

**Shai Feraro, 11/02/2011. 'Interview: Shân Morgain.'** Compiled from Feraro's book *Women and Gender Issues in British Paganism, 1945–1990* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). The book of his 2016 PhD, Tel Aviv University.

These excerpts about Shân Morgain do not quite follow the order they appear in Feraro's book. They have been organised chronologically following Shân's life events.

Names note. From 1967-2009 she was Shan Jayran.  
She then changed to Shân Morgain.

**NY, USA 1960s.** Born in England in 1949, Shan and her parents lived in New York for a period during the mid-1960s, when she was 17. Shortly after their relocation to New York she ran away from home to live in Greenwich Village [p. 121]

**Feminism 1970s** [She] discovered *The SCUM Manifesto*, which soon became her 'Bible'. Solanas' pamphlet encouraged bisexual Shan to withdraw her sexual involvement with men, and back in the UK she immersed herself within London's pre-feminist lesbian scene, centered around establishments such as the Gateway Club, which Shan felt was 'rather boring' politically and intellectually. A television appearance by Germaine Greer galvanized the young Shan—who was 21 years old at the time—into participation in the Women's Liberation Movement. [p. 121]

During the 1970s Shan worked at the London Women's Liberation Workshop, and helped produce its newsletter. [p. 121]

In 1974, the newsletter published a keynote speech delivered by Morgan during the 1973 Los Angeles West Coast Lesbian Conference, in which she came out [p. 122] as an initiated Wiccan Priestess and read the 'Charge of the Goddess'. [pp. 121-22]

**Robin Morgan 1970s** During the early 1970s she discovered Robin Morgan—whom she felt personified radical feminism—and her poetry, and helped to sell the pirated underground British version of the censored 'Monster': "[Morgan's] incredible poem, 'Monster'... that was my politics... 'I want a women's revolution like a lover'... I think that was the most important thing I ever read. ...I wrote it all over my walls, and I used to print it as cards to send to people". [Feraro, interview 11/02/2011, p. 121]

**1977 Not spiritual** Although Shan hardly identified with the spiritual at that time, Morgan's speech actually served as Shan's introduction to the Craft.

[reprinted in Morgan, *Going Too Far*, pp. 170–188. Cited Feraro p. 122, n. 140]

She read *Goddess Shrew* as it came out in the spring of 1977, but was not taken by the views expressed in it: "I thought it was very silly... I was a very hard feminist; I was 'politics, and economics, and revolution' and a radical feminist, and I thought this was a waste of time. I thought this was entertainment, like writing poetry... it was very nice but it had nothing to do with politics". [p. 122] [Feraro, interview 11/02/2011, p. 122]

**In 1981**, she founded a private women's center called Tabbies which contained a café, a sauna, and a meeting room, where various women's groups held their meetings and Greenham women could arrive for a short London r&r. [p. 122]

[Feraro, interview 11/02/2011, p. 122]

The center included a resource library which had a full run of *Womanspirit's* forty issues. [p. 122. n. 143 letter from Cindy Ross in 'Womanspirit' 40 (Summer 1984): 59.]

Simultaneously she also held various New Age activities such as yoga, tai chi, and meditations which centered on the four elements. [p. 122]

[Feraro, interview 11/02/2011, p. 122]

One of my interviewees, Anne Keeley, a WLM activist who was heavily involved in separatist activities during the late 1970s and early 1980s, participated in Shan's Goddess classes at Tabbies, and was referred by the latter to Starhawk's *Dreaming the Dark*. She then joined Shan's women's spirituality group with a couple of her friends, and attended her first ritual in September 1983. Personal Interview with Ann Keeley. Cited Feraro p. 122. n. 144]

After a year or so of facilitating these meditations Shan was approached by one of the participants, who— unknown to Shan at the time—took part in the production of the 1977 *Goddess Shrew* and was a member of MRRN's Dianic 'grove group'. She encouraged Shan by saying that other women across the country were organizing similar activities, and the two befriended. [p. 122]

**1984**, she identified herself as a 'Witch' after being questioned on this matter by Shan, and agreed to train and initiate her into Dianic Witchcraft. Shan and her teacher then decided to form a coven with some of the women who attended her meditation sessions at Tabbies [p. 122]

Shan was eventually asked to lead [it]. This created a row between her and her Dianic teacher, and consequently her initiation to Dianic Craft was not completed. [p. 122]

Tabbies, Shan's women's center and café, closed in the spring of 1985. [p. 122]

**1985 'I am the Goddess' stall.** She began to attend New Age festivals and fairs such as Prediction and Mind, Body and Spirit, setting up stalls [herself] in order to sell Goddess books and figurines. [p. 122]

**1985 Doreen Valiente** One of these fairs was set in Brighton during early 1985, and one of the women visiting Shan's stall, wearing a long green cloak, seemed particularly interested in her posters, which had [p. 122] the 'Charge of the Goddess' printed on them: "and she said 'hmm.. oh, this is very interesting – you have the Charge of the Goddess'. ... and I said 'yes, you see what it is it's the nearest thing we Witches have as a creed, and what its about is this, and this, and this'. And she waited very politely 'till I got to the end of it and she said 'yes, my dear, I wrote it'". That woman, of course, was Doreen Valiente. [p. 123]

Shan (gives the short version), *Which Craft?* p. 75.

The meeting itself was corroborated in Valiente, *The Rebirth of Witchcraft*, p. 194. [p. 122, n. 149]

**Starhawk** Another woman who became heavily influenced by Starhawk during the 1980s was Shan Jayran. [p. 121]

**1983** Shan recalled reading *Dreaming the Dark* during December 1983, and noted that it 'blew her mind' and quickly became 'the' book for her: "it drew together so many different parts of me. You know – psychology, politics, magic, Goddess, being a women, nature - all the things that were very important to me all came together' and... I remember saying to my girlfriend 'all these things that I have been trying to fit in the corners of my life – they're serious, other people take them seriously', and I realized I could put this at the center of my life". [p. 125]

[p. 125, n. 164. She also read both parts of Z Budapest's *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries* during that same period. Interview, & her note Shan, *Which Craft?* p. 9.]

**1984–1985** An ephemeral 'Goddess bibliography' included in a Communicat issue printed around 1984–1985 included Starhawk's *The Spiral Dance* and *Dreaming the Dark*, and in her *Which Craft?* and *Circlework* Shan recommended *The Spiral Dance* as the minimum read for non-bookish novices. [p. 125]

[p. 125, n. 163. From Kayoko Komatsu's personal archive; Shan, *Which Craft?* p. 63; Shan, *Circlework*, p. 77.]

A notice describing Tabbies and its friendliness to Goddess feminists was posted in the Beltane 1984 issue of the MRRN Newsletter. Shan was also noted for her "massive contributions" to the Newsletter's 22nd issue, which included an [article she penned](#) and permission to use her 48k Amstrad Spectrum computer, and an ad

for her upcoming book was published in the 28th issue during mid-1985. Matriarchy Research and Reclaim Network Newsletter 21 (Beltane 1984); Matriarchy Research and Reclaim Network Newsletter 22 (Summer Solstice to Lammas 1984); Matriarchy Research and Reclaim Network Newsletter 28 (Beltane 1985). [p. 122, n. 145]

**1985 Starhawk in London:** Shan Jayran, who attended the meeting, recalled that the room “was so packed [with women] ... there was standing room only. We were just standing jammed together.” [Shan, *Circlework*, p. 113. Feraro cited p. 72, n. 156.]

Shan first met Starhawk when the latter visited London, during one of the two evening talks she facilitated there during May 1985. [p. 125]

[p. 125, n. 166. probably the May 6th talk on ‘Politics, Magic, Witchcraft and the Women’s Movement’ which took place at the ‘A Woman’s Place’ (London)]

This was shortly before the closure of Tabbies and the foundation of HOG, when Shan was already leading a Dianic-inspired coven. Following the talk, Shan volunteered to drive Starhawk back to the flat in which she was staying, talking politics on the way and taking a (rather long) detour for a feast at Tabbies with the women of her coven. [p. 125]

**1980s influential: Shan Jayran, who founded the House of the Goddess in London** and was highly influential there during the latter half of the 1980s. [p. 104]

According to Leonora James, who headed the Pagan Federation during the 1980s, HOG was indeed very influential in the British Pagan scene during the latter half of the decade. Personal Interview with Leonora James, 9 February 2011. [p. 123, n. 148]

**Oct. 1985 House of the Goddess** Shan established a ‘women’s temple’ adjacent to her south London residence, which began to serve both women and men by October 1985 as ‘House of the Goddess’ (HOG), lasting until 2001. [p. 122]

Noted Harvey and Hardman (eds.), *Paganism Today*, p. vii; and York, *The Emerging Network*, pp. 116–117, 229. [Cited Feraro, p. 122, n. 147]

Unable to make a living solely through these means and forced out of four years of separatist lifestyle, Shan rented out part of her South London property to Alan King, who operated a Pagan mail-order business named ‘Craefte supplies’ selling books, candles, incense, etc. and utilized this new space as a Pagan/occult shop that ran parallel to a large room in the back used by Shan for meditations and meetings. [p. 123]

HOG soon “became the centre of an eclectic form of feminist witchcraft which she developed for herself, and which embodied the whole American version of the history of witchcraft”. [p. 123]

**In October 1985**, Shan began to conduct there open training courses in ‘Circlework’ ritual and philosophy—a simplified amalgamation of Starhawk and of British Wicca as presented in Valiente’s books—as well as other open meetings and rituals. In January 1986, she began holding fortnightly ‘Pagan “At Home” Evenings’. [p. 123.]

[Michael York, *The Emerging Network*, 116–117, 229. Cited Feraro p. 123, n. 151]

Shan furthermore created a large contact network and managed The Magical Teahouse from her home for five days a week. [p. 123]

[[Michael York, *The Emerging Network*, p. 117. Magazines associated with PaganLink, such as Moonshine and Pagan News, would also help publicize Shan HOG activities during the late 1980s. See for instance “What’s On,” 3. Cited Feraro p. 123, n. 152]

**1986 Which Craft?** ... [Influenced by Starhawk her] definition of magic as “power from within” in the context of her discussion on the idea of power in her 1986 book—*Which Craft?* [p. 125]

[p. 125, n. 165 citing Shan, *Which Craft?* p. 9.]

**On men & the God.** Shan utilized Valerie Solanas’ *SCUM Manifesto* in claiming that men “have persuaded the first sex they are the second, and puffed the second sex up to pretend, uncomfortably, they are the first”. [p. 124]

[Shan, *Circlework*, p. 113. Cited Feraro, p. 124, n. 154]

She maintained that the basic model of creativity lies in “[t]he female [,who] creates from her own, building within and then giving birth”, and added that “Mother remains our first security, our first relationship... [S]he can never deny that we are her children; birth is too big an event. In contrast, fathers can deny us. Fathers can leave”. The Goddess, claimed Shan, “gives birth to the universe and her many children with it” through her cervix and vagina, which symbolize “the gate of life”. [p. 124]

[Shan, *Which Craft?* pp. 66–67, 68. Cited Feraro, p. 124, n. 155.]

Men, furthermore, were seen by Shan to be “less well endowed by nature” than women.

[Feraro p. 124, n. 156 citing Shan, *Circlework*, p. 113]

Her vision of the God, as representative of the male principle, was that of “provider, protector and guide, not as an appointed authority who remains above and beyond, but as a striving, suffering force who provides by his own sacrifice. ... Where Goddess has clearly marked separate personalities, the God is less diverse, perhaps simpler. ... [He] gives men a model of themselves which [p. 124] invokes love and honour [sic] for the female”. [pp. 124–25. Feraro n. 157 citing Shan, *Which Craft?* pp. 72–73]

**HOG middle ground** But while her work was mostly Goddess-centered, Shan also argued against “fall[ing] totally into the dream of a matrifocal (women centered) paradise”. [p. 125] [Feraro p. 125, n. 158 citing Shan, *Which Craft?* pp. 72–73]

In the latter half of the 1980s, HOG acted as a sort of middle ground connecting the more liberal-minded in both Wiccan and Dianic/Goddess strands, who would attend Shan’s rituals and other activities. [p. 125]

**Wiccan polarity disdain/ shamanic** ... she recalled that while some Wiccans disdained her work due to her lack of interest in male-female polarity, [n. 159] on one particular occasion Wiccans attending her meetings introduced their own coven to some of her practices (such as chants and ‘shamanic witchcraft’ work), which were then incorporated into its repertoire. [p. 125]

[p. 125, n. 159. ... negative review of Shan’s *Which Craft?* By Wiccan Julia Phillips in ‘The Cauldron’ [newsletter], in which Phillips stated that “[m]ost damaging of all is the author’s rampant feminism which distorts the most fundamental of Craft beliefs” and her “total ignorance of the male role in the Craft.” Phillips concluded that “Feminist neo-paganism is not unpopular and one feels Ms Jayran would have been much more at home here than with the Craft.” Phillips, “Which Craft?” 7.]

**Feminist hostility, MRRN 1986** British Goddess feminists were also divided in their attitudes to Shan during this period, and while some cooperated with her, others criticized her choice to work with men. In 1986, the women who produced the MRRN Newsletter has stopped advertising Shan’s Goddess publications and workshops due to her business liaison with Alan King, owner of ‘Craefte supplies’—an act which led her to write an enraged letter to the Newsletter’s editing committee. [p. 125]

**Exceptions Asphodel, Monica Sjöö** [p. 125, n. 162. According to Shan, Asphodel Long and Monica Sjöö—whom she met in separatist circles in the late-1970s—were among the notable figures in the British Goddess Feminism scene who did not shun her. Feraro email correspondence with Shan, 14 November 2015.]

### **Pagan Halloween Festival, est. 1987.**

Organized by Shan Jayran in a central London location, the Halloween Festival attracted 1400 attendants. [p. 89]

[p. 89, n. 148. Hutton, *Triumph*, p. 379. Susan Griffin, *Goddess Spirituality and Wicca*,” p. 273. Attendance in later Halloween Festivals during the 1980s was usually around 2000. Michael York, *The Emerging Network*, p. 117.]

In 1987, Shan organized the first completely Pagan national festival open to the general public, which attracted 1400 attendants. [p. 122]

[p. 122, n. 153. York, *The Emerging Network*, p. 117; Griffin, "Goddess Spirituality and Wicca," p. 273. Attendance in later Halloween Festivals during the 1980s was usually around 2000. York, *The Emerging Network*, p. 117.]

**1990s Pagan Moons** the monthly 'Pagan Moon' events, which took place ... at the Students Union Building of the University of London. [p. 125]

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