

A special feature from the archives of ReclaimingQuarterly.org

a collection from RQ #86

Aspecting the Divine

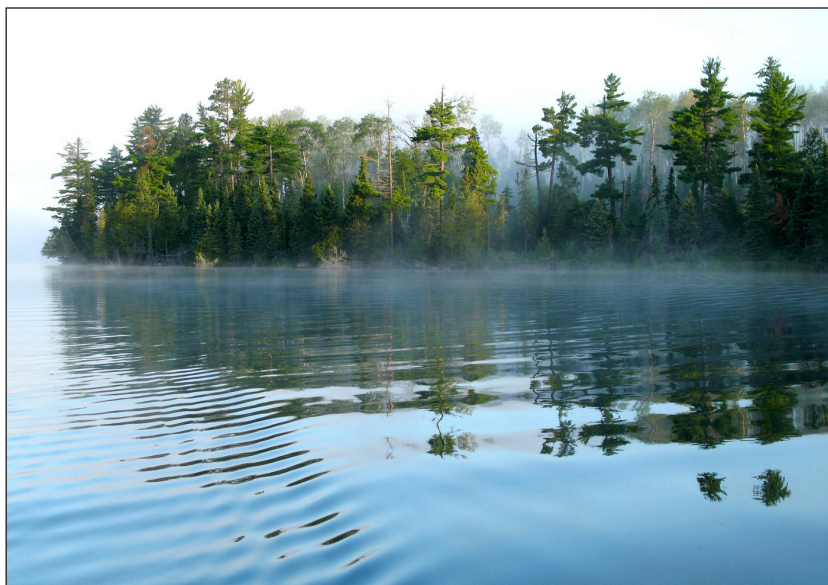
Reclaiming was founded in 1980 as an organizing and teaching collective. Although there is not an official Aspecting class, various teachers have offered workshops and classes over the years, bringing this time-honored practice into the feminist and activist cauldron of Reclaiming.

These articles formed the theme section of Issue #86, Spring 2002, and are offered here as an archival feature. Included are articles from a number of people who helped integrate this material into the dynamic mix of Reclaiming:

- Pomegranate Doyle
- Sage
- Robin La Sirena
- Inanna Hazel
- Ortha Spingaerd

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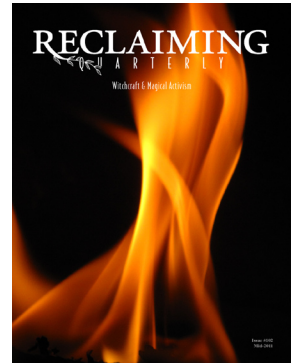
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RECLAIMING

QUARTERLY

The Magazine For Witchcraft And Magical Activism

Aspecting:
Experiencing
the Divine

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Venee Call-Ferrer is a hot, sassy
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Our Founder



Founded in 1980 as *Reclaiming Newsletter*, re-formatted as a magazine in 1997. Of the 100-plus people who have worked on some version of this publication, the following are responsible for this issue:

- Publisher and Editor-in-Chief Sunshine Moonbeam
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* — *No animals were harmed in the production of this magazine*

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Regional Pages Credits — see page 38

INVITING IN THE DIVINE

by Pomegranate Doyle

THE FIRST I remember hearing of aspecting was some years ago when Rose May Dance (an elder of the Craft) asked if I would like to aspect the Goddess Diana at an evening Witchcamp ritual. I was a student-teacher, and afraid to tell Rose that not only had I never heard of “aspecting,” I hadn’t thought much about Diana, either.

Concerned that I would never be asked back to teach because I was so uneducated, I plastered on my “sure, I know all about that” smile, nodded yes and hoped to hell something would happen when my time came to aspect.

That night, I sort of sunk down into my body, let go of control and sent out an invitation to Diana, trusting that the Mysterious Ones are out there,

INTRODUCTION

THIS ISSUE, RQ focuses on aspecting — a magical practice in which a priestess or priest channels the presence of a deity or quality. One article discusses anchoring (also known as deep witnessing), a related but distinct practice.

Along with articles on different facets of these topics, we feature several short pieces focusing on a particularly magical experience, ranging from hearing the music of buildings to hearing the voice of a very worried police officer.

waiting for a chance to take on human form. And take me over Diana did. My body changed shape. I grew taller and stronger. Her dogs kept jumping up on me and knocking me over.

I don’t remember the ritual. I don’t remember what was said. All I remember is the moon glowing and growing large until it literally came down from the sky and enveloped us. Diana was reminding the campers of their beautiful bodies, bodies of potential motion and power. She did this by beaming the moonlight out of her hands and her solar plexus. I saw her do it — and yet I was with her, too. I was sort of bi-locating, outside and yet deeply inside the experience. And then she left, very fast. I was dizzy and tipsy. I felt my body deflate and my mind swim. I fell down just like in all those old movies when you see the channeler slump as the ghost leaves.

STILL BEING INVENTED

ASPECTING ALLOWS a spirit to take on human flesh and

faculties for a brief period of time. The human who offers up their body deflates their own presence in the body and calls in a spirit to take over and use parts.

If you want to see some truly amazing aspecting, see Jim Carrey as Andy Kaufman in the movie *The Man on the Moon*. And the Scorsese film *Kundun* has an example of how the Tibetans use aspecting.

In the Reclaiming tradition we have a stubborn need to learn through trial and error. We reinvent the wheel so that we have ownership of what we’ve made. With each different technique, we ask individuals to define it for themselves and develop their own methodology. This is true of any living religious tradition. For us, aspecting is still being invented, and should only stop when archeologists are digging up our bones.

DON’T TRY THIS AT HOME

I KNOW SOME of you are thinking, “Maybe I’ll try out aspecting this afternoon.”

Well, don’t! If you really want to try it, go find some one to teach it to you. But first become very skilled at grounding and purification and be sure to do a good mental health check, ask people around you, “How is my sanity

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G. Franklin

ASPECTING IN THE RECLAIMING TRADITION

an interview
with Sage

SAGE IS A Reclaiming teacher from British Columbia who learned aspecting with Reclaiming and related traditions. RQ interviewed her for our theme section.

WHAT IS ASPECTING?

Aspecting is a technique which allows participants to experience the presence of a quality, being or deity in an embodied, physically manifest way.

In some ways, aspecting is an enhancement of invocation.* When we invoke, we call energies into the circle, and so into ourselves. Aspecting takes this "calling in" further. When we aspect, we are inviting the energy to use our human abilities (sight, speech, movement, etc.) to communicate and interact.

Aspecting is a way to learn more about the quality we are exploring, or to deepen our relationship with the being in aspect. When a goddess or god is present "in aspect," we explore our relationship to this being, its impact on our lives and the ways that we ourselves carry this energy. Inviting one of the Mysterious Ones (deity) to come to us through aspecting is a wonderful opportunity to receive blessings and guidance and to offer our gratitude through celebration.

Aspecting does not necessarily have to be a public event. I would recommend that you invite someone to

support you in the work, as a scribe and/or "wrangler" (see below). But aspecting doesn't necessarily require a large number of ritual participants to be powerful and transformative magic.

HOW IMPORTANT IS KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE DEITY?

It's important to have a point of connection with whatever you are choosing to aspect. That may or may not mean historical or literary research-type knowledge. Once it is clear that I am

"called" to aspect a particular being I might do formal research. And I certainly will do psychic research to build on the connection, negotiate the parameters and clarify with the Mysterious One the intention of the working and why I request their presence.

Aspecting is itself a great way to gather knowledge and build relationship with beings, qualities and deities.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE TO ASPECT IN A RITUAL?

First, I make sure I thoroughly understand the intention of the ritual

continued on next page



Venetia Call-Ferris

* — For this and other basic magical practices, see *The Spiral Dance*, by Starhawk.

continued from preceding page

and the purpose of the aspect. I want to know what “tasks” the Mysterious One will be asked to perform — for example: welcome people, tell a story, guide a transition, witness, etc.

I spend time doing my own centering and clearing practice. I want to be as clear and open a channel as I can

be. Then, I connect with the quality I will be aspecting and explain the working and what we’d like from “them.” I negotiate how much will be me and how much will be the aspect (this is determined in large part by the intention of the work and my relationship with the being that I will aspect).

“MY WRANGLER SPARED ME A MOSQUITO FEAST”

I WAS ASPECTING the ancient, primal, snake Goddess. During a moment when ritual participants were busy in small groups, I was to come to the center and simply “be” there. Ritual planners were open to whatever way this being was going to express itself. We knew that what we were after was very ancient, and might not be very chatty!

A close friend and fellow priestess was to be my “wrangler.” She was interested, I think, in being with the energy as it emerged — one of the “perks” of doing the wrangler work.

I was nervous. I had a real “sense” of this Being, but had never aspected It/She/He/They before. The feeling of raw, primal force was intimidating. I worked to clear myself, to get over my anxieties and my fear of looking like an idiot — feelings that would get in the way of bringing this energy through me.

Well, it worked. The Snake Goddess was powerful, raw, and primal. Its presence in the ritual was a transformative piece of deepening and moving the magic forward for many participants.

But that’s not the part of the aspecting that people talked about afterwards. What they remembered was that my eyes seemed to have moved around to the sides of my head. The Snake Goddess was fascinated by all the mosquitoes. My wrangler struggled with whether to allow me to follow the aspect’s instincts and zap out a four foot, forked tongue at the mosquitos, or to intervene, encouraging me to simply notice the mosquitoes and move on.

Luckily (for the sake of our friendship!), my wrangler sacrificed the delight of watching me materialize a snake’s tongue and chow down on mosquitos, and guided my attention back to the ritual.

I like to have a “wrangler” — a person who checks in and supports me, during and after the ritual. I make sure my wrangler knows the plan, has information about the being we’re working with and understands what I might need from them when the work is completed.

I will often have a shawl, a cloak or some other item that holds the energy of the Mysterious One. Putting this on helps me to go into aspect.

Afterward, it can be useful to have a familiar object (for example, a watch or a pendant) that the wrangler returns to me to assist my coming out of aspect. Taking off the shawl or cloak also helps me to return to myself.

After I’ve aspected I need a little time away from people. I need food and I definitely need a cup of strong tea!

HOW CAN PEOPLE LOOK INTO ASPECTING?

If you have access to teachers and priest/esses who you feel do powerful, sane and healthy work, take their classes or ask for their assistance.

Work with a partner, a wrangler who can offer reality checks. Ideally this person is someone you trust to have your best interests at heart, and also trust to be honest in their feedback.

Remember that the basic tools — grounding, centering, nurturing your inner “truth detector” — are the most powerful allies in magical work.

Be honest with yourself. If you struggle to move in and out of trance, if you can’t actually feel energy, if you want attention or power, if you’re afraid to say “no,” it may not be the right time for you to try aspecting. (*See sidebar, next page, “Are you ready to try aspecting?”*)

WHAT ABOUT POWER ISSUES?

I’VE HEARD concerns about aspecting creating a separation between participants and deity — that the person in aspect is an intermediary and



Venece Cull-Ferrer

— Sage

continued on page 58

ARE YOU READY TO TRY ASPECTING?

- You must be able to sense and move energy.
- You should have a clear understanding of your own energy and your own “issues.” Its important to be able to discern what is personal and what is the aspect.
- It’s incredibly helpful to have worked with expressive abilities: moving, speaking, singing. It’s not that you have to be a performer — rather that you offer a clear channel through which the energy can be expressed. It’s about openness , not letting insecurities or blocks get in the way.
- You benefit from having a self-reflective practice. Whether that’s a 12-step program, therapy, counseling, or something else, it is essential to have a well-developed process for working through personal issues as they are activated. When aspecting, you run a lot of energy through the body and psyche. Unresolved issues (we’ve all got them!) often get highlighted and block expression of the energy, or warp it into bizarre or melodramatic behaviour. When this happens, a self-reflective personal practice can make all the difference between a short “flare” and a prolonged “episode.”

— Sage



Venice Call-Ferrari

“PERSONAL BOUNDARIES AND NEGOTIATION SKILLS”

by Sage

I WAS TO aspect the Faery Queen, simply to be present and to witness the ritual that unfolded. Beforehand, I spent time explaining to the Faery Queen what we were asking of Her. However, I hadn’t bargained on how uncomfortable it was for Her to be in the claustrophobic, airless, and ugly indoor space in which the ritual took place.

My wrangler and I arrived before the participants to set up a place for the Faery Queen to sit. We had to create a small area that was “Her Realm” in order for Her to be able to tolerate being indoors at all. Once the ritual began, she

found the humans bizarre and somewhat annoying.

It really got tricky when one of the ritual participants went dashing from one side of the room to another and ran right through Her Realm.

The Faery Queen was outraged. She went on a tirade about how insensitive and blundering humans were. How we trampled through the wild spaces, destroying mindlessly, etc. etc. Then She decided that this was the last straw and that this human must be killed to serve as a lesson for all the rest.

All of this was going on internally. All that was visible to others was a high

degree of agitation. She and I (using all the priestessing skills I could muster) argued back and forth. It felt like a tremendous battle of energies within me.

Eventually I was able to share what was going on with my wrangler, and she was an enormous help. Finally, the priestess in me prevailed. No murder was committed, and relations with Her Realm weren’t severed.

Later in the ritual someone came to the Faery Queen in terrible distress. She offered some of the most compassionate and loving healing I’ve ever had the honor of sharing.

ASPECTING

IN THE SERVICE OF DEITY

by Robin LaSirena

ASPECTING — ALSO called Possession or Drawing Down the Moon — is the calling in of a deity into a person, so that person speaks the words of the god/dess, and experiences things as that divine being.

People differ in what they believe happens. Some see it as actually having deity come into them. Some people think of it as drawing out their own god-selves. Others experience it as a heightened trance state. In the Catholic religion, possession is an evil experience, in which one is taken over by a malevolent being. Some ecstatic Christian faiths speak in tongues, and invite God or the Holy Spirit to come into them as a matter of regular practice. Some Wiccan traditions include drawing down as part of the training to become a priestess.

Aspecting is not used very often in Reclaiming. Our practice is rooted in the belief that no one else can stand as a spiritual authority for another person. To claim to speak for the gods could be an awfully cocky thing to do. We're wary because it could be used as a tool of power. Aspecting work must be done in the spirit of service to the gods, not as a way of developing personal power.

I was trained in a more

structured tradition of Wicca, where part of our work involved learning how to aspect the gods. Later, when I began working with Reclaiming and became a teacher, I felt a desire to explore aspecting within this style of magic.

I have participated in some rituals where the aspecting didn't seem real. I decided to teach a couple of workshops on aspecting in San Francisco. My intention was to explore why aspecting did or didn't work, and to encourage people to be as truthful in their magical working as they could be.

I am also drawn to work around connecting with deity. Having my own

personal struggles with crises of faith, it is good to have work that helps me reconnect.

I'm writing this article not as a how-to-explanation, but to bring up things to think about. Aspecting is a tricky skill — one shouldn't try it based solely on reading an article. This work should be explored only after a good amount of time working in the Craft. You need a regular practice of meditation or grounding, established for at least a year. You need a firm experience of your Self to come back to, and to know how to do this on your own.

So much of our work is about self-knowledge, which is a long and many-layered path. We need to be comfortable with our deeper and shadowy sides before doing this work.

I also believe one should not aspect alone. It is important to have someone else there to help you come back after aspecting, preferably someone with prior experience with the work, and who knows you well.

LEVELS OF ASPECTING

A FEW YEARS ago I co-facilitated a workshop at Pantheacon (an annual Pagan conference that happens in the Bay Area) on Aspecting. It was fascinating to hear the experiences of people



photos by George Franklin

from different traditions. In Brazil, those who practice Yoruban tradition study and train for a full year before they are allowed to speak while aspecting. The voice brings up our personality and ego, and that's what we want to get out of the way.

We have to be comfortable with honesty and parts of ourselves we may not like. For instance, someone you're working with may feel that you were not actually channeling the voice of another being, but speaking out of your own beliefs. That might be hard to hear. You might want to defend yourself. But to really get better at the skill, you have to be able to admit, "Yes, I was nervous, and I wanted you to believe it was happening," if that's what is going on.

There are different degrees to which one can be affected. At witchcamp a few years ago, Anne Hill, based on material created by Judy Harrow, described four levels of aspecting.

The first and lightest is Enhancement. Here experiences are

close to normal. One is in control of one's actions, but sensing things in a more intensified way. Language becomes more poetic.

The second level is Inspiration. One is still in control, but it feels like something is coming through. In this state people can often talk about things without having had knowledge of them before.

The third state is one of Integration, which some refer to as the state of actual Aspecting. This is when people speak as the Goddess. Some describe this as feeling like

their personality steps aside from half of their space, to allow for someone else to come in. Afterwards the person may have some memory of what happened,

but usually can't recount all of the experience.

The fourth level is Full Trance Possession. People do things they can't normally, such as speak in tongues, or do physical things requiring great strength. Afterwards there may be no conscious awareness of



what occurred.

My friend Raudhildr, who works in

continued on page 56

“WHAT’S GOING ON HERE?”

by Elle

IT WAS A clear Spring night as we gathered in a hilly park in San Anselmo for a deity class. That evening, we were to aspect faeries or Earth-spirits.

We paired up so we could aspect with a buddy in attendance. When it was my turn to begin aspecting, I felt as though my face was changing, my ears elongating, and my toes splaying. I felt an immense ebullience and wanted to run over the hillside, much to my partner's dismay. As I looked out over the landscape, it seemed as though every little detail was sacred and immensely important. I saw where some of my "kin" lived underneath a pile of woven twigs by a little bridge. I was giggling and bubbling and running around — laughing at questions and

ignoring my partner's repeated requests that we stay on the footpaths. I laughed when she asked about sex. "No one belongs to anyone," I said. "Everyone is a part of everyone else and sex is. It just is!"

UNFORTUNATELY, AT this point, a San Anselmo police car pulled up and began to shine a bright light through the park. A cop got out of the car and walked cautiously towards us. I regarded him with the eyes of my fey spirit, and saw a human with fear pouring out of him. I felt simultaneously sorry for him and amused because he was so ridiculous in his panic, with wooden and metal sticks and guns hanging off him. I saw this as an ancient scenario — a fear-filled man coming to root out the women playing in the woods and wild places at night.

He shone the bright light into my eyes for a second and it burned.

He demanded, "What's going on here?"

The question hung in the air, gathering absurdity with every second that passed. He couldn't see and hear and feel and sense just what was going on here? A reply burst forth from my lips.

"Life!"

My partner shushed me. Our teacher stepped forward to talk to him. The park was closed at night, we learned. We had to leave immediately.

As I marched out of the park with the rest, I whispered to my partner, "Even he may be blessed someday."

ELLE is an eclectic San Francisco Witch who adores poetry, felines, and magpies (who steal sparkly things for her).

ANCHOR

by Inanna Hazel

"Deep witnesses, people whose sole reason for being there is to hear, see, value..."

SHIFT

"SO, WHAT IS that, exactly?" is the usual response when I mention anchoring. Like anything else that happens out of the public eye, anchoring tends to be overlooked, and people are often unaware of it. As a result, most don't know what it is or the effect it has. They aren't aware that magic which has the support of anchors is stronger and more focused than that which does not.

Briefly, the mechanics of anchoring are this: after grounding and balancing one's aura (front and back, left and right, top and bottom), and creating a meditative state by calming the mind and breath, one's attention is pulled inside the head and concentrated into one point. Some people use the image of a ball; I use the image of a pinpoint of light. This ball is then dropped through

the body; the attention moves down from the skull to the hara. On a physical level, the hara is between the second and third chakras, and is the center of the body. On an energetic level, it is the center of the aura. From this central point, the attention is released and radiates out as a flat disc, parallel to the floor. It's like a CD or record, with the hara at the center.

There we stay, for as long as we can.

If you lose the focus needed, or push the disc out too far to maintain it evenly, you just pull everything back in and repeat the process. We often anchor for an hour or two; a daily meditation practice is necessary to build the ability to stay in this state for that long.

The major thing to remember is not to work the ritual energy. The role of anchor does not include shaping or directing. For those of us who like to play with fire, this is a hard thing to bear in mind. But it is important. Running or shaping the energy is far too exhausting.

SO WHAT difference does anchoring really make, anyway? If you're not shaping or moving or directing or channeling, why are you there?

There is another name for anchoring — deep witnessing. In this day and age, in this time and place, our souls cry out to be seen, heard, valued. In the predominant culture of this country, which values individual achievement and fulfillment to the exclusion of community achievement and fulfillment, every individual's voice is in competition and we drown in cacaphony. Unheard, unseen, unvalued. And this plays into the hands of a power-over structure which wants us to compete instead of cooperate.

Into this, insert witnesses: people whose sole reason for being there is to hear, see, value. People who have placed themselves deeply into the energy, not to shift it, but to source their witnessing, to activate their senses more fully, to engage their very being in the art of



photos by George Franklin

paying attention. In not acting overtly, anchors hold space for others to do what they need to do.

It is not easy or simple work. Listening is hard enough; we do not listen well in this culture. We are trained to be distracted easily. We are too busy thinking about everything else we need to do today to pay much attention to anything. Witnessing is harder still, perhaps because it is perceived as being passive. Deep witnessing is listening on the deepest level possible.

There is power in the role of witness — it is power-with. It is sharing and supporting another's journey, another's being, not attempting to control or to shape. That support, that listening, shifts the energy of any magic of which it is a part, enhancing and clarifying the magic, and honoring each being who is present.

And that makes all the difference in the world. I learned this at Imbolc 1999, the first time I anchored a public ritual. I anchored the second half, as people made their pledges. I settled into the chair, and dropped and opened. I was

nervous — it being my first time and all. I was afraid I'd do something wrong.

The pledges began, and so did my lesson.

In dropped and open attention, one hears so much more than the words spoken. I sensed something deep, below any level I had reached before. I prayed to Brighde, stating my own pledge for the year, which was to anchor whenever and wherever possible. I told Her of my fear, and asked that She help

me to be a witness for Her.

And from out of the floor in front of me, Brighde rose. She moved toward me, looking straight into my eyes, then turned and sat down in me. It is hard to explain what this felt like. I was twice my physical height; the floor came to my waist. My legs felt heavy, encased in the building. My head was as high above the floor as my feet were below it. I saw everyone in the room, as though I was



facing all directions at once.

I did not feel that control of my
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“THE MUSIC IMBEDDED IN THE BUILDING ITSELF”

by *Ortha Spingaerd*

Ortha participated as an anchor in the Spiral Dance last Fall. These are her reflections on the experience.

I WAS GIVEN the choice of sitting near the North Altar or the East Altar. No choice for me. North it was. I'm comfortable with mountains, caves, rocks, the geographic north, and darker colors (although I hadn't thought ahead that I'd also be surrounded by everyone's ancestor photos!)

The dead themselves didn't intrude, but Susan, my tender, found it difficult to keep people from walking on me as they viewed the altar.

As I anchored, the image that came to me was the anchors as three

Selket guardian Goddesses with our arms outstretched around the Spiral Dance. Selket was the gold statue in King Tut's tomb, defying anyone to disturb the contents of the canopic shrine which held King Tut's liver, lungs, stomach & intestines. For me, she looks eerily similar to Liz Taylor in "Cleopatra". She's also a Scorpion Goddess and helps women in childbirth. She was depicted as binding up demons that would otherwise threaten Ra.

I got a bit geometric at one point. The Spiral Dance itself was essentially round; the building was rectangular, and the three anchors made a triangle around the whole thing which then increased our size dramatically in order

to encompass everything. On several occasions this put me above the city, and I was looking down at Fort Mason. Selket kept me very grounded.

When we were big we were like the Colossus of Rhodes, with our feet in the water, standing on the floor of the Bay.

Then what came to me was music, incredible music, separate from what was going on in the ritual. I began thinking about what music was imbedded in the building itself. This music lasted several minutes, then faded...

Ortha Spingaerd owns and manages a travel agency in San Francisco. Her abstract acrylic paintings can be viewed on her website, alltravelsf.com

study of martial arts, like the study of any artistic method, goes far beyond learning to fight (the functionality of this art) to the discovery and development of one's whole, true self. Truly it is a study of how to be a human being.

Jess O'Brien is an editor in Berkeley, CA. He likes practicing martial arts and talking to giant rocks. Contact xingyiquan5@yahoo.com

RESOURCES ONLINE

stillnessinmotion.com
plumflower.com
emptyFlower.com
hsing-i.com
energyarts.com
sixharmonies.org

BOOKS

Opening the Energy Gates of Your Body, by BK Frantzis
Xing Yi Quan Xue, by Sun Lu Tang
Essence of T'ai Chi Ch'uan, by Benjamin Lo

Anchor Shift

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body had been taken from me; I did not release any of it. In all innocence, I had invited Brighde

to share my flesh with me, and She had accepted my invitation. Together, we listened to each pledge. With Brighde there, I heard the stories behind each promise - the impetus, the reason, the other choices not made as a result. Very quickly, I realized that I had too much knowledge, more than I should, far more than the speakers would have shared with me, had we been talking over a cup of tea. So I chose to forget; I chose to listen fully, then let go of the face, the voice, the story. I remember almost nothing of what I heard that night.

But I remember what I felt. It was easy to be happy for the ones who were pledging what Brighde asked of them, the choice freely made, the challenge accepted. But there were those who pledged far beyond what She asked, or for something else, and this upset me. I wanted to tell them that they were on the wrong track, that they needed to fix this or that; I wanted to help. "No," was the unequivocal response of the Goddess. "It is not your place, it is not your right, it is none of your business, and you

know it. You promised to be My witness. Listen to them; honor each journey, each struggle, each story. That is all I have asked of you; to witness."

It is a wonder that She had the patience to say that as many times as She had to over the course of the evening. I am a slow learner.

And it was a wonder to witness not only the pledges, but the response of the Goddess. Each promise was received with love and tenderness, especially those who were pledging far beyond what they could do. It was as though the words had form and She gathered them in Her hands very gently, and released them into Her heart. The anvil became Her voice, acknowledging and welcoming every promise,

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—meditating, praying, and calling to her. It is important to not rush this stage. Take the time to silence your talking, busy mind. You don't want your ego to get in the way of the work.

Another way to prepare yourself is to put on a specific piece of clothing (a mask, hat, veil, etc.) that you associate with that deity. This helps to define that you are entering that other state of being. In some traditions, it is also appropriate to take a specific stance. This position would be a receptive one, such as standing with arms open to take in what is coming to you.

There are different ways to "call in." Some spiritual traditions do it through music and dance. Specific movements and songs are associated with specific deities, and used to call them in. In the class I taught, we didn't dance, but sang an invocatory song for a long time—past the point where your mind gets bored. This also helps shut down your talking mind and gives it something else to focus (and then un-focus) on. In a group, this technique can work where everyone is calling in the god/dess into themselves. In group aspecting, it is important to have a few people who do not do the work, who can ground the circle and help people come back.

You can also work in pairs, having your partner invoke the deity into you. During the preparatory stage, the invoker would also be preparing. It takes strong intention to actually do the work of invoking. There are some traditional words one can use for the specific invocation. One calls to the God/dess, often praising them. Then one speaks an introduction of the person being invoked upon, and invites the God/dess in, saying "Here is your

priestess _____. Hear with her ears, See with her eyes, speak with her lips." One might also touch the person purposefully to make real the moment of calling in. It's important to check with your partner as to what they are comfortable with beforehand. (On a cautionary note, it's not a good idea to touch someone while they are aspecting. That could draw them out of it, or they may react differently than you expect.)

One of the most powerful ways to invoke is to have a group call the goddess at once into one person. The most affecting such experience I've ever had was aspecting Brigid in a NROOGD ritual. This was after the big fires in the Oakland hills, and the ritual was intended to try to heal the land. I had no idea if it would work, praying for hours that I would be worthy. The priestesses put the crown of candles on my head, and I stepped towards them. They chanted repeatedly, and when I stepped into the center of their singing, everything shifted. It's because of this experience I know it can really happen.

I had a specific script to follow in that ritual, which I found really helpful—my ego didn't get in the way, trying to find words to say. During the feasting part of the ritual, I (and the pronoun "I" doesn't seem appropriate) told one of the priestesses that if people wanted to come up for healing, they could. I, Robin, would never dream of doing such a thing. I don't believe I have the power to heal.

But in that state, it was something She wanted to do through me. It felt right.

VARIED EXPERIENCES

WHAT HAPPENS during the experience will vary. Most people will not go very deep the first few times working. In preparing for a recent workshop, my co-teacher Medusa and I practiced invoking for each other. The first time she called into me, nothing happened. I waited, and still nothing. Finally I said I didn't think it was working. She suggested I close my eyes, and when I did, I went on a trance journey with the goddess we'd called. It wasn't aspecting, but it was still connecting with the deity.

Some people will do automatic writing. This is setting pen to paper, and without thinking, letting whatever come out onto the page.

Some people may not want to go very deep. A recovered alcoholic I know said the thought of losing control over her actions rings too close to having a black-out, and she has no desire to do that again.

Knowing how to come back is an integral part to the work. State with intention that you are coming back. If you were invoked into by a partner, they would speak aloud words similar to the invocation—Hailing the God/dess, thanking them for coming, and saying, "You will now depart from your Priestess _____. She will now speak with her own lips, see with

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her own eyes, and hear with her own ears.”

According to some longtime practitioners, the swallow response is suppressed when people are deep in trance. So it is good to get the person to eat or drink something. Some people like to be touched or massaged. Have the priestess perform some mundane physical task, or use her hands. It is good to give people familiar objects to hold, such as their own jewelry. I like to ask people to answer three questions about mundane things, such as to name three things in their medicine cabinet.

Asking the person to say their name is a way to check on them. Any hesitation is a good indicator of not being all the way back.

Some people don't like to have a lot of personal attention afterward, so they may say they're fine in an attempt to get their tender to back off. It's the job of the tender to give them the space they need, and still stick with them until they're really convinced the person capable of functioning normally again. (It's always risky to let someone drive a car after aspecting!)

Aspecting is not work for everyone. Some people may not want to do it, and some may never be able to let go enough to do it. But it is a valuable magical tool. I like the work, and intend to continue exploring it, with my own cautious style. When approached with a commitment to our spiritual paths, it can be a rich experience.

Robin LaSirena teaches Reclaiming classes in the Bay Area, directed the chorus for the Spiral Dance for several years, sings locally, and acts with Magical Acts Ritual Theater Group.

Aspecting: Inviting Divine

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these days?” In order to let someone else use our bodies we must first truly know who we are and know how to get in and out of our own bodies. Aspecting is not a party trick.

As with most things in Witchcraft, we must be able to take aspecting with a grain of salt. When receiving words from an aspect, use your intuition. Even if you are in the presence of a Master Aspector whom you trust, don't take in everything without question. Not all Mysterious Ones are our friends. Aspecting can be used like a drug, inducing an effect similar to drunkenness. It can also be over-used. We did that at Witchcamp for a while when we first started using it. We wanted to aspect absolutely everything. One time I remember aspecting the Garden of Eden.

Done well, aspecting can change all those involved. Being in the presence of divinity can be felt in the body, a feeling of grace filling you. You become more than you had known yourself to be. Your own presence becomes more full, and the aspect reveals to you a larger sense of your authentic self. After the aspect has gone, you feel in a deeper way the divinity of all things around you.

At its best aspecting is a kind of mini-enlightenment and a cultural exchange. You have been changed and so has the Mysterious One who came for a visit.

Pomegranate Doyle is an artist, homemaker, Witch, priestess, and a senior teacher in the Reclaiming Evolution of Witchcraft.

Aspecting in Reclaiming

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therefore interferes with other participants' direct contact with the sacred.

This is not a problem that I've experienced. I've certainly seen disappointing aspecting which feels like self-indulgence or ego tripping, but I've also been blessed with powerful and transformative experiences in ritual, times I have felt the presence of the Goddess in ways I'd never imagined possible — because a priestess was aspecting Her.

I think the key as a ritual participant is that I never give up my personal authority or discernment. I never surrender my personal connection to the sacred, no matter what the ritual planners or facilitators choose to do.

Sage teaches workshops and Witchcamps throughout Canada and the United States. Her current magic revolves around trees, the family and the alchemy of star and earth.

Alchemy in the 17th Century

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a frontal assault on all the assumptions that underlay occult thinking, especially alchemical philosophy. The cosmos was re-conceptualized as consisting entirely of “matter and motion.” This vision would be the one embodied in the later decades of the scientific revolution (see “Dead on Arrival,” reference below.)

According to the historian Frances Yates, Rosicrucianism actually gained a rather short-lived foothold in the late 1610s in the newly-established court of the German Prince Frederick V, the Elector Palatine, who had recently married Elizabeth, the daughter of James I of England. The death in 1612, at a critical time in the ongoing struggle between Catholic and Protestant powers, of the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II (who had extensive magical and alchemical interests) meant a new emperor would be chosen. The Archduke Ferdinand of Styria, the likely successor, was a man known for his efforts to enforce religious orthodoxy. In 1617 he was crowned King of Bohemia, a longtime center of religious toleration, radical philosophy, science, and the magical arts. His crowning was a major step toward acquiring the imperial crown, but his immediate move to stamp out “heresy” in Prague led to rebellion.

The Bohemians moved to invite Frederick V, strongly identified with the Protestant cause, to replace Ferdinand as King of Bohemia. Frederick V accepted their offer of the crown, and he and Elizabeth, along with their newborn son, Prince Henry, journeyed late in 1619 to Bohemia,

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