

# The Goddess Will Help Your Sales Figures

*Thom Moore*

***The 1997 Lunar Calendar.* Luna Press, PO Box 511, Kenmore Station, Boston, MA 02215, USA \$20(USD)**

When Robert Graves mentions Laura Riding's extraordinary remark about a poem of his being so nearly something that would please her that she had to destroy it, it is a salutary lesson in husbandry for his readers: he's not looking for sympathy, he's making a serious point about criticism. Do good intentions alone make something worthwhile? Is any attempt at something worthwhile worthy for that reason alone?

The notion of a female Deity wasn't invented by Graves, but the fact that the word goddess means more today to a great many people than just a good-looking woman or some cutesy aspect of ancient cultures is due largely to him and his singular work. I happily include myself in the legion of post-Christians whose lives have been given more meaning because of the concept of a living Mother God whose changing face is to be seen nightly, weather permitting. But so much drivel has been inspired by Her resuscitation that it is hard to know what to do: encourage the propagation of Her observation whatever its quality,

or Do What a Boy's Got To Do and point out naked empresses where they prance and infelicitous doggerel where it cankers?

If *The '97 Lunar Calendar: Dedicated to the Goddess in All Her Guises*, on offer from Luna Press (21st annual edition, \$20.00), passed itself off as a witchcraft almanac or some such handy thing, its value would be patent: basing its thirteen "months" on a perfectly scientific lunar ephemeris, each page shows, with attached Gregorian date and day of the week, the 29 or 30 daily phases of the moon in a tight withershins spiral, new moon to new moon, with daily rising and setting times, zodiac-sign-entry times, quarter times, and "void of course" times. But it purports to do much, much more.

For starters, it pays homage whenever and wherever it can to Graves—in itself a welcome change from his relentless disregard and denigration by hacks and others making a living off renascent Old Religion. This review copy came with the previous year's calendar, and apparently, by "permission of A.P. Watt Ltd. London on behalf of the Trustees of the Robert Graves Copyright Trust," each copy contains an obligatory Graves poem—"The Land of Whipperginny" in 1996 and "The Snap-Comb Wilderness" in this year's. But judging from the rest of the poetry and the artwork accompanying the other months, this is less a genuflexion than an effort to provide the other writers and artists with "real" status by association. The other main Gravesian aspect of the calendar is its naming of the lunar months by the BLNF tree-alphabet from *The White Goddess*, with a little instructive note in pseudo-Elizabethan Witchese at the beginning (by a writer called "Epona") about how to "use" the relevant trees "to deal with the lunar energies throughout the year." On the face of it, an intriguing idea, if you go in for that kind of thing—but the monthly notes by Epona are purest poppycock: "MUIN • Vine: Nurtures understanding from past experiences (or lives). Aids in revealing the life work of a soul—from Self—understanding [or is it supposed to be 'Self-understanding?'] and relating to the whole. Encourages anchoring in the Now." This sort of thing would encourage most people of good will who had got this far to up-anchor from the Now and toss the damned thing into the bin. As far as I can tell, their leaf-rubbings for each month are accurate, but I am no botanist; and they can't seem to make up their minds if LUIS is mountain ash, quickbeam, or rowan, or even if they're the same thing. It doesn't matter—Epona says each one of them ". . . Reconnects to the Universal Love Ground." Which brings us to another aspect of Goddess-commerce.

Because Goddess-thinkers and Goddess-lovers around the world tend to be post-Christians, there is a relentless goodness about the artwork and verse published for profitable sale to them (Actually, not all: there is a fine bloodthirsty poem to "Kali" by one Lisa Sparger at the RUIS month on the '97 calendar). This is, in fact, another one of the proliferating markets of America, all of which have their own standards, and the standards of this branch of the huge New Age market are leftover hippie make-nice-and-smell-the-flowers buzzwords in a context overlaid with a depressingly literalist understanding of antique sciences like herbalism and astrology—both of which are eminently worthy of study, but shouldn't be dragooned into the canon of a half-baked Goddess fundamentalism. "Oh, how wonderful!" you can almost hear them saying. "Trees! And they actually change with the cycles of the moon! And they have Celtic words for them, too?" This sloppiness of thinking—a lack of a sense of irony, an imbalance characteristically American—leads them to an impasse that I would like to see happily resolved. I can't imagine how they are going to do it, though. It is this: their calendar has thirteen months. They alternate between having thirty and twenty-nine days. However you calculate it, that's something like 384 days—nineteen or so more than the average Gregorian year. 1996's *Lunar Calendar* begins on December 21, 1995, and goes to January 8, 1997. This year's goes from January 8, 1997, and goes to January 27, 1998. If they keep this up, it won't be more than a few years before they are completely out of synch not only with the solar Gregorian calendar, but with the seasons of the (oops, solar) year, which is what the tree alphabet celebrates. Since this is the 21st edition, I wonder how they dealt with that in the past? I wonder if they know that you can't fudge it if you want to be taken seriously? If 1998's simply reprints 1997's RUIS and calls it BETH, then someone should give them a smack.