Shamans, stones, authenticity and appropriation: contestations of invention and meaning

Jenny Blain

The strange things you find when browsing in bookstores

On Saturday 26th September 1998, in a bookstore in Halifax, Nova Scotia, I picked up an issue of *Shaman's Drum: a journal of experiential shamanism*, a magazine I browse through from time to time. My eye was caught by the title of one of the articles, 'Rekindling the Gaelic hearthways of *Oran Mor*', by Frank Henderson MacEowen, which purported to discuss his 'transformation… into a neo-Celtic practitioner reviving the ancestor-based spirituality of his own Gaelic heritage' (*Shamans Drum* 49: 2).

Sighing slightly at the use of the word 'neo-Celtic' I turned to page 33, to be slightly perplexed by the cup-and-ring marking at the top of the page. Yet, the article appeared to describe a personal journey, and looked quite interesting, so despite some misgivings I began to read fast, skimming, to see if I should buy this issue. Then, turning the pages, I saw the illustrations (figure captions, including parenthesis and emphasis, are as they appeared in the article):

> • *Ancient standing stones of unknown origin grace the landscape of Kilmartin Valley*
>
> • *Glencoe Memorial pays homage to the MacDonalds and Hendersons of Glencoe*
>
> • *One of the many ancient Pictish burial complexes found in Kilmartin Valley* (MacEowan 1998: 34-35).

What, I wondered, was going on here. The definition of 'Pictish' appeared very broad, projected backwards about three thousand years before the 'Picts' of the current era. Besides (after initial perplexity occasioned by a reversal of its image in the magazine) I recognised the site: I'd been there, some years before. And in any case, you can read about it on the internet.

I skimmed on, to be greeted by more illustrations with their captions:

> • *White bulls were associated with Toirneach (god of thunder and lightning) and the* ***taghairm****.*
>
> • *The Pictish* ***ri cruin*** *(round grave) in which the author received his vision of Oran Mor*
>
> • *The view looking out of an ancient Pictish burial cave located in Kilmartin Valley*
>
> • *A Pictish motif said to be associated with the* ***taghairm*** *(echo) of ancestral knowledge* (p. 36-39).

On going back to the beginning, I found the introductory, full-page photograph, which I'd missed in my haste to turn to the text.

> • *Located in the Western Isles of Scotland, Kilmartin Valley is covered with numerous Pictish graves and other ancient monuments* (p. 32).

This full-page illustration is of the chambered cairn at Nether Largie South (shown from a different angle in the third illustration mentioned above), of which consensus opinion appears to be that it was used from approximately 4,500 years ago (2,500 BCE) for about one thousand years (information from Kilmartin House Museum and website), with in the foreground a cist grave added towards the end of that period. The cairn was excavated in the 19th century, when Neolithic and Beaker pottery and flint arrowheads were found, along with cremation deposits and unburnt bones, and fragments of a food vessel in a secondary cist (RCAHMS 1999), though the grave in the foreground of McEowan's full-page illustration was empty when excavated. Needless to say, this is neither 'Pictish' nor in the Western Isles. (Put another way, one doesn't have to go on a boat to get there from Glasgow, though possibly the author did not appreciate this.)

A serious of thoughts passed through my mind at this point. The first was expressed in a sigh of exasperation. Oh, no, not again! Why does everything have to be labelled 'Celtic' or (as here) 'Pictish'. Can't they get anything right? I then became aware that I was not merely exasperated, but acutely, blazingly, angry. I grew up with both 'Pictish' symbol stones, and the much older cup and ring marks, as part of my cultural awareness, part of my heritage, my knowledge of the surrounding countryside, the construction of my consciousness. Now it seemed to me that this was being

prostituted, muddled and muddied, by this strange person about whom I was now finding it hard to think politely, who thought he could claim 'Celtic ancestry' and thereby tramp over people's fields at night to sleep in a bronze-age grave (apparently the north cist in the cairn at Ri Cruin, furthest SSW in the Kilmartin linear cemetery), casually lumping together millennia and cultures. The third thought was of some relief that because of the mis-identification of the location perhaps the New Age wouldn't find the valley. The fourth, that it was a rather comic example of something I'd been discussing elsewhere, the use of archaeological and anthropological material, cairns, rock art and interpretation, by neo-Shamans and neo-Pagans – comic because it was even more muddled than my previous examples, and the exasperation returned as I reflected that the author claimed to have visited the Kilmartin House Museum. Had he not managed to learn *anything* while there?

This led to the fifth thought, that the illustrations and article were now *data*, upon which I purchased the magazine. Further reflection led to a realisation that my reactions had, of course, come from somewhere: they were just as 'constructed' as the *Shaman's Drum* article, and a key to them lay in my own background and personal history.

A short but necessary bit of biography

I grew up in Dundee, Scotland. Some of the strongest memories of my childhood are of visits to 'the stones', various stone circles in the countryside around, cairns on the Sidlaw hills, remnants of iron-age hill-forts, and in particular what were then called, colloquially, 'Picts' houses', earth-houses or souterrains at Tealing, Ardestie and Carlungie. My father had a strong interest in local history, not only the relatively recent history he wrote about, of the past 400 years or so, but reaching further back through the Scottish middle ages and beyond. I remember being told that the 'Picts' houses' were older, and later learned they were probably Iron Age storage facilities. I heard about the 'Picts' as an almost-historic people of what were then called the Dark Ages, though alas leaving very few pieces of written evidence about themselves, other than the 'king lists', and hence plenty of confusion about their lives, their inheritance patterns and the language(s) they spoke. With a child's eye, I saw the monuments that they carved, in the landscape or in museums, with warriors and animals, a woman sitting side-saddle, with wonderful decorated patterns people called knotwork, and some with mysterious symbols which, I was told, no-one today understood. I heard about the battle of Nechtansmere. Before them came the peoples of prehistory, leaving their homes and their graves, their artefacts, their carvings: and even some of the stones the 'Picts' had carved had held meaning long before their times. History and prehistory, going back in its diversity at least 4000 years.

But my family were incomers to this landscape. My parents were from Glasgow and Greenock, their ancestors from many areas within the last two centuries, one branch from the North of England, another from Whitby in Yorkshire, one branch possibly from the Forfar area near by Dundee, and others, the majority, in a broad sweep across the Scottish lowlands from Linlithgow to Ayrshire, and down the West coast to Wigtownshire and North through Argyll as far as Moidart and Ardnamurchan, where there was a beach called Camus Blain and a tiny hamlet of Blain, which was even in my childhood becoming known instead as Sheil Bridge. And I grew up with a mixture of stories and songs old and new, of lowland Scotland and its heroes (my school claimed as its most famous alumnus the Scottish Patriot, and Guardian of Scotland, William Wallace), of highland clans, of the mythology of the 'little dark people' who had somehow become associated in popular folklore with 'Picts', of the coming of the Scots and Somerled of the Isles, of life in industrial Glasgow and my grandfather's actions in 'Red Clydeside', and of my mother as a small child going on holiday to Rothesay... Always, though, there was a sense of time and place, of change and renewal, and, from the different ways these stories were told, of contestation. After all, my school's famous alumnus had given his life in fighting 'the English', and yet the much more recent history we were taught was chiefly concerned with English politics, with the difficult time of the union of the Parliaments in 1707 mentioned either in passing or not at all, while the independence wars of the middle ages were relegated to elementary school stories. For one who had grown up immersed in history it was not difficult to become aware both of diversity of interpretation, and of the passion with which these interpretations were held and the constructed Scottishness that was emerging.

Yet I left Scotland, for Canada, as had many others before me, leaving behind these scenes and that sense of place. In 1994, when my family rented a car for a holiday in Scotland, my object was to show my children some of what I grew up with, in an attempt to instil in them some of that sense of connection that I had, and have still. So from the sights and sounds of Glasgow we drove north, along the west of Loch Lomond, and west, round hairpin bends with a young child who was very car-sick, through Inverary and round to Lochgilphead, and north to Dunadd, the stronghold of the first Scots of Dalriata. We climbed the hill and debated the carved footprint and boar, and looked out over the Kilmartin valley below. Then, armed with a Historic Scotland booklet and a small pamphlet which I managed to pick up somewhere, somehow (for this was before the opening of the Kilmartin House Museum); I set out to explore the valley. By the time we reached the stone circles of Temple Wood it was raining, the fine west-coast rain that soaks through garments to the skin, and I dragged my protesting family in and out of the cairns of the linear cemetery and tried to take a minute, here and there, to ponder the staggering realisation that these sites, these places, had lain at the heart of spiritual life of a changing community for – how long? – two thousand years or more, long before the common era, and that this green valley itself, with its changing climate and vegetation, had had significance for longer yet (figure 1).

The Dunadd Scots were mere newcomers, long after the time of the tombs. Some of the cairns had carvings on the

Figure 1. Today's context: Glebe cairn, at the NNE end of the linear cemetery, with Kilmartin House Museum, houses of the village, and the hills behind.

Figure 2. Looking into the chambered cairn at Nether Largie South. To describe this as 'Pictish' requires the collapse of several millennia. Interpretations of such sites that allowed for a spiritual or shamanistic approach would provide greatly enriched contexts for today's practitioners, and help avoid simplistic and reductionist accounts such as that critiqued here.

underside of grave slabs, cup-marks and axeheads. They were not designed for the living to see. Yet the tombs, the neolithic chambered cairn and later round cairns and their graves, were open, partly reconstructed, and any might now enter; and in the oldest, the chambered cairn at Nether Largie South, in its stillness it seemed that anything, all knowledge might wait, and that perhaps I should remain there awhile to catch an echo, a sound, an awareness of the people who laid the bones of their dead in this communal grave, before the coming of the idea of rulership and the individual burials that lay all around (figure 2).

But we had arranged to be at Oban by dinner-time, and my family was protesting, and wet. At the time of first writing this account, I had never been able to return.

Appropriation and understanding

This is part of the background, then, to my reaction to the *Shaman's Drum* article. I have detailed it here, along with the reaction, in an attempt to understand the question of 'appropriation' which forms one of the charges against what is called neo-shamanism (a term disputed by non–traditional shamanistic practitioners, but convenient for an article such as this one). The charge of appropriation, in turn, deals in concepts such as ancestry, cultural knowledge, respect, and profit, i.e. commercial gain. Such charges have been documented by a variety of writers, with reference to 'borrowings' from Siberian shamanism – through anthropological accounts – and more directly from Indigenous peoples of North and South America. Let us look again at MacEowan's 'Celtic Shamanism' and further investigate the construction of this ahistoric concept.

At the basis of MacEowan's article is the idea that spiritual practices of past generations can be 'remembered'. His account is of his own spiritual journey, in which he was drawn to 'shamanism' in North America and worked with medicine people of several indigenous nations, eventually being 'introduced to ritual processes designed to help me "remember what I already knew"' (p. 33). These apparently resulted in an understanding, achieved during a Sun Dance, that his task was to remember the ways of ancient 'shamanic' ancestors in Scotland. The 'shrilling of eagle-bone whistles' was converted, he says, to highland bagpipes, as he danced with his ancestors, and experienced their sufferings. This led him to a search within his 'cell memories' for ancestral knowledge, the basis of the 'ancestor-based mysticism' within which he describes his own practice (and teachings) to be 'ancestor work, healing through sound, and Gaelic soul-maintenance methods, including dreaming, as well as contemplative meditations with the natural world' (p. 36).

An ancestral spirit led him to discover himself as a seer, and as a descendent of hereditary seers and 'tribal bardic historians' (seanachaidh, or for MacEowan 'shanachie'), other family lines being those of 'Celtic nature priests'. His reading produced information about the 'taghairm', apparently 'a traditional Gaelic oracular practice which utilises basic vision question methods', in a 'natural setting'. This research is unreferenced (though Scottish neo-shamanic practitioners tell me that the concepts may bear a similarity to recent neo-shamanic writings by John Matthews [see, for example, Matthews 1991]), though practitioners doing similar work cite the rather outdated writing of MacCulloch (1911) to whom this concept of 'taghairm' may be attributed. Eventually his research led him to the 'Western Isles' (by which he seems to have intended mainland Argyll) and the Kilmartin valley, the so-called 'Pictish' grave, and his visions of Bride's Well, or Connla's well, produced, he says, at least in part through sound, humming that reverberated from the walls of the grave and cairn; resulting in his learning double-voiced or harmonic chanting[1], drinking from the 'fifth stream' of wisdom, and finally experiencing *Oran Mor*, which he translates as the Great Song.

People with whom I discussed the article have questioned whether, in fact, the author had visited Argyll. They include a shamanic practitioner from the (geographical) Western Isles, who thought that aside from the geographical misplacement, there were other clues: references to the Northern Lights which he thought would not be seen there in summer. My own thoughts related mostly to the cup and ring mark pictured (twice) in the article, for which no location is given: out of the richest rock-art landscape in Scotland, only one such image is shown or referred to (figure 3). Marks which are found within graves – including axeheads from the south cist at the Ri Cruin cairn MacEowen visited – are not portrayed (figure 4). I wondered about his adherence to one solitary symbol, when he could have had his pick from such a diversity of motifs in the Kilmartin Valley. Information provided by staff of the Kilmartin House Museum indicated that the Northern Lights may occasionally be seen. Despite the photograph of a 'white highland bull' among trees, however, there are no highland cattle in the glen, though there are many other cattle and sheep, the Ri Cruin guesthouse being a working sheep farm. And, even given differences of American and British terminology, the description of the tiny village of Kilmartin as a 'town' seems doubtful. Yet as the author claims the illustrations as his own, one must assume that he was there, though the visit may have been exceedingly brief.

[1] MacEowan claims that the following day he visited Kilmartin House, where he 'discovered' a CD with similar chanting: reading the liner notes he further 'discovered' that 'The recording label attributed the chanting style, known as sordan to Colomkille... now known as Saint Columba. The liner notes suggested that the chanting had much earlier druidic roots and that Columba had reportedly used sordan chants when battling the druids of the Pictish King Brude... ' (p. 39, fn3). Having a copy of this CD, I explored the liner notes, which refer to Columba's terrifying King Brude's Druids (Kilmartin Sessions, liner note 32) and imply the use of sub-harmonic singing may have been a possibility. They further suggest that 'harmonic singing... may well have been used in pre- and early Christian Ireland and Scotland' (liner note 20), and that St Columba and St Brendan may have 'included such techniques, which in ancient Gaelic seem to be referred to by the terms fodhord and dordan – low and high murmuring' (liner note 34). It seems that MacEowan's 'sordan', several times repeated in the article, may have been a misreading.

Figure 3. The author could have had his pick of cup-marks from ‘the densest and most elaborate concentration of later Neolithic and Bronze Age rock carvings found in Scotland’ (RCAHMS, 1999: 6) including in addition to cups with or without rings, grooves, spirals (as in this picture), axe-heads and lozenges.

Figure 4. Today’s context: the reconstructed Ri Cruin cairn showing the north cist.
The fence behind separates tourists, sheep farm and recent sycamore grove.

Inventing a 'Celtic Shamanism'

There seem to be several strands woven into the construction of the *Shaman's Drum* article. One relates to the construction of Native North American shamanism as basic, pure or essential; a second to the construction of 'celticity', and the 'Celts' as an equally-oppressed population; a third relates to charges of appropriation of spirituality and cosmology, levied by indigenous practitioners against neo-shamans (charges that MacEowen wants to avoid). The whole is reliant on the concept of 'cellular memory', through which people can be taught the 'shamanic' ways of their ancestors if they can find a way to 'remember'; and on MacEowen's own claimed descent from a line of hereditary shamans. The symbols that will jog this memory become the stones and the carvings in them. Sleeping in the grave, apparently, became a way to 'recover other shamanic traditions through direct contact with my Pictish ancestors' (p. 37).

MacEowen does not claim to have discovered the sole true form of 'Celtic' shamanism. There are many, he says, each rooted in a different 'bloodline'. He does claim 'truth', and authenticity, within his own 'bloodline' or lineage: with little apparent acknowledgement of how this difficult concept relates to population genetics, or that 'cellular' inheritance would link him with a very large group of people indeed, most of whom, for the last thousand years and more, have practised a very different form of spirituality; or that those shamanic practitioners elsewhere who look to ancestral teaching do so within a context of shamanic culture.

His account relies on, and is interwoven with, material from anthropology, archaeology and folklore. Thus, snippets of information appear in the account: mention of the derivation of 'shaman' from the Tungus word *saman*, but without reference to how or why. The concept of sleeping within a grave may be a conflation of tales (from Nordic, Scottish and Irish folklore) of sitting out on the gravemound for wisdom, and spending a night in the hollow hills of the sidhe. (Such 'outsitting' is quite common practice among neo-shamanists today.) MacEowen gives no sources for most of his information, but attempts to support the concept of what he calls 'ancestral transmission' by mentioning unreferenced ethnographic accounts of Tungus, Inuit and other cultures, saying that these 'show that shamanic initiates are often chosen and trained directly by ancestral or clan spirits… I now believe that ancestral transmission is an innate human phenomenon' (footnote 1, p. 39).

Perhaps the most astounding feature of the article, for me, is that despite the mention of ethnographic work, despite the mentions of folklore and a footnote referring to 'anthropological theories of shamanism', and despite the setting in the stones of the tombs which surely, bear witness to human activity, organisation and collective construction of meaning, the account remains devoid of any grounding in culture, history, work, change, movement or discovery, or, most specifically, community. This permits the identification of ancestral shamanism that can be reclaimed, presumably, unchanged, and used in the present. It permits, also, the collapse not only of centuries but of millennia, in the problematic identification of ancestors, shamanism, and monuments as 'Celtic' and 'Pictish'.

Archaeologists may be attempting to deconstruct the category 'Celtic' (see, for example, James 1999)[2], but for MacEowan it is unshakeable, the basis of his argument. He has constructed a business, based on teaching his personal revelations as authentic 'Celtic' practice. He is, in today's North America, creating his reality and persuading others of its veracity. At least in his self-presentation, both in this article and on the internet, he appears to be a successful shamanistic teacher.

Embeddedness and shamanistic practice

There are, of course, other people constructing European shamanisms in their ways also. Most of my research on Western shamanism deals with the present-day construction of seidr, Nordic shamanistic practice, from accounts in the Eddas and sagas (see, for example, Blain 1999). This is constructed variously in different settings, and on two continents: in the version about which I've written most, oracular seidr, people are attempting to ground their practices in the saga accounts, while relying also on personal inspiration and revelations within the seidr trance (see also Wallis forthcoming a). Others rely on concepts from 'core shamanism' (see, for example, Harner 1980), which attempts to abstract features and practices from shamanic cultures, to construct something which is culture free, not associated with any cosmology, and hence free also of charges of appropriation. While this gives rise to its own problems, and does not necessarily remove the charges (Wallis 1999), 'core shamanism' has been used as a basis for reconstruction: a number of groups, including 'traditionally' shamanic Siberian peoples, are drawing on core shamanism techniques to replace 'lost' practices (Wallis forthcoming b; Hoppál, from discussion at the conference on Shamanism in Contemporary Society, Newcastle, 1998).

In all these means of construction, personal inspiration forms a key component. Differences arise in the frame within which inspiration is received or acted upon. For core shamanic practitioners, the techniques (and concepts such as those of animal spirit-guides) are the frame. Within oracular seidr, the frame is principally cosmological, the setting drawn from the sagas (Blain 1998).

Oracular seidr is community practice. The sejd-workers described by Lindquist (1997), using core shamanic techniques with some Nordic cosmological setting, also appear to emphasise community, rather than personal practice and personal development. Lindquist describes their sejd as 're-embedded' in culture and cosmology, following Giddens (see, for example, Giddens 1991) use of the term, and seeing 'Decontextualised and transplanted ideas and practices (becoming) pinned down to specific conditions of

[2] And arguing about it: see, for example, discussions on the email list arch-theory, in early May 1999.

time and place' (Lindquist 1997: 123), through being related to culture, mythology and specific localities, and also through the present-day cultural manifestations and continuance of nineteenth century romantic 'nationalist' attachments to mythology. The derivation of oracular seidr in North America is directly from the saga material, within a specific historical framework, as a present-day adaptation of specific practice rather than 'timeless truths'. By contrast, the abstracted practices of core shamanism, not linked to specifics of time, place or cosmology, would be 'disembedded'[3].

For MacEowan, however, it's hard to see any context of framework or community. He appears to be aware of charges of 'appropriation' levied by indigenous North American medicine-people, and this has sparked his quest for his own 'ancestral wisdom'. He also admits to an almost total ignorance of Scottish history and cultures. But his attempts to alter his state of ignorance (finding instances from which he can claim 'Celtic' ancestors to be an oppressed people) in no way parallels the research done by the sejd or seidr groups: and his basic assumption of ancestral transmission acts to prevent a need for cultural or historical knowledge, or for any appreciation of possible nuances of the exercising of power, over millennia. Equally, his work is based on individual practice and personal development.

Conclusion: postmodernism and the shaman

The quest among many neo-shamanists today seems to be for a reclamation of an original state, a pure form of shamanism, primaeval, 'primordial and unspoiled' (Green 1998). I recently heard a conference paper in which the speaker bewailed the passing of 'true', pristine shamanism – that survival from a sacred golden age. What would we do, she asked, when 'the last true shaman' has died? (Weinstein 1999) MacEowan's answer would be, presumably, that we'll remember… For me, both standpoints miss the point. 'Shamanism' in the modern West has a history of abstraction and appropriation, constructed as being something to marvel at, something exotic that 'other' people do; described by recourse to individual abilities (as in Eliade's 1964 definition). As such it is a westernism, a concept drawn from 18th century travellers' tales (Flaherty 1992). By contrast, some anthropologists and practitioners are today describing specific 'shamanisms' as culturally based and rooted in local knowledge (Hultkrantz 1994; Turner 1994), changing, dynamic (Heinze 1991; Green 1998), linked with economic and political processes (Taussig 1987), both responding to and shaping local conditions, transforming community, not only the individual (Blain & Wallis 2000).

I do have some sympathy, however, with MacEowan, where he implies that anthropologists, and others, will accept local definitions of teaching by ancestors or spirits when these come from the 'exotic other' – my phrasings, not his – but not from people seen as 'Western' or 'European'. Yet even here he misses the point: it is not that anthropologists accept 'ancestral transmission' for 'others' learning, but that for the most part they do not accept spirit teaching at all, viewing it as 'native theory': through seeing it as a local explanation that forms part of a cultural complex. Westerners are assumed to not subscribe to such a definition (Wilson 1994) unless they have 'gone native'. Those attempting to reconstruct European shamanisms are constructing discourses of resistance dealing, in some part, with spirit teaching and ways to view this. Those anthropologists who are developing the 'experiential ethnography' discussed by Goulet (1994) require to take spirits – or 'native theory' – seriously (Blain 2000; Wallis 2000). The approach I take in most of my published work to date (see, for example, Blain 1998) does not necessitate truth claims as to the validity or otherwise of such teaching, but does examine the context in which it occurs. MacEowan gives no cultural context.

Others have tried very similar techniques: practitioners, anthropologists, archaeologists and other writers who like Turner (1994) are attempting to 'take seriously' concepts of understanding human/spirit relations, even interviewing spirits. Some stories are told privately, to friends or sympathisers, perhaps out of the 'fear of ostracism' by scientific peers that Young and Goulet (1994: 8) discuss. Others are publicly stated, on the internet and elsewhere[4]. These accounts deal in possibilities, which are linked to the specific local context, history and archaeology, and to present-day attempts to uncover and use meaning. MacEowan's truth claims, by contrast, are sweeping, and take little account of the context, which becomes merely an exotic backdrop linked by the keywords 'Pictish' and 'Celtic' to a present-day market construction. Put another way, the only context evident to me is that of selling, to an American market, whatever 'knowledge' he has gained or invented. Claims to 'authenticity' rely on the 'ancestors' while removing from consideration not only the contexts of those ancestors' lives, but the context within which they are today consulted and in which they are brought into being, given a new life of recognition. And so his use of the monuments becomes, to me, an attack on my own expatriate cultural knowledge, an appropriation similar in kind to that which he began by wishing to avoid.

And yet, even in his lack of accuracy he is attempting to link himself, in whatever way he knows, with some concept of 'ancestors' and scenery: perhaps I am too hard on him. The problem is not unique to McEowan. As a successful shamanistic teacher, he is introducing people to a new way to look at themselves and explore their own 'heritages'. Attempting to avoid one appropriation, he falls into another through his use of a discourse of 'bloodlines' and 'heritage', 'ancient knowledge' and 'timeless traditions', which is all-too-common among pagans and neo-shamans, as Gallagher

[3] Like Lindquist (1997), I have problems with Giddens' assumption of an essential difference between premodern and modern society, relating to embeddedness/disembeddedness, and particularly the assumption that reflexivity and hence conscious attempts to re-embed are a property only of 'late modernity'.

[4] Among the most accessible are the adventures of 'Gyrus' on the Yorkshire moors, on the internet, at http://www.suresite.com/oh/v/verbeia/ or http://www.suresite.com/oh/g/glyphs/. For an academic account see Blain, forthcoming.

(1999) demonstrates. Practitioners, attempting to create identity, draw on popular categories, simplify processes, collapse millennia, and in doing so utilise the narratives of individualism-within-sameness that permeate the popular media interpretations of culture and inheritance. Present-day Western, Europeanised 'urban shamanism' is a product of Western, urban-orientated society, and it cannot be surprising that many present-day Western 'urban shamans', therefore, reflect their specific, geographical and temporal, contingent ideologies.

Within present-day neo-shamanism, 'what works' becomes acceptable. It may be that parts of his practices and discourse become incorporated in others' re-makings, reinventions, and I fully expect to find Oran Mòr, the Great Music, as part of the awareness of 'Celtic' urban shamans[5]. On a personal level, the 'inauthenticity' of his article (as I experienced it) has persuaded me to seek those places that matter most to me, and to use their influences in my work and writing: and to examine how and why they matter, in the awareness that the folk-anthropology and archaeology with which I grew up had its own claims to 'truth' and 'authenticity', many as problematic as MacEowan's. And so I end this paper, a little (a very little) more charitably-inclined towards MacEowan than I began: seeing him and his appropriation as part of postmodern society that I cannot change, but that in the end becomes part of what I analyse, and part of the shaping of my own practices, just as his article persuaded me, for my own reasons, to buy the magazine.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to David Clough and members of the staff of the Kilmartin House Museum (Kilmartin, Argyll, Scotland PA31 8RQ), who read an early draft of this paper and offered suggestions and encouragement when I was finally able to return to Kilmartin in June 1999.

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the CASCA (Canadian Anthropology Society) annual meeting, Quebec City, May 1999, in the session on Shamans, Neo-shamans and Anthropologists. Research was assisted by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

References

Blain, J. 1998. Seidr and seidworkers: recovering shamanic practice in contemporary heathenism. *The Pomegranate* 6: 6-19.

Blain, J. 1999. Seidr as shamanistic practice: reconstituting a tradition of ambiguity. *Shaman* 7(2): 99-121.

Blain, J. 2000. Speaking shamanistically: seidr, academia and rationality. *Diskus* http://www.uni-marburg.de/ fb03/ religionswissenschaft/journal/diskus/.

Blain, J. forthcoming. *Nine worlds of Seid-Magic: ecstasy and Neo-Shamanism in North European Paganism* (provisional title). London: Routledge, 2001.

Blain, J. & Wallis, R J. 2000. The 'ergi' seidman: contestations of gender, shamanism and sexuality in northern religion past and present. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 15(3): 395-411.

Eliade, M. 1964. *Shamanism: archaic techniques of ecstasy*. New York: Pantheon.

Flaherty, G. 1992. *Shamanism and the eighteenth century*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Gallagher, A-M. 1999. Weaving a tangled web? Pagan ethics and issues of history, 'race' and ethnicity in Pagan identity. *The Pomegranate* 10: 19-29.

Giddens, A. 1991. *Modernity and self-identity: self and society in the Late Modern Age.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Goulet, J-G. 1994. Dreams and visions in other life-worlds. In: D.E. Young & J-G. Goulet (eds) *Being changed by cross-cultural encounters: the anthropology of extraordinary experience:* 16-38. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press.

Green, S. 1998. The shaman's needle: development, shamanic agency, and intermedicality in Aguaruna Lands, Peru. *American Ethnologist* 25(4): 634-658.

Harner, M. 1980. *The way of the shaman.* London: Harper Collins.

Heinze, R-I. 1991. *Shamans of the 20th century*. New York: Irvington.

Hultkrantz, Å. 1994. Religion and environment among the Saami: an ecological study. In: T. Irimoto & T. Yamada. (eds) *Circumpolar religion and ecology: an anthropology of the North*: 347-374. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.

James, C. 1999. *The Atlantic Celts: ancient people or modern invention?* London: British Museum Press.

Kilmartin Sessions. 1997. *The sounds of Ancient Scotland* (CD notes). Kilmartin: Kilmartin House Trust.

Lindquist, G. 1997. *Shamanic performances on the urban scene: neo-shamanism in contemporary Sweden*. Stockholm: Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology.

MacCulloch, J.A. 1911. *The religion of the ancient Celts*. London: Constable (reprint).

MacEowen, F.H. 1998. Rekindling the Gaelic hearthways of oran mor. *Shaman's Drum* 49: 32-39.

[5] Oran Mòr is currently part of the awareness and discourse of people interested in Scottish Pipe Band music, a point of which the author does not seem aware.

Matthews, J. 1991. *The Celtic shaman: a handbook*. Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element.

RCAHMS, 1999*. Kilmartin: Prehistoric and Early Historic monuments.* Edinburgh: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.

Taussig, M. 1987. *Shamanism, colonialism and the wild man: a study in terror and healing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Turner, E. 1994. A visible spirit form in Zambia. In: D.E. Young & J-G. Goulet (eds) *Being changed by cross-cultural encounters: the anthropology of extraordinary experience:* 71-95. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press.

Wallis, R.J. 1999. Altered states, conflicting cultures: shamans, neo-shamans and academics*. Anthropology of Consciousness* 10(2-3): 41-49.

Wallis, R.J. 2000. Queer shamans: autoarchaeology and neo-shamanism. *World Archaeology* 32(2): 251-261.

Wallis, R.J. forthcoming a*. Neo-Shamanism: wannabe Indians, Heathen ecstasies and Druidic archaeologies*. London: Routledge.

Wallis, R.J. forthcoming b. Return to the source: neo-shamanism and shamanism in Central Asia and Siberia. In: T.A. Dowson, M.M. Ko_ko & A. Rozwadowski (eds*) Rock art, shamanism and Central Asia: discussions of relations: in press.* Oxford: British Archaeological Reports.

Weinstein, N. 1999. *Shamanic transformation in the rainforest of Belize: my personal journey.* Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness annual meeting, March 1999. Http://www.shamanicdimensions.org/naab.html.

Wilson, R.C. 1994. Seeing They See Not. In: D.E. Young & J-G. Goulet (eds) *Being changed by cross-cultural encounters: the anthropology of extraordinary experience:* 197-209. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press.

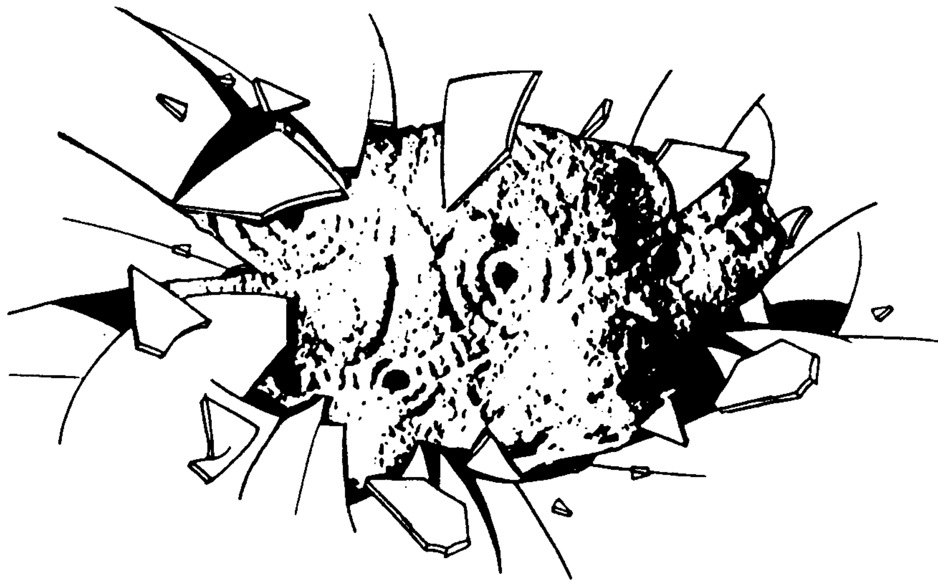
Young, D.E. & Goulet, J-G. (eds) 1994*. Being changed by cross-cultural encounters: the anthropology of extraordinary experience.* Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press.

A Permeability of Boundaries?

New Approaches to the Archaeology of Art, Religion and Folklore

Edited by

Robert J. Wallis & Kenneth Lymer



BAR International Series 936
2001

(British Archaeological Reports, Oxford, UK)