

holding spells

RYA WARD

*We call on you elemental Earth
To give us
Fermentation and fertility In the style of bottom friction*

*Depart in peace elemental earth
Our blessings take with you*

To be enchanted, So Mayer says, in their introduction to *Spells - 21st Century Occult Poetry*, happens at intersectional moments. When we meet each other: *Enchantee! Encantadx!* The convergence of two or more new worlds. It can happen when taking care in the words we use, at the intersection of wording and worlding: making magic palpable by bringing what was not there before, into being.

Enchantment can happen anachronistically – falling in love with your people, subversively through history, can show us ways of being today. The witch, the feminist, the differently (dis/) abled person, trans people and anarcho-outsiders, can form communities of affiliation, whole life-spans apart, through appreciating the different cloaks they'd have had to wear.

This practice – of enchanting and being enchanted – finds one of its forms in rituals of spellcraft. Now writing as “I”, and only giving small glimpses of very private practices I've had the fortune to be part of, I'll share some thoughts on when magic worked. By that I mean – when the converging of a group, who were either willing, antagonistic, bemused, sceptical or enthusiastic by turns – gave of themselves, just a small amount, to participate. And that mode of sharing, the loose formality and in-

surgency of practices connected to witchcraft, produced it's own momentary occultism, which had a real effect on communication, on visibility of issues, on correspondent feelings within a group.

*We call on you elemental Air
To give us
Breath & oxygenation In the style of a storm surge*

*Depart in peace elemental Air
Our blessings take with you*

Circlework as a communal practice, is environment-responsive, in that it historically takes place at cyclical moments. This can be in response to the waxing or waning moon, or to the celebration of a festival connected to changing seasons. The chosen moment has import, this one time is the only time, and also one of infinite similar moments which will flow after we have stopped.

The schema to follow – open the circle / cast the spell / close the circle, creates a secretive inside and outside of a practice, of temporal community disbanded after the ritual ends. It can be as spiritual or community-focused as its practitioners. Embedded in practices I've seen, is a reciprocal gratitude and wonder at the formation of the universe, and an awareness of what and how you “take”: from others, from the world around you.

*We call on you elemental fire
To give us
Solar radiation that intensifies evaporation In the style of S2*

*Depart in peace elemental fire
Our blessings take with you*

I've been included in ritualistic practice that, with lightness and laughter, was malleable and could have fit many different groups. And in larger group-work, where 50 people magnified an organised solemnity. At times, debate has arisen slap bang in the middle: should we really do the Trump disappearing spell, if we take into account the Wiccan belief of doing no harm? Alarm as someone described the rule of return, which states that a hex comes back to haunt you threefold, could have had coven-splitting proportions.

I've seen people dissolving in tears of laughter at the Earth signs performing earthiness, as part of casting the circle (the group characteristic involved a lot of stamping, huffing and snorting). And there have been shared weights - taking seriously the display and enactment of care that holding a ritual entails. That we know that when we make space for one participant's grief, trouble or heartache, the structure of the ritual can enable us to "feel with" pain. That attention, which has a connection to therapy, literally facing inwards towards the middle of the circle with the issue at the centre focuses emotional direction. At the same time, I experience the configuration as showing a respect for the gap between different people's ex-

periences. We're working on an issue that might not be ours, holding open the possibility of real concentration and mutuality.

*We call on you elemental water
To give us
Life happiness in freak waves In the style of M4*

*Depart in peace elemental water
Our blessings take with you*

The suppleness of words used in spellcraft is an accessible poetical form, which can bind the group in self-reflexive understanding of its own vernacular. This poetry uses what is excessive in language, it can multiply meaning, dissolve words into sound and compose words as images, to make space for creativity, intuition, visualisation and meditation. There are either four or five elements, according to variations in Eastern and Western philosophy: Earth, Air, Fire and Water, and in Chinese tradition – Metal, with Vedic traditions including “aether”, or void/space, which structure and ground the ritual in location and compass direction. The elements also serve as social imaginary of form, essence and mutation, together with an accompanying sensation. In their symbolic abstraction, they move away from physicality, at the same time being a celebration of wonder in the physical world. When it works, the magic is in these hidden resources: within the words, between the worlds, that gets magnified by the collective acknowledgement of a will to manifest something different.

Opening the circle and closing the circle
Esbat for the Ice Moon, February 2020
Cast by Political Economists, Oceanographers, Artists, De-
signers & Data Scientists
Modelling Waves & Swerves Workgroup

*we share a rich vocabulary; us.
we can speak of
broad skies and magnitudes,
the sound of a blown voice,
through a horn softly
on a hill far away,
of magnetite swathes
and sparks so sharp,
they can be felt by grazing a little finger.
we can speak of things that
when we don't feel strong, we think about
and of things that
when we want to feel strong, we think about.*

*little animals, small and quiet and shivering
caressed but
suspended
by the tips of whiskers only air.
when we speak, noses twitching
it can be of
separateness, discreteness
the spaces between circles
overlapped, but still holding.
we can multiply interpretations,
and brace against their weight
or
we can scoop up abundance
and bathe lightly.*

throats, quivering, sound like cold or terror
but they too ask, whether the circles
are organisms micro-vibrating
with the energy it takes
to realise squelchy new forms
to absorb: experience grows the self grows
autonomy
by care and love into the blood.

our expanding throats
stickily coated with the outside,
wonder
whether us-as-earth, will shift magnetic poles
again
as we did recently
780,000 years ago
well, not within my living memory but
maybe within ours.

it's comforting that a polar shift might mean
no more
to glottises
than huffing in the wet brown mulch from the
forest floor;
yelling in bluebells until we laugh
is anyway more accessible and soothing.

to you, the piece of my bruised heart:
that bright lodged glint
is your intelligence
equal to all winds it bends against
think of it like a tinder mushroom -
cupped, it can keep you warm
and light many fires along the way

when we loudly open ourselves without
insides
the world rushes in
unbidden even
but making calm salve
by making ourselves space
avoids projection.
when we speak, let's not speak
about identity
no -isms or -nesses,
just about sheltering
the trembling creatures, we are
just about protecting
the vulnerability in our voices.

that belief, in self-knowledge
might even allow
ample vibrant exchange, iron fizzing,
something like a conversation between
million year old magnetic traces found inside
a tenth of a millimetre of rock
and a magnetometer
in the key of hysteresis

*this vocabulary we share,
made of hard and soft sounds
of silences
and recurrences
(i won't lie)
has lashed at times,
and whipped us round
but it has also gifted us
cycles of growth
and non-linear narratives
comfortably spiky creations
and exuberant wide worlds;
so now
when we speak, intertwined,
i'm grateful for all those words
that bind and support us
leaning back away from another,
onto each other,
overlapped but holding, still.*

a spatial conception, that might be in-
consequent, but therefore open for Inter-
pretation and Improvisation

wording and
worlding

socio-techni-
cal protocols

ficción

a body that protects
myself from the art-
world outside

the dominant Image of the authentic
Composer, whose individual work is
stylistically coherent.

being together

Protocols have a tendency to focus energy on discurs-
ive processes, rather than building concrete skills
and practices within groups and across participants.

power-
relations given
by institutions

violencias
estructurales

It takes
time to work
together!

what and how
you “take”

when do we really have time
for collective digestion of
the events happening?

Handles (H)

Forms (F)

* = How

Colors

Contributions (C)

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spideralex

Collective Conditions

X-Id=Xíng, 邢

Rica Rickson

Behuki

common ground

(Beta Version)