

Encore aujourd'hui la mauvaise réputation et les idées déformées de la sorcière règnent dans beaucoup d'esprits. On n'a qu'à jeter un coup d'oeil dans nos contes pour enfants pour le constater. Il est très important, pour moi, de redonner à la sorcière tout ce qui lui est dû: le respect — l'acceptation et la reconnaissance de ses possibilités. L'inquisition (mysogynie de masse) ne fut qu'une autre forme que prit l'oppression de la femme. Et tant qu'on n'aura pas pris conscience de notre oppression en tant que femme, on ne pourra comprendre ce qu'a été, et est encore, l'oppression de la sorcière.

Depuis deux ans, j'ai commencé une pratique privée de counselling féministe ou j'intègre la respiration du rebirth, le massage, le counselling émotionnel et spirituel. J'anime aussi des ateliers et des séminaires sur la sorcellerie féministe et sur d'autres sujets pertinents aux femmes.

Un de mes projets à long terme, est d'ouvrir des temples de (guérison naturelle) ou entre femmes nous pourrions prendre conscience de notre pouvoir — partager nos envies — nos peurs — nos colères — nos tristesses — célébrer nos joies — nos personnes — chanter — danser — crier — créer — créer un monde nouveau. Monde où la femme et tout ce qu'elle représente prendra une place d'honneur.

Alors le mot sorcellerie sera peut-être transformé en d'autres mots régis par la poésie du temps. En attendant "Sorcellerie vit".

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Bibliographie: Sorcellerie de Justine Glass. Ce livre ne traite pas de la sorcellerie féministe, mais plutôt de la sorcellerie dite "traditionnelle."

Drawing Down the Moon de Margot Adler. Excellent chapitre sur la sorcellerie féministe. Le reste traite du traditionnel.

Une excellente source d'informations sur la "sorcellerie de femmes" en français, est dans la revue "Les Sorcières". On peut se la procurer en écrivant à: LES SOURCIERES, C.P. 384, La cité Montréal, H2W 2N9 (9 numéros = 20 \$)

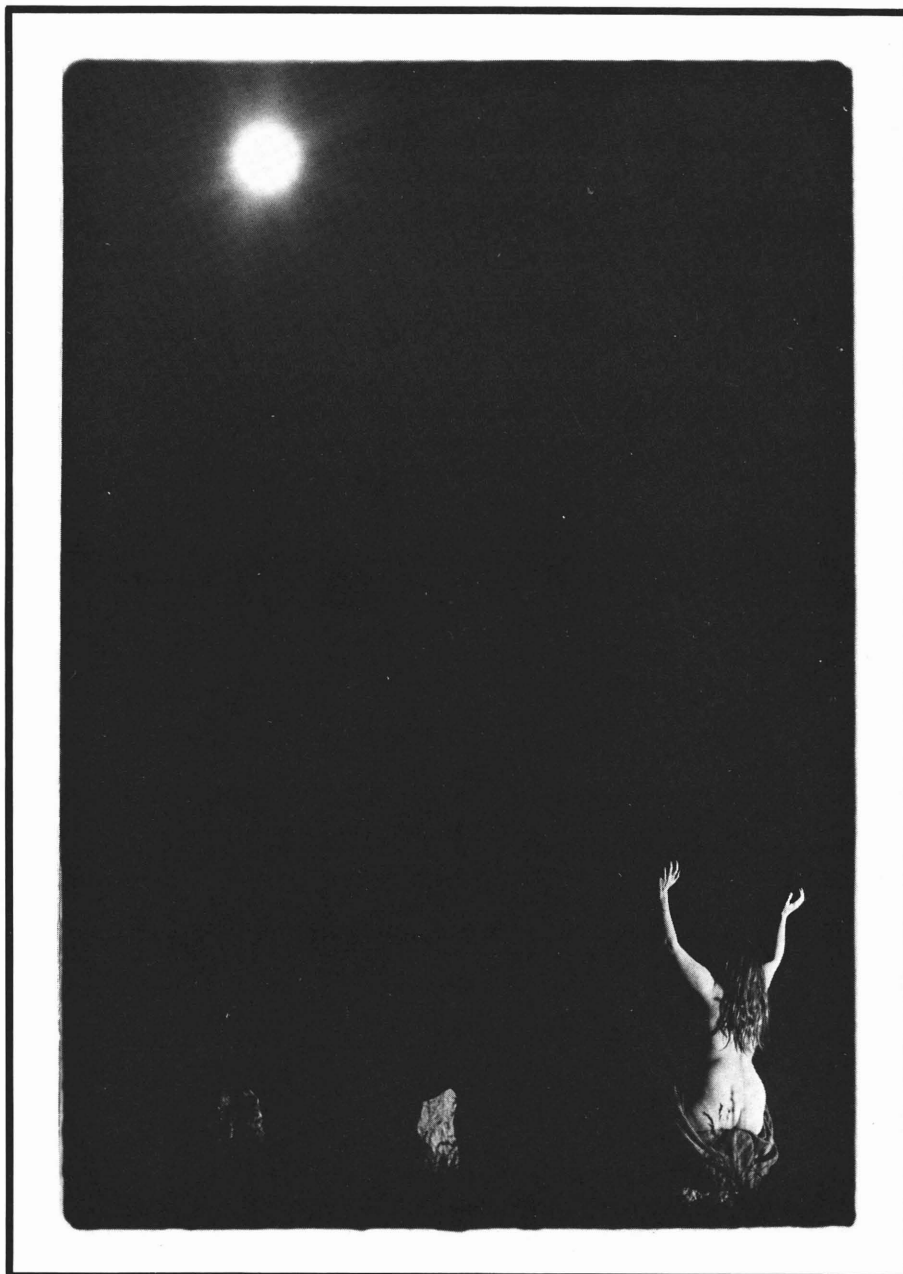


Photo: Janice Williamson

THE ROLE OF RITUAL IN CONSCIOUSNESS CHANGING

F. Tsipporah Nemani

En examinant de livre de Mary O'Brien, The Politics of Reproduction, l'auteure établit une distinction entre la conscience productive et reproductrice et la conscience immanente. La conscience productive porte sur ce qui concerne la subsistance et les besoins fondamentaux de l'existence, la conscience reproductrice, sur la continuation de la race humaine. La conscience immanente, elle, s'occupe de

l'humain en tant que partie de la nature.

Aujourd'hui, la conscience immanente s'exprime surtout à travers la religion. Les femmes doivent se demander quelle sorte de besoin est satisfait par la religion, et se rendre compte que de nombreuses féministes ont adopté des systèmes de croyance qui comprennent un dieu mâle. Le rituel est un élément important dans toute religion, et les féministes doivent en explorer le sens. L'auteure a assisté à deux rituels l'an dernier —

un service mené par une femme rabbin, et un cercle de la déesse dans un groupe de sorcellerie. Elle remarque que c'est par le rituel que l'intégration de l'esprit et du corps, et la réalisation que nous faisons partie de la Nature, nous permettront d'atteindre l'état de plénitude. Les femmes ont besoin, pour explorer leur spiritualité, de sentir qu'elles appartiennent à une communauté.

By articulating the historical dialectics of reproductive consciousness, Mary O'Brien (in her book *The Politics of Reproduction*) has placed feminist theory at the vanguard of social and political thought. We have now at our disposal not only the Hegelian-Marxist materialistic framework for the analysis of man-made history but a wider theory which enables us to analyse the social and political manifestations of two of the basic human necessities — reproduction and sustenance (subsistence). However, feminists who work within the discipline of social and political thought have failed to address directly another element of human consciousness — the consciousness of Immanence. Starhawk develops this concept in her book *Dreaming the Dark*: "The awareness of the world and anything in it as alive, dynamic, interdependent, interacting, and infused with moving energies, a living being, a weaving dance" (p. 9).

Immanent consciousness emphasizes nature and the human as part of nature. In other words, immanent consciousness is that part of consciousness that encompasses the knowledge or the pretension of knowledge of the energies of nature — what is nature and how does she work? What IS? At present I prefer to address this consciousness as a system of beliefs: myths, religions, folklore, prejudices, fairy tales, and everything else we may "know" but do not know exactly how or why we acquired this information. In this realm the oppositions between nature and culture, nature and nurture, individual and society, and many more can be examined dialectically with historical tools. However, these

conceptual dualities only indicate that the consciousness of immanence has also undergone patriarchal "revisions."

The consciousness of immanence is largely an uncharted territory; only now we are beginning to understand how pornography leads to acts of violence against women; how sexist advertisement degrades women; how a male image of god and sexist language lead to the devaluation of women as human beings; how fairy tales prepare young girls for second-class status in humanity; how self-perceived helplessness results in despair and inaction. Only now we are beginning to understand that freedom within patriarchal concepts of immanence is the freedom to distort, abuse, and destroy. We must free ourselves from this "freedom," and to do it we must transcend it.

We can do it through our own experience and understanding of the consciousness of immanence. In today's terms, the bulk of such consciousness is expressed through religion. Engel's observation that religion serves as opiate for the masses is correct but incomplete. We know how opium works physiologically to effect euphoria and addiction. Do we know why people, especially women, cling to religion? What kind of a basic need does religion satisfy? Is there a natural necessity that religion satisfies partially, or at least pretends to do so? I think so.

Ironically, Marxist ideology offers the masses the same brand of opium that religion does, in spite of the Marxist claim to atheism. The dictatorship of the proletariat promises the Garden of Eden once it achieves dominance throughout the universe.

We, as feminists, have generally recognized the power of the "opium" since we had to deal with basic patriarchal myths, with distorted "truth," with irrational logic classified as "speculative" or "metaphysic," in order to uncover the motivation and the means by which the patriarchy oppressed and still oppresses us. We may reject institutionalized religion and

the present available forms of ritual because of their discriminatory and oppressive aspects. However, the question still remains unanswered: what kind of need does religion fulfil? For some reason, rituals are associated with rigid conservatism and tradition. Are these associations concrete and real? Or are they just another smokescreen spread by patriarchs in order to maintain their supremacy?

I understand the world around me through the mind of an atheist. What this means in practice is that I did not and still do not accept any male authority's attempts to shape my beliefs and values. I have come to the realization that most women do not share my world view. Some women have different systems of beliefs and, if I want to interact with these women, I also have to take into account their beliefs; these beliefs sometimes include a male god. Thus the question is not whether a god exists, but in what god, if at all, a particular woman believes? The question of god is thus removed from a theological sphere and becomes a human exploration.

In the last year I participated in two rituals. (I must add that such participation occurred for the first time in my life.) One ritual took place in a coven and the second in a Jewish Reform synagogue. I went to the Jewish service because it was delivered by a woman rabbi. In the synagogue I watched a male don a silk *talit* (prayer shawl), kiss it, and sit down to pray. I said to a friend, "Do you realize how much this man values himself for being so privileged to wear something that he and society consider holy and sacred?" The service itself was prepared and conducted by the rabbi, and the lines interchanged between prayers in English and Hebrew. While the English lines were non-sexist and included a prayer to the spirit who was addressed as female, the Hebrew lines could not avoid being sexist in that the god was referred to as male and father. Unfortunately I know Hebrew too well. I did not

utter one word in Hebrew but I saw the other women — and their faces glowed with tears. It was a moment of participation and belonging to them, a moment of acceptance of oneself — a moment of privilege.

Orthodox Jewish men perform this ritual three times every day, Conservative and Reform men less frequently. It is only in the Reform synagogues that women are allowed to participate in rituals. In the other synagogues women are barred behind a wall or a curtain or put on a viewing balcony. The men practise their spiritual supremacy at the expense of their women. Yet some women cannot conceive of spiritual life as separated from the god whom they have learned to fear and love from early

childhood. Some women had positive experiences in domestic rituals and some women cherish their labour, which enables men to rise to the heights of godlike experience and affirmation. Can we say to these women that they must discard their experiences, their pattern of beliefs with which they feel comfortable and secure? I cannot. I can only hope that the women who choose to remain within the traditional structures will have the courage to change these so as to accomplish the affirmation of women as fully alive human beings.

In the coven, although the one I attended is hierarchically structured, we were part of one circle; we sang, we chanted, we laughed and joked, we collected our energy (gynergy), moved it around the

circle, let it flow and increase, and we also grounded it. I hesitated to participate at first since the experience was overwhelmingly strange; I was also upset at the time because of an unrelated incident. By the end of the ritual I was part of that flowing energy. I have reaffirmed my existence, my belonging to the human race, my self-worth, my ability to ground my awareness in my body. I was grateful because the energy healed.

According to Starhawk, the basic function of a ritual is to teach our bodies what our minds already know; it is an integrating experience in which the rift between body and mind can be healed. The balance that is achieved by this process gives a sense of completeness, wholeness, and well-being.

PATRIARCHY & GODDESS WORSHIP

Heather M. Ferguson and F. Tsipporah Nemani

Les auteures discutent du déclin du statut de la Grande Déesse, à l'origine suprême et unifiée, déclin causé par le système patriarcal. A travers un processus de division, chacun de ses pouvoirs et de ses aspects fut assigné à une déesse différente. La Déesse, à l'origine, était la nature dans tous ses éléments, et était donc à la fois permanente, immanente et changeante.

La Déesse Sumérienne Inanna représente une autre forme de déclin. Le fait qu'elle ait tellement d'attributs différents, souvent contradictoires et incohérents, montre qu'elle était à l'origine la Grande Déesse. En comprenant les déesses telles qu'Inanna, nous pouvons commencer à redécouvrir la Grande Déesse dans toutes ses manifestations.

The Great Goddess, the Queen of Heaven and Earth, was, for thousands of years, the primary deity of a large part of the world. Even after the gradual "patriarchal

takeover," when a supreme female deity was slowly demoted and replaced by a supreme male deity, Goddesses were worshipped, sometimes with state approval as in Ancient Rome's Magna Mater (Great Mother) cult, sometimes in fear and secrecy as in the Wicca (witch) religion of the Middle Ages. Indeed we suspect that there have always been Goddess worshippers. What, after all, is the cult of the Virgin Mary? Today many feminists are reviving Goddess worship, either through joining one of the Wiccan circles which can be found now in most major cities or, helped by the research of feminist scholars, developing their own version of Her rituals.

The task of recovering lost or hidden information about the Goddess and Her worship has been, and still is, an enormous one. Such sources as there are, are, to say the least, imperfect. Many of them have been destroyed by the male-

dominated religious establishments of the patriarchy; others have been so tampered with and altered that it is difficult for feminist scholars to reconstruct them. Still, much work has produced some results, so that we can now say that we are again beginning to know Her.

Originally the Goddess was one and eternal. She was creativity itself. She was nature in all its elements and processes, so that, far from being abstract and separate from the natural world, She was in and of it. Her essence was that She was both immanent and changing — as nature is both. And because She was nature, it was possible for humans to see Her as different aspects of nature — as moon, as sea, as earth, as tree. This possibility led gradually to the division of the one Goddess into many different Goddesses, all still retaining some indication of their original unity. The division of the One into the many inevitably diminished Her power, and this division was one of the ways that patriarchy found to demote and weaken Her. Her femaleness, Her biological cycle, which originally was a sign of both Her immanence and Her ability to transform, also was, by its very nature, divisible. Her aspect as young girl or daughter was separated from Her aspect as mature and