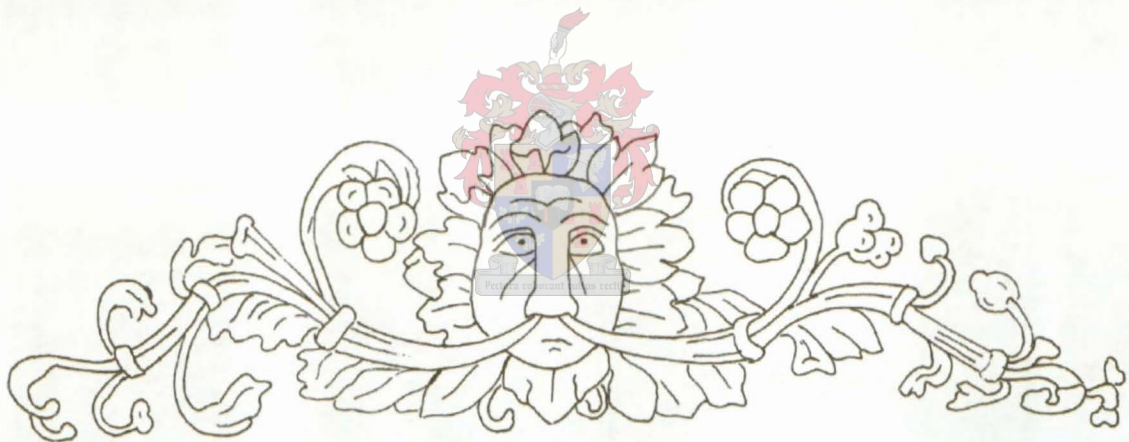


Fantasy Illustration as an Expression of Postmodern 'Primitivism': The Green Man and the Forest

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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at
the University of Stellenbosch.

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April 2006

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Date: 08/03/06.....

Abstract

This study demonstrates that Fantasy in general, and the Green Man in particular, is a postmodern manifestation of a long tradition of modernity critique.

The first chapter focuses on outlining the history of ‘primitivist’ thought in the West, while Chapter Two discusses the implications of Fantasy as postmodern ‘primitivism’, with a brief discussion of examples. Chapter Three provides an in-depth look at the Green Man as an example of Fantasy as postmodern ‘primitivism’. The final chapter further explores the invented tradition of the Green Man within the context of New Age spirituality and religion.

The study aims to demonstrate that, like the Romantic counterculture that preceded it, Fantasy is a revolt against increased secularisation, industrialisation and nihilism. The discussion argues that in postmodernism the Wilderness (in the form of the forest) is embraced through the iconography of the Green Man.

The Green Man is a pre-Christian symbol found carved in wood and stone, in temples and churches and on graves throughout Europe, but his origins and original meaning are unknown, and remain a controversial topic. The figure of the Green Man most commonly appears in Fantasy art as a humanoid male head disgorging leaves from its mouth; a composite of man and foliage. In contemporary Fantasy the Green Man has come to signify what Terri Windling terms “the Mythic Forest” and “... mythic rebirth and regeneration ...”.

The study concludes that the prevalence and pervasiveness of Green Man and forest imagery in Fantasy is indicative of a wider trend in modernised society – that of nostalgia for a mythic and imagined past, and of dissatisfaction with modernity.

The discussion demonstrates that postmodern ‘primitivism’ continues certain Modernist characteristics and brings them to their logical/extreme conclusion. Thus postmodernism takes modern ‘primitivism’ to the extremes of escapism and consumerism. Hence, like most counter discourses of modernity, Fantasy remains caught in the very paradigm it sets out to critique.

Opsomming

Hierdie studie demonstreer dat Fantasia in die algemeen, en veral die Groen Man, 'n postmoderne manifestasie van 'n lang tradisie van kritiek op die modernisme is.

Die eerste hoofstuk fokus op die uiteensetting van die geskiedenis van 'primitivistiese' denke in die Weste, terwyl hoofstuk twee die implikasies van Fantasia as postmodernistiese 'primitivisme' bespreek deur middel van 'n bondige bespreking van voorbeelde. Hoofstuk drie verskaf 'n in-diepte blik op die voorbeeld van die Groen Man as 'n voorbeeld van Fantasia as postmodernistiese 'primitivisme'. Die slothoofstuk ondersoek die versinde tradisie van die Groen Man verder binne die konteks van *New Age* spiritualiteit en godsdiens.

Die studie beoog om te demonstreer dat Fantasia, soos die Romantiese kontrakultuur wat dit voorafgegaan het, 'n opstand teen toenemende sekularisasie, industrialisasie en nihilisme is. Daar word geargumenteer dat, binne die postmodernisme, die Wildernis (in die vorm van die woud) aangegryp word deur die ikonografie van die Groen Man.

Die Groen Man is 'n voorchristelike simbool wat gekerf is in hout en steen, in tempels en kerke en op grafte in Europa, maar sy oorsprong en oorspronklike betekenis is onbekend, en bly 'n omstrede onderwerp. Die figuur van die Groen Man verskyn in Fantasia-kuns as 'n mensagtige manskop, met blare wat uit sy mond peul: 'n saamgestelde beeld van mens en blare. In kontemporêre Fantasia dien die Groen Man teenswoordig as betekenaar vir, soos Terri Windling daarna verwys, "the Mythic Forest" en "... mythic rebirth and regeneration ...".

Die studie kom tot die slotsom dat die algemeenheid en hoë voorkoms van die Groen Man en woudbeelde in Fantasia 'n aanduiding is van 'n wyer tendens in die gemoderniseerde samelewing – dié van 'n verlange na 'n mitiese en versinde verlede sowel as 'n ontevredenheid met modernisme.

Die bespreking demonstreer dat postmodernistiese 'primitivisme' sekere Modernistiese kenmerke voortsit en hulle tot 'n logiese uiteinde of 'n uiterste voer. Postmodernisme neem dus moderne 'primitivisme' na die uiterstes van ontsnapping en verbruikerswese. Dus soos so baie einste ander kontradiskoorse van die modernisme, bly Fantasia vasgevang binne die paradigma waarop dit kritiek lewer.

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisors, for their support during the period of this study; Lize van Robbroeck I thank for her interest and guidance, Paddy Bouma for her continuous encouragement of my practical illustration.

I wish to thank my mother, Rosalind Tolson, for emotional support, a dictionary and a place to rest my head, William Pienaar for being there, and Romaine Hill for her conscientious application to the language aspects of my study.

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Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate and explore the link between postmodern 'primitivism' and the subculture of Fantasy. To achieve this end, and to narrow the field of this potentially vast inquiry to manageable proportions, I will discuss one example in depth: the image of the so-called 'Green Man'.

As an illustrator, I am particularly interested in how Fantasy as postmodern 'primitivism' asserts itself visually, and in what manner it differs from other contemporary illustration styles. My motivation for writing this thesis was to discover the significance of the proliferation of 'Green Man' type figures and symbols that I have come across in the course of my reading and my general perusal of Fantasy literature and illustration. The figure of the Green Man appears in Fantasy art most commonly as a humanoid male head disgorging leaves from its mouth: a composite of man and foliage. He appears on websites and on jacket covers, in hundreds of unconnected illustrations and as a character in many books, short stories and in films.

The Green Man is a pre-Christian symbol found carved in wood and stone, in temples and churches, and on graves throughout Europe, but his origins and original meaning are unknown, and remain a controversial topic. In Fantasy, the Green Man has come to signify what Terri Windling terms "The Mythic Forest" and "... mythic rebirth and regeneration" (2002: 3-4). My contention is that the prevalence and pervasiveness of Green Man and forest imagery in Fantasy is indicative of a wider trend in society – that of nostalgia for a mythic and imagined past, and of dissatisfaction with modernity.

In the course of my argument I cover much theoretical ground, ranging from discussions around 'primitivism' and Modernism to postmodernism and Fantasy. As a result, I make use of a wide array of literatures that adopt a variety of theories. Hence, my methodological approach is quite eclectic.

As is evident from the title of this thesis, postmodern theory plays a major role in my arguments. According to Jean-François Lyotard, a defining condition of postmodernism is "... incredulity towards metanarratives" (1984: xxiv). For the purposes of this article I particularly discuss the implications of progress as a Modernist metanarrative. The Enlightenment-derived system "... in which the hero of knowledge works toward a good ethico-political end-universal peace" (Lyotard, 1984: xxiv) is challenged and critiqued through the symbolism of the Green Man figure.

As a part of the postmodern suspicion of the notions of absolute truth or truthful representation, I acknowledge that my own claims of objectivity are suspect. Unlike Jean Baudrillard, I am not a nihilist, yet I accept that in a late-modern global village certain of his views, as articulated in *Simulacra and Simulation*, have significance. The poet-philosopher Baudrillard argues that we have lost contact with the 'real' in various ways, and that there is nothing left but a continuing fascination with its disappearance. His is a vision of extreme melancholia and nihilism, where nothing exists except simulation and the "... desert of the real" (1997: 162, 1).

Frequently, the Green Man is represented as an all-encompassing symbol of Nature/ anti-civilisation, whose universality I contest according to postmodern theoretical principles that argue in favour of specific localised contexts and diversity of human experience. As Marina Warner comments in the introduction to *From the Beast to the Blonde*, the Modernist thrust to universal significance obscures "... the power to illuminate experiences embedded in social and material conditions" (1994: xviii). Although I do not discount psychoanalytical interpretations of texts, I believe that historical interpretations, embedded in material and theoretical circumstance, offer more consistent insight into human behaviour than the former.

As it is my contention that the Green Man signifies a radical disenchantment with modernity, I explore the reasons for this disenchantment in some depth, particularly the Modernist Nature/culture dichotomy, where human identity is "... defined in opposition to and through denial of nature" (Plumwood, 1993: 22). According to Val Plumwood, 'Nature' is perceived as "... the excluded and devalued contrast of reason ... [including] the emotions, the body, the passions, animality, the primitive or uncivilized, the non-human world, matter, physicality and sense experience, as well as the sphere of irrationality, of faith and madness" (1993: 19-20).

The major difficulty that I have encountered is that of writing an academic thesis on a topic that frequently explores notions of the esoteric, spirituality and religion – matters about which it is difficult not to have some personal bias, and which are ultimately a matter of personal opinion. I have, therefore, deliberately focused on the discursive aspects of the phenomenon of the Green Man, and by and large avoided a spiritual interpretation.

To remain within the limited constraints of this thesis, I must frequently offer up brief and necessarily superficial overviews of topics that deserve a more lengthy and detailed discussion. It stands to reason that over one thousand years of history cannot be contained in one account, nor would it be desirable to attempt so thorough a one in this study.

In this relatively brief discussion, I first explain the significance of ‘primitivism’ to Western¹ ‘civilisation’. I then apply my findings to the subculture of Fantasy, ending with a more specific discussion of the significance of the Green Man as a symbol of postmodern ‘primitivism’.

I am particularly indebted to the following literature in the formulation of this thesis. Marianna Torgovnick’s *Primitive Passions* (1996) and *Gone Primitive* (1991) are referred to throughout. Other texts that proved invaluable were Susan Hiller’s anthology *The Myth of Primitivism* (1991) and Deborah Root’s *Cannibal Culture* (1996). In my discussion of Fantasy I have made much use of Ann Swinfen’s *In Defence of Fantasy* (1984); J.R.R. Tolkien’s various essays collected in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays* (1997); and of those in *Tree and Leaf* (1964).

My main sources on the Green Man and the forest have been Robert Pogue Harrison’s *Forests: The Shadow of Civilisation* (1992), Kathleen Basford’s *The Green Man* (1978) and Clive Hick’s *The Green Man: A Field Guide* (2000).

In order to fully explore the ideas surrounding Fantasy and the Green Man, I begin my thesis with a chapter dedicated to a definition of postmodern ‘primitivism’. In this chapter I discuss the different and often confused meanings and connotations of ‘primitivism’, and give a brief historical overview of the term. I investigate patterns of ‘modern’ thinking, by focusing on constructions of Otherness and concepts of the ‘primitive’. I propose that the modern fascination with non-European and colonised peoples is frequently used (at times subconsciously) as a basis for engaging in a critique of modernity. To make my point, I discuss the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau, Michael de Montaigne, and Joseph Conrad. The purpose of this chapter is, however, primarily to define *postmodern* ‘primitivism’. I examine and demonstrate how, recently, it has been recognised that the ‘primitive’ has become “... the sign and symbol of desires the West has sought to repress” (Torgovnick, 1996: 8) and that postmodern ‘primitivism’ has become both the urge to reclaim these rejected elements and an expression of a utopian desire to “... re-inhabit core experiences ... ” (Torgovnick, 1996: 5). I discuss how postmodern ‘primitivism’ differs from Modern ‘primitivism’ in that it looks within to find the ‘primitive’, rather than projecting it onto Other cultures.

Having defined postmodern ‘primitivism’, in my second chapter I demonstrate that Fantasy is very often an expression of postmodern ‘primitivist’ desire/fear and that the consumption of, and participation in, Fantasy-related materials is one way in which Westerners explore their fascination with the ‘primitive’ and with alterity in general. As well-known author and scholar Ursula Le Guin states in her book, *The Language of the Night*, “Fantasy is the natural, the appropriate language for

¹ For the purposes of this article, I use the term ‘Western’ to signal an “... association with European-derived

the recounting of the spiritual journey and the struggle of good and evil in the soul” (1992: 64). I present a brief overview and contextual introduction to the concept of Fantasy before I discuss, in this and the following chapter, how the Western Fantasy subculture has turned its fascination and projections of the ‘primitive’ inwards. The results can be viewed (within the context of Fantasy) in the widespread popularity of the myth of the ‘white barbarian’ and of an imagined European pre-history. I discuss and demonstrate this idea through the use of various examples of Fantasy, particularly those taken from J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, but also with reference to Arthurian Fantasy and *The Matrix* trilogy of films.

The purpose of this account is neither to judge nor to justify the use (or existence) of postmodern ‘primitivism’ in the form of Fantasy. The study of Fantasy is of interest to me because of what it reveals not only about the Western cultural imagination, but also about the underbelly of mainstream society. However, I propose here that Fantasy and activities that can be considered expressions of postmodern ‘primitivism’ are reactions to, and rejections of, modernity. I propose that Fantasy illustration is consciously ‘conservative’, deliberately turning its back on more mainstream trends in much the same way as the Pre-Raphaelites did in the mid-nineteenth century, and the Romantics before them (Wood, 1998: 7).

In my third chapter, I discuss one prominent and popular example of Fantasy as a form of postmodern ‘primitivism’: the Green Man and the forest. I demonstrate how the Green Man has become the personification of the forest, which stands, in the West, for the ‘primitive’ *Other*. I also briefly discuss the long cultural history of the forest in Western society, as well as its ambiguity and connotations of lawlessness. Further, I discuss the postmodern ‘primitive’ notions of ‘white savages’ and imagined European pre-histories, as demonstrated through the discussion of contemporary ‘Celtic’ Fantasy and culture. In my final chapter, I demonstrate that ‘Celtic’ traditions and religions, and the Green Man in particular, are in fact ‘invented traditions’, and that any continuity purported with the past is mostly fictitious.

Finally, I demonstrate that the forest and the Green Man have become highly profiled symbols of the postmodern ‘primitive’: a rallying point for a type of romanticised ‘anti-civilisation’ and spiritual transformation movement, as well as the expression of dissatisfaction with modernity. I discuss how the Green Man has become (literally, as well as metaphorically) a deification of the concept of the postmodern ‘primitive’.

cultural assumptions” (Price, 2001: 3; Gunew, 2004: 48).

Chapter 1

Defining Postmodern 'Primitivism'

The term 'primitive' and its derivative 'primitivism' are ambiguous and problematic words about which much has been, and continues to be, written. The space of a mere chapter cannot do justice to this topic. Therefore, I would like to draw attention to those aspects of the history of 'primitivism' that I feel are particularly relevant to my discussion, and to give only a broad overview of the topic concerned.

My understanding is that the idea of the 'primitive' is a fantasy – a fictional construction of the modern imagination – while the term 'primitivism' describes the belief in the 'primitive'. In writing this thesis, I take the view that 'primitive', 'primitivism', 'modern' and 'postmodern' are all terms that refer to categories that have been constructed out of a specific historical and cultural context (Hiller, 1991: 4). I propose that the connotations of the word 'primitive' (and, therefore, also 'primitivism') have changed, as paradigms have shifted, politics changed and years passed. Like Warner, I strongly believe that historical interpretation offers insight into human behaviour (Warner, 1994: xviii-xix) and that no discussion of 'primitivism' would be complete without a brief look into the rather convoluted material circumstances from which the term arose.

This discussion is, in Shelly Errington's words, "... premised on the fact that the object of knowledge changes in different contexts and is constituted partly by the way it is named" (1998: xxvi). As I demonstrate, the tradition of belief in the 'primitive' has existed since pre-modernity, through the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries until the present day.

For the purposes of this thesis, I maintain that a history of the 'primitive' is essentially a history of Western preoccupation with the 'Other', and it is against the difference of this 'Other' that the West defines its 'normality'² (Hiller, 1991: 11).

Alterity plays an essential role in the formulation of 'primitivism'. A society chooses some *other* group or place, different in some way from itself, that it then constructs as 'Other'. On these 'Others' are projected those qualities that are rejected, feared or disowned by the society itself. In Western/modern society these Others have included women, non-Europeans, criminals and the insane – all groups that have been traditionally excluded from positions of power. According to Clastres, "All cultures ... create a division of humanity between themselves ... a representation par

² The 'self', the normative, the empowered and the 'civilised' are always perceived as the Western, 'modernised' 'us' versus the primitive 'them'. In the words of Marianna Torgovnick, the Western self is usually portrayed as white, of European ancestry, literate and middle-class or wealthy (Torgovnick, 1991: 4).

excellence of the human, and the others, which only participate in humanity to a lesser degree Cultural alterity is never thought of as positive difference, but always as inferiority on a hierarchical axis.” (1994: 46.)

Dealing as it does with ideas, it is neither possible nor desirable to attempt a strict chronological ‘history’ of ‘primitivism’, where one idea ‘evolves’ into the next. Neither people nor ideas behave in such a ‘rational’, ordered fashion. Ideas overlap, oppose each other, are coterminous: sometimes they exist simultaneously; sometimes one paradigm dominates and then the other.

1.1 A Brief History of ‘Primitivism’

1.1.1 Pre-Modern ‘Primitivism’ and ‘The Wild Man’

As I have already stated, the term ‘primitive’ is not a timeless category, but rather a transmutable construct for which there is no ‘beginning’ – no single event that signals the birth of the West’s pre-occupation. However, as Keith Dietrich argues in his doctoral thesis *Of Salvation and Civilisation*, Western culture is heir to “... two major formative influences that served to shape ideas about the Other, namely, Christianity and the heritage of Judaic and Greco-Roman³ cultures” (1993: 6). I discuss these ideas in some depth, since the dualisms, ambiguity and myths that characterise contemporary postmodern ‘primitivism’, arguably, have their origins here. I particularly focus on the figure of ‘the Wild Man’, since the iconography of the Green Man possibly derives from this mythological prototype⁴.

³ Western history books tend to trace the origin of everything – science, art, and civilisation, and Western culture in general – back to ancient Greece in a neat linear ‘progression’. However, this model has recently been called into question – particularly with the controversial publication of *Black Athena* by Martin Bernal in 1987. Bernal asserts that “The world of Plato and Aristotle was more Egyptian and African than it was European” (Sardar, 1998: 206). He claims that the ‘Aryan model’ of the origins of Greek civilisation was a fabrication of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Romantics and racists (Bernal, 1987: 2).

It is not at all surprising that a work such as *Black Athena* should be published at a time when all things of Western-European extraction are being viewed with academic suspicion. The study of Greek and Latin literature and language are still “... considered to be the most traditional of disciplines, as a legacy from the European past when the study of the ‘classics’ was synonymous with education ...” (Lefkowitz and Maclean Rogers, 1996: x). The truth of Bernal’s facts has also been questioned.

Sardar finds that it is extremely problematic to refer to Greek culture as ‘European/Aryan’, since ‘Europe’, as such, only dates from Charlemagne’s achievements at the earliest (1998: 206). It is equally problematic to refer to ancient cultures, about which we have limited information, in contemporary terms of race-relations. Evidence suggests that skin-colour (though not nationality) was of little importance to the ancient Greeks (Lefkowitz, 1996: x); we are projecting contemporary concerns onto a culture intrinsically alien from our own. Traditions are easily invented and the “legacy of Greece” is a fairly powerful myth in Western society (Livingstone, 1921: 1). Facts aside, I think Bernal has a point in the broader sense: Western civilisation may not be the direct ‘heir’ (or the *only* heir (Sardar, 1998: 206)) to ‘classical’ culture, but it has been adopted as such, and therefore is relevant to my discussion.

⁴ Although there is no direct evidence that a such link can indeed be made.

The roots of the ‘civilisation/savagery’ binary can already be found in the writings of Greek and Roman philosophers⁵, in Christian mythology, theory and iconography, and in medieval and classical mythology (Dietrich, 1993: iii). Preceding the Greeks and Romans, the Sumerian⁶ epic of *Gilgamesh* also shows evidence of tension between ‘civilisation’ and ‘savagery’⁷.

The revival of interest in Greek and Roman cultures and literatures, in medieval and Renaissance Europe:

... introduced into European thinking a revision of the ‘primitivistic’ ideas of authors such as Tacitus, Virgil, Seneca, and Ovid, who held that certain peoples still lived according to nature in a state approximating that of the mythical Golden Age, which shared many features with the Judea-Christian paradise myth (Dietrich, 1993: 17).

This ‘Golden Age’ was frequently expressed through reference to Virgil, who wrote of it extensively in his work *The Georgics*. Virgil’s ‘Golden Age’ was inhabited by a ‘golden race’, identified often by scholars of the 19th century as noble savages (Johnston, 1980: 5-6).

Almost by definition, history, philosophy and literature have been written in urban centers by ‘civilised’ peoples. Historically, these city-dwellers have habitually identified country people as inferior. Dietrich discusses how urban societies separate themselves from the Wilderness, and how this separation is accompanied “... by a corresponding internalized separation in the consciousness of ... societies; a detachment of the mind from matter” (1993: 21). The ancient Greek poet Alcman’s ambivalence towards Nature was fairly representative of Grecian attitudes. In his various works “... mountain summits ... glens, cliffs and caves,” like his “... dark ocean’s waves ...” were both beautiful and dangerous, associated with “... black earth’s reptile brood ...” and the “... wild beasts of the mountain wood ...” (Murray, 1912: 39).

According to Nicholson, the Roman attitude to Nature (among ‘classical writers’ at least) “... remained almost consistently adverse ... the Romans felt mountains to be aloof, inhospitable, desolate, and hostile” (1997: 39). After the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, the Christian Church inherited the Roman view of the Wilderness as a hostile and dangerous waste, bolstering this

⁵ Aristotle wrote in *The Politics* that the ‘Polis’ is the highest good and a man who dwelt within such a city-state was a “complete man” and a “political animal”. He claims that the state is what makes humans different from animals and that “... he who ... is without state, is either a bad man or above humanity ...”. Aristotle quotes Homer to further verify his point. For Aristotle a man without a state (a *polis*) is a man without justice or virtue – he is like “... the most savage of animals ... full of lust and gluttony ...” (*Aristotle*, Ancient History Sourcebook [Online]).

⁶ The Sumerians are credited with the earliest recorded invention of writing, and the *Gilgamesh* Epic is regarded as the first ever piece of literature (Harrison, 1992: 14).

⁷ Gilgamesh, the hero of the epic, soon finds himself pitted against his first antagonist – the forest. Gilgamesh is a builder of towns and civic structures, and is referred to in the text as “The builder of the walls of Uruk” (Harrison, 1992: 14-15).

notion with the Christian-derived assumption that, like the human race, Nature was cursed, and suffering the punishment brought about by human sin⁸. Despite this widespread view, there existed “... implicit dualism in the Bible ...”, with the Old and New Testaments describing different attitudes towards Nature (Nicholson, 1997: 42). Coupled with debate over ‘The Lord’s Controversy’⁹, these differences would ultimately lend weight to a gradual reversal of the Christian attitude towards Nature, where from seeing it as cursed it became regarded as blessed.

However, in pre-Modern Europe, Nature was customarily described in unbecoming terms, and the worst characteristics projected onto it. For instance, during the 17th century, mountains were commonly described as “... Dugs, Risings, Fumors, Blisters, [and] Warts” (Nicholson, 1997: 41-42). Also, as Harrison relates, outside the city gates lay “... the underside of the ordained world, forests represented the last strongholds of pagan¹⁰ worship” (1992: 61). Outside the towns and villages of medieval Europe, in the forests and Wilderness:

... lived the outcasts, the mad, the lovers, brigands, hermits, saints, lepers, the maquis, fugitives, misfits, the persecuted, the wild men. Where else could they go? Outside of the law and human society one was in the forest (Harrison, 1992: 61).

During the turmoil and unrest of the early Middle Ages, human habitations – civil and religious buildings – were sanctuaries from external actual and imagined dangers. Human society and ‘culture’ were set up in opposition to the threatening Wilderness. Cultivated gardens were the opposite of the savage and dangerous Wilderness – ordered, rational places of respite, standing for “... a sense of security ... a guarded and protected area” (Wethered, 1933: 123). In medieval gardens, Nature was tamed and gentled, while being equated with the Christian myth of Paradise, the Garden of Eden, a concept that fascinated the West throughout the Middle Ages and well into the 19th century. In monastery and convent gardens, the portion that was given over to the growth of flowers for decorative use in the Church was termed ‘Paradise’ (King, 1979: 11).

Already, in pre-modern Europe the ‘primitive’ within was being projected onto people and places outside, or Other than those within the norms of society and ‘culture’. Sexual and social repression, religious guilt over the Christian ‘fall’ of man, all of this and more were projected onto Nature, and onto a figure of particular interest to this study: ‘the Wild Man’. The medieval imagination was fascinated by stories and images of ‘Wild Men’. The mythological figure of ‘the Wild Man’ appeared

⁸ The influential theologian and ecclesiastical reformer, Martin Luther, wrote in the 16th century: “... even the earth, which is innocent in itself and committed no sin, is nevertheless compelled to bear sin’s curse. All these things were deformed by sin and remain deformed still ...” (Nicholson, 1997: 101).

⁹ The central issue of which was whether or not the “... punishment of human sin [was] limited to man, or was it also extended to Nature?” Some early Christian theologians believed that before Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, the world was smooth and as devoid of feature as an egg. Mountains, valleys, and other ‘distortions’ were “... an immediate result of the sin of Adam and Eve” (Nicholson, 1997: 83).

in ‘European’ literary material from the 12th century onwards, and became popular as a visual image from the mid-14th century onwards (Dietrich, 1993: 26). ‘Wild Men’ were believed to look like humans, but to behave like animals, living in the Wilderness and the forests, outside normative medieval society. While ‘the Wild Man’ may have some basis in fact, Dietrich calls these projections ‘mythological’, since stories and legends were spun about them.¹¹

Onto these ‘Wild Men’ were projected all of the associations of ‘Wild’ Nature, and so, according to Schama, “... for much of the Middle Ages, hairy, cannibalistic, sexually omnivorous wild men and women ... represented the antithesis of the civilized Christian” (1996: 97). ‘The Wild Man’ was depicted as the “... supreme example of fallen ‘natural man’ who inhabits the corrupted wilderness” (Dietrich, 1993: 84).



Fig 1. Martin Schongauer, *Wild man with coat of arms* (15th century).
Engraving (Dietrich, 1993: 24, Fig. 9).

With the advent of modernity, attitudes to the Wilderness and to Nature gradually changed and so, too, did attitudes towards ‘Wild’ Men and Women. According to Dietrich, ‘the Wild Man’ [and Woman] “... began a transformation from an object of loathing, fear, lust, and violence, to an object of open envy and admiration; and later still, into the ideal or model of a free humanity as the Noble Savage” (1993: 84). Theologians began to draw associations “... with incontestably holy hairy men: the anchorite saints and hermits of early Christianity ...” (Schama, 1996: 97). ‘The Wild Men’ were tamed and gentled into what became a more domestic and paradisaic view of Nature.

¹⁰ Meaning non-Christian. I provide a more detailed discussion on this concept in Chapter 4.

¹¹ Harrison claims that Wild Men and Women were not always completely imaginary: “... such men (and women as well) would every now and then be discovered in the forests – usually insane people who had been taken to the woods ...” (1992: 65).

1.1.2 Noble Savages and Cannibals

The earliest European journeys of exploration generated considerable speculation – often fantastic in nature – about the Other. Medieval cartographers commonly populated their maps with mythical places and creatures, thought to have actually existed.¹² Some of these places were supposedly populated with various noble and spectacular figures – Prester John, the Queen of Sheba, and King Solomon,¹³ among others (Dietrich, 1993: 13). These figures, some of whom were relics of Greco-Roman culture,¹⁴ were admired for their bravery, piety, nobility, beauty and wealth.

Most of the medieval Fantasy creatures were, however, monsters – sea serpents, dragons, the ‘Kynokephaloi’ (Dog-headed people) and the ‘Anthropophagoi’ (man-eaters) (Dietrich, 1993: 13). Another peculiarity of medieval cartographers and explorers was the obsession with locating the ‘earthly paradise’ – the biblical Garden of Eden – somewhere in geographical actuality. Such beliefs motivated the search for the origins of the Nile.¹⁵

In a culture obsessed with ‘progress’ and ecological development, there is always a fascination with origins. The dichotomy of repulsion and attraction towards Others was already firmly in place before the process of colonisation and conquest by the West resulted in European speculations and fantasies about the Other becoming projected onto real peoples and geographies (Hiller, 1991: 11). Philosophical thinkers, such as the poet Baudelaire, espoused the beauty and virtue of reason:

... Everything that is beautiful and noble is the result of reason and thought. Crime, for which the human animal acquires a taste in his mother’s womb, is of natural origin. Virtue, on the contrary, is artificial and supernatural. (In Bauman, 1991: 4.)

According to Baudelaire, ‘civilisation’ was what stopped humans from reverting to their animal-like state. Supposedly, lower down on the evolutionary scale, colonised peoples were, therefore, uncivilised and animalistic, being much in need of the saving graces of civilisation. Other ‘primitivists’, such as Rousseau and Lord Shaftsbury, argued that ‘civilisation’ itself was a

¹² Belief was not necessarily universal, however – some cartographers refused to portray mythical beasts and places on navigational maps as early as the 14th century. The sentence “This is the true description of the cosmographers, in concordance with the sailors but freed from worthless tales” was discovered written on the anonymous Genoese World Map, which dates from 1457, demonstrating the skepticism of at least one cartographer (Harley and Woodward, 1987: 372).

¹³ These legends were still to be found as late as 1877, in books such as Thomas Baines’ *The Gold Regions of South Eastern Africa* (in Dietrich, 1993: 18).

¹⁴ Examples included the Amazons, female warriors who supposedly rode to the defence of Troy in Homer’s *Iliad*, but who reappeared on medieval maps as late as the 16th and 17th centuries.

¹⁵ Columbus claimed he had found Paradise in the gulf of Paria, and various other explorers claimed that it lay in the Seychelles, in Mesopotamia, by the Ganges River (Harley and Woodward, 1987: 328). The Nile was only one of four rivers that supposedly had its source in Paradise.

corrupting influence, and left to him/herself a person would be virtuous. The duality of the Enlightenment thus hinged on speculations about the essential nature of man.

So, colonised peoples were viewed in turn, and even simultaneously, as paradisaical and in tune with nature, or violent and animalistic – the dichotomy of the noble savage versus the cannibal. Probably the most famous proponent of the ‘natural goodness of man’ (the idea of the ‘noble savage’ untainted by the evils of civilisation) was Frenchman Jean Jacques Rousseau.¹⁶ Both de Montaigne and Rousseau make extensive reference to ‘classical’ scholars to support their arguments. At the opening of *A Discourse on the origin of Inequality*, Rousseau quotes Aristotle’s *Politics* (I.v.1254a): “It is not in depraved beings, but in those who act in accordance with nature that we must seek what is natural” (in Rousseau, Undated: 55).

The figure of the noble savage is clearly a form of the critique of modernity. Rousseau laments the march of progress, commenting that:

... what is even more cruel is that the whole progress of the human species removes man constantly farther and farther from his primitive state ... through studying man ... we have rendered ourselves incapable of knowing him (Rousseau, Undated: 67).

He argues that the combinations of “science and civilisation” will be the undoing of modern man, and comments that all the ills of his society spring from that source: “... crimes, wars, murders; how much misery and horror ... vanity and scorn ... shame and envy ...” (Undated: 114). When compared to the happiness and well-being of ‘uncivilised’, ‘primitive’ societies, says Rousseau, his own ‘modern’ society is sadly lacking:

... Excesses of all kinds, immoderate transports of every passion, fatigue, exhaustion of mind, the innumerable sorrows and anxieties that people of all classes suffer, and by which the human soul is constantly tormented; these are the fatal proofs that most of our ills are of our own making (Undated: 84-85).

To his disgust, Rousseau seems to have found himself surrounded by moaners and would-be suicides. And whoever heard, asks Rousseau, of “... a savage in a condition of freedom even dreaming of complaining about his life and killing himself?” (Undated: 85). Rousseau is clearly more interested in the critique of his own society, the “... fatal Enlightenment of civilized man”, than he is in the discussion of any ‘primitive’ society¹⁷ (Undated: 115).

¹⁶ Although probably the most well known, Rousseau was not the first to subscribe to the idea of the inherent goodness of man. Others, such as Lord Shaftsbury and Richard Steele, had earlier blamed “... defective education ...” for corrupting individuals (Alderidge, *Primitivism in the Eighteenth Century* [Online]).

¹⁷ As early as 1580 the process of using a discussion of so-called ‘primitive’ peoples as a basis for engaging in a critique of European culture was in place – as is evident in the Renaissance writer Michel de Montaigne’s well-known essay *On Cannibals*. De Montaigne spoke at length with a man who had visited ‘Antarctic France’ (now known as Brazil), basing his essay on this man’s experiences. De Montaigne’s view of the “barbarous peoples” he discusses is more specific and far less romanticised than Rousseau’s notions of “noble savages”. De Montaigne considers them to be cruel, and says so at length – but significantly finds their cruelty no more disturbing than that of his European counterparts. Specifically, he compared the practice of ritual cannibalism with methods of torture

This ambivalence towards the Other continued into the 19th and 20th centuries, but the ‘scientific’ paradigm became dominant and was used to justify colonialism.

As I have demonstrated in the above examples, a strong counter-current of romantic ‘primitivism’ ran through the Enlightenment, characterised by stories about noble savages living in harmonious and peaceful co-existence with nature, and by dreams of simple societies with little or no government in which man’s natural goodness led only to happiness (Crocker, 1969: 27-28). Rousseau, de Montaigne and others employed these stories of ‘primitivism’ as an effective critique of Western ‘civilisation’.

Also, importantly, ‘knowledge’ about the Other from the inception has consisted of a rich blend of fact and fantasy. After the Enlightenment, when a modern epistemology attempted to definitively compartmentalise ‘scientific knowledge’ and ‘wrong knowledge’ of myth, the degree to which ‘knowledge’ of the Other continued to be a mixture of fantasy and fact has been occluded (Dietrich, 1993: 35, 37).

1.1.3 Modernity and the Romantic Counterculture

I use the term ‘modernity’ to imply modernisation or the condition of being ‘modern’. Modernity, according to Bauman, is “... a stage in the history of Western civilization – a product of scientific and technological progress, of the industrial revolution, of the sweeping economic and social changes brought about by capitalism”¹⁸ (1991: 3). The term refers to belief in “... a continuous process of improvement in the capacity of humanity to manage and control its physical, social and cultural environment for its own benefit”, implying that this is not only possible, but also desirable (Waters: 1999: xii).

To avoid confusion from the outset I must briefly differentiate between modernity and Modernism. I view Modernism as an aesthetic concept and intellectual trend that has visible roots in numerous events of the 19th and even 18th centuries, but that reached its peak during the first few decades of the 20th century. Bauman considers Modernism to consist of a rejection of the principles of modernity,

carried out by and during the Spanish Inquisition, and found the former to be no more abhorrent than the latter (*Read About the World, Volume 2, De Montaigne*). De Montaigne, then, used primitivism as a critique of, in his own words: “... the cruelty, the corruption and the culture of Europe” (1993: 79).

¹⁸ There is no agreement regarding the date of the beginning of modernity. Arguably, modernity can be dated from the early 16th century that saw the advent of mercantile capitalism; however, “... many would argue that the modern era did not properly begin until what is known as the ‘Industrial Revolution’ occurred in Britain between about 1750 and 1820, and political revolutions that had the effect of overturning monarchical power occurred in the American

which ultimately both undermines and serves the condition. He states that in Modernism “... modernity turned its gaze upon itself and attempted to attain the clear-sightedness and self-awareness which would eventually disclose its impossibility, thus paving the way to the postmodern reassessment” (1991: 3-4)¹⁹. I shall briefly discuss ‘primitivism’ as a form of Modernist discourse at a later stage, focusing for the moment on the condition of *modernity* in the 19th century.

Modernity defines itself through a series of negations – all of which are defined by difference to various subordinated Others. Val Plumwood argues that dualisms result from this denied dependency on Others, creating unequal pairings such as culture/nature, master/slave, self/other, and that these relationships shape the identities of both halves of the coupling (1993: 41). Bauman suggests that modernity originated out of an “... overwhelming ambition to conquer nature and subordinate it to human needs”. Accordingly, the notion of ‘nature’ was constructed in tandem with the construction of modern ‘culture’ as a product of reason and human will. Nature became the ultimate ‘Other’ of modern ‘culture’ and therefore something to be subordinated (1993: 4, 39-40). Plumwood, too, considers the reason/nature dualism to be of great importance in the development of modern culture. She discusses how everything on the ‘superior’ side “... can be represented as a form of reason, and everything on the underside can be represented as forms of nature” (1993: 45). This subordinate, de-animated and devalued notion of nature as a passive resource “... led to the compartmentalization of nature into specialized spheres of exploitation, which denies or overrides holistic links between natural forces” (Van Robbroeck, 2005: 77).

Inevitably, critiques of modernity develop in tandem with modernity and its offshoots – such as urbanisation and industrialisation. Bauman describes this process as the “*hate-love* relationship between modern existence and modern culture ...”, both of which are mutually dependent. In a world-view defined by dualisms, the complement that emerges from each opposition, *is* opposition (1991: 9). The Romantic Movement was just one such ‘opposition’, developing simultaneously as a product of modernity and as its critique. Paul Heelas terms Romanticism the “... great counter-current of modernity ...” (1998: 1).

In 1755 Burke published his *Inquiry Into the Origins of the Sublime*, after which the concept of the sublime became key to the formation of the aims and definition of what was to become known as Romanticism (Clark, 1973: 19). Burke ushered in a ‘movement’ of aesthetic rebellion against the then dominant art form of ‘Classicism’; a revolt against the “... static conformity of the eighteenth

colonies in 1776 and in France in 1789” (Waters, 1999: xiii). Others confine use of the term to discussion of cultural trends that began in the early 20th century and ended towards the middle of it.

¹⁹ There is a strong element of modernity critique in some manifestations, such as Dadaism, Cubism and German Expressionism. However, some Modernist movements, such as Futurism, Bauhaus and Constructionism, celebrate modernity; Bauman’s statement, therefore, cannot be interpreted as absolute.

century ... a rebellion against generalised forms borrowed from Greco-Roman sculpture, and against the prohibition of colour and movement as expressions of vital force” (Clark, 1973: 20).

The word Romantic had a long history of convoluted meaning, before it surfaced in 19th century Western Europe as an ‘ism’. During the 14th century, the word ‘romance’ (from the root ‘Roman’) was applied to languages derived from Latin. Chaucer later used it to signify tales of chivalry written in those languages. According to Eric Newton, by the 17th century ‘romance’ had come to mean “ ... any prose fiction dealing with unusual or imagined events ...” until it became “... vaguely applied to that class of literature in which fantasy predominated over probability ...” (1962: 10).

The first writers and artists to become known as Romantics were those associated with the German critics, August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, in the late 18th century. By 1846 the term Romanticism was in such use that it required French poet Baudelaire’s defence. “Few people,” he wrote, “ ... will want to give a real and positive meaning to this word; and yet will they dare assert that a whole generation would agree to join a battle lasting several years for the sake of a flag which was not also a symbol?” (In Vaughan, 1995: 9.) Romanticism reflected an era in Western Europe when “ ... accelerating material progress ...” was, for the first time, leading to serious doubts about the “ ... mores of civilized society ...” (Vaughan, 1995: 19). Many artists who practised within the Romantic tradition were determined to confront their culture’s problems, providing a critique of the modern in the form of ‘primitivism’, and bringing them to the attention of the exhibition-going public. The obvious inhumanity of the slave-trade, social problems resulting from the legacy of the feudal system and the changes brought about by ‘progress’ – such as the rapid spread of industrialism and accompanying slums – all of these issues and more were addressed by the Romantics in their art, poetry and literature.

The Romantic attitude was not limited to artists and poets alone – there was widespread disenchantment with modernity among the rest of European society as well. British economist and historian Thomas Carlyle compared medieval and modern life in his essay of 1843, *Past and Present* and found modern life wanting: “We have more riches than any nation ever had before; we have less good of them than any nation ever had before” (in Vaughan, 1995: 20).

Needless to say, Romanticism generated both controversy and criticism as its ideas and aesthetics set it in direct contention with the Classical revival. Romantic art and literature had no uniform stylistic qualities, being rather an attitude of mind, an art form that “ ... emphasizes the associative side of picture making” (Vaughan, 1995: 11).

According to Carlos Reyero, Romanticism:

... projects the individual into the outside world – dark, abysmal, violent, and fantastic – where nature appears to have a life of its own and the irrational is more powerful than the rational ... an investigation of desires, dreams and nightmares, magic, and religious expression (1990: 7).

The Romantic landscape paintings of Constable, Friedrich, Turner and others signalled a “ ... challenge to the subordination of nature to man implicit in classical landscape” (Vaughan, 1995: 133). Under Romanticism, Nature was now an expression of God’s greatness, rather than his curse, as it had been viewed in pre-Enlightenment Europe.

By their very name the Romantics professed a fascination for medieval Europe. They believed in Rousseau’s noble savage, and looked for him within their own imagined pre-histories, and in their own collective unconscious, as well as in an alterity projected onto colonised peoples in geographically remote Other locations. As landscape artist and Romantic painter, Caspar David Friedrich said: “The artist should not only paint what he sees before him, but also what he sees within him ...” (in Vaughan, 1995: 24).

To Karen Berger, the historical process of modernisation implies secularisation, and the abandonment of religious subject matter in art in favour of the possibility of “... self-definition ...” (2000: 91). In direct opposition to this process, many Romantic paintings and poems were unabashedly spiritual or religious in content and execution. “I made a new religion,” wrote the Irish late-Romantic²⁰ poet, William Butler Yeats, “of poetic tradition, of a fardel of stories, and of personages, and of emotions, inseparable from their first expression, passed on from generation to generation by poets and painters...” (in Windling, 1997 [Online]).

During the 19th century, various groups of European ‘primitivists’ proposed a more specific return to European pre-modern origins, rebelling against aspects of modern culture. Groups such as ‘The Ancients’, ‘The Brotherhood of St Luke’ – also known as The Nazarenes – and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood wished to ‘return’ to art forms which they felt embodied spiritual values – be they Christian, pagan, esoteric or visionary. The ‘Barbus’ or ‘Primitifs’ were young French artists for whom “ ... crucial points of reference were pre-classical Greece and the mythical ancient Gaelic world of Ossian²¹” (Prettejohn, 2000: 18). The Nazarenes in Rome tried to bring about a new religious movement in painting. They concentrated their work on the lives of the saints, on images

²⁰ Yeats referred to himself in *Coole Park* and *Ballylee* as one of “... the last romantics ...”, who found “... fresh vitality and variety in the potential explored by earlier generations of Romantics ...”, such as Blake and Rossetti (Sanders, 1996: 495). Interestingly, in the context of my study, Andrew Sanders describes Yeats’ work as containing “ ... a Celticism which is both nationalistic and escapist ...” (1996: 495).

from the German Middle Ages, and on scenes inspired by literature. ‘The Ancients’ were a self-named group of artists, from Kent in England, who greatly admired the work of William Blake in the 1820s. They explored “ ... diffuse notions of a pre-modern pastoral world” ranging from the piously Christian to the erotically pagan (Prettejohn, 2000: 18).

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, like ‘The Ancients’, openly declared their allegiance to the notions of ‘primitive’ and their affinity with art produced in Europe before 1500 AD, through their choice of name (Prettejohn, 2000: 18). One of the founding members, William Holman Hunt went on record saying, “It is simply fuller Nature we want. Revivalism, whether it be of classicism or mediaevalism, is seeking after dry bones.” (In Bowness, 1984: 11.)

As Lize Van Robbroeck notes: “ ... primitivist longing surfaces repeatedly throughout modernity, and follows it like its own shadow”. She suggests that: “The suppressed alterities of modernity, and the social and emotional pathologies these give rise to, bubble to the surface as primitivism *and* racism; the idealisation of women *and* their systematic denigration.” (2005: 75.)

Despite criticism (both at the time and throughout the 20th century until the present day) that their themes were ‘escapist’, the Pre-Raphaelites showed much concern for the social consequences of modern life. For example, both Rossetti and Hunt explored the theme of the ‘fallen woman’, a contemporary problem seen as serious in the cities (Prettejohn, 2000: 94). However, by choosing subject matter derived mainly from their own perceived European ancestry, the Pre-Raphaelites demonstrated an interest in the ‘primitive’ within, rather than exclusively with a geographically remote Other.²²

The public affection for artworks in the Pre-Raphaelite style waned towards the end of the 19th century. The popularity of paintings in the style of the movement was eventually extinguished in favour of French ‘Modernism’. However, paintings such as Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale’s *The Little Foot Page* and William Holman Hunt’s *The Lady of Shallott* were only completed in 1905; other artists continued working in the Pre-Raphaelite tradition well into the early decades of the 20th century.

²¹ The world of Ossian was, in fact, a ‘primitivist’ fantasy that was extremely popular during the 1800s – despite its having absolutely no basis in reality. Although Poet James Macpherson claimed to be translating the epic poem from ‘ancient Gaelic’ manuscripts, it was, in fact, his own creation (Russo, 1999: 75).

1.1.4 20th Century 'Primitivism'

Interest in African and Oceanic art flourished in a variety of artistic circles during the late 1890s and earlier 20th century, occurring simultaneously with the colonial scramble for Africa. The emphasis of 'primitivism' shifted from the 'European' pre-modern to the non-Western. While modern 'primitivist' notions of the Other had their roots in the Enlightenment and before, as briefly discussed in the last section, this interest reached its peak in the 20th century in the artistic phenomenon of 'Primitivism'. Thus, the Pre-Raphaelite movement shares 'primitivist' characteristics with early 20th century movements, such as Fauvism, Cubism, *Die Brücke*, as in each example " ... the 'primitive' reference proposes a swerve away from the orderly flow of historical progress and cultural development in the modernised, industrialised Western world" (Prettejohn, 2000: 19).

The following discussion does not purport to be a comprehensive account of 'Primitivist' art, nor to fully explain its ramifications, but merely offers a brief discussion with specific reference to those points of significance to my overall work. My thesis is not concerned with an investigation of 'primitive' art as such, only with 'primitivism' as a characteristic of modernist discourse – and as an expression of modernist dissatisfaction.

During the early 20th century Western art was inspired by objects and art collected from colonised lands (Turner, 1996: 582). Although the term 'primitive' retained its colonialist connotations of crudeness, racism and savagery, the idea of embracing the Other (particularly as represented to Westerners by so-called 'primitive' peoples) had gained in popularity amongst intellectuals. As Deborah Root writes, the " ... juxtaposition of a supposedly authentic tribal society with a corrupt urban one" is a powerful myth, rooted in the dichotomy of 'Noble Savage' versus Cannibal, and still much in evidence today (1996: 34).

During this early part of the twentieth century " ... a large class of non-Western artifacts came to be redefined as art " in a remarkably short space of time (Clifford, 2002: 221). This reclassification of objects, previously perceived as colonialist trophies, curiosities and exotica, heralded the arrival of a new paradigm of Western thought. I propose that the Modernist artists sought to glorify that which they perceived to embody the 'primitive': geographically remote places and colonised Others that were simplified and romanticised in what was a failed attempt to subvert the colonial stereotype (Leighten, 2002: 234).

²² Specifically, they were interested in the alterity of women.

William Rubin, director of the controversial exhibition “*Primitivism*” in *20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, held in New York, 1984-5, claims that early Modernist artists who ‘discovered’ these reclassified art-objects (and were so inspired that they initiated the Modernist art movement) were only interested in the formal aesthetic value of these objects. In the exhibition catalogue, he states that artists such as Picasso and Weber “... did not generally know – nor evidently much care – about such matters. This is not to imply that they were uninterested in ‘meanings’, but rather that the meanings which concerned them were the ones which could be obtained through the objects themselves.” (1984: 1.)

Rubin’s opinions are typical of the popular conception of ‘primitive’ art²³ and ‘primitivist’²⁴ art for the majority of the 20th century. Rubin, as a Modernist, believes first and foremost in the universality of Modernist art, and of the value of formal concerns (1984: 28). According to this Modernist outlook, Picasso is cast in the traditional role of white-male genius and ‘neo-colonial hero’, and as such his work is “... beyond criticism”²⁵ (Mallen, 1999 [Online]).

While I am not denying that the Modernist painters *were* intrigued by the formal concerns of aesthetics, I propose, as I have already mentioned, that aesthetic Modernism can be seen as a rejection of the principles of modernity, which both undermines and serves that condition (Bauman, 1991: 3). It is reasonable to assume that an art ‘movement’ is, as James Clifford states, a “... category defined and redefined in specific historical contexts and relations of power” (2002: 222). Modernism is no exception, although this point tends to be glossed over by (Modernist) art historians.²⁶

²³ I use the term here to mean art objects created by nameless colonised peoples (individuals or groups) – not necessarily created as an artwork – that have found their way to the West, displaced from their original contexts.

²⁴ I use the term here to mean art created in modernity by a Westerner, inspired and influenced by so-called ‘primitive’ art-objects, particularly in the early part of the 20th century.

²⁵ With the notable exception of British critic John Berger who wrote *The Success and Failure of Picasso*, in 1965, it was only in the last two decades of the 20th century that this paradigm was challenged.

²⁶ Pablo Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger (O.J.)* serves as an example of the complex and ambiguous blend of romanticisation and racist presupposition that characterised Modernism during the early 20th century. This illustrates the ambivalent nature of primitivism, which entails simultaneously scathing modernity critique, and an implicitly Otherising Romanticisation of the ‘primitive’.

Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger (O.J.)* – the image that has been accredited as signalling the ‘beginning’ of modern art – was completed in 1907. Just prior to the time that Picasso and others ‘discovered’ African art, scandals over French officials’ brutalities in the Congo, and French foreign policy in general, sparked heated debate in Paris. The *Femmes d’Alger* moves beyond purely formal concerns (such as composition, colour and texture, etc.) with themes of danger, sexuality and horror that can be interpreted as a critical response to colonial policies in Africa at the time. However, the *Femmes d’Alger* themselves have little to do with the realities of any real African culture. That Picasso intended the *Femmes d’Alger* to be a political statement, is, I think, without doubt – his work rebelled against the formal qualities of bourgeois art, and politically against the bourgeois morality that constantly preached a civilising mission in French colonies whilst treating inhabitants with casual brutality (Leighton, 2002: 235, 242). It is probable also, that Picasso was less concerned with the realities of his ‘primitive’ inspiration than with his own identity; the relevance and difference of Others helped modern artists to explore hitherto inaccessible parts of themselves. In his

The modernist painters, and writers, such as Joseph Conrad, used colonised people, as ‘primitive’ Others, to critique themselves, their own Western European culture and, in particular, modernity. In the process, ironically, stereotypical and damaging myths about the Other were, and are still perpetrated, and the colonial binaries of Modernism reified.

1.1.5 Postmodern ‘Primitivism’

The examples of Rousseau, Montaigne, Conrad and, to a certain extent, Picasso and the early 20th century ‘primitivists’ all deal with alterity as projected onto a remote Other. After the Second World War, the focus was on the idea of alterity within – the threat and ‘darkness’ of ‘our’ own subconscious. This knowledge and acceptance of the projective nature of Western beliefs about the ‘primitive’ Other subsequently caused further interest in the psychological projections of the concept.

In the second decade of the 20th century, influential Swiss psychologist Carl Jung²⁷ published his theory of “the shadow”. He stated that:

... By shadow I mean all the “negative” side of the personality, the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide, together with the insufficiently developed functions and the contents of the personal unconscious (Robinson, 2002 [Online]).

He referred to this shadow as ‘the dark side’ of the human psyche, with all the previously discussed connotations of blackness and evil (Kerbelker, 1997: 17). In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung writes of a life-changing dream he experienced:

... The deeper I went, the more alien and the darker the scene became. In the cave, I discovered remains of a primitive culture, that is, the world of primitive man within myself – a world which can scarcely be reached or illuminated by consciousness (1989: 160).

Jung’s words gave expression and consciousness to a projection that had been occurring for at least the previous century and a half²⁸ – non-Western colonised peoples (the Other) had come to represent all that was repressed – the unconscious fears and desires of the West. While postmodern ‘primitivism’ retains the Modernist meanings discussed in previous sections, I propose that it has

creation of Modernist paintings such as *Les Femmes d'Alger*, Picasso and other artists like him were participating in the time-honoured European tradition of ‘primitivism’ as critique of modernity.

Rubin draws a parallel between Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Picasso’s *Les Femmes d'Alger*. Conrad’s “... archetypal ‘night journey’ of the soul recounted in *Heart of Darkness* by means of the metaphor of Kurtz’s voyage to the interior of the Congo”, Rubin states, “seems to me close in spirit to Picasso’s descent into his psyche during the elaboration of the *Femmes*. Indeed, Picasso’s radical primitivizing of the *Femmes* might well be considered a pictorial realization of Conrad’s words.” (1984: 259.)

²⁷ The so-called ‘father’ of analytical psychology (Williams, 2003 [Online]).

²⁸ Such as is demonstrated in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Picasso’s *Femmes*.

also acquired new meanings – primarily the expression of a utopian desire to “ ... re-inhabit core experiences” (Torgovnick, 1998: 5).

The move from Modernism to late (or post) Modernism marked a shift in ways of looking at knowledge, and at histories – from (Modernist) epistemology to (postmodern) hermeneutics. I define the postmodern as a continuation of modernism (i.e., late Modernism), in which certain Modernist characteristics are brought to their logical/extreme conclusion. Postmodernism can be seen to represent discontent with modernity (Bauman, 1991: 237). However, like Romanticism, and those working in after the manner of the Pre-Raphaelite tradition, postmodernism is a product of Modernism; it cannot transcend it any more than the word ‘Modernism’ can be deleted from the term without destroying its identity. Postmodernism is undeniably a response to what went before (Turner, 1990: 3-4). ‘Post’ thus implies not only *after* Modernism, but also ‘inclusive’ of Modernism (Hutcheon, 1995: 10). Post-modernism has become, in the words of Ziauddin Sardar, a new, more subversive breed of Modernism:

... colonialism signified the physical occupation of territory of Others, the non-western cultures. Modernity signalled their mental occupation. Postmodernism now moves in to take possession of their total reality (1998: 20).

Previously the West had incorporated difference by keeping a rigid separation between West and non-West, between ‘normalcy’ and ‘Others’ (Root, 1996: xi). Now, in late-capitalist modernity, however, not only Westerners consume: as modernity has become a global phenomenon,²⁹ postmodern ‘primitivism’ is occurring everywhere. Under the auspices of postmodernism, all cultures are absorbed and commodified. Root uses the apt analogy of a cannibal to describe the process: late-modern culture is seen as a monster of insatiable appetite, appropriating and consuming differences it finds pleasing, adapting them to its own purposes; discarding concepts that threaten its whole. In the postmodern age, modernity itself *becomes* the cannibal, whose horror was historically projected onto colonised peoples (1996: 9-16).

One important difference between modern and postmodern ‘primitivism’ is, therefore, that modernity has become a global concern: no longer can only Western or European-derived cultures be regarded as ‘modern’. If Modernism proclaimed universalism, then postmodernism fetishises difference – polysemy and multiculturalism are perceived as the ‘great levellers’ – adopting a pretence of equality, and a celebration that denies the existence of oppression and inequality.

²⁹ For example, increased globalisation has led to transnationalism. For global tourists, ethnicity is now for sale as a consumer product.

In the postmodern era, the previously marginalised supposedly moves towards the ‘centre’ – the imagined Other³⁰ has become desirably ‘fashionable’. Many middle-class Americans question their relatives in hope of discovering forgotten Native Indian kinship; others attend ‘Cherokee sex workshops’ in order to shed their inhibitions (Torgovnick, 1996: 36). New Age materials and books available from most bookshops in modernised societies expound objects and ideas appropriated from various ‘primitive’ cultures, as well as previously repressed Western traditions, such as astrology and tarot.

New Age is a singularly difficult term to pin down, since it has no generalised meaning and means many things to many people. Generally it can be said that the New Age involves “... a rejection of middle-class Christianity and mainstream, middle-class culture”. The movement probably descends from the 1960s rejection of the mainstream and adoption of the exotic (Root, 1996: 87). The term encompasses a vast plethora of interests that range from crystal healing and Wicca³¹ to an interest in Eastern religions. In contemporary society, Westerners are able to buy (both literally and figuratively) into the myth of the ‘primitive’.

Root discusses how there is a large element of necrophilia involved in ‘New Age’ appropriation (1996: 96). There is generally no interest at all in the real concerns of so-called ‘primitive’ cultures.

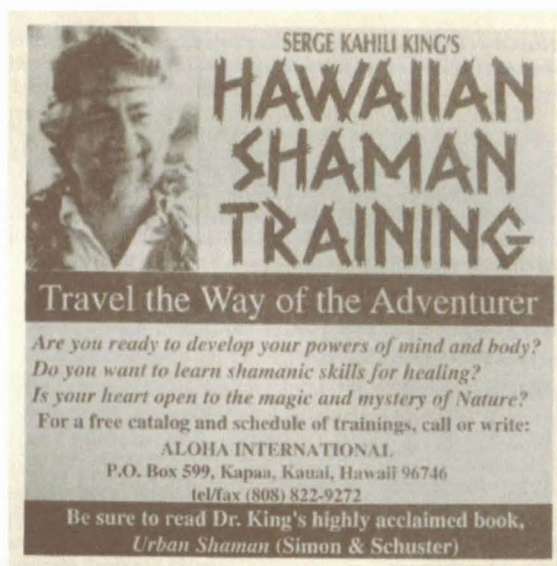


Fig. 2. Hawaiian shaman training advertisement, *Serge Kahili King's Hawaiian Shaman Training: Travel the Way of the Adventurer* [USA]. Black and white magazine advertisement (Root, 1996: 96, Fig. 3.7).

³⁰ Frequently as little based in reality as Columbus' proclaimed discovery of Paradise.

³¹ Contemporary Nature-based 'witchcraft'; Wicca is a neopagan religion "... found in many different countries, though most commonly in English-speaking cultures. Wicca was first publicised in 1954 by a British civil servant and Co-Freemason named Gerald Gardner, after the British Witchcraft Act was repealed" (Wicca, *Wikipedia* [Online]). Although Gardner claims that the religion was a "... modern survival of an old witch cult, which had existed in secret for hundreds of years ..." originating in pre-Christian Europe, there is no independent evidence to support his claims. (Wicca, *Wikipedia* [Online]).

The allure of the 'primitive' comes from the fact that these cultures are perceived as 'elsewhere', removed in space as well as in time (Artaud: 1988 [Online]). The appropriator of romanticised 'primitive' cultures perceives them to be dead, static and idealised (Root, 1996: 96).

'Primitivism' in the West has become, through the combined force of historical contexts and projected mythologies, associated with self-transformation (Torgovnick, 1998: 13). Many reasons can be put forward for why Westerners might feel "... ill at ease or constrained ..." in the society that they have created for themselves. The philosopher Nietzsche describes the alienation caused by lives that are too ordered and regulated by government and society: "[These are] the destroyers who set snares for many and call it the state: they hang a sword and a hundred desires over them" (1969: 75). In a world where consumerism reigns supreme, success and happiness are measured in terms of material wealth. In a postmodern culture, 'reality' is so patently constructed that people cease to believe they belong to the world in which they live. As John Murphy, anarchist author notes, "A strange type of society has to be invented ... in order for alienation to be considered normative"³² (in Zerzan, *The Catastrophe of Postmodernism* [Online]).

Churches and institutionalised religions frequently channel spiritual and 'primitivistic' impulses into forms that are non-threatening to themselves and to the civil-state (Torgovnick, 1998: 213). Increasingly, the 'primitive' is presented as a cure for the various ills of society, the breakdown of families, growing divorce rates, a climbing suicide rate,³³ the destruction of the environment and the growth of industrialisation. Thus, in a secular age, the 'primitive' has grown to represent spirituality. Torgovnick claims that it represents the positive passions – the opposite of cultural estrangement. Experiencing postmodern 'primitivism' is like "... finding a home ..." – a place of spiritual wholeness and balance and a place of belonging (1991: 185). The 'primitive' differs from person to person, depending on the personal frustrations, desires and experiences involved; there is no 'truth', no glib definition, merely a desire to return to origins.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated that 'primitivism' as modernity critique has had a long and fairly substantial history. 'Primitivism' remains a psychological reflection – a projection of modern fears

³² Unsurprisingly, in recent years the cinema has been home to a number of films in which the heroine/hero discovers the world she/he lives in is a constructed reality. Examples that spring to mind are *The Matrix*, (1998) and *The Truman Show* (1998).

³³ According to the American National Institute of Mental Health, in 2001 suicide was the third leading cause of death amongst people aged 15-24, following unintentional injuries and homicide. (*Suicide Facts and Statistics*. The National Institute of Mental Health Website [Online]). There is also evidence that suicide rates are higher in industrialised countries (Robinson, 2001 [Online]).

and desires, inherited from centuries of mythological projection onto Others – imaginary or otherwise. Postmodern ‘primitivism’ represents the desire in the modern psyche to reclaim these lost impulses and to “ ... re-inhabit core experiences ... ” (Torgovnick, 1996: 8).

In a culture obsessed with ‘progress’ and technological development, there is always a fascination with origins. ‘Primitivists’ invented the ‘primitive’ as the origin or source of humanity. If I define the postmodern as a continuation of Modernism (ie: late Modernism), where certain Modernist characteristics are brought to their logical/extreme conclusion, then postmodernism takes modern ‘primitivism’ to its two logical conclusions: escapism and consumerism.

Chapter 2

Fantasy as a Vehicle for Postmodern 'Primitivism'

In this chapter I propose that the subculture of Fantasy can be interpreted as a reaction to, and critique of, modernity in the form of postmodern 'primitivism'. I propose that Fantasy is very often an expression of postmodern 'primitivist' desire/fear and that the consumption of and participation in Fantasy-related materials is one way in which people are able to explore their fascination with the 'primitive' Other. Frequently, this exploration involves an expressed dissatisfaction with, and critique of, modernity.

In this and the following chapter I discuss how the Fantasy subculture has turned its fascination and projection of the 'primitive' inwards, in an exploration that has much in common with art in the Pre-Raphaelite tradition, and with some aspects of Romanticism. The results can be viewed (within the context of Fantasy) in the widespread popularity of the myth of the 'white barbarian' and the obsessive creations and re-reactions of imaginary European pre-histories.

The study of Fantasy is of interest to me because, as I have stated above, of what it reveals about the 'primitive' Other and about the underbelly of mainstream society. In order to further illustrate my discussion, I give a brief overview of the genre and discuss the psychology and possible ethos of escape. In order to further my argument I discuss various examples of Fantasy: J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, various examples of contemporary Arthurian Fantasy and *The Matrix* trilogy of films.

2.1 An Introduction to Fantasy

Many kinds of Fantasy exist within the late-Modern tradition of literature: children's Fantasy (of all kinds); magic realism; and works of fiction that contain elements of the fantastic or the surreal. No one has yet come up with a satisfactory definition of the term. All fiction (as a work of the imagination) could arguably be defined as Fantasy, and, indeed, the term, before the 20th century could be taken to mean 'of the imagination' (Rogers, 2002 [Online]).

However, when I use the term Fantasy in this study, I refer specifically to adult³⁴ Fantasy in the late-Modern tradition. I use the term Fantasy to include media as diverse as literature, illustration, films,³⁵

³⁴ Even this causes problems as Fantasy is often particularly difficult to classify either as children's or adult's fiction (I shall discuss this in more depth later on). Specifically, I refer to Fantasy not intended solely for children, especially very young children.

³⁵ Particularly anime. [The word *anime* is a transliteration of the abbreviated version of a Japanese term. Anime is a style of animation, originating from Japan, that is aimed at a broad range of audiences " ... because there are [sic] a

comics,³⁶ gaming,³⁷ as well as the surrounding cultural activities, such as conventions, ‘LARPS’³⁸, Renaissance Fairs and historical and mythical ‘re-enactments’.

The emphasis of this chapter is to explore trends in the genre, rather than to establish an absolute statement that can be applied to the whole. Fantasy, even within the contexts of the late-modern subculture, is a broad and over-generalised term; whatever examples I cite, there are going to be a dozen that contradict them. Fantasy, in my understanding, is by its very nature particularly open to the expression and interpretations of personal beliefs and agendas. However, there *are* common threads and trends and it is these I shall discuss (Swinfen, 1984: 2).

Fantasy shares many characteristics with the related subcultures surrounding the literatures of Science Fiction and Horror; as a result it becomes exceedingly difficult to classify a piece as one or the other.³⁹ All three genres contain elements of the fantastic, and have much in common (Fantasy, *Wikipedia* [Online]). To further cloud the issue there are many sub-genres, each of which emphasises different elements. Some of the most well-know are Mythopoetic; ‘Sword and Sorcery/Sorceress’; ‘High’ or ‘Heroic’ Fantasy; comic, feminist, utopian/dystopian, Horror, ‘Arthurian’, and erotic Fantasy, etc.

2.2 Critics and Defenders of Fantasy: The Ethos of Escapism

In both this section and the next, I propose that the contemporary Fantasy tradition can be regarded as a continuation of the Romantic revival (that occurred in the late nineteenth century) for all things supernatural, and nostalgia for an imagined European ‘primitive’ state. It is my aim specifically to challenge the presumption that escapism can have “... little positive connection to social ‘reality’ ...” (Torgovnick, 1991: 43). Rather, I maintain that the practice of escapism, as demonstrated by late-Modern Fantasy, is, in fact, an act of postmodern ‘primitivism’, which in turn can be interpreted as a form of modernity critique.

wide range of different genres that any series may be categorised under” (Anime, *Wikipedia* [Online]). Unlike traditional Western-style animation anime is primarily aimed at adults. In Japan romance, action and drama are very popular. In non-Japanese countries, science-fiction, Fantasy and pornographic anime-styles (*hentai*) are the most common and have a large following (Anime, *Wikipedia* [Online].)

³⁶ Western style adult comics (such as Neil Gaiman’s *Sandman*), superhero derivative comics, such as those championed by DC Comics (and Vertigo) and Marvel, and Japanese-style manga. The distinction between East and West is rapidly blurring as Japanese comic artists use English scripts and vice versa. However, despite much cross-pollination, there are definitely two distinct styles.

³⁷ Electronic, role-playing, card and war games.

³⁸ Stands for ‘Live Action Role Play’.

³⁹ It is possible for a Fantasy to involve science, and for Science Fiction to involve fantasy. A personal definition is that Fantasy looks to a romanticised (or horrific) past for resolution, while Science Fiction looks to a romanticised (or horrific) future. Once again, this is a general rule, as there are examples of futuristic Fantasies and Science Fiction set in the past.

It is commonly argued that Fantasy has a long and illustrious history with "... beginnings in Greek mythology ... and other epics such as *Beowulf* ..." ((Fantasy, *Wikipedia* [Online]).⁴⁰ However, while *Beowulf* and Homer's *Iliad* contain many of the same elements as a contemporary Fantasy plot, they were not written in the same climate nor with the same intent (Anderson, 2003: 1). I agree with the author Swinfen that legend or mythologies ought not to be classified as Fantasy, although they are certainly related and are often mistaken for each other (1984: 3). Fantasy writers and artists appropriate these sources and others as inspiration for their works in much the same way that the 'primitivists' appropriated art-objects from colonised countries. The novel and the source are not the same thing, any more than Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* has or had the same function as a 19th-century Yoruba mask in its original setting.

Anderson suggests that Fantasy literature developed from literary fairy tales⁴¹ – 19th century stories created by a single author – and as such is deeply indebted to folkloric traditions (2003: 1). Literary fairy tales evolved into Victorian children's literature and into Fantasy as a genre for adults (Swinfen, 1984: 2). Appropriation of folkloric sources has always been an important factor in the creation of Fantasy, and remains so to this day.

Contrary to popular belief, Fantasy literature is very firmly rooted in 'reality'. A Fantasy story cannot exist without a frame of reference – some contextualisation with which to juxtapose the fantastic elements of the story.⁴² The sources that are appropriated for this purpose are as diverse as authors themselves; however, medieval, 'Celtic' and Norse-derived folklore are probably the most common sources of inspiration for Western Fantasy authors.⁴³ For a Fantasy to be effective, it must invite constant comparison between the 'real' world and the world between the covers. Without the real world, Fantasy would have no reason to exist. The author, Ann Swinfen, discusses the relation between 'reality' and Fantasy literature extensively in her study *In Defence of Fantasy*:

... the writing of fantasy seems to be closely linked with man's rational being and perception of the natural world To create an imaginary world it is necessary to observe faithfully the rules of logic and inner consistency which, although they may differ from those operating in our own world, must nevertheless be as true to themselves as their parallel operations are in the normal world (1984: 3)

⁴⁰ Usually by producers or consumers of Fantasy – also see the next chapter in my discussion of 'the invention of tradition'. Assumptions of age, of 'long traditions' are frequently used to validate invented traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1984: 6). One could argue that all traditions are invented at some point, but Fantasy is certainly a fairly recent creature – aged no more than two centuries, at most.

⁴¹ Such as the German *kunstmärchen* in the tradition of the Grimm brothers (Anderson, 2003: 1).

⁴² The mark of a great Fantasy is supposedly the convincingness of its unreality: "A fantasy that reads like realism ...", enthuses author Garth Nix on the cover of a popular Fantasy novel (2002: cover).

⁴³ I will suggest reasons for the popularity of these themes in my next section, and in Chapter Three *The Forest and the Green Man*.

Contemporary Fantasy owes much to seminal works such as J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, all published in the mid-20th century (Fantasy, *Wikipedia* [Online]). These works, particularly J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, revitalised and developed Fantasy literature, in many ways, defining what was to become the modern genre⁴⁴ (Anderson, 2003: 2). While these works earned the genre increased respectability, raising its stock and profile in the publishing industry during the mid-20th century, it is also true that the Fantasy 'response' has traditionally been met with mistrust and suspicion by the general Western public (Fingarette, 1963: 190).⁴⁵ To this day, works of Fantasy are frequently labelled escapist and infantile, and are generally dismissed by serious critics and authors as being too childish to have worth.⁴⁶ No doubt some of this is due to lingering connotations left from its evolutionary journey through Victorian children's fairy stories⁴⁷ and the Victorians' frequently sentimental and cloyingly sweet depictions of the 'fairy folk' themselves.

Ursula Le Guin sums up the popular conception of Fantasy in her book *The Language of the Night*: "Dragons and hobbits and little green men – what's the use of it?" (1992: 64.) The irony is that very few Fantasy novels include any mention of dragons⁴⁸; Tolkien's work is the only place where hobbits are to be found; and fairies are as scarce on the ground as roses on a real-life Martian crater.⁴⁹ Such is the strength of public preconceptions that many authors reject Fantasy as a label for their work. This

⁴⁴ I am not implying that *all* subsequent works were derivative of these afore-mentioned ones – a more than likely number owe them nothing more than the increased opportunities for exposure and publication that 'respectability' entails. However, it remains a fact that many novels were and continue to be written in the 'style' introduced by Tolkien, although few can match the scope or depth of his work; usually this is referred to as Heroic or High Fantasy. Elements of Tolkien's story have become clichés in this genre, helped along by the advent of role-playing games ('RPGs') such as *Dungeons and Dragons* ('D&D'), arguably the most successful and almost definitely the most influential RPG. Generally (but not always) a typical role-playing game session or 'campaign' involves a mixed group of stock characters – one for each player – who embark on a quest. For example: an axe-fighting female dwarf with a strong constitution; a cowardly elven ranger; a half-human paladin who is afraid of heights, and an evil halfling sword-fighter with a filthy temper. Each player assumes the personality traits and mannerism of her/his character; each contributing to the story of their quest in turn and responding to events set up for them by the Dungeon Master/Mistress (who controls the game). The setting is usually based on an imagined Western European medieval society; the characters can fight with enchanted armour etc and cast spells. Stories based on themes such as this have become the biggest cliché of Fantasy literature. The role-playing industry alone has spawned an entire new genre of literature and art based on D&D campaigns. Author Terry Pratchett has become one of the most successful authors of the 20th (and 21st) century, with his *Discworld* novels characterised by pastiche and satire of clichéd Fantasy types and situations.

⁴⁵ Indeed, the contribution of J.R.R. Tolkien has been both a blessing and a curse to the genre in general (the same could be said of the J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books): while it is undeniable that the genre would not be the same without Tolkien's contributions, Tolkien still dominates the public perception of the Fantasy genre – even though his works were written seventy years ago (Swinfen, 1984: 3).

⁴⁶ See Edmund Wilson's infamous comments on Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy in an essay entitled "Oo, Those Awful Orcs!" (Langford, 2001 [Online]).

⁴⁷ The irony being that these fairy stories were, in fact, sanitised and modified versions of older oral folktales that frequently contained explicit violence and sex that was never intended for childish consumption (Tolson, 2002: 48).

⁴⁸ Unless, of course, you have wandered haplessly into a role-playing game convention, which is, as I have already stated, a whole genre unto itself.

⁴⁹ I for one have never read a contemporary Fantasy novel, or short story, that mentions fairies. And I have read a lot of Fantasy – good, bad and mediocre.

is particularly true of those who have achieved critical success in the literary sense, who tend to deny that they write Fantasy, despite the fact that their plots strictly adhere to the 'rules' of Fantasy literature (Gilman, *In Defense of Fantasy* [Online]). Ann Swinfen comments: "... some critics and academics condemn the whole genre with a passion which seems to have its roots in emotion rather than objective critical standards" (1984: 1).

Fantasy follows in the footsteps of those Modernist movements that critique the modernity that they belong to. Fantasy is a Modernist movement or counter-culture that rebels against modernity in much the same way that the Romantic Movement did. Ultimately, Fantasy both undermines and serves the condition of modernity – serving as its critique, and as containment for 'Otherness'.

The purpose of this study is not to judge either the creators and consumers of Fantasy, or their critics. But I will explore possible reasons that Fantasy elicits such strong emotional responses. As I have said, my argument here is that escapism, and the need for escapism, constitute a profoundly critical response to modern life.

It has been claimed that Fantasy is particularly suited to the job of exploring the human condition, more so than other forms of literature, precisely because the genre is not shackled to the exploration of what is empirically likely (Tolkien, 1964: 44). C.S. Lewis comments, in his essay *An Experiment in Criticism*, that in a sense *all* reading is an escape: It "... involves a temporary transference of the mind from our actual surroundings to things merely imagined or conceived All escape is *from* the same thing; immediate, concrete reality. The important question is what we escape *to*" (Lewis, 1965: 68.) The reader of Fantasy becomes a party to, as the Romantic poet Coleridge puts it in his *Biographia Literaria*, a "... willing suspension of disbelief ..." (1965: 169).⁵⁰ To most critics of Fantasy it appears to be a foregone conclusion that to engage in an act of escapism is a worthless and immature expenditure of energy, and therefore to do so knowingly, and with obvious enjoyment, can only signify a puerile mindset. It is assumed that Fantasy (as 'escapism') can have, "... little positive connection to social 'reality' " (Torgovnick, 1991: 43).

⁵⁰This is an important point – and one that I shall discuss further in subsequent chapters. This is why Fantasy differs from other vehicles of postmodern 'primitivism' such as New Ageism, or Modernist-derived art. I suggest that this is the point (or one point at least) missed by those who object to Fantasy on religious or 'moral' terms. It is a concern frequently and noisily expressed by religious minorities (and others) that the consumption of Fantasy in the form of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books, or Wizards of the Coasts card game *Magic: The Gathering* will turn readers into Satanists (Bauer, 2002 [Online]). I would be lying if I claimed that Fantasy novels never have any subversive content, nor any pagan or Christian agendas (C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* can be read as a Christian allegory) as they frequently can and do, but are just as likely to be purely intended as entertainment (Swain, *C.S. Lewis* [Online]). However, my point and Coleridge's is that Fantasy is not written to be believed, whatever other purpose individual instances might pertain to. Fans of George Lucas' *Star Wars* Trilogies, fanatical though they may be, do not really believe in light-sabers, or 'a Galaxy Far, Far Away' (*Star Wars, Episode V*, 2004). Likewise, those who enjoy Harry Potter are unlikely to ride broomsticks or to practise alchemy. The consumer of Fantasy does not believe what she/he reads.

Such is the general condemnation of ‘escapism’ that even the most staunch defenders of the faith deem it necessary to apologise for, or to deny any trace of, its existence. In the concluding paragraph of Swinfen’s *In Defence of Fantasy*, she asserts the worth of Fantasy by emphatically denying any evidence of escapism:

What emerges above all from this study, then, is that modern fantasy, far from being the escapist literature which it is sometimes labelled, is a serious form of the modern novel, often characterised by notable literary merit. (1984: 234.)

Even Swinfen assumes that any association with escapism can only lessen the worth of the genre. Her denials appear to be an attempt to emphasise that Fantasy is based on, influenced by and contributes to the real world. However, while I agree with the afore-mentioned statement, it seems to me that to deny that Fantasy is an escape is to undermine any argument in Fantasy’s favour and to lend credence to its critics. Two seemingly opposing schools of thought appear to exist on the ethics of escape (regarding Fantasy): the first belongs to those critical of escapism; the second belongs to those who enjoy and embrace the act. I am in no doubt that Fantasy, as postmodern ‘primitivism’, serves a vital function in contemporary society.

As Marianna Torgovnick discusses in *Primitive Passions*, advanced modern societies tend to pay little regard to some essential human emotions and “... sensations of relatedness and interdependence ... effacement of the self and the intuition of profound connections between human and land, humans and animals, human and minerals” (1998: 4). In the words of popular Fantasy author and humorist, Terry Pratchett, “The suggestion that the world could be other than it is always annoys those who are content with the way things are Jailers don’t like escapism Telling stories can be dangerous.” (Pratchett, 1999: 6.) In Fantasy, the created world must be Other, or else the book would not be Fantasy, but a romance or a thriller or something else entirely. In the Fantasy novel, the ‘natural order’ of the real world is shattered, broken apart and rearranged according to the personal taste of the particular author.

As discussed in my definition of postmodern ‘primitivism’, by the late nineteenth century the ‘Other’ had come to represent all that was previously repressed – the unconscious fears and desires of the West. Now, in the early 21st century, Fantasy literature *consciously*, and sometimes *gratuitously*, explores those same fears and desires. In his lectures *On Fairy-Stories*⁵¹ (delivered during the 1930s), Tolkien professed a sentiment worthy of Jung: he proclaims that for himself “Most good ‘fairy-stories’ are about the adventures of men in the Perilous Realm or upon its shadowy marches”

⁵¹ Tolkien uses the term ‘fairy-stories’ probably because the term Fantasy was not broadly accepted in the 1930s (Swinfen, 1984: 4-5).

(1965: 16). The nature of the Fantasy, therefore, depends on the nature of the ‘Perilous Realm’; those who inhabit it, those who create it and the Other.

2.3 The White Savage/ Spirituality for a New Age

“If whites want to be spiritual,” said John Lavelle, director of a centre for the protection of Indian culture, “let them investigate their own religions and look to their own traditions.” (in Torgovnik 1998: 210.) As Marianna Torgovnick points out, the attraction of the ‘primitive’ for Westerners in modern life results both from the desire for tradition and from the difficulty of retrieving it (1998: 210). It is my hypothesis that the sub-culture of Fantasy fills a niche created by a fascination with the ‘primitive’ – of a need to explore the repressed elements of the West – the fantastic and the horrific. The fact that it generally manages to do so in a relatively unthreatening manner might account, in part, for its popularity, for, unlike its cousin, the New Age, Fantasy does not require belief or commitment of any sort.

I have discussed in the previous section how Fantasy ‘world-building’ is an imaginative act of borrowing from both reality and from imagined Others. In common with the New Age, there is a large element of necrophilia involved in this appropriation (Root, 1996: 96). Like the New Age, Fantasy borrows from cultures that are perceived as ‘elsewhere’ – removed in space as well as in time (Artaud: 1988 [Online]). According to Root, the appropriator assumes the ‘primitive’ cultures to be dead – static and frequently idealised (1996: 96). Such an assumption can be misleading or potentially harmful if the appropriators insist or believe that their romanticised version of events is real. The most problematic scenario is if the appropriated culture does in fact exist – if it is alive and in the present.⁵²

As previously mentioned, ‘Celtic’, Norse and mediaeval settings are among the most popular of Fantasy settings, all of which can be seen as ‘white barbarian’ Fantasies/fantasies, with the added appeal of supposed ancestral authenticity for Westerners. In Fantasy, the spirit of appropriation is therefore remarkably similar to that of Conrad and the ‘primitivists’. The vehicle of expression is different, but once again the appropriators are not so much concerned with the ‘authenticity’ of their object of fascination as they are with their own romanticised construct and, through it, their own exploration of their repressed selves.

⁵² For instance, ‘Celtic’ is a term sometimes used to refer to people who speak ‘native’ minority languages of the British Isles other than English, for example Cornish, Gaelic, Welsh. These languages and cultures have been threatened by the dominance of the English but are still in use today. See Chapter 4 for further discussion of the relevance of the term ‘Celtic’ to these peoples.

Fantasy seems to be an apt vehicle of expression for a postmodern age, in which alienation is the norm. I have already discussed how the alienated and ill at ease might be tempted to seek recourse in Fantasy. It has also been suggested that the recent increase in the popularity of Fantasy is due to the increase in the feeling of alienation and estrangement in contemporary society, appearing as a widespread "... general cultural stagnation" (Starr, *The Geek Shall Inherit the Earth* [Online]).

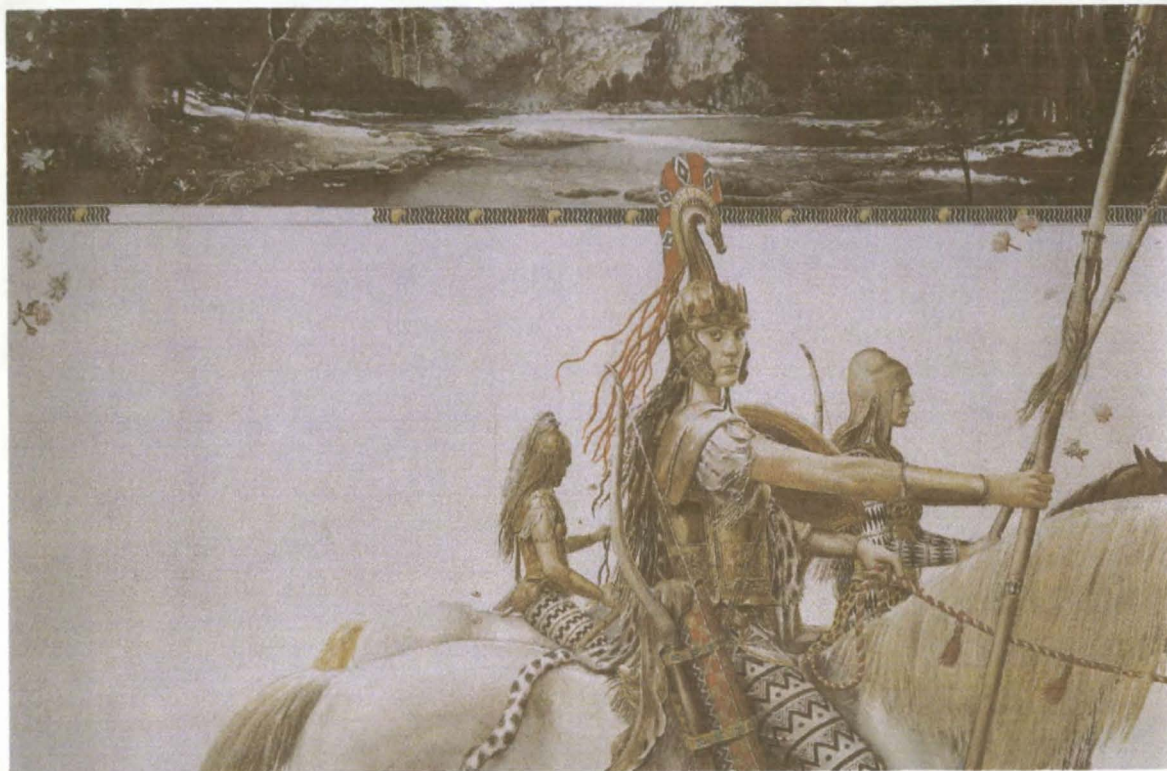


Fig. 3 The Amazons ride to the defence of doomed Troy in Alan Lee's cover illustration for the Fantasy novel *Black Ships before Troy* by Rosemary Sutcliff (Jude, 1999: 18).

Fantasy can thus be seen as a Modernist attempt to 'contain' Otherness. In Fantasy, there is often an interest in identifying with the outcast of society (even if the society is imaginary) and the victimised underdog: frequently, the protagonists of Fantasy novels are orphans, slaves, servants or the downtrodden.

It is perhaps not surprising that Fantasy gains in popularity in a postmodern age where, as Daniel Boorstin remarks, "The citizens of our post-industrial society live in a world where Fantasy is more real than reality, where the image has more dignity than the original." (1961: 252.) Baudrillard explores the boundaries of 'hyper-reality' and nihilism in *Simulacra and Simulation*. He paints a bleak picture of the postmodern condition, stating that in a world that is completely catalogued, analysed and then "... artificially resurrected under the auspices of the real", there can exist only a

world of simulation (1997: 8). In Baudrillard's words, "When the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning" (1997: 6).

If modernity is a spiritually barren place, as some believe, producing "... specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart ..." (Max Weber in Pippin, 1991: 7) and promoting anomie, consumerism, alienation and disaffection, it is no wonder that nihilism and dissatisfaction are widespread. The result, for whatever reason, is that what has always been a fairly marginal subculture is moving into the mainstream,⁵³ with its popularity at an all-time zenith.⁵⁴ Robinson suggests that the increase of interest in Fantasy and the decline of Science Fiction are closely linked: "Young people no longer find the real future exciting. They no longer find science admirable. They no longer instinctively lust to go to space." (2003: *Forward Into the Past* [Online].) Nostalgia for a mythic past overrules excitement about the future. The rational optimism embodied by the space race of the fifties and sixties has long been extinguished, as the exploration of space itself seems on more or less permanent hold. Government expenditure on weapons and arms has tended to replace funding spent on space exploration or research into 'improving the planet'. It would seem as if the future is no longer fashionable. This general apathy is a toned-down version of the anarcho-'primitivists'' opinions that science has had a century or more in which to prove itself the saviour of the human species; yet the poor remain poor, while the rich remain rich and the world is still plagued by war, hunger and pollution.

High or Heroic Fantasy frequently offers an entertaining safe haven from the 'evils' of civilisation as envisaged by Rousseau, allowing as it does for an exploration into an imagined and romanticised past populated by white noble savages in the style of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy. Science and reason are set aside for faith and magic and an exploration of the 'primitive', unsullied by empirical fact or physicality.

The anti-industrial element of Fantasy has always been particularly strong, which is hardly surprising considering that Fantasy acts as a foil to the technocracy and instrumentalism of the scientific age. Tolkien's work clearly expresses anti-industrial feelings. In this respect, he continues in the rich Pre-Raphaelite tradition of such artists/designers as William Morris. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* is at times quaint⁵⁵, yet his vision of a Middle-Earth is neither childish nor idyllic. Written after the impact of the First World War, and amidst the Second, it offers a stern critique of the dangers of despotic leadership, tyranny, war and the abuse of Nature resulting from deforestation and the debilitating effects of industry.

⁵³ Especially with the success of the likes of the *Harry Potter* books and movies, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, etc.

⁵⁴ Yet the general 'quality' of Fantasy literature is at all time low, with fewer "... serious, capable writers working in traditional fantasy ... than ever before" (Blackston, 2003 [Online]).

Tolkien has much to say about the dichotomy of Nature versus culture. His trees are sometimes evil⁵⁶, sometimes benign⁵⁷, but at all times wild, uncontrollable and, above all, at least in part conscious. However, Tolkien makes a fine distinction between those who prefer industry to Nature: Gandalf, one of the heroes of the book (and the archetypal 'good' wizard) is referred to by Treebeard the tree-herder as "... the only wizard that really cares about trees" (1992: 487). At the other end of the spectrum, the wizard Saruman, who is evil and corrupt, is accused of having a mind of "... metal and wheels; he does not care for growing things, except as they serve him for the moment And now it is clear he is a black traitor ... there is always smoke rising from Isengard these days." (1992: 495.) This is clearly a critique of industrialism and Modernist instrumentalism.

However, heroic or high Fantasy in the tradition of Tolkien account for only part of the genre. There also exist tracts of Fantasy that are set in either the present day, an imagined future or in imaginary industrialised worlds. These worlds function in quite a different manner, usually juxtaposing an alternative world or worlds against the "real" or more identifiable world. The key factor that links all these divergent forms of Fantasy is spirituality. This is also a key issue in the differentiation between *Modernist* fantasies and *postmodern* Fantasy. Well-known author and critic, Ursula le Guin, writes in the aptly named, *The Language of the Night*: "Fantasy is the natural, the appropriate language for the recounting of the spiritual journey and the struggle of good and evil in the soul." (1992: 64.) Fantasy can be interpreted as a parable of the metaphysical quest.

Religion, or spirituality of one form or another, is a frequent and recurring theme of Fantasy, and I propose that it fills a gap left by lack of attention to the repressed parts of Western consciousness. Fantasy is characterised by a "... a quality of strangeness and wonder in the Expression." (Tolkien, 1964: 44.) Unlike Science Fiction, Fantasy is uninterested in explanation – no one is interested in *how* magic works, the interest is in the *why*, and in the metaphysical quest itself. Contemporary Fantasy has become a "... medium of soul-searching ..." for those who feel constrained or repressed in everyday life. This sense of relatedness, this spiritual element of Fantasy, is manifest even when overt mention of religion is absent (Torgovnick, 1998: 13). Popular examples of this include George Lucas's *Star Wars* films, in which mention of God or gods is completely absent.⁵⁸ In the *Star Wars*

⁵⁵ One has only to think of Tom Bombadil's idiosyncratic manner of speaking, "Hey dol! merry dol! ring a dong dillo! Ring a dong! hop along! fal lal the willow!" (Tolkien, 1992: 134.)

⁵⁶ A tree, 'Old Man Willow', absorbs Pippin and Merry in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, with lethal intentions. (Tolkien, 1990: 132). In *The Hobbit* the forest of Mirkwood is corrupted by the presence of the necromancer who is later revealed to be Sauron, the Lord of the Rings – the ultimate evil of Middle-Earth.

⁵⁷ As in the case of the forest of Lothlórien "...fair and perilous...", Lothlórien is a place of healing and magic, where the travellers rest and recuperate (Tolkien, 1990: 357).

⁵⁸ The distinction between Fantasy and Science Fiction is never clear. My reasons for classifying *Star Wars* as a Fantasy are manifold. Despite the prevalence of 'high-tech' spacecraft and guns, the story is set in the past ("Long ago, in a galaxy far, far away") and has a nostalgic quality to it. The story is a metaphysical quest, and all the important battles are fought with 'light-sabers' – essentially swords made of light. The entire story is that of a search

universe there exist prophecies and the mysterious 'Force', which connects every living thing. 'The Force' can be manipulated through meditative-like actions, and protagonists' quests are profoundly spiritual in Nature. In an interview for *Time* magazine, Lucas told the journalist: "I see Star Wars as taking all the issues that religion represents and trying to distill them down into a more modern and easily accessible construct – that there is a greater mystery out there." (In Knox, 1999 [Online].)

A writer for the English newspaper *The Daily Telegraph*, William Nicholson, states of Fantasy literature: "Secretly I have a suspicion that these things are almost religious at base. They take the place of stories about gods and saints and holy people." (In Rees, 2003.) To lend further credence to Nicholson's statement, I shall briefly discuss this factor in various popular Fantasy texts and films.

To exemplify Fantasy's function as a conduit for repressed spirituality, I refer to the branch of Fantasy based on the legends of King Arthur and Camelot. Countless retellings of the legend exist, usually making some critical or illuminating point about contemporary society.⁵⁹ Contemporary fantasies of Arthurian legends also illuminate the connection between the works of the Romantics and present-day Fantasy: the legend of Arthur and the knights of the Round Table appears as a recurring theme for those who identify with the ideals of the Romantic tradition.

Written shortly after the Second World War, T.H. White's *A Once and Future King* seizes the opportunity to critique Western society. The young King Arthur (or 'Wart' as he is known until he pulls the sword from the stone) is tutored by the wizard Merlyn, who introduces his charge to all manner of animals and beasts, all of whom have different philosophies of life, and who live according to different ethics and social systems. Merlyn magically transforms the boy Wart into each creature for a day or so. The ants represent communism; the hawks is a military society and Wart is turned into a fish to experience the dangers of despotism (White, 1958). As an ant, Wart listens to a broadcast, before marching to war with the colony: "When Other blood spurts from the knife, | Then everything is fine ... " (1958: 127). T.H. White's dominant concern (unsurprisingly for a story that was written so soon after the fall of Nazi Germany) seems to be the uses and mis-uses of modern politics and social systems.⁶⁰

for spiritual redemption and enlightenment, and has a romantic quality that would not be amiss in a contemporary Arthurian quest. Star Wars is, essentially, a 'sword and sorcery' Fantasy epic that just happens to be set in space.

⁵⁹ My discussion of these examples is of necessity somewhat superficial. I have already said that there are too many different kinds of Fantasy to do them all justice. My main motivation in picking these examples is popularity, and a wish to demonstrate diversity. My supposition is that, in order to be popular, the works must have a certain mass appeal, and strike a common cord with their audience.

⁶⁰ This theme of use and abuse of political and social power is echoed in the more recent film *X-men 2* – based on the popular Marvel comic. *X-men* is set in a futuristic world much resembling our own. Here evolution has "gone one step further", creating 'mutants' or humans with seemingly supernatural powers. The character, Professor

In *The Mists of Avalon*, Marion Zimmer Bradley uses the Arthurian tradition to critique the domination of men in Christian society and discourse. She focuses on the female characters of the Arthurian legend to create a feminist and 'neo-pagan' retelling. According to Michelle Erica Green who reviewed the book for the Green Man Press, both *The Mists of Avalon* and the film of the same title contributed greatly to the emergence of a spiritual movement and represented "... a critical juncture for the New Age movement ..." (Green, *Green Man Press* [Online]). Zimmer Bradley strongly condemns Christianity's destructive role in her version of King Arthur and Camelot. When she fails to conceive, Arthur's queen, Gwenhwyfar, blames her ongoing barrenness on her husband's pagan loyalties, and demands that he fly the banner of the Cross rather than that of the Druids. The Chalice of the Druids becomes the Holy Grail, and the Knights of the Round Table disperse in "... a misguided quest for Christian salvation ..." (Green, *Green Man Press*[Online]). The men in her story are weak and corruptible, there to be manipulated by the more powerful women. As King Arthur turns away from paganism to embrace the new religion of Christianity, so his reign turns to violence, and ultimately tragedy (Zimmer Bradley, 1983). Zimmer Bradley's postmodern Fantasy condemns Christianity's part in the story, presenting a pro-pagan and strongly feminist view of the tale with the action centering around the women, Morgaine, Queen Igraine, the Lady of the Lake and Gwenhwyfar. Bradley's critique of modernity is, as I have already noted, centred around a search for the spiritual.

These Arthurian fantasies clearly continue the tradition of critique of Western society through use of a romanticised 'primitive'. Knights and chivalry, magic and mythology are all used to great effect to create a highly nostalgic and romanticised 'primitive' and pre-industrial society that never actually existed⁶¹. While the tone of Arthurian Fantasy differs from novel to novel, the dominant thrust is towards an exploration of a literal or metaphorical spiritual journey – the search for the Holy Grail. Most commonly, the retellings of the story of King Arthur are used to explore, specifically, issues surrounding Christianity and what it means to be Christian.

Different authors present different viewpoints according to their personal beliefs and agendas. T.H. White presents a somewhat obvious critique through 'primitivism' of the evils of various modern social systems. Religious discussion is present, but only as a by-issue. Sophie Masson, author of *The Age of Arthur* (a discussion of the prevalence of the Arthur legend in contemporary Fantasy)

Xavier, reads White's *Once and Future King* to his students and another powerful mutant is shown reading it in his prison cell before becoming the victim of a despotic tyrant (*X-Men 2*, 2003).

⁶¹ As is the case with most legendary figures, the evidence for King Arthur's actual existence, in any form, resides on tenuously little historical fact. Most contemporary retellings of the King Arthur legend are derivatives of Sir Geoffrey of Monmouth's *A History of the Kings of Britain* which was written about 1136. Sir Geoffrey's book, although accepted as historical fact during the Middle Ages, is of dubious historical value (Hopkins, 1993: 7-8).

describes King Arthur as "... a secular Christ, suffering, troubled, brilliant, beloved, hated, wounded, bleeding and heroic ..." (Masson, 1999 [Online]). As the mainstream religion of modernity in the West, Christianity's methods, mythologies and beliefs serve often as the object of critique in contemporary Fantasy. As in Masson's discussion of the Arthurian Fantasy, the image of 'a secular Christ' is one often repeated in Fantasy.



Fig. 4. Screenshot from *The Matrix Revolutions*. Keanu Reeves as 'Neo' at the moment of his 'death'/rebirth (*The Matrix Revolutions*, 2004).

The protagonist of *The Matrix*⁶² films of 1999, 2003, and 2004 is one such popular conception of 'a secular Christ'. In Matthew Cheney's words, *The Matrix* films deal with the implications of technology for what it means to be human and create a postmodern fable of alienated identity (Cheney, 2005). The Matrix is set in a dark, gritty and machine-filled world, that initially seems much like parts of our own.⁶³ Despite the absence of pre-industrial, 'primitive' societies and landscapes, I propose that *The Matrix* trilogy has much in common with the Arthurian fantasies previously discussed.

⁶² It is significant that the definition of the word 'Matrix', according to the *Collins Paperback English Dictionary*, is "... a substance, situation, or environment in which something has its origin" (Collins Paperback, 1992: 520.) If the search for the postmodern 'primitive' is embodied by the Western search for a point of origin, then *the Matrix* is the quintessential postmodern 'primitive' film.

⁶³ A synopsis of *The Matrix* follows: in the near future, computer hacker Neo is contacted by underground freedom fighters, who explain that reality as he understands it is actually a complex computer simulation called 'the Matrix'. Created by a malevolent Artificial Intelligence, the Matrix hides the truth from humanity, allowing it to live a convincing, simulated life in 1999, while machines grow and harvest people to use as an ongoing energy source. The leader of the freedom fighters, Morpheus, believes Neo is 'The One' who will lead humanity to freedom and overthrow the machines. Together with Trinity, Neo and Morpheus fight against the machine's enslavement of humanity as Neo begins to believe and accept his role as 'The One' (*The Matrix 101*, 2003 [Online]).

The first film was a 'sleeper hit' and went on to gain a cult-like following and popularity. This was achieved, in part, by its innovative use of special effects and cinematography⁶⁴, but also, I suggest, from its double appeal of spirituality, and salvation and hope for the alienated.

The central character 'Neo' (played by Keanu Reeves) is introduced as a troubled and rebellious programmer/'hacker', continuously in trouble with authority. After receiving a strange message on his computer telling him to "... follow the white rabbit ...",⁶⁵ Neo travels to an underground gothic club where he meets a woman named Trinity⁶⁶. She claims to know him very well and tells him:

... I know why you're here, Neo. I know what you've been doing. I know why you hardly sleep, why you live alone and why night after night you sit at your computer. You're looking for him. I know because I was once looking for the same thing. And when he found me, he told me I wasn't really looking for him; I was looking for an answer. It's the question that drives us, Neo The question brought you here. (*The Matrix*, 1999.)

The answering of this question forms the central concern of the film. In the film the question is tagged as "What is the Matrix?" (*The Matrix*, 1999), but the phrase "What is the meaning of life?" or "What is the Origin?" can be substituted just as easily. *The Matrix* demonstrates a Rousseauian distrust of 'progress' (it has led to enslavement by machinery) and a fascination with the potential origins of the human race. Machines and the notion of progress appear to be inexorably linked, and, according to Heidegger, part of the "... modern experience ..." that ultimately leads to the "... loss of the gods ..." and nihilism (in Pippin, 1991: 122).

'Civilisation', according to Agnes Heller, is normally associated with "... control, mediation, efficiency, [and] rationality" (1999: 162). It is machinery and technology that enable modern society to control Nature. Technology is also, arguably, responsible for the alienation of 'Man' from Nature (Heller, 1999: 167). Neo, as the central character of *The Matrix*, discovers that 'real life', as he knows it, is, in fact, an illusory construct manufactured by machines, and that he has been living a lie. Neo's guide quotes Baudrillard as he finally introduces him to 'reality': "... 'welcome to the desert of the real' " (*The Matrix*, 1999; Baudrillard, 1997: 1).⁶⁷

In order to experience real life, Neo must escape the Matrix by being 'reborn' (*The Matrix*, 1999). He subsequently embarks on a Christ-like journey of self-discovery and transformation, peppered with religious connotations and references. The films (and his life) come to an end in the final moments of

⁶⁴ Visually the film was styled on Japanese anime, of which both the directors are fans.

⁶⁵ The first of many references to Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

⁶⁶ One of many religious associations and references.

⁶⁷ In one of the first scenes of the film, Neo is shown selling pirated software to some customers. Neo keeps the disks inside a hollowed-out version of Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*. When he opens the book to reveal its illegal contents, the first chapter heading reads 'On Nihilism', which is, in fact, the last chapter of Baudrillard's book (*The Matrix*, 1999).

the last film, *Matrix Revolutions*. Neo sacrifices himself in the belief that in so doing he ensures the future liberation of the rest of mankind (Hertz, 2003 [Online]). Earlier in the films, Neo is referred to as 'The One' (an anagram of his name) and "... my own personal Jesus Christ ...". The iconography and use of Christian mythology is obvious even to the most visually illiterate of viewers. I suggest that *The Matrix's* success rests on the joint appeal of innovative and beautiful cinematography, as well as on the postmodern critique of modernity, which manifests, typically, as a spiritual journey.

From the above examples, and others besides, I deduce that Fantasy seems to fill a void left by secular society, and addresses many issues surrounding spirituality and faith that frequently go unasked and unexplored in 'the real world'. The added appeal of Fantasy is that the substance or moral can be believed without commitment to, or faith in, the specifics. Furthermore, the experience of Fantasy is a quiet, introspective and intensely personal one. The possibilities may be mulled over and experienced in the comfort of an armchair. Active participation in rallies or New Age religious rituals is unnecessary – the ideas can be sampled in private. As Jung observes in *Psychological Types*, closed systems of religion "... have an undoubted tendency to suppress the unconscious in the individual as much as possible" (1976: 115). Fantasy encourages the exploration of the unconscious and of faith-related ideas. The genre finds an increasingly wide audience in those who feel alienated or ill-at ease with some aspects of Western society; be it a lack of faith, a lack of faith in the future, or merely a feeling of helplessness in the face of modernity (Torgovnick, 1998: 13). Fantasy as postmodern 'primitivism' provides an outlet for imaginative exploration in a mundane world, and, in the words of author Howard A. Jones, "... gives a sense of wonder that our modern lives lack" (Blackston, 2003 [Online]).

2.4 Fantasy Illustration as a Continuation of the Romantic Tradition

As an illustrator, I am particularly interested in how Fantasy as postmodern 'primitivism' asserts itself visually, and in what manner it differs from other contemporary illustration styles. At this point in this chapter, I briefly set out to explore the visual expressions of Fantasy as a form of postmodern 'primitivism'. Once again, this is intended as an overview, and, as such, generalisations and simplifications will occur.

Generally, Fantasy illustration can be viewed as a continuation of the style of 19th century Romanticism, and, more specifically, of the Pre-Raphaelites⁶⁸. By contrast, most other contemporary

⁶⁸ To clarify my use of the terms Romanticism and Pre-Raphaelite movement: I use the term Romanticism as a broad one referring to the artistic and intellectual movement that was dominant in Western Europe in the late 18th century. I understand the Pre-Raphaelite movement to represent a late phase of Romanticism – a phase having its own distinctive style and appearance, yet sharing in many of the ideals of the broader movement from which it stemmed. Moreover, I have deliberately chosen *not* to distinguish between the 'original' Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

illustration tends to be very consciously fashionable, postmodern and trend-setting. The atavistic nature of Fantasy is thus contrary to contemporary trends in illustration. Postmodern Fantasy is therefore, not all that different from modern Fantasy (as represented by the Pre-Raphaelites). Like the modern 'Primitivists', postmodernism seeks to critique modernity. It is thus likely that there would be common ground in their shared dissatisfaction. However, the idealism of the Romantics was shattered by the horrific events of the First and Second World Wars and is arguably no longer present in the works of Fantasy authors and artists.⁶⁹

Unsurprisingly, therefore, many of the complaints once levelled at the Pre-Raphaelite Movement are currently levelled at Fantasy art: it is sentimental, *copying*, too literal, nostalgic, and retrogressive. Fantasy art, however popular among the public, is regarded as unfashionable by the *avant garde* for these very reasons.

(John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Holman Hunt) and the Symbolists or late Pre-Raphaelites (i.e. Edward Burne-Jones, John William Waterhouse and others) who followed them, for reasons I discuss below.

The artists commonly referred to as Pre-Raphaelites cannot be easily or accurately classified as a 'movement' in the manner of the 19th and 20th century French Modernists; they lacked a manifesto or any written declaration of intent and there exists no contemporary evidence at all of how the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed; however, they published a group magazine, had a decided group identity and, as Prettejohn states: "... made a demonstrable impact on mainstream artists of succeeding generations" (2000: 65). I resist the urge to classify them as a movement not in dismissal of their achievements nor in denial of the significance and impact of their art-making, but rather in the belief that the concept of an *avant-garde* movement is a notion intrinsically tied to the Modernists of the 19th and 20th centuries, who are frequently glamorised as the 'true' precursors of modern art.

Reputedly, the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed some time late in 1848 with seven members – Rossetti, Hunt, Millais, a young painter named James Collinson, a friend or pupil of Hunt's named Frederic George Stephens, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's younger brother William Michael Rossetti and a sculptor Thomas Woolner (Prettejohn, 2000: 26-27). For one year only – 1849 – did the members initial their paintings 'P.R.B.'. Of the seven only three – Rossetti, Hunt and Millais – achieved lasting historical fame and success as artists. There is as much difficulty in locating the 'end' of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as there was in discovering its beginning. Prettejohn sources it sometime between 1850 and the early decades of the 20th century (2000: 87). The original Brotherhood stopped meeting regularly in 1850; it could be argued that the only 'real' paintings that can be spoken of as being Pre-Raphaelite are the few works created by the original seven artists between 1849 and 1850. Despite this, artists as "... diverse as James McNeill Whistler, John William Waterhouse ... Aubrey Beardsley ... and a vast array of others have been linked to Pre-Raphaelitism" (2000: 88).

I argue that what I call art in the Pre-Raphaelite tradition is recognisable as a 'school', despite technical stylistic differences that existed between individual artists, and indeed, 'earlier' and 'later' groups. This Pre-Raphaelite tradition is characterised, primarily, by a vividness of technique, the use of sophisticated modern methods to dramatise an exploration of the 'primitive', attention to detail, keen observation and skilful technical execution of a naturalist style; and above all what Prettejohn terms a "... conceptual primitivism ..." (2000: 20).

Fantasy art recalls these characteristics, forming an instantly recognisable tradition, despite differences of execution by individual artists.

⁶⁹ Frequently, Fantasy dwells on the darker aspects of human nature and the potential for destruction that lies within. The Fantasy illustrator's vision of 'primitivism' is more like that of Montaigne – the Other is viewed with less dewy-eyed idealism – she/he acknowledges the cannibal within her/his own society. Postmodern Fantasy also appropriates/pastiches from a wide array of sources.

According to Prettejohn, Pre-Raphaelite art was in “... shocking friction with the illusionistic sophistication and technical refinement ordinarily expected of painting in the modernised and industrialised world of Victorian England ...” (Prettejohn, 2000: 19). The same can be said of contemporary Fantasy illustration. This kind of powerful, resonant image-making is, perhaps, one of the reasons for its popularity. Unlike most contemporary illustration, Fantasy usually exists to complement adult fiction⁷⁰, rather than children’s. The images are accomplished and complex, and tend to be highly symbolic and referential. The kind of Modernist break with pictorial realism that is common in other contemporary fields of illustration is rarely seen in the context of Fantasy.

As the subject matter of a Fantasy illustration is, by its very nature, unlikely to exist (except in the mind of the creator) to support this fiction and to render it convincing, pictorial realism is necessary. It is impossible to get a photographic reference for an aircraft carrier that floats several kilometers up in the air, for a dragon or for a woman with no back. An abstract image of an idea that is already abstract or sublime in Nature would not suffice.⁷¹ Fantasy illustration exists to augment the literary text and to lend it substance and credence. The artist wants his/her audience to believe in the impossible.

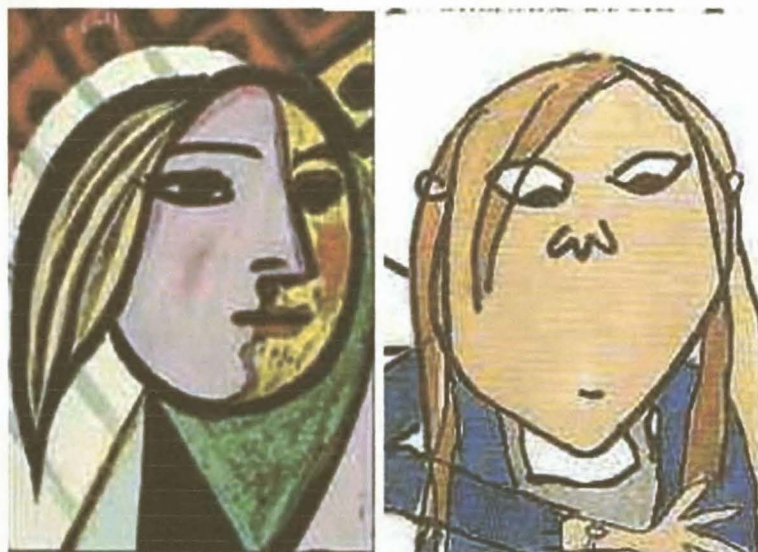


Fig. 5. (left) Detail of Pablo Picasso’s *Girl before a Mirror* from the cover of “*Primitivism*” in *20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, Volume 1, 1984 (Rubin, 1984: front cover). **Fig. 6.** (right) ‘Clarence Bean’, a popular character by Lauren Child, winner of the Kate Greenaway medal for children’s illustration. Cover detail from the children’s picture book *Clarence Bean* (*Clarence Bean* illustration by Lauren Child, 2002 [Online]).

⁷⁰ The distinction between children’s and adults’ Fantasy is, arguably, somewhat arbitrary. While it is true that the brand of Fantasy I am discussing is particularly adult-orientated, there is so much crossover appeal that the differentiation frequently lacks meaning. It is also true that Fantasy for children, (that is Fantasy rather than ‘imagination’) has many similarities with the adult style of Fantasy illustration I am discussing.

Figure 5 compares a detail of Picasso's *Girl before a Mirror* with contemporary children's book character, 'Clarence Bean' (figure 6), by illustrator Lauren Child. This juxtaposition demonstrates that the Modernist break with pictorial realism is continued in most contemporary illustration. This simplifying, abstraction and flattening of features is radically contrary to the naturalism of Fantasy art, as shown in Figure 7.



Fig. 7. (left) Kinuko Y. Craft's illustration for *Thomas the Rhymer* (*Paintings: Kinuko Craft*. Duirwaigh Gallery [Online]). **Fig. 8.** (right) *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. By Sir Frank Dicksee (Unknown Author, *Le [sic] Belle Dame sans Merci* [Online]).

Critic Andrew Rissik famously commented that "J.R.R. Tolkien's chief contribution to the literature of the twentieth century was to ignore it almost completely" (in Abrahamsen, 2003 [Online]). From a certain point of view, the same can be said of Fantasy illustration. At a glance, the styles that are currently popular could be seen as imitations of pre-Modernist fine art movements. Figure 7 is by contemporary fairy-tale illustrator Kinuko Y. Craft, from her book *Thomas the Rhymer*. Figure 8 shows a piece after the fashion of the Pre-Raphaelites by Sir Frank Dicksee entitled *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, created in the early 20th century. The style and subject matter of the two pieces are remarkably similar. Both deal with the abduction of mortals by faerie Queens, and it is likely that the contemporary Fantasy illustration was directly inspired by the first.

When Fantasy illustrators talk of their artistic influences, they are more likely to cite artists from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (and earlier) than the more contemporary influences of mainstream illustrators. Names such as Aubrey Beardsley, Edmund Dulac and Arthur Rackham are frequently mentioned (Jude, 1999: 16), as well as the works of the Pre-Raphaelites (Winding, 1997 [Online]). This is probably because there was *no break* in the tradition between Pre-Raphaelites and

⁷¹ Abstraction does occur in Fantasy illustration, but it is usually partial, and then it is highly symbolic, as in the work of Dave Mckean.

Fantasy. Tolkien energised the tradition and brought it into the public eye once more, where it became known by the new name of Fantasy.

As a continuation of the tradition of the Pre-Raphaelites, Fantasy illustration shares many characteristics with them. These are listed by Newall as the glorification of Nature and of women, the romantic fascination with the Middle Ages and with spirituality, and a preoccupation with mythological, religious and literary subjects (2001: 46). As a contemporary art form, Fantasy illustration does tend to address more contemporary concerns, which are reflected in the subject matter, for instance: changed attitudes towards women⁷² and contemporary interest in New Age spirituality, which is now much more prevalent than the myriad biblical scenes favoured by the Pre-Raphaelites. Contemporary Fantasy also tends to be far darker in substance. As David Michael Levin says:

...Western metaphysics has forgotten, has suppressed, this *other* vision, this vision without presence, the *parousia*, of the light of day: a vision which understands (the ontological significance of) the *absence* of light and is open to learning from the greatness – even the terror – of the night. (Levin in Berry and Wernick, 1992: 2.)

Postmodern Fantasy gives a voice and visual expression to “this *other* vision”, fully realising the horrors and sublimity of ‘the night’, as well as the romance of the day.

The Fantasy art community was quick to embrace new advances and new mediums, including digital technology (Jude, 1999: 10). This eager acceptance of new materials was also a characteristic of the Pre-Raphaelite Movement, whose artists were among the first in the 19th century to adopt new artists’ materials available as a result of new chemical and industrial research⁷³ (Prettejohn, 2000: 148). Upon closer examination, contemporary paintings that appear similar in style and technique to pre-Modernist works, may often be constructed with the aid of a graphics tablet and software rather than the traditional pigment and paintbrush. Digital Fantasy and Science Fiction art galleries (both amateur and professional) occupy vast amounts of web space, while high-profile conventions⁷⁴ offer innovative ‘on demand’ printouts of digital paintings (Foster, 2005 [Online]). This rapid acceptance of new media alone, suggests to me that the criticism levelled against Fantasy illustration – that it is merely derivative and insists on clinging to antiquated and quaint notions – demands closer examination.

⁷² While women are still frequently regarded as ‘primitive’ Other, the majority of depictions are, arguably, more empowered and less sentimental, although there are always exceptions. Also, contemporary Fantasy illustrations of women are often highly and blatantly sexualised, whereas the Pre-Raphaelites were subtle, reflecting the difference in attitudes towards nakedness and propriety.

⁷³ Such as the new pigments of emerald green, vivid yellows and purples (Prettejohn, 2000: 148).

⁷⁴ Such as Dragon Con, “America’s largest, multi-media, popular arts convention” (Foster, 2005).

Thus Abrahamsen proposes that *The Lord of the Rings* is "... a cognitive response to the only century that could have produced it: the 20th ...". Fantasy illustration, like Fantasy literature, should be viewed as an alternative to, or commentary on, contemporary modern life. I therefore propose that Fantasy illustration deliberately turns its back on more mainstream trends in much the same way as the Pre-Raphaelites did in the mid-19th century (Wood, 1998: 7). Fantasy illustration is a continuation of that tradition, rather than a revival of it,⁷⁵ and offers a visual alternative to the irony and cynicism that characterise most other postmodern illustration.

The visual goals of Fantasy as postmodern 'primitivism' are metaphorically captured in the Fantasy tradition of introducing a novel with a map of the imaginary world in which the novel is set. This tradition is particularly prevalent in 'High' or 'Heroic' Fantasy. The maps are usually artificially aged and the paper is frequently distressed or partially burned. The maps usually contain a mix of late medieval and/or colonial style iconography. Figures 9 and 10 are typical⁷⁶.

These maps embody Fantasy's bid to convince the reader of the 'reality' of the Fantasy realm: "The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it ..." (Baudrillard, 1997: 1). They are also reminders that maps can only ever serve as selective representations of 'reality', whether what they document exists or not (Black, 1997: 11). There is a close connection between map-making, power, imperial conquest and rule. The irony is that the maps can be viewed as Modernist representations, providing as they do an omnipotent bird's eye view. Here, Fantasy chooses to record its 'primitivist' dream-reality by adopting the documentary methods of colonial Europe. In this instance, Fantasy uses the tools of Modernism as an aid in the rejection of modernity. This example aptly demonstrates that, like most counter-discourses of modernity, Fantasy ironically remains caught in the paradigm that it critiques.

⁷⁵ The Pre-Raphaelites and the medieval revival were no longer fashionable by the end of the First World War. As Wood says in his biography of Burne-Jones "... modernism had triumphed ..." and critics scathingly dismissed the works of the Pre-Raphaelites (1998: 152). An art historian of the time wrote of Burne-Jones' *King Cophetua* as "... the silliest possible still-life record of two models posing in fancy dress on a heap of Wardour Street bric-a-brac ..." (Wood, 1998: 153).

From this it can be seen that, as with Fantasy literature, the style is frequently at odds with mainstream artistic inclinations. The artwork of the Pre-Raphaelites clashed jarringly with modernist notions of significant form – and Fantasy art continues to do so to this day. Many members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were still around and very visible at the end of the nineteenth century, when Tolkien and others were children/teenagers. William Morris' *Well at the World's end* was published in 1896, and was a great influence on Tolkien. Its plot bears a striking resemblance to *The Lord of the Rings*, and, incidentally, contains a character named Gandolf (Langford, 2001 [Online]). The *Hobbit* was written scarcely a decade or so after this.

⁷⁶ Tolkien's example, as always, was seminal in establishing this tradition.

unacknowledged. To ignore/dismiss Fantasy is to dismiss the discontents of a large (and growing) portion of modern society. It is likely that Fantasy is 'used' by the establishment to keep the discontents 'happy' and therefore under some measure of control.

I maintain that Fantasy as postmodern 'primitivism' continues the tradition of using the 'primitive' to engage in a critique of Modernism. 'Heroic' and 'High' Fantasy particularly lend themselves to the romantic idealisation of 'primitivism' and to the projection of the savage as a form of escapism. I shall discuss this concept more fully in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The Forest and the Green Man

In this chapter, I argue that a prominent and popular example of contemporary visual Fantasy, the so-called 'Green Man', can be considered an expression of postmodern 'primitivism'. I aim to demonstrate how the Green Man has become representative of the forest, and of all that it stands for in modern Western culture: the ultimate representation of the repressed 'primitive' Other. I shall also briefly discuss the long cultural history of the forest in Western society, and its associations of ambiguity and lawlessness.

I shall demonstrate that the Green Man is heir to a long genealogy of imagery in the West, but that this genealogy is retrospectively imposed. In this chapter I aim to explore the extent to which Hobsbawm's theory of the invention of tradition can be applied to the case of the Green Man. I am going to argue that while a Green Men-like iconography has existed for a very long time, this does not prove that there has been a consistent Green Men genealogy.

I demonstrate that, as an invented tradition, the Green Man utilises historic manifestations and forms to legitimate the frequently made claim of ancient origins. I take the term "invented tradition", as set out by Eric Hobsbawm in *The Invention of Tradition*, to mean

... a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past (1983: 1).

I shall demonstrate that the tradition of the Green Man is largely founded upon the writings of a folklorist, Lady Raglan, who was the first to use the term 'Green Man', in 1939.

3.1 In Search of the Green Man

My original motivation for writing this thesis was to discover the significance of the proliferation of the 'Green Man' type figures and symbols that I came across in the course of my general perusal of Fantasy literature and illustration. The Green Man in Fantasy literature is a recurring figure – he appears on websites and on jacket covers, in hundreds of unconnected illustrations and as a character in many books, short stories and films.

While there have been many Green Man-like characters and depictions in earlier (20th century) Fantasy⁷⁷, the tradition of the Green Man (in visual Fantasy) appears to be a relatively contemporary cultural phenomenon, emerging in its current form, to the best of my knowledge, from the mid-1980s onward (Hicks, 2000: ix).

The figure of the Green Man appears in Fantasy art most commonly as a green humanoid male head made from, or spewing, leaves; a composite of man and foliage. Occasionally he is depicted with horns or cloven feet (see Figure 16). Figures 11 and 12 show two fairly typical depictions of Green Men as they appear in Fantasy. Both examples come from the Fantasy gaming industry. Figure 11 comes from the player's guide to the popular role-playing game *Dungeons and Dragons*, and shows the image of the neutral god of Nature – the so-called 'Obad-Hai'. The player's guide says Obad-Hai " ... rules nature and the wilderness, and he is a friend to all who live in harmony with the natural world. Barbarians, rangers, and druids sometimes worship him." (Martin and Rateliff, 2003: 108.)

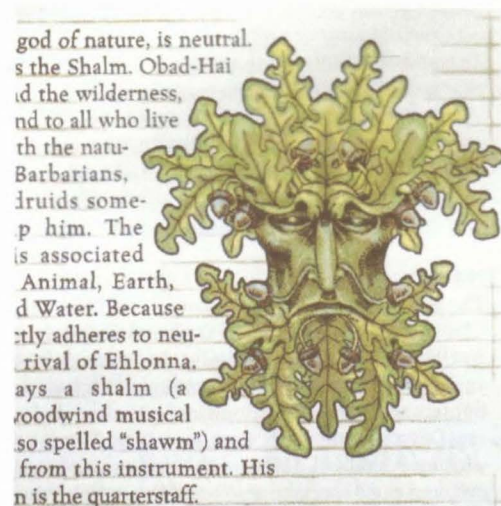


Fig. 11. Wood, S. (2003) Interior illustration from *The Dungeons and Dragons Player's Handbook: Core Rulebook v. 3.5*. (Martin and Rateliff, 2003: 108).

Figure 12 shows a 'Maro' card from the popular Fantasy game *Magic: The Gathering*. The art description of the card reads:

... This earth spirit is a creature of the soil. It seems to be the epitome of the fertility of the fresh ground and it thrives on that still unseen. In many ways it is the avatar of the seedlings, maybe plants randomly sprout from Maro's body (Rosewater, 2002 [Online]).

⁷⁷ Characters such as Peter Pan in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan and Wendy*, and Pan in *The Great God Pan* by Arthur Machen, fit the profile of Green Men, being embodiments of repressed desires (be it the desire to be free of parental control, to fly and never grow up, or – in Machen's case – the darker repressed desires of sex and violence) and leafy attire. However, they were not referred to as 'Green Men'.



Fig. 12. Stuart Griffin, *The Green Man/Maro*. From Wizards of the Coast *Magic: The Gathering*, ‘Mirage’ deck (Rosewater, 2002 [Online]).

The similarities between these images are considerable; it is obvious that both artists are referencing the same sort of ‘Green Men’. The written descriptions of both characters emphasise the connection with Nature, and attest to the presence of harmonious spirituality.

A quick and casual web search provides evidence that such a view is widespread in contemporary popular Fantasy culture. One anonymous South African writer proclaims that the Green Man is, “The Guardian of Nature and represents mankind’s union with the natural world. He is the male counterpart of the Nature aspect of the Goddess. The Green Man is thought of by most as a God.” (*The History of the Green Man* [Online].) The blurb for a recent anthology of short Fantasy stories and poems entitled *The Green Man: Tales from the Mythic Forest*, defines the Green Man as “A spirit who stands for Nature in its most wild and untamed form ... through the ages and around the world”. A frequent implication is that the figure of the Green Man is ancient, multicultural and timeless, as William Anderson, author of *Green Man: The Archetype of our Oneness with the Earth* asserts: “In his origins he is much older than our Christian era.” (1990: 14.)

Actually, it seems the name or term ‘Green Man’ dates back only to 1939, when a folklorist named Lady Raglan published an article in *Folklore Journal* entitled “The Green Man in Church Architecture” (in Anderson, 1990: 18). The proliferation of English public houses bearing the name ‘The Green Man’ – and frequently accompanied by a sign, either of a ‘Wild Man’ dressed in leaves, or of a Robin Hood-type figure – appeared from this time onwards (Hicks, 2000: 93).

Lady Raglan had noticed the numerous carvings or bas-relief of 'foliate heads'⁷⁸ in cathedrals and churches throughout England. In the article, she related the carvings to what are popularly believed to be debased remnants of pre-Christian rituals and ceremonies that can still be witnessed throughout the British Isles, and much of Europe, today. She wrote:

... the question is whether there was any figure in real life from which it could have been taken. The answer, I think, is that there is only one of sufficient importance, the figure variously known as the Green Man, Jack in the Green, Robin Hood, the King of May, and the Garland, who is the central figure in the May Day celebrations throughout Northern and Central Europe (1939: 50).

Many of these pageants and dances commonly feature characters bearing names such as 'the Fool', 'the Hobbyhorse', 'Maid Marian', 'Cross Bow', as well as 'Jack in the Green'. The exact traditional significance of these tradition events has been forgotten, or romanticised. Jon Raven speculates that they could be debased remnants of Druidic rituals; the remnant of a church fund-raising pageant; or, in the case of the village of Abbot's Bromley in England, the symbolic celebration of the granting of forest rights to the commoners (*Abbot's Bromley* [Online]). However, according to Roy Judge, morris dancer and folklorist, the concept of the Jack-in-the-Green and other dance-related characters like him, is "... essentially a popular May Day money-making scheme developed by chimney sweeps in the late-eighteenth century ..." (in Centerwall, 1997 [Online]).

Brandon Centerwall argues that Lady Raglan was determined to view the Green Man in an attitude that was then one of "... fashionably Frazerian catholicity ...", relating him indiscriminately to a wide variety of forest-linked mythological, legendary and cultural European characters. Lady Raglan's Green Man was, as Judge states, "... a particularly successful example of modern mythmaking ..." or, as Judge calls it, "... a case study in the invention of tradition" (1997 [Online]).

The 'Green Men' that Lady Raglan 'discovered' in various places of worship, were seldom green, being mostly carved in stone and situated in hidden places. Her interest was perhaps sparked by the fact that in some cathedrals in Europe images of the 'Green Man' (or foliate heads) outnumber images of Christ ten to one. No one had brought this to the attention of the public before, and no church records of any kind exist to suggest why there are so many foliate heads, or to explain for what purpose they were created (Radcliffe, 2000: v).

⁷⁸ As they were known prior to the publication of her article, and as they are still referred to in architectural circles.



Fig. 13. Unknown artist, *Green Man with hawthorn and birds* (Probably early 14th century). Stone sculpture, All Saints, Sutton Benger, Wiltshire (Basford, 1978: Plate 48b).



Fig. 14. Unknown artist, *Green Man roof bosses* (Early 14th Century). Stone sculpture, Exeter Cathedral, England (Basford, 1978: Plate 50b).

It is significant, however, that the association between the medieval stone carvings of foliate heads and traditional and legendary folk figures, such as Robin Hood, Saint George and Jack in the Green, has little to no evidence to support it. The idea only became popular after Lady Raglan had published her article.

The most likely hypothesis seems to be that the foliate head was merely a popular type of decorative grotesque⁷⁹. No written records remain to explain either the function or purpose of the Green Man, or, for that matter, the purpose of gargoyles and grotesques. Their symbolism remains a controversial topic (Bridaham, 1969: xiii). The Abbè Auber suggested that gargoyles were “... representations of devils conquered by the Church and made her slaves” (in Bridaham, 1969: xiv). If this is the case, then it is possible that the foliate heads have a pre-Christian origin.⁸⁰

The Christian church of the Middle Ages had a long history of appropriating customs and imagery from local ‘pagan’ religions, presumably in an effort to encourage the local populace to convert and feel at home doing so (*Celtic Mythology*, 1999: 185-187).⁸¹ So, it is possible that the Green Man might have originated as a pagan symbol, appropriated and transformed⁸² into another demonised grotesque to adorn the walls and keep out evil. Grotesques, and many foliate heads, appear as if in anguish and torment. In Exeter Cathedral in England, the Virgin Mary is shown treading on the head of a Green Man, in much the same way that she treads on the head of the tempter/ the serpent in the Garden of Eden (Basford, 1978: 20). It is possible that she is represented as stamping out evil in the form of paganism and Nature worship.

Besides the connection with the forest, through means of their decorative foliage, no evidence suggests more than the most tenuous of links between the foliate head carvings in churches and cathedrals and the traditional characters of European, and particularly British, folklore. There are, in fact, no reasonable grounds to suggest the truth of the commonly held assertion: that the Green Man figure exists as evidence of an unbroken tradition of paganism in Europe stretching from pre-Christian to postmodern times (*The Green Man* [Online]).

⁷⁹ Grotesques are often confused with gargoyles. The difference is merely that a gargoyle was designed to act as a waterspout and had a practical purpose in funnelling rainwater away from the walls and foundations of the building. A grotesque is merely decorative (Arnold, 2001 [Online]).

⁸⁰ Although the link is not the one contemporary neo-pagans suggest – that the Green Man is proof that ‘paganism’ survived the Middle and Dark Ages in defiance of the Christian church.

⁸¹ For example, in Ireland, the pre-Christian Goddess ‘Brigit’ was incorporated into the Catholic canon of saints under the name Saint Bridget. Apart from the small change in spelling, her attributes are almost the same (*Celtic Mythology*, 1999: 185). The ‘pagan’ traditions of decorating trees during the winter solstice were also adopted by the Christian church at Christmas time, as well as many other small pagan practices (Hajicek, 2000 [Online]).

⁸² The appearance of the devil, for instance – cloven hooves and horns on his head – probably derived from the appearance of the Greek and Roman God, Dionysus/Pan, who is himself often associated with the Green Man (Alexander, *What is the Goat Connection?*[Online]).



Fig. 15. Unknown artist, *The Virgin Mary and the Christ Child* (Late 13th or early 14th century). Stone sculpture, Exeter Cathedral, Devon (Basford, 1978: Plate 49).

It is as a postmodern symbol that the Green Man has come to signify defiance of normative, mainstream modernity, in matters particularly of spirituality and ecology (Hicks, 2000: vi). Keith Dietrich speaks of how the process of “... separation of urban societies from forest, bush, and desert wilderness was accompanied by a corresponding internalized separation in the consciousness of these societies; a detachment of the mind from matter” (1993: 21). The Green Man embodies the romantic urge to reclaim the ‘lost’ connection with Nature and the Wilderness.

The Fantasy author Charles De Lint uses the Green Man as a character in his novels. In *Greenmantle*, originally published in 1988, a character tells of ‘the Mystery’ in the woods: “The one they called Jesus – the Green Man they hung from a tree in the desert. How St. Paul took the mystery and twisted it to make a religion of intolerance and self-torment.” (1992: 196.) In the popular style of Fantasy, De Lint uses the Green Man to critique modern Christianity. The Green Man of his books is a symbol of an occluded mystical Christian tradition of tolerance and oneness with Nature.

In the manner of Structuralist Anthropology (where universal structures are believed to underlie diverse religions⁸³), De Lint associates the Green Man with almost any other mythical or legendary figure ever associated with the forest or the hunt:

In Gaul and Britain, he was given the name Cernunnos. In Wales, he was sometimes called Mabon. The Germanic people knew him as Uller, the winter bowman. The Greeks and Romans knew him in various guises: as Apollo and Orion; the Egyptians as Amen-Ra; the Hindus as Surya. He appears in the Bible as Nimrod ... I like to think of him as the Green Man, an earthier view of the legendary Robin Hood. (De Lint, 1992: 151.)

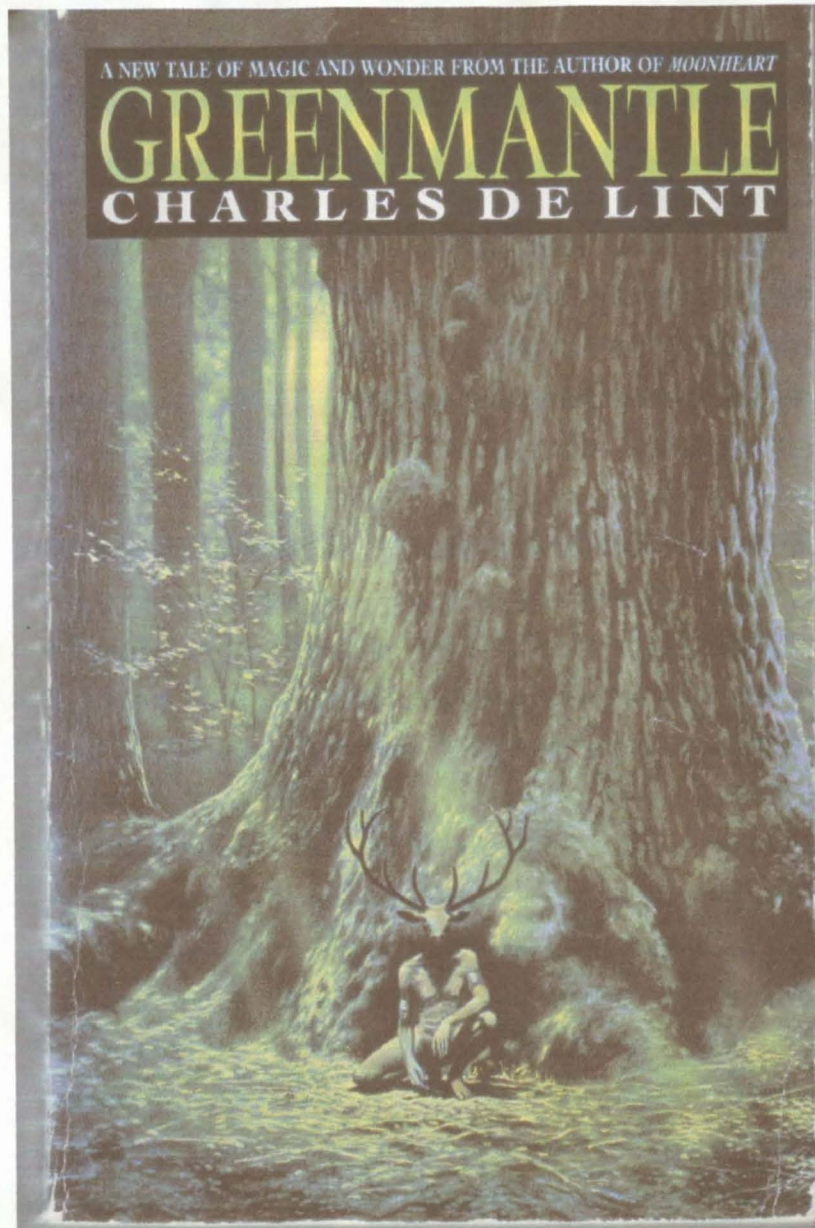


Fig. 16. David Bergen, *Greenmantle* (1992). Unknown medium. Cover illustration for *Greenmantle* by Charles de Lint (De Lint, 1991: front cover).

⁸³ As in Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, a text that greatly influenced the formation of contemporary paganism in the early to mid-20th century.

David Bergen's cover illustration for *Greenmantle* (Figure 16) depicts the Green Man as a man with a stag's head and antlers. His skin is green and brown and he crouches in front of the massive trunk of a tree in a forest glade⁸⁴. All that he appears to be wearing are two armbands on his upper arms; however, his nakedness is not emphasised. Although De Lint stresses the connection between Pan and the Green Man, he rejects the wild sexuality for which the Greek Pan is most famed, instead recasting his late-modern Pan as a mirror of the human soul:

... if you approach him with fear, he fills you with panic ... if you approach him with lust, he appears as a lecherous satyr. If you approach him reverently, he becomes a majestic figure. If you approach him with evil, he appears as a demonic figure. (1992: 152.)

In De Lint's novel, the protagonists all perceive the Green Man as majestic being – presumably the 'correct' interpretation according to the author.

Charles de Lint's depiction of a Green Man is an exception in the genre of Fantasy, rather than the rule. The Green Man generally appears as an artistic device, a symbol rather than a character, and is much more in evidence in Fantasy illustration than in the literature. A case in point is the association of the Green Man in David Gemmell's Fantasy novel *Echoes of the Great Song*.

The cover illustration to Gemmell's novel (Figure 17) shows several Green Men, briar roses and a sword hilt. The Green Men are green in colour, made of foliage with 'tongues' of water spewing from their open mouths. Above the Green Men, a tangle of delicate and very beautiful roses is flowering in the sun; viewers are left with the impression that they are looking beneath the roses and surface beauty to discover the source of the flowering. A sword features predominantly to the right foreground of the cover: it is buried, point down, in the ground and a thick rose stem, complete with thorns, is twisting around it, suggesting that the sword has been buried there for some time and will, in time, be completely consumed by the flowers and greenery.

From the cover it might be supposed that *Echoes of the Great Song* is a novel filled with green characters with foliage faces. In fact, this is a fairly traditional sword and sorcery 'epic' based on fragments of Almec and Aztec history. Most of the action takes place on glaciers, amidst the ice and snow. The story follows various characters as they struggle against one another, the elements, magic, and a strange being known as "the Crystal Queen", who has an insatiable appetite for death and demands the sacrificial ritual deaths of millions atop her pyramids (Gemmell, 1998: 265). Indeed, the choice of cover and its associations are not obvious. The only possible link is that *Echoes* follows the

⁸⁴ Probably a giant redwood. The story is set in "... the great forests" of America (De Lint, 1992: 151).

decline and fall of an empire, and the subsequent rebirth of a new social order, while the Green Man in Fantasy is frequently associated with sacrifice and rebirth. One of the characters in the novel is an



Fig. 17. A detail from the cover of *Echoes of the Great Song* by David Gemmell. Illustrated by John Howe. Bantam, 1997 (Howe, 2001: 97).

insane killer by the name of 'Viruk', who is, paradoxically, also a gardener. At one point, Viruk makes an impassioned speech in defence of the people of a civilisation about to be slaughtered:

... I was thinking of my garden Every plant has its role to play, a scent to draw butterflies and aid pollination, a wide leaf to gather moisture and provide shade for the earth. And when their leaves and petals wither, they go down to the earth to feed the ground for future generations of blooms This land, this planet, is a garden. We are like plants upon it. But what kind of plants are we ... ? (1998: 399.)

The illustrator John Howe was most likely inspired by this passage in painting the cover – with Green Men and a sword being slowly lost in the undergrowth.



Fig. 18. John Totleben's cover for the comic *Swamp Thing*, Issue 157 (Millar, 1995: front cover).

The front cover of Issue 157 of *Swamp Thing* (figure 18) bears a photograph of a contemporary stone sculpture of a Green Man, created for the comic by John Totleben. Once again, the illustrator consciously seeks to link the contemporary tradition of Green Men with a character. The character of Swamp Thing was once a man named Alec Holland, “... whose consciousness was infused with the organic matter of a Louisiana swamp”, when Holland died (Banks and Wein, 1998 [Online]). The illustrators and writers of *Swamp Thing* draw parallels between the Green Man and Swamp Thing, as both are composites of man and vegetation. In Issue 47 a manifestation of Swamp Thing is named Jack-in-the-Green. Once again, the creators are clearly conscious of the tradition of the Green Man and are deliberately seeking to emphasise the connection.

Comic characters such as the Hulk and Swamp Thing are male, literally green, and are likened to both the destructive and harmonious aspects of Nature. Both comic characters have the potential to give in to animalistic violence; both are, in fact, gentle and “... paradoxically driven by a need for

peace of mind” (Sanderson, 2003 [Online]). Ang Lee’s film *The Hulk* ends with the title character finding peace and harmony in a forest; surrounded by the green colour of his own skin, he no longer stands out as he does in urban settings. In the forest environment he finds inner peace and a sense of belonging (*The Hulk*, 2003).

Clive Hicks, in his introduction to *The Green Man: A Field Guide*, dismisses claims of tenuous evidence between church carvings and characters from folklore and legend, ecstatically proclaiming, “The Green Man is a universal human symbol”. Hicks then proceeds to urge the reader to “... see through the specific to the more universal beyond” (2000: x). As proof of this alleged universality, Hicks then mentions several vaguely Green Man-like examples⁸⁵ from places as far afield as India, China and Mexico – places that he problematically claims to be “... culturally separate from Europe”. As I consider the Green Man to be evidence of postmodern ‘primitivism’, I contest Hicks’ claims, firstly for their vagueness and presumption, and secondly for the simple fact that no culture other than the European shows a mythological or folkloric figure with foliage concentrated upon a human head (Anderson, 1990: 20-21). Certainly there is a link between the Green Man of Fantasy illustration and the ‘paganism’ of pre-Christian Britain – but it is clear that contemporary illustrators consciously imitate formally the pre-modern examples (such as is evident from the *Swamp Thing* cover). However the interpretation of the figure is a modern invention – an invention that rests upon problematic and romantic assumptions.

3.2 The Green Man as the Personification of the Forest and the Forest as a Cultural Icon

The subject of the forest in a Western cultural context is a mammoth and fascinating topic that deserves much more space than I can accommodate in this study. For the purposes of my brief discussion, I shall refer especially to Simon Schama’s *Landscape and Memory* and Robert Pogue Harrison’s *Forests: The Shadow of Civilisation*.

“A tree will always be less interesting than what it represents” writes a reviewer in the English newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* (Douglas-Fairhurst, 2003: 6). I must agree with his remark. The cultural, social and political significance of trees, forests and woodlands cannot be overestimated in late-Modern society. As Torgovnick suggests, “The West has been engaged, almost continuously, in defining itself against a series of ‘primitive’ Others in its midst and without” (1998: 8). As I shall show, the Wilderness (as represented by forests) has become one of the most potent and powerful symbols of the ‘primitive’ Other in the cultural imagination of Western society. In *Forests: The Shadow of Civilisation*, Harrison discusses how “The governing institutions of the West – religion,

⁸⁵ I.e. they involve humanoid figures and leaves.

law, family, city – originally established themselves in opposition to the forests” (1992: ix). This is perhaps not surprising, considering that in a very literal sense modernity is accompanied by a process of radical deforestation (Knobloch, 1996: 18). Trees provide paper for writing, and lumber for the building of houses, fortresses and ships; the trappings of civilisation and conquest are thus produced through the felling of forests.

I shall begin with a brief contextual overview of changing attitudes towards the forest in the Western imagination, beginning with Christian Europe, after the fall of the Roman Empire.⁸⁶

3.2.1 Historical Contexts: Changing Attitudes towards Nature/ the Wilderness

As I have already mentioned in my brief discussion of the Nature/culture dichotomy, attitudes to the forest, and to Nature in general, have changed a great deal over the last thousand years or so. Poets and writers of the early Middle Ages considered ‘beauty’, ‘greatness’ and ‘vastness’ to be attributes belonging solely to God, rather than to landscape (Nicholson, 1997: 71). The Christian fall of man, and mankind’s sins, were projected onto a vision of the landscape – mountains and other ‘distortions’ of the earth were considered “ ... an immediate result of the sin of Adam and Eve” (Nicholson, 1997: 83).

Aside from religious doctrine, it is not hard to imagine the average medieval ‘European’ was not overly fond of Nature. Civilisation, in the form of villages, towns and monasteries, was a retreat from the dangers and harshness of the Wilderness and from the lawless men (and animals) that inhabited it. Life was harsh and communities must have been even more at the mercy of the elements than we are now; places outside human habitations were dangerous to life and to limb (Warner, 1994: 213).

I have mentioned before that there was always ambivalence towards Nature in the scriptures and teachings of Christianity. In some translations⁸⁷ of the Old Testament, for instance in Deuteronomy (16:21), Christian animosity towards the subject of woods and trees is made quite clear: “Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of trees near unto the altar of the Lord thy God” (Hajicek, 2000 [Online]). In *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, Harrison discusses how, during the Middle Ages, the Christian church associated the forest with “Bestiality, fallenness, errancy and perdition ... an anarchy of matter itself” (1992: 61). Rabanus Maurus, an eighth-century theologian, wrote that leaves

⁸⁶ In AD 476 (Fernández-Armesto, 1995: 52).

⁸⁷ As always when books are translated, the text is changed according to the intentions of the translator. The word in question here is the Hebrew ‘*asherah*’ – possible translations include tree, trees, grove, idol made of wood, decorated tree, etc. The exact meaning of the word is no longer known, but the translation I have given is the most common, and that which would have been used during the Middle Ages (Hajicek, 2000 [Online]).

represented “ ... the sins of the flesh or lustful and wicked men doomed to eternal damnation” (in Radcliffe, 2000: vi).

This Christian view of foliage that prevailed in the Middle Ages makes a strong case for the inclusion of foliate heads in churches as grotesques. It seems unlikely that ‘the Green Man’ was revered as a symbol of renewed life in Christian churches, since the vast majority of heads appear to be in torment – possibly a depiction of the doom that awaited unconverted pagans. Kathleen Basford surmises that these foliate heads represented “ ... the darkness of unredeemed nature as opposed to the shimmering light of Christian revelation ” (1978: 20). It is possible that the use of the head on tombs and at burial sites was a form of *memento mori* – a reminder that “ ... all greenness comes to withering ... ” (1978: 21).

Of course many, if not all, of the ‘pagans’ whom the church was trying to lure to its verdant bosom were staunch animists, purportedly to whom trees, rocks, groves and places were holy, if not worshipped as Gods themselves. I say purportedly because (as I shall discuss in more detail in my next section) very little is, in fact, known about the religious practices of the Celts, Gauls, and Visigoths who made up the ‘barbarian’ tribes of ‘Europe’ during the days of the Roman Empire and the subsequent Dark Ages (Davidson, 1993: 11). It seems unlikely that the church would *openly* venerate the traditions of religions it was trying to suppress.

Attitudes towards the forest gradually changed. Between the middle of the seventeenth century and the end of the eighteenth, European attitudes towards Nature in general underwent a nearly 180-degree reversal. It was not long before the “ ... irregularity that had once repelled began to attract” (Nicholson, 1997: 324). With the advent of Modernity (and a lessening of the threat of the Wilderness, as Nature was harnessed to human control) the pendulum swung towards the Romantic view of Nature as sublime: “All things in nature, animate and inanimate, bespeak the providence and plan of Deity; Nothing made by Him can be other than good...”, writes Henry Moore in his book *An Antidote Against Atheism*, published in London, 1712 (Nicholson, 1997: 116).

I would suggest that the change in aesthetic tastes, and in attitudes towards Nature in general, is due in part to social and political changes wrought by Modernist ‘progress’, coupled with the human destruction of the environment. It is from this last that I feel the most noticeable difference must derive. The fact that Nature was once what people needed to be protected from; and now itself needs protection from people⁸⁸ (Douglas- Fairhurst, 2003: 6).

⁸⁸ My argument here is simplistic and generalised, since much has been written on this topic. For an extended discussion, I would suggest the following works which I have consulted: *Contextualising Aesthetics: From Plato to Lyotard* edited by Gene H. Blocker and Jennifer M. Jeffers, also Marjorie Hope Nicholson’s *Mountain Gloom and*



Fig. 19. Caspar David Friedrich, *Cross and cathedral in the mountains* (1812). Oil on canvas, 38 x 45cm (Russo, 1999: 83).

This paradigm shift in aesthetic taste and judgement was heralded in, in the 17th century (the ‘century of revolutions’), by the general philosophical adherence to humanism⁸⁹ (Fernández-Armesto, 1995: 104). Against the orthodox religious conceptions of the ‘decay of Nature’ was set the “... humanist defense of the natural goodness of man” (Nicholson, 1997: 112-113). Rousseau sought and found revelation in the forest, and was inspired to write in *A Discourse on Inequality*: “Deep in the heart of the forest I sought and found the vision of those primeval ages whose history I bravely sketched” (in Vaughan, 1995: 28). Nineteenth century environmentalists, such as Henry David Thoreau and John Muir, promised that “... in wilderness is the preservation of the world ...” (Schama, 1996: 7).

The forests had become a positive projection of modern ‘primitivism’, a paradise and a sanctuary from the evils of ‘civilisation’. The projection was quintessentially a modern construct that was intended to critique the dominantly destructive and secular forces of society. Thoreau, in 1856, had already recognised this ‘Other’ in the Wilderness, as the occluded part of himself and his society:

... It is in vain to dream of a wilderness distant from ourselves. There is none such. It is the bog in our brains and bowels, the Primitive vigor of Nature in us, that inspires that

Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite, and Nature and the Victorian Imagination edited by U.C. Knoepflamacher and G.B. Tennyson.

⁸⁹ Renaissance humanism pre-dated Enlightenment humanism.

dream. I shall never find in the wilds of Labrador any greater wilderness than in some recess of Concord, i.e. than I import into it. (In Schama, 1996: vii.)

3.2.2 Etymology of the Word 'Forest'

An inquiry into the etymology of the word 'forest' sheds further light on the subject of the forest in the collective Western imagination. The word forest was, in fact, originally a juridical term deriving from the Latin word *foresta*, which appeared for the first time during the Merovingian period,⁹⁰ in the laws of the Longobards⁹¹ and in the capitularies of Charlemagne (Harrison, 1992: 69). The Roman word for 'woods' had been *nemus*. The word *foresta* was used, not in reference to groups of trees in general, but specifically in reference to Charlemagne's royal game reserves. According to Harrison, the probable Latin root of *foresta* was the Latin *foris*, meaning 'outside', from the verb *forestare* meaning "... to keep out, to place off limits, to exclude" (1992: 69). During the reign of the Merovingians, the kings placed public bans on large tracts of woodlands in order to preserve their wildlife, not in the interests of environmentalism, but in the interests of preserving the ritual of the royal hunt. As Harrison says, once a section of land had been 'afforested' – or declared a forest – it became a reserve and could not be cultivated, built on or utilised in any way by the general populace. Quinion notes that in England the forest lay outside the common law, offenders being punishable by a special and specific set of 'forest laws' (1996). So the very word forest⁹² contains implications of 'outsideness', of conservation⁹³ and Otherness.⁹⁴

3.2.3 The Forest in Fantasy and Literature

The forest is an important setting for many well-known Western folk and fairy tales (Warner, 1994: xvi). As contemporary Fantasy owes a large debt to folk and fairy tales, unsurprisingly, the forest is also an important and recurring setting for many Fantasy novels. The forest is culturally seen as a

⁹⁰ The Merovingians were a dynasty of Frankish kings who ruled a volatile area in parts of present-day France and Germany from approximately the 5th to the 8th century AD (Merovingian. *Wikipedia* [Online]).

⁹¹ A Germanic tribe that originated in the south of what is now Sweden, in the second century AD, and worked their way across 'Europe', reaching Italy by the 6th century. The name 'Longobards' refers to their long beards. Later they became known as 'Lombards'. They were one of many 'barbarian' tribes that established a kingdom after the fall of the Roman Empire. Their rule had effectively ended by 751 AD, when they were defeated by the Franks (Dunnigan and Nofi, 1994 [Online]).

⁹² As a point of interest – a forest does not necessarily have to involve trees (Quinion, 1996 [Online]).

⁹³ Although the serious deforestation and destruction of the natural environment began in earnest with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, there is a common misconception that before then Europe was covered in vast tracts of 'primeval' woodlands that had remained untouched for centuries. In fact, historically, such is not the case. Deforestation had already begun prior to modernity and, had Charlemagne and the other kings who soon followed suit not had large sections of woodland 'afforested', forests in the natural sense would probably have disappeared from the face of Europe a long time ago (Harrison, 1992: 69). Also, it has been proven likely, through reenactment and reconstruction of archeological findings, that the Celts of pre-Christian Britain and 'Europe' had a highly specialised timber industry – disproving one very popular myth about pre-modern 'barbarians' (Editors of Time-Life Books, 1994: 114).

⁹⁴ This etymology reveals that the very idea of 'natural forest' is a fantasy (Nelson: 2000 [Online]).

place beyond civilisation, and, as such, is traditionally recognised in Fantasy as a place of danger; a forbidden place of transformation; a place of the irrational; one place where the rules of civilisation are suspended, or do not apply. The forest thus provides ample scope for fantasies to play themselves out.

The significance of the forest and the wood has a long tradition in Western literature. To Robin Hood the forest was a haven out of whose depths he strove to topple an unjust social system; to Little Red Cap or Little Red Riding Hood and countless other fairytale heroes and heroines, the forest is a place of latent danger, outside the law-and-order of the village, where actual or metaphorical wolves may lurk. The forest is the traditional dwelling place of outcasts and social deviants, witches and crones, hermits, holy men, 'Wild Men', savages, and cannibals: "... the kinds of beings associated with marginal knowledge, who possess pagan secrets and are possessed by them" (Warner, 1994: xvi).

Two authors whom I have already discussed in previous chapters, Tolkien and Conrad, make ample use of the suggestive force that forests exert on the modern imagination. Tolkien's interest in forests is evidenced by the sheer number of them that crop up in his stories of Middle Earth. The forests and trees of Tolkien's world are characters as well as places;⁹⁵ they play a pivotal role in the outcome of his plots. Frequently Tolkien's forests act, in a Thoreau-like manner, as "a mirror to the soul". When a character questions the wisdom of chancing the perils of the forest, Lothlorien, we are told the forest is "Perilous indeed ... fair and perilous; but only evil need fear it, or those who bring some evil with them" (1992: 357). The 'primitive' Other, in this case the forest, is used as a basis for engaging in an evaluation or a judgement of each individual who enters it. Tolkien's forest (and many others like it that appear throughout Fantasy) is a place of truth, an arena that allows for an encounter with the 'true self'. Tolkien also employs the Romantic literary device of projecting the mood of any given scene onto the forest – bright and sunny forests set the stage for happy times during the stories, whilst dark and threatening forests, full of gloom and menace, are traversed during times of emotional stress.

Most of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* takes place in a forest. His narrator, Marlow, describes how an explorer might feel journeying through a strange land, to "... march through the woods, and in some inland post feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had closed round him – all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men" (Conrad, 1902: 1762).

⁹⁵ Old Man Willow does his best to kill and 'absorb' several of the characters in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, (Tolkien, 1992: 132-134), whilst, at a later stage, the reader is introduced to Fangorn, a 'tree-herder' who also claims to *be* the forest Fangorn in its entirety (Tolkien, 1992: 489).

Conrad's title *Heart of Darkness* is ambiguous⁹⁶, but can be interpreted to mean that the forest is the literal heart of darkness. Conrad implies, through his novella, that for an individual to venture into the African Wilderness of the forest is for him to risk his or her sanity – a cataclysmic event that will release the savage within. Once again, the forest is used to spectacular effect due to its associations of otherness and the 'primitive'.

As I have said, the forest appears repeatedly in the imagination of Western society. Depictions of forests appear to convey lingering connotations of danger and of ambiguity; they are approached with both nostalgia and fear; those who dare enter find them both “ ... fair and perilous ... ” (Tolkien, 1992: 357).



Fig. 20. Alan Lee, *Merlin* (1984). Pencil on paper, 70 X 46cm. For the magazine *From Avalon to Camelot* (Jude, 1999: 23).

⁹⁶ It almost definitely refers to the character Kurtz, who turns into a 'monster' under the influence of the 'primitive' and also possibly alludes to the metaphorical heart of Marlowe, the narrator; possibly, too, it refers to all mankind, who, given the right incentive, turns to 'darkness'.

Figure 20 shows an illustration by Alan Lee depicting the ever-popular subject of the wizard Merlin. This depiction emphasises Merlin's connection with the forest and animals. Lee chooses the period of Merlin's life in which he loses his sanity and wanders the wilderness, communing with Nature. He stands like a gnarled tree in the wilderness, all evidence of his life in the civilised court of King Arthur gone, or, at least, hanging in tatters from him. His hair is unkempt and his eyes are wide, either in meditation, or in madness, it is difficult to tell. This image suggests that Merlin has been standing very still for a long time; the tree roots and branches are growing round and through him. When he finally emerges from the forest he is more powerful than ever.

A more recent Fantasy exploration of the "fair and perilous" forest can be seen in the popular American television series *Lost*, in which a plane crashes on a remote island in what seems to be the South Pacific. Forty-eight survivors set up camp on the beach. The characters in *Lost* appear to be 'lost' in every sense of the word – physically and, in many cases, spiritually, morally or even mentally. Early on in the series, some of the characters learn that they cannot be rescued because no one knows where they are – the plane was a thousand miles off course, with no radio when it crashed. The island on which the survivors find themselves is large and covered with thick tropical forest. The episodes unfold as each character responds to the forest and the situations in different – and sometimes fatal – ways.

There are, in the course of the drama, references to, and direct quotations from, both Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. The themes of civilisation and savagery are fully explored through the survivors' encounters on the island. At one stage they discover they are not the island's only human inhabitants. These others are only ever glimpsed, never properly seen, but they are violent and strike terror into the hearts of the survivors. They are referred to as "the Others" and are spoken of with fear and superstition. The Fantasy elements of the show are handled in such a way that there is usually a 'rational' explanation for every strange thing that occurs, even if it is not quite believable. The dense forest is beautiful and a main source of food, fuel and shelter, but also a place of great danger. The survivors are attacked by polar bears in the jungle; there is also a 'monster' (glimpsed and heard yet not seen in the cold, hard light of day, until mid-way through the second season). Lurking in the forest, this monster screams and bellows and occasionally rips people to shreds, leaving only a bloody mess behind. But the survivors have no idea what it is; they know only that it is massive and dangerous⁹⁷.

⁹⁷ When finally revealed to the viewers, the 'monster' appears as a menacing and black cloud of smoke that swirls up to one of the characters in the forest. Flickers of images from the past of this character (particularly emotional or significant moments) can be seen within the 'monster'. The decision of 'the monster' to kill or to leave seems to be contingent on how the survivor feels about himself.

On several occasions characters wander, or stumble into, the jungle where they have life-changing experiences. Some of these experiences are horrific, not infrequently resulting in injury or death. Others have positive and enlightening experiences. John Locke, who has spent half his life in a wheelchair, suddenly realises he can walk again. Another character who is taking the body of his father home for the funeral, meets the reanimated corpse in the forest. At first he thinks he is delusional from lack of sleep and stress, then he finds the empty coffin in the forest. Once again, the forest acts as a mystical mirror to the human soul. The characters are all lost. What they are looking for is in the forest, if only they are brave enough to search for it. What they find, depends upon who they are and on how they respond to their hopes and fears. Says John Locke: “... this island may just give you something you are looking for, but you have to give the island something in return” (*Lost Episode Guide*, 2005 [Online]).

In the cultural imagination of late-Modern society it appears that the forest, like the image of colonised ‘primitive’ peoples, is the receptor of projections of Western desires and fears. The forest is simultaneously viewed as an awe-inspiring place, a wasteland, a dangerous place inhabited by deviants and madmen, and a ‘cathedral grove’ inhabited by saints and prophets (Schama, 1996: 14). The image of the forest is simultaneously repulsive and attractive to the West, and these feelings are evident in many examples of literature and art created in a modern context. The image constitutes the modern ambiguity of noble savage versus the ravaging cannibal, neatly projected onto a physical location.

Unsurprisingly the forest appeals to the imagination of those seeking to “... re-inhabit core experiences ...” through postmodern ‘primitivism’ (Torgovnick, 1998: 5). If the postmodern ‘primitive’ represents a desire to return to origins, no better visual symbol could be found to represent it than the forest, for forests have a long Western history of being originary places⁹⁸ (Harrison, 1992: 1). According to Knobloch: “Forests are places where everything else comes from, places against which all the animosity of ‘civilisation’ turned in simultaneous nostalgia and contempt for its imagined sylvan origin.” (1996: 17.) Western mythology implies that the forests were there before towns and cities, as Harrison puts it, “... like a precondition or matrix of civilisation ...” (1992: 1).

In postmodern ‘primitivism’ then, the Wilderness, including the forest and all ‘Wild’ Otherness, is embraced through the iconography of the Green Man.

⁹⁸ For instance, the forest is the legendary birthplace of Rome and the Roman Empire (Harrison, 1992: 1).

Chapter 4

Postmodern Spirituality and the Green Man as God

Berry and Wernick state that in late-Modernity we “ ... have begun to elaborate ‘other’ ways of thinking that alterity which philosophy formerly consigned to the marginality of darkness” (1992: 3). Surprisingly, towards the end of the 20th century, there has been a revival of interest in aspects of Otherness that can loosely be termed religious or spiritual. Keiran Flanagan suggests that:

... if postmodernity is about postsecularity, it also represents a revolt against apparently settled notions of indifference which secularisation cultivated in its marriage with modernity Far from confirming an indifference to religious belief, postmodernity reveals a search for spiritual difference. (1999: 6.)

Despite being a descendant of the Romantic tradition, ‘New Age’ spirituality contains many postmodern traits. For instance, it frequently encourages the collapse of cultural meta-narratives, escapism and consumerism, and appropriates freely from many sources.

I have previously demonstrated that the modern fascination with ‘primitive’ Others has, arguably, been ‘turned inwards’ in late modernity. In contemporary postmodern society it can be argued that there are no longer any *Other* cultures – there is only late-modern global culture. Because of this, the focus of fascination turns increasingly to the ‘primitive’ within: to aliens, ghosts and the Otherness of spirituality and mysticism. In Fantasy, in particular, modern fears and desires are projected constructs of imagined and romanticised Western/ European pre-histories. In this chapter, I provide a historical context for a discussion of invented ‘Celtic’ religions. I have chosen to focus my discussions and deconstructions on these ‘Celtic’ religions because the Green Man reputedly sprung from these traditions (Winding, 2002: 3).

3.3.1 The Celtic ‘Magic Bag’

It is often proposed that the Green Man is an ancient Celtic figure and associated with contemporary ‘Celtic’ paganism (see Fig. 21). The terms ‘Celt’ and ‘Celtic’ can be heard in many places (in bookshops, online, in the news) and are used loosely, and often inaccurately, to describe anything from taste in music and fashion, to literature, politics and religion. The Green Man figure is a product of ‘Celtic’ Fantasy literature (and possibly of a New Age ‘Celtic’ religion) and thus I need to explain the connotations of ‘Celtic’ in regards to the Green Man.

Firstly, I must explain what I myself mean by use of the term ‘Celt’. This is not a simple matter. Most of what is known of the race referred to as ‘the Celts’ comes to us second-hand through the

accounts of the Greeks and Romans,⁹⁹ who encountered them on the battlefield, or through more recent archeological evidence (Davidson, 1994: 2). It is likely that both the Greeks and Romans were biased in their opinions of the ‘Kelti’ or ‘Celti’, as they were known¹⁰⁰, since they regarded them as barbarians, and as the enemy of their civilisations (Davidson, 1994: 2).

The question ‘Who were the Celts?’ is not one that can easily answered. It is commonly proposed that, between the period 700BC and 100AD (Norton-Taylor, 1974: 7) the Celts constituted a group of warriors, traders, craftsmen, artists, poets and settlers who gradually spread from the east across ‘Europe’, eventually occupying land as far afield as the northernmost British Isles, the Balkans and Asia Minor (Editors of Time-Life Books, 1994: 8). The peoples who can tenuously be called ‘the Celts’ were united only by a common language and genealogy (Davidson, 1994: 4). Supposedly, their religious practices were the same or similar – but there is little evidence remaining of this.

The Celts themselves left no written histories. It is often claimed that they had no written language, but this is a misconception; they wrote, but only for ceremonial or commemorative purposes¹⁰¹ (Editors of Time-Life Books, 1994: 17). From what little is known of their culture, the Celts seem to have resisted the idea of committing words to writing. Theirs was an oral culture and it was believed, by Julius Caesar among others, that they committed phenomenal amounts of material to memory (*Celtic Mythology*, 1999: 441).

Clearly little is actually known about the Celts, and much that is can be considered myth. Celts are commonly represented as the ultimate white savage – romanticised, noble yet ‘primitive’ – and frequently dressed in nothing but blue woad in preparation for battle. As such, the Celts provide an excellent source for appropriation. The term ‘Celtic’ has thus become, as Tolkien commented,¹⁰² a “... magic bag into which anything may be put, and almost anything may come Anything is possible in the fabulous Celtic twilight, which is not so much a twilight of the gods as of the reason” (Tolkien, 1997 [Online]).

⁹⁹ Classical authors who mention the ‘Celts’ include Strabo, Diodorus Siculus and Caesar. However, most of these writers derived much their material from the same extinct source, Posidonius. As no copy of Posidonius’ work remains in existence and it is suspected that these authors make modifications and additions of their own, even these sources are of suspect historical value (Davidson, 1994: 3).

¹⁰⁰ It is noteworthy that what the Celts called *themselves* is unknown.

¹⁰¹ The Celts developed a form of writing known as ‘Ogam’ – “A system of notches and slashes carved into stone and wood” (Editors of Time-Life Books, 1994: 17). Each letter supposedly represents a tree. (*Celtic Mythology*, 1999: 439).

¹⁰² This formed part of a valedictory address titled *English and Welsh* to the University of Oxford in 1959. The speech, later recorded as an essay bearing same title, can be found in many collections of essays of and about Tolkien (Tolkien, 1997 [Online]).

In contemporary Fantasy, the term ‘Celtic’ encompasses anything with tenuous connections to medieval England, or an imagined European ‘pre-history’ (Morgan, 2002 [Online]). Historically, the word was first applied to peoples of British or Irish descent during the 18th Century: a Welsh clergyman and linguist of the name Edward Lhwyd adopted the term (on the most slender evidence of a connection) as a name for a group of languages of supposedly ancient British origin, the modern descendants of which spoke Welsh, Gaelic and Cornish (Morgan, 1983: 68). ‘Celtic’ was then adopted as a name by those searching for a national identity separate from the dominant English culture (and language) that threatened to destroy the Irish, Welsh, Cornish and Scottish traditions and cultures (Morgan, 1983: 67).

The name captured the imagination of 18th century Britain and, as Prys Morgan states (in reference to Wales), “The Celts reflected the fantasies of the age ... and ... provided the constricted and pathetic small nation ... with an unimaginably grandiose past ...” (Morgan, 1983: 69).

The Green Man falls neatly into this constructed ‘Celtic’ category of Otherness that exists in opposition to mainstream late modernity. Although images and stories of the Green Man are spread throughout the world, and are thus found in various modern contexts¹⁰³, he is portrayed in Fantasy as being a particularly British ‘God’ or symbol. The Green Man in Fantasy illustration embodies a particular kind of nostalgia and ‘primitivist’ longing for a magical, mysterious and pre-modern (even pre-Roman) British Isles. The Green Man is adopted as a symbol for all the ‘pagan’ religions that were suppressed with the coming of the Romans and the Christian church, and, as such, is taken to represent the ‘true’ spiritual instincts of many people of British descent all over the globe.

In *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth*, Chapman proposes that “Celtic is an empty category signifying ‘otherness’ whose fluctuating cultural definition has depended more on the vague prejudices of the centre than the actuality of the periphery ...” (in Kidd, 1999: 185). This process of invention, and of identification with a ‘primitive’ Otherness, continues today with the contemporary appropriation of the label ‘Celtic’ by neo-pagans and the Fantasy sub-culture.

3.3.2 Neo-Pagans

As an image based on a historic manifestation found in medieval churches, the Green Man cannot escape contemporary associations of spirituality. Many New Age religions claim to be ‘Celtic’ in origin; Green Man worship is no exception.

¹⁰³ Charles De Lint, for example, is a Canadian; until recently there was a Green Man pub in Cape Town; and Charles Vess’ publishing house ‘The Green Man Press’ is based in the United States of America.

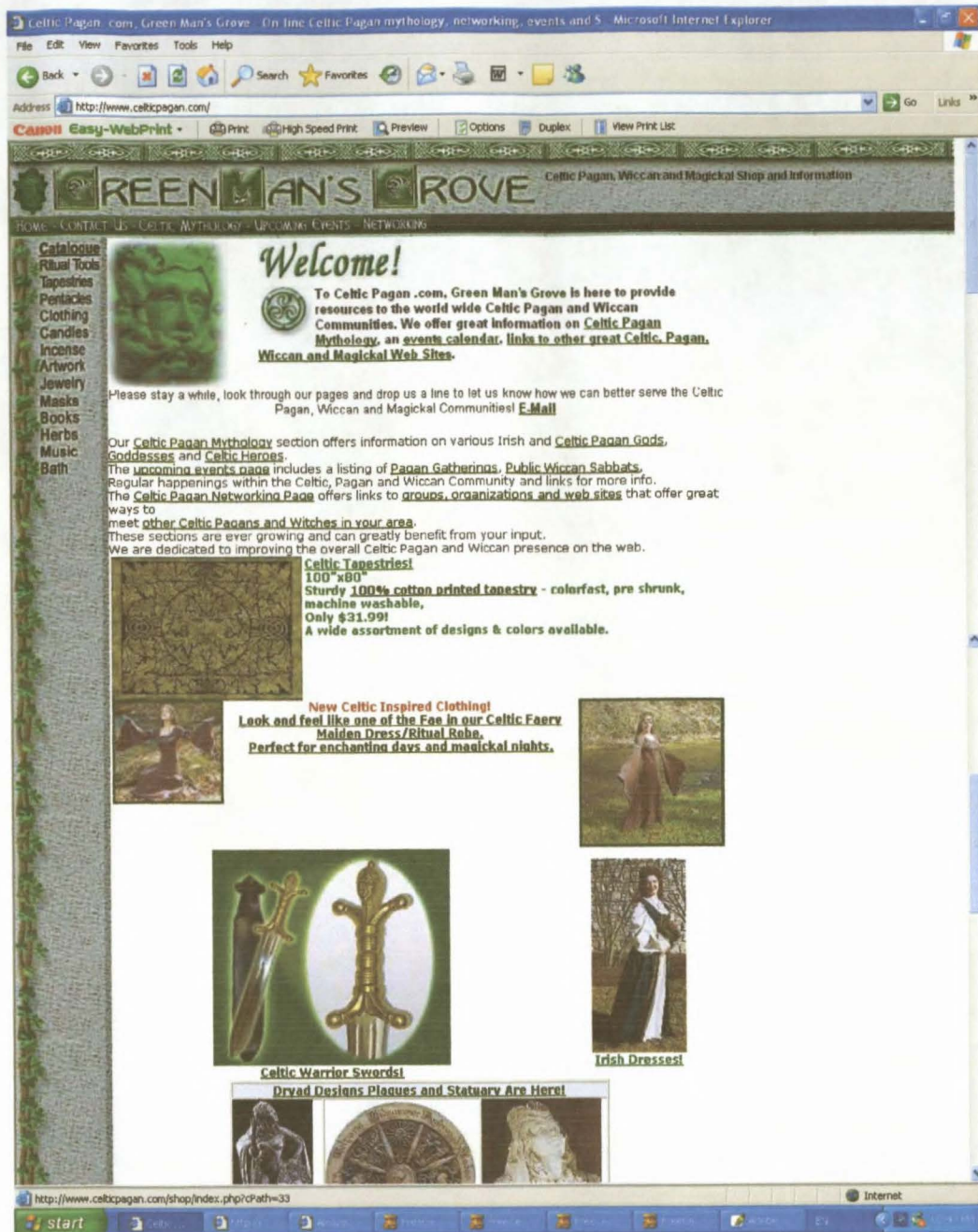


Fig. 21. Screenshot of the website *Celtic Pagan.com: The Green Man's Grove* (2005). (<http://www.celticpagan.com> [Online]).

For instance ‘Green Man’s Grove’ (above) is the chosen name of the website *celticpagan.com*, a website that is “... dedicated to improving the overall Celtic Pagan and Wiccan presence on the web” (<http://www.celticpagan.com> [Online]). The site has a Green Man theme: intertwined leaves and stems and Celtic knot-work. The links are all highlighted in green and the first image at the top of the page is an artificially coloured photograph of a foliate head, identifiable as being from the Parish Church at Sutton Benger in England (Noel, 2002 [Online]). Besides providing information on “Celtic Pagan Mythology” and links to other pagan sites, their online shop sells ‘Celtic’ and Green Man tapestries, “Celtic Faery Maiden Dresses” and reproduction “Celtic Warrior Swords”.

In many of the works of Fantasy I have earlier discussed, the Green Man is depicted as a god¹⁰⁴. Whenever the Green Man is mentioned as a fictional character, harmony with Nature and spirituality are themes that come strongly to the fore. He is frequently associated with pre-Christian pagan traditions and seems to represent a British-based ‘primitivism’ that embraces the natural world. It is, therefore, unsurprising that the Green Man has been appropriated as a deity by various New Age religions.

I use the term ‘neo-pagan’ to differentiate between pre-Christian ‘pagans’ or non-Christians, and those who follow religions that (I shall argue) have been constructed and invented in the modern era. Such religions include Wicca, Druidry and Shamanism. Wicca, despite claims to ‘ancient tradition’, seems to have originated as a hermetic order known as ‘The Golden Dawn’ in the late 19th century. Its initiators were two masons, and the most famous of their followers was probably the notorious magician, poet and philosopher, Aleister Crowley. ‘Modern’ Wicca, in the form that it is currently practised, probably began in England in 1954, with the publication of a book entitled *Witchcraft Today* by Gerald Gardner, who coined the term ‘Wicca’ for his religion (*History of Wicca* [Online])

The word ‘pagan’ is itself derived from a Middle English word, which is derived from the Latin word *paganus*, meaning ‘country dweller’ or ‘someone on the outside’. The term derives from the Latin word *pagus*, which means ‘country’ or ‘rural area’ (Wilton, 2004 [Online]). The term has a Judeo-Christian bias, since it implies that a pagan worships ‘the wrong Gods’ (*A Practical Definition of Pagan*, 2001 [Online]). Far from taking umbrage at the term, neo-pagans embrace it as part of their identity. The etymology of the word ‘pagan’ implies an embracing outsidership and affinity with Nature and with seasonal cycles (*A Practical Definition of Pagan*, 2001 [Online]). These connotations still apply today.

Charles De Lint’s Fantasy novel *Greenmantle*, already mentioned, unusually features the Green Man as a literary character, as well as in image on the front cover. It is significant that most of the characters of De Lint’s novel reject Christianity, and some of them have founded their own community separate from ‘civilisation’: “We turned our backs on what was then the modern world and return to ... older ways, including older ways of worship ... ” (1992: 151). The spokesperson refers to worship of the Green Man as an “older way of worship”. The supposed great age of their religion is given as validation for their beliefs. The impression is hereby created that Westerners who adopt the Green Man (or the ‘Great Goddess’) or Druidic Gods are returning to ‘true’ Western

¹⁰⁴ For instance, in the later story-lines of the comic, Swamp Thing is depicted as “... the world’s god ... ” who feels “... alteration in the spirit and condition of the ‘Green’ ... the organic world ... ” (Banks and Wein, 1998 [Online]); in the role-playing game *Dungeons and Dragons* the Green Man is a deity of the imaginary D&D world.

religions, having strayed from these authentic ‘faiths’ for a few hundred years. The ‘Celtic’-based religion centred around the worship of the Green Man thus appropriates historical ‘Others’, which underscores the self-conscious Otherness of what it means to be a ‘Pagan’ in a late-Modern, predominantly Christian, community.

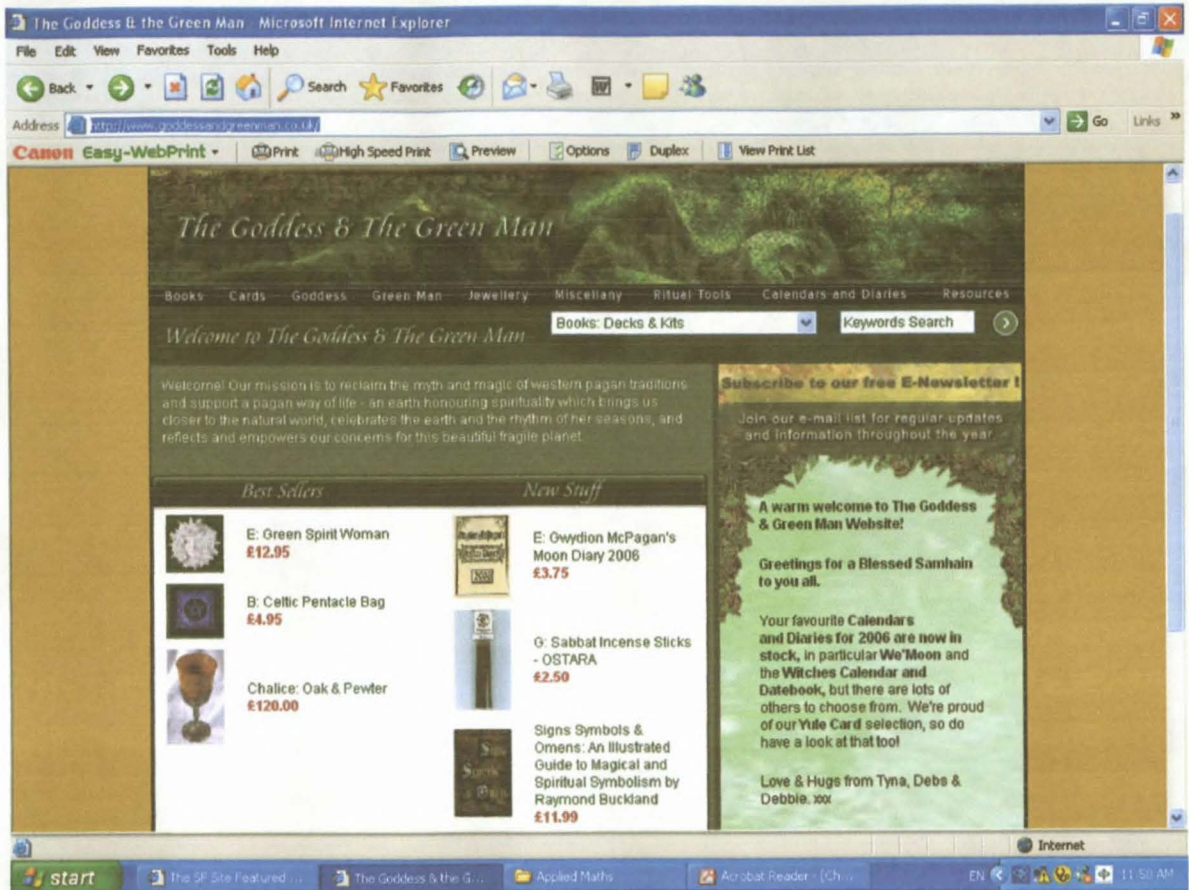


Fig. 22. Screenshot of the website *The Goddess and The Green Man* (2005). (<http://www.goddessandgreenman.co.uk> [Online]).

Figure 22 shows a fairly typical neo-pagan Green Man website. As the computer uploads the site, the traditional medieval tune ‘Greensleeves’ plays, as if to underscore fictitious links between neo-paganism and an invented and erroneous ‘medieval Celtic’ British tradition. The website is essentially a retail outlet that sells books about contemporary paganism and pagan-themed objects, such as ritual tools and ‘Sabbat Incense Sticks’. Its mission, however, claims to be spiritual rather than commercial:

... Our mission is to reclaim the myth and magic of western pagan traditions and support a pagan way of life – an earth honouring spirituality which brings us closer to the natural world, celebrates the earth and the rhythm of her seasons, and reflects and empowers our concerns for this beautiful fragile planet (<http://www.goddessandgreenman.co.uk> [Online]).

Presumably, such “earth honouring spirituality” is available for purchase from this website: a ‘Green Spirit Woman’ for the garden at £12.95 or a ‘Celtic Pentacle Bag’ for £4.95. Originally I visited the site on the 29th of October – the website wishes visitors a “Blessed Samhain ” – the pre-Christian term for the season of Halloween.

These and other Neo-Paganists are investigating and appropriating traditionally Western religious histories and looking to what they believe to be their own traditions to create modern myths, almost as if in response to Lavelle’s call for Westerners to do so. Such movements are constructing new religions out of appropriated remnants that have little or no validity in terms of historical fact. This ‘fact’ makes the emergence of the Green Man (and of new or ‘neo-pagan’ religions, in general) no less significant. This contemporary late-modern phenomenon can be seen as a sub/conscious critique and rejection of aspects of Christianity. Particularly it appears as an attack on late-modern attitudes to Nature. The adoption of the Green Man figure as a deity by the neo-pagan community can be viewed as evidence of fairly widespread dissatisfaction with the secularism, nihilism and uncontrolled industrialism of late-modern life.

Other popular, and perhaps better-known, symbols of the repressed unconsciousness that reoccur in Fantasy are those of the werewolf and the vampire. Both have histories stretching back to pre-modern Europe. The vampire can be interpreted as representing sexual repression, while the werewolf (like the Green Man, a creature and symbol of the forest) represents the dangerous, ravenous and animalistic qualities of the repressed modern human psyche (Farson, 1975: 126).

I mentioned in my previous chapter that it appears that part of the appeal of Fantasy lies in its dalliance with ideas that might otherwise unsettle, which is certainly true of the popularity of the Green Man. Neo-pagan worshippers of the Green Man appear to abound (it is impossible to know how many). However (as previously mentioned), the majority of his ‘fans’ seem to be connected in some way or another to Fantasy subculture. In the Green Man, consumers and creators of Fantasy have appropriated aspects of medieval, Christian and ‘Celtic’ mythology to create a ‘new’ myth, a myth that signifies disenchantment with late-Modern lifestyles and philosophies.

The idea of the Green Man has been appropriated and reconstructed to meet the contemporary desire for an alternate social order. The Green Man concept is generally not overly threatening¹⁰⁵;

¹⁰⁵ I could speculate on this topic extensively. I find it particularly interesting that the female-counterpart to the Green Man, the Green Woman, has not received such widespread popularity and significance as the Green Man. That she exists as a carving in churches is certain. According to Windling, it is considered lucky to lick ones finger and press it to her vagina, from where she gives birth to a spray of foliage (2002: 8). It appears that the idea of a

frequently, the concept is represented as a more 'ancient' form of Christianity. In such cases, the Green Man is depicted as Jesus, who is represented as hanging from a tree rather than from a cross. The "... cross originally stood for the Tree of Life ...", (see figure 23) explains a character in De Lint's novel (1992: 152). In 1610 Hendrick Goltzius painted Christ on a cross-shaped tree; a 'verdant cross', and, a symbol of death that celebrates the vitality of organic life. As shown by De Lint's example, modern day Fantasists have eagerly adopted this 17th century symbolism of death and rebirth, incorporating it into their visual lexicon of Green Man-related imagery, forgetting that while the Green Man communicates some spiritual notion of the forest, the converse is not necessarily true.

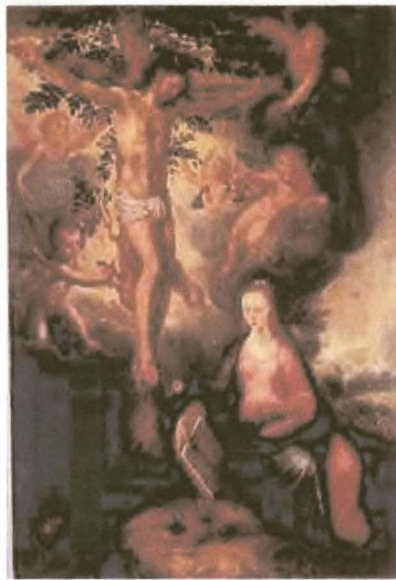


Fig. 23. Hendrick Goltzius, *Christ on the Tree of Life* (1610). Oil (Schama, 1995 [Online]).

As Bauman states, some forms of Cultural Modernism critique and undermine modernity, but ultimately remain tied to the modern condition (1991: 3-4), as does the postmodern 'primitivism' of the Green Man. His uncontrollable sexual urges (present in the fragments of May Day/Jack in the Green legends, etc., on which he is supposedly based) are always played down and gentled. The Green Man is less 'vulgar' and less threatening than 'the Wild Men', Pan and Dionysus. Because of these changes, he is more socially acceptable than the older pagan mythologies would imply. Also, as with the invention of King Arthur, that of the Green Man demonstrates a restructuring of the

wild, highly sexualised woman of the forest is not as socially acceptable – or desirable – as that of a 'Wild Man'. I can find no images of her – neither photographs of medieval stonework nor contemporary illustrations. It is perhaps significant that the Green Man has been adopted also as a symbol for the 'men's movement' in America and Australia. (See *The Green Man* [Online]) As I have mentioned above, the postmodern appropriation discards what threatens its whole; the Green Man represents change, but is not perhaps as extreme as it first appears. The Green Man offers a kind of liberation, mostly focusing on men, and so the current social *gender* perceptions remain unchallenged.

Christian myth to allow for a more environmentally conscious ethos, without necessarily radically threatening the dominant late-modern culture.

My argument is that the Green Man's popularity has arisen as a critique of late-Modernism in partnership with the general public's concern over environmental issues and increasing nihilism. An invented tradition, the Green Man is a powerful late-modern myth, adopted by those who are uneasy in late-modern society. I see the Green Man figure as part of a Romantic continuation of a large scale rejection, though not a mainstream one, of aspects of late-modernity. When a book or an image contains a likeness of the Green Man, the contents invariably offers an expression of postmodern 'primitivism': spirituality for a secular and ironic age and an embracing of the 'positive passions'.

Conclusion

“A tree will always be less interesting than what it represents ”

(Douglas-Fairhurst, 2003: 6).

This study shows that the postmodern must be seen as a continuation of Modernism (ie: late-Modernism), and that postmodern ‘primitivism’ continues certain Modernist characteristics, bringing them to their logical and extreme conclusions. In addition, postmodernism takes modern ‘primitivism’ to its extremes of escapism and consumerism.

Fantasy illustration and literature is a medium which enables disenchanted citizens of a late-modern society to engage in heartfelt soul-searching. It is particularly attractive to those who require a socially acceptable way to rebel against the constraints and traditions of mainstream culture and religion. I have shown that Fantasy, as demonstrated by the example of the Green Man, is a medium through which a critique of modernity (and of late-modernity) can occur.

Fantasy is the “ ... mirror that shows us, simultaneously, how we are, how we were and how we wish to be ...” (Gilman, [Online]). The study of Fantasy is of interest because of what it reveals about the ‘primitive’ Other, and about the underbelly of mainstream society. To ignore the critique of Fantasy is to dismiss the fears and desires of a large (and growing) minority of Western society. Fantasy allows for the exploration of the repressed subconscious. In Swinfen’s words “In a world governed by materialism and scientific rationalism fantasy sets out to explore the immaterial and the irrational” (1984: 2). Heroic and ‘High Fantasy’, particularly, lend themselves to the Romantic idealisation of the ‘primitive’ as a form of escapism. I have demonstrated that modern Fantasy fulfils a function in Western society, not only providing entertainment but, most importantly, serving as a source of spiritual nourishment and growth.

Like the Romantic counterculture that preceded it, Fantasy is a revolt against increased secularisation, industrialisation and nihilism. Through the iconography of the Green Man, the representative connotations of the Wilderness, Nature and the Forest are embraced as an expression of postmodern ‘primitivism’.

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