




Visions of the Cailleach: The Myths, Stories and History of the British / Celtic Earth Shaping Crone Goddess of Winter

Sorita d'Este , David Rankine

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Standing astride the British landscape, looms the giant blue form of the Cailleach. Whether she is seen as a benevolent earth-shaping giantess, harsh winter hag goddess, shape-shifting crone, guardian of sacred wells and animals, or ancient bestower of sovereignty; the Cailleach appears in many roles and manifestations in myths and legends across the British Isles. Tracking the Cailleach across thousands of years through folklore, literature and place names, the authors have uncovered startling references which hint at a hidden priestess cult worshipping the Cailleach from ancient times through into the twentieth century. By exploring her myths and legends, they demonstrate the hugely significant role of the Cailleach in the early history of the British Isles. The demonization of the Cailleach through the Middle Ages by the Christian Church paralleled that of women and witches, and is reflected in various other supernatural hag figures possibly derived from her and discussed in detail, such as Black Annis, Gyre Carling, Mia Lia, Nicneven and the Old Woman of the Mountain. Looking beyond the veil of the sacred landscape, the vision of the Cailleach confronts the seeker, in hills and rocks, lakes and wells, burial chambers and stormy skies. Now finally the primal elemental power of the Cailleach is revealed in her full glory, in the tales and places of Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man; as well as in traces of her presence in England, Wales, Jersey, Brittany, Spain and Norway. This unique and ground-breaking work brings together for the first time the wealth of folklore, stories and legends regarding this most significant of British supernatural figures, whose myths and wisdom are as relevant today as they have ever been.

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From Reader Review Visions of the Cailleach: The Myths, Stories and History of the British / Celtic Earth Shaping Crone Goddess of Winter for online ebook

Seawood says

A fantastic resource for anyone interested in Irish or Goddess mythology, this is an exhaustive collection of Cailleach myths and connections with a huge bibliography.

S. says

'Tis the season for the Cailleach!

This is place-centered Celtic folklore.

Terri says

A fascinating history and compilation of various Cailleach myths. Though I had heard stories for her before, I wasn't aware of the scope and geographic spread of the legends and the connections to a possible priestess society. Or the connections to Malta, a place I have been intrigued by.

This book was very readable as well as informative making it more accessible than I expected. Very enjoyable.

Kate says

Nice compilation, if a bit redundant at times. However, some sites were misidentified as to country - an island in the Hebrides as Ireland? Not enough depth or analysis in spite of the hefty amount of footnotes and references. The end just ends. No summary or conclusion as to various theories or associations made in passing. Great starting point for someone wanting to do further research. Definitely a quick read - I finished in two days over the holiday. Overall, a flat read.

Bridget Robertson says

Has many legends and folklore across the Celtic and Norse world.

I am only interested in Pre-Christian tales.

While a well researched piece, it reads in many places dry.

I am still questioning her ever being a queen of fairy.

Naomi says

This is a good collection of the stories of Cailleachan, but the interpretations around them can be very odd. Despite being aware that Cailleach may be a class of beings rather than one being/goddess, the stories are often treated as one set of motifs, rather than being clearly separated by area. Additionally, the writers' belief that an ancient priesthood survives in the Cailleach stories is based on dated scholarship and influenced by Murray. That said, this is a helpful set of stories, some of which are hard to find elsewhere.

Stephen Morris says

Great resource

Well done but a little disorganized in its presentation. A wonderful resource about this folkloric character, nevertheless, and an interesting collection of tales.

Shelby Fullington says

This book was an interesting read. I am not 100% sure on some of the connections made, but it does give the reader something to think about.

Sarah says

review soon @ thefaeryromanticlibrarian.blogspot.com

Janette says

The editing could have been tighter, but the research can't be faulted - the bibliography is huge and varied. This book has brought together all the various tales and legends about this figure in a very accessible and enjoyable way.

Kenneth says

A short-ish look at a figure from the folklore of the British Islands with possibly related figures. This survey takes all these figures and stories and breaks them down into characteristics they have in common. This is not a retelling of the legends and stories. The tellings here are bare bones, as the authors try and tease out commonalities and possible links to older, pre-literate societies.

This work is a work on folklore and folktales, it's a glimpse into an older thought process that was bigger, more complex, stranger and more diffuse than we imagine from the Christian writings on them from later times. Recommended.

