

continued from front

somebody who stood on the boundary between material and spiritual wealth. Her adopted father was a Druid who had had a vision that three angels came and baptised and named her. As she grew, everything she touched seemed to go well: harvests were full, herds increased, flocks produced more young than ever, and lots of poor were helped through her... she lit a fire, not only of faith, but also a physical fire. The task of maintaining the flame of that physical fire was given to twenty particular nuns, including herself, whose job it was to keep that fire alight as a symbol of faith. After she had died nineteen nuns traditionally kept that fire aflame, and it was, in fact, kept alight for a thousand years after her time, until the dissolution of monasteries. What a powerful symbol!

Moving on from the semi-Christian to the fully pagan, the most impressive megalithic sites – Stonehenge and Avebury – are located in the West Country, well away from the Celtic ‘fringe’ which Martin Wallace seems to view as not only extending as far as his coastal parish in ‘Saxon’ Essex, but actually culminating there! However, pre-Celtic stone circles can be found throughout the British Isles, from Cornwall to the Outer Hebrides. A tourist centre designed to resemble a motorway service station recently opened beside the supposedly remote stone circle at Callanish on the Isle Of Lewis. In the Callanish Centre café, visitors are sold badly made cappuccinos and bombarded with New Age music that has a vaguely ‘Celtic’ flavour. While the majority of tourists seem to obey the notices at Callanish asking them to keep to the outer path, elderly local ladies walk straight through the stones, unmoved by pleas about the preservation of ‘our’ common heritage.

However, even the Callanish guide books admit the stones have been ‘restored’ and at least one of them re-erected in the ‘wrong’ position (see, for example, *New Light On The Stones Of Callanish* by Gerald and Margaret Ponting, G & M Ponting, Callanish 1984). That said, the indifferent attitude of the indigenous population stems not from cultural iconoclasm but their hardcore Presbyterianism. Not only are there no bus or ferry services in Lewis on a Sunday, even the swings in parks are locked up to prevent children playing on them. In an equally ‘spiritual’ fashion, a local prophet known as the Brahan Seer is said to have predicted that the Isle Of Lewis would sink into the sea. Tourists are regaled with the theory that this may refer to the ferry of that name which brings them over from the ‘mainland’. Such legends are the stuff of ‘Gaelic’ wish-fulfilment.

The majority of place names in Lewis are derived from Norse rather than Gaelic words, but since both languages sound ‘foreign’ to the majority of visitors, this is simply more grist to the mill of the ‘Celtic’ tourist industry. The fact that a swathe of what is currently considered to be ‘Scotland’ at one time belonged to ‘Norway’ mirrors similar confusions further south. Even J. D. Mackie in his rabidly nationalistic *A History Of Scotland* (Penguin 1964, pages 14-15) had to admit:

‘When one considers the great similarity between the terrain of the Scottish Lowlands and the northern counties of England... it is not easy to see why the Border came to be where now it is.’ While the ebb and flow of political power has caused the border to shift back and forth over the centuries, simultaneously transforming the national ‘status’ of Berwick-Upon-Tweed, there are few doubts about the ‘fact’ that Holy Island – a few miles to the south of the sometimes ‘Scots’ town of Berwick – is ‘English’.

According to Magnus Magnusson (cited on the inside front cover of *Holy Island* by M Scott Weightman, Pitkin Pictorials, Andover 1996): ‘St Aidan, the first bishop of Lindisfarne... kindled the lamp of Christianity in the north of England. It was a lamp whose rays would illuminate the civilisation of Western Europe and give Lindisfarne a Golden Age whose afterglow confers upon the little island still an aura, an ambience, of remembered grace.’ In fact, everything about Holy Island is attractive except for the village of Lindisfarne, with its vile pubs, tea rooms and gift shops selling tack that various entrepreneurs have commodified as ‘Celtic’ crafts. While everywhere in the village there are reminders that one is in the north of ‘England’, the Northumbrian petit-bourgeoisie are every bit as heavy handed in laying claim to the ‘Celtic’ mantel as their ‘Scots’ cousins’.

Northumbria has at other times been considered ‘Anglo-Saxon’ and as Allen J. Frantzen observes in *Desire For Origins: New Language, Old English And Teaching The Tradition* (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick 1990, pages 22-23): ‘early Anglo-Saxonists posited an ideal point, ancient and continuous with the present. We call belief in such a point “primitivism”, and distinguish two kinds, cultural and chronological. Cultural primitivists have long portrayed the Anglo-Saxon era as a time of simple “natural” social organization and political order. This myth intersects with (and is not entirely distinct from) chronological primitivism, which is less concerned with specific social or political organization than with a generalized view that life in the past was free of inhibition and restraint. It was chiefly cultural primitivism that inspired early Anglo-Saxonists. Generations of English and American writers elaborated the myth of an ideal and innocent Anglo-Saxon culture, and, as if longing for an earthly paradise, looked back on it as an image of their own beginnings.’

To borrow a phrase from the Equi-Phallic Alliance, ‘place’ is false and these primitivist ‘landscapes’ sway on ‘stilts’. In the borders – that is to say in ‘Scotland’, since only the north side of the ‘English’ / ‘Scottish’ border is marketed to tourists as ‘the’ borders, the south side is sold to them as the north of ‘England’ – castles and abbeys are the main tourist attractions. War and religion are thus promoted as quintessentially ‘Celtic’, when they are actually a key component within every branded ‘variety’ of nationalist reaction. Predictably, Hume Castle remains neglected

by those bodies promoting ‘Scotland’ as a tourist destination. Although Hume Castle survived Robert the Bruce’s scorched earth policy in the ‘borders’, Oliver Cromwell experienced no difficulty in laying it to waste. In the eighteenth-century, William Home built a fake replacement on the original site. Situated a few miles outside Kelso, the folly dominates the landscape and looks very impressive from a distance. Close up, the vastly overstated imitation battlements become an absurdity. There is no admission charge, no ‘Celtic’ crafts and the hill-top folly offers a superb view of the surrounding ‘countryside’ as it sways on stilts. Beyond a telephone box, there are no amenities in the adjoining village of Hume, not even a shop!

The ‘French’ bourgeoisie has had occasion to take up ‘Celticism’ and make use of it as the dominant element within its ‘national’ ideology. At other times, ‘Celticism’ has provided a convenient ‘alternative’ to a dominant Greco-Latin ‘French’ identity. The praise of Celtic roots and Gothic architecture as ‘truly French’ in ‘avant-garde’ Cubo-Symbolist circles during the early years of the current ‘century’ was co-ordinated by Robert Pelletier, founder of the Lique Celtique Français, whose extremely reactionary cultural programme included the promotion of medieval corporatism. In texts such as *Cubisme et la tradition (Montjoie! # 1, 1913)*, the painter and nationalist functionary Albert Gleize reiterated Pelletier’s prejudiced attacks on the Italian renaissance, which both men viewed as having had a baneful effect on France’s ‘Celtic’ ‘heritage’. Likewise, President Charles de Gaulle sometimes quoted passages from the works of the uncle he was named after, a Breton poet and early Pan-Celtic ideologist.

Classical writers of the Posidonian persuasion ridiculed the ‘Celts’ for a belief in an ‘afterlife’ that was so ingrained that they’d make loans which were repayable in the ‘next’ world. Satire has ‘always’ been used by bards to bring blisters to the cheeks of their enemies, and even Hegel in his *Aesthetics* observed that satire dissolves character. It should surprise no one that ridicule is the favoured weapon of the avant-bard as it sets about demolishing theme park ‘Britain’. Therefore, the Neoist Alliance throws down the following challenge to Peter Berresford Ellis, a particularly contemptible ‘Celticist’ who likes to pose as a ‘bard’ by dressing in bed sheets. If Berresford Ellis genuinely believes his traditionalism is superior to our conception of Celticism as a symbol of continuous becoming, he can demonstrate his sincerity by loaning three hundred thousand pounds to Stewart Home, with repayment of the debt to be made without interest in the ‘next’ world. Regardless of how he responds to this challenge, thanks to our ridicule Berresford Ellis will soon learn that the working class has no country.

FORWARD TO
A WORLD WITHOUT
FRONTIERS!

Re:Action

Newsletter of the Neoist Alliance

Neither Burnham Nor Benda!

No.5 Winter Solstice 1996



Neoist Alliance researcher on the road between Rodel and Leverburgh, Isle Of Harris.

DEMOLISH THEME PARK BRITAIN

Reality is indefinable. The proposition “whatever is, is real,” although true, does not help us define reality, or to determine it in any other way, because in “whatever is” the “is” involves being, and being is the same as reality. But the proposition, though tautologous is not, I think, useless, since it brings before us the wide denotation of reality.’

J. McT. E. McTaggart *The Nature Of Existence Volume 1* (Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1927).

Treason and tradition spring from the same etymological root – *tradere*; to place, to deliver up, to hand or give over. To give over to the ‘enemy’ is treason (*traditionem*). To give over to another ‘generation’ is tradition (*traditio*). In choosing to ‘betray’ tradition, the Neoist Alliance rejects everything reproduced or reproductive, it rejects all ideologies of development, all realignments, all new adaptations and all selection. Indeed, the Neoist Alliance rejects the entire panoply of originary myths and actively participates in their dissolution. The avant-bard has no programme, it simply seeks to render itself obsolete.

In her book *The Druids* (University Of Wales Press, Cardiff and Connecticut 1966), N. K. Chadwick delineates two distinct responses within classical society to the Celtic ‘tribes’ of Gaul and the British Isles. The Posidonians belittled the barbarous habits of the Celts and today their views are quite rightly viewed as archaic, although they are echoed in the anti-Irish diatribes issued by far-Right extremists such as Richard Hunt, the founder and ideological architect of *Green Anarchist*. In contrast to this, the Alexandrian tradition idealised the Celts as ‘noble savages’ who were closer to ‘nature’ than the urbanised citizens of ancient Greece and Rome. Reactionary clap-trap of the Alexandrian type is still popular among privileged conservatives whose political commitments can all too easily degenerate into fascism. Idealisation of the ‘primitive’ contains within it the implicit assumption that the very ‘civilisation’ ‘denounced’ by Alexandrians is somehow more ‘advanced’ than the social forms these creeps pretend to extol.

Rather than being something ‘new’, primitivism has a history that stretches back at least three thousand years. It should go without saying that the current ‘generation’ of self-styled ‘anarcho-primitivists’ (many of whom can be described more accurately as fascists – see *The Green Apocalypse* by Luther Blissett and Stewart Home) are largely ignorant of this. John Moore, an anaemic academic and possibly the leading ‘theorist’ of ‘anarcho-

primitivism’ in the UK, bizarrely locates the origin of primitivism ‘in the lived experience of Detroit’s inner-city dwellers’ (*Transgressions* 2/3 August 1996). Since Moore’s positions are demolished in a response piece by Luther Blissett, I will not treat them in any detail here. Obviously, Moore’s ‘thought’, like that of modern day ‘Celticists’, represents an enthusiasm for what proponents of ‘nature’ mysticism wrongly view as being ‘Other’.

It is, of course, a banality to state that the modern idea of the ‘Celtic’ is a complete fabrication. This is patently evident from the markedly different forms ‘Celticism’ has taken in ‘Britain’ and in ‘France’. In the UK, middle-class romanticism transformed the Celtic ‘fringes’ of the British Isles into places of wish-fulfilment. As a pseudo-inversion of the actuality of industrialised ‘England’, the Celtic ‘fringe’ provided snobs with healthy holidays well away from the ‘vulgar’ mass resorts favoured by the upper-working and lower-middle classes. Celtic tourism is now well established as a successful service industry whose features include a particularly nauseating combination of the aesthetic and the ‘holy’. Among the ‘Celtic’ sites most popular with tourists are the megalithic stone circles to be found throughout the British Isles, all of which pre-date the arrival of the Celts by centuries if not millennia! Ironically, although many of those doing the ‘Celtic’ tourist trail fly into the UK via Heathrow Airport, few of them seem to be aware that this complex was constructed on the site of possibly the best example of a timber built pre-Roman Celtic shrine.

As a highly commodified ‘spiritual pilgrimage’, the ‘Celtic’ tourist trail offers supplicants to Capital a mixture of Christian and Pagan fetishes, usually combined in a manner that would have horrified ‘earlier’ adherents to either ‘faith’. The pamphlet of sermons *St. Peter’s Chapel Bradwell-On-Sea: Celtic Heroes Of Faith* by Martin Wallace (Aquila Celtic Crafts, Bradwell-On-Sea 1996 pages 26-28) provides a typical example of quasi-Celtic religious baloney dished up by a ‘trendy’ vicar: ‘Brigid was...

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DISPUTATIONS

A new pamphlet *Disputations On Art, Anarchy And Assholism* by Stewart Home and "Friends" has just been published by Sabotage Editions. This includes exchanges with Frankfurt School groupie John Roberts who retires suitably chastised. Other texts include a demolition of that sad 'academic' journal *Anarchist Studies* and further jests at the expense of Larry O'Hara, whose self-righteous posturing and utter lack of a sense of humour makes him a perfect target for ridicule. Copies of *Disputations* are available for 12 first class stamps from Sabotage Editions, BM Senior, London WC1N 3XX. Further deflations of O'Hara, Green Anarchist, the ICC and others can be found in a series of excellent leaflets issued by Unpopular Books which include *In Defence Of Revolutionary Organisation* and *Green Parasite*. Rush stamps to Unpopular Books, Box 15, 138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS. Due to popular demand Unpopular Books have reprinted *The Green Apocalypse*, which is available for £3.50 from the same address. A companion volume, *The Revolution is Not a Masonic Affair*, dealing with masonic involvement in the setting up of the First International is scheduled for publication in January 1997, price £2. This consists of Nicolaevsky's *Secret Societies and the First International* plus an introductory essay on the role of Freemasonry in developing bourgeois society. *Abduction*, an excellent entry for the *Larry O'Hara Short Story Competition* is available from *Communist Headache*, P.O.Box 298, Sheffield S10 1YU

Books Received:

Pulp Election, by Carmen St. Keeldare, an exposé of secret service manipulation of the publishing industry, available for £12.99 from Blue Dove Publishers, 83 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1 5AR, or upstairs in Compendium Bookshop, Camden.

AVANT-BARDISM IN ITALY



Initiation of future Tory prime minister Winston Churchill into the Albion Lodge of the Ancient Order Of Druids at Blenheim, 15 August 1908.

Our comrades in Bologna continue to publish books and magazines at a phenomenal rate. The following short extract is taken from *Rock Henge! The Druid Roots Of Punk Rock* run in a recent issue of their magazine *Luther Blissett*: 'In 1717 the Irishman John Toland founded The Order Of Druids, a secret organisation about whose origins little is known. This is because of the deliberate secrecy of the founder allied to his own work as a "debunker". Toland wrote several satirical pamphlets against the Order and against himself, thus creating confusion among his critics... This practice would be repeated a couple of centuries later by the punks who happily accepted the negative image the mass media projected onto them.'

LUTHER BLISSETT PROJECT

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THE FIRST CONGRESS OF THE NEW LETTRIST INTERNATIONAL

Rather than travelling directly to St. Andrews for the Founding Congress of the New Lettrist International, I took a train to Dundee where I spent a pleasant evening drinking pints of heavy in the Star And Garter on Union Street with Marshall Anderson, curator of the Pete Horobin Data Archive. When the pub closed we retired to the Data Attic, where drams of McClelland's Islay Single Malt kept the conversation flowing. I didn't make it to my bed, at some point in the wee hours I fell asleep in front of the blazing fire. To be honest, I don't remember much of the evening, although Marshall must have mentioned early on that McClelland's only costs £12 for a full bottle because that fact lodged in my brain. The following quote from the McClelland's label will provide something of the flavour of the night: 'The island of Islay is a very special place. It lies looking out westwards across the vastness of the Atlantic, washed by the balmy waters of the Gulf Stream, and by warm, gentle rains. Islay's landscape of lush, gold and green hue expresses the unique nature of the place: a rich, full character which finds its echo in the rich, smokey, peaty flavours of Islay Single Malt Scotch Whisky.'

In the morning, Marshall escorted me to the bus station. Despite the fact that he was advertised as speaking at the congress, Marshall took a cross country coach to Ullapool. As he departed, Anderson declared that he much preferred the solitude of the Scottish highlands to the hustle and bustle of formal occasions. I got on a local bus that was delayed for nearly an hour at a roundabout just outside Tayport. A cattle truck carrying pigs had crashed, killing several animals. The rest were herded into a pen by the roadside. I was sitting at the front of the upper deck and thus had a good view of the Fife Constabulary making a pig's ear of the rescue operation. As time passed, more and more passengers came up from the lower deck to get a better view of what was going on. The cops could have easily kept the traffic flowing but instead simply let it jam up. The jokes about pigs and bacon were pretty lame but a sense of community soon sprang up among those on the bus, all of whom shared a hearty dislike of the cops.

I was a couple of hours late arriving at the Crawford Art Centre, the conference venue. Luther Blissett from Bologna had hired a pair of paranoid schizophrenics named Prigent and O'Hara to stage an anti-Lettrist demonstration. Blissett's intention had been to create a scandal and thus generate press interest. As I made my way towards the conference hall, this sad pair were being pelted with buns by a score of those who'd come out for some fresh air during a break in congress proceedings. Prigent, who'd drunk the better part of a bottle of meths in a bid to improve his dialectics, or at least this was the line with which the pro-situ justified his consumption of the spirit, was scrambling around picking up buns and eating them. Meanwhile, O'Hara was alternating his accusations that those tormenting him were paid agents of the secret state, with the claim that they held fascist political sympathies. After howling that Ken Dodd was a nazi collaborator, O'Hara denounced Luther Blissett as a state asset. Some wag pointed out that since O'Hara had been hired to stage the anti-Lettrist demonstration by Blissett, this meant the crazed conspiracy theorist was also in the pay of the secret state. Confronted with the iron logic of this argument, O'Hara began rolling around on the ground while emitting hamster-like noises, something he kept up until he was carted off in an ambulance.

Once inside, I discovered I hadn't missed much. Harry Kipper had failed to show and so a textual submission he'd sent along as a substitute had been read out in Esperanto. The reading was supplemented by hand-outs of the text in English. The talk entitled *The Druid Roots Of Lettrism* was pretty much what you'd expect from Kipper: 'When John Toland, the founder of modern Druidry, was criticised for contradicting himself by claiming at various times that the "original" Druids were engaged in human sacrifice, were no more than peace loving sages and were patriarchs, he shot back: "Yes, yes, ha, ha!" This reply is remarkably similar to that given by Marcel Janco when he was asked about his art: "Da-da!" Toland's view of the world was both pantheistic and materialistic. It was Catholic, Protestant, Latitudinarian, Socinian and Deist. Towards the end of his life, Toland was influenced by the doctrines of Giordano Bruno and Renaissance alchemy. He summed up his philosophy with the phrases "everything is matter" and "everything is movement". Toland considered reason to be the First Law, viewing it as a ray of light from which the revolution would flow.'



After Kipper's somewhat scrambled pedantry, Florian Cramer's paper on rhetoric came as a breath of fresh air. Unfortunately, Cramer's views are too complex to summarise here. Cramer had originally been scheduled to speak on the second day of the congress but filled in as a replacement for Richard Essex, who'd been detained in Manningtree by three twenty something scooter girls, who were busily massaging his ego. By the time a lunch break was announced, it was clear the entire structure of the conference had been lost despite the months of planning that had gone into it. The afternoon was taken up with video screenings because none of those participating in the announced panel talk on cut spelling returned from the pub. The videos were supplied by a radical film collective based in Rome and the content was impenetrable to anyone whose Italian was anything less than completely fluent. This meant that 90% of those present were unable to follow the proceedings. By the end of the session, buns were being hurled at the video projection screen.

No one seemed to know what had been arranged for Saturday evening, so most of us ended up getting plastered in a local bar. Sunday morning began with John Zerzan arguing somewhat ironically that the development of language marked the beginning of human alienation. He concluded by observing that lettrism was something to be smashed rather than encouraged. Zerzan was followed by Blaster Al Ackerman who illustrated a series of citations from the writing of Henry Flynt with various jokes. While Flynt's idealism floated over the heads of everyone present, the jokes divided the audience into supportive and hostile camps. Sample joke: 'Why did the feminist cross the road? To give me a blow job.' While Ackerman's humour may have been distasteful, it did have the merit of creating heated discussion.

After lunch, Stewart Home spent a great deal of time detailing his various pranks against everything from the literary establishment to the cops, without even so much as attempting to relate this to lettrism. He was followed by Luther Blissett who was peddling a similar act. Several people made comments about this pair getting too big for their boots. Fortunately, they had the rug pulled from under their feet by the final speaker Sadie Plant. Waving a copy of a *Guardian* interview which came complete with the claim that she was 'possibly the most interesting woman in Britain,' Sadie revealed that her cyber-feminist writings were never intended as anything

other than a Lettrist demonstration at St. Andrews harbour. 'Donna Haraway is a waste of space,' Plant proclaimed, 'it is time to return once more to Rosa Luxembourg and devote ourselves to a careful reading of her works!' At this, the hall exploded into a chorus of cheers. As Luther Blissett and Stewart Home raced up to the stage to congratulate Sadie on out-pranking them, they were pelted with buns.

So what was achieved by all of this? Nothing very much as far as I am concerned. Sadie's prank was well executed and her advice about rereading the classics of left-communism is not without its merits, but this cannot be viewed as an advance on previous positions. The New Lettrist International may have been founded but in all other respects the congress was a farce. Having failed to attend, Richard Essex circulated a call for interested parties to compose imaginary reports of the event. He has already mailed out his fictionalised account of the founding of the New Lettrist International under the auspices of the London Psychogeographical Association. In my opinion, rather than creating originary myths about the founding of the NLI, we would be doing the communist movement a far better service by subjecting ourselves to forthright criticism. It was for this reason that I composed my report.

A report by the Unknown Neoist

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