Rosaleen Norton (1917-1979) remains a shadowy figure in Australian history – popular or otherwise. For a select few, she represents a part of Australia, specifically Sydney's Kings Cross that is essentially long gone; a bohemian city of artists, writers and anarchists sharing space with nine-to-five workers and families. For roughly four decades, Norton moved around Kings Cross and other inner-city suburbs, painting, drawing and practising magic. Her artwork, appearance, lifestyle and occultism earned her considerable attention. Indeed, Norton became notorious during the 1950s in particular because of numerous altercations with police and media attention.\(^2\) Often at the heart of these scandals was her practice of magic.\(^3\)

As a self-proclaimed witch, Norton was certainly ahead of her time, technically breaking the law in fact, as witchcraft was illegal in New South Wales until 1969 as was fortune telling until 1979.\(^4\) Additionally, her self-identification and flagrant disregard of the anxiety caused by the term are testimony to the strength of her spiritual convictions. She remains misunderstood and her beliefs and practices – even to those only slightly familiar with her – tarnished by a media-created persona and / or a prejudiced view of those associated with esoteric traditions. Labelled a Satanist, for example, and accused of various immoral and illegal acts, Norton \textit{in reality} was a far cry from the traditional, stereotypical wicked witch. At the heart of her belief system, which she avowedly classified as witchcraft, was the worship of Pan.

Norton and her partner Gavin Greenlees (1930-1983) worshipped Pan and conducted rituals to him (and others) in their shared accommodations during the 1940s and 1950s. To the ancient Greeks, Pan was the god of nature per se, but was regularly associated with pasturelands and their human and animal inhabitants. Half-man, half-goat, Pan also embodied the sexual drive, the uninhibited urge to copulate. For a pantheist like Norton, Pan was a natural inclusion in the multifarious deities requiring worship, occupying as he did, a long-established place in the occult tradition. Practitioners such as Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) and Gerald Gardner (1884-1964) actively worshipped Pan, albeit in different ways, and his presence is still a powerful one among contemporary witches and pagans. In view of the significant influence of Crowley on Norton, it
seems likely that she drew heavily from his rituals in honour of the god. However, Norton’s personal testimonies state that an essentially intuitive attraction to Pan began at an early age.

An article in Squire magazine in 1965 records that Norton’s worship of Pan overlapped with her parents’ attempts to persuade the 12 year old to take confirmation in the Anglican Church:

> She started to take more than a passing interest in Pan, the horned … half-man, half-goat Greek deity … This interest, generated by the confusion which accompanies adolescence and fired by Ro’s [sic] inherent rebellion, became a fetish. She devised worship rituals, using robes, Chinese joss sticks and wine she pinched from a stock hidden by her parents. … She rejected Christianity entirely and embraced Pantheism … the identification of God with all that exists … Ro believes that everything is equally a manifestation of her God – rather Gods – because she has divided her divinity into several gods.  

It is possible that Norton accessed information on the god from her extensive childhood / adolescent reading; although she regularly maintained that the gods she worshipped simply came to her at an early age. This is in keeping with traditional explanations of the genuine occult practitioner, namely, that an ability to access other realms or to perform magic is an integral part of the particular individual. As Norton remarked to journalist Dave Barnes in 1956: “If you are a witch nobody has to teach you. In my case, it came naturally, and nobody had to teach me.”  

This creed, and the age at which Norton maintained she began to undergo extra-sensory, supernatural experiences, remained constant throughout her life. Prior to the interviews with Squire and Barnes, for example, she spoke of the significance of puberty to her inner-awakening:

> The onset of adolescence often awakens the religious as well as the sexual urge, and this was so for me. For some time previously I had been constantly aware of a world wherein moved vast and mysterious powers, the sense of gay daemonic presences and hauntingly familiar atmospheres, elusive yet powerful and compelling, when everything round me seemed to change focus like patterns in a kaleidoscope.

Pan, as cited in the Squire interview, was at the centre of this early pantheism, and emerged in the trance art of Norton from the 1940s onwards. In a painting from c. 1943, Pan is depicted as a powerful, snake-entwined being emerging
from a cauldron (Plate 3). He is a decidedly threatening force with feline eyes and whiskers and an enlarged fanged grin. In an analysis of this piece, Kirsti Sarmiala-Berger writes:

In Norton's *Pan*, the lecherous deity, sporting a forked beard and outsized horns, leans on a cauldron, his genitals resting on the rim ready to fertilize its contents, while a naked Maenad frolics in the background. … Pan was not merely a motif of lust on the earthly plane but, as lord of all natural energies, he conducted the progress of both growth and dissolution, of birth and decay. Therefore, in Norton's picture, the shrouded figure of death is in attendance, and the cauldron has become the crucible for the regeneration of decomposing bodily refuse. The coils of the phallic snake, rising out of the black container, combine the duality of life and death into a single cycle of recurrent transformation.8

This is a more menacing representation compared to the better known mural that functioned as a ritual backdrop to Norton's personal altar (see Plates 1 and 2). In the mural, Pan is more closely aligned with conventional images from antiquity: a horned, hoofed and bearded figure holding pan-pipes with discernable human characteristics.

Within the social and religious contexts of 1950s Australia, such images were, not surprisingly, contributing factors in the charges of Satanism levelled against Norton. Indeed, artistic representations of the Devil have a traceable heritage to Greek and Roman images of Pan as well as Celtic depictions of the horned god Cernunnus. Accordingly, the Devil was and remains (in some Christian contexts) cloven-hoofed and horned, and in a conservative Australia far from familiar with multi-faiths, Norton's art was not only misunderstood but regarded as evil and Satanic. The anxieties triggered by Norton’s art and Norton herself were not helped by her various statements to the press, such as this excerpt from the *Australasian Post* in 1957:

If the kingdom of Pan had always been with me, it had mostly been in the background, overlaid by what was called reality… So, my first act of ceremonial magic was in honour of the horned god, whose pipes are a symbol of magic and mystery, and whose horns and hooves stand for natural energies and fleetfooted freedom: And this rite was also my oath of allegiance and my confirmation as a witch. I remember my feelings on that occasion well, and they are valid today:
if Pan is the “Devil” (and the joyous goat-god probably is, from the orthodox viewpoint) then I am indeed a “Devil” worshipper.⁹

Such statements, however, were essentially simplified explanations of her worship of Pan and her pantheism per se, aimed at a tabloid readership. One marked exception is the series of autobiographical entries written for the Australasian Post - part of one being quoted above. In a later one, Norton wrote of her equation of Pan with ‘the planet Earth’ and, accordingly, Pan as ‘the ruler and god of this world.’¹⁰ She then suggests that this may well have been why the Greeks assigned the name ‘Pan’ to this particular deity: ‘which in Greek means “All”, for he is the totality of lives, elements and forms of being – organic, “inorganic” and otherwise, comprising the planet as a whole.’¹¹ To Norton, then, Pan was a metaphysical being who was the earth and everything that inhabited it.

Despite this extract, it is usually in other, non-commercial documents that Norton’s more complex expressions of her belief system were revealed. In a letter penned to C. S. Lewis in 1952, for example, Pan was described as ‘the unfallen one who expresses Itself through’ the ‘powers of Earth.’¹² While this explanation is akin to her accounts as recorded in the aforementioned tabloids, the letter continues in a more esoteric tone: Norton refers to Pan as ‘the Elemental,’¹³ who functioned as a ‘neutralising power’¹⁴ juxtaposed to Adam Kadmon (the creator part of God), ‘the fallen … the one who expresses itself through the human race.’¹⁵ This figure features in the Lurianic Kabbalah (from the teachings of Isaac Luria [1534-1572]) as the first being to come from the Godhead (Ein-Sof) and was, therefore, virtually inseparable or indistinguishable from that Godhead – hence Norton’s reference to ‘Adam K.’ and ‘all his creation.’

Norton continues to articulate her system, placing Pan at the forefront:

A being whose state has been supreme delight and harmony, who has expressed nothing but goodwill – and knew of no other – and who had reached for still higher forms of manifestations … Adam K. would have destroyed all his creation … and any other under his influence, except for the neutralising power of Pan the Elemental.¹⁶

Here, Norton sees the universe as a living entity imbued with supersensuous forces or beings at times engaged in turmoil and conflict. On an earthly realm or plane, these forces could manifest themselves: Adam Kadmon being expressed through the human race and Pan through ‘weather and geological activity … animals,
vegetation, place intelligences etc.\textsuperscript{17} As a force that forms an oppositional energy to the more logos-driven manifestations and energies of Adam Kadmon and Its human expressions, Pan guides and protects Nature, keeping the earth on its natural path. In such a system, therefore, Pan is the cosmic equaliser, the ‘neutralising power’ of universal harmony.

Norton, then, imported Pan into her personal cosmology as part of an eclectic supersensual environment inspired and elucidated by her many trance experiences in which forces, daemonic beings appeared and enlightened her at will; such is the nature of pantheism. Thus, in a trance state, Pan or Adam Kadmon – or a host of other possibilities – may visit her. Here we see the influence of magicians such as Dion Fortune (1891-1946) and Crowley, who worked with the Tree of Life and its ten levels of consciousness (known as the ten \textit{sephirot}). The magician would meditate on the Tree, which was ‘a symbol of the unconscious mind,’\textsuperscript{18} and would use this process to scale it, reaping the spiritual, magical and intellectual benefits that came with each ascension.\textsuperscript{19}

In Fortune’s magical system, as represented in her influential text, \textit{The Mystical Qabalah}, Pan is the positive earth force, the giver of happiness.\textsuperscript{20} Similarly, Fortune’s 1936 novel, \textit{The Goat Foot God}, ‘did honour to Pan as the prime symbol of a paganism needed to heal the modern world.’\textsuperscript{21} Crowley’s rituals likewise featured the god in a significant role, especially his workings in 1909 in the North African desert, the conclusion of which involved the construction of an altar to Pan and a sacrifice.\textsuperscript{22} In \textit{Magick in Theory and Practice}, Crowley included an elaborate hymn to the god prefaced by an excerpt from the Greek tragedy \textit{Aias} by Sophocles (496-406 BC).\textsuperscript{23} Crowley depicts Pan as a being closely aligned with the Greek god Dionysus, thereby emphasising their shared qualities as deities of fertility, uninhibited sexual expression and the sex urge per se.

Norton lived her life according to the universal laws of Pan, that is, she lived – as closely as an urbanite can – in harmony with nature. Although she occupied numerous small flats and apartments throughout her life, Norton surrounded herself with a menagerie. She shared her life with numerous cats, the occasional lizard, frogs, rats and spiders. In an interview in 1952 she spoke of assaulting a man in Coffs Harbour because she had suspected him of harming a lizard: “I was very fond of this lizard and he lived in a stump. We used to have an understanding about everything – well, you could say there was an affinity.”\textsuperscript{24}
Norton reveals in the same interview that she was charged for this offence. Such encounters with animals and a preference for their company point to a lifestyle choice on Norton's behalf that was simpatico with her worship of Pan. Such a passion for the world of Pan was with Norton from childhood, as illustrated by various autobiographical anecdotes – a night spider named Horatius, setting free one neighbours' pigeons and another's Angora rabbits ('There was a vague feeling in my infant mind that a cage was the wrong place for them.') and attempts to entice 'hornets, wasps, and such-like to settle on and possible sting' her.\(^{25}\) That Norton regarded Pan as the giver of life in a real or physical sense is illustrated by her story of a turtle sent to her by the god: during a walk in Centennial Park she slipped into a pond and on emerging found the creature in her hand.\(^{26}\)

It is therefore not surprising that Norton was fiercely opposed to accusations of animal sacrifice in her rituals, once stating:

> The god Pan and the other gods are against animal sacrifice ... Animal sacrifice leads to bad trouble for the people who carry it out.\(^{27}\)

As an animal lover and a staunch defender of the environment, Norton may be regarded by some as a precursor of nature-based witchcraft, commonly known as Wicca, which began to surface in Australia in the 1970s. Yet for many Wiccans, the Mother Goddess occupies the pivotal position of worship, or at the very least, she shares a dual position of power with her male consort, the Horned God. For Norton, however, while she certainly worshipped female deities, especially Hecate, one specific, all-encompassing goddess was not at the centre of her magical hierarchy. Similarly, while Norton shares with Wiccans a belief in the presence of the divine in all things, her magical calling and practice were more in keeping with the traditions of Crowley than Gardner (usually regarded as the father of modern Wicca). Crowley's approach to magic – or 'magick' as he preferred – encompassed an understanding of the term in its broadest sense, namely the use of supersensual powers for desired means that did not encompass concepts of good or bad but transcended these to embrace a state of amorality, best encompassed in his creed: 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law' (The Book of the Law 1:40). Her knowledge and use of the Kabbalah (or 'Qabalah' as she spelt it), her practice of trance magic and, most notably her practice of sex magic, show a close allegiance with Crowley's magical world than Gardner's, whose system adheres to the duitheistic concept of the Goddess and
God, and whose followers now promote the maxim: ‘Do what thou wilt but harm none.’28

Norton claimed that she only worked curse magic when required to redress a situation she regarded as unfair – a phenomenon against the contemporary Wiccan tradition. In such circumstances she called on Hecate, not Pan, to perform hexes. As a more threatening and even frightening deity compared to Pan (according to Norton), Hecate was regarded as the more appropriate being to summon. This is indicative of her approach to the gods as beings to be worshipped and forces available – if they deign – to empower the witch in her pursuit of magic to enact change.

Norton was once asked: ‘What would be the state of the world if evil ruled?’ She replied: ‘Precisely what it is.’29 She believed that the kingdom of Pan was long gone in an earthly sense, available only to the witch who sought his message and honoured his presence in the forces of nature. Nevertheless, in a world she saw as ‘evil,’ she lived and remained content in her magical universe:

So
I live in green blood of the Forest:
I live in the white fire of Power:
I live in the scarlet blossom of Magic:
I live.30

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1 Thank you to Elaine Lindsay, co-editor of this journal, for her invitation to submit an article on Rosaleen Norton for this final issue. The article is dedicated to the memory of Lillie May Wood (1919-2007), a woman who, like Rosaleen Norton, lived life according to her own rules.
2 On Norton and the media, see my article on-line at http://www.newcastle.edu.au/school/humanities/staff/johnsonmarguerite/Role%20Version%203.doc
3 One of the most scandalous events in Norton’s life – and one that received extensive media coverage – was her involvement (intimately and magically) with Sir Eugene Goossens (1893-1962), the Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Director of the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music. For details, see n.2.
5 Anon, ‘Inside Rosaleen Norton,’ Squire, April 1965: 42.
9 See n.6.
11 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid 79.
15 Ibid 76.
16 Ibid 79.
17 Ibid 76.
18 Drury, Echoes from the Void: Writings on Magic, Visionary Art and the New Consciousness (Great Britain: 1994)
24.
20 Fortune XXIV.30 and 33.
23 The 1929 edition was titled Magick in Theory and Practice.
26 Drury n.12 (94).
28 From The Pagan Federation Information Pack, 2nd ed. (London: 1992): 14. Thank you to Nevill Drury for bringing this to my attention. It is important to note that while assessing Norton’s magic overall, it seems that her private activities – those in which she worked alone or with select individuals (such as Greenless and Goossens) – resemble Crowley’s philosophies in practice, her coven clearly shows the use of Gardner’s various systems; see Doreen Valiente, The Rebirth of Witchcraft (London: 1989) 154-59. Valiente specifies that the ‘deities invoked by Rosaleen and her coven were called Pan and Hecate’ (158).
29 See n.25 (4).