

NUMBER THREE

W A T E R H O U S E S Y M B O L I S M N E W S L E T T E R # 7 0

SPECIAL SYMBOLS

- Trinity conveys Father, Son & Holy Ghost
- Youth conveys the governed, the hero and subversion
- Halo conveys holiness, saintliness and sanctify
- Wreath conveys eternity because it has no beginning and no ending
- Torches convey life
- Three Fates convey all that has been, all that is, and all that will be

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NUMBER THREE

It seems that the number three is an appropriate symbol to explore especially with Easter coming up on April 8, 2012. Three is in many ways connected to Easter especially with the symbol of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Ghost). Other ways three is seen in the New Testament is the three Magi; the three denials of Peter; the three crosses on Golgotha; and the Resurrection after three days are all symbols related to the story of Jesus.

Three is the most positive number in symbolism as well as religious thought, legend, mythology and folklore. One of the phrases that we relate to is "third time lucky" and is very old in origin.

Other civilizations that value the number 3 are Greece and Ireland. Three-headed or

three-fold gods such as the Greek Hecate or the Celtic Brigit had multiple functions or control several spheres.

Religious triads are common—the Hindu Trimurti of Brahma (Creator), Vishnu (sustainer) and Shiva (destroyer); the three brothers, Zeus (Jupiter in Roman), Poseidon (Neptune) and Hades (Pluto), who controlled the Greek world with their triple attributes, the three-forked lightning, the trident and the three headed dog Cerberus; the three great Inca deities of the sun, moon and storm; and the three brothers who controlled the heavens in China.

Other mythological and allegorical figures also frequently come in three such as the Fates (see page 4), the Furies, the Graces, the Harpes, or the Gorgons.

Three is, significantly, the number of a family unit, the smallest tribe in African symbolism.

Three is also seen as a lucky number, possibly because it conveys the resolution of a



conflict - a decisive action that may lead to success or disaster. In folk tales, wishes are customarily granted in threes. Heroes or heroines are allowed three choices, set three trials or given three chances to succeed. Ritual actions are often performed thrice, as in Islamic daily ablutions, in salutations or in making auguries.

trinity

The painting to the right is by Spanish artist [Bartolomé Esteban Murillo](#) and the Trinity enables a monotheistic God to be worshiped through the Holy Spirit and is an example of the way in which Three can replace One as the symbol of a more versatile and powerful

unity. In cemeteries, the Trinity is shown by the triangle and represents Faith, Hope and Charity (see page 3). The symbolism of this shape is always associated with its three sides, signifying a variety of triads such as birth, life and death; heaven, earth and human; and mind, body and soul.



God the Father (top), the Holy Spirit (represented by a dove), and child Jesus

THREE AGES OF MAN

The three ages of man convey young man, mature man and old man. Youth conveys the governed, the hero, subversion, boldness, intuition, the primitive mind, new ideas, and the rising sun.

Mature man conveys the conscious, the spirit, heaven, fire, and the imagination.

Old man conveys the father, master, tradition, contemplation, justice, old and/or tired ideas, and the setting sun. The history of ages of man

goes back to Greek mythology and are the stages of human existence on earth.

Classical authors offer accounts of the successive ages of mankind, which tend to progress from an original, long-gone age in which humans enjoyed a nearly divine existence to the current age of the writer, in which humans are beset by innumerable pains and evils. This degradation over time conveys a successively decreasing value.



Three Ages of Man from Graceland Cemetery, Chicago, IL. Marks the grave of William Goodman's son Kenneth who died very young. Epitaph reads "Until the day breaks and the shadows free away"

THE HOLY FAMILY

"Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away"

Anonymous

The Holy Family gravestone is from Greenwood Cemetery, Atlanta, GA. Symbols related to the Holy Family include: the halo which conveys holiness, saintliness and sanctity; classical robes convey tradition, longevity and history; and the staff with the Lily coming out of the top conveys purity, virginity, the purified soul, heavenly bliss, majesty, queenly beauty and grace.



CIVIL WAR MONUMENT, CHARLESTOWN, MA

While in Boston wandering around the delightful Charlestown area, I came across this Civil War Monument to land and maritime soldiers that protected the Union side during the Civil War.

Notice the rather large lady liberty that is at the top of the monument.

Notice that she is dressed in a classical robe which takes us back to antiquities and the beginning of civilization. Also, notice that she is holding a wreath for each soldier. It conveys eternity because a

wreath has no beginning and no ending. The laurel wreath conveys victory in athletics or the arts.

Notice the sculpture frames a pyramid which conveys firmness, strength, endurance, stability, the sun, eternal light and the abode of the dead.



three angels of the brown monument

If you are a fan of Oakland Cemetery, in Atlanta, you are familiar with the Brown Monument with Gabriel on top and the two angels at the base snuffing out life.

Archangel Gabriel is usually at the beginning and end of things. For example, he announced the Virgin Mary that she will be the mother of Jesus.

He also will be there at the end and will announce the second coming and our souls will rise and follow Gabriel to heaven. Cole Porter, in the 1920s,

made this notion very popular in the song "Blow Gabriel Blow".

At the bottom of the base are two delicate angels snuffing out torches which conveys snuffing out a person's life here on earth so they can have eternal life. Torches are seen a great deal in Victorian cemeteries such as Oakland and can mean different things depending on the way they are turned. Upward torch conveys a strong and productive life here on earth.



"To finish the moment, to find the journey's end in every step of the road, to live the greatest number of good hours, is wisdom"

Ralph Waldo Emerson

FAITH, HOPE & CHARITY

Faith, Hope and Charity are a group of Christian martyred saints. Their mother was supposedly Sophia (Greek for wisdom). Also, Sapientia (Latin for wisdom) was also connected to them but not as their mother.

The names are also connected to three Christian virtues mentioned in Apostle Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 13:13). According to the Apostle Paul, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these

is charity."

Accurate historical data on the existence of the three saints is minimal. However, the cult of the three saints is very ancient and the names are not only found in the various early martyrologies of the Western Church, but also in the Menaia and Menologies of the Ancient Greeks. In the preserved documents, there are two groups of references. They mention a band of martyrs, mother and daughters, whose names are always given in Greek.



Oconee Hill Cemetery, Athens, GA

CHRIST HAS RISEN INDEED

This particular monument is in San Michele, Venice and shows Christ is rising with the two young angels at his feet. The three figures, once again, convey Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Notice the way Jesus holds his hands toward the viewer showing his stigmata which conveys his death here on earth on the cross but he has risen and will have eternal life.

His head is surrounded by the halo or nimbus which conveys holiness, sanctity and saintliness. Also, notice the sun rays coming out from around the halo which convey son of God.

The two children angels have their hands placed in different ways. One is in a prayer stance looking up to Christ while the other one has hands in the same position as Christ. Children angels convey innocence and protection.



San Michele Cemetery, Venice, Italy

What are your ideas
for future newsletters?



WATERHOUSE
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The mission of Waterhouse Symbolism is to research and document symbols locally, regionally, nationally and internationally and share that information.



NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

As you can see by the painting below, art history is full of symbols including many that have been adapted by ancient civilizations. Because of the last newsletter's theme, Cori Ander reminded me of Botticelli's *Primavera* and if you look to the far right in the painting where the cold Winter Wind (Zephyrus) is trying in vain to hold on to Spring (Chloris), but to no avail - we see her actually turning into new life as flowers spew from her lips in abundance.

UMBERTO ROMANO'S NEW ENGLAND TRAGEDY

In mid-March, I visited the Cape Anne Museum in Gloucester, MA and discovered the artist Umberto Romano and viewed the work to the right by him, *New England Tragedy*.

A review was done in the *New England Journal of Aesthetic Research* about Romano's exhibition "Man Sings of Man: Umberto Romano, 1906-1982". The reviewer explains about this work that "Romano adopts a cubist-flavored blocky style, with heavy black outlines, for his *New England Tragedy*, from about 1934. A guitarist serenades his lady friend over drinks in a cemetery, which has the vibe, if not quite the look, of the cemetery overlooking Lane's Cove in Gloucester's Lanesville neighborhood. Three women – apparently the Fates – loiter, watching in the background. "

"The lady friend reclines among the tombstones, a bit of sexy bare thigh revealed between the top of her stocking and the hem of her skirt. You don't need the fates to see where this is headed."

The symbol of the three fates is destiny, all that has been, all that is, and all that must be. They are usually identified as the Three Sisters of the Fates. They have been forever existent but have been given different names in different cultures. They are most commonly known as the Goddesses of Fates or the Norns in Norse. They are known as the Moirai in Greek and the Parcae in Roman.

When they are in good spirits, the Fates become the Three Graces. They are three lush women entwined in dance.



Umberto Romano
New England Tragedy
Cape Anne Museum
Gloucester, MA