

West Midlands

# WITCH

Magazine

Between Wicca and Witchcraft

The Ancient Yews of Wychbury

Full Moon in Leo

## *Pagan Poetry Special*

A selection of Pagan poetry and prose.

Our Lady of Holy Death

South Birmingham Moot

Dark Faeries



Issue 2/February 2020

# West Midlands Witch

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Percieved differences between Wicca and Witchcraft

The Full Moon in Leo

Our Lady of Holy Death

Tarot Talk

Pagan Poetry Special

The Sacred Yews of Wychbury Ring

February Grimoire

Welcome to the second issue of West Midlands Witch.

Thank you for all the feedback we had on our first issue! We are delighted to have had so many readers and people enjoy our writers and artists work!

Remember, if you have something you would like to share with us, contact us on Facebook (The Crows Feet) or email [thecrowsfeet@outlook.com](mailto:thecrowsfeet@outlook.com)



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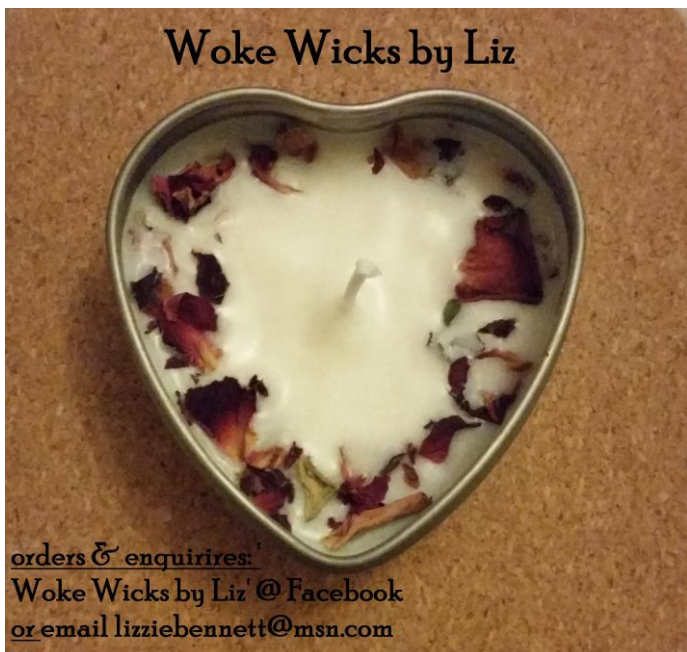
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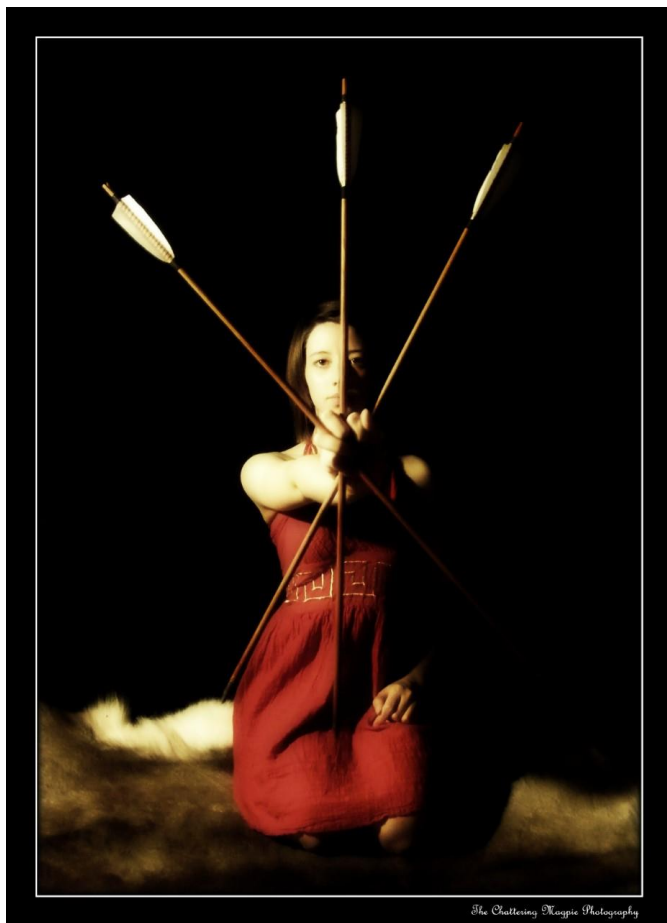


# Perceived differences between Wiccan-Witchcraft and Traditional Witchcraft

BY DANIEL BRAN GRIFFITH – THE CHATTERING MAGPIE

It can be said that Traditional Witchcraft is folk-magic, yet there are some forms that are also of a religious or strongly spiritual nature. Here I emphasise the word "some" as there is no uniformity, each individual practitioner can only say what they do and cannot speak for other paths.

Indeed, in Gardnerian and Alexandrian practice I believe there is an element of standardisation. A coven in for example Glastonbury, will have a recognisably similar practice to a group in Edinburgh, bar the latter being in a foreign language (English joke). Traditional Witchcraft appears to display a far greater regional variation, between groups, counties and individuals.



Let me put it this way, from the social-psychological approach. The way the human mind works predisposes us to think and identify ourselves, not by what we are but by what we are not. It is the "us and them" mindset. There is nothing particularly wrong with this way of thinking, as it is simply how our minds generally work.

Attempting to define ourselves by what we are, by what makes us unique is often quite challenging. We will often read statements that say Wicca is different from Traditional Craft because of perceived differences. Actually trying to define what Wicca is and what Traditional is by focusing on the actual praxis of each example is not the obvious path and can as suggested, be quite difficult.

The matter here is complicated further by the enormous variety of practice and belief found within Traditional methodologies, so rather than looking at Traditional Craft as

one whole or unified concept one has to look at each individualised approach to praxis. The danger of perceived generalisation is misrepresentation.

Just as there are subtle differences between Gardnerian and Alexandrian Witchcraft or Wicca, there are differences between the many different forms of Traditional Craft. There is no one singular example that can be presented as the quintessential model, so as a detached observer let me offer these observances on perceived or actual differences between Traditional and Wiccanesque Praxis.



My observances here; are made upon wide reading and a wide range of contacts, my approach here is that of Phenomenological Sociology. I do not pass judgement on the rights and wrongs of any belief system or practice, I observe and describe them.

Although some Wiccans do not identify themselves as either Pagan or as members of a religion, the majority appear to do so. Wicca focuses on the worship or veneration if you prefer, of a divine couple, a Lord and a Lady, a Great Goddess and a Great God as representations of all other known divinities. Sociologists and theologians therefore categorise Wicca as a Duo-theistic Pagan Religion.

Traditional Witchcraft is less clear cut, the approach can be that of sorcery or a magical arte that does not necessarily include divinity or one that does include spiritual and religious aspects of veneration if not necessarily worship. The latter would include at least some involvement of Gods, Goddesses, Spirits, the Ancestors and often there is an overlapping approach.

Therefore, Traditional practices rather than being perceived as Duo-theistic are much more likely to display traits of Polytheism, Henotheism, Pantheism or good old-fashioned Animism.

There is less likely to be a standardisation of practise in Traditional Craft than in Wicca. The latter form of Witchcraft, with an origin traceable to one or more founders, has an identifiable set of core rituals and methods. Traditional practice is more often regional and idiosyncratic, often influenced by localised phenomenon and folklore.



Again, whereas Wicca is Duo-theistic and focuses on a divine couple, some Traditional covens or sometimes Covenes, will focus on one totemic or tutelary Deity, this is an aspect of Henotheism, although some groups such as the Clan of Tubal Cain use the word Monolatry, which should not be confused with Monotheism. Some Traditionals or Traditionalists consider themselves to be Pagan, while some do not and it is therefore advisable to ask the individual for clarification.

In Wicca, outside of some references to the Aradia Mythos, Luciferian traits are not generally observable. However, there are some Traditional groups who are Luciferian in their approach, the actual manifestation of this influence will vary from group to group; it is far from standard and should not be confused with Satanism.

It is common knowledge that Wicca has a degree system, reflecting an early Masonic influence. Many Traditional groups do not have a degree system of such formality, one is either a member or one is not a member. Those that do have a degree system of sorts may use the term "admission" whereas the first admission is to an "outer court" or circle and the second admission to an "inner court" or core working group.

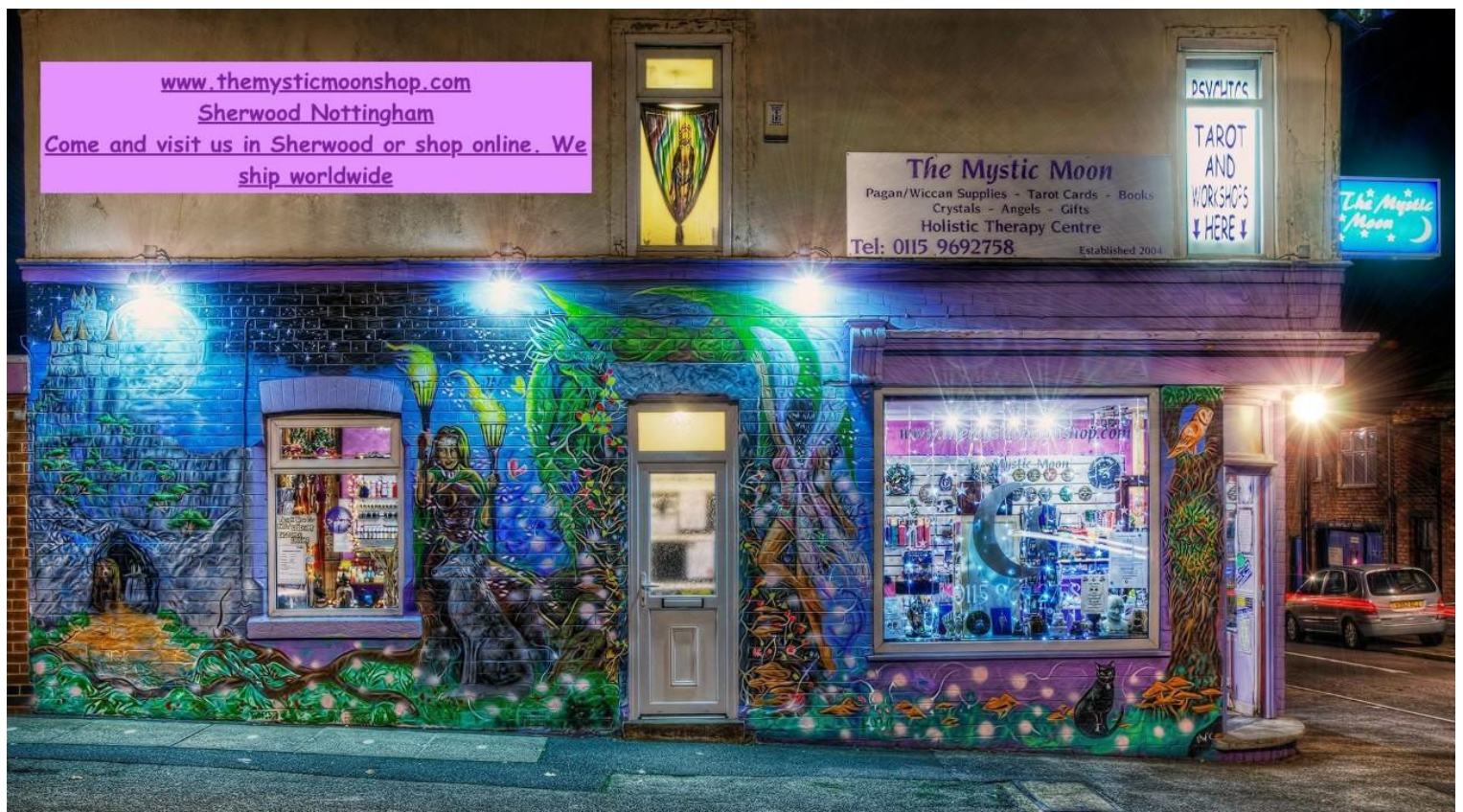
In Wiccan covens, the leading couple are known as a High Priestess and a High Priest. Traditional covens or coveens display a varied number of titles dependent on the individual group or dispense with titles altogether. One may for example, hear references to Covenmaster, Mistress, Maid, Magister (Male) or Magistra (female) or any number of other titles.

The origins of the Wheel of the Year in its modern form, like the Wiccan Rede, can be traced to the late 1940's. Although these festivals are indeed ancient, no one culture celebrated or observed all eight festivals at any one time. Therefore, although some Traditionals have adopted the modern eight, illustrating the active cross pollination of ideas, there are other groups that recognise a calendar of five, six or ten festivals. The Wiccan Rede is however, rejected by the majority of Traditional groups and solitaries.

As clear as mud?

This paper was first published in the Hedge Wytch as: Chattering Magpie (D.B. Griffith) (2012) Perceived differences between Wiccan-Witchcraft and Traditional-Witchcraft. The Hedge Wytch. February/Imbolc 2012 pp14-16.

Text and photography ©Daniel Bran Griffith the Chattering Magpie





# Full Moon in Leo

BY MICHELLE ROSE BOXLEY

FOR SISTERS OF THE MOON

We are welcoming in our next full moon tomorrow and it's in the fiery and joyful sign of Leo. February's full moon is also referred to as the Snow Moon, the Hunger Moon or the Storm moon. With Imbolc last weekend we may be getting excited about Spring, but these moon names serve as another reminder that February can be a cold and harsh month and to make sure that we're still taking good care of ourselves and making lots of time for rest and nourishment.

Having said that, full moon in Leo is all about letting your hair down and shaking off the heaviness of the last few months. Leo is a playful and joyful sign and when you mix this with the sun being in the expansive, curious and creative sign of Aquarius you can open yourself up to a feeling of lightness and new possibilities. If you've been adulting hard of late and feel like it's all work and no play then now is the time to inject some fun into your life. Can you down tools for a bit this weekend and let yourself enjoy the fruits of your labour? This full moon is a great opportunity to ask yourself if you're taking yourself too seriously? Have you been letting yourself get bogged down in the daily grind? And have you let winter get a hold of you? When was the last time you belly laughed? How could you bring elements of fun and play into your life as we begin our approach into Spring? Spring is associated with the archetype of the maiden and Leo is often associated with our inner child, spend some time connecting to your inner child and inner maiden. What does she want to do? create? experience?

What would you do if no one was looking?

Divination on a full moon is always extra powerful and it provides another opportunity to check in with yourself and where you're at. Lay out your favourite oracle/tarot deck, light some candles, prepare a yummy drink (we recommend Magic Tarot Tea by Tarn and Moon) and give yourself a reading. Note down your reading in your journal and any feelings this may have triggered.

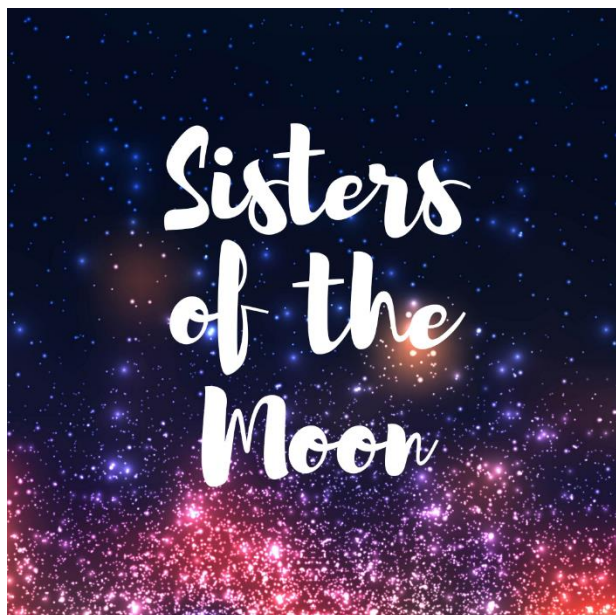


## Permission to Create

Aquarius and Leo are both incredibly creative signs. Leo helps infuse Aquarius with a more playful approach to creativity, as left to their own devices Aquarius won't be satisfied with just creating for fun but will need to turn it into a project of some kind. Why not give yourself permission at the weekend to play, create, sing, dance? Use that heightened energy of the full moon and channel it into some fun! Get your paints out, collage, draw, write poetry. Don't overthink it. Connect to the experience of joy and freedom that being creative evokes.

This article was an excerpt from the Sisters of the Moon Blog – read the full thing here:

<https://sistersofthemoononline.weebly.com/blog/wolf-moon-lunar-eclipse>



Sisters of the Moon is an online community, magazine, and so much more!

You can find them at

<https://www.facebook.com/sistersofthemooncommunity/>

The first issue of the Sisters of The Moon is available to buy for the cost of a cup of coffee on Etsy – visit their Facebook page for more info and a link to purchase the Winter edition!

The first issue of Sisters of the Moon digital Zine, 54 pages of winter yumminess from recipes, to self care rituals, to astrology forecasts as well as interviews with incredible women from all over the country. This issue is inspired by Yule and the perfect way to help you connect to the winter solstice and seasonal self care.



ISSUE #1

*The Magic  
of Yule*

yule rituals  
mindful living  
gift guide  
the magic of cacao  
lunar art  
seasonal self care  
astrology  
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*"The nations thronged around, and cried aloud, As with one voice,  
Truth, liberty, and love!"*

# Introducing Our Lady of Holy Death (Santa Muerte)

BY IAN WILLIAMS

Santa Muerte, translated as Holy Death, is a folk saint, sometimes regarded as a deity in her own right, originating in Mexico before devotion to her spread out across the world. Often in a ritualistic setting the name *Santisima Muerte*, which translates roughly to Most Holy Death is used.

Her appearance takes the form of a feminine skeletal figure, robes of various colours adorn her frame and her symbolic objects – a scythe and a globe – are clutched in her hands.

Interestingly, veneration to Our Lady of Holy Death, when worshiped as a folk saint, was encouraged by the local congregations in Mexico. That is until she began to draw attention away from the Church when other local independent churches were raised solely for her worship and split off from the mainstream Church.

Although commonly perceived as a folk saint, others view her as the personification of death, like the Grim Reaper, or often as the ancient Aztec goddess of death *Mictecacihuatl*. Although perceived to be a strong deity on her own, many Catholic devotees still view her as a saint and see themselves as good Christians despite condemnations from the Church.

Our Lady of Holy Death is traditionally prayed to in order to settle matters of the heart, provide wisdom and knowledge, help devotees with money and finance problems, and nurture the health of those who worship her (usually her cloak is portrayed as covering and protectively shielding those loyal to her).

Local churches and sometimes international groups are attracting huge swathes of devotees, some leaving the Church entirely in order to follow Santa Muerte, and this is one of the reasons the Catholic Church's opinion of her veneration has swayed, leading to their official statement condemning her worship as devil worship, with a Catholic priest quoted as stating that she is 'literally a demon with another name'.

Despite her fearful reputation, propagated by those who do not understand or are intimidated by her power, Our Lady of Holy Death is a loving, caring and loyal guardian to those who pay her homage and is definitely an interesting addition to an individual's pantheon or a good introduction for those new to the Left-Hand Path.

Our Lady of Holy Death, pray for us!

*Ian Williams is a BA (Hons) Religious Studies student at the University of Wolverhampton and enjoys studying and practising minority Pagan traditions. His specialities include Daemonology and the worship of Santisima Muerte.*





# South Birmingham Moot – First Anniversary Reflections

BY PORTLAND JONES

It all started with a simple question.

‘Does anybody know if there are any moots over this side of Birmingham?’

Debby posted this question to Birmingham Pagans on Facebook. She added that she lived in Longbridge and didn't drive.

There was a collective umming and aahing in posts springing back and forth between pagans scratching their heads. They finally reached a conclusion; indeed, there wasn't.

Then the hive mind agreed that it was a pity that we didn't have a local moot, and further, that we needed one. It wasn't long before there was a tentative suggestion that maybe Debby would like to start one, and advice followed on how to go about doing this.

‘It only needs two or three of you to start and if it takes off, great, start advertising.’

So I messaged Debby to say if she was up for it so was I. Bobbi said the same. That first exciting and rather nervous meeting took place at the Great Stone Inn in Northfield. Just seven of us: Debby, Bobbi, Mandy, John, Colin, Jonathan and me.

We sat round a table in a corner of the noisy bustling pub. Bits of broken, hesitant conversation soon flowered into full grown chatting, giggling and of course some serious talk about setting up the moot. Most pressing was a venue, but most important was our approach, our ethos. We wanted to welcome people of all pagan beliefs in a safe environment. Our only rule would be that members would treat each other with respect and kindness.

We wanted somewhere with easy access – this included transport, abilities and atmosphere. We asked where people were coming from, checked bus routes and trains. We wanted somewhere ground floor with easy access for people needing support with mobility such as wheelchair or scooter, so also with parking close by. And we wanted a non-threatening environment for people coming to join us who may perhaps be on their own or nervous around new people. This was a tall order, especially as we needed all this for free!

I spent several weeks contacting pubs with function rooms, social clubs, churches, community halls. I was getting desperate. Surely our little venture wasn't going to end before it had even started?



Bobbi saved us; she found our home. The Allegro Lounge on Northfield high street is a new breed of meeting place. It serves delicious food, tea, coffee, soft drinks and alcohol – a café bar. It has the appeal of

a bar, the food of a restaurant and the relaxed atmosphere of a café. What's more, they

welcome community groups. For free. They were happy to offer us a home. We meet once a month and have grown from a handful to twenty plus each month. This February is our first anniversary, and wow, has it been a busy year.

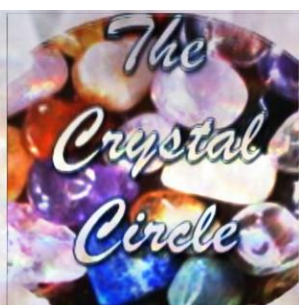
We've had talks on essential oils, tarot, the witchcraft trials. We had a book exchange. We made a banner to represent the moot, with each member using fabric paints to decorate a square which Mandy kindly and cleverly stitched together to display at moot camp. Yes, we all went camping for a pagan orientated activity filled weekend – thanks to John and Colin's enthusiasm and organisational skills. So good, we already have a date in the diary for this year.

We have come together for moot rituals for Beltane and Samhain, at Martineau Gardens, a green and safe haven in the heart of busy Birmingham. We made Yulevent calendars, to count the days off to Yule, which we celebrated with a Mummer's play, specially written for us using local places, characters and history. There was a part for everyone if they wanted it and people surprised themselves I think – born naturals the lot of them. We finished with enthusiastic singing. And we did this all at the Allegro Lounge – their long-suffering staff are brilliant.



So Birmingham's newest moot had a successful first year and this year looks to be just as good. Follow us on Facebook, or better still, come and join us at moot. First Wednesday of every month, 7.30pm start (though many of us get there early to sample the food and just enjoy the company) Allegro Lounge, Northfield, Birmingham B31 2NN

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# Dark Faeries: Traditional Folklore and Charms of Protection

BY HELEN JR BRUCE

Often we imagine faeries as small, winged creatures fluttering between the wild flowers of a pleasant meadow. But if we trace belief in the fae folk further back, back beyond the Victorian notion that they were dear little things with wings, then we may encounter the full and fascinating breadth of faerie folklore.

In Ireland the ancient race of the Tuatha De Danaan defeated earlier settlers, before being driven underground themselves by the conquering Gaelic invaders. The conquered Tuatha De Danaan became known as 'the people of the Sidhe', which translates as 'the people of the barrow mound or cairn', with the name arising from their decision to find safety by living beneath these earthworks. It was considered bad luck to refer to this fallen race by name, and euphemisms such as 'hill folk', 'blessed folk' and 'fair folk' began to be used. It was the term 'fair folk' that then developed into the shorter name of 'fairy'.



In Welsh folklore it is the 'grey folk' who live beneath the hollow hills. They are skilled in magick, and will often venture abroad to hunt wild game in the mortal world. In many myths, and notably in the well known tale of Rhiannon, a faerie man or woman will woo and wed a human partner. In the Welsh Mabinogion the maiden Rhiannon weds Pwyll, Lord of Dyfed, and they have a golden haired son who is kidnapped by a monster but later returned to his royal parents by a farmer. It is from these tales that certain family lines claim to have otherworldly heritage and even faerie blood.

But faeries are not always benevolent to humans. In Lancashire, Jenny Greenteeth is said to lurk in rivers and pull in children and old folk to be drowned. In Irish mythology, the Leanan Sidhe is a seductive faerie woman who inspires her mortal lovers to live short, but brilliant, lives as musicians and poets. Cornish folklore also tells of the Redcap; a malevolent faerie who is bound to murder humans in order to keep his grisly red cap wet with blood.

With all of this in mind, it might be prudent of us to consider traditional ways in which to protect ourselves from these less than pleasant faeries. Perhaps the most popular method cited is to use iron. Horseshoes may be hung over the door to stop faeries crossing your threshold and, as an added precaution, you can also wear an iron nail around your neck and sew iron filings into the hem of your clothes. Faeries are said to fear iron, as it

will burn their skin. This belief is likely to originate from during the shift of Bronze Age to Iron Age, where iron began to be viewed as somewhat of a wonder material, as it was able to cleave a bronze sword in two. In later civilisation, it was used to fashion lighting rods for Christian churches. When the iron absorbed and redirected the deadly electricity it was seen as a taming of the old gods, especially Thor, by the new religion. If it could stand up to a god, how could a faerie withstand it?

Alongside this, tales of faerie encounters will sometimes mention magic stones, known as 'hag stones'. These are smooth, rounded stones with a naturally occurring hole through them, and it is said that they can protect the wearer from harm. Various accounts describe their magickal properties; ranging from offering safety from witches, curing illness or allowing the owner to see through faerie glamour by looking through the hole in the stone. The term 'hag stone' originates from an ancient belief that most illnesses were caused by spectral 'hags' or spirits, and the stones were able to cure these ills.

In Germanic folklore they are called adder stones, stemming from the belief that snakes came together and used their venom to bore the hole. The characteristic holes are in fact caused by water wearing through a natural weakness present in the rock. In Britain, these stones were collected by farmers and hung on their livestock or in the stables in order to stop the animals being ridden by witches on the Sabbats. It is said that looking through a hag stone will allow you to view invisible denizens of the land of the fae, and also to see other worlds that overlap with our own. Italian folk magic even suggests that hag stones can be used to bind a faerie to do the bidding of a human for a set amount of time, although the exact method is not described. The ability of a hag stone to pierce through the glamour of the fae and reveal the faerie realm is said to be increased if the wearer of the stone collects morning dew and pours it through the natural hole in the stone, before then ritually anointing themselves with the water.

Other methods suggested to protect yourself from unwelcome faeries include wearing a spring of St. John's Wort and sprinkling salt along all the windows and entrances to your home. The yellow flowered plant is said to protect the wearer from faerie mischief, and the salt will prevent faeries from gaining access to your dwelling place unseen. It can also be sprinkled on food to stop faeries from stealing it, or simply sucking all the nutrition from it. If you are out walking, and you feel that a faerie may be watching you, or even confusing your thoughts and causing you to be 'pixie-led' away from the path, then a good remedy is to turn your clothes inside out. This is said to break the magic being used upon you.

*Helen JR Bruce is an author, illustrator and oral storyteller who specialises in British folklore. She has spent the last ten years researching both Faerie Folk and the motif of the Wild Hunt in mythology. Her book, 'Heat of the Hunt', is available to purchase on Amazon and direct from the author via facebook/heatofthehunt..*







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# Tarot Talk

BY ESME KNIGHT

Each month we will discuss the cards, suits and interpretations of the tarot to aid you in your tarot readings.

## THE EMPRESS

If there was a 'Mother' of the deck, it would be the Empress. In the major arcana the Empress carries the number three; the number of fertility and fusion. If she appears in your spread, the Empress symbolises potential and abundance and urges you to nurture your creativity and to love unconditionally. Take heed of this lesson, when the Empress appears she is letting you know that your potential is waiting just below the surface for you to embrace and to realise. When the Empress is reversed, there may be a blockage in your creativity, a delay of projects, a period barren of love and care that requires your attention.

At this time, as the earth waits to bloom in the coming Spring, we can look to The Empress is a representation of the Goddess and her fertility. Soon the frost will melt and the clear and pure waters shall give life to all that lies dormant. We shall see the new growth and fresh life that will lead to the blossoms of Summer and the fruit of the harvest, but for now – gather your potency, make ready your plans so that your actions can make them reality when the Spring comes.



## THE SUIT OF PENTACLES



As we are about to head into the coldest part of Winter, the grounding and sensory nature of this suit seems very appropriate. The Earth is in stasis, resting and dormant but full of potential for the coming year. While in this limbo state, harness the energy of the suit of Pentacles; get your house in order ready for the year ahead. Prune away unwanted habits and old thinking and welcome a fresh start.

This suit represents the element of Earth, the Winter season, all things material, practical and tangible. When Pentacles appear they are leading you to consider the



aspects of health, wealth, possessions, family, status, career, knowledge and experience that surround you in your life.

Beginning with the Ace, this is representative of all earthly things. Your possessions yes, but more importantly your BODY! Your physical presence here on your human journey. Along the way we must learn how to balance health vs wealth, but the curious and creative nature of the spirit endures, bringing gifts through all the loss, forfeit, sacrifice. Cultivate hospitality, and reap the rewards. Study diligently and be kind and honest in evaluating progress and failure. Goals are attainable, desires can be manifested with patience and hard work.

Make the wish... Then DO the wish.

**Esme Knight** is a Yorkshire born musician, witch, fire performer, artist, writer and community leader living in Nottingham. Primarily a musician, Esme's original material is a mix of dark and sassy rock songs blended with modern gothic folk ballads. Following years of bands, collaborations and cover gigs she decided to focus on her original material and her debut solo album "Forever Wild" was released June 2018 to wide acclaim, containing tales of joy, sorrow, reflection, death and the wildness in all of us. Moving to Nottingham in 2008 from London where she was Retail Manger of the famous and gruesome London Dungeon, she began her work with the Pagan community and founded Pagan Pride UK, championing accurate representation for modern Pagans and hosting the UK's largest Pagan event attended by over 3500 people every year. Her community work earned her an International Women's Day award marking the centenary in 2011, and recently Pagan Pride UK's annual festival in Nottingham won the Pagan Federation's 'Best Large Outdoor Event 2018'. Esme Knight is a Dragon Shaman and a member of Clan Dolmen, regularly performing and speaking at their events, including their fire rituals, working with fire, drums and body movement to conjure the dragon within.



The image displays a tattoo artist's portfolio. On the left is a logo for "KLAIRE ADER TATTOOIST" featuring a stylized face with large eyes and a crown, surrounded by floral and leaf patterns. To the right is a grid of 12 circular images showing various tattoo designs: a green frog, a skeleton, a colorful rose, a tree, a dragon, a bee, a butterfly, a dragon, a woman's face, a woman's face with a crown, and a woman's face with a crown. Below the grid is contact information: "Insta- Klaire\_Ader\_Tattoo", "FB- Klaire Ader Tattooist", and "Klaireadertattoos@gmail.com".

# The Ancient Yews of Wychbury Ring

Part of the Magickal Midlands Series BY  
BEKKI MILNER

Not far from Stourbridge Town is  
Wychbury Hill.



On top of the hill, sits Wychbury Ring - an Iron Age hill fort. It lies above the Wychbury Obelisk, locally known as the monument, and a replica Greek Doric temple, which as kids we called The Chainy. Both are follies built by a Lord Lytton in the 1700's.

At school, the rumour mill told that beneath the obelisk was a secret temple where witches held rituals - with a secret entrance located in the replica Greek temple. No evidence suggests this to be the case, but we weren't far from the truth, as Pagans and druids did and still do frequent this sacred place - although I have never had the chance to meet any whilst walking there.

Wychbury Ring once housed a shrine in a yew tree - one of many ancient yews situated on the hill. Sadly, following the Summer Solstice of 2002, the sacred tree was burnt and later felled due to being unsafe.



I saw the sacred tree once, as a child, on one of many walks my parents and I took up there. I have a vague impression of ribbons and rags tied to its branches, empty, burnt out tea-light casings and melted wax on bark. I have never been able to recall the exact location since the tree was removed.

Wychbury ring has always held mystery and magick for many people, be they local or just passing through. Many speak of a feeling of unease, of being watched, of something 'other'. Rumours of a ghostly highwayman on the road alongside the hill are many, as are the resident ghosts at the Badgers Set pub, previously the Gypsy's Tent.

Across the road, in Hagley Woods, the tale of Bella was born in the 1940's. The case of the unidentified woman buried in a tree grows colder each year, with no leads, no body, and no one to tell of her identity or her misfortune, though many have tried and guessed through the years. The obelisk still bears the enigmatic graffiti that asks 'Who put Bella in the Witch elm'? But that is a story for another day.



I hadn't returned to the ring fort side of Wychbury in many years, sticking to the lower woodland instead and the hill of the monument. In summer, the hill catches hours of glorious sunlight. Late last year, in the height of Autumn, myself, my husband and various friends began walking the ring fort on a more regular basis. I wondered why I ever stopped, why it took so long to venture up the path to the ramparts.

It can seem a little adventurous at times, walking the ramparts, where the path narrows or steepens or a fallen yew creates an obstacle to crawl under or climb over. Where the brambles lean in to tangle around your feet, or the yews reach to touch your hair. In places the banks either side are so steep, and the path so narrow, you must take your time and watch your feet so as not to tumble down them.

Wychbury is covered in rich, dense woodland. Alongside the ancient yews are gnarled silver birch, weathered oaks, and slim hazels, amongst others. It also bears a wide variety of fungi and mushroom, from jelly ear to Fly Agaric and some in between that I don't even recognise. In Spring, there are bluebells and snowdrops carpeting the floor and a symphony of bird song if you stand still long enough to listen.

This pocket of woodland is a real treat to those seeking to connect with nature, for it is slightly wild in places, losing light quickly as the sun sets, and staying cool in the heat of summer. For foragers, there are brambles, nuts and mushrooms a plenty if you know what you are looking for.



Earlier records indicate there were at least 28 of the ancient yews that once circled the hill fort - possibly some of the oldest in the country. Later counts revealed 25, and now there are likely to be less.

Some of the yews have chance to be between 800 and 1000 years old. If you follow the ramparts around the ring, you can see most of them, ancient sleeping giants who have twisted and grown against their landscape in magickal and unusual ways.

Yew trees are long associated with witchcraft, death and necromancy. Often linked with the Goddess Hekate, and a reputation for being poisonous, they have long suffered a dark reputation. Yet I find the yews peaceful sentries of a time long ago, with wisdom in their roots and magick in their branches. Tall stand the still and silent wardens of Wychbury Ring.

As far as ring forts go, Wychbury is quite small. No excavations have taken place since 1885, so its purpose and origins are hazy at best. It may have been the most northern outpost of the Hwicce Tribe who occupied this area before the arrival of the Romans, or a respite point for traders taking goods across country. The height of the hill gives views



right over to Malvern and beyond, making it a good look out point to see anyone approaching the hill.

There is talk of battles upon the hills, between Romans and Britons, or the post-Roman Britons and the Saxons, or even the Hwicce and giants - and it's said that great warriors from one or the other are buried beneath each of the ancient yews. A quick search online will bring you the highlights of all these mysteries, none of which seem to be set in stone.

It even has its own Arthurian legend - with rumour that King Arthur himself is buried, sat astride his horse, under nearby Saddleback Hill. It's clear this legend has no hold in the realms of the King, but the idea pleases me. To think that of all places, Wychbury could hold the resting place of the legendary King of Avalon.

Kings and battles aside, Wychbury remains for me a magickal place of the Midlands. Take some time to walk the walls of history, look for mushrooms, listen for the birds, and rest against the strong tall trunk of a yew. Listen, can you hear their ancient song? I can.



The Crows Feet



*Pagan*

*Poetry*

*Special*

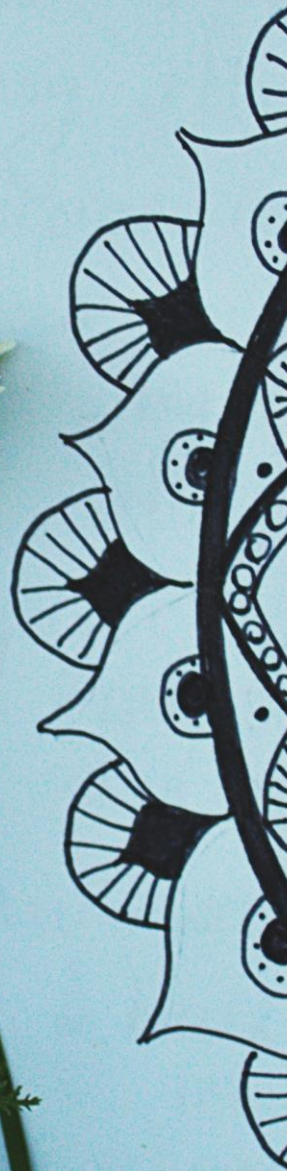
*featuring*

*Laura Aldoma*

*Claire Valentine-Gibson*

*Naum*

*Bekki Milner*





# THE DARK MOTHER CALLING BY LAURA ALDOMA

My wounded roots scratch Gaia's centre and sink into her dark waters. I am the first and the last thing you will ever see. Guardian and Mistress of Life and Death. I am the Mystery that lives in you. The veiled face of the Moon, the mother and the daughter, and the sterile woman whose womb never hosted life. I am the Void. My dark face has been carved and painted in your idols.

I am the fiery lioness, Sekhmet, hear my roar!

I am the one who whispers to the wolves, Skadi, hear my howl!

I am the slayer of demons, Kali, hear my heartbeat!

I am the battle crow, Morrigan, hear my war cry!

I am your rage and sorrow, Angrboda, hear my voice!

I am the secret seed, Persephone, hear my song!

I am the torch bearer, Hekate, hear my silence.

I wander among you, like a stray cat, listening to your prayers, instigating revolutions. I hear your cries and feel your pain. Shout! Shout my names! Awake in my arms, claim your power! Sing my song out loud and I shall anoint you with my blood. The blood of your ancestors, witches, shamans, queens, slaves... their blood shines brighter than the sun under your veins. It is time.

Honour our Feminine Rage. Call my names!





# A Poem for Imbolc

## Valentina Healer of Hearts BY CLAIRE THE WITCH CRAFTER ARTIST

Under the oak tree hollow,  
Where the wild lady lay.  
Shoots of spring began stirring,  
In the bitter cold day.

She lit a fire to keep herself warm,  
She was doing the best that she could.  
She felt the Ivy wind round her legs,  
And the calls of the birds from the wood.

Though her limbs were of snow, and with nowhere to go and with fire and love in her  
heart.  
She took a deep breath, and she stretched and she left, she was off to make a fresh start.

Across fields she ran, mind on her plan,  
Imbolc calling her on.  
Goodbye dearest tomb, my watery womb,  
My worries and fears will be gone.

Over dale and gorse dell, she arrived at the well,  
Welcomed by Snowdrops and sun.  
She knelt at the water,  
As mother and daughter,  
The February spell had begun.

Here I find inner peace, through forgiveness' release,  
Love is my power and art.  
I drink from this well with my story to tell, I'm,  
Valentina, Healer of Hearts.

Valentina, Healer of Hearts" series. Valentina is one of my characters. Valentina teaches us to forgive, both ourselves and others. For only in forgiveness can we find inner peace and freedom to move on. She shows that you must learn to love yourself in order to be the best in love for others. She reminds us that the heart knows more than the head and following your intuition will guide you well. It is important to feel your path ahead before you know it.

Symbol: Rose

Colour: Red and Pink

Moon Aspect: Waning Gibbous

Incense: Jasmine

Star: Venus

Sabbat: Imbolc

Power: Love, forgiveness, kindness, release, compassion and virtue. Trust in your intuition. If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.







# fallow

BY NAUM

we are clouds in a universe of dreams

passing through the cells

in a stem of giant daisy

we are only air in the realm of flying fairy

how long it takes for flying fairy

fallen body to reach? life's eternal dream

are you afraid my friend?

you've no answers to give

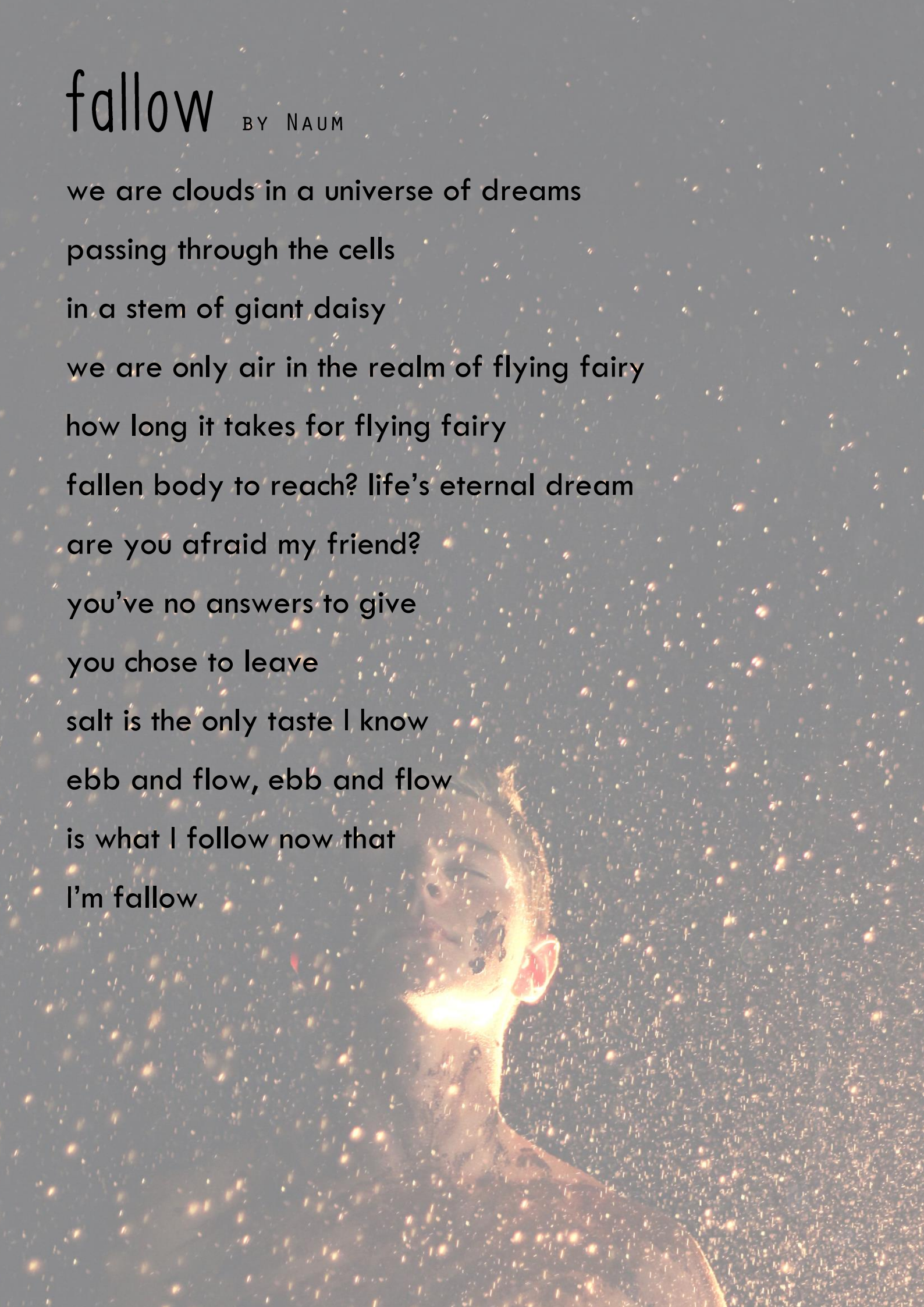
you chose to leave

salt is the only taste I know

ebb and flow, ebb and flow

is what I follow now that

I'm fallow





# spirit of a tree BY NAUM

I cut my leaves off

being a tree, I didn't need them

I let the wind caress my trunk

I saw my hair fall

being a girl who didn't have it

I asked the wind caress my scalp

Then

I

became a holy grail

again, like I was nine

made to be bold

united in division

reborn through apparition

of the spirit

of a tree



# Moonchild

BY BEKKI MILNER



I asked the sea  
Where do i go?  
I don't quite know for sure  
And She whispered to me gently  
As I knelt upon Her shore

'Walk towards the moon, my love  
Be guided by Her light  
Let Her pull you to the stars  
And lead you back home every night'

So I listened to the ocean  
And I settled on the tide  
And soon I found the rhythm  
Like a drum beat deep inside

The sea taught me Her secrets  
And the moon taught me to flow  
I no longer wander lost now  
For my path the moon does show



# Grimoire

February 2019

We're heading out of Winter and towards the Spring. We're spring cleaned, reset our altars, set intentions, but there is still time for being slow and steady as we prepare for the warmer months.

## My Nature, My Goddess

Wrap up warm and head out in to nature. Be it a walk by the river, in the local woods, or just your local park, find a bit of nature that you can think of as just yours. It helps if it is somewhere you can get to easily, as you'll want to visit it all through the year.

When you've chosen your special or sacred space, find a suitable place to rest or sit, and spend some time observing what lives there. The plants, the trees and animals, take a look at everything around you. Observe the current season and the effect it has on the entities that live there. If you are so inclined, you may spend some time meditating or connecting with the spirits that inhabit the area too. Carrying a journal to make notes would be a good idea, then you can compare as you go through the year.



As the year progresses, revisit your special place. See what grows, what dies back, what changes in nature in the place you've chosen? What surprises do you find? What is different in Summer to your first visit now in Winter?

You can make this as simple or as complex as you like. Depending on the space, it might be easy for you to hold ritual there, or leave offerings – flowers, bird seed or spring water are suitable, nature friendly things you could leave (but leave bird seed in winter, when the food is more scarce).

You may wish to take fallen twigs, stones or plants back to your altar at home – don't forget to thank Nature for her gifts if you do, and don't take more than you need, or newly grown plants – we want to preserve the natural order of things.

It may be suitable for a picnic, or to bring friends to share the beauty with you. If it's a public place, taking along a bag to pick rubbish or litter left by others would be a nice way to honour the space and help nature thrive.

Wherever you choose, I hope you find joy in connecting with your own special place.



# Witch Tips – Bath time!

-Quick shower protection – draw a pentagram with shower gel on to your sponge to cover yourself in protection as you wash!

- steamed up mirror? You can draw a pentagram there too – for invoking or banishing!

- Add Himalayan salt and protective herbs to your bath water for an easy ritual soak – you could add rosemary and bay leaf for protection, rose petals and cinnamon for love, lavender and chamomile for restoration. Light a white candle and lie back and relax, visualising the water cleansing you and helping you attract the things you need.



Do you have a favourite spell or ritual you would like to share? Email them to [thecrowsfeet@outlook.com](mailto:thecrowsfeet@outlook.com) and we will feature them in future issues!