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# Musical Hybridity, Nostalgia, and the “Folk” Element in Pagan Folk Music

Nevi L. Zerkle

University of New Mexico

## Abstract

As the work of Eric Hobsbawm and Svetlana Boym shows, the Dutch pagan-folk band Omnia employs musical, sartorial, and religious syncretism to construct a specifically Neopagan cultural product. Neopaganism is a decentralized and antidogmatic religious movement. Sects are delineated by their relationship to a pre-Christian past. The form this relationship takes varies by who constructs it, and for what purposes. As demonstrated in songs from their albums *Earth Warrior* (2014) and *Musick & Poëtree* (2011), published interviews with the band members, and festival tour footage, Omnia aims to create a postmodern spectacle that showcases nostalgia for an imagined past thought to be preserved by ancient “pagan” cultures, indigenous communities, and exoticized minority groups perceived as embodying pagan values. Omnia performs their relationship to the past in a way that bolsters anti-capitalist and environmental activism, encourages cultural pluralism, and challenges traditional notions of religion, and ethnicity. These affects are common in pagan communities and have been studied by Sabina Magliocco and Holly Tannen. Omnia achieves these affects by considering their musical decisions such as genre, timbre, style, harmony, lyrics, and performance that layer multiple specific cultural histories and otherwise distinct religious traditions. Juxtaposed are elements of Celtic, Native American, Norse, Roman, and Greek lore in a blending of musical genres such as rap, rock, bluegrass, Celtic, folk, and reggae that is both exotic and familiar thus connecting Neopagans with a distant past and a modern purpose.

Neopaganism is an umbrella term encompassing many varied magical practices and religious traditions. The term “pagan” has historically been used to refer to pre-Abrahamic religions, indigenous cultures actively resisting Christianization, and country dwellers who worship local deities, earth cycles, and practice folk magic.<sup>1</sup> Contemporary Pagans have adapted the word as a way of expressing their countercultural position to the monotheistic Abrahamic

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Jane Davy, *Introduction to Pagan Studies* (New York: Alta Mira Press, 2007), 2–6.

religions that they perceive as too restrictive and impersonal.<sup>2</sup> A distinctive characteristic of Neopaganism is its decentralization and resistance to orthodoxy.<sup>3</sup> Contemporary Pagans emphasize personal connection with the sacred as defined by the individual. The majority of practitioners in the United States are white, middle class, well educated, and female. Only 7.8 percent report education of high school or less.<sup>4</sup> These demographic trends are mirrored in European countries. Their demographic positioning and education afford practitioners unfettered access to many multicultural global resources.

With this access, Neopagans actively create their rituals and traditions following three primary narrative forms identified by Jenny Blain in 1996.<sup>5</sup> First are narratives based on assumptions of unbroken practice and lineage reaching into a pre-Christian past. Second is a postmodern hybridity and syncretism of ancient cultures, current indigenous cultures, contemporary popular lore, and interpretations of archeological findings. Finally, some groups

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<sup>2</sup> Neopagans and Contemporary Pagans may be used interchangeably when referring to practitioners of various forms of Neopaganism. Some sects of Neopagans reject the prefix “Neo,” insisting on a historical continuity between their practices and an ancient past. Other sects have no problems with the prefix and recognize their own postmodern fluidity, adapting ancient narratives and coupling them with pop-culture icons in magickal ritual. See Christopher Partridge, *New Religions, A Guide: New Religious Movements, Sects and Alternative Spiritualities*, ed. by Christopher Partridge (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 296. Note; “magick” spelled this way is used by practitioners to differentiate between stage magic and their own ritual magick. See Christopher Penczak, *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft: Magick, Meditation, and Psychic Development* (Woodury, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Some groups have moved towards Orthodoxy in an effort to be recognized by cultural institutions as a legitimate religion. See Barbara Jane Davy, *Introduction to Pagan Studies* (New York: Alta Mira Press, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Helen A. Berger, Evan A. Leach, and Leigh S. Shaffer, *Voices from the Pagan Census: A National Survey of Witches and Neo-Pagans in the United States* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 30–32.

<sup>5</sup> “Neo-Pagans self-consciously create rituals and mythology often using bits and pieces from diverse cultures.” Many Neopagans both participate in rituals, but also stand outside of them with a critical eye for new possibilities. Quote from Berger, Leach, and, *Voices from the Pagan Census*, 7.

emphasize conscious reconstructions of specific past cultural groups, such as Celtic, Heathen, Latvian, or Greek mythos. reinterpreted for contemporary contexts and uses.<sup>6</sup>

It is this second narrative form that is the focus of this paper and its connection to the motivations embedded within nostalgia. Nostalgia comes from the Greek *nostos* (return home) and *algia* (longing).<sup>7</sup> Nostalgia has a rich history deeply intertwined with 20<sup>th</sup> Century folk music revivals, nationalism, postwar disillusionment surrounding both world wars, and technological advancement in warfare, industry, and everyday life. Important for this study is Svetlana Boym's definitions of restorative and reflective nostalgia. Restorative nostalgia "emphasizes *nostos* and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up memory gaps."<sup>8</sup> Reflective nostalgia emphasizes *-algia* and is a self-aware, fragmentary, and even ironic awareness of "the gap between identity and resemblance."<sup>9</sup> As such it is a nonteleological reading of history that opens up the souvenirs of the past for cultural play and revels in the multiple resultant potentialities, rather than an objective historical truth or single-minded interpretation as in restorative nostalgia.<sup>10</sup>

This form of cultural play is on full display in eclectic Neopagan sects through their use of historical narrative constructed from folklorism—defined by Guntis Šmidchens as "functionally, denoting the conscious use of folklore as a symbol of ethnic, regional, or national culture."<sup>11</sup> As a decentralized and generally antidogmatic religious movement, Neopagan sects are delineated by their relationship to a pre-Christian past. The form this relationship takes varies

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<sup>6</sup> Jenny Blain, "Constructing Identity and Divinity: Creating Community in an Elder Religion in a Postmodern World," in *Between the Worlds: Readings in Contemporary Neopaganism*, ed. Siân Reid (Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Scholar's Press, 2006), 242; see also Jenny Blain, "Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion: Some Discursive Reconstructions of Belief and Practice," paper presented at *The Middle Ages in Contemporary Popular Culture*, McMaster University Hamilton, Ontario, March 1996, <http://www.geocities.ws/ragnheidr/midrel.html>, accessed 4 April 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiii.

<sup>8</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xiii.

<sup>9</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 49–53.

<sup>10</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 53.

<sup>11</sup> Guntis Šmidchens, "Folklorism Revisited," *Journal of Folklore Research* 36, no. 1 (Spring 1999), 64.

by whom it is constructed, and for what purposes. Drawing on the work of Svetlana Boym, Jenny Blain, and Robert J. Wallis as models, I will examine the way that the Dutch pagan-folk band Omnia employs musical, sartorial, and religious syncretism to construct a specifically Neopagan cultural product in their 2014 album *Earth Warrior*. Using published interviews with the band members, music videos from the aforementioned album, and festival tour footage, I will argue that Omnia's postmodern blending of otherwise distinct cultural histories and religious practices depends on nostalgia for an imagined past thought to be preserved by ancient "pagan" cultures, indigenous communities, and exoticized minority groups perceived as embodying pagan values. By showing *where* and *with whom* Neopagans locate authenticity in their folklore and *how* that informs the way they perform their paganness we can see the way Neopagans are challenging traditional notions of history, religion, and ethnicity.

Omnia is a collective of self-described "pagan folk" musicians originating from the Netherlands, founded in 1996 by Steve Sic.<sup>12</sup> On their website *World of Omnia*, the band states that originally the group was meant to be a "Pagan Iron-Age Celtic living history re-enactment project" with music, but gradually morphed into a band and "way of life."<sup>13</sup> Since 2000 the group has released nineteen albums and a limited edition DVD with illustrated biographical booklet.<sup>14</sup> As part of their overt anti-capitalist "true art" philosophy, Omnia releases all of their work through their own record label that they titled Pagan Scum. They also tour extensively, frequenting the major Pagan and fantasy festivals world-wide, visiting many countries including Germany, the U.K., the United States, Mexico, Poland, Belgium, and the Netherlands.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Omnia, "Biography," *World of Omnia*, 2016, <https://www.worldofomnia.com/band/biography>, accessed December 1, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Omnia, "Biography."

<sup>14</sup> Omnia, "Biography."

<sup>15</sup> Omnia, "Biography."

Omnia's brand of folklorsim is eclectic and designed to create a shared cultural memory for the sake of common identity. Omnia uses juxtaposed mythologies and symbols, showcasing a contiguity that allows their audience to reside in what Boym describes as the "potential space of cultural experience—that is based—on elective affinities."<sup>16</sup> The diverse contiguity can easily be observed in the diversity of genres on the album alone; ranging from classical piano to bluegrass, acoustic harp, and a unique blending of folk and aboriginal instruments playing in a lively pop-dance style.

The elected affinity of the album is defined in its first two tunes. The album begins with a brief piano piece intro in solemn character titled "Weltschmerz" (see [Video 1](#)) that serves as an overture for the theme of the album. *Weltschmerz* translates as world weariness or world pain. The term reflects a melancholic feeling of the inadequacy of the world and is linked to 18<sup>th</sup>-century German Romantic poetry and 19<sup>th</sup>-century postwar pessimism.<sup>17</sup> "Earth Warrior" (see [Video 2](#)), the next song on the album, continues the sentiment with a grim picture of late-stage capitalism and its ramifications for the environment, now in a completely different musical genre, Reggae. In this song Omnia defines an ardent us vs. them rhetoric as a call to social action that is registered in multiple layers of their music and defines their relationship to the idea of "the folk."

Us vs. them rhetoric is achieved in the song's antagonistic populist tone. Populism as an ideology is constructed in terms of a morally good group, the people, and a corrupt self-serving

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<sup>16</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 53. In this case the elected affinity is tied to identification of Paganess classified religiously, but Neopagans are so diverse that it meets the criteria for elected affinities instead of religious grouping. To say all Neopagans are practicing Neopagan religion is a fallacy akin to saying that all Abrahamic faiths practice Abrahamic religion, ignoring many irreconcilable ideological differences of the various sects.

<sup>17</sup> Marta Cooper & Jill Petzinger, "World Weariness: There's a German word that people use in times of despair and it's as apt today as it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century," *Quartz*, October 18th, 2016, <https://qz.com/811186/weltschmerz-theres-a-german-word-people-use-in-times-of-despair-and-its-as-apt-today-as-it-was-in-the-19th-century/>, accessed April 1st, 20.

group usually referred to as the elite.<sup>18</sup> The populist tone is found in lyric content and imagery of the music video – both intentionally instigative:

There's a war on nature  
We can all choose what to do  
So if you feel like I feel, the love of the earth  
Well you can be an earth warrior too!  
cause I'm a warrior ... how about you?<sup>19</sup>

This introduction is a call to action and sets up the dichotomy between “the people” and “the elite.” The former, in this case, represented by the band and their Pagan fans, as they are filmed from all over the world—usually in natural settings and sporting a variety of Pagan garb (follow link to [Figure 1](#)) with a distinct warrior-like appearance. Garments you'll see here have jangles associated with Romani (problematically known as Gypsy) witchcraft, medieval clothing, tribal tattoos, Celtic knot patterns, Native American beadwork and dream catcher designs, and other esoteric symbols. Many are wearing war paint and carry handmade weapons like axes and bows. Like the folk revivals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Omnia is relying on a perceived authenticity in ancient, rural, and indigenous cultures that presumably hold the secret to a harmonious life, as opposed to modern urban industrialized society.<sup>20</sup> Pagan, folk, and indigenes thus become synonymous with each other and with the populist notion of “the people.”

Lyric antagonism and imagery also locate the populist elite. The video cycles between images of lush green forest, modified corporate logos painted on stark white gravestones, and human atrocities of animal and environmental cruelty associated with those logos (follow link to

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<sup>18</sup> Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 6.

<sup>19</sup> World of Omnia, “Omnia Official: Earth Warrior,” *YouTube*, posted July 29, 2014, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://youtube.com/watch?v=71swxdSzY1w>.

<sup>20</sup> Christopher Chase, “‘Be Pagan Once Again’: Folk Music, Heritage, and Socio-sacred Networks in Contemporary American Paganism,” *The Pomegranate* 8, no. 2 (2006), 148–150, <http://www.equinoxpub.com/journals/index.php/POM>, accessed November 28, 2019; and Andy Letcher, “Paganism and the British Folk Revival,” in *Pop Pagans: Paganism and Popular Music*, ed. Donna Weston and Andy Bennett, (Durham, UK: Acumen Publishing Limited, 2013), 91–109.

Figure 2). In the middle of the video, the modified logo headstones make a reappearance as they are smashed by a sledgehammer by the band members. Lastly, the industrial, capitalist, urban elite are officially identified in inflammatory verse.

People breed disassociation  
Industrialization of elimination  
A million mutant monkeys making mutilation  
Deforestation from nation to nation  
The earth and her children, no they cannot hide  
From pollution, confusion and genocide  
But I will protect them, yes I got the right  
'Cause I am a soldier, I fight the good fight!<sup>21</sup>

“Mutant monkeys” is a play on secular theory of evolution to refer to humans. Mutant is used for its negative connotation to illustrate destruction caused by people to the Earth. “I” in the verse calls the good Pagans to action against human-caused destruction at the hands of corporations.

The sartorial evidence, in combination with their populist message, serves a nostalgic purpose in the song that furthers a firm persecution, resistance, and liberation narrative held in common by many Neopagans. It must be noted that nostalgia is not strictly backwards looking. It more often glances sideways, sometimes through the potentialities of past dreams or often to hold the past as a value for the present and goal for the future. Leon Botstein describes musical nostalgia saying, “Music increasingly was written to evoke a sensibility of loss for a past that neither listener nor composer could have experienced or known—by evoking folk traditions and the exotic, whose connection to the listener is discontinuous.”<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the sartorial and populist dimensions discussed, exoticism and folk idioms are sonically rendered in Omnia’s performance, especially in orchestration. For example, “Saltatio Vits” (“Dance of Life”) (see Video 3) features Irish bodhrán, drum set, Australian

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<sup>21</sup> World of Omnia, “Omnia Official: Earth Warrior,” *YouTube*.

<sup>22</sup> Leon Botstein, “Memory and Nostalgia as Music-Historical Categories,” *The Musical Quarterly*, 84 no. 4 (2000), 534.

didgeridoo, acoustic guitar, and a Neo-Celtic double flute.<sup>23</sup> These strange instrument combinations and acoustic timbres evoke natural landscapes and otherworldly longings for an ideal mythological place and time that audience members have never known. A glimpse through the comments section on Omnia's YouTube channel confirms this sentiment among listeners. For instance, Aria Mehr says, "I'm not from Europe, never went there and never saw any country or anything. I don't know why but every time I'm listening to folk music I can feel something. I can feel nature. I can see nature. My soul knows so many things that I don't know!"<sup>24</sup>

The deliberate eschewal of electronic instruments, instead favoring "hand-made acoustic, traditional and prehistoric instruments," locates musical authenticity in ancient, folk, and indigenous traditions and reveals the Neopagan penchant for indiscriminate cross cultural borrowing.<sup>25</sup> In a recorded interview on their Pagan Folklore DVD, Steve Sic talks about their playing of a traditional Afghani song "Dil Gaya," saying "Sometimes it's cool to grab something from a different culture. We play it just to show that true music surpasses all politics and religion." This belief in the transcendental nature of music is translated also into borrowing of rituals and cultural symbols of marginalized peoples to which Neopagans draw intentional parallels to support their own marginalization narrative in an overly Christian world.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> World of Omnia, "Omnia Official: Saltatio Vita," *YouTube*, posted February 20, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69OSmdm9G3w>, accessed December 1, 2019.

<sup>24</sup> Aria Mehr, "Omnia: Pagan Folk Lore" *YouTube* (comment), posted January 11, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JXPdMk5cNvg&t=822s>, accessed December 1, 2019.

<sup>25</sup> "Steve Sic," *World of Omnia* (website) (2016), <http://www.worldofomnia.com/band/steve-sic>, accessed February 20, 2018, ; and "The Band: About the Music," *World of Omnia* (website) (2016), <http://www.worldofomnia.com/band/steve-sic>, accessed February 20, 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Neopagans—particularly practitioners of Wicca and traditional Witchcraft—cite the Witch trials that swept across Europe and the Americas in what they call the "burning times," pointing out blatantly misogynist readings in the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum* (*Hammer of the Witches*, 1487), which is used as a guide to Witch hunts and trials carried out by Christians. See Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess Worshipers and Other Pagans in America Today*, revised and expanded ed. (New York: Penguin Group, 1997). Anne-Marie Gallagher writes, "We may occasionally see ourselves as an oppressed group; for example, our spiritualities provoke fear and hatred among other groupings...." See Anne-Marie Gallagher, "Weaving a Tangled Web?: Pagan Ethics and Issues of History, 'Race,' and Ethnicity in Pagan Identity," *Between the Worlds: Readings in Contemporary Neopaganism*, ed. Siân Reid (Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2006), 279.

The marginalization narrative in “Earth Warrior” is legible in their genre selection coupled with orchestration and lyrics found in the chorus. The song is in a reggae style with the chordal guitar syncopations played by Irish bouzouki and back beats provided by drum set. The driving bass line is provided by the piano, reinforced by bass drum, and sustained by the drum set. Use of Reggae is significant for its initial context in the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica during the 1960s and popularized in the United States countercultural “hippie” movement by the 1970s, thanks to Bob Marley.<sup>27</sup> Rastafarianism resulted from a particular reading of the bible that saw the emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, as the second coming of the savior on Earth.<sup>28</sup> It’s rhetoric took root in the 1930s, especially among blacks in Jamaica whose strong sense of displacement and oppression was felt in the Kingston ghetto.<sup>29</sup> Reggae music arose from this locale as an expression of black identity that situated their idyllic homeland in the African country, Ethiopia, to which they would eventually return. Reggae was necessarily entangled with Rastafarian doctrine of livity, expressed with dreadlocks, the sacramental use of cannabis, a vegetarian diet, and avoidance of all industrially manufactured food products. These tenets are also held by many Neopagans and are paralleled in Omnia’s song.<sup>30</sup> The chorus of the song reinforces these parallels:

I'm a warrior, Earth Warrior  
True-born Pagan, yeah  
I'm a Warrior, dreadlock soldier  
Fightin' for the earth  
Yeah Mon<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> HTS Roots Creations LLC, “Holding On to Jah: Roots Reggae Music and the Rastafarian Movement,” Films Media Group (2011), [fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wid=104024&xtid=109762](http://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wid=104024&xtid=109762), accessed November 26, 2019.

<sup>28</sup> “Holding On to Jah: Roots Reggae Music and the Rastafarian Movement.”

<sup>29</sup> Tuomas Järvenpää, “From Gugulethu to the World: Rastafarian Cosmopolitanism in the South African Reggae Music of Teba Shumba and the Champions,” *Popular Music and Society* 40 no. 4 (2017), 456.

<sup>30</sup> Järvenpää, “From Gugulethu to the World,” 456.

<sup>31</sup> World of Omnia, “Omnia Official: Earth Warrior,” *YouTube*.

The lyric “dreadlock soldier” is contextualized in reference to Reggae’s inherent ties to Rastafarianism. Three of the four members of the band and many fans show their own dreadlocks in the music video. The antagonistic tone also finds imported meaning, because Reggae musicians used their music for protest, as a weapon for social change that relies on clearly declaimed verse delivered by the steady, marching heartbeat rhythm.<sup>32</sup> By drawing this musical parallel, “Earth Warrior” is continuing the genre’s revolutionary roots while also registering their own nostalgic longing for a Pagan homeland—a clean Earth free of pollution and the evils of capitalist greed.

Homages to other persecuted peoples who’ve suffered loss of culture, lifestyle, and land are found in the songs Kokopelli and Crazy Man on the album. The former is introduced by Steve Sic saying, “this song is for the horned God of the Native Americans. It’s called Kokopelli.” The song features a gradual *accelerando* played on a large traverse flute adorned with leather strips and feathers, accompanied by didgeridoo and bodhran. The primary lyrics are the vocables “Hoka Hey” evocative of traditional Native American use of vocables in musical expression. “Crazy Man,” by appearing immediately after Kokopelli, directly connects the neopagan community with the environmental and spiritual values of Native Americans, combining problematic associations of primitivism with nativism and locating authenticity in both.

I'm a blood an' bone heya heya primitive caveman  
I can talk to the trees but I don't speak Human  
Got a heart full of Earth and a head full of Sky  
I got Spirit Drum Wolf Claw Raven's Eye  
Crazy Man  
I'm a Crazy Man  
Shaman or Madman it's all Heyokay with me<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> “Holding On to Jah: Roots Reggae Music and the Rastafarian Movement.”

<sup>33</sup> World of Omnia, “Omnia Official: Earth Warrior,” *YouTube*.

In this way, pagan nostalgia is a value for the present, constructed by drawing connections to multiple specific pasts shown here to be historically persecuted minority groups tied to the land, with environmental and or spiritual values characteristic of an indigenous or animistic world view.

While musical hybridity is an embodiment of pluralism for many eclectic Neopagan practitioners, it is also representative of the longstanding tendency to romanticize minority cultures—a key symptom of nostalgia.<sup>34</sup> As a predominately urban white movement, it is a tremendous flaunting of privilege that, in its romanticizing, sometimes misrepresents or essentializes living indigenous traditions and marginalized communities. This is especially the case for Native American traditions when adapted by Neopagans in a fashion that has been referred to by J. H. T. Davies as “spiritual strip mining”<sup>35</sup>—a lofty accusation.

Religious syncretism is another sometimes problematic feature in Omnia’s music and performance. In “Call Me Satan,” another tune on their *Earth Warrior* album they sing;

Call me Satan, call me Satyr,  
I'm Cernunnos, I am Pan!  
I'm the laughter in the forest  
I'm the happy horny one

Dionyssos, Kokopelli  
Lord of animals, Green Man  
And though it started long ago  
My story's just begun<sup>36</sup>

The impressive list of deities from disparate pantheons across time and place sewn together in verse as practically equivalent entities gains traction from anthropologist Sir James George

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<sup>34</sup> Anne-Marie Gallagher, “Weaving a Tangled Web?,” 273.

<sup>35</sup> J.H.T. Davies, “The Celtic Tradition,” in *The Pagan Index*, (London: House of the Goddess, 1995), cited in Anne-Marie Gallagher, “Weaving a Tangled Web?,” 273.

<sup>36</sup> World of Omnia, “Omnia Official: Call Me Satan,” *YouTube*, posted April 8, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyWtBCDE01A>, accessed December 1, 2019.

Frazer's 1959 book *The Golden Bough* and Robert Graves' subsequently inspired 1969 book *The White Goddess*. Both texts are widely read in Neopagan communities for their detailed accounts of pre-Christian practices.<sup>37</sup> However, *The Golden Bough* has been discredited for its distorted Darwinian account of the progression from so-called primitive cultures to modern civilization; nevertheless, it is still referenced by contemporary Pagans to construct their rituals and folklore.<sup>38</sup>

The way Omnia and the Neopagan community juxtaposes religious and cultural artifacts and symbols in performance presents several challenges to study of the religious movement in general. First, the practice of Neopaganism is highly individualized and actively resists dogma, while also demanding recognition as a legitimate world religion, thus challenging the Euro-American largely Abrahamic concept of religion as a singular coherent philosophical and ethically specific system of beliefs and practices. Second, it challenges traditional notions of ethnicity because of its extensive cross-cultural borrowing and arguably appropriating. Finally, the premise of practicing Neopagans rests heavily on nostalgia and a specific idea of who “the folk” are, locating them in rural, ancient, indigenous, and or marginalized cultures.

The unabashed juxtaposition of cultures may be read in two ways dependent on the sect. It can be seen as a desire of restorative nostalgia—as a way for Neopagans to construct an unbroken lineage to the past, emphasizing historical truths of pagan persecution in affinity with contemporary indigenes. Or it may be a form of reflective nostalgia symptomatic of what Blain and Wallis describe as an indigenous world view of history as an omnipresent living relationship

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<sup>37</sup> Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 206–207.

<sup>38</sup> R. G. Lienhardt, “Frazer, James George,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (Farmington Hills, MI: Thompson Gale, 2008), <http://www.encyclopedia.com/people/history/historians-miscellaneous-biographies/james-frazer>, accessed December 23, 2017.

between people, memory, and landscape.<sup>39</sup> In this reading, fragmentation and recontextualization become “signposts”: not aiming to dictate a single historical trajectory, but rather allowing for contiguity drawn in elective affinities for the purpose of pluralism.<sup>40</sup> It is for these reasons and in this evidence that I suggest that Neopagans are using folklorism in a specifically postmodern way not dependent on Šmidchens original criteria of region, nation, or ethnicity, but on these elective affinities. Neopagans locating of authenticity via borrowing is not unproblematic, but the performance of their paganness is in fact an authentic expression of themselves.

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<sup>39</sup> Jenny Blain and Robert J. Wallis, “Sacred, secular, or sacrilegious? Prehistoric sites, pagans and the Sacred Sites project in Britain,” in *(Im)permanence: Cultures In/Out of Time* eds. J. Schachter and S. Brockman (Pittsburg, Penn State University Press, 2008), <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/60/>, accessed April 1, 2020.

