

Dr. Thomas Horn On “The Original Halloween Witch”

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By Dr. Thomas R. Horn

On October 31, spooky beings and superheroes, cartoon characters and rubberized celebrities will line the streets and mall hallways of America, anticipating sugary rewards. Compelled by shouts of “trick or treat,” children of all ages will tote receptacles of various size and weight harboring the result of the night’s hunt. It’s called Halloween, and while for most it is a harmless annual activity, its roots run deep in ancient paganism.

All Hallows’ Eve, or Halloween, originated in the 7th century AD. It was celebrated on May 13 and was a night for remembering deceased saints and martyrs. The date was later changed to November 1 in order to Christianize the pagan holidays Beltane and Samhain - festivals of summer, winter and fire.

James Frazer, in *The Golden Bough*, said, “throughout Europe, Hallowe’en, the night which marks the transition from autumn to winter, seems to have been of old the time of year when the souls of the departed revisited their homes in order to warm themselves by the fire.” Such ghosts walked the countryside retrieving offerings of food and drink (the treat) supplied by living family members. Darker forces roamed the night as well. Demons, hobgoblins, witches on broomstick—all haunting the night with acts of mischief (the trick).

Real witches were also known to revel on Halloween night. According to *Man, Myth & Magic*, the witches of Aberdeen danced “round an old grey stone at the foot of the hill at Craigleuch, the Devil himself playing music before them.” Modern witches and Wiccans

practice similar skyclad (nude) Halloween traditions, calling on Earth spirits and goddesses to visit their knife drawn circles of power.

Meet the Original Halloween Witch - Hecate

[Abaddon Ascending: The Ancient Conspiracy at the Center of CERN's Most Secretive Mission](#), we consider, among other topics, the goddess Hecate, the Titan Earth mother of the wizards and witches, who illustrates perhaps better than any other ancient goddess the connection between Wicca, the Celtic Halloween traditions and the realm of evil supernaturalism.

As the dark goddess of witchcraft, Hecate, like Isis, was worshiped with impure rites and magical incantations. Her name was probably derived from the ancient Egyptian word Heka, meaning "sorcery" or "magical," which may explain her association with the Egyptian frog goddess of the same name. This may also explain the affiliation of frogs with witchcraft, and the various potions of frog-wart and "hecateis," Hecate's hallucinogenic plant, also called Aconite, which supposedly sprouted from the spittle of Cerberus (Hade's three-headed guard dog) that fell to the ground when Hercules forced him to the surface of the Earth.

Because her devotees practiced such magic wherever three paths joined, Hecate was known by the Romans as Trivia ("tri"-three; and "via"-roads). Later, when the Latin church fathers compared the magic of the goddess Trivia with the power of the Gospel, they found it to be inferior, and thus the pursuit of Hecate's knowledge became known as "Trivial Pursuit," or inconsequential. But the fact that Hecate's followers sincerely believed in and feared her magic and presence was legendary. This was primarily due to her role as the sorceress of the afterlife, but true believers also feared Hecate's ability to afflict the mind with madness, as well as her influence over night creatures. She was thought to govern haunted places where evil or murderous activity had occurred. Such areas where violence or lechery had a history were believed to be magnets of malevolent spirits, something like "haunted houses," and if one wanted to get along with the resident apparitions they needed to make oblations to the ruler of the darkness - Hecate.

Hecate's familiar, the night owl, announced the acceptance of the oblations, and those who gathered on the eve of the full moon perceived the spooky sound of the creature as a good omen. Statues of the goddess bearing the triple-face of a dog, a snake, and a horse overshadowed the dark rituals when they were performed at the crossing of three roads. At midnight, Hecate's devotees left food offerings at the intersection for the goddess ("Hecate's Supper"), and, once deposited, quickly exited without turning around or looking back. Sometimes the offerings consisted of honey cakes and chicken hearts. At other time's puppies, honey and female black lambs were slaughtered for the goddess and her *strigae*.

The strigae were deformed and vicious owl-like affiliates of Hecate who flew through the night feeding on bodies of unattended babies.

During the day the strigae appeared as simple old women, and such may account for the history of Halloween's flying witches (interestingly, Warner Brothers, who in association with Wonderland Sound and Vision produces the popular television drama/horror series *Supernatural*, used my published work on the Strigae in the first season of their series and then invited me to join a panel of paranormal activity experts for the release of the 5th Season.

The series stars Jared Padalecki as Sam Winchester and Jensen Ackles as Dean Winchester, two brothers who as demon hunters often find themselves pursued by spirits of the wicked dead. While expert input is sought by the screenwriters in order to give series episodes a mode of believability, *Supernatural* blends numerous religious concepts and worldviews not consistent with orthodox faith and should not be taken seriously. Thus the reason I declined the invitation).

The same strigae hid amidst the leaves of the trees during the annual festival of Hecate, held on August 13, when Hecate's followers offered up the highest praise of the goddess. Hecate's devotees celebrated such festivals near Lake Averno in Campania where the sacred willow groves of the goddess stood, and they communed with the tree spirits - Earth spirits, including Hecate, were thought to inhabit trees - and summoned the souls of the dead from the mouths of nearby caves.

It was here that Hecate was known as Hecate-Chthonia ("Hecate of the Earth"), a depiction in which she most clearly embodied the popular Earth-mother-spirit that conversed through the cave-stones and sacred willow trees.

Hecate was elsewhere known as Hecate-Propylaea, "the one before the gate," a role in which she guarded the entrances of homes and temples from nefarious outside evils (talk about Satan casting out Satan!).

She was also known as Hecate-Propolos, "the one who leads," as in the underworld guide of Persephone and of those who inhabit graveyards.

Finally, she was known as Hecate-Phosphoros, "the light bearer," her most sacred title and one that recalls another powerful underworld spirit, Satan, whose original name was Lucifer ("the light bearer").

It was nevertheless her role as the feminist Earth-goddess-spirit Hecate-Chthonia that popularized her divinity and commanded reverence from among the common people.

Modern Symbolism

The connection between ancient paganism and the modern customs and costumes of Halloween is easy to trace. The Hecatian myths adopted by Celtic occultists continue in pop culture, symbolism and tradition in the following ways:

- People visiting neighborhood homes on Halloween night represent the dead in search of food (the treat).
- Masks of devils and hobgoblins represent evil spirits seeking mischief (the trick).
- Those who pass out candy represent the homes visited by the dead or may also represent worried individuals seeking to appease Hecate and other nighttime terrors.

- The Jack-O-Lantern (will-o-the-wisp, fox fire, fairy fire, etc.) is, according to some histories, a wandering soul stuck between heaven and hell. Others claim the Druids left Jack-O-Lanterns on doorsteps to ward off evil spirits. Another legend concerns a drunk named Jack who made a deal with the devil. Each claim to be the true origin of the Jack-O-Lantern myth.

Harmless Fun or Doorway to the Occult?

If we could see through the veil into the supernatural realm, we would find a world alive with good against evil, a place where the ultimate prize is the soul of this generation and where legions war for control of its cities and people.

Christian leaders should use the month of October and the season of Halloween to address these issues.