

Serpent's Coil

Newsletter for the Australian and New Zealand members of OBOD

Alban Eilir, September 2004

From the Chapter: 'Spring'

*All is calm on the river shore
as the fisherman drifts by.
Here, far from the cares of the world,
there is time to listen
to the conversation of trees.*

Songs of the Seasons: A Collection of Zen Poems and Paintings –
by Stephen Cassettari

Charge of the Spring Maiden

By Doreen Valiente & Winter Belliso

Hear the words of the Star Goddess,
The dust of whose feet are the hosts of heaven,
Whose body encircles the universe,
I ay the promise kept, faith restored,
And blessings shared.
I give you spring showers and drenching rains.
I ay the return of flowering trees,
Brilliant color, and chirping birds.
I ay the creative and energizing force of fire.
My love is evident as I encourage the Sun arrive earlier
And linger with us longer,
Charging the new shoots out of the tender ground.
I ay crisp fresh air.
I ay the green scent on the wind.
I ay a trip to the seed store.
I ay a new garden planned.
I ay cleared ground, receptive and waiting.
I ay every dream you hold dear in the dark of night.
I ay the path to fresh ideas.
I ay available, approachable, and willing to be embraced.
I ay the Daughter of Clouds, Sister to Wary Earth,
I ay the moment of Yes, Yes, and Yes Again.
And you who seek to know me,
Know that your seeking and yearning will avail you not,
Unless you know the Mystery,
For if that which you seek you find not
Within yourself, you will never find it without.
For behold, I have been with you from the beginning,
And I ay that which is attained at the end of desire.

An Imbolc Greeting

Awakening sleepily
Not fully aroused yet.
She sniffs the air
Spring'll be here soon, I bet.

That quiet time,
That cozy time
Time of anticipation
Time of re-creation

Just a glimpse
Of Brigid here and there
In the birds as they gather,
In the very warmth on the air.

Wedding Bush is ready
Her sweet delicate white blooms.
Winter has lost its grip
Spring arrives soon.

Taran, 1st Aug 2002





STORM WOLF'S RAMBLINGS

Hello everyone!

How are we all this fine (hopefully!) Spring day?

Hasn't the recent rain been wonderful! Our garden is looking much happier, and the grass is now green instead of yellow! The wallaroos I am caring for through WIRES (Wildlife Information and REscue Service) are enjoying the fresh growth!

I am looking forward to seeing some of you at the Annual Assembly in Queensland soon. It is hard to believe that almost a year has already gone by since the last Assembly! Hopefully I will get to meet some more new people and put more faces to names!

How are your creative urges going? I am running low on poems, and have run out entirely of articles for SerpentStar, so anything you can send me would be greatly appreciated. I am happy to go trolling through the internet for articles and poems, but this is your newsletter, so it is good to have things written by our talented members to share!

I hope you are all well and happy! Follow your bliss and SMILE!!! ☺

Storm Wolf

THE WAY OF THE ANCIENTS

Follow the narrow path
The one that leads to the ancient trees
Smell the damp earth along the way
Feel the wild wind in your hair

Step into the grove that is your home
Feel the warmth of the fire –
glowing embers forever
See the little house of wattle and dub
Your guide waiting just for you

Linger a while and feel renewed
Regain your strength from the ancient trees
Rest your back against their strong trunks
Feel their message in your soul

The midnight sun blazes in the North
The lightness of spring blossoms in the East
The heat of summer sun glows in the South
And the orange ball of sunset settles in the
West

The first breath of air brings thought
The first drop of water brings feeling
The first touch of earth brings sensation
And the first heat of fire brings inspiration.

This is the way of the ancients
Open your hearts to their wisdom
Live with the wonders of nature
Feel your spirit soar to enlightenment.

- raelene taylor 2004

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Opinions published in this newsletter are not necessarily the opinions of the editor or the Order.

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Southern Echoes, a book of poetry and prose by Druids living in the Southern Hemisphere, can be ordered by sending a cheque or money order to-

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http://members.linnet.net.au/~muzzza/druidry/southern_echoes.html

Bride - The Fair Woman of February

(From the writings of Fiona MacLeod)

I have heard many tales of Bride, one of the most widely loved and revered beings of the ancient Gaelic pantheon. They are of the Isles, and may be heard in some of the Sgeulachdan Gaidhealach, or Gaelic tales still told among the seafaring and hill folk. Brighid bhoidheach. Bride the beautiful, is not infrequent in songs and seasonal hymns, for when her signals are seen along the grey beaches, on the sandy machairs, by the meadow path, the glen track, the white shore road, the islanders know that the new year is disclosed at last, that food, warmth and gladness are coming out of the south. Everywhere she is honoured at this time. Am fheill Bride was until recently a festival of joy throughout the west, from the Highland Line to the last weedy shores of Barra or the Lews; in the isles and in the remote Highlands, it still is.

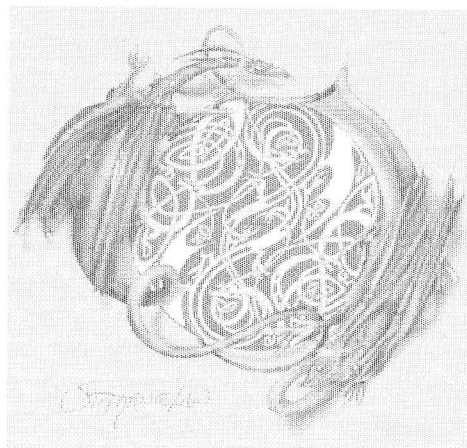
It is an old tale, this association of Bride with February. It goes further back than the days of the monkish chroniclers who first attempted to put the disguise of verbal Christian raiment on this fair woman. It is a tale that refers to one to whom the women of the Gael went with offerings and prayers and to one whom the seannachaidh speaks of when he tells of the oath taken by Brighid of the Flame.

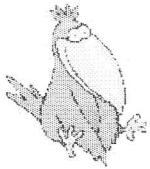
They refer to one whom the druids held in honour as a torch bearer of the eternal light, a Daughter of the Morning, who held sunrise in one hand as a little yellow flame, and in the other held the red flower of fire without which men would be as the beasts who live in caves and holes, or as the dark Fomor who have their habitations in cloud and wind and wilderness.

They refer to one whom the bards and singers revered as mistress of their craft, she whose breath was a flame and that flame song; she whose secret name was fire and whose inmost soul was radiant air, she therefore who was the divine impersonation of the divine thing she stood for, poetry.

She herself and no other, is she, that ancient goddess whom our ancestors saw lighting the torches of sunrise on the brows of hills, or thrusting the quenchless flame above the horizons of the sea; whom the druids hailed with hymns at the turn of the year, when, in the season we call February, the first comers of the advancing spring are to be seen on the grey land or on the grey wave or by the grey shores; whom every poet, from the humblest wandering singer to Oisín of the Songs, from Oisín of the Songs to Angus Óg on the rainbow or to Midir of the Underworld, blessed because of the flame she put in the heart of poets as well as the red life she put in the flame that springs from wood and peat.

None forgot that she was the daughter of the ancient God of the Earth, but greater than he, because in him there was but earth and water, whereas in her veins ran the elements of air and fire. And how could one forget that at any time she has but to bend above the dead, and her breath would quicken, and a pulse would come back into the still heart, and what was dust would arise and be once more glad. Yes, the Fair Woman of February is still loved, still revered.





Irish bird superstitions

From: <http://www.birdnature.com/apr1898/apr1898.html>



The Hedgewarbler

Known more popularly as the "Irish Nightingale," is the object of a most tender superstition. By day it is a roystering fellow enough, almost as impish as our American Mocking Bird, in its emulative attempts to demonstrate its ability to out-sing the original songs of any feathered melodist that ventures near its haunts among the reeds by the murmuring streams. But when it sings at night, and particularly at the exact hour of midnight, its plaintive and tender notes are no less than the voices of babes that thus return from the spirit land to soothe their poor, heart-aching mothers for the great loss of their darlings. The hapless little Hedge Sparrow has great trouble in raising any young at all, as its beautiful bluish-green eggs when strung above the hob are in certain localities regarded as a potent charm against diverse witch spells, especially those which gain an entrance to the cabin through the wide chimney. On the contrary, the grayish-white and brown-mottled eggs of the Wag-tail are never molested, as the grotesque motion of the tail of this tiny attendant of the herds has gained for it the uncanny reputation and name of the Devil's bird.

The Starling, the Magpie and the Crow

When the starling does not follow the grazing cattle some witch charm has been put upon them. The Magpie, as with the ancient Greeks, is the repository of the soul of an evil-minded and gossiping woman. A round-tower or castle ruin unfrequented by Jackdaws is certainly haunted. The "curse of the crows" is quite as malevolent as the "curse of Cromwell." When a "Praheen Car" or Hen Crow is found in the solitudes of mountain glens, away from human habitations, it assuredly possesses the wandering soul of an impenitent sinner.

If a Raven hover near a herd of cattle or sheep, a withering blight has already been set upon the animals, hence the song of the bard Benean regarding the rights of the kings of Cashel 1,400 years ago that a certain tributary province should present the king yearly "a thousand goodly cows, not the cows of Ravens." The Waxwing, the beautiful Incendiaria avis of Pliny, whose breeding haunts have never yet been discovered by man, are the torches of the Bean-sidhe, or Banshees. When the Cuckoo utters her first note in the spring, if you chance to hear it, you will find under your right foot a white hair; and if you keep this about your person, the first name you thereafter hear will be that of your future husband or wife.

Four Mournful Superstitions

Four other birds provide extremely mournful and pathetic superstitions. The Linnet pours forth the most melancholy song of all Irish birds, and I have seen honest-hearted peasants affected by it to tears. On inquiry I found the secret cause to be the belief that its notes voiced the complaints of some unhappy soul in the spirit land. The changeless and interminable chant of the Yellow Bunting is the subject of a very singular superstition. Its notes, begun each afternoon at the precise hour of 3, are regarded as summons to prayer for souls not yet relieved from purgatorial penance. A variety of Finch has notes which resemble what is called the "Bride-groom's song" of unutterable dolor for a lost bride — a legend of superstition easily traceable to the German Hartz mountain peasantry; while in the solemn intensity of the Bittern's sad and plaintive boom, still a universally received token of spirit-warning, can be recognized the origin of the mournful cries of the wailing Banshee.



From a letter sent to me by an OBOD member in New Zealand, regarding labyrinths:

'I was intrigued by the item on Labyrinths in the latest SerpentStar (June); I have a 3 circle left hand labyrinth in my garden since March this year. It is laid out with beautiful coloured rocks and stones from the Otago, Westland, and Canterbury coast and rivers, including a piece of pounamu greenstone which I found in the Grey River on the West Coast.

Pounamu is the Peace Stone of the Waitaha, an ancient people who pre-date the Maori migration.

This design is very ancient; drawings of it and a seven circle have been found carved on walls of cave dweller's sites.

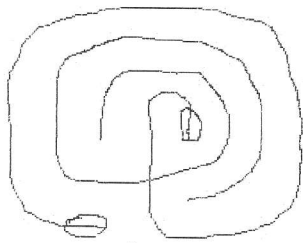
At Imbolc I gathered all the stones up and nourished the ground; then relay the labyrinth but this time it is a right-hand 3 circle labyrinth. I feel a change of direction with the turning of the seasonal wheel — it felt right.

It is interesting observing peoples reactions to the labyrinth; some enter with anticipation, some apprehension, and some prefer to walk it when no one else is around, and others refuse to walk it!

Zen walking meditation is great for Labyrinth walking — breath in = one step, breath out = one step.

The two books I have found most helpful are 'The Way of the Labyrinth' by Helen Curry, and 'Walking a Sacred Path' by Lauren Artress.

The revival of Labyrinths worldwide is amazing; is it an indication that more and more people are awakening to the need to return to their centre/soul, the sacred, for this is the basic symbol of the Labyrinth — the Sacred Journey to the centre of our being and then returning with the knowledge to live and share that understanding in the outer world.



Left handed

THE SHAMAN

Inside your mind,
He calls,
Within the seat of your womb,
You feel
The stirring beat
Of is withered drum,
Through your soul
You hear
His cry.
His voice travels
On wild songs
Into her depth.
Stirring all beings
Deeply within
Earth's dwellings.

Calling forth
The flow of rivers,
Moving
Deep tree roots,
Penetrating
Rock and stone.

His song rides
On the winds
From four corners
Of her kingdom.

Never does he
Control,
But comes
Like a lover,
Awakening
And stirring
The senses of all living

He wakens you
From deep slumber
As your soul
Sojourns the worlds,
And you do not like
To be disturbed
From within
Your cosy dreaming.

Yet your blood
Answers his calling
And you take his hand
As he laughs
At his triumph.

Now you leave behind
Your comfortable world,
So suited and so perfect
Until this moment.

True beauty
He shows you
Below earth's dreaming,
A life of which yours
Is barely a mirror,
A pale shadow only
Of what is real.

Break through that mirror
And grasp
The true face
Of the Mother
Her footsteps triumphantly burst
With new life
Beyond man's trashing rape
Of her living body.

Branwen

Hawaiian Prayer of Greetings and Unity

HAWAIIAN

E na 'Akua
E na 'Aumakua
E na Kupuna
Aloha kakou.

English

To all the Gods
To all the Guardians
To all the Ancestors
Greetings to all of you.

Irish Gaelic

Don Déithe uile go léir,
Don Caomhnóirí uile go léir,
Don Sinsearaigh uile go léir,
Beannachtaí daoibh uile go léir.

Scottish Gaelic

Do na h-uile Dianan
Do na h-uile Dionadairean
Do na h-uile Siansearan
Failte oraibh gu leor

Cornish

Orth an Dhywow oll
Orth an Gwithysi oll
Orth an Hendasow oll
Gorhemmynnadow dhewgh oll.

ITALIAN

A tutti i dii,
A tutti i guardiani,
A tutti gli antenati,
Saluti a tutti voi.

French

A tous les Dieux
A tous les Gardiens
A tous les ancestres
Souhaitez a tous

Russian

Vsem bogam,
Vsem Opekunam,
Vsem predkam,
Pozdravleniya k vam vsem.

Spanish

A todos los dioses,
A todos las guardas,
A todos los antepasados,
Salud a Ustedes.

Hebrew

L'col ha elim,
L'col ha shomrim,
L'col he avim,
Shalom le culam.

Dutch

Aan alle Goden
Aan alle bewakers
Aan alle voorouders
Groeten aan U allen!

German

An alle Götter,
An alle Wächter,
An alle Ahnen,
Grüße an Euch Alle.

Portuguese

A todos os deuses,
A todos os guardians,
A todos os antepassados,
Cumprimentos a voce todos.



THE FOLKLORE OF THE WILD HUNT AND THE FURIOUS HOST

by Kveldulf Hagen Gundarsson, from *Mountain Thunder*, Issue 7, Winter 1992.

Part 2

(first presented as a lecture to the Cambridge Folklore Society at the house of Dr. H.R. Ellis-Davidson)

The theme that the Hunt is led by a nobleman doomed for his sins is common to both Scandinavia and Germany. A characteristic example of the story comes from Rugen: a great prince who loved the hunt more than anything else. When a herdboy cut the bark of a young tree to make a pipe, the prince tied the youth's guts to the tree and chased him about it. A farmer who killed a stag that was eating his corn, the prince bound living to a stag and let the animal run free in the wood until it had battered the man to death. "For such cruel deeds the monstrous man at last got the payment he had earned." He broke his neck while hunting, "and now it is his punishment after death, that he also has no rest in the grave, but must about the whole night and hunt like a wild monster. This happens every night, winter and summer, from midnight to an hour before sunrise, and then people often hear him crying: 'Wod! Wod! Hoho! Hallo! Hallo!', but his usual cry is 'Wod! Wod!' and from this he himself is called 'der Wode' in many places" (Jahn, Ulrich. *Volkssagen aus Pommern und Rügen*, pp. 4-5).

The various German, Swedish, and Danish stories of this ilk are clearly medieval or post-medieval in origin, and have imposed a form of social commentary onto the original legend. The leaders of the Hunt are almost invariably men of high status, either men who abuse their privileges in some manner or commit some form of blasphemy: hunting on a Sunday or uttering some phrase along the lines of "the Lord may keep his heaven, so he leave me my hunting." Not subject to earthly justice, they are punished in the afterlife. Such tales reinforce the peasant's sense of virtue in contrast to the "evil" folk in power; by setting the principal character into supernatural legend, they also express an otherwise unacceptable hostility towards and, perhaps, fear of the living nobility hunting through the woods. There also seems to be a progression from the ghostly procession to the horde of hunters which, with the emphasis on a single, named figure, eventually becomes the solitary hunt which often (though not exclusively) appears in Swedish and Danish legend.

A variant of the Wild Hunt in which the hunter chases after a supernatural female is known from Sweden to the Tyrolean Alps, and first appears in the Germanic countries as a part of Middle High German heroic literature, in the *Ecken-Lied*. The basic theme is characterized by this Swedish tale.

"My father and my grandfather were out hunting in Solerud Forest one day. That evening they heard a strange barking; there was one hound barking very shrilly, and there were also two with a deeper cry.... All at once, a woman came running by with her hair streaming out behind her. Next came the hound that barked so shrill, and then the two others. Shortly after, along came a man with red hair and beard. He had a gun with him. He just went straight along. Father said this was Oden's hunt."
(Simpson, *Scandinavian Folktales*, p. 226. Collected in 1944 from an informant born in 1860).

The woman is variously a wood-wife (Germany or Switzerland), a mermaid (W. Jutland), one of the "hulder-folk" (Sweden), or an elf (Denmark). The hunter chasing the woman always appears as a solitary figure. The theme of this supernatural hunt seems to have little connection with the damned lord leading a group of hunters. The red hair and beard of the Swedish "Oden" seem more typical for the Old Norse Thorr (though Odinn is also called *Raudhgrani*, "Redbeard"). Celander ("Oskoreien ok beslätade föreställningar," *Saga och sed* 1942, p. 155) suggests that this is an independent tradition, with "Oden's" hunt of the wood-wife taken over from Thorr's troll-hunt. Thorr is in fact particularly noted for killing giant-women. In "Hárbarzljodh 23," he says "Mighty would be the race of etins, if they all lived; there would be no men in Midhgardhr," and Thorbjörn disarskald credits Thorr with more female than male trophies. Though there is probably insufficient evidence to make more than a tentative association between Thorr's pursuit of giantesses and the later hunter's pursuit of supernatural women, especially given the wide spread of the latter, Celander's suggestion that this version of the Wild Hunt legend may be an independent tradition is entirely plausible. If the hunt for the wood-wife or mermaid is indeed derived from a wholly different source than the large-scale hunt of the dead, which is clearly a later version of the original procession of the dead, then the association with Oden may be a simple product of a natural confusion between the two types of supernatural hunts.

The identity of the leader of the host varies from place to place. Often the horde of spirits is identified with an historical or legendary-historical figure. Gervasius von Tillbury describes King Arthur as the leader of the Wild Hunt (1211). In Lausitz and Orlagau, it is Dietrich von Bern -- Theoderic the Great in Germanic legend. Around the Hessian Odenberg, Charlemagne; in France, Charles the Fifth (folk etymology making "Charles quint" into "Hellekin," as in the 14th-century "Exposition de la doctrine chretienne"); in Dartmoor, Sir Francis Drake; in Sealand, King Valdemar; in Jutland, Christian the Second; in Norway, the oskorei is led by Sigurd Svein and Guro Rysserova ("Gudrun Horse-tail") -- the Sigurdhr Fáfnisbani and Gudhrun Gjúkadottir of the Eddic lays. In Middle and Upper Germany, the man who goes before the host was called "der trewe Eckhardt." Grimm identifies this figure as Eckhardt, Kriemhild's chamberer in *Nibelungenlied* (III, p. 935), and in the

Heldenbuch, he is said to sit outside the Venusberg to warn people, much as he does in the accounts of the furious host. By 1534, Eckhart had passed into a proverb: "Du thust wie der trewe Eckhart, der warnet auch jederman vor schaden" (You do like the trusty Eckhart, who also warns everyone of harm). Some of the names appear only in Wild Hunt legend, as Ritter Alke of Greifenhagen, Graf von Ebernburg of Zabelsdorf, and Hans von Hackelnberg/Hackelberend of Westphalia. The most common names, however, are derivations from the *wodh- root: in Schwabia, the army is "Wuotes Here" (*Zimmerische Chronik*); the hunter is "der Wode" in Rügen; the Middle German names "Wutan" and corresponding "wutanes her" have already been mentioned. Westphalia preserves the name Woenjäger beside the more difficult forms Hodenjäger and Bodenjäger; in the northern half of Jutland, we have Wojensjaeger, Uen, Uensjaeger. In Sweden, we have the Odensjakt, with Oden identified as an ancient king doomed to wander the world in punishment for his sins (in Varend), or as a sharpshooter who hunted on a Sunday.

The name Wodan or Wod does not appear in Normandy, England, or, surprisingly, Norway. However, Sigurd has undergone a curious change in the Norwegian folklore of the oskorei. While all the German and Norse legends in which Sigurd appear show him as a youthful hero, doomed to an untimely death. In fact, the depiction of this hero on the Hylestad stave-church portals shows him as beardless; if the Sigurd of the Ramsundberget rune stone is bearded at all, his beard is very short, in contrast to the long-bearded smith Reginn in the same carving. However, M.B. Landstad records (*Norsk Folkeminnelags skrifter* 13, 1926) that Sigurd Svein is terrifyingly old, and decrepit to the point of blindness, so that when he should see, his eyes need to be opened with a hook. The old man with seeing difficulties is by no means similar to the young hero Sigurdhr Fafnisbani, though the ballad of Sigurd Svein is otherwise relatively faithful to *Völsunga Saga*: he is, however, remarkably similar to Sigurdhr's godly patron and forefather, the aged Odinn who also goes by the names Bileygr ("Weak-Eyed"), Herbundi ("Army-Blind"), and Helblindi ("Death-Blind"), leading to the suspicion that Norwegian folk tradition might have replaced the name of the god with that of his hero.

A variant form of the legend is that associated with the female Perchte/Holda/Holle (in Germany) or Frien/Freki/Frik/Freja (Sweden, Northern Germany). Like the masculine figures discussed above, Perchte or Holda leads a train of souls. However, her followers are sometimes young children (Orla-gau); she also steals children. She also acts as an enforcer of female social norms: she punishes women who have not finished their spinning by the appointed night or who spin on the wrong day. She often gives gifts to children, as her masculine equivalents do not. Particularly in Austria and Scandinavia, the Yule-time female figure who can either be the kindly gift-giver or the fearsome demon is St. Lucia, who also is associated with animal-masking. In Austria, she is *Spillahutsche*, "Spindle-Lucia," who punishes children and spinners with red-hot bobbins. In Schleswig-Holstein the Holda-figure is shown with a cow skin and horns, and a cow's head or foot marks Lucy Day on some of the Scandinavian rune-stocks (Liungman, Waldemar, *Traditionswanderungen Euphrat-Rhein*, part II. FF Communications 119, 1938, pp. 654-55). This bears a certain similarity to the Norwegian image of Guro Rysserova, who appears as a woman in front, but has a horse's tail.

The Wild Hunt or Furious Host appears at different times of the year, being frequently seen in spring and fall, but the most common and consistent period for its appearance overall is the Yule season. This fits in neatly with the Germanic tradition as a whole: Yule is the season in which hauntings and supernatural visitation of all sort are the most common. The hauntings in *Eyrbyggja saga* take place at Yule, as does the death of Glam in *Grettis saga*. Folk tales of all the Scandinavian countries have trolls or elves making their appearance at Yule, particularly in Iceland, where a common theme is the supernatural visitor menacing the woman who must stay home to look after the house on Christmas Eve. Christopher Arnold, writing in 1674, mentions "neither good or evil spirits, which are particularly in the air around the holy birth-time of Christ; and are called "Juhlafolker," that is, "Yule-folk" by (the Laplanders)." This name is suspiciously similar to the Old Norse "jóln" for "gods" (in Eyvindr skaldaspillr's "Haleygjatal"), which both Magnusson (p. 433) and Faulkes (*Edda*, p. 134) interpret as being derived from *jól*, "Yule." The oskorei is also called *julereien* or *juleskreien*.

Another theme which is common to the Wild Hunt/ Furious Host legend is that of the human being interacting with the hunt in some way. Involvement with the host of the dead can often be dangerous or fatal. In the *Zimmerische Chronik*, one man bandages a ghost and becomes ill, another man answers the hunt with the same result. In Pomerania and Westfalia, the Hunt chases travellers to death. M. Landstad cites a Telemark story of the "Aasgaardsreid" leaving a dead man hanging where they had drunken the Yule ale. "He was dressed as a Nummedaler and had silver buttons on his best. The Aasgaardsreid had taken him in Nummedal and carried him along, and they had presumably ridden so bard that he had burst" (*Norsk folkeminnelags skrifter* 13, p. 20). The motif of the living person who is picked up by the horde and carried somewhere else is particularly common in Germany and in Norway. A curious form of this theme which is unique to Norway has people undergoing a sort of involuntary separation from their bodies, which lie as if dead while their souls are faring with the *oskorei*, as Landstad describes: "She fell backwards and lay the whole night as if she were dead. It was of no profit to shake her, for the Asgardsreid had made off with her." The woman then awakes to tell how she had ridden with the host "so that fire spurted under horse-hooves" (p. 15). In Pomerania, doors are closed against the Hunter to keep children from being carried off; in Bohuslän, it was said that "Oden fares from up in the air and takes creatures and children with him."

A number of the tales of the Wild Hunt describe the punishment of someone who mocks at the hunt, as in Neuvorpommern, where "A miller's boy stood before the mill, when the Wild Hunt went over him. 'Take me with!' the youth cried. 'Half part!' Wode said, and as he came back, cast a human leg before the mill, crying, 'Häst du wullt jagen / Kannst ok mit gnagen!' -- If you wanted to hunt, you can also eat. The boy tried to get rid of the leg in all possible ways, but nothing worked" (Jahn, *Volkssagen aus Pommern und Rugen*, pp. 7-8). Variants of this story are repeated a number of times in Northern Germany.

Those who help the Hunter or members of his train, however, are often rewarded with gifts. In the *Strassburger Chronicle's* example of the Freiburg woman who bandaged her dead husband, the woman was given "a great golden head, from which she should drink ... the woman held the head in her hand, and nothing happened to her. It was found afterwards, that the golden head was good, and had been no betrayal. The devil had certainly stolen it somewhere." Those who hold the hounds of the Danish Wolmar are given apparently worthless trifles which later turn into gold. In the North German stories, similarly, the foam which a hound-holder wipes from the Hunter's horse turns into gold pieces (Jahn, p. 12), and a man of Boeck who fixed Frau Gauden's carriage wheels was given the dung of her hounds, which afterwards became gold (Grimm, III, p. 926). A combination of both themes appears in another North German tale in Jahn's collection, where the man who calls to the Hunt is given a horse-leg with the words, "There have you also something for your hunting," but the next day the horse-leg has become gold (p. 30).

While it takes a foolhardy person to interfere with the Hunt, only the courageous survive when the Hunt accosts them. In "Local Traditions of the Quantocks" (*Folklore* XIX, 1908, p. 42), C.W. Whistler reports that a man "dared to cross the path in the dark, and was overtaken by the Wild Hunt as it passed overhead. And when he looked up, there was the devil himself following the hounds and riding on a great pig. What was worse, the devil pulled up and spoke to him. 'Good fellow,' he called, 'how ambles my sow?' The man was most terribly feared, but he knew that he must make some answer, so he replied, 'Eh, by the Lord, her ambles well enough!' And that saved him, for the devil could not abide the name of the Lord, so that he and his dogs vanished in a flash of fire!" Another well-known Mecklenburg legend has Wod engaging in a tug-o-war with a peasant whom he meets on the way, but the man is clever enough to tie the chain to an oak, so that Wod cannot pull him up into the air. "'Well pulled!' said the hunter, 'many's the man I've made mine, you are the first that ever held out against me, you shall have your reward.'" The peasant is then given some blood and a hindquarter from Wod's stag, which have turned into gold and silver by the time he has reached his cottage (Grimm, III, pp. 924-925).

While these tales show the Hunt as Märchen, attempts have also been made to interpret the legends as based on natural phenomena. In the late 19th and early 20th century, the Wild Hunt/Furious Host was often compared to the stormwinds of winter. A more plausible explanation was offered by the Danish scholar H. F. Feilberg: in "Hvorledes Opstar Sagn i Vore Dage" (*Dania* II, 198294, p. 121) he describes how, one evening near Odense, he heard a great rustling and hound-barking in the air over his head, and how he thought at once of the Odinsjaeger, but "Next day I asked the teacher of natural history at Latin school which migratory birds it was that I had heard." Hylten-Cavallius (*Wärend och Wirdarne* vol. I, p. 216) cites the Wärend expressions, "that is Oden's hunt, those are Oden's hounds that can be heard in the air" for the passing of the wild geese, and in eastern Hinterpommern, the Wild Hunt comes in the spring and fall, when the migratory birds come and go. It cannot be denied that the eerie barking voices and rustling of a flock of geese passing overhead is very likely to have contributed to the longevity of the belief in the Wild Hunt; however, it does not explain the legend. Wild geese, after all, do not visit the northern countries around Yuletime, when the Wild Hunt most often rides. Further, Iceland is a favorite stopping place of many sorts of migratory birds: if the legends of the Wild Hunt were heavily based on flocks of geese, one might have expected them to have survived better there than anywhere else. However, Iceland lacks hound-and-horse hunting, and also lacks the sort of social stratification which may have contributed strongly to the development of the Furious Host into the Wild Hunt elsewhere.

Otto Höfler, in his *Verwandlungskulte, Volkssagen, und Mythen*, has strongly put forth the idea that many of the medieval records of the Wild Hunt/Furious Host were actually descriptions of a ritual folk-procession. The fact that the host appears by both day and night, coming into the city streets as well as terrifying lonely travellers in the dark wood, may support this theory, as does Vulpius' 16th-century description of the Nürnberg *Fastnacht* train as "the wild host, very strange figures, horned, beaked, tailed ... roaring and shouting ... behind, on a black, wild steed, Frau Holda, the Wild Huntress, blowing into the hunting horn, swinging the cracking whip, her head-hair shaking about wildly like a true wonder-outrage." Vulpius also calls this procession "das wuthende Heer" (Meissen, p. 124). Similar living trains appear in the Tirol, such as the *Perchtenlauf* described by J.V. v. Zingerle in 1857:

"The Perchtenlauf was earlier usual on the last Fasching-evening. It was a kind of masked procession. The masked ones were called Perchten. They were divided into beautiful and ugly.... The beautiful Perchten often distributed gifts. So went it loudly and joyfully, if the wild Perchte herself did not come among them. If this spirit mixed among them, the game was dangerous. One could recognize the presence of the wild Perchte when the Perchten raged all wild and furious and sprang over the well-stock. In this case the Perchten ran swiftly away from each other in fear and tried to reach the nearest, best house. For as soon as one was under a roof, the Wild One could not have them any longer. Otherwise she would tear apart anyone, who she could get possession of. Even today, one can see places where the Perchten torn apart by the wild Perchte lie buried" (Sitten, *Bränuiche, und Meinungen des Tiroler Volkes*, in Höfler, p. 59).

This idea of a Yule/masking game becoming terrifyingly real also appears in a Danish folk-tale, where a young woman dances with the Yule-buck, which then comes to life as the Devil himself and batters her to death against the barn walls (Simpson, Jacqueline. *Scandinavian Folktales*, pp. 80-1). Christine N.F. Eike, in her article "Oskoreia og ekstaseriter" extends Höfler's investigation to the Norwegian materials, concluding that there may well be an original relationship between the living bands of young men that travel about during the Yule season riding horses, drinking beer, and so forth, and the tales about the bands of the dead who do the same.

Overall, the legends of the "Furious Host" or "Wild Hunt" seem to have maintained a remarkable degree of consistency through their wide range of time and space a consistency which can, perhaps, be best explained by the essential reality of the underlying belief to those who held it, from the heathen period through the time of our own grandparents. So when you go out into the night this wintertime, listen carefully for the barking of dogs and the cry "Midden in dem Weg!" Do not mock at the horde that sweeps past, but be ready to carry home whatever Woden or Holda should give you, for the lowliest of gifts from the Hunt's leader may be found to turn to true gold like the very folk-stories themselves, whose quaint dialects and humble words cloak the gold of our forebears' souls.

BOOK HOARD

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Seasonal Recipes

Mediterranean Rarebit

1 wholemeal baguette cut into 2.5cm (1 inch) slices
Two gloves garlic, halved
One small avocado
1 small bunch parsley, finely chopped
3 or 4 tomatoes, sliced thinly enough to cover each slice of bread
Goats cheese, sliced as per tomatoes
Basil leaves, one for each slice of bread
2 teaspoons dried oregano

1. Toast bread slices gently on both sides. Rub one side with the cut section of a clove of garlic.
2. Mash the avocado with the parsley and spread thinly on the bread.
3. Top with tomato slices, then goats cheese.
4. Sprinkle with oregano.
5. Grill for about five minutes, or until cheese starts to run. Add basil leaves to each slice and grill for one minute only.

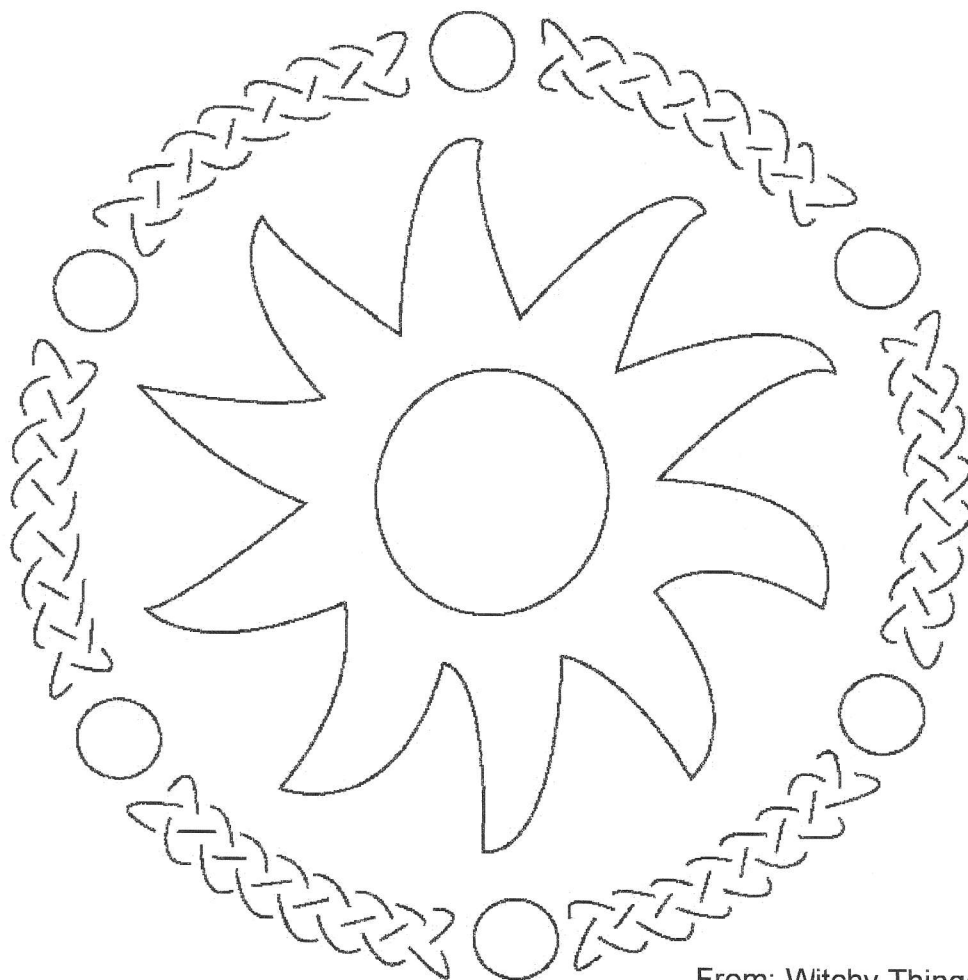
Pink Passion

200g (7 oz) caster sugar
250ml (8½ fl oz) rosewater
350ml (12 fl oz) pink grapefruit juice
3 tablespoons lemon juice
1 pink grapefruit, cut into segments, with rind, pith, and pips removed
1 handful rose petals

1. Boil sugar and rosewater for four to five minutes. Cool.
2. Mix together the grapefruit and lemon juices.
3. Combine the juices with the sugared rosewater, pour into a freezer-proof dish and freeze until almost firm.
4. Break into chunks and reduce to a slush in a food processor, or put into a bowl and use a mouli grater.
5. Return to the freezer, cover and freeze until firm.
6. Serve several mounds on each plate, with the grapefruit segments arranged around the side and rose petals scattered over the top.

From: 'Superherbs: For Health and Healing' by Michael van Straten

Children's Page!



From: Witchy Things Colouring Book
by eliza@sacredspiral.com

C T R Z A H H S H G P Y D F B
R O K O C S R E O E I R D K D
O H C A N N O I S F R A E I L
T N E C P S P A R O K C R N R
S B B B B R A N C C U E D D D
E D O E R U E I L I D O O G R
A R I L A A O U Q N M E B E U
B U O W O C D H A R Z A H A I
H I L I C S H A E U M D R R O
A E A B L H G I N A T H A R O
C N I L M T I A E Q L A N P H
U A R A S H A A N A U A C G U
A P D L E S C R F N S Y E E S
C B F A O L O T S O C U M D H
A W N A T H A I R H R Q Y I T

CELTIC ANIMAL NAMES

ART	EALA
BEACH	EILID
BO	FAOL
BRADAN	SEACH
BRAN	SEARR
CAT	IOLAIR
CORR	LOSANN
CU	MUC
DAMH	NATHAIR
DOBHRAN	REITHE
DRAG	RON
DRUIDHNEBH	SEABHAC
GRUIN	SIONNACH
SEACH	TARBH
	TORC

Translation

Art – Bear
Beach – Bee
Bo – Cow
Bradan – Salmon
Bran – Raven
Cat – Cat
Corr – Crane
Cu – Dog
Damh – Stag
Dobhran – Otter
Drag – Dragon
Druid Dhubh – Blackbird
Dru-en – Wren
Each – Horse
Eala – Swan
Eilid – Hind
Faol – Wolf
Geadh – Goose
Gearr – Hare
Iolair – Eagle
Losgann – Frog
Muc – Sow
Nathair – Adder
Reithe – Ram
Ron – Seal
Seabhac – Hawk
Sionnach – Fox
Tarbh – Bull
Torc – Boar