

Response from Henry Buchy

Henry resides in the Cape May area. He an old craft witch, Feri Initiate, and a member of Covenant of Rhiannon, one of the oldest continually practicing covens in New Jersey. He will also be a contributor to [Dead, Mad or Poet](#), an electronic journal and e-zine.

1. What do you think has caused the current split within Faery/Feri? Was there a precipitating recent event? How far back have the tensions causing the current split go?

Having been an initiate for the past 6 years, I can only say that the tension has existed for close to four decades based on anecdotal and literary history. What I have observed over those 6 years has led me to some of the following conclusions:

The 'split' as folks have called it has always been there. Some of us have decided that it's time to bring it to light and name it. There is a combination of precipitating events, most of them are rooted in the tensions surrounding the ideas around autonomy in relation to community, I.E. The idea of a tradition with lore and liturgy held in common, and whether any single person has the right to do as they please with that commonly held material.

These tensions really aren't trad specific and are the same tensions that have existed in witchcraft in general. Some of these tensions also center around the idea of charging for teaching, and the commercialization of the craft. Gwydion Pendderwen, for instance wrote an article for Nemeton as early as 1973 entitled 'The Selling of the Old religion'. He also penned a ballad, "The Witches Calumny" which tells the tale of a witch and the giving of coin for teaching craft.

This period is also one which shows the beginnings of the erosion of old craft practices such as the coven structure, the 'initiation' or making of a witch via ritual oath and measure taking, prior to instruction, and the idea of solitary or self made witches being popularized through books. It's also an outcome of the general movement of the idea around recognition of witchcraft as an 'official' religion by secular authority. I might hearken back to [an article by Mike Nichols entitled 'Old Guard'](#) written back in 1988, which goes to show it's a tension that has been present within paganism in general and still with us.

2. What is your conception of the Faery Tradition? How do you feel about the very public teachers of Feri, and the large number of Feri students?

It's an initiatory order of witchcraft. To participate fully requires initiation. As far as defining it, other initiates have done that much better and more fully than I could do here. Feri is highly transformative, and extremely experiential, the process needs closer attention and responsibility than workshops, seminars, and

intensives provide. The results of some of the practices don't always manifest in a day or two, or even in a week, but long after the workshop etc. has ended and the teacher has left town.

In answer to the second question, I feel it is creating a public religion. Either the self improvement aspect can stand alone from the religious aspects of Feri, or they depend on introduction to the Feri Gods et al. If the latter, then really one is approaching declaring Feri a 'one true religion'. I mean for me I am perfectly fine with folks saying they are teaching the tools of Feri, as they see them being a benefit to others in their practice. Teaching the tools of Feri is different from teaching the religion of Feri.

I also see it as treating the tradition as a commodity, a product, with all the hype and advertising to create a demand, that then 'needs' to be filled. It's pop spirituality. It's evangelism, it's proselytism as long as it continues to be connected to the 'religion' part. Don't get me wrong here, I don't begrudge folks if they want to tour the country or Europe teaching alignment practices, even Iron and Pearl and let folks work it into their own personal religious beliefs. I've taught my nieces alignment and ha prayer and it has helped them greatly in being better Episcopalians. They don't need to be taught Feri religion, unless they choose to. They know I am a witch. They asked me how do I pray, so I taught them how I pray, but not which God(s) to pray to.

3. Do you think this seeming split is a permanent one? What do you think the future holds for your tradition?

Yes, I do see it as becoming permanent. It's a difference in philosophy at a basic root level. Take Buddhism for example and the schism as it were into Mahayana and Hinayana and Tantrayana, and the Vajrayana and Theravada schools. Or the traditional six schools of Vedanta. Or Sunni and Shiia of Islam, or the protestant reformation in Christianity. Increase in 'followers' lead to re interpretations and different approaches.

What I see in the future is pretty much what has happened in the past, with BTW orders, there will be the non initiated witches/wiccans and there will be the initiatory craft witches, and like oil and water, they will only mix when shaken vigorously.