

Book Reviews

Sabina Magliocco, *Witching Culture: Folklore and Neo-Paganism in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 280 pp., \$55 (cloth), \$19.95 (paper).

A fair number of books, both scholarly and semi-scholarly, provide overviews of modern Paganism. Sabina Magliocco's *Witching Culture* is the best survey to date, particularly if the focus of one's interest is North American Paganism. In fact, it would be my first choice for a textbook in any university class with a significant component on contemporary Paganism. In addition to being a useful survey, *Witching Culture* also breaks important new ground in Pagan Studies. In fact, I anticipate that in the near future it will come to be regarded as a groundbreaking book – one to which all future studies of Paganism will refer.

I was deeply touched by Magliocco's introductory narrative, where she relates an experience she had during a ritual that confirmed her intuition that her academic vocation was also her spiritual path. This highly personal lead-in story and the author's subsequent reflections in the Introduction provide readers with a clear sense of the perspective from which she approaches her topic. Magliocco makes effective use of this narrative structure – evocative personal story followed by academic reflection – throughout her book. I found her initial discussion of how contemporary ethnography has struggled to renegotiate the boundary between engagement and distance fascinating.

Witching Culture is divided into three major sections that roughly correspond to the three stages of modern Pagan ritual. Part I, "Roots and Branches," provides readers with a basic history of the movement and an overview of American Paganism. Part II, "Religions of Experience," examines Pagan ritual, with a special interest in the ecstatic experiences participants have during ritual. Magliocco views personal experiences of religious ecstasy as being at the heart of the movement. Part III, "Beyond Experience: Religion and Identity," discusses how contemporary Paganism fits into American society – in terms of the appeal of an oppositional culture and in terms of the issue of cultural borrowing.

Almost every chapter contains either new insights or original analyses that extend prior discussions to a new depth. For example, I was impressed by the author's discussion of how modern Paganism was influenced by early anthropology and folklore studies. This is a topic that others have dealt with, but Magliocco takes the analysis to a new level. I was also impressed by the author's discussion of cultural appropriation, which is easily the most nuanced analysis of this issue I have ever read.

Though I do not have any real criticism of *Witching Culture*, there are a number of different aspects of modern Paganism missing from the book that I wish the author had touched on. In particular, I and other researchers have been impressed by the importance of the "Teen Witch" fad that has swelled the ranks of the contemporary

Pagan movement with youthful recruits – a fad that, for better or for worse, promises to influence if not reshape the movement. Many observers have also been struck by the rapid growth in the number of solitaires, a subpopulation that has come to constitute the majority of contemporary Pagans. *Witching Culture* mentions solitaires once in passing (59) the Teen Witch fad only indirectly (via a few passing mentions of Silver Raven Wolf, 68-69).

I would also like to have seen at least a mention – if not some analysis – of so-called “Witch Wars,” which is not a minor phenomenon in this decentralized, anarchistic subculture. Finally, Magliocco describes a number of magical rituals that seem to have had positive results (e.g., one a healing ritual and the other an “employment” ritual). I would like to have seen a discussion of a magical working that failed to produce the desired result, and an analysis of the various interpretive strategies participants relied upon to understand their failed magic.

As I have already indicated, I do not intend these observations to be criticisms. Rather, I am merely pointing out other important phenomena on the Pagan landscape that fall outside the scope of *Witching Culture*. These points aside, I can heartily recommend this book as a “must read” for anyone in this field, whether academic observers or reflective participants.

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Adrian Murdoch, *The Last Pagan: Julian the Apostate and the Death of the Ancient World* (Stroud, UK: Sutton Publishing, 2003), xvi + 255 pp., £20 (cloth).

Jonathan Kirsch, *God against the Gods: The History of the War between Monotheism and Polytheism* (New York: Viking Compass, 2004), xi + 336 pp., \$25.95 (cloth).

Anyone thinking that the fourth-century CE was a long time ago is both right and wrong. Right in that 1,700 years is a long time in human history, but wrong in that certain religious and cultural controversies of that era have loud echoes in our own.

At the intersection of these controversies stands the figure of Flavius Claudius Julianus, better known as the emperor Julian “the Apostate,” the would-be philosopher-king. During his brief reign (316–63) he attempted to revitalize Roman Paganism before dying in a cavalry skirmish near present-day Samarra, Iraq, part of the empire’s protracted conflict with its Persian rival. One small example may suffice: while one faction of the Christian home-schooling movement in America calls for “Classical Christian education,” based on the *trivium* of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, another faction reacts in alarm, saying that such education is not biblical and may lead to “addiction to Greek mythology.” Julian, as readers of either Murdoch’s or Kirsch’s book will be reminded, dealt with a similar education issue by simply forbidding Christian teachers to teach Hesiod, Homer, etc. Rather than endanger their faith, he proclaimed, “let them go and teach Matthew and Mark in the church” – thus effectively banning Christian teachers from private or municipal schools without actually saying so.

Kirsch, the author of biographies of Moses and King David and *The Harlot by the Side of the Road: Forbidden Tales of the Bible*, writes not against Christianity as such, nor

does he deal at all with contemporary Pagan revivals. His inspiration is Al-Qaeda, not Ásatrú—in other words, the violent behavior of what Kirsch calls monotheistic “rigorists.” “Indeed,” he writes, “all the excesses of religious extremism in the modern world can be seen as the latest manifestations of a dangerous tradition that began in the ancient past. When the Taliban dynamited the Buddhist statuary of Afghanistan, they were following the example of the idol-smashers of antiquity” (283). The hijackers of 11 September 2001, he notes in his introductory chapter, had “embraced the simple but terrifying logic that lies at the heart of monotheism: if there is only one god, if there is only one right way to worship that god, then there is only one fitting punishment for failing to do so—death” (2).

He begins with Akhenaton (fourteenth century BCE), the young Egyptian pharaoh who elevated the worship of the divine Sun disk Aton to a top-down monotheism that never appealed to the Egyptian masses and that ended abruptly with his death. Kirsch moves then to Hebrew monotheists “who did not define wickedness and sin in terms of moral and ethical content...but rather the offering of worship to gods and goddesses other than the True God” (35), focusing the favored metaphor of unfaithful Israel as the adulterous wife and on the reign of King Josiah (seventh century BCE) who strove to purge polytheistic religion from among the Israelites, before moving on to Julian’s life and reign.

God against the Gods, then, is ultimately part of the same conversation as the questions “Is militant Islam compatible with secular democracy?” or “Must we eliminate all references to Christmas in the public square?” Since Kirsch’s greatest concern is to illuminate the terrifying spectacle of monotheism united to the power of a totalitarian state (he counts Nazism and Communism as forms of secular monotheism), his answers to those questions probably would be “No” and “Not necessarily, but...” His conclusion argues that “the values that the Western world embraces and celebrates—cultural diversity and religious liberty—are pagan values” (284); consequently, his position likely would be that “rigorism” must give way at least partly to polytheism.

Less helpfully, Kirsch does not position his polytheism versus monotheism in the current of discussion going back to Nietzsche’s pronouncement that “God is dead.” Although it seems obvious to connect this re-evaluation of polytheism with the commonplaces of postmodernist thinking—they clearly are part of it—he has preferred the biographical approach. That approach makes for a readable book about “great men,” but it misses the opportunity to connect his subject with philosophical and intellectual trends outside religion.

Meanwhile, Julian’s doomed attempt to revive Roman state Paganism and make himself into Plato’s philosopher-king have inspired yet another biography, Adrian Murdoch’s *The Last Pagan*. Murdoch gallops through the events of Julian’s life from his upbringing, orphaned by the palace assassinations ordered by his uncle, the avowedly Christian emperor Constantius II, through his unlikely rise to power, his eventful 18 months as emperor, and his death in battle. Murdoch’s style is lively although marred by frequent dangling modifiers, e.g., “Wounded across the stomach in a hunting accident, doctors in this case also decided not to suture...”

The book’s best feature is its epilogue, which traces Julian’s reception down the ages: a virtual ogre during the Middle Ages, rehabilitated somewhat during the Renaissance, but again used by seventeenth-century English Protestant pamphleteers as a symbol of repression, in a complicated equation that matched Julian’s Paganism with the Roman Catholic Church, both opposed to the “true faith.” Yet he also could become

a “a mascot for the Age of Reason, a symbol of toleration” to John Locke and Voltaire; and, of course, he received a gentle treatment in Edward Gibbon’s *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which did much to ensure interest in his life down to our time.

In this bibliographic survey Murdoch continues to trace Julian’s career up to the present in fine art, poetry (including that of C.P. Cavafy), biography, and fiction. He misses, oddly, Polymnia Athanassiadi’s *Julian: An Intellectual Biography* (1981, revised 1992). One of that book’s reviewers, James O’Donnell, called Julian “a figure of far greater potency in our time than he ever was in his own.” Certainly, as long as we continue to revisit the religious controversies of Julian’s time, he will retain that potency.

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James R. Lewis, *Legitimizing New Religions* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), viii + 272 pp., \$60 (cloth), \$ 21.95 (paper).

Overall, this is a worthwhile book for those studying new religious movements. It has little that deals specifically with contemporary Western Paganism (apart from one chapter on Satanism and a brief discussion of Gerald Gardner), but it examines many issues that are very relevant to Paganism. The book focuses on legitimation strategies in new religious movements, with each chapter providing a detailed case study to illustrate a different aspect of legitimation. Contemporary and historical religious movements reviewed include the Movement for Spiritual Inner Awareness, the native American prophet religions, the Jesus-in-India story, Scientology, Satanism, Heaven’s Gate and Unitarianism. The second half of the book examines delegitimation strategies including anti-cult atrocity tales, religious insanity and the use of the word ‘cult’ as a rhetorical strategy. A chapter describing research on Soka Gakai International demonstrates that in the past academics have made theological and moral judgements of new religions under the guise of academic objectivity.

For example, Lewis does an excellent job demonstrating that the beliefs of Heaven’s Gate were quite reasonable to anyone immersed in the occult-metaphysical-New Age subculture of the time. He charts the links between ascended masters and ufonauts, the resurrection and the idea of extraterrestrial ‘walk-in’, and the idea that our time on earth is a terrestrial classroom. He also shows that New Age beliefs about near-death experiences ‘if taken seriously... paint a positive enough portrait of dying to take the sting out of death. Thus, far from being crazy or irrational, even the final dramatic exit of Heaven’s Gate becomes understandable in terms of the thought world of the metaphysical subculture from which Applewhite drew his theological synthesis’ (p. 140). Lewis’s more general point is that legitimation in new religions is not simply a product of the leader’s charisma, rather legitimation is a product of a social consensus among followers that beliefs are plausible. This consensus is more easily maintained, argues Lewis, when the leader draws on an already existing set of religious ideas.

Although I have read Lewis’s articles on Satanism before, it was ‘wicked’ to read it again. Based on his own survey of 140 Satanists and other fieldwork, Lewis demonstrates that Satanism has become routinized into an identifiable religious tradition. In contrast to LaVey’s original appeal to science to legitimate his animalistic image of humanity, many contemporary Satanists treat *The Satanic Bible* as a diabolically

inspired quasi-scripture. As the Church of Satan has splintered into a variety of denominations, Satanists have argued about who is, and is not, a true Satanist. These debates appeal to *The Satanic Bible* as an authority, and to traditions of ritual practice, in a manner that is very similar to the legitimation strategies deployed in other religious traditions. While there are some Satanists who retain a LeVeyan appeal to rational authority, many Satanists do appear to be mirroring the textual and institutionally based arguments for authenticity characteristic of other religions of the book. There is something very beautiful about Lewis's demonstration that the followers of the dark one himself are shaped by the same social processes and principles as the religious traditions they seek to reject. Perhaps God is a sociologist with an evil sense of humour?

I particularly enjoyed the discussion of the brainwashing controversy. In Chapter 8 Lewis reports the results of his own survey of 154 former members of 'half a dozen different controversial religious movements' (164), 65 of whom had been involved in either exit counselling or coercive deprogramming by the anti-cult movement. The survey results convincingly demonstrate that negative accounts of new religious movements are largely a result of anti-cult exit counselling and deprogramming. In Chapter 9 the same survey is used to examine 'post-involvement syndrome' with symptoms such as nightmares, hallucinations and suicidal tendencies that anti-cultists attribute to participation in new religious movements. Lewis argues that forced abductions combined with the intensive aggressive verbal harassment of deprogramming generate these post-traumatic stress-like symptoms rather than participation in new religious movements. In Lewis's survey those who had no contact with the anti-cult movement were much less likely to report such symptoms in comparison to those who had voluntary or involuntary exit counselling from the anti-cult movement. In Lewis's words: 'information disease is the direct result of the traumatic transition out of a non-traditional religion rather than the result of anything experienced while in such a group' (190).

The discussion of the Unitarians is primarily historical, focusing on Ram Mohan Roy (1774-1833). Lewis argues that the substantial interest in Roy's Bengal Unitarian movement shown by the Anglo-American Unitarians was primarily because of the legitimation it lent the Anglo-Americans: 'the knowledge that there were people in different parts of the world who held the same beliefs (which had apparently been reached independently of one another's influence) would tend to reinforce one's convictions about the veracity of these beliefs' (150).

Scholars who have worked long in this field will find, perhaps, that some of Lewis's discussion is well-covered ground. Some of the chapters are based on articles already published or summarize earlier literature. However, to those of us who are less familiar with the articles published in the 1980s, Lewis has provided some excellent summaries. Many of the ideas and arguments in the book are new or restated in innovative ways.

There are a few minor irritations in the book. The introduction's summary of chapter contents, and the acknowledgements, systematically assign incorrect chapter numbers. I suspect Lewis initially intended to make the introduction Chapter 1, then changed his mind and made it numberless, but forgot to renumber the chapter descriptions.

I was a little frustrated that Lewis didn't systematize his analysis of legitimation and delegitimation strategies in an overall summary chapter. This means that you have to read the whole book if you want to understand his overall argument. Someone else will have to do this summarizing, if Lewis does not do it himself in an article. However, the book 'works' because Lewis provides engaging and analytically

incisive narratives about the religious traditions he discusses.

Lewis writes with a sensitivity and respect that demonstrates a deep empathy. I suspect this in part derives from his methodology. He makes the point that as far as possible he has made an attempt to directly contact the religious communities he discusses. One example of this is found in Lewis's argument that direct religious experience is itself powerfully legitimating of religions (27). This should not be underestimated or explained away as a source of religious belief. In short, the book is clearly written, sensitive and insightful. I will be recommending it to my students.

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Barbara Goff, *Citizen Bacchae: Women's Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), xiii + 400 pp., \$60/£38.95 (cloth).

Much of ancient Greek religion has a "desperately alien quality" from a modern perspective, because Christianity "created an unbridgeable divide from the pagan religions that came before" (Moses I. Finley, Foreword to *Greek Religion and Society*, edited by P.E. Easterling and J.V. Muir [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985], 4). By contrast with, say, Greek epic, philosophy, and historiography, Greek religious mores have left no sustained legacy in the modern world. Instead, we have a multitude of textual and material remains that are difficult to envision as a once-living complex of traditions that rural and urban Greeks actually maintained in the past and handed on across generations. In *Citizen Bacchae: Women's Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece* Barbara Goff makes a valuable contribution toward piecing together the shards of the former social complex of ancient Greek ritual as practiced by women, and she does so in a manner that avoids romanticizing the Paganism of times past. Her study focuses mainly on classical Athens of the fifth and fourth centuries but deals with other periods and cities of ancient Greece as well, where evidence allows.

Goff's book, as suggested by the title, *Citizen Bacchae*, deals almost exclusively with so-called free Athenian and other Greek women, that is, women as mothers, daughters, and sisters in enfranchised Greek kin groups, and not slave women or resident alien women or other women in between freedom and slavery. This is an important point, for her study's very notion of religious rituals in Greek society, and of female agency in the rituals, would almost certainly be very different if her study strove to include available information about rituals as practiced by those women in Greek society who were even more marginal than the mothers, daughters, and sisters of Greek male citizens.

Citizen Bacchae is knowledgeable in its use of primary and secondary sources, and it is socially engaged from a historically grounded feminist perspective that "strives to restore women to history and to restore our history to women" (26, citing Joan Kelly). This study is also skilled in its array of interpretive methods and applied theories from cultural anthropology, Marxist criticism, feminist theory, and cultural studies. These methods are carefully explicated in the Introduction. Chapter 1 concerns women's cycles of specific ritual practices; Chapter 2 deals subtly with ritual as a formative component of female sexuality and of women as gendered subjects; Chapter 3 addresses how female religious ritual constitutes a political identity or citizenship of sorts for women in polis society; Chapter 4 articulates a meaningful female culture by integrating women's ritual, female-authored poetry, and portrayals of women in

Greek vase painting; and Chapter 5 draws on the strengths of Chapters 1 through 4 to reassess how women's ritual is reconfigured in male-authored Greek drama. Throughout this work Goff raises worthwhile questions about the social significance of free women in Greek religious ritual, and through her methodological virtuosity she is able to elicit a rich array of fresh ideas that make progress toward envisioning these women's rituals as a once-complex, vibrant, and three-dimensional phenomenon, rather than as ruins long flattened and scattered many centuries ago. She presents her investigations in a thoughtful manner that has a tendency to become ponderous but is nonetheless substantive and worth careful reading.

Goff's main driving inquiry is to elucidate how religious ritual in Greek society in various respects taught women who were mothers, daughters, and sisters in the polis to be invested in the *Kinder* and *Kuche* conventions of their own subordination, while in other respects providing a venue through which the women could create cultural authority, engage in intellectual creativity, and bond together in collective groups. She persuasively demonstrates that women's rituals often functioned as an ongoing interchange or dialectic between opposing features of dissidence and liberation on the one side and conformity and subordination on the other, not simply as one or the other. Hence, as Goff shows, it is simplistic to stress either one side or the other when dealing with ritual, such as the one-sided view that women's Greek rituals were nothing more than a patriarchal trap and meager substitute for authentic power or, conversely, that the rituals were a female-empowering gift of the goddesses. This interchange or dialectic between release and repression is intrinsic to the dynamic of "ideology" by Goff's definition, and women's religious ritual as she explores it is predominantly an ideology in its social workings (9-11).

The emphasis on the ideological dialectic of women's Greek rituals is accordingly the most prevalent recurrent theme of the *Citizen Bacchae*. For instance, Goff demonstrates that the Thesmophoria in honor of Demeter is an institution that involves female-specific parallels to holding office as authoritative citizens, but this citizenship is undermined and arguably only quasi-political because women were excluded from playing a role in the human governance of the polis (205-11). Likewise, the ritual turning points of marriage, birth, and death in Greek families brought women into the public sphere as agents, but only in order to perform ceremonies dramatizing the altered membership in the traditional female domain of the *oikos* or house (26-35). Further, women's rituals that were part of the civic calendar gave the female practitioners, and priestesses especially, far more of a public presence and ability to move about outdoors than has hitherto been recognized, but many of the ritual tasks that women went out in public to do, such as the Plynteria and Adonia, replicated and reinforced their domestic roles as wives, daughters, and mothers responsible for tasks such as weaving and washing (51-61). In addition, girls' choruses functioned in one respect as celebratory community events in which the choruses could take pride, but also as an objectified display of budding female adolescents presented to the gaze of males up to twice their age and older, who surveyed them as prospective malleable girl brides (85-98). These examples are but a sampling of many venturesome ways in which the author elucidates the ideological tensions of women's Greek rituals, and thereby brings this social phenomenon to life in its manifold ramifications.

Perhaps most interesting of all, Goff conjoins women's ritual – largely as depicted on Greek vase paintings arguably produced for a female audience – with the scant remains of poetry by Sappho, Nossis, and Erinna to show that Greek women must

have shared a spiritually rewarding culture that derived from their rituals and provided them with distinctive poetic sensibilities. This culture, however, was kept in a marginal place as a subculture in antiquity (227-88). This culture of Greek women in antiquity, though largely muted today, is brought to a much more audible level thanks to Goff's exploration of its emotionally complex, and partly erotic, overtones.

Though Goff's study of women's Greek ritual is mostly clear, albeit slow-going on occasion, here and there her argument is puzzling. For instance, at the outset of her discussion about how ritual served as a quasi-citizen activity for the female participants, she maintains, "If we pursue this homology [between ritual and politics], we are in a position to argue that ritual dramatization of women's citizenship offers a genuine, if qualified, alternative to the customary figuring of women's exclusion from the city" (164). By the end of this discussion, however, Goff states, "the ritual sphere provides the solution to the problem of women and the city in its fantasies of female citizenship, but the solution remains imaginary" (226). Women's Greek ritual cannot be both "a genuine, if qualified alternative to... women's exclusion from the city" and yet only an imaginary phantasm. She provides stronger evidence for thinking that it is the former, such as the role of the Sixteen Women of Elis as described by Aristotle (191).

Even though Goff recognizes that "'women's ritual practice' is whatever women do that constructs for them a relation to the divine" (15), she excludes the theological and spiritual dimensions of women's ritual from the research project of *Citizen Bacchae*. As she expressly states, "I do not mount an investigation into the figure of 'the goddess' and what she may mean for female spirituality. I am interested in historical women rather than in transcendent versions of femininity." Likewise, "I do not address... in detail... the spiritual or salvific or eschatological component to Greek religion" (15, n. 29). These exclusions are unfortunate given the parameters of her study, because divinity and spirituality are an intrinsic and powerful part of religious ideology, and goddesses mattered greatly to Greek women. Goff gives only scant mention to these two dimensions of women's ritual partly because she continues to harbor the conventional yet dubious view that spirituality or reflection on the divine were a virtually non-existent feature of ancient Greek rituals: "Ancient Greek religion was chiefly a matter of behavior and observances rather than of spirituality, personal conscience, and salvation" (15, cf. 26). Goff's own elucidation of Greek female-authored poetry in connection with women's ritual tells against this conventional view.

Reservations aside, *Citizen Bacchae: Women's Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece* makes a great contribution to elucidating the social complex of women's roles in Greek religious rituals. Thanks in part to Goff's acumen in interpretive methods, her work takes the study of women in Greek religion to a higher level, which scholars, students, and readers with similar interests would do well to emulate.

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Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 294 pp., \$28.50 (cloth), \$19 (paper).

Although the title readily suggests that this book has little to offer for the study of contemporary Paganism, there is a surprising amount of useful information for those

of us who are interested in the construction and usage of the modern family and “family values” as a rhetorical device of the Christian right. In fact, the title of this book does not do justice to its contents in several respects.

Rosemary Ruether does give a fascinating, if thumbnail, analysis of the history of Christianity, its changing and varied attitudes toward family from the downright antifamily stance of early Christianity to the embrace of the totally fictional “traditional, Biblical family” of male headship and female subordination. While contemporary Christians seem to believe that Christianity has “always championed the family” and family values, this “belief ignores three fourths of actual Christian history,” which had an ambivalent if not wholly negative attitude toward sex and reproduction. The ideal Christian was often seen as unmarried, celibate, and childless (4).

As suggested by the title, Ruether gives a thorough, although necessarily brief, account of the development of the modern (read Victorian) family and the ways in which idealized images of family seldom matched their economic and social realities. But she also provides highly useful historical information about the women’s movement and keen analysis of its own shifting attitudes vis-à-vis gender, race, economics, family, and the complex connections between them.

The book also illustrates how ideals of womanhood, including those rooted in the feminine divine—in this case the Virgin Mary—may be used to conceal oppressive social structures and religious ideologies that have little to do with complicated and conflicting family and economic realities. The image of the ideal woman as Virgin Mother—chaste, pure, and delicate—that was carefully crafted in the Cult of True Womanhood during the Second Great Awakening is used to support “family values” that are “generally coded messages about women and how they should behave in relation to men” (5). Ruether’s analysis serves as a reminder that female images of sacrality do not automatically translate into social and economic empowerment for women.

The one jarring note in this otherwise interesting book came in her discussion of more progressive re-imaginings of family. While she was evidently willing to include Jews, Muslims, and even Buddhists in interfaith dialogue, notably missing were Hindus, Pagans, or practitioners of indigenous religious traditions as possible partners in conversation (224). Perhaps the discussion was limited to those with mono-theisms or a-theisms (as in non-theisms), but not poly-theisms.

On the whole, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family* is an interesting read, especially for its several historical summaries, making parts of it eminently useful for the classroom.

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Paul Christopher Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip and Gods: The Transformation of Brazilian Candomblé* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), xi + 225 pp., \$19.95.

The concept of “secretism” is central to Paul Johnson’s study of Brazilian Candomblé. He defines it as “the milling of the pretense and reputation of secrecy; not that which cannot be spoken but rather how the rule not to speak it gets around...” (23). Johnson sees secrecy as “a discursive framing of power” (24) that is “most powerful in the

moment of revelation" (26). This is because the telling of a secret shifts mere possession into active alliance. With secretism, however, there is more power in keeping the secret than in telling it. In his view, as it becomes progressively more public in nature, secretism is gradually edging out secrecy in modern Candomblé.

In building his case Johnson clearly describes the different historical circumstances Candomblé practitioners have faced, from the shattering experiences of their arrival as slaves in Brazil, to the gradual creation of their own sacred space through carefully guarded secrecy, their religion's continued illegal status after emancipation and its later friendly, even enthusiastic, acceptance as the Vargas regime sought to create a uniquely Brazilian national identity in the 1940s. Since that time Brazilian Candomblé has been a religion of secrets operating openly.

While secrecy has always characterized Candomblé communities, the circumstances under which they operate have changed fundamentally, as has to some degree the kind of secrecy practiced. For a long time meetings and membership needed to be kept secret because the religion was illegal. In addition secrecy was and remains important within the religion, as progressively higher levels of initiation expose practitioners to knowledge that had previously been kept from them. This knowledge is rarely, if ever, simply spoken or presented in written form. It is considered experiential, and initiation opens practitioners up to ever deeper levels of experience. Finally, secrecy manifests in claims by competing *terreiros* (temples) to having the "most authentic" *fundamentos* of the tradition. For Johnson this continuing emphasis on secrecy raises the question "if secrets continue to be claimed as forcefully as ever despite a marked shift in historical context...of what [do] secrets mean to those who claim them, once the historical context for their necessity as armor is removed" (30). As he put it, "The enigma that this book seeks to address is that of the complex relationships among the decline of secrets, the perseverance of bodies ritualized into secrecy, and the rise of secretism" (17).

Johnson's book is divided into an introductory theoretical section, a historical overview, accounts from his field work, and an investigation of "public Candomblé" as practiced and taught by those with access to public media rather than traditional *terreiros*. The opening section provides a discussion of how leading theorists have treated secrecy, as well as a brief and clear description of Candomblé. Johnson's historical study covers Candomblé until the 1940s, by which time it had become legal. His account of his field work includes descriptions of initiation processes he participated in, emphasizing the "closing" of the body, and accounts of three communal rituals: an *Ebo* offering taking place within the *terreiro*; the Waters of *Oxalá*, an annual honoring of *Oxalá* that requires members to briefly leave the *terreiro* early in the morning to obtain water from a well; and a third, the group's participation in downtown Rio de Janeiro, where they and thousands of others gather for the day of *Yemanjá*. The theme of the opening and closing of bodies, the *terreiro*, and wider conceptions of sacred space unite these descriptions.

The final section discusses public Candomblé, as whites and Asians increasingly join Afro-Brazilians in its practice, eroding its ethnic identity but at the same time reaching out to all Brazil, and even the world at large (156). Those who took Candomblé public abandoned its traditional secrecy. Many practitioners today have no connection with established *terreiros*, having learned instead from books, television, the internet, newspapers, and even university courses (159).

The move from oral and experiential transmission to the printed word has

encouraged the religion's "rationalization," emphasizing what can be directly communicated through the media. Texts are standardizing the religion, as people come to expect an "orthodox" approach. Johnson perceptively notes that in the process this transmission of *Candomblé's* practices is also transforming them (162). Ironically, the conservative practices of the *terreiros* are more fluid, for "tradition is less a fixed thing than a rhetorical technique for creating cultural coherence" (38).

The result is a "protestantization" of *Candomblé*, "a condensation of ritual and a concomitant elaboration of discourse on internal states and meanings" (169). Religious knowledge is "democratized" as religious practice is simplified. But these changes raise the question of to what extent the religion remains *Candomblé* rather than having become something different.

Successful religions seem to face a fateful choice to either remain small because they demand a great deal of commitment and effort from followers, while offering a powerful and transformative personal relationship with the Sacred, or a more accessible and less demanding practice that is better able to be fitted into the requirements most people face of regular employment, families, and often geographical mobility. This apparent dichotomy is really a continuum, but the pressures of modernity push continually toward the accessible and convenient end of this gradation in practice.

Any secret written down seems to have gotten out into how-to *Candomblé* books promising readers that if they follow the teachings within their pages, they can also practice *Candomblé*, even in the absence of a temple or lineage. The same thing is obviously happening in the United States and elsewhere regarding contemporary Pagan practices.

In my own understanding, indigenous religions such as *Candomblé* grow out of shamanism in the broad sense, incorporating its spontaneity as well as its power to a greater or lesser degree of institutionalization. In the modern world this ecstatic dimension is further superseded by even more doctrinal standardization. In doing so, the living vitality of personal encounter with Spirit is potentially obscured, dampened, and channeled into easily digestible avenues. Doctrinal religions enforced by organizational and community conformity are the ultimate expression of this process.

But at their root indigenous religions are not doctrinal. The challenge facing *Candomblé* and similar practices is how to preserve the ecstatic openness to Spirit for those willing to make the commitment while simultaneously making itself available to all. Johnson's Brazilian study contributes important insights in understanding modernity's impact on indigenous religions once they enjoy freedom to practice openly, at the price of opening themselves up to the modern world's insatiable curiosity about everything and its desire for simplification. I believe this analysis is one of the most valuable features of this volume. Here I recommend it highly.

Critical Comments

Johnson faces a problem that any traditional academic confronts when studying spiritual traditions that are experiential rather than doctrinal. Written texts can be studied effectively from the outside, given a sympathetic as well as critical effort. But what is a scholar to do when a religion like *Candomblé* is described as a "religion of the hand" of "right practice instead of right doctrine" (12). But right practice is more than going through the motions. It requires an attitude of respect, without agreement about exactly what is respected.

The question is particularly apt when, as he says, he does not believe in the *Orixás*,

and was agnostic about gods in general (13). He tells us his teacher said that was not important, but I would be surprised if such a view were universal within the Candomblé community. She also seemed anxious to benefit from the prestige of having a foreign scholar choose her *terreiro* to study (12).

A strong attitude of non-belief may well deter someone from being open to the experiences that make the religion most meaningful to its practitioners. Further, telling your teacher you do not believe in the deities to whom she has devoted her life is not a strategy I would think well calculated to learn maximally from the relationship. Reading the book, one is always aware that the author writes from the outside. Johnson argues that, given the nature of his topic, this does not matter (12).

I am not so sure. Even in as well argued a book as *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, I think this experiential lacuna makes a difference. The author's concept of secretism, that what is important is not the secret, but that there is a secret, and that this is a tool of power, is insightful and in my view applies as appropriately to some contemporary Pagan traditions as to Candomblé. But this insight is mostly useful in studying the dynamics of competition between *terreiros* and Candomblé's initial attraction to potential members. Johnson's analysis seems quite sound to me regarding the sociological and political role secrecy plays in Candomblé. And yet, I was left at the end feeling that he did not penetrate all that deeply into the role secrecy played in the religion's actual practice.

Before taking this discussion farther, I should inform readers that I belong to a Pagan tradition that emphasizes secrecy, Gardnerian Wicca, and worked six years with a Brazilian teacher within the broad Umbanda tradition. Both make common use of trance incorporation and secret graduated initiations. I can be said to have a dog in this fight. On the other hand, I also have considerable personal experience on these issues.

Secrecy cuts at right angles to the tenets of modern scholarship. It is a constant irritant to those studying traditions where it plays an important role. I sympathize, but think the problem is unavoidable because religion cannot be reduced to discursive knowledge, and the remainder is vital for the practitioner, an annoyance for the scholar.

Yes, organizations of all kinds like to control information as it enhances their power. Yes, people within organizations like to control information as it enhances their power. Yes, in both instances, the mere appearance of such control also enhances power. Yes, many kinds of secrecy can change as the organization's environment changes. And yes, these changing secrets can enhance organizational power and the status of leaders. All this is true, importantly true, and a good target for scholarly research. Johnson does a good job here.

At the same time, if there is an intersubjective reality to *Orixás*, spirits, *axé*, and the like, there are other layers of relationship that can interpenetrate the above. Initiations and *fundamentos* may well partake of *both* these dimensions. Reducing them to the sociological and political dimension does not capture the full complexity of the phenomena. Let me offer a possible hint that I am right on this point.

Christian practice generally eschews the secret and the esoteric, especially in these modern Protestant times. It seeks to capture all spiritually relevant knowledge in texts equally accessible to all (4). At the same time, even many Christian ministers and theologians wonder whether God really exists, and how to prove that existence. *That* knowledge apparently cannot be transmitted effectively via texts, not even to theologians and clergy.

Yet a great many people in more experiential traditions could not be less interested in such efforts at proof. They have repeated personal experience of that existence. This suggests to me that in its broadest sense secrecy may hold much more that is worthy of investigation and contemplation than is present in Johnson's fine book.

The author says he was himself never "ridden" by an *Orixá* (11). He does not believe in the reality of the phenomena that are most central to the practitioners' involvement in Candomblé. Nor has he penetrated very far into the initiation process with its long periods of isolation. What is learned there is not discursive.

I am reminded of what my own teacher once told me about knowledge in his own tradition. He said he could tell us everything he could put into words in a weekend, and that it would be basically useless. A person had to grow into it. Graded initiations allow for that. The standard Candomblé initiation cycle is 21 years, and no one becomes head of a traditional *terreiro* without many long years of committed work. Johnson discusses this, but his outsider status seems to me to keep him from doing the matter justice (30).

Johnson makes a point of telling us that reading, writing, and even texts are prohibited during initiations (106). He often explains that things he is told are secret *fundamentos* that have actually previously been published (31, 34). I think he misses the point. David Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous* might offer a good perspective for rethinking the issue.

Whatever else it may be, the kind of knowledge this resembles is what Michael Polanyi would term *tacit*. It is a kind of knowledge in which we dwell rather than from which we stand apart. Polanyi used this concept to examine the practice of science (he was a chemist as well as philosopher), the learning of skills, and exercise of judgment. If even scientific knowledge rests on a tacit basis that cannot be directly taught, spiritual practices rooted in initiations and the like appear even less reducible to matters of power and politics.

Johnson writes that such secrecy is finally "unspeakable" either because it "retreats as discourse approaches" or because "there is finally nothing at all" (19). How one judges this question is important, and I mean no disrespect when I suggest Johnson comes down on the latter, as I do on the former. In the absence of personal experience, I think Johnson arrives at the same message as did the albino monk in *The Da Vinci Code*, (a good mystery, but bad history). When seeking the location of the Grail in St Sulpice Church, Silas uncovers the message: "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further" (Job 38.11).

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Chas S. Clifton and Graham Harvey, eds., *The Paganism Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004), xi + 387 pp., £65.00/\$110 (cloth), £19.99/\$34.95 (paper).

This annotated collection of selections from Pagan texts is useful, interesting, and mostly achieves the difficult task of providing a selection of readings representative of Paganism. The selections are mainly from practitioners who reflect thoughtfully on their practice. The questions that the collection seems to try to answer are such as these: What does it mean to be Pagan, and how did Pagans come to believe and do

what they do? The selections are not typically from academic studies: Hutton, York, Luhrmann, Berger and Blain do not appear. The selections are also not typically from texts that outline the well-known basics of Pagan practice: Starhawk, the Farrars and Cunningham are also absent. Further, selections from known authors such as Valiente do not focus on basic practices of Paganism, but on examining the sources of Pagan practice. The selections are from texts, sometimes hard to find, that illustrate central themes in the development of contemporary Paganism.

The book is broken into three parts. The first part, 'Classical texts', includes mainly brief selections from, among others, Apuleius, Pliny the Elder, the Nag Hammadi gospels and Irish mythology. Each selection points to a genre of inspiration for contemporary Paganism. Harvey and Clifton provide excellent introductions that frame the significance of each selection and provide suggestions for further reading for those who wish to pursue them. For example, the letter from Julian the Hellene to a Pagan priest provides an insight into classical Paganism that reminds us that Paganism was once a majority religion and that this status presented particular challenges for Pagan priests that may have some contemporary parallels.

Part 2, 'Proto-revival texts', includes selections from Charles Leland, Kipling, Margaret Murray and Robert Graves. There is a gorgeous excerpt from *The Wind in the Willows* in which what is clearly an incarnation of the Pagan god Pan appears to Rat and Mole and leaves them awestruck. I immediately went out and purchased the DVD animated version for my children. Kipling's 'A Tree Song' is a forgotten source that often finds its way into contemporary rituals, typically unacknowledged. Aleister Crowley's *The Book of the Law* is reproduced in its entirety. As Harvey points out in his introduction, Crowley's pervasive influence on contemporary Paganism is well illustrated by the links between Wicca's 'An it harm none, do what thou wilt' and Crowley's 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law', and the chapter provides a useful taste of Crowley's work.

Part 3, 'Revival and diversification texts', makes up the bulk of the book (200 out of the 380 pages). It includes selections from Gerald Gardner, Paul Huson, Raymond Buckland, Judy Harrow, Asphodel Long and Chas S. Clifton. The selection from Doreen Valiente's *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* is emblematic of the tone of the much of the rest of the book. In it Valiente reflects on the sources and practices of contemporary Witchcraft, drawing on her direct experience at the birth of contemporary Witchcraft. The editors select two sections: 'Working with Gerald' and 'Robert Cochrane, Magister'. In 'Working with Gerald' Valiente describes several very plausible guesses about the sources of some Wiccan terms and practices. She suggests Gerald Gardner found the term 'Book of Shadows' in a 1949 magazine reference to an ancient Sanskrit manuscript. Valiente points out that the traditional markings on the hilt of a Witch's athame can be found in the 1888 MacGregor Mathers edition of *The Key of Solomon*, and wonders which came first. She also provides an early verse version of 'The Charge of the Goddess' that she wrote and subsequently reworked into its now famous form. Valiente reports that she was 'very amused' to find an American book that attributed 'The Charge' to Sybil Leek.

While there are some selections that can serve as an introduction to Pagan practices and ritual, such as the selections from Huson and Holzer, much of the text presumes a basic understanding of Pagan terms and practices. The last few selections for the book have a distinctly anarchic flavour to the approaches of the authors and experiential orientation to the practices they advocate, which I found to my liking.

I particularly enjoyed gems such as Buckland's quote from Brantson (213): 'Today, organized Christianity is dying a lingering death, smothered under an accretion of man-made dogma and doctrine...it is only at the main festivals, Christmas and Easter...that its adherents show any sign of real religious activity.' The selections from the revivalist texts remind us of the spirit behind contemporary Paganism – the desire to rediscover a relevant alive spirituality.

I also enjoyed Clifton and Harvey's perspicacious introductions to the selections that point to the human and inspired sources of contemporary Paganism. For example, in his introduction to June Johns' account of Alex Sanders, Clifton writes (255): 'As with both Gerald Gardner and Robert Cochrane, Alex Sanders might have fudged the evidence, but his legacy is greater than himself.' The sensitivity and insight of the introductions reflect the editors' own dual positions as practitioners and academics. They demonstrate that it is possible to be both a practitioner and an insightful, at times critical, but also respectful commentator on Paganism.

Parts 2 and 3 are mostly selected from Witchcraft and Witchcraft related texts. This emphasis is largely justified given the importance of Witchcraft to the contemporary Pagan revival. Goddess spirituality is represented (Asphodel), as is contemporary shamanism – there are chapters by Clifton and Gordon MacLellan. While there is a selection from Pliny that discusses Druidry in the section on Classical texts, I was a little disappointed to find nothing on Druidry in the third section, particularly given Harvey's links with the Druids. Perhaps the omission reflects the difficulty of finding appropriate and affordable selections.

The omission of contemporary Druidry texts is somewhat ironic given that one of the four symbols on the front cover is the 'awen' (three lines that converge) particularly utilized by modern Druidry. Then again, of the four symbols on the cover, only the Pentagram accurately indicates the contents of the book. There is nothing on Chaos Magick – which the eight-rayed circle symbol reminds me of. The fourth symbol looks like a variant of the 'Ing' rune – and again there is nothing in the book on contemporary Heathenry or classical runic sources. Beyond these, of course, there are all the other traditions that could claim to be influences on and aspects of contemporary Paganism such as Spiritualism and Transcendentalism, to name only two. Selections from all these traditions would have at least doubled the size of the book, and while it would have been nice to see them given greater recognition, the editors have done a good job within the constraints of an edited collection.

Clifton's chapter 'Nature Religion for Real' is a rewarding read from a difficult-to-obtain article originally published in *Gnosis* magazine. I wished they had also found space for Harvey's equally impressive and neglected 'Gods and Hedgehogs in the Greenwood' published in G. Floods' *Mapping Invisible Worlds* (University of Edinburgh Press, 1993).

At the end of the book is a chapter that provides extended suggestions for further reading. It points students to academic texts and other relevant works that locate the book in the broader literature on contemporary Paganism. References to studies of Heathenry and Druidry are found in this section. I would have liked to see this section a little more expanded.

I enjoyed reading this edited collection and will use it as part of the courses I teach in contemporary religion. I will use it alongside more recent academic studies such as those by Griffin, Greenwood, Hume, Pike and Wallis. It provides a good selection of mainly practitioner texts that illuminate the development of contemporary Paganism.

The introductions provide excellent contextualizing commentary typically unavailable, or difficult to locate elsewhere. I recommend it.

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Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 224 pp., \$88 (cloth), \$24.95 (paper).

In *Cyberhenge*, Doug Cowan provides a provocative, penetrating, and nuanced analysis of Pagan constructions of religious identities and communities on the World Wide Web. *Cyberhenge* is impeccably well researched, with enough references to both websites and scholarship to keep online practitioners and scholars alike busy. Cowan's treatment of Paganism is insightful and respectful, making him a self-described "cowan" or outsider of the best sort. He is never patronizing or derisive, even when his subject matter readily (and perhaps justifiably) lends itself to that response. The writing is witty, well paced, and jargon-free, making this an excellent book for classroom use.

However, scholars take note: Cowan has an uncanny ability to anticipate any question you might have in the course of reading this book and raise it himself in the next paragraph. Every time you think you have him, or see a flaw in his reasoning, Cowan will anticipate you and address the issue. As any scholar knows, this is most annoying. It is probably best to think of *Cyberhenge* as less a book and more a dance in which you are not leading, but following a lively and agile stepper.

Cyberhenge raises several important issues about the various cultures of Paganism and how they conceptualize themselves through the technology of the Web. Using an analogy from computer technology, Cowan frames this discussion in terms of "open vs. closed source" religions (think Linux vs. Microsoft), placing the changing histories of world religions along a continuum between both extremes. Modern Paganisms lie at the open source end of the spectrum, encouraging cultures of appropriation, innovation, syncretism, and personal Gnosticism or verification of truth based on experience. But by using three "screenshots" from the Pagan web, Cowan illustrates some of the problems of the open source, including "cultural strip mining," the online "instant expert," and what might be called the "be all that you can be" hyperbole shared by some forms of Pagan online rhetoric as well as postmodern scholarship.

Cowan borrows the term "cultural strip mining" to refer to the indiscriminate appropriation of material, including deities, from other traditions under the guise of creative "reimaginings." For example, we learn from *The Cyber Spellbook* (2002) by "Cyber-Pagans" Knight and Telesco, that Annapurna, the "Great Hindu Mother Goddess" makes your website profitable; the Virgin Mary, the "Christian Mother Goddess," is good for signing contracts; and the Buddha, "God of solar and zero point energy" is a whiz at calculators, toys, laptops, and cars (2). Each is just a mouse-click away!

The online "instant expert" and the encouragement "to be all that you can be," raise questions of credibility, authority, and identity and how these are constituted on the Web. How can you be sure that the person you interact with online is who and what she says she is? Are online identities and communities a new reality, or just the illusion of reality? Where does imaginative identity play end and religious fraud begin?

Far from a simple matter of creative imagination, Cowan points out that identity is actually a “negotiated, co-constructed product that exists within fixed and definable limits” (174). The often-idealized rhetoric of identity creation is met by the hard reality that we are all embodied and subject to the constraints of time, space, and economics. In addition to the great “digital divide,” the fact that the ability to interact online is hardly a global phenomenon, Cowan notes “the postmodern blush comes off the Internet rose” when we find that—far from idealistically “revolutionizing gender roles”—Web persona “replicate the most stereotypically spectacular gender stereotypes of the predigital age” (60).

Cowan frames the problems of the open source “culture of appropriation and innovation” within the larger “Internet paradox,” the fact that there is “more information available more quickly than ever before in human history, but with fewer controls on the quality, accuracy, and propriety of that information” (4). One of the problems with the open-source analogy is that on the Web there is little peer review and often no clear way to test for quality and efficacy. Moreover, since there is “no overarching process by which information can be vetted either before or after Web publication,” (8) indiscriminate replication—essentially plagiarism—easily accompanies appropriation, as whole chunks of text are cut and pasted—“shoveled”—from one website to another. Far from being innovative, such replication merely demonstrates the ability of website creators to click and drag content from one site to another.

Lest such wild “reimaginings” of deities and “shovelware” “masquerading as hieratic and pedagogical authority” give too much pause, Cowan reminds us there is no “pure religion,” and that “issues related to cultural appropriation, syncretism, and recontextualization...are hardly limited to the modern Pagan context, and the dynamics that inform them are often far more subtle and complex than either their detractors or supporters are willing to admit” (39).

One of the most interesting parts of *Cyberhenge* is its extensive analysis of online ritual, in which Cowan takes up issues of embodiment rather more intensely. He notes a twofold problem presented by Pagan ritual online: the difference between experience and imagination, and the centrality of the body in modern Pagan ritual. In the first, “map is not territory” (as J. Z. Smith would put it): the “sacred space” online is not a *place*, but a mode of *communication*, visualization is *not* sensation, and typing is not a spoken *performance*. In the second, the problem of translating the body online, especially “interphysicality,” “ritually oriented physical interaction between participants” has yet to be solved.

Cowan concludes that, although online Paganism will likely not represent a “significant threat to its off-line counterpart, especially in a religious tradition that is so closely tied to the physical world as modern Paganism—the fact that there is another venue for crucial conversations on which religious faith, belief, and practice are built cannot be ignored” (200).

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Marcus Tanner, *The Last of the Celts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 432 pp., \$30 (cloth).

As representatives of a milieu purportedly so awash in Celtic consciousness, one could be forgiven for assuming that followers of Paganism might be inclined to delve deeply into the fascinating study of the societies and histories associated with that geo-cultural region. In reality, it sometimes seems that those within the fold tend to be more concerned with rewriting a heady and mythically pregnant yet largely superficial narrative of 'colourful', poetic and elf-fixated melancholics heroically resisting the tide of grey Saxon empiricism, than they are engaging with the culturally messy and politically compromised reality that actually underpins the Celtic world's story.

Marcus Tanner's admirable yet gloomy book, which should be seen as a skilful, journalistic interweaving of history and travelogue rather than academic appraisal *per se*, amply succeeds in providing a concise and absorbing context for such views, by lucidly revealing the ambiguities, grudges and ironies that have beleaguered political and cultural relations between Celtic and non-Celtic realms over the centuries.

For Tanner, it is Malcolm Arnold who most embodies these complex fissures, his 'famous lectures' in the mid-nineteenth century (8) serving as a sympathetic yet sanctimonious and self-fulfilling prophecy of doom for Celtic culture generally. Crystallizing much prior debate and opinion on the matter, Arnold conjured an insidiously seductive and devastatingly influential image of the Celtic peoples as a 'poetical, dreamy, feminine' populace terminally exiled to the rough edges of history (19).

This was a 'fantasy version of the Celts' that gave succour to the ruling non-Celtic establishment(s) by simultaneously helping offset a sense of dull utilitarianism with an image of barely civilized exoticism, and reaffirming the Celtic world's perceived political redundancy (19), a situation pithily summarized in Tanner's blackly comedic phrase, 'there's nothing that the British or the French love more than a good old Celtic Revival' (4-5).

The author is well aware that, in some respects (economic, most notably, but also musically), certain regions of the Celtic world would appear to be 'booming'. However, with regard to the area of cultural life that he regards as most defining and constitutive of Celtic 'difference', namely that of language, Tanner finds more than enough evidence to prove the bitter prescience of Arnold's predictions.

In accordance with his emphasis on linguistic matters, the author pursues what some might regard as a rather selective course around the Celtic world. Scottish readers, for instance, might be disappointed to find that Tanner's travels north of the border are limited to the Highlands—this being the properly Gaelic part of Scotland—to the detriment of the other, more (for want of a better term) 'Anglo-Saxon' areas. Similarly, the Irish segment of his tour focuses on the western coastal strip known as the Gaeltacht, along with Belfast, where a modern, urbane and highly politicized Celtic-speaking culture seems to be emerging (although the author's historical remit allows him to take in a broader geographical area when discussing the island's turbulent past).

On the other hand, this approach also gives him scope to investigate farther-flung regions, namely Nova Scotia and Patagonia, which gave homes, respectively, to significant Scots Gaelic- and Welsh-speaking populations. And happily for those of us who are frequently infuriated by what seems to be a popular assumption (particularly among North Americans) that 'Celtic' equals 'Irish' and—at a stretch—Scottish, the

Brythonic (or, if you will, 'British') side of things (as represented by Wales, Cornwall and Brittany) receives as much attention as the Gaelic (as spoken in Ireland, Scotland and, once upon a time, the Isle of Man), although given that Tanner's quest was inspired by the discovery of his own family's Welsh roots, this is perhaps not too surprising.

First off, it really cannot be stressed too much just how good Tanner's book is. The material is impressively organized, giving readers the sense that they are travelling at once over land and back through history. Stylistically, his ability to combine obvious sympathy for his subject with cool – albeit often verging on cutting and iconoclastic – detachment and an enviable eye for descriptive nuance and detail is mightily effective, his tone striking just the right note between the appreciative, elegiac and (often) down-right bemused.

The governing theme is how such once-confident and forward-looking – even expansive – linguistic cultures could fade so rapidly into virtual insignificance. Empire alone cannot explain this. For example, at the very same time that Irish was steeply declining from majority- to minority-language status, other small European nations no less enmeshed in colonial pasts – such as Finland, Latvia and Slovenia – were beginning to forge new linguistic cultures out of the battered remains of their indigenous tongues (76-77). Nor can the blame be placed on modernization alone. As Tanner eloquently explains, industrialization and urbanization in late nineteenth-century South Wales actually had a beneficial effect on the Welsh language (for a time, at least), this being demonstrated by Merthyr Tydfil's status during its heyday as 'the first large town in Britain where English was not the main language of the streets' (203). Indeed, such was the 'proud and self-confident' nature of industrial Wales at this point that even English and Scottish incomers eventually 'became absorbed into the Welsh [language] mainstream' (199).

Tanner does not offer any pat answers as to why this wide-ranging linguistic slump occurred; rather, he makes it abundantly clear that, while a complex array of historical factors all played their part, not one of these by itself can be regarded as the actual 'smoking gun' in the affair. Of course, it would be facile to deny that the historical agents of English (and, for Bretons, French) imperialism all played their part; likewise, it is quite clear that the current burgeoning trend in favour of 'lifestyle'-driven, middle-class immigration (with its attendant holiday-home industry) into all areas of the Celtic world has had a devastating effect, linguistically speaking. However, it is also important to acknowledge how complicit and self-defeating the Celtic societies themselves have been at times, their self-appointed ecclesiastical, cultural and political guardians, and even their own populations, seemingly capable of surprising ambivalence with regard to language affairs. This, is – again – strikingly demonstrated by the case of Ireland, whose Gaelic-language champion, Patrick Pearse, offered a poetic and bloodthirsty – indeed, partially Arnold-inspired – vision of a defiantly monoglot nation with which the Irish people quickly fell out of love once it had attained the status of political orthodoxy after Home Rule. In fact, it seems that the cultural shape of things to come was personified far more significantly by the nationalist pioneer Daniel O'Connell, who for all his Gaelic background had a 'whiggish disdain' for the language, seeing it as a mere frippery when compared with bread-and-butter matters such as land reform (79-80).

The example of Wales also provides some salutary lessons. For example, after effectively saving the Welsh language in the sixteenth century by arranging for the Bible's translation into the common vernacular, the Church of England proceeded to

outstay its welcome there by treating the native population with condescension and neglect. However, after enthusiastically embracing some time later yet another ecclesiastical kick-start to the language, this time in the form of Methodism, the Welsh people themselves eventually saw fit largely to abandon the religious and political culture that had done so much to bolster national self-confidence in favour of socialism, whose 'powerful Labour Establishment' has since then found it difficult to conceal its utter contempt for linguistic nationalism within the country (213).

A very similar (though less intense) prurience can be found in Scotland, whose 'leftist political establishment' even now frets that efforts to protect the Gaelic language might be 'confused with racism' (42). Such concerns, moreover, highlight another illuminating tension, namely that between native speakers and 'mainstream' nationalists. Thus, fans of a certain tartan-hued cinematic epic from recent times might be surprised to learn that it was the English-speaking Scots lowlanders who were chiefly responsible for the country's 'hothouse nationalism...with its flags, battles and medieval heroes', while the Gaels themselves actually tended more usually to side with the English 'against [their] common enemy', this being 'the Scottish crown' which, it seems, had traditionally sought to keep them in check (65).

Even Ireland has not been immune to resentments of this sort, albeit expressed in more subtle guise, perhaps. By way of illustration, Tanner writes that metropolitan Gaelic enthusiasts in the late nineteenth century were often 'puzzled' to discover that the first-language speakers they eulogized 'were bored by the learners' anglophobia' (87). Equally enlightening are the renowned – and Gaelic-speaking – satirist Flann O'Brien's unimpressed comments on the country's linguistic revival movement, the 'intolerance and bigotry' of whose leading lights he felt had 'alienated all those to whom language is not a trade' (96).

Nor is this mutual lack of communication restricted to the Gaelic world. In his chapter on Brittany, Tanner suggests that 'peasants and intellectuals' there 'have always disappointed each other', and, based on his own experiences, makes the following, dispiriting observation: 'The real enthusiasts were always learners, outsiders... They did not really connect up with the world of the old Breton farmers who actually spoke the language. There was a barrier of reserve between the two groups, and the old-timers were not much interested in preserving their culture anyway' (278).

Worryingly, the overall impression given in Tanner's book is that in those areas lucky enough to have retained something of their old tongue little can be done to halt further decline, even where significant political, economic or intellectual support has been secured. Thus, for example, the rise of a 'new Gaelic "establishment"' in the Scottish Highlands (consisting of 'middle-class professionals' involved in 'the arts community, the Gaelic-speaking media...and development bodies') has not prevented the virtual collapse of the 'traditional culture' (49). Most depressingly, it seems that this is no less the case in Ireland, where decades of government indulgence have not succeeded in stopping the Gaeltacht from fading to a shadow of its once indomitable former self. As Tanner himself puts it, far from developing into the flourishing renaissance centre once hoped for, it quickly came to stand as a guilty reminder of modern Ireland's stubbornly 'Anglophone' actuality, serving as little more than 'a kind of reservation, or cultural museum, where a precarious older way of life could be artificially maintained' (99).

It seems that, for all the (more often than not musically inspired) upsurge of interest in Celtic matters internationally, it is only in Wales – where genuine grassroots

enthusiasm for the language has given rise to a frequently highly effective lobbying force – that ‘something survives of the pre-Anglo-Saxon culture in fairly robust form’ (217), which is to say, as a ‘living’ language employed ‘casually and unselfconsciously’ by a substantial proportion of the population, as distinct from ‘some kind of cultural project’ (214). But even here, Tanner mordantly adds, ‘it is not certain if it will survive as a culture of the many or the few’ (217).

Given its unrelentingly pessimistic tone, some might (not unreasonably, perhaps) come to the conclusion that Tanner’s book is the very last thing the surviving Celtic languages need right now. On the other hand, as was strongly indicated by the example of ‘Tynged yr Iaith’ – Saunders Lewis’s despairing lecture from 1962 on the future of the Welsh language, which rapidly achieved ‘call-to-arms’ status (metaphorically speaking) for budding activists – it could be that it is only by having the ‘fear of God’ put into them that the inheritors of this vast cultural wealth will be prompted to ‘do something’ in sufficient numbers to snap their respective peoples out of the crippling state of linguistic torpor and resignation in which they have so long been mired. As such, *The Last of the Celts* could be seen as a timely and much-needed riposte to bland, cock-a-hoop Celtic revivalism of any stripe, and so should be welcomed accordingly by all those with genuine concern for what remains of these wonderful cultures in the modern world.

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Jenny Blain, Douglas Ezzy, and Graham Harvey, eds., *Researching Paganisms* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), 256 pp., \$79 (cloth), \$29.95 (paper)

In this collection of essays, scholars in religious studies and overlapping academic areas such as anthropology and sociology reflect upon their ethnographic research into various forms of modern-day Pagan religion. The authors provide both personal and methodological reflections, often interweaving the two. Overall, the book reveals the lively ferment of research methods and conceptual approaches that is occurring among scholars in the new sub-field of religious studies that is Pagan studies. Graham Harvey, one of the editors and contributing authors, prefers to call this sub-field “the study of Paganisms,” a conceptual nod toward diversity and pluralism that I find admirable but unwieldy. As we do not find scholars of different types of Buddhism addressing their work as “the study of Buddhisms,” or Christian theologians referring to “the study of Christianities,” I feel quite comfortable in speaking of “Pagan studies” to refer to the work of scholars studying Wicca, Heathenry, Goddess worship and other contemporary religious movements working with pre-Christian cultural and spiritual traditions, mainly though not exclusively drawn from the European past.

Many of the chapters involve authors returning to the “scene of the crime” of previous ethnographic studies, and offering additional commentaries on their particular experiences with theory, method, and fieldwork. These chapters include Jone Salomonsen’s reflections on her study of the Reclaiming tradition of Goddess worship in the San Francisco area, published as *Enchanted Feminisms* (2002); Sarah Pike’s reworking of an essay that was originally intended as a chapter in her anthropological study of American Pagan festivals, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves* (2001) but excluded for reasons that are here explained; Wendy Griffin’s discussion of her evolving

method of research into Goddess Spirituality that came to be published as "Into the Darkness: An Ethnographic Study of Witchcraft and Death" (1990); Douglas Ezzy's reflections on his studies of Australian Witchcraft published as *Practicing the Witch's Craft* (2003) and elsewhere; Ronald Hutton's discussion of certain repercussions that befell him after the publication of his historical study of British Paganism, *The Triumph of the Moon*; and Robert Wallis's exploration of his evolving methodology for studying British Neo-shamanism, published as *Shamans/Neo-Shamans* (2003).

Of this first category of essays, I find Pike's, Griffin's, and Hutton's chapters primarily interesting as autobiographical essays or academic memoirs on the trials, tribulations, and sometimes tragedies of scholarly engagement with alternative and marginal religions. As an American who has lived abroad many years, often encountering the criticism that Americans are simplistic people who always insist on Happy Endings, I took a certain grim pleasure in Pike's discussion of omitting from her book a chapter dealing with the illness and death of a key research subject that she had become close to, under pressure from others who judged it too negative and "downbeat." The gist of the missing chapter is published in this essay, and it proves quite poignant.

Salomonsen's, Ezzy's, and Wallis's essays strike me as the most perceptive and innovative as regards issues of theory and method. Salomonsen's discussion of a "method of compassion" in which she remained both critical yet sympathetic toward the religious group she was not only "studying" but living among is a valuable contribution to methodological musings on whether the researcher should conceive of her- or himself as "insider" or "outsider," "participant" or "observer" in relation to those they locate themselves among.

Ezzy's critique of "methodological atheism" forcefully deflates the assumption that "objective" scientific method and knowledge and "subjective" religious experience and belief are mutually exclusive domains, and makes a strong case for the religious social scientist accepting his or her own religious belief and experience as legitimate sources of data for research and analysis.

Wallis explains the evolution of the theoretical perspectives and methodological positions he terms "autoanthropology" and "autoarcheology," in which he explicitly includes his own experience as a Neo-shamanic practitioner as a key source of information for his detailed accounts and examinations of Neo-shamanism(s) in Britain. An interesting point that Wallis briefly touches on here but has investigated more deeply elsewhere is how Queer Studies may serve as something of a template or role model for Pagan studies, because of the parallel locations of homosexuality and Paganism as marginal and oppositional social formations in relation to mainstream society, including academic society.

The above-mentioned chapters are all enriched by reference to previously published works of Pagan studies; indeed, they may be read as methodological or autobiographical appendices or footnotes to those works. By the same token, certain chapters suffer by seeming to be supplementary commentaries to works that have not yet been published, perhaps not even written. Such "prologue" chapters include the contributions of Andy Letcher and Melissa Harrington. These chapters suggest new and interesting theoretical directions, Letcher in terms of "bardism" and Harrington in terms of modern psychological approaches, without fleshing them out in a really satisfactory way. It is to be hoped that these authors will soon publish more substantial works in which their theoretical perspectives are not merely introduced, but applied.

Other chapters include Chas S. Clifton exploring the state of Pagan studies

research, as well as his own personal experiences, with mind-altering drugs or “entheogens”; Ruth Mantin discussing her relationship with Goddess worshippers during her study of this religious movement, in which she saw her interviewees not so much as “research subjects” as collaborators and co-researchers, an issue that arises in other chapters as well; Jenny Blain’s examination of her role as both practitioner and researcher in relation to British Heathenry; and Graham Harvey’s thoughtful reflections on theory and method, including the suggestion that the researcher position him- or herself as a “guest” among those whom they study, with obligation to be respectful and courteous in both interaction and subsequent academic documentation and analysis.

A theme that connects many of these essays is a critique of old-fashioned academic objectivity, combined with a passionate advocacy of the importance of scholarly self-disclosure and self-reflection. Again and again the authors point out that their researches and writings were informed by their personal involvement with the religious groups and activities that they were researching, and that they were themselves personally transformed by their research. As a scholar who has himself been involved in, and transformed by, research into Pagan religions, I find myself questioning whether this two-step dance of rejecting academic objectivity and embracing reflexive subjectivity is really as important or groundbreaking as the authors claim, and I also feel a sense of concern about where this dance will lead.

To my contrarian way of thinking, it is nonsense to speak of a wholesale rejection of objectivity. I will gladly concede the point that in our postmodern, postcolonial times of multifarious information and authority sources, it is no longer useful or even credible for a scholarly author to adopt the phenomenological pose of an all-knowing, omniscient viewer who dispassionately observes and describes the universe. Obviously all scholarly accounts and analyses of religious phenomena or other aspects of human life are informed by the researchers’ particular viewpoints and experiences, acknowledgement of reflection upon which *may* provide useful further data for the overall research project and *may* be of value to the audience or consumer of said research.

Or perhaps not. I think there is a real danger to uncritically opening the door to extensive and unchecked subjectivity and self-reflection; the danger that instead of the researcher providing an analytical account of something happening in the larger social universe to which the researcher is attending, and of which she or he is a part, the researcher may be tempted to provide an autobiographical account limited to explaining how social or cultural phenomena impinge upon the delicate consciousness of the researcher.

Imagine a version of *Das Kapital* in which Karl Marx devotes page after page to complaining about the poor lighting, uncomfortable seats, and foul breath of certain unpleasant companions in the British Library where he is writing the text, or a *Protestant Ethic and the Rise of Capitalism* in which Max Weber fondly reminisces about his recent nervous breakdown. My examples are intentionally absurd and extravagant, but my point is that there can be *good* scholarly uses of subjectivity and self-reflection, and there can be less-good ones as well. There is, for instance, the question of proportion: how much self-disclosure provides valuable context and perspective, and how much is *too much*. It is a definite shortcoming of this book that the embrace of subjectivity is a bit too enthusiastic and uncritical. Some occasional reflection upon the possible limits of scholarly self-reflexivity would have been in order, at least in this reviewer’s subjective opinion. As co-editor Jenny Blain notes in her chapter, there may

be certain insights or experiences better expressed in art or poetry than in academic writing. I would add that autobiography is always an option for those who find nothing more fascinating in the world than themselves.

I would also argue that the researchers featured in this volume have *not* rejected the pursuit of objectivity, at least in the sense that all involved have clearly made strenuous and praiseworthy efforts to provide accurate, truthful, factual accounts of their topics of research, *and also of themselves*. It could even be said that, rather than rejecting objectivity, they have *extended* its reach, to encompass not merely the social world “outside” the researcher, but their internal thoughts, feelings, and experiences as well. For this reason, I would suggest that the key issue at stake in the kind of research portrayed in this volume is not really an either-or conflict between objectivity and subjectivity so much as an expansion of acceptable information sources to *include* the internal experiences of the researcher, along with the external phenomena that she or he is exploring and describing.

In the end, any researcher in the social sciences or humanities must provide a coherent, thoughtful, and hopefully readable account of a social-cultural phenomenon, in this case a religious one, using, it is to be hoped, a wide variety of data sources, which *may* include the subjective experiences of the researcher, to the extent that these are illuminating and instructive in regard to the topic at hand, or *may not* include them, if they do not shed any particular light on anything beyond the author’s autobiography. This still leaves the question of which kinds of internal or subjective experiences deserve inclusion in or, on the contrary, *exclusion from* scholarly research and writings, a topic this writer is content to leave for further debate and discussion.

An important related issue that the essays address is the impact of the researchers’ own religious identity upon their research, with most, though not all, authors in this collection being “religious insiders” in relation to the particular Pagan traditions they study, in that they are either committed Pagans or highly sympathetic observers and occasional participants. This is seen as highly crucial in many cases, as modern Pagans religious communities are well aware of their marginal status in society and the sharp realities of public hostility and scholarly scorn, and would probably not have allowed full and open access to their activities and beliefs to scholarly observers wholly lacking in sympathy for their form of religion. The case of Tanya Luhman, a scholar of Wicca who became initiated into the religion and later published a scathing exposé in violation of her commitments to the religious community that had welcomed her into their midst, is held up as a cautionary example of scholarly ethics gone awry.

The issue of the interaction between scholars’ own religious identities and their Religious Studies scholarship is one that extends far beyond these particular authors’ religious involvements and scholarly activities, to the work of any and all scholars involved in scholarly research on religion. How many works of religious studies have been written with a thinly veiled, positive or negative bias toward the religious phenomena under study, without the author letting the reader in on the “dirty little secret” of his or her particular religious identity or faith commitment? The old ideal of scholarly neutrality and objectivity allowed this issue to be swept under the rug and dismissed from polite conversation, if not from academic gossip; but this book demonstrates the value of scholars also being objective, or at least truthful, about their own religious identity and perspective and how this impinges upon their academic work. This is not to say that an academic researcher highly critical to a religious community could not produce excellent research and writing; indeed, the hostile

outsider might have valuable insights that would be lacking in the work of the chummy insider.

The implications of religious studies scholars “coming out” about their religious identity are both far-reaching and unsettling to established ways of doing academic business. The way could be opened to a brave new world of religious studies scholarship that would be truly, as opposed to superficially, tolerant and inclusive, empowering academics to freely express their personal religious perspectives and bring these into dialogue with those of the religious communities they study, as well as those of other scholars. This would violate the old canon of scholarly objectivity, but would open the way for a new objectivity of full disclosure and allow for a scholarly ferment of “in your face,” inter-religious scholarly dialogue that would be both intellectually stimulating and spiritually alive.

On the other hand, there are certain cruel facts of religious demography and institutional politics that would work against such a scenario, and these are especially important for scholars in such a nascent and fragile academic sub-field as Pagan studies to take into account. Most universities and colleges today are market-driven, semi-corporate institutions that cater to what they see as the needs and sensitivities of their students, alumni, and corporate sponsors. In Christian-majority nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States, particularly the latter, many religion or religious studies departments are dominated by Christian scholars and theologians, catering to a largely Christian student body. Therefore, scholars of religion who make a point of identifying themselves as members of a marginal religion could face marginalization at the time of hiring or tenure as well. Therefore, at this point in time, an open avowal of Pagan religious identity would seem to be something best reserved for those scholars who have secured tenure and/or are seeking employment in areas outside religious studies. It is worth noting that most of the authors in this collection are not employed in religious studies departments but in the social sciences.

The tension between Paganism as a marginal religion and the majority religion of Christianity, both in the general society and in the sub-culture of academia in various countries, is a topic that is dealt with only in passing in this book, but which would form a fascinating field for future study.

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Carol Barner-Barry, *Contemporary Paganism: Minority Religions in a Majoritarian America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), xii + 242 pp., \$55 (cloth).

Although some might suggest that there are no such accidents in the universe, as I was reading this book for review, I received my first official “complaint to the dean,” part of which impinges directly on Carol Barner-Barry’s excellent contribution to the field of contemporary Pagan studies. Early in the semester I used an example from my own book, *Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet*, to illustrate aspects of religious community on the World Wide Web. Subsequently, a Christian student complained to the dean that, among other things, she thought I was trying to recruit students to “an occult called wica,” and threatened to take the whole matter to the state Department of Education if the situation were not resolved. While I am not Wiccan, the experience

sharpened somewhat the lenses through which I read *Contemporary Paganism: Minority Religions in a Majoritarian America*.

Many, perhaps most Americans believe that the free exercise of religion is solidly enshrined in the Constitution and all but carries the force of holy writ in the shuffle of social life. We are free to worship what we please as we please, and to do so free of fear from intimidation and interruption. When interruptions do occur, they are isolated incidents, anomalies rather than business-as-usual. Using contemporary Paganism as her principal example, however, Barner-Barry, a professor of political science at the University of Maryland, argues that "minority rights and protections are, to a very great extent, what the majority is willing to allow, or, at least, to tolerate" (1). A frightening thought, when you consider it, because tolerance, depending where you live and who you are, is a decidedly relative concept. While some Wiccans, for instance, regard wearing a pentacle as an important affirmation of their modern Pagan identity, others have been dismissed from school, fired from their employment, or separated from their children for making the same statement. Contrary to what many Pagans may suspect, however, what the author reveals is not an organized persecution of minority religions, but rather the logical consequences of a constitutional process that could not imagine their existence, a legal system ill-equipped to deal with the special problems they face, a political system unwilling to work proactively to enshrine their protection, and a social system that has, on the other hand, embedded Christian demographic dominance with majoritarian privilege.

Barner-Barry proceeds with her case in fairly straightforward manner, discussing first the legal concepts of religious freedom and the legal status of minority religions in the United States. The framers, she points out, clearly did not have the minority religions of the late twentieth century in mind when they introduced the First Amendment. Rather, it was included to protect minority Christian sects from persecution by more dominant sects. Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and certainly contemporary Pagans were not considered in the equation. Contrary to what many believe two hundred years later, though, Barner-Barry concludes that "persons who practice emerging or minority religions can be assured of little protection under the Free Exercise Clause, unless the law harming them has clearly and unequivocally targeted their particular religion" (23). That is, how much "freedom of religion" does the Constitution really guarantee, and for whom? Does "freedom of religion" truly exist in the United States, or is that merely a simulacrum, a social fiction we tell ourselves to make the powerful, unmistakable hierarchy of religion in the United States more palatable?

Moving through a rather standard history of modern Paganism in North America (Chapter 2) – and here Pagan readers will need to bear in mind that it is unlikely they were her intended audience – she comes quickly to the heart of the problem: the "challenge of Christian hegemony" in the United States. Subsequent chapters discuss "Paganism as a Religion," "Religious Diversity and the Social Order," "Threats, Intimidation, and the Strategic Use of Fear," "Christian Privilege and the Perception of Entitlement," and the larger problem of "Majoritarianism and Religion." In each chapter she outlines the issue at hand, then offers case after case to illustrate the problem.

Although non-Pagans may be taken aback by the blatant religious discrimination Barner-Barry catalogues, few contemporary Pagans, I suspect, will be surprised by what they read. Perhaps what this book reveals more than anything is how poorly majoritarian America understands the wide range of minority religions in its midst,

and how quickly fear takes root in the soil of that misunderstanding. I was most struck, for example, by a series of cases Barner-Barry describes (131-33) in which students were suspended from school for allegedly casting spells on teachers or other students. What struck me was how ready school officials – many of whom are Christian – were to believe that the “offending” student actually possessed such power. “There seem to be a number of teachers and administrators,” she writes, “who ascribe occult powers to Pagan students and seem almost afraid of them.” This fear leads quite naturally to intimidation and retaliation, not all of which makes it to court. Indeed, an important yet unexplored subtext in this book is that Barner-Barry relies on those cases that have come to light. Like any other form of abuse, I suspect that far more remains hidden from public scrutiny.

This is an extremely valuable contribution to the emerging interdisciplinary scholarship on contemporary Paganism, but there are a couple of drawbacks to Barner-Barry’s book of which readers should be aware. First, it is expensive; hopefully, the publisher will see fit to release it in a more affordable format. Second, as she carefully, relentlessly piles example on example to illustrate her case, but then offers little in the way of deeper interpretation of the issues these cases disclose, some of the later chapters become monotonous and repetitive. This leads to the problem of how many contemporary Pagans may read her work, seeing in it only doom-and-gloom, but ignoring two crucial factors: (a) there are cases in which the legal system has worked to defend successfully the rights of minority religions, and (b) the presence of a book like this is an important step in the resolution of the problems faced by minority religions in a majoritarian America. Highly recommended.

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