

Issue 37



June 2023

WITCH

MIDSUMMER



Crows Feet Press



WITCH

Magazine

Dearest Witches,

We have reached the mid-point - the longest day, shorted night, and the roll towards the dark half of the year.

Fear not, there's still plenty of sunshine left! I love the descent through the harvests and in to the Winter, each turn of the season is inspiring and invigorating.

I hope this issue finds you all well!

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Be blessed,

Bekki
Editor

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WITCH

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What We're Reading

A hand is shown holding a bundle of wheat in a field. The background is a soft-focus field of golden wheat under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on a yellow, rounded rectangular background.

WITCH LUGHNASADH

Submissions due 24 July

WITCH is an independently published magazine featuring writers across the globe, from all paths. We feature anything from witchcraft to the occult, pagan and druid practices and anything in between.

Even if you've never written before, we welcome new voices, previously published works and artist features of all kinds.

We'd love to hear from you!

*Send your submissions to:
submissions@witchzine.co.uk*



Solstice
Blessings

*Join us, dance
Beneath the summer sun let us find joy
Before the fields turn to gold*



WITCH
Magazine

In the Urban Wilderness

Carrie Anderson

Living in a city is part of my life. Being a nature enthusiast, plant communicator, and advocate of plant wisdom and consciousness is a core part of my witchcraft practice. I don't find that these two facets are diametrically opposed. The only aspect of living in the city, while being a nature oriented person, that I find limiting, is the constant message from others that nature is somewhere out there (vaguely pointing into the distance) and not here, where I am. I look for nature in every corner of the city and I find it runs wild and plentiful.

My family volunteered to paint a wrought iron fence in a Victorian Era Cemetery. It's located in the middle of the city. The painting took almost two months and I used that time to observe the flora and fauna that I came across.

The cemetery is home to ginkgo trees that are several hundred years old. These are beautiful behemoths that have inches of layer upon layer of exposed bark that creates a mosaic of texture, color and depth.



In the base of the tree we found

Eastern Click Beetles living (and breeding). This was the first time I had ever seen one of these beetles. They are usually found in deciduous forests, not in the middle of a bustling city. These are not common to find, but are also not rare, somewhere in between the two extremes. These are absolutely stunning beetles. They are large, black and white, with large false eye spots on their back which will definitely make any predator think twice before dining on a click beetle.

While actively painting, I kept coming across spiders that needed to be moved before anyone could paint the fence. I found a green crab spider on the top most portion of the fence and relocated him to the grass and clover below. Daring Jumping Spiders, which live in my yard, were also busy building webs around the rusty fence. It's a



bit more difficult to convince a jumping spider that it needs to move, but, eventually, they all heeded my message and went on their way (at least until the paint dried).

There was a sour cherry tree laden with bright red fruit and it was a buffet for various species of birds. Robins were also busy, pecking at the ground looking for insects. Crows flew above on their way to farmland.

My favorite encounter with a bird was close to the end of our volunteering. A fledgling Robin was being taught how to move, hastily, across the cemetery grounds, in an attempt to learn to fly. The mother Robin would stand on a headstone, make a noise, and then fly to a headstone nearby. Her offspring would then totter on his feet and scurry over to her, while trying to flap his wings. Once close to her, the mom would then fly off to a different headstone. The fledgling would then again take off, bouncing and bumbling over the grass.

Some of the gravesites have been turned into pollinator plots, so there's quite a bit of buzzing insects flying around. Lichen is plentiful on the graves

and fungi can be found in some of the damper shadowy parts of the cemetery. There was a variety of flowers, naturally growing and not planted as part of a memorial. I saw lots of Spring Beauties, Violets, Clover, and Philadelphia Fleabane.

The concept of nature being elsewhere, and not where we are, that we must go to the wilds to be in nature, is a sentiment that forgets that we are part of nature. If we exclude ourselves and the places we call home, then we are again seeing nature as something outside of ourselves and creating a barrier and stigma that we are other. I like the idea that plant communication, nature, being one with the environment is accessible to all, regardless of where we live, because it's right outside, even if it's dandelions growing out of cracks in the sidewalk.



CRIMSON GODDESS, ANCIENT SPIRIT, DIVINE LOVE

Halo Quin

*Crimson for passion, for lust and for love,
for the ink our tale's writ' in; our life's blood.*

*Crimson the pleasure of love's gentle lips,
and crimson our hearts that beat with bliss.*

Witchcraft is inherently a path of intuition and connection. In the magical practices which gave rise to what we now give the name "witchcraft", the power and wisdom of it came from the relationship of the human with their spirits, and the land. The witch worked with embodied souls that grow in the forest and fields, unseen spirits, and was often said to have the ability to take on animal form and travel beyond the boundaries of the village. Magic rooted in our earthly, embodied nature.

The Cunning Folk were healers and charmers, and we still have records of their old love spells today. Spells to see a future lover. Spells to call in love. Spells to keep a relationship fresh, or at all. It seems that the spirits are happy to help us with our desires for love, both romantic and carnal. And, it turns out, self and Divine Love too.

Last October, I began a ritual in the hour and day of Venus. An invocation to the energy of divine love and passion. Not for a lover but rather to connect more deeply with a particular spirit, to cultivate that energy more powerfully in my own life and in the world, because who wouldn't like a world with more pleasure, beauty, and delicious delight?

That spirit was Babalon, a goddess found in occult spaces and descended from the line of love and sex and power goddesses; Inanna, Ishtar, Aphrodite, Venus, and including my Lady, Freya.



It is said that she loves music and dancing as offerings, so I began crafting a set of songs in praise of Her, beginning with an opening chant. Using bone-deep beats and the prayer from the Crimson Craft that opens each circle, calling on the archetypal beings of the Red Goddess, the Wild God, and the Bright Spirited Lover to hold us and support us in deepening our relationship with divine love, and our own embodied, sensual, magical nature, the work began.

Something powerful happens when you work intimately with a particular spirit, whether they're a deity, or of a different nature. They begin to appear more in your life, their energy manifests more often, you start to feel their guiding hand in your days.

And so it is with Babalon.

She carries the gift of Inanna, who claims her power wherever she walks. She also carries the beauty and love we think of as Aphrodite's domain. And she encourages self-love, self-confidence, and self-assuredness. Not the kind of soft love that opens it's arms to all, not the self-sacrifice of the ever-giving, but the warrior's love that marks the line and holds it firm. The sovereign ownership over body and mind that says this is mine and you may not have it. Or, equally, this is mine and I choose to give it to you. Babalon, just like the Goddesses of passion who walked before her, knows who and what she is, knows her value, and chooses.

These are just some of the gifts of this lineage.

The pulse of the drum thrums through my chest as I beat beat beat the earth with these feet that carry me, voice upraised in invocation and offering. Here on the dancefloor I give myself over in ecstatic prayer, dancing my devotion, dancing





myself into flight through the realms.
In the libation of wine and song, She
is honoured and I am reborn, renewed,
whole.

AT DAWN ON A FRIDAY, THE HOUR THAT
VENUS RULES ON FREYA'S DAY, LIGHT A
GREEN CANDLE AND SAY THESE WORDS
WITH FEELING:

“WITH BREATH OF BLISS,
CAUGHT UPON THE TONGUE,
I WELCOME YOU, INVITE YOU,
DIVINE LOVER COME.”

BREATHE IT IN. FEEL THE PRESENCE OF THE DIVINE LOVER.

REST IN THE LOVE. FEEL IT IN YOUR BODY, IN YOUR BELLY, IN YOUR SEX.

THAT EXPANSION OF PLEASURE, WARM POWER THAT IS YOURS BY RIGHT OF BEING
BORN. DEPENDENT ON AND BELONGING TO NO OTHER. THIS IS YOURS.

BREATHE OUT, RELEASE IT, BLOW OUT THE CANDLE WITH A KISS OF GRATITUDE.

Red Witchcraft is a path of the Craft that is rooted in the fact that we are crea-
tures of the earth, of flesh and blood and love and passion and desire. It is the
dance between our sweet animal selves and our social compassion. This is where
Divine Love becomes embodied love, becomes the energy of eros; pleasure. And
this is where we learn ourselves and allow ourselves to deepen into relationship
with our bodies, reclaiming that pleasure from the marketers. Reclaiming our
power from where we have tidied it away.

REMEMBER A TIME WHEN YOU FELT DEEPLY ALIVE, DEEPLY CONNECTED.

CALL UP THAT MEMORY, THE FEELING OF IT IN YOUR BODY.

NOW NOTICE THE MAGIC THAT RISES WITH IT.

BREATHE IT UP AND LET IT NOURISH YOU, HEALING YOU.

When we are rooted in our bodies, connected to all the parts of ourselves, we have access to more magic than when we disconnect.

And finding our way back to our bodies is easy for some, but hard for so many of us, for so many reasons. So the path of the Red Witch begins in healing our sensual, sexual selves and building a sense of safety in our own bodies.

One way we do this is by drawing our boundaries, by remembering our edges and holding space for our own dear selves.

Babalon, known to be promiscuous like her foremothers, is also very much a Red Goddess in that she gives what and when she chooses. She chooses pleasure, and she is Queen of her choice.

CRIMSON CRAFT

Sexual magic
for the
solo witch

HALO QUIN

AT DAWN ON A FRIDAY, THE HOUR THAT HER ANCESTOR VENUS RULES, LIGHT A RED CANDLE AND SAY THESE WORDS:

“WITH BREATH OF BLISS,
CAUGHT UPON THE TONGUE,
I WELCOME YOU, INVITE YOU,
COME BABALON.”

FEEL THE ENERGY RISING.
FEEL HER PRESENCE DRAW NEAR.
NOTICE HOW YOU FEEL, HOW YOUR
BODY RESPONDS.
SPEND SOME TIME WITH HER IN
WHATEVER FORM SHE COMES.
YOU MAY CHOOSE TO INVITE IN
THAT FEELING OF STRONG BOUND-
ARIES, OR OF SOVEREIGNTY, THAT
SHE KNOWS SO WELL. OR PERHAPS
YOU HAVE SOMETHING ELSE YOU

WOULD LIKE TO LEARN FROM HER. PERHAPS YOU HOLD YOUR OWN EDGES SO TIGHTLY YOU STRUGGLE TO LET THOSE YOU WOULD CHOOSE COME CLOSE AND SHE MIGHT SHARE WITH YOU THE SENSE OF SOFTENING AND SURRENDER.

WHEN IT FEELS TIME, BREATHE OUT, RELEASE HER FROM YOUR AWARENESS AND SPACE, AND BLOW OUT THE CANDLE WITH A KISS OF GRATITUDE.

This work is healing work, it is magic that empowers. Babalon, Freya, Aphrodite, Inanna... these are all goddesses who know their worth and claim their power. And they are loved and respected for it.

And, and, they lead by example, showing all who meet them what is possible when you are firm in your body, embrace your sensual nature, and value yourself.

This is the gift of the Red Goddesses, to show us how to be wholly, powerfully, sensually, our full magical selves.

Just as the Cunning folk, our magical ancestors, worked with spirits, intuition, and their earthly, human nature to heal, find love, and be whole, so too do we.

These are some of the divine spirits I dance with, and who hold the magic of the Crimson Craft, shared within the Crimson Coven. This is Red Witchcraft, and all who enter with an open heart and a desire to bring more pleasure, play, magic, and love into the world are welcome.

SHE IS CALLING YOU.
WILL YOU COME?

Bio:
Dr Halo Quin is a pagan, storyteller, author, philosopher, singer-songwriter, music producer, and a lifelong lover of magic. She is a devotee of the Faery Queen and Priestess of Freya and the Red Goddesses, a follower of the Welsh gods, and sensual witch exploring the divine erotic and sacred nature of pleasure and beauty, to (re)enchant the world. Her books include "Gods and Goddesses of Wales", "Faeries, Folktales, and Spirits" and "Crimson Craft - sexual magic for the solo witch".

Her first single, "Red Goddess, Come" is out August 2023.

Find Halo's books, classes, and music, and request entry to the Crimson Coven, at www.haloquin.net

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Hawthorne, Sex and Death

Helen J.R. Bruce



There are few trees with more folklore attached to them than the widespread, and easily recognisable, hawthorn. It grows on open moorland, on motorway verges, in farmland hedges and in the middle of roundabouts.

Flowering between April and June, it garlands the hedgerows in white for both Beltane and the Summer Solstice. Mature trees can reach a height of fifteen metres, although in harsh climates and trimmed hedges they will spread out in a tangle closer to the ground. Hawthorn often grows alongside blackthorn, but can be distinguished by the fact that it grows leaves before flowering, whereas blackthorn flowers first. The flowers of hawthorn also have fuller, more rounded petals and carry a pungent aroma which can be particularly strong on summer evenings.

In the Medieval era it was said that hawthorn smelt of the Great Plague. Fascinatingly, modern botanists have discovered that the chemical trimethylamine in hawthorn blossom is also the first chemical which forms in decaying animal tissue. This smell may also partially explain the enduring belief that hawthorn should never be brought into the house, and that if it was illness and death would soon follow.

Across Britain and Ireland, hawthorn trees can be found growing over holy wells or as lone specimens on crossroads. An ability to adapt to a broad range of soils, including sand, clay and chalk, makes them successful and resilient in locations where other trees may not thrive. Their presence at sacred sites, such as close to cairn burials and barrows, has earned them a long standing association with the fae folk. Often called 'faerie trees' or 'gentle bushes', following the custom of not naming faeries out of respect, they command correct treatment to this day. A car plant in Ireland blamed financial difficulties on the disturbance of a faerie thorn as recently as 1982.

Although hawthorn has traditionally been valued by farmers for hedging, able to keep animals in with its dense growth and thorns, lone hawthorn trees are taboo to touch. These single faerie thorns, not planted by humans, appear in folklore as places where faeries gather for meetings and dances. Stories tell of foolish people who anger the faeries by intruding on their meeting place or damaging the tree that marks it,





and retribution from the Otherworldly folk ranges from bad luck to death. In some Irish tales, even gathering naturally fallen hawthorn wood must be avoided.

Lone thorns on barrow mounds mark sites of liminality, where the veil between this world and the Otherworld is especially thin. They can be places of crossing and kidnap, where humans follow faerie music underground and are only seen many years later, or sometimes never again. Stories warn of children and young brides being taken and local folk practice has evolved precautions against this, including sewing iron filings into the hems of clothing and dressing very young boys as girls to make them less desirable to the fae.

However, the attitude to hawthorn around Beltane is often quite different. In some local traditions of Britain and Ireland a hawthorn branch

was collected and taken back to the garden of a home, where it was dressed with ribbons and given offerings. Associated with the May Queen, the coming of spring and the fertile goddess, the hawthorn is a glorious symbol of abundance during the month of May. Even from a scientific stance, the tree is known as 'promiscuous' with the two to three hundred species within its genus being able to successfully cross breed and create even more variations.

The sight and smell of hawthorn is so entangled with the coming of spring that 'May' has become a common folk name for its flowers. The chemical trimethylamine which creates the smell of death around the flowers, and is used to attract pollinating insects which are drawn to the scent of rotting flesh, has also been likened to the musky smell of sex. The brazen fertility of hawthorn meant it was sometimes chosen to weave into wedding crowns, and its branches hung with dooties carrying wishes for marriage and abundance.

In British Christian mythology Joseph of Arimathea, an Uncle of Jesus, is said to have travelled to Britain in search of somewhere to bury the Holy Grail. This sacred cup held the blood of Jesus during the crucifixion as is still

regarded as an important Christian symbol and relic. When Joseph reached Wearyall Hill, he is said to have thrust his wooden walking staff into the ground, where it immediately burst into flower. He took this as a sign that this was the site to establish the first Christian church in Britain, close to what is now the town of Glastonbury.



The thorn tree on Wearyall Hill, known as the Holy Thorn and said to have been grown from a cutting of the original, remained a popular site of pilgrimage until it was destroyed by vandals in 2019. However, this particular species of hawthorn has left many descendants, notably in the grounds of Glastonbury Abbey and Chalice Well Gardens, where these trees continue its unique pattern of flowering at both Easter and Christmas. The crown of thorns worn by Jesus at his death is also widely believed to have been made from hawthorn.

In the modern day, hawthorn is popularly used as a tonic for the heart and is useful in treating the early stages of cardio-vascular disease. Both the flowers and berries are used in medicine, having been found to assist the heart through the dual action of both dilating the blood vessels and stimulating the heart muscle itself. Blood pressure is lowered through the relaxing and enlarging of veins and arteries, while the gently stimulated heart increases the pulse rate and works more efficiently.

Young hawthorn leaves are edible and nutritious, leading to the nickname 'bread and cheese' plant. These are best picked from hedges and trees away from the road and, if you believe in the folklore, not from a hawthorn tree standing alone. The berries can be added to gin and used to make 'haw gin' as an alternative to sloe gin, or soaked in vodka to make a medicinal tincture. A walk in nature might become a pilgrimage to a local hawthorn, where libations of cider and biodegradable dooties (a strand of your own hair is a meaningful offering) are likely to be as warmly received now as ever.

HOUSE BLESSINGS AND CLEARINGS

WISE WORDS FROM THE OLD CRONE

Moving home is almost always traumatic in some way shape or form. So much to do. Pay the bills up to date, close some payments and energy contracts, open new contracts, book a skip, (certainly in my case) trips to the tip, organise all your possessions and decide what will, and what will not, fit in the new home. Sell a few bits, clear the garden, and so on and so on. The list is never ending. Leaving the old home is so busy, and at times distressing, leaving a part of you behind, apart from wondering if you have made the right decisions and choices, and it doesn't end there. Once you have moved, it begins again.

Where to put the furniture? Which bedroom will each person use? Which colour combination in which room can I really not live with? What are the neighbours like? Which fence is ours?

We have all found problems which surprise us in a new home even a small thing can be a real thorn in the side. Unexpected problems like no shed key, a garage door that now refuses to open, or shut, how do you set the boiler and where is the darned kettle?

OK, so now you are in and surrounded by boxes and furniture, which doesn't fit where you hoped it would. You shimmy by piles of possessions and wonder why on earth you kept that sideboard, which once belonged to Aunty Mary. Well, yes, OK you did promise her never to get rid of it. Will she haunt you if you put it in the garage?



Everyone wants to put their own mark on a new home and rightly so, and attend to all the necessities, sometimes while trying to hold down a full time job, cope with new schools, sometimes new jobs and if moving long distance, all this with little, or sometimes no, support network too. With lack

of sleep and jangling nerves it's no wonder we can feel negative and find the whole process challenging. Now then.....there are solutions.....We can do many things to help. We can call in decorators so that we don't have to take time out to paint or wallpaper new rooms, a gardener to make sure the garden is well kept or re-landscaped, a cleaner to spring clean the new house if required. All these things help, but so often, along with a new house, comes extra financial constraints, so money is too tight to ask for professions to come in. So how to calm our jangled nerves cheaply and effectively? Something less material based and more spiritual is called for.

House blessings are nothing new. Our ancestors blessed and protected their new homes with a ritual. Among many things some put the bones of a dead cat in the roof, (UGH!) some put a child's shoe, some put a circular weave of herbs and willow, and we still adorn our front entrances with wreaths of holly and other plants at Yule.

I have performed several House Blessings and House Clearings, and they are always well received. Sometimes it has been a private affair, with just myself and the new owners, and other times it has been a party, with food, drink and lots of people. Like any ritual, it does not have to be a solemn affair. It can be lots of fun and very light hearted. This does not mean it is not taken seriously though. Any ritual should be well thought out and planned, and if possible, the intent secured.

Here are the bare bones of a ritual I performed for a dear friend who had moved several times, at least four in one year. She found she was unable to settle after selling her house and also after a bereavement, and could never settle anywhere, choosing to rent for a while. She moved and moved again, then asked for my help.

I took a small loaf of bread, a plant, a bottle of wine, and a home-made elder wand, as gifts and the following items.....



Clary Sage, Rock Salt, Tea Lights, Incense Cones and small containers for all, for safety.

We began by some calming deep breathing just to ready ourselves for the ritual and find a tranquil space in order to begin. I then began the ritual in the hallway saying....

I bring you bread, so this house shall never know hunger

I bring candles, so this house shall always have light and warmth

I bring salt, so this house shall always know protection

I bring wine, so this house shall always have joy and prosperity

I lit the sage and allowed the smoke to filter all rooms as we walked around the house. It was a small, pretty cottage she was renting at the time.



In each room, I placed a small bowl of salt, a small glass of water, a saucer with an incense cone and a saucer holding a tea light, to represent the four elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water. I lit the cone and tea light as we processed around each room.

I asked her to repeat my words after me in each room.

With the grounding energy of earth I leave salt, to cleanse and protect this space.

With the clean breath of air, I light this cone to cleanse this space.

With the passionate heat of fire, I light this candle to cleanse this space.

With the purifying power of water, I leave this glass to cleanse this space.

When we had repeated this in each room we went back to the tiny hallway. Again I spoke....

May the great goddess of the hearth and home, bless this house,

Make it sacred and pure,

So that nothing but love and joy

Shall enter through its door.

I placed an elder wand I had made for her, on the lintel above the front door saying...

Let no sadness come through this door, let no trouble come to this dwelling,

Let no fear come through this entrance, let no conflict be in this place,

Let this home be filled with the blessing of joy, and peace.

When all was done we went back to each room to check all was well and the tea lights and cones were still safe. Together we repeated a Prayer to count ones blessings.



I am grateful for that which I have.

I am not sorrowful for that which I do not

I have more than others, less than some,

But regardless, I am blessed with what is mine.

First, I am thankful for my health.

Second, I am thankful for my family.

Third, I am thankful for my warm home

Fourth, I am thankful for the abundance in my life.

By the Power of the Divine

This home is Blessed!

So Mote It Be!

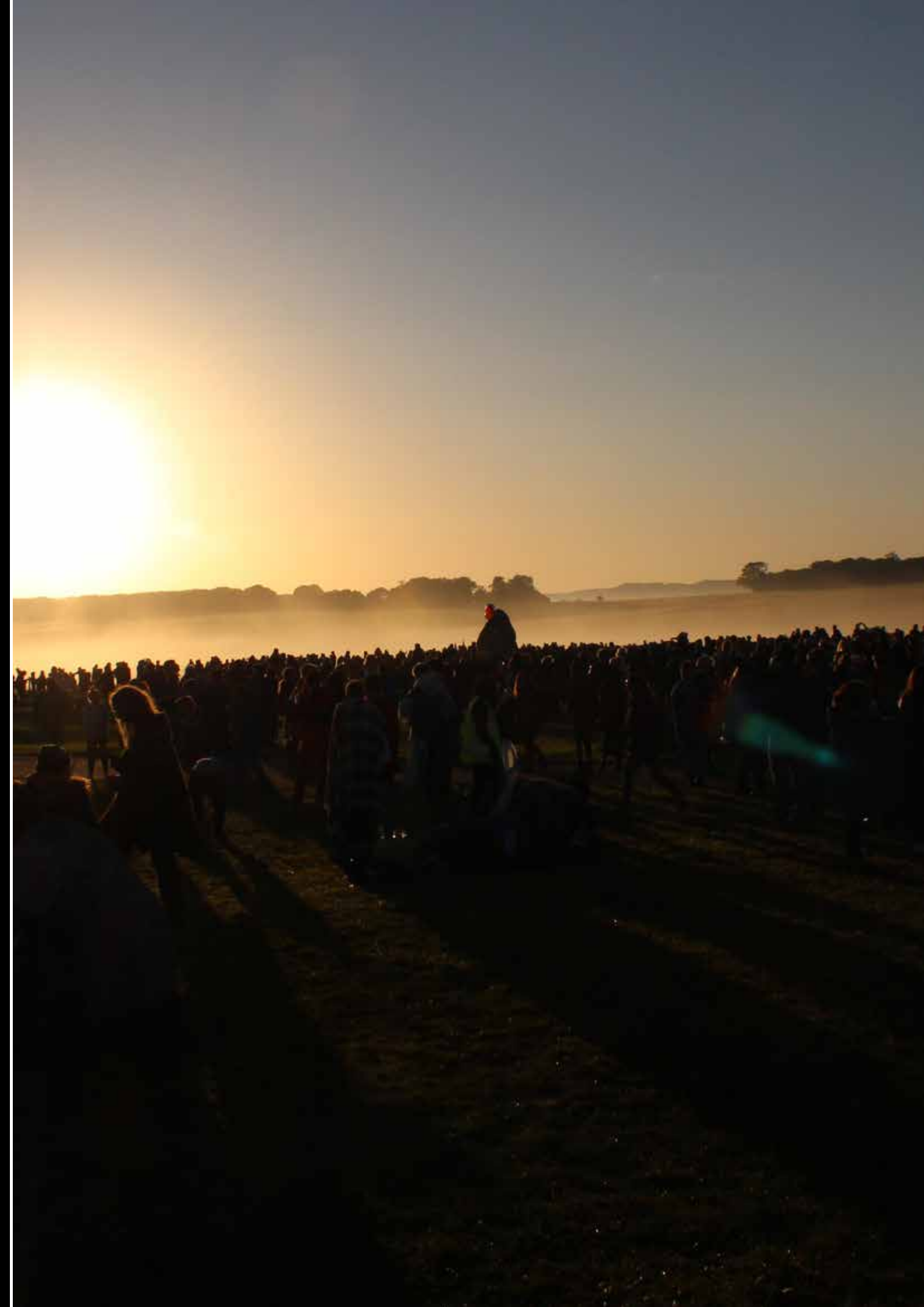
My friend spent several months of peace and harmony, making friends in the village, and even volunteering at the local community run shop. She was finally a more settled person. She then found a house she wanted to purchase, and, as it was brand new, the purchase went as smooth as silk. She has now been in that house for almost four years and is very happy indeed.

I think that in this instance it was not the home which needed a blessing, it was her and her chattels and of course her dog who had followed us in the ritual with due reverence. They are still happy and settled.

Blessed Be

The Old Crone

theoldcrones@gmail.com



SCOTT IRVINE THE DARK KING

On the longest day, we bathe in nearly 17 hours of our star's power. The Sun, also known in other cultures as Sol, Helios/Apollo, Ra, Shamash, Lord Surya and the goddess Sunna, stops at its most northerly travels along the horizon at sunrise. It rests for around three days, hence solstice, or sun stop before the pendulum begins to fall towards the balance of the Autumn Equinox, gaining enough momentum to swing fully towards the Winter Solstice in six months' time. Midsummer is when the Holly King wrenches power over nature from the Oak King who has held dominion over us these past six months. The Holly King represents the return into darkness.

The Celts believed the evergreen holly tree provided a winter shelter for the wood spirits and decorated their huts with holly branches for protection against misfortune. Holly became a symbol of Christ's sacrifice at the Winter Solstice with the spiky leaves representing his crown of thorns and the red berries, his blood of passion. Is Christ the Holly King, struck down at midwinter to be reborn at Easter/Beltain and coming into power when the Sun/Son is at its peak in the summer? Just a thought.

Holly or more precisely *Ilex Aquifolium* is a symbol for hope and joy and is considered

unlucky to cut one down. Depending on the quantity of berries it produces will predict the harshness of the winter to come, the more berries, the harsher the winter ahead. Its fine grain wood was used for billiard cues, chess pieces, printing blocks and horsewhips.

Ancient lore describes holly as one of several plants that protected against lightning strikes, sickness and witchcraft, the berries being the supreme witch deterrent apparently. Because of its resistance to lightning, holly is associated with the Celtic Thunder God Taranis and the Norse Thor. As a male symbol, holly must be bought into the house by a man. A sprig in the cowshed would ensure a productive herd and one dropped into a milk pail would keep the milk fresh. Sprigs of holly were exchanged at midwinter festivals as tokens of good will. It was known as a fairy tree.

I was honoured to battle as the Holly King against the Oak King with bow staffs at Stonehenge for the Cotswold Order of Druids a few summers back. I tutored myself in bow staff fighting with YouTube videos, learnt the foot movements of Karate for attacking and defensive stances, and practiced hitting soft balls hanging from a tree in the back yard. The day before the battle, I received a message from the Archdruidess that the Oak King, an experienced battle

reenactor, was taking it seriously and I needed to 'pad up' to protect myself. It was hot inside Stonehenge so I decided to forego any padding and just wear motorbike gloves to protect my hands, only to forget to put them on when we were called forward to be 'crowned'.

The Oak King told me I was going down, then he would let me win but I allowed my ego to get the better of me and told him no chance. It was a fierce battle with the Oak King trying every trick in the book to get me down, trying to trip me and grabbing my staff but I stayed on my feet, parried his attacks and fought back.

I knew in the end I would win but the heat began to take its toll on me and I began to tire. My crown was knocked off and I took a hefty whack to my fingers. I remembered a tactic Muhammad Ali used against George Foreman in the 'Rumble in the Jungle' in 1974 getting in close to the opponent so he could not swing his staff to get my breath back.

It worked for a while but I was so exhausted I was ready to fall but luckily for me, the Oak King was tired too and told me to hit him three times and he would go down. I had won, the Holly King was victorious and the world was saved from burning up. Darkness would rule for the next six months until the Winter Solstice when light would experience victory again. The watching Druids were mortified at the seriousness of the battle and from then on, the battle would be mostly of words and insults between the hitting of staffs before one of them would be slain.

From the Summer Solstice, darkness shortens the day, increasing in power until the two forces met again. In the darkening days, vegetation matures and fruits ripen. Without darkness the world will die.

Blessings

Scott Irvine



PAGANISM & CAPITALISM

ANNIE OATHBOUND

@OATHBOUNDSECRETS



These are some common concerns Pagans have regarding the impact of Capitalism on Mother Earth:

1. Environmental Degradation

The pursuit of economic growth and profit in a Capitalist system leads to unsustainable practices that harm the environment. Exploitation of natural resources, excessive consumption, and a focus on short-term financial gains contribute to deforestation, pollution, climate change, and loss of biodiversity.

2. Economic Inequality

Capitalism leads to wealth and income disparities, as the pursuit of profit and accumulation of capital concentrates wealth in the hands of a few individuals or corporations. This economic inequality exacerbates social divisions, limits opportunities, and perpetuates poverty for marginalised populations.

3. Exploitation of Labour

Capitalism is based on labour exploitation, keeping wages low, with poor working conditions, and limited workers' rights. Capitalists will outsource their workforce to countries with lower

wages and fewer workers rights, to maximise profits. Workers face unsafe conditions, long hours, or lack of fair compensation under capitalism.

4. Market Externalities

Capitalism's emphasis on free markets and profit maximisation overlooks the social and environmental costs of economic activities. Market externalities, such as pollution, resource depletion, and social impacts, are not fully accounted for in the pursuit of profit, leading to social and environmental burdens that affect communities and future generations.

5. Consumerism and Overconsumption

Capitalism relies on consumption to drive economic growth, and this contributes to overconsumption, resource depletion, and waste generation. The relentless pursuit of profit and constant promotion of materialistic values leads to a culture of consumerism, where individual well-being is equated with the accumulation of goods.

Does Capitalism align with Pagan beliefs? From my personal perspective, I would say that Capitalism goes against my Pagan beliefs. So what are the alternatives? Maybe we can learn something

from our pre-Capitalist ancestors.

The Celtic tribes that inhabited various parts of Europe, before the Roman Empire, had a predominantly agrarian economy. They practiced subsistence farming, growing crops such as wheat, barley, oats, and vegetables. They also raised



livestock, including cattle, sheep, pigs, and horses. The tribes relied on the land for their sustenance, and farming was a crucial activity for their survival.

Trade played a role in the Celtic economy, although it was not as extensive

or developed as in later periods. The Celts engaged in local and regional trade, exchanging goods and resources with neighbouring tribes. This trade primarily involved commodities such as grain, livestock, metalwork, textiles, and natural resources like salt and amber. Note that trade and commerce are not Capitalism. There were no Capitalists at this time.

The Celts were skilled metalworkers, particularly in the production of bronze and iron objects. They crafted weapons, tools, jewellery, and other items using these metals. This expertise in metalworking also contributed to their economic activities, as they could exchange metal goods for other commodities. People could pay metalworkers to craft exquisite items, but there were no Capitalist bosses controlling the metalworkers.



Celtic societies were generally organised in a tribal structure, and economic activities were often communal or based on kinship ties, rather than a Capitalist class. Land was often collectively owned by the tribe, and agricultural production and resources were shared among community members.

It's worth noting that Celtic economies varied across different regions and tribes, and there may have been local variations in economic practices and specialisation, but none of the tribes were Capitalist. Our understanding of the Celtic economy is based on archaeological evidence, historical accounts from ancient sources, and interpretations of Celtic culture and society.

What can we learn from our Celtic ancestors, to adjust our current socio-economic structure?

ANARCHO-PAGANISM

Here are some key aspects of how anarchist principles can be applied to religion and spirituality within the context of paganism:

• AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM

Pagan anarchists prioritise individual autonomy and freedom of belief. They reject the imposition of dogma or centralised religious authority and emphasise personal exploration and spiritual sovereignty. Each person is seen as having the right to develop their own unique spiritual path and connect with the divine in their own way.

• DECENTRALIZATION AND PARTICIPATORY STRUCTURES

Pagan anarchists challenge hierarchical religious structures and favour decentralised and participatory forms of organisation. They advocate for collective decision-making, consensus-building, and inclusive practices that value the input of all participants. This can manifest in practices such as consensus-based rituals, community assemblies, or non-hierarchical covens.

• EARTH-CENTERED SPIRITUALITY

Anarcho-Paganism emphasises a deep connection with the natural world and ecological consciousness. It recognises the interdependence between humans and nature, highlighting the importance of sustainable practices, environmental stewardship, and reverence for the Earth. Nature serves as a source of spiritual inspiration, and the preservation of ecological balance is seen as vital to both personal and collective well-being.

• MUTUAL AID AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Pagan anarchists value mutual aid and community support as essential aspects of spiritual practice. They foster networks of care, cooperation, and solidarity within their communities. This can involve shared resources, skill-sharing, and collective efforts to address social and environmental challenges.

• **OPPOSITION TO OPPRESSION**

Pagan anarchists are committed to challenging and dismantling systems of oppression within both religious and societal contexts. They recognise the intersections between different forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and capitalism, and strive for inclusivity, diversity, and social justice within their spiritual practices.



It's important to note that Anarcho-Paganism, like any philosophical or spiritual approach, can encompass a wide range of beliefs and practices. Different individuals and communities may interpret and apply anarchist principles to their spirituality in various ways, reflecting their unique perspectives and experiences.

A REAL DANGER

You may notice fascist rhetoric in the media, which isn't overtly labelled as fascism, but promoted as conservatism. National conservative movements or individuals can become radicalised and adopt more extreme and authoritarian positions over time. This can occur through the influence of charismatic leaders, the manipulation of fears and grievances, or the gradual erosion of democratic norms. When extreme ideologies and methods gain traction within national conservative movements, it can pave the way for a transition towards fascism.

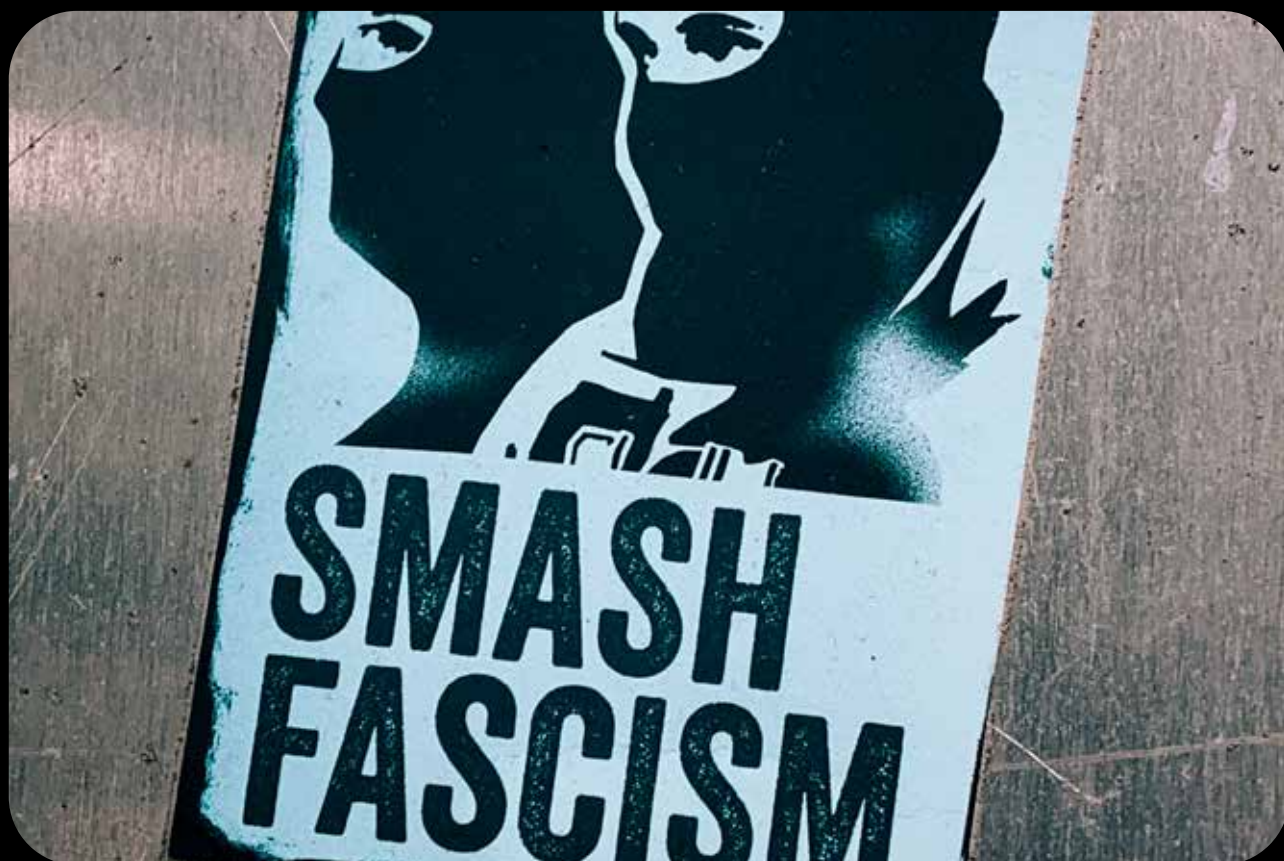
Fascist regimes prioritise the interests of the state or the ruling party over the rights and freedoms of individuals. They curtail freedom of speech, assembly, and the press, suppress political opposition, and enforce strict control over people's lives. This suppression undermines democracy, restricts personal liberties, and creates a climate of fear and oppression.

Fascist leaders cultivate a cult of personality, projecting themselves as charismatic

figures who claim to have all the answers and embody the will of the nation. They consolidate power in their hands, weakening democratic institutions and creating a centralised authority. The concentration of power in the hands of one leader or a small group can lead to abuses of power, corruption, and the erosion of checks and balances.

Fascism promotes extreme nationalism and often scapegoats minority groups, immigrants, asylum seekers, or ethnicities as threats to the nation. This xenophobic rhetoric fuels hatred, discrimination, and violence against marginalised communities, leading to social divisions and conflicts.

Fascist regimes emphasise militarism and expansionism, seeking to assert dominance over other nations. This aggressive foreign policy can lead to wars, invasions, and conflicts, putting countless lives at risk and destabilising regions.



Fascist ideologies reject diversity and promote a narrow, homogenous conception of society. They target minority groups, including ethnic, religious, and LGBTQ+ communities, seeking to marginalise or eradicate them. This suppression of diversity limits social progress, stifles creativity, and undermines the richness of cultural

exchange.

Fascist regimes align themselves with powerful business interests and promote corporatism, where the state and corporations form close alliances. This can lead to economic exploitation, monopolies, and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, exacerbating economic inequality and disadvantaging the majority of the population.

It is important to note that fascism can manifest in any contemporary context where similar ideologies and practices arise. Recognising and opposing fascism is crucial to safeguarding democracy, human rights, and social progress.

MAGIC AGAINST FASCISM AND XENOPHOBIA

This ritual is aimed at fostering collective energies to resist fascism, the far right, xenophobia, and violence against immigrants. By creating a space of love, compassion, and unity, this ritual seeks to empower individuals to take a stand against



hatred and work towards a more inclusive and tolerant society. Feel free to adapt and modify this ritual according to your beliefs and cultural practices.

Materials:

- A quiet and peaceful space
- Candles (red and white)
- A heat proof container
- Incense (common sage or frankincense)
- A bowl of water, or body of water
- A piece of paper and a pen
- Symbols of unity, such as a peace sign or interlocking hands

Preparation:

1. Find a tranquil space where you can perform the ritual without interruption.
2. Cleanse the space by lighting the incense and allowing its smoke to purify the atmosphere.
3. Set up the symbols of unity at the centre of the space.
4. Stand before a body of water, or place a bowl of water nearby and have the candles within reach.

5. Invocation:

Light the candles and say, "Here I stand between the pillars of love and hate, peace and war. I stand against fascism, the far right, xenophobia, and violence against immigrants."

6. Gaze on the water while you reflect on the impacts of fascism, xenophobia, and violence on minority groups. Think about the problems affecting your local community and what you can do personally to help marginalised people.

7. Dip your fingers into the water and touch your forehead, saying, "May my mind be clear and focused on promoting love, justice, and inclusivity."

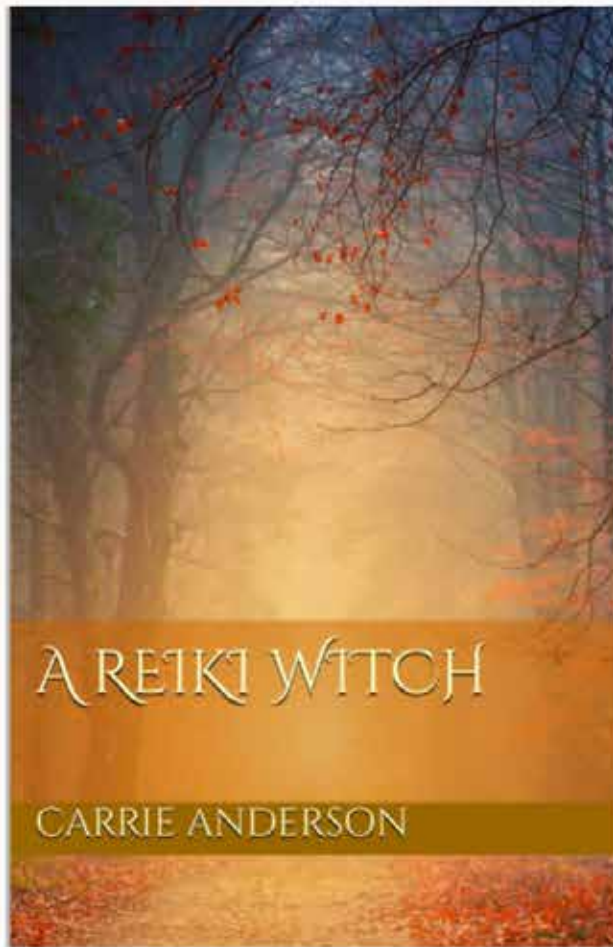
8. Write down any symbols or names associated with the far right.

9. Hold the paper over the flame of the red candle and collect the ashes in a heat proof container. As the paper burns, the influence of the far right is destroyed.
10. Say, "I affirm my dedication to actively challenge hatred and prejudice. I will promote understanding, empathy, and equality within my community."
11. Sprinkle the ashes on the water, and imagine the far right groups weakening, their fervour being extinguished, and the community healing. Close your eyes and visualise a world where people of all backgrounds and cultures come together in peace and harmony.
12. You can say, "May the light of love and unity guide us in challenging fascism and xenophobia. May compassion and empathy prevail over hatred and fear." Extinguish the red candle, to symbolise the fascist ideology coming to an end.
13. Express gratitude for the opportunity to perform this ritual and for the strength and courage to stand against fascism and xenophobia. Finally extinguish the white candle, symbolising the completion of the ritual.

Annie Oathbound @oathboundsecrets



A REIKI WITCH



Carrie Anderson

Learn ways to
incorporate your
witchcraft with your
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THE DIVINE STORYTELLER

One of my close friends shared with me recently how divination is the storytelling of the unseen. Since he said those words I haven't been able to stop thinking about how when we "tap in" we're simply telling stories. Opening energetic books and asking spirit to translate through us. It made my heart and soul so full.

My airy mind has been in awe of the fact that we're all storytellers in our own ways.

Here's some words from Me, recognising the storyteller within and how I express it into the world.

Instead of pages, I read stones and bones,
Translating sticks and markings, interpreting the language of symbols.
Reading chapters of souls from the placement of stars on their birth,
Reflecting their pages, chapters, and stories back to them on this earth.

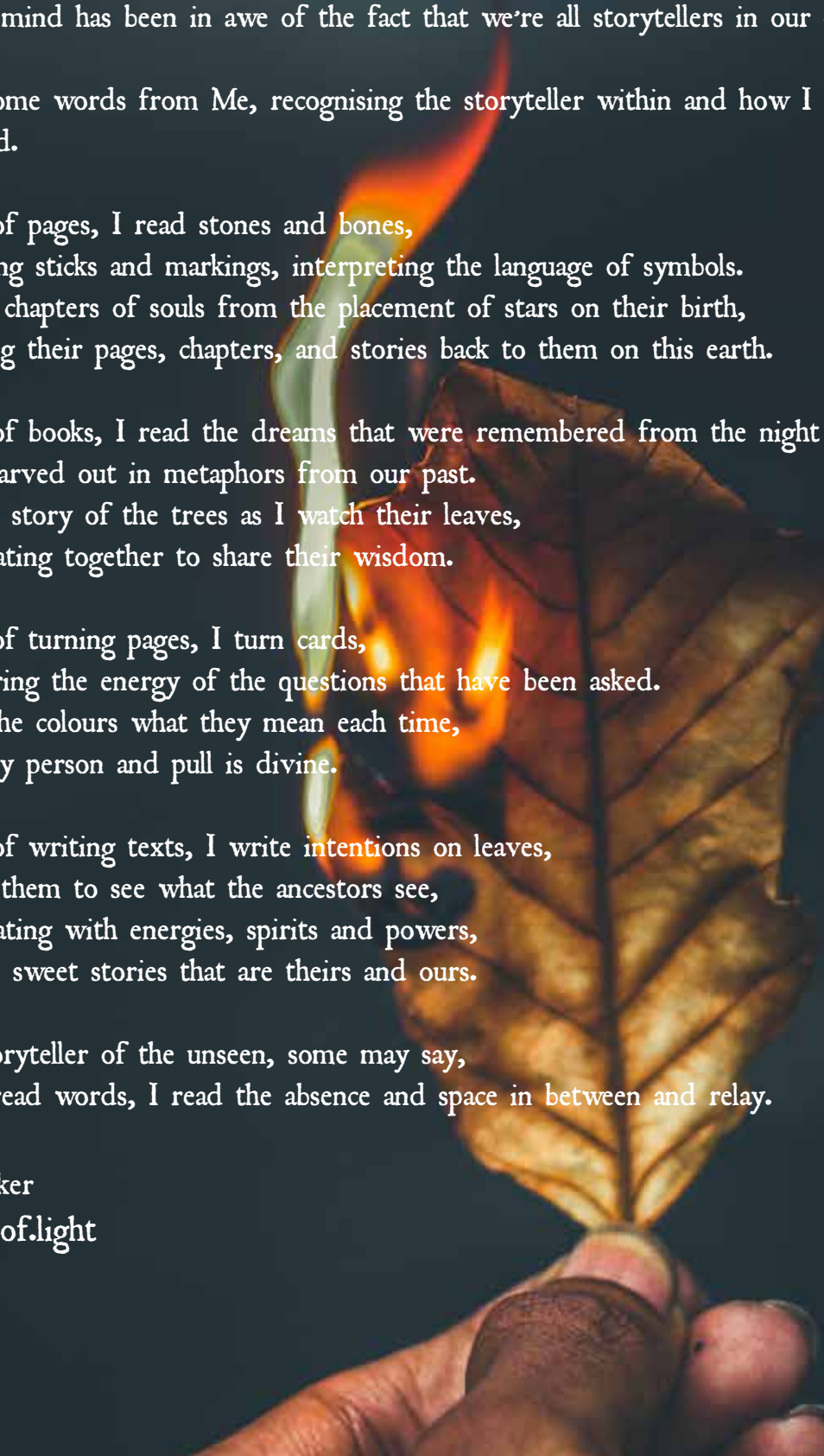
Instead of books, I read the dreams that were remembered from the night before last,
Stories carved out in metaphors from our past.
I tell the story of the trees as I watch their leaves,
Collaborating together to share their wisdom.

Instead of turning pages, I turn cards,
Deciphering the energy of the questions that have been asked.
Asking the colours what they mean each time,
For every person and pull is divine.

Instead of writing texts, I write intentions on leaves,
Burning them to see what the ancestors see,
Collaborating with energies, spirits and powers,
To relate sweet stories that are theirs and ours.

I'm a storyteller of the unseen, some may say,
I don't read words, I read the absence and space in between and relay.

Lucy Baker
@Lucy.of.light



BAREFOOT..

Barefoot we run into the night.
Because in the darkness we find our light.
A light that was born just for you and me and in the woods it sets us free.
Free to run and free to fight and dance away this dark night.
We run around the rooted trees and in the mud we sink to our knees
We call on Pan to come out to play, for on this night magic is made.
We play with cards and we set fires but you and I we never tire.
For we are free here in the dark we steal away our beating hearts.
Hearts That are filled with both darkness and light, there is no judgment in the dead of night.
But every night must come to an end, so I turn to you and say...
Next full moon my friend..

Kimberley Jade

A photograph of a forest floor covered in bluebells, with sunlight filtering through the trees. The sun is visible in the upper right corner, creating a bright glow and lens flare. The trees are tall and thin, with their trunks and branches visible. The ground is covered in a dense carpet of small blue flowers. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

GODDESS UNEARTHED

When a shift warms air's mercurial breath
Blooms liminal bliss between birth and death

A curious light into her cave beams
And I no longer see her only in dreams

Out from the shadow of my mind she wakes
To help me see beauty through eyes that ache

I see her when the forest dawns its light
And dewdrops glisten in misty delight

In June I see her breathe about the trees
As their branches wave in a wispy breeze

And when verdant hilltops meet the sky
I see her where sunlit leaves aurify

She is in all things sacred and wild
Where earth and flesh come to reconcile

C. MCKENNA RICE

THE MAGICIAN

Opening from the ether, emphatic
Like the primordial howl of a wolf pup
Head to spine, point to sky

Exaltation, laughing with the moon
That kisses a river teeming with life
There they dwell
In the thralls of creation

Where past and future
Scatter in the gale
Alchemizing their being
Harmonizing with the unseen

Peering inside the soul
Come on out, it's okay
This lantern called the heart
Yearns to shine

C. McKenna Rice



WHAT WE'RE READING

IT'S WRITTEN IN THE STARS

BY ZOE K.M. FOSTER

This book is something different - a companion, an inspiration, a collection of art, a collection of poetry, and a reminder on how to step in to our complete being, spiritually, physically and mentally.

This is a book that holds space for the reader, and allows them return to themselves and thrive. It's also a delight to behold - the bright colours and imagery are inspiring, invoking, and magical with every turn of the page.

Read in one sitting or dip in to what appeals to you or what you need - or didn't know you need. All of you is welcome between it's pages.

Zoë K. M. FOSTER

ZOË CHANNELS IMMERSIVE, ENERGY ART AS MEGA-MANIFESTATION PORTALS FOR DIVINELY FEMININE REBELS. SHE IS ALSO THE CREATOR OF HER SACREDEXPRESSION™ METHOD, COMBINING SACRED GEOMETRY, JUNGIAN MANDALA PSYCHOLOGY AND FULLY-EMBODIED, ENERGY-EXPANDING SELF-EXPRESSION.

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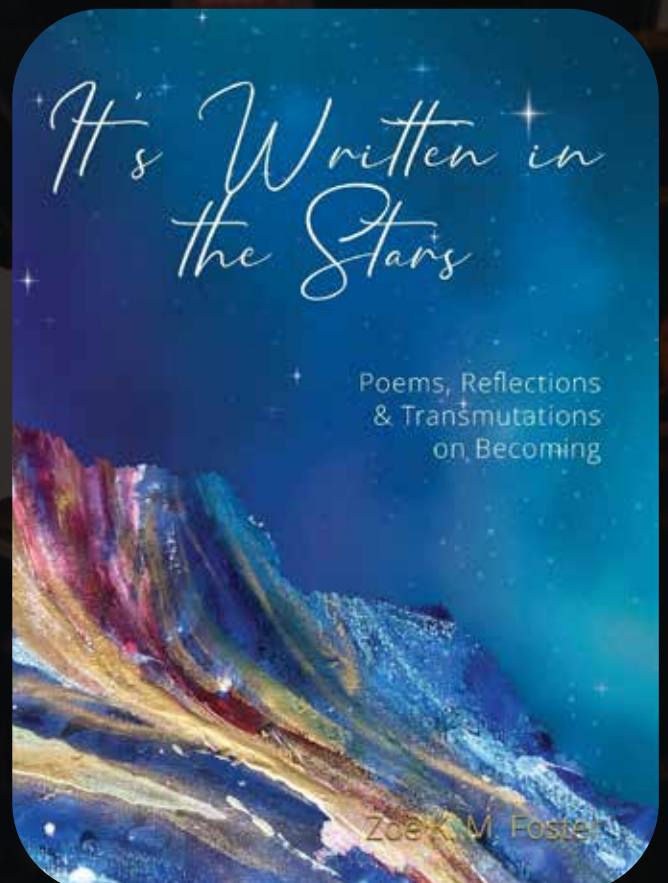
FROM HER BARN STUDIO SPACE IN THE WILDS OF MID-DEVON, SHE HOSTS ENERGY-SHIFTING WOMEN'S CIRCLES,

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VERGE

BY NADIA ATTIA

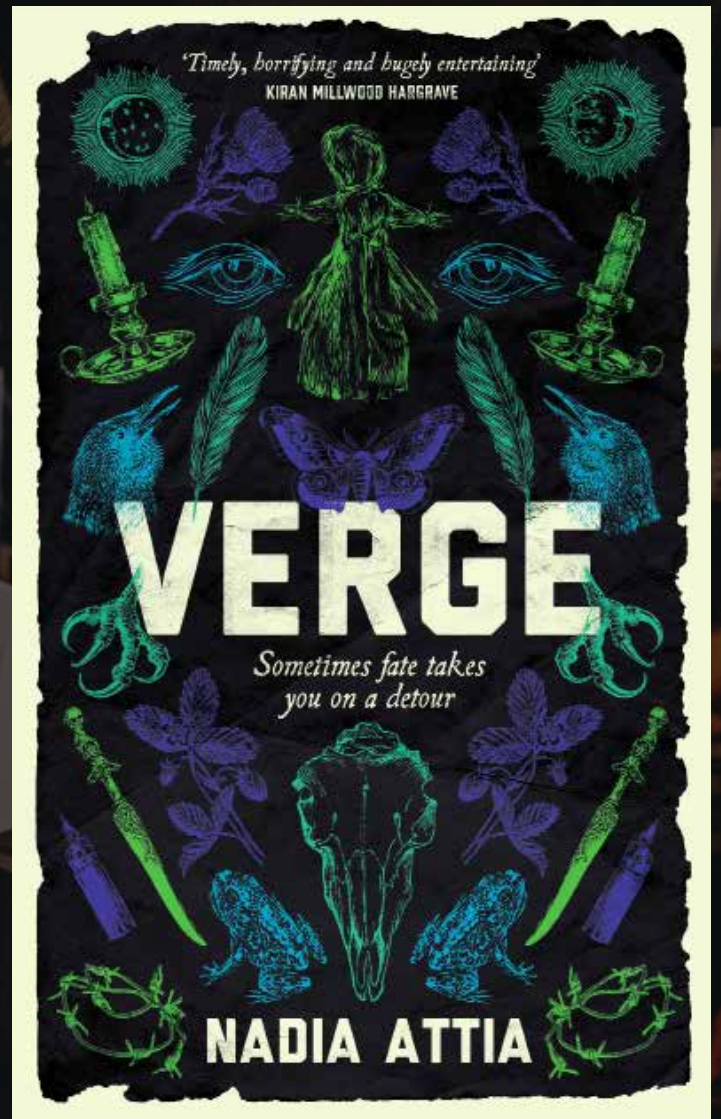
Nadia Attia's future image of Britain feels like a genuine possibility - a dystopian landscape bearing haunting and magical folk traditions, spiced with magical realism.

We follow Rowena and Halim on a mission across the country to cure a curse, encountering strange rituals, danger and folklore that mystify and terrify. Will they make it before time runs out?

The pagan knowledge used here is clearly well researched and reimagined, creating a definite page turner that young adults and more mature readers will enjoy.

It's also refreshing to find pagan traditions and folklore held in a positive light in fiction!

The hard back edition is stunningly beautiful, and definitely worth a space on any bookshelf.



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