

## Gaia's carrier bag

(A memory of the Earth)

*Don't panic. It's not a poem. I just put in some extra line-breaks.\**

*\*Felt like it.*

Once, we hunted. Now, we drive  
to the supermarket.  
Once, we  
cleared forest,  
made tools out of stones,  
made fire  
discovered the workings  
of seasons  
and seeds  
and water,  
feared the anger of storms,  
found words.

Once, we gave names  
to the spirit-shapes  
of our imagination, stored food  
for the winter, celebrated  
nature's seasons  
and our own,  
built homes, gathered into settlements,  
became communities.

Now, we have the vegetable aisle. We had  
Gods and now we have Religions. In my local  
supermarket, a sign on the wall tells me that

every time I re-use a plastic carrier bag, the earth says thank-you.

Uh huh.

Imagine an ancient ritual fire, bright against the night, the young (wo)men dancing, their faces and bodies painted, high on their tribe's fermented elixir, invoking the spirits of earth and fire to acknowledge their transition at last into adulthood.

Lightning flashes.

And out of the thunder, out of the storm and out of night, wild and exultant over the wind, come the combined Voices of Isis, Arianrhod, Hekate, Selene, the Morrigan and Gaia. They shout out against the darkness: "Thank you for taking your litter home."

Perhaps down the centuries we've misheard the Goddess's message. Perhaps all along it wasn't blood sacrifice, death, portent, fertility, wild highs and running with the wolves.

Perhaps always it was something more along the lines of, "Dance carefully."

Or these days, "Stand still and hold onto the handrail while the escalator takes you down to the food hall."

Perhaps.

Not.

Perhaps the earth hasn't changed as we have changed away from it. Perhaps the earth has stayed as it was.

Remember?

No?

This safe world is all that we longed for, as we worked out how to build walls to keep out the elements, how to fish, how to plant seeds so that they would give us bread next year, how to make bread, how to live. All along, this is the world we were making.

But I wonder if the earth, when it sees us re-using our carrier bags, picking the organic lettuce, driving carefully home, thinks:

What's happened to these guys?