COSMOPOLITANISM, NATIONALISM, AND MODERN PAGANISM

EDITED BY KATHRYN ROUNTREE

Palgrave Studies in New Religions and Alternative Spiritualities

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Kathryn Rountree
Editor

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Kathryn Rountree

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Introduction. "We Are the Weavers, We Are the Web": Cosmopolitan Entanglements in Modern Paganism

Kathryn Rountree

A chant well known to modern Pagans includes the refrain: "We are the weavers, we are the web," which speaks to the creative agency, connectedness and constructedness involved in this growing group of new religions. Yet, the development of modern Paganisms has not taken place in a social or political vacuum, and their proliferation has proceeded at the same time as, and partly influenced by, such factors as globalization, ubiquitous Internet use, the ever-mounting environmental crisis, increased human mobility, a postcolonial revaluing of indigenous religions, new political configurations, along with some other local and global processes. A burgeoning of cosmopolitanism and various nationalisms has significantly influenced the weaving of diverse Paganisms.

At first glance, the concepts of cosmopolitanism and nationalism seem far apart, suggesting contrasting strategies for formulating identities. Insofar as both are interested in relationships between self and other, self and nation, individual self and global community, and the local–global

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nexus, however, cosmopolitanism and nationalism offer a novel and fascinating lens through which to examine modern Pagan and Native Faith groups, because they, too, are engaged in negotiating these relationships. The recent "turn" of interest in cosmopolitanism across the social sciences tends to explore it in terms of the social consequences of globalization, especially since the 1990s, focusing on "post-national dynamics and inter-connections that play out in everyday life" (Turner et al. 2014: 84). This perspective not only separates the cosmopolitan from a concern with the national, but also renders it chronologically subsequent. Given that to be cosmopolitan (from the Greek *kosmopolités*) is to be literally "a citizen of the world," scholars often see cosmopolitanism as the antithesis of nation-alism or any form of categorical othering which essentializes group identity and closes off individuals from one another (Rapport and Amit 2012: xv). And yet, as Robert Schreiter (2011: 26) points out, while "globalization on the one hand homogenizes the world, wiping out local difference," on the other, it "provokes the resistance of the local, thereby re-invigorating the local. This creates a dialectic between the global and the local." The chapters in this volume explore this dialectic and the complex, tangled relationship between the two as authors probe the interplay of, and ten-sions between, concerns about nationalism, the local, the indigenous, the transnational and globalization in Pagan and Native Faith practitioners' creation of identities and allegiances in diverse ethnographic settings.

Nationalism and cosmopolitanism have long individual and joined histories, but their particular conjunction in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is new due to the rapid and dramatic geopolitical, sociopolitical and technological developments producing unparalleled global connectivity and mobility during this period. Ulrich Beck (2009: xi), in his Foreword to *Cosmopolitanism in Practice*, defines "cosmopoli-tanization" as "the erosion of clear borders separating markets, states, civi-lizations, cultures, and the life-worlds of common people, which … implies the involuntary confrontation with the alien other all over the globe." Amidst all this boundary-blurring and intermingling, old notions of "we" and "they," "ours" and "theirs," are challenged, and the significance of the nation-state as an influential identity-marker waxes or wanes in the lives of individuals, either without their conscious awareness or perhaps as a politically driven project precisely to counteract cosmopolitanization. Huon Wardle (2010: 387) goes further,[1] saying that the recent anthropo-logical interest in cosmopolitanism emerged "not only at the birth of the internet, but also at the moment when [not only 'the nation,' but also]

'society' as a normative determining force behind individual action lost most of its former credibility." Amidst the contemporary drive toward individuation, however, new forms of sociality have emerged, most notably through virtual communities and networks, which are integral to many people's daily lives.

Inevitably and increasingly, even individuals and groups that do not embrace a cosmopolitan identity, and that reject cosmopolitanism as a moral ideal (cf. Nowicka and Rovisco 2009: 2), experience a growing sense of living in "one world." Moreover, as the chapters in this volume show, they become, to some extent, unwitting—even if unwilling—cosmopolitans. This is far from saying that national, cultural, ethnic or local characteristics have become unimportant or unrecognizable in individuals' or groups' beliefs and practices—or in their forms of sociality—subordinated to a global melting pot in which cultural or local distinctiveness and its provenance have disappeared. But it is to say that the way in which ideas, practices, identities and social relationships are now put together and put into practice, and the sources drawn upon, cannot be taken for granted in the way they once might have been, and that constellations of ideas, practices, identities and social relationships now change faster in less predictable ways.

Nationalism and cosmopolitanism are multivalent terms, and context is everything in understanding their operation. As Scott Simpson points out in Chap. 4 of this volume, in many countries, "nationalism" is associated with conservatism and right-wing politics, but in Central and Eastern Europe, it can have other associations, including with the politics of liberation and egalitarianism. Here, as Adrian Ivakhiv explains, "blood" and "tradition"—and ultimately nationality and nation-state—are rooted in a specific territory, an idea with precursors in European and Soviet thought. The nature–society relation is not structured in the way it is by most Anglo-Americans: humans are not seen as "distinct from nature, but as culturally or ethnically 'rooted' within the natural world" (2009: 214), a natural world which is geoculturally specific. This worldview inevitably informs Pagans' ideas and practices in Central and Eastern Europe. Pagans more widely also seek to undo the nature–society dualism and anthropocentric ordering of humans' relationships with other-than-humans (Harvey 2005), but for most there is not a tight connection between nature, cultural or ethnic roots, and nation-state. Intimacy with nature tends to be primarily a cherished philosophical and moral tenet and an everyday embodied experience of being in the place where one lives. Before going

into further detail about the ways in which particular worldviews influence local Paganisms, let us introduce modern Paganism more generally.

Paganism has become a flourishing global religious phenomenon in recent decades.[2] In a world where cultural, ethnic and religious pluralism are now pervasive—if not universal—social realities, Pagans use a variety of strategies to craft and recraft their paths and identities, which take a plethora of forms. While these are diverse and dynamic, there are some shared characteristics within the Pagan phenomenon globally: an emphasis on attunement with nature and the sacralization of human relationships with all other beings, the valorization of ancient and pre-Christian religions (and, to a variable extent, cultures), and a tendency toward polytheistic cosmologies. Some Pagans take up universalist traditions such as Wicca or some version of modern Pagan Witchcraft, Druidry, Goddess spirituality or Western shamanism, drawing on eclectic, ancient and contemporary cultural sources—or they may simply identify more generically as "Pagan." These paths are found worldwide and their ideologies incorporate no special allegiance to the nation-state; indeed, they may have no interest in it, or be critical of it. It is easy to see Pagans in universalist traditions as cosmopolitan "citizens of the world," and Wiccans, in particular, enshrine the value they place on personal freedom, and hence individual uniqueness and difference, in the Wiccan Rede: "Do what you will but harm none."

Other individuals and groups focus on reconstructing the ancestral, pre-Christian religion of a particular ethnic group, nation or geographic area and are motivated partly or largely by nationalism and/or ethnic politics—particularly, but not only, in Central and Eastern Europe. They may be chary of cosmopolitan processes which seem to serve the erosion of cultural boundaries and weakening of cultural distinctiveness, and their emergence in post-Soviet contexts from the late 1980s may be seen as part of "a wave of re-nationalization and re-ethnification" (Beck 2009: xi). Their efforts at reviving or reconstructing pre-Christian religions have been interpreted as responses to concerns about foreign colonizing ideologies, globalization and crises in ethnic identity (Ivakhiv 2009; Strmiska 2005; Shnirelman 2002; Ališauskienė and Schröder 2012; Gardell 2003).

Both cosmopolitanism and nationalism incorporate utopian ideals. Whether Pagans seem to, or claim to, incline more toward one or the other—toward dissolving or reinforcing sociocultural boundaries—they do so for strategic reasons as part of an identity project and expression of values, as part of forging for themselves a positive, empowering identity in the world as they understand and experience it. Yet, discursive positioning

and actual practice do not necessarily coincide. I think it can be argued that where Pagans or Native Faith followers espouse and articulate nationalist ideals, there is evidence that they are, almost unavoidably today, cosmopolitans in practice. As Mariya Lesiv shows in Chap. 5, Ukrainian Pagans may articulate anticosmopolitan sentiments, but they are informed by "global cultural flows" (Appadurai 1990) like Pagans everywhere.

These two different orientations (the universalist and nationalist) have come to be seen in Pagan scholarship, following Michael Strmiska (2005), as existing on a continuum with "eclectic" Pagans at one end and "reconstructionist" groups at the other. For the latter, the term "Pagan" is often problematic because it is Christian-derived, and Christianity is seen as the religion of the foreigner, colonizer or invader. Their preferred terms are "Native Faith," "indigenous faith," "traditional religion," "ethnic religion," "reconstructionist" or, more likely, the name of a specific local group or tradition. For reconstructionists, ethnic identity and a demonstrable lineage are what proffer authenticity, sacred authority, power and meaning to their modern religious practice. Eclectic Pagans sometimes mistrust reconstructionists' emphasis on ethnicity, their cultural fundamentalism, ardent nationalism and—in some cases—xenophobia. Eclectics themselves, on the other hand, may be accused of indiscriminately appropriating the decontextualized practices of indigenous and ancient peoples, treating them as a vast religious and cultural smorgasbord from which they feel entitled to pick and choose for their own consumption (see Fisk, Chap. 2, this volume; Strmiska 2005; Blain 2001; Mumm 2002; Wallis 2003).

The categories "eclectic" and "reconstructionist," as applied to Pagans and Native Faith followers, align loosely with the concepts of cosmopolitanism and nationalism, respectively. But just as cosmopolitanism and nationalism are not the contrasting concepts they may first appear to be, neither are eclectic and reconstructionist approaches to modern Paganism entirely separate nor contradictory (and we should recall that Strmiska proposed a continuum rather than two mutually exclusive categories). Many Pagans and followers of Native Faiths combine both approaches. For example, they may indigenize a universalist tradition and inject it with local cultural or seasonal content, include elements borrowed from global sources in their reconstruction of an indigenous religion or Native Faith, interweave aspects of multiple Pagan and non-Pagan traditions (such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Vodou and even Christianity), or combine any of these processes with conscious, deliberate innovation or invention.

Whatever their inclination, all modern Paganisms incorporate a good deal of creativity. This is required to fill the gaps that cannot be filled by research into old Pagan religions, to create a workable practice for the modern world and simply to enjoy creative experimentation and expression. It is not only reconstructionist Pagans who tend to "traditionalize" their modern religious path by frequent reference to "the ancestors," ancient religions and indigenous or tribal religions. Eclectic Pagans do this too. Antiquity and indigeneity *per se* tend to be seen as lending authenticity—they evoke people and time periods which emblemize modern Pagan ideals, such as the honoring of all life and living a relatively simple, sustainable, peaceful life in harmony with nature.

Thus, reconstructionist and eclectic Pagans cannot be neatly separated. Those tending toward one or other orientation often flourish, as individuals and groups, alongside one another in a single country—comfortably or uncomfortably—as they do, for example, in Denmark, Sweden, Greece, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Germany, Israel, Russia, the United States and Britain. All Pagans, as individuals or groups, create paths that in some way, to some extent, inevitably reflect local cultural, social, political, religious and historical realities. Yet, like everyone else, Pagans live in a globalized, Internet-saturated world, where social networks have everywhere spilt over older cultural and geographical borders, and the global circulation of people, goods and knowledge has reached unprecedented levels. Irrespective of the extent to which a modern Pagan person, group or tradition proclaims a nationalistic, indigenous or local orientation, it is almost impossible today for a cosmopolitan sensibility not to influence their thinking and practice in some way. Most Pagans live in metropolitan environments, use the Internet for research and making interpersonal connections, and thus participate in supranational networks. No matter how strongly a group or tradition asserts its uniqueness, in every society being Pagan represents an alternative religious identity, and in that sense (at least) Pagans share—and know they share—a universal alterity (c.f. Josephides 2010: 392), not infrequently coupled with local discrimination in the society they inhabit.

Although Pagans are invariably cosmopolitan to a greater or lesser extent through their participation in global cultural flows of ideas, people and artifacts (books, art, music, chants and invocations, magical objects, symbols and ritual tools), they are most certainly not cosmopolitan in the classical sense of *transcending* the local (c.f. Delugan 2010). As already noted, attunement with nature is critical for Pagans

of all stripes, and this is true not only in an abstract, mystical, idealistic sense, but also in a material, embodied, locally en-placed sense. Nowicka and Rovisco (2009: 6) argue that cosmopolitanism "as a set of practices and identity outlooks is not to be seen as predicated on the transcendence of the particularistic and parochial ties, which are often associated to non-cosmopolitan feelings and dispositions." As Rapport and Amit (2012) emphasize, however cosmopolitan an individual's orientation is, all individuals live local lives. This is abundantly true for Pagans. Even for geographically dispersed, eclectic traditions such as Wicca, Druidry, Goddess spirituality and Western shamanism, the local landscape, seasons and sacred places are deeply valued and integral to a localized Pagan practice (see chapters by Ezzy and Sanson). For reconstructionist traditions, such as Russian Rodnoverie (Shizhenskii and Aitamurto, Chap. 6), Ukrainian RUNVira (Lesiv, Chap. 7) and Polish Rodzimowierstwo (Simpson, Chap. 4), the local or indigenous culture, history and politics are fundamentally connected to a local landscape and ethnic heritage. In these instances, while cultural fundamentalism plays a central role in Pagans' discourse and identity construction, a cautious cosmopolitanism can still be found, and Mark-Anthony Falzon's (2009: 37) argument that for cosmopolitans "there is no necessary contradiction between [the importance of] ethnicity and 'world citizenship'" is apt.

Hence, modern Pagans and Native Faith followers typically confound the dualisms that tend to be associated with discussions of cosmopolitanism and nationalism as they interweave cosmopolitan and noncosmopolitan threads in the construction of their religious paths and author complex identities as members of local communities and, frequently, global networks. Even where identity is claimed to be constructed only with regard to an indigenous community or local, ethnically uniform group, Victor Shnirelman (Chap. 5) shows that nonlocal and nonindigenous sources have had an (perhaps unacknowledged) influence. Simpson (Chap. 4), too, shows that "native" can be a very flexible term: because "nativeness" is so desirable and important in Native Faith, elements which other people might deem "foreign" or "from outside" may be taken into the expansive "native" embrace of Polish Rodzimowierstwo. Here, "nativeness" works on a sliding scale, attributed according to context and practitioners' needs, and is always a work in progress.

Some traditions which trace connections to a particular ancient religion and territory—such as Heathenism (Snook, Horrell and Horton, Chap. 3) and Canaanite Reconstructionism (Feraro, Chap. 8)—have ardent dia-

sporas far from, respectively, northern Europe and Israel. Indeed, those in the diaspora, who perhaps have more self-conscious identity-work to do, may be more ardent about their connection with an "authentic" ancient religion, and committed to an ethnic and cultural essentialism, than those who live in the original homeland of the ancient religion. By far, the largest number of modern followers of the Canaanite gods and goddesses lives not in Israel but in the United States. According to her blog profile, American Tess Dawson "is the principal force behind Natib Qadish," a "modern polytheistic religion that venerates the ancient deities of Canaan and strives to understand the ancient cultural context and religious practices in which these deities were honoured" (http://tessdawson. blogspot.co.nz/p/about-natib-qadish.html). Dawson, who has authored two books on modern Canaanite religion, describes the community she leads as "Near Eastern historic-rooted, revivalist, and reconstructionist" (http://tessdawson.blogspot.co.nz/p/about-author.html).

Thus, discourses about indigeneity, with appeals to birth-right and ancestry, can become separated from discourses of the local, and discourses of the local become separated from discourses about nationalism. The national and indigenous are not always aligned either, as in cases where indigenous people's claims regarding heritage, language, land, culture, politics and traditional religion do not sit well with the goals and claims of nation-states, especially where there is a history of colonialism. Despite the far-from-perfect alignment between the indigenous, local and national, all three may figure significantly in Pagans' discourse. As Jennifer Snook, Thad Horrell and Kristen Horton show in Chap. 3, for American Heathens, who revere the Gods and spirits of the ancient Germanic tribes, indigeneity, the local and nationalism are separate but important concepts which remain vigorously and contentiously "in play" in the consciousness of practitioners. And just as Polish Pagans arguably stretch the notion of "nativeness," so some American Heathens contest and stretch the meaning of "indigenous religion," disregarding histories of colonialism.

Thomas Biolsi (2005: 249) uses the term "indigenous cosmopolitanism" to refer to the expanding participation of indigenous peoples in diverse social, economic and cultural worlds. This term applies well to indigenous shamans who are increasingly open to sharing knowledge with each other via multiethnic and cosmopolitan endeavors such as online social networking, international festivals, workshops, conferences and ecological projects. A number are also sharing their knowledge with nonindigenous people who wish to learn from them, including Pagans, who subsequently seek to pursue these "indigenous" practices in their own home settings,

which may be far from the practices' original geographic, social, cultural and indigenous backgrounds (Sanson, Chap. 11; Rountree, Chap. 12). In such cases, the "local" and "indigenous," while remaining valorized, become uncoupled, multivalent terms, and the politics of nationalism have little or no place. The essence of modern shamans' worldview is the oneness of the world and respectful acknowledgment of the interdependence of all forms of existence. Their focus is the individual and the global community: the deepening spirituality and holistic health and wellbeing of each person, the healing and survival of the planet, and the vital, mutually dependent relationship between the two. Like Nowicka and Rovisco's "moral cosmopolitans," they believe that "all human beings ought to be morally committed to an essential humanity above and beyond the reality of one's particularistic attachments," including to a particular nation (2009: 3). This is not to say, though, that they eschew local connections and communities.

The chapters in this volume explore the culturally inflected nature of Pagan diversity—the conditions producing local uniqueness and the diverse ways in which globally circulating ideas and practices are downloaded into local contexts as a result of Pagans and Native Faith practitioners occupying "glocal" spaces. Most chapters draw on ethnographic research conducted with particular groups in a particular country (though they should not be taken as a comprehensive overview of Paganism in that country, because in every case there are a variety of Pagan traditions present). The country contexts include the United States, South Africa, Israel, Russia (two chapters), Ukraine, Poland, Malta, New Zealand and Australia. The contributing authors show how modern Pagans and Native Faith followers negotiate local/global tensions, revealing the protean quality of Pagans' subjectivities, which are to varying degrees cosmopolitan, yet "rooted" firmly in the local (c.f. Appiah 2006). Their case studies demonstrate the importance of the "situated rather than the universal subject" (Pollock et al. 2000: 586) when trying to understand modern cosmopolitans.

At the outset of this project, the volume's contributors were invited to address the following questions:

- As Paganism spreads and morphs in the globalized world, how important are discourses of indigeneity and "the local" for Pagans? How do local sociocultural, political and religious contexts, histories, landscapes and natural environments influence the construction of local Paganisms?

- How do Pagans situate themselves in global socioreligious networks? To what degree does cosmopolitanism play out—or not play out—in the context of individuals' and groups' situated subjectivities?
- What are the relationships and tensions between discourses of nationalism and cosmopolitanism; the local and the global; retrieval of tradition, eclecticism and invention?

It has been illuminating and fascinating to see how each author has responded to these questions—where each has found theoretical purchase—in the light of their research with local Pagan communities. Dale Wallace's chapter on modern Pagan Witches in South Africa drives home the critical importance of the national, political–historical context when attempting to understand the fraught entanglement of cosmopolitanism and nationalism in the postapartheid state. She examines how modern Pagans' identity politics is impacted by the gulf between local "traditional" African meanings of witchcraft and modern Eurocentric Wiccan meanings of witchcraft. As one might have predicted, authors dealing with communities in Central and Eastern Europe have focussed on tensions between nationalism and cosmopolitanism. In countries where nationalism is not a particular or overriding preoccupation of the population at large or of Pagans, such as New Zealand and Australia,[3] authors have stressed the cosmopolitan nature of local Paganism and not discussed nationalism at all. In Australasia, on the geographical outskirts of the original hubs of modern Paganism (the United Kingdom and the United States), and far from the plethora of distinctive Paganisms and Native Faiths which have sprung up throughout Europe, Pagans are more concerned with adapting imported universalist traditions and honoring local landscapes.

Anna Fisk's chapter is the only one which does not deal with a geographically specific community. Rather, Fisk considers modern Pagan animists' engagement with indigenous animists' traditions and weighs up the claim that a Pagan co-option of the term "animist" risks various kinds of cultural imperialism. Her approach is not to adjudicate regarding the rightness or wrongness of Pagan animists' identity claims. She sees adopting an animist cosmology as a positive move in the current environmental crisis, but concludes that contemporary Pagans "must not appropriate the enchanted worldviews of indigenous peoples, either as salvific symbols or in the pretense that they are the same as we are."

It seems to me that one of the problems between people identifying as Pagan "new animists" and those accusing such people of cul-

tural appropriation from indigenous peoples is that the two groups are talking past each other, each group understanding "animism" differently and operating within its own understanding. Modern Pagan animists, on the whole, focus on a religious or spiritual understanding of what "animism" means, and on that basis claim to resemble indigenous animists: their spiritual understandings, cosmology and some of their practices are broadly like those of indigenous animists (noting, however, that all indigenous animisms are culturally unique in their detail). Those concerned about cultural appropriation, on the other hand, do not separate spiritual understandings and cosmology from the political history of colonization and broader sociocultural identities and life experiences of indigenous animists. They feel justified in this because indigenous animists themselves do not draw boundaries and distinctions between religious ideas and other aspects of cultural identity and life. From this holistic perspective, one could perceive a gulf between the new animists, who typically hail from societies which have colonized indigenous animists, and indigenous animists, who have typically been colonized. Fisk offers a solution whereby politically conscious Pagans understand and do not try to erase the differences between their "new animism" and the diverse animisms of indigenous peoples, and actively engage with the responsibilities which attend the adoption of this religious identity.

Jennifer Snook, Thad Horrell and Kristen Horton also focus on issues to do with indigeneity, but in the case of their research with American Heathens, claims to indigeneity are being made by people who look to the religio-cultural traditions of Northern Europe, whom they see as their ancestors. Heathens are varied, and there are ongoing virulent debates among them about who qualifies as Heathen. Like cosmopolitans more widely, they acknowledge and may celebrate cultural and religious diversity, and have been swept up in the tide of globalization. But in reaction against cosmopolitan and homogenizing global forces, and against Heathenry's reputation for harboring white supremacists, a portion of the community is increasingly framing Heathenry as a "tribal faith," claiming theirs is a unique, indigenous, ethnic identity which is just as valid, authentic and worthy of protection as that of any other indigenous people. In doing so, they deny that the meaning of "indigenous" necessarily includes having been subjected to colonization, and ignore the privileges associated with their white settler status in the United States.

What constitutes indigeneity or "nativeness" is a preoccupation of the four chapters on Central and Eastern European Paganisms. Scott

Simpson explores the meanings of "native" to followers of the Polish Native Faith, Rodzimowierstwo. The concept of nativeness is central to this faith, but far from being dogmatic about including only culturally indigenous elements, most practitioners of Rodzimowierstwo are flexible and expansive in their determination of what passes as native. It can be applied to religious elements adopted and indigenized from "foreign" or "external" sources. Things can *become* native, and the authenticity of religious practices does not derive only from their antiquity. As a result of religious innovation, new elements may be embraced as authentic if the innovation seems "naturally" home-grown from native origins. Thus, nativeness is a dynamic process of becoming and is mobilized differently in different contexts. Simpson explores nativeness in Rodzimowierstwo constructions of identity in relation to Polish society at large, to the dominant religion of Roman Catholicism, and to other Slavic Native Faith groups. While scholars tend to refer to groups like Rodzimowierstwo as "reconstructionists," Simpson says that practitioners reject this term because it implies that the original tradition has been destroyed. In their view, Rodzimowierstwo is the continuation of a living tradition; they prefer to see their activities as reform, repair, restoration and return.

There are synergies between Polish Native Faith practitioners and modern Russian Pagans with regard to the malleability of the concept of "native." Victor Shnirelman describes the Pagan landscape in Russia as highly complex and diverse. Russian Pagans generally articulate a strong discursive focus on *ethnos* and ancestors, while at the same time—hard pressed in their research efforts to unearth an "authentic" Russian religion—they co-opt an expansive range of what might well be seen as "foreign" and often distant sources and influences. While the creative and eclectic techniques they use to construct a contemporary Russian Paganism may seem at odds with a discourse favoring the indigenous, Russian Pagans maneuver around the paradox by redefining—and considerably stretching—what constitutes the indigenous in relation to Russia's past. Another paradox Shnirelman explores is the simultaneous shunning and co-opting of Christian and Biblical elements in order to configure a narrative which establishes Russia's preeminent role in the birthing of *all* the world's religious traditions.

Roman Shizhenskii and Kaarina Aitamurto, who also write about Russian Pagans, in particular followers of the Rodnoverie Slavic tradition, are less inclined than other scholars of Russian Paganism to

stress the importance of nationalism—at least statist nationalism. While Rodnoverie developed out of the nationalistic movements and milieu of the 1970s and 1980s, and nationalism is still a prominent feature, Rodnovers' relationship with nationalism has recently become more problematic: there has been a lessening of extreme nationalism in mainstream Rodnoverie, and issues related to nationalism have caused heated divisions in the community. Drawing on the results of a survey conducted during a large Russian Pagan festival in 2014, Shizhenskii and Aitamurto document the beginnings of a shift among some community members toward a more cosmopolitan identity as members of a global Pagan community. While still patriotic, their allegiance is to the land and local area. As with the Polish Rodzimowierstwo, there is a growing emphasis on Native Faith as a spiritual tradition rather than a vehicle for nationalism.

Focussing on the context of the contemporary Ukraine–Russia crisis, Mariya Lesiv shows that cosmopolitanism and nationalism, far from being at opposite poles, are entangled in perpetual tension. The more pressing the perceived threats of cosmopolitanism and blurring of cultural and territorial boundaries, the more ardent the nationalism. The two Ukrainian Pagan groups Lesiv describes, RUNVira and Ancestral Fire, are both strongly nationalistic, but disagree fervently on where to draw the boundaries between "us" and "others," or "brothers" and "enemies." For RUNVira, indigeneity is about being Ukrainian; for Ancestral Fire, the pan-Slavic identity is what counts. While both groups reject the universalist forces connected with cosmopolitanism, seeing them as detrimental to their (differently constituted notions of) indigenous identity, Ukrainian Pagans and the construction of their various paths are demonstrably affected by global cultural flows of people and information. Identity politics are at the heart of contemporary Paganism in Ukraine, integral to its formation, its followers' lives, its leaders' pasts, its raison d'être and, probably, its foreseeable future.

In Israel, Paganism apparently has nothing to do with any kind of nationalism, and most Israeli Pagans construct eclectic spiritual paths drawing on universalist traditions such as Wicca, Druidry, Goddess Spirituality, shamanism and Asatru, making use of the Internet, Anglo-American Pagan literature, and their own creative interweaving and invention. This is not to say that the local landscape and local cultural and religious heritages are unimportant, and, as Shai Feraro intriguingly shows, for some Israeli Pagans—the very small number who identify as Canaanite

Reconstructionists—they have become the main focus. It is unthinkable, of course, that invoking the ancient Canaanite religion would ever be part of an Israeli nation-building agenda because of the fundamental inseparability of Jewish religion and the state of Israel, and in any case, Israeli Pagans have no interest in resurrecting an ancient religion to build a nationalistic political platform. Feraro identifies signs, however, that the wider Israeli Pagan community is showing an increasing interest in the ancient religious heritage of the land where they live, excavating through millennia of the world's most powerful monotheistic religions, and recovering indigenous goddesses and gods they feel are *theirs*. The voices of these modern worshippers of Asherah, El, Anat and Ba'al, scant though they may currently be, are compelling.

The three chapters about Pagan communities in the southern hemisphere reveal communities looking in two directions: outward toward the northern hemisphere whence, like most Israeli Pagans, they have inherited so many of their ideas and practices (especially from Anglo-American derived traditions), and inward toward the particular local places they inhabit. Dale Wallace explains how, in the wake of apartheid, South Africa set about constructing a new identity as a united nation, embracing an African postcolonial nationalism based on cosmopolitan values and principles. She describes the complex and heated contestation of the terms witch and witchcraft in this context, wherein modern Pagan Witches occupy two quite different positions, but fit easily into neither. On one hand, they may be seen as a subaltern, misunderstood religious minority whose Witch identity renders them vulnerable because of the pejorative meanings traditionally associated with witchcraft in Africa and in Christianity. On the other hand, they may be seen as a white—therefore privileged—Eurocentric group which shares the wider white South African colonial view that traditional African witchcraft beliefs amount to pretense and superstition, a view rejected by the black majority amidst a postcolonial revaluing of African customary beliefs, traditions, laws and cultural property. Wallace unravels the intricacies of Pagans' entangled positions and the complexities of their identity work and discursive positioning, whereby they reject both the colonial construction of "paganism," and also the traditional African construction of "witchcraft."

Doug Ezzy's chapter addresses the tensions Australian Pagans experience between seeking authenticity by replicating the practices established by Wicca's respected founding grandfathers and grandmothers in

the United Kingdom, and claiming an authenticity grounded in attentive listening to the earth beneath their feet and the turning of the local seasons, which are very different from those half a world away. Ezzy traces a local southern hemisphere shift from straightforward importation and reproduction of British Pagan practices, to inverting northern hemisphere festival dates and circle-casting traditions, and finally to a more fluid, adaptive, en-placed and cosmopolitan approach to Pagan practice, which involves local human and other-than-human participants. The trickiness of the Pagan Wheel of the Year dates for southern hemisphere Pagans has always been pertinent for me, too, another Antipodean, and is especially so right now as I draft the introduction to this book at the end of October. Each year, at this time, hundreds of witches, ghosts, ghouls and goblins dash about my neighborhood with their Hallowe'en goodie-bags during a long, warm spring evening. Simultaneously, the women's Goddess group with whom I celebrate the Wheel of the Year celebrates the earth's greening by leaping the Beltane fire in a garden fragrant with flowers and ripening strawberries. My New Zealand Pagan friends become frustrated by the "wrong" celebration of Hallowe'en (Samhain) at the end of October, not to mention the commercialized, secular appropriation of this religious festival. As Ezzy points out, however, while the local season and landscape ask for one kind of ritual celebration (of springtime in this case), it is worth remembering that a great number of Antipodean Pagans have Celtic ancestors who once celebrated Samhain at the end of October.

The New Zealand neo-shamans that Dawne Sanson describes include indigenous (Māori) and nonindigenous people who combine local and global sources to create a cosmopolitan, yet uniquely local, brand of modern shamanism rooted in the landscape and cultural history of New Zealand. The scene Sanson describes is one corner of a tapestry of twenty-first-century global shamanism in which indigenous shamans are not (any longer) victims of cultural appropriation but active agents, "eclectic bricoleurs" who disseminate traditional sacred knowledge, synthesize it with global indigenous and nonindigenous knowledges, and create new shamanic forms which they believe the world urgently needs. Where once Māori ethnicity was regarded essential for legitimate access to traditional knowledge, today, spiritual and past-life connections between Māori and non-Māori shaman-healers are being used to forge close, productive relationships.[4] Thus, boundaries between different indigenous peoples, and between indigenous and nonindigenous

people, are now regarded by some influential Māori shamanic healers as less important than the global community's need for sacred healing and spiritual knowledge. The cosmopolitan space inhabited by these shamans has become a bridge between self and other, community and humanity, the unique and the universal (c.f. Rapport and Amit 2012).

This represents a dramatic shift in indigenous identity politics since the early 1990s, when I was conducting fieldwork on Goddess spirituality in New Zealand. At that time, cultural appropriation was a fraught and troubling issue nationally, and Pagans (who were almost all not Māori) were acutely concerned about fully respecting Māori spiritual and cultural traditions and Māori ownership of them, but fearful of being seen to appropriate these traditions. They therefore seldom incorporated Māori aspects into rituals, apart from acknowledging Māori ancestors and spirits associated with particular places in the landscape, and mentioning well known Māori goddesses connected with the elements (e.g. Mahuika with fire and Papatūānuku with earth). Sanson attributes the shift in attitudes to the Māori cultural renaissance of the late twentieth century and post-colonial sociopolitical developments in New Zealand which have brought into being new articulations of power and agency, and have been positive for Māori in many spheres of life.

Ananta Giri (2006: 1278) says that the revival of cosmopolitanism "reflects an urge to go beyond the postmodern and multi-cultural imprisonment in difference and realize our common humanity." In these terms, modern shamans are cosmopolitans par excellence (although it must be acknowledged that they do not all embrace a "Pagan" identity). Indigeneity and cultural distinctiveness are alive and well for shamans, but today they are frequently used as a bridge between people and conduit for sharing, rather than as boundary markers and grounds for division. My research with shamans in Malta turned up different strands of shamanism, loosely interwoven at the local level with equally strong, if not stronger in some cases, connections globally. The notion of indigeneity as a harbinger of authenticity is sometimes tethered to the local, and sometimes not—shamans in Malta invoke indigenous Native American shamanism, an ancient (historically unknown) indigenous Maltese shamanism, and, occasionally, past-life experiences as indigenous shamans from a society distant in time and place from the one they currently inhabit. Thoroughgoing cosmopolitans, they are mobile participants in supranational networks, engage productively with difference, and proclaim a strong sense of living in "one world." The politics of nationalism have no part in their endeavors;

the need for a global environmental ethics and concerted environmental action, on the other hand, is vital.

While I have argued in this introduction that all modern Pagans are inevitably cosmopolitans irrespective of their discursive stand, clearly this does not mean they all embrace being "a citizen of the world" or even "a member of the human family" (c.f. Giri 2006: 1278). In one sense, such terms draw too large a circle for some Pagans and Native Faith followers to accept. But in another sense, these terms are too restricted in their anthropocentric reference to human citizens in a human family. What more Pagans might embrace more happily—given their overarching principle of "kinship with nature"—is membership of an vast multispecies community encompassing all human and nonhuman beings in a dynamic web of mutual connectedness, including not only human and other-than-human persons in the material world (such as nonhuman animals, trees, rocks and rivers), but also spirit beings, elementals, ancestors and deities.

NOTES

1. In this argument, Wardle is following Marilyn Strathern (1996).
2. Over the years, there have been attempts to put local and global figures on numbers of Pagans. The 2011 census figure for total Pagans in England and Wales was 78,566 (Lewis 2012: 132). In 2008 an American Religious Identification Survey was carried out by the Graduate Center of the City University of New York; the number of total Pagans was 711,000 (rounded to the nearest thousand). The figure represents a statistical extrapolation based on a survey of 50,000 people in the United States (Lewis 2012: 133). The Canadian census in 2011 recorded a total of 26,495 Pagans (e-mail from Shai Feraro to New Religious Movements Scholars group, September 28, 2013). In the 2006 New Zealand census, the total was 7122, and in the 2011 Australian census, the figure was 32,083 (Lewis 2012: 134–5). The above total figures of Pagans are variously broken down into the various traditions (Pagan, Wicca, Druidism, Witchcraft, Heathen, Pantheism and so on).
3. New Zealanders and Australians are, however, patriotic—witness, for example, ANZAC Day commemorations or any rugby test match played by the All Blacks or Wallabies (especially against

each other!)—but neither country has recently experienced the kinds of social and political upheavals experienced by post-Soviet societies.

4. Waldron and Newton (2012: 67) similarly describe reciprocal borrowing between indigenous and nonindigenous Australians, pointing out that "cultural appropriation goes two ways; some indigenous people have drawn upon New Age ideology," and "there is a continuum of behaviors and attitudes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples."

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Appropriating, Romanticizing and Reimagining: Pagan Engagements with Indigenous Animism

Anna Fisk

INTRODUCTION

Pagan conceptions of human relations with the nonhuman world, especially that understood as "nature," have been considered in terms of the ethnographic concept of animism. This was originally a colonial concept—one that regarded indigenous worldviews that incorporate the subjectivity of nonhumans as the "primitive basis of religion." Recent anthropological and theoretical accounts have presented a new understanding of animism as a profoundly relational worldview in which "the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human" (Harvey 2005: xi). The extension of social structures and relationality to the nonhuman environment is a common element of the otherwise diverse worldviews of indigenous cultures around the world. It is also prevalent in contemporary Pagan discourse, but with a key difference: for contemporary Pagans, animism is "elective," deliberately adopted as an oppositional response to the dominant cultures in which they live, rather than embedded within them, as for indigenous societies (Rountree 2012).

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Cross-cultural engagement with indigenous animist traditions (and related anthropological and philosophical discourses) is widely regarded in contemporary Paganism as a positive move in the face of global environmental crisis. Both traditional indigenous worldviews and contemporary Pagan and philosophical understandings of the subjectivity of the "other-than-human world" (Hallowell 2002 [1960]) are thought to contribute to a way of life that is more ecologically sustainable than the dominant paradigms of modernity. Yet, while the cosmopolitanism of Pagan "new animist" engagement with indigenous cultural traditions may be good, that does not make it innocent. In this chapter, I explore how Pagan animism may run the risk of western imperialism in the following interrelated modes: first, through the direct appropriation of indigenous beliefs and practices; second, through the romanticized and essentialized view of indigenous cultures; and third, through the contemporary Pagan reimagining of indigenous animist cosmologies by relocating them in what is perceived as "one's own heritage"—the mythic and religious traditions of the European past (such as occurs in Heathenism and Druidry). This is often from an explicit resistance to appropriating indigenous cultures, as well as the potentially more nationalistic impulse of claiming harmonious relations with nature as native to one's own culture. I will suggest that both the imagining of an animist pagan past in Europe and the turn to indigenous animist ways of knowing are related to the modern desire to escape superficiality and dualistic rationalism.

DEFINITIONS AND DISCLAIMERS

By "contemporary Paganism," I am using an umbrella term for a diverse set of contemporary religious traditions. The focus of this chapter is the writing of published scholars: sociologists, historians, scholars of religion and anthropologists. Thus, the material this chapter contends with is representative not of Paganism as a whole, but rather of "Pagan Studies," an academic discourse in which most of the key scholars are themselves Pagan (Davidsen 2012: 184). The authors on which I draw, whether writing in conventional academic venues such as books or peer-reviewed journals, or popular books or websites that nevertheless are deeply considered and thoroughly researched, are, in a sense, the "theologians" of the Pagan movement. My own interest in Pagan discourses of relation to the

nonhuman world is personal as well as academic. While I do not identify unequivocally as Pagan, any critique this chapter makes is from a place of loose affinity, rather than of "otherness," even if that affinity does not extend to outright belonging.

Animism

The definition of animism as "belief in spirits" was a concept originally devised by early anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor, first used in his *Primitive Culture* (1871) in reference to the beliefs of indigenous peoples who venerate or ascribe subjectivity to nonhuman things and animals. Tylor regarded such worldviews which included nonhuman agents— whether stones, birds or ancestor spirits—as the "primitive basis of religion," from which evolved polytheism, then monotheism. Tylor's analysis has been discredited by the refutation of such evolutionary theories of human society and culture, as well as postcolonial critique of what now seems a ghastly way of analyzing societies. Nevertheless, Nurit Bird-David has shown how this understanding of animism has been pervasive in common parlance (1999: S67–8). While the focus here is the "new animism," the colonial origins and implications of the term continue to be relevant.

"New animism" is characterized as belief in a world "full of persons, only some of whom are human, and [that] life is always lived in relationship to others" (Harvey 2005: xi). The "new animist" worldview of the personhood of the nonhuman world is seen as an alternative to the dualism of modernity (stemming from the legacies of both Christianity and industrialization), an alternative that should be embraced in the face of environmental crisis. The concept of the new animism is found in a number of anthropologists' writings on indigenous cultures, such as those of Irving Hallowell, Nurit Bird-David, Philip Descola, Tim Ingold and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (see Graf 2012). It is also prevalent in Pagan discourse: in the introduction to his 2013 collection *Handbook of Contemporary Animism*, Graham Harvey (2013: 2) describes how this concept of personlike relations with nonhuman "nature" kept cropping up in his postdoctoral research and involvement in contemporary Paganism. The new animism is also related to the "material turn" in critical theory, known as "new materialism"; in thinkers such as Bruno Latour (2005), Martin Holbraad (2011) and Jane Bennett (2010), we see the agency of matter and material objects.

Indigenous

"Indigenous" means native or original inhabitants as opposed to colonialists, but also refers to nonindustrial societies distinct from and marginalized by the dominant society of a given place (Hughes 2003: 11). It is admittedly problematic to refer to diverse peoples around the world under one term that only exists because of colonialism. Yet, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs uses a fundamentally political definition of "indigenous," a cultural identity that has to be defended from outside forces: "the *disadvantaged* [my italics] of those peoples who inhabited a territory prior to colonisation or formation of the present state," culturally distinguished from the dominant group, and often "marginalised and discriminated against" (IWGIA). The preservation and transmission of ancestral territories and cultural heritage, as well as self-identification as "indigenous," is a political objective for indigenous people. As Suzanne Owen notes, the definition of "indigenous" referring only to the objects of colonialization and marginalization creates a dichotomy of "mutually exclusive categories" that are defined on the grounds of ethnicity. Indigenous activists take the "ethnic exclusivity" of the term and use it to their own ends "to reclaim land and human rights that had been denied them on largely racial grounds in the first place" (Owen 2008: 1).

However, discussion of indigenous *animism* involves an acknowledgment of certain cultural commonalities that exist in many, though by no means all, indigenous societies. The key is traditional worldviews arising from nonindustrial ways of life, and hence a particularly direct relation to the land and climate, whether the means of subsistence is pastoral, or hunting and gathering, or through small-scale farming (see Hughes 2003: 21–6). David Abram, using language that exemplifies the romanticization of both indigenous cultures and animism discussed in this chapter, proclaims the relation between animist worldviews and nonindustrial ways of life in terms of those "[c]ultures whose reliance upon the animate earth is not, as yet, mediated by a crowd of technologies" and who are thus living "in close and intimate contact with undomesticated nature" (Abram 2013: 127–8). While today indigenous peoples such as Native Americans, Aboriginal Australians and the Māori of Aotearoa/New Zealand may have urban lifestyles broadly similar to those of the descendants of European colonizers, they will commonly have worldviews shaped by their recent ancestors' nonindustrial ways of life.[1]

Paganism, Animism and Indigenous Culture

There are both implicit and explicit connections between Pagan animism and that of indigenous people. Second, there is the centrality in much contemporary Pagan practice of relationship with the natural world and elements of it: as Barbara Davy (2009: 1) states, "[f]or most contemporary Pagans in the English-speaking world nature is the milieu of the sacred." On the Scottish Pagan Federation's website, this is manifest in the first of their three principles beginning with the phrase "love for and kinship with nature" (SPF). Pagan scholars such as Graham Harvey report a number of Pagans self-identifying as "animist" (2005, 2009) and this is also evident in the work of Pagan writers such as Emma Restall Orr (2012a), and those collected in *The Wanton Green* edited by Gordon MacLellan and Susan Cross (2012). MacLellan (2012: 52) writes in that collection:

> In modern western animism and some other forms of paganism, we have no key texts or received teachings to guide us. Our practice, the expression of our way of being, grows out of our experience of the world we live in. That world is a living world, unfolding, evolving, within its own consciousness, full of spirit, full of connections.

This characterization of contemporary Pagan animism, in the absence of authoritative sacred texts or traditions, as flowing directly from experience of "the living world" may be evocative, but it neglects the ways in which experience is mediated through cultural products and categories. By using the very word "animism," contemporary Pagans are invoking indigenous cultures, as transmitted through colonial interpretations.

A second more explicit connection between Paganism and indigenous animism is western and European cultures' drawing on the imagery and rituals of indigenous peoples, especially in shamanic practices. New Age appropriation of the figure of the shaman has been widely discussed (Harvey 2003; Wallis 2003; Znamenski 2007). Third, the connection between animism and Paganism is made clear in the more scholarly discourse of "new animism," following Graham Harvey. Furthermore, many scholars writing in a new animist vein, having adopted elements of the worldviews of indigenous peoples, such as Colin Scott (2006) and Priscilla Stuckey (2010), are not necessarily involved with Paganism. In collections such as the *Handbook of Contemporary*

Animism (Harvey 2013) or Davy's 2009 edited collection on Paganism and nature, there is an overlap between Pagan and non-Pagan scholars writing about new animism from anthropological, sociological and philosophical perspectives. Thus, in my discussion, I treat the western animism found in Paganism and in the scholarship of the contemporary "new animism" as different shades of the same thing, rather than attempt to draw boundaries according to religious affiliation.

To turn now to the main concern of this chapter: the majority of contemporary Paganisms are located in Christian-heritage, postindustrial societies, and Pagan emphasis on human relation with animals, plants and landscape is a response to the perceived dualism of modernity, in which humanity is alienated from and set above nature. Thus, it is arguable that Pagan animism is essentially distinct from the animism of indigenous societies, and drawing parallels between them may be inherently problematic. Kathryn Rountree (2012: 306) has claimed that Pagans' relations with other-than-human persons are fundamentally different from the "taken-for-granted system of bodily practices" of indigenous animisms. In indigenous societies referred to as animist, the networks of society are inclusive of the other-than-human world, and there is no dualism of non-human nature and human culture—human activities and the organization of social systems are contiguous with the ecological network of animals, plants and weather in which they are embedded. In contrast, contemporary Pagan animism is countercultural, an oppositional response to the prevailing culture which critiques its dominant values and epistemology, such as consumerism and the march toward progress, and the dualisms of nature and culture, mind and body, subject and object (see Hope and Jones 2006). Rountree (2012: 306) argues that Pagan animism

> reflects a world-as-wished-for rather than the world-as-it-is. It gives Pagans a spiritual orientation to the natural world in terms of their own beliefs and practices and provides a platform for political rhetoric and action regarding more ecologically aware attitudes and practices relating to the environment, but does not reflect those currently prevalent in Western societies.

Her claim is that Pagan animism is "an *elective ideology* [my italics] rather than a taken-for-granted way of living in a world which one has inherited from one's culture" (Rountree 2012: 316). Despite the all-pervasive significance of being animist for some contemporary Pagans, ultimately it is a matter of personal individual choice.

Rountree's arguments have led me to question whether western use of, or claims of affinity with, indigenous concepts of relations between the human and other-than-human may be critiqued as an imperialist appropriation of these cultures. Arguably, speaking of contemporary shamanism or animism is not even to steal someone else's self-definition—it is to take for oneself and make respectable the labels that one's ancestor colonists invented about *them,* the other. The colonial origins of the term "animism" itself underscore the potential imperialism of proclaiming a sort of spiritual affinity with the worldviews of oppressed peoples around the world, fighting for the survival of their culture and their homes.

Conversely, the new animist engagement with indigenous animism may be regarded as a positive move. For Graham Harvey, it is the opposite of the old imperialist attitude that invented the term "animism" in the first place, part of the colonialist arsenal of willful misunderstanding and cultural abuse. He argues that the new animism in western discourse is a thoughtful engagement that depends on respect for indigenous peoples' valuable insights and ways of knowing, rather than seeing them as "primitive superstition" and "childish category errors" (2005: 28–9). Linda Hogan, of the Native American Chickasaw people, describes being initially "horrified" to hear that animism was on university curricula, when "we were killed in great numbers for being called Pagans and animists. Now one of the very institutions that disavowed our original relationships with the environment has studies in its return … What once victimized us is now a special area of religious studies" (Hogan 2013: 21). Yet, Hogan has come to think of this as a good thing if it ensures the survival of at least some of the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples. Priscilla Stuckey's scholarly exploration of animism, stemming from her own experience of "being known by a birch tree," puts the writing of western thinkers in conversation with indigenous philosophers. She wishes to "acknowledge an intellectual and historical debt to Indigenous peoples for offering ontological alternatives to modernity" (Stuckey 2010: 184), as well as to blur distinctions, and "render more permeable the boundary between [the] cultural paradigms of western and indigenous" (2010: 202). What is refreshing about Stuckey's new animism is that she is drawing on indigenous animist philosophers' writings—indigenous worldviews as described by indigenous people themselves, rather than just by outsider anthropologists.

But to brood a while with a hermeneutic of suspicion toward western animism, I still want to explore how it may easily become a different kind

of colonialism, in three ways: first, by taking what is not yours ("cultural appropriation"); second, by romanticizing; and third, by taking what is not yours and transplanting it elsewhere in "reimagining."

Cultural Appropriation

"Cultural appropriation" refers to a borrowing or plundering from indigenous peoples, in which cultural ideas and practices are uprooted from their original context without acknowledgment, or with an erroneous or romanticized reference to a generic "spirituality" without following the relevant protocols (see Owen 2008). The appropriation—"misuse and commodification"—of Native American spirituality in particular has been critiqued as "neo-colonialist" (Owen 2008: 2). For example, Margo Thunderbird laments: "[T]hey've come for the very last of our possessions; now they want our pride, our history, our spiritual traditions. They want to rewrite and remake these things, to claim them for themselves" (cited in Wallis 2003: 195).

The cultural appropriation of indigenous traditions has been critiqued by anthropologists and Pagan Studies scholars (Aldred 2000; Vitebsky 2003; Wallis 2003) as well as indigenous scholars and activists. The term "cultural appropriation" is frequently used in Pagan discourse about appropriation of divinities from other cultures, but also about practices such as sweat lodges. Throughout the texts I have engaged with in researching this chapter, there recurs a prevalent resistance to appropriation, reflected in Chas Clifton's observation that the "contemporary Pagan movement generally displayed an internal taboo against appropriating American Indian ceremonies or nomenclature" (2009: 71). Similarly, Rountree notes that white Goddess feminists in New Zealand do not co-opt Māori traditions (2009: 253). As religious thinkers go, Pagans, especially the academic variety, tend to be very self-reflexive and resistant to imperialism. However, whether the sensitivity of the scholarly branches of Paganism is representative of the Pagan movement as a whole is less easy to claim with confidence, and the focus of this chapter is the writing of Pagan scholars.

Romanticizing

The ways in which contemporary Paganism and nature religions may romanticize and essentialize indigenous animist societies are encapsulated in Andrei Znamenski's (2007: 274) statement that "[t]o many Western

seekers, the Native American represents the archetype of the ancient, the ecological, and the spiritual." This romanticizing is often concurrent with ignoring the unjust circumstances of marginalized indigenous peoples around the world, as demonstrated by Andy Smith's critique of romanticization of Native American spirituality:

> Indian women are suddenly no longer the women who are forcibly sterilized and are tested with unsafe drugs such as Depo provera; we are no longer the women who have a life expectancy of 47 years; and we are no longer the women who generally live below the poverty level and face a 75 per cent unemployment rate. No, we're too busy being cool and spiritual. (Cited in Gallagher 2009: 580–81)

There is also an exoticized othering inherent in the western lure toward the traditional practices of colonized cultures, which Znamenski terms "the beauty of the primitive" of shamanism in the western imagination (2007). This is illustrated by Graham Harvey's tongue-in-cheek comparison of shamans with the shepherds of the Pennines, who are also "close to nature," and "important to the lifestyles of their neighbours"; being a shepherd is just as much an "archaic and increasingly marginalised or abandoned lifestyle" as being a shaman, yet urban westerners "do not run workshops on shepherd's whistles or on urban or Celtic shepherding … One cannot become a shepherd by correspondence course" (1997: 109).

Perhaps most significantly, the romanticizing of indigenous animism may involve what Kay Milton terms "the myth of primitive ecological wisdom" (1996: 135), rooted in a romanticized version of the old cultural evolution approach of the likes of Tylor, and in many ways is just an inverse of it. Lotte Hughes (2003: 44) notes how some westerners regard indigenous people as "beautiful beasts in a human zoo"; indigenous people who live within nature reserves report being treated by tourists as "an extension of the wilderness." Harvey discusses how, just as the modern dualism between nature and culture has become inversed, with the wild uncontrollable savagery of nature now revered as being pure and free, the attitude to "closer to nature" indigenous people is now one of a romanticized respect:

> Indigeneity in both colonialist and contemporary stereotypes is constructed as "natural," but the evaluation of "wilderness" has radically altered.

> What was once alien and inhuman and therefore bad is now autonomous, diverse and therefore good. In relation to whatever "nature" might mean, indigenous people who were bad when nature was bad have become good as nature has become good. (Harvey 2003: 8)

The problem here is that the divide between human and animal, wild and domestic, nature and culture, is so deeply ingrained in the western imaginary (see Soper 1995) that, however benevolent one's sense of the "closeness to nature" of indigenous people, it still belies a sense that these nonindustrial societies are not fully human. A respect for indigenous ways of knowing and living that does not romanticize and essentialize them requires a deep-rooted rethinking of the categories of nature and culture (see Descola 2013; Haraway 1991).

Here, it is worth bearing in mind that the insights of indigenous animism do not necessarily fall under the realm of the "religious" or "spiritual." While contemporary Pagans may regard their animism as religious, many examples of indigenous animism are not "religious beliefs"; rather, they are ways of knowing, social structures and systems of thought. To automatically ascribe them to the realm of "religion" is to fall back into the mistake of what Mary Douglas calls "the myth of primitive piety," the "popular thinking about us, the civilised, and them, the primitives, that we are secular, sceptical … and that they are religious" (Douglas 1975: 75, cited in Lerner 1995). While western romanticizing of the spiritual wisdom of the indigenous may appear benign relative to other forms of cultural imperialism, emphasis on indigenous ways of knowing in religious terms can be seen as contributing to the subordination of these worldviews. Elizabeth Povinelli suggests that the subordination of indigenous worldviews is due to ascribing them as beliefs rather than knowledge, as well as "popularly imagined as preceding it in social evolutionary time" (1995: 505, cited in Graf 2012).

Reimagining

The third mode of contemporary Pagan engagement with indigenous animism is "reimagining," in which concepts such as animism and shamanism[2] are applied to one's own geographical context and/or cultural heritage. This stems from a desire for one's religious practice to be rooted in what is perceived as one's heritage, a heritage that one has become disconnected from. This may also involve appropriating concepts such as

"indigenous" and "native" for the purposes of reclaiming an imagined European past, or for recovering connection to land and nature in postindustrial modernity.

The "core shamanism" of Michael Harner has presented to a modern western audience the fundamentals of shamanism, derived from the practices of various indigenous cultures. These core practices, such as entering into altered states of consciousness through the use of drumming or hallucinogenic substances, communicating with animal spirit guides, and so on, are regarded as applicable even to those in a contemporary western context (Harner 1980). Some strands of the neo-shamanism influenced by Harner focus on "re-embedding" these indigenous spiritual practices "in the context, landscapes and cosmology and cultural knowledges of Northern Europe" (Blain 2002: 143, citing Lindquist 1997; see also Znamenski 2007: 273–320). This includes applying the category "shaman" to the ancient druids (e.g. Forest 2014, see Wallis 2003: 85–9) and imagining a "Celtic shamanism" (Matthews and Matthews 1994; Matthews 2001), both following a theme in Celtic Studies scholarship (Jones 1998: 197). The trend may also be seen in the Heathen practice of *seidr* magic[3] as reconstructed from Norse tradition (Lindquist 1997; Blain 2002; Wallis 2003; Kraft et al. 2015), or seeing evidence of an ancient Gaelic shamanism surviving in nineteenth-century folk practices (Harris-Logan 2005, 2006).

This relocation of shamanism to the history of northern Europe[4] is in part an attempt to sidestep cultural appropriation, as well as a desire to ground practice in one's own land and heritage. For example, the "English Shamanism" of The Apple Branch justifies their approach thus:

> Most modern shamanism automatically includes symbols and animals from places people may not feel connected to (my daily life isn't strongly affected by Bison or Jaguar, for example, and I wouldn't properly understand Lakota symbols on drums) … our members have a lot of respect for Native American and South American cultures, as well as the many others which enrich the modern shamanism movement. That is precisely why we do not borrow from them. Appropriating from the sacred rites of other cultures can be disrespectful as well as ineffective. (Blake 2011)

Similarly, leading Druid Philip Shallcrass, also known as Greywolf, tells Robert Wallis that he avoids using the term "shamanism," because it is "a culturally specific term for spirit workers in Siberia." While his practice

of Druidry, working "with the spirits of the land, of the gods and of our ancestors," involves using a rattle for calling spirits, drumming for entering into a state of altered consciousness—practices similar to those used in Siberia or South America—Shallcrass insists that the Druidic tradition is "a native European (more specifically British) way of communicating with and responding to the spirits of place, of the gods and ancestors and of the natural world … What we do is Druidic because we define Druidry as the native spirituality of these lands. If we were Siberian, we'd describe what we do as shamanism" (Wallis 2003: 85). Wallis pushes Shallcrass about his "sensitivity to the issues concerning the 'stealing' of native traditions," while at the same time describing the use of a Native American-style sweat lodge at a gathering in Britain. Shallcrass (2003: 89) replies, "I went into that sweat lodge not because it was Lakota but because it was there."

John Matthews claims that he devised his "Celtic shamanism" in response to a vision given to him by a Native American shaman, who instructed him to return to Britain to discover "his own native *British* shamanic tradition" (cited in Jones 1998: 198). Caitlin and John Matthews (1994: 2) also describe John's conversation with the Lakota elder, who, when asked "if he had anything to say to our people, working with a fragmented and in some instances forgotten tradition," answered that "there is no such thing as a forgotten tradition. It is possible to neglect such traditions, but these can *always* be recovered."

Jenny Blain (2002: 147) notes that most practitioners of Heathen *seidr* do not refer to themselves as shamans, preferring "seidwoman" or "seidman," in order to "avoid appropriation" of indigenous cultures. Thus, their "quest for meaning turns to the ancestors—and to those spirits of place, animals and plants [and] landscapes, both physical and cosmological, in which the seeker feels most 'at home'" (Blain 2002: 158). In notable Druid Emma Restall Orr's exploration of animism, *The Wakeful World*, she chooses to focus on western animism, "not the animism of the Amazon rainforest or South East Asia," but that within her own British context and geographical location: "the journey of this book is one that stays within my own ecosystem. Both philosophically and spiritually the roots of my thinking are found deep in my own heritage of Western thought and culture" (2012a: 8).

Despite the reflexivity and sensitive intentions of the thinkers and practitioners discussed above, I remain somewhat discomforted by discourse on the "native spirituality of the British Isles" or "our own heritage." This is because as well as guarding against imperialist colonization

of other cultures, emphasis on European heritage can morph into the language of "land and blood," as, for example, in some extremes of east European Native Faith (Ivakhiv 2009) or instances of "paganism … being pressed to the cause of spiritual Aryanism in Europe" (Gallagher 2009: 585). Here, it should be underscored that xenophobia and racism are resolutely *not* part of most contemporary Pagans' spirituality—the opposite in fact—simply that Paganism's "relationship with ethnic, historical, national, social and political boundaries" (Gallagher 2009: 578) is not unproblematic. If Druidry is asserted as the native faith of the British Isles, implicit within that assertion is that other spiritualities (Christianity, but also Islam and Hinduism) are not native, and this is troubling when the extent to which a spirituality is "native" implies something about its relative value. It also runs the risk of implying that some spiritualities *belong* in this geographical context, thus implying that others do not belong, or at least do not belong quite as much.[5] As Gallagher (2009) has discussed, contemporary Paganism in Britain is predominately white, and while it may desire to be inclusive of those whose ancestors arrived in Britain rather more recently than the Celtic or Anglo-Saxon ancestry of white Britons, it is understandable that focus on the worldviews of the ancient inhabitants of these isles is hardly attractive to current inhabitants of, say, Pakistani or Caribbean descent.

Another issue regarding animist worldviews and shamanic practices re-embedded in European traditions is that, despite the richness of (some[6]) Pagan reimagining of personal relatedness with the more-than-human world in terms of reconstructed folklore, myth and fragments of history, arguably the introduction of the mythic element highlights how contemporary animism lacks the *particularity* of indigenous animist relations, which concern very particular places and species. It seems that many western Pagans need mythology, such as the "Celtic" tree alphabet (Ogham) or Bardic poems about birds, in order to justify, or make more profound, their own personal spiritual relations with trees and birds.

However, perhaps the emphasis on myth and tradition is less about origins, and more about community, in the sense that locating animist myths in the European mythic tradition enables a communal imaginary, rather than atomized individual relations to the other-than-human world. Piers Vitebsky (2003) has argued that indigenous shamanism is embedded in the community and the particular ecosystem, and that fragmented, postmodern, postindustrial societies' neo-Shamans can "never authentically recapture the holistic vision of indigenous knowledge"

(paraphrased in Sanson 2009: 446). In response to this, Wallis (2003: 9) suggests that for some neo-Shamans, "[t]heir life-transforming experiences empower their world-views to the extent that, while they are often discordant with the West, it is nevertheless socially integrated … A new sort of shamanic local knowledge is thus produced." The use of ancient myth may enable this "local knowledge," providing a means of re-enchantment for one's religious community and local physical context. Myth and particularity are not necessarily mutually exclusive: in Wallis's writing on his spiritual practice, we see a balanced combination of the specific and the mythic: he "works with" the plant mugwort, relating to that which grows along the banks of his local canal, as well as its importance in the Anglo-Saxon poem, the Nine Herbs Charm (2012: 24–37). He writes, "[m]y engagements with Mugwort have re-ordered for me my place in the world, the places in which I am en-placed, and contributed to an ongoing process of re-enchantment, a creative and magical act which resists the conventional worldview, even if I cannot fully escape it" (2012: 36).

Elective Animism

This leads us back to Kathryn Rountree's claim that Pagan animism is "elective" (2012: 313). Here, it bears iterating that just because contemporary Pagan animism is elective, this does not mean (and Rountree does not suggest) that it is not experienced as real, or good, for its adherents. The Pagan writers and practitioners I have read are deliberately trying to change the cultural imaginary; their sense of relationship with, and personhood of, nature and place is in conscious opposition to the cultural norm of their societies, a deliberately countercultural stance. Emma Restall Orr (2012b: 107) sees this Pagan animism as a relational way of viewing the knowledge of science, "perceiving the world as an intricately woven fabric of relationships, every creature held within its community of being, its natural ecosystem." This relational view, "to feel nature as home," is what leads many Pagans to their path, precisely because of its opposition to the dominant culture:

> Many are drawn to Paganism specifically because they feel isolated, unable to relate to the consumer culture or religious conventions that surround them and, adrift, they feel alone. What they discover is a spiritual tradition which teaches that we are never alone. (Restall Orr 2012b: 107)

Harvey, writing seven years before Rountree, asserts that contemporary Pagan animism is a dynamic interaction between a deliberate, countercultural expression and the inherent, taken-for-granted, lived reality of indigenous cultures. He suggests that to insist that western Pagan animism is chosen, whereas indigenous animism is not, is itself an imperialist attitude to indigenous peoples, since "indigenous animists also choose and shape their animism." While an indigenous person may have been enculturated since birth in an animist worldview, they still engage in "thoughtfulness, theorising, discourse, debate, dialogue and change" with their wider culture, rather than being "childish primitives blindly obeying a fixed and false tradition" (Harvey 2005: 84). However, the distinction Rountree draws between contemporary Pagan animism and indigenous peoples' animism is that Pagan animism is deliberately countercultural, swimming against the tide, whereas indigenous animism—no matter the extent of thoughtful reflection of its adherents—travels *with*, not *against*, the dominant cultural flow.

For me it remains important to resist the kind of homogenizing that Susan Greenwood displays in the following quotation: "[t]he only real difference between the Western magical cognition and so-called indigenous thinking is the context ... the human attitude of mind—in the ability to create cosmological maps—is the same" (2005: 211). This is underscored by how Greenwood's (2005: 18) discussion of contemporary nature religion's postmodern re-enchantment of the world, in the book *The Nature of Magic*, includes a chapter entitled "Learning to be Indigenous," about the role of fairy stories and nature spirits in deepening relations with land and place. Similarly, eco-philosopher Freya Mathews (1999) has explored "Becoming Native" as "an ethos of countermodernity." No matter how laudable the intention, I find this use of terminology extremely problematic: first, because it shows a lack of engagement with the political realities of indigenous peoples around the globe, and, second, because it demonstrates the symbolic use that indigenous peoples are put to by the western imagination in order to heal the wounds of modernity.

INDIGENEITY, ANIMISM AND MODERNITY

In Jay Griffiths's *Wild: An Elemental Journey*—a book which combines memoir, travelogue and nature writing with manifesto—she tells of her suffering from an intense episode of depression. An anthropologist friend offered her the chance to visit the Amazonian jungle and drink ayahuasca

with a shaman as a means of healing. She describes her experience of "[g]arish and cartoonish" visions of "tourist-shop junk, silly plastic toys … the ugliness and stupidity of the city I had left … jangling with febrile urban banality." Then, the shaman, Victor, "put his hands on either side of my head and pressed his lips to my head and sucked … It felt as if he was sucking out of my head sharp poisoned needles" (Griffiths 2006: 11). In the morning, "[t]he depression that had so darkened me for months had gone," and she was free of it for years afterwards (2006: 13).

This episode is a microcosm of the book as a whole. Griffiths (2006: 4) links her own depression with the sterility of modern western living, a way of life that it is against life, "the tepid world of net curtains and the dulled televisual torpor of mediated living." For Griffiths (2006: 4), human separation from nature and wildness is imposed artifice:

> Kerneled up within us all, an intimate wildness … Our strings are tuned to the same pitch as the earth … We are—every one of us—a force of nature, though sometimes it is necessary to relearn consciously what we have never forgotten.

The book details Griffiths's attempts to relearn, and just as she went to the indigenous Peruvian shaman for healing from depression, it is to indigenous people as well as the nonhuman wilderness that she turns for healing from the banality of western modernity: "From Inuit people in the Arctic I learnt something of the intricate ice and how all landscape is knowledge-escape … From Aboriginal people in Australia I learned … how land is heavy with significance and how it sings" (2006: 3).

In Griffiths's writing, as in the "new animism," we see indigenous peoples' ways of knowing and living providing a salvific route out of the dualism, alienation and disenchantment of a modern western lifestyle and ontology. In this, as in many other discourses, "indigeneity is made to serve as the opposite of the allegedly alienated, individualistic, anonymous and purposeless world of consumerist modernity" (Harvey 2003: 6).[7]

Gerald Vizenor (1999, cited in Aldred 2000: 343) draws on Baudrillard's theory of simulations, in which the "proliferation of reproductions intensifies the desire for the original," resulting in a nostalgia for authenticity. This we see in British Pagans' quest for the "native spirituality" of these isles, as well as in white American engagement with Native American traditions, which is Vizenor's focus. He argues that the consumption of Native American spirituality enables white Americans to ignore the social and political reality of indigenous peoples. It is my feeling that the efforts spent by contemporary

Pagans in imagining their animist heritage from an ancient past, identifying themselves with those nature-loving people who were marginalized and suppressed by the Christian "other," would be better put to acknowledging, and where possible seeking to address, the colonial and imperialist crimes of a much more recent past from which we directly benefit.

Franz Graf makes the salient point that animism has always been held up in opposition to the idea of the modern, originally as the primitive, inferior mind, and now as the means of redemption from modernity: "while the 'old' animism served as a negative mirror image for the project of modernity, it is 'modernity' that serves as a negative mirror image for the project of the 'new' animism" (Graf 2012). For me, contemporary animisms—whether religiously Pagan or philosophical or literary—must take care not to use the indigenous other as a symbolic means of re-enchantment, as archetypal shaman, medicine man or witchdoctor, who will restore to us the relation with the nonhuman world we have become disconnected from, without attending to the realities of oppression faced by indigenous peoples around the world.

Conclusion

I do regard a deepening sense of relation with the other-than-human world as a positive move in the face of environmental crisis, and for social and spiritual wellbeing. Yet, in seeking re-enchantment, contemporary Pagans must not appropriate the enchanted worldviews of indigenous peoples, either as salvific symbols or in the pretense that they are the same as we are. We may draw on their insights, for ecology or for spirituality, but it is vitally important to preserve that otherness in the encounter, not to pretend something stumbled across has always been ours, to plant a flag on it and claim it for our own.

Notes

1. With thanks to Kathryn Rountree for this observation.
2. In what follows, most of the examples discussed concern shamanism in particular, and do not always explicitly refer to animism. Shamanism is defined here as the practice of accessing and communicating with the other-than-human world via altered states of consciousness, in order to facilitate healing or attain special knowledge for the good of the wider community. Animism and shamanism are

commonly discussed together, since shamanic practices are very much concerned with the relation and communication with the other-than-human world. Neo-Shamanic texts (such as Matthews and Matthews 1994) emphasize the animist context of shamanism. While animism and shamanism are in many ways distinct, this chapter relies on discussions of appropriation of indigenous cultures in neo-Shamanism as well as animism, because the majority of the literature explicitly concerns the former, thus implying the latter.

3. *Seiðr* refers to the sorcery referred to in Old Norse literature, and reimagined in neo-Shamanic practices of contemporary Heathens.

4. Since the shamanic practices of the indigenous Sami people means that shamanism is in some way indigenous to Nordic regions, it is arguable that Nordic neo-Shamanism is not a "relocation." However, this is only in a geographic rather than cultural sense: Harner's core shamanism applied to Norse mythology is very much a relocation.

5. I also find problematic Pagan emphasis on the evils of Christianity as compared to the more nature-loving and egalitarian religion of the ancient pagan peoples of Europe. This is because the reification of a purer polytheist religion, eclipsed and oppressed by monotheism from the east, may carry with it a latent anti-Semitism.

6. Leslie Ellen Jones criticizes the "Celtic shamanism" of Matthews (2001) for repackaging the shamanic elements of the medieval Celtic literature in a way that renders it "safe," also lacking the dangerous power of the shamanism of indigenous cultures: "all of this incomprehensible, dreamlike, frightening and beautiful and dangerous stuff has been homogenized and sweetened by these manuals of Celtic shamanism. I would not go so far as to call them Disneyfied, but they perhaps Tolkienize Celtic myth into something readily assimilated by an audience accustomed to late twentieth-century fantasy and science fiction" (1998: 204).

7. To be fair to Griffiths, she does focus on the political situation of indigenous peoples: while I may feel discomforted by her seeking of personal and cultural healing from the wounds of modernity through encounter with the indigenous other, unlike so many other writers in the same Thoreauvian tradition, she is not seeking wilderness without engaging with the people who have dwelt in, and been inextricably connected with, these wild places for millennia. Griffiths writes extensively of the social realities and political struggles of indigenous peoples. Much as I feel distaste for the romanticized

idealization of indigenous peoples, it seems likely that Griffiths's book would have much more impact on awareness-raising that may lead to change than any amount of squeamish silence.

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Heathens in the United States: The Return to "Tribes" in the Construction of a Peoplehood

Jennifer Snook, Thad Horrell, and Kristen Horton

Heathenry is the broadest umbrella term for a number of related movements seeking to revive or recreate the religious practices and worldviews of the pre-Christian populace of northern Europe. In discussions of cosmopolitanism, Heathenry provides a contra-case—a religious movement in which participants express an anticosmopolitan backlash through cosmopolitan sentiments while navigating issues of race, whiteness, and claims to indigeneity. In 2013, the Worldwide Heathen Census counted nearly 8000 Heathens self-reporting online in the United States and thousands more across the globe (Seigfried 2013). In the United

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States, Heathens vary regionally in beliefs, practice, and cultural foci, but share a focus on the history, linguistics, and cultural revival of the Anglo-Saxons, Scandinavians, Germans, Normans, and Britons, among others. They may focus on the ethnic, national, racial, or cultural (worldview, religious identification) variables of these groups, but ultimately connect their sense of self in some way to the imagined and romanticized ancient Heathen. By various names, they revere the Gods of ancient Germania: Thor, Odin, Frey, Freyja, Frigga, Heimdall, Tyr, and many more. In the United States, Heathens are mostly white, middle-aged people who worship together in tightly knit, decentralized communities (Snook 2015). Contemporary American Heathen movements tend to emphasize polytheism and a close connection between humans and the natural world. They have a complex relationship with the broader Pagan communities with which they overlap substantially, but from which they differ significantly in political beliefs and religious practices.

A key element of Heathen identification is the emphasis on polytheism, which provides a stance counter to the dominant religion of Christianity against which Heathens almost always formulate oppositional identities. In contrast to many more eclectic forms of contemporary Paganism, Heathens are historically minded about the reconstruction of their particular religio-cultural beliefs and practices. Heathens revere and seek to emulate the particular gods, goddesses, and spirits of the ancient Germanic tribes. They devote studious attention to historical texts such as the Icelandic Sagas, the prose and poetic Eddas, the writings of Saxo Grammaticus, Tacitus, and Bede, among other linguistic, archaeological, and anthropological works. The use of old languages, anachronistic crafts (such as brewing, weaving, blacksmithing), and sometimes dressing in anachronistic clothing are all methods by which Heathens identify with the Elder Heathen (the pre-Christians of northern Europe) "ancestors." Such methods facilitate both a narrative and a performative (re)production of meaning which legitimates and brings into existence the differentiation of selfhood (St. John 2001; Handelman 1998), to connect with and shape a Northern European indigenous identity.

The first Heathen groups in the United States appeared in the 1940s as a result of the work of Australian Odinist Alexander Rudd Mills (Gardell 2003). In the United States, Odinism, a racialist variety of Heathenry, has continued as a small underground movement, largely (if not entirely) limited to the milieu of white supremacist and neo-Nazi activists. In the 1970s, however, a rearticulated version of Heathenry, called Ásatrú, was promoted and popularized by then-serviceman Stephen McNallen in

Texas. In the early 1970s, McNallen started the "Viking Brotherhood," which would fold and recoalesce as the "Ásatrú Free Assembly." McNallen's rearticulated view of Heathenry put less emphasis on race, and more emphasis on the commonalities and overlaps of Heathenry with Wicca and other contemporary Pagan religions. The more ritualized, spiritual, less racist brand of Heathenry spread much more rapidly than those earlier forms plagued by white supremacy that ultimately led to the breakup of the Ásatrú Free Assembly and the formation of the "Ásatrú Folk Assembly" (AFA). Ironically, McNallen was eventually convinced by the Odinist *völkisch* philosophies and adopted them himself, forming what he called "Folkish Ásatrú" (Gardell 2003: 259–60; McNallen 2015b). The popularity of the colorblind, spiritual, ritualistic, and "magical" Ásatrú movement that McNallen had spearheaded continued on its own path of spiritual and religious development without him, even as he discarded it in favor of a more racially based model. Although the AFA and McNallen do not represent all that there is to American Heathenry, McNallen continues to represent a segment of American Heathens who share his beliefs about race, ethnicity, and Heathenry's place among the world's indigenous socioreligious systems.

This chapter is a collaboration based on over 35 combined years of the authors' participation in American Heathenry and 18 combined years of systematic ethnographic observation, in addition to interviews, content analysis of Heathen websites, blogs, and observation of social media sites and Heathen print publications. We address how Heathens have reacted to globalization and cosmopolitanism through a framing of Heathenry as a "tribal" faith linked to an "indigenous" or "native" identification with northern Europe. First, we look at how this tribalism is an appeal to indigeneity as an effort to provide white practitioners with a claim to an authentically grounded ethnic identity. Second, we discuss how tribalism is an effort to evade the ongoing debates between Folkish and Universalist Heathens about the importance of racial identification in Heathenry, while maintaining boundaries for methods of inclusion and exclusion through the manufacture of tribal custom. Then, we investigate the weaknesses of this project and demonstrate that tribalism either blends into or lends itself to disguising racial logics and practices. Throughout the chapter, we highlight how the attention to historicity and authenticity, coupled with the reaction against globalization and modernization that affects paganisms in general, has affected Heathen organizational structures and philosophies in a way that provides a contra-case: an anticosmopolitan backlash expressed through cosmopolitan sentiments.

Heathenry, Whiteness, and "Tribes"

Since the 1970s, Heathenry's divisive racial interpretations and consequent polarizing identity politics have been a persistent issue over which factions divide and fall. The division finds most tension between those for whom Heathenry is primarily socioreligious, and not ancestrally determined, and those for whom Heathenry is "inherited," tied to blood, ancestry, and racial classifications. Although most Heathens fall in between these two poles, the framing of Heathenry as a "birthright" of those with Northern European heritage persists among many Heathens. This self-consciousness about and attention to ethnic identity embroils participants in an ongoing dialogue that is fundamentally cosmopolitan. Both Heathens and scholars of cosmopolitanism seek to determine whether people should strive to protect the ways and traditions of distinct communities from the influences of the "other," or seek out and attempt to understand the other through the adoption of various cultural insights: to be "citizens of the world" (Braidotti et al. 2013: 3).

Cosmopolitanism is a "multidimensional process" in which all people are essentially "unconscious cosmopolitans" due to the development of an "openness to foreign others and cultures even without conscious normative intentions"; it is based upon postmodern institutional (social, political, economic, cultural) transformations occurring at the "global level" (Saito 2011: 126). In a world of global communication, travel, and organization, people are living in an increasingly cosmopolitan environment. Even those—like many Heathens—who resist the concept are nonetheless swept up in the tide of globalization. Cosmopolitanism is the opposite of nationalism, which constrains social identity within "national" borders. Cosmopolitan projects seek to expand the sense of identification beyond such local constraints to a global or even cosmic level, in which the "cosmo" in "cosmopolitan" refers to a cosmic oneness or global humanness.

Yet, the categories of cosmopolitanism and nationalism are not mutually exclusive. Cosmopolitan global citizenship can best be accomplished through a dual identification, with both global and local poles (Appiah 2006). In the case of Heathens, while some champion a cosmopolitan appreciation for the unique religious and cultural heritage of ethnic groups around the world, many of the same individuals also make appeals to a racial and ethnic biological essentialism that fuels nationalism. This "rebirth of ethnic nationalism" is part of the polemical nature of cosmopolitanization embedded in globalization, which

can result in the adoption of either cosmopolitan sentiments or an oppositional attitude (Saito 2011: 128; Beck 2003: 27). Where people are situated within this dialectic is based upon certain aspects of their social network, such as homophily (in terms of both characteristic similarity and geographical space/proximity) (Saito 2011: 128; Beck 2003: 27).

As a group of overwhelmingly white people, Heathens suffer from the normalcy and rootlessness of their racial category. To white people, ethnicity in the United States is optional and often superficial: they may celebrate being "Irish" on St. Patrick's day, or "German" during Octoberfest, but are not otherwise cognizant of ethnic belonging or identification (Dyer 2002; Dalton 2002; Gans 1979). Whiteness offers its bearers the privilege of normalcy and "default" Americanness (Snook 2013). After the Civil Rights triumphs, in reaction to the forces of modernization and the perceived decrease in white privilege, many white Americans began searching for their ethnic roots (Jacobson 2006). To many Heathens, then and now, Heathenry provides an ethnic or otherwise sociocultural identity to those for whom ethnicity is divorced from social and religious life, and whose ties to ethnic identity and belonging have been complicated by centuries of transience, forced assimilation, and ancestral emigration. Yet, with the development of ethnic identity in the United States comes the unavoidable question of who gets to be Heathen, and who is excluded.

Even many of those Heathens cognizant that race has no biological foundation nonetheless believe—or fantasize—that Heathenry is an "ethnic folkway," and should be counted among other tribal indigenous faith traditions. For some Heathens, "tribalism" is an attempt to redevelop cultural patterns and social organization more akin to those used by the Elder Heathens, and thus is a part of the basic *cultural* revitalization or reconstruction project that is Heathenry. For others, it is an emphasis on and celebration of an essentialist racial identification that they see stretching back beyond the dawn of history into the mythic past at the very root of what it means to be Heathen. For some, tribalism is simply another way to organize Heathen communities, one that appears to evade the quagmire of debates over the role of racial identification that has plagued Heathenry for decades. Yet for others, the distinctions between these various approaches are unclear and not mutually exclusive (Snook 2015).

The term "tribe" originated as a colonial construction (Xaxa 2005) to refer to "collectivities of native people, groups rolled up into units for

administrative purpose" based on imperial/colonial policies connected to governmental power to control trade and land acquisition (Campisi 1982: 166). Generally, within anthropological studies, the term "tribe" refers to groups of people who are different from the mainstream society (white colonizers), based on the distinctiveness of their language and culture (i.e., ethnicity), religion, land territory, and government (Xaxa 2005). Postmodern "neo-tribalism," as theorized by Maffesoli (1996) and Bauman (2000), is a constant process to construct a social identity where "new tribes" or communities "share religious, political, and/or ethical orientations," existing on the "periphery of mainstream culture" (Lucas 2007: 38). The basis for "neo-tribalism" is not ascribed status; rather, it is a predominantly elective or actively achieved family–clan–sect structure providing a feeling of solidarity and belonging by virtue of a "re-actualization of the ancient myth of community" (Riley et al. 2010: 348).[1]

Tribalism and the Appeal to Indigeneity

The term "indigenous" was popularized in the 1970s by the American Indian Movement (AIM) as a common name for those ethnic groups who were subjected to colonization, acknowledging their distinct experiences with imperialism, yet had the capacity to maintain their unique identities (Smith 2012). Central to many, perhaps most, projects of Heathen identification are efforts to understand their revived/revitalized identity as, in some sense, "indigenous." The softer manifestation of this argument reads Heathenry as the "Native" spirituality of Northern Europe. Books by Heathen authors, with titles such as *The Nature of Ásatrú: An Overview of the Ideals and Philosophy of the Indigenous Religion of Northern Europe* (Puryear 2006), *Ásatrú: The Great Nordic Indigenous Religion of Europe* (Klovekorn 2013), and most recently, *Ásatrú: A Native European Spirituality* (McNallen 2015a), further the framing of Heathenry as "Native" or "Indigenous." To some, there is a perceived parallel between Heathenry and the idea of bloodlines and belonging among Native Americans, implying that blood (which they equate with whiteness) is a fair measure of access to the category "indigenous."

"Indigeneity" among Heathens involves a romanticized European ancestry viewed through the obscuring fog of modernity, and reflecting at least as much modernity as it does the supposed past that it claims to echo. While "indigenous" is an umbrella term that does not deny

people's distinctiveness, it is used as "a *collectivizing* political and social strategy" (Adefarakan 2011: 35) which works in conjunction with the two distinct forms of openness found in cosmopolitanism, where being more open to foreign cultures is more common than being open to foreign others (Skrbis and Woodward 2007). Heathen respect for indigenous cultures (cultural omnivorousness) often separates a culture from the people who practice it, resulting in a lack of ethnic tolerance for those viewed as outgroups (Saito 2011). Both cultural omnivorousness and ethnic tolerance are "*aesthetic* and *ethical* dimensions of cosmopolitanism" (Saito 2011: 129–30). Their sense of being "indigenous" is also what draws some reactionary Heathens to reject or object to cosmopolitan ideals, being more concerned with the "me and mine" of local, racial, or political classifications, dismissing what Saito (2011: 129–30) refers to as "cosmopolitics": a "*collective* endeavor to form a transnational public and debate global risks as citizens of the world," which adds a political dimension to cosmopolitanism. The dismissal of cosmopolitics allows Heathens to construct their own indigeneity through the structures and language of tribalism while idealizing the "pure," pristine past of their ancestors. Heathens frequently refer to their "native traditions" and their "tribal" social structures, appealing to a sense of indigeneity and likening themselves to Native peoples who have "tribes," a term evoking images of authentic, primal, geographically situated groups whose connection to land and ancestry is taken for granted. Swain Wodening (2011), a long time Heathen leader and ideologue, defines tribalism as "a reconstruction for the purpose of resurrecting the social structure of the ancient Heathens, and with it their emphasis on familial and other bonds." Wodening (2011) further argues:

> The reason we need tribalism in modern Heathenry is because ancient Heathenry evolved beside tribalism. The moment that the tribes started to become nations, they began to convert to Christianity, and not ironically, this is when the family as a social unit began to disappear. Modern society is not real helpful to the practice of Heathenry, and this has nothing to do with technological advances. Instead it has to do with the decay of the nuclear family, and the rise of Managerialism which largely contributed to that decay. With families not speaking to each other for years, tribalism seems to be a way to restore a social order that makes the extended family of utmost importance, and by doing so, bring back much that made Heathenry the great religion it is. Many feel then that tribalism and Heathenry go hand and hand, and you cannot truly be Heathen without it.

For Swain, like McNallen, the reconstruction of Heathenry and Heathen ways of organizing social life are one and the same project, and a way of combating the alienating forces of modern societal "decay." Ale Glad (2015), of *An Ásatrú Blog*, explains that tribalism advocates "the creation of modern tribal units based on continuity with ancient tribal structures." To Glad (2015), "these tribal units are predominantly reciprocal, culture-based, and socially distinct from the dominant culture resulting in a specific sense of identity and membership." To many Heathens, tribalism is increasingly tied to the essence of the Heathen socioreligious project. Whether specifically invoked or not, however, a sense of indigeneity is a necessary component of the collective identity of those for whom Heathenry is conceptualized as tribal. It is these conceptualizations of "native" and "tribal" that lend to Heathenry's comparison with Native American cultural and spiritual traditions.

The Internet helps to accentuate cosmopolitan notions of transnationalism and "border transcending knowledge," while simultaneously acting as "a bulletin board for small-scale collective self-perceptions and aspirations … in which identity can be freely contested and reformulated" (Niezen 2005: 549–50). The Internet is thus a double-edged sword, with a global community or "cosmopolitan federations of people" on one side and "indigenous peoples" on the other side, those who can use social media to reinforce "primary attachments to land, language, and lifestyle" (Niezen 2005: 549). These "'thick attachments' to particular solidarities still matter—whether in the forms of nations, ethnicities, local communities, or religions" (Calhoun 2003: 11). McNallen (2014b) asserts:

> We call ourselves Irish, or German, or Dutch, or European-Americans, and that is true. However, we are fundamentally indigenous Europeans. We may have migrated around the world, but our homeland is Europe. Its rugged environment shaped our bodies, our minds, and our souls; it is a part of us, and we are a part of it, forever. We are just as indigenous as are the Amazonian Indians, the Congolese, and Borneo tribesmen. Once we realize this, our outlook on many things cannot help but change. A sense of continuity is a powerful thing.

Cosmopolitan projects have sought to broaden our sense of identity beyond national, racial, and religious borders. Some of these projects involve visions of a world united under one religion, nation, or ideology—reflecting the folkish nightmare of a global "mono-culture." Many

Heathens reject this kind of cosmopolitan ideal of global community and shared similarities. Other varieties of cosmopolitanism have emphasized the celebration of diversity itself as a virtue. In this vein, many American Heathens champion a cosmopolitan appreciation for the unique religious and cultural heritage of each ethnic group as the underpinning for arguments against cultural exchange and appropriation. Following the argument that Heathenry is an indigenous pathway for people of Germanic descent is the notion that all peoples should likewise aspire toward their own unique ancestral traditions. Some Heathens present themselves and their social/identity projects as fighting for the indigenous rights of a particular tribal people, while denying or overlooking their positions of cultural, social, and political dominance as overwhelmingly white people. Nonetheless, they view it as a postcolonial project: a struggle to protect the survival and revive the vitality of a distinct group of people in opposition to the imperial domination of a global mono-culture. McNallen (2013a) argues:

> Ásatrú has much more in common with traditional American Indian religion, indigenous African religion, or similar ethnic beliefs than with what passes for "paganism" in the modern industrialized West. It is the "way of a people"—in our case, the people of Northern Europe. It is a part of our deeper identification, our way of relating to the Holy, an expression of the soul of our Folk. We have been cut off from these roots for too long … but every day, our sense of reconnection grows!

The recognition of the uniqueness of tribal cultures is, in theory, a cosmopolitan imagining beyond existing group boundaries. In practice, the genuine pride that many Heathens feel in their ancestry and the problematic baggage of white colonialism throughout history creates a conundrum. McNallen (2014a) maintains: "Native cultures in every part of the world revere their forebears … The American Indians, the Australian natives, African tribes, Asian peoples—all give special place to their kin who preceded them." The general argument, not unique to McNallen, continues that because Amazonian Indians, Congolese, Hindus, and American Indians are considered legitimately indigenous and not racist, American Heathenry should be afforded the same consideration, the privilege, and legacy of whiteness aside.

When evoking the argument of indigeneity, a differentiation between "constructions of Indigeneity that are interlaced with historical and

contemporary legacies of conquest, colonial occupation, and White supremacy, and those that are grounded in struggle, resistance, and decolonization" must be made (Adefarakan 2011: 40). Yet, the construction of Heathenry in the United States is necessarily connected to a sociohistorical context in which white people, divorced from the geographic, cultural, and linguistic roots of their European ancestors, must construct their religious system from the ground up. They do so, however, in a context in which the dominant whiteness is inextricably connected with the spoils of colonialism, racial domination, oppression, and historical atrocities committed against people of color, in which claiming "indigeneity" is a form of appropriation which neglects questions about power imbalances and the innocence of their settler identity (Razack and Fellows 1998). This makes it difficult to construct a religio-ethnic identity without facing the issue of racial exclusion and white privilege, particularly when Heathenry is indeed used by some as an avenue for white supremacy.

According to McNallen (2014a), Heathens need Heathenry to ameliorate themselves against the forces of modernity, globalization, and the "mono-culture" in which people are "locked into the pursuit of material things and most distanced from the world of nature," and because of this, we have "forgotten the importance of the ancestral connection." Modernity means modernization, which in turn means "the aggressive expansion of practical mentalities of rationalization, bureaucratization, and secularization," which disenchant and demythologize the world (Barber 1995: 161). This disenchantment is the very process that spurs the Pagan imagination to re-enchant the world.

Tribalism as a Solution to the Folkish Versus Universalist Debate

For decades, since shortly after the time of McNallen's 1970s revival, United States Heathenry has been plagued by the bitter, ongoing, and seemingly endless debate between what have become polarized as the "Folkish" and "Universalist" ideological camps. The label "Folkish" has come to mean that "proper heritage" is a required component of Heathen identification. "Universalist," on the other hand, has come to refer to the idea that anyone, regardless of culture or race, can convert to and legitimately practice Heathenry. "Universalist" is largely a term of derision

used by the Folkish to describe their detractors, though the polarizing of the two camps has led at least some Heathens to self-identify with the term. Many Universalist Heathens, however, are unwilling to use—or are uncomfortable with—the term due in part to the word's long-standing Christian usages and connotations, often associated with imperialism and missionary proselytizing. "Folkish," however, is a widespread term of self-identification, even among those apparently unaware of the term's origins in German nationalism. Universalists usually accuse the Folkish of racism, while the Folkish usually accuse Universalists of being communist, globalist, and destroyers of cultural particularity. Those wanting a middle way between the extremes have turned to "tribalism" in an attempt to reconcile the desire to be inclusive and avoid accusations of racism, while maintaining a degree of exclusivity through an "authentic" historical social structure. Heathens like Swain Wodening and Wayland Skallagrimsson have long argued that this is the most legitimate and accurate approach to doing Heathenry:

> During the great schisming of the heathen community during the 80s and 90s, three distinct traditions were formed: Tribalism, Folkish, and Universalism. These factions formed in response to the question "Who can be considered a heathen?" Tribalists answered, "Only those who sufficiently make an effort to adopt the culture and beliefs of the ancient heathens." The Folkists answered, "Only those with white European blood, such as ancient heathens had." Universalists answered, "Anyone who says they are." I am a Tribalist. I believe that the ancients were Tribalists. I have argued strongly against Folkism, viewing it as a corruption of true heathenry and a genuine danger to modern heathenry. However, I am just as firmly opposed to Universalism. It also isn't a genuine heathen path. (Skallagrimsson n.d.)

The growing popularity of tribalism in Heathenry has for many been an opportunity to escape the constant tension and bickering about race (Snook 2015). "Tribalist" or "localist" projects have insisted upon the distinction and autonomy of smaller groups with more direct personal relationships and actual investment in each other's lives, rather than a larger identification with "our people," "European people," "Germanic people," or the like, all of which can be and have been used as euphemisms for "white people." Swain Wodening (n.d.) argues that tribalism allows Heathens

to become Heathen without many of the hassles of universalism or folkism. Since most tribal Heathens believe folks must be adopted into the tribe, ancestry is not as much of an issue as it is with folkism. Meanwhile, a group is not forced to admit anyone and everyone as tribalism is willing to admit Heathenry is not for everyone.

That "tribalism is willing to admit Heathenry is not for everyone," implies that, unlike Christianity and other missionary universalist religions, Heathens do not either need, or even want, everyone to be Heathen like them. As the language used to claim indigeneity has shifted to descriptions of Heathenry as a "native faith," Heathen "kindreds"[2] have increasingly veered more toward an emphasis on local customs, reflecting the division of people into groups of friends and acquaintances that share the same social–geographic space and political ideological beliefs. In the past decade, the focus on the local and reworking of Heathen collectivities as "tribal" has led to the increasing fragmentation of the greater community as groups develop their own *thew* or *sidu*—group norms or evolving customs.[3] To many Heathens, a critical component of Heathen organization is respect for the autonomy of every group or tribe. Similar to most tribes in the conventional sense, these groups have "a collective bond that involves shared values and understandings of what is appropriate behavior … they have the potential to create moments in which to live out their own values, creating temporary pockets of sovereignty over their own existence" (Riley et al. 2010: 348). Any attempt by any Heathen to control, criticize, standardize, or influence the beliefs, behaviors, or customs of another group risks backlash and ridicule. Heathens refer to perceived know-it-alls as "Asapopes," a derogatory term meant to insult the audacity of those who claim special knowledge—an indication of how strongly Heathens cleave to their own decentralized tribal *thew* and the tenacity with which they resist any attempts at homogenizing, bureaucratizing, or otherwise standardizing of Heathenry. Mark Stinson, a chieftain (leader) in the Midwest, frequently ridiculed on social media with the term "Asapope" for his prolific self-published books on Heathenry, argues that a

loose confederation of kindreds and families, allows each kindred to participate, contribute ideas, and partner with other kindreds and families in the region without any one person being in charge. Strong independent kindreds can then participate, communicate, collaborate, and support one

another, without any one kindred or person being "in charge." This maintains the grassroots tribal nature of our native Folkway, and avoids top-down organization, dogma, and divisions among our People. (Stinson 2013)

In contrast with the homogenizing forces of modernity, this specific, cultural and ethnically based peoplehood that Stinson (2013) refers to as "our People" provides a sense of socioreligious distinction to people whose whiteness is otherwise invisible and taken for granted. Yet, this provides a conundrum—how to divorce ethnic awareness and pride from the abuses of white privilege. The "divisions" to which Stinson (2013) refers, when they happen, are more often in regard to conflicts over differing ideological frameworks regarding race or sexuality—conflicts which the tribal model and rule of "autonomy" effectively depoliticize. In reviving the Old Norse focus on tribes and local customs, Heathens have also revived the concepts of *innangard* (inner yard)—people within a tribe—and *utgard* (outer yard), which encompasses a wide variety of people who are not "your" people. In this way, Heathen tribes protect their membership, ideas, behaviors, and customs while adding nuance to the debate on the nature of "equality," side-stepping the Folkish versus Universalist debate on "who gets to be Heathen" with a deeper conceptualization of the relationship between individuals and tribes. Through Facebook, Sunna, a 30-something mother and Midwestern spiritual leader, explains:

> There is a concept of Innangard and Utengard [utgard] within the Teutonic culture and cosmology. It extends across all matters of being and understanding—social, political, and spiritual. Innangard is to be within, it is the inner circle, or inside the enclosure. Utengard is to be outside. There are levels of each. It is most sacred and most important because it relates directly to honor and luck. Many modern Heathens will throw about the word Innangard or its modern variant, Inner-yard, without fully understanding the weight of such. They think it simply means that "if you are not in my inner circle you don't matter." That is a grave misstep. What it truly means is that "I have taken on a responsibility to these people and things inside and so I must protect them from the outside, which includes how I live and interact when in that outeryard. (Sunna 2015)

Part political, part ethical, the notion of who is "equal" to whom centers around the nature of personal responsibility and accountability, divorcing the individual from the structural constraints facing those society

has deemed "less than" or "other." Sunna's concern with the tribal exclusion of those who "don't matter" references a tendency for some Heathens to enact an anticosmopolitan rejection of those of marginalized sexualities, races, social class, or, perhaps more frequently, those of opposing political viewpoints. Rather than focus on the effect of racial barriers, poor education, or class limitations on an individual's ability to achieve a particular goal, Heathens, like many Americans, have revived a personal accountability model that sidesteps sociopolitical considerations and blames each person for his or her own shortcomings. In this way, Heathens may argue that not all people are created equal because not all people have earned equal standing in a community. They have not "achieved" renown through good deeds, gifting, or making themselves useful to others outside of their tribe (Snook 2015). Through the meritocratic focus of Heathenry and the de jure removal of racial considerations from membership by tribalism, problems of exclusivity are effectively silenced.

This meritocratic argument about personal worth impacts who is invited into a tribe, as well as how tribes interact. Yet, it attempts to sidestep larger structural and sociopolitical questions about membership, identity, and equality—a question that tribalism attempts to put to rest. In "Three Ásatrú Perspectives," Metal Gaia (2014) expresses the ambivalence that some Heathens experience toward tribalism by explaining the "confusion of terms" because

> … tribalists still call themselves "Folkish" Heathens, but they typically are accepting of non-white Heathens among their ranks … they describe themselves as Folkish because they believe that there must be a deep adoption of Norse Culture in order for one to call themselves a Heathen or Ásatrú. They believe that anything otherwise is just a surface level adoption of Ásatrú. To become a Tribalist Ásatrú you either must have Norse/Germanic descent or you must be adopted and oathed into the community. This is similar to Judaism where one is either automatically born into the tradition via bloodline, or converted into the community.

As Gaia (2014) suggests, the work-around for racial exclusion, once done openly by kindreds averse to including people of color, is now rendered a private "personal matter" by tribalism. Some Heathens will defend racial inclusiveness by arguing that the Old Norse adopted foreigners into their clans and families regularly; therefore, it is expected that Heathen kindreds may adopt or oath in a non-white (read: outsider) member if they

so choose. It is in this way that racial exclusion is depoliticized and that the strangeness of the inclusion of members of color by other tribes is excused. Heathens of color are held to a higher standard of "proof," in which assumptions about ancestry are based on a person's visible whiteness or brownness, regardless of ancestry. The result is that Heathens scrutinize a biracial Heathen with mixed German and African ancestry more closely than a Hispanic Heathen who appears white. These allowances make it possible for non-whites to participate in the movement, but only after overcoming more substantial social hurdles than those to which a non-Heathen white stranger would be exposed.

TRIBALISM AS RESISTANCE TO GLOBALIZATION: A CONTRA-CASE TO COSMOPOLITANISM

Cosmopolitanism can be seen as a direct opposition to the folkish/*völkisch* logic that animates much of American Heathenry, in which boundaries of distinction are drawn around who can claim Heathen identity and how groups navigate membership. These questions of membership are often determined by qualifications decreasing in racial specificity, from groups requiring European ancestry, to those accepting of adoption (by white Heathens), "oathing" into a group, to those most inclusive for whom racial determinations are meaningless. Yet, many Heathens interact with one another in a limited milieu in which primarily white Heathens have been infected by a culture in which whiteness has, for centuries, conferred upon its bearers racial privilege and accumulative social, political, and economic advantage. Tribalism, to many, implies "indigeneity" and therefore attempts to sidestep this discursive quagmire about "race," as "indigenous" groups are taken seriously and are legitimate enough to justify excluding some people. Indigenous groups frequently argue for the right to hold themselves apart as different and worthy of protection from the negative consequences of colonization. They are widely seen as justified in celebrating their distinct heritage, and can justify excluding people who are not "one of ours." As McNallen (2013c) indicates in his article "The Heart is Ancestral and Tribal":

> How arrogant it is to think that joining an organic religion is a matter of mere preference! To take up a tribal religion like Ásatrú, or Native American belief, or Yoruba or any other native faith is to take up the ancestors themselves. All real, organic religion springs from the deepest recesses of the

heart, not from the superficialities of logic and debate. The heart is ancestral and tribal, shaped by the forefathers and foremothers, and beating to the pulse they gave it.

The indigeneity that McNallen (2013c) and others evoke defies clear explanation. Heathens invoke Native American identity in support of their "indigeneity" claims, while the identity over which they claim ownership is a native European one. In terms of scholarly definitions of indigeneity involving generations-long ties to place and space (Adefarakan 2011), Heathens in the United States certainly do not count. On one level, their claims decouple the concept of land and indigeneity altogether, emphasizing instead a biological and "metagenetic" determination of belonging (i.e., racial). On another level, however, this Heathen approach to ethnicity is precisely a claim to the land elsewhere in an effort to be indigenous *here,* in the United States. The European ancestors of white Americans came from other lands during recorded, and fairly recent, history. Conquerors and invaders of far off lands generally do not qualify for the term "indigenous." "Indigenous" can also be used, however, as a privileged category of identification that is politically above reproach and justifies those who claim it in maintaining a proud distinction from globalizing, colonial, invading forces. Stephen McNallen (2013b) further defines "folkish" and "tribal," arguing:

> Those who are critical of folkish Ásatrú seldom extend their criticism to Asians, Africans, South Americans, and the Native Americans of North America. Apparently, folkish religion is bad only if Europeans practice it.
>   The position of the Ásatrú Folk Assembly is that all native religions spring from the soul of a particular people. It is the distilled spiritual experience of that people, passed on to them by their ancestors. We respect that special relationship and stand in solidarity with all peoples, anywhere in the world, who seek to protect their spiritual and cultural heritage from appropriation, exploitation, or dilution.

In this regard, claiming indigeneity offers an opportunity to understand oneself not as a global villain, an invading destroyer of distinct and diverse cultures and a spreader of global mono-culture, but rather as a fellow victim of these historical atrocities. Most Heathens recognize that their ancestors were global conquerors. Most of these seem to celebrate the fact as an indication of their people's potency and power. This allows the maintenance of their settler identity (Razack and Fellows

1998) which is rooted "in romantic amnesic constructions of themselves as benevolent 'founders'" (Adefarakan 2011: 40). Some, like Mark Puryear, McNallen, and others, recognize the contradiction between being "indigenous" and being globalizing conquerors, and blame the conquests on the influence of the foreign religion of Christianity or the "Roman Paradigm" (Puryear 2006).

Conclusion

In the United States, whiteness has, for the vast majority of the nation's history, been synonymous with citizenship and freedom. To be "American" has meant, first legally and now de facto, whiteness, and for many—as evidenced, for example, by the continuing questioning of our president's citizenship status—it still does. Cognitively, these hierarchical structures are still in place and the snare of invisible imperial whiteness remains. The deep-seated prohibitions against discussing or thinking about one's own whiteness are crucial to post-Civil Rights era colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2003). Although discussions of race and ethnicity are widespread in Heathen writings, discussions of "whiteness" as such are rare, except in the most comfortably and explicitly white supremacist crowds. And therein lies perhaps the biggest problem that Heathens face. So long as the identities they seek to reconstruct are unproblematically (and invisibly) synonymous with whiteness, they are perpetuating the categories, structures, and logics of imperialism. So long as they seek a "white indigeneity," their claims to indigeneity, or their efforts to achieve it, are undermined and contradicted. Whiteness, as an artifact and tool of colonial control and imperial status, is inherently and definitively contrary to the category of indigenous. Until Heathens begin to actively emphasize that their reconstructed identities are pre-white, in the same way that they are emphasized as pre-Christian, any Heathen claims to be indigenous will continue to be ironic and troubling at best. The struggle to escape the legacy of Christianity, with which most Pagans are intimately familiar, is a long and difficult one; the struggle to escape whiteness, if it is to be taken up at all, will be even more so.

This ongoing focus on "the Folk" is a case in contra-cosmopolitanism, just as it was in the mid-twentieth century in Germany, in that it emphasizes the profound importance of the racially conceived "people" in contrast to a more cosmopolitan emphasis on interaction over and across borders

of identification. In *Jihad vs. McWorld*, which deconstructs the struggle between consumer capitalism and tribal fundamentalism, Benjamin Barber (1995: 164) writes:

> Today, the forces I identify with Jihad are impetuously demanding to know whether there will ever be a Serbia again, a Flanders again, a Quebec again, an Ossetia or Tsutsiland or Catalonia again, that is worth living in. Immigrants from old to New Orleans, from old to New England, from old to New Zealand, want to know whether the lands of origin that fire their imagination can be made real. And they gather, in isolation from one another but in common struggle against commerce and cosmopolitanism, around a variety of dimly remembered but sharply imagined ethnic, religious and racial identities meant to root the wandering postmodern soul and prepare it to do battle with its counterparts in McWorld.

Some Heathens frame cultural appreciation (as others frame "white pride") as a matter of protecting the "survival" of various religious and ethnic traditions. "We" fight for our survival; "they" fight for their survival. Stephen McNallen makes it very clear on a number of occasions that he, at least, sees these differing peoples necessarily fighting against each other for their respective survival, and for geographical space in which to live. In "Wotan vs. Tezcatlipoca: The Spiritual War for California and the Southwest," McNallen (2000) outlines the immigration "crisis" that he perceives is going to rob those of European descent of the social and political privilege that their forebears in the United States fought for and earned. And although many Heathens actively challenge and reject McNallen as a leader and thinker, many do not. He echoes the sentiment of a segment of Heathenry for whom Heathen, white, and European are synonymous. He writes:

> Mighty psychic forces, and powerful religious impulses, are on the move. The old Gods of Mexico, and the Gods of ancient Europe, are stirring their respective peoples. The spiritual descendants of the Aztecs are looking northward, coveting land which, they have convinced themselves, should be theirs—and, perhaps quite unconsciously, they are moving to conquer it by mass immigration, by language, by cultural influence. A dangerous few want to conquer by force of arms. (McNallen 2000)

While the importance of acknowledging different "peoples" is vital to folkish conceptions of Heathenry, it makes a great deal of difference how these differing peoples are conceived. Some view ethnic groups as

bounded and essentially distinct species, which need to be kept distinct and separate in order to maintain their vitality and worth. Others, however, acknowledge that ethnic groups, diverse in culture, belief (and yes, phenotype) can benefit from interacting with, and maybe even learning from, those who are not like themselves. The first is an essentialist articulation of racial difference, the second a cosmopolitan understanding of cultural difference. Although these two projects seem similar in daily discourse, the real life conditions they work to promote are profoundly different and contradictory.

Heathenry responds well to the critique of the "identitylessness" of white Americans. We might, in fact, say that this is one of American Heathenry's central projects: to locate white Heathens in a grounded ethnicity, an "exotic" identity comparable to the particular identities being reclaimed by American Indians and African Americans in contrast to the "normalcy" of mainstream white identification. Cosmopolitanism contributes to a postmodern condition in which ascribed identity withers, leaving us adrift—we are, in Melucci's (1989) terms, "nomads of the present." Though many Heathens do, certainly, continue to see themselves as part of a raceless and unlocated "normalcy," the centrality and significance of contentious discourses of race and ethnicity force them to grapple with the issue in perpetuity.

Notes

1. People who became Pagan during its emergence into American culture in the 1960s and 1970s have raised their children in and around their Pagan religion (Kermani 2013). Using data collected 15 years apart, Berger (2012) states that there is an increase in the percentage of Pagans sharing their spiritual path with a romantic partner and raising their children within their Pagan faith. These authors raise the question as to how second- and third-generations raised Heathen, within originally elective but now familial groups, will affect "tribalism."

2. Paxson (2006: 162–3) writes: "This term, which was popularized in the 1970s by the Ásatrú Free Assembly, has become the most commonly used term for the heathen equivalent of a coven."

3. "Sidu" is the Anglo-Saxon word for "custom," and "thew" is the Anglo-Saxon word "þeáw" or "tradition." Both words are increasingly used by Heathen groups to label their own constructed tribal norms and values.

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Only Slavic Gods: Nativeness in Polish Rodzimowierstwo

Scott Simpson

In 2014, an assembly of representatives of several Polish communities which consider themselves part of the Rodzimowierstwo (Native Faith) movement reached a consensus on an essentialist definition of a Rodzimowierca as simply "one who worships only Slavic gods."[1] This was intended as a guiding principle, rather than a strict delineation of fixed borders. In practice, any two Polish Rodzimowiercy are unlikely to worship precisely the same deities, and they might hold different private beliefs about the deities they worship in common, but will recognize a broader or narrower range of choices which are still valid within the bounds circumscribed by Slavic "nativeness."

Rodzimowierstwo is the Polish iteration of Slavic Native Faith, referring to "groups and individuals who practice a Slavic spirituality that acknowledges some form of polytheism or many forms of deity based in a continuation of Slavic traditions of the pre-Christian past, with emphasis on the use of historically and ethnographically reliable sources" (Filip and Simpson 2013: 35). *Rodzimy* (native) is arguably the central concept in Polish Rodzimowierstwo in the twenty-first century. It is central to the name Rodzimowierstwo itself (meaning "the practice of Native Faith"), which since the mid-2000s has been the commonest self-description for

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members of this small but internally diverse movement.[2] Many communities and registered organizations that make up the movement include "native" in some form in their name, and nativeness is central to the selection of beliefs and practices which participants endorse.

In this chapter, I would like to explore how nativeness is construed and how it intersects with other, closely linked spheres of activity. It is felt in the ethics and politics endorsed by participants, and it dwells more or less explicitly in the aesthetics of clothing, music, and decoration at religious events, as well as in the food and drink which is served. Although nativeness is strongly linked to the past, it need not be frozen in time, but may be an element in an active process of indigenization of new influences. "Native," then, is both an identity which one can be and a process of continual becoming.

Concentric Circles of Nativeness

What is it to be native? The basic definition of *rodzimy* in Polish is simply "specific to a given nation, tribe, or home" (PWN 1969: 699). It must have a here-ness and us-ness to the people who are the point of reference; there must be a sense of an essential shared identity of the people and places involved, in both time and space. To describe a specific human, deity, or religious practice as "native" to Poland, we have to believe in an essential identity of the polity or people of Poland over the course of whatever history is involved and over whatever geographic area.

Some declarations of nativeness are not explicitly tied to a named place or people, but the reference is considered to be implied or self-evident. The term Rodzimowierstwo itself does not explicitly state its reference point. In practice, it often only becomes explicit in scholarly writing about Rodzimowierstwo, where it may be translated into English as "Slavic Native Faith" or "Polish Native Faith." Nonetheless, some individuals and communities who fall under the heading of Rodzimowierstwo do themselves make statements about to precisely *what* they are native.

Smaller communities may name themselves after the place where they meet, or feature references to a specific local culture. For example, Gromada Wanda is an unregistered community in Krakow whose name references Wanda, a legendary queen of the local Wiślanie tribe, who is depicted in their logo as merging with the local Vistula River (*Wisła*, in Polish). In their self-description posted on their blog, they describe themselves as representing Rodzimowiercy in the Małopolska region (the

modern administrative region around Krakow, roughly corresponding to the old Wiślanie principality), but welcoming guests from other regions and supporting some all-Poland initiatives, as well as being open to discussions about all of Slavdom (http://gromadawanda.blogspot.com/). One of the officially registered countrywide Native Faith organizations in Poland is named the *Rodzimy Kościół Polski* (the Native Polish Church), indicating a reference point of nativeness congruent with the nation of Poland, although also often referencing the much broader frame of the Slavic peoples in their publications. Another registered religious organization, *Zachodniosłowiański Związek Wyznaniowy Słowiańska Wiara* (the Western-Slavic Religious Association of Slavic Faith), does not have *rodzimy* or Poland in its name, but their website contains reference to two rings of nativeness: the ethno-linguistic subgroup of Western Slavs (modern Poles, Czechs, and Slovaks, among others), as well as the more general family of Slavs (including Eastern Slavs and Southern Slavs) (http://www. slowianskawiara.pl/).

Even those Rodzimowiercy who are clearly ideologically committed to maintaining a regional (subnational) focus in their own practice seem unwilling to enforce that as normative for all Rodzimowiercy in all situations. Patryk Wierzchoń of *Stowarzyszenie Żertwa* conceded:

> Some, taking a relatively global stance, will include elements of the folk tradition from the whole of Poland or even Slavdom in the ritual practice of their community. Others, looking more locally, will put the emphasis exclusively on elements from the region where they live. The correctness of these positions, and those between them, belongs to the sphere of individual judgement. (Wierzchoń 2015: 9)

In general, the impression is that nativeness in Polish Rodzimowierstwo is almost never measured exclusively against a single point of "here/us," but rather as a series of concentric circles of "here" and concentric circles of "us." Thus, the tribe of the Wiślanie is bounded by the nation of Poles, which is bounded by the Slavs, which is bounded by the Indo-Europeans. Different groups and individuals place greater or lesser emphasis on specific concentric rings. But more importantly, most communities seem comfortable with shifting their emphasis as the situation warrants. If one is attending an all-Poland meeting, for example, the Polish frame may be referenced; if attending an international all-Slav meeting, the Slavic frame may be referenced.

This principle comes into play more subtly when selecting elements such as music for a rite. When searching for a hymn with the right subject matter or effect, a song from a broader ring of nativeness may be selected if nothing in a nearer ring fits the current need. Thus, songs from ethnographic sources in neighboring Ukraine may be regularly heard in religious performances in Krakow, Poland.[3] At other times, a very local element might trump equally fit, all-Slavic elements, such as leaving Krakow's iconic *obwarzanki* (a kind of round soft pretzel or bagel) as a votive offering for an idol or burning it in the ritual fire.

There are some Rodzimowierstwo communities, however, who make an effort to keep their circle of influences tightly within the borders of Polishness whenever possible. One website, *Bogowie Polscy* (The Polish Gods), explicitly states that the project is dedicated to the ancient Polish gods and beliefs which are "unique, even when compared with those of the other Slavs" (http://www.bogowiepolscy.net/). The site includes some gentle chiding of those who use material drawn from other Slavic nations when more local accounts are available. For example, the common use in Poland of the name "Perun" for a particular deity (well attested in medieval sources from the Eastern Slavs) is contrasted against evidence for names like "Piorun" or "Grom" for the same deity in the Polish lands.

The ring of all Slavic peoples is the widest ring of nativeness which is frequently invoked. References to broader Indo-European religion are infrequent, although not unknown. Some ritual toasts contain statements that might be interpreted as noncommittal about the outer edges of nativeness, such as those raised to "the gods" or to "Mother Earth." Ultimately, in practice, nativeness is multivalent and contextual.

Nativeness and Polish Culture

The "native" always stands in contrast to the exotic, foreign, distant, and, of course, the imported, invading, and colonizing. It can also be contrasted against the international, the global and the universal. The root of *rodzimy* is *rod. It is tied to Polish words related to "family" (*rodzina*) and "to give birth" (*rodzić się*), "biological species" (*rodzaj*), and "ancestral lineage/kindred" (*ród*). It is therefore a natural extension to apply it to "nation" (*naród*), "national" (*narodowy*), "nationality" (*narodowość*), and "fellow-national" (*rodak*). Words related to fertility are also in this lineage, such as "surplus harvest" (*urodzaj*) and "natural beauty or charm"

(*uroda*) (Boryś 2005: 516). These link together in a cluster of easily read-able connotations: nativeness is something you are born with, a bounty and blessing bestowed by nature.

While richly endowed with warm connotation, *rodzimy* is not fraught with quite so much political–legal baggage as the word "indigenous" is in international law and academic postcolonial discourse. But the two words clearly overlap in meaning. The United Nation's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues lists some typical characteristics of indigenous peoples:

- Self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member.
- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies.
- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources.
- Distinct social, economic or political systems.
- Distinct language, culture and beliefs.
- Form non-dominant groups of society.
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities. (UNPFII 2008: 8)

Many items on this list could be claimed by participants in Rodzimowierstwo, but not all would be true in ways that are directly anal-ogous to the situation of, say, the Koori people in the context of contem-porary Australia. Only very rarely would Polish Rodzimowiercy engage in truly distinctive social, economic, or political systems, and no experiment in this area has ever become widespread across Rodzimowierstwo. On the other hand, Rodzimowiercy conspicuously self-identify as native, empha-size their links with local territory and nature, and are resolved to maintain their ancestral environments and systems.

As regards being a nondominant group within Polish society, the relationship is a little more complex. Rodzimowiercy are small in num-bers and only rarely heard above the dominant discourse of Roman Catholicism in Poland. At the same time, they do not pose as a separate ethnicity, but rather as a loyal and consequential (if often unrecognized and underappreciated) sector of that ethnicity. They represent continu-ity with history, but this continuity attaches to a different set of anchor points than those emphasized by the Roman Catholic mainstream of Polish society. For example, Polish Roman Catholics may see them-selves as the *antemurale Christianitatis*, the bulwark of Christendom, a phrase first used in Poland during the doomed Crusade of Varna in

1444, but reappearing often throughout Polish history.[4] This image portrays the constantly embattled Roman Catholicism of Poland bearing the brunt of successive attacks by infidels—Pagan and Islamic, but later also Bolshevik—and saving the often thankless nations of Europe from forced conversion (Knoll 1974). Another favorite Catholic anchor point is the notion of Poland as the Christ of Nations, a concept popularized by Adam Mickiewicz in the third part of his dramatic poem "Forefathers' Eve" (written in 1832 after the November Uprising).[5] Here Poland is seen as enduring undeserved suffering (in Mickiewicz's time this took the form of the partitions of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, but later reinterpretations could apply it to Nazi and Soviet oppression). Thanks to that suffering, the Christ-like Polish nation will fulfill a messianic role that will redeem the sins of the other nations of the world.

The anchor points selected by Rodzimowierstwo are different. Many link back to earlier points in time, before the arrival of Christianity, which plays the role of invader and colonizer in their narrative. The image of the Pagan Slav as a noble savage is a potent one. The primordial Polish character is portrayed as simple and guileless, in harmony with nature and competent in unpretentious crafts. Somewhat like the *antemurale* image, the early medieval crofter needed to be always vigilant to defend his family and homestead against invaders cresting the hill, but the global messianic redemption role taken by Catholicism is missing. And Rodzimowierstwo often intentionally looks to rustic folk models, not necessarily just those in the distant past, to reveal the true Polish nativeness. They represent a variant of the dominant culture as it could or should have been, not as it usually is.

POLITICAL NATIVENESS AND NATIONALISM

Most Rodzimowiercy today would probably be comfortable with the label "patriot." Some have explicitly called themselves "nationalists," and mean this in a political sense. A number of hybrid ideological movements have mixed religious, social, and political ideas in the family tree of Polish Rodzimowierstwo. Jan Stachniuk's 1930s Zadruga movement laid out the social, economic, and political aspects of their vision for a future Poland (Strutyński 2013: 125). A small and brief-lived postcommunist political party, Unia Społeczno-Narodowe (The Socio-National Union), tried to merge Zadruga thought with free market capitalism. A club founded in 1998, *Stowarzyszenie na rzecz Tradycji i Kultury "Niklot"* (the Association

for Tradition and Culture "Niklot"), combines Zadruga ideology with new inspiration drawn from identitarian and *nouvelle droite* streams in Western Europe. Their name references one of the last great Pagan Slavic princes who fought against the forced Christianization of his people. Their "metapolitical" program includes expressly Pagan ideas, such as honoring the ancestors and gods, and they frequently work in cooperation with *Rodzima Wiara*, one of the registered Rodzimowierstwo religious organizations (http://www.niklot.org.pl).

There are also significant numbers of Polish Rodzimowiercy who reject such mixing and attempt to keep their religious practices and political activities entirely separate, regardless of their political sympathies. The tendency to openly mix politics and religion within Polish Rodzimowierstwo has declined markedly over the past two decades. This does not necessarily mean that individuals have become more apolitical or that their religion does not have a significant influence on their ethics and politics. But a semi-official and semi-articulated membrane has been erected in many communities to keep political slogans away from the sacred. The reasons why individuals might want to maintain this separation are probably varied and need further study. It certainly reduces potential conflicts within communities, and leaves more space for the kind of religious reflection which is unrelated to politics.

The influential *Zadruga* periodical was proudly subtitled "A Publication of Polish Nationalists." The explanatory essay that led the first edition only fleetingly mentioned the Republic of Poland, focusing instead on the cultural and social "nation" which is more than the polity: the Romantic *naród* of shared character and kinship (*Zadruga*: 1935–1939 (1937 issue): 1). But there is little doubt in the articles that followed that their vision for a post-Christian nation embraced both political and economic systems.

The earliest Rodzimowierstwo publications from the start of the 1990s also embraced the term "national." The photocopied 'zine *Żywioł* (1991–1999) carried a banner at the top of every issue declaring it to be a product of a "National Conceptual Study Group" and in the articles that followed writers regularly referred to the "Polish nation." Observers in the 1990s frequently noted connections with nationalist political organizations and discussed them in academic articles (Wiench 1997).

There is a very extensive literature on nationalism, embracing a wide variety of definitions of the term, both substantive and functional in scope, and representing primordialist or modernist perspectives (Hutchinson and

Smith 1994; Delanty and Kumar 2006). The definition offered by the PWN encyclopedia, a standard reference work in Poland, runs:

> Nationalism (Latin. natio '*naród*') the belief that the nation is the most important form of socialization, and that national identity is the most important component of individual identity combined with a requirement to hold national solidarity over all other relationships and commitments, and [to hold] everything that is national over that which is foreign or cosmopolitan; A political ideology, according to which, the primary task of the state is to defend national interests, and [the state's] territorial limits should match the area inhabited by the nation. (PWN 1999: 568)

Since the eighteenth century, Polish national identity as well as Polish nationalism has been strongly informed by the sense of struggle to escape foreign occupation and partition. It is almost always framed as a call for liberty. In many countries, people are accustomed to associating "nationalism" only with colocations like "conservative" or "right-wing." But in times of oppression, Poland has had its liberal nationalists, like the great politician-scholar Joachim Lelewel (1786–1861), who sought home rule for his nation through democracy, and drew inspiration for this project from an explicitly Pagan Slavic model, the *gminowładztwo* (community-rule) that he believed had guided the ancient tribes. Lelewel's political ideas were to go on to influence later nationalists (both Pagan and Christian in orientation), and his scholarly reconstruction of the ancient Slavic religion would also have an influence on some branches of Rodzimowierstwo (Gajda 2013: 48). As Peter Sugar (1994: 46) noted about nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century movements across the region, "nationalism in Eastern Europe was a revolutionary force aiming at transferring sovereignty from the rulers to the people … Eastern European nationalism shared with all others the basically anti-clerical, constitutional, and egalitarian orientation that gave it its revolutionary character." This stream continues to intertwine in Poland with other kinds of nationalism that, for example, far from demonstrating an anticlerical streak, now cozy up closely with the institutional Roman Catholic Church, or at least those sectors of that institution within Poland that embrace their role as the guardians of Polishness.

While certainly not mass movements, there are sectors of the Rodzimowierstwo spectrum which lean toward extreme, right-wing nationalism and which treat "the nation" as an integral part of their

sacrum. This sector has attracted a significant portion of the Polish media's interest in Rodzimowierstwo. *Nigdy Więcej* (Never Again), a Polish periodical dedicated to fighting racism, xenophobia, intolerance, and fascism (http://www.nigdywiecej.org), has shown recurring interest in that extreme sector. A 2009 edition ran a cover story on "Slavic Abuse," listing a number of communities which could be characterized as both right leaning and committed to Pagan streams of thought and imagery (including some of an openly political character, but also some with other interests, such as rock bands). In it, Kornak (2009:17) neatly encapsulated an outsider's view of "fascist neo-paganism":

> The Pagan Slavs have been for years the object of ideological abuse and manipulation, if not to say profanation … The far-right appropriation and perversion of the Slavic myth has followed two paths. The older, Panslavism … has appeared mostly under the patronage of Russian imperialism and nationalism. The other [Polish] manipulation is … currently popular fascist neo-paganism, which is mainly indebted to the ideas of pre-war Zadruga developed by Jan Stachniuk … of an "indigenous," original, ancestral Slavic community …

In Kornak's view, fascist neo-paganism primarily envisages the role of Slavic religion in nation-projects as:

> An ideological fist aimed at the Judeo-Christian concept of charity, humility, love for one's neighbor and turning the other cheek…And this is again more abuse, because whatever the essence of the original religion of the Slavs might have been, it was certainly not developed on the basis of alleged anti-Semitic complexes. (Kornak 2009: 17)

Many in the Polish Rodzimowierstwo scene took umbrage with the broadness of the brush they were being painted with. An article posted on the website of the periodical *Gniazdo* (the Nest) responded:

> The basic idea of the article is correct—there are groups that use the Slavic tradition to bolster an ideology which is more or less associated with fascism. The purpose of this publication and the association behind it is to stigmatize these groups. This would be cool, if it were not that the author sees "little Nazis" almost everywhere … Sometimes, amid the allegations there is a shadow of real events, and sometimes they cross the border into sheer slander. (Bożywoj 2009)

As wide and varied as the political opinions across the Polish Rodzimowierstwo scene may be, it is difficult to say where the proper

division should fall between "legitimate Rodzimowiercy nationalists" and "fascist appropriators of Slavic myth." Some activists have attempted to set up such ideological boundaries, such as Ratomir Wilkowski's (2009) manifesto on "real Rodzimowierstwo" and "pseudo-Rodzimowierstwo." Among the kinds of false Rodzimowierstwo, he lists "extreme nationalism, fascism or even Nazism." Wilkowski notes that both the real and pseudo appeal to national heritage and Slavic religion, and can be difficult to tease apart. He concedes that extreme views might sometimes be found among real Rodzimowiercy, although he considers them "strange" and atypical. The fundamental difference for Wilkowski lies in that the real Rodzimowiercy believe in a faith, whereas fake Rodzimowiercy use deities only as symbols for political purposes.

Catholicism, Rodzimowierstwo, and Nationalism

Practically every religion—large or small, ancient or freshly minted—enters the popular Polish consciousness with a question hanging over it as to which nationality it represents. From the point of view of the majority of today's citizens of Poland, Roman Catholicism represents Polishness. This is a received tradition that is only rarely seriously questioned in public discourse. Eastern Orthodoxy, Poland's second largest religion, is seen as representing Russia, while Protestantism represents Germany. Once associated with Poland's esteemed Tatar minority, Islam is increasingly represented in the twenty-first century as the religion of immigrants from some exotic (and probably dangerous) Oriental land. Even atheists cannot escape this equation entirely, as their lack of Catholicism may be interpreted by others as a lack of Polish ethnic identity. It is difficult to imagine how contemporary Paganisms in Poland could completely escape the connection between religion and national identity, even if they wished to do so. Many engage in this question actively, turning the interwar slogan "Polak to katolik" (a Pole is a Catholic) on its head by pointing out that Slavic Paganism was here before Christianity arrived and, therefore, is more Polish than Roman Catholicism. This should not be read as a turning away from the field of religion into a new realm of ethnic nationalism, but rather as inhabiting the religious landscape around them.

Some, such as Hoppenbrouwers (2002: 311), have seen a general "identity match" between nationalism and religion. Both encourage social homogenization and cohesion through similar mechanisms and

symbols. For the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the postcommunist vacuum was broad and deep, "political, ideological and social … What had been the point of all the suffering of the 1940s and 1950s? How did the communist experience until 1989 fit into the timeline of the nation and the individual? How could moral order be restored?" (Hoppenbrouwers 2002: 313). Religion and religious institutions may attempt to fill that immense void, but are tempted to reach for support in nationalist themes (just as nationalists reach for religious themes) to bolster their cause.

Because the dominant religious discourse in Poland today is unequivocally Roman Catholic, there is a huge and unavoidable challenge to any smaller religion that wants to say something about the Polish nation. This is monumentally so on the right wing of politics. This leaves would-be right-wing Rodzimowiercy in an awkward position. One of the key tropes of the right wing in recent years has been the defense of Christendom in the face of invasions of "laicism" from the West and Islam from the East. Nearly all of Poland's right-wing parties jostle with each other to make more convincing declarations of Catholicism. At the most extreme, the Polish far-right contains figures such as Father Jacek Międlar, who delivers speeches which can take the style of football hooligan chants and the rhetoric of skinhead political agitation, but who may end his performance by asking the flag-waving crowd to join him in an expression of traditional Marian Roman Catholic piety and recite "Under Thy Care."

In such an atmosphere, where is the space for Polish nationalists who are also outspoken Rodzimowiercy? In the absence of large-scale quantitative studies, it is impossible to say precisely how Rodzimowiercy stand on a variety of political and national questions. But from my interviews with members which touched on the subject, as well as from anecdotal evidence (online discussions, in particular), we can say that a significant number of self-declared Rodzimowiercy express negative opinions about accepting additional non-Slavic refugees in Poland (especially under a quota system set by the EU), and are against encouraging Islam (especially in a foreign variant) to become a more significant part of Poland's religious landscape.[6]

But to fight against this, they would have to work with groups, initiatives, and events that are Roman Catholic-dominated, who speak about defending "Christian Europe." Even the briefest look at the Polish media shows that such anti-immigration groups repeatedly include Christian symbolism and prayer in their marches and demonstrations. They wave banners portraying Christian Crusaders attacking a Muslim horde. Rodzimowiercy

could not fail to be aware that the Northern Crusades of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries (the Crusades which most directly affected this area of the world) were directed against the native Pagans. While some right-wing Rodzimowiercy might elect to work individually with such groups on an enemy-of-my-enemy basis, they would have little reason to identify as Rodzimowiercy while doing so, and no reason to reinforce the "defense of Christian Europe" portion of the message in any public forum. This is perhaps one of the most salient reasons for the lack of attempts to raise a stronger Rodzimowierstwo voice on the anti-immigration issue.[7]

More progressive representatives of Rodzimowierstwo (those continuing the democratic "home rule" nationalism of Lelewel) fight to have their voice heard at all. With limited numbers and resources, they are currently more likely to engage in the discussion about how (and whether) religion should appear in school curricula, for example, than diving into controversies around Muslim immigrants. In theory, more tolerance for minority religions should be beneficial for them, and they would no doubt be happy to see the "defense of Christian Europe" banners disappear. But in practice, supporting issues like immigration from non-Slavic countries would seem dangerously close to endorsing a further dilution of local Slavic tradition. Thus, progressive Rodzimowiercy run a double risk of alienating their own colleagues, while also not being heard in the mainstream discussion as a distinctive voice. As with the right-leaning sector, they might individually join some marches and other initiatives, but are unlikely to loudly identify themselves as Rodzimowiercy when they are doing it.

Return to Culture

The Polish "neopagan" scene of the 1990s (as it called itself then) was deeply beholden to its ties to the highly political programs of earlier movements like Zadruga (Simpson 2000). Political language and topics were taken for granted as a normal part of religious practice. The shift in the twenty-first century for Rodzimowierstwo has been distinctly away from the unquestioned inclusion of politics in the sacred circle, and toward more cultural and artistic expression (Simpson 2012). This has been where Rodzimowierstwo has found its voice to be most welcome in wider Polish society. Rodzimowierstwo has had a surprising influence on Polish folk and popular music in the past decade. Secular folk music magazines like *Gadki z Chatki* have run cover stories on Pagan folk music (such as their 2006, 63/64 issue). In November 2015, the online

portal "Culture.pl" (run by a government-sponsored cultural institute) posted a feature on "7 Must-hear Polish Folk Groups." One of the seven groups has openly Rodzimowierstwo members and lyrics, one declares itself "Rodzimowierstwo-sympathizing," and two more include occasional Pagan and anti-Church themes in their music, making the majority of the list Pagan-friendly (http://culture.pl/en/article/7-must-hear-polish-folk-groups). This extends into broader pop culture, beyond the folk scene. Poland's official entry in the 2014 Eurovision contest included Donatan, a self-declared Rodzimowierstwo rapper. The third installment of Poland's globally successful video game series, *The Witcher*, contains a soundtrack recorded by the Rodzimowierstwo-sympathizing band.[8]

To a lesser extent, a similar situation can be found in the realm of traditional Polish food. Some Rodzimowierstwo communities such as Gromada Wanda hold moots dedicated to sharing recipes, seeds, and prepared foods. Many communities place a lot of emphasis at religious events on using home-brewed alcohols and home-baked breads. The influence of these efforts can be seen in the broader Slow Food movement in Poland. The commercially run portal "Smak z Polski," which publishes articles on the production of traditional Polish food and agritourism, has also found space for articles on Rodzimowierstwo and the Rodzimy Kościół Polski organization as a topic of interest to its readers (http://www.smakizpolski.com.pl/). And Rodzimowierstwo periodicals like *Gniazdo* have returned the favor by printing articles about organizations like the Slow Food Polska Association, and their attempts to revitalize endangered foodways. There are also significant overlaps between Rodzimowierstwo culinary interests and attempts to reconstruct the lost cuisine of the medieval Slavs through archaeological or ethnobotanical methods (see Krasna-Korycińska 2015).

One possible way of framing the Polish Rodzimowierstwo approach to nativeness is to use the term "reconstruction" to describe what they do.[9] A "reconstructionist" approach to contemporary Paganism emphasizes the significant work needed to reconstruct a culture which has been destroyed or lost. As Michael Strmiska (2005: 19) has defined it, Reconstructionists are

> those that aim to reconstruct the ancient religious traditions of a particular ethnic group or a linguistic or geographic area to the highest degree possible … Reconstructionists dedicate themselves to a fairly scholarly study of the ancient texts, folklore, archaeology, and languages that are believed

to contain reliable information about the past religious traditions of the peoples of their particular region of interest. For Reconstructionist Pagans, the older the evidence is that gives information about the Pagan religion of the past, the better.

But the foremost criterion for the inclusion of any element in Rodzimowierstwo remains its nativeness, even when compared with other criteria such as the antiquity of the source. Solid sources that describe beliefs and practices from before Christianity diverted the path of native culture are, of course, highly valued. But the arrival of Christianity is not perceived as having caused the death of native culture, language, or values. Antiquity, while important, is not the only path to authentic nativeness. Celebration of received local folk culture, including the ethnographic record of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, plays an important role in Rodzimowierstwo in the twenty-first century. This aspect of Rodzimowierstwo is not nearly so exotic to the participants as it is to outside observers (or, for that matter, to Slavic Reconstructionists living outside Slavic lands). The folk practices that are performed are *swojskie* and *rodzimy*—they are nearly the same as those which might be taught to children in secular schools, performed by student folk clubs, shown on state-run television, or captured in ethnographic museums. They are used with modifications, of course, but can still be found in many cases as part of folk religiosity among conservative Roman Catholics in Poland.

Whatever the divagations of history, and any gaps in ancient knowledge that might have been created thereby, Polish Rodzimowiercy certainly do not see themselves as distanced in any way from the heart of their living national culture. Their task is one of reform, repair, restoration, and return. The term "reconstruction" seems to many Rodzimowiercy to have two distasteful connotations: it implies that the original has been destroyed, and it implies a replication of a simulacrum of that earlier state. As one of my interviewees said:

There is one important thing that I want to emphasize: that this is not in any way reconstruction, at least not in my approach. It should be a living thing. It does not reenact any past era … and I wouldn't even want it to be that way. Because we are not reenacting. This is not a reconstruction … We make use of certain historical or ethnographic reports, but in my case I'm very much supplementing it … with my own experience. (Interview, February 2013)[10]

"Authenticity" is still an important keyword (see Strmiska 2012: 27)—not in the sense of an authentic copy, but in the sense of an authentic and living continuation. To be an authentic simulacrum would make it a dead tradition, a dead nativeness, rather than an authentic, living nativeness. In terms of Whitehead's "religion in the making," history and ethnography provide the highly important "ground" (the preexisting facts), and the creativity and experience that each participant brings to Rodzimowierstwo results in the "consequent" (the novel form which arises). While this kind of creativity is not the same as slavish devotion to the replication of models, it is also not the same as attempts to cut oneself free from grand narratives in a postmodern project. Whitehead was close to Rodzimowierstwo thought when he noted that: "The new creativity, under consideration, has thus already a definite status in the world, arising from its particular origin" (Whitehead 1927: 136). Even innovation enjoys the status of nativeness when it seems to be the natural, even necessary, contemporary development out of particular origins found in native history and ethnography.

Aside from personal inspiration, another important path for local innovation comes from contacts with neighboring communities engaged in similar Native Faith projects. On the one hand, the various communities enjoy complete independence in terms of which sources they choose to emphasize, which beliefs they espouse, and which rites they practice. On the other hand, individuals within those communities are also free to observe the beliefs and practices of many other communities, accessed either through face-to-face contacts or via the Internet.

Those contacts are not only found within the nearest circles of nativeness. Polish Rodzimowiercy participate in a variety of transnational organizations like the European Congress of Ethnic Religions and the Rodowy Wiec Słowiański (Kindred Assembly of Slavs), where they meet and discuss with peers from Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovenia, Croatia, and elsewhere. Personal contacts made at such fora often continue well beyond, so pairs of communities may regularly send individuals as guests to one another's ceremonies. Highly developed ideas, symbols, and practices move from community to community. This is a different way of extending the circles of nativeness than, for example, a Pole who reads a textual source originating from the medieval Kiev Rus and uses it to build contemporary practice in Poland. When a Pole visits a Ridnovirstvo community in modern Kiev and learns their rites, songs, and chants, they

can choose to bring some of those into their own practice. They are selecting from another contemporary practice which has already made its own choices from the available material, based on their own needs. Although Polish Slavs and Ukrainian Slavs are not particularly culturally distant from each other, there is still some degree of indigenization to be done before this innovation can be used.

There are also cases of things from very far away being brought into local nativeness. An interesting case of the indigenization of global influences can be found in the use of "fire poi" at Rodzimowierstwo celebrations of the summer solstice. Contemporary European fire poi performers owe a great deal of their art to forms developed in the Pacific region in the mid-twentieth century (Letuli and Letuli 2004).[11] In early ethnographic accounts, large bonfires on hilltops were one of the signature elements in Polish midsummer celebrations known as Sobótka or Kupało.[12] As they became available, various fire-related innovations were added to folk practice over the years. Kitowicz (1855: 56–57) described a rather chaotic folk practice in the mid-nineteenth century, where young lads had added a practice of throwing packets of black powder into the (already dangerous) flames to produce explosions of sparks and flame.[13] In 1861, Anczyk described a far more genteel variation, with red "Bengal fire" (a kind of spouting flare) placed along the banks of the river Vistula, party boats bedecked with multicolored lanterns, and pinwheels and firecrackers on a floating barge (quoted in Zinkow 1994: 210–11). The current civic (non-Rodzimowierstwo) celebration of the holiday in Poland includes city-sponsored laser and fireworks shows, as well as launches of flame-powered Chinese paper "sky lanterns." These clearly foreign influences have been readily accepted as part of the secular celebration of a clearly native holiday. Most have not been brought into Rodzimowierstwo practice, but the fire poi have been.

Given that many Rodzimowierstwo celebrations take place in natural settings (e.g., clearings in the woods), explosions are not desirable; nor would anything that could easily get out of hand—like a free-rolling burning wheel—be welcome. But the fire poi have a practical fit for the event, in that they provide a fiery spectacle without undue risk. Fire poi are a known art form in the alternative cultural scene in Poland: neither overly pop culture, nor completely alien. They have no strong association with any other religious group which could exclude them from use. They induce a raw, almost-hypnotic fascination, with glowing shapes traced in

the darkness, a low humming sound in the silence. In Rodzimowierstwo performances in Krakow, shirtless men often take turns swinging the larger globes of fire for as long as they can, the sweat on their bodies glistening in the firelight, a suitably primordial and wild image. But above all, fire poi are consonant with the basic symbolism of the holiday, the elliptical orbits of the flaming spheres are like the passage of the sun, the sacred fire on the hilltop contrasted against the sacred stream of water below the site of the ritual, the light carried by members of the community through the dark night.

Giddens's (1990: 21–22) notion of disembedding—lifting things out of their existing context so that they may be employed in novel, reflexive ways—is a double-edged sword in the hands of Rodzimowiercy. On the one hand, severance from native, traditional (largely premodern) ties is felt as a deep wound. On the other hand, intentional disembedding may be employed by Rodzimowiercy themselves as a tool for excising selected symbols or practices out of the Christian context in which they have been embedded for centuries, such as the association of Kupało with the Christian holiday of Pentecost. However, they are not simply releasing their meanings adrift in a sea of Bauman's liquidity, but allowing them to be re-embedded to fulfill redirected intentions. Likewise, in the process of indigenizing new, perhaps foreign, influences within the "native tradition," those must undergo some degree of dis-embedding and re-embedding. The process remains inevitably reflexive to those who introduced the innovation; they do not forget the choices and process by which the practice was indigenized.

In contrast to the Polish case, Sarah Pike (2001: 220–21), observing US Pagans at festivals, concluded that there is a tension between an "anything goes" postmodern self and the "inward reflexive" modern self which is typical of many Pagans. As Pike (2001: 224) noted, "Neopagans are experts on 'the reflexive project of the self' as it is described by Giddens … Personal narrative works to shape a common cultural and moral universe." In contrast to those Anglosphere Paganisms, Rodzimowierstwo is much harder to frame as a postmodern religion. Not only do Rodzimowiercy themselves not describe themselves that way, but some leaders have explicitly presented their religion as an alternative or in *opposition* to postmodernism. In this discourse, postmodernism is identified as severing the sinews of authentic identity and surrendering to the onslaught of mass-market consumerism and muddled globalization.

Conclusion

Bauman (1993: 238–43) has suggested that the neotribalism which is typical of liquid modernity is little more than an "obsessive search for community" constructed out of a "multitude of individual acts of self-identification." Ultimately, such efforts result in no more than "the right to be left alone." The Rodzimowierstwo construction of nativeness is, at least some of the time, clearly fluid and leaves a certain amount of room for individual agency. But the communal nature of the central concept of nativeness and the heavy emphasis placed on rooting action and belief in local tradition seems to create something of a hybrid case, neither completely, unreflexively tribal, nor completely neotribal.

Processes like the indigenizing of fire poi within Rodzimowierstwo practice suggest that nativeness is an open process, rather than conceptually fixed. "Searching for community" may in fact be the most apt way to describe participation in any living tradition, if we assume that only those traditions that change can be called living. The most obvious conclusion that can be drawn from this is that Rodzimowierstwo communities in Poland must leave room for change in their concept of nativeness simply because the world around them is changing. But it appears that there is more than that involved, because similar results could be achieved by simply jettisoning old notions in favor of new ones. "Nativeness" seems, rather, to be a discursive tool used to help filter, adapt, and repurpose the incoming changes the contemporary world offers.

Notes

1. This definition was unanimously agreed upon by participants present at the II Ogólnopolski Zjazd Rodzimowierców (the Second All-Poland Assembly of Rodzimowiercy) at Mount Ślęża. Although it included an impressive spectrum of representatives from at least nine different communities, this meeting did not include all of the varied communities in Poland which have laid claim to the name Rodzimowierstwo.

2. Reliable numbers of participants are not currently available. I would estimate the number of actively engaged and regular participants at somewhere between 2000 and 2500, with more than half participating in relatively small and informal communities. In practice, criteria for membership in such a movement are

fluid, and it is surrounded by a diffuse milieu of individuals with varying degrees of involvement. The 2011 Polish general census used a methodology and religion question ill-suited to small, informal religious communities, and therefore cannot be taken as conclusive. Overall it suggested that somewhere in the order of 4500 Polish citizens would self-identify as some kind of Pagan or Rodzimowierca. (There is a strong consensus that Rodzimowierstwo by far outnumbers all other forms of contemporary Paganism in Poland.) For a crude measure of people who are or have been interested in Rodzimowierstwo, there are over 8000 Facebook accounts which currently belong to the largest Polish-language closed group dedicated to the subject (this number could also include critics, scholars, individuals whose interest has waned but have not left the group, duplicate accounts, etc.).

3. Some southeastern dialects of Polish may approach some western dialects of Ukrainian due to longstanding cultural interaction. But songs borrowed from Ukraine remain easily recognizable as Ukrainian (or at least not any standard or local dialect of Polish) to most Polish listeners, and their origins are specifically known to the performers, some of whom learned the songs in travels abroad.

4. Poland is not alone in claiming this title. Albania, Croatia, and Hungary, among others, have also claimed it is their own special role.

5. Again, this claim can also be found in neighboring countries such as Hungary or Russia, although it is not nearly as prevalent as in Poland.

6. There has been an ethnic minority of Muslim Tatars in the various iterations of Poland since the fourteenth century. Since the Second World War, their numbers have been small and those that remain are threatened with assimilation and dissipation. Until now they have been perceived by the Polish public independently of how international Islam and foreign Muslims are perceived.

7. At the end of 2015, this issue is still too fresh to have provided much empirical evidence. All it would really require for the situation to change would be for one or two well-known Rodzimowierstwo leaders to raise a cogent and compelling argument in order to draw out a more public discussion.

8. The band, Percival Schuttenbach, was named after one of the characters in Polish fantasy writer Andrzej Sapkowski's novels, on which the game was based. They have also worked together with Donatan and other Rodzimowierstwo-related musicians. Although they have maintained close relations with the Rodzimowierstwo scene, members of the band have stressed in multiple interviews that they are cultural sympathizers with Rodzimowierstwo and Slavic Paganism rather than believers or members. The jargon often used for this is *rodzimokulturowcy* (Native Culture, following on the model of Native Faith).

9. The majority of my recent fieldwork and interviews have been conducted in Krakow, a city with large numbers of students, universities, and academic conferences. Local Rodzimowiercy are quite likely to be familiar with academic writing about a variety of contemporary Paganisms in both Polish and English (as well as other languages). It is not uncommon for informants to spontaneously offer critiques of how academics describe and interpret their activities and beliefs—including the terminology used—as a part of their self-descriptions, even when such issues have not been raised by the interviewer.

10. Up to this point in the interview, the word "reconstruction" had not been used. It arose in a discussion of sources used for a Winter Solstice.

11. Similar ideas may have been hit upon at various times and places, especially after the petroleum industry made convenient fuels cheap and easily accessible. In a European example, residents of the port town of Stonehaven, Scotland, were swinging similarly constructed fireballs on chains in circles as early as 1908 (http://stonehavenfireballs.co.uk/history).

12. In the early nineteenth century, there was more variation in the date of this folk practice, with some communities lighting Sobótka fires on the night of 23 June (the eve of St. John's day) and others, such as in Krakow, celebrating it on the eve of Pentecost, with variable dates in May and early June. (In some areas of western Poland, there are no signs of a similar rite in the early nineteenth century.) Medieval Polish sources also complain about "diabolic" bonfires on Pentecost Eve. Nineteenth-century Romantic writing about the holiday helped unify folk practice across the various regions to the national date of St. John's Eve (Krzyzanowski 1965: 380–83).

Rodzimowierstwo celebrations of Kupała usually take place on the astronomical summer solstice.

13. Kitowicz also noted that although celebrating Sobótka had been common in his youth (he was born in 1727), he believed the practice had died out in much of Poland by the 1760s. This was before Romanticism repopularized such ancient practices in the following century. Appropriately, the nineteenth-century appreciation for his posthumously published book on customs was partly due to its descriptions of authentic Old Polish practices that could be used as models.

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Obsessed with Culture: The Cultural Impetus of Russian Neo-pagans

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The imperial and then Soviet projects turned ethnic Russians into a "people without culture," a result of modernization and urbanization. Like any dominant majority, Russians were fascinated by universal human values and by no means wanted to isolate themselves within strict cultural borders. They shared their language with all peoples of the Soviet Union, and a modernized Russian urban culture made up the basis of the new Soviet entity. As a result, Russians lost the monopoly on their culture and became cultural orphans. However, after the USSR dissolved, ethnic culture, together with ethnic history, proved to be a powerful political symbol which legitimized new states and new political borders. Simultaneously, Russians lost the symbolic status of "elder brother," which had been forged by Soviet ideology in order to involve them in the Communist project. Finally, many Russians—both white and blue collar—lost their jobs

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during the harsh economic crisis of the early 1990s. As a result, they also lost their belief in progress and turned to the past, which was now read in ethnic terms. They became obsessed with culture and identity, ideas closely linked with those of the past and ancestors. By the turn of the 1990s, some Russian political activists had begun calling for a development of their own ethnic culture and ethnic communities. This formed the background for the development of a Russian Neo-pagan movement, reminiscent of the revitalization movements discussed by Anthony Wallace (1956) and heavily affected by the growth of Russian nationalism (Shnirelman 1998, 2007, 2012; Ivakhiv 2005).

Contemporary Russian Neo-pagan communities were crafted by well-educated urbanized intellectuals frustrated with and tired of cosmopolitan urban culture. People from the hard sciences and white-collar professionals dominated their leadership. They were searching for an "original culture" unspoiled by "foreigners." Thus, they looked back to primeval times, when their ancestors had enjoyed a unique way of life whose culture had not been "corrupted." In order to imagine this culture, they referred to various sources—not only original Slavic, but also Germanic, Indian and even South American and esoteric ones. In this chapter, I scrutinize the ideas of some well-known Neo-pagan leaders, focusing on the sources of their wisdom, and in particular, how and why they made their choices. I discuss their motives, attitudes and values, which combine Russian ethnocentrism with a certain cosmopolitan outlook in unexpected ways.

Early Slavic Heritage: Where and How to Search for It?

Neo-pagan consciousness is paradoxical in that, on the one hand, Neo-pagans were eager to demonstrate the originality of the Russian people. They argued that both the Soviet and imperial pasts constituted a long period of "foreign" rule and exploitation of the Russian people by "non-Russians." They dreamed of liberation from what they viewed as oppression similar to a colonial one. This prompted them to shift to isolationism and build a high wall between themselves and other ethnic groups and nations. Moreover, this made any future for Russia as a multicultural country questionable. On the other hand, a search for the "genuine," that is, pre-Christian, culture of their ancestors proved difficult: there

were only scarce written documents on the Eastern Slavs' way of life in the pre-Christian period, and these were incomplete and obscure, allowing various interpretations. Moreover, most written documents were produced by Christians, who were either openly hostile to paganism or unable to provide correct interpretation because their authors were outsiders. The most complete sources are dated to the ninth and tenth centuries, when Christianity was expanding and pagan beliefs were persecuted (Tolstoi 1996: 145; Toporov 1996: 161–162; Levkievskaia 1996: 175).

Professional historians believe that Slavic paganism was an open, dynamic system which underwent continuous transformation, in particular integrating innovations from neighboring groups (Tolstoi 1996: 145). It is in this context that a pantheon of gods led by the supreme god of thunderstorms, Perun, was shaped. Certain authors interpret this as a shift in the direction of monotheism (Tolstoi 1996: 146, 160), yet genuine monotheism has never been part of the Slavic milieu (Toporov 1996: 164–165). The nature of the Slavic pagan pantheon is mostly unclear. Some gods, while having the same function, belonged to different, albeit related, traditions; the functions of other gods are unknown. The names of certain gods (such as Hors and Semargl) clearly point to their non-Slavic origins, and one has to assume they were introduced to the Slavic pantheon not long before Christianity as a result of political concessions (Toporov 1996: 166), or interpret them as evidence of the integration of former Iranian speakers—like the Alans—to the Slavic entity (Vasiliev 1999: 71–72, 127). Although the sun played a role in early Slavic beliefs, the Slavs never espoused a solar religion similar to Iranian Zoroastrianism (Tolstoi 1996: 149). Traditional pre-Christian Slavic paganism provided a mosaic of beliefs and rites. It did not turn into a monolithic system, and only Christianity furthered its unification and systematization (Tolstoi 1996: 155; Levkievskaia 1996: 176).

All this confuses contemporary Neo-pagans and makes them pursue their research among related traditions, creatively processing their heritage and interpreting it in their own ways. Various Neo-pagan leaders have made their own idiosyncratic choices. Some have relied on their intuition or "genetic memory," as though it was inherited from the remote ancestors (Slavic or non-Slavic); others have appealed to early chronicles and scholarly materials; a third group has focused on folklore; a fourth has used esoteric concepts picked up from various esoteric traditions; and, finally, a fifth group has attempted to integrate all these sources. Some Neo-pagans understand this eclecticism and acknowledge the need for

borrowing from Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and other traditions which they view as related "Vedic" traditions (Istarkhov 2000: 196). In addition, until recently many Neo-pagans relied heavily on the forged "Book of Vles," finding there the required key terms, gods and also arguments in favor of the ancestors' great antiquity, their glorious military feats and cultural activity (Shnirelman 1998).

Therefore, Neo-pagan teachings popular among Russians are highly diverse and often do not correspond with each other in regard to a pantheon of gods and their functions, cosmological beliefs, rites and festivals, the structure of priestly organization, symbolism, ritual sites and sanctuaries. Some Neo-pagans favor neo-Hindu traditions; others prefer Zoroastrianism; others dwell on the early Germanic heritage, ascribing it to the Slavs. Some are fascinated by runic magic, which was a late development in the Germanic tradition. Finally, others search for the "genuine Slavic religion" unspoiled by alien influence. In doing so, they try to present it as monotheistic, while others stick to polytheism. In addition, many contemporary Russian pagans are highly affected by esotericism, which provides them with the materials required for a narrative of the remote past.

The key point of all these constructions is how the ancestors are viewed, because access to various materials depends on how the ancestors are imagined. Indeed, those who wish to search for their origins among Eastern Slavic tribes (say, the Viatiches) were disappointed that the scarce historical sources could not provide reliable data to restore their "authentic" religious beliefs and rituals. The Early Medieval monks collected much more data on the cultures and beliefs of the Western and Southern Slavs than on their eastern counterparts. Utilizing the idea of remote, common Baltic and Slavic roots proved more fruitful, because paganism survived much longer in some Baltic regions (such as in Lithuania). Incorporating materials about early Germanic paganism was also tempting, but this idea required belief in a remote Slavic-Germanic unity. The same concerned the appropriation of a Celtic heritage.

Another research route led to India, which demanded a memory of allegedly common "Aryan ancestors." Emphasizing a common Slavic-Germanic ancestry was necessary if the enthusiasts wanted to exploit the Aryan myth popular in Germany in the very late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. And if they identified the "Aryans" with the Indo-Europeans, in general, this opened a much broader perspective, including access to the folklore of numerous Indo-European groups. Finally, an esoteric approach

made all these strategies limitless, because, according to Helena Blavatsky's (1831–1891) teaching, the Aryans were the "fifth race," which embraced the majority of contemporary humanity (Blavatsky 1991–1992). Thus, embracing Aryan identity opened access to the rites, myths and beliefs of a great many ethnic groups, well known from ethnographic narratives.

In addition, there was one more approach—bizarre at first glance. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the German Assyriologist, Friedrich Delitzsch, discovered that Judaism had incorporated some beliefs which the early Israelites had learned during the Babylonian Exile (Marchand 1996: 223–226; Shnirelman 2015, vol. 1: 42). This strengthened the idea which appeared in the early nineteenth century that the Semites had borrowed their philosophy from the "Indo-Germanics" (Shnirelman 2015, vol. 1: 19). Since that time, several well-known anti-Semites developed the idea that the Jews had "stolen" knowledge from the early Aryans and incorporated it in their holy books, where it was appropriated by the Christian Bible. This approach allows contemporary Neo-pagans to borrow from the Bible under the pretext that they are giving the Aryans back the spiritual heritage "stolen" from them by the Jews long ago (Shnirelman 2015, vol. 1: 225–226).

All this affects how "Russian paganism" is constructed by its contemporary advocates. Indeed, eclectic borrowings from various sources have resulted in a bizarre pattern whereby the Iranian Zoroaster turns into an early Russian prophet, the Indo-Aryan god Agni is represented as the Russian goddess Ogni, the early Indo-Iranian title of "Arya" appears to be the name of the Slavic forefather Oryi, and the Germanic runes are viewed as "Slavic-Aryan" magical signs. Some Neo-pagan authors go so far as to identify Jesus Christ as Slavic-Russian, similar to their German predecessors who turned him into an Aryan (Hesche 2010).

The Search for Ancestors: Choices and Their Consequences

Several groups can be distinguished among Russian Neo-pagans depending on their religious preferences. The dominant majority does its best to integrate elements of numerous Eastern religious practices and beliefs, borrowed especially from Neo-Hinduism, with a reference to a pseudo-scholarly idea about the close relatedness of the Slavs and Indo-Aryans. Naturally, they make extensive use of Theosophical heritage of Helena

Blavatsky and Nicolas and Helena Roerich, while enriching it with images of the Slavic gods. However, they express contempt for the Hare Krishna (International Society for Krishna Consciousness [ISKCON]) movement (e.g., see Krylov 1993: 8; Istarkhov 2000: 218; Ivanov 2007: 113, 133). In the 1990s, only the small "Spiritual Vedic Socialism" movement dwelt on the Aryan idea, constructing its ideology entirely on the basis of Hare Krishna (Danilov 1996). Some Neo-pagans, though, are suspicious of and have reservations about Neo-Hinduism. They are more fascinated by Zoroastrianism with its warlike traditions and dualist teaching about Good and Evil (Avdeev 1994). The followers of these ideas are less numerous and focus more on political rather than religious activity.

While constructing his "Vedic religion," one of the most prolific writers, Aleksandr Asov, pays respect to both Hinduism and Zoroastrianism (Asov 1998: 8–10). At the same time, he argues that the Vedic faith was long maintained in an uncorrupted shape only in India and Russia, whereas after being reformed it disappeared among the Greeks, Romans and Germanics and was replaced by pagan polytheism. He claims that, despite the destruction of the "genuine" faith, the Slavs managed to preserve the "tradition of the Vedic faith" after the adoption of Christianity. According to Asov, it survived best among the Berendei[1] descendants (the legendary Berendei were a Cossack clan, from whom Asov derived his roots) (Asov 1998: 16–18).

Some Neo-pagans favor the early Germanic cults. The followers of runic magic use the early Germanic runes for various speculative constructions and foretelling (Platov 1995; Troshin 1997). This movement was launched by the writer Viktor Pelevin who popularized the principles of fortunetelling developed by the American Ralph Blum in the early 1980s (Pelevin 1990). In 1994, the police disbanded the semi-political, semi-criminal organization "Legion of the Werewolf," which was a Neo-pagan group attempting to introduce an early Germanic cult. Its members were arrested, trialed and put in jail (Chelnokov 1996; Filatov 1996).

There were more unusual Neo-pagan groups in the 1990s that wanted to combine early Slavic, Hindu and Germanic heritage; the Aryan Pagan Community *Satya Veda* was an example. It was founded in February 1998 under the alleged protection of the god Veles (Arinushkin and Cherkasov 1998; Cherkasov 1998). Such an eclectic approach toward restoring a pagan tradition did not embarrass the community's leaders, because, they claimed, one was dealing with related religious branches rooted in

the same "*vedizm, obshchii dlia vsekh ariitsev*" [Vedism, common to all Aryans] (Istarkhov 2000: 196).

At the same time, the fast growth of Russian nationalism in the late 1990s resulted in the reorientation of even those Neo-pagans who had previously avoided associating themselves with the earlier Slavic tradition. Since then, many Neo-pagan groups have emphasized their Slavic origins and do their best to restore early Slavic pagan beliefs and rituals in their "pure" form. They distance themselves from external influence and avoid borrowings from outside. The cultural organization *Viatiches*—whose name was borrowed from the early Slavic tribe Viatiches—that emerged in Moscow in 1995 was one of them (Speransky et al. 1997). It is also telling that the term "*rodnoverie*" (Native Faith) became extremely popular from the very late 1990s on, and many Neo-pagan communities began to affiliate themselves with the *Rodnoverie* movement (Shnirelman 2012: 14). This environment demanded a manifestation of patriotism, and foreign names became inappropriate. As a result, even the Aryan Pagan Community *Satya Veda* had to revise its identity and become the Russian-Slavic *Rodnoverie* community of "*Rodoliubie*" (Clan-loving), thus, underlining its Slavic foundation.

Let us analyze more closely how several Russian Neo-pagan leaders (*volkhvs*) constructed their teachings. Initially, *volkhv* Velimir (the adopted pagan name of Nikolai Speransky), one of the founders of the *Viatiches* community, focused on the Slavic tribe Viatiches, who lived in Central Russia in the early medieval period. Speransky acknowledges that Slavic paganism embraced a great variety of beliefs and practices—indeed, each tribe enjoyed its own gods and sacred sites. Yet he claims that from time to time some thinkers managed to integrate all this variability into a uniform system based on the worship of the pan-Russian gods (those common to all ethnic Russians). His own teaching contains a Manichean belief in the eternal struggle between Good and Evil which is embedded in the world's political and social arrangements. Good is represented by the god Belbog (also identified as Rod) and his followers, and Evil by the god Chernobog and his admirers. Allegedly, humans were created by both of these gods: Chernobog made the human body and Belbog provided the latter with an immortal soul. Thus, a dualistic principle was embedded in humans from the very beginning. They were provided with free will and Belbog/Rod's intervention was very restricted (Speransky 1996: 53–54; Speransky et al. 1997: 27–28). Besides free will, Speransky's system maintains the Christian principle of postmortal consequences unknown to pre-Christian

pagans; thus, he who commits evil deeds will be punished in the afterlife (Speransky et al. 1997: 29). Evidently, Chernobog's image as bearer of Absolute Evil is also rooted in the Christian view of Satan. Finally, dissatisfied with the lack of required sources, Speransky borrowed a lot from Russian folklore.

Speransky wanted to avoid mixing Slavic paganism with foreign traditions and therefore rejected Helena and Nicolas Roerich's "Living Ethics," which he regarded as useless for Russia, being based on Hinduism. He also rejected Christianity as being based on "Semitic ideology," referring to anti-Christian and anti-Semitic literature from the period of the Enlightenment up to the contemporary works of Dobroslav.[2] At the same time, he is sympathetic toward Russian folk Christianity, as if it managed to eliminate Semitic ideology from Christianity (Speransky et al. 1997: 19). Contrary to scholarly data and the views of many other Russian Neo-pagans, Speransky restricts the "Indo-European" to European people only, declining to ascribe it to the inhabitants of non-European regions, including India. Yet he acknowledges relationships between Russian paganism and the ideas of the early Iranian book, the *Rig-Veda* (Speransky et al. 1997).

While dissatisfied with the scarcity of data on the pre-Christian past of the Eastern Slavs, Speransky made an attempt to use Baltic materials. He familiarized himself with Lithuanian Neo-pagan teachings and was fascinated by their ideas about the state of "Darna," which allowed one to distance oneself from current passing interests and reach harmony with the surrounding world. According to Speransky (1999: 4), Darna is human existence in accord with the Earth and the ancestors, which provides feelings of happiness and, thus, is favored by the gods. Therefore, despite his suspicious attitude toward non-Slavic traditions, Speransky found it beneficial to borrow from Lithuanian pagan wisdom, because, he believed, this was justified by the close relationships between the early Slavs and the Balts. Further, he claims that the teaching of Darna is able to rescue the world.

In general, Speransky worries little about the relationship between Good and Evil, and more about overcoming the drive toward unlimited consumption; he advocates a shift to self-restriction and rejection of excess materialism, arguing that Darna can teach humans to remain modest (Speransky 1999: 12, 26). One can reach Darna when far from the city, in close contact with virgin nature: thus, one can arrive at a "natural faith" (Speransky 1999: 28–38).

Based in the city of Kaluga, *volkhv* Vadim Kazakov and his followers stick to pan-Slavic ideas and stand for the insulation of a "traditional" all-Slavic religion. They reject the label "pagan," calling themselves the "Union of Slavic Communities." In this way, they underline their unbroken ties with the "Slavic world," which they separate from all others. Yet, they highly respect Friedrich Nietzsche as an ally in their struggle against Christianity. Besides, in their book *Mir slavianskikh bogov* [The World of the Slavic Gods], Kazakov and the leader of another pagan group (the Vedic community Troian, based in the city of Obninsk), *volkhv* Bogumil, introduced more than 30 gods, including early Slavic gods (Swarog, Dazhbog, Perun and the like), Slavicized Hindu (Vyshen'/Vishnu, Intra/Indra, Kryshen'/Krishna) and early Greek (Dyi/Zeus) gods, as well as Iranian gods (Semargl, Khors), who were integrated into the Slavic pantheon relatively late (probably in the tenth century or earlier). Also included were gods from the forged Book of Vles (Pchelich and the like) and even heroes from Russian fairy tales (such as the evil sorcerer, Koshchei), together with gods (like Chislobog, responsible for counting and numbers) invented by the authors themselves (Kazakov and Bogumil 1997).

Another path was chosen by the *volkhv* Veleslav[3] (Ilia Cherkasov), who initially constructed his teaching with reference to Germanic and Indian sources. However, with the wave of patriotism in the late 1990s, he became one of the founders of the *Rodnoverie* stream within contemporary Russian Neo-paganism, although his teaching retained traces of his former beliefs. In contrast with *Viatiches*, the *Satya Veda* community was more open, perhaps because of its younger student members. On the one hand, they attempted to restore the "Aryan" cults, that is, the beliefs of early Indo-European groups, mainly the Germanic and Indian ones, but with an emphasis on "the Russian spirit" and Russian consciousness. On the other, they claimed that membership in any religious denomination could not block enrollment in the community, regardless of racial, religious or political identity (Cherkasov 1998: 74). Veleslav's attitude is based on his belief in the archetypical nature of paganism as the basic religion of the Tradition,[4] which he says contains the roots of all later religions in the world.[5] Notably, they have reservations about the Book of Vles, but are not embarrassed about borrowing from it.

Veleslav graduated from high school in 1990 and during the 1990s familiarized himself with various religious systems, favoring mainly Neo-Orientalist ones. Russian Orthodoxy, which he learned about from Deacon Andrew Kuraev's lectures, did not attract him; he decided to

stick to paganism. He explains his search for spirituality with reference to his dislike for the culture of consumerism. While sharing many of the ideas of the national patriots,[6] he disagreed with their emphasis on violent behavior ranging from hate speech to physical attacks (Aitamurto 2011; Shnirelman 2013). In his view, to get rid of the chains of modern civilization one had to return to genuine traditional values. While understanding it was impossible to return to them entirely, he believed that one could reconstruct the "Aryan-Slavic spirit" and at the same time manifest universal values through it (Cherkasov 1998: 74–75). His view of evolution dwells on Rene Genon's traditionalist scheme depicting a sequence of Golden, Silver, Bronze and Iron Ages. He was fascinated by the traditionalist view of cyclical time, which anticipated the arrival of the Golden Age. He treated this as a "Neo-Aryan" approach and did his best to build a living religious system which embraced a mythology, beliefs and rites.

The first leader of the Moscow pagan community, which emerged in 1989, Selidor[7] (Aleksandr Belov), traces his origin to the Teutonic knights, which legitimated his extensive borrowings from Germanic folklore. In addition, he identifies his ancestors as Aryans, and this opened the way to both Indian folklore and esoteric wisdom. He also uses numerous archaeological sources from prehistoric Europe. Identifying commonalities among classical and early medieval peoples (Rugiis, Rosses, Rosomons, Etruscans, Ruyans and Varangians), he claimed in the early 1990s that all originated from the earlier proto-Slavic community, going so far as to claim that the Rus' emerged much earlier than the Slavs. He identified the Indo-Europeans with the Cro-Magnon people, presented Sanskrit as the language of Neolithic Europe, and derived "Slavism" directly from the early Bronze Age Battle Axe (known also as Corded Ware) culture. He associated this culture with the Trypillian culture, which flourished much earlier, and he had no doubt that it enjoyed its own Trypillian state. He dated belief in the Trinity ("Tribozhie") to the Neolithic period, the "period of the common European Vedas," and accused Christianity of plagiarism and distorting this "great idea." He developed all these ideas in order to trace the allegedly unbroken development of the "Russian ethnos" from the Paleolithic and to present paganism as invaluable knowledge which was more developed than contemporary science (Belov 1992). One learns from his books that the Aryans enjoyed "higher knowledge" long before Judaism and Christianity and that the latter obtained all their knowledge by stealing it from the Aryans (Belov 2007: 23, 26, 33–34). Thus, one can blame Christianity for brutally and thoughtlessly exterminating the "early

Aryan heritage." Belov's ideas also included the Aryan arrival from the North Pole (Belov 1992: 11, 47).

The well-known *volkhv* Dobroslav[8] (Alexei Dobrovol'sky) was fascinated with Blavatsky's works, which opened for him a vast field for borrowings. He aimed his religion toward the Slavs and shared the myth of the *Russes* as an ancient people who settled extensively throughout Eurasia and gave rise to numerous other peoples (Dobroslav 1996: 6). While projecting contemporary ethical norms into the remote past, he was searching for the roots of ethics in a Paleolithic Golden Age when harmony prevailed, and people did not kill animals (Dobrovol'sky 1994: 9–11, 71). He argued that the early Aryan tribes long declined to do that, and that their Sun god Mithra did not approve of bloody sacrifices (Dobrovol'sky 1994: 66). Dobroslav failed to mention both the important role of animal sacrifice in the Iranian cult of Mithra and a well-developed early Indo-European pastoralism. Perhaps for this reason he avoided making reference to the Book of Vles, which enjoyed high respect among many other Neo-pagans. Instead, he condemned the bloody sacrifices allegedly practiced in early Judaism (Dobrovol'sky 1994: 49, 70).

While identifying himself as pagan, Dobroslav borrowed a lot from esotericism: he referred to global compassion and sympathy as an occult superfield which encompassed the universe, the moral–cosmic unity of existence, bioenergy which radiated at death, telepathy, karma, the astral field, the Single Initial Will and World Reason (Dobrovol'sky 1994: 13–15, 17–19, 33). He borrowed extensively from various cultures—African, Central American, Chinese and Siberian—and exploited shamanic beliefs and practices. He was not embarrassed that this might undermine the idea of Slavic originality. Indeed, Dobroslav even enriched his teaching with ideas borrowed from Christianity (such as postmortal reward).

The Omsk *volkhv* Aleksandr Khinevich founded his Early Russian Ingliist Church "*Dzhiva* Temple of Inglia" in 1991. Initially, he concentrated on the early German chronicles, mainly the Island sagas, where he picked up the term "Inglings." Later he turned to esotericism and developed an original teaching based on a syncretic Slavic-Aryan myth.[9] He also included Indian sources. His teaching integrates gods of a great many religions, who are respected as prophets (Khinevich 2000). Khinevich avoided using the term "religion," let alone "neo-paganism." He talked of the "early ancestors' beliefs" that were neither monotheistic nor polytheistic (Khinevich 2000: 16), while offering his students dozen of gods, including Slavic, Germanic, Iranian and Indian ones, as well as those invented

by Asov and himself. This multiplicity of gods was presented as incarnations of the Universal God. Khinevich borrowed the idea of reincarnation from Hinduism and esotericism, and the idea of the struggle between Light and Darkness from Zoroastrianism and Christianity (and also from esotericism). Christianity with its Ten Commandments was regarded as backward in comparison to Ingliism, which enjoyed 99 Commandments. Khinevich's eclecticism is further seen in his invention of a variety of festivals, such as a Day of Krishna, Day of Buddha, Day of Osiris, Day of Moses commemoration and the like.

Above all, Inglings are preoccupied with nationalism. Despite the numerous borrowings described above, they claim to reject cultural borrowings from outside and stand for a "Russian spiritual culture" which can rescue people from corruption (Yashin 2001). Together with quite reasonable and noble appeals, their teachings contain racist ideas, for example, segregation and prohibition of interracial marriages.

The syncretic nature of the Slavic-Aryan myth manifested also in the "Temple of Perun's Wisdom" founded by Khinevich. The entrance was decorated with a signboard covered with Book of Vles paleography. Russian icons were placed next to pictures of Konstantin Vasiliev (a cultic artist among Neo-pagans) and swastika. One could find images of Perun and Krishna and the Chinese Yin-Yang sign as well.

Similar to esoteric science, Inglings are ambivalent toward Christianity. On the one hand, they respect Jesus Christ as one of the prophets, but claim that the early Slavic *volkhvs* were aware of the major Christian ideas (such as the Universal God and the Trinity) long before Christ. On the other hand, they accuse the Church of distorting genuine Christianity, whose major ideas were allegedly contained in the apocryphal literature which the Church rejected. The Inglings' journal *Dzhiva-Astra* has published such Albigeois apocrypha as the "Tainaia kniga Ioanna" [Secret book of Ioann], as well as the "Novyi zavet Sviatogo Apostola Fomy" [New Testament of the Holy Apostle Thomas], discovered in Egypt in 1945—both referred to extensively by many Russian nationalists. Like many other Neo-pagans, the Inglings treat Christianity as an antinational agent aimed at the enslavement of people, mostly the Russians. Their anti-Christian reasoning contains anti-Semitic connotations as well (Yashin 2001; Shnirelman 2015, vol. 2, 72–74).

Khinevich depicted Christ as the "*Velikii Putnik*" [Great Wanderer], who was sent by the gods to the "*Velikaia Rasa*" [Great Race], and accused the "foreign enemies" who arrived from the "world of Darkness"

of his murder. Although he extensively used code words and allegories, the context and content of his narrative left no doubt that by "foreign enemies" he meant Judaism and Christianity. He claimed that the "Great Wanderer" was an "insider" and that Christian missionaries distorted his genuine teaching (Khinevich 1999: 37–50, 121–128).

During the 1990s, the St. Petersburg pagan and esoteric scientist Viktor Kandyba disseminated his own teaching of the "Russian religion." His major book *Istoriia Russkoi Imperii* [History of the Russian Empire] was published in 1997. Its structure was influenced by the Bible: the author offered an ambitious scheme of human development based on genealogical principles, whose core was a history of the Russian people. Historical constructions were mixed with religious reasoning, prayers and … political slogans. The book was intentionally written in an ethnocentric way: it covered mainly the Russian people and was aimed at the Russian people. Yet, what Kandyba meant by the Russian people was confusing—sometimes he wrote about all the inhabitants of Eurasia and sometimes about "the white race" or even "the yellow race" (Kandyba 1997).

The "*Russkii Bog*" [Russian God] was at the center of the "Russian religion." While inventing this religion, Kandyba borrowed from the Bible without reservation and claimed that he was returning stolen and lost wisdom to the Aryans. Thus, in his books, one finds well-known extracts from the New Testament, including the Sermon on the Mount. Like the early Medieval chroniclers, he used biblical expressions and prayers, but in a transformed shape. For example, one of his books opened with the epigraph: "*Vnachale byla ideia, I ideia byla v Bogei Bog byl ideia*" [First, there was an idea, and the idea was in God and God was the idea] with reference to the Rig-Veda. He also borrowed a strategy from the Old Testament: using a pseudo-genealogical structure to combine historical narrative with religious teaching, closely integrating human history with the history of a particular people (Kandyba and Zolin 1997). The prophets of this religion included Zoroaster, Jesus Christ, Buddha and Mohammad, along with some others invented by the author. All were called "Russian prophets," and Islam, Buddhism and Russian Orthodoxy were presented as younger branches of the "Russian religion" (Kandyba 1997: 299).

What allowed Kandyba to relate Islam and sometimes Buddhism to "Russianness"? First, he claimed that in their evolution many peoples had broken away from the original Russian stock, and, second, that they had retained a recollection of the "Russian Northern Homeland." Being "Russian" thus includes all who feel deeply the sacredness of the territory

they live in, and this sense allegedly differentiates all Russians from other people, who understand national borders in rational terms (Kandyba and Zolin 1997: 82). Kandyba emphatically protested against identifying Russians with only one of their tribes, the Slavs (Kandyba 1997: 356). In a broad sense, he identified Russians with all people of the "white" and "yellow" races (Kandyba 1997: 414 ff.).

To put if differently, Kandyba's construction contained the Eurasian idea of the unity of all who had ever inhabited either the Russian Empire or the USSR. It is no accident that he dreamed of a Russian–Islamic union and a "restoration of Empire," which, in his view, should legitimately include the territory from early Libya to the Pacific Ocean and from the "Holy Arctic" to the "Holy Indian Ocean" (Kandyba 1997: 355). The Empire was to be consolidated by the restored Russian religion, which Kandyba viewed as the "national state ideology" (Kandyba 1997: 355). This is another feature of his view of religion and its social role. He had grown up in an environment of scientific atheism focused on the political and social functions of religion rather than on spirituality. Therefore, he treated religion as ideology, calling the earliest priests "ideologists" (Kandyba 1997: 14). That is why his "Bible" was sometimes reminiscent of a political tract and contained slogans exhorting readers: "Enroll in the Russian Religion, and we will be a real physical and military force," "Everyone has to make his choice—either you are Russian or the enemy: the enemy of the Russian people, enemy of God, enemy of Truth and enemy of life on Earth." Side by side with these appeals, one came across the slogan of the Russian National Congress (*Sobor*) of General A. Sterligov: "*My—Russkie! S nami—Bog*!" [We are Russians! God is with us!] (Kandyba 1997: 56–57, 92, 355, 467).

Another way to construct a monotheist religion was taken by the writer Aleksandr Asov. He is an advocate of a primeval monotheism, which he identifies as proto-Vedism, the true faith which, he argues, later divided into regional and national traditions. Russian Vedism, or Orthodoxy, was among the latter. Asov argues that it was the Russian tradition of Vedism that brought the genuine Vedic teaching to us in better shape. He claimed that it was the source of the Vedic faith and Vedic culture, and that it still determines the life of modern civilization to a major extent (Asov 1998: 14). He contrasts Vedic teaching with paganism, which he identifies as pantheistic and polytheistic, rejecting of the universal God identified with Rod. For years, Asov occupied himself inventing "Holy Scripture" for Russian Neo-paganism. His teaching consists of two parts: Slavic myths

and Slavic sacred history. To restore them, he extensively uses apocryphal literature, in particular, the "*Golubinaia kniga*" [Pigeon's book], a collection of religious verses of the late fifteenth to early sixteenth centuries, and claims that the god Rod was depicted there as Christ.

Asov's fantasies are not restricted by time, space, local religious tradition or linguistic rules. The early Iranian gods Semargl and Khors are presented as genuine Slavic gods. Yav', Prav' and Nav', invented by the emigrant Yuri Miroliubov,[10] are imagined as essential principles of the Vedic religion. The Biblical Trinity loses its mystical meaning and turns into an ordinary (although heavenly) family: Father, Son and Mother. Asov's supernatural world is inhabited by numerous gods and goddesses (there are even several Trinities), yet it does not stop him viewing his religion as "monotheist." Mount El'brus in the North Caucasus appears to be the sacred stone of Alatyr' from Russian fairy tales, and prince Bus of the historical Ants (the early Slavic tribes of the fourth to seventh centuries) becomes an "incarnation of the Supreme God," who, in his glory and destiny, can challenge Christ. Asov is sensitive to the Biblical idea of the Messiah, and his religion incorporates both precursor (Veles) and Messiah (Vyshen') (Asov 1998: 41).

Asov is not embarrassed about borrowing Biblical legends and Slavicizing them: the tale of Noah is rewritten and ascribed to the first man Vania (Asov 1998: 89–90); narratives of how the child Koliada was put in the river in a basket and found by Khors, as well as the childhood of Aryi Oseden' who was hidden from the Dragon (Asov 1998: 128, 250–251), are evidently based on the legend of the wonderful rescue of Moses. Asov integrates the Christian idea of postmortal reward, which sends righteous souls to paradise in the Sun, while limbo (the threshold of Hell) is connected with the Moon. All other souls are to reincarnate and come back to Earth (Asov 1998: 57)—this idea is evidently borrowed from Hinduism. Pictures of the pagan gods have been drawn by Asov in collaboration with M. Presniakov according to the Christian canon. Asov calls them "icons" and decorates them with their names in Cyrillic, as is common for Russian Christian icons.

While depicting the "Slavic gods" Asov borrows also from archaeological materials—not without confusion. For example, his Aryan-Scythian Sun god of the third millennium B.C. (Asov 1998: 130) proves to be a variety of the Scythian goddess Apy (Earth goddess), wife of the Supreme god Papay, whose images date to the third century B.C.

Like Kandyba, Asov follows the Bible and builds up a grand historical scheme, which ascribes Indo-European and Aryan traditions to the Slavs and discovers Slavic roots in the Paleolithic. While presenting his fantasies as scholarly truth, Asov refers to a thick layer of Vedic literature. He includes not only Hindu and Zoroastrian texts, but also Russian folklore: fairy tales, legends and parables, regardless of their background (sometimes Christian). He argues that Russian folklore maintained the "original Vedas" lost by the Aryans on their way to India. Although he acknowledges using Biblical materials (Asov 1998: 141–143), he accuses the Bible's authors of borrowing from Aryan wisdom and deliberately distorting it (Asov 1998: 260–263). Finally, Asov uses fakes—the Book of Vles and the Hymn of Boyan. To legitimate this, he naturalizes and Russifies various religious traditions. He argues that all religious traditions that were founded by Ram, Krishna, Buddha, Zoroaster and Christ were as native for the Ants' princes as the teachings of Kryshen', Koliada and Veles. The Russian Vedic teachings (close to Vishnuism) and Zoroastrianism were born in lands run by the Bus princes and Keianids (Asov 1998: 285).

Discussion

What is behind all these views? First, many of the activists discussed above grew up in provincial regions and were shocked by their movement to large cities, which meant breaking away from both their native natural environment and tradition. Second, as their professional activity tended to be associated with the hard sciences and the soulless methods they entailed, they appreciated spirituality, which was missing from the industrial world. Third, having been raised in the Soviet school of thought, they were accustomed to a holistic outlook and were shocked by its disappearance from the post-Soviet environment. In addition, scientists commonly think in systemic terms, and therefore gravitate toward an image of "organic entities," be they "ethnos," the Earth or even the universe as a whole.

Most Neo-pagans call themselves "atheists" and want to develop a scientifically based outlook. Many hardly treat paganism as a religion. However, for all it means integrity with nature and a belief in the living Earth (Gaia)—the unity of society and nature. This represents a type of pantheism that was characteristic of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and for Ernest Haeckel and the Monist League at the turn of the twentieth century (Gasman 1971). Neo-pagans' holistic outlook

goes even further, referring to an organic social unity, which leads to an image of a highly integrated "ethnic community." The core idea is a strict embeddedness of humans in their surrounding natural environment and culture. Cosmopolitan universalist ideas are extraneous for Neo-pagans, who reject universal religions (like Christianity or Islam) together with their abstract notions and discourses. Neo-pagans believe that one is strictly connected with a given rather than an abstract natural environment, and is also integrated in an ethnic culture and inherits its archetype. The latter determines one's behavior and moral values. While identifying religion as tradition, Russian Neo-pagans believe that every ethnic group should enjoy the "native" gods worshiped by its own remote ancestors. Foreign religions and cultures are harmful because they are less organic for another people and less correspondent with their "ethno-psychological" condition. To put it other way, Russian Neo-pagans appreciate collective rather than individual spiritual life; they imagine beliefs as communal and ethnic.

What, then, allows Neo-pagans to break away from scholarly methodology in search of "native tradition"? Their key terms are "the people" (*ethnos*) and "the ancestors." But their view of "the people" as a tribal community severely restricts research and makes it difficult. By contrast, a more inclusive approach focused on, say, the "Aryan" or "Indo-European" entity opens a more extensive field and allows them to easily appropriate alien traditions. Put another way, whereas they appreciate indigenous roots, some of them view indigeneity as a broad, inclusive category, which allows them to appropriate alien heritages.

Their view of this category is inconsistent and obscure. While claiming originality, many Neo-pagan teachers simultaneously appropriate the spiritual heritage of various peoples through identification of others' ancestors with their own. This trend reaches megalomania in some works, where Russians are imagined as the First People, having given birth to the rest of the humanity. One finds this idea in Asov's and Kandyba's teachings. It has been well developed by the writer Yury Petukhov, who depicted the "Russes" as the earliest humans who had already populated the Earth by the Paleolithic and given birth to almost all its remaining inhabitants (Petukhov 2003). This idea is closely connected to the Messianic one, which makes the Russians responsible for humanity's destiny. While accomplishing this mission, they face a mighty enemy, which persistently does its best to destroy humanity. A popular view identifies this enemy with the Jews (Shnirelman 1998). Hence, there is a revival of the Aryan

myth that places the allegedly eternal Aryan–Semitic confrontation at the core of human history (Shnirelman 2015).

Here one is dealing with a basic approach to historical materials rather than with beliefs only. While presenting the Russes-Aryans as the first people who provided all the others with the goods of civilization, Russian Neo-pagans follow the Jewish Bible, which is also heavily based on historical narrative. As a result, Neo-pagan historical constructions explicitly or implicitly compete with the Torah. They claim it was only the Russians or their close relatives who developed both a monotheist religion and a writing system, as well as the rich Vedic knowledge, which was later appropriated by the Jews. They also argue that it was the Russes-Aryans who initially inhabited Canaan and were forced out by brutal Jewish conquerors who dreamed of seizing all the rest of the "early Russian" territories and wanted to rule the world. Rus', Russia, is depicted as a perennial object of invasion, and as such is both the first and last stronghold defending humanity against this deadly threat. Simultaneously, Rus' is presented as the source and a fortress of the Vedic faith (Shnirelman 2014).

Russian Neo-pagans are less preoccupied with the restoration of a pure Slavic paganism, but use it as an important means of ideological consolidation for the Russian nation against a common enemy, to rescue the Russian state from dissolution and Russian culture from disintegration. Yet this is by no means easy to accomplish given the great variety of religious beliefs they present as pagan.

There are two major trends. One is an aspiration to construct a "genuine Russian monotheism" together with a Russian Trinity. Another focuses on the restoration of early pre-Christian pagan beliefs. With regard to the first, one is dealing with a struggle for priority, and Christianity is presented as a poor epigone of the "Russian religion." Sometimes Russian Orthodoxy is viewed as a later branch of the "Russian religion," which on one hand underlines its derivative character, yet on the other presents it as an ancestral heritage. In the case of the second trend, Christianity proves a dangerous and cruel competitor, allegedly aspiring to eliminate the "Russian tradition."

In addition, Russian Neo-paganism is characterized by great diversity and includes followers of Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, early Germanic and Celtic beliefs, Runic magic and the like. Many communities are preoccupied with the restoration of Slavic paganism, and it is they who focus on the "revival" of ethnic culture. However, because of the lack of reliable and rich materials, enthusiasts have to resort to their imagination

and borrowing from other traditions. Therefore, paradoxically, while identifying itself as a "pure ethnic religion," Neo-paganism is a religious hybrid by nature. Like their Western counterparts (Butler 2005; Pearson 2007; Rountree 2010), many Russian Neo-pagan teachings are affected by Christian ideas. Yet the *volkhvs* decline to acknowledge this, claiming they are returning to the true heirs the early beliefs that were stolen by the Jews. And in their search for "folk traditions," Neo-pagans appreciate Russian Orthodoxy because, in their view, it has been enriched by the ancestors' paganism.

Finally, many Russian Neo-pagans are influenced by esotericism, which provides them with certain evolutionary ideas and views of the universe. In this way, they enrich their teachings with cosmopolitan ideas, presenting them as local ones which originated in their own ethnic environment. All of this is a manifestation of the cultural hybridity characteristic of the epoch of globalization.

Notes

1. They were Turkic nomads of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, whose image survived due to Russian folklore.
2. Dobroslav was the pagan name of Alexei Dobrovol'sky (1938–2013), one of the founders of Russian Neo-paganism.
3. Veleslav is his adopted pagan name.
4. Here "Tradition" is viewed in an esoteric way, as a primordial tradition that gave birth to all other traditions (Sedgwick 2004). Hence a capital "T" is used.
5. Based on the author's interview with Ilia Cherkasov in Fall 1998. Also see Cherkasov (1998: 72–73).
6. He indiscriminately associated West with Evil and the Kingdom of Death, the direction from which "murderers" always come (Arinushkin and Cherkasov 1998: 46).
7. Selidor is his adopted pagan name.
8. Dobroslav is his adopted pagan name.
9. Yet, some meticulous pagans have revealed that he borrowed many ideas from the "Moscow Templars," an esoteric organization destroyed by the secret police in the late 1920s. See Pravda (2012).
10. Miroliubov (1892–1970) left Russia after the Civil War and lived in Belgium.

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Multiple Nationalisms and Patriotisms Among Russian Rodnovers

Roman Shizhenskii and Kaarina Aitamurto

Rodnoverie is a term used for their religion by a sizable portion of the followers of pre-Christian Slavic spirituality in Russia.[1] Reverence for nature and the revival of ancient spiritual practices, reconstructed from historical material and ethnographic studies, are central features of the movement. Rodnoverie rituals follow the cycles of nature; the largest include the summer solstice, *Kupala*, the winter solstice, *Kolyada*, and Shrovetide, *Maslenitsa*. Typically, Rodnovers—the name given to followers of this spirituality—celebrate these festivals in nature, either in city parks or in the countryside. There are no commonly acknowledged religious authorities or organizations in Rodnoverie. Instead, in addition to some bigger umbrella organizations, small informal groups are constantly established. Moreover, many Rodnovers do not belong to any organization, but construct their own religious views from different sources. Due to this lack of dogmatism, it is difficult to define any common beliefs of the community. For example, while some believe in one supreme God, who is manifested in other divinities, others subscribe to polytheistic views, and yet others conceive of gods simply as symbols.

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Previous studies of Rodnoverie have routinely noted that nationalism is one of the most characteristic features of this movement. Admittedly, love for one's country, the uniqueness of the "Russian tradition" and a division between "us" and "them" are frequent themes in Rodnoverie publications (Istarkhov[2] 2001; Yemelyanov 2005; Ozar 2006). However, as scholars of nationalism have noted, nations are constructed concepts, and therefore under continuous negotiation, especially in such a multiethnic and multi-confessional country as Russia, in which both imperialistic and ethnically based forms of nationalism compete with each other. This chapter begins with an overview of the nationalist tradition in Russia and scholars' views on Rodnoverie nationalism. These studies are then reflected upon based on a survey conducted during the biggest Russian Pagan festival, Kupala, held in the town of Maloyaroslavets in 2014. Particular attention is given to the question, "What does the motherland (*rodina*) mean to you?" The data shows a multiplicity of nationalisms and identities among Rodnovers. Surprisingly, a substantial number of Rodnovers identify themselves as Pagans in a very cosmopolitan way, as members of a global community. Another finding of the research is that as representatives of an occasion-ally discriminated-against minority religion, Rodnovers rarely subscribe to statist nationalism and instead form their identity and loyalties on the basis of locality and land.

Russian Nationalism

Analyses of Russian nationalism have often paid attention to the coexis-tence, or continuous balancing, of ethnic and civic forms of nationalism (Shevel 2011). The Communist ideology, which formed the basis for the October Revolution, deemed national borders to be a means of control-ling the working class and proposed a borderless world as the ultimate aim of the revolution. For practical political purposes, however, Lenin admit-ted the right of national self-determination, and later Stalin introduced his new nationalist politics, crystallized in the phrase "nationalist in form, socialist in content," combining Soviet propaganda and culture. Despite this, internationalism, both within the Soviet Union and in the global con-text, was one of the core ideals of the Soviet Union, and official rhetoric buttressed its multicultural nature (Hirsch 2005). However, the nation-alist politics of the Soviet Union contained very similar features to that of the previous Russian imperialism. Although the Soviet power granted

some privileges to the national elites of the various republics, Moscow still kept the national republics under strict control, and beyond the rhetoric of a "multinational Soviet Union," processes of Russification were implemented.

The collapse of the Soviet Union quickly launched discussions in Russian society about what the new national identity should be like, and what post-Soviet patriotism should be based on. For example, in 1996, President Boris Yeltsin made a call to Russian society to develop a new definition of the "Russian idea." Despite the huge amount of material and number of publications that this call produced, no generally agreed-upon definition of the "Russian idea" was found.

As in Soviet times, the political elite of the Russian Federation now subscribes to the idea of civic nationalism. At the beginning of the 1990s, President Yeltsin introduced a new term, "*rossiskii*" (Russian), which denoted Russia as a state, instead of the term "*russkii*," which refers precisely to Russian ethnicity. Criticism of the new term as artificial has revealed the prevalence of an ethnically colored understanding of the nation. Ironically, the essentialist understanding of national, or rather ethnic, identities was for a large part inaugurated during the period of Soviet internationalism by celebrating the "friendship of nations" and equality of the Soviet nations. The Soviet "institutionalization of ethnicity" (Hutchinson and Tolz 2015: 26) included, for example, a paragraph about "nationality" (here meaning ethnicity)[3] in Soviet passports.

The simultaneous interplay and contest between ethnic and civic Russian nationalisms have continued, or even been reinforced, during the last decade (Shevel 2011). In the 2010s, President Putin has taken on the role of championing the civic (and imperialist) understanding of Russia, while in the nationalist opposition the lobby that promotes ethnic nationalism has continued to gain weight. A new phenomenon is the link between the nationalist and democratic opposition, personified in the popular anticorruption campaigner and one of the leading figures of the national–democratic opposition, Alexey Navalny. The difference between the state and oppositional nationalisms culminates, for example, in attitudes toward Chechnya and the Eurasian Union. The slogan "stop feeding the Caucasus," popularized by Navalny, reveals an urge to create a Russian ethnic state, even if it means relinquishing the status of a multinational empire. Such views are criticized as unpatriotic and detrimental

for Russia by President Putin, who also promotes the idea of the Eurasian Union, which would bring ex-Soviet states into closer cooperation and consolidate the influence of Russia in this area. The Eurasian Union is rather unpopular in Russian society, where antimigrant or even xenophobic attitudes have proliferated in the twenty-first century. Indeed, the main reason for the opposition to the Eurasian Union is the fear that it would facilitate migration from central Asian countries (Laruelle 2015: 95). Paradoxically, sometimes imperialist ambitions may protect ethnic minorities, as multiethnicity can be regarded as one of the prerequisites of an empire in contrast to a nation state.

Although the concepts of ethnic and civic nationalism have been widely criticized as both simplistic and judgmental (Kymlicka 2001; Brubaker 2004), they are useful tools in analyzing different forms of Russian nationalism. However, these concepts are based on methodological nationalism, which ignores the multiplicity of overlapping identifications and attachments. These may be transnational affiliations, for example, where one identifies oneself as part of a transnational religious community such as a "Pagan nation," or even a racist identification such as positioning a "white race" above national differences. Local attachments can also offer more meaningful frames of identification for people than nationality or citizenship. In her analysis of the concept of "motherland" (*Rodina*)[4] among activists and officials organizing various "patriotic" activities in the Siberian city of Omsk, Anne le Huérou (2015) also came to the conclusion that for a significant proportion of her informants, *Rodina* referred first to something about the local area or the intimate circle of people around them. Thereby patriotism could also be seen as a pyramid, which started from intense affection for and responsibility toward one's nearest community and extended to the level of the state. As one of le Huérou's interviewees argued: "If it is only the country, it is too abstract or too vague, as it was in the case with the Soviet Union" (le Huérou 2015: 38).

Russian Rodnoverie and Nationalism

The birth of the modern Rodnoverie movement is usually located either in the nationalist movements of the 1970s or in the spiritual and nationalist cultic milieus of the 1980s (Aitamurto 2016). The first public presentation of Slavic Paganism as a viable religious alternative was the infamous book *Desionizatsiya* by Valerii Yemelyanov (2005), published in 1979, which, was more an anti-Semitic political statement than a presentation of Pagan

spirituality as such. Even though similar ideological "Pagan" currents were supported by some other nationalists, the revival of pre-Christian religious practices only began during the second half of the 1980s. The first believers came partly from nationalist circles, but also from the broader mushrooming subculture of alternative spirituality which was popular among the urban intelligentsia. Nevertheless, until the liberation that was brought by perestroika at the end of the 1980s, and especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the movement was very small. In fact, rather than being a movement, it consisted of some small groups and individuals who did not necessarily even know much about each other.

At the beginning of the 1990s, occasional media coverage about Rodnoverie began to emerge in the mainstream press—such as several articles by Aleksandr Asov (e.g. 1992) and Aleksei Belov (e.g. 1991)—and a three-part television series of the program "*Dobryi vecher, Moskva*!" (Good evening, Moscow!) on Channel Three in 1992, where Grigorii Yakutovskii presented his ideal of a contemporary Slavic Paganism. At the same time, Rodnovers eagerly seized the new liberty in publishing and several, usually very modest, publications emerged. Most of these were connected to an ultra-nationalist philosophy and, in the spirit of Yemelyanov, were more focused on combating the "enemies of Russia"—Jews regularly being the main point of reference—than on developing Pagan cultic practices or theology. However, there were also individuals and groups which were oriented toward the latter. For example, Grigorii Yakutovskii aimed to introduce Rodnoverie as a form of shamanism, and has consistently throughout his career taken a critical stance toward nationalist intolerance within the movement. He aimed to incorporate elements from other nature religions of the world into the practices of his community, and in many senses, he can be regarded as one of the first representatives of a cosmopolitan Rodnoverie. The less political and nationalist approach to Slavic pre-Christian spirituality was also popularized in the numerous bestsellers of Aleksandr Asov, although many Rodnovers considered his teachings to be closer to the New Age due to their syncretism and commercial aims.

The political and social turmoil of the first half of the 1990s might be one of the reasons for the extreme radicalism and popularity of wild conspiracy theories in Rodnoverie groups at that time. By the turn of the millennium, the influence of ultra-nationalism within the movement had not necessarily lessened, but it had become less extreme especially in the larger organizations. In addition, the larger nationalistically oriented Rodnoverie

organizations, such as the *Soyuz Slavyanskikh Obshchin Slavyanskoi Rodnoi Very* (the Union of Slavic Communities of Slavic Native Faith, USCSNF), *Soyuz Venedov* and *Mertvaya Voda*, began to pay more attention to ritual activity. At the beginning of the 2000s, Rodnovers who took a critical stance toward national chauvinism organized themselves into an umbrella organization, *Krug Yazycheskoi Tradittsii* (Circle of Pagan Tradition, CPT), and for a couple of years, the issue of nationalism divided the Rodnoverie community in bitter disputes (Aitamurto 2006).

In the 2000s, the Russian authorities introduced new legislative and administrative measures against the incitement of hatred in public. The laws against extremism can, for example, be used to proscribe activity and ban "extremist" organizations. In addition, they form the basis for the federal list of banned literature. Such measures were needed in a situation where racist violence and hate speech, including Nazi propaganda, were rampant. However, to an increasing extent these measures have also been used on very light grounds against minority religions and to quell societal dissent (Fagan 2013). Some Rodnoverie publications were among the first on the list of banned literature, and since then numerous Rodnoverie books, periodicals and organizations have been banned. The effect of these policies on the Rodnoverie community is twofold. On the one hand, Rodnoverie communities have become more careful in their statements and explicitly aggressive ultra-nationalism has lessened in mainstream Rodnoverie. On the other hand, such rhetoric and activity have shifted underground into communities which do not seek publicity and into informal communication.

In addition to these two changes that the antiextremist legislation brought to the Rodnoverie movement, it has transformed the Russian nationalist opposition in general, and these developments have also been reflected in the Rodnoverie movement. The measures taken against ultra-nationalist movements in the second half of the 2000s led a substantial part of this scene to take a more critical stance toward the political elite. Some of the most radical extremist groups, who were not averse to committing violent acts, began to target such authorities as the police (Kozhevnikova 2009).[5] At the same time, the nationalist opposition grew and sentiments were expressed in such diverging representations of nationalism as violent extremist groups, massive riots against migrants in Manezhnaya square in Moscow in 2010, and the national–liberal opposition to the reelection of Putin at the end of the following year. At the time of the annexation of Crimea, the situation again changed dramatically, as the nationalists

divided into those who were against the annexation, those who supported Putin, and those who criticized him for taking too soft an approach toward Ukraine. Revealingly, in November 2014, the yearly nationalist "Russian March" was divided into two events and the number of participants was significantly lower than in previous years as the rising popularity of "state patriotism" undermined the appeal of oppositional nationalism.

Although both of the Russian marches in 2014 drew some Rodnovers, and attitudes toward Putin, the annexation of Crimea and the situation in Ukraine vary among Rodnovers, some recent developments could be pushing this minority into an oppositional, or at least marginal, position. The first of these is again the antiextremist measures, which hit not only the nationalist activity of Rodnovers, but also their religion. The banning of some Rodnoverie literature or communities, imposed on a questionable basis,[6] has discredited the politicians and the authorities in the eyes of many Rodnovers. At the same time, the role of the Russian Orthodox Church has significantly strengthened in Russian society, which has also manifested in the weakening, and sometimes persecution, of minority religions. While at the turn of the millennium, the demonization of "totalitarian sects" mainly addressed imported new religions, in recent years Rodnovers have increasingly been lumped in the category of suspicious religious activity. In consequence, links with—or the too visible presence of—Paganism may discredit nationalist organizations, especially those which seek to gain the support of the authorities. Although Orthodox Christian ultra-nationalist publications have also fallen onto the list of banned literature, the borderline is more permissive for Christians than for Pagans. There are high-profile (ultra)nationalist Orthodox Christian organizations or activists, such as the famous motorcycle club "Night Wolves," on which the authorities would very likely have taken a censorious rather than permissive stance had they been Pagans rather than Orthodox Christians.

Rodnoverie, as with virtually all modern Pagan religions, is extremely heterogeneous. There are notable differences between various Rodnoverie organizations on how they understand their religion, but an even wider gap exists between these and various groupings which are at the fringe of the definition of "Paganism." These fringe phenomena include the use of Paganism as just one element in a syncretic spirituality, such as the Anastasiya movement, which is not anchored in any specific tradition (Pranskevičiūtė 2012). Another example of the Pagan fringe is the selective use of Paganism as an element in nationalist political ideology without a commitment to any religious practices. Especially among skinheads,

such usage is not uncommon. However, these groupings are marginal in the Rodnoverie movement and often excluded by the mainstream organizations. The antiextremist measures are not the only, or even the prime, reason for the lessening of ultra-nationalism in mainstream Rodnoverie. It has also been caused by a certain maturation of Rodnoverie as a religious movement, instead of being merely a supportive element of a nationalist ideology.

Although the movement has shifted in a less politicized direction, nationalism is still a very prominent feature and consequently, a substantial portion of studies on Rodnoverie have focused on analyzing the forms of nationalism within the movement or its links to nationalist and ultra-nationalist activity. Attention has been drawn, for example, to the links between Rodnoverie authors and radical ultra-nationalist and skinhead groups (Shnirelman 2012, 2013; Yakupov 2009). However, other scholars have argued that the most radical groups are relatively small and not typical of mainstream Rodnoverie (Koskello 2005; Gaidukov 2013; Aitamurto 2016). Alexey Gaidukov writes about the racist murders and attempted bomb attacks which took place between 2008 and 2010: "These blasters called themselves 'Rodnovers,' which in the eyes of the public audience and the authorities, not knowing the religion, ultimately connected all Slavic Pagans not only with skinheads, but with extremists. In this way, a couple of people managed to discredit constructive initiatives of many well-meaning and law-abiding citizens" (Gaidukov 2013: 177).

While Victor Shnirelman (2012) considers nationalism to be a prevalent and inseparable part of the Rodnoverie movement, other scholars argue that there are also groups and individual Rodnovers who are not particularly nationalistic and for whom nationalism is not a central element of their religion (Aitamurto 2013). Koskello (2005) argues that in addition to the "anti-globalist" Rodnovers, the religiosity and societal views of some Rodnovers are distinctly "globalistically" oriented. One of the problems in the study of Rodnovers' social and political attitudes is that there is no reliable statistical survey data available, similar in scale, for example, to that which emerged from a survey conducted in the United States (Berger et al. 2003). Analyses of "Rodnoverie attitudes" are based on a reading of published Rodnoverie literature, which gives a very biased picture of ordinary, practicing adherents and communities by, for example, exaggerating the weight of ultra-nationalist authors, who often find it easier to secure publishers than those who focus on the practices of pre-Christian

Slavic spirituality and are not particularly nationalistic (Shizhenskii and Tyutina 2014; Aitamurto 2016). Even ethnographic studies are able to capture only fragments of this extremely heterogeneous movement, and are therefore somewhat slanted. The following part of this chapter, which is based on a survey undertaken at the Kupala festival in Maloyaroslavets in 2014, is not statistically representative of the Rodnoverie movement either. However, the material provides the widest consistent survey conducted so far within Rodnoverie, and therefore it offers good grounds for commenting on some previous suggestions about adherents' views. Concerning nationalism, the data reveals the gamut of identifications and attachments within Rodnoverie. It also gives support to Koskello's argument about the "globalistically oriented," or cosmopolitan, wing within Rodnoverie.

The Survey in Maloyaroslavets

The Kupala in Maloyaroslavets, a small town located a little over 100 kilometers southwest of Moscow, was organized by two notable Pagan organizations, *Velesov Krug* (the Veles Circle) and the Union of Slavic Communities of Slavic Native Faith (USCSNF). The latter is one of the oldest Rodnoverie umbrella organizations, established in 1997. In the summer of 2015, it included 16 Rodnoverie communities as members. From the outset, the USCSNF has represented a more nationalistically oriented part of Rodnoverie, although not its most radical wing. On its webpages, the goals of its activity include "following, preserving, studying and disseminating the original cultural, spiritual and ethical habits of the Slavic people, and the spiritual, moral and physical healing of the Slavic ethnos." The description reveals the nationalist spirit of the organization, and on the webpage titled: "Who are we?" this inclination is directly expressed: "We are an association of nationalistically thinking people, who promote national self-identification of the Slavic people" (*Kto my est' I chto my delaem* 2015).

The Veles Circle, named after the god Veles, was founded in 1999, and in the summer of 2015, included 12 communities (see Fig. 6.1). It is headed by the prolific author and charismatic leader, Il'ya Cherkasov (known as Veleslav; see Fig. 6.2). The Veles Circle has remained outside the most heated debates about nationalism in the Rodnoverie movement. In a published questionnaire, formulated by four Rodnoverie leaders (Rodoslav, Iggel'd, Ogneyar and Velemysl) and given to 24 Rodnoverie

Fig. 6.1 The god Veles and his wife, the goddess Mara (temple of the five gods, Red Meadow, Selo Ignatievsky, Maloyaroslavsky district, Kaluga region). Photograph: Roman Shizhenskii

leaders, Veleslav answered the question about nationalism in the following way:

> Russian-Slavic Rodnoverie is faith and knowing of RUSSIANS and SLAVS and in this sense, a deeply nationalist phenomenon. But when the love of one's own and natives begins to be accounted for on the basis of hatred

Fig. 6.2   The Magus Veleslav (Il'ya Cherkasov), creator of the "Veles Circle."
Photograph: Roman Shizhenskii

toward aliens, then that kind of approach has little in common with the
Path of Spiritual Elevation and is therefore unacceptable for us. (Rodoslav
et al. 2004: 171)

Although neither Veleslav nor the Veles Circle condemns nationalism,
their influence on Rodnoverie has been crucial in the depoliticization of

the movement. Revealingly, while religion as such is hardly touched upon in the most politicized Rodnoverie publications, and is addressed, but alongside nationalistic themes, in the writings of the leading figures of the USCSNF, the publications of Veleslav focus almost solely on spirituality. At this point, it should be noted, however, that Veleslav and another leader of the Velesov Krug, Bogumil, with their numerous publications are probably the most widely read Rodnoverie authors.

The first joint Kupala festival of the Veles Circle and the USCSNF was organized in 2013 in a field outside the town of Maloyaroslavets (see Fig. 6.3). According to the organizers, the event gathered between 1500 and 1800 people, while in 2014, the number was almost 1200. However, as the organizers admitted, some of those attending did not necessarily see the event so much as a religious event as just a folk festival held in nature. The main ritual of the festival was the *Kupal'skaya misteriya* (Mysteries of Kupala) held around a big bonfire, which was lit as a "living fire" in a massive wooden machine by rubbing logs together. During the three days, other rituals took place as well, such as Pagan weddings, purification rituals and Pagan name-givings. The program included musical performances (scheduled musical groups and more or less spontaneous singing and instrument playing), martial arts and folkloric plays (see Fig. 6.4). A group of *skomorokh* [traditional harlequins or fools] entertained the participants and especially children, for whom also a separate ritual and various games were organized. The festival included a marketplace for traditional handicrafts and some tent restaurants for the participants, who mostly lived in tents for the weekend.

The survey reported in this chapter was conducted by the "New religious movements in contemporary Russia and European countries" research group of Minin University in Nizhny Novgorod from 20 to 23 June 2014. The survey was a continuation of a smaller survey conducted by this research group at the same festival the previous year. In 2014, the questionnaire was composed of nineteen open and closed questions. The scholars collected 234 completed questionnaires. Of the respondents, 138 were men and 93 were women; three respondents did not indicate their gender. In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents were young adults:

Age	14–21	22–30	31–39	40–50	over 51
N	18	108	65	28	10

Fig. 6.3 Ritual Fire, Midsummer (Selo Ignatievsky, Maloyaroslavsky district, Kaluga region). Photograph: Roman Shizhenskii

The respondents were clearly educated above the average: 162 (69.2 % of all respondents) had undertaken higher education. Although the respondents represented a wide array of professions, an interesting feature is that a substantial proportion worked in a business as company managers (13), middle-level managers (37), or business owners (27). Another large group was "specialists," professions which require higher education,

Fig. 6.4   A priest appeals to the ancestors. Photograph: Roman Shizhenskii

such as engineers, scholars or information technology (IT) professionals (71), which corresponded to the high level of education among respondents. Creative professions such as craftspeople (3), film industry workers (2), artists (2), a musician and an organizer of folk festivals were represented at an above-average level compared with the general population. Only 14 respondents identified as students, perhaps related to the fact that Rodnoverie witnessed a significant growth in the 2000s, and there

has been a maturation of the first generations of the movement. Almost as many (11) held a position in the armed forces, which is a notably high number.

Scholars have suggested that Rodnovers are predominantly men, young, educated and living in cities (Gaidukov 1999; Kavykin 2006; Aitamurto 2016). Of the respondents in this survey, only 27 people did not live in a city, and the largest individual group consisted of 131 people resident in the major cities of the country.[7] In this respect, the respondents correspond to Kavykin's (2006: 7) portrayal of typical Rodnovers as representatives of "the marginal urban intelligentsia."

The Understanding of Motherland (*Rodina*) in the Survey

In this chapter, we translate the word "*rodina*" as motherland, which conveys specific connotations in contrast to the word "*otechestvo*," fatherland, deriving from the word "*otets*," father. The concept of *rodina* derives from the word "*rod*," a clan or tribe, and the adjective "*rodnoi*," which means both something connected by family or blood ties and something near and dear to a person. For example, one's hometown is expressed as "*rodnoi gorod*." Thereby, the word *rodina* could also be translated as "home country." Nevertheless, in Russian cultural history, the word "*rodina*" is often associated with the idea of Russia as a woman or a mother. For example, one of the most famous wartime propaganda posters featured a woman with a beckoning hand and the text "*Rodina zovet*" [the motherland calls you]. Incidentally, many Rodnovers refer to this poster as an example of Pagan thinking evoking Russia as a female divinity in Soviet imagery and rhetoric.

According to Irina Sandomirskaia, in the Russian tradition, the word *rodina* draws from two competing intellectual traditions. The first is state patriotism, which emphasizes the individual's duty toward one's fatherland (*otechestvo*). The second is an emancipatory discourse which criticizes power, a form of romantic rebellion against it. For example, the so-called village writers of the 1960s and 1970s used the term "*malaya rodina*" [small motherland], in contrast to Soviet internationalism (Sandomirsakaia 2001: 16, 98–9).

In the 2014 survey, the open question, "What does motherland mean to you?" was left unanswered by 26 respondents. Some of the responses

were only one word long, while others contained a more detailed description. A preliminary analysis of the key words in responses divides the answers into the following categories:

Land (zemlya), native land, my land	Local place, locality	Ancestors	Tribe (rod), family, children	The people (narod)[8]	Cultural and historical values, tradition	Cosmopolitanism
77	47	46	35	20	18	16

Nationalism	Home	Faith, spiritual outlook	Country	Rus' (the name of the country from the late ninth to the mid-thirteenth century)	Russia	Nature
15	14	10	10	9	9	3

Categories such as "family" or "nature" were based directly on words mentioned by respondents; other categories were based on further analysis of respondents' answers. For example, the category "nationalism" included such answers as "nation" (*natsiya*), "blood" or "the lands of the Slavs." Naturally, such interpretation was subjective, but it aimed to incorporate the implicit connotations of the words. Therefore, the word "*zemlya*" [land] was excluded from the category of "nationalism," but "nationalism" included the term "*pochva*" [soil], which in contemporary Russian bears a more nationalistic connotation. Similarly, "the ancestors" were left as a separate category, because the word does not indicate any ethnic denominators, while the word "blood" was included in the category of "nationalism."

The category "cosmopolitanism" included the most diverse answers. It is important to mention that none of the respondents actually used the word "cosmopolitanism" due to its negative connotations in the Russian language.[9] These connotations derive from Soviet times, when "good internationalism" was distinguished from "bad cosmopolitanism" in a similar way to how "good patriotism" was distinguished from "harmful nationalism." The concept of the "rootless cosmopolitan" was also used as a code word for Jews in anti-Semitic rhetoric. In the survey discussed here, this analytical category was used to include such answers as "an abstract concept, which is not connected to any tangible place," or "all the world." What was common to these answers was their refusal to demarcate "the

motherland" as a specific geographical area or ethnicity, instead referring to the motherland as locatable anywhere in the world, according to one's choice. In this way, the ultimate idea underpinning all these answers can be characterized as cosmopolitanism.

The single word answers in particular may admit several interpretations. For example, the word "home" could mean that the respondent considers his or her home to be a personal homeland or, conversely, that the respondent's country is seen as their home. However, the main reference points of the answers give some interesting results. The first two categories of land and locality comprise a total of 124 responses. These answers reject the idea of motherland as defined by state borders and instead place it in the physical environment, one person defining it as "the place of [spiritual] power." This local, personal "motherland" may be quite small. For example, one respondent answered: "The motherland is an area around which one can walk within one day."

The next group of categories identifies motherland with blood ties, either within such intimate circles as family or ancestors, or within larger communities, which may evoke imagined communities, such as "*narod*" [the people]. Together these categories include 101 answers and seem to support Victor Shnirelman's interpretation of Rodnoverie as a cult of the tribe. However, it may also be portrayed as a "cult of roots," which is how the Belorussian scholar Mikheeva (2003) has characterized Rodnoverie. If interpreted in this way, the same group can include the 18 answers mentioning cultural and historical traditions as the ultimate meaning of motherland. The answers in this category may reflect a very traditional ethno-nationalism, but they also include such descriptions as "family" or "children," which again appear to disrupt large, constructed categories such as nation.

Moreover, even though the word "*rod*" is often translated from Russian as tribe, family or origin, in Rodnoverie discussion its meaning can be wider. In addition to blood ties, it may refer to elective communities such as the Pagan community, or even be understood as a kind of universal force or form of energy that connects all living beings. Perhaps the commonest interpretation is to understand Rod as a god, who is occasionally considered the main god in the Slavic pantheon, although there are disputes about this as well (Gavrilov and Ermakov 2009: 23–35; Anfant'ev 2011: 58). Moreover, as a god, Rod can be understood not solely as Slavic, but as a universal divinity. On the first pages of the journal *Rodnoverie*, published jointly by the three largest Rodnoverie organiza-

tions, the Veles Circle, the USCSNF and the CPT, the leader of the Veles Circle, Il'ya Cherkasov (Veleslav 2009: 5), writes: "Rodnoverie honors the initial Spiritual Union of Mother Nature and Father Rod, Rodnoverie teaches that every human being is a son [sic] of Father Rod and Mother Nature and all living beings are essentially his [sic] kin (*rodnye*) brothers in One Divine Family." Interpreted in this way, some of the responses that mentioned the word "*rod*," instead of having ethno-nationalist underpinnings, may come closer to the category of cosmopolitanism.

Perhaps the most surprising result of the survey was the small number of responses which represented a statist (or imperialist) understanding of "motherland," such as "Russia" or "state." The low number partially reflects the dissatisfaction with some manifestations of the "official patriotism," but the respondents also continue the old Russian tradition of patriotism being understood as loyalty to the land or the people, not loyalty to the state or the rulers. In addition, some respondents wished to express their loyalty to a particular historical manifestation of the Russian state (rather than the contemporary one), such as "the historical Russia until the year 1917." Whereas some respondents identified themselves with "Russian people" or "Russian lands," others referred to a wider Slavic community as, for example, "the land of Slavs, specific religious views that unite them." There were also answers which mentioned the "ancestors" without connecting them to any geographical area or ethnicity.

The low number of responses which associate "motherland" with the state of Russia can be interpreted as demonstrating a weakness of civic nationalism within Rodnoverie, especially if juxtaposed with such answers as "the people," "the tribe" or "the land and blood," which bear ethno-nationalist connotations. However, the relative unpopularity of state patriotism may also reveal a preference to identify oneself with the Pagan community rather than the category of Russian citizens; thus being a Pagan is a kind of "diasporic identity," a separate community, as expressed by the respondent for whom the *rodina* was "the whole Pagan *Rus*." Here it should be noted that in such answers, "our Paganism" was predominantly defined as the tradition of Slavs or "our ancestors," and the survey responses included no explicit references to Pagans as a global community. However, some answers, such as the idea of *rodina* being a place which can be found anywhere, may imply a more globalist understanding of the "Pagan community."

The notion of diasporic identity manifests itself in many ways in Rodnoverie. From the outset of the movement, Rodnoverie leaders

and popular authors have tended to regard active societal participation as a specifically Pagan virtue, in contrast to more otherworldly oriented religions. At the same time, they have constructed the idea of a Pagan community with its own traditions, history and myths. There have even been plans and projects to found separate residential areas or villages for Pagans. One of the grand old men of Rodnoverie, Dobroslav (Aleksei Dobrovolskii), settled in the remote countryside, intending to gather other Pagans with their families in the area. Although this vision of a "Pagan village" around Dobroslav never materialized, for almost two decades Dobroslav's difficult-to-reach cottage became a place of pilgrimage for many Rodnovers. Since then, some Pagan villages have been founded in less remote areas in Russia. Another strain in the construction of a distinctly Pagan community is the more or less detailed blueprints for a Pagan state (e.g. Shizhenskii 2014: 49–80).

Discussion

It would be misleading to argue that a substantial number or even the majority of participants who participated in the Kupala in Maloyaroslavlets would not consider themselves nationalists or patriots in some sense. The emphasis on "our" Russian or Slavic tradition was evident at the festival in numerous ways, and it seems safe to say that the majority would have answered "yes" to the straightforward question, "Are you a patriot of your country?" However, the advantage of the survey question about the meaning of motherland is that it reveals some nuances in the ways people feel connected to their "country" and their identifications and sense of belonging. Even the nationalistically oriented answers differed greatly. The ethno-nationalist ideology manifested itself in, for example, the two answers which referred to a slogan common in aggressive nationalist circles: "Where our ancestors have shed their blood, that land is ours." Some people subscribed to statist nationalism in their understanding of *rodina*: "Put together, all the lands of Russian people, which form a state," and "the content of the national anthem of Russia." For others, spirituality was more central in their definition of motherland: "One's own land. One's own faith. One's own people."

The survey in Maloyaroslavets demonstrates that in addition to ethnic and civic forms of nationalism, an inclination to regard national or ethnic categories as secondary to local or global identification finds much support. Hence, this study challenges the interpretation of Rodnoverie

as a movement based solely on nationalist concerns and the claim that all Rodnoverie activists subscribe to a nationalist ideology. The variety in Rodnoverie attitudes toward nationalism is illustrated by the relatively small proportion of respondents who defined "motherland" in the framework of the Russian state, and in the number of people who associated the "motherland" either with some local area or with a global context. The different ways of constructing and envisioning a Pagan community also reveal that Rodnovers may define the "Pagan community" with which they identify in terms of ethnicity, but it may also be based on some local space or a sense of being part of a transnational community: "the Earth on which our ancestors were born, the whole globe"; "where your soul yearns for, irrespective of where you were born, but where you feel connected to the earth, nature and where you feel that you are making people happy"; "everything around us, everything spiritual and dear."

As mentioned above, the published literature may give an overtly nationalist picture of the Rodnoverie movement, especially if the focus is placed on searching and analyzing nationalist claims. The survey demonstrates the diversity of respondents' identifications and belongings, but the festival itself also testifies that nationalism is not (any longer) at the core of Rodnoverie religious practices in the mainstream movement. This is more notable considering that the other organizer, the USCSNF, has been considered as representing the nationalist wing of Rodnoverie. The description of the festival in its advertisements and festival activities focused on the spiritual tradition instead of nationalistic concerns. The published "rules for behavior" for the festival explicitly prohibited "political propaganda" or the "display of political views by means of, for example, flags." After the festival, attendees' experiences were asked about in the "Kupala 2014"[10] group on the social media platform "VKontakte.ru," which is often described as "Russian Facebook." Both in 2014 and 2015, negative features of the event mentioned by some participants included the actions of individual "extremists" or people who promoted political slogans. For example, one discussant stated that his community found shouts of "death to the enemies" unacceptable. The discussion[11] included other similar comments: "The group of nationalists who stood aside and kept going on about races disturbed a little bit, but all in all, they behaved peacefully." This comment aroused some defense of the term "nationalist": "Do you not then consider yourself a nationalist? I thought it is exactly these kinds of festivals in which they [nationalists] gather." However, the term was later used by others with apparently negative connotations: "I

didn't notice any drunken people or nationalists, only happy faces, people having fun and an excellent marketplace." Such comments convey both that ultra-nationalist behavior was marginal at the festival and that it has become socially unacceptable—at least at this largest Rodnoverie event in Russia.

NOTES

1. This article was prepared with the support of the RGNF *Rossiiskii gumanitarnyi nauchnyi fond* (Russian Humanitarian Scientific Foundation) for the project "Kompleksnoe istoriko-religio-vedicheskoe izuchenie fenomena russkogo neoyazychestva" (proekt No. 15-31-01247). On terminology used among followers of pre-Christian Slavic spirituality, see Simpson and Filip (2013).

2. V. Istarkhov is a pseudonym, coming from the words *istoricheskii arkhiv* (historical archive). For years it was unknown who the author was, and the police tried to discover the author's identity as the book was accused of extremism. However, a couple of years ago Ivanov "came out" and is now a visible leader in ultra-nationalist activity.

3. In Soviet vocabulary, "nationality" (*natsional'nost'*) referred to ethnicity in contrast to the word citizenship (*grazhdanstvo*). At the age of 16, people chose their "nationality" according to either their father or mother, but the nationality had to be one of the around 100 nations, listed officially as "nations" of the Soviet Union, such as Jews or Tatars. Not surprisingly, this fifth paragraph in the passports enabled ethnic discrimination against, for example, Jews (Slezkine 1994).

4. In Russian and English texts, *Rodina* is often capitalized. It is capitalized here because this is Le Huérou's practice.

5. See http://www.nbcnews.com/id/31491414/ns/world_news-europe/t/russian-ultranationalists-target-officials/#.Vkxa50a1cqc (Retrieved 23 November 2015).

6. For example, a substantial portion of Aleksei Dobrovolskii's publications are now banned. Though his texts certainly contain anti-Semitism, some of the bannings reveal the absurdities of the "expertise statements" on the basis of which literature is banned. For example, the statement about Dobroslav's book *Volkhvy* declared not only that Dobroslav's text was extremist, but also the

picture on the cover, which happened to be the world-famous painting "Oleg meets wizard" by Viktor Vasnetsov, painted in 1899 (Lushnikova 2011).

7. In the questionnaire, this option was explained as "cities with Federal standing."

8. The word *narod* refers rather to the people, in a similar vein to the German *Volk*, instead of the nation, even though it is occasionally translated in this way as well.

9. It is also noteworthy that the concept of "cosmopolitanism" was selected by Roman Shizhenskii (one of this chapter's authors) in his preliminary analysis of the material before he knew about the title (or even the idea) of this anthology.

10. In 2015, the name of the group changed to "Kupala 2015. 'Velesov Krug'. Maloyaroslavets," but the site includes material such as photographs and discussions of festivals in previous years as well. http://vk.com/event39133716 (Retrieved 20 October 2015).

11. The discussion can be found in http://vk.com/topic-39133716_30002841 (Retrieved 18 November 2015).

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Blood Brothers or Blood Enemies: Ukrainian Pagans' Beliefs and Responses to the Ukraine–Russia Crisis

Mariya Lesiv

INTRODUCTION

"Ukraine has only one enemy, and it is Russia," said Bohumyr, a middle-aged male adherent of the *Ridna Ukrains'ka Natsional'na Vira* (Native Ukrainian National Faith *RUNVira*, hereafter RUNVira), in response to my question about how the ongoing Ukraine–Russia crisis reflects on both the RUNVira community and him personally (interview, 16 June 2015).[1] Ohnedar, an adherent of the Ukraine-based *Rodove Vohnyshche Slov'ianskoi Ridnoi Viry* (Ancestral Fire of Slavic Native Faith, hereafter Ancestral Fire), answered the same question in a contrasting way: "We do not have enemies there [in Russia] and we do not have any crisis between Ukraine and Russia. Our people go to Crimea for vacation. We do not, we do not, we do not [have enemies there]! They [Russians] are our brothers" (interview, 5 July 2015). These polarized views illustrate the contrasts

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in Ukrainian Pagan discourse surrounding the ongoing political and military turbulence in Eastern Europe.

This study is informed by my previous research on Ukrainian Paganism in both Ukraine and the North American diaspora between 2006 and 2012 (Lesiv 2013). However, its main focus is based on subsequent fieldwork in Ukraine in the summer of 2015, supplemented by online ethnography and related published sources. I was interested in Pagans' individual responses to the ongoing political crisis between Ukraine and Russia as communicated via personal narratives. I followed folklorist Leonard Primiano's (1995: 44) "vernacular religion" approach which emphasizes the importance of studying religion "as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it."[2] This approach allows for an understanding of the complexities of religious folklife by incorporating individuals' own creative interpretations of their religiosity and spirituality that, in turn, may be shaped by a variety of sources.

Although I have encountered Ukrainian Pagans with more nuanced perspectives on Russia and its politics, the majority of the narratives I collected reflect two distinctly opposing paradigms. The most radically contrasting voices tend to belong to the adherents of RUNVira and Ancestral Fire. Ancestral Fire followers perceive Russians as their blood brothers, despite the ongoing political unrest. In contrast, RUNVira adherents treat Russians as their blood enemies, and this position has been strongly reinforced by the recent crisis between the two countries. I will first trace the formation of the positions of RUNVira and Ancestral Fire regarding animosity toward and brotherhood with Russia, arguing that political convictions constitute part of the experience-based belief systems of Ukrainian Pagans. These beliefs will be further addressed as they relate to the concepts of cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Both Ukraine-centered RUNVira and pan-Slavic Ancestral Fire oppose a cosmopolitan ideology. However, paradoxically, their belief-based anticosmopolitan sentiments are often nourished by the same modern sources that inform cosmopolitan thinking, making the boundary between nationalism and cosmopolitanism less clear-cut than traditionally acknowledged.

Ukraine–Russia Crisis

In order to understand the micro-level views of Ukrainian Pagans, we need to consider the macro-level political dynamics that inform Pagan perspectives. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to cover all details of the

Ukraine–Russia conflict, especially considering it has received substantial attention in both English-language media and scholarship.[3] I will briefly underline only those aspects that relate to the main themes of the present study.

In late November 2013, mass protests erupted throughout Ukraine, when then President Victor Yanukovych, under pressure from the Kremlin, suddenly refused to sign a long-planned association with the European Union. The protest movement was referred to by the umbrella term *Maidan* (square), named after its epicenter *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (Independence Square) in Kyiv. The nature of the protests changed after a large group of peacefully demonstrating students were dispersed and severely beaten by the government-controlled special police force. Focus shifted from the EU Agreement to the widespread political corruption of Yanukovych's government and its disregard for basic human rights. Protests that had begun peacefully unfortunately did not end the same way. Cobblestones and Molotov cocktails were thrown at police. In response, snipers fired live ammunition at the protestors. By late February of 2014, over 100 people had been killed. President Yanukovych fled the country and found asylum in Russia.

Despite the widespread scale of the protests, Ukraine was still politically divided. While a great number of Ukraine's citizens supported the potential economic ties with Europe, many still favored integration with Russia. The military conflict between the two countries began when Russian troops entered and subsequently annexed the Ukrainian territory of Crimea immediately following Yanukovych's flight. Although Moscow initially denied its presence in Crimea, it eventually explained its actions as necessary for the protection of Crimean Russians who were perceived to be in danger from nationalist-oriented supporters of the Maidan.

The crisis further intensified during the subsequent unrest in Ukraine's Donbas region. The clash between the pro-Russia separatist forces and the Ukrainian government escalated into armed conflict that has since seen several unsuccessful attempts at a ceasefire. While the Ukrainian Government and much of the international community report that Russia has been providing military and material aid to the separatists, Moscow denies its presence in the Donbas region. Ukraine's Ministry of Defense has stated that as of July 2015, 1930 Ukrainian troops have died since the beginning of a military counteroffensive, referred to as the Anti-terrorist Operation (ATO) (1930 Military Troops 2015). To date, over 7000

people in total have died in the region since the beginning of the conflict (Eremenko 2015).

The role of Russian state-controlled media in the reinforcement of antagonistic sentiments between pro-Ukraine and pro-Russia sections of the population cannot be underestimated. Throughout the period of the Maidan and subsequent events in Crimea and the Donbas region, Russian media disseminated fear-mongering messages about supposed nationalistic Ukrainian-speaking protestors who were to invade eastern Ukraine to destroy the Russian/Russian-speaking population.[4] These messages were promulgated despite the fact that Russian was a commonly used language among the protestors, especially in the movement's epicenter in the predominantly Russian-speaking capital of Kyiv. Another recurrent theme of Russian state-controlled media is its focus on the role of the USA in Ukraine and elsewhere in the world. Moscow views the West in general and the USA in particular as a hegemonic force that strives to expand the zone of its geopolitical influence and, thus, as the fabricator and sponsor of the Maidan.

Ukrainian Pagans' responses to the crisis between Ukraine and Russia and strategies for dealing with it appear to be heavily shaped by their pre-existing group affiliations and the groups' historically dissimilar perceptions of Russia.

Ukrainian Pagans and Russia: A Brief Overview[5]

Modern Ukrainian Pagans strive to revive beliefs and practices from thousands of years ago. They offer an alternative vision for a nation/state, whether Ukrainian or pan-Slavic, based on the rediscovery of old ancestral roots. Paganism evolved in both the North American Ukrainian diaspora and in Ukraine, having reached the apogee of its development at times of sociopolitical turmoil on the two continents. Pagan ideas became attractive to some representatives of the urban Ukrainian intelligentsia in the North American diaspora after the Second World War. This was a time when many immigrant Ukrainians felt compelled to construct and promote their national identity, considering that Ukraine was occupied by foreign political forces, both Nazi and Soviet. In Ukraine, Paganism has developed rapidly in the decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the myth of the "Soviet people" was shattered, increasing the need for many individuals to seek out a new sense of self. Today, Ukrainian Paganism is in great decline in the diaspora. The situation is very different in Ukraine,

however, where this new religious movement is growing rapidly, involving many different communities and thousands of believers.

Since the spiritual beliefs and practices of old Slavs and their predecessors are largely unknown, many contrasting theories and distinct Pagan groups have emerged. As I have argued elsewhere (Lesiv 2013: 83–85), the past as the unknown "other" opens horizons for creative interpretation in today's diverse and contested identity-formation processes. Thus, different Pagan groups promote different views of the past and visions for the future, often projecting onto the past their present-day needs and concerns.

Individual groups' attitudes to Russia have been firmly shaped by their leaders. Unlike many Western Paganisms that lean toward idiosyncratic spiritualities (Clifton 2006: 12) and oppose formal leadership (Orion 1995: 130) and established (hierarchical) state institutions, many Ukrainian Pagans desire to build an alternative state that, by definition, implies institutionalization and hierarchy (Lesiv 2013: 69). Thus, while there is room for individualistic views and interpretations, many Ukrainian Pagans have historically tended to be loyal to their leaders. All the Ancestral Fire participants in this study, when mentioning Volodymyr Kurovskyi, the group's creator and ultimate leader, referred to him as *bat'ko* (father) Volodymyr. In a similar way, RUNVira followers, both in their publications and informal conversations, use the title "Great Prophet" or "Teacher" when talking about the group's founder, Lev Sylenko. In order to understand Ukrainian Paganism in general and the ways RUNVira and Ancestral Fire lived in particular, we first need to understand the ways they are preached by the leaders.

Sylenko's Runvira and Russia

The Pagan leaders' views of Russia are shaped by the larger historical contexts of their personal lives and are based on their creative interpretations of history and old Slavic traditions. There is evidence that Lev Sylenko (1921–2008) was a student of Volodymyr Shaian (1908–1974), who took the first steps in reviving the polytheistic faith of the old Slavs in 1934, under the influence of the idea of Aryan origin that was popular at the time (Ivakhiv 2005a: 11). Although Sylenko eventually parted with Shaian, Shaian's influence on the founder of RUNVira is evident.

Shaian was a highly educated Ukrainian patriot who was forced to leave Ukraine during the Second World War because of his political convictions.

His alternative religious views, which were developed as the basis for Ukrainian nationhood, are filled with personal frustration regarding the colonialist politics in his home country. Shaian opposed the notion of cosmopolitanism, associating it with universalist ideas linked, in turn, to expansionist forces, among which Russia occupied a prominent position. Shaian (1987: 878) viewed Russia as a dangerous political player "that strive[d] to swallow other nations with the help of its 'universalist program'." Shaian (1987: 877–78) metaphorically compared Russia's politics to the intentions of the Catholic church that, in his opinion, was another expansionist force that strived to blend all nations into "one flock of sheep under one pastor in Rome." Shaian (1987: 877–78) further connected these interpretations with Ukraine's position in the Soviet Union ruled by Russia, where "the Ukrainian nation ha[d] to blend in such a foreign stable," even though this stable was not Christian but Marxist and consisted of "collective farms, where Ukrainians [we]re constantly being disciplined by the [Russian] supervisors."

The influence of Shaian's thinking, reinforced by his personal tragic experiences, is clear in Sylenko's teachings. Sylenko witnessed the *Holodomor* [famine] in eastern Ukraine during the Stalin era. His own father was a victim of the mass-scale repressions of the same period, and was attacked for having been an independent farmer or *kulak* and sent to Siberia. These events interfered with Sylenko's further postgraduate studies, when he himself was persecuted for being a son of "an enemy of the people" (Lysenko 1996: 38–39). Escaping the Communist regime, Sylenko ended up in the German refugee camps after the Second World War, eventually emigrating to North America where he resided for periods of time in both Canada and the USA.

In the diaspora, Sylenko founded RUNVira, a monotheistic religion based on his reconstruction of old Slavic polytheism. Throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, RUNVira communities were established across the USA and Canada. Sylenko's faith further spread to Ukrainians in Australia, England and New Zealand (Sylenko 1996: 6), reaching Ukraine shortly before the collapse of the Soviet Union. As of 1 January 2015, RUNVira had 62 registered communities, 53 spiritual leaders, 4 schools, and 3 periodicals in Ukraine.

Sylenko, like Shaian, sharply criticizes the universalist principles adopted by ruling powers such as Russia. For example, in his voluminous *Maha Vira*, a book that lays the foundations of RUNVira, Sylenko (2005: 699) asks: "Why … muscovite-nationalists propagate internationalism

everywhere and consider themselves to be internationalists?" He answers this question by sarcastically interpreting some of the most popular ideological slogans and messages that circulated in Soviet Ukraine:

> The calls of internationalism help to conveniently exploit captive nations, lull their self-defending national feeling to sleep, and slacken their national consciousness. (And these calls have to carry such attractive messages as "the unification of the two brotherly peoples [of Russia and Ukraine]" and "nations-brothers who are made happy by Lenin's teachings and became brothers in the eternal union of sister republics"). (Sylenko 2005: 699)

Sylenko's RUNVira was initially introduced as a creative weapon to resist this type of politics. Thus, his *Maha Vira* (Sylenko 2005), the foundational sacred text of this religion, is full of historical episodes accompanied by Sylenko's interpretations of Ukraine's political enemies, among which Russia occupies perhaps the most prominent place. Readings from *Maha Vira* are the central mandatory component of all RUNVira rituals, including those rituals whose names do not suggest any political connotation. Furthermore, the RUNVira calendar created by Lev Sylenko (1991) includes a special *Den Narodnoho Hnivu* (The Day of People's Anger) that falls on November 5. Based on Sylenko's argument that "one who feels no hatred towards one's enemies does not love one's native land," this day is meant to acknowledge the historic oppression of Ukraine.

Sylenko was an eager learner, predominantly self-taught. He traveled extensively, obtaining access to international educational institutions and resources, where in a creatively comparative manner he collected materials for the foundation of his RUNVira. Svitoslava Lysenko (1996: 184), a biographer of Sylenko, mentions in this regard:

> Lev Sylenko has worked in the biggest libraries of the various countries of the world, including France, Germany, Canada, England, Syria, Great Britain, Greece, and India. While studying Hindu philosophy, he began to learn Sanskrit. He familiarized himself with a history of the Aryans' coming to India. He researched the Vedas ("the most ancient monument of the human mind") and was surprised by his own discovery: Sanskrit (the language of the Vedas) includes many words that exist in contemporary Ukrainian. He was convinced that Avestan, the language Zoroaster spoke, indeed was the language of the later Trypillians.[6]

Kurovskyi's Ancestral Fire and Russia

Ukraine-based Ancestral Fire, led by 40-year-old Volodymyr Kurovskyi, markedly differs from RUNVira in several ways, especially in its pan-Slavic orientation that, in turn, involves a close cooperation with Russian Pagans. Appointed as the Supreme Volkhv (Pagan priest) of Ancestral Fire for a five-year term in 2003, the year the group was initially formed (Ancestral Fire 2005: 3), Kurovskyi continues to head Ancestral Fire today. Under his leadership, the group's membership has experienced impressive growth and now consists of one International Spiritual Centre, 20 established communities and 17 initiative groups (communities in the process of formation) throughout Ukraine, including Crimea. In addition, Ancestral Fire has eight communities and five initiative groups in Russia and one community in Moldova under its umbrella (Communities n.d.). It has also expanded beyond Slavic territories, with (Slavic) followers in Munich, Germany, where Kurovskyi frequently visits. Ancestral Fire events appear to be very well attended. Ancestral Fire summer camps and festivals attract approximately 200 people on average, including guests from other countries, especially Russia. The majority of Ancestral Fire followers are young people in their 20s, 30s and early 40s.

Like Sylenko, Kurovskyi opposes cosmopolitanism, striving to establish boundaries against what he perceives to be universalist/expansionist currents. However, his enemies differ from those of Sylenko because Kurovskyi's understanding of *narod* (a people with shared roots) embraces not merely Ukraine but the larger Slavic world. Kurovskyi is convinced that Slavs, especially Ukrainians and Russians, are brothers and sisters in blood that, when united, represent a great power. He suggests that it is the enemies of the Slavs who impose controversial political ideas in order to separate and weaken them and, thus, insists on the unity of all Slavic Pagans. These views are manifested in Ancestral Fire's statement (Kolo Volkhviv 2014) regarding the occupation of Crimea issued on 6 March 2014:

> Once again, puppeteers behind the scenes are trying to knock together the heads of Ukrainians and Russians who are, blood from blood and spirit from spirit, brothers. This will not happen!!!

Ancestral Fire's earlier statement regarding the Maidan events clarifies exactly whom they consider the "puppeteers behind the scenes." Although

not directly named, Kurovskyi's (2014) references to international politics make it clear that he sees the USA as the main destabilizer of the situation in Ukraine:

> These are the activities of overseas foreign special-forces, who are sent to destabilize the country with the complete support of the international financial system (dominated by the dollar). For this, they […] organize "revolutions" in Iraq, Libya, Egypt, Syria […].

Even though Ancestral Fire was founded in the context of the post-Soviet identity crisis, this context was not nearly as turbulent as the experiences of Lev Sylenko and Volodymyr Shaian. Unlike Shaian and Sylenko, who both endured major traumatic life changes associated with political persecution and displacement resulting from Russia's politics, Kurovskyi and his fellow supporters represent the late Soviet generation that was born and raised in the Soviet Union. These future Pagan leaders were fully immersed in the Russian language and culture since early childhood. As a result, things Russian do not seem as foreign to them as they may have appeared to their predecessors.[7] Although the collapse of the Soviet Union brought instability and social turmoil, it took place in a peaceful way in Ukraine. Many people of Kurovskyi's generation merely aspired to look for an alternate sense of belonging, and that search did not imply risking their lives.

Rodoslava (interview, 4 July 2015), who currently holds a leading position in Ancestral Fire, actively participated in the creation of Ancestral Fire along with a team of friends headed by Kurovskyi. They were all students at the Kam'ianets-Podilsky Ivan Ohienko National University. She remembers their group gatherings and discussions during which they realized that they must have been the descendants of the clans of the old Slavic *volkhvy* (priests). The main sign of this was that each of their families maintained a range of unique folk traditions that appeared to have been rooted in the distant past. Rodoslava mentioned in this regard:

> And it was a coincidence that we, as the descendants of these old clans, [ended up studying at the same institution] and we decided to revive those ancient traditions. As paradoxical as it may sound, we began to revive them at our Kam'ianets-Podilsky Ohienko University. […] Somehow fate brought us all together.

Ancestral Fire leaders draw inspiration from old Slavic mythology. *Rod* is perhaps the most important and widely used concept in Ancestral Fire's cosmology. It means "clan" in some Slavic languages. Rod is also the main and multifaceted god of Ancestral Fire.[8] In addition, some of the leaders, including Kurovskyi, studied psychology and findings from that academic field constituted another foundational basis for Ancestral Fire. In addition, Ancestral Fire borrows elements from other cultures, indigenizing them. For example, Kurovskyi's most prominent healing technique, called *Zhyva*, is an equivalent of both Japanese Reiki and Cosmoenergy, a healing method based on old Eastern meditative practices that was developed in the last years of the Soviet Union (Mikhailov n.d.).

Soon after its initial establishment, the group began to successfully expand on a larger scale. Rodoslava recalls how Ancestral Fire ideas were widely disseminated across the entire Slavic world as a result of their publications and the Internet. The leaders began to receive frequent invitations from groups in other countries to celebrate holidays, lecture about traditions and conduct specific rituals. Among the countries that Rodoslava has visited most often are Belarus, Moldova, Poland, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and, of course, Russia.

Ancestral Fire's latest publications have appeared in Russian, and the native fluency in Russian of Kurovskyi and other Ancestral Fire leaders has helped expand their market and spread their power base far beyond the geographical borders of Ukraine. In addition, Kurovskyi is known for his long-term cooperation with other Russian Pagan groups, especially that of the Church of Ynglings, currently ex-communicated by the majority of Russian Pagans (Sviridonov n.d.)[9]

Despite continuous sharp criticism of Kurovskyi from other Ukrainian Pagans, and even though he proclaims close ties with Russia, Kurovskyi does not appear to treat Ukraine's role in the context of the imagined Slavic state as subordinate. In fact, as I observed on numerous occasions, Ancestral Fire leaders, through creative interpretation of history and traditions, promote Ukraine as the spiritual center for modern Slavs. In the summer of 2008, one female leader explained to me (with a tone of superiority in her voice) that they had to switch from speaking Ukrainian to Russian on numerous occasions because Russians had lost their ancestral culture and, therefore, must be taught in a language they could understand. In response to the present-day crisis, Kurovskyi (2014) also refers to the distant historical past while trying to legitimize his view of Ukraine as an independent state:

From ancient times our tribe developed several nations in Europe, it was characteristic for Slavs to live according to their customs and laws, for as much as we know. […] Ukraine is an independent Slavic country and we believe that both the Ukrainian armed forces and the forces of the "self-defense groups" [referring to Russian military troops that Moscow initially claimed to be local self-defense units] accept this undeniable truth.

Kurovskyi and his ex-wife, Lada, are the main ideologists and the most widely published authors within Ancestral Fire.[10] Although they express some racist sentiments, such as opposition to marriage between people of different races, Ancestral Fire publications focus almost exclusively on spirituality and its immediate application to one's life. Some of these works concentrate on concepts such as time, eternity, good, evil and holiness; others resemble popular psychology publications, providing advice on how to behave in difficult life situations or on how to gain spiritual and physical strength. Even though this kind of guidance may be drawn from a variety of sources, Ancestral Fire leaders frame and present it as ancestral knowledge about the universe.[11] Unlike those of RUNVira, Ancestral Fire's spiritual rituals exclude references to nationalist politics.

Personal Narratives and Pagan Consciousness Continuum

Kurovskyi has not only been sharply criticized by other Ukrainian Pagans for his cooperation with Russian Pagans, but this cooperation has even led to a major split within Ancestral Fire itself.[12] The present-day political crisis has markedly reinforced this hostility. Bohumyr, introduced above, calls Kurovskyi a *prodazhnyi tarakan* (mercenary cockroach) because, in his opinion, Kurovskyi is sponsored by Russia's Federal Security Service (the current successors to the KGB). Olga (interview, 3 July 2015), a senior female who, although she does not formally belong to any Pagan group, leans toward Sylenko's RUNVira, also states that Kurovskyi's activities have been sponsored by money from Russia and that his main focus is business, not spirituality. In addition, Olga believes that Kurovskyi's former wife, Lada, is half-Jewish, and therefore could not be fully devoted to Ukrainian causes.

Ohnedar, also introduced above, when asked if he believed Russia had acted correctly in its annexation of Crimea, was rather surprised by my question (our interview was conducted predominantly in Russian because

this was the language that Ohnedar appeared to feel more comfortable speaking):

> Of, course. What did you want!? Would you rather prefer Turkey to go to Crimea? [If it was not for Putin], Turkey would have been in Crimea. […]. When the Crimean Tatars gathered to wave their flags there [in Crimea, opposing Russia's annexation of the peninsula], there were not only Ukrainian flags there. There were red-colored flags with crescents on them. [If it was not for Russia], […] Turkey would have come. Well, it would have, in fact, been done by America [through Turkey].

Ohnedar concluded by emphasizing that if Russia had, in fact, taken Crimea away from anyone, it was from the USA. Ohnedar did not personally go to Crimea to witness the events he described, but, rather, referred to information he accessed via mass media, including Russian state-controlled TV channels and the Internet. In line with the main messages of the Russian channels as well as Kurovskyi's convictions, Ohnedar is convinced that America organized and sponsored the Maidan against Yanukovych. In his opinion, Yanukovych was not an ideal president because he was not a *vedaushchii* (a Pagan possessing and carrying ancestral knowledge and traditions). However, despite this, Ohnedar felt that Yanukovych was generally a positive figure because he was a *khazain* (master) and a Slav. He believes that most of the people who came to power after Yanukovych are Jews who, in turn, are the enemies of the Slavs and are closely allied with the Americans.

These ideas are in line with Ohnedar's preexisting understanding of spirituality, nation and state. Although there is no academic proof that old Slavs historically perceived themselves as a unified cultural and political entity (Ivakhiv 2005b: 209–11), Ohnedar provides his own interpretation of history. He distinguishes between the concepts of *narod* (a people) and the state/nation. According to him, "*narod* has one root, shared culture, everybody wears an embroidered shirt, everybody worships the sun because it is a god to them." Ohnedar believes that the old Slavs were such a people, but were eventually "partitioned by borders and granted a citizenship [and] a passport." In his opinion, a nation consisting of citizens of various ethnic backgrounds is very difficult to unite:

> It is very difficult to unite a nation. They [citizens] go out on the street and begin to *maidanit* [to maidan: a derogatory Russian verb coming from

the noun "*Maidan*" that is widely used by Russian state-sponsored media], while at home they pray to different gods. How is this possible? A person should have a faith, and when one has a faith, one has a path. If there is no faith, a discord comes. […] We should unite *narodami* [as peoples] and live *narodami* [as peoples]. Because what does *narod* [a people] mean? The united *rod* [clan].

While developing his arguments, not only did Ohnedar recurrently refer to the teachings of *bat'ko* (father) Volodymyr, but also recited many *pokony* (an Ancestral Fire word that roughly means ancestral commandments, sing. *pokon*) developed and written by Kurovskyi. This kind of reasoning helps Ohnedar to establish boundaries between "brothers"—Russian "saviors"—and "enemies"—perceived potential "foreign invaders" in response to the present-day crisis.

The RUNVira followers I communicated with do not appear to see the United States as Ukraine's enemy. This can at least partly be explained by the group's history and experiences. The USA and Canada provided fertile ground for the development of alternative Pagan ideas at a time when they could not develop in Ukraine. Bohumyr recollects how happy he was to receive books from the diaspora, including those of Volodymyr Shaian and Lev Sylenko, shortly prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, a time when he was seeking a true Ukrainian identity. Because of the positive experience associated with their leaders, RUNVira interpretations of the current turbulent events in Ukraine do not portray North America in an unfavorable light. However, Bohumyr idealizes neither the West nor the USA, as he is frustrated by their passive reaction to Russia's actions. Rather, he considers potential allegiance with Western powers as the only way for Ukraine to resist its most evil enemy. In contrast, Lelia (interview, 6 July 2015), a senior female follower of RUNVira, sounded more positive. In response to my request to comment on the notion that the USA had fabricated the Ukraine–Russian crisis, she replied:

Let them [whoever said this] not lie that the Americans [had done this]! Our only support is from America […]. Let them not try to trick you. The Americans have sent ten naval ships, ten aircraft carriers. Troops are already in the Baltics and Poland. Yes, there are already airforce weapons, some kind of planes or something. So it is only America. We thank America and Canada especially.

Like Bohumyr, Lelia is convinced that Ukraine's main enemy is Russia and that it is the regular Russian army that is fighting in the Donbas. In her narrative, Lelia refers to information about NATO, including support from the USA, strengthening the borders of its East European members for protection from a potential Russian invasion. News about Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's openly anti-Putin statements and promises to provide military or humanitarian aid to Ukraine was also widespread.[13] In addition, Lelia provided me with a RUNVira periodical that included a positive report (entitled "Thank you, our Ukrainians") about several American and Canadian citizens who are long-time RUNVira followers and who continue to provide financial aid to the Ukrainian military (Shcherbyna 2014: 19).

Vohneslav (interview, 4 August 2015), a middle-aged male adherent of Ancestral Fire, addressed the ongoing unrest in Ukraine by sharing his recent experiences with representatives of RUNVira who defiantly refused to read the Ancestral Fire newspaper because it was in Russian. This kind of position does not fit Vohneslav's worldview. For him, everything circulates within *Rod* and nothing exists beyond *Rod* (as stated by Kurovskyi in one of his *pokony*), so both languages, Ukrainian and Russian, are part of his cosmology. Although he follows his own path, he "look[s] at everybody else calmly and easily." In Vohneslav's opinion, "any path is a path to Rod the Almighty." He has no problems communicating with anyone, including Russian Pagans. Vohneslav is convinced that if one understands that everything exists within Rod, then one accepts that good and evil are two normal *stany* (conditions) of existence:

> What is better, day or night? What is better, man or woman? Nothing is better or worse and things work on the basis of either opposition or connection. If opposites connect, something new results. When a man and a woman unite, something greater results out of their love—a child. In a similar way, war and peace are inalienable things.

Although Vohneslav does not support the war, he understands that it is an inherent developmental process that will lead to the creation of something better. According to him, both Victor Yanukovych and Vladimir Putin play important roles in this process. Vohneslav portrays the two as negative heroes whose actions will eventually lead to positive changes for the Slavic world. While Yanukovych oppressed, humiliated and robbed the people of his country, they rose up in protest and he inadvertently united

Ukraine. Similarly, Putin is now uniting the Slavic people against perceived foreign invaders. This philosophy reassures Vohneslav that "everything will be alright."

The personal narratives addressed above were developed in line with what I propose to call the *Pagan consciousness continuum* that provides room for personal interpretation within the boundaries of a leader's teaching or a group's doctrines. Imparted with individual reasoning and arguments, the narratives exemplify the complexity of religion as lived. For example, even though both Ohnedar and Vohneslav are very active adherents of Ancestral Fire, they have dissimilar views of Ukraine's turbulent realities. Ohnedar appears to set sharp boundaries between who are, and who are not, his people while Vohneslav takes a more positive, inclusive approach. Despite these differences, Ohnedar and Vohneslav's interpretative strategies lie within the teachings of Ancestral Fire and its leaders. (This, in turn, reemphasizes the importance of groups and leaders in Ukrainian Paganism.) They both argue for the unity of Slavs who all share the same ancestral spiritual wisdom. The Pagan consciousness continuum allows them to arrive at this conclusion in a variety of ways. Bohuslav and Lelia, who are both active adherents of RUNVira, display similar patterns in their narratives. Although imparted by different reasoning and sources of influence, they convey the same view of Russia as the main enemy of Ukraine.

Beliefs and Politics

At first sight, Ukrainian Pagans' views of Russians as either brothers or enemies may be perceived as purely political convictions that have developed within the Pagan consciousness continuum. However, in the case of RUNVira and Ancestral Fire, the situation is more complex. Pagans' political views constitute part of the larger cosmologies developed by the leaders of their groups. Folklore scholarship dealing with belief in relationship to experience helps us to understand the roots of this phenomenon.

Folklorist David Hufford (1982) revealed the crucial role of individual experience in the formation of one's beliefs, having shown that some supernatural beliefs develop rationally from physical experiences. Sociologist James McClenon (1995) further proved Hufford's "experiential source hypothesis" by expanding the geographical and phenomenological scope of Hufford's research. Among scholars of Western forms of Paganism, folklorist and anthropologist Sabina Magliocco (2004:

95–181), following Hufford's lead, showed how American Pagans' beliefs in magic rationally develop from their (meditative) experiences. Although our topic is not directly related to the paranormal, Ukrainian Pagans display firm preexisting beliefs about Russians as either their brothers or enemies, and these beliefs are largely shaped by their leaders' experiences with the Russian world.

As described above, the founder of RUNVira, Lev Sylenko, represents a generation of Ukrainians who endured personal trauma connected with persecution and displacement as a result of what he views as Russia's universalist values. The importance of the experiential roots of RUNVira beliefs is also manifested in the group's developmental dynamics. RUNVira is in great decline in the diaspora because it fails to attract young people. Its most active period of growth occurred between the 1960s and 1990s, drawing the attention of the post–Second World War immigrants who shared experiences similar to those of Shaian and Sylenko. RUNVira ideas do not seem to appeal to the generations of Ukrainians who were born and raised in North America and can no longer relate to the dramatic experiences of their grandparents and great-grandparents. The situation in Ukraine is somewhat similar. One of the most striking aspects of RUNVira is the average age of its membership, with most of its members in their 50s and 60s. Young people in Ukraine are also not interested in RUNVira (especially when compared with Ancestral Fire) as their experiences are different from those of the older generations whose concerns RUNVira responds to. We could even go so far as to say that without a clear image of Ukraine's historical enemies, such as Russia, RUNVira would not have emerged. The entire religion developed on the basis of Sylenko's rationalization of Ukraine's historical problems with its enemies.

This differs markedly from the pan-Slavic nature of Ancestral Fire. As products of the late Soviet period, the group's leaders were comfortable with the idea of Russia and Ukraine as brother nations. This congenial viewpoint is further reinforced by positive experiences with Russian–Pagan groups that had taken place prior to the Ukraine–Russia conflict. Rodoslava stated in this regard:

> We do not have any obstacles between us. We celebrate *Velykden* [Great Day, marking the rebirth of nature that coincides with Christian Easter] in an identical way as in Russia, our brothers and sisters in Belarus celebrate Easter identically, they celebrate *Velykden* identically, they make *pysanky* [decorated ritual eggs] and bake *babky* [ritual bread] in Poland, Slovakia, in the Czech

Republic, and to say that these are some sort of enemies there, I don't see the substance in this. [...] They are our like-minded colleagues, in general our friends, with whom we have interacted for many years; well, they are simply our dear and close friends with whom we have communicated for a very long time.

As is seen in both Ohnedar's and Vohnedar's narratives, the idea of Slavic brotherhood is clearly incorporated into the group's larger experience-informed cosmology that treats all Slavs as one *narod* (people) that shares ancestral spiritual wisdom. In line with Hufford's theory, although in different ways within the Pagan consciousness continuum, Rodoslava's views of Russians as brothers developed rationally from her experiences, while Ohnedar's and Vohneslav's views of Russians in light of the current crisis developed rationally from their groups' larger experience-informed belief systems.

Between Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism

Despite some recent attempts by political scientists to theoretically make peace between the two (Tan 2002; Pavel 2009; Voronkova 2010; Montani 2012), cosmopolitanism and nationalism are generally seen as being at war with each other (Pavel 2009: 491) since they appear to engage with two radically opposite sets of values. Even though multiple types of cosmopolitanism have been identified by social and political scientists (e.g., Vertovec and Cohen 2002; Delanty 2006: 28–36), all are associated with the crossing of boundaries, whether physical or virtual, and prioritizing postnational forms of belonging. Like cosmopolitanism, nationalism is a multifaceted phenomenon, and the various forms of Slavic Paganism alone exemplify its complexity (Aitamurto 2006). In contrast to cosmopolitanism though, nationalism is widely associated with the creation and reinforcement of boundaries.

The two forms of Ukrainian Paganism addressed in this chapter are distinct examples of the nationalist outlook. Both RUNVira and Ancestral Fire, whether directly or indirectly, reject universalist forces connected with cosmopolitanism seeing them as detrimental to their indigenous identities, either Ukrainian or pan-Slavic. These Pagans strive to establish spiritual and cultural boundaries, prioritizing "local" identities over a global sense of belonging associated with cosmopolitanism. The local identities are closely linked to particular geographical territories, namely

Ukraine in the case of the RUNVira followers and the larger Slavic world in that of Ancestral Fire. The imagined boundaries constitute parts of the groups' experience-rooted belief systems.

When looking at both RUNVira and Ancestral Fire not only as they are preached but also as they are lived, especially the mechanisms that shaped their formation, the relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism appears less antagonistic. Ukrainian Pagans' territorially bounded identities and belief systems are informed by sources that are similar to those associated with global dynamics. For example, Sylenko's extensive travels and exposure to a variety of sources as well as the further spread of his ideas from the diaspora back to Ukraine are clear examples of what Arjun Appadurai (1990) would identify as the "global cultural flows" of "ethnoscapes" (migrating individuals and groups) and "mediascapes" (imagery disseminated via published sources and various forms of mass communication). Similarly, Ancestral Fire's belief system is informed not only by reconstructed old traditions but also by the discipline of psychology (including international influences) and cultural borrowings such as Reiki and "Cosmoenergy."

Among many others, folklorist Margaret Mills (2008: 23–24) argues that global processes often shape local cultural formations. In our case, it is with the help of global forces that people symbolically create isolated local places. Consequently, beliefs shaped by the global flows inform what was discussed earlier as the Pagan consciousness continuum, within which Pagan individuals can develop personal responses to the ongoing crisis between Ukraine and Russia. Ohnedar's personal narrative, influenced largely by Russian state-sponsored media, or Lelia's perception of the events as portrayed by Ukrainian media and her ongoing contacts with the North American Ukrainian diaspora are just two examples. In other words, global social mechanisms help contemporary Ukrainian Pagans to distinguish between "brothers" and "enemies" and to develop coping strategies in the turbulent local context.

Notes

1. Considering the politically sensitive nature of the issues discussed in this chapter, all names (except those of the major leaders, who are known public figures and openly express their views through publications and public speeches) have been changed. All translations from Ukrainian and Russian are the author's.

2. Sociologist and anthropologist Meredith McGuire (2008) calls attention to a similar understanding of religion.

3. For example, see Marples (n.d.) for a detailed chronicle of the Maidan from November 2013 to February 2014. The chronicle is part of the larger forum devoted to the study of the protests in Ukraine developed by Canadian and Ukrainian scholars.

4. A special initiative called "Stopfake.org: Struggle Against Fake Information About Events in Ukraine" was undertaken by students and alumni of Ukraine-based Mohyla School of Journalism and of the Digital Future of Journalism program in March 2014. The initiative's mandate is to refute distorted information about Ukraine, including that produced by Ukrainian and Russian state-controlled media. Numerous examples of this initiative can be seen at their website http://www.stopfake.org/en/news.

5. For more detailed overviews of the history of Ukrainian and other Eastern European Paganisms and their sources, see Shnirelman (2001, 2002: 197–211); Ivakhiv (2005a: 7–38, 2005b: 209–40); and Lesiv (2013: 26–62).

6. Trypillian culture is a Neolithic-Eneolithic culture uncovered by archaeology whose area included substantial parts of present-day Ukraine.

7. I was born, raised and received part of my post-secondary education in Ukraine. I belong to the same generation as Kurovskyi and other Ancestral Fire leaders. This idea is largely informed by my own observations and experiences of living in the Soviet Union and witnessing its collapse.

8. This idea is likely shaped by Boris Rybakov (1981: 20–25), a Soviet Russian historian and archaeologist known for his research on old Slavs and anti-Normanist interpretations of their history who hypothesized that Rod was the supreme god in the old Slavic pantheon.

9. I thank Kaarina Aitamurto for pointing this out to me.

10. Volodymyr and Lada were recently divorced, and this has reflected negatively on some of the activities of Ancestral Fire, especially their formerly popular workshops on successful family building (Rodoslava, 4 July 2015).

11. See, for example, Kurovska and Kurovskyi (2008) and Kurovskaia and Kurovskii (2007, 2008).

12. The conflict is discussed in a 2007 Pagan Internet forum "Україна—наша Батьківщина: Форум для патріотів України" [Ukraine is our Fatherland: Forum for the Patriots of Ukraine], http://www.batckivchina.uaforums.net/c-vt241.html. Accessed 15 July 2012. This webpage is now inactive.

13. The Television News Service (TSN) of the Ukrainian 1 + 1 channel is perhaps the most popular source of news for people of Lelia's generation. The TSN pays special attention to international politics regarding Ukraine. See, for example, its report about the G20 Summit in Australia in November 2014, when Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper blatantly told Vladimir Putin to "get out of Ukraine." (Retrieved 31 August 1015 from http://tsn.ua/svit/prem-yer-kanadi-osheleshiv-putina-v-lob-zabiraytesya-z-ukrayini-391881.html).

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Canaanite Reconstructionism Among Contemporary Israeli Pagans

Shai Feraro

Israeli Pagans represent a small and relatively new spiritual community that has taken root in the country in recent years. I have argued previously (Feraro 2014) that although Israeli Pagans may employ a community-building discourse, they constantly fear the perceived negative consequences of public exposure. They see the bond between Jewish religion and the state in Israel as a main factor in the intolerance and even persecution that they expect from the government and from religious fundamentalists. Within this somewhat fraught context, as we shall see below, many Israeli Pagans try to reconcile cosmopolitan processes with local and national concerns by adapting Wiccanate[1] Western Paganism to the local seasonal cycle and geography. However, a small denomination in their midst, Israeli Canaanite Reconstructionists, goes beyond simply "indigenizing" an imported universalist tradition by injecting it with local cultural content, and instead aims to "revive" (and, if needs be, invent) an "ancestral" form of Pagan spirituality. Set against the unique background of Israeli society and identity politics, this chapter focuses on the recent emergence of Canaanite Reconstructionism

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in Israel, explains why it is has not been a popular choice among Israeli Pagans in general and highlights Reconstructionists' discourse regarding their links to ancient Canaanite culture and to the land—indeed the very soil—of modern-day Israel.

Yonatan Ratosh and Canaanism: The 1940s–1950s

Before we begin our discussion of Canaanite Reconstructionists in contemporary Israel, it is relevant to discuss (albeit very briefly) Canaanism, a cultural and ideological movement that climaxed during the 1940s in British Mandate Palestine but declined soon after the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, and was itself engaged in similar questions of cosmopolitanism, nationalism and locality. Its founder, Yonatan Ratosh (1908–1981), "can be construed as the first post-Zionist thinker to emerge from Israeli intellectual life" (Diamond 1986: 5). The discovery of the ancient port city of Ugarit, situated in present-day northern Syria, in 1928, and especially the gradual deciphering and publication of its texts during the following decade, indicated for many scholars that both Canaanite and Biblical literature enjoyed a common literary background. One was Adolph Gourevitch Horon (1907–1972), a scholar of the ancient Orient, who was himself taken by the romantic primitivism of the famed Hebrew poet Shaul Tchernichovsky's (1875–1943),[2] who "rejected abstract Judaism and admired the ancient Israelites (distinguishing between Jews and Hebrews)" (Ohana 2012: 61). For Ratosh, who met Horon in Paris during 1938, the Ugaritic texts served as decisive proof of a cultural and religious association between the Canaanites and the Israelites, making up one big Hebrew nation (Shavit 1987: 85–86).

Ratosh's ideology centered around the idea that it was a specific plot of land—instead of collective memory, cultural heritage, ethnicity or biology—that created a nation. In this nativist Israeli nationhood, the sharing of "physical space and the language obliterated differences and formed a national melting pot" (Ohana 2012: 17). By opposing Jewish religion and Diasporic history itself, Ratosh's Canaanism transcended the early-twentieth-century Hebraists, who focused on securing a clear-cut separation between themselves as native Hebrews—born on Hebrew soil and speaking the Hebrew language—and diasporic Jews who speak a myriad foreign tongues (Ohana 2012: 18).

While contemporary Israeli Canaanite Reconstructionists continuously engage with Ratosh's poetry and thought, one should not confuse the activities of his group with the Reconstructionist subgroup of contemporary Israeli Paganism. Indeed, ancient Hebrew tribalism and its associated values and culture actually accounted for only 1 of the 24 points in the Canaanite manifesto that was finally produced during the 1950s, and this was drafted in a vague manner "as if to supply some intellectual or emotional ballast" to a "very modern" document which centered on "the individual, his or her civil rights, a secular egalitarianism" (Diamond 1986: 67). It would be wrong to conclude, however, that Ratosh's vision, secular as it was, could be identified with the liberal left. Quite the contrary, Canaanism's end goal was not limited to the Hebraization of Jewish native soil, but to the Hebraization of the entire Middle East (Ohana 2012: 90).

Ratosh's vision was incompatible with that of mainstream Zionism and the formation of the state of Israel in 1948, and by the mid-1950s Canaanism—which had been a small movement to begin with—disintegrated. Ratosh died in 1981, and by that time, maintains James Diamond (1986: 4), "those who were old enough remembered the 'Canaanites' as nothing more than an eccentric historical curiosity, and those who were younger had never heard of them at all." Diamond (1986: 6) added, however, that while Canaanism "never evolved into a political force, [it] still exists as an implicit challenge, an 'enzyme' of ferment within the Israeli body politic."

CANAANITE RECONSTRUCTIONISM AMONG CONTEMPORARY ISRAELI PAGANS

Paganism in Israel is a relatively new phenomenon. The findings presented in this chapter are part of my wider, ongoing study of the Israeli Pagan community,[3] which draws on four sets of sources. First, research was carried out in the web archives of existing and defunct Internet discussion forums. Second, 45 in-depth interviews with Israeli Pagans were conducted during 2011 and 2012. The interviews reflected a variety of Pagan voices of diverse age groups, genders, denominational backgrounds, seniority and levels of involvement within the Pagan community. Third, an Internet-based survey was conducted in order to provide demographic and socioeconomic information on Israeli Pagans, coupled with insight into ideology and social, religious and magical perceptions.

Lastly, participant-observation was carried out in Pagan rituals and social gatherings.

The interviews I conducted with veteran Israeli Pagans suggest that up until the late 1990s there was only a handful of Pagans living in Israel, isolated and unaware of each other's existence. The spread of Internet usage in Israeli society—which intensified during that period—changed this situation, as Pagan websites in the English language became accessible to Israeli seekers and Hebrew websites, mailing lists and discussion forums dedicated to Paganism began to emerge.[4] Presently, the Israeli Pagan community (hereafter referred to as IPC) consists of between 150 and 200 individuals who not only communicate with each other mostly online, but also gather for social meet-ups and rituals, as well as during the community's annual autumn Mabon festival.[5] Most Israeli Pagans are eclectic and rely heavily on imported traditions from North America and Britain. Only a few focus primarily on a revival or reconstruction of the local ancient Canaanite religion. This they do almost always as solitaries,[6] for when they attend—or even organize—IPC rituals they have to come to terms with its emphasis on generic Wiccanate Pagan cosmology and ritual praxis.

The most notable attempt at Canaanite revivalism in its contemporary Western Pagan sense is associated with Natib Qadish (Ugaritic for "sacred path"), developed by American Tess Dawson since the early 2000s, drawing eclectically on various sources.[7] Natib Qadish's yearly calendar is professed to be based primarily on the Ugaritic texts, while the Gezer Calendar, written in early Hebrew about 925 BC, is also taken into consideration. Many of its eight yearly festivals occur near the equinoxes, solstices, full moons and new moons.[8]

In Israel, however, the vast majority of Israeli Pagans follow some form of eclectic amalgamation of contemporary Western Paganism, such as Wicca, the Reclaiming tradition, Druidry, and even paths associated with other regions such as Asatru and Heathenism. Furthermore, while attempts to combine Paganism with Jewish identity and beliefs—such as Jewitchery—are relatively common among American-born Jewish Pagans, who live in a primarily Christian society and perhaps feel the need to preserve their unique minority heritage, such attempts are rather rare among Israeli Pagans, who live in a country where Judaism already occupies center stage. When I began my participant-observation with the Israeli Pagan community during mid-2011, Canaanite Reconstructionism did not seem to have a place in the community rituals and social gatherings I docu-

mented. Only one of the 45 Israeli Pagans I interviewed during the first couple of years presented himself as a Canaanite—a follower of Anat, the goddess of war and fertility. Between 2012 and 2013, I conducted an Internet-based survey, which was filled in by 113 Israeli Pagans (out of about 150 I knew of at the time). When asked to write down which Pagan traditions they adhered to, only four (3.5 %) chose "Canaanite" as their spiritual path. Six (5.3 %) more noted Canaanite Reconstructionism as one path among other traditions they felt a closeness to. Around this period, I carried out three more (four in total) interviews with Israelis who follow the Canaanite deities from a polytheistic, pan-deistic or archetypical viewpoint and make it the central part of their spiritual identity. The obvious question that arises is: why do so relatively few Israeli Pagans (fully) adopt the Canaanite path? I hope to suggest some answers in the remainder of this chapter.

My first interviewee was Raz, who told me that he grew up in a Hasidic family in Jerusalem's Ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of Mea Shearim (personal interview, 28 October 2013).[9] Following a process of disaffiliation with Orthodox Judaism, Raz fled his family as a teenager and was adopted by a secular Jewish family. There he discovered the Internet, and a simple web search which contained the words "God's family" led him to a website on the ancient Canaanites. He started reading translations of the Ugaritic texts and was happy to find the names of Astarte, Ba'al and other gods which he was familiar with from his Bible studies as an ex-Hasidic Jew. Later on, when Raz began his obligatory service in the Israeli Defense Forces, he experienced a vision of Anat, the Semitic goddess of war, hunting and fertility, who was worshipped by the ancient Canaanites. She has since functioned as his main deity.

Like Raz, Emily, an Israeli Canaanite Reconstructionist, works primarily with one deity, Asherah, and Emily too hails from a—albeit less strict—religious Jewish Orthodox background (personal interview, 5 November 2013).[10] After several years during which she defined herself as an atheist, and then as a pantheist, during 2010 and 2011, Emily began taking her first steps in Paganism. She attended a course on Pagan Witchcraft (which she learnt about from a Pagan friend in the role-playing community), led by three Israeli Pagan women who were influenced mainly by the Reclaiming[11] tradition, which originated in the United States. Sometime after the course ended, Emily toured the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. While paying tribute to the various Goddess figurines on display, Emily wandered into the museum's Canaanite exhibition. There she witnessed

a figurine of the Goddess Asherah, surrounded by ibexes, and experienced a deep feeling of connection to that deity. Emily's true name in Hebrew translates as ibex, and she felt moved by the understanding that she was named after an animal considered sacred to Asherah. It suddenly hit her that this deity was native to the land, and had been worshipped there by the people of Canaan. Up until that moment, Emily's concept of the divine had centered on the generic Wiccanate concept of the Great Goddess and the Horned God. Emily realized that instead of importing various Goddesses of Celtic, Hindu or African origin, she could work with home-grown deities. She had experienced trouble connecting with the European emphasis of Wiccanate Paganism, providing the example of winter's association with death in the Wiccan Wheel of the Year, as opposed to its local Israeli connotations of life, growth and renewal.

Hailing from a religious Jewish-Orthodox family, Emily's Jewish background ironically also played a part in her attraction to Canaanite Reconstructionism. Following her experience in the Israel Museum, she read Raphael Patai's *The Hebrew Goddess*, which served as an eye-opener:

> You realize the traces left by Asherah in the Bible, and you understand that … she is not my Goddess simply because she was worshiped *here*, [but] because my *foremothers* worshipped her here. It's in my blood. It's not something I can deny … and suddenly I look through the pages [of the Bible] that I have known, and see that the tribe of Asher, with its symbol of the tree … suddenly I say, "Yes, Asherah was here. I look at the worship of Ba'al, and at all of the places where [it is mentioned that] the cult of Asherah was cut down, and realize that the cult of Asherah was here. The beauty of Patai's book is in its transformation of Asherah from *their* goddess—the idolatrous Canaanites—into *my* Goddess, the Goddess of the *Hebrew* people. (Italics are used to indicate Emily's verbal emphasis during the interview.)

Emily continued, arguing that Canaanite Reconstructionism

> appeals for ex-observant Jews precisely because … it feels so familiar, so at home … I browse through [the writings of] Ugarit and they talk of animal sacrifice and I know that from Leviticus—I grew up on this. I speak the language. Addressing my gods in [ancient] Biblical Hebrew—it is so right, so natural, so appropriate. But it is not just that … there is also something … that I don't think I'll ever be able to sever—the business of … I won't say respecting the [Jewish] tradition, but it is kind of a feeling that something was passed onto you, [and] you will pass it onward.

It is precisely Emily's strong observant Jewish cultural tradition, into which she was enculturated from childhood, which ironically encourages her adaptation of the religious identity against which Judaism originally defined itself. Indeed, Emily says that as someone who grew up in observant Jewish surroundings, it took time for her to get over the fact that in her worship of Asherah she was performing exactly the idolatry preached against by the Biblical prophets. In my interview with him, Raz similarly stated:

> There might have been an element of spite [in adopting Canaanite Reconstructionism as an ex-Hasidic Jew], because this is not mere idolatry—it is the specific form idolatry that clashed so much with the Jewish religion in its formative years. Specifically, when Elijah scolded the Israelites: "How long halt ye between two opinions?", he is referring to the worship of Ba'al and Asherah *specifically*. Or the fact that during the period of the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites, the only town they could not overrun was Beit Anath [The House of Anat] … so there might have been an element of: "Yes, I'm going for the worst [idolatry] possible." I don't think I actually consciously thought about it during that period, but considering my rebellious nature there is a really good chance that there was something [in it].

I then asked Emily what place she hopes Canaanite Reconstructionism could eventually take in Israeli society. After considering the question, she replied:

> Considering this makes me very sad, because I wish for things that probably won't happen during my lifetime, if at all. But … just like that overseas Reform Jewish *Siddur* I saw,[12] which contained a prayer to Asherah, maybe? Simply recognizing her as the mother we have forgotten. It is obvious for me that it won't seep into Orthodox Judaism, because [it is considered] idolatry.

As she spoke these last words, Emily's eyes were glistening with pain. Raz took even greater care in emphasizing the contrast between Canaanite Reconstructionism and Israeli society. He said that the former would probably induce even greater resistance from average Israelis than Celtic-based generic Neo-paganism:

> Imagine what will happen if the Rabbinate will find out that people here are again worshiping Asherah, Ba'al, etc … They have a whole book detailing

wars and prohibitions … [against these specific deities] … Jehovah and his prophets never decreed: "Don't ever worship Oshun or Discordia," yes? But he did say: "Don't ever worship Tammuz and Asherah."

Not surprisingly, Emily does not view Jehovah—described in the Bible as a jealous God who ordered His followers to destroy the trees dedicated to Asherah—in a positive light, and does not include the Jewish God in her Canaanite pantheon. She quoted a verse from Deuteronomy (33:2) which states that: "Jehovah came from Sinai, and rose from Seir unto them," in order to suggest that he was a Midianite deity[13] that "immigrated" into the land of Canaan. She said: "He is not mine, he is not for me, he ruined my … his people destroyed my Goddess."

Following Emily's initial encounter with the Asherah figurine at the Israel Museum, she decided to learn more about her Goddess. Most of her rituals now engage Asherah, and some include El (the supreme god of the Canaanite pantheon) or Kothar-wa-Khasis (a Canaanite smith God, also associated with craftsmanship and magic). For those who take an interest in Canaanite Reconstructionism, however, resources are few and scarce. Mostly there are the Ugaritic texts, translated into English by Prof. Dennis Pardee (2002). Some of the materials have also been published in Hebrew by various authors. Several posts in Emily's blog refer readers to Hebrew and English volumes which present the Ugaritic texts or hypothesize on the place accorded to the feminine divine among the ancient Hebrews, as well as to relevant websites.[14] The partial Ugaritic texts that survived present an incomplete calendar of religious festivals, which may be augmented by information gleaned from Dawson's contemporary revivalist Natib Qadish, produced in the United States. During the second Israeli Mabon Festival, held in September 2012, Emily presented a workshop on "Canaanite Witchcraft" which utilized materials drawn mostly from Dawson's work on Canaanite witchcraft and sorcery practices. Emily's own reading of the Ugaritic texts led her to feel that this subject was anchored more securely in historical record than some other elements in Dawson's work. Indeed, as we shall see below, Dawson's books are not embraced wholeheartedly and without question by Israeli Canaanite Reconstructionists.

Emily chastises herself for getting carried away sometimes by trying to "stick to the texts, sticking to: 'This is how it was in Canaan.' Which is sometimes rather foolish, because at the end of the day, I don't really

know how things were in Canaan, and my goal is not to recreate the Canaanite religion."[15] She continued:

> Some [contemporary] Canaanite traditions aspire to maintain rituals which simulate the Canaanite temples. Most of Tess Dawson's practice is like that—loaded with strict attention to details, purification, doing things right and according to protocol. I see things differently. I hold a domestic [homely, kind of] worship. And it is O.K. if I improvise everything, and it's O.K. if I don't have a lapis stone in the south and a piece of earth in the north (or vice versa, don't remember Tess's ritual markings right now). What's important for me is calling these mighty forces, and inviting them to materialize in me and in my home. You can think about it like this: a goddess is a frequency of a certain essence. When I work with that essence, I establish it in my life. And for me, simple, daily work is more significant when connecting to the gods than one big ritual [held] once in a while.[16]

While Emily found Dawson's work "amazing" in many ways, she also found herself disagreeing with her on several issues: Dawson's path seemed to be "highly inflexible," and Emily took issue with Dawson's adaptation of the religious rites described in the writings of Ugarit into a Wiccanate eightfold Wheel of the Year structure. She felt this structure was largely invented by Dawson, and did not hold up when compared to additional sources, such as both the Gezer and Hebrew calendars. Using someone else's invented tradition in what Emily considers to be her ancestral spiritual path seemed wrong for her; she felt she might as well invent and develop her Canaanite tradition herself.

Emily's Canaanite practice is "a kind of mix and match because at the end of the day most of the people I'm working with (when I'm not performing solitary work) are used to the generic Wiccanate structure … but when I work on my own I don't bother with it. It had nothing to do [with my Canaanite working system]." While Ceridwen and Hecate connote in Emily's imagination vast European forests, Asherah reminds her of the seashore she grew up near and walked on in her suburb of Tel Aviv, the trees of the Tu BiShvat[17] holiday and the oak groves she hiked in. "It feels like the land on which I walked and walk on; it is not distant." She maintains that many in the local Pagan community respect and show interest in her Canaanite practice, but there also exist many negative perceptions of the Canaanite gods, based on (biased) Biblical descriptions such as child sacrifices to the god Moloch. In July 2012, Emily cofacilitated a ritual dedicated to Asherah, which took place on Mount Carmel, very near the

University of Haifa. It was attended by a handful of IPC members, and did not include many of the generic Wiccanate ritual proceedings.

As the moving force behind the organization of the second Israeli Mabon festival in September 2012, Emily was in a prime position to infuse it with Canaanite content and, as noted above, she organized a well-attended workshop on Canaanite Witchcraft. During early December 2014, in the wake of the Israel–Gaza conflict which took place during most of July and August that year, Emily cooperated with four other IPC members to facilitate a ritual to Ba'al and Anat in the hopes of bringing an end to hostilities in the region. A description by an informant who was among the ten participants in the ritual made it clear that Wiccanate elements (such as grounding, casting the circle) were dominant enough for him to feel that if he had not been told that the ritual was a Canaanite one, he would not have considered it different from any of the other community rituals he took part in. This was probably due to the fact that in this setting Emily was one among a total of five organizers, and the only one who practiced a primarily Canaanite spiritual path. The ritual did however include plenty of elements not usually found in generic Wiccanate Pagan rituals. After the deities were invoked, a small part of the Ugaritic myth of Ba'al and Anat was read, in which Ba'al asks his sister, goddess of war, to bring peace to the land. The participants then proceeded to anoint surrounding trees and stones in oil, and a libation of wine was poured for Anat out of a Shofar horn.[18]

When I interviewed Emily in November 2013, she lamented the fact that the yearly Mabon outdoor festivals held by Israeli Pagan community follow the Wiccanate template of the Celtic Wheel of the Year, with no representation of ancient Canaanite festivals, not all of which even correspond to the dates of the Celtic festivals. While my participant-observation research confirms that assessment, it is also worth noting a gradual change in the place and importance given to Canaanite deities in the five large community festivals held so far (four marking Mabon, and another one celebrating Beltane). The first Israeli Mabon festival, which took place in September 2011, did not include any workshops relevant to either Canaanite deities or practice, and the main rituals were dedicated to the generic Wiccanate Great Goddess and Horned God. By the second Mabon Festival, the program included a women-only "Sacred Dance to Ashtoreth" led by another Israeli Pagan who includes Canaanite aspects in her eclectic practice, in addition to Emily's Canaanite Witchcraft workshop. The main ritual at the festival, however, was still dedicated to

Wiccanate deities in a similar way to the previous festival. This situation began to change by the third Mabon festival, which, in addition to a workshop run by Emily on ritualistic weaving to Asherah, included a main ceremony dedicated to the Mesopotamian deities Dumuzi and Inanna. The fourth Mabon festival included a workshop on dealing with fear through contacting the Mesopotamian goddess Inanna, led by Dana, a respected member of the IPC who combines work with Mesopotamian deities with her Reclaiming-inspired eclectic practice, and who acted as the festival's chief coordinator for that year.

It would serve as no surprise to learn, then, that the main ritual of the fourth Israeli Mabon festival was dedicated to the Canaanite deities Ba'al and Asherah, and included invocation to those deities which were inspired by the Ugaritic texts. But while the main rituals held during the third and fourth Mabon festivals were directed at Mesopotamian and Canaanite deities, their structure still adhered to the Wiccanate ritual template. While the shorter one-day 2015 Beltane festival, held in the format of a large community festival for the first time, did not include any Canaanite-themed workshops, Canaanite deities took center stage in its main ritual. Around that time, Dana presented her reservations about the way in which Beltane rituals were usually celebrated by Israeli Pagans in a local Pagan e-magazine:[19]

> I've been struggling for a long time with what I should write underneath this headline, as part of the complicated relationship I maintain with the definitions of Pagan festivals. Most of us (me too!) use [festival] names [which] originate from the Celtic culture, and expectedly every such festival has a meaning and substance which are tightly linked with the climate and natural life cycle of northern countries, which are much colder than the land I live in. I read in [Beltane] festival descriptions that "the sun, gaining strength after the long winter, warms the earth, and the fields are being covered with big green vegetation." But in the field surrounding my home, the green vegetation has all but ripened, and many of the fields have already been reaped! The readying of the herds to leave to the green summer pastures too does not exactly fit with the sight of herds quickly feeding on the winter grass which will soon wither under the scorching sun. (My Beltane 2015: 9–13)

Unable to sever herself completely from the Wiccanate Wheel of the Year, she knows and loves in favor of a full adoption of Canaanite Reconstructionism, Dana "is left with the story of the Goddess and the

God, who arrive at the erotic fulfilment of their love in this festival. A holiday of flames of passion, love, a sacred time for couples to celebrate the formalization of their love bond into a mutual commitment" (My Beltane 2015: 9–13).

Considering this, it is perfectly understandable that Dana and the festival's five other co-organizers (two of whom combine Canaanite elements with their eclectic practice like herself) centered the festival's main ritual on the union between Ba'al and Ashtoreth. According to information I gathered from one of the organizers, one of them initially proposed focusing on Celtic deities but a consensus was quickly achieved regarding the need to invoke local, native deities. Prior to the ritual, participants were urged to learn about these deities online. While Wiccanate ritualistic components such as purification, circle casting, calling the Elements and a May Pole were used, much of the ritual included features not usually found in Israeli generic Wiccanate rituals. "Morning Star" and "Myrtle"[20] (both of whom combine local Canaanite elements with their broader spiritual path) personified Ba'al and Ashtoreth in this ritual; they were dressed and adorned by some of the other participants with various garments, jewels and headpieces, thus simulating the ancient Mesopotamian customs of dressing and decorating the statues or representatives of the gods.[21] While Morning Star's personal leanings toward initiatory Wicca made him urge the use of gender polarity in the deities' invocations, these were drafted (as he later told me) from surviving texts detailing the attributes of Ba'al and Ashtoreth. Furthermore, during the invocations, Morning Star and Myrtle assumed in turn the physical postures detailed in surviving Canaanite statues of these deities, instead of those used in Wiccan ritual practice.

This was followed by a choir which personified the Kosharoth—a group of northwest Semitic goddesses appearing in the Ugaritic texts as divine midwives—and recited a love song between Ba'al and Ashtoreth, adapted by Morning Star from a song attributed to Inanna and her sibling, the god Dumuzi, which he found in a Hebrew anthology of Mesopotamian poetry. The last part of the choir's recitation was further adapted by Morning Star out of Israeli songs commemorating the Feast of Weeks, an ancient Jewish festival of reaping. The idea behind this was to simultaneously affirm the local Israeli identity of the Pagan participants as well as to make a statement regarding the shared culture of the ancient Hebrews and Canaanites. Following the choir, two small bonfires were lit—each linked to one of the two deities—into which the participants threw previously prepared offerings (such as dates, myrrh or frankincense) supposedly associated

with these deities in ancient texts. Morning Star and Myrtle—personifying Ba'al and Ashtoreth—then lit a larger bonfire with the aid of the flames from the two smaller ones.

In May 2013, Emily founded the "Canaan is Here" (*Canaan Ze Kan*) blog, with the subtitle of "Experiencing the World through the Local Deities, the Canaanite Gods." Most materials on this website were posted by Emily under the pseudonym "Bat Asherah" (meaning "Daughter of Asherah") and Elad Aaron as "Ezruba'al"[22] (meaning "Helper of Baal"), with additional items posted by Raz under the name "Ben Anat" (meaning "Son of Anat") and by Morning Star as "Hanireshef" (meaning "Blessed by Reshef"). The blog's poetry section contains Tchernichovsky's "Vision of Asherah's Prophet" (*Hazon Nevi Ha'Asherah*) and "Soul Homes to Ashtoreth" (*Batei Nefesh Le'Ashtoret*), as well as a song by Aharon Amir (1923–2008), who was Ratosh's main disciple.[23] It has a "prayers section" which contains several invocations to Asherah, Anat and Ba'al; some are original, others are reworked from a Jewish prayer or translated from the Ugaritic texts.[24] The section detailing the blog's premise states that:

> Canaan is the experience of all that shapes us, of the local that surrounds us, through which we think, express [ourselves] and act. Canaan is the Gods who reside here from time immemorial. Canaan is the nature that maintains a relationship with these Gods in whose figure it is embodied, and through which they are being shaped within our spirit. Canaan is us, those who experience these same Gods, this same nature, and even ourselves, through the same view which many believe to have passed from the world.
>
> What is Canaan? Canaan is the past of this place, the ancient peoples who lived here and maintained a rich and diverse culture. Canaan is now; it is we who act here. Canaan is the future, it is the nature we must preserve and the traditions which would keep on going, in a perilous journey, for many years after our own lives [are spent]. And all this revolves in a circle which has no beginning and no end, moving simultaneously toward an unknown future.
>
> Where is Canaan? Canaan is here, and nowhere else. In all corners of the world we find different and diverse Gods, Gods shaped and who shape the locality. Thousands of years of history made this local affinity between man and place.[25]

The post, written by Elad Aaron, utilized the emphasis on the land, on locality, so stressed by Ratosh's Canaanites of the 1940s and 1950s, but his attitude toward Ratosh and his thought—as presented in his own blog—is actually ambivalent. Aaron's post was followed by one from Emily as Bat

Asherah. For Emily, centering her spiritual tradition on the Canaanite deities (mainly Asherah, but also on others such as El and Kothar-wa-Khasis), feels:

> like waking up to an ancient tradition. If the Israelites worshipped Asherah, and I'm their distant offspring (especially because in the Diaspora Jewishness was determined from mother to daughter so the matrilineal line was kept), there is something here which connects in a very primal way—if I connected to other goddesses because of their symbolism, I connect to Asherah because for the first time in my life I feel that this is *my* goddess, and positively feel the word "tradition" (and this is a word I loathed for most of my life).
>
> I don't know where the peoples of Canaan are today. I do know that at some point, the Israelites worshiped both El and Asherah. I also know that those who wrote the Old Testament did a hell of a job in falsifying and removing all reference to Asherah, and that Jewish Halacha had done everything in its power to remove women from worship. So I'm probably not a Jew anymore, but my roots remember something else, a different [kind of] worship.[26]

Raz too remembers feeling immediately at ease with the concept of deities native to the land; their existence echoed in locations such as the Canaanite wall and the temple of Yam in the ruins of the city of Ashkelon. In our interview, he said:

> They [the Canaanite gods] are *here*. Yam is the god of the sea. Not of any sea but of the sea at the shores of *this land*. And Nikhal, for example, is a goddess of orchards and gardens—not of those in America or Europe, but of the orchards and gardens here. And this gave me a stronger connection with them … These are Canaanite deities, and I'm in Canaan, meaning I'm here.

For Israeli Canaanite Reconstructionists like Raz and Emily, their belief in the Canaanite deities stems mostly from inhabiting a particular locality; they dwell in Israel, the historic land of Canaan, and also from their genealogy, hailing from a Jewish background, which they consider to be ethnic as well as religious. They therefore differ from adherents of North American Canaanite Reconstructionism of the Natib Qadish style, who feel drawn to the Canaanite deities though they share neither the relevant locality, nor, often, a relevant genealogy. I asked Emily what if, as a member of an Ashkenazi Jewish family hailing from Poland and Russia,

she found out that her ancestors were in fact Christians who converted to Judaism, say, 600 years ago? Would finding out that her bloodline did not actually extend to ancient Canaan have changed her strong feeling of connection to the local Canaanite deities? "Yes and no," she answered:

> I'm still Israeli. If I was living in England right now, I'd honor the local deities, and if I relocate to a different country in the future, I don't know whether I'll manage to work with Canaanite deities in the same way. Probably not. I've actually been thinking about that. So it does have to do with this locality, this country, but it also has something to do with bloodline, with being of Jewish descent.

Locality, then, building one's life in a specific geographical area, is considered far more critical in shaping a person's spiritual praxis in the eyes of this Israeli Canaanite Reconstructionist than it is for North American Canaanite Reconstructionists.

Emily draws inspiration from Ratosh's and his followers' writings: "I read Ratosh and say to myself, 'Yes. Just like that. Exactly!' Also with songs by Tchernichovsky, although he worked in an earlier period than them." The inspiration that the proponents of Canaanism in the 1940s and 1950s drew from the Canaanites and their emphasis on locality, connecting Jews living in Palestine to the Hebrews and Canaanites of old, instead of to the Diasphora, resonates with Emily. However, she also finds

> it difficult to relate to them from the national [political] angle, because I am quite the left-wing gentle soul and they are not … You know, I once found something really beautiful in Ratosh, when speaking of the connection to the land, to *here*, but I did not pass it forward [to others] because one sentence afterwards he totally went for the so horribly fascist angle … but on the other hand, if looking at their "we are Hebrews" argument, I greatly sympathize with it, *greatly*, because … I think that today so many people can connect to this … to the deities of this place, to its sanctity, a way of life. But again, I don't see it happening soon.

Emily also felt that it was impossible and "just not right" to erase all the tribulations Jewish people experienced in the Diaspora and start a new Hebrew nation (together with Arabs living in the region) by claiming "there is no Judaism; you are all Hebrews." Raz, on the other hand, upon learning about the Canaanite movement in 1940s Israel, explored their writings and developed a better sense of his identity both as a Canaanite

Reconstructionist—a follower of Anat, Nikhal and Tammuz—and of his "secular" Canaanism, influenced by Ratosh's distinction between the stereotypical diasporic Jew and the ancient Hebrews who inhabited the land of Canaan.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has examined the recent emergence Canaanite Reconstructionism in the Israeli Pagan community. As modern-day Israel is situated on much of the land which was once home to various polytheistic Canaanite tribes and city states, we might have assumed that Canaanite Reconstructionism would form a major denomination among those forming the small and fragile Israeli Pagan community. Such an assumption, however, is starkly misplaced, and very few Israeli Pagans actually make Canaanite Reconstructionism their primary concern (or even consciously try to adapt Canaanite elements into their eclectic spiritual path). The Israeli Pagan community is still relatively young in comparison with Pagan communities in Britain and North America. Save for one original Hebrew book, published in 2006 by a Reclaiming-oriented Israeli Pagan, the only books available for the budding Israeli Pagan during the late 1990s and the 2000s were written in English, and focus mainly on the Celtic deities of the British Isles from a Wiccanate perspective, as well as on other European pantheons. This serves as a good example of how Pagans' global proclivity for reading books related to their spiritual path, already noted by other researchers,[27] can affect the practices of Pagan communities locally. Furthermore, the geographically close Greek and Egyptian pantheons have a far richer surviving documentation, as well as local manifestations such as the Temple of Pan in the Banias in Northern Israel and the Shrine of Hathor in the southern Timna Valley.

As the local Israeli community matures and gains confidence, it seems that the tendency to focus on "home-grown" local deities is growing. It also seems that an Israeli Pagan's prior background as an observant Orthodox Jew might have relevance to that person's proclivity to feel "at home" addressing Anat, Ba'al or Asherah. For secular Jews in Israel (the most common former religious identification among Israeli Pagans), who are continuously exposed to Bible lessons almost from the start of their journey through the country's official education system, the Old Testament's archaic language and the magnitude of the secular–religious divide in Israeli identity politics causes most to feel alienated from and

antagonized by this text in many ways throughout their adult lives. This may explain why Canaanite deities mentioned in the Bible and featured in the Ugaritic texts hold no appeal to Israeli Pagans hailing from secular Jewish background, and who may even be deterred from showing interest in Canaanite Reconstructionism. At the same time, an Israeli Pagan hailing from an observant Orthodox background might find in the Ugaritic texts a familiar ring.

While some modern Western European nations, such as Britain, Ireland or Iceland have embraced their Celtic or Nordic past (Gierek 2011; Strmiska and Sigurvinsson 2005: 163–164, 168, 170) and utilized figures such as the Druids as focal points for the kindling of patriotic sentiments (Hutton 2009), the situation in modern Israeli society is completely reversed. Israeli Jews—whether secular or religious—are not brought up to feel any sort of kinship with the tribes and nations which inhabited the historical land of Canaan. On the contrary, the extinction of the Canaanites by the Israelites is celebrated in Bible lessons administered in the country's formal education system as a triumph of Jewish monotheism over idolatry, witchcraft and paganism (Sand 2012). As a further complication, many secular Jews in Israel would also understand the labels "pagan" and "idolatry" as pejorative terms in regard to observant Orthodox Jews who pray at the Wailing Wall or visit the tombs of Jewish sages. Furthermore, while a cultural and ideological movement dubbed "Canaanism" by its detractors did climax during the 1940s in British Mandate Palestine, it was considered incompatible with mainstream Zionism and declined after the founding of the state of Israel.

Following a recent visit to Israel, Ronald Hutton, the celebrated historian of modern Pagan Witchcraft, noted that "Israeli Pagans are clearly at present in a double bind, whereby if they follow non-Israeli traditions such as Wicca and Druidry, they are accused of importing alien beliefs, while if they revive aspects of the ancient native religion, they are accused of bringing back the ancient evil against which true religion originally defined itself" (Hutton 2013). That said, my participant-observation, particularly at annual IPC festivals, shows that in recent years Canaanite deities are beginning to take center stage at main rituals. Furthermore, an effort is clearly being made to infuse the generic Wiccanate ritual structure with both references to the local seasonal change and elements derived from the Ugaritic texts, thus indigenizing a universalist, Wiccanate tradition and injecting it with local cultural content in a "glocal" manner. I suggest that in the years to come we might see this process intensify as Israel's

Pagan community grows in numbers—allowing the formation of specifically Canaanite "covens" and ritual groups—and confidence.[28]

NOTES

1. By Wiccanate Paganism I mean the much wider Pagan community who, while not Wiccan initiates, largely follow the cosmology, theology and ritual praxis developed by Wiccans. Wiccanate Paganism may be contrasted with various forms of Pagan Reconstructionism, such as Kemetism (contemporary Egyptian Paganism), Hellenic Reconstructionism and Asatru.

2. Influenced by Nietzsche's early usage of the Greek myths and Dionysian paeans, Tchernichovsky aimed at finding in Judaism parallels for the Greek heroes. This Nietzschean influence is most clearly represented in his 1899 poem, "Facing Apollo's Statue" (Ohana 2012: 41). Tchernichovsky also translated the Epic of Gilgamesh into Hebrew.

3. The larger research project is intended to result in the first book-length study of contemporary Paganism in Israel.

4. A lengthier description of the IPC's development can be found in Feraro (2014).

5. Part of the Wiccan Wheel of the Year, Mabon, the Autumn Equinox, is celebrated in late September. Hutton (2008) provides an analysis of the shaping of modern Pagan seasonal festivals.

6. The majority of modern Pagans globally are not active in organized groups but work as solitaries, who may join with other Pagans only occasionally, particularly at Pagan summer festivals (Clifton 2006: 11, 12, 164).

7. Dawson maintains a website (http://canaanitepath.com) and a personal blog (http://tessdawson.blogspot.co.il). In recent years, she has published two books on Natib Qadish, and edited an anthology on wider forms of Canaanite Reconstructionism (Dawson 2009, 2011, 2013).

8. See http://tessdawson.blogspot.co.il/2012/10/shanatu-qadishti-natib-qadish-sacred.html, accessed 28 June 2015.

9. All quotations from Raz in this chapter have been transcribed and extracted from my interview with him on 28 October 2013.

10. All quotations from Emily in this chapter have been transcribed and extracted from my interview with her on 5 November 2013.

11. The Reclaiming tradition was developed by the feminist Witch, Starhawk. It is deeply influenced by radical feminism and carries distinct elements of political and social activism. For a detailed study on Reclaiming Witches, see Salomonsen (2002).
12. A *siddur* is a canonized Jewish prayer book containing a set order of daily prayers.
13. The Midianites were a people mentioned in the Bible, generally thought to have lived in the northwest Arabian Peninsula, on the eastern shore of the Gulf of Aqaba on the Red Sea.
14. See https://canaanishere.wordpress.com/more_info, accessed 28 June 2015.
15. See https://canaanishere.wordpress.com/2013/11/23/%D7%9 C%D7%97%D7%96%D7%95%D7%A8-%D7%9C%D7%94%D7%A A%D7%A8%D7%92%D7%A9, accessed 28 June 2015.
16. See https://canaanishere.wordpress.com/2013/07/13/%D7%9 1%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%9B%D7%99%D7%9D-%D7%90%D7%AA%D7%9D-%D7%91%D7%91%D7%99%D7%A A%D7%99 , accessed 29 June 2015.
17. Tu BiShvat is a Jewish holiday occurring on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat. It is also referred to as the "New Year of the Trees." In contemporary Israel, the day is celebrated as an ecological awareness day, and trees are planted in celebration.
18. A *shofar* is a musical instrument of ancient origin, made of a horn (traditionally a ram's) and used during certain Jewish religious rites.
19. This magazine is free and has no print version. It started as the house newsletter of a local Pagan shop and then grew.
20. "Morning Star" has long been the Internet nickname of that individual, and "Myrtle" is the English translation of the other's Hebrew name.
21. For information on ancient Mesopotamian customs of dressing and decorating the statues or representatives of the gods, see Finkel and Geller (1997).
22. This is the original Phoenician form of the Latinized Hasdrubal, and was the name of a King and of several Carthaginian generals from the period of the Punic Wars.
23. See https://canaanishere.wordpress.com/new_songs, accessed 28 June 2015.

24. See https://canaanishere.wordpress.com/prayers, accessed 28 June 2015.
25. Translated from https://canaanishere.wordpress.com/about, accessed 28 June 2015.
26. Translated from https://canaanishere.wordpress.com/2013/05/12/%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%95%D7%9D, accessed 28 June 2015.
27. As Kathryn Rountree noted more than ten years ago, "It is a paradox that while they frequently claim that they have no 'sacred book' (like the Bible) which sets out their doctrine and provides a guide for living, … witches probably read more on the subject of their spirituality than the members of any other religious group" (Rountree 2004: 41).
28. I have previously noted the importance attributed by IPC members to holding their own annual festivals without "importing" workshops by notable overseas Pagan teachers as a symbol of the community's maturing and independence (Feraro 2014: 67).

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Pagan Identity Politics, Witchcraft, and the Law: Encounters with Postcolonial Nationalism in Democratic South Africa

Dale Wallace

INTRODUCTION

On the winter solstice of June 1996, a small group of individuals who had engaged in private Pagan activities during apartheid gathered to endorse their draft constitution for the Pagan Federation of South Africa (PFSA) and to vote in its first president, Donna Vos. Ranging in age from their 30s to 60s, the males and females who negotiated the public emergence of Paganism[1] identified primarily with the religions of Wicca and Witchcraft as developed by Gerald Gardner in Britain in the 1950s. In full anticipation of the challenges they could face in a religiously conservative country, the PFSA set two goals. One was the correction of misinformation about Paganism through the media that primarily focused on the stereotypical assumption that it was a branch of Satanism. The second goal was to facilitate the national networking of practitioners of a plurality of expressions of Wicca, Witchcraft, and magic practices that have remained the heart of South African Paganism.

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The increased availability of Pagan literature following the lifting of apartheid censorship policies and the rise of the global Internet from the late 1990s facilitated a rapid growth in the local Pagan community. In a short period of time, new groups emerged to represent diverse Pagan interests, alternative Pagan traditions were explored, teaching modules were developed, and valuable contacts were made with government institutions. The Paganism publicly presented was of traditions that celebrated the immanence of the divine in the natural world, recognized the masculine and feminine aspects of divine reality, and drew on western[2] systems of magic in their practices. The new Pagans, who were predominantly politically liberal individuals, fully celebrated a new non-racial nation founded on universal principles of equality. Accordingly, the fact that they were white proponents of a group of Eurocentric religions was not envisaged as becoming a potential obstacle in the public articulation of their religious identity.

Reassured by constitutional guarantees of religious freedom in a newly democratic South Africa, the Pagans of 1996 embraced their future relatively unaware of the extent to which the history of meanings associated with the terms "pagan" and "witchcraft" would shape their identity politics in ways uniquely different from their global counterparts. The semantic congruence between the terms "Africa" and "paganism" has its history in the global projects of imperialism and colonial expansion when the religious and cultural practices of African peoples were constructed as being "pagan" through their association with practices such as animism, divination, sacrifice, and ancestral veneration. These practices have acquired academic attention in the context of a postcolonial turn toward the recognition of indigenous traditions and, not least, within Pagan Studies. In developing his argument that Paganism is a world religion, Michael York (2003: 38) extends this umbrella term to include "the paganism of indigenous tribal religions." Such assumptions can be criticized for denying Africans the opportunity to choose their own terms of identity and to reject the neocolonial reimposition of terms without consultation. Attention to the politics of language highlighted the colonial legacies of racism and prejudice in words and labels ascribed to "others," and their decolonization is integral to postcolonial nation-building processes. Contrary to widespread conjecture, in the postcolonial context, the term "pagan" was not revitalized and/or appropriated by South African blacks who did, however, engage in formal processes to decolonize witch-

craft and magic. Pagan involvement in the intercultural conflict that these processes engendered cannot be understood outside of factors in South Africa's colonial, apartheid past and post-1994 changes in South Africa's nationalist vision.

Embracing Postcolonial Nationalism

South Africa's inclusion as a postcolonial state in Africa was delayed by the rule of the National Party (1948–1994), under whose apartheid policies the majority black population had been disenfranchised and whites had been privileged in all aspects of social and political life. Until the demise of apartheid, the country had been, as Zegeye (2001: 64) observed, "a state *sans* nation," and the radical challenge became one of uniting diverse racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities into a single nation with a common purpose and vision for the future. The opportunity for postcolonial states to achieve this on their own terms underpins what Rao (2012: 167) calls "the postcolonial attachment to nationalism" that can only be seen in the context of political liberation from, and resistance to, systems of western domination. As such, African nationalism is inseparable from a postcolonial politics of decolonization. The historic import of the first democratic elections in April 1994, in which the African National Congress (ANC) came into power under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, was globally celebrated as an overdue triumph over the dehumanizing effects of apartheid. Of singular importance in the transformation of South African society was the commitment to inclusive participation in drafting the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa that, in its preamble, stated its aim to "establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights" and "build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations" (South Africa 1996).

MP Professor Kader Asmal (2008) reflected back on the constitutional goal as having been to construct a "politics of humanity … by infusing our constitutionalism with a cosmopolitan, multicultural ethic." Emergent African nationalisms have prompted questions regarding the feasibility of applying the moral cosmopolitan principles of equal rights and justice in nations still burdened with addressing the legacy of colonial cultural, economic, and social inequalities in their societies. In questioning the compatibility of cosmopolitanism and nationalism, Appiah (1997) proposed a "rooted" cosmopolitanism wherein local and particular allegiances, rights,

and obligations are extended to include all of humankind. In extending Appiah's proposal, Masaeli (2008: 492) introduced dialogue as a critical component in the bridging of local and global obligations when he reframed rooted cosmopolitanism as one that "celebrates the cultural differences among individuals, groups, and nations and draws on the dialogue among them as the cornerstone of the political community of mankind." It was in this spirit that the ANC engaged in inclusive dialogue in drafting a constitution for a newly envisaged collective, the nation, in which the rights of separate, and potentially competing, identities would be equally safeguarded in a Bill of Rights. Constitutional guarantees of freedom and equality provided the linchpin on which minority groups could lobby for their full and equitable representation in a multicultural democracy, but also brought competing identity assertions into dialogue and/or opposition in the process. Pagan identity politics are discussed below in the context of these tensions and can be seen, retrospectively, in two phases that parallel political changes in South Africa's new democracy.

The Rainbow Years: 1996–2007

South Africa's vision for a new nation was symbolically captured in Archbishop Desmond Tutu's metaphor of the "Rainbow Nation" that became a unifying motif of a multicultural South Africa as it reentered the international sporting arena, embraced a new flag and national anthem, and was drawn on by business and commercial sectors as they engaged in the transformation process. The rainbow was also an important symbol of the ANC's primary goal of dismantling the white ethnocentrism of apartheid from which all forms of social, religious, and political divisions had been established and reinforced. Racial equality became a new narrative in the Rainbow Nation as the world celebrated the transition to "black" majority rule: a term that denoted an apartheid race typology of White, Black, Colored, or Asian/Indian. This category essentialized differences between ethnically and linguistically distinct communities who had migrated southward over one and a half centuries ago and who became collectively known as the Bantu.[3] The indigenous peoples of southern Africa are the still marginalized Khoisan, who suffered the most significant destruction of their culture, language, and social structure during colonial expansion. Notwithstanding the semantic complexities, it is the Bantu who are referred to as "African" in this chapter. Unlike the Afrikaner nationalism that had only extended state privileges to English-speaking

whites, strategies to mobilize the entire population behind a restructured national project fell predominantly into Bantu hands.

The necessity for this project can be seen in the light of Isaiah Berlin's view of nationalism as "a response to a wound inflicted upon a society" (cited in Rao 2012: 170), but one that, outside of violent transition, anticipated healing through reconciliation and dialogue. The imperative to accept and promote difference in the new multicultural nation-state required an inversion of apartheid policies that had translated difference into multitiered forms of exclusion. To safeguard and support South Africa's fledgling democracy, a number of state institutions were provided for in Chapter 9 of the Constitution. Among the collective of "Chapter 9 Institutions" were the South African Law Reform Commission (SALRC) and the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) that was "established to support constitutional democracy" and mandated to "promote respect for, observance of, and protection of human rights for everyone without fear or favour" (SAHRC 1995). These institutions became constitutional mediators and watchdogs of individual and/or community rights violations, most of which had roots in apartheid's preoccupation with race, religion, and language. Prior to 1994, Christianity had been privileged in all state institutions as the moral and ethical foundation of society and was promulgated through Christian National Education to all population groups in South Africa. Through this system, almost 80 percent of blacks had converted to Christianity by the end of apartheid, and, from their genesis in the early twentieth century, African Initiated Churches (AICs) had developed into the largest religious groupings in South Africa. This growth was indisputably connected to their syncretism of traditional[4] African beliefs and practices within an African-Christian context.

Christianity lost its privileged status in the new constitution, and in the reconfiguration of the religious landscape, the new minority religion of Paganism came to be represented by a growing number of multifocused groups and organizations through the 1990s. Initially, sharing information and networking through e-mail, some Pagans forged important links with well-known Pagans and Pagan organizations in the United Kingdom and America. Buoyed by the international presence of Pagan traditions, they were a fellow community constructing itself in a society now accepted as liberated from discriminatory rhetoric and persecution. Legislative change is not necessarily commensurate with changes in historically established mindsets and attitudes, however, and Pagans almost immediately

confronted the fact that legal rights did not automatically translate into social or familial acceptance where the historical Christian associations of witchcraft and magic with Satanism and/or heresy were the ubiquitous concern. This conflation was also evidenced in a heightened media interest in individuals who self-identified with the terms "pagan," "witchcraft," and "magic" in a religious context quite antithetical to the Christianity with which white South Africans were conceptually associated.

In light of the historical and extant significance of these terms in South Africa, there was a striking absence of media interest in whether they shared any commonality with African cultural and religious beliefs and practices. Perhaps through wishing to dissociate from the colonial construction of paganism as synonymous with "unbelievers" and other derogatory epithets, Pagans publicly avoided any congruencies being made between themselves and traditional practitioners. Their distancing was reflected in their failure in 1997 to respond to a "Call to Shape the Face of Paganism in South Africa" made by Donna Vos (1997: 6) in her quarterly magazine *Pagan Africa*. In what to date is the singular statement of its kind, Vos stated that "The PFSA rejects the Eurocentric bias that is much of modern Paganism, for a balance between the inherent African (tribal) Paganism and a Eurocentric Paganism." Vos's call was made with good intention in the halcyon political climate of 1997 when restoring damaged intercultural relationships was fundamental to the nation-building project. Today, Vos (pers. comm., 21 June 2015) reflects back on her call as "a strategy to protect Paganism in Africa," but it was one that provoked no intra-Pagan discussion at the time and did not translate into the appropriation of any African practices into Pagan traditions.

Processes to decolonize language highlight the legacies of racism and prejudice words carry in local contexts and can result in their avoidance as a strategy of reconciliation in times of strengthening national unity. A component part of the postcolonial African recovery of their own religious and cultural identities was the tacit rejection of prior Eurocentric category constructions within which they had been pejoratively labeled as "pagans" and as constituting a "native problem" that had necessitated a series of "Native Acts" through which their political rights were systematically and effectively eroded. Also mindful of Khoisan struggles for First Nations status, Bantus themselves have avoided referring to their religious traditions as a "Native faith." Local Pagans, who avoided referring to African practitioners as "pagans," simultaneously resisted debating these interpretive issues with traditionalists, who faced equal difficulties in publicly

articulating their religious identities amid growing Christian conservatism that persisted in viewing magical practices as nonrational, if not heretical. In embracing a rainbow-hued nationalism, Pagans took little account of the post-1994 shifts in power relations that would inform the decolonizing process and reignite divisions between "the colonizer" and previously colonized subjects.

Decolonizing Witchcraft

In contrast to the terms "pagan" and "native," Africans appropriated the term "witchcraft" through the systems of colonial education and Christian conversion, and the postcolonial task was one of decolonizing its Eurocentric interpretation and application. The majority of Pagans were not aware of the colonial Witchcraft Suppression Act (3) of 1957[5] (WSA (3)) that to date remains unrepealed by the ANC. The small minority who were aware were partly correct in their assumption that, as the WSA (3) provided no definition of terms, it did not apply to them nor warrant their direct engagement. Culturally distanced from a phenomenon about which they knew very little, South African Pagans made no comment on witchcraft-related violence that continued in black communities through the 1990s. The WSA (3), which privileged Christian-colonial thought, was modeled on the British Witchcraft Act of 1735 and imposed without consultation on African communities. The role of *Izangoma* (African diviners) was most negatively affected by the list of offenses in the WSA (3), in which they earned the pejorative and reductive title of "witchdoctors," a term from which they tried to dissociate through their inclusion in the category Traditional Healers from the 1970s. *Izangoma* receive their calling to the profession from the ancestors and, on acceptance, undergo rigorous training in mediating human concerns and afflictions with the ancestral spirit realm. Their divinatory skills in diagnosing the causes of physical, social, and psychological misfortune and disruptions, which included their causation through malevolent actions, or witchcraft, made them indispensable to their communities and their chiefs. African languages had applied a number of different words to a range of social and moral transgressions that were colonially collapsed under the single term "witchcraft" that was duly applied in the WSA (3). In this legislation, the primary offense was the accusation, or imputation, of witchcraft, albeit that "witchcraft" remained legally undefined. In addition to delimiting the role of *Izangoma* as community doctors and healers, the WSA (3)

denied the reality of witchcraft by referring to it as "a pretended knowledge" and criminalized the magical practices of divination, conjuration, and fortune-telling that had been historically constructed as indicative of its practice in European history. African churches became a sanctioned location for vocalizing African fears of witchcraft that were not subjected to aspersions of superstition and for addressing them through traditional systems of diagnosis and protection in an African-Christian context. As the dangers of witchcraft in biblical texts endorsed traditional understandings of evil agency, the difficulties in articulating a Pagan Witch identity were exacerbated in increasingly widened sectors of society.

In 1999 Mandela's deputy, Thabo Mbeki, became democratic South Africa's second president. Known for his "I Am an African" speech[6] in Parliament on the passing of the new constitution in 1996, Mbeki highlighted the distinctness of being in, and from, Africa, in a liberal cosmopolitan world. Throughout his term of office (1999–2008), Mbeki pursued his nationalist vision as an African "Renaissance" and drove South Africa as a leading player within the Organization for African Unity (OAU). Under Mbeki, there was a growing challenge in meeting constitutional provisions for equality in the midst of numerous new, and often conflicting, identity assertions that were potentially counterproductive to nation-building. This led to the establishment of Equality Courts in terms of the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000. A related government response to these difficulties was the founding of a new Chapter 9 institution by an Act of Parliament in 2002. This was the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL), which had a highly localized focus on ensuring that equality rights "are protected against any form of transgression, violation or denial" (CRL 2014). In line with their mandate, the CRL was government funded to conduct nationwide and inclusive information-gathering seminars on highly contentious issues that would assist government in policymaking.

Toward the end of this first phase under discussion, local Pagans had increasingly withdrawn from national politics and lacked a unifying voice to address matters they considered as infringements of their constitutional rights. In 2004, a more politically engaged Pagan formed the South African Pagan Rights Alliance (SAPRA) "as a faith-based (Pagan) human rights activist alliance" that would protect Pagan rights and pursue cases of perceived infringements "in line with its constitutional mandate, namely, to promote the guaranteed liberties and freedoms enshrined for all South

African Pagans in the Bill of Rights" (SAPRA 2004). In late 2003, an inter-Pagan collective had worked toward the establishment of the "Pagan Freedom Day Movement" that would hold annual festivals on April 27, a public holiday held to commemorate South Africa's first democratic elections held on that date. The first events in 2004 marked a celebration of a decade of religious freedom, and specific groups and/or individuals took responsibility for their planning in all major cities. The events attracted minimal media attention despite the prior dissemination of a press pack to various media and, as primarily intra-Pagan celebrations, attracted low public attendance outside of family and/or friends, and interfaith invitations were limited. However, in the spirit of sharing the 2004 event with other previously marginalized groups with whom they recognized some affinity, Pagans in Johannesburg invited *Izangoma* to join in a day on which their disparate religio-cultural backgrounds and divergent interpretations of witchcraft were sublimated in a spirit of camaraderie. In hindsight, had Pagans been advised of Masaeli's (2008: 495) caution that "Any failure to take the identity awareness into consideration may result in the possible collision among cultural identities," the conflict that later developed among Pagans, and between Pagans and the wider community of Traditional Healers, could have been averted through purposeful dialogue. This conflict was precipitated by renewed debates on finding a legal definition for witchcraft and was coterminous with political changes within the ANC that would reinvigorate intentions to dismantle forms of neocolonialism that had been obscured by the cosmopolitan commitment to blanket constitutional equalities in the Rainbow Nation.

The Fading of the Rainbow: 2007–2015

Witchcraft is a complex and malleable term in Africa and serves as an explanatory system for physical, social, and economic misfortunes, and is therefore adaptive to changing sociopolitical circumstances. Consequently, witchcraft-related accusations and fears spiked in response to rising poverty, high unemployment, high crime rates, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and unabated government-related corruption scandals. Strategies for incorporating African experiences and interpretations of witchcraft in the law were prioritized in renewed debates on African customary law and in policymaking related to bringing Traditional Healers and their practices in line with systems of western medicine. The renewed focus on these initiatives was contiguous with volatile changes in the ANC leadership

in 2007 and reflected changes in South Africa's postcolonial vision. The inclusive networking among the Pagan community had broken down through internal politics following Donna Vos's departure from the PFSA in 2000. The group divisions that formed in its wake significantly reduced inter-Pagan dialogue, leaving Pagans with no common platform on which to debate the potential threats to their social identity that could inhere in changing political circumstances. In July 2007, a copy of the government-commissioned Draft Mpumalanga Witchcraft Suppression Bill 2007[7] was accessed and unofficially distributed by a Pagan person working in the same provincial offices. Curiously, in the first opportunity for Africans to legally decolonize witchcraft, the wording and offenses of the WSA (3) were largely retained in the draft legislation, which differed mostly by including (a) a definition of terms and (b) a code of conduct for Traditional Healers. This code applied primarily to the practices of *Izangoma* and *Izinyanga* (herbalists) in *muthi* (traditional medicine) that, in the magical nexus of natural properties and spiritual forces, becomes the medium through which most healing and harmful outcomes are realized. Alongside the WSA (3), a factor that brought Traditional Healers into their compromised relationship with witchcraft was the knowledge/skill base in the preparation of these concoctions that they alone shared with witches, and the unabated demand for their skills in mediating witchcraft-related concerns and afflictions with the ancestral spirit realm.

A negative definition of witchcraft in legislation was a concrete threat for all Pagans, who set aside their differences to debate the issue in a conference[8] convened by the South African Pagan Council (SAPC), an umbrella body inaugurated in 2006. At this conference, Pagans were addressed by national coordinator of the Traditional Healers Organization (THO) Dr. Phepsile Maseko, whose organization had lobbied their objection at being singularly subjected to a code of conduct in the draft bill. In her short address to Pagans, she married her support for their constitutional rights to self-define as Witches, with a caution as to the difficulties they would undoubtedly encounter. Pagans from diverse traditions were divided in opinions that ranged from the need to pursue a public reclaiming of the word "Witchcraft," to retaining it privately within their communities, or to relinquishing the term due to its harmful effects in wider South African society. Following a highly contested vote, an eclectic group was mandated to pursue the "reclaiming of Witchcraft," but its members were not all part of later initiatives driven by SAPRA and some members of the SAPC. Formal documents in support of the SAPRA/SAPC position

were submitted to the SALRC, to whom both the THO and SAPRA submitted their own draft proposals for new witchcraft legislation. In the former, witchcraft was negatively defined according to African interpretation, whereas SAPRA provided a Pagan-centric definition in its Witchcraft Protection Bill.[9] SAPRA (2014a) argued that, as the only "actual Witches" in the country on account of their self-identification with the term, usage of the term in all other contexts was a misnomer and prejudicial to self-defining Witches. Taking full ownership of the term, SAPRA presented formal accusations of hate speech to the Press Ombudsman when witchcraft-related violence was reported in the media, and, when leveled at traditional bodies such as the THO, closed dialogue between these two groups of magical, healing practitioners. SAPRA's 2010 demand that the SAHRC investigate Dr. Maseko for making libelous statements against South African Witches[10] when she had spoken of "witches" in the context of Traditional Healers solidified this divide. In a less conciliatory mood than at the 2007 Pagan conference, Maseko responded by saying, "Publicly calling yourself a witch in South Africa smacks of white privilege … SAPRA must accept that we speak different languages and live in different areas" (cited in Pitzl-Waters 2010). Maseko's response was indicative of a rising spotlight on issues of race, particularly in cases that reflected a lack of significant social transformation, and in those perceived as constituting neocolonial privilege.

Concurrent internal ANC divisions combined with growing criticisms of a rising black elitism in the face of unalleviated poverty, and of Mbeki's vision of an African "Renaissance" as one overtly modeled on European experiences. On 18 December 2007, Mbeki was replaced by Jacob Zuma as president of the ANC at the party's 52nd national conference. Following the clearing of corruption charges against him, Zuma became president of South Africa in the 2009 national elections. The removal from office of the intellectual Mbeki, whose vision had been to locate a modern, decolonized South Africa as an equitable partner on the international stage, gave rise to widespread concerns that the populist Zuma would initiate a narrower, ethnic-based nationalism that could become a troubling development for constitutionalism. The timing and rhetoric of SAPRA's "reclaiming Witchcraft" campaign were, in hindsight, out of step with rising criticisms of neocolonialism and the rejection of Eurocentric influences in processes toward the Africanizing of state institutions. Geschiere (1997: 200) points to a conceptual link between politics and occult forces, and suggests that the volatility and secrecy behind changing politics in

Africa "create a political climate in which rumors on witchcraft blossom as never before" and that this is "inevitable with the Africanization of the state."

As the decolonizing of witchcraft gained emphasis in official sectors, SAPRA launched their annual "30 days of advocacy against witch-hunts in Africa" campaign on Human Rights Day, 21 March 2008, under the banner Touchstone Advocacy. This campaign marked the first formal Pagan response to the murders of individuals or couples accused of witchcraft that had been unremitting both before and after the transition to democracy. The etiology of these criminal and heinous events is multifaceted: each case requires contextualization in a myriad of social factors, and their incidence is unpredictable and in the extreme minority in relation to the thousands of weekly witchcraft accusations that are resolved without violence. Intercultural dialogue between Pagans and Traditional Healers on these factors could have included discussion that such accusations are qualitatively similar to the Pagan magic practice of hexing/cursing and are comparably dealt with through magical systems of protection and/or prayer. SAPRA provided comprehensive detail of their campaign on their advocacy website that also included an online petition. Their argument takes what Nussbaum (1996) refers to as a "strong" moral cosmopolitan position whereby each individual is entitled to equal treatment in terms of human rights justice, a position criticized by Miller (2002: 80) as requiring "the creation of a world government, and this could only be an imperialist project in which existing cultural differences were either nullified or privatised." It is also at odds with a postcolonial nationalism that commences with vast and unaddressed structural inequalities and injustices, and can, therefore, come at the expense of privileging elite advocacy without engagement in local, highly contextualized interpretations and experiences. The "witch" in Africa is one who has relinquished his/her inclusion in a moral community, and, as Bernstein (2012: 712) comments, "All cosmopolitan conceptions of morality oppose views according to which some human beings lack moral status."

Perilously close to the colonial denial of witchcraft, SAPRA (2014a) states on its advocacy website that "Naturally, what our fellow countrymen believe about the mythical 'witch' and imaginary 'witchcraft' does affect real Witches and the way in which society generally perceives Witches and Witchcraft." In eight years of this campaign, SAPRA's petition has attracted relatively low local support considering the scale of official and unofficial attention on witch-hunts. With large sectors of the Pagan

community equally disengaged, the support of some notable international Pagans was reflected as a rational and liberal response to human rights abuses being unaddressed by the state. Coverage given to the campaign by Greene (2015) on the international Pagan blog *The Wild Hunt: a modern Pagan perspective* was within the wider context of witchcraft-related violence against women that collapsed their geographic, religio-cultural, and linguistic particularities and differences into a single phenomenon. Other than the value of raising awareness, it is questionable whether solidarity from the international Pagan community can be of practical benefit when international human rights organizations—such as Human Rights Watch Africa and Witchcraft Human Rights Information Network (WHRIN)—have had limited success in effecting the types of resolution that local community initiatives achieve through dialogue and consultation when witchcraft fears and accusations are elevated.

In the context of postcolonial nationalism, SAPRA's growing criticism of government initiatives and the outreach to international Pagan information sites and human rights organizations can be considered in light of the tendency for liberal cosmopolitans to "minimize the importance of state sovereignty precisely because they see the post-colonial state as the locus of threat to human rights and the 'international' as a source of remedies" (Rao 2012: 172). Whether such remedies bear fruit in highly localized contexts and succeed in translating universal norms into praxis is debatable. Rao (2012: 166) provides a salient perspective on justice within the cosmopolitan–communitarian debate in saying that critics of cosmopolitans "argue that norms of justice can only arise from within bounded communities." This sentiment was part of the rationale for the proposed Traditional Courts Bill presented to Parliament in 2008 that would settle disputes (which would inevitably include witchcraft) in the "traditional" way. Giving support in his opening address to the National House of Traditional Leaders on 2 November 2012, Zuma again raised concerns over South Africa's constitutional democracy by saying, "Let us solve African problems the African way, not the white man's way. Let us not be influenced by other cultures and think that lawyers are going to help" (APDUSA 2012). In this address, Zuma simultaneously alienated many blacks who are part of South Africa's judicial system, and who grapple equally with the problem of acknowledging traditional rights in ways that would not adversely influence the idea of South Africa as a modern country with a place in the global community of nations.

What is in tension at the national level is the compatibility of constitutionally enshrined individual human rights with their imposition within a framework of tribal allegiances that prioritizes community rights over those of a single individual. South Africa's legal system does provide formal courts with the option of hearing cases under Customary Law, which includes written and unwritten rules that have developed from the customs and traditions of communities. The WSA (3) had effectively closed community members' access to their accustomed systems of justice, and Customary Law provides a viable choice under which certain types of disputes can be heard and adjudicated. A problem relating to Customary Law is that it is open to multiple interpretations and, as the supreme law of the land, South Africa's constitution demands that all conduct or law must be consistent with its provisions. The Traditional Courts Bill is still under review as the SALRC contend with wide-ranging objections that primarily rest on the grounds that it centralizes power in traditional leaders along apartheid tribal lines and disallows the accused having legal representation.

Witchcraft disputes and accusations lack homogeneity and cross ethnic, socioeconomic, and educational boundaries, and yet victims of violent persecution do predominantly fall into the rural, economically and politically disadvantaged sectors of society who therefore lack access to formal courts. In the context of what is criticized as cosmopolitan elitism, the important question arises of how universal systems of justice can be applied without first addressing factors that underlie rampant inequalities that marginalize members of specific communities. The right to belief in witchcraft as a threat to safety and stability has constitutional protection and cannot be simply equated with witchcraft-related violence. If one employs the term "subaltern" to refer to those whose lives remain subordinate on all social and political levels, then it is valid to follow Rao (2012: 168), who suggests that, from the subaltern perspective, the question "Can s/he be expected to be cosmopolitan too?" can be reframed to ask, "What's in it for us?" SAPRA's objection to the Traditional Courts Bill can be seen as "one that does not engage with the subaltern outsider" (ibid.), as SAPRA (2013) argues that

> This Alliance seeks to ensure that Traditional Courts may no longer hear accusations of Witchcraft, and that customary laws and beliefs concerning Witchcraft be brought in line with acceptable constitutional norms and standards, especially with regard to the constitutional protection and promotion of religious freedom.

The WSA (3) has been identified as a contributory factor in fueling witchcraft-related violence, and afflicted individuals could well argue against a second legal closure to having their accusations heard in a court of law. In the current political climate, it is indisputable that objections lodged by Pagans, who are a white minority with no sociocultural experiences in living with dangerous witchcraft, would be resisted, if not overtly resented. Constitutional rights have failed to provide jobs and put food on tables, and provide no tangible solace for, or emancipation from, being subjected without respite to the vagaries of human life. Therefore, as Rao (2012: 168) concludes,

> Anyone teetering on the brink of existence, on account of material deprivation or persecution, might be forgiven for not giving the question of their obligations to strangers much consideration.

Redebating Witchcraft

The Chapter 9 institutions most engaged with witchcraft are the CRL, SALRC, and the SAHRC, which, in their debates and deliberations, engage in inclusive dialogue with all interested and affected parties and stakeholders. It is in the absence of cooperative dialogue on the issues at hand that SAPRA's position, in denying the reality of African witchcraft, puts all Pagans in danger of being excluded from debates in which they are undoubtedly invested and from being valuable role-players in reaching a solution. Factors of interest to Pagans are raised in a summary document of the findings of the 2013 CRL national witchcraft seminars that was privately forwarded to me. Of singular importance was that there appeared to be no exception to the call to criminalize witchcraft, and a ubiquitous sentiment voiced was that the western influence on the constitution contradicts "the African way of life" and should be corrected. Contrary to SAPRA's (2014a) 30 days of advocacy slogan "Accusations are not proof," the central difficulties debated in the conferences were that there is substance to many accusations, there are confessions substantiated with evidence, and the vibrant economy of the unregulated witchcraft-related *muthi* trade has empirically verifiable dimensions and is testimony to its sustained cultural value.

The CRL findings were an important source of information for the SALRC, which issued a public document in 2014 entitled "Review of the Witchcraft Act 3 of 1957" in which they reflected a wide spectrum of

stakeholders' perspectives and the legal complexities in defining witchcraft in new legislation. According to this document, in which SAPRA objections were taken to reflect all Pagans, the SALRC noted the primary Pagan displeasure as "directed at the definitions of witchcraft" (2014a: 39) and that "as practitioners of the religion and/or as self-defined witches, they should be responsible for defining the words 'witchcraft' and 'witches'" (ibid.: 40). This assertion failed to reflect the diversity of Pagan opinion in the 2007 conference and the fact that some Pagan Witches too have chosen to publicly relinquish the term "witch." Members of the wider community have found no channel to counter what they informally debate as being a threat to a "Pagan" identity that, at the official level, is now reductively construed as synonymous with Witchcraft. This concern was validated in a later SALRC media statement calling for public response to a number of questions arising from their deliberations. In reference to Pagans, the question asked was "How the law should account for forms of witchcraft such as Paganism that people practice as part of their religion" (SALRC 2014b). The SALRC have stated their intention to provide new legislation for public comment in 2015; how they incorporate SAPRA's propositions that are so distanced from local endeavors to decolonize witchcraft and to reassert African cultural and intellectual property rights remains conjecture. Again attributing SAPRA's position to *all* Pagans, some indication can be found in the SALRC (2014a: 40) statement that "They fail to provide alternatives to deal with the scourge of witchcraft violence" and that "The only proposal they advance is the use of common law to address the issues around witchcraft violence."

SAPRA's (2014a) dismissal of African witchcraft as "imaginary" is of concern in the current political climate in that it mirrors the colonial position that the belief in, and practice of, witchcraft was a pretense or superstition. This is a position that was carried into the wording of the WSA (3) and is one cited as a significant factor in fueling witchcraft-related violence. In addition, it lacks engagement with a "pragmatic pluralism" that Tobias (2011: 73) persuasively argues as

> situated and localized forms of cooperation between state and non-state actors, particularly religious groups and organizations, that may not share the secular, juridical understandings of rights, persons, and obligations common to contemporary cosmopolitan theory.

According to Vertovec and Cohen (2002: 9), some celebrate cosmopolitanism for "its political challenges to various ethno-centric, racialized, gendered and national narratives," whereas others "are highly skeptical of what is perceived to be an emergent global, hybrid and 'rootless' cosmopolitan culture." Skepticism such as this has been increasingly vocalized in South Africa over the past few years and inheres in a postcolonial resurgence of the types of narratives to which Vertovec and Cohen refer. The cosmopolitan principles of human rights as upheld by international institutions can be a political challenge to the worst excesses of ethnic nationalism and religious extremism in Africa, but are also dismissed as a "rootless" cosmopolitanism that cannot rise above being a rarefied concept of little value in addressing the ambiguities of postcolonial experiences.

Conclusion

Discussion in this chapter has focused on the impact that South Africa's pre- and postcolonial politics had on Pagan identity politics, and has drawn on the contestation of witchcraft as a specific example to highlight the tensions between local and global rights and responsibilities in a postcolonial context. These tensions are reflected in the fluctuating compatibility of cosmopolitanism and nationalism from the birth of South Africa's transition to democracy and the drafting of the new constitution, to factors in the current political environment. The public emergence of Paganism in South Africa in 1996 was directly related to the transition to a new, democratic nation, strengthened by a cosmopolitan constitutionalism that recognized and protected individual rights and freedoms. What was silenced at this time was that African nationalism is a response to colonialism and, as an emancipatory instrument in the liberation process, is infused with discourses on who shares in the history, language, and culture of those tasked with reestablishing a national identity. It was thus inevitable that these discourses would, of necessity, transcend their lack of primacy in cosmopolitan discourses of universal equality. Each type of nationalism is dependent on specific historical and political conditions, making African postcolonial nationalism quite different in form and expression from postcolonial experiences where the "previously colonized" remain marginalized and are not in the privileged position of reconstituting society on their own terms and through their own processes of redress. This factor is vital to understanding why postcolonial nationalism in Africa is inseparable from imperatives to decolonize language and social structures, and

to highlight sustained neocolonialism that can be obscured by an unexamined focus on universal equalities.

Pagans, who grounded their rights in the cosmopolitan provisions of the constitution, took little account of how shifts in power relations would inform the decolonizing process and how insufficient dialogue and reflection on their own position in this process could further marginalize a still unstable public Pagan identity. In a call that champions moral universalism in addressing witchcraft-related violence, SAPRA's (2014a) assertion that "There can be no human culture without human rights for all" is positioned within criticisms of strong cosmopolitanism as being neglectful of local obligations. Finding a solution to the harmful effects of witchcraft in society is a difficult and dialogical process being undertaken at the grassroots and national level, and cosmopolitan solutions not rooted in local, postcolonial realities can be seen as perpetuating western interventions in African affairs. The resurgence of racial narratives in South Africa falls directly within the ambit of postcolonial nationalism in their focus on inherited, unexamined white privilege. Where one is positioned in terms of race and voice when engaging in related local debates warrants objective self-reflection by all South Africans, including Pagans. Finding ways to overcome their own internal divisions in order to have these conversations is a prerequisite to establishing healthier intercultural dialogues and relationships. Doing so could prove vital in determining the future role and development of Paganism in a South Africa rapidly moving toward realizing the type of postcolonial nationalism envisaged during apartheid.

Notes

1. The terms Pagan/ism, Witch, and Witchcraft are capitalized throughout this chapter to denote a self-identification with the terms. The lower case is applied to all other usages.
2. The term western is deliberately not capitalized in the context of postcolonial attention on the decolonization of language.
3. The term Bantu is attributed to linguist Wilhelm Bleek (1827–1875), who introduced it as a collective term for a diversity of languages spoken by ethnically distinct communities across southern Africa.
4. The term "traditional" in this chapter refers to African cultural and religious customs that survived colonialism and are sustained and

developed in modern, technologically advanced societies. It is not interchangeable with the term indigenous.

5. The WSA (3) can be accessed on www.justice.gov.za/legislation/acts/1957-003.pdf. Retrieved 1 August 2015.
6. This full speech can be accessed on http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4322. Retrieved 10 July 2015.
7. This Draft Bill was never officially distributed but a copy can be read on http://methodius.blogspot.com/2007/07/mpumalanga-witchcraft-suppression-bill.html. Retrieved 8 July 2015.
8. For a full discussion of this conference, see Wallace (2008).
9. The Draft Witchcraft Protection Bill was written by SAPRA founder Damon Leff and is available in the files section on SAPRA's Facebook page. Retrieved 1 August 2015.
10. For a fuller discussion, see SAPRA (2014b).

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Cosmopolitan Witchcraft: Reinventing the Wheel of the Year in Australian Paganism

Douglas Ezzy

Paganism, by virtue of its polytheism, is inherently pluralistic and sensitized to cosmopolitanism. One practitioner's gods are not the gods of the next practitioner, and most Pagans think this is as it should be (Ezzy 2014b). There are instances of fundamentalist Paganisms that resist pluralism and act disrespectfully toward those who follow different Pagan paths, but these are in the minority. It is very common for individual Pagans to be involved in multiple groups and traditions. They might, for example, at the same time be part of a group working with Egyptian gods and another honoring Norse deities. In this context, Pagans develop various practical techniques and repertoires for managing such pluralism respectfully.

Skrbis and Woodward (2013: Loc 608)[1] argue that cosmopolitanism is both an idea or value and a practice, and is integrally performative: "Cosmopolitanism therefore involves the knowledge, command and performance of symbolic resources or repertoires for the purpose of highlighting and valuing cultural difference." The abstract princi-

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ples that may inform some types of cosmopolitanism are less important to forms of cosmopolitanism that "find their expression in a range of everyday fields which are grounded in repertoires of practical thinking rather than abstract philosophical principles" (Skrbis and Woodward 2013: Loc 565). In this chapter, I argue that it is precisely these sorts of repertoires of practice that nurture a cosmopolitan Paganism.

The relationship of Pagans to their gods is one that encourages the practice of respect toward others who are "different." In monotheistic religions, practitioners are expected to obey their gods. Many, if not most, Pagans have a more ambivalent relationship toward deity. They honor, but do not necessarily obey, their gods: "The relationship between participants and the deity honored is complex and ambivalent because Pagan deities do not necessarily act in the interests of humans" (Ezzy 2014a: 128). As such, Pagan worship is often a practice that integrally invokes an etiquette for negotiating relationships with a multiplicity of others (gods, animals, humans, the land and other actors), many of whom do not share the same purposes as the Pagan practitioner (Harvey 2013). For example, a practitioner may respect and honor Hades, the Greek god of death and the underworld, but he or she probably does not feel the need to obey all the imperatives associated with the dark and sometimes morbid motivations of Hades. A sensitivity and openness to a multiplicity of voices and traditions is central to most Pagan practice. This is also central to cosmopolitanism:

> It is not that we are without culture but we are drawing on the traces and residues of many cultural systems, of many ethical systems—and that is precisely what cosmopolitanism means. It means the ability to stand outside of having one's life written and scripted by any one community, whether that is a faith or tradition or religion or culture—whatever it might be—and to draw selectively on a variety of discursive meanings. (Richard Sennett, quoted in Vertovec and Cohen 2002: 4)

Sennett's point is apposite, if somewhat linguistic in emphasis. Australian Paganisms draw on the traces of European Paganisms in the context of an Australian landscape that both resonates with and resists these European repertoires in complex ways. Part of the process of developing a mature Australian cosmopolitan Paganism has been the development of etiquettes for negotiating the tensions between these various repertoires, and to forge

a meaningful and robust ritual practice in this context. At the heart of this mature Australian cosmopolitan Paganism is an adaptive response that is inclusive of both the European mythological heritage and the Australian ecological context.

The geographical and ecological contexts are central to the practice of Pagan ritual, and profoundly shape the nature of Pagan cosmopolitanism. Following Lamont and Aksartova (2002), Skrbis and Woodward (2013: Loc 609) argue that cosmopolitan dispositions need to be grounded "in everyday experiences: what people eat, watch, listen to, shop for and buy and dream about." This list of everyday experiences needs to be extended to include the seasons, and the ecological and geographical nature of an individual's physical location. Experiences of heat and cold, dry and wet, long and short days, and the position of the sun are central and framing experiences for Pagans.

Australian Paganisms have moved through three distinct phases in the development of a cosmopolitan approach. At first, Australian Pagans simply *imported* the rituals and practices of European Pagans. Second, they *mirrored* these practices, slightly changing and contextualizing their practice to reflect the geographical location of Australia. Finally, they *adapted* the rituals and practices of European Paganisms as they developed a mature cosmopolitan practice. The final phase of adaptation involves the development of a practical etiquette of relating to the "otherness" of the Australian seasons, geography and landscape. I demonstrate these stages through an analysis of the practices of Australian Pagans from the 1980s to the present.

Cosmopolitanism is typically a highly anthropocentric concept, concerned with the "otherness" of human persons. For Australian Paganisms, it is the otherness of other-than-human persons (Harvey 2005) that is most confronting. Or, as Ingold (2013: 214) puts it: "a focus on life processes requires us to attend not to materiality as such but to the fluxes and flows of materials." As the myths, traditions, practices and rituals of European Paganisms were imported to Australia, they were confronted with the otherness of the Australian seasons and landscape. It is through the development of an etiquette of practice of relating to this otherness that Australian Pagans have developed a mature Paganism, one that is cosmopolitan in relation to both humans and other-than-human persons.

Pagan Ritual in Australia

Paganism is a complex and diverse set of religious traditions. I use "Pagan" as a generic umbrella term, and "Wicca" to denote the traditions of Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca (Hutton 1999). These have initiatory lineages and a clearly defined ritual tradition, mostly published by Farrar and Farrar (1981). I use the terms "Witch" and "Witchcraft" as broader terms inclusive of Wicca and the many traditions of practice that have developed and adapted the rituals of Wicca, and other identified traditions of Witchcraft.

The Wheel of the Year is a set of eight festivals, also referred to as "sabbats," followed by many Pagans in Australia (Hume 1997) as well as by Pagans worldwide. The festivals currently recognized as constituting the Wheel of the Year are a recent reformulation popularized by Gerald Gardner and those he worked with during the early period of Wicca in the 1940s and 1950s in England (Hutton 1999) and also by Druids such as Ross Nicols (Hiraeth 2000). The festivals are defined by the seasons of the sun and are central to most introductory books on Witchcraft, Wicca and most forms of Paganism. Other Pagan traditions, such as Heathenry, may have slightly different festivals, or different names and emphases from those in the Wheel of the Year. The eight celebrations fall approximately every six weeks throughout the year on the solstices, equinoxes and the cross-quarter festivals (Lammas, Imbolc, Samhain and Beltane) that fall roughly in between these dates. In Australia, these are key events for community gathering at local, state and national levels. Local ritual groups typically celebrate these festivals. State-based Pagan associations have larger celebrations on a few of the festivals, such as "Hollyfrost" celebrated in July by the New South Wales–based Pagan Awareness Network as a somewhat delayed winter solstice celebration. Anywhere between a dozen and a hundred people might attend such an event. At a national level, the Australian Wiccan Conference (that has mostly been open to all Pagans) which began in the late 1980s always occurs on the spring equinox and is an important opportunity for national community building. These national events often attract more than 100 participants.

With the arrival of Wicca in Australia in the 1980s, the dates of the rituals of the Wheel of the Year became problematic. The dates and festivals of the northern hemisphere heritage do not coincide with the seasons in Australia. Beltane is a spring festival celebrated in the northern hemisphere on May 1st, but in Australia it is autumn in May. Practitioners initially

simply imported the northern hemisphere practices before developing a more localized practice reflecting the seasons of their geographical location. However, much confusion and debate accompanied this process. The resolution of these questions turns on a practitioner's understanding of their religion. Some Pagans understand their practice in a dogmatic and fixed traditionalized form, adhering to ritual practices as they were taught by the UK founders of their movement. Others understand their practice in a more flexible and localized way, developing their rituals in response to the seasons and locality in which they live. A final group have developed an interpretative hermeneutic in which tradition and geographical location are integrated and adapted in complex ways.

Most Witchcraft rituals commence by casting a sacred circle, and circle casting is also very common at Pagan gatherings (Hume 1997). Most Pagans are familiar with the practice, even if it is not part of the particular tradition they themselves utilize. Heathens, for example, do not typically cast a circle (Harvey 1997). Circle casting typically includes calling the four elements, beginning with air in the east, then fire, water and ending with earth. The directions associated with these elements are central to the practice of casting a circle. In the northern hemisphere, fire is located in the south, the direction of the sun and hotter climes. Earth is located in the north, associated with the cold and dark. Pagans in Australia often, but not always, invert these directions. They retain air in the east, and water in the west, but place earth in the south, and fire in the north, the direction of the sun and hotter regions. Similar to the reconfiguration of the Wheel of the Year, the directions associated with the elements reflect a tension between traditional, authorized practice and lived reality, localized creativity and adaptation.

Finally, the direction of circle casting is also significant. Circles are typically cast "deosil," which literally means in the direction of "the apparent course of the sun" (Oxford English Dictionary, quoted in Phillips and Phillips 1994: 23). In the northern hemisphere, this is clockwise, involving a movement to the right for those standing in a circle facing inwards. In the southern hemisphere, the sun is in the northern sky, hence a person facing it perceives its apparent movement as from their right (rising in the east) to their left (setting in the west). Many practitioners in Australia have therefore reconceptualized deosil as anticlockwise. This can create significant confusion for Wiccan practitioners trained in the northern hemisphere where they have become deeply habituated to casting a circle clockwise.

The direction of a circle casting may appear a small thing, but it can have powerful emotional resonances. Casting a circle "widdershins," in a direction opposite to deosil, is associated with maleficence and evil. Many Witches are profoundly uncomfortable with the practice of casting a circle widdershins, associating it with deliberate evil or with an invitation to less savory supernatural forces (Ezzy 2014a). More experienced practitioners tend to be more comfortable with a widdershins circle casting. For example, Phillips and Phillips (1994: 25) argue: "Wiccan philosophy does not subscribe to the viewpoint that widdershins is either 'evil' or 'unlucky', but it is most definitely seen as a contrary motion." Nonetheless, a Witch who has learnt his or her practice from books written in the northern hemisphere and casts her or his circle clockwise may become quite distressed when meeting Australian practitioners who cast a circle anticlockwise.

The debates here point beyond the cognitive understanding of religion to issues of embodied habituated practice. The discomfort generated by circle casting anticlockwise in the southern hemisphere, or invoking fire in the north, or celebrating spring in October, are not simply a product of cognitive dissonance between theology and practice, although this may be the case. Rather, the discomfort is also, and perhaps more importantly, emotional and embodied. A person trained in the northern hemisphere over many years will have habituated their emotions to associate clockwise movement with routine and normative ritual practice. Some guides to learning Witchcraft, and presumably some training practices for Witches, specifically encourage practitioners to routinely practice casting a circle so that it becomes second nature—the directions and movements at elemental invocations become habituated routine practices (Luhrmann 1989).

Initially, most Pagans used the imported dates of the festivals, the directions of the elements and the direction of circle casting from the northern hemisphere. Over time, these practices changed, developing through a phase of mirroring the northern hemisphere dates and rituals, to a mature practice that involved both adapting and retaining the northern hemisphere practices and mythology. As I have indicated above, this mature cosmopolitan Paganism developed as a consequence of the development of an etiquette for relating to the Australian seasons and landscape, to the European mythological tradition, and to the practices of the huge variety of Pagans both in Australia and internationally.

The First Australian Witches: The 1980s

When Witchcraft arrived in Australia, the inclination to celebrate the seasonal festivals according to the pattern of the northern hemisphere reflected the culture of mainstream Australia, including the celebration of the Christian seasonal festivals, whereby northern hemisphere seasonal culture was simply imported and imposed, most notably at Christmas and Easter. Bodsworth (1999: 10) notes that Europeans in Australia have, almost without question, celebrated festivals that correspond to the European seasons: "For more than two hundred years, we have held winter Solstice celebrations, with hot roasts and Yule elves, in the middle of Summer."

Thus, perhaps unsurprisingly, many Australian Pagans began their ritual practice celebrating summer in the depths of winter, and spring as autumn leaves were falling around them. Drury and Tillett (1980: 51), in one of the earliest published descriptions of Witchcraft in Australia, noted that the celebration of the festivals of the "witchcraft calendar … are based upon the cycles of the year in the Northern hemisphere; for example, the summer solstice and the autumn equinox are celebrated when they occur in the North, not the South."

One of the reasons for following the northern calendar may have been a deep sense of respect for authoritative tradition in the training of Witches during the 1980s, when people typically became Witches through developing personal contacts with other Witches and then entering a semi-formal training arrangement (Luhrmann 1989). In some forms of practice and training, Witches were warned of dire consequences associated with not following the correct procedures and practices of the established tradition.

The urban focus of the lives of most early Witches in Australia probably also did not assist in developing a localized attunement to the seasons. Kettle (1995) notes that Pagans mostly live in cities with their lives determined by the clock, which distances them from the experience of the seasons. The festivals of the Wheel of the Year are a development from and elaboration of the seasonal and agricultural festivals of Europe (Hutton 1996). Some, but probably only a few, early Australian Witches were involved in agriculture or had a strong link with agricultural cycles in Australia; most were professionals living and working the larger Australian cities (Hume 1997).

The directions of the elements in early Australian Witchcraft practice appear to have also straightforwardly reproduced the elemental directions

of British practice. Simon Goodman was one of the first Australians trained in British Witchcraft, and in turn trained a large number of others in Australia (Hume 1997). His document "The Working Tools of a Witch" was written in this early period, probably in the 1980s (Goodman 1995). It was reproduced in several newsletters and magazine formats in the 1980s and 1990s and was formative on, and reflective of, the practice of many Wiccans in Australia during this early period. It retains the elemental directions of the British Isles: "South … is the direction of the hottest wind, the burning deserts, and is the realm of fire" (Goodman 1995: 28).

Early Australian Witchcraft was not very cosmopolitan. There were several reasons for this. Early Witches had a strong sense of respect for the authority of the British traditions, often training in a context that was hierarchical and authoritarian in structure. The belief that altering rituals could be dangerous was also important in constraining innovation. Finally, it takes time and experience to have the confidence to develop and adapt rituals. A cosmopolitan openness to the Australian seasons and landscape emerged slowly out of this context. However, even at this early stage in the 1980s some practitioners were questioning the rigid adoption of northern hemisphere festival dates and practices. For example, Anatha Wolfkeepe mentions that in the late 1980s she had been at the "Neo-Pagan Easter Gathering" and that "no-one knew for sure whether we were celebrating the Australian autumn equinox or the European spring equinox" (Woolfkeepe 1999: 29).

INVERTING NORTHERN HEMISPHERE PRACTICE

By the 1990s, the practice of inverting the festivals of the northern hemisphere to align with the Australian seasons had become standard. This is clearly documented in the book *The Witches of Oz,* one of the earliest and most important statements of Australian Witchcraft practice, first published in a very limited print run in 1991 (Phillips and Sandow 1991), and then reprinted in 1994 (Phillips and Phillips 1994). This publication documented and standardized the practice of inverting the festivals of the Wheel of the Year, the directions associated with the elements, and the direction of casting a circle. However, the caveat must be included that Wicca is highly idiosyncratic and practice probably continued to vary considerably.

For Phillips and Phillips, there was no doubt that the winter solstice should be celebrated in June, the element of fire is in the north, and deosil circle casting is anticlockwise. These associations probably reflect an evolving consensus that developed during the 1980s among Wiccans in Australia and the influence of Phillips and Phillips, along with Rufus Harrington, who is cocredited with the writing of the chapter on the Wheel of the Year. These authors are highly respected both in Australia and the UK, and their statements were considered authoritative. Phillips and Phillips (1994: 67) observe that: "It is important to understand that the Festivals are celebrating a time of year: a season, not a date." They note that while authors from the northern hemisphere might rightly locate Beltane at the first of May, in the southern hemisphere, May is clearly the wrong time to celebrate Beltane: "the portent of summer." The argument for these changes is traditional in the sense that: "Wicca is a religion in which practitioners attune ourselves to the passage of the seasons" (Phillips and Phillips 1994: 68). Practitioners should therefore celebrate the seasons of the place in which they live. Phillips and Phillips contrast this understanding with that of Christianity which sees humans and the environment as separate, and therefore "has no problem celebrating Easter in autumn, and Christmas at the Summer Solstice" (Phillips and Phillips 1994: 68).

For similar reasons, they argue that the direction of circle casting should follow the apparent direction of the movement of the sun in the place where the practitioner lives. Phillips and Phillips (1994: 24) note that although the word "deosil" is associated with movement to the right, "you must remember that these concepts are directly derived from the apparent motion of the Sun." In Europe, this direction is clockwise. However, "If sundials had been invented in Australia instead of Europe, clockwise would be the other way!" Similarly, Phillips and Phillips (1994: 33) suggest that the elemental directions should be transformed, associating south with earth and winter, and north with fire and summer.

These interpretations are also reflected throughout the 1990s in the central community publication *Pagan Times*. This was a newsletter/magazine distributed to the members of the Pagan Alliance, which was formed in 1991 to provide "networking and information service to Pagans of different paths" in Australia (Pagan Alliance 1997). The Pagan Alliance was the most important national Australian Pagan networking organization during the 1990s and early 2000s. In *Pagan Times,* the dates of the Wheel of the Year are taken for granted as an inversion of the northern hemisphere dates. In 1997, Don McLeod's article on seasonal celebrations simply

asserts: "On the 22nd of December, Pagans of the Southern Hemisphere will celebrate Litha. This is the festival of the Summer Solstice" (McLeod 1997: 16). In 1994, an Editor's note in *Pagan Times* regarding a list of Asatru festivals says: "[T]he article was written in the northern hemisphere, and so the following dates follow the northern hemisphere seasons" (Gamlinginn 1994: 4). This understanding continued into later editions. For example, James's 2005 report on the nationally significant Mt. Franklin festival, typically attended by between 100 and 300 people, begins: "Well, what a fantastic year it has been since last Beltaine at Mt Franklin" (James 2005: 29). That Beltaine should be celebrated at the end of October is unquestioned. James goes on to describe many activities typical of May Day celebrations in Europe, including an "Obby Oss," "Dobbin" and dancing around a "Maypole."

The standardization of the inverted northern hemisphere practices is also illustrated in the books of Fiona Horne (1998, 1999, 2000, 2003), who is probably Australia's most public Witch. In addition to these books, she has appeared in numerous magazines and on various television shows, and is the most widely read Australian author by teenage Witches in Australia (Berger and Ezzy 2007). Spanning a short period of five years, and aimed mainly at the popular teenage Witch market, Horne's books provide a snapshot of the generally accepted understanding of introductory Witchcraft ritual practices and seasonal celebrations at the turn of the century. Horne's first book *Witch: A Personal Journey* (1998) explicitly draws on *The Witches of Oz* as the basis for her chapter on the Wheel of the Year. The northern hemisphere ritual cycle is inverted, the directions of fire and earth are reversed and circle casting is also unquestioned as "deosil (anti-clockwise or 'sunwise')" (Horne 1998: 12). In her second book, *Witch: A Magickal Year*, Horne (1999) suggests a more nuanced approach to the festivals: "The way we experience the seasons in Australia is obviously quite different to Northern Europe when the traditions originated, and since it's such a large continent, the seasonal shifts vary all across the land" (Horne 1999: 40). Despite this suggestion that festivals may need to be further adapted beyond simply inverting the northern hemisphere dates, her descriptions of the rituals still largely mirror the northern hemisphere practices.

The importance of the Wheel of the Year festivals for the broader Pagan Community is also noted by Horne. She observes (1999: 38): "The Sabbats are great for unifying Witches when groups come together and celebrate a common theme." This is perhaps one of the main reasons many Witches and Pagans continue to celebrate the inverted northern hemisphere Wheel

of the Year: it provides a consensus calendar that Witches around Australia share. Major festivals are timed to celebrate those of the Wheel of the Year. While many Pagans have moved to more localized interpretations of the festivals in their personal practice, they continue to celebrate the festivals of the southern hemisphere Wheel of the Year because their celebration is central to community networks and relationships.

More Complex Adaptations

During the late 1990s and subsequently, Pagan practice became more idiosyncratic and localized. This reflects the development of a mature cosmopolitanism in which diversity of practice is respected and encouraged. Various Australian Witchcraft texts have advocated a complex negotiation of tradition and local sensitivity. These adaptations moved in two directions. First, they became more localized, attuned to the seasons and "nature" of where practitioners lived. The second trend was toward a greater sensitivity to the European folklore and traditions that nurtured Pagan practice. Roxanne Bodsworth articulates the first of these trends:

> Following the Wheel cannot be a static way of life. It cannot be dogmatic or unchanging. It is motion, a journey through stars and seasons, through other worlds, through our conscious awareness and our inherent wisdom. It is following the cycles of life, growth, death, and rebirth until no longer is there any separation between following the Wheel and being part of it; no longer any separation between Earth and her children. (Bodsworth 1999: 10)

Bodsworth is here emphasizing the "nature"-oriented aspect of contemporary Paganism (Harvey 1997). Similarly, Frances Billinghurst (2012) begins her book on Pagan seasonal celebrations noting that as she prepares for a winter solstice seasonal celebration, she has spring flowers in her garden, including irises and daffodils. This is quite common in Australia. What is required, Billinghurst (2012: 2) suggests, is more than simply "moving the seasonal sabbat dates around six months."

Both Bodsworth and Billinghurst adapt and develop localized practices that are attuned to the complexities and nuances of the Australian seasonal cycle. For example, most Australian native plants are evergreen and do not lose their leaves in winter. In many places, Australian winters are less harsh than European winters. For the winter solstice, Bodsworth suggests that: "Decorating the house with plants that survive winter symbolizes the

survival of the green and can teach children (and adults) about the difference between deciduous and perennial and the place of these plants in the Australian climate" (Bodsworth 1999: 15).

By 2006, the author "Link" was advising readers of *Pagan Times* to study their journals for patterns in their experience of spring. He lists various spring festivals including Pagan, secular and Christian (Easter in the northern hemisphere) celebrations, suggesting: "While you can mark these formal holidays, you can also mark a few informal celebrations of spring," going on to note events such as school holidays and sports seasons commencing that might be used as personal celebrations (Link 2006: 14).

The more closely Australian Pagans observe the seasons and ecology of Australia, the more problematic even an inverted northern hemisphere Wheel of the Year becomes. For example, Julie Brett (2015: 1) observes that: "There are quite clearly two times of death and rebirth" in the Australian seasonal cycle in South Eastern Australia where the majority of Australians live. In the standard Wheel of the Year, winter is a time of death and summer a time of life and abundance. However, in Australia, while mid-winter is a time of death, so is mid-summer, with the hot, dry heat and destructive fires. For Brett, the height of summer is a time to celebrate "rebirth and renewal, cleansing and waymaking" (2015: 1). Brett has spent considerable time and energy to develop a cycle of festivals that are deeply sensitized to the Australian seasonal cycles.

However, Brett (2015) is also sensitive to the significance of northern hemisphere mythology. For example, she provides some thoughtful reflections on the Pagan use of decorated pine trees at Christmas time. While Brett has worked hard to localize her practice, resisting being "forced" into simplistic importation of northern hemisphere rituals, she makes a cosmopolitan move, recognizing that there are different influences operating. These influences include:

> the ancestors of "blood, mud and wisdom" as Emma Restall-Orr has called them. They are the ancestors of our bloodlines who have given us our physicality, the ancestors of the land that we live in who provide us with a sense of place and being, and the ancestors of our inspiration and learning who have made us who we are in personality and mind, and create our culture too. (Brett 2015: 1)

In this context, the decorated pine tree becomes a way of honoring her Pagan cultural ancestors, and of connecting with Pagans in other parts of the world. She does this alongside her more localized practice.

Other Pagans also retain a relationship with the northern hemisphere mythology that informs and nurtures their practice. Hiraeth argues that the direction of the elements in circle casting is not simply a matter of flipping the northern hemisphere associations of north and south: "What we eventually get back to though, is the notion of a folkloric 'mythic' context which informs the directions and our thoughts on the Elements" (Phillips and Hiraeth 2002: 42). Hiraeth notes that many of these mythological traditions remain influential on Pagans practicing in Australia. While many do "flip the attributions … there are others who have grown up with the European mythic background without the direct physical context, and in those cases the broader mythic connections associated with the North often prevail" (Phillips and Hiraeth 2002: 42). In this context, the physical environment of the ritualists is less significant. Rather, "mythic connections and meanings are paramount, and … we key in to mythic/astral/magical truths." For Hiraeth, it makes a great deal of sense of invoke fire in the south and earth in the north, as much of the mythological literature has these associations which resonate deeply for the practitioner.

Hiraeth concludes his discussion by stressing: "There isn't necessarily one right way to look at things" (Phillips and Hiraeth 2002: 42). This statement is indicative of a broader cosmopolitan openness to diversity that is now quite common. Pagans in Australia have moved away from asserting that there is one right way of doing things, whether that be following the practices of the northern hemisphere, or flipping them. Rather, as Paganisms in Australia matured, practitioners became more confident to choose a set of practices that resonated with their repertoires, mythologies and local geography.

Hiraeth's discussion is particularly interesting, as it highlights precisely the tensions that Pagan cosmopolitan religious cultures experience. It also points toward the adaptive practices of Australian Pagans and etiquette of respect that frames them. Much of Pagan cultural heritage resonates with European myth and associations. However, the physical environment contains a quite different set of associations. Which one prevails depends heavily on the individual's experience and history. The importance of the European mythological tradition was reaffirmed as Australian Witches increasingly developed strong networks with their European counterparts as international communication became more common with the growing importance of the Internet: "The choice to remain traditionalist, back to origins and in some cases back to the Northern Hemisphere, is intermingled with the impressions of the information super-highway" (Kettle

1995: 37). Some practitioners take this to great lengths, ignoring completely the "nature" aspect of Paganism, focusing instead on the magical or occult aspects. Tully (2015) notes this tendency, whilst railing against it:

> Some Australians even insist on sticking completely to the Northern Hemisphere method, Compass attributes, Deosil and Widdershins AND even the Sabbats! Their justification is that rituals occur on the Astral Plane and so it does not really matter what direction you use or on what date the Seasons fall in the real world. (Tully 2015)

When Paganism first came to Australia, most Pagans were Witches, following the distinctive set of practices and festivals established by the early Wiccans in Britain (Hutton 1999). However, as Paganism became established in Australia, more and more practitioners began to follow other traditions, including Druidry, Heathenry, Shamanism and various forms of High Magic (Hume 1997). The diversity in contemporary Pagan ritual practices is a reflection of this increasing diversity in Paganism more generally. Some traditions, particularly those influenced by High Magic and esoteric occultism, are much more oriented to otherworldly and metaphysical myths, symbols and events. For practitioners of these traditions, the local seasonal environment is of less significance.

Adaptive Pagan cosmopolitanism moves in complex ways as it negotiates relationships with multiple repertoires, practices and discursive traditions. Moving beyond the simplistic importation of European practices, or mirroring them, contemporary cosmopolitan Pagans engage with their European mythological heritage, while also adapting and transforming it for an Australian context. Some continue to maintain that their particular practice is the only correct one. However, Pagans are much more likely to subscribe to an etiquette of respectful diversity: "There isn't necessarily one right way to look at things" (Phillips and Hiraeth 2002: 42).

The Evolution of the Wheel of the Year in *Witchcraft* Magazine

The evolution of understandings of the Wheel of the Year in *Witchcraft* magazine clearly illustrates the changing understandings identified in other literature. *Witchcraft* was an Australian magazine widely read by Australian Pagans and distributed through mainstream newsagent outlets from 1994 to 2005. Over the time of its publication, descriptions of the

Wheel of the Year festivals move from a simplistic rehearsal of northern hemisphere dates, to an inversion of these dates for the southern hemisphere, to a more localized, experiential and adaptive approach. This transformation reflects understandings and practices in the broader Pagan community, although *Witchcraft* probably lagged a little behind changes that were occurring in other parts of the Pagan community in Australia.

Early editions of the magazine provide confusing information about dates of festivals. The "Calendar" in the first edition lists solstices and equinoxes, but does not mention whether the solstices are summer or winter, or whether the equinoxes are spring or autumn. In the second edition in "A Witch's Calendar" (1995), the Winter solstice is listed in December, and the Spring equinox in March, the northern hemisphere dates. However, they have a text box that explains: "Witches living in the southern hemisphere have the option of following the calendar of their northern sisters, or swapping the dates so as to correspond with our seasons" (A Witch's Calendar 1995: 50). In 1997, Velverde's "A Wiccan Calendar" provides both northern and southern hemisphere dates for the solstices and equinoxes, but retains the northern hemisphere dates for the cross-quarter festivals of Lammas (August 1) and Samhain (October 31).

As we have seen, by the mid-1990s, most Pagan practitioners had begun to invert the Wheel of the Year dates. This is illustrated in an article by Kettle (1995) in *Esoterica*, a less commercial magazine with a smaller distribution oriented to more experienced practitioners in Australia. Kettle (1995: 36) notes that the first edition of *Witchcraft* magazine in 1994 listed Pagan festivals according to the northern hemisphere dates which are "wildly wrong dates." However, the confusion in the first edition of *Witchcraft* is probably indicative of the confusion experienced by many practitioners of Witchcraft, particularly those who had learnt their practice from books or in traditions that followed the northern hemisphere dates.

It is only with issue number five of *Witchcraft* that Deitrich (1998: 55) fully reverses the dates. Later issues continue giving southern hemisphere dates, often with the northern hemisphere ones in brackets. By 2001 (A Witch's Wheel of the Year), the southern hemisphere dates are listed without qualification and a northern hemisphere date is only mentioned in explanation of Samhain, with respect to Halloween. The directions associated with the elements of Earth and Fire are also reversed. In 2003, an article in *Witchcraft* has no doubt that south is the direction of the element of earth in the southern hemisphere and north is the direction of fire (Spiraldancer 2003).

Toward the end of its publication run, *Witchcraft* began to reflect the more complex and adaptive practice of Australian Pagans. For example, King's (2004) article on "An Australian Wheel of Life" marks a move away from the dominant influence of European mythology to a more localized ritual practice. Similarly, in 2005, Bodsworth notes: "Keeping the Wheel of the Year in Australia can have greater implications than just having a warm Yule feast in the appropriate season—it can help us build greater ties with the land and our country" (Bodsworth 2005: 36). Bodsworth and King both seek to develop a more experiential engagement with the local seasons and landscape of Australia.

Conclusion

Australian Paganism is cosmopolitan in a number of senses. First, the practices and rituals of Australian Pagans have become cosmopolitan through a process of adaptation, engagement and openness to a plurality of repertoires and "others." These "others" include the seasons and landscape of Australia. The first Australian Witches simply imported northern hemisphere festivals and ritual practices. The disjuncture between these practices and Australian seasons and ecology was stark. Australian Pagans then moved to mirror the northern hemisphere practices, switching the Wheel of the Year festivals, direction of circle casting and elemental associations so they corresponded more closely with Australian seasons and ecology. Finally, Australian Pagans adapted their practice to develop localized and individualized rituals and festivals. These cosmopolitan adaptations engage the voices of the local Australian landscape, European mythological traditions and the substantial literature on Pagan ritual practice. They produce a sophisticated and nuanced multiplicity of practice that is cosmopolitan and largely respectful of this diversity.

Second, Australian Paganism is internally cosmopolitan, in the sense that diversity and alterity within Paganism are respected and creatively engaged. The first Pagans to arrive in Australian were mostly Witches and Wiccans. Over time other Pagan traditions became more established, including Druids, Heathens, Shamans and a rich variety of eclectic forms of Paganism. It is common for individuals to be members of multiple traditions, to move relatively easily between traditions, and for members of one tradition to participate in the rituals and practices of other traditions. This internal cosmopolitanism reflects the polytheistic theology and practice of most Pagans. It also reflects cosmopolitan forms of engagement

with other religious traditions. This is part of a broader social engagement facilitated by social and legal policies of religious tolerance (Ezzy 2013).

However, the individualism and diversity of cosmopolitan Pagan practices is constrained by the needs for consistency and community integration. The seasonal festivals of the southern hemisphere Wheel of the Year remain at the heart of the contemporary Australian Pagan community calendar. This is unlikely to change. These festivals serve as foci for community building and relationships. The long history of celebrations on the relevant dates creates a form of cultural inertia. The Beltane festival held at Mt. Franklin in late October, for example, has been going for more than 30 years (James 2005). It is unlikely that any other ritual calendar could achieve a similar degree of community acceptance.

At the heart of cosmopolitan Australian Paganism is a respectful etiquette of engagement with "others." This etiquette developed out of the plurality of gods, humans, mythologies, spirits and landscapes with whom Australian Pagans interact. Some Pagans retain dogmatic and exclusionary practices and beliefs. However, the majority are comfortable in a cosmopolitan pluralistic context. Australian Pagans often participate in rituals led by Pagan "others" from different traditions. The small number of Pagans in Australia and the dispersed nature of the Australian population perhaps make this more necessary than in Britain or the United States. While polytheistic beliefs and ethical imperatives to respect diversity are important, the practical considerations and etiquettes of practical engagement with the Australian seasons and landscape as an "other" have been central to the development of the multiplicity of forms that make up cosmopolitan Australian Paganisms.

Note

1. The abbreviation "loc" indicates the "location number" of the direct quotation in the Kindle e-book referenced here.

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Cosmopolitanism, Neo-Shamans and Contemporary Māori Healers in New Zealand

Dawne Sanson

One of the interesting aspects is that in spirit, or in those other worlds, there is no ethnicity. I'll never forget at Avebury Stones three or four years ago [when a couple of friends and] I walked the Avenue. We were heading for the actual village, and coming towards us was this extraordinary group of people, raggle-taggle Gypsy-looking people except that their draperies and chains were 18ct gold and Italian silks. They were being led by this huge Native American with a drum [laughing]. All these dancing individuals were European and guiding them along the Avenue was this Native American—he was an actual ethnic, huge, reddish-brown, long braids, eagle feathers, blue jeans, squash blossom necklace Native American! We made eye contact. He looked at me and I looked at him, and it was very odd. And I thought "Bro, what are you doing?" It was May Day, the 1st of May, and earlier that morning … [there was] a series of rituals around the stones and along the Avenue.

In the village, there's a pub on the corner and there were three guys in Druid outfits [laughing]. British men with beards, longish hair and strange jewelry, and white robes over which were draped these bright,

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bright emerald satin Church-like vestments, but they weren't vestments, they were just—oh God, I don't know what they were, but they were very, very bright and emerald and satin and gleaming and embroidered with runes and Celtic knot-work in gold. And I thought, "They're really interesting!"

In my head, this thing happened: why is a Native American drummer with a group of hurdy-gurdy Gypsies in very expensive Gypsy clothing up the Avenue at mid-day while, having lunch at the pub are these three guys in their Druid outfits? And it is things like that which—umm, the juxtaposition, and the ad hoc-ery, discordant craziness of events like that which really excite me, which really intrigue me. (Interview with Nuori, 13 May 2008)

Introduction

Nuori is a Māori woman I worked with during my doctoral fieldwork researching contemporary shamanism in New Zealand (Sanson 2012). Her anecdote above illustrates the intriguing contradictions and paradoxes inherent in the unexpected, bizarre sight she encountered when, after the locally inspired Pagan and Druid May Day rituals were over, a procession of expensively dressed visiting Europeans led by a Native American man paraded down the avenue in Avebury, England. Local, global and indigenous influences incongruously met and intersected. As he made eye contact with Nuori, visibly an indigenous woman witnessing the parade, we do not know what he was thinking, but Nuori's response is clear: "Bro, what are you doing?" she thinks. She recognizes the "discordant craziness" of the situation, but also perhaps feels some strange shared experience with the man; they are both indigenous people participating in ceremonies in a place and time unrelated to their ethnic origins. Ethnicity does not exist in the spirit worlds, Nuori observed, but it is clearly discernable in these events taking place in everyday reality, and was presumably important to those following the Native American and, indeed, to the man himself proclaiming his ethnicity in his ceremonial attire imported to this different local landscape and culture.

Nuori self-identifies primarily as Māori, but her ancestry also includes French, German, Inuit and Sami (from her great-great-grandfather's lineage). Rich hereditary, cultural and global influences have thus contributed to her quest to find a name for her private healing rituals for friends and family, eventually leading her to think that "shaman" best describes her

practice. On occasions, she has classified herself as Wiccan/*Pai Marire* (goodness and peace),[1] but since meeting two woman shamans in Norway—one Inuit and the other Norwegian—she has been considering "shaman" an appropriate descriptor:

> It was like, they do stuff that I do! We performed a ceremony on a Bronze Age barrow in a circle of silver birch trees, and it was extraordinary. I thought, "Yeah, this feels like me!"

As I left Nuori, we joked about her "coming out" as a "shaman": "My Sami ancestor is by my shoulder here, grinning!" she laughed. Taking on the title of shaman has been a private process of identity construction for herself reflecting her personal cosmopolitan influences and inheritance, rather than responding to a need to explain her healing methodology and rituals to others.

Cosmopolitanism has been theorized in various ways by social scientists. Rapport (2010: 464), drawing on John Stuart Mill, describes it as a "philosophy of freedom." Often it is analyzed on two levels—as the observable practices of people in their daily lives negotiating relationships with new and different cultures and ideas accessed through travel, migration, books and the Internet, resulting in plural perspectives; and, secondly, as a broader moral viewpoint that "emphasizes both tolerance towards difference and the possibility of a more just world order" (Nowicka and Rovisco 2009: 2). Anthropologists and sociologists, according to Nowicka and Rovisco (2009: 4), have tended to observe cosmopolitanism on a micro- and perhaps more mundane level, rather than be preoccupied with the larger ethico-political processes or philosophical and moral issues which concern political scientists. On the other hand, sociologists Skrbiš and Woodward (2013: 116) note that cosmopolitanism is an inherently ambiguous concept, as people negotiate their practices between local and global domains within an "increasingly interconnected and open world." They refer to it as a tool for conceptualizing global processes, a useful aid to understanding societies' and peoples' practices in a globalizing world.

This chapter examines the practices and relationships of neo-shamans and contemporary Māori healers, at least some of whom consider themselves shamans, in New Zealand. The neo-shamans I worked with came from diverse backgrounds; they were predominantly Pākehā (people who are New Zealand born with European ancestry) or other Europeans, along with a few Māori and Pacific Island people. Those of European descent

included both recent and long-time immigrants from the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Hungary and other European countries, South Africa, and one French Canadian woman with part-Native American heritage. Here I consider the ways in which neo-shamans in New Zealand, with their eclectic blending of assorted influences, are creating novel, cosmopolitan and fluid forms of twenty-first-century Western shamanism special to this land. In many ways, they are similar to the neo-shamans who have emerged in other Western countries over the last 40–50 years—particularly those trained in "core shamanism" with the Foundation for Shamanic Studies founded by Michael Harner in 1985. However, their rootedness in Aotearoa/New Zealand, with its distinctive landscape, its history of immigration and colonization leading to a "do-it-yourself" pioneering ethos, and their interactions with contemporary Māori healers, have enabled a particular and unique form of neo-shamanism to evolve (see Fig. 11.1).

At the same time, modern Māori healers, who might be categorized by anthropologists and other scholars as "shamans"—grounded in a multifaceted, cosmological blend of monotheism, polytheism and animism colored by the impact of Christianity and colonialism—are sharing their traditional knowledge with any who wish to learn from them. I describe the interplay between Māori spirituality and the role of the *tohunga* (priest or skilled spiritual leader) within the complex colonial history which has contributed to the shaping of contemporary Māori healing practices, while situating the healers in a global context. The willingness of some to include other indigenous and various New Age-like practices within their healing work, while still retaining, innovating and modifying their Māori traditions and *tikanga* (customs), becomes apparent.

Neo-Shamans in New Zealand as Cosmopolitan Bricoleurs

The geographical spaces and the interior spatial maps occupied by neo-shamanic practitioners in Aotearoa/New Zealand are varied and mobile. Some of the multiple strands that shape and intersect with their practices include the New Age movement, contemporary Paganism, Native American spirituality, complementary and alternative medicine, psychotherapy and counselling, Māori spirituality and healing traditions, all of which combine to create a multiplicity of local identities. They are unique by virtue

Fig. 11.1 Neo-shamanic altar incorporating a fusion of elements from the New Zealand landscape (native and exotic foliage, bird's nest, shells), Māori tradition (woven flax) and Native American influences (rattle and talking stick decorated with bones and feathers). Photograph: Dawne Sanson

of living in this land that embraces, inspires and informs their shamanic practices. The Māori place name Te Arai[2] can be interpreted as "the veil," and for two neo-shamans I met during my research—living there with expansive and elevated views across native bush and farmland to the ocean and Te Arai headland—the veil between the worlds is very thin. For one expatriate neo-shaman, returning to live in the country of her birth was a "coming home" to the land and mountains, especially Aoraki (Mt. Cook), her birthplace. The interplay of the New Zealand landscape, its colonial history and relations with Māori, the *tangata whenua* (indigenous people of the land) all contribute to neo-shamanic identities and practices in New Zealand.

Yet the complex networks of alternate spiritualities and healing modalities that neo-shamans in New Zealand live and practice among are also subject to global effects, the dynamic interplay between local and global contributing to diverse and heterogeneous neo-shamanic forms. They

have not been immune to global shifts in consciousness which have popularized shamanism, Paganism and other nature religions over the last 40 or 50 years throughout the Western world—the so-called spiritual re-enchantment of the West (Sanson 2012). New Zealanders have always traveled widely. The tradition of young New Zealanders in particular traveling and gaining "overseas experience" (OE) is well ingrained, resulting in wide exposure to other cultures.[3] Robert Ellwood (1993) has argued that New Zealanders tend to be attracted to alternative spiritualities in disproportionate numbers compared with other populations.[4] Perhaps, he suggests (1993: 215),

> the twenty-first century will bring a distinctly New Zealand style of modern paganism, in which the Kiwi love of nature and its powers … and the utopian New Zealand myth, blend powerfully with themes from Māori spirituality to create something new.

His prediction could be correct. A New Zealand feminist witch and ritual-maker has related the southern hemisphere seasons to Celtic and Māori traditions creating a unique Pagan ritual cycle. Her desire to find the "dynamic meeting point, the richness of relationship and the joy of cultural exchange from the deepest spiritual perspective" (Batten 2005: 23) may well continue, she proposes, as New Zealanders are inspired by festivals and rituals introduced by other cultures within their increasingly multicultural population (2005: 9).

As a result, neo-shamanic practices, while creatively evolving in unique ways, with seasonal and cultural variations distinctive to New Zealand, are affected by global trends as people access information through books, the Internet or workshops (some of which are facilitated by teachers visiting New Zealand from overseas). They form one thread within the global tapestry which is creating, synthesizing and reconstructing numerous forms of twenty-first-century shamanisms. Many have traveled to or lived in other countries, gaining exposure to spiritual teachings and belief systems in a variety of global contexts; some have studied with neo-shamans or indigenous shamans while overseas. Others have been born overseas and immigrated to New Zealand as young children or adults, bringing their own particular shamanic understandings and experiences with them. The Internet has provided access to information and online courses in shamanism, dramatically expanding the number of influences neo-shamans in New Zealand are exposed to. Besides those trained in core shamanism,

some draw on their Irish/Celtic and pagan roots. Some practice Toltec shamanism, based on teachings by followers of Castaneda, such as Ken Eagle Feather (2006), while others have been trained in South American traditions, or participated in *ayahuasca* ceremonies in Amazonian South America. Still others have experienced workshops or trained with South African *sangoma* (traditional healers or diviners). A New Zealand-trained medical doctor became interested in shamanism and energy healing after working with indigenous people in Australia and Ecuador, and aspires to integrate these teachings into her practice. Some psychotherapists incorporate shamanic journeying with their practices. Clearly, neo-shamans living in New Zealand share much in common with neo-shamans in other Western countries, albeit with a distinctive New Zealand flavor.

I have argued previously that neo-shamans in New Zealand are eclectic bricoleurs who skillfully adapt, adopt and work with whatever tools they have on hand (Sanson 2012). "This is what shamans have always done," several told me. Shamans apparently have a chameleon-like ability to shape-shift and change in new circumstances, blending old and new ideas and techniques. They work creatively with whatever tools are on hand, the difference being that contemporary neo-shamans have a much larger pool to draw from. And that is why shamanism with its numerous forms will always survive, I was told. During a conversation I had with Margaret, a Māori woman exploring shamanism for her personal healing and as an avenue to reclaim her heritage, we mused about the implications for contemporary shamanism. If traditional or indigenous shamanism was or is ultimately about survival—obtaining food supplies and gathering information for healing from the spirit world—how is it relevant now? What might "survival" mean when the basic human needs of most Westerners have already been met? Our conversation continued:

> M.: I think your study is really interesting. It raises more questions than answers about the differences between ancient shamanism and modern shamanism. I imagine traditional [shamans] didn't do psychotherapy, didn't sit around discussing childhood … It seems to me it's exploded into so many different permutations of what it could be … I imagine right throughout time, it's always been important for survival to be relevant. No point being an ancient shaman that is no longer relevant.
>
> D.S.: That's the thing. The bottom line of shamanism is about survival, survival of the tribe when food supplies were so important, and medical supplies were not around other than the tools they had with them, the

plants and medicines available to them. And so now, it's what is relevant in a Western context …

M.: When other fundamental needs are getting met in terms of material issues anyway. So what is surviving? How is it meeting someone's depression? I guess that's where psychology comes in.

D.S.: I think a lot of Western shamanism is working in that area; also the area of addictions, alcoholism. That blending of shamanic practitioners and psychotherapy.

The survival of shamanism by assuming variable guises depends on the capacity of shamans to be flexible, to change and adapt their practices. The neo-shamans I spoke to believe this is one of their roles, as they explore, create and (re)-introduce shamanic concepts to a world they believe desperately needs their spiritual insights and skills in a time of climate change, global environmental degradation, and political and economic uncertainty. They take seriously the prophetic voices of indigenous people such as the Lakota visionary, Crazy Horse, calling for preservation of the Earth.[5] The evolution and survival of contemporary shamanism—whether in the form of assorted neo-shamans in New Zealand and other Western countries, revivalist Sami neo-shamans seeking to reclaim their lost heritage (Kraft 2015), or indigenous shamans modifying their practices to suit changing circumstances—therefore depends on the ability of shamanic practitioners to negotiate global–local cosmopolitan trends.

Shamanism as a complex of unchanging and local spiritual practices or traditions is not viable in the postmodern world. Joralemon (1990) has described the fluidity that one Peruvian *curandero* demonstrated as he modified his practice when Westerners began to seek him out. Joralemon's initial reaction (as an anthropologist) was anger, embarrassment and a sense of having been betrayed as he observed "ancient traditions" being broken and tainted by New Age seekers. Later, he came to understand that the shaman was successfully navigating "between local and international frameworks for understanding sickness" (1990: 110), and that he was, in fact, not doing "anything different from what his Peruvian predecessors had done for generations … how else did a form of curing that pre-dates the arrival of the Spanish by many centuries come to include the use of altars filled with Christian icons?" Moreover, the shaman was able to do this because of his deep understanding and immersion in his own Peruvian cultural context and, Joralemon (1990: 111–12) concludes, this "has always been the key to the survival of shamanism in Peru."

Hannerz describes cosmopolitans as "consumers of cosmopolitanism" who "'pick' and … 'choose' to engage or not with alien cultures" (1990, cited in Blasco 2010: 404). "Consumers" neo-shamans are indeed, as they purchase spiritual knowledge and skills from the global marketplace, read books and access knowledge freely from the Internet, meeting and talking to people with similar interests. These bricoleur-cosmopolitan neo-shamans display varying degrees of reflexive awareness about where particular borrowed (or purchased) practices originated, and concerns that academics and others may have regarding cultural appropriation do not generally cause them to question their practices. It seems fair to suggest that their processes of picking and choosing from other traditions are an unconscious or organic form of cosmological hybridity (Brendbekken 2003, cited in Lahood 2008: 168). Nowicka and Rovisco (2009: 2) point out that there can be different degrees of reflexivity among individuals and that "certain cosmopolitan values and ideas … allow … [some people] to develop a cosmopolitan imagination and a knowledge standpoint" in particular contexts: "in some social settings cosmopolitan sensibilities remain latent, in other contexts, they are more actively and consciously displayed by people." Cosmopolitanism is thus something people (including neo-shamans) enact without necessarily consciously thinking about it, while in other circumstances they may be very aware of external factors that cause them to modify their practices. I extend and illustrate these ideas by next considering the relationships between neo-shamans and Māori healers.

Neo-Shamans and Māori Healers Meet

In New Zealand, I have encountered a number of examples of contemporary Māori healers and neo-shamans working together, forging new relationships and creating unique fusion healing practices. Relations between neo-shamans and Māori have not been as tension-filled as those cases in which Native Americans have accused Westerners of stealing their culture (e.g., Aldred 2000; Churchill 2003; Jenkins 2004; Smith 1994). Although they may, in some cases, have less knowledge or awareness about appropriation issues in relation to Native Americans or other indigenous peoples, neo-shamans in New Zealand are generally aware of potential sensitivities over these matters when it comes to Māori traditions and culture. Their consciousness of the politics of biculturalism and indigeneity in this country led to a reluctance by some neo-shamans to talk to me about their relationships with Māori healers, out of respect for Māori healing tradi-

tions and practices. One woman told me: "I feel very presumptuous, but all I know is we do the same things, in my experience of being around them and with them." She and the Māori healers she knows meet at the interface of their mutual psychic and spiritual understandings, the flow of information going in both directions. I describe one publically prominent relationship between a neo-shaman and a *tohunga* shortly, which is an exception to the hesitation expressed by this neo-shaman.

In addition, it is likely that changing social and political processes in New Zealand over the last 30 or 40 years have resulted in a shift among Māori themselves, so that they are perhaps less possessive of their cultural knowledge than they were, at least in some instances. The settlement of Māori claims relating to the Treaty of Waitangi by the Waitangi Tribunal,[6] and an increased drive to address the negative impacts of colonization, have contributed to a Māori renaissance resulting in greater indigenous agency in managing tribal assets, new Māori enterprises in forestry, fishing, farming, broadcasting and the arts, tourism and business, along with a revitalization of *te reo* (the Māori language) (Royal 2015). This renaissance is also evident in contemporary Māori healing and the desire of Māori to reassert their healing knowledge as a means of reclaiming power and their "cultural and intellectual estate" (Reinfeld and Pihama 2007: 25). Innovative changes incorporating traditional concepts have empowered Māori, shifting them from positions of victimization to one of self-responsibility that embraces multiple perspectives and opening them to global cosmopolitan influences.

Lily George's (2010) case study of an urban *marae* (meeting place) in Auckland is an example of Māori from many different *iwi* (tribes) committed to a vision of sharing a space with non-Māori. Through the development of a "third space," conceived of as an evolving, organic and dynamic space, "Māori and Pākehā … can find common ground that is negotiated for the benefit of all" (George 2010: 265). The Māori healers I have worked with reside within this third space, willing to work with anyone who wishes to attend their clinics, workshops or *wānanga* (Māori learning institutions).[7] Neo-shamans and Māori healers also meet in this third space where all healing traditions and spiritual understandings are honored.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that not all Māori feel like this. For example, debates and confusion have arisen concerning the Waitaha people (a South Island *iwi*), alternative archaeologies and histories. A Māori scholar, Makere Harawira (1999), has accused former academic Pākehā historian and archaeologist-turned-New Age teacher, Barry Brailsford,

of exploitation and spreading "disinformation" after Waitaha *kaumātua* (elders) entrusted him with their oral history. One Māori woman told me some Māori might not wish to share sacred knowledge because they wish to preserve the traditions of their ancestors without the "taint" of colonizing influences, and may have concerns about the information becoming disrespected, diluted, mutated or misused. When I asked another Māori scholar about the Waitaha story, tellingly, she replied: "Do you mean Waitaha the people, or the new religious movement that has grown up around Barry Brailsford?"

These are complex issues that require careful negotiation. Māori such as Harawira are opposed to the sharing of sacred cultural knowledge which could result in misappropriation, while others such as Dr. Rangimarie Turuki Arikirangi Rose Pere (1994: 170; 1997: 58) and my research participant Te Waimatoa Turoa-Morgan (Wai) think it is time for indigenous people to impart their sacred knowledge to others outside their culture.

But running more deeply than these issues of cultural politics are perceived spiritual connections between some neo-shamans and contemporary Māori healers. A number of neo-shamans I worked with distinguish between their physical and spiritual shamanic lineages, which they feel give their practice legitimacy. By "physical lineage" they mean their genetic or hereditary bloodline, whereas their "spiritual lineage" consists of their soul or spiritual connections from past lives. The belief of these neo-shamans is that those drawn to shamanism in the twenty-first century are remembering past lives and are answering a "call" to return to the earth at this time. They believe the earth is on the brink of ecological, economic and social collapse. The returning shamans are "reconnecting and remembering," bringing their "medicine bundles from those [past] lifetimes," one woman told me. The "medicine bundles" she was referring to consist of shamanic tools and spirit helpers acquired from previous incarnations as shamans. The spiritual lineages of those shamans who have chosen to be born at this time are as important as their physical or genetic lineages.

One woman, Franchelle, founder of the Medicine Woman Centre for Shamanic Studies, is an example of a neo-shaman who believes that both her physical and spiritual lineages support her shamanic practice. She works closely with a Māori *tohunga*, Dr. Rangimarie Turuki Arikirangi Rose Pere (Rose). Franchelle's shamanic gifts come through her maternal and paternal physical bloodlines, her Russian and Native American ancestors whom she says she has always been able to communicate with.

Thus, she is a hereditary shaman through her genetic lineages, but she also believes her spiritual lineage contributes to her shamanic powers. It is through her spiritual lineage that her relationship with Rose manifests. Her understandings about various arcane Māori concepts are teachings received both through her ability to function as a *tohunga* in this lifetime, and through a Māori mystery school (the *Kura Huna*) whose teachings she is able to directly access spiritually in nonordinary reality. Franchelle was able to correctly answer specific test questions about the *atua* (gods) and *tupuna* (ancestors) posed to her by Rose in *te reo huna*[8] (which at the time Franchelle did not speak or understand), demonstrating she had direct access to information held in the psychic plane and generally only available to Māori. As a result of their unique spiritual connection, Rose Pere serves as the "Official Spiritual Patron and Guardian in Perpetuity" for a range of New Zealand native plant flower essences cocreated by Franchelle and her husband.[9] Writing in a book published about the flower essences, Rose says: "In this lifetime Franchelle and I have chosen two different cultures to work from and within … We both wear our cultural cloaks with pride and integrity, but on a spiritual level we are one with each other" (Ofososké-Wyber 2009: 13).

One Māori man commented to me that "Franchelle has certainly received an awesome reference from Dr Pere and seems to have been initiated into some extremely esoteric Māori teachings. It is the closest connection I've seen between occult knowledge of the Māori with 'new age' (for lack of a better word) wisdom, the two 'cultural cloaks' referred to by Dr Pere" (pers. comm., 28 Sept 2009). In a second communication (5 October 2009), he continued: "Dr Pere is surprisingly revealing of her *kura huna/*hidden world and Franchelle must surely be of the same soul group. It is powerful stuff indeed when the aspirations of a soul-group are able to manifest on the physical plane." The relationship between Rose and Franchelle illustrates the complexities that can arise when traditional hidden knowledge appears to be blended with neo-shamanic and New Age notions—or perhaps it is the case that they are *not*, in fact, exclusively neo-shamanic and New Age notions. In some circumstances, it seems that previously hidden sacred indigenous knowledge, once revealed outside its own culture, has some similarities to ideas in Western esoteric traditions about the occult and astrology, now commonly disseminated within New Age circles.

To facilitate his understandings of Māori healing practices, O'Connor (2008) drew on anthroposophical philosophy developed by Rudolf

Steiner (1861–1925), mind–body medicine and quantum mechanics theories proposed by a contemporary medical and ayurvedic doctor, Deepak Chopra, to explain the subtle and intangible spiritual and energetic concepts embodied by the healers. Such comparisons highlight the similarities between notions intrinsic to the "traditional" work of these Māori healers and much New Age thinking, principles that are also familiar to shamanic, and complementary and alternative practitioners who work within subtle energetic healing realms. These concepts all push the boundaries of Western rationality and epistemologies (Kent 2007: iv), but, as Hume (1999: 5–6) points out, "ideas of alternate realities that have woven their way through Western occultism for centuries" begin to become avenues for Westerners to comprehend indigenous worldviews. It is at these crossroads that Franchelle and Rose meet.

Early in 2015, in a three-part sacred ceremony held at Lake Waikaremoana,[10] Dr. Pere adopted Franchelle into her *iwi* as a *tohunga ruahine* (*ruahine* = an old woman, a Māori woman elder or *kuia*), "keeper of the sacred ceremonies and the ritual priestess who is a spiritual guardian of the First Voice—the spiritual language and vibrations of the divine mother from the *whare wānanga* house of higher learning" (http://www.nzfloweressences.co.nz/about-us/the-founders/ accessed 9 September 2015). As the Māori man I corresponded with observed, this is an extraordinary occurrence. Franchelle's spiritual endorsement and credentials are being used to give credibility to a very successful global New Age business. A recent workshop advertisement for the ninth Medicine Woman Residential Workshop (under the auspices of the Medicine Woman Centre for Shamanic Studies) promises participants they will "personally experience and participate in sacred ceremony and aspects of divine mysteries that have never before been publically available."[11] Recently, 11 Japanese women traveled to New Zealand to participate in a three-day Japanese Medicine Women Workshop, and they will apparently return to continue the work in 2016 (First Light Flower Essences e-Newsletter, 29 October 2015).[12] The global spiritual market place is patently flourishing.

Māori Healers as Local "Shamans" in a Global Context

I now turn to an exploration of traditions and cosmopolitanism in relation to contemporary Māori healers, some of whom self-identify as shamans. As Delugan (2010) points out, linking indigeneity and cosmopolitanism initially seems contradictory, with indigenous people supposedly locked into traditions and customs bounded by a particular time and place, in direct contrast to cosmopolitans with a global and inclusive perspective. Some scholars argue that these distinctions have lost their "sharp contours," and that the boundaries between local and global are "blurred and indistinct … more permeable to flows of information" (Beck 2009: xi, xii). Perhaps a cosmology such as that attributed to ancient Māori, who viewed the universe as a fabric woven from a "fabulous mélange of energies" (Royal 2003: xiii), lends itself to an "indigenous cosmopolitanism" (Biolsi 2005, cited in Delugan 2010: 84). In the physical world manifested by those energies, Māori, in common with other indigenous peoples, are subject to and participate in complex global flows that have the potential to both challenge and extend or enrich their traditions. Māori healers live and interact within a global sphere as they travel and export their healing practices to Europe and the Americas, and intermingle with other indigenous people, discovering commonalities between their traditions. Some contemporary Māori healers are eclectic in their practices, borrowing from others' teachings and creating new practices and traditions. Others, though, do not feel the need to bring in new methods, saying that the traditional teachings they have received work for them and the people they treat.

Nowicka and Rovisco (2009: 9) observe that "while individuals can become more cosmopolitan in distinct world sites in rather banal ways (synchronic time), cosmopolitan identities, practices and ethico-political outlooks of various kinds are also tied to historically-rooted memories and imaginaries (diachronic time)." This observation is relevant when considering the changing practices of Māori healers. Ritual use of *karakia* (prayer), *wai* (water), *rongoā* (plant medicine), *karanga* (calling out) and *waiata* (song) are all traditional healing practices. Some healers work with their hands, using various forms of *mirimiri* (massage) and subtle energy healing, while others use oratory, song and movement, ritual and ceremony. Many blend and incorporate other teachings and traditions into their own cultural matrix. Some have websites and use Facebook to

promote their work, developing and extending their traditions in creative ways that syncretically mix and match healing elements borrowed from numerous global sources, including other indigenous cultures, Western psychological and esoteric sources and Eastern martial arts and healing traditions. Some travel overseas, especially to Europe and North America, where healing centers are established by local contacts who publicize the healers' arrival and book clients for the duration of their visit.[13] Others conduct commercial spiritual tours within New Zealand that encourage international and New Zealand (Māori and Pākehā) spiritual seekers.[14] Some healers promote their practices as an act of ethnic pride and renaissance. One Māori woman told me that if the innovators are well grounded in their *tikanga*, paradoxically they are then able to innovate authentically, building on their traditions, extending or adapting them for modern Māori and non-Māori audiences alike. They are exhibiting a form of cosmopolitanism that is diachronic—their innovative practices are embedded within a deep knowledge of their own *tikanga*.

The Changing Roles of Tohunga

Among Māori healers, *tohunga* are a particular category of specialist healers.[15] Other healers may not be named *tohunga*, but still perform a number of *tohunga-* or shamanic-like healing functions in their communities. Some have chosen to take on the name "shaman," particularly those who work in Europe where *tohunga* is an unfamiliar term. *Tohunga* have been shrouded in mystery for centuries, their knowledge *tapu* (sacred, set apart) and unavailable to ordinary people, Māori or non-Māori. "*Tohunga*" is sometimes a misunderstood term in much the same way as "shaman" is, and, as with shamans, *tohunga* have been both romanticized and demonized by Europeans. *Tohunga* serve in many roles and one Māori healer wrote to me that "Māori healing has its own forms of shamanism through the *tohunga* lineages. Many types, from *rongoā* medicine-makers through to land healers through to psychic readers" (Reedy, personal communication, 6 August 2008).

Europeans arriving in New Zealand in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries introduced diseases such as measles and typhoid fever which Māori had no natural immunity to, and *tohunga* were helpless to cure. This, in combination with European fears and perception of Māori beliefs and spirituality as quackery, led to the *Tohunga Suppression Act* (TSA) in 1907.[16] This had the effect of driving *tohunga* underground. The Act was

not repealed until 1964, and since then, Māori healers have very slowly emerged to become a little more visible in the wider New Zealand society. Many *tohunga* who learnt their skills in traditional *whare wānanga* grew up in the twentieth century, but their elders and teachers were of the nineteenth century, thus retaining ancient knowledge and skills. In this respect, Māori culture and healing traditions have been better preserved than those of, for example, the Sakha people whose shamanic revival is intertwined with national and ethnic revivalism in a post-Soviet era (Peers 2015).

As with shamans, few healers claim the title of "*tohunga*" for themselves, although some are recognized as such in their communities. Perhaps the notion of the *tohunga* as a *tapu* and sacred religious specialist recognized from birth is changing, just as some contemporary *whare wānanga* are becoming more democratized and open to Māori and non-Māori. As part of my doctoral fieldwork, I attended a weekly clinic in West Auckland where a group of Māori healers operate, which is open to all members of the public by *koha* (donation). On my first visit, I arrived as instructed while the training *wānanga* was still in process, before the clinic opened to the public. The leader, a Māori man, was dictating a chant or prayer in Māori and some in the group were writing it down before he went on to discuss the meanings of the words: they were about "breaking the ties that bind" to release the spiritual and emotional blocks of the past. Later, he told me that he had been dictating an ancient *karakia* in "classical Māori," an older form of *te reo* transmitted orally. The words in the *karakia*, he said, have been passed down since the mythical time when *Ranginui* (sky father) and *Papatūānuku* (earth mother) were separated.[17] They are strongly traditional and complex in their structure, symbolism and imagery, and require dedicated study to understand their hidden meanings, one healer explained to me. It seems that the language *tohunga* used to speak was a vernacular special to them.[18] Today, these healers are operating in a complex cosmopolitan and urban milieu of tradition and innovation, dancing between their own deeply embedded mythology and esoteric beliefs, and global influences.

Samuel Timoti Robinson (2005) is a contemporary Māori who advocates a *tohunga* revival. His revealing of detailed cosmological knowledge, passed to him through oral traditions from his elders and recorded in family manuscripts held by him, breaks tradition by including information not revealed to the public before, he says. In addition, he draws on other sources and traditions when he likens teachings about *Io* (supreme god)

and the *kore* (void, potentiality) periods to the Hebrew Kabbala concept of "ain" or "not periods" (periods of negative existence) (2005: 296–7). He further breaks with tradition, and says he is possibly leaving himself open to the criticism from other Māori that he is imparting sacred knowledge which should be restricted to Māori, when he advocates that everyone should "arise to their own *tohunga* status" and claim their own spiritual power instead of using spiritual experts (such as *tohunga* or church ministers) to mediate with the gods on their behalf. Just as neo-shamans are taught to shamanize for themselves, Robinson urges everyone to become their "own *tohunga*, say … [their] own prayers, see … [their] own visions and know … [their] own gods on a very direct basis" (2005: 11). His invitation is not for Māori alone. By publishing this material, he is opening the information up for use by anyone who chooses to follow his protocols and rituals. Robinson appears to be very open and honest about his sources, and the authority given to him by his elders to write and publish his accounts.

Ultimately, it is for Māori to determine the authenticity of his work and perhaps, as one Māori man told me, such matters are best decided experientially with people performing the rituals outlined by Robinson, and assessing their effectiveness for themselves. In spite of Robinson's concerns about his revelations being contentious, I am not aware of any widespread debates about his book within Māoridom. His work is noted by two Māori researchers (one of whom is also a healer), as an example of "iwi based *kōrero* (talk)" about *tohunga* and *rongoā* Māori (traditional Māori medicine) (Reinfeld and Pihama 2007: 36). They do not question his authority to publicize key concepts relating to *tohunga* and *wānanga* from his own *iwi* perspective, but they do criticize his work for presenting a gendered and Westernized romantic rendition of mythology in some places.[19] Their criticism does not appear to be about Robinson going public with sacred healing information—his break with the "traditional" use of shamanic healing by a few chosen ones, and advocacy of a twenty-first-century, democratic approach that empowers and encourages everyone to become their own *tohunga*-shaman. Robinson's innovative eclecticism, a kind of neo-*tohunga*ism, is typical of some other contemporary Māori healers I encountered.

Just as some people with a Native American heritage think it is time for indigenous traditional wisdom to be shared with others (for example, Mehl-Madrona 2010: 301–3), so too do Māori healers such as Te Waimatoa Turoa-Morgan (Wai). Wai has traveled and worked extensively

in Europe for a number of years, where she is known as a "shaman." She self-identifies as a *tohunga* and a shaman and simplifies and universalizes specific cultural teachings for an international audience.[20] These healers believe that their sacred teachings and traditional wisdom are needed for healing the earth in an era of environmental degradation and climate change. In some cases, they believe ancient prophecies are being fulfilled that support the sharing of their knowledge. They often have a sense of urgency, of needing to impart their knowledge before it is too late. Delugan (2010: 86) suggests that indigenous cosmopolitanism "offers an alternative source for a worldly social imaginary. It represents a moral imagination of the kind that many seek from cosmopolitanism, namely, a sociality inspired by humanistic values of care, respect, peace, tolerance, and love." Contemporary Māori healers are offering these values to all who wish to partake. They play a role in cosmopolitan processes as they build relationships with other indigenous peoples and shamans, from North and South America and parts of Northern or Eastern Europe. In doing so, they discover correspondences between their practices and those of others, with their shared holistic worldviews and colonial histories.

The shamanic landscape of Aotearoa/New Zealand is complex with local and global influences melding to shape unique shamanic healing systems and practices. Amidst a world of countless global encounters, cross-fertilization of cultural, artistic and healing practices is commonplace. Neo-shamans and Māori healers interact with each other locally and participate in the global circulation and exchanges of spiritual and healing knowledge. They are cosmopolitans immersed in Aotearoa, while unavoidably influenced by—and often eager to participate in—larger global flows.

Notes

1. The Pai Marire movement was also known as Te Hauhau Church (*hau hau* means "breath of God"), the first organised Māori church that grew out of the land conflicts in Taranaki, New Zealand, in the 1860s. See http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/politics/pai-marire/pai-marire-intro (retrieved 28 August 2015).
2. Te Arai is a small settlement situated on the east coast, north of Auckland in New Zealand's North Island.
3. This has become a rite of passage for New Zealanders. The OE varies from a few months to several years, and sometimes results in emigration.

4. Ellwood (1993: 186) estimates there are 25 times the numbers of Theosophists in New Zealand on a relative population basis compared with the United States.

5. Many indigenous people have spoken out about the urgent need to care for the planet. See, for example, http://www.earthwisdomfoundation.net/Crazy_Horse_s_Message.html http://icewisdom.com/icewisdom/ http://worldcouncilofelders.org/about-wcoe/ http://www.forthenext7generations.com/home.php http://www.grandmotherscouncil.org/ http://undesadspd.org/IndigenousPeoples/DeclarationontheRightsofIndigenousPeoples.aspx https://pwccc.wordpress.com/partners/ (all retrieved 30 September 2015).

6. The Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand's founding document, was signed in 1840 by some Māori chiefs and representatives of the British Crown. The Treaty consists of three Articles, originally written in English and translated into Māori, resulting in ongoing contention because of differences between the two versions. Māori signed the Māori version, and thus had a different understanding of what they were agreeing to. For example, Article One in Māori gave Queen Victoria "governance" over the land, whereas the English version states she had "sovereignty," a stronger term. Article Two in the Māori version guaranteed chiefs "*te tino rangatiratanga*" (chieftainship over their lands and *taonga* [treasures]), whereas the English version gave the chiefs "exclusive and undisturbed possession" over their "lands, forests, fisheries and other properties." It also gave the Crown exclusive rights to negotiate with Māori to purchase land. Article Three is similar in both versions and gives Māori protection and rights as British subjects (Orange 2012). The Waitangi Tribunal was established in 1975 to process claims brought by Māori relating to breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi.

7. *Whare wānanga*, or houses of learning, were originally places where esoteric knowledge was imparted orally.

8. *Te reo huna* is the secret language of the *tohuna* (Rose Pere's Tūhoe *iwi* dialect for *tohunga*). Franchelle extends the term, however, telling me the *tohuna* has a "direct link with the source [psychic realms] and does not 'learn' their information like the *tohunga* does." See footnote 7 above; also footnote 18 about the esoteric language of *tohunga*.

9. See http://www.nzfloweressences.co.nz/about-us/the-founders/ (retrieved 9 September 2015) and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2YoPLGtJUM&feature=share (retrieved 27 September 2015).

10. The lake is located in Te Urewera, an area in the East Coast region of the North Island, and is the home of Rose Pere's Tūhoe iwi. The Park was included in a complex series of Waitangi Tribunal settlement negotiations with Tūhoe over many years and is now administered by the Te Urewera Board which comprises joint Tūhoe and Crown membership. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Te_Urewera_National_Park (retrieved 29 September 2015).

11. This information comes from an e-Newsletter to the e-mail list for First Light Flower Essences of New Zealand (7 September 2015).

12. The same e-Newsletter features photographs of articles about the flower essences in a Japanese women's magazine.

13. An "Inside New Zealand" television documentary called *No Ordinary Joe* (12 May 2005), directed by Jane Reeves, showed a well-known *tohunga*, Papa Joe (Hohepa Delamere), and his team of healers working during one of their regular trips to California. Hohepa Delamere passed away in 2006. Atarangi Muru is a Māori healer who was trained by Papa Joe and continues to travel regularly to the United States, England and Europe. See http://www.stuff.co.nz/sunday-star-times/features/2520594/Body-and-spirit-a-glimpse-into-the-world-of-traditional-Maori-medicine and http://www.maoritelevision.com/news/regional/native-affairs--maori-healer (both retrieved 11 November 2015).

14. See, for example, http://www.wikitoriamaorihealing.co.nz/ (retrieved 11 November 205).

15. While *tohunga* have generally been defined as specialists or experts in their field, for example, *tohunga tā moko* (tattoo artist) and *tohunga matakite* (seer), this definition is too simplistic to convey the depth of meaning. See Sanson (2012: 227–29) for an explanation.

16. The Tohunga Suppression Act (1907), sponsored by Māori Members of Parliament with a belief in medical science, only restricted those who claimed supernatural powers or the ability to foretell events from practising as healers; massage, herbs or application of poultices were allowable. As a result, not all traditional healing knowledge was lost (Durie 1994; Laing 2002; Voyce 1989).

17. For one version of this story, see http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/ranginui-the-sky (retrieved 10 September 2015).

18. Charles Royal (2003: viii–ix) describes a meeting between two *tohunga* that he was privy to witness. Although Royal says he is relatively proficient in *te reo*, their conversation was largely unintelligible to him. He felt "as if an invisible veil had been drawn between us for they spoke a Māori language that I could only assume was the language of the *tohunga*, understood and used by the initiated only."

19. Anthropologist and historian, Anne Salmond, has suggested a "sceptical [epistemological] relativism" allows for variations between different tribes' creation stories and cosmologies, whilst holding to the truth of one's own *iwi* accounts (1985: 248–53).

20. Wai Turoa-Morgan talks about her "Life as a Māori Shaman" on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8zd427a90g (retrieved 7 September 2015). Also see http://www.shamanicteachings.org/en/all-shamans.html where she features along with other shamans and healers from around the globe (retrieved 7 September 2015).

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The Spirits Are Cosmopolitan Too: Contemporary Shamanism in Malta

Kathryn Rountree

Introduction

Before undertaking the fieldwork on which this chapter is based, I thought I knew the Pagan scene in Malta fairly well after a decade of intermittent fieldwork engendering close involvement with the community—although keeping up with its rapid developments has sometimes taken me by surprise. I received one such surprise when I visited at Easter in 2014. I was catching up with a long-term friend from my research with Maltese Wiccans and Pagans, Naia,[1] when she brought out her phone to show me photographs of a *Temazcal* she had recently participated in during a weekend camp run by a visiting Native American–trained Argentinian shaman named Carlos. This was the second such weekend to have been held in Malta. A *Temazcal*, so-named in the indigenous Nahuatl language (known historically as Aztec) of central Mexico, is a type of sweat-lodge which originated in Mesoamerica and is currently being revived in Mexico and Central America as a religio-therapeutic tool for purifying, healing and renewing the mind, body and spirit. Horacio Rojas Alba (1996) describes it thus:

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> When we enter the Temazcal, we return once again to our mother's womb, presided over by the great goddess, Tonantzin or Temazcaltoci, the great mother of both gods and humans. She is our beloved mother, concerned with the health of the children and she receives us into her womb—of which our own mother's womb is but a microcosmic manifestation—to cure us of physical and spiritual ills. The entrance way is low and small, and through it we enter a small, dark, warm and humid space, in this way recreating the uterus, cutting off the outside world and giving us a chance to look inside and find ourselves again. Our re-emergence through this narrow opening represents our rebirth from the darkness and silence of the womb.

When I saw Naia's pictures of the *Temazcal* held in Malta, I gaped at what seemed an extraordinary disjunction. The setting was familiar: a narrow field bordered by limestone rubble walls, caper bushes, trees and prickly pear cacti, with the towering walled city of Mdina and its piercing church spires in the background (see Fig. 12.1). The foreground, though, was utterly unfamiliar. Here were men and women, some with feather earrings and other exotic adornments, dancing ecstatically around a fire beating drums decorated with Native American–looking symbols, shaking rattles and stoking a fire to heat imported volcanic rocks for a sweat-lodge they had built with wooden pallets and blankets. I recognized a few of these people as Wiccans and Pagans; most I did not know.

My astonishment was mixed with chagrin. I had just finished writing about how Maltese Pagans were adapting Wicca to the local context, revising the Wheel of the Year for the Maltese seasons, emphasizing the local landscape and integrating local cultural, folkloric, archaeological, and environmental knowledge and traditions. Their indigenization of an imported Witchcraft tradition and creative combining of universal and indigenous elements had seemed to indicate a local grounding and coming-of-age of the community. The process echoed a historically familiar pattern in Malta, where, in the course of accommodating numerous waves of colonizers over seven millennia, cultural eclecticism and indigenous tradition have typically been entwined in an evolving process (Rountree 2010, 2015: 288–89). Maltese people have always been *bricoleurs* and the construction of Malteseness a perpetual work in progress. The making of contemporary Maltese Paganism/s works the same way.

Thus, when I saw Naia's photographs, I asked myself what on earth was going on. Mexico and Native Americans are clearly culturally and geographically distant from Malta. Why was this exotic tradition being

Fig. 12.1 Preparing the sweat-lodge (October 2015). Prayer bundles in the foreground ready to be hung inside the lodge. Photograph: Kathryn Rountree

imported, and why now? Admittedly and importantly, the *Temazcal* phenomenon, and shamanism more broadly, was and is not entirely under the "contemporary Pagan" umbrella in Malta. Only a small part of the Pagan community is involved, and many people who identify as shamans or as following shamanism do not identify as Pagan. The current interest in sha-

manism can be viewed as another addition to the plethora of "alternative" spiritual and religious paths to have found a place in the country, against the overwhelmingly Catholic religious backdrop.

But there is a clear overlap between shamanism and Paganism in terms of demographics and in their sharing of a nature-centered worldview and some ritual elements. Some of my Pagan, Wiccan and Druid friends have participated in *Temazcal* weekends with visiting shamans over the three years they have been run, twice annually, in Malta. A small indication of the importance of Naia's new affinity with shamanism was that she began signing off messages to me with "Ho"[2] instead of "Blessed Be," and referring to spirit guides and power animals as well as to goddesses and gods. As I learned when I participated in a *Temazcal* myself in October 2015, Pagan songs, chants, ideas and ritual components are being introduced, resulting in a blurring of boundaries between the *Temazcal* phenomenon and Paganism, along with a flow of participants in both directions between these loose communities and other spiritual, alternative healing, and holistic living events, groups, modalities and practices. The latter include, for example, reiki, yoga, meditation, public Equinox and Solstice events, sacred sites and environmental projects, permaculture, Red Tent (menstruation) ceremonies, Gurdjieff-inspired Fourth Way workshops, psychic readings, channeling, past life regression, dream interpretation, crystal healing, angel healing, belly dancing, drumming circles and others. Friendship and personal questing, rather than adherence to a distinctive, coherent code of beliefs and practices, constitute the basis of any gathering for spiritually related purposes. The composition of these groups changes fairly frequently as individuals move among them creating bespoke spiritual paths which sometimes seem like hybrid (though perhaps temporary) constructs, and other times like idiosyncratic collections of traditions, techniques, modalities and identities which a person employs variously and effortlessly, similar to switching between apps on a device or reaching for a different tool in the tool-kit. The kaleidoscope of "alternative" spiritual life in Malta turns continuously revealing intriguing new patterns.

What is happening in Malta is of course not unique and the growth of interest in shamanism worldwide has been widely documented and debated (Wallis 2003; Churchill 2003; Rose 1992; Kraft et al. 2015; Kraft 2015; Jenkins 2004; Aldred 2000; Kehoe 1990; Peers 2015; Sanson 2012). Renée de la Torre (2011) describes how shamanism has become increasingly transcultural and deterritorialized in the globalized world. Whereas a few decades ago "Indo-American" religions were restricted to indigenous

community contexts, now they are "part of the 'neo-esoteric' offer of the global market," drawing broad, enthusiastic audiences "interested in them as paradigms of native 'authenticity' and 'ancestry,' … contributing to the transformation of these religious practices into circuits … influenced by the itineraries of cosmopolitan actors roaming networks of alternative New Age spirituality" (De la Torre 2011: 147). Discussing religion in the context of transnationalism and globalization, Thomas Csordas (2007: 264) remarks on two consequences of the transcendence of local boundaries by indigenous religious traditions: first, pan-indigenous movements are being formed, and, second, indigenous religions are extending their influence in a "'reverse' direction, from the margins to the metropole." Both phenomena are characteristic of indigenous shamanisms today. Csordas (2007: 261) cites the Lakota (Native American) sacred pipe ceremony as a practice which "travels well" transnationally because it is relatively simple and "some individuals are willing to share it with other tribes and non-Indians, sometimes even travelling with it on the New Age circuit." In such instances of spiritual or religious globalization, the direction of travel is not from the powerful center to the periphery (the usual direction of economically driven globalization), but from the periphery to the center, a process explicitly invoked by one of my research participants in Malta, Kimimila, who feels responsible for helping shamanism return to Europe (see below). Ideas and practices also criss-cross different parts of the (former) periphery, as in the case of pan-indigenous networks and gatherings.

The Cultural Appropriation Debate

The spreading process is not only the result of nonindigenous spiritual seekers (usually referred to as New Agers) being attracted to the wisdom and resources of "traditional" religions. Indigenous shamans who travel, share and teach are themselves agents too (although in some cases the provenance of indigeneity becomes blurred, resulting in the denouncing of "plastic shamans" or "plastic medicine men").[3] De la Torre (2011: 153) would add a third phenomenon to Csordas's two. Along with the transnationalization of ethno-American traditions by indigenous and non-indigenous agents, indigenous people themselves are borrowing from the smorgasbord of spiritual resources on offer in the global religious marketplace, and this has resulted in a revival, and arguably renovation, of native traditions. Waldron and Newton (2012: 67) emphasize this

reciprocal borrowing in their article "Rethinking Appropriation of the Indigenous" in the Australian context:

> [C]ultural appropriation goes two ways; some indigenous people have drawn upon New Age ideology; and the documented genuine commitment of a few New Agers suggests potential for a more positive and grounded future relationship between the two groups. In relation to cultural appropriation, there is a continuum of behaviors and attitudes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

These authors (and Sanson in the previous chapter of this volume) point to convergences and collaborations between indigenous and nonindigenous practitioners, leading them to conclude that "there are signs that a shift away from absolute condemnation of cultural borrowing" is occurring both among indigenous peoples and among scholars (Waldron and Newton 2012: 65). The discourse on cultural appropriation is still fervently alive, but it has become more complex and perhaps less heated as a result of multidirectional borrowing, escalating globalization, the urbanization of indigenous peoples, and ongoing shifts in power relations between indigenous and nonindigenous peoples in postcolonial contexts. The very notion—and condemnation—of cultural appropriation from indigenous peoples relies on an idea that cultures are discrete, essentialized, self-generative things with a perennial, inalienable and incontestable authenticity, an idea that is increasingly hard to sustain in the globalized world.

I see that now, but did not when I began this research. As I noted in the introduction to this book, my ideas and feelings about indigenous identity politics were formed in New Zealand during the 1980s and 1990s, when cultural appropriation was a fraught issue nationally. Māori were vigorously challenging a variety of situations where they saw their *taonga* (treasured property, including land, language, sacred knowledge and other cultural material) being stolen by Pākehā (New Zealand-born people with European ancestry) in further acts of colonial subjugation and dispossession. Pagans, who were almost all Pākehā, were acutely concerned about respecting Māori spiritual and cultural traditions and Māori ownership of them, and were determined not to appropriate these traditions. Like many liberal-minded Pākehā descended from the colonizers, I was susceptible to feeling inherited colonial guilt and readily embraced the Māori position in regard to cultural appropriation.

Such debates about the appropriation of indigenous peoples' spirituality were of course happening in many contexts around the world at this time. One area of debate coalesced around the burgeoning of neo-shamanic schools run by people who had been taught by indigenous shamans, including one-time anthropologist Michael Harner, who developed his "Core Shamanism" after learning from shamans from a number of Native American tribes and extrapolating the common elements while omitting culturally unique ones (Harner 1980). Along with his colleagues, Harner has taught Core Shamanism to thousands of nonindigenous Westerners around the world. Robert Wallis (2003: 49) summarizes the charges made against Harner and other nonindigenous neo-shamanic teachers and practitioners: they decontextualize shamanic practices from their cultural settings; they universalize, psychologize, individualize and romanticize indigenous shamanisms; and they reproduce notions of cultural primitivism. Nonetheless, the Western appetite for shamanism has continued to grow in the last three or so decades, along with the number of those—indigenous, nonindigenous, and with mixed ancestry—offering to teach it.

In the course of learning about (Pākehā) Dawne Sanson's (2012) PhD research with Māori healers, begun in 2006, I was confronted with the fact that among many Māori the discourse about cultural appropriation had shifted during the twenty-first century, and was no longer an overriding preoccupation (although it has not disappeared). Waldron and Newton (2012: 77) report a similar situation in Australia: "Indigenous [Aboriginal] responses to New Age beliefs indicate ambiguity and co-option rather than negative resistance." They quote Jane Mulcock (2001), who came to acknowledge that the line between appropriating group and appropriated group was hazy and that "cultural exchange was an ordinary part of everyday life" (cited in Waldron and Newton 2012: 78). I have discussed my position on cultural appropriation here because it influenced the way I approached my research with shamans in Malta. As a result of listening to them, learning from them, sharing in their rituals, thinking about the changing world we all share, and contemplating the themes of this book, I came to see things differently.

Researching Shamans in Malta

My ethnographic fieldwork in Malta was conducted in the second half of 2015, and since then I have continued to observe and sometimes participate in several relevant Facebook groups.[4] In line with the themes of this volume, I was interested in learning about local/global relationships and the importance and interplay of the indigenous and cosmopolitan among shamans. Was there a distinctively Maltese shamanism, or were there simply shamans who live in Malta? Did the issue of cultural appropriation of an exotic tradition have any purchase? What was the lure of Native American spirituality?

I began by seeking out and interviewing those who had organized or had an important role (e.g., as fire-keeper)[5] in the *Temazcal* weekends, and eventually attended such a weekend myself in October 2015. I also got in touch with a British artist friend who has lived in Malta for many years and had mentioned belonging to a group of women who practice shamanism. Her group had formed following a series of workshops taught by three visiting shamans from the UK (a man and two women, one of whom was Maltese), who themselves had studied at the school of The Four Winds[6] founded by Alberto Villoldo. Like Harner (and a number of other nonindigenous shaman teachers), Villoldo learned his shamanic healing techniques from medicine people in various Native American tribes and teaches them to Westerners.[7] The group had also met at my friend's house over several months to work through a recorded training course on self-directed healing and spiritual growth conducted by American shaman Sandra Ingerman. I was fortunate to join these women for several of their Full Moon rituals held either outdoors on the rocky slope near Ħaġar Qim Neolithic temple during the hot summer months, or in a member's home when the weather was cooler. Seven of these women shared their personal stories with me and the rest of the group during a Sacred Story Circle held at my home in late September 2015.[8] In addition to these two avenues of research, a long-time Pagan friend put me in touch with a former Jesuit priest, Francis, with whom I had long and fascinating talks and who introduced me to his shamanic group—one of a number of alternative spiritual and holistic healing groups he facilitates.

Thus, my research followed three strands of shamanic activity in Malta.[9] I was struck early on by the fact that these strands seemed fairly separate from one another at the local level. Despite the fact that Malta

is a small island, international connections with other shamans outside one's immediate group seemed at least as strong, and sometimes stronger, than intranational ones. While there were some overlaps in membership between the different cohorts in Malta, and individuals were likely to be involved with, or have tried out, other alternative spiritual modalities as well, there was not a coherent Maltese shamanic community and most members of groups did not know very much about one another's activities. For example, when I mentioned to Naia and some *Temazcal* participants the publically advertised visit to Malta in April 2015 of high-profile American shaman Brooke Medicine Eagle,[10] facilitated by some in the women's shamanic group, they said they did not know about it. The strongest connections between the different strands were made via Francis, the former priest, whose varied spiritual and healing work was known and much valued by a number of people I met, and who himself regularly participates in the *Temazcals*.

The women's group and Francis's group are both more-or-less "closed" (the occasional visitor or researcher notwithstanding) and thus have fairly stable memberships of people who have come to know one another well; this is regarded as an important foundation and safe container for shamanic work, and strong social as well as spiritual bonds have formed. Both these groups have some non-Maltese members; as a consequence, English is the lingua franca.

Those who have participated in the twice-yearly *Temazcal* weekends, on the other hand, constitute a loose, open network with a core group of organizers, the gentle driving force of which is a woman called Kimimila.[11] Between the *Temazcal* events, connections are sustained by informal socializing among those who have become friends and by an open Facebook page.[12] During my fieldwork, Kimimila also organized a Moon Blood [menstruation] ceremony, described on the event invitation as "a closed and sacred ceremony for women," to which I was invited. The ritual was held on a hot summer evening among trees in a camping area, and was attended by ten women and one man, Zephyrus, an Alexandrian Wiccan and Druid, who had helped Kimimila organize the event (and whom I knew from my research with Maltese Pagans).[13] The climax of the ritual occurred when women, one at a time, offered their moon blood (stored in the freezer until the ritual) to Mother Earth via a small hollow dug out at the edge of the altar. The eclecticism of this shaman/Pagan event was reflected on the altar, which included

Fig. 12.2 Moon blood ceremony altar (August 2015). Hollow at bottom of image for receiving women's gifts of menstrual blood. Photograph: Kathryn Rountree

statuettes of a Native American woman, the Greek goddess Aphrodite and several Maltese Neolithic female figurines (see Fig. 12.2).

Most of the around 80 people who have attended a *Temazcal* are Maltese (rather than ex-pats) and they have diverse spiritual interests and levels of ongoing commitment. For some, doing a sweat-lodge does not mean taking up a shamanic worldview or way or life; it is simply an interesting experience to have in the course of exploring spirituality. For those who identify as Pagan or Wiccan, shamanism is an addition to, rather than replacement for, their Pagan identity and practice, which continues to develop in tandem. It is not the case, as I had half-anticipated when I first saw Naia's photographs, that the process of localizing Paganism in Malta has been reversed in favor of a freshly imported "exotic" tradition. Rather, the Pagan and wider alternative religious scene in Malta have become even more eclectic and diverse. And while the *Temazcals* certainly have an exotic source, structure and appearance, they, too, are being gradually adapted to the local environment.

Cosmopolitan Spirits

In the various shamanic rituals I experienced, it was common to invoke exotic animals from the American continent when invoking the cardinal directions to create sacred space. The women's group follow Villoldo's Four Winds system of correspondences: south/serpent, west/jaguar, north/hummingbird and east/eagle. On a car journey home from a Full Moon ritual one night, I raised with one of the group the issue of invoking animals which did not exist in the Maltese landscape (but would be familiar to Native Americans). She said it would not matter if they invoked dolphin and other local species instead; the group follows the Four Winds system simply because this was how they were originally trained. She emphasized that it is the symbolic associations of the animals which are important, and those associations have universal applicability in terms of their meaning and power. When e-mailing me a copy of the invocations, another in the group noted that the animals representing the directions change with different schools of shamanism; she reiterated Sandra Ingerman's claim that "shamanism is a path of direct revelation … so each of us can have unique and personal experiences."

When I raised the issue of invoking nonlocal animals with some *Temazcal* participants including Naia, she thought my question odd, explaining that the provenance of the animals was unimportant. It was not an *actual* animal from a *particular* landscape that was being invoked; it was the animal *spirit*, which is infinitely greater and unrestricted by material place or national borders. Over dinner one night another woman was similarly bemused, stressing that she was connecting to the spirit of the animal and it did not matter where the animal lived. In Csordas's terms, animal spirits "travel well" transnationally (2007: 261). As a result of these conversations, it became clear that my ideas about shamanic traditions being tied to the particular geocultural spaces in which they were rooted, and what I had deemed the incumbent political implications vis-à-vis cultural appropriation when these traditions were exported, seemed parochial and outmoded to most shamans. Cultural or national origins and boundaries are perceived as less important than universal needs, and they see shamanism as intensely relevant to both universal and their own needs as individuals. In a globalized world characterized by mobility and connectivity, where notions of "ours" and "theirs" are difficult to sustain and arguably unhelpful, shamans are inclined to focus on what they see as universally beneficial spiritual resources. Those I met have global social networks; they travel

frequently for work, holidays, workshops, conferences, spiritual seeking and to visit family and friends; they are continuously connected to the internet. They are cosmopolitans who clearly experience a strong sense of "living in one world." The spirits, animal and otherwise, also live in this world and are cosmopolitan too.

This is not to say that heritage and local places do not matter. We are not talking about "a One-World placelessness" produced by the global consumer culture (Klein 2000: 117). For people with an animist world-view, the place where one lives constitutes a unique multispecies community with whom one experiences intimate connection on a daily basis. This community's importance does not derive from its national or cultural connection; it has to do with one's embodied connection to place and those many beings with whom one shares it. Unlike some other international shaman teachers, I was told, Carlos, the Argentinian shaman who runs the *Temazcals* in Malta, is happy for the participants to adapt the sweat-lodge to the local environment. Zephyrus supports these adaptations (he has also been instrumental in helping adapt Wicca to Malta), and has a rather different take on the issue of universal and local animal spirits from others I met:

> Carlos is very realistic about the directions and elements that we use and insists it is useless calling yourself Native American when you're in an island with a different climate and a different earth, fruits, herbs, and whatever. OK, follow the Lakota tradition, but we're Maltese, so if we're honouring the waters, we have to honour dolphins, *lampuki* and all those spirit animals. We don't have eagles, but we have falcons. Otherwise it doesn't make any sense! It has to work for you, even psychologically. In Druidry it's quite similar. In that path I can participate in ceremonies which are earth-based, but I cannot connect with the stag or the grizzly bear or the salmon.

Carlos himself initiates some of the local adaptations. Traditionally, for example, the *Temazcal* altar, which is placed between the sweat-lodge and the sacred fire, is created from mounded earth in the shape of a turtle—a reference to "Turtle Island," the name by which Native Americans refer to North America because of its shape. But because the turtle symbolism is meaningless in Malta, Carlos creates the altar in the shape of a heart, a universal symbol, which here symbolizes the loving heart of Mother Earth (see Figs. 12.3 and 12.4).

Fig. 12.3 The stones are blessed and placed on the sacred pyre. Photograph: Kathryn Rountree

Kimimila

Kimimila's personal story with shamanism illustrates the kinds of cosmopolitan mobility and global connections characteristic of shamans in Malta. A former veterinary nurse, she has been interested in Native American cultures since she was small, attracted by their respect for animals and nature, and environmental practices. She ventured into shamanism as a spiritual

Fig. 12.4 The heart-shaped altar decorated with flowers and crystals, along with shaman's paraphernalia, in foreground. Sacred fire heats stones in background. Photograph: Kathryn Rountree

practice through working with Francis's group, where she was introduced to shamanic journeying and experienced visions. Francis, following a revelation by his spirit guides, conveyed to her the knowledge that in a previous life she had belonged to the Lakota tribe, an indigenous people of the Great Plains. At first Kimimila had thought: "This is craziness!", but

gradually she embraced this identity and sought to discover more about those she now calls "her people."

Three years ago, she went to South Dakota to see the sacred places of the Lakota and had serendipitous meetings with Native Americans, including a Medicine Man and Sundance chief whose spirit guides had alerted him to her imminent arrival in a dream. She told him about her visions of an earlier life as a Lakota woman and then spontaneously slipped into trance and began speaking in an ecstatic language. Upon arriving back in Malta, Kimimila learned about a sweat-lodge about to be held in Spain, so she and a friend traveled to Spain and experienced their first sweat-lodge. There she met Carlos and in 2013 invited him to come to Malta and facilitate the first of the *Temazcal* weekends. In 2016, Kimimila is going to Italy to support some friends there in the Sundance, and looks forward to when she will do the Sundance herself. A few weeks before the *Temazcal* weekend I attended, Kimimila made a trip to Mt. Etna in Sicily to gather volcanic rocks for the sacred fire, taking care to avoid getting caught by the Sicilian authorities. The rocks used for the previous *Temazcals* had told her their work was done, their power exhausted. Thus, she needed to invite new rocks to come to Malta.

At the time of my fieldwork, Kimimila had undertaken two vision quests in Spain, which involved going into the mountains and abstaining from food and water for four days.[14] Her most recent quest in mid-2015 was overseen by a Mexican grandmother who follows the Lakota tradition so close to Kimimila's heart. Her ultimate goal is to be able to run *Temazcals* herself and have a piece of land in Malta with a permanent sweat-lodge which people can visit any time. She says Carlos is helping her to develop the requisite skills and knowledge, but there will come a time when "Carlos will leave us on our own." Enormously grateful to and fond of Carlos, Kimimila and Zephyrus were less sanguine about other shamans on the international circuit who had been vying to come to Malta to run sweat-lodges. Kimimila said:

> We are Maltese! We've always been colonized! Why don't we have our own things? Why does someone always come and do everything for us? We've been shamans from the beginning! We never really needed foreigners to come, but lately everyone wants to get Malta.

With regard to the discourse about modern Western shamans appropriating the spiritual and cultural property of indigenous peoples, especially Native

Americans, this quotation from Kimimila raises the issue of where Maltese shamans are positioned. They are undoubtedly modern Western shamans who today are drawing on practices from beyond Malta's shores taught to them by foreigners. But Maltese can also claim to be an indigenous people who have been colonized in successive waves since prehistoric times (Rountree 2010: 14–15), most recently by the British (independence was gained in 1964 and the country became a republic in 1974). What constitutes "indigeneity" has been debated at length with numerous definitions proffered, including an individual's self-identification (Saugestad 2001: 43; Kenrick and Lewis 2004; Kuper 2003; Stewart and Wilson 2008: 14). While the Maltese fit many criteria of "indigenous people," they have never become a minority in their own country, and while they have certainly experienced "subjugation, marginalization, dispossession, exclusion and discrimination" (Stewart and Wilson 2008: 14), their experiences have not been in the order of those of minority indigenous communities living in nation-states dominated by an originally European settler society. As Grixti (2011: 343) points out, Malta never underwent "major settlement by the colonizing power" and thus indigenous Maltese "continue to constitute the majority of their now independent nation-state."

Even so, there are shamans in Malta, and Francis is also one of them (see below), who believe that a retrievable, indigenous Maltese shamanism lies buried deeply in their cultural heritage and landscape. It is unknown historically, however, unlike other indigenous shamanisms (such as Sami, Native American or Māori) which are well known historically, survive in practice, and are much more easily recoverable. Another issue arises in that not all who participate in shamanic activities in Malta are Maltese. Many non-Maltese—long and short term residents—are involved too, and within groups no distinction is made between those who might claim to be indigenous Maltese and those who would not. The very idea of making such a distinction would be a ridiculous anathema to them. Nonetheless, the ambiguity regarding Maltese as an "indigenous people," and the fact that the construction of Maltese identity has been an eclectic process blending many cultural influences over several millennia, have an impact on how people in Malta understand cultural appropriation, or, indeed, do not understand others' preoccupation with it. If one's own culture is, and has always been, an eclectic, syncretic mix, it may be difficult to see why another people would have strong feelings of "ownership" and want to fend off "appropriators."

Kimimila's spiritual and physical itinerary makes clear her international connections and cosmopolitan identity. Her relation with the local is complex. She defines herself in relation to two cultural identities and localities which are geographically and temporally distant from each other. Native American shamanism is not for her an exotic tradition from a faraway place; it is her own tradition because of the genealogical connection she traces to it via her past lives as a Lakota woman. But she is not only Lakota; as we have seen she is also adamantly Maltese and committed to developing a local shamanism. She believes her mission as a reincarnated Lakota woman in this life is to revive the shamanic tradition in Europe:

> In the Lakota prophesy there will be a time when all the Native Americans who were killed by the White Man will come back as Rainbow Warriors of different coloured skins. That will be when the earth needs them. I'm one of the Rainbow Warriors. Europe has killed Native American spirituality and you have to be in Europe to bring it back. Now Native American souls are coming back to save the tradition.

In this regard, Kimimila is participating in what Csordas (2007: 264) calls a "reverse" flow of globalization, whereby indigenous religions are extending their influence "from the margins to the metropole."

Francis

A Jesuit priest for 30 years, many spent abroad, Francis has spent the last two decades facilitating people's diverse explorations of spirituality. The Centers he runs host a range of activities related to spirituality, wellness, healing and holistic living, and interweave Catholic Christian, New Age and shamanic elements. "We do everything here!" he told me. "This is like a supermarket." The shamanic group he facilitates has been together about five years and has 10–12 members. Francis's own venture into shamanism began in England, training with shamans in Villoldo's school and with Caitlin Matthews, an authority on Celtic Wisdom and the ancestral traditions of Britain and Europe. He then branched into Core Shamanism, making contact with an Austrian group practicing it, but became disenchanted with the commercial preoccupation of this and a number of other schools circulating internationally. So Francis and a likeminded group decided to begin their own practice, using their intuition, reading and experimenting. "The most important thing," he told me, "is to revive a

very ancient shamanic experience here in Malta. And to do that you need to practice, you need to open yourself up to it, and you need to link with the land."

Francis still sees value in Core Shamanism because it extrapolates common shamanic experiences from global sources and goes "to the essence of the practices," but appropriately leaves out the culture-specific dimension, which he believes needs to be added locally. The heart of the cultural dimension, he says, is the intimate, sacred relationship between a group of people and the land where they live. He is not interested in the "romance" of exotic rituals from distant cultures with their elaborate material trappings; they are "out of context" in Malta. Francis says to people: "You're not in Peru; you're in Malta! So why do you imitate a culture which is not yours and which is totally foreign to your experience?" He is also skeptical of "traditions" which do not acknowledge their inventedness, where a nonindigenous shamanic teacher combines a bunch of practices from several traditions and claims they belong to a single tradition. Core Shamanism at least acknowledges its own constructedness, he says.

Of all those I met, Francis is the most focussed on reviving an indigenous Maltese shamanism, but is happy to share it with his multiethnic group. He thinks there was once a powerful shamanic practice in Malta associated with the country's many Neolithic temples. This knowledge "is still alive in the land and in the collective unconscious," he believes. "If the thought process of the ancients is still present in the land, I can link to it. Then I can re-experience what the ancients experienced." His group's way of recovering this knowledge is to meditate, intuit, experiment, spend time in nature, care for the land, explore past lives, and above all to embark on shamanic journeys to meet the spirits assisted by drumming and rattle-shaking.

Cosmopolitan Sisters

The women's group, often referred to by members as a sisterhood, sistren or tribe, was established about three years ago and meets for ritual each full moon. The group interacts frequently (with postings most days) through a Secret Group on Facebook which has 31 members, most of whom live in Malta. A significant number are not Maltese by birth. The only male in the Facebook group lives in Britain and was one of the three shamans who originally trained the group in Alberto Villoldo's school. The group comprises mostly professional (some now retired) women who, as well

learning from the British shamans and American Sandra Ingerman, have traveled extensively, lived and worked in many parts of the world (one worked for the United Nations), and experienced a wide range of spiritual practices in the course of their lives and journeys in such places as Peru, the United States, Scandinavia, Africa, India, Australia, Britain and Ireland. Although they follow the basic ritual structure taught by Villoldo, they feel free to adlib and freewheel, combining what they have learned from diverse sources with their own creativity, intuition and whim. The local and global are interwoven effortlessly. Thus, while their summertime full moon meetings are often held adjacent to Malta's Neolithic temples—invoking a connection with these deeply important local sacred places—the animals invoked in that setting are not local (serpent, jaguar, hummingbird and eagle) and the animal spirits they meet in their personal shamanic journeys represent a global menagerie.

When seven of the group met at my home to share their stories, each told a unique story, but there were common threads, chief of which was the centrality of nature to their lives from a young age and an ongoing connection with the earth, animals and plants. "Nature is the true divine for me; I find all my answers in nature," said one woman, who had once lived in Peru for three years surrounded by shamanic activity. Her compassion for animals as a child was such that she "did not feel any more important than a chameleon." Another woman who had visited Peru for a nine-day retreat with an Inca shaman said, "Nature was my everything. Mother Earth heals you; Mother Earth loves you." Another described trying many spiritual practices, but it was through shamanism that she "became aware of the power of earth. It is the same thing anywhere in the world … the same Mother Earth." This connection to the Earth and nature was the constant in women's lives irrespective of where they lived or traveled, or from whom—shamanic school or tribal group—they learned. There is only one Mother Earth, one Father Sky, one Grandmother Moon and one Grandfather Sun.

Other recurring themes in women's stories were the importance of healing and working with energy (especially for a doctor in the group), connecting with alternate realities and "a bigger world" via the shamanic journey, and an enormous appreciation for the group itself. One who had explored different spiritual practices all over the world said:

> I came to realise the sameness in all practices, whether it was Druidism in Wales and Devon and Cornwall, or whether it was the Native American, or

whether it was in Peru, or in Russia, or Australia … with all the indigenous people there was such a similarity. I thought to follow the thread of truth that runs through all of that. When I look back at the history of my path, it was learning more about love, understanding my love connections to the earth, the stars, as well as all other realities and all of us.

CONCLUSION

Despite some obvious differences between the various strands of shamanism being practiced in Malta, on the whole these shamans are thoroughgoing cosmopolitans, as are the spirits they invoke and encounter. The core practice of shamanism is the soul journey to other realms to meet the spirits. Such journeys transcend this-worldly borders of any kind: natural, cultural, political, national, local or global. As well as their spiritual journeys, shamans in Malta are bodily mobile participants in supranational networks and experience a strong sense of living in one world. Their goals are twofold: an individual's holistic healing, well-being and deepening spirituality, and planetary healing, harmony and survival. The politics of nationalism have no part in these goals, and indeed may threaten them. A robust, universal environmental ethics and politics, on the other hand, are vital. Shamans in Malta share with many modern shamans around the world a cosmology drawn from those of indigenous peoples, which, as Elizabeth Reichel (2008: 421) explains:

> invoke respect for the sacred and spiritual essence of all forms of existence, to keep a balanced coexistence among the parts composing the total whole of the cosmos. People, ecosystems, and the geoscape and cosmoscape, are defined as having identities defined with matter, spirit, and mind … imply[ing] shared cosmic synergies among all forms of existence, human and non-human, biotic or not, who must negotiate with other matter, energy, spirit and other essences.

Shamans subscribe to the ideal of a moral cosmopolitanism that posits "all human beings ought to be morally committed to an essential humanity above and beyond the reality of one's particularistic attachments" (Nowicka and Rovisco 2009: 3), but they would extend this moral commitment beyond human beings to all beings. The spirits with whom they share the world have respected native roots in particular societies, cultures, histories and landscapes, but they are not restricted to geonational spaces or cultures of origin. Spirits "travel well" beyond local boundaries,

as do the shamans who journey to meet them and with whom they form relationships.

Notes

1. This is her self-chosen name; it means "dolphin" in Hawaiian, and relates to her love of animals. All names used in this chapter are pseudonyms. I am deeply grateful to all those I interviewed and spent time with for welcoming me into their groups so generously and helping me to see things differently.
2. "Ho" or "Aho" is a Native American word. According to the Llewellyn Encyclopedia (http://www.llewellyn.com/encyclopedia/term/Aho. Retrieved April 18, 2016), "In Lakota it means 'hello,' in Kiowa it means 'thank you,' and in Cherokee it is used at the end of a prayer similar to the use of 'amen'." The term is said by an individual or group to indicate agreement or support, usually after a statement by another person. It may be followed with the Lakota expression *Mitakuye Oyasin*, meaning: "We are all related." During my fieldwork I heard "Ho" and "Aho" frequently in rituals, conversations, and on Facebook.
3. There is an extensive academic and nonacademic literature on "plastic medicine men." See, for example, Wallis (2003), Kehoe (1990), Hobson (1978), and Aldred (2000).
4. These mainly include the Secret Groups "Our Tribe," "Love and Light with [person's name]," and "Goddess of Malta," and the open group "Temazcal Malta" (https://www.facebook.com/TemazcalExperienceInMaltaSweatLodgeInipi/#!/temazcal.malta?fref=ts).
5. The fire-keeper tends the sacred fire which heats the volcanic stones for several hours prior to a sweat-lodge ceremony. When it is time to enter the lodge, participants (wearing sarongs and having removed all jewelry) process inside and sit in a circle around the fire-pit (a scooped-out hollow in the earth). The fire-keeper takes the red-hot stones from the fire one at a time with a pitchfork, brushes away clinging embers with herbs, and carries the stones to the entrance of the lodge. The shaman, seated near the entrance, receives the stones and places them in the fire-pit, after which the door of the lodge (a couple of blankets) is pulled shut. Steam is created inside the lodge by the shaman casting water on the stones

periodically. The sweat-lodge in October 2015 was divided into four "rounds" or "doors" lasting about half an hour each. During this time participants would freely talk, pray, sing, share experiences and visions, voice opinions, doubts and dreams. For the first "door" seven stones were brought into the lodge. After each round the blankets over the doorway were thrown back for a few minutes to give brief respite to those inside. Then another seven stones were added for the second "door." The process continued until the fourth "door," when there were 28 stones inside the lodge.

6. Villoldo's website is http://thefourwinds.com/.
7. The Four Winds Society's web-site claims: "Over the last 25 years the Four Winds Society has trained more than 10,000 students in the art and craft of shamanic energy medicine" (http://thefourwinds.com/about-us/. Retrieved April 29, 2016).
8. Although I hosted this event, the evening was intentionally as much a sacred ritual as a focus group interview. It began with the group creating sacred space by invoking the directions and associated animal spirits (as taught by Villoldo). As each woman began to tell her story she lit a candle on the altar.
9. However, I am not claiming this is the sum of shamanic activity in Malta; I have been told about other individuals who are not part of these networks.
10. Brooke Medicine Eagle's web-site makes her cosmopolitan identity clear. She claims ancestors from six Native American tribes as well as European ancestors from Scotland, Ireland and Denmark: "Brooke's lineage is an amazing rainbow, and she has always identified with the richness of all humanity, rather than any one tribe or people." The site says she is now committed to traveling and teaching internationally (http://www.medicineeagle.com/meet-brooke/. Retrieved April 29, 2016).
11. Kimimila is the Lakota word for butterfly.
12. The Facebook page titled "Temazcal Malta (The Sacred Fire of Malta)" is located at https://www.facebook.com/TemazcalExperienceInMaltaSweatLodgeInipi/#!/temazcal.malta?fref=ts
13. Prior to becoming involved with shamanism and Paganism, Zephyrus was in a Franciscan religious order in Assisi, Italy.
14. After completing four vision quests, Kimimila will be able to become a Sundancer.

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