

Faery Tradition

Among the distinguishing features of the Faery tradition is the use of a Faery Power which characterizes the lineage. It is an ecstatic, rather than a fertility, tradition. Strong emphasis is placed on sensual experience and awareness, including sexual mysticism, which is not limited to heterosexual expression. In this, as in the general spirit of spiritual exploration, there is more risk-taking encouraged than in other Wiccan traditions which may have specific laws limiting behavior, and there is a certain amorality historically associated with the Tradition. We see ourselves, when enchanted, as "fey" -- not black, not white, outside social definitions, on the road to Faeryland, either mad or poetical. We are aware that much of reality is unseen, or at least has uncertain boundaries. As in all the Craft, there is a deep respect for the wisdom of Nature, a love of beauty, and an appreciation of bardic and mantic creativity. The Gods are not just constructs or psychological forces from the collective unconscious. The Gods are real, with a system of morality different from our own, and we have a responsibility to them. The Faery Tradition, in common with initiatory lineages of the Craft which practice possession, is a mystery tradition of power, mystery, danger, ecstasy, and direct communication with divinity. This is in contrast to traditions which practice psychodrama or psychotherapy through ritual. The negative side of this style of working is that we have a lot of initiates who did not return unscathed from between the worlds. The tradition is not for everybody, and it is not amenable to mass attendance, like many Pagan paths.

There is a specific corpus of chants and liturgical material, much of it stemming from Victor Anderson and Gwydion Pendderwen, which provides a frame for many Circle-workings, and poetic creativity is highly valued. The magical practices of the Faery (or Feri, as Victor spells it) Tradition are heavily invocatory, to encourage possession, which relies mainly on psychic talent or sensitivity to occur. Rites are stylistically diverse, and may draw from many sources. There is an initiatory lineage, traceable to Victor or Cora Anderson or Gwydion Pendderwen. Victor tells of antecedents of the present tradition in the coven in which he was involved in the 1920's and 30's in Oregon. Hallmarks of the tradition are possession of secret names, energy-working using pentacles and visualization of blue fire, a body of poetic and liturgical material, deities and archetypes specific to the Tradition, the doctrine of the Three Selves, a cingulum of a specific color, a "tribal" or "clan" feel to the coven, the use of the horned (sometimes called "inverted") pentagram, and the honoring of a warrior ethic. For example, we are urged not to coddle weakness, support others in insincerities or self-deceptions, or to submit one's own Life force to anyone or anything, which leads to a fierce openness called the "Black Heart of Innocence." The Faery Tradition is gender-equal, and all sexual orientations seem able to find a niche. For many, there is a strong identification with the realms of Faery and with shape-shifting.

Although Victor is universally recognized as the founding teacher of the tradition, it is possible to identify influences which shaped the tradition before its present form evolved. There is a strong African diasporic influence, primarily Dahomean-Haitian, and the Three Selves theory is an outgrowth of Huna beliefs. Neither is Victor the only source for material presently within the tradition. Each initiate seems to draw the tradition in a new direction and uncover new ground. Some practitioners, such as Gwydion and Eldri Littlewolf, went deeply into shamanic forms. Gwydion also worked extensively with Celtic religion, even learning Welsh early in his Wiccan training. Other influences (Arica, Tibetan meditation, and Ceremonial Magick) entered as Gabriel Caradoc began teaching. Victor, Gwydion, Caradoc, Brian Dragon and Paladin wrote darkly beautiful ritual poetry and liturgy. Gabriel's classes provided an excellent training in magical visualization and his students continue his teachings. Poet Francesca De Grandis and songwriter Sharon Knight have added their inspiration to the corpus of material. Starhawk has used concepts developed in the Faery Tradition in expressing her beliefs and practice, and has given the clearest explanations widely available of concepts such as the Three Selves or the Iron Pentacle.