

The Faerie Faith
and the
Beth-Luis-Nion Celtic Lunar Tree Calendar

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Celtic Lunar Tree Calendar

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Vita

James Clifford (Cliff) Landis, son of William Ronald and Mary Lou Landis, was born March 11, 1980, in Somerset, New Jersey. He graduated from Lowndes High School in 1998. He entered Auburn University in August, 1998, and graduated University Honors Scholar with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy with a concentration in Religious Studies in May, 2002. He obtained his Second Solar degree in the Faerie Faith in November, 2001. He maintains an interest in New Religious Movements, Mysticism, Feminist Religion, Psychology, and Library Science.

Thesis Abstract

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Celtic Lunar Tree Calendar

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The following thesis is presented in two parts. Section One consists of the history, practices and mysteries of the Faerie Faith, otherwise known as the Eponian branch of the McFarland Dianic Tradition. Section Two consists of the academic and mystical study of the Beth-Luis-Nion system of the Celtic Lunar Tree Calendar. An appendix is included which summarizes the vital information and correspondences for each of the Lunar Trees.

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Style

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Introduction

The Faerie Faith is a complex Pagan tradition, with its own mystical system, that of the Beth-Luis-Nion Celtic Lunar Tree Calendar. It is impossible to understand any one part of the tradition without looking at all of the tradition's different components. I will try to introduce some concepts that should be kept in mind while reading this paper.

First, the Faerie Faith is a Dianic tradition, and as such places emphasis on the feminine in humanity, in nature, and in God. For ease of reading, all pronouns will be in the feminine, according to that tradition. For example, "High Priest or High Priestess" will be referred to simply as "High Priestess," unless noted otherwise. Similarly, pronouns such as "he or she," and "his or her," will be referred to as "she," or "her," respectively. It should be noted that individuals of both genders can and do enter the training of the Faerie Faith.

The Beth-Luis-Nion system is a mystical system, and therefore it is difficult to understand in a purely intellectual way. In many ways it is comparable to the Qabalah. Israel Regardie describes the Qabalah as, "a trustworthy guide, leading to a comprehension both of the Universe and one's own Self" (Regardie i). Similarly, the Beth-Luis-Nion system is a beneficial system that leads to an understanding of Nature, and a personal transformation of the student. It is this goal of personal transformation and balance that all students work towards on their journey through the mysteries of the Celtic Lunar Tree Calendar.

This paper serves as a simple introduction to the Faerie Faith and the Beth-Luis-Nion system. The Faerie Faith is a living, evolving tradition, and therefore may change in the future. This paper describes the Faerie Faith as it is currently practiced, as well as the current understanding of the Beth-Luis-Nion calendar. Also, much of the information I present here may

appear juvenile in the future, as I learn more. This is not an exhaustive paper. Please consult the bibliography to learn more on the research presented here.

Section One:
The Faerie Faith

History of the Faerie Faith

The Faerie Faith is a tradition that has branched off from the McFarland Dianic tradition. Through Mr. Mark Roberts and the High Priestess known as Epona, the Faerie Faith has been handed down over the years. What follows is a summary of the historical development of the Faerie Faith.

The history of the Faerie Faith begins with the McFarland Dianic Tradition, founded by Morgan McFarland in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area of Texas. McFarland had been trained in her family's tradition, and in 1971 she joined with Mark Roberts, another practicing solitary Witch. Together, they founded the Covenstead of Morrigan. According to the McFarland Dianic Homepage, "It was Mark who pointed out to Morgan the reference to "Dianic cults" in Margaret Murray's *The Witch Cult in Western Europe*. It spoke to Morgan's beliefs and practices, and she adopted the designation "Dianic" as that of her tradition." Later that year, Morgan began writing down the rituals handed down orally through her tradition. Morgan went on to initiate several High Priestesses who hived off to start other covens. In 1977, Mark left the Covenstead of Morrigan to start a new path called Hyperborea. In 1979 Morgan withdrew as High Priestess from her covens, and now serves as matriarch and advisor to the Council of High Priestesses of the McFarland Dianic Tradition (McFarland).

After Mark left Texas, he moved to Atlanta, Georgia in 1979 where he met Epona. Mark taught her the lessons he had learned while with Morgan, and she became the founder of the Eponian branch of the McFarland Dianics—what is now known as the Faerie Faith. Mark Roberts was the first to use the term "Faerie Faith." The name was most likely taken from *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries* by W.Y. Evans Wentz (1911). This book describes a variety of folk beliefs and

practices in the past. Under Mark's teaching, Epona was trained as a High Priestess of the Faerie Faith mysteries—the Beth Luis Nion system. After only eighteen months, Mark left to start a new path called Hyperborea in Dallas in 1981. Epona, however, proved to be fertile ground for the teachings of the BLN system. She took what she had learned of the system and pursued it to new heights, teaching a new form of the McFarland Dianic mysteries, which became the Faerie Faith (“What is”).

Epona went on to teach the mysteries of the Faerie Faith. It grew and spread under her teachings, and today there are members of the Faerie Faith spread out across the Southeastern United States. Because of the difficulty of the path, however, very few students made it to the level of High Priestess. As of this writing, there is currently only one practicing coven of the Faerie Faith, located in Auburn, Alabama, under the teaching of Linda Kerr, one of Epona's students. Kerr has gone on to establish a legally incorporated church—the Church of the Spiral Tree—an ecumenical Pagan church (“What is”).

The Practices of the Faerie Faith

Hierarchy and Training

As a shamanic and mystery tradition, the Faerie Faith has a training system and an internal hierarchy. This distinguishes the Faerie Faith from many traditions which center around worship, and whose leadership is usually democratic. The hierarchy of the Faerie Faith consists of those who are new (neophytes), those who have begun training (students), and those who have completed training (High Priests/High Priestesses).

The training of students of the Faerie Faith is a very complex and difficult process. As such, it tends to take a very long time (4-8 years, typically). In addition, most students who begin training will not complete it. In this section, I will try to explain the basic format of training in the Faerie Faith, as well as many of the events that are usually encountered.

Training begins with reading. The student begins by reading a variety of books, covering a multitude of information that she is required to know. Such topics include Huna (a Polynesian system of psychology and magic), ritual, nature spirits, herbalism, mythology, women's studies, psychology, and philosophy. Some of the books on the reading list are required as a prerequisite to other training, but most are read as the student continues to train, or as the need arises.

As she is reading these books, the student will also attend classes with the other students. The majority of the training takes place in these classes. Here the student will study the Beth-Luis-Nion system, as well as a variety of other topics such as shamanism, psychology, and mysticism.

Rituals

The Rituals of the Faerie Faith can be split up into two categories: Lunar Rituals and Passage Rituals. Both of these types of rituals serve a specific purpose in the life of a student. Rituals are done outdoors as long as weather permits. They are typically done in rural areas, using small stone circles laid out upon the ground. The sites for these circles are usually selected as those with the most natural energy occurring. Stone circles are specifically used for rituals, and are treated as sacred. If the ritual is done in an unfamiliar place (such as a beach or in a field), then the area is scouted for the largest concentration of earth energy, and circle is cast as normal.

Lunars

The term “Lunar” is used to signify both a lunar ritual, as well as a lunation—the passage of the moon from the phase of new moon to full moon to new moon. Therefore, the “Birch Lunar” means both the time of Birch Moon, as well as the Birch Moon ritual. Lunar rituals are the regular liturgical rituals that take place at specific times throughout the year. There are thirteen Lunars throughout the year, one corresponding to each of the thirteen lunations.

The Format of a Lunar Ritual

Each Lunar takes place on the date of the full moon, or as close to that date as possible. Each student is expected to attend unless extenuating circumstances arise. The ritual begins with the casting of the circle—an energy field raised around the area to be used in the healing portion of the ritual, as well as for protection from negative influences. The High Priestess then reads the “Tenets of the Faerie Faith.”

“There should be a sensitivity, a belief, of the spiritual reality behind what we refer to as Nature.

There should be a sincere love of Earth Herself, and a desire to communicate with Her other children.

There should be a belief in the individual life of this planet, and a certainty that it permeates the whole world.”

After the reading of the Tenets, the lesson for that particular Lunar begins. For example, during Birch, the student will listen to the lesson, and then contemplate the mysteries of rebirth, self-authority, and self-discipline. After the lesson, the circle performs Brigit healings for those in need (Brigit is a Celtic goddess of healing). During a Brigit healing, members gather around the afflicted person (or a representative if the person is not present), and chant Brigit's name as a mantra, while pulling energy from the circle toward the person in the center. Whenever the afflicted person feels that the energy has reached its peak, they signal to the other members of the circle, who lay their hands on the person to send the rest of the energy. After all the Brigit healings have taken place, the members perform the Water Sharing Ritual, in which they all drink water from a single chalice while the High Priestess reads:

“Share of my water and know that as the Rain, it is the Bringer of Life.

Share of my water and know that as the Oceans and Seas it is the Womb of Life.

Share of my water and know that as the clouds, it is the Seeker, the Traveler with a Mission.

I share of the water, and may all know that as the Streams and Rivers, it is the Shape Changer, the Destroyer of old, and at the same time, through change, the Creatrix of New.

Knowing well that water is the essence of Life, we have shared and become

One, and now as One we offer our lives to She Who is the Mother of All Life, in service and in love.”

After the Water Sharing, the members will close the circle and typically return inside for class.

Passage Rituals

Within the Faerie Faith, there are five passage rituals that make up a hierarchy of study. Each student learns and progresses in their personal transformation, and when the High Priestess has deemed the student ready, they take part in the next passage. Each passage ritual is named for one of the five Solar Trees—the over-arching times of

the year. The names of each of the passages are also the names of the degrees for which those passages represent. For example, a student who has just gone through a Second Solar passage will hold the title of Second Solar.

Before the First Solar, a student studies as a Neophyte. It is this stage in which the student learns basic lessons about the Faerie Faith, to decide if the path is appropriate for them. Students will study Huna, dowsing, basic energy work, and will attend Lunar rituals and classes with all the other students. After they have studied for a time (usually at least six months), the High Priestess will offer them their First Solar.

First Solar is the first passage ritual. Otherwise known as Adoption, this passage designates that the student has a definite interest in studying the Faerie Faith, and it is at this point that the student dedicates herself to this study. At this point a person becomes an official student of the Faerie Faith. One line from the ritual is told to the students long before they take part in the ritual. "By setting foot on this path, do you recognize that you set into motion currents that shall impel you forward?" This question is a warning to all students that learning the mysteries and going through personal transformation is a long and difficult process—not to be taken lightly. Even if the student chooses to leave the path, as many do, it is impossible to un-learn those lessons she has been taught. Therefore, even if she leaves, the student will always remain aware of the cycles of nature and the mysteries of life that are central to the study of the Faerie Faith. After this passage ritual the student must write at least one Lunar of her own, to be performed by the circle.

The Second Solar is a passage ritual that marks growth beyond the First Solar. This degree is one in which the student takes on more responsibilities (assisting the High Priestess, helping to teach introductory lessons, etc.). In order to become a Second Solar, she must have read the most basic books on the reading list. This passage will often follow the first major personal transformation, in which a student confronts one of her fears or vices.

Third Solar is also called Initiation. This is the passage in which the student once again takes on more responsibilities, this time by teaching a student of her own. Under close observation by the High Priestess, the Third Solar will take on a Neophyte as a student. The Third Solar will act as teacher, mentor, and counselor for that student. All this time, the High Priestess will observe the Third Solar to make sure that she is teaching in an accurate and ethical manner.

The Fourth Solar marks the further growth of the student, and is the final point before she becomes a High Priestess in her own right. At this point she must have at least one adopted student of her own. The training of that student is still under the watch of the High Priestess.

The Fifth Solar is also called Final Passage. It is at this point that the student becomes a High Priestess. The individual now has her "walking papers," and may begin to train a circle of her own. At this point the High Priestess becomes autonomous, and may branch off to begin her own circle. However, the new High Priestess retains contact with all the other teachers through the Council of Elders.

Classes

The majority of a student's training takes place during class. Here the student will listen and take notes on a variety of topics, perform basic exercises, and discuss different parts of the learning material.

In addition, class serves as a form of group therapy. It is at these times that most of the personal transformation takes place. The student will often discuss different problems or issues that have arisen in her life, in an attempt to receive counsel and advise from the other students and the teachers. Everyday topics are dealt with (family troubles, sexual dysfunction, loss of work, depression, etc.), as well as more esoteric topics (self-identity, self-esteem, faith/belief in Deity, faith/belief in magick, etc.).

Training

In addition to rituals and classes, a variety of other training takes place in the form of exercises and tests. These serve as a way for the student to apply all of the information learned in class. The student will take place in shamanic Journeys and Vision Quests. She will take nature walks with the others and learn about local medicinal plants, and collect and prepare them later in a test. She will have to prepare a complete meal for her circle, made only from plants that she has collected from the wild. The student will take essay-based tests where she will have to relate many of the topics learned in class and through reading. She will have to perform some sort of community service to help others, in order to help further develop her sense of compassion and humanity, and to help her realize that she is not isolated from the mundane world. She must perform some sort of physical exercise throughout her training, because the training is for the body as well as the mind and spirit. She will have to perform service to Nature, be it by recycling, community gardening, or participating in Arbor Day. The student will often be asked to do periods of a self-discipline ritual—often for a complete lunation—in order to help her meditate on any particular struggles she may be having at the moment. These and other exercises and tests are given at various points in her training, to help develop practical experience to complement her scholarly study.

Mysteries

Faerie Faith is a mystical path. As such, it has its own mysteries connected to the Beth-Luis-Nion system, as well as shamanic mysteries that are part of any mystical path. As Penny and Michael Novack write in their short paper, "Mysteries and Secrets": "The truly frustrating thing about the mysteries is that they cannot be taught, they must be experienced." Further in the same paper, they write:

"Distressing to anyone who's grasped the most elementary of the "mysteries" is forever the fact that a mystery can't be told or even easily shown to someone, while a "secret" can be told to just about anyone and they can tell it to somebody else and it will be the same secret. And yet, there seem to be an amazing number of people who believe the two terms to be synonymous."

Students often struggle with the fact that they aren't "getting" the mysteries. Yet the mysteries themselves come as a *result* of training and personal transformation. During intense meditation, a student will often have a mystical experience—a grasping of the mystery at hand—that will solidify all that she has learned intellectually.

The Shamanic Mysteries

The validity of mysticism is found in its many disparate paths. Qabalah, Sufism, Mystical Christianity, Yoga, Meditation, and the Beth-Luis-Nion system each come up with similar tales of certain mystical experiences. And at the same time, they each come up with mysteries that are unique to their own tradition.

Shamanic mysteries are those mysteries that are found in all mystical experience. They often leave the student in a state of awe, joy, and confusion, as she grasps a new dichotomy within the cosmos.

The most widely recognized shamanic experience is called "The Mystery of Union." In this experience, the student becomes one with the Divine. One of the first recordings of this experience that we have is found in the *Enneads* of Plotinus,

Roused into myself from my body—outside everything else and inside myself—my gaze has met a beauty wondrous and great. At such moments I have been certain that mine was the better part, mine the best of lives lived to the fullest, mine identity with the divine. Fixed there firmly, poised above everything in the intellectual that is less than the highest, utter actuality was mine. (O'Brien 62)

Here, the student becomes one with the Divine, the One, the Source, or God. She realizes just how small and insignificant she is, but at the same time how precious and unique her life is.

We also find the "Mystery of Nature," in which the student experiences the connectedness of all things in existence. The mystery leaves the student knowing that all things in Nature are ultimately "One." This is the experience that most likely resulted in the pantheistic philosophy of Baruch Spinoza. For Spinoza, everything exists as one substance—God—from which different modes and attributes are formed (Bombardi).

In addition, there are other mysteries. Experiencing the "Mystery of Ignorance," the student is shown that no matter how much she studies or learns, that she will never know everything. This experience often leaves the student awestruck, as she realizes just how much there is to know, and just how limited the human capacity for knowledge is. Yet at the same time, the student has a new thirst for knowledge, because she realizes the true value in learning.

The Lunar Mysteries

The Lunar Mysteries are those mysteries that are connected with the trees of the Beth-Luis-Nion system. Each tree (as well as its corresponding lunation) has several mysteries connected with it. Birch, for example, teaches the lessons of self-awareness, self-discipline, and compassion. Ivy, on the other hand, teaches the lessons of moderation and restraint. Like the

shamanic mysteries, the mysteries of the trees have many different layers and aspects. Students will spend a lifetime trying to discover them all. This makes the Faerie Faith a lifelong path. Just like the "Mystery of the Trinity" in Christianity, each lesson cannot be explained clearly, only experienced. And each time it is experienced, the individual gains further insight into the mystery.

Section Two:
The Beth-Luis-Nion System
Celtic Lunar Tree Calendar

Understanding the Trees

The use of the Beth-Luis-Nion (BLN) System of the Celtic Lunar Tree Calendar is the distinguishing feature of the Faerie Faith. Members use this system to bring about personal transformation, as well as to understand the ever-changing world around them. Each tree is associated with a time of the year—one of the thirteen cycles of the moon each year, lasting 28 days, from new moon to new moon. Together with the Day Apart, the thirteen lunations add up to 365 days. The Day Apart is the time period from Winter Solstice to the beginning of Birch. This is the source of the "Year and a Day" of many myths.

The glyphs for each moon are derived from "The Song of Amergin." This ancient Celtic poem is considered a calendar-alphabet for the BLN system. The chief bard of the invading Milesians was said to have recited the Song as he set foot on Ireland in 1268 B.C.E. Each glyph is a line from the poem that is connected to one of the Lunars. In addition, each Lunar (and glyph) corresponds with one of the letters from the Old Irish alphabet. Beth corresponds to Birch, Luis corresponds to Rowan, Nion corresponds to Ash, and so on. In this way, the eighteen letters of the alphabet correspond to the thirteen lunar trees and the five solar trees—the complete cycle of the year (Graves 205-7).

The cycle of the trees also tells the story of the life cycle. Within Pagan mythology, the story is told of the life cycle of the God and the Goddess—the masculine and feminine aspects of Divinity. The God is borne by the Goddess as the Sun Child on Winter Solstice, and grows up through the first four moons. He reaches his physical maturity at Beltane (May Day), and—as the Warrior King—impregnates the Goddess with his next incarnation. He reaches the peak of his power at Summer Solstice, and then begins to age, becoming the Sage. He dies during Samhain on October 31st, only to be reborn as the Sun Child again at Winter Solstice (Paterson 23). This

is also the life cycle of every human, as experienced through many reincarnations. The cycle can also be seen as the cycle of each year, as crops are sown, grow, harvested, and die. It is also seen as the cycle of each human as we grow mentally and spiritually each year.

For example of how it works, Birch is associated with the first lunation of the year. Beth (the letter for Birch) is the first letter of the alphabet. Birch is a time of new beginnings and of rebirth. All together the trees make a complete system, and as such, each tree can only be understood in the context of the whole. One of the best ways to understand how the trees are linked together is to view them as novels in a series. Each tree tells a story all its own, yet at the same time, it is intimately connected to all the other trees. Also, some trees are more closely tied than others. For example, Birch, Rowan and Ash form a sort of "trilogy." They are the three watery trees at the beginning of the year. Each tree tells its own story, and all together they form an epic.

The trees can be understood in a variety of ways. First—and most important for students of the Faerie Faith—the trees can be understood through their mysteries. Each kind of tree has its own mysteries, through which we can come to understand the world around us. Each tree's mysteries have many layers and aspects, and each person's understanding of these mysteries is different. This makes the experiences of the trees a beautiful, powerful, and unique experience.

The trees can also be understood botanically. By understanding the way a tree works—its connections to the elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water—we can understand how we relate to the world. Herbally, we learn the medicinal and food uses of each of the trees.

Through mythology and folklore, we can learn about all of the different characters in ancient myth and folk tales who relate to each tree, its lunation, and its mysteries. Each lunation also brings emotional changes with it, and these can best be understood and coped with by understanding the corresponding trees. Rhythmically, all of the trees together tell a story. This is both the rhythm of Nature, and of the individual. Paying attention to this rhythm can prevent stress on the spiritual path. Along with this, we can better understand how we affect others, and as such relate better to others socially.

The Trees

What follows is an introductory explanation of each of the trees. The trees each have different medicinal uses, food uses, folklore, mythology, symbols, and energies associated with them. We will explore them in an attempt to better understand each of the trees individually, and how the trees work together as a comprehensive mystical system.

Birch

Birch is the first tree of the year. Its Gaelic name is Beth (pronounced "Beh"). Its glyph is "I am a stag of seven tines."

Herbal Uses and Folklore

The young shoots and leaves of the birch can be used to make a tonic laxative. The leaves have been known to make a tea used to treat gout, rheumatism and kidney stones. In addition, either an infusion of the leaves or a decoction of the bark can be used to treat dropsy—fluid buildup underneath the skin. This same decoction of the bark has been used to treat skin ailments (Grieve 104).

A Dictionary of Plant-Lore describes the use of birch branches in English churches on Whit Sunday—Pentecost. The branches were tied to the pillars of the nave, or were affixed to the ends of the pews. "[B]eing young growths, they represent the renewal of life" (Vickery 32). This identifies Birch's connection with the rebirth of the New Year.

Mythology and Symbols

The glyph of Birch is "I am a stag of seven tines." By looking at gods associated with the stag, we begin to see a pattern. Sadb is the deer-goddess mother of Oisín, and Britomart's cult included the Minelaphos—the 'Stag-Minos' of Minoan Crete (Graves 216). Artemis (whose Roman counterpart is Diana) is famous for her sacred hunt after the white stag. This Sacred

Hunt arises several times throughout the year, and at this point in time, it is the symbol of creation of new life through the destruction of the old—rebirth.

The number seven is a riddle in Birch's glyph. "B is the Hercules stag (or wild bull) which begins the year. The seven fights, or seven tines of his antlers, are months in prospect and in retrospect: for Beth is the seventh month after Duir the oak-month, and the seventh month from Beth is Duir again" (208). The Winter Solstice, which ends the year on the Day Apart, is just before the beginning of Birch. Therefore, it is at this point that the masculine/active Yang energies begin to rise, and the feminine/passive Yin energies wane. Duir is the month in which the Summer Solstice takes place, and will show a reverse in the energies—starting the second half of the year. This shows the importance of Birch as a time of new beginnings and rebirth.

Another symbol of Birch is that of the Fasces. In her paper, "Lunar Tree Energies," Linda Kerr explains the significance of this symbol:

"A symbol for Birch is the Fasces - a double-headed axe with birch wrapped around the handle, bound with a red cord. This is a symbol of authority; and the double-headed axe is symbol of balance: mental function, male/female, external/internal, waxing/waning, authority/compassion. The bundle of branches is for strength. This symbol speaks of integration of self-strength, basis for authority, compassion/empathy, awareness/responsibility, respect/ability to see. The fasces was a symbol of authority in ancient Roman times; however, the word fasces has evolved into the word Fascist, with all its negative connotations."

Further identifying this use of birch as a symbol of authority, branches were used to "beat the bounds," to reestablish boundaries, as well as to flog criminals (Paterson 29-30).

Energies

Birch is a time of new beginnings—of inception. It is the first of the three watery birthing moons of the year. During this moon, the individual should make plans for the following year—New Year's resolutions. The student should let go of the past, and move on with the future. Facilitating these new plans are the mysteries to be learned at this time: self-discipline,

self-authority, compassion, and self-awareness. These are the first, most important lessons to be learned throughout the year, and they will be emphasized again and again in the months to come. If they are not understood now, the student will have a difficult time dealing with the energies of the rest of the year (Kerr, "Lunar").

Rowan

Often known as the Mountain Ash or Quickbeam, the rowan is the second moon of the year. Its Gaelic name is Luis (pronounced "Loo-ish"). The glyph for the Rowan is "I am a wide flood on a plain."

Herbal Uses and Folklore

Rowan bark can be decocted to treat diarrhea and leucorrhoea. Ripe rowanberries have a variety of uses. An astringent infusion made of the berries can be used to treat sore throat, inflamed tonsils, scurvy, hemorrhoids, and strangury. In addition, the berries can be used to make jelly, cider, flour, beer, or spirits (Greive 70).

The leaves were said to be useful for asthma when dried and burned, and "Frost-nipped rowan berries (the frost removes the sourness) were infused in vodka and after six months or so this was used as a medicine for stomach ache." In addition, cakes made from dried rowanberry flour were used for ill children (Vickery 322).

Rowan was used in the British Isles for protection. They were often planted near a new house to protect against witchcraft, bad fairies, and the evil eye. According to Milton Keynes of Buckinghamshire, "On the Isle of Man we used to make little crosses of mountain ash to put up above the door for protection" (Vickery 320). The red color of the berries was often considered the source of their protective properties as red is the primary protective color against evil. "On May Eve the farmer cuts rowan berry in the shape of a ring and ties it to the cow's tail with a red string" (Vickery 321).

Mythology and Symbols

Rowan is the quickbeam—the Tree of Life. This is the time of quickening, when life begins to rouse itself from the slumber of winter. The Pagan holiday of Candlemas falls during

Rowan Moon on February 1st. Candles and fires were lit at this time to encourage the Sun King to return to the world. Later this holiday became the feast of St. Brigit, the Christian version of the Celtic goddess Bridget—a sun goddess (Graves 168).

Rowan was also heavily used for magical purposes. Druids used the smoke from fires of rowan wood to conjure spirits. Its wands were used to divine metal, and as stakes driven in corpses to keep their ghosts from wandering (Graves 167).

Energies

As Birch was the time of inception, so Rowan is the time of quickening. Rowan moon is the time of planting seeds, and hence the seed is one of the symbols of Rowan. It is at this point that the earth begins to stir, but it is not yet time for life to spring forth.

The student plants the seeds of the plans she made during Birch. If the plans were not correct, she may abort them and start again with new plans. It is important for the student to have grasped the lessons of Birch, as they are emphasized again in this moon, along with the lesson of communication. Only with proper communication—both with one's self as well as with others—does the student ever hope to have her plans reach fruition (Kerr, "Lunar").

Ash

Ash is the third lunar of the year. Its Gaelic name is Nion (pronounced "Knee un"). The glyph for Ash is "I am a wind on deep waters."

Herbal Uses and Folklore

The bark of the ash has been used as a tonic, astringent, and antiperiodic. "The leaves have diuretic, diaphoretic and purgative properties, and are employed in modern herbal medicine for their laxative action" (Greive 66). In addition, the fruits—known as ash keys—can be eaten once pickled, and have been known to help flatulence. Pliny attributes the ash leaves with the ability to cure snake bites (Grieve 66-7).

Ash trees are also surrounded by folklore. If ash trees failed to produce keys, then disaster in the Royal Family was foretold. Ash leaves have a number of leaflets, and those leaves without a terminal leaflet (called even ash leaves) were used in love magic and love

divination. One tradition of Christmastide was to burn ashen faggots, and to drink whenever one of the bonds broke. "[A]n ancient ceremony transmitted to us from the Scandinavians who at their feast of Juul were accustomed to kindle huge bonfires in honour of Thor. The faggot is composed of ashen sticks, hopped round with bands of the same tree, nine in number. When placed on the fire, fun and jollity commence..." (Vickery 16).

Ashes were attributed with the ability to magically heal a number of ills. Passing a child through a fresh split made in an ash sapling, and then binding the wound afterwards would heal a child's hernia as the tree's wound healed. The same method was used for curing a man's impotence, by passing his organ through a similar split, and then binding the split. Different customs were used to cure warts, neuralgia, whooping cough, earache, ringworm, snakebites, and even the ills of livestock (Vickery 17-19).

Mythology and Symbols

The Ash is the third of the three watery trees at the beginning of the year. This is evidenced by their glyphs. Together, they make up the time before the birth of the world into spring. According to the Water Sharing ritual, the oceans and seas are the "Womb of Life," and so it is appropriate that this time before birth is marked by its affinity to the element of water.

The ash was sacred to Poseidon, the Greek god of the seas, as well as to Gwydion, the famous Druid. In Norse mythology, the tree Yggdrasill, which holds up the world, is an ash (Paterson 49). Odin used the Yggdrasill as his steed, as well as twigs from the ash to form the runes. The third month is also known as the month of floods.

Energies

Ash is not only the month of floods in the physical sense, but also in the emotional sense. With the month of Ash comes a flood of emotions—a great desire to burst forth into spring. Many people get very anxious as winter slowly eases away, and want to get moving, but this would be premature. This is the first time when the learning of the mysteries is tested, as students often feel impatient. They want their plans to manifest instantly, when they have not even given birth yet!

Ash is said to protect against the serpent's bite, and in this case, the serpent is often other people. People are very impatient, rash, and overwhelmed by emotion during this moon. After having been shut up indoors all winter, people are ready to move. By learning the patience and protection of the Ash, "The Ash is tall, straight, grounded in earth. It speaks of an inner calm and stillness. And like the Oak, it tempts the lightening flash of change" (Kerr, "Lunar").

Alder

Alder is the fourth tree of the year. Its Gaelic name is Fearn (pronounced "Fair un"). The glyph for Alder is "I am a shining tear of the Sun."

Herbal Uses and Folklore

Alder has been used for its tonic and astringent properties. "A decoction of the bark is useful to bathe swellings and inflammations, especially of the throat, and has been known to cure ague" (Grieve 18).

In County Worcestershire in England, a superstition arose that pieces of alder carried around would be a guard against rheumatism. Meanwhile, "black knobs," the fruit of the alder, were much used in well-dressing, the rite of honoring a well (or its spirit, or later, its Saint) for providing water (Vickery 2, 388).

Mythology and Symbols

The Alder is the bridge between water and fire, sea and land, winter and spring. Alder is impervious to water, and was therefore used for pilings for buildings. "The Rialto at Venice is founded on alder piles, and so are several mediaeval cathedrals" (Graves 170). It was also useful in making bridges, causeways, and water-conduits.

Alder is closely connected with fire, for although it makes poor fuel for a fire, it makes the best charcoal. In certain areas of Ireland, the price for felling a sacred alder was to have one's house burnt to the ground. "[T]he alder is the tree of fire, the power of fire to free the earth from water" (Graves 171).

This connection with fire is apparent in the fact that the Spring Equinox always falls under Alder. The Spring Equinox is a bridge, taking the year away from the cold floods of winter and to the warmth of spring. Alder was, "Fearineus, the God of Spring to whom annual sacrifices were offered on the Cronian Mount at Olympia at the Spring equinox" (Graves 172).

The alder is associated with four colors. Purple is the color of royalty, and the Alder (Faerie) Kings get their name from this tree. Red is the color of fire, as well as that of blood. When an alder is felled, its bark begins to turn scarlet, and appears to bleed like a man. In addition, a red dye may be made from the bark. A green dye can be made from the flowers, which bloom during the month of Alder. Green is the color of the clothes of the faeries—the nature spirits. A brown dye comes from the twigs of the Alder, brown being the color of the earth in which the alder stands.

Energies

At long last, Alder brings the time of birth. Spring arrives, and the growth of plans made in the first moon can now move forth. Yet at the same time, this can be a painful period. With the birth of the new must come the destruction of the old. The glyph for Alder, "I am a shining tear of the Sun," is akin to the saying, "A worthy birth is always accompanied by tears." With the arrival of the Sun at the Spring Equinox, we give birth to our plans. Yet this period can be marked by doubt, confusion, depression, and heartache. Postpartum depression follows many births, and in a similar way, many people get depressed at this time, as their plans may not turn out as hoped.

At Alder the student must learn balance. The four colors of Alder teach the student reverence, harmony, and balance. These lessons must be learned well before the second half of the year (Kerr, "Lunar")

Willow

Willow is the fifth moon of the year. Its Gaelic name is Saille (pronounced "Sahl' yeh"). The glyph for Willow is "I am a hawk on a cliff."

Herbal Uses and Folklore

"In 1827 a French chemist isolated from meadowsweet a chemical which was later found in the sap and bark of willows and given the name salicin. From this was derived salicylic acid, and eventually, at the end of the nineteenth century, acetylsalicylic acid, which is more commonly known as the analgesic aspirin."

(Vickery 401)

Before the advent of aspirin, however, willow was commonly known to relieve earaches, headaches, and toothaches—either by making a decoction of the bark and sap, or by chewing young willow twigs (Vickery 401).

Folklore has long connected the willow with sorrow and mourning. Psalm 137 finds the Israelites hanging their harps on a willow tree on the banks of the river Babylon as they mourn for Zion. Later, the grief of a forsaken lover was to be marked by a willow hat worn on the head. In the nineteenth century weeping willows were depicted on gravestones and mourning cards (Vickery 400).

Mythology and Symbols

More than any other tree, the willow is depicted as sacred to the Goddess, and to her worshippers—the witches. Many crone or death aspects of the Goddess hold the willow as sacred. From the Indo-European root word for willow (*weik*), we get the words "witch," "wicked," and "wicker." Witches worshipped the Moon Goddess, and "The willow is sacred to her for many reasons: it is the tree that loves water most, and the Moon-goddess is the giver of dew and moisture generally" (Graves 173). From the Greek name for the willow (*helice*), we get Helcion, the home of the Muses.

"The 'witch's besom' [broom] in the English countryside is still made of ask stake, birch twigs and osier [wicker] binding: of birch twigs because at the expulsion of evil spirits some remain entangled in the besom; of ash stake as a protection against drowning... of osier binding in honour of Hecate." (173)

It even appears that the wearing of a wicker hat as a sign of rejection was a protective measure against the jealous Moon Goddess.

Energies

May Day (Beltane) falls during or shortly after Willow moon, and with it comes the death and rebirth lessons of the Wicker Man and the Sacrificial King. Only through sacrifice and death can we hope for further life. We must kill plants and animals in order to survive. We must cut down trees to make shelters. Nature sacrifices herself over and over to further the lives of us—her children. And therefore we must be like the "hawk on a cliff," aware of our surroundings, and how we affect others.

This is a time of choice. During Willow moon people often want to abandon the plans that they have laid, and start anew. But the student must be able to look into the future as well as the past, to decide if now is the appropriate time to "fly on." She must be clear of vision, to discern if the time is right. Yet if people are denied the opportunity to fly at this point in time, resentment often builds up. "Resentment may be felt against a perceived harsh trial, anger, unfairness, love rejected, invasion of boundaries. Yet, most often during this month, we feel resentment for no apparent reason or provocation" (Kerr, "Lunar"). The student must remember the lessons of Birch, and be aware of herself and those around her, to be sure of the right decision.

Hawthorn

Hawthorn is the sixth tree of the year. Its Gaelic name is Huath (pronounced "Hoh' uh"). The glyph for Hawthorn is "I am fair among flowers."

Herbal Uses and Folklore

M. Grieves describes the hawthorn as a, "Cardiac, diuretic, astringent, [and] tonic. Mainly used as a cardiac tonic in organic and functional heart troubles" (385).

Hawthorn is surrounded by myth. In many areas it is considered one of the unluckiest of plants, able to bring death or serious illness if picked or brought into a house. Some say the plant is unlucky because it was used to fashion Christ's crown of thorns. Others believe this

superstition arose from the "unlucky month of May"-the time when the Hawthorn blooms. Still others speculate that the superstition arose because the May Queen of the May Day pre-Christian celebration was crowned with the plant before being ritually slaughtered (Vickery 166-68).

In Chiswick, the plant was even known as "mother-die" because of its unluckiness. The blossoms of the plant are believed to smell like death. This is due to the fact that "trimethylamine, one of the first products formed when animal tissues start to decay, is present in hawthorn flowers" (Vickery 169).

Hawthorn's connection with May Day is also tied up in its connection to carnal love. May Day was the celebration of Beltane, the time when the Pagan Sun God makes love to the Moon Goddess. "[I]t is a plant kept out of doors, associated with unregulated love in the fields, rather than conjugal love in the bed" (Vickery 168).

Mythology and Symbols

In ancient Rome, May was the time when the Temple of Vesta (the Goddess of Marriage), was swept out and cleansed. Because of this, no marriages could take place during that month. The hearth and homes of the people could not be safe when their Goddess' house was in a state of uproar. People could not wear new clothes, and chastity was required between couples (Graves 174).

The Mabinogion, a collection of ancient Welsh tales, tells the story of "Culhwch and Olwen." In this story, the Hawthorn appears as the Chief of the Giants, Yspaddaden Penkawr, the father of Olwen. Young Culhwch is sworn to take Olwen as his bride, yet the Chief Giant demands a dowry of thirteen treasures, each a daunting task to get (Jones 85-121). The Hawthorn apparently does not want marriage to happen under its rule.

Yet there is another, seedier side to the month of May. "The ascetic use of the thorn...must, however, be distinguished from its later orgiastic use which corresponds with the cult of the Goddess Flora (Graves 176). We are familiar with this as the May Day celebrations in which hawthorn flowers were picked and people danced around the maypole. These festivities

were often overwhelmed with eroticism, as Robert Graves explains, "Hawthorn blossom has, for many men, a strong scent of female sexuality; which is why the Turks use a flowering branch as an erotic symbol" (176).

Energies

Hawthorn is a time of cleansing and purification-if used properly. The strong sexual energies of Hawthorn moon can be dangerous if used improperly.

"A lot of people feel in "rut" right now, but instead of running off in the woods and having lots of sex, you should refrain, and re-channel those energies into spiritual and emotional growth. Hawthorn is the moon of purification and creative (as opposed to fertility-oriented) uses of sexual energies. This is not the time for unrestrained sexual activity. People are much more sensitive and vulnerable, and can be hurt by misplaced lust. Experience love instead. Hold out now, wait for the Summer Solstice. That is the time of consumation, physically and otherwise. Use this time to nurture your inner feelings. Hawthorn heals the heart, literally - it is used as a cardiac medicine." (Kerr, "Lunar")

The glyph, "I am fair among flowers," speaks of Flora. This is a time of high sexual drive. The student must be careful to use these energies in a positive and healthy way.

The other glyph of Hawthorn is "I am guardian of the boundaries, at night I fly alone." This glyph speaks of Vesta, the chaste Goddess. It is advice to the student to abstain not only from sex, but also from too much human contact. Vesta admonishes the student to protect her boundaries at a time when others will often fly off the handle.

Oak

The seventh tree of the year is Oak. Its Gaelic name is Duir (pronounced "Dur"). The glyph for Oak is "I am a god who sets the head afire with smoke."

Herbal Uses and Folklore

Oak bark is highly astringent, highly antiseptic, and slightly tonic. It has been used to remedy agues, hemorrhages, and intermittent fevers. The bark is also helpful for chronic dysentery or diarrhea, as well as with sore throat, bleeding gums, piles and leucorrhoea (Grieve 596).

May 29th is the celebration of Oak Apple day, on which King Charles II restored the monarchy in 1660. He escaped capture by hiding in an oak tree after the battle of Worcester, to return on May 29th. On this day, people would wear oak leaves, oak sprigs, or oak apples for luck. These oak apples are the galls created by the gall-wasp. These galls contain a high amount of tannins and were often used in dyeing cloth. Oak Apple Day is celebrated at local churches as well as at the Royal Hospital founded by Charles II in 1682 (Vickery 261-2).

Mythology and Symbols

Oak's Old Irish name is Duir, pronounced "Dur," with a rolling "r." This is very similar to our modern word "door." Oak is the doorway between the two halves of the year. Oak has been associated with doorway deities. Janus, the Roman god of doorways, Cardea, the Roman goddess of hinges, and Sheila-na-Gig, the Celtic goddess of portals and rebirth: each of these relate to Oak. In addition to being a door between the two halves of the year, Oak is also the hub on which the Wheel of the Year turns. It is this wheel that Fenja and Menja turn—two Norse giantesses—as they turn the millstone Grotte for both creation and destruction. Hence the glyphs: "I whirl without motion" and, "As the mill-wheel grinds comes creation from destruction" (Graves 178).

Oak also has the glyph, "I am a god who sets the head afire with smoke." It is from this that we find Oak's connection to the gods of thunder and lightning: Zeus, Jupiter, Hercules, The Dagda, Thor, Jehovah, Allah, etc. Robert Graves relates the connection between the oak and lightning in *The White Goddess*:

[O]ak...is the tree of endurance and triumph, and like the ash is said to 'court the lightning flash'. Its roots are believed to extend as deep underground as its

branches rise in the air—Virgil mentions this—which makes it emblematic of a god whose law runs both in Heaven and in the Underworld. 176

Supposedly only oaks can survive a lightning strike, because their roots go as deep underground as their branches go into the sky—grounding the electricity. Oak moon falls during the time of the Summer Solstice, the time when the light gives way to darkness, only to rise again at Winter Solstice.

Energies

Oak falls during the Summer Solstice—the time when the Yang energies start to decrease and the Yin energies start to increase. Life begins to slow down from the extroverted stages of growth and movement, and moves towards the preparations for the quiet reflection of winter. This is the last chance for the individual to use the active energies of the first half of the year to get important work done before they begin to wane. This is also a time of "victory through change." Janus looks into the past as well as the future at this point, and the individual must take care to do the same (Kerr, "Lunar").

Holly

Holly is the eighth moon of the year. Its Gaelic name is Tinne (pronounced "Chihn' uh"). The glyph for Holly is "I am a battle-waging spear."

Herbal Uses and Folklore

Holly leaves can be prepared in different ways to treat catarrh, pleurisy, smallpox, fevers, rheumatism, and jaundice. The berries, on the other hand, are heavily emetic and purgative. In powdered form, the berries can be used as an astringent to treat bleeding. Bark can be fermented to create birdlime, used to catch small birds and destroy insects. Holly species similar to the Common Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) can be used as teas (Grieve 407).

Holly has mixed reputations, due to its popularity during Christmas, as well as its unlucky- or at least potent-nature. Holly is often used with ivy during the Christmas season for decoration. Yet at the same time, it seems, certain rules applied to its proper handling around the house. Certain customs maintain that holly should not be brought inside the house before Christmas;

others state that holly trees should never be cut down or destroyed. Still others claim that holly sprigs should never be burnt. Also, a large crop of holly berries foretold a hard winter (Vickery 180-2). This connection of holly to Christmas can be seen in the tale of the Oak and Holly Kings.

Mythology and Symbols

Oak and Holly have always been united in Pagan mythology through the story of the Oak and Holly Kings. We learn about this story through the story of *Gawain and the Green Knight*. The Green Knight is a giant who wields a holly bush as a club. Sir Gawain makes a pact with the Green Knight to behead each other at alternating new years—meaning Winter and Summer Solstice (Graves 179-80). This is the story of the Oak and Holly Kings who trade places in their rule of the world. At Summer Solstice—during holly moon—the Holly King takes his place as ruler of the world until Winter Solstice when the Oak King will replace him. Later, when Christianity came to Europe, the custom was changed, "Since in mediaeval practice St. John the Baptist, who lost his head on St. John's Day, took over the oak-king's titles and customs, it was natural to let Jesus, as John's merciful successor, take over the holly-king's" (Graves 180).

Like other moons in the year, Oak and Holly are twin moons. As the Oak and Holly Kings each rule one half of the year, they also stand as symbols for the masculine Yang half of the year (Oak), and the feminine Yin half of the year (Holly).

Energies

Holly's Old Irish name is Tinne. From this word, we find "tanist," the word for the "Dark Twin." This dark twin is Holly, the counterpart to the Oak King. The tanist rules during the dark half of the year. In psychology, the tanist is seen as our dark self—the part of us that we do not like, or do not want to deal with. This is a new half to the year, and unless we remember the lessons of Birch (self-awareness, self-discipline), then the negative aspects of this darkness will overrun us: jealousy, anger, hatred, etc. We walk around as prickly as a holly leaf, ready to strike out at anyone who annoys us (Kerr, "Lunar").

Hazel

The ninth moon is Hazel. Its Gaelic name is Coll (pronounced "Cull"). The glyph for Hazel is "I am a salmon in the pool."

Herbal Uses and Folklore

The hazel tree itself has very little medicinal qualities, but the uses of the hazelnut are plenty. The milk taken from the nuts can be used to treat a chronic cough, and when mixed with pepper helps stop runny eyes and noses. Diarrhea and menstrual bleeding can be aided by mixing the dried husks and shells with red wine (Culpepper 179).

Mythology and Symbols

The hazel tree has long been associated with wisdom. It is the ninth tree of the year, and legend tells of a well near Tipperary over which hung nine hazel trees. These trees produced nuts and blossoms at the same time--symbolizing wisdom and beauty. As the nuts fell into the pool, they fed the salmon in the pool, which would gain a spot for each nut eaten (Graves 182). Druids were said to catch and eat the salmon for all the wisdom they gained.

Nine is the number of the muses, and the hazel is the first of the three trees of poetry and inspiration. From the hazel nut we find the phrase "in a nut shell," because all wisdom and knowledge was compacted and contained within the nut. (181-2).

According to Robert Graves, "The salmon was, and still is, the King of the river-fish, and the difficulty of capturing him, once he is lodged in a pool, makes him a useful emblem of philosophical retirement" (210).

Energies

Hazel is the moon of wisdom. Wisdom is not mere knowledge, but the growth and maturity that comes from learning from experience. According to Linda Kerr, "Hazel is known as the hermit moon. After the turbulence of Oak and Holly, and the preparatory meditations of Hawthorn, comes a time of rest and reflection" ("Lunar"). Painful experiences often make us want to withdraw into ourselves. This is especially tempting during this moon--the first moon of inspiration. We want to dwell within our dream worlds, and want others to leave us alone. This

can be healthy if done for the right reasons. If the student has dealt with the issues brought up earlier in the year, now is the time to separate from those experiences and move on. Now she may gain wisdom from those experiences and meditate on the time of inspiration that has begun. If, however, the student has not dealt with these experiences, she will be tempted to withdraw into areas of her life that offer a distraction from the lessons to be learned. She may drown herself in work, art, or games in an attempt to numb herself to the experiences of the past.

Vine

The tenth moon is Vine. Its Gaelic name is Muin (pronounced "Muhn"). The glyph for Vine is "I am a hill of poetry."

Herbal Uses and Folklore

The vine is typically thought of as the grape, but can be substituted by the bramble (blackberry). The sugar of the grape can be absorbed into the system without being broken down by the saliva. This can be useful for regaining strength and stopping wasting. The leaves and seeds of the grape vine can be used to stop bleeding and hemorrhaging. The sap can be used as a lotion for weak eyes and to get rid of spots on the cornea (Grieve 832). And of course, grapes are edible.

An interesting superstition arose that if you find a dead cat, especially a black tom, and bury it underneath your grape, it will help the vine to grow (Vickery 158).

The bark, root and leaves of the bramble are highly astringent, and have been used to treat dysentery and diarrhea (Grieve 109). The berries are edible, and can be used to make any number of fruit dishes.

In folklore, there was a prohibition against eating blackberries after a certain date (which varies according to the tale, but usually occurs during the month of Muin). This prohibition existed because evil influences were said to inhabit the berries after the date; anything from the boogey Pooka, the Devil, and witches were to blame. The connection of the blackberry to death and the waning time of the year exist in many folktales (Vickery 45-7).

Yet at the same time, wild blackberries were said to offer cures for everything from whooping cough to blackheads. By crawling around or under a bramble, you leave your ills there. The children's' rhyme, "Here we go round the mulberry bush," may have been derived from this practice, as the mulberry is a close relative of the blackberry (Vickery 48-9).

Mythology and Symbols

The glyph for Vine connects it with the Muses, and their mother Mnemosyne. It is also connected to Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom. Wine is the classic drink of the poet, as the ecstatic god Dionysus shows (Graves 210). The power of poetry was respected by the ancient Celts. Anyone who dared to insult a poet could inspire him to "compose a satire which could bring out black blotches on his face and turn his bowels to water, or throw a 'madman's wisp' in his face and drive him insane." (Graves, 22)

Energies

Linda Kerr explains Vine's role in the cycle of the Trees:

"The inspiration for poetry begins in Hazel, but Vine is truly the poet's moon. Vine is a hill of poetry, artistry, inspiration and imagination all overflowing upon the very fabric of our being. Vine is a tonifying, healing moon, a time to heal ourselves from the punches we took in Holly, and from the exhaustion we felt in Hazel. We feel joy and sorrow, exhilaration and wrath, all at once. This is a time of healing through creativity. We may begin to express this time of inspiration and imagination and not even realize it. We may redo a room, rearrange our furniture, start writing, or start working on holiday presents. We feel a lot of energy inside, and may have a hundred different ideas that we want to accomplish. We are now as the Vine is; eager, light, limber, growing at an amazing rate, yet solid and very diversified" (Kerr, "Lunar").

In this time, the student is feeling the height of inspiration that comes with the three trees of inspiration. As one student put it, "I feel as if the Muses are barfing into my head!" Many different thoughts come into our heads, and we are easily distracted. We again may want to distract

ourselves from our work, or on the other hand, escaping into the work we have. This is a time to use the creativity at hand to enhance our lives, not to escape them.

Ivy

Ivy is the eleventh moon. The Gaelic name for Ivy is Gort (pronounced "Goert" or "Gore-it"). Its glyph is "I am a ruthless boar."

Herbal Uses and Folklore

Ivy's more interesting medicinal qualities come not from medical science, but from ancient associations. According to M. Grieves, "Ivy was in high esteem among the ancients. Its leaves formed the poet's crown, as well as the wreath of Bacchus, to whom the plant was dedicated, probably because of the practice of binding the brow with Ivy leaves to prevent intoxication, a quality formerly attributed to the plant" (441). Other than that, we are told that the flowers remedy dysentery, and that if applied externally, ivy can help the nerves and sinews (442).

Ivy had a reputation of being an unlucky plant. Yet this prohibition is suspended during the Holiday season. "Holly and ivy must not be taken in house until Christmas Eve and must be removed by January 6th (Vickery 202).

Mythology and Symbols

The myth of the Sacred Hunt arises again in Ivy as it did in Birch. This time it appears as the myth of the frenzied Bassarids, the followers of Dionysus who celebrated their Bacchanal festival during this time. These women would run about on the mountains, ripping to shreds any man, child or beast that would not join them in their ecstasy. They wore ivy wreaths around their heads, and had roebucks tattooed on their upper right arms (Graves 184, 210). The Vine's symbol of the spiral is repeated in this moon with the triple spiral. Both the vine and ivy grow in spirals, symbols of resurrection and rebirth.

Energies

Ivy moon falls around Samhain, the time when the veils between the worlds is at its thinnest. At this point in time the student will often feel overwhelmed to the point of frenzy. The

last of the moons of inspiration, its energies will often lead a person to emotional outburst. Yet the lessons of this moon speak of restraint and moderation. The ivy is worn as a wreath on the head to prevent intoxication from its twin the vine. In order to prevent these emotions from running out of control, we must be as a hunter, running after our own lower natures. We catch the roebuck (our wild emotions) in a net, controlling them, yet not denying them.

Reed

The twelfth moon is Reed. Its Gaelic name is Ngetal (pronounced "Nyettle"). The glyph for Reed is "I am a threatening noise of the sea."

Herbal Uses and Folklore

Because the reed itself (*Phragmites communis*) has little medicinal or food qualities, the broom plant is used as a substitute for reed for these qualities. The young tips of the broom are collected in May, and are used either fresh or dried for their alkaloid qualities. It serves as a diuretic and cathartic, to treat chronic dropsy and bladder and kidney troubles. Broom affects the heart in a peculiar way, first slowing the heartbeat, and then increasing it and the strength of the pulse. Unlike *digitalis* (foxglove), it has no long-term cardiac effects (Grieve 127).

Broom is often considered connected to the hawthorn in its unluckiness. An old adage says: "If you sweep the house with broom in May / You'll sweep the head of that house away" (Vickery 51). Broom blooms during the month of May, like the hawthorn, and like hawthorn came to be associated with death.

Broom is also considered the *Planta Genista* from which the royal Plantagenets received their name. Geoffrey, Count of Anjou, father of Henry II, was passing along a rocky pathway, saw the broom plant, and according to legend said: "And thus shall that golden plant ever be my cognizance, firmly rooted amid rocks, and yet upholding that which is ready to fall. I will bear it in my crest, amid battlefields if need be, at tournaments, and when dispensing justice" (Vickery 284).

Mythology and Symbols

The connection of the reed (and broom) with death is not surprising. The owl (the bird of Reed Moon) is the messenger of the death goddesses Hecate, Athene and Persephone. As the bringer of prophecy, the owl also becomes associated with wisdom. The roaring of the sea against the cliff's edge is the sound of Ngetal—the sound of death forecoming. For no cliff can resist the power of the sea (source of death and rebirth), and will eventually be worn away to mere pebbles (Graves 211).

Energies

Reed is twinned with Elder, the last tree of the year. Reed is the Moon of death forecoming, and as such is the Moon of terror. The sound of the wind through a dry reed bed, the sound of the ocean against a cliff, the cry of the screech owl, the shriek of the Beansidhe (or Banshee): all of these are the sounds of Reed. Yet at the same time, Reed offers comfort through sound as well, as reeds are used to make the panpipes with which we make music. This is the time when the student should be coming to grips with endings: the ending of the year, and the eventual ending of life itself.

Elder

Elder is the thirteenth moon. Its Gaelic name is Ruis (pronounced "Roush" or "Roo-ish"). The glyph for Elder is "I am a wave of the sea."

Herbal Uses and Folklore

The elder's bark, leaves, flowers, and berries all have healing properties. The bark is a purgative and emetic. The leaves are used to repel insects, treat bruises, sprains, and dropsy. The flowers can be processed to make a volatile oil used in a mixture of water to treat freckles, sunburn, and blemishes. Elder wine can be made from the berries, as well as to treat rheumatism and erysipelas (Grieve 269-73).

Elder was considered a witches' tree, and therefore unlucky, yet at the same time protective. It was considered bad luck to take any part of the live tree, unless the tree itself was asked for permission first. According to Vickery, "If you chop an elder tree or fell it, you should

bow three times and say: Old Woman, Old Woman / Give me some of your wood / And when I am dead / I'll give you some of mine" (120). Because of the ability of the oil in the leaves to keep away insects, the tree was often planted near toilets to deter flies (122).

Mythology and Symbols

Elder has long been associated with death and endings. The elder was said to have been the tree on which Jesus was crucified, as well as the tree on which Judas hung himself. Graves explains, "The elder is the tree of doom—hence the continued unluckiness of the number thirteen" (185). Later, he continues:

"R[uis] is the month when the wave returns to the sea, and the end of the year to its watery beginning. A wave of the sea in the Irish and Welsh poetry is a 'sea-stag': so that the year begins and ends with the white roebuck" (211).

Elder is the tree that brings the death of the year. It is a time of sacrifice and acceptance of endings.

Energies

Elder brings with it many mysteries connected with death, resurrection, and rebirth. The glyphs for Elder, "I am a wave of the sea," or, "On a boundless sea I was set adrift," speak of death and rebirth. This is the time of the year when the student should come to peace with all that has happened in the year. Imagine yourself set adrift on a sea. You cannot see anything but the water and the sky. On this sea, your possessions, your loved ones, your job, and your life mean nothing. They will all eventually end. The only important thing you have on that sea is your soul. This is the true lesson of Elder: All of these things shall pass away, but your soul shall remain. This can be either a terrifying or exhilarating experience, depending on what you have done and what you believe about yourself. If the lessons of Birch have been learned and applied well, the student has nothing to fear. If they have not, then a whole new year awaits just around the corner.

The Day Apart

The Day Apart is the time period between Winter Solstice and the beginning of Birch. It can last anywhere from a single day to a week or more.

In the Anglo-Saxon calendar, there were 12 months of 30 days each, with 5 days left over, named after five gods. It is from these days that we get the names of our week days. From Kerr's forthcoming book, "[T]heir extra days were named Tiw, Woden, Thor, Frig, and Seterne. From these last names, plus two other later ones added by Christian missionaries, come the names of our seven weekdays." These names give us Tuesday (Tiw's Day), Wednesday (Woden's Day), Thursday (Thor's Day), Friday (Frig's Day), and Saturday (Seterne's Day). With the addition of the Sun's Day and the Moon's Day, we have an entire week.

The day apart is considered a day outside of the normal constraints of the year. It is the time between death and rebirth, when the soul wanders free. In this sense, it is also a day outside of space. For in this time, the spirit of the old year is gone from the world, and the spirit of the New Year has not yet taken hold. The "Otherworld" is very present.

For those of the Faerie Faith, the Day Apart serves as a day outside of space and time. We use this time to go to our place of rebirth, a place in Nature that is special to us. We use this time to reflect on the past year and the year to come. We reconnect with the Earth Mother, and give thanks for another year (hopefully) well spent.

Epilogue

People have often asked me what it is like to study the Faerie Faith. I tell them that it is the most wonderful, beautiful and challenging path I have ever embarked upon...and that I wouldn't wish it on anybody. When I say this to prospective students, they look at me with trepidation. When I say this to my teachers, they burst into laughter.

The nature of this path is such that it makes people look at themselves to a degree which most people never do. In its course, a student is forced to examine every major character and personality flaw that they have. She faces down every fear, prejudice, and issue that she has—and attempts to fix it. This is not something that the teachers do—it is something that the path itself does. Once a student has overcome her first big hurdle, she realizes that there is almost no problem that she cannot overcome on the path to personal transformation. Knowledge of the Self and the knowledge of Nature (ultimately the same thing) become a major goal. Most students will not make it. Most students will grow weary, move on, or give up. Despite this, most people in the world agree that the goal of becoming a better person is a worthy one.

So what is a “better person?” That is up for the student to decide. And that is one of the things that make this path difficult. We believe that most people are inherently good, and wish to become better individuals. But ultimately no one can tell you what to do or who you are. Responsibility, compassion, and awareness echo throughout the lessons of the Trees. These are the things that each of us strives for as students of the Faerie Faith.

The other question often asked is, “Given the opportunity, would you do it all over again?” And my answer is a resounding “Yes!” In the beginning, I was asked a question: “By setting foot on this path, do you recognize that you set into motion currents that shall impel you forward?” I

answered yes. And as a result, I have truly moved forward. I write this paper having been on this path for almost four years. I am now a Second Solar student. I have much further to go. Yet I am thankful everyday for having said yes to that question.

Table I

Correspondences for the BLN System of the Celtic Lunar Tree Calendar

Taken from "Lunar Tree Energies" by Linda Kerr, and *The White Goddess* by Robert Graves

Birch / Beth

Glyphs	I am a stag of seven tines...for strength.
Color	White
Letter	B, B
Animals	Pheasant, Stag
Symbols	Birch Wand, white taper candle, the fasces
Female Archetypes	Britomart, Sadb, Artemis, Dana
Male Archetypes	
Healings	Panacea for all ills of the skin and joints.
Mysteries	Contemplation, Flexibility, Rebirth, Resilience, Forest Magic, Queen's Authority, Inner Authority / Self-Discipline, Discipline

Rowan / Luis

Glyphs	I am a wide flood on a plain...for extant.
Color	Red, Grey
Letter	L, L
Animals	Duck
Symbols	Rowan wand, seeds.
Female Archetypes	Bridget, Cerridwen, Kore, Demeter, Dana, Artemis
Male Archetypes	
Healings	Sustained, extended life, skin problems
Mysteries	Inner Quickening, Seeds of Hope, Planting for Renewal, Divination of Mysteries of Life, Divination of Metal, Quickening or Aborting.

Ash / Nion

Glyphs	-I am a wind on the sea. -I am a wind on the deep waters...for depth.
Color	half clear/half deep blue
Letter	N, N
Animals	Snipe
Symbols	Ash wand, bowl of water
Female Archetypes	Norn, Dana, Artemis, Branwen, Mari Morgan, Cardea
Male Archetypes	Poisedon, the Meliai, Uranus, Lir, Odin (and the Ygydrassill)
Healings	Tonic of life
Mysteries	Frenette, The Justice of Fate, From the Viper's Poisonous Bite (Circle of Protection), Spear/Neighbor of Death, Strong Urgings, Winds of Change, Control over Impatience

Alder / Fearn

Glyphs	I am a shining tear of the sun...for purity.
Color	Crimson, green, brown, royal purple
Letter	F , F
Animals	Crow, Gull
Symbols	Alder wand, red or crystal egg, red piece of cloth, green piece of cloth, brown piece of cloth, purple piece of cloth
Female Archetypes	Kore, Eostre, Sunna, Oстера, Astarte, Dana, Artemis, Branwen
Male Archetypes	Bran, Gwern, Orpheus, Phoroneus, Fearineus, Saturn.
Healings	
Mysteries	The Need Of Women's Rule, Whistle Away Doubts, Divination of Hope, A New Beginning

Willow / Saille

Glyphs	I am a hawk on a cliff...for cunning.
Color	Green
Letter	S, S
Animals	Hawk
Symbols	Willow wand, Willow rod
Female Archetypes	Sal Ma, Bridget, Artemis, Dana, Hecate, Circe, Hera, Persephone, Minerva, Flora.
Male Archetypes	Orpheus, the Sacrificial King, the Wicker Man.
Healings	Fevers and headaches
Mysteries	Divination of the Future, Purification as Preparation, Seeking New Horizons

Hawthorn / Huath

Glyphs	-I am fair among flowers... -I am a guardian of the boundaries, at night I fly alone
Color	Darkest Black
Letter	H, H
Animals	Night Crow
Symbols	Hawthorn wand, cluster of flowers, broom, black feather
Female Archetypes	Flora, Vesta, Cardea, Maia, Artemis, Dana
Male Archetypes	Yspaddaden Penkawr (Chief of the Giants), Kilhwych.
Healings	Returning balance to the blood, nerves and spirit, Cleansing, Tonify heart
Mysteries	A Time Apart and Alone, Chastity, Cleansing for Rebalance, Purging of the Body and Spirit

Oak / Duir

Glyphs	-I am the Queen in every hive. -As the mill wheel grinds, comes creation from destruction. -I whirl without motion. -I am a god who sets the head afire with smoke.
Color	Black
Letter	D, D
Animals	Wren, Black Dove
Symbols	Oak wand, honeycomb, honey, acorn coffee
Female Archetypes	Rhea, Vesta, Cardea, The Dagda, Fenja, Menja, Artemis, Dana
Male Archetypes	Zeus, Jupiter, Hercules, The Dagda, Thor, Jehovah in the "El" aspect, Allah, Janus, any Thunder God.
Healings	Cleansing and strength, bleeding problems
Mysteries	Ecstasy of Victory/Change, Divination, Need for Root, Willingness for Change

Holly / Tinne

Glyphs	-I am a battle-waging spear -I am the spear that roars for blood. -I am a spear that roars for blood, a sharp sword taking vengeance. -I am a giant with a sharp sword, hewing down an army in taking vengeance.
Color	Green/Gray
Letter	T, T
Animals	Starling
Symbols	Holly wand, black feather
Female Archetypes	Creidylad (Cornelia), Artemis, Dana.
Male Archetypes	Cuchulain, Hercules, Sir Gawain, The Green Knight, the Oak and Holly Kings, Jesus and St. John the Baptist, Tannus, Tina.
Healings	Fever preventative medicine
Mysteries	Invulnerability, Preventative Protection, Watchfulness, Good Omen, Travel

Hazel / Coll

Glyphs	I am a salmon in the pool
Color	Brown
Letter	C, C
Animals	Crane
Symbols	Hazel wand, hazel nut, bag of rune sticks.
Female Archetypes	Bridget, Sophia, Artemis, Dana, Diana, Nemesis, Minerva, Diana Nemtona
Male Archetypes	Fionn
Healings	
Mysteries	Divination-Dowsing, Wisdom-Knowledge, Food for Thought/The Matter in a Nutshell, Inspiration, Achievement Through Pain, The Value of Time and Patience

Vine / Muin

Glyphs	I am a hill of poetry
Color	Variegated
Letter	M, M
Animals	Snake, titmouse
Symbols	Vine wand (Blackberry or grape), roll of parchment or paper, triple spiral
Female Archetypes	Dana, Bridget, Minerva, The Muses, Artemis, Mnemosyne
Male Archetypes	Dionysus
Healings	Bleeding, wounds, need of tonic
Mysteries	Joy, Exhilaration, Growth/Eternity, Remembering, Inspiration, Returning Reincarnation

Ivy / Gort

Glyphs	I am a ruthless boar
Color	Blue
Letter	G, G
Animals	Mute Swan
Symbols	Ivy wand, roebuck
Female Archetypes	Artemis, Bridget, Dana, Sadb, Britomart, Roag, Ariadne, Cerridwen
Male Archetypes	Dionysus, Bacchus
Healings	Sedative, regulator of the nerves
Mysteries	Restraint of Fear, Base Emotion, Seeking Moderation, Constraint of Lower Nature (Strength)

Reed / Ngetal

Glyphs	I am a threatening noise of the sea
Color	Green
Letter	Y, NG
Animals	Owl and Wild Goose
Symbols	Reed wand, blade, pebbles and sea shells
Female Archetypes	Dana, Fand, Hecate, Athene, Persephone, Cerridwen, Norn
Male Archetypes	
Healings	With the <i>Planta genista</i> for overindulgence
Mysteries	Discipline, Protection of the Home Against Climate, and Security, Joy of Music, Preparation for Protection

Elder / Ruis

Glyphs	-I am a wave of the sea -On a boundless sea I was set adrift
Color	Blood-Red
Letter	Z , R
Animals	Rook
Symbols	Elder wand, bowl of dried leaves, blade of sacrifice, a plant
Female Archetypes	Artemis, The Morrigan
Male Archetypes	Cernunnos, The Dagda, Cuchulain, Fionn
Healings	Purification of the inner and outer body, Ills from cold weather
Mysteries	Passage of the Old/Nourishment of the New, Sacrifice of the Lower Nature, Renewal of Spiritual Self, Preparation by Sacrifice

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Each month of the Celtic Lunar calendar bears the name of a tree, which also stands for one of the consonants in the Celtic "tree alphabet". There are basically two different versions of this Lunar calendar: the Beth-Luis-Nion (which begins on the Winter Solstice) and the Beth-Luis-Fearn (which begins on Samhain). I work with the Beth-Luis-Nion simply because it seems to work the best for my style of Witchcraft. Beth-Luis-Nion version of The Celtic Tree calendar. B " Beth, the Birch Month (December 24th " January 20th) L " Luis, the Rowan Month (January The Celtic calendar is a compilation of pre-Christian Celtic systems of timekeeping, including the Gaulish Coligny calendar, used by Celtic countries to define the beginning and length of the day, the week, the month, the seasons, quarter days, and festivals. The Gaulish Coligny calendar is the oldest known Celtic solar-lunar ritual calendar. It was discovered in Coligny, France, and is now on display in the Palais des Arts Gallo-Roman museum, Lyon. It dates from the end of the second century CE, when Her proposed "Celtic Lunar Zodiac" (sic) follows the beth-luisn-nion, oghamic sequence as does Hageneder's . However, where Hageneder proposes "straif" in penultian position, she prefers "ngetal". using Robert Graves's Tree-calendar. Helena Paterson's 13-sign "Lunar Zodiac of the Ancient Druids": (Civil calendar period -- Tree Ruling Planet -- Celtic Symbol). Dec 24 - Jan 30: Beth/Birch Sun the White Stag Jan 21 - Feb 17: Luis/Rowan Uranus (Brigantia) the Green Dragon Feb 18 - Mar 17: Nion/Ash-tree Neptune (Lir) Trident (or Sea-Horse) Mar