

Trance 2

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Question #1: Describe your regular method of entering basic trance. (min. 300 words)

Through the course of journaling for our clergy classes as well as in my religious work in ADF, I have tried all sorts of different methods of going into trance, and all of them have worked, more or less, with some of them working really well.

The easiest way I have found for regular, basic trance work, though, is through the breath. This doesn't require any props or special postures or even the help of other people, but can be done anywhere and at any time. And through long practice, use of the breath to enter trance has become my most obvious first choice.

I first came to the breath for trance when I was in college studying to be an actor. I used to have horrible stage fright just before going out on stage, which would make me wooden and stiff. Once on stage I knew that I would be fine – it was that last few minutes before my entrance that worried me. So, out of the blue one night, it suddenly occurred to me that if I breathed slowly in and out, and on the exhale breathed the word, 'calm', it might help. And it did help, immensely. I found that I was able to lower my heart rate by 10 beats a minute, something I can still do. Later, when I suddenly developed an irrational fear of flying whenever we hit turbulence, I found that this breathing technique would calm me right down by sending me into a light trance.

So it was obvious that I would try this method for religious and spiritual trances.

First I find a quiet place in which to do the work. While I can usually manage this in a noisy environment, if I have to, it's much easier in the quiet. I sit comfortably, on a meditation bench or in a chair, with my back straight, and just breathe slowly, starting with the exhalation. I breathe out to a slow count of three, and then let my breath come back in, normally, to another count of three. I do this over and over and every time I try this I sink deeper and deeper into a trance.

If I am trying to meditate and find the silence, I keep my eyes open, looking with an unfocused stare at the floor ahead of me. If I'm looking to go on a journey or have a spiritual experience, I close my eyes. And off I go.

Question #2: Explain the use of trance in group ritual, including trance techniques including the Neurolinguistic Programming techniques of "anchoring" and "leading" in trance induction. Give an example of how you would script this use in ritual. (min. 500 words for essay, 200 words for script)

In group ritual, spirituality can be experienced in different ways, and trance, usually induced by a leader, is one very effective way of accomplishing this. People often want to have an "experience" of some kind, to be changed inside somehow, in ritual. They also wish to "touch" the divine and travel in the Otherworlds.

In ADF we often begin trance work with the Two Powers meditation, which is actually an exercise in bringing folks in touch with the powers of heaven and earth as they flow through our bodies. Then later in the rites, there is often a call to "find" or "renew your center," which is a way of getting the participants to recall how they felt during the Two Powers, reminding them of their

connection to the Otherworlds. And then sometimes the ritual leader will lead some sort of trance during the Key Offerings section of the rite. But I believe that we have many more opportunities for trance in group ritual, such as after each invocation, when the participants may be invited to experience the arrival of the Spirits to the ritual site, or during the Waters of Life.

The main techniques used for a successful group trance start with relaxation. A slow and almost sleepy-sounding voice will lull folks into relaxing and lowering their normal barriers, which will allow the leader's suggestions to penetrate. Only then can the leader actually 'lead' the people into a relatively common experience. Often a deep relaxation will begin with tension draining from the upper part of the body on down into the ground, and then the tensions will be drained from lower down, until the entire body is relaxed. The people are now lulled, or hypnotized, into trance.

In Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP), there is the concept of the *anchor*. An *anchor* is a kinesthetic, auditory or visual cue that becomes associated with a particular emotional state in the person (Bandler, 84-85). While kinesthetic anchors are the easiest to use, they are also the least practical in a group situation. One can hardly run around and touch everyone at the point of deepest relaxation. However, a bell could be rung just at the time that the deepest relaxation is achieved, and if rung again every time the leader says, "Breathe deep, and renew your center", then the participants might do so more easily.

One thing that must be remembered is that people perceive the world in different ways, varying from person to person. Some people are primarily visual, some auditory, and some kinesthetic. In other words, when you ask someone a question and they have to answer, they are either generating visual images, talking to themselves and hearing sounds, or having feelings. Many people even combine these systems in different sequences. These ways of thinking are called *representational systems* (Bandler, 15).

So to lead a successful trance journey, the leader must take this into account, filling the work with visual images, the suggestions of sounds, and the tactile feelings that one might feel at that part of the journey or visualization.

The Script

An example of this could be as follows. This assumes that a bell was rung at the point in the rite where the people have been relaxed the most, perhaps just before the Two Powers meditation:

After an invocation to Manannan mac Lir as the Gatekeeper, the celebrant says, "Children of the Earth, close your eyes, breath deep and renew your center."

(Pause - a bell is rung - pause)

"As you breathe, you feel relaxed and open. You hear the sound of the fire crackling, and you feel a slight breeze on your face. In your mind's eye, you see the smoke swirling up from the glowing fire, making patterns in the breeze. You feel happy and slightly expectant.

Now the smoke from the crackling fire begins to swirl around the circle, moving outside the seats of the people, filling up the air behind you as though it were a mist or fog. You can smell the ozone and wet, smoky mist as it thickens behind you, and in your mind you can see that mist behind the people in front of you, across the fire. There is only silence in the mist.

Suddenly you hear the sound of waves lapping on the shore, of water on a sandy beach, and the air become electrified, with power caressing your skin. The swirling mist begins to move more rapidly, excitedly, and you can feel it touching your face. Someone is approaching. Someone is here!

Like some gigantic horn, the ground and air vibrate deeply, as the mists part, and before you, sixty feet tall, stands a man with white hair, white beard and laughing eyes, dressed in a blue cloak, with crane bag on his hip. It is He! It is the God!

(pause)

(loudly) Manannan, we welcome You!"

Question #3: Describe three experiences from trance. These trances must come from three different methods chosen from the list below: (min. 600 words for each experience)

- a. Body Postures**
- b. Sonic Driving**
- c. Dance/Movement**
- d. Chant/Mantra**
- e. Ascetic Practices**
- f. Visual Concentration**
- g. Spoken Guidance**

First, let me say that I have achieved trance, often quite effectively, using all of the above techniques. It was hard to narrow them down to only three. The three methods I will be using for this essay are Sonic Driving, Chant/Mantra and Ascetic Practices.

Sonic Driving

At a two-week long shamanic workshop led by Michael Harner, we were asked to make a journey in the Middle World, where we normally did not go. As part of this journey, one of the instructors would be drumming on a small, sharp-sounding drum for the entire time, ending with a 'call back' signal towards the end, to let us know it was time to return home. The drum would be beaten at about 3-4 beats per second for the whole journey, and this frequency was supposed to help the shaman enter the alpha state (good for trance).

Since I was already in the Middle World I would not have to use my cave (where I enter the Underworld) or my rainbow (to enter the Upper World) for access, but rather would only need the aid of my totem animals to go where I needed to go.

Arthur, a friend of mine from my ballooning days who was the South African delegate to the FAI Ballooning Commission, had very recently been murdered in a house invasion of his home in Sanditon, near Johannesburg, and I was appalled and worried about him. So I determined that for this journey I would travel to South Africa to see what I could see. I have never been to that country, but I had seen a photo of Arthur's house, so I hoped I would be able to find it.

Once the drumming started, I found myself at the entrance to my cave in Wales (where I usually start) and there I called for my totems (Black Jaguar, Horse and Eagle) to please come to my aid. And all three appeared at the entrance of the cave, with Jaguar rubbing his body on my legs, Horse rubbing her nose on my face, and Eagle calling and flapping his wings while perched on a rock near the entrance. I told them what I needed to do and they all nodded gravely. Jaguar let me know (I hear him in my mind) that this could be done, but that Eagle would have to take me there. So Eagle came down to the ground and grew in size enormously, and I climbed on his back, hanging on to his neck with all my strength, at which point we took to the air.

The trip didn't take all that long, across much ocean and desert, until we finally came to Arthur's house. It was very quiet there. After dismounting from Eagle's back, I entered the house and walked down the tiled hallway, past the stairs. Just as I was about to turn to the right towards

what I think was the living room, I heard someone hoarsely, and desperately, whisper my name from behind me. I quickly turned, and there was Arthur, or at least his spirit, crouching under the stairs. I was suddenly filled with a knowing that he had been killed so quickly that he still didn't know he was dead. He looked terrified, and motioned for me to join him. The terror in his eyes showed that he plainly thought the house invaders were still in the house.

I went to him and crouched before him, and took his hands. I did my best to tell him what had happened, and that we needed to go. He didn't look convinced, but he let me lead him down the hall and out the front door.

There in the yard was the bottom of a huge rainbow, and together we scaled it up into the sky. The rainbow was made of springy stuff that we could get hold of, but only once we got higher and the angle leveled out some did climbing become easier. At the top we entered a cloudy environment, and as we walked in these clouds, they parted to show us a sailing ship on a quiet sea in front of us.

We both boarded the ship and it sailed towards the setting sun, and as we approached land, Arthur began to recognize people waiting for him on the shore. He grew quite excited and pleased. When we landed, he started to go, but was surprised when I did not follow him. I gave him a hug and told him I'd see him again someday, but that I had to go back. He left the ship and went into the arms of his relatives/friends and the ship and I returned across the sea to the clouds, where I descended the rainbow, found eagle, and flew home again. Just as I got back to the cave in Wales, I heard the drumming call back begin and quickly returned to the classroom where I had begun.

Chant/Mantra

This one is a bit embarrassing, because I have never been possessed by a God before. But at Between the Worlds, a gay pagan festival, this is exactly what happened to me. At least, I think that is what it was.

S.T.R., a gay pagan Elder, and his friend S., a bard from Minneapolis (which he called 'Paganistan') held a workshop there in honor of the God, Freyr. It was to be a Men's rite, and I was actually quite nervous about it because according to the blurb in the program, it would involve 'touch', and possibly even 'erotic' touch. I wanted to do this, but at the same time wondered if I could go through with it.

As I had assumed, all the men who showed up were older, like me. None of the young lovelies were there, which was actually reassuring in an odd sort of way. No need to worry about 'competition', as it were. S. T. R. quickly assured us that no one would have to do anything other than give a few hugs, and that this was really a safe place and rite. I determined then that hugging would be all that I did that evening. Right. The Gods love it when you throw down the gauntlet.

The trance technique that we were to use was a simple chant: "Freyr, Freyr, Freyr, O Freyr" which repeated over and over again. S.T.R. would also sing a song of invocation to the God over our chants, which did help to place what we were doing in context. The longer we did the chant, the more entranced I became. I have often wondered if the trance comes from the words, or from the sustained breathing that the chant requires, or perhaps a mixture of both. I tend, at this time, to lean towards the mixture of both. The sustained breath can make one a bit high, and the repeated words hold the intent in place. In any case, this sort of mantra/chant can be very effective. Our chanting went on for an hour and a half, which is actually quite a long time.

All we had to 'do' in the rite was hug each other. That's all. And when we were done with the hug, one of us would simply stop chanting and say, "This to Freyr", and the hug would end. Not

hard. But with the continual chanting, I found myself getting deeper and deeper, more and more lightheaded and, well, disconnected from myself and even from the Midworld. It's hard to describe, because I don't really remember much of it.

While we were hugging, S. offered honey-milk to a large black stone phallus. I remember seeing the white substance flowing down the stone. The symbolism is obvious, and it added a sexual dimension to the rite that hadn't really been there before. I remember hugging a few guys and interrupting the chant to say, "This to Freyr" a few times, but I kept going in and out of my own awareness. At one point I noticed that I had become naked. Nudity doesn't bother me, but I do remember wondering how it had happened. And then at another point, I came to consciousness only to realize that I had someone's dick in my mouth. This is something I *don't* do, not with a stranger and certainly not without protection. I immediately backed off and hugged him again, saying, "This to Freyr". And to be honest, the experience freaked me out a bit. I have learned that Freyr is a God to be reckoned with, and since he has worked his will on me, I keep a small stone phallus on my altar to honor him.

Ascetic Practices

For the purposes of this essay, I will be including primal practices under the general heading of ascetic practices. While primal work is not about self-denial, particularly, they certainly fall under self-discipline.

At the Southwest Leather Conference there is an event on the Sunday afternoon called the 'Dance of Souls'. This is a primal dance where folks may take needles or hooks into their flesh and spend hours moving to the sound of ecstatic drumming. The 'tribal witnesses' are folks who drum or dance without the piercings in support of the process.

For this particular event, I determined to have it all. I took two 8 gauge hooks in my chest, which had ropes tied to them. I also took six needles, through which monofilament was strung so that when the needles were removed, a small but heavy brass bell could be tied to each piercing. These bells were scattered across my chest and back.

At first, moving with these various piercings was difficult because of the stinging involved – each swing of a bell brought a sting to the wound, and pulling on the ropes attached to the chest hooks brought about the same feeling, though greater. But as time went by, the flood of endorphins filling my body took care of any pain issues, and allowed me to fly. Normally, I would play with the other dancers, pulling on their ropes gently or allowing them to pull on mine, or perhaps even using a ring to attach my ropes to those of someone else, so that we could pull against each other. But this time I simply attached my ropes to a hook in the wall and leaned back, gently pulling on the hooks, keeping to myself.

And I was rewarded by a vision that included feeling, as I shape-changed into an eagle, trying to fly on the wind with a gaping wound in my side. I could feel desperation, I could feel the pain of the spear wound, I could feel the wind in my face and sense the darkness of the sky, stars twinkling overhead. And I could sense determination.

I flew on, weakly and painfully, almost falling out of the sky on a couple of occasions. Finally, in the distance I could see a tall oak tree on a hill, silhouetted in front of the bright, starry sky. And I managed to make it to a high branch, where I used my talons to dig into the wood, keeping me from falling to the ground.

I felt myself come and go from consciousness into blackness and back again, catching myself from falling off that branch, for what seemed like hours. My breath came in ragged gasps, each inhalation bringing pain to my wound, and I thought I would never see the sun.

But sunrise came, and with it the sound of something snuffling about on the ground below me. I could just make out a large pig rooting around on the forest floor, snorting and snuffling as she ate something down there. I closed my eyes, only to hear a song.

I looked down and saw a tall, good-looking man staring up at me and singing something that I couldn't understand. But it drew me, whatever it was that he was singing. I stirred and managed to flutter down to a lower branch. The man sang again, and I felt stronger, with less pain and with clearing vision. Again I felt drawn to him, so I fluttered even lower down the tree. The man smiled at me, and he looked familiar, though I couldn't place him exactly. And this time, when he sang, I found myself fluttering down onto his outstretched arm.

At this point I found myself still attached by my ropes to the wall, and with a smile on my face, went and played with the other hook dancers for the remainder of the event, promising Llew Llaw Gyffes a bottle of whiskey in return for the honor of the gift of His passion.

Question #4: Submit an original trance induction script based in ADF symbolism (e.g. Two Powers, Fire/Well/Tree, Three Realms, etc.) (no minimum word count)

Well, Fire and Tree

(The following is to be read out loud by someone not taking the journey, or into a recorder for playback at a later time. A *pause* lasts about 3 beats, based on the speed of the reading. A *long pause* lasts about twice as long as a pause. Read this gently, slowly and deliberately.)

First of all, make yourself comfortable. Loosen your clothes and either sit or lie down, and close your eyes.

(long pause)

Now, I want you to breathe slowly and evenly. Breathe in – breathe out. Breathe in – breathe out.

(pause)

And while you are breathing, imagine all the tension in your body flowing down and out, down into the floor.

(pause)

Feel the tension in your head and neck flow down and out. Let Mother Earth absorb it all – She can take it.

(pause)

As you continue to breathe slowly and evenly,

(pause)

Feel the tension in your shoulders drain away, down and away. And now the tension in your chest and stomach and back just drains away, down through the floor into the earth.

(pause)

Feel the tension in your hips drain away,

(pause)

and the tension in your legs and in your feet drains away, down, down, deep into the earth below us.

(pause)

And while you are breathing, in your mind's eye, you are aware of a mist coming out of your mouth as you exhale.

(pause)

And as you breathe, this mist grows thicker and thicker, until you are completely surrounded by the mist. This mist is warm and bright, and glows gently.

(pause)

Now you can feel yourself floating in the mist, gently floating, with no sense of movement or of direction. Let yourself float for a while, gently enveloped by the warm mist.

(long pause)

Now, as you float in the mist, you can hear the splashing of water. And you can feel a breeze on your face, and the mist starts to swirl around you more quickly.

(pause)

And as you breathe, you feel yourself gently settle down on the ground, on what feels like grass, and the mist clears in the gently blowing breeze, and you see before you a large hollow cut into the rock, filled with dark water.

(pause)

Suddenly you see something break the surface of the water, and hear a splash. Drops of water even land on your face. You see a brightly colored salmon swimming just underneath the surface of the pool.

(pause)

And as you look at the water, you see something sparkling deep, down in the depths of the water, but you can't make out what it is. But the water begins to bubble, spraying warm drops all around you, and a thin mist curls its tendrils up off of the water's surface.

The sparkling thing is getting closer to the surface, and the water is starting to move, with ripples lapping at the edge of the pool. You can hear the water hitting the side and the air seems more humid now.

Suddenly, the sparkling thing breaks the surface, and it is a living fire, poised just above the water's surface. You can hear it crackle and feel its warmth upon your face. And if this wonder is not enough, the ground suddenly begins to quake, and a low rumble comes from the earth beneath you.

Across the pool the ground begins to heave, and suddenly, with a crack that vibrates in the air, a plant tendril breaks through the surface of the ground and quickly grows higher and higher into the air. It thickens as it grows, and you can hear the creaking of growing wood and feel and

vibrations in the air as it becomes an enormous tree, branches hundreds of feet above your head, reaching high into the heavens. From above, a ball of bright yellow light snakes down through the branches and down the trunk of the tree, hissing with power and throwing off electricity into the air, making the hair on your arms stand on end.

The ball of light suddenly merges with the fire with a crack and the flame expands and roars for a moment, throwing off tremendous heat. And then it subsides again, and you are standing by a pool with a living flame upon it, and all at the base of a giant tree.

(long pause)

You are suddenly very tired, and you lie down on the grass and as you breathe, you see a mist begin to surround you, and thicken deeply.

(pause)

And once again you are gently floating in the warm mist, floating in comfort and in silence.

(long pause)

And now you feel the floor underneath you once again. The mist begins to clear, and you are once again where you started.

(pause)

Take a moment to get your bearings, and then open your eyes.

(pause)

Welcome home!

Question #5: Submit an original trance induction script based on Indo-European mythology. (no minimum word count)

Meeting Llew Llaw Gyffes

(The following is to be read out loud by someone not taking the journey, or into a recorder for playback at a later time. A *pause* lasts about 3 beats, based on the speed of the reading. A *long pause* lasts about twice as long as a pause. Read this gently, slowly and deliberately.)

First of all, make yourself comfortable. Loosen your clothes and either sit or lie down, and close your eyes.

(long pause)

Now, I want you to breathe slowly and evenly. Breathe in – breathe out. Breathe in – breathe out.

(pause)

And while you are breathing, imagine all the tension in your body flowing down and out, down into the floor.

(pause)

Feel the tension in your head and neck flow down and out. Let Mother Earth absorb it all – She can take it.

(pause)

As you continue to breathe slowly and evenly,

(pause)

Feel the tension in your shoulders drain away, down and away. And now the tension in your chest and stomach and back just drains away, down through the floor into the earth.

(pause)

Feel the tension in your hips drain away,

(pause)

and the tension in your legs and in your feet drains away, down, down, deep into the earth below us.

(pause)

And while you are breathing, in your mind's eye, you are aware of a mist coming out of your mouth as you exhale.

(pause)

And as you breathe, this mist grows thicker and thicker, until you are completely surrounded by the mist. This mist is warm and bright, and glows gently.

(pause)

Now you can feel yourself floating in the mist, gently floating, with no sense of movement or of direction. Let yourself float for a while, gently enveloped by the warm mist.

(long pause)

Now, as you float in the mist, you can hear wind sighing in trees. And you can feel a breeze on your face, and the mist starts to swirl around you more quickly.

(pause)

And as you breathe, you feel yourself gently settle down on the ground, on what feels like dead leaves, and the mist clears in the gently blowing breeze, and you see that you are in a forest of deciduous trees, and the leaves around you are a riot of colors. It must be autumn! The dead leaves on the forest floor are crunching beneath your hands and the breeze carries a slight chill in the air.

(pause)

Suddenly, a shadow passes over you, and the forest goes silent.

(pause)

You look around you but see only more forest.

(pause)

Then high above you hear an eagle's cry and a loud rustling, and you look up, but the sun is in your eyes, and it's hard to see anything more than movement in the branches above, but something is silhouetted in the light.

It spreads its wings and cuts off the light in your eyes, and you see the form of what could be a large, winged man.

He leaps off the branch he is on and, with outspread wings, flutters to the forest floor in front of you.

(pause)

Momentarily, you see him as part man and part eagle, with yellow hair framing a handsome face, wings covering his arms, and feathers discreetly covering various parts of his body. He smiles at you and says, "Bore da."

Then he suddenly gives out a cry, like that of an eagle, and he begins to change his shape in front of you. You can feel the air vibrate with power around you, and there is a sort of ripping sound.

(pause)

And he stands before you, beautiful in his nakedness. He raises an eyebrow and says, "Siarad y Cymraeg?" When you don't answer, he smiles again.

"Saesneg. English, probably." And then he laughs. "I felt your coming."

He places a hand on your shoulder and looks you in the eye.

He says, "I have a message for you."

He comes close to you and whispers in your ear.

(long pause)

What did he say?

(long pause)

Suddenly you see and feel the wind come up, and he backs away from you. He gives a loud eagle's cry and begins changing his shape before you, the air vibrating with power, as he becomes an eagle once again.

Spreading his wings, he give out another cry and takes to the air, flying from sight.

(pause)

You are alone in the forest. The chill wind is blowing on your face as it sighs in the tree branches.

(pause)

You are suddenly very tired, and you lie down on the dead leaves of the forest floor, hearing them crunch beneath you, and as you breathe, you see a mist begin to surround you, and thicken deeply.

(pause)

And once again you are gently floating in the warm mist, floating in comfort and in silence.

(long pause)

And now you feel the floor underneath you once again. The mist begins to clear, and you are once again where you started.

(pause)

Take a moment to get your bearings, and then open your eyes.

(pause)

Welcome home!

Question #6: Describe your process of creating your inner locale, the challenges and aids you experienced in the creation of this locale, and (optional) its appearance. (min. 1000 words)

I actually have a few inner locales, which I use for different purposes. Three I have come up with on my own, and one came to me as a result of a trance journey that was made at the Clergy Retreat in 2006.

The locales I have are based on need. Some I use all the time, and some only occasionally. But when I started out, I had no idea of what I was doing. My first inner locale came about as a result of taking one of Michael Harner's beginning shamanism classes one weekend in Phoenix, Arizona.

We were told that we had to find a 'hole' somewhere that existed in real life, and to imagine it perfectly. It could be a hole in a tree, a cave, or a hole in the ground, but we had to be able to picture it clearly.

Well, this really stymied me. I couldn't, for the life of me, think of anything, so I just visualized a hole in a tree. Nothing I actually knew. And every time I tried to use it to go down to the Lower World, I'd get stuck inside the tree. Like they said, it was important that it be a 'real' place.

Frustrated, I just let go, deciding to bag the whole class, when it hit me. In southwest Wales there is a ruined castle named Carreg Cennen that was destroyed in the English Civil War. Beneath it, walled into the fortress, there is a large cave that had been used for storage. It is fairly long (perhaps 100 feet) and very, very dark. It gets smaller as it gets deeper, and at the far end there is a hole in the floor of the rock that is about 3 feet deep and just large enough that I can get inside it to peer around. There are cracks in the rock that seem to lead deeper into the stone.

Having been to this cave a number of times in my life, I could picture it pretty easily. And so when the trance drumming would begin, I would see myself at the front gate of the castle and I would then cross the courtyard to the doorway in the far wall that led to the stairs down to the cave's entrance. Descending the steps, I'd look out the openings in the outer wall used by

medieval archers, until I would get to the bottom. Then I would enter the cave and proceed down its dark passageway until I came to the hole, and there I would just dive in.

I would suddenly find myself descending, head first, down what appears to be a dark, rocky tunnel. At the bottom, I'd find myself in a large cavern. And here my explorations of the Lower World would begin.

In the class we would be told very little about what to expect down there, and our experiences would be guided by our intents. One of our intents could be about meeting a totem animal. Others could include searching for someone's soul fragment or to visit a God of the Underworld or we could be led to look for a river or some other natural feature that we would need for a specific reason (or not, as the case may be). In any case, we were mostly on our own.

For me, the Lower World is a labyrinth of large caverns, with some so large that they are the size of counties, with blue sky and sunlight and forests, etc. For one working I've done a couple of times, I've paddled down a large river which traverses a plain with reed beds lining the waterway. Near to where I come out inside after diving through the cave under Carreg Cennen there is an underground river that goes over a waterfall that I ride down, or climb up on my travels. And the God of the Dead, Cernunnos, has a throne room below the waterfall along the side of the river. He lets me come see him and occasionally helps me in healing work.

My other, very specific locale is the one used in the Clergy work. I won't go into what it is like here, but the process we used to discover it was to follow a guided meditation that only laid out the barest of details concerning what we were to see. The idea was that we should all have some common meeting place in the Otherworlds, so some experience had to be suggested. But how we each saw the individual parts of the journey varied immensely. We have gone to this place a number of times now, and the images only grow stronger. We sometimes see each other there, and when we compare notes, we sometimes agree on where we were standing at the final destination. This, to me, is quite amazing.

After finding the shamanic Lower World, I also traveled to see the Upper World. I can get there in a variety of ways, such as 'up' from the Lower World somehow, through rocky shafts that turn into the insides of huge trees, or by climbing rainbows here in the Mid World. The Upper World starts out as a cloudy realm (I've probably been too influenced by Christian mythology) but it quickly changes into either the sea or a rocky mountain. Here I have met spirits including the Shining Ones.

I have two other locales. The first, and most simple one, is where I go for quick trances. This place is usually simply dark, and there someone will come to me. This is where I first encountered Brigit, her fires glowing in the dark. Since this was my first attempt at creating a locale, I didn't bother with fleshing out the details, as it were, and settled for the dark space.

I also have a locale that I use for some magical work that is (sort of) located in Wales. There is a waterfall in southwest Wales that I used for my Druid baptism a few years ago, and in my mind's eye there is a small stone circle on the land above the waterfall. Here I have an altar and a large stone chest that only I can open, which is filled with magical tools, incense, offerings, silver and all the other things I need to do magic. When I was physically at the waterfall last year, I climbed the hill behind it just to see if there was anything similar to my imaginings there, but I was disappointed. My place only exists in the Otherworlds.

Question #7: Journal for five months, continuing the trance work journal you began in Trance 1. Provide an essay based on this journal detailing how your experiences have affected your practice. (min. 1000 words for the essay)

This essay will cover my journal entries from 26 May 2007 through 27 October 2007. My Trance 1 journal left off on 3 April 2007.

In addition to continuing with the various methods of attaining trance that I tried for Trance 1, I also added a couple of new ones – trance singing, trance dancing and self-drumming.

While I had come close to trancing while singing before, I had never done it *with intent*, and I discovered that this would make all the difference. One weekend I was taking F.M.'s professional piercing class in San Francisco and at the end of the course, he and his wife C. led a sort of Hindu/Wiccan rite to close out the proceedings. To aid the rite, my partner and I drummed and sang Harner's shamanic song, "I Circle Around":

I circle around, I circle around,
The boundaries of the earth.

I circle around, I circle around,
The boundaries of the earth.

Wearing my long wing-feathers as I fly,
Wearing my long wing-feathers as I fly,

I circle around, I circle around,
The boundaries of the earth.

We repeated this over and over again, and since it's fairly long, it takes good breath control. And this sustained breath made me high. F.M. and C. invoked the Hindu God Murugan who had introduced the Kavadi ritual to mankind, and suddenly I became aware of Him, the first time I have connected with a non-IE deity. He was jolly and happy and delighted with us for what we had been doing. Now, in ritual, if I'm not the responsible party (like the person taking the part of Orator or, as Ian Corrigan puts it, the Traffic Cop), I will consciously sing and sing, with the intent of going into trance, or for sustaining trance that I have already initiated through breathing. I have had some amazing connective experiences with this.

Another new method I tried was trance dancing. I had tried spinning before, primarily with my work with chaos magic and, of course, in my style of opening the Gates to the Otherworlds in ritual, but I had never really tried dancing per se as a method of trance.

At the Starwood bonfire in 2007, it was a cold night, and for some reason the bonfire that year wasn't as hot as in earlier years. As a result folks tended to get closer to it than usual. I normally dance this bonfire naked, wearing only a leather, Cernunnos mask, and I dance around it for a while until I get tired and go to bed. Circling the fire also often ends up as more of a rhythmic walk than a dance for most people, and the same would happen to me.

That year, however, because of the cold and the oddly cool bonfire, I parked myself near the flames by one of the fire tenders who was keeping folks from getting too close, and danced in place. This time I was truly dancing, and I followed the rhythms of the drums. I don't think the drumming is what tranced me out, because of their complex patterns, but rather believe it was the dance, itself. The movement took hold of me and I dance and danced, not getting at all tired, but getting higher and higher. I felt amazingly at peace and very, very good. I also felt sexy, and I did end up getting laid that night (for the first time because of attending the bonfire). I'm going to have to try that again this year.

The third new form of trance induction I tried this time was through self-drumming. I had heard many times that the drummers at Starwood and other festivals would often be able to trance all night due to their own drumming, and I wanted to see if it was possible. I know that shamans

usually had someone else do their drumming so that they would be free to journey as needed, but I suspected that it was still possible to trance, if not journey, through drumming. Also, during a trance journey to the Lower World, Cernunnos had suggested that I try this, so what choice did I have? During a full rite that I did on my own, I took the large mother-drum that we own and placed it on the floor in front of me. I started beating it with my thumbs (and later my hands) in a steady rhythm of about the same speed as would be used in a shamanic journey (about 120 beats per minute). I started to trance, and so I started moving my head side to side, which was a sort of release, perhaps, but which in any case sent me deeper. I found myself chanting something unintelligible as I went deeper and deeper into ecstasy. I kept getting louder and faster, and finally, the energy built up inside me to the point where I had to cry out and drop my hands to the floor. I had achieved gnosis, it would seem. I was suddenly aware of Rhiannon and Math standing there before me, helping to direct my energy, and so I made an extra sacrifice of incense to both of Them, and to Cernunnos, in gratitude before ending the rite.

But in addition to these three new forms of trance induction, I have continued with my tried and true methods from before. Breathing is still the easiest way to go into trance for me, and I've been doing it so much that it's become second nature for me now. In fact, if I'm not careful, I can go into a light trance without even willing it to happen. The breath is a very power connector for me.

I had some amazing results with the trance postures as well. The Tennessee Diviner (Goodman, 171) showed me the way out of a number of frustrating problems I was experiencing, and the Crouching Jaguar Figure (Goodman, 157), while difficult at first, gave me the trance experience of becoming an eagle again and flying through the sky. Good stuff, that.

One thing that I did investigate further was the technique of auditory confusion (Hoffman, 96). Instead of using different musical pieces playing into each ear, I tried using speech instead. I played two different TV talk shows into my ears, and discovered that I could go really deep. In fact, I stayed in a light trance with a sort of buzzing in my head for some time afterwards.

MJD, L.K. and I then tried this out at Summerland Festival in August of 2007. We got two pieces of text and two of us would read the texts into the third person's ears, one of us on each side. And all three of us ended up having similar experiences when our turns came to be the person in the middle. First our brains would get sort of fuzzy, and then we would start to go into the trance state, and end up going quite deeply.

As far as ritual is concerned, however, breathing, dancing and singing (chanting) seem to be the most practical methods for trance. And they work very well.

Question #8: Describe an experience of leading a trance induction in group ritual. (min. 300 words)

I have done many a Two Powers trance induction in group ritual, and last month at Wellspring I even led my workshop in a trance induction to meet the Celtic Arthur.

But something that I've been adopting lately is the practice of taking the folks of Sonoran Sunrise Grove through a trance induction after each of the major invocations (or, actually, as the final part of each invocation) in order to help folks connect with the deities or other spirits we are calling. While I have been doing this for years after each Kindred invocation, I decided to add in all the other spirits we call in ritual. I did this during our Summer Solstice ritual last weekend, where I had the leading part of Orator.

When we came to the Gatekeeper invocation, I first got the folks to relax a bit with their eyes closed after we called for the God, Cernunnos. Then I described how our breath created a mist around us, and that as we breathed we could feel something coming our way. Then I described

how we could hear something very large approaching us, and finally the mist cleared away and a 60 foot tall antlered God stood there before us all. Then we all welcomed Him to our nemeton. I did the same with the three Kindreds, as usual, and then for Artio I reminded the folks about the mist, and then I described Her as a huge bear who approached and joined us in the Circle. The trance induction for Taranis had the extra benefit of allowing us to feel the electricity in the air, which came off of the lightning streaming in His hair.

I find that, so far, this has been a valuable experiment. It adds to the 'woo woo' factor of the rite, and this sort of thing seems to be quite welcome. And it's not difficult to do, as I have to do it all anyway for myself, silently, in order to feel, and I hope project, the magic of the rite. It's also fun to do.

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