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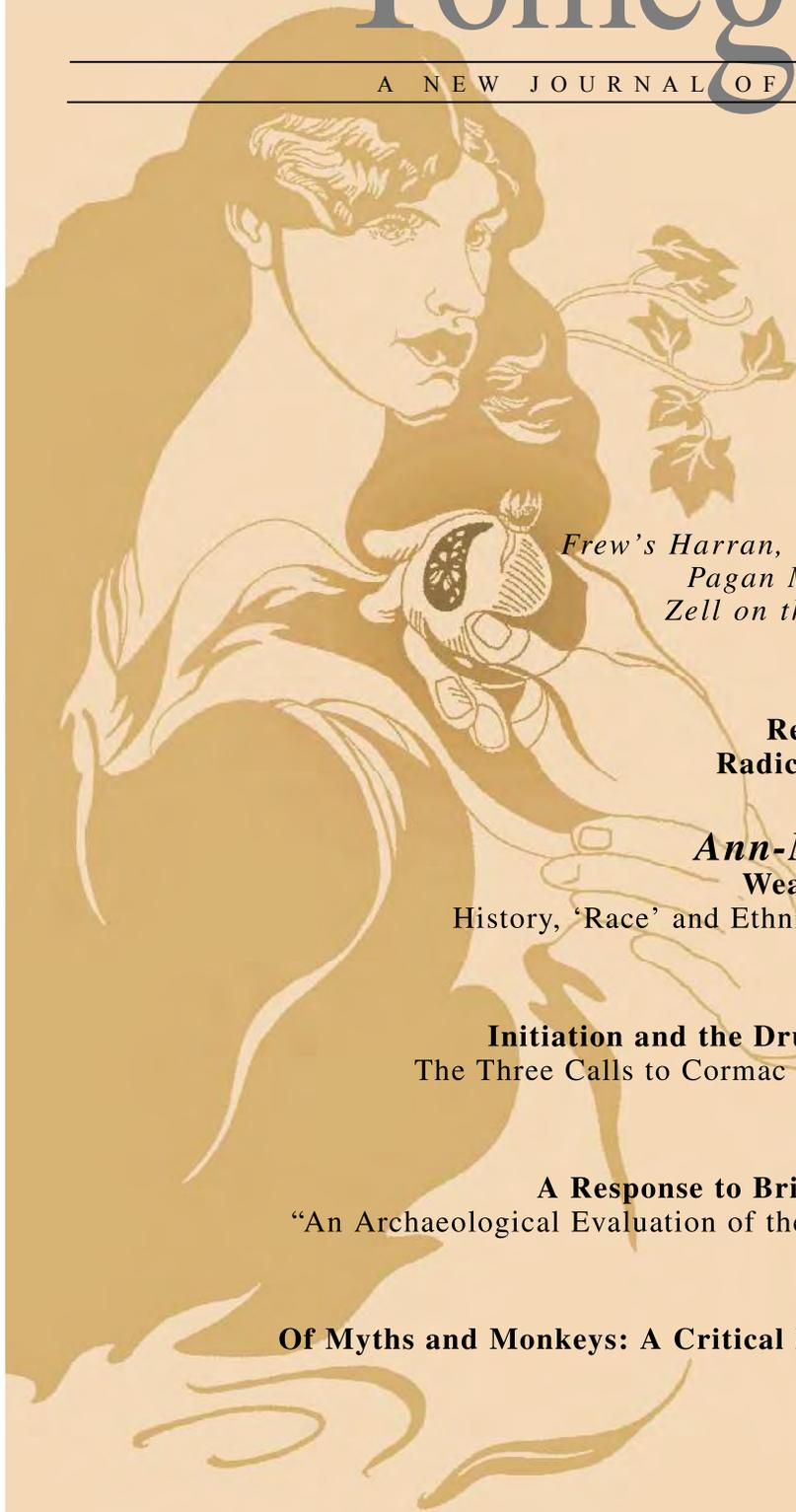
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The Pomegranate

A NEW JOURNAL OF NEOPAGAN THOUGHT



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The Pomegranate

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The Pomegranate is the combined effort of a group of senior Pagans in the United States and Canada. Its purpose is to provide a scholarly venue for the forthright and critical examination of Neopagan beliefs and practices. We intend this Journal to be a forum for the exchange and discussion of the philosophy, ethics, and spiritual potential inherent within modern Paganism's many Paths. The consideration of new ideas, as well as the exploration of the roots of our current practices such as classical Paganism, western esoteric traditions and influences from other disciplines, will be included.

Notes from the Underground

According to Edward Whitmont, in *Return of the Goddess* (NY: Crossroads, 1989), our newfound interest in the magical and the matri-focal is causing material which has long laid dormant in our unconscious to now be brought to the surface. For the most part this is a good thing, but Whitmont cautions us that the "free-floating impulses from the magical layer are powder charges waiting to be ignited by the sparks from the torches of the returning Dionysos and his menadic retinue". Many of us seem to be aware of this, at least intuitively, and are concerned about the implied potential for violence in Nature Religion and Neopaganism, especially about their fringes.

We begin with two articles which address this issue. In the first, Bron Taylor argues convincingly that, incendiary rhetoric notwithstanding, radical environmentalist and animal rights movements are unlikely to pose an immediate or intentional threat to human life. We are encouraged by his optimism and hope that it is well founded.

A more pessimistic view is proposed by Ann-Marie Gallagher. She warns that not only are Pagan beliefs and imagery being appropriated in Britain and Europe by neo-Nazi organizations in order to sacralize their political agendas, but that within the Neopagan community proper, the re-writing of history (and even, occasionally, geography) in search of 'authentic' identity has often led to quite reactionary nationalist and even racist rhetoric.

Our third article is by Brendan "Cathbad" Myers, a respected member of the Celtic

Reconstructionist community. It is our hope that by seeding our magazine with writing of this quality, we will encourage other scholars of the Druidic persuasion to contribute.

Joan Marler, Marija Gimbutas' editor and biographer, has entered the lists with a critical response to Brian Hayden's recent defence of classical academic archaeology, and we have allowed Prof Hayden a few short paragraphs in reply. The editors now serve notice that these are the final words we wish to publish on this subject (at least as articles—letters are still welcome). It is our considered opinion that the dialogue which first appeared in *Pom* #6 between academic feminist theorists and the supporters of Gimbutas is of much more interest, and we would like to actively encourage our readers to address this subject.

We close this issue with an essay from the archives, by the humanist psychologist Maureen O'Hara, wherein she takes issue with the misappropriation of scientific language and methodologies in the service of sensationalist paranormal claims. The ostensive subject of this essay, the Hundredth Monkey Phenomenon, may not be familiar to many of our younger readers, but it enjoyed considerable popularity in the mid-80s. We hope that the lessons learned by reading its critics may be valuable in dealing with the similar ways in which marginal belief systems are promoted today.

This issue (our 10th!) also contains a bumper crop of Letters to the Editor, and we hope you enjoy reading them as much as we enjoyed receiving (and editing) them. Our thanks to all those who contributed, and as for the rest of you ... please write.

Persephone's hard-working minions.

The Pomegranate Readers' Forum

Please contribute to our Readers' Forum so that we may continue to present this valuable venue for the exchange of ideas.

Letters may be edited to conserve space or to avoid repetition. Writers of published letters will have their subscriptions extended.

Dear Pomegranate Editor,

I have read the article on Harran by Donald Frew in *The Pomegranate* 9 with great interest.

Mr Frew has correctly referred to the group known as the Sabi'ah (Sabaeans) whose exact identity or qualification remains wide open to scholarship. The Qur'an lists them among those who were religiously acceptable in the eyes of God: Jews, Christians, Sabaeans, and—of course—Muslims. Th. Ibn Qurrah, it is reported by Ibn an-Nadim, claimed that he and his community were Sabaeans, and were thus exempt from being considered enemies of Islam, coming under the same protection (*dhimmah*) that is accorded to Christian and Jewish subjects. What exactly was the religion of the town and its people remains open to question.

The Syriac term with which he described himself (and his community) may be related to the enigmatic Arabic term *Hanif*. Abraham, the Qur'an states, was neither Jewish nor Christian; he was a *Hanif*. Some would argue that before his prophethood, Muhammad too was a *Hanif*. The term may mean someone who worshipped the One God prior to the descent of revelation.

Two important points are missing from the article (which I enjoyed reading). The first is the report—again by Ibn an-Nadim—that a rift over ideological and philosophical issues occurred between Th. Ibn Qurrah and his townsfolk to the point that he had to leave the town. How does one interpret this? The second point is that once he had referred to himself and his community as a Sabaeans, and the identification was accepted by the Muslims, neither he nor his community could be described as 'Pagans', unless one wants to suggest that Ibn Qurrah was not telling the truth.

Hanna Kassis,
Budapest, Hungary

To The Pomegranate:

For the last several years I have attended lectures by Donald Frew and have eagerly awaited the printed versions of his entertaining and convincing presentations. I'm sorry to say, however, that the substance of his recent articles in both *Ethnologies* and *The Pomegranate*—although almost identical with the content of his lectures—leaves much to be desired, especially as scholarship and academic precision are concerned.

One of the most convincing elements of Frew's lectures on Harran is his reading of the passage attributed to Thabit Ibn Qurrah that begins "We are the heirs and propagators of Paganism ..." No Neopagan audience of today can fail to be moved by these words. Nor could they fail to be convinced of the point, central to Frew's argument, that Ibn Qurrah is a descendent and defender of Classical Graeco-Roman Paganism. If this is so, Frew is well on his way to convincing us that Harran was a Pagan centre of scholarship under protection of the Islamic authorities of the day, and as such it can be considered a previously

unsuspected route by which Classical Pagan beliefs and their concurrent magical practices were transmitted from ancient times to the scholars of Late Medieval Europe.

But as it turns out, the word Frew's source gives as "Pagan" is actually *han-putho*. My medieval Arabic is pretty rusty, but this is surely a close relative of *hanith*, the term used in Islam to refer to those who were already on the right path prior to, or without having been formally exposed to, orthodox Prophecy. The primary element of this path, of course, was belief in the One True God: Abraham is usually given as the classical example of *hanith*. No polytheistic Pagans could possibly be referred to thus.

In his quotation of this passage, Frew capitalizes the words Pagan and Paganism. This is, of course, in accord with the current standard for referring to a modern practitioner of the religion or to those who practiced Classical Graeco-Roman Paganism in antiquity, but in this case it may only serve to lead the unwary reader astray. I would be curious to see if the original paragraph in Scott's *Hermetica* capitalized these words. Unfortunately, none of the university libraries to which I have access seem to carry this book. This, along with the book's having been published in Boulder, Colorado, and being no longer in print, lead me to suspect that Frew may be relying on a non-standard, possibly sensational, New Age source for information that requires more careful handling.

Aaron Walker
UC Santa Cruz

Prudence Priest writes:

As one of the founders of the Northern European Tradition, an original member of the Rune Guild, an long-time member and

elder in CoG, a philologist and diffident scholar, I feel compelled to comment on Blain & Wallis' article "Men & 'Women's Magic'".

There is no evidence that the practice of seidh makes you 'unmanly' (neither does being gay for that matter—where have you people been for the last 20 years?). But because these practices involve being 'possessed', and since genuine possession is virtually impossible to control (ask any Voodoo drummer or Pentecostal), there is plenty of evidence that you can be 'unmanned' by these practices.

For the difference between 'unmanly' and 'unmanned' please consult a dictionary.

Any genuine psychic experience can 'unman' anyone (male or female), and being a man who embraces his anima is not going to give you special dispensation to avoid this.

Prudence O. Priest

To the Editor:

I read with interest Max Dashu's "Another View of the Witch Hunts" (*Pom* 9 [1999]:30-43) and John Michael Greer's "Myth, History and Pagan Origins" (*Pom* 9 [1999]:44-50). Greer makes some astute observations about the myth of Pagan origins, including its character as a sacred narrative (the definition of myth used by many folklorists) and its structural similarity to other contemporary narratives of fall and redemption.

A key aspect of this sacred narrative seems to be the period of persecution known as "the burning times," during which witches—our actual or spiritual ancestors—were executed for their practices. I do not wish for a moment to question the historicity of this terrible episode

continued on page 53

Religion, Violence, and Radical Environmentalism

by Bron Taylor

University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh

Since the 1980 formation of Earth First!, radical environmental movements have proliferated widely. Their adversaries, law enforcement authorities, and some scholars, accuse them of violence and terrorism. Here, I scrutinize such charges by examining 18 years of radical environmentalism for evidence of violence and for indications of violent tendencies. I argue that despite the frequent use of revolutionary and martial rhetoric by participants in these movements, they have not, as yet, intended to inflict great bodily harm or death. Moreover, there are many worldview elements internal to these movements, as well as social dynamics external to them, that reduce the likelihood that movement activists will attempt to kill or maim as a political strategy. Labels such as 'violent' or 'terrorist' are not currently apt, blanket descriptors for these movements. Thus, greater interpretive caution is needed when discussing the strategies, tactics, and impacts of radical environmentalism.¹

Radical environmentalism is best understood as a new religious movement that views environmental degradation as an assault on a sacred, natural world. Aggressively anti-dualistic and generally anti-nationalist (human-political boundaries are cultural artifacts to be transcended), it has evolved as a global bricolage with both religious and political dimensions. Its nature-centered spirituality is patched together from bits and pieces of the world's major religious traditions, indigenous cultures, and

the creative invention and ritualizing of its devotees—thus, a good umbrella term for this movement is pagan environmentalism.² Its political ideology, while plural and internally contested, is an amalgamation influenced most prevalently by the world's radical intellectual traditions as informed by egalitarian (especially anti-imperialist and pro-peasant) social movements. All this is fused to a "deep ecological" moral perception of the kinship and sacred value of all life that is tethered to an apocalyptic vision of the impending collapse of these sacred ecosystems. In a new twist on the domino theory, this collapse will topple the human political systems that depend on such ecosystems.

Among government and industry elites, alarm has escalated about radical environmentalism. This is in part because these activists have demonstrated an increasing ability to organize massive civil disobedience campaigns, sometimes including the sustained blockading of logging roads, in campaigns that have challenged established resource regimes and occasionally forced significant concessions.³ Alarm has been acute among Conservative Christians, many of whom perceive radical environmental activists as promoting a pagan revival bent on destroying Christian industrial-civilization, and of using terrorism as a tactic. Alarm has been further fueled by law enforcement authorities and "wise use" partisans who have deployed the Unabomber's stated sympathy for radical environmentalists and green anarchists as evidence that radical environmentalists engage in terrorism. As exhibit one, they cite the January 1998 conviction of Theodore (Ted) Kaczynski,⁴ his clearly stated sympathies for radical environmentalists and anarchists, and court documents (including his own stated acknowledg-

ment) revealing that he drew on radical environmental tabloids when selecting two of his victims.

But this charge of terrorism had been leveled long before the Unabomber articulated sympathies for radical environmentalists; and it was a charge advanced not only by theists hostile to green paganism. In *Terrorism in America*, Brent Smith warned that ecoterrorism would become "a

mental spirituality.⁹ Supplemented by statements by contemporary Nazis extolling nature and calling for her militant defence, even empirically-grounded scholars such as Jeffrey Kaplan understandably wonder about possible affinities between radical environmentalists and participants within Far Right millenarian movements.¹⁰

... the martial symbolism and apocalyptic worldviews found within radical environmental subcultures has not and probably will not yield widespread or proliferating terrorist violence.

major threat before the turn of the century."⁵ In her analyses of Earth First!, Martha Lee concluded similarly, that it is "possible, if not highly probable, that more radical environmental movements will emerge" and that those, like certain factions within Earth First!, which have "a millenarian belief structure ... will be the most threatening [and best] prepared to use any tactics they deem necessary to achieve their goals."⁶ Lee's analyses were subsequently deployed by "wise use" partisan Ron Arnold to buttress his claim that widespread ecoterror was emerging from radical environmental groups, and worsening due to the absence of aggressive law enforcement response to these threats.⁷

Such fears are supplemented by scholars who warn that radical environmentalism promotes an atavistic primitivism reminiscent of the Nazi preoccupation with blood and soil,⁸ or who criticize the irrationality they believe characterizes radical environ-

THE CULTIC MILIEU: SPAWNING GROUND OF GREEN VIOLENCE?

Even Colin Campbell's discussion of the cultic milieu can be used to suggest the likelihood of this possibility. He argues that a cultic milieu exists as "constant feature of society" representing "the cultural under-ground of society" including "all deviant belief-systems"; that cultic groups "rarely engage in criticism of each other [and] display a marked tolerance and receptivity towards each others' beliefs"; and that since mysticism is "the most prominent part of the deviant religious component of the cultic world" a key characteristic of the cultic milieu is "the continuing pressure to syncretization"¹¹ (my emphasis).

Although Campbell's characterization of cultic groups is overbroad (many are intolerant and anti-syncretistic even in relation to other culturally marginal groups), nature mysticism does permeate radical environmental subcultures and sometimes

the racist right.¹² It is prudent, therefore, to inquire about possible linkages and to wonder whether the cultural “tent” represented by the cultic milieu is pitched so broadly that radical environmentalists, animal liberationists, and those from the racist right, might cross paths underneath it and reciprocally influence one another, perhaps mutating synergistically into increasingly violent forms.

to rule it out, there is little evidence of violence being deployed to cause injuries or death.¹⁴ The interpretations of scholars and partisans building careers by warning us about proliferating radical environmental violence, thus, deserve scrutiny. Such analysts often restrict their inquiries to archival research of movement documents, law enforcement and court records, and at best, a few interviews, usually with promi-

It is certainly possible that some troubled soul or souls will decide that God or Gaia is calling them to defend their given sacred space through a terrorist holy war.

The martial rhetoric and tabloid graphics found among radical environmentalists amplify such concerns and appear to promote violence, perhaps even terrorism; my own work provides the most detail about violence-related debates within these subcultures.¹³ Some Earth First! activists, for example, have depicted their struggle as a holy war against those who would desecrate a sacred earth, express solidarity with diverse revolutionary movements around the globe, and endorse sabotage that involves at least some risk to human beings. One sabotage manual distributed by an anarchist faction associated with Earth First! even discusses firearms and firebombs. A few have expressed sympathy for the tactics employed by terrorist groups such as the Weather Underground and even the Unabomber.

Yet despite the recurrent debates about violence within radical environmental subcultures and the refusal by many activists

movement spokespersons, and often without a clear sense of who they are and which if any factions they represent. A clearer assessment of the prospects for violence emerging from radical environmental groups demands the inclusion of ethnographic data and judicious interpretation of all sources of information. Through my intensive qualitative fieldwork I have identified a number of variables that explain why the martial symbolism and apocalyptic worldviews found within radical environmental subcultures has not and probably will not yield widespread or proliferating terrorist violence. Although a complete overview of the record related to violence up to this point is beyond the scope of this paper, it is available in my forthcoming paper in the *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence*.

Not surprisingly, authorities and other adversaries of radical environmentalists overstate the risks posed by the kinds of

sabotage in which radical environmentalists tend to engage. Tree spiking, for example, does not threaten tree fellers because Forest Service regulations require that they cut the trees within twelve inches of the ground. Spiking should pose no risks in the mill if mill owners install the proper safety barriers and insist that workers follow safety procedures. If power line destruction were to continue, injuries would likely result, but probably more from a failure to foresee consequences (and possibly from callous indifference) than from an intent to kill or maim. Clearly, however, such tactics can and likely will cause injuries, at least indirectly.

Arson has been probably the most dangerous tactic employed thus far, with one exception: On 30 November 1992, after repeated acts of sabotage targeting a chip-mill company engaged in clearcut logging in North Carolina, the on-guard mill owner shot at a fleeing figure after awaking to find his chip-mill on fire. The apparent ecoteur eluded capture by shooting back, the bullet knocking the owner to the ground without causing serious injury. To my knowledge, this is the only incident where it appears that a radical environmentalist used a firearm.

To summarize, most radical environmentalists refuse to deploy sabotage that risks injuries to humans. During efforts to disrupt logging there have been scuffles with workers and sometimes with law enforcement officers resulting in minor injuries. And as we have seen in one case, an activist was apparently willing to employ lethal violence to avoid apprehension. There is, nevertheless, even after 18 years of radical environmental action, little evidence that radical environmentalists intend to maim and kill their adversaries or to foster “terror” among the general populace.

If David Rapoport is right, however, and nonviolent direct action has often appeared “as an initial step in conflicts which later matured into full-scale terrorist campaigns” and that the drama of such campaigns “may intensify and broaden commitments by simultaneously exciting hopes and fanning smoldering hostilities,”¹⁵ it makes sense to look deeper for clues regarding the possibility of these movements evolving terrorist dimensions. Although I cannot here offer detailed ethnographic description regarding traits and dynamics among radical greens that encourage and discourage violence,¹⁶ I can broadly discuss such tendencies and offer some judgments about their relative importance.

TRAITS AND DYNAMICS ENCOURAGING VIOLENCE

One dynamic that could fuel the prospects for violence is the tendency for both radical environmentalists and many of their adversaries to view their activities as defending sacred values. Radical environmentalists generally locate the sacred beneath their feet while their adversaries perceive the sacred as somehow above or beyond the world (or even as centered in the nation state and constitution).

A related but often overlooked dynamic that can encourage violence between these adversaries is the result of watchdog groups waging campaigns to demonize members of the radical group in question. Jeffrey Kaplan’s analysis of the role of watchdog groups opposing racist groups is provocative in this regard.¹⁷ He suggests that watchdog groups often promote a self-fulfilling prophesy in which only those with violent propensities are drawn to the demonized movement while potentially moderating voices are scared away. This

could increase the likelihood that violence will emerge from the individuals and groups under scrutiny. Applied to the social context in which radical environmentalists and their opponents are engaged it is reasonable to wonder if the demonizing of radical environmental activists by “wise use” partisans (such as Barry Clausen and to a lesser extent Ron Arnold), abetted by the alarm expressed by some academicians (such as Brent Smith and Martha Lee), might also add fuel to the possibility that violence could emerge from radical environmental groups. (Advocates of logging, ranching, and mining on public lands use the term “wise use” to contrast their own approach to natural resources, which they consider to be prudent use of them, with the “environmental extremists” or “preservationists” who hope to “lock up” the land and preclude anyone from responsibly making a living from it.)

Certainly some radical environmentalists likewise demonize their adversaries. Stuffed “Smoky the Bear” dolls symbolizing Forest Service employees are occasionally hung in effigy from trees in movement campsites. Earth First! activists sometimes use Biblical metaphors like “Babylon” to label the government evil and corrupt, and some radical environmental activists engage in their own incendiary and revolutionary rhetoric, intensified by apocalyptic urgency and their deep moral conviction. So it certainly is possible that violence could escalate as radical environmentalists and their adversaries engage in crusade rhetoric to justify their competing missions. It is certainly possible that some troubled soul or souls will decide that God or Gaia is calling them to defend their given sacred space through a terrorist holy war. Much more likely, however, are continued scuffles with relatively minor

injuries occurring at blockades and during other resistance campaigns, or somebody getting hurt while responding to or fighting an arson-fire. Sooner or later, someone probably will be badly injured by one or another act of monkeywrenching. Perhaps this will result from an environmentalist-placed tree spike, or from gunfire employed to avoid capture, or when a vehicle crashes after hitting an obstacle created to thwart industry or law enforcement.

Such possibilities, however, do not automatically suggest the likelihood that concerted terrorist violence will emerge from such subcultures. Based on the record of nearly two decades of radical environmentalism and a variety of impressions derived from my ethnographic field work—I believe that if terrorist violence does emerge from radical environmental groups, it will most likely come from people Kaplan calls “unguided missiles” or “lone wolf assassins”—namely from those untethered to the broader subculture with which the terrorist identifies.¹⁸

This said, even an individual like Judi Bari, who battled long and hard against violence promoting rhetoric in Earth First!, and who had repeatedly criticized tree spiking as ineffective and dangerous, did not rule out violence.¹⁹ In a 1993 interview, after the second major wave of movement debate about violence, she said that she agreed with those in the movement who believe that the movement should divide along strategic lines based on attitudes toward violence: “I think we need a split, like the Weather Underground and SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] so those who want to do such tactics can do so without any official connection to Earth First!.” Bari then mentioned what she considered to be a similar relationship between the Animal Liberation Front and

the above-ground People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, and other groups, that support and publicize ALF actions.²⁰ But in her reference to the Weather Underground, which engaged in armed robbery and bombings, Bari implied a greater sympathy for violent tactics than she was will-

scholars find helpful in analyzing the likelihood of radical groups turning violent is the relative isolation of the adherents from mainstream society. As Kaplan puts it, “The more distant a particular group tends to be from the values and beliefs of the mainstream society, the more difficult it

... their greatest and most consistent successes have been won from the judicial branch of the federal government; an inconvenient fact for rigid ideological anarchists ...

ing to acknowledge publicly. After her death Bari was simplistically portrayed as the saint of the nonviolent faction of Earth First!, yet clearly the reality was more complex. Indeed, “a few days before her death Bari requested that her obituaries depict her occupation as a ‘revolutionary.’”²¹ This is not a term usually associated with nonviolence.

TRAITS AND DYNAMICS DISCOURAGING VIOLENCE STATE POWER

Within radical environmental groups rebellious and revolutionary rhetoric is consistently tempered with realism if not exaggeration about the repressive power of the state.²² As Kaplan observes with regard to Nazis, intense scrutiny of radical groups by law enforcement makes it “tantamount to organizational suicide” to “seriously contemplate violent action”—and this provides a strong disincentive to violence.²³

RELATIVE INSULARITY OR SOCIAL ISOLATION

Another variable within radical groups that

becomes for an adherent to moderate or give up the belief system altogether.”²⁴

When viewed through such an analytic lens, radical environmentalism seems less likely than many other radical groups to yield the kind of unbridled extremism that promotes violence. Earth Firstlers do not, as a general pattern or membership requirement, sever ties to their natural families; indeed, some rely on such connections for part of their material resource base. While stridently critical of the consumerism they believe is prevalent among their friends and families, most Earth Firstlers still celebrate holidays and life-passages with them. Although there probably are some cases where familial ties have been completely severed, this is not a general tendency. Although there are intentional and “back-to-the-land” communities within radical environmental subcultures, they do not generally sever all contact with the wider world. There are cases and contexts where terrorists, especially early in their campaigns, do not sever their ties with family, friends, and the wider society

which harbors them.²⁵ My point here is simply to suggest another variable that reduces the likelihood of violence emerging from radical environmental groups.

The Unabomber provides an important contrast that demonstrates the potential importance of the “withdrawal” variable. Ted Kaczynski severed ties with his family and society at large. This was one of many factors that led each of the three court-empowered psychology experts who exam-

Except for a tiny and unknown number of completely underground and isolated eco-teurs, most movement activists are engaged face-to-face with many of their adversaries, from loggers, to Forest Service bureaucrats, to attorneys. Such encounters are often unpleasant for all parties, but nevertheless they play an important role in humanizing the “enemy,” continually forcing the message on all involved parties that, however much we might dislike them, adversaries

hood of violence, is ‘charismatic authority.’ Robbins and Palmer agree that this is a crucial variable as they summarize the argument that charismatic authority increases the “volatility and violence in apocalyptic or ‘world rejecting’ sects.” They argue, therefore, that

charismatic leadership ... probably enhances the antinomian potential of apocalypticism. Indeed, the combination of charismatic leadership and an apocalyptic worldview may create a kind of tinderbox, although much will depend on the particular qualities of the visionary leader [including whether he] demonize[s] any opposition. [Moreover,] world-rejecting sects manifest a stance of total rejection of or detachment from the broader society that may require ... a revered charismatic prophet with a compelling vision.²⁸

Yet again, when viewed through such an analytic lens, radical environmentalism seems less likely than many other apocalyptic groups to turn violent. There is no charismatic figure to follow blindly, indeed, any figure who even begins to consider her or himself an authoritative leader is usually quickly and effectively blocked or deposed by other activists within this radically egalitarian group.

The anti-hierarchical dimension to Earth First! not only makes this movement inhospitable to charismatic authority, it also manifests itself in another trait found among them—their enthusiasm for debate. The *Earth First!* journal itself provides a venue for debate that, on balance, has a moderating effect. No movement individual who is contemplating violence and in contact with other movement people, whether through the journal or at movement gatherings, will fail to hear the many good strategic and moral arguments against such tactics. Moreover, because of their activism, the most astute in these subcultures will surely notice that their greatest and most consistent successes have been

won from the judicial branch of the federal government; an inconvenient fact for rigid ideological anarchists, to be sure, but certainly one that makes difficult a comprehensive demonology of the federal government.

Certainly there are troubling insular dimensions to the subcultures of radical environmentalism, including certain anti-intellectual streams. I have heard startlingly ignorant statements about politics and ecology, especially by activists who grew up in these subcultures or were drawn into these groups at a young age. Because of the ideological commitment to free speech and expression within these groups, however, countervailing and moderating opinions will continue to be heard, along with the prevailing green militancy.

LIFE AS SACRED

There are also general religious sentiments, such as that the earth and all life is sacred, that lessen the possibility that movement activists will engage in terrorist violence. Sometimes such arguments are advanced explicitly during movement gatherings and in its publications. In response to Barry Clausen’s efforts to link Earth First! and the Unabomber, for example, one Earth First! group insisted that, “Earth First! practices non-violent civil disobedience.” They continued asserting that sabotage is controversial and there is no official position about it and “Earth First! does not advocate violence towards any person because ... Earth First! considers all life sacred, even Barry Clausen’s.”²⁹ Often, the sacredness of all life is conveyed through various forms of movement ritualizing. It is hard to avoid the logic that, if all life is sacred, one ought to eschew violence, especially when defending sacred places. This would seem to reduce the potential of such a movement spawning terrorist action.

... it is possible to imagine some radical environmentalists, despairing of peaceful social change, and having no expectation of divine rescue, splintering off into militia-like survivalist movements.

ined the documentary record and interviewed Kaczynski to diagnosis him “schizophrenic, paranoid subtype.” Moreover, Kaczynski’s refusal to acknowledge his own illness and to allow his attorneys to use it in his defence, these experts agreed, is a common aspect of the illness.²⁶ In any case, despite the prosecutor’s zeal to link Kaczynski with Earth First! by introducing into the record the existence of movement literature in Kaczynski’s cabin and one time reliance upon it in victim selection, the strong evidence of mental illness clearly erodes the implication that the Unabomber case proves Earth First! is a terrorist breeding ground.

Indeed, in the absence of mental illness, it is the activist engagements of radical environmentalists that can prevent social withdrawal and the dangerous “insularity-dynamic” linked by scholars to violence.

are human.²⁷ Sometimes activists must acknowledge that some adversaries are likable enough creatures, even if their values are “fucked up.” This moderates movement demonologies and reduces the possibility of violence. Indeed, much of the rage felt by movement activists is directed less at the mass of “functionaries” in governments and corporations than at high government and corporate officials. Ordinary workers are often viewed as brainwashed and deluded, trapped by the evil system due to their livelihood needs and advertising-manipulated lifestyle preferences.

CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Another variable, one linked to the relative isolation of adherents and postulated by some scholars of apocalyptic movements to have predictive value related to the likeli-

THE CONVERGENCE OF ANIMAL LIBERATION AND RADICAL ENVIRONMENTALISM?

To a significant extent, the Animal Liberation and Radical Environmental movements represent distinct subcultures. My own perception is that within Earth First! there are at most a few dozen activists who regularly participate in both movements. Yet there is increasing cooperation and overlap between radical environmental and animal rights activists, and since a major movement schism in 1990, Earth First! has printed articles about animal liberationist resistance. Given the much greater propensity for ALF activists to engage in arson, the future extent of collaboration between these groups is certainly of interest in attempting to assess the likelihood of injuries resulting from radical environmental actions.

In addition to Rod Coronado, two other figures have attempted to bridge the gap by appealing to and writing for Animal Liberation tabloids and the Earth First! journal. Like Coronado, both David Barbarash and Darren Thurston have been convicted of crimes for which the Animal Liberation Front took credit, including the theft (or "liberation") of 29 cats from the University of Alberta on June 1, 1992. During a related search of property owned by the two activists, according to Ron Arnold, Canadian police found "an AK-47 assault rifle, ammunition and two hand grenades."³⁰ When informed that Arnold had reported this on his website, Barbarash replied

Ron Arnold, like most of his kind, are [sic] idiots who twist facts. During a raid on Darren's place in Edmonton in 1992 in relation to the university raid, police found an AK-47 type of rifle, as well as a dummy grenade being used as a paperweight. The weapon was fully legal and registered, and the dummy grenade was not illegal either.³¹

Since no charges were ever filed with regard to the firearm and grenade, it appears Arnold did not report all pertinent facts.

Thurston and Barbarash are currently, however, suspected of a number of additional crimes. According to articles in Animal Liberation tabloids and *Earth First!*, these include four 1995 cases where mail bombs were sent to two Canadian racists (the Nazi propagandist Ernest Zundle and Aryans Nation leader Charles Scott), John Thompson of the right-wing MacKenzie Institute, and Terrence Mitenko, a geneticist with Alta Genetics in Calgary. Yet neither of these activists have been charged with mailing bombs.

Although they have not been arrested in these bomb cases, they were charged in March 1998 with 27 counts related to sending packages booby-trapped with razor blades. The alleged aim was to injure big game "trophy" hunters in Canada, who might cut themselves on the blades when opening the letters. Barbarash was also charged with possessing an illegal weapon (a stun gun), and with Rebecca Rubin, "an explosive substance," that was, according to Vancouver Sun reporter Rick Ouston, a nine-volt battery and wire.³² They deny the charges and attribute the arrests to unfair, ongoing police harassment. If true, however, these actions represent one of the very few cases where activists at the intersection of Animal Liberationism and Radical Environmentalism have clearly intended harm to their adversaries.

These crimes did not have a clearly stated ecological purpose, however, in the articles written by supporters of these activists. Therefore, it is worth wondering if these qualify as "radical environmental" actions. Yet clearly, some ALF activists, seeking support widely and viewing Earth First!'s ecoteers as kindred spirits, regularly

send news updates on their activities and encounters with law enforcement to Earth First!. By publishing these stories Earth First! creates an impression that these two movements are unifying or, at least, that they cooperate and are mutually supportive. There is certainly something to this impression, although it is probably exaggerated in

increasingly toward wild animals rather than domestic ones or those exploited in the fur trade. I know of no cases where radical environmentalists have suddenly converted to an animal liberationist perspective, abandoning forest protection work to liberate hogs, mink, or fox.

As we have seen, however, there are a

I have heard startlingly ignorant statements about politics and ecology, especially by activists who grew up in these subcultures or were drawn into these groups at a young age.

the minds of watchdog groups and most law enforcement officials. The printing of such material is probably influenced by the anti-authoritarian and anti-censorship views widely shared by radical environmentalists more than it is dictated by ideological agreement with animal liberationist ideology.

Significantly, collaboration between these groups usually occurs where animal rights beliefs intersect with concern for ecosystems and species survival. (For example, when hunting of predators is underway, which often negatively impacts ecosystems, or where species themselves are threatened with extinction by human activities.) Most radical environmentalists are more concerned for ecosystems and species than for individual animals.

When radical environmentalists and animal rights activists collaborate the latter tend to become radically-ecologized—developing greater concerns for ecosystems and endangered species. Consequently, such activists often turn their attention

number of activists who dwell in both camps, even if sometimes uneasily. Often such activists are anarchists, opposed to all hierarchies, whether in human society or between humans and non-human nature. One woman activist who writes under the pseudonym "Anne Archy," for example, has made it a personal goal to unify the two movements, by writing for each of their tabloids.³³

Despite such efforts, profound ideological differences remain between radical environmentalists and animal liberationists. Radical environmentalists promote a ecosystem- and species-focused ethics (which includes plant life) while animal liberationists focus more on the well being of individual, sentient, animals. This has and will continue to cause tensions between these groups and reduce the occasions for their collaboration and mutual influence.

Moreover, my strong impression is that animal liberationists who come in contact with radical environmentalists without finding their priorities changing withdraw

to their more 'individualistic' and traditional animal rights groups. It is possible, however, that the more arson-friendly ALF may win tactical converts even if they do not change the focus of the radical environmentalists they know.

metaphysics-of-interdependence seriously, they will refuse to demonize opponents. On balance, the politics and metaphysics of the sacred, which permeates radical environmental groups, helps erode the kind of absolutist-Manichean demonizing of the "enemy" that otherwise might more force-

... much of the radicalism of the 1960s started as Yippie-like fun-fests, but did not end up that way.

DEEP ECOLOGICAL "IDENTIFICATION," INTERDEPENDENCE, AND ANTI-DUALISM

Deep ecology's goal of fostering a "deep ecological sense of identification with all life," as Bill Devall and George Sessions once argued, including a sense of the inter-related sacredness of all life, works against both misanthropy and violence in radical environmental groups. "Ecology has taught us that the whole earth is part of our 'body' and ... we must learn to respect it as we respect ourselves," they wrote, "As we feel for ourselves, we must feel for all forms of life." It is difficult to advocate or justify violence against any life form when animated by such spiritual perceptions, as Devall and Sessions concluded: "Both on practical and ethical grounds, violence is rejected as a mode of ecological resistance."³⁴

Perhaps even the most "spiritual" or "woo woo" activists ("woo woo" is an amusing movement term referring to religious ritual or one's "spirituality") have a moderating influence. Some of them wear buttons with "us/them" crossed out with the universal sign "Not!"—suggesting that if movement people take their anti-dualistic,

fully emerge in these movements, given their apocalyptic urgency. Such dualism has been widely noted by scholars as an important variable that increases the likelihood of violence by radical groups.³⁵

NATURE BATS LAST AND "WHO SHALL BE THE AGENT OF TRANSFORMATION?"

It could be deduced from one of David Rapoport's arguments, however, that religiously motivated apocalyptic groups are especially prone to violence. He asserts that with such groups there are two conditions for terrorist violence, an expectation of an imminent day of deliverance and a belief that violent human actions "can or must consummate the process."³⁶

The critical question Rapoport is addressing is "Who (and what means) shall be the agent of transformation?" A related question is, "How does the answer to such a question influence the likelihood of violence emerging from a social movement?" Jeffrey Kaplan's answer is that when apocalyptic groups envision no divine intervention or rescue, violence is more likely.³⁷

Although it might seem that Earth Firsters do not anticipate a divine interven-

tion that will usher in a green-millennium, there is a strong belief that if humans do not radically change their lifeways, nature (whether personified as Gaia or goddess and/or conceived as 'population dynamics' within ecosystems) will eventually do it herself. This is symbolically represented in the popular movement slogan and bumper sticker, "Nature Bats Last" (coined by ecologist Paul Ehrlich) that musingly anticipates the eventual restoration of Eden on earth, even if by means of a tragic "cataclysmic cleansing." Here is expressed the widely shared movement belief that sacred earth herself will eventually shake-off species pathogenic to her long-term health. This belief might, in a way similar to that observed by Kaplan in a different context, reduce the possibility that movement activists will feel it is justifiable and possible to, by their own actions, violently force the needed transformations.

For this reason I disagree with Martha Lee's insistence that the Earth First! faction she calls the "apocalyptic biocentrists" are more likely to engage in terrorist violence than ones she claims are optimistic millenarians.³⁸ It is hard to see how despair regarding the possibility of human action bringing about the desired transformations can provide a basis for revolutionary violence.

This conclusion does not, however, address Rapoport's belief that there is a strong psychological need, by at least some devotees, to think their actions are central. Here he seems to imply that there is a strong tendency for apocalyptic groups to turn terrorist:

When a sense of imminence takes root, some believers must find it psychologically impossible to regard their actions as irrelevant, ... At the very least, they will act to secure their own salvation. And once the initial barrier to action has been overcome, it will only be a

matter of time before different kinds of action make sense too. Soon they may think they can shape the speed or timing of the process.³⁹

Moreover, Rapoport adds: "It would seem rather obvious that, when the stakes of any struggle are perceived as being great, the conventional restraints on violence diminish accordingly."⁴⁰

Such assertions are certainly sobering. Radical environmentalists do believe the stakes are high: the survival of Homo sapiens and untold other species is at stake. Consequently, it is possible to imagine some radical environmentalists, despairing of peaceful social change, and having no expectation of divine rescue, splintering off into militia-like survivalist movements. Or perhaps revolutionary cells will emerge, grounded in tragic, romantic scripts that argue that the only hope for the planet is in a vanguard of green-anarchist revolutionaries willing to resist violently the industrial juggernaut. Nevertheless, with regard to radical environmentalism, I am currently unconvinced of the psychological tendency cited by Rapoport. The anti-anthropocentrism in radical environmentalism works strongly against placing hope in human agency. Perhaps the musing movement slogan, "There is hope, but not for us" captures some of the fatalism to which I am alluding.

FUN AND EROS

Perhaps one of the most important factors that reduce the likelihood of violence emerging from radical environmentalism is the riotous sense of fun that characterizes its activists. In keeping with their conviction that "rewilding" is an essential part of the needed transformations, many of these activists are hearty "party animals." Indeed, the fraternity/sorority scene celebrated in the motion picture "Animal House" might

even be considered a ritual source. "Body shots," where activists take turns drinking Tequila off increasingly intimate body parts, has become a trust-building and group-bonding rite—even self-consciously so. It might also lead to even deeper intimacies in nearby fields or woods. Alcohol-fueled antics can become serious fun—and real ritualizing.

Also popular at most wilderness gatherings is an "amoebae" made up of circling and encircled mostly inebriated activists. With arms and hands intertwined around shoulders and hips, swirling chaotically around fields and campfires, the amoebae captures unwary human organisms, absorbing them into itself, all the while chanting "eat and excrete, eat and excrete." Not only does it provide a wild good time—although sometimes angering those trampled by it or whose overtly spiritual ritualizing was disrupted—the amoebae draws even some of the most retiring activists into the group. It also conveys other important messages: as another ritual of inclusion, it represents the value and importance of the so-called "lower" organisms, while simultaneously bonding activists together in the ritual play.⁴¹ It also articulates symbolically the kinship of all creatures who share the same primal urges. Perhaps it also signals that activists should not take themselves too seriously—for like amoebae food, they too will be reabsorbed into the biological processes from which humans emerged.

Early in their history Earth First! activists appropriated from a Native American culture the "mudhead Kachinas"—trickster-like figures known for making fun of solemn occasions—a role itself viewed as a sacred, anti-hubristic endeavor. In any case, the lampooning, the ridicule, and the mirth-making that characterizes Earth First! gatherings mitigates the sullen bitterness

and brooding anger that can characterize the radical personality of the "true believer"—the personality type especially prone to violence.⁴²

CAVEATS AND CONCLUSIONS

It is impossible to predict confidently the extent to which radical environmentalists (or the animal liberationists with whom they sometimes collaborate) will employ tactics that, intentionally or not, risk injury or death to humans. There are many examples of groups with non-violent records making a transition to violence. Sometimes, as Jeffrey Kaplan shows with regard to the rescue movement, it only takes someone to show the way, focusing pent-up frustration in a violent direction.⁴³

Nevertheless, much expectation that these are or will be violent, terrorist movements is based more on a priori expectations than on the historic record of these groups or on an understanding of their worldviews and how they precipitate action. Upon examining the record and characteristics of radical environmental groups, I here conclude that claims that these are violence-prone subcultures are inaccurate. I make this statement mindful that some animal liberationists and radical environmentalists have been willing to risk injuries to their adversaries and, in a few cases, have intended to do so. To summarize, excluding the Unabomber and perhaps one other case where an ecoteur sought to evade capture, there is as yet no proven case where Animal Liberationists or Radical Environmentalists have attempted or succeeded in using violence to inflict great bodily harm or death on their adversaries.

Radical environmental subcultures certainly threaten "business as usual" in western industrial societies. If such societies are to respond in a way that does not exacer-

bate environment-related conflicts, it is critical that the nature of such threats be apprehended accurately. Such an appraisal will not be achieved if exaggerated and ill-informed perceptions of the violent tendencies in these movements become conventional beliefs—and especially if such perceptions are allowed to be shaped by the most trenchant adversaries of these movements.⁴⁴

NOTES:

1. I wish to acknowledge collegial assistance and helpful comments from Jeffrey Kaplan, David Rapoport, Ron Arnold and Jean Rosenfeld.
2. See Bron Taylor, ed., *Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press 1995) and B. Taylor, "Resacralizing Earth: Pagan Environmentalism and the Restoration of Turtle Island" in *American Sacred Space*, edited by D. Chidester and E. T. Linenthal (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press 1995) pp. 97-151.
3. B. Taylor, "Earth First! Fights Back", *Terra Nova* 2/2 (Spring 1997) pp. 29-43.
4. On 22 January 1998, Kaczynski pleaded guilty to being the anti-technology serial bomber who between 1978 and 1995, killed three people and injured 23 others.
5. Brent L. Smith, *Terrorism in America* (Albany: State University of New York Press 1994) p. 129.
6. M. F. Lee, "Violence and the Environment: The Case of 'Earth First!'", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7/3 (1995) p. 124.
7. Ron Arnold, *Ecoterror: The Violent Agenda to Save Nature—the World of the Unabomber* (Bellevue, Washington: Free Enterprise 1997).
8. Luc Ferry, *The New Ecological Order* (Paris: Bernard Grasset 1992; reprint Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press 1995).
9. Michael W. Lewis, *Green Delusions: An Environmentalist Critique of Radical Environmentalism* (Durham: Duke University Press 1992); George Bradford, *How Deep Is Deep Ecology? With an Essay-Review on Women's Freedom* (Ojai, California: Times Change Press 1989); and J. Stark, "Postmodern Environmentalism: A Critique of Deep Ecology", in B. Taylor, ed., *Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press 1995) pp. 259-81.
10. Jeffrey Kaplan, "The Postwar Paths Of Occult National Socialism: From Rockwell and Madole to Manson", in *Cult, Anti-Cult and the Cultic Milieu: A Re-Examination* (2 volumes), ed. J. Kaplan and Heléne Löw. (Stockholm University & the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention 1998).
11. Colin Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization", in *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* 5 (1972) pp. 122-124.
12. Bron Taylor, "The Religion and Politics of Earth First!", *The Ecologist* 21/6 (November/December 1991) pp. 258-66; idem., "Evoking the Ecological Self: Art As Resistance to the War on Nature", *Peace Review* 5/2 (1993) pp. 225-30; idem., ed., *Ecological Resistance Movements*; idem., "Earth First!'s Religious Radicalism", in C. K. Chapple, ed., *Ecological Prospects: Scientific, Religious, and Aesthetic Perspectives* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1994) pp. 85-209. On the racist right, see Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press); "Right Wing Violence in North America", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7/1 (1995) pp. 44-95; and idem., "The Postwar Paths of Occult National Socialism: from Rockwell and Madole to Manson".
13. Bron Taylor, "Diggers, Wolves, Ents, Elves and Expanding Universes: Global Bricolage and the Question of Violence Within the Subcultures of Radical Environmentalism", in *Cult, Anti-Cult and the Cultic Milieu: A Re-Examination*, ed. J. Kaplan and H. Löw (Stockholm University & the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention 1998).
14. For the latest series of debates about violence (and a related debate about whether the journal should print articles that seem to promote it), see Gary McFarlane and Darryl Echt, "Cult of Nonviolence", *Earth First!* 18/1 (1 November 1998) pp. 3, 17; Rod Coronado, "Every Tool in the Box", *Earth First!* 18/2 (21 December 1998) pp. 2, 21; Lacey Phillips, "Censoring the Journal", *Earth First!* 13/3 (1998) p. 2; and the forum in *Earth First!* 18/4 (20 March 1998) pp. 7-11.
15. David Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions", *American Political Science Review* 78 (September 1984) p. 671.
16. For this see Bron Taylor, "Diggers ..." (note 14).
17. Jeffrey Kaplan, "The Anti-Cult Movement in America: A History of Culture Perspective", *Szyzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture* 2/3-4 (1993) pp. 267-96.
18. Jeffrey Kaplan, "The Context of American Millenarian Revolutionary Theology: The Case of



'Identity Christian' Church', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 5/1 (Spring 1993) pp. 30-82; idem., "Right Wing Violence in North America".

19. Yet she was also clear that the time was not ripe to take up arms. Nicholas Wilson, "Judi Bari Dies But Her Spirit Lives On", *Albion Monitor* (5 March 1997), <<http://www.Monitor.Net/Monitors>>. See Judy Bari, "Monkeywrenching", *Earth First!* 14/3 (2 February 1994) p. 8, and idem., "The Secret History of Tree Spiking", *Earth First!* 15/2 (21 December 1994) pp. 11,15, for her arguments against tree spiking, especially that it does not work.

20. Interview with Judi Bari, Willets, California, February 1993.

21. Nicholas Wilson, "Judi Bari Dies But Her Spirit Lives on."

22. Bron Taylor, "Diggers ..." (note 15).

23. Jeffrey Kaplan, "Right Wing Violence ..." p. 47.

24. Ibid., p. 46.

25. As David Rapoport and Jeff Kaplan pointed out (personal communication) in most guerrilla wars, familial ties are often not severed. Kaplan suggests, however, that "leaderless resistance" whether radical right, anarchist, or green, often depends on breaking ties.

26. These conclusions are drawn from a careful reading of the declarations submitted to the court by three court-appointed psychiatric experts.

27. On the role of dehumanization in terrorist violence, see Ehud Sprinzak, "Right-Wing Terrorism in a Comparative Perspective: The Case of Split Delegation", in *Terror From the Extreme Right*, ed. Tore Bjorgo (London: Frank Cass 1995) pp. 17-43, especially p. 20.

28. T. Robbins, and S. Palmer, "Introduction" pp. 20-21.

29. Cascadia Forest Defenders, "Barry Clausen: The Unreal Truth", <<http://www.Igc.Apc.Org/Cascadia/Clausen.html>> (1996).

30. Also, according to Arnold's internet site (<http://www.cdfe.org/ecoterror.html>), the "Ecoterror Response Network", Barbarash and Thurston were convicted of torching several trucks belonging to the Billingsgate Fish Company. But in email and telephone communications on 10 and 11 May 1998, David Barbarash stated that only Thurston was charged and convicted of the fish company crime.

31. Email message 10 May 1998.

32. Rick Ousten, "Activists' 'secret' lives probed", *Vancouver Sun*, (30 March 1988), A1.

33. She recently published the lead article in *No Compromise* explaining Earth First! to ALF activists, arguing that habitat destruction is an animal rights issue, and urging greater collaboration between these movements. See Anne Archy, "Frontline Forest Defence for Earth and Animal Liberation", *No Compromise* # 8 (1998) p. 16-19.

34. Bill Devall and George Sessions, "Direct Action", *Earth First!* 5/1 (1984) pp. 18-19, 24.

35. E.g., "Apocalypticism is also, at least in its catastrophic manifestations, decidedly dualistic. Absolute good and evil contend through history such that there is no room for moral ambiguity." T. Robbins and S. Palmer, "Introduction", p. 6.

36. "Messianic Sanctions for Terror", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20/2 (1980) pp. 197-198.

37. Jeffrey Kaplan, "Right Wing Violence in North America", p. 52.

38. Martha Lee, *Earth First!* (Syracuse University Press 1995).

39. Rapoport, "Messianic Sanctions", p. 201.

40. Rapoport, "Messianic Sanctions", p. 204.

41. See Christopher Manes, "Paganism as Resistance", *Earth First!* 8/5 (1 May 1988) pp. 21-2, for a movement discussion of the importance of play.

42. Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer* (Harper: New York 1951). When I presented an earlier version of this paper at the November 1997 meeting of the American Academy of Religion, David Rapoport reminded me that much of the radicalism of the 1960s started as Yippie-like fun-fests, but did not end up that way.

43. Jeff Kaplan, "Absolute rescue: absolutism, defensive action and the resort to force", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7/3 (1995) pp. 128-63.

44. Jeffrey Kaplan, "The Anti-Cult Movement in America: A History of Culture Perspective", *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture* 2/3-4 (1993) pp. 267-96.

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Weaving a Tangled Web? Pagan ethics and issues of history, 'race' and ethnicity in Pagan identity

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On the 25th of March 1997 a Witch, Kevin Carleon, got inside Stonehenge and at dawn unfurled and flew the Union Flag. This was in protest of a theory being put forward and published in the Wiltshire Archeological Magazine that Stonehenge and Avebury may have been built by insurgent peoples originating from the west of what is now France around 4,500 years ago. Carleon explained his protest by declaring: 'It is my theory that those living in this country invaded Europe—and not vice versa'. The deployment of a Union Flag under the circumstances seems somewhat anachronistic, given that it did not exist in its present form until 1801 and the idea of 'nation' in its contemporary sense did not exist before the 18th century (Robbins 1989, Hobsbawm 1990). But this is just one example of a whole range of misconceptions and, arguably, misappropriations of concepts of history, nation, 'race' and ethnicity which seem to exist within popular Pagan lore, and it is the purpose of this article to hold up to the light, from an academic and Pagan participant perspective, a number of issues arising from the continuing evolution of Pagan identities here in Britain at the end of the 20th century.

Some of these are named in the title of this short piece; all, it will be suggested,

arise from a number of as yet unaddressed assumptions about the place that Pagans occupy in terms of our current historical, social and political situation(s). These assumptions articulate in a number of ways; in the opinions, philosophies, texts and vernacular expressions of Pagan culture and occurring with a regularity and variety which is almost dizzying when one seeks to catch at their sources and their boundaries. In order that the varying emanations of ideas around history, gender, 'race', identity and ethnicity, and other issues do not slip the net, I will be seeking to identify the nodes each presently occupies on the web of Pagan culture and to name the points at which this web is becoming entangled with that of the more dominant social structures in which we are also participant. This piece will argue that current Pagan praxis has the power to transform both, and to point the way towards a Pagan ethics which would support this mutual transformation, but that this first requires acknowledging the links between the two. Identities and meanings being allotted and ascribed to an ongoing construction of current Pagan identity may make that identity appear more fragile and contingent.

'HISTORY' AND POPULAR PAGAN TEXTS

"The dead are not always quiet, and the past will never be a safe subject for contemplation" Ronald Hutton (1996)

A survey of popular Pagan texts published by Aquarian Press, Thorsons, Elements and Arkana turned up an arrestingly unproblematic relationship with ethnic, historical, national, social and political boundaries. Amongst the very popular titles surveyed, there was a markedly lackadaisical attitude towards historical perio-

dicity. This was particularly the case in titles which invoked historical precedent as the foundation of both the authority of the information contained in the book about contemporary Pagan practices and, significantly, the basis for present-day Pagan identity. The examples I analysed were peppered with invocations of 'Ancient times ...' and began authoritative pieces of information with 'In the past ...' invariably failing to identify era let alone dates, cultural context or cite provenance. Admittedly, none of the books I looked at claimed to be academic texts, although one of the worst offenders did, somewhat ironically deplore the 'flimsy scholarship' on which many books detailing various magical traditions are based (Green 1995).

I would argue, however, that neither the lack of claims to scholasticism nor the disclaimers to the effect that some texts occasionally carry exonerate them from blatant inaccuracy or unaccountability. The influence of popular Pagan texts should not be underestimated; the majority of identifying Pagans in Britain, Northern Europe and North America are first-generation Pagans (in the contemporary sense at least!) and the majority of us either have first-contact with Paganism via these texts or consult them for follow-up information after initial person-to-person contact with Paganism. Moreover, in my experience, and from the evidence of other, similar, sources cited in the texts themselves, the information and ideas gen-

erated by these books is often enthusiastically picked up on and quoted, taken as given and often, as I will go on to argue, reapplied somewhat problematically.

PAGAN 'ETHNICITIES', CELTICISM AND CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISONS

A concept which appears to spin some particularly woolly ideas around some of the issues mentioned is the often uncritical and unproblematized application of the term 'Celtic'. What has effectively been a salvage job around previously suppressed, silenced and overlooked aspects of past and present cultures of these islands has been a positive consequence of the so-called 'celtic revival' and has gone some way to challenging the myth of Anglo-Saxonism first imposed within ideologies of racial hierarchies

in 19th century England. However, the current wave of popular 'celticism' stands in danger of propagating myths with similarly denigrating effects. Courtenay Davis, in the introduction to his book *Celtic Design* uses the term '... the Celtic nation' (Rutherford 1993); one of the problems related to which I have already pointed out. But the frequency with which the rhetoric of celticism abounds, for example '... the Celtic civilization', '... the Celtic people ...' places it in favour of an homogenous 'Celtic' history and identity. Only one of the samples of books on the Grail Mysteries that I looked at, for example, contained any element of differentiation

in terminology. John and Caitlin Matthews do pause at the beginning of *Ladies of the Lake* to deplore what they term a "... growing tendency to confuse 'Celtic', 'British', 'Welsh' and 'Gaelic'". However, they go on to say that when they are talking about '... Celtic' they are "speaking broadly about the traditions of Britain and Ireland combined, since both countries share many common themes and stories ..." (Matthews 1992). Notably, both authors employ the term 'Celtic' unproblematically and without even as much differentiation as this in a number of their other works. So what we have, effectively, is a large number of popular texts invoking a cultural specification without ever specifying whose culture, or when or where it is or was. What does this fine disregard for cultural and historical specificity signify?

Perhaps we could paraphrase the historian Renan by applying his assessment of the tendencies of forming nations to present-day Pagan identity. He claimed that "Getting its history wrong is part of being a nation" (Hobsbawm 1990). Perhaps getting our history and occasionally our geography wrong is part of constructing a Pagan identity. But what might the consequences of such myth-building be? Might not the construction of our ideas about, for instance, Celticity actually be culture-u-like with knotwork, and undermine those voices struggling to be heard below the surface of that lumpenmasse identity: fighting for land-rights in Scotland, against racism and poverty in Wales, against war in Ireland, absentee landlords in Cornwall and against the demise of the Manx language in Vannin? To what extent, when an author claims and a reader believes that building a mound in your garden is a 'very Celtic thing', are we

essentializing racial characteristics, positing an inside track on spirituality in place of recognizing human rights issues and lack of power? Stereotyping even when it appears to be awestruck and benevolent actually denies and 'disappears' self-autonomy. Claims towards 'Celticity' or any other identity which ignore the real history and material conditions of those with whom we are declaring affinity becomes another form of abuse, whether this takes the form of ripping off identities which are not ours, or the strip-mining of the spirituality which may be the last dignity some peoples have remaining. All Pagans have a responsibility to act ethically in relation to oppressed peoples—that means respecting their history and present struggles, not constructing a 'Stage Oirish' spirituality.

Romanticizing minority-ethnic cultures is a concentric issue occurring within the recent interest in Native American spirituality. This has had a devastating effect on Native Americans, as Andy Smith, a Cherokee woman maintains in her essay "For All Those Who Were Indian in a Former Life" (Smith 1993). She points out that Native Americans are told they are greedy if they do not choose to share their spirituality, and gives the example of white women in search of spiritual enlightenment appealing to female solidarity in order to glean some 'secret' knowledge from Native American women. She notes that she can hardly attend a feminist conference in the United States without the only Native American presenter being the woman who opens the conference with a ceremony. Because of this romanticization of indigenous peoples' spirituality, the real oppression of Indians [sic] is overlooked, even trivialized:

Indian women are suddenly no longer the

A survey of popular Pagan texts ... turned up an arrestingly unproblematic relationship with ethnic, historical, national, social and political boundaries.

women who are forcibly sterilized and are tested with unsafe drugs such as Depo provera; we are no longer the women who have a life expectancy of 47 years; and we are no longer the women who generally live below the poverty level and face a 75 per cent unemployment rate. No, we're too busy being cool and spiritual.

An analogy between what has happened to Native American spirituality and the situation with the new Celticity in Britain is drawn, albeit unwittingly, in a book on 'Celtic Lore'. In a section where 'past' 'Celtic' oral culture is discussed in relation to story-telling traditions, the author inserts an amazed footnote:

There are still peoples who retain an oral tradition and possess memories which are, to us, startling. An example of this is the Navajo Indians. A writer in the Independent Magazine in August 1990 records a visit to a restaurant in Navajo country. The waitress went from packed table to packed table taking orders without the benefit of written notes, then returned with laden trays bearing the correct dishes (Rutherford 1993).

Since all that can be said with any certainty, given the evidence, is that this woman has an extremely good memory, it is difficult to conclude whether the author really believes this woman lives wholly outside the rest of American culture in spite of the fact that she is found waiting in a restaurant, or that she somehow embodies an essence possessed by all Navajo. It is clear, however, that in his enthusiasm to point out the difference of oral cultures from literary ones, the author is more keen to attribute the ensuing abilities of the former to groups of peoples than he is to engage with the social contexts of their lived realities.

Essentializing, romanticizing and imbuing with mysticism is, in fact, racist. John H.T. Davies, a Welshman, writes: "I do

not want to see what has happened to the Native Americans, happen to the heritage of my own people. I do not wish to see us marginalized as the 'Dreamtime People' of Europe. ... To value us only for our dreams is extremely patronizing". He goes on: "I do not wish to encounter your expensive workshop leader who can't even pronounce, let alone speak, any Welsh; whose only qualifications are a set of distinctly cranky ideas, assembled from fragments torn loose from our heritage ..."

Whilst it is possible for me to agree heartily with the sentiments and warnings expressed in this plea, the linkage made between land, heritage and spirituality provokes another important question. The Pagan movement is a predominantly white movement. Are we passively or even actively excluding black and Asian participants because of the store we are setting by indigenous British traditions? And what are we defining as 'British', or even as Cornish, English, Irish, Manx, Scottish and Welsh? One finds, for example, the rare text which appears at least to acknowledge that Britain is multicultural by declaring appreciation of the cultural 'gifts' successive 'visitors' have brought to British culture; needless to say, caveats of this type are clearly defining 'British' culture as something core and pre-existing those 'visitors', defining the 'gifts' as added extras (Matthews 1988). This seems to situate 'British' Pagan antecedents as part of an historical identity which actually excludes all those communities and ethnicities arriving after a given date. At one level this indicates a measure of social unawareness around, for example, black and Asian Britons, whose 'own' culture is black and Asian British. At another it connotes an inadvertent racism, the message of which is the spiritual equivalent of 'these roots are not yours'.

CONTEMPORARY PAGAN 'ETHNICITIES'

Given the expressed importance of historical precedence and provenance to contemporary Pagan identity, one is not surprised, then, to find that contemporary Paganism in Britain is a predominantly white movement, particularly given the additional tendency to essentialize certain spiritual attributes as the gift of given peoples. However unintended, and for whatever reasons, there do seem to be a number of exclusionary definitions operating around the construction of Pagan identity in the British context. Oppressions often work multiply and are rarely without complexity, but it seems that there is a good deal of difference between a person of colour resisting what Davies identifies as 'spiritual strip mining', and a predominantly white movement in a racist culture steering clear of black or Asian participation. It is perhaps the case that white ethnicities, and I would include amongst these British Pagan ethnicity, are selective in which inequalities they seek to redress. As one Manxman wryly put it when I began to enumerate the loss of many Manx traditions: "... and don't forget the alarming demise of bigotry, including sexism, racism, homophobia".

ASPECTS OF PAGANISMS AND UNIVERSALITY

At the very least, there is currently a good deal of ambivalence expressed within the

Pagan community regarding certain forms of oppression and here some of the more troubling aspects of these tendencies open up in relation to ideas regarding, for want of a better description, issues of 'fate' and personal responsibility. There is a tendency, which expresses itself in a variety of

Perhaps getting our history and occasionally our geography wrong is part of constructing a Pagan identity. But what might the consequences of such myth-building be?

ways, to place responsibility for the conditions of one's life at the feet of the individual. This is often taken up and applied uncritically and regardless of the specific context of the individual's life and the extent to which they may control events governing their situation. This conviction comes across quite strongly in a number of popular Pagan texts, although the strength of this underpinning credo is perhaps felt more in its accumulative effect, both within an individual text

and in seeing it reiterated in a range of similar texts. Consequently the examples below, which have been selected from two of the more popular texts analysed for this study and which are based in the Western Mystery Tradition, appear on the face of it to be relatively harmless: "If you have lost a lover you must ask yourself 'In what way did I fail to meet her needs/passion?' The fault lies with you" (Green 1995). "If you have no love in your life, magic will not supply it, until you learn why you are not lovable" (Green 1990).

If this philosophy stays where it is put, it may be regarded as little more than a rather callous homily for broken-hearted ex-lovers. However, the basis of this rather

uncomplex theory of unconditional personal responsibility is often reapplied and extended to both global problems and both natural, and often unnatural disasters. The suffering of the people affected by starvation and disease following the war in Rwanda was theorised by one Pagan as

“... the earth getting rid of her surplus. There must be a life lesson in it for them, mustn't there? We all have to take responsibility for what happens to us”. And so presumably the same applies to a raped woman, a tortured man, an abused child, a beaten pensioner, and so on. It seems quite significant, moreover, that the philosophy is so readily applied to people of colour who live ‘over there’. But the crucial thing here is that a self-motivating philosophy applied to an individual living in the West who, to a certain extent, enjoys the type of autonomy not experienced in other cultural contexts is not appropriate for projection onto what is the result of political interventions, often by the Western powers whose freedoms that individual enjoys.

Another typical, if troubling Pagan response to suffering is to attribute it to a mysterious spiritual malaise that is felt globally:

The Wasteland is growing, both on the face of the planet and in the minds of the people. Many have sunk so low through poverty, homelessness, sickness, deprivation or disaster that they have lost hope of things getting better. They have even become so hopeless that they are not able to take advantage of any good which may come their way (Green 1995).

One of the corollaries of this type of stream-of-consciousness universalism is that it substitutes a blanket explanation for any attempt to focus on the particular causes of specific sufferings. It also raises the question of how appropriate a response to privation it is to map onto the events of

... Paganism has proved a rich hunting ground for fascist groups looking for symbols of volkisch unification.

one geographical and historical location the symbols and metaphors of the historically and geographically located tradition of another. At this particular node of the web the tension between the universal and the specific mirrors that which snags where a philosophy which motivates the individual is applied to the general to produce a

theory of inaction. At these points, the two webs, that of Pagan identity and that of the wider social web against which it occasionally strains, become entangled. This may, in part, be due to the internal entanglement that some Paganisms have with philosophies which could more accurately be defined as New Age. However, the distance often placed between the political and the spiritual in both mainstream and Pagan culture is a predisposition both to this type of entanglement occurring and, significantly, the catching of something nasty in the web.

PAGANISM, RACISM AND NEO-NAZISM

The occult-fascist axis often posited by historians of the German Nazi movement of the 1930s and 40s is perhaps the better known of the interludes where Paganism has proved a rich hunting ground for fascist groups looking for symbols of volkisch

unification. This specific connection, in fact, had a much longer history, but I am more concerned here with present connections being made. Initial analyses of alleged connections between Pagan groups and neo-Nazis being made from within the anti-Nazi movement led me to regard some of the claims with a measure of scepticism, partly because some of the rhetoric tended to be either anti-Pagan or rather confused in conflating all occult interests of known neo-Nazis into ‘Paganism’. However, a close examination of neo-Nazi literature available in Britain makes it quite clear that Paganism is being pressed to the cause of spiritual Aryanism in Europe, through groups such as ANSE (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Naturreligiöser Stammesverbände Europas or European Racial Association of Natural Religious Groups), the Thule Seminar, and others currently operating on the internet. Indeed, there are a number of neo-fascist initiatives operative in most parts of Britain and some of these appeal to what they perceive as Pagan ‘values’ within the extreme right: these values are those mobilized around notions of history, race and nationhood. The edges of some Pagan philosophies blur dangerously with those that support racism and warn against what they see as racial and spiritual ‘miscegenation’. The links made between fascist aspirations and Paganism appear to come from the provision, within the formations of Pagan identity in Britain, of the racial specificity of what some Pagans perceive to be their past and their cultural antecedents.

An example of the way in which Pagan discourses of history, ‘race’ and nationalism can be diverted and appropriated is found in the desktop-published newsletter *Valkyrie*, which advertises itself as the ‘voice of the Patriotic Women’s League’, an

organization based in the northwest of England. *Valkyrie* is replete with celtic knotwork and symbols and contains an advertisement for the ‘Church of Thor-Would’, and for the neo-Nazi band ‘Celtic Warrior’. It also contains a list of publications, organizations and bands which have links with the League, including titles such as: ‘Renewal of Identity’, ‘Aryan Sisters’ and ‘Blood and Honour’. As well as containing strong imagery referring to a Pagan past including a blonde, plaited child regarding a stone dolmen it posits a warrior goddess dubbed ‘Mother Europe’. This figure is juxtaposed with a diatribe against non-racist and non-sexist educational materials which reiterates the theme of preservation and a mythical all-white heritage found elsewhere in the magazine. The message of a photograph of a white mother teaching her white child on the page opposite that of the goddess-figure ‘Mother Europe’ emphasizes the role of both mother and goddess, whose fiercer intentions are focused upon ‘defending’ Europe from multi-culturalism by invoking a veritable confusion of celtic and nordic knotwork. At the same time, this sacralizes the task being set here for all white mothers, exhorting them to play this role within the home. Other neo-Nazi magazines and newsletters indicate that several other Pagan organizations are actively supportive of neo-Nazi aspirations: the latter are entirely commensurate with those of ANSE and the Thule Seminar, both Pagan fascist organizations and with the philosophies of hatred and denial which appear on the agendas of fascism globally. The blurring of Pagan affinities and neo-Nazism to the point where neo-Nazis are as at home in the former as they are in the latter is a cause for grave concern; at which point does a badge declar-

ing 'Albion for Pagans' or 'the Pagan State of Albion' become 'England for the English' or 'Keep Britain White'?

The nature of the highly particularised standpoints which fund ideas of Pagan identity, historical rights and future aspirations is that they emanate from a new, minority perspective which is fundamentally in flux around issues of identity. Accordingly, notions of history, authenticity and provenance are often seen as paramount in the task of constructing an 'authentic' identity; to such an extent that where these are contested, any newly-forming ideas around identity are considered under threat. Similarly, ideas which are seen to smack of 'political correctness' are given short shrift, partly because of the challenge to the Pagan love-affair with 'Nature' and the organic, which are seen as being ontologically tintegral to the past(s) to which we refer, and as a distinctive aspect of our spiritually-led identities. In this context, what appear to be challenges to the exclusionary nature of what are actually reconstructions of past ways of life and what are actually socio-cultural constructs of 'Nature' are seen as joltingly modern (if not post-modern), interventionist and wishful thinking. The search for authenticity in the formation of contemporary Pagan identities does tend to lead to quite reactionary stances on issues of social inequalities; the will to change these inequalities are seen as being out of step with the 'realities' of past Pagan societies and the organic, with the 'Nature' from which past Pagan societies allegedly emerged. That our ideas about the past and about 'Nature' are largely social constructs doesn't seem to bother anyone overmuch, judging by the general ethos of popular Pagan literature and by attitudes and ethical standpoints being expressed

within the Pagan community. The spiritual is also seen as the authentic and there seems to be a widespread understanding of spirituality as essence. This essence appears to emerge fully-grown from encounters with Nature and unmediated (or 'untainted') by social conditions: pronouncements arising from the spiritual experience of individuals or groups are seen to have more authority, therefore, than understandings arising from the more suspect perspectives of the social and the political.

The predisposition towards misappropriation by fascist and neo-Nazi groups, in fact, is coming from the very bases upon which the anxious construction of Pagan identity appear to be resting: 'Nature', 'the past' and seeing spirituality as an absolute which can be separated from politicality. This is further adumbrated, thanks to an interlap with New Age philosophies, by notions of the collective 'fate' of peoples who are paradoxically deemed responsible for their own troubles. 'Destiny', it should be remembered, was a very good friend of British imperialism.

It could be argued that we are not responsible for symbols and identities hijacked from our movement; after all we can't actually stop anybody doing this. But unless we are to be associated with these agendas calling themselves 'Pagan', we have to examine what they are finding so attractive and make a positive statement which irrevocably dissociates us from them; whoever 'we' turn out to be.

I am conscious, even as I am formulating and defining the problems that Paganism faces, that pointing them out constitutes a criticism of what for many of us, is a relief from imposed sets of beliefs and perhaps gives the impression that what is being recommended here is yet another

set of prohibitions, unsuited to the generally liberal ethos found within Paganism. I am also conscious that citing the political dimensions which indubitably exist within our spiritual understandings and within our ensuing ethicalities will meet some resistance in the community, particularly where Pagans feel that in coming into a nature-revering spirituality, which can claim to some extent ancient antecedents and links with counter-cultural tendencies, we have managed to evade the 'conformity factor'. It is my contention, however, that some of the myths attached to Paganism around some of our more favoured identity-touchstones ('Nature', 'the past', etc.) need to be subjected to scrutiny because they are always already political. Equally,

I would argue that querying our spiritually-led philosophies risks dismantling that which many of us find empowering about our path: reinscribing social inequalities is about 'power-over' rather than 'power-within' and I have yet to encounter a Pagan spiritual aspiration which subscribes to the former rather than the latter. And this brings us back to disposing with the idea that spirituality has nothing to do with the political, with power.

PAGAN PRAXIS AND CHALLENGES TO RACISM

Given that Paganisms often abhor dualistic separations, our embodied spiritualities, our notions of immanence and our sense

of the interconnectedness of things are particularly fitted to provide models of interrelationship, gradation and flow. Within the structures of our practices and symbols, our acknowledgement of tides, cycles and seasons and our reverence towards nature, lies the potential to challenge political hierarchies and provide an agency for positive change in our society and on our planet. This means acknowledging diversity—of needs, of experience, of the cultural, social-historical and geographical contexts of peoples lives. It also means seeing nature not as a 'given' to be translated into a brutalized social model of 'survival of the fittest' but as an understanding of the non-human world we have constructed from a socio-cultural perspective.

From that point we can move on to living in peaceful symbiosis with nature rather than distorting its lessons into exclusionary philosophies and dulling the edges of the most inspiring relationship we have within our spiritualities. One of the most compelling and powerful symbols we have is that of the web. It is a symbol which has been deployed with amazing success both metaphorically and physically at Greenham; it provides a model via which we might see varied forms of oppression, different spiritualities, economic means, different identities as contingent upon each other and touching at various nodes of the web. But perhaps we may see it as many webs, each touching

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and interconnecting but varying with location, experience, political agenda and worldview.

As a spiritually-led identity we may occasionally see ourselves as an oppressed group; for example, our spiritualities provoke fear and hatred amongst other groups (both religious and non-religious) to the point that child-kidnapping by misinformed social workers is still a real fear. But the acknowledgement of our own oppressions and our own, often overlooked, histories, carry the responsibility of acknowledging both our own privileges and the oppressions of others and the suppression of their histories. Fighting for our own rights need not mean that we privilege our community's needs by ignoring or trivializing the day to day prejudice that other oppressed groups experience. We are not, as some New Age interlaps with Paganism would have it, 'all the same'; we are all very different and have differing needs at both individual and wider political levels. The principle of interconnectedness, signified within this article as a web, lies at the heart of Pagan spirituality. It is not a philosophy which espouses sameness as oneness, by definition; it inter-connects and coalesces by recognizing diversity. Given what I have had to say about the inappropriateness of projecting specified and located symbology as universals, this may be a surprising proposition. But the point

... some of the myths attached to Paganism around some of our more favoured identity-touchstones ('Nature', 'the past', etc.) need to be subjected to scrutiny because they are ... political.

about interconnectedness as a touchstone is that it recognizes and situates 'me' and 'us' and 'others' as contingent and located.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A PAGAN ETHICS OF DIVERSITY

A Pagan ethic which acknowledges the proximity of the wider social web to that of its own communities would go some way to disentangle the prejudices of the one from the spiritual declarations of the other. But as I have indicated, there are other pressing and compelling reasons why such an ethic would need to be developed. This brings us full circle to the issue of identity which began with the Union Jack being flown in Stonehenge at the beginning of this paper. Who are 'we'? Where and when are 'we'? Who and what do 'we' embrace; who and what do 'we' should 'we' exclude?

On the issue of exclusivity in term of heritage, history, tradition some words from Caitlin Matthews:

... there are no rightful bearers of tradition, only bearers of tradition. However we are welcomed into our tradition—whether it be by formal training, ritual initiation or long personal meditation—we become bearers of that tradition by desire, aptitude and dedication (Matthews 1990).

To this I would add the quality of committed understanding, and that would include the criteria that we are prepared to accept and find out why it is more useful to some oppressed groups that we respect

their traditions from the sidelines rather than attempt to enter them from certain given positions of social privilege.

As for the issue of legitimate exclusion and dissociation, this depends upon the will to develop an ethic which would positively undermine those predispositions which make our philosophies so tempting to some of the more malevolent tendencies currently misappropriating Pagan symbols and philosophies. What such an ethic might eventually look like depends to a certain extent on the passage of time, on the growth of the movement and its ideas. Given the very real threat of the misappropriation by the New Right of both, however, it is critical that it is not left entirely to time. More than the future of the Pagan movement is at stake here; if we acknowledge that the web of our Pagan culture connects with that of a larger, dominant social web, we do not simply disentangle ourselves from its worst tendencies, but have a position of agency, a potential for transformation which can spread from our web to others. Change is a multi-directional process; enchanting the web with a commitment to ending oppression means not only holding up a mirror to ourselves, but becoming, in turn, a reflection in which others may see something worth emulating. If we believe in a web of life; one in which everything is interconnected, then we must believe in the reverberating effects of a conscious disentanglement, a conscious awareness of privilege and oppression, and the outflowing change the ownership of that awareness can bring to wider contexts than ours.

The question that a Pagan ethic might address could be something close to the thought on which I would like to close the discussion here and open it up elsewhere, and which the poet-philosopher June

Jordan suggests we constantly ask of ourselves: "How is my own life-work helping to end these tyrannies, the corrosions of sacred possibility?"

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Initiation and the Druid Secret Language: The Three Calls to Cormac Understood as a Druidic Initiation

by *Brendan Myers*
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1. UNDERSTANDING THE SECRET LANGUAGE OF THE DRUIDS

A secret language is a means of communicating ideas to selected persons in such a way that everyone else will not be able to understand the message. Secret languages or esoteric use of language has been used by many famous authors over many centuries to hide the meaning of what they say from people who would not be receptive to it; typically, authors writing at a time when what they have to say is politically unacceptable or dangerous would write esoterically. Plato, Machiavelli, and Spinoza all wrote esoterically, to name a few. There is no need to search for a “key” or secret pass-code to unlock the secrets of esoteric language. Hidden messages in philosophical or literary works are not military codes. To read the hidden messages in this kind of writing one simply needs a good background in the culture of the time and the situation of the author, a reason why she might write esoterically, an idea of who her audience is, of who she is trying to reach, and who she is trying to fool.

In the case of the Druids, the secret language was used to speak to other Druids. Dr. Anne Ross speculated that the secret language of Welsh and British Druids was Q-Celtic, or the form of the Celtic language spoken in Ireland and Scotland (*Life and Death of a Druid Prince*, p. 148). I mount no argument against

her claim at this time but I believe that from the perspective of those involving themselves in the revival of Druidism, there is more that can be said of it. We know much about the Celtic use of language, and its use of poetry, “riddles and dark sayings”¹ and word play. In poetry we will find the “key” to unlocking the secret language of the Druids. The true secret language of the Druids is the use of literary symbol to communicate religious ideas.

If Dr. Ross is to be believed, the Druids kept a secret language in order to protect a trade route that brought gold from the Wicklow Mountains of Ireland into continental Europe via Britain. This is sufficient for economic or political perspectives, but does not seem to explain why they would have used a secret language in their magical roscanna poetry. The ancient Druids might have wanted a secret language for many reasons, but here I describe one possibility. The most plausible reason I can think of at this time is that the Druids may have had an “outer” doctrine, for consumption by the tribe, and an “inner” doctrine, for use among themselves. This is a common feature of ancient priesthoods, such as the Pythagorean “akousmatikoi” and “mathematikoi” cults.² Celtic society was a stratified, hierarchical society that by no means bore all of the egalitarian and democratic features that Neopagan Celts often ascribe to it. The Aes Dana caste, including the Druids, was an elite group that set itself in authority over other groups in society because of the irreplaceable service they rendered to society. Contemporary Paganism has, for the most part, rejected this feature of ancient Druidism. This has the advantage of consistency with modern liberal democratic values, but the weakness of allowing unprepared people to take on leadership roles. At least the ancient Druids, as stratified as they were, realized that not everyone has what it takes to be a Druid. Therefore they may have wanted to keep certain facts about

what they actually believed unknown to the rest of the people.

This may not have been to suppress others from becoming Druids, but it may have been to locate potential Druids: I speculate that if someone unexpected were to understand their secret language, she might be drafted into the Druid caste, for example, and inner circle doctrines revealed to her. Recall that when Cu Chullain courted Emer, he tested her with riddles, not to charm her with his wit but to see if her wit could match his. Recall also that when Nede took over Ferchertne’s seat as chief of poets, Ferchertne tests the young upstart to see if he is capable of producing Druidic magical poetry.³ I’m not about to speculate in this essay of what the inner Druidic doctrine consisted, but there are clues showing what was omitted from it. We know that they did not use idols, and we also know that they did not lead seasonal celebratory rituals. Eugene O’Curry tells us that “there is no ground whatever for believing the Druids to have been the priests of any special positive worship”⁴ and though the Druids do hail spirits and Gods in their magic poetry, it seems as if the relationship is that of companions or business partners, and not a relationship of worshipper to deity. So, whatever the inner circle teachings of ancient Druids may have been, worshipful adoration of Gods may not have been a part of it. A Druid has no need to worship any God when he can declare his own immanent divinity, with “I am a wave of the sea”.⁵ The idea that we don’t need the Gods would have been very politically unacceptable to devout people, and hence had to be covered with a secret language.

In this essay I won’t speculate on whether or not this sort of secret language of poetry was employed by ancient Druids to transmit Druidic mysteries in such a way that the Christian recorders would not identify them as such

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(and hence not edit them out). I will point out, though, that one can penetrate Christian suppression of Druidic mysteries by reading the stories with an eye for literary euphemisms. For example, a character’s motive is the sort of thing that gets Christianized, and one can read the pagan message by substituting a motive more consistent with pagan themes and teachings. Repairing the pagan content of our mythological heritage by way of meaning substitutions involves making interpretations of poetry. I am fully aware that the Pagan community tends to frown upon interpreting poetry, as if interpretation somehow kills the spirit. It is my view that interpretation actually reveals the spirit of poetry and does not kill it. The aesthetic state brought on by the enjoyment of symbols is an interesting place to be, but in my view does not ultimately lead to substantial principles by which we can guide our lives. I do not confirm nor deny that the Gods and the Otherworld are real. I simply read the text, and report what it told me.

With these disclaimers for the devout out of the way, I proceed with the inquiry. I made this particular insight about the Druids secret language while reading about Manannan in Lady Augusta Gregory’s wonderful book, *Gods and Fighting Men*.⁶ In the case of the story of “His Three Calls to Cormac”, I read the work with an eye for the use of esoteric language and dis-

Celtic society was a stratified, hierarchical society that by no means bore all of the egalitarian and democratic features that Neopagan Celts often ascribe to it.

covered that the story reports what I believe to be Cormac's induction into the Order of Druids. In this story the Otherworld becomes the grove at which the Druids meet and conduct ceremonies, the Gods become the Druids at the ceremony who take on certain ritual roles, or perhaps even ritually impersonate the Gods, and magical wonders describe not supernatural powers but principles of nature, humanity, and moral teaching.

2. THE SUMMONER APPROACHES

The first paragraph of the story as retold by Lady Augusta Gregory tell of how Cormac is at home alone and is approached by an 'armed man'. The description of the man is given in detail, yet the only carried item that is described is not a weapon but his "shining branch having nine apples of red gold, on his shoulder", so it is for bearing the apple branch (hereafter referred to as the bell branch) that the Summoner is described as an armed man. There is no indication that the man is a warrior, for the clothing that he wears is not combat armour, but a shirt ribbed with gold thread and bronze shoes. This is, I believe, consistent with reports of the multicoloured dress of Irish Druids, and hence establishes that the armed man is not a fighter nor even an ordinary traveler, but a Druid.

I use the term "Summoner" in this context as an anthropologist might. The role of the Summoner is already established in Neopaganism;

he is the member of the Wiccan coven (usually a man) who, before the ritual, sends out the call to the members of the coven that the ritual is about to begin and, during the ritual, acts as a kind of gatekeeper and stands outside the circle to protect against intruders. Manannan acts as a kind of gatekeeper in other myths about him as well, and so the role of Summoner seems appropriate here. Margaret Murray describes the

Summoner as the "Man in Black" who acts in this capacity for her (somewhat fictitious) mediæval witches. In our story, the figure who approaches Cormac is probably Manannan himself, or a Druid impersonating the God, for although the name is not given in the text, it is implied by the title. The Summoner exchanges words with Cormac and leaves him with the bell branch. The power of the bell branch is that it eliminates troublesome thoughts in the minds of those who hear its sound, for it rings with a music that comes from a land where, as Manannan describes it, "there is nothing but truth, and where there is neither age nor withering away, nor heaviness, nor sadness, nor jealousy, nor envy, nor pride". This is, as all readers of Celtic literature will recognize, Tir Na nOg, the most wonderful Otherworld that humanity has conceived. Cormac responds that our world in which he lives is not a place where there is only truth, but a place where there is heaviness, sadness, and all the other sufferings.

Cormac requests the bell branch along with the Summoner's friendship. By doing so, Cormac is actually asking for the means by which all the sufferings of this world can be removed. Cormac takes up not just the bell branch but a psychological commitment to the Druids, and the Druid way of reaching Truth and happiness. We shall soon see more of the spiritual method prescribed by the ancient Druids to lead one from suffering to contentedness.

3. THE SACRIFICE

The Summoner exacts a price for the branch: three unspecified gifts from Cormac in return for it, which are not to be collected immediately but remitted one at a time. First, the Summoner requests his daughter, then his son, and lastly his wife. Naturally his tribesfolk are upset by this but Cormac rings the bell branch to calm them down. The essential message in this part of the story is that in order to join the ranks of Druids one must break associations with one's own tribe. The Druids were pan-tribal, meaning that their authority extended across all Celtic tribes that they encountered, so if a postulant to the Druid order was still partial to any one tribe, he could not effectively discharge his duty to all tribes. Cormac shakes the bell branch to put the sorrow from his tribesfolk, perhaps to reinforce in their minds as well as his own the commitment he made to apprenticeship in the Druid order.

This first encounter with a Druid that the story describes is actually, albeit symbolically, describing a short ritual. In it, Cormac expresses his commitment to apprenticeship under the Druid who came to him by divorcing his own tribe, and the Druid accepts Cormac as his apprentice by gifting him with his first ritual tool, the bell branch-- but as we have seen, Cormac's acceptance of the bell branch has further layers of meaning. This is an initiation of the rite-of-passage type.

4. OPENING THE GATES TO THE OTHERWORLD

The storyteller writes that Cormac left Teamhair at this point to search for his wife. I believe it safe to suppose that Cormac's motive here is something that Christian editors inserted—and if so, the real motive is something else. Cormac already agreed to cut off his connection to his tribe for a short while so it seems inconsistent that he should try to win his kin back right away. His search for his wife is

not only the search for the place where she has gone but also for the man who took her, and the story tells us that the place she went was the Otherworld and the man who took her was Manannan. Understanding both the God and the Otherworld to be poetic devices here, we can understand the Otherworld as the symbol for the Druid's grove and Manannan as the Druid Summoner who called to him there. We enter the grove by passing through a boundary that establishes the division between ordinary space and space reserved for religious purposes; it is the famous Mist that appears in so many Celtic tales.

5. TESTING THE INITIATE BY RIDDLE

Some initiation ceremonies require that the postulant be worthy of initiation. This is established by a test. In contemporary Paganism, initiations that test people are generally avoided, or else the tests are superfluous and easy. In the ancient times, initiation tests were much more serious, and failure was a distinct possibility. Candidates for initiations may have risked injury, madness or death in the ceremony. There are legal and social reasons why contemporary Pagans no longer perform health-threatening initiations anymore, and moreover there are other kinds of initiations that are equally legitimate that we perform instead, such as recognition of achievements already obtained (which is what a rite of passage sometimes is). Lady Gregory describes the initiation of the Fianna of Ireland elsewhere in the same text. The postulants for entry into the Fianna had to demonstrate mastery of certain martial skills, mainly having to do with war and wilderness survival. They also had to be competent at poetry.

Cormac's initiation now becomes the testing type. The initiators will be testing his ability to recognize certain Druidic mysteries represented by symbols that he has not seen before. The possibility of failing the test is real.

As Cormac approaches the rath of Manannan, which is the sacred grove where the initiation will take place, he is shown three wonders. The first is a house with feathers thatched in the roof, and Riders of the Sidhe thatching them there, and once the roof was finished a blast of wind would scatter them and the job would have to be redone. The second was a man kindling a fire with an oak tree, and every time the man went for another tree to feed the fire the first would be consumed. The third wonder he saw was a grand fort, at the center of which is the Well of Wisdom. We know this well from identical descriptions of it in other tales: it has five streams flowing from it, and nine hazel trees growing around it, and salmon in the streams eating the nuts that fall from the trees.

Cormac is shown these wonders and his test for the moment is to meditate upon them. Their meaning puzzles him and so he seeks out the meaning from two Druids who enter the story at this point. Again, their style of dress is described in detail and it bears all the colour, ornament, and regalia of Druids. They are identified as "the master of the house and his wife", but this time they are not named because Cormac must identify them as a part of his initiation tests. Cormac is now offered a bath (for ritual purification?) and a place at the Druid's meal table.

A third unidentified person enters the room now, bringing the total occupants of the ritual chamber to four, or one for each cardinal direction. We know this to be an important part of ancient Druid ritual custom from the archaeology of sacred sites, as well as from other stories where certain rituals require four participants. Dian-cecht with his three children enchanting his Healing Well is one classic example. This extra man brings a pig for roasting over a spit for the meal, a log for cooking it, and an axe for cutting the log and gutting the pig, but "never and never will the pig be boiled until a truth is told for every quarter of it". Each person must

tell a story then, and the story given by the three Druids is a riddle that Cormac, as candidate for initiation, must be able to solve. The pig here is understood to be Cormac himself, transforming in the ritual experience from an ignorant, innocent, "raw" youth into a mature, knowledgeable, "cooked" adult.

The story given by the extra man is about his axe. Any pig killed by it is alive again in the morning, and any log chopped by it produces enough wood to boil the pig and, like the pig, is whole again in the morning. The story given by the master of the house is that of a field: when he had a mind to sow it with seed he found that it was already planted, and when he wished to harvest from it he found the crops already cut for him. The story given by the woman of the house is of seven cattle whose milk can satisfy all people of the world, and seven sheep whose wool can clothe all people of the world. What axe, what field, and what cattle and sheep can do these things? Cormac knows; but his answer is to say to the man of the house: "If this is true, you are Manannan, and this is Manannan's wife, for no one on the whole ridge of the world owns these treasures but himself". Cormac has announced that he understands the secret riddle language by employing the language himself.

6. WELCOMING THE INITIATE INTO THE NEW LIFE

Now that Cormac has passed the tests successfully, he is welcomed into the community of Druids. The story says that Manannan sang a song to him to make him sleep, and when he awoke he was in the company of fifty armed men, as well as his wife and children who were taken from him at the beginning of the story. I believe that this means his membership in all tribes, including yet not limited to his own, is affirmed here, as it is for all Druids.

The famous truth-detecting Cup is offered to him at this point. Its power is to shatter into

three pieces if three falsehoods are told under it, and to repair itself if three truths are told. The capacity to distinguish between the true and the false is an essential skill for judges and kings like Cormac. Without any means to discover whether a crime occurred or did not occur, there can be no justice. It is interesting that the principle of Truth is the first virtue that the Summoner confirmed for Cormac, which seems to verify its importance as an ancient Druidic doctrine. Cormac is also allowed to keep the bell branch.

The three wonders which he saw at the beginning of the ceremony are explained to him now. "And the Riders you saw thatching the house", Manannan explains, "are the men of arts and the poets, and all that look for a fortune in Ireland, putting together cattle and riches". This is a moral lesson about the pursuit of wealth: Just as the feathers fly off the roof of the house, the actual acquisition of wealth does not satiate one's desire for more. The pursuit of wealth is unattainable and hence a bringer of suffering, and so he ought not to live his life this way. "And the man you saw kindling the fire", continues Manannan, "is a young lord that is more liberal than he can afford, and everyone else is served while he is getting the feast ready, and everyone else profiting by it". The moral instruction here has to do with the pursuit of an honourable reputation. Even though one would think honour is a virtue,⁷ Manannan dismisses it, on the grounds that one cannot meet one's own needs while always seeing to the needs of others. Last, Manannan says "And the Well that you saw is the Well of Knowledge, and the streams are the Five Streams through which all knowledge goes". The third wonder in the triad is for the Druid caste, and at last Cormac is given a positive instruction: to seek knowledge, and drink from the streams as his predecessor Druids have

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done. This is the psychological path promoted by Druids to alleviate suffering, to bring truth into the world, and heal all beings of their heaviness and sorrow. I find that the three wonders express virtues appropriate for the three main castes⁸ in ancient Indo-European society: wealth for the producer-caste, honour for the warrior-caste, and wisdom for the Druid-caste.

By bestowing these gifts and revealing these mysteries, the initiators invite Cormac into their community, and make him one of them. The initiation becomes a rite-of-passage again, so the ceremony has come full circle, and concludes upon Cormac's return home.

7. ADVENTURING AWAY FROM IGNORANCE

An excellent way of penetrating the secret language in Irish myths is to pose questions of the text. On encountering a magical artifact in the story, ask yourself what it is and experiment with some answers that emerge from your imbas, which is your divine inspiration. What axe can kill and yet allows for renewal? What field both fertilizes itself and harvests its own produce? What sheep and cattle both clothe and feed the world? What are the five streams from which all knowledge goes? Answer these questions and you have the hidden meaning that the speaker wishes to communicate to

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you. It is up to you, gentle readers, to answer them for yourselves, but I leave you with my answer for the mystery of the Well. The five streams from which all knowledge go are the five physical senses, which bring us into contact with the manifest world around us. To drink from the streams is to engage our senses as fully and comprehensively as we can, and accept into our being all things that our senses contact, without the intervening obstacles of preconception, habit, expectation, and illusion. The Well of Wisdom is immanent within each of us, and may it never run dry!

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1. "Riddles and Dark Sayings": A comment by Diogenes Laertius on how Druids teach their tribesfolk. Piggot, *The Druids* (Thames and Hudson, New York, 1975) pg. 117.
2. Nede and Ferchertne: see the "Colloquy of the Two Sages", in *Encyclopaedia of Celtic Wisdom*, by John & Caitlin Matthews.
3. Outer Circle Pythagorean doctrine consisted in the famous theory of transmigration of souls, whereas Inner Circle Pythagorean doctrine eschewed soul-talk in favour of speculation about "inner harmony of elements". See, for example, Plato's discussion of Inner Circle doctrine in the *Phaedo*, 92a. At least four Roman historians (Hyppolytus, Diodorus, Ammaianus and Valerius Maximus) commented on the similarity between Pythagorean and Druidic thought,

which lends some strength to my argument.

4. Eugene O'Curry, "Druids and Druidism in Ancient Ireland", in *The Celtic Reader*, ed. John Matthews (The Aquarian Press, London, 1991) pg. 49.
5. "I am a wave of the sea": Song of Amergin
6. Lady Augusta Gregory, *Gods and Fighting Men*. (Colin Smyth Ltd., Gerard's Cross, Buckinghamshire, 1904) pp. 106-110.
7. "honour is a virtue": Consider the several instructions that are given to young warriors by older warriors, such as by Fionn MacCumhall and Cu Chullain. Honour would seem to be a cardinal trait for the warrior caste, and yet in this story Manannan dismisses it. This is precisely the sort of unpopular idea that Druids might try to protect with a secret language.
8. "Virtues appropriate for the three main castes": The similarity to Plato's theory of the tripartite soul is tempting, not only for its organisation, but for its dismissal of honour and wealth as virtues for philosophers. See *The Republic*, 434d-441c.

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A Response to Brian Hayden's Article: "An Archaeological Evaluation of the Gimbutas Paradigm"

by Joan Marler

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In the August 1998 issue of *The Pomegranate*, Brian Hayden harshly criticizes an article by Mara Lynn Keller that speaks in favor of the work of archaeologist Marija Gimbutas. It is the nature of scientific inquiry to question new theories, especially those that run counter to prevailing ideas. In my view, it is extremely important to engage in respectful discourse so that areas of disagreement can stimulate new levels of understanding. It is in vogue, among certain scholars, to treat the contributions of Marija Gimbutas with contempt. Before responding to some of Hayden's remarks I will begin by introducing Marija Gimbutas since she is often described in caricature at the center of an ideological controversy.

Marija Gimbutas (1921-1994) was a European/American archaeologist who was born and raised in Lithuania. She fled Lithuania during WWII with a Masters degree in archaeology and a background in philology and folklore, and knowledge of most eastern and western European languages. Immediately after the war, she completed her doctorate in archaeology, with emphasis on ethnology and history of religions, at Tübingen University before emigrating to the United States in 1949. Marija Gimbutas spent thirteen years at Harvard University as a researcher, producing texts on European archaeology which established her as a world-class scholar on the prehistory of the Slavs, the Balts and the Indo-European Bronze Age (see Polomé and Skomal 1987; Polomé 1997:102-107).

From 1963 to 1989, Marija Gimbutas taught Baltic and Slavic studies and was Professor of European Archaeology at the University of California, Los Angeles where she was instrumental in establishing the Institute of Archaeology and Indo-European studies. She was Chair of European Archaeology, Curator of Old World Archaeology at the Cultural History Museum at UCLA, and co-founder of *The Journal of Indo-European Studies*. Between 1967 and 1980 Dr. Gimbutas was project director of five major excavations of Neolithic sites in southeast Europe and devoted the last three decades of her life to Neolithic research. Her bibliography contains 33 texts (published in nine languages) and over 300 scholarly articles on European prehistory. For a compilation that includes everything except her posthumous texts *The Kurgan Culture* (1997) and *The Living Goddesses* (1999), see Marler 1997:609-25.

In her 1994 obituary in the London

Anthropologist Ashley Montagu considers Gimbutas' findings to be as important as Schliemann's excavation of Troy, while others, like Brian Hayden, are highly critical.

Independent, Colin Renfrew wrote: "[Marija Gimbutas] was a figure of extraordinary energy and talent. The study and the wider understanding of European prehistory is much richer for her life's work."

Gimbutas' research was supported by an encyclopedic background in European prehistory and a lifetime study of linguistics and mythology. Her theories have generated an enormous range of both positive and negative responses within the academic world and beyond. Anthropologist Ashley Montagu considers Gimbutas' findings to be as important as Schliemann's excavation of Troy, while others, like Brian Hayden, are highly critical.

Sometimes, the influence of particular views is made deeper by the dissenting opinions they have triggered or the continued investigations they have inspired. Nowhere are these considerations more valid than in the case of Marija Gimbutas (Polomé 1997:102).

ARCHAEOLOGY

Although the ideology of prehistoric societies is considered "one of the most taxing problems in archaeology" (Renfrew 1994:xiii), Gimbutas turned her attention, during the 1960s, to the study of Neolithic symbolism. She came to the conclusion that the art of Old Europe reflected a mythopoetic perception of the sacredness and mystery of the natural

world expressed through "a cohesive and persistent ideological system" (Gimbutas 1989:321, xv). In order to investigate the non-material aspects of culture, Gimbutas developed an interdisciplinary approach called archaeomythology which combines archaeology, mythology, linguistics, historical ethnology, folklore, and comparative religions.

Brian Hayden rejected the position put forth by Mara Keller that Marija Gimbutas was a pioneer in her formulation and use of archaeomythology to enrich the study of Neolithic cultures. In his view, archaeologists have always been interested in areas of cultural meaning, including ritual, symbolism and myth, and he quotes Lewis Binford, a main architect of the New Archaeology, to back up his point. This may be so in theory, but not in practice. In *A History of Archaeological Thought* (1989:327) Bruce Trigger points out: "Although the New Archaeology advocated studying all aspects of cultural systems... [m]ajor aspects of human behaviour such as religious beliefs, aesthetics, and scientific knowledge received little attention." This situation is understandable since it is rare for archaeologists to be suitably trained in mythology, linguistics and comparative religion that would give them the tools to cross the borders of their discipline to address such non-tangible subjects as aesthetics, symbolism and religious beliefs.

Twenty years after Marija Gimbutas published her first book on Neolithic symbolism, *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe* (1974), an attempt is finally being made within the ranks of processual archaeology to study prehistoric human cognition. The preferred direction of this 'new' discipline of cognitive archaeology is one that is "rooted in the scientific tradition and in an empirical methodology. It draws upon the cognitive, the mathematical and the computer sciences" (Renfrew and Zubrow 1994) while providing little encouragement toward the study of mythology. Hayden nevertheless places himself within the hypothetical "long and strong tradition in archaeology of dealing with social, political, religious, and mythological aspects of culture," and gives the example of Schliemann who used mythology to locate the existence of Troy. Hayden points to research by mythologists and other scholars, but is unable to name any archaeologist other than Gimbutas who has incorporated a detailed knowledge of mythological elements in an archaeological study of Old European cultures.

GIMBUTAS' KURGAN HYPOTHESIS

Using an interdisciplinary approach, Marija Gimbutas was the first scholar to bring together archaeological and linguistic evidence in the formulation of her Kurgan Hypothesis. The linguist A. Richard Diebold writes:

To Marija Gimbutas we owe much. For the first time, with the formulation of her Kurgan Hypothesis, ... we have a defensible hypothesis that heuristically links linguistic and archaeological knowledge. ... [A]nd such is the cumulative weight of evidence adduced in support of these associations, that the unenviable burden of (dis)proof must fall upon the critics and skeptics

(Diebold 1987:19).

"Indo-European" is a linguistic term that refers to a family of languages found from India to the western edge of Europe. Proto-Indo-European (PIE) refers to the now extinct mother tongue from which all Indo-European languages developed. Gimbutas' hypothesis locates the homeland of Proto-Indo-European speakers in the area of south Russia and documents their movements into Europe from the end of the 5th millennium BC. Gimbutas describes the influx of nomadic pastoralists over a 2000 year period as a "collision of cultures" in which androcratic cultural and ideological patterns were introduced into Europe. This led to a hybridization between the Old European and Indo-European systems (see Gimbutas 1991: 352-401 and 1997). To his credit, Hayden does not turn the Kurgan Hypothesis into a cartoon to dismiss it, as others have done. Instead, he acknowledges in his article that this explanation of the spread of Indo-European languages "may still be the most widely accepted one" (1998:36).

Hayden appears to endorse some of Gimbutas' ideas in his 1993 textbook, *Archaeology: the Science of Once and Future Things*. He includes a map indicating the geographic range of Gimbutas' Kurgan theory; the terms "Kurgan" and "Old Europe" are freely used. Marija Gimbutas named the Proto-Indo-European speakers "Kurgans" after their burial mounds, and "Old Europe" refers to the Neolithic cultures of Europe before the Indo-European influence; both terms were coined by Gimbutas. Sections are included such as, "The Indo-European Invasions," and "Neolithic vs. Indo-European Societies"; and illustrations are included from Gimbutas' book *The Goddesses and Gods of*

Old Europe (1982) as part of a section titled, "Death and Resurrection: the Leit-motif of Neolithic Religion." Although Gimbutas originated these concepts, her name is conspicuously absent from the text. Her name only appears at the end of the book in small print as an illustration credit and by the inclusion of one small article in the bibliography (Hayden 1993: 238-240, 340-344, 348-353, 480). Other archaeologists whose theories are discussed are clearly referenced.

Hayden is using (and in some places distorting) Gimbutas' original scholarship while erasing her identity. Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon situation for many women scholars who have made substantial contributions to their fields (see Spender 1982). Perhaps this is Hayden's way of incorporating some of Gimbutas' concepts without appearing to accept her work. As he states in his article in reference to her ideas about matrilineal cultures, "no reputable archaeologist has ever endorsed [her views] ..." (1998:43).

CHIEFDOMS OR CIVILIZATION

Hayden emphasizes that "there is no theoretical or empirical support for the idea of non-hierarchical, egalitarian, peaceful chiefdoms or states in the European Neolithic, and no support for colonies of artists producing art for art's sake" (41). This is quite correct. Gimbutas never considered chiefdoms to be non-hierarchical or egalitarian, nor did she ever refer to the production of Old European art by the modern concept of "art for art's sake." In her view, chiefdoms, which are by definition non-egalitarian and hierarchical, did not appear west of the Black Sea until Europe was Indo-Europeanized. Gimbutas did consider pre-Indo-European Old Europe to be the first European civiliza-

tion. The traditional meaning of 'civilization' assumes political and religious hierarchy, warfare, and class stratification that did not apply to Old Europe. Therefore, she redefined the term:

I reject the assumption that civilization refers only to androcratic warrior societies. The generative basis of any civilization lies in its degree of artistic creation, aesthetic achievements, nonmaterial values, and freedom which make life meaningful and enjoyable for all its citizens, as well as a balance of powers between the sexes. Neolithic Europe was not a time 'before civilization' ... It was, instead, a true civilization in the best meaning of the word" (Gimbutas 1991: viii).

Marija Gimbutas perceived Old European ceramic and sculptural traditions as refined expressions of the aesthetic, spiritual and technical development of this civilization. She acknowledged the work of specialists in Old Europe, but did not equate their activities with patterns of dominance. She also did not consider it impossible for people to be self-organizing for the common good without the dictates of a chieftain.

When criticizing Gimbutas' theories, Hayden stresses that "before accepting ideas or statements as reliable or true, whether they derive from intuition, logic, or other sources, they must undergo rigorous reality testing. Without such a step, no real progress in understanding can be made" (1998:37). I agree. Of course, this process must be applied to Hayden's theories as well.

THE BIG MAN COMPLEX

One of Hayden's major assumptions, elaborated in his 1993 text, seems to be that societies cannot develop without socioeconomic inequalities or hierarchies. In his view, Neolithic societies can best be

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understood in terms of a "Big Man complex" which he believes is founded upon self-interest, desire for power and materialism (1993:251-253). Economic competition and prestige are given as the reasons for creating beautiful ceramics. This is also offered (amazingly) as a motivation for the transition to food production (225). Hayden posits "competitive feasting" as central to the development of economic advantage in early Neolithic societies, in which

... ambitious men try to give away as much food and as many goods as possible in order to earn interest on their gifts and establish a debt hierarchy. Desirable foods and exotic decorative items were also given to supporters as rewards for their help in raising the capital for these feasts (225).

The indirect evidence for competitive feasting is supposedly the appearance of "status items" such as special ceramics, ritual structures, and plazas where feasts could have been held. Hayden states that ritual structures found in the Neolithic settlements of Sesklo, Dimini, and early Knossos were probably centers for feasts, councils, and other events whose primary purpose was to "extol the qualities of the community Big Man" (255-256). The possibility that the creation of elegant ceramics, sculptural art, feasting and communal celebrations were motivated by concepts of the sacred within an egalitarian context is

never considered. Hayden does admit that "[m]uch more research must be undertaken, however, before this idea can be substantiated" (225). How true, since there is absolutely no evidence within the pre-Indo-European Neolithic period to support his notion of a Big Man complex. The first cemetery evidence of an elite male is found in the Varna necropolis at the end of the 5th millennium BC which is precisely the time that Gimbutas claims the transition to male dominance began (see Marler 1997: 141-142; Marazov 1997:175-187; Gimbutas 1991:118-121). Nevertheless, according to Hayden:

The Big Man complex is one of those invaluable conceptual tools that enables archaeologists to fit together a wide range of observations on past communities. It helps create powerful, predictive, and parsimonious models (1993:241).

Early Neolithic life, like that of most hunter-gatherers, was fundamentally egalitarian ... Many a Big Man had to work harder than any of his neighbors to ensure the success of his socially competitive games. Always, however, he did his utmost to pass on the extra work load to his wife (or wives, since many wives produce more food than one wife) ... (242).

Thus the Big Man is constantly running around his village, exhorting everyone to get up and get to work, not to be lazy, to be productive. In him we see the original incarnation of the Protestant ethic. Idleness and hedonism are anathema to Big Men. One ethnologist has likened them to impotent scoutmasters (248-249).

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Why has there been no criticism of this bizarre scenario? Perhaps because it is congruent with a prevalent belief that male domination is the most natural mode of developed human society. There seems to be an assumption that large groups of people are unable to work communally for mutual benefit beyond the level of "primitive" tribes. Anything more complex requires control by a Big Man.

Naomi Goldenberg offers this reflection:

Gimbutas' ideas are important because they threaten to disrupt the performance of male grandiosity by suggesting that in some parts of ancient civilization, intense, aesthetic focus was not accorded to maleness. The facile rejection of this rather modest hypothesis is testimony to the hold that androcentric religions and the theories which support them have on the imaginations of many scholars (Goldenberg 1997: 45).

NEOLITHIC WARFARE

Numerous settlement mounds in southeast Europe indicate long-term habitation with no indication of internecine violence during the pre-Indo-European period. Such stable continuity provided suitable conditions for uninterrupted cultural development. Gimbutas makes a clear distinction between the peaceful character of Old European societies and the disruption that took place as a result of a "collision of cultures" during the late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age.

Hayden decries Gimbutas' assertion that the pre-Indo-European Neolithic period was peaceful by assuming a "Big Man complex". Using circular logic, he asserts that "warfare is endemic wherever the Big Man complex is found" (251). He believes that "brute instinctual force, violence, great power, great virility, and great ferociousness" were venerated during the Neolithic in the form of the bull (1998:39). For a contrasting interpretation of bull symbolism, see Gimbutas 1989:265-271.

Hayden also refers to Jacques Cauvin's repetition of R.A. Fisher's 1936 biological model of diffusion in which farmers were thought to have spread out from the Near East in a "wave of advance" into Europe at the rate of one kilometer per year, replacing, rather than assimilating, indigenous populations. Hayden presents the simplistic conclusion that this steady movement must have created antagonisms and war. The controversial wave of advance theory may work on paper as a theoretical model, but is highly questionable when applied to actual landscapes with varied concentrations of Mesolithic populations. According to Marek Zvelebil,

Archaeological research does not record any evidence for rapid saturation of areas colonized by Neolithic farmers or for demographic expansion, with the single exception of the Linear Pottery culture in central Europe (Zvelebil 1998).

There is evidence that three Linear Pot-

tery (Linearbandkeramik, or LBK) settlements in northeastern Belgium (c. 6300-5900 BP) protected themselves against attacks by Late Mesolithic foragers. But according to the excavators, "brief periods of armed hostilities do not preclude more peaceful interactions over longer periods" (Keeley and Cahen 1989:168-172). The short term use of palisades in these LBK colonies does not contradict Gimbutas' claim that Old European societies were primarily peaceful.

Hayden goes on to state that "there are many indications of fortified, palisaded, walled Neolithic sites from early to late Neolithic times, from southeastern Europe (sites such as Dimini in Greece) to north-eastern Europe, including ones with mass graves in the bottoms of encircling ditches." Works by Christopher Scarre (1984), Sarunas Milisauskas (1986:787), Robert Evans and Judith Rasson (1984:720) and Gary Webster (1990:343) are given as evidence. Let's see what these references actually say.

Evans and Rasson's article is a 1984 review of the literature on Neolithic and Chalcolithic research in southeast Europe. Here are their remarks about "defensive" structures:

Features such as ditches, banks, or fences may be investigated for a variety of functions (Jacobsen 1981). The identification of a community by a wall or fence may be symbolic (to create a sense of community) or functional (to keep animals in or out, for instance). Tringham (1971) suggests that the evidence for fences, ditches, and banks is more likely a method of community "demarkation" than evidence for fortification. The question of works constructed with defence in mind—"fortification"—is another matter (Evans and Rasson 1984:720).

Recent archaeological analysis has reversed an earlier interpretation of the walls sur-

rounding Dimini in Thessaly:

[Dimini] consists of several concentric retaining walls, between which there were buildings and work areas... The walls are not now seen as defensive, and there are several entrances through all the circuits (Whittle 1996:87).

The article by Gary Webster includes these few words relating to fortification:

From the late 4th millennium on, cultural development in adjacent regions of the Balkans and the Aegean follow strikingly different trajectories... There is evidence for settlement nucleation (sometimes with fortification) and the associated widespread abandonment of small peripheral sites during the late 4th millennium ... perhaps reflecting a declining agricultural base (Webster 1990:344).

Gimbutas' Kurgan Hypothesis explains the disruption of settlements following invasions by Kurgan peoples (see Gimbutas 1991:358, 368).

The discontinuity of the Varna, Karanovo, Vinça and Lengyel cultures in their main territories and the large scale population shifts to the north and northwest are indirect evidence of a catastrophe of such proportions that cannot be explained by possible climatic change, land exhaustion, or epidemics (for which there is no evidence in the second half of the 5th millennium B.C.). Direct evidence of the incursion of horse-riding warriors is found, not only in single burials of males under barrows, but in the emergence of a whole complex of Kurgan cultural traits... The earliest hill forts are contemporary with late Lengyel and Rössen materials or immediately follow them. Radiocarbon dates place this period between 4400 and 3900 B.C. (Gimbutas 1991:364).

As archaeologist James Mallory points out, the indigenous populations were displaced in every direction except eastward, moving into marginal locations— islands, caves or easily fortified hilltop sites. The apparent cultural collapse and chaos of this period produced a Balkan 'dark age'.

Evidence for this comes from the abandonment of 600-700 tell sites in the Balkans which had flourished from as early as the 7th millennium BC.

This abandonment and movement, often propelling neighbouring cultures into one another, operated against a background not only of somewhat elusive traces of hybridization with the steppe cultures... but also with continuous incursions of mobile pastoralists (Mallory 1989:238).

The repeated movement of steppe people into Europe over two millennia shattered the continuity of Old European development (although Old European traditions continued in the Aegean and Mediterranean islands until the mid-2nd millennium BC). During the 4th millennium, a reorganization of social structure took place across much of southeast Europe.

Sarunas Milisauskas devotes one brief paragraph in an 1986 article to the subject of fortifications. In his view, warfare and fortifications began with the appearance of Neolithic farmers. He mentions that "a number of fortified settlements were excavated" and that ditches were found at the Lengyel site of Svodín in Slovakia.

Since evidence for the association of Neolithic farmers with warfare is not presented, it is impossible to evaluate the merits of these statements. What are these fortifications? Is Milisauskas assuming that ditches are evidence of warfare at the exclusion of other possibilities? Did Brian Hayden actually read the articles that Milisauskas cited (which were written in German in Slovakian and Polish publications), or is he simply adopting Milisauskas' statements as truth? In any case, no discussion of the material evidence is provided. Milisauskas, however, goes on to say:

It should be noted that not all Neolithic sites with ditches or enclosures are classified as fortified sites. For example, the Neolithic site of Makotrasy in Czechoslovakia was classified as a ritual place ...[whose orientation] was consistent with sunrise and sunset at the winter and summer solstice (Milisauskas 1986: 787).

The square enclosure of Makotrasy in central Bohemia from the Funnel-necked Beaker culture (TRB), excavated by Pleslová-Stiková, is a sophisticated example of astronomical orientation. For information on ceremonial enclosures see Gimbutas 1999: 99-111. Christopher Scarre (1984:225) mentions the discovery of 60 fortified settlement sites from west-central France with elaborate systems of ditches and ramparts that appear during the late Neolithic (c. 2800-c.2300/2100 BC). In his view, these sites reflect increasing community stress, competition for critical wetland pasture and a change in the organization of society toward a social hierarchy (237). The monumental tombs used in the earlier Neolithic for collective burials were no longer built and lost their importance in the new social circumstances (241-243).

By the Late Neolithic, Kurgan influences were being felt (directly and indirectly) throughout Europe. Signs of warfare and societal change toward social hierarchy reinforce Gimbutas' theory of the Indo-Europeanization of Europe. Old European cultures were replaced by such hybrid societies as the Baden, Ezero, Cernavoda and Globular Amphora. Evidence of massacres are not uncommon (see Mertz 1997:70-77; Gimbutas 1991:426). The abandonment of Neolithic collective burials is a common indication of the rupture of Old European communal patterns (see Gimbutas 1991:396-401; 1997:351-372). When no distinction is made

Why has there been no criticism of this bizarre ['Big Man'] scenario? Perhaps because it is congruent with a prevalent belief that male domination is the most natural mode of developed human society.

between the pre-Indo-European and Indo-European periods it is simple but misleading to conclude that there was warfare during the Neolithic period.

CONCLUSION

The cultural transformation that took place as a result of the Indo-Europeanization of Europe was "one of the most complex and least understood in prehistory" (Gimbutas 1980:1). Brian Hayden has claimed the superiority of a number of unproven assumptions, such as: Old European societies were chiefdoms controlled by "Big Men"; warfare was endemic to Old European (pre-Indo-European) society; and the Neolithic arts were created as prestige items for competing males. Gimbutas saw the Old European cultures as egalitarian, primarily peaceful, with a wealth of artistic expression that reflected a sophisticated veneration of the cycles of life, death, regeneration (which she called 'Goddess'); the transition to androcracy took place after the 5th millennium BC.

Keller and Gimbutas are accused by Hayden of resembling "born again" fundamentalists. While every new theory must withstand the scrutiny of skeptical colleagues, the emotionalism and sense of righteous disgust and name-calling exhibited by Hayden does not promote a balanced, objective discourse so essential to this field.

I'm quite sure that Gimbutas would agree with Hayden's statement that "[t]he best scientists in all disciplines are always willing to consider all possibilities and to evaluate and re-evaluate them on their relative merits" (1998:36). Marija Gimbutas was a woman of great dignity who refused to engage in personal attacks. She made original and significant contributions to her field and understood that progress rarely comes from the repetition of unsubstantiated formulae.

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Brian Hayden replies:

It seems that Marler is projecting much more hostility into my defence of archaeology than was actually there. For one thing, I avoided using overly impassionate terms in my defence of archaeology (unlike Marler's use of emotion-laden phrases such as 'bizarre,' 'amazingly,' 'righteous disgust,' 'emotionalism,' and 'name-calling'). If she and other supporters of Gimbutas' views want to attack and harshly criticize the entire discipline of archaeology as narrow-minded, biased, and bent on disenfranchising women of their true roles in the prehistoric past, they should learn to expect as strong a response as they dish out.

I view Keller's rejection of scientific methods and her advocacy of a semi-mystical methodology for establishing the facts of the past as pro-

If Marler thinks, for example, that the feasting model of domestication is 'bizarre,' this is probably a reflection of her isolation from recent theoretical work in archaeology.

foundly disturbing. If I used the term, 'fundamentalism,' it was to refer (accurately, I think) to the methodology that Keller advocated where a belief system takes precedence over the objective analysis of facts in establishing reality, and where contrary evidence is portrayed as promulgated by enemies of 'the truth.' I thought Keller's criticisms were unjustified and inappropriate.

In a similar vein, Marler begins by using ad hominem arguments to place Gimbutas on a pedestal of untouchable scientific respectability. My view is quite different. While Gimbutas may never have openly engaged in personal attacks, she was not adverse to using academically dishonest tactics to stifle criticisms of her ideas. Gimbutas was known to use her considerable popularity and standing to try to suppress the publication of articles which contradicted her theories. Such tactics, along with portraying those who disagree as being biased, androcentric, or wed to a narrow empiricism, are typically used by those who support Gimbutas' interpretations about Old European society. Both she and her followers have also been consistent in their efforts to polarize these arguments along gender lines, a strategy which I find distasteful and counterproductive.

While archaeologists during the 1960s-80s may not have made many advances in dealing with ideologies or myths, my point was that it was not because they were uninterested or biased, but because these topics were difficult to deal with. Archaeologists had certainly been trying to deal with these topics in other areas of the world besides Old Europe and even inside Old Europe

in the case of Evans' excavations of Minoan Crete.

If I used the term, 'art-for-art's-sake,' it is because this, rather than socioeconomic factors, seems to be what is implied by the appeal by Gimbutas, Keller, and Marler to the 'aesthetic focus' of Old Europe as the reason for creating the prestige items that occur there.

I have little quarrel with the speculations on Neolithic myths since it is difficult to disprove mythic models such as those proposed by Gimbutas. However, when claims are made about Neolithic society and politics, there is a great deal of hard archaeological evidence to indicate that there were aggrandizive Big Men (and probably Big Women) and chiefdoms in Old Europe, as well as state level societies in Crete. There is no assumption that 'civilization refers only to androcentric warrior societies' in archaeology. However, empirically, male aggrandizers (not necessarily warriors) seem to be most frequently the driving forces behind increasing sociopolitical complexity.

A refutation of Marler's attempt to minimize this evidence and the evidence for warfare would require far more space than I have been allocated here, but it is substantial. If Marler thinks, for example, that the feasting model of domestication is 'bizarre,' this is probably a reflection of her isolation from recent theoretical work in archaeology. She might do well to check out the forthcoming volume on the topic from the Smithsonian Institution Press.

*Brian Hayden
Simon Fraser University*

Of Myths and Monkeys: A Critical Look at Critical Mass

by Maureen O'Hara
Saybrook Graduate School

The 'Hundredth Monkey Phenomenon' was first proposed by Lyall Watson, a writer on paranormal subjects, in his 1979 book *Lifetide*, and was subsequently elaborated upon by New Age author Rupert Sheldrake in *A New Science of Life* (1982), and Ken Keyes, a human-potential movement guru whose 1982 book *The Hundredth Monkey* sold a million copies. By quoting the more marginal of each others' theories as if they were established scientific facts, and by 'puffing' each others' books with glowing back-cover testimonials, these three writers managed to convince an entire generation of New Age readers of the staggering assertion that telepathy in monkeys had been accepted by science since the 1950s.

The first published skeptical evaluation of this myth was written by psychologist Maureen O'Hara, who criticized the story in the July 1983 Association of Humanistic Psychology Newsletter and again in the Winter 1985 Journal of Humanistic Psychology. The response from many of her colleagues was one of hostility. They regarded her concern for objective truth as petty; their counterreplies paraphrased the New Age Axiom "if it feels good, it must be true".

Even though the *Hundredth Monkey Phenomenon* is now little more than a infrequently cited footnote to the history of odd 1980s beliefs, the confusion between speculation and proven fact, prevalent even in scholarly circles, remains, unfortunately, alive and well in the 1990s. This confusion is often deliberately reinforced by writ-

ers and public figures whose motivation is to push a particular theory or belief system, and by publishers who have found that representing sensationalistic claims as science sells books and magazines.

The following article originally appeared in *Whole Earth Review* 52 (1989) and is reprinted, with Dr O'Hara's kind permission, from *The Fringes of Reason* (New York: Harmony, 1989) pp 182-86. The substance of these preliminary remarks has been adapted in large part from the introduction by Ted Shultz, the book's editor.

The 'Hundredth Monkey' provides us with a case study through which to examine the deterioration in the quality of thought and scholarship among those people who participate in what has become known as the 'New Age' or 'Human Potential' community. I believe that this deterioration may ultimately result (if it has not already) in discrediting humanistic science altogether, leaving us with nothing more than faddism and a rag-bag of pseudoreligious and pseudoscientific superstition. Because I believe that a humanistic view of persons and their communities has never been more necessary in order to counterbalance the galloping alienation in human life, I view this trend toward superstition with real alarm.

Lyall Watson does not tell us the monkey tale in his book *Lifetide* because he is interested in studies of behavior propagation in macaques—he is merely using the story to support his conviction about human consciousness, that when a certain 'critical mass' of people believe in something, suddenly the idea becomes true for everyone. There can be no doubt that ideas and attitudes can spread rapidly through a community from time to time. Evidence of this exists everywhere. Perhaps this monkey story and the rapidity with which it passed from pseudoscientific specula-

tion, through dubious editing, word of mouth transmission by superstars in the human potential movement, into popular New Age superstition, makes a far better case study of the very phenomenon than the monkey research putatively demonstrates.

There are major contradictions in the present idealization of critical mass. In promoting the idea that, although our ideas are shared by only an enlightened few (for the time being), if we really believe them, in some magical way what we hold to be true becomes true for everyone, proponents of the critical mass ideal ignore the principles of both humanism and democratic open society. Are we really willing to give up on these ideals and promote instead a monolithic ideology in which what is true for a 'critical mass' of people becomes true for everyone? The idea gives me the willies.

PSEUDOSCIENCE, SCIENCE, AND AMBIVALENCE

How could such a profoundly nonhumanistic idea become so popular among people who consider themselves the harbingers of a 'New Age'? I think the answer lies, at least in part, in the renewed infatuation with science and its shadow, pseudoscience. In the past ten years or so, we have seen the image of nuclear physicist shift from Dr Stangelove-like creators of the most terrifying death devices in history to their present status as darlings of the so-called 'new paradigm' consciousness. When we saw the physicists as on 'their side', we rejected everything they did. Now that they are on 'our side', we quote them at breakfast. Books like Fritjof Capra's *The Tao of Physics* have the New Age community convinced that physics is just some kind of Taoism with numbers.

This new infatuation with science is a shallow one, easily swayed by tricks of the pseudoscience trade such as theorizing wildly in

Those who engage in pseudoscience want it both ways. They want the authority of science but are unwilling to abide by the rules by which the scientific community earned its authority in the first place.

scientific-sounding language, sprinkling speculative discussion with isolated fragments of real data regardless of relevance, confusing analogy with homology, breaking conventional rules of evidence at will, and extrapolating from one level of reality into others wherein different principles operate.

I do not wish to imply that pseudoscience necessarily stems from a conscious effort to deceive. More often than not, crossing the line from science to pseudoscience comes from ignorance and inexperience, and the popularity of pseudoscience is with an audience equally ignorant and inexperienced. Because this audience is not equipped to evaluate claims of scientific validity, they instead accept them on faith.

One standard trick of the pseudoscience trade, for example, is to emphasize whatever affiliations to established science the writers have or had. It is to great advantage if the writer can be referred to as a scientist associated with a prestigious university with a wide reputation for scientific excellence. It matters not to the purveyors of pseudoscience whether or not the 'scientists' referred to have been in a lab for years, or if, when they were, it was in a field even remotely relevant to the subject at hand.

An August 1981 *Brain/Mind Bulletin* account of the Hundredth Monkey story refers to Lyall Watson as a biologist: the monkey story follows. The bibliography of

Casually interchanging myth, science, and metaphor robs each of these realms of its unique power to deepen our understanding of the world ...

Watson's book contains not one reference to any scientific research, biological or otherwise, that he has published, yet his other books, on the occult, are listed. It is not difficult to imagine a rather different response from the reader if *Brain/Mind Bulletin* had introduced the monkey story by referring to Watson as a writer on the occult.

Another example of 'authority transfer' can be found in Tom Cooper's review of the film, *The Hundredth Monkey*, which appeared in the May 1983 issue of the *Association for Humanistic Psychology Newsletter*. In asserting that the Hundredth Monkey thesis is "substantiated" he says, "Rupert Sheldrake, the Cambridge scientist, reports that when one group of rats was taught ..." The implication here is clear and misleading. The statement conveys the impression that Sheldrake (a) is currently on the faculty at Cambridge; (b) does scientific research there; (c) knows a lot about rats; (d) is 'reporting' on his own research.

If we look at Sheldrake's own book, *A New Science of Life*, we find that he was once a scholar at a Cambridge College, and is described as currently a consultant at an international research institute in India. His research is on the physiology of tropical plants. Again, the impact would be very different if Cooper had written, "Rupert Sheldrake, tropical plant physiologist in an Indian

crop research center, says that when one group of rats ..." This kind of 'credentialleering' is obviously intended to give credibility to scientific-sounding propositions. Such authority-borrowing works because institutions such as Cambridge University and disciplines such as biology have, despite occasional, widely publicized aberrations, lived up to their reputations for reliability.

Another characteristic of pseudoscience is its profound ambivalence toward the scientific establishment. Despite his identification as a biologist, Watson's work carries within it clear evidence of his ambivalence. On one hand, he uses research findings to try to support his conviction about critical mass theory in human events. On the other hand, he suggests that the scientific community is less than honest when he tells us that these same researchers were reluctant to publish what they suspected was the truth. He panders to the popular distrust of science by suggesting that this reluctance was due to fear of ridicule by, one assumes, the scientific community.

Those who engage in pseudoscience want it both ways. They want the authority of science but are unwilling to abide by the rules by which the scientific community earned its authority in the first place. Pseudoscientists and their publishers may actually use criticism of their ideas by the scientific community as evidence that they are important because they are controversial. They seem to reason that because Einstein was controversial, anyone who is controversial must be an Einstein. On the jacket of the US Paperback edition of Sheldrake's *A New Science of Life* is the proud claim that the British scientific journal *Nature* had suggested that the book was "the best candidate for burning there has been for many years". As the designers of trade-book jackets

are well aware, such outbursts by the scientific establishment only enhance a work's attractiveness to a generation of lay people fed up with the excesses of 'more orthodox than thou' attitudes of the scientific establishment.

This ambivalence toward establishment science strikes an immediate and comforting chord in the minds of a public that is not only ambivalent about science, but largely ignorant. It is difficult for the uninitiated to distinguish between good science, bad science, and pseudoscience. Appraisal becomes especially difficult when isolated pieces of scientific knowledge are abstracted from their contexts within the broad, interwoven fabric of scientific thought. It is context that make knowledge out of data. This is true not only for sciences, but for all areas of advanced knowledge such as art, Zen, medicine, psychotherapy, and so on. This makes a book like Capra's *Tao of Physics* almost impossible to evaluate adequately. Those adept at physics don't understand orientalism; those well versed in Taoist philosophy can say little about the physics. The people who swallow Capra's speculations usually can critique neither. If they like what they read, they accept it as fact.

One concrete consequence of this ubiquitous ambivalence toward science can be seen in the rejection of training in science and logical thinking by some would-be humanistic psychologists and other aspiring agents of change. Without such training these people, regardless of their heart-felt commitment to transformation, have practically no basis on which to evaluate claims made in the name of science. Anyone—crackpot, charlatan, genius, or sage—must be dealt with in the same way (believed or disbelieved) solely on the basis of personal opinion. Personal opinion then becomes equated with knowledge and can be asserted without embarrassment.

The result is that the human potential movement has come dangerously close to cre-

ating the conditions for the establishment of yet another orthodoxy resting on unproved articles of faith and taken-for-granted definitions, axioms and concepts. Humanistic science loses ground each time it hands over authority to pseudoscientists and speculative myth builders.

GOOD MYTHS AND BAD MYTHS

On two occasions (both gatherings of humanistic psychologists) when the monkey story was told, I tried to raise some of the issues raised here. When I suggested that the Hundredth Monkey story lay in the realm of mythic thought, not scientific, the response was the same: the speakers were unimpressed. "Myths are as true as science", was the response. "It's a metaphor," was another. P.B. Walsh's comment in the November 1983 *Association for Humanistic Psychology Newsletter* was characteristic: "Science or myth, the Hundredth Monkey is a metaphor that exactly fits ..." and later, "As metaphor it speaks to our empowerment."

As to the assertion that myths are as true as science, I take the point. But there is more that has to be said, for although they might both be 'true', they are not true in the same way. These respondents either do not know this or do not think it matters much. But, of course, it matters a great deal and I believe that it is urgent that we learn to recognize the difference. Casually interchanging myth, science, and metaphor robs each of these realms of its unique power to deepen our understanding of the world, to orient our science, and to inform our actions. Women and ethnic minorities well know the consequences of wrapping a myth together with science. It is especially pernicious, as any Nazi holocaust survivor can confirm, when a bad myth is wrapped up with bad science.

My objection to the Hundredth Monkey Phenomenon is not that it is myth, but that it

is bad myth, and that it draws its force not from the collective imagination, but by masquerading as science. It leads us, (as I have tried to show) in the direction of propaganda, manipulation, totalitarianism, and a worldview dominated by the powerful and persuasive—in other words, business as usual.

When I was first drawn into humanistic science, I was well aware that I was attracted to its myth. I know of very little actual 'data' that could support a belief in the possibility of a humane global collective, composed of free, responsible, rational people capable of purposeful action, critical thought, creativity, and individual conscience. Of course I knew this to be an idealized myth standing in sharp contrast to the indignities that are the actual daily experience of all but a privileged few. Even so, I think it is a good myth and has the psychological power to mobilize us and to orient our search for knowledge about ourselves.

Over the past 15 years, this myth has guided my studies and those of my colleagues (and at times has required acts of faith as great as any religion would demand) as we have tried to discover, as all science does, if this mythic possible world could, in fact, be an actual world, and if not, why not? So far we have discovered little that, in my judgment, gives much grounds for the current New Age optimism that the transformation is just around the corner. It is a testimony to the sustaining power of the humanistic myth that we did not give up our research long ago and open a restaurant.

In contrast, I most emphatically cannot agree that the "Hundredth Monkey myth empowers". In fact, I believe it to be a betrayal of the whole idea of human empowerment. In this myth, the individual as a responsible agent disappears; what empowers is no longer the moral force of one's beliefs, not their empirical status, rather, it is the number of people who share them. Once the magic number is reached, curiosity, science, art, crit-

icism, doubt and all other such activities subversive of the common consensus become unnecessary or even worse. Individuals no longer have any obligation to develop their own worldview within such a collective—it will come to them ready-made from those around. Nor are we called on to develop our arguments and articulate them, for, by magic, those around us will catch them anyway. This is not a transformational myth impelling us toward the fullest development of our capacities, but one that reduces us instead to quite literally nothing more than a mindless herd at the mercy of the 'Great Communicators'. The myth of the Hundredth Monkey Phenomenon is more chillingly Orwellian than Aquarian.

Inspired in the 1960s by the works of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Gregory Bateson, and others, Maureen O'Hara cut short a career in biology and became a humanistic psychologist in order to participate in "the creation of a precise humanistic science" with the goal of "a humane global collective, composed of free, responsible, rational people capable of purposeful action, critical thought, creativity, and individual conscience". Today she is alarmed by the way her profession, intertwined as it is with the human potential and New Age communities, has embraced the trappings of pseudoscience and become prone to accept and amplify 'bad myths', of which the Hundredth Monkey story is only one example. As a specialist in mass psychology and cross-cultural phenomena, she is particularly qualified to comment on the 'critical mass' concept idealized in the Hundredth Monkey myth, and to provide us with an insider's view of the reasons behind the rise of superstition in humanistic science.

Dr O'Hara is currently the acting president of Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center in San Francisco.

READERS' FORUM *continued from page 3*

in human history, nor to minimize the suffering of those arrested, tortured and killed. However, it is important to understand why this episode has become central to the Pagan sacred narrative, especially when there are few, if any, documented historical links between contemporary Witches and Pagans and the victims of the witch hunts.

I would hypothesize that one reason for the popularity of this narrative in the late 20th century is that in the current climate of identity politics, narratives of past oppression are important elements legitimating the identity of any minority group. In the 1960s and 70s, African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, gays and lesbians, and other minority groups made forceful claims to identity and power by reminding the dominant culture of the very real violations of civil rights they had repeatedly endured. Somehow, these narratives became models for any group claiming a legitimate and authentic identity: victimhood has become a necessary step in constructing authenticity. Narratives of past oppression may be functioning to legitimate our current identity; this is one reason why we cling to them so strongly.

This may be especially so since most Pagans are white and middle-class—members of a group which is supposed to have all the privileges in American society. The trouble with this paradigm is that it reduces complex power interactions to one or two variables. Every group has been at one point or another the victim of some more powerful group; victimhood is no guarantor of authenticity or spiritual legitimacy.

Perhaps it would be more fruitful to recognize that all traditions are legitimate and authentic, no matter when they have been constructed or by whom, and regardless of

whether or not their practitioners have suffered oppression. What is authentic is always a matter of cultural construction.

*Sabina Magliocco
California State University—Northridge*

To the editors:

I've been following the articles in the last few journals about the great witch hunts. As someone who is by no means a scholar, I've found myself in the uncomfortable position of not being able to defend my gut feeling that the entire 9 million women scenario is incorrect. I was pleased to read Jenny Gibbon's article in issue #5. She provided a good argument as to why basing historical opinions on 'propaganda' such as witchhunting manuals can provide faulty conclusions.

Max Dashu provides at least a partial rebuttal to Gibbon's article, but in making her argument that the hunt was a specific dedicated campaign against the old religion, Dashu relies heavily on the witchhunting manuals about which Gibbons warns us. Further, she suggests that the trial records that might support her position have been intentionally destroyed. I am always uncomfortable with "the dog ate my homework" reasoning. It seems too convenient to me, particularly in the light of the more credible and less inflammatory sources to which Gibbons has referred.

This is obviously a developing and exciting area of study. Thanks so much for airing both sides of the issue. I'm hoping that studied differences of opinion will result in a complete and defensible history of that turbulent time.

Jennifer Alcott

Oberon Zell writes:

There has been quite a debate raging on some of the Pagan lists regarding Jenny Gibbons' article "The Great European Witch Hunt", with some people trying to say that, according to modern research, the Inquisition

hardly bothered the Witches and Pagans, so we shouldn't keep alluding to it as victims thereof.

This has come up particularly because of the letter to the Pope, which has been created by an international joint Committee of concerned Pagan leaders and liberal Christians, and which will be sent to the Vatican along with over a thousand signatures. This letter respectfully asks the Pope to be sure and include Witches and Pagans in his planned Millennial Apology for the Inquisition, wherein he has already stated he will be apologizing to the Jews, Protestant Christians and Moslems for the persecution their people suffered under the Inquisition.

In case you are not already familiar with this project, check Circle's web site for the Lady Liberty League: circle@mhmc.net.

Here is a little statement I wrote in reply to some of those aforementioned critics:

The excellent article to which so many critics allude, "The Great European Witch Hunt", by Jenny Gibbons, republished in the Autumn 1999 issue of *PanGaia*, contains several interesting statements apropos of the criticisms. One of these statements is on p. 30 of *PanGaia*:

"In 1258 Pope Alexander IV explicitly refused to allow the Inquisition to investigate charges of witchcraft: 'The Inquisitors, deputized to investigate heresy, must not intrude into investigations of divination or sorcery without knowledge of manifest heresy involved.' 'Manifest heresy' meant: 'praying at the altars of idols, to offer sacrifices, to consult demons, to elicit responses from them ... or if [the witches] associate themselves publicly with heretics.' In other words, in the 13th century the church did not consider witches heretics or members of a rival religion."

Well, that's certainly not the conclusion I would draw from those quotes. If "knowledge of manifest heresy" was required for an Inquisitorial investigation, and "Manifest heresy" meant: "praying at the altars of idols, to offer

sacrifices, to consult demons [*ie*, other deities than Jahveh—OZ], to elicit responses from them ...," then that would certainly indicate to me that this is a reference to "a rival religion," and a specifically Pagan one at that! I mean, who else besides Pagans and Catholics prays "at the altars of idols"? So how does the quoted statement confirm the author's point, that: "Pope Alexander IV explicitly refused to allow the Inquisition to investigate charges of witchcraft"? It seems to me that the quote specifically refutes that point!

Ms Gibbons also states, in bringing down the estimated total number of executions for Witchcraft, that: "To date, less than 15,000 definite executions have been discovered in all of Europe and Americas combined." Following this statement, she lists other recent estimates, of 60,000; 40,000; and 100,000. But even the lowest estimate of "less than 15,000" seems to me to be a considerable number. I mean, the entire country has been in a justifiable uproar over the recent hate-killings of a handful of gay men. Suppose the number had been 15,000? Would we have thought that this was insignificant, and not worthy of protest?

I don't wish to comment further on this article at this time, as, according to a note at the end of the article in *PanGaia*, a full rebuttal has been prepared by Max Dashu, and appears in the August 1999 issue of *The Pomegranate*: 501 NE Thompson Mill Rd., Corbett, OR 97019; antech@teleport.com.

*Never Thirst,
Oberon Zell-Ravenheart*

Jenny Gibbons replies:

I'd like to address a couple of the thoughtful points that Oberon Zell raises.

First, the citation from Pope Alexander states that the Inquisition cannot investigate charges of sorcery (witchcraft) without evidence that there is heresy ('incorrect' interpretations of Christianity) involved. Obviously,

... shouldn't we Witches be apologizing too? Many of our spiritual ancestors, the wise-women and cunning men ... accused their neighbors, and watched them die.

then, witchcraft and heresy are not the same thing. Magick was not the Inquisition's provenance at this point—only magick practiced by Christian dissidents (Cathars, Albigensians, etc).

And this also cannot be a reference to a rival Pagan religion, as Mr Zell suggests. The Inquisition investigated heretics, and only Christians could be heretics. Other religions, like Judaism and Islam, were not heresies and therefore not the Inquisition's concern. Non-Christians were considered infidels, and poorly treated, but they were not heretics. This is why the Spanish government forced Jews to 'convert' to Christianity. If it had not done so, the Spanish Inquisition would not have had jurisdiction over them. If the Church considered witchcraft a non-Christian religion, then the Inquisition could not have touched witches.

Second, I do not mean to imply that 'only' 15,000 people died in the Witch Hunts. We know of 15,000 definite executions, therefore scholars believe that 40-60,000 people died. The 15,000 figure is the evidence that scholarly estimates are based on, not an estimate itself. Many trial records have been lost, therefore we know the death toll must be higher than 15,000. And no one suggests that the Witch Hunts were less important if 'only' tens of thousands of people died. The Great European Witch Hunt was an atrocity of staggering proportions. We don't need to have nine mil-

lion deaths to be horrified by it. These were people, not statistics.

But the question remains, is it an atrocity that the Catholic Church bears the sole responsibility for?

Recent research shows the answer is a definite 'no'. All segments of European society bear some of the blame; no one's hands are clean. The Church helped created the stereotypes and religious intolerance that led to the Witch Hunts. But it was secular courts of

Europe that killed the vast majority of witches, not the Church. It was ordinary, everyday people who sent their neighbors to the stake. If we ask the Pope to apologize, why shouldn't we ask the same of all Europeans and Euro-Americans? And shouldn't we Witches be apologizing too? Many of our spiritual ancestors, the wise-women and cunning men of Europe and America, were active witch-hunters who blamed illnesses and misfortunes on 'black' witchcraft. They accused their neighbors, and watched them die.

I thought that the letter to the Pope was well-written and moderate, and yet I chose not to sign it. In part this was because I disagree with the history the letter is based on. It implies that the Church and Inquisition were somehow especially guilty, that the Witch Hunt was mainly their fault.

But more importantly, it reinforces Neo-Paganism's 'myth of victimization'—and that's not just bad history, it's dangerous history.

As Witches, our biggest obstacle to understanding the Witch Hunt is our insistence that we were victimized by it. When we look at the past, we split the world into Good Guys and Bad Guys. There are Bad Guys (witch-hunters, doctors, the Church, Christians—people we don't identify with). There are Good Guys (women, witches, Pagans—all groups we like). And the Bad Guys did terrible things to the Good Guys. We don't stop to think that this



DEMONOGRAPHIA

(demon graphics)

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dualistic world-view is precisely the philosophy that allowed the Witch Hunt to occur. We don't acknowledge that reality is far more complex than these dualistic stereotypes. Worse, we do not recognize that we were, and may continue to be, part of the problem.

In the 1980s, America went through a dress-rehearsal for the Burning Times: the panics over Satanic ritual abuse. For the most part, the Pagan community failed to notice the similarities. We began to make all the same mistakes that our ancestors made. Mistakes that, in another time and place, killed tens of thousands of people.

During the Witch Hunt, our spiritual ancestors believed the Church's demonology. They knew that they were not the Satanic witches that the Church warned about. But they were willing to believe that their neighbors belonged to this devil-worshipping conspiracy. And when people came to them, asking them to lift a curse or divine the name of a witch, they did so. Their expertise, their confirmation of suspicions of bewitchment, led to the convictions and deaths of their neighbors.

In the 1980s the exact same stereotypes arose. Fundamentalist Christians, like the

Catholic Church before them, resurrected an age-old myth of a nocturnal, murderous Satanic witch-cult. And like the wise-women and cunning men before us, many Neopagans accepted this demonology. We knew that we didn't do the horrific things that Satanic witches were accused of. But many of us were willing to believe that our neighbors did. Many of us (and I include myself in that number) believed we ought to use our magic to protect our communities from these Devil-worshipping 'Satanists'. Many of us made all the mistakes that created the witch-hunting witches of the Burning Times.

And the reason we did this was because our myths blinded us. We saw others as villains, ourselves as victims and so we did not break the cycle of fear that fed the satanic panics of the 1980s, and the witchcraft trials centuries before. I believe our community must break through the myth of victimization. We need to stop seeing the Witch Hunt as what *They* did to *Us*. There was no *Them* in the Burning Times. There was only a *great Us*, and we did terrible things.

Blaming others achieves nothing. Light a candle for the fallen, and remember them.

Jenny Gibbons