

RAW POWER

WITCHCRAFT, BABALON & FEMALE SEXUALITY

Let us begin with a quote from that most important of Witchcraft texts, the inquisitor's bible, *Malleus Maleficarum*:

All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which in woman is insatiable

The fantasies of the witch hunters do conceal a truth, not only about sex but about the source of power: Woman.

There is both a fascination and a fear at work here.

All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which in woman is insatiable

For all the tongs, pincers, irons and fire, they are frightened of the carnal appetite of woman.

This is the first principle of witchcraft, before poppets, dolls, charms, chants, potions, candles and claptrap: the raw power of female sexuality.

Stripped bare, violated, hung in strappado, burned, yet woman remains miraculously unquenchable amongst the flames.

All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which in woman is insatiable

Though the inquisition is still with us, She cannot be burned when she is the fire.



So can we find in modern witchcraft a way to access this incandescent power? Are there voices, and is there a Goddess who addresses carnal lust?

We are the witchcraft. We are the oldest organisation in the world. When man was first born, we were. We sang the first cradle song. We healed the first wound, we comforted the first terror. We were the Guardians against the Darkness, the Helpers on the Left Hand Side.

*We are on the side of man, of life and of the individual. Therefore we are against religion, morality and government.
Therefore our name is Lucifer.*

*We are on the side of freedom, of love, of joy and laughter and divine drunkenness.
Therefore our name is Babalon.*

Sometimes we move openly, sometimes in silence and in secret. Night and day are one to us, calm and storm, seasons and the cycles of man, all these things are one, for we are at the roots. Supplicant we stand before the Powers of Life and Death, and are heard of these powers and avail. Our way is the secret way, the unknown direction. Ours is the way of the serpent in the underbrush, our knowledge is in the eyes of goats and of women.

This is one of the surviving fragments of the work of Jack Parsons. Written in 1950 at the nativity of modern pagan witchcraft and yet his writing and ideas are still largely unknown. His is a name not mentioned in the history of the Craft or the index of Ronald Hutton.

Our own Work is a continuation of the spirit, if not the letter of his work and a return to the roots of witchcraft. In the instinctive and passionate example of Jack Parsons, we can find a way to reconnect with the primal spirit of woman and man. A partnership of equals.

The story of Jack can be reduced to one whispered word, the name of his Goddess:

BABALON

His Goddess and ours, is the derided whore of *Revelations*.

In *Revelations* 17 John of Patmos evokes Her:

and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

And when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

But this is not a strictly Christian image, behind the sulphur and brimstone is the spectacular oracular Goddess of love and sex come to engulf the world. Not a Black or a White, but a Red Goddess.

We have painstakingly exposed the Pagan origins of *Revelations* in our writing. Our research has taken us on pilgrimage to the very cave where John composed his poison pen letter to the Goddess. We have done more bible study than most devout Christians. The inescapable fact of our research is that Christianity is violently opposed to the Goddess, to Witchcraft and to the pursuit of knowledge.

In particular the image of *Revelations* comes from the demonization of the love goddess known as Inanna, Ishtar, Astarte, a slur repeated in Biblical literature since the captivity in Babylon. The failure of their god to save Jerusalem and the Temple from destruction was squarely blamed on the worship of pagan divinities in the propaganda hate-speak of the Biblical Prophets.

John in *Revelations* continues the war against women and in particular their oracular role. In Ephesus the priestess would bind a band around her forehead inscribed with the greek word MYSTERY and utter prophecies. This speaking Goddess was a threat to those who saw religion as signed and sealed in a book. It is this direct connection that defines Witchcraft.

In the pagan cults it was wine which inspired divine intoxication, a wine loaded with hashish, opium, henbane and rue, a wine sweetened with sexual juices. But

to John, this was a poisoned chalice and the Priestess who entered possession states, a whore.

Needless to say, drugs of vision are also those of sexual ecstasy, and a Witchcraft that does not fly to the Sabbat on these wings is no witchcraft at all. Limitations on sexual freedom go hand in hand with the banning of the Sabbatic wine.

In the iconography of Babalon and glimpses through biblical scripture it is possible to experience a whole forbidden history unfurling which drenches us in perfume and nectar, which lacerates us with thorns. Woman is the second sex, raped, degraded, despised and demonised. Yet her erotic power burns undiminished. This is Babalon.

From a legacy of Inanna, Ishtar, Astarte, Aphrodite, a new Goddess has arrived, one who is not chaste and virginal, one who is not disconnected from her body, one who possesses us with the fury of Love and the ecstasy of living witchcraft. Babalon is the critical figure behind the Enochian angel magic of John Dee, Babalon confounded Crowley and Babalon turned Jack Parsons into living flame.

Rather than a reconstruction of the past, this is a goddess who is taking form around us and within us NOW.

We are not saying that everyone must work with Babalon and the explicit power of female sexuality, but the fact that you are here shows that some part of you wants to be turned on.

DESCENT OF INANNA

The suppression and control of female sexuality is not a new phenomena. Some of our the earliest extant writings, texts from Mesopotamia going back to the third millennium BCE such as *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* and *The Descent of Inanna*, offer evidence that woman's body was subject to extreme ambivalence, non-procreative sex in particular being regarded with suspicion and fear.

It is at this time we first discover the *lilitu*, malign female demons who controlled the 'stormy (disease-bearing) winds' and flew like birds. They were defined by negative sexual characteristics: they are unmarried and thus not under the dominion of a male; they are seducers, actively seeking men to satisfy them; and they are child-killers. Not only do they solicit and engage in 'unnatural' sex, that is, non-procreative sex, the *lilitu* steal and kill children, emasculate men, and cause miscarriage and death in mothers. They are, whilst seemingly exiled to the wilderness, to *outside*, able to transgress and penetrate human habitations and

domesticity. We see them leaning out of windows and doorways, the standard iconographic motif of the prostitute, and slipping into houses uninvited. They are the thieves and whores that prey on civilised and law-abiding people, and they are at the heart of the city.

This same iconography is used for the goddess herself: Inanna-Ishtar. She stands at the window *looking for a man in order to seduce him, love him and kill him*. Inanna too displayed herself provocatively in windows and doors, She initiates sexual contact and was called *sahiratu*, the one who roams about. In hymns she goes *from house to house and street to street*, a phrase later used to describe demons and repeated in the *Song of Songs*, which despite being attributed to Solomon is a cut and paste of these earlier hymns to Inanna.

The lilitu are the inspiration for Lilith, dislodged from the Huluppu tree and flown into Jewish consciousness as the archetype of insubordinate and dangerous female sexuality. In Jewish myth, Lilith was the first wife of Adam, who refused to lie beneath him and wanted to take the mother superior rather than the missionary position. This is the genealogy of the witch, whose family tree profoundly roots her in the conflicted DNA of our earliest civilisations.

The disconnect from the shamanic consciousness of our ancestors was accomplished by building walled cities, stepped pyramids imitating the emergence of a hierarchical order and patrilineal organisation; the sacred mountain and cave now made of burned brick, the Priestess who gives the King his right to rule now a state function rather than a wild woman, a shamaness. The stories and myths of Mesopotamia are already ancient when they are pressed into clay tablets, and we can intuit layers of earlier Shamanic material in them.

It is worth plunging into the myth of the descent of Inanna-Ishtar. A description of the initiation of Goddess and priestess, a mystery play, and a coming of age drama of reaching sexual maturity. It can also be read as a Shamanic descent and ordeal, in which Inanna is forced at each of the seven gates of the Underworld to surrender one of the seven tokens of her earthly power with which she has prepared herself, as she is brought bent low and naked to the throne room of her sister Ereshkigal.

Ereshkigal is the goddess of the underworld, the Great Below. She is, in one sense, the chthonic mind, pre-conscious and unilluminated darkness, absolute hunger and appetite. A devourer.

Inanna from her domain in the Great Above has heard her sister Ereshkigal – ostensibly grieving for her husband – though the description is clearly playing on her suffering menstrual pains, or being in the pangs of labour, or in heat. All these explanations I believe are plausible and intended.

At the seven concentric gates of the underworld, Inanna is compelled to give up all her worldly attributes of power and femininity. She is not comfortably naked, she is stripped for the final confrontation with her sister. Witchcraft and shamanic initiations are always an ordeal. The text reads:

*Naked and bowed low, Inanna entered the throne room.
Ereshkigal rose from her throne.
Inanna started toward the throne.
The Annuna, the judges of the underworld, surrounded her.
They passed judgement against her.*

*Then Ereshkigal fastened on Inanna the eye of death.
Then spoke against her the word of wrath.
She uttered against her the cry of guilt.*

She struck her.

*Inanna was turned into a corpse,
A piece of rotting meat,
And was hung from a hook on the wall.*

Inanna is hung up to season like meat in a butchers. The image of Inanna hung from a hook brings to mind suspension rituals, but in close analysis we become aware that this act of initiation is an *inversion*.

When meat is hung it is from the hind legs, the feet, so that the blood can be drained from the throat. So here we have a chthonic sacrifice, and simultaneously an image of menstruation. One could also conjecture a connection to the head down position of a baby in the birth canal). A possible earlier version of the myth would have Inanna consumed (as sacrifice) by her sister and then birthed by her. This cannot be dismissed as primitive physiological (mis)understanding, similar acts of the 'Mothers' and female Seizers are detailed in the tantras. See the *The*

Kiss of the Yogini by David Gordon White for many interesting parallels and insights. I highly recommend reading and studying this work.

Inanna is rescued from the Underworld by the intercession of another shaman, Enki, who sends two golems (a *galatur* and a *kurgarra*) fashioned from spit and fingernail dirt. These comfort Ereshkigal in her pain, by repeating her cries, in the manner of professional mourners. We could even see them as dildos, as sex can be harnessed by women to alleviate menstrual cramps. It is worth reading *The Wise Wound* by Penelope Shuttle for more insights. Her work, and that of her husband, the fellow poet Peter Redgrove, whose *Black Goddess and the Sixth Sense* should be on any witchcraft reading list.

Returning to our narrative: soothed, Ereshkigal grants the *galatur* and *kurgarra* a wish and they ask for the corpse of Inanna which they bring back to life with the food and water of life. She returns to the earth with a retinue of demons who drag off her useless husband Tammuz in her stead.

What, besides a life for a life and life for death, has been exchanged?

In being stripped of all that identified her as a woman, a priestess and a queen, in this absolute self-effacement before her sister, Inanna gains self-knowledge. She has confronted the dark, unknown recesses of the world that lies outside her domain (life light love) and by this act of acknowledging the *other*, this sacrifice of herself, has won carnal knowledge from the darkness of Ereshkigal.

Sexuality becomes not a blind force that controls you, but a power that can be exercised knowingly. In psychological terms we would call this integration: the goddess who descends is not the goddess who returns. Ereshkigal has gifted Inanna the raw power of her sexuality. As the story ends: *All praise to Ereshkigal!*

This self-conscious use of sexuality is traditionally the domain of the prostitute, and Inanna was the goddess of sacred sex and of prostitutes, whose repertoire of techniques included how to void or avoid pregnancy, the arts of evoking and invoking pleasure, and the arts of disguise, transformation and illusion. These are gained through uninhibited knowledge of the self. Though we do not wish to glamorise the life of the ancient or modern prostitute, she remains a symbol of independent female sexuality in a human history of carnal terror. Confidence, strength, awareness: these are rarely gifts we are born with, but wrested from the dark mirror to the underworld.

Witchcraft, like the ordeal of Inanna, is a matter of carnal knowledge, it is a question of gnosis in and through the body.

We use this mythic structure of the descent in our own work, returning to the Great Below every year in our rites at Samhain. Without the descent to the underworld, there can be no flight to the Sabbat. Incubation, the dark, the cave, the deep mind, are where we find and bring back power to transform both our world and our selves. Sexuality and creativity are inexorably linked but to access these most potent and primordial depths we need to go ever further, stripped naked of our civilised selves and emptied of words.

This we do in the name of Babalon.

As we have seen, the demonic feminine of Lilith migrates into Judaism, as too does a guilty and demonised Eve. Inanna-Ishtar becomes Astarte who, with her consort Baal, is denounced in the Old Testament before St John gives a final twist to the tale, and with the trappings of the Roman Empire, names her after the old enemy, Babylon.

Revelations like that other hymn to the Love Goddess, the *Song of Songs*, carried the old religion into a new post pagan age. It has been misread and misinterpreted ever since, but remains one of the core myths upon which our entire modern world revolves.

MIDDLE AGES

Babalon's image hangs over the Middle Ages as the Whore of *Revelations*, her voluptuous sensuality and ostentatious wealth and beauty raised as the epitome of carnality and sin. Europe, ravaged by the Black Death, lusted after images of Apocalypse – seeking salvation from famines, war and a plague which killed 50% of the population in four grim years. The stage was set for the appearance of Woman, Dragon, Beast and Anti-Christ.

The end of the world was nigh as popular pamphlets and preachers alike proclaimed. Between 1458 and 1650 *Revelations* was reprinted in 750 editions. The imagery of Revelations saturated the culture. This macabre flowering of apocalyptic Christianity opened the way for intensified sexual oppression – though at the heart of the rose is also the solution to it: *the survival of the Goddess in a newer and more potent modern form.*

Medieval history of is a litany of the reduction and constriction of women's powers and prospects in the world. The freedoms women had exercised in sphere's such as medicine and childbirth were revoked. Midwives and their plant philtres became suspect; the male alchemist appropriated the function of maternity while the wombs of real women effectively became the property of their feudal lords.

But the war was wider than this.

Let me give you one example: in France, the state decriminalised rape against women, so long as they were peasants or of the working class. Such a blatantly divisive manoeuvre on the part of the French municipal authorities would have catastrophic effects for both sexes. Women would bear the scars and the social stigma of what was an officially sponsored violation – designed to appease working class men's sexual frustration. Men would suffer in the breakdown of class solidarity, as victims of a strategy of divide and rule which turned them into disenfranchised workers and controlled male sexuality through the female.

It is worth quoting Sylvia Federici here, in whose book *Caliban and the Witch*, much of this shocking story is told:

The legalization of rape created a climate of intense misogyny that degraded all women regardless of class. It also desensitized the population to the perpetration of violence against women, preparing the ground for the witch-hunt which began in this same period. It was at the end of the 14th century that the first witch-trials took place, and for the first time the Inquisition recorded the existence of an all-female heresy and sect of devil-worshippers.

The demonisation and control of women under the feudal, proto-Capitalist system signified the intent of the ruling classes to domesticate *all* people: It was woman, as herself, and as mother, sister, wife, lover, comrade in arms, who had to be undone in order to break the strength of the community.

This process of domestication has continued, with no real men and women, but rather a passive mass of dead-eyed consumers. It is sex and difference which can ignite us, just as rape was used to divide us.

The French historian Jules Michelet, looking at this period of history with 19th century sensibilities, saw in the figure of the witch a symbol of the French people.

The rising of a Romantic nationalistic sentiment amongst the bourgeoisie cast the figure of the witch as both pre-Christian and anti-Christian icon. Michelet, inspired by Jacob Grimm and his book *Deutsche Mythologie*, recast the witch as a healer, a wise-woman and defender of the people – as the repository of native knowledge and all-but-lost traditions.

He also, specifically and fictitiously, identified her with Revolution. In his novel, *The Sorceress*, he writes:

Under such a system of blind and indiscriminate repression, to venture little and to venture much and far, is all one, and the risk the same. The very danger incurred increased the Sorceresses' reckless, and led them to do and dare everything.

Michelet also explicitly unites woman's body with Revolution, and the hoped-for return to the natural, cyclical rhythm which she embodies. He writes:

... that the marvellous monster of universal life was swallowed up inside her; that from now on life, death, everything was held within her entrails, and at the price of such painful labour, she had conceived Nature.

An image strangely reminiscent of Ereshkigal moaning with lust or labour in the Underworld.

It is time for Witchcraft to remember and read the work of Michelet.

Both inversion and revolution are inherent in Witchcraft. What in the microcosmic sense can be found in the body of woman, manifests in the panorama of lived and shared experience as the Sabbats and Black Masses. Michelet once again recognised this:

At the Witches Sabbath woman fulfils every office. She is priest, and altar, and consecrated host... In the last resort, is she not the very God of the Sacrifice as well?

Woman's centrality is not to the exclusion of ALL, rather she unites ALL. As cave, cauldron, chalice, womb and cunt she holds ALL, and ALL issue from her.

What distinguishes the Sabbat, or indeed the Black Mass, from the Christian Mass or our own age's consumerism, is its inclusivity: a sense of revelry, licentiousness, feasting, flirting, dancing, abandon. It is a communion of revolt under the aegis of a Priestess.

Deflecting the male gaze and logic in describing this feminine experience, Catherine Clément writes in the *Newly-Born Woman*:

The reverse spectacle, the celebration, in which everyone participates, in which no-one is voyeur, is the Sabbat.

Importantly, it is carried out under the cloak of darkness. Being nocturnal it is free of all the impositions of diurnal life – in particular, the social obligations that govern a woman's life.

At the Sabbat she wears forbidden personas, indulges aspects of her sexual nature such as the mænadic and ecstatic consort of beasts and demons. In fact, the Sabbat is a descendant of secret rites called *orgia*, from whence our word orgy, practised in the ancient Mystery religions – sometimes exclusively by women. They are associated particularly with Dionysos, Cybele and other pre-Olympian gods. The orgia, like the Sabbat, seek to dissolve the barriers between the celebrant and the divinity, who is said to arrive or *come* in the heightened ecstatic state of the devotee.

The orgy is a quite peculiarly feminine experience, because of woman's erotic and sexual nature. Her libido, *which is cosmic*, has the potential to plunge the individual and society into a violently ecstatic liberation of consciousness.

The body cannot be subordinated to reason.

Our flesh is alive and constantly changing.

One of the futures I foresee through this increasingly hegemonic and reductionist age is the manifestation of fearless and unreasonable women who will turn on everyone around them, who will lead the way in creating communities of liberated individuals.

Above all, I call for a revolutionary art that undermines this unsustainable and futile exchange economy.

Beauty for beauty's sake, beauty for all!
For sex and creation are inextricably bound.

Remember, the Sabbat is also an imaginal realm, attained through the erotic stimulation of the senses. Here is woman's peculiar and natural proclivity to generate outpourings of fantasy and phantasm, of motion and emotion. This is a holy state. And it is achieved with sexual energy.

You can't talk about a female sexuality, uniform, homogenous, classifiable into codes-any more than you can talk about one unconscious resembling another. Women's imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing; their stream of phantasms is incredible.

Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*

What we can see is that Witchcraft is continually re-imagined and re-invigorated by the blood of each generation. By new voices. By strong sexually independent women. By you, daring to become the Witch you imagine.

There is an urgent need for Witchcraft.

The enemy of Christianity has been replaced with a Corporatism that tells us freedom is the right to work as slaves, that being a woman means a constant treadmill of shopping and self loathing. That the rape of the planet is business as usual.

As the Goddess might put it: Fuck that.

The witch walks miraculously out of the flames.

The body continues to speak.

The Priestess will not be silenced, the oracle is never closed.

Witchcraft is never fixed.

Every Witchcraft revolution is a sexual revolution.

Though we can plunge back into the depths of the Sumerian underworld, or the matriarchies of Margaret Murray, or the Old Europe of Maria Gimbutas, Witchcraft is always about the naked body of the witch.

Right now. Our bodies in this room, naked under our clothing.

Our visions, our rites, our rituals in our time.

Our desire to reconnect with the raw power of witchcraft, the carnal lust, which is in woman insatiable.

TEXTS CITED & FURTHER READING

JACK PARSONS, *Freedom is a Two-Edged Sword*

DAVID GORDON WHITE, *The Kiss of the Yogini*

SYLVIA FEDERICI, *Caliban and the Witch*

JULES MICHELET, *The Sorceress*

DIANE WOLKSTEIN & SAMUEL KRAMER, *Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth, her stories and hymns from Sumer.*

MARIJA GIMBUTAS, *The Language of the Goddess; The Living Goddesses*

CATHERINE CLEMENT & HELENE CIXOUS, *The Newly-Born Woman*

HELENE CIXOUS, *The Laugh of the Medusa*

PENELOPE SHUTTLE & PETER REDGROVE, *The Wise Wound*

PETER REDGROVE, *The Black Goddess and the Sixth Sense*

PETER GREY, *The Red Goddess*, (paperback edition due 2011);

Seeing through Apocalypse (essay from XVI, published by Scarlet Imprint)

ALKISTIS DIMECH, *Coup de Foudre* (essay from XVI)

ANTI-COPYRIGHT PETER GREY & ALKISTIS DIMECH, 2010

This text may be distributed for non-commercial purposes

WWW.SCARLETIMPRINT.COM