

Mysterious Ways

A Cyberzine for Queer Pagan Men.

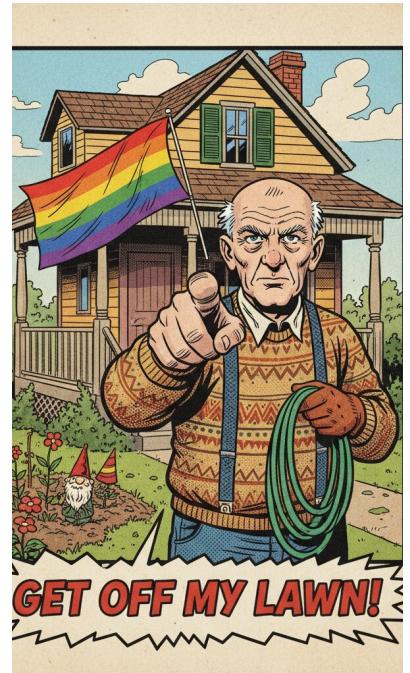
Winter / Spring 2026
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Theme this Issue: Embracing the Crooked Path: Queer & Pagan Elder Wisdom

Welcome to the last issue of Mysterious Ways! In this issue, we'll be exploring aging and elders in the Queer and Pagan communities. How do we age as queer men and how are we met in these respective communities to which we belong? Do you automatically become a "troll" at the age of 30? And what happened to a generation of queer men who would now be our elders? Additionally, Anarion from Portugal will tell us about "Aspects of Cernunnos" and you'll get the regular report on recent Pagan men's retreats.

It is also with mixed feelings that I announce this as the last issue of Mysterious Ways. After a great deal of thought and soul searching, I've decided to move on to other projects. To find out more about my decision and where I might be going from here, be sure to read the last couple of articles at the end of this issue.

- Mel Mystery



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Special Thanks

Special thanks to all who contributed articles, poetry, and art this issue and all past issues.

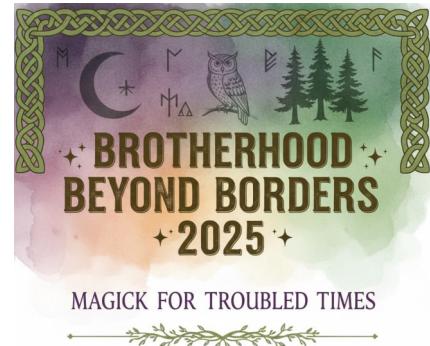
All images in this issue provided by Gemini.

Events and Gatherings

Virtual Brotherhood Beyond Borders Premiered in November 2025

By Mel Mystery

The newly renamed virtual retreat, Brotherhood Beyond Borders for Pagan men of all paths, orientations, and backgrounds took place the weekend of November 14-16, 2025. The new name replaces the old name “Virtual Brotherhood by the Bog”. The name change was effected to differentiate between our in-person Brotherhood by the Bog retreat and the virtual retreat which launched under the same name during the Covid pandemic. The new name signifies that Pagan men from all paths, orientations, backgrounds, and locations around the world are able to attend this online retreat. The theme was “Magick for Troubled Times.”



On Friday, Mel Mystery presented a workshop on “Musical Playlists for Regeneration and Resistance”; Eldritch led a “Show and Spell” Icebreaker; and the Friday night ritual emphasized awareness and protection. Both Friday and Saturday night featured a trivia game hosted by Gwydion.

Saturday’s lineup of workshops and activities included “The Alchemy of Joy: Magickal Resilience and the Queer Spirit” with Sawyer from the Unnamed Path; “Magick for the Resistance” inspired by **The Revised Boy Scout Manual** by William S. Burroughs presented by Gwydion; “Warrior Magic: Deities and Legends for Fighting the Good Fight” with author Tomás Prower; and a ritual of magickal transformation with Eldritch.

Sunday’s workshops included “Song Writing: A Workshop and Shareshop” with Dallán; and “The History of Werewolves” followed by a “Werewolf Purification Rite” with author Denny Sargent.

The next virtual Brotherhood Beyond Borders retreat is likely to take place in November 2026. Additional details will be shared on the website as they become available.

For more information about Brotherhood Beyond Borders:

<https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/brotherhood-beyond-borders/>

Retreat YouTube Channel Gets a Boost

By Mel Mystery

It was decided in our retreat planning meetings for Brotherhood by the Bog, Brotherhood Beyond Borders, and Arcadia that we will make more use of our YouTube channel in the future. In the past, the public face of our channel has mainly been used for promoting upcoming retreats, sharing nature videos, and sharing the opening and closing rituals from our virtual retreats. And all of our recordings of presentations, discussions, and activities from our virtual retreats have been kept unlisted and only available to those who have attended our retreats.

Having hosted nearly five years of virtual retreats with no ending in sight, we made the decision to start releasing select videos from past virtual retreats. We are committed to maintaining the privacy of retreat participants so we are meticulously reviewing these videos before posting them to our public channel. For the most part, those videos shared publicly on our YouTube channel will only be presentations made by our guest presenters, and we will get permission from presenters to put their presentations on the public YouTube channel. In cases where retreat participants show up in these videos, we will edit them out to protect their personal privacy.

(continued at bottom of page 3)

Arcadia Retreat for Queer, Pagan Men Scheduled for March 2026

By Mel Mystery

The Arcadia Retreat for Queer Pagan men is scheduled to take place the weekend of March 20-22, 2026 at a campground in Cumberland, Virginia. Our theme this year is “Queer Hearth: Building Community and Chosen Family”. This theme emphasizes the importance of connection and belonging within the queer pagan community. It's about fostering supportive relationships, creating safe spaces, and celebrating the unique bonds formed between queer pagan men.

Workshops will be a mix of presentation, discussion, meditation, and group activities. The primary workshop sessions will include: “The Wild Hunt for Belonging: Exploring Models of Queer Brotherhood and Community”; “Building Your Chosen Hearth: Intentional Community Engagement”; and “Pathways to Connection: Creating, Building, and Joining Community Networks that Honor Your Queer Paganism.” Additional workshops and activities will include creating a communal altar to the queer ancestors and queer spirit; crafting tribal talismans; a ritual emphasizing our connections; and a Saturday evening social “Communing with Spirits” under a disco ball in the woods.

Rather than camping this year, we decided to rent a 3-bedroom cabin. Due to space restrictions in the cabin, spaces are limited to a total of eight people. If you are interested in attending, we encourage you to register as soon as possible to secure your space. Registration cost is only \$80 for the entire weekend and includes basic meals.

For more information about Arcadia:

<https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/arcadia-main/>



A few photos from Arcadia 2024. Photos taken by Eldritch.



(YouTube channel continued from page 2)

The release of these videos on YouTube should not be taken as an excuse to miss the virtual retreat experience. There's really no reason not to attend virtually as our virtual retreats are always free. Not all recordings from past retreats will be shared to the public channel. Certainly, we won't share any group discussions, icebreakers, trivia games, or other videos that feature regular retreat participants as we wish to protect their privacy. Also, some presenters have asked us not to share their presentations publicly for various reasons and we will respect their wishes. In general, videos from recent retreats won't be available for a time after the retreat has ended. Our plan is to start trickling out videos from our past retreats every month or two as we are able to review them and get permission from presenters to share their presentations on the public channel.

Our retreat YouTube channel can be found at:

www.youtube.com/@brotherhoodbythebog9330

From Across the Pond

Aspects of Cernunnos 1: The Pillar of the Boatmen

by Anarion (*writing in Portugal*)

There are several monuments in Europe which either do, or claim to, represent the Celtic God Cernunnos. In a series of articles, I will investigate these: our only tangible sources for this mysterious god.

One iconic image of Cernunnos can be found on one face of the so called 'Pillar of the Boatmen', now to be found in Cluny Museum in Paris, France. The partially surviving pillar was erected by the guild of boatmen in Lutetia (now modern Paris) in the first century CE, in honour of the Roman Emperor Tiberius & the God Jupiter, but mixes Roman & Celtic deities on its sides. It is made of 'pierre de Saint-Leu-d'Esserent' limestone, being 17 feet 2 inches in height, 2 feet 11 inches wide at the base, tapering to 2 feet 5 inches at the top. Most likely it was erected in a romano-celtic temple to Jupiter, which would have stood on or near the present Notre Dame cathedral, it was discovered in fragments on 6th March 1710, during the construction of a crypt beneath the nave of Notre Dame.

History of Site & Pillar

The Île de la Cité, where Notre Dame now stands, is an island in the River Seine. It is thought that a Gaulish settlement called Lutetia existed on the isle from at least the 3rd century BCE. This most probably was a settlement of the Gaulish tribe called the Parisii, although there seems to be no traces of habitation surviving from before 1st Century CE. It is significant that evidence of a Roman era wharf has been discovered, which shows the isle was far smaller in Roman times than it is now. These remains can be seen in the excavated crypt where the pillar was found. After discovery, the blocks making up the Pillar of the Boatmen were taken to the then, Hôtel de Cluny, which afterwards became the Musée de Cluny.

In 2001 the blocks making up the Pillar were cleaned & restored. They then were put on open display, & are viewable to this day in the museum.

Dedication

On Level 2 of the Pillar a dedication appears. This reads, in latin:

TIB CAESARE
AVG IOVI OPTVM
MAXVMO M
NAVTAE . PARSIAC[I]
PVBLICE . POSIERV
NT

This translates as:

TO] TIBERIUS CAESAR AUGUSTUS
[AND] JOVE THE BEST
AND GREATEST
THE SAILORS OF THE PARISII
PUBLICLY SET UP

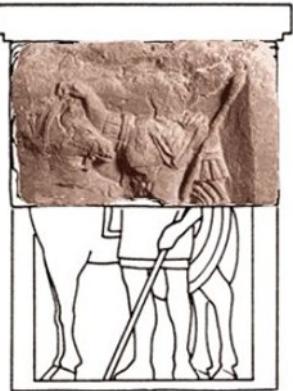
'Sailors' can also be read as 'Boatmen', hence the usual name given to the Pillar. The important thing to remember is that this demonstrates a monument dedication to the reigning roman emperor Tiberius, to roman gods such as Jupiter, but also to purely Celtic gods such as Cernunnos. It is a fusion often found where tribes & peoples were brought within the Roman Empire.

Detail of the Pillar level showing Cernunnos

In order to give the fullest description of the Pillar of the Boatmen, it is necessary to explain that there are basically four levels, each with four sides which show a relief. I usually describe each of these levels, with each of its four faces, starting with the lowest level & working up to the top of the Pillar. However, for this article I will concentrate on the one block featuring the Celtic god Cernunnos, relating it briefly to other images carved on that level to explain why he is placed there. Unfortunately, on many of the levels, only the upper half of the design was found amongst the blocks originally discovered, & this is true for the Cernunnos block. As can be seen from the reconstruction of the pillar shown at the beginning of this article,



cle, archaeologists/historians have attempted to reconstruct how the bottom half of each face may have looked. However, without the whole actual blocks, this is only conjecture. Cernunnos appears on Level 3.

Level 3: Side 1	Level 3: Side 2	Level 3: Side 3	Level 3: Side 4
[C]ernunnos	Smer[trios]	Castor	Pollux?
			

Side 1 features, & names, the Celtic God Cernunnos. Although Neo Celtic Pagan groups claim all sorts of things Cernunnos is the god of, there is only a limited iconography for him, & even some of these are fiercely debated as to whether the god pictured is, in fact, Cernunnos. He is, however, usually depicted sitting. This pose looks like the Buddhist lotus position but his legs do not take up the same position because most often one leg is in front of the other. Although technically a 'horned god', his 'horns' are in fact antlers. There has even been suggestions that this is a shaman style headdress. Featured is always the Celtic Torc; here one on each antler. Torcs were symbols of wealth & power in Celtic society & most often worn around the neck. Other representations of Cernunnos have him wearing a torc in this manner. Sometimes torcs were made of solid gold or electrum. The Snettisham Great Torc from Norfolk, England (see below) weighed 2 pounds 3 ounces. The fact that Cernunnos is given



two torcs indicates his status as a god. It may also represent him as a god of wealth & this may be supported by other images which appear to have a pouch placed in his lap, although it cannot be said with any certainty that this is a money pouch.

On level 3, Cernunnos appears with three other figures on the other sides. Two are greco-roman gods: Castor & Pollux. These half twin brothers were transformed by Zeus into the constellation Gemini. In legend they were brilliant horsemen & hunters & joined Jason on the Argo. It is thought that, through Pollux being the son of Zeus/Jupiter, to whom the pillar is also dedicated, they represent protection for the boatmen. The third image is a Gaulish god Smertrios. Studies of his name suggests he may be identified as 'The Provider', also symbolic for the wellbeing of the boatmen. So we have symbolic gods, mixing Greek, Roman & Celtic beliefs all possibly lending support to the trade & prosperity of the boatmen's guild

However if Cernunnos here is solely being asked for his blessings upon the boatmen, in other places his purpose could be more in relation to nature or a link between worlds, such as between the world of the living & the underworld. These themes we will explore in the next Mysterious Ways. At the end I will examine my own thoughts as to why I think Cernunnos to be an apt god for gay pagan men.

Embracing the Crooked Path: Queer & Pagan Elder Wisdom

Are there any adults in the room?

By Mel Mystery

In the book, the **Gay Warrior: Transforming Betrayal** into Wisdom by F. Jim Fickey and Gary S. Grimm, the authors argue that gay men often live out the archetype of the puer, seldom attaining the status of adulthood or warriorhood. Some of the signs of the expression of the puer archetype in a person's life can include immaturity, narcissism, and a desire to escape into fantasy or idealism in preference to remaining with the reality of a situation. Another article called "Gay Adults! Gay Adults! Where are you?" in the White Crane Journal, argues that there is no concept of gay adults in the gay community only "older gays" and "younger gays".

But in order for a community to thrive, it must contain the four archetypal stages of life: youth, adults, elders, and ancestors. Each stage builds on the one preceding it and the people in each stage learn from the stage after their own. The ancestors look out for the welfare and protection of the community and keep the vast storehouse of knowledge that shamans, dream-workers, and vision seekers can access and learn from. The elders are responsible for the spiritual well-being of the community. They transmit spiritual information, knowledge, and wisdom from one generation to the next often by conveying their stories and the history of the tribe. Adults are responsible for the material well-being of the community. They do the work, provide the food, raise the young, protect the community, perform the ceremonies (including initiations and rites of passage), and pass on practical knowledge to the youth. Adults care about themselves and something larger than themselves – the state of the community. They have a sense of civic responsibility. Youth symbolize the future. A healthy community will treat its young people seriously and provide them with guidance as they grow into adult roles in the community. The positive aspects of youth are having fun, being creative, making mistakes and learning from them, learning about life, sex, and love, and thinking about possibilities for the future. Negative aspects of youth that are often condemned in gay culture are self-absorption, narcissism, and immaturity.

There are several arguments about why there are so few people living the adult archetype in the gay community. One is that gay men have a delayed adolescence. Since we are usually still figuring out our sexuality in adolescence when our straight peers are already dating, and since sometimes we don't even have the opportunity to date until we go off to college, or after we move out from mom and dad, we often go through a delayed adolescence period in our 20s rather than our teens. The problem is many gay men continue acting from an adolescent stage well into their 30s, 40s, and beyond. Another explanation for the missing adults is the generation lost to the AIDS epidemic. These would be people who would now be middle-aged and older. While it was a terrible loss, the Center for Disease Control estimates that only 8-12% of our community from this generation were lost, leaving 88 to 92% still around. A third argument is that gay men usually don't have children or need to support a family, so unlike heterosexual men they don't have to grow up or assume adult responsibilities. These may be valid points to some extent, but perhaps the reason so many gay men remain in the adolescent puer stage is because they haven't truly been initiated into adulthood. Perhaps they need a rite of passage to help them transition into adulthood.

A rite of passage is a formalized ritual or ceremony designed with the intent to help an individual transition from one stage or position in life to another. Rites of passage help to provide the tools, skills, and mental attitudes necessary to transition life's stages effectively.

A Trolling We Will Go

By Mel Mystery

While we in the gay and bi male community may remain in perpetual adolescence way into adulthood, we simultaneously age much more quickly than our straight counterparts. If “conventional” queer wisdom is to be believed, we go from careless youth to bitter old trolls at the arbitrary age of 30.

Mainstream culture is obsessed with youth, beauty, and vitality, but gay culture is even more so. A gay man could hit “middle age” as young as age 30. In fact, age 30 is an age when many gay men start to feel old and less desired. In his 20s, he may be living out an adolescence he missed because he came out late or be partying like straight people his age, but when he hits the arbitrary age of 30 somehow he is not quite the same man he was when he was 29. He may start to see the first signs of aging like gray hairs, crow’s feet, or a little extra weight around the middle. In gay terms, he is becoming a “troll.” I say this mockingly, but I think there’s power in using our own archetypes. We can use them for good or for bad. There are some who may argue that using the troll archetype as feeding into ageist attitudes in the LGBTQ+ communi-

ty. We could sweep this ageism under the carpet, repress it, and so on, but to me that runs counter to the need for an age-related rite of passage. The whole purpose of an age-related rite of passage is to prepare one for their next stage of life – both good and bad, and to address the unspoken, perhaps repressed fears associated with aging. The alternative is to take the negative, feared, and anxiety-inducing aspects of aging, confront them, and draw power from them. A gay or bi man coming out of this rite of passage should be able to say and believe, “Hey, I’m a healthy man in my 30s, and you may think of me as a troll, but you know what I’ve already confronted that fear and really I’m not. I’m not as young as I used to be and I’ve matured a bit, but I’ve still got a lot to offer....”

To the aging 20-and-30-somethings out there, I implore you to embrace the troll within.



Between the Worlds

A spiritual gathering for celebrating all aspects of the queer male spectrum

September 14—19, 2026

www.betweentheworlds.org/

A Generation Lost: Queer Men and the AIDS Epidemic

By Mel Mystery with dates and statistics compiled by Gemini.

The AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s had a devastating and disproportionate impact on the generation of gay and bisexual men in the United States, particularly those in their prime adult years. The loss of these men represent a generational loss of men who could have been role models, mentors, and elders within our community.

A Timeline and Statistics

In June 1981, the CDC published a report on **five** young, previously healthy gay men diagnosed with a rare pneumonia (PCP) and Kaposi's sarcoma (KS) in Los Angeles.

Within the first decade of AIDS between 1981 and 1990, according to CDC data, over **100,000** persons in the US died from AIDS. Of these, gay and bisexual men accounted for 59% of all reported AIDS deaths.



The AIDS Memorial Quilt on display in Washington, D.C.

Nearly **three-fourths** of AIDS deaths in the first decade occurred among persons aged **25–44 years**.

By 1995, it was estimated that **one gay man in nine** in the US had been diagnosed with AIDS, and **one in fifteen** had died. Approximately **10%** of the estimated **1.6 million** gay men aged 25-44 in the US had died by **1995**.

AIDS diagnoses and AIDS-related deaths **peaked in the early-to-mid 1990s** before the widespread introduction of Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (HAART) in **1996**.

The introduction of **HAART** (Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy) in 1996 was the "watershed moment" that transformed HIV/AIDS from a certain death sentence into a manageable chronic condition.

Since then, the focus of medicine has shifted from mere survival to improving quality of life, reducing side effects, and preventing transmission.

In 2012, the FDA approved **Truvada** for use by HIV-negative individuals to prevent infection. This shifted the focus to proactive prevention. This is also known as PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis). Since that time, other PREP medications such as Descovy, Apretude, and Yeztugo have been approved for use. PrEP medications stop the HIV virus from making copies of itself in your body's cells, preventing it from spreading and taking hold.

Elders in the Pagan Community

By Gemini

In the Pagan community, honoring elders is deeply woven into the spiritual fabric of the path, as it values the "Wheel of Life"—the belief that every stage of life has its own sacred medicine. Unlike some mainstream cultures that marginalize aging, many Pagan traditions view elders as the living bridge between the community and the ancestors.

Here is an outline of the ways elders and older folks are honored within the Pagan community:

1. Rites of Passage (Croning and Saging)

The most distinct way elders are honored is through specific rituals that mark the transition into the "elder" phase of life.

- **Croning:** A ceremony for women (usually post-menopause) to embrace the archetype of the **Crone**. It celebrates the transition from the "Mother" phase to a time of wisdom, authority, and spiritual power.
- **Saging:** A similar rite for men (and sometimes a gender-neutral alternative to Croning) to recognize their transition into the role of a wise elder or **Sage**.
- **Visibility:** These rituals often involve the elder being "presented" to the community, receiving a new name or title, and being draped in specific colors (often purple or silver).

2. Spiritual Leadership and Roles

In many covens, groves, or kindreds, "Elder" is a formal title earned through years of service and study.

- **Keepers of Lineage:** Elders are often the "librarians" of a tradition, holding oral histories, specific ritual nuances, and the history of the group that isn't found in books.
- **The "Council of Elders":** Large organizations often have a council of experienced members who provide ethical oversight, mediate disputes, and offer guidance to the current High Priests or Priestesses.
- **Mentorship:** Older folks often serve as "elders of the heart," providing one-on-one mentorship to seekers and new initiates, passing down craft skills like herbalism, divination, or ritual construction.

3. Ritual Recognition

Elders are given physical and symbolic priority during communal gatherings and festivals.

- **Seating and Serving:** At feasts (like a "Dumb Supper" or a post-ritual potluck), it is common practice to serve elders first or ensure they have the most comfortable seating.
- **Speaking First:** In a "circle," when it is time to share wisdom or stories, elders are often invited to speak first to set the tone for the younger generations.
- **Symbolic Archetypes:** During rituals, older members may be asked to embody the "Elder" aspect of the Triple Deity (the Crone or the Old King), grounding the energy of the ritual in experience and stillness.

4. Ancestral Connection

In Paganism, the line between an "Elder" and an "Ancestor" is thin and sacred.

- **The "Mighty Dead":** When a prominent elder passes away, they are often elevated to the status of the "Mighty Dead"—ancestors of the tradition who are called upon in future rituals for protection and guidance.
- **Storytelling:** Honoring elders often involves actively listening to their stories. In a community where "what is remembered, lives," the act of listening is considered a form of spiritual preservation.

5. Community Care and "Old Guard" Respect

There is an increasing movement within modern Paganism to ensure that those who built the movement in the 1960s and 70s are cared for.

- **Pagan Eldercare:** Discussions and initiatives (like those at festivals such as Paganicon) focus on how to provide physical care, financial support, and accessibility for aging practitioners.
- **Honoring the Pioneers:** At large festivals, "Old Guard" Pagans are often given awards or invited as Guests of Honor to acknowledge the risks they took to practice openly in earlier decades.

The Gay Pagan Elder Archetype

By Gemini

The gay pagan "elder" archetype is not a single, formally defined figure across all of modern Paganism, but rather a recognized and valued role that emerges particularly within queer-inclusive or queer-centered Pagan traditions and communities. It represents the culmination of spiritual maturity, life experience, and a deep understanding of what it means to be both gay and pagan.

Here are some key aspects and characteristics associated with this archetype:

Key Roles and Characteristics

- **Spiritual Guide and Teacher:** The gay pagan elder often serves as a mentor, offering spiritual guidance to younger or newer members of the community. They help interpret teachings, lead rituals, and transmit the wisdom of their path.
- **Embodyment of Queer Spirituality:** They often embody a deep understanding that their queer identity is sacred and a source of power, rather than a deviation. They challenge heteronormative or gender-essentialist views found in some mainstream Pagan practices (like those focused solely on the heterosexual Divine Couple of the God and Goddess).
- **Keeper of Unconventional Wisdom:** Drawing on experiences of living on the "liminal edges" of mainstream society, they offer a unique perspective, much like the shaman or hedge witch on the edge of the village. This can translate into unique magical or healing perspectives.
- **Community Anchor:** Elders are often crucial to building and maintaining community, providing a sense of history, stability, and chosen family, which is especially important in the LGBTQ+ community.
- **Integrator of Masculine and Feminine:** In traditions that emphasize gender-fluidity or the Divine Androgynous, a gay male elder may be particularly adept at integrating and expressing both masculine and feminine energies in ritual and life, often challenging rigid gender roles.
- **Connection to Ancestral/Mythological Queer Figures:** They may draw on and help resurrect roles inspired by historical and mythological queer figures, such as gender-variant shamans, non-binary deities, or ancient priests of queer-inclusive cults (like those of Dionysus or Cybele).

Arcadia

"Queer Hearth: Building Community and Chosen Family"

A weekend retreat for Queer Pagan Men

March 20-22, 2026 in Cumberland, Virginia

Spaces are limited so register soon to secure your spot!

<https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/arcadia-main/>

Context in Modern Paganism

The need for and recognition of this archetype grew as modern Paganism evolved:

- **Challenging Heteronormativity:** Early forms of Wicca often emphasized a heterosexual polarity (the union of the Priestess and Priest representing the Goddess and God), which was often alienating to LGBTQ+ individuals. The gay elder archetype is a development within groups that sought to create an explicitly queer-affirming spirituality.
- **The Radical Faeries:** The **Radical Faeries** movement, which is a spiritual and countercultural network for gay men that blends queer consciousness and spirituality (with many Neopagan elements), is a major source for this elder tradition. Radical Faeries often explore the "gay spirit" as a source of wisdom and initiation, naturally leading to the establishment of revered elder roles.
- **Queer-Centered Traditions:** Traditions like the **Minoan Brotherhood** and the **Unnamed Path** (gay male initiatory traditions) and the **Feri Tradition** (which is very open to queer identities) offer spaces where gay men can fully express and celebrate their spiritual path, thereby nurturing the growth of their own elders and leaders.

Quotes on Tyranny

Compiled by ή Δωδώνα'Οράκλος

From the Roman Republic Statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero:

'A nation can survive its fools, and even the ambitious. But it cannot survive treason from within. An enemy at the gates is less formidable, for he is known and carries his banner openly. But the traitor moves amongst those within the gate freely, his sly whispers rustling through all the alleys, heard in the very halls of government itself.'

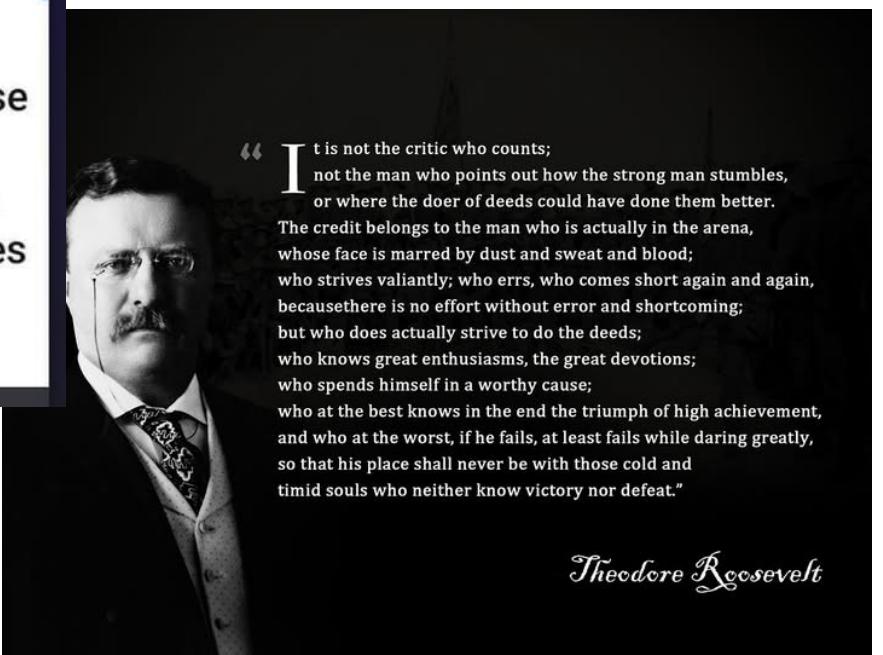
'The purpose of education is to free the student from the tyranny of the present'

From Thomas Jefferson:

'When tyranny becomes law, rebellion becomes duty.'



Other quotes found on social media. The first a reminder to Queer people about what we have to work on within ourselves. The second is a reminder to myself (Mel Mystery) that regardless of my successes and failures or what the critics say, I'm always in the trenches doing what I can for the Queer Pagan men's community—whether my past podcast, this cyberzine, or the retreats I help to organize.



Mysterious Fate

by *Mel Mystery*.

I recently became aware that the publishing software that I use to create Mysterious Ways will be ending support in the fall of 2026. It got me thinking about the future of this Mysterious Ways cyberzine. Certainly, I could just get new publishing software and learn how to use it. That would be a reasonable solution. But I've been really thinking deeply about whether Mysterious Ways has met my own expectations after six years of semi-annual publication; whether online print media is the best method to get the news and stories out; whether there are better ways to market to my target audience of Queer Pagan men; and whether I'm ready to move on to new ventures that cater to said audience.

As for my expectations for Mysterious Ways, it has always, first and foremost, been a means to promote Queer Pagan men's retreats and gatherings—both my own and those put on by other groups and people — as well as Queer Pagan men's groups and our unique community. Queer Pagan men are a niche within a niche within a niche, but it is also a community near and dear to my heart. In my own experiences, I have found that general Pagan groups and paths, while often friendly to LGBTQ+ folks, do not always adequately address my needs as a gay man. And I have found that general LGBTQ+ groups don't often adequately address my needs as a Pagan. The times that I've felt most at home among a community of people has been when I've been among groups of other Queer Pagan men. It's these people that usually just "get" me and "get" where I'm coming from. I don't need to spend a lot of time explaining myself or my beliefs. I know many feel the same way and that has come out in discussions with people at larger Queer Pagan men's gatherings such as Coph Nia (now defunct) and Between the Worlds (the one for queer people and not to be confused with the other Pagan conference of the same name). Many of these people considered that one special gay Pagan men's gathering the highlight of their year as it is often the one chance they had each year to be among others of our unique tribe. When I started Mysterious Ways, I hoped that more people would be excited about these same things and would wish to share their own knowledge and experiences, their art and poetry, their reviews, and so forth. While I have had off and on contributors and periodic submissions to the cyberzine, I had really hoped for more of your stories and contributions so that the publication wasn't just about my thoughts and experiences as a gay Pagan man. I'm also just hitting a creative block these days and am running out of ideas for themes for each upcoming issue.

Marketing has also been a challenge. While I announce new issues of the zine and also request submissions on my own social media pages and groups, it is a bit dicey posting on other social media groups catering to audiences of queer Pagan men or to general Pagan audiences. There are many of these social media groups out there, but rules and expectations vary from group to group. Some of them don't care what you post so long as you aren't looking for or causing trouble; some of them are okay with folks promoting groups and events so long as it's not for profit; some of them get very defensive if you try to promote anything; and some of them have weird rules that are hard to keep up with like you can promote events only on Friday and you can promote things you sell only on Tuesday. And in some groups my announcements just end up in "approval limbo" - whether because missed by moderators or because they wish to "gate keep" who posts about what in the group. Since we are a very niche audience (and often misunderstood in the mainstream) , it is often difficult determining what places there are out there where promoting our publications, groups, and events would be welcomed. I also don't want to spam these groups so I post announcements sparingly.

I've also been thinking about whether print media (even online print media) is the best way to go in this current day and age. I feel like there are much better ways to reach people. While I periodically read articles and blog posts on sites such as the Pagan feed on Patheos.com or on the Wild Hunt, I tend to get most of my information—whether news or entertainment — on YouTube and when I talk to folks they often cite spending a lot of time on either YouTube or TikTok.

And that brings me to whether I'm ready to move on to new ventures that still cater to said audiences. Between 2007 and 2021, I hosted the "Discovering the Male Mysteries" podcast for Queer Pagan men. In 2020, I started publishing Mysterious Ways and I phased out my podcast. I've been eager to do more with YouTube—and that's one of the reasons I pushed to do more with our Pagan men's retreat YouTube channel. I also have been considering starting a "Mel Mystery" channel. I feel like there may be more a built in audience and built in searches for people searching for content. And one of the things I've considered doing is having interviews with various people and groups. This can be the various authors who write on topics relevant to queer Pagan men; it can be representatives from queer Pagan men's groups and gatherings; and perhaps even some every day people who just happen to be gay and Pagan.

There's only so much that I can do in my "spare" time. At the moment, I still plan to be involved in planning the Brotherhood by the Bog, Arcadia, and Brotherhood Beyond Borders retreats. I'd really like to find time to continue writing my Gay Guy's Guide to Werewolves books. I still have two books planned and the second book is partially written. It's possible that I will still publish a semi-annual retreat and gathering publication, but in an abbreviated format. As for Mysterious Ways, I feel that now is the time to move on with a solid and symbolic 13 issues under its belt. As for other ventures, I guess only time will tell.

What will Mel be doing after Mysterious Ways?

- I'm still involved with the Arcadia, Brotherhood by the Bog, and Brotherhood Beyond Borders retreats.
- I'd really like to finish my next werewolf book. In the meantime, I will be starting a "werewolf" blog on my website. I'll be sharing content from my upcoming books as well as commentary on other things related to werewolves and shapeshifting. Check my website soon for this new blog (website link below)
- I might compile a semi-annual Queer Pagan directory that feature groups, gatherings, events, speakers, and so forth. There will still be room for community "News, Views, and Reviews", but there will be less focus on articles. This will be on my website and will likely premiere in the summer 2026.
- Look for the new "Discovering the Male Mysterious" YouTube channel (link below).
- I'm hoping to get more involved with my Druid group and also to better develop my personal spiritual practices.
- If the Fates allow this year, I'm planning to attend the Between the Worlds Gathering, September 14-19, 2026.
- I've still got lots of house, car, and home organizing projects to keep me busy.

How to keep connected:

- **Mel Mystery website** (you can find old issues of Mysterious Ways, archived audio podcasts, and more)
<https://www.melmyystery.com/>
- **Mel Mystery Facebook page**
<https://www.facebook.com/melmysterypodcast>
- **New "Discovering the Male Mysteries" YouTube channel**
<https://www.youtube.com/@DiscoveringtheMaleMysteries>
- **Arcadia, Brotherhood by the Bog, Brotherhood Beyond Borders website**
<https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/>
- **Arcadia, Brotherhood by the Bog, Brotherhood Beyond Borders YouTube channel**
www.youtube.com/@brotherhoodbythebog9330

Be Listed...

I'm in the process of creating a new directory for the Queer Pagan men's community. The new directory will come out semiannually and be posted on my website as a downloadable PDF. The directory will include an event calendar for the coming year; listings for Queer Pagan men's groups, retreats, and gatherings; Queer Pagan authors; and listings of publications, podcasts, and vodcasts of interest to our unique community. This directory will feature worldwide listings!

Please send your listings to Mel at knightsofmatrix@gmail.com by May 15, 2026. Be sure to put "Mysterious Ways Directory" in the subject line.

Submission deadline for the first issue of the new directory is May 15, 2026.

Queer Pagan Resources

Queer Pagan Men's Groups

Brotherhood of Cernunnos -- A Brotherhood of UK Gay Pagan Men.

FMI: <http://www.brotherhoodofcernunnos.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

Upcoming Retreats and Gatherings

March 20-22, 2026 — Arcadia Retreat for Queer Pagan Men. Our theme this year is “Queer Hearth: Building Community and Chosen Family”. To be held at a cabin at campground in Cumberland, Virginia. Registration is only \$80 for the weekend and includes meals. **Spaces are limited.** Register soon to ensure your spot at the retreat.

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

May 15-17, 2026 — Gay Spirit Visions Spring Retreat at the Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands, NC.

FMI: <http://gayspiritvisions.org/annual-gatherings/>

September 14-19, 2026 — Between the Worlds: A spiritual gathering for men who love men held at Four Quarters Interfaith Sanctuary, Artemis, PA. FMI: <http://www.betweentheworlds.org>

Dates to be announced —

November 2026 — Brotherhood Beyond Borders. A virtual Retreat for Pagan men of all paths, backgrounds, and orientations. Theme and dates TBA. FMI: <https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/brotherhood-beyond-borders/>

Spring 2027 — Brotherhood by the Bog retreat for Pagan Men of all paths, backgrounds, and orientations. To take place in-person at First Landing State Park in Virginia Beach, VA. Details TBA.

FMI: <https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/brotherhood-by-the-bog-main/>

Stone and Stang gathering for men who love men.

FMI: <https://unnamedpath.org/stone-stang/>

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.melmyystery.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/>

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://unnamedpath.org/podcast/>

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!

<https://www.melmyystery.com/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.melmyystery.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:

Look for the all new "Green Man's Guide to Queer Pagan Community and Brotherhood" this coming summer 2026. This new guide will feature directory and calendar listings for Queer Pagan men's retreats, gatherings, and events; groups and covens; books and authors; blogs, vlogs, and podcasts; and other resources that might be of interest to our unique community. Please consider sending your announcements for upcoming retreats and gatherings, group announcements, or other news to be included. Also, consider sharing reviews and photos from retreats, gatherings, and events that you've hosted or attended.

Please send directory and calendar submissions to Mel at knightsofmatrix@gmail.com by May 15, 2026. 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.