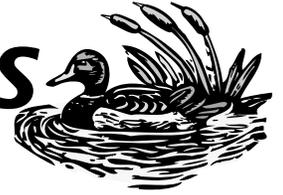




Shining Lakes News

A Newsletter for Shining Lakes Grove, A.D.F.



Spring Equinox 2012

Vol. 19, No. 2

A Three-Way with Rob and Two Goddesses (As close to being Charlie Sheen as Rob will ever get)



I should start by saying what a few of you already know about me: I am not a fan of gender-exclusive ritual. Never have been. I just don't see the point of it, and certainly can't approve of any ritual or group that excludes people solely on the basis of genetics, or anything else that people cannot possibly choose for themselves. Grove-only ritual? Sure, that's fine. Anyone can choose to be a member of a Grove. ADF Clergy-only ritual? Sure. It may take time, but people can at least try to become clergy. But men-only ritual? I just can't accept that as valid, even if the Ancients did, and I refuse to take part in it. (I also refuse to take part in women-only ritual, but for some reason no one seems to have noticed.)

Is it because I'm not sensitive to gender energies? Is it because 20 years ago I was briefly involved with a Dianic group who refused to let me attend half of their events, and I am still kind of pissed off about it? Is it because I don't have a girlfriend? (Or a boyfriend?) I don't know exactly, but I need to be true to my feelings.

I don't, however, force my feelings on the Grove as a whole, and if people want to run one-gender-only rituals in a Grove context, I'll let them. I just won't participate myself. Some of you may remember Gen doing a women's Aphrodite rite at last year's Lughnasadh, and I was fine with that. I only had one rule that I expected them to follow, and it's the same rule that the Chenille Canopy (ADF's women's SIG) uses: anyone who self-identifies as a woman would be allowed to participate. If there's anything I dislike more than gender-exclusive ritual, it's the thought of transgender or other "non-traditional" folks being excluded because they aren't "real women." They need a place in our rituals, and if they think they're women, what, I'm supposed to force them into a men's rite?

So as you can imagine, I was not thrilled when I heard about the rite at this year's Pantheacon that was billed as "the beauty and grace of the feminine form in all of her infinite variety" and also said "Genetic women only." I've seen plenty of feminine forms among transgender people, thank you very much. And I was all set to write an article of how terribly offensive this was, and how it went against basic neo-pagan concepts of diversity and tolerance. Unfortunately, as I thought about it, I realized

that forcing a group to allow transgender folks in when that goes against their tradition isn't exactly an act of diversity and tolerance either

So how to address an issue that I was feeling so conflicted about? It was actually an online comic strip, *The Oatmeal*, which reminded me of the old angel-and-devil-on-each-shoulder image, the perfect way to depict an internal conflict and its resolution. But we're not exactly a religion of angels and demons (insert Dan Brown joke here), so I came up with a similar concept that would work for a Neo-Hellene like myself.



ROB: And now, let's welcome my two guests for this article. First is the goddess of Peace, one of the Seasons, and the mother of Wealth. Please welcome Eirene!

EIRENE: Blessings of the spring to us all!

ROB: And the goddess of Strife, mother of Oath, and instigator of the Trojan War, honored by modern-day Discordians all around the world: Eris!

ERIS: Eternal suffering upon all who would not invite me to their party!

ROB: Um, but I actually did invite you here.

ERIS: Ah, so you did. Carry on.

ROB: Actually, that's the very reason I asked you to speak on behalf of the transgender who are forbidden entry into these "real women only" rituals. Their story certainly reminded me of yours.

ERIS: There are certainly some similarities, although I don't dress nearly as well as they do.

ROB: Which leaves Lady Eirene to take the other side of the debate.

EIRENE: That's fine. I understand that modern pagans have had gender-restricted ritual for a long time now, and I'm all for maintaining traditions that work.

ROB: A good point, but obviously the transgender taking part in anything has only been a recent one, for less than a century. For the Ancients, this wouldn't have been an issue.

EIRENE: Very true. Men and women were happy with their own rituals.

ERIS: Or at least said that they were.

EIRENE: Perhaps these transgender—is that the term?

ROB: That should work. Just don't call them "transies."

ERIS: Nah, go ahead and call them that, as long as you're willing to be called a "cissie" in return.

EIRENE: Yes. Well, maybe they would be happier having their own rituals as well? I'm sure anyone who didn't want them in a women's ritual would approve.

ERIS: Sounds like something a racist group would say. "Separate but equal" rituals for people with different genes? Is that really the path you want to go down?

EIRENE: So why do the women running these rituals not want these people to attend?

ROB: As I noted above, I don't really get the appeal of gender-restricted ritual in general. The arguments I've heard are that the energy of the participants is different, which would make the ritual less effective . . .

ERIS: I'd think a proper ritual could handle that easily enough.

ROB: . . . and also that these rituals are done nude, and for some of the participants in these healing rituals, the sight of a penis would be too much for them to deal with. One woman said that she could not possibly stay in the room if anyone with a penis were present, whether they were otherwise male or female.

EIRENE: That would certainly be disruptive.



1. Eirene (on the left?) and the other two Horai, or Seasons. (Attic Red Figure Kylix, ca. 500 BCE, from Antikenmuseen, Berlin, Germany)

ROB: I can see that. And I do want to throw one thing in here, as an aside. I'm a Priest in ADF, and have received training as such. And as someone who provides counseling, I was taught long ago that there was a certain point at which you need to stop acting like you're the best way to help someone yourself, and you need to refer them to actual professionals who specialize in mental health work. And if someone is at the point where the sight of a penis will send her (or him) screaming from the ritual, then that person is

about five metaphorical miles past that point. Maybe the woman who said that is also in therapy, I don't know. But I do know that there's only so much we can expect a ritual to do to heal someone, and I can't agree with using that as a justification to exclude other people from the rite.

ERIS: Of course, you being a male priest in a hierarchical tradition, they'll never listen to you.

ROB: I know, but I have to say it. That's my job.

ERIS: Hang on, the people running these rituals think that entities with "female energy" can't have penises?

ROB: That seems to be part of their argument.

ERIS: So tell me, do they call upon Athena in these rites?

ROB: Obviously I've never been to one myself, but I'm told that she's very popular among the Dianic crowd, so probably yes.

ERIS: The same Athena who appeared disguised in the physical form of a man several times in *The Odyssey*, presumably with a penis attached?

ROB: Yeah, that would be her.

ERIS: Ha. Those people have no clue who they're dealing with, do they? Hey, I'm a goddess, bitches, I can have a penis any time I want! Check this out!

ROB: Wow. I am so glad I didn't start writing this with enough lead time for anyone to illustrate it. [Editor's Note: Like that would stop me. Lucky for Rob I'm not a great artist, so I have to depend on good ol' Theoi.com for images.]

EIRENE: Eris, dear, please put that thing away. You're being even more frightening than usual.

ERIS: Okay, fine. So why not just let those women who want their cissie-only rituals do them on their own time? Why bring it to a public event?

EIRENE: Because many of these women don't have access to their own ritual groups. For many of them, an event like Pantheacon or Starwood is their only chance to take part in any non-solitary form of ritual.

ROB: Sadly, that's true. I don't know about those events in particular, but having been to ConVocation many times, I know that there are a lot of folks out there who have that problem. For whatever reason, they don't have a group to work with, and this is their once-a-year chance to take part in group ritual. Being told "no, you're not welcome" here has far more effect.

ERIS: Which applies just as much to those transgender who don't have groups to work with.

ROB: That's true too. The stakes are higher when you have hundreds of people involved.

ERIS: Speaking of stakes, is it really fair that people who paid to take part in a huge event like that not be allowed to attend every single part of it? They helped pay for that ritual to happen, didn't they?

EIRENE: They also paid to rent a site with both men's and women's rooms, should everyone be allowed to go into those as well?

ROB: I definitely have to side with Lady Eirene on this one. As poor a pagan as I am, we're not talking about a huge amount of money here. According to their website, Pantheacon had about 300 different workshops and rituals, and the most anyone had to pay for registration for the weekend was \$75. That works out to about 25 cents each. Even I can't pretend that that kind of money is enough to justify open access to everything. That could be an amusing compromise, though. For any ritual that some people aren't allowed to attend, there has to be a Warder standing at the door with a big bag of quarters. And any attendee who shows up during the first five

minutes and isn't allowed in, gets a quarter and an apology.

ERIS: That'll show them! Make them pay for what they've done. Literally.

ROB: I thank you both for your input, and I think I've finally decided how I feel about the situation.

EIRENE: Glad to give you peace of mind.

ERIS: So tell, tell!

ROB: When I first read about the situation, I thought that if I'd been there at Pantheacon, I would have taken part in the protest. I personally know transgender who have suffered from this kind of discrimination, and I couldn't let that stand. And if I had to do it over again, I'd still take part in the protest.

ERIS: Yay!

ROB: Which is why I'm as surprised as anyone to hear myself saying it now: Those "genetic women only" rituals have to be allowed at those big events.

ERIS: Ya-what?

EIRENE: What changed your mind?

ROB: Ultimately, nothing did. As much as I dislike those rituals, and as much as I won't allow them in my Grove, I don't have the right to deny anyone access to them at a convention. We talk about diversity and

tolerance in our neo-pagan movement, and not letting transgender into those rituals does go against that. But so does not letting those rituals into our festivals or conventions. If the people who run them think that they're doing the right thing, and they're willing to accept the consequences of what others think of them, then they should be given the chance to do them.

ERIS: And what about those poor, poor people who are being excluded?

ROB: They should continue to protest. And I'll protest right along with them. And they should also be open to dialogue



2. Eris depicted with wings on her shoulders and feet (and perhaps with a penis under her skirt?). (Attic Black Figure Cup, ca. 575-525 BCE, from Antikensammlung, Berlin, Germany)

throughout the year, not just at the big events. They need to make their case for inclusion, and the other side needs to make their case for separation.

EIRENE: That doesn't exactly sound peaceful.

ROB: Well, I'm certainly not encouraging violence, or even nasty rhetoric, from anybody. But I do think we need to have this discussion out in the open, and in person instead of just online, and big events like Pantheacon seem like a good place to do that. And then maybe, even if we can't come to a consensus, we can at least come to an understanding. Not that it will be easy. Honestly, I couldn't even blame the organizers of a big event if they didn't allow cis-only ritual ever again. I don't know that I'd want to deal with that hassle, and I don't expect anyone else to do so if they can't handle it.

IRIS: Message for the Rev. Rob Henderson?

ROB: Um, that's me.

ERIS: A third goddess is joining our fray?

EIRENE: What does the message say?



3. Iris (not to be confused with Eris), goddess of the rainbow and messenger of the gods. (Attic Red Figure Lekythos, ca. 480 BCE, from Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, New York, New York)

ROB: It says that the organizers of Pantheacon have just decided that all male- or female-only rituals at next year's event will be open to anyone who identifies as male or female, respectively.

EIRENE: Well, you did say you'd understand.

ROB: Yeah, I guess I do. Still, it's a little weird to come to a conclusion just in time for them to come to the opposite conclusion.

EIRENE: Now that's not true. You said you wanted the dialogue to keep on going until an understanding was reached, and they came to an understanding.

ROB: Heh. I guess they did.

ERIS: And come on, you know these people. Do you really think the cissie supporters are going to shut up and go away? Trust me, I know conflict. This is far from over.



ROB: You speak truth, Lady Strife. You speak the truth.

Yours in service to the Kindreds
and the Grove,

Rev. Rob Henderson, Senior Druid

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Grove Calendar: Spring Equinox to Summer Solstice

Rituals

An Bruane: Rituals and advanced spiritual exploration for those who wish to go beyond the standard High Day rites. Members only, please. Our current topic: Developing Monthly Rituals For SLG. 3/21, 5/2, 5/30, 6/20, 7-9 pm at Rob's

Liturgists' Roundtable—Ritual Planning: Help us plan our Beltaine and Summer Solstice rituals. All welcome. 4/18, 6/6, 7-9 pm at Sweetwaters

Nemeton Work Day: After saying goodbye to the nemeton we used for eighteen years, it's time to build a new one. Join us as we create and consecrate our new ritual site. All welcome. 4/15, 12-4 pm at Cavallo Farms

Fire Watch: We follow the traditions of our ancestors and keep the hearth fire burning the night before ritual. 4/28, 6/23, Dusk at Cavallo Farms

Dawn Beltaine Rite: Join us on our annual journey to the source of the Huron River to greet the sun and bless our water for the coming year. 4/29, 4:30 am, meet at Cavallo Farms

Beltaine Rite: Join us as we honor Aren, our god of love and freedom. There will be a raffle and potluck after the rite. 4/29, 2-5 pm at Cavallo Farms

Summer Solstice Rite: Join us as we honor Bel and Danu, our primal father and mother deities. There will be a raffle and potluck after the rite. 6/24, 2-5 pm at Cavallo Farms

RUNIC DIVINATION

April 22, 4 to 6 PM
11623 Lisa Lori Ln., South Lyon

Rodney Cox (SLG Assistant Senior Druid and ADF Magician's Guild Chief) leads a workshop on the Runes, including their history and usage in magic and divination.

The class costs \$5, please pre-register at 734-277-1897 or robh@shininglakes.org

Meetings

SLG Business Meeting: Discussion of general business and setting of the calendar. All welcome. 4/11, 5/9, 6/13, 7-9 at Sweetwaters

Social Events

Coffee Hour: Join us for our monthly discussion of interesting topics. All welcome. 3/23, 4/20, 5/18, 6/29, 7-9 pm at Sweetwaters

Game Night: Board games, socializing, and more! All welcome. 3/31, 7-10 pm, private residence in Ypsilanti (please contact us for address)

Helping the Huron

River Roundup: Collect water and insect samples from streams in the rivershed. Sponsored by the Huron River Watershed Council. (You must register in advance for this! jmartin@hrwc.org or 734-769-5971) 4/21, 9 am-2pm or 11 am-4pm, meet at NEW Center

Festivals

Wellspring: Join ADF members from all over the world for ritual, workshops, and the ADF annual meeting. 5/24-5/28, Brushwood Folklore Center, Sherman, NY (www.stonecreed.org/wellspring.htm)

Recipe Corner!

Pasta ala Puttenesca

1 can canned whole tomatoes
½ can tomato paste
8 black and green olives
¼ large onion
4 cloves of garlic
4 anchovies
1 Tbsp. capers
Olive oil
Red wine
Hot pepper flakes, oregano, paprika, rosemary, etc.

Dice everything. Saute garlic and onions in olive oil. Add wine and tomato and tomato paste

Chop tomatoes as they cook. Add everything but the herbs. Stir and simmer covered for 20 minutes. Add herbs and simmer until the sauce is thick. Serve over pasta.

If desired, add sausage, chicken, or beef before simmering.

—By Paul Hartzler

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
March 18	19	20 SPRING BEGINS	21 7-9 An Bruane Rob's	22	23 7-9 Coffee Hour Sweetwaters	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31 7-10 Game Night
April 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 EASTER	9	10	11 7-9 Business Mtg. Sweetwaters	12	13	14
15 12-4 Work Day Cavallo Farms	16	17	18 7-9 Liturgist RT Sweetwaters	19	20 7-9 Coffee Hour Sweetwaters	21 9-3 or 11-5 River Roundup NEW Center
22 4-6 Runic Divination Rob's EARTH DAY	23	24	25	26	27	28 Fire Watch Cavallo Farms
29 5 AM Dawn Rite 2-5 Beltaine Rite Cavallo Farms	30	May 1	2 7-9 An Bruane Rob's	3	4	5
6	7	8	9 7-9 Business Mtg. Sweetwaters	10	11	12
13 MOTHER'S DAY	14	15	16	17	18 7-9 Coffee Hour Sweetwaters	19
20	21	22	23	24 WELLSPRING	25 WELLSPRING	26 WELLSPRING
27 WELLSPRING	28 WELLSPRING	29	30 7-9 An Bruane Rob's	31	June 1	2
3	4	5	6 7-9 Liturgist RT Sweetwaters	7	8	9
10	11	12	13 7-9 Business Mtg. Sweetwaters	14 FLAG DAY	15	16
17 FATHER'S DAY	18	19	20 7-9 An Bruane Rob's SUMMER BEGINS	21	22	23 Fire Watch Cavallo Farms
24 2-5 Summer Solstice Rite Cavallo Farms	25	26	27	28	29 7-9 Coffee Hour Sweetwaters	30

Addresses:

Sweetwaters, 3393 Plymouth Rd., Ann Arbor
Cavallo Farms, 2185 N. Harris Rd., Ysilanti

NEW Center: 1100 N. Main, Ann Arbor
Rob's, 11623 Lisa Lori Ln., South Lyon, (734) 277-1897