

Notes from the Underground

In the final chapter of *The Triumph of the Moon*, Ronald Hutton discusses at length how Neopaganism—particularly Neopagan Witchcraft—might fit in the various classifications proposed for it by scholars of religion. Some, such as ‘sect’ and ‘cult’, are dismissed out of hand, while others, like ‘New Religious Movement’ and ‘native’ or ‘post-modern’ religion, are rejected as being either inaccurate or insufficiently inclusive. In this latter category, Prof Hutton includes ‘Nature Religion’, a term favoured by many American academics since the publication of Catherine Albanese’s *Nature Religion in America* (Chicago UP, 1990). In the course of this discussion, the work of Jo Pearson is mentioned on several occasions, and *The Pomegranate* is delighted to be able to offer a seminal article by Dr Pearson on the subject. The editors hope that this will stimulate further discussion, particularly among those readers who have recently suggested that the term ‘Nature Religion’ be substituted for ‘Neopaganism’ in the subtitle of this magazine.

Two reviews of *Triumph of the Moon* are also included in this issue. Other reviews, letters, and articles on the subject of this book are actively solicited.

Our second article, by Ellen Friedman, addresses the ethical dilemmas faced by those attempting to simultaneously fill the roles of clergy and psychotherapist in the context of coven leadership. This paper reiterates and expands on several related issues raised in Judy Harrow’s new book, *Wiccan Covens* (Citadel, 1999), which is highly recommended to our readers. Watch for a review of *Wiccan Covens* in an upcoming issue of *The Pomegranate*.

In recent years, the burning of large hominular sculptures has become a feature of several Pagan gatherings, at Beltaine, Lammas, or the post-Samhein celebration of Guy Fawkes Day. The flagship event of this genre, of course, is the Burning Man Festival, held for several years now in the Nevada desert on Labour Day Weekend. We’re delighted to present an in-depth analysis of this visually stunning and culturally challenging event, along with a companion article on the modern icon of antiquity which may be credited with inspiring this trend: the British movie *The Wicker Man*.

In our previous issue, we included two reviews of Cynthia Eller’s *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory*. In this issue Prof Eller responds to these reviews, and we offer yet another review which commends Eller’s command of the anthropological and ethnological literature and praises her conclusions about the status of women in other cultures, both present and past. At the same time, Eller’s assertion that there are no important patterns of differences between the behaviour of women and men is challenged. The popular feminist conflation of female/male with the feminine/masculine, combined with the militant assumption that any attempt to differentiate between women and men must necessarily denigrate and disenfranchise the former, is a subject of a future *Pomegranate* article. In the meanwhile, we hope that this review will draw responses from both Prof Eller and our other interested readers.

This issue concludes with a review of Thomas DuBois’ *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age*, in which today’s readers are once again cautioned to take those descriptions of pagan cultures and religions derived from 12th and 13th century documents with more than the usual grain of salt.

Persephone’s hard-working minions