

Preface and Introduction to Undines: Lessons from the Realm of the Water Spirits, © 2011 published through North Atlantic Books.

Preface

The natural world abounds with elemental beings composed of water, air, earth, and fire. Undines are nature spirits composed of the water element. It has not been easy to describe the undines in this book. In thirty years of magical practice, I have met perhaps ten individuals who interact on some level with these beings. Not only are undines poorly represented in literature, religion, and folktales, but direct experience with them is quite rare as well.

If we turn to religion, it is only in a few instances that we find any discussion of nature spirits. Interaction with these beings, even in nature religions such as among Wiccans and Druids, often occurs only indirectly or at a distance. There are Sufi masters and Hindu yogis whose religions have historical references to these beings. But again you will be hard-pressed to find a Sufi master or a swami who can say, “Oh yes, last Tuesday I spent some time with a salamander as I was learning to control fire” or “A sylph instructed me on how to change the course of a hurricane.”

As a result, I have turned to art. I present entertaining stories and dialogues rather than discussing rituals and employing esoteric diagrams and symbols. If I can entertain, then at least on this level I am communicating something. Life is magical. Our sense of awe and wonder constantly reminds us of the primacy of perception, the delight of mutually shared empathy, and the power of intuition. There are kingdoms that have yet to be explored within the depths of our feelings.

I suspect there remain a few problems on earth that can only be solved through magic or high levels of applied spiritual power. In my mind, such problems include replacing war with peace and limiting the use of weapons of mass destruction. It is these issues involving survival and establishing justice that motivate me. The undines offer gifts that contribute to these ends—developing a direct, heart-to-heart connection

to anyone else on earth and taking one's deepest desires and transforming them in ways that are both satisfying and fulfilling.

Introduction

Undines

Undines are part of oral traditions, historical literature, and mythology. They go by various names: water sprites, water spirits, water nymphs, nixies, naiads, ondines, and so on.

Undines are sometimes considered to be half fish in their lower extremities and half woman in the upper; this image comes to mind especially when undines are called mermaids. In other legends, it is said that if an undine wishes to assume human form, she can enter the body of a woman at the moment of death. Restoring the body to health, the undine then lives out the rest of her days in the appearance of a human woman. In this case, she can marry a man. In some of these stories, if the man is unfaithful to her, they both die. At death, the undine returns to her own domain within the ocean.

The undines described in this book are not half fish and half woman. They are not attached to any well, lake, river, or ocean. No religion, race, or ethnic group has an affiliation with them. They do not belong to mythology or to the past. They do not need to be protected or sentimentalized. They are neither inferior nor fragile. They are not an endangered species.

They are in the form of beautiful women and are masters of the magic of water and magnetism. They embody and guard treasures of empathy, sensuality, and love that the human race has yet to discover. In this regard, they are our teachers.

The Wonders and Dangers of Fairy Realms

Collectors of folktales such as W. B. Yeats in Ireland or the Brothers Grimm in Germany did not have to worry about any dangerous side effects for their readers. But they did have to worry about being accused of promoting superstition or of being enamored with occult mysticism. As a consequence, they went out of their way to remain academically detached. They presented their stories as carefully recorded collections

of folktales and children's stories that were intended to enrich language, art, and literature.

Still, if someone recounts for us a story about a nature spirit, how are we to take it? Are they making it up? Perhaps they dreamed it or, like some elderly people, confuse fact with fiction.

In his introduction to *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland*, W. B. Yeats says that in his collection of tales he has "tried to make it representative ... of every kind of Irish folk-faith" while avoiding any kind of rational interpretation. Yeats goes on to quote a response Socrates made in the *Phaedrus* when asked about the tale in which "Boreas is said to have carried off Orithyia from the banks of the Ilissus.... I beseech you to tell me, Socrates, do you believe this tale?" In response, Socrates reviews the various legends relating to this story and the various interpretations of it. He points out that for those who believe this allegory, there is the further problem of having to continue on to ponder an entire array of similar monsters that are utterly inconceivable.

Socrates then says, "Now, I have certainly not time for such inquiries. Shall I tell you why? I must first know myself, as the Delphi inscription says; to be curious about that which is not my business, while I am still in ignorance of my own self, would be ridiculous.... I want to know not about this, but about myself."

It is ironic for Yeats to make this reference. Yeats, like William Blake as well, was a registered and active member of a Druidic order. In quoting Socrates on fairies, Yeats is hiding the fact that he had performed rituals that attempted to interact with these beings.

And as for Socrates, I think he was asking the wrong question. The only way to know the self is through encounters with others and with the world around us. For me, a better question is, "What is it to be fully alive?" Socrates never sat in the forest and became the rock, the tree, the stream, the wolf, and the deer in his mind. Enjoying his own eloquence and the delight of confounding others with his questions, Socrates did not explore the boundaries of sensory perception.

Humor me for a few moments and consider the possibility that undines lurk just outside of the normal range of human perception. If we gather all of our sensory experiences with lakes, rivers, and seas, we can

begin to taste the awareness that undines possess. Water certainly embodies sensual release. Water invites us to let go, to flow, and to be enfolded by nurturing tenderness. Ever float on a raft down the Little Colorado and feel as if time has begun to vanish?

Ever float just at the edge of breaking waves and felt your feelings opening to the vastness of the sea? Ever float in a mountain pool and just let go into primal being as the first rays of dawn reach down into those watery depths? Have you ever experienced the clouds descend to the ground with drops of rain running down the bark of trees, poised on the tips of leaves, shivering, quivering, and then slipping into streams? In any one of these examples you may have sensed a dreamlike serenity, a thrilling wildness, and a playful exuberance.

The gate to the realm of undines opens to us precisely at this point where sensual perception and feeling amplify each other. Nature grants us a chance to step outside of our social identities. Nature revives and renews us by taking us beyond ourselves into a timeless dimension where past, present, and future intermingle to reveal awe, wonder, and delight.

Moments of uninhibited sensuality and extended perception are a part of almost everyone's experience. But undines would take us further. Every undine in this book attempts to enchant through her heightened levels of empathy and magnetic attraction and through her mesmeric sensuality, all of which presents an entire spectrum of new ecstasies. Why should this be a problem?

When going beyond the normal modes of perception, there is always a danger of disorientation. As in some of the stories I present, no matter how talented an individual is, a person can become obsessed and seemingly possessed—for example, experiencing exhilaration and ecstasy one moment and then depression and an acute sense of isolation after returning to everyday life in the next.

Consider that we are connecting to beings from an evolutionary path distinct from the sciences and wisdom traditions of human civilization. For example, elemental beings do not have human ethics. If you receive a gift for Christmas, you assume that the giver of the gift has

your best interest and well-being in mind. But a gift from an elemental being may be a dangerous gift of pure power.

I was meditating one time with a partner who said an elemental being had given her an amulet to wear—something purely of a psychic nature and not material. She found that she started hallucinating at odd times during the day when she had it on. It turns out that the amulet empowered the woman to cross over to the Otherworld—to the astral plane, where the nature spirit exists.

Being pulled into the astral plane is an astonishing experience—especially if it happens when you are driving your car or shopping in a store! When you enter the astral plane of elemental beings, it is like entering a dream in the mind of a creature from a different evolution. There are no references to anything pertaining to your culture or civilization.

The elemental does not worry if his or her gift is going to present you with complications or side effects. The elemental's intent is solely to offer you an opportunity to experience its mode of existence. A gift of power is given out of respect. And no matter how beautiful or loving an undine may be, in their realm all interaction is based on power. Attraction and love are expressions of the magnetic properties of water, and with this magnetism they are grand masters.

Also, the elemental beings I describe are well acquainted with human beings. I am not the first person to talk to them. Some of the elementals in this book have formed extremely close ties with magicians. They have become companions and learned from each other. This has been beneficial for some individuals, but for others the connection to the fairy realm has been their undoing.

Some of the undines also claim to guard treasures of spirit and hidden destinies that world teachers have not yet revealed to mankind. Some elementals have incarnated as human beings. Even in the twentieth century, there are reports of this happening. This usually occurs because the elemental has temporarily taken a human lover.

When I talk with elementals, they may tell me about their relations with mages, poets, and sages from historical and forgotten civilizations. When it comes to cultural myths and legends, it is sometimes difficult to

trace the sources of the stories handed down through the generations. It may be that a poet or bard cannot help but embellish and add entirely new chapters to ancient sagas in order to convey a message to his or her own time. It is probably wise, then, to take with a grain of salt the stories elementals tell. The astral plane is perhaps even more prone to exaggeration and to the excesses of imagination than is our own world.

Keep in mind that elemental beings are invisible except to clairvoyants. They do not eat food or drink water as do we; the energy sustaining them is altogether different. And they are not subject to human morality—they existed for millions of years before human religions began. When these elemental beings think, they do not use the lexical items in our dictionaries—neither the sounds nor the units of meaning they use relate to Indo-European or any other human language. When a “thought” is placed into your mind by an elemental, it is your experience that becomes the vehicle for translating that thought into something familiar that you understand. If you rush to label your sensory perceptions or take for granted your connection to elementals, you lose the depth and the beauty of what is being shared.

And though the life span of elementals is a matter of speculation, it is fair to say that many live for countless ages and some have been around for millions of years. So when you enter the domain of elemental beings, you have to create your own reference points. Science, history, culture, and the works of mankind—these beings do not need any of this in order to flourish or to practice their arts.

A relationship with another person often takes a lot of work. Working with elemental beings also takes effort, patience, and contemplation if you are going to get anything out of it. As in any kind of relationship, there are times when you have to put aside your expectations if you are going to hear what is being said or make the most of the opportunities that arise.

Once you form a connection, an undine can show up unexpectedly, obtrusively, and without being called. These are the queens and the masters of their element. Unless you possess a mastery of the water element equal to their own, they can follow their own rules. The rituals

and authority in human spiritual traditions are no more than a curiosity and minor hurdle for them to leap over.

They do not speak in human language. Instead, their communication is body to body, feelings to feelings, and mental imagery to mental imagery. This is intimate and at times absolutely overpowering. Some of your experiences with these beings will be outside of anything described in literature by any mystic, poet, or philosopher. The undines act according to principles of psychology that the human race will not discover for hundreds of years.

Through extended interaction you can begin to see as they see, feel as they feel, and engage the natural world from their perspective. But your new perceptions are, nonetheless, outside the normal operating range of other human beings. It takes a huge effort to make sense of what you experience, and it is even more difficult to share your experiences with others.

And unless you immediately write down what you experience with an undine, everything that happened may vanish from your mind within a few minutes. Why? You have two hundred thousand years of neurological programming that makes you a human being. Undines have millions of years of uniting with nature. Joining these two perspectives and ways of being may not be as easy as it seems.

All the same, in reading through this book, a reader might ask, What is the point of this? What is the purpose?

What is not taught in our civilization is the essence of the feminine—the accepting grace, the healing power, and the all-embracing love within magnetic and attractive energy. The magnetic fluid, the essence of the feminine, is so receptive, so giving, so empty, so free of ego and of indentifying with any form that it is able to contain within itself the soul of any being so as to shelter, transform, inspire, and make something completely new of it. This feminine power has no limitations or restrictions placed upon it.

This energy that exists within nature and that undines have mastered can be reproduced within us. This energy is cool, contracting, soothing, and attractive. It is nurturing and supportive. It shelters and protects. Instead of being intense, commanding, and explosive as is

masculinity, it is rhythmic and gentle. In psychological terms, it is empathic, sensitive, and responsive. It draws together, bonds, joins, and unites. It accepts and affirms. In spiritual terms, it reaches towards an all-encompassing, all-embracing love.

If our society had the undines' knowledge, our empathy would be vastly expanded. Inner kingdoms of feeling would be revealed. Our receptivity and sensitivity to impressions and our intuitive abilities would be exponentially increased. In practical terms, this would mean we would have the ability to understand why others feel as they do—anyone anywhere on earth. We would be able to perceive and also to interact with their souls directly from within. Love, then, would not just be a moral imperative or a theological ideal. It would not just be an attraction that makes you feel good or bonds you with another. Love would be the power to hold and to contain anyone else's life, soul, or will within our hearts so as to heal, bring to completion, and transform from within.

We all know about weapons of war. Love, however, creates peace. It is greater than the desire to control, to dominate, or to destroy. It is more powerful. This is because the empathy I describe is more accurate, precise, and penetrating with awareness than is any form of knowledge we currently possess.

If you can understand others from within, then you can understand what motivates them, what drives them, what instincts are active, and every aspect of the power they hold in their hands. No general, dictator, warlord, politician, intelligence organization, corporation, or military industrial complex would be safe if it wished to abuse its power.

In the final analysis, it is love that takes responsibility for the world. It is love that is qualified to oversee the unfolding of history. It is love that has the power and authority to establish justice. It is love that sees the future. And it is love that offers us our greatest chance to be fully alive and to discover the best that life holds.

As I state in the dialogues, beings such as the queens of the undines have been created and imbued with wisdom and beauty commensurate with the destiny the human race is meant to achieve.

Their knowledge awaits our discovery. They are an opportunity waiting to be seized.

As one undine queen said to me, “All that I am in my being you have the power to create in yourself as well.” Whether we choose to learn from their love or not, it is our destiny as a race to embody their abilities within us. I have journeyed into the realm of the undines in order to share their treasures with the world.

