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February 2001

# The Pomegranate

No. 15

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**UUID:** 23708258-129B-D5B2-4E7B-C21E8C26A995

### **Recommended Citation:**

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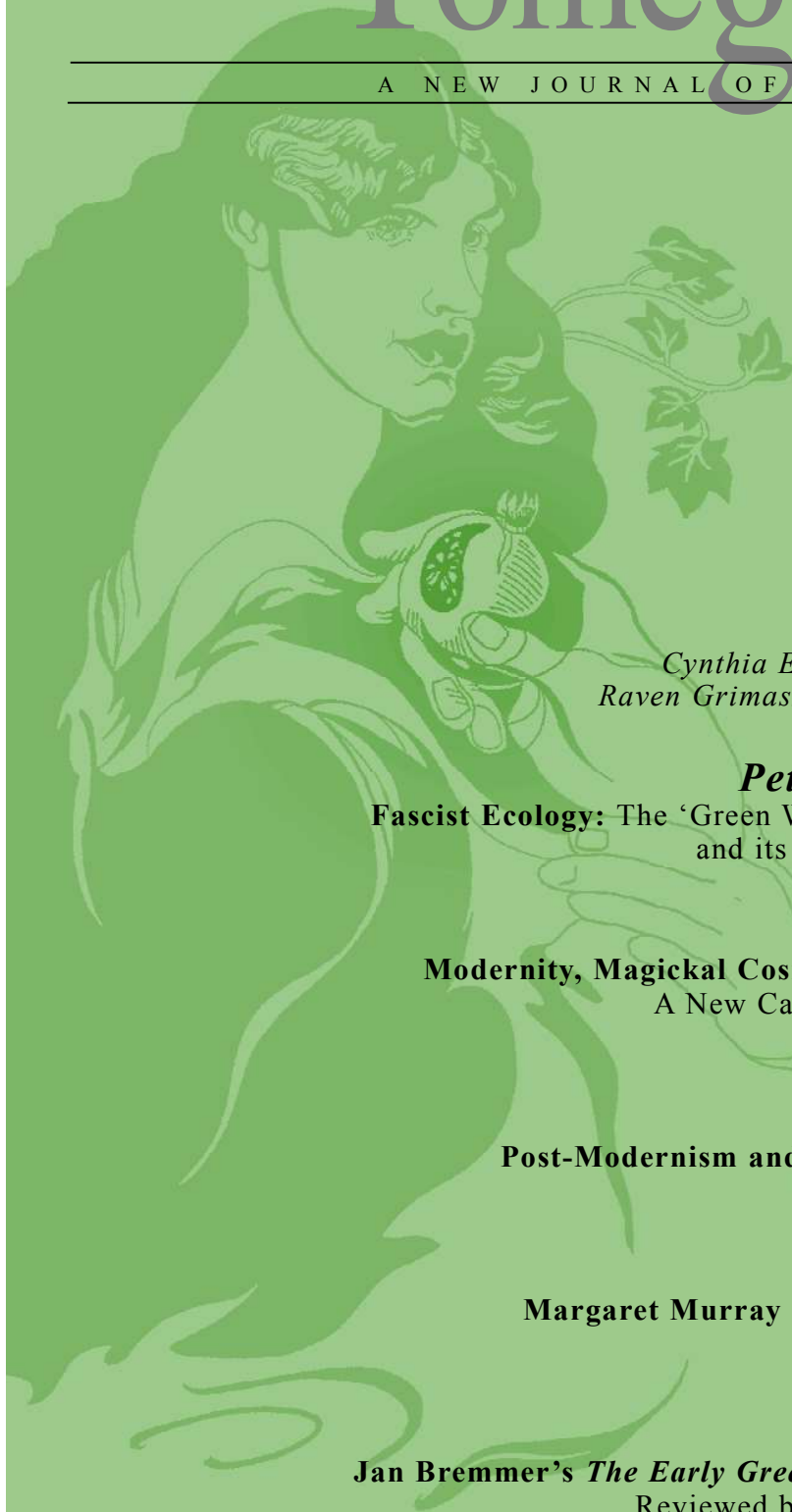
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# *The* Pomegranate

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A NEW JOURNAL OF NEOPAGAN THOUGHT

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# The Pomegranate

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*The Pomegranate*  
is published quarterly.  
ISSN 1528-0268 refers to this Journal.

Subscriptions:  
4 issues: US\$20 — 8 issues: US\$37.50  
by surface mail anywhere.  
Send US Cash, Money Orders in US funds,  
or Checks drawn on US banks to  
*The Pomegranate*  
501 NE Thompson Mill Rd,  
Corbett, OR 97019  
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[www.interchg.ubc.ca/fmuntean/](http://www.interchg.ubc.ca/fmuntean/)  
Deadline for submissions:  
the Solstice or Equinox preceding each issue.

The Cover:  
Drawing by Tina Monod  
from *PROSERPINE* by  
Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1874

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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

The Enlightenment was a movement of ideas which characterized much of 18th century European thought. Its adherents believed that truth could be attained through reason, observation and experimentation. They sought to use their scientific method in the service of humanitarian ideals like tolerance, justice and the welfare of humanity. Some Enlightenment leaders encouraged an open-minded investigation of the nature of society. Others called for a more revolutionary program, defended the victims of religious persecution, and encouraged the development of technology. This is the movement that gave the western world separation of Church and State and set the stage for the Industrial Revolution.

In reaction to the classicism and rationalism which marked the Enlightenment, Romanticism was a movement which, although it began in 18th century, came into fruition during the 19th and characterized much of the thinking of the Victorian era. Romanticism was concerned more with feeling and emotion than with form and aesthetic qualities. The social thinkers of this era were strongly critical of the industrialization and urbanization of 19th century society, and their writing was marked by passion and imagination—visionary and idealistic at best, but sentimental or fantastic at worst.

Romanticism flourished well into the 20th century, and Modernism was only partially successful in succeeding it. The sleek geometry and aesthetic linearity of Modern art seemed fragile and insubstantial in contrast to Romantic opulence, and a return to the rigours of rationality proved difficult after a century of devotion to the primacy of emotional experi-

ence. In our feature article on the Nazi Party's 'Green Wing', Peter Staudenmaier traces the means by which an intuitive affection for the purity of the natural world, combined with a harsh criticism of modern technology and a rejection of humanism (none of which would be unfamiliar to today's deep ecologists), led to savage political consequences. A repudiation of historic methodology and a wholesale indictment of the rational process made it impossible for an entire generation to effectively critique the political and economic structures which generated the ecological and social ills of their day. Conflating biological and social categories, a single culprit was identified, and organized mass murder was the result.

Many of those Neopagan writers who promote alternative historical paradigms invoke Post-modernism as an academically credible means of reinterpreting the past and challenging empirical studies of history. David Waldron, in his article on Witchcraft Histories, suggests that these narratives, in part because of their reification of beliefs and images, owe more to Romanticism than to Post-modernism.

Dr Juliette Wood, the current president of Britain's Folklore Society presents a more generous evaluation of Margaret Murray than did her predecessor, calling Murray a "charmingly eclectic scholar", and pointing out that many of the perceived irregularities in Murray's work were the typical procedures of her day.

We *Pom* editors were considerably impressed with the article on Magical Cosmologies and Science by Dave Green, in spite of the fact that none of us are well informed on the subject of Chaos Magick. We enthusiastically encourage those readers who are familiar with the topic to give this piece a close reading and respond with such commentary as seems appropriate.

*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.*

CYNTHIA ELLER WRITES:

Dear Editor,

Thanks again to *The Pomegranate* for its extensive review coverage of my recent book, *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory*. Thanks especially to Brian Hayden for saying that it is "a short book that will make tall waves." This was very flattering, and particularly rewarding since the book only ended up being short via much blood, sweat, and tears (the original manuscript was nine hundred pages long).

As Prof Hayden points out, we differ mainly in our assessment of the existence and relevance of significant, predictable, cross-cultural differences between women and men. I don't think we are as far apart as Hayden suggests though. I realize that I stated my case somewhat hyperbolically in chapter 4 of my book, but I think a careful reading of it (and chapter 9) makes it clear that I do not claim that sex differences do not exist. I'm more concerned with their relevance (or lack of same). The fact is, most purported sex differences have not been adequately documented yet. But I'm willing to accept that this is a failure in precise scientific measurement of such things rather than an ontological statement regarding women's and men's essential sameness. I'd even go so far as to say (for anyone who cares about my personal opinion, which is all it is) that I

think it is *probable* that there are significant, predictable, cross-cultural differences between women and men *as classes of people*. However, I think that there is questionable utility—and a lot of preexisting ideological motivation—in undertaking sex difference research.

In reaction to the racist excesses of the last couple of centuries, race difference research has recently become extremely suspect. For the most part, it is just not done these days (except in areas where there is an obvious, practical benefit to doing so; for example, in medicine, where racial predisposition to specific diseases may be an important factor in proper treatment). I see no reason to believe *prima facie* that there are no significant, predictable, cross-cultural racial differences. But I, and most Americans, think it is pernicious at this time in history to try to find out what they are. Given our very painful history of using race difference research to justify racism, we're being careful these days. We should be.

We are not so careful around questions of sex difference. From governmentally-funded sex difference research to the plethora of self-appointed authorities writing books in the ever-popular Venus/Mars genre, one can make all sorts of ridiculous, unsubstantiated generalizations about men and women (or "masculine" and "feminine," which elide effortlessly into the former) and never raise an eyebrow by doing so. Even sex difference research that is appropriately modest in its claims tends to be interpreted in the broadest, most overstated way by the popular media. We are altogether too ready to ferret out sex differences big and small, supposedly for the sake of "knowledge," when what we are really about is an excuse to treat women and men differently—and usually in familiar sexist ways—in both public and private life.

In short, exploring sex differences through ethnography, sociology, psychology, neurology, or any other branch of science is not in princi-

ple misguided. But we have no reason to trust ourselves to do it responsibly *right now*. Indeed, we have ample reason to suspect that even when we think we are enquiring into potential sex differences in a responsible, open-ended way, we are really just nailing more planks onto a deeply sexist structure.

It's time to step back and give the endless rhetoric of sex difference a rest. Maybe one day we will be able to conduct research that demonstrates that women are more nurturing than men without immediately construing this as a justification for leaving women overwhelmingly responsible for childcare. And maybe one day we will be able to conduct research that demonstrates that persons with African ethnic roots are more likely to have good rhythm than persons with European ethnic roots without thinking that blacks belong in vaudeville shows and whites in corporate boardrooms. But we're not there now. And until we are, caution should be the order of the day. I don't think we lose anything for now—and we stand to gain much—by throwing out the baby of sex difference with the bathwater of sexism: at least until we can trust ourselves to discriminate between the two. I'm thinking that's going to be awhile, in which case it is well worth our time to figure out ways to think and act during the interim that don't rely so much on generalizations about who women and men fundamentally are.

Sincerely,  
Cynthia Eller

RAVEN GRIMASSI WRITES:

Dear Pomegranate,

I read the article "Spells, Saints, and *Streghe*: Witchcraft, Folk Magic, and Healing in Italy" (*Pomegranate* #13) with great interest and would like to make some comments regarding it. I feel I should preface my comments by stating I'm one of the authors whose work was examined by Professor Magliocco in her well

written article. Although my books *Ways of the Strega* and *Hereditary Witchcraft* were not written with scholarly review in mind, it was interesting to discover what a scholar drew from my material. I had the pleasure to personally meet with Professor Magliocco after the article was written, and to discuss with her my views regarding Italian witchcraft. It is unfortunate that our meeting did not take place prior to the writing of her article so as to provide Magliocco with a fuller understanding of my approach in presenting my books on Italian witchcraft.

In her article, Magliocco states I present "Italian witchcraft as consisting of three traditions: the northern Italian *Fanarra* and the central *Janarra* and *Tanarra*". While it is true that I focus on these traditions, it is a misunderstanding of my writings to conclude that I claim they are representative of "Italian witchcraft" as a whole throughout Italy. What I do claim is that these traditions (originally one system known as the Triad Tradition) divided and settled in various regions of Italy where they remained relatively intact over the centuries. Such a concept is not without precedence in the literature of Italian witchcraft. Author J.B. Andrews (*Folk-Lore; Transactions of the Folk-Lore Society*, March 1897) wrote that the witches of Naples are divided into "special departments of the art". He lists two as adepts in the art of sea magic and earth magic. Later in the article he implies that a third specialty may exist related to the stars.

Accounts such as Andrew's report are admittedly not widespread in the study of Italian witchcraft. Magliocco states that her approach is to "look for multiple documentation of the existence and meaning of a custom in order to confirm its widespread practice, rather than relying upon a single informant's report". While this seems a very safe method, I feel it may unintentionally dismiss key

*continued on page 52*

## Fascist Ecology: The 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and its Historical Antecedents

by Peter Staudenmaier

This essay is an excerpt from *Ecofascism: Lessons From the German Experience*, by Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, and is reprinted with the kind permission of AK Press, PO Box 40682, San Francisco CA 94140. This book and other interesting titles are available from AK Press. Please see their website: <www.akpress.org>

*"We recognize that separating humanity from nature, from the whole of life, leads to humankind's own destruction and to the death of nations. Only through a re-integration of humanity into the whole of nature can our people be made stronger. That is the fundamental point of the biological tasks of our age. Humankind alone is no longer the focus of thought, but rather life as a whole ...  
"This striving toward connectedness with the totality of life, with nature itself, a nature into which we are born, this is the deepest meaning and the true essence of National Socialist thought."*<sup>1</sup>

In our zeal to condemn the status quo, radicals often carelessly toss about epithets like "fascist" and "ecofascist," thus contributing to a sort of conceptual inflation that in no way furthers effective social critique. In such a situation, it is easy to overlook the fact that there are still virulent strains of fascism in our political culture which, however marginal, demand our attention. One of the least rec-

ognized or understood of these strains is the phenomenon one might call "actually existing ecofascism," that is, the preoccupation of authentically fascist movements with environmentalist concerns. In order to grasp the peculiar intensity and endurance of this affiliation, we would do well to examine more closely its most notorious historical incarnation, the so-called 'green wing' of German National Socialism.

Despite an extensive documentary record, the subject remains an elusive one, underappreciated by professional historians and environmental activists alike. In English-speaking countries as well as in Germany itself, the very existence of a 'green wing' in the Nazi movement, much less its inspiration, goals, and consequences, has yet to be adequately researched and analyzed. Most of the handful of available interpretations succumb to either an alarming intellectual affinity with their subject,<sup>2</sup> or a naive refusal to examine the full extent of the "ideological overlap between nature conservation and National Socialism."<sup>3</sup> This article presents a brief and necessarily schematic overview of the ecological components of Nazism, emphasizing both their central role in Nazi ideology and their practical implementation during the Third Reich. A preliminary survey of 19th and 20th century precursors to classical ecofascism should serve to illuminate the conceptual underpinnings common to all forms of reactionary ecology.

Two initial clarifications are in order. First, the terms "environmental" and "ecological" are here used more or less interchangeably to denote ideas, attitudes, and practices commonly associated with the contemporary environmental movement. This is not an anachronism; it simply indicates an interpretive approach which highlights connections to present-day concerns.

Second, this approach is not meant to endorse the historiographically discredited notion that pre-1933 historical data can or should be read as "leading inexorably" to the Nazi calamity. Rather, our concern here is with discerning ideological continuities and tracing political genealogies, in an attempt to understand the past in light of our current situation—to make history relevant to the present social and ecological crisis.

### THE ROOTS OF THE BLOOD AND SOIL MYSTIQUE

Germany is not only the birthplace of the science of ecology and the site of Green politics' rise to prominence; it has also been home to a peculiar synthesis of naturalism and nationalism forged under the influence of the Romantic tradition's anti-Enlightenment irrationalism. Two 19th century figures exemplify this ominous conjunction: Ernst Moritz Arndt and Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl.

While best known in Germany for his fanatical nationalism, Arndt was also dedicated to the cause of the peasantry, which lead him to a concern for the welfare of the land itself. Historians of German environmentalism mention him as the earliest example of 'ecological' thinking in the modern sense.<sup>4</sup> His remarkable 1815 article *On the Care and Conservation of Forests*, written at the dawn of industrialization in Central Europe, rails against shortsighted exploitation of woodlands and soil, condemning deforestation and its economic causes. At times he wrote in terms strikingly similar to those of contemporary biocentrism: "When one sees nature in a

necessary connectedness and interrelationship, then all things are equally important—shrub, worm, plant, human, stone, nothing first or last, but all one single unity."<sup>5</sup>

Arndt's environmentalism, however, was inextricably bound up with virulently xenophobic nationalism. His eloquent and prescient appeals for ecological sensitivity were couched always in terms of the well-being of the German soil and the German people, and his repeated lunatic polemics against miscegenation, demands for teutonic racial purity, and epithets against the French, Slavs, and Jews marked every aspect of his thought. At the very outset of the 19th century the deadly connection between love of land and militant racist nationalism was firmly set in place.

Riehl, a student of Arndt, further developed this sinister tradition. In some respects his 'green' streak went significantly deeper than Arndt's; presaging certain tendencies in recent environmental activism, his 1853 essay *Field and Forest* ended with a call to fight for "the rights of wilderness." But even here nationalist pathos set the tone: "We must save the forest, not only so that our ovens do not become cold in winter, but also so that the pulse of life of the people continues to beat warm and joyfully, so that Germany remains German."<sup>6</sup> Riehl was an implacable opponent of the rise of industrialism and urbanization; his overtly antisemitic glorification of rural peasant values and undifferentiated condemnation of modernity established him as

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The experience of the  
'green wing' of  
German fascism is a  
sobering reminder of  
the political volatility  
of ecology.

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the “founder of agrarian romanticism and anti-urbanism.”<sup>7</sup>

These latter two fixations matured in the second half of the 19th century in the context of the *völkisch* movement, a powerful cultural disposition and social tendency which united ethnocentric populism with nature mysticism. At the heart of the *völkisch* temptation was a pathological response to modernity. In the face of the very real dislocations brought on by the triumph of industrial capitalism and national unification, *völkisch* thinkers preached a return to the land, to the simplicity and wholeness of a life attuned to nature’s purity. The mystical effusiveness of this perverted utopianism was matched by its political vulgarity. While “the Volkish movement aspired to reconstruct the society that was sanctioned by history, rooted in nature, and in communion with the cosmic life spirit,”<sup>8</sup> it pointedly refused to locate the sources of alienation, rootlessness and environmental destruction in social structures, laying the blame instead to rationalism, cosmopolitanism, and urban civilization. The stand-in for all of these was the age-old object of peasant hatred and middle-class resentment: the Jews. “The Germans were in search of a mysterious wholeness that would restore them to primeval happiness, destroying the hostile milieu of urban industrial civilization that the Jewish conspiracy had foisted on them.”<sup>9</sup>

Reformulating traditional German anti-

semitism into nature-friendly terms, the *völkisch* movement carried a volatile amalgam of 19th century cultural prejudices, Romantic obsessions with purity, and anti-Enlightenment sentiment into 20th century political discourse. The emergence of modern ecology forged the final link in the fateful chain which bound together aggressive nationalism, mystically charged racism, and environmentalist predilections.

In 1867 the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel coined the term ‘ecology’ and began to establish it as a scientific discipline dedicated to studying the interactions between organism and environment. Haeckel was also the chief popularizer of Darwin and evolutionary theory for the German-speaking world, and developed a peculiar sort of social darwinist philosophy he called ‘monism.’ The German Monist League he founded combined scientifically based ecological holism with *völkisch* social views. Haeckel believed in nordic racial superiority, strenuously opposed race mixing and enthusiastically supported racial eugenics. His fervent nationalism became fanatical with the onset of World War I, and he fulminated in antisemitic tones against the post-war Council Republic in Bavaria.

In this way “Haeckel contributed to that special variety of German thought which served as the seed bed for National Socialism. He became one of Germany’s major ideologists for racism, nationalism and imperialism.”<sup>10</sup> Near the end of his life he

joined the Thule Society, “a secret, radically right-wing organization which played a key role in the establishment of the Nazi movement.”<sup>11</sup> But more than merely personal continuities are at stake here. The pioneer of scientific ecology, along with his disciples Willibald Hentschel, Wilhelm Bölsche and Bruno Wille, profoundly shaped the thinking of subsequent generations of environmentalists by embedding concern for the natural world in a tightly woven web of regressive social themes. From its very beginnings, then, ecology was bound up in an intensely reactionary political framework.

The specific contours of this early marriage of ecology and authoritarian social views are highly instructive. At the center of this ideological complex is the direct, unmediated application of biological categories to the social realm. Haeckel held that “civilization and the life of nations are governed by the same laws as prevail throughout nature and organic life.”<sup>12</sup> This notion of ‘natural laws’ or ‘natural order’ has long been a mainstay of reactionary environmental thought. Its concomitant is anti-humanism:

Thus, for the Monists, perhaps the most pernicious feature of European bourgeois civilization was the inflated importance which it attached to the idea of man in general, to his existence and to his talents, and to the belief that through his unique rational faculties man could essentially recreate the world and bring about a universally more harmonious and ethically just social order. [Humankind was] an insignificant creature when viewed as part of and measured against the vastness of the cosmos and the overwhelming forces of nature.<sup>13</sup>

Other Monists extended this anti-humanist emphasis and mixed it with the traditional *völkisch* motifs of indiscriminate anti-industrialism and anti-urbanism

as well as the newly emerging pseudo-scientific racism. The linchpin, once again, was the conflation of biological and social categories. The biologist Raoul Francé, founding member of the Monist League, elaborated so-called *Lebensgesetze*, ‘laws of life’ through which the natural order determines the social order. He opposed racial mixing, for example, as “unnatural.” Francé is acclaimed by contemporary ecofascists as a “pioneer of the ecology movement.”<sup>14</sup>

Francé’s colleague Ludwig Woltmann, another student of Haeckel, insisted on a biological interpretation for all societal phenomena, from cultural attitudes to economic arrangements. He stressed the supposed connection between environmental purity and ‘racial’ purity: “Woltmann took a negative attitude toward modern industrialism. He claimed that the change from an agrarian to an industrial society had hastened the decline of the race. In contrast to nature, which engendered the harmonic forms of Germanism, there were the big cities, diabolical and inorganic, destroying the virtues of the race.”<sup>15</sup>

Thus by the early years of the 20th century a certain type of ‘ecological’ argumentation, saturated with right-wing political content, had attained a measure of respectability within the political culture of Germany. During the turbulent period surrounding World War I, the mixture of ethnocentric fanaticism, regressive rejection of modernity and genuine environmental concern proved to be a very potent potion indeed.

#### THE YOUTH MOVEMENT AND THE WEIMAR ERA

The chief vehicle for carrying this ideological constellation to prominence was the youth movement, an amorphous phenomenon which played a decisive but highly

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ambivalent role in shaping German popular culture during the first three tumultuous decades of this century. Also known as the *Wandervögel* (which translates roughly as 'wandering free spirits'), the youth movement was a hodge-podge of countercultural elements, blending neo-Romanticism, Eastern philosophies, nature mysticism, hostility to reason, and a strong communal impulse in a confused but no less ardent search for authentic, non-alienated social relations. Their back-to-the-land emphasis spurred a passionate sensitivity to the natural world and the damage it suffered. They have been aptly characterized as 'right-wing hippies,' for although some sectors of the movement gravitated toward various forms of emancipatory politics (though usually shedding their environmentalist trappings in the process), most of the *Wandervögel* were eventually absorbed by the Nazis. This shift from nature worship to Führer worship is worth examining.

The various strands of the youth movement shared a common self-conception: they were a purportedly 'non-political' response to a deep cultural crisis, stressing the primacy of direct emotional experience over social critique and action. They pushed the contradictions of their time to the breaking point, but were unable or unwilling to take the final step toward organized, focused social rebellion, "convinced that the changes they wanted to effect in society could not be brought about by political means, but only by the improvement of the individual."<sup>16</sup> This proved to be a fatal error. "Broadly speaking, two ways of revolt were open to them: they could have pursued their radical critique of society, which in due course would have brought them into the camp of social revolution. [But] the *Wandervögel* chose the other form of protest against society—

romanticism."<sup>17</sup>

This posture lent itself all too readily to a very different kind of political mobilization: the 'unpolitical' zealotry of fascism. The youth movement did not simply fail in its chosen form of protest, it was actively realigned when its members went over to the Nazis by the thousands. Its countercultural energies and its dreams of harmony with nature bore the bitterest fruit. This is, perhaps, the unavoidable trajectory of any movement which acknowledges and opposes social and ecological problems but does not recognize their systemic roots or actively resist the political and economic structures which generate them. Eschewing societal transformation in favor of personal change, an ostensibly apolitical disaffection can, in times of crisis, yield barbaric results.

The attraction such perspectives exercised on idealistic youth is clear: the enormity of the crisis seemed to enjoin a total rejection of its apparent causes. It is in the specific form of this rejection that the danger lies. Here the work of several more theoretical minds from the period is instructive. The philosopher Ludwig Klages profoundly influenced the youth movement and particularly shaped their ecological consciousness. He authored a tremendously important essay titled "Man and Earth" for the legendary Meissner gathering of the *Wandervögel* in 1913.<sup>18</sup> An extraordinarily poignant text and the best known of all Klages' work, it is not only "one of the very greatest manifestoes of the radical ecopacifist movement in Germany,"<sup>19</sup> but also a classic example of the seductive terminology of reactionary ecology.

"Man and Earth" anticipated just about all of the themes of the contemporary ecology movement. It decried the accelerating extinction of species, disturbance of global ecosystemic balance, deforestation, destruc-

tion of aboriginal peoples and of wild habitats, urban sprawl, and the increasing alienation of people from nature. In emphatic terms it disparaged Christianity, capitalism, economic utilitarianism, hyperconsumption and the ideology of 'progress.' It even condemned the environmental destructiveness of rampant tourism and the slaughter of whales, and displayed a clear recognition of the planet as an ecological totality. All of this in 1913!

It may come as a surprise, then, to learn that Klages was throughout his life politically arch-conservative and a venomous antisemite. One historian labels him a "Volkish fanatic" and another considers him simply "an intellectual pacemaker for the Third Reich" who "paved the way for fascist philosophy in many important respects."<sup>20</sup> In "Man and Earth" a genuine outrage at the devastation of the natural environment is coupled with a political subtext of cultural despair.<sup>21</sup> Klages' diagnosis of the ills of modern society, for all its declamations about capitalism, returns always to a single culprit: "Geist." His idiosyncratic use of this term, which means mind or intellect, was meant to denounce not only hyperrationalism or instrumental reason, but rational thought itself. Such a wholesale indictment of reason cannot help but have savage political implications. It forecloses any chance of rationally reconstructing society's relationship with nature and justifies the most brutal authoritarian-

ism. But the lessons of Klages' life and work have been hard for ecologists to learn. In 1980, "Man and Earth" was republished as an esteemed and seminal treatise to accompany the birth of the German Greens.

Another philosopher and stern critic of Enlightenment who helped bridge fascism and environmentalism was Martin Heidegger. A much more renowned thinker than Klages, Heidegger preached "authentic Being" and harshly criticized modern technology, and is therefore often celebrated as a precursor of ecological thinking. On the basis of his critique of technology and rejection of humanism, contemporary deep ecologists have elevated Heidegger to their pantheon of eco-heroes:

Heidegger's critique of anthropocentric humanism, his call for humanity to learn to "let things be," his notion that humanity is involved in a "play" or "dance" with earth, sky, and gods, his meditation on the possibility of an authentic mode of "dwelling" on the earth, his complaint that industrial technology is laying waste to the earth, his emphasis on the importance of local place and "homeland," his claim that humanity should guard and preserve things, instead of dominating them—all these aspects of Heidegger's thought help to support the claim that he is a major deep ecological theorist.<sup>22</sup>

Such effusions are, at best, dangerously

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The specific contours of this early marriage of ecology and authoritarian social views are highly instructive. At the center of this ideological complex is the direct, unmediated application of biological categories to the social realm.

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naive. They suggest a style of thought utterly oblivious to the history of fascist appropriations of all the elements the quoted passage praises in Heidegger. (To his credit, the author of the above lines, a major deep ecological theorist in his own right, has since changed his position and eloquently urged his colleagues to do the same.)<sup>23</sup> As for the philosopher of Being himself, he was—unlike Klages, who lived in Switzerland after 1915—an active member of the Nazi party and for a time enthusiastically, even adoringly supported the Führer. His mystical panegyrics to *Heimat* (homeland) were complemented by a deep anti-semitism, and his metaphysically phrased broadsides against technology and modernity con-

verged neatly with populist demagoguery. Although he lived and taught for thirty years after the fall of the Third Reich, Heidegger never once publicly regretted, much less renounced, his involvement with National Socialism, nor even perfunctorily condemned its crimes. His work, whatever its philosophical merits, stands today as a signal admonition about the political uses of anti-humanism in ecological garb.

In addition to the youth movement and protofascist philosophies, there were, of course, practical efforts at protecting natural habitats during the Weimar period.

Many of these projects were profoundly implicated in the ideology which culminated in the victory of 'Blood and Soil.' A 1923 recruitment pitch for a woodlands preservation outfit gives a sense of the environmental rhetoric of the time:

"In every German breast the German forest quivers with its caverns and ravines, crags and boulders, waters and winds, legends and fairy tales, with its songs and its melodies, and awakens a powerful yearning and a longing for home; in all German souls the German forest lives and weaves with its depth and breadth, its stillness and strength, its might and dignity, its riches and its beauty—it is the source of German inwardness, of the German soul, of German freedom.

Therefore protect and care for the German forest for the sake of the elders and the youth, and join the new German "League for the Protection and Consecration of the German Forest."<sup>24</sup>

The mantra-like repetition of the word "German" and the mystical depiction of the sacred forest fuse together, once again, nationalism and naturalism. This intertwinement took on a grisly significance with the collapse of the Weimar republic. For alongside such relatively innocuous conservation groups, another organization was growing which offered these ideas a

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... although some sectors of the [*Wandervögel*] movement gravitated toward various forms of emancipatory politics (though usually shedding their environmentalist trappings in the process), most of the *Wandervögel* were eventually absorbed by the Nazis.

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hospitable home: the National Socialist German Workers Party, known by its acronym NSDAP. Drawing on the heritage of Arndt, Riehl, Haeckel, and others (all of whom were honored between 1933 and 1945 as forebears of triumphant National Socialism), the Nazi movement's incorporation of environmentalist themes was a crucial factor in its rise to popularity and state power.

#### NATURE IN NAZI IDEOLOGY

The reactionary ecological ideas whose outlines are sketched above exerted a powerful and lasting influence on many of the central figures in the NSDAP. Weimar culture, after all, was fairly awash in such theories, but the Nazis gave them a peculiar inflection. The National Socialist "religion of nature," as one historian has described it, was a volatile admixture of primeval teutonic nature mysticism, pseudo-scientific ecology, irrationalist anti-humanism, and a mythology of racial salvation through a return to the land. Its predominant themes were 'natural order,' organicist holism and denigration of humanity: "Throughout the writings, not only of Hitler, but of most Nazi ideologues, one can discern a fundamental deprecation of humans vis-à-vis nature, and, as a logical corollary to this, an attack upon human efforts to master nature."<sup>25</sup> Quoting a Nazi educator, the same source continues: "anthropocentric views in general had to be rejected. They would be valid only 'if it is assumed that nature has been created only for man. We decisively reject this attitude. According to our conception of nature, man is a link in the living chain of nature just as any other organism'."<sup>26</sup>

Such arguments have a chilling currency within contemporary ecological discourse: the key to social-ecological harmony is

ascertaining "the eternal laws of nature's processes" (Hitler) and organizing society to correspond to them. The Führer was particularly fond of stressing the "helplessness of humankind in the face of nature's everlasting law."<sup>27</sup> Echoing Haeckel and the Monists, *Mein Kampf* announces: "When people attempt to rebel against the iron logic of nature, they come into conflict with the very same principles to which they owe their existence as human beings. Their actions against nature must lead to their own downfall."<sup>28</sup>

The authoritarian implications of this view of humanity and nature become even clearer in the context of the Nazis' emphasis on holism and organicism. In 1934 the director of the Reich Agency for Nature Protection, Walter Schoenichen, established the following objectives for biology curricula: "Very early, the youth must develop an understanding of the civic importance of the 'organism', i.e. the coordination of all parts and organs for the benefit of the one and superior task of life."<sup>29</sup> This (by now familiar) unmediated adaptation of biological concepts to social phenomena served to justify not only the totalitarian social order of the Third Reich but also the expansionist politics of *Lebensraum* (the plan of conquering 'living space' in Eastern Europe for the German people). It also provided the link between environmental purity and racial purity:

Two central themes of biology education follow [according to the Nazis] from the holistic perspective: nature protection and eugenics. If one views nature as a unified whole, students will automatically develop a sense for ecology and environmental conservation. At the same time, the nature protection concept will direct attention to the urbanized and 'overcivilized' modern human race.<sup>30</sup>

In many varieties of the National Social-



ist world view ecological themes were linked with traditional agrarian romanticism and hostility to urban civilization, all revolving around the idea of rootedness in nature. This conceptual constellation, especially the search for a lost connection to nature, was most pronounced among the neo-pagan elements in the Nazi leadership, above all Heinrich Himmler, Alfred Rosenberg, and Walther Darré. Rosenberg wrote in his colossal *The Myth of the 20th Century*: "Today we see the steady stream from the countryside to the city, deadly for the Volk. The cities swell ever larger, unnerving the Volk and destroying the threads which bind humanity to nature; they attract adventurers and profiteers of all colors, thereby fostering racial chaos."<sup>31</sup>

Such musings, it must be stressed, were not mere rhetoric; they reflected firmly held beliefs and, indeed, practices at the very top of the Nazi hierarchy which are today conventionally associated with ecological attitudes. Hitler and Himmler were both strict vegetarians and animal lovers, attracted to nature mysticism and homeopathic cures, and staunchly opposed to vivisection and cruelty to animals. Himmler even established experimental organic farms to grow herbs for SS medicinal purposes. And Hitler, at times, could sound like a veritable Green utopian, discussing authoritatively and in detail various renewable energy

sources (including environmentally appropriate hydropower and producing natural gas from sludge) as alternatives to coal, and declaring "water, winds and tides" as the energy path of the future.<sup>32</sup>

Even in the midst of war, Nazi leaders maintained their commitment to ecological ideals which were, for them, an essential element of racial rejuvenation. In December 1942, Himmler released a decree "On the Treatment of the Land in the Eastern Territories," referring to the newly annexed portions of Poland. It read in part:

The peasant of our racial stock has always carefully endeavored to increase the natural powers of the soil, plants, and animals, and to preserve the balance of the whole of nature. For him, respect for divine creation is the measure of all culture. If, therefore, the new *Lebensräume* (living spaces) are to become a homeland for our settlers, the planned arrangement of the landscape to keep it close to nature is a decisive prerequisite. It is one of the bases for fortifying the German Volk.<sup>33</sup>

This passage recapitulates almost all of the tropes comprised by classical ecofascist ideology: *Lebensraum*, *Heimat*, the agrarian mystique, the health of the Volk, closeness to and respect for nature (explicitly constructed as the standard against which society is to be judged), maintaining nature's precarious balance, and the earthy powers of the soil and its creatures. Such motifs were anything but personal idiosyn-

cracies on the part of Hitler, Himmler, or Rosenberg; even Göring—who was, along with Goebbels, the member of the Nazi inner circle least hospitable to ecological ideas—appeared at times to be a committed conservationist.<sup>34</sup> These sympathies were also hardly restricted to the upper echelons of the party. A study of the membership rolls of several mainstream Weimar era *Naturschutz* (nature protection) organizations revealed that by 1939, fully 60 percent of these conservationists had joined the NSDAP (compared to about 10 percent of adult men and 25 percent of teachers and lawyers).<sup>35</sup> Clearly the affinities between environmentalism and National Socialism ran deep.

At the level of ideology, then, ecological themes played a vital role in German fascism. It would be a grave mistake, however, to treat these elements as mere propaganda, cleverly deployed to mask Nazism's true character as a technocratic-industrialist juggernaut. The definitive history of German anti-urbanism and agrarian romanticism argues incisively against this view:

Nothing could be more wrong than to suppose that most of the leading National Socialist ideologues had cynically feigned an agrarian romanticism and hostility to urban culture, without any inner conviction and for merely electoral and propaganda purposes, in order to hoodwink the public ... In reality, the majority of the leading National Socialist ideologists were without any doubt more or less inclined to agrarian romanticism and anti-urbanism and convinced of the need for a relative re-agrarianization.<sup>36</sup>

The question remains, however: To what extent did the Nazis actually implement environmental policies during the twelve-year Reich? There is strong evidence that the 'ecological' tendency in the party, though largely ignored today, had considerable success for most of the party's reign.

This 'green wing' of the NSDAP was represented above all by Walther Darré, Fritz Todt, Alwin Seifert and Rudolf Hess, the four figures who primarily shaped fascist ecology in practice.

#### BLOOD AND SOIL AS OFFICIAL DOCTRINE

"The unity of blood and soil must be restored," proclaimed Richard Walther Darré in 1930.<sup>37</sup> This infamous phrase denoted a quasi-mystical connection between 'blood' (the race or Volk) and 'soil' (the land and the natural environment) specific to Germanic peoples and absent, for example, among Celts and Slavs. For the enthusiasts of *Blut und Boden*, the Jews especially were a rootless, wandering people, incapable of any true relationship with the land. German blood, in other words, engendered an exclusive claim to the sacred German soil. While the term "blood and soil" had been circulating in *völkisch* circles since at least the Wilhelmine era, it was Darré who first popularized it as a slogan and then enshrined it as a guiding principle of Nazi thought. Harking back to Arndt and Riehl, he envisioned a thoroughgoing ruralization of Germany and Europe, predicated on a revitalized yeoman peasantry, in order to ensure racial health and ecological sustainability.

Darré was one of the party's chief "race theorists" and was also instrumental in galvanizing peasant support for the Nazis during the critical period of the early 1930s. From 1933 until 1942 he held the posts of Reich Peasant Leader and Minister of Agriculture. This was no minor fiefdom; the agriculture ministry had the fourth largest budget of all the myriad Nazi ministries even well into the war.<sup>38</sup> From this position Darré was able to lend vital support to various ecologically oriented initia-

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The 'green wing' of the NSDAP was not a group of innocents, confused and manipulated idealists ... their configuration of environmental politics was directly and substantially responsible for organized mass murder.

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tives. He played an essential part in unifying the nebulous proto-environmentalist tendencies in National Socialism:

It was Darré who gave the ill-defined anti-civilization, anti-liberal, anti-modern and latent anti-urban sentiments of the Nazi elite a foundation in the agrarian mystique. And it seems as if Darré had an immense influence on the ideology of National Socialism, as if he was able to articulate significantly more clearly than before the values system of an agrarian society contained in Nazi ideology and—above all—to legitimate this agrarian model and give Nazi policy a goal that was clearly oriented toward a far-reaching re-agrarianization.<sup>39</sup>

This goal was not only quite consonant with imperialist expansion in the name of Lebensraum, it was in fact one of its primary justifications, even motivations. In language replete with the biologicistic metaphors of organicism, Darré declared: “The concept of Blood and Soil gives us the moral right to take back as much land in the East as is necessary to establish a harmony between the body of our Volk and the geopolitical space.”<sup>40</sup>

Aside from providing green camouflage for the colonization of Eastern Europe, Darré worked to install environmentally sensitive principles as the very basis of the Third Reich’s agricultural policy. Even in its most productivist phases, these precepts remained emblematic of Nazi doctrine. When the “Battle for Production” (a

scheme to boost the productivity of the agricultural sector) was proclaimed at the second Reich Farmers Congress in 1934, the very first point in the program read “Keep the soil healthy!” But Darré’s most important innovation was the introduction on a large scale of organic farming methods, significantly labeled “*lebensgesetzliche Landbauweise*,” or farming according to the laws of life. The term points up yet again the natural order ideology which underlies so much reactionary ecological thought. The impetus for these unprecedented measures came from Rudolf

Steiner’s anthroposophy and its techniques of biodynamic cultivation.<sup>41</sup>

The campaign to institutionalize organic farming encompassed tens of thousands of smallholdings and estates across Germany. It met with considerable resistance from other members of the Nazi hierarchy, above all Backe and Göring. But Darré, with the help of Hess and others, was able to sustain the policy until his forced resignation in 1942 (an event which had little to do with his environmentalist leanings). And these efforts in no sense represented merely Darré’s personal predilections; as the standard history of German agricultural policy points out, Hitler and Himmler “were in complete sympathy with these ideas.”<sup>42</sup> Still, it was largely Darré’s influence in the Nazi apparatus which yielded, in practice,

a level of government support for ecologically sound farming methods and land use planning unmatched by any state before or since.

For these reasons Darré has sometimes been regarded as a forerunner of the contemporary Green movement. His biographer, in fact, once referred to him as the “father of the Greens.”<sup>43</sup> Her book *Blood and Soil*, undoubtedly the best single source on Darré in either German or English, consistently downplays the virulently fascist elements in his thinking, portraying him instead as a misguided agrarian radical. This grave error in judgement indicates the powerfully disorienting pull of an ‘ecological’ aura. Darré’s published writings alone, dating back to the early 20s, are enough to indict him as a rabidly racist and jingoist ideologue particularly prone to a vulgar and hateful antisemitism (he spoke of Jews, revealingly, as “weeds”). His decade-long tenure as a loyal servant and, moreover, architect of the Nazi state demonstrates his dedication to Hitler’s deranged cause. One account even claims that it was Darré who convinced Hitler and Himmler of the necessity of exterminating the Jews and Slavs.<sup>44</sup> The ecological aspects of his thought cannot, in sum, be separated from their thoroughly Nazi framework. Far from embodying the ‘redeeming’ facets of National Socialism, Darré represents the baleful specter of ecofascism in power.

#### IMPLEMENTING THE ECOFASCIST PROGRAM

It is frequently pointed out that the agrarian and romantic moments in Nazi ideology and policy were in constant tension with, if not in flat contradiction to, the technocratic-industrialist thrust of the Third Reich’s rapid modernization. What is not often remarked is that even these mod-

ernizing tendencies had a significant ecological component. The two men principally responsible for sustaining this environmentalist commitment in the midst of intensive industrialization were Reichsminister Fritz Todt and his aide, the high-level planner and engineer Alwin Seifert.

Todt was “one of the most influential National Socialists,”<sup>45</sup> directly responsible for questions of technological and industrial policy. At his death in 1942 he headed three different cabinet-level ministries in addition to the enormous quasi-official *Organisation Todt*, and had “gathered the major technical tasks of the Reich into his own hands.”<sup>46</sup> According to his successor, Albert Speer, Todt “loved nature” and “repeatedly had serious run-ins with Bormann, protesting against his despoiling the landscape around Obersalzberg.”<sup>47</sup> Another source calls him simply “an ecologist.”<sup>48</sup> This reputation is based chiefly on Todt’s efforts to make Autobahn construction—one of the largest building enterprises undertaken in this century—as environmentally sensitive as possible.

The pre-eminent historian of German engineering describes this commitment thus: “Todt demanded of the completed work of technology a harmony with nature and with the landscape, thereby fulfilling modern ecological principles of engineering as well as the ‘organological’ principles of his own era along with their roots in völkisch ideology.”<sup>49</sup> The ecological aspects of this approach to construction went well beyond an emphasis on harmonious adaptation to the natural surroundings for aesthetic reasons; Todt also established strict criteria for respecting wetlands, forests and ecologically sensitive areas. But just as with Arndt, Riehl and Darré, these environmentalist concerns

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were inseparably bound to a völkisch-nationalist outlook. Todt himself expressed this connection succinctly: "The fulfilment of mere transportation purposes is not the final aim of German highway construction. The German highway must be an expression of its surrounding landscape and an expression of the German essence."<sup>50</sup>

Todt's chief advisor and collaborator on environmental issues was his lieutenant Alwin Seifert, whom Todt reportedly once called a "fanatical ecologist."<sup>51</sup> Seifert bore the official title of Reich Advocate for the Landscape, but his nickname within the party was "Mr Mother Earth." The appellation was deserved; Seifert dreamed of a "total conversion from technology to nature,"<sup>52</sup> and would often wax lyrical about the wonders of German nature and the tragedy of "humankind's" carelessness. As early as 1934 he wrote to Hess demanding attention to water issues and invoking "work methods that are more attuned to nature."<sup>53</sup> In discharging his official duties Seifert stressed the importance of wilderness and energetically opposed monoculture, wetlands drainage and chemicalized agriculture. He criticized Darré as too moderate, and "called for an agricultural revolution towards 'a more peasant-like, natural, simple' method of farming, 'independent of capital'"<sup>54</sup>

With the Third Reich's technological policy entrusted to figures such as these, even the Nazis' massive industrial build-up took on a distinctively green hue. The prominence of nature in the party's philosophical background helped ensure that more radical initiatives often received a sympathetic hearing in the highest offices of the Nazi state. In the mid-thirties Todt and Seifert vigorously pushed for an all-encompassing Reich Law for the Protection of Mother Earth "in order to stem the

steady loss of this irreplaceable basis of all life."<sup>55</sup> Seifert reports that all of the ministries were prepared to co-operate save one; only the minister of the economy opposed the bill because of its impact on mining.

But even near-misses such as these would have been unthinkable without the support of Reich Chancellor Rudolf Hess, who provided the 'green wing' of the NSDAP a secure anchor at the very top of the party hierarchy. It would be difficult to overestimate Hess's power and centrality in the complex governmental machinery of the National Socialist regime. He joined the party in 1920 as member #16, and for two decades was Hitler's devoted personal deputy. He has been described as "Hitler's closest confidant,"<sup>56</sup> and the Führer himself referred to Hess as his "closest advisor."<sup>57</sup> Hess was not only the highest party leader and second in line (after Göring) to succeed Hitler; in addition, all legislation and every decree had to pass through his office before becoming law.

An inveterate nature lover as well as a devout Steinerite, Hess insisted on a strictly biodynamic diet—not even Hitler's rigorous vegetarian standards were good enough for him—and accepted only homeopathic medicines. It was Hess who introduced Darré to Hitler, thus securing the 'green wing' its first power base. He was an even more tenacious proponent of organic farming than Darré, and pushed the latter to take more demonstrative steps in support of the *lebensgesetzliche Landbauweise*.<sup>58</sup> His office was also directly responsible for land use planning across the Reich, employing a number of specialists who shared Seifert's ecological approach.<sup>59</sup>

With Hess's enthusiastic backing, the 'green wing' was able to achieve its most notable successes. As early as March 1933,

a wide array of environmentalist legislation was approved and implemented at national, regional and local levels. These measures, which included reforestation programs, bills protecting animal and plant species, and preservationist decrees blocking industrial development, undoubtedly "ranked among the most progressive in the world at that time."<sup>60</sup> Planning ordinances were designed for the protection of wildlife habitat and at the same time demanded respect for the sacred German forest. The Nazi state also created the first nature preserves in Europe.

Along with Darré's efforts toward reagrarianization and support for organic agriculture, as well as Todt and Seifert's attempts to institutionalize an environmentally sensitive land use planning and industrial policy, the major accomplishment of the Nazi ecologists was the *Reichsnaturschutzgesetz* of 1935. This completely unprecedented "nature protection law" not only established guidelines for safeguarding flora, fauna, and "natural monuments" across the Reich; it also restricted commercial access to remaining tracts of wilderness. In addition, the comprehensive ordinance "required all national, state and local officials to consult with Naturschutz authorities in a timely manner before undertaking any measures that would produce fundamental alterations in the coun-

tryside."<sup>61</sup>

Although the legislation's effectiveness was questionable, traditional German environmentalists were overjoyed at its passage. Walter Schoenichen declared it the "definitive fulfilment of the völkisch-romantic longings,"<sup>62</sup> and Hans Klose, Schoenichen's successor as head of the Reich Agency for Nature Protection, described Nazi environmental policy as the "high point of nature protection" in Germany. Perhaps the greatest success of these measures was in facilitating the "intellectual realignment of German Naturschutz" and the integration of mainstream environmentalism into the Nazi enterprise.<sup>63</sup>

While the achievements of the 'green wing' were daunting, they should not be exaggerated. Ecological initiatives were, of course, hardly universally popular within the party. Goebbels, Bormann, and Heydrich, for example, were implacably opposed to them, and considered Darré, Hess and their fellows undependable dreamers, eccentrics, or simply security risks. This latter suspicion seemed to be confirmed by Hess's famed flight to Britain in 1941; after that point, the environmentalist tendency was for the most part suppressed. Todt was killed in a plane crash in February 1942, and shortly thereafter Darré was stripped of all his posts. For the final three years of the Nazi conflagration

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the 'green wing' played no active role. Their work, however, had long since left an indelible stain.

#### FASCIST ECOLOGY IN CONTEXT

To make this dismaying and discomfiting analysis more palatable, it is tempting to draw precisely the wrong conclusion—namely, that even the most reprehensible political undertakings sometimes produce laudable results. But the real lesson here is just the opposite: Even the most laudable of causes can be perverted and instrumentalized in the service of criminal savagery. The 'green wing' of the NSDAP was not a group of innocents, confused and manipulated idealists, or reformers from within; they were conscious promoters and executors of a program explicitly dedicated to inhuman racist violence, massive political repression and worldwide military domination. Their 'ecological' involvements, far from offsetting these fundamental commitments, deepened and radicalized them. In the end, their configuration of environmental politics was directly and substantially responsible for organized mass murder.

No aspect of the Nazi project can be properly understood without examining its implication in the holocaust. Here, too, ecological arguments played a crucially malevolent role. Not only did the 'green wing' refurbish the sanguine antisemitism of traditional reactionary ecology; it catalyzed a whole new outburst of lurid racist fantasies of organic inviolability and political revenge. The confluence of anti-humanist dogma with a fetishization of natural 'purity' provided not merely a rationale but an incentive for the Third Reich's most heinous crimes. Its insidious appeal unleashed murderous energies previously untapped. Finally, the displacement

of any social analysis of environmental destruction in favor of mystical ecology served as an integral component in the preparation of the final solution.

To explain the destruction of the countryside and environmental damage, without questioning the German people's bond to nature, could only be done by not analysing environmental damage in a societal context and by refusing to understand them as an expression of conflicting social interests. Had this been done, it would have led to criticism of National Socialism itself since that was not immune to such forces. One solution was to associate such environmental problems with the destructive influence of other races. National Socialism could then be seen to strive for the elimination of other races in order to allow the German people's innate understanding and feeling of nature to assert itself, hence securing a harmonic life close to nature for the future.<sup>64</sup>

This is the true legacy of ecofascism in power: "genocide developed into a necessity under the cloak of environment protection."<sup>65</sup>

The experience of the 'green wing' of German fascism is a sobering reminder of the political volatility of ecology. It certainly does not indicate any inherent or inevitable connection between ecological issues and right-wing politics; alongside the reactionary tradition surveyed here, there has always been an equally vital heritage of left-libertarian ecology, in Germany as elsewhere.<sup>66</sup> But certain patterns can be discerned: "While concerns about problems posed by humankind's increasing mastery over nature have increasingly been shared by ever larger groups of people embracing a plethora of ideologies, the most consistent 'pro-natural order' response found political embodiment on the radical right."<sup>67</sup> This is the common thread which unites merely conservative or

even supposedly apolitical manifestations of environmentalism with the straightforwardly fascist variety.

The historical record does, to be sure, belie the vacuous claim that "those who want to reform society according to nature are neither left nor right but ecologically minded."<sup>68</sup> Environmental themes can be mobilized from the left or from the right, indeed they require an explicit social context if they are to have any political valence whatsoever. "Ecology" alone does not prescribe a politics; it must be interpreted, mediated through some theory of society in order to acquire political meaning. Failure to heed this mediated interrelationship between the social and the ecological is the hallmark of reactionary ecology.

As noted above, this failure most commonly takes the form of a call to "reform society according to nature," that is, to formulate some version of 'natural order' or 'natural law' and submit human needs and actions to it. As a consequence, the underlying social processes and societal structures which constitute and shape people's relations with their environment are left unexamined. Such willful ignorance, in turn, obscures the ways in which all conceptions of nature are themselves socially produced, and leaves power structures unquestioned while simultaneously providing them with apparently 'naturally ordained' status. Thus the substitution of ecomysticism for clear-sighted social-ecological inquiry has catastrophic political repercussions, as the complexity of the society-nature dialectic is collapsed into a purified Oneness. An ideologically charged 'natural order' does not leave room for compromise; its claims are absolute.

For all of these reasons, the slogan advanced by many contemporary Greens, "We are neither right nor left but up

front," is historically naive and politically fatal. The necessary project of creating an emancipatory ecological politics demands an acute awareness and understanding of the legacy of classical ecofascism and its conceptual continuities with present-day environmental discourse. An 'ecological' orientation alone, outside of a critical social framework, is dangerously unstable. The record of fascist ecology shows that under the right conditions such an orientation can quickly lead to barbarism.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Ernst Lehmann, *Biologischer Wille. Wege und Ziele biologischer Arbeit im neuen Reich*, München, 1934, pp. 10-11. Lehmann was a professor of botany who characterized National Socialism as "politically applied biology."
2. Anna Bramwell, author of the only book-length study on the subject, is exemplary in this respect. See her *Blood and Soil: Walther Darré and Hitler's 'Green Party'*, Bourne End, 1985, and *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History*, New Haven, 1989.
3. See Raymond H. Dominick, *The Environmental Movement in Germany: Prophets and Pioneers, 1871-1971*, Bloomington, 1992, especially part three, "The Völkisch Temptation."
4. For example, Dominick, *The Environmental Movement in Germany*, p. 22; and Jost Hermand, *Grüne Utopien in Deutschland: Zur Geschichte des ökologischen Bewusstseins*, Frankfurt, 1991, pp. 44-45.
5. Quoted in Rudolf Krügel, *Der Begriff des Volksgeistes in Ernst Moritz Arndts Geschichtsanschauung*, Langensalza, 1914, p. 18.
6. Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, *Feld und Wald*, Stuttgart, 1857, p. 52.
7. Klaus Bergmann, *Agrarromantik und Großstadteindschaft*, Meisenheim, 1970, p. 38. There is no satisfactory English counterpart to "*Großstadteindschaft*," a term which signifies hostility to the cosmopolitanism, internationalism, and cultural tolerance of

- cities as such. This 'anti-urbanism' is the precise opposite of the careful critique of urbanization worked out by Murray Bookchin in *Urbanization Without Cities*, Montréal, 1992, and *The Limits of the City*, Montréal, 1986.
8. George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, New York, 1964, p. 29.
  9. Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945*, New York, 1975, pp. 61-62.
  10. Daniel Gasman, *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism: Social Darwinism in Ernst Haeckel and the German Monist League*, New York, 1971, p. xvii.
  11. *ibid.*, p. 30. Gasman's thesis about the politics of Monism is hardly uncontroversial; the book's central argument, however, is sound.
  12. Quoted in Gasman, *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism*, p. 34.
  13. *ibid.*, p. 33.
  14. See the foreword to the 1982 reprint of his 1923 book *Die Entdeckung der Heimat*, published by the far-right MUT Verlag.
  15. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, p. 101.
  16. Walter Laqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement*, New York, 1962, p. 41.
  17. *ibid.*, p. 6. For a concise portrait of the youth movement which draws similar conclusions, see John De Graaf, "The Wandervogel," *CoEvolution Quarterly*, Fall 1977, pp. 14-21.
  18. Reprinted in Ludwig Klages, *Sämtliche Werke*, Band 3, Bonn, 1974, pp. 614-630. No English translation is available.
  19. Ulrich Linse, *Ökopax und Anarchie. Eine Geschichte der ökologischen Bewegungen in Deutschland*, München, 1986, p. 60.
  20. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, p. 211, and Laqueur, *Young Germany*, p. 34.
  21. See Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, Berkeley, 1963.
  22. Michael Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics and Art*, Indianapolis, 1990, pp. 242-243.
  23. See Michael Zimmerman, "Rethinking the Heidegger—Deep Ecology Relationship", *Environmental Ethics* vol. 15, no. 3 (Fall 1993), pp. 195-224.
  24. Reproduced in Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Auf der Suche nach Arkadien*, München, 1990, p. 147.
  25. Robert Pois, *National Socialism and the Religion of Nature*, London, 1985, p. 40.
  26. *ibid.*, pp. 42-43. The internal quote is taken from George Mosse, *Nazi Culture*, New York, 1965, p. 87.
  27. Hitler, in Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier 1941-1942*, Stuttgart, 1963, p. 151.
  28. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, München, 1935, p. 314.
  29. Quoted in Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, "Politics, planning and the protection of nature: political abuse of early ecological ideas in Germany, 1933-1945", *Planning Perspectives* 2 (1987), p. 129.
  30. Änne Bäumer, *NS-Biologie*, Stuttgart, 1990, p. 198.
  31. Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*, München, 1938, p. 550. Rosenberg was, in the early years at least, the chief ideologist of the Nazi movement.
  32. Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, pp. 139-140.
  33. Quoted in Heinz Haushofer, *Ideengeschichte der Agrarwirtschaft und Agrarpolitik im deutschen Sprachgebiet*, Band II, München, 1958, p. 266.
  34. See Dominick, *The Environmental Movement in Germany*, p. 107.
  35. *ibid.*, p. 113.
  36. Bergmann, *Agrarromantik und Großstadtfreundschaft*, p. 334. Ernst Nolte makes a similar argument in *Three Faces of Fascism*, New York, 1966, pp. 407-408, though the point gets lost somewhat in the translation. See also Norbert Frei, *National Socialist Rule in Germany*, Oxford, 1993, p. 56: "The change in direction towards the 'soil' had not been an electoral tactic. It was one of the basic ideological elements of National Socialism ..."
  37. R. Walther Darré, *Um Blut und Boden: Reden und Aufsätze*, München, 1939, p. 28. The quote is from a 1930 speech entitled "Blood and Soil as the Foundations of Life of the Nordic Race."
  38. Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century*, p. 203. See also Frei, *National Socialist Rule in Germany*, p. 57, which stresses that Darré's total control over agricultural policy constituted a uniquely powerful position within the Nazi system.
  39. Bergmann, *Agrarromantik und Großstadtfreundschaft*, p. 312.
  40. *ibid.*, p. 308.
  41. See Haushofer, *Ideengeschichte der Agrarwirtschaft*, pp. 269-271, and Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century*, pp. 200-206, for the formative influence of Steinerite ideas on Darré.
  42. Haushofer, *Ideengeschichte der Agrarwirtschaft*, p. 271.
  43. Anna Bramwell, "Darré. Was This Man 'Father of the Greens?'" *History Today*, September 1984, vol. 34, pp. 7-13. This repugnant article is one long series of distortions designed to paint Darré as an anti-Hitler hero—an effort as preposterous as it is loathsome.
  44. Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, *Hess: A Biography*, London, 1971, p. 34.
  45. Franz Neumann, *Behemoth. The Structure and Practice of National Socialism 1933-1944*, New York, 1944, p. 378.
  46. Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, New York, 1970, p. 263.
  47. *ibid.*, p. 261.
  48. Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century*, p. 197.
  49. Karl-Heinz Ludwig, *Technik und Ingenieure im Dritten Reich*, Düsseldorf, 1974, p. 337.
  50. Quoted in Rolf Peter Sieferle, *Fortschrittsfeinde? Opposition gegen Technik und Industrie von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart*, München, 1984, p. 220. Todt was just as convinced a Nazi as Darré or Hess; on the extent (and pettiness) of his allegiance to antisemitic policies, see Alan Beyerchen, *Scientists Under Hitler*, New Haven, 1977, pages 66-68 and 289.
  51. Bramwell, *Blood and Soil*, p. 173.
  52. Alwin Seifert, *Im Zeitalter des Lebendigen*, Dresden, 1941, p. 13. The book's title is grotesquely inept considering the date of publication; it means "in the age of the living."
  53. Alwin Seifert, *Ein Leben für die Landschaft*, Düsseldorf, 1962, p. 100.
  54. Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century*, p. 198. Bramwell cites Darré's papers as the source of the internal quote.
  55. Seifert, *Ein Leben für die Landschaft*, p. 90.
  56. William Shirer, *Berlin Diary*, New York, 1941, p. 19. Shirer also calls Hess Hitler's "protégé" (588) and "the only man in the world he fully trusts" (587), and substantiates Darré's and Todt's standing as well (590).
  57. Quoted in Manvell and Fraenkel, *Hess*, p. 80. In a further remarkable confirmation of the 'green' faction's stature, Hitler once declared that Todt and Hess were "the only two human beings among all those around me to whom I have been truly and inwardly attached" (Hess, p. 132).
  58. See Haushofer, *Ideengeschichte der Agrarwirtschaft*, p. 270, and Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century*, p. 201.
  59. *ibid.*, pp. 197-200. Most of Todt's work also ran through Hess's office.
  60. Raymond Dominick, "The Nazis and the Nature Conservationists", *The Historian* vol. XLIX no. 4 (August 1987), p. 534.
  61. *ibid.*, p. 536.
  62. Hermand, *Grüne Utopien in Deutschland*, p. 114.
  63. Dominick, "The Nazis and the Nature Conservationists", p. 529.
  64. Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn, "Politics, planning and the protection of nature", p. 137.
  65. *ibid.*, p. 138.
  66. Linse's *Ökopax und Anarchie*, among others, offers a detailed consideration of the history of eco-anarchism in Germany.
  67. Pois, *National Socialism and the Religion of Nature*, p. 27.
  68. Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century*, p. 48.

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## Modernity, Magickal Cosmologies and Science: A New Cauldron for a New Age?

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### ABSTRACT:

*This paper examines the many overlaps between Pagan magick—particularly Pagan cosmologies—and science. Using the example of chaos magic it explores the ways in which science is used to legitimate and liberate contemporary magickal practices. I then argue that science is increasingly coming to resemble a religion. In particular, scientific ontological explanations increasingly use spiritual metaphors.*

*Appropriating Foucault's concept of heterotopia, I examine the ways in which Pagan fusions of science and magick furnish magickians with transformative possibilities. Using heterotopia as a heuristic, I demonstrate how postmodern magickal practices help to critique purely rational notions of modernity and modern man. Postmodernism and irrationality, for me, being fundamental, symbiotic parts of the modern condition.*

*Similarly Magickal selves are multiplicities with both rational and irrational aspects. Magickians are in constant motion, synthesising different domains of knowledge and experience. In this respect they resemble Deleuze and Guattari's nomad and Serres' Hermes and harlequin, providing modern individuals with postmodern possibilities for change.*

My ongoing research into contemporary Paganism has continually forced me to rethink my precon-

ceptions about the relationship between science, magick and religion. Once virtually indistinguishable under the *aegis* of cosmology, science and religion, like C.P. Snow's *Two Cultures*, have become symbolically opposed (see Sorrel, 1991: 98-126; Needleman, 1988). This polarisation has produced caricatures of religious narrative and magickal practice as irrational, magick famously being in Frazer's terms "the bastard sister of science", or, for Tylor, "one of the most pernicious delusions that ever vexed mankind". Meanwhile, scientific rationality is seen as liberational (Midgley, 1992). The relationship between science, magick and religion became a staple of anthropological study. Those debates are well-known and need not be elaborated here other than to say that many early theories of magic, particularly intellectualist approaches, tended to view magickal ritual as a pre-enlightenment, pre-scientific mentality which eventually through a process of cultural and intellectual evolution would be abandoned by primitive societies. Such a mind-set is astutely depicted throughout Jim Crace's fictive *Continent*, particularly in the first story of the collection "Talking Skull" in which science is viewed by the main protagonist as a panacea and magickal superstition is seen very much as *other*.

My research, however, tends to dismiss these types of stereotyping and evolutionism. Instead it depicts an emergent picture of Pagan cosmologies where magick, religion and science are fused into holistic ontological explanations. This is particularly the case when we look at Pagan appropriations of anti-reductionist science—such as systems biology, complexity and chaos theories, and quantum mechanics—as a critique of Cartesian, mechanistic models (see Capra, 1992). In other words, my research provides a window on the world where mag-

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*Chaos magic, alternatively known as chaoism, is a radical, libertarian form of magick which appears to have the most overt scientific content both in terms of cosmological understanding and magickal practice.*

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ickal cosmology increasingly comes to resemble scientific ontology and vice-versa.

### PAGAN COSMOLOGIES, MAGICK AND SCIENCE

Over the last twenty years or so, now familiar parallels have been drawn between ontological models drawn from contingent, anti-reductionist science and cosmological explanations derived from Oriental spirituality (for example, Capra, 1992). As one shall see, the holism of the Tao is likened to the holism of the quantum field. The resonating interaction of particles is likened to the Dance of Shiva. The paradoxical nature of matter is said to be analogous to the Zen koan. All forms of dualism are, in theory, rejected. Thus Cartesian dualism is rejected along with Christian dualism as reductionist ontologies. While scientific attention has been drawn ever eastward, the Occident has quietly been cultivating its own fusion of indigenous spiritual tradition and cutting-edge scientific explanation.

When talking to Pagans about their cosmological models it soon becomes obvious that many are well versed in the latest scientific ideas and freely use them to support their cosmological understandings. Effectively, Pagan cosmological *language games* exist where scientific theory and magickal narrative meet. Examples of the overlap of Pagan and occult cosmology and anti-reductionist science are numerous. Perhaps the best known examples are the Gaia hypothesis and the Pagan view of the Earth as a sen-

tient organism capable of action and reaction; and, the manner in which the ten sephiroth of the Kaballistic Tree of Life have been likened to the ten dimensions and *super-strings* of space-time.

In an interview as part of my own research, a prominent Odinist re-interpreted Heathen cosmogony in terms of contemporary physics. He explained how the Odinist cosmos with its concept of multiple worlds came into being in tradition through the meeting of fire and ice in the void. He argued that this was symbolic of the fusion of energy—possibly of matter and anti-matter—in the Big Bang of astrophysics. Serena Roney-Dougal (1993)—a Pagan and trained parapsychologist—outlines many parallels between science, esotericism and magick; for example, she makes connections between physical indeterminacy to consciousness and psi-phenomena; biochemistry to the chakra system; and, geo-magnetism to earth mystery and UFO activity. In all of these cases science appears to legitimate ancient wisdoms.

### CHAOS MAGIC AND SCIENCE

For the purposes of this article, however, I'd like to concentrate on the numerous overlaps between cosmological understandings drawn from chaos magick and anti-reductionist scientific theory. Chaos magic, alternatively known as chaoism, is a radical, libertarian form of magick which appears to have the most overt scientific content both in terms of cosmological understanding and

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... material rootedness ... provides chaoists with a theory of how magick works, given that consciousness, mediated through gnosis, can affect the physical universe.

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magickal practice (see Wilson, 1992). Chaos magic is “truly postmodern in that it is completely eclectic, positively not adopting one system, but using whatever elements may be suitable at a particular place at a particular time, even to the extent of using science fiction characters as modern mythological figures” (Greenwood, 1996: 281). A popular example is the use of Star Trek characters as archetypal representations of Jung’s personality types of thinking, feeling, intuition and sensation; for example, Mr Spock as logical thinking. Chaos magic draws its inspiration from, among others, Aleister Crowley’s Thelema, Tantra, the Tao, H.P. Lovecraft’s Cthulu mythos, American Discordian philosophy, Situationalism, and Nietzscheanism, particularly the idea of the magickal ‘will to power’ (see Sutcliffe, 1996: 127-30). This explosive mixture means that it has come to possess a ‘guerrilla ontology’ (Wilson, 1992: 59).

Its emphasis on altered states of consciousness, or *gnosis*, has meant that chaoism has been likened to a postmodern form of shamanism (Houston, 1995; also Woodman, 1998: 2-3). And, although it is a largely materialist magickal practice, Chaoism does have a spiritual core, often underemphasised by other occultists and scholars, which for me locates it as part of the Left-hand magickal path within the wider Pagan community (see Sutcliffe, 1996: 127-130; Woodman, 1998: 19-22).

For the purposes of this article I would like to concentrate on two ways in which

chaoism overlaps with science. Firstly the relationship between chaoist cosmology, quantum physics and neuroscience; secondly, the chaoist idea of the Pandemonaeon and forms of existential experimentation.

#### CHAOIST COSMOLOGY AND THE PHYSICS OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

For chaoists the cosmos is both contingent and chaotic. Paradoxically, however, this chaos has order, and can also be ordered magickally, principally through the transformation of the magickian’s consciousness (see Woodman, 1998). As Adrian Savage (n.d.: 4) states:

To the Chaos practitioner, Chaos is not the absence of order, but—to paraphrase Henry Miller—an order beyond understanding. It is analogous to the Hindu’s Brahman, the Buddhist’s Void, the Taoist’s Tao, and the Ancient Anglo-Saxon’s Wyrð.

This chaoist cosmological model comes to resemble the types of physical indeterminacy posited by quantum theorists such as Werner Heisenberg who argue that the physical realm is simultaneously structured by matter but suffused with uncertainty and possibility. Chaos magic brings with it:

... the realization that everything is possible, and every conceivable reality is in *potentia*, lying dormant within the sub-spaces of the very air we breathe. All things are in *potentia*, with no intimation of restriction. This is the Chaos of orthodoxy, the omnipresent primal soup (Templum Nigri Solis, 1996: 207)

Ontological concepts derived from quantum mechanics are therefore popular among chaos magickians. Pete Carroll, a founding father of chaos magick, for example, has developed a materialistic theory of magick founded on quantum-based predictions of magickal reality. Indeed he characterises chaos magicians as ‘rebel physicists’.

Quantum theory states that matter is simultaneously both particle and wave (Capra, 1992: 164-5). In this respect matter resembles a Zen koan in that it has a dual nature but is also non-dual (see Capra, 1992). Accordingly, the physicist David Bohm has characterised the cosmos as non-dual but simultaneously consisting of the manifest, material *explicate order* and the *implicate order*—the supra-material realm of magick and synchronicity. Similarly, the dual nature of matter has also been used in occult cosmologies in order to explain paranormal events; for example, Lawrence LeShan (1987) has proposed that two kinds of reality exist simultaneously, the sensory and the clairvoyant. These theories reminiscent of Paracelsus’ cosmology wherein the universe consisted of concomitant *gross* and *subtle* forces. The quantum world-view has prompted Roney-Dougal (1993: 75) to remark that we “have to change from an ‘either-or’ world view to a ‘both-and’ one.”

Similarly Dave Lee (1997: 85-100), a leading chaos magickian, uses this property of matter to reject cosmological models which rest upon dualism. Christianity and the cosmic duality of good and evil, and the Cartesian separation of mind and matter, are prime examples (also Woodman, 1998: 1). This rejection of Descartes provides the chaoist with a vital connection between consciousness and matter, particularly when linked to the idea of the Bose-Einstein Condensate (BEC) (Lee, 1997: 90-93). This predicts “a similarity between the behaviour of

fundamental wave/particles and that of brains—because one is rooted in the other” (Lee, 1997: 92). It is this material rootedness which provides chaoists with a theory of how magick works, given that consciousness, mediated through *gnosis*, can affect the physical universe (Hawkins, 1996: 81). Thus brain and cosmos are intimately, perhaps holographically, connected (see Needleman, 1988). The fact that chaoists see “no gap between in-here and out-there” (Watson, 1998: 41) suggests significant overlaps between chaoist cosmology and theories of the brain and consciousness arising from contemporary neuroscience (see below; also Watson, 1998).

#### THE PANDEMONAEON AND EXISTENTIAL EXPERIMENTATION

Thus a major feature of chaoism is the creation of order and positive magickal results from cosmic chaos. This is particularly true of the chaoist notion of the Pandemonaeon (see Hine, n.d., 1993). This is an imaginal terrain and time-scape, alternatively known as the Fifth Aeon, which the chaoist can use to envision alternate realities and futures, giving them some form of imaginal reality—a hyperreality. Thus the Pandemonaeon is an arena for the creation of personal, postmodern cosmologies for, like other neo-shamanic cosmoses, the Pandemonaeon is both within and without (Hine, 1993: 26; also see Needleman, 1988). As Phil Hine argues, the Pandemonaeon typifies “the trend towards individualism becoming separate from any totalizing belief or narrative, be it metaphysical or scientific” (Hine, n.d.: 1).

In these respects the Pandemonaeon resembles a new technology which each of us can use individually to re-enchant reality:

Despite the restrictions control culture tries to impose, we now inhabit a cyber age, where information and technology are easily

accessed. This is the mirror of the Shamanic Age, when knowledge was free to those who wished to reach out and interface with it directly, and all realities were immanent. Human biology and the environment were not discrete, and this is an understanding we are discovering today. We still have the neurological hardware that caused bushes to burn and dragons to walk the earth, and there is a new magical technology that allows us to reboot it. (Templum Nigri Solis, 1996: 206-7)

This heuristic of virtual technology and space and can be extended when we come to consider how the Pandemonaeon operates, because linked to the Pandemonaeon is the Ideosphere, a “non-local space entered by the magician in order to explore possible models & paradigms which may be of use in configuring the Pandemonaeon” (Hine, n.d.: 2). The Ideosphere operates as a cosmological laboratory in which the magician has *carte blanche* to create his own cosmology. The Ideosphere is, therefore, a smooth, *horizontal* space (see below). Hine (n.d.: 2) outlines his experimental way of working with the Ideosphere thus:

The Ideosphere is more of an attitude; a stance from which the magician can seek inspiration from any incoming information, be it newspaper articles, cartoons, flickering media images, scientific jargon, random acronyms, or half-heard phrases from another's conversation. An idea flashes into the Ideosphere; the magician may grasp it immediately or store it for later work. The main attitude to foster is that nothing, no matter how ridiculous, bizarre or unworkable should be rejected. Working from the Ideosphere, the magician allows himself to bathe in the emanations of the mass media until, satiated and bloated, he withdraws into silence to digest, regurgitate, and create new forms.

Here, therefore, we have another overlap with science—the use of the experimental method by chaos magicians. Chaoists are, for me, occult experimenters *par excellence*. The results of these experiments are noted

with further experimentation undertaken on their basis: Chaoists experiment with traditional magickal forms, deconstructing and reassembling traditional forms of ritual in novel and transformative ways. Experimentation with identity through the manipulation of various *word viruses*—a linguistic concept invented by William S. Burroughs and, incidentally, analogous to biologist Richard Dawkins' idea of the *meme*—is a way of experimenting with and reconditioning the self (see Lee, 1997: 125-6; also Hine, n.d.). Experimentation with different sexual techniques and drugs, particularly psychedelics, are common ways of achieving the desired *gnosis* or altered states of consciousness required for magickal workings (Lee, 1997: 68-81). Experimenting with therapeutic regimes, most notably neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is another ubiquitous form of self-experimentation and method of transforming consciousness (for example, Lee, 1997). For chaoists, “It is the very nature of magic to be progressive, anarchic and experimental” (Templum Nigri Solis, 1996: 206).

Just as matter has a multiple nature as particle and wave, both NLP and chaos practitioners see the self as having a multiple, even schizophrenic, character (Lee, 1997: 131-2). Here the chaoist self lives up to the ‘postmodern shaman’ tag. The *multiple self* and experimentation within the Pandemonaeon and Ideosphere, again, relate to findings arising out of contemporary neuroscience and philosophy in which consciousness is said to rise out of “a plurality of voices within us which are themselves contradictory, inconsistent and often just nonsense” (Watson, 1998: 41; also Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 239-52). Interestingly, the prominent neuroscientist Daniel Dennett terms this booming, buzzing confusion ‘pandemonium’, a term cognate with the chaoist

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*The Pandemonaeon ... is an imaginal terrain and time-scape, alternatively known as the Fifth Aeon, which the chaoist can use to envision alternate realities and futures, giving them some form of imaginal reality—a hyperreality.*

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Pandemonaeon. In this respect the chaos of the body resembles the chaos of the cosmos.

Having outlined some of the uses of scientific concepts in Pagan cosmologies I'd now like to turn my attention to the way in which science has increasingly come to resemble a religion.

#### SCIENCE AS RELIGION

One has now seen that various Pagan cosmologies have appropriated concepts and models derived from scientific enquiry. Appropriation, however, is not a one-way process and science has borrowed metaphors from religion in order to demonstrate how the physical world operates and is structured. A prime example is Jim Lovelock's use of ‘Gaia’, the Greco-Roman Earth goddess, as an anthropomorphisation of global organic chemical processes (see Lovelock, 1979). Furthermore although science has always viewed itself as rational it has taken on some of the totalizing characteristics of a religion, espousing its own forms of dogma, doctrine and salvation (see Midgley, 1992; Fuller, 1997: 40-62). As the Enlightenment project has unfolded we, as a culture, have increasingly put our ‘faith’ in science and reason—faith being the operative word. In particular we have turned to science as the dominant source of cosmological truth. Epistemological (for example, Needleman, 1988), postmodern and late modern critiques have dented the intellectual credibility of science. However these criticisms do not

seem to have affected science's ideological and social centrality, particularly in its most dogmatic form—*scientism*. As Roney-Dougal (1993: 247) remarks:

... when I see advertisements on television no longer using sex or affluence to sell their products but rather a ‘scientist’ in a white coat, then I know that scientists are verily the most influential symbol of the day—the high priests of the latest religion.

‘Popular’ scientists have begun to appropriate the language of theologians and metaphysicians in their arguments. For example, Stephen Hawking writes in his *A Brief History of Time* that it is the quest of science to understand “the mind of God”. Richard Dawkins sees scientific enquiry as the key to metaphysical questions such as, “Is there a meaning to life? What are we for? What is man?”. In this respect science has taken on a mantle of mysticism and mystery (Fuller, 1997: 48-50). Indeed on a metaphysical level, the rise of theories of complexity and quantum mechanics has meant that, far from providing simple answers to these questions, the cosmos has become more complex and unpredictable—more mysterious (also Fuller, 1997: 48-50). For example, Bas von Frassen (1985: 258) writes:

Once atoms had no colour, now they have no shape, place or volume ... There is a reason why metaphysics sounds so passé, so *vieux-jeu* today; for intellectually challenging complexities and paradoxes it has been far surpassed by theoretical science. Do the concepts of the



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Trinity and the soul, haecceity, universals, prime matter, and potentiality baffle you? They pale beside the unimaginable otherness of closed space-time, event horizons, EPR correlations and bootstrap models.

Furthermore Steve Fuller (1997: 50-60) argues that science has taken on the characteristics of religion in a number of other ways:

Science has developed its own *soteriology*, where it sees itself as the sole source of salvation from society's ills, and, increasingly, liberation from the constraints of mortality when we think of the latest breakthroughs in genetics and technologies like cryogenics (also Midgley, 1992).

It possesses its own brand of *saintliness*, for example, in the canonisation and hagiolatry of prominent scientific figures such as Einstein and Hawking. Effectively, it has developed its own cult of genius. It has its own form of *magical causation*, where science appears to work magickally 'at a distance' over time and space, rather like Frazer's conception of 'contagious magic'. How often do new breakthroughs in technology seem to work *as if by magick?* (see Needleman, 1988: 139-40). Finally it has developed its own form of *theodicy*, in which science appears to conform to some sort of divine justice which, firstly, justifies even its most loathsome features, such as the technological features of warfare; and, secondly, can be used to discredit those creeds, like religion, which dare to compete with it as a source of cosmological or ontological understanding. Sci-

ence has created its own cosmologies which could not exist outside scientific method. That, seemingly, appears justification enough within the scientific community for its cultural dominance.

A further overlap is provided by that *Eureka* moment, the flash of insight when scientific discovery overlaps with the so-called irrational and the *numinous* (see Needleman, 1988: 105). Rudolf Otto argues that the numinous cannot be rationally defined or explained; it can only be experienced, "only be suggested by means of the special way in which it is reflected in the mind in terms of feeling". Perhaps the most famous example, Archimedes aside, is Kekulé's discovery of the form of the benzene molecule in 1865. Needleman (1988: 105) relates the story thus:

After struggling with this problem until he saw no way out, Kekulé one night dreamed of a snake eating its tail and awoke realizing the problem had been solved beneath the level of his ordinary thought. The discovery that organic chemical compounds take the form of rings was the basis of an entire branch of organic chemistry.

Similarly many prominent scientists have incorporated concepts and metaphors culled from religion and magick in their cosmologies: Stephen J. Gould uses magickal metaphors to illustrate his thoughts on the contingency of evolution. In particular he uses angelic intervention as an example of social bifurcation. Einstein rejected the uncertainties associated with quantum

theory by notoriously invoking the divine—"I cannot believe that God plays dice with the cosmos". Stephen Hawking, on the other hand, accepting of quantum indeterminacy retorted some years later, "On the contrary, it appears that not only does God play dice, but also that he sometimes throws the dice where they cannot be seen". Perhaps most famously, Fritjof Capra vividly describes his epiphany in realising that physical ontology and sacred cosmology were one in terms of seeing phenomena which he'd only previously experienced through "graphs, diagrams and mathematical theories" (Capra, 1992: 11):

I 'saw' cascades of energy coming down from outer space, in which particles were created and destroyed in rhythmic pulses; I 'saw' the atoms of the elements and those of my body participating in this cosmic dance of energy; I felt its rhythm and I 'heard' its sound, and at that moment I *knew* that this was the Dance of Shiva, the Lord of Dancers worshiped by the Hindus.

#### HETEROTOPIA—TOWARDS POSTMODERN COSMOLOGIES?

One has seen that there are numerous overlaps between science and esotericism in Pagan cosmology, but what are the consequences of these relationships? For me, one important corollary is that Pagan cosmological arguments act as heterotopic textual sites. I have recently been working on the role that heterotopia play in Pagan sacred spaces and Pagan identities (for example, Green, 1999).

Heterotopia is a concept coined by Michel Foucault to refer to sites of 'otherness' wherein diverse elements, often polar opposites, are juxtaposed to create new meanings and transformative ways of seeing the world. For Foucault (1986: 25) the heterotopia "is capable of juxtaposing in a single place several spaces, several sites that are in

themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another; thus it is that the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space". Foucault (1986: 25-6) gives the example of how sacred Oriental gardens act as heterotopic sites, sacred microcosms echoing wider religious cosmology:

We must not forget that in the Orient the garden, an astonishing creation that is now a thousand years old, had very deep and seemingly superimposed meanings. The traditional garden of the Persians was a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, with a space still more sacred than the others that were like an umbilicus, the navel of the world at its centre (the basin and water fountain were there); and all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to come together in this space, in this sort of microcosm. As for carpets, they were originally reproductions of gardens (the garden is a rug onto which the whole world comes to enact its symbolic perfection, and the rug is a sort of garden that can move across space). The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world. The garden has been a sort of happy, universalizing heterotopia since the beginnings of antiquity (our modern zoological gardens spring from that source).

In this example the garden provides new cosmological understanding whilst transforming the notion of the garden itself.

The hermetic and alchemic heritage common to both contemporary science and magick, for example, also emphasises heterotopia. The exoteric alchemic quest involved the mixing of the opposing elements of sulphur and mercury eventually to produce the Philosopher's Stone or Elixir of Life. On an esoteric level these chemical reactions are

said to symbolise the concomitant processes of spiritual self-transformation in which one confronts one's symbolic opposites in the forms of the Jungian *shadow* and *animus* or *anima*. In this case the alchemic self, magically linked to the crucible, acts as a heterotopia. Interestingly Lee (1997: 106-111) refers to his eclectic chaoist repertoire of healing techniques—for example, the consumption of magickal elixirs, dance and movement *gnosis*, and the use of *pranayama*—as body alchemy. In this case the chaoist body is positively transformed by the heterotopic “overlaps of the physical and mental/emotional levels” (p.106). The self is a *multiplicity*.

Thus heterotopic sites appear to work on the fundamental magickal principle of the *hieros gamos*, or sacred marriage, where opposing elements or symbols are magically synthesised (for example, Green, 1999). This idea is ubiquitous within Paganism whether one is talking about symbolic synthesis—for example, the ritualistic marriage of the Goddess and Horned God in Wiccan celebration—or actual physical synthesis—such as Tantric sex magick. This idea of sacred union is particularly marked in the writings of George Bataille, especially in his notion of transgression wherein, for example, sacrifice, the potlatch, or eroticism ruptures the profane order to provide sacred moments of continuity and community. As Bataille (1986: 242) argues “the sacred is only a privileged moment of communal unity, a convulsive form of what is ordinarily stifled.” Magickal heterotopia allows the sacred to interrupt the established order (see Green, 1999).

Heterotopia can be spatial or textual sites. I view Pagan ritual spaces, for example, as being heterotopic spaces which juxtapose symbols, particularly those pertaining to life and death, in order to transform the ritual's

participants, producing new existential symbols, insight and new, transformative, ways of being (Green, 1999). The chaoist Ideosphere is heterotopic. Likewise in Pagan cosmological texts or discourses the symbolic opposites of science and mysticism, I argue, are juxtaposed in such a way that produces new ways of experiencing and viewing the cosmos (*ibid.*). For me this has differential effects on the individual and societal levels:

For the individual, the overlap between Pagan cosmology and anti-reductionist science helps to galvanise magickal identity and legitimate magickal cosmologies whilst providing individual opportunities for spiritual insight and transformation. We have seen this in the case of the chaos magickian whose eclectic synthesis of magick, physics, consciousness studies and therapeutic techniques provides him with *gnosis* and transformation, whilst giving him the opportunity to create his own subjective universe.

On the societal level, there appears to be an emergent *zeitgeist* in which, far from being incompatible ways of understanding the universe, science and Paganism appear to legitimate and reproduce each other. Yob, for example, has suggested that religious metaphors and scientific models are compatible in the sense that they serve virtually identical functions in differing attempts at cosmological understanding. She states that scientific and religious cosmologies should not be judged on criteria of truth or verifiability, but rather:

... judged according to their ability to illuminate, stimulate insight, and suggest relationships and the existence of other structures otherwise unimagined. They persist as long as they continue to power investigation and assist communication and are rejected when they no longer do this adequately. (Yob, 1992: 484)

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## *The Ideosphere operates as a cosmological laboratory in which the magician has carte blanche to create his own cosmology.*

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You could call this a postmodern view of cosmological models and metaphors. This relativization of cosmology allows for a plurality of individual cosmological beliefs to exist alongside each other unproblematically, something which patently happens when considering the diversity of cosmological belief within the Pagan community.

This postmodern fusion of scientific and religious understandings of the cosmos also says something about rationality and the cultural dominance of science. In postmodern terms we cannot really talk about the superiority of scientific rationality as opposed to religious or magickal irrationality, but rather a plurality of rationalities as posited by certain *neo-intellectualist* scholars of magick. Similarly, Paula Eleta in her study of magick in modern day Argentina characterises contemporary magick not as “a return to primitivism”, but rather, like science, “a form of knowledge-control of reality” (1997: 51), which pervades both sacred and secular milieux. Marian Green (1988: 12) notes the parallels between scientific and magickal technologies:

In every instance the magical equipment has exact parallels in other technologies. The Tarot symbols are like the electronic engineer's technical drawings: each symbol represents a different component which, in circuit, will act in a specific way. The magician's robe and magical circle of protection are like the laboratory overalls and sterile atmosphere found in medical research—used for exactly the same reasons keeping the psychic rather than the physical atmosphere pure and untainted.

MODERN MAN MEETS THE *NOMAD*,

### HERMES AND THE HARLEQUIN

What this example illustrates is that both science and Paganism are traditions which are subject to *reflexivity*. Critiques of complexity theory have overwhelmingly argued that it does not constitute a postmodern science despite notable dissenters. Rather than dispute this—much science is still clearly a largely deterministic and monolithic enterprise committed to progress and liberation through the rational application of technology—I argue that science is a microcosm of Mellor and Shilling's (1997) ‘Janus-Faced’ modernity. Whilst Paganism can be seen in one respect as an attempt to valorize and re-apply ancient wisdom in an ‘inauthentic’ modern context, one has also seen the appropriation of rational science by Pagans as a means of its legitimation. One example is the growth of *cyber- or techno-Paganism* and the proliferation of Pagan internet sites in recent years. Similarly one has seen how science has, counter-intuitively, adopted the character of an organised religion. In ‘Janus-Faced’ modernity a plurality of rationalities co-exists:

One the one hand, there is the modernity with which we are most familiar: that of Cartesian dualism, Kantian reason, Corbusier's *machine à habiter* and Habermas' ‘ideal speech’ situation. On the other hand, however, is another modernity: that of Schopenhauer's ‘senseless will’, Nietzsche's ‘will to power’, Baudelaire's *flâneur*, and the reassertion of sensuality in baroque culture (Mellor and Shilling, 1997: 131).

Postmodernism in this context does not appear to be an evolution of, or break, with

*Epistemological, postmodern and late modern critiques have dented the intellectual credibility of science. However these criticisms do not seem to have affected science's ideological and social centrality.*

modernity as many commentators argue. Rather evidence culled from Pagan magick suggests that the postmodern is an integral part of modern life (see Green, 1999). For many magickians, magick as a postmodern social practice is a 'component' which has the ability to transform modern thought and trajectories, rather like the transformative hybridized effects of globalization.

An example of the way in which rationalities exist alongside each other is provided by urban milieux. The metropolis is often said to epitomise modernity. Urban landscapes are often used as metaphors for modern life and psychology, particularly when one considers the functionalism of modernist architecture as machines for living. Despite this—like Eleta (1997)—Donald (1992) in his semiotic reading of the changing face of the city sees rationality and magick, in its broadest sense, as co-existing in the metropolis. He illustrates this with the example of Doris Lessing's novel *The Four-Gated City* to illustrate how the same environment can be described in rationalistic terms by an incomer, contrasting this with the romantic, almost 'magickal', narrative given by a native whose memories are inextricably linked to the fabric of the buildings (Donald, 1992: 434-5). Certainly a surprise for me during the course of my research has been the extent to which magick is not only surviving but flourishing in modern urban contexts, particularly in London. Chaoism in particular has developed as a very urban, almost alien-

ated, form of magickal practice.

Importantly one has seen how the magickal self is a *multiplicity*. Mellor and Shilling's (1997) non-dualistic reworking of Durkheim's notion of *homo duplex* demonstrates the co-existence of 'rationality' and 'irrationality' within modern individuals. Such a reworking allows them to question:

... the widespread assumption which has been expressed from Descartes, Kant and Hume, to Parsons, Giddens and Habermas, that the rationalist Enlightenment project has achieved control over the extra-rational senses and sensualities of humans (Mellor and Shilling, 1997: 2).

This control is largely absent, and certainly resisted, when one considers an individual's participation in ludic Pagan celebration, or the postmodern existential experimentation of the Ideosphere (Hine, n.d.). The 'smooth space' of resistance of the Ideosphere, in particular, mirrors notions explicit within the experimental horizontal philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

Richard Sutcliffe (1996: 129) notes the Neo-Nietzschean influence of Deleuze and Guattari on chaoism. Their 'eroticised' 'will to power'—*délire*, or desire—neatly appears to encompass the motivation behind many chaoist magickal workings (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1986). Similarly their idea of *multiplicities* and the human as a heterogeneous *desiring machine* able to transform chaos parallels chaoist notions of the creative,

schizoid, magickal self (Watson, 1998). Particularly important here is their idea of the nomad (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 351-423). Deleuze and Guattari set out to make their philosophy a transformative experience in itself. For example *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) acts as a textual heterotopia, juxtaposing differing literary styles, chronologies and knowledge culled from natural and social science, mathematics, literature, philosophy, history and art to create a *bricolage* which seeks to affect the reader on many levels. Their philosophy possesses its own transformative aesthetic. It is a treatise of horizontal, *rhizomatic* thought over vertical, arborescent hierarchies of knowledge (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 3-25). It belongs to 'the smooth' rather than to the gridded and hierarchised—the *striated*—spaces of modernity (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 351-423). By this I mean that Deleuze and Guattari, like chaoists, have levelled out—made horizontal—modern hierarchies of signs and knowledge so that no single signifier or discourse, such as science, is privileged. This allows the nomadic *bricoleur* to make connections between different signs and domains of knowledge, for example, (re)connecting religious metaphors with scientific models. In this respect the chaoist resembles the nomad who is able to roam over a smooth space, be it the Asian steppes, the horizontal plane of signs, or, the smooth space of the *social unconscious*, leaving their old domains—*deteritorialization*—and creating new (symbolic) homes—*reterritorialization* (*ibid.*). Like the Deleuzian nomad, the magickian is able to resist, to smooth over, the striated spaces of modernity and make transformative connections between science and magick.

For me, the idea of the nomadic magickian strikes a chord with the work of the prominent French philosopher of science

Michel Serres and his 'twin' figures of *Hermes* and the *harlequin* (see Serres, 1983). Serres' philosophy is a voyage between the arts and the sciences (see Lechte, 1994: 82) which, for me, parallels the types of syntheses that magickians are seeking between science and magick. Serres' 'magickian figure' is *Hermes*, appropriately the Greco-Roman God of Magick, the traveller—again a nomadic figure—who mediates and translates between apparently heterogeneous domains of knowledge and diverse regions of social life in order to forge passages between them (see Lechte, 1994: 83-5). For purposes of my argument, *Hermes* is the magickian who heals the splits between various fields of enquiry creating new ways of experiencing the universe. The other figure is the *harlequin*, itself a ludic, magickal chameleon, but also a metaphor for the multi-dimensional nature of knowledge. The *harlequin* is "a composite figure that always has another costume underneath the one removed. The *harlequin* is a hybrid, hermaphrodite, mongrel figure, a mixture of diverse elements, a challenge to homogeneity" (Lechte, 1994: 82). The *harlequin* resembles the magickal self as a site for heterotopic transformation. Serres believes that:

... the very viability and vitality of science depends on the degree to which it is open to its poetical other. Science only moves on if it receives an infusion of something out of the blue, something unpredictable and miraculous. The poetic impulse is the life-blood of natural science, not its nemesis. Poetry is the way of the voyager open to the unexpected and always prepared to make unexpected links between places and things (Lechte, 1994: 85).

Pagan magickians are simultaneously nomad, *Hermes*, and *harlequin*. *Multiplicities*.

CONCLUSIONS: A NEW CAULDRON FOR A NEW AGE?

For me, the perceived incompatibility of science and religion in the modern world is divisive and one of our greatest contemporary challenges is the creation of these nomadic types of dialogue between the two (Needleman, 1988, Capra, 1992). Once it was Eastern mysticism (*ibid.*), but now Pagan paths also appear to be at the vanguard of bringing such a dialogue into being, ushering in a 'new age' where science and religion could exist harmoniously. Perhaps producing what Roney-Dougal (1993; 246) terms "Science with a Conscience". Whether this is the arrival of the much-heralded Aquarian Age is, however, debatable. It certainly is a new age which has some of the postmodern features which certain forms of Paganism are seeking to cultivate within modernity. To do this one has to abandon dualistic notions of (ir)rationality within both the self and society. Certainly chaosists recognise the multiplicity of the self, and cyber-Paganism appears to suggest that modernity is 'Janus-Faced'.

For chaosists, the idea of science as a dominant religion belongs to the Fourth Aeon (see Lee, 1997: 97). Conversely, the post-modern Fifth Aeon of the Pandemonaeon acts in several magickal ways synthesising the individual with the collectivity and, importantly, new forms of non-monotheistic spirituality with science (see Hine, n.d.: 1; also Hine, 1993). We see this clearly in an article from an Australian chaosist group the Templum Nigri Solis who link the bombing of Hiroshima with the birth of the 'quantum universe'—a new 'spiritual landscape' which heralds the Nietzschean death of God and the age of contingency:

The first public demonstration of nuclear power heralded the transition from a relativistic universe to a quantum universe. This view

is only beginning to become established in popular culture, as at the time of writing,

most schools have difficulty incorporating post-Newtonian physics into their curricula. To do so would challenge the orthodox view of the universe, which is an integral construct of the old Western paradigm. In the centuries before Hiroshima, science and religion were enmeshed. Although practitioners of either would have denied it, there was a tacit alliance. Most of pre-war science still accommodated the concept of a creator/god, adherence to which caused Einstein to balk at the last theoretical hurdle (Templum Nigri Solis, 1996: 206)

To conclude, like the alchemic crucible where polar opposites were reconciled, Pagan magickal cosmologies appear to provide a new cauldron for a new age. Science needs its *other*. To extend the magickal metaphor, this new cauldron is a postmodern melting pot, or heterotopia, where the divisions between magick, ancient truth and modern science are being healed bringing with it the potential of seeing the cosmos in new, transformative ways.

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## Post-Modernism and Witchcraft Histories

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by David Waldron

University of Ballarat

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### ABSTRACT

*The Neopagan movement relies extensively on representations of the past for historical, cultural and ideological legitimacy. Of particular importance in these histories is the reclaiming or re-creation of pre-Christian pagan societies, the witchhunting crazes of the early modern period, and the reinterpretation of the rise of modernity and industrialism. The means by which these histories are constructed and the changes in the processes by which historical representations are formed are indicative of broader changes in the configuration of historical legitimacy in western culture.*

*This paper will examine how these histories are constructed and the nature of their relationship with contemporary ideological and cultural configurations. Of particular importance is the perceived shift in Neopagan witchcraft histories from traditional historiography to post-modern historiography in the early 80s. This paper will investigate the location of these historical discourses within the framework of western modernity and in debates over the legitimacy of historical claims between different elements within the Neopagan movement.*

Neopaganism is a contemporary eclectic religion, with strong counter-cultural elements. In defining a sense of cultural and social identity the Neopagan movement draws upon a wide variety of historical representations. Of these the most significant are representations of

ancient pagan societies and the early modern European witchhunting crazes. Many, if not most, of these historical representations are based on eclectic, invented and created histories. It is this eclecticism in defining Neopagan histories and a sense of historico-cultural identity that makes Neopaganism a particularly interesting area of study. It is a religion that defines and creates history through a wide range of symbolic appropriations and reinventions originating in areas as diverse as traditional historiography, popular culture, conservative Christian stereotypes, positivist caricatures of pre-industrialist society, romantic literature and art, and the colonial experience.

The sign of the witch is itself derived from a particular conceptualization of western history and is appropriated specifically because of its socio-cultural impact in western society. The sign of the witch is everywhere in our culture. It is represented in mass media stereotypes of satanic cults. It is apparent in cinematic presentation through popular films like "The Wizard of Oz", "The Craft" and Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs". In the writings of historian Norman Cohn and playwright Arthur Miller the witch is taken as a symbolic representation of the pointless and irrational persecution of minorities and social dissidents. Other writers have utilized the persecution of the witch and the figure of the witch itself as an example of the perils of ignorance and superstition set in stark relief against the freedom granted by enlightenment humanism.

The Neopagan movement takes these images of mainstream culture and recreates them as symbolic constructions which illustrate the weaknesses of the industrial, the patriarchal and the positivist and sets them against the authenticity and capacity for human expression revealed in the primitive, the feminine, the rustic and the rural. The

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... the conclusions reached by historians examining the witchcraft beliefs of the early modern period, increasingly placed the empirical veracity of the historical claims of the Neopagan movement under threat.

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Neopagan recreation of history posits continuity, authenticity and cultural autonomy against the repressive and destructive aspects of western modernity, caricatured as universalist reason. Neopagan histories invert the stereo-types, caricatures and symbolic representations of the witch, the feminine and nature in enlightenment narratives and presents them as an alternative vision of a possible social, cultural and spiritual order in western society.

In this paper I would like to examine the methods by which history is understood and interpreted within the Neopagan movement. In particular I would like to focus on the different kinds of historiographical positions utilized by different aspects of the Neopagan movement and how these constructions of Neopagan identity have evolved to deal with changes in western culture and society. I would also like to examine how the differing attitudes towards historical representation are indicative of broader trends in western culture.

Firstly, I have divided up the myriad different forms of Neopaganism into four general areas illustrating different kinds of cultural and ideological construction and the general trends towards representations of history. In a movement as diverse and frag-

mented as Neopaganism there is, by necessity, a certain degree of overlap between these four areas. However the categories I have selected are representative of four general trends towards historical representation in the Neopagan movement. These are: ANTIQUARIAN: Those groups who rely on traditional historiography and empirical veracity in defining their historical legitimacy and socio-cultural identity. Also included in this grouping are the various national and ethnic groups such as

Odinist, Celtic or Creole based practitioners who utilize the re-creation of magical ritual as a means of defining a national cultural identity in the confines of traditional historiography.

TRADITIONALIST: The groups derived from the ritual magic intensive witchcraft such as Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca. These groups tend to be more concerned with the precision of ritual activity and magical practice than the veracity of their historical claims. Some people have used the term "Traditionalist" to describe those claiming to have a hereditary or pre-industrial background to their witchcraft beliefs. I am using the term here to specifically refer to those hierarchical groups that are descended from ritual magic practices in 19th century Europe.

NEW AGE/ELECTIC: These groups are heavily reliant on the work of Carl Jung and his theory of the collective unconscious. New Age/Eclectic Neopagans are particularly concerned with the psychological impact and universality of symbols. They posit the psychic truth of symbolic representations manifested in history and other cultures as the ultimate source of authenticity in ritual opposed to the empirical veracity of truth claims.

ECO-FEMINIST: Those groups that are par-

ticularly concerned with the plight of women and utilize the symbol of the witch as an ultimate expression of the persecution of women within patriarchal culture and society. The fundamental historical concern here is the ability of historical representations to empower women as opposed to arguments over historical validity.

While these four areas of witchcraft history have different structures of legitimating historical interpretation and ideological/cultural perspectives, there are several elements which link them together. The first is a belief that the application of the enlightenment and industrialization represent a distancing of humanity from its more authentic and natural existence uncorrupted by the influence of western civilization. Secondly, the Neopagan movement is generally unanimous in the belief that western Christianity is guilty of suppressing much of what is free, creative and autonomous in human nature in support of a static oppressive patriarchal system of morality and social control. Thirdly, the witchhunting crazes of the early modern period are taken as representative of a conscious attempt to oppress and destroy the vestiges of pre-Christian nature religions. And finally, the reclaiming and re-creating of the pre-Christian agrarian past is perceived as the best way for contemporary society to evolve in such a way as to transcend the ills caused by the oppressive aspects of Christianity, the enlightenment and western modernity.

Until recently, Neopagan histories were solidly based on an appropriation of the romanticist histories of Margaret Murray and 19th century historians and folklorists such as Jules Michelet and Jakob Grimm. These writers perceived the witch persecutions of the early modern period to be representative of a

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**The rise of post-modernism also influenced the interpretation of history in the Neopagan movement. ...Instead of arguing the veracity of historical interpretations empirically, Neopagans could deconstruct and re-read historical narratives on the basis of their underlying assumptions.**

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wide spread and endemic oppression of the peasantry and a pan-European pagan witch cult by the aristocracy and early modern church.<sup>1</sup> The underlying ideology surrounding this interpretation of witchhunting crazes of the early modern period has been considerably developed in popular culture and has enjoyed broad popularity in the general public, despite the recent contradictory findings in academic histories. However, the method of defining the historical legitimacy of these histories has undergone radical change.

The 1980s saw a major transformation in the historical study of witchcraft that in turn led to major shifts in the construction of historical legitimacy within the Neopagan movement. Prior to the mid 1980s, Anglophone witchcraft histories were predominantly concerned with universalist arguments about magic and the primitive, the nature of mass persecution, the dangers of superstition compared to scientific rationality among other universalist perspectives. In addition, Anglophone histories of witchcraft were heavily influenced by a fixation upon the British and American experience of witchhunts with only

a peripheral interest in the witchhunting crazes and witchcraft beliefs of continental Europe. During the 1980s a series of conferences were held in Paris and Schwelzig by a collection of continental witchcraft historians. These historians were examining the history of witchcraft from a local history rather than a universalist anthropological or psychological perspective. What was perhaps the most significant outcome of their research was the finding that popular beliefs of witchcraft and the nature of the early modern witchhunting crazes arose out of an immensely varied and diverse period of history. The social class, gender and cultural background of those persecuted varied immensely in location and time. Furthermore, it was found that the nature of the charges laid against those accused of witchcraft and the socio-cultural identity of those charged varied immensely from place to place and over time. Similarly, there was an apparent difference between learned doctrine of witchcraft practices, as represented by the *Malleus Maleficarum* and the *Pax Formica* to what was believed and manifested in witchcraft accusations at the local level in European society.<sup>2</sup>

Aside from revolutionizing and granting renewed credibility to the study of witchcraft as a historical discipline the conclusions reached by historians examining the witchcraft beliefs of the early modern period, increasingly placed the empirical veracity of the historical claims of the Neopagan movement under threat. Furthermore, the claims of several of the primary leaders of the Neopagan movement, most notably Gerald Gardner, also came under question. It was found that much of the material he claimed originated with a secret coven of witches in rural England was in fact derived from his interpretations of Hindu manuscripts, the ritual magic of Aleister Crowley and other 19th

century occultists.<sup>3</sup> It became increasingly doubtful whether he had actually met with any surviving witches at all. Even Gardner's closest associates, such as Doreen Valiente and Ray Buckland, began to claim that whilst they believed the core of his ideas came from an actual experience with a surviving cult of witches, much of his writings were an attempt to fill the gaps in his experience with his own knowledge of ritual magic obtained through anthropological and ritual magic background.<sup>4</sup> These critiques were also supported by the fact that once local empirical studies of witchcraft beliefs and practices came to be generally recognized in the Anglophone world, the representation of witchcraft described by the Neopagan movement and romanticist historians like Margaret Murray and Jules Michelet bore very little resemblance to that suggested by the empirical data available.<sup>5</sup>

There were a wide variety of responses to the increased pressure placed on Neopagan representations of history. Some simply changed their representations of witchcraft history to suit new historical findings or looked to the historical data available on their own indigenous folklore and ritual. Others took a more confrontational approach typified by Mary Daly's description of critiques against eco-feminist interpretations of witchcraft being equivalent to Nazi book burnings.<sup>6</sup> However, many Neopagan writers, notably Starhawk and Margot Adler, took an alternative approach, relying on Carl Jung's concept of the collective unconscious, and described witchcraft history as representative of universal psychic truths independent of empirical history. In this light what was important in witchcraft histories was not the empirical veracity of historical claims but the psychological impact of images like the witch, the crone, and the witch persecutions of the early modern era.<sup>7</sup>



This particular aspect of eco-feminist Neopaganism is illustrated by Margot Adler's claim that "Goddess worship has an ancient universality about it but it appeared in different places in different times." As she states, "The Old religion may not have existed geographically or historically but existed in the Jungian sense that people are tapping into a common source." According to Adler this perspective of history is very common throughout the Neopagan movement. In a series of interviews she found that many Neopagans focused on the symbolic experience as an indicator of past legitimacy illustrated by statements like "When you are doing a ritual and you suddenly get the feeling that you are experiencing something generations of your forebears experienced it is probably true." Other Neopagans she interviewed claimed, "It doesn't matter whether the grandmother was a physical reality or a figment of our imagination. One is subjective the other objective but we experience both." What these statements indicate is that the fundamental issue of truth and legitimacy in many Neopagan truth claims is based upon symbolic impact, popular appeal and experiential reality in ritual. These psychological truths were perceived as existing in their own right independently of issues relating to empirical veracity.<sup>8</sup>

The rise of post-modernism also influenced the interpretation of history in the Neopagan movement. For the first time an academically credible means of interpreting history and challenging empirical studies of witchcraft history became possible. Instead of arguing the veracity of historical interpretations empirically, Neopagans could deconstruct and re-read historical narratives on the basis of their underlying assumptions. Jim Wafer describes this shift in Neopaganism as a movement from foundationalism to post-modernism, borrowing from Lyotard's

description of post-modernism as "A recognition of the futility of seeking an absolute foundation for knowledge."<sup>9</sup> This perspective is shared by Dianne Purkiss who postulates that "The entirety of modern witchcraft offers a unique opportunity to see a religion being made from readings and rereadings of texts and histories. No one person is in charge of the process, so modern witchcraft is not a unified set of beliefs. Every interpretation is subject to reinvention by others."<sup>10</sup>

The adoption of post-modernism by many sectors of the Neopagan movement became not only a means of rationalizing a particular conception of history, it also became a statement of ideological identity. The very fact that history was defined in accordance with alternative perspectives of historical legitimacy became a means of illustrating fundamental differences in the nature of Neopagan epistemology and cultural structure. This was placed in comparison to the linear empirical perspectives of enlightenment and traditional historiographical discourses of witchcraft history. This perspective is illustrated by Dianne Purkiss' comment that "Modern witches' histories of witchcraft present a much cleaner break with academic values than anything feminist historians have ever produced or wished to produce. Far more than Derrida or Foucault, popular history disregards the assumptions that make enlightenment history possible."<sup>11</sup>

However, despite this reliance on rather post-modern styled interpretations of historical veracity and a belief in the virtues of psychic and experiential truth over empirical and factual truth, the question of historical legitimacy and veracity is still an area of unresolved tension for many Neopagans. According to Dr Sian Reid of Charleton University, conflicts over legitimacy and authenticity of representations are rife within most sectors of the pagan community leading to broad areas of

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**The witch is a particularly  
unique figure in western  
symbolic construction ...  
a prominent symbol that  
stands astride the  
romantic/enlightenment divide  
of western modernity.**

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personal and politico-cultural conflict within the sub-culture. Of particular importance in these conflicts are ideals of what *is* an authentic witchcraft tradition and practice, and a fear that one particular pagan community within the subculture is attempting to hegemonically dominate another in creating witchcraft representations.<sup>12</sup>

This tension tends to belie claims that Neopaganism has shifted from its dependence on a sense of historical authenticity to that of a post-modern re-reading of historical narrative as a basis of legitimating its truth claims. In addition, despite claims to the contrary, the popular histories developed within the Neopagan movement do not bypass the tendency to create meta-narratives. To the contrary, the development of post-modern histories within the Neopagan movement are *intrinsically* based in underlying meta-narratives and universalistic and symbolic interpretations of nature, the feminine, pre-industrial society and the significance of symbols in forming human identity and creative human expression. In this light, it is perhaps better to describe Neopaganism as a romantic rather than a post-modern movement.

The primary ideological correlation, as I see it, between contemporary Neopaganism and romanticism, is the belief that it is necessary to gaze inwards and to appropriate

images from the past to find forms of identity and symbols of meaning perceived as natural, culturally authentic and in opposition to the forces of the enlightenment and industrialism. Conversely, this also involves a belief in the veracity of symbols, images and feelings over empirical experience and logic. Like much of western romantic literature, Neopaganism is fundamentally dominated by a reification of beliefs and images. Quintessentially modern ideological and symbolic

socio-cultural formations are reinforced by interpretations of a past that is dogmatically protected as a particular symbolic construction that is defined as authentic. Similarly, Neopaganism and romanticism both share a focus on the new and the modern. Whilst Neopaganism and romanticism gaze into representations of the past for symbols of authenticity and meaning, they are far more than simply a reaction of traditionalism against industrialization and the objectification of society. What they represent is a search for cultural authenticity and creative autonomy and a redefinition of the modern as a search for that which is creative, authentic and autonomous.<sup>13</sup>

Romanticism is very much a modernist movement. It is fundamentally concerned with the transformation, development and progress of the human subject. Western modernity is marked by concepts of "the new", progress, science, industrialism and the transformation of the human subject in the social and physical environment. However, this force for social, economic and political development and transformation is also marked by an integrated episteme of cultural and aesthetic transformation. It is through this integrated episteme that the new social formations, technological developments and the changing human relationship with nature



is understood and interpreted. This perspective is illustrated by Thomas Hansen's statement that:

The romanticist episteme marks in a certain way the final breakthrough of modernity as a cultural system, as it for the first time posits *originality* and notions of *autonomy* and *self grounding* of human beings, cultures and social forms as marks of the highest cultural and political value. If modernity as a cultural system of secularized thought is fundamentally characterized by its anthropocentrism and a celebration of a break with the past, the romanticist celebration of human will, autonomy, of an emerging human spirit, the mystique of the artistic self creation and individual genius marks the consummation of that cultural system.<sup>14</sup>

The significance of Neopagan histories becomes increasingly important when perceived as a romanticist reinterpretation of a prominent symbol in western culture. The witch is a particularly unique figure in western symbolic construction as it is a prominent symbol that stands astride the romantic/enlightenment divide of western modernity. For some sectors of society the witch represents superstition, evil, irrationality and the primitive, *ie*, that which limits the potential for human progress and autonomy from nature. To others, the witch represents beauty, nature, freedom and cultural autonomy from the corrupting and limiting influences of scientific rationalism, commodification and industrialization. In this context, the Neopagan movement's construction of the witch and of witchcraft is indicative of a broader trend of romantic thought in western society and the means by which it appropriates images and symbols. If we examine Neopaganism as a romantic movement located within the sphere of western modernity it ceases to be simply a reactionary counter-cultural movement and

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**If we examine Neopaganism as a romantic movement located within the sphere of western modernity it ceases to be simply a reactionary counter-cultural movement and becomes indicative of changes in the nature of western modernity.**

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becomes indicative of changes in the nature of western modernity. This is particularly the case when examining the means by which Neopaganism as a romantic movement appropriates symbols and defines cultural and historical identity.

Romanticism is inherently shaped and defined by its location in relation to the enlightenment and capitalist industrialism in western modernity. Similarly, the transcendent imagination, the central component of romantic thought as defined by Richard Kearney, does not occur in isolation from the economic, epistemological and social formations in which it develops.<sup>15</sup> The meaning, significance and identity of the social and cultural structures from which the romantic episteme defines social and cultural significance are fundamentally characterized by the dominant economic and socio-political structures from which these symbols are appropriated. Signs and symbols do not have any essential value but are always referent, even if only in relation to other abstracted signs. Furthermore, these structures of signs are given meaning by their place in relation to a complex infrastructure of other signs and cultural formations. The interpretive meaning of these structures are also historically contingent.

This is to say that these meanings are based on the social and cultural processes by which they are interpreted and they are defined within the context of historical process and cultural formations in which they have significance.

Given that romantic epistemes, and the cultural forms they appropriate, are the products of particular national, economic and political configurations it is not surprising that, as the structure of western modernity and its inter-relationship with capitalism has changed, so too has the romantic counter episteme. Romanticism is a quintessentially modern movement based in the continual process of reshaping cultural meaning in a social order dominated by capitalist industrialism and the commodification of social value in terms of both symbolic significance and in terms of labor and production. From this perspective, the shift from "Foundationalist" to "Post-modernist" in the Neopagan movement, as described by Jim Wafer and Dianne Purkiss, is not brought about by the realization of the "Futility of seeking an absolute foundation for knowledge".<sup>16</sup> Rather the shift from foundationalism to post-modernism in the Neopagan movement is perhaps more appropriately defined in terms of a shift in the nature of western modernity in the era of late capitalism and its corresponding structures of symbolic appropriation and discourses of cultural meaning within the romantic counter episteme.

In this context, Neopaganism and its relationship with historical representations are best described as an expression of the romantic episteme located within the sphere of western modernity. The cultural symbols it appropriates and the ideological basis of social and cultural identity are fundamentally defined by the overarching structure of western modernity in which it exists and is given meaning. What we are seeing in the shift from

foundationalism to post-modernism in Neopagan histories is representative of several issues. Firstly, it is representative of the inter-relationship between popular history and academic history. The two areas are often in conflict, particularly with regards to cultural signs of strong symbolic impact in western culture. The means by which this tension has been transformed over the course of recent history is indicative of broader trends of popular and academic historiography in western society. Secondly, the development of Neopagan histories is illustrative of how academic debates about the nature of historiographical validity and the interpretation of empirical evidence impact in popular representations of history. It is also representative of the means by which these ideological constructions of legitimacy in historical construction are utilized in defining symbolic cultural and social identity. Finally, the shifts in Neopagan historiographical method are also indicative of the inter-relationship between romantic and enlightenment epistemes in western culture. This is particularly significant in the era of late capitalism where the increasing commodification of cultural symbols has become a strong influence in the construction of popular history and the reabsorption of counter-cultural identities into mainstream society as consumable and purchasable symbols of identity.

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## Margaret Murray and the Rise of Wicca

by Juliette Wood  
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*This article is reprinted from 3rd Stone 34 (April-June 1999). 3rd Stone magazine is enthusiastically recommended to our readers, who are encouraged to visit its website at <www.thirdstone.demon.co.uk>.*

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One does not ordinarily associate a learned society with the emergence of a new system of belief. Thus it is all the more astonishing that a book published by an Egyptologist with an interest in folklore at the beginning of the 1920s should be the ultimate source for Wicca, the most influential movement in the revival of modern witchcraft.

Margaret Murray, the Egyptologist in question, is undoubtedly best known for her work on the history of witchcraft. Born in India, she trained as an Egyptologist after her return to Britain and worked at University College London where she was one of Flinders Petrie's most loyal students and supporters. Her work on witchcraft dates from the latter part of her long life. Although she had published a number of articles on the subject in various learned journals, her first book, *The Witch Cult in Western Europe*, only appeared in 1921. It did not really have an impact until it was reprinted in 1952 and later appeared in paperback in 1962. Murray claimed that witchcraft was actually 'an old religion'

based on the natural cycle of vegetation. The rituals of this religion were dominated by a horned hunting god and his consort, and the religion had been practised in Europe since the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods. According to Murray's book, the Christian Church persecuted the practitioners of the cult as witches. Nevertheless the cult survived and could still be found in certain folk practices associated with the changing seasons. She expanded this idea in subsequent articles and in two further books, namely *The God of the Witches* (1933) and *The Divine King* (1955). Her work was an important, perhaps the most important, influence on the rise of the modern Wicca movement in the 1950s, although many of its practitioners today are at pains to point out that their doctrines are not dependent on Murray.

Murray was president of the Folklore Society just before her death in the 1960s and had been an active member for some years previously. Many current members of the Society remember her fondly, and she was especially keen to encourage younger researchers, even those who disagreed with her ideas. Her ideas, however, have become something of an embarrassment to professional Folklorists, embodying as they do the somewhat reductionist assumptions associated with 19th century evolutionary theories which were even by Murray's time outdated in relation to academic folklore studies. Yet even today, this quaint, 19th century approach which sees 'survivals' in every custom and uses 'folk memory' to justify tenuous links between past and current practices, characterises the popular image of what folklore is.

The topic of Murray and her relation to folklore studies was reopened recently by another president of the Society who emphasised Murray's very selective use of

material in creating her appealingly romantic, although historically untenable, 'old religion'. Yet even at its first appearance, there was some scholarly dismay at Murray's now famous thesis that witchcraft originated as an ancient fertility cult. Several historians and anthropologists noted that she gave undue weight to this hypothesis and failed to consider that witchcraft might be described within the wider context of sympathetic magic with the fertility elements as a secondary feature.

While the somewhat racy and anti-religious content of *The Witch Cult* caused controversy at the time, it was greeted enthusiastically by the editors of *The Occult Review*. The aspect of Murray's work which appealed particularly to the occult movement was her conviction that the witch cult was a 'secret tradition' which survived despite attempts to suppress it. This kind of thinking was very popular among occultists at the period, and *The Occult Review* carried a number of articles throughout the 20s and 30s on so-called 'secret traditions'. The journal undoubtedly provided a degree of popularisation for Murray's work, since the original publication sold rather slowly. However the republication of her book in 1952 occurred in an entirely different climate. By that time the witchcraft laws had been repealed and Murray's work had already had an

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influence on what was to become the modern Neopagan movement led by another member of the Folklore Society, Dr Gerald Gardner. In 1954 Murray wrote a preface to his book, and there is even a suggestion that she herself was a witch, a claim she vigorously denied in a letter to a colleague.

However Murray never made any secret of her antagonism to organised religion. In this and all subsequent books on witchcraft she sympathised with the practitioners of this ancient fertility cult whom she felt were victims of bigotry. It is all

too easy to let this kind of controversy get out of proportion. Modern scholars have objected to Murray's ideas on academic, not religious or sexual grounds. A fundamental problem with Murray's work is her exclusive focus on witchcraft as an ancient fertility cult and her tendency to generalise wildly on the basis of very slender evidence. The consensus today, with the notable exception of some Neopagan writers, is that this picture of a benign nature/fertility cult is a construct rather than a record of history. This suggestion that the study of witchcraft might be more fruitfully linked to sympathetic magic rather than to fertility cults has been echoed in recent reassessments of her work. Attitudes range from Norman Cohn's critique which rejected Murray's evidence totally, to the more sympathetic stance of Carlo Ginsberg whose

analysis of a local group of 'witch hunters' led him to see some continuity of early religious forms. However Ginsberg does not propose anything approaching the pan-European cult which Murray advocated.

Murray's autobiography, written as she approached her hundredth birthday, reveals a mind clear and sharp. She rejected utterly the suggestion that she was a witch herself. What then were the elements which constitute her theories about the nature and origins of witchcraft?

Murray's own ideas about the origin of witchcraft were formed in the decades before 1921 when her first book was published. She had lectured on, or published, substantial portions of her first book in *Folklore* and the anthropological journal, *Man*, before then and had covered key themes, such as the number thirteen, child sacrifice, animal transformation, the devil's mark, the witch coven and the familiar, which figure prominently in her subsequent books. The most obvious source for her approach lies in the theories of cultural evolution so important to 19th and early 20th century thinking, especially in the newly developing social sciences. Cultural evolution is much talked about among scholars who study the history of ideas, and the Folklore Society was an important arena for discussion among leading cultural scholars such as Edward Tylor and Andrew Lang. However 'cultural evolution' was never a monolithic theory, and there were several strands, each with their supporters and detractors. The early issues of the new journal, *Folklore*, and the venerable journal, *The Atheneum*, played host to several lively debates on whether characteristics of 'primitive culture' were universal, and stemmed from a psychic unity among mankind, or whether diffusion played some role in this model.

Murray's theory incorporated elements from both sides of this argument, and a great deal else besides. Basic to Murray's thinking was the idea of the 'divine king'. Her early studies in Egyptian archaeology indicate that Murray was much influenced by Frazer's concept of the dying god. The theory is centred on Frazer's reading of classical texts in which he identified a number of metaphors having to do with the death and resurrection of divine and semi-divine figures which seemed linked to the cycle of the seasons. These he interpreted in terms of an all-embracing primitive ritual aimed at ensuring the continuance of fertility which, through the actions of significant individuals such as priests, kings and eventually their substitutes, propitiated certain natural forces. Frazer's rationalist stance saw primitive man as a kind of proto-rationalist who, lacking an understanding of science, attempted to control the forces of nature by means of rituals in which sympathetic magic functioned as a kind of substitute for scientific principles of cause and effect. Murray believed Frazer to be antagonistic to her ideas and thought he was behind a negative review in *The Scotsman* when her book first appeared, but their methods had much in common. Both proceeded from the study of documents, in Frazer's case classical texts, in Murray's the records of medieval and early modern witchcraft. Significant elements from these documents were selected out and projected backward in time onto the 'mind' of primitive man. Both shared a mistrust of organised religion. However, Frazer eventually included the Christian resurrection story among his examples of the dying god myth, while Murray maintained a distinction between her witch-cult and Christianity.

Another important influence on Murray's thinking was her great friend and

colleague in the Folklore Society, the religious historian E.O. James, editor of *Folklore* from 1932-58. His theories about the mother goddess use the same kinds of arguments as Murray, and his book on *The Cult of the Mother Goddess* is in many ways a companion piece to hers in its use of a Frazerian model moderated by myth-ritual assumptions. James' attitude to the relation between myth and ritual was closer to a group of Cambridge-based classicists usually referred to as the 'Myth-ritual School'. For James, as for Frazer, ritual was concerned with the promotion of social fertility which, in the mind of primitive man, could directly affect the operation of nature. Like Frazer, James' theories developed from reading texts. However, for scholars associated with the myth-ritual school, these texts included not just classical ones, but those from the ancient Near East. In effect, although divine kingship and renewing rituals based on the agricultural cycles still remained central, the myth-ritual approach was essentially a diffusionist position centring on the cultures of the eastern Mediterranean. This was a significant refinement of other cultural evolution theories, notably those of Frazer and Tylor who assumed a psychic unity in mankind and a universal process of culture evolution. Scholars who adopted the myth-ritual approach used terms such as 'adaptation', 'disintegration' and 'degradation'. As a result, the idea of cultural evolution became less one directional and less progressive, while the idea of a primary pattern became stronger. Myth and ritual however remained the product of the needs of an agricultural world, and the 'pattern' involved elements of dying god, divine marriage and the rebirth of vegetation re-enacted in a great annual festival. Murray's theories apparently presented substantive evidence for this. Here was an

actual (pre)historical context—Neolithic religion in Europe—whose rituals were dependent on the agricultural seasons and centred around dying and resurrection linked to the vegetative cycle.

The survival of these rituals, misunderstood and persecuted as witchcraft, presented a dramatic and profound change to the concept of cultural evolution. The Frazerian myth of the dying god and the myth/ritualist Near Eastern religion were always academic constructs. Murray's witch cult seemed to make them real and living.

While the idea of cultural evolution provided a theoretical context for Murray's work, there are a number of specific influences as well. The historian Ronald Hutton has recently pointed out similarities between Murray's characterisation of the witch cult and the concept of *la Vecchia religione* in Charles Leland's *Aradia: Gospel of the Witches*. Leland's somewhat dubious identification of a supposed witch cult in medieval Italy appeared in the 1890s. Theories about the survival of ancient civilisations were becoming increasing popular during the 19th century and the idea that earlier races survived in later culture under the guise of fairies or witches had been suggested by anthropologists and folklorists (such as Lawrence Gomme, A.R. Wright and David MacRitchie) working at the end of the last century. It is not always possible to say with certainty how much of this was 'in the air' at the time and how much was the direct result of Murray's reading.

Murray gave few hints in her autobiography about the sources of her work. She spent some time in Glastonbury in 1915 recuperating from an illness. Here she became interested in the Holy Grail and probably came across an article on the Dorset Ooser (a mask used in a seasonal celebration, see photograph). She stated

that a chance remark from someone whom she claimed not to recall that witches had their own religion sparked her interest in witchcraft. She began to work 'only from contemporary records' and 'had the sort of experience that sometimes comes to a researcher', namely that the Devil was a disguised man, not a demon. This 'startled, almost alarmed her' and indicated that witches were members of an old and primitive form of religion. Murray believed her witchcraft research, which she characterised as 'the interpretation of beliefs and ceremonies of certain ancient forms of religion', to be her most important work. Her assertion that she forgot who started her on this important endeavour is a little suspect for a woman who paid great attention to detail and had an excellent memory. The whole passage betrays the heightened dramatic tension of autobiographical discourse, and there are in fact a number of studies which anticipate Murray's ideas very closely indeed.

For example the great statistician and polymath, Professor Karl Pearson, was Professor of applied mathematics at University College and a colleague of Murray's. Pearson was interested in eugenics and social reform and this led him to speculate, as did so many fine minds of the day on the nature of society. His essay 'Woman as

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The fact that Murray was not the first to mention witchcraft as a survival of an earlier cultural practice does not really strengthen the argument that it is in reality an ancient religion.

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Witch: Evidence of Mother-right in the Customs of Mediaeval Witchcraft' appeared in 1897 and drew heavily on Erich Neumann's concept of 'mother-right' (i.e. matriarchy) and on the work of the French historian, Jules Michelet. Pearson's essay anticipates substantial themes which appear later in Murray. It treated the customs of medieval witchcraft as fossils of the 'old mother age' of prehistoric civilisation. Besides witchcraft, such fossils were to be found in the folklore of agri-

culture, spring and harvest festivals and peasant dances (all of which were of particular interest to Murray). Both witch gatherings and peasant ceremonies were relics of ancient rites. What Christianity repressed became witchcraft; what it tolerated became associated with seasonal folk festivals. The characteristic features of witch gatherings included a communal feast, a choral dance and a sacrifice under a sacred tree. Since inheritance during the period of 'mother-right' was through the female, it followed that the deities and the presiding spirit of witchcraft were undoubtedly female. Pearson suggested (following Michelet) that originally the male deity had been subservient to the female one. Later however, the male deity became prominent and eventually became the 'devil' of the witch trials. Pearson's attitude to Joan of Arc was also close to Michelet. Both suggested that she was a white witch or folk

healer. The figure of Joan is important in Murray's most extreme book on the witch cult, *The Divine King*.

At the centre of Murray's witch cult was a male deity. The Diana of the historical documents (and of Leland's *Aradia*) becomes a male deity called Dianus, (Janus Dionysius) by a philological slight of hand and, no doubt, also influenced by the literary cult of Pan popular in the Edwardian period. In literature Pan became a symbol of duality, of savage sexual release, of a life of wildness opposed to the strictures of civilisation. Nietzsche defined Pan

as primary emotion to challenge Apollonian authority. Here too Murray apparently provided anthropological validation for such a cult and created the possibility for joyous sensual worship sanctioned by ancient religion.

Other scholars also examined this idea of surviving religious cults. Jessie Weston, a noted Arthurian specialist, suggested that coded in the Grail narratives were records of secret societies and rites which had to be kept hidden from prevailing Christian orthodoxy and that these secret rituals were related to mystery religions that involved sacred kingship and sexual initiations of the type described in Frazer's *Golden Bough*. Although Murray never took up the occult angle, she was interested in the same

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No matter how sympathetically one wishes to look at this charmingly eclectic scholar, folklorists and historians will (quite rightly) continue to point out the mismatch between Murray's construct and what can be read into her sources.

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themes and images. In effect she turned the vegetation myth into a mystery religion which was not merely a fragmentary survival but a living entity. The implications of this were worked out by the modern Neopagan movement whose newly revived rituals were given authenticating force via Murray's theories.

The repeal of the witchcraft laws in the 1950s was a significant factor in Murray's popularity. She herself admitted that her second book *The God of the Witches* published in 1933 was a failure. However, in

1952 the re-published *Witchcult* sold much better. Gerald Gardner, another figure involved in the witchcraft revival who also had contacts with the Folklore Society and direct contact with Murray, also benefited from the repeal of the witchcraft act. Murray's work certainly appealed to the modern Wicca movement. The relationship between the two is somewhat contentious, with academic opinion suggesting Wicca's dependence on Murray as a basis for constructing both their rituals and their history. Wiccan writers, in particular Gardner, claimed their sources antedated Murray.

Vivianne Crowley, an important exponent of modern Wicca, acknowledges Murray's importance, but defends the prior existence of the ancient witch cult. Her

chapter on the Witch God follows Murray's argument and use of material, starting with the Palaeolithic cave drawing known as 'the shaman' in the cave of *Trois Freres*. Murray wrote an enthusiastic note about this figure and used the illustration in her books. In the first edition of Crowley's account, Murray is mentioned four times; twice in connection with the sacrifice of kings, once in connection with initiation rituals, and once in a discussion of the predecessors of the Wicca movement in which she is given pride of place.

In the revised and updated edition, Murray is less prominent. Crowley still acknowledges her contribution, but treats her as one among several early writers on the ancient cult. The revised edition stresses Murray's testimony to Gardner, omits reference to the self-sacrifice of English kings (presumably since this later phase of Murray's ideas on the subject were getting increasingly far-fetched), mentions Frazer only (i.e. omits the earlier reference to Murray) in connection with ritual king murders. Indeed Crowley has a point. Murray was not the first to suggest the existence of a vegetation cult and the links to witches, but she did take the elements and forge a new and exciting synthesis on which she wrote several readable books and published in her many talks. The fact that Murray was not the first to mention witchcraft as a survival of an earlier cultural practice does not really strengthen the argument that it is in reality an ancient religion.

Many historians of witchcraft suggest that it was Murray's failure to use the newly available records of witchcraft which account for some at least of the problems with her theories. Indeed, although she was insistent that she consulted the original documents, these were mostly already in print, and always mined for the informa-

tion which she expected to find there. Much the same can be said of the 'field-work' which supported her findings. Murray's correspondents were primarily other educated individuals, often connected with local parishes or councils. She asked specific questions to which she received specific answers which she took as further substantiation of her assumptions. This is painfully clear in the papers relating to Pook Fair. Some of the information actually contradicted her assumptions but she simply rearranged it to suit her ideas. One must add in her defence that this was typical procedure at the time. Collecting meant finding a 'good' informant who would have access to more popular sources. Murray was one of many educated men and women collecting material from servants, employees and rural workers within a parish context or encountered on a holiday to some 'exotic' locale within Great Britain.

In theoretical terms Murray's stance was a particular variant of the myth-ritual approach. She historicized the 'dying god' myth as a vegetation cult practised during a particular period of primitive European time. No matter how sympathetically one wishes to look at this charmingly eclectic scholar, folklorists and historians will (quite rightly) continue to point out the mismatch between Murray's construct and what can be read into her sources. However indebted it is to Murray's ideas, modern Wicca has certainly gone its own way. Broader based, more popular, more influenced by feminine principles and increasingly confident as a cult, it is less dependent on arguments about continuity from an ancient period and on the reality or lack thereof of Murray's thinking. Certainly the movement differs in many respects from the witchcraft cults of the 1960s and its current concerns are linked to ecological thinking and femi-

nism. The latter would certainly have pleased Murray as she was herself involved in the suffragette movement and her belief in the freedom of expression, especially for women, was a positive force in her own life.

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*This article is based on A Coven of Scholars: Margaret Murray and her Working Methods by Caroline Oates and Juliette Wood, the first offering in a new Archive Series published by the Folklore Society.*

#### READERS' FORUM

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fragments that may indicate the survival of archaic elements reflective of older traditions. Some of these older traditions may be key source material from which common folklore or folk magic may have evolved. They may also represent traditions retained within secret societies that were never fully assimilated by the culture in which they resided. One example can be found in the witchcraft trial of Elena Draga (Elena Crucichi) circa 1582. The records of this trial indicate that Elena employed a form of sympathetic healing magic that involved pouring the bath water of the afflicted into the ocean as the tide was going out. Elena stated that along with the tide the spell had to be timed with the phase of the moon, typically waiting until the third or fourth week. Historian Ruth Martin states that "it is one of the few entirely non-Christian aspects of healing still in existence by this period" (*Witchcraft and the Inquisition in Venice 1550-1650*, page 143). To dismiss it as an anomaly or to reject its relevance because it may not be reflective of popular Italian folk magic is to lose sight of a possible surviving element of a secret tradition residing in a subculture of Italian society. I often wonder if anyone is keeping track of the many discarded "anomalies," comparing them in their collective state to see what they might impart.

Magliocco states in her article that "The trouble with seeing Italian folk practices as 'survivals' of Neolithic or ancient Etruscan practices ... is that it ignores the many cultural changes which have swept Italy since the early Bronze Age, as well as folklore's extraordinary ability to adapt to cultural changes". While I certainly do not feel that all Italian folklore and folk magic customs and practices are rooted in pre-Christian religion or Neolithic culture, I do believe that many are. Yves Bonnefoy (*Roman and European Mythologies*) makes a compelling argument for the persistence of prehistoric and primitive con-

cepts surviving well into the Roman period in Italy. He addresses that particularly in Etruria "essential aspects of the way of life and organization characteristics of Iron Age cultures, as well as survivals of prehistoric ritual customs such as the celebration of cults in grottoes or rock sanctuaries" existed at the time of the Roman conquest. Bonnefoy states that "traces survived of primitive conceptions and practices so distant from the rationality of the classical world that they sometimes provoked the astonishment and incomprehension of writers in the Hellenistic and Roman periods". The most striking examples were the animistic conception of the supernatural, the omnipresence importance of divine signs and divination, and the belief in the material survival of the dead in their place of burial. According to Bonnefoy, so tenacious were these and other archaic elements that they persisted even into the Middle Ages where they plagued Church leaders. Bonnefoy writes: "Regarding this tenacity we have the testimony of the capitularies and the councils who up to the Carolingian period denounced superstitious practices and condemned as sacrilegious those who continued to light flares and fires near trees, rocks and fountains. Gregory the Great had already recognized the impossibility of extirpating the layers of beliefs rooted 'in such stubborn minds'; the only way to fight superstition was to assign the pagan vestiges to the new cult, to put pious images on trees, to carve crosses on menhirs, to place fountains under the invocation of the Virgin—in a word, to cover the ancient veneration with a cloak of orthodoxy" (*Roman and European Mythologies*. University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp 26, 202-203). So, in effect, Christianity helped to further preserve the archaic elements of Italic paganism and to pass them on with a Christian veneer.

The essential basic beliefs held by the Etruscans and Romans can still be found in popular Italian folk practices. Some examples are the belief in some type of indwelling spirit residing

in a natural object such as a stone, the divinatory nature of fava beans, and the power of red ribbons or strips of cloth. Granted, many now popular customs and practices were modified by cultural changes and would therefore not reflect the identical ancient Roman or Etruscan belief or practice. However I believe that there is a difference between how folk lore and folk magic evolves among common people compared to witch families. The average person does not consciously set out to maintain folk traditions. He or she simply participates in them, enjoys them, and may even pass them on to others by example or oral instruction. But the average individual is not typically concerned with any modifications that might be made. Therefore the custom or practice can easily change over time. The witch, by contrast, is typically devoted to retaining traditions intact. The hereditary witch is well aware that he or she is an outcast of society and is never assimilated into the culture in which he or she resides, not by personal desire nor by the desires of his or her neighbors. Instead the witch finds his or her identity in the things that separate him or her from the people and the culture that rejects the witch. Therefore the preservation of customs and practices (even those incongruent with popular culture) is essential to the hereditary witch because it the only safe and reliable world he or she knows. In the meantime the culture and the society in which he or she lives proceeds on without the witch in tow. Leland noted in *Etruscan Roman Remains* that the witches of Italy keep "an immense number of legends of their own, which have nothing in common with the nursery or popular tales such as are collected and published". It is only natural that esoteric traditions should differ from exoteric ones. Therefore it is not surprising that certain aspects of Italian witchcraft customs and practices may not appear in popular folklore and folk magic. However, enough folklore resides in modern Italian witchcraft to indicate its origin in Italy, and sufficient historical evi-

dence is available to support its endurance over the centuries.

With all due respect to Prof Magliocco's focus on popular Italian customs and practices, I believe that historical documents will serve us more effectively than will a comparison of folklore and folk magic practices. Is there any evidence that witchcraft was ever viewed as a religion in the past or that hereditary witches existed and were connected with an organized cult? Such appears to have been the opinion of Francesco Guazzo, an Italian Ambrosian monk who grew up in the region of Tuscany and came to be regarded as an authority on witchcraft. In his book *Compendium Maleficarum*, written at the request of the Archbishop of Milan (Frederico Borromeo) and published in 1608, Guazzo writes in great detail concerning the structure of the Italian witch cult (as well as other European systems). In chapters 12 and 18, Guazzo indicates that witches gather in circles drawn upon the ground with beech twigs, and work with spirits of earth, air, fire, and water among others. Guazzo notes in chapter ten that witches adhere to certain laws, one of which relates to countering the magic of other witches: "... for no one might thrust his sickle into another's harvest, according to the law which provides that he who binds must also unbind." In chapter 6, Guazzo states: "The infection of witchcraft is often spread through a sort of contagion to children by their fallen parents ... and it is one among many sure and certain proofs against those who are charged and accused of witchcraft, if it be found that their parents before them were guilty of this crime. There are daily examples of this inherited taint in children ...". Guazzo states that Italian witches "read from a black book during their religious rites" and he notes a religious demeanor among witches in chapter eleven, where he writes: "For witches observe various silences, measuring, vigils, mutterings, figures and fires, as if they were some expiatory religious rite". Guazzo's depiction of witchcraft seems to indi-

cate a rather structured and organized cult, and is consistent with accounts from Italian witch trial transcripts dating from 1310-1647. Folklorist Lady Vere de Vere also describes a structured witch cult in an article she wrote in 1894: "... the community of Italian witches is regulated by laws, traditions, and customs of the most secret kind, possessing special recipes for sorcery" (*La Rivista di Rome* June 1894). Folklorist J.B. Andrews later added: "The Neapolitans have an occult religion and government in witchcraft, and the camorra; some apply to them to obtain what official organizations cannot or will not do. As occasionally happens in similar cases, the Camorra fears and yields to the witches, the temporal to the spiritual" (*Folk-Lore*, Transactions of the Folk-Lore Society, March 1897).

Prof Magliocco expressed extreme doubt in her article that secret societies can remain secret. She cites the Mafia as an example of one that failed to remain secret. However, the Mafia drew a great of attention to itself through its criminal activity and the use of violence and murder. The dealings of the Mafia clearly could not go unnoticed. That some secret societies have been exposed does not mean that all must meet the same fate in due course of time. Magliocco stated in her article that "the existence of an Italian witch cult among Italian-Americans" is "extremely unlikely". Leland noted that Maddalena (his witch informant) was immigrating to America in 1899. It seems extremely unlikely that she would be the only travelling witch in the entire history of the Italian immigration to America. I see no reason for any children or grandchildren she may have had, to not preserve family traditions passed to them simply because of Italian-American culture. Perhaps in the final analysis we may have to consider that the Italian witch cult may simply be as those who actually practice it claim it to be.

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## Book Review: THE EARLY GREEK CONCEPT OF THE SOUL

by Jan Bremmer  
Princeton UP, 1983. xii + 154. pp.  
Two Appendices. Index. Selected Bibliography.  
ISBN 0-691-03131-2.

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While at first glance this study may not seem germane to modern Hellenic polytheists, those particularly interested in reconstructing this ancient religion should find it of particular interest, as Bremmer notes that the ancient Hellenes viewed both the soul (*psyche*) and human psychological makeup entirely differently than we, here in the West, do today. The study is divided into two parts. The first examines the souls of the living—the free soul, the ego souls, and soul animals. The second part examines the conceptions of the souls of the dead. Bremmer includes two appendices, one on the soul of plants and animals, the other on the wandering soul in Western folk tradition.

In sum, the Hellenes, as first enunciated in Homer, conceived of four separate "souls"—"a free soul, corresponding with *psyche*, and body souls, corresponding with *thymos*, *nous*, and *menos*" (p. 13), a distinction which is common to many pre-modern peoples, including the Anglo-Saxons. The free soul, or *psyche*, is so integral to the human being that without it one cannot survive. For the most part,

the Hellenes believed that the *psyche* rarely manifested itself, but would usually flee the body at a time of crisis, causing immediate collapse—a swoon or faint, if it returned; or death, if it did not. However, the *psyche* is not the *aion*, or "life-stuff" (which Bremmer does not adequately or clearly define); nonetheless, when the *psyche* leaves the body and does not return, the body dies. Despite several assertions that the free soul has a non-physical mode of existence in dreams, faints, and various forms of unconsciousness including the trance, Bremmer notes that, as in death, the use of *psyche* in Homer does not support this conception. The Homeric *psyche*, Bremmer contends, is a transitional concept, between the archaic "breath-soul", which wanders away when the body is passive, to a post-Homeric "unitary-soul"—*ie*, both the free soul as the soul of the dead, and the breath soul which wanders away during various forms of unconsciousness. This concept of the wandering free soul persisted for much of the Hellenic Archaic age, as seen in a number of legends related by Pindar, Hippocrates, and Xenophon, including bilocation, not unlike the New Testament stories of the raising of Lazarus or Jesus' appearance to the two disciples travelling on the road to Emmaus.

The ego soul (usually held to represent living consciousness), Bremmer states, most

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frequently occurs in Homer as the *thymos*. The latter is the opposite of the *psyche*; *ie*, it is only active when the body is awake. It is also the source of all emotions, and the force that urges people to act. Thought to reside primarily in the chest (and in the *phrenes*—the lungs or diaphragm), it normally stays in its place and does not wander about—when the body is passive, it does not leave the body, but just shuts down. Another aspect of the ego soul was known to the Hellenes as the *nous*—the mind, or “an act of mind, a thought or a purpose.” Though always found in the chest, it is not a material thing—*ie*, it cannot be struck, pierced, or blown out like the *psyche* or *thymos*. Finally, there is the *menos*—the momentary impulse to act, only rarely controllable by the individual, such as the “battle fury” of warriors.

Regarding the dead, Bremmer notes the belief that they “moved and spoke like the living and that the soul of the dead could not move but instead flitted and squeaked” (p. 73). Death occurred when the *psyche* left the body and failed to return. The *nous*, though, is never mentioned in connection with death, though the *thymos* and *menos*, as the *psyche*, flit away. This meant, for the Hellenes, that funeral rites were not simply a means for disposal of the body, but of performing various rites intended to aid the soul in its passage from the world of the living to the world of the dead. Without these rites, the soul could not pass on—thus the emphasis on recovery of bodies for burial, or, as an added punishment, a refusal of burial for those condemned and executed.

Bremmer contends that the ancient Hellenes conceived of their personalities, and their motivational forces, as structured entirely different than the way we, in the post-Freudian West, do today. Only in Classical Athens, in the 5th century BCE does the concept arise that humans can determine

their own courses of action—this perhaps may be a consequence of the growth of literacy and political consciousness, as once notably stated by Jack Goody and Ian Watt in their pioneering study “The Consequences of Literacy” (*Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5 (1962-63): 304-345). For all those interested in this subject, in the funerary rites of the ancient Hellenes, or with shamanistic practices, this study should prove richly rewarding.

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