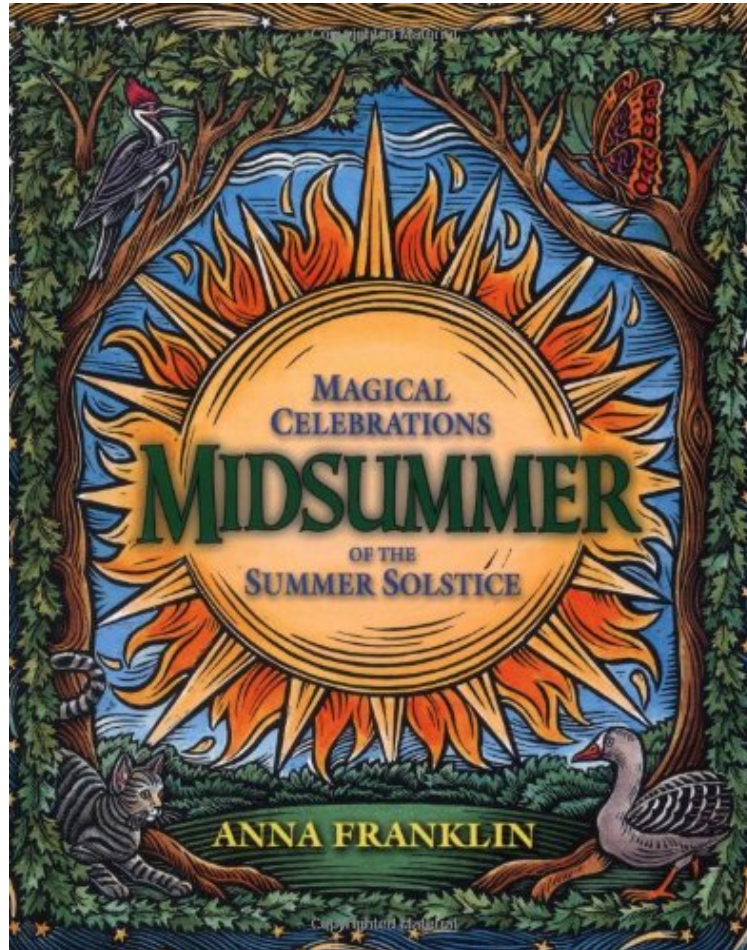


[Pdf free] Midsummer: Magical Celebrations of the Summer Solstice (Holiday Series)

## Midsummer: Magical Celebrations of the Summer Solstice (Holiday Series)

Anna Franklin

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**Anna Franklin : Midsummer: Magical Celebrations of the Summer Solstice (Holiday Series)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Midsummer: Magical Celebrations of the Summer Solstice (Holiday Series):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Book Club By Hannah Roberts A group of my friends read this book for our book club that was planning to meet on the summer solstice. It was very informative. The book is split up into 2 parts. The first part was harder to get through because it contained so much information and it was difficult to retain it all in one read. The second part was fun to read. Some of us made dishes from the recipes given on the book. Reading this book was an enjoyable experience and I learned a lot. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A fun book on Summer Solstice By alexxcz This book is a great collection of everything under the sun for solstice. The author really threw in a little bit of everything - ancient holiday customs, spellwork, recipes, and suggested rituals for

the holiday. The sections are well marked, and well layed-out, so it's easy to flip through and find something quickly. The only downside to the material is that in covering such a mix of topics, the information is very surface, and only a smattering of sun deities and cultures get touched on. Of course this is not meant to be a dry scholarly tome, but a fun book to flip through and use. I recommend it to anyone wanting to celebrate their own SS or just read more about it. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By riverkicking If you follow the pagan path, this is a must have book!

Celebrate Midsummer-A Day of Warmth and Light, A Night of Fairy Folk and Magic Midsummer is one of the most ancient, widespread, and joyful Pagan festivals. The sun rises to the height of its power on the summer solstice, and Midsummer Eve is filled with fairy mischief and magic. Anna Franklin reveals the origins and customs of this enchanting holiday with: Myths and lore: The gods and goddesses of Midsummer, rolling wheels, the Midsummer tree, circle dancing, and torchlight processions Midsummer magic and divination: Fairy contact, spells, empowering magical tools with solstice sun energy, Midsummer Eve pillow divination Traditional summertime treats: Elderflower Fritters, Gooseberry Fool, Coamhain Soup, Strawberry Wine, Heather Ale, Clary Sage Tea Seasonal rituals: Rite of the Oak King and the Holly King, Cornish Flower Ritual, Witch Rite for Midsummer Day, Drawing Down the Sun Midsummer herb craft: Gathering and drying herbs for magical oils, incenses, inks, and teas; herb recipes, from Amun Ra to Sun Goddess Oil First Runner Up for the 2003 Coalition of Visionary Resources (COVR) Award for Best Non-fiction Book

.com Summer solstice celebrants will find plenty of inspirational rituals, magic spells, and recipes in Anna Franklin's Midsummer. As in her previous book about the early fall festival of Lammass, Franklin can be whimsical as well as reverent. From the building of a magical bonfire to the staging of elaborate solstice rituals involving priests and priestesses, Franklin offers something for every level of pagan. In the section on "Midsummer Magic and Divination," Franklin gives instructions for placing various herbs and charms beneath the pillow to welcome prophetic dreams. Those who are inspired by the more romantic Shakespearean take on Midsummer's Eve can try some of Franklin's love divination techniques, such as flicking an apple seed toward the ceiling to see if your love is requited. Franklin also gives specific instructions for performing the "Rites of Midsummer." For instance, "The altar should be decorated with golds and yellows--this theme is echoed through candles, clothes and flowers.... Centrally placed should be a sun wheel or sun representation." And for the Martha Stewart-style pagan there are some excellent recipes, including Anise Tea and Comfrey Fritters. --Gail Hudson About the Author Anna Franklin (England) has been a witch for 30 years, and a Pagan in her heart for all her life. She has conducted many rituals, handfastings and sabbat rites. She is the High Priestess of the Hearth of Arianrhod, a coven of the Coranieid Clan, a group of traditional witches with their roots in the New Forest, and branches in several parts of the UK. The Hearth publishes the long-running Silver Wheel Magazine, runs teaching circles and postal courses, and is also a working coven. Anna Franklin is the author of eighteen books on the Craft, including the popular Sacred Circle Tarot, Midsummer, Lammass (with Paul Mason), and The Fairy Ring. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. The Origins of the Midsummer Celebration The celebration of Midsummer is a global custom. Every culture has, at some point in its history, marked this time of year and held it to be enchanted. The Celts, the Norse, and the Slavs believed that there were three "spirit nights" in the year when magic abounded and the Otherworld was near. The first was Halloween, the second was May Eve, and the third was Midsummer Eve. On this night, of all nights, fairies are most active, and the future can be uncovered. As the solstice sun rises on its day of greatest power, it draws up with it the power of herbs, standing stones, and crystals. In the shimmering heat-haze on the horizon, its magical energies are almost visible. And as the mist gate forms in the warm air rising beneath the dolmen arch, the entrance to the Otherworld opens--Avalon, Tir nan Og, the Land of Youth, where it is always summer, and death and old age are unknown. Shakespeare captured all the magic of the occasion in A Midsummer Night's Dream, where fairies, magic, and mischief abound on one bewitched night in the forest. Every ancient religion had its own customs and traditions associated with Midsummer. These appear in the lore of Greece and Rome, the myths of the Norse, the Maya, the Aztecs, the Slavs, and the Celts, the writings of the ancient Egyptians, and the Old Testament of the Jews. Vestiges of these festivities can still be witnessed today. In places we may still see the baal fires, the torchlight processions, the rolling of a sun wheel downhill, the casting of spells, divination, love magic, and the blessing of crops and animals with fire. The cold, dark days of winter and blight are far away, and the time of light and warmth, summer and growth, are here. We naturally feel more joyful and want to spend more time in the open air. The crops are planted and growing nicely, and the young animals have been born. Midsummer is a natural time of celebration. The Four Solar Festivals The festival is actually the observance of the summer solstice. There are two solstices annually. The summer solstice is the longest day of the year and falls around June 21 in the Northern Hemisphere and around December 21 in the Southern Hemisphere. The winter solstice is the shortest day of the year and falls around December 21 in the Northern Hemisphere and around June 21 in the Southern Hemisphere. The other two solar festivals are the equinoxes. At the spring equinox, day and night are of equal length, but the light is gaining; the days are getting longer. Then at the summer solstice, the sun is at the height of its power on

the longest day of the year. At the autumn equinox, day and night are again of equal length, but the dark is gaining; the days are getting shorter. At the winter solstice, the sun is at its weakest on the shortest day of the year. The Technical Bit The summer solstice marks the zenith of the sun, a time of greater warmth and longer hours of daylight. We experience changing seasons because the axis of the Earth-an imaginary line between the North and South Poles-is tilted from true by 23.5 degrees. As our planet revolves around the sun this means that part of the Earth tilts toward the sun, then away again. Between June and September the Northern Hemisphere is tilted toward the sun and gets more light, experiencing the season of summer. At the same time the Southern Hemisphere experiences winter. Between December and March the Northern Hemisphere is tilted away from the sun and receives less light and warmth, while the Southern Hemisphere enjoys summer. Just how much sunlight you receive depends on the latitude you occupy. By June 21 there are twenty-four hours of daylight above the Arctic Circle, while below the Antarctic Circle (which, if you remember, is experiencing the winter solstice) there are twenty-four hours of darkness. I am sure that you can work out the degrees of gradation between the two. During spring and autumn both hemispheres experience milder weather, and the two equinoxes mark the junctures when the Earth's axis is pointing sideways. Without the tilt in the Earth's axis we would have the same degree of light and warmth-or dark and cold-all year round, and have no seasons at all; the sun's rays would always be directly over the equator. The word solstice is derived from Latin and means "sun stands still." A little before and during the winter and summer solstices, the sun appears to rise and set at almost exactly the same place. The summer solstice is celebrated when the sun reaches its most northerly position. Throughout the year the sun passes through the constellations of the zodiac, and the summer solstice occurs in the constellation of Cancer, the Crab. If you have ever wondered why a zodiac sign should be named after a crab, it is because the sun seems to travel backward after this point in time every year, descending the zodiacal arch-just like a crab walking.

**Midsummer in Prehistory** There is plenty of evidence that prehistoric people were fascinated by the passage of time. Thirty thousand years ago they were making tallies of the moon's phases on bone and horn sticks. These techniques gradually became more sophisticated and evolved into ways of marking the solstices and equinoxes, of predicting astronomical events and eclipses. Early on these may have been marked by an observer in a chosen position placing wooden posts or pegs where the sun rose and set at these times of year. Later on, stones would replace the pegs. By the New Stone Age (8,000 years ago), stone circles, like Stonehenge, were orientated to mark the position of the rising sun at the midsummer solstice. The sun would rise over a heel stone and cast a long, phallic shadow into the heart of the circle, consummating the marriage of heaven and earth.<sup>1</sup> Other circles mark the equinoxes and the cross-quarter festivals we know as Imbolc, Lughnasa, Beltane, and Samhain. The great importance of these festivals to ancient people can be surmised when we realize that tons of stone was moved and raised without the aid of machinery-a process that must have been back-breaking work spanning many years.

**Ancient China** In ancient China the summer solstice was accounted feminine and predominantly yin, a summer festival of earth and fertility. Offerings were made to encourage the fecundity of the earth. In contrast the winter solstice was accounted male, yang, and celestial. Offerings were burned so that their smoke would rise to the heavens. Together the two solstices formed the balance of the year, summer and winter, female and male, earth and sky, light and dark, and the marriage of the two was symbolized by the famous yin/yang symbol.

**The Celts and Druids** We know comparatively little about how the Pagan Celts celebrated their festivals, as they left no written records. What we do know comes from the later accounts of Christian monks, writing of traditions that they were in the act of suppressing. The monks thought it their duty to strip any traces of Paganism from what they wrote, transforming Pagan gods and goddesses into ordinary men and women, heroes, and even Christian saints. We have to carefully unravel real Pagan myths and traditions from the knotted tangle of the whole. Fortunately, a good indicator of what actually took place is the survival of ancient folklore customs in the Celtic countries. From these we can guess at some of the older festivals that lie behind them. Prevalent among these is the celebration of Midsummer, with bonfires on tops of hills and cairns. These hilltop fires are a central part of this celebration in many parts of the world, a symbolic encouraging of the fire of the sun with "little brother" bonfire, lit on a hill, and therefore in a place as near to the sky as possible. The four Celtic festivals of Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnasa, and Samhain were based on the pastoral calendar and marked the activities of the shepherd and cowherd. The four festivals of the solstices and equinoxes relate not only to a solar calendar, but also to an agricultural one, marking crop-planting and harvesting times. The druid priesthood were learned men and women who studied astronomy and carefully marked the solstices and equinoxes. At the summer solstice they celebrated the marriage of heaven and earth and kindled the sacred need fire of oak wood. They gathered their sacred herbs infused with the sun's power and dried them so that they were ready to use in magic and healing work. It was at this time of year that they gathered the mistletoe berries believed to turn golden for one night a year-at Midsummer. They believed that these berries, the fabled golden bough, had the power to cure all ills, containing as they do the seed of Midsummer fire.<sup>2</sup> The Celts believed that there were two suns, the sun of the waxing year and the sun of the waning year. Traces of myths in many places of the world indicate two opposing rulers of the year, characterized as the light king and the dark king, or the Oak King and the Holly King. Midsummer was associated with the thunder god Taranis, king of the oak, who brings the summer rain.

**The Northern Traditions** The Saxons began their year at the midwinter solstice, and the summer solstice marked its midpoint. They called the month of June Aerra Litha, meaning "before Litha," and July

Aeftera Litha, meaning "after Litha."<sup>3</sup> This led some to speculate that the Saxon name for the festival was Litha, which is usually translated as "light" or perhaps "moon." J.R.R. Tolkien used this term for a midsummer festival in the fantasy novel *The Lord of the Rings*. At Midsummer, Thor, god of thunder, brought the rains. The Germanic tribes marked the summer solstice with huge bonfires to salute the victory of the sun over darkness and death. With the Christianization of the area it became the Feast of St. John or Johannisnacht ("John's Night"). On St. John's Eve in Bavaria fires were lit on the mountains by shepherds, a custom dating back to Germanic tribal celebrations. Even today people make their way up to the hills to kindle fires of wood collected over the preceding weeks by the village children. Midsummer was and still is an important festival for those who live in the far north. The light of midsummer is a great contrast to the long hours of darkness in the winter. The Finnish summer festival is called the kesä. The house is thoroughly cleaned and birch trees are placed outside the front door. In ancient times there would have been feasting, dancing, bonfires, and offerings to the earth in the form of food placed on a sacred stone.<sup>4</sup> In Iceland the year began on Midsummer Sunday, and the first month was called Heyan meaning "haytoil," since this is the time of haymaking. Midsummer is celebrated all over Sweden. As in Finland, England, and Wales, Midsummer poles of birch are erected and decorated with flowers and greenery. Dancing takes place around the poles, which symbolize the marriage of earth and sky. There are seasonal songs and dances, and many parties and feasts. In some provinces a Midsummer Bride is chosen and crowned. She then chooses herself a Midsummer Bridegroom and a collection of money is made for the pair.<sup>5</sup> Ancient Rome The midsummer solstice was sacred to Juno, the queen of heaven and guardian of the female sex. She was the wife of Jupiter, a sky and thunder deity, chief of the gods. Juno was the patroness of marriage; the month of June is named after her, and it is still the most popular month for marriages. On this day, too, she is Juno Luna, the moon goddess who confers menstruation on women.<sup>6</sup> The time of the midsummer solstice was also sacred to Vesta, goddess of the hearth fire. Earlier in the month her sanctuary doors were thrown open and the married women of Rome entered the temple to make offerings in the form of salted grain meal. The offerings went on for eight days, after which the temple was thoroughly cleansed. The festival of the dawn goddess Mater Metuta was held in June. Women led female servants to her temple and then beat them with sticks. The time was also sacred to Venus, goddess of love. The Roman writer Pliny advised farmers to light bonfires in the fields during the height of summer to ward off disease.<sup>7</sup> Mesopotamia The rites of the goddess Ishtar and her lover Tammuz were celebrated at Midsummer in the Middle East, though further north they were celebrated at the vernal equinox. The month of Tammuz corresponds to our June/July. Ishtar loved Tammuz, the young vegetation god. He returned her love, but was tragically killed by a boar. The goddess was devastated and was determined to go to the underworld, ruled by her sister Ereshkigal, and bring him back. To do this she had to pass the seven gates of the underworld and at each surrender some article of her clothing and jewelry. Finally she stood before her sister naked and vulnerable. The queen of the underworld was unmoved and imprisoned Ishtar also. Without Tammuz and Ishtar the world became a barren desert and the other gods became alarmed. The gods of the sun and moon appealed to Ea, the god of water and magic, for help. He sent a messenger to the underworld with a powerful magic spell, and the two were immediately released. He purified the young god and goddess with water, and the earth became fertile once more. This myth tells of the barren months when the sun is too hot and the rains are withheld and no crops can grow. Only the god of water can free the harvest god from the underworld and make the seeds shoot. The Greeks In Italy and Greece, Tammuz became Adonis ("Lord"). In the heat of summer the women planted small pots of fast-growing plants called Gardens of Adonis, which were allowed to grow and wither in the space of a few days before being thrown into the sea. For the ancient Greeks the day was sacred to all high priestesses and heras, the female guardians of temples and communities. The name is derived from the goddess Hera, wife of the chief god Zeus (a sky/thunder deity) and the Greek equivalent of the Latin Juno. In another sense a hera is a human being who has achieved union with the Mother of All Things.<sup>8</sup> The male equivalent is hero. The name of the hero Herakles (Hercules) means "beloved of Hera."<sup>9</sup> Herakles' famous twelve labors represent the passage of the sun through the twelve signs of the zodiac during a solar year. Athene (Athena), goddess of wisdom, has solar characteristics. The Greek year began on the first new moon after the solstice with a Panathenaia festival in her honor. This was celebrated as the birthday of the goddess, and her favors were sought in bringing rain for the crops. Two young girls would carry baskets containing offerings on their heads to a grotto by the temple of Aphrodite. New clothes were made to clothe her statue, and these were led in procession to her temple on a boat with her new cloak as its sail. It was at Midsummer that the titan Prometheus ("Sun Wheel") brought fire from the heavens as a gift for his creation, humankind.<sup>10</sup> He entered Olympus by stealth and lit a torch from the fiery chariot of the sun, then smuggled the fire to earth secured in a fennel stalk. Like the Irish sun god Lugh, he was a master and teacher of all arts and skills. In Corinth the goddess of midsummer was golden Aphrodite, the sea-born goddess of love and desire. She was also worshipped in her aspect of Urania, Queen of Heaven. Africa The Islamic people of North Africa continue to kindle bonfires on Midsummer Eve, particularly in Morocco and Algeria. The day is sometimes dedicated to Fatima, daughter of Mohammed, and the well-known symbol of the Hand of Fatima is said to relate to the five pillars of Islam, though she is probably a much earlier Pagan goddess in origin. In Swaziland the summer solstice (here around December 21) marks the start of the new year. When it coincided with the full moon, a ceremony called Incwala was held to strengthen and renew the king. Virgin youths would bring back branches from

amagic tree, used to enclose the king's sanctuary. The king would take a magic wand representing fertility and strike a black bull with it, which the youths would then catch and sacrifice. The next day the king would eat green foods representing the new year while his people celebrated by dancing and singing. At sunset the king would dress as an animal and hurl a gourd representing the old year at his warriors. The next day his cheeks are painted white, representing the full moon, and on the final day all the ritual objects used were burned and the king was washed, the falling water representing the coming rains. Eastern Europe As elsewhere, the Bulgarian celebration of Midsummer is very ancient, a time when the forces of nature were placated. The Bulgarians said that the sun danced and whirled swords about itself as it rose on Midsummer Day, though it lost its way as it came up and had to be shown the way by the Dawn Maiden. The Bulgarian festival of Midsummer today includes a celebration of the rose-picking season with carnivals, processions, folk songs, and dances. The Serbians thought that the sun was aware of its mortality and decline on Midsummer Day and this made it hesitate and stop three times, overcome by fear of winter. In Poland the sun was said to bathe in the river and dance and frolic in the sky. Girls danced clockwise singing to it, encouraging it to play. Today in Slovenia the summer solstice customs are appropriated to the celebration of independence on June 25. There is music in the streets, food, drink, and fireworks at midnight. However, these midsummer meetings and fairs can be traced back into the remote past. One old custom involved the climbing of mountains and hills. In Russia the death of the vegetation spirit was celebrated at Midsummer, when the days begin to decline. On Midsummer Eve a figure of Kupalo was made of straw and dressed in women's clothes with a necklace and floral crown. A summer tree decked with ribbons is set up and given the name of Marena ("winter" or "death"). A table is set up nearby with food and drink, and the straw figure of Kupalo placed by it. Then a bonfire is lit and the men and women in couples leap over it, carrying the figure with them. The next day the figure and tree are stripped of their ornaments and thrown into a stream.<sup>11</sup> In Hungary swineherds would produce a fire on Midsummer Eve by rotating a wheel around a wooden axle wrapped in hemp. They would then drive their pigs through the fire to protect them. In Swabia the "fire of heaven" was kindled by igniting a cartwheel, smeared with pitch and plaited with straw, and fastened on a pole twelve feet high. This was made on the top of a mountain, and the people would recite certain set words.<sup>12</sup> The Baltic sun goddess was called Saule. Her daughter is the dawn. On Midsummer Eve people stayed up all night in the hope of seeing her dance as she came over the horizon at dawn. They assembled on a hill and raised a bonfire on a pole, and danced and sang around it, sharing a meal of cheese and mead. They bathed in the holy waters, the rivers and streams that flowed east toward the rising sun. This was considered to be both healing and lucky, particularly for anyone looking for a potential marriage partner. The festival was called Ligo, meaning "swaying," since the sun is supposed to dance on this day. The hearth fire was allowed to go out and was then relit with much ceremony. At all other times the fire was kept going constantly.<sup>13</sup> Modern Lithuanian Pagans call the summer solstice festival Rasa. Spain In Spain several obvious Pagan customs have become part of the Christian celebrations. In San Pedro Manrique firewalking takes place on St. John's Eve (June 23). Three girls called Pure Ones carry baskets of bread on their heads to solicit the blessing of Mary, Queen of Heaven. Horse racing and dancing form part of the celebrations. The custom of bullfighting is a remnant of ancient rites celebrating the sky god, often represented as a bull, and whose chosen sacrifice was the bull. The Americas Midsummer was and is still an important festival in numerous places in North America. In Quebec, Canada, the Feast of St. Jean Baptiste is celebrated with a public holiday, fireworks, feasting, parades, and dancing. The Natchez Indians in the southern part of the United States worshipped the sun and believed their ruler was descended from him. The Hopi Indians of Arizona would have masked men wearing bright paint and feathers who danced their special rituals. They represented the dancing spirits of rain and fertility called kachinas. The kachinas were messengers between humans and the gods. At Midsummer the kachinas leave the Hopi villages to return to their homes in the mountains. While they are there, for half the year, they are believed to visit the dead underground and hold ceremonies for them. The Chumash Nation of southern California holds a summer solstice gathering every year on Pine Mountain. The peak was once called Iwihinmu, which means "place of mystery." The Feast of St. John The date of the summer solstice varies between June 19 and 23, while Midsummer is pegged to June 24, which is St. John's Day in the Christian calendar. The Pagan festivities of the solstice were appropriated to the Feast of John the Baptist, the cousin who baptized Jesus and announced that he was the savior foretold by the Hebrew prophets. The baal fires became fires of St. John, whom Jesus called "a burning and shining light." 1. This wedding of earth and sky is one of the recurring themes of Midsummer, and we will explore it in greater detail later on. 2. Please note that mistletoe berries are very poisonous. 3. Nigel Pennick, *Runic Astrology* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1990). 4. Robert Nelson, *Finnish Magic* (Saint Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1999). 5. J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (1922: reprint, London: Macmillan, 1957). 6. Lawrence Durdin-Robertson, *The Year of the Goddess* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1990). 7. Pliny, *Natural History XVIII*. 8. Lawrence Durdin-Robertson, *The Year of the Goddess* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1990). 9. Robert Graves, *The White Goddess* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961). 10. Prometheus formed humankind from clay and water. 11. J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (1922: reprint, London: Macmillan, 1957). 12. *Ibid.* 13. Sheena McGrath, *The Sun Goddess* (London: Blandford, 1997).