

Notes from the Underground

We are delighted to offer our readers an excerpt from Ronald Hutton's new book, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. To readers familiar with his previous works, *Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles* and *Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*, Dr Hutton needs no introduction, and new readers are sure to find his ideas provocative and entertaining. We are delighted to see such a book published by the prestigious Oxford University Press. In addition to whatever effect this work might have on the Neopagan community, it has already made its mark on academia. Professor Hutton writes:

You probably haven't heard of the Dictionary of National Biography, which is a huge work in about fifty volumes, begun under Victoria and supposed to include potted lives of everybody who has contributed significantly to British history. It matters a lot to historians, but also to Establishment Brits. Every few decades it gets revised, and the latest revision is under way currently. A hundred top British historians were asked to submit names for possible inclusion. On an impulse I suggested Gerald Gardner and Alex Sanders. The official response was silence, the informal one a not unkindly comment that such people were of significance only to private groups. Last Friday I received a letter from the committee of Oxford dons who edit the work, informing me that following the publication of "*Triumph*" it was apparent that both men had made major contributions to national history, and so should be included. I was asked to write their entries, and shall. It is another step in the coming of age of Paganism in Britain.

Two other writers address the issue of who we are and (even more important) who we think we are. The husband-and-wife team of Cat Chapin-Bishop and Peter Bishop discuss,

in an essay commissioned by *The Pom*, the embarrassing skeletons in the collective closet of even today's more 'out and about' Pagans. Jenny Blain, who has previously contributed several articles on the practice of *seidhr* among today's heathenfolk, has graciously allowed us to publish the paper she presented to the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion last year. She follows a thread that has appeared in several of our previous issues by interviewing a wide variety of Neopagans about their actual belief systems, and exploring the ways in which these words and images relate to the respondents' everyday life experiences.

A fellow practitioner of the Northern Mysteries, Dana Kramer-Rolls, offers a paper originally presented at PantheaCon in San Francisco earlier this year, which is part textual scholarship and part theological discussion. Many scholars of folklore and related fields are now suggesting that with the demise of Frazer's theory of 'survivals' we may need to look beyond conventional Medieval sources—such as Snorri Sturluson—for the spiritual underpinnings of Neopagan beliefs and practices. In doing so, Dr Kramer-Rolls proposes a new model of Northern Cosmology, based on a metaphor of the Well of Wyrð and the World Tree. A shorter version of this article was published in *Idunna: A Journal of Northern Tradition* 42 (Winter 2000).

From another presentation at this year's PantheaCon, we are especially please to offer an excellent article on the Hindu goddess Kali. As Pagans, we often invoke Kali as a kind of generic third-world goddess, without paying too close attention to her complex and sometimes daunting iconography. David Nelson, a member of the Vedanta Society and a translator of sacred Hindu texts, provides us with a coherent and instructive view of Kali and her followers, past and present, East and West.

Persephone's hard-working minions.