

The Bowl as Sacred Object

At the end of Southern Faire of '99 I purchased a beautiful black walnut bowl from Goodly Woods. This purchase culminated a season of admiration of Joe's wares, a season wherein I had bought several other small pieces and had encouraged others to do likewise. Joe and I had discovered a rapport and this final transaction included heartfelt good wishes and his blessing.

About a month later a group of close friends gathered to celebrate the anniversary of the death of one of our dearest, my Beloved Honey. We rented all the rooms in a bed and breakfast in San Diego and made it our private clothing-optional domain for the weekend, with the blessings of the proprietor, a wonderful woman who had also loved Jim. While he was alive we had done likewise several times so it seemed fitting that we remember him in one of his favorite places. We brought personal objects and food and generally made the place our own.

In the afternoon of the second day a thought struck me out of the blue that I needed to find my bowl. I asked everyone present if they had seen it, but none could place its whereabouts. I searched all the common areas by the pool and jacuzzi and looked in all the rooms but could not locate it. My friends suggested that it would turn up and that I should calm down and relax.

I thought about it. "I can't relax. My bowl is in trouble and it's calling to me. It needs me and won't let me rest until I find it."

After a futile frantic search I came across our hostess with soapy rubber gloves on.

"Have you seen my wooden bowl?" I asked.

"It's soaking in the sink with the other dishes", she replied.

"Oh NO", cried I, "wooden bowls should not be immersed, let alone in soap!" I rushed to the rescue. I fondled and dried the bowl and oiled it repeatedly to bring back its lustre and eventually it fully recovered.

Not all of my possessions call out to me so clearly and insistently when in distress, and I have a theory about why this one did so. A mendicant holy man may own but one possession - a bowl in which to receive offerings from the devout. I do not place myself in the company of the holy, but in my devotional life I do honor several archetypal objects. This incident clearly indicates to me that the humble bowl from Goodly Woods had joined these numinous ranks - The Bowl As Sacred Object.

Jim Kelly 10/99