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A Quest into the Dark Side

Befriending the Dark

Beneath the Surface

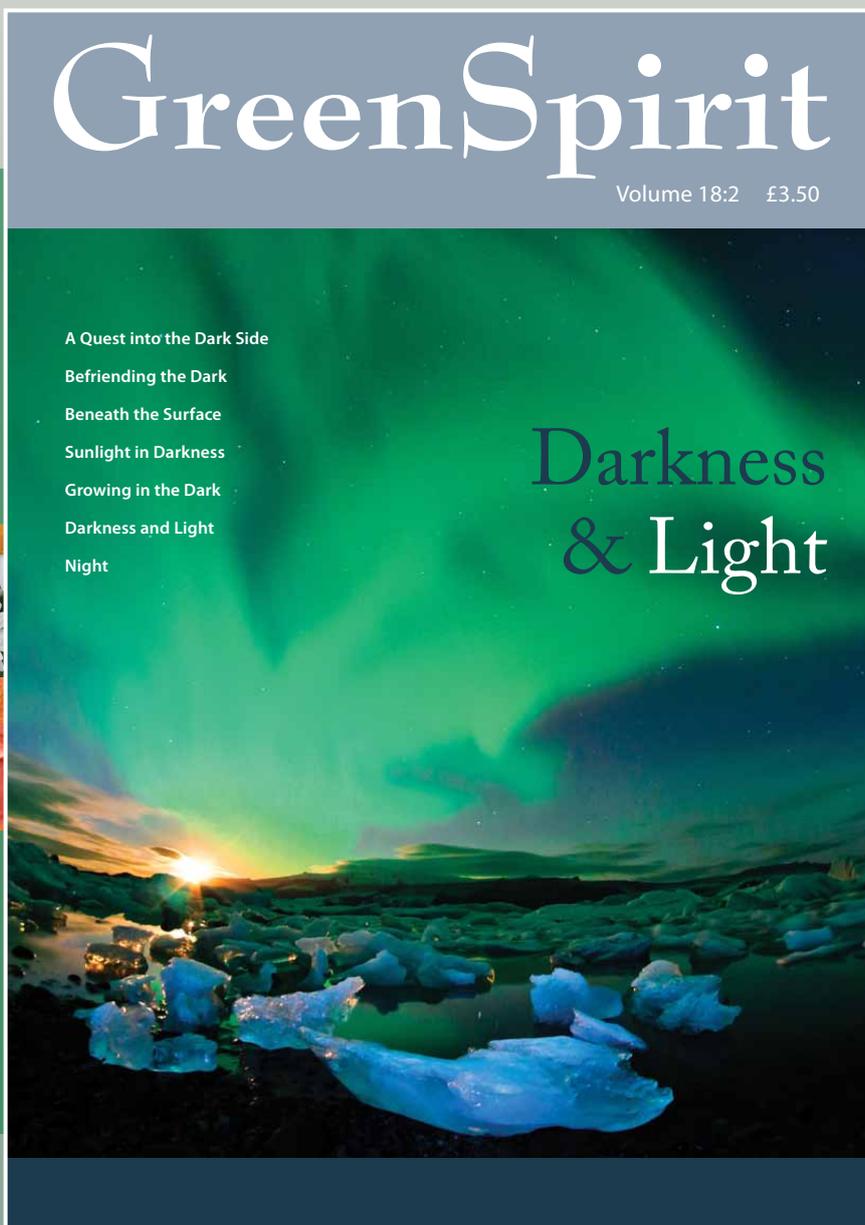
Sunlight in Darkness

Growing in the Dark

Darkness and Light

Night

Darkness & Light



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Beneath the Surface

~ a call to the depths

NIAMH BRENNAN

The world is always coming to us. The sounds of the world through our ears. The sights of the world through our eyes. The tastes of the world through our mouth. The feel of the world through our body, flowing in and out of us as breath, as wind, as words. Words that fill our head and mouth and are emptied again by our speech. It is a full world with so many billions of species, each individual striving to be warm and to be fed, clamouring to be heard, seeking out prey and hiding from predators, every one of us a manifestation of a Universe that is unimaginably diverse and unimaginably vast, stretching out, mile after mile after black mile from us. We are encompassed by and encompassing, created by and creating, participant and spectator, so completely bound into and to this world.

In this commotion of life, we are often blinded by what we see and deafened by what we hear, but when we still ourselves, close our eyes and block our ears to all these externalities, we become aware of another current that flows consistently silent beneath this activity. This current seems to be deeper than the senses, somewhere that we cannot see or feel or touch but that comes to us in another way, making its presence felt by its effect. It resides in the darkness of the world, an opaqueness that is as effective as the sun and as active as the sea. It is the hidden dimension of the world, a presence beyond our senses. This presence invites us beneath the surface of things because life does not just happen on the outside, it happens in the dark, in the underneath of things.

Two thirds of the surface of Earth is covered in water and we live and have our being on that one third that at present is not. It is here that our world is contained, it is here that we are most familiar with. We have built our homes and cities here, colonised its different landforms of meadow, mountain and forest. We live secure on this relatively thin crust, mostly unconcerned with the hot and flowing mantle it travels upon. The sea, we remain cautiously respectful of, knowing it holds its own wildness, a vigorous life force with the potential to rise up and envelop all around it – as it has done previously. We have travelled to the depths of this ocean, probed and analysed her and yet, there remains still, so much we do not know. In this everlasting sea, we get a glimpse of the depth of mystery that the world is built upon.

We know this about the sea, that it is much more vast and much more deep than our eye can drink in. We know this too when we raise our eyes to the heavenly splendour of twinkling stars, blinking in and out of existence, causing that dark space to seem benevolent and friendly – new human words for that which is ancient. And so too the world and what it is composed of, an energy that so little is known about, that is named ‘dark’ and that constitutes over 70% of what this Universe is.

This hidden dimension of the world permeates existence, an ever-present energy that is revealed through life itself. If we only take time to notice. If we begin to see the world as she takes her mighty breath and sends the kingfisher gliding through the sky, opens the petals of the rose, tumbles the rocks from the mountains, and scatters the sands in the desert. As she rises the tide ever higher and pulls it back into herself with rhythmic, deft grace, as she articulates herself in the speech of scholars and the play of children, this hidden dimension, a connection and current at the heart of all things, silent, alluring and generous. And through life, declaring herself.

Some four billion years ago, as the newly formed Earth was being pounded by rain, this hidden dimension was at work below the oceans in the churning interior of Earth. The actions from within Earth causing volcanic unrest at the bottom of the oceans which in turn caused land to rise, pushing it to the surface. So too did life begin to form beneath the surface, in the vents of rock under the sea, chemical gases combining and reacting, life without a membrane but life nonetheless. And what of the seed that we can plant ourselves, pushed deep into the damp and moist soil, covered and left in darkness? Who can understand the mystery that occurs when that seed some months later breaks through the soil, transformed in the darkness, perhaps by the darkness, into a tentative but vital bud.

Is it not the same thing repeated timelessly, surrender to the darkness, let yourself go deep into the unknown and that darkness and the alchemist power it holds will transform you. It is an act of trust. Of trust in the dark. Of trust in what we do not know and what we cannot see. Of trust that there is more to life than meets our eyes. This is true for the seed as it is true for a child



(are they not the same thing in any case?). The child takes shape hidden in the dark womb of her mother. All the formation that is needed, all the nutrients, the development of its little body, its arms and legs and organs, all happen in darkness, beneath the surface and hidden to the eye. It is real, we know it is real every time a baby is born, but that baby's conception, its growth, as the growth of the seed, as the churning interior of the Earth are all hidden dimensions to reality which take place beneath the surface. For some reason, they are not for us to gaze upon.

And high above us, above the clouds and the blue of our sky, encircling our planet in a magnetic field connected to the iron in the core of our Earth, and protecting us from the solar winds, is the magnetosphere. We cannot see it, perhaps for most people it does not even enter their consciousness but this protective shield lets in enough sun to light up our world and call the seeds from Earth but also prevents the intense solar winds from setting flame to our planet.

And what of our very own selves? Carl Jung once wrote of how there are as many galaxies within a person as there are that fill the Universe. We are that immense and so much of what we are and who we are happens also beneath the surface. All these things that the human being is made of – love, thought, forgiveness, anger, hatred, all these dimensions of reality that can only be known through their effect. And something is present where it has an effect.

Life is much greater than we can see. It is time to respect that and to be humble about our place and our knowledge. Alfred Schopenhauer said, 'Every man takes the limits of his own field of vision for the limits of the world', but man is wrong, the world is deeper than we can imagine, more full and layered than we can possibly know. Beneath the surface, under the exterior, in all that we cannot see or hear or touch, this is where the river runs that stirs us, this is where the mystery is, that divine spark of possibility and potential. This mystery that calls to be honoured, a sacred mystery that is slowly revealing itself, always being born in darkness.

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