

Advanced Ritual Writing II: Re-purposing traditional Wiccan pieces

By Blayze

So now we have examined how to find mystery within your Book of Shadows, we can expand this technique to help us in writing Sabbat and Esbat rituals for small groups and covens. For the purposes of this workshop (and others I am presenting this weekend) I have created a fictional coven called The Coven Of The Spring Phoenix. They have 9 members, including an HP and HPS. I like small coven rituals to include the whole coven, rather than the HP and HPS doing and saying everything. This means that we need to apportion the parts. I have some ideas that relate to an 8 spoked wheel, so I need at least 9 people in my fictional coven. Writing for my own group, I would, of course, factor in the number of participants and guests attending and write the ritual accordingly. It is also pre-supposed that members of this fictitious coven have no problem in being asked to learn copious amounts of lines and will learn them well and with no complaint. I did say this was a fictitious coven!

However, the downfall of writing specific parts for a specific number of people is what happens when someone can't make it?

I have written beautifully balanced rituals for 6 people that I had to re-write a couple of days before for 5 people. I still prefer the 6 people version, but I was able to convert the pattern of energy from 3 couples to the Pentagram. I have also had to re-work rituals where one of the participants with the biggest part, lost his voice. As a ritual writer and co-ordinator, you have to be flexible. If you have a close knit group that is good at inspired utterance, then you can build that in to the ritual as well. This helps in having to re-assign parts at the last minute.

When you are preparing to write the Sabbat ritual, start by gathering any information about that sabbat from your BOS and/or Coven diary. Examine previous Sabbat rituals. Try to find the core theme of the Sabbat that you want to explore for this turn of the wheel.

If you are going to be writing an Ostara or Spring Equinox ritual, then you would make a list of all of the various aspects of Ostara and find the themes that speaks to you.

DISCUSS: WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THEMES OF OSTARA? [WRITE ON THE BOARD](#)

Eg. Balance, re-awakening etc.

You could then take your final list of themes and go through your BOS again to look for any references to those themes that are not linked to the Sabbat. We are, after all dealing with inspiration gained from re-purposing standard or traditional pieces.

So now we have a list of themes for our Sabbat. This means we can examine some of the structures or procedures we could use in the ritual. Later on we can then test these structures against the themes and vice versa, to find the core of the ritual.

Ritual Structures

Usually rituals follow a particular scenario of Circle cast / Quarters / power raising / invocations / celebration / cakes and ale and closings, with of course some variation according to specific traditions.

For Sabbat rituals you don't always have to use the same ritual structure with each action following on from the previous one in isolation. The ritual can have an overall story arc so that each ritual element or section contributes to the build up of energy, the story and the theme.

HAND OUT CHART: On the chart you can see a very basic outline of a typical ritual. In the ritual scenario we will be working with today, we will be creating a story arc that follows the more detailed outline on the right.

In this case we will have Set up / circle cast / Quarters / Central Invocation / Power Raising. We will break the Work Celebration section into a Poetic Statement of Intent / Creation of Coven Offering / Choosing Of the Maiden / Preparation of the Maiden / Invocation Of the Maiden then we move to Choosing Of the Young Stag / Preparation Of the Young Stag / Invocation Of The Young Stag. After this fairly lengthy process we now have a Priestess and a Priest who have been invoked upon. So we need to work out what to do with that, and in this case there will be the Empowerment Of The Young Stag by the Maiden, Symbolic Joining of Maiden and Young Stag, Lighting of the Fire. We will then move back into a more standard closing scenario with Cakes and Ale, Farewells and Closing the circle. The opening section up to the point of Power Raising and the Closing section from Cakes and Ale onwards are generally not re-written for the ritual, as they utilise a tradition's particular ways and systems of performing these tasks. The Power Raising and Cakes And Ale, both being on the edge, so to speak, of the traditional opening and closing, can be incorporated into the story arc of the ritual.

We will discuss different scenarios that could be used as well as testing them against our themes and story arc. Since ritual writing is not a very linear process, you can refer to the chart as we weave our way through the story we are

creating.

For example, you could make the power raising flow into the the story of the Sabbat. If you have a standard power raising chant, make it into a song or a dance that is different from the normal running around or dancing in a circle. You could have everyone beating time with staves or drums or bells. You could cover the staves with bells and then weave the staves together into a pentagram or other sigil, raise them up and lower them gently to the earth to ground the excess energy, still keeping them woven in an appropriate pattern. You could do this with brooms or wands or cords also.

Or you could have a candle dance, you could have each person carry a branch of a tree or a bunch of flowers that is significant to the Sabbat or to the coven. By significant to the coven, I mean that you could link the power raising to a coven totemic theme, and in the case of our fictional coven, that totemic theme would be the Spring Phoenix.

The objects used in the power raising can also be used as a linking idea or physical action somewhere else in the ritual. So keep that in mind as we work our way through the ritual writing process.

Poetic Statement Of Purpose

To compliment the story arc we could link the end of the power raising to a poetic statement of purpose for the ritual.

For example, instead of saying "it is the Spring Equinox and the Land is in balance between night and day", have each person declaim something poetic that describes the journey between the last sabbat and this one. Weave into the words the imagery of both the sabbat and the coven totem. This layers the themes and allows the covenors to feel ownership of their worship and ritual that binds them all together as a group.

Personally I find it easier to write the large chunks of poetry first and then place them into the ritual. I can then add in any additional dialogue to link ideas and get me to where I want to be. Then I can break the dialogue and poetry up into manageable chunks for each participant to say.

Of course I don't always get this right straight away. Sometimes I dig myself into a hole and have to abandon ideas. But this is part of the process. I may have only written six stanzas, but then realise when apportioning out the parts or voices, I really need eight stanzas to make it flow. So I can add new stanzas as I go, or I can take some out and use those stanzas, slightly reworked, elsewhere in the ritual. As you can see, this type of ritual writing is not necessarily a linear process... more spiral or weblike.

Here is an example of a piece of introductory declamatory poetry written on theme of the Phoenix. By the way, the totemic theme can be subtle, it is a thread within the story arc, not the be all and end all of the ritual. The layering of mystery does not have to immediately be obvious, it can build up slowly as a feeling and an awareness.

HANDOUT

*The silver'd star on silken thread
'twixt night and day doth swing
But where O where will it come to rest
When Winter turns to Spring?*

*For subtle is the journey
Of the ash and feathered flame
That drifts between the dusk and dawn
In search of Sun's bright ray*

*The feather flies on scented breeze
As silver'd star doth pause
In seeking for the Golden Child
With whom Solstice is reborn*

*For now the silver'd star doth swing
beyond the Earth and Sea
With mirror'd glimpse of other worlds
Where bone becomes the seed*

*Where feathered flame consumes the ash
As the firebird takes wing
To land upon the crown of He
Who heralds in the Spring*

*So seek now for the Golden Child
Who with wing'd crown displays
The changing seasons of the man
The King who rules the Day.*

This piece then is our link between the power raising and the main body of the ritual. It is a statement of purpose that takes a poetic and totemic form. It serves to keep the energies flowing and the mood appropriate. From this point, we can work out where to go next. Now traditionally, this may be straight into an invocation. However using the idea of the story arc and keeping everyone in the coven involved, we can create a group offering for the Sabbat and use this to choose our Invokees.

Coven Offering

For those of you familiar with the published version a traditional Ostara ritual as published in *Eight Sabbats For Witches*, it starts with a Sun Wheel upon the altar.

Janet and Stewart Farrar described theirs in *Eight Sabbats For Witches* as being a highly polished cymbal with flowers sitting in the central hole.

The sun wheel can also be a literal wheel with spokes. If you like you could use 8 spokes to represent the Wheel Of The Year.

If we go back to the discussion on using staves for power raising - you could combine this idea with the Sun Wheel. You can bind the staves together to form a wheel which is placed upon or behind the altar.

If someone in the coven has woodworking skills they may be able to make a wheel hub that can have short staves (or wands) inserted into it.

SEE FIGURE on HANDOUT

You could also use a Stang planted either behind the altar, in the Sabbat direction or in the centre of the circle and have a small wheel hanging from that. The wheel could also be ritually taken around the circle, presented to the Quarters and placed upon the altar.

You could also draw upon imagery in the Charge Of The Star Goddess. *"Let there be beauty and strength, power and compassion, honour and humility and mirth and reverence within thee"*.

8 virtues for 8 spokes of the wheel. If you are placing 8 objects into the wheel (i.e. spokes) then use that layered imagery of 8 virtues x 4 pairs and build that energy into your symbols, layering the meaning into an object that transforms from prop to tool and offering. These are virtues for the group, the Maiden and the Young Stag who will eventually become King. So thematically it works to weave this into the coven offering. We can then utilise this theme later on in the ritual if we wish.

Another way of using a Sun Wheel as a focus could be to start the power raising with a cord dance of 8 cords or 4 cords. These empowered cords are then tied to a wooden hoop in a wheel formation with the centres still looped. The wheel can then be decorated with flowers and offerings. You could have each person in the dance standing in for one of the virtues. I am starting to lean towards the idea of using the cord dance, hoop and weaving of flowers to create the sun wheel as it creates a nice spring theme.

SEE FIGURE ON HANDOUT

So we can hold onto these various ideas of stave dances, wheels constructed of wand lengths of wood or via cord dancing. As we write more of the ritual we can test each method against the story arc and theme to see what gives the best fit and flow of energy and story. We are dealing with a coven offering, but this is influenced by the method of power raising we end up choosing.

To recap. We know that we will have some kind of power raising that leads smoothly into a declamatory introductory poem. The poem will link the theme of the Sabbat and the coven totem, as well as acknowledging previous points upon the wheel.

This will then come together as layered energy to create an offering for the altar that also layers in aspects of what we need to balance in ourselves whilst also bringing in the virtues we to find in our Maiden and King.

We still need to eventually invoke upon our Maiden and Young Stag so that they can weave the journey and empower the changes that happen after the moment of balance. Of course we will need to ritually choose the Maiden and the Young Stag before we invoke upon them. So now we have to work out how we will choose them, and when we will choose them. We also have to work out whether the choosing is random within the ritual or if the Maiden and Young Stag have been pre-chosen in order to learn lines and prepare themselves.

Choosing the Maiden

There are many different techniques that we can use for choosing the Maiden, however not all techniques will fit into the overall story arc.

Let's examine some of the ways we could choose the Maiden. Since this is turning out to be a ritual of much poetry, it would probably be better if the Maiden is pre-chosen to give her a chance to learn the part. We can also build in some periods of inspired utterance. However, we would want the inspired utterance to occur after the invocation of the Young Stag. This is a slow build up of trance and energy and willing possession.

DISCUSS WAYS OF CHOOSING MAIDEN.

WRITE ON BOARD

One idea, that can also tie into the creation of the coven offering is for each person to take an object from the altar. This is pre-determined as they will have something to say about its relationship to the Sabbat. The last object (which has special significance for the Maiden) will be the one chosen / collected by the presumptive Maiden.

When she places her object(s) she can be questioned on this significance, whereby she comes to the realisation that she holds that mystery within her. She can then be asked if she will consent to be ridden by the Maiden.

When she says yes, she can then be properly prepared before the invocation.

Testing this method of choosing against our story arc, could this be a good way of linking the idea of the flowers woven into the sun wheel as the balance of the Spring Equinox, the power of the Maiden and the Stag, the Earth and the Sun? This could be another layer of mystery that also works to have the flowers physically collected and woven into the sun wheel. Remember we are trying to make all of the actions weave and transition smoothly from one to the next.

If we look at the language of flowers we may be able to work this idea into a way of choosing the maiden. The language of flowers does not, of course, directly correspond to the 8 "virtues" but this is a close approximation.

SEE HANDOUT

Beauty: Burgundy Rose
Strength: Fennel / Oak Leaf
Power: Sunflower
Compassion: Elderflower
Honour: Iris
Humility: Broom / Bluebell
Mirth Crocus
Reverence: White rose

Could it then be the Maiden who takes the Sun Wheel around?

When trying to find methods of choosing your invokees, you can also look at some of the existing and semi-traditional Wiccan poetry for inspiration. Sometimes you will find recurring acts and themes. I have found recurring references to dreams and to cups in Spring poetry and Retrospective poetry (such as Autumn charges and invocations). These ideas then start bubbling around in my brain as I try to find ways of using the themes as physical parts of the ritual.

An example of a Retrospective invocation that you could use for inspiration

SEE HANDOUT

*Once, long ago, My love
When we were first young
beneath the budding trees of spring
You gave me the Cup of Life to drink
And gave me yourself in equal measure*

Vivianne Crowley, *The God: Wicca And The Masculine*, Wicca Pg 162

This theme is also found in another piece by Vivianne Crowley.

SEE HANDOUT

*All belief comes from within,
and all truth is sought and found,
in the Cup of the heart,
and the Temple of the Spirit;*

Vivianne Crowley, 1994. *Earth Traditions*, Pg 215-216

The Temple of Spirit can be seen as the Temple of Akasha, but it is also contained within the centre of the circle. We could then take this as inspiration for the placement of the Cup of the Heart.

If we want our presumptive Maiden to drink from the Cup of the Heart, the magical well, the sweet spring waters, then the cup could be carried from the west, taken around the circle and spiralled into She who now stands in the Centre.

But we are constantly testing ideas against our overall story arc. Could the flowers to be woven into the Sun Wheel be taken from a cauldron of Spring Water? There could also be a chalice sitting within the cauldron. Maybe the Cup is the last object in the cauldron! So whilst the idea of the Maiden is represented by the flowers gathered and woven by the coven, the Presumptive Maiden is left with the cup and all its symbolic layers. She is questioned on this and found to hold within herself the aspects of the Maiden.

This is a theme found in another piece of Vivianne Crowley's poetry.

SEE HANDOUT

*The tides of Spring are upon us
when the Sun shall dance,
When water shall merge with fire
when the Maiden is made Mother
In the name of the Two and the One
We shall seek the mystery of unity.*

This really works as a precursor to what is to come later in the ritual, and takes the theme of cups and water and weaves it into the ritual. It also links into the idea of dancing for the Sun which we would be doing by weaving Gold cords into a wheel and dancing them.

I also mentioned that there is a theme of dreaming. If we want our Stag (when he is chosen) to dream of the Maiden, he can drink from the cup that in all things provides inspiration and love and wisdom. Another layering of mystery.

*the oak tree dreams of a god with horns
and knows no other king!*

Vivianne Crowley, Earth Traditions, pg 19

So we can use the opening idea of the sun and flower wheel whose energy is built up by the coven as an offering. This also functions as a way to choose the Maiden.

The cup can then be used in the ritual and its use can re-occur when the Stag is chosen. It can also then link to their joining either in reality or in token. Could we then bring in the ritual piece of male and female polarity poetry that was formed from ideas in the Book Of Shadows?

The loops and whorls and spirals of the brain can be exciting and fun.

We now have our Maiden chosen. It is she who takes the cup from the Cauldron.

We now have to decide if we will invoke upon our Maiden first and then choose the King, or if we will choose the King and then invoke on them around the same time.

DISCUSS – WRITE ON BOARD

In the overall story arc, I feel that having the Maiden already invoked upon before the Stag is chosen could work well. She can then aid in his empowerment.

So before we look at the methods of choosing the Stag, we will sidetrack ourselves into the realms of invocations. Besides, by doing this we may find inspiration or clues to how we can choose the Stag.

Invoking

But why are you invoking?

We are celebrating the journey of the Goddess and the God around the wheel of the year. We would like them to be present and to actively interact and participate with them in their journey.

Instead of just performing an invocation to the God and the Goddess, we want to make the choosing of the invokee and invoker, their preparation and the invocation itself part of the greater story of the Sabbat. Give the invocations a purpose, a reason that works thematically. So by working out how to choose the Maiden first, we have given ourselves a link to the preparation and invocation.

Here are some questions to ask yourself as we test our scenarios.

What is the story?

Who are we interacting with?

What are the aspects of deity that are revealed at this time / place on the wheel?

Will someone, or a pair, take on these aspects in the ritual?

How can we make this invocational aspect part of the story and part of the drama, the energy flow and the mood?

For inspiration, take a look at your BOS. Does it contain invocations, charges or rituals for this Sabbat? Are there any lines that speak to you in particular, that encourage revelation of a mystery that you would like to explore? We will have looked at these in finding our main theme for the Sabbat. We can now go back and examine them again looking for invocational ideas.

In our example, we are working with Ostara. It is a time of balance, but also a time where the Young God begins to take on his mantle of power. The mystery being that this occurs just after the moment of balance, as the Day and Sun's power is in the ascendant. A journey that leads to Midsummer where his power peaks.

So we can use our ritual aspects of male power and growth. This means that at some stage of the ritual we will need to invoke the God into a male. This would represent one of the peaks of the ritual, the main purpose being that change.

This is why we would probably invoke upon a female first so that she could aid the male in taking up the first vestiges of his power.

In some traditions it is also the time of the first mating of the God and Goddess - between the Maiden and the Youth. They are then married at Beltane when the Stag submits to joining not only with the Goddess, but with the Land.

Remember the piece we have already looked at in regards to the Cup?

SEE HANDOUT

*Once, long ago, My love
When we were first young
beneath the budding trees of spring
You gave me the Cup of Life to drink
And gave me yourself in equal measure*

Vivianne Crowley, The God: Wicca And The Masculine, Wicca Pg 162

Invocation Of The Maiden

For the moment we are working with the Maiden aspects, for at the heart of the story is the awakening of power in the male by the female. The awakening of the Goddess and The God as newly discovered sexual beings of polarity as well as balance. It is a story of young love and tentative meetings.

The taking on and preparation for assuming power is not unlike that of an initiation. So if you are of an initiatory tradition, then look for clues in your initiation rituals, look for ways to make this happen. You could also look at various ways of making magic and dealing with power, see how you can adapt the "lores" of your traditions.

Even though by now we have worked out how our Maiden will be chosen, there are still some questions we can ask ourselves as we continuously test our story.

Will the Goddess be invoked upon the HPS or another woman? How and when will this be done so that it fits within the story arc? Back and forth we go, filling in the blanks and building upon the journey. Will it be a priest or priestess that invokes upon the Maiden?

If you can't find an invocation in your BOS that really describes the aspect of the God or Goddess that you wish to be invoked, then find an invocation that has the rhythm and feel that you require. Use that as a basis to write your own invocation, keeping a line or repeated call intact.

Maybe there is a Charge that you like but don't really need, but it could make quite a good invocation. Use the themes of the charge and spin them around so that the theme of the Goddess speaking becomes the aspect of the Goddess you are calling. You can also apply this to Charges of the God when you are working on His invocation.

I sometimes find it helpful at this point to see what invocations will come to me as I start writing. Sometimes the newly written, or adapted, invocations will provide inspiration for the method and timing of the invocations. The invocation will let me know how it wants to be used. Other times, the invocations are written, or adapted to fit the method.

Our totemic theme for this ritual is the Phoenix. Can we use this image or form in a ritual way to enhance the energy, story and drama?

Are there lines of poetry that can be repeated and expanded upon?

In my research I found another poem by Vivianne Crowley that inspired the theme of this ritual.

SEE HANDOUT

*All belief comes from within,
and all truth is sought and found,
in the Cup of the heart,
and the Temple of the Spirit;
in the deep places of the forest,
where sunlight patterns the leaf-strewn floor,
and there is only the song of the birds,
to break the silence of the soul;
there shall we find our gods,
beneath tree and leaf and waving bough,
beneath sky and cloud and in wind and rain,
reborn of the ever-returning Sun
like a Phoenix from the Flame.*

Vivianne Crowley, 1994. Earth Traditions, Pg 215-216

This could very well be used before the invocation as part of the preparation of the presumptive Maiden before she is invoked upon. She could then use this before she invokes upon the presumptive Young Stag. Or it could be used by the HP as an instruction to the Stag. Repetition of poetic themes works well in ritual and again adds layers to the meaning and the energy.

Here are two invocations that I wrote a year before I started thinking about writing an Ostara phoenix ritual as an example for this workshop. I was just inspired by the theme of the AWC.

SEE HANDOUT

Invocation to the Maiden

*I call to thee O Maiden of the Moonrise
From beyond the silver'd sea
reflecting starlight, rainbow hue'd upon the flood*

*I call to thee O Maiden
By thy robes of girdled green
that bind the sickle of the birth and of the blood*

*With the crown of many flowers
bound thrice upon thy brow
Thou art rising Queen of verdant blooming*

*Thou art winged in spirit's flame
Seeking form within thy name*

As the wheel is bestowed thy loving kiss

*O Maiden of morning, rise up from ashes' dawning
Send thy sickle to cut the winter's thread*

*Send thy mantle to enfold the land a-warming
And thy steps to bloom the ground where 'ere thou tread*

Since we are dealing with two invocations within the ritual and the methods for discovering them or writing them are the same. Here is the Invocation to the Young Stag.

Invocation to the Horned One

*I call to thee O Horned One
From beyond the silver'd shore
that lies within the darkness' sweet embrace*

*I call to thee O Horned One
By thy golden ray of flame,
That bears the spear of kindred's summoned fate*

With the crown of many tines

*bound twice upon thy brow
Thou art rising sovereign to the Stars and jewelled sky*

*Thou art Winged in spirit's fire
Seeking form within desire*

As the wheel spins again from dusk to dawn

*O Horned One rise up from Winter's ashes
Send thy spark to match the amber birth anew*

*Send thy spirit to enchant the greening forest
And the magic of the land to be renewed!*

For the sake of getting on with forming the rest of the ritual, we'll take these two invocations as the ones used for this particular ritual.

Both of the invocations that I have written have references to the wheel in them.

For the Goddess: "As the wheel is bestowed thy loving kiss"

For the God: "As the wheel spins again from dusk to dawn".

This imagery, which when I originally wrote the invocations reference the Wheel Of The Year, can also serve dual purpose in referencing the Sun Wheel. The actual object could be bestowed a loving kiss and be spun from West to East as it spins from dusk to dawn.

This is how we build up ideas for our story arc.

In the invocation the Maiden is described as being girdled. Could you then have her bind the wheel with her girdle to form the Circle Of Life around the spokes? However we have the Sun Wheel of Cords tied to a hoop – so this fits the imagery as well. In this way we can have the presumptive Maiden be the person who places the hoop over the cords. Then again, the invocation also says

"Send thy sickle to cut the winter's thread".

So she binds the wheel but also cuts the thread of winter. We may be able to use this idea later in the ritual.

So we have the invocation but we still have to prepare the priestess who will become the Maiden.

Preparing The Maiden

We know the choosing method involves a Cup. So we can use that. I also want to use the piece of poetry that references the Cup of the Heart and the Phoenix. However, let's look at the invocations in more detail and see if we can find any other ideas.

"With the crown of many flowers, bound thrice upon thy brow"

We can use this as part of her preparation. She can be crowned. There is a matching line for the Invocation of the Horned God.

"With the crown of many tines bound twice upon thy brow"

Thus we have complimentary preparations of the Maiden and Stag.

Now we have our method for choosing the Maiden and our invocation. In between there is the preparation. Many traditions have particular methods for preparing an invokee. If you do have traditional methods you can then insert them or modify them for this section of the ritual. For this ritual we need to come up with a way of preparing the Maiden that we can discuss as a group.

DISCUSS: WHAT COULD BE SOME ACTIONS OR METHODS WE COULD USE TO PREPARE THE MAIDEN

Write on Board

We have the Cup so she could be asked to drink from it. The purpose of the Cup can be stated. I would say that just by incorporating the idea of a cup in the choosing, we really should find some way of using it in the preparation. But just drinking from the cup, whilst a powerful and symbolic action, is just one step.

Three is a good number for questions and answers. Are there any preparation methods that we could use one after the other?

She could be anointed, she could be robed or veiled and she could be crowned.

It will probably be the HPS who is doing the questioning. However it would be desirable for the rest of the priestesses to be involved, so any items that need to be brought to the HPS to use, could be brought by the other priestesses.

SEE HANDOUT

HPS: *Priestess, will you drink from the Cup of the Wine of Life? It was not within the well without purpose. It has called to you from the depths of your dreams.*

Maiden: *I will drink*

Maiden drinks.

PS1 comes forward and takes the cup. She places it upon the altar and returns to the circle.

HPS: *Will you open your heart and your mind to the fullness of Spring, to the tides and the rhythms of the earth?*

Maiden: *I will open my heart and my mind.*

PS2 comes forward with anointing oil. HPS anoints Maiden on heart and third eye.
PS2 replaces oil upon the altar and returns to the circle.

HPS: *Will you seek the mystery of transformation?*

Maiden: *I will seek the mystery.*

PS3 comes forward with circlet of flowers. HPS places the circlet upon Maiden's head.
PS3 returns to circle.

So the Maiden is prepared and instructed and then invoked upon – probably by the High Priest.

We can figure out the exact movement of everyone during the invocation when we write the ritual up.

For now we have an invoked upon Maiden. So we move from that into choosing the King. Here we would probably give some lines to the Maiden so that she can express her desire to find or choose her consort, since this is actually her purpose.

Choosing The King

Will the Maiden or HPS ask for a volunteer? Will the Stag be a champion of some task or game? Will he be the last person to take a sip from a cup, or light a candle?

To layer this once more, in the opening declamation of totemic poetry I mentioned, "*the silvered star on silken thread, twixt night and day doth swing*". This actually refers to a pendulum swinging between daytime of balance where the future is unknown.

Tying that then into the theme you could use a pendulum hung from the Sun Wheel. Could this then be how the King is chosen?

How could we use a pendulum and Sun Wheel that has been built up with coven energies, to choose our King?

DISCUSS WRITE ON BOARD

As with the Maiden, we probably will have to pre-choose the Stag King. He will also have lots of lines. So on second thought, whilst the Pendulum would be a funky method of choosing the King, we probably need a simple and elegant solution.

The Cup would be great, but since the Maiden was chosen that way, it would be nice to use the cup after He is chosen, so she can use it as part of his preparation. So the cup as a method of choosing doesn't really work either.

At this point, we would probably have the Maiden in the centre of the circle after she has been invoked upon, everyone else would be standing around the circle. What if then, she declares that she is seeking for the Sun?

SEE HANDOUT

Maiden: *The tides of Spring are within me
and the Sun shall dance
when water merges with fire.*

*But where is the Sun?
I see him not!*

She could then begin to dance slowly around the circle calling the Sun to her. One of the priests can then start following her around the circle as she has awoken this aspect within him, the first stirrings of lust and joy – for what else is the essence of spring? When she notices him she can spin him into the centre and question him.

We could then bring in the dream motif that was mentioned earlier. He could justify his following her by relating a dream and awoken memory of her.

This could be handled in back and forth dialogue, that all the time builds the tension between them. He can start by being deferential, but come to almost match her in passionate strength. She draws his sovereignty to the surface until finally she challenges him and asks if he is willing to take his place as the Sun, to drink from her Cup, to be crowned and transformed. Again we are layering the energies with multiple meanings and mystery.

This then can echo her own preparation. So we could look at lots of different methods for preparing the Young Stag. However since we have already examined preparations for the Maiden, there is a symmetry in using a similar method for him.

Preparation Of the Young Stag

We will need to have him drink from the Cup. She was crowned so so should he be. She was asked if she was willing to be transformed, so that should be there too.

However, he is also representing the flame of phoenix, and the flame of the Sun. So it would be good to use flame in some way as part of the preparation.

Since we had the Priestesses assisting the HPS in the Maiden's preparation, we could have the Priests bring the objects to the Maiden as she prepares the Stag.

I would suggest having him first consecrated by a candle flame. The Maiden could draw a sigil before him with the flame. Then the cup and then the transformation enacted by being crowned.

SEE HANDOUT

Maiden: *Then you shall be properly prepared.*

PR1 brings candle to the Maiden. She draws a sigil with the flame in front of the Stag.

She hands the candle back to PR1 who places it on the altar and returns to the circle.

Maiden: *Are you willing to drink from the Cup of the Wine of life?*

Stag: *I am willing to drink. For once long ago, my love
when first we were young beneath the budding trees of springtime
you gave me the Cup of Life to drink
And gave me yourself in equal measure.*

PR2 brings cup from the altar. Maiden gives it to the Stag to drink from. She then hands it back to PR2 who places it on the altar and returns to the circle.

Maiden: *Are you willing to seek the mystery of transformation?*

Stag: *I am willing to be transformed.*

HP brings crown from the altar and gives it to the Maiden, who crowns the Stag. HP returns to circle.

Thus is he prepared. It is the Maiden invoking upon the priest. So is there anything she can do to him during this that ties in with her journey?

DISCUSS

Remember the Sun Wheel that she placed before the altar. This was an offering that could be literally tied into the drawing down of the Sun into the Priest. Bringing the story arc full circle, she could have the Sun Wheel bound to the Priest as he stands with his arms upraised, legs apart, ready to receive the invocation. The central knot of the Sun Wheel could be placed over his solar plexus. He literally becomes the Sun Wheel during the invocation.

Again we are laying energies and patterns into the ritual story arc.

So if we go with this idea, at the end of the invocation the Maiden could kiss the central knot of the Sun Wheel, which harks back to the Invocation upon her which states *“as the wheel is bestowed thy loving kiss”*. They are also awakening sexual power within each other, so the Maiden can move to him as he is still bound, and hold the Sun Wheel between them as she echoes his stance. She can then kiss him to seal in the invocation.

If we used Vivianne Crowley's poem of the Cup and the Phoenix for the Maiden's preparation, she can then use a couple of lines from it after she kisses the Stag.

SEE HANDOUT

Maiden: *Thou art reborn of the ever returning Sun
Like a Phoenix from the flame.*

Now we have tied the choosing, preparation and invocation of the Young Stag into the precursor of joining together the Maiden and the King. He can be unbound. We now need something for our Maiden and Young Stag to do together. This would be a good time to set things on fire.

The Climax: Setting Things On Fire

Both the Maiden and Stag have been transformed, so we can use the phoenix and fire theme as an act of transformation for the world around us. The setting free of the energies of spring.

The Ostara ritual in its traditional invocation kindles fire. What can we burn? Do we have a fire already laid that the Maiden and Stag can light together or are we using a cauldron of meths? Are we indoors or outdoors? Should we set the sun wheel on fire?

Early on in the workshop I decided to go with the cord version of the Sun Wheel, rather than one made of sticks. If we wanted to set that Sun Wheel on fire we could make it out of paper twine spun into cords and make sure that the hoop is wood or cane.

Would it actually be appropriate to set the Sun Wheel on fire? Can we build this into the story arc and the drama and the energy?

Would it be more appropriate to wrap a blown egg or crystal egg in golden or red tissue paper and set it alight in a small cauldron. That way you would could have a fast burning fuel that leaves an egg sitting amongst the ashes – which is appropriate for Ostara and for the Phoenix imagery.

DISCUSS **Write on Board**

So how can we work this into the ritual?

I'm starting to think that setting the Sun Wheel on Fire may be a bit strange at this point. Maybe we could save it and set it on fire at Litha.

We left our Maiden and Stag at the point where they had joined with the Sun Wheel between them.

If we want to go with the Egg burning scenario, how do we get them to this point?

Let's look at what we need to do this, the actual physical objects.

1. An egg wrapped in tissue paper
2. a small cauldron to burn it in
3. a source of flame
4. a taper to light the paper

DISCUSS Write on Board

We don't want to break the flow so the easiest way to achieve this would be to have the Stag say something about kindling fires.

eg. *Let us kindle the fires together my love, so that the ashes of my renewal may be carried far upon the sweet scented breath of Spring.*

The Maiden can agree and the coven can bring the object to them. The Maiden could be given the egg, the stag the paper. A priest can light a candle from the God flame, and a priestess light a candle from the Goddess flame.

The Maiden and Stag wrap the egg and place it in the cauldron. They are given the flames and light the paper together.

The cauldron of ashes could be taken around for each person to do something with. This would also be a good place to have inspired blessings given by the Maiden and Stag.

Cakes and Ale

Whilst normally it would be the HP and HPS who perform cakes and ale, in this scenario it would be good for the Maiden and Stag to perform this. The HP and HPS could bring them the Cup etc and after the blessing take it around the circle.

We could also have them perform the blessing of the cakes. However since we have invoked upon the Maiden and Stag it would probably be better to gently ease them out of their invoked states by thanking them and slowly removing their Crowns as invoked aspects, before they eat of the cakes.

One method that could work well is to take them around the circle and honour them from each direction, when they get to the West (which for us is a place of Sunset and farewell) their crowns could be removed. They then join the circle as the HP and HPS bless the cakes.

They can then use the act of eating as a final grounding.

DISCUSS: DOES ANYONE ELSE HAVE IDEAS FOR HOW TO BRING OUR MAIDEN AND STAG FROM THEIR INVOKED UPON STATE?

From final act of eating the Cakes, the ritual can then be closed in the normal traditional manner.