BOOK REVIEWS

Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona
by Adrian J. Ivakhiv
Bloomington: Indian University Press, 200.
0 23 3389 9.
xx1 + 326.

Reviewed by Graham Harvey
King Alfred's College, Winchester, UK.

Over a decade ago Yi Fu Tuan argued for the vital importance of considering what he called 'topophilia' in relation to many pressing issues. Not only geographers and scholars of religion, but policy makers, politicians, economists and many others should be interested in the various ways in which identities are entangled with places. Adrian Ivakhiv has not only written a fascinating book about Glastonbury and Sedona, but contributes (cogently, powerfully and importantly) to debates about pilgrimage, politics, modernity, post-modernity, globalisation, consumerism, materialism, spirituality, diversity, particularism, sectarianism, and much more. Although the book's dust-jacket says that this is a 'captivating study of people and politics at two New Age spiritual sites' it is only if you read this expansively that the phrase does justice to the book. It is precisely the fact that Glastonbury and Sedona are not only New Age spiritual sites, but also places where people professing or stigmatised with other labels live, that generates this work. And if 'people and politics' means anything, it is an almost all-embracing phrase. What is left? Well, admittedly I looked up 'catering' in the index and found nothing—but it is there among the patterns of sociality and the modes of employment relevant to Ivakhiv's debates.

Claiming Sacred Ground arises from detailed and admirable research in both the USA and the UK applying and advancing significant scholarly approaches. In other words, the author is himself entangled in the various contests and conversations that make these places and this era so exciting. This is not to say that he obviously takes sides, indeed the book is remarkably free of polemics for or against anyone. But this seems to arise out of genuine interest and respect for people and their diverse engagements rather than from the old style 'aloof and distant' pretence at objectivity. In other words, this is a book I shall be recommending to researcher students when considering methodologies. I too hope that conversation will become more central, indeed normative, within academia—but also celebrate the contestations that seem necessary as phases in these conversations towards mutual understanding. Clearly in understanding each other we may come to realise that our initial dislike had not taken into account matters that really divide us even more deeply. That is a risk we take.

If this book is excellent as a provocation of thought about scholarly approaches, it will also be of great interest to those fascinated by contemporary religions (spirituality if you will) and especially by New Age's ideology and lived-reality in Glastonbury and Sedona. For those primarily interested in (neo-)paganism there is also much to ponder

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THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH NEW AGERS, PAGANS, CHRISTIANS AND OTHERS APPROPRIATE FROM INDIGENEITY ALSO SUGGESTS FLUID BOUNDARIES BETWEEN WHAT MIGHT OTHERWISE BE POLEMICISED AS OPPOSING OR ALTERNATIVE IDENTITIES.

here. Although the index cites 'neo-paganism' as occurring on only three pages, it also lists Druids, Dion Fortune, and many more. I and others have asserted (sometimes even argued!) that Paganism and New Age are not the same creature. But much that appears definitive of New Age is also true of Paganisms. This book requires further thinking and clarification of the terms both among insiders and as critical terms. Similarly, there are points where Ivakhiv's discussion of New Age requires consideration of the boundaries (or their absence) drawn around Christian identities. Reference to 'angels' is obvious, but social dynamics and discourses are far more interesting commonalities. The various ways in which New Agers, Pagans, Christians and others (shop keepers, tourist office, etc.) appropriate from indigeneity also suggests fluid boundaries between what might otherwise be polemicised as opposing or alternative identities. An excellent discussion here should generate further engagement.

To be honest, I had intended to write a brief review that simply read 'this is a very interesting and valuable book about lots of things to do with the world in which we live'. I didn't intend to delay your reading and consideration of the book itself. Instead I have, I hope, justified my enthusiasm for the book within several arenas.

Graham Harvey

Wiccan Warrior:
Walking a Spiritual Path in a Sometimes Hostile World
by Kerr Cuhulain
Llewellyn, 2000
1 56718 252 6

Reviewed by Phoenix Pangaryk

With *Wiccan Warrior: Walking a Spiritual Path in a Sometimes Hostile World,* Kerr Cuhulain masterfully presents his vision of the Wiccan who dances to her own unique euphony, transcending the limitations emulated and imposed by some of the more 'fundamentalist' Wiccan traditions. A full-time law enforcement officer, father and active Wiccan Elder, Cuhulain challenges the Wiccan reader to revisit his or her initial attraction to Wicca, and to reexamine the ways in which that initial attraction still applies, or has stagnated. Cuhulain encourages his readers to assess the motives and effectiveness of their teachers, and to determine if they are

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RABINOWITZ SHOWS HOW THE LATER GREEKS, SUCH AS PLATO, CAME TO DREAD THE MATERIAL WORLD, AND HOW HEKATE'S INFERNALIZATION WAS AN ATTEMPT BY THE ROMANS TO EJECT HER FROM THE OLYMPIAN RANKS BECAUSE OF HER ASSOCIATIONS WITH BIRTH, DEATH, DIRT, AND IMPURITY.

indeed following a path that is true to themselves. He then demystifies much of the myth that has resulted in the 'power-over' relationship of adept over postulant, and exposes the ever-present responsibility of the individual Wiccan to create his or her own destiny.

Cuhulain will no doubt be challenged by traditional and fundamentalist Wiccans for his candid views concerning dogma and the constant need of the Wiccan to pursue growth, and consequently, change. He warns of a potentially impending theological collision within the Wiccan community comparable to the rivalries exhibited in places like Ireland. In order to avoid this level of strife, Cuhulain expresses the need for the individual to strip away the rigid structures of Wiccan dogma found in various traditions today, and to embrace her own Wiccan path.

An effective example of this vision is Cuhulain's comparison of the rigidly structured, by-the-book type of ritual found within many Wiccan traditions to an initiation rite created by Cuhulain and his wife, Phoenix McFarland, specifically based on the values, experience and desires of a particular initiate. It is a ritual of genuine magick and discovery suited to the needs of the individual, rather than in accordance with a set standard of text, chants, and guarded restrictions that are fixed in many traditions. Cuhulain and McFarland made the effort as teachers to learn as much as possible about the initiate during his studies with them, and as a result, they were able to provide a unique and powerful gift in return.

Cuhulain's message that intent is more important than form speaks to any Wiccan interested or schooled in the martial arts. As a Wiccan martial artist for the past ten years currently exploring my own Warrior path, I could not agree with Cuhulain more in his approach to Wicca today. A pioneer on the subject, he is one of the first Wiccan writers to effectively integrate Eastern martial art philosophies with basic pagan principles. In their book *Moving with the Wind: Magick and Healing with the Martial Arts*, Brian and Esther Crowley make passing reference to the bridge between Eastern martial arts and philosophy with that of Wicca. Cuhulain actively embraces this bridge, making the connection relevant for any Wiccan prepared to explore her own take on the Craft in the process of becoming a Wiccan Warrior. Mastery of the martial arts, not unlike Wicca, requires the eventual letting go of the structures and forms provided as a

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solid base for growth during initial training. Cuhulain transcends the realm of basic structure in his quest for self-discovery, and creates his own magickal 'style within the style' suited to his independent needs, while making it clear that these same concepts can be adopted by any Wiccan.

Cuhulain's reminder that each of us has arrived into this world with all the tools we will ever need for magick encapsulates the very essence of *Wiccan Warrior*. The introduction of the Witch's Pyramid to this vision offers a tantalizing glimpse of things to come. Cuhulain's next book, *Full Contact Magick* is due out next spring, and will no doubt shed more light on themes introduced in this text. You can also bet that he will continue to challenge us with the will of a true Wiccan Warrior, because as he says, "the Wiccan Warrior uses the principle of planning and preparation to help focus intent and facilitate action … the Wiccan Warrior then actively directs energy with his will to cause change." And cause change is exactly what this Wiccan Warrior's work will do.

Phoenix Pangaryk

The Rotting Goddess: The Origin of the Witch in Classical Antiquity
by Jacob Rabinowitz
Automedia: New York

Reviewed by Doug Ezzy
University of Tasmania

THE ROTTING GODDESS is Rabinowitz's term for Hekate, a deity of classical antiquity. The book is divided into three sections. The first section traces Hekate's evolution from her first appearance as a sweet fertility goddess in Asian minor, through her decomposition into a demonic goddess among the late Greeks as "Queen of Heaven, Queen of Hell" and on into her ambivalent place in the Roman pantheon into the 1st century AD. The second section of the book examines images of the Witch in antiquity, tracing a similar degeneration from "inspirer of passion to victim of sexual appetite, from goddess to crone". The third section of the book is two appendices, one on the Witch of Endor, and the other examining Shamanism in the Roman Witch literature.

There are two main themes running through Rabinowitz's book, which is based on a graduate school thesis, apparently a doctoral thesis at Brown University. First, he makes an academic argument about the evolution of Hekate and the Witch in antiquity. The book presumes an extensive knowledge of the mythology of antiquity, and it is hard going if you are not already familiar with the intellectual terrain. The academic argument is most easily summarised with a quote from page 115 where he concludes: "The actual practice of witchcraft—that is, private magical activity centred on Hekate as a source of power and not just any casual practice of magic, herbalising or midwifery—is perhaps the result and not the basis of the Witch who is at first a mythological figure." There are further complexities in his argument about the evolution of Hekate, her conflation with Juno, and the significance of this for images of Hekate that I will not detail here.

Ken Butler, in his review of the same book, comments that Rabinowitz has collected virtually every reference to a

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"witch" that occurs in the Roman literature. Rabinowitz has clearly done his research, and the book, from this point of view, is a valuable source. For example, he quotes extensively from *Papyri Graecae Magicae,* a collection of magical spells and formulas, hymns and rituals from Greco-Roman Egypt, often with his own translations. Butler was not entirely convinced by Rabinowitz's argument about the evolution of Hekate and the Witch, and neither was I, although I am not a classicist, and not really equipped to evaluate his argument.

However, for me there was a second theme in Rabinowitz's book that lies under, or beyond, the academic argument. This is perhaps best illustrated by the final paragraph of the book (p. 122): "The development of the dark goddess is not merely a degeneration and demonization of an originally benign being, but the (albeit somewhat onesided) unfolding of the implications and depth of one of her basic aspects. Those who would learn the Craft of the Wise must embrace not only the nymphlike generation-spirit of Asia Minor, but exult in the corruption of the Rotting Goddess of Rome, and pass the initiatory night at her side, sharing her shroud."

The lessons of death, decay, and the earthy world of dirt and sex are ones that our culture still recoils from. Rabinowitz shows how the later Greeks, such as Plato, came to dread the material world, and how Hekate's infernalization was an attempt by the Romans to eject her from the Olympian ranks because of her associations with birth, death, dirt, and impurity. Rabinowitz reminds us again that the body, sex, and death, are not prisons of a rotting soul, but rather, elemental to life.

The Rotting Goddess came to me at a time I was grappling with images, experiences, and emotions associated with death, decay, and dying. Its message rang true for me, and I'm glad I read it. It is not an easy book. This is both because it presumes a considerable understanding of classical mythology, and because it challenges us to confront a side of ourselves that we tend, still, to avoid. It is also a frustratingly short book, with many of its themes only barely developed and hardly explained. Nonetheless, I found it worthwhile and would recommend it to others, with the proviso that it is a demanding and frustrating text, both academically, and emotionally.

Doug Ezzy

The Twelve Wild Swans: Rituals, Exercises & Magical Training in the Reclaiming Tradition
by Starhawk and Hilary Valentine
HarperSanFrancisco, 2000
326 pages, $24 cloth

Reviewed by Chas S. Clifton
University of Southern Colorado

Twenty years after the success of *The Spiral Dance,* the Wiccan teacher Starhawk, with the collaboration of Hilary Valentine, has returned to the self-help genre with *The Twelve Wild Swans,* which brings together in book form what the authors and others have taught in numerous training sessions, or 'Witch Camps'. As Robert Bly did with Iron John, this book is organized around a folktale, one in which a princess endures many hardships in order to free her twelve brothers from an enchantment which has

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[Starhawk's] Foundation myth is cheerfully ahistorical, still retailing Margaret Murray's claim that victims of the Early Modern witch trials were persecuted Pagans and Goddess worshippers

turned them into swans. Rather than seeing the story as encoding patriarchal domination, in which the princess, Rose, serves her brothers, the authors reinterpret its symbolism to gain both a feminist message and a template for magical self-realization.

Thus, "Leaving the Castle" introduces discussion and exercises about moving from mundane in sacred space: self-purification through visualization exercises, invoking the four element powers, and casting a circle. "Wandering in the Wilderness" includes self-blessing and self-initiation, and developing what anthropologist Tanya Luhrmann called the "interpretive drift" toward the magical world-view and into viewing one's life as a spiritual quest. Likewise, the chapter entitled "The Wicked Vow" involves overcoming "shadow beliefs" about gender roles, self-importance, and the like—in Jungian terms, confronting the Shadow.

"Carried Away," based on the tale's telling of how the swan-brothers carried their sister over the sea in a basket, is interpreted shamanically and deals with trance work and creating ritual. Next comes "The Challenge," which reinterprets the princess's weaving of twelve shirts from nettles in total silence, and further chapters dealing with her marriage, a false accusation of infanticide, and her eventual rescue of her brothers.

Compared to *The Spiral Dance,* this work is denser, more nuanced, contains far more experiential material, and has more of a sense of humor. It also departs from the traditional Witchcraft teachings on the neutrality of magic as spiritual technology, summarized in the saying, "A Witch who cannot curse, cannot bless." Starhawk and Valentine optimistically assume that their course of study will inevitably produce not just a more centered, self-realized person, but one who shares their political views on oppression by race, class, or gender; on nuclear power, or on the World Trade Organization. In addition, its foundation myth is cheerfully ahistorical, still retailing Margaret Murray's claim that victims of the Early Modern witch trials were persecuted Pagans and Goddess worshippers, and Marija Gimbutas' claims about a universal, peaceful Goddess-worshipping culture in the distance past. (However, the claim that "The red, the white and the black are the colors of the Goddess," should be attributed to Robert Graves rather than Gimbutas.)

Chas S. Clifton

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