

SEVEN STAGES OF WOMANHOOD: A CONTEMPORARY HEALING RITUAL FROM THE FINNISH MYTHOLOGY OF THE *KALEVALA*

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this article is to introduce a healing ritual, which is inspired by and draws from the ancient Finnish epic Kalevala's poetry of affirmations and its seven stages of womanhood. The seven stages are metaphors for female ego stages of maiden, wife, mother, crone, sage, warrior, and healer. Participants select these ego stages for cycles of affirmations, which are laments, charms, positive affirmations, affirmations of transcendence, affirmations of transformation, and prayers. The healing components of the ritual incorporate interpretive frames from Baldwin's transactional system and the author's differentiation of personal, transpersonal, and universal perspectives. The larger context of the oral tradition, the "poetry of affirmations" that gave birth to the Kalevala, is presented. The traditional mythological figures of the Kalevala exemplify the seven stages of womanhood and are guides for inspiring imagination and free associations among participants in a healing ritual. The procedure for the ritual is outlined, followed by concluding observations.

The wisdom and healing practices of ancient cultures were often transmitted orally. The rituals and chants that passed these practices on were imbued with the living power of direct oral expression. Shamans, spiritual heroes, and heroines of sung stories also acknowledged the power of chanted poetry. As written languages were developed and literacy among ancient peoples increased, the power and efficacy of the ancient traditions, which depended on oral transmission, was all but lost.

Where the oral tradition has only recently faded or is perhaps still extant, recapturing the power of this tradition is naturally easier. Such is the case with the tradition of Rune Singing in Finland. Oral poetry was first recorded in the beginning of the 19th century. Living Rune Singers from an unbroken lineage of oral transmission have been tape-recorded by folklorists in the sparsely populated areas of Eastern Finland as recently as the 1970s.

Today, a growing interest in indigenous spirituality worldwide has brought about a renewal of efforts to retrieve and preserve some of the ancient oral traditions and even to recreate and synthesize ancient laments, charms, and prayers in contemporary forms. The use of ancient traditions and folk poetry as a source for contemporary theater, visual arts, and music has strongly taken root in Finland since the late 1980s (Fihlman, 2001). More recently, researchers discovered that there are still a few living lamentors who belong to an oral tradition of unbroken transmission. However, contemporary lamenting is a learned skill and is used for self-expression, even in public performances. It springs from a basic human need to express pain and

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loss in one's own life and circumstance.

In the field of Expressive Arts Therapy, I have developed a framework, "the Rainbow Method," which draws from ancient Finnish rituals, rites, and healing traditions. One of its most important components is the recovery and revitalization of the ancient Finnish oral tradition adapted and used for healing purposes in contemporary contexts.

This article presents a work in progress. It introduces an outline of a healing ritual that draws from the Finnish mythology of the Kalevala and its poetry of affirmations. This mythology is also the source of the structure of the seven stages of womanhood and of personal healing (Hiltunen, 2001). In my work with the ritual, I take the spirit and structure of Kalevala's poetry of affirmations and have the participants express themselves in their own language and personal style.

THE POETRY OF AFFIRMATIONS

The Kalevala

The term "Poetry of affirmations" is used here as the general term for laments, affirmations, charms, and prayers that compose a large portion of the epic stories recorded by Elias Lönnrot (1802-1884) in the *Kalevala* (Haavio, 1943). Lönnrot's work shaped Finland and its collective vision as a nation by igniting nationalistic consciousness. "One might say that, in true folklore fashion, the Finnish people through the Kalevala actually sang themselves into existence" (Friberg, 1988).

The *Kalevala* represents a vast oral tradition of epic stories, laments, charms and prayers.¹ The mythological poetry or runes (Finnish: *runo*) were transmitted by the Rune Singers, male and female, by singing or chanting it to the next generation while working in the home, field, or forest. For the Rune Singers, singing was as natural as breathing. Singing and chanting accompanied their activities throughout the day, which made it possible for succeeding generations to learn and memorize thousands of verses at an early age.

The *Kalevala's* plot centers around three male heroes, Väinämöinen, Ilmarinen, and Lemminkäinen, from the mythical homeland of Kalevala. All three are trying to court the beautiful daughters of Louhi, the unattractive but powerful Matriarch of Northland. Louhi puts the three heroes' shamanic skills to a test. She is able to trick one of them to forge a *sampo*, a magical object of power and wealth. Then a fight ensues among the heroes over the *sampo*, which breaks into pieces. This leads Louhi to seek revenge. In retaliation she hides the sun and the moon, causing permanent darkness in Kalevala. Only when the heroes threaten Louhi's freedom does she free the sun and the moon and transform herself into a dove to take the good news back to Kalevala. The myth has many subplots, such as the story of Lempi, mother of Lemminkäinen. He is young, and behaves arrogantly and disrespectfully to an old shaman who, in revenge, kills him at the River of *Tuonela* (Death). Lempi goes to the river and is able to retrieve her son's dismembered body, piece by piece, and eventually bring him back to life.

Laments

Lamenting, also known as *keening*, is the international heritage of humankind. The most ancient recordings come from ancient Greece, whose dramatic literature gave us the classical tragedies in which the chorus consists of women lamentors. Laments have also been historically recorded in Ireland, Corsica, and Sardinia. The longest recorded tradition, however, has been found in Eastern Europe, in countries with Finno-Ugrian and Slavic nationals.

The laments of the *Kalevala* often seem to cry about misfortunes or events of loss or loneliness. However, some runes sing of happier occasions and may have been performed to honor high-ranking guests. Laments held a central place in all rites of passage. In weddings, for example, they were quite elaborate and complex. The bride sang thanks and good-byes to her parents and to her carefree days of childhood. Ten different runes prepared the bride for her departure from home and arrival at her new home-to-be. These runes were for saying good-bye, setting the bride's headdress and seeing her off, for arrival in the bridegroom's house, for praise and advice for both bride and bridegroom, and for comforting the bride. The wedding party eventually joined in with laments for teasing, reproaching, praising, comforting, pitying, and praising both parties involved.

Funeral laments would likewise have their own order of singing. According to Asplund and Koivu (1980), death laments were chanted to see the deceased off to the grave and lead his or her spirit to the afterlife. When the deceased was carried to the graveyard, the lamentor assumed the role of the deceased and uttered the good-bye to the home, house, and yard. At the graveside, the lamentor requested the dead ancestors to receive the deceased among them. When the casket was lowered into the ground, the lamentor continued until the casket was in the grave and the grave covered. From the graveyard, the relatives and friends returned to the house of the deceased to lament and seek the deceased there. After funerals, widows would sing at the graveside of their loved ones.

According to Asplund and Koivu (1980), the tradition of lamenting legitimizes the expression of grief at a sanctioned time and place. Thus lamenting was a custom that made provision for a healthy grieving process. The mourning process is generally understood as consisting of distinct steps. Fitzgerald (1994), for example, identifies eight steps for the mourning process: disbelief and shock, denial, rage and anger, guilt and regret, depression, fear, panic, and physical illness. In my work with laments in rituals, I recognize these eight and have added a ninth, resilience, or acceptance. Levine (1982) also recognizes the importance of experiencing grief to its fullest dimensions of pain, because it can open our hearts. Grief may be experienced first at the cerebral level, but if one does not allow the pain to tear the heart open, allowing grief to be fully felt, the opportunity may be lost to experience love and compassion again.

Asplund and Koivu (1980) state that after the death of a loved one, laments expressing grief, at funerals, or at the graveside can never be repeated exactly, because they

spring from the deep emotions and special style of the lamentor, as well as a tradition of unique vocabulary. These authors note that the most established lamentors were often older women, whose life experiences enriched the depth of their expressions of grief and loss. Traditionally, in the beginning of a lament, sobbing is sparse, but as the lament continues, the sobbing increases and lengthens. During this sobbing, the lamentor has a chance to create the words for the next stanza.

The vocabulary used in laments often consists of ancient “filler” words, the meaning of which has become obsolete and obscure. Finnish is highly alliterative, and this feature, which affects the sound and rhythm of speech but not its semantic content per se, is used especially in the filler words of the laments. Thus the alliterations of laments seem longer than in other folk poetry or runes. Also, the endearing words in laments are particularly rich and repetitious. It is said that lamentors put their most deeply felt emotions and their souls into their laments. Consequently, lamenting can be a physically exhausting and emotionally depleting experience. It has been called “crying with voice” by older lamentors in the Finno-Ugrian tradition.

Charms and Prayers

Asplund and Koivu (1980) define charms “as magic word patterns, which aim to evoke supernatural power or beings” (p. 17, author’s translation). The charms could be chanted either in prose or poetry, and it was believed that the very words when spoken had the power to evoke whatever was called for. Asplund and Koivu differentiate charms as follows: charms of origin or birth, charms for conjuration, or charms of prayer. The charms of origin are based on the belief that power, or a being, can be conquered or controlled if one knows its origin or birth information. Conjuration is essentially an invocation to manifest or expel something. Conjuration may actually have been the original form from which the other charms have evolved. Prayers substantially overlap with charms. They are communications with, expression of, gratitude toward, or request for help or guidance from a higher power.

The charms and prayers of the ancient Finns identify and call forth the origin of the problem. By chanting or reciting the origin they diminish the perceived power of a problem. For example, when a person is injured with an ax, the origin of iron is chanted for the healing. This is consistent with the principle that underlies most forms of contemporary therapy, namely, that the first step toward healing is to identify the origin of the problem or challenge.

The following is an illustrative healer’s charm.* Brackets in quotations specify the author’s changes in the English translations in order to clarify the meaning of the words.

* All quotations from the *Kalevala* are taken from Kirby (1907). Volume and page numbers given after the quotation refer to this work only.

Now the bath approach, O [God],
 [And Father to the warmth of air],
 Healthfulness again to grant us,
 And our peace again secure us!
 Drive away these foul diseases,
 From these dread diseases save us,
 Calm thou down this heat excessive,
 Drive away the heat so evil,
 That it may not burn thy children,
 Neither may destroy thy offspring!
 Therefore will I sprinkle water,
 On the glowing stones I cast it,
 Let it now be changed to honey,
 May it trickle down like honey,
 Let it flow a stream like honey,
 Flowing to a lake of honey,
 As it flows along the hearthstones,
 Flowing though the mossy [sauna].

*Tule nyt lölyhyn, Jumala,
 Iso ilman lämpimähän,
 Tekemähän terveyttä,
 Rauhoa rakentamahan!
 Pyyhi pois pyhät kipunat,
 Pyhät saastat sammuttele,
 Lyötä maahan liika löyly,
 Paha löyly pois lähetä,
 Ettei polta poikiasi,
 Turmele tekemiäsi!
 Minkä vettä viskaelen
 Noille kuumille kiville,
 Se me'eksi muuttukohon,
 Simaksi sirahakohon;
 Juoskohon joki metinen,
 Simalampi laikkukohon,
 Läpi kiukahan kivisen,
 Läpi saunan sammalisen.*
 (p. 208)

The focus of the healer's charm on *sauna* is significant here. From ancient times, the sauna has been an essential feature in Finnish culture and customs, a place for healing as well as for birthing and dying.

SEVEN STAGES OF WOMANHOOD

The seven stages of womanhood are maiden, wife, mother, crone, sage, warrior, and healer. Two powerful female mythological characters from the *Kalevala* embody these seven stages. Ilmatar, a divine being living in the air, represents the beginning stages. The latter stages are illustrated by Lempi, the warrior mother of one of three male heroes, Lemminkäinen, who is himself a shaman and a healer. The seven stages of womanhood in the healing ritual are metaphors for ego stages or identity. Using these stages in the ritual also provides an opportunity for the participants to become aware of the psychological orientation, which can be referred to as the "Prism of Consciousness": A refraction of consciousness into personal, transpersonal, or universal perspectives through which participants project during the different rounds of the ritual.

Virgin/Maiden

The *Kalevala* begins with the creation of the world, in which Ilmatar (also called Luonnotar) plays a central role. Her names mean that she is the spirit of both air and nature. First introduced as a virgin, she is the only figure in the *Kalevala* who is considered a deity:

Air's young daughter was a virgin,
 Fairest daughter of Creation,
 Long did she abide a virgin,

*Olipa impi, ilman tyttö,
 Kave Luonnotar korea,
 Piti viikkoista pyhyyttä,*

All the long days of her girlhood,
In the Air's own spacious mansions
In those far extended regions.

*Iän kaiken impeyttä
Ilman pitkillä pihoilla,
Tasaisilla tantereilla.
(Vol. I, p. 4)*

Wife/Lover

A brief description then follows of Ilmatar's encounter with her lover, the tempest, who mysteriously impregnates her.

Wearily the time passed over,
And her life became a burden,
Dwelling evermore so lonely,
Always living as a maiden
In the Air's own spacious mansions,
In those far-ending [regions].
After this the maid descending,
Sank upon the tossing billows,
On the open ocean's surface,
On the wide expanse of water,
Then a storm arose in fury,
From the East a mighty tempest,
And the sea was wildly foaming,
And the waves dashed ever higher,
Thus the tempest rocked the virgin,
And the billows drove the maiden,
O'er the ocean's azure surface,
On the crest of foaming billows,
[And the wind the womb blew blowing],
And the sea woke life within her.

*Ikävystyi aikojansa,
Ouostui elämätänsä,
Aina yksin ollessansa,
Impenä eläessänsä,
Ilman pitkillä pihoilla,
Avaroilla autioilla,
Jop' on astuiksen alemma,
Laskeusi lainehille,
Meren selvälle selälle,
Ulapalle aukealle;
Tuli suuri tuulenpuuska,
Iästä vihainen ilma,
Meren kuohuille kohotti,
Lainehille laikahutti,
Tuuli neittä tuuitteli,
Aalto imepä ajeli,
Ympäri selän sinisen,
Lakkipäien lainehien,
Tuuli tuuli kohtuiseksi,
Meri paksuksi panevi.
(Vol. I, p. 4)*

The symbolism of the rune is subtle, yet exceptionally lyrical and dramatic at the same time. The pregnant Ilmatar carried Väinämöinen for 700 years in her womb. Ilmatar laments over her extended pregnancy and her consequent misery:

O how wretched is my fortune,
Wandering thus, a child unhappy!
I have wandered far already,
And I dwell beneath the heaven,
By the tempest tossed for ever,
While the billows drive me onward,
O'er this wide expanse of water,
On the far-extending billows.
Better were it had I tarried,
Virgin in aerial regions,
Then I should not drift forever,
As the Mother of the Waters,

*Voi, poloinen päiväni,
Lapsi kurja, kulkuani!
Jo olen joutunut johonki,
Iäkseen ilman alle,
Tuulen tuuittelavaksi,
Aaltojen ajeltavaksi,
Näillä väjillä vesillä,
Lakeilla lainehilla
Parempi olisi ollut,
Ilman impenä eleä,
Kuin on nyt tätä nykyä
Vierähellä veen emona,*

Here my life is cold and dreary,
Every moment now is painful,
Ever tossing on the billows,
Ever floating on the water.

*Vilu tääll' on ollakseni,
Vaiva värjätelläkseni,
Aalloissa asukaseni,
Veessä vierillääkseni.*
(p. 5)

Ilmatar's prayer is addressed to Ukko, the highest god of heavens, the Thundergod:

Ukko, thou of Gods the highest,
Ruler of the whole of heaven,
Hasten here, for thou art needed;
Hasten here at my entreaty.
Free the damsel from her burden,
And release her from her tortures,
Quickly haste, and yet more quickly,
Where I long for thee so sorely!

*Oi Ukko, ylijumala,
Ilman kaiken kannattaja,
Tule tänne tarvittaissa,
Käy tänne kutsuttaessa,
Päästä piika pintehestä,
Vaimo vatsan vääntheestä,
Käy pian, välehen jou'u,
Välehemmin tarvitahan!*
(p. 5)

Mother/Nurturer/Creator

Ilmatar is a mother and a creator who gives birth to the most prominent hero of the *Kalevala*, Väinämöinen. She evolves from helpless maiden to mature and powerful mother, able to exercise her divine powers to aid her son. In addition she also creates the Earth Mother (*Maa emo*).

As the central male figure of the *Kalevala*, Väinämöinen is a poet and Rune Singer with shamanic powers, who, with his music, easily enchants his listeners, whoever they may be, even to the point of unconsciousness if he so wills. He visits Tuoni (Hades or the Realm of the Dead) three times and returns triumphantly unharmed. Yet Väinämöinen turns to his mother Ilmatar for advice and help on several occasions when he himself lacks the needed supernatural knowledge or wisdom.

Crone/Wise Woman/Elder

The goal of the crone is to achieve true knowledge through experience and to be able to retain, apply, and transmit it. She also has the gift of discernment. As a wise woman, Ilmatar advises her son Väinämöinen:

In her grave his mother wakened,
Answered from beneath the billows:
"Still thy mother lives and hears thee,
And thy aged mother wakens,
That she plainly may advise thee,
How to best support thy trouble,
That thy grief may not o'erwhelm thee,
And thy sorrow may not crush thee,
In these weary days of evil,
In these days of deep depression

*Emo hauasta havaisi,
Alta aaltojen vastasi:
"Viel' ompi emo elossa,
Vanhempasi valvehella,
Joka saattavi sanoa,
Miten olla oikeassa,
Murehisin murtumatta,
Huolihin katoamatta,
Niissä päivissä pahoissa,
Apeissa mielialoissa,*

Seek thou out the maids of Pohja,
 Where the daughters are more handsome,
 And the maidens twice as lovely,
 And are five or six times nimbler,
 Not like lazy girls of Joulo,
 Lapland's fat and sluggish daughters,
 Thence a wife, O son, provide thee,
 From the fairest maids of Pohja,
 Choose a maid of fair complexion,
 Lovely too, in every feature,
 One whose feet are always nimble,
 Always active in her movements."

*Mene Pohjolan tyttärihin,
 Siellä on tyttäret somemmat,
 Neiet kahta kaunihimmat,
 Vittä, kuutta virkeämmät,
 i joukon jorottaria,
 Lapin lapsilöntäreitä,
 Sieltä naios, poikaseni,
 Paras Pohjolan tyttäristä,
 Jokä on sievä silmiltänsä,
 Kaunis katsannoiltansa,
 Aina joutuissa jalalta,
 Sekä liukas liikumolta."*
 (pp. 53-54)

The word *grave* does not need to be taken literally: here it implies that Ilmatar still resides in water, even after Väinämöinen's birth.

Sage/Spiritual Teacher

The sage is defined by her ability to have direct spiritual gifts of seeing deeply into human beings and connecting to the spiritual world. The sage has an ability to see beyond the physical realm. Ilmatar and Lempi both possess the essential qualities embodied by sages. Lempi, Lemminkäinen's mother, has taught him all he knows, and has much more to teach. She warns him:

Yet beware, my son and go not,
 Unto Northland's dread homestead,
 Destitute of magic knowledge,
 Destitute of all experience,
 There to meet the youths of Pohja,
 And to conquer Lapland's children!
 There the Laplanders will sing you,
 And the Turja men will thrust you,
 Head in clay, and mouth in charcoal,
 With your arms where sparks are flying,
 And your hands in glowing embers,
 There upon the burning hearthstones.

*Ellös, vainen, poikueni,
 Menkö Pohjolan tuville,
 Ilman tieoin tietämättä,
 Ilman taion taitamatta,
 Pohjan poikien tulille,
 Lapin lasten tanterille!
 Siellä Lappi laulanevi,
 Tunkenevi turjalainen,
 Suin sytehen, päin savehen,
 Kypeniin kynnäsvarsin,
 Kourin kuumihin poroihin,
 Palavihin paateroihin.*
 (Vol. I, p. 120)

Warrior

The goal of the warrior is to be fearless, gentle, to defend virtue and truth, and to right wrongs. Fearlessness is the most essential weapon of the warrior (Trungpa, 1984). Lemminkäinen's mother is a true warrior in the *Kalevala*.

When Lempi finds out that her son is dead, she laments his death at first, then acts bravely and activates her will to find him. The description of her action as a warrior woman expresses the characteristic of *sisu* (English equivalent: "stick-to-it-iveness");

activating one's will and persevering in the face of enormous odds), still much valued in the Finnish culture.

In her hands her skirt she gathered, With her arms her dress she lifted, And at once commenced her journey, Hurried upon her journey, Mountains thundered 'neath her footsteps, Valleys rose and hills were leveled, And the high ground sank before her, And the low grounds rose before her.	<i>Kourin helmansa kokosi, Käsivarsin vaattehensa, Pian juoksi matkan pitkän, Sekä juoksi jotta joutui, Mäet mätkyi mennessänsä, Norot mousi, vaarat vaipui, Ylhäiset maat aleni, Alhaiset maat yleni.</i>
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(Vol. I, p. 150)

Lempi travels to the Northland to meet Louhi, a powerful shaman and the Mistress of the Northland. She asks Louhi about the whereabouts of her son, but Louhi is unwilling to tell the truth because of her indirect involvement in Lemminkäinen's death. Lempi does not accept Louhi's lies: "This indeed is shameless lying/For no wolf would touch my offspring/Not a bear touch Lemminkäinen!/Wolves he'd crush between his fingers/Bears with naked hands would master./If you will not truly tell me/How you treated Lemminkäinen,/I the malthouse doors will shatter./Break the hinges of the Sampo!" (Vol. I, p. 151). Lempi is fearless in her pursuit of the truth and confronts and challenges Louhi, who seems to have much more power, prestige, and wealth than Lempi. Finally, Louhi tells the truth. The description of Lempi's search as a sage demonstrates her spiritual powers:

[As] a wolf she tracked the marshes, [As] a bear the wastes she traversed, [As] an otter swam the waters, Badger-like the plains she traversed, Passed the headlands like a hedgehog, [As] a hare along the lakeshores, Pushed the rocks from out her pathway, From the slopes bent down the tree-trunks, Thrust the shrubs beside her pathway, From her track she cast the branches.	<i>Juoksi suuret suot sutena, Kulki korvet kontiona, Ve'et saukkona samosi, Maat käveli mauriaisena, Neuliaisena niemen reumat, Jäniksenä järven rannat, Kivet syrjäähän sysäsi, Kannot käänsi kallellensa, Risut siirsi tien sivuhun, Haot potki portahiksi.</i>
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(Vol. I, p. 152)

Lempi's love for her son represents the unique force of a mother's love for her child.

Healer/Servant

This is the culminating, major ego stage in the healing ritual and may be associated with a universal perspective or orientation toward life. The healer/servant stage is here represented by Lempi, who is described in Kalevala as being able to access universal consciousness as a healer.

The task of the healer is to listen, to serve, and to heal. The fundamental requirement for the healer is to recognize and to respond to others' needs. In the *Kalevala*,

only Lempi qualifies as a healer in this full sense of the term.

Lempi is a powerful sage and the devoted mother of an arrogant son who is also a sage. She is a strong, determined, and peaceful warrior who is spiritually highly evolved and empowered with an ability to resurrect her son. As a female, Lempi has an identity only in relation to a male hero, her son, yet the son is not as powerful as she is. Her language expresses her power through laments, charms, positive affirmations, and prayers.

As the story is told in the *Kalevala*, Lempi needs an ointment to restore the life of her son, and she sends a bee (a metaphor for her special powers) to fetch the ointment from God, the Highest. Twice the bee fails in his mission and is reluctant to fly again, but Lempi provides him with a positive affirmation and sends him to his final trip as follows:

Thou can rise on high with swiftness, Fly aloft with easy effort, O'er the moon, below the daylight, And amid the stars of heaven, Flying windlike on the first day, Past the borders of Orion, On the second day thou soarest, Even to the Great Bear's shoulders, On the third day soaring higher, O'er the Seven Stars thou risest, Thence the journey is a short one, And the distance very trifling, Unto Jumala's bright dwelling, And the regions of the blessed.	<i>Hyva on sinne päästäksesi, Kaunis kapsahellaksesi, Yli kuun, alitse päivän, Taivon tähtien välitse, Lennät päivän löyhyttelet, Kuutamaisen kulmaluille, Siitä toisen siuottelet, Otavaisen olkapäille, Kolmannen kohotteleihet, Seitsentähtisen selälle, Siit' on matkoa palanen, Pikkaraisen piiramata, Perille pyhän Jumalan, Asunnolle autuahan.</i> (Vol. I, pp. 161-162)
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This time the bee succeeds, and the connection to universal consciousness is established. While using the ointment, Lempi affirms Lemminkäinen's transformation and resurrection:

Rise my son, from out thy slumber, From thy dreams do thou awaken, From this place so full of evil, And a resting-place unholy.	<i>Nouse poika makoamasta, Ylene uneksimasta Nailta paikoilta pahoilta, Kovan onne vuotehelta.</i> (Vol. I, p. 163)
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In the healing ritual, the seven stages are described for the participants and illustrated by the examples from the *Kalevala* as described above. These provide metaphors for the participants that may stimulate and guide their journey within. In hearing the expressions of these mythical figures, the participants may be able to clarify their past, present, and future identities and thus affirm their own personal power of womanhood.

A CONTEMPORARY HEALING RITUAL

The healing ritual presented here gives voice to the participants and empowers them as women. Its purpose is to identify where the participants have been in the past, that is, the stage from which they are emerging, their present stage, and the stage toward which they want to be moving. Thus a participant's identity as a woman is chosen and expressed. The selection of a stage identity for each participant may vary during the ritual. At first a participant may need to identify and express a stage typifying unresolved personal issues. Later she may select another stage to reflect subsequent identity. Finally, the identity may reflect a stage the participant is aspiring to move toward in the future. The ritual offers an opportunity for the participants to transcend their current stages as well as to expand their consciousness. In addition, the ritual encourages them to set their sights on future stages that are not yet manifested but may be desired.

The ritual also provides an opportunity for the participants to become aware of the perspective or psychological orientation—personal, transpersonal, or universal—they are projecting during the different rounds of the ritual. The experiences associated with each level of these projected perspectives as they manifest in the ritual are as follows:

Personal	Transpersonal	Universal
Fear/anxiety	Faith in the higher spiritual order	Unity consciousness
Guilt/blame	Acceptance/understanding/forgiveness	No-self
Envy/jealousy	Generosity	Mystic Christian
Anger/hate	Unconditional love	Other mystic experiences

Affirmations create the structure of the ritual. They are presented in a set order, beginning with laments and moving from positive affirmations to affirmations of transcendence and, finally, to affirmations of transformation. The positive transcending and transforming affirmations are procedures I have added to the *Kalevala* material. Each participant is given an opportunity to participate in each of the six rounds of affirmations, during which she is expected to affirm a stage of womanhood. The stage need not be selected to follow any prescribed order but can be different for each round of affirmations if the participant so chooses.

The laments express the past, the good-byes, the regrets, or whatever is no longer wanted in one's life. By acknowledging the negative emotions associated with these, such as fear, anxiety, anger, hate, envy, jealousy, guilt, and blame, the laments give an opportunity to let go of things that one has held too long. The charms are offered to identify the origin and the root cause, as well as the root emotions, for negative attachments and consequences in one's life. The charms provide the foundation for the identification of the positive counterparts for one's life. The affirmations express the positive elements the participants want to welcome and

strengthen in their lives, either at present or in future stages.

The Healing Focus of the Ritual

For an interpretive framework that brings into focus the healing intent of the ritual, I have added elements from Baldwin's (1989) work. In his transactional analysis, Baldwin specifies three major ego states: the child, the parent, and the adult. In the ritual, these ego states give impetus to the seven stages of womanhood. The ego states generate two major influences, the Higher Self and the Saboteur. The Higher Self guides the healthy ego responses and the Saboteur guides the unhealthy responses.

In keeping with the ancient transpersonal orientation of the healing ritual, the medieval term "Guardian of the Threshold" is substituted for Baldwin's term "Saboteur." The Guardian of the Threshold here refers to the emotional obstacles and barriers created in people's lives by choosing to feel fear, anxiety, guilt, blame, envy, jealousy, anger, or hate. It can be thought of as a projection of these obstacles, operating at a personal level of consciousness.

The Guardian of the Threshold has been traditionally illustrated by the image of some kind of horrific beast. In the context of the ritual, the "beast" is "fed" by negative emotions, because negative emotions may block the threshold to one's spiritual awareness. Furthermore, the Guardian will stop a person from transcending or transforming as a spiritual being. For example, in the warrior stage, the Guardian will challenge the warrior, or stop her spiritual growth, through the fear of death or through fear of fear itself. The key to spiritual growth lies in positive emotions, which direct the path of one's thoughts and reactions to internal as well as external events. The first step is to recognize that one cannot control the actual triggers for these negative emotions, which are caused by others. The only thing one can control is one's own reactions to them. The healing ritual offers the participants an opportunity to identify some of these negative emotional patterns and transcend and transform them.

The Guardian in this ritual guards the entrance to transpersonal experiences through the identification with fear, anxiety, guilt, blame, envy, jealousy, anger, and hate. As long as one remains identified with these emotions and attitudes, one is unable to pass through the threshold in this ritual. On the other hand, those who are able to embrace healthy ego responses—specifically, faith in the higher or spiritual order, acceptance, understanding, forgiveness, generosity, and unconditional love—will be rewarded by their ability to transcend and transform. As long as the identification remains in the negative at any stage, the Guardian will keep the participant from experiencing the empowering experience of conquering the Guardian and entering transpersonal awareness, her Higher Self.

In her book *Paras Lääkäri II [The Best Doctor]*, Viilma (2000), a physician and healer, refers to self-healing and discusses at length the impact that fear, guilt, and anger have on physical health. The Guardian will not allow an individual to choose healthy responses or to access spiritual consciousness unless the beast has been con-

quered. Until then, it will block reconnection with the spiritual or Higher Self. The Higher Self operates perceptions and responses through faith in the higher or spiritual order, understanding, acceptance, forgiveness, generosity, and unconditional love.

The *Kalevala*'s female mythological imagery and laments provide opportunities for the female participants to acknowledge and say good-bye to the negative ego responses of the Guardian. At first, however, the participants are invited to identify the stage in which the particular negative response is relevant. When the stage is selected, it is helpful to identify whether this ego stage represents the past, present, or future. After the laments, the participants are invited to find the positive emotional responses elicited from the chosen stage for each round of affirmation that follows. The affirmations of self-transcendence can potentially be used to enhance each participant's transpersonal self-awareness, rekindle the mystery of womanhood, heal the wounded healer, and empower the participant to more consciously identify with, and thus confirm, the significance of each chosen stage.

Affirmations

Both negative and positive affirmations can be found in the *Kalevala*, embedded in the charms or prayers. For the healing ritual, however, positive affirmations, affirmations of transcendence, and affirmations of transformation were added to provide the participants with ample opportunities to embrace their faith, acceptance, understanding, forgiveness, generosity, and/or unconditional love.

Positive Affirmation Chanting. Some years ago, in my work with clients with mental retardation, I noticed that they tended to affirm "happiness" regardless of how they actually felt.

The importance of that emotion and the great need for it may have created this "positive affirmation" need and practice among them. This practice may just as well be a transpersonal choice, not a choice made due to cognitive limitations. Their transpersonal choice could have been an outcome of a higher spiritual consciousness, springing from sources beyond body ego. . . . That has inspired me to develop a transpersonal component to the therapeutic process, namely Positive Affirmation Chanting, during which only positive emotions are affirmed by chanting and negative emotions are just discussed. (Hiltunen, 1997, p. 234)

Positive affirmations are also found in the *Kalevala*. For the healing ritual, I supplemented the positive affirmations in the *Kalevala* with Positive Affirmation Chanting. During this positive affirmation phase of the ritual, negative emotions may still arise for some participants. When this happens, the participants may take a moment to ventilate those emotions alone without chanting them aloud. Afterwards, they are encouraged to find a positive outcome or solution and affirm it in the later affirmation cycles.

Affirmations of Transcendence. Transcendence of one's negative emotions of fear, anxiety, guilt, blame, envy, jealousy, anger, hate, or consequent actions may be enough to open the door to a transpersonal or even universal experience. Such tran-

scendence can be brought about by making a positive choice and embracing the positive counterparts of the negative emotions that arise. This sounds like a simple step, but anyone who has struggled to make such a positive choice in a moment of deeply felt negative emotion knows how overwhelming the challenge can be. Acknowledging and identifying such negative emotions during the ritual, deeply and honestly, is essential.

Affirmations of Transformation. In the *Kalevala*, Lempi and Louhi both demonstrate the ability to transform physically. While grieving and looking for her son, Lempi transforms herself into a variety of wild animals to make her journey faster. Louhi transforms into a mighty “warrior bird,” carrying hundreds of swordsmen and archers under her wings. Later on, she transforms herself into two other birds to seek information or transmit messages. These feats of magical physical transformations² have inspired the metaphors for psychospiritual transformation for this ritual.

Transformation is an essential part of human experience, even at the level of simply becoming aware of the changes one’s body goes through in a lifetime. In a larger sense, transformation may be a necessary step in any significant growth.

Procedure for the Ritual

The following is an outline of the procedures for conducting the Seven Stages of Womanhood Healing Ritual.

1. The participants form a circle. If there is a large number of participants, two concentric circles of ± 14 participants each may be created. Participants in the inner circle speak their affirmations aloud, and participants in the outer circle write the affirmations down and make their own affirmations silently. The ritual may take a long time, due to the six rounds of affirmations each active participant will voice.
2. The seven stages of womanhood from which the participants choose their identifying ego stages are explained and illustrated for the participants. They are then asked to reflect on their choices for a moment. (If necessary, the list may be repeated).
3. The types of affirmations are explained to the participants, and before each round the participants choose the affirmations they will express. They also have the option of not participating in a round. The order of affirmations is: laments, charms, positive affirmations, affirmations of transcendence, affirmations of transformation, and prayers.
 - a) Laments: The participants specify their ego stage in the beginning of the lament and then create the lament, which can be just one word or can be expanded to any length, and may also be expressed in prose or in poetry. In their laments, the participants identify past regrets and negativities and say good bye to fear, anxiety, guilt, blame, envy, jealousy, and anger.
 - b) Charms: In this transitional phase of the ritual, the participants identify the origins of the negative forces in their lives and then affirm the positive counterparts or outcomes and

welcome these to their lives. Depending on the needs of the participant, negative emotions may still be addressed before inviting the positive.

c) Positive Affirmation Chanting: Each participant now takes turns leading and deciding the stage of womanhood for her to identify with and the most essential positive energy she wants to affirm. The leader chants, "I am [ego stage]." Each participant who is leading the chanting then adds a positive word, noun, or adjective. The other participants affirm the leader's word by chanting: "You are [repeating the leader's word]." The leader then joins in and together all chant: "We are [ego stage]." This sequence of exchanges ("I am —" "you are —" "we are —") constitutes a round of affirmations. Like physical muscles that get stronger with exercise, the repetition of positive affirmations exercises and strengthens the spiritual aspect of identity.

d) Affirmation of Transcendence: During this phase, the participants at first choose an ego stage with which to identify. They then identify something in that ego stage that they want to transcend. The affirmation of transcendence may be a statement of faith, acceptance, understanding, generosity, forgiveness, or unconditional love.

e) Affirmation of Transformation: During this phase, the participants again identify an ego stage and then state where their affirmation of transcendence has brought them or where they would like to be in the future. The affirmations are the same as in the previous phase, reflecting faith, acceptance, understanding, generosity, forgiveness, or unconditional love.

f) Prayer: Here the objective is to make a shift or leap from one's own perspective to another's point of view, with understanding, forgiveness, and love. Prayer may also be a vehicle for communication, expression, or gratitude, or a request to a higher power for help and guidance to manifest all the positive affirmations made during the ritual.

4. During the conduct of the ritual, a set of bells (or a sounding meditation bowl) will be passed around to each participant in turn as she states her ego stage during each round of affirmations. Each participant will ring the bells before voicing her participatory affirmation. Incense may be burned in the center of the circle, and objects representing all stages of womanhood may also be placed in the center.³ The participants may change their ego stage identity at different rounds of affirmations, and the ritual may be repeated, with the participants working through their identities or ego stages as many times as necessary.

CONCLUSION

The *Kalevala* offers a rich transpersonal heritage. As a Finn, I have received it, not only with great gratitude for my ancestors' struggle against historical national oppression and poverty, but with great humility, admiration, and a sense of my responsibility to convey this heritage to future generations.

This contemporary healing ritual adapts the ancestral use of laments as a means to express one's loss and grief naturally as a part of the life cycle. Lamenting may also offer further uses in therapeutic treatment contexts for grieving processes.

Most importantly, however, the ritual identifies metaphors for seven ego stages

from the Finnish epic of the *Kalevala*. They are mediated through the poetry of affirmations, which may be projected from personal, transpersonal, or universal perspectives. The ritual builds participants' self-awareness and self-esteem by encouraging them to transcend their personal perceptions. By increasing their awareness of their personal projections, the ritual can expand their everyday consciousness and open it to transpersonal or even universal experiences. In general, the ritual aims to empower women to reclaim their authentic spiritual awareness by transcending their negative emotional barriers as a step toward transformation through faith, acceptance, understanding, generosity, forgiveness, and unconditional love. The goal of this ritual is to begin a healing process for participants and to inspire them to incorporate a newly awakened and expanded awareness into their everyday lives.

NOTES

¹ The *Kalevala* is a small fraction of the documented Finnish folk poetry, proverbs, charms, prayers, fairy tales, and laments collected prior, during, and after Lönnrot's time. Subsequently, through the efforts of others inspired by Lönnrot, the additional oral poetry has been recorded and published in 14 volumes of Finnish folk poetry (*Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot* I-XIV, 1908-1948) comprising 85,000 poems. In 1997, the fifteenth volume was published, adding 1,300 poems to the collection.

² I have discovered that Native American belief systems embrace transformations not as metaphorical but as physical reality. Highwater (1977) speaks of transformation as follows:

Since the Indian concept of life is based on movement rather than form, the transformation of one thing into another is not extraordinary. In many tribes it is believed that men and especially animals are capable of changing their outward forms quite easily. The world does not consist of inanimate materials and living things; everything is living and everything can therefore be of help or can cause harm. That is the basis for the ceremonial relationships of men and nature. Indians have none of the cosmic egotism of Western civilization which sees men as the crowning achievement of evolution. (p. 22)

³ This ritual does not include the use of masks, which were included in much of my prior drama therapy and therapeutic theater methods (Hiltunen, 1988). My current transpersonal drama therapy continues to evolve, and a more recent expanded version uses masks in various applications.

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