

Mysterious Ways

A Cyberzine for Pagan men who love men.

Winter/ Spring 2023
Volume 4, Issue 1

Welcome to the latest issue of Mysterious Ways!

As I write this, we are at the peak of the “dark” time of the year. This is the time when the days are short and the nights are long. The long, cold nights of winter will eventually give way to the brighter, warmer days of spring. Our Pagan forebears considered this cold, dark time a time when our world was closest to the Otherworld—a world populated by strange and supernatural forces, dark and sometimes hostile spirits, the solar deities give way to the chthonic, and nature hibernates. Many religions aspire to the heavenly, sky realms and deities. As Pagans, we find value in the balance of complementary forces. We know that without dark, there can be no joy in the light. We know that dark is often more mysterious than sinister. We know that Chthonic deities and spirits are often more misunderstood than outright malevolent. We know that there is power in facing and embracing what others fear. Cerberus guards the gate to the Otherworld. Dare you enter?

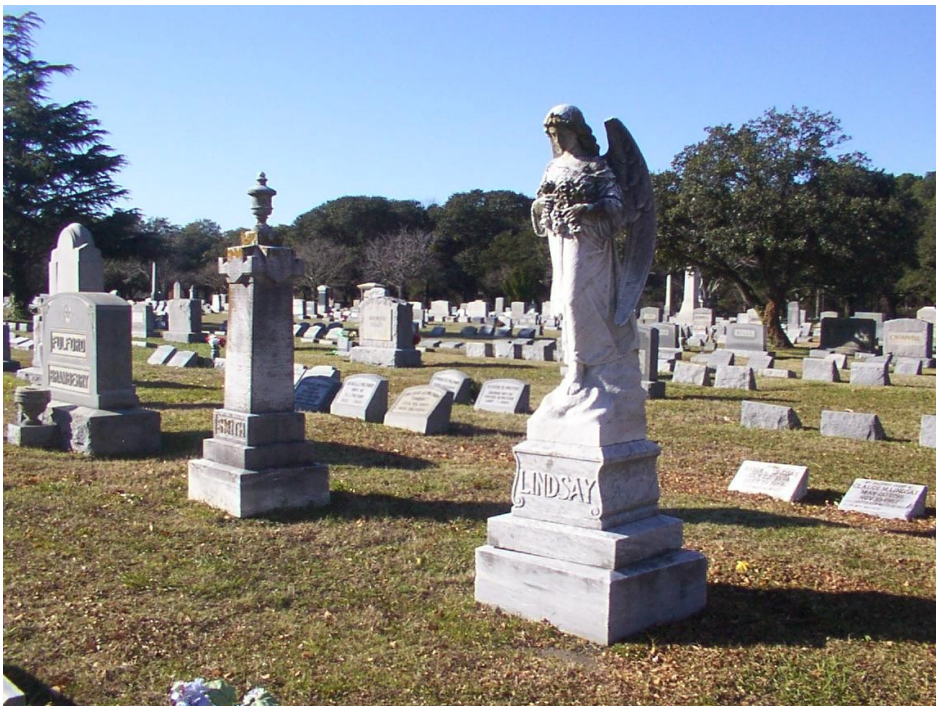
— Mel Mystery

Theme this Issue: Underworld Journeys



Cerberus guards the gate to the Otherworld.

Photo from the Wikimedia Commons.



Cemeteries are portals to the Underworld. *Photo by Mel Mystery.*

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Special Thanks

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

Events and Gatherings

Brotherhood by the Bog to Return In-Person

By Mel Mystery

After a three year hiatus due to Covid, Brotherhood by the Bog (BBTB) will return to an in-person retreat this year. The past two years, BBTB has been held as a virtual event. The retreat will return to First Landing State Park in Virginia Beach, Virginia the weekend of April 21-23, 2023. BBTB is open to Pagan men of all paths, backgrounds, and orientations.

This year's theme is "What Place for Pagan Men." Focus groups, panels, and other activities will explore the place of Pagan men within what is traditionally considered a feminine, Goddess-centered spiritual path. One focus group will explore the roles, experiences, needs, challenges, and aspirations of Pagan men in the community. Another focus group will highlight the need for diversity and allyship among Pagan men. This will include supporting gay, bi, and trans men; elders and youth; People of Color; and supporting the women in our communities. One panel will examine the place of men within Pagan paths such as Wicca, Druidry, Norse Paganism, and possibly other Pagan paths. Another panel will explore the role of rites of passage among Pagan men. Men's rites of passage were an integral part of pre-Christian Pagan communities that were often orchestrated by community elders or local shamans.

In addition to the panels and focus groups, there will be "Bog Trivia by the Fire" with prizes on Friday evening. Attendees will be quizzed on Mythical Creatures, Historic (Pagan and Magickal) People; Places and Events (again related to Pagans and Magick); and Folklore, Superstitions, and Magick. There will also be a community dinner, nature hike, beach ritual, and drumming on the beach.

As this is the first time back in person after three years, the event will be an outdoor camping retreat. This will allow us to keep costs down, alleviate any lingering fears about Covid being spread in indoor spaces, and allow us to charge only a minimal registration fee to help cover the cost of the campsite, food, and supplies. Pre-registration cost is only \$10 per person for the entire weekend. Registration at the door will be \$15. Folks are encouraged to pre-pay so we know how many to plan for. Attendees are responsible for their own accommodations—whether a campsite, cabin, or hotel room. Many attendees will be day trippers from the local Hampton Roads community. Those not camping will be responsible for a parking pass from the park. Parking passes are included with park camping and cabin rentals. Otherwise, parking passes are issued at the park gate and cost approximately \$10 per day.

Registration opened on January 1, 2023 on the Brotherhood by the Bog web page.

For more information on Brotherhood by the Bog:

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



Photo from a forerunner to the BBTB Retreat. The main ritual paid homage to the Native Americans buried at First Landing State Park.

Brotherhood by the Bog and Arcadia to Offer Alternating Virtual Retreats

By Mel Mystery

It's no secret that the Brotherhood by the Bog (BBTB) and Arcadia retreats are run more-or-less by the same group of people. The retreats are a continuation of retreats held in the 2000s at First Landing State Park in Virginia Beach, VA by two former Pagan men's groups in Southeastern Virginia. BBTB is envisioned as a weekend retreat for Pagan men of all backgrounds, paths, and orientations. Arcadia is envisioned as a weekend more specifically for Queer Pagan men (gay, bi, and trans men). That all said, no respectful seeker is turned away who feels like they have something to learn or to contribute by attending either event.

After the success of the Virtual BBTB retreats in 2021 and 2022, it was decided that we want to continue with a virtual retreat in some form even as we return to in-person events. In Fall 2022, we decided the best way to move forward with this is to host alternating in-person and virtual events for each retreat. In 2023, we will hold an in-person BBTB Retreat in April 2023 and a Virtual Arcadia in early November 2023. In 2024, we will alternate with a Virtual BBTB retreat in the Spring and an in-person Arcadia in the Fall. The last in-person BBTB was held in April 2019. The last in-person Arcadia was held in October 2021. This year will be the first Virtual Arcadia Retreat.

Virtual retreats are nice because we can host attendees and presenters who may not otherwise be able to attend the event in person and folks can fit these events better into their busy schedules. The Virtual BBTB retreats even had international attendees. In-person retreats are great because they provide an opportunity for greater male bonding and the chance to commune in nature and by an actual campfire. They also provide a chance to step away for a weekend from the normal distractions and stresses of everyday life.

Virtual Arcadia to be Held this Fall

By Mel Mystery

The first ever Virtual Arcadia retreat will be held the weekend of November 3-5, 2023. There have been two previous in-person Arcadia retreats. The first was held in October 2019 prior to the Covid pandemic and the second was held in October 2021. Our virtual theme this year is "Otherworld Spirits." The idea actually came from the theme of this issue of Mysterious Ways. It seems there is much potential content and interest in this theme.

The virtual retreat is free and open to Queer Pagan men over the age of 18. As much of the content of this virtual retreat is not specific to one's sexual orientation, we will also welcome open-minded and respectful straight Pagan men who would like to attend. We may even try to offer a workshop on Allyship. As a Queer men's event, we will still try to ensure there are some workshops, activities, or discussions specific to the Queer Pagan men's experience.

Specific details including schedule, presenters, workshops, and so on will be announced on the Arcadia web page at a later time as details become available.

For more information:

<https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/index.php/events/arcadia>

Brotherhood by the Bog
A Retreat for Pagan Men
April 21-23, 2023 in Virginia Beach, VA.

This year's theme is: "What Place for Pagan Men?"

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

From Across the Pond

'Darkness into Light'

by Anarion (writing from Portugal)

When we think of ancient faiths, the concept of Underworld can conjure up many visions and feelings in the human spirit. Darkness has always been associated with underworlds, whereas celestial homes seem to be more places of light. But this polarised view is, again, something partly handed down from ancient fears of attack in the woods, and partly the illusions given us as another wonderful (sarcasm here) legacy from the christian religion. Perhaps we need to re-examine these concepts within ourselves as we are beginning, as Pagans, and gay men, to look again at what we are and what we believe.



Fireflies at Linggu Temple. A famous Buddhist temple in Nanjing. Photo from the Wikimedia Commons.

Hades and Hell are both concepts of underworlds with less than happy associations. "This is where you go boys if you're bad" propaganda leads to a general association of 'darkness' with 'badness'. When I won my freedom from christianity, having studied its history and seen the fallacies of christian teaching and ideology, I perceived that the concepts given us in our youths by religion and custom are not necessarily worthwhile things to cling on to. There is a disconnect between truth and fantasy here. Often allusions are fed to us with the object of control or to dissuade us from doing things the particular ideology hates. Hence the primeval fear of the monsters that lie in wait to pounce on you in the darkening woods of the Anglo-Saxon or Norse eras were used by the christian church to re-enforce the concept of sin. 'Dark' was associated with 'bad' things because converts from pagan religions understood the dangers of their time. Even later with such things as Grimm's Fairy Tales, the Germanic fears of the forest were used to create morality tales to scare children. The original stories were hardly Disney !!

However, what is Darkness? It is, at its core, an absence of light and yet the night is full of light. Even without the artificial illumination of human activity, there are the stars and moon in the sky and the light coming from such creatures as fire flies and glow worms. There is light in the darkness and we truly are never 'in the absolute dark' these days. In many ways I feel a certain womb like comfort from the night. I have wondered in woods near my home in England at night and felt at one with the trees surrounding me and protecting me from harm. Often the greatest insights can be gained at such inspirational moments in our lives. It requires solitude and an openness to nature which no church, mosque or synagogue will provide. It is what makes being Pagan unique; a willingness to be 'one' with our environment. Of course, there are still physical dangers so don't get me wrong. The ancients had their fears for good reason but, if we are careful, and respect our environment, we gain incredibly from a journey into darkness, into, in fact, our Underworld.

Many ancient cultures think humanity entered the world from a cave or underworld creation. A transition from darkness into light. But archaeology tells us that they still worshipped in the caves and dark places. They did not turn their backs on their supposed origins but embraced the darkness as part of their very being and so it should be for us. We are creatures of darkness and light, a fusion of the two and we need to embrace this fusion to know inner meaning, both for ourselves and the world around us.

You will hear people talk about our 'dark side'. Nicely used in the Star Wars films, there is a disparity between light and dark within a person. Light exemplifies good, and Dark, evil. This is too simple to accept. Why should Dark be evil any more than the darkness of a man's skin should mean they are less of a human than a man with light skin? It makes no sense. Darkness and Light are blended into a unity which brings final contentment. It is only by accepting all shades of our individual natures that we can truly know ourselves.

For gay men this disparity is also used by established religions to brand homosexuality as an unacceptable abomination. What we do in sex, whether vanilla or extreme, is seen as proof of the dark nature of our souls and justifies rejection or

finger pointing when natural viral infections such as HIV or Monkey Pox rise up in communities. It is just finding a scapegoat, of course, for things people find hard to accept in themselves. As we all know, HIV was not simply a gay disease, and I am sure Monkey Pox will turn out to be the same. However, people and institutions use such plagues to highlight what they see as darkness in a gay man's nature. All of us who have rejected such orthodox religious rhetoric, see the error in such judgements but we are left with conservative misinformation which convinces many in society, even within the target group concerned. I remember once having a short, rather unhelpful, correspondence with a satanic priest. He was convinced that satan was the goat like creature with horns of history. He could not see, even as a supposed priest of that faith, that the imagery had been handed down to him through christian ideology; a very successful propaganda technique to rid converts of belief in ancient gods such as Pan. Indeed, there is no mention of horns and cloven hooves in the Bible and the imagery is wholly that of conversion christianity, but it has lasted in the human imagination to this present day. It shows how misinformation can blight even the most supposedly rational brain. My belief is that sex is a problem for many orthodox religions. They fully know that it happens in many forms, but the hypocritical stance of religious leaders is based on a suppression of the reality of sexual need in human beings. Even so, how many so called good 'christian pastors' have been caught with rent boys in the past or priests with altar boys? No, a new reality must be sought where gay sex is not seen as a 'dark practice'. It must be seen, in all its flavours, as an activity which is acceptable, if it causes no harm to others. Too long have gay people suffered from an allusion that they have an evil darkness within them.



Yin and Yang represents a Chinese philosophical concept that all things have both light and dark, order and chaos, male and female, and other opposites within. *Image is in the Creative Commons.*

So, our 'Underworld Journeys' are not just Greek Mythology, but a real-life journey we all make from birth to death to attain understanding. Whether gay or straight, man, woman or trans, we are a beautiful combination of all shades of light and dark and we should embrace our whole nature and not cherry pick. Our journey is not as the ancients saw it, one from darkness into light, but one of absorption of all that makes us one with natures and with the world.

Anarion (Boetia@protonmail.com)

Virtual Arcadia 2023
A Retreat for Queer Pagan Men

November 3-5, 2023

This year's theme is "Otherworld Spirits."
This year's virtual event is free!!!

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

Underworld Journeys

Come to the Dark Side... We have Cookies!

by Mel Mystery

The “dark side” -- working with Chthonic and Underworld spirits and deities, working with death energies and spirits of the dead, and dealing with the “uncomfortable” parts of human nature -- these often get a bad reputation in modern life and post-Christian influenced spirituality and culture. Christians, New Agers, and even some fluffy Pagans would all have us looking skyward and heavenward for inspiration and answers, focusing on happy thoughts and emotions to raise our vibrations, repressing our “baser” sexuality and material needs in hopes of a joyous afterlife, and just being kind and loving to everyone - whether they deserve our love and kindness or not. It’s all about love and light. In this worldview, there’s no room for darkness, shadows, or even good old-fashioned vengeance against those who have deliberately and maliciously done you wrong. Did I say that in my “out loud” voice? I meant “Do as thou wilt but do no harm.” The Pagan earthy and Underworld deities and spirits of old have at best been forgotten and neglected, and at worst been labeled as devils, demons, and the taboo by modern religions and culture. Just look at the lusty earth deity Pan whose horns, cloven hooves, and goat-like appearance have been used to portray images of the Christian devil. The actual “devil” was a fallen angel (presumably with wings) in Christian mythology. His name even translated as “bringer of light” for anyone looking for a sense of irony and contradiction in this article. But this article isn’t really about Christians, New Agers, or fluffy Pagans (except maybe for contrast and cultural context), it’s about the role of darkness, death, shadow work, and balance in the lives of the rest of us Pagans.



Image from publicdomainpictures.net

As Pagans, we generally honor both the light and the dark. We see them as complimentary and part of the balance of nature. Dark isn’t necessarily evil, and light isn’t necessarily good. We honor and recognize day and night, the dark and light phases of the moon, the light and the dark times of the year, and even the dark and light halves of our human natures. We see the world in cycles and seasons, and each of these dualities is important to the greater whole. It was once said that one cannot truly appreciate light without darkness, and so the cycles of light and dark are necessary for the turning of nature. The dark of winter might be harsh and cold, but it allows for the incubation of seeds and perhaps a time for rest and introspection. The light and warmth of the summer can be good, but in some climates the long daylight hours and heat of the beating sun can be too much. In those places, the cooler nights might bring a much-needed reprieve. Light is not always good. And dark is not always bad. As a Pagan, it’s really important to recognize cycles of nature and to seek out balance.

Ideas about death, dying, and departed spirits are often taboo in our culture. This is at least partly because of our own fears of death and partly because we fear the restless spirits of the dead. The Christian dead go to heaven or hell (or perhaps purgatory) based on the lives they lived. Many Pagans and New Agers believe in reincarnation, but also that the dead go somewhere in-between lives. I personally want to go to the Undying Lands of the Elves when my time comes, but I’d be happy in any of the non-punishing afterlife realms – especially if I can commune with my deceased loved ones again. Ideas about the afterlife realm vary by Pagan path. A Norse Asatruar or Heathen might go to Valhalla, Hel, Fólkvangr, a handful of other realms, or just under the earth itself. A Druid might go to Annwn, also known as Tír na nÓg. Wiccans might go to the Summerland. Hellenists might go to Hades or to the Elysium Fields. Some of these places are dark and harsh, and others are happy and filled with light. These realms might be in the heavens, under the earth (hence the term “underworld”), or even in parallel dimensions. The Otherworld and the Underworld might both refer to the afterlife... or not. The Otherworld might also be the realm of the Fey. It all depends on one’s path and the mythology behind it. Some folks believe that you create your own afterlife and the light and dark contained there are the lessons and tribulations you that bring with you.

As Pagans we honor our ancestors and deceased loved ones (wherever they might be). At the very least we might remember them at Samhain. Some Pagans have a dedicated ancestor altar year-round. The more devoted might even offer “red meals” or “dumb suppers” to our ancestors, or we might Shamanic journey or astral travel to the land of the dead. This might be done to gain knowledge, seek advice, or just communicate with loved ones who have passed over. Some Pagans (and other folks) work with the spirits of the

dead – either to help them pass over or to gain magickal assistance.

Pagans dedicated to self-discovery might also work to balance the light and dark within themselves. This is often referred to as “shadow work.” Shadow work is all about becoming an integrated person. It’s about facing and making peace with our fears, our weaknesses, and our human nature. What we resist or try to hide within ourselves persists. Focusing on love, light, and positive vibes might repress, but not eliminate, the darker parts of our psyche. If you’re running from yourself, you’ll never escape. Many of us learned this lesson when we came to terms with being queer, but it applies to the other thoughts and feelings we try to hide, especially those we try desperately to hide from ourselves.

I had an interesting learning experience years ago when the book, **The Secret**, came out. I read the book and I decided that I would live my life with positive happy thoughts as that was supposed to draw happy, positive things into my life – “law of attraction” and all that. I did this successfully for about two weeks. I was at an all time high of feeling happy. I decided that if I didn’t like the circumstances of my life that I’d reimagine them the way I wanted them to be. I’m not sure my circumstances really changed much in those two weeks, but my attitude did. But beyond two weeks, I couldn’t sustain positive vibes and feelings of happiness any longer. At that point, I seemed to be attracting the opposite of what I wanted, and my happy feelings gave way to a brief period of “the blahs.” Cycles of happiness and sadness are part of the natural cycles of human lives. Like the Wheel of Fortune in the Tarot, the wheel of life is always turning.

When we try to hide or repress parts of ourselves, they find a way of coming out. You can’t sustain constant happiness. You also have to go through cycles of strife and sadness. It’s part of being human.

So, to summarize, Pagans recognize light and dark, as well as life and death, as part of the cycles and balance of nature. Many of us honor and work with the dead, or with deities that mainstream folks might consider dark and scary. We also work on integrating our full, authentic selves because we know that repressing any part of ourselves only leads to bigger problems later.

Now that we’ve cleared all that up. Drum a slow heartbeat vibration. Journey to the Underworld and have some cookies.*

**Disclaimer: Please be aware that in some traditions if you eat or drink while in the Underworld or Otherworld, you can never leave. So read up on the mythologies and traditions of your particular path before you eat the cookies.*



From publicdomainvectors.org

Between the Worlds

A Spiritual Gathering for Men Who Love Men

August 8-13, 2023

Pomeroy, OH

www.betweentheworlds.org

Perspectives on the Underworld

By Sawyer Massie and Adam Pratter

The Unnamed Path is a spiritual group for Men Who Love Men. Two initiates of the Unnamed Path, Sawyer and Adam, interview each other on their individual perspectives of the Underworld from the viewpoint of the Unnamed Path tradition.

ADAM'S INTERVIEW OF SAWYER

Adam: In your practice in the Unnamed Path, what does the Underworld mean for you?

Sawyer: The Underworld always comes back to home. That is a central theme of the Underworld for me, that feeling of “welcome home.” It is everything. It is the physical brought into the spiritual being brought back into the physical. It is all of what manifestation is and could be coming together. It is a place of healing, growth, and convergence.

It is a place of wholeness for me. It is the place that contains all the pieces of our individual self. All the things we've rejected, hidden, thought we'd released, and embrace in secret coming together to influence our conscious self. But the Underworld is also the place where we can bridge these aspects to bring ourselves back to wholeness.

Adam: What experiences have been the most significant in your spirit travels to the Underworld?

Sawyer: This is hard for me to answer. Every encounter I have in the Underworld is fundamentally shifting in some way and it's a building practice. This one profound and transformative journey that I had not set out to experience was almost one month into my apprenticeship training in the Unnamed Path. I guess I had in that I set out to do *something*, but I didn't know exactly what I needed at that time.

I was feeling heart-heavy that day. Overwhelmingly sad and blocked, but also rageful. Every attempt to center was failing. So I stopped and let go, and I was pulled into a specific moment in my life where I first made an offering to the spirit world. In kindergarten there was this rainbow heart eraser that I won as a prize in class. I was excited to win this and I remember telling myself that I had to win *that* eraser. After school, I was compelled to bury it before this oak tree in my front yard. In this particular Underworld journey this scene in my life and the current journey merged. The heart eraser that I buried when I was a child was my own heart now being ravaged and consumed by the Earth and digested into the Underworld into this pool of black. It was pure black like tar and suddenly I was in it. I could barely move through it. I had to find my own way of willing myself to solid ground that was not visible. I found myself in a sink or swim moment, and having to push myself forward despite the extraordinary effort it took. I made my way to solid ground and the earth I walked on in the Underworld was a deep purple. I didn't think anything of it until I noticed that it would give way to this pink color as I walked. I realized that I was walking on bruised flesh. My flesh. Eventually, certain places weren't purple anymore. I was healing myself and my trauma with each step forward. And it was from this place that I experienced a very deep connection with the deity of the Unnamed Path we call the Dark God.

Through this journey I saw how the Underworld responded to me as I responded to it, knowing all of the places it opened for me to be able to explore and take back for myself. The power I have been able to reclaim because of that specific moment is one of my deeply impactful Underworld journeys.

Adam: What method do you use in the Unnamed Path to journey to the Underworld?

Sawyer: I use one of the Unnamed Path's fundamental exercises called Tree Breathing as my primary method of journeying. This technique is initially taught to us as a breathing exercise to balance and align ourselves with the energetic currents of the Underworld and Upperworld. Our roots extend into the Underworld, our branches reach into the Upperworld, while we are the trunk in the Middle World that bridges and carries these energies to and from. I build upon this practice as a journeying technique by breaking away from my roots in the Underworld and extending out and away from my branches in the Upperworld.

Adam: What initiatory rites have you done in the Underworld? Did you ever experience a journey that ended up being an initiatory experience?

Sawyer: The journey I shared before about my heart was definitely an initiatory experience. The powers and deities of the Underworld received me and took me in, namely the Dark God. And I, in turn, was forced to take myself in. In that journey I had to look at them and





An Underworld Bonfire

myself as they looked upon me. Another early initiatory experience was with the Dark Goddess, this culminated from a rather gruesome death experience journey in the Underworld. The journey left my corpse decaying in the Underworld area we refer to as the Field of Ash. This experience transpired over several journeys taken in the course of three weeks. Still in another, I received my magical name through an experience with the Ancestors of Men Who Love Men. This was also a result of culminating journeys.

I used to think of initiations as such a finality, when in reality for me, they are on-going experiences. They are new beginnings composed of growth achieved through trials and exploration.

Adam: In your last response you mentioned a term, “The Dark God.” Who is the Dark God?

Sawyer: The Dark God is one of the four deities of the Unnamed Path. There are two Gods in the Unnamed Path, the Dark God and the Light God. They are lovers and aspects of one deity at different points of experience and time. They are two and they are one. The Dark God resides in the Underworld where he watches over the Ancestors of Men Who Love Men. He is hedonistic and very driven toward experiencing and knowing the self.

Adam: What is one concept you felt you have been taught by communing with spirits in the Underworld?

Sawyer: You are never alone. Ever. It is not a matter of exiting or entering the Worlds. It’s a matter of shifting consciousness and it being “right over there.” My connection to the Worlds helps solidify what is already here and what is “over there.” Though this could be called “the point of origin,” it is all connected. I am “here” and “there.”

SAWYER’S INTERVIEW OF ADAM

Sawyer: Why do you feel we journey to the Underworld?

Adam: In the Unnamed Path there are three worlds we focus our attention on, that would be the Upperworld, the Middle World, and the Underworld. We journey to the Underworld to basically find wholeness, to work on our Shadow Selves, to commune with the spirits of the Underworld, and to connect with the Ancestors of Men Who Love Men. We believe that all of the queer and gay ancestors congregate or make themselves available in the Underworld, and we use the term “Men Who Love Men” for them. In the Underworld the Ancestors of Men Who Love Men gather by large bonfires where they celebrate each other and enjoy each others presence by dancing, feasting and fucking.

We, as beings in the “mundane” World, journey to the Underworld to commune with the spirits there. The purpose of these journeys are to get answers to questions we may have, and to help others in our community. We travel to the Underworld to heal ourselves, explore and learn how to work with our Shadow Selves, bringing a sense of wholeness back to who we are. We do this to present ourselves from a holistic perspective to individuals instead of being fractured. These fractured aspects that many gay/queer men struggle to deal with is what most people would term their “shadow aspects.” In the Unnamed Path we do a tremendous amount of work on healing ourselves first, before we are able to go and work on healing others.

Two deities of the Unnamed Path reside in the Underworld, that is the Dark God and the Dark Goddess. Both of these are two of the four deities of the Unnamed Path. They make their homes there, and so we would travel to the Underworld to commune with our deities. Gener-



Adam

ally as we become more adept in our initiatory aspect in the Unnamed Path, we commune with the deities much easier. But one of the ways to do it is to travel to the Underworld and commune with them in their home territory.

We also travel to the Underworld to speak with the spirits of the dead, to get information to help the living essentially. So we perform divinatory or oracle rites that allow us to travel there and commune with the spirits of the dead, as they often have much more information that can assist us in things that are going on in the mundane world. And so we seek their counsel in order to help people.

And as an initiate of the Unnamed Path, sometimes we travel to the Underworld just to commune. Just to feel the presence of the Ancestors of Men Who Love Men, to feel the connection with the deities. We use the energy of the Underworld also to heal, ground and energize ourselves. One of our rites, the rite of Tree Breathing, we visualize ourselves filling up with the energy of the Underworld. This helps us with being able to reach balance and to allow us to be centered, and to draw upon the energy of that place to do the work that we need to do.



An Underworld Ash Field

Sawyer: Who are the Dark Goddess and Dark God, and what are Fear Totems?

Adam: There are four deities of the Unnamed Path. The Light God, the Dark God, the Light Goddess, and the Dark Goddess. Essentially there are two deities, well actually one, but they present as two and then four. The two deities are in constant flux I guess you would say. The Dark Goddess and the Light Goddess are the same deity but in different aspects, and so the Dark God and Light God are the same deity but in different aspects as well. And then all four of these deities are actually one deity, but they are split into four aspects. Being otherworldly beings, it is a more complicated concept than what is easy to convey in words. Also we use the term deity loosely here. Again it is just the best word we could use to try and describe something that is difficult to articulate. We interact with them mainly as their four individual aspects. It is just easier coming from our perspective. There are some initiates though that have the capacity to perceive them in other aspects.

They represent aspects within the Unnamed Path. Each of the four deities works within the energies of one of the four paths of the Unnamed Path. And even though all four deities delve into all aspects of the Unnamed Path, they sort of specialize in one particular aspect. The Dark Goddess presents the aspects of death and rebirth, and truth, for me. And the Dark God resonates with the self and empowering the self, using your force of will to gain what it is you want to obtain in the world. This can represent a lot of different things, like power, sex, or physicality.

In the Unnamed Path, we know the Dark God watches over the spirits of the dead and the spirits of the Ancestors of Men Who Love Men. He observes all that we as gay/queer man manifest in the world. You could say the Dark God symbolizes sort of the expression of all earthly things. The Dark Goddess is often observed “stirring” the “Cauldron of Fate”. It is our belief that at the time of death, the Dark Goddess takes your spirit and brings you to the River of Blood where all souls go. She is also the one who initiates the aspects of birth, pulling your energies from the River of Blood to reincarnate into a new body. She is the end of all things and the beginning of all things.

When we go through the initiatory path in the Unnamed Path, we commune with many spirits and we create a spiritual court that we work with through most of our lives or the remainder of our lives. Some of us come into the Unnamed Path with a spiritual court kind of established and they kind of just integrate the Unnamed Path teachings with them. And sometimes people forge their spiritual court during initiatory training.

One of the spirits we work with is what we call our Shadow Guide. When we do our Shadow Work, we commune with our Shadow Guide who is essentially a guide that helps us work with, meet and engage our Shadow. From my experience, my Shadow Guide often resides in the Underworld. And when I travel in the Underworld, my Shadow Guide is often there but guides can be in any of the worlds. They can be in the Upperworld, the Middle World, or the Underworld. And some just have a preference for certain places.

So when we’re doing initiatory training, we’re doing a lot of work with our Shadow Guide to help us interact with our Shadow. This is to help us to heal and commune with our Shadow, and integrate the Shadow back into who we are. It allows us to accept those aspects of ourselves and work on the traumas we’ve experienced in our lives that we’ve kind of put onto the Shadow itself.

Sawyer: What qualities or do any qualities of the Underworld stand out to you?

Adam: In my perspective, I think everyone has a different perspective on the Underworld. It’s a very fluid place and a lot of our experiences are tinted by our own personal experiences and beliefs. So for me, a lot of times the Underworld is a dark, misty ancient forest. There’s caves that are overgrown and everything is incredibly lush and green but shadowy. The air smells of soil and a bit of decay. The animals I perceive are more gaunt or even skeletal in appearance. The air is always cool, like autumn with perpetual scents of muskiness and fruit that is just a bit overripe. The landscape shifts and is fluid. I never feel like I am walking somewhere. I am just in a different location suddenly.

And different areas of the Underworld have different energies to them. So when I go to interact with the Dark Goddess, for me that area is more desolate and obscured. For me, the Shadow World morphs into whatever sort of aspect I’m working with at the time. Because it’s a place I travel in spirit form, it’s very amalgamous and has the ability to change and shift very quickly into different things in front of me. One minute I could be in a forest and the next minute I could be in a cave with a feast in front of me, and then before a roaring bonfire with the spirits of the Ancestors of Men Who Love Men. It’s very adaptable. It’s almost like dreaming, like when you dream and scenes change and shift.

I know everyone has different experiences of the Underworld. It has its own energy, its own scent, its own colors. It’s just the whole vibration of the space, it’s unique to me and to each person.



An Underworld Forest

To Walk with the Dead

by Anthony Nelson

Necromancy, not the most accurate term to use but it is the one that is most recognized by people and practitioners. The art of divination through the dead. Gaining information, accessing wisdom, or requesting protection. This is my practice I am here to share with you. I have been a practitioner of magic for over thirty-five years, but it is only within the past ten years that I have realized how much of my work is with the dead. Three years ago, I came “out of the coffin” and announced during a community ritual I was a necromancer. The term leaves people thinking about a multitude of ideas. Ideas of characters from the realm of Dungeons & Dragons to emaciated black cloaked figures of Hollywood. I am neither of them. I am sure I have brothers and sisters walking the path who may fit into one of these categories, but I believe those who walk this path are no different in their practice than any other, for the most part. Much of the practice involves ancestral veneration but it does include contact and work with the dead in general. I will admit I do have a fascination with the macabre and I love a good horror movie so it is probably from there I had my first interest. Over the years as I studied different practices and walked various magical paths, I began to take an interest in the veneration of the dead, something we as Americans rarely do. We fear death, we avoid death, let's not talk about death and dying.



Anthony Nelson

I was young when my maternal grandfather passed, my mother's husband at the time came to me and told me I would need to be strong for the family. I am not sure what happened inside, but I did not mourn with the others. I was there to comfort them. I was sad that he had passed, yes, but I knew he was not gone, he had moved on to another place. Since that moment I began to view death differently. We mourn not for the dead but for ourselves. It is for selfish reasons that we mourn, and I believe that is normal. We don't like the idea of being without grandpa on the holidays or not having great aunt Tilly there to smother us in kisses. Change is never fun, but change must occur. As a magical being I believe I have things I need to do in the hereafter, I will then again return to the flesh to continue past work or continue new work which I cannot do until I finish this life.

I like to say the practice of walking a path of death is to start with that ancestral veneration. This can be Ancestors of blood - your actual family, those who have come before you. Ancestors of the heart - those who are near and dear but not of blood, a chosen family, those who have meant a lot to you. Then there are Ancestors of purpose - those ancestors who share something in common which you value. I like to use the notion of Artists when I talk about these ancestors. As an Artist one may call upon great artists of the past to aid and guide, this is an ancestor of purpose. Find a place in your home you can dedicate to these people. Fill it with pictures of the family who have passed, friends who are gone, and pictures of those you hold dear. It is a belief that the living should never go on an ancestor altar. This is an altar for the dead, not the living. Place upon your altar candles preferably white. Have a dedicated cup to keep water in. The Greeks believed that the dead thirst, there are stories of how to properly trav-

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 May 15, 2023.

erse the underworld in order not get lost and not drink from the wrong fountains. This belief has continued though many different systems of practice and magic, African Diasporic Religions (ADR) pour out water for the ancestors as a show of adoration and remembrance. You can place other offerings of food or drink in the space too. I have been taught that food should sit there no more than two days. To allow the food or drink to grow mold and rot is not a meal for the ancestors.

I leave fresh coffee on my altar as I come from a long line of coffee drinkers. I change out their coffee every two days and any food offered stays on the altar one day. I pour the coffee onto my house plants and the water as well when I change it weekly. Food I put into a small white trash can liner then I put that into another liner. A magical educator I know once told me in his class that the food offering should remain sacred or clean. This is why we double wrap it and I take it to my local favored cemetery and leave it in a trash receptacle there with an offering to the guardian of the graves. Speaking of graves, I spend a lot of time in them. If you have an interest in the path I suggest you do the same. I have several cemeteries around my city where I live which I love to visit and spend time there. I live a state away from my deceased family, but I believe all cemeteries are mystically connected. I visit the dead here in my current home, yet I know my words, my feelings, and my love transcend space and find my ancestors. One does not need to go to a place of rest to visit the ancestors, but it does not hurt.

When one goes to visit the resting place of the dead and you intend to go for magical purposes you would announce yourself, introduce yourself to the keeper of the cemetery. Other titles of this keeper are The Papa or Mama, The Watcher, The Baron, or The Grim. In places outside the US there are practices that the first male or female buried in a cemetery becomes the keeper of the graves. Some practices sacrifice and bury a dog, this is done because people did not want their relatives to spend eternity watching over the dead so they would first bury a dog thus becoming a Grim. In the US we have no such practices, so I look for the oldest grave. I look for the tallest statue and make the assumption they are the keeper. If I am incorrect the spirits usually tell me and I often get a gut feeling I am incorrect. In one of my favorite graves, the tallest statue is near a crossroads in the cemetery. It is not the oldest grave but after doing some research on those buried there many of them have streets named after them and they were the 'well to do' people of their time. This particular keeper was one of the founding people of the community where the cemetery is located, and Mr. Dill has taken on the moniker of keeper.

When I enter, I drop three shiny pennies at the threshold of the cemetery. I drive directly to Mr. Dill's grave and bow and greet him. I speak to him like I would a friend I highly respected. I often bring an offering of rum to pour out for him and his wife who is buried beside him. The time period when Mr. Dill was alive was a time of whisky, I offer that at times too. I tell him why I am there and what I plan to do. Should I be gathering Cemetery Dirt or Dirt from a grave I tell him what I intend to do with it and where I intend to take it from. This cemetery has many Civil War soldiers buried there. Soldier Dirt is a great dirt for love and protection spells. I introduce myself to the owner of the grave, I tell them what I am doing and ask permission and let them know I have an offering for them if they accept. At first I got more 'NOs' than 'Yes'. Over time and after just visiting to visit, someone said yes. After that I did not have much of a problem. I do try to share the love with all the willing spirits of the soldiers there.

When the collection is complete, I take them, return to Mr. Dill and thank him and depart. As I cross the threshold again, I spritz some cleansing water on myself, I like to use Florida Water, and I say, "May no spirit follow me unless it is to protect me or aid me in my work, all others leave me." I don't want anything mischievous to follow me home, and the dead can be very mischievous. Again, in many ADR practices the Ghede are the forgotten dead and they are wonderful spirits, and they are mischievous but will not intentionally harm you, well unless you deserved it. In my years of practice, I have only had a few times when something ugly followed me home to cause trouble but once I realized this, they were easily taken care of. Most of the dead are harmless; keep contact respectful and brief and you should be good. Should something try to push their way into your life remember it is YOUR HOUSE, it is YOUR BODY, it is YOUR fill in the blank and they have no right to it. It will be a dance of the WILL, but you are the living and they are a specter. As I write this it was only two weeks ago, I was doing work in one of my local cemeteries and I was doing some pendulum work to find a spirit who would be good to work with on a project. I was led to a grave and using the pendulum I engaged in conversation. To make a long story short this spirit was trapped in the grave by an evil spirit that was ruling over the entire cemetery. I found this very odd because I have been coming to the location for years and this is the first I have heard. In the end



this spirit was pulling my leg and when I asked why they did this the response was, “I’m dead and bored.”

The dead current flows through all practices thus giving the practitioner access to a variety of experiences. As we travel these paths we need to walk with respect. I encourage my students to learn all they can about death and dying in a variety of magical and non-magical paths. Through the study of death and dying we begin to appreciate life. Some of my brothers and sisters are Death Doula’s, the people who assist those who are near the end of their life to prepare emotionally and spiritually for death. One thing I love about the Doula is the Memento Mori which basically means “remember you have to die”. No matter who we are, rich, poor, where we are from, what is our place of origin, death comes to us all. In a Bone Lodge practice, it is common to have a pile of bones in the center of the ritual place. The ritual leader will ask “Whose bones are these?” The participants reply, “it matters not, for in death we are all equal”. I find my work with death makes me appreciate life more, I want to live with more vigor and more gusto. I have a tattoo of a skull on my wrist to remind me that I too will die one day.

I leave you with just a portion of a Rosary Prayer to Santa Muerte:

“Our Santa Muerte who will come for us all, kind and gentle be your kiss. When you come to end my life, may I be free of any regrets. Thank you for this day, one more beautiful day, so I may have it to live, love, and laugh my own way.”

-Author unknown



Anthony's Ancestor Altar

Poetry and Art

Drawing Down the Wolf God

I am Zeus Lykaios, Greek God of Thunder who transformed Lycaon into a wolf.

I am Apollo Lycaeus, Solar Deity of the Wolves.

I am Mars, Roman God of War whose cult was initiated as wolves.

I am Lupercus, Roman God of flocks and wild places.

I am Crom Cruach, Lord of the Celtic Mounds worshipped by the Faelad wolf warriors.

I am Odin, attended by the wolves Geri and Freki.

I am Anubis, Egyptian God of the dead.

I am Osiris, Egyptian God of the afterlife who was sometimes worshipped in wolf form.

I am Wepwawet, Egyptian God of war and hunting, and called "Opener of the Ways."

Embrace the wildness within you and in the world at large. Honor me on this night of the full Moon.

- By Mel Mystery

Action, reaction.

To ones without self reflection this is life. Passivity is mistaken as meek.

Inaction is action.

Inaction keeps multitudes intact. Traverse the multitudes, you find action to be inaction. So in passivity you assess the variables. So many multitudes with the same result. Must look past.

Visions unseen must be seen.

If We Look back, we may find Earth unseen. The rabbit hole of the fates aligns with Charybdis' snare. The event horizon of the maw of madness stares.

Action, reaction.

It's a crap shoot, you only know what you know as you entered.

Action, reaction.

Hapless, swim weak. Funneled into the abyss, memories of lessons, lessons of memories. Withstanding the maze underneath, as tall as Colossus. Yet, confessing is doom. Chains abound, if no impact made then one is made obsolete.

Inactivity is action.

Traverse the multitudes. Manifest our destiny. The new WonderVision. Like a photon, the torch bearer is weightless with no name. A grain of sand is the beach. A drop of water is the ocean. A photon is the sun. Able to see beyond the veil, she gains what she never hoped to be won. Hope in love, a strength of force unseen. The pressures of the extremes make diamonds of beings. Overcome oppression, suppression ensues.

Action, reaction.

Love is the only universal constant, when progression is refused. If Placated by apathy, love always gets a head start. The David to the Goliath of ideals, My shot hit its mark."

—By Dozer

Two inert entities.

Full of activity on their paths.

Life births from one.

Chaos broods from the other.

Inspiration from one.

Dread from the other.

Each has their sycophants.

Each have their spawn.

If The choice is made to only understand one

then pondering the other breeds anxiety.

Understand both, revolution occurs.

To understand two sides,

everything in between is just mathematics.

Analyze the patterns, the fates are screaming,
calculate the trajectory, the earth is screaming,

imagine the multitudes, analyze the patterns,
the furies are teaming.

Predict the orbits, alignment is screaming.

Manifest destiny, the tower is leaning.

One snap from Shiva, and final fantasies exist.

—By Dozer



Neptune Statue in Virginia Beach, VA.

Photo by Mel Mystery.

Gay Gods and Spirits

Psychopomps

by Mel Mystery

In this section, I usually pick and write about a single deity that relates to the theme of the current issue. The deity usually has either direct or indirect queer associations. In this issue of *Mysterious ways*, I've decided to write about not one deity, but a group of deities known as psychopomps. I'll include a sampling of psychopomps from various cultures and point out any queer associations that I'm aware of.

A psychopomp is literally a "guide of souls" who guides the recently deceased to the afterlife. Their role generally isn't to judge the dead, only to guide them.

One of the queerest psychopomps is the Greek god, Hermes. Hermes is a jack-of-all-trades. He was originally worshiped as a phallic god. He's associated with communication, thieves, cunning, roads, doorways, and travel. He is also a god of boundaries. In fact, piles of standing stones (known as herms), and later sculpted pillars with a head and a penis, represented Hermes at the boundaries of homes, roads, borders, boundaries, and crossings. Hermes was known to cross boundaries. These boundaries include the boundaries between our world and the Underworld. In most cases, the trip to the Underworld is a one-way trip, but in some cases, Hermes helped mortals enter the Underworld and then return to the land of the living. In one story, Hermes helped Heracles on his quest to retrieve the hound Cerberus from the Underworld. Hermes is almost always associated with male lovers in Greek myths. He is seldom mentioned as having female lovers. Hermes is invoked as "Hermes of the Underworld" in male and female homosexual love spells in third century Alexandria in Egypt.

Another Greek psychopomp is the ferryman, Charon, who carries the souls of the dead across the rivers Styx and Acheron to the Greek Underworld. In Greek religion, it was believed that the dead needed to pay for their passage, so the dead were often buried with coins in or near the mouths. Those who couldn't "pay the ferryman" were doomed to wander the shores near the river Styx for one hundred years before they were allowed to cross. Charon is said to have wolf-like ears.

In Celtic mythology, another ferryman serves as a psychopomp. Manannan Mac Lir is the Irish god of the sea, storms, and dreams, but he's also ruler and guardian of the Otherworld realm, known as Mag Mell. This Otherworld is a joyous paradise which might either be under the ocean or on a mystical island somewhere. In the myths, Manannan was married to the fairy woman, Fand. In ancient Celtic society, homosexuality and bisexuality were common and accepted, so it is possible that Manannan could have had one or more male lovers, though this is not confirmed by surviving mythology.

Another Celtic deity, the goddess Morrigan is a deity of battle, war, and fate. She is sometimes seen in the form of a crow on the battlefield. She is said to scour battlefields looking for slain warriors who are worthy for her to escort to the Otherworld. The Morrigan is married to the Celtic god, Dagda, who is one of the kings of the Tuatha De Danann (the Celtic deities).

Anubis is an Egyptian, jackal-headed god, who is protector of the dead and associated with embalming, mummification, and the afterlife. Anubis is often depicted guiding the souls of the dead to the afterlife. The Egyptian Book of the Dead shows Anubis weighing the heart of the dead to determine whether the deceased is worthy to enter the Egyptian underworld, known as Duat. The deceased person's heart is weighed against an ostrich feather representing Maat or truth. The heart must weigh less than the feather for the soul to enter the afterlife. If not, the deceased one's soul will be fed to a demon called Ammit.



Image of Anubis.
From the Wikimedia Commons.



The Aztec God Xolotl.
From the Wikimedia Commons.

The Aztec god Xolotl is another deity who serves as a psychopomp. Xolotl is the twin brother to another Aztec god known as Quetzalcoatl. Quetzalcoatl “dwells in the light of the sun” and Xolotl dwells in darkness. Xolotl is generally depicted as a dog-headed man, but sometimes as the Axolotl salamander. Xolotl is said to guide and protect the sun as it travels through the underworld (known to the Aztecs as Mictlan) from sunset through sunrise each night. Just as he guides the sun, Xolotl also guides the dead to the Aztec underworld. Both Xolotl and Quetzalcoatl are said to have traveled together to the Underworld to retrieve the bones of those who lived in the previous world in order to create new life in the current world. Xolotl is closely associated with dogs who are also believed to accompany the dead in the underworld. Aztec burials are often found with the remains of dogs or with dog statues.

While various deities perform the role of psychopomp, this role isn’t limited to gods and goddesses, various other supernatural creatures, animals, and even skilled humans can perform this function.

In Norse mythology, beautiful, supernatural women known as the Valkyrie are said to scour battlefields searching for noble warriors slain in battle. The Valkyrie guide these slain warriors to Odin’s Hall of the Dead, known as Valhalla. Valhalla is depicted as a happy place where the deceased warriors endlessly feast, drink, and battle. Any wounds inflicted during their war games are fully healed by evening.

There are a number of animals that are considered psychopomps. These include wolves, dogs, crows, owls, and various other animals. Many of these animals gained their reputation for guiding the dead to the underworld because they are often seen frequenting the aftermath of battles or lurking in cemeteries.

Human shamans can also serve as psychopomps. Many shamanic traditions allow for shamans to take on this role by guiding spirits of the dead to the afterlife.

The dying are often greeted and guided by family, friends, ancestors, and spirit guides as they pass on from this world to the afterlife.



Photo of a Crow.
From the Wikimedia Commons.

Fairy Facts

Did you know that your body requires both periods of darkness and periods of light to regulate your circadian rhythms?

The dark periods are just as important as the light periods. Disruption of these patterns can increase your risk of obesity, diabetes, depression, insomnia, and some forms of cancer. Our circadian rhythms are approximately 24 hours, the length of one day. These cycles have developed within human physiology over the course of billions of years.

During the night, one’s body temperature drops, metabolism slows, and the hormone melatonin rises. In the morning, when the sun comes up in the morning, these cycles reset.

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 May 15, 2023.

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

January 13-15, 2023 — Gay Spirit Visions Winter Meditation at the Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands, NC. FMI: <http://gayspiritvisions.org/annual-gatherings/>

April 21-23, 2023 — Brotherhood by the Bog Retreat for Pagan Men. Theme is “What Place for Pagan Men. Held at First Landing State Park, Virginia Beach, VA.

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

August 8-13, 2023 — Between the Worlds: A spiritual gathering for men who love men at Wisteria in Pomeroy, OH. FMI: <http://www.betweentheworlds.org>

November 3-5, 2023 — Virtual Arcadia Retreat for Queer Pagan Men. Theme is “Otherworld Spirits.” Free online event.

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

May 12-14, 2023 — Gay Spirit Visions Spring Retreat at the Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands, NC. FMI: <http://gayspiritvisions.org/annual-gatherings/>

Stone and Stang — 2023 dates and theme have yet to be announced. 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.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: The Name Game. What's in a name? How do we label ourselves?

How do we label and identify ourselves? What's in a name? Do names and labels have power? Can we and should we reclaim names and labels with negative connotations? Are you a witch, wizard, warlock, a faerie, or something else? Do you identify as gay, homosexual, queer, a man who loves men, or some other label? Perhaps you are a bear or an otter? Are labels important or do they box us in? What are the ABCs of LGBTQIA+? Do labels help us find our tribe or do they just further divide us?

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 May 15, 2023. 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.