COSMOS

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&

THE RITUAL YEAR 4

The Ritual Year and Gender

Cosmos: The Journal of the Traditional Cosmology Society is published twice a year, in June and December. It is concerned with exploring myth, religion and cosmology across cultural and disciplinary boundaries and with increasing understanding of world views in the past and present.

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Reviews

Enquiries about reviews should be sent to the Review Editor, Dr Karen Bek-Pedersen at: karen@bek-pedersen.dk. All relevant books received will be listed and as many as possible will be reviewed.

COSMOS

The Journal of the Traditional Cosmology Society

Volume 25 2009

& The Ritual Year 4

Editor: Emily Lyle
Guest Editor: Jenny Butler
Review Editor: Karen Bek-Pedersen

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Editorial

JENNY BUTLER

It is an honour to have been invited to be Guest Editor of *Cosmos* as well as being Editor of *The Ritual Year* 4, and it is with very great pleasure that I welcome you to this special issue focused on "The Ritual Year and Gender" which is both *Cosmos* 25 and also the fourth volume in a series produced by the Ritual Year Working Group of The International Society of Ehnology and Folklore, *Societé Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore* (SIEF)

This present volume is a valuable contribution to both the field of ritual year studies and gender studies. The articles presented here have been selected from the papers presented at The Ritual Year and Gender Conference, which was held in Cork, Ireland, 22nd – 26th June 2008 which I organized with the support of the Folklore and Ethnology Department, University College Cork. I would like to acknowledge the sponsors of this conference: the UCC Arts Faculty Conference Fund and the Fáilte Ireland Conference Ambassador Support Programme. I would like to record my indebtedness to Stiofán Ó Cadhla, Head of Department of Folklore and Ethnology UCC, for his unfailing support and assistance in arranging the conference and to the departmental secretary Bláthnaid Begley for her time and advice in facilitating the conference and her help in its smooth progression. A special word of thanks to Prof. Gearóid Ó Crualaoich for his Opening Address at the conference and for granting permission for a DVD of the film made of his Kevin Danaher Memorial Lecture on "Gender Aspects of Traditional Calendar" (*Béascna* 4, 2008, pp. 1-13) to be included in the delegates' conference packs.

Grateful thanks are also due to Prof. Peggy Reeves Sanday of the Anthropology Department, University of Pennsylvania, USA for her keynote presentation "Gender in the Minangkabau Ritual Calendar". Prof. Sanday graciously took on the role of keynoter at short notice in place of Prof. Henry Glassie, Folklore Department, Bloomington, Indiana, USA, whose unfortunate illness made it impossible for him

to travel to Ireland to take part in the conference. Although the Opening Address and keynote papers are not included herein, they were a central part of the conference.

RY4 brought together folklorists and ethnologists as well as scholars from other disciplines to present papers and discuss future directions for the study of calendar customs and related topics. There were forty-five papers presented in total, with delegates from Ireland, Estonia, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Greece, France, Lithuania, Hungary, Austria, Czech Republic, the United States, the United Kingdom and Russia. The current volume brings together twenty-three selected papers based on presentations delivered at the conference. However, not all the papers presented at the conference are included in this publication.

The intention of this conference was to examine aspects of the ritual year that relate to gender in either a social or symbolic sense and thus resulted in both empirical and theoretical contributions to the scholarly understanding of the interplay between calendar year events and gender. The interdisciplinary nature of the conference provided an opportunity for exchange of ideas between the folklorists and other scholars interested in the field of ritual year studies. The merging of ritual year studies with the field of gender studies opened interesting channels of investigation and the contacts made between scholars interested in both areas will surely last, maybe even giving rise to future collaborative research. This collection shares this work with a wider audience.

I would like to thank all the authors for their valuable submissions and to express my deep gratitude to the Editor, Emily Lyle, for her encouragement, help and patience throughout the editorial process. Thanks are due to the Advisory Board of the Ritual Year Working Group for their helpful feedback. Sincere thanks go also to Aude Le Borgne for her work in the technical editing and layout of this volume. The scope and quality of submissions was heartening and reflects the remarkable work of the Ritual Year Working Group, the future efforts of which will surely bring about even greater things.

Cosmos Editorial: A Farewell and a Welcome

EMILY LYLE

As editor responsible for the production of *Cosmos* for the first twenty-five years of its existence, I would like to take my farewell of readers and to offer a very warm welcome to Professor Mirjam Mencej who will be editor from volume 26 onwards. I look forward eagerly to seeing the journal flourish under her direction. I would also like to offer my thanks to Jenny Butler for guest-editing this volume, and to express my appreciation of guest-editing undertaken in the relatively recent past by Rosemary Muir Wright (12.2), Aude Le Borgne (16.2) and Geo Athena Trevarthen (24).

As I have the pleasure of being president of both The Traditional Cosmology Society, which produces *Cosmos*, and of the Ritual Year Working Group of SIEF, which produces *The Ritual Year*, I have been happy to bring about the merging of these two journals for this one volume (*Cosmos* 25 / *The Ritual Year* 4). The papers contained in it are derived from the conference on the "Ritual Year and Gender" held in Cork in June 2008. The previous volumes of *The Ritual Year* series were:

The Ritual Year 1 (2006).
Proceedings of the First International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year. Malta: Publishers Enterprises Group (PEG) Ltd.

The Ritual Year 2 (2007): *The Ritual Year and Ritual Diversity*
Proceedings of the Second International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year. Elanders, Välingby: Institutet för Språk och Folkiminnen Dialekt-, Ortnamns- och Folkminnesarkivet I Göteborg.

The Ritual Year 3 (2008): *The Ritual Year and History*
Proceedings of the Third International Conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year. Národní ústav lidové kultury, Strážnice .

For further information, see:

The Ritual Year Working Group website:
http://www.theritualyear.com/

The SIEF website:
http://www.siefhome.org

Woman and Man in Udmurt and Besermian Religious Practice in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century

NADEZHDA SHUTOVA

ABSTRACT. *The paper provides a description of gender distribution of roles in Udmurt and Besermian ritual practice especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Man played a leading role in the folk religion and inner spiritual life of agrarian communities of that period. Traces of a former high status of women in the religious sphere survived among northern Udmurts and Besermians. The meaning of male and female activity varied in accordance with the type of sanctuary and specific situation in each local district.*

KEYWORDS: *folk religion, sanctuaries, ritual, cult keeper, gender, Udmurt, Besermian*

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a description of the role of man and woman in the religious practice of Udmurts and Besermians – two of the ancient agrarian peoples of Eastern Europe – in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. According to the All-Russian census of 2002, there are a total of 636,906 people defining themselves as Udmurts and 3.122 people defining themselves as Besermians. Udmurts and Besermians were christianized comparatively late. The first seventeen Udmurt families were baptized in 1557, and the majority of the population became Christian only at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. In spite of Christianisation, and also Soviet repressions and atheistic education in the period from 1930 to the 1970s, Udmurts and Besermians have preserved traditional cultural traits up to the present.

A system of calendar and family festivals formed the annual ritual year in traditional Udmurt and Besermian communities. The majority

of the traditional festivals and rituals coincided with the Christian Orthodox calendar. According to the sources of the period under discussion, males had the leading role in the religious practice of the Udmurts. It is possible, however, that such a situation arose under the influences of Orthodox Christianity and Islam, for there are indications that women used to have a higher status in religious life. In the old times, both Udmurt and Besermian women had special women's sacred places, and women also used different types of magic practices from men.

UDMURT AND BESERMIAN CULT PRACTICES

Considering the functions carried out by Udmurt cult keepers as well as their social role and phenomenological abilities, they may be roughly subdivided into two groups. The first group included numerous male priests of the pre-Christian sacred places, who organized and held all the necessary calendar and family rituals. They were old, wise and prosperous heads of clans. The second group consisted of the magicians (*tuno*), sorcerers, wizards, fortune-tellers etc., who were able to contact gods or spirits and help people to recover from diseases as well as other misfortunes. The *tuno* often interacted with "other" divine spheres in an altered state of consciousness, practising shamanistic techniques of ecstasy, and meditation. As the *tuno* were considered to have magical power and abilities people appealed to them in situations of crisis. They had the function of choosing a place for praying and also choosing a priest for a sanctuary. Most, but not all, of the *tuno* were men.

The difference between the male and female ritual activities varied in accordance with the type of each cult site. More than ten sacred places were concentrated within a village and the surrounding area. They differed from each other by their types and functions, as well as by the gods they were devoted to. There were family and clan cult places. It was said that some of the family and clan protectors (Vorshud, Mudor, Invu) lived inside those places, which symbolized the human home space. (In one local district people honoured Vorshud, in another the main protector was Mudor; we have little information about Invu.) The protectors ensured happiness and health

for the members of the community. They were responsible for the links between the generations of relatives: the ancestors, the living people and their descendants. Archaic variants of family shrines were areas or pits surrounded by a fence and situated at private households (*s'ion pottonni* "place for throwing/putting sacrificial food" *kuala gop/inty* "pit/place after sacred building *kuala*").[1] Late variants of these family shrines were small log cabins with a fireplace – *pokchi kuala*. Usually the principal functions of prayer in a family sanctuary were performed by a man, the head of a family. His wife made all the necessary preparations for the rituals. Also a man could ask his wife to help him in holding a cult ceremony. Prayers were offered there about seventy times a year. They were timed to coincide not only with calendar festivals but also with numerous significant events in family life such as the birth of a child, a wedding, an illness etc. (Emelyanov 1921: 38, 69).

The clan sanctuary or shrine (*bydzym kuala*) in the form of a larger building with a hearth was established within a village or near it. Praying ceremonies were conducted there between one and five times a year. The dates of having rituals coincided with important Orthodox festivals such as Pancake Day (*Maslennica*), Easter (*Paskha*), Whitsun (*Troitsa*), St Peter's Day (*Petrov*) and others. A kin or clan shrine was maintained by a priest who was chosen by the local *tuno* or by drawing lots. The wife of a priest acted as an assistant to her husband and helped him to prepare ritual food and drink and to lay out the design of a shrine. The priest's wife wove towels and tablecloths for the shrine, and she also cooked the food and prepared the drinks essential for the ritual. An archaic wedding head shawl belonging to the priest's wife was kept among the sacred things inside the shrine (Gavrilov 1891: 88-9; Emelyanov 1921: 47-50, 58-9; Minnyakhmetova 2003: 126, 129-31).

The pre-Christian priests had to be married men; unmarried men could not perform religious ceremonies. In Sarapul district, after a priest's death the duties of a priest could be carried out by a person who was chosen by the widow of the former priest. In other cases the priest's duties were given to a son of a former *kuala* keeper. A main keeper of a clan shrine (*bydzym kuala*) and his wife had special silver rings which they put on only for praying. Those rings were given by the former priest and priest's wife to a new couple of keepers chosen

for praying. Handing over those silver rings to the new priest and his wife was organised as a special ceremony (Bogaevski 1890: 101-2).

There were shrines dedicated to male gods of Wild Nature (*N'ulesmurt, Lud* and others). They controlled the forests, fields and meadows and all the land round the settlements. People prayed to them, asking them to give game to hunters, to protect cattle, and to offer help in agriculture. Prayers were offered there once or twice a year in spring and autumn. The place for praying to the Master of the Forests (*N'julesmurt/Chachamurt*) was a clearing inside a forest near a large old spruce. There was a fireplace to sacrifice poultry and cattle in this glade. In Northern Udmurtia all the members of a village community (men, women, and children) could participate in religious ceremonies performed at the shrines dedicated to the Master of the Forests, but only a male priest could pray there. Priests blessed bread, leaf (or flat) bread, egg pancakes, wine, butter, porridge and meat. Then they sacrificed food and drink to the gods. At the end of the ceremony all the participants had a communal meal with the food and drink that had been blessed. Women helped men make all necessary preparations for the ritual. They made wine, baked bread, cooked other food and plucked poultry before sacrifice etc. (Vereshagin 1886: 53; 1889: 97; Pervukhin 1888: 4-6, 58, 92-101; Luppov 1911: 263).

The situation in the southern districts of Udmurtia was different. The grove for offerings to the Master of the Meadows (*Lud*) had a more complicated structure. The territory of the shrine was surrounded by a fence, and the most sacred corner inside the shrine was fenced off separately. In the village of Varzi-Jatchi, Alnashi district of Udmurtia, every householder had his own individual spot with a tree at which to pray inside the *lud*. By contrast with Northern Udmurtia where women were free to visit shrines dedicated to the Master of the Forests, in Southern Udmurtia women were strictly forbidden to visit *lud*, which were considered male sanctuaries. Women were allowed to observe the praying standing far away, but they could not come close to a sacred place (Gavrilov 1891: 112-14).

The typical male territorial or tribal shrine in Central Udmurtia was the sacred place Lek Oshmes in the Igra district of Udmurtia. It was arranged on a slope of rising ground. There was a spring surrounded by fir trees at the shrine. A fir called *kort shukkon kyz*

(Udm.), "a fir for hammering irons in", grew among other trees at the shrine of Lek Oshmes. Old men hammered knives or small pieces of different iron implements into the trunk of the tree; they believed this could help to heal their relatives. People threw down coins and pieces of food on the ground near the tree or placed them in a pit near the roots. From the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century Udmurts conducted both collective and individual worship in this place. According to local sources, members of the community sacrificed bull-calves and other animals to a local god, in pursuit of health and happiness and prosperous agriculture. Participants in the ceremonies conducted there were mostly old men, although youths and boys could go there too. Women did not appear at the sanctuary except in case of necessity. Moreover, when a wedding procession passed by the shrine Lek Oshmes it was necessary to cover the bride with a shawl, so as not to anger the spirit of Lek Oshmes.

We have found several instances where women preserved higher status in the religious sphere. Among the Northern Udmurts and Besermians there were special female sacred places, where rituals were performed till the middle of the twentieth century. For example, female "prayers" (priestesses) organized rituals at the territorial sanctuary called Inmala. The sacred place Inmala in the Slobodskoj district of Kirov Oblast, is situated on a small rising ground near a spring. There is a sacred birch and fireplace in the clearing in the forest. It was an old tribal, and later a territorial, shrine of the local Udmurts and Besermians. People from more than twenty local villages participated in ritual ceremonies performed there. Women tied fabrics and towels to the birch trunk and then prayed for fertility for themselves and health for their children. They buried coins at the roots of the birch to reinforce these requests.

General community sacrifices were conducted there twice in a year – on St Peter's Day (*Petrov*) in the middle of July and at the festival of the Protection of the Mother of God (*Pokrov*) in the middle of October. In the old days praying with the sacrifice of large animals (bulls, sheep, calves) used to be organized at the shrine, but at the end of the twentieth century the main sacrifice was poultry. The cult keepers of the place were two women. They came to the shrine, kindled a fire and sacrificed poultry. All the female participants in a ceremony stood in a circle and prayed (Shutova 2001: 29-34).

At first glance the Besermian system of male-female contribution to ritual practice was in general similar to the Udmurt system. Men conducted most agrarian and family ceremonies. Besermian priests' wives carried out the same functions during the preparation of rituals. But we have observed one important difference between Udmurt and Besermian traditions. Besermian cult places and the rituals performed there were strictly divided on gender lines. This division went back to archaic times. Men had their sacred places devoted to the Master of the Forests (*Chachamurt*) and women had their own shrine, *vey kis'kan* "a place for pouring melted butter", in private households. Women's sacred buildings were constructed from logs or boards (Fig. 1). The ritual included offering butter and a cake and other food. Rituals were conducted there in spring or in early summer by an old woman, and only elderly women participated in the ceremonies. They asked for the birth of children, and for the health of all the family members etc. The important cult buildings (*vey kis'kan*) were in villages and so belonged to the human/cultural sphere. They were used for praying to the Goddess of Fertility.

CONCLUSION

The majority of pre-Christian shrines were male ones. In broad terms, the man played a leading role in the folk religion and inner spiritual life of agrarian communities of the period. The role of a woman varied according to the type of sanctuary and the specific situation inside each local district. (Each district consisted of about 10-20 villages with a central maternal village and district sanctuary.) Women were generally onlookers or ordinary participants at those calendar or family and clan rituals annually conducted by men at territorial, tribal and clan shrines, although they were actively involved in the preparations for the rituals. In the southern districts of Udmurtia women were forbidden to visit the sacred groves, *lud*, but traces of a former high status of women in the religious sphere survived among Northern Udmurts (sacred place, Inmala) and Besermians (special female shrines, *vey kis'kan*). It is also important to note that in all rural districts there were not only male but also female masters of sacred knowledge. It was held that they could

Fig. 1. This archaic sacred building (*vey kis'kan*) in the Besermian village of Maly Dasos was reconstructed in accordance with the information given by Klavdija Zhujkova (born in 1937). She witnessed the offering of prayer at the *vey kis'kan* in her childhood (drawing by the author).

speak the special languages of "animals, birds, blood or fire" and had the ability to cure diseases, tell fortunes, practise sorcery, etc. Although in many cases ordinary women were only passive participants in rituals, in extraordinary and occasional situations every woman had the power to make a vow or present an offering and to sacrifice at cult places.

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Note

1 The remains of cult places in the form of a fenced area or sacrificial pits have been discovered by archaeologists at the medieval fortified settlements of the Permian tribes.

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Gender Roles in Some Udmurtian Traditional Calendar Rites

TATIANA MINNIYAKHMETOVA

ABSTRACT. *In the context of the Udmurtian traditional calendar, the article discusses briefly two women's rites and, at greater length, two male rites which are firstly the producing of a new fire and secondly a praying ceremony in a sacred grove. In some special cases, women also took part in the male events. The main reasons for these exceptions are a woman's special position in a family and the social meaning of the rite. Since the rite concerns a whole society, it is essential that either everyone or representatives of each section should take part.*

KEYWORDS: *Udmurt, calendar rite, fire, gender, men's rites, women's rites, ritual rules*

The Udmurts, a Finno-Ugric-speaking people in the Russian Federation, had some traditional rites in which participants were men only, and in this article I analyse two that were important events in the ritual folk calendar: the production of new fire and the offering of prayer in the sacred grove.

But before entering into discussion of these almost exclusively male rites, and seeing how women were marginally involved in them, I would like to demonstrate the simultaneous existence of female rites by giving a brief account of two of them. One occurred in the period of the Bydzhynal celebration in spring discussed below, when the elderly women in a village dressed up in men's clothes and hung vegetables like carrots and red beets between their legs to simulate male genitals. These mumming women went through the streets and visited the houses shaking the vegetables and singing obscene songs, and dancing and drinking beer and other alcoholic drinks. On this day males should stay hidden and should not be seen by women. If the women did come across a man they took his trousers off and shook his sexual organs with the words: "*Kidys viyatis'kom, kidys!*" – "We

are sowing seed!" (Minniyakhmetova 2000: 32). It should be noted that such obscenities and gestures could be employed only by elderly women, i.e., the ones who had crossed the threshold of fertility (Vladykina 1998: 308). Another women's rite is *kibi ulljan* – the exterminating of insects or grubs. Women taking part in this rite in early times were naked or half-naked, but later wore white clothes (Harva 1911: 32). Males were not allowed to participate in this rite or even to observe the activities of the females, although afterwards in the spring-sown field a white sheep was sacrificed by the men. The prohibitions for men in the context of the women's rites are connected with the liminal status of a woman. During the women's rites the borders between the worlds are opened and such a situation is dangerous for men. We may also note that, when it is taboo for the members of either gender to cross the border between prohibited and admitted behaviours or zones, conformity with the rules means keeping the completeness of the event and reinforcing the wholeness of a society.

I shall now turn to the two examples of male rites to be discussed. The rite of producing new fire was performed during the period of the Bydzhynal in spring, and the praying ceremony in a sacred grove or field was most frequently organised in summer. In the past only males – both men and boys – participated in these rites and it was forbidden for females to take part. Nevertheless, in some special cases women participated in these events. Here I will describe these rites and analyse what was considered a valid reason for breaking the ritual rules and giving females access to the events. How strictly was it forbidden for women to cross the border between permitted and prohibited zones? What is it that regulates people's behaviour in this area? In most cases my examples concern the Southern or Trans-Kama diaspora group of Udmurt people.

THE SPRING RITE OF THE PRODUCTION OF NEW FIRE

The first example is the rite of producing new fire (*typutyl potton*) and it fell during the period of celebration of the Bydzhynal (Great Day).[1] The date of the Bydzhynal (to be precise, the celebrating of the coming of the Bydzhynal) was and is calculated according to the

lunar calendar and in most cases it coincides with the Orthodox Easter. The Udmurt heathens had a five-day week, and they celebrated the coming of the Bydzhynal on Friday. Eventually, under the influence of the Orthodox calendar and later the calendar of the Soviet times, the Udmurts began to celebrate it on Sunday. The Udmurtian Bydzhynal period lasted two weeks and it included purification activities, producing new fire, bringing new water, honouring the dead ancestors, celebrating of the coming of the Bydzhynal, praying to the progenitor and protector of the lineage group Vorshud, mumming and guising, feasting, and seeing off the Bydzhynal.

The rite of producing new fire was performed on the Thursday before the celebration of the arrival of the Bydzhynal. The rite took place at the gate which is situated at the end of each village street (*busy kapka*). In the past, as a rule all the people living in a street belonged to the same kin group (*Vorshud*), and so the participants who gathered by the gate were relatives. We have to suspect that only members of a group of relatives could produce a new fire together. In early times those gates were kept closed, and later they were still shut at night. Nowadays, there are gates like this in only some villages, and, where they do exist, they are kept open all the time because of continuous street traffic.

Before the rite of producing new fire, all the participants – both the fire producers and those who would carry the new fire home – had to purify themselves, by taking a steam bath in a sauna and putting on clean clothes. Before the production of new fire, each household had to extinguish all the fires and lights in the house early in the morning. As a rule it happens while it is still dark, before the males leave to the gate. Afterwards a male family member, usually the head of the family or a husband, went to the village gate. If the family had no adult male member, an adolescent male or a boy who was capable of carrying the new fire would attend. In a case where a family had no male members at all, it was considered acceptable for the oldest woman to go to the gate and bring home the new fire.

The gates were normally made of wood and the gate-posts were of oak. The gate itself was fixed to a gate-post at one side, and the post was set into a hole in an oak-block on the ground so that it could swivel easily. Early on Thursday morning the males came to the gate

and put some inflammable objects like moss, straw and shavings between the oak-block and the post and started to swing the gate to and fro. They set the inflammable objects on fire by means of the friction between the two pieces of wood. This fire is named *typutyl*, *typu* meaning "oak"and *tyl* "fire". From this new fire, a bigger one was made with the aim of producing a large amount of charcoal. When enough charcoal had been produced, every family member took some home. Then each family made a fire out of doors in the yard and all the members of the family jumped over it three times for the purpose of purification. Afterwards the new fire was put into a stove and people baked pancakes and organised a rite in commemoration of the dead ancestors. This fire had to be kept burning till the next year, when it would be put out before the production of the new fire.

Nowadays people produce new fire in some villages only (although still in most of the villages in the Trans-Kama region) and there are not such strict rules as before. The participants, the males only, who produce a new fire together may come from one family or may belong to different groups of relatives. Perhaps some people come to this rite only to satisfy their curiosity. For example, some relatives from the towns pay a visit for the festival of the Bydzhynal and they want to observe the fire-producing ceremony. Of course, the guests do not take away any fire to their homes, although they may accompany their relatives who live in the village when they come for new fire.

THE SUMMER OR AUTUMN RITE OF PRAYER IN THE SACRED GROVE

Another rite was a summer (or autumn) praying ceremony in the sacred grove, in some local traditions it is named *Lude pyron* and in others *Keremete pyron*. Literally, this might be translated as "entering into Lud or Keremet", i.e. worshipping or praying in a sacred grove or field called Lud or Keremet. People did not enter into the sacred grove or field without special reasons, and they only went there to pray and worship. Every time they entered the Lud-Keremet, they brought special offerings with them. The rite is called "entering into Lud-Keremet", because the action of "entering" was accompanied by

special ritual behaviour and hence whole ceremony took its name from this.

To begin with, it is necessary to give some explanation of the concepts of Lud and Keremet,[2] for the cult is a complex phenomenon. The word *lud* in Udmurt means "field; wild; grove, copse" (Shutova 2001: 237). The word *keremet* is a loan-word; in Arabic it means "spiritual generosity" (Akhmetyanov 1981: 31-2). According to scholars, the Middle Asiatic cult of *keremet* extended into the Volga basin in the Volga Bulgarian epoch in X-XIII centuries and was adopted among the Turkic (Tatars, Chuvashs, Bashkirs) and Finno-Ugric (Mari, Mordva, Udmurt) ethnic groups. In the case of the Udmurts it was superimposed on the cult of the Udmurtian sacred grove or field Lud (Vladykin 1994: 109). In the traditional worldview of the southern Udmurts, as well as among other groups of Udmurts, Lud-Keremet was like a god or "spirit of the religious group *Lud vyhzy* 'lud branch' " (Lintrop 2002: 44) but it was characterised in negative terms, and was regarded with special reverence in the sacred grove surrounded by a fence or an open plane surrounded by trees or in a round plot of field or meadow. This spirit had some local differences and we can learn something of these from the descriptions of researchers from the seventeenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. According to information from the Finnish scholar Harva (also called Holmberg), the Udmurts name the deity of Lud Sultan det' and Kastjan in their prayers (Harva 1911: 16). We find the same deity with the name Sultan, Sulton or Saltan according to other authors (Georgi 1799: 53; Bogaevski 1890: 161-2: Blinov 1898: 62-3; Emelyanov 1921: 80). In some local traditions, this deity was named Ludya Aktash, Lude Aktash or Ludy Aktash and people worshipped in the period of celebrating of the Bydzhynal (Sadikov 2008: 110; Minniyakhmetova 2000: 29). Apart from this instance of spring worship, the main worship event in honour of the deity Lud-Keremet took place in summer or, less frequently, in autumn.

Lud-Keremet was characterised as a punitive being, and it was considered that many illnesses were caused by this spirit. "If people become ill, they seek help and rescue from Kiremet'; a sorcerer tells them what kind of sacrifice will be pleasant and agreeable to him" (Rychkov 1770: 161). It was common knowledge that this deity did not punish anybody without a reason. The main reason for being

punished by this being was one's impermissible behaviour, and usually such a deed or action was connected with the sacred grove or the worshipping place to the Lud-Keremet. For example, if someone entered there without special necessity, or took from this place something like wood, tree-branches or plants, or if one did not participate in the worshipping ceremonies, then this person could be punished by Lud-Keremet. Another cause for punishment by this spirit could be to think of this being as evil, or to consider it negatively. One's thoughts of this kind were "known" to the spirit. One's negative behaviour could affect a family's success and luck in general; furthermore, it could be reflected onto a whole community. If it was considered that a disease was caused by the spirit Lud-Keremet, a rite of visiting the sacred grove and offering to Lud-Keremet was organised. In this case a priest who prayed to this spirit only and the sick person should go to this healing ceremony.

In the past only males, both adults and children, had participated in the rite devoted to Lud-Keremet. Nevertheless, if a family had no males, the oldest woman from this family would go to these ceremonies and bring food and offerings. Since women were prohibited from entering the sacred space, the woman would place her offerings for Lud-Keremet and food outside the boundaries of the sacred space.

A similar situation is observed in the case of a sick person, who could be either female or male. According to the rules, it was forbidden for females to be there but, regardless of prohibition, she had to go there and make offerings. The eldest woman from a family could go to the ceremony if a sick person was a young boy or girl who was not capable of making offerings himself or herself.

The offerings for Lud-Keremet could be such things as domestic animals, towels,[3] a loaf of bread, and leaf or flat bread (in Udmurt *kuarn'an'*). In general every village had a sacred place Lud-Keremet, but in some local traditions a group of some villages connected by origin or with their former settled lands (the Udmurts had to migrate from the settled lands) had a common sacred place Lud-Keremet. Hence, the males from a village or from a group of villages could participate in a rite, and they had to organise ceremonies strictly according to the rules. If people wanted to offer a domestic animal or domestic animals, they collected the money offered by each family of

a village or several villages and with this money bought the animals from the participant villages. As a rule, on the worshipping day the animal was slaughtered and its meat boiled and then cut up into small pieces. Afterwards the priests and their assistants shared the carved meat wrapped up in the leaf bread. The participants also got meat wrapped in leaf bread for themselves and for their family members who did not come to the worshipping ceremony. The bones of the sacrificed animal must not be broken by the meat cutting. Traditionally, the bones were tied together with bast strings and hung on a tree, or they were burned in the same sacred grove after the worshipping (Pallas 1788: 39; Wichmann 1894: 31; 1990: 40; Harva 1911: 16, 136). In some local traditions the bones were put in a special place named *ly keljan* – "sending off bones". The skin should either be sold or hung on the trees in the sacred grove (Pallas 1788: 37; Miller 1791: 56).

One of the special features in this rite is the use of the leaf bread. Usually people baked leaf bread at home and the participants took it with them to the sacred place taking into account a piece of the leaf bread for a family member. In some communities, the leaf bread was baked only in the houses of the priests, and "those priests belonged to different relationship organisations" (Sadikov 2008: 112.). The males brought that leaf bread to the praying ceremony but, if a family had no male member, the oldest woman from this family should go to this sacred place and bring the leaf bread. She put the leaf bread outside the boundary of the sacred space and went away.

In some villages each family offered also towels or headscarves, and those towels and headscarves would be hung on the trees in the sacred place. Next year the organisers of the rite took them off the trees and burned them in a fire.

Nowadays, when worshipping and praying in the sacred grove Lud-Keremet, people do not follow the traditional rules. In some villages this event is a common praying to a spirit Lud-Keremet, and all villagers, both male and female, participate.

CONCLUSION

In connection with the exceptions made for women in the men's rites

it is necessary to point out that, generally, in Udmurtian traditional society, a woman occupied a special position in a family and had the same rights as a man. Furthermore, in some cases a woman had more possibilities open to her in terms of significant social roles than a man would have had.

In these men's rites we could see that a woman might substitute for a man. In my opinion, the main reason for this is the social status of the rite. Since the rite is a common event, it concerns the whole society, and hence the participants should be either all the people or members representing all the sections of the totality, and here we have to consider a family as the smallest component in an overall social structure. According to the traditional concept, even one's abstention and disregard may bring serious negative consequences for the whole society and so participation is the key essential.

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Notes

1 Bydzhynal literally means "great day" and in the past it marked the beginning of a new year, but although the exact "great day" was celebrated in a day; nevertheless the two-week festival period was named Bydzhynal as well. In some local traditions this period was named Akashka or Akayashka (see Lintrop 2002: 47).

2 The Udmurt language has no category of gender; hence the deity Lud or Keremet is without gender.

3 In former times people used white woven or homespun towels which could have coloured and decorated ends; nowadays a family buys a white towel or a white or light-coloured headscarf to make offerings for this deity. Before the performing of the rite those towels and headscarves should be washed, even if they never had been used before. Those towels and headscarves are the means to transmit the prayer's wishes to this spirit and symbolize the way to it.

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The Flower Festival as an Example of Mari Women Maintaining Rituals

HELENA RUOTSALA

ABSTRACT. *This article focuses on the role of Mari women in safeguarding and maintaining rituals and pays special attention to the Flower Festival which replaced the original Day of the Plough. The Mari are a Finno-Ugric people in Central Russia who practise their own ethnic folk religion. The article is based on the author's fieldwork in a rural Mari village. The Mari languages and literature, folklore, songs and dances, and also the national festivals and rituals, represent aspects of society in which Mari women have a decisive role, because they hand down the cultural traditions to the new generation.*

KEYWORDS: *Mari, indigenous religion, day of the plough, flower festival, sacrificial rites, Finno-Ugric*

The Maris are a Finno-Ugric people, who live in Central Russia in the Volga River area and they number about 604,800 today. Half of them live in Mari El, which is an autonomous republic in the Russian Federation. Large groups of Maris also live in Bashkortostan, Tatarstan and in other regions. The Maris form a minority (43%) in the Republic Mari El, while Russians (47%) comprise the largest ethnic group. Tatars (6%) represent the third largest minority group in the republic. While 60% of the overall population of Mari El is urban, most of the Maris (69%) live in rural villages.

Their living areas are crossed by different borders: linguistic, ethnic, cultural, religious and political as well as ecological. The Maris have lived for centuries as neighbours of Orthodox and Islamic nationalities. The influence of these neighbouring peoples can be seen not only in a plethora of cultural features but also in Mari religion. The Hill Maris are Orthodox Christians, but the Meadow Maris and those that live in the Diaspora outside of the Republic, the Eastern Maris, who originally fled taxation and forced conversion to Christianity, practise their own ethnic religion. Those practising their

own ethnic religion call themselves the *tšij mari*, meaning the "clean Maris". The Maris' indigenous religion bears the stamp of a syncretism between the dominant Russian religion, Orthodoxy, and the old Mari folk religion. This type of religion is also in everyday speech termed natural religion, and thus manifests the animation of nature.

This article is based on ethnographic fieldwork which I conducted in a Mari village between 2002 and 2005. This village, Untsho, has about 2200 inhabitants and most of them are Maris. The basis of living is agriculture and cattle breeding as well as bee-keeping. The village has some services: school, kindergarten, collective farm, canteen, village council, culture house, health clinic (without physicians), shops and cafe. The location of Untsho is crucial, because Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan with over a million inhabitants, offers a boundless market for agricultural products which are produced in Untsho. I have selected one special festival as my example to show how the Mari women are important maintainers of their culture, religion and rituals. I have chosen to discuss *Peledysh Payrem* here since I have already discussed elsewhere the festival of the remembering of the Dead called *Semyk* (Ruotsala 2008) and other religious festivals (Ruotsala 2009).

From the Day of the Plough to the Red Flower Festival

The Vernacular Calendar of the Maris consists of religious and non-sacred festivals. In addition to religious traditions, the impact of the Soviet Union and the Cultural Revolution are very clearly seen in the calendar festivals and vernacular calendar of the Maris. The Soviet power wanted to replace the traditional and religious festivals of the Mari people with its own festivals – secular holidays which had a political character and content and new symbolism. In line with the Bolshevik commitment to liberating the oppressed ethnic groups of the Russian Empire and helping them to develop national cultures "socialist in content", minorities like the Maris were encouraged to develop their own festivals (Luehrmann 2005:50). These new festivals were given an important position in the cycle of the year and

some of these have kept their importance even after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

During my fieldwork I – together with my colleagues Ildikó Lehtinen and Tamara Molotova as well as a group of students – visited Mari El several times during the spring and summer, and a number of different festivals took place during my field work. Already during my first visit I saw and interpreted the village as gendered space. I met women of all ages, I spoke with women and they invited me to their homes. All in all, it seemed that the village life was depending on active women. The men were more invisible. "Why?" I had to ask, and thus I started to study the village as gendered spaces and places and tried to see the role of both genders in the village (Ruotsala 2008).

Fig.1. Women are active in participating in the Semyk festival for the remembering of the deceased, Jambator, Mari El, 2002 (author's photograph).

The early days of summer among the Maris are important and busy. In addition to all the essential spring tasks in the field and garden, several important festivities take place in the early summer. One of these is *Semyk*, the memorial feast for the deceased (Fig.1).

The timing of *Semyk* is related to the Greek Catholic Whitsuntide at the beginning of June. For Russians, *Semyk* fell on the Thursday before Whit, when the "unclean" dead were remembered (Zelenin 1927: 368-9; Molotova 2003: 78). For the Mari people *Semyk* meant the start of summer and the end of the spring sowing. Along with *Semyk* another important early spring celebration for the Maris was the ploughing feast, *Aga pajrem*, which was held in the village's communal sacrificial grove (Holmberg 1914: 113-15). The Day of the Plough, *Aga pajrem*, was replaced during the 1920s by a new festival, which later was named *Peledysh pajrem*, the Flower Festival.

Fig.2. In the sacrificial grove, Untsho, Mari El, 2004 (author's photograph).

The workers in Sernur, a village about sixty kilometres from Untsho, were the first to organise a festival to honour workers in the autonomous area of the Maris, and from 1923 this festival was called *Yoshkar peledysh pajrem*, the Red Flower Festival (Luehrmann 2005: 50; Vesanen 2005: 46-9), the red colour being the symbol during the Soviet era. Later the name was only *Peledysh pajrem*,

Flower Festival. During the first years it could not be organised every year. The exact timing of the Flower Festival was decided by either the collective or the supervisors (TYKL/SPA/141). The village councils and collective farms were encouraged to celebrate the ending of the spring sowing with the new Flower Festival. Good workers were recognised and rewarded. In some places *Peledysh pajrem* was held in the sacred grove, *oto*, as an additional gesture of substitution (Solov'ev 1966: 9-13). In Untsho the *oto*, the former church – which is now used as a club and discotheque – and the old cemetery, which was situated outside the village space, were all used as a festival arena, but the villagers gave several reasons why these places for the flower festival had been abandoned. The villagers were strongly opposed to the use of these sacred places for secular and political celebrations. They interpreted several accidents (e.g. when several cows died suddenly after the festival had been held in the cemetery) as a sign, and said that the sacrificial grove, the former church and the old cemetery were not suitable places, because the ancestors became insulted by their use for secular purposes (TYKL/SPA/169). Then the village found a suitable place near the river and a festival arena with a stage and associated constructions was built there.

WOMEN'S FESTIVALS

On my first fieldwork expedition both the *Semyk* and the Flower Festival took place within a period of just over a week, and I was able to document both the arrangements for the festive period and the ceremonies themselves. We were also invited to take part in the festivals, both to commemorate the deceased at home and in the grave-yard during the *Semyk* and to participate in the *Peledysh pajrem* in the village of Untsho and next day in Morki, which is the centre of the district. The various festivals can be celebrated on different days in different places and regions. It shows how flexible the vernacular calendar is and how some festival dates are determined by village leaders.

When I was in the village I was also invited to private festivities, such as birthday parties. People used to visit their friends and relatives on birthdays. Guests were offered food and drinks and the

birthday celebrator received small presents, such as scarves and chocolate and sparkling wine. Often the evenings ended with music and singing, especially when the participants had belonged to the folklore ensemble of the village. Most of the members in the folklore ensemble were women.

According to my fieldwork, three festival days were mentioned when I asked the village women what they felt were the most important festival days. Most of them mentioned International Women's Day, which is on the 8th of March, the Flower Festival, *Peledysh pajrem*, and the memorial feast for the deceased, *Semyk*. Mari women pointed out that the International Women's Day is a special day, when they get special attention both at home and at work. The importance of *Semyk* shows that remembrance of the dead still holds a significant place in the culture and popular beliefs of the Maris. The rites connected to the memory of the dead ensure for people continuous contact with the hereafter. Honouring ancestors is important, and the rites carried out for them guarantee the continuity of the community. The deceased and the forefathers, for their part, help people to cope with everyday life. Women also play an important part in remembering the dead and communicating with them (Ruotsala 2008: 77-8). Both the traditional religious festivals and new, invented or re-invented festivals are regarded as important.

In the next section I will focus on the *Peledysh pajrem* and discuss its meaning for the Mari women.

THE IMPORTANCE AND MEANING OF THE FLOWER FESTIVAL

The purpose of the Flower Festival was to replace an old traditional religious festival by a new one which had a more acceptable content in the Soviet Union. To help it spread, the organizers took motifs, rituals and plays from the old festival in order to emphasise its Mari character. The time of year was the same, but the symbols were those of the new power, the Soviet Union (Fryer 2001: 25-6; Narody Povolzh'ja i Priural'ja 2000: 291). This new festival aimed to show continuity by creating a history and demonstrating its ties with the past (Vesainen 2005: 48). All in all, the Flower Festival can be

regarded as an invented tradition, in Eric Hobsbawm's terminology (Hobsbawm 1983: 1-14).

The reason why the Flower Festival became a success story is that it was combined with collectives and work and so the local collective farms organised it. It has been regarded as the festival of the local collective, where traditional songs, dances and sport and games are combined with old rituals. So the religious traditions of *Aga pajrem* were gradually displaced (Fryer 2001: 26). Also among other nationalities in the former Soviet Union, similar festivals were organised in order to replace old calendar rituals. The Udmurts celebrate *Gerber* and the Tatars have their *Sabantui* festival, both at the same time as *Peledysh pajrem* (Minniyakhmetova 2000: 49, 64).

Several games and competitions were organised, where skilful or strong workers could show their skills or children could compete. The prizes were much sought after. During the festival the winners received household equipment, such as microwaves, electric water-boilers, tableware and food mixers. The competitors were men, but the prizes they won belonged to the women's sphere. The traditional division of labour is still operative in the Mari culture, so that women take care of the work in the kitchen and in the house (Ruotsala 2009). When one of our students asked what the men think of these prizes that are regarded as women's utensils, the answer was, that the prizes are very desirable and important, because they are expensive items which are not yet so very common in the village (TYKL/SPA/160).

None of the festivals of the ritual year can be organised without the work contribution of women. Although the men working in the collective farm repaired the festival arena and its structures, the women took care of other preparations. They performed songs and dances, which they had rehearsed. Already several days before the festival period – *Semyk* and the *Peledysh pajrem* were situated close together in the ritual calendar – women were cleaning the houses and cooking and baking for the festival and guests. After the Flower Festival was over, relatives and friends visited each other. Those villagers who now live far away stayed in their former homes.

According to the villagers, the social aspect of the *Peledysh pajrem* was the most important. It gathered people together. After a busy working spring season people had free time, to meet each others, to chat, to relax and to celebrate. *Peledysh pajrem* was also a free day

for the collective workers. The functions of this festival – as also other festivals – are to give rhythm to life and to separate everyday life from holidays.

The participants in the Flower Festival consisted of people in all ages. In recent years, the organisers have brought in artists who are popular in the whole of Mari El to attract younger people. Although people value the programme and the artists, the most important reason for them to participate is to meet friends and relatives. The cultural programme with famous artists is regarded as a bonus.

THE ROLE OF MARI WOMEN

Mari women play a crucial role in sustaining and safeguarding the social order of their own ethnic community. Like those of other Finno-Ugrian nationalities, Mari women are active organisers of, and participants in, festivities and rituals. In this way they are important ethno-political leaders (see e.g. Siikala 2000: 84; Ruotsala 2003: 143).

The status of the Mari culture and Mari indigenous religion improved in the 1990s. The sacrificial ceremonies became a visible manifestation of Mari ethnicity. The consolidating of traditional customs has been one part of building Mari identity, while safeguarding the continuity of their own national languages and cultural traditions, such as festivals, has been another. The role of educated Maris has been important for the safeguarding of the ethnic religion, because they have actively participated in sacrificial rites and in reviving the religion as a whole (Toidybekova 1998: 261).

Overall, the activities of Mari women – as is the case with other women in the former Soviet Union – can be defined as having four different functions, according to Anthias and Yuval-Davies (see Ashwin 2000: 3). Firstly, women are primarily responsible for the ethnic community's reproduction. Secondly, they produce the ethnic limits of the community by focusing on Mari culture and traditions. Thirdly, they are responsible for the ideological shaping of the community and act as the mediators and conveyers of culture from one generation to the next. Fourthly, they actively participate on behalf of their own community in the on-going political and

economic struggle. We may note that women also contribute to the preservation of the social structure of the community and are responsible for the everyday duties. Involvement in festivals is an important part of their role.

According to the results of my own fieldwork and the observations of other researchers, women comprise a majority of participants in the different Mari feasts; whether it is *Peledysh pajrem*, a folklore evening or a religious rite such as the remembrance of the dead (e.g. Lehtinen 2006: 45). Folk music and dance are still alive amongst the Maris. Even today girls are taught at home both day-to-day tasks such as the preparation of food, baking, cleaning, sewing and perhaps embroidery for Mari national costumes and also to be the custodians of the Mari language and cultural skills and the social arrangements of the community. The Mari languages and literature, folklore, songs and dances, and also the national feasts and rituals represent those subjects and situations, in which the Mari woman is in the decisive situation, because she hands down the cultural traditions in turn to her own children and grandchildren.

In the last years of the twentieth century the Maris recognised the *Peledysh pajrem*, which was originally designed to replace a traditional Mari *Aga pajrem* (Day of the Plough) as an important Mari festival. In order to keep the traditions living further, Mari mothers and grandmothers take their children and grandchildren to the *Peledysh pajrem*, where Mari ethnic identity is on display.

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Women in Greece in Relation to Year-Cycle and Life-Cycle Rituals

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ABSTRACT. *Modern and Ancient Greek religious festivals follow a ritual calendar where celebrations are performed in connection with important phases during the agricultural year. Fertility-cult is of focal importance in these festivals and also in life-cycle transitions, and women are the most competent and central performers of the fertility-rituals. The fertility-cult plays an important role within the official male value-system. Taking account of the female sphere in Greece provides us with a basis for considering the female part of society, thus giving a reconsidering of the male view and simultaneously a comprehensive analysis of the societies, ancient and modern, in which the female point of view is included.*

KEYWORDS: *Ancient Greece, modern Greece, women, gender, gendered value-systems, religious festivals, fertility-/death-cult, rituals, life cycle, healing*

THE FEMALE SPHERE

"The female sphere" is important when studying such personal phenomena in life as ideologies and mentalities, represented by religion, behaviour, values, customs, faith, worship and popular beliefs. We discover that what we usually call "macro-" and "micro-society", i.e. the "public" and "domestic spheres", in fact have different meanings to what is generally assumed. In Greece, we do not find the "little" society or "only the family" at home; rather, this is where we meet the "great" society. Therefore, it is important to search out to what extent the official ideology is dependent on fertility-/death-cult and healing, and so the female sphere, to manifest itself.

The "male sphere" is usually connected with the official world, and the female with the domestic world, but as already stated, this does not imply that the female sphere is marginal and the other not, as

some researchers have claimed (e.g. Danforth 1982). Marginalization is a spatial metaphor and depends on where you are standing. This means that the centre in a Greek village can be both the central village square, "the man's world" (cf. Ar. *Eccl.* 154 f. for a parallel), and the kitchen hearth or courtyard, important spaces that women control. When studying Greek village life, anthropologists have considered the two spheres of male and female importance in terms of "public" and "private", home and outside home, but there are also public spaces where women dominate, one of these is the cemetery. So, when working with this material, one realizes that the division in a male and female sphere in Greek society may, under certain circumstances, be blurred. In reality, the world of the domestic and familial or the world of women, i.e. the female sphere, covers a more extended area and has greater power than is generally assumed.

THE CYCLICAL FESTIVALS AND FERTILITY-CULT

The festival is an important means of communication, an offering or a gift, most often dedicated to a deceased guardian of society, alone or together with a god(dess), for instance to the modern *Panagia* (the Virgin Mary) or to ancient goddesses. The analysis of the fertility-cult demonstrates how fertility is connected to the deceased and the powers in the subterranean world where life begins, according to the cyclical symbolism, which is central in Greek culture. The deceased mediator also receives a blood sacrifice, the ritual slaughter of an animal, for example an ox- or a lamb, which afterwards is consumed as a communal meal by the participants of the festival. The communication is presented on several levels. The dead receives the offering in order to provide for the fertility of the society through the communication with stronger powers, first and foremost, Mother Earth. Her importance parallels the woman's who is the central performer of the cults, which are important in the festivals, because they are connected to the female sphere. The Greeks conceive the Earth as a woman's body and the agricultural year as a woman's life. The Earth is also seen as the female sex organ. But, the Earth represents only one of the two parts of the nature, who has to be invoked to ensure the harvest. Accordingly, rain-magic dedicated to a

heavenly god is a generally theme in the festivals, particularly around the most important periods during the agricultural year: sowing (autumn) and sprouting (spring). From this fact follows the significance of the Sacred Marriage, *hieros gamos*, also illustrated by the union of Mother Earth with her son, the corn-seed, to make the ground fertile (cf. Håland 2005, 2006).

FROM THE HONOUR OF MASCULINITY TOWARD A POETICS OF WOMANHOOD, OR A CHTHONIC PERSPECTIVE

While carrying out fieldwork among women, and considering their own value-system, the picture may change from that projected by men (cf. Bourdieu 1998, discussed in Håland 2007: ch. 6, see also 2009). Even if Greek women may subscribe to the male ideological "honour and shame" model, they have their own values in addition to, or running contrary to the male view, depending on how the male view suits their own thinking. That women experience the world differently from men is difficult to discern from ancient male-produced sources.

Women also have female knowledge. Based on the values of modern Greek women, it may be called *a poetics of womanhood*, and the point is how women can present public performances of *being good at being a woman* (Dubisch 1995; cf. Seremetakis 1991; Abu-Lughod 1988), for example when performing fertility-rituals in agricultural or procreation contexts, using magic such as in healing contexts, nursing children, performing death-rituals. Women we meet in modern Greece are often strong personalities and active participants in social life. They are often stronger and more assured than women we know from our own societies, and far from the suppressed, downtrodden and reclusive creatures presented by several ethnographers. They run their households with a firm hand, and exhibit self-confidence.

The female body provides a significant source for social symbolism: it plays an important role in the "poetics of womanhood", because bodies have social meanings that may be used in public performances. In Greece, the female body both creates and represents the family and social relations in a variety of contexts. By wearing

black mourning clothes when a family member dies, women become highly visible symbols of mourning, hence of the kinship relations between the deceased and the living. This importance of the women's black mourning clothes is stated in ancient traditional sources from Homer (*Il.* 24.93), but is criticized by Plutarch (*Mor.* 608f4). Complaints about suffering are especially expressed by women lamenting their dead. They also suffer in pilgrimage. But in relation to problems of everyday life, we meet the same complaints, since they call attention to what they must endure in order to carry out their roles as wives and mothers.

In modern Greece, we meet the importance of *ponō*, suffering or feeling pain as one of the important ways of expressing the "poetics of womanhood". In ancient society, *ponos* described motherly suffering generally, and for Plutarch (*Mor.* 496d-e, cf. 771b), and Sappho (*Fr.* 42, cf. 28, 118b). The same word signifies a woman in labour. In contemporary Greece, a woman makes a public performance when crawling on her knees to the church with a sick child on her back in the hope of healing (see Fig. 1), but the action takes validity through the sacrifice and suffering of the self on behalf of others.

Fig. 1. A mother crawling on her knees to the church dedicated to the Panagia on Tinos with a sick child on her back in the hope of healing (all the photographs are by the author).

It is important to understand the cultural meaning of emotion (*Il.* 22.33-90; Sappho. *Fr.* 83), which is different from the Western ideological focus on suppressing and hiding emotions and suffering. In Greece, a suffering mother may therefore present public performances in "being good at being a woman". Her "public" audience most often is other women, who share her "public" space, interests and value-system.

The importance of women's central roles in festivals and life-cycle rituals does not necessarily imply that women are official priestesses. Some ancient women could hold office as priestesses, but as already stated, the point is the importance of changing our perspective and value-system.[1] When dealing with women and religion, we do not necessarily have to refer to priestesses, women do more than that, for example in the home and at the cemetery where they are the performers of the laments, tend the graves and conduct the memorials for the dead.

It seems that the daily-life situation of women is intensified during the festivals (Fig. 2). Women are the guardians of their family's spiritual health, given the role of prayers and vows in healing and protection. Accordingly, modern women visit the cemetery nearly every day, they light the oil lamp or candle in front of the family *icons* (images), and thus, parallel ancient women also taking care of the household cult. The relations with the divine powers still are everyday activities. Religion and the rituals represented in the festivals and in connection with the life-cycle passages are an "overdose"/intensification of the rituals performed in daily life. Today, this is illustrated by the mother calling her daughter home in the late afternoon, and thus loudly and publicly proclaiming what may be a Greek woman's most significant status, that of a mother.

FROM FERTILITY-CULT TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE WOMAN AND GENDER RESEARCH

The female body symbolizes everything connected with conception, nourishment and birth. It is assumed as a container, but also as a microcosm. In modern Greece, we have the possibility to discern

Fig. 2. Women celebrating the midwife, Babo (*Agia*/Saint Domenika), in the village of Monokklēsia, Northern Greece. By washing Babo's hands, each woman anticipates the day when the midwife will assist her in childbirth.

women's sayings from men's, and we learn that coming from the same womb, is as important among women as belonging to the same blood amongst men, a clear reference to the fact that only motherhood is publicly verifiable (du Boulay 1984). Perhaps this view found among modern Greek women is more conform with the reasoning of ancient women than the negative or ambiguous view we get from their male contemporaries, a view which naturally has been passed down by men.

The archaic and later lawgivers (Plut. *Sol.* 12.4 f., 21.4 f.; *SIG*^{3}1218, cf. Plut. *Mor.* 608f-611b) attempted to curb women's rituals where their connection with birth and death or the mysteries of life was prominent. It has also been claimed that ancient Athenian Democracy was based on the appropriation of the female combined with the subjugation of women (Loraux 1989; cf. Håland 2007: ch. 6 for discussion). The deprivation was especially connected to women's rituals in the sphere of death-cult. Through the creation of the *Epitaphios Logos*, the official classical male funeral oration which focused on praise of the dead and tragedy, the Greek *polis* or "men's club" appropriated the function of and condemned the excesses of women's laments in order to promote the eternity of the hero who died for the fatherland (Loraux 1981; Holst-Warhaft 1992). Thereby, the importance of the polis was manifested, and the male polis appropriated an important female language, the way women traditionally have addressed the dead. But, when men attempt to appropriate women's domains, as illustrated through the classical tragedy's (Aesch. *Cho.* 22-31, 327-339) and funeral oration's (Thuc. 2.34-46) "appropriation" of women's traditional laments, this demonstrates an acknowledgement of the importance of women's rituals. Athens (male) attempts to curb women's festivals and laments which posed a threat to the official society, were probably only partly successful, since it has been stated that the same process happened in the Byzantine and modern periods when new attempts to curb women's laments became important. The picture from the Christian era is not very different from its forerunner: women were still lamenting, and the female laments continued to our own days, since women's laments and other rituals remained essential parts of the death-rituals of rural Greece. One may claim that men have the

executive power through the official political male sphere, but there are also other arenas for power.

Until puberty, Greek boys are still reared in an exclusively female environment (cf. Plut. *Lyc.* 14.1). They are moulded and socialized by their mothers, wet-nurses or grandmothers, who exercise influence upon them in ancient (Hdt. 6.138; Pl. *Resp.* 377c, cf. *Leg.* 790 and Plut. *Mor.* 609e), and modern (Gilmore 1987) society. Their experiences from early childhood may have caused that their attempts to appropriate women's institutions never succeeded: in present-day's Athens, the ceremony of the official male church during *psychosabbata* (All Souls' Day) is followed by women's rituals on each grave (cf. Thuc. 2.34-46).

Similarly, the official ritual on Good Friday in the church of Olympos, on the island of Karpathos, is followed by the ritual performed by the women during the afternoon, when they creep under or walk around the *epitaphios* (Christ's funeral) to be healthy or fertile (Fig. 3; cf. Håland 2008). Since all the children are present, the boys learn that their mothers perform important rituals to ensure the fertility in the coming year. Neither the prayers the priest says to the icons and the dead for rain (cf. Håland 2005), nor all the villagers' ceremonial walking under the *epitaphios* before and after the procession, is sufficient. The performance of the women's "afternoon-ritual" in the church is of greatest importance, and during this ritual not one single man dares to be present. The ritual is a modern parallel to the ritual during the ancient women's Haloa-festival when the *archons* (the magistrates) stayed outside of the sanctuary, discoursing on their original discovery and dissemination of Demeter's gift, the domesticated foods, to the populace, while the women were "within", securing the very food by their magical rituals.

Male-dominated rituals are connected with the official male sphere and in ancient Athens the relationship between them was demonstrated with the Thesmophoria, a gathering of women to ensure fertility: if an Assembly was to be held, during the days this female festival was celebrated, it was held not in Pnyx, its normal setting, but in the theatre.[2] So, the men's political business was displaced by the women's higher duties to Demeter and her grain, to ensure the food. The polis depends on the fertility of its region for its basic food supply of wheat and barley, so by financing the Thesmophoria, the

Fig. 3. A woman crawls under the *Epitaphios* (Christ's funeral) to ensure her health in the coming year. Good Friday in the church of Olympos, Karpathos island, 1992.

male polis demonstrates its interest in the successful conduct of women's magical rites,[3] which have to be performed to ensure that the male-dominated sowing and reaping will yield an abundant supply of food.

We meet the importance of the female womb and its parallel, the womb of the Earth Mother who sends up the corn. The celebrations of the Demetrian festivals were an important way of demonstrating how to "be good at being a woman", since their collective performance of the rituals were important to ensure fertility for the community.

From a chthonic perspective, we learn that a male ideological or system-oriented approach to the relationship between men and women becomes too one-sided, because it accepts the male value-system's presentation of the actual relationship. Particularly, the female festivals demonstrate an upheaval of official male roles and male power, and the fertility-cult may be considered as the unifying and underlying factor in all festivals. Sexuality, reproduction and fertility are central and have explicit importance in the festivals.

Therefore, to examine fertility in Greece is to look at Greek society through female eyes.

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Notes

1 Accordingly, this article does not try to find out if and eventually how many ancient women participated at *symposia*, were educated, participated in the official male political sphere, as for example Blomqvist 1995 does, see also Connelly 2007. Cf. Håland: 2007: ch. 6 for discussion.

2 See Winkler 1990: 194 for *IG* II² 1006.50-51, cf. Xen. *Hell.* 5.2,29.

3 Cf. also *IG* II² 1261.9-11, 1290.10 for the Adōnia.

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Gender and Emotion: Male and Female Annual Rituals Commemorating the Dead at Olymbos on the Greek island of Karpathos

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ABSTRACT. *This article deals with the analyses of two cases of recollection of the dead from Olymbos on Karpathos. The first takes place inside the church on Good Friday and consists of lamenting cries by women and laments which refer to relatives who have died over the past year. The second case is related to the collective, dialogical and ritual male singing in public called a* gléndi *and takes place on formal occasions such as saints' day celebrations. Among its various aspects the* gléndi *constitutes a process through which the inhabitans of Olymbos may recreate the memory of their dead.*

KEYWORDS: *Greek calendar, Karpathos, Olymbos, ancestor's memory, ritual, gender, lament, folksong, rhyming couplets, improvisation, performance, dialogical singing*

The island of Karpathos belongs to the Dodecanese island complex, the "twelve islands", on the southeast edge of the Aegean Sea. Olymbos, in the north of Karpathos, forms a distinct cultural unit on the island and is distinguished by its inhabitants' insistence on traditional values. The village's geographical isolation until the 1970s and even into the 1980s, as a result of the lack of communication with the so called "low villages" in the south of Karpathos, kept the inhabitants apart from an urban way of life and technological development, favouring the preservation of traditional cultural practices, such as song and women's costume (Skiada 1990: 31).

In this paper I treat an idiosyncratic ritual, still practised in the village of Olymbos, in which the dead are commemorated at Easter in association with the commemoration of the death of Christ. More precisely, I explore the role of women within a specific ritual event which is linked to the official worship that takes place within the

church on Good Friday. This is a ritual/religious practice in which women commemorate relatives who have died through written rhyming couplets and dirges. In contrast to this women's practice is the men's practice of commemorating the dead through the process of an improvised dialogical singing, called a *gléndi*. These are two unconnected practices which become connected in the annual cycle. One is performed within the church, the other in the public open space of the community. Through these practices the inhabitants of Olymbos on Karpathos verbally and dialectically manage the memory of their dead.

The practice which I shall analyse is unique in Greece as a form of commemorating the dead. It illustrates the interaction between men and women, an element that expresses an aspect of the social power of women. This assumption does not seek to lay emphasis on the role of women. It rather stresses the fact that through their dirges, women, at least as regards the lamenting of persons who had a profound presence in the community of Olymbos, express an ideology similar to the ideology expressed in men's song in the masculine space of the *gléndi*. The correspondence between the two types of laments by men and women confirms the complementarity of male and female roles in the public arena (Hirschon 1998: 221). Thus I am concerned with the role both of women and men with regard to the commemoration of dead through song.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN: WORSHIP AND LAMENT IN THE CHURCH

The first case of commemoration of the dead which I examine constitutes a practice of recalling the dead, which is emotionally part of what Tullia Magrini has characterised as a "work of pain" (Magrini 1998: 3). This is a process that takes place on Good Friday, whereby the women hang on the *Epitáphios* of Christ (a canopy decorated with flowers representing the tomb of Christ) the photographs of relatives who have died over the past year along with dirges in the form of rhyming couplets written on pieces of paper. During the worship of the *Epitáphios*, after the Deposition of Christ, the women unbind their hair and tear at it, gesticulate and break out in laments, crying out the name of the dead person and occasional words about him/her, often in

dirges taking the form of the standard dirge of Olymbitian funerals (Kavouras 1990: 121). Through this practice, "they bring themselves to the state of pain and at the same time they lead their audience to pain too" (Caraveli 1986: 173). In this way, the pain and lament caused by death are presented as a performance arena defined according to gender, in which emotional intensity is imposed also as performance through the expressive techniques of the women's bodies (Seremetakis 1991). (Fig. 1)

Fig. 1. Women lamenting in front of the *Epitáphios* of Christ (photograph by Erich Hänssler, Olymbos, ca. 1978).

By hanging the photograph and the couplets/dirges on the *Epitáphios,* the reference to the dead is registered as a customary practice, which constitutes an obligation of the family of the dead, and which belongs exclusively to female jurisdiction. The memory of the dead is constructed through the hanging of his photograph, but it is also disseminated through the couplets/dirges since those who come to worship at the *Epitáphios* may dedicate as much time as is required to read the dirges. In this way, the memory is expressed

initially as the personal memory of the person who composed the dirge and is subsequently reshaped into the memory of the community. The transformation from individual to collective memory secures the preservation of the bonds with the past and the symbolic presence of the dead within the community.

In what follows I give parts of the texts of two dirges that were hung on the *Epitáphios* in 2007. These refer to two important figures of Olymbos, two brothers, Antonis and Yiannis Pavlides, who both died in 2006 within approximately two months of each other. Both were symbolic figures for the community of Olymbos: Yiannis was a lyre-player and an important contributor to the *gléndi*, whilst Antonis was a cantor in the Orthodox church. Both dirges are creations of folk poetry, with an emphasis on the qualities of the dead, thus assigning each of the brothers his own distinct place in the community of Olymbos. This is a common way in which the personality of a person with a profound presence in the social life of the community is recreated. Similar dirges are published in the local newspapers of Olymbos. The following texts are given in a free translation into English:

For Antonis
You were a fine man in body, a fine man in your heart,
outstanding as a partner, a fine man to your children...

You left our mother dear alone to crumple
and she is like a rudderless ship with no captain...

Our nightingale shall never be heard to chant again
at the "Panayia" of the village nor at Diafani.

A man with your qualities never dies
and your memory in our hearts shall remain fully alive.

For Yiannis
I came in Holy Week as I always did,
but I am only on this piece of paper, because I'm dead.

I came to the *Epitáphios*[1] along with Antonis

and I know that you, all my fellow villagers, are going to cry.

I will follow the icons, go around with them
and later in the *Platý* have a *gléndi* with all of you...

In the lanes and coffee houses of Olymbos
my little soul is sure to be found.

Despite the differences between the two texts, there are common factors. In neither dirge are there any metaphysical expectations. The dirges focus on the social values thanks to which both dead men acquired prestige in the local community.

The first text, about Antonis, was written by his daughter, and is an expression of true pain for the absence of her father. The daughter endures the weight of her whole family's pain and undertakes to express it in public space within the context of a religious ritual. The content of the first dirge thus allows us to explore intra-familial emotional relationships. It is a public expression of family and social values by means of being the performance of an obligation by a daughter who knows how to honour her father (Vernier 1991). At the same time it is a genuine expression of a deep emotion by a close relative.

I shall now focus on the second dirge, which was written by the widow of Yiannis, as this introduces us to my second point, which is the commemoration of the dead during the *gléndi*. The discourse surrounding the commemorated dead man in this dirge focuses on his main qualities and projects those characteristics that connect him with the social life of the village. In this dirge, the dead man himself speaks and appears to claim his presence in the community of Olymbos and his return to it within the social framework that is determined by time and space. *Pláty* (the broad open area in front of the church) is given as the space, and the time is represented by the *gléndi* held either in *Pláty* after the procession of the icons on White Tuesday or in the coffee houses of Olymbos on various occasions.

THE ROLE OF MEN: *GLÉNDI* IN SECULAR SPACE

The *gléndi* constitutes the most prominent expression of male dominance in Olymbos, and is the symbol of genuine communal life and the foundation upon which the community is structured (Caraveli 1985: 279). It consists of the performance of an improvised dialogue in rhyming couplets sung to various Olymbitian tunes, in accordance with certain rules. It is performed by men around a table, with the lyre, lute and *tsamboúna*[2] as instruments, and with the necessary accompaniments of drinking and, partly, of eating together. The most important element of the *gléndi* is the production of dialogical rhyming couplets, which are called *mandinádes*. For the men, their participation in the *gléndi* and in the production of *mandinádes* is "a reflexive mode of being in the world" (Kavouras 2005: 6). Through the dialogical singing of *mandinádes*, the men express their communal experiences and manage their social world. (Fig. 2)

Fig. 2. A *gléndi* in Olymbos (photograph by the author, Olymbos, 1998).

It is a common practice at every Olymbitian *gléndi*, especially on official holidays, to call to memory those friends and relatives who

have died, particularly those who had a profound presence in the life of the community. Through the reference to the dead in the songs of the living, the presence of the dead man in his village is achieved symbolically. It is therefore clear that the purpose of the dirges hanging on the *Epitáphios* is not simply to recall the memory of the dead at this specific site of memory (the church), but the aspiration is that this recollection will be of such duration as to permit the spirit of the dead to be reintegrated into the community. What Vernier argued for dirges published in local newspapers is true here too, that through the poems to the dead strategies are developed that for the most part concern the living (Vernier 1991). This is a two-way process, where "individual" memory is transformed into "collective" memory, and the "collective" becomes "individual" once more when expressed through the individual *mandinádes* of the men during the *gléndi*. The values of the dead are thus promoted by his family within the church and transferred to the community, which is in turn entrusted with the obligation to continue the commemoration through the *gléndi* and the songs of the men. Through the individual memories of the participants in the *gléndi*, the memory of the group is constructed. The memory of a dead person is recreated on the basis of his relationship to each person participating in the *gléndi* and the intensity with which the community experiences his death. If the commemorated person was an active member of the community and a participant in the *gléndi*, his death is experienced as a rupture in collective life.

Below I discuss the commemoration of Yiannis and Antonis Pavlides on 30th August 2007, approximately a year after their death, during a *gléndi* held at Avlona, on the last day of the three-day festival of Ai Yianni (the beheading of St John the Baptist). During this *gléndi*, many thematic dialogues set to various tunes were developed through the improvised singing, such as appeals to the Saint being celebrated, blessings for the participants, matters related to them, communal issues, etc. The Olymbitians call each different thematic unit a *théma*. At one point the *théma* of the two brothers, whose absence from the church lectern and from the *gléndi* was conspicuous during the three-day festival, was woven into the dialogue. I give a segment of the men's song in a free translation into English:

Vassilis Kakarolis
Many who were an adornment to the company are missing,
the lyre of Pavlides is missing also from the instruments.

Nikos Anastasiades
They are missing for all of us, my uncle, those who departed.
I close my eyes and they appear as in a photograph.

Vassilis Kakarolis
A CD made me cry late last night.
I thought that he was coming to play, for me to have a *gléndi*...

Nikos Anastasiades
The double absence touches all of us;
at the *glendia* and the church I think they are with us.

Vassilis Kakarolis
It's truly hard for someone to forget them.
I keep thinking that he will come and play his lyre again.

Nikos Anastasiades
The two of them taught me the one and the other skill.[3]
The *glendia* and the Liturgy had a different flavour...

During the commemoration of the two brothers, the *gléndi* performers referred to the main characteristics of their personalities, which are linked to the roles that they played in the social life of Olymbos. These are the same characteristics that we encountered in the women's dirges, written by the families of the dead and hung on the *Epitáphios*. In both cases we saw references to the dead men's relationship with chanting and the church in the case of one, and the lyre and the *gléndi,* in the case of the other. However, the content of the song during the *gléndi* does not seek to express pain. Rather, by drawing on images from the participation of the commemorated in the social life of the village, the *gléndi* performers experience the deaths of the two brothers as a rupture in their social life. At the centre of the community's value system is the social contribution of

the two dead men, which confirms not only their own value but also that of their families, who now find a response in the song of the men to all that they had formulated in their own dirges.

CONCLUSION

The instances of the commemoration of the dead I have just described are expressed through two independent yet complementary processes of lamenting, which belong to the different spheres of influence of the two genders. The space of the church is dominated by women in contrast to that of the site of the *gléndi* which is dominated by men. In the space of the church, women have a primary role. They are vocal and declare their emotions publicly, whilst the men do not participate in this lament. Through the women's ritual within the church, the photographs of the dead and the written dirges, the pain is socially constructed, merging the emotion with the basic ideology around which the society of Olymbos is organised, which is focused on the representations of manhood. Men are expected to become also involved through their own ritual means in the dissemination of the memory of the dead, something which is done through the male song at the *gléndi*, a space dominated by men. This involvement is expected to transcend the limits of the Easter period and have a duration appropriate to the social values of the dead. Thus, the ritual performance within the church, even though it is an expression of personal pain, becomes socially ratified through the song of the men and the individual references to the dead. The praise of the dead in song by the men at the communal *gléndi* fulfils a common demand for the proper commemoration of the dead. This event confirms women's social involvement and the complementarity of male and female roles in public space.

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Notes

1 He means that he came as a photograph hung on the *Epitáphios.* He says that he came to the village because he did not live in Olymbos, but was a resident of Rhodes.
2 The *tsamboúna* is similar to the bagpipes and is played only when the *gléndi* begins.
3 He means behaviour during a *gléndi* and the art of the cantor.

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Ireland's Seasonal Festivals in Place, Myth and Culture

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ABSTRACT. *Is there a constant human dialogue with distinctive places in the Irish landscape? An array of impressive stone monuments forms Ireland's earliest archaeological legacy, sculptural statements from the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages. The orientation and other features of such prehistoric monuments point to calendrical associations and ritual time. These places of antiquity and pagan festivals reappear in early Irish literature and mythic lore, overlaid with Christian traditions. Do modern day seasonal activities also contain echoes of this apparent continuity between the Neolithic, Celtic and Christian calendars? Does the sun's dance in the heavens continue to find cultural expression on earth?*

KEYWORDS: *Newgrange, Tara, myth, solstice, equinox*

THE POWER OF PLACE: ROLLING SUN, RITUAL LANDSCAPE

A large natural rock outcrop in the west of Ireland is carved with an array of swirling circular patterns. Standing at this stone on 18th April and 24th August, you can observe that the setting sun appears to roll like a great ball of fire down the side of a prominent mountain on the horizon, the pyramidal peak of Croagh Patrick. The radiating cup and ring marks decorating the stone are the fingerprints of our ancestors of the late Stone Age. This stone, at Boheh, Co. Mayo, is the only spot in the landscape from which this "rolling sun" spectacle can be seen (Fig. 1).[1] The early farmers who created this rock art may have used the dates to celebrate the sowing and harvest seasons. The stone was later Christianised in name, and is still called St Patrick's Chair (Corlett 2001: 13).

Places that Touch the Sky

The triangular cone of Croagh Patrick is an iconic landmark. Rising steeply from the shores of Clew Bay, it has long been the focus of a

prehistoric ritual landscape and an important centre of Christian pilgrimage (Corlett 1998). A stone cairn of the Early Bronze Age marks its shoulder, when it may have already been regarded as a sacred mountain (Corlett 2001: 19). The peak has mythical associations with Crom Dubh, a pagan harvest deity who was later supplanted by Christianity (MacNeill 1962: 71-84). Legend tells that when St. Patrick visited the mountain, he was tormented by the devil's mother in the form of a demonic serpent, which he banished into a lake below. Today, it is Ireland's most famous pilgrimage mountain, and many thousands of pilgrims, some barefoot, still make the perilous ascent to its steep summit annually, on the last Sunday of July (Hughes 1991).

Fig. 1. Sun rolling down the side of Croagh Patrick on 24 April 1992 (Photo by Gerry Bracken, courtesy of Ann Bracken)

Croagh Patrick and its hinterland demonstrates a typical and constant dialogue in the human relationship with special features in the Irish landscape and ritual time:

- Pre-Historic Use (Neolithic monuments in locality, Bronze Age cairns)
- Pre-Christian Festival (Mythological Associations, Crom Dubh)
- Christian Pilgrimage (Early lore and literature, present day ritual continuity)

We are walking in an ancient land with its own mythic geography. A distinctive place is layered with archaeological features and sculptural statements in stone. Pagan mythology is overlaid with Christian tradition, and overtones of patriarchal triumph. The ritual calendar, moved by the dance of the sun in the heavens and the now forgotten struggle to win the harvest from the earth, continues to be enacted.[2]

Before the Myths: Neolithic Dawn

Loughcrew Equinox

There are a number of important groups of Neolithic "passage-grave" type monuments marking hilltops in County Meath in the east of Ireland. A ridge of three hills at Loughcrew is capped by a group of more than thirty chambered- cairns, which date possibly as far back as 3500 BCE (McMann 1993: 42-6; Cooney 2000: 158-63). The rising sun enters the passage of one of these mounds, Cairn T, at the Spring and Autumn equinoxes, and it traces a path of light across a pattern of incised stone ornamentation in the rear of the chamber: symbols seemingly representing the sun and stars. This phenomenon may have been set up to ritually indicate the times to begin sowing (20-21 March), and when the harvest should be complete (22-23 September).[3]

It was in the Neolithic period (New Stone Age), from approximately 4000–2500 BCE, that the first farming communities were active. Folklorist Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, tracing the lore and ritual of pre-Christian Ireland, has noted that the mysterious hidden forces of nature were central in the formation of customs and ritual practice. The workings of the environment, – especially the sun, moon and

stars, tides and storms, and the variations of the landscape itself – were of crucial importance in the computation of time, and survival depended on them. The emphasis on the sun is so strong that passage alignments marked the sun's entry to the inner stone chamber of particular passage-graves at special times, and seasonal festivities were taken into account in designing these mounds (Ó hÓgáin 1999: 3-5, 11).

Tomb and Womb: Newgrange and the Shortest Day

East of Loughcrew, the River Boyne loops around the great megalithic complex around Brú na Bóinne (Fig. 2). The remains of up to forty mounds survive in the Boyne Valley today, including the most imposing passage cairns at Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth (Eogan 1986: 13), described as great "cathedrals of the megalithic religion" (O'Kelly 1982: 122). The most striking instance of solar orientation is that of the passage at Newgrange, when the rising sun darts its rays into the deep spacious chamber in concentrated light shafts on the days around the winter solstice (Stout 2002: 42).

Fig. 2. Equinox sunset at Newgrange, "Brú na Bóinne", the Boyne valley, Co. Meath (photo: Mary MacKenna).

"The coming of the light thus presages the end of the dark winter and the rebirth of the sun" (Ó hÓgáin 1999: 11). Such alignments are thought to have calendar connections, possibly with pastoral and social significance. In many cultures, caves and openings in the earth symbolise the womb and maternity, with connotations of regeneration. Was the sun thought to escort the spirit to another place at the solstice? Did such symbolism rationalise death as part of life itself within the cycle and continuum of time? (Ó hÓgáin 1999: 15).

The designers of Newgrange may have intended a three-fold symbolism: the sun for vivification, the soil for productivity, and the stone for continuity (Ó hÓgáin 1999: 13). The great stone marking the entrance is decorated with a triple spiral. A splendid mace-head found at Knowth, with a similar spiral design, may have been a symbol of power used by a religious or political leader (Ó hÓgáin 1999: 20; Eogan 1986: 61, 176).

Customs and Time

The decorated kerbstones and solar alignments at some of these structures suggest that some form of ordered rites may have taken place. Rites might have included mourning, pilgrimage, seasonal assembly and ceremonies for the well being of crops and flocks, and based on later ritual traditions, could have included processions, moving in a "right-handed" or "sun-wise" direction. The tendency to situate structures on hilltops and eminences seems to stress their social and spiritual importance. The use of stone in building and decorating them may have signified endurance and immutable force. These complexes marked or socialised the environment, and appear to have emphasised the site as a sacred place (Ó hÓgáin 1999: 14, 20-2; Eogan 1986: 177-86).

A Neolithic Pre-Cursor to Celtic Samhain at Tara?

Southeast of the Boyne Valley lies the Hill of Tara, the centrepiece of a larger ritual and settlement landscape (Halpin and Newman 2006: 341-7). The oldest visible monument is *Dumha na nGiall* (The Mound of the Hostages). Solar observations have noted that the entrance to this mound is orientated towards the direction of the rising sun on the cross quarter days of 8th November and 4th February

(Brennan 1994: 121).[4] Cross quarter days fall exactly halfway between the solstices and equinoxes.

BRONZE AGE

Circle of Life – Summer Solstice

The use of metal from before c. 2000 BCE marked a change, as a new tradition took over older sacred sites for use in its own ceremonies. A great circle of standing stones was constructed around the cairn at Newgrange, as if to enclose the central mound from the rest of the landscape, and solemnise an already sacred area. The stones may have been used as a ritual calendar, as studies of shadows cast by the megaliths have indicated connections with the summer and winter solstices and the spring and autumn equinoxes. (Stout 2002: 36). The importance of the ritual circle here, and at other Irish sites, may also be suggestive of practices including circumambulation (Ó hÓgáin 1999: 26-7).

About two kilometres northeast of Newgrange, a great circular earthen-banked enclosure called Dowth henge (or Site Q) was built, possibly an amphitheatre for community worship, in the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze age (Stout 2002: 33-5). It has been found that the axis formed by its entrances is aligned with the summer solstice sunrise and winter solstice sunset (Murphy and Moore 2008: 95, 88-99).

PREHISTORIC CALENDARS

The existence of indigenous prehistoric calendars seems highly likely, based on many instances of archaeoastronomical alignments with features and art at Neolithic and Bronze Age sites. (Burl 2000: 65; Brennan1994: 135-205; Murphy and Moore 2006 8-11, 52-4). These sites seem to have performed a function as observatories, and may have been used both to track the movements of heavenly bodies, and also to correlate these to the annual round of agricultural, religious or cultural customs. The examples already quoted demonstrate the marking of key dates of the solar year – winter and summer solstices,

and spring and autumn equinoxes. It has been suggested that the sun was viewed as male, impregnating the female earth. This common basis of belief among ancient peoples appears very strongly in Irish tradition of the later Iron Age, and could be a survivor of much earlier Irish beliefs (Ó hÓgáin 1999: 15, 17).

IRON AGE

There was improved weaponry and craft from the fifth century BCE, and Celtic influences on technology, art and language became central in Irish culture. Ritual importance continued to be accorded to the impressive physical remains of antiquity. Later literature of the medieval period attests that these sites came to be regarded as dwellings of great Celtic deities, heroes and kings (Ó hÓgáin 1999: 40, 41). Great ring barrows and henges had already been added on the Hill of Tara during the Bronze Age. The Iron Age saw a new wave of monumental religious architecture at Tara and elsewhere. The *Ráith naRíg* ("the fort of the kings"), a huge circular henge one thousand metres in diameter dating to the 1st century BCE, wrapped around the crown of the hill. Other circular enclosures, such as Ráith Lóegaire, may have been part of a defensive ring around Iron Age Tara (Halpin, Newman 2006: 345-6).

CELTIC CALENDAR

The basic Celtic division of the year was into two parts. The year began with the winter half "from Samhain to Bealtaine", followed by the summer half, from Bealtaine to Samhain. Samhain was at the beginning of November and Bealtaine was at the beginning of May. There were two further subdivisions, Oímelg (1 February, later name *Imbolg*) and Lughnasa (1 August). At each of these four junctures, festivals were celebrated (Ó hÓgáin 2006: 472-3). The Celtic calendar festivals, with their own particular customs, coincide approximately with the astronomical cross quarter days falling exactly halfway between the solstices and equinoxes. Though it may

be unclear as to exactly when these practices were adopted in early Ireland, they became a central part of calendar tradition, both sacred and secular, which has carried down to the present day.

THRESHOLDS OF HISTORY: LITERATURE, PLACE AND TIME

More than four thousand years after the creation of the sophisticated but enigmatic structures in the Neolithic landscapes of Loughcrew, the Boyne Valley and Tara, elements of the indigenous Irish tradition were committed to writing by monks. Our oldest surviving manuscripts of the 11-12th century Christian period are copies of earlier texts, perhaps written down as early as the 7th century, based on an older oral tradition of storytelling (Gantz 1981: 18-25). "Both in age and variety, the literature of ancient Ireland ... surpasses that of any other western European vernacular during the early Middle Ages" (Cross and Slover 1969: viii). Many of the tales refer to places which were significant in earlier prehistoric periods, i.e. the Neolithic and Bronze Age (MacKenna 2009).

The Boyne Valley is associated with many myths, and with the great pantheon of deities called the *Tuatha Dé Danann* ("people of the goddess Danu"). The Boyne River itself was considered to be the goddess Bóinn. The great passage chamber at Newgrange, Brúgh na Bóinne was said to have been built by the father-god, the Daghdha, who was identified with the sky or sun, and was a regulator of time and agriculture. Following a love-tryst between Bóinn and the Daghdha, the child Aonghus was born. He was a youth-deity who later replaced his father just as the new sun displaces the old (Ó hÓgáin 2006: 478-81, 38, 151-4). The great hero Cú Chulainn was also fathered by the deity Lugh at the Brúgh in the depths of winter, under the mysterious circumstances of an otherworldly encounter (Ó hÓgáin 2006: 138; Kinsella 1969: 22-3).

The waves of early races and their heroes, followed by the early Christian saints, are all identified with specific places. The tales themselves operate in a non-linear world of shape-shifting deities, magical battles, kings ruling and controlling the land, adventures of brave warriors and heroines, transformational encounters with the otherworld, tales of feasts, wooings, battles, voyages, and deaths.

Events within this matrix of circling, mythical time are very frequently anchored within specific moments of the ritual calendar.

The festival of Samhain, an open door between the numinous otherworld and the real world, features centrally in many of the tales (Gantz 1981: 12-17). Festivals as intervals of sacred time, when mythical and ancestral beings are recalled, is an idea common to many cultures (Ó hÓgáin 1999: 103-4; Eliade 1959: 68-113). Tara, like Newgrange, features centrally in all of the cycles of Irish myth, and was the location for a great annual seasonal festival, the *feis* gathering at Samhain. Tara was a centre of high kings who married a sovereign queen representing the land goddess. Warriors, gods and heroes such as Fionn, Lugh and Conaire symbolically made a ritual entrance to Tara and underwent tests and trials to be accepted there. Samhain was a time of both dissolution in primordial chaos and regeneration, when many pivotal mythical events occurred, such as kingly inaugurations and the sacred marriage, great battles, and the deaths of kings (Gantz 1981: 12-13; Ó Crualaoich 2003: 40)

A BRIDGE TO CHRISTIANITY

The seemingly modest hill of Tara opens to panoramic vistas, the view in each direction like a window into different episodes of the mythic past. To the north, on the Hill of Slane, St Patrick first illuminated the land and night sky at Easter, with the new Christian Paschal fire, blazing up to challenge the pagan king's fire and his druid's wizardry. Soon the bells of Christianity rang out through the land.

The Goddess in the Land

But the lore and name of an old shape-shifting hag personage, the *cailleach,* lived on. The Loughcrew ridge of hills, also visible from Tara, is called *Sliabh na Caillaighe*, ("hill of the hag"). The mythological wise woman figure is remembered in place names and stories throughout Ireland. Ó Crualaoich highlights the enduring relevance of this otherworldly female figure in folklore. She is regarded in traditional cosmology as the personification, in divine female form, of the physical landscape, and also of the cosmic forces

at work in that landscape. As a sovereignty principle, a vehicle of political ideology of ruling royal dynasties, she became a kind of "trophy wife". This royal mother / spouse goddess figure was further displaced with the development of the patriarchal and early Christian cultural world. In spite of this, in vernacular culture and cosmology, the *cailleach* lived on in stories until the present day, as a wise woman and healer figure (Ó Crualaoich 2003).[5]

Three Peninsulas, Triple Goddess

The southwest of Ireland is especially the home of the Cailleach Bhéarra, as the Beara peninsula in west Cork is named after her. The barren primeval raw hillsides in the southwest evoke the chthonic cailleach, the wild power of nature (Ó Crualaoich 2003: 105).

> This wise and somewhat sinister old woman...as an echo of her origin as a goddess, she is triplicated by the claim that she had two sister- hags who lived ...on the Kerry peninsulas of Dingle and Iveragh. (Ó hÓgáin 1991: 67)

Further east near Killarney, a more bounteous aspect is remembered at *Dá Chích nDanann,* twin peaks called after the great Danu, mother goddess of the Tuatha Dé Danann (Ó hÓgáin 2006: 275). These two symmetrical hills, the Paps of Anu, are topped with prehistoric stone cairns, a deliberate nipple-like enhancement of the visual effect that they are the bosom of a woman, part of an awesome female form in the land (Coyne 2000).

ETERNAL ECHOES

The ritual calendar is alive and well in the cultural and social life of Ireland today, a fusion of ancient and new in both sacred and secular calendars, and the ritual battles of heroic warriors play out in major calendars of sporting events.

At midwinter, on 21st December 2007, three hundred thousand viewers worldwide, who accessed a live web cast of the event, joined the hundreds of people at the annual gathering to see the winter solstice sunrise in the Boyne Valley around the round belly of the five

thousand year old mound of Newgrange.[6] The gods smiled as the sun rose above the misty river and the frosty fields of the Boyne Valley. Those who took the time to step outside the bustling seasonal glitter of consumerism were rewarded by the more ancient brightness of nature's drama, a glory echoed a few days later by church bells proclaiming the birth of the Divine Child on Christmas morning.

In the matrix of our existence, within the co-ordinates of space and time, Neolithic landscapes formed the visible foundation of subsequent cultural landscapes, and the past is constantly incorporated into a new version of reality. A central belief operating is that landscape is founded on permanency, the sacred:

> Sacred places ... took on mythic quality which has endured down to the present day, and this still dominates many people's perceptions of landscapes such as the Boyne Valley and Tara. (Cooney 1994: 39)

The general backdrop of great antiquity from which more recent calendar customs have arisen has been described by Kevin Danaher (1972: 12):

> Calendar Custom...reaches back through time into the remote and unknown depths of prehistory. It contains elements which already were of vast antiquity when the first Christian missionaries came into Ireland, as well as matter which recalls the flowering of early Irish Christianity ... It shares largely in the common tradition of Western Europe.

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Notes

1 Rolling Sun: noted in 1989 by Gerry Bracken of Westport; see Figure 1.

2 Photo of Croagh Patrick: http://www.mythicalireland.com/photos/photo-of-the-month/june2008.php

3 Loughcrew Equinox Photos:
http://www.shadowsandstone.com/gallery/824678_hUeB4
http://mythicalireland.com/ancientsites/loughcrew/springequinox07/spring-equinox-2007.php

4 Tara Samhain Photos:
http://www.knowth.com/tara-samhain.htm

5 Ó Crualaoich Radio Series Recordings:
www.rte.ie/radio1/hagsqueensandwisewomen/

6 Photos and Video of Newgrange Solstice 2007:
http://www.mythicalireland.com/photos/winter-solstice-2007/newgrange-solstice-webcast.php
http://www.heritageireland.com/en/Solstice2007/

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The Women of Bealtaine: From the Maiden to the Witch

FRÉDÉRIC ARMAO

ABSTRACT. *This article aims at analyzing the representation of women within the boundaries of the festivities held at the beginning of the month of May in Ireland. We will tackle the superstitions and rituals performed by young maidens at that time of the year as well as the numerous fears linked with the arrival of the summer time (including the fear of witches and ageing women). The purpose of this study is to gain better knowledge of the customs and insular traditions held by women in connection with the celebrations of May and therefore to understand, at least partially, the role they played in rural Ireland in the 19th and 20th centuries.*

KEYWORDS: *folklore, Bealtaine, witches, superstitions, summer, May, women*

Superstitions are a significant part of the folklore of Bealtaine, the Irish festival of May, or at least they were until well into the twentieth century in rural Ireland. Fear of thieves, of spells, of ill-intentioned neighbours, of loss or gain of fortune, concerns regarding the passing of time with no possibility of redemption: all those apprehensions were at their peak at the beginning of the month of May. Yet one of the most peculiar kinds of fear at Bealtaine was to be found in connection with women: some women feared; others were feared. Is it possible to explain this whole dynamic of fear versus hope, of taking protective measures versus casting spells, by examining the nature of the Irish May festival? In other words, is Bealtaine inherently a festival of fear(s)? Furthermore, is it possible to clearly account for the predominance of women, both feared (such as witches) and fearing (most specifically young maidens) in the folklore of Bealtaine? This study will aim to answer – at least partially – those rather difficult questions and possibly to establish a link between the "fearing" and the "feared", between the "maiden" and the "witch".

BEALTAINE: THE FESTIVAL OF MAY

According to most researchers, Bealtaine corresponds to the Irish festival of early May, a festival which would mark the beginning of the summer season (Lysaght 1991: 75; Lysaght 1993: 28). *Lá Bealtaine* is the modern Irish for "the first of May" and a number of superstitions and beliefs, notably in the most rural areas of Ireland, tend to prove that the feast was associated with the entry into the warm season (LeRoux 1962: 178): until fairly recently, farmers started the transhumance at Bealtaine (or May Day in English) and crops were supposed to have be sown before Bealtaine (Danaher 1972: 86-9; *Irish Folklore Commission* 1947, MSS. 1095-7). The festival also had a significant impact on everyday life – especially when it came to financial matters – as it was considered, in several counties, a "gale day" (that is a day on which rent should be paid) and also a "hiring day" which corresponded to dozens, if not hundreds, of cattle fairs throughout the island (Danaher 1972: 86; MacNeill 1982: 311-42; Joyce 1903: 2.438 ff.; Logan 1986: 121).

Bealtaine was a "quarter-day". Along with Samhain (November 1st), Imbolc (or St. Brigid, February 1st) and Lughnasa (August 1st),[1] the May festival used to divide the year into four equal parts (O Danachair 1959; Rees 1961: ch. 3). As it seems, Bealtaine and Samhain were the most important festivals of the year as they marked the beginning of summer and winter respectively in the Irish modern popular tradition (Mac Cana 1970: 126-7).

It would be impossible to list and analyze here all the customs and superstitions linked with the holding of those festivals, but we should take note that Bealtaine and Samhain in particular were times when fear was predominant. The following examples are just a small part of the many superstitions linked with Bealtaine in popular tradition. Driving the cattle to pastures on Bealtaine was considered lucky and failing to do so meant illness or bad luck on either the farmer and/or the animals. Farmers had to protect their crops and/or cattle by any means possible. If sometimes it was customary to sprinkle holy water on fields and beasts, the most well-known tradition is perhaps the prophylactic driving of cattle between two fires (or around a fire) on Bealtaine (see for instance O Súilleabháin 1967: 21; Danaher 1972: 109-24; Lysaght 1993: 37-9, Glauser-Matecki 2002: chs 4-5). Many

proverbs and expressions support the fact that this period of the year was deemed unsafe, uneasy and risky (MS. 1095 §4,[2] MS. 1096 §71, §77) and the fact that the expression *idir dhá thine Bhealtaine*[3] to be "between the two fires of Bealtaine" or, in other words, to be in a dilemma, still exists in modern Irish, may confirm this view. Some farmers watched their cattle all night long and parents were eager to protect their children from the dangers of a month leading to an alleged – but still uncertain – period of plenty and warmth. However, it is with women, both feared and fearing, that the folklore of Bealtaine finds the most explicit thematisation of its potential inherent dangers.

WOMEN IN THE FOLKLORE OF BEALTAINE

Bealtaine and, generally speaking, the whole month of May was a time most women dreaded for some very specific reasons. Marrying in May was considered extremely unlucky (Danaher 1972: 125). A number of proverbs support that view, e.g. "marry in May and rue the day", "a marriage in May lasts for a year and a day", "marry in May go far away", "married in May soon to lay". Most of the time, however, those proverbs mentioned in the manuscripts of the Irish Folklore Commission are not found in the Irish language, and actually the fear of marrying in May seems almost absent from the Irish-speaking region, the *Gaeltachta*.[4]

It is interesting to notice that maidens were particularly anxious to find a husband at Bealtaine. To be more specific, the beginning of the month of May was a time when young girls and women tried to find out whether they would marry in the forthcoming year or not (Armao 2008: 43). In order to do so, a number of customs were supposed to be carried out on the morning of the first of May or on May Eve (Danaher 1972: 125). In Ulster, maidens should, according to tradition, pick ten yarrow leaves on May Eve; nine leaves were placed under the pillow and the tenth was thrown over the shoulder. The girl was then supposed to dream of the face of her future husband during the night. Sometimes, a magic formula (or one of its variants) was to be uttered before going to bed : "yarrow, fair yarrow, good morning and twice good morning to you, if you are true yarrow by

this time tomorrow you will tell me who my true love will be" (MS. 1096 §112). In other areas, the tradition was to wake up early on May morning and look in a well so as to see the face of the forthcoming true love.[5] Occasionally, "it was customary to go into the country and pick up the first snail found, bring it home and place it on glass or ware covered with flour." The movement of the snail made marks in the flour which were supposed to give the initials of the future husband (MS. 1095 §12). In County Cavan, young girls wrote all of the male Christian names that came to mind on small pieces of paper and put those in a dish filled with water on May Eve; on the next morning, the one piece of paper which was (hopefully) turned over bore the name of the future husband. Finally, in County Cork, maidens were to wash their face in dew on May morning (i.e. the morning of the first of May) and the first Christian name they would hear would be the name of their future husband (MS. 1095 §13).

May dew was actually an important part of the folklore of Bealtaine as far as women were concerned (Danaher 1972: 108-9): many women washed their face, arms, hands and/or feet in dew on May morning to have a good complexion, get rid of wrinkles and/or simply to look more beautiful in the forthcoming year (Wood-Martin 1902: 2.176).[6] Sometimes, washing in dew on Bealtaine was considered a cure or prevention for several diseases, especially for ageing women, who were likely to catch dangerous illnesses at that time of the year. In Munster, for instance, it healed headaches and fevers; in some parts of Ulster, it was supposed to prevent stomach aches and warts and even sometimes cure blindness and major illnesses. As a rule, washing in dew was a "sure" sign of good fortune for girls.

However, May dew was also linked with another aspect of the traditions of Bealtaine which apparently contradicts those we have already mentioned: stealing May dew on a field was considered a way to steal the luck (or wealth) of the owner of the field (Lysaght 1993: 31-7). In fact, women – more specifically neighbouring women and ageing women considered to be witches – were supposed to be seen on the morning of Bealtaine "dragging" the dew[7] to this end while chanting "come to me, come to me" or "half to me" in reference to the luck (or wealth) they were trying to get (O Súilleabháin 1967: 24).

The night of Bealtaine in itself was deemed "more 'lonesome'

than the darkest November night" (MS. 1095 §19). In other words, people feared witchcraft in general and especially witches as it is around *Bealtaine* that the fantasised evil women were supposed to cast their most dangerous spells. Red-haired women – often associated with witches – were avoided and thought unlucky to meet on May Eve or May morning. The most common superstition held that witches stole milk from the farmers' cows, which meant they stole his luck or wealth. It is interesting to notice that women (i.e. witches) were more likely to steal the milk or butter than men. The relationship between women and milk-stealing practices has already been noticed by Patricia Lysaght (1993: 34):

> A connection between women and milk-stealing practices is evident, and while men are also, to some extent, regarded as potential milk thieves, the overwhelming evidence of tradition is that it was women more than men who engaged in milk stealing activities.

According to popular belief, women could turn into hares which were then able to suck the udders of the cows and steal the luck of the owner. As the story goes, a hunter or a priest usually sees a hare sucking the udders of a cow in a field and decides to pursue it; the hare is hurt (sometimes a silver bullet is mentioned) and turns out to be an old lady that had taken the appearance of the animal. In some versions, the woman is found home some time later, alone and bleeding to death (MS. 1095 §9, for instance).

Private wells were also watched on Bealtaine as ill-intentioned women could steal the luck of the owners of the well by "skimming" it. It was also unlucky to give anything that had to do with fire or metal on Bealtaine (for example, pieces of coal, burning turf, glowing embers, nails or pieces of iron) for the same reason, especially if the woman who asked for fire or metal knocked at the door when you were churning. The witch would go back home and pretend to churn, placing the piece of coal, nail or glowing ember under her empty churn so as to steal luck and/or the production of milk or butter. In Munster and Connaught, the spells of witches occasionally went a step further; they were thought to throw dead animals or rotten eggs in the fields of farmers to take their wealth. It was also believed that

they entered graveyards, opened graves and cut off hands from corpses. Those hands would later be used to churn the butter, or they were placed under the churn (MS. 1096 §67).

The predominance of milk and/or butter-stealing rites in the superstitions linked with Bealtaine is not to be underestimated. Dairy produce was an essential part of the household economy from at least the 16th century onwards (Lucas 1989: 40-67; Lysaght 1994: 208-29,) and it is women who "traditionally, had the responsibility for milking, butter-making, and the care of associated utensils" (Lysaght 1993: 35; see also Skerbred 1994). We cannot but share Lysaght's conclusion (1993: 35):

> In a society where fluctuation in milk and milk fat could be attributed to milk stealing, it is not surprising that those most closely associated with dairy produce, namely women, who are everywhere considered to be more inclined to perform magic than men (Mauss 1972: 28), should be considered the culprits. In addition, the extra-categorical status of some women farmers – those who were old, widowed, unmarried, or independent and thus lacking supportive social ties – made them potentially culpable and easy scapegoats (Jenkins 1991: 326-7).

FROM THE MAIDEN TO THE WITCH?

The question of whether those different beliefs and superstitions are connected or not is crucial. Is there a link between young maidens, who were anxious to find a husband on Bealtaine (just as they were anxious to look beautiful and be healthy), and witches, who were deemed dangerous and were dreaded by the common people in early May? As mentioned above, this question can be answered – at least partially – if we take into account the very nature of the festival of May.

Bealtaine was – and to some extent still is – a yearly festival. It was celebrated every single year and marked the beginning of the summer season, in other words, of a warm, lively, beneficial period of time, often opposed to the six months of winter. Ancient texts tend to

prove that, even if the Irish year was indeed divided into four parts (each marked by the celebration of a quarter-day), the two main seasons lasted from Samhain to Bealtaine (winter, the "passive" season) and from Bealtaine to Samhain (summer, the "active" season, be it on agricultural, economic, religious, military and even mythological terms) (LeRoux and Guyonvarc'h 1995: 102-3).

Bealtaine has been called a "boundary" festival on several occasions (for example, see Lysaght 1994). Like most (if not all) yearly festivals, it marked the passing of time and the fact that the feast was caught between winter and summer, between the passive season and the active season, is in itself essential. Bealtaine embodied a turning point of the year: the dangers of winter were supposed to give way to the plenty of summer, a plenty which was of course not to be taken for granted. The feast was, symbolically speaking, halfway between fear and hope: fear of potential diseases, bad weather, bad crops, ill fortune and, more generally bad omens; but, at the same time, "hope" that those fears could be contradicted and that the various dangers implied by the passage from the cold to the warm season could be countered.

Until fairly recently,[8] women therefore tried in their own way to "stop" the passing of time at Bealtaine. The many superstitions that were supposed to give them a good complexion, to help them to get rid of wrinkles or even to cure diseases are symbolically connected with the arrival of the new season. "Time" is the nemesis of beauty and youth and therefore "time" ought to be countered. And when would it be more efficient to counter the passing of time than at a festival which in itself embodied the passing from winter to summer, a "time out of time" (Guyonvarc'h 1995) inherently filled with the hopes carried by the forthcoming warm season?[9] Alwyn and Brinley Rees even went a step further (1961: 286-7):

> A correlation of freedom and eroticism with summer, particularly with May, the first month of summer, and especially the first of May, survives in popular belief. May is the "merry month", the month of "maying", of dancing and of love-making.

In rural Ireland, some women therefore tried to take advantage of

the alleged mystical nature of the day, as the beginning of the month of May was clearly a mystical time (or at least it was considered so by a large proportion of the people) filled with hopes and possibly a sense of budding emotions and eroticism. Young maidens were eager not to become barren, ageing spinsters (/witches) and wanted to find true love at a time of the year where nature blossomed; on the other hand, witches craved the fertile milk of the cows or the beneficial dew of the fields, using dead hands to churn the butter, turning into hares so as to steal the wealth and the good luck they might not have had in the course of their life. To put it differently, witches were presented as lonely old women whose sole purpose was to do wrong – a gloomy vision indeed for most young girls living in rural Ireland.

The apparent opposition between young maidens seeking love and happiness on the one hand and ageing spinsters/witches willing to do wrong on the other should not be understood as a monolithic fight between good and evil, between hope and fear, between plenty and sterility. Even if a number of Irish traditions were, to some extent, Christianized and therefore bipolarised (black/white, God/Satan, good/evil), we should bear in mind that they are steeped in paganism. The very essence of Bealtaine is much more subtle as it is primarily a festival of transition. This idea of transition, change, passage, "boundary" is at the core of the superstitions linked with witchcraft and of the customs carried on by young girls.

At Bealtaine, in early May, abundance, wealth and luck were at stake. And, as far as women were concerned, perhaps the expected regeneration of the year echoed the alleged rejuvenation of the body; perhaps the alleged fertility of the fields mirrored the expected fertility of a fruitful union. Fertility: the word in itself is quite telling and seems to perfectly match the symbolic system of the May festival as a whole.

In modern Irish folklore, the festival of Bealtaine was a time when, hopefully, cold would turn into warmth, where misfortune would turn into plenty, sterility into richness, fear into hope, death into life: on a symbolic level maybe simply a time for "magic" to happen – be it the evil magic of witches or the hypothetical "magic of love" desperately sought by young maidens. The social implications of such superstitions and beliefs cannot be neglected either; in early May, women had the opportunity to find a place in the world.

Looking beautiful, young and finding a husband was a way to be a part of the Irish rural society – a ruthless society that literally outlawed, rejected and virtually demonized "those who were old, widowed, unmarried, or independent and thus lacking supportive social ties" (Lysaght 1993: 35). Blossoming nature foretold a fruitful life; women therefore had to cross the boundary of *Bealtaine*.

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Notes

1 Obviously, those dates are given by convention. In most areas, the four quarter-days were celebrated at the beginning of those months, not necessarily on the first of each month. As those four festivals are likely to spring from ancient Celtic festivals, those approximations are not a surprise. A tolerance of twelve to fifteen days before or after the first day of our modern months may be acceptable (MacNeill 1962: 20-1; LeRoux and Guyonvarc'h 1995: 100 etc.).

2 Read "Manuscript 1095 (from the Irish Folklore Commission questionnaire of 1947), answer number 4", etc.

3 The use of fire in the traditions of Bealtaine is well-known as the cattle were supposed to be purified "between two fires" (both in modern folklore and in ancient texts). See for instance MS. 1095 §61 (Waterford), MS. 1096 §113 (Cavan), MS. 1097 §189 (Laois) or, for ancient beliefs, Le Roux and Guyonvarc'h 1995: 103.

4 The I.F.C. Manuscripts of 1947 only mention this superstition six times in relation to the Gaeltachata (MS. 1095 §3, §9, MS. 1096 §65, §72, §76, §138) as opposed to the hundreds of examples connected with the rest of the island.

5 MS. 1096 §77 (Galway), §128 (Antrim), §153 (Donegal).

6 The references to May dew are simply too numerous to be all mentioned here. See for instance MS. 1095 §31 (Cork), MS. 1096 §73 (Galway), §132 (Monaghan), MS. 1097 §159 (Meath).

7 According to tradition, witches dragged threads, aprons, ropes, knots, sheets etc. on the fields so that they could absorb the dew. See Lysaght (1993: 33) for example. See also Lysaght (1994: 209) for the link the

author establishes between dew and dairy produce.

8 Even if a number of traditions are much older (the use of dew for beauty is for instance mentioned in Great Britain as early as the 16th-17th centuries, see Danaher 1972; several other traditions find their counterpart in ancient Irish texts, i.e. in Irish mythology), our analysis focuses on the most recent examples to be found in Irish folklore (that is in the 19th and early 20th century): the problem of the origins of those customs is too complex to be analyzed here into details (just like the links between the modern celebration of Bealtaine and their ancient counterparts in Irish mythology will not be tackled here).

9 We should remember that on Bealtaine, just like on Samhain, the Irish fairies (the people from the *sídh*, i.e. the otherworld) could be seen wandering in the countryside, visiting forts, changing their abode, playing hurling, trying to steal children or even going to war, according to many testimonies to be found in the I.F.C. Manuscripts or even in the Schools' Collection (see also Danaher 1972: 121-4). Bealtaine was considered to be a period where the world of the living and the world of the *sídh* merged, hence its inherent mysticism and the power attached to the day in modern times.

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Where Homage is Due: Female Authority and Sacral Landscapes in the Early Irish Ritual Tradition

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ABSTRACT. *In early Irish tradition, a number of divine or supernatural female figures were associated with the Festival of* Lugnasad *and the Feast of* Samhain. *These women were connected with fertility, sovereignty, magic, wisdom, warfare, sacred assemblies and the veneration of the dead. This paper explores the social, symbolic and ritual associations of these figures, who include Tailtiu, Nas, Macha (*Lugnasad*) and Carmun, Tlachtga and Mongfind (*Samhain*) as well as manifestations of the Goddess of Sovereignty. The power and authority wielded by these women, who were honoured at important seasonal gatherings, informs and deepens our understanding of the Irish ritual year.*

KEYWORDS: *Lugnasad, Samhain, assemblies, sovereignty, goddesses, ritual*

In early Irish tradition, a number of female figures were associated with the ritual period occurring between (and inclusive of) the Festival of *Lugnasad* and the Feast of *Samhain*. These women are described in a variety of texts and were connected with kingship, fertility, magic, the veneration of the dead and the symbolic separation of the sexes during this phase of the ritual year.

Lugnasad was one of the quarterly feasts of the early Irish year and has been described as a symbolic or actual harvest festival. In medieval Ireland *Lugnasad* was traditionally held on the first of August (MacNeill 1962). The name of the holiday means "the festive or commemorative gathering or assembly of the god *Lug*", a figure known in early Irish sources as a multi-skilled divinity associated with kingship, battle, music, crafts, healing and magic (Gray 1982). His association with the feast day is attested in *Sanas Chormaic*, where he is said to have celebrated the holiday each year at the beginning of autumn (Stokes 1868: 99). Although the festival was

named for Lug, a number of large assemblies held at this time of year were associated with divine or supernatural women: *Oenach Tailten* ("the Assembly of Tailtiu"), *Oenach Carmain* ("the Assembly of Carmun"), and *Oenach Macha* ("the Assembly of Macha") (MacNeill 1962).

The assembly of Tailtiu took place near a mound about halfway between Navan and Kells, commemorated in the Anglicized name *Teltown*. The *Dindshenchas* account of *Oenach Tailtiu* was written to celebrate the re-institution of the fair by Maelsechlainn in1006, the first gathering after an interim of almost eighty years (Gwynn 1991: IV, 413). In *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, Tailtiu was a queen of the Fir Bolg and the foster mother of Lug (MacAlister 1997). Her first husband was *Eochu mac Erc*, a king of the Fir Bolg who ruled in Ireland until he was killed by the Tuatha Dé Danann in the First Battle of Mag Tuired. Next she married *Eochu Garb*, son of *Dui Dall* of the Tuatha Dé Danann (MacAlister 1997: 115-17, 148-9). Tailtiu cut down the great wood of *Coill Cuan* with an axe, presumably in preparation for agriculture, and later expired from her exertions (Gwynn 1991: IV, 146-9).

Before she died, Tailtiu told the men of Ireland that they should hold funeral games (*cluiche cáinted*) to lament her, and prophesied that as long as every prince accepted her, Ireland would not be without perfect song or poetical composition. Her death took place on the Calends of August – *día lúain Loga, Lugnasad* – translated either as "the Monday of Lug, Lugnasad" or "on the day of Lug's Moon, Lugnasad" (i.e. the first day of the lunar month dedicated to Lug) (Gwynn 1991: IV, 415). From that day forward, "the chief fair of Ireland" (*prím-óenach hÉrend*) was held around Tailtiu's grave. The lamentation of her death was said to have been observed by the sons of Mil, the Fir Bolg, the Tuatha Dé Danann, and the "fairy host" (*slúag síabra*) (Gwynn 1991: IV, 150-3). It is significant that although the festival was instituted by the god Lug, the assembly itself was held in honour of a woman.

At the assembly of Tailtiu there were various games and activities, including the "music of chariots" and "the adornment of body and soul by means of knowledge and eloquence" (*cumtuch cuirp is anma iar n-eólus iar n-erlabra*). There were to be no disputes, insults, arrests, thievery or fraud, and this "unbroken truce" was described as

having existed in Ireland and Scotland. In return for maintaining the peace, the people were granted grain, milk and fair weather. Another stipulation of the gathering was that men were not to go into the *forad* ("mound or platform") of the women, nor women into the *forad* of the men (Gwynn 1991: IV, 150-3).

A number of passages refer to various types of gravesites at which acts of remembrance took place: a tomb with one door for a man of poetic inspiration (*fir co n-aí*), a tomb with two doors for a woman, and graves without doors for young men and women. Other funerary activities are also attested (Gwynn 1991: IV, 152-3). Several ramparts are mentioned in the text, on top of which were twenty seats for the kings of Tara and twenty seats for their queens. These "walls" may refer to embankments of earth and stones under which were ancient burial chambers and on top of which were the seats (*forada*) occupied by the assembly, where each person was seated according to rank, gender and province (Gwynn 1991: IV, 416).

The wall of Tailtiu was a site where evidently many women were buried, as well as one where kings fasted so that no disease visited the land. Tailtiu's wall was also reputed to be a location where Jesus granted to Eochaid Mac Eirc (her Fir Bolg husband) the boon of removing three plagues from the land (Gwynn 1991: IV, 152-7). It is probably no coincidence that in Lebor Gabála tradition, the Fir Bolg were said to have landed in Ireland on the Calends of August (MacAlister 1997: IV, 8-9, 16-17). The Fair of Tailtiu continued into Christian times; kings walked around the site three times and invoked the blessings of Saint Patrick. The Christian deity apparently even sent six "friends" to guard the site: Eochaid Mac Eirc, Eithne, Adamnan, Becan, Patrick and Brigit (Gwynn 1991: IV, 158-9).

The *Dindshenchas* refers to a period of eighty years during which "the green of Cormac was without a chariot". This phrase derives from a description of Maelsechlainn, the king who revived the fair, as a "new" Cormac ua Cuinn. By raising the Fair of Tailtiu "from the sod" (an event which, although of ancestral use, had become unknown), he "brought the grainfields of the Gaels out of danger" (Gwynn 1991: IV, 158-61). The connection between the Fair of Tailtiu and kingship is demonstrated in "Baile in Scáil". When Cormac's grandfather *Conn Cétchathach* treads upon the Stone of Destiny, his *fili* relates to him the following: "the stone would go to

Teltown where a fair of games was always held ... any prince who did not find it on the last day of the week of the Fair of Teltown would die within the year" (Dillon 1994: 11-13).

The Assembly of Tailtiu is also mentioned in *Dindshenchas* account of *Nas*. The poem relates the story of two of Lug's wives, *Nas* and *Bui*. *Nas* was buried at the site that still bears her name in County Kildare, while *Bui* was buried at *Cnogba* (modern day Knowth). The hosts of the Gaels were said to have travelled to these locations from Tailtiu with Lug, who lit a fire there. A cry of perpetual lamentation for his wives was raised and funeral games were held. From this lamentation, somehow, the gathering of Tailtiu grew (Gwynn 1991: III, 48-53). While these gatherings were held for Lug's wives, rather than Tailtiu, it is interesting to note that they were likewise enacted to honour women.

The connection between these sacred assemblies and the Goddess of Sovereignty is illuminated by references to Lug's wife *Buí* in the *Dindshenchas* poem on Cnogba (the Hill of Knowth) (Gwynn 1991: III, 40-3). Tomás Ó'Cathasaigh has written about the connection between *Buí* and manifestations of the Goddess of Sovereignty (including the figure of the *Cailleach*). He mentions a story in which *Niall Noigiallach* encounters a *cailleach* who reveals herself as the Sovereignty of the land. Their encounter takes place at Cnogba (Ó'Cathasaigh 1989: 26-8). The Sovereignty goddess prophesies that Niall and his descendants would hold the kingship from that point forward; their lineage continued down to Maelsechlainn, the king who revived the Assembly of Tailtiu (Dillon 1994: 41).

Another divine figure associated with sovereignty and the festival of *Lugnasad* is the goddess Macha, for whom Emhain Macha was named. One of the most famous legends associated with her is recounted in the *Dindshenchas* poem on *Ard Macha*. A rich herder, Cruinn mac Agnoman, was attending an assembly held by King Conchobar. He boasts that his wife, although pregnant, can outrun two of the king's horses. His wife is summoned and pleads with the Ulstermen to consider her condition. She is not spared, however, and is forced to compete. She wins the race but collapses at the end, giving birth to twins, a boy and a girl. After cursing the men of Ulster, she dies and is buried at Ard Macha (Gwynn 1991: IV, 125-31).

In the *Dindshenchas* poem on *Emain Macha*, her name is *Macha Mong-ruad* ("Macha of the Red-Mane"). Two stories are given for the origin of this site. One tells how Macha disguised herself in order to overcome the five sons of Dithorba, with whom she was in competition for the rulership of the land. She outwits and overcomes them, forcing them to build the rath at Emain Macha. The other is similar to the story outlined in the poem on *Ard Macha* (Gwynn 1991: IV, 308-11).

While the timing of the assembly at which Macha raced the king's horses is not mentioned, it is well known that horse races were a prominent feature of many *Lugnasad* assemblies. There are also indications that a festival called Óenach Macha was held on the plain around Emain Macha at this time of year. Also featured at *Lugnasad* gatherings were rituals in which horses were swum in bodies of water (MacNeill 1962: 242-53, 332-8, 348). These ritual activities bring to mind a statement in the poem on Ard Macha that Macha was summoned to Conchobor's assembly "from beneath the ocean waves" (Gwynn 1991: IV, 125-31).

There is another female figure associated with ritual gatherings held at *Lugnasad*. This is the woman Carmun, whose assembly (*Oenach Carmuin*) was commemorated in a lengthy *Dindshenchas* poem. Carmun was described as an experienced battle leader who attempted to use magic to destroy the abundance of the land. She and her three sons were vanquished by four members of the Tuatha Dé Danann (similarly involving three men and a woman). Carmun is captured and expires, after which the Tuatha Dé Danann rather inexplicably raise the first wailing over her, thus establishing the Óenach Carmain (Gwynn 1991: III, 4-9).

Like the poem on Oenach Tailtenn, this poem also demonstrates a connection between the harvest festival and funerary activities. The text mentions the traditional lamentation of kings, queens and other honoured dead who were located "beneath the mounds of assembly" (Gwynn 1991: III, 2-3, 24-5). The Assembly of Carmun was also held without violence or transgression. Similarly, no men were to go into the assembly of women, nor women into the assembly of men. Horse races were also a prominent feature of the assembly. The poem provides some detail about the ritual activities that took place at the gathering, which included music and the recitation of traditional tales

and lore. These recitations included information about the Feast of Tara as well as the Oenach of Emain (presumably the gathering at Emain Macha) (Gwynn 1991: III, 10-11, 18-23).

Several other female figures were associated with the Irish ritual year, particularly with sacred assemblies held at the Feast of *Samhain* (November 1st). One of these was *Tlachtga*, whose name derives from the Old Irish *tlacht* "garment, clothing; covering, protection." As with the poems on Tailtiu, Carmun, Macha, and the other women of *Lugnasad*, the *Dindshenchas* poem on Tlachtga extols the existence of the hill where a grave was created for this venerable female figure (Gwynn 1991: IV, 188-91, 425-7). Tlachtga is the old name for the Hill of Ward in County Meath, which in Keating's *General History of Ireland* was the site of an *oenach* or gathering held at *Samhain*. A sacred fire was kindled at the site to "summon the priests, augurs and druids of Ireland to repair thither, and assemble ... in order to consume the sacrifices that were offered to their pagan gods." The account also states that all the fires of Ireland were extinguished on that night and that the people of Ireland were forbidden to re-light them except from the fire that burned at Tlachtga (Dineen 1908: 247, 325).

Tlachtga was the daughter of *Mug Roith*, an arch-druid from Munster credited with extraordinary magical powers (Gwynn 1991: IV, 187-91). In *Forbhais Droma Dámhgháire* he receives training from a supernatural druidess of the *Áes Síde* known as *Banbhuana* and had the ability to shape-shift and control a variety of natural elements (Ó'Duinn 1992: 53, 69-79, 83-91, 99-105). In the *Dindshenchas*, Tlachtga's own magical attributes are emphasized, for in addition to training with her father, she was said to have travelled with him to visit Simon Magus. Simon's three giant sons secretly "give their love" to her, an act which produced three similarly gigantic offspring. The text states that as long as the names of her sons (*Muach, Cumma* and *Doirb*) were held in honour throughout Ireland, no ruin would come to the people. After her death, Tlachtga was buried and venerated at a sacred mound and ritual site (Gwynn 1991: IV, 187-91). It is interesting to note that like Macha, Tlachtga dies after giving birth to multiple children. Additionally, both Carmun and Tlachtga were said to have had three sons.

In the Dindshenchas, Tlachtga, her father and Simon Magus were credited with creating a magical object known as the *roth rámach* ("rowing wheel"). However, in the *Edinburgh* and *Rennes Dindshenchas*, Tlachtga alone is said to have created it (Stokes 1895: 61; Stokes 1893: 491). Anyone who saw the wheel went blind, anyone who heard it went deaf, and anyone who touched it perished (Gwynn 1991: IV, 426). It has been suggested that the wheel may have been similar to a ritual object called a bullroarer which is utilized in initiation rituals (Chadbourne 1994: 106-12). In *Silva Gadelica*, a popular etymology on the name of Tlachtga's father supports the connection of the *roth rámach* with esoteric knowledge or practices: "*mogh roth* = 'magus rotarum,' because it was by 'wheel-incantation' that he used to make his observations" (O'Grady 1892: 511).

Tlachtga herself was associated with esoteric knowledge, as a variant form of the ogam alphabet mentioned in *Lebor Ogam* was known as *Taebogam Tlachtga* ("Side-Ogam of Tlachtga") (McManus 1997: 138). It is also possible that the "rowing wheel" may refer to the sun or a chariot wheel, for Mug Roith was said to travel through the skies in a magical chariot made from rowan wood in which "day and night were equally bright" (Ó'Duinn 1992: 59). Indeed, the rowing wheel is described in the *Dindshenchas* as "the red well-finished wheel", perhaps referring to the wheel of a chariot, magical or otherwise.

The theme of magical flight persisted over time, and the *roth rámach* was later connected with the early Christian story of Simon Magus's ill-fated attempt to fly. In the story, he falls from the air and his body breaks into four pieces that turn into blocks of stone. Tlachtga carried the fragments with her, including the Stone of Forcarthain (said to be near Rathcoole on the road from Dublin to Naas) and the Pillar at Cnamchaill (probably at Cleghill, near Tipperary). In *Sanas Chormaic*, Mug Roith is associated with the stone at Cnámchaill, here referred to as the *Roth Fail* (perhaps echoing the name of his father *Fergus Fáil* [Stokes 1868: 74]). In the *Rennes Dindshenchas* account, however, Tlachtga alone is responsible for the placement of the stones (Stokes 1893: 491).

The connection between Tlachtga, the rowing wheel and pre-Christian rituals resulted in the association of the wheel with the

Apocalypse and the belief that on St. John's Day (Summer Solstice) the wheel would crush those involved with the cult of Simon Magus (Chadbourne 1994: 108-11). The tradition that *Samhain* fires were kindled at *Cnoc Tlachtga,* a ritual site associated with assemblies held at the most important time of year, and the connection of Tlachtga with pagan rites, magical practices and druidic wisdom underscore the significance of her original attributes.

Magical associations were also found in connection with another supernatural woman venerated at *Samhain.* In *Echtra mac n-Echach Muigmédon, Mongfind* is the wife of Eochu Muigmédon, and with him the mother of four sons. Eochu had a fifth son, Niall, by another woman, and Mongfind hated the boy and his mother. When Niall's mother gave birth to him she dared not take up the child for fear of the queen, so the poet *Torna* reared him instead. When the boy came of age, Torna brought Niall to Tara. Mongfind was angry and asked Eochu to judge between his sons to determine who would succeed him (Dillon 1994: 38-9).

The five sons were sent hunting where they encountered an old hag guarding a well. She demanded a kiss in return for a drink of water, which the boys refused. Niall alone consented to lay with her, after which she turned into a beautiful woman who identified herself as Sovereignty. She prophesied his kingship and the success of his line. Interestingly, Niall had a foster mother named *Láir Derg* ("Red Mare"), a name reminiscent of Macha Mongruad ("Macha Red Mane") and his stepmother Mongfind ("Bright Mane") (O'Rahilly 1984: 293). Mongfind died on the eve of *Samhain* by taking poison intended for her royal brother. Apparently *Samhain* was called the "Festival of Mongfind" by the common people because it was said: "so long as she was in the flesh, had powers and was a witch: wherefore it is that on Samhain Eve women and the rabble address their petitions to her" (O'Grady 1892: I, 332; II, 575).

We can see that in early Irish tradition a number of divine women were venerated at both *Lugnasad* and *Samhain.* These women were associated with kingship, fertility, magic, prophesy, ritual assemblies and the remembrance of the honoured dead. They were venerated at important sites during major gatherings at pivotal points of the yearly cycle, and were honoured as powerful figures in their own right. These perceptions, and the attributes associated with these women,

deepen our understanding of these important feast days and their significance in the early Irish ritual tradition.

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The Ritual Year and Irish Travellers: Celebrating the Feast of the Assumption at Knock Shrine

ATTRACTA M. BROWNLEE

ABSTRACT. *In 1879 an apparition of the Virgin Mary occurred at Knock in the west of Ireland. Marian devotion is a salient feature of Irish Traveller religiosity and on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption, many Travellers undertake their annual pilgrimage to Knock Shrine. In some instances, this has led to tensions in the non-Traveller community where hostility towards large gatherings of Traveller pilgrims at the Shrine is couched in terms of law and order concerns. The contested space of Knock brings into focus issues of power and resistance, and the inequalities that exist between different sections of a society.*

KEYWORDS: *Irish Travellers, Knock, Virgin Mary, apparitions, Feast of the Assumption, pilgrimage*

Irish Travellers are an indigenous nomadic minority group, and make up less than one percent of the Irish population. Some of the most salient features of Traveller culture include nomadism, a shared language called Gammon or Cant, the primacy of the patriarchal family and flexible economic adaptations (Mc Cann, Ó Síocháin and Ruane 1996: xvii). The majority are Roman Catholic and celebrate many church calendrical feast days.

While there are many excellent studies of Knock shrine from historical, anthropological and sociological perspectives (see Hynes 2008; Donnelly 1993, 2004; Turner and Turner 1978, Turner 2009), the history of Travellers at Knock has yet to be elucidated. This paper is an attempt to make Travellers visible at Knock through an exploration of a particular devotional occasion in their ritual calendar, the celebration of the Feast of the Assumption at the shrine. It also investigates issues of power and resistance between dominant and subordinate cultures.

THE APPARITION AT KNOCK

On 21 August 1879 an apparition of the Virgin Mary occurred in the tiny village of Knock, County Mayo. The apparition, claimed to have been witnessed by at least fifteen people, occurred at the southern gable wall of the church on a dismal rainy evening. The witnesses asserted to have seen the Virgin Mary, flanked by St. Joseph on her right and St. John the Evangelist on her left. To the left of St. John was a plain altar on which stood a lamb and a large cross (Walsh 1955: 5-9). The apparition was a silent one and the Virgin did not speak to any of the witnesses. When news of the apparition spread pilgrims flocked to Knock, and shortly afterwards the first cure was reported (Neary 1997: 12).

Shortly after the apparition at Knock the customary stations practiced at the shrine included all-night vigils, recital of the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross. The Rosary was recited as pilgrims walked around the outside of the old church; similar to the traditional station of "doing the rounds" at a holy well. In the past, as a form of penance some pilgrims did the "rounds" on their knees. These practices seem to have been instinctively adopted by the pilgrims themselves (Walsh 1955: 130).

In the early years organised pilgrimages came from all over Ireland, and even from Britain (Neary 1979: 14). However, in subsequent years interest in the shrine declined and the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland appeared reluctant to offer an opinion for or against accepting the apparition. The driving force behind the growth of Knock as a major pilgrimage site was not the institutional church, but a lay woman, Judy Coyne, and her husband Liam, a District Justice. After a visit to Lourdes they became conscious of the potential of Knock to become a major Marian shrine and set about promoting the story of the apparition and establishing similar facilities for pilgrims and invalids as already existed at Lourdes. In 1935 they founded the Society for Promoting the Cause of Knock Shrine, which later became known as the Knock Shrine Society (Coyne 2004: 38-42).

The Catholic Church's ambivalence towards Marian apparitions and popular piety is exemplified by the reluctance on the part of the Irish church to accord official recognition to Knock. Coyne (2004:

48) did not always find the church hierarchy open to her proposals for the development of Knock, and many priests had a derisory and sceptical attitude towards the alleged apparition. However, today Knock is one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in Ireland.

THE IRISH RITUAL YEAR AND THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION

Máire MacNeill (2008: 24-5), in her seminal study of the festival of Lughnasa, notes that the Feast of the Assumption was one of the great holidays of rural Ireland when people attended Mass, and afterwards went to sports meetings and other outdoor events. Danaher states that the Feast of the Assumption was referred to as *Féile Mhuire 'sa bhFomhar*, the Festival of Our Lady in the Harvest, and was a welcome break from work during the farmer's busy harvest season (1972: 178). It was also an important pattern day in many parishes, and pilgrims did the rounds of a holy well in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Official church feast days of the Virgin Mary were important pilgrimage days at Knock. The largest crowds gathered on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption. A report in the *Knock Shrine Annual* (1957: 100-101) noted that the Feast of the Assumption was traditionally the occasion when families made their own private pilgrimages to Knock, rather than participating in organised parish pilgrimages. Thus, it is likely that Traveller families have participated in the Feast of the Assumption ceremonies at Knock over many decades. What is unclear is the number of Travellers who made the pilgrimage to Knock each August since the Knock Shrine authorities have kept no records.

TRAVELLERS' PILGRIMAGE TO KNOCK

The Feast of the Assumption is one of the most important Traveller pilgrimage days and families gather at Knock or at other shrines devoted to the Blessed Virgin such as Our Lady's Well at Athenry in Galway and Lady's Island in Wexford. In the past, Travellers came to Knock Shrine on foot or in horse-drawn wagons. They camped on the

outskirts of Knock and many walked to the shrine in their bare feet. They came, not only to worship the Virgin Mary, but also to socialise, to pursue business deals, to participate in family reunions and to arrange marriages. Being nomadic, extended families rarely saw each other during the year so the pilgrimage to Knock was an important matchmaking day in the Traveller calendar.

Hundreds of Travellers still descend on the small village on this feast day. They come from all over the Republic, Northern Ireland and Britain. Although most Travellers now journey to the shrine in vans or trailers, it is not uncommon for some Travellers to still walk to Knock from neighbouring towns, covering distances of up to ten miles. Courtship is still a feature of the day. However, factors such as changing nomadic patterns, the availability of motorised transport and increasing economic prosperity have lessened the importance of occasions such as Knock in the matchmaking process.

Travellers are a highly gender-segregated society. Appropriate behaviours are associated with male and female roles and the spatial separation that Traveller pilgrims exhibit at Knock mirrors gender divisions in Traveller society. Men and women participate in the rituals at the shrine but women are generally more active. Taylor (1997: 193) has observed the gender orientation of certain pilgrimage sites in Ireland, and argues that generally pilgrimages to Knock have been central to women. Nevertheless, Traveller men are present at Knock in large numbers on the 15 August, even though not always as actors in the ceremonies. However, in Traveller culture the simple act of being present is very important, and men's presence at the shrine is, in itself, an act of devotion.

Each Traveller family performs its religious devotions separately, and individual members of a family may, or may not, participate in the official religious ceremonies at the shrine. Some Travellers perform the traditional station at Knock, walking anticlockwise around the old apparition church while reciting the Rosary, yet others do not perform the station. A stone from the gable wall of the old church where the apparition occurred is embedded in the wall of the new Apparition Chapel, and is an object of great devotion for most Travellers. Men, women and children touch and kiss this stone. Children learn how to behave ritually by observing adults and older siblings, rather than by direct instruction. This stone provides the

tangible link to the gable wall where the apparition occurred, and is believed to be imbued with healing powers. Sacred objects, such as the gable stone, provide Travellers with the physical embodiment of spiritual ideas.

Many Travellers enter the old church to light candles and stand a few minutes in silent prayer for an intention. The lighting of candles is considered very powerful and there is a belief that if you light a candle for a particular intention, that prayer will be answered. Many families attend the blessing of the sick and the concelebrated Mass which is held in the basilica, but others prefer to remain outside. The highlight of the ceremonies is the procession of the statue of Our Lady of Knock around the basilica grounds, borne on a bier carried by the Knock stewards. This procession brings to an end the official church ceremonies at the shrine.

Unlike at Lourdes, there is no natural spring at Knock but water is piped to the shrine and it is considered to have healing and protective powers. Pilgrims fill their containers from taps, as they do at Lourdes, and the holy water is taken home. Bottles of holy water will be distributed to family members who are unable to visit the shrine. The holy water is sprinkled about the house or trailer to protect the family from evil, and children and adults are given the water to drink during times of illness.

When interviewing Travellers as to why they go on pilgrimage to Knock, the usual answer is, "We go for Mary". Devotion to Mary, the Mother of Christ, is one of the most prominent characteristics of Traveller religious life, and at Knock an important site of ritual action is the little grotto of Our Lady, situated between the old church and the basilica. At this statue Travellers place lighted candles and flowers, and an assorted array of votive offerings (Figure 1). Written petitions are inserted in holes in the wall near the statue. Thus at Knock, as at many Marian shrines throughout the world, one finds, to use Thomas Tweed's (1997: 43-4) terminology, parallel rituals being enacted. Despite the attempts by the Knock Shrine authorities to regiment all aspects of ceremonies at the shrine, rituals, based on shared Traveller symbols, are enacted in a social space outside ecclesiastical boundaries.

Fig. 1. Votive offerings at Our Lady's grotto, Knock (photo: A. Brownlee, 2008)

Mary is approached on a personal level, and she is called on directly to intervene in human affairs. In Traveller discourse Mary is commonly referred to as "Our Mother" or "Our Blessed Mother". Motherhood in Traveller society imparts status. Thus, it is not surprising that Mary as mother is a dominant theme in Traveller discourse. Mary is the protector of the family and the home. As a female, she understands the trials that women face in life. As a mother she understands the perils of childbirth, the worries of caring for a family, and the pain of the death of a child. Even as the discourse of the Catholic hierarchy emphasises Mary's virginity, passivity and self-sacrifice, Traveller discourse highlights Mary's strength, courage and womanhood. Devotion to Mary is as strong among Traveller men as it is among women. Men, in general, have a very close relationship with their mother and they unselfconsciously express their faithfulness to Mary in terms of their devotion to their own parent.

Pilgrims who journey to sacred sites, whether it be to a holy well or to a Marian shrine such as Knock, invariably come to pray for an "intention"; to seek a cure, to obtain the resolution of a family difficulty, to find peace of mind. Although undoubtedly people go to shrines to pray for their own intentions, I constantly heard Travellers declare that they went to pray "for someone". As one Traveller woman said to me, "You never just ask for yourself, you ask for someone else". Traveller discourse emphasises a social world where concepts of kinship and reciprocity are pivotal. Individuals rely on extended family to provide material aid in times of need and to support them in disputes with other families. These bonds of kinship and reciprocity permeate Traveller religious rituals.

TRAVELLERS AND THE SETTLED COMMUNITY – CONTESTING KNOCK

Stanley has observed that the annual Romani pilgrimage to Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer in the Camargue region of France is, for the most part, supported by the local community (2007: 240-5). While negative stereotyping of the Romani exists, the tourism potential and economic importance of the festival to the Camargue cannot be underestimated. It also allows the local community to demonstrate to itself, and to the wider world, its tolerance for other cultures and other religions (Stanley 2007: 243).

On the other hand, the annual arrival of large groups of Traveller pilgrims into Knock has led to tensions between Travellers and some sections of the settled community, although most of the anxiety concerning Travellers at Knock appears to emanate from within the settled population. Periodically, reports surface in the local and national newspapers about the supposedly troublesome behaviour of Travellers at the shrine, for example, *The Irish Times*, a national newspaper, printed a story concerning local community leaders at Knock who had claimed that the behaviour of Travellers had "marred" the Novena celebrations (25 August 2003). Complaints centred on illegally parked vans, loud music blaring from vehicles during ceremonies and "scantily clad young women". Yet, contradicting itself, the article went on to quote one of those same

community leaders who emphasised that the majority of Travellers who had attended the Novena were well-behaved.

Boulders block many of the traditional halting sites where Travellers camped. Now, they are forced to park their trailers on every available patch of land, on the two sides of the roads leading into Knock, on side roads and on wide footpaths in front of houses. Knock has many car parks but gates at entry points have barriers that are too low for trailers to pass. The purpose of these barriers seems to be specifically to prevent the parking of large trailers in the car park. Many Travellers view this as an attempt by the settled community to exclude Traveller pilgrims from Knock. This has led some Travellers to question why the shrine authorities have not provided a temporary parking site for them.

While the settled community does not overtly stress the importance of Knock for the local tourist industry, instead preferring to extol the spiritual aspect, there is no denying the significant contribution Knock Shrine makes to the local economy. Images of Traveller trailers lining the streets of the village is, perhaps, seen by local business people as not being conducive to tourism. In Irish society in general one hears recited the standard litany of stereotypes of Travellers as drunken, rowdy and irreverent, negative labels which serve to bolster antagonism to Travellers at the shrine. The wider community's hostility is couched in terms of law and order concerns, and the Traveller outsiders are seen as disrespectful and lawless. These stereotypes reflect the fears of one community towards the "Other". Travellers, on the other hand, point out the discrimination they suffer such as being refused meals in the local cafes, their children being chased out of souvenir shops and the village pubs closing while Traveller pilgrims are in the village.

Another source of annoyance to certain members of the settled community centres on the style of dress worn by a number of young Traveller girls visiting the shrine, and which some consider not in keeping with the solemnity of the occasion. Many Traveller girls, like teenagers in the non-Traveller community, are very fashion-conscious and the trends sported by popular music and movie stars have influenced how people dress. Travellers are constantly faced with discrimination and are regularly refused entry to pubs, restaurants and shops. Some hotels will not take bookings for Traveller weddings. It

is almost impossible for young Travellers to gain entry to discos or nightclubs. For young Traveller girls faced with nowhere to socialise, the only occasions they get to dress-up occur at Traveller functions such as weddings, or when they attend such events as fairs or even pilgrimages. One cannot dismiss the sincere religious sensitivities expressed by most young Travellers visiting Knock Shrine. However, the pilgrimage is also one of their main social events, when a girl may catch the eye of a boy, all the while being chaperoned by watchful parents or other relations. Travellers see no contradiction in praising the Virgin Mary and in engaging in festivities. Indeed, Taylor has argued that the social characteristic of a pilgrimage is a crucial aspect of the religious experience and an example of the "formation of social worlds through religious action" (1997: 245).

Further, it would appear that a preoccupation with the way women, in general, dressed at Knock Shrine predates the more recent concern with the fashions of Traveller girls. The following editorial, which appeared in the *Knock Shrine Annual* in 1942, illuminates this preoccupation with the exposure of women's flesh:

> In this regard one of the rules always insisted on by the Parish Priest of Knock (The Very Rev. Canon Grealy) is proper and becoming attire in women pilgrims at the Shrine of Our Lady ... they consider it a first duty to remind, when necessary, all who come there that it is not becoming to visit the Shrine scantily clothed (*Knock Shrine Annual* 1942: 1)

RITUALS, GENDER AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

Badone (1990: 4) has argued that religious discourses are formed by relationships of power and subordination. It is erroneous to view institutionally sanctioned and popular religious rituals as distinct and static entities; a more meaningful insight results from exploring the dialectical interrelationships between popular and orthodox expressions of faith. Travellers actively shape the nature of their religious experiences, and these experiences are mediated by their interactions with both the institutional Church and the wider

dominant culture within which they operate. When investigating the pilgrimage to Knock one is confronted with rituals as an expression of both individual and collective Traveller identity. The celebration of the Feast of the Assumption, an important religious feast day in the ritual year, allows Travellers to engage in a public performance of pilgrimage which serves to reinforce cultural identity. The Feast of the Assumption resonates deeply with both Traveller women and men whose representations of Mary as loving, but sometimes grieving, mother and as powerful, wise woman reflect the status of motherhood in Traveller culture.

The shared Catholic faith of Travellers and settled people highlights to both communities their common ground. Religion can be a source of unity. However, the contested space of Knock also brings into sharp focus issues of power and resistance, and the inequalities that exist between different sections of a society. Yet, Traveller religious rituals at Knock can provide the symbols to challenge those inequalities, and subvert the dominant culture and present the means to reassert identity.

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The *Christkind*: Gender Ambiguity in the Evolution of a German-Austrian Christmas Gift-Bringer

MOLLY CARTER

ABSTRACT. *In Austrian and German tradition, the* Christkind *and St. Nikolaus both bring children gifts (on Christmas and December 6th respectively). Ostensibly identified with Jesus, the* Christkind *is envisaged as female, blond, and white-veiled, seeming to partake of the gender ambiguity of the angels she resembles. Her evolution (from Nikolaus's companion to his rival, then champion of cultural authenticity) has served various agendas in religious polemics and the social politics of seasonal ritual. Some* Christkinds *are girls elected to preside over Christmas markets and others sexy pinups in wings and halos, revealing contemporary readings of the femininity attributed to this figure.*

KEYWORDS: Christkind, *angel, Austria, Christmas,* Weihnachtsmann, *Santa Claus*

CHRISTKIND, NIKOLAUS, AND *WEIHNACHTSMANN*

Walking through Traun, Upper Austria, in December 2006, I finally got a close look at the two figures squaring off on the ÖRF Radio 3 billboard I had been seeing from a distance in my travels. One looked like the Santa Claus I knew from childhood, arms crossed defiantly and scowling through his beard, but who was the figure mirroring his stance, a small blond child sticking out her tongue at the jolly old elf? Stranger still was the caption ("Dich gibt's ja gar nicht!"), which can be translated, "You're not there at all!" or "You don't exist at all!"[1] This was the first time I saw a depiction of the rivalry between the *Christkind* (Christ-child), whom many Austrians and Bavarians feel is the "real" Christmas gift-bringer, and that obnoxious foreign import, who goes around the world pushing himself down people's chimneys without a thought to local sentiment or custom.

In the course of my fieldwork in Austria and Germany from 2002 to 2008, I asked many people who these figures were, and how they felt about them. Usually they would refer to the familiar, white-bearded figure as the *Weihnachtsmann* (Christmas Man), conflating him with the American Santa[2] and sometimes adding, "We don't have Santa Claus here," which was confusing, because we might be standing in front of a supermarket window filled with chocolate Santas at the time. What they seemed to be saying was that Santa is not "*echt*" (genuine, true, real) because he is not part of their culture – in other words, Santa "doesn't exist at all".

Who, then, is this *Christkind*, the "real" Christmas gift-bringer and child opponent of Santa Claus? I was to learn that, depending on context, this mysterious folk-figure is variously conceptualized as male, female, or neither. Although her name identifies her with the infant Jesus, the *Christkind* is commonly portrayed as a golden-haired girl or young woman, robed in white with angel wings. She visits houses on Christmas Eve to bring presents, and children write to her with their Christmas wishes (Köstlin 1999: 554). She is said to be invisible, but one can sometimes hear the ringing of her bell as she departs.

In 1545, Martin Luther instigated a campaign, carried on by other Reformation writers through the mid-sixteenth century, to shift the focus from the extremely popular St. Nikolaus (who brings children gifts on his feast day, December 6) to the Christ-child and Christmas Eve (Mezger 1993: 141). Although it is commonly assumed that Luther introduced the *Christkind* tradition to supplant Nikolaus, Werner Mezger points out that the two figures coexisted amicably in art long before 1545 (1993: 139-40). Furthermore, Luther and others referred to contemporary customs in which the two appeared together, bringing gifts to children. In these sources the *Christkind* is referred to as "the Holy Christ", this designation indicating that, at least for these writers, the *Christkind* was explicitly identified with the baby Jesus.

Despite Luther's condemnation of folk-observance of Nikolaus Day (Mezger 1993: 141), mumming portraying the saint and his wild, devilish companion (known by various names, including Krampus, Knecht Ruprecht, and Hans Trapp) remained popular in both Protestant and Catholic areas. Church writers complained of their house visits, which sometimes included the *Christkind*; indeed, their

calendrical proximity and shared gift-giving function may have made joint appearances more practical. A ducal decree from 1682 states that throughout Advent, "disguised people under the names of *Christ-Kindlein,* [and] Nicolai ... run in the streets around here, are either called willingly into the houses, or force themselves into the same", the masked figure "thought of by the children as if it were the true *Christ-Kindlein*" (Mezger 1993: 147). A source circa 1700 complains of Nikolaus mumming groups that "silver knives and spoons often go missing [and] one cannot tell whether the greatest thieves are ... Nicola, or the angels and devils" (Mezger 1993: 149), suggesting that the *Christkind* was portrayed as an angel at that time, although the influence of "Nicola and the devils" on her character left much to be desired.

Although the evidence is fragmentary, it seems plausible that it was during this period that the *Christkind*, ostensibly identified with the male Jesus, became female in folk tradition. Personification by human actors necessitated the conceptualization of appearance, of which gender is arguably the most important component. It must be added, however, that (at least in the house-visiting contexts referred to in the earliest examples) this figure was heavily veiled and wore loose robes, providing an ambiguous, asexual appearance perhaps intended to suggest invisibility or the transcendent nature of the Christ-child. While these early references do not mention their gender, convention would suggest the actors were probably male, a fact which could be concealed (or at least downplayed) by the use of such costuming.

Some nineteenth and twentieth-century accounts clearly describe female mummers, such as an 1863 Alsatian example reminiscent of the Swedish Lucia[3] (Mezger 1993: 142). This *Christkind* was "impersonated by a woman in white robes, whose face was made up with grease and flour and who wore a crown of gold paper with burning wax candles on her head" (Reinsberg-Düringsfeld 1863: 380-1). Here the switch-wielding Hans Trapp appears with the gentle *Christkind*, serving her as he would Nikolaus, demonstrating Mezger's point that the *Christkind* is functionally "interchangeable" with the saint (1993: 142). In a 1992 example from Sprollenhaus in the Black Forest, the heavily veiled and crowned female *Christkindle* ("dressed in white like a bride") and two young unmarried female companions listen to the children's songs and verses, then "reach into

a sack and pass out gifts" (Mezger 1993: 201). The best-known contemporary *Christkinds*, however, preside over the Nürnberg Christmas market, flanked by several angels (Franzke 2005: 14). The girls helping Nikolaus distribute sweets today are generally called *Englen* (angels) as well, their similarity in form and function to the *Christkind* apparent despite their minor role and generic title.

THE GENDER EVOLUTION OF THE *CHRISTKIND*

One of the most intriguing things about the *Christkind* is that she partakes of the gender ambiguity of angels, who are ostensibly without sex, although they have been depicted as men, women and children over the centuries. The *Christkind*'s transition from male to female may be tied in part to gradually evolving conceptions of angels in folk-belief and art, where they developed from stern medieval warriors into androgynous Renaissance youths and Baroque *putti,* coinciding with the nineteenth-century popularization of the personal guardian angel, portrayed (like the *Christkind*) as blond and beautiful, part muse and part mother (Murray 1996: 19). It may also be significant that "*Christkind"* is a neuter noun, making the *Christkind* an "it", grammatically speaking. Since the language does not force people to resolve this ambiguity verbally, pinning down whether they are referring to the male infant Jesus or a type of female angel, it is possible that the word's neuter status engenders some conceptual ambiguity as well, allowing the *Christkind* to become a more complex, nuanced being than a fixed gender would permit.

Sometimes the question of the *Christkind*'s gender enters public debate. In 2006, for example, someone asked on the Yahoo Deutschland: Clever Internet forum whether the *Christkind* was female or male ("Is the *Christkind* a girl or boy??"). As might be expected, varying conceptions of the *Christkind*'s nature and origins emerged. One writer posed folkloric innovation in opposition to Christian orthodoxy, declaring that, since Luther "invented" the *Christkind*, "it is NOT identical to Christ!" Identification of the *Christkind* with the infant Christ was common; "Jesus is male; oh, man, what a dumb question!" wrote one. Others drew upon their understanding of official church doctrine concerning the gender of

angels. Several writers regarded the *Christkind* as essentially asexual; for example, "A white-robed, probably godlike, sexless person with an angel face!!!" and "As a supernatural being, it is sexless." Another implied the *Christkind* is female *because* she is a "little angel": "Angels are only male when they bear the name archangel. Therefore the *Christkind* is female."

In a similar discussion on the CHIP forum in 2002 ("Why is the *Christkind* female?"), one respondent explained that the *Christkind* is female "because the *Weihnachtsmann* is male", underscoring his point with a smiley-face icon, and another gave the gender-biased response: "So the *Christkind* is a transvestite, huh? Basically male, but female on the outside, so as to appear more beautiful?" Another writer simply answered, "A girl; I have seen her at the Nürnberg Market." Finally, one made the pointed observation that "the angels only have male names, and female *Christkinds* are simply prettier to look at? [sic] Furthermore, the archangels ... are supposed to evoke a certain authority. Or would you have respect for an archangel by the name of Helga?"

The gender of this figure is totally unambiguous, however, when she appears in person at a handful of Christmas markets in Austria and Bavaria, the most famous of these being the one in Nürnberg. The role of *Christkind*, for which up to eighty girls compete every two years, is a combination of international ambassador, tourist attraction, role model, and beauty queen and reinforces idealized "feminine" attributes, such as selflessness, blondness, and affection for children. Candidates for the post must be "between 16 and 19... and at least 160cm tall ... yet they are not expected to look like models. It is far more important to have a natural appearance" (Franzke 2005: 13-14). Be that as it may, once she is dressed in the tall crown, gold lamé cape (the pleated fabric suggesting a glamorous version of angels' wings), and platinum wig dripping with ringlets, this teenager assumes the role of sweet, charitable "Christmas angel" – a mask of sorts, which in itself *does* embody idealized feminine appearance and character traits.

The press office schedules her charitable appearances; "It is ... their responsibility to ensure that the *Christkind* icon remains genuine and is not misused for marketing and advertising purposes. For this reason visits to department stores are taboo" (Franzke 2005: 17). She does, however, stimulate commerce. The *Christkind* opens the

Nürnberg market with a welcoming prologue, which reads like an invocation of the spirit of the market, conflating it with Christmas tradition itself; with timelessness, and thereby authenticity: "My market is forever young, / As long as Nuremberg does exist, as long as you remember it" (Franzke 2005: 10). Thus we can see that, while in the current rhetoric the *Christkind* is positioned as the personification of contemplative spirituality and family-centered traditionalism in opposition to secularism and consumerism, these qualities are actually intertwined in her person, which is equally "Christmas" and "market".

PURITY, TRADITION, AND CULTURAL AUTHENTICITY

The *Christkind* shows a steelier side in the Austrian debate over the identity of the "correct" Christmas gift-bringer, which in turn is embedded in the public conversation about Austrian identity and cultural values (what it means to be Austrian in the age of the European Union, which it joined in 1995). Konrad Köstlin describes the strong feelings unleashed in response to a Viennese newspaper article published in December 1997, which quoted a child saying, "I write my wishes to the *Christkind*, and the *Weihnachtsmann* brings the gifts" (1999: 554). This statement inspired a torrent of letters conflating crass commercialism with the *Weihnachtsmann* (identified with the American Santa, but also the traditionally Protestant and more secularized north of Germany) and expressing nostalgia for childhood memories of a purer, more innocent Christmas (represented by the *Christkind*). It is from this sense of lost innocence that the *Christkind* derives much of her symbolic potency. As Hermann Bausinger points out in his discussion of the notion of *Heimat* (homeland), there seems to be an inverse relationship between modernity (bringing the expansion or dissolution of old cultural-geographic borders) and a longing for the purity of a past which is largely a romanticized construct, but no less compelling for that (1990: 55).

The rivalry between these folk-figures for the crown of Christmas gift-bringer allows the social discussion about tradition and authenticity, past and future, to be conducted in symbolic terms. In

Austria and Bavaria, Nikolaus and the *Christkind* are now united as "traditional" figures (symbolizing a kind of post-denominational religiosity) against encroaching globalization and rampant consumerism. The readers' letters cited by Köstlin express concern over "the loss of Austrian identity," revolving around "the 'Austrian' *Christkind* ... that was interpreted as 'our own' ... and not, or only secondly, as Catholic. Bound up with that was fear of ... the *Weihnachtsmann* ... who most of all was seen as cultural-imperialistic import ... The *Weihnachtsmann* was discussed as symbol of a threatening economic hegemony" (1999: 556). These concerns are echoed elsewhere in the news media and on the Internet, as well as in my interviews and informal conversations with Austrians, a number of whom have explained to me that for something to be traditional means that it is "theirs" – a part of their identity, cultural as well as family heritage, passed from generation to generation; that is to say, part of what they are describing when they speak of "tradition" is a present-day "horizontal" relationship to their countrymen interlaced with a "vertical" relationship to past and future generations.

In 2006, another question was posed on the Yahoo Deutschland: Clever forum: "*Christkind* vs. *Weihnachtsmann*?" The responses were telling:

> It's sad that everything is becoming so Americanized in Europe. The *Christkind* is born on the 24th and the *Weihnachtsmann* is an invention of Coca-Cola.
>
> I'm from Austria myself, and find it totally stupid! The *Weihnachtsmann*, fat old man, doesn't please kids at all!! The *Christkind* is a sweet little angelkins and has gotten lost! ... a *Weihnachtsmann* now climbs ... into nearly every house from the window and on every Advent calendar a fat old man is to be seen! I find it a shame that the local Austrian customs are ever more forgotten!

This last example mirrors other complaints objecting to the *Weihnachtsmann* on aesthetic grounds: next to this perfect creature (small, uncomplicated, virginal), this "fat old man", as he is called again and again, is positively obscene. His sloppy (degenerate?)

image appears everywhere, while the lovely little *Christkind* remains invisible. I propose that these starkly contrasting images illustrate the way in which essentially *moral* values are expressed via *aesthetic* values, the resulting complex of imagery and associations forming a semantic equation in which beauty (female in a male-oriented culture) plus physical purity (youth) equals virginity and innocence (moral purity). As both angel and virginal young woman or child, the *Christkind* is the perfect embodiment of these qualities, which (in this cultural context) enjoy semantic proximity to each other. Furthermore, the *Christkind*'s feminized virtues have acquired secondary symbolic functions, embodying her role as guardian of moral integrity (present in the concept of cultural authenticity), tradition's perceived ability to bring wholeness (re-membering) to society, and a "pure" Christmas (itself a symbol of these virtues), thereby hinting at the contemporary significance of her gender, if not resolving the mystery of its evolution.

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Notes

1 All translations from the German are my own unless otherwise noted. For simplicity's sake, I have chosen to refer to the *Christkind* with female pronouns except where context specifies otherwise. Translation is problematic, as English demands one choose a male or female pronoun for neuter nouns like *Christkind*. Therefore, in order not to misrepresent translated texts by insinuating a male or female gender, I have preserved the neuter gender by using the pronoun "it".

2 Although the *Weihnachtsmann* originated in nineteenth-century Germany independently from the American Santa Claus (Mezger 1993: 219), it is unsurprising that they should be widely perceived as identical, as both are decidedly secular figures incorporating features of Nikolaus and Krampus. Mezger discusses the historical relationships between Nikolaus and the *Weihnachtsmann* (219-36) and Nikolaus and the *Christkind* (138-42) in his comprehensive *Sankt Nikolaus* (1993).

3 Seasonal proximity and visual similarity to house-visiting *Perchten* mummers (portraying the female folk-figure Perchta) may have exerted

an influence on the representation of *Christkind* as a veiled female figure, as Perchta has sometimes been portrayed by veiled mummers (Rumpf 1991: 40, 44). An investigation of the overlapping forms and functions of the *Christkind* and other female folk-figures, especially Perchta, Lucia, and the *Nikolausweibe* (Nikolaus-wife) who sometimes accompanies Nikolaus, veiled in black or white, falls outside the scope of this paper, but will be pursued elsewhere. Many thanks to Eva Carlsson-Werle and Marlene Hugoson for providing me with insight into the *Christkind*'s similarities to the Swedish Lucia.

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The Role of Women in "Male" Yearly Rituals: Comparing French and Scottish Examples

LAURENT SÉBASTIEN FOURNIER

ABSTRACT. *Many calendar rituals such as guild celebrations or traditional games have been considered by folklorists as exclusively "male" rituals. However, fieldwork on contemporary festivals shows evidence of the increasing role of women when the European traditional rituals face modernity. This paper will specially focus on the role of women in the preparation and in the performing of some contemporary festive rituals, arguing that even if women apparently play no part in "male" rituals, they nevertheless have an important role at a mythic, symbolic or metaphoric level.*

KEYWORDS: *festivals, games, France, Scotland, gender*

This paper examines the role of women in yearly rituals past and present both in France and in Scotland, using specific examples. A starting point for my demonstration is that many calendar rituals such as guild celebrations or traditional games have been considered by folklorists of the the 19th and early 20th century as exclusively "male" rituals. However, on the one hand ethnographic fieldwork on contemporary festivals supplies evidence of the increasing role of women when the European traditional rituals face modernity, and on the other hand scholarship of recent years has brought about a change of awareness by placing emphasis on the importance of a "gendered" perspective in the social sciences (Butler 1990; Fradenburg 1992; Héritier 1996; Bourdieu 1998). At the same time that women wish to participate more in traditional rituals, and in public life in general, social scientists have become aware of the importance of the female point of view when trying to understand historical or sociological problems connected with social cohesion, labour divisions, symbolic hierarchies, kinship, politics, hygiene, etc. Such a shift leads to a reassessment of accepted analyses concerning traditional "male"

rituals and the passive role of women in traditional folk cultures.

First I will present some empirical data related to so-called "male" rituals in France and in Scotland. I will use examples connected with fieldwork on traditional festivals and games to emphasise the apparent leading role of men and I will give a provisional standard definition of "male" rituals.

Secondly I will show that, in spite of frequent statements to the contrary, women play a great part in "male" rituals. I will show what this part consists of, arguing that even if women apparently play no part in "male" rituals, they nevertheless have an important role at a symbolic or at a metaphoric level. Moreover, I will show that women are especially active in the preparation and in the performing of some contemporary revitalised traditional festive rituals.

Thirdly I will advocate the necessity of bringing together the male and the female part of a ritual in order to fully understand the ritual's complex meanings. I will examine in particular the cycle of May as a period when European traditional folklore and rituals are very much concerned with the men-women relations.

WHAT ARE "MALE" RITUALS?

Many traditional rituals have been analysed by folklorists as "male" rituals and have thus reinforced the perception of traditional societies as being sexist or roughly separatist. A comparison between two cultural areas in Europe – one located in the Mediterranean part and the other located in the Celtic part – enables us to know better what this problem is about and helps us to provide a definition of "male" rituals.

In Provence, in the South of France, many traditional rituals obviously give a prominent role to men. For instance, studies concerning the local guilds' celebrations show that women could not participate in the ritual before the 1970s. The organization of the summer festivals devoted to Saint Eloi and Saint Roch, as well as the preparation of the banquets, were reserved to men, and the women used to have different festivals on their own at other times of the year. In most cases, however, things have changed, as we will see in the next section. But in one case known under the name of "Bottles

Procession" or "Saint Vintage", in the village of Boulbon between Arles and Avignon, a strict separation between men and women is still observed for the "Saint Marcellin" patron saint festival on the 1st of June. In the folklorists' descriptions (Benoît 1933) as well as in the present, each man in the village brings a bottle of wine to the mass, in a special chapel where no women are allowed for the occasion. The priest blesses the wine which will be used as a remedy in case of animal illness during the year. Each year the media document the festival as being a true example of sexism or misogyny, but the custom still lasts and the locals have the feeling that they have to carry on with it in order to fight against political correctness and standardization of values in a globalizing world.

Figure 1. A "male" yearly ritual football game before Lent in Jedburgh, Scotland (photograph by the author, 14th February 2008).

In the eyes of local Provencal folklorists, the gendered aspects of such rituals are often connected with the idea of a Mediterranean culture, in which the men would command the outside of the house

whereas the women would rule the inside. But anthropologists have shown that this sort of separation between men and women was far more general (Lévi-Strauss 1958; Godelier 1982). For instance, in the European context, the British "Uppies and Downies" ritual football games feature another good example of apparently "male" rituals. In Kirkwall in Orkney at Christmas Day and New Year's Day, or in the Scottish Borders at Fastern's E'en (the day before Lent), boys and men ritually fight in rough contests for a leather ball known as "the ba'" (Hornby 2008), which has to be brought either to one side or to the other side of the town by the two contesting teams (Fig. 1). The absence of the women in such games is often explained with historical evidence: according to the Church's position in the time when the games were founded, in the 16th century, the "ideal woman was antithetical to sport. Passive, gentle, emotional and delicate, she had neither the strength nor the inclination to undertake strenuous exercises and competitive games" (McCrone 1987: 99). In this respect the present games would simply perpetuate the women's historical exclusion.

The two different examples I have emphasized here enable us to list a few criteria to define the notion of "male" rituals in European ethnography. A first general feature is the centrality of a male community in such rituals, which is either related to a professional or to an age-group division. Other general features lie in the presence of an initiation pattern, in the existence of local male village leaders, in the symbolical use of the village's space, and in the fact that the ritual superimposes its own order to the local usual political order. Lastly, if we differentiate the case of festivals and the case of games out of our two examples, "male" rituals typically either have a religious counterpart or call for special physical abilities. But in spite of the existence of such common features, is it possible to admit that the "male" rituals are owned by men only?

WHOSE RITUALS ARE THE "MALE" RITUALS? THE FEMALES' PART IN MALE RITUALS

Now that we have emphasized the men's apparent role in "male" rituals, what about the women's role? Because rituals are always at

the same time performances, they need an audience. Even before the modern transformations faced by European rituals in the age of tourism and globalization, it is likely that "male" rituals addressed the part of the community which did not explicitly take part in the performance, i.e. the women.

At a symbolical level first, it is interesting to investigate the part women play in the "male" traditional rituals we have just pinpointed. In Provence, most of the traditional festivals have been codified by the Nobel Prize in literature winner and folklorist Frédéric Mistral (1830-1914) and his followers who invented special "female" rituals to complete and to participate in the traditional "male" ones. In Arles, Mistral created for instance the "*Festo Vierginenco*" at the very beginning of the 20th century, when young women could wear the regional costume for the first time. He also was at the origin of the ritual election of a "Queen of Arles", every three years, where the "*gardians*", the Provencal cowboys thoroughly described by Stanley (2008), gather in front of the town hall and swear loyalty to the queen. In the Scottish traditional games I have investigated, the symbolical part played by women is even more important. In Jedburgh in the Scottish Borders, the annual Fastern's E'en contest between "Uppies" and "Downies" is supposed to commemorate a 16th century battle between the Scots and the English: "during the battle one of the Scots recognised an English officer who had raped his daughter, and promptly decapitated him. The officer's head was then used as a ball in a celebratory kickabout" (Hornby 2008: 113). In this legend, the historical dispute between the Scots and the English is at the same time a tale about the offended honour of a local girl and about the revenge of her father and fellow countrymen. Thus the present "male" ritual game is deeply connected with the idea of a community to defend, which would not be possible without keeping control over the local women's unions. Moreover, the balls for this game have in the past been decorated by a girl who was "the queen of the grammar school" and up to the present are decorated, and sometimes thrown up, by brides celebrating their weddings or women celebrating their special wedding anniversaries (Fig. 2), which reinforces the importance of the role of women in this apparently "male" ritual.

Women also participate in the ritual performances themselves, and

their part has clearly increased in modern times. In Provence, researchers have shown how much the local women had got involved in the "male" guild celebrations (Gueusquin 2000). The "Bottles Procession" is a notable exception as women are still not allowed to participate. However, women have been associated since the 1970s revival with the Saint Eloi and Saint Roch guild festivals partly because it was becoming more and more difficult to maintain the rituals due to the lack of interest in folklore, and partly because of the general evolution of the social role of women. Women began to cook for the men's banquets and to collect money through lotteries. They were also especially concerned with the regional costumes, which were exhibited during the religious processions in spite of their showy appearance. From this time on, the people appointed to chair the festivals were more and more often married couples instead of single men, which considerably changes the symbolic and the social meanings of the ritual. Concerning Scottish traditional games, a master's dissertation has recently focused on the hidden role of the women in the games (Gueltas 2008), showing that women play an active part as spectators of the games. Unlike in the modern meaning of the word, being "spectators" in this case involves an active fostering of the game. Women shout and support their favourite teams and players. Moreover, as already mentioned, women participate in the making of the balls by sewing embroidered ribbons on them.

Ritual as a whole: bringing together the male and the female parts of the rituals, with a special mention of May folklore

What has been said shows the necessity of bringing together the male and the female part of the rituals to fully understand what they mean. It is especially interesting in this respect to see that the women's contribution is an important component in the "male" rituals, even if a hidden part. But is this part different according to the position of the rituals in the annual cycle?

Figure 2. The females' part in the ritual: a married woman throws up the ball at Hobkirk, Scotland (photograph by the author, 11th February 2008).

The different examples I have focused on are related to different moments of the ritual year. The Provencal "male" rituals we have spoken about are mainly summer festivals: the "Bottles Procession"

in Boulbon is on June 1st and the Saint Eloi and Saint Roch celebrations are held in the different villages from the end of June to the beginning of September, with a peak for the summer solstice. For their part, the "*gardians*" festival in Arles and the triennial election of the Queen were traditionally held for Saint George's Day on April 23rd, as Saint George is the patron saint of the "*gardians*", but they were displaced to May 1st in the 1980s, causing some trouble when meeting the political May Day demonstrations. Indeed, the "*gardians*" have the reputation of being very conservative and the traditional May folklore in their festival is disregarded by left-wing activists as politically embarrassing because it is seen to reinforce the traditional social and symbolic hierarchies between locals and outsiders or between men and women. In Scotland, on the contrary, the traditional games I have referred to are basically winter rituals, most of them being located between Christmas and Easter and more or less connected with the cycle of carnival and Lent. Interestingly, these games have a strong symbolic relation with marriages and with fertility in spite of their apparently "male" nature. But this feature is generally quite ignored by the players during the performances and the games are today criticized as sexist by some women, as in Kirkwall, who would like to promote modern female versions of the games (Gueltas 2008).

These examples contrast with the folklorists' usual accounts concerning the importance of gender relations in May folklore, as if there were a real difference between May rituals when relations between men and women are prominent and rituals of the other times of the year when relations between men and women are not so evident. From a French perspective on folklore, the cycle of May has been studied by fine scholars such as Sébillot, Varagnac or Van Gennep since the 19th century. According to Arnold Van Gennep (1999[1949]), May rituals are characterized by a special relation with nature and springtime, by the local election of girl queens, by ritual vegetal offerings, by the erection of maypoles, and by religious processions around the fields. Gender relations are especially evident through the offering of different sorts of flowers, plants and branches with different meanings by the young men to the girls of the village they want to seduce. Nicole Belmont (1978) has emphasized for her part the social dimensions of the May customs, arguing that they had

a strong role in the regulation of gender relations. In another attempt to explain the symbolic meaning of May rituals, but this time at a European scale, anthropologist Jocelyne Bonnet-Carbonell (2007) has recently brought new arguments to the debate. May folklore, she says, has to be connected with the customary ways of preventing danger and risks in traditional societies. The May Day traditional folklore consisting of rituals such as vegetal offerings, sexual licence, purifying fires, bachelors' gatherings, etc., would combat evil spells and symbolically protect the new couples in the community. During this period, she notes, the festivals do not assemble the whole community but only the bachelors and unmarried women. Their rituals would symbolically be connected with purity and danger; they would have something to do with a seasonal magical prevention of misfortune, at a moment when the remaining evil forces of winter-time have to be forgotten and changed into positive energy.

When bringing together folklore and gender studies in order to analyse the role of women in "male" yearly rituals different key features come to light. Firstly, we can see that the gender perspective is caught up with more general interpretations of the rituals, such as evolutionism, symbolism, functionalism, structuralism or psychological approaches. Secondly, we can see that the examination of the rituals deeply depends on space and time. It is interesting to observe the men-women relations at a European scale within the framework of the ritual year. Comparatively, the analysis of rituals through the annual calendar can throw doubt on posited connections between types of seasonal activity and specific gendered relationships that may not be universally valid. Geographical comparisons enable us to study variations between the different cultural areas and they show that the relationship between men and women in rituals can vary considerably from one place to another, partly due to the historical re-invention of the processes of tradition.

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Szent Luca Day Customs in Hungary

DAVID STANLEY

ABSTRACT. *In Hungary, Szent Luca Day, December 13, is traditionally observed with customs of divination, incantation, charms, and magic. The measured construction of a footstool allows the builder to identify witches in his congregation on Christmas Eve. Young women use the day to identify the man they will marry through forms of divination. Charms and the observance of taboos can help hens begin laying again and can otherwise improve one's fortunes for the coming year, often through bad luck given to neighbours. These customs are marked by pre-Christian calendrical observances and by distinct gender roles.*

KEYWORDS: *Saint Lucy, custom, Hungary, Advent, divination, charms, magic*

During the fall semester of 2007, I was fortunate enough to teach in both the American Studies and the Folklore and Ethnology departments at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, Hungary, as a Fulbright senior lecturer. Thanks to Vilmos Voigt, Kincső Verebélyi, Kinga Gaspar, and Szilvia Molnár of the Folklore Program and many other Hungarians as well, I became interested in customs surrounding Saint Lucy's Day (December 13), called, in Hungary, Szent Luca's Day. These are customs that have been observed for hundreds of years but may now be in danger of dying out.

According to Christian legend, Szent Luca (pronounced, in Hungarian, as roughly "sent-loo-tsa") lived from about 283 to 304 CE. She lived in Siracusa, on the southeastern coast of Sicilia, where she maintained her Christian faith despite the persecutions ordered by Diocletian. She consecrated her virginity to God and refused orders to burn a sacrifice to the emperor and to marry a non-Christian. When she was betrothed against her will, she gave away her dowry to the poor and was then betrayed by her would-be husband. She was sentenced to serve as a prostitute in a brothel; guards were sent to take her there but could not move her, even with a team of oxen.

When the guards tried to burn her, the fire went out. Then they gouged out her eyes, but she was still able to see. They finally stabbed her in the throat, which resulted in her death.

Szent Luca is often portrayed in iconography holding a golden plate with her eyeballs on it, and she is therefore the patron saint of the blind and of those with vision problems. Another legend says that when a suitor praised her beautiful eyes, she gouged them out herself and sent them to him, asking to be left in peace; soon after, God gave her new, even more beautiful eyes. She is thus a martyr to the Christian faith and to its central tenets of chastity, poverty, patient suffering, steadfastness and devotion.

Saint Lucy's Day is observed in a number of countries, particularly in Italy and in eastern Europe and Scandinavia. The Scandinavian custom of placing a young girl in a procession with a crown of lit candles on her head is well known in Europe and in North America, the candles symbolizing the fire that could not burn the saint. In Sweden, the oldest daughter of the family brings coffee and Saint Lucia buns to the parents while other daughters carry candles. Public processions are held annually as well, with a new Lucia chosen as queen each year; it is also an occasion for student parties. Because Saint Lucy's Day was the longest night of the year under the Julian calendar, the holiday is generally associated with light in Scandinavia, and her name may be derived from "lux", "light". In Italy, on the other hand, Saint Lucy brings gifts for children with the aid of a flying donkey.

Many elements of Saint Lucy's Day suggest pre-Christian origins, particularly its original connection to the Winter Solstice, a theme emphasized by the English poet John Donne in his famous "A Nocturnal upon Saint Lucy's Day". The candles, feasting, parties, and gift-giving are all antidotes to the forces of darkness, but in other cases the human fear of darkness is directly confronted, even celebrated. The demon Lussi, or *Lussi die dunkle*, has been cited as a possible parallel to Lucy, as has Lucifer ("Crashedsite" 2008 and Wikipedia 2009). The emphasis on darkness is especially apparent in eastern and southern Europe – Slovakia, Croatia, Poland, Slovenia, and Hungary – where it is often called "Witches' Day". Here it may be associated with the construction and use of the so-called "Szent

Luca Chair" or "Witch's Chair", as well as the practice of divination, the charming of chickens, and other decidedly non-Christian customs.

In addition to its association with the Winter Solstice, the Gregorian date, December 13, is exactly midway between the first day of Advent, December 1, and Christmas Day. And since the "Twelve Days of Christmas" follow after December 25, lasting until the Epiphany, January 6, we have three equal periods of twelve days each after Advent begins: December 2-13, December 14-25, and December 26-January 6. It is not surprising, then, to find Lucy's Day associated with both light and darkness, both fear and joy.

In Hungary, a number of customs historically marked Szent Luca Day. Some of these are still actively observed, some are still practised – but in a sceptical or joking fashion – and some are not practised at all. Whatever their state in the present, they suggest the complexity and variety of calendrical observances and the dangers of assuming too readily that a single mood, colouration, or atmosphere is associated with particular points in the yearly round of the seasons, whatever the culture.

Perhaps the most familiar custom associated with Szent Luca's Day is the chair – in reality a basic, squarish stool made of wood, sometimes, indeed, described as a "milking stool". The chair is familiar to all Hungarians through the expression "*Készül, mint a Luca széke*" ("Made like Saint Lucy's chair"). The implication is that this process is happening very slowly, and in fact the phrase often contains a tone of exasperation or impatience similar, perhaps, to the English expression, "slow as molasses in January". The chair is associated with slowness because the custom required the construction of the stool over a period of twelve days beginning on Szent Luca Day and finishing on Christmas Eve. Each day a new piece was made: the seat, the four legs, and eight pegs to hold the legs in place (the final peg was completed and inserted just before Midnight Mass on the twenty-fourth). These should be made from thirteen different kinds of wood; one source suggests that the maker should buy only one kind of wood each day and should not talk to older women during this period to avoid having his intentions known (Semayer 1915).[1]

When complete on the night of Christmas Eve, the stool was carried by the maker to the local church. In the back of the church,

the maker said an incantation to protect himself from evil spirits, then drew a circle on the floor and placed the stool in the centre. When the maker sat on the stool, said Vilibald Semayer in 1915, "a little person will appear. The little person will start to bargain and try to persuade the man to move the stool out of the circle". Despite the promises of the little person (clearly the devil or one of his minions) for treasure and other gifts, the man must stay inside the circle lest he be carried away. "But if the man steadfastly sits in the chair, the devil will make a large racket and try with force to move the man out of the circle. If the man stays put, then the devil will give him all of the things he promised and possibly show him his future and maybe even his own death" (Semayer 1915).

Having resisted temptation, the stool-maker – at the stroke of midnight or at the moment of the consecration of the Host – stands on the stool. He can then recognize the witches in the congregation by various signs: they might be facing in a direction different from the rest of the congregation, or in place of a bonnet there might be a beehive, or a turkey's nest, or horns. Or the witch might be wearing a cross on her back (Semayer 1915). The maker of the stool must be very careful, however, for the witches can see *him* as well. Before the priest steps down from the altar, the observer must take the stool and run for home as fast as possible. Here is another description by Károly Viski from the 1930s (Viski 1937: 135-6):

> When the stool is ready, it is advisable to put on our waistcoat inside out, and make a knot in our tie or scarf. If, having thus put everything in order, we go to the midnight mass at Christmas, draw a circle round ourselves with chalk, and stand up on the stool at the consecration of the Host ... lo! We can see all the witches one by one! They leap around the priest all naked; they curse and spit; some of them have horns, others moustaches, a few wear a milking pail on their heads. ... They all turn their heads away from the Sacrament with horror. ... But as soon as we have seen and recognized them, we must run! We must pull the stool to bits, and rush home at full speed! It is wise to throw poppy and caraway seeds behind us for the witches following us to pick up. For these they will give up the chase! Having reached home we had better throw the

> stool straight into the fire, so that it may burn without leaving a trace!
>
> It is a good thing to know the witches, so that we should also know which bad soul of the village takes away the milk of the cow and causes sterility.

Another source reports that a woman would pile hot coals on a metal dustpan, sprinkle incense over the coals, then carry the dustpan through the house, attic and barn in the name of the Holy Trinity to repel any witches that might be lurking in advance of the holiday season. Some women were even known to pour hot fat on the walls of the barn for the same purpose (Game "Austro-Hungarian", no date).

A second practice, also related to animals, concerns chickens – or, more precisely, hens, which were traditionally spruced up on Szent Luca Day to make them lay well. If the hens are not laying, there is a series of beliefs and practices to correct the situation (Viski 1937: 136):

> These rules, which count as remedies, are the following: – we must not sew on Saint Lucia's day, – we must not spend money, – in the evening we must frighten the fowls with a piece of wood, – the mistress of the house must drive the hens off their roost in the hen-coop with a broom held in her left hand; – we must shake the shovel over the hen-coop; – on this day we must sleep on maize and throw this same maize to the hens; – we must steal a little wheat from the mill for the hens, – we must feed the hens from a sieve. One or two of these precautions must prove effective, especially if, while doing it, we murmur some traditional spell, for instance: – "Our hen shall lay eggs, that of our two neighbours shall only cackle; my hen shall lay and lay, the neighbour's hen shall cackle and cackle; – hens, hens, you shall lay and cackle, lay and cackle; I also shall cackle, you also shall cackle, hens, hens, lay eggs! – My hen, you shall lay eggs, the hens of the others shall only cackle!"

Another hen-related practice is the practice of calling in *kotyolók,* "cacklers". These are young men or boys who come to the house at

dawn on Szent Luca's Day with straw or a log, which they put down on the doorstep or just inside the house (they have to come at dawn to be sure that no woman visits the home before they do). They chant a poem which in Hungarian sounds something like chickens cackling:

> Lucia, Lucia, cackle, cackle,
> Their hens and their geese shall lay eggs,
> Their cows shall give plenty of milk,
> Lucia, Lucia, cackle, cackle . . .
>
> They shall have as many eggs
> As there are stars in the sky,
> They shall have as many chickens
> As there are stones in the gravel,
> Lucia, Lucia, cackle, cackle . . .

They wish for other earthly blessings as well, especially for fertility (Viski 1937: 139):

> Their axe, their driller shall stand in its helve
> Like a young tree, straight and erect,
> Lucia, Lucia, cackle, cackle ...

The mistress of the house puts the straw or log with the hens; she may also throw maize on the heads of the *kotyolók*, then give the maize to the hens – a form of imitative magic, since the *kotyolók* are here being treated as hens. The cacklers should be received well and given dried pears, for they have the power to curse the household as well (Viski 1937: 139).

Here, incantation, magical practices – including ascetic behaviours – and curses are combined to create good outcomes for the hosts but bad ones for the neighbours. These practices suggest the notion of a finite amount of good or of wealth within a given community, so that one person's advantage works against the interests of the rest of the community.

Other practices, recorded as recently as 1981 by Tekla Dömötör, include various taboos; for example, a woman should not visit others' houses because she would bring bad luck. Lucy also forbids women

to work on Szent Luca Day, and other practices are clearly associated with the Evil Eye, possibly a mark of Turkish or Mediterranean influence in Hungary.

Finally, Szent Luca's Day is also a day for divination, both negative and positive. Feathers may be stuck in small so-called "Luca cakes", then baked in the oven; whoever's feather is scorched should prepare for death. Weather can be predicted by correlating the twelve days between Szent Luca Day and Christmas Eve with the months of the year, so if December 15 were cold and wet, so, too, would be the following March. Or an onion could be peeled and split open, salt put between twelve of its layers, and the layers examined for signs of wet or dry weather in the twelve months of the new year.

Divination can identify a future spouse as well. On Szent Luca's Day, a young woman can write male names on twelve pieces of paper (they may be the names of young men whom she knows or just common male names) and put the papers under her pillow or bake them in cakes, choosing one each day until a single name remains on Christmas Eve – the name, of course, of the man she will marry. Another faster method is to put the names inside *krumpli gomboc*, potato dumplings, then cook them in hot water. The first dumpling to bob to the surface holds the name of the future husband.

This welter of beliefs and practices is perplexing and paradoxical: dark and light, evil and good, communal and selfish, joyful and dangerous, male and female – all coexist in the practices associated with Szent Luca and her feast day. Especially worthy of note is the degree to which gender roles are marked. It is men who make the stools, discover witches, and chant to the chickens. It is women who are subject to taboos and who rely on divination to foretell the future. Thus, Szent Luca Day reinforces and reiterates the traditional gender roles in the community.

Yet Szent Luca herself is a figure of great power, an icon of faith, courage, independence and strength. Her own hagiography suggests the vitality of female resistance and the possibility of rejecting the traditional roles of the woman as bride, devotee, even prostitute. Szent Luca also symbolizes the importance of sight, both physical seeing and spiritual insight. She and her day represent, too, the ambiguity of this season, the shortest days of the year, when evil, darkness, and witchery can easily be imagined as actively present in

human society. Yet it is also the season that holds the promise of lengthening days and renewal, of witches driven out and chickens laying eggs.

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Note

1 An alternative belief set indicates nine pieces of wood (only four pegs) made from nine kinds of wood over a nine-day period, presumably December 17-25.

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May Day in Western Sweden: Democracy, Demonstrations and Drinking

LINA MIDHOLM

ABSTRACT. *In my paper I would like to give a picture of the celebration of May Day in Western Sweden. In Sweden the first of May became a public holiday in 1939 and was for a long time the only secular holiday. My purpose is to compare old and new archive material to see what changes has been made in the celebration of May Day – from being an important church holiday, a day to celebrate the beginning of the summer with a picnic, to big demonstrations for democracy or just a day to party.*

KEYWORDS: *May Day, demonstrations, holiday, students, working class*

At the Ritual Year conference in Straznice, Czech Republic, in May 2007, it was agreed to compile studies of the celebration of Walpurgis and May Day. At the Department of Dialectology, Onomastics and Folklore Research in Gothenburg it was decided that a questionnaire should be sent out and that, among other things, observation by photography would provide a clear picture of what took place in Gothenburg and places nearby during those two days.

This paper seeks to draw a picture of the celebration of May Day in Western Sweden – both in times past as well as today – by using different archive materials, including chronicles, newspaper clips and photos. The aim is to compare old and new archive material in order to determine changes in how May Day is celebrated over the years.

In Sweden the first of May – May Day – became a public holiday in 1939 and was for a long time the only secular holiday in the calendar. In 2005, the sixth of June, the Swedish national day, was also made a public holiday. There had for many years been discussions about making the national day a public holiday, but in order to do that another public holiday had to be abolished. Some argued in favour of abolishing May Day, but ultimately it was Whit Monday (the day after Whitsun) that was abolished. In 2005 the

Archive sent out a questionnaire to find out what people did on the national day, whether or not they celebrated it, and what they thought about this day becoming a public holiday. One woman, born in 1954, who works as a nurse, wrote in her response that in her view there are a number of other holidays that would be far more suitable to make into the national day than the sixth of June – for example May Day. This is a day in which she takes pride and she always makes sure that she takes the day off work on that day (DAGF 393:2). In general, those who find it important to have a Swedish national day are probably not the same people that consider May Day to be a important day – and vice versa.

SAINTS, FARMERS, STUDENTS – AND PICNICS

This section sets out examples from the history of May Day in Sweden in order to give a flavour of the long and complex background to the day. During the Middle Ages, May Day was a church holiday, dedicated to the apostles Philip and Jacob and later on to Saint Walpurgis. The old chronicles at the Archive, which mainly deal with the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, indicate that May Day in many places marked the beginning of the administrative year – and also was seen as the first day of the summer – and was therefore a natural time for a feast. In the villages this was the day to make sure that all the fences were complete and to let out the cattle for the summer, settle accounts and to choose the so-called "elder" (i.e. the head of the village). At the end of the day it was time to "drink marrow to the bone" so that one stayed healthy and strong during the summer when so much work had to be done with sowing and harvesting. The drink varied. It could be eggnog, beer, snaps and sometimes even birch sap. In the cities, royalty went on excursions and picnics in the countryside. Businessmen and different craftsmen chose their "Count of May" (and in some places also a "Countess of May") and arranged May feasts. May Day was also a time for a school holiday and for the schoolchildren to choose their own "Count of May". Even after the so-called "big death of the holidays" in 1772, when all the days of the apostles disappeared in Sweden (and with them many public holidays), May Day continued to be a school

holiday. Young people went around in the parish singing and playing. They went "singing for eggs", collecting food and drinks from the farmers and then they had a feast (Bringéus 1976: 162; 1999: 61; Gerward 1996: 58ff). In one chronicle a man born in 1853 says: "The evening before May Day the young people went around singing for eggs ... It was usually a success. I remember that we once sang together more than 20 scores of egg" (IFGH 2436: 47).

May Day also used to be a celebration day for students with big carnival processions. Today this takes place on Walpurgis Day, the 30th of April, but in Lund in the south of Sweden the student choir still sings on May Day. This event has been broadcast by radio since 1927, and later on also on TV, and for many people all over Sweden watching this has become an annual tradition (Bringéus 1999: 68). One woman, 81 years old, writes about her May Day as follows: "Nowadays I celebrate ... May Day on my own, but I have one tradition left. That is to listen to the student choir from Lund, when they are 'singing for spring' on TV. Then I usually sing along with all the songs and remember my own old school days" (DAGF 890:6).

The Archive houses several chronicles about "maja", which means to decorate something in greenery, but in this context also is used in the sense of, for example, having a picnic in the open on May Day. One woman, 75 years old, says:

> In my childhood we always went out to "maja". My younger sister and I got lemonade, sandwiches, a bun and – most important of all – boiled eggs. Our mum packed us each a bag and a blanket to sit on and gave us a warning to look out for snakes. We used to go to a beautiful place at the edge of a wood. ... Sometimes we were a few girls who rode our bikes to an old open-air dance floor, where we ran around and had fun. Most important of all was to have picnic outside, since May Day was said to be the first day of the summer" (DAGF 906: 24).

MAY DAY DEMONSTRATIONS

Today May Day is mostly associated with demonstrations. May Day demonstrations have taken place since 1890 and have their origins in working feasts, carnivals, spring celebrations, feast processions and journeymen's prank (Engman 1999: 49). The decision to make the first of May the day of the workers' movement and a day for demonstrations was taken by the International Socialistic Congress in Paris in 1889. The first of May 1890 was a Thursday, an ordinary working day, but nevertheless workers in twenty places around Sweden chose to demonstrate. In Gothenburg the demonstration gathered a couple of thousand participants and the rally afterwards around 15,000. They demonstrated for eight hours' work, eight hours' leisure and eight hours' sleep, but also for a universal right to vote[1] (Harringer 1993). As a result, several of the demonstrators lost their jobs.

In Gothenburg some unions requested that the pubs should stay closed on this day because they wanted the workers very first day of demonstration to be celebrated with dignity and not to be disturbed by any intermezzo or encounter with the police (Bodin 1980: 10). Birgitta Skarin Frykman has used old newspaper clips to reconstruct this day in the book *Working Culture – Gothenburg 1890* in which she describes how newspapers reported on the order and sobriety that had given the demonstration on May Day 1890 its character (Skarin Frykman 1993: 22). Drunkenness, however, could be a problem on May Day. Åke, born in 1916, tells us of some of his childhood memories from May Day in Gothenburg, when his father used to demonstrate (Nyblom 1978: 20):

> In those days, May Day belonged to the men. In the morning my father would give his hat and his overcoat a brush. Then he would go outside and sing The Internationale,[2] and then he went to the pub and got drunk. My mother sat at home and waited. It was the same every year. There was no talk about the women demonstrating. The men could agitate for human dignity and class struggle, but at home they were just damned tyrants. In our house there were never any calls for democracy.

During the 1930s people demonstrated for work, bread and a decent life. In 1940 the number of participants in the May Day demonstrations reached record numbers. May Day becoming a public holiday, along with the Second World War, made the day into a day for national pride and this was the first time the Swedish flag was carried in the procession (NE 1992, bd. 7: 234). However, one man wrote: "On May Day 1945 nobody raised their right arm to greet the Swedish flag, as many had done on this same day in 1940" (DAGF 851: 6). After the Second World War the cry for peace and liberty dominated. During the 1960s and 70s, people began to develop an international awareness, fuelled, for example, by the ANC's fight for rights for Blacks in South Africa, the Vietnam war and nuclear weapons (Harringer 1993). Today, the placards carried by people taking part in the demonstrations declare: "There are no illegal immigrants – we demand a humane refugee policy", "Welfare before lower taxes" and "More money for rent and bread – we support women in the health-care sector". And since Sweden is currently under a conservative government, the Prime Minister is derided in some placards (GP 2008-05-02).

The questionnaire the Archive sent out in spring 2008 included the question "Do you demonstrate in any May Day procession?" – and demonstrations were something about which several of those responding had opinions. To take a few examples: A woman born in 1944 writes: "I have never taken part in any May Day demonstration. ... I have no political 'training' and I remember that I as a child thought that May Day was an annoyance and Walpurgis Day the best!" (DAGF 896:1). A 78-year-old man stated: "The May Day demonstrations are a mockery!" and goes on to say:

> May Day used to be ... a significant and respectful day. It was the day for all workers. Back then we had far too long a working days, no holidays, far too low wages and no protection if we got ill. Everybody wanted to change these conditions. Not through revolution, but by negotiation (...) Together we succeeded with that (DAGF 883:1).

A 56-year old woman says:

> I never demonstrated with my family as a child, but when I grew up, started university and lived in a communist ruled part of Gothenburg I became politically active. Since then I have always taken part in the May Day demonstrations. ... I love The Internationale. I remember when we once went by boat through the canal and sang The Internationale in order to honour all the workers who built the canal. Today everybody goes through the canal with big expensive boats and no one longer knows that it was built by unemployed men during the Depression (DAGF 898:19).

Ingrid, 82 years old writes about her May Day:

> A friend who is a widower and 86 years old comes round to us around noon. We have a lunch of poached mackerel, potatoes, meatballs, Janssons Temptation, smoked salmon, bread and butter. Then we listen to Mona Sahlin[3] when she makes her May Day speech and feel the solidarity with the friends among the Social Democrats. Nowadays we no longer walk in the procession. We always used to do that when we were younger. I have joined the procession of demonstrators since I was a child, when I proudly marched together with my father" (DAGF 881:13) (Fig. 1).

Fredrik, 26-years old, writes:

> I have always had a romantic picture of May Day as it is the day of the workers. If there is something that I am proud of in the Swedish history then it is the welfare and system of social security that the workers and the labour parties have built ... The whole point of the May Day demonstrations is to push for a change and an improvement. This happens once a year, and then it's forgotten again. (DAGF 907:26)

Fewer people are participating in the demonstrations, the demonstrations themselves are becoming smaller and in some places they have disappeared completely. In smaller towns and places close to bigger towns, one of the reasons for this could be that the people

living there tend to go to the closer big town, for example into Gothenburg, to demonstrate instead. One of the people who responded to our questionnaire, born in 1933, believes that the reason behind the decreased participation is the fact that the younger generation have a better standard of living and therefore take everything for granted (DAGF 906: 24). There is perhaps some truth in this. Some college students responded to the question of what they thought of May Day and none of their responses was very positive: "I have never demonstrated because I have nothing to demonstrate for." "I am not interested in politics." "May Day is boring because then the gym is closed." "I spent Walpurgis partying with friends and May Day with a hangover." (DAGF 953).

Fig. 1. The Social Democrat's rally in Gothenburg on May Day 2008 (photo: Eva Knuts, Institute for Language and Folklore).

MAY DAY AND CHANGES

There are also those who simply see the day as a day off work to spend with friends and families, go shopping or to work in the garden. Gothenburg's largest newspaper asked the question "What do you do on May Day?" 2,500 people answered and the result was: Demonstrating 12%, Shopping 5%, Going to the countryside 8%, Other 75%. According to the newspapers, this year in Gothenburg 1,900 participants demonstrated in favour of the Social Democrats, 1,800 in favour of the Left Party and 1,500 in favour of the Syndicalists (GP 2008-05-02). This was actually a quite good number bearing in mind that the weather was bad.

At the same time, another newspaper article states that, in spite of the pouring rain, 2,000 people had gathered at Wapnö farm in Halland to watch the cows gambolling in the green grass. Several farms are going back to the old tradition of letting the cattle out for the summer on May Day, and some of them even advertise it and invite people to come and watch (GP 2008-05-03).

This year [2008] May Day coincided with Ascension Day, which in Sweden is also the national day of sobriety. Ascension Day is also the day for the big fishing competition in the river that runs through the centre of Gothenburg, so this May Day there might have been people who missed the demonstrations in order to try their luck fishing. May Day 2008 was also the day for the first new potatoes to be picked – a delicacy that will be sold to restaurants for the price of 500 Swedish crowns (about 50 euros) per kilo (GP 2008-05-02). According to some of the people who responded to our questionnaire, May Day is the day to plant the potatoes if one would like one's own new potatoes for Midsummer (DAGF 897: 17) (Fig. 2). And one 81-year-old woman says that May Day does not mean anything special to her, but that on this particular day she used to take her first swim of the year in the sea (DAGF 890: 6).

One of the men who initiated the law that turned May Day into a special holiday for working people, has said that if he had thought that this day would be a day devoted to excursions and sports, he would probably suggest that May Day returned to a normal working day (Möller 1959: 189). But there are still those who take May Day for its original purpose. One of the respondents to our questionnaire

writes: "There are those who say that this day's significance is on the wane. But no! There are still some of us for whom this day really is a special holiday! And there should be more of us … ." (DAGF 919: 35).

Fig. 2. May Day 2008. Planting potatoes on the island of Tjörn on the Swedish West Coast (photo: Peter Lundvall).

In conclusion, even though the recently collected material on May Day is very new, one can nevertheless make quite clear comparisons. During the twentieth century this day became very politicised, and despite the fact that there are some people who still take this seriously and demonstrate every year, one can ascertain some changes. More and more people see this day as just a public holiday, a time to potter around in the garden and to watch gambolling cows. It's back to nature again, and rain or no rain – it is the first day of the summer.

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Notes

1 All men over 24 got the right to vote in 1907 and women got it in 1918. In 1919 a law was passed on a trial period for an eight-hour working day; a permanent law was introduced in 1930.

2 A famous socialist, anarchist, communist and social-democratic anthem first written in French by Eugène Potter in 1871 with music composed in 1888 by Pierre Degeyter. The song is translated into many languages, for example into Swedish in 1902.

3 Mona Sahlin is the current leader of the Swedish Social Democratic Party.

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French *Muguet* Customs and Permutations in the Ritual Year

COZETTE GRIFFIN-KREMER

ABSTRACT. *Contemporary uses of the lily-of-the-valley for May Day and maying in France reveal a wealth of customs and narrative which belie any thoughts that bringing in the summer is a thing of the past. It is today clothed in both highly commercial, broadly staged, almost "national" practices and deeply local, identitary events. The muguet customs also lie on a half-year axis that illustrate some of the developments in a ritual year division known to us since Antiquity.*

KEYWORDS: *lily-of-the-valley,* muguet, Convallaria majalis, *May Day, maying, ritual year, festival, florist,* beaujolais nouveau

CATCH ME, IF YOU CAN!

There is a fleeting aspect involved in most holiday or festive celebration familiar to anyone who endeavours to pin such human phenomena down for examination. This is especially true in the case of an organic "implement" like the lily-of-the valley (French *muguet*), which comes in two guises. The greenhouse varieties have been calibrated so that the market garden producers can deliver them for May Day, whereas the wild variety has continued blooming when it sees fit and this may be as late as mid-May, when some shady nooks are pervaded by the scent of the *muguet*.

The lily-of-the-valley's olfactory impact on humans and its white blossoms can be compared with those of the hawthorn in May Day and maying practices. In both plants, their smell is one factor that may contribute to interdictions in the British Isles, where it is thought unlucky to bring either one inside the house (Vickery 1995: 220-1, 166-9). In the case of the *muguet*, this reluctance certainly has no counterpart in contemporary French perceptions of the plant. However, the blooming habits of both plants provide a timely reminder that the now nearly half-month shift caused by the calendar

reform has cast a long shadow over practices involving flowers and May Day, since the "actors" may arrive on stage too late for the event, if not industrially coached.

The wild *muguet* does figure in maying practices, however, and may even be enlisted for May Day gifts, if it is available that early. This is a specialty of some Burgundy producers, while the market garden commerce is mainly dominated by the Nantes, Bordeaux and German growers, in that order. The financial stakes involved are high – €26.2 million in metropolitan France for sales in 2007, down from €30.7 million in 2006 (Allavoine 2008, Office National Interprofessionnel 2006). This has in no way ousted the small operator. Individuals, groups of friends and families still gather lily-of-the-valley for sale on May Day, and the plant has been literally extirpated from much of its former habitat, though there are protected spots still available to the privileged or the persevering.

Fig. 1. Just before the rush on May Day 2006 at the Eden Flor shop in Vanves, suburb of Paris (photo: C. Griffin-Kremer).

Theoretically, the wild plant is a big player on May Day in France,

since this is the only day of the year people are allowed to openly engage in street-selling of this particular article without permission. Legal technicalities can make the situation far more constraining and these have greatly reduced the income from the day for groups such as the French Red Cross or the Communist Party. In spite of the hardships, a fine location such as the entrance to an underground station may be surrounded at any one time with up to twenty "free" sellers, working individually or in groups. What are they doing? Most are slaving away to tie and sell single sprigs. In contrast, at a regular florist's shop, there can be a remarkable range of prices and arrangements. These commercial operations are intense and massive, but for the professionals, they are a banal event in a series over the calendar year. They pale in comparison to the bustle of activity for months and weeks around the *muguet* in a place that has linked its identity to the flower for over a century and where it is engaged in more monumental expression.

Fig. 2. The float of King Kong pushing aside the Eiffel Tower and the Montparnasse skyscraper, Fete du Muguet, Rambouillet, 2007.

WORK AS DEVOTION – OFFERING AND *AGON*

Imagine you wished to construct a float some five to eight metres long and five metres wide, bearing a figure of King Kong three metres high in the act of bending back, with, on his right side, the Eiffel Tower, and on his left, the Tour Montparnasse, both nearly equal his height. Each of these figures and much of the bed of the float would be covered with *muguet* leaves, and the highlights would be outlined by the white flowers. If there are ten to fourteen such floats, then this adds up to an astounding amount of meticulous, high-pressure work and it is totally unpaid in monetary terms for the float-creators. This effort is what will be qualified as devotion here, so let us look quickly at what is going on in the town of Rambouillet (some 50 km southwest of Paris) in the Fête du Muguet.

This event takes place in mid-May, since it involves only the wild lily-of-the-valley, used by both the float-makers and the shop owners for their window decoration. The float-makers work as fairly large teams, while the shopkeepers may call upon a few friends or family members. One of the latter said she had her "secret" places in the Rambouillet forest where she could always find the plant in bloom. However, the privileged place in this task of gathering *muguet* belongs to the members of the associations that create the floats. They alone have access to a well-guarded kingdom, where the *muguet* grows unthreatened: the French President's state domain, which includes the Presidential hunting grounds.

This is but one aspect of the secrecy that hovers around the float creations, since their designers do their best to keep the theme and details of each float quite confidential until their "coming out". There is an added touch of suspense that is evoked with deep respect and even some dread – what will the weather be like? It can influence attendance numbers by the thousands. Once the day has come, the float folk will bear up under whatever weather they are given, because they have a remarkable offering to give to their community: thousands of man- and woman-hours of work, free, all to be consumed in a few hours by the onlookers along the parade route. Some watch from their windows, others bring out chairs to line the sidewalk, still others follow from beginning to end and stay on until the last, quietly agonising moments.

Indeed, there is an *agon*, a contest, if mitigated by a prize for every category. At the end of the day, the exhausted float-makers take their creations back to their shelters, well knowing the mountains of *muguet* will not last out the day. The atmosphere is cordial, the applause heart-felt, the gift free and freely given. What stands behind this offering is intense work and affective investment. It fully merits the label of "devotion" in the most Latin sense (Ernout and Meillet 2001: 753-4, Benveniste 1969: 233-43), where there is an offering and a return. In this context of bringing in the summer, we might posit the return is indeed the luck the *muguet* is thought to bring, here to the whole community.

The mammoth work involved is the opposite of alienating and it is truly possessed by the workers. It is "received" by a community that knows very well how to "consume" it, in renewal of a "communicative bond" (Glassie 1992: 70ff). When this work cannot be carried on, the sense of grief felt by the association members is deep and difficult to assuage. However, the fête goes on and the inventiveness did not abate in the latest "edition" of 2008, perhaps because the floats and parade fit into a rich fabric of festival and this provides cushioning to absorb shocks.

The fabric of the Rambouillet fête is complex in the literal sense of many dove-tailing threads in festive practices with classic traits of bringing-in-the-summer customs: a circumambular procession, moving rightways from periphery to interior and its "double", a smaller-scale foreshadowing of it. This first sunwise procession is undertaken by the royals, the Queen and her Dauphines, accompanied by all the notables in the town hierarchy. They walk from a borderline, the very un-urban château park, which is quite low topographically, to the high point and religious centre of the downtown area. Accompanied by the embodiment of a long-standing alliance with the local gentry – a full, 30-hound hunt – the cortege of "royalty" and notables is welcomed by the priests and all enter the church for a morning mass. This aspect of the fête could be seen as a consecration, perhaps even as a wedding, but there are many other things going on at the same time. On the "other side" of town, the float-makers are gathering or putting the final touches on their own work, and could never attend the two morning processions and mass.

The local alliance of town and aristocracy goes back long before

the founding of the Fête du Muguet by a particularly dynamic male mayor and an equally formidable female aristocrat and this is but one more example of the wealth of interweaving festival components. There is a broad meeting of classes and interests that can unite and underwrite a community through festival. In the Rambouillet fête, gift-giving of many varieties is a predictably major element and recalls the broader *muguet* customs at the month's opening, that mainly involve buying, giving and receiving the plant.

A GIFT OF FLOWERS AND PERMUTATIONS OF THE RITUAL YEAR

In the more general gift-giving around May Day, the hierarchical relationships are far less visible, but equally complex. Yet there is a levelling mechanism often perceptible in an explicit insistence on reciprocity. So, who is giving *muguet* to whom? Is it a gender-determined affair or some broader *élan*? The answer is – both. There is a conventional perception of *muguet*-giving in the framework of gallantry: gentlemen give flowers to ladies – the boss to his employees (but lady bosses do this, too), men to their wives or companions, young men to girlfriends, and so on, but partners of all known kinds rush to give each other *muguet*, both for the "conventional" reasons of respect and love, and for the plant's deeply important role as a *porte-bonheur*. ("Lucky charm" is a possible translation). This means there is much inter-generational and consistently reciprocal giving, as well as exchange between neighbours, shopkeepers and customers or companies and their clients.

These happy exchanges, some of which are rigidly convention-bound, might well veil an element in the May Day customs that is quite present and eloquently evoked by the quiet, friendly, but intense *agon* in the float events in Rambouillet. There are real clashes here and they are not to be ignored. The plant itself has also been a major class symbol, having long been the emblem of the Communist Party and workers' movements in general. Class tensions have been thematised explicitly by many of the song composers who have devoted their talents to the *muguet* over the years (Griffin-Kremer 2008). The florists' syndicates and the wildcat sellers have been

engaged in a running battle since the late nineteenth-century and it was even the subject of one of the *muguet* songs. One might say on the rare occasion that "there will be blood" – wildcat sellers do occasionally go "over the wall" in their gathering to a closed estate with an armed guard. A 2008 incident ended in the courtroom after an overly intrepid gatherer was wounded by gunshot (Allezy and Persidat 2008).

There is a generally articulated perception of opposition between "free" selling and the official florists protected by a real police presence. People do not react well to seeing a Red Cross group or an elderly woman working off a kitchen stool inspected by the police, even when the latter are carefully courteous. Some free sellers have remarkable stories about how they get their *muguet* and how they manoeuvre around the police. Most of the many people I have spoken with support the free sellers, although they may make their more important purchases at the florist's, where the keeping quality and attractiveness are insured.

These usually gentle oppositional configurations recall older, often highly ritualized, but very ungentle confrontations that accompany the bringing-in of summer in both custom and in the many narratives attached to May Day across Europe. A classic example of this is the annually recurrent clash between two suitors over a woman, familiar from many a *Sommer / Winterstreit*, or a conflict between two forces over the possession of a country or the bounty of crops or livestock. These clashes are often repeated at hinge-points in the ritual year and May Day or May events may have a mirror image in the autumn or around November Day. There may at times be a hint of gender division at the half-year points or for the half-year periods, with one half presided over by a feminine and the other by a masculine figure.

It is possible to make a rather playful suggestion in this regard, if we juxtapose images associated with May Day and May with an autumnal event. The *muguet* is white and green. This colour combination is avidly embroidered upon in the Fête du Muguet in Rambouillet and visible in much décor associated with May Day in France. The bipartite configuration lacks only a touch of red to achieve a tripartite representation of a social whole (Turner 1966). The Rambouillet "royalty" have always been unmarried young women of good repute, chosen by the associations that sponsor them.

For their trip to the church, then riding in the float parade and on the podium for the final events of the fête, they indeed don deep red capes and, of course, carry lily-of-the-valley bouquets.

More generally for the massive May Day holiday, the *muguet* "bells" (the flowers are termed *clochettes*) turn down in what could be perceived as a uterine manner. If we then place them beside a photo of the emblem of the major end-of-summer event in France – a bottle of *beaujolais nouveau* wine – we have a rather feminine object, partly of virginal colour (white is an occidental convention, *nota bene*), and a rather masculine one full of a substance that often represents blood, even sacred blood. However, taken together, the green and white of the *muguet* plus the red of the *beaujolais* again come round to a union of feminine and masculine, which is a pleasing (if not necessarily compelling) argument that one aspect of the ritual year as created and dynamically practised by human beings continues on its way through varied permutations.

This is indeed a playful and tentative interpretation on the part of an outside observer who enjoys and respects what is going on: in both cases, massive participation in events that no one terms "festivals", though May Day is a bank holiday. The great secret about what is going on is that it is an open secret. Both the *muguet* customs at the beginning of the summer half-year and the *beaujolais* customs at its end still work in the realm of the "invisible obvious". They are so omnipresent and part of the "normal" fabric of events in time that people find it odd (at best) to suggest that *muguet*-givers are bringing in the summer or that the arrival of the *beaujolais nouveau* is the most widely and enthusiastically practiced holiday in France.

What we might also see here is that axis running from May to November in many European calendar traditions, which is evoked as part of the year's divisions by Hesiod, Pliny, the makers of the Coligny Calendar, Cormac MacCuillenan, Geoffrey Keating, Amhlaioigh O Sulleabhean, Sean O Chonnaill and so many others. We may also think this is a heritage of our forebears around the world, sitting up at night to watch the moon and stars, working through the day under the sun, trying to understand their movements and assumed interrelations, and measuring the impact of the seasons on human life and survival. They endeavoured to order the complexity of the phenomena they observed through the creation of

calendar systems and the narratives that accompany them, that provide bearings in the sea of time and the pillars of ritual that should guarantee harmony between the house and the world.

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Constructing a Sense of Place: The Hungarian "Clean" Room

NANCY CASSELL McENTIRE

ABSTRACT. *In various parts of Hungary and in Hungarian settlements, houses may contain a rarely used "clean" room. This paper reviews accounts of clean rooms and their functions in Doroszló, a Hungarian settlement in former Yugoslavia, and examines a specific clean room in Méra, a village populated entirely by Hungarians in Western Romania. Especially after the birth or the death of a family member, the clean room provides a place for reflection and sanctity. Filled with elaborate art, it is a symbol of the continuity of the family's traditions. On a deeper level, it is a focal point for rituals connected with life's most important transitions.*

KEYWORDS: *Hungary, Romania, clean room, rites of passage, birth, death*

In various parts of Hungary and in Hungarian settlements in countries nearby, rites of passage are observed within one room of a home, the "clean" room. Behind a closed door, separate from other rooms in the house, it is rarely used or even heated. It may not have electricity, thus requiring those who enter in the evening to carry their own lamps. Yet the clean room is distinguished by its beauty – it is filled with painted, woven, and embroidered examples of folk art – and by its physical separation from the chaotic mess of daily life. Even when other rooms of a home are overused and crowded, the clean room remains untouched, tranquil and pristine.

This article reviews accounts of clean rooms in Doroszló, a Hungarian settlement in former Yugoslavia, and one specific "clean room" in Méra, a village populated entirely by Hungarians in Western Romania. I am including images from recent fieldwork in Méra to highlight a room that holds cultural value for the Varga family that maintains it and for the local residents who are aware of it. Like other clean rooms, the room in Méra is used to display folk costumes and folk art, yet it also provides a place to protect members of the family

during key rites of passage in the life cycle.

CLEAN ROOMS IN DOROSZLÓ, ROMANIA

Clean rooms are nothing new to Hungarian families. In an article about rooms and their textiles in Doroszló, Rozalia Raj and Istvan Nagy describe one villager, Juliana Geller, who informed them that not only did her mother (born in 1884) have a clean room, but her grandmother (born in 1864) did as well. Some of the room's furnishings changed when Juliana got married in 1920, but she kept the chest that had belonged to her grandmother.

Tradition and continuity permeate the custom of determining ownership of clean rooms. Young female family members inherit the room, often at the time of their marriage. Girls know that they will use furniture from their mothers and grandmothers. They take older pieces to a local carpenter so that he can restore them and preserve their older style (Raj and Nagy 2001: 123).[1]

One of the key functions of the clean room is to store the dowry for the next woman in the family to be married. The clean room is also a symbol of status within the village, differentiating prosperous families from less-prosperous ones by the quality of its belongings. The room is usually aired two times during the year, in the spring and in the autumn at this time the windows are opened so that passers-by may examine the contents of the room. This accomplishes the freshening of the room, but it also allows the owners to "show off" their clean room and reinforce their social standing (Raj and Nagy 2001: 124).

Rozalia Paki, who was interviewed by Rozalia Raj and Istvan Nagy, grew up in a poor family as one of six children. No one in her family had a clean room. She said, "There wasn't room for one, nor was there anything to put in it." However, six years after her marriage in 1919, she was able to get her own clean room. She gathered the furnishings, one by one. The last piece she gathered was a dresser with two doors. She recalled with excitement, even after the passing of many years, how she prepared all of the textiles for the room, embroidering with her needle and scalloping with a crochet hook day

and night until her clean room was finished (Raj and Nagy 2001: 123).

According to Julianna Bartol (Samu), another resident of Doroszló, her clean room won "the best clean room honor in the village" (Raj and Nagy 2001: 107). Villagers were aware of which rooms were magnificent, and it was an honour to be recognized, either informally, through the praise of other villagers, or formally, through an organized contest.

The clean room can have a religious function, especially in older homes. Religious pictures line the walls, there are statues of the Virgin Mary and of angels on the cabinets, and holy candles are placed throughout the room. In one clean room the words "Praise Jesus Christ" are embroidered on a tablecloth. There can also be a house-blessing in the clean room, most likely done by a member of the local church (Raj and Nagy 2001: 115-24). Another prominent use of the clean room is paying honour to family members, near and far, alive and dead. Photographs of family members living far away are placed in the clean room, as are other family pictures. In one clean room in Doroszló, the owner's name is embroidered in the clothes (2001: 113). It is also customary to write the birthdays, death dates, and wedding dates of family members on the inside of the cabinet doors of the dresser.

THE CLEAN ROOM OF THE VARGA FAMILY IN MÉRA, ROMANIA

Located in western Transylvania, Méra is a small village made up of Hungarian families. Such anomalies are not uncommon, due to the disintegration and political reorganization of the Hungarian nation over past centuries. A stranger will be greeted with Hungarian salutations on the street; Hungarian foods grace the tables at mealtime, and the custom of the clean room is maintained.

In one such home, both painted art and sewn and embroidered art are prominently displayed. The clean room of Enikö Varga and her family is a stunning example of a family's dedication to tradition and to aesthetic values.[2] The red painted floral designs and the red and white embroidered linens and coverlets in the family's clean room create a memorable sight, especially when contrasted with the

sparsely adorned interiors of the other rooms in the house. Although customary practices in Hungarian clean rooms vary, the sanctity of the room remains a constant feature. Often there are rules: no sleeping in the bed, no food, no children allowed, and no casual use whatsoever. The room can be used as a haven for rest and recuperation by a mother after she has given birth, and it can also be a final place of rest for a corpse, prior to burial. In this case the clean room becomes a focal point for a transition in the life cycle. Birth and death are times of danger and mystery, so the use of the room as a place of tranquillity is especially meaningful.

Fig. 1. The clean room is a sanctuary, containing the best folk art that the family can produce.

In a study of European homes, Norman Pounds notes that infant mortality was a real problem in Europe throughout the pre-industrial period and even during the nineteenth century: "It was far from unusual for the death rate among children in their first year to approach 40 percent, and there were many instances of levels of mortality higher than this" he writes. "The total extinction of whole families was not infrequent" (Pounds 1989: 217). With real fears of

premature death as a possible impetus, the clean room may have offered practical solutions for health problems created by contaminations from the outside world. The mother and child could therefore find protection from infection as well as tranquillity in an isolated part of the home.

Fig. 2. The chairs are hand-painted in a cheerful floral design.

When we consider the other end of the life cycle, we find that the clean room functions as a way of separating the living from the dead as well as a way of honouring a deceased family member. When a family member dies at home, the body must rest in a separate place until it is time for the funeral. The clean room provides its own peaceful resolution for a final liminal state. The corpse is in a quiet place, and the family can regulate who will enter the clean room to be with it.

In writing about the social importance of the home, Witold Rybczynski considers the concept of "stimmung", a sense of intimacy that is created by a room and its furnishings. "Domesticity", he writes, "has to do with family, intimacy, and a devotion to home, as well as with a sense of the house as embodying – not only harbouring – these sentiments" (1986: 75). In keeping with this concept of the

embodiment of intimate sentiments, we can see how the clean room is much more than a place for special objects to be kept; it is a place that holds the values of the family that has created it.

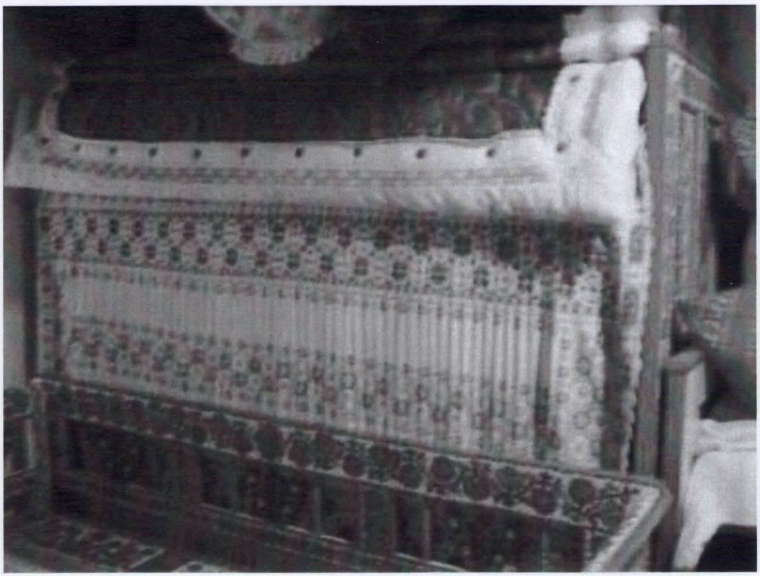

Fig. 3. The bed is adorned with hand-embroidered coverlets and pillows.

Removed from turmoil, preserved and embellished, the clean room remains a symbol of tradition, of family, of faith, and of aesthetic beauty.[3] Within the community it allows families to achieve status elevation through the acquisition of hand-sewn costumes for key events, such as first communion, important birthdays, and marriage.[4] It also is a place to display handmade and hand-painted furniture and elaborately embroidered textiles, resulting in a stunning display of folk art. The clean room is a symbol of continuity and a place for solace. Religious commitment can be emphasised through paintings or engraved and hand-embroidered biblical passages. The family is honoured through photographs, embroidered names on textiles, and written names on the interior doors of the furniture. The furniture holds the items for a future dowry, and the room itself is passed on from one generation to another, one woman to another. Finally, on a personal level, the clean room can give strength to an

individual's spirit, either through the act of sitting among reminders of one's religious faith or one's family members, or by gazing at the hand-painted, carved, and sewn representations of traditional patterns and designs. In a world torn by conflict, political tensions, shifting boundaries, and economic instability, the clean room offers hope and stability.

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Notes

1 It is in the details of rural, peasant life that evidence of the continuity of tradition is evident. According to Gyula Ortutay, "Everyday customs were practiced, even work-processes went on within the limits set by definite traditional forms marked out by the laws of the community" (1972: 56).

2 Enikö Varga, her sister, and her mother-in-law, Erzi-néni, have done most of the sewing and embroidery for the clothing and bedding in the clean room of their home.

3 The practice of keeping one room separate, clean, and formal is known in both Europe and America. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American homes, the "parlour" was maintained and kept clean, yet

seldom used, except for the occasional visit from a minister. Young couples would occasionally be allowed to "court" in the parlour, and the parlour was used for wedding ceremonies. On the occasion of a death in the family, the corpse was laid out in the parlour. Here the link with key aspects of the life cycle can also be discerned. See Williams 1991: 79-81, 102.

4 For more discussion of status elevation, see Turner 1969: 170-2.

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Beliefs and Customs in Marie Balfour's Collection of Stories set in the Lincolnshire Carrs

MAUREEN JAMES

ABSTRACT. *This paper discusses the context and content of a set of stories published in* Folklore *in 1891 and apparently collected in the Carrs of North Lincolnshire. These stories contain a wealth of folkloric references which this study seeks to assess. Background research on the folklore of Lincolnshire indicates that there were varied calendar customs and rituals taking place at strategic times throughout the year.*

KEYWORDS: *Lincolnshire Carrs, fens, will o' the wisp, folklore, legends, calendar customs, rituals, Marie Clothilde Balfour*

This study is concerned with the folklore content of a set of stories published by Mrs Marie Clothilde Balfour in *Folk-Lore* in 1891 and alleged by her to have been collected from oral tradition in the Carrs of Lincolnshire. Balfour, who was born in Scotland, lived for about two years in the vicarage at Redbourne in North Lincolnshire, and it seems that, whilst she was living in this village where her husband was practising as a doctor, she busied herself with telling stories and hearing stories from the local people. The preamble to her stories indicates that she may have been following an agenda of finding out about ancient "paganism" and the survival of heathen practices. She states that in the Carrs there lingered "tales that tell of the old pagan customs" (Balfour 1891: 148) and argues that "it is more as vestiges of a bygone religion that these tales may interest, than as samples of modern credulity" (Balfour 1891: 258). She wrote of her belief that nowhere else in England could one find "such a childlike certainty of unseen things or such an unquestioning belief in supernatural powers" and explained how she had collected some of her stories from "devout believers, mostly aged folk" (Balfour 1891: 148).

I will first provide an outline of those stories in her collection

which are of interest from the point of view of folklore and then go on to set the beliefs and customs they mention in a broader historical and folkloric context, giving special attention to the seasonal customs.

THE STORIES

"Tiddy Mun", ascribed to an old woman, explores the drainage of the Carrs, the effects of drainage on the local people, livestock and landscape and, more importantly for the story, the people's belief in a water spirit who was a "tiddy" or tiny man-like creature (Balfour 1891: 149-56). When the Carrs were drained and the waters no longer came into people's houses at the time of the spring tides, the people stopped calling for "Tiddy Mun's" help and dire consequences ensued. Things only returned to normal when the people got together after dark at new moon carrying stoups of fresh water and poured the water out, calling on Tiddy Mun to accept their offering:

> Tiddy Mun, wi-out a name,
> Here's water for thee, tak' tha spell undone!

"The Dead Moon" is said to have been told to Balfour by a nine-year-old girl, called Fanny, who had heard it from her "gran" (pp. 156, 403). It was the story of what happened when the moon came down to the Carrs to investigate the horrors that came out when she did not shine (pp. 157-64). The moon became trapped by the creatures, but not until after she had helped a man who had been led off the path by a "will o' the wyke". Eventually the moon was freed by the people and from then on it has shone more brightly over the Carrs than anywhere else.

"The Green Mist", ascribed to a man, is about a family with a girl who was ailing (pp. 259-64). She expressed aloud her wish to live long enough to see the Green Mist and to carry out a spring-time ritual to wake the earth and said, if her wish was granted, she was willing to live only as long as the first cowslip. Her mother warned her about making such wishes as the "bogles and things" might have been listening but the girl was unconcerned. She gained in strength and lived long enough to see the mist and carry out the ritual of

crumbling bread and salt onto the earth but faded and died when a young lad picked a cowslip to give to her.

"Yallery Brown" is told in the first person by a man who explains that, when he was walking back to work one evening, he heard the sound of a baby crying (pp. 264-71). Tracing the source of the noise, he had the impression that it had come from under a large flat stone. He lifted the stone and a yellowy, wrinkled, "boggart" (a Lincolnshire name for a fairy creature) appeared and offered him a wish. The man requested help with his work but found that this help made everything go "arsy-varsy". He went to where he had met the boggart and said to him, "I'll thank thee to leave me alone." The boggart called him a fool and gave him fool's luck for the rest of his life.

"The Dead Hand", ascribed to a man, is a dark tale of how a young man called Tom disregarded warnings to carry "keep-safes" and walked across the Carrs alone at night (pp. 271-8). His friends, who were watching from a safe distance, saw him dragged down by a hand that came out of the water. Tom was not seen for some time and when he did reappear he was quite mad.

The last story of interest, "The Strangers' Share", also ascribed to a man, could be said to be a land-based variation of "Tiddy Mun" in which the people forgot to leave offerings of the first fruits of flowers and fruit and crops like corn and potatoes for the "fairies" or "strangers" on flat stones and neglect to spill a bit of bread and a drop of milk or beer on the fireplace before a meal (pp. 278-83). The harvest failed, the fever (fen ague) got worse and the babies began to die. The people realised what they needed to do and started to make offerings again but things never quite returned to normal.

THE HISTORICAL AND FOLKLORIC SETTING

Some of the physical and psychic effects found in these stories have counterparts in the real life of the area where they were collected, which has been subject to violent changes in the course of its history.

The village of Redbourne lies on the western side of the River Ancholme, a few miles east of Kirton in Lindsey, and south of Scunthorpe and Brigg. Much drainage took place in the early 17th century in the various low-lying parts of Eastern England particularly

the Isle of Axholme in North Lincolnshire and the Great Level, or Cambridgeshire Fens, and in 1635 Sir John Monson commenced draining the lands in the Ancholme Valley turning it from wetland to pasture land. Darwin Horn, in an article in *Folklore* (Horn 1987), explained how the drainage mentioned in "Tiddy Mun" would have had a devastating effect as the soil chemistry was altered. This could have made the ponies lame as the soil lost its moisture; the cattle would have become sick and the milk would have tasted sour through the change in diet from lush grass; the houses would have collapsed if built on the peat as it shrinks when it dries; and the babies would have succumbed to malaria as the mosquito population increased due to the change from a predominantly wetland environment.

In 1826 new drainage works were proposed to widen, deepen and straighten the River Ancholme to turn the land from pasture to arable. The life of the people changed once again as they had to adjust to the new agricultural production. The gang labour system originated at about this time to provide employment to women and even children and alongside it grew opium addiction as a means of keeping the fen ague, rheumatism and hunger at bay. Opium poppies grew readily in the Fens and Carrs and mothers would even dose their children with it to keep them quiet while they worked. The side effects of advanced opium addiction, according to Aletha Hayter, could include waking visions much like some of the content of the Balfour stories:

> ... decaying things, still faintly touched with the likeness of beings once loved, stir beside them in rotting debris; their children, as they kiss them, turn to skeletons. Wandering through huge caves, they are forced to step on rotting corpses, and thousands of faces made of blood-red flame flash up and die out in the darkness. They are watching faces everywhere, grinning up through sea-waves, stretching and lengthening and disintegrating ... (Hayter 1988: 56)

Real-life experience could also be phantasmagoric. Balls of self-igniting marsh gas found in wetland appeared as small flickering flames on the surface of the water, and these are called "will o' the wykes" in the stories. Ethel Rudkin researched this "Will o' the Wisps" phenomenon in Lincolnshire (Rudkin 1938: 47), and the

topic is also treated in Enid Porter's fine book called *Cambridgeshire Customs and Folklore* published in 1964 which contains many snippets of information from a man named Walter Henry Barrett. Barrett noted how, in the late 19th and early 20th century, in the days before electric lights, the Fens would have been very dark and dangerous at night and people would not happily choose to go out alone. He noted similar fears to those found in the Balfour stories and explored the phenomenon of "Jack o' Lanterns" and how a "wayfarer at night could be enticed by the flames away from his path to a certain death in the marsh" (Porter 1969: 4).

It can be seen that the dire effects of both of the stages of agricultural improvement and also the uncanny phenomenon of marsh gas might well have been interpreted in terms of the presence of supernatural beings. In "The Green Mist", Balfour represents her male story-teller as speaking of the strength of belief and customary practice in the times recalled by his grandfather (159):

> Ma gran'ther said 's how th' bogles 'd wanst bin thowt a deal more on, a' a 'd smear blo'od o' th' door-sil' to skeer awa'ay th' horrors; an' a'd put bre'ad and salt o' th' flat stouns set oop by th' la'ane side to get a good ha'arvest; an' a'd spill watter i' th' fower co'ner o' th' fields, when a wanted ra'in; ... A can't tell 'ee reetly what they b'leeved; fur 'twor afore ma gran'ther's toime, ... but a reckon tha made nigh iverythin' as they seed 'n heerd into sort o' gre'at bogles; an' tha wor allus gi'un 'um things, or sa'ayin' so't o' prayers loike, to keep um fro' doin' th' fo'ak anny evil.

THE SEASONAL CUSTOMS

Bearing in mind the possible continuity of customary practice, I have attempted to assess the strength of the evidence for seasonal customs found in the stories by comparing with studies of Lincolnshire folklore made in more recent times. Maureen Sutton bases much of her work on oral accounts and her book *Lincolnshire Calendar* is a good source for 20th century folklore and beliefs relating to the annual cycle.

In exploring the ritual customs included in the stories, I shall start in the spring, in the month of March. Whilst no evidence has yet been found to back the type of sacrifice included within the "Tiddy Mun" story, where offerings were made to the water at the time of the New Moon, at the time of the Vernal equinox, the Trent has an equinox tide known as the Aegir and Sutton found an informant who remembered how in the 1920s, when he was a boy he would throw a piece of silver into the River as "a toll fee to prevent you from ever drowning ..." (Sutton 1997: 40). She also found that animal sacrifice was still practised in the Gainsborough area within living memory. "It was said that the River Trent was a greedy river and would take seven lives a year, so in March when many of the lambs were born a farmer would sacrifice to the river a cade or weak lamb." Her informant believed that by his action a human life would be spared (Sutton 1997: 35).

In "The Green Mist" the girl wished to live long enough to carry out a spring- time ritual to wake the earth and to see the cowslips bloom. The sick girl was simply taken to the door where she crumbled bread and salt on to the earth and said the strange old words of welcoming to the new spring, but other ritual activity at this time of year is described elsewhere in the story. The people who believed in the old ways would go to every field and lift a spadeful of earth while speaking a charm. Sutton found that at the time of the Vernal equinox at Swineshead, it was once

> the custom for farmers to throw four clods of earth across the field to wake the sleeping spirits in the earth... Ebenezer Wilson used to do it. He'd throw a clod to each corner of the field. The four corners were to represent the north, south, east and west, but strictly speaking, by throwing into the corners it didn't make it quite right, he should have thrown from the middle, forwards, backwards, left and right (Sutton 1997: 40).

The narrative of "The Green Mist" pays special attention to the emergence and flowering of cowslips in the spring, and makes an identification between a girl and a cowslip, and it is clear from other sources that cowslips were regarded as special flowers which had magical potency. Rudkin recorded how, at Bishops Norton, "Old

Tetty used to put on her pattens, on the 13th of May, and walk two miles to a certain field to gather cowslips – these she used to make into a ball, or into balls, and throw over her cottage" (Rudkin 1933: 286). Sutton enquired further about the making of these balls and found that the cowslips "were sewn together underneath the head of the flower" until "enough were sewn together to form a ball" (Sutton 1999: 26). Sutton had been told by an old lady from Thimbleby near Horncastle, that the ritual of throwing the balls over the cottages was to get the sun to "buck its ideas up". The cottages were very small mud-and-stud thatched constructions.[1] Rudkin found that Tetty used to recite some rhyme while she did the throwing, but her informant could not remember what it was and did not know what Tetty thought she would gain by this observance. In Gainsborough it was believed that if you hung "a bunch of cowslips in the cowshed on May morning it will keep the witches away" (Sutton 1997: 105).

The evidence of offerings of the first of the harvest in "The Stranger's Share" has not yet been supported by folkloric evidence, but Sutton has found that around the time of Midsummer's Eve people would put out "a thimbleful of frumenty for the fairies ... near the back door ... for a few nights running" (Sutton 1997: 134). "The Green Mist" includes mention of singing "hushieby songs" in the fields in the autumn evenings (p. 261) and conversations between Sutton and elderly Lincolnshire farmers have led her to believe this may have occurred. Moving on to winter, a wise woman in "The Dead Moon" advises the people to put a pinch of salt, a straw and a button on the door sill for protection on dark nights (p. 162). Sutton found that at Coningsby on New Year's Eve a family "used to put out on the window sill, a piece of silver, a piece of coal and a bit of wood. This was to ensure good luck for the following year". They believed that "the silver would see you alright for money, the coal would bring good luck, and the bit of wood would keep you in fuel" (Sutton 1997: 230). Similarly, at Gainsborough people would "put bread out, to make sure you'd have something to eat all year ... if you took a piece of wood into the house, you wouldn't take a piece out in the New Year, in other words you won't be taking a coffin out" (Sutton 1997: 230). The "Green Mist" story includes mention of pouring wine on the door sill at cock crow to bring good luck in the New Year (p. 260) but no evidence has yet been found to support this.

Whilst it will probably never be possible to come to a firm conclusion as to the origins of the stories in the Balfour collection, it is likely that they were told by natural oral storytellers who had been born and bred in the Carrs in a time before literacy became widespread and rationalism took hold. The customs mentioned in them have similarities with those known from other Lincolnshire sources, but sometimes appear in distinctive forms that it has not been possible to authenticate through comparison with outside sources.

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Note

1 Information from Mrs Maureen Sutton given in an interview with the author at her home in Waddington, near Lincoln, on 15th September 2009.

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A "Women's Liturgical Year": The Role of Food in the Construction of Ordinary Time, Fast and Feast in Karelia

MARJA-LIISA KEINÄNEN

ABSTRACT. *This paper shows how food and cooking contributed to the construction and embodiment of time in pre-modern Russian Orthodox Karelia. It examines the ways in which food imbued the different time units – ordinary time, fast and feast – with religious meaning. The liturgical calendar provided the basic structure for the ritual year and stipulated the dietary rules, but it was women who put the church regulations into practice at the household level. Women, in their role as cooks, also upheld the God-created order and safeguarded the salvation of their family members.*

KEYWORDS: *calendric year, Lent, food, religion, women, Orthodox Church, Karelia*

INTRODUCTION

Even though the liturgical calendar in the hands of the male priests provided the basic structure for the ritual year and stipulated the dietary rules, it was women who put the church regulations into practice and brought into the home the ideas and practices advocated by the Church. In this paper, I will examine the symbolic role which food played in the construction of the ritual calendar in pre-modern Russian Orthodox Karelia. The rotation of fast days, non-fasting days and holy days structured time at a fundamental level. The weekly cycle was divided into ordinary weekdays (*arki*) and days of fast (*pyhä*) (Wednesday and Friday), which commemorated Christ's suffering. The week ended on the holy day of Sunday, which commemorated the Resurrection. The annual calendric cycle was divided into corresponding temporal units, with four periods of ordinary time (*arki*) and four fasts of different lengths.

When putting the dietary regulations into practice women thereby domesticated[1] the ideas and practices advocated by the Church. Since

these regulations were essentially religious and were intimately linked to the liturgical calendar, cooking can be seen as a ritual and religious activity (cf. Sered 1992: 87-8). Since women controlled food and were in charge of food preparation they can be seen as "the agents for ritual and religious knowledge" concerning diet and cooking (Counihan 2004: 5). Because food played a central role in various kinds of rituals which women were in charge of in Karelia, we could view food as a female religious symbol. Food stood at the centre of rites of passage, such as childbed gatherings, baptismal feasts, marriage celebrations and funerals. It was a central element in religious feasts as well as in the commemoration of deceased family members and in women's practice of charity.

In this study of how the food and cooking under the control of women contributed to the construction and embodiment of time in Russian Orthodox Karelia, I will draw on folkloristic archive materials[2] as well as ethnographical publications, roughly covering the period 1880–1940.

FOOD AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF TIME IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Nancy Munn has asserted that we must be wary of reducing the concept of time to nothing more than a catalogue of temporal reference points or as a means of measuring duration. Since we are not only situated in time and space but also construct time and space through social action, she advocates a practice-oriented view of time. Practice-oriented scholars see action as "a symbolic (meaningful and meaning-forming) process in which people ongoingly produce both themselves as spatiotemporal beings and the space-time of their wider world" (Munn 1992: 102, 105-6). At the concrete level of everyday life, food was the central symbolic marker that not only distinguished the various temporal units from one another, but also served as a medium in the very production and embodiment of time.

As Mary Douglas has shown, food and meals structure time at a fundamental cultural level. According to her findings, the variety and quantity of food permitted on any given occasion correspond to the time of the day, the day of the week, and the festival season of the year (Douglas 1984: 15). An analysis of the semantics of Karelian time and food terminology indeed reveals that there was an intimate connection between the type and quantity of food on the one hand,

and time, on the other. The noun *arki* denoted a non-fast day or a non-fast period, but also designated ordinary, non-fasting food (KKS 1: 66-7). Besides denoting "holy" the noun *pyhä*, also meant 1) a fast, 2) a holy day, i.e. Sunday, which nevertheless was not a fast day, as well as 3) the Eucharist, where the central element was the communion meal (KKS 4: 556-7).

In the following, I will examine how women produced different types of time units by regulating the variety and the quantity of food and how food contributed to the embodiment of religious meaning.

THE PRODUCTION BY WOMEN THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF FOOD OF TIMES IMBUED WITH RELIGIOUS MEANING

The continuous alternation of *arki*, fast, and holy days constituted time that can be seen as one of the basic buildings blocks of the God-created cosmic order. It was feared that failure to fast or observe holy days would lead to a collapse of this order, which therefore was protected by strong taboos. Breaking the fast during Lent, especially on Good Friday, was considered to be an "unpardonable" sin.[3] In the strongly dualistic thinking that, according to Heretz, characterised popular Russian Orthodoxy – and, as far as I can see, also Karelian vernacular religion – fasting became a demonstration of one's piety and allegiance to God. Those who ate non-fast food were not only seen as defying God, but were considered to be guilty of joining forces with the Devil and his legions (Heretz 1997: 72-5).[4]

Since the observance of fasts was assumed to be crucial to one's salvation, it was women's responsibility to make sure that household members did not jeopardise their fate in the afterlife by consuming forbidden substances. The *arki–pyhä* dichotomy controlled the detailed organisation of the daily household chores. Ordinary foods had to be kept apart from *pyhä* foods, and even the utensils used for their preparation and the bowls used for their storage were kept separate. Since meat and dairy products were banned during a fast, oils and fats were the main elements in distinguishing *arki* from *pyhä* food. When cooking, women had to be constantly aware of the nature of the period of time in order to use the right type of fat and oil. They made ordinary butter from cream, while "fast butter" was usually made from pressed linseed. Ordinary porridge was boiled in milk and was served with milk and butter while, during a fast, *pyhä* porridge

was cooked and eaten without milk and butter. Milk and butter were often replaced by fish fat or water mixed with crushed berries. Milk and butter were used in baking *arki* bread, buns or pasties, while *pyhä* bread was baked and smeared with oil. Depending on the period, pasties were stuffed with an *arki* or *pyhä* filling.[5] Milk that could not be consumed during a fast was processed, for instance into cheese cakes which were eaten after the fast (Virtaranta 1958: 231). I will focus on Lent and Easter in order to examine in greater detail and in a wider context how food was used to structure time and embody religious meaning.

LENT AND EASTER

Lent was a period of corporal and spiritual preparation for the celebration of Easter. Through the Lenten fast, which recapitulated the events of the Passion, people became spiritually and bodily involved in Christ's suffering. This involvement was materialised by abstaining from certain kinds of food and – ideally – from sexual intercourse. In order to understand more deeply the symbolic meanings of Lenten food, we have to study it in the wider context of the annual *arki–pyhä* cycle. Great Lent was preceded by *pyhäkeski*, the *arki* period that started at Christmas and was a season of excess and merriment. *Pyhäkeski* was a popular wedding period, whereas weddings, birthday celebrations and memorial feasts were not permitted during Great Lent or Passion Week (Valmo 1935: 259). The diet of *pyhäkeski* was characterised by a great variety and quantity of food, at least in contrast to the frugal diet of Lent diet that expressed self-denial and piety. The more pious a person was the more strict her/his fasting. Within the Lenten period, variations in the type and quantity of food could reflect the special religious significance of a particular day or week.

Lent implied a gradual eschewing of meat and dairy products. On certain days and weeks even fish was forbidden. Since meat was given up after "meatfare", the Sunday eight weeks before Easter, meat dishes dominated the meatfare day menu. Hence, an exceptional variety and quantity of meat dishes distinguished the meatfare breakfast, lunch, and dinner from ordinary Sunday meals.

"Milkfare" on the Sunday a week after meatfare was the next step in the gradual transition in the Lenten diet. The week between

meatfare and milkfare was a period of merriment (Sauhke 1971: 437). Besides extreme merry-making and various kinds of work taboos, the diet also set this week apart from ordinary *arki* weeks as well as from Lent. Meat was already excluded from the diet, but milk products were permitted even on the usual, weekly fast days (Sauhke 1971: 431-3). In Salmi region, pancakes and "boiled pasties" (*keitinpiiraat*) were popular foods during this week.[6] Since milkfare was the last day when milk and dairy products were consumed before Easter, the menu of milkfare, besides a variety of fish courses, naturally consisted of a number of milk dishes.

After the feasting of "milk week", Lent started on Clean Monday. With no fresh fish available, Lenten fare in Karelia largely consisted of salted or dried fish, cereals such as gruel and porridges, bread, and different kinds of pasties. Turnips, swedes, potatoes, cabbage, and black radishes, prepared in a variety of ways, were common Lenten foods. Root crops and vegetables, as well as salted or dried mushrooms and conserved berries replaced fish when fish was forbidden.[7] Lenten pasties were usually filled with fish, cabbage, or slices of the vegetables mentioned above. Another popular Lenten dish was *imel'* or *idu*, a porridge made of flour sweetened through fermentation. A stock of flour mixed with cold water was eaten with bread on days when fish was forbidden. It was not unusual that just bread with some salt on it was served instead of a meal during a fast.[8]

During the first week of Great Lent fasting was quite severe, comparable to the Great Week. The severity of these two weeks was coupled to Christ's suffering that had been greatest during these two weeks. Ideally, food should have been restricted to bread and water.[9] During the following two weeks, fasting was lighter. The fourth week in mid Lent was called in Karelian "cross bread" week (*ristileipänetäli*), and was again a precious week when fasting was harder and even fish was forbidden.[10] On Thursday women baked "cross bread". The ways the bread was baked as well as its subsequent ritual uses varied locally. A common practice seems to have been to bake three loaves. Sometimes they were to be baked of three different kinds of cereals: one of barley, one of rye and one of wheat. A cross was made on the top of the loaf either of strips of dough or by imprinting an image of a cross with the edge of a holy icon. Most of this bread was saved in the Great Corner or in a bin of grain until the spring sowing or/and the day when the cattle were let

out. Thus, the cross bread played an important part in the agrarian fertility magic. Children also carried cross-bread to their godparents.

Great week, when Christ's suffering culminated, was again a precious week – a week of intense prayer and fasting. Those who for one reason or another did not observe the whole of Lent at least fasted during this week. The week started on Palm Sunday, which was a precious holy day, in Karelia also known as Birch Sunday. The services of this week recapitulated the events of the Passion and people partook in Christ's suffering by consuming a minimum of food and by refraining from all sorts of joy. On Great Friday suffering reached its peak and the ideal was a complete fast. In practice the degree of fasting was related to each individual's piety. Old people, especially women, fasted harder.[11] All kinds of work, such as spinning, grinding, mashing and washing, were prohibited.[12]

Easter saw a dramatic shift from the atmosphere of suffering into one of joyful celebration of the Resurrection. After weeks of self-denial, the fast was broken on Easter morning. Quite naturally, food was a central element in Easter celebrations and the diet distinguished Easter week from ordinary *arki* weeks in several ways. First of all, no weekly fast days were observed. Secondly, the variety and the quantity of food made during this week was exceptional. People indulged themselves as a compensation for the long fast: "On Easter day you have to eat seven times for the fast of seven weeks."[13]

Even though the variety and order of dishes was pretty much the same at all feasts, each religious feast had some characteristic course that distinguished it from others. Easter, the most important holiday in the Orthodox calendar, was set apart from other holidays by the exceptional variety of dishes and the quantity of food. Women baked the best of pasties for Easter. The eggs, milk and cream that had been stored away during Lent were used for Easter delicacies. In some areas, the fast was broken by eating eggs, while in some other areas it was broken by eating a kind of cheese cake (*siiroa*), which was a typical Easter dish.

Cooking and baking for a holy day were distinguished from ordinary, everyday cooking and baking by means of ritualisation. Firstly, sacred cooking was differentiated from ordinary cooking by the extraordinary point of time at which it was to be done. Christmas baking was done in the early morning after midnight mass, while Easter baking had to be finished on Easter Eve, since work was prohibited on Easter Day. "Baking on Easter was a sin" (Virtaranta

1958: 220). Secondly, a small change in the working routines sufficed to distinguish sacred cooking from ordinary, everyday cooking and some minute changes in routines could distinguish the cooking for different holy feasts from each other.

The prohibition on using a rolling pin distinguished Easter baking from baking for other holy days. This proscription was grounded in sacred narratives that referred to Christ's suffering or to the Virgin Mary's food preparations on Easter morning. According to one tale, neither sieves nor rolling pins were used at Easter because they were the very instruments with which Christ had been tormented.[14] In Northern Karelia the prohibition on rolling *sultšina* pasties and boiling meat at Easter was explained by reference to the Virgin. Mary, whose son according to this narrative had gone missing, had been cooking hazel hen and baking pasties on Easter morning, when, all of the sudden, the hazel hen flew out of the cooking pot and the rolling pin she was holding in her hand broke: "That's why we were not allowed to roll *sultšina*s on Easter day. Old people said that it was a sin. Cooking meat was also prohibited on that day, Easter day. That was the rule!" (Virtaranta 1958: 220-1). In Olonets, women referred to Mary's interrupted baking on Easter morning, when explaining why they baked rolls for Easter instead of pasties.[15] The ban on using a rolling pin limited the choice of pasties that were standard festive food in Karelia. Women baked pasties for Easter that did not need rolling (Virtaranta 1958: 587-8).

It may be noted as a point of interest outside the unfolding of the liturgical year that a slight difference in baking method could also distinguish the pasty baked for the spirits of ancestors from that baked for the living. The pasty that was baked for the commemoration feast was rolled anticlockwise unlike the ordinary pastry that was rolled clockwise.[16] During the cooking process, the food reserved for the dead was kept apart from the food intended for the living.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this paper I argued that food was a particular, feminine symbol, because it was a resource controlled by women and a central element in rituals dominated by women. Even though the liturgical calendar of the Church laid out the dietary regulations, it was women as culinary experts who put the regulations into practice

and accommodated them creatively to the local conditions. As cooks women also upheld the God-created order which stipulated that *arki* was eaten on *arki* days and *pyhä* on *pyhä* days, and in this sense, safeguarded even the salvation of their family members.

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Notes

1 I have borrowed the term "domestication" and its specific usage in the work of Susan Sered who among other things refers to women's reinterpretation and accommodation of the church's teachings into a domestic setting (Sered 1992: 10).

2 Folklore Archives at the Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki, Finland = FA.

3 Viena Karelia: Santtu Marttinen FA 1926, IV, b-osa, p. 47.

4 Viena Karelia: Santtu Marttinen, ibid.

5 Salmi: Martta Pelkonen FA 1935 E126:134.

6 Salmi: Martta Pelkonen FA 1935 E126:122.

7 Salmi: Martta Pelkonen FA 1935 E126:132.

8 Salmi: Martta Pelkonen FA 1935 E126:62–65, 76.

9 Vuonninen: Samuli Paulaharju FA 1932:18239.

10 Salmi: Ulla Mannonen < Martta Kuha (50 yrs); FA 1938:11078.

11 Vuonninen: Samuli Paulaharju FA 1915:18249.

12 Vuonninen: Samuli Paulaharju, ibid.

13 Ilomantsi: I. Manninen FA 1916:742.

14 Salmi: Pekka Pohjanvalo FA 1936:51.

15 Vieljärvi: A. Railonsala < Tarja Bottarev; FA 1947:3595.

16 Salmi: Martta Pelkonen FA 1935 E126: 141.

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The Celtic Year and Gender

EMILY LYLE

ABSTRACT. *The Irish year is divided in quarters, with "true" quarter days on 1 November, 1 February, 1 May and 1 August and the eves of these days. I argue that the winter half of the year between 1 November and 1 May is a "male" half with a stronger link to the sacred than a "female" summer half which relates to fertility. I also suggest a relationship between the four seasons of the year and four periods in the life of people of both genders.*

KEYWORDS: *calendar, Celtic, gender, life-cycle, summer, winter*

I shall argue that we can distinguish two overall patterns relating to gender in the Celtic year, one concerning moieties of time and space that can be distinguished symbolically as "male" and "female", although there would be people of both genders related to them, and the other concerning the biological males and females in the society as they move through their life cycles in correspondence with the annual round.

In seeing these possible interpretations of the Celtic year, I am able to place it comfortably within the general Indo-European context. However, the Celtic year has a number of unique features, and one feature that makes it highly valuable for symbolic exploration is its strong marking of transition festivals at key points in the year. Although there are currently considerable divergences of opinion about the interpretation of the year structure, there is complete consensus on the importance of a quarter system resting on the four points that can be expressed, in terms of the modern calendar, as 1 November, 1 February, 1 May and 1 August and the eves of these days. The sections of the year with divisions at these points are called the "true quarters" (*ráthaí fírinneacha* in Irish) and these are the four seasons. There is also complete consensus on the existence of another set of four days that lie between them which mark out the "crooked quarters" (*ráthaí cama*) of the year. As articulated by the Irish tradition-bearer, Seán Ó Conaill, in the early twentieth century (Ó Duilearga 1981), the two sets are:

THE TRUE QUARTERS OF THE YEAR		
A quarter from Lúnasa to Samhain,	1 August to	1 November
A quarter from Samhain to St. Brigid's Day,	1 November to	1 February
A quarter from St Brigid's Day to Bealthaine,	1 February to	1 May
A quarter from Bealthaine to Lúnasa.	1 May to	1 August
THE CROOKED QUARTERS OF THE YEAR		
A quarter from St John's Day to St Michael's Day,	24 June to	29 September
A quarter from St Michael's Day to Christmas,	29 September to	25 December
A quarter from Christmas to St Patrick's Day,	25 December to	17 March
A quarter from St Patrick's Day to St John's Day.	17 March to	24 June

It has been recognised that the festival days named in the second set correspond roughly to the solstice and equinox points.

Caoimhin Ó Danachair, the author of the influential book, *The Year in Ireland*, commented in an early article, after surveying the evidence on the true quarters from folk tradition and the older literature, that "the older Irish system of time reckoning was based upon a year divided into four equal quarters or seasons, each heralded and signalised by a great festival" (1959: 55). He later claimed that this four-season calendar predated the early Celts in Ireland (1982: 222):

> Thus we may conclude that the four-season calendar of modern Irish tradition is of very high antiquity, even of late neolithic or megalithic origin, and that its beginnings predate the early Celts in Ireland by at least as great a depth of time as that which separates those early Celts from us.

This deep diachronic perspective on the Irish calendar has had considerable appeal. Gearóid Ó Crualaoich, in a recent discussion of

gender in relation to the quarterings of the year in Ireland (2008: 9-11), contrasts the two sequences of 1) true quarters and 2) crooked quarters, saying that we can see "how the indigenous [pre-Celtic] calendar [1] is oriented to the rhythms of earth; the incomer calendar [2] to the rhythms of sky". This idea of a relatively late fusion of two separate calendars functioning differently is also present in the work of Sylvie Muller, who contrasts an Irish rural lunisolar calendar with a Christian city solar one (Muller 2000). I argue, however, that the Celtic eight-fold year need not be interpreted as a late composite but could stem from an ancient Indo-European construction, which contained both "fixed" and "spinning" components. Every member of the Indo-European family of cultures can be expected to have made calendrical modifications in prehistoric times, and we would not anticipate finding identically shaped structures. We can aim, through the variety of calendrical solutions on offer, to penetrate to the core of the symbolic organisation of time, although it must be said that this cannot be fully grasped without an understanding of the total cosmology, which still eludes us.

THE FIXED STRUCTURE WITH "MALE" AND "FEMALE" HALVES

Although there is a clear "true quarters" system, as discussed above, there is also a clear (and fully recognised) division into summer and winter halves (each containing two of these quarters) with the division points falling at 1 May and 1 November. In terms of Celtic spatio-temporal cosmology, as studied by Rees and Rees (1961: 100-3, 122-4), the two "lower" provinces of Ireland – Leinster and Munster – are in the summer half and the two "upper" provinces of Connacht and Ulster are in the winter half (see Fig. 1a), and I now consider that these identifications are the correct ones,[1] and also that the equivalences winter = above and summer = below are of Indo-European extent. Since we have a top and bottom of a diagram, this spatial component can be directly reflected in the visual image which shows the winter and summer halves respectively above and below a horizontal line.

In accordance with a universal, or well-nigh universal, association of the male with the above and the female with the below, this pattern gives a gender equivalence of winter = male and summer = female. In Ireland, there are traces of this association, as N. B. Aitchison has

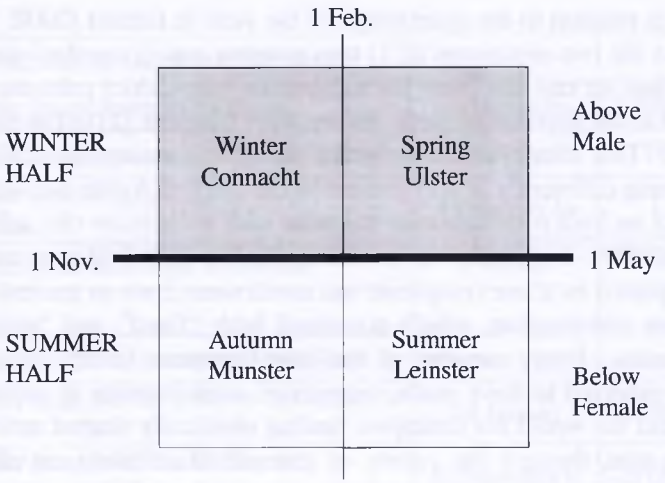

Fig. 1a

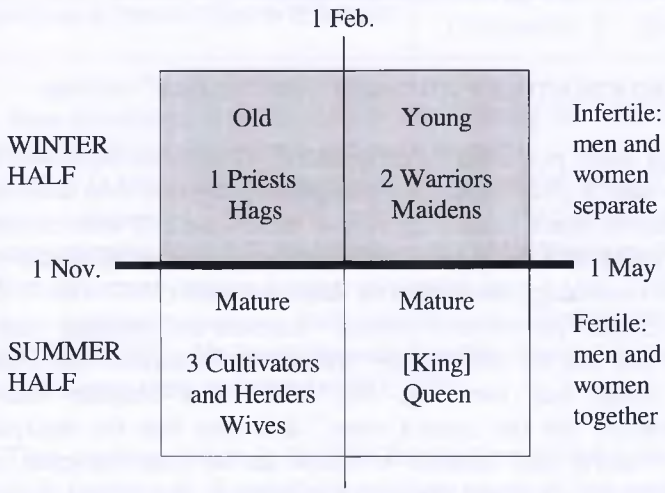

Fig. 1b

discussed. He has shown, for example, that Armagh as a male religious centre in the north is contrasted with Kildare, a female religious centre in the south (1994: 264-5). This connects the male with the winter (and so the dark) half of the year, which upsets my previous impression that

the male would be connected with the bright side of a bright/dull polarity (Lyle 1995). We can be fairly sure that the whole system is a male construction and accordingly that the more highly valued side will be connected with the male, and, if the dark is the more highly valued, it was probably because it was regarded as sacred while the less highly valued side allotted to the female was regarded as mundane. The summer and autumn, that bring warmth and growth and the prosperity at harvest, have clearly much to offer the community and certainly cannot be dismissed as valueless, but it appears that in the overall scheme these things relate to the mundane and the female and, in relative terms, are less highly valued than the male contribution.

Georges Dumézil's initial Indo-European trifunctional theory (Littleton 1982), which placed a fully male half consisting of 1) the sacred = priests and 2) physical force = warriors in opposition to a half with female associations consisting of 3) fertility = cultivators and herders, fits well with the above/below "fixed" aspect of the present model (see Fig. 1b) and I suggest that the "spinning" aspect of the model (Fig. 2) can be illuminated by a fairly recent development of Dumézil's theory which I discuss in the next section.

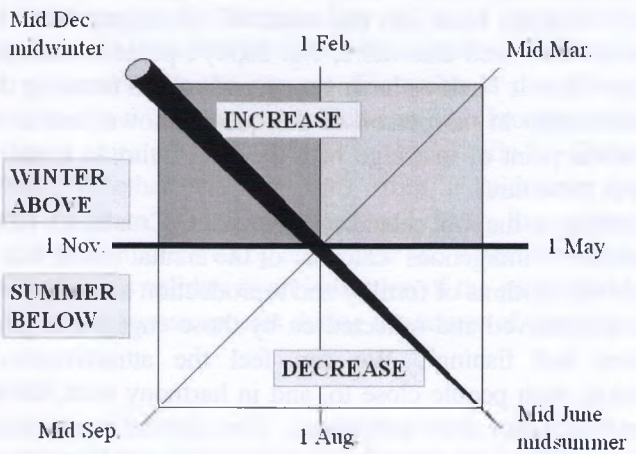

Fig. 2

THE SPINNING YEAR CORRESPONDING TO PARALLEL MALE AND FEMALE LIFE CYCLES

A major shift in the perception of the Dumézilian three functions has come about through Kim McCone's insightful observation that they might have less to do with social groups than with age-stages in a posited prehistoric age-grade society. When I followed up on this idea and studied the age-grade pastoral societies of East Africa, it became apparent that a major transition took place when a man entered into the mature stage of potential fatherhood through marriage and that this transition could be paralleled by his departure from the mature stage later in life when it was no longer considered appropriate for him to father children (Lyle 1997). We need not posit a society organised in quite such a tight way to see that the year cycle can be matched with aspects of the life cycle as shown in Figure 1b, which shows the young men, mature men and old men in terms of the occupations which relate this scheme to Dumézil's initial system.

The interesting point about the schema, as regards gender, is that both males and females partake of the entire cycle, with maidens paralleling young men (warriors; Dumézil's second function), wives paralleling mature men (cultivators and herders; Dumézil's third function) and hags paralleling old men (priests; Dumézil's first function). I cannot enter into the matter of sovereignty here, but in the diagram (as discussed elsewhere, e.g. 2007) I point to a single quarter within the "female" half as having a special role in focusing the female aspect of society in the person of the queen, shown here as the bride placed at the point of marriage with the king (who, in terms of space, belongs in the centre).

Reflecting on the folk calendar in Ireland, Ó Crualaoich (2008: 9-10) says that the " 'indigenous' calendar of the annual round was based on the perceived rhythms of fertility and reproduction associated with earth and sea as observed and reflected on by those engaged in pastoralism, agriculture and fishing". We can feel the attractiveness of this formulation, with people close to, and in harmony with, the earth and sea from which they draw sustenance. The calendar is not extraneous to people's everyday concerns. But it can be suggested that the calendar is even more internalised than this. It is human-created and human-

centred and probably the most important thing for people, and certainly one of the most important, is the human life-cycle.

Muller also stresses the natural world but at one point gives a clear indication of the homology with human life (2000: 173):

> It is the superimposition of the three life cycles, of moon, plant and man, that makes it possible for the dead to meet the unborn, in the dark womb-tomb of a winter's night, and for the dead to feed the gestation of the unborn and to transmit to them the power of life.

Her diagrams of gestation, growth, maturity and fall corresponding to winter, spring, summer and autumn, are quite in keeping with the life-cycle model discussed here, and, without engaging with the intricacies of her formulations about the solar and lunisolar year, we can adopt her views on the winter transition corresponding to human death-and-birth. The death period can be placed at the winter solstice, one of the crooked-quarter markers, in any calendar that has an undoubted stress on a ritually marked twelve-day period at midwinter, and it is shown in this way in Figure 2 by the line that has a single point at the culmination at midsummer but has an expanded presence covering a whole period at midwinter. Muller has demonstrated that, in the Irish context, the period between Samhain and St Martin's Day (1 to 11 November) can be treated as a special time comparable to the midwinter twelve days, and the point of interest for the present discussion is that this time lies entirely within the winter quarter which can be a broader statement of the idea that is more precisely present in the specific 11-12 day period (Lyle 2008). Whether the line runs from a midwinter period to midsummer or from 1-11 November to 1 May, the concept of an increase and growth followed by a decrease and withering is still present and it is this that has validity as an indication of the path taken by males and females of the human species during the course of their lives.

Conclusion

Both the above/below polarity and the increase to decrease sequence in the calendar relate to gender. The first relates to it through a direct contrast of a "male" winter half and a "female" summer half. The

genders are complementary with male above and female below. The second presents males and females in parallel in a pattern of growth and decay. The whole of the year is permeated with both genders (as individual men and women) under the different aspects of their lives and we can expect to find the specific roles they played in society at the various life-stages being reflected in customs embedded in the seasons of the year, with the inevitable fact of death being given recognition in the winter quarter.

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Note

1 I earlier argued (Lyle 1990: 80) on the basis of a single instance – a royal circuit made by Diarmait mac Cerbaill – that the southern provinces were connected with winter and the northern ones with summer. I now think that this evidence is insufficient to weigh against the general picture.

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The Neo-Pagan Ritual Year and Gender

JENNY BUTLER

ABSTRACT. *This paper deals with the gendered roles of participants in particular neo-pagan rituals connected to the ritual year. In neo-pagan worldview, there are many parallels between the life cycle and the seasonal progression or "Wheel of the Year". Within neo-pagan cosmology, the individual human life cycle is understood as meaningful when viewed as a microcosm of wider cycles that exist in the universe. These cosmic forces are often themselves interpreted as gendered: gods, goddesses, male and female spirits can all be interpreted as gendered personifications of the divine.*

KEYWORDS: *neo-pagan, paganism, nature religion, Celtic mythology, magical worldview*

This paper deals with the neo-pagan[1] view of the relationship between the ritual year cycle, gender, and the celebration of phases of the human life cycle. Contemporary Pagans view their own lives in the context of various cycles: that of the ritual year, the moon's phases and the ecological progression of birth, death and new life as well as symbolic cycles. The comprehension of the seasonal cycle, and the myths associated with each festival, is echoed in personal mythologies of individual neo-pagans in regard to the development of their personal lives. Neo-pagans order their lives in terms of cycles, whether these are seasonal, lunar, solar, corporal (for women, particularly the menstrual cycle), or the all-embracing metaphor of birth-death-rebirth, which features prominently in neo-pagan literature and discourse. "Rebirth" can be taken to mean a physical regeneration of plant or animal life or a symbolic renewal or it can refer to the concept of reincarnation. For neo-pagans, life is regulated according to these circular rhythms and metaphors. Individuals' experiences and ordinary happenings are related to the symbolic cycles of life and the two dimensions are inextricably linked in neo-pagan worldview. It must be stressed that there is a plurality of forms of neo-paganism, often referred to by insiders as "paths" or

"traditions"[2] and within each tradition, there is a multiplicity of views across individuals.

GENDER IN NEO-PAGAN COSMOLOGY

Gender polarity is central both symbolically, in terms of how gods and goddesses are conceptualised, and practically in terms of how ritual groups are organised and how rituals are performed in relation to the roles of male and female participants. For some Pagans, there is a duality: a god and goddess while others hold polytheistic beliefs and venerate different gods and goddesses as distinct supernatural beings. Even where the practitioner holds polytheist or pantheist beliefs, it is common to find dual gender categorisations in references to "the god and goddess" or "lord and lady". Although there is belief in and veneration of both gods and goddesses, there is still a penchant for "The Goddess" symbol; "although Pagans do claim to seek a balance, and although many will teach that the masculine and the feminine are of equal importance, the emphasis is often placed very firmly on 'the Great Goddess' and the feminine" (Partridge 2004: 270). There is rejection of the patriarchal monotheisms to be found in Christianity, Islam and other world religions. Despite this cosmological emphasis on the divine feminine in some sectors of neo-paganism, neo-paganism must be distinguished from "Goddess Religion", which is more commonly associated with feminist witchcraft[3] and the New Age movement. On the whole, neo-pagan cosmology is inclusive of male and female divinity and cosmic energies. Within neo-pagan culture a man professing to be a "goddess worshipper" is not unusual. As has been mentioned above, there is an emphasis on the Mother Goddess figure but even so the female is not an exclusive divinity: "neo-pagan religions usually focus on female deities, particularly a Great Mother Goddess, although ordinarily not to the exclusion of male deities, such as a pre-Christian image of a horned god" (Jorgensen and Russell 1999: 327). The "Horned God" is a figure that features in different neo-pagan traditions and his horns are associated with animals such as the bull and the ram and with the crescent shape of the moon:

> The Horned God is the consort of the Goddess and represents the male principle of the supreme deity. He is the lord of the woodlands, the hunt, and animals. He is also associated with death, the underworld, sexuality, vitality, logic, and power [...] the Horned God personifies the sun, in contrast to the Goddess's moon, with whom he alternates in ruling the fertility cycle of birth-death-rebirth (Lewis 1999: 146).

As shown here, the fertility cycle extends to the symbolic roles of divine beings. The life cycle of particular deities is viewed by many neo-pagans as being tripartite. There are three phases of the goddess's life cycle, namely maiden, mother and crone, mirroring the waxing, full and waning phases of the moon respectively. These three phases of maiden, mother and crone are paralleled to the life cycle of real flesh-and-blood women. In the case of the male deity, the phases are young "seeker" god, consort of the goddess and old father-god and correspondingly the lives of flesh-and-blood men are understood as following similar phases of young male in a time of learning, husband/partner and old age.

There is an embracement of both male and female divinity in relation to neo-pagan discourse, artwork and other forms of expression; there is also an emphasis in neo-pagan worldview that male and female are of equal importance. There is a conceptual distinction between the divine as deity and the divine as spiritual essence within a human being. There is a differentiation between the divine as immanent or indwelling in nature and the deities as distinct from this world in that they are separate entities that exist independently of human life, but both concepts are commonly held concurrently by neo-pagans.

Rather than the focus being on the physical, biological sex of an individual, there is more attention paid to aspects of gender, often referred to as "energies", within practitioners; for example, a man can identify with particular aspects of goddess energy or the "divine feminine" and a woman can connect with the "divine masculine". Gender polarization can therefore be in reference to the gender division within each individual and is thus ideologically inclusive of different gender identities and individualism as regards self-concepts of masculinity or femininity and of personal sexuality.

GENDER ROLES IN RITUAL PRACTICE

In mainstream culture, there is the popular notion that witches are women and druids are men while within neo-pagan culture, Witches can be male or female and likewise Druids can be either sex. The majority of magical groups have both male and female members unless they are specifically all-female or all-male groups[4]. Discussing the tradition of Druidry, Graham Harvey states that: "gender plays a minimal role in allocating roles or recognition of rank or ability in most contemporary Druid orders. Membership, too, seems fairly evenly balanced between men and women" (2004: 278). I have found this to be the case with Irish Druid groups or "Groves" as they are termed and with organisations such as the Hibernian Order of Druids (HOOD) (see further Butler 2005). In fact, the members of HOOD reject the term "druidess" because they feel it is a Victorian imposition on the word and liken it to "poetess"; the general feeling is that, since women are as capable of fulfilling their spiritual obligations as men are, the word "druidess" is rather demeaning.

Wiccan covens generally have an equal number of men and women in the belief that there should be a balance of masculine and feminine energies within any given ritual. Gardnerian[5] Wiccan covens have more rigid gender roles and rituals fixated on the union of male and female energies. The basic concept of this has its basis in the Jungian theoretical complementarities between femininity and masculinity. Wiccans become clergy-members on their initiation[6] into a coven i.e. the neophyte practitioner becomes a priest or priestess of the Wiccan religion. There are different stages or "degrees" of initiation, depending on the kind of coven and there can be a second-degree initiation to High Priest or High Priestess. Another gendered term is "Witch Queen", as one Wiccan High Priestess explains: "A Witch Queen means that I have had more than three covens spring from the one I originally started" (Interview with Alice; see References) and this title has certain status and significance attached to it within Wicca. Each role and status has particular activities and responsibilities associated with it, one example of which is "aspecting", discussed below.

SEASONAL CELEBRATIONS:

The ritual year[7] holds considerable importance for neo-pagans and particular things are done in celebration of the progression of the seasonal cycle or, as neo-pagans term it, "Wheel of the Year[8]" (for an overview of Irish neo-pagan festival celebrations see Butler 2002). The four major festivals mark the beginning of each new season: spring (Imbolc), summer (Bealtaine or May Day), autumn (Lughnasadh) and winter (Samhain). The kinds of ritual activities that take place at each seasonal transition reflect the symbolic importance of that time of year. For example, initiations are often held at Imbolc since it is a time of symbolic newness in that it is a period of new plant growth and new animal life. Handfastings (weddings) may be held on Bealtaine, as this is a time of fertility in the natural world. Another time that is chosen for marriage rituals is the Summer Solstice, which, in neo-pagan cosmology, is the time when the solar god and goddess of the land unite in a "Sacred Marriage" and is accordingly associated with physical union, sexuality and marriage between human couples. Lughnasadh is a time of symbolic harvest and taking stock of one's life and achievements. Samhain is a time of letting go of negativity and an occasion for symbolic sacrifice, normally enacted in ritual as a way of easing the emotional cutting of ties with certain people or activities. The Winter Solstice or Yule is another transitional period, normally associated with gathering together of family and the celebration of close bonds with loved ones. It is also connected to the symbolic rebirth of the sun, as explained by one informant: "[on] Yule, which is the birth of the Sun God, we might do a ritual drama enacting the birth of the Sun God from the Goddess" (Interview with Sarah).

It is interesting to notice how gender identities are expressed and played out at neo-pagan gatherings. Perhaps the most intriguing are gatherings for the purpose of celebrating the festival of Samhain or Halloween (see further Butler 2009). The carnivalesque atmosphere that features in the Halloween festivities of mainstream society features in neo-pagan parties, as does the dress-up factor. Many neo-pagans don costumes and disguises for Samhain merrymaking; often Witches dress up as the witch-figure of popular culture, using symbolism reminiscent of either the crone or "wise woman"

personage or the fantasy witch that is more commonly connected to children's literature and other forms of children's media. In mainstream culture, the witch figure and the event of Halloween go together and neo-pagans sometimes make reference to this in a light-hearted way within the context of their own celebrations. The seasonal festivals are liminal times in which various celebratory performances take place. Samhain is a time of particular mischievousness and a time when imagery can be played with by guising and decorating houses for parties. As Victor Turner states, "liminality may involve a complex sequence of episodes in sacred space-time and may also include subversive and ludic (or playful) events" (Turner 1982: 27). This ludic capacity is evident during Samhain, especially with the conscious frivolousness of using conventional or stereotypical "witch" imagery when one self-identifies as a Witch. Samhain is a time of celebration of the goddess in her "crone" or "hag" aspects, both terms that have been reclaimed and attributed specific meanings within neo-pagan culture; they are used to refer to the goddess in her dark, destructive aspect and also represent the old age phase of human life.

GENDERED "ASPECTING" OF DEITY

At Esbats, which are ritual gatherings of Wiccans that occur on the full moon, there is sometimes a ritual called "drawing down the moon". This is a ritual "through which the High Priestess receives, through invocation, the spirit of the moon goddess and becomes her mortal incarnation. The Goddess is invoked into her by a High Priest using the principle of polarity. As the Goddess incarnate she then delivers a charge, manifesting for the coven members" (Jordan 1998: 60). The "charge" in the context of Wiccan ritual relates to the delivery of commands from the Goddess through the High Priestess.

> The Charge of the Goddess is the most famous and oft misquoted piece of text in Wicca. The Charge of the Goddess was written by Doreen Valiente, who was Gerald Gardner's High Priestess [...] the priest draws down the moon on the High Priestess. The drawing down of the moon is the poetic

> name for invoking the spirit of the goddess into the High Priestess and then the High Priestess delivers the Charge. The Charge is a piece of prose and the High Priestess will then deliver that and just say this to the group and it changes every time. I mean there's a standard set text but it usually changes because there is more coming through because of the spirit of the goddess. And it is something that has to be experienced to be understood to be perfectly honest with you [...] it sounds like it's just a declaration of a piece of text like you would read, but there is more behind it because there is an energy behind it and until you've actually seen that it's hard to imagine it (Interview with Mary).

Some have made references to "drawing down the sun" as an invocation of the god. The purpose of such rituals is for the practitioner to achieve an altered state of consciousness in which they embody deity or allow divine energy to emanate through them. This is a kind of religious possession that is sometimes referred to as "aspecting", where it is believed that "the subject actually embodies a goddess or god in physical form" (Magliocco 2004: 172). The divine energies are often gendered and this shapes the personal awareness of gender identity in ritual contexts. As Susan Greenwood points out, "engaging in magical rituals designed to facilitate contact with the otherworld affects magicians' notions of identity, gender and morality. These areas of magical life illustrate how central the experience of the otherworld is to magical thought" (Greenwood 2000: 1). There are complex connections between an individual's identity and their conceptualisation of the otherworld and associated supernatural beings.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Neo-pagans engage with the world, as all humans do, from an embodied, gendered perspective and their cosmology is comprised of gendered beings and entities. Neo-pagan dialogues, especially in relation to the practice of magic, show that gender is often a significant part of ritual. It is the intention of this article to give some

insight into neo-pagan cosmology and worldview in regard to how gender is significant and to provide at least a rudimentary depiction of how gender roles are understood within ritual contexts. To more fully understand gender in neo-pagan culture, the topic would have to be examined in conjunction with related areas of sexuality and identity-construction; this is a broad subject that deserves a more thorough exploration than space has allowed here[9].

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Notes

1 Insiders describe the movement as "Paganism" and practitioners use the term "Pagan" self-referentially. It is less common for practitioners to use the term "neo-pagan" but from a scholarly standpoint it is useful to employ this term as it helps to avoid confusion between the modern cultural movement and classical and historical paganism in the sense of indigenous religions.

2 My research deals with Irish neo-paganism, particularly the traditions of Wicca, Witchcraft (there are different kinds of neo-pagan witchcraft that are distinct from Wicca) and Druidry. My informants also include those who self-identify as "Pagan" or "earth-based spiritualist", using these labels generically and not associating themselves with a specific neo-pagan path.

3 There are feminist groups of neo-pagan witches also, such as Dianic Wiccan covens, which normally focus their religious worship on the goddess and exclude the god.

4 I can describe only the groups and organisations I have encountered during the course of my fieldwork. It should be noted that although they

do exist in Ireland, I have not sought out women-only or men-only ritual groups of neo-pagans for involvement in my research so I cannot comment on the activities or worldviews of these groups.

5 Gerald Gardner (1884-1964) was the British founder of Wicca as a mystery religion. He set down a system of ritual magic that became known as Gardnerian Wicca. Nowadays, traditions that adhere to the Gardnerian ritual system might be referred to as "British Traditional Wicca" to distinguish them from the many other kinds of Wicca and neo-pagan Witchcraft that follow different ritual structures. In Ireland, there are Gardnerian covens as well as a variety of other Wiccan covens.

6 There are Wiccan practitioners who are "solitaries" and not involved in any groups. One does not have to be initiated to be a Wiccan but usually joining a coven involves being initiated into the chosen ritual group.

7 This paper deals with how Irish neo-pagans celebrate their seasonal festivals. It should be noted that neo-paganism is an international movement and there are interesting parallels and comparisons but also significant differences between neo-paganism as it is found in different socio-geographical contexts.

8 The "Wheel of the Year" passes through eight festivals, which can be divided into four major fire festivals: Samhain on October 31st, Imbolc on February 1st, Bealtaine on May 1st and Lughnasadh on August 1st and the solstices and equinoxes: Spring Equinox on March 21st and Autumn Equinox on September 21st, the Winter Solstice on December 21st and Summer Solstice on June 21st.

9 The author intends to examine this aspect of neo-pagan culture elsewhere.

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This paper draws on information contained in thirty-seven ethnographic interviews conducted between 2001 and 2009. Quotes were taken verbatim from the following:

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Interview with Alice, Third Degree Wiccan High Priestess, 09/01/02.

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Jane Ellen Harrison's "*Eniautos Daimon*"

KAMILA VELKOBORSKÁ

ABSTRACT. *The paper focuses on the analysis of the term* "Eniautos Daimon"*, introduced by a British classical anthropologist Jane Ellen Harrison (1850–1928). The new term was supposed to designate the spirit of the spring renewal of life and replace the term "fertility spirit". Although the term itself was not accepted, some ideas lying behind it are still vital today.*

KEYWORDS: *ritual, sanctity, worship, emotion, renewal,* daimon, *periodicity*

Jane Ellen Harrison (1850-1928) is probably best known as a central figure of the so-called Cambridge Ritualists, a group of scholars including Gilbert Murray, Francis Cornford and A. B. Cook, who put forward the theory of Ritualism, which can be briefly defined as the idea of the primacy of ritual over myth (see Ackerman 1991). There is much more, however, to Harrison's remarkably wide-ranging thought and spiritual outlook than her well-known advocacy of Ritualism, and I have chosen here to discuss her attempt at establishing a new term – *Eniautos Daimon*. I will begin by outlining the intellectual development leading to this remarkable (albeit not altogether successful) attempt (see further Velkoborská 2008).

Very early Jane Harrison realised that there was much more to ancient Greece than the world of Homeric mythology, which represented not (as was then the accepted idea) the beginning but rather the culmination of centuries of ancient Greek religious development. This theory corresponded also with the Ritualist insistence on the pre-eminence of the ritual act over the word which moved the stories depicting life on Olympus into a later stage of the evolution of religion. She had already come up with this idea in 1890 in a book she co-authored with Margaret Verrall, *Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens*. Harrison then worked for over a decade to collect and analyse sufficient (particularly archaeological) material evidence, as well as the evidence of the pre-Olympian origin

of various Greek festivals ostensibly dedicated to Olympians, to support her thesis.

Her first major work, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1903), was very well received by classicists but *Themis: A Study in the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, published nine years later, was not so successful. The reason may perhaps have been that, while *Prolegomena* remained within the precincts of Greek religion, *Themis* went much further. Due to its topic and the method Harrison used (that is, the comparison of specific aspects of Greek religion with those of "primitive" religion), it belongs fully to the realm of anthropology. It also ambitiously offers a general theory of the origins and development of religion. Influenced by the sociological theories of Émile Durkheim, Harrison presents religion as an institution based on *collective emotion*; out of the emotionally intense experience shared collectively arises the idea of a god. To support her thesis, she collected a mass of information about religious activities and rituals from all over the world.

In order to elucidate the meaning of various annual rituals, Harrison felt the need to introduce a new term – the "*Eniautos-Daimon*" – rejecting the terms "vegetation spirit" and "corn spirit" coined by Wilhelm Mannhardt and used by James George Frazer, as inadequate[1] to express the core of the magical worldview and the associated practices of the peasantry. The term, however, proved problematic due to its "faulty construction" since "Greek cannot use the word *eniautos* as an adjective" (Robinson 2002: 227) and thus, it was not generally accepted by the classical community. Harrison was well aware of this linguistic problem but she argued in favour of her terminology nevertheless. She preferred "Eniautos" to "year" because "year" means something "definitely chronological, a precise segment as it were of spatialized time; whereas *Eniautos* ... means a *period* in the etymological sense, a cycle of waxing and waning" (Harrison 2003: 547, italics Harrison's). By using her term, Harrison wanted to express an idea that contrasted with the modern notion of non-recurrent evolution.

Harrison's ability to feel her way into the spirit of language is evident here. However, she did initially feel that she owed the reader "an apology, or at least an explanation, for the introduction of a new term" (Harrison 2003 [1912]: 547). Nevertheless, in the preface to the

second edition of *Themis*, published fifteen years later, Jane Harrison confidently states that the book is "a study of herd-suggestion, or, as we now put it, communal psychology. Its object is the analysis of the *Eniautos*- or Year-*Daimon*, who lies behind each and every primitive god; of the Eniautos-Daimon and of his ritual" (Harrison 2003: 538). The life of a "primitive" society is originally centred upon regular rituals aimed at continuing the recurrent process of decay, death and renewal of all things – plants, animals and people. Using as example a Thracian ceremony (Dawkins 1906) which is an enactment of the life-history of what Harrison calls the fertility-*daimon* (carefully avoiding the term "spirit"), she advocates the meaningfulness of the new term. The concluding words of the ceremony are: "Barley three piastres the bushel. Amen, O God, that the poor may eat! Yea, O God, that poor folk may be filled." So far we can speak about the fertility-*daimon* but then, as we are informed, the participants throw all the implements high into the air and cry out: "Next year also". The last statement makes the meaning of the ceremony much wider and deeper than just that of an affirmation of fertility and it is clear, Harrison claims, "that the *daimon* impersonated is the *Eniautos-daimon*" (Harrison 2003 [1912]: 333). The term *eniautos* is important because it suggests not continuity from past to present (unlike "year" which suggests this year in contrast to the following – different – year) but rather cyclicity of the "same" event. "Next year also" in fact means "next year the same thing all over again in the same way".

Having clarified the meaning of the word *eniautos,* we may now analyse the second part of the term. What is the meaning of the word *daimon*, which Harrison prefers to the term "spirit" and which is of fundamental importance to her work? The reader of her work would likely notice that it is usually things closely connected with the origin of religion that are considered worthy of Harrison's full attention and it is no different with *daimon.* Daimon is the embodiment of the *religious feeling*, which appears as a result of the perception of *sanctity*; *the sacred.* We perceive the presence of sanctity when we face the *unknown.* Quoting Hobbes, for whom the essence of religion lay in the fear of invisible things, Harrison immediately challenges his assumption and replaces the word *fear* with the word *awe*: "It is rather awe, and awe contains in it the element of wonder as well as fear; awe is on the way to be reverence, and reverence is essentially

religious" (Harrison 2003: 64). Moreover (as the sociological approach is felt strongly throughout *Themis*), it must be awe *felt together* and thus *intensified.*

Having established the conception of the sacred in this sense, we may state with Harrison that the feeling of sanctity is not derived from the idea of god, as is sometimes thought – it precedes it; it is "pre-theological". First "a thing is regarded as sacred, and out of that sanctity, given certain conditions, emerges a *daimon* and ultimately god". To justify this statement, Harrison offers an example of the use of a religious implement popularly examined around the turn of the 20th century – the bull roarer. During the initiation ceremony the novices hear "the awful unearthly whirring sound" while being told that the sound is the voice of the sky-god. But "[w]hen the boy is actually initiated the central mystery takes the form of a revelation [...] of the Bull-Roarer [...] Now we should expect that with the god will go the sanctity. Not at all; the sanctity did not arise from the god, and it survives him" (Harrison 2003 [1912]: 63)[2]. The sacred is a quality independent of the facts of the visible world and, when the feeling of the sacred attains a vague form, we may speak about a *daimon.*

The *daimon,* then, is a projection of *collective emotion* aroused by the encounter with the *unknown*, which brings about the feeling of *sanctity*. It is conceived in animal or plant form. Anthropo-morphism and the idea of a god has not arisen yet. One of the most ancient forms of a *daimon* is that of a snake. The snake is often considered as sacred due to its special character – living in two realms, on the earth and underground (in the upper world and in the underworld), and therefore having symbolic connection with the world of the dead. Another reason worth mentioning is that the snake sheds its skin, an action associated with immortality.

To expound on the essence of the *Eniautos Daimon*, Jane Harrison offers a lengthy analysis of the connection of the *daimon* and the dominant Greek element – a hero. She begins with the earliest hero worshipped in Athens, discussed already in *Mythology and Monuments* – Cecrops. Accepting the euhemerist point of view, Cecrops is often seen as a historical figure, a king, a culture hero, a bringer of law and of knowledge of the cultivation process of the olive crop. However, "Cecrops the hero-king, the author of all these

social reforms, Cecrops the humane, the benevolent, has a serpent-tail", Harrison says and presents a picture of a "delightful archaic terracotta" depicting the snake-tailed king to make this feature absolutely clear (Harrison 2003: 262-3). Nevertheless, "there are not such things as snake-kings" but "for some reason or another, each and every traditional Athenian king was regarded as being also in some sense a snake" (Harrison 2003 [1912]: 265). How did this come to be? A discussion of the possible connection with a rite that included the carrying of snakes as a fertility charm as well as a consideration of a snake as a symbolic vehicle of the dead follows, but the conclusion is important: none of the snake-kings "is a real actual man, only an ancestor invented to express the unity of a group" (Harrison 2003 [1912]: 267). That is to say, in *mysticism* life and death do not contradict but blend, as Harrison remarks. Therefore, the snake, a symbol of both fertility (life) and mortality (death), is in fact a symbol of "*im*mortality – of something sacred, something in the vaguer sense divine" (Harrison 2003 [1912]: 270).

Here we are not speaking about immortality of individual members of the group – people die. But Cecrops, who never *really* lived, lives forever as a snake – as the spirit of the group: "he stands not for personal immortality in our modern sense, not for the negation of death, but for the *perennial renewal of life through death*, for Reincarnation" (Harrison 2003: 271, italics mine).

The *Eniautos Daimon* is the entity that emerges as a result of *collective experience* (herd suggestion) and it is not anything as definite as an anthropomorphic god but instead a vague spirit. It is a representation of the periodic recurrence of human life when life is seen not as a line but as a circle: "The king is dead, long live the king!" (let us crown him on his return), "the old year is over, the new year has begun." The *Eniautos-Daimon* is an essential part of all periodic festivals; it precedes "and long outlasts the worship of any Olympian, the *disjecta membra* of the life-history of a year-god or fertility-*daimon*" but can be discerned in the nature of the supposedly Olympian divinities, particularly Dionysos, whose cycle of life "is eternally monotonous [and] perennially magical" (Harrison 2003: 333). The main characteristic of the life of the *Eniautos-Daimon* is his "cyclic monotony", due to which "it matters little whether death follows resurrection or resurrection death" (Harrison 2003: 415).

As already mentioned, despite the complexity (and in a sense also simplicity) of the term, it was not very well received. This was due to its "wrong grammar" and, I suspect, also to its novelty. Nevertheless, it caught the attention of some scholars and a series of lectures on this controversial subject was soon organised. The three lecturers were Jane Harrison herself and her two scholarly "enemies", classicists and professors of archaeology: Lewis Farnell and William Ridgeway. Jane Harrison claimed that the new term "grew out of (her) hands from sheer necessity" as it was needed "to designate the spirit of the spring *renouveau* universally celebrated in primitive worship" (Stewart 1959: 87). For Farnell, the *Eniautos-Daimon* was "an unnecessary and ugly pseudonym" while Ridgeway held to his former opinions and "maintained that magic and fertility were secondary and that drama and athletic contests had a concrete origin in the funeral feasts of heroes" (Stewart 1959: 87). While Frazer saw magic as preceding religion and the Ritualists saw magic and religion as intertwined and related, Ridgeway saw religion as antecedent to magic. Criticising the Ritualists' approach he asserted that:

> [S]cholars had begun at the wrong end, taking as primary the phenomena of vegetation spirits, totemism etc., which really were but secondary, arising almost wholly from the primary element, the belief in the existence of the soul after the death of the body. As prayer, religion proper, was made to the dead, religion must be considered antecedent to magic, which is especially connected with the secondary elements. (Cornford 2003: 215)

As regards the attitude of her closest scholarly friends, the *Eniautos-Daimon* was enthusiastically accepted by both Murray and Cornford, who incorporated the conception into their own theories which they presented in their contributions to *Themis*. Cook, however, did not contribute; the reason may be, as Robert Ackerman suspects, his disapproval of the *Eniautos-Daimon*, which appears to be both academic (the incorrect grammar)[3] and also rather emotional. In a personal letter to Murray of 23 August 1913 he reveals his position clearly: "I daresay it is all a question of words. I hate

'daemons' of all sorts, and 'year-daemons' worse than any." (Ackerman 1991: 165)

Although Harrison's "invention" soon faded into oblivion, much of what was lying behind it did not. Apart from scholars relating to Jane Harrison in terms of her position in the history of scholarship (or her eccentric lifestyle) there are also those who take her seriously in the sense of overtly claiming that *some of her ideas are still vital and powerful today.*[4] In my own reading of Harrison the most important and vital aspect of her work is the superb analysis of *religious emotion* emerging in the encounter with the *unknown* and resulting in the perception of *sanctity*. Developing this idea – that religious emotion is intensified by sharing and that the experience is regularly repeated – Harrison naturally comes to the conclusion that a term encompassing all these meanings is missing and must be created. Nevertheless, without judging whether the term did or did not have the potential to become universally used (which is not likely in any case), Harrison's talents that stood at the birth not only of the *Eniautos Daimon* but of most of what she was thinking and writing about, are not diminished by the fact that the story of her "invention" did not have an entirely succesful ending.

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Notes

1 Namely, it lacked the element of periodicity – the process of decay, death and renewal.

2 In the explication of the idea of the sacred, Harrison relies on Durkheim (Définition des phénomènes religieux, p. 17, in *Année Sociologique*, II, 1898); in her discussion of the bull roarer she is indebted to Marett (Savage Supreme Beings and the Bull-Roarer, *Hibbert Journal*, Jan. 1910), but elsewhere she praises Lang (1884) for his investigation of it (Harrison 2003 [1912]:62).

3 Robinson informs us that Harrison "notes [...] that Cook had suggested *eniausios* for *eniautos* (adjective for noun), which would at least have made the phrase grammatical Greek. Inexplicably, she rejects his suggestion as 'less suggestive'." (Robinson 2002: 276). It could be

argued that when something seems "less suggestive" to Harrison, it *is* an explication as well as a good reason.

4 Examples include Camille Paglia's (1990): *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*. New York: Vintage Books.

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"There is Nothing Like a Dame!" Cross-Dressing in Mumming Activities Past and Present

TERRY GUNNELL

ABSTRACT. *This article briefly analyses the long history of cross-dress activities in mumming in the Nordic countries, and the various roles that cross-dress seems to play here. It is stressed that while there are close connections between such traditions and cross-dress in the theatre and on the screen, there are also key differences in nature, which have an effect on the performance situation as a whole.*

KEYWORDS: *cross-gender, cross-dress, mumming, guising, disguise, ritual, festival, performance*

One of the earliest definitions of "mumming" appears in Henry Bourne's *Antiquitates Vulgares* (1725) in which Bourne underlines the key role that cross-dress has always played in mumming or guising[1] activities. For him, "mumming" is essentially:

> ... a changing of clothes between Men and Women; who when dressed in each other's Habits, go from one Neighbour's house to another, and partake of their Christmas-Cheer, and make merry with them in Disguise by dancing and singing and such like merriments (Bourne 1977: 147-8).

It is noteworthy that in this description, Bourne passes no moral judgement on the temporary changing of sexual appearance by the mummers. Indeed, the practice is seen as a natural part of "making merry" at Christmas. In other words, it appears that during this period, when part of such activities, cross dress was viewed as being quite acceptable, even on the streets.

The following paper contains a brief look at the history, nature and role of cross-dress in mumming and guising traditions past and

present, and the way in which it evolved to become a natural part of the popular entertainment industry – especially in English culture, where men playing women and vice-versa has long played a central role in comedy. I say that it is a "natural part" of the popular entertainment industry because cross-dress has played a central role in British and indeed also Nordic popular culture for centuries.

One of the earliest references comes in the shape of Tacitus' comment (c. 100 CE) about how the Naharvali tribe in northern Germany had a sacred grove which was presided over by a priest dressed like a woman (Tacitus 1970: 202-3), a tradition that might be supported by an image on the Gallehus horn from Schleswig (c. 400 CE), which appears to depict a bearded horn-bearing female figure in a ritual context (see further Gunnell 1995: 51-2).

Also worth considering is the early Nordic myth recounted in a poem called *Þrymskviða* (recorded c. 1270) which describes how Thórr, the most masculine of all the Nordic gods, loses his hammer, and has to dress up as a woman in order to retrieve it from a giant (*Eddadigte* II, 1971: 58-62). I have suggested elsewhere that many of these poems were probably originally performed dramatically (see Gunnell 1995: 182-329), and this poem is certainly both dramatic and very visual.

From around the same time (early thirteenth century), a contemporary saga from Iceland tells of a man called Steingrímr Skinn-Grýluson (lit. son of "Skin-Grýla"), who was known for indulging in satirical dances, and ended up being killed by an irritated enemy (Gunnell 2007b: 285). Particularly striking is that Steingrímr's second name is not a patronymic, but implies a relationship with a supernatural female figure (Grýla) later known not only as an ogress, but also as a personage annually acted by mummers in both the Faroes and Shetland (Gunnell 2007b: 298-300 and 311-19). Indeed, the name "Skin-Grýla" suggests early connections between this figure and skins (a common mode of disguise past and present). One also notes that versions of the verse about Grýla quoted in the saga are still directly associated with the Faroese Shrovetide "Grýla" mumming activities (Gunnell 2001: 38 and 52).

The cross-dressed Grýla's connections with performance were not limited to the Faroes and Shetland. It appears that the performed Grýla had descendants in later dance traditions from sixteenth- and

seventeenth-century Iceland, where male performers commonly burst into dance rooms disguised not only as goat-like monsters but also as old women or ogresses, sometimes in search of a mate (see further Gunnell 2007b: 287-9 and 298-9).

Our recently published detailed review of Nordic mumming traditions past and present, *Masks and Mumming in the Nordic Area* (2007) serves to remind us in no uncertain fashion that such cross-dressed mumming figures occurred *throughout* the Nordic area. One of the most obvious early parallels is found in a nineteenth-century drawing of a horned and very masculine, burly disguised "woman" named "Lussi" from Western Norway (see Eike 2007a: 67). A close parallel to this figure is seen in a photograph of a female *julget* (Christmas Goat) from Härjedalen, Sweden, from the same period (Gunnell 2007c: 130).

Other looser parallels can be seen in a range of images contained in *Masks and Mumming in the Nordic Area* which show how common it was for men to dress up as women – and vice versa – as part of Nordic mumming traditions past and present, traditions which range from traditional disguised house-visiting (see Gunnell 2007a: 30-3) to modern stag parties and school graduation. From before the time of Bourne's description of mumming and onwards,[2] accounts of men dressing as women regularly occur in association with Norwegian, Danish, Swedish and Swedish-Finnish *Knut* and *Lusse* traditions; the Swedish *påskkäring*, *Mats*, *Anders* and *Anna* traditions; the Estonian *lutsid*, *katrid* and *martid* traditions; the Norwegian *julebukk* traditions; the Shetland "dancing *gruliks*" and guisers; and even the often erotic Greenlandic *Mitaartut* tradition (see Gunnell 2007c: 56, 67-8, 71-2, 74-5, 118-19, 161, 187, 217-19, 252, 254-5, 313, 436, 441, 468-81, 517, 519, 532-5, 538, 574, 577, 607, 613, 617). Of course, similar figures are also well known in the British and Irish mumming traditions, and especially the North-East England Wooing Plays (see for example Gunnell 2007b: 298; Cawte 1978: 66; Gailey 1969: 47; 56-7; and Cawte, Helm and Peacock 1967: 75-6), many of which involve central female figures acted by males.

However, cross-dressing in mumming activities is far from limited to males. Women also acted men, as can be seen in other examples connected to Norwegian masquerades; the Åland and Swedish *Knut* traditions; the Icelandic Ash Wednesday traditions; Swedish hen

parties; and modern Icelandic school graduation customs (Gunnell 2007c: 182, 505, 625, 639, 560-2, 715).

An interesting feature of the above customs is that there is rarely much attempt to convince those watching that the cross-dressed performer really belongs to the opposite sex. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that in spite of all the laws passed against mumming activities over time in the Nordic countries,[3] few of them ever state anything about this particular brand of mumming, to which most of the authorities seem to turn a blind eye. The exception was the influential Danish bishop Erik Pontoppidan, who, in his 1736 tirade against Shrovetide mumming draws on a statement in *Deuteronomy* 22.5 that "A woman shall not wear that which pertains to a man; neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does these things is an abomination to Yahweh your God" (see Bregenhøj and Larsen 2007: 217-18). The range of evidence shows that the cross-dressed mummers and their hosts were little more bothered by Yahweh's disapproval than the cross-dressed male stage actors of earlier centuries had been.

Certainly, as the records in most countries indicate, mumming and guising in the past was commonly carried out by young unmarried men in their late teens and early twenties.[4] Thus, as in Greek, Roman, medieval and Shakespearean drama, if there was a female role in an early mumming play, it was usually taken by one of the men in the group. As noted above, however, there is a clear difference between most of the cross-dressed males found in mumming activities and those boys who acted women on the early professional stage. For the most part, it is highly unlikely that famous Shakespearean figures like Juliet, Ophelia or Cleopatra ever took the form of television comic figures like Mrs Niggerbaiter (from *Monty Python*). In mumming traditions, whether the identity of the actor was known or not (and in "proper" guising, identity tended to be hidden), there is rarely any question whether the "woman" is a man or vice versa. So what is it that makes mummers want to cross dress?

In *Masks and Mumming in the Nordic Area*, cross-dressing is approached from a number of viewpoints: two authors underline the fact that in mumming customs, the aim is to disguise your identity as fully as possible. As they point out, the best way to disguise your identity is to change sex visually (Bregenhøj and Larsen 2007: 217).

Certainly, donning the clothes of the opposite sex is as effective a disguise as dressing up in seaweed, skins, or straw (see Gunnell 2007c: 62-3; 130; 293; 302), but there is clearly more involved in this particular choice of disguise. Christine Eike (2007b: 517) points out that changing sex by way of clothing seems to be one of those features that both performers and audience seem to find most "entertaining". Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj (2007: 531-47) goes even further in her examination of the erotic aspects of guising. Her informants note that the adoption of the "signs" or clothes of the opposite sex means a certain degree of freedom from daily rules of behaviour. Kaivola-Bregenhøj's analysis is worth particular attention. Writing about Finnish women dressing as men, she notes that "when a woman dresses up as a man, she naturally begins to behave like a man as well", masculine behaviour making "the role look more real" (Kaivola-Bregenhøj 2007: 534). For men, there seem to be "more erotic overtones" to dress as women because "men have far fewer opportunities to play at being women in everyday life" (Kaivola-Bregenhøj 2007: 534). One man "got most fun of all from being [...] 'a brazen, mature woman' whose feminine traits he could exaggerate in his clothing, make-up and behaviour [...] thrusting his breasts and pelvis forward or raising his skirts"; his wife noted how "going round as a mummer had also helped her to behave just as she pleases even when she is not wearing a mask" (Kaivola-Bregenhøj 2007: 535). This last feature is worth remembering.

As Kaivola-Bregenhøj notes (2007: 536), "there was definitely a sexual undercurrent running beneath the actions and conversations of the mummers and the hosts, and both parties quite obviously expected it". Such erotic excitement is reflected in the general freedom of behaviour often mentioned in descriptions of mumming, something only partly explained by the use of alcohol and the fact that disguise of any kind gives a certain feeling of power and freedom. As Ron Naversen has revealed, concerning the psychological associations of masking, "the masker often feels strangely different and may experience a loss of inhibition and a sense of empowerment," often equated "with being possessed or inspired by another force" (Naversen 2005: 18; see also Muensterberger 1986: 261-5).

Kaivola-Bregenhøj likewise underlines that the use of cross-dress also affects audience, since "inversion is not only reflected in the

costumes, but also in the mummer's behaviour" and "the resulting interaction between the hosts and the mummers", where "slight overacting and a violation of the agreed rules of propriety" [...] "appear to be taken for granted in the behaviour of the adult mummers and members of the household alike" (Kaivola-Bregenhøj 2007: 539).

However, the feeling of freedom is created only partly by the adopting of disguise. It is also encouraged by the atmosphere that this particular "inappropriate" costume opens up within the often confined performance space. Indeed, the surrounding atmosphere of humour and entertainment noted above reflects the fact that what has been brought into being is an essentially *comic* situation. In his analysis of the humour demonstrated in films like *Some Like It Hot* (1959) in which we are again constantly reminded that the central female figures are men (very different to Marilyn Monroe), Andrew Stott reminds us of Freud's statement (from *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*) that "the spheres of sexuality and obscenity offer the amplest occasions for obtaining comic pleasure", showing "human beings in their dependence on bodily needs" or "the physical demands lying behind the claims of mental love" (Stott 2005: 62-3). Furthermore, sexual jokes (such as those implied by the awareness of cross-dress) offer the "furtive joy of ignoring taboos" (Wilson, quoted in Stott 2005: 63), and simultaneously articulate "sexual politics from a number of contradictory positions, including liberation from censorship, exploration of desire, and insistence on conservative categories of gender" (Stott 2005: 63).

As Stott argues, in plays like Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, the use of "cross-dressing allows the play to develop a heightened eroticism and an inclusive attitude towards sexuality" (Stott 2005: 64). *Some Like It Hot* goes even further, in that the cross-dressing here seems to "accentuate the men's sense of essential sexual differences, as well as underline their view of women as sex objects" (Stott 2005: 68), creating, as Kaivola-Bregenhøj noted earlier, a "conscious heightening as well as dissolving of sexual stereotypes" (Babington and Evans, quoted in Stott 2005: 68). In short, as Stott writes, "In the tradition of pantomime dames, comic *drag*" (which is really what is going on in mumming and guising) "paints a picture of feminine grotesque, self delusion, hyperbolised glamour and sexual outrageousness that would

be inappropriate in real women" (Stott 2005: 71). It is "a parodic interplay between 'appearance' and 'essence' in which the performer retains their 'real' gender via the guarantee of the concealed body" (Stott 2005: 72). At the same time, it "focuses the attention on the sartorial symbols of gender and recontextualises them in a way that might lead us to question their cultural power" (Stott 2005: 73).

There is, however, one key difference between *As You Like It*, *Some Like It Hot*, *Little Britain*, and mumming activities. We laugh at the "bisociation" of comedy (Koestler 1970: 35-7), seeing the man and the female costume, the real character and his apparent cartoon-like behaviour – when we watch it from a distance. The gorilla apparently acting in human fashion is similarly funny, as long as he remains behind the bars. If the gorilla is released into the crowd, humour can turn into horror. As Judith Butler has highlighted, in cross-dress or drag, we are aware of three categories simultaneously at work: "anatomical gender, gender identity, and the gender that is being performed" (Butler 1990: 137). The problem with the intimate "kitchen theatre" of mumming performance is that the lines between performer and audience are unclear. The presence of the exaggerated, masked, cross-dressed performer standing in the room beside you, manhandling you, and talking to you in person, means that awareness of Butler's three categories in one result in a mixture of humour and discomfort, even horror; and an uncertainty about where the borders lie. Cross-dress in mumming is comedy breaking through the bars, and rampaging across the borderline. As Bregenhøj and Larsen note, "Not being able to decide whether a mummer is male or female creates for the spectator an enigmatic vision [...] an uncanny feeling of uncertainty in both performer and observer" (Bregenhøj and Larsen 2007: 217).

In a sense, as Eike has argued (see above) one of the key attractions of mumming activities has always been this breaking down of borderlines between reality and fantasy, play and work, the natural and the supernatural, the chaotic and the controlled, the outside and the inside, the male and the female, the animal and the human. Indeed, the use of cross-dress in mumming and guising parallels the use of animal costume: it adds uncertainty to the clear differentiations on which civilisation thrives; and simultaneously refreshes, renews and reassesses these values, not only in the game –

but also in the daily life that takes over once again the following morning.

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Notes

1 The words "mumming" and "guising" are both used for disguised house-visiting traditions (see Gunnell 2007a: 30), the latter tending to be found more often in the British Isles as a means of distinguishing simple house-visiting from the presentation of mummers' plays.

2 The earliest report of such behaviour in Denmark comes from Helsingør in 1633 (see Bregenhøj 2007: 273).

3 Eike 2007: 51; Bregenhøj and Larsen 2007: 192, 196, 198-200, 206, 227, 231, 239, 244, 272; and Vento 2007: 332.

4 See Gunnell 2007c, passim.

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The Giving Away of the Bride – Isn't She Man Enough To Go It Alone?

JOHANNA STÅHLBERG

ABSTRACT. *In the traditional Swedish church wedding, the music begins, the church door opens and the couple proceeds together down the aisle to join the priest waiting at the altar. Lately, the Anglo-Saxon custom where the bride's father walks her down the aisle to give her away is making its way into the ceremony. The priests in the Church of Sweden are opposed to this, as they believe that it signifies oppression of the woman. This article provides a survey of current opinion.*

KEYWORDS: *Sweden, weddings, gender, equality, priests, new rituals*

Finally the day has arrived, hopefully the day later referred to as "the happiest day of my life" – the day when two people tell the world that they are, in a sense, leaving their former lives as two individuals to become a strong, joint, loving unity; crossing the bridge to become a married couple. The music begins, the church door opens and the couple proceeds together down the aisle to join the priest waiting at the altar. That is the traditional Swedish church wedding. At least it used to be. Lately, foreign elements are making their way into the ceremony, especially the Anglo-Saxon custom where the bride's father walks her down the aisle to give her away to the husband-to-be.

And then they lived happily ever after? No, not if priests in the Church of Sweden have anything to say about it! The Church is putting its foot down and trying to drive off this influence because the priests believe that the act of giving the bride away signifies oppression of the woman. Some feel that there is something unequal and obsolete about it that does not belong in the Church in this day and age. But what about the bridal couple and their wish? Who is to decide?

THE HISTORICAL SITUATION

Earlier on, marriage was not about love primarily, but was more about economic aspects. Most of the Swedish population lived in the countryside and inherited pieces of land were of great importance and would be handled with care. Thoughts about infatuation as a condition for marriage only became common in the end of the nineteenth century.

The unmarried man could ask for a woman's hand in marriage assisted by a *böneman*. This person presented the proposal to the father and he accepted or dismissed the proposal in his capacity as the woman's *giftoman* (a kind of spokesman in marital questions). This procedure was most common where the largest farms were involved. The woman's father or another near relative had the mandate to decide who she should marry until 1916 (Carlsson 1965-1972). So the custom of giving the bride away *did* exist in medieval Sweden and the ceremony normally took place in the bride's parental home. The bridegroom asked permission to speak and asked the father of the bride to conduct the marriage. The father stepped forward and gave the bride to the son-in-law while articulating a few phrases summing up the legal, social and economic position she was now given. Amongst other things he said: "I give you my daughter."

As the Catholic Church grew stronger they began to require people to look at matrimony as a sacrament established by God and so they wanted the former custom to be replaced by the church wedding. The act should take place in a church, with a priest as officiant and the parish as witnesses. They also believed that the woman's consent to the marriage was important. The phrase: "I give you my daughter" was changed so that the bride herself pronounced the words: "I take thee [name] to be my lawful wedded husband", pointing out that she was independent both before and after the wedding. But the process took some time; change did not come until 1734 when the church wedding came to be looked upon as the only legal form to constitute marriage (Bondeson and von Melen 1996).

The latest version of the Swedish church manual was published in 1986 and it contains, among other things, a description of how the Lutheran wedding ceremony should be conducted. Significantly, the man and woman walk together down the aisle. Many priests are sorry

for the loss of knowledge concerning the symbolism this stands for: that you marry out of free will, that you have chosen each other and want to walk side by side as equals. In the past, priests made the note "consent of both" in the column for comments in the parish register well into the twentieth century, which shows that it was a matter of vital importance in the ceremony.

THE RESULTS OF AN ENQUIRY INTO THE CURRENT SITUATION

My research is based on e-mail correspondence with 127 priests within the Church of Sweden. They all received the same contact mail in which I asked about their view on the matter based on the questions: (1) Have you noticed an increased demand for this model of conducting the wedding act? (2) What is your take on the wish? (3) How does it usually end up if the wish exists? I tried to get answers geographically from all over the country and from priests working both in the city and in the countryside. Most of my research was done in May-June 2008.[1]

Patterns from the material are as follows. The wish to be given away by the father has increased since the 1990s but it goes somewhat in waves. One peak was around 2004 in the aftermath of the royal weddings in Norway and Denmark that were broadcast on television during the beginning of the twenty-first century. They have followed what we mostly think of as an Anglo-Saxon custom. Movies like *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994) and American soap operas are other influences. The wish to be given away is mainly a big-city phenomenon and when it occurs in smaller places it is mostly in places geographically near where the influence came from, for instance smaller villages in the south of Sweden close to Denmark and also up north along the Norwegian border.

The bishop in Stockholm (Caroline Krook) advised the parishes not to agree to giving the bride away. The recommendation was announced in 2003 (Ingvarsson 2007). None of the priests that I have been in contact with say that they refuse to marry couples with this request but some priests know of others who do.

Approximately 50% of today's Swedish marriages take place within the Church of Sweden (Bringeús 2007), 40% are civil

marriages and 10% other kinds of church unions. 50% may sound like a low figure but the Swedish society is in many ways a secular one and religion does not play a prominent part in ordinary people's lives. But the wedding is an occasion when people tend to seek the church, maybe not so much because of their faith as for the solemn framework it provides.

The betrothed couple goes to church to have a preliminary talk with the priest with a vision of their big, very special day. It may not always be a pleasant task for the priest to be the one to tell them that a joint walk is preferred, to explain why and inform them of the symbolism of the "given away" woman who, despite being an independent person, effectively gets transferred from one guardian to another. The woman gets reduced to a passive object in need of a man's protection. That is the way the priests interpret the act of giving the bride away and as such it is incompatible with their view on marriage as a union between two equals, chosen by one another of their own free will. In the Swedish wedding ceremony, *both* are active, *both* make the same vows and have the same responsibilities and rights and walking together represents this.

Prior to telling the wedding couple how they feel about it, the priests try to gently ask why the couple in question wish the bride to be given away. Several reasons appear. One is that people simply have the misconception that this is the formal or correct way to conduct the wedding ceremony in Sweden. However, the majority of couples wishing to have this procedure are very definite about how they want it and a disagreement between the priest and the bride, primarily, could be under way. I would like to add that numerous wedding ceremonies take place where this question never comes up, so that it does not cause any trouble at all. And even if the wish to be given away is increasing, the ceremony involving the father is not yet the most common way to conduct the wedding ceremony. But, when it does come up, the priest can be faced with a bride who holds a strong opinion on this matter. Several priests put emphasis on the fact that it is *always* – amongst couples where both are of Swedish origin – the *bride*'s wish to be given away. From these accounts, it would seem that the groom has no say in the matter and can show remarkable relief when the priest expresses his or her point of view. For some grooms, this may be because they are uncomfortable with

the prospect of standing alone, nervously waiting and being put on public display! Several of the priests expressed the feeling that a motivating factor for the bride is actually to be looked at; perhaps they really want to feel princess-like with the aisle as their stage and friends and family as an admiring and loving audience.

The dilemma is the different ways to interpret the symbolism. In many cases, the wedding couple does not see what the priest sees. To them it is just something nice and romantic, or perhaps something they want to do out of reverence, and they are unable to understand how this symbolises an obsolete view of women's status. But of course the views of the priests vary: some are really against the Anglo-Saxon custom and might refuse to conduct the ceremony while others believe that it is not worth wasting energy over the matter, but only wish to state that they, by virtue of the Swedish church manual, prefer the couple to walk together. Besides, they recognise that the wedding ceremony cannot be changed in just any way; there are regulations to follow. Many of the couples have never thought about the symbolism and are not so concerned with the priest's opinion.

Sometimes a hybrid form of ceremony evolved when the brides who were planning on being given away changed their minds after talking to the priest but nevertheless were unable to change the plan because of concerns for the father's feelings in cases where he has already been asked and was pleased and honoured. One way to get around this is to reach a compromise; for instance the father walks by her side a shorter part of the way, lets her go and she walks alone towards the groom as he walks down the aisle to greet her so that they can walk the remaining part together. This is what most of the compromising priests prefer. Or the mother of the groom could walk by his side too, to manifest the abandonment of the offspring's former nuclear family. The bride and groom walk a bit together, leave their parents, grasp each other's hands and continue together down the aisle. For some reason it seems sweet and appropriate for a grown woman to be led by her father, whilst almost ridiculous for a man to be led by his mother and opponents of the giving away of the bride say that this proves that we do not fully see men and women as equals. One priest mentions that this question is brought up amongst the candidates for confirmation and that the girls usually say they want to walk together with the father but the boys wish to walk next

to their future wife.

Not every bride finds herself in a romantic haze when it is her time to shine and some brides wish to be given away simply to call attention to *the father*. For instance, for a stepfather, who despite the lack of biological connection has played a big part in his stepdaughter's life and accordingly walks her down the aisle, it is a way of showing everyone that she thinks of him as her "real" father. Or it could be that the biological father and the bride lost contact, perhaps through the parents' divorce, and this is a way to give him a role in the ceremony. To be given away by the father becomes a declaration of love.

Some priests are baffled by the fact that this wish often comes from younger brides. Perhaps the explanation may be that younger brides nurture the American dream of a fairytale wedding. The younger brides have seen it in movies and believe this is the way it should be; to them it is "traditional". In some cases the couple have attended someone else's wedding, where the bride was given away and got inspired. An older sister may have married this way and it would feel a bit strange to choose something else, and would seem like a rejection of the father or the method.

Wedding fairs and other commercial information have an effect too. The wedding ceremony has become more and more privatised and complicated and, as many people feel, too much of a lavish show. They are bigger occasions in contemporary times and the priest comes into the picture too late. A form letter is sent to wedding couples in parishes in Stockholm where the question is addressed so as to avoid problems later on since the wedding reservation is made long in advance but the first meeting with the priest takes place shortly before the wedding date. The wedding couple wants to decide a lot themselves and make the wedding unique, and give the ritual a looser shape. As a matter of interest, the Swedish word for wedding coordinator made its way into the list of new Swedish commonly used buzz words only in 2006 which reflects the later arrival of this social role.

Approximately 20% of the priests I have been in contact with say that they do not engage themselves in discussion if the wish comes up during their first talk with the wedding couple. But others start off with a relatively neutral stance by saying that it is the wedding

couple's big day and that they are content as long as they are assured that the couple knows what the symbolism stands for. Still others mention clever and useful wording to encourage the couple to change their minds, for instance by asking: "Why isn't it the other way around? Why doesn't the mother give the groom away?" When the couple say that they want it to be impressive and refer to royal weddings, the priest points out that when the current king of Sweden got married he walked together with his bride. Some priests approach the issue psychologically by mentioning how, after the wedding ceremony, many couples talk about the lovely moment when they were waiting outside and just about to enter the church and they ask the rhetorical question: "With whom would you like to share this moment: your father or your future husband?" Some even comment on the almost comical effect in giving a bride away that perhaps has children of her own already,[2] in a nice way of course, but their argumentation is probably hard to resist and several priests honestly believe that it feels illogical and ridiculous to give a bride away who in most cases has lived with her husband to be for quite some time before the wedding. The priests could mention that this practice is not traditional in Sweden and comment on the lack of equality and finish off with: "Is this something you would like to support?" The Anglo-Saxon custom seems to be more upsetting to female clergy but some men were upset about the attitude towards women and also what it says about their gender, attitudes towards them *as men.*

Another foreign element in the wedding ceremony clearly showing the impact of television is the commonly asked question: "When are we supposed to kiss?" The phrase "You may now kiss the bride" does not exist in the Swedish ceremony. It is customary to kiss afterwards, outside on the church steps (Bondeson and von Melen 1996). Some priests state that they are not going to say it because it feels strained and even becomes ludicrous since the couple live together already. Others do not mind saying it because they find Swedes to be stiff and formal and the kiss really eases the atmosphere on a nervous day like this.

Should Swedes try to assimilate the giving away of the bride to the Swedish custom, keeping the Anglo-Saxon form but giving it new meaning, or should they preserve the "Swedish" ceremony and the thought behind it? Opponents of the giving away argue that, since the

wedding ceremony is not a private act but a public church ceremony where the church must take into consideration more than individual opinions and values and personal feelings, the Church's teaching that men and women are each other's equals should be unambiguously present in the ceremony. But another view is expressed by one priest who says: "Let them do as they please – it's their wedding not mine! I don't care how they get to the altar, as long as they are standing there when the wedding march is over and it's time to begin."

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Notes

1 The survey was undertaken with a view to presenting the results at the conference on The Ritual Year and Gender being held in Cork, Ireland, in June 2008.

2 It should be noted as an additional factor that the wedding age is high in Sweden, on average 31 for the woman and 34 for the man (Jonsson 2005).

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Reinventing Rituals of Death: New Expressions of Private and Public Mourning in Sweden

MARLENE HUGOSON

ABSTRACT. *By way of a discussion of private and public mourning, and the stage in between the two, I will attempt to describe some of the changes that are becoming evident in the way rituals of death are performed in Sweden today – including funerary customs, decorations on graves, public displays of a country in mourning, commemorative places with heaps of flowers building at the scene of a murder or a fatal death, and "Internet cemeteries" and commemorative homepages where you can "eternalize" not only the dead, but also headstones and mourning itself, by online publication.*

KEYWORDS: *death, mourning, grief, rituals, cemeteries, Internet, distanced participation*

INDIVIDUALISED BURIAL CUSTOMS

During a walk through the cemetery one can see toys, photographs, flowers, knick-knacks, drawings and last words from family members on children's graves. On a young person's grave, the CDs the teen would have listened to can be found together with the occasional beer bottle left by his or her peers.

It has also become more usual for immigrants and refugees to be buried in their new homeland, bringing funeral traditions from the old country with them, many times using more elaborate decorations of the grave, including plastic flowers, lanterns and ornaments. The gravestone itself may also look different from the generic Swedish stones, for example with photographs etched or inlaid in the stone.

The decorations and stones used for children's and immigrants' graves in turn influence the adult Swedish graves, and it does not stop there. Today's graves can also express life-styles, for example by the use of neo-pagan or *feng shui* decorations. Relatively new high festivals, such as Halloween, also give rise to the use of new seasonal

decorations by introducing colourful pumpkins on the graves (SOFI 39176, 39372-39375; Klippsamlingen EII).

These more individualised decorations of graves are all part of a change where personal keepsakes are becoming more and more common in the otherwise quite strict cemeteries – despite regulations banning many of the previously mentioned decorations. For regardless of regulations, the staff taking care of the cemeteries have often had a permissive attitude to the decorations. The cemetery workers do not always have the heart to clear away banned decorations and tell grave owners they are not allowed to place soft toys on their child's grave. They also tend to overlook transgressions when the grave stone carries a foreign name, the name of one of the minorities in Sweden, when it is apparent the person buried in the grave belonged to a specific religious community, or when something out of the ordinary has occurred, as with the grave of Fadime Sahindal, the victim of an honour killing in Uppsala in 2002 (Hugoson 2006). Put together this suggests a perceived widening of the *griftefrid* (i.e. respect for the funeral peace supposed to surround the burial place).

The new trends are picked up and shown at funerary exhibitions, for despite a certain conservatism, there is a sensitivity to customer demand. Examples of oriental lanterns and Japanese rock gardens are shown, gravestones in the shape of hearts are produced as a counterpart to the more uniform stones, and renowned Swedish glazier and artist Ulrika Hydman-Vallien has been engaged to design new coffins for children (Nordiska trädgårdar 2004; Roman 2008; see also website j under Internet references).

Other changes are taking place as well: the new trends influence the crafts movement and craftsmen make their own grave markers, and one community college is even giving a night course in how to craft your own coffin. The man teaching the course has made a coffin for his mother but, as she is still alive and well, he has put shelves in it and uses it as a CD stand (Svensson 2007; Sandblom 2008). When this paper was delivered orally, conference participants were able to offer parallels. Marion Bowman added that in Somerset, England, customised coffins made out of wicker can be ordered and that they too are initially used as CD stands, and Molly Carter and Amy Whitehead then mentioned the Goth-inspired coffin tables (compare

to the word *coffee table*) where the coffin is used as a coffee table while the person for whom it is intended is still alive.

There is also a revival of early history. New designs for cremation urns are being developed, among them prototypes for heathen version urns, columbaria are coming back in style but in new design, and modern version cairns can also be found, previously used in Scandinavia during the Bronze Age, 1800-550 BCE (see website f; Flykt 2003; Wikelund 2008. For more on Swedish funerary history, see Söderpalm 1994, and Smeds 2003).

Economy, environmental awareness and new technology furthers the development: in recent years it has become possible to share gravestones, i.e. to have one side each of a stone for separate graves, saving both money and space, and a new Swedish invention called *promession* or freeze-drying is being explored as a more ecological alternative to cremation and traditional burials (von Essen 2004; Ennart 2005).

MEMORIAL FLOWER SHRINES

There are also new ways of expressing one's respect when someone has died unexpectedly: At the scene of a murder or fatal accident one can find flowers, photographs, cards and soft toys, sometimes building up to a giant heap. The first heap of flowers that was noticed on a national level was the one that spontaneously formed out of the thousands of red roses placed at the scene of the murder of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme in Stockholm in 1986. The same thing occurred after sixty-three young people lost their lives in a fire at a disco in Gothenburg in 1998, and again after the murder of Foreign Minister Anna Lind in 2004 (Klippsamlingen EII. SOFI 39129).

There is a historical parallel to the heaps of flowers to be found in the Swedish *offerkast*, the sacrificial throwing of a twig or stone exercised in order to protect oneself from evil when passing the site of an untimely death; however the heaps of flowers are more closely related to the memorial roadside shrines found in Catholic parts of Europe (Erixon 1988; Belund 1958; SOFI 39378-39379).

According to Anna Petersson, who wrote her PhD thesis at Lund University on the subject of Swedish roadside memorials, these

memorials are usually abandoned after the burial when there is a new place to go to (Peterson 2004; Eriksson 2005). With this said, it should be noted that red roses are still placed outside the fine art supply store where Olof Palme was shot and at the NK department store where Anna Lind was knifed down.

The authorities respond in different ways to the rule-breaking that occurs when people express their grief in these new ways: in Uppsala, the city cleaning crews let memorial flowers fade before they clear them away. At NK the flowers placed for Anna Lind were and still are moved from the department store to the church where she is buried (Bill 2005; Jacobsson 2004). The Swedish Road Administration has also been permissive about memorial road shrines as they can function as a warning and thus help road security (Eriksson 2005). However, the County Administrative Board of Lappland were not impressed by the large memorial construction built without permit in memory of a girl who died in a snow-mobile accident; but in the end they too yielded and left the memorial standing (Sjölund 2005; Staafjord 2008). Again the widened perception of the *griftefrid* is shown.

Obituaries and memento mori tattoos

It is hard to say where the line between public and private is drawn, but exploring this threshold area I would like to begin by examining the obituary printed in the paper. Like the graves and gravestones, the obituary too has become more personalised. From the 1890s the stylised black cross was the symbol used in obituaries, but in 1977 a flower was seen for the first time in one of the daily newspapers (Weman Thornell 2004). Since then the variation of symbols has increased, in later years dramatically, as more and more private symbols, drawings and photographs have been used. The symbols can convey information about occupation, interests, what religion or which organisations the deceased belonged to, or the animals and/or flowers he or she liked (Sollbe 2008). The time we live in shows as well; one man got a symbol in the shape of a computer in his obituary (DN 2007).

There is an apparent connection between the symbol used in the

obituary and on the gravestone, as the same symbol may be used for both. The image may then be used for other purposes as well: in articles, blogs, and discussion forums one can read about Swedes who have had tattoos made in memory of dead relatives – a trend fuelled by television series such as *Miami Ink* and *LA Ink*, reality shows staged in tattoo parlours (TLC). In one case a sister and mother of a young man had his face tattooed on their upper arms – the same image was already engraved on the gravestone (website a). Reviewing the Swedish web pages, it seems to be mainly women who get these memento mori tattoos done, but the cases reviewed are too few to make a definite statement (Klippsamlingen EII).

MEMORIAL WEB PAGES

With the introduction of the Internet the bereaved have found a new forum in which to express their grief, and this is where the boundaries between private and public become truly blurred, as it is possible to eternalise not only the memory of the dead, but the headstones and even grief itself, by online-publication.

There are private web pages made in memory of loved ones, and their deaths are recounted in detail and the mourner's grief is expressed (Klippsamlingen EII). There is an interesting parallel to be drawn between the writing on these Swedish web pages and the Greek laments, written down on single sheets of paper, that Maria Androlaki describes (in this volume). In other web pages the grave itself has become the centre of attention, as web page owners make photo documentations of their visits to the cemetery, what the grave looks like and how it is decorated as the seasons change (Klippsamlingen EII; see also website c).

The breach from the norm is that these commemorative web pages not only show pictures of what the person looked like in life but, if the web page is dedicated to a deceased newborn, pictures of the corpse may also be posted. This may be because the picture of the dead child is all the family has to remember them by. In these cases the images are often in black and white and/or softened, and the children are often referred to as *child angels* (Klippsamlingen EII; see also website b). Without going into antiquity and, for example,

Roman funeral customs and depictions of the dead, there is a more recent historic parallel to be found to this: from the mid 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century it was not unusual to have photographs taken of the dead, a form of photographic death-masks. This is a custom that was later abandoned, but has now been reinvented in part (Söderlind 1993: 404-15).

There are also web pages made in memory of several people, for instance the joint web page for the victims of the previously mentioned fire at the disco in Gothenburg (website e), and the one for the hundreds of Swedish tourists who were victims of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004 (website h). However, I have not found a joint web page in memory of the victims that went down with the Estonia in the Baltic Sea in 1994. It seems that happened before Swedes began to use the Internet as a means of expressing their grief.

Memorial pages can also be found among the official authorities' web pages, for example there is a memorial page in honour of Foreign Minister Anna Lind among the Government Offices web pages (website m). However, there is no such page for Prime Minister Olof Palme, again most likely because his murder occurred before the Internet began to be used in this fashion.

The online influence for the memorial web pages is mainly American. On American Internet pages one can find both individual and combined memorial pages and even Internet Cemeteries and online obituaries, and Sweden is not far behind as these Internet cemeteries are being developed in Sweden too (see websites k and o; Wojidkow 2004; TT 2006).

ONLINE COMMUNITY RESPONSES AND TELEVISED FUNERALS

Over the years a select few funeral services had been broadcast on television, either as part of the news or, for greater celebrities both Swedish and international, as separate programmes. Still, the use of television as a means of dealing with private grief was yet unexplored, but in 2008 this was about to change. The prelude had occurred a couple of years earlier.

When a ten-year-old boy named Bobby was tortured and left to die by his parental figures in 2006, the gory details of the case were

published in the media, leading to public outrage, and the evening paper *Expressen* together with BRIS (Children's Rights in Society) organised to have roses sent from the Swedish people to the funeral – over 29,000 of them. Because of the public response it was decided that the church was to be kept open for the public after the private family funeral had ended (websites l; g and d).

Then, in April 2008, a ten-year-old girl named Engla disappeared in Stjärnsund in Sweden. A massive search was initiated and mass media covered the story from every angle. Hundreds of thousands of virtual candles were lit in hope for the girl on the Internet, people could leave messages online, and on *Facebook* a forum for discussion was opened in support of Engla's family. Within the week a man suspected of abducting Engla was brought in for questioning by the Police and he soon confessed to kidnapping and murdering the little girl (website n).

After the sad news broke, text messages sent via e-mail, mobile phones and posted on blogs circulated, asking people to light a living candle in the window in memory of Engla at a specific time the following evening. This time the enormous response from the Swedish people prompted the family to ask Swedish Television, the non-commercial state-owned broadcasting station, to telecast the funeral, and somewhat unexpectedly they agreed, as they felt Engla had become a symbol of violence against children. A giant television screen was also put up outside the church so that people who did not get a seat inside the church could follow the service outside, i.e. not unlike what we have previously seen done for celebrities that have passed away (SVT; Klippsamlingen EII; see also website i).

Engla's family wanted all of those who had invested their feelings in the case to feel welcome to take part in the ceremony, but as the public reactions to the murder had grown, so had the public unease. A boundary had been overstepped and, according to surveys made in the evening papers, approximately 80% of the tens of thousands of readers who voted in the poll disliked the idea of the broadcast. Still, some 365,000 viewers followed the televised service when it was broadcast (website n).

Conclusion

The fact that Sweden has been spared from the chaos of war and greater tragedies for so long has left Swedes somewhat unaccustomed and unprepared to deal with death and grief, something that has become more and more apparent over the last ten to fifteen years, and today the rites of death are changing at high speed, a sign that there is a demand for traditions and customs that are more in tune with our time and that are easily accessible.

The most striking trend is of course the distanced participation – the way grief is expressed both individually and *en masse* through the use of new technology: people creating web pages, writing blogs, posting messages online, engaging via sms, e-mail, and through the media of television, and somewhat surprisingly this distanced participation can still lead to joint manifestations.

Simultaneously the strong individualisation seen in the examples above signals a belief in the individual and that he or she matters, a development that will be interesting to follow, not only when it comes to rituals of death, but in all aspects of ritual.

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Reviews

Runes and their Secrets. Studies in Runology. Ed. Marie Stoklund, Michael Lerche Nielsen, Bente Holmberg and Gillian Fellows-Jensen. Copenhagen, Denmark: Museum Tusculanum Press. 2006. ISBN: 87 635 0428 6. 461 pp.

Runes and their Secrets is comprised of twenty-two of the thirty-six papers presented at the Fifth International Symposium on Runes and Runic Inscriptions held in Brandbjerg Højskole, Denmark, in 2000.

As stated by the editors in the Preface, the main themes proposed for the conference were the following: "1) The runic artefacts with the older runes; 2) Runic writing confronted with Latin literacy and Christianisation; 3) The problem of runic chronology and typology versus regional variation; 4) Runology and runic research, methodology and new challenges at the turn of the millennium." (p. 7)

The collection presents a very good selection of papers that relate in one way or another to the inscriptions in the Elder Futhark. A good example is Mindy MacLeod's paper "Ligatures in Early Runic and Roman Inscriptions". The author tries to show that, even though it is generally believed that ligatures in runic inscriptions are mainly used for space-saving purposes, there are several instances where they must clearly fulfil another function, since there is enough space. The author proposes that the bind runes can possibly be used as emphasisers, drawing the reader's attention to a particular word. Also, MacLeod compares the usage of ligatures in Roman and runic inscriptions, which helps the author reach the conclusion that runic ligatures, as the Latin ones, can be used as "a kind of orthographic decoration to distinguish names" (p. 194).

Of a more archaeological nature is Nancy L. Wicker's paper on how inscriptions were made in the bracteates she was able to study microscopically in Denmark. This paper includes information on the making of the die, the striking process, ornamentation of the bracteates, etc. as well as diagrams and illustrations.

Also about the older runes, but of a more linguistic nature, is Hans Frede Nielsen's insightful presentation on the phonology, morphology and syntax of the language of the Early Runic inscriptions. Regarding phonology, Nielsen first analyses the unaccented vowel system, for which he uses graphs and examples to show how the vocalic changes resulting from the stress accent introduced by Proto-Germanic evolve into the Old Norse and Old English unstressed vowel systems. He then proceeds to examine the accented vowel system as well as the consonants. Concerning morphology,

the author presents a reconstruction of the Early Runic demonstrative and interrogative pronouns in the masculine and neuter singular. He finishes his paper by discussing word order in the language of the older runic inscriptions, concluding that it must have been in a syntactic transitional state "in which an older OV [Object-Verb] layer is being replaced by a younger one with features characteristic of VO [Verb-Object] typology." (p. 267)

Terje Spurkland also contributes to the first theme of the symposium with a linguistic paper about the process of umlaut and syncope from Proto-Norse to Old Norse. He does so by looking at the transition from the Tune to the Eggja stones. He first introduces the different understandings on the "causal relationship between umlaut and syncope" (p. 335), stating that the phonetic umlaut is dependent on the umlauting unstressed vowels and that phonemic umlaut is dependent on syncope. In his chapter about the evidence of umlaut and syncope in the Tune and Eggja stones, Spurkland warns us that umlaut is rarely traceable in inscriptions until after syncope has occurred, when the umlaut vowels progress from allophones to phonemes. He also suggests that periodisation of Proto-Norse should take the likelihood of synchronic variation into account, which can allow for syncopated and unsyncopated forms to coexist for a time.

The first article about Runic versus Latin writing to appear in the collection is by Alan Griffiths, under the title "Rune-names: the Irish connexion". The author presents, at the very beginning of the paper, what the thesis is going to be: to show that the names of the runes "can be explained in terms of letter-names found as glosses to the Mediterranean alphabets listed in Irish manuscripts going back to at least the seventh century" (p. 84). Although he is aware of the scepticism with which this topic is normally confronted, he first tries to show the relation between ogham names and rune names to then argue that they do not predate the advent of Christian literacy in Ireland, from where (supposedly) they would expand to Anglo-Saxon England and to Scandinavia and that they may derive from other Mediterranean alphabets such as Hebrew, Greek and Latin. In order to achieve this, the author examines three examples (*h*, *x* and *d*) in an extremely interesting and sometimes wildly imaginative exposition, where he compares the kennings for the ogham names of the former letters with the verses referring to them in the OE *Runic Poem*.

Jan Ragnar Hagland also remarkably contributes to the theme of the confronted scripts, but this time focusing on a particular digraphic manuscript written at the end of the Middle Ages by a Danish court official called Bent Bille. Two thirds of his writing in this particular manuscript is done using the runic script, the remaining third in Latin script. He first looks

at possible functional divergences between the two scripts in the manuscript, after which he genially argues that the runic script has been used in the manuscript with typographical purposes, since the author of the document has used it to record notes on private affairs (sexual encounters, illicit activities, etc.). Hagland extrapolates this "secretive" function of the script in the mss. to the situation of the runic script at the end of the Middle Ages, where it is no longer used for general communication. A close examination of Bille's typographical and orthographical features provides the author with the conclusion that his Latin handwriting dominates his runic writing.

Another interesting paper related to early runic usage is Bernard Mees' "Runes in the First Century", where he tries to show that literacy for tribes in contact with the Roman world in the first century is generally Latin. He also comments on some inscriptions of Germanic authorship in both the North Etruscan and Greek alphabets, and offers a comprehensive and fascinating exposition about the word "notae" in a passage of Tacitus' *Germania* and about whether this passage refers to the casting of runes or proto-runes, or whether it is too early for these.

A particularly interesting case of runic script confronting Latin script is to be found in Jørgen Steen Jensen´s paper, which is devoted to the Danish *renovatio monetae* during the 11th century. He proposes the Danish *renovatio monetae* system was first used around 1060, with the appearance of the coin type "Hauberg 28". However, the author argues, some major change had to be applied to the coins to distinguish them clearly from foreign currency or former mints due to the starting process of royal mint monopolisation. In Jensen´s opinion, this change is found in the introduction of the runic script in the coins, this first new type called "Hauberg 30", dated to 1065.

The collection's last paper, by Kristel Zilmer, adds to the understanding of Christian runic inscriptions. The author tries to compare runic inscriptions of the Early Middle Ages with those of the High Middle Ages by focussing on their textual analysis and their cultural-historical connections.

"The problem of runic chronology and typology versus regional variation" was the third topic proposed for the papers presented at the Symposium. An interesting attempt to present a more accurate chronology of Viking-Age Swedish rune stones is Anne-Sofie Gräslund's paper. Preoccupied with the aura of pessimism (or even resignation) regarding the dating of the Swedish rune stones of the 11th century, the author proposes doing so on stylistic grounds. She proceeds to offer an analysis of the six stylistic groups of runic animals, focussing her attention in details such as overall impression, head, tail, etc. Gräslund argues that each style has a particular set of commonalities (not shared by the other styles) that can help

provide scholars with a chronology, though she makes it clear that "we must expect large overlaps" (p. 125), proceeding then to offer her certainly more precise chronology.

Marie Stoklund's paper is an important contribution to the chronology of Danish runic inscriptions. The piece abounds with tables and examples based on evidence which divide the corpus in three temporal delimitations: before 800 AD, Viking Age and post 1050 with the beginning of the Danish Middle Ages.

Also about Danish inscriptions, but this time focussing on the Jelling stones, is Anne Pedersen's paper, which compiles important aspects of the history of the Jelling monuments. She provides an account of the history of research on Jelling, the archaeological history of the site and the artistic representations of the historical characters to whom the inscriptions refer.

The fourth theme of the collection is well represented by the very first paper, by Michael Barnes, on standardised futharks. The author questions whether standardised futharks are useful to the runologist or whether they are completely misleading. Barnes explains that the initial selection of graphs for the standardised futharks can be dated back to the 19th century, when runologists such as Wimmer started recording only some particular variations in the known corpus, without ever justifying the selection process, in what Barnes describes as a process of uncritical thinking. Standardised futharks can imply the existence of original prototypes from which later forms developed, thus rendering variation as deviant.

R. I. Page also contributes to this fourth theme of the conference with an interesting and certainly good-humoured article about the statistical problems with which runology is faced. He starts by introducing the idea that the amount of runic material we possess does not represent any number close to the actual quantity of runic writing that must have taken place. He also revises the statistical problems of runic numismatics and of the Anglo-Saxon inscriptions (or lack of them) in particular locations. Page concludes that we work with a very small representative of the inscriptions, but that should not prevent runologists from drawing careful conclusions, always bearing in mind that they need to be updated constantly to include new findings.

Within the field of Anglo-Saxon runic research, Gaby Waxenberger offers a well illustrated paper on the problems encountered when dealing with the yew-rune in the Anglo-Saxon inscription corpus, as this particular rune sometimes represents a vowel and others, different consonants (velar spirant, palatal fricative, etc.). She also provides information regarding the rarely found star-rune, whose interpretation tends to prove very conflictive.

For those who are able to read German and Scandinavian languages, the collection includes a paper by Bernd Neuner about the Norwegian Runic Poem entitled "Das Norwegische Runengedicht – was sich hinter den zweiten Zeilen vergibt", an article under the title "Zur Runeninschrift auf dem Schemel von Wremen" by Schön, Düwel, Heine and Marold, and Per Stille's paper on "Johan Bure och hans Runaräfst".

Runes and their Secrets is a solid interdisciplinary compilation with many high quality pieces of research which will satisfy both beginning runologists and specialised scholars. The work is wonderfully edited and exceedingly well presented, the result being an approachable yet illuminating collection. (Irene García Losquiño)

Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits: Traditional Belief and Folklore in Early Modern Europe. Ed. Kathryn A. Edwards. Kirksville: Truman State Univ. Press. 2002. ISBN: 1-931112-08-8. 264 pp.

This is a fascinating volume dealing with a wide, even eclectic, range of issues related to magic and witchcraft in a broad sense and, more specifically, with "spirits" and "beasts". The geographical spread of the material in the essays is largely Continental with a focus on the Germanic and French. Edwards' introduction provides an excellent overview of the issues running through the essays and makes comprehensive and unified a range of topics which might otherwise be (overly) disparate. Indeed, the introduction would serve as an excellent starting point for students wanting to understand some of the key issues in the area of "traditional belief and folklore" in the early modern period. The first essay, by Briggs, discusses shapeshifting in the context of Lorraine witch trials making the key point that such "fantastic tales" (p. 23) need to appear in all trials but will appear at some point in most groups of trials because of the association of "classic narcissistic delusions" (p. 23) with the extreme emotional and psychological pressure brought to bear on the accused. The result is an essay which effectively explains why such bizarre "confessions" occur across Europe.

Lederer's essay on Bavaria ghosts traces evolving attitudes towards, and reactions to, ghosts rather than questioning, necessarily, the existence of ghosts. What is suggested is that ghosts remained almost "an anthropological constant" (p. 25) while societal interpretations of them altered from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Most interestingly, the essay charts the widening gulf "between popular tradition and elite innovation" (p. 28).

When looking at possession and exorcism in France, Ferber also charts a similar divergence between the elite and the popular – as in Bavaria, within the context of post-Tridentine Catholic Reform – while stressing the "mutable lines between elite and popular" (p. 58). In particular, she stresses the complex Catholic response to views "defended as orthodox" but uncomfortably associated with superstition (p. 64). The next essay, by Nalle, shifts the focus of the discussion to Spain and *El Encubierto*, a messianic leader who comes close to being Spain's Thomas Müntzer. The essay stresses the interplay of elite (published) ideas of the apocalypse and traditional, folkloric view about the end of the world. While less about the magical, the essay gives the reader a firm grounding in the popular with emphasis (nicely complementing Ferber and Lederer) on the changing response to the vision being presented: from "earthly salvation to living hell" (p. 92). Bell's essay moves the reader back to Germany (Worms) and wonderfully counter-balances the strongly Christian (and Catholic) focus by examining Jewish ideas about magic. The essay focuses on three tales in the *Ma'ase Nissim* (by Joseph Juspa, written in 1670) which relate magical events (largely of a "protective nature", p. 115) associated with the Jewish community and its relations with the wider (gentile) community in Worms. Bell, in particular, presents a reading (and writing) of magic which is not only *not* negative but, at times, entirely positive. While an antidote to the more familiar (elite) Christian view it may well help readers to understand how "witches" managed to survive and even thrive in communities for many years before being denounced to authorities – the role of magic as *beneficia* – and miraculous – stands out in the essay. The sixth essay, by Schutte, considers Asmodea (Maria Fabri) an "out-and-out witch" and nun prosecuted in Tuscany in the 1720s by the Roman Inquisition. The essay is interesting in detailing Asmodea's "variation" on the demonic pact; she actually married the devil and then was transported on "deluxe tours of major cities" (p. 124). Here, the demonic becomes escapism. This suggests a shift in ideas about the demonic and magical which find their echo in the next essay, Krampl's on witchcraft in early eighteenth century Paris. The essay focuses on so-called "false sorcerers and sorceresses" – an oxymoron from a sixteenth-century perspective. In this essay, there is the hint of a movement towards eliding magician / witch with the con artist but the credulity of the authorities survive. Faced with a case involving a philosopher's stone, they actively discussed putting the stone to use in the service of the state while treating its "owner" as a charlatan (p. 140). The next essay, by Gordon, shifts the volume's focus away from France and back to the sixteenth century by examining Protestant (e.g. Bullinger) ideas on necromancy and demonic physicality. The apocalyptic nature of the ideas

recalls issues raised in Nalle's essay. Gordon discusses an extended debate about the ability of sexual relations with demons to produce progeny in a wider discussion about the apparent power of Satan in the world as a sign of the end of the world. The penultimate essay, by Jacques-Lefèvre, focuses specifically on werewolves in demonological works. Most agreed that such transformations could not "truly and essentially happen" (p. 185) but were mere illusion although Bodin accepted the possibility of actual change. Obviously the essential reality (or not, of an illusion) was almost unimportant, a mere technicality, in recounting tales of werewolves. What is perhaps most interesting is the total lack of a cohesive or singular idea of what the transformation actually meant (partial, complete, etc.) with the result that the *idea* of the werewolf had substance but in every other sense the werewolf was "an irrepresentable figure" (p. 197). Midelfort's essay, which closes the volume, places the entire discussion into the wider context of psychohistory and even, with references to Freud, of psychoanalysis. In this nineteenth century reading, the spirits, beasts, and powers of the essays were moved from the external world (and reality) to much more "real" (and terrifying) "unconscious drives and anxieties" (p. 209). For the student or interested reader the theme of re-interpretation will form one of the strongest strands running throughout the volume. Werewolves, witches and wandering spirits were a significant part of traditional belief and folklore – and remain so today. However, the move from a view where witches really solemnized pacts with the devil, ghosts walked and talked and werewolves haunted the darkest corners of the night to one of amusement and titillating fright in darkened cinemas is substantive and important. This volume helps to explain both early modern ideas about such "beings" at the elite and popular level but also how these ideas went through their own metamorphosis over time. (William Naphy)

Notes for Contributors

Manuscripts of articles should be submitted to the editor, Dr Mirjam Mencej, Associate Professor, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, Zavetiška 5, Ljubljana 1000, Slovenia. Enquiries may be made by email to mirjam.mencej@ff.uni-lj.si. The articles will be sent out to readers for peer review. An author receives a pdf of the article and a copy of the journal issue.

Articles should be typed double-spaced throughout on one side of the paper and the pages should be numbered. One paper copy should be submitted and a further copy should be retained by the author. Wherever possible, a disc copy or email attachment should also be sent, preferably formatted for Word for Windows (PC).

Figures and tables should be camera-ready and clearly numbered and should be accompanied by numbered captions typed on a separate sheet. The position of both figures and tables should be marked in the typescript.

The Harvard style of surname, date and page number cited in the text with an alphabetically ordered list of references at the end should be employed. Any footnotes should be given before the references. Spelling and punctuation should follow British English conventions. Past issues of the journal may be consulted for details of presentation. The references should be set out as in the following examples:

Dillon, Myles (1947). The Archaism of Irish Tradition. *Proceedings of the British Academy* 33, 245-64.

Mac Cana, Proinsias (1995). Mythology and the Oral Tradition: Ireland. In *The Celtic World*, ed. Miranda Jane Green, pp. 779-84. London: Routledge.

Needham, Rodney, ed. (1973). *Right & Left: Essays on Dual Symbolic Classification*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press.

Turner, Victor (1967). *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

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