

Notes from the Underground

According to Edward Whitmont, in *Return of the Goddess* (NY: Crossroads, 1989), our newfound interest in the magical and the matrifocal is causing material which has long laid dormant in our unconscious to now be brought to the surface. For the most part this is a good thing, but Whitmont cautions us that the “free-floating impulses from the magical layer are powder charges waiting to be ignited by the sparks from the torches of the returning Dionysos and his menadic retinue”. Many of us seem to be aware of this, at least intuitively, and are concerned about the implied potential for violence in Nature Religion and Neopaganism, especially about their fringes.

We begin with two articles which address this issue. In the first, Bron Taylor argues convincingly that, incendiary rhetoric notwithstanding, radical environmentalist and animal rights movements are unlikely to pose an immediate or intentional threat to human life. We are encouraged by his optimism and hope that it is well founded.

A more pessimistic view is proposed by Ann-Marie Gallagher. She warns that not only are Pagan beliefs and imagery being appropriated in Britain and Europe by neo-Nazi organizations in order to sacralize their political agendas, but that within the Neopagan community proper, the re-writing of history (and even, occasionally, geography) in search of ‘authentic’ identity has often led to quite reactionary nationalist and even racist rhetoric.

Our third article is by Brendan “Cathbad” Myers, a respected member of the Celtic

Reconstructionist community. It is our hope that by seeding our magazine with writing of this quality, we will encourage other scholars of the Druidic persuasion to contribute.

Joan Marler, Marija Gimbutas’ editor and biographer, has entered the lists with a critical response to Brian Hayden’s recent defence of classical academic archaeology, and we have allowed Prof Hayden a few short paragraphs in reply. The editors now serve notice that these are the final words we wish to publish on this subject (at least as articles—letters are still welcome). It is our considered opinion that the dialogue which first appeared in *Pom* #6 between academic feminist theorists and the supporters of Gimbutas is of much more interest, and we would like to actively encourage our readers to address this subject.

We close this issue with an essay from the archives, by the humanist psychologist Maureen O’Hara, wherein she takes issue with the misappropriation of scientific language and methodologies in the service of sensationalist paranormal claims. The ostensive subject of this essay, the Hundredth Monkey Phenomenon, may not be familiar to many of our younger readers, but it enjoyed considerable popularity in the mid-80s. We hope that the lessons learned by reading its critics may be valuable in dealing with the similar ways in which marginal belief systems are promoted today.

This issue (our 10th!) also contains a bumper crop of Letters to the Editor, and we hope you enjoy reading them as much as we enjoyed receiving (and editing) them. Our thanks to all those who contributed, and as for the rest of you ... please write.

Persephone’s hard-working minions.