaches right back into the dim and shadowy antiquity of ancient European hunting and herding cultures where he ruled over the wild beasts and domestic livestock as the shamanic Master of the Animals from his deep throne in the forests of Annwryn. He is the overlord of the kingdoms of the wilderness whose inhabitants worship him as their true master and he and his servitors, the Gruagach of Highland Scotland, the Boggart of Lancashire, the Brownie of England, were given regular offerings in exchange for their aid in promoting fertility and natural wealth.

The Horned Master governs the generative powers of the kingdom of the beasts, the raw forces of life, death and renewal which sustain the natural world and was therefore an enormously important divinity to breeder, herder and hunter alike from the earliest Indo-European period and earlier.

In the Welsh tale of "Owein, or The Countess of the Fountain" from the Mabinogion, a related being is encountered by Kynon, sitting on a mound in a clearing of the forest:

'....On that mount you will see a great black man, no smaller than two men of this world. He has one foot, and one eye in the middle of his forehead, and he carries an iron spear..... Though

ugly he is not an unpleasant man. He is keeper of the forest, and you will see a thousand wild animals grazing about him'

Kynon asks this mighty god of the wildwood what power he holds over the animals and the keeper of the forest replies:

"Little man, I will show you," he said, and he took his cudgel and struck a stag a great blow so that it roared: with that wild animals came until they were like the stars in the sky..... He looked at them and ordered them to graze, and they bowed their heads and worshipped him as obedient men do their lord. Then he said "Well, little man, you see the power I hold over these animals."

In ancient Gaulish images of the Horned One, Cernunnos, he is shown grasping ram-headed serpents and flanked by a stag and a bull symbolising his mastery of the horned herds and goat flocks.

Thus it is clear why witches all over Britain and Europe told of how Old Hornie, the Devil, bestowed animal familiars upon them at their initiations to aid them in their sorceries. The familiar spirit, also called the puckerel, imp and nigget, can be regarded as an aspect of the 'animal-soul' or 'animal-fetch', which the Horned Master unfolds within his initiate.

If we interpret the familiar in this light it represents a manifestation of deeply buried atavisms within the sorcerer's psyche which can be projected to perform certain magical works. In some cases the familiars of a witch were

held to dwell within his or her body, emerging when evoked for some specific purpose.

The forms taken by witches' familiars open up a whole strange world of occult zoology and totemic symbolism. Most well known is the black cat which recalls both the sacred lynx of the Northern goddess Freyja and the Cat Sith or Faery Cat of Celtic lore. The pupil of the cat's eye is supposed to contract and dilate with the cycles of the moon and it's uncanny, nocturnal ways make it especially significant, both as a familiar and as a shape-shifting form of witches. Black Annis, the fearful hag of the Leicestershire hills sometimes took the shape of a cat.

The hare is another famous familiar of witches and again, a favoured guise for shape-shifting in rural English Wicce-craeft. It's lunar and fertility associations are well-known. In Lancashire, the Cunning-man always wore a hare's foot in his hat as a sign of his office.

The Somerset witch Elizabeth Styles had a familiar in the form of a black dog whom she called Robin. In Dutch Pennsylvania the practitioners of 'hexerei' were usually accompanied by an owl familiar.

Other familiar spirits in the annals of traditional witchery appear as horses, toads, rats, ferrets, ravens, weasels, blackbirds, hedgehogs and various peculiar hybrids and Otherworld theriomorphs. In regard to mouse-familiars we should remember that in Germany, witches' souls leave their bodies by the mouth in the shape of small red mouse.

Witches sometimes kept these spirit-creatures in small earthenware jars and made sacrificial offerings of drops of blood to them.

On some occasions we come across witches who were assisted by faeries and ancestral spirits. The Orkney witch Bessie Dunlop was aided by the spirit of one Thomas Reid who had fought and died at the battle of Pinkie and now dwelt with the Sidhe-folk in the world of Faerie.





The hare or malkin is sacred to the moon and to the Saxon goddess of dawn, spring and fecundity, Eostre.

A Short Disquisition Concerning Toad-lore

That remarkable native amphibian, the toad or paddock (*Bufo bufo*), has a longstanding and celebrated association with witchcraft in the British Isles and Europe, especially as a familiar-spirit. The reasons for the importance of the toad in mediaeval witchlore must ultimately be sought in esoteric folk-symbolism, mythopoetics and the psychopharmacology of rural sorcerers and hexe-wives.

The totemic significance of the toad in witchcraft is primarily due to its intimacy with the subterranean marshes, caves and dark waters of Annwryn. Thus the toad is a dweller in the fens of the underworld and is especially holy to the chthonic divinities. The toad is equally at home in the waters or on solid land, passing at will from one realm to the other just as the witch-shaman crosses the boundaries between this world and the underworld. The toad, therefore is a shamanic creature, considered symbolically, who epitomises passage between the dimensions. In this respect it should be remembered that in the Celtic world-view, marshy pools and linn were entrance points to the lower world, the great below.

At the initiations of Basque witches new devotees were marked by the Devil or Horned God with the sign of the toad or toad's foot. In mediaeval lore the heraldic crest of the Devil was held to consist of three toads emblazoned on a shield, affirming the link with the powers of the

netherworld. A toad hopping over a person's foot is an ominous sign of impending death. An old Mantuan name for the toad is 'fada' or 'faery', emphasising it's otherworldly nature. In the Pyrenees it was said that witches could be recognised by an image of a frog's foot in their left eye.

The witch-trials particularly highlight the toad's function as a familiar-spirit. In the Basse-Pyrenees new witches were given toads by the Dark One. At Windsor in 1579 it was reported that "one Mother Dutton dwellyng in Cleworthe Parishe keepeth a Spirite or Feende in the likeness of a Toade, and fedeth the same Feende liyng in a border of greene Hearbes, within her Garden, with blood...." Similarly in Essex a witch in 1582 was held to own "two spirits like Toades, the one called Tom, and the other Robbyn" which she had inherited from her mother. Seventeenth Century French witches were accused of possessing 'petit Diabeteaux' in the form of toads. The Italian witch Billia la Castagna in 1365 kept a large toad under her bed whose excrement was used in potions. This last detail is very significant as it is actually a cryptic reference to 'toad-stools' or visionary fungi used in witch-practices, usually of the Fly Agaric species. All across Europe there occur folk-names for certain mushrooms which link them with toads such as Crapaudin in French.

In Slavic countries inedible mushrooms are called Zabaci Huby - "toad-mushrooms". The folk-affinities between hallucinatory fungi and toads point to an ancient awareness of the presence of psychotropic toxins in the skin of the latter.

Toads secrete a fluid from their skin which contains the indole alkaloid bufotenine. Bufotenine was extracted from the glands of toads in ancient China and the traditional witches of Europe were well-acquainted with the properties

of this batrachian elixir.

The witch-covens of north-western Spain in the 16th Century used toads' blood in their flying ointments. In 1525 Maria of Ituren confessed to having concocted a flying-salve from toad-skins and water-plantain, no doubt mingled in an oily base. Swedish witches compounded their salves with toads' fat and snake-foam along with poisonous herbs. German covens reputedly fried the toads to prepare such ointments and toad-grease salves were also utilised by witches in Hungary and Easter Europe to attain the ecstasy of 'spirit-flight'.

The toad is also famous for bearing within his head the Toadstone, a magical gem which healed all bites and stings and which, when set in a ring, grew paler in the presence of poison. In 'As you Like It' Shakespeare makes his well known reference to the Toadstone:- "the toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in his head".

This casts light on the emblem of the Black Toad in later Hermetic/alchemical literature as a glyph representing the 'earth of the philosophers' or 'first matter' which conceals within itself the wondrous Stone of the Wise.

In rural regions of England, such as Cambridgeshire, there operated a secret guild of men called the Toadmen who were reputed to exert a magical influence over horses. The Toadmen, like the secret society of the Horseman's Word, preserved many of the mysteries of the masculine side of the Craft of the Wise, honouring Old Hornie as the Master of the Beasts.

To become a Toadman and gain the power a certain bone had to be obtained from a toad which was fixed to an ant-hill until the skeleton was entirely clean and devoid of flesh.

The initiate then carried the bones in a pocket until they dried. On the stroke of midnight on the night of the full moon he cast the skeleton into a running stream: one bone would screech as it separated and floated downstream and this, when secured, conferred the supernatural powers of the Toadmen upon the bearer. Sometimes the new initiate had to take the bone to a stable or graveyard for three consecutive nights - on the third night the Devil (Horned God) would appear and make a last attempt to trick the Toadman into parting with his bone as the final test of his shamanic initiation. According to some reports Charles Walton who was foully murdered in Lower Quinton, Warwickshire in 1945, was reputed by villagers to breed natterjack toads and use them in his magic - his garden was apparently thickly populated by them at the time of his death.

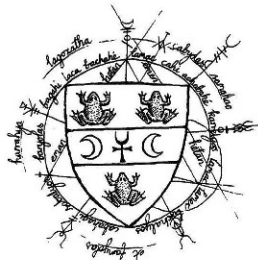
Toadmen were known to be practising their arts in Cambridgeshire as late as 1938 and it is not impossible that the cult may have survived clandestinely into the present day under a close shroud of rural secrecy. The toad's fertility aspects are to be clearly seen in the practices of the Auldearne coven in 1662 who performed a curious ceremony in which toads drew a plough made from the horn of a castrated ram with couch-grass for the harness. The coven went several times round a field with the toads 'praying to the Devil for the fruit of that land'. This seems to be a fragment of an ancient geomantic ritual to enhance telluric fertility.

The classical author Pliny described how a toad should be placed in an earthenware pot and buried in a field to magically protect the crops from storms.

The Slavonic vampyre could appear in the guise of a frog and the paddock features heavily in Gypsy lore and

tradition as a form of the Devil whose Romany name, Beng means "frog-like". In Transylvanian Gypsy mythology the Queen of the Faeries lives in her remote mountain castle in the shape of a golden toad.

The recondite arcanae of toad-lore can be seen to illuminate the moste esoteric recesses of the Craft of the Wise as one of it's cardinal totemic symbols. It is thus fitting that the contemporary seeker again learns the marshland lore of the paddock as the People of the Toad did in times past. It would seem prudent to hearken once again to his oracular croaking amidst the reeds at twilight and to pay heed to the chthonic wisdom from the haunted fens of Andumnos.



Faerie Witchcraft & the Geography of Elfland

The traditional metaphysics of Elfland lie at the heart of true Witchcraft, a body of ancestral faery teachings and arts which formed a hidden tradition transmitted down the centuries across Europe and the British Isles. The historical documentation provides ample evidence of the witches' trafficking with Faerie and their close associations with faery beings and the people of the Sidhe, 'the lordly ones in the hollow hills'.

The underworldly realms of the Sidhe is conceived of as being literally 'beneath' the earth, 'underneath' the surface phenomena of nature and middle-earth as an underlying depth-dimension of archetypes and endlessly regenerated potentialities. This is the spiritual landscape of Elfname where the 'People of Peace' dwell, known to the Irish Celts as Tir Andomain and Tir Na n'Og, the Annwyn of Welsh tradition and in Teutonic lore, the kingdom of Hel. In the mediaeval period the chthonic realm was known as the Land of Faerie.

In the Netherworld we descend to the very roots of being, into the faery radiance which emanates from the haunted mounds; concealed in the depths is the secret source of generation, death and rebirth for it is the place where the souls of the dead reside between incarnations according to traditional lore. There, the dead are restored and renewed by partaking of the sacred fruit, the apples of the



The 'Hooded Ones', the land-spirits and faery ancestors of ancient Britain; their pointed hoods became the caps of the pixies.

Otherworld plucked from Mother Holle's subterranean orchard or from the trees of Ynys Afallon, ruled over by Morgan Le Faye. The Silver Branch or Craebh Sidhe, which allows passage into Elfland, is a bough upon which three silver apples hang, emitting faery music that entrances all who hear it.

Our ancient forebears possessed a perpetual awareness of other worlds and states of reality which at particular times and places could 'break through' into our world, often in eerie and eldritch ways. There were also traditionally known loci where the worlds touched, places of intercommunication between middle-earth and Elfland such as trees, mounds, hills, caverns, watercourses, pools and wells. At these sites passage between the worlds could, and still can be effected through the use of the faery arts.

The kingdom of the Sidhe exists outside and beyond the cycles of space/time which govern the material universe - it is well known that travellers to Faerie have spent years there only to find mere minutes have elapsed upon their return to our world. Those who reside for a night in that land may find that centuries have passed when they come back into middle-earth. Elfhome lies outside the circles of time and this mysterious atemporality is the inner key to the metaphysics of rebirth and the cyclic reincarnation of ancestors in their tribal and familial descendants.

Elfland is inhabited by a diversity of intelligences ranging from the divine beings and godlings within the earth to divinized ancestral-souls and non-human faery-entities, theriomorphs and ornithomorphs. All these beings can be accurately described as faeries, for they all inhabit that mode of existence which is utterly 'other' - the wild and mysterious faery 'state'.

According to the inner doctrine of the faery-faith, the post-mortem soul descends into Elfhome and enters into the state of the Sidhe, sojourning as a faery in the otherworld whilst awaiting the right cyclical patterns which will enable it's earthly rebirth to occur, usually in the body of a clannic descendant. The spirits of the dead thus become mystically unified with the inner heart of the land, merging with particular loci such as hills or trees for the world of the Faerie is the inherent spiritual dimension which exists concealed within the natural landscape as it's inner archetypal reality.

The 'human' and the 'faery' are the two poles of our being between which we oscillate through our transmigrational cycles of rebirths, our countless discarnations and incarnations. In other words, the Sidhe are ourselves awaiting birth in middle-earth and we ourselves are the Sidhe awaiting our return to Elfhome. The faerie Craft is concerned with regaining the totality of our awareness, bridging our human and faery natures and activating the 'Sight of the Two Worlds' or 'Second Sight', the faculty of trance-seership and direct spiritual vision into Elfhome.

The dead thus become faeries between incarnations and certain souls in the underworld may, in time, undergo a complete faery metamorphosis and no longer incarnate as human-beings - these are the 'Master Men' of Scottish witch-lore. The identification of the faery-faith as an ancestral cultus clarifies many hitherto obscure problems and allows us an insight into the destiny of the soul and it's post-mortem relationship with the noumenal and natural environments. The Faery Rade or Sluagh Sidhe rides out at Halloween, the liminal and intercalendary time of the hallowed ancestral souls. This Faery Host manifests along the dead straight 'faery passes' which link the sepulchral tumuli which are their forts, changing their hunting-

grounds at the four Quarter-Days. These 'faery-roads' are a Celtic analogue to the Dutch 'death-roads' and German 'Geisterwege', the Saxon 'deada waeg', the tracks of the Wild Hunt and the spectral Black Dog and the traditional English 'Corpse-Roads', 'Coffin-Paths' and 'Church-ways' - they are all funereal lines of spirit-movement which link burial places, graveyards and mounds. On the west coast of Ireland much oral folk-lore makes the identity of the faeries as the souls of the departed very clear for they say that if you have many dead friends you will have many good faeries about you. The Sidhe of Irish tradition and the Elves in German folklore, are the chthonic faery-ancestors, divinized souls who have passed below the land and who exert a subtle influence upon the living in whom they await rebirth, mysteriously informing their minds and bodies from the depths of the hidden kingdoms. As Jacob Grimm astutely observed: "The dead were known to the Norsemen as elves."

The Elves are divided into two types, the Lios Alfar (Light Elves) and the Svart Alfar (Dark Elves). The Light Elves are the light-bodies of the ancestral souls, 'fairer than the sun to look at' and are connected with sunshine, rainfall, the fertile soil and plants. The Dark Elves or dwarves dwell deep in the earth, in stones, in crags and caverns and are famous for their metallurgy and smithcraft - they represent the ancestral transformative energies and magical skills passing from generation to generation, continually refining the crude ore of consciousness into divine treasure. They are known as the Zwergs in North German folklore. As Walter Kelly wrote in his *CURIOSITIES OF INDO-EUROPEAN TRADITION & FOLKLORE* (1863):

"Some of the many names by which the Zwergs are known in North Germany mean the 'ancestors' or the 'ancestors' and mark the analogy between the beings so designated and the Hindoo

Pitris or Fathers: whilst other names - ... good people, good neighbours in Ireland and Scotland connect the same Elves with the Manes (ancestral shades) of the Romans."

In old Germania the female equivalent of the elves, the divine ancestresses, were called the Disir and were regarded as protective feminine spirits who were attached to a person or a clan and its toul territory. In ancient Gaul the cult of the Matronae or Mothers concerned itself with the propitiation of divine ancestresses, recalling the faeries of Gwent and Carmarthenshire known as Bendith-y-Mamau, the 'Mothers' Blessing'.

The apparition of 'faery lights' and Teine Sidhe in folklore accounts refers to the radiant light-bodies of the ancestors emerging from the depths of the 'Spirit-Earth' - luminescent forms are a well-known form taken by the Sidhe and are recalled in the Gaelic name of the Leprechaun, the Old Irish 'lugh-corpan' or 'body of light'.

The Fair Folk manifest and are encountered at thresholds, boundaries and liminal times and loci: the Faery Rade of the Sidhe rides out at Halloween, the 'crack' or 'time between the times' when the old year has ended but the new has not yet been born. Likewise the Elves visit houses on the Twelve Nights of Yule, an intercalendary time in Teutonic calendrical reckoning - their footprints can be seen in the hearth ashes on Christmas mornings. The wild Faery Host thus appear as time and the cosmos dissolve into the original chaos of 'ritual reversal', the pre-existent 'dreamtime' or archetypal depths from which all things are regenerated. The best time to glimpse faery activity is at dawn or evening twilight when all things stand between light and darkness, night and day. Midnight is the 'gap in time' between the old day and the new when ghosts, faeries

and the Wild Hunt appear. Likewise, the bottom of the garden is another kind of boundary between cultivated land and wilderness, this world and the otherworld, and therefore a locus of faery phenomena. Faery sites include tumuli, stones, bushes and trees which are thought to stand where two worlds meet, at hedges, crossroads, stiles and other paradoxical places of 'inbetweenness'. Certain trees such as the Irish 'Skeog' or 'faery thorn' are thought to be dwelling places of faeries and there is an old English charm against faery-spells and disorientation which runs:

"Turn your cloaks
for faery folks
live in old oaks."

The roots of the oak tree were traditionally thought to reach down into Faerie Land. This echoes the Eurasian concept of souls perched in the boughs of the World Tree awaiting birth. In German folklore Yew copses are haunted by faeries. One of the prime 'faery trees' is the Elder in whose hollow stems and twigs the Huldra-folk dwell - the tree is the residence of Frau Ellhorn or Holle, the 'Elder-Witch'.

In Hungarian Gypsy tradition clumps of nettles mark the tunnels which lead down to the world of the earth-faeries, the puvushi, thus nettles are called 'Puvushi-Wood'. The Horned One and the Witch-Goddess ride at the head of the Sidhe- Hosts as King and Queen - they are the ruling divinities of the high faery-faith. The Faery King is Gwynn ap Nudd, Master of the Wild Hunt and Lord of Annwryn. Antlered and robed in shadows he leads the company of discarnate spirits across the midnight skies into the Tor at Glastonbury, the entrance to his subterranean kingdom. By the god's side run the spectral Cwn Annwryn or 'hounds of Annwryn', white hunting dogs with red ears whose aerial

baying is heard in the nocturnal yelping of high-flying geese on winter nights. Gwynn, Vindos or Finn is the original 'god of the deer's head', the horned Faery King of the deeps who governs the ancient wealth and fertility of the underworld. He is the true initiator of the Faery Craft, guardian and psychopompic guide who rules over the raw forces of death and regeneration. Gwynn's domain is the wilderness of fen, heath and forest where his horned herds roam.

The Faerie Goddess or Queen of Elfland was well described in the accounts of Scottish witches and in Scots-English border ballads. Her appearance is that of a beautiful female figure, robed in finery of green velvet and silks and riding side-saddle upon a milk-white horse from whose braided mane hangs 'fifty silver bells and nine'. She is the hippomorphic earth-mother and goddess of sovereignty, known as Morgan Le Faye, the Morrigan, Epona, Rigantona and Rhiannon - the 'Great Queen', supreme in her triple power. In Irish mythology she can be seen in the triplicity of equine goddesses called the three Machas, for one of the Morrigan's three names is Macha - 'Horse'. She is the 'Morgan the Goddess', Queen of the Faery Rade who rules over the Isle of Avalon in the underworld. She confers the magical golden apples of that realm which grant healing, renewed youth and the gifts of mantic prophecy. She is also connected with spinning as the goddess of destiny and in 1670 the witch Jean Weir of Dalkeith described how the Queen of Faerie laid a spell upon her so that she could magically produce large amounts of yarn in a short space of time. In her darker, crueller aspects she is the Owl-Goddess of Scots Gaelic tradition, Gailleach Oidhche, the 'Night Hag'.

Isobel Gowdie's account of her experiences in 1662 bear all the hallmarks of the true faery initiation:



Hela, the Teutonic goddess of the underworld who is half dark and half fair: her name signifies the 'Veiled One'.

"I was in the Downie Hills, and got meat there from the Queen of Faerie, more than I could eat. The Queen of Faerie is brawly clothed in white linens, and in white and brown clothes; and the King of Faerie is a braw man, well favoured, and broad faced. There were elf-bulls routing and skoyling up and down there, and affrighted me."

The witch Bessie Dunlop in 1576 related how she was initiated and instructed by a faery man, called Thom Reid who had originally died at the Battle of Pinkie and was now one of the Sidhe. He appeared in the form of:

"an honest well elderly man, gray bearded, and had a gray coat with Lombard sleeves of the old fashion; a pair of gray breeks and white shanks, gartered above the knee; a black bonnet upon his head.... and a white wand in his hand."

Faery initiations in the hollow hills and direct instruction and aid in the faery arts from the Sidhe are distinctive features of the Traditional Craft. A wyse- wife of Leith called Christian Livingstone described in 1597 how 'all the knowledge she had was by her daughter, who met with the Faerries'.

At Perth in 1623 Isabel Haldane gave an account of how ten years earlier she had been carried out of her bed to a faery hill which opened before her so that she spent three days in Elfland. She was brought out by a 'man with a gray beard' who was her faery teacher and companion and aided her in divination, healing and cursing upon her return to middle-earth.

In 1588 the witch Alison Peirson was convicted 'for haunting and repairing with the good neighbours and

Queen of Elfhame, these divers years bypast; she had been healed of a sickness and had become a healer herself through the agency of a green-clad faery man who came to her. The traditional witches drew much of their oracular foresight, magical lore and power from such faery companions.

Sometimes a threefold division of the Sidhe is encountered as in the account of John Walsh in 1566 who consulted the faeries in the hills of Dorset at midnight and noontide - he said that there were white, green and black faeries, the latter being the most wild. In Slavonic faery lore we find these three divisions in the Zracne Vile, the faeries of the aerial spaces, the Povodne Vile or water-faeries of the pools and rivers and the Pozemne Vile, the earth-faeries of the subterranean realms.

One of the prime sacramental rituals of the ancestral faery faith is the offerings made to the Fair Folk - these are found in the various European cultures and include the old Norse Alfblot in which bull sacrifices took place at barrow-mounds and blood-libations made to the Elves. Also the sacrificial offerings made to the Disir on Winter Night and the grain and honey left in cup-and-ring stones or 'Elf-Mills' by Scandinavian peasants into the 19th Century.

In Lancashire tradition milk and bread are poured into the hollow cup of the 'Dobby Stone' for the boggart and dobbie. The Clac-Na-Gruagach is the cup-marked stone where a share of grain and milk were deposited for the gruagach, the 'long-haired one' who guarded the fields, crops and herds. In Wales and England bowls of milk and bread were set by the hearth at night for the Bwca or Brownie, the household faery.

Offerings of food for the Elves were left out on the twelve

nights of Christmas in Germany as is a portion for the dead in Celtic regions at Halloween.

To make a faery offering is a simple thing in itself and is actually a mystical communion which unifies the living above the land and the hallowed ancestors below. A cup of wine, beer or milk and a cake or piece of bread is consecrated with these words:

"I sein this drink and this bread in the power of the Queen of Elfhame, Morgan the Goddess, and in the power of Gwynn, the King of Faerie and Horned Master of the Faery Rade."

Each celebrant takes a sip from the cup and a piece of the bread and the remainder is poured and left upon the earth, stone or amongst the roots of a faery tree with the words:

"Blessings upon the deep ones in the hollow hills
Blessings upon the Faery People within the land
and the Faery Blessing be upon us!"

There are also various faery arts taught within Traditional Witchcraft to enter the world of Elfhame: at the most basic level these consist of simple imaginal techniques which induce the subtle faery trance in which passage between the worlds becomes possible.

The first technique is to meditate upon the image of a deep stone-lined well in a shadowy grove of hazels, hawthorns and yews. Contemplate the dark well from whose depths a gentle greenish glow emanates and then descend into it in your vision until you sink beneath it's waters, deep down into the great below. After a time and with regular work this will catalyse altered mind-states and visions as

grew towards evening, he would grow so ill tempered that no-one could speak to him and it wasn't long before he would go to bed. There was talk about him being a shape-changer and people called him Kveld Ulf (Evening Wolf)." The Norse eschatological vision is dominated by the dreadful Etin-wolf Fenris, who will break free at Ragnarok, the 'twilight of the divine powers' which signals the cyclic destruction of the universe. Thus in Northern stellar lore the constellation of the Greater Wolf's Jaws seems to threaten the sovereign order of the Pole Star, Tyr, the Cosmic Axis.

Etruscan tomb paintings depict Hades, Lord of the Netherworld, wearing a wolf's head and skin as a headdress underlining the beast's association with death. Throughout the ancient North an outlaw, murderer or temple desecrator was termed a 'Vargr', or wolf, cast out from the tribe or community into the wilderness, and they could be killed without penalty by anyone because they were already 'dead' in symbolic terms.

Likewise bands of shamanic warriors identified ecstatically with the wolf as part of their initiatory death mysteries. At one with the Furious Hosts of the Dead they lived and acted outside the normal order of things, characterised by lycanthropic transformations and sinister magical fury. Here Odhinn as the 'God of the Hanged' (Hangatyr) presides over the gallows - called the Warg Tree (Varagtreo) in Saxon England. These Mysteries of wolf-shamanism were sometimes preserved as a hereditary tradition amongst certain families.

The medieval writer Giraldus Cambrensis reported that members of a certain Gaelic clan around Ossory in Ireland possessed the power to turn into wolves for a period of seven years, echoed in Shakespeare's line: "...Tis like the howling of Irish wolves against the moon' from, As you like it." The

Scythian tribes of the Neuroi who dwelt by the Black Sea were said to undergo a similar transformation with each person becoming a wolf for a few days of the year. Throughout Germania the Twelve Nights of Yule were the season when wolves grew particularly ferocious, when ghosts, witches and the Wild Hunt were abroad and the chosen few became werewolves and roamed out into the darkness.

In Lithuania and Prussia it was forbidden to use the word 'wolf' at Yule. Here the Twelve Days are the ancient intercalendary period of ritual reversal 'between the times' when the primeval powers of the Underworld cross into the world of the living, the 'time of the wolf.'

Pliny the Elder gives an interesting account of lycanthropic shamanism in Arcadia; the initiate was chosen by divinatory lots and travelled to a sacred marsh where he hung his clothes on the branch of an oak tree. This symbolised leaving behind human form and identity. The initiate then swam across the waters of a lake, passing through boundary waters between the worlds. On the other side he became a wolf and ran with the packs of the Otherworld for nine years before returning to the human state. This werewolf cultus existed throughout Europe from the remotest times, rooted in shamanic totem clans and initiatory warrior societies all of whom invoked the wolf-power in their mysterious rites and magical practices.

After the Christian era began these lupine fraternities were broken up and the secrets of lycanthropic wizardry were preserved by isolated individuals and underground associations during the Middle Ages. The medieval witch-faith continued the practice of the wolf mysteries by werewolf-shamans and warlocks, whilst other strands became part of folk ritual such as the midsummer

ceremonies of the Brotherhood of the Green Wolf at Jumieges in Normandy, and German folklore concerning the Rye Wolf (Roggenwulf).

The magical techniques of wolf wizardry and lycanthropy seem to have revolved around the symbolic 'death' of the initiate, mystical communion with the Master of the Underworld Forests and the Death Goddess, disrobing and passing over the water to the Other side, ritual donning of a wolfskin or the traditional wolfskin belt with the seven-tongued buckle. The eerie undulating chants of the wolf-initiates combined with the effects of a salve of wolf fat and certain herbs. This all constituted an archaic magical discipline whose aim was to induce a state of altered perception in the initiate.

In the 'wolf trance' the mutable energy field (Hamingja) would be liberated and the Hamr, the etheric soul-sheath or 'skin' would be projected forth in the form of a wolf as a vehicle for the shaman's consciousness. This experience also involved atavistic communion with the deeply buried 'animal soul' at the level of the ancestral subconscious. Odhinn was held to be a master of such shape changing arts and advanced adepts who possessed great personal power could actually affect the perceptual consciousness of an observer causing them to see their changed form. Likewise seers and psychically empowered individuals could discern the shape-shifted animal forms of sorcerers and witches as they wandered abroad.

By medieval times these practices were condemned by the Church and the lycanthropy of the werewolf-witch was persecuted with insane cruelty as part of the general Christian assault on heathen spirituality among the common folk. Three wolf-wizards were hung at Poligny in 1521, and there is the account of the werewolf Jean Grenier

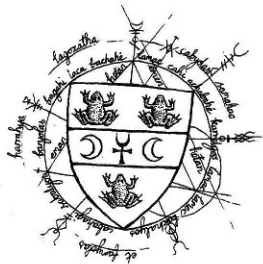
in Bordeaux who worshipped the Lord of the Forest. In the 15th century witches in the Valois confessed to assuming the shape of wolves and attacking the cattle. The werewolf cult seemed to exist with some vigour in the Balto-Slavonic regions under the overlordship of the 'elder champion' Volkh the Sorcerer who possessed occult wisdom and lycanthropic powers.

At a witch trial in Livonia in 1692 an old man confessed to being a werewolf. At Yule and Midsummer Eve he would travel under the earth with other were-wolves armed with iron whips and in the Underworld they fought against the malevolent forces of chaos, evil beings bearing broomsticks hung with horse tails, fighting for the fertile harvests. Livonian werewolf cults assembled at full moon in forests with rites led by a priest termed Meza Tevs or 'the Forest Father'.

Olaus Magnus described how werewolves attacked men and livestock throughout Prussia, Lithuania and Livonia during the Twelve Nights of Yule. Well into the 17th century Lithuanian peasants would gather during this season to sacrifice a goat as an offering to the wolf-spirits. This custom recalls the goat sacrifices made at the classical Roman Lupercalia, the Festival of Pan as a wolf divinity. An old Polish adage describes an agitated person as 'running around like someone wearing a wolfskin at Christmas', hinting at ecstatic dances or mumming dramas. The Taltos, the Magyar witch-shamans of Hungary, are often said to be the offspring of a male wolf and a woman taken unawares in the wildwood. In Guernsey the locale of Mont Varouf is haunted by le Varou, the bloodthirsty werewolf of the Channel Isles.

The interwoven pattern of lycanthropy and witchcraft is therefore seen to run deeply through the Indo-European

magical consciousness, but other cultures offer significant parallels. The Navajo Indians have one word meaning both 'witch' and 'wolf', Haitian Vodoun also preserves lore concerning loup-garous, influenced by Breton tradition; bands of malevolent sorcerers belonging to the Zobop cult roam at night as Loup-Garous seeking blood to drink. The Vodoun seers name the shimmering trails of comets 'nids de loup garous' or 'werewolf clusters' for they mark the luminous tracks of werewolves across the night-heavens, recalling the ancient Norse constellation of the Greater and Lesser Wolf's Jaws.



The Shamanic Vampire

A multiplicity of curious linkages exist between the vampire mythology of Eastern Europe and the inner traditions of medieval witchcraft. Firstly Rumanian folklore states that people who are born with an amniotic placenta or caul upon their foreheads are destined to become vampyres or night-flying witches (Strigoi). Being born with a caul is a certain omen of shamanic election and of the ability to mediate between this world and the spirit world. This peculiarity at birth characterises a number of European witch-shamans such as the Kresnik of Croatia and Slovenia, the Friulian 'Good Walkers' and the Hungarian Magyar Taltos, all of whom are held to experience trances in which the soul leaves the body as a fly, toad, insect or dog in order to roam by night. The caul of the witch and the vampire is symbolic of the magical hood, mask, cloak or shroud.

In Bulgaria those who die during the intercalendary Twelve Nights of midwinter are said to become vampyres. This is the liminal season of inbetweenness, the return to the primeval Dreamtime when witches, wolves and dead spirits wander abroad. The Rumanian vampyres are called Moroi or the Varcolaci and are identified with the disembodied spirits of certain individuals who possess unnaturally pallid complexions and dry skin.

Periodically the Varcolac enters into a profound, death-like trance during which his soul flies forth to the sphere of the moon to feed on its blood. Lunar eclipses are held to

occur because of the ravenous attacks of these vampyres. The blood streaming from the mouths of the Varcolac floods over the disc of the moon and causes it to glow with reddish light. The Varcolaci sometimes make these journeys in shape-shifted canine form. Disturbing the entranced body which the Varcolac has vacated is thought to have dangerous, even fatal consequences in accordance with classic shamanic thinking.

These vampyre journeys are connected with certain mysterious warnings in Rumanian folk tradition against spinning during the night hours. When a woman spun at midnight by the rays of the moon the thread produced was infused with magical qualities and would become a 'spirit road' along which the Varcolaci would travel. It became a path along which the vampyre spirits ascended into the sky to drink the blood of the moon and sun. Only if the 'spirit thread' broke were the Varcolaci disrupted and then they flew to other celestial regions. The use of a thread or a cord as a spirit road is well known in the sacred technologies of many cultures.

The Indian gypsy tribe of the Doms hang a fishing net over the door of the house as a protection against vampyres - the net is a 'spirit trap' for the vampyre must 'count all the knots', and becomes lost and diffused in the web of threads. The spinning of thread by women under the moon at midnight could be interpreted as an invocation of the triple witch goddess Arada, whose title is Doamna Zinelor or 'Mistress of the Faeries.' Spinning is also associated with the goddess of German witchlore, Perchtl or Berchtholda. The Gaelic owl goddess known as the 'Cailleach of the Night Moon' was similarly envisaged as a spinner of silver threads. Along such threads of power the Varcolac spirit flies into the upper realms, leaving the physical body behind in cataleptic suspension.

As well as the twelve 'Holy Nights' of midwinter the Varcolaci were said to wander on St. Andrew's Eve (Dec 10) and St. George's Eve (April 22nd), when sacred need fires were lit across Europe to protect the people, dwellings and livestock from their attacks. Amongst the Circassians April 28th was the night of the 'Kara'Kondjiolos' or vampyres.

The forms which the vampyre spirit can manifest are not confined to bird, animal, or insect shapes; they can appear as a shadow inexplicably moving about, as a flicker of sparks in the darkness or as a will-of-the-wisp glow hovering over tombs. These corresponded to widely attested accounts of souls assuming luminescent forms - the Hungarian Taltos sometimes appeared spiritually transformed into a flame and Lappish sorcerers fought each other quite often in the guise of balls of flame. It was related that vampyres gathered in covens in ancient woods and graveyards to travel to the sabbat of the Varcolaci, journeying along the 'spirit threads' into the ghost world where they were initiated into the mysteries and magical knowledge of the dead.

In Russia for example at Nosovki in the early 18th century a man called Seymon Kallenichenko was prosecuted and confessed that he had been born a vampyre and could recognise women who were witches. He described his shamanic journeys to the sabbat where the witches also gathered. In some accounts from Istria and elsewhere it is clear that the Vuklodlak, the vampyre, is identified with the malevolent or hostile witch, often of a neighbouring people who threatens and attacks the fertility of the community. Ritualised magical battles against such beings take place in the Otherworld; Kresniki against Vukodlaki, Benandante against Malandanti, with the aim of winning an abundant harvest and prosperity. This theme also reflects the

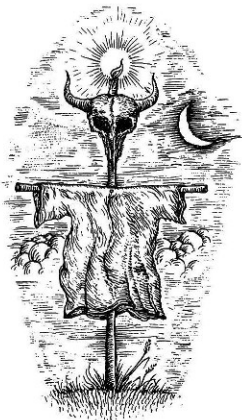
aggression of dead spirits against the living, and Rumanian Gypsy tradition describes how white wolves inhabit cemeteries and ferociously destroy the vampyres within. Were it not for these white wolves the vampyres and spirits of the dead would break out and conquer the world of the living.

In Serbia and the Slavonic countries there existed a witch- shaman called the Dhampir who specialised in discovering and battling with vampyres. The Dhampir was thought to be the child of a woman made pregnant by a vampyre husband, and is distinguished by possessing a slippery gelatinous body. Dhampirs generally conduct their trance-rituals in public for a fee and after observing the four quarters of the sky the Dhampir entered an ecstatic mind-state in which he sees the vampyre-spirit, whose destructive influence has been felt, amidst the mists of the spirit world. A fierce conflict then ensues in which the vampyre shapeshifts into many forms until finally the Dhampir is victorious and the malign power is broken. The use of a gun has been noted as a feature of this shamanic trance-performance in recent centuries. In 1959 a Dhampir ritual was observed at the village of Vrbrica, in the Kosovo-Metohija region.

Even from this brief outline it is apparent that the vampyre mythology draws its macabre power from various archtypical motifs: - the hostile, blood-drinking witch, the aggressive ghost and the shadowier aspects of the shaman figure. In this context, the Nosferatu are the 'living dead', those who whilst alive can enter into the temporary death of trance. Through this death trance the released spirit flies up on the thread/road into the heavens, the upper realms of the Sky-Pillar Coloana Ceriulu, to feed on lunar blood.

Finally, it should be remembered that the infant souls of

the Yakut shamans are nursed and instructed by a daemonic shamaness with one eye, one arm and one leg. This being rocks the newborn soul of the shaman in a black iron cradle and sustains it on a diet of clotted blood.



Spirit Masks in European Paganism

To enter into the state of ecstatic, magical consciousness in which the phenomenal and noumenal worlds interact, the traditional shaman and shamaness has employed various mantic techniques including the rhythmic magic of the drum, sacred dance, incantatory chants and the use of the spirit mask in order to achieve deep inner atunement with the divine beings. To wear the spirit mask is to invoke the powers of the Otherworld, for the mask manifests the presence of the divinities in a direct and tangible way.

To both the wearer and the beholder mask-magic is a method of overcoming 'ordinary' perception and slipping through the 'crack between the worlds' into the profound realities of Elphame. The true essence of mask-magic has been ably summed up by Mercia Eliade as 'total transformation of the individual into something other.'

Thus the spirit mask is a constant element in the sacred traditions of virtually all Pagan polytheistic cultures. The Siberian shaman's mask, called the abagaldei, was made of wood or hide with beard and brows of squirrel fur. The Tungus shaman dons the mask 'to show that the spirit of malu is in him.' Everywhere the ritual mask is a vehicle of transformation and the incarnation of the sacred.

Within our traditions of Pagan spirituality and witchcraft an enduring stream of native mask-magic can be

seen to have always existed. Odin, the shamanic Master of Ecstasy, has, as one of his god names, the title Grimr - 'the masked one' and in 7th century Britain, the archbishop Theodore disapproved of those who wore stag and bull head dresses at the kalends of January, recalling the Ooser or bull head-mask worn in folk-rites.

The totemic bird and beast masks of Germanic and Celtic heathendom, through which their wizardly caste attained shamanic transformation, lived on in the vigorous folk traditions of Europe. In mediaeval Germany riotous processions of youths with blackened faces went about disruptively at Samhain in imitation of the nocturnal spirit beings who ride with the Perchl or Frau Holda, the wild goddess of the Furious Horde of night travellers. In the Tyrol at Martinmas and Yule the mummers called the Perchtenmasken cavorted around the fields led by a man on a white horse.

One German festival included masked mummers called 'dead-faces' and 'bear-faces' whose ritual guise represented the chthonic ancestral and bear spirits of the underworld. Also in this tradition of the Wild Hunt ceremonies is the mediaeval 'Charivari'; an ecstatic and disorderly procession of mummers wearing stag, bull, hare, and fox and wolf masks who interrupted wedding banquets.

The British custom of 'guizing' at Samhain has long employed ritual masks to transform the dancers and actors into the ancestor spirits of the Wild Hunt and has survived in a popular form in the children's skull, devil and ghost masks worn at Halloween. The celebration of Yule featured ritual dances and mystery dramas with masked characters such as St. George, the Doctor and the Yule Father wreathed in holly to represent the Lord of Winter; the Holly King.

Masked mummers are also present at the Yorkshire and Northumberland 'rapper' interlinked sword dances such as the Plough Stot play. Pagan ceremonies at Beltane have featured spirit masks representing Jack-in-the-Green. Such woodwose masks have been made from tree bark with oak and hawthorn leaves, and ritual actors thus regaled the mystery of death and the resurrection, leaping up to dance about the Maypole with the Flower goddess/Queen of the May.

In his work 'A Calendar of German Customs' (London 1966) Richard Thonger relates that at Whitsuntide 'villagers went into the woods to collect green branches and came back with a green-clad figure with a mask of tree-bark': he is called Pffingstl in the south, and in Thuringia the Wild Man or Green Man (Laubmannchen); sometimes he wears a bird-like mask, has to be splashed with water and is called the water-bird, the Wasservogel.

The Green Man's foliate face in church closely resembles a mask. Perhaps it represents the votive cult objects kept within the earlier heathen temples and sanctuaries. Other mummer's masks from Europe include those of the swan or goose; shamanic psychopomps and faery spirits who act as guides and vehicles for Otherworld journeys, traversing the dimensions in their magical flight.

The Dark Man or magister of the traditional coven usually wore an antlered head-dress/mask as high priest of Cernunnos or Gwynn, Initiator and Lord of Annwyn. In the forest regions of lower Austria secret witch festivals are said to have been held into modern times in which all the celebrants wore deer masks.

German writers in the 16th century report that witches wore 'vizards' or masks at the Sabbat and Henri Boguet

attests that the Lyons coven he examined in 1598 also wore masks at their rituals.

A French account from 1614 mentions a gathering of 200 masked witches and the famous transformations of shape-shifting practitioners such as Isabel Gowdie into hares, cats, crows and bees may refer to masked dance rituals in which animal and bird totems were invoked. In the 1590 trial of the North Berwick witches, John Fian was stated to have been masked when he led the coven in a procession around the kirkyard.

From its use in Palaeolithic religion, Celtic and Norse wizardry and the great festivals of the people, the spirit mask lived on in Morris dancing, worn by the guizers, 'schuddigs' and 'perchtls' in the pageants, carnivals and masks of the Middle Ages. Frowned upon by the clergy, it went underground with the traditional witches and now needs to be reinstated to its rightful position in contemporary magical working, for the mask exerts an uncanny and timeless influence upon the imagination, evoking the heathen gods, fairies and totems to the visible eye and bridging the boundary of the worlds.

In modern working spirit masks open up fertile possibilities for dramatic rites based on scared myth, shape-shifting magic and votive ritual. The value of such masks lies in the fact that they help us to transcend the personality and to enter into the nature of the Old Ones; they enable us to enter the magical reality of Elphame.

In recent years I have worked with a friend upon several ritual masks and have completed both a cat-face and an owl spirit design. All these masks were made using durable medium of papier-mache which, given a few coats of white emulsion, makes an excellent ground upon which to paint a

stylised face in colour.

We have begun to incorporate feathers into these masks along with crystals and other suitable substances. These objects are as durable as wood when varnished and can easily be attempted by anyone - quite bold facial designs seem to work best.

One essential process is the empowering of the finished mask by the forces it is intended to represent. I recently performed a ritual in which I bathed the mask in moonlight, intoned an incantation to the Mistress of the Owls, the Cailleach of the Night Moon, and charged it with power. This ceremony was infused with the presence of the spirits, and for me it constituted a minor totemic initiation as I became aware of owl totems for some weeks afterwards.

A fully empowered spirit mask generates an eerie presence and power, often seeming like a non-human 'watcher' on the alter and becoming a focus for Otherworld forces, even more so when worn. Among the Samoyed of Siberia, the ritual mask is held to intensify inner concentration and to aid the focussing of consciousness. There is a definite sensation of detachment from the world when one is worn, an internalisation of awareness - the superficial personality is subdued, transcended by the deeper spiritual powers of which the mask is a symbol. As the Finnish scholar Uno Harva has said, the whole ceremonial and magical costume of the traditional shaman, witch or wizard is essentially a mask and can be regarded as having evolved from the mask which in all pagan traditions embodies the 'face of the spirit'.

Herblore & Wortcunning of the Witches

The traditional witch was a veritable repository of ancient herbal knowledge and well knew how to utilise natural plants and fungal substances to heal the ailing or to poison the troublesome who afflicted members of the sect. Witchcraft and the arts of the Cunning-man employed magically prepared brews, potions, infusions, ointments and fumigations made from the flowers, seeds, stems, leaves and roots of native herbs which could be gathered in the fields, woods and hedgerows of the countryside by the knowledgeable and keen-eyed. Wortcunning constituted an extensive branch of 'natural magic' in itself in which each herb was held to contain specific astral and planetary qualities which could be used in sorcery and spell-weaving for various ends.

Anthropomorphic roots such as the fabled Mandrake and White Bryony have long been prized for their magical potency. The Mandrake, also known as the Gallow's Man, Mandragora and Satan's Apple, is harvested in accordance with an elaborate ceremony; the gatherer must approach the plant with the wind blowing from behind him at around sundown and draw three circles around it with a consecrated blade before digging around the root. According to some authorities the Mandrake shines with a strange glow in the darkness and must be dug up with an ivory or wooden instrument rather than iron. It is said to emit a fatal shriek when exhumed from the soil and sometimes a

dog was used to pull the herb, which was tied to it's tail with a cord. White Bryony is interchangeable with the Mandrake and is said to grow with peculiar luxuriance beneath the gallows or on the graves of suicides and sorcerers.

Mandrake is called 'Circe's Plant' and was reputedly employed by the great Greek enchantress to bring about magical transformations. It is also sacred to Venus and bears formidable renown as a potent aphrodisiac and promoter of love, fornication and fertility when carried about the person or consumed in potions.

Mandrakes could also be employed in the capacity of a familiar or helper-spirit which aided divination and protected the witch from malevolent psychic attacks. The root was ritually named three times before it was reburied for a lunar month; it was then dug up and again named thrice while being washed in wine on a Friday. The root should be kept wrapped in a piece of white silk and was always addressed using it's magical name from then onwards. German witches knew such an image as an Alraun or Erdemannekin.

Garlic flowers and bulbs are famed for their power to turn away the depredations of vampiric spirits in Slavonic countries. Likewise Scandinavian farmers hung Garlic cloves around the necks of cattle to prevent goblins stealing their milk and to ward away the malicious attentions of trolls. Garlic was held to have grown in the cloven hoof-print of the Devil's foot.

The Fern is sacred to the moon and it's seed held the power of rendering it's bearer invisible when gathered on the night of Midsummer's Eve. German folklore calls this plant the 'Witch's Wing'. In Slavonic witchlore the Fern is celebrated as the 'Fire-Flower', the principal herb sacred to

the god Kupala. On the 'night of Kupala' the gatherer must go to the forest at midnight and watch as the flowers of the Fern bloom in a cloud of fiery radiance. Then a magic circle had to be inscribed about the Fern whilst it's flowers were plucked, for many daemons would attempt to deter and terrify the gatherer. Armed with the Fern-flower the witch could actually hear and understand the language of the plants as they conversed amongst themselves. Mugwort is another lunar herb which is held to increase spirit-vision and clairvoyance when drunk as a tea or burned as a suffumigation. Fresh Mugwort leaves, when rubbed on a scrying-mirror or 'keek-stone', will increase it's magical magnetism.

St. John's Wort or Hypericum is sacred to the sun and exerts a solar protective influence against malign entities; it is under the rulership of the 'bright day-god' Baldur and bunches were hung over cottage doorways for their apotropaic qualities. St. John's Wort also possesses the ability to move around uncannily to avoid gatherers. Other important solar herbs include Heliotrope, Camomile and the common Daisy, which in Celtic lore is the eye of the sun-goddess Grainne.

Vervain or Verbena is a potent magical herb, under the martial rulership of the god Tiw, a branch of which when hung over the doorway repels evil wights and spirits. Necklaces of Vervain are held to cure the ague, soothe headaches and increase one's luck. When ritually buried in a plot of ground, Vervain is said to promote agricultural fertility. Vervain is powerful in casting love-spells and was used by witches in foretelling the future when prepared as an incense. Other herbs sacred to Tiw or Mars include the poisonous Wolf's-bane or Stormhat, Absinthe and Rue.

Sun Spurge is Woden's plant and can be incorporated

into incenses for spells connected with wisdom, inspiration and secret knowledge. Amongst other mercurial and Odinnic 'plants' esteemed by witches we find the vision-producing mushroom, Fly Agaric and the common toadstools known as 'Liberty Caps'. Portuguese witches utilised the small, dung-growing toadstool *Panaeolus Papilionaceus* in their practices to produce visionary mind-states. The herb Cinquefoil is also sacred to Woden/Mercury and was included in mediaeval French 'flying-ointments' and Sage also promotes wisdom.

The chief Jupiterian herb of the Thunderer, Thunor or Thor, is the Houseleek which, when grown on the roof of a cottage, protected it from being struck by lightning. Also included amongst Jupiterian herbs is the Agrimony plant.

The herb of Freyja is the Maidenhair fern which can be used in amatory magic and talismans to procure love. Honeysuckle is a Venusian herb and engenders erotic dreams when hung in a girl's bed-chamber. Lady's Mantle is steeped in baths to help women conceive and it is also used to remedy menstrual disorders and induce sleep. Another herb of love-magic is the Marigold or 'Husbandman's Dial', which was employed as an aphrodisiac in Saxon Witchcraft. Primrose petals can be prepared as a Venusian suffumigation in love-spells in combination with Rosemary.

The infamous Saturnian herb, sacred to Dame Hel or Herodias, is the Deadly Nightshade, otherwise called Satan's Cherries or the Devil's Berries; it is a highly dangerous hallucinogen and has long been celebrated as the 'witch-herb' par excellence as the juice of it's berries mingled with goose-fat forms the basis of the notorious 'lifting-salve' by means of which sorcerers, witches and night-travellers flew forth to the sabbat. Another important Saturnian herb is the poisonous Hemlock which lies under the rulership of

the goddess Hecate: Shakespeare's witches sought the 'root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark'. Also Saturnian in quality is the sedative herb Valerian.

The 16th Century German magus, Agrippa von Nettesheim, gives the recipe for a traditional herbal suffumigation whose smoke will instantly cause daemons and Otherworldly spirits to assemble and be seen: this 'witch-smoke' is composed of specific proportions of Coriander, Celery, Henbane and Hemlock, thoroughly dried and burnt on glowing embers.

Herb Robert or Adder's Tongue is sacred to the god of the witches, Robin Goodfellow or Puck, and if allowed to grow about the house it invokes his blessing and help on the inhabitants. This herb is also effective for staunching wounds.

Greater Celandine or Swallow-Wort is associated with the Maytide when young swallows hatch in the nests. If a young swallow's eyes were damaged the older swallows would restore them with the juice of this herb. As Gerard's Herbal says, Swallow-Wort 'is good to sharpen the sight'.

Yarrow enjoys a deserved reputation for healing powers and for dispelling evil forces. Achilles allegedly used it to bathe and cleanse his companion's wounds. In Ireland the Yarrow was used by Gaelic witches to achieve spirit-flight when worn in their cap, the Cappeen d'Yarrag. Yarrow is potent in relieving women's menstrual disorders and was invaluable in casting spells. Yarrow is a 'faerie herb' and in the Western Isles it's leaves when held over the eyes, bestowed the 'second sight' or 'sight of two worlds'.

In closing this brief stroll through the herb-garden of traditional Wicce-craeft it should be noted that the

gathering of these plants always followed a special magical pattern in accordance with the hour of the day or night and the phases of the moon. Great pains were taken to propitiate the indwelling spirit of the herb and procure it's magical field of power intact. An offering of grain or honey might be given to the earth to replace the plant or, on occasions, a few drops of blood cast onto the soil in exchange.

Herblore and wortcunning were said to be imparted to witches by Dame Holda in the Mountain of Venus as part of their initiation. Likewise, in German folk-tradition, the Wild Man or Green Man of the Woods is held to be a master of herbal lore and green magic.



The Witches Compass

The Witches' compass or magic circle circumscribes and delineates the sacred space for the Craft workings. It's roots go back to the circular nemeton of the Celts and, ultimately to the megalithic circles of ancient Europe. The compass is a temple, a sanctuary and a cosmogram in whose bounds the witch is projected into sacred time where all words and acts become archetypal and primordial in their power. It is thus the true cosmological pattern of the microcosm and macrocosm to the witches. The four quarters of the compass in the Traditional Craft are ascribed the following qualities and magico- symbolic correspondences:-

- EAST** - Fire, red, the sun, awakening, light, youth, creative energy, the ram-horned god and the fiery smith, the hare-goddess, fox, the right hand, birch-twigg besom and sword/knife.
- SOUTH** - Earth, white, love, warmth, life, fertile abundance, sovereignty, the goddess of land and corn, the Rose Queen, mare, bee, feet and genitals, oaken stave and godstone.
- WEST** - Water, grey/green, the moon, mist, sound, shade, age, reflective energy, Ladies of the Lake, swan, cat, toad, the left hand, cauldron/cup, comb, mirror and apple.

NORTH - Air, black, the pole-star, cold, sleep/death, truth, fate, initiation, Dame Herodias and Owld Hornie, Wild Hunt/Faery Rade, goat, owl, black hound, crow, stang and hagstone, the head.



Three hooded witches bearing the stand make their way to the cavern of initiation; a hare leaps in the beams of the full moon.

Hallowing & Casting the Compass

To hallow and consecrate the compass for witch-rites the alter and stang are set in the north. The witch first intones the following crossing formula:

IN THE NAME OF THE SKYFATHER
(touches brow)
AND THE EARTHMOTHER (touches navel)
THE DARKNESS AND THE BRIGHTNESS (left
and right shoulders)
POWER AND WISDOM OF THE ALL HOLY
ONE.

Drawing a pentacle or witches foot in the east say:

RED SPIRITS ARISE! YE POWERS OF
BURNING FIRE, BE WITH ME.

Then doing the same in the south say:

WHITE SPIRITS ARISE! YE POWERS OF THE
RICH EARTH BE WITH ME.

To the west,

GREEN SPIRITS ARISE! YE POWERS OF THE
MISTY WATERS, BE WITH ME.

And finally to the north,

BLACK SPIRITS ARISE! YE POWERS OF THE
MIDNIGHT WINDS, BE WITH ME.

After these calls to the quarters the circle should be symbolically swept thrice sunwise with the broom. Alternatively it can be 'seined' or hallowed by carrying a flame three times sunwise with the chant:-

THREE CIRCLES OF LIGHT
I DRAW ARIGHT,
TO HALLOW THE COMPASS
WITH MAGIC MIGHT!

At the close of the workings go to each quarter and simply say RED SPIRITS, YE POWERS OF THE BURING FIRE, ALL HAIL! and so forth at each cardinal station. Finally the crossing formula should be repeated.



The Tools of Witchery

The Broom

The broom in witch-magic is pre-eminently symbolic of spirit-flight and also of sacral purification and rebirth: many mummer's plays and rituals feature a 'teaser' or 'Bess', a man dressed as a woman carrying a broom before the procession. The besom was employed in the cursing spell of the 'naked broom' by Manx witches, invoking the darker aspect of the witch-goddess. In Westphalia houses were ritually swept with a white broom decorated with cow's horns at Shrovetide which was then hung over the door of the cow-house. The three woods of the broom are ash, willow for the withies and birch- twigs. Luck-bringing heather is sometimes used.

The Stang

The stang, a horned ashen staff, is the true cultic standard-pole and image of Owld Hornie in Wicce-craeft, especially in his aspect as Lord of the Wild Hunt. The stang is used in various ceremonial invocations of the Wild Hunt from Northamptonshire to the Isle of Man, often to humiliate or banish wrong-doers from the village in the unruly rite of "riding the stang". In the mysteries of the Craft the stang is set in the north to symbolise the presence of the Horned Master as guardian of the portals of Annwyn and opener of the 'ghost-road' into his underworld kingdom.

The Knife-Sword

The sword and the knife are synonymous in the Craft of the Wise. It holds the powers of precision, incisiveness and penetrative illumination symbolised by Arthur's 'Lightning-Sword', Calad Vwlch. On deeper mystic levels it is connected with the shamanic 'sword- bridge' to the otherworld.

The Cauldron-Cup

The cup is one with the mystical cauldron in the underworld cavern: the Pair Annwvyn (Cauldron of Annwvyn) is the all-nourishing vessel of the goddess Cerridwen, the source of all birth, regeneration and becoming. It is both the womb of the mother and the well which restores the dead to life. The cauldron is also the containing vessel of the psyche in whose depths the goddess distills the threefold essence of omniscient inspiration for a year and a day.

In Witchcraft the cauldron is an emblem of rebirth, abundance and initiatic knowledge, the source of the deep wisdom.

The Stone

The Llech or stone is a symbol of foundation and eternal solidity. According to some it should be a natural whetstone for sharpening the blades. There are, in actuality, several stones used in the Craft such as the holed Hagstone, the phallic Godstone and the labyrinth- marked Troystone. In addition, rock crystal or Sunstone is seen as crystallized brilliance - spring-water, when poured over it, becomes

charged with healing potency. The stone also represents the cosmic mill, the understone of the world upon whose axis the starry heavens ceaselessly whirl above us.

The Rod or Wand

The wand is the phallic projector and director of numinous forces in Witch-magic. The usual woods used for the wand are hazel for magical wisdom or ash, the sacred spear and world-axis. The Hudlath or 'Rod of Enchantments' used by the Gwyddon and White Witch of Wales, is a length of scarlet rowan wood which is full of luminous magical potency. Devonshire witches always carried the feared 'black rod' of blackthorn as a ceremonial wand.



Hallowing the Witch-Tools

Before the working tools are brought into the circle they must be 'made sacred', set apart from the profane world and given a numinous 'charge'. The following formula can be used with any of the tools, to endow them with the subtle fluidic force of the Great Magical Agent. This serpentine power is known as the Nwyvre in Celtic doctrine. Rural Cunning-men and Witches in South England simply call it 'spirit' and liken it's action to that of the lightning-flash.

In order to consecrate any object breathe upon it three times and then say:

*BE THOU CONSECRATE AND IMBUED WITH
THE HALLOWING MIGHT OF THE OLD ONES
AND INCREASE TO THY SPIRIT BY MOON
AND SUN AND STARS, SKY AND EARTH,
WATER AND FIRE!*

As this formula is spoken trace three X's upon the object with the forefinger lightly moistened with saliva and then suffumigate it thrice, passing the tool or object through the incense smoke. Visualise the spirit-force as pale blueish-violet light glowing within and about the object.

The Sabbatic Cycle

The annual Sabbatic cycle of the Traditional Witches is observed on the four Quarter-days of old Celtic year reckoning.

The cardinal celebration is, of course, All-Hallows Eve, the night of October 31st, the Welsh Calangaef or Winter's Night when the old year ends and the new is yet to be born. By cosmological analogy both time and the cosmos have also ended and await regeneration. At this liminal period everything returns to the 'ancient chaos' of the pre-creational state and stands 'between the times'. Thus on All-Hallows Eve everything becomes upside-down and mystically reversed, the barriers between the worlds of the dead and living dissolve and the primeval Wild Hunt or Faery Rade rides across the night.

Masked 'guizers' ecstatically identify with the faerie-ancestors and homage is given to Owld Hornie and the Dark Hag. A single candle is lit to represent the renewal of time and the universe, the Tinley Fire of old Lancashire. It is the night of ancestral oracles and initiatic death/rebirth in the Craft. It's symbols are the dark reed, the goose and owl, the stag and the hounds of Annwryn, "white of coat, red of ear, sharp of fang".

Candlemas on February 2nd is a time of mystical quickening and illumination. The dark Cailleach becomes the young golden haired goddess Bride and her sacred fire is venerated to illuminate the mind, grant skill and healing

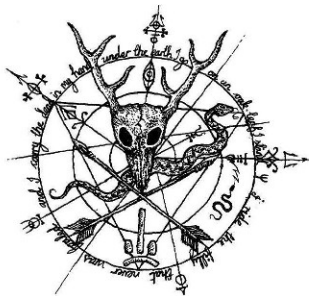
and promote the growth of bairns, kine and crops. On Candlemas the serpent emerges from the earth and the Queen comes from the mound. The Wild Hunt is seen, led by Herne, returning to the lower world after winter. The golden-haired Bride or Olwen is invoked to enter the house this night. The symbols of Candlemas are the sacred flame, the rowan, the cow and ewe, the hedgehog and rock crystal, the 'guiding star of Bride'.

May-Eve or Walpurgis Night on May 1st is the summer's beginning and a magical night when faeries and Witches revel and roam abroad. A bonfire is kindled and dances held around the garlanded birchen Maypole to celebrate the marriage of sky and earth, phallus and vulva. It is the time of love and erotic mysteries presided over by the green-clad May-Queen and Lord of the May. Beautifying and magical May-dew is gathered at dawn. Mumming processions include Jack-in-the-Green, the May-Queen, Robin Hood and Maid Marion. Flowers and greenery deck the circle and whitethorn is brought indoors. Its symbols are the hawthorn, the white and red ribboned birch, the primrose and the 'hawk of May'.

Lammas on August 1st is sacred to the sacrificial Red King and by analogy is associated with the death and resurrection of John Barleycorn, the spirit of the grain at first harvest. John Barleycorn dies in the mystery of threshing and grinding and the Witch eucharistically consumes him in the sacramental bread and ale. The sacrificed King, Llew is ritually lamented as his fires burn on the hills and high places for the Lammas Wakes. The symbols of Lammas are the sacred loaf and draught of beer, the bright green 'Lammas shoots' of the oak tree, the sheaf of grain, the eagle and the sacrificial spear.

The twelve 'Holy Nights' of Yule, the old Saxon 'Mothers'

Nights' are also an important sacred time in the Craft, possessing much the same symbolism as Halloween: the riding of the Wild Hunt, return of the ancestors, dissolution and rejuvenation of time and the cosmos, rebirth of the solar year. There is a kindling of sacred fire and the circlestead is decked with mistletoe and dark evergreens such as fir, yew and holly, etc.



Initiation Into Wicce-Craeft

There are three grades of admission in the Traditional Craft. Firstly the initiate swears fealty to the Witch-faith and serves as Prentice for a year and a day whilst learning the primary lore of the 'art, craft and mystery of the broom and the stang'. Basic knowledge and skills are acquired by the Prentice in this time. The initiate is then inducted as a true Witch-man or Witch-wyfe and becomes a committed devotee of the Old Ones and a fully empowered practitioner of the 'Art of Arts'. A woman is inducted by a man and a man by a woman in accordance with old custom.

This is the journeyman grade of Witchcraft during which time the Craft-knowledge is deepened and extended through practical experience. The third degree of the Craft is that of Master-Witch or Mistress-Witch: this grade is gained by the creation of work which gives clear evidence of the individual's advanced initiatic powers and abilities. The third degree of Witchery is the level of the true Magister and Lady as spiritual representatives of the Devil and Dame Herodias. Gaining this degree may be the work of many years.

Induction of a new initiate into the grade of Witch-man or Witch-wyfe is done according to the following pattern: the novice is led blindfolded to the east of the compass by a Witch who knocks three times upon the floor with a staff and is asked by the Magister or Dame,

WHO GOES THERE AT THE SECRET DOOR?

The Witch guiding the novice says:

*ONE WHO SEEKS ADMISSION INTO OUR
SECRET CRAFT AND IT'S HOLY MYSTERIES.*

The officer then asks,

WHO SENT THEE HITHER?

The Witch replies

*OWLD HORNIE BADE US COME HENCE BY
THE HOOKS AND CROOKS OF THE ROAD.*

The officer says

WHAT'S THE TENDER OF THE OATH?

To which the reply is

*HELE, CONCEAL, NEVER REVEAL: NEITHER
WRITE, NOR DITE, NOR RECITE: NOR CUT,
NOR CARVE, NOR WRITE IN SAND.*

The officer says

*THEN ENTER OUR CIRCLE BY SWORD-
BRIDGE AND BROOM.*

The Witch guides the novice over a crossed sword and besom into the circle, through the eastern doorway. Within the circle the initiate is made to swear the Witches Oath by kneeling on one knee with the right hand resting on the

crown of the head and left hand under the sole of the foot, saying:

I PLEDGE ALL THAT LIES BETWEEN THESE HANDS TO OWLD HORNIE, OUR MASTER AND TO DAME HERODIAS, OUR LADY OF THE NIGHT-MOON. I ABJURE AND ABANDON ALL FALSEHOOD AND WHOLLY DEDICATE MYSELF TO THE FAITH OF THE OLD ONES. TO THE CRAFT OF THE WISE I CLEAVE AND SWEAR TO HELE, CONCEAL AND NEVER REVEAL THE SECRETS OF THE WITCHING WAY THROUGH ALL MY YEARS.

THIS OATH I BIND AND SEAL, BY THE STANG AND THE BROOM AND IN THE SIGN OF THE HORNS. SHOULD I BETRAY THE CRAFT AND BREAK THIS, MY WORD, MAY I BE STRUCK DOWN BY THE WRONGS I HAVE WROUGHT. THIS I SWEAR BY CLAN, FAITH AND COVEN, SO MOTE IT BE!

The Magister bids the new Witch to arise and gives the Witch- Mark on the forefinger of the left hand; this may be either a small tattoo or a token mark, temporarily executed in ink or paint. The officer sprinkles the initiate with water and says

I NAME THEE — (Witch name) — IN THE SIGN OF THE HORNS AND THE WANDERING MOON AND THE OWL'S FOOT.

Now the Witch is given an unlit candle which is kindled from the fire to signal the commencement of a new life. Thus the rite which makes a Prentice into a fully-fledge Witch is accomplished.

Spirit-Threads & Knots in Witch-Magic

The use of threads, cords and knots in spell-weaving forms a very ancient branch of witch-magic in the traditional Craft. On the most profound level of cosmological significance weaving, spinning and thread-lore are intimately connected with the three goddesses who rule over the processes of fate and destiny, the Wyrd Sisters of the Saxons, the Scandinavian Nornir and the three Fates, Moirae or Parcae of the classical world. These three divinities were envisioned as standing behind the causal cycles of action and reaction in the universe, continuously weaving, unweaving and reweaving the fabric of space and time and all events which occur within it from one second to another. In Norse-lore this sisterhood are named Urdhr, Verhandi and Skuld and in the Roman mythic tradition, Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos.

Shakespeare's 'Weird Sisters' are in reality this mysterious fate-trinity whom he describes as 'posters of the land and sea', indicating their status as cosmic entities whose uncanny pronouncements unveil the dooms of kings. Spinning and weaving are traditional women's arts and are thus closely connected with female magic and the feminine side of the Craft. Thus witches 'weave' their immemorial enchantments, re-forming the weft and warp of reality to effect their spells. The cosmic axis is Frigg's Spindle in Northern cosmology about which the sun, moon and stars generate the tapestry of time and being through the power

of the goddess. Celtic Gaulish and British iconography of the three Mothers or Matronae likewise show them with spinning implements such as the wheel and the distaff. When babies were christened in mediaeval Germany it was customary for the midwife to plait three cords, coloured white, red and black to allot a benign destiny to the child.

Threads and cords feature so extensively in European Wicce- Craeft because the thread, particularly when spun at midnight in the light of the full moon whilst incantations are whispered, is a 'road' or line of passage for spirits and their powers. Threads form living lines of spirit-motion and thus can be utilised to dynamically facilitate their movement in a linear direction or to trap, confuse or baffle them when tangled. Alternatively, the power of the spirits can be bound in knots and unleashed when necessary by untying them as sea-witches in the British Isles were said to do with the winds.

Scottish witches performed powerful magic with the aid of the 'blue clew' and Samhuin ceremonial included a rite called the 'Winning of the Blue Clew'. Other Scottish spells featured the tying of a black thread with nine knots in it around a sprained or injured limb. The apotropaic application of the tangled thread can be seen in the 'spirit-traps', 'ghost-catchers' and 'witch-bottles' of rural English folk-magic.

In East Anglia a small glass bottle was filled with a bewildering maze of intertangled multi-coloured threads and then corked and sealed with wax. This bottle, if properly prepared and consecrated would entrap ghosts and the malefic spells of witches and was either placed in the window or buried beneath the doorstep. Charles Godfrey Leland in his 'Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune-telling' (1891) alludes to the wild, loose and unbound hair of witches when

he asserts that 'the old belief in the power of long and curling hair to fascinate was derived not only from it's beauty but also because of the magic of it's curves and entanglements.

A most baleful East Anglian spell is the Witches Ladder, a black cord with forty knots along it with a black hen's feather bound into each knot which constitutes a fearful curse. At the dark of the moon the malefic power of the curse was concentrated into each knot with a whispered chant to invoke the Black Hag-goddess's harsh power into the cord from whence it would emanate to the victim. Such Witches Ladders have been encountered in the remoter corners of Essex within the last few decades, often having been hung clandestinely in the belfry of the parish church.

For most purposes a nine-knot spell can be efficaciously employed by the contemporary witch. Whilst concentrating intently upon the purpose of the spell nine knots are tied at regular intervals along the cord or thread whilst the following chant is intoned:

"One to start the spell upon
Two to pull the magic through
Three to rouse it mightily
Four for power strong and sure
Five to bring the spell alive
Six the magic might to fix
Seven for the secret leaven
Eight to turn the web of fate
Nine the hidden spell I bind!"

For works of clairvoyance, dreaming, psychic vision, cyclical growth and intuition use a blue-green thread and work upon a Monday.

For works of law and justice and all kinds of contests, trials and tests use a crimson thread and cast the spell on a Tuesday.

Deep blue thread should be used on a Wednesday in spells concerning wisdom, intellectual skill, inspiration and prophecy.

For matters concerning oaths, rulership, maintenance of order, defense, strength and defeat of inimical forces use a purple thread on Thursday.

Love spells, works of vengery, erotic magic and fertility are worked with an emerald green thread upon a Friday.

The sinister black thread is employed in spells concerning fate, initiation, curses and darkness and is used on a Saturday.

In spells for wealth, gold, healing fecundity and happiness the witch must use a saffron yellow thread on a Sunday.

The knotted thread when fully empowered is worn upon one's person if intended to affect the personal self or placed in proximity to the target of the spell.

A more general colour system for cord-spells and thread-workings consists of three basic hues; white thread for matters of wisdom, mind, light, spirit and sovereignty, red thread for war, courage, strength and defensive might and green thread for fertility, eroticism, pleasure, abundance and wealth.

The whole subject of thread-lines, mazes and interbraided cords as spirit-roads and ghost-traps is in reality a very deep field of study which has innumerable ramifications and facets in shamanistic and magical praxis. The use of threads in witch-spells is merely one aspect of this lore of spirit-movement:-

"Twist ye, twine ye, even so
mingle thread of joy and woe."
(Italian spell quoted in C.G. Leland's
GYPSY SORCERY & FORTUNE-TELLING,
1891).



Mysterium Sabbati: Riding on the Witch Way

1. The church bell chimes the hour of midnight behind you; you walk away from the houses through the chill air of the night, treading quietly across the damp turf towards the high thorny hedge which surrounds and encircles the village. You see its dark mass before you as you approach it and you now walk beside it, following its boundary. As you pace by the hedge you begin to hear sounds which float over it from the wastes beyond, from the outside - the high calls of night birds and animals, rushing noises and dry, rustling leaves, the remote hoot of an owl, the croaking of toads, the shrieking bark of a fox.

2. You keep walking with the hedge to your left and after a while you come to a gap in it; before you is a stone stile which leads through the thorny wall. On each upright of the stone stile you see worn symbols carved; the hex star on one and the clawed witches foot on the other. Against the stile leans a staff and at its foot is a small pot of dark green ointment. You reach forward and take the staff in your hand, feeling its smooth surface and carved glyphs with your fingertips. You kneel and take up the pot of ointment which gives off a bitter scent.

3. With the staff you now stand before the stone stile in silence, before the towering hedge and the mystic words of the Sabbat prayers unfold within you:

**ROBIN, DARK MASTER
WHOM MEN CALL THE DEVIL**



*The night-travelling Hexe or 'Hedge-Rider'
upon her broomstick, flying between the worlds along
the haunted spirit-paths.*

*HORNED BOUCCA OF FIELD, MOUNT AND FEN,
LORD OF THE SKULL AND THE PHALLUS
WHO RIDETH WITH THE WILD HUNT:
OPEN THE WAY WE PRAY THEE,
THE WITCH WAY TO THE SABBAT.*

*NINEFOLD MOTHER OF NIGHT-WISDOMS
DAME HEL, DAME BIRCH, MORGAN LE FAYE,
WHO MEN CALL THE QUEEN OF ELFLAND,
GREAT HERODIAS WHO FLIETH THROUGH*

DARKNESS:

*THEE WE BESEECH, QUEEN AND HAG
TO STEER US UPON THEY WITCH WAY
TO THE STRANGE GLORIES OF THE SABBAT,
SO MOTE IT BE!*

4. Through the portals of the stone stile you now glimpse a hovering sphere of soft light, glowing in the mist beyond without casting shadows. You look at it's colour as it bobs beyond the stile. As you gaze deeply into the ball of light you catch a glimpse of an animal, a shape or a bird. Beyond the stone stile your fetch-light trembles and hovers over the ground, shining softly in the dark, enticing you further on the journey to the other side.

5. Now you look through the stile and beyond and see a full yellow moon hanging low over a foggy landscape of heaths, woods and marshes; misty meadows, barrow-mounds and standing stones casting long black shadows in the moonbeams where pale hares bound in the heather. From the foot of the stile a narrow pathway runs straight ahead shimmering faintly under the moon. You perceive that the pathway is aligned on a dark hill which looms in the distance.

6. Holding the staff and the ointment pot you step onto the stile and climb though the gap, the thorns pulling at your clothes as you emerge upon the wet grass on the other side of the hedge. For a few moments you stand, breathing the cool air, and then putting your fingers into the small earthen pot you rub some of the cold, green ointment upon your wrists and forehead. Taking the staff you now stand astride it, holding the pole between your thighs and the ancient spell whispers through your mind:

*THOUT, TOUT A TOUT, THROUGH AND ABOUT, IN THE
HORNED MASTER'S NAME!*

7. As you stand astride the staff a breeze rustles in the hedge behind you and a wind begins to rise, blowing from the distance; it's roar begins to fill the air, and upon it you seem to hear many far-off voices that call and cry across the night. A distant horn is blown and the wind grows stronger until you begin to feel it pulling at you and lifting you off the ground. Your feet leave the earth, and you are rising upwards into the cloudy air, moving forward. The fetch-light hovers over the path before you, leading the way as you soar upwards with easy motion, gliding smoothly through the dark. Effortlessly you ride the staff through the cold atmosphere, towards the dark hill on whose crown far-off fires now twinkle red in the distance.

8. Astride the staff you soar and speed, the chill wind in your hair and flapping in your cloak as you fly through the night-skies. You sense your height and look down upon the lands outspread beneath you - fields, treetops, fen pools and rough moor, all lit up in the wan moonlight. Below you the straight track runs ahead like a shimmering thread of silver.

You sense shadowy companions in flight around you, silent owl, cowled figures astride broomsticks and goats, some in dark peaked hats, glimpsed through wisps and cloud vapours, all soaring through the murky air. Onward you fly, moving smoothly and swiftly, as in a dream.

9. The bulky mass of the Dark Hill now looms up ahead, it's crown lit up by a beacon-fire; now you ride lower and lower upon your Staff, descending gently through the air towards the foot of the hill which rears above you, a gloomy mass topped with a dancing flame.

You float ever downwards until you feel your feet touch the earth. Now you find yourself standing, staff in hand, at the base of the hill beside an old and twisted Elder tree whose branches claw like black crooked fingers against the moon and around it's roots you see purple-belled Nightshade plants growing luxuriantly. Hard by the Elder tree you see a stone doorway running into the lower hillside from which glows an eldritch light upon the grass. You stand before this portal for a few seconds and then stoop slightly to enter the tunnel into the Dark Hill. You walk into the stone-paved passageway with its low roof and hear your footsteps sound hollowly as you go down. Now you hear a faint sound of rushing and murmuring, of low chanting, of wailing flutes, droning bagpipes and drums far below. You descend lower and lower and the passageway becomes very narrow and close. Your hands touch the rough stone walls as you creep further and further. The strange light now shines more strongly as if you are near it's source. All of a sudden the tunnel widens and you pass through a low arch into the twilight realm of mystery...

(A period of silence now takes place in which magical communion is attained with the old powers of the Sabbat.)

10. To return from the Sabbatic Mystery in the Underworld of Hel/Annwyn the witch rides the staff and chants the name of return:

RENTUM TORMENTUM, IN THE HORNED MASTER'S NAME!

By this spell you will return in an instant from the Dark Faery Hill of the Sabbat, you will come back from the high and lonely places of the Wild Powers and cross over the hedge back into Middle-Earth and the world of the living, awakening to your slumbering body. This in return is the sacred rebirth to the world from the primordial womb of Dame Birch, the Apple Island of Morgan Le Faye, the cavern of the Mothers; those who return from the deep places of Annwyn are reborn and come back as witches, women and men of dark power and secret knowledge.



Commentary on the *Mysterium Sabbati*

1. The journey begins at midnight, the traditional "witching hour", a liminal period or 'crack' between the old day and the new. Midnight is thus the mystical time of 'inbetweenness' when things return to their primeval source and the gates between the worlds are momentarily laid open.

The Hedge encircling the village is the sacred boundary between this world and the eerie immensities of the Otherworld. It is the boundary of the village settlement and beyond it's perimeter lie the fearful powers of primal nature, the wolves and beasts of the forested wilderness. Within the Hedge lies the ordinary life of the village, the everyday consciousness of middle-earth but out there on the other side is the realm of mystery and dread where faeries, ancestors and wild animals wander in the night, the domain of the dead and the ancient ones.

In Celtic regions this mysterious world of death and rebirth was known as Annwyn, the Unworld or Deep Place; in Teutonic Lands it was termed Hel, the Hidden Place of secret power ruled by the All-Mother, Dame Hel. This is the world of Elphame or Faerie.

The witch was one who had the power to cross over the Hedge, the 'Hag', journeying between the worlds. Hence the witch was called the 'Hedge Sitter' or 'Hedge Rider' -

Haegtesa in Middle English, Hagazussa in Old High German and Haghetisse in Middle Dutch. From these are derived our word 'hag' and the German 'hexe' signifying 'Witch'.

2. The Stone Stile is a gap in the hedge, a locus where passage between the worlds can take place and therefore heavily associated with Witches.

The Hex Star is a form of the Hagal rune, the ninth rune sacred to the Dark Mother of the Underworld and the Hel-Way or spirit path, along which discarnate souls travel for nine nights to reach her subterranean kingdom. It especially embodies pathways between the dimensions of the nine worlds of the cosmic tree. The Witches Foot is very old symbol which represents the clawed owl foot of the Witch-goddess Hold or Herodias. It thus denotes magical flight and hidden wisdom, also standing for the downward reaching roots of the Yew Tree which descend into the underworld.

The staff is the Gandr which served as both magical wand and riding pole to the Northern Witches. It is a variant on the classical broomstick or forked pole flown upon by witches throughout Europe. The host of nocturnal beings flying upon staffs is termed the Gandreidh in Old Norse and was applied to Witch-flights and to the Wild Hunt of the ghostly dead. The pot is symbolic of the Unguentum Sabbati, the 'flying ointment' or 'lifting balm' which usually contained narcotic and hallucinatory herbs such as Nightshade, Aconite and Henbane and whose use was a preliminary to the Sabbat-journey in traditional witchcraft practices.

3. The Sabbat prayers formulate the intention of the working clearly within the consciousness and bring about a degree of attunement with the archetypal deities of

The first prayer is addressed to the Old One, the Horned God of the wild forests and marshlands who rules over the horned herds of deer, cattle and goats; in the prayer the god is called upon using the Celtic name Boucca from which comes the English Puck and Irish Puca. These all derive from the Indo-European root - BHUG meaning a horned beast such as a stag or goat. In contemporary Ireland a goat is still called a 'puck'. In Gaul he was called Vindos and bore the title Cernunnos, 'the Horned One or God of the Deer'Head'; in Wales he was known as Gwynn Ap Nudd. He is the Lord of Annwyn and bestows its ancient wealth upon those who travel there. He is master of the Wild Hunt of the dead at wintertide riding through the night 'between the times'. His two major symbols in the witch mysteries are the skull of secret ancestral wisdom and the Phallus of fertility and regeneration. The witches called him variously Robin, the Old Hornie or the Devil.

The second prayer is addressed to the All-Mother, the great Witch-Goddess of the Night who rules over the underworldly kingdoms. Amongst her attributes are the earth and the waters within the earth, wild animals and birds, spinning, the moon and the crossroads. She can appear in triple or ninefold aspect signifying her dominion over the three planes of heaven, Earth and Hel. From her secret well, cauldron or womb the nine worlds were born at the beginning of time. Her original Indo-European name was KOLYO, the coverer from which derive the eponyms of the Greek goddess Calypso, the Germanic Hela, Holle and Hulda and the Celtic Cailleach, the veiled Hag who rides with her eight sisters on the winter tempests.

In the Celtic world this all-encompassing goddess was seen in the triplicity of the Morrigan, the 'Great Queen' in

her three aspects Nemain, Macha and Badb Catha - 'Terror', 'Horse' and 'Battle Crow'. In medieval times she evolved into Morgan Le Faye who dwells as part of a ninefold sisterhood on the underworldly Island of Apples, Ynys Avallon. Likewise orchards of magical apples grow in Dame Holda's domain, the 'apples of Hel' which regenerate the dead and bestow immortal youth. As the goddess who led the Faery Rade and the Heljagd she was interpreted classically in the texts of early Frankish writers as Herodias or Diana. German poets saw her as Frau Venus whose magic world was reached by descending into the Venusberg.

True to her nature the All-Mother may appear as a beautiful golden-haired queen (Bride) or as a tusked, blue-faced hag with iron talons (Cailleach). Scottish Witchcraft worshipped her as the 'Queen of Elfland' on her white horse of sovereignty. To the Basque Witches she was La Dama who presided over the Sabbat in her mountain. In Gaelic lore she is the Hag of the Night Moon, the owl-goddess who spins silver threads in the underworld.

4. The fetch-light is a manifestation of the Fylgja, the wild and otherworldly aspect of the soul which exists outside the hedge; this is the other side of our being which we rarely experience directly though it is a personification of protective, empowering forces. As an aspect of the inner psyche the Fetch has been traditionally known to appear in animal or bird form, as a female or male guardian spirit or as a sphere of light.

The Fetch wards and accompanies us and can be a source of luck and numinous powers for the witch in this world and beyond. The Dyr-Fylgja or 'Animal Fetch' underlies the traditional witch concept of the Puckerel or Familiar spirit which appears as a hare, a black cat, a toad and in many other forms. The familiar spirit is a power within and

beyond the witch and could sometimes be called forth for magical purposes. The fetch/Familiar, was invoked to gain divinatory knowledge, to gain unusual abilities, to act as spirit-guide or to shapeshift.

5. The straight pathway is aligned upon the distant faery mound or Dark Hill of the Sabbat; it delineates the path of magical motion undertaken by the witch on the broomstick ride. As a line of spirit flight over the inner landscapes of Elphame it became reflected in the outer world as the 'faery roads' of Gaelic tradition which run between the mounds of the Sidhe.

Along these magical tracks the Faery Folk rode on the four Quarter days "changing their hunting grounds." This phenomenon is the Sluagh Sidhe or Faery Rade and the magical host was led by the Queen of Elfland and the King of Faerie. The Saxon geomantic lore tells of the straight trackways periodically ridden upon by the Wild Host which were known by the terms 'Woden's Way.' In the Channel Isles cromlechs and dolmens are linked by 'pouquelaie' or 'goblin-paths'. The corpse-candle Paths of Wales and the roads of Ankou, the Wagon of the Breton Death-god attest to the same magical principles. In Germany the straight 'Ghost Roads' run between cemeteries and likewise the Dutch Death-Road and Helweg feature in folk-belief as linear paths along which discarnate spirits fly. In the Mysterium Sabbati the inspired consciousness is drawn along the haunted Witch-Way or Owl-Line through the spectral dreamscapes of Elphame, guided and protected by the invoked Fetch or Familiar.

6. The anointing of the Witch with 'flying ointment' here takes on the character of a purely symbolic or ritual gesture within the circle of awareness; it signals the attainment of, and entry into a further stage of inspirational trance whose

herbal emblem is the dark purple berry of the deadly Nightshade plant - the sacred Witch-herb, Dwale or Dwayberry. The spell for Travelling Forth by Night is an ancient West Country formula used by covens of witches in 17th century Somerset though of far older provenance; it probably originated in the ecstatic shaman-song or incantation of trance-flight, though greatly worn down over the centuries. This seed-incantation serves to steer the soul 'throughout and about', through layers of consciousness to the concealed source of all being.

7. The rising breeze and blustery wind here heralds the imminent presence of the spirits and mirrors an intensification of the spirit-breath of consciousness (Anda-Old Norse). The voices on the wind are the ancestors riding out in the night.

The distant horn being blown is of especially great significance - it is the horn of the Master of the Wild Hunt which summons souls from their bodies. By this instrument the Horned God, Gwynn Ap Nudd sounds the mystery of death and reincarnation. For the witch the Sabbat-Horn calls deep and long across the great spaces of time as a sign of the covenant sworn with the ancient ones.

8. Flight alludes to the liberation of the ecstatic psyche of the Witch; consciousness is extended beyond the normal parameters of the ego/body entity and ranges untrammelled beyond the hedge in spirit-flight. The broomstick or Gand-staff symbolises the secret formulae of Witch-magic by which this magical levitation is attained whereby the soul flies out upon the wings of numinous inspiration into Other Worlds.

At this point in the rite the Witch merges into the night-travelling horde of discarnate spirit-entities known by

myriads of names throughout Europe such as the Gandreidh, the army of Diana, King Arthur's hunt, the Herlathing, Mesnee a Hellequin - the dream hosts of the Underworld.

9. The Dark Hill of the Sabbat represents a profound inner locus of traditional Wicce-Craeft. The beacon-fire burning upon it's summit shines through many dimensions and summons the faithful across the night of power to celebrate the Mysterium. The Hill, Mound or Mountain is central to Witch-symbolism because it embodies the body or womb of the All-Mother within which the ultimate transformations are sought, beneath the roots of the cosmic tree.

The German knight Tannhauser followed this path into the Hurselberg, the Mountain of Venus. Pendle Hill possesses a similar function in the cosmography of Lancashire Witchcraft. The Swedish Witches of the Auldearne Coven entered into the Downie Hills and German Witches flew to the Brocken on Walpurgisnacht. Basque Sabbats took place within the caverns of certain mountains in the Pyrenees. Everywhere the symbolism of the Dark Hill of the Sabbat endures - descending the passageway into this mound entails a return to the earth-womb of Dame Herodias, the primeval source of all being which exists beyond time and space. This is the dream-state of Ur-consciousness in which all ordinary limits are dissolved - the divine chaos from which time and being are regenerated again and again through great cosmic cycles.

The Mystic Cavern within the Dark Hill is the place of the Cauldron itself, the eternal source of continuous rebirth. The Elder or Bourtree is the dwelling-place of the 'Elder-Witch' and as the Celtic raven-tree it denotes the deepest strata of the netherworld now being contacted. The whole movement of the Mysterium has led the Witch to this point

and experiences occurring within the Dark Hill may vary considerably from one individual to another: some may experience visionary involvement and participation in the archetypal Witch Sabbat, others may perceive symbolic revelations of initiatory power, others yet may simply achieve a formless communion with the primordial Ones and become aware of the numinous presence of the Horned One and the Triple Queen. When this state of Sabbatic communion is fully reached words are no longer sufficient to describe the ineffable Mysterium. Further exegesis would be superfluous.

10. The Spell of Return is again a traditional West Country formula and formally cues the return to ordinary consciousness in Middle-Earth. Every such return is virtually instantaneous as it takes place in an extra-temporal domain and always signifies rebirth in a higher state into the land of the living, endowed with numen and knowledge from the realm of death and ancestral memory. This is the eternal night-journey of Witchcraft initiation as it has always been known throughout Britain and Europe. It was essentially done in this manner in the old times although the secrets became forgotten and obscured through ignorance and the passing of time.

Now the Cultus Mysterium Sabbati and the Coven of the Three Owls are made manifest in this holy work of Witchery.

SO MOTE IT BE!



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