

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.

CARMELLA HUGGINS WRITES:

Dear Pomegranate Readers,

I was greatly impressed by Professor Salomonsen's recent article [*Pom* 8, Spring '99] on the difficulties facing those conducting research in 'Modern Magical Communities'. The efforts she went to, as well as the thoughtful insights she arrived at, are a credit not only to her own wit and character, but also to the way the scholarly process is supposed to work, IMHO, and often does.

Although Salomonsen's article mainly addresses the methodological problems she encountered, my attention was drawn to the issue she raises in her introductory remarks: the essentially masculine nature of the ritual symbolism in use, not only by Reclaiming, but throughout much of the modern Pagan community. Her closing comments on the subject were welcome and informative, and if there's anything more she has to say on this subject—something that may have found its way into her thesis, for example—I, for one, would be most interested to see it.

For several years now, I have heard and read others, both inside and outside of the magical community, express similar opinions: not only is Neopagan Witchcraft in

general, and feminist Witchcraft in particular, carrying what Salomonsen refers to as "the heavy patriarchal burden of romantic gender essentialism", for the most part we are also largely "only replacing one patriarchal tradition (Judeo-Christian religion) with another (Western occultism)". But if this is true, how can it be, as Salomonsen's respondent asks, that feminist Witchcraft continues to provide so much enrichment and empowerment to so many?

The answer to this question may lie in a more careful consideration of what greater access to 'enrichment and empowerment' actually implies. Here's a quote on the subject from Sukie Colgrave, the British Jungian writer:

Instead of urging a new and wider definition of thinking and feeling to include both the masculine and feminine principles, [American feminists] have largely restricted their demands to securing equal rights to develop the masculine thinking and feeling sides of their nature ... By doing this, women may win a more respected place in society, but the strength of the consciousness which exalts masculine thinking over feminine thinking, and all thinking over feeling will remain intact (*The Spirit of the Valley: The Masculine & Feminine in Human Consciousness*, J Tarcher, 1979, p. 91).

If the purpose of the exercise is to appropriate more political power, more access to material rewards, and more personal safety for women, then there can be little question that the most effective way of achieving these ends is through the aggressive use of masculine energy.

Even if the rhetoric surrounding these activities is couched in terms of what Salomonsen refers to as "the consciousness of human rights and its gospel of social constructionism", it doesn't require much in the way of psychological insight—or knowl-

edge of 20th century history—to know how hard it is to actively resist something as powerful as the patriarchy without becoming part of it in the process. This is particularly true if what pass for feminist aspirations are little more than a wish to extend the many, obvious benefits of patriarchal society to wider circles of women.

This process of appropriating patriarchal consciousness—and magic—for women, rather than working to undermine it on a cultural basis as it effects both women and men, may be effectively guaranteeing the victory of patriarchalism.

Carmella Huggins
Toronto, Ontario

SÍÂN REID WRITES:

I received the Beltaine issue in the mail today. Your editorial noted that no one had commented on your format change. Well, let me be the first then. I don't like it.

I understand that because of cost and space limitations, you needed to pick a smaller, more compact font than the one you

were previously using; I just don't like the one you've picked. I find it too rounded, slightly script-like, and more difficult to read. Two small, serif, compact fonts I think would make better text are Garamond and Palatino.

I also think that your call outs are too long and narrow. In general terms, I was taught that a call out should be four lines deep, max. Some of them look as though you've made a hole in the top of the page, and just sort of poured the text in. Could you make them wider, and fit the text around them, with, say, a one point line above and below to separate them from the text?

Just thoughts ... I know it is a big job to do this stuff, even when it is on a computer, and I probably shouldn't be so critical, but I think your other issues looked a whole lot better than this last one ...

Sîan Reid
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario



Pomegranate

Announces the establishment of an awards program intended to encourage Neopagan Scholarship.

The recipient of this \$200 grant will be a full-time University undergraduate student in the last 2 years of a 4 year program leading to a Baccalaureate Degree in a related field: Anthropology, Archaeology, Religious Studies, Theology, etc.

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