

The Magical Writer

Session 2 — Invoking Characters and Allies

What if I could close my eyes, breathe deeply, call on the names of my fictional characters — and they would step forth from the mists and tell me their stories, fully formed, exactly at the speed I can type?

If I could do that, I could quit my day job! Sadly, it's not quite that simple. But I've found that characters *can* be invoked, can join us in our work, and are excited to share their stories with us.

Invoking Magical Allies

We're familiar with ancestor and deity invocations from our ritual work. We know the power of calling their energy and their wisdom into our circle.

Our cultural ancestors can be powerful allies to our art. When I was writing about the English Revolution, I invoked a whole circle of ancestors from the mid-1600s, from Cromwell and Milton to the Digger and Leveller pamphleteers.

Ancestors can anchor our circle — I often find specific ancestors in particular directions, sometimes quite specific (one appears at north-by-northwest).

Who or what spirits anchor North for you? Which are in the East, direction of expression, of new beginnings? Which tend toward the West and hold emotional or liminal gifts and challenges?

Invoking Characters and their Energies

Deities and ancestors sometimes represent the “encapsulation” of particular energies. For instance, Susan B. Anthony might encapsulate the spirit of the Suffragettes. Invoking her might call forth an entire transformational movement.

Similarly, fictional characters often represent types of energy. Elinor represents “sense,” Marianne “sensibility.” Frank Hardy is cool and collected, Joe Hardy is hot-headed and impetuous.

Just as we can invoke different energies by calling different deities or ancestors, we can tap into the energetic movements of the universe via our fictional characters. If I invoke a quiet but passionate character, I am calling on that sort of energy in the wider world to coalesce and speak to me.

In my experience, the messages I hear are seldom linear or narrative — it's more like hearing excited kids describing their experiences at summer camp. Ideas and inspirations come flooding out, from literal descriptions to mythical overlays. My work is to take this raw material and refashion it into narrative prose.

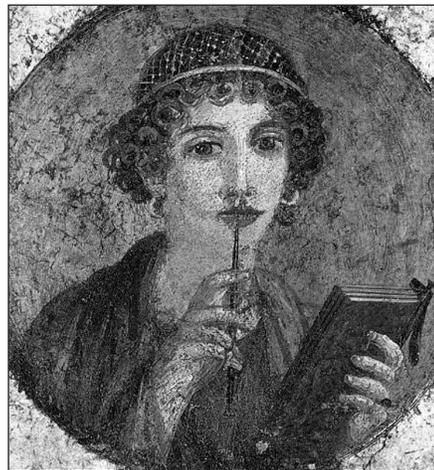
See page 2 for exercises

The Magical Writer

A Writing Intensive
in the Reclaiming Tradition

With George Franklin and Guest Teachers

Want to write a novel, memoir, or other narrative? Want to jump-start your writing, regardless of the style? Let Reclaiming magic help!



Magical Writing Ancestor — Sappho, mosaic from Pompeii, c. 50 AD.

We'll look at the craft of writing and the emotional blocks that keep us from reaching our full artistic potential.

We'll meet in sacred space, share writing and support over the web, and gain understanding and skill from working with others. Writing can be an isolating practice - we'll use magic to weave a web of support and encouragement.

With magical tools such as circle-casting, ancestor invocations, trances, and spell-work, we'll free our expressive gifts and strengthen our belief in ourselves as artists.

We will also work on writing that expresses our unique voice, creating plot-structures, developing characters, and other aspects of the writers' craft. Each class includes directed writing time.

Class is suitable for those working on writing projects who want a supportive circle and new inspiration, and those looking to begin the process. Although you'll determine your own work-pace, be prepared to dedicate time to your writing, and to write for at least ten minutes each day.

For more information, contact George, <george@directaction.org>

George Franklin is a Reclaiming teacher and co-editor of Reclaiming Quarterly. He has written several novels and published one (visit directaction.org), and helped edit work by writers such as Cynthia Lamb, T. Thorn Coyle, and Starhawk. Magic is a key part of his creative process.

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Exercises — Session 2

Invoking Characters

Ground and cast a circle. Call any allies you wish. Then try calling a character from your writing.

Maybe the character shows up and starts chattering. Maybe you have to watch patiently for ripples in your energetic circle.

I learned by experience to invite characters to the edge of my circle, not inside. I ask for their presence and support, not for them to take over my consciousness.

Characters don't typically speak to me in linear prose. It's more like an energetic presence within which I write. I feel encouraged or nudged in certain narrative directions, and can feel a pervasive delight as I develop the energy into a readable story.

I strengthen my contact by reading about the period or situation of a character, or by using divination to help me "listen." (See column three for Tarot ideas.)

Aspecting and Channeling?

If we can invoke characters, why not try to aspect or channel them? Probably for the same reason we don't typically try to channel deities or ancestors. Strange things may happen, but coherent expression is not always high on the list.

Still, why not try writing within a meditative or trance space, where I invite a character to speak through me? I wouldn't expect Pulitzer-winning prose, but it may be a way to generate raw material.

If you're going to write within trance, find a partner and take turns, so someone is tracking mundane reality. Afterward, reground into the daily world with familiar food, a bath, a movie, etc.

Ancestor Magic

The Tree of My Writing

Draw a simple tree-trunk about 2 inches tall in the center of a page.

From its base, stretch a bunch of root-lines. On each line, write an influence on your writing: authors, teachers, friends, animals, clouds, moments of power and beauty...

After you have a dozen or so, stop, re-read them, and breathe into their gifts.

Now draw some branches from the top of the trunk. Label them with things you want from your writing.

Read them and breathe. Then let your eyes run from roots to branches, over and over, seeing and feeling the flow. Breathe and ground the energy into your center.

Honoring & Invoking Ancestors

Are there writing-ancestors that I want to call to my circle? What gifts or challenges am I asking them to bring? What gifts (food, altar items, etc) do I offer?

As with invoking characters, my own practice is to invite them to the *edge* of the circle, and not within. I am listening, not channeling.

Ancestor Etiquette

I ask: Is this ancestor truly "mine" to call back? Is there a history of cultural appropriation that I risk perpetuating?

Am I hearing *all* of the ancestor's story, or just the parts I like? I might use Tarot and other tools to open to the whole story.

Is the ancestor asking something of me beyond my writing? What is my response?

Writing Exercises

Ancestor Writing

Try writing a page in the style of a favorite ancestor. Try it as serious writing and/or parody. Try capturing their dialog.

Ben Franklin would find a piece of writing he admired, make an outline, and then set it aside. A while later he would try, from the outline, to rewrite the original prose. Of course, Ben Franklin is not usually considered a great stylist. But his books are still in print, so maybe it's worth a try.

Rant-Writing

Take a minute and come up with a topic that you would like to rant about.

Now spend 3-5 minutes spewing. Don't try to be linear, grammatical, or coherent. Just vent your thoughts and feelings.

Take a breather. Then, working from your rant, construct a scene (or part of one) in which this material is voiced.

Try it as dialog, or as interior monolog. Where does it take place? Can you bring some conflict into the scene? What is at stake for the character(s)?

Character Tarot Reading

Draw some cards for your character, and scribe the reading. See Session 1 handout for a model reading, or use your own.

What if the character asks a question about themselves, and you give them a reading? Can you assist the character in their journey of self-discovery?

After a break (a short while or a couple of days), try invoking your character, then writing from your tarot-notes.