

creating a feeling of balance. I, for one, will gladly receive the support—but not the leadership—of men who have a feeling for what has to be done “according to necessity.”

Elemental Poem

EAST WEST NORTH SOUTH
EARTH AIR FIRE WATER

We turn to the East: AIR
Blue space—breathing—the kiss of life
The wind driving sails and waves across the ocean
Impelling clouds across the sky.
Blowing away the cobwebs at Cape Spear
We take deep breaths and laugh.
Meditation on the breath
I watch your breathing as you sleep.

Otherwise:

Difficulty in breathing, the poisoned air
Tear gas, poison gas in the trenches
Coughing up one's guts
Emphysema, asthma, bronchitis
Choking, throttled, the breath stopped
The air that kills.

We turn to the South: FIRE
The singing kettle on the hearth
Cooking: the bubbling pot of beans
The barbecue that friends and neighbours share
The camp fire, sitting in a circle
Glowing coals, warmth in winter
Making love by firelight
Candles burning before the shrines
Solar energy
The fiery sunset flowing red
The stars dancing round the sky.

NOTES

1. Adapted from a speech intended to stimulate thinking and discussion, written for the conference on Women's Alternatives for Negotiating Peace, held June 5-9, 1985, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Otherwise:

Smoke from the death camps: Auschwitz
The burning of people
Witches burned alive in the burning-times
The mushroom cloud at Hiroshima
Bombed houses catching fire in Philadelphia
Napalm burns on screaming children
Caught in cross-fire
Fire that destroys.

We turn to the West: WATER
First element, the waters of life
The sea womb of the Mother Goddess, giving birth
To strange creatures, bearing exotic cargoes
Aphrodite rises from the foam
The waterfall tumbling over cliff
The holy well, the sacred spring
That heal our spirits
Swimming in the sunset
Immanence is light on water.

Otherwise:

The flood that destroys, the burst dam
The raging sea, sailors drowning
The Ocean Ranger gone, bodies never found
The water cannon on the protest march
Polluted lakes killing fish; mercury poison
The poisoned water that kills.

We turn to the North: EARTH
Gaea, Mother Earth, the Deep-Breasted One
The nurse of seedlings, infusing the blossoms

Forming the fruit
 Digging our gardens
 Manuring, tilling, sowing seeds
 Until the bean hangs on the vine
 Until the lettuces fan out their delicate leaves
 Carrots, potatoes plump and swell
 The fertile earth, abundantly feeding her children
 At the last our final resting-place.

Otherwise:

The parched earth, desert, famine
 The rain forests cut down
 Defoliation—stripping the earth
 Chemical warfare where nothing grows

The earth poisoned with PCBs
 Eroded soil, the waste land
 The bomb—nuclear winter
 The poisoned earth.

EARTH AIR FIRE WATER

Essential elements, natural sources, re-sources:
 Extract, extort, exploit, rape, destroy, kill
 Or reverence, worship, conserve the sacred grounds of being?

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[This poem was written and performed as a ritual for a
 Women's Peace Celebration, L.S.P.U. Hall, St. John's, 20
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