

"BASIC BLOT CONSTRUCTION"

Why bother? It is good to know why we are doing a blot before we begin. I have devised a simple mnemonic device to help explain the purposes of ritual. This device is the word **CARE**. This stands for **Connect**, **Affirm**, **Remind**, **Ease**. These are the essential functions of any ritual. **Connect** means to renew our sense of connection with nature, the cycle of the seasons, our ancestors, and the Gods, as well as our sense of kinship with each other. **Affirm** means to note those special passages of our lives, birth, marriage, profession of faith, and death, as well as other special occasions, such as a great personal accomplishment one wishes to celebrate. **Remind** means reminding ourselves of our interconnected-ness with all things, our dependence on the blessings of our Gods, our duties to one another, and also to pay attention to such things as the passage of seasons and the great cycles of life. **Ease** describes those rituals that help us through difficult and painful times in life, such as the death of a loved one. A good blot will always include at least one of these elements.

What makes a good blot? One of the things we have to be concerned with when doing a blot is that it is having its desired effect. For a blot to really work, people must come away feeling changed in some way: inspired, refreshed, excited, or calmed. If a blot does not achieve this, then it is a wasted blot. To make sure a blot will work, it must include not only intellectual stimulation, but it must also provoke a psycho-emotional response as well. This can be achieved in several ways, including using drumming, clapping, and rhythmic chant. A dramatic reading of a myth, legend, or poem can also raise people's spiritual energies. The ultimate goal of really good blot would probably be to induce a state of ecstasy in the participants.

What are the basic tools needed for blots? Ultimately, all one needs to perform a blot is some liquid to be blessed, something to hold it in, and someplace to pour it. Everything else just adds to the convenience and ambiance of the blot. However, although trappings and equipment are not essential, good blot set-up can help immensely in producing the change of consciousness that we are trying to achieve. The most typical blot "tool-kit" then, includes a *stalli* or *harrow* (the altar), a *bolli* or blessing bowl, into which the consecrated liquid will be poured, a horn or other cup to hold the liquid while it is being blessed and passed around, a vessel to hold the liquid before it is poured into the horn. You also should have a *teinn*, or evergreen twig, with which the blessed liquid is sprinkled on participants. You may want also to have *recels* (incense) and a way of burning it. You can also include holy items including figurines of the deities being honored, hammers, words, spears, rings, wagons, horses, cats, ships, and so on. You can be as simple or elaborate as you like.

What is the basic structure of a blot? For a blot to work well a structure must be used that helps participants progress from their mundane, worldly state of mind to a state of spiritually excited consciousness. McNallen, one of the pioneers of modern heathen religion, has developed a framework that works very well magically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. The steps to a basic blot are as follows: **Hallowing**: First the space in which the blot is performed must be blessed. This action simply clears the area of unwanted spiritual energies and entities, and

dedicates it for the period of the blot to the service of the Gods. This is done by fumigating the area and participants with recels, and setting a holy sign, such as the hammer-sign or a particular rune, at the *aetts* (four or eight directions). A *galdor* or verbal incantation can be spoken at this same time. Not only does hallowing cleanse and prepare the area, it also begins the process of altering participants' mindset.

Calling: This can also be called the invocation. In this stage, we invite the Gods to participate with us in our blot Never, NEVER do we command our Gods to attend to us! Not only is this incredibly rude; in the case of someone like Thorr, it could even be foolhardy! Also, I personally like to emphasize in my call that the Gods are making us aware of their presence. I don't agree philosophically with the notion that the Gods are traveling from somewhere else to come and be with us; I believe they are always with us, and in blot we are just made especially aware of their presence. During the call is also the first time participants might be asked to participate, perhaps in a chanted invocation, or at the very least by greeting the Gods with a hearty "Hail!"

Rede: This section of the blot allows the presiding member to explain the purpose of the blot through either a reading from the mythology, or through a personal message. This is an opportunity to raise the participants' spiritual energy level by emphasizing the theme of the blot and tying it into everyday life. It can be a chance to expound on the great mysteries underlying our religion, or to verbalize the connective, affirmative, reminding, or easing functions of the blot. As said before, a story, a poem, or even a song can be used to advantage in this section. If a song with a repeated chorus is appropriate, then the participants could be asked to join in on the refrain.

Offering: At this point in the ritual, an offering is made to the Gods. This can take the form of the first "drink" of the liquid being utilized, or it can be some other offering, such as a loaf of bread, some pennies, or whatever other thing seems appropriate. In some situations, it may also be appropriate for each participant to make their own personal offering at this time. This offering, whatever it may be, should be given completely to the Gods; i.e., if you are offering liquid, pour it out on the ground; if bread, crumble some on the ground. These gifts are not to be "symbolically" given and then taken away again--they belong to the Gods.

Blessing: After the offerings have been made to the Gods, we ask them for their blessings on us. Usually this is done by asking them to pour their might and *megin* (spiritual magical force) into the liquid in the horn. Sometimes a holy sign, such as the hammer-sign or a rune, can be drawn over the liquid. Some of this liquid is then poured into the blessing bowl, and the teinn is used to sprinkle it first on the harrow or stalli, then on the participants. (As a practical matter, glasses-wearers may want to remove them at this time.) Other things can also be blessed. Food items, such as bread or boiled eggs, can be blessed, to be eaten by the participants, thereby taking the might and megin of the gods into themselves. Blessed items can also include holy tokens to then be worn or carried, holy items for someone's personal altar, or areas of land can be blessed, asking the Gods to watch over, protect and make fruitful that place. Seed can be blessed to be later planted in people's gardens, thus transferring the Gods' might to that garden.

After the liquid has been sprinkled, then the horn is passed to each participant so that each person may drink and thus take the Gods' might and megin into themselves. At that time, it is very appropriate for the person drinking to offer a toast to the God or Gods, a boast or swear an oath.

Closing: After the blessing, the essential work of the blot is done. The Gods are thanked for their participation for sharing their presence with us. They are thanked for their blessings. They are wished "Farewell" in each of the aetts, and the holy sign set in the aett during Hallowing is taken down. After closing, feasting and fellowship is appropriate. If the blot was done indoors, at this time any offerings should be taken outside and given to the Gods by placing it on the earth, in a stream, or burying it.

This, then, is the basic how and why of performing blots. The basic framework can be added to, although I wouldn't subtract any of the steps listed here. It can be as elaborate or as simple as you like, or the situation seems to demand. A blot can be done in a very quick and simple way if needed, or it can involve much planning, and include elements of theater, song, riddles, or what have you.

Remember, too, that although blots are very important and serious occasions, in most cases they are not meant to be somber, quiet affairs. Our Gods love laughter, happiness, and good times. Don't be afraid to laugh, sing, and even dance during blots. Let the occasion and the appropriateness of your actions be your guide, and perform blots with joy, and dedication, and love for the Gods of our mighty Folk.

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