

The Birth of Gwyn

Welcome and housekeeping.

Honouring of spirits of place / land acknowledgement.

Introduction

We have no lore relating to Gwyn's birth (or to His boyhood) in the Brythonic tradition. However, in 'The Spoils of Annwn' we find lines that suggest there was a certain amount of mystery surrounding the birth of Pen Annwn. Here Taliesin berates 'pathetic men' (monks) for not knowing when He was born.

'I don't deserve to be stuck with pathetic men, with no go in them,
(those) who don't know on what day the Lord is created,
(nor) when, at noon, the Ruler was born.'

Some scholars think these lines relate to the Christian God but 'Lord' here is translated from *Pen* suggesting these lines relate to Pen Annwn. If they do they are highly Christianised and suggest birth at noon on a certain day.

Looking to the Irish lore we find the following story of the birth of Gwyn's Irish cognate Finn. The Chieftain of the warrior-hunter band, the Fianna was called Cumhaill. He fell in love with and abducted the daughter of a druid. She was a 'deer woman' called Muirne. Because of the abduction Goll Mac Morna of a rival clan killed Cumhaill whilst Muirne was pregnant. She gave birth to a son who she called Deimne 'little stag'. When Deimne was six Goll decided to kill him so his mother dressed him in rags and sent him away with a band of wandering poets. There he was given the nickname Finn for his fair hair. He eventually killed Goll and won from him his famous crane bag.

In the Brythonic myths we find other births that are stranger. One example is Culhwch being born in a pig pen after his mother, Goleuddydd went mad. Another is Lleu Llaw Gyfes who is born with Dylan as a 'small something' from beneath the skirts of Arianrhod, slipped into the cloak of Gwydion, then placed in a chest from which He emerges as full-grown boy.

A well known story is the birth of Taliesin. Ceridwen sets a youth called Gwion Bach stirring Her cauldron to brew awen for her dark son, Afagddu. Gwion pushes Afagddu aside, steals the three drops and shifts through a

series of shapes before being eaten as grain by Ceridwen as a black hen. He is then reborn from Her as Taliesin.

In 'The Song of the Great World' Taliesin is created by God from 'seven consistencies' - 'fire and earth, / and water and air, / and mist and flowers, / and the fruitful wind'. In 'The Battle of the Trees' Taliesin is instead conjured by Gwydion from 'nine forms of consistency' - fruit, fruits, God's fruit in the beginning, primroses, flowers, the blossoms of trees and shrubs, earth / sod, nettle blossom, and the ninth wave's water. These retellings likely reflect Christian influences relating Taliesin to the microcosmic Adam who was created from 'eight consistencies' - 'land, sea, earth, clouds of the firmament, wind, stones, the Holy Spirit and the light of the world' or 'earth (flesh), fire (red, hot blood), wind (breath), cloud (instability of mind), grace (understanding and thought) blossoms (variety of his eyes), dew (sweat), salt (tears).'

There are even stranger births in other myths. In Greek mythology Dionysus is born from Semele but because She is dying Zeus sews Him into His thigh and 'births' Him when he is full grown. Aphrodite is born from sea foam after Cronus castrates his father, Uranus, and throws His genitals into the sea.

Discussion

A point that crosses my mind to contemplate is the paradox of Gods, on the one hand, being immortal, but having life cycles - being born and dying. Where they differ from us (if we believe, as attributed to the Celts by Roman writers, our souls are immortal) is that They return to life as the same deity.

Why is knowing the birth of a God important? What does it add to their mythos? What are we missing when we do not know the story of our God's birth?

10 minutes to contemplate and discuss questions.

Meditation

I invite you to close your eyes and bring your attention to your breath - the inspiration, the exhalation we share, uniting us with the air around us, with all beings, with each other, with the Gods and Annwn from where our awen originates.

Let us together breathe a prayer for inspiration, for insights, into the birth of Gwyn.

Let us together breathe and pray for inspiration, for insights into that sacred moment.

10 minute meditation.

10 minutes for sharing.