

# Mysterious Ways

A Cyberzine for Queer Pagan Men.

Winter/ Spring 2025  
Volume 6, Issue 1

## Theme this Issue: Rebirth and Transformation

Welcome to the latest issue of Mysterious Ways! This issue is about our rebirth and transformation. I've included articles related to the November 2024 U.S. election as the results have the strong potential to affect LGBTQ+ folks and freedom of religion for anyone not Christian.

I apologize for the delay in publishing this issue. I usually like to publish the Winter-Spring issue in January. This issue will be published in mid-to-late February. There are several reasons for this delay. With the shocking results of the 2024 U.S. Presidential election, I wanted to add a section on how this might affect us as Queer people and as Pagans, as well as how we might react to this over the next four years. Articles about the election were not originally part of the topics meant for this issue and they took extra time to write. As there has been talk in some psychic circles about election shenanigans and potential delays in certification and inauguration, I also wanted to see how this turned out before finalizing the election articles. I also wanted to give some folks more time to submit articles. There were some individuals who expressed interest in submitting articles, but ultimately did not submit them—even with the extra time. I know people are busy and overwhelmed with all that is happening in the world. Lastly, I went on a vacation at the beginning of February. I spent much time in preparation and did not have time to complete this issue before I left. During the vacation, I visited Mayan ruins and learned more about their culture and beliefs. I've included a few photos from my trip within this issue.

- Mel Mystery



Image from the Wikimedia Commons

“Just as the phoenix rises from the ashes, so too shall we rise from our challenges.”



Is it sunset or sunrise? Transformation includes both endings and new beginnings. Photo courtesy of Eric Eldritch.

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## Special Thanks

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

# Events and Gatherings

## Arcadia was held November 15-17, 2024

By Mel Mystery

The Arcadia Retreat for Queer Pagan men was held in-person the weekend of November 15-17, 2024 at a campground in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Eric Eldritch of the Radical Faeries and Stone Circle Wicca facilitated the weekend.

Rather than having a specific theme for the weekend, Arcadia tried a new participatory model where attendees got to suggest and vote on topics ahead of the retreat. Four main workshop topics were chosen for the weekend: 1) Attuning to Arcadia and Arcane Spirits with Eldritch, 2) From Heteronormative Upbringings to Queer Paganism: Honoring and Embracing our Uniqueness and the Uniqueness of Others; 3) Book Club sharing our favorite Queer and Pagan books; and 4) Herbal Magick and Herbal Medicine.

In addition to workshops and discussions, guests participated in a full moon walk on the beach, a nature hike, drumming and singing Pagan chants, and an evening social around the fire with their choice of hot cider and cold punch.

The next in-person Arcadia is scheduled for the Fall of 2026 and is expected to take place at a campground in Cumberland, Virginia. We are seeking proposals for a theme, workshops, and guest presenters.

For more information:

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

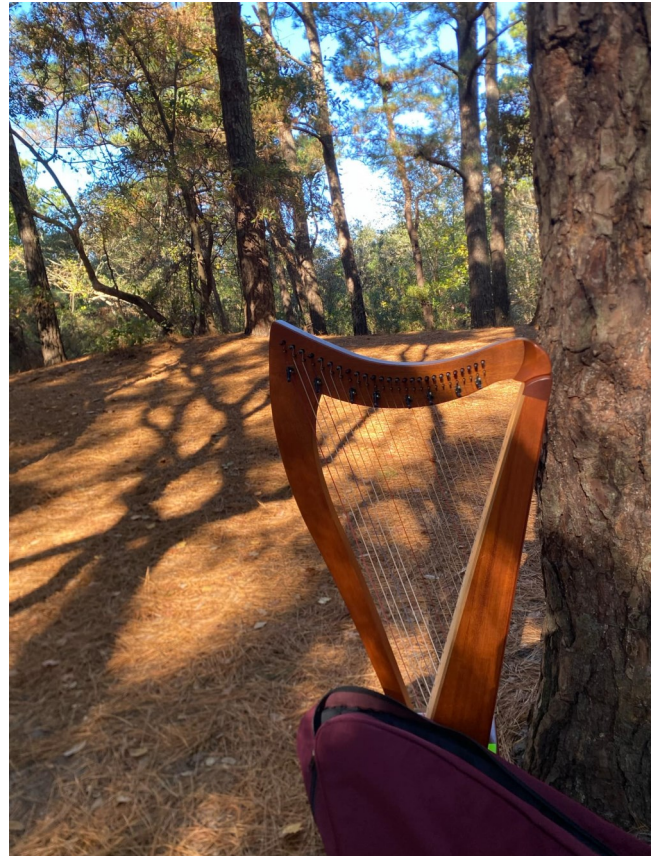


Our Facilitator for the Weekend, Eric Eldritch.



David and Matt take a hammock break at the Arcadia retreat.

*Photo courtesy of Eric Eldritch.*



## Photos from Arcadia

**Left:** Chase, Matt, and Mel

**Right:** The singing harp

*All Arcadia photos courtesy of Eric Eldritch.*

## Brotherhood by the Bog to be held in-person April 19, 2025

*By Mel Mystery*

The Brotherhood by the Bog retreat for Pagan men of all paths, orientations, and backgrounds will be held on April 19, 2025 at a campground in Virginia Beach. The theme will be “Divination and the Masculine.” Rather than having our usual weekend camping retreat, we’ve opted for a day retreat. We’re experimenting with different ways to engage people and not everyone enjoys camping or has the time to devote to a full weekend. While the event is geared toward day trippers, out of town participants are welcome to reserve their own campsite or cabin in the park or to find a hotel nearby.

While specifics are yet to be announced, we plan to have a couple of workshops on divination, an interactive divination play table, a hike looking for signs and omens, and drumming to end out the day. Lunch and dinner will be provided. A schedule, list of presenters, and registration information can be found on our website.

**FMI:**

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

## You can't please everyone all of the time...

By Mel Mystery

Organizing groups and planning retreats and events is hard. Anyone who tells you otherwise either isn't trying or is in a cult where everyone thinks and believes the same thing. It takes months of planning to create what is (hopefully) a well-polished event. You need to choose a theme of interest to your audience. You have to plan a date - compensating for everyone else's schedules and other events that might conflict. You have to secure the venue; arrange presenters, guests, workshops, and other activities; market the event; purchase supplies; secure registrations and much more.

During the planning process and during the event itself, you have to try to maneuver and contain disruptive influences. Perhaps you'll even get blamed in your efforts to put out fires or to reel in overbearing personalities. When you put yourself out there, there are critics everywhere. And your guests don't always see the full picture of what's going on behind the scenes.

I've been involved in planning Pagan men's retreats for just over two decades. They've never been really big retreats, but the love and devotion me and other planners have put in have made for productive and enjoyable experiences for *most* people who have attended. But there's always the exception. You can't please everyone all of the time.

Examples range from the extreme to the subtle.

I remember one retreat early on that one guest wanted to turn a mixed (gay and straight men) retreat into a weekend circle jerk. When we told him that wasn't what the retreat was about and that straight men were also involved, he went on a rampage insulting everyone on our Yahoo Groups (this was early 2000s) and a few adjacent groups before finally being banned.

At one men's retreat, we had a former group member sneak in with his girlfriend (obviously) disguised as a man. He had a grudge because we'd stopped having group events at his house, but the reason we stopped having events at his house was because all he ever did was complain about having group events at his house. He and his girlfriend sat through one of the retreat workshops, then left, kicking over a fire bowl as they went.

Most retreat concerns aren't this extreme, they're more subtle. There's the guy who attends every retreat and dominates the conversations not letting anyone else speak. We had one guy in those early days who would not stop talking and conversations always turned into longwinded ramblings about politics and BDSM. Somehow, he was always able to connect the two subjects. Then there was another guy whose conversation during discussions always devolved into cursing about the negative relationship he had with his father as a child. As an event host, it is important to let others discuss their concerns if relevant to the discussion, but you also have to shut them down at some point so others can talk. I've seen trained facilitators struggle with this sometimes.

Behind the scenes you have to interact with other group leaders and planners. The hope is that everyone there is aiming for the same goal, but that doesn't mean everyone is always on the same page to get there. In most cases, I've found planning to be a cooperative

## **Brotherhood by the Bog**

**A Retreat for Pagan Men of all paths, backgrounds, and orientations.**

**"Divination and the Masculine"**

**April 19, 2025**

**First Landing State Park in Virginia Beach, VA.**

**For more information:**

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

effort, but sometimes you have to deal with strong personalities or differences of opinion. There was this one guy once who didn't like the name planned for one of our events, so we changed the name to something we could all agree on. That didn't stop this other person from complaining about the old name at every planning meeting for five more months until the event was eventually over. He was one of our core planners so what do you do?

You can also experience disrupters and critics while marketing. We've often had a table for men's groups and retreats at our local Pagan Pride Day. Often, we'd get women stopping by our table complaining that we must hate women. Nothing could be further from the truth. Really all we wanted was a men's space in a predominantly feminine, Goddess focused religion. While sharing information about one of our retreats one year, this one guy in a gay Pagan men's social media group complained that a retreat for gay Pagan men was exclusionary. The irony seemed to be lost on him that the social media group he was in and where we posted the event was specifically for gay Pagan men.

There are actually frequent debates in men's groups (at least the one's I've been involved in) about whether or not we should admit women to the retreats. Everyone usually agrees that we should accept Trans men, but including or excluding women is a hot topic. We have frequently been asked to admit women if they have something to offer or gain by attending, but whenever we have loosened the reigns, we get backlash from men who want an all-male event.

A retreat weekend can either be too big or too small depending on who you talk to. Some people have expectations of large gatherings where everything is catered to them, while others prefer quality time with a few like-minded peers and everyone pitching in.

Disruptions and behind the scenes squabbles are harder to conceal at smaller events, but even larger events have their fair share. Differences of opinion and personality are simply a part of life, and you can't please everyone all of the time. There was this one gay men's gathering I went to several years ago. I really enjoyed the event for the few years that I attended. It ended up being cancelled indefinitely and this seemed in part due to internal politics. Even as a guest at the event, there was an obvious polarization among folks who were sex positive and felt gay men's sexuality should be celebrated openly and others who felt that displays of gay sexuality were too much in the open.

Then there are things at events that you can't really control – like the weather. These are less of a concern with hotel conferences, but they affect many camping retreats and gatherings. A few years ago, at one of our retreats we got heavy rain during the main part of our retreat on Saturday evening. We couldn't keep the campfire lit to make dinner, so we all agreed to head over to a Mexican restaurant near the campground. After we ate and conversed a bit, we returned to the campground and huddled under a canopy tent for the rest of the evening. Our musical guest arrived during dinner, and we told him he didn't need to entertain us since it was raining. Despite the rain, he stepped up anyway, returned to camp with us in the pouring rain, and played some of the most beautifully haunting drumming that I've ever heard. If someone had been focused entirely on the rain, they may have missed the bonding that took place and the beauty of the moment. Those who stuck around got a great show, nice conversation, and a sense of shared adversity that actually brought the people and the weekend together.

To wrap this up, I'd like to give a round of applause to all the group organizers and event planners out there who have had to deal with the disruptive elements and the critics and who still have the courage and vision to plod forward. You only fail if you quit trying. Everything else is a learning experience.

## **Between the Worlds**

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

**September 8—13, 2025**

[www.betweentheworlds.org/](http://www.betweentheworlds.org/)

# From Across the Pond

## Ancient Athens and Homosexuality: Heaven or Hell

by Anarion (writing from Portugal)

As some readers will be aware, as well as being Pagan and a gay man, I am also fascinated by Ancient Greece and its often misunderstood relationship with homosexuality. I have just finished reading 'Homosexuality in Ancient Athens' by Joseph R. Laurin and highly recommend this book to all interested in how this ancient society saw homosexuality in practice. Laurin, from the very beginning, stresses that it is wrong to judge Athenian views and practices on the basis of twenty-first century attitudes, morals and legal codes. The Athenians knew nothing of these and were not affected by Judaeo-Christian hatred of gay sex and relationships. The society stands proud in history, and even still lauded today as the cradle of Democracy, and the Athenians themselves would be as appalled about attitudes now as modern society does viewing theirs. So, Laurin stresses the point that you need to temporarily suspend your own views and beliefs in order to see and understand the Athenian view at the time. Athens was, of course, not alone in Ancient Greek city states which espoused acceptance of homosexual practices. Boeotia, Sparta and Elis amongst others did too. If you also look at the lives of Philip II and Alexander the Great of Macedon you would find similar practices as well. However, it should be made entirely clear that this article is in the way of an explanation of Athenian society as it was long ago, and in no way is it encouraging practices performed then which are now subject to criminal law.



So, first, dispense with the term Homosexuality. This was not conceived or used until the nineteenth century. In effect, there were generally regarded to be no gay men in ancient Athens. I say this because the Athenians may well have regarded one particular group of 'gay' men in the same light as modern criticism and use of the term Homosexual. Why do I say this? Well, all accepted men were basically bisexual in practical terms. In Greek city states there was a social duty to procreate to provide a new batch of hoplite soldiers to defend the state and prosecute foreign wars. This was true all over Greece at that time (and by the way, there was really no Greece then either; just a recognition that only those who spoke Greek were civilised, and anyone who did not was a Barbarian). Athens, as a state, needed to protect itself from attack from the many other states, both within the Greek mainland and as far abroad as Persia. Hoplites were the basic unit of defence, whether deployed on land or on Athenian ships. So, producing boys as offspring was immensely important (in Sparta girls and unpromising boys were killed!!). However, women did not hold the place in society they do today. They were for domestic needs and childbearing. They even had a specified room they should keep to, and their status did not change until later in Athenian history. The only lower status was to be a slave. Free men in Athenian society had women purely for the childbearing function but, at all other times, mainly spent their time in the company of their fellow men, whether it be in the Gymnasia, political forums, with philosophers and teachers, or eating and drinking in Symposiums. They thought nothing of having sex with men as well as women and boys. It was normal although it was bound by customary rules.

A firm sense of masculinity was central to gay sex in Athens. This was easily demonstrated in sex with women as the man always took the dominant role. However, in gay sex there was a conundrum. One man had to be top and one bottom after all in order to complete the penetrative act. A cautious negotiation resulted in alternating roles so that no one man was always top or always bottom. Indeed, to adopt a permanently dominant role was as much frowned upon by Athenians as was the permanent adopting of a submissive role. The norm dictated there had to be equality and alluded to a kind of courtesy between men. However, paying for, or accepting money to have, sex was appalling to Athenian society even if it did, of course, happen as it does in any society.

What was really despised was the effeminate man. Athenians believed that men should have certain attributes. In many ways this is Homer's fault. Greek men revered the heroes of their past and it was thought the height of manliness to fol-

low the manly example of these Greeks from the distant past. The Iliad and Odyssey, in which Homer tells the story of the Trojan Wars and homecomings, contain endless examples of manly role models such as Achilles (remember Brad Pitt's portrayal in the film Troy?), even if it may have been overlooked that even these demi gods had their faults and weaknesses. Indeed, the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus was legendary in terms of a probable gay relationship. However, it was more lauded for its honourable nature in the dealings between the two men. So, in effect, these guys most likely had sex but also observed the many rules of honourable behaviour. And this is important because Athenian men having sex with men were as much bound by honour as Achilles and Patroclus. What made effeminism abhorrent to their society was its visibility. Much in the way the US military once had a 'don't ask, don't tell' policy to homosexuality within the ranks, Athenians could just about tolerate effeminate males if their actions were unseen. To not do so meant a challenge to the concept of 'duty to state' as no effeminate gay individual would do the bare minimum to perform their duty in procreating future hoplites. Perhaps it was seen as a minor sacrifice to Athenian men whose nature was truly gay rather than bisexual and there are examples throughout history when gay men procreated with women only to produce offspring rather than them actually desiring the women for sex. So perhaps in this we should not be prudish in condemning them their bias against effeminate men. Today things are different although there are a vast body of gay men who would not stand out from a crowd of straight men because they choose to not demonstrate their homosexuality in an effeminate way, and although we must always defend effeminate gay men's right to demonstrate their gayness in an outwardly effeminate way, we must also ratify a non-effeminate gay man's right to not do so. All are equal under gaydom after all. However effeminate gays challenged the very pillar of what Athenians had to do to survive as a city state. And this is why Athenian men could freely accept being alternately bottom and top in sex with men, but not accept men who espoused to always be the bottom.

The most contentious thing about Athenian homosexuality, as viewed from modern morality's point of view, was sex between men and boys. Now it is outlawed and punished but then it was not, except in one instance. This is a very misunderstood area of Greek sexual practice and many, even now, cannot even bring themselves to even objectively discuss it. We are focused on the abuse of boys and the serious mental results of that predation. However, this was not the case in Ancient Greece. And here it is necessary to explain the difference, in the Greek mind, between Pederasty and Paedophilia. The Athenians would have had exactly the same attitude to modern society to paedophilia. It was regarded by them as the taking of a boy by a man, by force, and without consent. This seems exactly the core definition of the crime as it is now. So, in Athens then with these acts, although there were hardly any actual laws regarding sexual mispractice, a man guilty of such acts would have been ostracised by society which would, in effect, have the same consequences. Pederasty was regarded as completely different. It was seen as honourable for an older man to take under his wing a boy (most likely in his teens approaching manhood) to prepare him for adulthood. This included education, physical development in sports, exercise, and the attributes of warrior society, the instruction of the duties and functions an Athenian adult man had to obey and perform (including procreation of children for hoplite soldiers) and the performance of gay sex with the mentor. It required a courtship, the rules for which were laid down by Athenian society and, (I stress this strongly ) the full consent not only of the boy but also of his father or legal male guardian. Full consent was required throughout. There were also obligations put on the boy to act with honour. Indeed, the boy, once adult would do exactly the same thing and this was considered normal by even the mothers! As a result, boys became men without any of the hangups or mental damage which boys in modern western society normally have if subjected to the homosexual attentions of an adult man. They grew to be balanced individuals with a clear allegiance to the needs and requirements of their city state, whilst also having wide sexual freedoms.

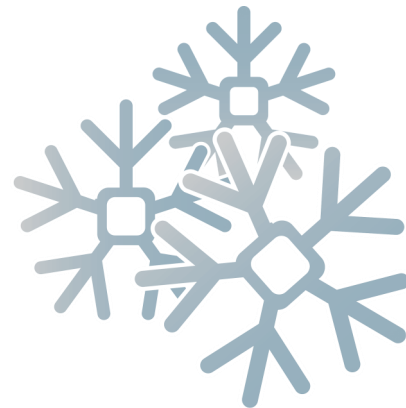
So, all this might seem like an ideal society for gay men, but this is deceptive. As they say, for true freedom, there is always a price to pay. Athenian society then might well also strike a chord with far-right misogynist organisations and groups now. Only, in effect, white male middle class men had those freedoms. Athenians did not give rights to women (or lesbians ), effeminate men, slaves or, in some cases, foreigners. They jealously restricted the rights to a small percentage of their population. Like all draconian societies or dictatorships only those in a narrowly defined definition had all the rights. No one else did. Remember this when Athens is quoted in founding Democracy. So, all I can do is leave you with a question for your own inner consideration: Would this society have been heaven or hell for you personally?

# Stories from the Resistance

## Are you going to be a snowflake or a snowstorm?

By Mel Mystery

After hearing the results of the 2024 election, I was shocked and appalled. Surely everyone but the MAGA diehards learned their lessons from the first Trump presidency. It seemed inconceivable that this guy convicted of 34 felonies and multiple rapes, this guy who foments division and hate, this guy who has promised to use his second term in office to punish his political enemies, this guy whose so many businesses end in bankruptcy, that this con man and grifter could have won the American presidency a second time. I'm still not sure it really happened that way. Psychics that I follow online have been adamant that the election was not won fairly. Certainly the bomb threats at some polling places, reports of burning mail box ballots, and Republican incited voter purges had some effect on the election results. Suspicious were the various times ahead of the elections that the convicted felon claimed that people didn't even need to vote in this election and certainly would never need to vote again. Suspicious too was that **ALL** the swing states went for the Orange Menace. In the days ahead of the election, rallies for Kamala Harris were full of joy, energy, and enthusiasm. Leaked clips from bored cameramen showed mostly empty seats with people falling asleep and leaving Grump rallies.



Or maybe most Americans really are stupid or apathetic. I certainly wouldn't rule that out. Some might be hateful too, but I do think that many people who voted for the Orange Menace only hoped for better grocery prices. Of course many were guided by their fear and/or hatred of transgender people and immigrants—who were frequent targets of scapegoating in Republican political advertisements across the country. Republicans and Republican owned media have also been fomenting hatred and fear of Democrats whom they paint as socialists, extremists, and “the enemy within.” That's quite a statement from those responsible for inciting the January 6 Insurrection of the U.S. Capitol.

Regardless of whether the election was stolen or the American people stupid or hateful, I made some strong resolutions on the day after the election. I'm not going to lay down and cry. I'm not going to leave the country. And I'm not going to be quiet anymore. I'm not going to argue with trolls and MAGATs on social media (it only ends up expending my time and energy on people who aren't going to change their minds from anything I say), but I'm not going to be silent for civility's sake either. Certainly calls for civility never stopped the other side from spouting their hate, lies, and misinformation.

In my college days, I was very outspoken on LGBTQ+ political issues. I wore political t-shirts. I put up flyers on campus. I went to rallies, vigils, and even protests. I wrote letters to the editor. I dared to stand up for what I believed was right. While I may now be middle-aged with a professional job and many other adult responsibilities, I can do that again. I may not have as much free time as I seemed to have in college so I may not be able to do as much, but I can still take a stand in this world. I hope that rather than giving up that you will too.

The day after the election, I ordered a garden flag. You may have seen this one in your neighborhood. It's the one that says that those in this house believe in science, that Black lives matter, that love is love, and kindness is everything. I also ordered some political t-shirts that I intend to wear out into the world. They have slogans like “Hate never made any nation great,” “We the people means everyone”, and “Make Lying Wrong Again.” These are things that we in America all should be able to agree upon. I'm also periodically going to post things on social media. I've noticed that I can turn comments off on my posts. This allows me to say what I believe without opening my feed to trolls and haters. And when Trump, MAGA, and Republicans do something stupid or enact something that affects someone who voted for this, I'm going to point out how the policies are hurting them. I'm also going to keep asking these folks for many months to come if the price of eggs has come down yet.

I've decided that I'm not going to be a snowflake. Instead I'm going to be part of the snowstorm. I'm not recommending to anyone to storm the Capitol like the MAGA folks did and I'm not advocating for violence or anything like that. But I'm not going to be silent either—at least not so long as we have freedom of speech in America.



“First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—  
because I was not a socialist.  
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—  
because I was not a trade unionist.  
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—  
because I was not a Jew.  
Then they came for me—  
and there was no one left to speak for me.”

— Martin Niemöller



## Transphobia Dominated Conservative Ads in 2024 Election

By Mel Mystery

During the 2024 U.S. Presidential election, Transgender people became the target and a scapegoat for conservative candidates looking for the latest boogeyman to scare and rile up voters. Transphobia took place in conservative ads for both the state and federal levels. According to an article on the news site Truthout (<https://truthout.org/>), Republicans spent nearly \$215 million in ads on network television attacking Transgender rights. This figure doesn't include additional ads on cable television, social media, billboards, political mailers, and print media. These ads spread Transphobia on a massive scale and blamed Democratic opponents for supporting Trans rights. These anti-Trans advertisements spread fear and misinformation about Trans athletes in sports, children receiving sex change surgery, Trans people using the bathrooms that match their gender identity, tax supported gender affirming care in prisons, use of pronouns, and other hot button Trans issues.

Anti-Trans and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric has also sparked a rise in hate crimes toward members of the LGBTQ+ community. According to FBI data, hate crimes against our community increased between 2022 and 2023. Hate crimes and harassment will likely rise even more under the 2nd Trump administration as they did in his first.

Many fear that the incoming Trump administration will continue to vilify Trans people and other marginalized groups, and that it will also impose legislation that will roll back rights for Trans folks and LGBTQ+ people in general. This may include rolling back Title IX protections, restricting or banning gender affirming medical care, barring Transgender people from sports competitions, and reimposing the military ban on Trans people. With the overturn of Roe v. Wade, some fear that the conservative dominated Supreme Court may in future decide to overturn the 2016 Supreme Court ruling that legalized same-sex marriage.

In addition to Transgender people, conservatives used xenophobia and fear of immigrants in their ads and messaging in the 2024 election.

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Transgender-rights advocates say the election of Trump and his allies marks a major setback -- <https://apnews.com/article/election-2024-transgender-rights-lgbtq-donald-trump-3bb3ace81ff32b6dec382b486ec6a772>

## Christian Nationalism a Growing Concern

By Mel Mystery

Christian nationalism is on the rise in the United States. Proponents of this ideology subscribe to the idea that the U.S. is a country founded by and for Christians. They believe that Christian symbols, scriptures, and ideologies should be on full display in government and civic life – despite the U.S. policy of separation of church and state.

Christian nationalism tends toward an exclusivist view of Christianity as espoused by white conservatives. It has been linked to prejudice toward other groups in society such as immigrants, racial minorities, and sexual and gender minorities. Fear and hatred of these groups is part of their narrative. Many Christian Nationalists oppose interracial marriages, as well as same-sex marriages. They support conservative issues such as gun rights. And they are against abortion rights for women.

Christian nationalists tend to authoritarianism and the Old Testament version of God as an angry and wrathful deity. They also believe they are called upon by their God to convert the masses to their narrow Christian ideologies. They believe they are in a great spiritual battle between good and evil and that they are called to fight those who oppose their views. While persecuting others, they often believe and espouse that they are the real victims persecuted by society.

Smaller goals include things like displaying the 10 Commandments in public places, having state-sanctioned or mandatory school prayer in public schools, and making the Christian (rather than the secular) version of Christmas a state holiday complete with nativity scene exhibits. Larger goals include establishing Christianity as the official religion of the U.S. and barring non-Christians from holding public office.

Project 2025, which is assumed to be Trump's agenda for his term in office, is a "blueprint" for Christian Nationalism. Project 2025 was created by the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank who also sponsored the Republican National Convention. Some of the goals expressed in this plan include banning abortion; overturning LGBTQ+ rights; banning pornography and imprisoning those who produce it; cutting Medicare and Medicaid; eliminating contraception and abortion coverage in health care; also cutting coverage for gender transition care, medication, and surgery; eliminating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Programs (DEI); mass arrest and deportation of illegal immigrants; sanctioning Sunday as a day of rest; supporting the idea of a traditional heterosexual nuclear family; overturning regulations meant to protect the environment and to slow climate change; defunding PBS; and basically turning the U.S. government into a machine that supports and turns to law conservative and Christian viewpoints.

While Pagans do not seem to be specifically mentioned in the document, we can speculate that making Christianity the official state religion and enforcing conservative Christian views through laws and policies would affect Pagans and other religious minorities. Pagans and other non-Christians would likely eventually become a target of their agenda.

It should be noted that not all Christians are Christian nationalists. There are many denominations sects within Christianity that are opposed to Christian nationalism.

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Christian Nationalism -- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_nationalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_nationalism)

What is Christian nationalism and why it raises concerns about threats to democracy -- <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/what-is-christian-nationalism-and-why-it-raises-concerns-about-threats-to-democracy>

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## Ways to Resist

By Mel Mystery

### Take care of yourself

- Ground, center, and meditate regularly
- Continue your spiritual practices
- Take care of your health
- Take care of your finances (the economy might get bumpy)
- Carry protection – pepper spray, a taser, even a gun (if you are so inclined). You never know when you might be threatened.

### Take care of each other

- Be there for your friends, especially those more at risk than yourself.
- Create safe spaces for those affected by hateful rhetoric.
- Avoid division. Fascists thrive when we are fighting each other.
- Join support groups or start your own.

### Confront hate, lies, and misinformation

- Many Trump voters are ruled by their own fears (trans people, immigrants, losing money, etc.). Use their fears of other things, like losing their own Medicare, against them.
- Remind your Christian friends and family that Jesus was a dark-skinned liberal who spent his time among outcasts speaking out against hate and greed.
- When things start going bad for everyone, remind Trump voters that they voted for him.
- Cut your subscriptions or viewership of any news outlets that went easy on Trump while going hard on Biden and Harris. Instead find objective and balanced news sources, or get your news from independent sources like Medias Touch, Faron Balanced, The Young Turks, Adam Mockler, David Pakman, and others.
- Boycott conservative media outlets and those owned by vocal conservatives. This includes Fox “News” and Twitter. Start calling Fox “News” the Fox Propaganda Network instead, especially around those who regularly watch it.

### Make a Statement

- Wear political t-shirts - whether subtle “Make lying wrong again” or blatant “F\*ck Trump”
- The same goes for wearing or displaying pins, bumper stickers, and garden flags.
- Write letters to the editor of your local paper.
- Talk with or write your elected officials – especially if they are conservative. Call their offices with your complaints!

### Join the Cause

- Join a political group or another cause intent on making things better.
- Donate to political groups and causes.
- March in a protest.
- Attend a candlelight vigil.

### Make Magick

- Now is the time to use shielding and protection magick.
- Realize that direct spells on Trump will likely be ineffective. Many believe he is supported by dark forces, and he also has the energies of his cult followers protecting him. Focus your magick on those around him instead.
- Be specific. Specific spells to sway a vote are more likely to succeed than general spells to end fascism.
- Do spells with others. These often have more power behind them.

### Share Your Story and the Stories of Others

- Fascists try to dehumanize and marginalize people, especially those who are the most vulnerable. It is harder to be dehumanized and marginalized when others see them as real people.

- Start a blog, podcast, or vodcast to share your story or to interview others about their stories.
- Start a story board. When I was in college, we gathered stories about anti-LGBTQ harassment and discrimination on campus. We created a gallery of those stories (much like an art exhibit) in the student center on campus. A story board could share the stories of Trans people, immigrants, women, and other people and communities affected by policies of the current administration. Your story board or gallery can be shared in physical places or you might share these in some kind of online story board.

### Random acts of activism

- Be creative.
- Plant a field with popsicle sticks representing all the children who have died as a result of gun violence.
- Troll conservative strongholds with slogans disguised as money.
- Place “Hate” or “Trump” stickers on stop signs. (i.e. “Stop Hate” or “Stop Trump”)
- Host a sit-in at your local MAGA politician’s office.

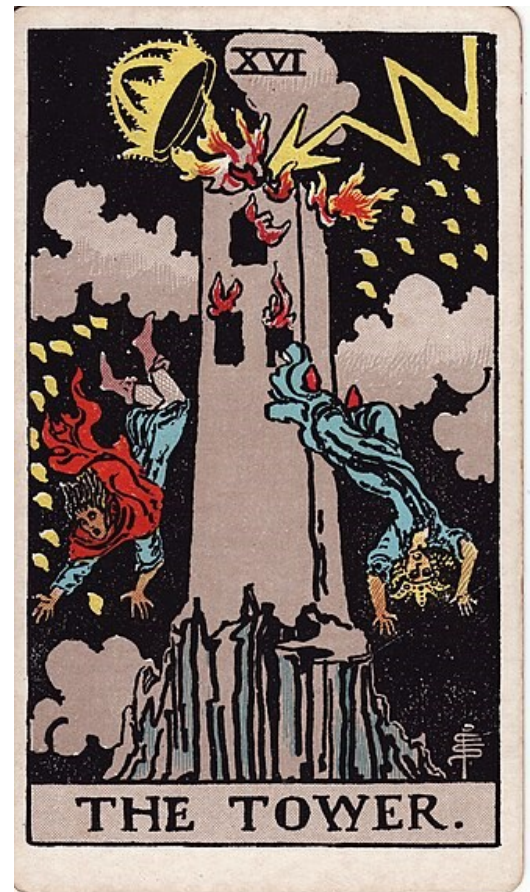
### It’s Tower Time

By Mel Mystery

I’ve been following Druid writer and blogger John Beckett on Patheos.com for several years now (<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/johnbeckett/author/johnbeckett> ). While I read articles on some of the other blogs on Patheos, Beckett’s blog is one I keep coming back to. Over the years he’s written several articles about a concept called “Tower Time”. Others have called this concept “The Storm” or “The Long Descent.”

According to Beckett, the concept first appeared around 2011 in the context of messages received by followers of the Morrigan. The message was to get ready for a time that would be “difficult, unpleasant, and long.” Becket cites another blogger, Byron Ballard, with coining the phrase “Tower Time” to describe the end of an empire and of the patriarchy. The name evokes the image of the Tower card in the Tarot and its message of “sudden, dramatic, and irreversible change.” According to Becket, Tower Time began in 2016 about the time of Donald Grump’s first presidency.

During this time, we will deal with many difficult and unpleasant things – both to shake off the shackles of the past, but also because many forces are fighting to control the narrative and the outcome. According to Beckett, these forces include ancient gods and spirits, like the Fey, fighting for a reemergence of relevance and power in the modern world, as well as forces seeking to maintain the patriarchal and Christian systems of power that have dominated human existence the past few millennia. All of these forces are in battle to reshape our world according to their own agendas. As part of this process, Beckett and others believe that the veil between worlds has also thinned (possibly



## Stone and Stang

### A Spiritual Gathering for Pagan Men-Who-Love-Men

**Check their webpage for the latest updates on retreats and workshops hosted by the Un-named Path.**

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

even shredded) for whatever reason and this is allowing more interaction between our world and the world(s) beyond. Beckett doesn't see Tower Time leaving us anytime soon and it may not even end in our lifetimes.

Symptoms of Tower Time include climate change; the decline of the American empire (and other regions throughout the world); the rise of fascism, nationalism, and xenophobia; more encounters with the Fey and others from beyond the veil; increased interest in magick; and more and more strange events that don't fit with our expectations for the world.

Beckett offers suggestions for navigating Tower Time. These include continuing to develop your spiritual practice and also your magick (as you may need to use it at some point); protecting and improving your finances and other means of security; building support networks; learning to separate facts from opinions; being an engaged citizen while also taking time for yourself; making allies in both this world and the Otherworld; and casting protection spells – among other things.

For those interested in finding out more, you can read Beckett's posts on Patheos and search for other Pagan bloggers who have referenced "Tower Time", "The Storm", or "The Long Descent". Beckett also offers an on-demand course titled "Navigating Tower Time".



## **Submit your Stories from the Resistance!!!**

**'Stories from the Resistance'** is a new and continuing section for Mysterious Ways and will remain as long as the need continues.

I encourage readers to share their stories. How has the current U.S. presidential administration or Rethugli-can leaders in your state affected you or others in your life? What strategies would you like to share to help others cope and survive? Are you aware of policies and initiatives that might affect the LGBTQ+ or the Pagan communities? Would you like to provide facts to counter misinformation? Do you have thoughts, opinions, or commentary to share? Have you participated in protests, vigils, rallies, or other actions against this administration and its policies? Have you participated in magick (whether alone or in groups) to counter the administration and its destructive policies?

**Submission deadline is May 15, 2025.**

# Book Reviews

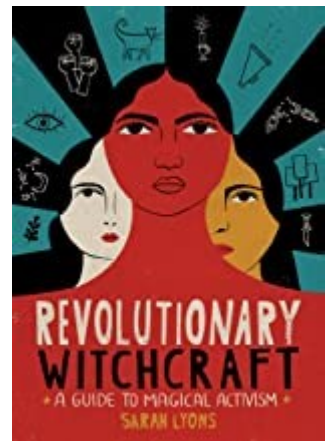
## Revolutionary Witchcraft

A review by Mel Mystery.

Reprinted from *Mysterious Ways*, Issue #2.

I was an LGBTQ activist long before becoming Pagan, so I was excited when I stumbled across **Revolutionary Witchcraft: A Guide to Magical Activism** by Sarah Lyons while searching Amazon. I've met other Pagans who are also activists at gay Pagan men's gatherings, and some other Pagans who mention environmentalism as among their concerns. However, activism isn't something I hear mentioned much in a Pagan context. My curiosity was peaked, so of course I had to buy and read the book.

The tone of the book is very young adult with the occasional casual mention of kinks and fetishes. Lyons paints a broad scope for activism by including LGBTQ activism, women's activism, and environmental activism – among others. She does this within the narrow context of witchcraft, though most of what she says could apply to Pagans of any path, not just Wiccans and Witches.



### **“A witch’s place is in the struggle.”**

The main theme she repeats throughout the book is that “A witch’s place is in the struggle.” She likens witchcraft to politics in that both are using personal and group power and energy to create and influence reality to your will. Politics does this by creating a narrative and getting people to believe and work toward that narrative. Magic does the same thing through spells and rituals. Both politics and magic raise the power of an individual or group to achieve a desired outcome. If we let others control the narrative or if we stay on the sidelines while others work against our best interests, we are giving up our power and our magic. The goal of both activism and magic is to create the world as you think it should be.

### **“Now is not just the time to take pictures of our altars, but rather to use them.”**

Lyons is concerned that witches have all this power and knowledge to shape reality, but most of us are using it for “surface level” stuff like sharing photos of our altars on social media or buying crystals. She states that “It’s long overdue that we fight like we have something precious to lose and the power to win. Now is not just the time to take pictures of our altars, but rather to use them.”

Lyons claims our enemies are using magic more effectively than we are. This book was written post-2016 election and she explains how Trump and his base are using their power effectively. Even if they don't call it magic, it's still having the same effect. She talks about consensus reality, and how reality is shaped by what people all agree is real and true. Trump and his base have turned consensus reality upside down. Just look at how many times Trump “should” have been evicted from office, or how many Supreme Court justices were pushed through who “shouldn't” have been appointed. How many times has Trump said or tweeted something that changed reality? Trump's allies in the Christian Right have their own power. Despite lower numbers, they work their “magic” through their “unshakeable” belief in their religion and their god. Lyons doesn't believe that our side has the conviction or the focus that the Religious Right and the MAGA crowd have. Our beliefs and actions are more scattered, and just as in a spell or ritual that dilutes our magic. It doesn't have to be this way, but we need something bigger to believe in and something unified to focus on.

### **“A disenchanted world is a disconnected world.”**

Lyons also talks about how we live in a Disenchanted World. “The Disenchanted World is a place of separation – from each other, the land, nature, our bodies, even our stuff, and the people and machines that make all of them. It's a place where all the magic is gone, and it's our job as witches to bring it back.” In a Disenchanted World, we are separate from each other, we are cynical, and we feel powerless to change things. This is all by design to benefit those in power and we are separated by all sorts of isms – like racism, sexism, ableism, and so on. Lyons suggests that an us versus them mentality isn't helpful when we are all fighting the same larger enemies, and that the goal isn't for us to give up what makes us unique and different either. “Examining the different circumstances we're all fighting is not about breaking up or dividing marginalized people. Instead, it's about bringing all the various “us” together against a common foe.”

Throughout the book, Lyons gives strategies, exercises, and rituals to add to your activist toolkit. Included is a write-up on the AIDS activist group ACT-UP and how they used the stories of the dead in their activism. She also includes a “Trans Rite of Ancestor Elevation” to honor Trans ancestors of spirit lost to murder and suicide during the previous year. This rite is meant to lead up to the Transgender Day of Remembrance in November. She also includes stories of the Zapatistas of Mexico and Native Americans at Standing Rock North Dakota.

If you practice magic, whether witchcraft or some other path, and if you care about the people and the world around you, I would definitely recommend this book. It is simplistic at times and might do better to broaden its focus to all magic workers (not just Wiccans and Witches), but overall it’s an insightful and thought-provoking read.

## “On Tyranny”

*A review by Mel Mystery.*

**On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons From the Twentieth Century** by Timothy Snyder is a handy little book of tips on what to do if you should suddenly find yourself living under a tyrannical government. This book isn’t Pagan or LGBTQ+, but it is full of tips that might help us make it through the next 4 years (or longer, if the need remains). The book isn’t particularly lengthy. I was able to read the entire book in two sittings within a 24-hour period. The author provides twenty lessons about living under and resisting tyrannical governments – complete with explanations and historical examples that apply to each lesson. Tyrannical governments might be fascist or communist. They might be ruled by one strong-willed leader or an entire party that aspires to authoritarian rule. An underlying message of the book is that we shouldn’t get too comfortable that tyranny can’t happen in our own country. Just because things have always been a certain way - elections fair, laws just, and media objective – doesn’t mean they always will be. According to the author, “European history of the twentieth century shows us that societies can break, democracies can fall, ethics can collapse, and ordinary men can find themselves standing over death pits with guns in their hands.”

For the rest of this review, I will highlight a couple lessons from the book that seem most relevant at this time. This will include my own commentary on how these lessons are relevant to the recent election and our specific communities. It was really hard to choose only a few of these. I’ve listed the full list of lessons in the side box and recommend reading the book if you’d like to learn more about how the other lessons might be applied.

### **One: Do not obey in advance.**

Many under tyrannical governments give their power away too soon. The author suggests that in most cases the power of authoritarianism is freely given. This is voluntary giving away our power and welcoming and cooperating with a tyrannical government or leader. In our recent election, just look at how many people have bowed down to our new president – some even before he was elected. The incoming president has threatened political, legal, and potentially even physical retaliation through mob rule (such as what happened on January 6, 2021) to those who oppose him. Look at **The Washington Post’s** decision not to endorse a presidential candidate in the 2024 election. Then more recently, Facebook’s decision to remove factcheckers which would foster misinformation on the site and provide solace to a president (and party) who habitually lies and spreads this misinformation. I’ve even noticed the hosts of some

### **Rules to Live by Under a Tyrannical Government**

1. **Do not obey in advance.**
2. **Defend institutions.**
3. **Beware the one-party state.**
4. **Take responsibility of the face of the world.**
5. **Remember professional ethics.**
6. **Be wary of paramilitaries.**
7. **Be reflective if you must be armed.**
8. **Stand out.**
9. **Be kind to our language.**
10. **Believe in truth.**
11. **Investigate.**
12. **Make eye contact and small talk.**
13. **Practice corporeal politics.**
14. **Establish a private life.**
15. **Contribute to good causes.**
16. **Learn from peers in other countries.**
17. **Listen for dangerous words.**
18. **Be calm when the unthinkable arrives.**
19. **Be a patriot.**
20. **Be as courageous as you can be.**

YouTube channels who have started talking in code about politics since the results of the 2024 election. These are all examples of obeying in advance. I, for one, remain committed to speaking out so long as we have freedom of speech and expression in this country.

#### **Two: Defend Institutions.**

The author suggests picking institutions that you care about – the courts and law, the free press, free elections, etc. – and do what you can to support and protect those. He suggests that we should not automatically assume that these will hold under tyrannical rule. The author states, “The mistake is to assume that rulers who came to power through institutions cannot change or destroy those very institutions – even when that is exactly what they have announced that they will do.”

#### **Four: Take responsibility for the face of the world.**

Don’t accept or become desensitized to the symbols, language, and propaganda of hate. When we talk of immigrants as “illegals”, it dehumanizes them. When we wear the symbols of the oppressor, we are cooperating and showing our loyalty to those in power. If you see symbols of hate displayed, remove them and set an example for others to do so. I’m going to just add to this one that you can be proactive in this lesson by putting out your own symbols, language, and facts to counter hate. I made a decision after the election to post a garden flag in my front yard – you know the one “In this house we believe science is real, no one is illegal, black lives matter, love is love” and I’ve also committed myself to buying and wearing t-shirts out in the public sphere that say things like “Hate never made any nation great” and “We the people means everyone.”

#### **Eight: Stand Out**

While everyone else is cooperating and bowing down to the tyrannical party or leader, dare to stand out. Keep your values, ethics, and moral compass. It can be uncomfortable, but if you don’t set an example, who will? When we set examples “the spell of the status quo is broken, and others will follow.” While the author obviously wasn’t discussing magickal spells, the spell of conformity can be just as powerful, and many Pagans might consider conformity (and propaganda) as unique forms of magick.

#### **Twelve: Make eye contact and small talk.**

Be affirming of others – especially those unfairly targeted by the tyrannical regime. Those who are marginalized often need a friendly word or a smile. Keeping up with others in our communities helps us to “stay in touch with our surroundings, break down social barriers, and understand whom you should and should not trust.” As most of our readers fall into at least two marginalized and misunderstood groups – LGBTQ+ folks and Pagans – I’d also like to look at this from the reverse angle. If we are going out and meeting and interacting with people in our communities, it is harder for them to see us as stereotypes and scapegoats, and they are more likely to support us and our causes when they see us as other humans living our lives and not some boogeyman out to destroy their way of life.

#### **Fifteen: Contribute to good causes.**

Contribute not just your money, but your time, to good causes. These need not even be political causes. “Insofar as we take pride in these activities and come to know others who do so as well, we are creating civil society.” I always support folks getting out and getting involved in their LGBTQ+, Pagan, and other communities during the best of times. I think it’s even more important during difficult times. We need to know people we can rely on and trust. We need people going through similar experiences to talk to and to process our own thoughts and feelings. So, contribute to a charity, join a club, start a coven or grove, and attend events and gatherings. And if smaller groups and events are struggling to find their place and you deem their goals to be honorable and in alignment with yours, respectfully step in and give them a hand rather than complaining about what you think they could or should be in an ideal world.

**World Pride**  
Washington, DC  
May 17—June 8, 2025

<https://worldpridedc.org/>







**Temple of the Moon  
(left)**

**Temple of the Sun  
(right)**



**Mel recently visited the Mayan ruins of Chacchoben in Mexico. Above are a few photos from the trip.**

## **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, 2025.**

# Rebirth and Transformation

## Rebirth and Transformation: A Personal View

by J.

The current issue of Mysterious Ways centres upon the theme of 'Rebirth and Transformation'. These themes can be taken in the wider form of concepts; however I want to give a more personal take on them regarding my own spiritual development within Paganism over the past year or so.

Several occurrences, both in my birth country England, and in the US lately, have crystallised the need within me for personal self-acceptance and also for my need for freedom of belief. With the rise of extremist groups, both secular and spiritual, these needs have become an urgent focus that can no longer be taken for granted or 'put off' for another day. At least for myself, they are central to my future wellbeing, and, perhaps, they should be for you too. That, of course, is up to you alone, but you should know that many others will now be revisiting these aspects of 'self', up until now so accepted as our integral right to pursue.

Since becoming a Pagan several years back, I have tried hard to find a path which fitted me as an individual and as a gay man. It actually has been quite difficult to achieve except in general terms. We can mistakenly dwell on the general background noise of paganism without honing in on that particular belief which will seem like 'home' to us. Research gives clues to the path, but it is perhaps only when we find the correct path that rebirth and transformation actually happen. I had considered Druidry, but my British background and work as a historian showed that underlying principles were often either based on unsound source materials (even accepted as unsound by Druids themselves) or had certain undertones that made me uncomfortable as a non-Christian gay man. I fully accept that for others these can either be overlooked or used as guiding principles even if constructed by a more modern source than that claimed. Unfortunately, I could not proceed on those terms. I had very helpful talks with members of Unnamed Path which wholly satisfies my need for a gay male based faith structure, but sadly they are overwhelmed by teaching those aspirants they have already now, and this left me time considering what I knew already in light of my own aspirations. Their god structure had aspects which are at issue with the more free flowing interpretation of gods as specific entities which I espouse and I saw that maybe, even with teaching, I might come to reject the formal godhead structure and that would have wasted their valuable time and the very special gifts they have to offer. I still have an open mind though and hope to retain the friends I have made within Unnamed Path as they are both supportive, friendly and have great wisdom.

My present focus is on horned gods, nature gods and total acceptance of all aspects of my inner gay self and, at last, I seem to be seeing light. Self-acceptance is a difficult path and the shadow self, as some call it, can be a part of us all we hide, strenuously try to avoid and rarely accept. We generally all want all parts of our being to be liked; both by ourselves and by others. Sadly, realism says that this hardly ever happens, even within gay circles. Our differing sexual desires cover a myriad of practices, and many are just beyond the pale for others. So, we must make a choice. Either we bury those parts of our inner self which others find hard to accept or love, or we embrace all as being the reality of our whole self and accept that we may be ostracised or just shunned by even our own gay brothers as a result. This latter path is strewn with thorns even for private self-realisation but the result is, at least, an honesty within. I hasten to add that just because we accept our darker aspects and desires, it does not mean we will act upon them. It is simply a willingness to accept our dark and light, our yin and yang, so balance can be achieved.

For me, growing up first in a former world where even my sexuality was outlawed, and then in a Christian faith which called me abhorrent just for being born as I am, any thought of accepting even my gay nature within belief was all but impossible. Freedom came with my becoming Pagan. No longer was there the strict sinfulness in all I did as a gay man. However, do not be deceived. Even within Paganism there is separation, segregation and even homophobia. Even within Pagan gay groups there can be exclusion. So, in many ways I found a freedom, but not absolute freedom.

My studies of ancient comparative religion and godhead has led me to see that there are so many cross overs between ancient beliefs, that gods, per se, can be seen as representational rather than personal. By this I do not mean that I think particular ancient gods were not real or even that they did not appear in the form worshippers were used to seeing. I think that the best analogy I can give to explain (and this is far too simplistic really) is to look at the form of a fully grown crystal in the geological world. Most crystals have different facet faces and yet are still all part of that one unique crystal. So, gods such as Cernunnos, Pan or even Satan could, in theory, be different aspects of the same entity. Their form at the time might be that which was needed to be acceptable to that particular culture at that particular time. There is even one branch of Satanism which views their god not as the personification given them by history, but as representing all the inner self they have as Pagan men and as a rejection focus of their mainstream religious past. No one should dismiss this. There is an honesty in it that says that a god in historical form can represent all we want to have in a god given our various gay male natures.

So, I can now say my studies, the invaluable help and friendship given to me by those I have sought out in my quest, have led to a much fuller rebirth of self with a comprehensive acceptance of all aspects of my nature, both dark and light. I am a more complete person as a result. My faith will continue to develop and will fit me personally whilst still encompassing others who feel the same. It rejects the world's and my youth's given mores and rules in favour of a more honest acceptance of what it is to be an individual gay male seeker after truth. I commend a similar attempt in seeking inner self-awareness to others, sincerely hoping that you too can be more at peace with all aspects of what makes you a truly unique and valued person in a darkening world.

## The Cauldron of Rebirth

by Mel Mystery

The Pagan worldview of life and time is cyclical rather than linear. Life doesn't just have a clear-cut beginning and a clear-cut ending. It cycles back in on itself with the concept of "rebirth." This is demonstrated most clearly in our celebrations of the Wheel of the Year. Crops die in the fall only to be reborn anew in the spring. The Sun (and various deities) dies only to be reborn at the winter solstice (or, for some deities, other times of the year). The Oak King vanquishes the Holly King only for the Holly King to be reborn, and then the Holly King vanquishes the Oak King, and the cycle continues. Many of our mythologies include dying gods who are reborn, and even the idea that this world we live in may eventually be destroyed (Ragnarök) only to be recreated as a new world. Many native mythologies talk of other worlds and peoples that existed before our own.

This same cyclical worldview is expressed in the Tarot. The Fool sets off on a hero's journey through the Tarot. At some point he dies and with that death of the old life, he transitions and begins a new and more fulfilling life. And Tower moments in the Tarot are just cataclysmic moments of change that destroy what is no longer needed to make way for something new and exciting.

Many Pagans believe in reincarnation - the idea that we live, die, and are reborn again into a new body and a new life. Within Druidry, the idea of reincarnation is depicted as a "cauldron of rebirth" and the "cauldron of renewal." In Celtic mythology, the healer Dian Cécht had a great cauldron that healed and resurrected anyone put into it. In the mythical story about the battle between the Tuatha de Danaan and the Fomors. Tuathan warriors who died in this battle were placed into the cauldron and resurrected to continue the battle. The Fomors eventually overcame the magick of the cauldron by filling it with stones. Arawn, the Celtic god of the Underworld, had his own "cauldron of rebirth" that could bring the dead back to life. These cauldrons are symbolic of the concept of reincarnation. Many Druids believe that the soul is immortal and leads many lives on the earthly plane. In between lives, souls live on in the Otherworld which is known by many names (and perhaps there is more than one Otherworld or several realms in one Otherworld plane of existence). The Celtic Otherworld is also known as Annwn or the Summerland. After a period of rest and reflection, souls return to the earthly plane to grow, to learn, and to ascend. Upon death in the earthly realm, they return to the Otherworld and the cycle continues.

The concept of reincarnation is supported by modern research into Near Death Experiences (NDE's). I first researched the topic around 2008 when my Dad was fighting off cancer. He died in early 2009. What I read gave me great hope that life continues on even after we pass from the mortal bodies we inhabit in this life. While some scientists try to explain away NDE's as hallucinations the mind experiences during the dying process, it is very interesting that those who experience them return back with information and generally report similar experiences regardless of their background, culture, or religious beliefs. The stages of an NDE include feelings of peace and well-being; separating from the physical body (often seeing the body from above); seeing a light or tunnel; and then entering that portal to another realm of existence. Often deceased loved ones and spirit guides greet the newly departed and accompany them on their journey to the afterlife. The deceased often experiences a life review where they are given the opportunity to look at both the good and the not so good aspects of how they lived their life. Some who come back from NDE's bring back stories of what "life" in the afterlife is like. Those who return from their NDE often report that they were told that it wasn't yet their time to die or that they still have things left to do in their lives.

### Hoof and Horn

Hoof and horn, hoof and horn  
All that dies shall be reborn  
Corn and grain, corn and grain  
All that falls shall rise again.

# 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](http://www.unnamedpath.com)

**Submission deadline for the next issue of Mysterious Ways is May 15, 2024.**

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

E-mail these to Mel at [knightsofmatrix@gmail.com](mailto:knightsofmatrix@gmail.com). Please put "Mysterious Ways" in the subject line.

## Upcoming Retreats and Gatherings

**January 17-19, 2025** — **Gay Spirit Visions Spring Retreat** at the Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands, NC.

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

**April 19, 2025** — **Brotherhood by the Bog** retreat for Pagan Men of all paths, backgrounds, and orientations. Theme is “Divination and the Masculine.” To take place in-person at First Landing State Park in Virginia Beach, VA.

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

**May 9-11, 2025**— **Gay Spirit Visions Spring Retreat** at the Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands, NC.

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

**September 8-13, 2025** — **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** —

**Fall 2025** — **Virtual Arcadia Retreat for Queer Pagan Men.** The virtual event might be renamed “Brotherhood Beyond Borders.” Details TBA.

FMI: [www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/index.php/events/arcadia](http://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/index.php/events/arcadia)

**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.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/>

**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.melmystery.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.melmystery.com](http://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: Under the Pagan Moon

For our summer / fall issue we want to hear your personal stories from Pagan events, retreats, and gatherings. This includes both general and Queer specific events, as well as virtual events. What has been your favorite event and why? Is there a particular speaker, presenter, or entertainer you just can't get enough of? Is there an event you have to go to every year? Did you meet someone special or make a lifelong friend? Did you learn or experience something you wouldn't have on your own? If you haven't been to a Pagan retreat or gathering, are there any you'd like to go to?

Any or all of these topics, and topics of general Queer Pagan interest, are suitable for submission to the next issue of Mysterious Ways. Don't forget to send us your "Stories from the Resistance."

Please send articles, reviews, original poetry, artwork, spells, and other submissions to Mel at [knightsofmatrix@gmail.com](mailto:knightsofmatrix@gmail.com) by May 15, 2025. 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.