

**Sheffield
Goddess Temple**

NEWS LETTER

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Issue 16 – Autumn Equinox 2019

Our Autumn Goddess and Temple Events

Rhibelisama

Goddess of the Northern Autumn

This goddess, whose name means "wise, Shining Queen", is commemorated in the name of the river Ribble, which flows from Yorkshire, through Lancashire, before ending at the Irish Sea. Legend has it that on a clear day it is possible to stand at the source of the river Ribble (Ribble Head in North Yorkshire, close to the Three Peaks), and glimpse that sea shining in the distant west.

In Celtic mythology the west is the direction of the Autumn Equinox and the mystical 'Land of Youth' known as *Tir Na Nog*. This sacred other world, beyond where the sun sets into the sea, is the wonderful place where deceased souls rest, feast, love and party whilst they await rebirth.

Until the end of the 18th century, the Ribble (like many other rivers, including the Don in South Yorkshire), was a great salmon river. In Celtic lore, Salmon are traditionally associated with longevity and the mystical gifts of wisdom.

The Legend of Finn McCool

(adapted from: www.yourirish.com/folklore/salmon-of-wisdom)

When God wiped the world clean with the Great Flood, he allowed a man named Fintan to survive by changing him into a salmon. After the waters receded, Fintan swam up the River Boyne from the sea. Eventually he found a quiet pool in the river where he could rest. Around this pool nine hazel trees were growing, each bearing nine hazel nuts. These nuts were filled with all the knowledge of the world.

At the Autumn Equinox the now mature nuts of wisdom fell into the pool. Hungry Fintan devoured them, and so all that wisdom became his. From then on he was known as *The Salmon of Knowledge*.

Centuries later a Druidic settlement was established on the banks of the Boyne. There a Druid by the name of Finegas taught the mysteries to his apprentice Finn McCool. One day when out fishing Finegas caught a giant salmon, which he knew must be *The Salmon of Knowledge*.

The Druid told his apprentice to build a fire and cook the fish, but warned the young man not to eat any of it - for Finegas intended to eat the salmon himself, and so gain all its wisdom. However some fat from the roasting fish splashed on to Finn's thumb and burned him. The youngster stuck his thumb in to his mouth to lessen the pain. With the salmon fat, came the salmon's wisdom!

Then Finegas realised then that it was not his destiny to receive the great wisdom from the salmon, but rather that it was meant for his apprentice. From that night on Finn McCool was destined to become the greatest of all the men of Ireland.

Temple Celebrations

Autumn Equinox Extravaganza

Saturday 21st September - join us to celebrate the Autumn harvest. Please ring the Airy Fairy shop (number below) to book your place on both the free and ticketed events:
 12:00pm – Autumn Equinox Celebration (free to attend)
 2:30pm – Workshops (free to attend)
 5:30pm – Vegan BBQ (£5 if paid in advance, £6 on the day)
 7:30pm – Jacqueline Haigh presents the "Goddess" show (£6)
 (see page 7, and: www.jacquelinehaigh.com/goddesscomedyshow)

Samhain Celebration

Weekend 2nd/3rd November – help us mark the end of the harvest season - and the beginning of Winter, or the "darker half" of the year! Please ring the Airy Fairy shop (number below) to book on to this free event, to book refreshments if required, and for details of times and updates - or see the temple web page (sheffieldgoddess temple.org).

Temple Diary Dates

Free Monthly Guided Meditation

Friday 11th October, 12:00 - 12:30 pm. No booking required.

Drum and Reiki Chakra Cleanse – Taster Workshop

Monday 23rd September 7:30 – 9:00 pm (with Carmen Edwards)

Moon Meets

Celebrate changing energies of the moon with Carmen Edwards:

Thursday 12th September 6:00 – 7:00 pm (*full moon*)

Monday 30th September 7:00 – 8:00 pm (*new moon*)

Monday 14th October 7:00 – 8:00 pm (*full moon*)

Monday 28th October 7:00 – 8:00 pm (*new moon*)

For further information:

www.facebook.com/Livethemagicwithcarmenedwards

or text/phone: 07939497525

To book events please ring Airy Fairy on 0114 2492090



Spiritual Crisis Network

- 21st September, 1:30-3:30 pm
- 19th October, 1:30-3:30 pm

Pagan Pathways – Talks, Discussion, Tuesdays, 8:00 pm

- 1st October: *Angels* – Rachel Rodham
- 15th October: *Number Symbolism* – Silverspear
- 29th October: *Something about Cloth* – Val Copley
- 12th November: *Jung and Individualism* - Tim Hill/Robin Ellis

Trees are the air we breathe

Trees are sacred. Trees give us the air we breathe. Without Yggdrasil, the Worlds' Tree (see page 8 of this newsletter), our worlds would cease to exist.

Destroying woodlands, whether through the mass felling of rain forests, or the chopping down of urban trees, puts our health, and that of the whole planet, at risk. It is ironic that local authorities such as the Wirral on Merseyside, and Sheffield in South Yorkshire, have become notorious for destroying thousands of healthy, life-giving trees – all in the name of 'health and safety'. Wirral campaign group 'For Trees' point out that their Council spends £220,000 annually felling trees, and that this *"is being driven by the 'risk industry' creating concerns that trees are a risk to health and safety, but the real risk for people is removing trees. The chance of being killed by a tree is 1 in 120,000,000. It's an outrage."*¹

Trees produce about 28% of the world's oxygen. 70% is produced by marine plants (phytoplankton). The remaining 2 percent of Earth's oxygen comes from other sources.²

In Sheffield STAG (Sheffield Tree Action Groups) report that 5,000 urban trees were felled in the period August 2012 to October 2017. Of these over 3,000 (60%) were officially removed for health and safety related reasons such as being supposedly "dangerous", "damaging" or "discriminatory" (e.g. obstructing footpaths).³

On the Wirral 'For Trees' lament that they have had no positive results in four years of campaigning. Whilst there has also been mass destruction of trees in Sheffield, at least here the results of campaigning have been a little more mixed, with some successes being recorded. STAG explain that *"In March 2018, work to remove thousands of street trees in the city and replace them with saplings as part of a £2bn*

*highways contract with Amey was put on hold following increasing protests against the strategy, and national political condemnation of the use of dozens of police officers and private security guards to support operations. Fresh inspections of over 200 trees that Sheffield Council had claimed had to be chopped down as a 'last resort' have identified just one that cannot be saved – leading anti-felling campaigners to say today their protests had been vindicated."*⁴

Clean air campaigns have identified pollution from traffic fumes as being one of the most immediate threats to public health for those of us living in cities. There is strong evidence to show that strategically planted trees can cut vehicle emissions and other particulates entering homes by 50%.⁵ Far from destroying trees, we should be expanding existing stocks through new planting, not merely replacing felled mature trees with new saplings.

In England tree-planting has failed to meet even relatively modest government targets. However Scotland has done

much better. There planting targets have been surpassed, and 84% of all new tree planting in Britain is now accounted for by Scotland, despite Scotland having only 8% of Britain's population (slightly less than Yorkshire).⁶

In Scotland alone 9,500,000 tonnes of CO² are removed annually from the atmosphere by forests – a clear example of why an increase in tree planting – and an end to significant levels of felling – is vital in the fight against climate change.¹ ♻️

How many trees does it take to produce oxygen for one person?

Deep breath, you're in for a big surprise when you find out how many trees we need to provide oxygen for our lungs! Trees release oxygen when they use energy from sunlight, making glucose from carbon dioxide and water. Like all plants, trees also use oxygen; but they produce more oxygen than they use up; otherwise there would be no net gain in growth.

A tree's photosynthesis process takes 6 molecules of CO² to produce one molecule of glucose, with 6 molecules of oxygen being released as a by-product. A glucose molecule contains 6 carbon atoms, so that's a net gain of one molecule of oxygen for every atom of carbon added to the tree.

A mature sycamore tree, for example, might be around 12m tall and weigh two tonnes. If it grows by 5% in a year, it will produce around 100kg of wood, of which 38kg will be carbon (absorbed from CO² in the air). Allowing for the relative molecular weights of oxygen and carbon, this equates to 100kg of oxygen per tree per year.

A human breathes about 9.5 tonnes of air in a year, but oxygen only makes up about 23 percent of that air, by mass, and we only extract a little over a third of the oxygen from each breath. That works out to a total of about 740kg of oxygen per year - seven or eight trees' worth.

If we allow for the fact that trees account for 28% of world oxygen production (with 70% coming from phytoplankton in the seas), then every human being on the planet needs two fully mature living trees to survive.

Sources: Luis Villazon, BBC Science Focus Magazine: <https://www.sciencefocus.com/>
<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/save-the-plankton-breathe-freely/>

⁴ <https://savesheffielddtrees.org.uk/2019/07/10/sheffield-protesters-vindicated-after-council-u-turn-on-axing-200-trees/>

⁵ Impact of Roadside Tree Lines on Indoor Concentrations of Traffic-Derived Particulate Matter, Barbara A. Maher, Imad A. M. Ahmed, Brian Davison, Vassil Karloukovski, and Robert Clarke, Environmental Science & Technology 2013 47 (23), 13737-13744, DOI: 10.1021/es404363m

⁶ www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/

¹ Morning Star 13th July 2019 p.23

² <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/save-the-plankton-breathe-freely/>

³ <https://savesheffielddtrees.org.uk/tree-felling-data/>

Dryads and Tree Spirits

Tree spirits are nature deities related to trees. In many cultures they are said to be young female entities, often connected to ancient fertility and tree worship lore. The status of these tree deities varies quite widely - from that of a local fairy/ghost/sprite or nymph, to that of a goddess.¹ The best known are probably the dryads² of

ancient Greek legend. Drys signifies "oak" in Greek, and dryads were originally the nymphs of oak trees, but the term later came to be used for all tree nymphs. They were normally considered to be very shy creatures - except around the Artemis, the Greek goddess of the hunt, forests, the moon, and archery, who was known to be a friend to most nymphs.³

There are two main types of tree spirit in Greek mythology: dryads and hamadryads. Dryads were often depicted in myth and art accompanied - or being pursued by - their male counterparts, the satyrs.⁴ Male satyrs could pursue dryads because dryads are not bound to their tree - they live near a particular tree, but not within it. Hamadryads on the other hand live within, and as part of, the tree itself.⁵

Some view tree spirits as minor but still immortal deities, but others believe that dryads, and in particular hamadryads, are mortal, and that their lives are tied to the trees they protect. When a tree reaches the end of its life, its dryad or hamadryad dies as well.

Greek mythology includes various tales involving dryads. Two of the best known are that of *Orpheus and Eurydice*, and *Echo and Narcissus*.

Orpheus and Eurydice⁴

Eurydice, an oak Dryad, fell in love with Orpheus through the beauty of the music he played for her. She and Orpheus wed, but she was so beautiful that another male admirer, Aristaeus, also pursued her. In her attempt to flee from Aristaeus, she was bitten by a venomous snake and died. Orpheus bitterly mourned her death, and travelled to the Underworld to rescue Eurydice from death.

His music put Cerberus, Hades' three-headed guard dog, to sleep, allowing Orpheus to enter the Underworld. Orpheus then used his music again to convince Hades, the god of the Underworld, to allow Eurydice to return with him to the realm of the living. However Hades insisted on one condition: Orpheus must not look back until they had both reached the upper world, or Eurydice would not be permitted to cross the threshold from the land of the dead.

At the last moment Orpheus doubted Hades' word, suspecting that the god might have deceived him. He turned around to see what was happening and saw the dryad he loved loyally following him. But Eurydice had not yet stepped over the threshold into the land of the living - and tragically she was swept way from her lover forever, falling back into the Underworld.

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dryad>

⁴ http://www.thewhitegoddess.co.uk/articles/mythology_folklore/dryads_and_other_faery_folk.asp

⁵ <https://mythology.net/greek/greek-creatures/dryad/>



¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_tree_deities

² Image: "Dryad" <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dryad11.jpg>

Stories of tree spirits in other mythologies are less well historically attested too. The Oak and Holly Kings written about by Robert Graves in his book *The White Goddess* for example, and claimed by Graves to be an ancient Celtic concept, are accepted by many commentators today as having been fabricated by Graves, rather than being genuinely ancient.¹ However this does of course not mean that tree spirits are not a genuinely valuable concept, or that they do not exist(!) On the contrary Graves' desire to promote the importance of tree spirits, if necessary at the expense of historical accuracy, probably reflects a genuinely felt need in many of us to recognise and honour the importance of both trees and their living spirits.

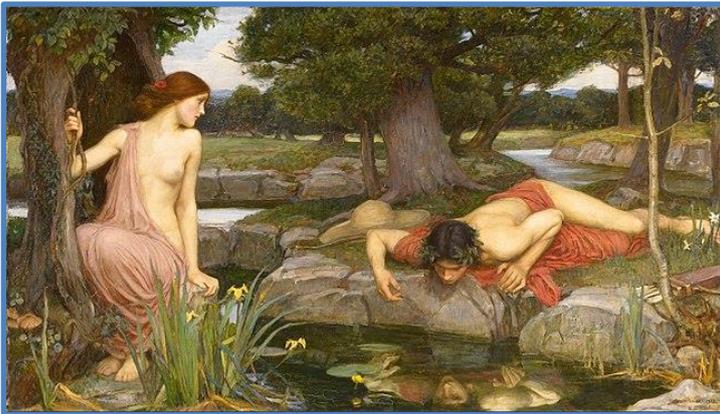


Image: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Echo_and_Narcissus_-_John_William_Waterhouse.jpg

One north European example of a tree deity which is historically better attested to is Hyldemoer: *"In Denmark, the Hyldemoer ("Elder-mother") or Hyldequinde ("Elder-woman") is a spirit like a wood-nymph or dryad that lives in the elder tree. The spirit is said to haunt or torment people who build from elder wood unless they ask permission first."*² In particular, Scandinavian folklore reveals that Hyldemoer especially dislikes her trees being chopped down to make cradles and cribs. It is said that if you put a baby to sleep in an elder wood cradle, Hyldemoer will come along and pull at the innocent babe's legs until it shrieks!³

This seems to be a reflection of the north European perceived requirement to respect and conciliate our natural environment. Treat the great goddess Mother Nature fairly, and she will be generous to us: *"We need the gifts of the Vanir [land fertility god/desses] every day in order to survive... the doctrine of exchange teaches that we must balance what we take from the earth with what we give in return."*⁴

Treat our trees, our dryads and tree spirits of all kinds, with the respect they deserve, and in return they will respect and nurture us, as we nurture and protect them.



¹ See for example: <https://lairbhan.blogspot.com/2016/05/robert-graves-influence-on-modern.html>

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyldemoer>

³ <https://www.godchecker.com/norse-mythology/HYLDEMOER/>

⁴ Diana L. Paxson, *Taking up the Runes*, Maine, USA, 2005, p.86

Echo and Narcissus

Echo was a beautiful dryad, a wood-nymph fond of the wild woods and hills, where she devoted herself to caring for the trees. She was a favourite of the goddess Artemis, and attended her in the chase. But Echo had one failing: she was too fond of talking, and always wanted the last word. One day the goddess Hera⁵ was looking for her husband who, she had reason to fear, was amusing himself amongst the woodland nymphs. Echo's insistent talkativeness contrived to detain Hera until the nymphs had made their escape. When Hera discovered the trick, she passed sentence upon Echo with these words: *"You shall forfeit the use of that tongue with which you have cheated me, except for that one purpose you are so fond of - reply. You shall still have the last word, but no power to speak first."*

One day, long after Hera's curse upon her, the dryad Echo saw Narcissus, a beautiful youth, hunting in the mountains. She loved him and followed his footsteps. She longed to address him in the softest accents, and win him over to talk to her! But it was not in her power. She waited for him to speak first, and had her answer ready.

Eventually the youth, having become separated from his companions, shouted out loud, *"Anybody here?"* Echo replied, *"Here."* Narcissus looked, but seeing no one, called out, *"Come to me!"* Echo answered, *"Come to me!"*

"Let's find each other and talk," shouted the youth. The maid answered with all her heart in exactly the same words, and hastened to the spot, ready to throw her arms around his neck. But then seeing at last that he had been conversing with a tree spirit, Narcissus grew afraid of the Dryad, and started back, exclaiming, *"Hands off nymph! I would rather die than you should have me!"*

"Have me," Echo begged in desperation, but all in vain. Narcissus ran from her, and the embarrassed Echo went to hide her blushes in the recesses of the woods. From that time on she lived in caves, leaving behind the beauty of the forest trees. Eventually there was nothing left of her except her voice. But with that she is still ready to reply to anyone who calls her, and she still keeps up her old habit of always having the last word.

However Nemesis, the Goddess of Revenge (see page 6), heard Echo's lament, and decided to punish Narcissus. One day when out walking by a lake Narcissus stopped to drink some water. He saw his reflection on the smooth surface of the lake, and became entranced by his own beauty! He could not obtain the object of his desire though, and so pined away, that he died by the lake from sorrow.

It is said that to this day Narcissus is still admiring himself – but now in the Underworld, staring at the waters of the river Styx.

⁵ Hera: Greek goddess of marriage & birth, known to be jealous and vengeful towards the many lovers and offspring of her husband Zeus. <https://greekgodsandgoddesses.net/goddesses/hera/>

Nemesis - Goddess of Fairness and Justice

Too much of a good thing is generally thought to be... a bad thing. Indeed too much of anything is, virtually by definition, a bad thing. To really thrive we all need a sense of balance, and an ability to achieve balance in many aspects of our lives. And in this respect, the gods themselves are no different.

Too much power – corrupts. Too much wealth, leads only to unreasoning greed for yet more riches. Even too much love can have its downside:

foolish infatuation, senseless obsession with the object of one's desire, leads all too often not to fertile and creative two-way relationships, but to negative impacts ranging from hopelessness and despair to various levels of self-harm.

The ancient Greeks, as usual, had a word for it, and a deity as well. Take an unbalanced approach to life's challenges and trials, and in Greece you were likely to risk meeting your nemesis, and/or the goddess Nemesis herself, often not without distinctly unpleasant consequences. Dictionary definitions of nemesis include:

- something that a person cannot conquer, achieve, etc.
- an opponent or rival whom a person cannot best or overcome
- an agent or act of retribution or punishment, and...
- the goddess of divine retribution.¹

The goddess Nemesis was *"fearsome... yet widely worshipped. The Greeks built temples to honour her, and the Romans took her cult to the ends of the Roman Empire, from Dacia to Scotland."*² Her name comes from the Greek 'nemêsis' and 'nemô', "dispenser of dues". Theoi.com says that she is the personification of the resentment aroused by those who committed crimes with apparent impunity, or who had inordinate good fortune. Nemesis directed human affairs in such a way as to maintain and correct equilibrium.

One of Nemesis' attributes was the scales, because of that concern with equilibrium. The story of Polycrates shows how this worked. He feared that his continuing good



Image: <https://www.mygodpictures.com/category/goddess-nemesis/>

fortune would attract the attention of Nemesis. So he began making her offerings, and at first his luck held. Until one day he tossed a valuable ring into the ocean during a voyage, as a gift to the goddess. That night, he had a feast, and his ring turned up inside a fish! He knew then that the goddess had rejected his offering; he became anxious, stopped eating, and died.²

The scales also linked her to the goddess of Justice Dike,³ and

a curse tablet from Caerleon in Wales invokes her against a thief: *"Lady Nemesis, I give thee a cloak and a pair of boots; let him who wore them not redeem them except with his life and blood."*²

Although Nemesis might seem to be a dark and frightening goddess, she was also a highly honoured one. These two things might be related! Latin inscriptions from altars, temples and offerings include the titles *Regina* (Queen), *Augusta* (August - but also related to the Roman conception of Imperial power), *Sancta* (Holy), and *Sacrae* (Sacred).

Some dedications to the goddess use the phrase *ex visu*, meaning "after a dream", *ex iussu* ("by the goddess' orders"), or *somnio admonitus* ("after a warning in a dream"). These dedications are spread across the empire, from Pannonia⁴ to Chester in England. The Chester inscription was found in the wall of a shrine behind the arena, and reads: DEAE NEMESI SEXT - MARCI ANVS V S - EX VISV ("Dedicated to the goddess Nemesis by Sextus Marcianus, after a dream").⁵ Out of 69 inscriptions around the empire which name Nemesis, 16 come from the areas around amphitheatres.²

[continues on page 8]

³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dike_\(mythology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dike_(mythology)): *"Dike: the Greek goddess of justice and the spirit of moral order and fair judgement based on immemorial custom, in the sense of socially enforced norms and conventional rules. She is depicted as a young, slender woman carrying a physical balance scale and wearing a laurel wreath. She is represented in the constellation Libra which is named for the Latin name of her symbol (Scales)."*

⁴ *"Pannonia was located in the territory of present-day western Hungary, eastern Austria, northern Croatia, north-western Serbia, northern Slovenia, western Slovakia and northern Bosnia and Herzegovina."*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pannonia>

⁵ <http://www.chestertourist.com/amphitheatre.htm>

¹ <https://www.dictionary.com>

² <https://earthandstarryheaven.com/2019/07/11/nemesis/#more-20064>

Autumn Recipe

source: www.ravenandcrone.com

Autumn Equinox Stew

Give thanks for the earth's bounty with this luscious stew made from fresh seasonal vegetables. This stew cooks quickly and can be easily prepared over a festive fire or on the stove.

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 large aubergine, cubed
- 1 small squash, peeled, cubed
- 1 large courgette, peeled and cubed
- 1 tsp. salt
- Black pepper to taste
- 1 sprig fresh thyme
- 3 large tomatoes, diced
- 1 1/2 cups of water
- 1 cup dried lentils



Method

Put olive oil in a large pot on medium heat. Sauté onion and garlic until highly aromatic. Add aubergine, squash and courgette. Sauté until edges show signs of cooking. Add remaining ingredients and simmer on medium heat for 10 to 15 minutes. Serve with fresh-baked bread.



Goddess - Comedy Storytelling



Saturday 21st September 7:30 pm - £6

"A comedy storytelling show based on my experiences working as a receptionist in a Tantric Massage parlour" - Jacqueline Haigh

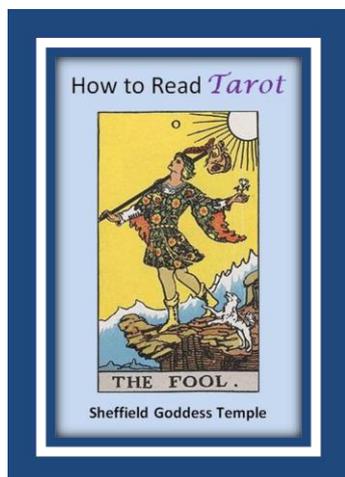
The Temple on the Web



For all the most up to date information on what is going on at the temple, don't forget to check out our website which has all the latest news of events, and links to our Facebook and Twitter pages: <https://sheffieldgoddess temple.org/>

Discover

The Tarot



Booklet available in the temple (£4).

The temple is open each day, Monday to Saturday 12:30 to 1:30pm, or ask in the Airy Fairy shop.

Agree or Disagree?

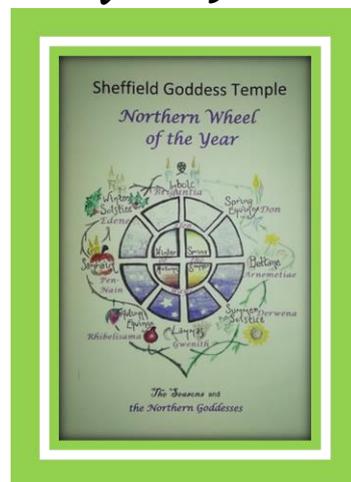
"Absolute faith corrupts as absolutely as absolute power."
Eric Hoffer

Write for the Newsletter

Do you follow a particular pagan path? Do you have an interest in an individual goddess, or a whole set of deities? Are specific aspects of daily life, such as the environment or social relationship issues, of concern to you? Do you have a favourite seasonal recipe? Please consider writing for this newsletter (articles can be as short as you like or up to about 1,500 words). Contact Jamie at: temple@lovecat.com

Discover Our

Northern Wheel of the Year



Booklet available in the temple (£4).

The temple is open each day, Monday to Saturday 12:30 to 1:30pm, or ask in the Airy Fairy shop.

Nemesis

[continued from page 6]

Chester Amphitheatre was built in the late first century CE, when many such buildings were being constructed throughout the Roman Empire. It was probably used both for entertainments and for practising troop manoeuvres and weapon training. Chester is unusual in that the shrine to Nemesis is not near to but outside the amphitheatre, but is actually situated inside it - behind a door to the left of the north entrance. The room contained an altar dedicated to Nemesis, as she was believed to control the fate of the performers.¹

The Romans tended to pair Nemesis with Fortuna, since Nemesis balanced out Fortuna's generosity. The Greeks, however, saw her slightly differently, pairing her with Themis, the goddess of justice (and mother of the aforementioned Dike³). As the goddess who held the scales and kept things balanced, they seemed a natural pairing. The other goddess paired with Nemesis was Aphrodite. This may seem surprising, but they shared the apple branch as an attribute, and both had shrines at Patrae. Perhaps a cool and calculating approach by Nemesis was supposed to balance out the heat of Aphrodisiac passions.²

Today, many Hellenic Pagans still hold celebrations in honour of Nemesis, acknowledging both her power over the living and as a goddess of the dead. Orphic Hymn³ 61 is a prayer to honour Nemesis:⁴

*Thee, Nemesis, I call, almighty queen,
by whom the deeds of mortal life are seen:
eternal, much revered, of boundless sight,
alone rejoicing in the just and right:
changing the counsels of the human breast
for ever various, rolling without rest.
To every mortal is thy influence known,
and men beneath thy righteous bondage groan;
for every thought within the mind concealed
is to thy sight perspicuously revealed.
The soul unwilling reason to obey,
by lawless passion ruled, thine eyes survey.
All to see, hear, and rule, O power divine,
whose nature equity contains, is thine.
Come, blessed, holy Goddess, hear my prayer,
and make thy mystics' life thy constant care.*

So remember: don't lose your sense of fairness, equity and balance. "Absolute faith corrupts as absolutely as absolute power."⁵ Even the gods need a sense of fairness and balance to survive. Don't let a desire for power corrupt you, or a wish for material sufficiency degenerate into greed for gold; don't let selfless love for another degenerate into selfish obsession and infatuation... or you might meet your nemesis, perhaps in the form of the goddess herself. ✨

¹ <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/chester-roman-amphitheatre/history/>

² Sheena McGrath: earthandstarryheaven.com

³ "THE ORPHIC HYMNS are a collection of 87 short religious poems composed in either the late Hellenistic (C3rd or C2nd B.C.) or early Roman (C1st to C2nd A.D.) era. They are based on the beliefs of Orphism, a mystery cult or religious philosophy which claimed descent from the teachings of the mythical hero Orpheus." <https://www.theoi.com/Text/OrphicHymns1.html>

⁴ Wigington, Patti. "Profile of Nemesis." Learn Religions, learnreligions.com

⁵ Eric Hoffer (American author, 1902-1983): www.greatest-quotations.com

Yggdrasil

The Nine Worlds' Tree

In north European mythology Yggdrasil is the tree which holds and nourishes the nine worlds. Central to these worlds is Midgard, the Middle World (Tolkien's Middle Earth, or our own world). Just as trees in our world nourish the air with oxygen, so Yggdrasil the mother tree feeds each of the nine worlds with their different essential energy requirements.

Midgard is granted time, change, and the seasons, culminating in life, death, and birth, marked by the rune J (Jera). The moderate, temperate energies which allow life in Midgard, are generated by the interaction of two other worlds of elemental extremes: Nifelheim, the land of freezing mists and ice (marked by the N rune, Nyd), and Muspelheim, the land of fire and flame (marked by the M rune, Dagaz).

Below Midgard is Hel. This is not the Christian hell of everlasting torture by fire, but the cold land of the goddess Hel, designated by the rune H (Hagalaz). Her realm is where those who die on land of old age or illness go (death at sea takes you to the sea-goddess Rán). Close by lie both Jötenheim, the land of the Ice-giants, elemental forces of nature whose rune is I (Isa), and Svartalfheim, the land of the underground dwelling Dark Elves. Their rune is S (Eiwaz).

Above Midgard, higher in Yggdrasil's branches, there are two worlds linked by the energies of love, fertility, creativity and growth. The first is Vanaheim, home to the Vanir fertility gods. The Vanaheim rune is V (Ing). The second is Lightalfheim, where the Light Elves live, whose rune is L (Sol). Both these worlds are ruled by Frey, the male fertility god, and his sister the great Goddess Freya, the mistress of both love and battle.

Finally, at the apex of the tree, at the end of a rainbow bridge guarded by the god Heimdall, there may be found Asgard, the fortress home of the Æsir gods. This is where Woden's Valhalla is located – the destination of half of those dying in battle (the other half are chosen by Freya as leader of the divine Valkyrie female warriors). Asgard's rune is A (Gifu).

While Yggdrasil lives, all nine worlds, from the freezing lower levels to the fertile upper realms, are supported in her branches. Yet just as life-giving trees are uprooted in Midgard, so Yggdrasil herself is threatened. In Nifelheim there lives the dragon Nídhögg; he gnaws away continually at the worlds' tree's roots, thereby threatening not just Yggdrasil, but all life held in her branches.

Just as we in Midgard undermine our own survival by attacking trees, so the dragon Nídhögg's actions threaten even his own existence, for if Yggdrasil falls, so does Nifelheim, and so does Nídhögg. N

Adapted from: *Leaves of Yggdrasil*, Freya Aswynn, St. Paul, USA, 1994 pp.160-163

