

Losers, Weepers, Finders, Keepers

by *Lucie Marie-Mai DuFresne*

L'auteure présente les textes d'un atelier sur la divinité spirituelle qui existe en chacune de nous.

I am a priestess of Wicca, a contemporary North American Goddess-centred religion which celebrates as one of its mysteries, the immanence of the divine within a gendered humanity. The ritual text that follows was first enacted as part of a workshop on discovering the female divine within oneself held as part of the Conference on Female Spirituality at York University in March 1996.

Wiccan rituals are characterized in part by the ephemeral nature of the texts used. They are often written for a specific purpose and then discarded or else they are improvised on the spot. Some groups follow a standardized liturgy but even they will modify the standard texts to fit the moment. My aim in choosing for the workshop the images and the symbols that follow was to promote in the participants a sense of primordial, oceanic remembrance and thus to foster the possibility for the participants to be "women giving birth to themselves."¹ Though the workshop was not restricted to women, only women (about 40) attended and took part in the ritual. The ritual took more than an hour to complete.

The language is purposefully empowering. The participants are invited to engage in actions or to make decisions of their own accord and for their own purposes. The text directs but does not command. The participants are assumed to be fully capable of choosing for themselves the appropriateness and depth of participation within which they wish to engage. Finally, silence and quiet are recognized as important spaces within which personal and individual experience can develop.

Note: Italic text is spoken out loud by ritual leader and/or participants.

Set-Up: The altar is arranged on a low, draped table in the centre of the room. Sea shells and coral pieces are used to evoke the sea as strongly as possible. A shell and some stones are placed in a basket (lava, fluorite, chrysocolla, clear quartz, amber) so that they may be handed around later. Clear glass altar tools (chalice, Goddess dish, water jug, candle holder) of a simple, round design are chosen. The elements are represented by: air/incense stick in shell, fire/star shaped votive candle of white wax, water/shell with salt water in it, and earth/scallop shell filled with salt. Mineral water fills the chalice. No other tools or candles are used. Food and drink are placed under the table in readiness for the feast.

Grounding

A grounding is an exercise in becoming present in the moment and in establishing a sense of openness and quiet within oneself prior to entering into ritual. Women sit on the floor around altar set-up while holding hands with each other. The ritual leader invites them to breathe deeply and to close their eyes while they listen to her.

Breathe deep.

Breathe deep and let each breath sink you deeper within yourself.

Breathe deep and let each breath release you from your cares.

Breathe deep and sink within the molten core of your own passions.

Breathe deep and let your spirit rise to meet your dreams.

Breathe deep.

Let an atonal chant begin and fade in its own time. An atonal chant is a polytonic improvised chant sung either using vowel sounds only or a repeated word or short phrase. It allows participants to synchronize with each other and for the ritual leader to gauge the level of harmony and depth of trance of the participants.

Elemental purifications and casting

A self purification consists in using the elements and what one perceives them to represent as a means of evacuating from one's consciousness any impediment to a successful ritual. Most Wiccans would consider that it is human nature and not nature itself which needs "purification." Participants unclasp hands. Using each element in turn (air/fire/water/earth), they will proceed to self-purifications as the elements are handed around the circle deosil (sunwise). The elemental chant is maintained throughout.

As each element is handed to you, allow your inner core to resonate with all that this element means to you. Feel this resonance grow and fill you completely. Let it release anything and everything that you may not want to bring to this circle. And continue to let your voices blend as our spirits blend.

Elemental chant

Elemental chants are now widely known within the Wiccan and Goddess worship communities. The identities of the authors is rarely known. Many have now

developed alternate melodies and verses. The following chant is used in the workshop.

*Air I am
Fire I am
Water, earth, and spirit
I am.*

Casting the circle

As each woman states her intent, she takes the hand of the woman to her left. The circle is cast when the last woman has clasped hands with the first woman.

By my will, I cast this circle....

Anointing

Using oil, each woman in turn anoints the forehead of the woman beside her on her left (oil has a light floral scent) and states:

You are goddess and woman. Blessed Be.

Goddess call

Each woman is invited to name herself as herself, as the daughter of her mother, as the granddaughter of her grandmothers.

*I am ... and I am daughter of ... who is the daughter of
....*

Ritual leader then says:

*Let us look deep within each others' eyes and souls for we
are all daughters of the goddess. And she takes form in
each of us. Blessed Be.*

Meditation

If not already sitting, the women are invited to sit comfortably and to close their eyes as they listen to the meditation.

*We are all daughters of the goddess and she takes form in
each of us. What a simple thing to say. And yet....*

Such a simple thing ... very simple really ... and yet ...

There was a time when we had forgotten this simple

*truth. We had lost this precious thing, this simple thing.
We had lost it and we were left longing ... longing ... for
that which we had lost.*

*We were lost in our loss... We were without... We
could not find our way... We were lost... We could not
find our way within....*

*But we came to know the depth of our loss. We came to
know the depth of our longing... We came to know the
depth of our need ... and we wept....*

*Tears grooved our cheeks... We could not speak our loss.
Tears grooved our cheeks... We felt alone.... Tears
flowed and we wept....*

*Deeper and deeper in our sorrow we sank. Deep within
our loss our sorrow sank. We were emptied of our loss...
We were left emptied and our longing grew....*

*Our longing grew and grew. Our longing filled the
emptiness of our loss and we overflowed with longing....*

*Our longing grew so much that it overflowed us... It
ran like a river grooving deep channels in the parched
earth of our souls... And we flowed with it... It carried
us ... and we flowed....*

*Our parched souls bathed in our longing... Deep
within us a memory ... from deep within us a memory
rose... A gentle, gentle sound arose ... a lapping sound
of waves and deep currents ... a memory of salt and sea
and wetness ... a memory ... a memory of she ...*

*She ... deep sea ... she ... deep ocean ... she ... a
memory....*

*Deep within us ... a memory of she ... and our longing
came to know itself... It came to name itself... It came
to find itself... It was she....*

*She... Deep within ourselves, she rose ... a memory...
Deep within ourselves, she rose... And we found what
we were longing for ... deep within our longing ... deep
within ourselves... We found a memory ... a memory
of what we had lost... We found She...*

*She ... She who ... She ... She who ... She was ... She
is ... She will be ... She ... the sea ... our memory....*

Deep currents of memory ... deep currents ... of memory

... She ... We have found our longing... We are filled with She... We are filled with the sea ... deep currents of memory... We are found....

Wave after wave of memories ... salty memories ... deep currents of memories... We are found.... She... We... Our parched souls bathe in our found memories... Our hearts beat again.... Wave after wave of memories ... washing away tears.... She ... Sea ... We....

And our deep longing fills us with her memory... She... We... No longer are we lost... No longer are we empty... Our tears have flowed to her... Our memories have called to her... Our longing has brought us to her... We are found... We are found....

Deep within us ... deep longing fulfilled ... deep sorrow soothed ... deep yearning fed.... She... We....

Chant:

*We all come from the Goddess
And to her we shall return
Like a drop of rain
Flowing to the Ocean*

(alternative chant)

*The river is flowing
Rolling and flowing
The river is flowing
Down to the sea*

*Oh Mother carry me
Child I will always be
Oh mother carry me
Down to the sea*

Wine blessing

Each of the women is invited to add a few drops of water from the water jug to the chalice, saying:

All that I am, I share with you.

As the filled chalice returns to the ritual leader, she adds:

Each of us, as all that we are, woman and goddess, we are the ocean. We are She. Blessed Be.

Sharing

As the chalice now goes around the circle, each woman is invited to drink from it if she chooses. When the chalice returns to the ritual leader, she libates (pours out some of the water as an offering) the goddess bowl. Then the ritual leader introduces the stones in the basket as a focus for sharing:

In the basket are a shell and five stones: a clear quartz crystal, a fluorite crystal, a piece of chrysocolla, a lava stone, and a piece of amber. Each is there to engage with you and your emotions. Each of them is there to serve as a focus for sharing. If it is your wish, choose one or more, hold it for a moment as you think of something lost, of something wept for, of something found, of something you wish to keep. If it is your wish, you may want to share your thoughts with us. You may also want to use the stones to capture or to let go of memories. They are there for you and they are very strong. Allow them to dream with you....

Feasting

Food, drink, and conversation are shared until the energy of the group has settled. Events are allowed to unfold as they require....

Farewells

When the energy of the group has settled, the ritual leader calls upon the participants to hold hands and to give thanks to She who is with us, to thank the women of their families and to thank each other. The ritual leader then thanks and releases the elemental energies and the circle is dissolved as it was created, each woman in turn saying to the woman to her right as she lets go of her hand:

From my heart to your heart, this circle is open.

A final chant releases the circle:
*There's a river of birds in migration
A nation of women with wings.*

(alternate chant)

*We will never
Ever lose our way
To the well
Of her memory*

*And the power
Of her living flame
It will rise
It will rise again.*

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¹This phrase has become apocryphal. No original author can now be identified. Nevertheless, it is a central theme of the women's spirituality movement.