

to the scientific revolution are no longer widely accepted, her scholarship as well as the debate that ensued helped to show the importance of esotericism as one important influence on modernity. The popularity and spread of Masonic lodges in the eighteenth century and beyond suggests an even wider sphere of influence for esoteric ideas and practices and a means by which that influence was transmitted. Bogdan's work hints at that wider influence and begins to detail the mechanisms of transmission in these rituals and the groups that formed around them. It also exposes real early modern roots for contemporary Pagan movements. Bogdan's work leaves this reader eager for more work along these lines.

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Paul Reid-Bowen, *Goddess As Nature: Towards a Philosophical Thealogy* (Burlington, Vt. : Ashgate, 2007), 208 pp., \$99.95 (cloth), \$89.96 (online).

In recent years, those who have been calling for extended theological investigation in Pagan Studies have been answered with a flurry of scholarly texts. Aiming at various aspects of Goddess and polytheist religions, Carol Christ, Michael York, Jordan Paper, Anna Primavesi and John Michael Greer have all contributed a great deal to this area of religious development. Paul Reid-Bowen's *Goddess As Nature* is a work of second-generation scholarship that seeks to systematize much of the thought of earlier Goddess theologians. Reid-Bowen, a doctoral protégé of influential Goddess theologian Melissa Raphael and the late Christian feminist theologian Grace Jantzen, reaches back to explore Goddess scholarship of the late 1970s and 1980s. While he defines his task as demonstrating and defending the need for systemic precision in Goddess thealogy, he also defends theological poetics from what he sees as misguided criticisms by secular feminists and others. This aspect of Pagan studies is already highly politicized, with some critical scholars either dismissing religious Paganism or summoning others to this task for fear of being dismissed as scholars of an illegitimate religious option.

In his introduction, Reid-Bowen frames his work in ambitious Kantian terms by suggesting that *Goddess as Nature* forms a "prolegomena" for future Goddess theologies. While perhaps a bit ambitious, this is an appropriate characterization of the work. Bowen, who previously edited the volume *Themes and Issues In Hinduism*, (Cassell, 1998) stands out as a major contributor to Goddess theological discourse, charting sets of questions and relationships of which future scholars must take note.

Bowen's work takes the form of a carefully built edifice, arguing that despite a well-intentioned suspicion of metaphysics, Goddess religionists have nonetheless implicitly constructed a set of evocative mythopoeics. After the obligatory nod to reflexivity in scholarship, Reid-Bowen draws on the work of Sallie McFague and Gordon Kaufman to analyze theological models of Goddess devotion. A sympathetic close reading of Goddess sources leads Reid-Bowen to argue for a process pantheism based on the ideas of "the Great Goddess," "Goddess as Mother," and the "Triple Goddess," all of which he sees as making significant contributions to the theological ecology of Goddess discourse. What critics, secular or otherwise, fail to see is that Goddess theological modeling does not follow monotheistic guidelines, but rather pantheistic levels of ordering and carnal (i.e. embodied) forms of knowledge production, so that most criticisms of Goddess theology are essentially misguided.

As a "prolegomena," *Goddess As Nature* is at its most effective when it maps territorial connections between popular Goddess theologians (such as Monica Sjoo, Starhawk, Donna Wilshire, and Rachel Pollack) and the rather insular academic discourses of professional theology, often wrongly assumed by outsiders to be mere Christian or masculinist dogmatism. Reid-Bowen refers to this activity as "drawing together" existing proposed religious models of a pantheistic Goddess so as demonstrate the intellectual coherence and consistency of this kind of theology. Along the way, Reid-Bowen demonstrates a clear command of various theological literatures as well as advanced concepts in contemporary philosophy of religion and feminist discourse.

Moreover, Reid-Bowen seeks to accelerate the discussion between religion and science via the role of both Gaian thought (represented by Lynn Margulis, Elizabeth Sahtouris, and James Lovelock) and chaos theory as explored in separate chapters. While suspicious of mechanistic "scientism," Reid-Bowen sees a great role for Goddess theology to incorporate and in turn influence the relationship between religion and science. Most appropriately, *Goddess As Nature* ends as many other works in contemporary theology begin. A reflexive theology carries with it the responsibility and space for theological anthropology. The role of evil in Goddess ontology is discussed, as well as a celebration of both mortal finitude and "being-towards-birth." Reproduction is encouraged because the Goddess values diversity, and sexuality outside reproduction is also encouraged because it promotes relational mutuality for its own sake, another Goddess value.

Finally, *Goddess As Nature* is careful as a whole to stand outside any particular single theological or philosophical tradition, critiquing and challenging Goddess theologians, Heideggerian language, and various

other points of reference. Provocatively, Reid-Bowen argues for a significant compatibility and symbiotic mutualism between Goddess theology and the “cyborg feminism” of Donna Haraway. Nor does he shy away from tackling accusations of “gender essentialism” commonly levied against Goddess advocates. For Reid-Bowen, theology is an “imaginative construct,” not as fantasy, but rather as a reflexive and pluralistic journey towards articulating divinity and its roles. This is a challenging and successful book, and should be read carefully both by those that claim Pagan theologizing does not exist, and by those who would feel threatened by the professionalizing of this subject matter.

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