

## Book Reviews

Ken Dowden, *European Paganism: The Realities of Cult from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2000), xxi + 367 pp., £49.00.

We have had expert discussion of ancient European paganisms from historians and Pagans, now Ken Dowden offers a classicist's view. Even if you are tempted to think that Ronald Hutton has said all that needs saying, you will find much that is new here, and Dowden certainly approaches the subject rather differently.

Dowden's fourteen chapters begin with an introduction, 'Approaching Paganism', which succinctly notes and moves on from a number of 'myths'. Here is an example of his style: 'This is a modern mythology, and like all myths works so well because it is not true.' If he challenges nothing that has not already been challenged, he certainly does so in an endearing and relaxed manner . . . and is not too worried if people wish to continue holding particular notions. More interestingly, he offers these thoughts in order to challenge stereotypes far more widespread than those judged (perhaps anachronistically now) as being held by 'contemporary Pagans'. Did pagan Imperial Romans persecute Christianity for 'pagan' reasons? Do we know about that pagan persecution of Christians because Christians kept on about it as a justification for a far more sustained persecution of 'pagans'? At any rate, the purpose of this introduction is to quickly survey the geography of interest to the rest of the book, and the literatures and other forms of evidence that will be presented.

Succeeding chapters present the landscape of pagan performance, action, engagement, reverence – in short, cult. Resonating with recent studies of many indigenous religions, Dowden focuses on location and power. Chapters three and four deal with the foci: 'spring, lake and river' and 'stone and tree' respectively. These are followed by broader views of areas like hills and mountains, shore and island, meadows and groves. The technology of pagan cults – statues, shrines and temples – are then discussed. Each section is structured similarly: quotations from ancient sources tell us 'what a stone is' or 'what a grove is like'. And the answers are not always what we (scholars or Pagans) might think. Some discussion of continuity, especially into the Christian era and, more interestingly, into Christian discourse, arises. Chapter eight, for example, is devoted to 'Christian paganism', that is, what Christians know or allege about paganisms. It is argued here that the paganism preached and legislated against by Christians was their own construction. Chapters on rituals – of sacrifice (including of humans) and seasons – follow. 'A few aspects of gods' (their existence, functions, relationships, actions and their portrayal by Christianity) and the activities and engagements of priests lead to a chapter on life rites from cradle to grave. A final chapter brings together all the 'tantalising themes' and argues that all of the above

'together . . . make sense and the diversity of the phenomena of the book become more than the engaging miscellany of paganism'. The chapter is entitled 'Unity is the Thing', and that simple phrase speaks volumes and does so as eloquently and invaluablely as Dowden's.

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Matthias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), x + 446 pp., \$69.95 (cloth), \$23.95 (paper).

Matthias Gardell's *Gods of the Blood* is a thorough and fascinating analysis of the rising Pagan factions within the American white-supremacist subculture. While the book's endorsements laud its insight into the radical right, this comprehensive work should be read by Pagan-identified scholars – especially those with a stake in ethnic identity traditions and the problematic romanticism of early European cultures that accompanies them.

Gardell's research into American racist culture originated from his observations of the infiltration of American-made propaganda into the nationalist, white-supremacist movements in his native Sweden. Gardell's research in America consisted of extensive interviews, primary-source analysis, and attendance at various Odinist "blots" throughout the late 1990s. Consequently, he is able to differentiate the various nuances and conflicts within the radical right's Pagan revival, despite their common roots and similar ideologies.

Gardell defends his use of the words "racist" and "religious racist" as categorizing terms, which are used throughout the text. He specifies that a racist believes in the inherent difference between races and the supremacy of his own, and that a religious racist believes that supremacy to be divinely ordained or "biologized" by blood or genetic makeup. Consequently, the author is able to be very specific when distinguishing between groups that are "racist revolutionaries," "ethnically-identified racist," or non-racist but "ethnically aware." These occasionally overlapping and potentially confusing terms are more clearly understood – and challenged – by Gardell's painstaking analysis.

All of the individuals and groups represented in the text embrace Norse or Germanic heritage as racist. However, Gardell manages to avoid falling into the trap of labeling most or all Ásatrúar or Odinists as racist by situating his subjects squarely in the subculture of Aryan-American white separatism. He initially traces the historical trajectory of "white" identification movements in the US, the cosmology of National Socialism, the occult influences of Ariosophy, and the growth of Neopaganism in the US. This establishes the theoretical framework wherein groups like Wotansvolk and Tribe of the Wulfings have firm roots in Aryan subculture, and not to American Neopaganism as described by Margot Adler or Starhawk. A pattern emerges showing that longtime racists may become Pagan, but longtime Pagans do not become racist (146).

Nonetheless, Gardell's discussion of Neopaganism's general Eurocentricity and the ancestral romanticizing of its adherents gave me, and should give other Pagans, pause

for thought. The urges for ethnic or cultural affiliation, an empowering and politically agreeable belief system, an actual or imagined community of similarly believing people, and rejection of Christianity are familiar urges to many Pagans. They are precisely the same as those expressed by white separatist Pagans when asked why they identify as Ásatrú or Odinist. The difference, expertly discussed, lies in what kind of past golden age the romanticizing portrays, the values revealed by the group's romanticizing, and what an imagined community's response to a "collective trauma" results in with regard to how they see themselves and how they relate to the "other" – ally or enemy. For example, mainstream Pagans typically interpret the "Burning Times" lore as a lesson to espouse tolerance; racist Pagans interpret it as an impetus to preserve their "culture" and to keep it purer in the face of an impending new "Jewish threat" or Inquisition.

Once the theoretical framework is established, Gardell's interviews and group-specific research fills the rest of the book. A chapter each is spent on groups affiliated with Aryan revolutionary politics, on separatist organizations and prison ministries, on "ethnic Ásatrú," and on syncretisms with Satanism and occult National Socialism. Despite the commonalities of ritual, calendar, philosophies of race, and the redundant use of names like "Ásatrú" or "Odinist" (much to the consternation of non-racist Ásatrú organizations), it becomes clear that much of the inflammatory talk and revolutionary boasting of many of Gardell's informants is just that. In fact, many of these organizations spend more energy lambasting each other than their perceived cultural enemies, either for being too racist, or for not being white enough, or too religious, or too political. Some of the infighting Gardell relates in his text reaches nearly comical proportions.

Beyond this careful discernment, Gardell reaches a conclusion that is hardly surprising: white racist Paganism is largely a result of angry white males who, feeling disenfranchised by increasing American pluralism and their perceived loss of privilege, form "cultural" groups based on a mythology of purity, superiority, and justification for separation or revenge. Racist Paganism simply adds an answer to spiritual and cultural longings when the "Aryan Christ" paradigm is perceived as part of the problem. Gardell does not dismiss the potential political impact of these groups. Despite their inability to organize, he argues, the Nordic Warrior mythos is frequently an encouragement to engage in the sort of "lone-wolf" criminal activities that white supremacy is notorious for.

In spite of its thoroughness, and keeping in mind that the membership of these organizations is overwhelmingly male, one of Gardell's shortcomings is the lack of interviews with racist Pagan women. Two women (Else Christensen of the Odinist Fellowship and Katja Lane of Wotansvolk) get the same amount of text space as the other men interviewed, but further study into women's roles and their attraction to these organizations is needed. Despite the many images of women dotted throughout the author's photos, one gets the feeling reading the text proper that women do not exist in these movements – or have nothing important to contribute. I wondered how the tenor of the text would have changed if more racist Ásatrú/Odinist women had been included in Gardell's data.

*Gods of the Blood* proves to be an important addition to Pagan studies. The similarities in practices and mythic interpretations between both mainstream and radical groups can be a little too close for comfort. Furthermore, mainstream Pagans' valued tolerance for diversity of religious expression within the movement also hits a

troubling boundary after reading this text. The ensuing discussions engendered by this book are necessary for contemporary Pagans to have, scholars and non-scholars alike. A question arises: if contemporary Pagans truly value diversity of belief as a cornerstone of their religious philosophies, do they accept racist groups like Wotansvolk as fellow Pagans? Or do a new set of boundaries begin to arise? Encountering one's shadow helps deepen one's own self-understanding. Today's Pagans will undoubtedly engage in thinking about how they define themselves after reading Gardell's book.

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Barbara A. McGraw, *Rediscovering America's Sacred Ground: Public Religion and Pursuit of the Good in a Pluralistic America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 241 pp., \$73.50 (cloth), \$24.95 (paper).

Barbara McGraw, associate professor of legal, ethical and social environment at Saint Mary's College of California, is a person passionately in love with her country. In *Rediscovering America's Sacred Ground: Public Religion and Pursuit of the Good in a Pluralistic America*, she meticulously elucidates the American Founders' conception of a two-tiered public forum for debate and action that makes the pursuit of the good possible without governmental coercion. This seminal vision, she contends, was inspired from the thought of John Locke that held tolerance to be the chief achievement of civilization. Not surprisingly, considering her areas of specialization, McGraw presents her argument like a legal brief and builds from Locke's own view that the state's mission is to ensure individual liberty as a form of service to God. Specifically, freedom of conscience and its expression form 'the greatest opportunity for society to reflect the good of God' (80). In other words, 'freedom of conscience and the political context for its expression in speech and action [are] religiously grounded in a political theology' (88).

Lockean fundamentals are drawn from a spiritually inspired premise, namely, that the 'state of nature' understood as the inherent freedom and equality of all people, along with their right to rebel in the face of infringement of their 'natural rights', derives from the assumption that God created human beings free and equal. However, a good society is not something simply God-given. It rests on two fundamental 'conscientious moral precepts': (1) the duty of each individual to think and act universally – beyond one's own desires, and (2) the duty of each individual to do his/her best to contribute to social development. The theological basis of the American understanding is that 'God communicates to individual human beings through nature and, therefore, reason, as well as revelation' (121).

If the language McGraw uses in her argument is uncomfortable for contemporary Western Pagans, and there may be a difficulty in accepting the theistic principle upon which the American political framework is constructed, McGraw nonetheless points out in an appendix of 'A Few Definitions', that the term 'God' is generalistic, as far as we know, in the minds of the Founders. For them, God is the agent that created the world and human beings. Nothing more is specified. Consequently, any understanding of God – whether as the biblical God, the Goddess, the godhead or the gods – is a matter of individual conscience and becomes part of the open forum of debate that the

constitutional framework is designed to allow and encourage.

As McGraw makes clear, the scope of her work is simply an attempt to clarify the structure behind the American freedom for debate rather than to elucidate the issues themselves that are raised in that debate. Accordingly, she examines the positions of both the religious right and the secular left and finds that each has missed the point that American freedom is for individualism, freedom of conscience and freedom of speech, along with the values that these imply. It is all these themselves that are the 'sacred ground' of America. This 'civic faith' is both the common good for the country's pluralistic society and the means to achieve that society as a good one. It takes the form of a two distinct American fora: the Civic Public Forum, whose sole duty is 'to preserve the inalienable rights and to promote the safety and welfare of the people' (169), and the Conscientious Public Forum of persuasion and voluntary compliance in which all opinions, beliefs and viewpoints are to be allowed full and free expression as long as the viability of the Civic Forum is not put into jeopardy. In the Conscientious Public Forum, truth is allowed 'to shift for herself'. McGraw argues convincingly throughout this work that America does not necessarily have a faith or a God but instead simply faith and God: 'the faith of all people who seek truth and goodness under a system of government that preserves to all the equal freedom to answer when God, however known or understood, calls' (173). In the Conscientious Public Forum, 'religious people are invited to share the sincerity of their convictions and the certainty of their truths in an effort to convince others, or to be persuaded by others, as to what is the right path for making a better world and to ensure personal salvation' (101).

Both Locke and the constitutional Founders sought to design a way to prevent the imposition of any 'overarching worldview', comprehensive doctrine or metanarrative that would thereby stifle the mechanisms of open and free American discussion. While McGraw considers the religious right and the secular left as simply promoting the respective perspective of their own overriding moral context in establishing or disestablishing a particular role of religion in American public life, she omits the possibility of both a capitalistic right and a religious left – neither of which may be constrained toward sentiments of national loyalty. The Machiavellian tendencies of American corporate capitalism might be more preoccupied in locating a global arena of opportunity unhampered by state-imposed rules and regulations. The religious left may be more concerned with a global community and a universal environmental consciousness than with the preservation of the nation-state system understood as an archaic and imperialistic legacy. But despite this lacuna, McGraw nevertheless makes clear for Americans of all political and religious and non-political and non-religious persuasions – including Muslim, Jew, pagan ideologue, Hindu, Anabaptist, Arminian, heathen and idolater – that the fundamental sacredness for one and all is the principle of freedom of conscience upon which all viable debate and individual search for the good rest. In the uniqueness of the 'American experiment', there is no room for 'top-down' ideology or hegemony, whether religious or secular, that weakens, destroys or precludes open debate within the moral language of divinely inspired and naturally grounded inalienable rights.

Consequently, McGraw's exposé of the sacred principles upon which the American interpretation of the roots of our freedom in the state of nature lie is one that is relevant to all peoples, Pagan and non-Pagan alike. As she makes clear, 'when any authority is

provided with the instrumentalities of political government and law, so that coercion can be used to enforce a unifying order in the social order, such authorities are prone to corruption, even when that unity is asserted as a means to promote public peace and safety' (92). This corruption is ultimate, she contends, because it becomes an effort to override the divine will that is directed to each and every individual and not to usurping authorities themselves. McGraw lets us understand the profound and emancipated foresight of the Founders of the American nation who went even further than Locke would have suggested in according full civil rights even to those who do not profess a belief in God, as well as in extending tolerance even to the intolerant as long as these last do not seek to harm or infringe the sacred civil rights of life, liberty and property. In understanding the religious grounding of political freedom and the open forum that that freedom requires – with no single religious view privileged over any other – McGraw's *Rediscovering America's Sacred Ground* could not be more wholeheartedly recommended by this reviewer to both the Pagan community and the American public at large.

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Helen A. Berger, Evan A. Leach and Leigh S. Shaffer, *Voices from the Pagan Census: A National Survey of Witches and Neo-Pagans in the United States* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), xxii + 279 pp., \$29.95 (cloth).

Between 1993 and 1995, a survey circulated through the Pagan community, at festivals, through groups and meetings, and through the then-new medium of the Internet. It asked basic questions about the respondents' demographics and their attitudes on political, social, and religious questions.

The results of this Pagan Census are only now becoming available, in *Voices from the Pagan Census: A National Survey of Witches and Neo-Pagans in the United States*.

This work is unique in many respects, most notably in its approach to the problem of finding and surveying a representative sample of Pagans. Much of the work done before and since on Pagan attitudes has gathered data from participants in Pagan festivals, which provide a convenient population sample of people who are generally willing to discuss their experiences of Paganism.

The Pagan Census material commendably sought to move beyond this group, by encouraging survey-takers to distribute the survey to other Pagans they knew, and by publicizing its existence on the Internet. The respondents still fall short of an idealized representative survey – your true solitary, who does not engage with the Pagan community, is not reached through these methods – yet it did reach a significant number of respondents who were not festival-goers. This effort to document a population with no central registry or organization is one of the most significant and valuable elements of this project.

The results reflect a wide variety of viewpoints, including not only Wiccans and Druids, but Norse Pagans and other magic-workers. The authors report their results in detail, offering sparing analysis and occasional quotes from survey-takers' comments to illuminate the numbers.

One part of the survey deliberately echoed a standard public-opinion questionnaire, so that the responses of the Pagans could be compared to those of the American population at large. In some respects, we find Pagans are not that different from the population at large, and many of the gaps that do exist are not as wide as many Pagans like to think.

Some of the results may raise some Pagan eyebrows. For example, a significant number of respondents did not oppose sexual relations between Pagan teachers and their students. Nearly half of all those surveyed said they supported the idea of paid clergy. (This may be indicative of the participation of the EarthSpirit Community, one of the few large Pagan groups whose leaders have voiced support for full-time paid clergy.)

One particularly illuminating section focuses on the differences in values between those who do attend festivals and those who do not; those who do not attend festivals are more likely to be solitaires, less likely to be politically active, and more likely to support the use of mind-altering substances. Besides being interesting on their own, the data suggest that research focusing only on festival-goers is likely to miss significant segments of Pagan opinions and lifestyles. Another interesting result: regional differences among Pagans in different parts of the United States are less wide than those of the population at large, suggesting that Paganism draws from similar populations no matter where it occurs. (This may also reflect the relative importance among Pagans of national, rather than local, channels of communication, such as web sites and published books.)

The eight-year gap between the survey's end and the publication of its data is both a strength and a weakness. There is no doubt that Paganism, Pagan community, and Pagan communications have changed in those eight years, making the Pagan Census data a document of a specific time period rather than a descriptive look at the Pagans of today. Yet this specific time was also an interesting one for Paganism, the beginning of a time when the Internet changed how we found one another and exchanged religious information.

Indeed, the project itself represents a movement toward stability and mainstream acceptance on the part of the Pagans (notably members of the EarthSpirit Community) who played an active role in disseminating the survey and encouraging others to respond. On this level, it is also interesting to the student of the modern Pagan movement.

The book itself, being mostly a report of survey results, tends toward the dry and technical, which may come as a surprise to those who find it shelved among livelier titles in the Metaphysical section of their bookstores. It is easy to understand the impulse to include as much data as possible. If one could wish for one thing, it might be that *Voices from the Pagan Census* had included more of those voices, more of the comments and in-depth responses to shed more light on the numbers.

Berger, Leach, and Shaffer have done something significant here, laying a baseline for future study of a religious movement that is earning a place in American culture. This book belongs on the shelves of anyone seeking an understanding of who Pagans are and what they think.

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Adrian J. Ivakhiv, *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), xii + 326 pp., \$49.95 (cloth).

Contemporary New Age movements arise in the context of global capitalism, spread not only throughout nations, but across national and linguistic boundaries. They find their home as much in publishing ventures, national seminars, and Internet chat rooms as in local communities; as a result, it is easy to neglect the importance of place for this mode of spirituality. Adrian J. Ivakhiv's study, *Claiming Sacred Ground*, carefully extracts the particular role that geographical and cultural landscape can play within New Age spirituality, contemporary Paganism, and earth spirituality. He examines two locations, Glastonbury in Britain and Sedona in the southwestern United States, which have become destination spots for tourists and pilgrims from these diverse religious movements. To his study he brings a strong attention to the history and culture of these particular spaces, coupled with theoretical perspective and an attention to wider global religious trends.

Ivakhiv utilizes a number of different interpretive approaches in examining these locales. He opens his study with a theoretical overview, focusing on the problems and issues his subjects bring to the study of religion and to the understanding of contemporary spiritual movements. Using Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopia, he asserts that Glastonbury and Sedona must be understood in the context of heterogeneous cultural movements that all find contested meanings around a common landscape. Thus, he immediately calls attention to the contested and diverse interpretations he will explore. That contestation, though, revolves around landscape – and his focus will settle on those for whom the landscape is most important, those whom he calls "Gaian Pilgrims." Ivakhiv uses this interpretive metaphor to situate the earth-conscious travelers to and the residents of Glastonbury and Sedona within the history of interpreting the natural world as a unitary living organism, both in its institutionally scientific modes, such as Gaia theory and feminist archaeology, as well as more popular modes, such as theories of ley lines. With regard to the specific landscapes, he posits they are orchestrated by a number of different actors, including the land itself; when he turns to his chapters on Glastonbury and Sedona, he teases out the interpretive perspectives of the different human communities, both present and past, as well as those of the green hills of southern England and the red rock of the Arizona high desert.

Ivakhiv approaches his subjects with what he terms "critical sympathy." While he maintains a critical distance from the cultures of Glastonbury and Sedona, his analysis incorporates a personal connection allowing him to more deeply understand and convey the spiritual projects undertaken by his subjects. Although he clearly is not a member of either of these two communities, introductory remarks reporting his own personal history and occasional references to his own experience, sometimes visionary and spiritual, in the two locations show the fullness of his encounter with these religious worlds. As vital as this reflexive ethnographic position is to honest study, attempting it is difficult, and many scholars fail in it. Ivakhiv, however, succeeds. The reader is aware of Ivakhiv's presence in the text, but the study never becomes one of Ivakhiv's experiences, but remains soundly focused on Glastonbury, Sedona, and the wider cultural movements of which they are a part. I might only criticize that Ivakhiv's sympathy for the alternative communities in these cities is strong enough that the real estate agents, conservative Christians, and other opposing powers remain primarily

anonymous others. Equally, Ivakhiv shows a stronger sympathy with the New Agers of Glastonbury over those of Sedona, along what seem to be primarily class lines, though this may also reflect the historic hostility between “Pagans” and “New Agers” – Glastonbury is a haven of Pagan culture while Sedona tends to attract the more rarified spirituality of light, angelic energies, and crystals. As much as Ivakhiv wishes to emphasize the diversity and contested nature of these locations, the alternative community of Glastonbury gains a human face that the other communities never achieve.

I appreciate Ivakhiv’s willingness to engage the diverse theoretical issues of his study. One potential danger in this type of study is that it can become an interesting, but ultimately insignificant, litany of facts about small, yet visible, alternative communities. Ivakhiv shows these two towns represent wider movements within global culture and amongst human subjects that constantly construct and reconstruct religious worlds in a fast-paced, ever-changing social and political world. Using theoretical models from philosophers like Foucault and Gilles Deleuze or the literature of tourism and pilgrimage highlights how these places participate in more general social trends. At the same time, as with many writers who heavily engage theory, the theoretical models sometimes seem to take on a life of their own. In a few places Ivakhiv lets the language of theory overwhelm the keen analytic insight that drives most of his text. The reader might wonder if introducing the language of “nomadism” and “striation” from a philosopher like Deleuze really adds much if it is not fully developed and carried through the text. Even the more dominant concept of “heterotopia” remains mostly an introduction of theoretical language rather than an entry into a complex discussion. However, the theoretical models Ivakhiv introduces of his own are much stronger – such as his concept of a “nonessentialist bioregionalism,” which could, if further developed, contribute a vital perspective to deep ecology and political and social ecology.

Two other discussions stand out in this book: his discussion of desire and of science. Ivakhiv argues that desire intersects with the possibilities presented by landscape, capital, history, and social structures to generate the religious cultures he studies. He does not make the mistake of locating desire with the marginal cultures, but discusses the degree to which desire operates for all the actors, including the scholars and scientists who study the culture and landscape, to produce particular cultural outcomes. One particular set of possibilities for realizing the desires takes place for Ivakhiv’s subjects through the culture of science itself. Scientific culture claims for itself the authentic story, the real description, of the landscape. If it tolerates the mythic tableau of religionists or even the commercial projections of real estate, scientific culture nevertheless claims the last word for describing that physical reality. Ivakhiv spends substantial time examining the way the New Age cultures of both Glastonbury and Sedona use the language of science to legitimize their own particular interpretations of that landscape. Yet, I would note that the use of science by the New Agers represents a manifestation of scientific culture that extends beyond the mere desire to share Science’s authenticity. The use of concepts like “energy” and scientific or pseudoscientific research by the movement suggests a more complex encounter between science and spirituality than Ivakhiv presents when he primarily examines it around the issue of legitimization.

Criticisms aside – and in the end they are minor – this is a fine study. I advise anyone interested in understanding how emerging alternative religious communities interact with their particular locations in the context of the globalization not only of markets, but also of spirituality and culture to read this book. Ivakhiv has contributed a unique

perspective to the study of nature religions, of new religious movements, and of religion and globalization. While his specific focus on Glastonbury and Sedona is invaluable, he provides a broader discussion that contributes important theoretical insights that would aid any scholar of religion in understanding the formation of spiritual and religious worlds in relation to history, the surrounding culture, and, most importantly, the landscape and location in which they arise. In the end, Ivakhiv makes a strong argument that in these cultures the land really does begin to speak, even as it is halted, contested, and constructed through the desires of the humans that live there.

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Shelley Rabinovitch and James Lewis, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Modern Witchcraft and Paganism* (New York: Citadel Press, 2002), vii + 336 pp., US\$29.95, Can\$41.95 (cloth).

As more Pagans enter the academic professions, the realm of scholarly Neopagan publishing has benefited, particularly in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and religious and gender studies. Reference works have also begun to cross the divide from popular to scholarly, with varying degrees of success. Rosemary Ellen Guiley's *The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft*, now in its second edition, and James R. Lewis' *Witchcraft Today* set the standard for quality reference material by non-Pagans on Neopaganisms. There have been other attempts to publish encyclopedias with practitioners' entries and autobiographies that displayed an unfortunate lack of scholarship. Now Rabinovitch and Lewis have edited an encyclopedia of articles written primarily by practitioners who are also scholars or known and respected elders in their traditions, a most welcome addition to the reference shelf.

It is refreshing to have balanced, educated treatments of the familiar controversies (the origins of Gardnerian Wicca, the "Burning Times," ritual sex) sitting placidly among entries in the more pedestrian categories of traditions, individuals, concepts, tools, histories, phrases, and even dance bands. This is a work that strives for global inclusion and particularity, and largely succeeds, within the confines of a one-volume encyclopedia. On occasion, the Canadian voice outshines all others, most notably in the challenging matter of which persons to include or exclude – where are Rae Beth, Arthur Evans, Kay Gardner, and Paddy Slade? Many writers are gifted at situating Neopagan material in larger cross-cultural or historical contexts. The entry "Coming Home," while an unexpected term, provides an excellent way of conveying the idea that Pagans are not proselytizers, and that practitioners discover rather than convert to a religion we have known all along without knowing that we knew. The article on feminist spirituality in Neopaganism is particularly elegant, with a welcome international and multi-racial focus (though the absence of any mention of W.I.T.C.H. or Andrea Dworkin is puzzling). There are several extensive (for a work of this kind) essays on the intersections of Neopaganisms with a variety of social movements: pop culture, psychology, the New Age. The entries on nature and nature religion reflect the academic networks from which the editors drew, while other entries by and about honored elders show their connections with the communities they describe.

To be sure, some might find the range of voices (from "chatty" to scholarly to downright self-promotional) disturbing, while others might regret the lack of the usual

scholarly reference apparatus (no citations for quotations in entries, no primary or secondary sources in text, and, worst of all, no index). But poly-vocality is surely one of the hallmarks of the Pagan communities, and the quality of the entries and their authors can speak on their behalf to the scholarly world at large. Perhaps the greatest risk lies in the self-referential entries; Aidan Kelly makes no mention in his (auto)-biographical sketch of his controversial study of Gardnerian Wicca, *Crafting the Art of Magic*, and Sam Wagar claims initiation as a Reclaiming Priest by means of the Great Rite, which, while possible, is highly unlikely in this particular tradition. Giving the article on families and children in Neopaganism to one of the few authors of guides for ways to include children in Pagan religious practices virtually ensures preference for that voice in what is actually a significant and multi-faceted discussion in the community. There are various reasons why many Pagans will not teach or include persons under eighteen years of age in public rituals, from legal considerations to philosophical stances (can a person who is “under age” be fully responsible for their actions in a spiritual sense if not a legal one?). The article on Environmental Activism is an excellent example of a scholarly entry (it even mentions Foucault!) marred by the absence of the conventions of scholarly reference works: several lines and passages are direct quotes from various authors with no other attribution, making it a laborious task to locate them in their original sources, unless one is already acquainted with the material. To anyone who spends a great deal of time trying to instruct students in the proper methods of citing sources, this lack of role model is discouraging, to say the least.

Which raises an interesting question: who is the intended audience? Citadel generally publishes for the popular audience, and is to be commended for its increased commitment to Pagan titles of the high quality that this work displays. Yet without an index, that most basic of research tools, novice practitioners and student scholars alike may find this a challenging work to navigate, one that requires some knowledge of the terms and concepts of the topic before the book can be fully utilized (useful cross-references notwithstanding). On the other hand, most scholars and elders will find much of the material quite familiar, though refreshing in its authority, and thus, perhaps, useful mainly as a reminder rather than as a guide to uncharted territory.

The greatest disappointment to this reviewer was the absence of any discussion of current social issues in the context of Pagan religions and practices. There were missed opportunities to discuss racism, heterosexism, violence and non-violence, activism (other than environmental activism), and cultural appropriation. Why was there an entry for transgenderism (of excellent quality) and Radical Fairies, but none on gay or lesbian or bisexual issues? Why was homosexuality treated under the heading of “Gender Activism,” a clear misnomer? Why an entry on Goddess and not on God? Why no article on interfaith initiatives? Although the appendix on the sizes of the Pagan communities discussed ages, why were there no discussions of the races, genders, or socio-economic classes of the members? These questions are intended not to criticize but rather to challenge, in the hope that a future edition of a fine encyclopedia will demonstrate further greatness – and a thorough index.

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Michael York, *Pagan Theology: Paganism as a World Religion* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), x + 238 pp., \$40.00 (cloth).

Part travelogue, part theological argument, part sociological study, Michael York's *Pagan Theology* is a tour through paganism's multiple forms in space and time. York's preference for using a lower case "p" in "paganism" is useful, because this differentiates his subject matter from what is usually understood in Pagan studies as contemporary Paganism, Neopaganism, or sometimes modern or Western Paganism. York suggests that Neopaganism, which he understands largely in terms of the dominant bitheistic traditions of Wicca, is an identifiable tradition within Western paganism, and should therefore be capitalized (60). York's subject, in contrast, is paganism as a global phenomenon, at once a world religion and what he calls "root religion."

The stated purpose of the book is to answer the question of whether or not "paganism can be in any way considered serious religion" (vii). York argues that paganism is a legitimate religion (4), and he here aims to develop "an understanding of what paganism is or at least could be understood to be" (ix). He identifies himself as both a practitioner and an academic (4), and his approach in this text is confessional, apologetic, and sociological (ix). The book is divided into three chapters: the first looks at various pagan religions (or various indigenous religions in terms of paganism), the second looks at various behaviors that might be termed pagan but occur in context of other religious traditions, and the third chapter presents what he views as a generic pagan theology (viii).

York argues that paganism should be understood, in sociological terms, as a world religion, by which he means that it is "a legitimate spiritual perspective that already exists globally" (vii). In terms of numbers, York finds that between 5 percent and 6 percent of the world's population can be identified as pagan. This may sound insignificant when compared with Christianity's share (around one third of the global population according to the same study), but other traditions that are frequently taken to be "world religions" have far fewer adherents. York reports that Jews, Sikhs, Jains, and Bahais together comprise less than one percent of the world, according to David Barrett's 1982 data in *World Christian Encyclopedia* (10).

Being a world religion is not simply a matter of numbers, but it might be a matter of organization and institutionalization. Ritual studies specialist Ronald Grimes jokingly refers to the world religions as "the multinationals." World religions, in common parlance among scholars of religion, are "long established," with everything that phrase implies in terms of having a documented history, established institutions and authoritative sources.

York arrives at his estimate of 5 percent to 6 percent of the global population as pagan from Barrett's data by including indigenous traditions. York would like to use the term "paganism" to refer to all indigenous religion, a designation for religion that includes "animism, polytheism, pantheism and shamanism" (6). He is well aware that others will criticize the inclusion of indigenous religions under the term "paganism" as Eurocentric because they feel that this denies the uniqueness of individual traditions. In response, he questions what might distinguish ancient European traditions from other Indo-European traditions across Europe and Asia except their geographic locations (6). These traditions have common roots in Indo-European language, but this aspect of his argument is perhaps less convincing beyond Europe and Asia.

He might also seem to sidestep the issue that what contemporary practitioners usually call "Paganism" is not continuous with any indigenous traditions, even when practiced as re-constructionist traditions. In York's terms, however, it is not necessarily a problem that the common use of "Paganism" is somewhat distant from what he is calling "paganism," since he finds that Neopaganism is related to paganism analogously to the relationship of the Latter-day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses with mainstream Christianity (64). Some readers will find it odd to define what is usually taken as "Paganism" by Western practitioners as marginal to the phenomenon of "paganism" as a whole.

Yet York makes a good argument for extending the understanding of "paganism" as root religion. By "root religion," York means something like what Hegel and other nineteenth-century thinkers called "nature religion," as the original religion out of which all others have developed, but also an underlying substratum that continues to inspire vernacular religiosity cross-culturally. In terms of behavior in particular, York sees paganism running across other world religions (67). York identifies behaviors that are often, but not always, "subliminal and automatic," such as tossing coins in springs, well offerings, as well as ritual greetings like "good morning," as pagan (60). He links this folk religiosity with Catherine Albanese's understanding of nature religion and Robert Corrington's "ecstatic naturalism" (186), clarifying that the latter denies the reality of anything "supernatural" (67), whereas York's definition of paganism includes relations with the "nonempirical" (162).

Some readers will sense a conflict between York's presentation of paganism as a world religion and as root religion. This perhaps derives from an ambiguity in his desires about paganism: for it to be a "proper" religion, worthy of study, and a legitimate form of religious practice, but also to present it as distinctive, unlike all other religion, and as foundational to all religion. It is a common desire to present one's own religion as epitomizing some aspect that one feels is essential to religion in general, such as wonder, faith, ethics, or celebration, which York discusses (167).

One of the identifying characteristics that York finds for paganism is that it is essentially local. Some might question why, if this is the case, does it make sense to look at it as a "world" religion? In the way York thinks about paganism it does make sense, not only because there are similarities between expressions of nature religion as Albanese conceives of it and folk and indigenous religion, but, more importantly, because such religious traditions should not be left out of the study of religion as "world religions." Nature religion, and "paganism" as York intends the term, need to be included in introductory survey classes and general interest texts on religion, because studying only the institutionalized religions, particularly only the dominant expressions of them, gives a skewed picture of what religion is. Because paganism and nature religion are not generally included in the study of world religions, such religiosity is often overlooked even when people are in search of such traditions – as in Thomas Parkhill's *Weaving Ourselves into the Land*, and, as Doug Ezzy recently pointed out on the Nature Religion Scholars Network e-list, in Donald Crosby's *A Religion of Nature*. York does an admirable job of making paganism visible as an important area of study in religion. My only complaint is that I would have liked to see him relate his understanding of paganism to Robert Redfield's understanding of folk practices in terms of "little traditions" as opposed to the institutionalized "great traditions" usually identi-

fied as “world religions,” discussed in *The Little Community and Peasant Society and Culture* (1969).

Pagans are quick to criticize one another for not including each other in descriptions and definitions of Paganism, always stressing differences, perhaps to the detriment of clarity, or the development of Pagan theology, of which York’s book is a milestone. York provides a Pagan theology that does not present itself in purely oppositional terms. As Wendy Griffin’s review on the back cover says, York’s work is exceptional in focusing on what paganism is, rather than being concerned primarily with what it is not. I hope a variety of theologies will follow, to develop a broader discourse of Pagan theology in venues such as this journal, as well as Alta Mira’s Pagan Studies series.

*Pagan Theology* will appeal to an international audience of scholars and practitioners of Paganism, similar to that of *The Pomegranate*, but should also be of interest to scholars of religion more broadly, since York examines paganism in a global context, and as it occurs within other world religions, as root religion.

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Jenny Blain, *Nine Worlds of Seid-Magic: Ecstasy and Neo-Shamanism in Northern European Paganism* (London: Routledge, 2002), US\$80.00, Can\$120.00 (cloth), US\$22.95, Can\$34.95, £15.99 (paper).

Jenny Blain’s *Nine Worlds of Seid-Magic: Ecstasy and Neo-Shamanism in Northern European Paganism* is an experiment in a multi-methodological approach to describe both her experiences in the contemporary reconstruction of *seiðr* (Viking prophesy and magic) and her review of its origins, focusing on issues relevant to today’s practitioners. One of her main objectives is to support the authenticity of contemporary engagement with spirits and establish modern *seiðr* as a form of shamanism, in the face of what Blain refers to as academic “shamaophobia.” A second, and equally important, objective is addressed to the intended audience for the book, the Heathen/Ásatrú community itself, to whom Blain is trying to justify practices that some members see as unmanly, deviant, or effeminate.

Blain is strongest in her discussion of “lore,” the medieval texts that describe both mythology and family histories on which the Heathen community bases its belief-structure. The most significant historical sources to modern *seiðr* ritual are the Eddic poems *Völupsa*, *Baldursdraumr*, and *Völupdá in skamma*, and the narration of the visit of the *spákona* (seeress) Thorbjörg in *The Saga of Eric the Red*, which forms the basis of the widely practiced oracular *seiðr* ritual developed by Diana Paxson and the Hrafnar group, a Troth-affiliated Ásatrú group based in Berkeley, California. Blain’s discussion of the use of entheogens and other trance-induction methods, such as drumming, the practice of wrapping up in a cloak or animal skin, and visionary experience, especially with spirit animals, draws parallels between contemporary *seiðr* and historical Northern practices. Blain’s narrative of her own otherworldly journeys and the testimony of interviewees describe the range of methods and experiences claimed by this form of modern shamanism.

For the new Heathen, the critical issue is not whether *seiðr* (magic) or *spae* (foretelling)

is shamanistic, but if it is necessary to the development of mainstream Heathenism as a religion, complete with clergy, ritual structure, and behavioral norms, which are sometimes collected under the rubric of “Tru.” As Blain herself notes, many contemporary Heathens think of *seiðr* as being as evil and dangerous as did their Viking forebears (59-60, 97).

Blain addresses two seminal issues in understanding and evaluating *seiðr*: fear of magical women and distrust or dislike of unmanly men, invoking feminist critique in Chapter Six, “Re-Evaluating the Witch Queen,” and queer theory in Chapter Seven, “*Ergi* Seiðmen, Queer Transformation.”

By looking at text examples of women who did *seiðr*, considered “women’s magic” by many of today’s practitioners (90), Blain discusses views concerning gendering in historical and in contemporary practice. She first reviews the literature about women who practice not only divinatory skills, but shapechanging, casting a glamour to hide others, and various forms of spellcraft, practices that have come to the attention of Ásatrú reconstructionists. Two works are detailed, *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Gréttis saga*, both of which are rich in examples of women’s magic and folklore. Blain uses the example of Queen Gunnhildr, who appears in a number of sagas, to introduce the notion of *seiðr* as a woman’s political tool. Gunnhildr was a historical figure and a woman of unquestioned status, and who was eventually elevated to mythic status, a magically powerful woman and another “evil queen” who was trained by “Finnish sorcerers.” However, Gunnhildr hardly makes for a good example of the theory that women did magic because they had no other power on which to fall back (105).

Heiðr presents a more problematic invitation to discourse and interpretation. Heiðr/Freyja/Gullveig are usually considered the by-names of the same goddess, and Freyja, according to the thirteenth-century author Snorri Sturluson, was the first teacher of *seiðr*. “Heiðr” has come to mean “a witch” in general, and in many translations of the *Völuspá*, Heiðr is a seer and spellcaster who is welcomed by evil women. Blain suggests a feminist hermeneutic for this passage by offering an alternative reading, based on the relationship of Heiðr and Freyja to childbirth. In her reading, Heiðr is welcomed by women in need.

What we may conclude from Blain’s chapter on Witch Queens is that institutional patriarchal hegemony is neither restricted to academia nor Christianity, and the role of women who practiced magic was problematic historically, and that women who now practice *seiðr* have a rich literature to mine for folk magic and spiritual inspiration.

The problem of men who make *seiðr* is even more complex. In the literature there are many examples of men who make *seiðr*, given that the modern conceit of separating *seiðr*, *galdr* (spellcraft), rune magic, *fjölkyngi* (witchcraft), and transformational states such as those described as *berserkr* did not occur to historical Heathens. Since there were male Sámi shamans, and the majority of “witches” executed in Iceland were male, a tradition of male magic would seem to be well established. The problem comes from the word *ergi*, which has been translated as “unmanly.” The meaning of *ergi* is in part based on the “lore,” and in part on the modern location of “gayness.” The word is used in a derogatory way in the *Poetic Edda* and in *Lokasenna*, and was also used to describe the shamanistic states of Óðinn in his role as a sorcerer god. While in period these saga references to Óðinn as effeminate might have been regarded as knee-slapping humor or even political satire, it also established *ergi* as a homophobic insult related to men who are *seiðr*workers. Blain’s question is how contemporary men who “make *seiðr*” experience *ergi*.

At the heart of the issue is the perception that sorcerers need to become passive and submissive to spirits. However, the suggestion that male magic workers are necessarily submissive is not coherent with historical narratives of warrior shamans (for example the wide range of magical tools employed by men in *Hrólfs saga kraka*), which Blain excludes from the discussion. In reference to contemporary practice, Blain quotes Prudence Priest's suggestion that divine possession can unman, but that being "unmanned" is not the same as being "unmanly" (120). Nevertheless, Blain's conclusions are based on the perceptions of her informants, who identify the loss of control in trance states as unmanly.

Blain suggests that *ergi* can take on a new meaning under the rubric of queer studies. Blain points out that "homosexual" is a modern category, and suggests that the category of "two-spirit" or *berdache* (from North American indigenous cultures) might be useful in resolving the *ergi* issue for contemporary seiðrworkers. While Blain offers examples of gender blending as insult, this application of queer theory offers a hermeneutic applicable for the comfort level of men (many self-identified gays) who practice seiðr today. This is clearly an important issue to the Heathen community, given the traditionalist family values that many groups claim to embrace, such as one cited British Ásatrú community which holds that homosexuality is anti-family (121).

Blain makes a critical point when she suggests that the gap between "gender performativity" and shamanism can be breached, gender on the coat-tails of shamanism where there is permission to be "other" (133). Blain suggests that "Gender and sexuality are actively constituted, and constitutive of, specific sets of social relations," which include spirit, and altered consciousness states yield self-understanding "where gender is fluid, malleable, and changeable," which is transformative for seiðrworkers (133). This statement allows queer and feminist theory to have a place in understanding shamanism and altered states of consciousness, and offers a hermeneutic by which "dangerous" female and effeminate male magic workers can be included in the social fabric of the Heathen community.

While Blain points to her perceived conflict between skeptical academic analysis and the faith statements of practitioners regarding spirit journeys and other beliefs associated with traditional shamanism, her use of testimony can sometimes border on Heathen apologetics, if not Heathen polemics. She draws on a small sample of informants with whom she shares a community of faith. Although she claims that multi-locality is seminal to her methodology, she fails to note that the majority of her interviewees may be physically multi-local, but actually occupy a "virtual location," as most, if not all, have been on two well-known e-lists. As a result, most of the respondents have developed some degree of consensus regarding this new religion and seiðr practice through discourse amongst themselves. While this may not invalidate her investigation, this factor should be recognized.

Hrafnar-trained seers make up a large number of the seiðr community thanks to Diana Paxson's frequent and far-flung workshops. Although Blain cites Paxson's Umbanda training in trance possession, she fails to emphasize the extent to which this has influenced both worship and seiðr that Paxson teaches and practices. Óðinn "horsing" has become widespread, as has Óðinn devotion, and these are being formulated by the piety and religious testimony based on what are called UPGs (Unusual or Unprovable Personal Gnosis), which are shared on e-lists and web logs. In Paxson's oracular seiðr (or *spae*, more accurately) sessions, questions to gods, who are believed

to briefly possess a seer, have become far more frequent, and are far more critical to the community understanding of the “New Seiðr” than either consultation with the dead or natural spirits, which would seem to be more coherent with historical practice and cultural understanding. One would wish that Blain had discussed the overall effects that god possession is having on *seiðr* and on Heathenism as a social subculture.

All this points to a problem with observer-participant ethnography. While a post-modernist recognition of colonialist, patronizing and Orientalist elements in “traditional” ethnography may be valid, the ethnographer who is embedded in the community may romanticize observations. Blain might object to the scholarly bias against accepting shamanistic experience at face value, but blind acceptance of interviewees’ claims seems equally invalid. Blain’s choice of an uncritical acceptance of claims made by interviewees removes her from any evaluation of them based on context or content. Heathens do not necessarily embrace possession, trips to Hel, conversations with the Norns, or are overly concerned with the sacred geography of the Nine Worlds. Such testimony as, for example, Rauðhildr’s visionary visit with the little-known Maurinir (22-23) would leave most Heathens puzzled. And Bil Linzie’s exotic claim to have been trained by a Sámi shaman in the American Southwest (119) goes unexamined. Blain correctly notes that these experiences are “authentic” in that they are personally transformational, but they do not fit within the overall Heathen landscape or even shape developing Heathenism, the community that these “shamans” are supposed to serve.

Blain’s supposition that Heathenism, urban shamanism, and *seiðr* are examples of a postmodern trend is not supported. Her disclosure of contemporary distrust of magic, and the current wrestling with *ergi* as homosexual, unmanly, and therefore effeminate and cowardly (124), points to Heathenism, with or without *seiðr*, as traditional and reactionary. Paxson’s twice-quoted comment that she developed *seiðr* to give the women something to do while the men played at Viking games further suggests an underlying traditional social structure. An anthropological study that recognizes and deconstructs Western ontological assumptions may be postmodern, but making *seiðr* or practicing Heathenism may not be.

This book fills the gap in an examination of a shamanistic practice that is becoming more mainstream in Paganism. Practitioners of *seiðr* will find the interviews and opinions on where one goes when one goes “out there” both interesting and supportive. However, close reading of the text is needed to parse out the streams of material regarding Hrafnar high-seat practice, which locates the seer in Hel, Hrafnar three-seer (Norn) practice, which locates the seer at the Well of Wyrð, and the various definitions of the *fylgja*. Although Blain points out that most “*seiðr*” practiced is not magical but merely foretelling, or *spae*, she uses the word *seiðr* ubiquitously, which is confusing. And a more thorough index would have been helpful. Blain falls short in a lack of critical distance in evaluating *seiðr* within the context of its religious community, but rather globalizes the *seiðr* experience based on testimony of a relatively small and close-knit virtual community. However, this book is rich in information about and investigation of a complex and critical practice in reconstructive shamanism.

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Philip Heselton, *Wiccan Roots: Gerald Gardner and the Modern Pagan Revival* (Freshfields, Berkshire: Capall Bann Publishing, 2000), iv + 388 pp., £14.95 (paper).

The emergence of Wicca and Witchcraft in the last several decades has led to many speculations about its origins. At the center of these discussions is Gerald Brousseau Gardner, who credits himself in his own writings with rediscovering and reviving the religion and practice of witchcraft. Other scholars and writers describe him as inventing Wicca and identify his description of a surviving witchcraft tradition as part of that invention.

Heselton's purpose in researching and writing this work is to examine some of the influences on the intellectual and social life of Gardner, and to provide a focused study of some of Gardner's claims. Heselton proposes to prove that Gardner did indeed discover a surviving religion and was initiated into it by a witch named Dafo at the home of "Old Dorothy." In an appendix to Janet and Stewart Farrar's *The Witches Way* (Hale, 1984), Doreen Valiente, an initiate and priestess of Gardner, identified "Old Dorothy" as Dorothy Clutterbuck, a long time resident of the New Forest region. Prior to this time, many writers, such as Jeffrey Russell in *A History of Witchcraft: Sorcerers, Heretics and Pagans* (Thames & Hudson, 1980), charged that "Old Dorothy" was one of Gardner's inventions. Much of the author's attention is centered on the possible existence of a New Forest coven of hereditary witches and on the personas of Dafo and Old Dorothy. *Wiccan Roots* attempts to prove a clear path from Gardner and his associates to a family of hereditary witches.

The first chapter relates Gardner's life until retirement in 1936 at the age of 52. The book then provides a detailed examination of the events and the people that may have influenced him between 1936 and 1945, the decade during which Gardner moved to the New Forest region and was reportedly initiated into witchcraft. Heselton's approach not only relies on interviews and the examination of documents, but also, less critically, on the flashes of intuition available to him as a practicing Pagan and as the proclaimed initiate of a hereditary witch family. His documentary research consists of a detailed examination of letters, diaries, newspapers, journals, and archived documents, which he uses in tracing the family histories and backgrounds of the people who *may* have been a part of Gardner's life during this period. For sources on the life and thoughts of Gardner, Heselton consulted Gardner's novels and non-fiction and J. L. Bracelin's biography, *Gerald Gardner: Witch* (Octagon, 1960). According to a conversation with Patricia Crowther, another of Gardner's initiates and priestess, Gardner admitted to her husband that Gardner himself had written this last book. Heselton explains that the issue of authorship is a complex one because the purported writer of the biography at times specifically quotes Gardner and at other times does not. Authorship is further complicated by acknowledgment of evidence from Fred Lamont and other researchers that the biography was actually written by Indris Shah, a writer on many occult and spiritual topics.

Heselton begins by situating Gardner's interest in witchcraft within the intellectual and social movements of the time. Gardner was a man with immense curiosity for ceremony and the occult, which had already established him as an expert on Malay weaponry. His avid interest in naturism, or social nudity, came about as a prescription by his English doctor for chronic illnesses contracted while living in Malaya. Gardner's unique combination of interests in ritual, religions, and weaponry put him into contact with an assortment of people who provided inspiration and influence. Much of

Heselton's detailed examination focuses on the philosophies that Gardner studied and the people he may or may not have known, setting the stage for his introduction to the witches who reportedly initiated him.

Moving from London to escape the threatened bombings of war, Gardner sought a safe haven for not only himself and his wife, but also for his very valuable and historically significant collection of weaponry. He chose the village of Highcliff, near Christchurch on the edge of the New Forest. Here the presence of occult activity and naturist clubs dovetailed with his own demonstrated interests in folklore, alternate religions, and reincarnation. A group in nearby Christchurch under the leadership of George Alexander Sullivan studied Rosicrucianism. Sullivan and others also founded the Crotona Fellowship, an organization that held ceremonies, conducted classes, gave degrees, and produced plays that espoused their beliefs. Gardner was an actor in some of those amateur theatricals and attended some of the meetings. Through other members of the Fellowship, Gardner came into contact with a variety of esoteric philosophies including Co-masonry. The Fellowship also put him into contact with people who were pursuing occult interests, most notably Ernest William Mason and Rosetta Mason Fudge, the siblings of Susan Mary Mason. Heselton traces the history of the Mason family through three generations culminating in the generation known to Gardner. Members of this family were known to actively study Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, and Theosophy; and Bill Wakefield, a contemporary and friend of Ernie Mason, identified them to Heselton as hereditary witches. Heselton believes that the Masons put Gardner into contact with hereditary witchcraft and provided his connection to those witches who reportedly initiated him.

Although Doreen Valiente identified Old Dorothy as Dorothy Clutterbuck, Heselton points out that she did not prove that Clutterbuck was indeed the witch and hostess present at his reported initiation. Other scholars, including Ronald Hutton in *Triumph of the Moon* (Oxford University Press, 2000), theorize that Old Dorothy was actually a diversion designed to protect Dafo's identity. Heselton vigorously disagrees that Old Dorothy is merely a smokescreen, and a large portion of this work is devoted to an examination of the family life and interests of Dorothy Clutterbuck.

Dorothy Clutterbuck was a socially prominent, wealthy woman in the region, who put on amateur theatricals at her home and who entertained widely, but there is no documented evidence that Clutterbuck and Gardner knew one another or had occasion to come into contact. There are many reasons to think that they would not have been known to one another including differences in economic and social stations as well as differing interests. Heselton maintains that it would be possible for Clutterbuck to maintain the façade of a respectable, socially prominent woman while practicing witchcraft in secret. Much of the author's theory is based on an examination of her diaries, which are actually daybooks with poems written by Clutterbuck and illustrated by artistic friends. These charming books were intended to be read by others in her social circle and therefore, according to Heselton, needed to disguise any pagan leanings. A close reading of the poems by the author reveals a woman who loved nature and had a belief in fairies, and did not put forward strong Christian beliefs, and that her diaries suggest a "philosophy of life in harmony with that of the Craft" (204). The poems excerpted do not seem to be out of the ordinary for one of her educational background and social status. Moreover, as a faithful churchgoer, the extremes to which Clutterbuck would have had to lead a double life are at odds with the artifacts of her life. Clutterbuck appears to have been an interesting person in her own right, with an

unorthodox background that included a bigamous marriage, but there is no conclusive proof that she was the Old Dorothy referred to by Gardner in his description of his reputed initiation into hereditary witchcraft.

By his own admission, Heselton's belief that Dorothy Clutterbuck was the witch in whose house Gardner was reportedly initiated derives mainly from intuitive insights gained while visiting Clutterbuck's house. To use his own term, he judges her handwriting, name, garden, and house to be "witchy."

Heselton also examines the identity of Dafo, the person who reportedly initiated Gardner into the first degree of witchcraft. In *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* (Phoenix Publishing, 1989), Doreen Valiente states that Dafo was a music and elocution teacher. From this and other clues gleaned from contemporary magazine interviews, Heselton was able to credibly identify Dafo as Edith Rose Woodford-Grimes. She was involved in the Crotona Fellowship at the same time as Gardner and the Masons, and she lived on the same street as the Mason family for fifteen years, between 1922 and 1937. She was known to be friends with Gardner and, while she never publicly acknowledged any knowledge of witchcraft, her relationship to Gardner remained close and he even gave the bride away at her daughter's wedding. She never admitted to being a witch, even after Gardner publicly disclosed his affiliation, either because she was angry with him for revealing the secrets of witchcraft or, most probably, to protect her public professional life as a teacher and her private living circumstances with Christian relatives.

This book is a complex tapestry with numerous threads, many of which are long and tangled. Heselton patiently works at unraveling these, traveling backwards through generations of families to trace the influences that might have been brought to bear on Gardner, especially those that might prove the existence of a pre-existing witch family. Some of these threads seem tangential and irrelevant to the pattern that Heselton is trying to weave, and many of the facts he cites could produce conclusions different than the one that he proposes. Some of Heselton's arguments are convincing, but many raise more questions and provide more opportunities for further study. In every such case, the author is honest about where he thinks he has proven his case and where he feels he has not. *Wiccan Roots* provides a remarkable and compelling look at a crucial period in the life of Gerald Gardner.

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Ivan Hudec, *Tales from Slavic Myths*. Trans. Emma Nezinska and Jeff Schmitz with Albert Devine, ill. Karol Ondreicka (Wanaconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2000), 134 pp., \$85.00 (cloth), \$9.95 (paper).

"Cultural worship of Gods was an inextricable part of everyday life for the ancient Slavs. The ancient Slavic mind was open to nature and the material manifestations of weather . . ."

Rare indeed are English-language references about Slavic mythology, so the publication of Ivan Hudec's *Tales from Slavic Myths* was a surprise. Hudec was the Minister of Culture in Slovakia, so my presumption was that this text might be a little dry, and a little touristy, and more than slightly skewed. This assumption proved to

be incorrect. It is not an academic work, although vast amounts of scholarship went into the preparation of the materials, judging from the bibliography and the nature of the materials covered. Hudec includes an afterword entitled "Slavs and Slavdom," by Dr Dusan Caplovic of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, that traces theories on the cradlelands of the Slavic peoples throughout Eastern and Central Europe and the advent of Christianity.

Starting with a section entitled "The Age of Dreams," the book introduces the reader to the sweeping realm of creation myths, pantheons, spirits and beliefs in a chronological presentation broken into sections.

The first deals with the creation of the universe, tales of the World Tree, and how humankind came to be. "The Stone Age" shows how it was that the Gods began helping people, why autumn has no patron God, and what is the world of Morena and her Kingdom of Souls. The gift of Fire begins "The Iron Age." Included is a little-told tale that describes how the Slavs lost their favor with the Gods and how the spirits were taught the skills needed to oversee the world. The final myth reminds the seeker of tales that "patiently, the Gods amuse themselves as they wait in the Giant Oak, knowing that someday they will recover the esteem of the people and receive their due homage again."

Since *Tales* is not a text, there is no comparison of mythological motifs, but some are easy enough to pick out. Svarog creates the universe by blowing life into matter, then sits back and sleeps in the sun until the cycle ends, and chaos dissembles it; the sun goes out, Svarog wakes, gathers the shattered pieces together and breathes a new universe into existence. Pripelaga, the earth, gives birth to new beings of clay with stones for bones; these creatures slowly evolve into humankind. The Gods live in the Giant Oak (or linden or birch, but always in a world tree) where they oversee the lives of humanity. A young man sets out to steal wheat from the Gods for his people, and in turn is punished by them.

Other stories are directly tied to the "FolkSoul" of the Slavic people. In the tale "What Insulted the Victorious Slavs," a captive tells the people they have usurped the land from another tribe who worship unfamiliar Gods. They begin to question what they have always known to be true, which causes them to be conquered by the very people they conquered long ago. This self-deprecation and sense of fatalism is a very stereotypical Slavic motif, something not readily found in other cultures.

*Tales from Slavic Myths* was published in two editions, a hardcover designated as a teacher's copy, and a paperback version for students. The limited edition hardcover is worth the rather high price tag, as it is laced with 97 full-color renderings of both scenes from the myths and Slavic antiquities. Some of the illustrations are printed in full-page format to resemble a picture book. Inside the front cover and placed strategically in the narrative are maps delineating the Slavic homelands, with sites of religious or archaeological interest marked. Throughout the text are sidebars that fill in the information gaps for those who are unfamiliar with the culture of the Slavs. The paperback edition contains the same additional materials as the hardcover, but in black and white, making this one well within a student's (or library's) budget.

Hudec's selected bibliography contains a number of source materials in English, and recommends three references for extensive additional research. The final feature is a guide to the Slavic pantheon, in outline format ordered by importance and correspondence.

I truly expected this text to be disappointing, because so many attempts at delineating

Slavic myths are. Through the first reading I saw little to dispel that presumption, until I stood back and assessed my reaction. There is a cultural tendency to lump all peoples of a given ethnic background together, assuming that all Celtic peoples were the same, all Germanic, all Slavic, ad infinitum. Of course, intellectually we know this is not true, and when I reminded myself that not only were the major groups of Slavs different from one another, but within each modern Slavic nation existed many different tribes with separate but similar cultures, I was able to revisit this book with a different attitude. Much of the material was unfamiliar to me, but it had threads woven through it that hinted of things I did know. The wonderfully crafted stories filled in many gaps in my own experience and sometimes gave new names to deities I had known of before. The stories sing of the soul of the Slavs, and this text would make a rare but welcome classroom introduction to their mythology.

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