



## Transcript Episode 11: We always have Loki

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### 0:30 Jochem

Hello! Welcome to the Wyrd Thing podcast, episode 11, We always have Loki. I am Jochem and today I will talk with our special guest Jay and Frigga about trans people and gender variance in modern inclusive heathenry. Maybe, Jay, you can introduce yourself a bit to our listeners.

### 0:52 Jay

Yes, sure. Thanks for inviting me along. I am Jay, I am a clinical psychologist in the UK. I'm a short, white man, from England, with bold head, blue eyes, big ears, and a little goatee beard and a septum piercing, wearing a black t-shirt. And I've been interested in paganism and heathenry for a really long time, probably about 25, 30 years. And on various points of my spiritual journey I dipped into other things, like Buddhism, but I always going to come back here. I am really pleased to come and speak to you today, because this is a fascinating topic, with everything, about the intersection of gender and spirituality and heathenry. So, thanks very much.

### 1:36 Jochem

Frigga, you had prepared an eh...

### 1:40 Frigga

A few words, thank you. For nearly two years by now The Wyrd Thing Podcast team is talking on inclusivity and diversity. And for the last couple of months we also talk with guests. In this period I became aware of many a thing and one is the fear and hate for transgender persons. Now I know how short sighted and intolerant people can be, but I guess I will always wonder why. Why hate someone who is different, a person you might not even know. Culture plays a crucial role in our social lives, culture is amongst others values and beliefs, language, communication, practices, norms. There will be all kind of responses when people break norms, and even more so with breaking gender norms. November 16 is International Day of Tolerance and only 4 days later, November 20, is Transgender Day of Remembrance. A day needed due to lack of tolerance and exactly on this day there was a shooting in a lgbtqe... i... a+ nightclub in the US. This morning I read Musk gave access again on Twitter to some transgender haters, this while one of his children is transgender. I feel horrified and it must be even more so for you Jay and Jochem and all other transgender people and their loving family and friends.

### 3:18 Jay

Yeah. Beautifully put.

### 3:21 Jochem

It is weird, isn't it, that differences are always scaring people for some reason. And when we had our pre-chat, Jay, you said some interesting things about that.



### 3:39 Jay

Yeah, I think it's... this is a really timely episode, I think, for us to be talking about this, given what happened in the US, recently. And how close we are to Transgender Day of Remembrance. And so I think, it's more important than ever that we reach out to other people to share our stories and to learn from each other. I think, you know, part of being a psychologist, I guess, is that I spend a lot of time thinking about other people and how other people's minds work. And trying to make sense of that. But often in therapy it's trying to make sense of that *with* someone. And I am endlessly frustrated how little tolerance we have in society.

And you're right, it's to with the things around us, that are outside our experiences that are the things we're often the most scared of. And there are personality differences, you know. If you're the sort of person who has a very flexible mind, who is curious about the world, who is open to experience, who is less likely to be scared of difference and of different people, and more likely to seek out those people, to find out what's going on, to find out about the way different people live their lives. Where is, if you're someone who is maybe a bit more closed, maybe a bit more rigid in thinking or is maybe fearful of your own resources, of your own security, than it's really easy to have mistrust. Or a concern about others.

And I think what we see now is that what would have maybe just been a fear or anxiety or worry, has been really thoroughly weaponised by larger groups, with their own agenda's, to tap into that. Essentially to groom people and manipulating them into much more fear, much more anxiety, and worry, more distrust. And that's when we see things have happened like this, this horrific event in the States.

### 5:32 Jochem

Hmm. Yeah, that makes sense. You also said something about that this kind of things is in fact regardless of the specific theme. So, it's not directed against trans people, but it's more a kind of general bigotry?

### 6:00 Jay

Yeah, the underlying processes, the underlying thought processes, that are behind these kind of events and this way of thinking, they are the same regardless of what group is targeted. So, people who are... who tend to be racist, also tend to be homophobic. You know, these kind of things kind of cluster together, because it's not about any individual group per se. It's usually about an underlying way of seeing the world. You know, if I'm being open minded and flexible in my thinking, and I have, you know, maybe a bad experience with someone from a particular cultural group, now I'm less likely to contribute that kind of characteristic to everyone in that cultural group, and more likely to want to understand what was happening, and more likely to not generalise that to everyone and then into other groups. So, yeah, it's the same process.

So bigotry... it's not that transphobia is the issue, that racism is the issue, that homophobia is the issue. It's bigotry [that] is the issue, because it is the same across all these different groups, this way of thinking, the othering, seeing people as dangerous, as out to get your resources, as out to take things from you. You know, if someone else has rights, than it's going to take yours away. All these fears are the same, regardless of whom tearing down.

But where you do see differences, is in the vulnerability of different groups, to the impact of that. You know, the trans community and non-binary communities in the UK, and, you know, globally, are very vulnerable to the effects of this kind of bigotry, and these prejudices, this violence. Because of not having a critique in human rights. So, as are many other groups.



So, you know, as a trans person, I feel particularly... I feel the impact of those things, when I read the inactive stories in the press, when I see legislation changes coming in that are reruling the things that I fought for so hard, it has a huge impact. I feel it very personally. Even though it is not aimed at me, I feel it personally, because this is my community. And it's unjust. And it's this injustice, I think, that can be really corrosive to all of us.

#### 8:11 Jochem

Yeah. So, you basically say, it's a form of social violence. And the more marginalised a group is, the more impact it will have on that group, or on people in that group.

#### 8:59 Jay

Yeah. The more marginalised a group is, the fewer resources it has to protect itself, to whether these things that come, to be able to tolerate that kind of... distressing within the system. So yeah, the fewer resources we have, the more at risk we are. Definitely. And I would call this violence, you know, the kind of the erosion of rights. It's subtle, but it's abuse. It's still abuse. And I think, we do need to recognise this for what it is. We don't do that enough.

#### 8:59 Jochem

Hmm. I agree on that, yeah.

#### 9:03 Frigga

Maybe... Can you explain what TERF is? Because that is one of the words, or expressions, I never heard of. And by now I'm starting to understand what it is, but maybe you can explain about that.

#### 9:17 Jay

I can definitely have a go [laughs]. I think, the term TERF is really... it's a really interesting term. So, it stands for Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists. And, you know, back in the 70's and 80's and, you know, early radical feminism was a really important social movement. The, you know, it was aimed at addressing inequalities for women and girls, and it did some amazing things. And I know loads of people who call themselves radical feminists, who do not exclude trans people. But there are a growing minority who do. And... what that basically means is for those people trans people are deluded. So, if you are a trans woman, if you are someone who was assigned male at birth and you identify yourself as a woman, what TERF ideology or TERF perspective would be, is that you're a man. Regardless of how you feel. That your sex is permanent, and unchangeable, and you're just deluding yourself. And actually, you might be a risk to, in inverticles, 'real' women and girls by accessing their spaces. And again, TERF ideology comes down to a fear of resources. So, if these 'men' are allowed into women spaces than it takes away the sanctity of the spaces that are just for women and girls. And obviously, from my perspective trans women are women, trans men are men, non-binary people are valid. You know, this isn't up for discussion. Because I know who I am, and who I've always been, and I am very happy with that, and it is very offensive when someone tells me that I'm actually, really a lesbian and I am just deluded about it. I've fallen out of the patriarchy. TERF ideology would say that I've become a victim of the patriarchy, that I believe that women aren't good enough, so I'm not happy being a lesbian. I'm not... Well, I've internalised homophobia, and I've had to transition, because that seemed like the



only option. That's not true. That's not the case. I was actually a pretty good lesbian before I became a man. So, you know... It's not who I am. It's just not.

But, unfortunately, that's where this ideology comes from. It sees trans people as being completely invalid, as being deluded, and in some way not recognising reality. And I think that's the crux of it. That's two very different perspectives, and it's very hard to find a middle ground between them.

### 11:44 Jochem

What I find interesting, is that a lot of the arguments we hear from TERFs now, is the same as we heard in the 70's when people were against homo and lesbian people. [Jay: Yeah] And it's the same way of reasoning, and so, nothing has changed [Jay: No! Laughs] in 50 years.

And the other thing that I find really weird is that even then the way of reasoning was not valid, and scientifically wrong, and it still is and it's even more so, in 50 years we have done a lot of scientific research, and even more evidence that this way of reasoning is just not right! [Jay: Hmm] It has nothing to do with facts.

### 12:43 Jay

Laughs. No, it doesn't.

### 12:45 Frigga

What I see happening is that it is repeating the same arguments. I can be afraid of things, I know what fear is, and I might be fear of whatever. But how I see it, it is my problem, I have to look into my fear. Why am I afraid? What is it that upsets me? Why am I responding in the way I do? And it is simply repeating the same arguments and there is nothing [Jochem: Yeah] of themselves in it. [Jay: Yeah] And that what's make me so... Please!

And it has been people I know, who consider themselves to have a mind of their own and who think for themselves. And then, how's it possible that you claim you think for yourself and you just repeat the arguments which others tell you to?

### 13:34 Jay

We see a lot in the trend that is at the moment towards believing conspiracy theories. And what's interesting about conspiracy theories, and why people may believe those, is that they're not based on facts. It's belief. And there... It's, it's not people who are stupid, or who... who are easily misled. No, it's bright people who are very able to weigh the evidence, but who just come to very different conclusions to what mainstream might come to.

I think it's really interesting, Jochem, when you talk about the way that this hasn't changed. I almost feel like society always needs some kind of scapegoat to make people feel like... for some people to feel good they need someone to blame for their problems, they need somewhere else to put it. And our governments are very good at saying 'Oh, look over there, immigrants, they're the problem, blame them for the fact that you don't have housing and good social care.' Yeah, things like that. We need a scapegoat somehow.

I feel like it was lesbian, gay and bisexual people, now it's trans people. What's frustrating is that trans people fought for the rights of LGB people and it's not necessarily always happening the other way round. Because a lot of people who identify as TERF, or I would say are TERFs, are people who are lesbians. [Jochem: Yeah] And that's really sad.

Some people who I've put under the TERF umbrella would say 'we really hate the term', they really reject it. But it is actually a term that has come from TERFs. It's the term that they chose to call



themselves. So even I know some people who reject it, I still use it. 'You chose it' [laughs] So, that's what I'm going to call you. And it's a very accurate monogram.

You're right, it's not fact based, it's ideology. I think you can... you can see this as almost being a kind of faith, a believe. You can't argue someone of their faith, you can't give them logic out of a faith. It's what they believe to be true. And that's where it gets really trick.

### 15:34 Frigga

Yeah, I miss then the dialogue. Just listen to one another. And empathy is what I miss. And... And...

### 15:41 Jochem

It's, I think, what Jay said earlier. It took a while before TERFs set foot in the Netherlands, where Frigga and I live, but they are here now as well. And what I didn't realise, is two things. The movement is funded by far right and evangelical groups, so they get a lot of money. Much more than trans groups worldwide have on... to spend to raise awareness about trans issues. They get, I think I saw numbers, they have three times as much for just marketing stuff. And they use it, I'll have to say, wisely. Because they do it really brilliantly.

### 16:40 Jay

Yeah. That's something that I see a lot happening, which is very similar to what's been happening in the UK government in recent years. That kind of populist way of expressing: just saying things that grab headlines, that grab people's attention. And even if it is disproved later, it almost becomes irrelevant, because already that thing you've said has got into the consciousness of society.

[Jochem: Yeah] It doesn't even matter if you know it's not true. It doesn't even matter if it gets disproved. You still hooped people in by it. And I see that an awful lot in the kind of TERF rhetoric that's around at the moment. It's, it's eye-catching. It grabs your attention. It evokes fear. It's *really* clever. And it's *really* thought through.

And I kind of... of worry about these groups, because yeah, they are funded by the far-right, they are funded by evangelical organisations. These are by large, as far as I can tell, really caring individuals, who really care about women and girls, and are scared about them being hurt. And *that* is an amazing thing. Who do they think these organisations that are funding, are going to come for next, when they've dealt with trans people? Where do they think *their* rights are going to go? Yeah. I feel like... I'm genuinely worried, because these are, by large, really decent human beings. And I worry for them, even well... they're causing all this drama and stress, you know. Anyone can be manipulated.

### 18:04 Jochem

It makes me think of the poster, it's from the eighties as well. I don't remember the exact words, but it goes something like: First they were against black people, then they were against LGB people, then they were against... pffff... I don't know what, and I did nothing all that time, and now they're against me and there is no-one left to help me.

### 18:33 Jay

That's very much what's happening.



### 18:35 Jochem

Yeah. Let's go away from the TERF's and talk more about trans people in general. What would we do to make our story heard and our point of view more known to the general public?

### 18:55 Jay

It's a really interesting question, how we increase the visibility, I guess, of trans people. So that it becomes more the norm and less of something that can be othered so easily. It's so difficult to do this, because, especially in the time that we're living in now. You know, we've just seen this awful hate attack in the States. There's a huge rise in the UK, certainly in LGBT hate crime. It's a really scary time and with all of the access that people online now have to you as an individual. Not just online, but then to be able to find out where you work and where you live, you know, and people do get targeted.

So actually being really visible and being open now is, I would say, more dangerous than it was ten years ago. Because all these people... They were curious and rude, but they weren't violent. [Laughs] You know. Well, that's not true, lots of people, you know, were murdered as well. But it's, it feels like that's really shifted, that violence is more, um, more okay now? Seems to be more normal now. Um, less invisible. So it's difficult for us to be visible, for us to share our stories.

The problem with that is that is how you make social change happen: it's by meeting people, by interacting with people, by sharing your experience and listening to others, and this is the glue that holds society together. That's what's really important, we can't make these changes unless we're sharing our stories, but when we share our stories we're vulnerable. And, also when we share our stories we're sharing a bit of ourselves, and if we're sharing that with people who are maybe not receptive, who are maybe responding in a way that's unhelpful, who might be aggressive, that's really difficult to manage, you know. When you're trying to be vulnerable and open with people to then have that met with hostility, um. But not everyone's going to be like that.

And I think, I made a decision a long time ago that, you know, I'm a white person, so I have white privilege in this society, so I'm less likely to be attacked or harmed, than I am if I were a person of colour, so that gives me a layer of protection. I'm perceived as male and I identify as male, but I'm perceived as it, so you know, that gives me a layer of protection, so there's... and I'm middle class, so, you know, I'm financially relatively secure. All of these things mean that I've got protections that some other people don't have. So I made the decision to use that to be visible, because if I'm visible I'm less likely to be harmed than maybe some other people.

So, although the stories that I can share are not going to be representative of other people who are might be more vulnerable, it's a start. It's a start, and at least it's opening conversations, and I'm less worried. But it's difficult. It's really difficult, and I think... I always really, really, really, really want other trans and non-binary people to be able to be telling their stories, but at the same time it's not possible for everyone. It's not safe for everyone. And it depends also on just where you're at at the time. If you have to give something of yourself to share your story you have to have enough in you, that day.

### 21:53 Frigga

To me the next question is: How can I be an ally?

### 21:56 Jay

That is such a good question! It's such a complicated question. I love it. You know, you ask the most complicated questions, I love it. But how to be a good ally? First thing is to believe trans and



non-binary people. To believe that we exist and we're real, and to start from a place where that's not even up for debate. That's the first thing. So that's not even part of the equation.

To do some of the emotional labour yourselves. So do that background reading, that background work, there's loads of really good books, and there's loads of blogs and stuff, that are written by trans people and non-binary people. So you can learn a heck of a lot from those already. Be curious, but respectful. So, you know, you can ask people about their experience, but they may not want to tell you and that's has to be fine, that has to be fine.

If you have a platform, you know, this is a great example, you have a platform and you're sharing it to enable those voices to be heard. This is great. So that's a really important thing, if you have social power, use your social power. In whatever way, shape or form. What we see a lot of, I think this comes back to the TERF thing, is people... There aren't actually that many TERF's. It's quite a small movement, but they're powerful and they're loud. So their voices are amplified, so it looks like there's a lot of them. And you think, if there were more people who had that kind of social power speaking out in support of trans people, imagine what that could do. That would be amazing.

So using a platform, using power, if calling out what you see, if you see transphobia, if you hear it, if people are making offensive jokes, if they're using offensive language, name it. Because you won't know who in that room might be trans or non-binary, because you can't tell just by looking at us, by large, which is a popular misconception. So if you see it, there might be someone in that room who is feeling deeply uncomfortable and vulnerable, but can't say anything because it's too risky. Whereas if you're cis, you're not trans, you have the power to be able to challenge that. And actually cis people will often hear it more from other cis people. If you're a trans person saying 'please don't do that, it's really upsetting', you're suddenly labelled as the 'angry trans person' and that invalidates your perspective. And that's something that I think people of colour, especially women of colour, are more than familiar with. That being labelled as the 'angry black woman', you know, what that does to the power of your voice.

So yeah, if you are in a majority, or if you are a person with power, calling out what you see, naming it. Because you might be saving someone in that room from going home and feeling completely isolated and not leaving the house again for days, or even worse. So, yeah... Those are all steps you could take to be an excellent ally.

#### 24:40 Jochem

Thank you.

#### 24:42 Frigga

Okay. And I think that I'm partly doing a few things, at least, but you always can learn more about it, and become more aware. Sometimes it's scary also, but that's not a reason not to do it. And indeed what you said, I can relate to that, being white, being privileged, and cisgender in this case, I feel an obligation to open my mouth.

#### 25:07 Jay

And it's scary, you know, standing up to anything you see like that. I've named racism, I've seen it, and it's scary, you know, it evokes a real reaction. It's like, is it my place to start with? Should I do this? Is it up to me? How do I do this, what if I get hurt? What if it comes back on me? You know, all of those things go through your mind.

The consequences are still fewer than for the person in the room who is being targetted. Even if the person who's being aggressive doesn't know that's there someone they're targetting. But it is



hard, it's hard. But I think, being an ally means doing the hard work that trans and non-binary people have to do every single day without choice.

#### 25:52 Frigga

Ah.

#### 25:53 Jochem

In a way it reminds me to an experience I had when I was heavily involved in Deaf community. A lot of Deaf people are very - it was twenty years ago - especially then, but still - all lot of them are so disappointed by the inaccessibility of hearing society that they are angry with hearing people. For not understanding, for not being able to communicate with Deaf people, for basically excluding them on daily basis. Like trans people are often excluded for other reasons as well.

Being there, in a group of Deaf people, being able to sign with them just naturally, so we didn't have any communication difficulties. Sometimes we talked about hearing people, and they would say 'Ah, yeah, those hearing people they just don't get it.' And I thought 'Yeah, but I am hearing too', 'Oh yeah, you, but you are different.' [laughs] Which felt as a huge compliment on one hand and still felt awkward on the other hand.

#### 27:15 Frigga

Yah.

#### 27:17 Jay

You know, I've just been having a conversation about something really similar to this. About when trans people express frustration at cis people 'Ah, cis people again! What is it with the cis people, what's wrong with the cis?' You know, like that. It's quite a common thing. But it's really easy for cis people in the room then to feel like it's a personal attack and to take it personally. And when that happens, it becomes about them and their feelings and their emotions and they're not listening to what it is, which is actually just frustration at a whole system [Jochem: Yeah] that cis people benefit from.

You know, I can say those things around my partner, who is cis. She never thinks it's her... she knows she's part of this world where she has cis privilege. But, there are other people that I might have said it around, who take it very personally and get very offended. And I understand, I do see why, and that's kind of what you were talking about just like that: 'Oh, but hang on, it's not me'. Yeah, it's none of us as individuals. If you're trying and you're doing your best, it's never about you as individuals.

But it's, it's a difficult world to live in if you're trans or non-binary and the world is designed for cis people by cis people. And you're having to kind of navigate that every day. It is frustrating. I think this is something that we see... Again whilst bigotry is a common process across all different groups, I think these internal processes that we have, you know, in any group that is socially disempowered, are the same processes, it's the same issues [Jochem: Yeah] psychologically that are underlying a lot of this. Even if the outside structure is different.

#### 28:51 Jochem

Yeah. To me, one of the benefits of being trans is that I was 'forced' [giggles] to think about things that are natural to other people. I think I was done transitioning and I saw a couple of young guys I think they will have been fifteen, sixteen, and they were playing basketball outside. And they were





just being boys and they didn't seem like they were questioning their gender, just, it's all so natural. For a very brief moment, I was so jealous to those guys, because it came natural to them. And when I was that age I had difficulties with my body, but I didn't understand why. I took me fifteen years of frustration to sort out what the problem was. That benefit of being trans is that we think about issues that most people will never think about. And that gives unexpected 'corners' in life, in the positive sense of the word corner.

### 30:13 Jay

You're so right. This is one of the things that, I think, you know, we talk about gender dysphoria, which is the medical diagnosis that trans people get these days. You know, a dissatisfaction, a deep unhappiness, the discrepancy between how you feel you are and the body you've been given at birth. What we don't talk about is trans euphoria, the things that are absolutely brilliant about being trans and non-binary, that bring us joy and pleasure, that are specific to us, and that are amazing.

And this is one of those things for me, this is a thing that I am grateful for being a trans person and the things that gives my life so... I think I see it a lot in therapy with heterosexual cis people where... I see a lot of older people maybe who've kind of, you know, got married, they had kids, you know, like they were eighteen, nineteen, twenty, you know. Especially women, you know, cis women, who just stayed at home, and looked after the kids. They're maybe fifty, sixty now and they don't know who they are, they don't know what they're doing with their lives. Like 'I did everything I was meant to, but now what's next for me? Am I just waiting to die?' You know, like 'Do I just age?' And I see it a lot with younger people as well, you know. There's a really awful TV series in the UK, and it's in the States and Australia as well, I don't know if you have... it's called 'Married at First Sight', have you heard of this?

### 31:25 Frigga

Yah.

### 31:26 Jay

My god, it's so awful! It's like... [laughs]. It's amazing, I mean, we're sort of hooked on it, because it's so terrible [laughs]. But it is mostly straight people where they... some experts match two people and they meet for the first time at the altar and get married. And then there's a whole load of drama that's kind of constructed by the production company. But, in the interviews with people when they're starting this process, they say things like, you know, 'I'm twenty-six now and I need to have had kids by the time I'm twenty eight and I'm running out of time, what will I do'. And, you know, it's a lot of stuff like that.

And I'm just like [Jochem: No], feels like there's a lot of things that, not all, but quite a lot of cis people do, especially straight cis people, which are just, kind of, they're implicit in their culture. They're things that they are expected to do and that are just the steps you take. Most straight, that I know, who are heterosexual, just like me, you know, it's like at some point they'll have kids, at some point they'll get married, they'll buy their house, they'll do these things. And it's like that's fine if that's really what you want, but it's the fact that they never think about it, because it just fits in with the cultural expectations around them so they just do it.

### 32:23 Jochem

Yeah.



### 32:24 Jay

And I'm like, 'But what about...?' But what, what else is there? Why? Why are you doing that? You know? And ironically I've probably ended up doing most of these things anyway, but I feel like I've questioned everything about myself, about what my role is in the world. As a man that doesn't fit the idea of masculinity, that a lot of men have. And a lot of women have. And a lot of other people have.

And, you know, what does that mean for me? Who am I? How do I fit into these expectations? You know, certainly early in transition when I was first thinking about this, I looked at cis men. 'If I'm not a woman, if I'm a man, that's what I'm meant to be'. And I tried really hard to be that kind of [Jochem: Oh, yes!] macho... I mean, I'm five foot two, there's nothing macho about me, you know, I'm as camp as anything. But, you know I tried really hard to fit into this. I tried to want these things, I got into relationships that were *really* inappropriate. You know, just because I thought that that was what was expected of me, I was meant to do all this stuff.

And it was only as I settled into my identity, I was like, 'Hang on! What am I doing? Why am I doing these things? I don't want to be *that* guy! That guy's horrible. I don't want to be *that* guy. I want to be *this* guy. I want to be who I am. Who am I then? If I'm not going to adhere to all these things, if I'm not going to hold these stereotypes and these beliefs, what does that mean for me?' And oh my gosh, the doors that that opens. When you're not constrained any more by what society tells you you're meant to be, you can literally be anything. Okay, I can't, I can't be a unicorn. But you know, you can be a lot of things [laughs].

So you may then choose to do some things that are expected, you may not. But it doesn't matter, it's about choice and consciously living your life. And gosh, when you question social ideals, the world becomes a much more interesting place to live in, and you can do anything. And I love that. I love that about being a queer trans person, it's the most exciting thing that's ever happened to me.

### 34:19 Jochem

Speaking of that, another benefit of being trans is that I got the opportunity to have a second puberty, when I was thirty. [Jay laughs loudly] And that's a *completely* different experience than doing puberty at... puberty age. But being a grown up and having done it before, and now doing it again. Because all those hormones are running around in your body and making you think unexpected thoughts and stuff [Jochem and Jay laugh]. And meanwhile learning how to behave as a man and getting to know all those social rules that are *never* spoken about, but are so important to fit in or not to fit in. Not that I want to fit in. But life is much easier if you know when you don't fit in, and when you do things that are socially unexpected. [Jay: Hmm] So I have talked a lot to other people, other trans people, cis people, just to try to know all those social rules. Which was a really interesting journey.

### 35:41 Frigga

Hmm. I can imagine. When we had our pre-chat, you said also something about trans people perceive heathendom also a lot different?

### 35:53 Jay

I think that, the kind of, the intersection of gender and heathenry is interesting. And I think trans people, similar to kind of, breaking away of those social norms around the rest of life. You know, for me, this is part of the same thing. It's that, it's certainly in the UK, like, traditional paganism, you know. There has historically been a real focus on things like a god and a goddess, and it's the male



and female energies and how that works together. And that has been previously very excluding of LGB people: lesbian, gay and bisexual people, and pansexual people. Because there hasn't been room for... Because, where are you represented in that? You know, if the divine is a male and a female energy coming together, combining, where are gay people? Where are trans people? And what does that mean?

And so, like with a lot of social norms. If you're trans or if you're queer, you have to question that, because that doesn't work for you necessarily, that doesn't really fit. Because you're not in that pantheon then, where do you exist? So you look elsewhere, and you look at... Find those other examples, you know. You look at other ways of approaching spirituality. And, you know, it's not like in heathenry we don't know about shapeshifting as an idea. You know, we have this in our constructs, in our spiritual world, you know. So I think that's maybe where things are different. It has made people maybe break way from very traditional rigid ways of thinking about how we embody our spirituality and our approach. And maybe, I think actually, being a little more playful and a little bit more creative.

And it's not like, you know, we have shapeshifting, that's available, that's something that we all underst... You know, that goes back to the Greek, you know. We've seen that for centuries in all cultures. That's not a novel concept. The idea that there's these two forms of energy and that's all there can be, you can't ever change between them or do things differently. It's just doesn't work. It doesn't work for me, it doesn't work for a lot of queer and a lot of trans people.

### 37:58 Frigga

The last episode - what was it, episode nine? - we talked about how we see the gods and the influence on... We have as humans on gods, and how we see them. Yah, if there is only male / female in your brain, you can only... You project them as male and female. But I think we invent the gods also [laughs], for a great deal, at least how they represent. So that means that we can see them as queer or as whatever as we want.

### 38:28 Jay

That was it, yeah, yeah. That really reminds me of that conversation. We are connecting with something spiritually, with some other kind of energy, with something bigger, then we're gonna, exactly that, see it how we see everything, within the confines of how we've been taught to think. So yeah, like you said: if you only ever see male and female, that's all you're going to see. If you can see so much more, I would suggest that maybe we're seeing even more of that energy, of that spirit. We're seeing more facets. We're able to see more than just what we expect to see. And I think that's, that's quite a blessing, I think. [Jochem: Hmm] It opens a lot of doors.

### 39:09 Frigga

It makes me also, what we talked before, how can trans people become more visible? We need storytellers who come up with new myths, with gods which are transgender, whatever.

### 39:25 Jochem

A lot of gods already are. Jay said about shapeshifting. We all know that Odin is a shapeshifter. But nowadays I meet a few people that ask the question: What does this shapeshifting say about Odin's gender? Which would be an interesting question, I think.



### 39:51 Jay

Also, if Odin is a shapeshifter who presents themselves to whoever they're interacting with in a particular way to get a particular response, why would we assume then that Odin's sex or gender is male? Just because that's what some people have said that they're seeing. [Frigga: Yah] No-one knows [laughs].

### 40:12 Jochem

And when you say this, I think it's also interesting to realise that it is also about symbolism. I have been taught in my shamanistic trainings, that the spirits we see or we talk to in our journeys, these spirits use the language of the person who is journeying, to make something clear. So gender is just *one* of these symbols.

### 40:44 Frigga

Yah.

### 40:45 Jay

Surely. If you're like an ethereal being, you know, a powerful energy trying to impart something to humanity, or to share something or learn something, you would present yourself in a way that, you know, would be palatable and accessible potentially. Or that you think that people might accept, maybe.

### 41:12 Jochem

And another thing is that we in Western society think in two genders, but we are the only ones. All other cultures, now and before, I have read about or heard about, have at least three, and I think up to twenty-six genders? [Jay laughs] So while we in Western society think we are the default, no, we are not. We are the exception with *only* two genders, which is completely weird [laughs].

### 41:50 Frigga

Hmm.

### 41:52 Jay

It's very limiting, isn't it? I think it's a lack of imagination, surely [laughs]. [Jochem laughs loudly.] It feels like a very Christian idea. [Jochem: Yah] An Adam and Eve thing, you know?

### 42:07 Jochem

And all this that we spoke about, is that the reason that we used to have queer pagan camps?

### 42:16 Jay

Yes, so Queer Pagan Camp in the UK was a... I do think, you know, if there was ever a history of queer people in the UK written, Pagan Camp would have a chapter. It had such a significant role for so many people, so yeah. I am not the holder of the origin story for Queer Pagan Camp, so I would certainly miss bits. But essentially it came about, because of people being excluded in beliefs. Through maybe the ways that I've just talked about, the kind of god and goddess thing. And I've certainly experienced that myself.



But also just through having, through the kind of drama of having to experience homophobia and transphobia in pagan spaces. As much as you do in any other spaces, because some pagans are transphobic and homophobic. So, you know, they're still there. So there is a need for places to be able to be safe, to be able to express yourself without having to worry about other people and how you might be perceived.

And Queer Pagan Camp was an absolutely essential place for anyone who had any kind of pagan spirituality or beliefs of *any* form. It was very open to *anyone* and who was queer in any way whatsoever. And that included some heterosexual people, because it wasn't just about sexuality. 'Queer' encompasses so much, so much more. And it was an exceptionally inclusive space, it was... The ritual that happened at QPC was a melting pot of all kinds of different traditions and belief systems. And it was just this beautiful chaos that was utterly divine.

It has finished, like a lot of these things it had its time. And I think it's finished... There are other queer pagan events that happen, but they're not QPC. They're not Queer Pagan Camp. It's a different thing. It's finished really in part because we don't need it in the same way that we used to. There are more options. There are more queer people being visible. There are more stories being told. There are more ways of embodying paganism and heathenry. And more general kind of pagan spaces are now more welcoming, at least superficially, to queer people. So, in some ways it's good that it's not there, that it's not needed as much now, like that shows that things have changed a bit.

But at the same time I'm really sad and I mourn that loss. Because to have somewhere where you can truly be all of who you are, is an incredibly rare thing in this world, I think. And you know, some people will never find that, and some of us will find it for a little bit, and some of us are really lucky and have it all the time. But, especially if you've ever been an outsider in any way, if you've ever been excluded for anything, you know what that pain means. And to find somewhere, where not just 'you can come here as long as you're like this, but don't bring that part of you'. To find somewhere where you can bring your entire authentic being to it and be welcomed, and seen, and visible, and enjoyed, and appreciated. There's no greater magic, is there? Than that?

#### 45:12 Jochem

Yeah.

#### 45:13 Frigga

Sounds lovely.

#### 45:14 Jay

Yeah. I think it was transformative.

#### 45:16 Jochem

Oh yes! I have never been to QPC, because it stopped already before I knew about it. But I have been to other queer pagan camps and it's absolutely lovely. It is indeed what you said, Jay, it's a space where people accept you, all of you, just because it is you. And it's absolutely amazing to experience that.

#### 45:45 Jay

Yes. And you know, it wasn't all perfect. There was always some drama, you know, because there always is at these sorts of things. There's always someone who you don't get on with, or whatever.



But that doesn't matter. I think that's something that we're missing in this world now, is that blending of different ways of seeing things. And having to find a common ground, and also being able to tolerate being in a space with people you maybe see things very differently from. Because maybe you have a bigger aim or, you know, something like that.

But we miss that now. I think that's an issue that we have largely, I guess, from social media and the internet. We don't interact in the same way, we have an echo chamber. Whereas previously if you wanted to engage with something, there would always be someone there that you didn't like, or... You know, that's just part of life. But we're insulated from all this now. And I think, yeah, there was always drama, but that's kind of part of the charm of it as well [laughs], you know.

#### 46:37 Jochem

Yeah.

#### 46:38 Jay

But, you know, QPC will forever be legendary for a lot of people. And in particular for the incredible last night cabarets that used to happen [Jay and Jochem laugh], which were entirely something else! So, yeah, so. [Jochem: Yeah] And the back of those years, with incredible fire. I just have to tell you the way I found QPC, was magic in itself.

So, I'd moved far away to take a job in rural west Wales. In the middle of nowhere, in this tiny little town and I knew no-one. And I happened to hear about this thing called Queer Pagan... I think someone send me an email about it. And I knew that they were in the same county, which is, you know, a big area of some hundreds of square miles. And I knew roughly where it was and then I thought: I'm just gonna, I need to find them, I need to find these people. And I just got in my car after work and I just drove out into the countryside in Wales. And I drove around, and suddenly after about an hour, I saw attached to a gate... attached to a signpost, a little tiny pink pumpkin with an arrow. [Jochem laughs loudly]

It was like: it has to be them! And I followed the arrow and then at the next junction there was another little pink pumpkin with an arrow. And I followed that one. And I followed this trail of pink pumpkins around Carmarthenishire in west Wales, until I eventually came to a gate. And all I could see through this gate was a muddy field, nothing else. But it had rainbows, and feather boas, and all sorts of tied to it, and a massive pink pumpkin. And I was like: This has got to be the queer pagans! And I went in and was met by this ethereal being in flowing robes and high heels trolling through this muddy field and this massive wig on. And they were like: Are you here for queer pagan camp, love? And I was like: Yes! And that was it. That was how I met Queer Pagan Camp, and it was amazing [laughs].

#### 48:33 Jochem

Oh, brilliant!

#### 48:35 Jay

Yeah. It was incredible. So, yeah. So, that feels like a bit of magic in and of itself. It feels destined. It was destined to be.



48:43 Jochem

Yeah. I think this is a brilliant way to close this episode. [Jay: Cool] I would like to thank you both for today. In our next episode we will discuss the theme of disability in modern inclusive heathenry with our special guest Richard, it promises to be another interesting episode, so please join us next time. Bye!

49:08 Jay

Bye.

49:09 Frigga

Bye, bye.

49:10 Jochem

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