

Mysterious Ways

A Cyberzine for Pagan men who love men.

Summer / Fall 2022
Volume 3, Issue 2

Welcome to the latest issue of Mysterious Ways! In this issue, we'll be talking about "Visibility and Representation." What are the benefits of being visible and represented as Queer Pagans? Does being an invisible minority help others perpetuate negative myths about us? Does being "hidden" isolate us from connecting and finding role models? How are haters using our invisibility and lack of representation against us?

— Mel Mystery

Theme this Issue: Visibility and Representation



A group of Pagans represented at the Hampton Roads, Virginia LGBTQ Pride Interfaith Event in 2018.

Can you identify the Queer, Pagan, polar bear in the image above?
Hint: He's not wearing any identifying symbols.

Inside this issue

Welcome	1
Events and Gatherings	2
From Across the Pond	4
Representation and Visibility	6
Don't Panic	8
Reviews.....	12
Gay Gods and Spirits	15
Poetry and Art.....	16
Resource Listing	18
Upcoming Events	19

Special Thanks

Special thanks to all who contributed articles, poetry, and art this month.

Events and Gatherings

Virtual Brotherhood by the Bog Review

By Mel Mystery

Brotherhood by the Bog held our Pagan men's retreat virtually again this year the weekend of April 22, 24, 2022. Traditionally, Brotherhood by the Bog is an in-person event that takes place in the cabins, or sometimes in tents, at First Landing State Park in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

This year's theme was "Strange Magick: Off the Beaten Paths." The idea was to showcase paths and practices beyond the traditional Wicca, Witchcraft, Druidry, and Norse Paganism that most folks are familiar with. This year's topics ranged from Necromancy to UFOs to Ecstatic Dance Traditions of the Mediterranean. There was a workshop on the Mexican Folk Saint Santa Muerta, another on Sigil Magick, and a discussion on self-care and "Getting your bearings." Author and mortician, Tomás Prower, returned again this year for a workshop and Q&A session on Pagan Funeral Planning. Initiates of the Unnamed Path, a shamanic tradition for men who love men, provided an introduction to their Path and also hosted the main ritual which focused on core concepts of their tradition – Tree Breathing and Raising the Great Crossroads. Eric Eldritch of the Radical Faeries and Stone Circle Wicca facilitated an icebreaker "What Makes You Strange?" and a "Strange Panel" discussion where we got to know some of this year's presenters a little better. The opening and closing rituals led attendees "off the beaten path" at the start of the weekend and then led them back to the main path again at the end. The evenings featured virtual game nights with prizes. The Quizzard of Odd game on Friday evening tested participants knowledge of cryptids, Magick, Aleister Crowley, astrology, and more. The Monster Mashup game on Saturday evening was a "name that tune" game with a twist. The twist was that the lyrics were acted out with no sound. There was also an "After Hours" social for folks who wanted to stay up into the evening and wee hours of the morning (depending on their time zone).

This year's virtual retreat attracted an international audience with folks from Canada, the U.K., and Portugal, as well as folks from across various time zones of the U.S.

With more events going back to in-person, there is hope that Brotherhood by the Bog will return to the bogs of First Landing State Park for in-person retreats in the near future. At the same time, there is acknowledgement of the value of a virtual retreat where folks from all over can connect, learn, and socialize with each other, and a desire to continue the virtual retreat in some form in the future as well.

For more information on Brotherhood by the Bog:

<http://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/index.php/events/brotherhood-by-the-bog-pagan-men-s-retreat>



An altar "off the beaten path" featuring tokens representing workshops and activities of the weekend.



Between the Worlds to be Held, August 8-13, 2022

Between the Worlds gathering for queer pagan men returns this August 8-12, 2022. This year's gathering will honor the Shinto deity Inari. Inari is a trickster associated with "foxes, rice, tea, sake, agriculture, general prosperity, worldly success, blacksmiths and fertility. Inari is a primary household spirit who is sometimes seen as male, and sometimes as female.

Due to Covid, there is still some possibility that the event might be cancelled. If this happens, all registrations will receive complete refunds. Proof of Covid vaccination is required to attend.

For more information: <https://betweentheworlds.org/>

Stone and Stang Review

By Mel Mystery

The Stone and Stang spiritual gathering for Men-Who-Love-Men was held virtually the weekend of May 13-15, 2022. The event is open to men of "diverse pagan and alternative spiritual paths." This year's theme was "The Daily Weave: Connection, Balance, Ecstasy In The Middle World." The gathering is hosted by the Unnamed Path and is usually held as a biennial in-person gathering which previously took place in California. It was to be held in Eustace, Texas in May 2020, but that event was cancelled due to Covid. Stone and Stang was last held virtually in April 2021. This year there was at least one international participant attending from Australia.

Durgadas Allon Duriel presented a workshop on "Everyday Magic: Little Ritual Choices with a Big Impact." The workshop was about creating your own reality in the "middle world." We all have choices about whether to view the world as mundane or as sacred, magickal, and full of connection. Various ways to connect to the magickal on a daily basis were suggested.

Storm Faerywolf hosted a workshop on "The Queer Sabbat: Magic, Ecstasy, and the Celebration of Queer Lives." Much of the material presented was from his latest book **The Satyr's Kiss: Queer Men, Sex Magic, & Modern Witchcraft**. He described the historical roots of the witch's sabbat, how that relates to our modern Pagan eightfold wheel of the year, and he suggested how we might add Queer holidays, feasts, and celebrations to these annual sabbats.

Dayan Martinez presented on "Sovereign Spirits for Queer Animists." The workshop was based on his own research into Sovereign land goddesses in the United States. These are animistic spirits of entire regions. So far his research has identified four massive land goddesses in the U.S. These are Mother Florida, Mother Texas, Mother California, and Grandmother Appalachia. His workshop went into how he went about discovering these sovereign spirits of the land.

Casey Giovinco hosted a workshop on "A Tantric Approach to Gay Witchcraft;" The workshop was based largely off of his new book, **Serpent Ascending: A Tantric Approach to Gay Witchcraft**. He made connections between Witchcraft and Tantra using the mythology of the Goddess Inanna while exploring the concept of sacred sexuality.

Jason Freshwater presented "Aposematism as Community Building." In his workshop, he talked about crypsis (camouflage to hide) and aposematism (displaying bright colors to discourage predators) and how those concepts relate to the modern queer community. In addition to the workshops, there were also fellowship chats between sessions, and a virtual circle to Journey to the Ancestors.

For more information on Stone and Stang:

www.stoneandstang.org

Brotherhood by the Bog A Retreat for Pagan Men

We will return for another virtual or in-person event in 2023!

<http://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/index.php/events/brotherhood-by-the-bog-pagan-men-s-retreat>

From Across the Pond

'Reflections'

by John Pead (writing from Portugal)

Since I last wrote an article for Mysterious Ways many tragedies have happened within my family and this has caused me to reflect on life in a, hopefully, post pandemic world. The theme of this edition of Mysterious Ways is 'Visibility and Representation' and this article will touch upon these themes, but will also (and Mel is so kind in this respect) address things that, perhaps, we all now have to face in our lives.

Nearly everything has changed in the last three years. We have faced the greatest plague since, perhaps, the Black Death in the Middle Ages. We have seen graphically the change in the climate. We have witnessed the erosion of human rights all over the world and in the very heart of democracy. We have seen the rise of true evil, casting war and death upon Ukraine, with devastating effects on the whole world just to satisfy one man's lust for power and legacy. Many people going through all of this have reflected inwardly upon their lives, their responses to others, and the very meaning of morality and ethics in a topsy turvy world. I am going to look at each of these changed areas and how we, as Pagans, may respond in our own way and why they should concern us.

At first it was shrugged off as 'just another flu' and then the deaths started mounting from Covid-19 all around the world. It became a pandemic with far reaching consequences for personal liberties in an attempt to reduce the number of people dying. Social Media caused the wide distribution of fake and misinformation which fuelled both fear and prejudices. Many still remain fixed in some people's minds as being the absolute truth. In consequence preventative measures were, and are still, ignored or challenged in court. A new world of fantasy living became the norm as people preferred to believe lies rather than face and deal with the reality. More people died. It fuelled political rhetoric, courting favour with voters despite the lies being supported against truth, and, in turn, a new politics of 'say it and people will believe it' was born. The professions of politician, government official, and law officer have suffered as a consequence. It is as if The Matrix has become reality. However, amongst thinking persons, the pandemic also began an era of re-evaluation. This encompassed our lives, both working and personal. It showed that jobs we had always taken for granted, the non-visible, like health workers and delivery people, should be seen as far more valuable in the scheme of things. People in lockdown reflected upon whether they truly wanted to continue working in jobs that paid a minimum wage and/or gave little or no job satisfaction. We reflected on our relationships, being confined at home, and many decided that a new vision of partnership was a better way forward. We pondered on faith. For some it strengthened their relationships with the deities they had always believed in. For others a change to a new faith or none at all was the outcome. Practically no area of life was not touched by Covid-19 and Pagans were no different. I would welcome hearing from Mysterious Ways' readers how Covid has touched your lives too.



Free Image from Pixabay.com.



Wildfire in Bitterroot National Forest, Montana taken by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Image is in public domain.

Next was Climate Change. Wildfires raged. Floods and landslides occurred. The Earth heated and glaciers melted, all at a rate not seen before. Droughts in Africa, which formerly happened every 6 years, now happen every three. Starvation and displacement are the results which, again, fuel bigotry and fear in others. For Pagans, the wellbeing of Mother Earth is central to our belief structure. If we do not cherish this planet and all life upon it, we fail in our worship of whatever deity we choose to believe in. It is inherent within us not to turn a blind eye to the degradation and murder of nature and our environment. However, Covid and conflict has given excuses to most to do just that. It prompts the repeated diversion into things that cause us to forget. It causes the total madness of misplaced priorities. To show what I mean, consider the payment of \$49 Billion for one man to buy one chat platform. This is an unimaginable amount of money to a person sometimes on \$1 wage a week or even a month. This sum would enable a lasting change to world hunger and poverty. And yet this 'person' (and I use the term advisably as

what I would wish to write Mel would not print) chooses to do this in priority to doing good. Many Billionaires and Millionaires are as bad. They are like small children with new toys, rushing to zoom into space for 10 minutes thrill for the price that would do so much good to their own country's poor and for the wider world. And we all need to reflect on our own performance too, me included. This world has changed. The goal of holding global warming to 1.5 degrees will now not be met. So, we need, as Pagans, to reflect on this and how we, individually, respond. Again, we need to address our visibility on such issues but not only to protest, but to act to make changes to the way we live to impact, however small in nature it is, the future of our world. Mother Earth and all our deities and spirits will approve I assure you. Yesterday I went for a walk in a small, wooded area near where I live. The reason was the offering of a votive and prayer for the spirit of my dear 41-year-old niece Jane who lost her battle against terminal cancer last week and sadly passed away. I tend to do this at such times; it is my way. I noticed all the life which had blossomed, all the green, the flowers, the birds, the butterflies. I noticed the good air and the peace so often denied us. This is all part of what being Pagan means to me personally. However, I also noticed the rubbish. I saw the piles of building waste and furniture dumped in the forest (who knows how !!!). Why do people do this? What are they thinking ?? Truth be told it is greed and laziness. They cannot be bothered to keep rubbish till they get home, so they discard it along the way. The builders or homeowners cannot be bothered to take their waste to a dump or recycling facility, or they just do not want to pay. The result is an eyesore ! Nature tries its best to cover such obscenities with foliage, but it is still there. Toxic things in the waste hurt the trees, plants and animals and sometimes take a huge length of time to degrade. We, all of us, and especially those of us who are Pagan, must address these issues as a matter of urgency.

Lastly there is war and human rights. As many parts of the world drift towards the far right, the impact on others becomes graphic. Sit and watch the images coming out of destroyed cities, towns, and lives in Ukraine to feed Putin's power lust and you see how things can go. Not only that but, although it seems far away, it has worsened supply chain issues and shortages which cause poverty, hunger and inflation hikes, all of which then inflame the cycle of inequality. At the same time extreme conservative politicians and evangelicals are eroding human rights and freedoms which took decades, if not centuries, to achieve, in their blinkered view of the world based often on erroneous misinterpretation of religious texts. It seems the US may see this in the upcoming decision on reproductive rights of women, but this is but one amongst many such erosions of humanity seen in the modern world. What, then should our stance be as Pagans ? Should we ignore and hope the pendulum will eventually swing back whilst untold harm is done to individuals?

There has been a discussion recently about how we should not challenge, even in symbolism, as it may offend. Perhaps I should not, for instance as a gay man, wear clothes or symbols laying out my views on sexuality, but I honestly think this would be a step in the wrong direction. There seems a fear to offend the very groups which caused the inequality in the first place ! Here, morality and ethics are central to what we do. Should we accept the definitions given us as children or do we challenge and enable change ? One argument, supposedly within the draft decision of this present Supreme Court issue, is that the promulgators of the US Constitution gave no rights to women on reproductive issues. Actually, as a historian with interest in constitutional history, I can say honestly that the framers of the constitution had no interest in women at all. Women had practically no rights and nor did men who did not fit a tight social group in the 18th Century. So, do we always look back or do we look forward? My opinion is that we need to see the world as it is and deal with inequalities now rather than hike on about documents written long ago in a different world. This applies to every country and not just to America.



Domestic terrorists storm the U.S. Capital on January 6, 2021.

Author: Tyler Merbler, from the Wikimedia Commons.

We need to reflect on how visible we are as Pagans in our knowledge and desire to change the world to a better, more kind, caring and tolerant one. That does not mean fearing treading on toes. It means firming up our resolve to change ourselves, our community, our country, and the world at large. It means sacrifice, not just a bunch of sage or a piece of incense. It means seeing who we really are inside, what we truly believe and then telling others and challenging them when their views are causing pain. That is not oppressing their rights; it is a healthy debate to cause change at the very roots of society. If this had not been done in the past, we, as Pagans, would still be tortured and burned at the stake. It involves representation too as it is the powerful who often influence change or stagnation. They can also make time go backward and the persecution of many.

So, forgive this article's blunt approach. The time has come for us all to live our faith even if it means that we must be more assertive.

Anarion (Boetia@protonmail.com)

Representation and Visibility

Why is it so hard for Queer Pagan men to connect?

by Mel Mystery

Many gay, bi, and trans Pagan men seek the company of other Queer Pagan men for friendship, to share common interests, to make magick, or to form covens and groups, but how accessible are Queer Pagan men's groups and events? Certainly, if you live in a small town the chances of connecting with other gay folks or other Pagan folks might seem remote. Even folks in larger cities might struggle to find a Queer men's coven or magickal group to join. And for many people, Queer Pagan men's events such as Between the Worlds or Stone and Stang sustain them that one week during the year when they can be with other Queer men making magick, dancing, drumming, learning, and loving. There's something about being with other Queer Pagan men that you can't get from gay groups that don't necessarily acknowledge your magickal self or Pagan groups and covens that don't necessarily celebrate your sexuality. Generally Pagan groups are accepting of LGBT folks, but their practices are sometimes geared more for heterosexuals. Coming out as Pagan among a group of mainstream gay folks might raise an eyebrow at best or lead to charges of Satanism and baby sacrificing at worse. Neither Pagans nor LGBT folks are totally immune to the misconceptions and prejudices of mainstream culture so you can't always assume total acceptance or understanding from either group. The answer to overcoming misconceptions, prejudice, and ignorance is to be visible and represented. It doesn't matter whether you're challenging misconceptions against LGBT folks or against Pagan folks.

Now think about the last Pagan gathering or event you went to. Was there any visible representation of Queer Pagans at the event? Was there a Queer camp? Were there workshops and programming for Queer Pagans? What about for Pagan men? Some Pagan events and gatherings do include Queer representation, but how many don't?

Think about the last LGBT conference or event you attended? What about your local LGBT Pride Day? Was there any visibility or representation of Queer Pagans at this event? For comparison, how many LGBT Christian groups were visible and represented?

I live in a large metropolitan region with a population approaching 2 million people. The region has an established LGBT community and an established Pagan community. Our annual LGBT Pride festival averages 30,000-40,000 people. We have an LGBT community center, LGBT advocacy and professional groups, a number of Christian LGBT groups, and the usual bear and leather groups. Our annual Pagan Pride Day is much smaller but it's still a thing. We have at least seven Pagan shops in the area. Most of these shops have regular workshops, rituals, and other events. Yet to my knowledge, there isn't a single Queer Pagan group or coven operating within the region – not that I haven't periodically tried to get one started. While there is virtually no Pagan representation at our annual Pride festival (other than running into Queer Pagan folks that I know while attending the event), I do feel that we are lucky to have representation each year during Pride week as part of an annual Interfaith Pride Event (*see photo page 1*). The event includes mainly Christians, sometimes Jews, and a small group of Pagans. This event that has been going on for years isn't on the official schedule of our local Pride week events, but somehow another exclusively LGBT Christian event called "Praise Fest" that started only a few years ago is on the official schedule.

Are Queer Pagans visible and represented in your local Queer community? What about your local Pagan community?

If you're looking for other Queer Pagan men to commune with, how do you find them if they aren't visible or represented in either your local Pagan community or your local Queer community? Is it enough to join an online group with folks you'll likely never meet or talk to? Is it enough to go to that one Queer Pagan gathering each year?

Silence is the voice of complicity.

Obstacles to Connecting

Below are some key items that I think make it harder for us to connect as Queer Pagan Men.

Obstacle #1: Men's programming and presence, and especially Gay, Bi and Trans Pagan men's programming and presence, are underrepresented at Pagan events.

Obstacle #2: LGBT Pagan presence and programming is underrepresented at LGBT events.

Obstacle #3: Visibility – Pagans and Queer folks are invisible minorities meaning that you can't always identify them just by looking (stereotypes and cliché's aside). Unless you know them personally or unless they are wearing identifying symbols (such as LGBT or Pagan jewelry, t-shirts, etc.), they may not be easy to identify.

Obstacle #4: We are a niche within a niche within a niche. We are men in a traditionally feminine religion, and queer men on top of that. We are also Pagan within the larger LGBT community.

Obstacle #5: We're a smaller subculture and we are spread out geographically.

Obstacle #6: I once had a tagline on my emails that said, "The world belongs to those who show up." Showing up is more than half the battle. How many of us don't show up to events, especially those for our specific niche in the community? We might be introverts who need time away from people to recharge. We might be solitaries who feel no need to belong to a group or coven. We might just be busy with life, our jobs, and other responsibilities. We might belong to multiple communities—LGBT, Pagan, and other populations—and find it hard to support all our communities.

Obstacle #7: Internal Compartmentalization – There are some of us who feel that we need to keep the LGBT and Pagan parts of ourselves separate. Given the sex negativity of some religions we may have grown up in, we might even believe that our sexuality and spirituality should be kept separate.

Obstacle #8: External Compartmentalization – all the things mentioned in #7 but applied to the outside world including our groups and communities. This includes the insular nature of many Pagan groups.

Obstacle #9: We distrust other men. One of the great ironies for queer men is that we are both attracted to, and we fear other men. Why is this? According to the authors of the book "Gay Warrior: Transforming Betrayal into Wisdom," men in general are socialized to compete with other men rather than to cooperate. We are socialized to hide our feelings, our fears, and our desires from other men. As gay men, we may have even been hurt or put down by both the straight and the queer men in our lives. We also may have been body shamed, been in relationships with unhealthy men, or been in other situations where the men in our lives have made us somehow feel less than. Because of all this, many queer men feel more comfortable in the company of women. Although there is nothing wrong with feeling safer with women, it may cause some gay men to seek out the safety and comfort of women rather than learning to feel comfortable among men as well.

Obstacle #10: Backlash --- Women's ideas that men's groups are "women haters." Mainstream LGBT folks might equate Pagans with Satanists. Gay men envision men's groups as full of hypermasculine straight men. Straight men envision men's groups as all gay.

Visibility and Representation are Personal Choices

While we've encouraged visibility and representation in this issue, I felt it important to note that one's level of personal disclosure and involvement in representative activities is always a personal choice. I encourage you to push your boundaries, but also to be aware that being out as Queer or as Pagan can have negative consequences that range from being shamed or put down to being the victim of violence. It's possible you could lose your job, that family could disown you, or that you could be harassed or hurt in the street. These are not decisions that should be made lightly. Being out might be very empowering both personally and magickally, but there are also those who may feel threatened by that power. If you have what is termed "passing privilege", either you are or you have the ability to pass as straight, cisgender, male, masculine, white, mainstream, or otherwise "normal," realize that this is privilege at work. Your ability to pass and mingle in so called "respectable" circles is not a luxury that everyone else shares. Also, realize that coming out is a personal choice; you should leave that choice to each individual and not unduly out others—intentionally or unintentionally.

— Mel Mystery

The New Satanic and Sex Panics

by Mel Mystery

In 2016, a man from North Carolina stormed the Comet Ping Pong pizzeria in Washington, DC and opened fire because he believed that Democrats ran a child sex trafficking ring from within the restaurant. Many others, believing this debunked conspiracy theory, have harassed restaurant owners and staff. Many others that year voted to elect Donald Trump President of the United States because they believed he would rid the government of a secret cult of Satanic Democratic pedophiles. Many Transgender supportive bathroom bills and policies have been proposed and/or adopted by various levels of government and private businesses since at least the mid-2010s. Those opposing these bills and policies paint Transgender individuals who want to use the bathroom that matches their gender identity as “predators”, “voyeurs”, and even “rapists.” Recently, Florida’s Republican Governor DeSantis has taken to labeling opponents of Florida’s new “Don’t Say Gay” law as “groomers” seeking to indoctrinate children into homosexuality and make it easier for children to be sexually exploited. According to DeSantis, anyone who opposes the law is “probably a groomer or at least doesn’t denounce the grooming of 4–8-year-old children.” In the recent confirmation hearings for U.S. Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson (the first African American woman to be confirmed to the U.S. Supreme Court), Brown Jackson was aggressively questioned by Republicans about her sentencing of sex offenders with many of these same Republicans calling her soft on sex crimes, especially those involving minors. As shown from all these instances sex panic is alive and well in 2022, and so is Satanic panic.

Satanic panic has been around for centuries. From the 15th to 18th centuries a witch panic and witch trials overtook much of Europe. The witch panic also spread to the U.S. Those accused of being witches were often accused of cavorting with the devil and taking part in orgies and other “deviant” sexual practices. In the 1980s, a book titled “Michelle Remembers” sparked a new generation of Satanic panic by alleging that the subject of the book, Michelle Smith, recovered memories of Satanic ritual abuse while undergoing the now discredited practice of recovered-memory therapy. These fears resulted in over 12,000 unsubstantiated cases of Satanic ritual abuse during that time. Many at the time also believed the then popular role-playing game, “Dungeons & Dragons” was responsible for indoctrinating children into witchcraft and Satanism. Current Q-Anon conspiracies are full of beliefs about Satanic ritual abuse of children at the hands of Democrats. Because the general public is largely ignorant about the beliefs and practices of Pagans, we are often lumped in with Satanists even though Pagans do not generally include Satan in our practices.

From the 1920s onward, various types of music have been labeled “the Devil’s music” intent on corrupting the minds of youth. Often the music labeled as such came out of the Black community including Blues and Jazz music, but later Rock-n-Roll, Metal, and Rap music. The lyrics and rhythm of some of this music was believed to promote sex and promiscuity, and later music genres were believed to introduce youth to Satanism with their lyrics, imagery, and even subliminal messages. More recently, African American and openly gay rapper, Lil Nas X sparked Satanic controversy for the video for his single “Montero (Call Me by Your Name).” In the video, Lil Nas X is shown suggestively having (mostly clothed) homosexual sex with Satan in Hell. The video prompted backlash from Christians and conservatives because of its homosexual and Satanic imagery. The 34th.com article “[Behind the Backlash of Lil Nas X’s ‘Montero’ Music Video: How criticizing Christianity can be empowering.](#)” suggests that “As a Black gay man, Lil Nas X felt vilified by the Christian narrative, and he utilized his platform to make a statement about accepting one’s true self, rather than hiding out of fear of eternal damnation.”

What do all these myths and conspiracies have in common? The exact term for this phenomenon is “atrocious propaganda.” The purpose of atrocious propaganda is to incite moral outrage and indignation. It is meant to rile up the general public, to arouse their



hatred, and to mobilize that hatred against one's enemy while at the same time convincing others of the justness of your own cause. The basic idea is to spread misinformation or at least exaggerated information that vilifies the opposing side and justifies your side's moral high ground. Atrocity propaganda works because it preys on fundamental human fears while portraying an enemy as a dehumanized "other" outside of the bounds of forgiveness or remorse.

The McCarthyism of the late 1940s and the 1950s is another example of this phenomenon that bears mention as many of the targets and allegations sound familiar today. McCarthyism targeted left-wing politicians, academics, the entertainment industry, labor union activists, and homosexuals as alleged communists, socialists, and sexual "deviants."

Q-Anon and many Republicans have been using moral panic to incite and fight their culture wars. According to Wikipedia, "A moral panic is a widespread feeling of fear, often an irrational one, that some evil person or thing threatens the values, interests, or well-being of a community or society."

These myths and conspiracies are dangerous to us as Queer folks, as Pagans, and as members of the various other misunderstood or marginalized communities to which we belong. The propaganda and moral panic they spark are often effective because they rely on the silence and often invisibility (or at least inaccessibility) of the affected group to perpetuate the untruths. Someone who knows a gay person as a friend or family member is less likely to believe that we're out to molest children. Someone who knows a Trans person is more likely to support their right to use the bathroom of their choice and less likely to believe the propaganda that they are voyeurs and rapists. Someone who knows a Pagan is more likely to realize that Pagans don't worship the Christian devil.

The way to fight misrepresentation is by being represented. The way to fight myths and conspiracies against whatever group you belong is to live a visible and authentic life. The way to fight lies is to tell the truth. Speaking up against lies and unjust laws does not make one a "groomer", a "sex offender", or a "Satanist." Living your truth might make you a "radical" or even an "agitator" in the minds of the general public (even if you only just wear a gay t-shirt or a Pagan necklace), but it is still living an authentic life and challenging the myths and lies.



Example of a Chick tract - an evangelical gospel tract created and published by now deceased cartoonist, Jack T. Chick. This image is from a tract called "Dark Dungeons." The tracts have targeted Catholics, Moslems, homosexuals, and evolution, and they lump Pagans in with Satanists. They are still available for purchase (in bulk) to Christian Evangelicals for mass distribution.

Between the Worlds

A Spiritual Gathering for Men Who Love Men

August 8-13, 2022

Pomeroy, OH

www.betweentheworlds.org

10 Common Myths about Pagans

1. Pagans worship Satan.
2. Pagans practice animal and/or human sacrifice.
3. Pagans recruit and brainwash people to join their ranks.
4. Pagans all practice “black” magic.
5. Pagan Sabbats are basically orgies.
6. The Pentagram is a Satanic symbol.
7. All Pagans practice Wicca and Witchcraft.
8. Paganism isn’t a real religion.
9. Pagans are all women who worship only a Goddess.
10. Pagans are all white and white nationalists at that.



The Gay Agenda?

10 Common Myths about Queer People

1. Being LGBTQ is a choice.
2. LGBTQ folks can be “cured”.
3. MTF Trans folks want to use bathrooms to spy on and molest women.
4. Gay men are all hypersexual.
5. Queer people are out to recruit and/or molest children.
6. Bisexual people don’t exist. They are just confused.
7. Gay men are all feminine, and Lesbians are all masculine.
8. LGBTQ people are flaunting their sexuality when they do the exact same things in public that straight people do.
9. LGBTQ orientations result from mental illnesses.
10. There is one single gay agenda and lifestyle.

Help Us to Help You and Our Tribe of Queer Pagan Men

Where else can you find a publication geared toward your unique interests and experiences as a Queer Pagan man?

Submissions to *Mysterious Ways* are not only encouraged, they are vital to provide several voices to the content of this Cyberzine.

I usually start sending out requests across various social media about a month before the submission deadline, but you don’t have to wait for my request to get your articles in. The submission deadline for the next issue is always listed in the current issue and I’m always happy to receive submissions anytime during that six month period. *Mysterious Ways* is published semi-annually. While there is usually a specific theme for each issue, submissions of a general nature are welcome too.

Please consider sharing your voice by sending in your articles, book reviews, event reviews, poetry, art, or anything else that might be relevant to Queer Pagan men. Don’t forget to share information about your Queer Pagan Men’s groups and events!!!

Submission deadline for the next issue of *Mysterious Ways* is December 15, 2022.

Advocates, Activists, and Allies

by Mel Mystery

Many of the articles in this issue have been about visibility and representation in our personal lives and in our communities, but visibility and representation also come into play in large social movements that affect us and that we care about. Most of those reading this are gay, bisexual, trans, or queer in some way so we've had at least some personal exposure to the LGBTQ rights movement. Many Pagans are involved in social and political movements for LGBTQ rights, women's rights, the environment, and other issues we hold dear. While I'm not aware of any kind large "Pagan rights" movement (most Pagans want to practice their spirituality privately), there are times when Pagans speak in support of their own inclusion or against prejudice and discrimination aimed at us. Examples include military Pagans getting representation in military chapels and the allowance of Pagan symbols on military tombstones; folks advocating for changes to laws that ban "fortune telling" and "witchcraft" that unduly affect Pagan businesses; or standing up when a mainstream business fires a Pagan employee.

Within all social and political movements there are roles for advocates, activists, and even allies. There is often overlap. An ally can be an advocate or an activist. An activist can engage in advocacy. An advocate can engage in activism. Each of these roles is needed to advance the greater whole, and they are all interdependent.

An **ally** is someone who is not a member of a marginalized or mistreated group, but who supports their cause, nonetheless. This can be a straight person who stands up for LGBTQ rights, a cisgender person who stands up for Trans folks, a man who supports women's rights, a white person who stands up for Black lives, or even someone who is not Pagan who stands up for Pagan rights. An ally is part of the solution as they educate themselves (often through direct interaction with members of the marginalized group) on the issues and thus become a resource to educate others. Their role is often bridging the gap between the marginalized community and their own (often mainstream and more privileged) communities. They say, "these people aren't so bad as they're made out to be and they have legitimate concerns." They also provide examples to their own communities. For example, "You can be straight, but not narrow" or you can be white and stand up for Black lives. An ally can go further by being an advocate or an activist to further help a cause.

An **advocate** is someone who negotiates in favor of a cause or group. Advocates often come from a place of privilege and use that privilege to speak on behalf of actions, policies, and laws that can help the less privileged group and their cause. Because of their privilege, they have better access to and are better perceived by the people who can affect laws and policies – whether lawmakers, corporate leaders, or business owners. Advocates are seen as respectable, non-threatening peers to those in charge. Advocates are often educated and have good speaking and negotiating skills. The role of advocates is to have conversations and negotiations with influential people to educate them about the experiences, needs, and goals of the cause or group they are advocating for. Advocacy can only go so far and relies on the desire of the person being advocated to be fair, just, and reasonable. Not all people can be persuaded by science, facts, or a sense of fairness over their own interests or political ideologies. Advocates must be patient as advocacy can be a slow, ongoing process.

An **activist** is one who takes action of some kind in response to or in support of a cause or marginalized group. The most common forms of actions include protests, marches, sit-ins, and hunger strikes. Not all forms of activism involve waving signs or chanting catchy slogans. Other forms of activism include letter writing campaigns to both corporations and politicians, writing letters to the editors of newspapers, boycotts, candlelight vigils, taking legal actions, marketing campaigns to educate and raise awareness of the issues, and even rallies and parades. Pride marches and parades have traditionally been a form of activism.

One goal of activism is to raise visibility of concerns to both the inside community affected by those concerns and to the outside community who otherwise might be oblivious to them. This can sometimes involve bringing an issue or an incident to the light of day. Unlike advocates who may only work to persuade a few prominent people, activists work to bring both their own communities and the world at large over to their cause. An often-overlooked goal of activism is engaging one's own community in a cause affecting them, giving those people something to work toward, and helping to empower marginalized communities who may otherwise feel powerless to make positive changes in the world.

Another goal of activism is to pressure those in power to address an issue or concern. Unlike advocates who act diplomatically with those in power, activists often act as the proverbial "angry villagers with pitchforks" demanding immediate action to resolve the problem. In conjunction with advocates, this can work as a "good cop / bad cop" scenario with the activists forcing an issue and advocates diplomatically suggesting "reasonable" solutions to those in power.

Review: The Trouble with Normal

by Mel Mystery

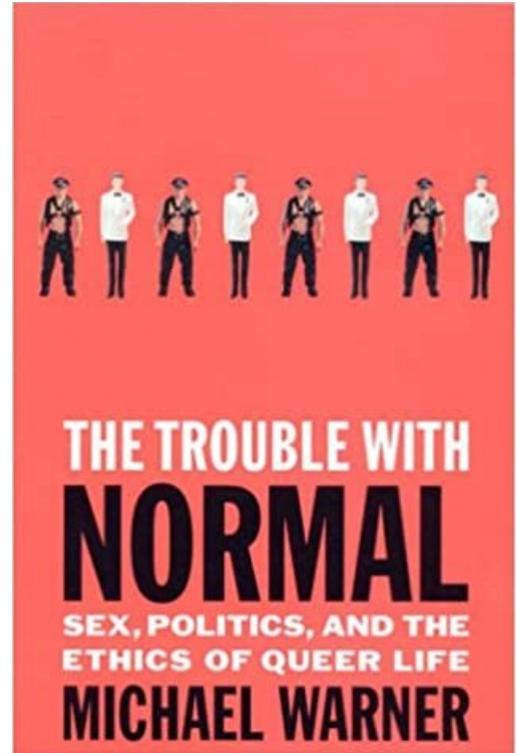
While **The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life** written by Michael Warner was first published in 1999, I believe many of its core messages are still valid today. They are valid not only for LGBTQ people, but also anyone with non-mainstream ideas about sexuality or who otherwise doesn't fit what is considered "normal" by society.

Warner starts with the premise that people like to control the sex lives of others and for many this is where their sense of morality begins. But Warner argues that controlling the sex lives of others is not only unethical, but that this attitude is actually moralism rather than any kind of ethics or true morality. Our culture governs sex, not just harmful sex like rape, but all sex by legally regulating what is and isn't acceptable, prohibiting some forms of victimless sexuality and by restricting access to and information about sexuality. Society also claims one set of sexual values and practices as normal while vilifying all others. Those who fall outside the sexual norms might be humiliated, beaten, jailed, or stigmatized as deviants and criminals. Warner argues that what many would take for granted as immoral, criminal, or pathological might just be harmless difference and a rival morality. And society's repression of sexuality may be the basis of pathology rather than sexuality itself.

Attitudes about sexuality have been tainted by the early Christian church's fear and repulsion of the flesh and the belief that sex is only about procreation. As such, society dictates that certain things aren't permissible and should be controlled including: homosexuality, sex outside the Holy institution of marriage, promiscuity, masturbation, group sex, casual sex, sex with someone outside your age group, public sex, pornography, BDSM sex, and virtually any other sex that doesn't include the possibility of insemination. Traditionally, this even included birth control, and if you're Catholic it still does.

All of these things are vilified and shamed by our society. LGBTQ people are particularly vulnerable to this shaming because we grow up in heterosexual families and with heterosexual peers who all assume we're heterosexual. Our schools and religions assume the same and indoctrinate us to grow up to be normal, responsible heterosexual citizens. To those who grow up realizing they're gay, this leads to a sense of estrangement and secrecy that further perpetuates those feelings of shame. Is it any wonder that many gay adults and even the gay movement itself seek validation and acceptance from the mainstream rather than sexual autonomy and difference? To embrace our difference and our sexuality would be to invite shame and our own feelings of inadequacy – of not being "normal."

This creates ambivalence for many gay people. They want to feel normal and connected to the heterosexual world that includes their parents and family, but they're also part of the gay world and the stigma associated with it. They may feel that their own feelings and actions are honorable, and so must blame this stigma on others in their group especially those that are further from



Arcadia 2023

A Camp OUT for Queer Pagan Men

We're taking a break in 2022.

Arcadia will return in the Spring of 2023.

www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/index.php/events/arcadia

straight norms and those who act in stereotyped ways. They may also feel a need to repudiate sex and to desexualize themselves, others, and the gay movement as a whole. This ambivalence plays out in the gay community with assimilationists seeking respectability and normalcy on the one end; and sex radicals embracing their sexual differences on the other end. Those seeking respectability are the most likely to be harboring sexual shame.

The trouble with normal according to Warner is many-fold but boils down to this. By trying to be “normal” we are only feeding into larger society’s stigma toward sex and sexuality and that when we take this attitude on as a movement the result is to reproduce a hierarchy of shame within our own community. Embracing normal throws shame on those further down the ladder of respectability including those who are effeminate or otherwise don’t act “straight,” those not in monogamous relationships whether bachelors or polyamorists, those into BDSM, sex workers, drag queens, those who actually admit to liking pornography, and so on. We do a disservice to ourselves and to society when we try too hard to win acceptance and respectability rather than challenging the faulty assumptions and ethics of the dominant culture. For gay people to disavow sex and sexuality in an effort to fight stigma is to reject the very thing that defines us.

Warner also points out that what we think of as normal is really what is statistically normal. People didn’t start worrying about normal until polling and statistics came into popularity. Being normal is not really a good reflection of desirability. It’s normal to have health problems and to be in debt. It’s not normal to be a genius or to be well endowed. People have come to see normal as meaning to be certified or approved, but in essence to be normal is to be common with nothing too special about you.

Warner spends an entire chapter with a compelling critique of gay marriage. This was long before same-sex marriage became legal in the U.S. Warner argued that while many believed same-sex marriage would somehow erase all the hate and intolerance existing in society toward LGBT people, it doesn’t address the real root of the problem which is society’s stigma and intolerance of sexual variation. We see that now that same-sex marriage is legal, but the fight for gay rights and respectability rages on in such places as Florida, where the “Don’t Say Gay” bill recently went into effect—blocking honest, age-appropriate discussion of sexual orientation and same-sex love in the classroom.

Opponents of gay marriage want their marriages to be holy at the expense of someone else. But that’s really the problem with the institution of marriage as a whole, and that doesn’t change much with the legalization of same-sex marriage. Marriage sanctifies and gives legitimacy to some relationships at the expense of others. It commends and privileges those who are married. It makes them special. If you don’t have it you and your relations are less than worthy. It’s kind of like being a single person on Valentine’s Day. Marriage confers a number of social and governmental benefits and privileges to married couples that are denied to single people, people in non-traditional relationships, and other types of cohabitating households. Warner argues that applying strict definitions of marriage onto same-sex relationships provides less freedom to LGBTQ people, not more.

Marriage might not be the right choice for gay people for other reasons as well. Historically marriage has been designed to define lineage and to perpetuate families by having and raising children, not to mention to indoctrinate and carry on a family’s religious beliefs – that’s why mixed religion marriages have traditionally be frowned upon and are still an issue in some families even today. As many feminists would point out, marriage has also historically been a way of dominating and trafficking women. A carry over from this can still be seen today when a bride’s father gives her away to the groom. Marriage allows the state to regulate and enforce the dictates and rules of marriage, as well as regulating and enforcing restrictions on sex in other contexts outside of marriage. Marriage gives power over to the state and third parties to legitimize and affirm the status of a relationship rather than letting that come from within the relationship itself.

Instead of gay marriage, Warner offers other solutions. These include extending the special legal privileges currently defined narrowly within marriage into wider contexts including domestic partnerships, common law marriages, and alternative forms of families. Rather than trying to force the plethora of gay relationships and even many straight relationships into the mold of marriage, it might be better to take the forms of relationships already existing and extend benefits and rights to those making them available and accessible to gay and straight people alike. Rather than trying to make gay relationships more straight, perhaps we should be trying to allow straight relationships to be more queer.

Being Vegetarian

by Mel Mystery

I've been a vegetarian for decades and thought I'd write about a recent incident at work to highlight the need for visibility and representation in life. Yes, I know this cyberzine is about being gay and being Pagan, but sometimes we're seriously invested in our ideas of what being gay or being Pagan means and how we're "allowed" to relate to the world. Hopefully my story will highlight the need for visibility and representation through a different lens that we can bring back to our queer Pagan perspectives.

Being a vegetarian in 2022 seems relatively accepted and innocuous. It's a personal dietary choice and I don't push my personal choices on others. Being vegetarian is fairly commonplace, whether one is aspiring to a healthy diet or has ethical concerns about eating animals for food. There are growing sections of vegetarian foods in the grocery stores, and even fast food restaurants have started offering vegetarian menu items. It's an awesome time to be vegetarian, and it's nice that I have choices more exciting and more filling than just a salad or French fries when I go out to eat.



So, this past week, there was an invitation sent out to attend the annual awards luncheon at my job. Part of the RSVP was to select my meal choice for the luncheon. Evidently, there was no vegetarian representation on the committee putting the event together and no thought whatsoever that there's at least a few of us vegetarians (and at least one vegan) among the 60 or so employees at my place of business. Out of six options to choose from (mostly sandwiches), all six contained meat. I think it was just an oversight and not a deliberate snub, but I was quick to reply, "Where are the vegetarian options?" The next day, a revised RSVP was sent out. A Greek salad was appended to the list of options. Now, I love a good Greek salad, but I'm still miffed about my options. It's kind of a myth that vegetarians only eat salads (and we honestly sometimes get tired of them being our only choices) and slapping a salad to the list of choices seemed lazy and uninformed somehow. I also know for a fact that the restaurant catering our event offers a variety of vegetarian options beyond just salads. A totally different committee putting together a different staff luncheon just a few months ago using the same caterer totally did things right by offering vegetarian Mediterranean sandwiches and at least one other vegan option. I feel like I should say something more, but I don't want to make waves, and I'm honestly just happy there's something I can eat. If there's a feedback form after the event, I'll make my thoughts known, but I won't push any more than I've done out of concern that I'll be seen as demanding or unappreciative of the free food being offered.

The lessons from this incident so far are many and can be translated to the queer and Pagan experience. We're often left out or forgotten. How many LGBTQ events have you been to that forgot to include the Pagans? Perhaps LGBTQ Pagans weren't represented at an LGBTQ interfaith event? How many Pagan events have you been to that forgot to include or acknowledge Queer Pagans? Perhaps that Pagan ritual you went to was overly heterocentric focusing on straight Pagan families with kids? How many times in life are you left out or your needs overlooked for being queer or for being Pagan? Sometimes this is an oversight, but it can sometimes be deliberate because of prejudice. Even if we are remembered and included, that doesn't mean that our needs are understood or even met. Sometimes we're just happy to be given a place at the table and we don't want to appear unreasonable or like we're pushing our beliefs. The best solution, of course, is to be represented or at least to educate those who make decisions about things that affect us.

I think people are more tolerant and accepting of vegetarians than they are of queer folks and Pagans, but that's not always the case. There are many folks out there who think that because I personally choose a vegetarian diet that I'm out tell them what and how they should eat. By being vegetarian myself, I'm somehow pushing my "deviant" lifestyle on them. The irony is that often when I've told people that I'm a vegetarian, some try to convince me of all the reasons I should eat meat. Comments in these cases range from "God put animals on this earth for us to eat!" to "You need to eat meat to get your protein!" We've all had similar experiences when coming out as queer or as Pagan – the people around you trying to convince you what you're not and that their way is better. "You're not really gay!" "It's just a phase." "You won't get into heaven if you practice witchcraft." People get defensive when by your very existence or life choices you challenge their preconceived assumptions about the world. It doesn't matter whether you're vegetarian, queer, Pagan, or in some other category that isn't conventional. Living an authentic life, standing up for your needs, and even educating others about what makes you unique isn't pushing your beliefs on anyone. We're often made to feel that these basic dignities that others take for granted are somehow inappropriate for us to ask for. Yet these are things that we all must do in life, especially those of us who are frequently misunderstood.

Gay Gods and Spirits

The Huldufólk

by Mel Mystery

In Iceland, the harsh landscape filled with volcanoes, earthquakes, hot spring geysers, harsh landscapes, rocks, cliffs, rough seas, and extremes of weather, has led to a deep reverence of nature and the belief in supernatural powers ruling over the environment.

The folklore of many places includes beliefs in faeries, elves, dwarves, gnomes, trolls, and nature spirits. In Iceland, these spirits are known as the Huldufólk, translated as “hidden folk.” The Huldufólk are believed to live in a parallel world very close to our own. They can make themselves visible or invisible at will. They also might live in rocks, mounds, and other wild and natural places. In Iceland, belief in these spirits is so strong that road builders and other construction teams make a point to build around places where the Huldufólk are believed to live for fear of disturbing them. Folks are also wary of throwing rocks or relieving themselves in nature out of concern they might accidentally hit these invisible spirits or their abodes. The Hidden Folk are not necessarily good or evil. Many of them are quite benevolent, but you certainly don’t want to get on their bad side.

These hidden folk are often associated with fertility, frivolity, and dancing. Many are considered beautiful and alluring, but their ranks also include trolls, gnomes, giants, and other spirits. The lives of these spirits often mirror the lives of everyday people, only more glamorous, carefree, and magical. Accounts of their size vary from miniature to human size to gigantic. They are said to wear old-fashioned clothes and to live simple, agricultural lives. They raise crops and live-stock, bake bread, and churn butter. Many like to fish. These spirits dislike electricity, churches, and crosses.

Icelanders will often leave food out for the elves who are believed to party late into the night. They often leave candles and light bonfires to help the elves find their way during the darkness of winter. These spirits are especially associated with the holidays of Yule, New Year’s, Thirteenth Night (January 6), and Midsummer. On Christmas Day, Icelanders light bonfires called álfabrennur, translated as Elf Fires. According to the folklore, if you meet these spirits at a crossroads on Midsummer Night, they will offer you food or gifts. It is bad luck to accept these directly. If you show patience, the gifts will eventually be left for you, and it is then okay to take them. At other times it is considered rude to refuse their gifts. Icelanders also create small wooden homes, called álfhols, for the elves which are scattered about the populated cities, in gardens, and at wilderness sites.

The folklore is not very clear about the existence of homosexuality among the elves. If they are a reflection of human society, certainly they would reflect our sexual diversity. There is at least one link with Freyr who presides over Álfheimr, Land of the Elves. Freyr is a fertility god whose priesthood was composed of gender-variant men who rang bells and engaged in homosexual rites as part of their worship.

Places to visit in Iceland

If you are ever visiting Iceland and want to learn more about the Huldufólk, consider taking classes at Iceland’s Elfschool (<https://theelfschool.com/>). And don’t forget to visit Iceland’s Museum of Sorcery & Witchcraft (<https://galdrasynning.is/en/>) or the Icelandic Phallogical Museum (<https://phallus.is/en/>). While Iceland is largely Christian, there are many in Iceland returning to the old ways. Another must see stop is the Hof Ásatrúarfélagsins, Iceland’s first temple to the old Norse Gods in over 1000 years.

The Sexual Nature of Icelandic Elves

According to Hallgerður Hallgrímsdóttir, author of the 2008 book, **Please YoursELF – Sex with Icelandic Invisibles**, elves are better lovers than human men. She was first introduced to Elf sex when one of these randy nature spirits whispered “dirty talk” into her ears when she was wandering alone in the Icelandic countryside. She says that Iceland’s elves are “incredibly limber and big on oral sex.” She says, “They have incredible tongues.” She claims that all elves are bisexual and that they aren’t particularly monogamous. She also says that “Elf sperm is quite shimmering, glittery.”

The book appears to be out of print at this time. However, if any Mysterious Ways readers are able to locate a copy of the book or someone who sells it, please by all means let us know.

As in many cultures, there are stories of Fey spirits stealing babies to raise as their own and of cannibalistic witches eating children. The Icelandic witch, Grýla, mother to 13 elves known as the Yule Lads, is said to eat naughty children. Are these simply stories to scare children into being good or to keep them from wandering into Iceland’s dangerous landscape? Or could these stories be further examples of atrocity propaganda against an invisible other (see pages 8-9). This “other” could be nature itself, supernatural spirits, or perhaps even human followers of the Old Gods and the Old Ways. Many healers, shamans, and cults to the Old Gods lived at the edges of society, and many were driven underground with the coming of Christianity.

Poetry and Art

Hail, Hail, Hail, great wolf spirit, Hail!
A boon I ask thee, mighty shade,
Within this circle I have made.
Make me a werewolf strong and bold,
Grant me this – both young and old.

Grant me a figure tall and spare;
The speed of the elk, the claws of the bear;
The poison of snakes, the wit of the fox;
The stealth of the wolf, the strength of the ox;

The jaws of the tiger, the teeth of the shark;
The eyes of a cat that sees in the dark;
Let me climb like a monkey, scent like a dog;
Swim like a fish, and eat like a hog.

Haste, Haste, Haste, lonely spirit, Haste!
Here, wan and drear, magic spell making,
Findest thou me – shaking, quaking.
Softly fan me as I lie.
And thy mystic touch apply.

- Words from a Medieval werewolf ritual.



“The Werewolf Rite” by Mel Mystery.

The Werewolf Within

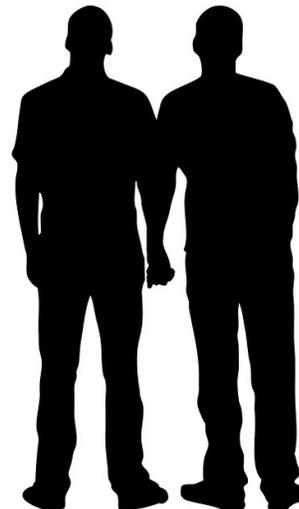
by Mel Mystery

How often do we as Queer men do this ourselves? We lock parts of ourselves away in polite company to protect others from our sexuality and to protect ourselves from being hunted and hurt by those who are ignorant of our true natures. We claim that being gay isn't about sex; it's about love, as if our sexual natures are too beastly to let out of the box. We try to fit into “normal” heterosexual shapes and forms, rather than shapeshifting these into forms that are more suited to our unique natures and the diversity of human experience that exists throughout time and place.

I See Them Holding Hands

by James Humphries

I see them holding hands, the boys and girls.
In the hallway, on the screens. Girls and boys.
Seeing so many straights make my head swirl
With jealousy at all of their straight joys.
I wonder if I'm normal after all?
Maybe I'm the problem? Should I exist?
Will to live becomes a desperate crawl.
How many firsts have you had that I missed?
My future seems dimmer among your youth,
It shines so bright I can't see my own truth.



Medusa

by Dozer

Do not suggest to me that I am Medusa.
The disconnection of fear.
Never to look another in the face.
She cannot even look in the mirror.
She was innocent, her tragedy turns the heart to stone.

If you are a goddess Athena, why?
How can ones who claim greatness bestow a curse such as that in an innocent.
An innocent raped by a god just because he thought her beautiful.
Then punished by the goddess of wisdom?
Maybe the lesson is deeper?
Why is it always the demise of an innocent that makes one hear?
To Find greatness after such horror, the destruction of the pure.

What did they see?
What turned them to stone?
Not your gaze, the understanding them we are nothing to them, only symbolism matters.
The demise of the innocent is the extreme of manipulation.
Everyone is aware of how much it motivates.
As a whole when the innocent are in pain, motivation to overcome procrastination is birthed.
Three sisters. Three moon goddess. The triple goddess of the Morrigan.
The water within, life in nothing without water.
Of course she gets beheaded and used as a weapon.

Joan of Arc indeed.
Innocent. Raped by a god, punished by a goddess, she endured.
I know what they saw.
I know what turned them to stone.
Even with all that happened she loved.
Her love was beautiful.
Nothing could be done.
We have no control of fate, the gaze of a woman.
They assumed rage, they assumed fury would be in the eyes of the gorgon.
What they saw was love.
Then after, everything they knew evaporated.

You have no control over the narrative.
It is a fallacy.
If unprepared you become immobile.
Shocked out of what you knew to be true.
They hadn't made the journey.
They could not face the lies they were told.
They were not prepared.
So just don't look, they said.
Cut her head off and use her power.
Use her power then put her on your shield Athena?
Use her power and then canonize her?

Joan, at least you got to fight before they made you obsolete.
The progression of society is the progression of legends.
The progression of society is the progression of history.
We must manifest connection, before all is lost.
If the disconnection is too great, tragedy of the inevitable becomes our collective hubris.



Tête de Méduse by Fernand Khnopff .
From the Wikimedia Commons.

If you conquer yourself under false pretenses.
No one will listen to your pain.
Your legacy will be the failure to find love as the common denominator.
Your mass shootings of failure have been heard.
They are easily forgotten.

We persist.
We care not of your pain anymore.
it can't hurt us now that you are gone. Memories of loves lost provide strength.
Thank you for your gift, weak man.
Love is the only tool to combat pain.
I have it in spades.

— by Dozer

Queer Pagan Resources

Queer Pagan Men's Groups

Brotherhood of Arcadia — The Brotherhood of Arcadia (BOA) is a spiritual organization created from the fusion of Hellenist and Pagan beliefs and practices with an emphasis on queer and sexuality positive beliefs, practices, and deities. BOA membership is open to men who love men regardless of whatever personal labels one chooses, and who are also over the age of 18. No one – male, female, or trans – who feels called to join will be turned away.

FMI: <http://www.melmystery.com/index.php/brotherhood-of-arcadia>

Brotherhood of Cernunnos -- A Brotherhood of UK Gay Pagan Men. **FMI:** <http://www.brotherhoodofcernunnos.org/>

Brotherhood of the Phoenix — A Neo-Pagan order for Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender men who love men. We celebrate the Spirit of the Divine within and build community with men who seek positive transformation of self, community, and the world. Together we work to weave the magick that changes lives.

FMI: <https://fellowshipofthephoenix.org/>

Cern'osia -- An eclectic Neo-Pagan faith which focuses exclusively on the veneration and worship of the Celtic Horned God, Cernunnos. Although it could be adapted by anyone who worships the Horned One, it was designed primarily with the needs of a solitary Pagan man in mind. **FMI:** <https://cernosia.webs.com/>

Ecclesia Antinoi — Devoted to the worship of Antinous, the lover of the Roman emperor Hadrian. Antinous was deified after his death and is worshiped by modern practitioners as a god of gay spirituality, youth, and beauty.

FMI: <http://www.antinopolis.org/>

Gay Druid Brotherhood — An international network for homosexual and bisexual men on the Druidic and Keltic inspired Pagan paths. **FMI:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/gaydruidbrotherhood/>

Green Faerie Grove — A brotherhood of queer men in Columbus, Ohio. **FMI:** <http://greenfaeriegrove.org/>

The Minoan Brotherhood — A men's initiatory tradition of the Craft celebrating Life, Men Loving Men, and Magic in a primarily Cretan context, also including some Aegean and Ancient Near Eastern mythology.

FMI: <http://www.minoan-brotherhood.org/>

Radical Faeries — Generally we are gay men who look for a spiritual dimension to our sexuality. Many of us are healers of one kind or another. Our shared values include feminism, respect for the Earth, and individual responsibility rather than hierarchy. Many of us are Pagan (nature-based religion). **FMI:** <http://www.radfae.org/>

The Unnamed Path — The Unnamed Path is a shamanic path for men who love men. The path focuses on four main parts—Magic and Prophecy, Shamanism, Energy Healing, and Deathwalking. **FMI:** www.unnamedpath.com

Submission deadline for the next issue of Mysterious Ways is December 15, 2022.

Please consider sharing your articles, reviews, poetry, art, events, and announcements.

E-mail these to Mel at knightsofmatrix@gmail.com. Please put "Mysterious Ways" in the subject line.

Upcoming Retreats and Gatherings

August 8-13, 2022 — Between the Worlds: A spiritual gathering for men who love men at Wisteria in Pomeroy, OH. FMI: <http://www.betweentheworlds.org>

September 22-25, 2022 — Gay Spirit Visions Fall Conference at the Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands, NC. FMI: <http://gayspiritvisions.org/annual-gatherings/>

January 14-15, 2023 — Gay Spirit Visions Winter Meditation at the Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands, NC. FMI: <http://gayspiritvisions.org/annual-gatherings/>

Spring 2023 — Arcadia Campout for Queer Pagan Men. Somewhere in Virginia. Details TBA. FMI: www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/index.php/events/arcadia

Blogs and Podcasts for Pagan men who love men

A Path through the Woods — Blog by a gay, Pagan, polytheist who lives in Chicago — <https://www.adrianmoran.com/>

Discovering the Male Mysteries — Official webpage for Mel Mystery and the Discovering the Male Mysteries podcast for gay and bi Pagan men. — <http://www.melmystery.com/>

Enfolding.org — A blog by Phil Hine to discuss interests including Tantra, Queer Theory, Gender, History, and Occult Practice. — <http://enfolding.org/>

Faehaven — Based in Harrisburg, PA the community is forming in order to create a space where queers and their advocates can explore spirituality of all sorts and have a safe space to share among like-minded independent individuals. — <https://faehaven.wordpress.com/about/>

Horns — A NSFW magazine where erotica meets Queer occultism and Paganism. — <http://www.hornsmagazine.com/>

Transfaith — An online journal for Trans spirituality. Includes a Trans Pagan section. — <https://www.transfaith.info/pagan>

Walking the Unnamed Path — Discusses the teachings and techniques given to us by their Ancestors of MWLM, and laid out by their late founder Hyperion. They also discuss topics and ideas pertaining to queer Pagan men in general. — <https://www.blogtalkradio.com/walkingtheunnamedpath>

Witches Betwixt — Witches Betwixt is a collective of queer witches representing a wide variety of magical practices and spiritual paths. We release a 45+ minute episode bi-weekly in which we discuss various topics relevant to the experience of a queer witch. — <http://witchesbetwixt.buzzsprout.com/>

**Looking for a speaker for your next gathering, retreat, or other event?
Check out the Queer Pagan Speaker Directory online!**

www.melmystery.com/index.php/links/queer-pagan-speaker-directory

Mysterious Ways

The Mysterious Ways Cyberzine is produced and published by Mel Mystery.

Mel Mystery is host of the Discovering the Male Mysteries Podcast for Gay and Bi Pagan Men. He is also author of the book, "The Gay Guys Guide to Werewolves and other Man Beasts" and he has a few other books in the works

You can find out about Mel, listen to his podcast, and find out more about his books at: www.melmystery.com

Archive copies of this newsletter will also be kept on the site.

We need your support!!!

This paper is a community-based project. We're not charging for subscriptions. We're not accepting paid advertising. Those writing articles are not paid for their work. This paper is for the Queer Pagan Men's community and by the Queer Pagan Men's community.

If you think this paper is worthwhile, please consider helping us to thrive. We need folks to submit articles, artwork, poetry, reviews, and other content. We need folks to share this in Queer Pagan groups and social media groups. We need folks to print copies and share them in LGBTQ and Pagan spaces in their local communities.

Thank you for doing your part!!!

Next Issue: Underworld Journeys

What is the Underworld and why is it so often overlooked in spiritual circles that focus on upper realms? What chthonic spirits and deities reside in the Underworld and what do they offer? How does the Underworld relate to the darker part of the year and what lessons does that time of year hold for modern Pagans? How do you journey to the Underworld and what do you experience there? What is the equivalent to the Underworld within Queer community and Queer culture? Any or all of these topics, and topics of general Queer Pagan interest, are suitable for submission to the next issue of Mysterious Ways.

Please send articles, reviews, original poetry, and other submissions to Mel at knightsofmatrix@gmail.com by December 15, 2022. Be sure to put "Mysterious Ways Submission" in the subject line.

Submission Guidelines:

1. All submissions should be of interest to Queer Pagan Men and fit at least two of the criteria—Queer, Pagan, and Men.
2. All submissions (especially photography and artwork) should be rated PG-13 or less. Since this newsletter will be shared in social media groups and in Pagan shops where minors might have access, we'd rather err on the side of community standards—not that we necessarily agree with them all.
3. Most articles should be a typewritten page or less. We may consider longer articles based on relevance and content.
4. You retain ownership and/or copyright of any articles or artwork you submit. We are only providing a venue to share your work with the world.
5. We reserve the right to refuse any content for any reason; to make minor edits such as spelling, grammar, and formatting; or to send the content back to you for revision.
6. We will not accept content that is explicitly racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ageist, body shaming, or that otherwise spreads hate, negativity, or misinformation about any population or subculture of people.