

Response from Storm Faerywolf

Storm Faerywolf is an artist, writer, poet, teacher, and initiate of the F(a)eri(e) tradition of witchcraft. He has been practicing the Craft for over 25 years and teaching for more than 15. He has lead open circles, given lectures, and taught classes in the San Francisco Bay Area and across the U.S. He holds the Black Wand, an honor bestowed by Feri Grandmaster Cora Anderson. He has studied diverse practices from various branches of the tradition which he incorporates into his own line of Feri, BlueRose. He is the author of *The Stars Within the Earth*, and is the editor of *WitchEye: A Journal of Feri Uprising*. For more information about his classes or his art visit his website at www.faerywolf.com.

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?

The F(a)eri(e) tradition is much more than the community of its initiates. What is shared between all lines is infinitely small, making all that has been written about in books, websites, and classes (whether in-person or long distance) merely individual expressions of this "core", expressions that have each gained popularity with certain groups and cultures within our larger tradition. What has evolved and is passed as "the" Feri tradition in one line might bear very little resemblance to what is passed as "the" tradition in another, making the idea of a split in the tradition impossible in my eyes.

The current language that describes this as a "split" really only applies if one believes there was a cohesive body to split *from* and that has never been my observation of F(a)eri(e) tradition. We have always had factions, some more vocal than others, and this latest episode is not as cut and dry as it has been reported in some circles. Many people want nothing to do with "taking sides" regardless of their personal views on the various issues that are being connected to this latest unpleasantness.

It is difficult to speak with much certainty of precipitating events because the 'community' has no central body, so even among initiates information is passed through second-hand emails, contradictory blogs, contentious email lists and the like. It is frustrating to hear rumors of splits and scandals from numerous social networking sites and still feel as if you know only ten percent of the story. That is the current predicament that practitioners of Feri find ourselves in.

There are many issues that are being talked about in relation to this; the issue of being public vs. being private... charging money for classes vs. free instruction... long-distance classes vs. in-person work... and which oaths (if any!) are "correct", just to name a few. Though some would claim otherwise, there has never been a consensus on *any* of these issues, but for those who do not feel comfortable with the direction that some of us are called to work, some have found it necessary to "disassociate" from the public face of Feri, ironically by making public statements and (sadly) by disparaging the practices of those who do not share their particular view.

The tensions that are being brought up to the surface now can be seen to stem back many years, much farther than I think anyone has yet spoken of. Back in the late 70's and early 80's similar sentiments reared up including the actions of the late Gwydion Pendderwen who

attempted to "close off" the tradition so that no more initiates would be brought through. The tensions were present then, and later when the late Gabriel Carillo began his teaching coven, bringing Faery/Feri to a wider audience than before. The current climate in Feri, though highly politicized and much more public due to the advent of the internet is no different, in my opinion than what we have endured previously. As with any culture there is a social pendulum that swings left and right.

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

I feel strongly that Feri tradition is a path of sorcerous soul-development. It is a living tradition, meaning that it adapts and changes to suit the needs of the moment. When I first began training in this tradition it was drilled into my head that the outer forms are less important than the inner experience, which makes the current debates of the "right" way to practice Feri vs. the "wrong" way, rather absurd in my eyes. As an initiate I mediate the powers that I have been privileged to carry in an effort to cultivate my own divine authority. By its very nature this will look different for each of us.

When we say 'large number of Feri students' I am uncertain as to how many that might be... I myself have 25 students (which includes both my in-person and long distance classes) and so my first responsibility is to them. I know that there are many more that have trained with other teachers who have not gone on to Feri initiation. I know that some in our tradition see this as a problem, but I do not. Though some say that Feri is a path only for initiates this was never a value that was presented to me in my training. I personally have no problem with non-initiated people practicing various versions of Feri (just as many initiates from different lines practice various versions). That some insist that one must be an initiate to practice Feri is simply one opinion, but no matter how often this might be presented as "fact" if one takes the time to observe what is actually happening then they will see differently. There have been non-initiated Feri practitioners for decades. The difference is that there are now venues in which these people can communicate and this makes some initiates uneasy as it underscores that they are not necessarily in control of where the tradition is headed.

Regardless of how we feel about this issue we need to decide what it is that we each can do about it. Are they just going to go away? No. Many people have found in Feri something that speaks to them on a soul-level; I myself found Feri in the pages of *The Spiral Dance* and while I have heard that its publication in 1979 caused much unrest in the Feri community at the time, few people would say today that it was a bad thing for the Craft; Starhawk forever changed the landscape of Neo-Paganism by including material and lore that could speak to the soul thus assisting others (like myself) to find their spiritual home. In my own small way I hope to do the same, leading people to the work that will help them increase awareness and power. If this leads them into our priesthood via Feri initiation then it is my hope to be able to help them with that. If not, then I hope to help them find what it is that they need. Not all are suited for our priesthood, and not all will even want to gain entrance to it.

Those Feri practitioners who have not undergone initiation have found a full spectrum of opinions regarding their place within our larger tradition. Some lineages embrace them and honor the work that they do through their contributions to the larger community via their art,

writings, and rituals. Others do not accept them at all. Ultimately Feri practitioners themselves need to decide who they will work with and whether or not to allow others to define them.

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

It will be permanent for those individuals and personalities who wish to disassociate themselves from the public eye. As for the larger Feri tradition, however, it is almost meaningless. Our tradition has always been fiercely individual, and so disagreements and strong opinions (and yes, even 'witch wars') have blemished our history just as with any other group of humans. I think that our community is struggling with these issues now and our collective demons are coming to the forefront. I predict that for some this current issue will fade away and not be a stinging as it may seem now... I think that for others it will always be a point of contention and may prevent some talented people from working together.

In the end all we can do is to return to our individual practice and follow the guidance of our own hearts and the Gods with whom we work. I have made a pledge to be a public teacher and will stand by that. The Feri tradition beats in my heart and it is with these tools and this language that I am most able to connect to divinity and to show others how to do the same. Regardless of how others may feel the tradition "should" or "should not" be practiced I will follow my own counsel and those who are close to me. I see a future in which students are not silenced because of initiatory status, in which they are less likely to be abused because of ever-increasing secrecy that protected some members of our priesthood from the responsibility of their actions. I see a future for Feri in which both the openness AND the mystery is honored. It is to this end that I do what I do.