

No. 46

Pan Gala

A PAGAN JOURNAL FOR THINKING PEOPLE

**Exclusive
Interview**

Buckland Speaks Out

*The Grandmaster of American
Wicca talks about the history of magic,
the necessity of the Wiccan rede, and
the future of Paganism.*

SPECIAL SECTION:

Words of Power



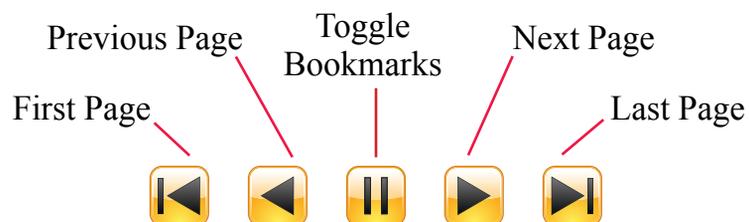


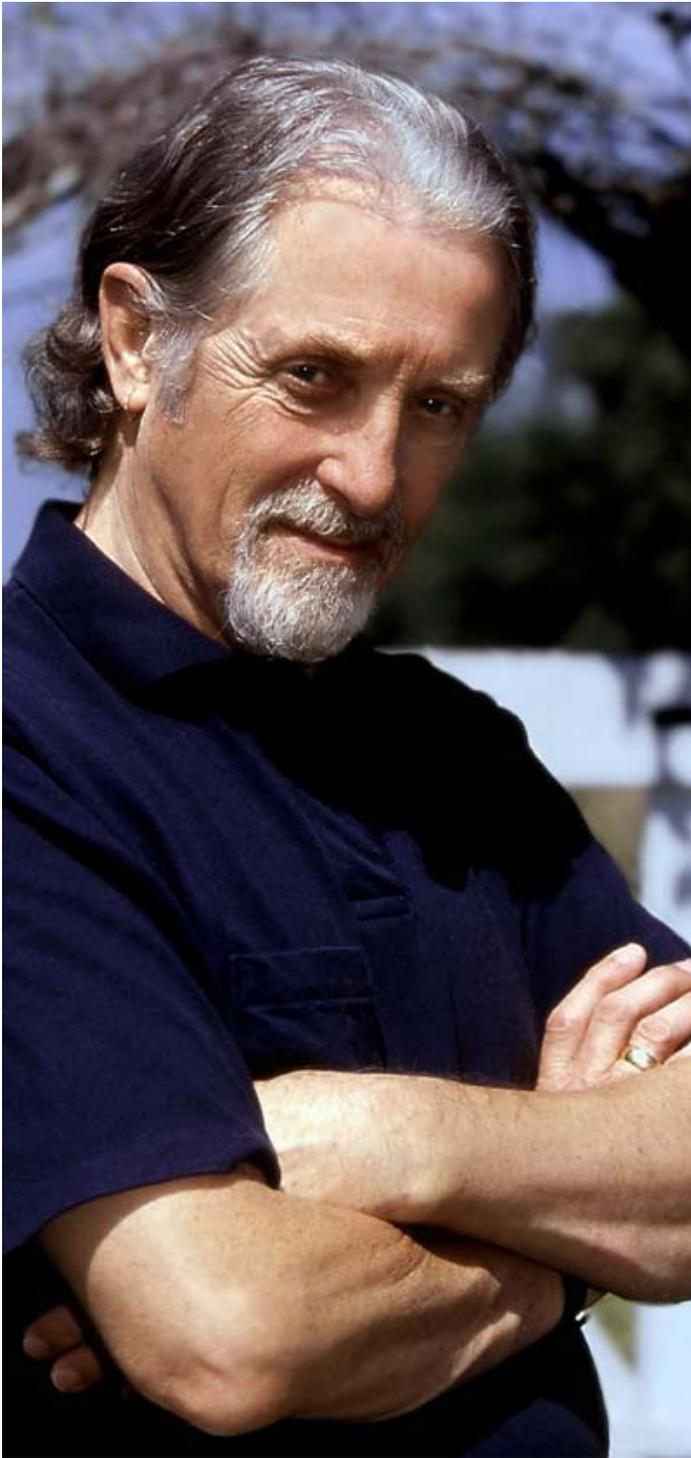
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ON THE COVER:

Raymond Buckland — Grandmaster of American Wicca

Ray Buckland was the author of the first American book on the Old Religion — and has since written nearly fifty more.

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PanGaia: A Pagan Journal for Thinking People

SPECIAL SECTION: WORDS OF POWER

Why do we call ourselves Witches?

For most of human history, a “witch” was something other people called you, not a name you chose for yourself. It denoted a worker of ill-intentioned magic, one whose uncanny connection to powers not honored by official religion made people nervous — nervous enough to kill. Even today, in many countries, no one in their right mind would take on the title. So why do we? *By Archer... 20*

What’s in a name?

The Cailleach is a Crone goddess, and not one to be invoked lightly. I imagined that she would not take kindly to a mispronunciation of her name. *By Myshale Goldberg... 23*

The Notorious N-Word

To a savvy Magician, words of power are not limited to Barbarous Names of Evocation, Aeonically Uttered, or Holy Names. Words which manipulate the group-mind can be far more effective — and dangerous — than anything you will read in a grimoire. *By Kenaz Filan... 26*

A Choice of Oaths

I hadn’t even started medical school yet when I first encountered the difference between my worldview and that of the medical culture I was about to join. I learned that, as part of a ceremony welcoming the entering class, we were all supposed to take the Hippocratic Oath. But no one seemed to be taking it as seriously as I. As a practicing Pagan, the gods of the oath were not long dead to me. I *knew* what the oath said, and I didn’t necessarily agree with everything in it. *By Leigh East... 31*

The Divine Magic of Language

Language is one of the more potent forms of magic, and even if you don’t consider yourself to be a writer, you may be surprised at how a little poetry (or prose) can enhance your magical practice. *By Holly Buck... 34*



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PanGaia: A Pagan Journal for Thinking People

FEATURE

The Emerging IndoPagans

IndoPagan: among a growing number of people, this name describes their spiritual path. It is a path that blends the Western tradition of NeoPaganism with Eastern traditions of South Asian origin, commonly with Hinduism. Up until recently the bulk of those following an IndoPagan path believed themselves to be alone. But that's beginning to change. *By Devi Spring ... 40*

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A scientist discovers an astounding equation. *By Matt McHugh ... 51*

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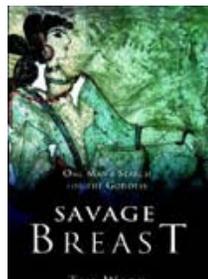
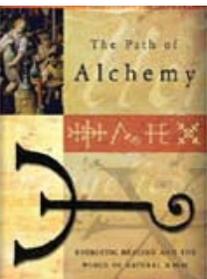
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OUR FEATURED ARTIST
 Carol Snedeker-Martinez is a self-taught artist and illustrator living in western North Carolina. To contact the artist please visit her website at www.carolsmartinez.com.



Language and the Craft

“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.”

— Mark Twain

It is language that makes us human. Language allows us to communicate with each other and preserve ideas. The beginning and end of all things is the Word. Most especially, the Word controls and shapes power.

The creative force of words appears in many different religions. Origin myths often attribute the world’s existence to the divine Word. According to Egyptian mythology, Ptah created the world with speech, the word taking form in his heart and then emerging from his mouth to do its work. According to Christian mythology, the Word of God guided creation, a motif repeated in C.S. Lewis’ novel *The Magician’s Nephew* when Aslan sings Narnia into manifestation. According to Miwok mythology, Silver Fox and Coyote danced and sang, and beneath them Earth took shape.

Language can shape not only the world, but the worldview. Each language has a unique way of describing things, events, and ideas — which influences how native speakers observe them. When a language dies out for lack of speakers, we lose a precious piece of diversity. When you learn a new language, however, you expand your options for perception and expression. This also brings you closer to the language’s home culture, a key reason why some Pagans choose to learn the historic language of their religion. Irish, Welsh, and Gaelic enjoy increasing popularity in part because of Druidic and Avalonian practitioners.

Similarly, language can define the layer of reality in which you travel. Visit a foreign country, or neighborhood of immigrants, or even an ethnic restaurant where the staff speak a language other than the local one — and you enter a different world. If you make an attempt to communicate with people in their own language, rather than expecting them to join you in yours, a magical transformation occurs: you suddenly become more “real” to them, more a “person,” and they are likely to treat you more favorably. On the other hand, conversing in a language not shared by everyone present can be a brutal way of excluding someone.

Even a subset of language, known variously as a lexicon or jargon, can identify people as belonging or not belonging to a particular group. Think of all the specialized terms — athame, cone of power, esbat, etc. — that characterize Pagan conversation. Those can create quite a barrier to someone outside the community. Learning their meanings thus becomes a rite of passage for newcomers.

This leads naturally to the idea of magical languages. Various natural languages over the centuries have gained a reputation of belonging to scholars, wizards, witches, priests, and other not-quite-worldly folk. Latin and Arabic, for example, contain many original texts of occult lore. Then there are the inventions, ranging from simple alphabets to whole languages, which people have created to contain magical writings; Theban is a fairly popular magical alphabet, for example. Fantasy fiction sometimes mentions, and

may include tidbits of, a language whose very words convey magical power. The magic of Ursula Le Guin’s Earthsea stories functions in this way.

Closely related to the idea of magical language is the idea of true names. According to this premise, knowing the true name of a person or thing gives you power over it. For this reason, some Pagans take a secret craft name which they reveal to no one, or at most to their covenmates. They may also inscribe names on their magical tools as a means of instilling power. Similar practices appear in traditions around the world.

Another small-scale example is that of magic words. Sometimes these are borrowings from another language, or archaic relics like “mote” in “So mote it be.” Their use indicates a situation outside the usual. Other times, the magic words seem like “nonsense” syllables that nevertheless purport to cause wondrous effects, simply by virtue of their sound. Over time, they may work their way into common knowledge, usually losing most of their power in the process, like “abracadabra” and “hocus pocus.”

Languages also tend to include some words with magical effects, which are either not recognized as such or are acknowledged only in jest. Consider the premise “As I will, so mote it be,” companion to the premise that “This is so because I say it is so.” Performative statements such as “I promise” or “I hereby consecrate” do exactly that. The word is the deed, literally. That’s magic. The word “please” can change a person from unwilling to willing in regards to a request, quite an impressive feat for a single syllable. That’s magic too.

Years ago, I heard a filk song by Stephen Savitzky, “The World Inside the Crystal,” which describes cyberspace as a place “Where we play with words and symbols / And creation is the game / For our symbols have the power / To become

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the things they name." No wonder we speak of "computer wizards," for they have created a whole new realm, entirely out of magic words in esoteric languages that ordinary people do not understand.

So you see, there are many words of power, and many powers of words. All of them demand thought and caution, because careless words can wreak devastating havoc. This brings us to the final aspect of word magic, enshrined in the saying, "To know, to will, to dare, and to keep silent." Yes indeed, the last piece of magical power is to keep your mouth shut.

Why? Because the power is in the words, and if you keep blathering after you've described what is to be, then that power can leak out and get lost. Likewise, loose talk about magical techniques can put them into the control of people who aren't ready to exercise due responsibility, with potentially disastrous results. So take care with the words you say, and the words you do not say, for thereby you may change worlds.

With that in mind, we present an issue devoted to exploring the wise and wonderful uses of "Words of Power."

For starters, we have an interview with Raymond Buckland, one of the best-known authors in the Pagan field. He has written over forty books and done much to encourage the growth of Wicca in the United States.

Several of our features deal with the importance of names. In "the Emerging IndoPagans," Devi Spring explores the overlap between Paganism and Indian mythology, as a growing number of people blend these traditions and seek a name for their practices. Archer asks a question that has recurred many times within Paganism in "Why Do We Call Ourselves Witches?" Kenaz Filan tackles the very touchy subject of race relations in "The Notorious N

Word." Myshele Goldberg analyzes the core principles of name magic in "A Rose by Any Other Name." Each of these articles takes a different angle on the names we use for ourselves and others, and the power those names can hold.

Of course, words can also change over time. Jen Hamilton's article "A Choice of Oaths" examines the history and evolution of the famous Hippocratic Oath. She also proposes a new version that holds to the spirit of the oath while removing some of the more ... peculiar ... points of the original.

Word magic also includes specific formats. In her article "Magical Poetry," Holly Buck reveals the wonder of verse. Finally, our short story this issue is the vivid "Theory of Everything" by Matt McHugh. What if describing reality in sufficiently precise terms allowed you to change reality ... ?

For departments, check out the thoughtful essay on Unitarian-Universalist Paganism in "Point of View." Our "Toe to Toe" debate considers whether secrecy is a good thing or a bad thing.

We also have several poems to offer this issue. Ursula Fanthorpe's "Genesis" delves into the creation of a world that most of us know and love — and it all started with a strange language looking for a home. Benn Mac Stephan blazes an unconventional trail in his poem "No Masters, No Druids." Rowena advises us that "All Words Are Spells." Tim Harkin wraps up the set with his lovely poem "In Praise of Brighid," who is of course the patron goddess of poetry.

Winter is coming to a close. Spring is just around the corner. Pull up a chair, and let the magic of words take you away from the capricious weather. ▲

— Elizabeth Barrette is the Managing Editor of *PanGaia*. She lives in Charleston, Illinois. You can write her c/o *PanGaia* or email her at www.bbimedia.com/email.