

PHALLIC RELIGION
IN THE DRUID REVIVAL

John Michael Greer

THE ORDER OF BARDS OVATES & DRUIDS
MOUNT HAEMUS LECTURE FOR THE YEAR 2003

THE MOUNT HAEMUS AWARD

There was already the Bond or circle of Druid fellowship between them, called the Caw, and companions of these several bodies founded the present-day Mount Haemus Grove in 1245.

Now Mount Haemus is a real mountain in the Balkans, and either this or another of the same name was the classical prison of the winds. ... The Aeolian isles off Sicily are also, however, given for this windy prison. It was, whatever the location, the allegorical name for powerful inspiration which lurked beneath the surface.

Ross Nichols, *The Book of Druidry*

As for the Mount Haemus Grove of 1245, I am simply baffled. The only historical connection between Druidry and Mount Haemus that I can discover comes from the mid-eighteenth century, when William Stukeley wrote letters describing himself as 'a Druid of the Grove of Mount Haemus'. All that he meant by this was that he was one of a group of friends who met at his house on a hill in the Highgate area near London which, because of its windy position, was nicknamed by them after the mountain in Greek mythology which was the home of the winds. His letters were published in the nineteenth century, and may somehow have become the basis for a myth involving the Middle Ages and John Aubrey.

Ronald Hutton, First Mt Haemus Lecture

Recognising the vital part that history plays within Druidry, and thanks to the generosity of the Order's patroness, the Order is now able to grant a substantial award for original research in Druidism, with particular emphasis on historical research. We have called this scholarship the Mount Haemus Award, after the apocryphal Druid grove of Mt Haemus that was said to have been established near Oxford in 1245.

Philip Carr-Gomm

Chosen Chief

The Order of Bards Ovates & Druids

Alban Eilir 2005

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Like any other anniversary, the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids offers an opportunity to glance back over the past and sum up a few of its lessons. While the history of OBOD itself has much to interest the scholar as well as the practicing Druid, I propose to look back a little further in the history of the Druid Revival, and note some of the factors that have made our modern Druidry what it is. Any such assessment needs to start by noting the sheer improbability of the Druid Revival itself. A handful of scrappy documentary references to an all but forgotten ancient priesthood - none of them written by members of that priesthood and half of them contradicting the other half in almost every particular - have managed somehow to inspire three hundred years of efforts to turn a bare rumor of archaic wisdom into a living spiritual tradition relevant to contemporary concerns.

Of course no two of these efforts have had the same results. Jacquetta Hawkes once famously remarked that every age has the Stonehenge it desires - or deserves;¹ the same could be said with at least as much justice about the Druids. Yet the attention paid to the ancient Druids has too often been paired with a remarkable lack of curiosity about those Druids whose lives and teachings are many centuries closer to us. For many people, images such as the much-reprinted photo of the young Winston Churchill blinking owlishly amid a throng of elderly Druids in false beards seems to have defined the entire Druid movement before 1970 or thereabouts. Yet behind the false beards, some remarkably strange things took place, and at least some of them have lessons of value for scholars as well as practitioners of Druidry today.

One example stands out a little more prominently than most, if I may so express the matter. The facts of the case are simple enough to state: during the latter part of the reign of Queen Victoria, there was a Welsh archdruid who believed and publicly taught that Jesus Christ was a phallic symbol. The archdruid's name was

Owen Morgan, and under the name and title of Archdruid Morien he presided over the Druid gorsedd of Pontypridd.

Owen Morgan's astonishing career had its roots, like so many other phenomena of the Druid Revival, in the work of that force of nature Edward Williams, better known by his nom de bardisme Iolo Morganwg. Poet, opium addict, first-rate scholar of medieval Welsh literature, and one of the brightest stars in the glittering firmament of nineteenth-century literary forgery, Iolo had in addition the invaluable gift of believing utterly in his own fabrications. Having concocted a fine set of rituals and traditions for gorseddau of Welsh bards, he proceeded to organize a gorsedd anywhere anyone showed the least interest in having one. Merthyr Tydfil, not precisely a large city at the time even by Welsh standards, at one point in the nineteenth century boasted no fewer than three independent gorseddau.² On one of Iolo's many journeys through southern Wales, the town of Pontypridd in Glamorgan received his eccentric benediction, and began its journey toward the far reaches of British religious history.

In its first years, little distinguished the gorsedd of Pontypridd from other local gorseddau that sprang up in Iolo's wake all over Wales, but its archdruid Evan Davies (1804-1888), better known by his bardic name Myfyr Morganwg, proved to be a resource few other gorseddau could match. Some sources refer to Davies as a watchmaker by trade, others describe him as a Protestant minister; it's entirely possible that he was both, serving as a lay minister in one of the many Welsh Protestant sects of the time while earning his living in a more prosaic fashion.³ But Fate had marked him out for a more interesting career.

Sometime in the 1860s, after what a contemporary acquaintance described as "thirty years preaching of Christianity,"⁴ Davies abandoned his church and announced the revival of the ancient Druid mysteries of his forefathers, with himself as Archdruid. From that time until his death in 1888, he and his fellow Druids celebrated the solstices and equinoxes beside the Pontypridd rocking stone with a distinctly Paganized version of Iolo's gorsedd ceremonies. However eccentric this may seem, it attracted followers not only in Wales but across the Atlantic in America as well.⁵

On Davies' death, his mantle passed to Owen Morgan, a prolific writer for the popular press who took up his teacher's cause with enthusiasm. He quickly turned his literary talents to the Druidic cause, producing a tome entitled *The Light in*

Britannia. The scale of this magnum opus of Pontypridd Druidism may be judged by its subtitles: *The Mysteries of Ancient British Druidism Unveiled; The Original Source of Phallic Worship Revealed; The Secrets of the Court of King Arthur Revealed; The Creed of the Stone Age Restored; The Holy Greal Discovered in Wales*. Historian of Druidry James Bonwick referred to it as "among the most candidly expressed books ever printed,"⁶ and indeed it is. Unfortunately for Morgan's hopes of literary fame, all this unveiling, revealing, and discovering had to do with the ultimate terra incognita of Victorian culture, the region midway between the navel and the knees.

To do him justice, Morgan was anything but coy about the matter. He began his book with a note warning the incautious reader to expect explicit talk about phallic worship. The first page launched straight into a discussion of the masculine and feminine principles of Nature. Within a few more pages Morgan was talking about the vulva of the goddess Venus and outlining the sexual mysteries central, at least in his opinion, to every religion worth the name. Before long the Sun was revealed as the son of the masculine divine principle Celi; the Earth likewise as Venus, the daughter of the feminine divine principle Ced; and the fertilization of the Earth by the Sun takes place in exactly the way one might expect. Speaking of the feminine principle, Morgan wrote: "Her feet were represented, open like a triangle, toward the sun rising at the summer solstice and winter solstice respectively; the apex of the fork would be on the equinoctial line, facing the virile sun in spring rising due east."⁷

In the time of Queen Victoria, this sort of image was startling enough, but Morgan was only just warming to his theme. Every mythology around the world, he believed, can be explained by the same combination of astronomy and sex, and every obscure name can be interpreted by transliterating it into the nearest Welsh equivalent and seeing what results. With Morgan, what results is fairly predictable. The name of the planet-god Saturn, for example, is in Welsh Said-Wrn. Said, according to Morgan, means the phallus, and Gwrn (here grammatically mutated to Wrn) is an urn, which is of course a vaginal symbol. Yet Morgan does not fail to note Saturn's status as the planet of old age, time, and fate: "Gwrn, or Urn, was the vessel into which, in ancient times, the ashes of the Druidic dead were deposited, and the name Said-Wrn (Saturn) implies that the virile power of the personified Sun has disappeared, and that his membrum virilis is now dead, or unable to reanimate the seeds in the Urn, and its former force is itself now exhausted in the earth, considered as an Urn."⁸

When he proceeded to explain that "Aaron entering into the Holy of Holies and the presence of the Ark of the Covenant, signified the same thing as Noah entering into his Ark,"⁹ the attentive reader must have guessed readily enough that Morgan's phallic theology had, so to speak, thrust its way into the Old Testament. Morgan devotes pages to the task of exposing the Ark of the Covenant as the symbolic vulva of the earth goddess.¹⁰ A full chapter expounds the solar and sexual mysteries of the Tabernacle erected by the Israelites in the wilderness.¹¹ Another interprets the ritual of the Day of Atonement as a symbolic orgy of astronomy and sex, in which the High Priest enters the Holy Place and is reborn from it, or, in Morgan's own inimitable prose, experiences a new birth "through the hairy eastern outlet of the Virgin of Israel."¹²

It's only fair to point out that Morgan's theology had a metaphysical dimension as well. The two primal divinities of his system, Celi and Ced, were respectively the male and female aspects of the unknowable First Cause. The sun and the earth were the primary symbols and emanations of Celi and Ced, and every other phallic and vaginal symbol in the cosmos (including, of course, phalluses and vaginas) reflected the mystic interplay of virile sun and fertile earth. Thus Morgan devoted pages to seasonal and astronomical symbolism, including that durable theme, the impact of the precession of the equinoxes on ancient mythologies.

The centerpiece of Morgan's entire project, however, was his demonstration that Christianity itself was simply a restatement of the ancient wisdom of sex and the turning heavens. In Jesus Christ, the god who rose again, Morgan once again discovered the holy symbol of the masculine powers of nature. The corresponding feminine symbol was none other than the Church, the Bride of Christ.¹³ But this parallel symbolism was far from the only relationship Morgan traced between Christianity and the ancient Druids. He argued, in fact, that Jesus had intended to replace the priesthood of Aaron among the Jews with the priesthood of Melchizedek, which latter was nothing other than Druidism pure and simple, learned by Jesus during his boyhood visits to Britain.¹⁴

For Morgan, in other words, Jesus was not only a phallic symbol and the reborn Sun of the winter solstice, he was also a Druid missionary. Morgan thus handled the conversion of the Druids to Christianity, a staple of Druid Revival literature before and after his time, in his own distinctive style, claiming that the "conversion" was simply a matter of changing names, since the Christian priesthood

was none other than transplanted Druidry, and Christian doctrine simply a restatement of the universal wisdom of astronomy and sex using slightly different symbols.¹⁵

This was Owen Morgan's phallic Druidism. It may seem odd from a modern perspective to use a one-sided label such as "phallic religion" to describe Morgan's theory, but it's a thoroughly Victorian oddity. The most widely respected medical textbook on human sexuality published in England during Queen Victoria's reign, Dr. William Acton's massive tome *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs* (1857), mentions women twice and vaginas not at all.¹⁶ For Acton, as for most male Victorians, "reproductive organs" meant penises and testicles. Vaginas were utterly taboo - a taboo so rarely breached that when the scandalous avant-garde French painter Gustave Courbet painted a woman's genitals and titled the painting *L'Origine du Monde* ("The Origin of the World," 1866), the rich private collector who commissioned it kept it in his dressing room with a veil hanging in front of it.¹⁷ Thus learned Britons of the time, or at least learned male Britons, spoke of phallic religion rather than genital religion.

Remarkably, though, they found room in their theories of primitive religion for vagina-goddesses as well as penis-gods. This probably explains why books on the sexual dimension of religion were considered pornographic all through the nineteenth century, not only by moral reformers, but by sellers and buyers of pornography as well. Thus Richard Payne Knight's *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*, an academic treatise originally published in 1786, saw print again in 1865 at the hands of J. C. Hotten, one of the premier publishers of Victorian smut.¹⁸ In the same way, plenty of other scholarly eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works on sexual themes in mythology and religion graced the shelves of Victorian London's pornographic bookstores. It was the one way many of them could get into print at all.

Yet this literature had been considered serious scholarship less than a century before *The Light of Britannia* saw the light of day. Many luminaries of late eighteenth century scholarship turned their efforts to unraveling the origins of religion. The Deist and skeptical temper of the time guaranteed that direct revelation by the Christian god rarely figured in their accounts. Instead, most of them found the sources of myth and ritual in nature, and the origins of religious creeds in overly literal misunderstandings of a symbolic language once meant to communicate the truths of natural philosophy.

The book by Richard Payne Knight just mentioned provides an excellent specimen of this literature, and one that, as will be shown shortly, has more than a casual connection with our theme.¹⁹ Knight himself was a scholar of independent means, whose interest in ancient Greek literature extended to those portions not usually translated into English even today. Like many learned gentlemen of his time, he also read with interest the translations of Sanskrit religious literature then just beginning to arrive from Britain's newly acquired Indian colonies. Ancient Greece and modern India alike posed a challenge to some of the fundamental certainties of the Christian West, for each presented the spectacle of a profound and mystical spiritual tradition in no way inferior to that of Christianity, that not only cohabited with an ebulliently enthusiastic attitude toward sex, but thrust explicit sexual imagery into a religious setting. To Knight, as to many other liberal scholars of his time, the splendid nakedness of the Greek gods and goddesses seemed to share a common symbolic and religious language with the erect lingams and erotic carvings that decorated countless Hindu temples.

In his work on the phallic religion of the ancients, Knight attempted to interpret some of this language. He argued that in ancient times, the supreme god was believed to divide into a male aspect of all-engendering spirit, symbolized by the penis, and a female aspect of receptive matter, symbolized by the vagina. These two appeared in the world of human experience as the life force and the substance of the earth, which produced all living beings through their mating. Every phallic image in ancient art, Knight proposed, was a sacred symbol of the creative force of the divine, while every vaginal image represented the equally holy receptive and material dimension of divine creative power. Nude figures of male and female deities had precisely the same meanings, while images of sexual intercourse referred to the cosmic creative process through the metaphor of its most obvious human expression.

This metaphysical symbolism led to surprisingly chaste interpretations of ancient and Eastern erotic art. Knight thus described one scene from the carvings at the Hindu temple at Elephanta: "...the action, which I have supposed to be a symbol of refreshment and invigoration, is mutually applied by both to their respective organs of generation, the emblems of the active and passive powers of procreation, which mutually cherish and invigorate each other."²⁰ The possibility that the sculptor's robust depiction of mutual oral intercourse might have had a less rarefied meaning, whether or not it entered Knight's mind, appeared nowhere in his prose.

Knight's work was closely paralleled by that of several contemporary scholars, most of whom published in the pages of *Asiatic Researches*, at that time the cutting edge periodical in the field of comparative religion. Still, his phallic theology was far from the only novel theory of the origins of religion available to literate readers in Owen Morgan's time. Another set of theories, popular in some circles even today, argued that the secret meaning hidden within the myths and religious teachings of the past was not sexual but astronomical. A number of the philosophes of pre-Revolutionary France, including Nicholas Boulanger, Charles-François Dupuis, and Constantin François de Volney, lent their support to this interpretation, which was taken up in turn by the English scholar Sir William Drummond in his *Oedipus Judaicus* of 1811.

The astronomical theory of religion argued that the reality behind the complexities of myth and doctrine was simply the movement of the sun and the changing seasons over the course of the earth's annual cycle. Every god was either the sun or some other celestial phenomenon, every goddess the earth or some sign of seasonal change. Some aspects of the theory made quite a bit of sense, and indeed make sense today; it puts no great strain on the imagination to compare Heracles in his lion's skin and his twelve labors to the sun's annual path through the twelve stations of the zodiac.

Other solar interpretations of mythology required a good deal more in the way of suspension of disbelief; in some cases, as J.R.R. Tolkien commented in a different context, disbelief had not so much to be suspended as hanged, drawn, and quartered.²¹ Like most theories of mythology, then and now, the solar theory also adopted interpretive rules so broad that anything could be read as a solar myth, and hostile critics accordingly had a field day coming up with parodies. Drummond's *Oedipus Judaicus* attracted perhaps the best of these, Rev. George Townsend's *Oedipus Romanus*, which purported to prove that the twelve Caesars whose misdeeds were chronicled by the Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius were simply the twelve signs of the zodiac under yet another symbolic disguise.²²

Such parodies, and a torrent of less amusing criticism in tones ranging from solemn to shrill, descended on the heads of proponents of the solar theory because they failed to restrict their talk about religion to other people's faiths. An analysis of Christianity as solar myth was part and parcel of the solar theory from its earliest days, with Christ in the midst of the twelve apostles providing only the most obvious

set of solar symbolism in Christian mythology. For many of the solar theorists and their defenders, this redefinition of Christianity as just another pagan sun cult was the whole point of the exercise, a calculated strategy in the Deist attempt to break the grip of dogmatic religion on the Western mind. Much of the literature of phallic religion had the same aim in mind; thus Richard Payne Knight's writings made blistering references to "the sour mythology of the Christians," and his *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* defended the sexual religion of the ancients on the grounds that it had avoided "two of the greatest curses ever to afflict the human race, dogmatical religion and its consequent religious persecution."²³

All this literature, the solar as well as the sexual, forms a crucial backdrop to Owen Morgan's project. Morgan cited Richard Payne Knight and Asiatic Researches frequently in *The Light of Britannia*, and all the themes of Morgan's work can be found detailed in the earlier literature. His metaphysics, with its transcendent divine being dividing into male and female aspects, is straight out of Knight, who also seems to have provided the inspiration for Morgan's sexual interpretation of mythology as well. Yet the solar theory is not lacking in *The Light of Britannia* either; Morgan's Jesus is solar and phallic at once.

Morgan's borrowings from earlier scholarship were not limited to these sources. His habit of using Welsh as a key to hidden meanings of words in other languages was borrowed from a forgotten classic of the late eighteenth century, *The Way to Things by Words*, which was written by John Cleland and published in 1766.²⁴ Cleland was also the author of *Fanny Hill*, and therefore could be considered something of an authority on phallic matters, but he was additionally an enthusiastic if wildly inaccurate etymologist and a strong believer in the profound wisdom of the ancient Druids. He argued, for example, that the Christian Mass got its name, not from the closing words *Ite, missa est* of the Roman ritual, but from the mistletoe of the ancient Druids: a remarkable foreshadowing of Morgan's own Druidic Christianity.

It is worth noting that Morgan was not quite the first person to couple the solar and phallic theories of religion with the ancient Druids. Richard Payne Knight himself commented on the phallic menhirs of prehistoric Britain,²⁵ and one of his more eccentric successors, Henry O'Brien, dedicated his book *The Round Towers of Ireland* (1834) to a theory that identified these structures as phallic shrines erected by ancient Irish Buddhist Druids.²⁶ Nearly every possible ancient religious tradition,

however poorly understood at the time, was grist for the mill of nineteenth-century theorists of religion, and so Druids appeared here and there as one more solar or phallic priesthood.

Yet the most interesting thing about Morgan's borrowings was the way he reshaped and redirected the sources he used. Solar and phallic theories of religion alike used connections between Christianity and older Pagan faiths in the service of an unstated assumption, one that was shared by most people in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The phallic religion literature attempted to show that Christianity was just another version of Pagan sex worship, and could therefore be dismissed from serious consideration. The solar religion literature, in turn, attempted to show that Christianity was just another version of Pagan sun worship, and again could therefore be dismissed. Most Druid Revival literature from before Morgan's time, by contrast, attempted to show that the old Druid religion was just another form of Christianity, and could therefore be tolerated. The assumption underlying all these claims was that Pagan nature worship was not a valid form of religion. Thus opponents of Christianity could attack its validity by showing that it was nothing more than Pagan nature worship, while defenders of Druidry had to catch Christianity's coattails in order to claim some sort of religious respectability.

What made Morgan's solar-phallic Druidry so distinctive was its refusal to accept this assumption. Morgan was thoroughly familiar with the solar and phallic theories of religion; he also knew the earlier Druid Revival writings, and drew extensively on all three literatures. At every opportunity, though, he stood the preconceptions of these earlier writings on their heads. If, as the phallic theorists proposed, all religions were fundamentally about sex and fertility, Morgan took this to mean that sex and fertility were holy. If, as the solar theorists argued, all myths described the turning seasons and the cycles of heaven and earth, Morgan saw this as evidence that the seasonal cycle was profoundly spiritual. And if, as all three literatures insisted, Christianity and ancient Druidry shared core elements, Morgan saw that as proof that Christianity was valid, because it restated the old profound mysteries of man and woman, sun and earth, seed time and harvest under a slightly different symbolism: because, not in spite of. For Morgan, Pagan nature worship was the only true religion, and Christianity was valid because, and only because, it unknowingly preserved the old fertility mysteries.

This last comment points toward the final difference between Owen Morgan and the scholars who provided him with the raw material for his Druid teachings. Richard Payne Knight devoted many pages to a sexual analysis of myths and symbols, but neither his writings nor any other source suggests that he even considered founding a religious movement to spread his gospel of the phallus. Drummond's *Oedipus Judaicus* poked fun at the claims of revealed religion, yet he offered nothing but Enlightenment skepticism in its place. Morgan, on the contrary, was neither a disinterested scholar nor a skeptic. He had discovered, or so he believed, the true religion of the ancient Druids, which was also the true and undistorted Christianity of Jesus; he presented that teaching to the world at large for its enlightenment, and he celebrated the rites and mysteries of phallic Christian Druidism beside Pontypridd's rocking stone until the end of his life. Thus Knight's scholarship became Morgan's religious revelation; what Knight preached, Morgan practiced.

This curious tale has at least two claims on the attention of today's Druids, aside from the simple and wholesome attractions of ordinary prurient interest. First of all, the process that gave rise to his phallic theory of Druidry - the transformation of scholarly research into living spiritual tradition - neither began nor ended with Morgan. In a very important sense, the entire Druid Revival from its beginnings to the present day has its roots in the same process. The eighteenth-century antiquarians who launched the Revival and founded the first Druid orders of modern times drew their inspiration, and many of the details of their Druidry, from what was then cutting-edge scholarship in the field of ancient Celtic religion. Each generation of modern Druids in turn has taken the legacies handed down to them and enriched them with material from the scholarship of their own time.

Just as Owen Morgan depended on the work of Knight, Drummond, and other theorists of fertility religion, Iolo Morganwg built his Druidic edifice on a foundation provided by the researches of the Gwyneddigion Society into early Welsh literature, and today's Druidic literature on the Ogham alphabet would never have been written without the hard work of scholars such as George Calder, the translator of the *Auraicept na n-Eces*.²⁷ The same process continues today; one of the major American Druid organizations nowadays, *Ar nDraiocht Fein*, has based much of its symbolism and ritual practice on Georges Dumezil's theories about the tripartite structure of ancient Indo-European society - theories that ADF members lifted straight

out of the scholarly literature in the 1980s. One of my fellow Mount Haemus scholars has pointed out elsewhere that the belief in a Neolithic matriarchal golden age, presented in the last two decades or so by some American Pagan writers as a radical new revelation suppressed by mainstream scholars, was in fact a widely held theory among mainstream scholars until the 1970s.²⁸ Other examples abound; in fact, it's hard to find any idea current in the modern Pagan scene that can't be traced back to some scholarly source.

All this casts an intriguing light on conventional ideas of relations between the world of academic scholarship and the realms of alternative spiritual traditions where modern Druidry has so often made its home. Many professional archeologists and historians have tended to portray these two as irreconcilable opposites. Stuart Piggott's scathing remarks on the Druid Revival groups of the mid-twentieth century - "bodies of self-styled Druids who today represent the fag-end of the myth...at once misleading and rather pathetic"²⁹ - are part and parcel of a rhetorical stance that contrasts the cool scientific accuracy of professional scholars with the vagaries of white-robed Druidical crackpots. Yet the scholars who like to draw this distinction have done more than anyone else to provide the raw material for modern Druidry; the very book by Piggott that includes the comments just quoted is on the recommended reading list of nearly every Druid order in the English-speaking world. Perhaps Piggott's contemptuous words might best be compared to the traditional disdain of the scientist engaged in pure research for the engineer who finds practical applications for the scientist's discoveries.

The light this casts on the origins of our modern Druid traditions, though, is not the only lesson that Owen Morgan's phallic Druidry has to offer today's Druids. However obscure he may have become, Morgan's ideas have had a surprisingly wide influence. Many of the oddities of early twentieth-century occultism seem a little less odd when illuminated by *The Light of Britannia*. When one of Aleister Crowley's instructional texts adjures the reader to visualize a "solar-phallic hippopotamus,"³⁰ those familiar with Morgan's work will recognize in this apparition a familiar symbol, rather than the product of a bad case of delirium tremens. On a broader scale, Morgan's work is quite possibly the first systematic adumbration in the modern West of a duotheistic fertility religion, with one god who comprises all other gods, and one goddess who contains all other goddesses - a pattern that, most of a century after

Morgan's time, came to dominate the modern Pagan revival as the fundamental theology of Wicca.

Nor are echoes of Morgan and his kindred writers entirely absent from the writings of Ross Nichols, whose founding of the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids we are gathered to celebrate today. The exuberant etymologies Morgan may have learned from the author of *Fanny Hill* bear comparison with some of the unbridled linguistic interpretations Nichols placed in the pages of *The Book of Druidry*.³¹ The symbolism of sun and sex appears in many forms in his analysis of ancient sites in the same book, and takes center stage in his programmatic and too little studied work *The Cosmic Shape* (1946), which calls for a new religious consciousness rooted in the cycles of nature as a counterpoise to the negative impacts of an industrial society out of touch with the fundamental realities of human existence.

Such concerns were by no means foreign to Owen Morgan and the Druids of Pontypridd, just as they mattered deeply to many of those who helped build the modern Druid tradition over the last three centuries. They remain, of course, profoundly relevant today, at a time when the trajectory of industrial society has brought it up against unyielding natural limits, with consequences we cannot yet begin to predict. We may find Morgan's choice of symbolism and language a source of amusement, but his attempt to build a Druid tradition, using the best scholarship available to him, to bring the people of his time literally back to earth deserves both our respect and our sympathetic understanding.

And the same point is true, finally, of the Druid Revival as a whole. The false beards and formalities of a bygone era have encouraged many modern Druids to distance themselves from older Druid traditions, and of course the contemptuous dismissal of those same older traditions by academics such as Piggott have given modern Druids another reason to hold the Druid Revival at arm's length. In doing so, however, we risk losing touch with our own history, and with the hard-won experience of other Druids who contended with the challenges of practicing a nature-centered spirituality in an industrial culture. If 'real Druids' are by definition those who lived before the coming of Christianity, and every attempt to revive Druidism between St. Patrick and the 1970s is dismissed or ignored, it becomes too easy to turn modern Druidry into a religious reenactment club whose members go about pretending to be pre-Christian Celts, instead of honestly confronting the hard realities and bright potentials of the present age. If we recognize instead that Owen Morgan,

like William Stukeley, Iolo Morgawg, Ross Nichols, and everyone here today, are part of a single historical process - the astonishing history of the rebirth of Druid spirituality in the modern West - the last three centuries take on a different meaning; we have a history of our own, a history in which we have a place, and from which we can learn.

Notes

1. Cited in Piggott 1975, p. 191.
2. Raoult 1983, p. 58.
3. Raoult describes Davies as a watchmaker, while Bonwick (who knew him personally) calls him a Christian minister; see Bonwick 1894, p. 3, and Raoult 1983, p. 86-9. Numerous elements in Davies' biography would repay further research.
4. Bonwick 1894, p. 3.
5. Ibid.
6. Bonwick 1894, p. 4.
7. Morgan n.d., p. 33.
8. op. cit., p. 15.
9. op. cit., p. 41.
10. op. cit., p. 7 ff.
11. op. cit., pp. 207-224.
12. op. cit., p. 324.
13. op. cit., p. 31.
14. op. cit, p. 325-328.
15. op. cit., p. 327.
16. See Marcus 1964, pp. 12-33.
17. Showalter 1991, p. 147.
18. Sigel 2002, p. 72.
19. See the discussion of Knight in Godwin 1994, pp. 1-26.
20. Cited in Godwin 1994, p. 9.
21. Tolkien 1966, p. 50.
22. See the discussion in Godwin 1994, pp. 45-46.
23. Quoted in Godwin 1994, p. 3 and 11.
24. Piggott 1975, p. 164.
25. See Godwin 1994, p. 10.

26. op. cit., pp. 19-22.
27. Calder 1917.
28. See Hutton 1998.
29. Piggott 1975, p. 181.
30. Crowley 1976, p. 270.
31. Nichols 1990 pp. 123 and 130-132.

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