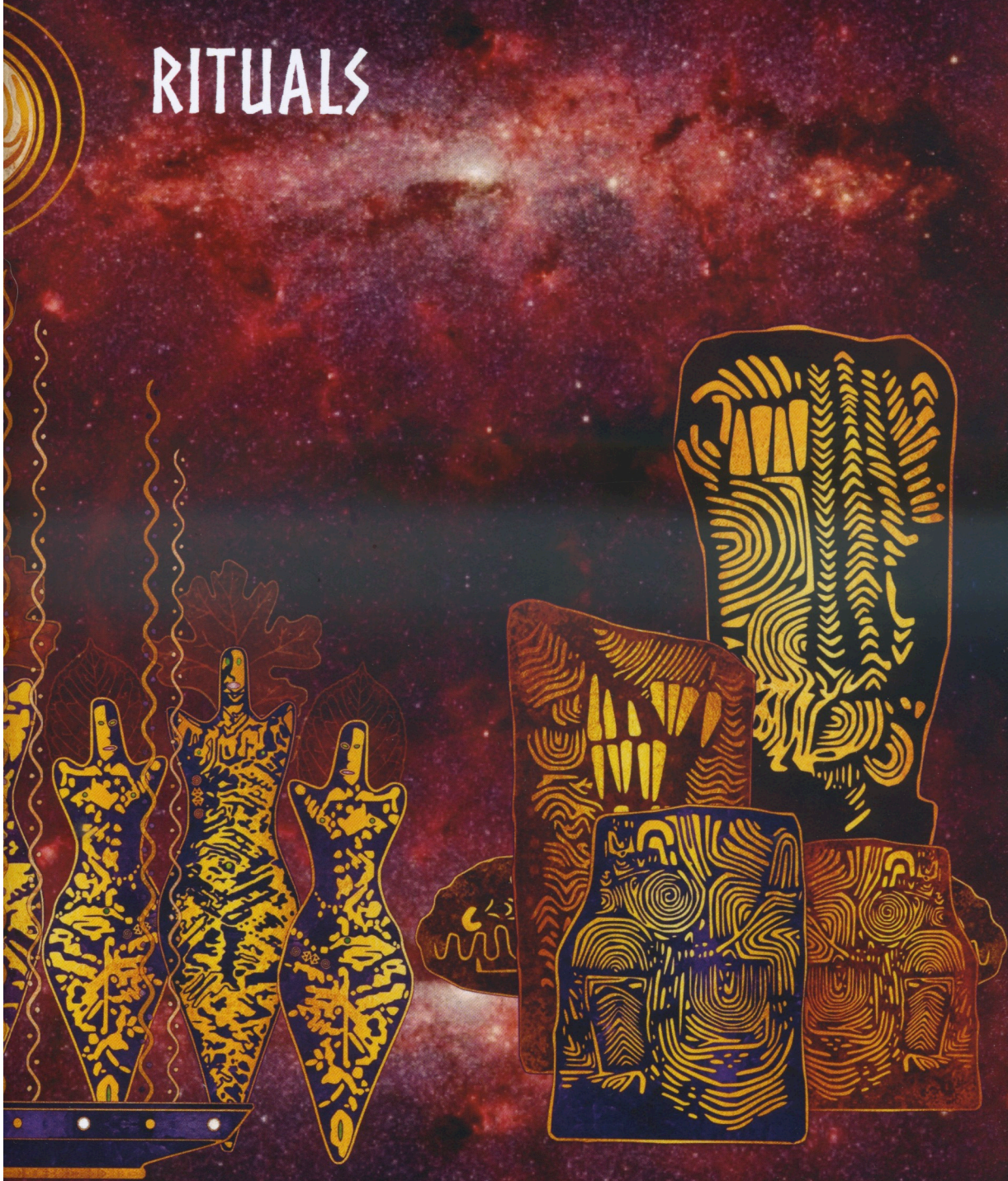


# RFD

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## RITUALS



# Ritual: Walking Between Worlds

By Sâde Gryffin

## Land Acknowledgment

I am a white Welsh immigrant; I live in Huichin, Chocheyno Ohlone land. With gratitude, I humbly acknowledge the Ohlone people who tend and have tended this land for centuries. (Huichin is the original Ohlone name for the city known as Oakland.)

### \*Croeso Aer | Welcome Air

Welcome, breath in my body, my lungs, belly rising and falling. Welcome wind on my skin; welcome air flowing inside and outside.

### Croeso Tân | Welcome Fire

Welcome heat in my body, my groin, passion and energy vibrating. Welcome sun on my face; welcome fire flowing inside and out.

### Croeso Dŵr | Welcome Water

Welcome fluid in my body, saliva on my tongue, blood flowing. Welcome river up to my chest; welcome water flowing inside and out.

### Croeso Daear | Welcome Earth

Welcome clay of my body, my feet, my hands, the mass of physical being. Welcome mud beneath my feet; welcome earth flowing inside and out.

*\* My indigenous language, Cymraeg/Welsh.*

Take a moment with your senses; evoke your connection to the elements. Bring your awareness to your breath and the warmth of your body. Run your tongue around your mouth; rest your feet on the ground beneath you. Be here. Be present.

## Threshold

A yellow leaf drops into the river and floats; a small boat with sides curved upward, its stem a short mast. I watch intently as it travels upstream in the opposite direction from the strong downstream current, guided gently by an invisible force. It sails past the remains of my completed Ritual, an altar laid out on the riverbank. In the circle I drew with a short branch in the sand, objects are placed to evoke the spirits of each direction. Precious pieces of nature I found as I walked through the

river. Long white Great Egret and tall brown Goose feathers in the East for Air.

Purple flowers in the South for Fire gifted to me from a lone Amaranth plant growing among the grasses. A hole dug in the mud to catch drops of the river, in the West for Water. A chestnut brown ripe acorn on top of luminous green lichen settles into the dirt in the North for Earth.

I come to water often to create Ritual. At beaches and riverbanks we find the interstice of land and water. The threshold. Among my favorite places is where the river meets the sea. The potent river water heavy with magical knowledge from the mountaintop. I love to sit in the place where they merge and let the mix of fresh and saltwater flow over my body.

The yellow leaf guides my eye on its journey as it gets dangerously close to the fast moving downstream current. I expect it to be immediately engulfed. It's not. Instead, it's propelled away like an anti-magnet and becomes trapped, no longer



*"Resplendent Gold," photograph by Devlin Shand. Sâde Gryffin wearing his sacred ritual garment, a resplendent gold sequined cloak, lovingly made for him by a friend in the mid-80s when he regularly performed as a Drag Queen in London and around Europe.*



going up or down the river, held between the currents. I watch it for some time, bobbing around in this liminal space.

My eyes turn back to my book, Kristoffer Hughes explains, "the hypnagogic state is what is balanced between wakefulness and sleep...where the analyzing rational mind is less likely to interfere."

In ritual, we consciously induce a similar state, the place between worlds. My ritual practice is earth-based Welsh Mysticism. As a professional Psychic Energy Healer, I walk between worlds and navigate these dimensions daily.

I venture over to see the fate of the yellow leaf. On closer inspection, I see the two currents spiraling into small whirlpools. I arrive in time to see the little yellow mast disappear down a dark vortex. The risk of becoming trapped in liminality.

### **Annwfn**

I am reminded of Annwfn, the Welsh 'other world'. Annwfn is not below or above, it's around us on a different dimension, we can access it when we desire, and we may stumble into it accidentally. In the Mabinogi, you know that you are encountering Annwfn when you see white animals: dogs, wild boars, deer, and horses.

The Mabinogi are the Welsh sacred teachings, often referred to as Welsh folktales or myths.

They were once an oral tradition, transcribed in the 1200s for fear they would be forgotten after Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the last Prince of Wales, was killed by the conquering English. The Welsh Celtic tribes once lived all over the British Isles we are the first Britons. Conquered by the Romans and the Anglo Saxons, pushed back to the West to inhabit the land we now know as the country of Wales. Colonization led to the destruction of our indigenous spiritual practices.

*The land knows you, even when you are lost.*  
—Robin Wall Kimmer

### **Gors Fawr**

In search of those lost practices, I travel back to my homeland of Cymru/Wales, the place I was born and raised for decades. The land where my bloodline Griffin goes back hundreds of years and most of my immediate family still lives in the small seaside town I grew up in. It is land that my physical body has been estranged from for some time. My spirit was not estranged; I spoke Welsh to myself in my head and still felt pride and connection. Only in the last few years have I reconnected with family and ventured back, for reasons too complex to explain here.

It's a freezing cold early morning in West Wales.

Gors Fawr is the only complete stone circle left in the region. It stands in a field near the village of Mynachlog-Ddu, at the foot of the blue Preseli Mountains where Stonehenge was quarried. It's a journey in itself to find it, even with a good GPS.

Once inside the circle, I begin my ritual, collecting objects to place in the directions, raw black wool and white wool, spiral snail shells, heather, and slate. I ground myself and draw up earth energy through my feet, draw down the energy of the Universe, connecting my body and spirit. I begin to walk the outer perimeter of the circle, listening to my inner knowing for what to do next. I spiral into the center and create an altar with all that I have collected. Such great symbols of Wales, wool, slate, and heather. I brought a small bag with me containing water and herbs to burn. I anoint the altar with water to honor my ancestors: the Welsh ones, the Queer ones, the Transcestors, the Artists, the Psychics, the Drag Queens, and the Faggot Magicians.

Gors Fawr is beautiful. As I turn to face the directions, calling in each one, I become aware of wild horses galloping in the field around me. I feel a little wary at first; their hooves are loud and forceful on the ground. They pay me no mind. I resume my meditation, moving back into my liminal state. Off in the distance, about two hundred yards away, a pure white horse catches my eye; it's the only one of its kind in the wild band. It's eating grass, as I watch, it raises its head and sees me. Looking directly at me, the white horse begins walking straight to me, not taking its eyes off me. When she gets close, I can feel her breath on my face, she stops, looks me in the eyes, softly neighs, and walks on. I do not reach out to touch her, she does not invite that. My whole being is vibrating, the land is sentient, it knows me, a white horse of Annwfn recognized

me. The sacred practices are not lost; they are waiting to be remembered.

### Resplendent Gold

My sacred ritual garment is a resplendent gold sequined cloak, lovingly made for me by a friend in the mid-80s when I regularly performed as a Drag Queen in London and around Europe. That cloak is saturated with the energy of Queer venues, Queer Rituals, Trans Rituals, Sex Magick Rituals, Solo Rituals, and Sea Rituals; it has pride of place on my home altar.

At this point in my life, after decades of creating and participating in ritual, I see my practice as a sacred knowing. It's not cosplay, it's not ego-based, it's holding space in authenticity. I'm honored to facilitate solo rituals with my clients, notably trans folks marking their journeys. Cocreating group ritual is joyous, I lead workshops, retreats, and Labyrinth meditation walks regularly.

Ritual, whether solo or in community, is an embodiment of intention. Our container to soar, to shift, to remember, to heal. In ritual, we enter the liminal, walk between



the worlds, and we return transformed.

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