

Sacred Places, Storied Places: Ancient Wisdom for a Modern World

by

Michelle Beauchamp
B.A., University of Winnipeg, 2005
M.A., University of Victoria, 2007

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of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

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Abstract

This dissertation begins with the hypothesis that sacred places and their stories are connected in complex ways. This refers to place-based sacred places; that is, places which gain their sacred qualities from their natural environment. The two main examples used are both located in the U.K.: Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean, and Stonehenge. It is further theorized that the stories within these places are repositories of an ancient wisdom; a memory of what it means to live with a sense of the divine in nature. Paying attention to those stories, and to the presences found in these places, may engender a greater appreciation of the interconnectedness of the human world to the natural world and the sacred in nature. Thus an ethic of care for that storied place may develop, and a more harmonious relationship between people and the larger environment may come about. Such an ethic of care may be central in finding solutions to current environmental problems, and preventing future ones. Thus a new story about our relationship with the Earth, based on ancient wisdom, may become the conduit for a kinder, gentler future, where peace, social justice, and environmental care inform both cultural paradigms and individual worldviews. This fusion of stories, the sacred, and the sacred in nature as a way towards self-realization, the development of an ethic of care, and the vision a more harmonious future, is the unique contribution of this dissertation.

Bringing together these diverse strands required a multidisciplinary approach with multiple methodologies, particularly phenomenology to account for experiences in or of sacred places, and hermeneutics to address the stories. In addition, there was a need to include some of the basics of system theory to explore both natural and social systems, and for philosophical inquiry to discuss spirituality and cosmology. Other elements of this dissertation include a background of the ways in which history is presented, how this contributes to the paradigms and worldviews found in the modern Western world, and how those paradigms affect thinking about sacredness in nature, as well as a discussion of why stories are central to all of our lives, and how places come to be imbued with stories. All of this is then set within a framework of the principles of the deep ecology movement. To bring all this together with a cohesive collection of methods, the concentric circles model was created and is explained.

Additionally, this dissertation presents five criteria that could prove useful in assessing sacredness in place when such sacred sites are contested, as happens quite often. This too may help to protect (care for) these places.

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I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Anna Schmidt, who read and critiqued early versions of this dissertation.

I also thank Regina Elizondo for contributing her sketch of Stonehenge, and Regina and Adam Domville for creating the diagram of Stonehenge, showing the concentric circles model.

Dedication

This dissertation could never have come to fruition without the love and support of those closest to me. Therefore, it is dedicated with love to the following people:

My daughter, Suzy Beauchamp, who is a constant source of inspiration to me in all areas of my life, and who makes my heart smile.

My sister, Nanette Hoogsteen, for all her encouragement, especially when I needed it most.

And to Adam Domville, for his love and support, and companionship through many late nights.

Prologue: Positionality and Research

Understanding Positionality - Situating Self - Choosing Sites

*Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact.
Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth.*

- *Marcus Aurelius*

Everything is relative. A simple, throwaway statement that we have all heard from time to time. But hidden in this is a profound truth: everything *is* relative. There are linkages and relations between all things; between you as you read this and I as I wrote this, between me and the cat sleeping beside me, between the cat and the birds chirping in the old oak tree that reigns over the back yard, and between that tree and the earth, the air, and the sky. My life and your life and the life of the person who built my house and those who grew or made the food we each had for breakfast, and all of the animate and inanimate world that surrounds us are intertwined. Although we rarely stop to consider those connections, linkages extend through time and space, connecting us to each other and to our pasts, to places we have perhaps only read or dreamt about and times beyond our own lifetimes.

These linkages and connections and relations affect everything we do, although most of the time we do not examine them too closely. We need to understand them to carry out our day to day lives, but at the same time, we need to avoid getting mired in self-reflexivity or some kind of infinite regression. However, in the context of qualitative research, such as is undertaken here, it is important for the researcher to understand her or his position in relation to the subject being researched. There are many different aspects

to positionality: gender, race, class, social position, cultural setting, the political self, and spatial and temporal location.¹

Acknowledging these subjective aspects of the relationship between research and researcher means acknowledging the impossibility of purely objective research – that is to say, research will inevitably be influenced to some extent by aspects of positionality. The ideas we hold about the world around us are, after all, conditioned by the era and the society in which we live.² Yet the idea of objectivity in research was, from the Enlightenment until relatively recently, assumed to be both possible and desirable. But what is meant by objectivity? Most definitions of objectivity are based on the evaluation of the results of an inquiry; for example, if the results are “universally valid” then the research has reached its goal of objectivity.³ Of course there may be issues with what is meant by universally valid. Another way to assess objectivity is if it “produces evidence that is open to, and bears, scrutiny.”⁴ For this to be the case, “the researcher’s actions and interpretations must be justifiable according to existing standards – typically standards agreed within a research community.”⁵ However, this only holds true when all members of the research community hold similar values and cultural conceptions of truth and validity. These results may or may not continue to be understood as valid and justifiable outside of that particular community – and would not, therefore, be universally valid. For example, archaeologists at Stonehenge may interpret certain data in one way, while a Druidic interpretation of the same data may produce entirely different conclusions. Thus the need for positionality, and for understanding the effect that various aspects of positionality can have on the interpretation of data gained through research.

The prevalent western post-Enlightenment worldview values objectivity very highly – as long as the objectively-gained results are in agreement with that dominant worldview. David Abram dates this insistence upon objectivity to the publication of Descartes' *Meditations* in 1641. It was around this time, Abram observes, that “material reality came to be spoken of as a strictly mechanical realm, a determinate structure” and this “cleared the ground and laid the foundation for the construction of the objective or ‘disinterested’ sciences.”⁶ Morris Berman, in *The Reenchantment of the World*, agrees with this timeframe; he writes that Descartes was perhaps not the first to *conceive* the dualistic separation of mind and body⁷, but he was among the first to articulate the theory that the mind is capable of completely objective or detached thinking;⁸ after all, objectivity can only be conceived of if mind/thinking/reacting *can* be distinct from body/sensing/acting.

The problem of objectivity, particularly in the social sciences and humanities, has remained under discussion. Questions were raised not only about whether objectivity was possible, but also whether it was in fact desirable. Geographer Kim England explains that “as well as being our object of inquiry, the world is an intersubjective creation” that is “peppered with contradictions and complexities” that should be embraced rather than denied.⁹ Researchers should acknowledge that objectivity is not a reasonable expectation, and instead position themselves in relation to their research. This act of self-reflexivity “allows the researcher to be more open to any challenges” and to consider a variety of perspectives. A self-reflexive approach, England writes, is “self-critical sympathetic introspection (that allows) self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher.”¹⁰ However, as another geographer, Barney Warf warns, “positionality is not just

acknowledging personal positions; it also involves understanding how labels (such as race, ethnicity and gender) are constructed and represented.”¹¹

Awareness of the position of the researcher as a thinking, breathing, feeling, sensing being allows acknowledgement that “our experience of the world, charged with subjective, emotional, and intuitive content”¹² influences our research. This is not mere “navel-gazing, narcissistic or egoistic,” rather it “dismisses the observational distance of neopositivism and subverts the idea of the observer as impersonal machine.”¹³ Abram writes that “whatever we perceive is necessarily entwined with our own subjectivity (and) subjective experience cannot be stripped from the things that we study.”¹⁴ This phenomenological approach – the approach of understanding through the individuality of experience – is one of the methodologies that will be used throughout this dissertation.

The focus of this dissertation is sacred places, the stories that live within them, and the people that come to them. It is also about the human/spirit/earth connections that are explored in the stories, and of (re)discovering a sense of enchantment with the world; a sense that has become lost in the secular, scientifically oriented modern western worldview. If that sense of enchantment can be recovered, perhaps this will help us live with a greater sense of connection and respect for the environment. I start with the basic premise that places and stories are inextricably linked, like a body and a soul. Each exists because the other exists, and each exists within the other. Throughout this work, I will always come back to this theme, finding evidence, making observations and drawing conclusions along the way. Sacred places are all about relationships – between place and the divine, between the divine and humans, and between humans and place.

Sacred places exist on all continents, in most cultures, and many date from ancient times. The kinds of sacred places addressed here are those that are set in landscapes and where the sacred or numinous qualities of that place, and the stories and presences within it, rely on that landscape and location. This is not intended in any way to be a survey of all such sacred places, although it is hoped that some of the suggestions and observations will be applicable in most situations. Instead, two particular sites have been chosen, both located in England: Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean, and Stonehenge. The differences between the two places allow for a wider discussion about the nature of the sacred, and of the sacred in nature. But more on this a little further on.

Situating self

To situate myself in relation to this research, a good place to start is to think about why I am drawn to this as a subject of inquiry. Although raised in Canada, I began my adult professional life as a journalist in London, England. The stories I worked on tended to focus on questions of social justice, and took me to many interesting and diverse places; the underworld of London's homeless, inside the clubhouses of outlaw motorcycle gangs, to inner-city Belfast during "the troubles," and across Central America during the tumultuous late 1980s. I visited areas of Nicaragua devastated by warfare and natural disaster, drank rum with Sandinista rebels, traveled up mountainsides in Guatemala where villagers had been gunned down by government militia, and stayed for a short time in San Salvador before being "advised" to leave.

This gave me invaluable insight into a variety of both western and non-western cultures and sub-cultures. Questioning dominant power structures was a big part of what I

did and who I became. At the same time, I was on my own personal quest to find meaning in a world that seemed to be filled with anger and violence and problems of power and domination. In particular I was concerned by the slandering and silencing of voices that did not suit those in power. I became involved in social and environmental activism, working with Greenpeace and various other organizations that spoke for those who could not speak for themselves. I sought to give those voices a way to be heard.

A series of personal events led to my return to Canada and subsequent return to academic life. Rather to my surprise, I found that I actually really enjoyed the rigors of academic life, and that I was also fairly good at it. In particular, I was drawn to the complexities of philosophical discourses and even more particularly the connections between philosophy and environmental issues, and the ways in which both of these interacted with and informed issues of social justice. My undergraduate degree was a double Honors major in cultural geography and philosophy and this led to my interest in natural sacred places.

All these events contribute to my relationship with the research being undertaken here. I locate myself as a feminist, seeking to understand power and domination in gender issues. I see the world from a female perspective, understanding (or believing) that there are various power structures in place that do not work in my favour. On the other hand, I also understand that I benefit from white privilege and heterosexual privilege, and that I benefit from living in a first world country, with access to many advantages such as shelter, food, education, and health care. While I am not in the upper classes within this cultural milieu, I am in the upper classes when considered on a worldwide basis.

I am accustomed to listening for lesser-heard voices. This is part of what draws me to the subject of sacred places, whose stories have often been disregarded, unheard, or dismissed as “fairy tales.” I am intrigued by the power of stories – something that pre-dates even my interest in journalism. Stories surround us, guide us, orient us, and sometimes confuse and disorient us. It is vitally important to pay attention to the kinds of stories that we let influence us. If we only listen to the stories told by those who hold power, then that mindset and those dominant paradigms simply become more deeply entrenched. The cycles of violence and destructiveness continue.

It’s a strange thing about western society; I have noticed that we have this tendency to always push what starts out as a good idea to such extremes that it becomes a bad idea. Some examples are money, individualism and technology. Initially, those seemed like really good ways to move forward – to progress. But we let them take control and move past a threshold where they become more destructive than useful. The focus on these things then comes at the detriment of other values – community, co-operation, the environment. Voices calling for a return to those values, or voices that tell of the destructive nature of those things that push “progress” onward go unheard until they are simply unheard. It’s like getting into a car – this car, we think, will be great! It will help us get to places more quickly, do things more efficiently, accomplish more. And so we set off down the road, gathering speed, pleased with ourselves for having thought of this. But we forget about the brakes. In our haste and self-absorption, we don’t notice those who have to jump out of our way, or even those we run over. We don’t heed the voices of those yelling at us to slow down and take care – instead we hurtle onwards until we don’t know how to stop even if we want to.

Learning to listen to stories told in quieter voices is a skill I am still working on. As part of the research for this dissertation, I sought to learn more about feminism and deep ecology to act as a conceptual framework and as a reminder of my situatedness. Conceptual frameworks are sets of “basic beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions which shape and reflect how one views oneself and one’s world... it is a socially constructed *lens* through which one perceives reality.”¹⁵ I seek to use this lens to figure out how and why the dominant western cultural paradigms consistently continue to devalue intuitive understandings and earth-based stories, and why prevalent histories – the ones we are told and taught – are so one-sided. I run a kind of constant background check my own immersion in the dominant paradigms of our times, striving always to listen critically, to question what is “not” said as much as what “is” said.

Choosing sites

As noted above, there are sacred places all around the world and it is fair to say that probably all of them in some way sit outside currently dominant cultural paradigms. I needed to choose places as foci for the work here, and they had to be places that I felt comfortable discussing. So why pick sites in England, when there are many sacred sites much closer to home? In fact there are sacred places under threat right here, in my home province of BC. In the early stages of thinking about and planning this work, I did consider working with Bear Mountain on Vancouver Island, and using Bighorn Medicine Wheel in Wyoming as a comparison site, as I had referred to the latter quite a bit in my Masters thesis.

The other option was to look at some of the well-documented places in the British Isles, of which there are many. When I lived in England, I had visited both Puzzlewood, located within the Forest of Dean, and Stonehenge, so I knew what both of those places “felt” like. I had connected with their presences, heard whispers of their stories, felt their earth beneath my feet.

In the end, there were two reasons for choosing Puzzlewood and Stonehenge over Bear Mountain and Bighorn Medicine Wheel. The main reason is that I felt very strongly that I did not want to run the risk of cultural appropriation. Bear Mountain and Bighorn absolutely have compelling stories to tell, and the disrespect shown to them in the current dominant North American cultural paradigm is certainly a matter of both social and ecological concern. But somehow, I felt that these weren’t my stories to tell. I did not want to add to the disrespect shown to the First Nations to whom these places are sacred by assuming that I could tell their story best.

The second reason is that I felt much closer to Stonehenge and Puzzlewood – they were more “my” places. I can still recall, with almost no effort, the smell of the air and the feel of the wind at Stonehenge, and the real sense of enchantment, the tingle of magic on my skin, the curious rustle beneath the trees of Puzzlewood and within the Forest of Dean. I *know* these places, maybe not well, but in ways that are hard to explain. I had sensed their stories. The contrast between the two places also appealed to me and these comparisons make it possible to talk about two very different kinds of sacred places. Stonehenge is known worldwide, and has been written about and fought over and argued about for centuries. It stands on the Salisbury Plain, visible for miles, recognizable as a symbol of ancient Britain. Puzzlewood, on the other hand, is a well-kept secret, and that

is part of its appeal. There is very little written about it, although one can find old stories from the Forest of Dean and the Wye Valley, where Puzzlewood is located. It's tucked away in a relatively quiet corner of England near the southern Welsh border, an area known for its natural beauty. In order to clarify the difference between the two sites, the table below shows some contrasting characteristics.

<i>Stonehenge</i>	<i>Puzzlewood</i>
Religion	Magic
Awe/humility	Enchantment/wonder
Love – agape	Love - eros
Social self	Deep ecological self
Plains	Woods
Structure	Chaos
Built/human	Organic/nature
Monolithic	Diverse
Rituals, rites	Personal exploration
Invocation	Evocation

Table 1: Characteristics of Stonehenge and Puzzlewood

This table perhaps requires some explanation. It shows some interesting contrasts between the characteristics of Stonehenge and Puzzlewood, but while it seems to present these in dualistic terms, this is mostly because there are only two sites. The two sides should not be seen as oppositional or hierarchical; one is not valued “more” than the other. Feminist theory, and ecofeminist theory more particularly, includes some interesting work on hierarchical dualisms in language. Hierarchical dualisms are “disjunctive pairs in which the disjuncts are seen as exclusive (rather than inclusive) and oppositional (rather than complementary) and that places higher value (status, prestige) on one disjunct than the other.”¹⁶ In cases such as that, dualisms are unhealthy and can create oppressive ways of thinking about and acting towards the lower-value disjunct.

The issue is not with the contrast; it is with the valuation. Things can be different but still equal ($2+2=4$, but so does $3+1$). This is the intention here.

The terms themselves are all explained in greater detail in the chapters on Puzzlewood and Stonehenge. Most of them are self-evident, but some may seem unfamiliar, or at least unfamiliar in this context. Agape, for example, describes a spiritual and selfless love of others. Eros, although commonly interpreted as sexual love, can also be thought of as intimate love, involving a closer, more natural connection. The social self can be thought of as the “anthropo-interactive” self – the self in relation to other people in a group. The deep ecological self is the self in relation to all living beings (not just people).¹⁷ Invocation is a calling-upon, or a prayer, to the divine or a transcendent presence or spirit, requesting its presence or attention. Invocation is *active*. Evocation is a response to what is already there; it is more *reactive*. It is still a calling-upon, but in a more subtle way, more communicative than supplicative.

When stories embedded in the two places are discussed in greater detail in Chapters 7 and 8, the use of these terms will become clearer. In the meantime, it is enough to understand that both places are special, unique, and sacred in their own ways. Each one offers stories of connection with some aspect of the divine, of magic, and of re-enchantment.

Endnotes

¹ Barney Warf, “Positionality,” *The Encyclopedia of Geography* (Published online: Sept. 2010). DOI: 10.4135/9781412939591. Print pages: 2258-2259.

²² Max Weber addresses the issue of objectivity in social science research in “Objectivity in the Social Sciences and Social Policy,” written circa 1903-1904. See translation in, for example, E.A. Schils and H.A. Finch, eds., *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: The Free Press, 1949): 50-112. Weber’s view was that “no science can be fundamentally neutral, nor can its observation language ever be theoretically independent of the way individuals interpret the subject matter that is to be studied.” See Ken Morrison, *Marx, Durkheim, Weber: Formation of Modern Social Thought*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE

Publications, 2006), 345. While there are certainly many different definitions and understandings of objectivity – depending in part on which discipline one identifies with – the focus of the dissertation is not on the development of social science methodologies. However, I do think that it is important to reflect upon and acknowledge the basis of the implicit cultural assumptions, ideals, and values that every researcher inevitably brings to their work. This discussion should be understood in this context.

³ The concept of “universal validity” is taken up by Wilhelm Dilthey from Kant; where Kant used the term for scientific knowledge, Dilthey explores its use in the social, or human sciences. See, for example, Adrus Tool, “Wilhelm Dilthey on the Objectivity of Knowledge in Human Sciences,” *TRAMES: Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 11, no. 1 (2007): 3-14.

⁴ Nigel Ford, “Creativity and Convergence in Information Science Research: The Roles of Objectivity and Subjectivity, Constraint, and Control,” *Journal Of The American Society For Information Science And Technology*, 55, no.13 (2004): 1182.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1182.

⁶ David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 32.

⁷ The argument about “who thought of it first” is not one that needs to be unpacked here; the fact that it was thought of is more the focus. It is however important to understand that the idea does have a long history in western thought. Alastair McIntosh, in *Soil and Soul*, argues that really Plato was the first to articulate the separateness of mind and body, if not soul and body. McIntosh suggests that “Plato became the father of dualistic thought; the idea of a sharp split between body and mind... parts of his philosophy reinforced the idea that we can legitimately cut ourselves off from this world. What is damaging about Plato is not that he demonstrated the power of reason, but that... he placed *logos* above, rather than alongside, *mythos* and *eros*.” Alastair McIntosh, *Soil and Soul* (London: Aurum, 2001), 209.

⁸ Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World* (New York: Bantam, 1981), 20-21.

⁹ Kim England, “Getting Personal: Reflexivity, Positionality, and Feminist Research,” *Professional Geographer* 46, no. 1 (1994): 81.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹¹ Warf, “Positionality,” online.

¹² Abram, *Sensuous*, 34.

¹³ England, “Getting Personal,” 82.

¹⁴ Abram, *Sensuous*, 34.

¹⁵ Karen Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western perspective on what it is and why it matters* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 46.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ For an overview of “selves,” see “The Ecological Self,” *Joanna Macy and Her Work* website. Available at: <http://www.joannamacy.net/deepecolology/the-ecological-self.html>. For more detailed explanations of the ecological self, see for example Macy, *World as Lover, World as Self* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 2007), 157. See also Arne Naess, “Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World,” *The Ecology of Wisdom*, eds. Alan Drengson and Bill Devall (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2008), 81-96.

Introduction: What's the story?

“The universe is made of stories, not of atoms.”

- Muriel Rukeyser

There are many different kinds of sacred places. There are built places, such as churches, mosques, and temples, and there are sacred places that are located in natural surroundings rather than in buildings, such as henges, medicine wheels, and some shrines. There are temporary sacred places, such as aikido dojos that share space in a gymnasium or community hall. There are personal sacred places that are places of prayer and reflection on a very intimate and private level, and there are sacred places that are meant as places where followers can gather together.

All of these places have value and meaning. In this dissertation, though, the focus is solely on places whose sacred qualities are embedded in place; henges, standing stones, medicine wheels, sacred landscapes and geographic features such as mountains, lakes, rivers, forests, and so forth. These kinds of sacred places face particular challenges and threats that are not as common in built places, and most of these issues stem from a worldview in which sacred places are measured more by their monetary rather than their metaphysical worth.

While such places can be found in many cultures and places around the globe and while their sacred qualities may be revealed in many different ways, there is one thing that they all have in common: they are all storied places. Stories are central to humanity. They are how we both give meaning to and make sense of our world. The stories of these sacred places reside in their very land – both literally (as artefacts) and metaphorically. These stories may contain ancient wisdom that links together the divine, or the numinous,

and the place, the place with people, and people with the divine. Perhaps that wisdom can lead to a deeper connection with, understanding of, and thus care for the natural world in which we are all, inevitably, immersed.

This dissertation, then, is a story about stories. A basic premise of this dissertation is that sacred places and stories are inextricably linked, like a body and a soul. Each exists because the other exists, and each exists within the other. This idea is well-supported in the literature on sacred places, particularly by scholars coming from a First Nations or other aboriginal perspective. Although the two main sites used to illustrate this dissertation (Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean, and Stonehenge) are not First Nations sites, I believe the premise applies equally to all sacred places. The thesis that I wish to prove here is that sacred places, and the stories and wisdom contained therein, can provide a path to reconnecting with the divine, with the natural world, and with each other, thus promoting an ethic of care for the Earth. Promoting an ethic of care is central in (re)solving current ecological problems, and preventing further ones from occurring. This is not about returning to past ways of thinking, or some nostalgic yearning for days gone by. It is about rediscovering ancient wisdom and using that wisdom in a way that makes sense now, and in a way that can guide the move towards a more ecologically sensitive future.

Stonehenge and Puzzlewood are both located in England; the former on the Salisbury Plain, about 85 miles slightly southwest of London. Most people will have at least heard of Stonehenge, even if only vaguely as that big stone circle in England. Puzzlewood is a little further north and west, about 55 miles on from Stonehenge, part of the Forest of Dean near the Welsh border. Puzzlewood is more obscure than Stonehenge;

probably most people won't know anything about it, unless they live in the vicinity or have come across it on holiday. These two sites have been chosen because of their many contrasting characteristics, such that each reveals a different kind of sacred place. Both have their own unique way of being, and of being sacred places.

Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is divided into three parts. Although those parts are called, in the interests of brevity, "Insight", "Inspiration" and "Implication", they can also be thought of as "What We Forgot", "Why We Should Remember", and "What We Can Do Once We Remember."

The first part is an investigation into various ways that the world is interpreted. A methodology and framework are needed with which to orient the dissertation. Because sacred places represent complex interactions between nature and culture, there is no one single methodology that could adequately examine all the different aspects; individual experience, social interactions, the stories, and the places themselves, including built elements (as in Stonehenge) and environmental issues. Sacred places are essentially experiential – that is, they are understood in place by individuals and by groups, although the emphasis which is placed on those two categories varies according to different theorists. Phenomenology provides a way to address experience and to tell both individual and communal stories of experiences in sacred places.

The stories are a central part of this dissertation. Stories, whether written down or passed down through an oral tradition, can be thought of as texts, and to study texts, hermeneutics is a useful tool. Some of the stories, such as the stories of the landscape and

stones of Stonehenge, and in the trees, caves, springs, and earth of Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean can be told through science and systems theory. For the most part though, the stories are related through phenomenology and hermeneutics. The stories include what might be called fables, fairy tales or folk tales, but here I simply refer to them stories. I see no need to divide them into separate boxes; they are the stories of and in the places.

All of this is set within a framework of the deep ecology movement. This provides a way to frame experience, story, culture, and landscape within an ecological viewpoint. This is important, since natural sacred places have first and foremost to be kept intact, and to be kept intact, there has to be an ethic of care for the land.

Part One: Insight, or, what we forgot

The first part of this dissertation gives some background to current thinking and scholarship about sacred places. In Chapter One, I propose a new methodology for this study: the concentric circles model. This methodology allows for a variety of perspectives and viewpoints. Starting with the idea that the individual is the locus of experience, or in some cases is self-contained, the circles move outward to encompass wider sets or factors. It is essential to understand that by individual, I do not necessarily mean an individual human. An individual may be a human, of course, but it may also mean a tree, a rock, a thought, or an atom (the latter two being self-contained rather than being experiential). It can refer to any self-organizing system, so an ecosystem could also be an individual. There are five circles; individual interior, individual exterior, collective interior, collective exterior, and the numinous (or the divine). These circles have

permeable, interacting boundaries, and are understood to exist *symbiotically*; that is, changes in one circle cause changes in all the others. For example, a change in the ecosystem of Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean would affect the trees and other flora and fauna, and would also affect the ways in which people experience the forest, and the stories that they access and can tell both about themselves and the forest and its presences. Changes can occur suddenly or over time; this can be clearly seen in Stonehenge, where some stones have fallen (suddenly) and eroded (over time), societies have come and gone, affecting the landscape along the way, and different groups have used the henge for different purposes.

The next two chapters are an investigation of factors which influence the current dominant Western worldview; that is, a worldview in which the sacred in nature, and thereby sacred places dependent on natural settings, have become less valued. Naturally, every person has their own unique worldview containing a set of beliefs and values through which they see the world, and by which they act within the world.

Chapter Two, “Ideas of History.” focuses on the Enlightenment and Romantic periods, exploring some of the differences between Enlightenment and Romantic understandings of the “right” way to approach history. This means uncovering underlying assumptions about the definition of progress, and what kinds of events (and whose events) are worth remembering and retelling. Equally, it is about what kinds of things are deemed not worth telling. It evaluates the claim that there are basic underlying human traits that are the same throughout all times and all cultures, and how these might guide historical trajectories across time and space. This chapter also discusses some modern approaches to history. One thing that is central to this discussion is that history is a very

human endeavour; it is written or told by people to people about people, or at least from a people point of view.

The Enlightenment philosophies and worldviews represented a very dramatic change in thinking from previous eras, bringing to the fore new paradigms that valued individual freedom and choice, valued culture above nature, and championed modern scientific methods as the surest way to learn about the world and all its inhabitants (both human and nonhuman). It presented Western Europe as the most advanced society, the pinnacle of human success, which all cultures should strive to emulate. And perhaps most crucially, the new worldview separated mind/ reason from the body/experience. This has had the effect of separating humans from the natural environment, and many current ecological problems and crises stem from this idea. The Romantics offered an alternative, in which humanity was still seen as part of the natural world and in which non-European cultures are understood on their own terms and values.

But what are worldviews and paradigms, and how do we form our worldviews in the first place? This is the question addressed in Chapter Three. Worldviews are individual ideas, values, and beliefs about the world, while paradigms are culturally held; that is, they underpin individual worldviews.

It is interesting to note the role that technology and science have played in the formation of paradigms and worldviews; having accepted the Enlightenment assumption (paradigm) that Western progress was the best route to follow, it was an easy next step to think that increasingly complex technologies (one result of that progress) would make everyday life better. Technology here does not simply refer to a list of devices and methods of production, but also to the ways in which lives are organized to accommodate

these new devices, the language invented to describe them, and, critically, the way that we think about them.

Worldviews are based on the stories that are told. Stories are the way in which information and values are passed on. There are stories about how the world came into being, why certain things are valued, the right way to behave, and so on. Stories can be factual or fictional; most are a combination of both in varying proportions. Stories are complex, and are based on paradigmatic themes, regardless of whether the storyteller or the audience is aware of them. Stories that resonate with cultural paradigms continue to be told, thus reinforcing those paradigms; those that don't are left behind. But not all old stories just disappear; they can be rediscovered, unearthed, be breathed into life once again. This is particularly true of stories embedded in places; they leave traces in the land and landscape, as will be illustrated particularly in Chapters 7 and 8. When we rediscover stories from another time, we rediscover different paradigms. This rediscovery is the focus of Part Two.

Part Two: Inspiration, or, why we should remember

This section looks at some different aspects of thinking about and understanding sacred places. In Chapter Four, the deep ecology movement is introduced. I have previously said that the concepts of the deep ecology movement serve as a framework for this dissertation. By this I mean that this keeps the dissertation oriented towards its goal; to discover whether sacred places and their stories can (re)introduce a deeper understanding of interconnectedness of all beings and thus promote an ethic of care. There are two primary reasons for using the concepts of the deep ecology movement as that framework. The first is that one of these concepts is self-realization. Theoretically, if the stories of

sacred places lead to a better understanding and sense of the connectedness of all beings, then they also lead to greater self-realization. An interesting corollary to that is, a sense of self-realization can draw a person to sacred places, where a better understanding of those connections might be found.

The second reason is that if natural sacred places are to become re-valued, then quite logically, they have to continue to exist in the first place. If all the trees of the Forest of Dean were cut down for timber, or if the fields surrounding Stonehenge were filled with housing, the experience of these places would change very dramatically. Initiatives to preserve these places (the creation and inception of an ethic of care) can be suggested within the framework of deep ecological thinking. Preservation is not the main theme of this dissertation, but it is one of the issues pertaining to sacred places.

Using the concepts of the deep ecology movement as a framework means keeping in mind some other concepts as well, such as ecological integrity, respect for all life forms, paying attention to inherent and intuitive (intrinsic) values rather than material (instrumental) values, and creating policies that reinforce this understanding. It involves developing personal understandings of these values through development of the deep ecological self, and considering how both paradigms and worldviews can change to become more sympathetic to sacred places. All of these ideas are discussed in greater depth, along with some background to the deep ecology movement.

In Chapter 5, the concept of the sacred is examined in more detail. After all, if we are to talk about sacred places, it would be well to understand exactly what is meant by sacred. There are many differing ideas about the meaning of the word, with many culturally mediated connotations and nuances. This chapter clarifies what is meant by the

sacred in relation to place, with consideration given to how definitions of the sacred fit with sacred places. Based on this, a list of criteria that can be applied to sacred places is offered. Often natural sacred places are also contested places; these criteria offer a reference or a guide that could be used to answer questions about whether or not a place should in fact be considered sacred. Clearly these criteria cannot be applied to private (personal) sacred (cherished) places, but rather are intended to be applied to places held sacred by a community.

This chapter also considers the role of religion in sacred places. Religions can help to create a clearer structure for, or understanding of, the place by bringing together a set of stories, beliefs, rituals, and symbols that can be formally transmitted in the context of the place. Religion is something an individual experiences and adheres to, and which is shared in cultural settings. The sacred can also be experienced outside of a religious context, in that a person may be “spiritual” without necessarily being “religious”. In other words, a person may have an individual understanding and appreciation of the sacred without adhering to all the paraphernalia of a specific religion. Or, a person might be both spiritual and religious. Religion is communal, while spirituality is personal. One of the things that is noted in this chapter is that all aspects (or criteria) of sacred places relate back in some way to *people*; while I do not (and would not) try to make a case that sacredness exists *only* in relation to people, the connections that people form with places is central to this dissertation. This leads to the debate about authenticity (this is not *your* sacred place) and appropriation (this was *my* sacred place and you took it from me).

But this dissertation is also about stories, and these are the focus of Chapters 6-8. In Chapter 6, the form of stories is discussed. One point to emphasize here is that I have

chosen not to follow the traditional categorization of stories – for example, as myths, fairy tales, folk tales, legends, and so on. There are two reasons for this. The first is simply that this dissertation is not about literary theory or criticism; there is no need here to place the stories in different kinds of boxes. This would serve only to discourage or confuse comparisons between stories from different places. The second reason is that creating these divisions seems to me to be a kind of cultural imperialism. Who are we to say that “this” (our) story is the “true” story, and “that” (your) story is merely a myth, fairy tale, or legend?

This chapter also discusses chronotopes – envelopes of time and place, or that which acts as a sort of time/place container for stories. Chronotopes help to locate stories in both time and place by seeing the two as inseparable, and giving that inseparability a name. This chapter also looks at the making of “place”; that is, how places gain meaning. The primary way in which places gain meaning is through stories. This idea is very well-supported in the literature about place, whether focused on sacred places, or sense of place, or gendering of place, or any other aspect of place. Stories are always the central component in creating, sharing, and passing along meaning in places. Interestingly, there is also a great deal of support for the idea that even when places fall into disuse, or the use changes, as has happened with many sacred places, the stories remain embedded in the land and can be rediscovered. This is connected to the idea of social or collective memory, which is also discussed in this chapter.

Another element of place-making is the creation of boundaries. This also is important in the consideration of sacred places, especially when those places are contested or threatened. Boundaries are often not entirely clear and can overlap. For

example, where is the “boundary” of Stonehenge? Is it simply the outside of the ring of stones? If so, then what are we to make of the recently rediscovered settlements, pathways, secondary henges, and burial sites connected to the henge? Perhaps then we could say that the boundary extends to the edges of the archaeological excavations. But then why should it matter if houses or factories are constructed on the surrounding plains? And yet it would matter a great deal, as it would obstruct the view of the rising and setting suns during the solstices, as well as other astronomical events. What then of the rights of farmers, who have historically made use of the plains to graze sheep? A flock of grazing sheep doesn’t obstruct anything much. Thus the boundaries overlap.

This chapter ends by introducing the idea of (re)enchantment. Enchantment is a wonderfully and many-nuanced word, which in some ways makes it problematic to use. Yet it does have a good pedigree of usage in the literature of places, and the idea of the reenchantment of the Earth is widely discussed. This is not enchantment in the sense of spells and charms and such, it is more about (re)discovering a sense of the wonderfully mysterious and multiple connections between people, place, and the transcendent. Again, this is the kind of wisdom that may be found in the stories of sacred places.

Chapter 7 and 8 are a little different from the rest of this dissertation. These chapters are about the stories of Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean, and Stonehenge respectively. Since one of the methodologies employed here is phenomenology, these chapters are presented as stories – my stories of visiting these places, the (hi)stories of the place themselves, and others’ experiences of the places. This does not mean they are not also academically rigorous, especially set within a phenomenological approach. The (re)telling of these stories is central to the thesis of this dissertation. Some of these stories

are the stories of scientists, archaeologists, and anthropologists, and what they have discovered about past people and cultures in these places. Keeping in mind the concentric circle model, and the methodologies that are ascribable to each circle, I have striven to present as clear and comprehensive a series or set of stories about each place as possible. Also included is a discussion of some of the elements of faith traditions in each location, and how those contribute to the sense of the sacred.

Part Three: Implications, or what we can do when we remember

This last section discusses in more depth the idea of (re)enchantment, and provides some thoughts on envisioning a future for sacred places in a modern world. While it seems that the art of listening to the sacred stories of an enchanted Earth has been forgotten, that doesn't mean that these stories are lost, nor does it mean there are not ways to re-learn how to listen to them and learn from them. The final chapter wraps up with some reflections on what future studies could be undertaken on sacred places, both to build further on some of the ideas and suggestions presented here, and in some new directions. Chapter 9 suggests some ways in which the future of sacred places could be ensured, so that the promise of sacred places can be fulfilled. It is essential (as a culture generally, as well as in this dissertation) to understand that *we get the future we envision*. So often, in books and movies and video games, a highly dystopic future is presented, full of despair and lawlessness and all kinds of terrible ecological disasters that cannot possibly be reversed. This does not have to be our future – but in order to create a different future, we need to envision it. In other words, we need to create a better story – both for the present, and for the future.

This chapter presents four challenges, three movements, two places, and one goal.

The four challenges refer to the four kinds of challenges faced by sacred places in the modern world. These are: resource extraction and development; tourism (in an invasive rather than respectful way); research interests (most particularly but not exclusively archaeology); and environmental degradation by causes other than those covered in the previous three points.

The three movements refer to what have been termed the three great movements of our time – the peace movement, the social justice movement, and the environmental movement. I argue that any solutions for the preservation of sacred places should adhere to the principles of those movements. After all, as Einstein has famously said, we can't fix a problem by using the same kind of thinking that created those problems in the first place. In the context of this dissertation, this means challenging the paradigms of the modern dominant western worldview, and instead thinking about how to create a future (not just for sacred places) based on peace, social justice, and environmental care. Again, the corollary here is that just as peace, justice and an ethic of environmental care can lead to seeking out and protecting sacred places, sacred places can lead to seeking peace, social justice, and an ethic of environmental care.

The two places refers to the main examples that are used throughout this dissertation – Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean, and Stonehenge. These places do face some of the challenges listed above, such as tourism, research interests, and environmental degradation, but many other sacred places also face these challenges and some of these are also discussed here. Seeking out those sacred places under threat was a very discouraging task and it does make for rather depressing reading. But here's the

thing: the problems encountered in these places, were also once an imagined future. It is entirely possible to envision a different future.

The stories we tell, and the stories that we listen to, are the stories that construct our future. Once we begin to think about and speak stories of respect, love, peace, social justice, and ecological integrity for sacred places (and indeed all places), we can begin to create that as the future. And the truly heartening part of this is that it does not matter if those stories are imaginary now; after all, all stories are imagined into being.

Chapter 10 delves more deeply into the enchantment / disenchantment / reenchantment story. Here too is further clarification of how enchantment and magic are understood in the context of this dissertation. Clearly this is not about magic in the sense of spells and charms, or of “magic tricks” and illusions. The first I argue is more properly called superstition than magic, and the second is merely entertainment, or sleight of hand and smoke and mirrors. While there is nothing inherently “wrong” with either of these things, they do tend to obscure what is meant here by magic, or perhaps misdirect the mind. So what is meant here by magic? It is magic in a more “natural” sense; a theory of magic based on the idea of a transcendent, and thus not fully comprehensible world – or at least, it can never be fully comprehended in *all its senses* through science. There is an ineffable quality to the natural world, if we are open to it, that does enchant, and that does give that tingle on the skin that ever-so-lightly raises the hair on the arms or at the back of the neck, and there is a sense of something more than what the five senses can comprehend. Magic can create a sense of awe, or of delight. This is what magic here refers to, and this is the way magic can be thought of as pertaining to something supra-human that finds its expression in sacred places. Magic, like religion, or belief, or values,

is not static; the understanding of what it is changes with time and place; that is, magic is understood within its temporal and cultural (chronotopic) context.

Enchantment is also, as already well noted, a word full of connotations and nuance. In this chapter, aside from better supporting the interpretation of enchantment used in this dissertation, is a discussion of the ways in which the enchantment found in sacred places can be extended beyond a one-time encounter, and beyond a single, bounded place.

This chapter also uses the phenomenological approach by presenting stories; in this case, stories from well-known academics who have written about their own encounters with sacred places, and with the enchantment they can bring. Enchantment is not always something that is deliberately sought and found; it is something that *happens*, unexpectedly. It can be thought of as a gift of sorts, from the presences in a place to the person who has come to that place. In sum, I argue that it is a mistake to try to explain *away* magic and enchantment; it is better to simply explain them. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the main points of the dissertation.

And so to the end. The Postscript is a reflection on all that has been covered in this dissertation, and also offers some suggestions for future studies of sacred places. This dissertation has covered many aspects of the stories of sacred places, from the ways in which we came to live in and accept a disenchanted world, to the ways that sacred places can speak to us of a different, potentially reenchanted future, to how that future can be envisioned and thus created. Writing this dissertation has been a long, interesting, and sometimes difficult journey for me; I hope that reading it can be part of your own journey of discovery of the ways you can find connection to the divine or the numinous (however

you many conceive it), to your own special and sacred places, to other beings, whether human or otherwise, and to yourself. I wish you much joy and many blessings in that journey.

Chapter 1: Methodology

Concentric Circles - Phenomenology and Hermeneutics – Other Approaches

I don't believe that life is linear. I think of it as circles - concentric circles that connect.

- Michelle Williams

The methodology for this dissertation has to be one that can incorporate both time and place, the individual and the collective, the concrete and the conceptual. The very nature of sacred places is such that they cannot be other than storied places; they contain stories within them in much the same way that a body contains a soul. Therefore the methodology must also be able to account for both nature and culture, and the intersections between them. Sacred places are places where participants co-create or re-create stories in ways that make sense and are compelling to individuals, to their communities, and to society, and which might lead towards a path of reconnection and reenchantment with the earth environment.

In order to bring together all the elements of individual and community, of physical place and conceptual narrative, and of ancient stories in modern times, the four quadrant model of integral methodology was my starting point. The four quadrants allow exploration from multiple perspectives and viewpoints, and can be applied to almost any discipline. As can be seen by the diagram below, the four quadrants, when combined, represent four different directions, as it were, from which to approach a subject: experience, understanding, cognition of self, and cognition about the world.

<p>Upper Left Interior Individual</p> <p><i>Phenomenology</i></p>	<p>Upper Right Exterior Individual</p> <p><i>The scientific method</i></p>
<p>Lower left Interior Collective</p> <p><i>Hermeneutics</i></p>	<p>Lower right Exterior Collective</p> <p><i>Systems theory</i></p>

Figure 1: A basic diagram of the four quadrant model, showing which methodologies can be applied to each quadrant.

It is a way to bring together four otherwise disparate methodologies into a single, encompassing methodology. Understanding sacred places requires attention to details such as how space becomes place, what stories mean and how that meaning is gained, how a person can be moved to encounter something beyond the everyday experience of the mundane world, and how all these things are connected. Sacred places cannot be understood only in terms of science, or of quantity; there is more than the tangible or rational to address. It is also about experience and feeling. As theologian and geographer Belden Lane notes, “our study of sacred places... requires an openness to every aspect of the process.”¹⁸

However, the four quadrant model does present some problems for the research that I have undertaken here. I will address these problems in greater detail a little further

on in this chapter, but the crux of the problem is that there is little space in the four quadrant model for addressing metaphysical questions. While it does cover the individual and the collective, it doesn't cover the transcendent as a concept on its own.

For this reason, and for the reasons more fully explained below, I suggest a new, alternative model of concentric circles that provides a different way to conceptualize a multiperspectival methodology. This model adds an extra dimension – or another perspective – to cover the element missing from the four quadrants, as well as addressing some structural and conceptual issues within that model. I will be using the concentric circles model throughout this dissertation.

The concentric circles model

When I first encountered the four quadrant model, I found it very hard to visualize. At the time, I was reading Cicero's "Dream of Scipio," and this led me to think of the four quadrants as four transparent nested spheres instead of four two-dimensional squares. Given the limitations of representing things in three dimensions on paper, I then re-envisioned these nested spheres as concentric circles, and added a fifth, outermost circle. It maintains the advantage of the quadrant model in that it continues to allow for a variety of approaches to a subject, but it also allows for more permeability between the different areas, applies a less rigid structure, is visually as well as conceptually interactive, and adds a fifth element to account for transcendence, immanence, or the metaphysical. With the four quadrant model, as the very name suggests, there can only ever be four quadrants. The concentric circles model is not bound either linguistically or representationally to contain only four – or even four – sites.

One highly significant feature of this model is that the circles are constructed of dotted lines – not solid lines – to illustrate the permeability and interplay between the different sites. The fifth, outermost circle is not bounded by any lines. This is where the metaphysical realm is located: the spiritual or numinous or cosmological sphere. It is left unbound to signify the infinite nature of the universe.

The ordering of the circles is not meant to be viewed as privileging one circle above the others. Each circle is open to the other circles, but since it would be rather messy to just place everything into one single circle with no differentiation, the elements are shown as separated out, but as noted above, they are not completely bounded. If this were to be made back into my original conception of a three dimensional model, the circles would become permeable spheres within spheres, not cylinders stacked like a wedding cake. The circles represent interconnections, like the Taoist yin/yang circle, a Celtic knot, or Ouroboros, rather than competition or dualism. No hierarchy is meant to be implied. Each circle, or sphere, contains in it elements of all circles; they exist symbiotically and relationally. Each circle is permeable, or open to receiving energy from all circles. This can be referred to as *multiple symbiosis*; whenever anything changes in one circle, changes occur also in the other circles. Each life affects all lives. These changes can be for better or worse. Nothing remains static – energy always flows.

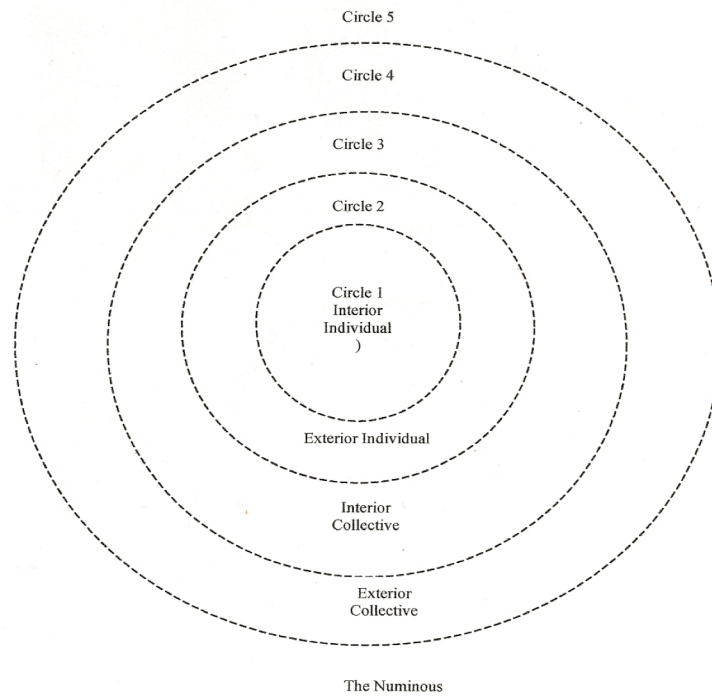


Figure 2: A basic diagram of concentric circles model. Note that the circles are bounded by dotted lines.

Clearly, a single circle also could not hope to represent all the different aspects of interiority and exteriority of any given subject, and all the different methodological approaches that one might wish to employ to study them. The five circles allow for the use of phenomenology, hermeneutics, narrative, philosophical inquiry, scientific method, systems theory, and so forth. The dotted lines emphasize the interplay between those perspectives. It allows for the integration of personal, interpersonal, cultural, physical, and spiritual points of view.

As circles emanate from a pebble dropped in a pond, so too do these circles emanate from a central point: the individual. Without individual interiority, action cannot happen. Crucially, though, the “individual” does not necessarily mean an individual

“person” (although of course it can also be that); it can be an ecosystem, an individual site, a non-human being, a tree, a rock, an atom, a thought. The point is, this is where it begins: the “pebble” of an individual being creates ripples that flow into one another. It is also important to understand the idea that all things have interiority – not just people. Imagine, for example, that you are sitting outside, on a mountain, next to a tree. That mountain contains stories; it has interiority, So too does the tree. Each element of a story and of a place has interiority and presence. While acknowledging that the individual can be a product of the collective,¹⁹ it is also true that without individuals, there can be no collective (represented in the second circle); this is an example of why the circles are not fully enclosed, but represented with dotted lines. Each circle includes and transcends the ones which it meets; the boundaries are not set but overlap, as the colours of a rainbow overlap and create each new prismatic layer.

Alan Drengson, in *Wild Way Home*, presents a similar diagram to explain the “journey from self to cosmos”. In his depiction, the centre is also the self, in his case the “deep self”: the circles then emanate outwards to encompass family, community, culture, ecological community and so on, until one reaches the cosmos at the outer edge.²⁰ Morris Berman, in *The Reenchantment of the World*, also uses circles to diagram the interplay between the embodied self, perception, and action.²¹ Richard Tarnas also employs circles in his explanation of the evolution from the primal world view to the modern world view.²²

The concentric circle model speaks directly to the connectedness of things, and presents it in a way that is more visually harmonious. In the study of the sacred, and in the study of sacred places, the image of the circle is pervasive. The web of life, the

Buddhist mandala, the ancient image of Ouroboros (snake swallowing its tail), North American First Nations medicine wheels, Celtic knots and symbols, Neolithic henges such as Stonehenge and Avebury, the Taoist yin and yang symbol – all reflect the deep symbolic meaning of the circle. Circles are more “unending,” if you like; it is often said that a circle has no beginning and no end. Our world, our sun, the moon, the other planets and the solar system are all spherical (or very nearly so); and phrases such as the “circle” of life and the “cycle” of the seasons are linguistic indicators of our attachment to the circular.

Explaining the circles: a description of methodologies

Given that each circle represents a different aspect of whatever is being studied – in this case, sacred places and stories– it makes sense that each circle uses a different method of investigation.

Phenomenology lends itself to the interpretation of individual experience and perception of place, and therefore belongs to the first circle. To study the exterior of the individual – for example to understand the physical bodies of the stones in a henge – the scientific method can be applied within the second circle. Hermeneutics provides a way to understand the stories that are embodied in these places and how those stories are interpreted; this interior of the collective is described by the third circle. Systems theory will help in the interpretation of fourth circle concepts of the exterior of collectives (both social and biophysical, for example landscapes). Both phenomenology and hermeneutics, as well as philosophical inquiry, can guide the study of cosmology and metaphysics, and of concepts of the divine or transcendent as represented in the outermost (fifth) circle.

Because the emphasis in this dissertation is on sacredness, stories and their relation to the divine, people, and place, phenomenology and hermeneutics will guide most of this study. What follows is a brief overview of each of these methodologies, with more in-depth discussions of phenomenology and hermeneutics.

Phenomenology: the first circle

The innermost circle represents the interior, subjective, experiencing “I” – the individual experience as described through a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is useful in describing those perceptions, experiences and behaviours that help to define the sacred in place, and how those experiences influence the perception of the physical and social worlds, as well as metaphysical concepts such as the spiritual, the sacred, and the divine.

Many writers and scholars of the sacred have used phenomenology to describe experience of place, and more particularly, the numinous experiences that are often associated with sacred places. If perception, experience, and behaviour are taken as being some of the indicators of a sacred place (see Chapter 5), then it is easy to see the usefulness of the phenomenological approach. Theorist Sean Esbjorn-Hargens and philosopher Michael Zimmerman, in their book *Integral Ecology*, list some of the advantages of using this method: honesty, authentic expression, vivid descriptions, positionality, identification of assumptions and acknowledgment of bias, and transformative expression.²³ It is commonly used in writing about sacred places; four well-known writers who have used the phenomenological approach with regard to sacred places are discussed below.

The first of these is Belden Lane. In his article, “Giving Voice to Place: Three Models for Understanding American Sacred Space,” Lane notes that there is of course

more than one way to approach the study and discussion of sacred places. He identifies three main academic approaches – ontological, cultural, and phenomenological – that have been used to define and describe sacred places in the academic work of the last half century or so²⁴. The first he ascribes to the noted scholar of the sacred, Mircea Eliade, observing that in Eliade's work, there is a sort of setting apart of sacred place, a way of seeing it as wholly other, and which implies that there is a wholly separate way of experiencing that place. Lane, however, takes exception to Eliade's approach inasmuch as Eliade "fails to recognize that sacred and profane, religion and culture, are inevitably *overlapping* dimensions of human experience. The 'sacred' never appears as a full-blown transcendent reality" (Lane's emphasis).²⁵ Given that in this study, the sacred is considered to be very much a tangible quality, and one both tied to place and creating a sense of place, that overlap must be attended to, and not set sacred places aside, as an ontological approach tends to do. While ontology, when thought of as "the metaphysical study of the nature of being and existence"²⁶ certainly has something to offer to the study of the sacred, it may not address all the aspects of the sacred in place, nor does it offer much in the way of understanding the role of stories and how these connect to places.

Lane then outlines the cultural approach to sacred place, citing the work of David Chidester and Edward Linenthal, who take the approach that "the human construct of sacrality is always a social construction of reality."²⁷ In this, it would appear that they are following a somewhat Durkheimian model, in which the social (and not necessarily individual) experience provides the basis for conceptualisations of the sacred. Durkheim's position is that "distinctions between the sacred and the profane are always made by groups."²⁸ While the group experience of sacred places is of interest, it is not the

only way to approach place. This approach causes problems in terms of validating the individual's experience of a place or object as sacred, especially if, as noted above, all social groups are composed of individuals. The *definition* of what is or is not sacred may be a social construct in the sense that certain kinds, or types, of objects or places or actions may be placed in one category or the other, but ultimately it is the individual who comes to see any particular object or place or action as sacred or not sacred. Furthermore, each individual encounters the sacred and the place in his or her own fashion, and interprets the stories within their own experience and cosmology, and brings that interpretation and experience back to become part of the group dynamic. Again, this is why there is such permeability expressed between the circles. As Lane explains, the initial experience of sacredness in place may occur, perhaps spontaneously, on one's own, but that individual may later become part of a group which recognizes and celebrates the sacredness of that place within a particular set of narratives and rituals. Another objection to this purely cultural approach is that it does not allow for the "reality" of the sacred, or to put it another way, for the sacred to exist in and of itself, regardless of whether humans interact with it. It may be useful in describing the cultural processes involved in the third circle (collective interiors), but for the first circle (individual interiors), where the focus remains on the individual, the cultural approach is not the best one to use.

Phenomenology is a much better fit for discussions of the sacred experience, as Lane explains. Lane's essay is largely concerned with the individual experience of sacred place, and he uses the phenomenological approach to tell the story of his experience of the sacred during a trip to Medicine Wheel, located near the Bighorn Canyon in northern

Wyoming. Lane describes how being in this place affected his understanding of the place, and his place within it – he had not expected such an experience, but once there, he found that in its own way, the place revealed itself to him. He writes that “there was nothing particularly ‘numinous’ about this experience, only a deep sense of being connected in a single moment to everything present... this unexpected experience of connectedness became an integral part of my own perception of the place as ‘sacred.’”²⁹ The usefulness of phenomenology, according to Lane, lies in its ability to give the place *itself* a voice, to allow the place to participate both in the experience of it and in the retelling of that experience. This allows that place can be infused with *being*, with an essential numinosity that is imparted to those who are open to the experience. This becomes important in discussing the stories of both Puzzlewood and Stonehenge.

There are many examples in the literature to support this view. Alan Drengson, in his book *Wild Way Home*, writes that as we “wander in nature, many of us have spontaneous experiences of the spiritual powers of the places we are in... it is a gift that comes to us. We are more aware of this *presence* when we are grounded in and sensitive to our places.”³⁰ Much of the wisdom in Drengson’s book is conveyed through narrative and a phenomenological approach – the telling of stories, the conveyance of personal experience. The same can be said of David Abram’s book, *The Spell of the Sensuous*³¹.

Abram describes phenomenology as “the Western philosophical tradition that has most forcefully called into question the modern assumption of a single, wholly determinable, objective reality.”³² For Abram, the description of the felt experience is as important – if not more important – than the objective circumstances of that experience. In fact, for Abram, as for Lane and Drengson, there is good reason to call into question

the modern assumption that the environment and the person experiencing it can in any meaningful way be described as separate. In talking to many different people over the years about their encounters with the numinous, Lane found an interesting commonality: in any person's experience of a sacred place, "the experience 'had' *them* as much as they could be said to have 'had' *it*" (Lane's emphasis).³³ Abram's take is much the same: his description of "falling through space" in a Bali rice paddock at night in the opening lines of *Spell of the Sensuous* is a beautiful example of this.³⁴

Phenomenology, Abram later writes, "would not seek to explain the world, but to describe as closely as possible the way the world makes itself evident to awareness, the way things first arise in our direct, sensorial experience."³⁵ For Abram, the value of using phenomenology as a way of describing the world and our experience of it – including sacred places – lies in the way in which phenomenology continuously refers us back to our direct experiences. Only by recalling those experiences, by understanding them for what they are in and of themselves, can we come to truly understand and appreciate the world around us, in all its numinosity and with all its intuitive and sometimes mysterious qualities.

Dolores La Chapelle, in *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex: Rapture of the Deep*, also writes of the need to experience place – to allow ourselves to be drawn into the "affordances" of place. La Chapelle uses phenomenology to tell the story of those experiences and how they can change one's perception both of a particular place, and of the natural world more generally.³⁶ La Chapelle explains that simply paying attention not only to what we see, but also to what we *don't* see – the spaces between the leaves of a tree, for example – is all part of understanding place. In terms of understanding sacred

places, what we don't see becomes even more significant. Being present to the *feel* of an environment begets a certain type of knowledge "that only gets deeper and deeper and there is no end to it."³⁷ This perceiving cannot be adequately accounted for using any sort of methodology that does not acknowledge the journey of the individual in perception of place and the incorporation of that experience into a personal narrative. La Chapelle describes a numinous experience she had as a child, noting that at the time, she had no words for that experience of oneness, of connectedness with the world; she had only the experience itself.³⁸ In telling the story, she speaks of a place that, for her, became part of the sacred. Much of her book is concerned with ways of creating and including Earth-honouring rituals in one's life, and it is worth noting that part of the point of creating and participating in such rituals is to allow oneself to be open to the stories of the land that surrounds you, and to tell those stories in the context of your experiences. Christopher Tilley writes that with phenomenology "the aim is not to *explain* the world... but to *describe* that world as precisely as possible in the manner in which human beings experience it"(my emphasis).³⁹ Phenomenology, then, becomes a way of describing the essence of the experience.

It is well worth noting another common thread that runs through the work of Lane, Drengson, Abram, and La Chapelle: all four describe that feeling of "oneness" with Earth – that subject/experiencer and object/experience are in no real way distinguishable. Lane writes that "our bodies... move through the environment as 'part' of it, actively engaged in perceiving and being perceived... phenomenologically speaking, the world *beyond* us is also deeply before us. We speak 'for' 'to' and 'with' it in a way that demands the total investment of ourselves."⁴⁰ La Chappelle writes that when we look at

the world as a place where everything is connected –birds, animals, trees, rivers, us, and so forth – then it becomes increasingly obvious that we need to “get rid of the dichotomy of subjective-objective, (and) to understand how invalid this dichotomy is.”⁴¹ Abram writes that “the boundaries of a living body are open and indeterminate... it is very difficult to discern, at any moment, precisely where this living body begins and where it ends. Considered phenomenologically – that is, as we actually experience and *live* it – the body is a creative, shape-shifting entity.”⁴² Indeed, Abram notes that “neither the perceiver nor the perceived, then, is wholly passive in the event of perception.”⁴³ Lane adds that when discussing sacred places, “photographs of the site do not begin to convey its mystery. Your immediate encounter with the place involves a combination of intersubjective moments.”⁴⁴

One useful way to conceptualise all of this is to think about love. We can define love as a feeling of deep affection or affinity with another being, or as wishing nothing but the best for another. But that does not even begin to describe the *experience* of love – what it *feels like* when you truly love and are loved in return. And when making love, two bodies become as one; both perceiving and perceived, acting and being acted upon. All the words, all the rationality in the world, cannot fully describe that. And so it is with sacred places: it is about what it *feels like*. In terms of places, it is easy to recall how certain places – sacred or not – made me feel. For example, I can still recall the extraordinary, extra-natural sensations that I felt when visiting Puzzlewood in the Forest of Dean (see Chapter 7), and how the place drew me in; how it connected me to the place, the stories, the presences, the past, and the present, all within the moment. Trying to put

words to the ineffable is a difficult task, but at least by describing the experience, there is a place to begin. This is where phenomenology is most helpful.

On to more technical matters, phenomenology is a term that has suffered from a few identity crises during its life. Most sources credit Edmund Husserl as being the first to articulate the concept early in the twentieth century, followed by Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty by the middle of the century.⁴⁵ As Abram notes, Husserl was the one who used phenomenology to “turn toward the ‘things themselves’, toward the world as it is experienced in its felt immediacy.”⁴⁶ For the most part, this is how phenomenology is currently understood in the intellectual tradition.

However, over the years phenomenology has been interpreted in many different ways and been used to study and describe quite a few different things. For example, David Smith, in his treatment of phenomenology in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, describes seven different “types” of phenomenology. The distinctions between them are perhaps slight, but significant, and at least the first four have some bearing on the subject of sacred places and stories. Of course, all aspects, or types, of phenomenology have validity in certain fields; it is certainly not my intention here to repudiate those forms which do not suit my needs. Rather, this brief summary serves to acknowledge the breadth and possibilities of the phenomenological approach. Therefore, all seven are briefly outlined below.

1. *Naturalistic constitutive phenomenology* is the study of how consciousness constitutes or takes things in the world, and comes with the assumption that consciousness is part of nature. This is in line with Husserl’s use of the term, and with how the four authors outlined above have used it in their work on the sacred.
2. *Hermeneutical phenomenology* studies “interpretive structures of experience” including language and symbols, or “how we understand and engage things around us in our human world, including ourselves and others”. This is in line with Abram

in particular, and we will consider this approach more a little later on in this chapter.

3. *Generative historicist phenomenology* is the study of how, over time, the meanings generated within our experiences, or conceptualized within our particular time and place, become part of the historical process of collective experience. A historicist phenomenology may be quite valuable in assessing changes in worldviews and cosmologies.
4. *Genetic phenomenology* is concerned with the “genesis of meanings of things” as they are generated within one’s stream of experiences – again, presumably, situated within a particular time-place referent. This seems closely related to the historicist position, although perhaps on an individual rather than collective level. It seems to be a melding of the naturalistic and historicist types, and while it may not be directly applicable here, elements of the “meaning of things” and of the individual’s experience of that, are certainly part of what we will explore.
5. *Transcendental constitutive phenomenology* is the study of how objects are constituted in pure or transcendental consciousness, but does not address how these are related to the natural or physical world. Although this is an interesting line of inquiry, it is not one that we shall pursue here.
6. *Existential phenomenology* looks at actual, biophysical aspects of human existence, and at how, in this tangible world, we experience the options of free choice and actions.
7. *Realistic phenomenology* studies the “structure of consciousness and intentionality.” This approach makes the assumption that the physical world is external to individual consciousness, rather than being brought into being by that consciousness. Neither does it seem to acknowledge the interaction between subject and object.⁴⁷

The first two of these approaches are the most relevant for the project at hand, although the third and fourth approaches could also prove fruitful, in particular with reference to the chronotopes of stories (a chronotope is a sort of envelope, or container, of time and place in which a narrative is situated).⁴⁸ While the remaining types may not be as applicable, it is nevertheless useful to acknowledge them, so as to avoid any confusion over how the term is being interpreted and employed here.

Note, in the second strand, a reference to hermeneutics, hinting that the two approaches may be intertwined. Indeed, Paul Ricoeur writes that “there exists between phenomenology and hermeneutics a mutual belonging.”⁴⁹ Gadamer, in *Truth and*

Method, discusses Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, which essentially locates the *act* of interpretation within the individual – it is as much about the experience as it is about the meaning. “A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting,”⁵⁰ writes Gadamer, adding that the “interpreter belong(s) to his object” and that such object, or text, “now acquires a concretely demonstrable significance, and it is the task of hermeneutics to demonstrate it.”⁵¹ The context of the reader – including such things as his or her culture, level of education, and experience of the world – affects the interpretation as each reader figures out how new texts (or stories) fit into their world and worldviews.

Phenomenology deals with the felt experience of interpreting the world and the attendant structures, including, as per Gadamer, the stories that we encounter. Hermeneutics deals more precisely with the meaning of the language and stories embodied within that experience – that is, phenomenology studies the individual's experience from within (the first circle), while hermeneutics can be used to assess and understand that same experience from the outside (the third circle), as language is a shared structure. Arguably, the two are so closely intertwined as to be inseparable; thus we find hermeneutical phenomenology. Gadamer writes that “a person who ‘understands’ a text... has not only projected himself understandingly toward a meaning – in the effort of understanding – but the accomplished understanding constitutes a new state of intellectual freedom,” thereby changing his or her self through the process of understanding. Furthermore, Gadamer asserts that if this is the case, then “all such understanding is ultimately self-understanding” and that one intuitively also understands the subtext in the context of their cultural situatedness.⁵² And so as Ricoeur writes,

“phenomenology remains the indispensable presupposition of hermeneutics. On the other hand, phenomenology is not able to establish itself without a hermeneutical presupposition.”⁵³

It can be seen, then, that for the interpretation of texts – in this case, stories situated in places – the combined use of phenomenology and hermeneutics will provide a more complete understanding of how these stories link people to themselves, to others, and to place. Given this connection between phenomenology and hermeneutics, I have taken the liberty of not going through the circles in order, but skipping ahead now to the third circle and the discussion of hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics: the third circle

The third circle describes the cultural intersubjective “we.” This is where such things as cultural narratives are located – the stories woven into sacred sites, for example, such as creation narratives, moral teaching stories, etc. These are the shared “insides” of the stories – the subjective / intersubjective telling of the stories that form the basis of a culturally shared spirituality or religion, among other things. The hermeneutical approach also pays attention to how and where the story is told – the setting if you like – and how that setting is interpreted by both the narrator and the listener/reader.

The word hermeneutics derives from the Greek *hermeneutikos*, meaning “interpreting” or *hermeneutes*, meaning “interpreter”, and is often referred to as the theory of interpretation – in other words, of uncovering meaning. Gadamer tells us that in German, the word is used to mean “understanding.”⁵⁴ Philosophers Ramberg and Gjesdal, writing in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, define hermeneutics as a “methodology for the recovery of meaning that is essential to understanding within the

‘human’ or ‘historical’ sciences.”⁵⁵ Of course meanings change over time – both of individual words and of whole texts. To facilitate understanding plural interpretations of texts, we can add, as a layer to hermeneutics, the philosopher and ecologist Arne Naess’s communication ecology. As Alan Drengson explains, this approach to language and culture “avoids the ‘one size fits all’ study of the world; it wisely facilitates diversity in cultural, linguistic, technological and economic analysis... (it) is pluralistic and multidimensional.”⁵⁶ What is especially pertinent to this research is Naess’ observation that “when we know the ecological context, it helps us to understand one another without translation, even when from different cultures with unfamiliar languages.”⁵⁷ Naess’ communication ecology approach is to study and understand languages as integrated in *whole systems*; as part of an overall cultural ecology. “By having a sense for those whole systems,” Drengson explains, “we are aware of the challenges to precise interpretations; this engenders positive cross-cultural communication exchanges.”⁵⁸ In other words, even though linguistic and cultural barriers clearly exist, by keeping the *context*, the parts can be more easily understood.⁵⁹

Hermeneutics, like phenomenology, has undergone many transformations and permutations during its history. Hermeneutics is often (mis)understood as a way of interpreting only Biblical texts; however, as was seen with Gadamer and his analysis of hermeneutic phenomenology, it can be applied a wide variety of texts, from the very simple to the very complex. Ramberg and Gjesdal add that it is a methodology for “an interrogation into the deepest conditions for symbolic interaction and culture in general,”⁶⁰ or, to put it another way, a path to understanding how humans communicate not only through language and stories but also through symbols, and culturally mediated

actions and icons; not only through “sophic knowledge” (or the quest for an objective truth) but also through “hermeneutic knowledge” (or that which is revealed by the divine).⁶¹ Esbjorn-Hargens and Zimmerman list “giving voice to community... resonance, meaningful and symbolic”⁶² as among the qualities of hermeneutic research. Given these parameters, the value of hermeneutics to a study of sacred places can be understood; not only will it provide a way to discuss the stories of the place, but also to discuss the meaning in its location and structures, and in the rituals and celebrations that take place there.

There are other reasons too for using hermeneutics, and here again there is reference to the hermeneutical phenomenology mentioned above – a sort of amalgamation of story and place, of structure and language. One commentator, David Linge, describes the phenomenological branch of hermeneutics as undertaking an ontological task, and one that allows for the subtexts of meaning in a story to be understood, as does Gadamer. Introducing Gadamer’s *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Linge makes a distinction between pre-Gadamarian hermeneutics and Gadamer’s approach, explaining that for Gadamer, “the task is ontological rather than methodical.”⁶³ Gadamer refers to hermeneutics as the art – rather than the science – of “listening to one another – for example, the listening to and belonging with someone who knows how to tell a story.”⁶⁴ This attention to story, to the *telling* of the story, and the importance of the cultural interpretation, illustrate the suitability of this method for this project.

Stories are very much embedded in place. In modern times, this is something that seems to be forgotten. Story and place are conceived of as two separate things; as being detachable from each other. However, as Abram makes clear, they are not: they are like a

body (place) and a soul (story) – without the soul, the body cannot exist in any meaningful way. In his discussion of the importance of place to the Apaches of the southwestern United States, Abram writes that a particular place in the land “is never... just a passive or inert setting for the human events that occur there. *It is an active participant in those occurrences*”⁶⁵ (his italics). Additionally, the Aborigines of Australia attach immense importance to the stories of their places, and believe that only by repeating these stories as they walk the land - “singing the land into being” - will the land, and their attachment to it, remain strong. As Abram notes, “it is not the person who speaks, but rather the land that speaks *through* him.”⁶⁶ And so it is in sacred places – the stories give rise to the place just as the place gives rise to the stories. To “read” those stories, to uncover their attachments and significance, to discover their power and their meaning, requires the interpretive power of hermeneutics combined with the experiential understanding of phenomenology.

The scientific method: the second circle

The second circle represents the individual exterior. The method most commonly associated with this is the scientific method, and I think it is important to situate it in the circles model next to the individual interior, simply because as the words imply, it is the physical enclosure of the interior. Whether one is speaking of henges or humans, the exterior is the vehicle through which the interior is expressed. This might be through the mechanics of language, the landscape, or a built structure.

The scientific method of inquiry is ubiquitous among the hard or physical sciences, as well as certain social sciences such as psychology. At the most basic level, this method involves the following steps:

1. Observe a phenomenon which you wish to investigate.
2. Create a hypothesis about this phenomenon.
3. Devise an experiment, with one or more variables that may prove or disprove this hypothesis, then conduct said experiment.
4. Analyze the data and draw a conclusion about whether the hypothesis is true, partially true, or false.
5. Share and compare your results and go back to Step 1 as needed.

This present inquiry is generally more concerned with qualitative properties, such as stories, experiences, and perception. Using the scientific method in these cases would be akin to trying to fit a square peg in a round hole, to use an old proverb. Nevertheless, there are some interesting scientific aspects to this study. For example, what are the stones of Stonehenge made of and where did they originate? Does their placement in fact act as an accurate astronomical calendar? To answer these questions, I refer to and rely upon the findings of those scientists and other experts who have also asked, and found answers, to these questions. Thus, the scientific method as used here is only indirect, in that the results of others' experiments will be used when such questions are to be addressed.

Systems theory: the fourth circle

The fourth circle represents the social or cultural objective or exterior layer. This is where one can look at social and biophysical systems and the things that make it cohesive. This can include ceremonies and celebrations, the stuff that makes sacred sites so important for connecting with the divine, and that bind together community. It can also be used when discussing or describing the environmental (biophysical) context.

Both environmental systems theory and social systems theory can be used. In a way, it could be argued that this entire dissertation relies on the systems theory view of

the world, in that systems theory understands the world as being a whole created of interwoven and synergistic (symbiotic) parts. It states that the individual parts, when studied on their own, do not provide a complete picture of the whole. Esbjorn-Hargens and Zimmerman provide a concise definition of systems theory as methodology that “examines the outside of systems, and how parts fit in a complex dynamic whole.”⁶⁷ Certainly in the sense that this study of sacred places takes a holistic rather than reductionist approach, it resonates well with systems theory.

The symbiosis of the circles

With the concentric circles model, all circles work symbiotically; that is, each one influences the others. When things change in one circle, it also causes changes in the other circles. In multiperspectival, or integrated research, it is understood that more than one perspective is needed to create a whole (or holistic) picture. As Esbjorn-Hargens and Zimmerman explain, “One of the basic premises of integral research is that any phenomenon should be examined simultaneously from 1st, 2nd and 3rd person methodologies... This avoids reducing the data of one method to terms associated with another method.”⁶⁸ In practical terms, this means that each part of the subject can be understood only when it is understood as being both individual and collective; it requires interiority as well as exteriority.

In the case of Stonehenge, the stones themselves can be regarded as individuals from a phenomenological viewpoint. The first circle allows thinking about the interiority of the henge on its own – the presences and numinosity of the henge (what is contained within these stones? Do they house spiritual entities? If not, what do they represent?) and the stones of which it is composed. While the henge is not a *living* thing as such, it is an

evolving thing, subject to biophysical forces as well as human understanding; it has its own rhythms and cycles and stories to tell. This model allows for the henge to be thought of as an individual entity and system in and of itself, and allows for acknowledgment and inclusion of these factors in this study.

These stones can also be studied from an individual exterior (second circle) viewpoint, verifying some facts via the scientific method. On the surface, it appears that physically, Stonehenge has not changed much over the centuries, but there are subtle differences –some of the stones have shifted, some have fallen, weathering has changed the face of the stones much as a person’s face weathers and changes over the years. This weathering can help to determine the age of the stones. It is also possible to ascertain the type of stone, and from whence it came. The second circle view can also be used to assess the use of the henge as an astronomical calendar. Science, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, is also a story.

While determining “how” the stones can be used to mark astronomical events such as equinoxes and solstices, questions can also be asked about “why” these celebrations are important to various groups or communities through a hermeneutical study of available stories and texts. This represents the collective interior of the third circle. The question can also be asked (using the fourth circle), why did the people who built the henge feel compelled to haul these particular stones from far away? If one digs deeper – in a literal as well as a figurative sense – in the landscape surrounding Stonehenge, other structures emerge; houses and communal halls, cooking pits and refuse pits, burial mounds, protective walls and so forth.⁶⁹ This social environment can be represented by the fourth circle in terms of the people of the original henge, as well as

other groups of people who have used Stonehenge over the centuries – how they organized their world (their stories) and how that organization is reflected both *in* and *by* the henge. Does this cosmology contain elements of a panentheistic worldview – one in which all nature is understood to be ensouled? Is it possible that this was part of the original intention, and does it remain so now? The stories that are embodied in the henge and its surrounding landscape become inextricable from each social structure, each individual worldview and each cosmological understanding, and all relate back to each other. By understanding how all circle interact symbiotically, a more complete understanding of the site is gained. Like a mirror reflecting a mirror, the process is both reflective and reflexive.⁷⁰

In more recent times, the worldviews and spiritual beliefs of the Druids, nature pagans, pantheists, panentheists⁷¹ and others who use the henge for spiritual sustenance and celebration are not without contestation and opposition. (Anthropologist Jenny Blain and archaeologist Robert Wallace, who have studied Stonehenge and other ancient spiritual sites over many years, use the term *paganisms* to refer to all groups together.⁷²) The third circle gives us the space within which to read the stories of the henge as told, re-told, and understood by those who use and have used it as a sacred place.

Now, it was stated that if one circle changes, it creates change in the others. In the case of Stonehenge, this becomes evident in the changes over time. As worldviews change, social structures change; as social structures change, the reasons behind the use of the henge – the celebrations and ceremonies – also change, as does the cosmology, both in individuals and in cultures. So one can ask, what happens when a modern worldview is superimposed on an ancient structure or place? If there are indeed spirits

that inhabit the stones of Stonehenge, as many modern celebrants of the place maintain, are these the same spirits that have resided there for centuries? What stories can be told about this ensoulment? What attachments to place are formed as people come to celebrate (with) these spirits? How do these attachments affect the way in which people connect to each other, to the place, to the greater environment? What stories are created, which ones are re-created, and what is co-created within the place itself? These questions will be addressed in Chapter 8. There are many complex and interlocking dynamisms at play, and each circle reacts and interacts with the other circles.

Speaking about stories

While it can be seen that all circles are important to this dissertation, there is more emphasis on the circles containing phenomenology and hermeneutics. This is because one of the starting assumptions of this dissertation is that a sacred place is a storied place. Cosmology, history, biography, emotion, and spiritual meaning, are all conveyed by stories. Stories are a big part of what connects people to place, and this connection to place, or to the land or landscape, with its layers of history and meaning, is an important element in the sense of a place as sacred. The sense of a place as sacred can only be described phenomenologically (or through phenomenological hermeneutics).

Anthropologist Tim Ingold writes that throughout history and across cultures, stories have been told to give (or explain) deeper meaning to landscapes. He notes that these stories are “a way of guiding the attention of listeners and readers”⁷³ to a better understanding of place. In writing about sacred sites in England, Wallis and Blain note that stories, and the interpretation of them, “become part of how individuals and groups

understand sacredness” within particular sites.⁷⁴ A shared understanding of and connection to these stories are a necessary element for the formation of community.

In his book *Two Sacred Worlds*, Larry Shinn writes that stories are central to the experience of the divine.⁷⁵ Without stories, the numinous experience cannot be told, and without the stories of such experience to validate experiences, the sense of a place as sacred can get lost. He adds that “those sacred stories, or myths, [which] arise from personal experience are valued as being especially true and as pointing to that which is ultimately real.”⁷⁶ Finding and understanding these stories, especially as they have shifted over time, will help to unlock the mysteries of places – to help figure out what connections there are to place, to the numinous and to each other within sacred places.

It is precisely because sacred places are storied that they may hold the key to a future in which place and land are cherished – to a reenchantment with the natural and extra-natural worlds and presences that surround us. Without the stories and without the connection to place and to land that these stories places provide, there is the risk of disregarding the importance of ecologically harmonious living. Thomas Berry, in *The Dream of The Earth*, laments that “we are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story” that ties us to place.⁷⁷ Perhaps it is not just a single story that is needed – perhaps what is needed are stories that are unique to unique places; stories that provide a more personal or intimate connection to particular places, which then lead to an appreciation of Earth as home place, and to an ethic of care for our home place.

To aid in the understanding of the connections between story and place, I have chosen two particular, and very different, sites to explore, as discussed in the Prologue. The stories contained in and told in connection with these places will have changed over

time. In both Puzzlewood and Stonehenge the original stories were not written down in words, but rather were passed down through an oral storytelling tradition, are written in the land and, for Stonehenge, in the stones themselves. The placement of the henge, the careful alignment with the movements of the solar system, suggests that these sorts of things mattered to the people who built the henge. More recent archaeological investigations have shown that the site was clearly used as a settlement as well as a ceremonial place: remnants of feasts and evidence of burials have been discovered. In more modern times, the Druids, neo-Druids and other pagan groupings have rediscovered, created, and co-created their own stories about the place, and about the revelatory qualities and ancestral wisdom held within the stones and the stars, and the relation between the two. That this is a special and sacred place *now* cannot really be doubted; that the stories that make it so have changed seems equally irrefutable (see Chapter 8).

In some cases, such as Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean, stories are about all there is to go on in the quest to discover whether this is a sacred place. It is a magical place, to be sure – a place of mystery and spirit and secrets, of enchantment and spell-binding intrigue. There is some knowledge of its general history; for example, it is known that the Romans used it as an open cast mine for iron ore. In the 1800s, the forest was part of a private estate and the landowner created a pathway to allow visitors to explore the woods. It is rumoured that it was here that J.R.R. Tolkien found inspiration for the Middle Earth, and that J.K. Rowling found inspiration for the Forbidden Forest. Puzzlewood itself has remained largely untouched, and is still in private hands, although it is now a tourist site with all the attendant infrastructure. Visitors consistently use such

terms as “mystical”, “magical” and “enchanted” to describe this place. But whether it was ever used as a ceremonial place, as a place to experience the numinous is unclear.

However it is clear that there are many sacred sites and stories of spirits within the Forest of Dean which includes the area now known as Puzzlewood. In an article written in 1905, Margaret Eyre recounts the tales told to her by inhabitants of the Wye Valley and the Forest of Dean. Some of the stories concern a sacred well, which was reported to be often visited by fairies, and which had curative powers; others concern the presence of fairies, of good and bad witches, ghostly hounds, and so forth.⁷⁸ At that time, most of the inhabitants of the area were at least nominally Christian, combining their beliefs in these stories with those told to them in church. Still, by listening to and locating these stories, it is possible to learn something of the land and of the connections people held, and continue to hold, to certain places. Thus once again, both phenomenology and hermeneutics come into play. Equally, the current experience by many people of the place as one that evokes connections with something “more” than human brings about a sense of attachment to the place. These stories, and the faith constructions around them, are explored in more detail in Chapter 7.

Some criticisms of the four quadrant model (or, why a new model is needed)

It is important to acknowledge the academic lineage of the concentric circles model.

Without knowledge of the four quadrant model, it is not likely that I would have thought to combine multiple methodologies into a single model, or at least, not in the way I have done here. There is no doubt that the four quadrant model is a useful methodological framework, one that allows for the use of a variety of perspectives to be combined to create a whole picture, as does the concentric circle model. However, as mentioned

earlier, the four quadrant model makes it difficult to include the *metaphysics* of a place – the numinous, otherworldly presences that are neither purely physical nor purely abstract, felt rather than seen – the spirit, the magic, the manifestation of the divine in place, all of which are central to this study.

In fact this lack of attention to the divine and the metaphysical has been one of the main criticisms of most common approaches to the four quadrant model. The model as explicated by Ken Wilber in particular attracts criticism on this front.

While one could write (and many have written) extensive volumes on the subject, the main focus of Wilber's model is that, rather obviously, it is set within four quadrants. This is important though: simply in the naming of the thing, Wilber has set limits. There can be, at least if one wishes to be etymologically correct, only four quadrants: not three, not five or six, only four. Furthermore, by placing these four quadrants on a linear plane, it becomes difficult to see how the four interact; there is little room for permeability between the quadrants, little room for the four to become interactive or indeed unified in structure. Each quadrant occupies its own little box.

For me, this was (and indeed remains) one of the biggest obstacles to both understanding and using Wilber's model. It is highly structured and rigid, and does not allow much freedom of movement. A similar assessment comes from M. Alan Kazlev, who writes that the model is “lacking in spiritual insight (gnosis), due to its over-intellectual approach”.⁷⁹ Thomas J. McFarlane also takes issue with Wilber's dismissal of “deeper subtle or transcendent levels of ontological reality,” noting that without an account of the metaphysical dimensions of the natural world, “the four quadrant model is not integral since it excludes very significant dimensions of reality.”⁸⁰ It seems that

while Wilber acknowledges that humanity is part of a larger cosmos, he does not believe that there is a need to re-connect with this larger reality. Nor, it seems, does he believe that the divine is immanent in the natural world.

This does not necessarily mean that Wilber believes that the world has no deeper levels of reality; however, in dismissing the possibility of spirit, and of the presence of the divine in nature, Wilber excludes much that may well prove essential for humanity to remember where we fit in with all the rest of Earth, the divine, and, indeed, each other. In his paper “Nature Religion and the Modern World”, Gus diZerega writes that Wilber’s position on religions – and nature religions in particular – contains a “fundamental error” in that Wilber seems to not understand the concept that “spiritual fulfillment is found with others... (and) this community is the world, but the world considered in a far deeper sense than is the case today.”⁸¹ An understanding of the world as “deeper” than simply a physical thing is necessary to a study of the depths found in sacred places, and any model used to understand this would need a way to address that sort of spiritual depth.⁸²

This is a serious flaw in Wilber’s approach as it relates to sacred place, but there are ways in which to create some flexibility. By the relatively simple expedient of choosing to add more than one subject, or layer to each quadrant, one can bring together a variety of approaches to explore a particular subject. So to a certain extent, it doesn’t really matter all that much whether one agrees with Wilber’s personal cosmology when he uses his model, as the researcher can layer in his or her own belief systems, or the belief systems relevant to whatever subject is being studied. The criticism however remains valid; intention matters, and so Wilber’s intentions must be acknowledged even while stating our own. Furthermore, creating an extra place in the model for the

discussion of metaphysical issues rather negates the idea of only four quadrants. If extra “layers” are needed, then really there need to be five quadrants – an etymological and mathematical impossibility.

Just as the four quadrant model suggests a rigidity in structure, so too does it suggest a rigidity in order. Here I am referring to Wilber’s preference for a hierarchical model. In his book, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution* (SES) Wilber seeks to justify this hierarchical ordering on two grounds; the first is that the natural world is ordered hierarchically, and the second is that the term hierarchy as he uses it refers not to a domination theory, but rather to the holistic capacity of objects – that is, “what is whole at one stage becomes a part of a larger whole at the next stage.”⁸³ This is of course a lovely way of thinking about the world, and is a good fit with systems theory. However, one must wonder why Wilber would choose to use the term hierarchical, given that it is laden with negative connotations, and even etymologically, it does not fit his description. Once again, this may be an aspect of Wilber’s personal worldview and way of thinking – one that needn’t necessarily be taken on even if one chooses to accept his model. Nevertheless it is troubling, especially when viewed from a hermeneutical standpoint, where the subtexts of words, the symbols and interactions and history of language become important. Put simply, the choice of words, and the way language is used, often reveals ultimate intentions. My intention with the concentric circles model is most emphatically *not* to create any sort of hierarchical ordering of the belief sets of individuals or societies in any given place, time or culture.

Zimmerman contends that in *SES* Wilber promotes “a cosmology that seeks to rehabilitate the concept of hierarchy... [while] discounting the adequacy of the web of

life model.”⁸⁴ Regardless of whether Wilber deems adequate the web of life model, it seems counterproductive to seek to reintroduce a hierarchical model, one that has been decried countless times by myriad authors and scholars as being, if not the root cause of a great many of humanity’s current problems, then certainly a significant contributing factor. Furthermore, by jettisoning all criticisms of the hierarchical model while also refuting the adequacy of the model of the web of life, Wilber considerably weakens his own claims to “include and transcend” with the four quadrant model.

Of course, one could quite legitimately claim that hierarchies are a necessary part of the ordering of the world, and in certain circumstances hierarchies are very helpful. In scientific endeavours, ordering things in this manner makes sense. In more abstract areas of study the trouble with hierarchies of any sort, even the sort of “transcending hierarchies” that Wilber describes, is that it is still a “ranking” of things where one is prioritized above the other. This ranking is where problems are encountered; instead of merely observing difference, inequality is created.

Much of our everyday language, and our conceptualization of things is done through pairings – in other words, we tend to think in dualistic ways. We think it is light because it isn’t dark, it is quiet because it isn’t noisy and so on, but then we create hierarchies based on these concepts – light is “better than” dark, for example. Any time one thing is chosen over another, some sort of hierarchy is created. In some cases this is not problematic at all – we may choose rice over pasta, or one kind of bicycle over another. These are simply choices though, rather than true hierarchies. The problem starts when we build hierarchical concepts into our worldviews; when we act upon those hierarchical dualisms – when we say that light is better than dark and so we must strive to

eradicate dark, or that culture is better than nature, and therefore it is good to replace nature with culture, and so on. We make value judgments that demean or devalue one half of the equation.⁸⁵ Although Wilber claims to not make such value judgements in his model, one cannot ignore the fact that our linguistic history steers us quite firmly in that direction. It would be better to pay attention to that and circumvent it with more subtle language and less value-laden terms, than to use terminology that pulls toward dualistic thinking. Nuances and connotation matter a great deal in making sure intentions are communicated clearly.

Summary and final thoughts

So where does all of this lead? The four quadrant model is a useful tool in that it allows for the weaving together of a number of different approaches to a subject. It also makes clear the distinctions between interiority and exteriority in both the individual and in wider cultural milieus, but it is flawed. A methodological model is needed that provides a way to include metaphysical concepts such as the divine, the sacred, and the numinous, and allows for the discussion of such ideas as enchantment and numinosity. This is what the concentric circle model aims to do.

In a way, multiperspectival research is like looking into a room through several windows. Each window provides a different perspective, and when one combines all the insights gained, one should have a fairly good idea of what the room looks like altogether. This room can now be seen through the eyes and mind of the individual, through the stories and rituals of the community, through the cosmology represented by those stories and rituals, through the physical structures and the biophysical location, and through the connections between all of these things and the concept of the sacred.

Using the concentric circle model allows for a greater flexibility in terms of understanding and including the importance of the stories and beliefs – the cosmology and the metaphysics, which are so essential in studies such as this one. This is something that the four quadrant model tends to exclude. For studies in the humanities, especially research in religious studies and in some branches of philosophy, the concentric circles is a more complete model, and one that allows for that completeness without creating friction. With the concentric circles there are no hierarchies, no levels that must be attained, no complicated verbiage to be learned; it is simplicity itself. And in its simplicity, I believe, lies its strength.

In the next chapter, I will discuss that phenomenon called “history.” It is important to understand the way that we perceive our past in order to understand our present situation. Again, sacred places are storied places, and often these stories are passed down through many generations, either verbally or in written form, or both. Each time a story is told or forgotten, it leaves an imprint in the land, and thus history is formed. The ways in which these stories are transmitted from one generation to the next, how and why stories transform over time, and how we choose which stories are worth passing on, are all important considerations, both to this story, and to history.

Endnotes

¹⁸ Belden Lane, “Giving Voice to Place: Three Models for Understanding American Sacred Space,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 1, no. 1 (2001): 74.

¹⁹ See Angelica Nuzzo, in *Memory, History, Justice in Hegel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 5. She explains this interplay thus: “Individuality is entirely the product of collective memory and cannot exist or have meaning without a social framework... personal identity is necessarily built out of references to and interactions with social objects, institutions and events.”

²⁰ Alan Drengson, *Wild Way Home: Spiritual Life in the 3rd Millennium* (Victoria: Lightstar, 2010), 134.

²¹ Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World* (this edition Toronto: Bantam Books, 1984), 5-6.

- ²² Richard Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche: Intimations of a New World View* (London: Plume Books/Penguin, 2007), 18, 22, and 24.
- ²³ Sean Esbjorn-Hargens and Michael Zimmerman, *Integral Ecology: Uniting Multiple Perspectives on the Natural World* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2009), 251.
- ²⁴ Lane, "Voice to Place," 57.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Merriam Webster Online Dictionary 2010. Merriam Webster Online, published 28 April 2010, Available at: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ontology>.
- ²⁷ Lane, "Voice to Place," 57.
- ²⁸ Lewis A. Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context*, 2nd ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 137.
- ²⁹ Lane, "Voice to Place," 55.
- ³⁰ Drengson, *Wild Way Home*, 43.
- ³¹ David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1997). See in particular the opening passages.
- ³² Ibid., 31.
- ³³ Lane, "Voice to Place," 56.
- ³⁴ Abram, *Spell of the Sensuous*, 3.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 3, 35.
- ³⁶ Dolores La Chappelle, *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex: Rapture of the Deep* (Colorado: Finn Hill Arts, 1988), 107-108.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 118.
- ³⁹ Christopher Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 1.
- ⁴⁰ Lane, "Voice to Place," 68.
- ⁴¹ La Chappelle, *Sacred Land*, 108.
- ⁴² Abram, *Spell of the Sensuous*, 47.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 53.
- ⁴⁴ Lane, "Voice to Place," 71.
- ⁴⁵ For Husserl, see "Logical Investigations," c. 1900; and "Ideas," 1913. For Heidegger, see "Being and Time," 1927; and "The Basic Problems of Phenomenology," 1927. For Sartre, see "Being and Nothingness," 1943; and for Merleau-Ponty, see "Phenomenology of Perception," 1945.
- ⁴⁶ Abram, *Spell of the Sensuous*, 34.
- ⁴⁷ David W. Smith, "Phenomenology," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (Summer 2009), ed., Edward N. Zalta Available: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>, 10.
- ⁴⁸ For an explanation of chronotopes, see Chapter 6 of this dissertation. Very briefly, a chronotope represents a "package" of space / time – seeing the two as inseparable. Each event takes place in a particular time and a particular place with a particular function; to understand the function of an event, the two dimensions must be understood as a single unit. This term is most often associated with the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin.
- ⁴⁹ Paul Ricoeur, "Phenomenology and Hermeneutics," *Nous* 9, no. 1 (1975): 85.
- ⁵⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 269.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 254 and 269.
- ⁵² Ibid., 251.
- ⁵³ Ricoeur, "Phenomenology," 85.
- ⁵⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 250.
- ⁵⁵ Bjørn Ramberg and Kristin Gjesdal, "Hermeneutics," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2009), ed., Edward N. Zalta. Available: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/hermeneutics>.
- ⁵⁶ Alan Drengson, "Communication Ecology of Arne Naess," *The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy* 26, no. 2 (2010): 79.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 80.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 81.
- ⁵⁹ Of course this is not to say that miscommunication will not still occur. It is more of a suggestion to widen the view, as it were, to locate communication in place.
- ⁶⁰ Ramberg and Gjesdal, "Hermeneutics," online.

- ⁶¹ According to Ramberg and Gjesdal, this is a distinction that dates back to the Platonic dialogues. It is easy to see that a similar sort of distinction survives to this day, upheld by Cartesian-inspired dualistic interpretations of mind and body. Gadamer, on the other hand, in his introduction to Jean Grondin's *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, dates the term to Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*. In either case, hermeneutics has a long history within the philosophic tradition.
- ⁶² Esbjorn-Hargens and Zimmerman, *Integral Ecology*, 252.
- ⁶³ David E. Linge, trans. and ed, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), xi.
- ⁶⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Foreword", in Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), xi.
- ⁶⁵ Abram, *Spell of the Sensuous*, 162.
- ⁶⁶ See, for example, *ibid.*, 172-176.
- ⁶⁷ Esbjorn-Hargens and Zimmerman, *Integral Ecology*, 255.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 250.
- ⁶⁹ These changes and discoveries are discussed in depth in Chapter 8.
- ⁷⁰ Reflection is introspection after the action – for example, a person might take the lead in conducting a ceremony at the henge, something that involves the community as a whole. Afterwards, that person will reflect upon how the ceremony went – what worked, what could be improved, how the participants reacted, and what influence the leader had on those reactions. Reflection, then, is done with the intention of improvement in a similar situation the next time round. Reflexion can be thought of as "reflection in the moment"; that is, it is more about understanding the influence of the actions while the actions are happening, and using the insights gained from reflection to improve the situation. This then leads again to post-action reflection. Reflection and reflexion taken together are ways of continuously changing (and hopefully improving). Both involve questioning assumptions, attitudes and beliefs that might affect the actions being taken, whether those involve leading, teaching, researching or writing.
- ⁷¹ Alastair McIntosh explains the difference between panentheism and pantheism in *Rekindling Community: Connecting People, Environment and Spirituality* (Bristol: Green Books, 2008), 46: "Panentheism understands the divine as being both immanent and transcendent, thus 'God in nature,' yet not limited to it. But pantheism, at least in its more simplistic representations, sees the divine as entirely immanent (thus more restrictive)."
- ⁷² Jenny Blain and Robert Wallace, *Sacred Sites, Contested Rites/Rights*, (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2007), xiv.
- ⁷³ Tim Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape." *World Archaeology* 25, no. 2 (October 1993): 153.
- ⁷⁴ Robert J. Wallis and Jenny Blain, "Sites, Sacredness, and Stories: Interactions of Archaeology and Contemporary Paganism," *Folklore* 114 (2003): 311.
- ⁷⁵ Larry Shinn, *Two Sacred Worlds: Experience and Structure in the World's Religions*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977), Chapter 5, especially 92-96.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.
- ⁷⁷ Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 123.
- ⁷⁸ Margaret Eyre, "Folk-Lore of the Wye Valley," *Folklore* 16, no. 2 (June 1905): 162-179.
- ⁷⁹ M. Alan Kazlev, "Redefining Integral," 2005, Integral World website: <http://www.integralworld.net/kazlev13.html>
- ⁸⁰ Thomas J. McFarlane, "A Critical Look at Ken Wilber's Four Quadrant Model," *Sangha*, January 2001. Published on Integral Science website with addendums, August 2007: <http://www.integralscience.org/wilber.html>.
- ⁸¹ Gus diZerega, "Nature Religion and the Modern World: The Returning Relevance of Pagan Spirituality," *Sacred Cosmos: Journal of Liberal Religious Paganism* 1, no. 1, (2000): 4.
- ⁸² For a further assessment of the importance of acknowledging the deeper connections to place, see Chapter 4.
- ⁸³ Ken Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1995), 17. In this same section, Wilber himself notes the etymology of "hierarchy", with *hiero* meaning sacred and *arch* denoting governance or rule.
- ⁸⁴ Michael Zimmerman, "Ken Wilber's Critique of Ecological Spirituality." Available online: <http://www.integralworld.net/zimmerman3.html>.
- ⁸⁵ This is also discussed in the Prologue to this dissertation. One excellent explanation of hierarchical dualisms can be found in Karen Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What is it and Why it Matters* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), Chapter 3.

Chapter 2: Perspectives on History

Philosophies of History – The Enlightenment – The Romantics – Modern Views

*Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow*

T.S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men"

To come to an understanding of the present state of things it is often most helpful to understand the past, to trace the paths that lead to the current position. This is what we most commonly call history. In this chapter, I consider the ways in which history is told and taught in contemporary Western societies. This is important to this dissertation as I believe that it is necessary to understand “how” specific versions of the past come to be accepted; that is, what influences the decision to include and emphasize certain events, and to privilege certain tellings of those events, and, conversely, not to include other events or versions of events. History, and the way it is told, influences our perception of the world – in other words, our worldviews, both at the individual and the cultural level.

There are, broadly speaking, two main schools of thought in the development of the philosophy of history; that of the Enlightenment philosophers, and that of the Counter-Enlightenment, or Romantic philosophers. For both of these, I present several of the main proponents and explain how their conception of “how to tell (his)stories” has influenced the way history has (historically) been told. I also include a summary of some more current theories in the philosophy of history, as these may offer a new way to consider the past, and what may (as well as what may not) be learned from it.

History, it seems, is a far from straightforward affair. It is fraught with conjecture, inaccurate memory, and arbitrary interpretation based on personal, political, and cultural

biases. The past cannot be recreated in any real sense; it is represented by documents and artifacts that may in themselves be flawed and are almost invariably fragmented – often what is left out may turn out to have been as significant as what is included. For the most part, our understanding of the past depends on our knowledge and interpretation of historical evidence and events, and how these things are interpreted depends on the worldview through which they are seen. As worldviews shift, the importance placed on certain events in history changes; as the understanding of history changes, worldviews shift. Every story and event is open to multiple interpretations, and it is the job of the historian not only to discern what may or may not have actually happened (there are both true and untrue stories), but also what is and is not worth retelling. In most cases, it has been the side with the greatest cultural influence whose story is seen as the most credible and instructive – or at least, it is the one most often repeated. But what of the other stories, and the other sides, the other voices in those stories?

In the case of sacred places, this is particularly important. Which stories are remembered and which ones lie buried in the past, waiting to be rediscovered or recreated? Stories, after all, are key elements in coming to an understanding of the place and its significance. They embody the history of the place. While metaphysical matters⁸⁶ have always been part of the human experience, in recent times the stories that speak to that part of ourselves have tended to be discounted, while more credence is given to scientific explanations of humanity's place in the universe. Thus the stories that seek to explain the past from a less analytic standpoint are relegated to the dusty back shelves of the storeroom while the shiny new stories of science are brought to the front of the shop.

We need to understand the consequences of past actions – not only what has been gained and who has benefited, but also what has been lost, who has been ignored or injured, slighted or silenced by choices made not only in the initial acting but also in the retelling. In the current dominant western cultural paradigm,⁸⁷ it is often the voices that have led to a distancing from Earth as home place that have, over the last 400 or so years, been heard above all others. Meanwhile, the voices that honour Earth have been reduced to whispers on the sidelines. How has this come to pass? In order to answer that, it might help to understand how history is written.

This chapter will address the ways in which the voices of the western intellectual tradition have been heard, what kinds of stories have been told, and how this particular way of understanding the past has come to dominate both our mindscapes and our landscapes. This begins with an overview of what history might actually *be*. This involves a discussion of the philosophies of history attributed to several important 18th and 19th century scholars (Kant, Hegel, Marx, Vico, and Herder); this will be followed by a discussion of the current understanding of history based upon the Enlightenment and Romantic traditions that these scholars represent, and upon which current understandings of history have been built. I will also look at some more recent philosophies of history, in particular, the views of Nietzsche, Spengler and Ankersmit. By gaining some insight into how history is (re)presented, an understanding can be gained of why some histories are *not* presented – how it became accepted that the voices less heard are in fact not worth listening to, and how to regain some of those stories and therefore the knowledge of ourselves that may be contained in those histories.

History: a history

Marx is said to have said, “History is the lie told by those in power.” Feminists and other marginalized groups often use the phrase that “History is written by the victors”. These seem simple enough statements on the surface of it. But what lies beneath that surface? What other privileges do power and victory bring? The victors also (re)write other things: they inscribe their own views and stories on the landscape, write laws, dictate moralities, set paradigms and build worldviews in the places where victories, and power, have been claimed. Victory (and taking power) allows the silencing of other voices and histories and ways of being. The very wording of the statement “history is written by the victors” also relays something quite important: if there were “victors,” there had to be a conflict in which victory was sought, and an adversary to be conquered. Describing one side as victorious reinforces the idea that conflict is the way to gain a place in history, and that victory confers the power (and the right) to erase or re-write the stories and culture of those whom have been conquered. As Arthur Koestler wrote, “Woe unto the defeated, whom history treads into the dust.”⁸⁸

It’s a funny old thing, history. Over the course of many centuries, the approach to history has changed; it has been seen at various times as mystic art, narrative, science, and social inquiry. Likewise, the purpose of history also changes; it can be seen as a path to knowledge, a clue to the ways of the divine, or as instructive in the ways of the ancestors. It can be thought of as living, dynamic, continuously evolving and unfolding, open to interpretation and imagination, or it can be seen as something that is static, that is only about verifiable facts, based upon a scientific method of inquiry. Differences in one’s starting assumptions influence the way in which history is portrayed as well as the purposes for which it is used.

But first, there is one matter which must be understood above all else: regardless of how we think about history, or who does the writing, one thing is absolutely certain: *history is created by people, for people*. Furthermore, each writer and each reader will inevitably layer their own imagination and interpretation upon what is already an interpretation of the past. It is also vitally important to remember that there is always more than one story in any given history; the version that gains the most credence depends on who is doing the telling.

There are many ways in which to think about history. Among the most influential philosophies of history are those of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Vico, and Herder. In general terms, these can be assigned to one of two major traditions that emerged and have remained dominant in the western intellectual tradition since the 18th century: the first three to the Enlightenment (Platonic / deductive) tradition and the latter two to the Romantic (Counter Enlightenment / Aristotelian / inductive) tradition.⁸⁹

Most historians agree that history as a specific and mainstream intellectual discipline began in the mid-18th century, during the height of the Enlightenment, when Voltaire first coined the term “philosophy of history.”⁹⁰ Prior to that, history (as a type of narrative) was either seen as unimportant, in that it did not have any relevance to the past or the future, or it was seen as something not *meant* to be understood; it would unfold in accordance with a divine plan, not according to human laws or ideals, which would have no effect whatsoever on the final outcome. A third view was that the very idea of history was useless as there was no way of knowing whether the stories were true, or merely the invention of the teller’s imagination – history in this analysis was mythical and vague; entertaining perhaps, but of no import beyond that.⁹¹

Nowadays, however, history is seen as something worth thinking about, although the reasons for this vary widely. R.G. Collingwood points out at the start of his *The Idea of History* that there are at least four differing academic stances on what history may be, or may be used for. It can be a sort of exercise in critical thinking, in which the historian seeks to differentiate between truth and fiction in historical accounts; it might be a way of thinking about the world as a whole and the part history plays in our conception of it; or it might be about discovering a set of universal and uniform laws and truths that govern the course of humanity through the centuries. Lastly, Collingwood suggests, the purpose of history may be that it “teaches us what man has done and thus what man is.”⁹²

Isaiah Berlin writes that, at least according to Voltaire, “the task of the historian... is to recount the achievements”⁹³ of humans. Edward Carr’s opinion is that historians ought to be more honest, and to recount both achievements and those abysmal failures that we would, perhaps, rather forget. He acknowledges the difficulty of this task, but adds that he “look(s) forward to a time when historians... will regain their courage for that task.”⁹⁴ More recently, Richard Tarnas, in *Cosmos and Psyche*, suggests that perhaps that courage has been regained as he discusses two seemingly oppositional views of history - that of history as a reminder of progress, and that of history as a tale of humanity’s fall.⁹⁵

Kant, Hegel, and Marx, while their political philosophies vary widely, were nevertheless in broad agreement with the main tenets of the Enlightenment, particularly as regards the progressive development of humanity. They held that a systematic approach to history would show that there are patterns of cultural development that can be traced in all cultures and all times, since, in the end, all humans are essentially similar

in motivation and outlook. Vico and Herder disagreed with the idea that universal laws apply to human nature and that these are discoverable by the scientific method. Their philosophies of history are often seen as the beginnings of the hermeneutic tradition, later followed by Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, and Foucault. Herder is also generally acknowledged to have been a major influence in the work of Nietzsche and Mill.⁹⁶

Some Enlightenment philosophies of history

This section begins with the Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant. Best known for his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant developed philosophical treatises on many subjects, including history. It seems likely that Collingwood had Kant in mind when writing about the third of his academic traditions, as Kant's philosophy of history is based firmly on the premise that "human actions are governed by universal laws" that work in unison with human rationality to govern right moral actions. Through history, it may be possible to discover what those universal laws are.⁹⁷ Kant was a great supporter of the Enlightenment ideals of individual autonomy and free will.⁹⁸ In his "Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View" (1784),⁹⁹ he sets forth nine propositions with the aim of proving that one can in fact make sense of the "pageant of history" if one views it as a whole, rather than pulling out individual historical acts and presenting those as "history".

Kant also believed that human history is a history of progress, writing that as political institutions rise and fall, each "leaves a germ of growing enlightenment behind, which... acts as a preparation for a subsequent higher stage of progress and improvement."¹⁰⁰ In short, it could be said that Kant saw history as being more than the sum of its parts – as does systems theory, discussed in the previous chapter. Individual

actions, or inactions, when added together, create a more telling picture of the overall changes over time. In his essay “Towards Perpetual Peace” (1795), Kant’s idea of history as progress is “tied to his view of international relations” in that if history is progress towards the ideal human condition, this must include peace between nations.¹⁰¹

This idea of history as a progression towards an ideal state (both in individuals and in governance) was taken up by Georg Hegel. He conceptualized history as divided into three stages, culminating in “the harmonious reconciliation of political principles and... private freedom.” History, in fact, was “the expression of the search of the finite spirit for freedom.”¹⁰² While agreeing with Kant that the right telling of history is a history of progress, Hegel more closely personifies Collingwood’s second academic tradition (history as a way of thinking about the world as a whole and the part history plays in our conception of it). His philosophy of history is contained in his political treatise, “Philosophy of Right” (1821) and “Lectures on the Philosophy of History,” circa 1825-1826.¹⁰³ Hegel conceptualized three stages of history that all lead towards the development of the “objective spirit.” For Hegel, “Spirit” represents the totality of human life and activity, and thus unites the universal and the individual to create a state of freedom.¹⁰⁴ If this is true, then by studying history, one can conceptualize what is to come; it offers up signs that western civilization is moving towards perfection (a very optimistic point of view). While he asserts that there is a certain inevitability to historical processes (hinting at determinism), Hegel does not think this negates free will or personal freedom; rather, it is personal freedom that pushes us forward. For Hegel, history “was never static and was characterized by change, by perpetual novelty, and by progress towards perfectability.”¹⁰⁵ This perfection would one day be achieved in Spirit.

Karl Marx, on the other hand, is not quite so optimistic, nor is he particularly convinced about spiritual freedom. Marx was the materialist foil to Hegel's idealism. While Marx is best known for his political and politico-economic theories, his writings also contain a philosophy of history, written from an economic perspective, and citing productive forces and processes as the drivers of historical change.

Where Hegel believed that the action of Spirit was the essential core of humanity's creation of itself, Marx contends that materialism and material conditions both create and define humanity and all its cultural, social and political trappings. Therefore, if one wishes to make sense of history, the best thing to do is to study the material conditions, including the operation of ideas and agency as material forces, of any given society in any particular period in time. For Marx "history is the story of struggle between classes."¹⁰⁶ In contrast to Hegel, and in even sharper contrast to Kant, Marx's philosophy of history is centered on the idea that as forms of society rise and fall, they ultimately *impede* the development of human productivity and thus progress, or at least progress as understood in the Enlightenment.¹⁰⁷ However, Marx also influenced, and was influenced by, the Counter-Enlightenment movement, as can be seen in his ideas that alienation from the land, and from the products of one's labour, are troubling human wrongs. One of the main influences of Marx's theory of history is that, as one commentator notes, "it has done much to take the writing of history out of the realm of chronology and chronicles of courtly intrigue" and showed "the necessity of tracing each social force back to the economic and material conditions that engendered it."¹⁰⁸ History, or perhaps mainstream teachings of history in capitalist economies, have been somewhat

less than kind to Marx's theories in general – as it turned out, he was not the victor in terms of global political structures.¹⁰⁹

The three philosophers outlined above each set forth their own conception about the proper meaning and value of history, and the proper way to go about investigating it. Still, they were in agreement about two main concepts. One, that there are in fact universal laws that govern human behavior and secondly, that those laws can be uncovered through the proper, thorough, and systematic (scientific) study of history. This is part of the legacy of the Enlightenment: it had great faith in “the inevitability of progress” and “the power of human reason” and the “new physics” which championed the use of scientific methods for all legitimate inquiry.¹¹⁰ Duncan Taylor summarizes this in “Disagreeing on The Basics”, writing that the Enlightenment tradition created “a world in which... values, instincts, emotions and all that could not be measured or clearly scrutinized under the light of reason were to be regarded as of secondary importance.”¹¹¹ Hegel, perhaps, was less inclined to think in this way than were Kant and Marx, but nevertheless, his system of philosophy, filled with explicit hierarchies and systems, follows the Enlightenment pattern of systematicity.

The Romantic movement

It was this jettisoning of the value of emotion, as well as the strict systematicity that the Romantics, or Counter Enlightenment, railed against. Romanticism was never as strong as the Enlightenment (nor, in line with the victors writing history, is it as well-documented or discussed). As Franklin Baumer writes, “the Romantic world is commonly represented as a counter-movement to the Enlightenment... (but) in truth, (it) was as much a revolution as a counter-revolution.”¹¹² The Romantic era had perhaps

more influence in the sphere of literature than in philosophy, including such writers as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Lord Byron, and both Mary Shelley and Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Nevertheless, there were a number of influential philosophers in the Romantic movement, including Rousseau, Goethe, Kierkegaard, and Herder. Here I shall discuss one of Kant's predecessors, Giambattista Vico (who is said to have heavily influenced Hegel and Herder),¹¹³ as well as Kant's contemporary, and one time student, Johann Herder. The Romantic tradition differs from the Enlightenment in a number of significant ways. As Richard Tarnas explains, "Whereas the Enlightenment's high valuation of man rested on his unequaled rational intellect and its power to comprehend and exploit the laws of nature, the Romantic rather valued man for his imaginative and spiritual aspirations, his emotional depths, his artistic creativity and the powers of individual self-expression and self-creation."¹¹⁴

Before discussing Vico's philosophy, it should be pointed out that his writings were originally published in the first half of the 18th century. As such, some historians prefer to place Vico with the Enlightenment philosophers. The choice to place him here with the Romantics, or as part of the Counter-Enlightenment, is not without precedent,¹¹⁵ and lies with the content of his work. As Costelloe writes, Vico's work was not generally given much attention until the 19th century, and Vico described himself as a "stranger" in his own time.¹¹⁶

Vico's main contribution to the philosophy of history is his contention that there is not a progressive "history of mankind"; rather, each culture or society follows its own path, each governed by its own set of rules.¹¹⁷ This is not to say that nothing can be

learned from the histories of other societies, but that this learning ought to be *on their own terms*, rather than trying to reorganize unfamiliar cultural expressions to fit into some preconceived “boxes” or categories that are more easily accessible to the Western mind. While not believing in a single progressive history, Vico did believe that history follows a pattern based on “knowledge of human nature, since all history is made by man.” History, for Vico, had to include “an imaginative ability... to see whatever period we are studying through the eyes, not of our time and place, but of those who lived it.”¹¹⁸

In “The New Science” (1725), Vico distinguishes between what he calls “the certain” and “the true”; the former being knowledge attained via reason, whether scientific or philosophic, while the latter refers, broadly speaking, to artistic forms, such as the poetic and metaphoric use of language. It is only by combining these two approaches, Vico argues, that history and its meaning can be truly understood. If one pays attention only to reason, and abandons the poetic, one can never truly grasp the “interior” of a culture, and instead, forces it into the aforementioned boxes.¹¹⁹ It is Vico’s identification of this “sense of knowing, which is neither deductive nor inductive”¹²⁰ that is his most lasting legacy. This, it could be said, was the very beginnings of hermeneutics, relying as it does on the interpretation of texts and the nuances of language. Again, this fits into the concentric circle model and attendant methodologies: Vico sees reason and science as the “exterior,” or second and fourth circles, while the “interior” lies in the first and third circles, particularly with phenomenology and hermeneutics.

Herder is in broad agreement with Vico’s principles. His “On the Change of Taste” (1766) sets forth the thesis that “there exist radical mental differences between

different historical periods (and cultures), that people's concepts, beliefs, sensations, etc. differ in deep ways from one period (or culture) to another.”¹²¹ This set him in nearly direct opposition to Kant particularly, and the Enlightenment generally. Significantly, Herder also argued against what is considered to be historically noteworthy: the so-called great wars and military campaigns were to him the greatest failings of society, not to be celebrated as signs of “progress” but rather as the most morally abhorrent of all acts. He does not argue that these events are not historically significant; rather, he questions whether they should be upheld as signals of the “progress” of humanity, and whether other stories ought to be told as well. After all, the events selected for recollection most often tend to take on the greatest significance; Herder simply wondered whether we also ought to listen to the voices less heard, and not assume that only Western societies had attained “progress.” Herder, like Vico, emphasized that to understand the history of any culture, it is better to focus on their literature, poetry and art; this, he said, “exposes them at their moral best”, whereas to focus on political and military history is “unedifying and elite-focussed.”¹²² Herder’s emphasis is on interpretation, rather than recounting.

For this reason, the Romantic approach to history is highly significant to this dissertation. That it has been less prominent in the past is not, in my opinion, sufficient reason to continue to downplay its importance. This approach allows a close examination of the meaning of those texts that have been set aside in the Enlightenment-led preference for those things that can be proven in a scientific way.¹²³ Tarnas notes that “Vico and Herder took seriously modes of cognition such as the mythological that had informed the consciousness of other eras, and believed that the historian’s task was to feel himself into the spirit of other ages... to understand from within by means of the sympathetic

imagination.”¹²⁴ Clearly Vico, Herder, and other Counter Enlightenment thinkers and their successors understood that value doesn’t always have to be numerical or scientific; meaning and worth can also be something felt, something interior to cultures and individuals.

Some modern theories of history

The theories of Vico and Herder are echoed in some more modern approaches to history. Herder’s idea of the rise and fall of cultures as cyclical is seen in the work of Spengler, while the idea of paying attention to narrative is particularly strong in the writings of Frank Ankersmit, who shall be discussed a little further on.

First, however, I turn to Nietzsche and his “On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History For Life” (1874). As the title suggests, Nietzsche is not entirely convinced, at least in this work, that we need history at all – at least not if we wish to be happy. Nietzsche laments that humans have the faculty of memory in the first place, but since we do, he suggests that we need to figure out both what we choose to remember, and what we choose to forget. Our very ability to survive and thrive, he says, “depends... on there being a line which distinguishes what is clear and in full view from the dark and unilluminable; it depends on one’s being able to forget at the right time as well as to remember at the right time.”¹²⁵ Nietzsche also has problems with the ambiguity of historical knowledge, or rather, with the necessity of viewing history through the lens of the historians’ own situation. Historians, he writes, “write in the naïve belief that just their age is right in all its popular opinions and that to write in accordance with the times comes to same thing as being just,”¹²⁶ thus bringing to the fore the proposals of Vico and

Herder, as well as Edward Carr, that history requires an act of imagination, and at the same time backs up the idea that history is written from the victor's point of view.

But Nietzsche also sees the past as providing meaning “in the sense that it has a kind of ‘presence’ in us.”¹²⁷ John Richardson summarizes Nietzsche's problem with history as being twofold: “1. That the past is far too important to ignore (being important in ways and for reasons we don't suspect), 2. But that attention to the past seems to be harmful to us. So, it seems, we are damned whether we do or don't pay attention to it.”¹²⁸ So while Nietzsche's observations regarding the validity of history are both interesting and relevant, there is the risk, if one is not careful, of falling into a deep abyss of apathy or despair about the impossibility of obtaining accurate historical information, or becoming mired in regret.

This pessimism about history is also found in the work of Oswald Spengler. In 1918 Spengler published the highly controversial *Decline of the West*, in which he outlines patterns of the rise and fall of civilizations. In his view, the decline of current western civilization is inevitable – it is a sort of organic process, much as trees, for example, grow, flourish, die, and return to Earth. Spengler “rejected out of hand the straight-line progression” of history which remains prevalent to this day. Instead, he theorized that each culture, independent of others, goes through cycles of growth, decline, and eventually death.¹²⁹ This echoes again the ideas of Vico and Herder, although Spengler's tone is more deeply pessimistic.

The later twentieth century saw the continued emergence and expansion of the ideas of the Romantics, and of the hermeneutic interpretation of history in the writings of Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, and Foucault. In this approach to history, the reader is

invited to “engage in an active construction of the meanings and intentions of the actors from their point of view”¹³⁰ – that is, to give intellectual consideration to the chronotope (the place and time) in which both historical actor and modern reader are operating and to think about the meaning of things both literally and symbolically. This is more or less also what Nietzsche was getting at, although he did seem to think it was an impossible task. In some ways, this is Collingwood’s fourth (and own) approach, as he encouraged envisioning history from within the minds of the enactors and to try to understand what drives human actions.

One other modern historian, Frank Ankersmit, suggests that perhaps the better way to approach history is through narrativism. Ewa Domanska explains what this means in her paper on Ankersmit’s theories. The narrativist approach to history “studies historical writing... (and) proposes an aesthetic approach to historiography.” It deals with the relationship between texts and the problems of memory. It differs from the critical philosophy of history in that “critical philosophy deals with description and explanation; narrativist philosophy focuses on interpretation.”¹³¹ Ankersmit brings attention to the same sorts of problems that have been mentioned above: that we cannot recreate the past, nor can we fully enter into the mind of past actors. The best we can do is to use our imaginations and intellect to interpret the past while acknowledging these limitations. In his “Six Theses on Narrativist Philosophy of History”, he notes that “there ordinarily is a difference between the historian’s perspective and that of the historical agent.”¹³² Furthermore, narrativism “recognizes that a historical interpretation *projects* a structure onto the past and does not *discover* it as if this structure existed in the past itself.”¹³³ In this, narrativism shares some common ground with hermeneutics –and still always forces

the acknowledgement that however records of the past are interpreted, there will always be uncertainty as to whether these interpretations are correct. Perhaps the best to hope for is to look at the stories and consider whether these stories make sense to us now, in our current situation, and whether they provide any kind of wisdom which can be used to move towards a more complete understanding of ourselves –as individuals, as communities, and in relation to all the ways of being that have existed on this planet.

Hearing voices

It can be seen then, that the study of history is not so straightforward. There are many different approaches, each with its own merits, problems, and purpose, each held within a different paradigm or perspective. There are also histories contained within various disciplines. For example, Mircea Eliade is often referred to as a historian of religion, Richard Tarnas could be thought of as a historian of ideas, and Alastair McIntosh provides a history of Hebridean cultural development in his work.¹³⁴ The image of a many-windowed room in a tower comes to mind: each of the windows gives a different, yet incomplete view of the room. How one interprets the function of the room will largely depend upon which window one looks through.

It was noted earlier that the most dominant histories are written by the victors and those in power. Therefore there are always other sides to the stories that are told about the past. But what happens to that other version once the victors' story has been impressed upon us? Given that there is an unheard chorus of voices, a multiplicity of stories, is it ever possible to know the truth about the past? Is it possible that more than one truth can emerge – and that those truths can exist comfortably side by side?

The answer to that depends on the approach to history: if one takes an absolutist approach, then the expected result will be that there is a single truth. This is the position that many Enlightenment philosophers preferred. If, however, one is willing to acknowledge that different perspectives yield different but equally valid results, then it is more likely that multiple truths can be found to describe or relate a single event. This is the position that the Romanticists and the hermeneutical historians encourage. But even here, it is difficult to figure out what any historical account has included, and what has been omitted, and why. Not only that, but a decision has to be made about which events to study in the first place.

Edward Said, in his 2003 introduction to *Orientalism*, writes that the “sediments of history... include innumerable histories (from) a dizzying variety of peoples, languages, experiences and cultures,” which are “swept aside or ignored”¹³⁵ by those who wish to make history fit their own ends. And after all, as noted above, one thing is clear about history: it is written by people for other people to read, and each individual, whether reading or writing history, will have their own agendas, prejudices and paradigms, and they relate to history from within a specific chronotope. History, as Carr writes, “consists essentially in seeing the past through the eyes of the present.”¹³⁶ History as a subject of inquiry exists only inasmuch as a narrative is created from past events. And historical narratives, according to Ankersmit, “are only contingently stories with a beginning, a middle and an end.”¹³⁷ Carr and Collingwood agree that history always comes as an act of reconstituted thought – the historian is making an (educated) guess, an act of imagination, when interpreting actions, documents or other evidence from the past.

¹³⁸ It is important to keep in mind that in all cases, historical facts, whatever they may be, are filtered through the actions and reactions of the historian.

Appleby et al make a similar point in *Telling the Truth About History*. Any claims about historical truth or knowledge can be challenged. “Every history”, they write, “is someone’s history, told by that someone from their partial point of view.”¹³⁹ The challenge lies in finding and acknowledging all voices of all players while searching out that essential core of truth (if there is one); the “facts” of what happened, when, and where, and why, and what relationship exists between the actions and the reasons for the actions. One way to do this, perhaps, is to acknowledge one’s own cultural backdrop, worldview, proclivities, penchants, and prejudices. Carr notes that the conception of what history might be “consciously or unconsciously reflects our own position in time.”¹⁴⁰ Of course, acknowledging this does not in itself guarantee truth or knowledge or wisdom, but at least it offers a position from which to begin, and acknowledges that it may not be the whole picture. It may be a place in which to discover an awareness that, in the words of Said, just as history is written, “it can also be unmade and rewritten,”¹⁴¹ and each time omissions and additions will be made.

This is, it seems, an example of Collingwood’s first way of studying history, as an exercise in critical thinking, in sifting through the stories and accounts to figure out what truths, whether partial or whole, are relevant. As Ankersmit noticed, it is much like being a detective trying to solve a case,¹⁴² and interviewing various witnesses who might not all give the same version of events. But one can, and inevitably will, still *choose* which versions of events to pay attention to. And if one’s intellectual and cultural ancestry is that of the victors in any given scenario, then it is likely that the victors’ stories will

remain largely unchallenged, if only because those are the stories for which there will exist the most proof – or, perhaps, the proof to which the most attention is paid. Carr points out that “history is, by and large, a record of what people did, not of what they failed to do; to this extent it is inevitably a success story.”¹⁴³ Remember too, Voltaire’s dictum that history is to be the record of mankind’s great achievements, and the belief of Kant and Hegel that human history is also ultimately a history of progress.

How the West was won over

And so the question of how to find those whispered, less heard truths remains unanswered. If the Enlightenment approach to history as a history only of a particular kind of progress continues to hold sway, there is little chance of hearing those voices. For better or worse, this standpoint was most influential in the current western intellectual paradigm. If the use of reason alone is not sufficient, then perhaps a different way of studying history is needed – a way that can produce infallible results and undeniable truth. And what better way to discover objective truths and laws than to use the scientific method? During the Enlightenment, with the enthusiastic support of Voltaire, Kant, and others, this became an increasingly popular way to delve into the mysterious past, to find an absolute history, regardless of the “type” of history sought. However, there is one major flaw in this plan: the scientific method relies on an absolute separation between subject and object. There is an observer and observed, and the two are meant to be completely detached so as to allow said observer to reach objective conclusions.¹⁴⁴

But can any person be completely detached from history? History is what has shaped us, has led us to where we are; even in times of great paradigm shifts such as occurred during the Enlightenment, what occurred in the past still shaped their present.

We are all actors in creating history as we go along. It is rather like asking a person to objectively assess a family member – there is too much attachment to allow for much objectivity. This is equally true when one is trying to objectively study one’s own cultural lineage: one’s descendants perhaps cannot be expected to objectively assess or dissect the actions of their ancestors, at least not if they believe those actions were justified and that the stories presented about them are true. This harkens back to Said’s observation that historians routinely sweep aside some facts while gathering up others; and Carr writes that this selectivity makes the idea of an objective core of historical facts “a preposterous fallacy.”¹⁴⁵ The very act of deciding which facts about the past become relevant or significant in the empirical evaluation is subjective. Daniel Little addresses this objection by pointing out that while history can of course be done badly, “there is no inherent epistemic barrier” that prevents at least an acceptable level of objectivity. He adds that “objectivity in pursuit of truth is itself a value, and one that can be followed.”¹⁴⁶

Nevertheless, and (subjectively) sweeping such objections aside, it can be seen that there was in the Enlightenment years a shift towards history based on the more objective scientific method – a method that would surely show the immutable natural laws governing human society and development; laws, these historians asserted, that would hold true for all places, all times and all cultures.¹⁴⁷ One commonly held reason for this shift in the understanding of history is that the Enlightenment was also about a paradigm shift from religiosity to secularism. Faith in the infallibility of the religious institutions was slowly fading. With their faith shaken, Europeans sought a new story and locus of faith; the rise of the scientific method at around the same time provided an alternative. Clearly there are many social and cultural factors that make this shift far more

complex, such as the intersection of the move from Renaissance to Enlightenment era thinking and the continuing aftershocks of the earth-quaking Reformation.

Two examples of this assertion come from Alan Drengson, in his book *Wild Way Home*, and from Appleby et al. In both cases, the authors say that the shift from the pre-Enlightenment view of the world to the post-Enlightenment view of the world can be seen largely as a transition from a “religious” to a “scientific” viewpoint. Both also write that one way in which this transition was facilitated is the rules of religiosity were simply transferred, as it were, to science. Whereas once religion had been the sole arbiter of good and bad, truth and non-truth, now science took on that role. The transfer of faith from religion to science did not happen overnight, but once terminal velocity, as it were, was gained, there was no turning back.¹⁴⁸ Carr too, notes that the character of history changed from religious to secular during the Enlightenment, and adds that gains made in personal autonomy were an important factor in the move away from religiosity and towards an individuality that made the objectivity of science a pleasing prospect.¹⁴⁹

However, as the Romantic thinkers, and as Collingwood, Carr, Berlin, Ankersmit, Appleby et al, Drengson, and others have all shown, there are other ways to think about history. History can be about trying out different interpretations, thinking in different ways, about not making the same mistakes twice. Even if, as Carr said, historians can only write about what has been done, rather than what has not been done, this can still allow attention to be given to the mistakes, as well as to the things done right along the way. Some consideration can be given to how things might have been done differently, and how this might be changed in the future.

Tarnas notes that the accomplishments of humanity in the Enlightenment and beyond have come to be regarded as “a long heroic journey,” leading out of the bondage of the Dark Ages into the freedom of the modern world, and that such progress must be upheld and continued. This is certainly what Kant and Hegel believed. And to be sure, there are many things that have improved – for the western world at any rate. It is a commonly held belief that in order to improve *more*, society ought to continue along the same trajectory. As Tarnas points out, it has become the only way we really know: “it is so familiar to us, so close to our perceptions, that in many ways, it has become our common sense, the form and foundation of our self-image.” But at the same time, he notes that there is another side to this story, a shadow that haunts. While embracing science, spirituality has been neglected. Hegel’s philosophy of history gently reminded us of the importance of spirit; Marx shook his head and pointed to materialism, and soon the scientific viewpoint gained strength again. Vico and Herder saw the problems and offered an alternative, but by and large, the western world has inherited the dictums of the Enlightenment. In the process, says Tarnas, we have lost “an instinctive knowledge of the profound sacred unity and interconnectedness of the world.”¹⁵⁰ We have traded knowledge of our souls for the knowledge of science; traded interconnectedness for individual autonomy. But, adds Tarnas, it can also be seen that both perspectives are not only equally “true”, but are both parts of the same story.

Summary and final thoughts

There are many different approaches to the study of history, and many different ways to conduct historical research. According to many Enlightenment philosophers, only those things that can be objectively proven to be part of the march of progress should be

recorded in the annals of history. However, the Romantic and Counter-Enlightenment philosophers suggested that the *meaning* of narratives and events are a better guide to the human story. They argued that not all cultures and societies fit nicely into the western-inspired categories of human development, nor are there any universal laws governing all of humanity and our actions.

Indeed, many of the writers mentioned in this chapter have questioned the Enlightenment assumption that history is a suitable subject for the scientific method, or whether historians would be better off using a more philosophical line of inquiry. After all, as Collingwood writes, scientific method uses observation and repeated experimentation to reach its conclusions, and since the past cannot be either observed or repeated, the scientific method might not really apply.¹⁵¹ There needs to be a balance – instead of seeing each side as opposite, it is more helpful to see them as parts of each other, as Tarnas does, like the yin and yang. Both approaches have merit; science and spirit both have value not only in aiding the understanding history, but in showing the way forward to a more complete and balanced future.

History is by its very nature a subjective venture. Nietzsche argued that, and figured we would be better off living ahistorically, although he also acknowledges that would have its own set of problems. Edward Carr saw that, and suggested that if you cannot accept it, you are better off to give history up as a bad job, and take up stamp-collecting instead. Richard Tarnas acknowledged that, but suggests that skepticism is the result of the modern self-reflexive mind and can be overcome.¹⁵²

In any case, there seems to be a growing realization that, given that humans are odd little creatures and that it is difficult to agree upon the most significant parts of the

past, or what will happen next, there are really no immutable laws of cultural progressions or of history. We can only understand cultures and histories other than those that we claim as our own, when we approach them on their terms. Moreover, there is never just one, true history of anything. As this is increasingly understood, the dominant voice begins to falter; the whispering of the “other” voices can now be heard in the background. Perhaps it is time to start paying more attention to them.

This last point is why thinking about the way that history is presented and represented is important to this dissertation. Over the years, the dominant culture of the Western tradition has discounted the voices that held that certain places in the world are sacred and that there is anything to be gained in acknowledging the voices that dwell within them. We can rediscover those voices in the texts and stories and narratives that have lived on through generations. But as long as we increasingly count on science, technology and human ingenuity to get us out of our present ecological predicaments, we will increasingly ignore the other side of our selves: the side that listens to Earth, that understands that the connections between ourselves and other ways of being on this planet are deeper and stronger than our connections to technology. Spirit and human spirituality have been part of history since the very beginnings of time; it’s just that we have stopped hearing, valuing and validating these stories. The stones of Stonehenge, the ancient trees of Puzzlewood, the rivers and meadows and forests and mountains, all have their stories to tell. They are simply waiting for us to be ready to hear them.

The histories that are privileged become part of our worldviews. In the next chapter, I will take a more in-depth look at paradigms and worldviews, and some of the other

factors that influence their formation. I will show how the stories we tell, as well as the way that we tell them, provide the foundations upon which the present is built.

Endnotes

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- ⁸⁶ For an excellent explanation of the term metaphysics, see Alastair McIntosh, *Rekindling Community: Connecting People, Environment and Spirituality* (Bristol: 2008, Green Books), 34. He explains that “meta = beyond, transformed” and “physica = matter.” Taken together, then, metaphysics is “concerned with what underlies the outer surface of the material world. It means reaching behind the ordinary, using both concept and metaphor to move beyond normal ways of seeing and being, to discover inner layers of truth that will transform our perceptions and experience of reality.”
- ⁸⁷ See Chapter 3 for an in-depth discussion of worldviews and paradigms.
- ⁸⁸ Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon* (New York: Bantam, 1968). Originally published 1941.
- ⁸⁹ For a discussion on the ways in which the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, or Romantic movement influenced each other, see Franklin L. Baumer, *Modern European Thought* (New York: MacMillan and Company, 1977), 268-269. There are some differences of opinion as to who fits into which category, although I would not go so far as to call it “disagreement”. For example, Baumer places Kant in the Romantic tradition (Baumer, 270), whereas Rauscher places him within the Enlightenment. Daniel Little (“Philosophy of History.” *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (revised September 2012). Available from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/history>). and Fuller (B.A.G. Fuller, *A History of Philosophy, Vol. 2*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1945, 207), see Vico as an Enlightenment philosopher, yet his writings, or the greatest influence of his writing, tends to place him in the Romantic era. Little also groups Vico’s writings in with both Hegel and Herder (Little, 2012). None offer any particular justification for placing these philosophers in one tradition rather than the other; I suspect it is based mainly on the times when Kant and Vico published their treatises (1781 and 1725 respectively) rather than on the ideas contained therein.
- ⁹⁰ R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 1; Edward Carr, *What is History?* (New York: MacMillan and Company, 1961), 13. According to most sources, Voltaire first used the phrase in his “Essay of Manners” circa 1756.
- ⁹¹ Collingwood, 87 and 114; Carr, 82 and 103-104; Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current*, ed. Henry Hardy (New York: Viking Press, this ed. 1980), 84.
- ⁹² Collingwood, *Idea*, 1, 10.
- ⁹³ Berlin, *Current*, 90.
- ⁹⁴ Carr, *What is History* 151.
- ⁹⁵ Richard Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche* (New York: Plume Books, 2007), 12-13.
- ⁹⁶ See, for example, Michael Forster, “Johann Gottfried von Herder,” *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (revised September 2007). Available from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/herder/>. See also Berlin, *Current*, Chapter 1, “The Counter-Enlightenment” and Fuller, *History of Philosophy*, Chapter XIII, especially 211-212.
- ⁹⁷ For an overview of Kant’s philosophy of history, see Burleigh Taylor Wilkins, “Teleology in Kant’s Philosophy of History,” *History and Theory* 5, no. 2 (1966): 172-185. See also Fuller, *History of Philosophy*, Chapter XIV, 215-272, and Frederick Rauscher, “Kant’s Social and Political Philosophy,” *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (June 2012). Available from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-social-political/#IntRelHis>.
- ⁹⁸ Rauscher, online.
- ⁹⁹ Some sources cite this work as “An Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim.” See, for example, Amélie Oksenberg Rorty and James Schmidt, eds., *Kant’s Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim - A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- ¹⁰⁰ Wilkins, “Teleology,” 175. Wilkins uses W. Hastie’s 1891 translation of Kant’s “Idea”, found in Patrick Gardiner, ed., *Theories of History* (Glencoe, Illinois, 1959).
- ¹⁰¹ Rauscher, online.

- ¹⁰² For an overview of Hegel, see Fuller, *History of Philosophy*, Chapter XVII, 301-336. These quotes from Fuller, *History of Philosophy*, 324-325.
- ¹⁰³ See, for example, J. Sibree, transl. *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover, 1956). See also "Hegel's Philosophy of History," <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/hi/history5.htm#060>. Also Fuller, *History of Philosophy*, Chapter XVII, 301-336.
- ¹⁰⁴ Fuller, *History of Philosophy*, 328-329.
- ¹⁰⁵ Baumer, *Modern European Thought*, 299.
- ¹⁰⁶ Lewis White Beck and Robert L. Holmes, *Philosophic Inquiry* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 311.
- ¹⁰⁷ Jonathan Wolff, "Karl Marx," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (revised June 2010). Available from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/marx/>.
- ¹⁰⁸ Beck and Holmes, 312.
- ¹⁰⁹ It should be noted, however, that although "other" histories may not be accepted as mainstream, that does not mean they have not been noted and recorded. There are Marxist, socialist, feminist, Aboriginal, and other writings of history that can be found if one looks for them. For example, see Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Sterling, 2009); and Bonnie Anderson and Judith Zinnser, *A History of Their Own: Women in Europe from Prehistory to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- ¹¹⁰ Michael Rohlf, "Immanuel Kant," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2010 Edition).
- ¹¹¹ Duncan Taylor, "Disagreeing on the Basics: Environmental debates reflect competing worldviews," *Alternatives*, 18 no. 3, (1991): 29.
- ¹¹² Baumer, *Modern European Thought*, 268.
- ¹¹³ Forster, "Herder," online.
- ¹¹⁴ Richard Tamas, *The Passion of the Western Mind* (New York: Ballantyne, 1991), 367.
- ¹¹⁵ Baumer, *Modern European Thought*, 294; Timothy Costelloe, "Vico's Life and Influence," *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (revised March 2012). Available from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/vico/>. Berlin also placed Vico as a Counter-Enlightenment thinker. See Berlin, *Current*, Chapter 1, "The Counter-Enlightenment" and *ibid.*, "Vico and the Enlightenment," *Against the Current*, 120-129.
- ¹¹⁶ Costelloe, "Vico," online.
- ¹¹⁷ For an overview of Vico, see Costelloe. See also Berlin, "Vico and the Enlightenment" in *Against the Current*, 120-129.
- ¹¹⁸ Fuller, *History of Philosophy*, 207.
- ¹¹⁹ See Costelloe, "Vico," in particular.
- ¹²⁰ Berlin, *Current*, 118.
- ¹²¹ Forster, "Herder," online.
- ¹²² *Ibid.*
- ¹²³ See Chapter 1 of this dissertation for an explanation of the role hermeneutics will play in the findings here.
- ¹²⁴ Tarnas, *Passion*.
- ¹²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life," transl. Peter Preuss, 10.
- ¹²⁶ Nietzsche, "History for Life," 34.
- ¹²⁷ John Richardson attributes this to Nietzsche's "Human, All Too Human." John Richardson, "Nietzsche's Problem of the Past" in M. Dries (ed.), *Nietzsche on Time and History*, Walter de Gruyter, 2008, 88.
- ¹²⁸ Richardson, "Problem of the Past," 91.
- ¹²⁹ Baumer, *Modern European Thought*, 507.
- ¹³⁰ Little, "Philosophy of History," online.
- ¹³¹ Ewa Domanska. "Frank Ankersmit: From narrative to experience," *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 13 (2), 2009: 177.
- ¹³² Frank Ankersmit, *History and Tropology: The Rise and Fall of Metaphor* (University of California Press, 1994), 35.
- ¹³³ *Ibid.*, 36.
- ¹³⁴ For Eliade, see in particular his three-volume *History of Religious Ideas*, trans. Willard Trask (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). For Tarnas, see especially *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the ideas that have shaped our world view* (New York: Ballantyne, 1991). For McIntosh, see *Soil and Soul* (London: Aurum, 2001). See also Hayden White, *Metahistory: The historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) for ways in which historians make stories out of events.
- ¹³⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (25th anniversary edition) (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), xviii.
- ¹³⁶ Carr, *What is History*, 15.

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- ¹³⁷ Ankersmit, *History and Tropology*, 35.
- ¹³⁸ Carr, *What is History* 16. In this section, Carr also quotes Collingwood, from *The Idea of History*.
- ¹³⁹ Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: Norton, 1994), 1-11.
- ¹⁴⁰ Carr, *What is History*, 2.
- ¹⁴¹ Said, *Orientalism*, xviii.
- ¹⁴² Ankersmit, *History and Tropology*, 35.
- ¹⁴³ Carr, *What is History*, 120.
- ¹⁴⁴ The idea of objectivity is unpacked in the Prologue of this dissertation.
- ¹⁴⁵ Carr, *What is History*, 6.
- ¹⁴⁶ Little, "Philosophy of History," online.
- ¹⁴⁷ Appleby et al, *Telling the Truth*, 53.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 17-18. Also, Alan Drengson, *Wild Way Home: Spiritual Life in the 3rd Millennium* (Victoria: Lightstar, 2010), 155. There are signs now that the return is to religiosity; it can be seen in the American phenomenon of Christian fundamentalism and the belief that the only reliable history is that in the Bible; the rise of Muslim fundamentalism is another example. I still think it can be argued though, that these may be the exceptions that prove the rule; religious fundamentalism has not yet become the main paradigm of our time despite the heavy influence of American political and cultural thought worldwide.
- ¹⁴⁹ Carr on the shift from religiosity, *What is History*, 104, 107. On individual autonomy, 130.
- ¹⁵⁰ Tarnas, *Cosmos*, 12-13.
- ¹⁵¹ Collingwood, *Idea of History*, 7.
- ¹⁵² Carr, *What is History*, 9. Tarnas, *Cosmos*, 14.

Chapter 3: Worldviews

Paradigms and Worldviews - Technology – Stories

“We do not grow absolutely, chronologically. We grow sometimes in one dimension, and not in another; unevenly. We grow partially. We are relative... The past, present, and future mingle and pull us backward, forward, or fix us in the present.”

-- Anais Nin

Cultural paradigms and worldviews are those ideas and values held most deeply. They are the cornerstones of cultures and personalities. Worldviews are individual, personal sets of beliefs. They are based upon paradigms, which are ideas, values, laws, and constructions of what things (actions, modes of dress, education, etc) are or are not socially acceptable, and are held to be true throughout a particular culture or society. Paradigms are the foundations upon which worldviews are constructed. As such, paradigms and worldviews generally do not change quickly; they can take generations to evolve and develop, they need time to filter through the collective consciousness and become part of the world as it is seen, lived, and experienced.

This claim can be verified by looking at the history of thought in the Western intellectual tradition; from Socrates right on through to modernity, the paradigms, values, and the science that underpin worldviews have shifted quite a bit. More often than not, that shift comes as a gradual acceptance of some new bit of evidence (such as with Copernicus) that then gains greater and greater acceptance until it becomes a “fact of life”, something that everyone in a specific cultural and temporal milieu takes for granted. To stay with the example of Copernicus, his theory that the Earth was not in fact the centre of the then-known universe was initially greeted with shock and outrage by nearly everyone ... except for a few who could see that he had a point. Now, there are few (at least in the Western world) who would question that statement – that this has been

accepted this as true can easily be seen in the fact that we refer to our little corner of the cosmos as a “solar” system.

Clearly, worldviews do not emerge out of a vacuum. A convergence of social, economic, political, technological, and cultural factors which created the specific milieu in which Copernicus made his discoveries, yet at the time, that milieu was not one in which his discoveries could be fully appreciated. So it is in this time too: a multitude of complex and interacting factors converge to create specific and unique chronotopes (envelopes of place and time), and those in turn exert a huge influence on what changes occur in both collective and individual worldviews. While it seems unlikely (though certainly not impossible) that there will be a change as revolutionary as that unleashed by Copernicus, that does not mean that any change will be insignificant.

It is worth asking, though, how *does* change occur? As our lives continue to unfold, day to day and year to year, is change occurring subtly? Or will it be sudden, a collective cataclysmic shudder as some new revelation dawns? However it occurs, it is not really possible to know what that change will look like – even if there is any way to know beforehand. Perhaps we will come across it as upon a new vista when we turn a corner in the road and see a dazzling new landscape laid before us. Or perhaps it will first be seen from a distance, like shadowy watercoloured mountains on a dusty horizon. Perhaps it will be possible to learn new things by rediscovering ancient stories, stories from a time of enchanted nature, when ensoulment of the world was part of the cosmology. But it is not possible to know whether something new will be discovered that takes our breath away (as Copernicus did), or circle back to ancient wisdom. In either case, worldviews could change in ways not yet foreseen.

There is one point on which I must disagree with much of the literature on the subject of change. Many writers, some of whom shall be encountered in the course of this dissertation, assert that the world is facing an unprecedented time of change. However, it can be seen that certainly there have previously been times of great upheaval. Consider again the changes that were wrought by Copernicus and his followers. Their *whole conception* of the world changed! No longer was humankind the central player in a cosmos created and contained by God; all of a sudden, the Sun took over as the centre of the solar system – not Earth as had previously been thought. The wrenching of the human soul that this new evidence brought about is still palpable now. Old conceptions of both science *and* religion came tumbling down. And not only that, but then in 1492, Columbus did not fall off the edge of the world, but instead came upon a continent that the European elite never even dreamed existed!

Whatever turmoil we are enmeshed in now, it is hard to believe that it will be more shattering than the changes that led to the rise of modernity.¹⁵³ It is not impossible of course, especially given the rate of ecological change. Granted, the tremendous advances in literacy and the spread of information means that certainly a greater percentage of the world can now participate more quickly in discussions regarding change than was possible during the Enlightenment. It is doubtful whether many people outside of the European literati ever came across Copernicus' theories during his time (his theories were only published posthumously to avoid his persecution). However, the concept did eventually spread throughout many societies and cultures to become part of the accepted view of things. That this spread happened slowly may be said to have

lessened its impact in a global sense, but it does not lessen the impact it had on each society in its turn.¹⁵⁴

The previous chapter focused on the interpretation of history and how that interpretation depends on the worldview through which history is considered. It was noted that history and worldviews are intertwined; as conceptions of the former changes, so too does the latter. The chapter assessed the approaches to history through the Enlightenment and Counter Enlightenment. Now I shift attention away from how history is conceived and look instead at the role that this historical understanding plays in the formation of worldviews.¹⁵⁵ This chapter begins with a note about the role that technology has played in shaping the world, and how it has thereby shaped society and affected individuals. Following this, the “idea” of a worldview will examine more closely: what it is, how it is different from a paradigm, and how these terms are defined. Next is a discussion of the importance of cosmology in the formation and acceptance of a worldview— of stories and myths and the human need to find something to believe in. The question of from whence will come a new cosmology for a new worldview is also discussed. And of course I will also discuss the role that sacred places –storied places – may have in this.

The role of technology

Scientific and technological advancements, in whatever era one cares to examine, can be seen to affect that society’s outlook on the world. Technology almost always opens new doors, provides novel ways of doing things, and makes doing some things much easier, though not necessarily more pleasant or meaningful.

In the currently dominant Western (and increasingly global) worldview, rapid advances in technology lead to an acceptance of the concept that “progress” can only be made via ever-increasing models of technology, put to use in modern industrialism and capitalism. Implicit in this is the belief that the *only* progress worth pursuing is that which is achieved through technological and economic growth. This in turn leads to the idea that the environment is a resource that can and ought to be manipulated and exploited to whatever lengths human ingenuity and technology can imagine and do. In order to sustain this system of beliefs (or worldview), Western-style capitalism and consumerism, led by technology, continues its march across the globe, destroying centuries-old cultures and lifestyles, knocking aside indigenous people and their ways, imposing instead an uncompromising one-size-fits-all approach to people, to place, to culture, to life on earth. As seen in the previous chapter, the ideas that led to these actions were at the forefront of the Enlightenment era; that history is a story of progress, and progress is tied in significant ways to the application of technology and the scientific method in all arenas of human endeavor. It was believed that universal laws govern human actions and that these hold true for all people in all places at all times. Implicit in this last is a certain arrogance that the only right path to follow is the one already blazed by Western Europe.

The increasing mechanization of the natural world, beginning with the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, was quickly followed by the increasing “technologisation” of the world in the Industrial Revolution¹⁵⁶. The Industrial Revolution could never have happened without the Scientific Revolution; technology is in many ways the practical application of the science and the view of nature as inert and mechanistic. As the decades and centuries passed, the growth and spread of technology

has continued unabated. And as technology increasingly pervades our lives, it can be argued that it also changes our relationship to, and perspective on, the world around us.

So it is worth asking at this juncture, what exactly is meant by technology?

Certainly the most common understanding of the word is the sum of all those little gadgets – cell phones, iPods, netbooks and so on – and all those not so little machines and mechanizations, from washing machines to cars to the automated factories that produce all those cell phones and iPods and netbooks and washing machines and cars. However, there is another way of describing and understanding technology and the role it plays in our world, and this is explored below. Though it seems paradoxical, to create more technology, we need more technology.¹⁵⁷

Jacques Ellul, with his book *The Technological Society*,¹⁵⁸ originally published in 1954, was among the first to articulate clearly the influence that technology has upon us – socially, culturally, and psychologically. Ellul wrote that technology “has become the new and specific milieu in which man is required to exist, one which has supplanted the old milieu, viz., that of nature.”¹⁵⁹ Ellul defines technology, or “technique,” as “the totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency... in every field of human activity,” and observes that technology has become a sort of self-organizing system that is “self-determinative independently of all human intervention.”¹⁶⁰ While this may conjure up images straight out of the movie *Terminator*, nevertheless it is an idea that has been taken up and repeated throughout the literature on the role of technology.¹⁶¹ Ursula Franklin, writing nearly 40 years after Ellul, describes technology as “a system (that) entails far more than its individual material components. Technology involves organisation, procedure, symbols, new words, equations, and, most of all, a mindset.” She

further likens the role and growth of technology to that of a house; one to which additions, renovations and changes are continually being made, but also one in which “more and more of human life takes place... so that today there is hardly any human activity that does not occur within this house.”¹⁶²

This draws an interesting parallel with Ellul’s words: if all human activity is taking place “inside”, there is less and less contact with the natural world “outside”. Richard Tarnas concurs, writing in *The Passion of the Western Mind* that as technology became firmly entrenched in our daily lives, it began to “take over and dehumanize man, placing him in the context of artificial gadgets rather than live nature” and quickly began to create “the mechanization of human beings... dislodging man and uprooting him from his fundamental relation to the Earth.”¹⁶³ Both Ellul and Franklin argue that technology has come to control *us*, more than we control it. Ellul points out that we shape cities, lifestyles, work and leisure around technology, while Franklin, in describing technology as a mindset, adds that it comes to include “activities as well as knowledge, structures as well as the act of structuring... means as well as ends.”¹⁶⁴

Now, no one would argue that there have not been what might be called “good” technological advances. Medical innovations such as vaccines against diseases, for example polio and diphtheria, the discovery of antibiotics such as penicillin, and advancements in the diagnosis and treatment of many other diseases have certainly contributed to lower child mortality rates and increased life spans generally, at least in the developed world. Likewise, improvements in the storage of food (particularly refrigeration) have made life considerably easier (again, primarily in the developed world). Increasingly rapid communication and transportation technology has meant that

help can reach disaster zones across the world more quickly, for example when earthquakes or floods occur.

Yet for each of these technological advances there has been a cost, whether human, environmental, or often both. Sadly, many argue that those truly beneficial advances in areas such as medicine and food have been slower to spread than more frivolous forms, such as televisions and video gaming systems, or more destructive forms, in the shape of advanced weapons technology, or technologies that allow for quicker exploitation of natural resources (for example, in mining or agriculture). Tarnas offers an explanation for this. He argues that the values that grew out of the Enlightenment, particularly those that allowed for the objectification of the natural world, also led, eventually, to the objectification of those humans whom the Western world thought of as “other” and therefore, not worthy of the benefits of technological know-how, or worse, as commodities to be put to use in the service of technology. This thinking led, says Tarnas, to “a world of objects... to ignore or exploit for one’s own purposes.”¹⁶⁵ And so the Western capitalist system made profits where it could, ignoring true need, while the value of human life and the natural world shifted from intrinsic to instrumental. The technological system became the most important thing; the values and the mindset allowed everything, including humans, to be seen as commodity.

This refers back to the point made by the authors quoted above, that technology has permeated every facet of modern life; the problem occurs when such permeation removes and inures us from the consequences not only to the natural world, but also within the human sphere. In other words, the negative effects of technology are

trivialized and instead the focus is only on the immediate benefits (immediate in terms of both time and place).

One can argue quite legitimately that humans have been using “technology” in one form or another for literally thousands of years. Any created tool or implement – such as a sharpened stick (and the means used to sharpen it) – is a form of technology. And for the most part, these tools and technologies were beneficial. So at what point in human history did technology move from being something good, something that improved human lives, to something that took over our lives? Ellul’s response to this lies in his definition of technology, or, more specifically, of technique: that “totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency... in every field of human activity”. For him, technology does not mean “machines”¹⁶⁶ in the sense of cell phones and iPods and netbooks and washing machines and cars. According to Ellul, the problem arose when technological industrial mechanization made “an abrupt entrance into a society which, from the political, institutional and human points of view, was not made to receive it.” From this, “inhuman conditions” arose.¹⁶⁷ However, just as worldviews do not arise in a vacuum, nor does technology. Without the ideals of the Enlightenment, without the establishment of the principles of rationality, personal freedom, democracy and so on, the Industrial Revolution could not have taken hold. Rather, it seems that society *was* ready for technology, although perhaps did not foresee all of the consequences. It does seem though, that once on that path, technology moved from tool to tyrant; the conditions required to sustain technological advances seem to be what created inhuman conditions for those involved in the production of technology. What is

worrisome is that it was accepted as necessary. The negative effects on human lives were seen as collateral damage, or acceptable loss.

Ellul argues that this is only to be expected; we are so immersed in the technological society that the belief has formed that it is only through more technology that we can solve the problems created by current technology and thus feel more secure. Furthermore, we also believe that any problems or crises we face, such as the myriad ecological problems currently being experiencing, can *always* be solved by more technology.¹⁶⁸ While it is certainly a popular notion in the Western world, this idea has not gone unchallenged. Lynn White Jr., in his seminal 1967 essay “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis”, argues that the increasing use of technologies has historically led only to more problems. While he also argues that Christianity – in particular the injunctions in Genesis to “subdue” the natural world – has created many current problems, his view is that “more science and more technology are not going to get us out of our present ecological crisis.”¹⁶⁹ The solution to our problems evades us, according to White, because we are looking in the wrong places for the answers. What we really need, he says, is a change in the fundamentals of our worldviews.

What in the world is a worldview?

Worldviews are not just about science and technology; they are also about the place of humanity in the world, in the universe. A worldview is, in essence, *a largely unconscious but generally coherent set of beliefs about how the world operates and our role within it.*

Worldviews include cosmological concepts, ideas about nature, morality, justice, progress, and our relationship with each other and the world around us. Tarnas, in

Cosmos and Psyche, defines worldviews as “our beliefs and theories, our maps, our metaphors, our myths, our interpretive assumptions... worldviews create worlds.”¹⁷⁰

In general, there are two ways of speaking about worldviews: as a set of beliefs held by an individual, or as a more widely held cultural set of beliefs, with the latter also referred to as a paradigm, a term popularized by the philosopher of science, Thomas Kuhn. Kuhn is among the most influential writers on the subject of paradigms, and his best-known work is the book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, published in 1962.¹⁷¹ Here, Kuhn uses the term paradigm to describe two different things. One is “the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given community.” The second is a single “element in that constellation which... can replace explicit rules” in a set of *scientific* beliefs.¹⁷²

Given that Kuhn is writing particularly about scientific revolutions, this is not unexpected. And given that scientific revolutions often play a major role in the overall conception of the world, this is of interest. Scientists, much like anyone else, are often very resistant to changes in their worldviews, and so Kuhn’s analysis of the ways in which the scientific community chooses to defend paradigms (by carrying on with what Kuhn calls “normal science”) is also very interesting. To delve deeply into that particular set of actions and beliefs may stray rather off the path of this dissertation; however, it is worth discussing some of Kuhn’s points in as much as they can be related not only to the scientific communities, but also to the larger world. Paradigms are as essential to scientific inquiry as they are to communities more generally. Kuhn also points out that science, like technology, like history, like all facets of intellectual inquiry, should not (or indeed cannot) “be interpreted in the absence of at least some implicit body of

intertwined theoretical and methodological belief that permits selection, evaluation, and criticism.”¹⁷³ Another point of interest is Kuhn’s observation that “paradigm changes do cause scientists to see the world differently... we may want to say that after a revolution scientists are responding to a different world.”¹⁷⁴

Much the same thing happens to both individuals and communities: an irrefutable change in the “facts” of things as previously understood and accepted naturally causes questioning of the beliefs, values and so on which had been based on those previous “facts.” Of course, the actual physical world has not much changed; rather it is the understanding of it that shifts. And so this leads back to Kuhn’s initial definition of paradigms as that “constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given community”. Fritjof Capra, a physicist and systems theorist, interpreted Kuhn in a similar way; in his book *The Web of Life*, Capra makes a variation on Kuhn’s definition of a scientific paradigm to describe a social paradigm, which Capra defines as “a constellation of concepts, values, perceptions and practices shared by a community, which form a particular vision of reality that is the basis of the way the community organizes itself.”¹⁷⁵ Here the concept of worldviews can be brought back into the conversation: in the 1970 post script to *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn describes the ways in which a paradigm shift affects the scientist’s worldview, which he usually refers to as a gestalt. Gestalt shifts, as described by Kuhn, refer to the shift in perception that occurs in an individual, rather than in the whole community.¹⁷⁶ This “gestalt” is approximately equivalent to what is referred to in this dissertation –and indeed what is referred to in much of the literature – as a worldview. Many commentators distinguish between paradigms and worldviews by saying that while the former is held by

communities, the latter is more personal. As Capra writes, “a single person can hold a worldview, but not a paradigm. A paradigm is always shared by a community.”¹⁷⁷

However, there is not complete agreement on the use of the terms. Cultural historian and political theorist Alastair Taylor considers “worldview” and “paradigm” as interchangeable terms; he defines worldviews as “a particular mode of cognition that characterizes an entire social system, being shared... by most of its members. Another name for this mode of cognition is paradigm – a universally accepted model of reality.” He goes on to note that worldviews include “symbolic cultural patterns of art, religion, law, language, etc” and therefore the worldview both creates and supports cultural systems.¹⁷⁸ In this definition, worldviews are seen as belonging primarily to the group, but also to the individual. On the other hand, David Naugle, who approaches the subject of worldviews from a Christian theological perspective, writes that a worldview is “an intellectual conception of the universe from the perspective of a human knower,”¹⁷⁹ thereby implying that worldviews are solely individual, not societal. This kind of approach is also found in the work of Ninian Smart, who uses the term worldview to mean simply “religion and ideologies” including secular ideologies.¹⁸⁰ However, Smart’s definition of what religion encompasses includes six dimensions: doctrinal, mythic, ethical, ritual, experiential and social.¹⁸¹ In this case, “worldview” could be applied to both the individual and society as a whole.

To a certain extent, how one defines worldviews and paradigms seems to stem from which academic discipline the topic is approached; yet what all have in common is an understanding that worldviews are complex sets of values and beliefs that underpin our actions and reactions to the world around us. In any case, it is necessary to be able to

differentiate between individual and collective worldviews, and so in the interests of clarity the word “worldview” will be used to describe either the individual or the collective (the context should make clear which is being discussed), while a paradigm shall be considered as the foundational shared elements of the worldview. To give an example of how these terms will be used, consider a community of Druidic followers who hold rites and rituals at Stonehenge. In this community, a community paradigm may be fiercely held in opposition to a stronger paradigm operating in the more dominant surrounding culture, while the worldviews of the individuals within that community may vary somewhat in their particulars. Since a worldview is composed of so many different aspects, this does not necessarily pose any problems, providing that the underlying assumptions – the foundational elements in (for example) art, religious practice and cosmology – are shared.

According to the Belgian philosopher Leo Apostel, a worldview contains seven elements: an ontological model of the world; an explanation of first causes or how the world came to be; moral and ethical values as to what is and is not permissible; a vision of the future; praxis as to how the permissible and imperative should be achieved; a theory of knowledge that allows one to determine what is true and what is not true; and finally, an account of how these elements combine to form a cohesive and intelligible whole.¹⁸² Apostel and his colleagues go on to suggest that “variations and combinations” of diverse worldviews might act as a catalyst for both confronting and solving many social and ecological problems across the globe.¹⁸³

Personal worldviews can be categorised by any one of their features, and in each case, this is the feature that holds primary importance for the individual. For example, a

worldview can be defined from an economic perspective, in which monetary wealth is valued very highly. Alternatively, a person might embrace a psychological worldview in which the most important factor is the individual's psychological and emotional healthiness, as defined by mental and emotional processes and perceptions of self. There is also a social worldview, in which interpersonal relationships are paramount. Or, a worldview may have as its axis metaphysical beliefs and notions, holding that spirituality and religion are the most important components of life.

It is easy to see that there are many different worldviews; in a sense, every person's worldview is slightly different, given that they are relating themselves to the rest of the world. Worldviews do not necessarily always make complete sense either. We make exceptions about things, sometimes we trust in our senses, sometimes in facts. Our everyday language attests to that: despite the dominant modern paradigm of a heliocentric solar system, we still speak of the Sun rising and setting. In fact, William McNeill, perhaps somewhat wryly, notes that "since we habitually entertain contradictory worldviews, there are more worldviews at any given time than persons walking the face of the earth."¹⁸⁴ Yet within a given culture, there are still those underlying paradigms, or structures, that give shape to each individual's worldviews. These are those foundational "facts of life" that everyone accepts: the example often used here is that of Copernicus' model that shows that demonstrates a heliocentric, rather than geocentric, solar system. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this must have been an almost unimaginably life-changing thing to contemplate; it changed everything that had previously been believed not only about science and astronomy, but also about the very place of humanity in the universe. It set in motion events and thoughts and paths of investigation in science,

religion, and philosophy that became the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment. The consequences have been far-reaching: science still accepts this as a basic principle (or paradigm) even while startling new discoveries about the nature of the cosmos continue to be made.

This leads to an interesting question: if those lost stories of sacred places are rediscovered, and if credence is given to those voices less heard and the messages they contain are taken to heart, if the world is understood to contain sacred and storied places, rather than simply being a resource to be used, how might this change conceptions in many spheres of human endeavor? What new revelations are on the horizon? Is there some ancient knowledge that needs to be relearned, some stories that need to be re-created and lived? According to Capra, in his book *The Turning Point*, all civilizations move in fairly predictable patterns: there is creativity and dynamism in the early stages, but as the civilization becomes more stable, it also loses some of its flexibility.¹⁸⁵ As seen in the previous chapter, according to Hegel, human history is a “spiral development from one form of unity through a phase of disunity and on to reintegration on a higher plane.”¹⁸⁶ If this is true, it could well be that the current apathy towards the spirituality contained within the world is merely a phase, and that when worldviews begin again to reflect what Tarnas, among others, calls the “original state of oneness”¹⁸⁷ with nature, Hegel’s higher plane will have been reached.

Alastair Taylor also sees societal changes as being an upward spiral, or more precisely, as following an evolutionary pattern in which simple forms appear first, succeeded by more complex variations.¹⁸⁸ Another issue to keep in mind as these changes begin to become apparent, is to reflect upon whether we agree with the Romantics’

conception of history and the need for an open and imaginative approach that accepts cultural differences, or whether we identify more with the Enlightenment approach, which held that, ultimately, all cultures develop in the same way regardless of whether in ancient Assyria or modern day Manhattan (and so all history will ultimately follow the same trajectory).¹⁸⁹

It would be well also to heed Duncan Taylor's warning in "Disagreeing on the Basics." "If a new worldview seeks to emerge," he writes, "its proponents must first be willing to take time to identify, clarify, and evaluate the underlying assumptions of the existing dominant worldview."¹⁹⁰ Apostel et al make a similar point, noting that "the construction of worldviews is not an easy enterprise."¹⁹¹ Kuhn also notes that changes are not easily accepted and that often a community of scientists will fight hard to keep "normal science" (research firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements that a particular scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its further practice).¹⁹² Change may not come easily; the old centres of power (whether religious, social, political, or scientific in character) that benefit from the current paradigms are not likely to give up that power without a good fight. Kuhn would, I think, agree on this point. Capra also writes that since transformation can be a painful and socially disruptive process, the mainstream majority, the old guard, as it were, is "petrified" as they watch their power and authority decline, while a "creative minority... carry on the process of challenge and response."¹⁹³

There is one other thing, however, that must be attended to if a new worldview is to emerge. White hints at it when he writes that to effect change we need to "find a new religion, or rethink our old one." Tarnas writes that our current worldview revolution may

well stall out because it “lack(s) one essential element... a coherent cosmology.” This means that we need to ensure that there is still an account of “where we came from” in a metaphysical sense; stories are needed that ground us in our home place (Earth).

Furthermore, Tarnas warns, “no amount of revisioning philosophy or psychology, science or religion can forge a new worldview without a radical shift at the cosmological level.”¹⁹⁴ Theologian Christopher Chapple adds that “cosmology orients us. It provides us a place within the universe, a home where our story can be told in such a way that it makes sense to ourselves and the people with whom we live.”¹⁹⁵ Smart writes that “the fact is that human beings have the impulse to find out who they are by telling a story about how they came to be. Myth thus is the food which feeds our sense of identity... (it is) the point where our feelings and the cosmos intersect.”¹⁹⁶ The theologian Thomas Berry meanwhile, notes that “we are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story.”¹⁹⁷

The importance of stories

When we were children, many of us were introduced to the wider world around us through stories. Even if we had never seen a giraffe or a zebra, we saw their pictures and knew about them in stories. We may have never personally encountered a unicorn or a goblin (although there may well have been monsters hiding in our closets or under our beds), but these also figured in childhood stories. Stories can be about things that we may later decide are real or not real, but they exist in our imagination and our dreams and they teach us much about our place in the world.

As we grow older, stories are still part of our lives. Some people may read rather more of these stories than others, but stories come to us via other paths too, and we create

our own narratives along the way. We encounter stories from and about the people in our communities from talking to them on the street, at the grocery store check-out counter, or over dinner, we hear about the goings-on in our city, province, region, country, and world in the news. And we develop our own stories about ourselves and our place in the world – how the world itself came into being, where we came from, where we are going. These stories may be religious in character, or they may be based on science, or they may simply be based on our lived experiences and observations. Most likely we do not think too much about the stories that have shaped us; they are part of our background – part of our worldview. Worldviews need stories to give them shape and meaning, just as places need stories to change them from simply “space” to meaningful “place.” Thus there is the assertion by the authors mentioned above that if our worldview is to shift to something more aware of the sacred as embodied in place, we need to find stories to account for that – and those stories have to make sense, given what we already know about our world.

This leads to an interesting dilemma: if we need a new story to create a new worldview or paradigm, and if that new story has to make sense in the world as we currently understand it, then the story has to satisfy *both the old and the new* worldview. It must both include and transcend what we know about the world now, and what we hope for the future. It needs to be relevant in light of our current social, ecological and scientific context, and still satisfy that ineffable, intuitive need for stories that reassure us that our hearts matter, as well as our minds.

How can this be done? One solution that has been proposed by a number of authors is that the new story must be based in science. Berry, for example, writes that “the epic of evolution does present the story of the universe and this story is now

available to us out of our present experience. This is our sacred story.”¹⁹⁸ He does not see any need to entirely separate science from the sacred, nor does he assume that accepting science means that all the mystery and wonder will disappear from the natural world – instead, it simply needs to be integrated into our current stories. He puts his faith in the fusion of science and religion, writing that “the limitations of the redemption rhetoric and the scientific rhetoric can be seen, and a new, more integral language of being and value can emerge.”¹⁹⁹ Another proponent of integrating science in our stories is Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, who notes that “no religion can hope to survive if it does not satisfy the scientific temper of our age [and] sympathize with its social aspirations.”²⁰⁰ McNeill writes that “since religion remains a necessity for human beings, a workable modus vivendi is very much needed... a symbiosis of secular science with sacred religion will remain important.”²⁰¹

Yet all this seems to me to be capitulating to the ideals of the Enlightenment, allowing science to retain its position as the arbiter of belief systems. And, to paraphrase White, more Enlightenment is not necessarily what is needed. Perhaps, as Tarnas suggests, we need some Romanticism in our lives. The trouble with trying to combine the two, Tarnas writes, is that “the very nature of the objective universe turns any spiritual faith and ideals into courageous acts of subjectivity, constantly vulnerable to intellectual negation.”²⁰² The scientific view of things has a long history of hegemony and it will not give up this advantage easily; experience shows that those who hold the majority of power do not react well to sharing. In other words, science and spirit may have too long been seen as oppositional to be brought together to create a unified story. Perhaps what is needed instead is a way of seeing the world that, while it accommodates the facts of

science, also allows for the supremacy of science to be challenged. Copernicus' battle was to get infallible cosmologies to accept new scientific evidence; perhaps the challenge now is to get infallible science to accept new cosmologies.

Norriss Hetherington, in the introduction to *Cosmology*, suggests that there is a need to accept cosmology as worthy of intellectual attention, just as science is now. Once we do this, “we have opened up one of the greatest of human achievements... to an increased appreciation.”²⁰³ He also notes that, since both cosmologies and science vary from culture to culture and from time to time, science may be just as relative as cosmology. In other words, science could be another way of telling a similar story. And perhaps it does not really matter much whether our stories contain what are considered to be objective “truths”, as long as understanding can be gained from them. Perhaps the power of stories generally is in the *meaning* rather than the facts. Smart argues that while “we can recognize how myths have traditionally played a vital role in fashioning a worldview (in fact the worldviews of many small-scale societies are expressed predominantly through myths), there are now limits on their credibility.”²⁰⁴ Put Smart and Hetherington together though, and it can be seen that science is just as open to skeptical review as are myths. To take this a step further, what happens when the story is taken as fact, and the science is seen as the myth? To give an example, this is the case for those who believe in a *literal* interpretation of the Christian Bible; the world for them was *in fact* created in seven, 24-hour days; Adam was *in fact* created from a handful of dust and so on. Science obscures those facts, tells untruths, they say.

Certainly the relationship between science and cosmology, between Enlightenment and Romanticism, is an uneasy truce at best. So what to do? How to tell

our story? Perhaps we need to look backwards, and forward, at the same time: to keep in mind what is known through science, but allow that there are also other, equally valid ways of knowing. Perhaps the reason that, as Tarnas writes, “human consciousness has found itself progressively emancipated yet also progressively... isolated from the spiritually opaque world it seeks to comprehend” is that Western society has only been asking one type of question: that is, only scientific knowledge and been pursued, and answers have not been sought in other ways or other places – including within the sacred places of the natural world. Alan Drengson points out that stories can be found all around us: he describes a forest system, for example, as containing “lives within lives... these structures have a long past built into them, a memory, a wealth of stories.”²⁰⁵ It’s just that most of the time, we don’t take the time to find these stories, much less sit and listen. As Tarnas says, the way forward is perhaps “to listen more subtly, more perceptively, more deeply. Our future may depend on the precise extent of our willingness to expand our ways of knowing.”²⁰⁶

Taking all of the above together, it can be seen that stories are needed that tell us about the world and our place in it, and that make sense to us in our world. Science now holds sway as the dominant story/teller. But science has not always been a very good storyteller, and the narrative it weaves may not be entirely satisfying to us as spiritual as well as physical beings. Intellectually it may be an excellent story, but stories need to also appeal to the human spirit if they are to last. Since a better story is needed, some have suggested that we try to turn science into this better story, or at least allow it room in a new story. But if we allow science in, we run the risk of it trying to take over again. So we need to look elsewhere for that story: Tarnas suggests turning to the Romantics and

using their ideas to look within ourselves to find our stories, to use imagination to try to find the hidden or forgotten stories and understand their significance. Drengson suggests looking to the world of ensouled nature; and this can perhaps (though not exclusively) be found in sacred places.²⁰⁷

What if, as Drengson says, the stories are already there, and we just have to find them? What if we looked for storied places, places where the ordinary world connects with a spiritual plane? Sacred places, whether medicine circles, mountains, sacred groves, henges, or forests, hold a wealth of stories situated within a cosmology that still makes sense today. Finding these stories may not be easy, but is it not impossible?²⁰⁸ These stories would fulfill Tarnas' requirement of a "radical shift"; they would not contradict science; and they offer a path to reenchancement with the natural world. In Chapters 7 and 8, we will look more closely at the stories in Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean, and in Stonehenge to see what they have to say – to see if they make sense to us in our present situation, and if they can lead us to the recollection of an enchanted and ensouled world.

Summary and final thoughts

In this section, a number of subjects relating to worldviews have been discussed. One aspect of that is that technology has slowly pushed humanity away from the natural world; a continuation in many ways of the paradigms of the Enlightenment. In the developed world at least, it has been accepted that technology will make the world a better place, and our paradigms, our worldviews and our world, have been structured around faith in technology. Next the question of what exactly is meant by the term worldview was considered; what it consists of, why it is important to understand how worldviews operate, how they come to be changed. It was suggested that stories are

central to the formation of worldviews and that if a new worldview is to emerge, stories need to be found that not only fit present conceptions of the world, but can also lead to new perceptions. Throughout it has been posited that a new worldview is seeking to emerge, one that will lead to a more balanced place, where we are not so isolated from our environment. In Chapters 7 and 8, we will discuss the stories of Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean, and Stonehenge to see if the stories and narratives found there can fulfill these requirements.

It has been shown that worldviews and paradigms do not emerge from, or exist in, a vacuum. They are part of an ongoing conversation, a response to shifting social, economic, technological, scientific, and political climates. As systems change, we respond to them. The world does not end when paradigms shift. The seismic tremors that rocked the paradigmatic foundations of the pre-Enlightenment did not lead to the collapse of the world, although certainly it set the Western world upon a new path. The social and cultural systems that are held together by the paradigms of our time will, perhaps, see change as dramatic (or nearly so) as in the Enlightenment years. When we begin to engage in this, change may well depend on where and how hard we look. The interweavings of systems, traditions, and assumptions are so subtle and complex that often we take no notice of them at all. They are simply “the way things are”. For example, how often does the average person in the Western world consider the concept of patriarchy? How often does one think about the effect of individualism and consumerism in our current lives? What about things like fossil fuel dependency? And what will happen if a new paradigm causes a rethinking of those issues and changes in the structures that have supported them?

There are signs already that there are ways to deal with these effectively. To combat patriarchy there is feminism; to combat individualism and consumerism, there are concepts of community and compassion; in response to oil dependency, creative scientists work on renewable or non-consumptive energy sources, and also there is an awareness that there is an obligation to use *less* energy, however sourced. Ecofeminism and deep ecology are committed to finding ways to live in harmony with our encompassing environment, and environmentalism in countless guises continues to point out that as humans we have a specific obligation to stop destroying the planet we share with other than human ways of being (even if an ultimate self-interest lies beneath it: that we must save the planet in order to save ourselves). These movements range from grassroots community efforts (such as the boulevard and community vegetable gardens) to international organizations (such as Greenpeace and Earth First!). As wide and varied as all these efforts are, there is one thing they all hold in common: they seek to challenge and change the paradigms that have underpinned the Western worldview for the past 400 or so years.

As our world goes through changes in many spheres (social, political, environmental and so on), worldviews will change in response, perhaps rediscovering the relevance of a re-enchanted worldview. But first, we need to find those elusive new stories – which may turn out in fact to be ancient stories, waiting to be rediscovered, with their compelling mysteries, their enchantment and their power.

This brings an end to Part One. In the next section, I will look more deeply into the stories in and of sacred places, I will also discuss ways of storytelling and how stories become situated in both time and place. Then I will delve into some of the stories that lie

at the heart of Puzzlewood and Stonehenge. To begin, though, a framework is needed within which this discussion can take place. For that, the discussion now turns to the Deep Ecology Movement and its main principles.

Endnotes

- ¹⁵³ Obviously, this point is up for debate, as telling the future is an inexact art at best. Given the ecological changes and challenges that Earth faces, it is of course entirely possible that the changes will be of an even greater magnitude than can even be imagined.
- ¹⁵⁴ Richard Tarnas also makes this point early on in *Cosmos and Psyche* (New York: Plume Books, 2007), 6-9.
- ¹⁵⁵ Once again, it should be clarified that for the purposes of this dissertation I will concentrate on those changes brought about in and through currently dominant Western intellectual thought.
- ¹⁵⁶ See, for example, Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature* (New York: Harper Collins, 1980).
- ¹⁵⁷ Jacques Ellul, in *The Technological Society* transl. John Wilkinson, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 4-5, makes this point too, writing that “wherever a technical factor exists, it results, almost inevitably, in mechanization.”
- ¹⁵⁸ Ellul’s book was originally published in Paris in 1954. The first English translation appeared a decade later. Here I use a republication of the original English translation. For Ellul and also Ursula Franklin (*The Real World of Technology*. Toronto: House of Anansi, 1990), “technology” does not refer simply to “machinery,” but rather to the *system* of technology.
- ¹⁵⁹ Jacques Ellul, “The Technological Order,” *Technology and Culture* 3, no. 4 (August 1962): 394. This article was written shortly before the publication of the English translation of his book, and was intended in part as an introduction to the book.
- ¹⁶⁰ Ibid. See also the introductory “Note to the Reader,” in *Technological Society*, xxxv.
- ¹⁶¹ See, for example, Ellul, *Technological Society*. See also Merchant, *Death of Nature*. See also Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984); and Franklin, *Real World of Technology*. One highly influential and controversial article on the role of technology and religion in dealing with ecological issues is Lynn White Jr, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1203-1207. This listing is simply a few of the primary sources; there is also a wide body of literature in academic journals dealing with the subject.
- ¹⁶² Franklin, *Real World of Technology*, 1-3.
- ¹⁶³ Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind* (New York: Ballantyne Books, 1991), 362.
- ¹⁶⁴ Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 4. Franklin, *Real World of Technology*, 3,6.
- ¹⁶⁵ Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 32.
- ¹⁶⁶ Ellul, *The Technological Society*, xxxv.
- ¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 4-5.
- ¹⁶⁸ Ellul, *Technology and Culture*, 396. Of course, there are some technologies that do help in ecological problem-solving, but the idea is that this is not the “only” thing that is needed – other elements including (but not limited to) changes in lifestyles to reduce pollution, and political and legislative changes are also necessary.
- ¹⁶⁹ White, “*Ecological Crisis*”, 1206.
- ¹⁷⁰ Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 16.
- ¹⁷¹ While the original manuscript was published in 1962, a second edition was published in 1970; in a lengthy postscript to the original text, Kuhn writes that his use of the term paradigms is “the most novel and least understood aspect of this book” (1962/1970a, 187).
- ¹⁷² Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970, 2nd edition), 175.
- ¹⁷³ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 111.

- ¹⁷⁵ Fritjof Capra, *The Web of Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1996), 5-6.
- ¹⁷⁶ Kuhn, *Scientific Revolutions*, 112.
- ¹⁷⁷ Fritjof Capra, "Paradigms and Paradigm Shifts," *Journal of Consciousness and Change* (Summer/Fall 1986): 11.
- ¹⁷⁸ Alastair M. Taylor, "Societal Transformations from Paleolithic to Contemporary Times," *Philosophy Forum* 15 (1977), 327.
- ¹⁷⁹ David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of A Concept* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans: 2002), 59.
- ¹⁸⁰ Ninian Smart, *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983), 3.
- ¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 7-8.
- ¹⁸² Leo Apostel et al, *World Views: From Fragmentation to Integration*, (Brussels: University of Brussels Press, 1994.) Available online: <http://www.vub.ac.be/CLEA/pub/books/worldviews>, section 2.
- ¹⁸³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸⁴ William McNeill, "History and the Scientific Worldview," *History and Theory* 37, no. 1 (1998): 1.
- ¹⁸⁵ Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society and the Rising Culture* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1983), 29.
- ¹⁸⁶ Quoted in Capra, *Turning Point*, 28.
- ¹⁸⁷ Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 13. See also Alan Drengson, *Wild Way Home: Spiritual Life in the 3rd Millennium* (Victoria: Lightstar, 2010), 4-5. Drengson describes our need as self-reflexive humans to feel ourselves in unity with the natural world.
- ¹⁸⁸ Alastair Taylor, "Societal Transformations," 330.
- ¹⁸⁹ See Chapter 2.
- ¹⁹⁰ Duncan Taylor, "Disagreeing on the Basics: Environmental debates reflect competing worldviews." *Alternatives*, 18 no. 3, (1991): 32.
- ¹⁹¹ Apostel et al, online.
- ¹⁹² Kuhn, *Scientific Revolutions*, 10.
- ¹⁹³ Capra, *Turning Point*, 28.
- ¹⁹⁴ Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 29.
- ¹⁹⁵ Christopher Chapple, "Thomas Berry, Buddhism and the New Cosmology." *Buddhist Christian Studies* 18 (1998): 147.
- ¹⁹⁶ Smart, *Worldviews*, 95.
- ¹⁹⁷ Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco, Sierra Club Books, 1988), 123.
- ¹⁹⁸ Thomas Berry, *The Great Work*, (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 31.
- ¹⁹⁹ Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, 136.
- ²⁰⁰ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith* (New York: Harper, 1955), 10.
- ²⁰¹ J.R. McNeill, "Ideas Matter: A Political History of the Twentieth-Century Environment," *Current History* (November 2000): 13.
- ²⁰² Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 31.
- ²⁰³ Norriss S. Hetherington, ed., *Cosmology: Historical, Literary, Philosophical, Religious and Scientific Perspectives* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 3, 7.
- ²⁰⁴ Smart, *Worldviews*, 89.
- ²⁰⁵ Drengson, *Wild Way Home*, 144.
- ²⁰⁶ Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 41,
- ²⁰⁷ Drengson, *Wild Way Home*, 144
- ²⁰⁸ For a quick overview of ways to track the stories of Stonehenge and Avebury, see Patrick Crampton, *Stonehenge of the Kings* (London: John Baker, 1967) particularly Chapter 3, "Indo European Myth." Also Robert .J Wallis and Jenny Blain, "Sites, Sacredness, and Stories: Interactions of Archaeology and Contemporary Paganism." *Folklore* 114 (2003): 307-321; and Rosemary Hill, *Stonehenge* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

Part Two: Inspiration

Chapter Four: The Deep Ecology Movement

Background – Arne Naess – Platform Principles – Self-Realization - Ecosophies

"As any change must begin somewhere, it is the single individual who will experience it and carry it through."

- Carl Jung

Deep ecology, or the deep ecology movement, is a way of thinking about and acting in the world that pays attention to our impact on the environment, including all human and non-human components. The words “deep ecology” are used to refer both to deep ecology as a movement, and to deep ecology as a topic of philosophical inquiry. Really, it is both. The phrase “deep ecology movement” was first used by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess at a conference in Bucharest in 1972, and began to appear in the environmental literature about a year later.²⁰⁹ It has remained in use ever since. It is the deep ecology movement that is of the most interest here, and it will be used as a framework²¹⁰ – a sort of background reference point, if you like – as I delve more deeply into places and stories. A framework is not the same thing as a methodology: as noted in Chapter 1, the main *methodologies* used here are phenomenology and hermeneutics as set within the concentric circles model. A *framework* is more of an *orientation* - rather like a trellis upon which a vine can grow. It can be thought of in this way: the thesis statement is the seed. The methodologies are those things such as water and (organic) fertilizer that will coax the seed out of the ground and help it grow well and flourish. The framework is the trellis upon which the vine will grow. The vine may well be perfectly capable of growing without a trellis, but the trellis supports and guides the growth of the vine. The principles and processes of the deep ecology movement can serve as a guide and support

to better understanding of the connections that exist between sacred places, their stories, and people, and of ways in which those connections can be realized.

First, it is necessary to attend to the subtle but important distinction between deep ecology as a *movement*, and deep ecology as a subset of environmental philosophy.²¹¹ It is much like the difference between, for example, reading the Christian Bible in order to find direction in order to try to live a “good” life as a Christian, and studying the Bible for theological purposes – praxis as differentiated from abstract thought. Here, I am interested in the practical application and implications of following the principles of the deep ecology movement.

In order to understand the deep ecology movement, there are certain questions that must be answered. The most obvious is, what exactly is the deep ecology movement? How is it different from the shallow ecology movement? What does being part of, or simply agreeing with the deep ecology movement involve? To answer these questions, I will look at three components of the deep ecology movement: the platform principles, self-realization, and personal ecosophies. But to begin, a brief history of the deep ecology movement is necessary.

A brief history of the deep ecology movement

Arne Naess, a founder of the deep ecology movement, was a philosopher, ecologist, mountaineer, musician, professor, and a human being who held deep ties to the land, especially in his home country of Norway. He was very interested in the natural world and our relationship to it, and was greatly influenced by Rachel Carson’s book, *Silent Spring* and by the writings of Thoreau, Muir and Leopold. The latter he called “a true subversive” whose writings “constitute a landmark in the development of the biocentric

position.”²¹² (Biocentric refers to a philosophical or moral position that honours, respects, and seeks to protect from harm all life forms rather than focusing only on humans.) Naess chose the term “long range deep ecology” to highlight the difference between his ideas and what he saw as a less committed, short term and “shallow” approach to environmental issues.

The use of the words deep versus shallow has drawn criticism from some quarters. Environmental theorist Harold Glasser notes that while “the distinction was never intended to shed light on the depth of particular individuals... nevertheless, as an expert in semantics and communication theory, Naess cannot be exonerated for failing to anticipate the unfortunate derogatory connotations.”²¹³ However, Naess did not want to call those who subscribed to the basic tenets of the deep ecology movement “deep ecologists”, preferring instead to refer to them as “supporters” of the deep ecology movement. The philosopher Alan Drengson explains that “Naess feels that ‘deep ecologist’ is too immodest, and ‘shallow ecologist’ is unkind language. The word ‘supporter’ is more Gandhian and rich for interpretation.”²¹⁴

In his introduction to *The Ecology of Wisdom*, a collection of Naess’s writings, Drengson explains the difference between the shallow and deep ecology movements thus: “Supporters of the long-range, deep ecology movement... look for long-term solutions, engage in deep questioning, and pursue alternative patterns of action,” while “supporters of the shallow ecology movement do not question deeply, but focus on short-term, narrow human interests... they do not look deeply into the nature of our relationships with each other and other beings.”²¹⁵ The essential distinction that Drengson highlights here is that deep ecology is ecocentric (focused or centred on the wellbeing of the natural

environment, and all its organic and inorganic components as well as our place within it) while shallow ecology is anthropocentric (focused or centred only on the wellbeing of humans).

Drengson notes that Naess intended the “deep” part of deep ecology to refer to “the level of questioning of our purposes and values... right down to fundamentals.” Shallow ecology, on the other hand, “stops before the ultimate level.”²¹⁶ Deep ecology asks us to question our basic beliefs and precepts, and our conceptions about the environment and how we are connected to it. It seeks out the roots of the problem, rather than seeing only what is on the surface. For example, while shallow ecology might consider ways to improve recycling technology, deep ecology asks why we use so much in the first place, and how that might be reduced. Consequently, the solutions sought in deep ecology are those which change behaviours, rather than simply providing a “band-aid” for the consequences. The deep ecology movement also understands that there is never a single solution to any problem, or a single viewpoint that is best for all supporters. Each person is encouraged to develop their own ecosophy – Arne Naess called his “Ecosophy T” (more on this a little later). The movement promotes a sort of patchwork quilt approach to environmental problems as preferable to a blanket solution. In other words, each area or community will find the solutions that are most suited to its unique environment and environmental problems, and its culture. Stitching those pieces together will create a more beautiful and suitable pattern of ecological change than trying to impose a uniform set of laws and regulations and so forth.

Naess illustrates the difference with the example of addressing pollution and resource consumption and depletion. He writes that the “central objective” of the shallow

ecology movement “is the health and affluence of people in the developed countries” whereas the deep ecology movement involves “rejection of the human-in-environment image in favour of the relational, total-field image”²¹⁷ and is intended to address the issue in ways that benefit the environment and the people in *both* developed and Third World nations. Throughout his writings, Naess is careful to make clear that deep ecology in developed countries will look very different from deep ecology in less developed nations, as the concerns and lifestyles of the inhabitants of each kind of place are very different. Therefore, the actions leading to change that are suitable in each place will also be very different. Some issues will overlap in fundamental ways; using the example of agriculture, both developed and Third World countries should aim to reduce the amounts of agricultural chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers) in favour of more organic farming methods. What those methods look like in practice though, could be very different in, for example, sub-Saharan Africa, equatorial South America, and the North American midwest.

Such actions often provide solutions not only for environmental issues, but also for issues of social justice. Naess frequently drew parallels and comparisons between the deep ecology movement, the peace and non-violence movement, and the social justice movement. Together these form what has been termed the “three great movements of the 20th century,” and now also of the 21st century. One of the key similarities is that all three are grassroots movements. Naess has written that he was greatly influenced by Gandhi’s nonviolent approach and that he was therefore “inevitably influenced by his metaphysics.”²¹⁸ While Naess felt that peace is a necessary prerequisite for living in harmony with the natural world, he also noted that “delays rapidly make the ecological

crisis more difficult to overcome. Wait five years and the process may take fifty more.”²¹⁹

However, he also suggests that if this is the case, those involved in the deep ecology movement could also participate in the peace movement, in order that those goals should be attained so that ecological goals can then be pursued. Since “it is evident that the goals of the deep ecology movement cannot be reached without decisive victories of the peace movement,” Naess concludes that this “should add to the motivation”²²⁰ of those who are involved in the deep ecology movement (peace with nature) to also be involved in, or in some way support, the peace movement.

Naess also felt that there should be strong ties between the deep ecology movement and the social justice movement. He asks, “What can be more urgent than the elimination of extreme poverty and suppression? We may answer that nothing may be more urgent.”²²¹ The deep ecology movement is about caring for all life forms, which *includes* humans. Therefore, supporters of the deep ecology movement should seek to reduce suffering and abuse of people by people, as much as of nature by people. This is not to say that supporters of the deep ecology movement need to also be deeply involved in the peace and non-violence movement and the social justice movement; to try to be consistently and meaningfully involved in all three would be exhausting. And, as Naess points out, each movement should concentrate on what it does best. But, since “the convergence of problems within the three great movements may be expected to increase,” there are many opportunities for co-operation and mutual support. “The frontier of work is long,” writes Naess, but supporters of all three “have cooperated well in praxis.”²²²

Supporters of the deep ecology movement come from many different backgrounds and have many different belief systems, just as those involved in the peace

movement and the social justice movement hold differing religious, spiritual, or philosophical worldviews. But the basic principles – of peace, non-violence, social justice, or ecological value – will be similar. This, according to Naess, is as it should be. In his essay, “The Basics of the Deep Ecology Movement,” he writes that “one must avoid looking for one definite philosophy or religious view among the supporters of the deep ecology movement. There is a rich manifold of fundamental views compatible with the deep ecology platform. And without this, the movement would lose its transcultural character.”²²³ He adds that “supporters of deep ecology may have great difficulties in understanding each others’ ultimate views, but not sets of penultimate views as formulated as a kind of platform.”²²⁴ In other words, while one supporter may identify as Buddhist, another as Druidic, another as atheistic and feminist, and so on, they will have in common a commitment to the deep questioning and consequent actions involved in the deep ecology movement, as outlined in the eight platform principles.

To introduce the platform principles and other components of the deep ecology movement, it is useful to refer to the “four levels” of discussion in the deep ecology movement. These four levels could equally be applied to the peace movement and the social justice movement. Naess describes these four levels as:

1. Verbalized fundamental philosophical and religious views (ultimate premises, worldviews and ecosophies)
2. The deep ecology platform principles
3. The general consequences derived from the platform – guidelines for lifestyles and for policies of every kind (normative or factual hypotheses and policies)
4. Particular rules, decisions and actions (in specific situations)²²⁵

Table 2: Levels of Questioning and Articulation

Level I	Ultimate Premises	Taoism, Christianity, Ecosophy T, etc.
Level II	Platform Principles Movement	Peace Movement, Deep Ecology Movement, Social Justice Movement, etc
Level III	Policies	A, B, C, etc
Level IV	Practical Actions	W, X, Y, etc

From Drengson, "Ecosophy and the Deep Ecology Movement: An Overview," 1999.

It can be seen that within these levels, there is room for many differing positions. Again, this is what Naess intended. He writes that "there is no point in trying to formulate a short (or long) version of level 2 that all supporters of deep ecology would like. The most remarkable similarities of positions and attitudes belong to levels 3 and 4." This is not to say that all policies and actions must be the same, but they should all be ecocentric at their core. In Naess's words, "very similar conclusions may be drawn from divergent premises," but "a plethora of consequences derived from the platform"²²⁶ is entirely possible.

In this chapter, the focus is mainly on the first and second levels. It is not necessary at this point to discuss specific actions or policy formations in which followers of the deep ecology movement might engage, although in Chapters 8 through 11 this will be more important in the discussion of interactions with sacred places. This is what is meant in saying that the deep ecology movement can act as a framework for discussion. As actions and policies are formulated, one can refer back to the basic principles and premises. I do not mean to suggest that anyone has to join the deep ecology movement, or any other movement, in any kind of formal way; it is simply that the principles contained in the deep ecology movement may provide a pathway to an ethic of care for sacred places in particular, and for the natural world more generally.

The eight platform principles

Naess originally formulated the basics of these principles on a camping trip with George Sessions. Further discussion and collaborations with other philosophers, including Drengson, Bill Devall and others, led to a set of guidelines, or a platform, that became the deep ecology movement principles. It was emphasized that this was simply a “preliminary” version, and others were encouraged to propose changes and revisions.²²⁷ The principles were also intended to tie in with the peace and social justice movements.²²⁸ Many versions of the eight platform principles have emerged over the years, each aiming to bring greater clarity and more ecocentric values into the circle. This is one of the earlier versions, taken from *The Ecology of Wisdom*.

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realizations of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital human needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.
5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation to directly or indirectly try to implement the necessary changes.²²⁹

In the deep ecology movement there are no prescriptive elements, no specific doctrines to follow. The first of the three principles, as well as the fifth, are statements. A supporter of

the deep ecology movement can agree with these statements from a wide variety of ideological perspectives, or from within many different religious and spiritual frameworks. The fourth, sixth and eight principles indicate that actions are required – the decreasing of human population, changes in policies and governance, and implementation of changes, but do not offer any set roadmaps. The seventh principle is predictive – if reductions in human population occur, and if shifts in policy and governance take place, and if the statement principles are taken as true, then this is what the world might begin to look like.

If the eight platform principles were made into a paragraph, it might read something like this:

Followers of the deep ecology movement believe that both humans and non human life forms have intrinsic value and should be allowed to flourish simply because we all hold equal rights to existence. Diversity of and among life forms allows all life to flourish more readily and abundantly and we ought to do what we can to encourage this diversity and flourishing. The only time that humans should interfere with this diversity, or impede the right of nonhuman life forms to thrive, is to satisfy vital human needs, such as for food or clean water. The way things stand at present, humans interfere way too much with the nonhuman parts of the world, and we are all the poorer for it. But things can change – if we aim for an overall reduction in the human population in both developed and developing countries; if we re-think the way we use technology to exploit the environment, and then lessen our impact; if we re-think the way the world economy is structured, and change it to reflect fairer practices; if we re-think our relationship with the environment and change it to be more respectful and harmonious; then we will come to a

deeper understanding of the inherent (intrinsic) value and interconnectedness of all things, and this will lead a more joyful and fulfilled life. If you believe these things too, then get involved! Help find ways to create these changes! Do so with joy!

The deep ecology movement encourages each person to seek ways to grow as an individual. The main differentiation between shallow and deep ecologies, as noted earlier, is that followers of deep ecology are encouraged to question their motives and beliefs on a deep level. Naess refers to the platform principles as “a set of norms and hypotheses” and not as “fundamental premises”. The underlying, and thus fundamental premises, he writes, may be “Buddhist, Taoist, Christian, or of other religious kinds, or they are philosophical with affinities to the basic views” of any of a number of philosophers or philosophic traditions.²³⁰ Naess writes that while the deep ecology movement may be “grounded in religion or philosophy,” one must nevertheless “avoid looking for one definite philosophy or religious view” among supporters.²³¹

David Landis Barnhill and Richard Gottlieb, in the introduction to the anthology *Deep Ecology and World Religions*, write that deep ecology is “the ethical and religious attitude of valuing nature for its own sake and seeing it as divine and spiritually vital.”²³² While religion (and a religious attitude) is commonly defined as a set of beliefs, rituals, symbols and practices that are common to a group, an ecosophy is a more personal thing, as the spiritual and/or philosophical aspects are formulated or chosen by the individual. Furthermore, deep ecology principles are not (to the best of my knowledge) incorporated into the articles of faith of any specific religious denomination. It would perhaps be more accurate to think of the deep ecology principles as being spiritual rather than religious,

and individual rather than social, although the outcomes should, at least in theory, benefit more than one individual.

In *World as Lover, World as Self*, Joanna Macy describes an experience that demonstrates this idea quite well, and is particularly relevant here, given that I will be discussing the stories of Stonehenge. She relates the story of a visit to two ancient standing stones in England at the end of a five-day ecology workshop, and of the power felt and shared with “the ancient Earth wisdom of the culture that erected the stones.” She recalls that: “We were people with different cultural and religious backgrounds, yet, despite the differing tradition systems to which we belonged, the prayers and affirmations that spontaneously arose in that circle expressed a common faith and fueled a common hope.”²³³

Since there is such diversity within the deep ecology movement, it is natural that there should also be some diversity in the wording of the platform principles. These have evolved and changed over time, as Naess encouraged. The basic message has remained the same, but, as Naess writes, “the transcultural character of the movement makes it natural that the wording of a version of a platform cannot be the same everywhere.”²³⁴ In some instances, it has been a simple case of re-wording; in some it is presented differently; in still others, a more complete re-write has been offered. Here are some examples of each.

Environmental philosopher Stan Rowe in his 1996 essay, “The Deep Ecology Platform: Moving it from Biocentric to Ecocentric”, proposes changes to the first four principles. These changes reflect Rowe’s careful attention to language and its nuances, and are designed to make the principle more explicitly ecocentric. For example, Rowe

suggests rewording the third principle thus: “Humans have no right to reduce the diversity of Earth’s ecosystems and their vital constituents, organic and inorganic”, thus removing the phrase “except to satisfy vital human needs”. Rowe points out that allowing this exception leaves open the door for interpretation – not necessarily as to what human needs are vital, but to what extent we can exploit the other than human world in order to meet those needs. Rowe’s intention is that “if the idea of the living Earth is stressed, people may, in time, look upon their environments as alive, deserving of the same attention, affect, and care as charismatic animals and plants.”²³⁵

This in itself is not an entirely new idea; in 1948, many years before Naess articulated the concepts of the deep ecology movement, Aldo Leopold wrote in *A Sand County Almanac*, “We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect... That land is a community is a basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics.”²³⁶ This concept is central to the study of sacred places as well; it is the *place*, the land, that is revealed as ensouled.

Another example of revision of the platform principles comes from David Rothenberg, in a 1987 essay titled “A Platform of Deep Ecology.” Rothenberg revised the form of the eight principles into seven “basic points” along with a conclusion. Mostly these seven points are a re-articulation of the first seven original platform principles, and the conclusion is essentially the same as the original eighth principle. However, Rothenberg gives each principle a pithy catchphrase, as follows:

1. Life!
2. Nature!
3. Human in/and Nature!

4. No False Distance!
5. Outside Change!
6. Inside Change!
7. Spread of Ideas!

And then the conclusion is simply “Action!”²³⁷ Rothenberg then elaborates each point. He emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living beings and systems, diversity and complexity within systems, and the need for humanity to come to understand its place *within* the context of Earth. He also discusses the role that technology has played in distancing humans from the natural world, and how economic, technological, political and social systems need to be re-thought in a more ecologically mindful way. In the conclusion (Action!”) Rothenberg goes beyond exhortation to offer a few examples of ways in which supporters of the deep ecology movement might take action. While acknowledging that any action towards change involves “some detachment from the dominant system,” he suggests ways in which individuals can help to create change, including both individual and collective actions, art as a subversive act, and ways to challenge the current system both directly and indirectly. He concludes by reassuring readers that “one must define one’s own place... the diversity of many methods and the symbiosis between them work together to enact a change greater than the sum of its parts.”²³⁸ This echoes Naess’ idea that the deep ecology movement is at once local and global.²³⁹

Another approach to the evolution of the deep ecology principles comes again from Stan Rowe, this time in 2004, in a collaborative work with Ted Mosquin and others, including Drengson, Rothenberg, and myself. Entitled “A Manifesto for Earth,” this document includes six Core Principles and five Action Principles. Rowe and Mosquin write that this Manifesto is meant as a “unifying framework for earlier environmental/

ethical thinking” including deep ecology, the Earth Charter, and the United Nations Charter for Nature.²⁴⁰ While the focus of some of these principles aligns closely with the eight platform principles of deep ecology, the intention is to “shift the value-focus from humanity to the enveloping Ecosphere - that web of organic/ inorganic/ symbiotic structures and processes that constitute Planet Earth.”²⁴¹ Here is a summary of the principles in the Manifesto:

Core principles

1. The Ecosphere is the Centre of Value for Humanity
2. The Creativity and Productivity of Earth's Ecosystems Depend on their Integrity
3. The Earth-centred Worldview is supported by Natural History
4. Ecocentric Ethics are Grounded in Awareness of our Place in Nature
5. An Ecocentric Worldview Values Diversity of Ecosystems and Cultures
6. Ecocentric Ethics Support Social Justice

Action Principles:

7. Defend and Preserve Earth's Creative Potential
8. Reduce Human Population Size
9. Reduce Human Consumption of Earth Parts
10. Promote Ecocentric Governance
11. Spread the Message²⁴²

In 1993, Naess himself wrote an essay, “The Deep Ecology ‘Eight Points’ Revisited” in which he says that “a longer name for the Eight Points is indispensable, for instance ‘A set of fairly general and abstract statements that seem to be accepted by nearly all supporters of the Deep Ecology Movement’.”²⁴³ Here Naess discusses the principles included in the eight points, and embraces some of the changes that have been suggested. For example, he likes Fritjof Capra’s reformulation of the second principle (Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realizations of these values and are also values in themselves) to read “fundamental interdependence, richness and diversity contribute to the flourishing of human and non-human life on earth”.²⁴⁴ He also discusses

the fourth point (The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease), saying that there has been much controversy over this. For example, Naess cites Robin Attfield's criticism that the deep ecology movement places greater value on "the biosphere as an organic whole", when instead "our loyalty should be focused on fellow-humans or fellow creatures."²⁴⁵ Still, most supporters of the deep ecology movement agree with this principle, although Naess adds that there seems to be some dissonance between acceptance of the principle in theory, and putting the principle into action. He acknowledges that the logistics of population reduction is a different matter from acceptance of the idea. It is also something that in the end is a very personal matter – if one agrees with this principle in theory, then in practice, that person (assuming a single life partner) should not have more than two children, and in fact should probably only have one or even none. Naess suggests "softening" the fourth principle to read "It would be better for humans to be fewer, and much better for non-humans"²⁴⁶.

While the above represents just a few of many suggested re-visionings, it illustrates that there are many ways of interpreting and presenting the main principles of the deep ecology movement, while keeping the basic message the same. Certainly they are useful tools in the discussion of what the deep ecology movement is all about. Naess writes that the eight principles "have been helpful in fostering feelings of being closely together in an immense task of supreme value". At the same time, he stresses that it would be a "grave misinterpretation" to think of these points as being an expression of "*the* philosophy characteristic of the Deep Ecology movement, or even *the* principles of Deep Ecology"²⁴⁷ (his emphasis). There is more to the deep ecology movement than just

the core principles. Those who subscribe to the principles of deep ecology should consider some form of praxis –one must “walk the walk”, not simply “talk the talk”. This is not to say that the principles, as articulated by any of the above authors are without value, but rather that supporters of these principles must, as Naess himself originally said, be willing to deeply question their own positions and beliefs.

Beyond the platform: other components of the deep ecology movement

Bill Devall wrote in a review of the deep ecology movement that “some supporters of the deep ecology movement assert that the platform is the heart of deep ecology... others disagree, arguing that the gestalt of deep ecology, the intuition of deep ecology, is the heart of the movement.”²⁴⁸ By this, Devall is referring to the questioning of core values, and the concept of extending beyond the “ego self” to the “ecological self” through self-realization. Self-realization is a difficult concept: as Rothenberg writes (rather unhelpfully), “it is a type of understanding that is easy to feel, but quite difficult to describe.”²⁴⁹ Naess himself quotes Eric Fromm in summarizing the concept with the phrase “realizing inherent potentialities” which is, says Naess “a good, less-than-ten-word clarification of ‘self-realization.’”²⁵⁰ Self-realization can be understood within in the first circle (individual interior) of the concentric circles model, and the methodology of phenomenology; the deep ecology movement as a whole can be understood within both the first circle and the third circle (collective interior).

This self-realization was part of Naess’ own ecosophy (Ecosophy T). Ecosophies are “a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. A philosophy as a kind of sofia or wisdom... [it] contains both norms, rules, postulates, value priority announcements and hypotheses concerning the state of affairs in our universe... The details of an

ecosophy will show many variations”²⁵¹ from person to person. In a way, this is like the worldviews discussed in the previous chapter; there are certain foundational elements (paradigms in worldviews, platform principles in deep ecology), but the specific elements, and the ways those elements are acted upon, are unique to each person.

Self-realization

Whether or not Naess intended self-realization to be at the core of the deep ecology movement is not entirely clear, although it is clear that he felt this was an important step for individuals to attempt. He wrote extensively on the subject, both as part of the literature of the deep ecology movement, and as part of the peace movement. The general idea of self-realization is the “reduction of the dominance of the narrow self or the ego. Through the wider Self, every living being is connected intimately, and from this intimacy follows... the practice of nonviolence.”²⁵² As we noted above, the deep ecology movement is also about nonviolence towards, or peace with, the natural environment.

Naess writes that while it is possible that self-realization and the development of a personal ecosophy may be designated as “the one ultimate premise” he also realizes that “some feel at home with this, others do not.” Because self-realization is not something that all followers of deep ecology see as essential, he says, it has no place in the eight platform principles.²⁵³ Drenegson adds that some who support the platform principles and the deep ecology movement generally, still “prefer to find their ultimate premise and ecosophies grounded in a different conception of self, emphasizing the social self.”²⁵⁴ Still, the development of the “ecological self” as Naess calls it, can be part of the deep questioning that the deep ecology movement advocates.

Naess defines the ecological self thus: “The ecological self of a person is that with which this person identifies”, including both human and non-human lives, animate and inanimate nature, attachment to place (or sense of place), potential of self and others, and so on. Self realization occurs when we “see ourselves in others”; thus the self is “widened and deepened” beyond the “narrow ego” self. It is an affinity with other beings, and a sense of altruism and empathy towards others.²⁵⁵ Drengson, in *Wild Way Home*, quotes a Native American elder as saying “If you do not know that you are these plants, these rocks and mountains, these birds in the sky, this ground under our feet, and these animals, you do not truly know who you are.”²⁵⁶ A little further on in this book, Drengson describes his own journey towards discovering his ecological self, and writes that while he identifies “most strongly with Southern Vancouver Island and the Northern Olympic Peninsula, [his] ecological Self includes the whole Island, the whole Peninsula and the Pacific Ocean Juan de Fuca Straits between them.”²⁵⁷

Another explanation can be found in *This Sacred Earth*, where Roger Gottlieb writes that “for deep ecology people’s ‘selves’ are not bounded solely by individuality or social group, but partly constituted by our connections to and at times identity with the natural world... the expansion of identity has to do with connections to the nonhuman.”²⁵⁸ In this same book is a quote from Devall and Sessions: “The deep ecology sense of self-realization goes beyond the modern Western sense of ‘self’ as an isolated ego... Self, in this sense, is experienced as integrated with the whole of nature.”²⁵⁹ Joanna Macy calls this “the greening of the self.” She also believes that this is an essential part of becoming more ecologically aware in a world that tries to move us in the opposite direction. She writes that “when you look at what is happening to our world... it

becomes clear that unless you have some roots in a spiritual practice that holds life sacred and encourages joyful communion with all your fellow beings, facing the enormous challenges ahead becomes nearly impossible.”²⁶⁰ She goes on to discuss the concept of self/other and ways in which that construct can be dismantled, so that we think instead of “all” as part of our selves. This realization “helps us to reinhabit time and own our story as life on Earth,” Macy explains, pointing out that “the ecological self, like any notion of selfhood, is a metaphoric construct, useful for what it allows us to perceive and how it helps us to behave. It is dynamic and situational, a perspective we can choose to adopt according to context and need.”²⁶¹

Self-realization, then, is not just about our individual selves; it is also about what and with whom we identify; and this can include human and nonhuman modes of being. Naess points out that “our self-realization is hindered if the self-realization of others, with whom we identify, is hindered.”²⁶² So, if self-realization is the recognition of potential, and the extension of the self, then self-realization is also about realizing the potential of others, whether human or non-human. And one good way to discover the inherent potential of others is to learn about them, study them, be interested in them. This relates to the concepts in Chapter 2, as it ties in with hearing the voices less heard – the stories that are not part of the currently dominant paradigm can be learned, studied, interacted with as part of the extension of the self.

This may be a key point in how the deep ecology movement can help in the understanding of the meanings and wisdom that resides in sacred places and their stories. By interacting with the presences of these places, it may be possible to understand the “inherent potentialities” of that place; there may come a recognition that spirit,

consciousness, and potential, are not exclusively human conditions but reside also in nature. In the case of a place such as Stonehenge, it may be a more difficult step to recognize consciousness in the stones, while in a place like Puzzlewood, it is not at all difficult to feel, and discover, the presence of both animate and inanimate inhabitants of the landscape – some of whom (for example, some of the trees) have been around for a very long time.

In both cases, one may do well to heed Naess' observation that "the 'everything hangs together' maxim of ecology applies to the self and its relation to other living beings, ecosystems, the ecosphere, the earth, with its long history."²⁶³ Self-realization involves healing the relationship with all members of "the widest community, that of all living beings."²⁶⁴ It can be, happily, about letting go of negative feelings and responses, about being joyful, about celebrating the possibilities and unity of all things. Naess makes a connection between "joy, happiness and human self-realization" where joy is an attribute of the wide, deep ecological self. Nature, he says, "is so rich we cannot see everything at once" but we can see joy in living things.²⁶⁵ Not only that, but working towards self-realization may also bring joy to ourselves.

Personal ecosophies

Another aspect of the deep ecology movement involves the development of a personal ecosophy. Naess defines ecosophy as "a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium."²⁶⁶ Drengson describes ecosophy as "a philosophy of life aiming for ecological wisdom and harmony in all our relationships."²⁶⁷ Elsewhere, he elaborates on this definition, writing that "ecosophy literally means ecological harmony and wisdom. Ecosophies are diverse evolving lifestyles... (and) are enlivened by spontaneous

spirituality... they are personal and place based.”²⁶⁸ The key point is that ecosophies are *personal*; that is, there is no single ecosophy that is “the” definitive ecosophy of the deep ecology movement. Naess articulates his own ecosophy, which he calls Ecosophy T (the T stands for Tvergastein, the name of Naess’s personal mountain retreat in Norway).²⁶⁹ In essence, Ecosophy T is about understanding *place* – this particular place – in all its nuances, all its seasons, all its moods. It is about, as Drengson explains, “thinking, experiencing, and acting in the world with an extended sense of self-identification and expansion of care to the small details of daily life, transcending the small ego self.”²⁷⁰ It may seem that the development of an ecosophy is tied to the idea of self-realization, but an ecosophy doesn’t have to include any specific components; the details will depend on your personal set of beliefs and your expression of your ultimate premises (think back to the four levels of questioning near the beginning of this chapter).

As with the platform principles, personal ecosophies can be expressed in many different ways, and can include any religious or philosophical grounding that a person finds inspiring. Because people live in such diverse places, and hold such diverse beliefs and worldviews, it makes sense that an ecosophy that is place-based will vary greatly from person to person. This sort of diversity is both encouraged and sustained by the deep ecology movement. Drengson suggests that one way to approach the development of a personal ecosophy is to “live day by day with increasing mindfulness so as to harmonize all our relationships with other humans, the animals, plants, rivers and rocks.”²⁷¹ By this he means that as we learn to care / develop an ethic of care for all forms of being in our home place, we increase our self-realization. The development of an ecosophy and the work towards self-realization are thus intricately connected. Looking back at the eight

platform principles, the seventh principle states that the changes wrought by adherence to the principles of the deep ecology movement are “mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living.” It is possible that as we come to appreciate our home places – those places where we find paths to self-realization, and where personal ecosophies are based – then we can see how the platform principles, self-realization, and a personal ecosophy all come together to both form and support the principles of long-range, deep ecology movement.

The praxis of the deep ecology movement will look different in the life of every supporter of the deep ecology movement, and this is a good thing. The way personal ecosophies are developed and interpreted can change and grow as personal circumstances change – for example, if a person moves from one place to another. It is possible to develop new relationships, new understandings and new appreciations of a new home place. The stories of this home place can be learned; by walking among the wild places, if any are available, by finding new flowers, hearing new bird songs, listening to rustlings in the grass and leaves as creatures move about and live their lives. Learning to live in place, in an ecologically aware manner, can bring joy into our lives. It may be possible to learn much about ourselves and our place in the world and in nature, just by learning to listen to the voices that surround us – and paying attention to the stories that reside in places. This is where deep ecology principles and approaches can be of use in understanding sacred places and their stories too.

Summary and final thoughts

This review of the principles of the deep ecology movement has included a discussion of its development, how it differs from the shallow ecology movement, and how it ties in with the social justice and peace movements. The eight platform principles were introduced and examined, and suggestions that have been offered to modify them from their original formulation were discussed. The basics of self-realization and why it is an important concept within the deep ecology were elucidated, and the ways in which self-realization is linked to the development of a personal ecosophy were shown. Throughout the discussion, it was noted that there is no one, single, “right” definition of the deep ecology movement or its platform principles, no single “right” way to act upon deep ecology principles, and that diversity is a key feature of all aspects of the deep ecology movement. These principles, as well as self-realization and ecosophies, can act as a guide in the quest to understand, learn from, and create change based on, the stories of sacred places.

I will finish with a personal story. Not so long ago, as I struggled with depression, and with combining my work at school with my work as a single parent, Alan Drengson very kindly gave me a copy of his book *Wild Way Home*. In it, he talks about “whole arts”; practices which “enhance sensitivity to the feelings and energies of ourselves and the world around us.”²⁷² Some examples of whole arts are tai chi, aikido, trance dancing, and walking or hiking in nature. Based in Victoria, Drengson talks about climbing local summits (of which he names 36). The ones closest to home for me are Mount Douglas (Pkols is the First Nations name) and Mount Tolmie (the former I can see at the end of the road as I walk towards my home).

Sometimes when the world overwhelms me, I feel the need to just go and wander in the forests around the base of Pkols. I find this to be very soothing, just listening to the trees, absorbing the peacefulness of the place, observing the journey of a small insect as it climbs a tree or negotiates a tricky fallen log, listening to the songs of the birds and the wind, gaining sustenance from the subtle energies of the place. But I had never climbed up to the top of the mountain. I was a little dubious that it would be any different from experiencing the forest and the trees at the base. Then one day, shortly after I had finished my first read of *Wild Way Home*, a good friend came by unannounced. He could see that I was not having a very good day and that I was feeling very stressed. He suggested that we go climb a mountain.

It was a beautiful, sunny, and warm day. We went to the park and walked from the base parking lot all the way up to the top. This was a transformational day for me. Being at the summit was exhilarating! It is hard to explain exactly *why*, but it lifted my spirits immeasurably. I could see the whole of what I have come to think of as my home place spread out below and beyond me, and it was beautiful. For several hours, we wandered both on and off paths through trees and rocks, sat in a patch of sunlight, enjoyed the cooling shade of the trees, talked, or sat silently and listened to the sounds of the mountain all around us. I returned home renewed, in a far better frame of mind than I had been just a few hours before.

Since then, I have made a point of climbing up both Pkols and Mount Tolmie, either alone, with my daughter, or with friends. Each time is just as exhilarating and renewing as was the first. This, to me, is a path to the praxis of deep ecology and part of my own journey towards self-realization – living in my home place, appreciating and

communing with the wild ways and wild natures that surround me. It is a way for me to remember that peace with nature is deeply fulfilling and healing. It connects me to the lives with whom I share this very special place – the trees and birds and insects, the deer and raccoons and rabbits, the winds, the sun, the rains, and all parts of Earth. The interconnectedness and beauty of it all takes my breath away every time.

In the next chapter, I turn to the question of what, exactly, it means for something to be sacred, and how sacredness affects the ways in which one might think about, act in and react to place, and how the stories in place can act as a sort of guidebook for ways of attuning to the enchantment in nature. I will discuss what the sacred means to societies and to individuals, and how it may be recognized as it resides in places.

Endnotes

²⁰⁹ Alan Drengson, “Ecophilosophy, Ecosophy and the Deep Ecology Movement: An Overview,” in *The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy* 14, no. 3 (1997): 110-111. Naess’s original article, “The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement: A summary,” appeared in *Inquiry* 16 (1973): 95-100. A revised version of Drengson’s article (1999) is available online: <http://www.ecospherics.net/index.html>.

²¹⁰ The point of this chapter is not to go into a detailed discussion of what a framework “is”. However, for a good general description, see University of Southern California Library, “Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper,” USC Libraries. Last updated October 2013. Available at: <http://libguides.usc.edu/content.php?pid=83009&sid=618409>.

²¹¹ David Landis Barnhill, “Deep Ecology” in *Encyclopedia Of Earth*, revised October 12, 2006. Available online: http://www.eoearth.org/article/Deep_ecology. Barnhill writes that there are three common meanings for the term “deep ecology”: first, as reference to “any environmental philosophy that critiques deep-seated worldviews and proposes a radical alternative”; secondly as “a platform, first formulated as eight principles by Arne Naess” and lastly, as “a philosophy of nature that is in line with this platform but is more specific in... views and values.” It seems that all three refer more to the philosophical rather than active part of deep ecology; however, as explained in the course of this chapter, Naess felt that deep ecology should be something that involves praxis.

²¹² Naess’s affinity for Rachel Carson and Aldo Leopold is well documented. See, for example, Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1985), 65 and 76; Harold Glasser, “Deep Ecology,” in *International Encyclopaedia of Social and Behavioural Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes. (Oxford: Pergamon, 2001). Available on-line: <http://www.deep-ecology.net/writing/glasser.html>; and Drengson, “Overview” (online). For the influence of Muir and Thoreau, see Glasser, online.

²¹³ Glasser, online.

²¹⁴ Drengson, “Overview,” (online).

²¹⁵ Alan Drengson, “Introduction,” in *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*, eds. Alan Drengson and Bill Devall ((Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2008), 26.

²¹⁶ Drengson, “Overview.”

- ²¹⁷ Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary," in *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*, eds. Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 3.
- ²¹⁸ Arne Naess, "Self-Realization: An Ecologic Approach to Being in the World," in *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 89.
- ²¹⁹ Arne Naess, "The Three Great Movements," in *The Selected Works of Arne Naess*, ed. Alan Drengson. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 219-225 and 220.
- ²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 221.
- ²²¹ *Ibid.*, 220.
- ²²² *Ibid.*, 222.
- ²²³ Arne Naess, "The Basics of the Deep Ecology Movement," in *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 106.
- ²²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 106-107.
- ²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 115.
- ²²⁷ Drengson and Inoue, "Introduction," in *Anthology*, xxiv.
- ²²⁸ Alan Drengson and Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement; Origins, Development and Future Prospects" *The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy* 26, no. 10 (2010), 48. See also Drengson, "Communication Ecology of Arne Naess," *The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy* 26, no. 10 (2010), 102. This issue of the journal was dedicated to the life and works of Arne Naess and Bill Devall.
- ²²⁹ Arne Naess, "Basics," 111-112.
- ²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 106.
- ²³¹ *Ibid.*
- ²³² David Landis Barnhill and Roger Gottlieb, eds., *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 1.
- ²³³ Joanna Macy, *World as Lover, World as Self* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 2007), 103.
- ²³⁴ Naess, "Basics", 106.
- ²³⁵ J. Stan Rowe, "Deep Ecology Platform: Moving it from Biocentric to Ecocentric," *The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy* 13, no.1 (1996): 26.
- ²³⁶ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Ballentine Books, 1966), xviii. Originally published by Oxford University Press, 1949.
- ²³⁷ David Rothenberg, "A Platform of Deep Ecology," in *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*, 158.
- ²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 163.
- ²³⁹ Naess, "Basics," 114-115.
- ²⁴⁰ Ted Mosquin, Stan Rowe et al, "A Manifesto for Earth," *Biodiversity* 5, no. 11 (Jan.-March 2004), 4. This is also available on line: http://www.ecospherics.net/pages/Earth_Manifesto.html.
- ²⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴² *Ibid.*
- ²⁴³ Arne Naess, "The Deep Ecology 'Eight Points' Revisited," in *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*, ed. George Sessions (Boston: Shambala, 1995), 214.
- ²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴⁵ Naess, "Basics," 107.
- ²⁴⁶ Naess "Eight Points," 218.
- ²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 220.
- ²⁴⁸ Bill Devall, "The Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: 1960-2000 – a review," (1999). Available: <http://www.deep-ecology.net/writing/deepeco.html>
- ²⁴⁹ Rothenberg, 162.
- ²⁵⁰ Naess, "Self-Realization," 86.
- ²⁵¹ Drengson, "Overview," online.
- ²⁵² Naess, "Self-Realization," 90.
- ²⁵³ Naess, "Eight Points," 215.
- ²⁵⁴ Drengson, "Introduction," online.
- ²⁵⁵ Naess, "Self-Realization," 84.
- ²⁵⁶ Alan Drengson, *Wild Way Home* (Victoria: Lightstar, 2010), 133. On 134, there is a very useful diagram showing how the "self" progresses from the ego self to the ecologic self to the cosmologic self. This diagram is similar in many ways to the concentric circles model presented in Chapter One.
- ²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

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- ²⁵⁸ This is in Gottlieb's introduction to the section in the book on spiritual deep ecology. (Roger Gottlieb, *This Sacred Earth*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), 405.
- ²⁵⁹ The quote is not attributed, other than by name. It can be found in *This Sacred Earth*, 404.
- ²⁶⁰ Macy, 150.
- ²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 157.
- ²⁶² Naess, "Self-Realization," 82-83.
- ²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 87.
- ²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.
- ²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 94. See also Drengson, *Wild Way*, 191.
- ²⁶⁶ Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements," in *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*, ed. George Sessions (Boston: Shambala, 1995), 155.
- ²⁶⁷ Drengson, *Wild Way*, 16.
- ²⁶⁸ Alan Drengson, "Tree Meditation Meets Shamanism," in *Wild Foresting*, eds. Alan Drengson and Duncan Taylor (Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 2009), 146.
- ²⁶⁹ This is widely documented. See, for example, Drengson, "Introduction", 34; Drengson, "Overview," online. For an appreciation of Naess' affinity for Tvergastein, see Naess, "An Example of Place: Tvergastein," in *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 45-64.
- ²⁷⁰ Drengson, "Introduction," 37. Another way of expressing "expansion of care" is "ethic of care."
- ²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 40.
- ²⁷² Drengson, *Wild Way*, 14.

Chapter 5: Finding the “Sacred” in Sacred Places

The meaning of sacred – the sacred in place – the role of religion–
contested places – 5 criteria

“To encounter the sacred is to be alive at the deepest center of human existence. Sacred places are the truest definitions of the earth; they stand for the earth immediately and forever; they are its flags and shields. If you would know the earth for what it really is, learn it through its sacred places.”

N. Scott Momaday

What is meant by the word “sacred”? In a very general sense, it describes religious objects within a religious setting. Certain rituals or ceremonies– for example communion or marriage – may also be considered sacred. It could be something that produces the kind of reverence that is often described by terms such as spiritual or religious. Whatever the context, to say that something is sacred, implies that it ought to be treated with a special kind of reverence or awe. It is, after all, a reminder that something greater than ourselves exists.

When one thinks of sacred places, built places such as churches, temples, or mosques might come to mind. These are usually “made” sacred through rituals of consecration. There are places that are sacred for the activities that have taken place there, such as graveyards or other burial grounds (for example barrows), or where especially significant events in religious history have taken place, such as the birthplace of Jesus Christ. These are all deeply storied places, sometimes they are contested places, and all have layers of meaning that are both personal and communal.

The kinds of sacred places that are under discussion here are also deeply storied and multi-layered, but they belong to a different category. While all of the above rely on human actions to gain sacredness, places such as Stonehenge, Puzzlewood, and many

others, gain their sacredness – or numinous qualities – primarily from their geographic location and natural surroundings, and that environment is the reason that certain ceremonies and other sacred activities take place there. For example, many of the most sacred or significant rites at Stonehenge take place *there* because of the precise alignment of the henge with celestial events such as solstices and equinoxes, and its location on the Salisbury plain affords a clear horizon. The numinous qualities of Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean reside *in place*; in the forest, filled with many presences and stories, and a sense that ancient wisdom and magic lives in the trees and the earth; this is not something that can be moved or transferred to any other site.

There are of course many other sites worldwide where sacredness is location dependent. There are sites which contain built elements, such as standing stones, henges, shrines, and medicine wheels. These built elements relate in some way to the surrounding landscape, though the way in which this occurs varies; in Stonehenge the placement of the stones aligns with the sun, the moon, and the stars, in other places shrines facilitate ceremonies, markers may indicate focal points, and so on. In many cultures both current and historic there are sacred landscapes as well, such as mountains, rivers, rock formations, forests, caves, or other natural features.

But, how do such places come to be recognized as sacred? This is the central question addressed in this chapter. The result is a list of criteria that could serve as a guideline to assess sacredness in places. This also helps to understand what sacredness means to individuals, to cultures, and to place. I also look at the role of religion, at the issue of authenticity, and at problems of contestation, where sacred places are seen as sacred by some but not by others.

To give this chapter its context, I begin with a list of criteria that may be helpful in assessing sacredness in a place, all of which will be explained in greater detail in this chapter. Some of the terms, such as “divine” will also be further explored. The list is:

1. It is revealed by the divine, not by chosen or created by humans
2. It creates a numinous experience
3. It evokes certain types of behaviors caused by the experience
4. It has sacred stories attached to it
5. It brings benefit to both the individual and to the community of followers as a whole.

What follows is an explication of the reasons for the inclusion of each criterion. To begin, I offer a brief history of ways in which the sacred has been understood within society – not just within religion or religious studies. As with Chapter 2, this historical review is intended to give some context to how the current understanding of sacredness came about. The work of Rudolf Otto, Mircea Eliade, and William James were instrumental in forming modern conceptions of religion, of the sacred, and of the sacred in place. The following section also includes an assessment of the ways that sacredness is currently understood in, and relates to, place.

The history of “sacred”

Sometimes a good way to figure out what something is, is to figure out what it is not. For example, light is not dark; up is not down, in is not out, and sacred is not profane, or not secular. But this just raises more questions, such as what is profane? How to distinguish between the profane, the mundane, the secular, and the sacred? Is there a sort of sliding scale? The sociologist Emile Durkheim writes that the world is divided “into two domains which include everything that is sacred in one and everything that is profane in

the other.” He adds that sacred things are “considered superior in dignity and in power to profane things,” and although “there are many degrees of sacred things,” really the simplest way to distinguish things as sacred is to say that they are not profane.²⁷³

However, in this view, “sacred” is a distinctly dualistic term – either something “is” or “is not” sacred, although within the former category something might be more or less sacred. But there are few absolutes in this world – dusk is neither fully light nor fully dark, a person can walk halfway up a hill, and when standing in a doorway, one is neither in nor out. Belden Lane’s observation from Chapter One can be recalled here, that “sacred and profane, religion and culture, are inevitably *overlapping* dimensions of human experience. The ‘sacred’ never appears as a full-blown transcendent reality” (Lane’s emphasis).²⁷⁴ Also, according to most of the authors so far encountered in this dissertation, a sacred place is very often about the *feel* of the place. But that in itself may not be sufficient to define or describe a place as sacred. Still, whether sacred is a feeling, an object, an action, a place, or some combination of these, it is still necessary to gain a better understanding what it means to describe anything as sacred.

For such a little word, “sacred” has garnered a great deal of attention in the Western academic and theologic traditions. This attention has come not only from theologians and religious scholars, but also from anthropologists, ethnologists, sociologists, philosophers, and even lawyers. It has been discussed and dissected at length in each of these disciplines. In this dissertation, the sacred is mainly approached in the post-Renaissance Western intellectual tradition; not because other traditions or timeframes are any less interesting or should be dismissed, but because throughout this

dissertation, the focus is upon this tradition and the effect it has on current thought processes.

Rudolf Otto, a theologian in the early 1900s, wrote an influential work, *The Idea of the Holy*, in which he maintains that the holy or the sacred “is a category of interpretation and valuation peculiar to the sphere of religion.”²⁷⁵ He also observes that “the fact is that we have come to use the words holy [and] sacred in an entirely derivative sense, quite different from that which they originally bore.”²⁷⁶ Over the years it seems that this confusion has remained; 80 years on, Otto’s lament is echoed by Matthew Evans, who writes that the word sacred “is unselfconsciously used in such disparate ways that meaning is sometimes unclear.”²⁷⁷ It has come into general usage as a way to describe things that are important or valued, but not necessarily associated with the divine (in a deistic sense) or even with religion in a general sense. In the process, it has lost some of its cachet. Because it is now used to describe so many different things, Evans notes that “both meanings inferred and meanings intended are more complex than explicit definition may allow.”²⁷⁸ Throughout his essay on interpretations of the sacred, Evans continually refers back to the point that the meanings of words shift over time, and sometimes hold multiple meanings at the same time, and sometimes multiple words mean the same thing. This, he concludes, is why there is such wide and various usage of “sacred.”

There are several ways in which the sacred is commonly conceptualized. It can be, as noted above, a thing, an activity, or a place that is treated with reverence. It has often been used to describe experiences, usually in conjunction with a place, and almost always in conjunction with religion or revelation. In some ways the sacred can be thought

of as a feature of religion; that is, all religions contain notions of the sacred, although the specific conceptualizations of what *is* sacred, and what sacred *is*, will differ. Without some framework of religion, spirituality, or divinity, the notion of sacred loses validity. For something to be sacred, it has to be connected with religion, religious experience, spirituality or spiritual experience. It has to be connected in some way with an idea of the divine, the numinous, or the spiritual.

Divine is another term that should be clarified; “divine” here to be not meant to be understood in a purely theistic sense, although the Latin origin of the word is “divinus”, meaning “of a god.” This word too has been co-opted to mean many different things, such as any object of beauty (as in, you look divine). I am going to take the liberty here of applying a fairly broad definition of divine, mostly because it is a lot less cumbersome than listing the entire panoply of transcendent, extra-anthropologic, supra-human entities, terrestrial spirit inhabitants, and extensions of the self (as in the Buddhist understanding that the divine is “located within the life of the individual”²⁷⁹) that it is intended to encompass here, every time that the phrase is used. The divine thus conceptualized includes (but may not be limited to): extensions of the self, gods and goddesses, ancestral spirits whether of humans or animals, spirits and sprites of or inhabiting trees, rocks, water, and other natural objects (more on these later), and both terrestrial and extraterrestrial manifestations of spirits and beings. This broad definition is used so as not to exclude any group of people (for example Buddhists, pagans, or those who subscribe to nature-based religions or beliefs, such as pagans or Shintoists among others).

This wide definition is not without precedent, nor without good reasons. Art historian Christopher Witcombe, who has a particular interest in sacred places, writes that

within the experience of the sacred, “The presumption is that the divine or some supernatural or spiritual force is manifesting itself to the beholder.” Furthermore, while “the perception of the divine is usually completely convincing to the beholder, who can become instantly a believer in whatever supernatural force of divinity is being made manifest thereby,”²⁸⁰ any person’s perception of the divine can only be made within the context of that person’s worldviews and experiences – in other words, in the context of their cultural situatedness. Whether a person believes the divine to be an ancestral spirit, or a goddess or a tree sprite, this is the way in which the divine will become manifest to and understood by them.

The divine, then, is part of the experience of the sacred. Both Otto and Mircea Eliade tend to approach their descriptions of the sacred experientially or phenomenologically – that is, they interpret the recognition of the sacred through a person or peoples’ experience of a place or thing as sacred, rather than describing sacredness as a quality of a thing itself. Otto’s *The Idea of the Holy* is often seen as a milestone in the modern interpretation of the sacred, while Eliade’s *The Sacred and The Profane*, published 40 years later, is widely acknowledged as essential reading for anyone interested in the history and philosophy of religions. But take another look at the titles. In the original German, Otto’s book is titled *Das Heilige*, and the German title of Eliade’s book is *Das Heilige und Das Profane*. Yet English translations invariably present the former as “the holy”, and the first part of the latter as “the sacred”.²⁸¹

Evans believes that Otto is referring to the sacred as a sub-category of the holy, while for Eliade the sacred refers to a transcendent reality (something not of this world, but real nonetheless). Furthermore, according to Durkheim, sacred is a social construct

and therefore can be applied to whatever society deems to apply it to. Taking these three approaches into account, Evans writes that “for Eliade, ‘sacred’ means something very different than it does for Durkheim. Perhaps ‘holy,’ ‘transcendent’ or some other term connotating an unseen order of existence would better capture what Eliade means.”²⁸²

The meanings that Eliade and Otto ascribe to the word are more similar; Willard Oxtoby thinks that Otto’s “holy” is equivalent to Eliade’s “sacred” – and indeed, the two book titles in German are the same, as noted above. This explication gains even more credence when we read Eliade’s own 1956 introduction to *The Sacred and the Profane* where he refers to Otto’s *Das Heilige* as *The Sacred*.²⁸³ Oxtoby observes that “in the English speaking world, writers on the nature of religion in general have referred sometimes to *the holy* and sometimes to *the sacred* as though the phenomena were identical and the terminology a rather incidental matter of personal taste... Eliade’s generation has invested the sacred with the same connotations that Otto’s generation found in the holy” (his italics).²⁸⁴

Given this situation, Otto’s introduction of the word “numinous” in *The Idea of the Holy* is of particular interest. The idea of the numinous has been widely used since its introduction by Otto into the general literature on the sacred. Otto used the word to fill what he saw as something of an identity crisis for the word sacred. Robert Streetman, in his essay “Some Later Thoughts of Otto on the Holy”, suggests that Otto believed that the “primary meaning” of the word holy – the experienced meaning – had been submerged and obscured by a secondary meaning of the holy “as ethical righteousness, or even moral self-righteousness.”²⁸⁵ Otto wished to have a word that would recall that experiential, primary sense of the holy, or the sacred, and to do so he found the word

“numinous.”²⁸⁶ Given his usage of the word, it might in some ways be more correct to call sacred places “numinous places” instead. Perhaps this could be a useful way to distinguish built places (churches, temples, mosques, etc) from natural sacred places – the former could be categorized as “sacred” places, and the latter as “numinous” places. As “numinous” is primarily meant to be understood as experiential, it sits well with the idea that natural sacred places are best described phenomenologically.²⁸⁷

The sacred and the numinous in place

Both Otto and later Eliade define a place or thing as sacred via the numinous experience, and other, later scholars, such the theologian Thomas Berry, also use the term extensively to describe that non-rational feeling of awe in the presence of a divine or sacred place or thing. Interestingly, John Harvey, translator of the 1923 edition of *The Idea of the Holy*, carefully assigns the phrase numinous “no moral import”, but instead describes it as “non-rational religious apprehension and its object.” Otto defines the “numinous” as a “category of value and... a state of mind”²⁸⁸ and uses it to express the experience of the divine, or the holy. But consider for a moment what Otto may have meant by a “category of value”. If “value” indicates something material that ought to be cherished, then it would be logical to assume that Otto believes there are different types or categories of objects that ought to be valued in different ways. If, however, this value comes from a state of mind, rather than from a tangible quality of an object, then the sacredness of the cherished object becomes entirely subjective, and is therefore only accessible through the conscious experience of any individual. Given Otto’s preference for experiential explanations, the latter seems more likely. In this case it is the experience of the thing, not the thing itself that is primary.

This brings us back again to the phenomenological approach favored by Belden Lane, Dolores LaChapelle, David Abram, Alan Drenghson and others, to describe sacred places. But this still doesn't explain how to recognize a sacred place; it could be argued that one may experience the numinous (or have a numinous experience) in a place, but it wouldn't *necessarily* follow that the place is itself numinous, or sacred: it is merely the vessel by which the numinous is experienced, much as a book is a vessel by which to experience events to which the reader would not otherwise have access. Certainly that place would come to have special meaning to the individual, and would become part of their narrative and their storied places, but again, that in itself doesn't make it sacred to an entire society or religion.

Joseph Campbell also addresses the subject of Otto's numinous experience, writing that "talking and teaching cannot produce it... only the accident of experience and the sign symbols of a living myth can elicit it." Campbell goes on to point out that these symbols "cannot be invented. They are found."²⁸⁹ This aligns him with Eliade's assertion that the sacred is revealed by the divine, rather than with Durkheim's theory that sacredness is assigned by people. Still, this does not explain how the qualities that elicit this numinous experience - or the conditions that combine to create the experience - come about in the first place.

Otto later writes that a "numinous object" - which he defines as an object descended from the gods - would have both subjective and objective value. This object would require both our fascination (subjective) and our homage (objective).²⁹⁰ Thus, we must *experience* the numinous subjectively in order to *understand* it objectively. Here Otto adds two more phrases - the "creature-feeling" (a feeling of humbleness) that one

feels in numinous encounters and the related “mysterium tremendum”, which is the sense of “awe before the mystery of a presence and the presence of a mystery.”²⁹¹ In this sense the numinous is experienced in a particular kind of place that embodies, at least at times, a particular kind of presence.

Is experience alone sufficient to describe a place as sacred? The experience would have to be reproducible in more than one person I think. It would not be sufficient if only one person had a numinous experience in a specific place; as noted above, that would be a personal epiphany or revelation. Durkheim saw religious experience as necessarily social: his position was that “distinctions between the sacred and the profane are always made by groups,”²⁹² from which it would logically follow that sacred places would have to be recognized as such by a society, or a religious or spiritual group. Of course an individual could have a personal and private numinous or religious experience in such a place, much as Lane describes in his account of his experience at a medicine wheel in Wyoming, independently of any other person. In fact, anthropologist Alexander Goldenweiser contends that religious experience “remains a purely individual affair; other individuals are understood to be there, but... their part is that of a stage setting,”²⁹³ thus suggesting that the experience of the sacred, or of a sacred place, is at once both individual and communal.

Eliade discusses the sacred from a slightly different angle. He agrees with Otto’s use of numinous experience to characterize or define an encounter with something divine and “wholly other”, but then introduces his own term, “hierophany”, to “designate the act of manifestation of the sacred.”²⁹⁴ This replaces Otto’s numinous object and in so doing, makes a clear distinction between object and subject. This goes against the idea expressed

by Lane, who in discussions with many different people over the years about their encounters with the numinous, found an interesting commonality: in any person's experience of a sacred place, "the experience 'had' *them* as much as they could be said to have 'had' *it*" (Lane's emphasis)²⁹⁵. In other words, the experience was interactive, and the subject/object distinction becomes blurred, as a sense of oneness with a divine or transcendent presence occurs. Particularly in places where the very land is sacred, this is a common experience. Blain and Wallace found that many of those who go to places such as Stonehenge see these as places to "connect to ideas of reenchantment of nature... [and whose] reenchantment practices involve perceiving nature as animate."²⁹⁶ This relates back to the idea of self-realization as discussed in Chapter 4; there is a sense of connectedness with all of nature. For Eliade, however, the subject-object distinction is absolute, as the person belongs to the profane world, whereas the sacred is transcendent and not of this world.

Eliade further theorizes that any object – a tree or a stone are his prime examples – may be hierophanic, and thereby may invoke a numinous experience. For Eliade, then, all nature and all natural objects hold the *possibility* of becoming hierophanies, although in practice of course this is not the case. Where hierophanies do occur, Eliade finds that such places become recognized as sacred, as places where the sacred chooses to reveal itself, and therefore are qualitatively separate from the surrounding topography. Again, experience is the prime driver for recognizing a place as sacred. In some cases where hierophany does not occur, Eliade allows that "some sign suffices to indicate the sacredness of a place... something that does not belong to this world has manifested itself apodictally" (undeniably).²⁹⁷ But the main problem with the experiential approach is that

where one person may recognize some thing or place as sacred through their intuitive experience of it, another person may not have that same experience of “creature feeling” or of the “mysterium tremendum” at the same place. This may be because the place is not sacred (though the experience of the other person may have been), or because not all people are open to the felt experience.

Eliade and Lane agree that a sacred place is noticeably distinct from other, non-sacred space, regardless of whether that surrounding space is seen as profane or neutrally mundane, though as Lane notes, the boundaries are sometimes blurred. Eliade writes that “every sacred space implies a hierophany, an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different,”²⁹⁸ while Lane describes a “curious transformation of consciousness” that draws a person into “the compelling mystery of the place”²⁹⁹ in a sacred place. (This last echoing both Otto’s and Campbell’s description of the *mysterium tremendum*.) So numinous experience may be part of the criteria for establishing whether a place is sacred, but only when that experience is reproducible by more than one person, although not necessarily all at the same time. This then combines Durkheim and Goldenweiser. Thus the first condition that might be put upon a possibly sacred place is that it can elicit a numinous experience and that this experience has been reproducible.

The general consensus thus far from Otto, Eliade, Durkheim, and those commenting on their works is that sacred experiences cannot be taught, or learned, or even properly described, but rather are intuitive and spontaneous – they are unexpected and unplanned. Eliade offers some theories as to ways in which places may be revealed as sacred, such as a sign from the divine, whether spontaneous or evoked³⁰⁰, but cautions

that cultural and historical factors will mediate the interpretation of any signaling of the sacred. Eliade emphasizes that in any case, the sacred is revealed by the divine in a place chosen by it. Thus, a sacred place for Eliade “is not merely the dramatic experience of the presence of the sacred... it is a point of communication” *with* the sacred.³⁰¹ It is a place where the sacred or the divine is directly present or accessible, and once found by one person, often a shaman or other religious leader, is willing to reveal itself again when called upon.

In such cases, the sacred is *invoked* through ceremony, ritual, or prayer. In other cases, though, the divine may be more evidently or continuously revealed and present, and it calls to us, rather than us calling it; in such cases, the divine may be said to be *evoked*. As noted in the introduction, this is the difference between a place such as Stonehenge, where invocation is generally required, and Puzzlewood, where visitors are drawn into the magic of the place without any need for special ceremonies; the evocative divine is always (or very nearly always) present. In both cases, the sacred place, as Lane writes, is “wholly infused with a sense of extranormal power.”³⁰² Witcombe observes that where there are structures – such as Stonehenge – those structures may then “become the ‘abode’ of the divine” and could serve to “entice the divine to continue to reside at a given place.” This also ties in with the idea of invocation. It is not only natural artifacts that can be hierophanic, according to Witcombe, but “it is through the art and architecture that the sacred or the divine is manifest or represented.”³⁰³

This is an important consideration when discussing whether any given place is truly sacred – a key aspect of sacred place is that it has a revelatory quality. It should not matter whether that revelation is invoked or evoked, as long as it can be experienced.

Revelation can then be added as a second necessary component in evaluating sacredness of a place.

The combination of numinous experience and revelatory quality seems a natural enough concept, and it is possible that either one could come first or both might occur simultaneously. Richard Comstock, in an essay titled “A Behavioral Approach to the Sacred: Category Formation in Religious Studies,” argues that behaviors naturally follow on from feelings evoked in the experience (as per Otto), and therefore it ought be possible to assess sacredness based on the behavior of the person claiming to have had a numinous experience or a “creature-feeling.” Goldenweiser notes that when participating in sacred rites, the individual “is transformed... he feels himself acted upon by a power which is of himself, yet also external to him.”³⁰⁴ This experience, or feeling, postulates Comstock, is “determined by an intentional reference to some sort of object,”³⁰⁵ or by extension, by being in a certain place.

Therefore, sacred places would encourage certain behaviours (and, one must suppose, would discourage others). Since behaviours are observable, Comstock argues that observations of behaviours provide an observable or measurable way of gauging sacredness. It was earlier noted that the current Western worldview rests upon a paradigm that values the scientific method, which requires both observation and measurement, and is widely seen as the most reliable way to confirm things. It is well to be aware that social constructs will affect interpretations of behaviours, and could cause problems unless care is taken to ensure that behaviours are properly understood within their own cultures and not evaluated only through the cultural lens of the observer. With that caveat, there is some value in this approach, particularly when a sacred site is also a contested site.

Comstock concludes that “a model of the sacred based on behavior rather than inner feeling is capable of development in a way that is open to public observation and verification.”³⁰⁶

Meanwhile, in his typology of sacred experiences, N.J. Demerath, a former president of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, lists four categories of the sacred: the integrative, the quest, the collective, and the counter-culture.³⁰⁷ Integrative experiences are those that act as confirmation that there *is* in fact a sacred presence. As examples, Demerath lists religious healings, falling in love (with the divine), and encounters with nature (though not specifically with sacred places in nature).

The second category, the quest, is described as spiritual (but not explicitly religious) experiences that bring new meaning to a person’s life. Those who are on quests “seek new meaning or experiences because they find the old inadequate.”³⁰⁸ Many of these, says Demerath, are individuals who participate in “new spirituality movements”. Demerath cites Wiccans in particular, but would presumably include in this category Druids and other pagans who claim Stonehenge and other Neolithic sites as their sacred places.³⁰⁹

The third category refers to those kinds of collectives or organizations which are not religious in character at all, but create a rarified air about them—for example, political organizations, corporations, or sports teams and their fans.³¹⁰ The final category, counter-culture, includes “movements of resistance and assertion.”³¹¹ Although with these last two Demerath moves into the territory of the non-religious use of the word sacred, he then says that “there is no question that religion remains an important sacred source.”³¹²

Notice that in all of his categories of the sacred, experience, and particularly experience as part of a group, is central.

Lane has noted that “one’s actual embodied experience in encountering a place perceived as sacred is crucial to the sense of magic or awe one finally attributes to it,” so it seems likely that he would be in agreement with Comstock’s behavioral approach, and with Demerath’s first (integrative) category. Both Lane and Comstock warn, though, that a preconceived notion that a place has sacred qualities might also act as a motive for engaging in particular types of behavior. Comstock writes that sacredness “might be understood as reference to the capacity of humans to behave in certain carefully prescribed ways in respect to their environment,”³¹³ while Lane notes that people will often journey to certain places with the expectation of a numinous encounter – an expectation that may well end up being a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy.³¹⁴ When one is open to this experience, according to Eliade, the sacred is felt as “something overpoweringly great, substantial, sublime and truly real.”³¹⁵ He further writes that “the sacred is equivalent to a power, and, in the last analysis, to reality.”³¹⁶ However, he also believes that we all seek to encounter the sacred, even if it is only unconsciously through “dreams, nostalgia and works of the imagination.”³¹⁷

But overall, one would have to trust that people’s actions or behaviours are genuine. If that is the case, there is a third condition for evaluating sacred places: that the place evokes certain kinds of behaviours based on the numinous experiences it induces. The basic premise remains that sacredness is essentially experiential, and the experience and resultant behaviours may define the place. When the sacred is consciously sought, it may be discovered in sacred places; places with hierophanic and numinous qualities.

Once discovered, certain kinds of behaviours would naturally follow (again with the understanding that those behaviours are also culturally mediated).

It is clear that one would expect to find qualitative differences between a sacred place and one not sacred. But there remain questions about the qualities and permanence of sacredness. Can a place lose its sacred qualities if those who held the place sacred have died out or moved on, or does it retain its sacred qualities whether we recognize them or not? If in fact those qualities exist only in relation to our use for or recognition of them, does the place remain sacred nonetheless (just in case another group might come along and “rediscover” those qualities)? And if not, would changes or development of the site become permissible? What would this imply about the temporal or eternal nature of the divine, of spirit, or of the holy? What would it imply about the idea that sacredness is a quality of *place* and not just a product of culture?

In their introduction to their book *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places*, the authors write that “a landscape is sacred because humans perceive it as such.”³¹⁸ While this resonates in some ways with the idea of places being revelatory – both revealing and being revealed – it seems rather vague. Yes, clearly humans would have to perceive a place as being sacred, but it doesn’t follow that all places “perceived” by anyone to be sacred are therefore sacred. It would have to fit certain other criteria, as noted above, such as revelation, numinous experience, and behavioral standards. Nor would it necessarily mean that just because one person does *not* perceive a place as sacred that therefore it is not sacred; there would need to be a consensus within a faith community. As an example of the latter, while a non-religiously-minded person may not perceive Stonehenge as

sacred, seeing it simply as an interesting historical relic, an individual Druid as well as the Druidic community as a whole, will perceive it as sacred.

There is the claim in some literature regarding sacred place that all nature is sacred. The main line of this argument is that if all the world was created by the divine, and everything created by or otherwise connected to the divine is sacred, then all nature is sacred. However, as Jane Hubert points out in “Sacred Beliefs and Beliefs of Sacredness,” even when “the whole landscape may be considered sacred, there are differences between this and the sacredness of sites that have particular significance.”³¹⁹ Eliade writes that the whole cosmos is “at once real, living and sacred; it simultaneously reveals the modalities of being and of sacrality,”³²⁰ but later refers to an “economy of the sacred”, which seems to imply that there are different levels or degrees of sacredness, or else perhaps a distinction between what *reveals* the sacred, and what *is* sacred. Eliade makes a distinction between those revealed sacred places and sacred objects, or hierophanies, and those places that hold intrinsic value and are worthy of our respect, if not our veneration. Levi-Strauss argues that it is “place” that confers sacredness to objects. In *The Nature of Human Society: The Savage Mind*, he writes that “all sacred things must have their place... it could even be said that being in place is what makes them sacred” and is what gives meaning to the world.³²¹

Eliade also addresses the question of whether a place remains sacred even if those who considered it sacred are no longer present in that physical landscape. He asserts that “a religious symbol conveys its message even if it is no longer consciously understood in every part.”³²² Thus it is that one can intuitively know a place to be sacred, even without being aware of or explicitly part of the story of that place. This suggests some sort of

universal recognition of the sacred or of the divine that exists quite apart from those culturally mediated meanings and symbols connected with various religions. The caveat to that, as Eliade and others observe, is that a person must be open to the experience, and open to the paradoxical coexistence of the sacred within a mostly profane, or at least mundane, world. As Douglas Allen explains, “that which appears from somewhere else is the sacred; that through which it appears is the profane.”³²³ In other words, a sacred place appears, and can be understood as sacred, *even though* it is set within the (mostly) profane world.

Arnoldo Vento, in his essay, “Rediscovering the Sacred: From the Secular to a Postmodern Sense of the Sacred,” offers what he terms a “functional” definition of the sacred as being that which exists outside of the “worldly, humane or mundane.”³²⁴ He also points out that in many indigenous North American societies, the sacred was simply part of the whole. There were, to be sure, places where one could come into closer contact with the divine, but there was no explicit dualism. In this worldview “the cosmos was one inseparable reality forever in motion, alive, organic, spiritual and material at the same time.”³²⁶ To these cultures, the idea of “sacred” as a dualistic concept, such as Eliade in particular suggests, would be puzzling. Vento suggests that sacredness may be construed as a way of living harmoniously within the world (here echoing the idea of self-realization as discussed in Chapter 4).³²⁷ The point is that sacred places exist within the everyday world, and can be experienced as such by the ways in which people relate to them in the practice of their everyday lives.

Sacred places have “the capacity to open us to the transcendent”³²⁸ – they connect with a power greater than our everyday ego awareness, whether that power is seen as an

extension of the spiritual self, or as the whole of Earth being greater than the sum of its parts, or as a terrestrial manifestation of divine, or as an extraterrestrial, supra-human divine power that created an ordered world out of cosmic chaos. These places can also help to create community and cultural continuity, and can bring people to an understanding and appreciation of the need to preserve the other-than-human parts of the natural world. But many current cultural milieus don't always uphold those values. These cultural paradigms affect ideas of what can be considered sacred, even when individuals believe that connections between the secular and the transcendent exist.

Lane posits that there are three "procedures" for recognizing or discerning sacredness in place: "the presence of the sacred, the operations of culture, and the particularities of place." He believes that "no deep and incisive reading of sacred space is possible apart from the multi-faceted conversation they provoke." These three elements "form a dance-like exchange that is essential"³²⁹ to the perception of sacredness in place. This chapter has addressed the presence of sacred, and continues to attend to the concept of place, but has not as yet addressed the role of cultures.

Cultural values clearly play a major role in the understanding of the sacred. Eliade writes that "man's reactions to nature are often conditioned by his culture."³³⁰ Lane makes this statement a little more strongly, emphasizing that the "voice" with which the sacred site bespeaks its sacredness "is heard by thoroughly culturally conditioned ears."³³¹ This brings us back once again to the point that sacred spaces are always storied places, and it is vital to listen for and to these stories to understand sacred places. According to Eliade, one function of these stories is to "describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthrough of the sacred into the world."³³² As noted near the beginning of this chapter,

the sacred ultimately needs a comparative value; it is impossible to understand one thing as sacred unless there is something not sacred for comparison, much as one cannot understand the concept of light unless one is aware of what it means to be dark. It is often the stories embedded in places which provide this comparison; in that place, through the performance of rituals based on narratives of belief, one might understand and experience the interconnectedness of humanity, nature, and the divine. The stories and the experience could provide paths and wisdom through which that connection may be understood and embraced. In finding that connection, it might then be possible to find reenchancement with the world and all that it contains both seen and unseen, spoken and unspoken, and come to treat it with greater love and respect (an ethic of care). Therefore, a fourth criterion may be added to the list: that sacred places are storied places – an idea which is at the heart of this whole dissertation.

These stories give meaning to feeling and to experience; they are grounding. These stories, often multilayered and deeply embedded, may serve to connect the place and the divine, and the divine to humans, and to complete the circle, connect humans to the place. They validate understanding of the place as sacred, and may provide a way to understand the world as a numinous, ensouled, and enchanting place. The stories themselves could be considered sacred, numinous things, embedded within the place much as the soul is contained in the body. Sacred (numinous) places are always places with sacred (numinous) stories residing in them. Each exists only insofar as it exists within the other.

The Role of Religion

Since it has been theorized that the sacred exists within a set of religious beliefs, or at least of spiritual awareness, the role that religion – as separate from sacrality – plays in sacred places will now be explored. Religion can be thought of as a shared set of beliefs, rituals, symbols, stories, and actions that are usually (though by no means always) centred on the idea of an other-than-human power.

Ira Chernus, at the University of Colorado, distinguishes between two general modes of scholarship in the study of religion. One approach, he writes, treats religion as “particular kind of experience... it is the quality of the individual's inner experience, not the source of the experience, that serves to define what counts as ‘religion’ and ‘religious’.” The second approach “focuses on societies, or groups of people, rather than individual experience... For these scholars, religion is primarily the overall framework a group uses to understand its world and guide its life.”³³³ There are various early and modern scholars who subscribe to each mode of understanding. It doesn't seem to be a divisive issue exactly; it is more a difference in approach.

Another well-respected early scholar in the study of religion is Friedrich Schleiermacher, who in 1799 stated that “once there is religion, it must necessarily also be social. That not only lies in human nature but also is preeminently in the nature of religion.”³³⁴ He adds though, that the initial experience of religion or religious experience is centred in the individual. In some ways Schleiermacher foreshadows Durkheim, asserting that religion is always and necessarily a social activity. However, paradoxically, in order to join in that social activity, one has to have a personal experience of and feeling for the religion in which they are participating.³³⁵ Durkheim's definition of religion in his

1912 work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, is that it is “a complex system of myths, dogma, rites, and ceremonies.”³³⁶ For Durkheim, the rituals were of primary importance – where previously rituals had been thought of as following on from belief, Durkheim contends that the rituals “actually create the beliefs that accompany them.” It is the rituals that make religion a cultural system; they are “in every society the real ties that bind. They disclose the true meaning of religion.”³³⁷

In terms of sacred places, there is a problem with accepting the Durkheimian theory that religion and rituals act in the same ways in every society. As discussed in Chapter 2, this is what the Romantics – the Counter-Enlightenment – argued against. Each culture or society follows its own path, each governed by its own set of rules. Herder too is relevant here, as his opinion was that in order to understand the history of any given culture, it is necessary to look not only at events but also at art, poetry, literature and other creative endeavours,³³⁸ and seek to understand the culture, including its religion, on its own terms. I would also argue that rituals are based on belief, rather than the other way round; particularly in the case of modern Druidry, new rituals had to be created in place of those lost, and those new rituals are firmly rooted in and framed by their beliefs. It could however be argued quite convincingly that ritual *reinforces* belief. But in any case, Durkheim’s work has been seen as key in the study of religions, especially for those who argue for the study of religion as a construct of culture.

William James, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), sides with the idea that the experience of religion belongs with the individual, and defines religion as “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.”³³⁹

It is interesting that James does not set community as a requirement at all, while, others such as Durkheim are very adamant that religion is only and necessarily a social activity. In any case religion is above all else an anthropogenic and anthropocentric cultural artifact, regardless of which specific elements it may or may not contain, and whether it is personal or social or both.

All these ideas could be combined to say that religion is something an individual experiences and adheres to, is also shared in cultural settings and groups, and contains certain elements as noted above. Therefore, to qualify as a sacred place, a place should be accepted as sacred by a group of people who have had (or are seeking) a religious or spiritual experience of some kind, and they interpret and understand their world through the stories, rituals, symbols and so on that are connected with that place. When sacred places are connected to religions, they act as gathering places for the adherents of that religion. Religion in this way might “verify” the sacredness of place; it gives a structure, a set of stories, beliefs, rituals, and symbols that can be formally transmitted in connection to a place to cause religious, spiritual, or numinous benefits to a community. It also serves to create a cohesive community among believers. While this is commonly understood to be a religious community, it could also be a spiritual community, such as is sometimes the case among, for example, among “new-age travellers” who gather at Stonehenge.³⁴⁰ Thus a fifth criteria for sacred places could be that they act as gathering places that benefit *both* individuals and the community of believers as a whole.

Contested places

As well as being storied places, sacred places are often contested places. Sacred places have to exist within a mundane world. They exist within cultures and societies where

often (not always, but often), the prevailing paradigms do not recognize sacredness with or within nature. Blain and Wallace contend that *all* sacred sites are also contested sites,³⁴¹ but that seems a little extreme. Nevertheless, it has to be recognized that location-dependent sacred places are almost never universally recognized as sacred.

Often sacred places become the subject of territorial battles. It is fairly common for those natural sacred sites which are also ancient monuments or sites of historical interest to be claimed by the tourism industry. Sometimes the territorial battle is between two or more groups who wish to contend that the place is “their” sacred place, as is the case with Temple Mount in Jerusalem, which is a sacred site in Christian, Jewish and Muslim faith. In other cases, such as Stonehenge, the contestation occurs both between various religious faith communities as well as between spiritual and secular groups. Here, the Druids claim this as their sacred site, as do other pagan groups who believe that the stones hold either special powers or contain ancestral spirits, or are home to the spirits of the place itself. Their ways of interacting with those powers may be at odds with the practices of the Druids (for example, “sacred partying” as opposed to respectful observance³⁴²), yet both wish to celebrate certain occurrences, in particular the summer solstice. Meanwhile the British tourism industry claims it as a revenue-generating tourist attraction, and then there are the archaeologists, who are of the opinion that they should be granted sole - or at the very least priority – access to the henge and surrounding lands in order to conduct archaeological digs, and that exclusion is necessary to preserve the integrity of possible future dig sites. It is easy enough to see the validity in the claims of all actors in this situation, and equally easy to see that it would be impossible to completely satisfy all claims at once.

Sometimes nature-based sites are protected through legislation that prevents development but allows public access, as is the case with Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean. In this case, tourism and access to sacred places exist together very peaceably. In other cases, sites that are within natural settings such as forests or mountains are claimed for resource extraction (forestry, mining) or are slated as sites for development, for example to create subdivisions for housing or industry. These are usually a lot less peaceable and often lead to legal proceedings.

In cases where contested sacred places are brought into the legal system for a decision on their future, it is an unfortunate reality that the more dominant worldview or cultural system will prevail. In most cases in developed countries this includes a capitalist economic framework, and therefore economic benefit is valued more highly than spiritual benefit. Bruce Miller, in his essay “Culture as Cultural Defense,” notes that “efforts to construct a notion of sacredness in court (means that) the court must accept premises which are neither shared by the judges’ own cultures or the legal sub-culture and thereby stand outside of their values and experiences.”³⁴³ James Lawson points out that often, the actors in such conflicts “often encounter each other’s stories in an atmosphere of disagreement, but also of mutual incomprehension.” While each parties’ stories are neither right nor wrong, the divergence comes from “differences in the parties’ everyday experiences of shaping the land and of being shaped by it in return.”³⁴⁴

It was noted above that, according to Durkheim, the decision whether to value the intrinsic (sacred) or utilitarian (mundane) qualities of an object or place is made by societies.³⁴⁵ If the adjudicator does not understand or accept the intrinsic sacred value of a place, it becomes unlikely that the place will be adjudged worthy of protection if that

stands in the way of monetary gain. This is very often the situation with First Nation sacred sites in North America, and indigenous sacred places elsewhere in the world.

In England, issues surrounding sites such as Stonehenge and Avebury are not so much about imminent destruction as about the exclusion of those for whom these sites have sacred significance. Although some progress has been made – for example, allowing open access to Stonehenge during the summer solstice – issues of access and management continue. In part, these disputes stem from the lack of clearly defined ways to confirm the sacredness of the site. More specifically, it is about whether Druids and other pagans can “prove” that their ancestors used this as a sacred site. Lack of this kind of proof is sometimes used as a reason to deny access; however, as discussed below, this is a rather problematic stance.

Issues of authenticity

Given the variety of stories that can exist in a single place, and the different people who believe in them, how important is a direct and provable genetic/cultural lineage to a site? If a person finds that a sacred place resonates with them, should not that resonance supersede lineage? Often modern day pagans claim that their Celtic heritage entitles them to observe Druidic or other pagan rites in a specific location, but should they not be allowed to observe the rituals of their chosen belief system regardless of their lineage? After all, in the same Western European cultural context, no one questions a person’s right to enter a Christian church based on their ancestry.

Lineage, authenticity, and appropriation are issues that often arise in sacred places, either as a reason to disallow a claim of sacredness (you can’t prove you have history here), or as a reason to *re-claim* a place as sacred from another (“you have taken

this sacred place from me”). It should be understood that the arguments presented here relate *only to sites within the U.K.*, as both the main examples in this dissertation are located there. There are other arguments, and other conclusions, about lineage, authenticity, and appropriation in North American First Nation, Australian Aborigine, and other indigenous sacred sites elsewhere.

Belief is not a product of genealogy in the way that, say, eye colour or height are. However, everyone has a cultural heritage that includes beliefs and religion, and these form part of each person’s worldview. Of course, whether or not one chooses to follow that heritage is up to each individual. If that cultural heritage lies outside of the mainstream of the society in which a person resides, it can be more difficult to assert the right to observe those traditions.

On the other hand, some may find that the belief systems of an entirely different tradition resonate more truly for them than the religious beliefs of their ancestors. To complicate matters further, beliefs can be mixed and matched from varying traditions and ideas; for example, as Christianity spread through missionary work, indigenous belief systems were sometimes fused with Christian teachings. Therefore one might believe in a singular God, but also believe in ancestor spirits, nature spirits, magic and/or magical creatures, or other kinds of spirits or other manifestations of the divine.

Oftentimes members of groups who wish to celebrate in places such as Stonehenge or Avebury assert that their cultural lineage gives them the right to claim these as “their” sacred places and to access these places for their celebrations and rituals. But should it be imperative to “prove” direct, genealogical Celtic heritage in order to

claim the “right” to practice Celtic religion(s) – whether those be Druidry or other forms of paganisms – at specific sacred sites?

As Jenny Blain and Richard Wallace point out in their book *Sacred Sites, Contested Rights/Rites*, one problem with this is that any claims to a truly authentic Celtic heritage are suspect, given that “contemporary Britain is a post-modern melting pot of cultures and traditions” and therefore “to claim indigeneity here would... certainly be politically and/or religiously motivated.”³⁴⁶ Yet the attachment both to the idea of being Celtic, and the attachment to sacred sites such as Stonehenge or Avebury is deeply held. Blain and Wallace have observed that among those who feel strongly that they “are” Celtic, “some may go to considerable lengths to study cultures and languages, so that their involvement becomes cultural.”³⁴⁷

Then there is the issue of what “ancestry” even means. Arguably, as archaeologist Mike Pitts points out, the word ancestors simply means “people who came before us.” In the context of Stonehenge and other ancient sites within the U.K., he writes that “invoking ancestors has proved productive both for thinking about the past and engaging the public in the stories,”³⁴⁸ regardless of whether those ancestors are literal or figurative. Blain and Wallace also observe that ancestry is not altogether a straightforward concept. There are in fact “many understandings of ‘ancestors’ to be considered, and these include implicit and explicit constructions of ethnicity and ‘race’. Pagan understandings of ancestors range from ‘those previously living on the land’ to ‘family members’” to more tribal understandings of Celts or Saxons.³⁴⁹

There are also issues associated with authenticity in the rituals and ceremonies themselves. There are no known written accounts *directly* from ancient Celtic cultures.

Much of the tradition was passed down orally, for example through the bardic tradition. In the *Sacred Texts* website introduction to Celtic mythology, it is noted that “ancient Celtic religious beliefs must therefore be inferred from second-hand classical accounts, hints from Celtic mythology, legend and folklore, as well as archaeological and comparative anthropological evidence.”³⁵⁰ There are texts of bardic poetry, such as *The Four Ancient Books of Wales*, published in 1898, which “contains every remaining piece of Bardic poetry known... all of which date from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries C.E.”³⁵¹ although “the mythic themes have their roots in pre-Christian Celtic culture, at least a thousand years before” the stories were first written down.³⁵² The book also contains poetry dated to the sixth century. The manuscripts on which this book is based are held in monasteries and university libraries.³⁵³ But even here, the authenticity of the manuscripts has been contested.³⁵⁴

Blain and Wallace agree that “authenticity presents a challenge to pagans, not only on their own development of practices, but to their apparent rights to practice.” However, they also point out that traditions and practices are “fluid strands of a cultural process... that is always in flux, in a process of invention and reinvention.”³⁵⁵ This is, in part, what sets up conflicts between different interest groups at sacred sites, such as between different religious communities, and depending on the site, tourism boards, forestry companies, developers, government, and so on. But defending their rights against these contestations is what necessitates claims of genealogical and cultural lineage to begin with.

If religious freedom is understood to be a basic human right, then it stands to reason that this right ought to be extended to all religious groups, regardless or whether

(or perhaps especially when) a religion is not part of the mainstream culture. Those who wish to follow this religion should not be pressed to show whether they as individuals have some sort of direct “claim” to the site. It should be sufficient that the religion, and the places, resonate with them, although this approach too becomes problematic. This is addressed to some extent with the third of the five criteria for identifying sacred places suggested here (that a place evokes certain types of behaviors).

Ultimately, it seems a better idea to focus on sacredness of place, and the qualities and stories with which that place is imbued, rather than on who has the “right” to call it sacred and to be allowed access to it. This may not sit well with those who use the lack of evidence-based authenticity claims as a reason to deny that a place is sacred. A sacred place can appeal equally to a wide audience from myriad backgrounds. Perhaps what matters more is what can be learned from the place – the ways in which that place acts as a conduit for connecting people, the divine, and nature. Blain and Wallace have found that one of the main reasons people turn to Celtic spirituality, ancient stories, and place-based sacred places is a “perceived lack on enchantment” and the need for re-enchantment. Pagans, they observe, “may view themselves as the inheritors of the ‘wisdom’ of ancient cultures... which provide sources for re-enchantment”³⁵⁶ as a way to develop and nurture a sense of connectedness, community, and care.

This approach to sacred sites – that the point is not who gets to use them, but what that site has to offer – seems at times to get lost in the wash of politics, or overridden by the prospect of profits, or pushed aside in the interests of digging (literally) into the past, and preserving only the physical archaeological artifacts, rather than looking to what the place as to offer in this moment, to the world as it is now. This approach can be seen in

McIntosh, who in *Soil and Soul*, questions whether it is really necessary to argue over lineage, or to assign to various groups the “right” to pre- and post-Christian traditions and by extension, pre and post-Christian stories attached to places, particularly within the context of Celtic faiths. He asks:

“Is not ultimate reality neither Yin nor Yang but Tao? And is that not what Celtic spirituality codifies, if not at all times in its varied history, then certainly in the direction that its inner fire has moved it towards among diverse people today? Such is the direction of a world re-enchanted.”³⁵⁷

Summary and final thoughts

This chapter has covered a number of subjects to provide an understanding of ways in which sacredness becomes attached to and recognized in places. Through this five conditions have been formulated by which a place may be recognized as sacred. To reiterate, these are:

1. It is revealed by the divine, not chosen or created by humans
2. It creates a numinous experience
3. It evokes certain types of behaviors caused by the experience
4. It has sacred stories attached to it
5. It brings benefit to both the individual and to the community of followers as a whole.

I have sought to address all aspects of sacred places so that the definition is neither so broad as to become essentially meaningless, nor so narrow as to be unnecessarily exclusionary, and rigorous enough to be defended. While recognizing that these have been formulated with western world sacred places as the main examples, it has striven to avoid as much as possible explicit directives that are created by, or in themselves create cultural biases. These five criteria fit with the definitions both of the sacred and of religion, and of the broad definition of the divine as provided earlier, and should be

helpful when dealing with contestations of sacred places. The rationale for each of these points are now summarized below.

1. As we have discerned from Eliade and others, the place, or the object that exists in place, must be revealed by the divine, not chosen by humans.
2. The place evokes a numinous experience –an experience of connection to something sacred and transcendent. This experience is reproducible and observable and may happen individually or communally, within a religious or spiritual framework. It may be evocative or invocative.
3. The place, via the above experience, will inspire certain types of behaviors, according to Comstock, and these are plainly observable when understood within their cultural context, thereby providing a more concrete way of ascertaining sacredness.
4. As explained by Lane and others, the place must have stories attached to or embedded within it, stories which both create and reinforce the beliefs of those who hold the place sacred. These stories, often multilayered and both physically and metaphorically embedded, connect the place and the divine, and the divine to humans, and to complete the circle, connect humans to the place, bringing about a sense of connection and reenchancement.
5. Lastly, by combining the ideas of Durkheim, Vento, and others with the concept of rituals, together with theories of religion, we can say that a sacred place must be one in which the community can participate and from which all in the community can receive some (spiritual) benefit.

It is worth noting that what all five of the above criteria have in common is that all include *people* – whether through their experience of place, as the tellers or receivers of the stories about the place, as enactors of rituals, or as a group who have come together for a reason connected to the divine presence in that place. While it would not be hard to argue that the sacred exists without people, it is the recognition that people give to sacred places – complete with all the stories, experiences, and connections therein - that bring about change.

This chapter has presented some ideas about ways to recognize places as sacred, and included in this is the idea of embedded sacred stories. I now turn to the idea and the role of embedded stories and the role of cultural memory in the stories of sacred places. I will discuss the way meaning is given to place, and how in turn, place gives meaning to us.

Endnotes

- ²⁷³ Emile Durkheim, "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life" in *Durkheim on Religion: A Selection of Readings*, ed. W.S.F. Pickering (London: Routledge, 1975), 114.
- ²⁷⁴ Belden Lane, "Giving Voice to Place: Three Models for Understanding American Sacred Space," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 1 no. 1 (2001): 74.
- ²⁷⁵ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, transl. John W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), 5.
- ²⁷⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷⁷ Matthew T. Evans, "The Sacred: Differentiating, Clarifying and Extending Concepts," *Review of Religious Research* 45, no. 1 (2003), 32.
- ²⁷⁸ Ibid., 40.
- ²⁷⁹ "Prayer in Buddhism," *Sgi Quarterly*, January 2001 (no author given). SGI (Soka Gakkai International) is "a nongovernmental organization (NGO) with formal ties to the United Nations... [and] is active in the fields of humanitarian relief and public education, with a focus on peace, environmental protection and human rights." This information, as well as the journal are available online at: http://www.sgiquarterly.org/about_sgi_q.html.
- ²⁸⁰ Christopher Witcombe, "Divination," Sacred Sites website. Available at: http://witcombe.sbc.edu/sacred_places/sacredness.html.
- ²⁸¹ Evans, 37.
- ²⁸² Ibid.
- ²⁸³ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, transl. Willard R. Trask, (London: Harcourt Brace, 1959), 8.
- ²⁸⁴ Willard Gurdon Oxtoby, "Holy (the sacred)" in Philip Wiener (ed.), *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas, vol.II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 434.
- ²⁸⁵ Robert F. Streetman, "Some Later Thoughts of Otto on the Holy," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48, no. 3 (September 1980), 369.
- ²⁸⁶ The root of the word is the Latin "numen", meaning "deity".
- ²⁸⁷ While I do very sincerely believe that "numinous places" is a far more fitting term than "sacred places" for nature-based sacred places such as those addressed in this dissertation, I will nevertheless continue to refer to "sacred places," as the terminology is so well established, I feel that to introduce such a change, at least at this point, would serve only to confuse the issue. It would be better perhaps to suggest the idea of numinous places in the relevant journals to see how it is received.
- ²⁸⁸ Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 7.
- ²⁸⁹ Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology* (New York: Viking Press, 1964), 519.
- ²⁹⁰ Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* 54.
- ²⁹¹ Campbell, *The Masks of God*. In *The Idea of the Holy*, "creature-feeling" is discussed in Chapter III, while the "mysterium tremendum" is the subject of Chapter IV. Streetman discusses these concepts briefly in "Some Later Thoughts of Otto on the Holy", an essay which offers an excellent explication of many of Otto's concepts.
- ²⁹² Lewis A. Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context*, 2nd ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 137.
- ²⁹³ A. A. Goldenweiser, "Religion and Society: A Critique of Emile Durkheim's Theory of the Origin and Nature of Religion," *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 14, no. 5 (1917): 114.
- ²⁹⁴ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 11.
- ²⁹⁵ Lane, "Voice to Place," 56.
- ²⁹⁶ Jenny Blain and Robert J. Wallis, *Sacred Sites, Contested Rites/Rights: Pagan Engagements with Archaeological Monuments* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2007), 10.

- ²⁹⁷ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 27.
- ²⁹⁸ Ibid., 26.
- ²⁹⁹ Lane, "Voice to Place," 53.
- ³⁰⁰ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 27.
- ³⁰¹ Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Wobbling Pivot", *The Journal of Religion* 52, no. 2 (April 1972), 141.
- ³⁰² Lane, "Voice to Place," 60.
- ³⁰³ Christopher Witcombe, "Introduction," Sacred Places website. Available at: http://witcombe.sbc.edu/sacred_places/sacredplacesintro.html.
- ³⁰⁴ Goldenweiser, "Religion and Society," 115.
- ³⁰⁵ Richard Comstock, "A Behavioral Approach to the Sacred: Category Formation in Religious Studies," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 49, no. 4 (December 1981): 627.
- ³⁰⁶ Ibid., 629.
- ³⁰⁷ N.J. Demerath, III, "The Varieties of Sacred Experience: Finding the Sacred in a Secular Grove," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39, no. 1 (March 2000): 6.
- ³⁰⁸ Demerath, "The Varieties," 5.
- ³⁰⁹ Ibid., 8. Also see Blain and Wallace, *Sacred Sites*, 6-8.
- ³¹⁰ Ibid., 7.
- ³¹¹ Ibid.
- ³¹² Demerath, "The Varieties," 8.
- ³¹³ Comstock, "Behavioral Approach," 630.
- ³¹⁴ Lane, "Voice to Place," 61.
- ³¹⁵ Daniel L Pals, ed. *Eight Theories of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 165.
- ³¹⁶ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 12-13.
- ³¹⁷ Pals, *Eight Theories*, 165.
- ³¹⁸ David L. Carmichael, Jane Hubert, Brian Reeves and Audhild Schanche, *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places*, eds. David Carmicheal et al (London: Routledge, 1994), 7.
- ³¹⁹ Jane Hubert, "Sacred Beliefs and Beliefs of Sacredness" in *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places*, 18.
- ³²⁰ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 116-117.
- ³²¹ Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Nature of Human Society: The Savage Mind*, transl. George Weidenfeld (Chicago, the University of Chicago Press, 1966), 10.
- ³²² Ibid., 129.
- ³²³ Douglas Allen, "Mircea Eliade's Phenomenological Analysis of Religious Experience.," *The Journal of Religion* 52, no. 2 (April 1972): 179.
- ³²⁴ Arnoldo Vento, "Rediscovering the Sacred: From the Secular to a Postmodern Sense of the Sacred," *Wicazo Sa Review* 15, no. 1 (2000): 193.
- ³²⁶ Vento, "Rediscovering the Sacred," 195.
- ³²⁷ Ibid., 200.
- ³²⁸ Maria Luisa Cohen, "Sacred Spaces: Beyond the Concept of Resource Exploitation." *The Environmentalist* 11, no.1 (1991): 58.
- ³²⁹ Lane, "Voice to Place," 60.
- ³³⁰ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 16.
- ³³¹ Lane, "Voice to Place," 70.
- ³³² Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964), 6.
- ³³³ Ira Chernus, "Religion as a Cultural System: The Theory of Clifford Geertz," Available online: <http://www.colorado.edu/ReligiousStudies/chernus/4800/GeertzSummary.htm>.
- ³³⁴ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, transl. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 163.
- ³³⁵ Richard Crouter, "Introduction to 'On Religion' in its Cultural Milieu," in Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, 52.
- ³³⁶ Durkheim, "The Elementary Forms," 112.
- ³³⁷ Ibid., 114.
- ³³⁸ See Chapter 2.
- ³³⁹ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library), 32. Originally published 1902. Available online: <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccernew2?id=JamVari.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=front>.
- ³⁴⁰ For an explanation of this term, see Christopher Chippindale, "Stoned Henge: Events and Issues at the Summer Solstice, 1985," *World Archaeology* 18 no 1 (1986): 38-58. See also Jenny Blain, and Robert J.

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- Wallis. "Sacred Sites, Contested Rites/Rights: Contemporary Pagan Engagements with the Past." *Journal of Material Culture* 9, no. 3 (2004): 237-261.
- ³⁴¹ See, for example, Blain and Wallace "Sacred Sites." See also Blain and Wallis, 2007.
- ³⁴² Blain and Wallace, 6-7.
- ³⁴³ Bruce Miller, "Culture as Cultural Defense: An American Indian Sacred Site in Court," *American Indian Quarterly* 22, no. 1-2 (Winter-Spring 1998): 83.
- ³⁴⁴ James Lawson, "Chronotope, Story, and Historical Geography: Mikhail Bakhtin and the Space-Time of Narratives," *Antipode* 43, vol. 2 (2011): 385.
- ³⁴⁵ Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought*, 137.
- ³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 191.
- ³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴⁸ Mike Pitts, "Don't Knock the Ancestors," *Antiquity* 77, no. 295 (2003): 172.
- ³⁴⁹ Blain and Wallace, *Sacred Sites*, 195.
- ³⁵⁰ John Bruno Hare, *Sacred Texts*, available at: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/index.htm>.
- ³⁵¹ Hare, in an introduction to *The Four Ancient Books of Wales* on the Sacred Texts website. Last updated 2004. Available at: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/fab/index.htm/>.
- ³⁵² R.J. Stewart, *Celtic Myths, Celtic Legends* (London: Blandford, 1994), 15.
- ³⁵³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵⁴ William F. Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1898), 208-211. Available as a ebook on the Sacred Texts website: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/fab/index.htm#contents>. The whole issue of authenticity is discussed within the context of Stonehenge in Chapter 8.
- ³⁵⁵ Blain and Wallace, *Sacred Sites*, 24.
- ³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.
- ³⁵⁷ McIntosh, *Soil and Soul*, 147.

Chapter 6: Stories, place-making, and enchantment

Telling stories –time and place - making places– stories in place – enchantment

*“The land remembers. The earth breathes stories
and the echoes rise like mist over the earth.”*

- Kimberley Blaeser

Stories, most particularly the stories in and about sacred places, are a central feature of this dissertation. It is hypothesized that such stories may contain an ancient wisdom about ways in which to live in harmony with Earth, and that in turn leads to an ethic of care for the environment. These stories may also have the power to bring communities together. As noted in the previous chapter as well, many modern pagans who seek out sacred places such as Stonehenge, Avebury, Glastonbury, and many others in the U.K. do so because they hope to find within these places a story about, and a way to find, a sense of reenchantment with the natural world – something which they feel has been lost in modern times.³⁵⁸ Now logically, for there to be such a thing as reenchantment, there has to have been a previous enchantment, and a loss of that. For there to have been previous enchantment, there would have to have existed stories that created a pathway to enchantment. These stories and the spirits and sprites that pagans believe inhabit the natural have not been lost; they are still there in these sacred places.

Just as the land contains stories, so too does every life. These stories form a continuous and open-ended narrative. What that narrative contains is unique to each life, and is a dialogue not only with others, but also with the self. It is rooted in cultural paradigms and individual worldviews; when these shift, so too does the direction and content of the narrative. If we so choose, we can bring into our narrative the threads of the three great movements (peace, social justice, ecological³⁵⁹) and move towards self-

realization. Moving towards self-realization, may bring an understanding of connectedness and the permeability of the self. When we begin to realign our selves to this permeability, it may become possible to enter into a sense of reenchantment with the natural world – a child-like sense of wonder combined with an extension of care to the natural world and all it contains, including sacred places.

But where did that previous enchantment come from? And how, if we ourselves did not experience it, can we in any sense be said to become reenchanted? The answer to those questions may lie in the stories that are created of memory imprinted on the landscape, and the stories of the land itself. Perhaps as we give meaning to places, so too do places give meaning to us.

To understand these concepts, in this chapter I will discuss what a story “is”, the role of chronotopes (time/place envelopes) in stories, how places gain meaning, how stories can be understood in place, and the concept of enchantment.

What is a story?

First of all, I’d like to explore what a story “is”. All stories are narratives, simply in that they are told, or narrated – that is, they are transmitted in some way. Narratives always involve three actors: the storyteller, the audience and the story itself. Sometimes these may all be the one and the same (who among us has not talked to ourselves?), or it may involve two people sharing a story or a conversation, or any of innumerable combinations of modes of transmission between any number of people, places, and timeframes.

There are many different words that are used to categorize stories. They may be categorized as myths, fairy tales, folktales, legends, historical narratives, news stories, novels, and more. They come in both poem and prose. They may be hero quests, love

stories, comedies, tragedies, cautionary, or morality tales; they may be based in facts, be informative, be entirely imagined, or any combination of these. But I would like to diverge from this categorical structure. There are two reasons for this. The first reason is simply that this dissertation isn't about literary or narrative theory. The point is not to dissect or evaluate any particular form of stories, or to arrange them as morality tales or cautionary stories or love stories and so on. Rather, it is to share the stories as and where they are present, to discuss their meaning and to see whether they have relevance in the present. Of course we are able more or less intuitively to distinguish between factual and imaginative values and to understand the difference between a news story and a novel; if we were not, the world would cease to make sense and we should go mad. What really needs to be understood though is the basic fact that all stories are narratives – some on-going and some closed – and that stories are always all around us. They are what our personal and cultural worlds are composed of; it is how we make sense of the world. As with places, we give meaning to stories and stories give meaning to us.

The second reason is that it seems to me that there is a cultural imperialism inherent in this sort of categorization. In the mainstream cultural paradigms of the Western world, we tend to think that “our” stories – our understandings of science, history, first causes, creation and so on – are the “right” stories. For example, the current dominant western view is to believe that the science-based story of the big bang theory and evolution is the “true” story of creation. Any other creation stories – such as those of North American First Nations or of Aborigines in Australia or of Celtic religions – are called “myths”. But who are we to say that our story is “right” and therefore their story is “wrong”, or at best, misguided? Similarly, categorizing stories as fairy tales or folklore

requires a certain cultural bias and those stories are summarily stripped of any notion of truth-telling. This also serves to enforce the idea that stories belong to different social strata and, therefore, have different social value.³⁶⁰

Now of course these categories do have validity in some situations. It is useful in the study of mythology or folklore to draw boundaries and to have certain criteria and understandings of what is and what is not included in that discipline. I have no wish to repudiate or denigrate or argue with distinctions made for those purposes; I just don't think that those boxes serve us well here. Instead, it seems better to simply take *all* the stories that are encountered here at face value. On the whole, the stories are what they are, and whatever *kinds* of stories they are, they are still first and foremost stories, and as stories, they are narrative and narrated.

Like stories themselves, storytelling takes many forms. The ways that stories are told and the places where they are told affect all three components (storyteller, audience and story). Storytelling in all its forms is always an ongoing creative process. Stories may be spoken from memory, they may come to us in dreams or visions. They might be written down and read silently and privately, or read aloud to a group of people, or performed in plays or movies. Stories are also told through art, music, and movement. Dance is one way to tell a story through movement, but stories are also told in movement by the way people walk and move in their day-to-day lives, by their gestures, posture and stance. Sometimes very easy to tell what kinds of events are unfolding in a person's life by signals such as whether they hold their head high and have a spring in their step, or are dragging their feet and are hunched over. They may be walking quickly or slowly, they may be sitting alone or with others, and so on. Stories are also told through landscapes;

we leave traces of ourselves, and we find traces of others, human and non-human, ancient and contemporary. We can read the stories of centuries in trees and rocks and artifacts, and the stories of seasons in the flora and fauna. In the case of sacred places, we may find the presence of the divine, or of something magical and supra-human.

Time and space connections: the chronotope

Whatever the story and whatever form the telling of it takes, one thing is clearly evident: the story takes place some *where* and at some *time*. The two are as inseparable as place and story; that is, they have to exist together.

The Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin fuses time and place together, stating that they are inextricable one from the other. He refers to this nexus of time-place or space-time, as a chronotope.³⁶¹ Chronotopes, says Bakhtin, are “the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied”³⁶² or the particular way in which “spatial and temporal indicators... are constructed in relation to one another.”³⁶³ They represent “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature... It expresses the inseparability of space and time.”³⁶⁴ As David Abram writes in *Spell of the Sensuous*, “separable ‘time’ and ‘space’ are not absolute givens in all human experience” and “the conventional distinction between space and time [is] untenable from the standpoint of direct experience.”³⁶⁵

So time and place are not separable from each other, and stories are not separable from time and place, and time and place are not separable from the people who are involved in the story, as creators, receivers and transmitters. This can be an intricate web at times. As Bakhtin writes, “these real people, the authors and the listeners or readers,

may be (and often are) located in differing time-spaces, sometimes separated from each other by centuries and great spatial distances, but nevertheless they are all located in a real, unitary and as yet incomplete historical world.”³⁶⁶ Sometimes we lose the strand of those webs; indeed the spatial and temporal distances cannot help but make it difficult to follow. But then places are natural repositories for ongoing stories; they exist in time and are always “there” as part of the present and the historical world. This again is expressed by Bakhtin, who writes that “out of the actual chronotopes of our world (which serve as the source of representation) emerge the reflected and *created* chronotopes of the world represented in the text.”³⁶⁷

Stories are themselves complex things, even ones that on the surface seem straightforward enough; remember in Chapter One the discussion of the way in which an individual interacts with any text, from a simple statement to a complex story or argument. All our previous experiences and our current chronotopic situation affect the way we interpret stories.³⁶⁸ In an essay on the chronotopes of enchantment, Camilla Ingemark also remarks on this complexity, noting that each text is “a mosaic... of other texts, discourses and cultural practices that creates networks of associations that bind the texts into an intertextual whole.”³⁶⁹ While many of the associations and cultural interpretations that we bring to the stories we read or hear are unconscious, nevertheless “the intertexts have a profound impact on the interpretation of individual texts.”³⁷⁰ The stories of sacred places may be no different; we bring our own biases and current worldviews to them, and this at times may obscure the message.

Making places

I have said previously that stories and places are intertwined and inseparable, much like a soul and a body. But how and why do places come to have meaning? In the previous chapter, it was found that sacred places are revealed in some way. While this initial revelation is clearly important, so are the ongoing ways in which places become or remain significant and meaningful to us. This is the process of “making places.”

The choice in this dissertation to use the phrase “sacred place” instead of “sacred space” is not arbitrary. The words “space” and “place” hold different connotations. The noted geographer Yi-Fu Tuan describes the difference between place and space thus: “Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other.”³⁷¹ Place carries a connotation or a subtext of belonging, of familiarity, of being somewhere special and meaningful. Places are also defined by how they are used and who can access them. Spaces are more open-ended; we have not yet ascribed meaning to them within our own narratives, and the kinds of activities that can be carried out there are less well defined.

This distinction operates on both the personal and societal level – for example, your home, your school or workplace, your local park, may all be “places” to you, with your stories and memories inscribed upon them as part of your narrative, but they will have a different meaning to the casual passer-by. But both you and the passer-by and most people in your town or city would recognize a courthouse or a hospital as being a very specific kind of “place” with rules that govern what activities can take place there and who is allowed to go there. There can be dissonance between individual and cultural

cognitions of some kinds of places – such as sacred places – and this sometimes leads to contestations of place, as we mentioned in the previous chapter.

The making of place is a seemingly universal need – along with stories, we need it to make sense and create order in our worlds. David Harvey, in *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* notes that place-making is “essential to social development, social control and empowerment in any social order.”³⁷² The transformation of spaces to places creates a “sense of place.” Keith Basso, who studied the lives and stories of the Apache, notes that in that society places hold their cultural history, and place is a primary constituent of both individual and community identity. He writes that “what people make of their places is closely connected to what they make of themselves... it is a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities.”³⁷³ Some attachments are clearly deeper than others, and attachments can be negative as well as positive (there are good places and bad places). On the positive side, Yi-Fu Tuan uses the word “topophilia” to describe something a little deeper than sense of place. Topophilia is “the relations, perceptions, attitudes, values, and worldview that affectively bond people and place.”³⁷⁴ While topophilia is a good word to describe the fierceness with which people will sometimes defend sacred places, I will continue to use “sense of place” here, as I feel that the phrase captures the way that our *senses* – vision, hearing, touch, taste, smell and also that “sixth sense” on a more metaphysical level – connect us with places.

When we create place, we create boundaries. Sometimes these boundaries are physical, sometimes they are created through actions or events, and always they are cultural. Sometimes places are created to include or exclude certain groups of people, based on any number of factors; gender, age, social status, etc. Boundaries are not always

clear, and sometimes overlap. Geographer Doreen Massey explains in *Space, Place and Gender* that places are in part constructed by their relation to what is “outside” of them, much as Eliade described sacred places as being markedly different from their surroundings.³⁷⁵ Massey writes that the construction of place is done in part by “defining it... through counterposition to what lies beyond, through the specificity of the mix and interconnections to that ‘beyond’. Places viewed this way are open and porous,”³⁷⁶ and boundaries are very fluid, mobile, and subject to change. Places then are equally about the outside as about the inside.³⁷⁷ Massey’s colleague, geographer Linda McDowell, sees boundaries as somewhat more definite, noting that boundaries are “socio-spatial... they define who belongs to a place and who may be excluded, as well as the location or site.”³⁷⁸

Massey also states that attention should be paid to not only *what*, but also *who* turns space into place; that who a place is made by, and also who it is made for, are intrinsic to the meaning of the place.³⁷⁹ One aspect to pay attention to here is power relationships. Most of the time we unconsciously comply with the power relationships that exist around us, and most of us also know our place in various power-relationships (for example, parent/child, boss/worker, partner/partner, and so on). Power relationships are essentially paradigmatic; they exist in and underlie cultures universally, although of course they differ very widely in different societies. They exist in all relationships, whether that power is equal or unequal. Some factors that influence power relationships are gender, age, race, social status, and occupation.³⁸⁰ Karen Warren, in *Ecofeminist Philosophy*, lists five different kinds of power: power-over, power-with, power-within, power-against, and power-towards.³⁸¹ All of these can be used both positively and

negatively. We cannot escape power relationships, but we can understand their effects, including the effect they have on the making and preserving of place.

It is logical to say that those who do the place-making have a degree of power in much the same way as those who write history.³⁸² The kind of power is relevant: power-over, or hegemonic power, creates places that legitimize and validate that power and emphasize social stratification. Harvey writes that “many traditional institutions... depend crucially on a whole network of symbolic places to secure their power and express their social meaning.”³⁸³ Think of places like castles or fortresses – these were created not only for protection, but also to show dominance. There are more modern examples too: the architecture of parliamentary buildings and corporate or bank headquarters also serve as symbols of power-over. Harvey points out that “the social construction of space and time arising out of certain social processes of domination and oppression”³⁸⁴ tend to then perpetuate those patterns of domination and oppression. The role of power in places is also acknowledged by McDowell, who writes that “places are defined, maintained and altered through the impact of unequal power relations.”³⁸⁵

To relate this to sacred places, it is logical to surmise that whoever led the making of Stonehenge certainly had a degree of power in that society (although not necessarily in a negative way), given the enormity of the task. The place itself, once constructed, also has various places within it of greater or lesser power – those who lead rituals or ceremonies sometimes have sole access to parts of sacred sites (the phrase “inner sanctum” comes to mind). McDowell’s unequal power relationships are relevant to the history of ancient sacred places: as the locus of power shifts over time, the places come to

be viewed in different (and sometimes indifferent) ways. Since sacred places are also very often contested places, the issue of who wields the most power becomes crucial.

But power is not the only issue within places. Place includes a whole constellation of factors, and is ultimately guided by the need to find and create meaning in the world. This, naturally enough, brings us back again to the subject of stories. But first, I'd like to discuss the connections that can be drawn between understandings of sense of place and understandings of sacred places.

Connecting sense of place to the five criteria

There are many ways of categorizing the various elements of sense of place. Here I briefly show the connections between sense of place as a general concept to the criteria set for assessing sacredness of place, as there are quite a few points of intersection. It is easy enough to find agreement in the literature that sense of place is connected with stories. Jerry Diakiw of York University writes that one of the greatest contributions to sense of place are “shared stories [that] provide a culture with its values and beliefs,”³⁸⁶ while Ingold writes that throughout history and across cultures, stories have been told to give (or explain) deeper meaning to landscapes. He notes that these stories, or narratives, are “a way of guiding the attention of listeners and readers”³⁸⁷ to a better understanding of place.

As McDowell states, sense of place is found through “complex, intersecting social relationships that operate at a variety of levels and which are affected by beliefs and attitudes, images and symbols.”³⁸⁸ This echoes the elements of religion (remember that religion is as a shared set of beliefs, rituals, symbols, stories, and actions).³⁸⁹ Other

scholars too have set out various criteria for sense of place, and there are some commonalities. Cultural geographer Kent Ryden lists the four elements of sense of place as location, history, identity and emotion,³⁹⁰ while Jennifer Cross, addressing a conference on sense of place, names six elements in defining sense of place; biographical, spiritual, ideological, narrative, commoditisation, and dependence.³⁹¹ Harvey describes sense of place as requiring “distinctive beliefs, values, imaginaries and social-institutional practices”³⁹². Summing all these things up, David Salvesen of the Urban Land Institute notes that “a sense of place means different things to different people... it derives from shared memories, experiences, traditions, and history... (and) the interaction of location, landscape and personal involvement.”³⁹³

The table below shows the connections between these attributes of sense of place and the criteria for sacred places. While there is some overlap and a little bit of less than strict interpretation of some of the terms, the connections nevertheless can be seen. I also show where each fits into the concentric circles model.

Table 3: Elements of sense of place and criteria for sacred place

<i>Criteria for Sacred Place</i>	<i>Ryden</i>	<i>Cross</i>	<i>Harvey</i>	<i>Salvesen</i>	<i>Concentric circles model</i>
1. It is revealed by the divine, not chosen.	location	spiritual			5 th circle (metaphysical) 4 th circle (collective exterior)
2. It creates a numinous experience.	emotion	spiritual		experiences	1 st circle (individual interior)
3. It evokes certain types of behaviours.	identity		values social practices	traditions	1 st circle 3 rd circle (collective interior)
4. There are stories attached to it.	history	biographical ideological narrative	imaginaries	shared memories history	3 rd circle

5. It brings benefit both to individuals and the community.	identity	commoditization dependence	social practices	involvement	1 st circle 3 rd circle
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Stories in sacred places

Every place has its own stories, and as we have noted before, the stories in sacred places are deeply embedded and multi-layered. There is the story of its revelation, and of its uses over generations. Harvey writes that “place is space that has historical meanings, where some things have happened which are now remembered and which provide continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken which have established identity, defined vocation and envisioned destiny.”³⁹⁴

Sometimes sacred places fall into disuse, but that doesn’t mean the stories or the numinous qualities disappear. This ties in with the idea of memory in places, and of social memory, which is the way in which “diverse peoples come to think of themselves as members of a group with a shared (though not necessarily agreed upon) past.”³⁹⁵ This is “variously called public, social, cultural or collective memory” and exists “between people, objects, texts, media, and across timespace” or chronotopes.³⁹⁶ Ingold writes that throughout history and across cultures, stories have been told to give (or explain) deeper meaning to landscapes. Stories are “a way of guiding the attention of listeners and readers”³⁹⁷ to a better understanding of place. This also ties in with the ideas of making places, and with the idea that as we give meaning to stories/places, so too do stories/places give meaning to us.

For those who claim sites in England as sacred, Blain and Wallace note that these “are not simply places of archaeological interest. They are sacred places which appear to hold answers to important questions of meaning and ontology, and to meet the need for

reenchantment.”³⁹⁸ The stories that answer those questions are believed to be held in the landscape, and by the supra-human entities that inhabit the place and may be invoked, but the stories *also live in memory* – in a collective unconscious, if you will, and may well be the reason that, as noted in the previous chapter, many pagans seek to stake a claim in Celtic heritage. When places resonate with a person, it may be that not only is the land imbued with cultural meanings, but that the stories in the place are easily recognized.

Sometimes, the stories told about or connected to sacred places are new stories. This is not problematic, as some might argue. Divine entities no more remain static than do people, and they may well have new things to say, or new ways in which to say things so that they make sense to us now, in our chronotope –which is inevitably different from the chronotope of the past. Blain and Wallis note that sacred places are “living temples” and not static or inert places at all: stories come from the place’s “spirits, wights, gods and goddesses... (and) the presence of these beings is felt most strongly.”³⁹⁹ These new stories also dwell in place, and it is the stories *themselves* whether continued, recovered or newly created, that matter, not their age. Participants are always in an act of re-creation, or co-creation of the narratives of any sacred place when they participate in them, just as Bakhtin asserts happens with all stories. Harvey also writes that “the preservation or construction of a sense of place is an active moment in the passage of memory to hope, from past to future. And the reconstruction of places can reveal hidden memories that hold out the prospects for different futures.”⁴⁰⁰

Of course not all the stories that are told about a place are new; some have a long lineage as they are passed on from generation to generation. This sort of lineage may seem to lend a certain gravity or authority to the stories and serve a purpose in creating a

connection with both place and ancestry. While this lends a sort of *quantifiable* depth to place, perhaps it is more important to have *qualitative* depth; that is, perhaps rather than being concerned with how old the stories are, it would be better to assess whether the stories make sense now. There are two very good reasons for making this assertion.

First, as seen in Chapter 3, there is quite a strong voice calling for a new story to go along with a new worldview; in fact, without a good story, a new worldview may not be possible. Stories can quite conceivably combine the old and the new and still be tied to place. The second reason is related to the first: that story and place are woven together in deep ways; and as the place changes, so too does the story.

David Abram, in *The Spell of the Sensuous*, writes that “each place has its own mind, its own psyche... a particular state of mind, a place-specific intelligence.”⁴⁰¹ He argues that for many indigenous societies, the places wrote the stories; people simply retell them. Kimberley Blaeser, who teaches creative writing and American literature at the University of Wisconsin speaks of uncovering (or “unearthing”) “the stories that reside within the earth.” She adds that “we center our words in the land... to create or carry a sense of place.”⁴⁰² Religious studies scholar Martin Ball writes that in many cultures “the land is not a passive or inert object... the land is alive and able to interact with humans in profound ways”.⁴⁰³ Blaeser concurs that the stories come from the land and its spiritual presences, and contain the stories of the past *and present* of that place. She writes that “the landscape itself is storied... it is peopled with our past and imprints of the spiritual. The natural and what is often called the supernatural are understood as being woven together in the essence of place, both realms a natural part of our experience. This weaving is explored in story.”⁴⁰⁴ In this way, the stories themselves can

be thought of as having their *own* interiority; thus stories, as well as people, could be placed in the first circle of the concentric circles model.

In sum then, it is not narrative *continuity* that creates either sense of place or sacredness of place, but rather the narratives themselves, whether continued, recovered or newly created. Blaeser recognizes this, saying that “when we write about place, and sense of place, “we may discover... some truth we had not yet deciphered about being, [and] render a sense of relationship, the life or motion of a place in our spirit.”⁴⁰⁵

It is not just sense of place that people need; stories about places are also needed. Blaeser notes that “we have a literary and personal preoccupation with the place from which we emerge, the place we inhabit, and the community within which we exist.”⁴⁰⁶ She emphasizes “the necessity of linking imagination, dream and story with the physical realities of place, the necessity of seeing with both the physical eye and the eye of the mind or spirit. That dual vision of place endures... perhaps inciting some small healing in the modernist breach between spirit and flesh.”⁴⁰⁷ She notes that writing about “storied landscapes has long been a key element in Native philosophy, oral literatures and written works.” She adds that in many native cultures, stories incorporate elements such as “the so-called nonrational relationship with nature, an awareness of the sacred quality of our involvement with place, and a solid grounding in the mythic centre.” All this is what she calls “the mysterious weaving of place, identity, spirit and story” to create “place-centredness.”⁴⁰⁸

Others too have noted the connectedness that exists between stories/places and the ways in which stories enrich our understanding of place and of ourselves, and of ourselves in places. Christopher Chapple, in his essay “Thomas Berry, Buddhism, and the

New Cosmology” writes that “for millennia, the earth and water, the light, the weather, and the heavens have been accounted for in myriad tales from diverse cultures. Humans have found meaning in reading their own story against the story of the place in which they find themselves.”⁴⁰⁹ And Blaeser writes that when we tell the narratives about place, “we may in fact write ourselves more clearly than we have ever done before.”⁴¹⁰ Blain and Wallis explain that “narratives of interpretation become part of how individuals and groups understand sacredness” within particular sites, such as Stonehenge⁴¹¹.

When one tells the stories of a place, it is, according to Blaeser, an invitation to others to do the same. These narratives offer “a connection to story, history and community,” an opportunity to “acknowledge and engage the alive world, to bring together the interior and exterior landscapes, or to remember our place in the storied landscape.”⁴¹² Terri Windling, in *The Wood Wife*, gives us these words:

Stories can touch our hearts and souls; they can point the way to healing and transformation. Our own lives are stories that we write from day to day; they are journeys through the dark of the fairy tale woods. The tales of previous travellers through the woods have been handed down through the generations in the poetic, symbolic language of folklore and myth; where we step, someone has stepped before, and their stories can help light the way.⁴¹³

Enchantment and reenchantment

Enchantment is a wonderfully nuanced word, evoking thoughts of magic and stories of fairies. It derives from the Latin *cantare*, to sing. To say that something is enchanting is to say that it is lovely, spellbinding, extraordinary, and a little mysterious (in the best possible sense of the word). While I devote a chapter to enchantment and reenchantment a little later on, it is worth a preview here, before moving on to the stories in the next two chapters.

Enchantment as described by Ingemmark is “an encounter with a supranormal being... and has an extraordinary effect, changing the relationship with the human world, on the one hand, and to the supranormal sphere on the other.”⁴¹⁴ Since sacred places so often involve encounters of this sort, it does make sense to link them with a sense of enchantment. In this dissertation though, we are dealing more specifically with a sense of enchantment with the natural world.

It should be noted that “enchantment” is not always about a positive feeling; just as there is light and dark in many things, there is light and dark in enchantment. Enchantment is about a sense of awe –which includes a sense of the “awful.” Even when natural disasters, such as famines, occurred, it can still be said that nature was seen as ensouled, and as enchanted. Those affected may also have appealed to an extra-terrestrial deity for assistance, but that did not necessarily mean that they did not *also* still see nature as enchanted, and themselves as enmeshed in that enchantment. The frightening and unfamiliar aspects of the natural world were understood to be enchanted just as much as the comforting and familiar aspects.

The idea of nature as enchanting is not new: prior to the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries, it was still common, at least in the British Isles, to think of the natural world as enchanted. Morris Berman, in *The Reenchantment of the World*, describes it thus: “Rocks, trees, rivers and clouds were all seen as wondrous, alive, and human beings felt at home in this environment. The cosmos, in short, was a place of *belonging*” (his italics).⁴¹⁵ But the paradigms of a new worldview, engendered by revolutions in science and then religion and society, led to a distancing from the natural world. As Carolyn Merchant details in her book *The Death of Nature*,

the natural world lost its wonders/mystery when it came under the scrutiny of the telescope and the microscope.⁴¹⁶ Again, this will be discussed more in depth in Chapter 10, but the basic idea is that with the rise of individualism and the advances in scientific inquiry, distance was created not only from the misfortunes and scary parts of nature (natural disasters, dark woods, ravenous beasts) but also from the wondrous parts of nature (abundance, sunshine, curative plants). In short, humanity began to think of itself as above rather than within the environment. This has led to many environmental problems, although that is not the focus of this dissertation. Instead, the focus is on ways to move forward from that – from disenchantment to reenchancement. In the first part of this dissertation, the background was set with a look at the causes of disenchantment in context of history, the rise of technology, and the shifts that occurred in the dominant cultural paradigms.

The idea of reenchancement supposes more of a societal than an individual shift. But, as seen in the concentric circle model, everything starts from an individual (not only human individual) interior. For societal change to take effect, personal changes in many individuals must converge. And because there did once exist enchantment, it may be possible to move towards reenchancement. This reenchancement will of course not look the same as enchantment did in the 14th or 15th century. The world has changed too much, and this is not a bad thing in and of itself. We learn both from successes and from mistakes and excesses.

As we discussed in Chapter 4, it may be possible to find a way to connect with the natural world in our current chronotopes through self-realization. We can rediscover our connections and in turn rediscover wonder and love. As humans we require more than

just materiality. We need spiritual sustenance and a sense of connection. And one path towards that is by listening to what *places* can teach us. When we (re)create stories of place, and in particular the stories of sacred places, a link may be found not only to the natural world but also to a spiritual dimension. These stories connect place/nature to the divine, the divine to us, and us to place/nature. If we listen to the stories of earth, we may find that truly, they are enchanting.

Summary and final thoughts

As we give meaning to place/stories, so too do place/stories give meaning to us. This chapter has been all about making places and finding stories. This involved a discussion of the ways in which stories are transmitted, and how each of us has our own narrative that we take forward every day, which then interconnects with other stories and narratives. Bakhtin's work shows that time-place, or chronotope, links past to present through stories in very real ways. There is an intuitive understanding of what stories are; they are our map to the world. And much as maps change with new discoveries about, or simply changes to the physical world, so too do we rearrange our internal maps when we encounter new information, or new stories.

We all seek places where we feel we belong. Those places act as containers for our stories; we inscribe meaning on places and the places reflect that meaning back to us. Those meanings are filtered through our worldviews and our places within society. Sacred places have stories/meanings that may offer a way to find connections to ourselves, to each other, to the more-than-human and the divine – in short, they may offer the story of reenchancement.

The next two chapters focus on the stories of the two main examples of sacred places: Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean, and Stonehenge. Many stories are embedded in these places – stories from ancient cultures and from the present day. I will discuss where and how some of these stories originate, and what these stories might have to teach us; perhaps we will find that sometimes, looking back is the best way to move forward. I begin this journey in the southwest of England, in the forest called Puzzlewood.

Endnotes

³⁵⁸ Jenny Blain and Robert J. Wallis, *Sacred Sites, Contested Rites/Rights: Pagan Engagements with Archaeological Monuments* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2007), 10. Blain and Wallace use the word “paganisms” as an encompassing term for the many different varieties and conceptions of nature-based religion and spirituality; “pagans” in this context then also refers to adherents of these many different views.

³⁵⁹ See Chapter 4.

³⁶⁰ Jack Zipes, “Breaking the Magic Spell: Politics and the Fairy Tale,” *New German Critique* vol. 6 (1975): 116-135. While Zipes’ study focuses on German fairy tales, his main point is that fairy tales reflect social and political structures, and often serve to reinforce class differences. Maria Kaliambou, in “The Transformation of Folktales and Fairy Tales into Popular Booklets”, writes that early popular booklets of fairy tales (her study focused on those printed in the nineteenth century) “did not belong to scholarly collections of the elite and were therefore condemned as worthless.” Maria Kaliambou, “The Transformation of Folktales and Fairy Tales into Popular Booklets,” *Marvels & Tales*, vol. 21 (1) Fairy Tales, Printed Texts, and Oral Tellings (2007): 50.

³⁶¹ See, for example, Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 200. See also *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 109.

³⁶² Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 109.

³⁶³ Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin*, 201.

³⁶⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope of the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, 84.

³⁶⁵ David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 193, 205.

³⁶⁶ Bakhtin, “Forms of Time,” 253.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ See Chapter 1.

³⁶⁹ Camilla Asplund Ingemark, “The Chronotope of Enchantment,” *Journal of Folklore Research* 43, no. 1 (Jan.-April 2006): 3-4.

³⁷⁰ Ingemark, “Enchantment,” 4.

³⁷¹ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 3.

³⁷² David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 267.

³⁷³ Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Place* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 7.

³⁷⁴ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1974), 4.

³⁷⁵ See Chapter 5.

³⁷⁶ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 5.

³⁷⁷ See, for example, Massey, *Space, Place*, 168-169.

³⁷⁸ Linda McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 4.

³⁷⁹ Massey, *Space, Place*, 4.

³⁸⁰ See, for example, Harvey, *Justice*, 225.

- ³⁸¹ Karen Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western perspective on what it is and why it matters*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000): 199-200.
- ³⁸² See Chapter 2.
- ³⁸³ Harvey, *Justice*, 306.
- ³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 268.
- ³⁸⁵ McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place*, 5
- ³⁸⁶ Jerry Diakiw, "Canadian Literature and Canadian National Identity: A Revisionist Perspective," *Canadian Children's Literature* 87, vol. 23 no. 3 (1997): 36-49.
- ³⁸⁷ Tim Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape," *World Archaeology* 25, no. 2 (October 1993): 153.
- ³⁸⁸ McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place*, 30.
- ³⁸⁹ See Chapter 5.
- ³⁹⁰ Kent Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and Sense of Place* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993), 88.
- ³⁹¹ Jennifer Cross, "What is Sense of Place?" *Archives of the Twelfth Headwaters Conference, November 2-4, 2001*. Available: http://www.western.edu/headwaters/archives/headwaters12papers/cross_paper.html.
- ³⁹² Harvey, *Justice*, 306.
- ³⁹³ David Salvesen, "The Making of Place," Montana Associated Technology Roundtables website. Available: <http://www.matr.net/article-4108.html>.
- ³⁹⁴ Harvey, *Justice*, 304.
- ³⁹⁵ Scot A. French, "What is Social Memory?" *Southern Cultures* 2, no. 1 (1995): 9.
- ³⁹⁶ Owain Jones, "Geography, Memory, and Non-Representational Geographies," *Geography Compass* 5 (2011): 876.
- ³⁹⁷ Ingold, "Temporality," 153.
- ³⁹⁸ Blain and Wallace, *Contested Rites/Rights*, 22.
- ³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 26-28.
- ⁴⁰⁰ Harvey, *Justice*, 306.
- ⁴⁰¹ Abram, *Spell*, 262.
- ⁴⁰² Kimberley Blaeser, "Centering Words: Writing a Sense of Place," *Wicazo Sa Review* 14, no.2 (Autumn 1999): 97.
- ⁴⁰³ Martin W. Ball, "'People Speaking Silently to Themselves': An Examination of Keith Basso's Philosophical Speculations on 'Sense of Place' in Apache Cultures," *American Indian Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 474.
- ⁴⁰⁴ Blaeser, "Centering," 101.
- ⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 97, 101.
- ⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.
- ⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.
- ⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 93-94.
- ⁴⁰⁹ Christopher Chapple, "Thomas Berry, Buddhism and the New Cosmology." *Buddhist Christian Studies* 18 (1998): 147.
- ⁴¹⁰ Blaeser, "Centering," 97.
- ⁴¹¹ Robert J. Wallis and Jenny Blain, "Sites, Sacredness, and Stories: Interactions of Archaeology and Contemporary Paganism," *Folklore* 114 (2003), 311.
- ⁴¹² Blaeser, "Centering," 98.
- ⁴¹³ Terri Windling, *The Wood Wife* (New York: Orb Books, 1996).
- ⁴¹⁴ Ingemark, "Enchantment," 1.
- ⁴¹⁵ Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World*, (New York: Bantam, 1981), 2.
- ⁴¹⁶ Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1990). Originally published in 1980.

Chapter 7: The Stories of Puzzlewood and The Forest of Dean

The Mystery of Puzzlewood - Royal Forests – The Literary Forest–
Stories for the present day

*“Magical places are always beautiful and deserve to be contemplated .
Always stay on the bridge between the invisible and the visible.”*

Paulo Coelho

The next two chapters focus on the stories of Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean, and of Stonehenge. Both places have long histories and hold many different stories from a wide range of sources. This is where the concentric circle model is especially useful; it provides a way in which to assess these different kinds of stories, and to bring them together in a cohesive manner.

In both chapters, I begin by describing the biophysical context – the fourth circle of the concentric circle model. This should provide a way to visualize the physical landscape of each place; this is important as the landscape is a crucial element of the sacredness of these places. Additionally, the way that people have interacted with the physical environment of each place are very different, which may in large part be due to the difference in the character of the land; Puzzlewood is part of a larger forest which has long been recognized as a place of outstanding natural beauty, while Stonehenge is situated on Salisbury Plain – an area that has historically been less cared for and more interrupted (for example by the building of roads, and the expansion and eventual degradation of agricultural land). For this reason, direct comparisons between the two places in terms of human interaction are difficult, but then this contrast is in part why the two sites were chosen.

Another related, and key, difference, is that Stonehenge has been the subject of a great deal of archaeological investigation. As shall be discussed below, Puzzlewood has been protected from such interference through legislative protection; recently in the form of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation, and in earlier times, through its status as a Royal Forest. There are also several more pragmatic considerations; the first is quite simply that it is physically much more difficult to excavate an archaeological site in a forest as opposed to an open plain. Secondly, the Puzzlewood estate has remained in private hands, while Stonehenge has been under governmental or at least quasi-governmental stewardship for many years. Lastly, Puzzlewood is just a less talked-about place; it has quietly remained outside of the national and international scrutiny that Stonehenge has had to bear. This has not always been a good thing, however, as one of the stories about the difficulties in finding evidence about the past shows. These stories relate in many ways to the second circle (individual exterior), for example, in stories about the effects of time and the management of change. One interesting contrast is in two stories about stones; there is a story about a farmer who simply blows up a stone marking a burial site in the Forest of Dean. Meanwhile in Stonehenge, steps have been taken to protect the stones from the (recent) human modifications.

I also discuss the variations in the kinds of spiritual connections that are found in each place, and the origins of that connection. These relate to the first (individual interior) and third (cultural interior) circles. This is also where the fifth circle becomes essential; these are *sacred* places, where spirituality, cosmology, and the metaphysical are essential to gaining a full understanding of the place, and in understanding the meaning and value

of the stories found there. These stories also serve to explain the *depth* of connection that people feel towards these places. In Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean, there is a strong tradition of fairy faith. Many of the stories here involve fairies, giants, and other fantastical creatures. By contrast, Stonehenge is more closely associated with the ancient Druidic religion, and with ancestral communication. Both places, however, maintain strong affinities to nature spirits, and to the presence of the divine in nature.

Throughout these two chapters, it should be kept in mind that with the concentric circle model, the boundaries between the circles are seen as porous, or “open”; when things change in one circle, changes also occur within the other circles. None of these stories arose in a vacuum – they all took place *within* the place, and they all interact to create something quite unique and special. I have endeavoured to present a variety of stories that represent each circle, and to provide as complete a picture as possible about what gives each place its sacred character and special qualities. With that in mind, I now turn to the stories of Puzzlewood.

The Stories of Puzzlewood

Puzzlewood is a forest covering 14 acres, on the edge of the larger Forest of Dean in the Wye Valley, on the southern part of the border between England and Wales. Within the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley, 326 square miles were designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1971.⁴¹⁷ Over the years, very little has been altered in Puzzlewood other than those changes that have occurred naturally – the paths currently used are the same ones laid out by the owner in the early 1900s, and for the most part follow natural pathways created by rock formations.⁴¹⁸ The Puzzlewood estate,

comprising a small farm and visitor facilities such as a teahouse and gift shop, as well as the woods itself, has been privately owned for over 100 years, which may in large part account for its relatively undisturbed state. The landowners and the site managers have also done their best to ensure the ecological integrity of the forest and environs.⁴¹⁹ Additionally, the AONB designation ensures that the surrounding area will not be developed.⁴²⁰

This chapter tells some of the many different kinds of stories that can be found in and around Puzzlewood. I also explore the importance of fairy faith and Celtic spirituality. The Forest of Dean has a history of human habitation that stretches back thousands of years, and a geological history that goes back even further. It is a place that has inspired great writers, and is filled with legends and stories of magical beings and miraculous places. To set the scene for these stories, I begin at the beginning, with the formation of the forest.

One unique feature of the forest's landscape are scowles. Scowles are a geographic or geological feature which "originated as a natural underground cave system"⁴²¹ inherent in the particular limestone of the area. Early iron ore extraction is also thought to have contributed to their formation. The Forest of Dean is the only place in the world where scowles are found.⁴²² Over many centuries, as the earth shifted and eroded, some of the limestone caves become exposed, creating hollows. While scowles can vary greatly in appearance, for the most part in Puzzlewood, they have become winding trails carved between rocks, or appear as hollows or, less commonly, caves. Where hollows have formed, they have become covered in grasses or moss, creating a wonderfully magical appearance.

The Forest of Dean is also “one of the largest remaining areas of broadleaf semi-natural woodland”⁴²³ within the British Isles, and contains both ancient woodlands and ancient grasslands.⁴²⁴ It is thought to be one of the oldest forests in the U.K. Forests are thought to have at one time covered up to one third of the U.K.; now, only seven percent of the land is forested, and less than two percent is deciduous forest cover, such as exists in the Forest of Dean.⁴²⁵ Puzzlewood itself is partly ancient forest, consisting of ancient yews, oaks, ash, willow, and beech trees, as well as a wide variety of ferns, mosses, mushrooms, and wildflowers, including a carpet of bluebells in the Spring. Foxes, badgers, birds, and bats also live in the Forest. Some say too that it is home to magical creatures such as fairies and pixies, but more on that a little later.

Stone Age art, Bronze Age villages, Roman temples, and the Mystery of Puzzlewood

There is evidence that the Wye Valley has been home to humans as far back as the Paleolithic era. Cave art discovered on the border between England and Wales has been dated to 15,000 BCE. Further investigations show that this cave was used in both Upper and Middle Paleolithic eras.⁴²⁶ Based on the kinds of tools and other artifacts found there, it appears that the cave was “seasonally occupied for many centuries” and that the inhabitants exchanged tools and animal flints with another group about 300 kilometres away.⁴²⁷

Puzzlewood is also known to have been a site for ochre (used to dye pottery and cloth) and iron ore extraction during the Iron Age and the Bronze Age.⁴²⁸ While it is quite difficult to determine exactly the age of such mines, the chemical “signature” of the iron found in the forest matches that of tools from that era discovered in the area.⁴²⁹ There is other evidence of Iron Age settlement in the vicinity too; for example, a group of three

individual enclosures were uncovered in the late 1990s in the Cotswolds Hills, about 40 miles east of Puzzlewood.⁴³⁰ Similar settlements have also been located about 30 miles east, near the site of two silted over riverbeds.⁴³¹ The latter is thought to have been the site of a farming community, continuously inhabited from 500 BCE to 43 AD.⁴³²

There is also abundant evidence of Roman occupation in the Forest of Dean and the surrounding area, including several caches of Roman coins bearing the same ore signature as the tools from previous eras.⁴³³ One such find is known variously as the Mystery of Puzzlewood, and the Puzzlewood Treasure. In 1848, workers were removing a block of stone from a cliff face in the woods. This revealed a small cavity, and within this, the workers found “three earthenware jars containing over 3,000 Roman coins.”⁴³⁴ No one knows why these coins were hidden away in this particular spot, although it does make for interesting speculation.

Phil Riches, chair of the Dean Archaeology Group, notes that “iron ore was the forest’s most vital resource before and during the Roman occupation,” and most findings from this time seem to indicate that the area was used as a staging point, rather than the previous permanent settlements. However, there is also evidence that the area was used for farming (as it still is today). This is an interesting find, Riches notes, as it indicates that “at this time and earlier, some areas which are now wooded, and are often considered to have been so for all time, were more open.”⁴³⁵ Indeed, according to a National Mapping Programme Report in 2006, aerial photographs suggest that the forest is “possibly a remnant of prehistoric woodland.”⁴³⁶ This more recent evidence may indicate otherwise, or at least if it was wooded, parts of it were cleared for agriculture.

Riches also notes that there is an ancient roadway, known locally as the Roman Road, which traverses the area. Despite the name, it seems the road could well pre-date even the Romans, and has been in use ever since. The road “cuts right through the Forest from Ariconium (now Weston under Penyard) to Lydney. It’s likely that the Romans made use of it and that parts were rebuilt in the Middle Ages.”⁴³⁷ Jon Hoyle, senior project officer for Gloucestershire County Archaeology Service, notes that: “the dating of the road, like so much in the Forest of Dean, suffers from a lack of hard evidence.” But since both Roman pottery and coins, as well as prehistoric flints, have all been found along the route, it seems likely that the road has a long history.⁴³⁸ Riches concludes that “we have to consider how the very rich Roman heritage in the Forest of Dean is part of the story”⁴³⁹ of the area.

In the town of Lydney, about seven miles south of Puzzlewood, is the Lydney Park Estate, where a Roman villa and temple were excavated in the early 1900s. According to Mark Lewis, curatorial officer at the National Roman Museum in nearby Caerleon, findings at the site suggest that “the temple was visited for healing and recovery. One of the finds was a ‘ward’ for therapies. Little stamps used to put a maker’s name on ointments or medicines were also found, as well as votive offerings.”⁴⁴⁰ These offerings were most likely made to Nodens, the Roman god of healing. Other evidence to support this, Lewis notes, is that “Nodens was never depicted in human form and nine representations of a dog were found on the site.”⁴⁴¹

A Roman altar stone was also recovered from a pond on a farm near St. Briavels just south of Puzzlewood. This stone, now housed at the Dean Heritage Centre, is “a rare find,” according to collections officer Nicola Wynn, who adds that “its use is still a

mystery” although indentations on the top of the stone suggest that it may have held offerings.⁴⁴² Interestingly, some standing stones and small circles have been found which date to around the 2nd century AD. These are thought most likely to be burial markers rather than ceremonial sites,⁴⁴³ although one could argue that burial is a ceremony in itself.

Harold’s Stones – or are they?

Down in the Wye Valley, about eight miles from Puzzlewood, and just outside of an area known as Cuckoo Wood, is the village of Trellech. Here one can find three standing stones dating back to the Bronze Age. These are known locally as “Harold’s Stones” after King Harold, but in fact the placement of these stones dates back some 3,500 years.

The connection to King Harold is that a battle was fought in the vicinity and the story is that the stones were erected to commemorate the battle. Historically, these facts bear out; a battle was fought in the area in 1063, in which King Harold’s troops were the victors, although there is no evidence to suggest that the King had the stones placed there.⁴⁴⁴ A newer story, dating to the 16th century is that the stones were thrown from Skerrit Mountain (some 13 miles away) by the giant Jack O’Kent in a game with the devil.⁴⁴⁵

In any case, it is thought that the location was originally used for rituals, and quite possibly had magical significance to the Druids, although it does not appear to be part of a larger stone circle.⁴⁴⁶ Another part of the Trellech stones’ story is the presence nearby of nine springs (of which only four still run). These springs have variously been said to cure illnesses, to serve as a bathing place for nuns, to be a gathering place for

fairies, and to grant wishes (but to make your wish come true, you must throw a pebble, and wish just as the pebble touches the water).

One of the springs feeds a well, variously known as the Virtuous Well and St. Anne's Well – the former by an old local tradition, the latter a more recent name given, perhaps, by the local clergy. The well itself is quite lovely, with stone steps and an archway, and benches where one may sit by the water. Even today, people visit the well and leave tokens, or gifts, in the hope of accessing the well's curative powers.⁴⁴⁷ It is known that a church was built on the site in the 7th century, and that was replaced by another church in the 12th century. Outside the church is a sundial, depicting both the standing stones and the well. There must have been some special significance to the well, as, according to folklorist Margaret Eyre, "there are not many carvings of sacred wells."⁴⁴⁸ There is, it seems, a long history of religious and cultural significance to the site. The many stories of the Trellech stones and the churchyard illustrate how stories do become layered in places, with each layer leaving its own reminder. Each story made sense in its time, and was significant to the people who lived in the area. Clearly it has long been used as a site for rituals of some sort – whether magical, commemorative, or Christian.

Royal forests

After the Romans, the Saxons came to settle in the area, although archaeological evidence is scant between the 1st and 7th centuries. It seems likely that the area was inhabited by pagan Saxons, rather than Christian converts, at least during the first century. The Saxons used the forest as a royal hunting ground, and according to a Natural

England report, historically this was “the main influence on the majority of the area.”⁴⁴⁹

This was the first time that the forest was managed, rather than simply used. There were very strict rules governing the Royal Forest, in terms of the amount and type of wood that could be cut, how saplings were to be protected from cattle and other browsing animals, and who could hunt and how many deer could be taken.⁴⁵⁰ Inhabitants of the area were still allowed to take wood from the forest for uses such as building and heating, although this was carefully monitored and controlled. The lasting legacy of this is that much of the forest remained intact, and settlements were allowed only on the periphery.⁴⁵¹ Even after the Saxons, no large-scale clearing occurred between the 11th and 16th centuries.⁴⁵² This history is important to the Forest as a whole, including Puzzlewood, as it has kept an ancient woodland intact.

Recalling, however, the extent of forest cover throughout England in the Middle Ages, it is not difficult to imagine the importance of forests, not only for livelihoods, fuel, and shelter, but also in the creation of culture and identity. As Brian Bates writes in his cultural history of *The Real Middle Earth*, “trees dominated the imagination of [Celtic] people... the forest was treated as a place of magic and power. It was like a great spirit that had to be befriended.”⁴⁵³

“You be come too late, Sir”

Yet this respect for the forest, and all its enchantment, faded over time. The need to accommodate an increasing human population meant that farmlands had to be created. There was little regard for preserving the monuments of the past. What this has meant is that, as the archaeologist Hoyle noted above, and as Small and Stoertz of the National Mapping Programme also observed, hard evidence of ancient sites in the Forest of Dean

is hard to find. In part this is due to topographical features and in part to the AONB designation (it is difficult to detect much from the air due to the dense ground cover, and difficult to excavate a forest, especially one with protections such as those afforded by Natural England).

However, it is also simply because much of the evidence is no longer there. The Proceedings of the Society of Antiquarians of London in 1876 records a letter sent from Professor A. Church of Gloucestershire describing his search for “Longstone”, a monolith marking an ancient burial site in the Forest of Dean:

As the roads are deep and winding, I had some trouble to find its exact locality. On inquiring of a farm labourer for the ‘Longstone’ he replied with a broad grin “You be come too late, Sir,” and he then told me that the tenant farmer who had just entered on the farm on which ‘Longstone’ had stood had blown it to pieces with three charges of gunpowder.⁴⁵⁴

He adds that he was “forcibly impressed with the need of some law” to protect ancient monuments and sites from “wanton destruction.” It seems that the Society took notice of his concerns, as the first Ancient Monuments Act was passed in 1882, although compliance was entirely voluntary.⁴⁵⁵ The Act was completely rewritten in 1913 with compulsory compliance.⁴⁵⁶ In 1979 this was replaced by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act.

The literary forest and more modern tales

The legends of King Arthur and Merlin are also closely connected to the Forest of Dean. Around 1700, a giant skeleton is purported to have been found about four miles from Puzzlewood, near a town called Great Doward and just outside a place known as King

Arthur's Cave. Some say this skeleton is that of the King himself;⁴⁵⁷ other accounts say that it is the skeleton of Jack O'Kent, the giant who played games with the devil.⁴⁵⁸

The forest is also said to have been King Arthur's childhood home, where the wizard Merlin raised him. The BBC TV series "Merlin" was filmed in Puzzlewood, as was the recent movie "Jack The Giant Slayer."⁴⁵⁹ It is said that J.R.R. Tolkien was a frequent visitor to Puzzlewood and it was there that he found much of his inspiration for Middle Earth. More recently it has been suggested that J.K. Rowling based elements of the Forbidden Forest in the Harry Potter series on Puzzlewood.⁴⁶⁰

Over the years, stories and legends continued to be told in and about the Forest of Dean and the Wye Valley. Stories are always fluid and changeable, and the stories of the Forest are no different. There are some persistent themes, such as tales of giants and the story of the sacred well, although the specifics of the stories vary according to the traditions of the time. There is also a persistent tale of an enormous ghostly hound roaming the woods. This tale is found in folklore dating back to the late 19th century.⁴⁶¹ In 2012, a visitor to the area wrote of seeing "a large brindle hound... that was there one moment and gone the next... the term spirit hound comes to mind."⁴⁶² Interestingly, the latter was not aware of the older story.

Fairy faith

It is also said that the Puzzlewood is home to fairies and pixies. Now I do realize that the immediate reaction, especially in academic circles, will be that such things of course do not exist. I do not intend to argue that point either way;⁴⁶³ rather, I will relay the stories that take such beings into account in Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean. However, it should be noted that some well-respected scholars of religion, including W.Y. Evans-

Wentz and Alastair McIntosh,⁴⁶⁴ have undertaken serious academic studies of belief in fairies, and the history of fairy faith.

A belief in fairies and other magical creatures has persisted in many cultures over many centuries. This is clearly true in Celtic traditions. McIntosh observes that

Most indigenous British cultures actually have an understanding and language for nature's wildness, but it has been relegated to folklore and legend. I refer to the realm of 'faerie'. By this I mean much more than just children's fairy tales. I mean, rather, a way of understanding the imaginal realm where nature is animated by Spirit.⁴⁶⁵

These stories too have become part of the layers of stories; as McIntosh writes, "Beneath formalized religious structures of many societies rests a bedrock or vestige of nature religion. In Scotland and other Celtic countries, [this is] faerie lore."⁴⁶⁶ But perhaps the question is not so much one of whether fairies "really" exist, but what fairies represent; faith in a magical, non-human realm that appeals to something deep within. Indeed, as McIntosh notes, the tradition of fairy faith "gives the realm of faerie a very serious place in [the Celtic] worldview." He explains:

At one level, fairies can be seen as icons of the human psyche connecting deeply into the consciousness of nature: a mechanism for knowing deep ecology. At another, buried deep in Celtic mythology, it is worth recalling that the fairies were once the original gentle and nature-connected peoples of this land... As such, the faeries can be seen to symbolise that in us which was true wild nature.⁴⁶⁷

The tradition of fairy faith can be traced back through many centuries. In their book on Scottish fairy belief between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan observe that the question " 'Do you believe in fairies?' would have baffled people in pre-industrial societies; everybody did, for the contrary was unthinkable."⁴⁶⁸ In the early nineteenth century, historian Thomas Keightley of Dublin

published several volumes of collected fairy tales from around the world. The first *Fairy Mythology* was in print in 1828, followed by several further versions, the last written in 1870.⁴⁶⁹ According to Keightley, the oldest recorded account of fairies in Wales is found in the writings of Giraldus Cambrensis, who travelled through Wales in 1188.⁴⁷⁰

Keightley also traces written accounts of fairy faith in England to the twelfth century, although his research indicates that the fairies of England were likely the fairies of Norse legend as well.⁴⁷¹ The fairy tales of Scotland, says Keightley, “scarcely differ in any essential point from those of England,” although the Scottish fairies are apparently rather more mischievous, and do indeed reside in the hills.⁴⁷²

In the memoirs of Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus, written in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, she recalls that “our mountains were full of fairy legends” which formed the “innermost faith of the Highlander.”⁴⁷³ The extent to which fairies permeated Celtic beliefs is also documented by W.B. Yeats. In his 1902 edition of *The Celtic Twilight*, he relates many stories based in the belief in fairies. One woman he met said that while she did not believe “in hell or in ghosts,” she believed “there are faeries and little leprechauns and water-horses and fallen angels.” Another person told him that “no one ever doubts the faeries, as they stand to reason.”⁴⁷⁴

Other accounts of fairy and folklore focus more specifically on the Forest and the Wye Valley. In 1905 Margaret Eyre collected a number of these stories and presents them in her essay, “Folk-lore of the Wye Valley” (sic). One such story is that fairies would visit the Virtuous Well on Halloween night, “drinking the water out of hairbell cups. People used to find these the next morning by the well... they used to gather them up and dry them, to be used in illness.” One unfortunate farmer who didn’t “believe” in

the fairies dug up the ground around the well simply to bring an end to fairy stories. He then found he was unable to draw water from the well, although others still could. It was not until he repaired the damage that he was once again able to draw water.⁴⁷⁵

It was common practice in the Forest as late as the early 20th century to cut hiding places and pathways for the fairies in and through the hedges. It was also widely held that “small whirlwinds which carry columns of dust along the quiet lanes” are caused by fairies traveling through the woods.⁴⁷⁶

These fairy narratives still reside in those hills and in the hearts of those to whom those hills and their stories belong. For many centuries, it was, in the Celtic worldview, neither more nor less problematic to believe in fairy lore than to believe in Biblical tales. In general, people will tend to form their worldviews according to what makes sense to them in their lived experiences in their home places. One may choose to believe in angels, or fairies, or both, or neither; yet the fact remains there is a long tradition of Celtic fairy faith. This deserves no less attention than, for example, North American First Nation faith traditions, nature religions, or the larger world religions.

One more story

Puzzlewood is invariably described as being “enchanted” and “magical,” and I can say from my own visits there that it really does feel that way. As an enduring and enchanting part of the Puzzlewood tradition, fairy faith, and what it represents, may be part of the path to reenchantment. It is this that many modern day pagans seek to rediscover in sacred places and in nature more generally; an “enchanted past that re-enchants.”⁴⁷⁷

I visited Puzzlewood for the first time in the summer of 1998, with my daughter who was then three years old. We had rented a trailer in a typical British “holiday park”

situated on the edge of the Forest of Dean, and every day we explored different parts of the woods, as well as visiting nearby farms and villages. While much of this holiday now is just a pleasant, though undifferentiated memory (there is not much difference really between one rural English village and another in the same district), the day spent at Puzzlewood remains vivid in my mind.

There really is something that makes Puzzlewood quite different from the surrounding woods. There is an ineffable quality to the air in this ancient forest; something mischievous and musical and... well, magical. If you are there with a young child, it is easy enough to embrace this and allow the spirit of the place to play with your imagination. And because children just naturally follow their imagination, it becomes a day of discovering dragon's lairs, fairy homes, leprechaun workshops, and the mines of dwarves.

The little brooks and streams in the woods have an orange tint to them from the level of iron in the ground, and the moss-covered scowles hollows seem like natural entrances to underground caves – which, indeed, they are, although we were not able to ascertain whether there were any “little people” in residence. The forest bed of leaves and fallen branches is not cleared away but allowed to remain in its natural state, and is filled with bracken and mushrooms and all manner of vines and mosses – perfect cover of course for any little people who might be out collecting water, berries, mushrooms, or other fairy foods. The paths meander through the forest, following the natural curves and rise and fall of the land. Sometimes you can glimpse animal paths that cross the ones intended for humans; the forest after all is home to various creatures, including badgers, deer, and foxes. There is also a small pond that I particularly recall for the beautiful

jewel-coloured dragonflies that hovered above its surface. Puzzlewood is a beautiful place, and it can make you really wonder whether fairies might really exist.

Countless visitors have described Puzzlewood as magical and enchanting. If you haven't visited there, it is easy enough to dismiss these adjectives, but if you have experienced it, these truly do seem the most fitting description. A writer for BBC's *Countryfile* magazine writes: "Puzzlewood is an enchanting forest where you can easily lose yourself in a world many of us only read about in fantasy novels. Emerging from a walk around Puzzlewood feels like stepping back to reality after an adventure in a truly magical place."⁴⁷⁸



*Figure 3: The Wye Valley
Both photos by the author*



Figure 4: Inside Puzzlewood.

Many parents, myself included, who visit with small children describe their children looking for fairies, and discovering fairy homes. Now part of that is simply a

child's wonder filled view of the world – they have not yet learned that fairies “don't exist”. Whether fairies are real or not, stories about them continue to capture the imagination of children and adults alike and it is these stories, as well as the atmosphere of the place itself, that create the magic, charm, and enchantment of Puzzlewood..

Some characteristics of Puzzlewood

In the Prologue to this dissertation, there is a list of characteristics of Puzzlewood and Stonehenge. Puzzlewood is described with these words:

- Magic
- Enchantment/wonder
- Love - eros
- Deep ecological self
- Woods
- Chaos
- Organic/nature
- Diverse
- Personal exploration
- Evocation

Magic, enchantment and wonder have been themes throughout this chapter. Eros love in this context is, as explained in the Prologue, an intimate connection with and deep affection for, the land itself, and the spirits and stories than dwell therein. It is a re-enchantment with the land, as well as with all the beings, seen and unseen, that happens here. The development of the deep ecological self, or self-realization, may make it easier to be receptive to the experience of enchantment. As discussed in Chapter 4, self realization, or the development of the deep ecological self, occurs when we recognize ourselves in others and deeply understand that we are part of nature and that nature is part of us. It is an affinity with other beings, and a sense of altruism and empathy towards others, both human and non-human.⁴⁷⁹ To be open to the enchantment of Puzzlewood

involves an openness of perception, an acceptance that spirit dwells in all things, and a sense of wonder in the world.

That Puzzlewood is a wood is self-evident, as perhaps is the description of it as being organic/natural. The term organic is used here in an ecosystems context (as opposed to being a way of producing food). That is, the forest and all its constituent parts have been allowed to grow, mature, die, and renew according to their own cycles and processes without excessive or deeply destructive human interference. “Natural” here refers to the fact that rather than being centred on a particular built component, it is the forest itself that is imbued with special qualities – the formation of the landscape, the ancient trees and hidden caves are where the evocation of the sacred takes place.

This is in contrast with places such as Stonehenge; while the landscape is an essential component of place, it is the structure that marks the specific spot where ceremonies are held. The magic of Puzzlewood, on the other hand, is present throughout the landscape and not held only in one particular place. It is present in all parts of the forest. Ascribing chaos to Puzzlewood ties in closely with these concepts – it is not structured or orderly in the way that a more managed landscape might be. This is also what is meant when describing it as a diverse (not monolithic) place. The special places within the forest can only be discovered, and understood, through personal exploration, by becoming acquainted with the nuances of the place. To place this within the context of the concentric circles model, the physical landscape, flora, and fauna of the Forest belongs to the fourth circle – the collective exterior. The *effect* of the landscape, though, can be described within of the first circle.

Lastly, Puzzlewood is a place that *evokes* something in the soul – a remembrance of our connection to the earth, a reminder that there may exist souls, spirits and sprites that are not encountered in the busy-ness of everyday life. Evocation in the context of the sacred is responsive, or reactive; that is, it does not require that we call to the presences. Instead, the presences – the spirits and sprites and perhaps also the magical beings – of (in this case) the forest call to us. It draws us out of ourselves, asks for our attention, and reveals its magic to us in that way.

Puzzlewood and the sacred landscape

So with all of these stories, all of this history, and all of this magic, the question is, is Puzzlewood a sacred place? If it is held up to the criteria for sacred places as set out in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, it does meet some of the criteria. Here is that list, and a look at where Puzzlewood fits in.

1. It is revealed by the divine, not chosen or created by humans
2. It creates a numinous experience
3. It evokes certain types of behaviors caused by the experience
4. It has sacred stories attached to it
5. It brings benefit to both the individual and to the community of followers as a whole.

Puzzlewood fulfills the second and third criteria, but only partially meets the other three.

It does have a revelatory quality, there are stories attached to it and it does benefit both individuals and the community, but not necessarily, or always, in ways that could be described as sacred – it is more magical than sacred.⁴⁸⁰ However, I would argue that Puzzlewood exists as part of a *sacred landscape*, in which all five criteria are met. As noted above, there is not one specific structure or feature (such as a sacred tree for

example) that marks the *single* spot where the sacred resides or may be called upon. The Forest of Dean – of which Puzzlewood is a part – has a long history of sacred uses – there are many standing stones and circles, and sacred wells, some of which are still in use today for certain rituals, and any or all of which have evocative powers. Much of the faith that lies behind the continued use of these sacred places derives from fairy faith – or similar ancient Celtic religions – and fairy faith understands that fairies have a capricious nature and do not always want to be seen (several legends explain why this is so).⁴⁸¹ There are also said to be numerous fairy dwelling places and meeting places, and one may encounter the fairies – or other mysterious beings – in any of these places as well as during their travels from place to place. The fairies, in other words, are always believed to be there, and may be encountered at any time in any place.

Curiously, these places have not become prominent in the current pagan or Druidic movement, despite the fact that there are clear and quite strong connections with a Druidic past, as well as connections with other Celtic belief systems. I suggest that there are three possible reasons for this. First, the kinds of rituals and connections to the sacred here are much more personal than communal (supplications to the sacred well, for example). Secondly, fairy faith is more common among those who live in the area than is Druidry, and lastly, it is simply off the beaten path. Stonehenge is 75 miles to the southwest; Avebury, another well-known Druidic/pagan site is 65 miles away, and Glastonbury, a popular pagan destination, is 70 miles away. (By comparison, Stonehenge and Avebury are 25 miles apart, although it is nearly 50 miles from Avebury to Glastonbury.) In addition, these latter three sites are more usually the focus of attention from the media and in academic circles. Given the rather negative portrayal of Druidry

and paganism in general, it seems likely that those who live close to the Forest, and who use these sites, would choose to keep their own sacred landscape quiet, peaceful, and private. This is not to say that there is not a community of believers, but it does seem that they prefer to keep to themselves. Indeed, researchers Jenny Blain and Robert Wallace found that “often, pagan rites are private, even secret,” as they “attend to the needs of their local sacred sites.”⁴⁸²

So within the landscape of the forest, all five elements of sacred places are found. The sacred well and stones at Trellech, the ancient Roman temple, and the rows and circles of standing stones are not just randomly chosen, but were in some way revealed as sacred places. There are countless stories over many centuries of numinous encounters and experiences, within Puzzlewood itself as well as the area more inclusively, and certain behaviours are enacted because of this numinous quality. There is a long tradition of stories related to fairy faith and other pagan religions in the area; the ones narrated here are only some of those that attach to the area. The Forest benefits individuals, in the rites held at the wells, for example. We can infer benefits to the larger community simply because if this was not the case, the places would have long ago fallen into disuse (clearly this is true of Roman temples, but other sites are still in use). It is true that the uses have changed somewhat over time, but that is true of any place, and of all stories.

Summary and final thoughts

Puzzlewood is, both in my personal experience and by the accounts of others, a place of magic and enchantment. For those who believe in fairy faith, Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean is an exquisite example of a sacred landscape, for here one can commune with

the sprites and spirits of the forest. It is a landscape filled with history and stories that have become layered into the land, both literally and figuratively.

Seeing this as a sacred place does require a different approach to traditional notions of sacred places, largely because fairy faith has been denigrated as mere superstition and fairy tales. Yet it is very easy to argue that *all* religion is mere superstition and fairy tales. To understand the sense of the sacred here requires that these beliefs be taken as being as real and important to those who hold them as the beliefs of the followers of any other religion, regardless of the deeply ingrained cultural resistance to it. The same holds true for other expressions of paganisms in sacred places. It is necessary, however, to first recognize that this bias exists. As Henderson and Cowan state, “the study of alien belief-systems requires a temporary suspension of the cognitive assumptions of our own society.”⁴⁸³

Places can be complicated, especially ones such as the Forest of Dean, which contain many stories over many centuries from many cultures. But perhaps these stories can best be understood by placing them in the context of the modern world, to see what might be learned from them. The stories of Puzzlewood, the Forest of Dean, and the Wye Valley remind us that there may be more to these places than meets the modern and the post-modern eye. Whatever you may believe about the existence of fairies, or the spirits of trees, wells, and forests, these stories are a reminder that the world was once understood as enchanted and ensouled, and that enchantment and ensoulment lives on in the stories of place.

In the next chapter, I discuss the stories surrounding Stonehenge. While many of these stories also are based in an ancient Celtic faith, both the kind of faith and the place itself are very different, in history and in current times, from the peaceful forests. I turn now to the Salisbury Plain, to see what stories might be unearthed there.

Endnotes

- ⁴¹⁷ From the Natural England website. Natural England is an NGO that oversees the designation of areas of outstanding natural beauty. There are currently only 33 such designations throughout England, which attests to the special qualities of this area. Available at: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designations/aonb/wyevalley.aspx>. Information about Puzzlewood from “What is the Magic of Puzzlewood?” available at <http://www.puzzlewood.net/>.
- ⁴¹⁸ Information about ownership and management from Helen O’Kane, currently the manager of Puzzlewood. Pers. Comm. Latest at June 10, 2013.
- ⁴¹⁹ A summary of Puzzlewood’s “green tourism” plan can be found here: <http://www.puzzlewood.net/greentourismpolicy.htm>.
- ⁴²⁰ According to the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, the AONB designation “secures their [AONBs] permanent protection against development that would damage their special qualities.” From the Natural England website. Available at: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designations/aonb/default.aspx>.
- ⁴²¹ Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service, “The Scowles of the Forest of Dean: Archaeology Information Sheet” (2004). Available at: <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=5366>.
- ⁴²² Ibid.
- ⁴²³ Natural England, *Natural Character Area Profile 105: Forest of Dean and Lower Wye* (Peterborough: English Nature, 2012), 6. Also available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/587130>.
- ⁴²⁴ For woodlands see Natural England, *Natural Character Area Profile 105*, 6. Ancient forests are defined as those which have been continuously forested since 1600 or earlier. For grasslands, see Shelley Evans, *Waxcap Grasslands – An Assessment of English Sites* (Peterborough: English Nature, 2004), 21. Ancient grasslands are those which have been grassland continuously for over 500 years. In Puzzlewood, these areas are currently used as pasture, mainly for sheep.
- ⁴²⁵ Brian Bates, *The Real Middle Earth: Magic and Mystery in The Dark Ages* (London: Pan MacMillan, 2003), 42, 282. Bates does note, however, that research continues on this subject, and that estimates of ancient forest cover frequently go up or down according to new data and information.
- ⁴²⁶ Thomas Rogers, “Cave Art in the Wye Valley,” *Current Anthropology* 22, no. 5 (1981), 602.
- ⁴²⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴²⁸ See for example, Bernard Cooper, “Scowles, Sheep, and Ancient Oaks: The Forest of Dean,” *GeoExPro: Magazine of Petroleum Geoscience* 4, vol. 9, 2012, online. Available at: http://www.geoexpro.com/article/Scowles_Sheep_Ancient_Oaks_The_Forest_of_Dean/3e6b85e1.aspx.
- ⁴²⁹ Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service, “The Scowles of the Forest of Dean.”
- ⁴³⁰ Alastair Marshall, “Functional Analysis of Settlement Areas: Prospection over a defended enclosure of Iron Age date at The Bowsings, Guiting Power, Gloucestershire, UK,” *Archaeological Prospection* 8, vol. 2 (2001): 81.
- ⁴³¹ J. Lovell et al, “Iron Age to Saxon Farming Settlement at Bishop’s Cleeve, Gloucestershire: Excavations South of Church Road, 1988 and 2004,” *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 125 (2007): 95-129.
- ⁴³² BBC News, “Iron Age Settlement Found at Farm,” June 2005. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/gloucestershire/4618135.stm.
- ⁴³³ Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service.
- ⁴³⁴ Puzzlewood website, “The Wood – A Brief History.” Available at: <http://www.puzzlewood.net/thewood.htm>.

- ⁴³⁵ Sarah Daly, "Finding Romans in the Forest of Dean," *Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Review*, May 9, 2012. Available at: <http://www.theforestreview.co.uk/featuresdetail.cfm?id=4672>.
- ⁴³⁶ Fiona Small and Cathy Stoertz, *The Forest of Dean Mapping Project, Gloucestershire: A Report of the National Mapping Programme* (Swindon: National Monuments Record Centre, English Heritage, 2006), 18.
- ⁴³⁷ Daly, "Finding Romans," online.
- ⁴³⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴⁰ Sarah Daly, "Lydney Park Roman Temple," *Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Review*, May 9, 2012. Available at: <http://www.theforestreview.co.uk/featuresdetail.cfm?id=4672>.
- ⁴⁴¹ Daly, "Roman Temple."
- ⁴⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴⁴³ Timothy Darvil, *Prehistoric Gloucestershire* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1987), 111.
- ⁴⁴⁴ Margaret Eyre, "Folk-lore of the Wye Valley," *Folklore* 16, vol. 2 (1905), 175. See also Ray Spencer, "Harold's Stones," *The Journal of Antiquities*, June 2012. Available: <http://thejournalofantiquities.com/2012/06/20/harolds-stones-trellech-monmouthshire/>.
- ⁴⁴⁵ Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud, "Jack O'Kent" in *A Dictionary of English Folklore* (Oxford University Press; print and online editions, 2003). Online entry available at: <http://oxfordindex.oup.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100015126>. See also Spencer, "Harold's Stones." See also Alan Wood, "Standing Stones & other Spiritual Places in the Wye Valley & Forest of Dean" (video). Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSm18qKZ7Ic&list=PL592ACA71C4E196FE&index=1>
- ⁴⁴⁶ Spencer, "Harold's Stones."
- ⁴⁴⁷ See Wood, "Standing Stones". For a personal account of a visit to the well, see for example Legendary Dartmoor website, "The Virtuous Well," updated 2013. Available at: http://www.legendarydartmoor.co.uk/vir_well.htm.
- ⁴⁴⁸ Eyre, "Folk-lore," 165.
- ⁴⁴⁹ Natural England, *Natural Character Area Profile 105*, 12.
- ⁴⁵⁰ For a very complete history of the Forest of Dean up to the beginning of the 20th century, see John Nisbet, "The History of the Forest of Dean, in Gloucestershire," *The English Historical Review* 21, vol. 83 (1906).
- ⁴⁵¹ Small and Stoertz, *The Forest of Dean Mapping Project*, 7.
- ⁴⁵² Nisbet, "The History of the Forest of Dean," 445
- ⁴⁵³ Bates, *The Real Middle Earth*, 44.
- ⁴⁵⁴ *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London*. Second Series, 1876. Thursday, March 9th, 1876: 496-509.
- ⁴⁵⁵ Christopher Chippindale, "The Making of the First Ancient Monument Act 1882, and its administration under General Pitt-Rivers," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 136, 1983; 1-55.
- ⁴⁵⁶ "The 1913 Ancient Monuments Act," English Heritage website. Available at: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-centenary/1913-ancient-monuments-act/>.
- ⁴⁵⁷ A.P. ApSimon, "King Arthur's Cave, King Arthur's Hall, and the Giant Skeleton," *Proceedings of the University of Bristol Speleol. Society* 20, vol. 1 (1994), 75.
- ⁴⁵⁸ Eyre, "Folk-lore," 175.
- ⁴⁵⁹ Puzzlewood website, "Filming At Puzzlewood," available at: <http://www.puzzlewood.net/filmingatpuzzlewood.htm>.
- ⁴⁶⁰ These assertions are repeated often in books, articles, and on popular culture sites, but I have not been able to find any academic literature to support or disprove these claims. However, there seems to be sufficient anecdotal evidence to support the Tolkien claim. I emailed J.K. Rowling's literary agent and representative to ask whether they could confirm the Rowling connection, and their response was that Rowling was not available to answer my question. However, in the movie *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows Part One*, some scenes are located (and were filmed) in the Forest of Dean. Additionally, Rowling was born in Gloucestershire, and may well have visited the Forest as a child.
- ⁴⁶¹ Eyre, "Folk-lore," 175.
- ⁴⁶² R.W. Search, "A Legend is Born in the Forest of Dean," Woody's World website (December 2012). Available at: <http://searchesworld.blogspot.ca/2012/12/a-legend-is-born-in-forest-of-dean.html>.
- ⁴⁶³ While it is more common to assume that fairies do not exist, it is possible to argue to the contrary. Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, in their book, *Scottish Fairy Belief: A History* (East Linton, Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 2001), note that "there is, arguably, as much evidence of one kind or another for the activities of fairies from the fifteenth to early nineteenth centuries as there is for the existence of either the

- Picts, the Britons, the Angles or the Scots during the first millennium of Scottish history.” (Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 8). Throughout the first chapters of this book they present arguments and written evidence that it was as common in England in the years preceding the Enlightenment to believe in the existence of fairies as real, living beings as it is now to disbelieve in their existence.
- ⁴⁶⁴ W.Y. Wentz is best known for his translation of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. For his account of fairy faith, see W.Y. Wentz, *Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1911). The book remains in print today, and an ebook can be found on the Project Gutenberg website: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/34853/34853-h/34853-h.htm>. Alastair McIntosh describes himself as an “independent scholar, writer and community activist,” and currently teaches at the University of Edinburgh. He is widely published in academic journals and has written extensively on Celtic spirituality and religions.
- ⁴⁶⁵ Alastair McIntosh, “The Future of Wild Land in Scotland,” in *The International Year of Mountains 2002, Scotland's Wild Land - what future?* (The Scottish Wild Land Group, 2002): 5-8. Also available: <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/articles/2002-wildland.htm>.
- ⁴⁶⁶ Alastair McIntosh, “Faerie Faith in Scotland,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Nature*, Jeffrey Kaplan & Bron Taylor eds. (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2005): 633-634.
- ⁴⁶⁷ Patrick Laviolette & Alastair McIntosh, “Fairy Hills: Merging Heritage & Conservation,” *ECOS: Journal of the British Association of Nature Conservation*, Vol. 18 no.3/4, 1997, 2-8. Also available at: http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/articles/1997_faerie_hills.htm.
- ⁴⁶⁸ Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 1.
- ⁴⁶⁹ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; this ed. 2004. Available online at: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/index/15/101015252/>. As an interesting aside, in his Preface to the 1870 edition of *Fairy Mythology*, Keightley notes that Goethe and Jacob Grimm both “thought well of it,” and the latter wrote a letter to the author “commending it, and assuring me that even to *him* it offered something new.” (Thomas Keightley, *Fairy Mythology: Illustrative of the Romance and Superstition of Various Countries* (London: H.G. Bohn, 1870), preface. An ebook is available from Sacred Texts: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/tfm/tfm002.htm>.
- ⁴⁷⁰ Keightley, *Fairy Mythology: Wales*, Sacred Texts web page.
- ⁴⁷¹ Keightley, *Fairy Mythology: England*, Sacred Texts web page.
- ⁴⁷² Keightley, *Fairy Mythology: The Scottish Lowlands*, Sacred Texts web page.
- ⁴⁷³ Alastair McIntosh, *Soil and Soul* (London: Aurum, 2001), 43, quoting from Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus, *Memoirs of a Highland Lady* (London: John Murray, 1811), 143.
- ⁴⁷⁴ W.B. Yeats, *The Celtic Twilight* (London: A.H. Bullen, 1902), 8. Available as an ebook from Sacred Texts: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/yeats/twi/twi00.htm>.
- ⁴⁷⁵ Eyre, “Folk-lore,” 176-177.
- ⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷⁷ Jenny Blain and Robert Wallace, *Sacred Sites, Contested Rites/Rights* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2007), 26.
- ⁴⁷⁸ Quoted on the Puzzlewood website: <http://www.puzzlewood.net/links.htm>.
- ⁴⁷⁹ Arne Naess, “Self-Realization,” In *The Ecology of Wisdom; Writings by Arne Naess*, edited by Alan Drengson and Bill Devall (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2008), 105-119. This is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.
- ⁴⁸⁰ It is, however, certainly possible to argue that magic is part of the sacred. In Europe, prior to the Renaissance, magic and religion were very closely linked, especially among the peasantry. It was common for clerics and priests to perform both sacred magic rituals and religious ceremonies. It is also possible in a historical sense to argue that magic and science are the same thing – as pointed out by James George Frazer in *The Golden Bough*. He argues that magic has historically been “alloyed with religion,” but also that “the analogy between the magical and scientific conceptions of the world is close.” (James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London: MacMillan, 1922). The edition quoted here is Dover, 2002, 48-49.) Frazer writes that while magic and science rely on the same *kinds* or principles (“faith, implicit but real and firm, in the order and uniformity of nature”), the reasoning in magic is faulty. He argues that the same reasoning informed the link between religion and magic.
- ⁴⁸¹ There are many references for these legends. See for example, R.J. Stewart, *Celtic Myths, Celtic Legends* (London: Blandford Books, 1994). See also the extensive collection of texts and historical notes on the *Sacred Texts* website. Available at: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/index.htm>.
- ⁴⁸² Blain and Wallace, *Sacred Sites*, 28 and in their Preface, xiv respectively.
- ⁴⁸³ Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 12.

Chapter 8: The Stories of Stonehenge

The Land and The Stones – The Stories of the Druids – The Stories of the Archaeologists
The Battle of the Beanfield – Settling Differences

“A sacred landscape is not simply a backdrop for action, but rather a place filled with names, associations and memories that link together everything present there. Humans become linked to the rocks, trees, animals, rivers, mountains, and these bonds guide future human interaction with that place.”

Christopher Tilley

It is a rainy, grey afternoon in the late fall. The motorway is practically deserted, which I suppose should not have surprised me, given the weather and the time of year. We turn off the main road onto the smaller road that will take us to our destination. I had intended for a couple of years to come to Stonehenge, but it was a visit from an old friend from Canada that prompted me to actually do so.

We first spot the stones from a distance. They look dark and wet and rather forlorn, standing in the middle of a field, surrounded by a chain link fence. As we turn into the muddy, pot-holed, and nearly empty parking lot, I notice that my companion looks disappointed. She sits quietly for a moment after I shut off the engine, then she turns to me and says, rather sadly, “Oh. I thought they would be bigger.”

That was in 1988. A great deal has changed in the area surrounding Stonehenge since then (although the stones have not gotten any bigger). Much consultation, thought, and effort has gone into making Stonehenge an “attraction,” with improvements to parking, a place to have tea, and informative displays.

This has brought with it an increase in the number of visitors, but there has also been an increase in the number of Druids and other pagans who wish to celebrate there, an increase in the amount of archaeological research that is carried out there, and an

increase in the level of friction between these various groups. Stonehenge is intriguing and complex, with a very long history of use and disuse, interest and apathy. As discussed at the beginning of the previous chapter, this is about the many kinds of stories that make up Stonehenge; the land and the rocks themselves, the theories about how and why it was built, the findings of archaeologists, the beliefs of Druids, and how all of this comes together. I will also discuss ways in which the wisdom found in these stories has influenced some groups, particularly the modern Druids, to find a more harmonious relationship with the land, with people, and the divine.

The land and the stones

The landscape upon which Stonehenge was built is essentially a large, flat plain. When considering the question, “why here?” it is worth recalling that, as noted in the previous chapter, the U.K. was heavily forested at the time.⁴⁸⁴ Even with the stands of hazel and beech trees, and the fine surround of oak forest, Salisbury Plain would have been a rare and exceptional clear space, making it ideal for the kind of monuments and settlements that were created there. Not only was it suited to the creation of a village with various structures for different functions, but the land is fertile, and the River Avon is close by.

While Stonehenge is obviously best known for the stone henge (a henge simply means a human-made circular area, usually surrounded either by standing stones or wooden poles), there is much more to the site than this. Rather than being only a ceremonial site, there is a great deal of archaeological evidence that the place had long been a permanent settlement, with all the attendant infrastructure such as homes, cooking pits, and burial sites, as well as communal areas for feasts and ceremonies.

It is thought that people first lived in the area as long ago as 8500 BCE⁴⁸⁵. Construction of wood henges – circles created with oak posts, or poles – as well as construction of earthwork circles in the area where the stones now stand is generally agreed to have begun circa 2800-2100 BCE, although the wood and earth circles were likely built first.⁴⁸⁶ Over the next 2000 or so years, both the wood and stone henges went through various permutations.⁴⁸⁷ The stone henge as it is seen now consists of two different kinds of stones: bluestones and sarsen sandstones. The outer circle consists of sarsen sandstones from the Marlborough Downs about 20 miles away. The largest of these weighs about 40 tons, so transporting them represents a rather significant feat given the technology of the time. However, the bluestones, which form the inner circle, present an even greater puzzle. Each one weighs approximately four tons and came from a site in Wales about 125 miles to the west.⁴⁸⁸

Truthfully, no one really knows how the stones were transported to this spot and raised up on end, or how the stone lintels were then placed atop the other stones. What we can know is that it must have been essential that these particular stones be used. Building the henge took many years, and much sustained and rigorous effort. It would have been much easier to use more locally sourced stones, so there must have been a deeply felt reason to bring these particular rocks to this specific place. There have been various theories put forth as to how the stones arrived at their current location, and reenactments performed to test some of the land-based theories. Another possibility is that they were floated down the Avon on some sort of rafts, and then brought up the relatively short distance from the riverbank. A number of theories have also been proposed as to “why”; some of the more popular are that the bluestones have healing

properties, or that they represent twinned gods, or that they contain the spirits of the ancestors who built the henges. It has also been suggested that the use of two kinds of stones from different regions represents a “symbolic merging of ancestries for two previously divided regions of western and eastern Britain.”⁴⁸⁹

A completely different story is that the great wizard Merlin caused the stones to be transported there from Ireland with the aid of a little magic, to build a monument to honour Pendragon, who had been killed in a fight with a dragon and then buried on the Salisbury Plain.⁴⁹⁰ Although we know that the henge was built many centuries before Merlin’s time (circa 300 B.C.), the point of the story may be more about the power of magic than about historical accuracy.

Over the years there have also been many different theories about the original purpose of Stonehenge. In other words, why was it built at all? As with the question of “how” was it built, we may never really know the original “why.” There are those who hold it was an astronomical observatory, while others claim it was strictly a religious site, akin to a temple. Of course, there is no reason to assume that both cannot be true. In fact, given that there is substantial archaeological evidence that the site and the structure changed a fair bit over the years it seems likely that it was a multi-purpose structure. While archaeology can provide some material information about what activities were carried out at the site (for example, the charred remains of animals in a fire pit would substantiate the idea that feasts were held), it still cannot answer the question of why. The problem is that, as one writer put it, any theories are bound to “reflect the cultural biases of their times,”⁴⁹¹ and indeed, of the individuals putting those theories forward. Barbara Bender adds that “It is hard for the archaeologist to understand how prehistoric people

might have conceptualized their relationship to the land, hard to understand the ‘world views’ of a people without a written history. There is evidence, but the imaginative leap in interpretation... is alien to archaeological training.”⁴⁹²

Thus it seems that the more scientifically-minded prefer the theory of an astronomical observatory, while those to whom matters of the spirit are more important favour the idea that it was used primarily as a place of worship and religious rites. However, as Martin Gray notes, “current theories regarding the purpose of Stonehenge suggest its simultaneous use for astronomical observation and ritual function,”⁴⁹³ which may of course be a reflection of the cultural biases of the present time (such as the assumption that astronomical observance and religious ritual might not have been the same thing). This chapter presents some of the stories of the past and current uses of Stonehenge. First, however, it is useful to understand a little more about the recent history of the site, and the many groups who currently hold an interest in Stonehenge and its environs.

Managing Stonehenge

Until the end of the 19th century, access to the henge was free, and the site was not “managed” as such by any particular group. Admission was first charged in 1901 when the site was still part of the Antrobus family’s private estate. In 1918, the land immediately surrounding the henge was donated to the state and placed under the management of the Department of the Environment. However, this comprised only a small portion the land that is now designated as a World Heritage Site. In the early 1900s, about 700 hectares of land surrounding the henge were used for farming, mainly as grazing land for sheep. This additional land was purchased by the state in 1929, and the

National Trust was given the task of making improvements. English Heritage took on management of the entire site in 1984.⁴⁹⁴

In 1986, Stonehenge and the surrounding area, including the prehistoric village at Durrington Walls, and another significant stone circle at Avebury, were officially declared a World Heritage Site. Altogether this comprises 2,600 hectares. Within this area are many Neolithic and Bronze Age burial sites, over 700 “known archaeological features,” and 520 hectares of farmland.⁴⁹⁵ Ownership and management of the site is complex; of those 2,600 hectares, the National Trust owns and manages 827 hectares of the chalk downlands surrounding Stonehenge, while English Heritage oversees both Stonehenge, some of the uncovered settlements, and the more recently discovered Woodhenge and Durrington Walls.⁴⁹⁶ Natural England is involved in the conservation of the grasslands on the downs and the protection of rare plants and insects.⁴⁹⁷ The RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) owns some of the land and also engages in conservation; other tracts are held by the Ministry of Defense, and some farmers and householders also still own land. Other bodies that share in the management include the Highways Agency, Salisbury District Council, Wiltshire Council, the parish councils, the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), and the Department for Culture, Media, and Sports (DCMS).⁴⁹⁸

Added to this mix of management interests are the diverse groups that use Stonehenge for various purposes: the archaeologists who conduct research, the Druids and neo-pagans who hold ceremonies and observe rituals, tourists from around the world who have simply come to see the monument, as well as the farmers who continue to use the fields for their livelihood. As altogether this represents nearly 20 different

organizations and interests, and that's not counting the sub-divisions within these, the complexity of coming to agreement on the terms of use becomes apparent. Set against this backdrop, in 2009 the Stonehenge World Heritage Site Management Plan was created through the not inconsiderable efforts of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site Committee.⁴⁹⁹ This plan sets out the goals and priorities for management of the site up until 2015, and aims to provide “the overarching strategy for achieving the correct balance between conservation, access, the interests of the local community and the sustainable use of the site, whether for recreation and tourism, or for agriculture.”⁵⁰⁰

It is however one thing to set out all these goals on paper, but another thing altogether to make it work on the ground, especially when observing that the two groups who use the site on the most regular basis are the Druids and the archaeologists, and they have not always gotten along particularly well.

It seems that the core of this conflict is the old story of science versus religion. The Druids and other pagan groups claim that they should be allowed access to the Stonehenge site for ritual and celebratory use, particularly on the summer solstice. The archaeologists meanwhile are appalled that the site is being “disturbed” by these “fake”⁵⁰¹ celebrations. Others, including Christopher Chippindale, are somewhat more agreeable to the idea of festivities being allowed on the Stonehenge site, regardless of whether there is any real historical precedent or authenticity to the celebrations. Part of Chippindale's argument is that if those who value the stones for spiritual reasons are allowed access, they will work towards preserving the site more passionately than, say, English Heritage. This view is echoed by Blain and Wallace.⁵⁰²

But before getting into the ways these two groups have interacted, I will discuss

each group individually.

The Druids' story: history and background

The first person to articulate a possible link between the Druids and Stonehenge appears to be John Aubrey, in an account dated from 1648.⁵⁰³ William Stukeley usually is credited with this; however, his account dates to 1740. William Camden also refers to a Druidic construction of Stonehenge in the 1695 edition of *Britannia*. The Aubrey manuscript was not published until well into the twentieth century, and the entry in *Britannia* received little attention, so it is more accurate to say that Stukely *popularized* the idea, even though he was not the first to suggest it. He came to his conclusion by first assuming that the builders of the henge had some kind of compass, but his error was the incorrect (though accepted at the time) assumption that oscillations of magnetic north followed a regular pattern (it seems that the oscillations are in fact rather random).⁵⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Stukeley gives a very detailed description of the stones, both individually and as a structure, and ascribes Druidic religious precepts to the overall construction.⁵⁰⁵ Stukeley's conception of the nature of Druidism was a little confused; he called them the first Christians to come to England and asserted that the first Druids were the direct descendants of Abraham.⁵⁰⁶ He held them in very high regard, calling them "famous philosophers and priests... who are never spoken of in antiquity but with a note of admiration." It was the Druids, he wrote, "from whom the Pythagoreans, Platonists, and Greek philosophers learn'd the best things they knew."⁵⁰⁷

Nowadays, based on archaeological data, a direct link between the Druids and the construction of Stonehenge is confidently dismissed; still, the connection has consistently remained in the public, if not the academic, mind. In an article published in 1954, the

writer confirmed that “the Druid story endeared itself to the popular mind and, as is always the case, general knowledge inevitably lags behind development in the field of scholarship.” He adds, by way of explanation, “it must be admitted, too, that the Druids are, in their legendary form, most satisfactorily picturesque.”⁵⁰⁸

However... there is a very interesting perspective on this from the Druids themselves. It is not unreasonable to surmise that there existed in the time of the building of Stonehenge, a well-developed cosmology. Of course it is also possible to argue that Stonehenge is a purely scientific structure, but even if that is the case, it seems reasonable, based on what is known about cultures and societies and the way that they develop, to surmise that *in addition to* their knowledge of astronomy, they also held strong spiritual views. Indeed, even the eminent archaeologist Parker-Pearson surmises that the “sheer scale” of work involved in creating Stonehenge “suggests a millenarian zeal in which people from across Britain must have participated in a religiously inspired remodeling of cosmology.”⁵⁰⁹

The Druidic community point out that “*only if* no knowledge ever passed from the indigenous people who built Stonehenge to the incoming people we now call the Celts would it be impossible for Druids to have an ancestral link with Stonehenge.” (my italics)⁵¹⁰ It is further pointed out that

We now know that when the Celts did arrive they did not kill the natives but lived alongside them and eventually merged. Around 70% of white British people today have DNA from pre Celtic mothers. Clearly there were sufficient survivors of this merger of cultures for knowledge to have been passed on also.⁵¹¹

While the assertion of 70% having pre-Celtic DNA is disputed – and there are a great many variations to this disputation – there is both genetic and linguistic evidence that the

Celts and other genetically distinct groups did intermarry and that there is pre-Celtic DNA still in many British people. The 70% figure, however, is not entirely correct. What the Druid article may have been referencing is the claim that “the genetic evidence shows that three quarters of our ancestors came to this corner of Europe as hunter-gatherers, between 15,000 and 7,500 years ago”⁵¹² The Celts arrived somewhat later; they came over to the British Isles from Basque country sometime during the Neolithic period,⁵¹³ but the claim of merging cultures is thought to be valid. It is an interesting coincidence, though perhaps nothing more, that Pliny the Elder “traced the term Druid to the Greek drus (meaning ‘oak’) and the Indo-European wid (meaning ‘knowledge’)”⁵¹⁴ and that the posts found at Woodhenge all appeared to be made of oak.

There is also a case to be made that Celtic and other groups shared traditions through cultural exchange rather than conquest. As one paper, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* states, recently “archaeologists tend to postulate considerable cultural exchange... with little or no movement of people” in Neolithic Britain.⁵¹⁵ Yet this idea does have a precedent: J.A. McCulloch, in the influential 1911 text *The Religion of the Ancient Celts*, writes in the preface that “Though no historic Celtic group was racially pure, the profound influence of the Celtic temperament soon ‘Celticised’ the religious contributions of the non-Celtic element.”⁵¹⁶ A distinction can also be made between “lineage groups” and “ethnic group.” In other words, people of different lineage can be part of the same ethnic group.⁵¹⁷ (They do not all have to be descended from a single progenitor.⁵¹⁸) It is well outside the scope of this dissertation to get into the complex scientific arguments about gene pools and

mitochondrial DNA and what these may or may not prove, but it worth mentioning that the discussion exists.

There is another point, made by Mike Pitts, that the term “ancestors... means little more than ‘people who came before us’.” Relating this specifically to Stonehenge, he writes that “in the British Neolithic... invoking ancestors has proved productive both for thinking about the past and engaging the public in the stories... reference to ancestors in the Stonehenge landscape has occurred in an atmosphere of enquiry [and] discovery.”⁵¹⁹ Pitts further observes that regardless of whether or not one believes that the stones themselves contain or represent ancestral spirits, it is an undeniable fact that there are numerous human burial sites (barrows, mounds, and stone tombs) in the landscape surrounding Stonehenge, and that “it would be perverse” to think that the lithic and other people “did not know” that these were their ancestors.⁵²⁰

The first modern Druidic order – the Ancient Order of Druids – was formed in 1781,⁵²¹ but Druids only began meeting regularly at Stonehenge in 1905 after initiating the landowner, Sir Edmond Antrobus, into the Order. Druids have maintained a presence in the U.K. ever since, although membership has fluctuated greatly over the years, with a particular decline just after World War II.⁵²² Membership began to increase again in the 1960s, although “it wasn't until the 1980s that this handful began to grow into the thousands of Druids who exist today.”⁵²³ Due to increasing membership and the need to create a legal framework, Druidry was granted recognition as an official religion in 2010. In a BBC report on the granting of recognition, it was noted that “with concern for the environment growing and the influence of mainstream faiths waning, Druidry is flourishing more now than at any time since the arrival of Christianity.”⁵²⁴ It is against

the backdrop of this ongoing argument that the Druids persist in claiming their right to carry out their rites and rituals at Stonehenge.

The Druids' stories: what they believe

For followers of Druidism, Stonehenge is “first and foremost a temple... [a] special and very sacred place where we may commune with the ancestors and with the natural order to which Stonehenge is finely attuned. We may reconnect with nature and with our roots.”⁵²⁵ Druids believe that “by consciously connecting with the World of the Ancestors, we can draw on a wealth of accumulated wisdom and experience that grows rather than diminishes with the passing of each generation.”⁵²⁶ It is “a place provided to us by the ancestors who built it nearly 5000 years ago.”⁵²⁷

Druids also have a deeply felt connection to the Earth as home place. They believe that the ancestors “taught us to live in harmony with each other and with all beings. We were told to live with courage and to seek understanding and with the wisdom to know that we belong here.”⁵²⁸ Emma Restall Orr, a Druid priestess, describes it this way: “Our key purpose is the interaction with the natural world, with our Earth. For many Druids, the Earth is their principle deity, the Mother Goddess, nourisher, nurturer, the hands that offer us abundance, the arms that hold us in our fear and uncertainty.”⁵²⁹ Brendan Cathbad Myers in his book, *The Mysteries of Druidry*, writes that, in accordance with the traditions of their ancestors, “contemporary Druids have responsibilities to... the Earth and its people, animals, and environments.”⁵³⁰

Yet the question remains: what are these ancient teachings, and where does one find them? It has often been pointed out that there is no written record; the old Druidic teachings were passed on through an entirely oral, poetic, and bardic tradition. Thus,

when early forms of Druidry died out (with the incursion of the Romans and then Christianity), most of the rituals and teachings were lost.⁵³¹ The Aes Dana Grove note on their website that “much of Druid wisdom had to be learned and retained in memory. This could take up to 20 years of study. This also meant that many stories told by our ancestors were only written down from around 500 AD onwards.”⁵³²

There are some records from which the basic bones of Druidry can be reconstructed. McCulloch’s *The Religion of the Ancient Celts* is often acknowledged as one of the best documented accounts of ancient Druidry. This work is based on 11th and 12th century manuscripts from Ireland and Wales, mythologies, folk histories, and Celtic burial mounds and other archaeological information, but even then, McCulloch describes it as “working in the twilight from heaps of fragments.” He laments that “no Celt has left us a record of his faith and practice, and the unwritten poems of the Druids died with them.”⁵³³ In his account, he describes the Celts as “born dreamers” with a pantheon of nature spirits; some were male spirits (usually in vegetation), others were female (the Earth itself). Often deities were local in character, and ceremonies were based on the seasons and cycles of nature. He also suggests that the “enthusiastic” reception to Christianity among the Celts and Druids was due to similarities in some of their basic beliefs; this new religion accepted some of the “less harmful customs of the past, merging pagan festivals in its own, founding churches on the sites of the old cult, dedicating sacred wells to a saint”⁵³⁴ (for example, the Virtuous Well and church in Trellech, described in the previous chapter.) However, saying the Druids were “enthusiastic” about Christianity might be stretching the truth somewhat, given that Christianity also sought to replace Druidry as the main religion.

McCulloch is in agreement with “the theory that the Druids were a pre-Celtic priesthood, accepted by the Celtic conquerors”⁵³⁵ thus adding weight to the idea that early Druids did have a connection with Stonehenge through cultural exchange. He does not suggest that either the indigenous people or the Celts adopted wholesale the religion of the other, but rather that the two combined, in much the same way as he describes of the combining of Druidry and Christianity. McCulloch then draws on classical Greek accounts of the Druids, in which the Druids are variously described as priests, prophets, magicians, healers, judges, and poets, with well-developed studies in moral philosophy and natural systems.⁵³⁶ This, he writes, dovetails with Irish accounts of the Druids as priests, prophets, magicians, teachers, and diviners. Druidism, he concludes, “was not a formal system outside Celtic religion. It covered the whole ground of Celtic religion; in other words, it was that religion itself.”⁵³⁷

This idea is further explored by Myers. Along with a comprehensive Celtic history and mythology, Myers writes extensively about the roles and functions of Druids past and present. The modern-day equivalents are, he writes, doctors, lawyers, professors, and priests – but the ancient Druids were all of these in one. He asks the reader to “imagine what it would be like if your doctor, lawyer, or teacher was also a priest; and the hospital, law court and college was also a temple. Then you have an idea what Druidry was like for ancient Celtic people.”⁵³⁸

According both to classical Greek accounts and Irish texts, the Druids settled disputes, performed name-giving ceremonies for children, and carried out burial rites. They were healers and advisors to kings. Their magical powers were said to include “giving or withholding sunshine or rain, causing storms, making women and cattle

fruitful, using spells, rhyming to death, exercising shape-shifting and invisibility, and producing a magic sleep.”⁵³⁹

But with the invasion of the Romans and later the incursion of Christianity, Druidry was suppressed, and those who practiced it often persecuted. In 61 AD, the Romans launched a campaign specifically aimed against the Druids in the west of Britain.⁵⁴⁰ When Christianity began to trickle into the British Isles during the first through fourth centuries, this too contributed to the death of Druidism.⁵⁴¹ It is said that the Druids retreated to secret sacred groves in forests, but, as this was “secret” it is nearly impossible to either prove or disprove.⁵⁴² Interestingly, McCulloch made note of the role of female priestesses in retaining knowledge of Druidic practices. He writes that “when paganism passed away, much of its folk-ritual and magic remained, practised by wise women or witches, who for generations had as much power... as the Christian priesthood.”⁵⁴³

To sum up then, at the beginning of the twentieth century, there was knowledge of the role of Druid priests and priestesses, as well as some knowledge of the kinds of rites and rituals they performed, as well as at what times of the year. There were accounts of the kinds of deities they worshipped, and the kind of society and culture in which they had lived, thrived, and eventually died out. Myers sums this up, writing that “we know quite a bit about their religious beliefs and practices, in broad strokes but not in fine detail. We don’t know the script of their ceremonies but we have a fairly good idea of what myths, beliefs, and principles their ceremonies were designed to affirm and re-enact.”⁵⁴⁴

With this information, it would not be too difficult to resurrect at least a form of Druidry that works in the present day. Of course it will not be “exactly” the same as the

Druidry of ancient times, but that does not mean it is invalid. Phillip Carr Gomm, a writer, psychologist, and leader of the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids, writes that Druidry is “a living and evolving spirituality that we can actively participate in, and... is different today from what it was thousands of years ago.” He points out that all spiritual traditions and religions necessarily evolve and change, as people and societies evolve and change. He answers criticisms that modern Druidry “is not ‘authentic’ or ‘pure’ since many of the ideas or practices were introduced since the seventeenth century,” by pointing out that “this belief is based upon the mistaken idea that there is such a thing as an ‘original’ or ‘pure’ form of a spiritual tradition: an idea that is no longer taken seriously by historians.”⁵⁴⁵ Contemporary Druidry

is acknowledged to be of an older indigenous if ever-evolving religious tradition sourced within these islands. As an ancient pagan religion, our belief is based on the reverential, sacred, and honourable relationship between the people and the land... it is the spiritual interaction between an individual and the spirits of nature, including those of landscape and ancestry, together with the continuities of spiritual, literary and cultural heritage.⁵⁴⁶

In this way, Carr Gomm observes that “after two centuries of an ambivalent history, Druidism has finally emerged over the last forty years, to offer a spiritual way that genuinely draws on an ancient heritage for inspiration, whilst making no claim to be identical to the Druidism that was practised two thousand years ago.”⁵⁴⁷

So what does Druidry look like, then, in the current context of Stonehenge?

Emma Restall Orr, the Druid priestess mentioned above, recalls that her preferred places of worship were “spaces deep in the forest or on the shifting ocean shores,” but that increasingly she was drawn to the energy of Avebury, a place where she felt the energy to be “warm and feminine.” Then in the early 1990s, she was asked to carry out some of her

functions as a priestess at Stonehenge. She contacted the site manager and asked to be allowed access to the henge beforehand, to get in touch with the spirits of the place. Her request for a special permit was granted. On her first visit, she felt that, in contrast to both the forest and Avebury, the energy of the place was “tight, flinched, bitter,” like “an angry young man.” In response, “both alone and with fellow Pagans I have sung my reverence for the spirits of the temple there, the ancestors in residence and the Old Gods, with the intention of recreating a bond of trust between them and us once more.”⁵⁴⁸

It is interesting that she differentiates between the softer “feminine” energy of the forest and Avebury, both places where the surroundings in general are less formal, and the more “male” energy of Stonehenge. When creating the list of characteristics of Stonehenge and Puzzlewood for this dissertation, one set of terms that was considered was “male/female.” I chose not to include them for several reasons; I did not wish to promote the idea of binary gender, nor did I wish to use words that have acquired such deep cultural connotations of hierarchical ordering.⁵⁴⁹ Yet her words are telling of the different kinds of presences that exist in different kinds of sacred places.

It is also interesting that she later adds that she feels that Stonehenge “is a powerful place. But when overrun with those whose mission is to take possession, climbing the stones, screaming their victory, and not to revere, it seems to me that the temple flinches.”⁵⁵⁰ Places react to the energy of those who visit them as much as the visitors’ energy reacts to the place. Here we can recall the words of Belden Lane, who found that in speaking with people about their experience of sacred places, one sensation that was often repeated was that “the experience ‘had’ *them* as much as they could be said to have ‘had’ *it*.”⁵⁵¹ (Lane’s emphasis).

To the Druids, Stonehenge is very much a place that “has” them. It is a place where they come to “reconnect with nature and with our roots... [it is] a temple and dwelling place of the ancestors. In this special and very sacred place we may commune with the ancestors and with the natural order to which Stonehenge is finely attuned.” For these reasons, it is to them “first and foremost a temple,”⁵⁵² rather than a site of archaeological investigation or a tourist attraction.

Time as understood in Druidry – and indeed, in many ancient religions – is cyclical rather than linear. This is reflected in the shape of Stonehenge and in the many other stone and wooden circles where Druidic ceremonies are celebrated (for example Avebury). Most, if not all of these circles are aligned as Stonehenge is: to provide optimal views of the sunrises and sunsets at the summer and winter solstices. There are eight different times of celebration in the Druidic calendar. The summer and winter solstices and the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, are about the cycles created by the sun, and they mark important times within an agricultural context. The other four are associated more with the care of animals (rather than plants). Carr-Gomm describes these celebrations and their significance:

At Samhuinn, between 31 October and 2 November, livestock for whom there was insufficient fodder were slaughtered and their meat salted and stored. At Imbolc, on 2 February the lambs were born. At Beltane, on 1 May, it was the time of mating and of the passing of the livestock through the two Beltane fires for purification. Lughnasadh, on 1 August, was the time which marked the link between the agricultural and the livestock cycle.⁵⁵³

These eight points are also related to the cyclic nature of human lives – of birth, growth, death and rebirth. As the sun is at the centre of the annual cycle, the soul is at the centre of the human cycle. In this way, humans are connected with nature, and “a sense of the

immanence of the divine in all things.’⁵⁵⁴ All eight of these significant dates are celebrated at Stonehenge as well as at less visible sites and circles, including nearby Avebury.

Accommodating other paganisms

The most well-known – and most controversial – of the Druid-led ceremonies at Stonehenge is the celebration of the summer solstice. It should be noted that it is not so much the Druids who have created the controversy over the summer solstice, but because the celebration is associated most strongly with them, they have taken a leading role in trying to find solutions.

This requires a little further explanation. While the Druids have been active in the U.K. now for well over a century, it has only been in the last 30 or so years that it has become a large movement. At the same time, there has been exponential growth in what is most commonly referred to as a “New Age” spiritualities, or, as researchers Blain and Wallace have termed it, “paganisms.” The term “New Age” has become loaded with connotations, and most of those are not particularly positive. In many ways the image and ideals of New Age could be thought of as being parallel to the hippies in the 1960s. Paganisms is a better descriptor, and includes “a variety of allied or associated ‘paths’ or ‘traditions’ including Wicca, Druidry, Heathenry and Goddess Spirituality, which focus on direct engagement with ‘nature’ as deified, sacred or otherwise animated by ‘spirit’ or forming a living community of ‘spirits’.”⁵⁵⁵ Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman suggest the term “alternative spiritualities” as a replacement for “New Age,” in part because, as they point out, practices such as Druidry and witchcraft (for example) are not “new” at all.⁵⁵⁶ The other advantage of these terms “paganisms” and “alternative

spirituality” is that they include anyone who is seeking a spiritual path, rather than simply “opting out” of mainstream society. In so doing, I do not wish in any way to denigrate those who choose the latter, just to differentiate them from the former, since the subject here is sacred sites – and, if a person identifies in whatever way with a sacred site, then it would follow that they are seeking a spiritual path of some sort.

The Druidess Restall Orr is quoted above speaking of those who wish to conquer Stonehenge rather than honour it; most often these are the actions of those who identify with a paganism other than Druidry. These are the kinds of actions that draw fire from English Heritage and from the archaeological community, who, quite rightly, fear damage to the monument. Restall Orr herself points out that such actions affect the spiritual presences of the henge, and also questions how to find the right balance between the use of the place as a spiritual site, and its ultimate preservation.

Another part of this problem is that there are so many interpretations – so many different stories – currently available about Stonehenge that it is not possible to pick just one (say, the Druids’ story, or English Heritage’s story) and say “that is the only truth.” The stories of Stonehenge are so deeply and multiply layered that it can become overwhelming. Its past is shrouded in mystery, and even the archaeologists can only surmise the true meaning of their own findings. As Blain and Wallace observe, “No list of imagined, desired, or imaged Stonehenges can be exhaustive... there is the Stonehenge of ‘alternative’ archaeology, of earth mystics, of dowsers, ley-line hunters, and... of alternative lifestyles” where travellers can come together. There is the Stonehenge of the Druids, and it is a place where other pagans seek to “perform ceremonies celebrating their gods, spirits, and ancestors in a living landscape.”⁵⁵⁷

The stories of the Druids have a longer history than most, and this has meant that they have been privileged over other voices. Another reason for that is simply that they are well-organised and present lucid, well-reasoned, and documented arguments that support their connection to the site. The Druids are committed, though, to working with members of other faith groups and other paganisms. As Restall Orr notes, many Druids came to Druidry via these paths. Druidry, she writes, “is spiced with its chiefs' past experiences in the Craft, [witchcraft, or Wicca] shamanism, Taoism, Christianity, atheism and more.”⁵⁵⁸ The common thread that brings them together is the sense of Stonehenge as a place with a deep spiritual history, where they can connect to their ancestors and their stories.

The archaeologists' stories

Archaeologists too have many stories within Stonehenge, although theirs come from a different tradition and worldview than those of the Druids and pagans. Archaeology, at least in modern times, has arguably as long if not a longer association with Stonehenge as the Druids.

However, the association is of an entirely different kind. Whereas Druids wish to celebrate and honour their ancestors, archaeologists want to uncover and analyze them; while Druids seek to discover meaning within the atmosphere of the inner henge, archaeologists seek answers within the ground. In relation to the concentric circles model, the Druids are more concerned with the first, third, and fifth circles, while the archaeologists are interested in the subjects of the second and fourth circles.

Yet while archaeology is primarily a meticulously scientific endeavor, there are some who recognize that cosmology matters, most particularly in places such as

Stonehenge where the structures lend themselves to the possibility of a spiritual meaning. It is interesting to note that it was the archaeologist William Stukeley who, in 1740, popularised the idea that Druids had built Stonehenge. The idea that Stonehenge was primarily (or even at all) a religious structure remained the main public conception, but eventually fell out of favour with the archaeological community and remained that way for quite some time. This may in part be due to the fact that it is an extraordinarily precise astronomical calendar. Not only is it aligned with the summer and winter solstice sunrises, but within the inner circle are 56 indentations that create a very precise chart of moon phases, not only over the course of a lunar month, but over the entire 18.6 year cycle of the moon in relation to the sun.⁵⁵⁹

While this is certainly an intriguing aspect of the henge, the focus on this has detracted from including other elements of interpretation. This led to archaeologist Alastair Whittle's statement that "our view of Stonehenge has been too scientific and too socio-political"⁵⁶⁰ while neglecting the religious and ritualistic significance of the monument. This continued to be the case, according to Joshua Pollard, up until the 1990s. Pollard noted that when excavating and interpreting results from places such as Stonehenge, "it is curious [that] with ready knowledge of the balance of past preoccupation, that there exists a long history of interpreting Neolithic monuments in sociological terms that have written out or marginalized the very religious beliefs that provided the imperative for their creation."⁵⁶¹ Another archaeologist, Francis Prior, commented that "what I've learnt, largely due to our pagan friends, is that as an archaeologist, I'm too analytical,"⁵⁶² and adds that he has come to understand that the past has religious significance in the present day.

The Malaysian archaeologist Ramilisonina is also more open to interpretations that include spiritual elements. In an interview in 2009, he talks about how the use of wood and stone in Madagascar led to the development of his theory, together with Parker Pearson, about the cosmological symbolism in the use of wood and stone at Woodhenge, Durrington Walls, and Stonehenge. Ramilisonina saw parallels between elements of Stonehenge and elements of ancestor honouring in Malaysia.⁵⁶³

In fact, this idea has come up more than once, seeming to have occurred independently to several leading archaeologists at around the same time. Alastair Whittle in 1997, Barbara Bender, and separately, Josh Pollard and Mark Gillings the following year, and then (also independently) Mike Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina in 1998, all theorized that Woodhenge represented the living (wood being temporal), while Stonehenge represented the dead (stone being more permanent). In fact, Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina created a map of the areas showing the area of Woodhenge, where most of the living quarters were located as the “Domain of the Living,” the Avon and a man-made avenue as a transitional zone, and finally the area around Stonehenge, including many burial mounds, as the “Domain of the Dead.”⁵⁶⁴

The stones themselves have also been the subject of many scientific investigations. For the most part, these have taken place at the site itself, where studies are undertaken to ascertain the exact geological makeup of the stones, and where each stone was placed within the henge at different times. Some study has also been undertaken at Mount Prescelly (or Presceli) in Wales, the place from whence the bluestones are thought to have originated. Archaeologist Patrick Crampton describes the bluestone outcroppings in Mount Prescelly as “irregular, cubistic and trianguloid” in

contrast to the surrounding mountains, all of which were “smooth-domed.” It was “strangely impressive in its form, setting, and utter loneliness... and through Bronze Age eyes I could see the god in the shape of a cloud and among the rocks.”⁵⁶⁵ Darvill and Wainwright also undertook research there, and based on their findings, theorized that the rocks were thought to have healing powers.⁵⁶⁶

The Stonehenge Riverside Project, headed by Parker Pearson, ran from 2003-2010 and brought to light many artifacts and aspects of Neolithic life. The team consisted of researchers from the Universities of Bournemouth, Bristol, Manchester, Sheffield, and University College London. Their work led to “the discovery of settlements, processional routes and ritual centres. Project highlights have included the discovery of a Neolithic 'village' at Durrington Walls, the re-excavation of an Aubrey Hole ... and the discovery of Bluehenge, a small Henge located at the end of the Avenue beside the river Avon.”⁵⁶⁷ In their final report, they claim to have finally discovered the “real purpose” of Stonehenge. It was, they (rather boldly) assert, “a monument to unify the peoples of Britain.”⁵⁶⁸ The researchers on the project have “rejected... previous theories [that] suggested the great stone circle was used as a prehistoric observatory, a sun temple, a place of healing, and a temple of the ancient druids.”⁵⁶⁹

And yet, as recently as 2009, a report by two archaeologists involved in the project, Timothy Darvill and Geoffrey Wainwright, stated that “the excavated material, and the evidence from the surviving stones, supports the suggestion that bluestones were brought to the site because of their perceived special qualities, perhaps for their supposed healing properties, and that some knowledge of those qualities remained current in later times.”⁵⁷⁰ In this same report, Wainwright acknowledges that Stonehenge “must have had

a variety of functions.”⁵⁷¹ Nor does this new assertion take account of the fact that the site was largely abandoned in the later Neolithic period – an abandonment that Barbara Bender notes “signalled an antagonism, and a rejection of at least some part of an internalised, as well as an external landscape.”⁵⁷² There have been so many different interpretations of the reasons for building Stonehenge that it seems rather arrogant to say that now, this time, they are sure that they have discovered the real reason. As noted previously, science cannot truthfully claim to be ahistorical or objective; the conclusions drawn by archaeologists are influenced by the cultural context in which the investigations are undertaken.

Settling differences

Clearly there is a difference between archaeologists’ way of seeing and interpreting things, and that of the Druids. As has been noted, many archaeologists have difficulty with accepting any kind of “imagined” past. To the Druids, though, their past is not imagined at all – the spirits and presences are as real and evident to them as the bones and stones are real and evident to the archaeologist. It would be easy to simply despair of ever finding a solution (one commentator labeled the differences “mutual incomprehension and irreconcilable worldviews”⁵⁷³, while Blain and Wallace cite “fundamental methodological and philosophical incompatibility”⁵⁷⁴), and conclude that the only option is to take one side or the other.

And is not only the Druids with whom the archaeologists take issue, although that is certainly the most obvious conflict, if only because both are in the public eye at Stonehenge, and the Druids represent an cohesive group with whom other parties, such as English Heritage, are in contact.⁵⁷⁵ Tok Thompson points out that archaeologists also

have a problem with folklorists (he calls it a “firm but wary distance”), as well as any other discipline or group who see oral historical traditions as sources of knowledge.⁵⁷⁶ On the other hand, as Chippindale observes, “Respect for ‘dispassionate’ and ‘objective’ science... is universal.”⁵⁷⁷

As noted above, one way to think about this feud is as a fundamental difference between scientific and religious worldviews. But another way to approach it is to see that really, there is a fundamental agreement; both sides wish to gain knowledge about the human condition, they just disagree about the way to do it.

The Battle of the Beanfield

At times this disagreement has been explosive. The most famous incident involves not the Druids per se, but other pagans, followers of alternative spiritualities, or those choosing alternative lifestyles. This incident, in 1985, has become known as the “Battle of the Beanfield.”

This confrontation occurred on June 1, 1985. Depending on which account is read, between 500 and 1,000 police officers, all in full riot gear,⁵⁷⁸ barricaded a road leading towards Stonehenge, where a festival was to take place. This festival, which had been arranged many months in advance, was popular with pagans and travellers, and this was not something that was seen in a positive light by the Thatcher government. It was known that a “peace convoy” of 140 vehicles had gathered nearby.⁵⁷⁹ This convoy came down the road, with approximately 500 people, including men, women, and children, and stopped upon seeing the barricade and the line of riot police. Some of the vehicles pulled off the road into a nearby beanfield. Now, there is some dispute over what happened next. The convoy members say the police launched the attack; the police say they were “pelted

with lumps of wood and stones.”⁵⁸⁰ What is clear is that many protesters were severely injured by police and 520 arrests were made. According to a report by *The Observer*, when a bus became stuck in the field, “a swarm of blue uniforms swarmed around it. The occupants pleaded to be allowed to leave. The windows were smashed by the police and occupants dragged out through a storm of truncheons.”⁵⁸¹ The bulk of reports and eyewitness accounts suggest that the police did indeed attack first, and attacked viciously. Members of the convoy sued the police, and in a 1987 court decision, one police sergeant was found guilty of actual bodily harm in connection with the incident, and in 1991, a jury awarded £24,000 in damages to members of the convoy.⁵⁸² Few of those initially arrested were charged, and even fewer convicted of any offence.⁵⁸³

Arguably, this incident was more about public control than it was about Stonehenge. At the time, it created a great deal of controversy and bad feeling, most of which had little to do with Stonehenge as such, but it had a deep impact of perceptions of the police and of English Heritage, and it turned a spotlight on to issues of access and control. Bracketed by police violence in the miners’ strikes in 1984 and the riots at Wapping in 1986, the Battle of the Beanfield was more a marker of the political climate of the time than of an escalation in conflicts over Stonehenge per se. Yet the result was a deep mistrust not only of the police (a mistrust which had in any case already existed) but also of the governing bodies at the Stonehenge site, including English Heritage. The “justification” for the police presence and subsequent events was to protect the site from “damage,” a justification that the archaeological community has used more than once in attempts to restrict access to the site for anyone other than themselves.

Moving forward

In the nearly 30 years since then, the various interest groups have worked together to come up with solutions that work for all concerned. As Robert Wallace mentioned in an interview with *National Geographic*, “contemporary pagan interests are no less and no more valid than those of archaeologists, preservationists, or the general public.”⁵⁸⁴

And things have indeed improved. Managed open access is now in place for the summer solstice events, which annually attract thousands of visitors. Access to the inner circle of the henge is still limited though, out of concern for the preservation of the stones and concerns about public safety. A new Visitor Centre is set to open in December 2013, and archaeologists and Druids have even worked together to create a model Neolithic village on the site. The National Trust and English Heritage continue to actively pursue ecological restoration and good practice on the downs, archaeological digs have continued to turn up extraordinary findings, and the Druids and other pagans are finding it easier to negotiate individual and group access with English Heritage for times other than the equinoxes and solstices.

There are still some unresolved issues – one in particular concerns the reburial of human remains unearthed by the Stonehenge Riverside Project in particular, although previous excavations have also been party to this. The Druidic community generally feels that the excavation of ancient burial sites is disrespectful. One commentator wrote that “we, as Druids, should be saying ‘Stop this now.’ These actions are disrespectful to our ancestors.”⁵⁸⁵ The new Visitor Centre, for example, is planning to include a display of human remains unearthed in 2008, a plan that does not sit well with the Druidic community. At the initial uncovering of the bones, a protest was held at the site, and it

was requested at the time that reburial be considered, or even that the excavation be stopped.⁵⁸⁶

In response to the Druid's concerns, English Heritage stated that the remains "have a rightful place" in the exhibit.⁵⁸⁷ The Druids, however, suggested that it would be better to create a replica and allow for the reburial of the bones. In so doing, they say, visitors "would leave feeling impressed that England is still a magical country with a spiritual and respectful people," rather than as a people who "treat our sacred ancestors as a commodity with which to raise money."⁵⁸⁸ English Heritage do try to find an acceptable middle ground, but it is not always possible to appease both irate archaeologists and upset pagans. English Heritage maintains that "sustainable archaeological research is encouraged within the Stonehenge World Heritage Site, in order to improve understanding and aid appropriate management." They acknowledge that "some archaeological research is destructive by its nature - but there are many other non-destructive techniques which can be used as well."⁵⁸⁹ Blain and Wallace have recommended that sacredness of remains "should be a default assumption" and that reburial should be the usual process.⁵⁹⁰ Clearly, given the imminent opening of a visitor centre containing human remains, this has not yet been adopted.

In 1990, at a conference on sacred places held in Madrid, a call was made for "community-based development, which takes a strong sense of identity and unity from the existence of sacred spaces, providing the mythical foundation for a coherent community policy."⁵⁹¹ This approach still has appeal now. If it was adopted at places like Stonehenge, along with many other sites, it would, one hopes, provide some measure of peace, social justice and environmental integrity.

A short note on time and place in the context of Stonehenge

Just as one cannot separate story and place, neither can one separate time and place. This is something that the literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin explores in depth.⁵⁹² In this case, the solstice (time) at Stonehenge (place) combine to produce something quite extraordinary that cannot be replicated elsewhere. It also interesting to consider how changes in conceptions of time and place affect perception of a sacred site.

It can reasonably be supposed that the creators of Stonehenge adhered to a cyclical view of time, and it seems that they attached a great deal of importance to place. Otherwise, why transport the stones over such a great distance? If the material were of importance, rather than the place, why not build closer to the location of the stones? On the other hand, if the place is also significant, then one would have to move the stones to that place. But now that time itself is conceptualized differently – in a more linear fashion – in what ways does that affect the perception of sacredness within Stonehenge? Does the imposition, or at least intrusion, of current models of time and place make understanding ancient sites more problematic?

The geographer David Harvey emphasizes the many cultural effects of the way in which both time and space are conceptualized, writing that “the social constitution of spatio-temporality cannot be divorced from... discourses, power relations, memory, institutions, and the tangible forms of material practices through which human societies perpetuate themselves.”⁵⁹³ Since the world of the creators of Stonehenge is undeniably different in many tangible and intangible ways from our own, then it follows that their conception of both time and space/place is also different, and their stories and beliefs – their worldview – are also quite different. This does not necessarily mean that the two are

incompatible, or, perhaps more accurately, incommensurable, but it does require that some thought be put into bridging those differences in order to understand the meaning, function, and importance both of time and place generally, and of the specific importance of time in the place, and place in the time, of Stonehenge.

Some characteristics of Stonehenge

In the Prologue to this dissertation, there is a list of characteristics of Puzzlewood and Stonehenge. Stonehenge is described with these words:

- Religion
- Awe/humility
- Love – agape
- Social self
- Plains
- Structure
- Built/human
- Monolithic
- Rituals, rites
- Invocation

With Druidry now recognized as an official religion, the context of the first of these characteristics is more clearly defined. Other paganisms too carry out religious practices at the henge, and one of the (many) theories about Stonehenge is that it was initially a place of worship and celebration. It is a place that inspires awe and wonder even in those who do not understand it as a sacred place. For those who do feel it is sacred, that sense of awe runs even deeper. It is also very much a social place – a gathering place. The festivals held there prior to 1985 attest to its history as a social place, and in the years since, as Blain and Wallace observe, pagans and New Age travellers “view Stonehenge as a special meeting place, a place where [they] can come together, form communities and celebrate.”⁵⁹⁴ Its location is on the Salisbury Plains; an open, expansive landscape, a place that invites sociability, in contrast to the seclusion offered by a forest. Clearly it is a

built structure created by humans rather than an organic creation of nature, although the natural elements of rock and of landscape are also present.

Monolithic in this context was contrasted with diverse. What is meant by this is that it is a singular structure, a very clearly defined space. It does not “wander” or ramble in the way that a forest can – trees grow and die and the ecosystem of a forest changes with the seasons. Stonehenge of course also changes over time, with the erosion of rocks and soil, but the timescale of change is on a geologic rather than human scale.

There are some very specific rites and rituals that are observed at Stonehenge. Again, the obvious ones are the observances of the solstices, and, slightly less obviously the observance of the equinoxes and other special dates within the Druidic calendar. In addition to these, other rites, such as hand-fasting (an equivalent to marriage) and child-naming are carried out. Restall Orr has also provided insight into more private rituals, such as singing to the ancestors. Lastly, Stonehenge is place where the spirits and presences of the place must be *invoked*; that is, while they are always present, one must appeal to them for an audience. Again, this is something that Restall Orr demonstrated when she sang to, and invoked, the spirits of the ancestors.

I reiterate that the list of characteristics that were applied to Puzzlewood and to Stonehenge should not be interpreted as being in any way hierarchical. People have their own preferences, and so some will find resonance with the kinds of characteristics found in forests and quiet places, while others gain energy from the characteristics of places such as Stonehenge. Both are equally valuable, and equally valid.

Stonehenge as a Sacred Place

With all of the above information, it should now be possible to assess whether Stonehenge meets the criteria suggested for determining whether a place can be considered, as objectively as possible, as a sacred place. Here once again is that list, and an analysis of Stonehenge in relation to it.

1. It is revealed by the divine, not chosen or created by humans
2. It creates a numinous experience
3. It evokes certain types of behaviors caused by the experience
4. It has sacred stories attached to it
6. It brings benefit to both the individual and to the community of followers as a whole.

In terms of the initial building, it is possible only to guess at whether this place was revealed by the divine, or for that matter, how or even whether the original builders would have used a term equivalent to the divine. However, in terms of modern practice, it is fair to say that according to the Druids, the presences of the place reveal themselves when called upon, and it is also then logical to further theorize that the presences would not reveal themselves if they did not reside there to begin with.

Certainly for the Druids and other pagans, this is a place that holds deep significance and creates a numinous experience. Restall Orr calls it “a powerful place,” while Carr-Gomm writes that the place holds “a quiet resolute power” that fills the soul. The rituals that are held there – the eight sacred times of year – are held *there* because of the power, and the presences, and the spirits that are felt by the Druids to reside there. Druids aim to be respectful in their attitude and behaviours here and come to this place to connect with the stories and the spirits in the place. Restall Orr recalls “I have sung my reverence for the spirits of the temple there, the ancestors in residence and the Old Gods,”

and she had found that “more and more Druids are taking the opportunities offered to visit the great stones, to offer their respect and share the healing energy, through the light body and their spirit allies, through love and honour, through the bardic arts.”⁵⁹⁵

There are many stories attached to Stonehenge, as described above. The stories that connect the Druids and other pagans to the place are ancient and compelling. Clearly many individuals find themselves drawn to the place; it is seen as a temple and as a place where one can connect to the cycles and rhythms of the universe, the earth, and the individual life. The interconnectedness of all things is understood within the context of a circle that is open to the sky.

Stonehenge certainly does seem to invoke passion in many people, for many differing reasons. People are drawn to it as a place of power, of celebration, and of healing. It is a place where a community can come together and reconnect to each other as well as to their faith. There can be little doubt that it fulfills the criterion of bringing benefit to both individuals and the community as a whole. Stonehenge is reliant on place – on the setting and location, on the whole of the sacred landscape – for its sacredness. While it may “also be” a historic monument, a part of the world’s heritage it is also, perhaps foremost, a sacred place. The “mystery and magic”⁵⁹⁶ of the place, as one Druid writes, is its greatest draw.

Stonehenge as example of the concentric circle model.

Stonehenge can also be seen as the perfect example of the way that the concentric circle model works as both metaphor and methodology.

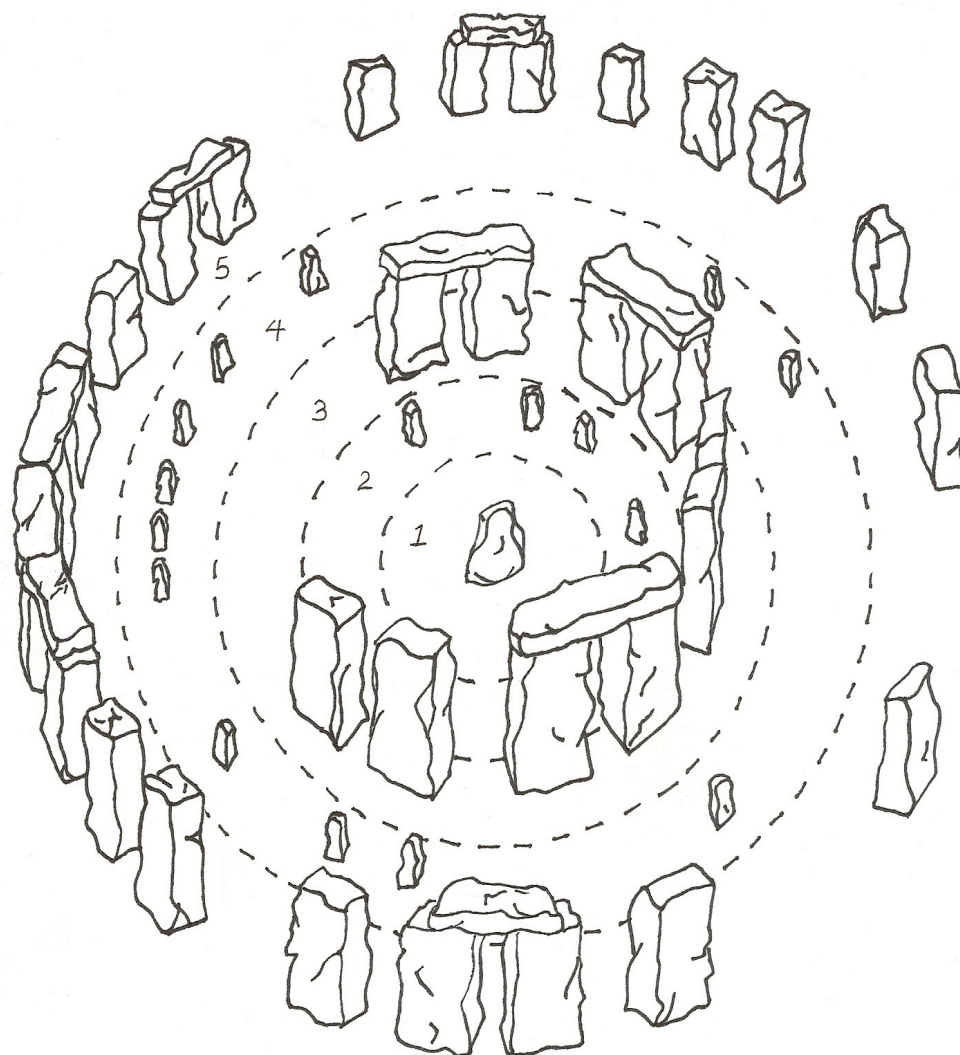


Figure 5: Stonehenge as example for the concentric circle model. Image created by Regina Elizondo and Adam Domville. Used with permission.

Beginning with the first, innermost circle, the individual interior, this can be conceived as the individual person, as an individual stone, as the individual monument, or as an individual landscape. Each of these has internality and can be described phenomenologically – through intersubjective experience. The second circle – the individual exterior – allows for exploration of the science of the place; what kinds of

stones exist, what elements of the landscape led to the creation of a settlement there, the ways in which the henge as a creation acts as an instrument to measure the cycles that resonate within people, within the stones, and within the henge as a whole.

The stories of the Druids and their history occupy the third circle, the interior collective. These stories, along with all the other stories, create community and continuity. The differences between the stories held by the Druids and pagans, and the stories created by the archaeologists, and the place as a heritage site as narrated by English Heritage are all part of this place, and all find expression in the cultural context within which Stonehenge currently exists. This leads into the fourth circle, the exterior collective; this locates the complex of social relations, both positive and negative that make Stonehenge such an interesting subject to so many different groups. The exterior collective is also where the ecosystem management, such as that carried out by the National Trust and the RSPB, can be evaluated, and it provides a framework within which to situate discussions of archaeological excavations and the effect these have upon the physical landscape.

Finally, the fifth and outermost circle – the realm of the metaphysical is reflected perfectly in the openness of the structure of Stonehenge itself. It is open to the universe, both literally and figuratively. From the metaphor of the soul as the centre of each individual to the sun as the centre of the universe, Stonehenge sends its ripples both inward and outward. Each circle is open to, interacts with and reacts to all the other circles. It is unbounded and timeless.

Summary and final thoughts

There are so many stories, and so many issues surrounding Stonehenge that it is impossible to cover them all here. As Blain and Wallace put it, “no list of imagined, desired, or imaged Stonehenges can be exhaustive.”⁵⁹⁷ Many large volumes have been written, and will continue to be written, about this enigmatic monument, and no doubt new stories about old times will continue to be revealed, created, and co-created. This is what the archaeologists, the Druids, and other pagans all seek to do, each in their own way.

Alastair McIntosh, writing about the Callanish standing stones near his childhood home in the Outer Hebrides, muses that “maybe all we can say with certainty is that such stones are poetry. We can but let their enigmatic presences affect us as they will.”⁵⁹⁸ The same could be said about most ancient stone circles, including Stonehenge. The original intent of their creators is lost; the long list of “right” theories about the reason Stonehenge was built is testament to that. This is why I remain somewhat skeptical of the latest “right” theory put forth by the researchers of the Stonehenge Riverside Project. I am sure that they are sure that they are right. Yet I am also sure that the Druids are sure that *they* are right in their rituals and honouring of the ancestral spirits of the place. And it seems to me that the Druids are the ones who gain the most in terms of connecting with the place, and with what the place might represent. It allows them to feel closer to the cycles of the earth, of the universe, and of their own lives and the lives of other beings – the lives of plants and animals. This is an example of the way in which the stories of the place lead to reenchantment – to an ethic of care and concern not just for this one place, but also for

the earth as a living system, and of each person within it as a representation of the cycles of life, death, and rebirth.

No matter how many holes are dug, no matter how many fences are put up, and no matter how many years pass, it seems that the presences of the stones – their spirit or divinity – remains. This is the “mystery” of Stonehenge, and perhaps it is not one that can be solved by counting pottery shards or measuring the age of human or animal remains. There are some things that must be understood more intuitively – more by listening than listing. Paying attention to that ancient wisdom seems to lead to a more harmonious way of being in the present.



Figure 6: Artist's sketch of Stonehenge. © Regina Elizondo. Used with permission.

We walked up the gravel path towards the stone circle. We couldn't get very close, on account of the fence. I felt as cold and damp as the impassive stones before us. They weren't revealing any of their secrets to us today. We walked around on the footpath, seeing the stones from all 360 degrees. If there had been any hint of sun we could have played with the light and shadows. The whole thing would have been like a giant sundial.

As it was, it was just rainy and gray, either all shadow or completely shadowless, depending on your point of view. My friend looked at me and wondered aloud where the nearest coffee shop was. I reminded her that this was England, and while we wouldn't be able to get a decent cup of coffee anywhere, there was likely that in the next town we could find a café with a warm and endless pot of tea.

Throughout this dissertation, a case has been built that sacred places are needed to encourage a more harmonious relationship between humanity and the environment. But there is one problem still to be addressed: how can we ensure that sacred places – often subject to competing claims that better serve the modern western paradigm for commerce and science – are not destroyed before this worldview is realized? In the next chapter, I will look at some of the challenges sacred places currently face, and suggest some ways in which the ideas and frameworks in this dissertation can be synthesized to envision a future where sacred places are honoured and preserved.

Endnotes

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- ⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 299.
- ⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, 300.
- ⁵³⁸ Myers, *Mysteries*, 34.
- ⁵³⁹ McCulloch, *Religion*, 310. It is interesting to note that many of these magical powers show up in British folk tales. See also Myers, *Mysteries*, 35.
- ⁵⁴⁰ BBC, "British History In-depth," BBC website. The campaign was cut short by the revolt of the Iceni, under Boudicca in the southeast of the island. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/interactive/timelines/british/index_embed.shtml.
- ⁵⁴¹ While Christianity did not really spread widely across Britain prior to the arrival of the Augustinian missions in 597, there were pockets of Christians before this, particularly in Ireland and Wales – the same areas where Druidry was common. Pagan and Christian beliefs did mingle to some extent during this time.
- ⁵⁴² McCulloch, *Religion*, 314.
- ⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 315.
- ⁵⁴⁴ Myers, *Mysteries*, 37.
- ⁵⁴⁵ Carr Gomm, "Spirits Of The Circle," online.
- ⁵⁴⁶ Aes Dana Grove, "Introduction," online.
- ⁵⁴⁷ Carr Gomm, "History," online.
- ⁵⁴⁸ All quotes in this passage from Restall Orr, "Contemporary Druidry," online.
- ⁵⁴⁹ These are interesting issues, but somewhat too removed from the central points of this dissertation to be adequately addressed here.
- ⁵⁵⁰ Restall Orr, "Contemporary Druidry," online.
- ⁵⁵¹ Belden Lane, "Giving Voice to Place: Three Models for Understanding American Sacred Space." *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 1, no. 1 (2001): 56.
- ⁵⁵² Aes Dana Grove, "Introduction," online.
- ⁵⁵³ Philip Carr-Gomm, "The Eight-Fold Year," on the Order of Druids, Bards and Ovates Library website. Available at: <http://www.druidry.org/library/modern-druidry/eight-fold-year>.
- ⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁵⁵ Blain and Wallace, *Sacred Sites*, xiv.
- ⁵⁵⁶ Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman, eds., *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spiritualities* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), "Introduction."
- ⁵⁵⁷ Blain and Wallace, *Sacred Sites*, 80.
- ⁵⁵⁸ Restall Orr, "Contemporary Druidry," online.
- ⁵⁵⁹ Christopher Witcombe, "Archaeoastronomy at Stonehenge," Art History Resources website. Available at: <http://arthistoryresources.net/stonehenge/archaeoastronomy.html>.
- ⁵⁶⁰ Alastair Whittle, "Remembered and Imagined Belongings: Stonehenge in Its Traditions and Structures of Meaning," in *Science and Stonehenge*, edited by C. Renfrew and B. Cunliffe, 145–166. (Oxford: Oxford University Press/The British Academy, 1997), 163.
- ⁵⁶¹ Josh Pollard, "The Materialization of Religious Structures in the Time of Stonehenge," *Material Religion* 5, no. 3 (November 2009): 334.
- ⁵⁶² Blain and Wallace, *Sacred Sites*, 1.
- ⁵⁶³ Richard Covington, "Conversation: Sacred Stones. Exploring the connection between Stonehenge and Madagascar's modern-day megaliths," *Archaeology* 63, no. 1 (Jan. 2010), online. Available at: <http://archive.archaeology.org/1001/etc/conversation.html>.
- ⁵⁶⁴ Whittle, "Remembered and Imagined Belongings," 145–166. Bender, *Making Space*. Josh Pollard and Mark Gillings, "Romancing the Stones: Towards a Virtual and Elemental Avebury," *Archaeological Dialogues* 5(1998): 143–164. Mike Parker Pearson and Ramilsonina, "Stonehenge for the Ancestors: The Stones Pass on the Message," *Antiquity* 72(1998): 308–326. For a summary of the development of this theory, see Parker Pearson et al, "Materializing Stonehenge," in particular their illustration, p.230.

- ⁵⁶⁵ Patrick Crampton, *Stonehenge of The Kings* (New York: Barnes and Noble 1992), 4. Originally published by Harper Collins, 1967.
- ⁵⁶⁶ Darvill and Wainwright, "Stonehenge Excavations 2008," 4-5.
- ⁵⁶⁷ Bournemouth University, "Stonehenge Riverside Project." Available at: <http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/caah/stonehenge-riverside-project/>.
- ⁵⁶⁸ Amy Stone, "Research Finds Stonehenge was Monument Marking Unification of Britain," *University of Sheffield News* (June 122, 2012). Available from: <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/news/nr/stonehenge-monument-unification-britain-1.188608>.
- ⁵⁶⁹ Stone, "Research Finds Stonehenge," online.
- ⁵⁷⁰ Timothy Darvill and Geoffrey Wainwright, "Stonehenge Excavations 2008," *Antiquaries Journal* 89 (September 2009): 1.
- ⁵⁷¹ Darvill and Wainwright, "Stonehenge Excavations 2008," 1.
- ⁵⁷² Barbara Bender, "Theorising Landscapes, and the Prehistoric Landscapes of Stonehenge," *Man*, New Series, 27, no. 4 (Dec. 1992): 735-755.
- ⁵⁷³ Chippindale, "Stoned Henge," 40.
- ⁵⁷⁴ Blain and Wallace, *Sacred Sites*, 113.
- ⁵⁷⁵ See for example, Bender, *Making Space*; Chippindale, "Stoned Henge;" Denison, "Arch-aeologists Divide." See also Robert Wallace and Jenny Blain, "Sites, Sacredness, and Stories: Interaction of Archaeology and Contemporary Paganism," *Folklore* 114 (2003): 307-321. For the Druids, see Aes Dana Grove "Introduction," online, and Restall Orr, "Contemporary Druidry," online.
- ⁵⁷⁶ Tok Thompson, "The Irish Si Tradition: Connections Between the Disciplines, and What's In a Word?" *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 11, no. 4 (Dec. 2004): 336.
- ⁵⁷⁷ Chippindale, "Stoned Henge," 39. "Universal" of course, is arguably not the case.
- ⁵⁷⁸ The BBC reported 500, while *The Observer* reported 1,000. Both can usually be considered reliable sources. Chippindale's article refers to 1,000 officers.
- ⁵⁷⁹ The number of vehicles is widely reported. The phrase peace convoy can be found both in Chippindale, "Stoned Henge" and Blain and Wallace, *Sacred Sites*, 84.
- ⁵⁸⁰ BBC, "Police and Hippies Clash at Stonehenge," BBC Archives website. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/low/dates/stories/june/1/newsid_2493000/2493267.stm. See also Chippindale, "Stoned Henge," 47-48.
- ⁵⁸¹ Quoted in Chippindale, "Stoned Henge," 48. Unfortunately this article is not in Chippindale's references and I have not been able to locate it. I have ascertained it was written by Nick Davies, *The Observer* Home Affairs correspondent at the time.
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- ⁵⁸³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸⁴ Hilary Mayell, "Pagans Get Support in Battle Over Stonehenge," *National Geographic*, October 2002. Available on National Geographic archives at: http://news.national-geographic.com/news/2002/10/1031_021031_Stonehenge.html.
- ⁵⁸⁵ P. Davies, "Respect and Reburial," *The Druid's Voice: The Magazine of Contemporary Druidry* 8 (Summer 1997): 12-13.
- ⁵⁸⁶ Pitts, "A Year at Stonehenge," 188-189.
- ⁵⁸⁷ Aes Dana Grove, "The New Stonehenge Visitor Center – Display of the Ancient Dead," available at: <http://www.stonehenge-druids.org/articles.html>.
- ⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸⁹ English Heritage, "Interview with Stonehenge Archaeologists," English Heritage website. Available at: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/education/resources/stonehenge/conservation-research/interview/>.
- ⁵⁹⁰ Blain and Wallace, *Sacred Sites*, 206.
- ⁵⁹¹ Maria Luisa Cohen, "Sacred Spaces: Beyond the Concept of Resource Exploitation." *The Environmentalist* 11, no.1 (1991), 57.
- ⁵⁹² See Chapter 4.
- ⁵⁹³ David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996), 235.
- ⁵⁹⁴ Blain and Wallace, *Sacred Sites*, 80.
- ⁵⁹⁵ Restall Orr, "Contemporary Druidry," online.
- ⁵⁹⁶ Aes Dana Grove, "Display of the Ancient Dead," online. See also *ibid.*, "Introduction."
- ⁵⁹⁷ Blain and Wallace, *Sacred Sites*, 79.
- ⁵⁹⁸ Alastair McIntosh, *Soil and Soul*, 18.

Part Three: Implications

Chapter 9: Envisioning a Future for Sacred Places

Four challenges – three movements – two places – one goal

*Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?*

-T.S. Eliot, "The Rock"

Often, we get the future we envision. Thoughts and words and images have an undeniable power to them; they are, after all, the building blocks of stories, and stories are how we give meaning to and find meaning in the world. They bring wisdom, knowledge, and information. They are the way we continuously *create* our world.

The stories of sacred places are multi-layered, ongoing creative narratives. The thoughts we have about them, the words we use to describe them, and the images that are presented of them, become part of their story and ours. The same is true of the larger places and cultures in which sacred places are inevitably situated. Think about the words and images that are presented to you every day. What kinds of stories are being told? What kinds of events make the news? What kinds of stories are told in movies and television shows? What kinds of thinking do these generate? What kind of future is being created?

There was a time when sacred places were sought out, when the presences were recognized and honoured, when their stories were listened to and the wisdom in them taken to heart. Sacred places were respected and treated with great care. Extraordinary things happened there and special stories lived there. But over the centuries changes in cultural paradigms have led to a loss of interest in natural sacred places. This is particularly true in the currently dominant Western cultural milieu. In this context, the

idea of “repurposing” sacred places as sites of resource extraction, development, tourism, or scientific research comes to seem quite reasonable. Keeping them exclusively as sites of spiritual importance is at best seen as quaint or puzzling, or at worst, scoffed at and dismissed as backward superstition.

So the question becomes, how can this trend be changed? And, indeed, why should it be changed? It has been emphasized here that the idea is not to move backwards to some magical mystical past; it is to move forward to a peaceful and fulfilling future. The development of an ethic of care for each other and for the environment is one way to do this, and may be the best hope for keeping Earth a viable home place. To paraphrase T.S. Eliot, how do we move from an information era, founded on knowledge, forward to an era of Life, founded on wisdom?

Four challenges, three movements, two places, one goal

The ultimate goal is to make and keep sacred places accessible, viable, conflict-free places where people can freely gather to hold ceremonies, and where people may come to meditate or pray on their own. In this way, it may be possible to nurture a greater affection for the natural world, now seen as imbued – at least in places – with sacred, numinous qualities. An ethic of care could then emerge to guide the future.

It has been said that the best way to reach a goal is to start by envisioning that goal as already attained, and then work backwards from that point to where you are now; this way you will know what steps are needed to reach the goal. That is what this chapter sets out to do. We have our goal, stated above. To propose solutions, I will first articulate four kinds of challenges that sacred places face. One of the recurring reference points in

this dissertation has been to the deep ecology movement, incorporating the element of self-realization. Another part of that framework is that it links together three movements: the peace movement, the social justice movement, and the environmental movement. Ideally, solutions will further the goals of these movements – peace, justice, and environmental care – as well as keeping sacred places safe. Where possible, I will use Stonehenge and Puzzlewood to illustrate the points. The goal is to envision a future where this is possible.

Four challenges for sacred places

Very often sacred places are also contested places, and very often they are misunderstood places. These things in themselves are not surprising; the currently dominant modern Western paradigm is designed in such a way that concepts such as sacredness and enchantment in nature take a far second to the concrete demands of resource utilization, scientific investigation, or creating profits.

If the purpose and legacy of sacred places is to be kept alive, then strategies need to be in place for doing so, and those strategies have to address the needs and concerns of all interested parties. Depending on the site and the groups involved, the level of differences and tensions between these groups will vary. The trouble is, interest groups other than those who wish to use sacred places as places of communion or connection usually do not share the goal articulated above. In the very long term, that goal may well come to fruition, but in the short term, strategies and solutions that simply keep sacred places intact have to be the first priority. In general there are four types of issues faced by sacred places in terms of site protection. These are:

1. resource extraction and development
2. tourism
3. research interests
4. environmental degradation (other than caused by the above).

Each of these will now be addressed in turn.

1. Resource extraction and development. This is not particularly relevant in the cases of Stonehenge and Puzzlewood, neither of which are threatened with extinction due to resource extraction or development issues (at least not at present). Puzzlewood continues to enjoy the protection of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation, while Stonehenge is considered an internationally significant monument, and has been designated as a World Heritage Site. However, it is an pressing and immediate concern for many First Nation sacred places across Canada and the United States, as well as other sacred places in many other parts of the world. Resource extraction threats usually come from companies involved in forestry or mining, while development may be privately funded, as in the creation of housing or industries, or publicly funded, when places are cleared to create roads, put in electricity lines, or erect telecommunications towers, or are flooded to create hydro dams.

In most instances, the crux of the issue is that money shouts quite loudly, while sacred places tend to whisper quietly. When conflicts are taken into the legal system, monetary considerations are often given more weight than spiritual ones. Another common problem, it seems, centres on the “kind” of site or object under threat. There seems to be a distinction made in the minds of court officials and governments between places such as burial sites and other sacred areas which are meant to be left undisturbed, and those which are used on a regular basis for ceremonies, such as medicine wheels. If a place is not “used”, the thinking goes, then it can’t possibly be all that important. For

example, current legislation in British Columbia allows for archaeological digs on Aboriginal burial sites meant to be left undisturbed, because the Aboriginal community doesn't visit there on a regular basis.⁵⁹⁹

However, a place set aside can still bring benefit to the community. Another part of the problem is that the current Heritage Conservation Act does not set very clear criteria on what characteristics are needed to designate a site as sacred. While in theory this could mean that it is relatively easy to claim a site is sacred, in practice the opposite has been the case.⁶⁰⁰ The Act could perhaps benefit from the type of criteria suggested here.

This dissertation is not the place for an in-depth analysis of the various legal battles currently underway in many places where sacred places are under threat of destruction, as any one of those could easily make up a whole dissertation in itself. Sadly, there are far more stories of sacred places lost than of sacred places saved. One troublesome issue here is that often efforts to save sacred places (and other environments for that matter) become violent. The protestors may well have peaceful intentions and use Gandhian tactics such as peaceful occupation and non-resistance, but companies and governments often retaliate with force. Clearly this does not serve peace, social justice, or the environment.

Sacred places that depend on their location or natural surroundings cannot be replicated somewhere other than in their original location, and natural features such as trees, rivers, and mountains cannot be replaced at all once they are destroyed. Planting a new tree does not compensate for the loss of an ancient sacred tree. This is something, it seems, that those whose worldview doesn't allow for the sacred in place, or the sacred in

nature, find hard to understand, or else they simply don't care. Natural sacred places are not like churches, for example, where the building can be decommissioned and a new place of worship created and consecrated in some more convenient place.

Often disputes over sacred places end up in court. The set of criteria developed here could prove helpful in creating better protection for sacred sites, at least in terms of identification. In a court of law, this sort of clarification could prove critical in providing initial protection for sacred places. By creating awareness of what a sacred place is, it also encourages movement towards a paradigmatic shift in which the value of sacred places for peace, justice, and ecological integrity are realized. Individual worldviews change slowly, and cultural paradigms even more slowly, but changes can and do come about.

To resolve such disputes before they get to point of legal action, there are a few different approaches that can be taken. The first is to find an alternative source of the resource. In the case of forestry, perhaps managed extraction in a different place would work. Better yet, alternative kinds of resources could be found. New paper can be made from recycled paper or from hemp; timber can be salvaged and reused, or if it was destined for home construction, alternative construction methods could be employed. Probably forestry will be around for a long time to come, but sustainable forestry is possible. If this can be done, the dispute could be solved peacefully and will better serve social justice, as well as being better for the environment.

2. *Tourism.* Issues of access and tourism can be tricky especially when sacred places are also sites of general historical interest or significance, such as Stonehenge, or places of outstanding natural beauty, such as Puzzlewood. It is difficult to balance the rights of

religious expression with the right to access for the general public. Stonehenge, which is situated on public land, has a long (albeit fractious) history of public access. Its popularity as both a sacred site for celebrations of the summer solstice, as well as its more general popularity as a tourist destination as discussed in Chapter 8, have led to problems.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, access to the henge was free. Admission was first charged in 1901 when the site was still part of a privately-owned estate. In 1918, the land was given to the state and managed by the Department of the Environment. However, this comprised only a small portion the land in the area. There are about 700 hectares of land surrounding the henge that were used for farming. This land was purchased by the state in 1929, and the National Trust was given the task of making improvements. English Heritage took on management of the site in 1984, although the National Trust still owns the land.⁶⁰¹

In the nearly 30 years since the infamous “Battle of the Beanfield” (see Chapter 8), the various interest groups – English Heritage, the National Trust, government departments, archaeologists and other academics, and religious organizations – have struggled to come up with solutions that accommodate all needs and desires. Of course this is impossible without some compromises. English Heritage and the National Trust have obligations under the terms of the ICOMOS⁶⁰² designation of Stonehenge as a World Heritage Site, such as restoring the degraded area around the henge, as well as managing tourism, and government officials worry about costs and accountability to taxpayers. Archaeologists continue to unearth evidence of early settlements in the area

while Druidic and pagan groups claim rights of religious freedom (Druidry was recognized as an official religion in 2010).

Currently, English Heritage continues to make improvements for tourists and continues to charge for admission most of the time, except during the Summer Solstice. Access to the inner circle of the henge is still limited, out of concern for the preservation of the stones and concerns about public safety. The National Trust actively pursues restoration and good practice on the downs, while the government continually blocks or backs out of restoration plans based on cost. Archaeological digs have flourished and turned up extraordinary findings, and the Druids and other pagans are allowed to celebrate the solstices, although individual and group access outside of that has to be negotiated ahead of time with English Heritage.

This is about as good an outcome as can be expected given the competing groups. Allowing access at the solstice helps to keep the peace, although I would argue that charging entry at other times does not necessarily create social justice nor allow for complete religious freedom. In terms of environmental care, English Heritage, the RSPB, and the National Trust are working to restore and conserve both the henge itself and the surrounding lands, but are constrained in terms of time and resources. Archaeologists and Druids are learning to get along, and there are even times when they work in tandem to prevent damage being done to the site, or to make improvements.

Tourism could conceivably work well in sacred places, if done with consideration and respect as priorities, rather than profits. But there is no way to keep everyone happy. At least there is now consultation between the various interest groups at Stonehenge. As noted in the previous chapter, a call was made in 1990 for “community-based

development, which takes a strong sense of identity and unity from the existence of sacred spaces, providing the mythical foundation for a coherent community policy.”⁶⁰³

This would, one hopes, provide some measure of peace, social justice and environmental integrity.

Puzzlewood seems to have gotten the right mix of tourism and access, but then it is an easier place in which to do so. For one thing there aren't any specific rituals at specific times of year to adhere to, as the magic of Puzzlewood makes itself continually available (See Chapter 7). The 14-acre forest has remained largely unchanged since the early 1900s, while facilities for tourists have been improved on the forest periphery. It is a very peaceful place with good ecological management. There are two reasons, I think, for this. The first is that it isn't all that well-known, and so there is no need to restrict access in terms of numbers of visitors. Secondly, my theory is that the magic of the place just overflows and creates good feeling. The site has not in living memory been contested, even when admission fees were introduced (at around the same time as at Stonehenge). When Puzzlewood and the Forest of Dean were used for ore mining in Roman times, the processes and technology did not destroy the forest itself, and it has found protection as a Royal Forest and more recently as a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It has consistently been treated with love and respect, and this seems to create more of the same. The future envisioned for Puzzlewood, it seems, has always been much gentler.

3. Research interests. Sacred places are often the subject of much interest on a variety of academic fronts. Archaeologists, anthropologists, sociologists, environmental biologists, geologists, and religious scholars all have interests in some aspect of sacred places.

Research can be done respectfully, if researchers are aware of their own position in relation to the place and the people who perceive it as sacred. However, often the work done by archaeologists in particular is intrusive and inappropriate, and cannot be undone. The removal of artifacts, most especially of human bones, is often deeply offensive, or harmful and hurtful to the community. Again, this is something that occurs frequently on Aboriginal lands, and it is also an issue at Stonehenge.

There will always be those who wish to carefully document artifacts and historical evidence, and this in itself is clearly not a bad thing. Gaining knowledge about the history of the place and the kinds of activities carried out by ancient inhabitants should only serve to strengthen ties to place. These stories are literally being unearthed and brought to light – it should be a tale told with wonder and love, but it is rarely presented that way. It seems that the problem does lay mainly with the telling; as was discussed in Chapter 4, science is really just another way of telling a story, but it is one that often doesn't fully satisfy the spirit or the imagination. As Christopher Chippindale, an archaeologist himself, points out, “Stonehenge is not a dry agnostic relic to be dissected by academic archaeologist, but a sacred place of living powers.”⁶⁰⁴

Finding a different way of telling the stories of the ancestors has traditionally been the domain of poets and bards. Yet when poets and bard do tell these stories, those who wish to tell the story via science distance themselves from it. It is difficult to bring these two groups together because their worldviews and attitudes are virtually incomprehensible to each other, and neither wishes to relinquish their position as storyteller. The scientist is interested in information and knowledge, the poet with

wisdom and Life. What is needed in an integration of both stories in ways that acknowledges the value each has for the sacred place involved.

However, researchers can work in tandem with those who hold the place sacred. This has often been harder for archaeologists than others, presumably because archaeology by its very nature involves digging the place up. Biologists tend to be more careful – one account of a survey of land molluscs in the Forest of Dean notes that “rocks and stones were turned and replaced” as well as noting other ways in which the researchers strove to ensure that the forest was disturbed as little as possible.⁶⁰⁵

For the most part, studies such as those carried out by Jenny Blain and Robert Wallace, who have done a great deal of anthropological research into sacred places in the U.K. are done sympathetically, and in so doing, this team as well as others like them, have discovered a great deal about the beliefs of present-day participants in these sites. Participatory research such as that recently carried out by Alan Wood at the May Hill Mayday sunrise celebration in the Wye Valley also creates more awareness and interest while remaining respectful of celebrants.⁶⁰⁶

4. Other environmental degradation. Finally, the fourth issue facing sacred places is environmental degradation not caused specifically by resource extraction or development, or by tourism, or research interests. These can be things such as peripheral development, climate change, or pollution.

The first has affected Stonehenge and has negatively affected the experience of the place. Chippindale calls the pre-English Heritage state of the landscape surrounding Stonehenge “dismally unimaginative.”⁶⁰⁷ The area included a pig farm, a few “shabby buildings” including a run-down café and not a great deal else. The chalk downlands

were degraded from grazing and other agricultural activities and a general lack of care or concern. The combined efforts of the National Trust, the RSPB, English Heritage, and many different government departments and levels of government (this has been an ongoing process since 1984) have slowly begun to rehabilitate the area. The Council for British Archaeology website provides a timeline detailing the milestones and the many setbacks of proposed improvement plans. As recently as 2012, ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre expressed concern that “the efforts put forth have been, as in previous years, rather administrative, whereas no physical progress has occurred on the site.”⁶⁰⁸ However, according to the English Heritage Stonehenge project update on their website in June 2013, “the transformation of the landscape surrounding Stonehenge will begin imminently when the A344 road closes later this month.”⁶⁰⁹ The road, so to speak, has been long and difficult but it seems that progress, at least in regard to environmental concerns, is being made.

Climate change and pollution are also issues, although often these issues by their very nature are not restricted to sacred places. In some situations though, the threat to sacred places is alarming. Sacred places situated in coastal areas can be particularly vulnerable. According to a 2008 report by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, “rising sea levels as a result of climate change are likely to have significant impacts on Aboriginal heritage and sacred sites which are often located in coastal areas.”⁶¹⁰

Many North American First Nations sacred places are affected by pollution, falling water tables, or toxic waste dumps. A depressingly long list of such sites can be found through the North American Aboriginal Rights Fund, a nonprofit law firm that

administers the National Indian Law Library⁶¹¹ and acts as legal advocate and advisor in many of these situations.

When creating and assessing protective measures for sacred places, it is essential to keep in mind exactly what is being preserved. Because natural sacred places are a unique combination of both culture and nature, and because each site faces its own sets of conflicts and potential solutions, there will never be a “one size fits all” answer. There are different kinds of conservation and preservation efforts that can be employed, but these have to be tailored to each situation. Some of the things which have been done to sacred sites beggar belief – such dumping sewage-contaminated artificial snow on sacred mountain tops,⁶¹² or bulldozing sacred trees to make way for a highway. Situations where police have beaten and arrested protestors at sacred sites have become almost commonplace.

The dumping of sewage-snow is taking place at The San Francisco Peaks. According to a press release from the Morning Star Institute, the Snowbowl Ski Resort in the San Francisco Peaks is planning to “use recycled sewage to create artificial snow.” These peaks are “sacred to over 13 tribes” and “myriad ceremonies are conducted there.” Court actions to prevent the use of sewage-snow have met with open hostility and government officials have dragged their feet while the management of the privately-owned resort continue with their plans.⁶¹³

In 2009, the Guardian Tree at Bulahdelah in New South Wales, “the most sacred site of the Worimi nation, was cut by workers with chainsaws, backed by police who kept the protesters away”⁶¹⁴ in order to make way for a highway bypass. These sorts of actions

are contemptuous and inflammatory, and the challenge is not only to just keep on trying, but also not to retaliate with any kind of violent actions.

Making space for possibilities

All of this makes for very depressing reading. These actions are all part of the disenchantment of the world, which will further discussed and explained in the next chapter. Disenchantment is described as the loss of several layers of connection; a loss of connection with the divine, with other people, with oneself, and with the natural world. This disconnect creates a forlorn feeling of meaninglessness, loneliness, isolation, and apathy towards other people and the environment.⁶¹⁵ Only this level of disconnection can explain actions that are so far away from the ideals of peace, social justice and environmental care. Faced with this, creating change seems nigh on impossible. *But this disconnection too was once only an imagined future.* It is possible to change that.

Alastair McIntosh, in his book *Soil and Soul*, writes that “we must embrace our losses,”⁶¹⁶ and that by allowing the pain of seeing the wounds inflicted on the environment to be real to us, we can then move towards solutions. He writes that by acknowledging “the reality of a brokenness of heart that is both personal and of the world... a music may eventually be heard.”⁶¹⁷ This idea echoes Joanna Macy’s “despair work” whereby “the very alarms that should rivet our attention and bond us in collective action tend to have the opposite effect.”⁶¹⁸ Macy writes that by acknowledging and sharing our pain and feelings of despair, we are able to release the negative energy and feelings – fear, pain, paralysis, depression – and then to make room for “insight, solidarity and the courage to act... In the synergy of sharing comes power.”⁶¹⁹

Of course these things do not come easily. It is human nature to turn away from pain and heartache; indeed that is sometimes what allows us to go on living in the world as it is. Macy observes that “it is easy to let the heart and mind go numb”⁶²⁰ rather than facing the horrific realities of things as diverse as factory farming, rainforest destruction, polluted rivers, and the loss of wild places and sacred places. But, difficult as it may be, it is not possible to solve problems until we confront the reality of them. Just as, on a smaller scale, it is not possible to move forward from a broken relationship until you acknowledge and process the pain and heartache, we must acknowledge and process the pain felt for the world.

Thoughts and words and actions create both the good and the bad that is seen in the world. While it only takes one person, one thought, one word, one image to begin re-imagining and re-creating the future, there is, as Macy observes, strength and solidarity in numbers. It helps to know that there are people in the world who agree that the current state of affairs with the environment is unacceptable, and that it must be changed. Even if there is not “hope” as such, Macy writes that there are always “possibilities... you can’t predict, just make space for them.”⁶²¹ It is worth acknowledging these dark stories, so that it becomes possible to move forward and to then think about and speak stories of respect, love, peace, social justice, and ecological integrity, for sacred places. It does not matter if those stories are imaginary now; all stories are imagined into being. And there are many voices who are currently speaking a new story, not just one. We can take heart from that.

Some general comments

Ultimately, ideally, the community that values the place ought to be empowered to make the decisions regarding that place, and there should be *fair* legal and legislative mechanisms in place through which those decisions can be implemented and respected. These communities know the stories of their places, its history, meaning and function, its numinous qualities. They know what makes the place sacred. Sometimes compromises can be reached, but many communities are understandably leery of any “deals” because past experience has shown that these deals often seem to be made with fingers crossed behind the backs of the corporations or governments involved.

Given the complex interactions between the needs and desires of various groups involved, one commentator notes that if sacred places are to be kept intact, “a sort of bridge will have to be built between the religious and the intellectual powerhouses of the ecological movement, and the politicians and administrators.”⁶²² Only then can conditions be created in which the needs and desires of the many actors, from developers, governments, tourist boards, academics, the general public, as well as those with religious and / or spiritual ties to a sacred place, can all be given at least an equal hearing, and equitable solutions sought. At the beginning of this chapter, it was noted that the first imperative is to simply keep sacred places intact, and once that future is secure, steps can be taken towards a future of continued respect and recognition, as well as towards any reparations or restoration that might be needed in the place itself.

Tensions, conflicts, and problems at places as diverse as Stonehenge, Bighorn Medicine Wheel, the San Francisco Peaks, and the Tasmanian coast show that there are almost as many issues as there are sacred places, and each one requires a different kind of

solution. In many cases, it seems that the key element that is missing is simple: respect. A wise person once said to me that if we really look at the root of any issue, common ground can be found. No one *wants* to live on a dead planet filled with inequity, despair and environmental disasters. We do all want things like clean air, clean water, and a future for our children or nieces and nephews. We all hope to be respected. If those commonalities at least can be recognized, the rest is just the details of how to achieve these goals. Perhaps that road really could be re-routed, the archaeologists could try to communicate and consult with the community, and the tourism authorities could do more to accommodate sacred ceremonies.

Sacred places present unique challenges. They are made of both nature and culture, with environmental and historical preservation issues as well as social and economic issues. David Lowenthal, in his paper “Material Preservation and its Alternatives”, discusses both natural and historic preservation, and stresses that any attempted solutions are bound to encounter difficulties when there are multiple claimants, each with different objectives in mind.⁶²³ Certainly this has been the case at Stonehenge, where some archaeologists think their research objectives are reason enough to grant them exclusive access to the grounds; English Heritage believes that site improvement is only worthwhile if access can be granted (at a price!) to the general public, while those who feel a spiritual connection to the site believe that they ought to be granted free access to the henge (in terms of both time and money), and that free access should be granted to all those who wish to attend celebrations and ceremonies during the summer and winter solstices. Because it is very much in the public eye, issues at Stonehenge tend to be well-

documented, and this makes it easy to look back and see that progress has indeed been made.

Lowenthal also makes the point that often, only “fragments” of an ancient site can be preserved, and he questions whether this is sufficient, given that the cultural / historic artifacts as well as the natural environment or setting are inextricably bound together. In some cases, the fragments that are left may be sufficient, while in other cases, it may be possible to rebuild or replace certain cultural elements, even if the entire surrounding landscape or ecosystem cannot be reinstated. In the case of Stonehenge, it might not be appropriate to try to rebuild those parts of the stone circle that have succumbed to age and weathering, but it does seem both possible and appropriate to restore the surrounding landscape, at least as far as is possible given the severity of human-initiated landscape change. The efforts being made there are to be (cautiously?) applauded from ecological, historic, and cultural viewpoints, and should serve to enhance the experience of rituals and ceremonies held there. Does Stonehenge meet the ultimate goal of being an “accessible, viable, conflict-free place where people can freely gather to hold ceremonies, and where people may come to meditate or pray on their own?” Not just yet. But the ripples are there, and they are getting stronger.

Christopher Witcombe writes that “there is good reason to believe that the popularity of sacred sites... offers a special reassurance about life today and the future.”⁶²⁴ That popularity shows little sign of declining, and this is reassuring. We get the future we envision. The stronger the voices, the stronger the vision becomes.

Summary and final thoughts

The journey I have been on in the writing of this dissertation is a story in itself that goes back some years. Of course, many other stories also happened along the way – each life is an ongoing narrative, and parts of our stories are inevitably woven with other people's stories. But what is interesting is that if two people tell their story of the same event, those stories are very different. If I were to write the story of my experience as a mother and a graduate student, and my daughter were to write her experience of having me as her mother while I was a graduate student, I guarantee that those stories will be very different. Yet both are true and both would contain lessons both taught and learned.

So it is with stories of places. They are multi-layered, spoken with many voices, and interpreted through many chronotopes. That they vary from time to time and that they mean different things to different people is inevitable. But the truths are still there, and the lessons can still be learned. This is where we can start to move from information and knowledge to wisdom. As we give meaning to places, so too do places give meaning to us.

If time is thought of as cyclical rather than linear, then one could imagine that we are approaching the close of a cycle of thinking about sacred places. What I mean by this is that there are signs that an understanding of sacredness in nature is coming back into the collective consciousness – slowly, yes, but it is there. The fact that you are reading this right now, that these discussions about sacred places happen, is evidence of that. The reenchancement has begun.

The next, and final chapter explores the idea of enchantment, disenchantment, and reenchancement, and examines the relationships that exist between science, religion and magic. I revisit the ideas of self-realization and of developing an ethic of care for the

environment, as well as how enchantment fits with those, and the place of sacred places in that milieu.

Endnotes

- ⁵⁹⁹ British Columbia Assembly of First Nations website. Section 3.16 Heritage and Culture. Available at: <http://www.bcafn.ca/toolkit/governance-bcafn-governance-tool-3.16.php>
- ⁶⁰⁰ Section 4 (4) (a) of the Heritage Conservation Act reads: “Without limiting subsection (1), an agreement made under this section may include one or more of the following: (a) a schedule of heritage sites and heritage objects that are of particular spiritual, ceremonial or other cultural value to the aboriginal people for the purpose of protection under section 13 (2) (h).” Section 12 (2) (h) refers to limitations on damaging or removing artifacts from a heritage site.
- ⁶⁰¹ This history is comprised of material found in Christopher Chippindale, “Stoned Henge: Events and Issues at the Summer Solstice, 1985,” *World Archaeology* 18 no 1 (1986): 38-58 (42), as well as information from The Council for British Archaeology, the National Trust, and English Heritage websites.
- ⁶⁰² ICOMOS is the International Council on Monuments and Sites. It acts in an advisory capacity to UNESCO on the designation and management of internationally significant historic sites. Recommendations for environmental and tourism improvements were made by ICOMOS upon designation of the site, some of which have still not been met.
- ⁶⁰³ Maria Luisa Cohen, “Sacred Spaces: Beyond the Concept of Resource Exploitation.” *The Environmentalist* 11, no.1 (1991), 57.
- ⁶⁰⁴ Chippindale, “Stoned Henge,” 44.
- ⁶⁰⁵ David Long, “A Survey in the Forest of Dean,” *Mollusc World* 10 (2012). Available on The Conchological Society of Great Britain and Ireland website: <http://www.conchsoc.org/MolluscWorld10/14>.
- ⁶⁰⁶ Alan Long, *Standing Stones and Other Spiritual Sites in the Wye Valley* (video) 2009. Available on Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4W6zfd8Iag>.
- ⁶⁰⁷ Chippindale, “Stoned Henge,” 42.
- ⁶⁰⁸ ICOMOS State of Conservation report, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/431>.
- ⁶⁰⁹ Stonehenge Project Update 2013 June 2013. English Heritage website. Available at: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/stonehenge/our-plans/project-update/>.
- ⁶¹⁰ Inquiry Into Climate Change and Environmental Impacts on Coastal Communities: Submission from the Tasmanian Government June 2008. Available online: http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Browse_by_Topic/ClimateChange/effects.
- ⁶¹¹ The National Indian Law Library can be found online at: <http://www.narf.org/nill/index.htm>.
- ⁶¹² The Morning Star Institute news statement, June 2012, pages 4-5. Available at: http://www.narf.org/nill/resources/Prayer_Sacred_Sites.pdf.
- ⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, 4-5.
- ⁶¹⁴ “Threats to Aboriginal Land,” Creative Spirits website. This was also reported in the Australian press. <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/land/threats-to-aboriginal-land>
- ⁶¹⁵ Joanna Macy, *World as Lover, World as Self*, (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 2007).
- ⁶¹⁶ Alastair McIntosh, *Soil and Soul: People versus Corporate Power* (London: Aurum Press, 2001), 2.
- ⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.
- ⁶¹⁸ Macy, *World as Lover*, 92.
- ⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.
- ⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, 91.
- ⁶²¹ *Ibid.*, 101.
- ⁶²² Quoted in Cohen, 60.
- ⁶²³ David Lowenthal, “Material Preservation and Its Alternatives,” *Perspecta* 25 (1989): 66-77.
- ⁶²⁴ Christopher Witcombe, “Divination,” Sacred Sites website. Available at: http://witcombe.sbc.edu/sacred_places/sacredness.html.

Chapter 10: Reenchantment and Sacred Places

Enchantment - Disenchantment – Reenchantment

Wisdom begins in wonder

-Socrates (in Theaetetus)

Enchantment is a word full of nuance. In some ways this makes it rather problematic to use, although it is common in academic literature. Some synonyms for enchantment are spellbinding, bewitching, charming, and entrancing – all of which have magical undertones; or captivating, alluring, enticing, and beguiling – all of which have seductive overtones. As children, we may have heard fairy tales involving enchanted forests, or people who fall under enchantments, both good and evil. The way in which it is meant here is closer to the “good” magical sense, but is not exactly that. It is more about a sense of wonderment and attachment, in this case particularly pertaining to place. It is about not needing to dissect or measure or quantify place, but instead accepting that there are some things which it is not necessary to describe via scientific methods – like love and peace and an ethic of care, all of which are part of the enchantment of sacred places. Like sacred places themselves, enchantment is something that comes to us, if we are initially open to the experience – it is not something that we create.

The earlier chapters of this dissertation discussed many of the reasons how and why the paradigms of disenchantment came about; now it is time to think about how and why reenchantment could be part of the future. This chapter will look into the enchantment / disenchantment / reenchantment story and connect that to sacred place. It will also seek to provide further clarification of the way that enchantment and magic are understood in this context. It should already be clear that we are not talking about hocus

pocus or Harry Potter; the words are employed in a more “grounded” or natural sense. It is not difficult to see how sacred places themselves can be enchanting; what is important is to understand how that enchantment can be extended beyond a one-time encounter, and beyond a single, bounded place.

Why call it “disenchantment”?

Sacred places are more about understanding than explanation, more about mystery than mastery. To be sure, it is interesting to know where the stones of Stonehenge came from, or how the ecological integrity of Puzzlewood can be ensured. I have previously in this dissertation used the analogy of place and story as being like body and soul⁶²⁵. Geology, ecology, biology, and so forth are akin to knowing about anatomy and bodily systems and how to stay healthy. Stories and (re)enchantment help keep the soul alive and healthy as well. It is just as essential to nourish our selves on a spiritual or, if you prefer, psychological level as on a physical level. This is where love, sense of place, and self-realization are needed. The understanding and experience of sacred places, their stories and the wisdom contained therein are one way that this kind of “soul nourishment” can be found. In sacred places one may experience a profound feeling of awe, that tingle of something otherworldly on the skin, the deep soul experience of oneness with nature, or of wonder and love. These mysteries of the soul are better understood through stories than laboratories.

One might use different words as synonyms for disenchantment, such as apathy or perhaps weariness. The word disenchantment came into the environmental discourse via sociology and history, and it does have a certain cachet, a particularity of meaning that

suits the situation well. Max Weber spoke of the “disenchantment of the world” in his 1919 work, “Science As A Vocation”⁶²⁶ to describe an ongoing process of progress: that as the dictums of science became the primary authority in matters of human speculation, it caused a sort of loss of faith – both as a loss of religious faith and a loss of wonder within faith, and a loss of any sense that the earth (or any part of it) could be sacred. To relate this back to Otto’s definitions of the sacred, it led to a loss of that “mysterium tremendum,” that sense of being in the presence of a greater power. At least in much of the Western world, the story of science as the conqueror of nature had replaced the story of the sacred in nature.

It should be remembered that Weber wrote these words close a hundred years ago. He was commenting on the way he saw his world, and the path he thought the world would continue to follow. Whether or not one agrees with this prediction will depend on how one chooses to interpret it. Basically there are two different angles from which the Weberian theme of disenchantment has been considered. One is to focus on the rise in popularity of science and the non-religious mindset that has encouraged; the other is to understand it more broadly as the rise of secularization, rather than science specifically. The latter is often characterized as the decline of magic, a phrase that comes from historian Keith Thomas’ 1971 book, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*.

However, the two approaches are not entirely distinct from one another. Wouter Hanegraaff, a historian of religions, argues that secularization does not involve a “disappearance or marginalization of religions” as is classically understood, but rather a “profound transformation of religion... from this perspective, the term ‘secularization’ does not stand for a theory but for a historical fact.” Christopher Partridge, writing on

alternative spiritualities for *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, agrees. “Religion in the thin atmosphere of the modern West will necessarily evolve away from what we have become used to calling religion,” he observes, adding that “future generations of alternative spiritualities... may prove more hardy and resistant to disenchanting forces.”⁶²⁷ This is also in accordance with Hanegraaff, who states that secularization has “no bearing on the future prospects of either religion or magic.”⁶²⁸ In other words, one can be both “secular” and “religious” or perhaps “worldly” and “spiritual”. One could accept science and still believe in either or even both magic and religion. The three concepts of science, religion, and magic are not incompatible in any combination. Upon reflection, at least one of these combinations can be seen to be true; there are many people who profess to both a belief in God and an acceptance of most basic scientific explanations of the world and things in it; understanding anatomy, evolution, geology or genetics does not necessarily exclude a belief in the divine.

Interestingly, though, philosopher Jane Bennett proposes that “modern science and ‘ethically oriented’ religions” have in fact colluded in the disenchantment of the world. Both are “sources of, even while they proffered solutions for, the problem of meaninglessness that haunts us.”⁶²⁹ Although it comes at the science/religion debate from a different angle than Partridge and Hanegraaff, the outcome of Bennett’s theory is still that it is entirely plausible for a firm trust in scientific principles to be part of a worldview that also includes religion. But in Bennett’s scenario, it is unlikely that a worldview could contain both an acceptance of science and an acceptance of magic.

I know of few people who believe in both science and magic, or in religion and magic, or even just magic, at least as magic is commonly understood. This is why it is

important to understand what we mean here by magic. Most certainly, magic when understood as charms and spells and amulets to ward off sickness or evil, has declined, and this seems reasonable. Both science and religion offer alternative explanations and ways to combat maladies, misfortunes, and malevolence. I would argue, however, that spells and amulets are better called superstition than magic, and that the two are not the same thing at all. Hanegraaff explains the theory of magic through an enchanted view of a divinely created world. It is based on the idea that “God had created the world as a beautiful and harmonious whole; and this divine creation was conceived of on the model of earthly realities”⁶³⁰ but since we cannot understand the mind of God, then even if we understand all “earthly realities” there will always be a component of mystery or magic. Another description of magic as used here is found in Raymond Lee’s essay on Weber’s conception of social futures: “Magic in this sense is not merely concerned with wizardry or arcane manipulations but a means of addressing the hidden spectrum of existence in the mundane world. It... creates opportunities to transcend the rationalized structures of everyday life and restore truncated connections with nature.”⁶³¹

Thus magic can be understood as transcendent, or as part of the divine, and it is in this context that magic can be found in sacred places. One point that Hanegraaff makes that I particularly agree with is that magic is no more static and unchanging than any other kind of practice or any other component of a worldview. Just as science adapts to new scientific discoveries, as we saw in our discussion of Thomas Kuhn’s theory of scientific revolutions in Chapter 3,⁶³² and just as religions evolve and change according to the overall mood of the times, for example as was seen very dramatically during the Reformation in the 16th century, magic too, says Hanegraaff, is “dynamic, diverse, and

subject to continuous historical change.”⁶³³ The magic of sacred places now is understood in its current chronotope. This magic may lead to enchantment, or reenchantment.

The tensions between science, religion, and magic arise only when hierarchies are imposed. This idea was discussed back in the Prologue. Two ideas may seem oppositional, such as light and dark, but no one would say that because light exists, therefore dark cannot exist. One could, however, say that light is “better than” dark and thus create hierarchy, or a system of valuation. Darkness is *devalued* and seen as something to be avoided. The same can happen with science and religion, or science and magic. Once science is placed in a hierarchical position over religion or magic, the two latter concepts are no longer valued. Hierarchies can of course contain more than two ideas; one might then create a ranking of the three ideas under discussion here. Current Western paradigms might well place science at the top of the ranks, followed by religion, then magic; or it might place certain *kinds* of institutionalized religion above science, followed by magic. Yet all three can have a place in the modern world – each has a separate function, to be sure, just as do light and dark. Magic is in some ways more mysterious than religion; religion can be intellectualized and rationalized, magic cannot. This is one of the problems that magic faces. Because it cannot be explained, instead it is explained away. If we understand magic to be about wonder, then the decline of such magic could indeed lead to disenchantment.

What follows here is a brief history of disenchantment. It is well to bear in mind, though, Bennett’s caveat that “the disenchantment tale, which purports to describe the existential and historical conditions in which we find ourselves, cannot be reduced to any one telling.”⁶³⁴ She also warns that “the very characterization of the world as

disenchanted ignores and then discourages affective attachment to the world... its rhetorical power has real effects.”⁶³⁵ Therefore, although we will not dwell too long in this place of disenchantment, it is part of the story of rechantment.

The process in western Europe of disenchanting the world began some four centuries ago, with the dawn of the Scientific Revolution and the rise of early modern capitalism and commodification, and the trajectory has stayed much the same ever since. Carolyn Merchant describes this in her book, *The Death of Nature*.⁶³⁶ David Abram also writes of this in *The Spell of the Sensuous*.⁶³⁷ As explained in the Prologue of this dissertation, both Merchant and Abram locate the start of disenchantment in the mid 17th century, with the publication of Descartes’ *Meditations* in 1641. Abram observes that it was around this time that “material reality came to be spoken of as a strictly mechanical realm, a determinate structure” and this “cleared the ground and laid the foundation for the construction of the objective or ‘disinterested’ sciences.”⁶³⁸ Morris Berman too in *The Reenchantment of the World*, agrees with this timeframe; he writes that “the modern paradigm is ultimately the child of the Scientific Revolution,” and that this could be called “the Cartesian paradigm” as well.⁶³⁹ In large part it was Descartes’ idea of the separation of mind and body that led, ultimately, to a separation of humans and nature.⁶⁴⁰

For Weber, disenchantment was an inevitable product of progress, as understood within currently dominant Western paradigms. As with the Romantic thinkers encountered in Chapter 2, Weber did not see history as always or inevitably leading to a higher level of human attainment. Disenchantment was, as Richard Jenkins puts it, “the ‘Dark Side’” of modernity. He explains further that Weber saw disenchantment as

the historical process by which the natural world and all areas of human experience become... understood as less mysterious; defined, at least in principle, as knowable, predictable and manipulable by humans; conquered by and incorporated into the interpretive schema of science... in a disenchanted world, everything becomes understandable and tameable, even if not, for the moment, understood and tamed.⁶⁴¹

Like Hanegraaff, Jenkins equates the decline of magic and enchantment with the rise in secularization. Jenkins also sees enchantment (but not magic) as “subverting and undermining”⁶⁴² the ongoing process of disenchantment. Jenkins employs a much broader definition of enchantment to include something he calls “disenchanted enchantment”; as examples he lists the allure of easy money (winning the lottery or on one of any number of “big money” game shows), or, a little more worryingly, “legitimate domination” and power, which can only be interpreted as power-over.⁶⁴³ If the definition of enchantment is that it creates a kind of desire for something greater, then I suppose one would have to include, to use Jenkins’ own borrowed phrase, the ‘Dark Side’ – things like greed and power. But if, as I have suggested, enchantment is more to do with positive feelings – compassion, wonderment, and love – then Jenkins’ “disenchanted enchantment” cannot make sense. Furthermore, I do think that a distinction can and should be made between those things (like money) that fulfill material needs rather than emotional or spiritual needs, and between things that ultimately create greater fear and isolation (like power-over) rather than fostering love and community.

Disenchantment can also be understood as dismissing any possibility of the existence of suprahuman beings – everything from a monolithic god to pantheistic gods and goddesses, to spirits, sprites and wights, and magical beings such as faeries, pixies and elves – and instead believing only in what has a scientific basis in observable,

verifiable, quantifiable “fact.”⁶⁴⁴ In this understanding, disenchantment “may be taken to signify a certain commitment to scientific authenticity.”⁶⁴⁵ Berman writes that “for more than 99 per cent of human history, the world was enchanted and man saw himself as an integral part of it. The complete reversal of this perception in a mere four hundred years or so has destroyed the continuity of the human experience and the integrity of the human psyche.” It is entirely possible of course that humanity was right to begin with; that the world is an enchanted and enchanting place. Berman adds that “the only hope, or so it seems to me, lies in a reenchantment of the world.”⁶⁴⁶

Bennett writes that the “disenchantment tale... construes the modern West as a radical break from other cultures; and it depicts the modern self as predisposed toward rationalism, skepticism, and the problem of meaninglessness.”⁶⁴⁷ In sum, the idea of disenchantment can be equated with a loss of connection in several ways; a loss of connection with the divine, a loss of connection with other people, a loss of connection with oneself, and a loss of connection with the natural world. This leads to an increasing sense of meaninglessness, loneliness, isolation, and disregard for the environment. And that in turn leads to the loss of a spiritual compass, a feeling of emptiness, a loss of compassion and sense of community, and destruction of the environment. If it is true, as has been argued through this dissertation, that sacred places are imbued with a sense of the divine, and that the stories in those places connect us to the divine, to each other, and to place, and that these are all part of the process also of self-realization, then it follows that paying attention to the stories and presences of sacred places could lead to a sense of reenchantment and more meaning-filled lives, characterized by love, respect, community, sense of place, and ecological responsibility.

What is “reenchantment”?

Following disenchantment comes the hope of reenchantment. But what, exactly, is reenchantment, and is it different from enchantment? On the whole, reenchantment and enchantment can be considered equal, although they may not “feel” the same. Think of it in terms of love – you may fall in love with a person, and then that fades, and then you may find that you once again fall in love with the same person, but it is not called re-love; it is simply love, even though it will likely feel different in some way – deeper, or more mature, or more connected. It is the same way with enchantment and reenchantment.

There are a number of ways to discuss the subject because there are differing ideas on what enchantment is to begin with. At the same time, there are many different names for enchantment. It can be presented as a search for spiritual meaning through ecological channels, a quest for renewal through connection with the natural world, finding ways to honour and care for Earth. Following the principles of the deep ecology movement and seeking self-realization could also bring about an openness to enchantment as well.

Different definitions come from different academic disciplines. Enchantment is described from a folklorist point of view by Camilla Ingemark as “an encounter with a supranormal being... and has an extraordinary effect, changing the relationship with the human world, on the one hand, and to the supranormal sphere on the other.”⁶⁴⁸ In this understanding, “reenchantment” might not really make sense as the starting point would be different. However, as we noted above, a new enchantment with the world would have to look different from previous enchantment because it also comes from a different

starting point. Reenchantment is *not* about some romantic misty-eyed nostalgia for the olden days. It would be ludicrous to suggest simply jettisoning 400 years of learning about the world; it is more a question of synthesis – of combining the understanding of the physical world with an understanding of the psychical world. As Alastair McIntosh says right at the beginning of *Soil and Soul*, “I do not argue for going back to the past, but... the past should be carried forward to inform the future.”⁶⁴⁹ While many positive things have come about through science and capitalism, so too have some negative things. Environmental destruction and disenchantment belong to the latter category.

Bennett describes enchantment as a “mood”, akin to joyfulness. Enchantment is “something that we encounter, that hits us... to be enchanted is to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary among the everyday.”⁶⁵⁰ Her definition of enchantment is far-reaching; while she acknowledges that enchantment can be found in places, she does not commit to the idea that enchantment has to connect to the divine. There is also what she terms “enchanted materialism,” although “materialism” here is not used in the Marxist sense, but rather as finding wonder in “a world of lively and endless flow of molecular events, where matter is animate, without necessarily being animated by divine will or intent.”⁶⁵¹ This doesn’t necessarily detract from our argument: that enchantment can be found in a number of ways is all to the good. Her basic principle is that enchantment will lead to a better ethic of care and greater compassion, both for human and nonhuman beings and for the environment, and it does still presuppose a greater power, whether that power is in the animate world or in a transcendent one. Enchantment matters, she writes, “because it is too hard to love a disenchanting world.”⁶⁵² I would never presume to say that sacred places and stories are “the only” way to find enchantment, but they are one of

the ways. And enchantment, no matter where it is encountered, or what precipitates it, is still about wonder, love and what Bennett calls “joyful attachment.”⁶⁵³

Enchantment is conceptualized as a way to find meaning and connection – or to put it another way, a path to self-realization as discussed in Chapter 4, although conversely, self-realization can also be a path to finding meaning and connection. As Lee writes, “meaningfulness may be considered equivalent to the idea of enchantment in which the interdependence of nature and humanity form the cornerstone of self-authenticity.”⁶⁵⁴ There is no single, best way to (re)discover enchantment, just as there is no single, best way to embrace deep ecology or to seek self-realization, or to experience the sacred in place. By definition, enchantment is *experiential*. That experience may be unexpected, or we may deliberately seek for it – neither is “better” than the other. One thing that does seem certain, though, is that an enchanting experience in the sense that it is meant here often does come through sacred places. The presences of these places, it seems, sometimes tell their stories directly to our souls.

Finding enchantment

Dolores LaChapelle describes an enchanting experience she had while hiking with her young son in the Olympic Mountains in Washington. On this particular hike, she is seeking a place she had only seen from a distance several years earlier. It is difficult to get to, off of the usual hiking trails. On the final leg of their trek, they had to descend a difficult cliff before arriving at a “flat place” where there was a little pond. Once she and her son had freed themselves of the climbing ropes, they had walked only a few steps when, she writes, “a heart-stopping hush came over us. There’s no other way to describe

it.”⁶⁵⁵ She realizes (“when I began to think again after the wonder of just breathing it all in”⁶⁵⁶) that she and her son were the first humans ever to set foot upon that place. Upon reflection, she realizes that this place is part of local First Nation sacred stories. For her, this trip was “my first recognition of sacred land.”⁶⁵⁷

There are many stories by many people of their experiences of enchantment in sacred places. These stories come from both far away and close to home; experiencing enchantment seems to be universal. I describe my own experiences of enchantment in the chapter on Puzzlewood, and when describing my treks through Pkols (Mount Douglas). As noted earlier, enchantment is something that comes to you. But that doesn’t mean that there are not ways or places to seek it. One thing I have found to be true, though, is that once a person experiences the enchantment of a place, it changes that place for that person, just as it changes the person, even if in subtle ways. It is something never forgotten. It’s like something awakens, or opens, within you.

At this point, it is worth taking a moment to backtrack a bit and reflect on a couple of things to clarify the current discussion of enchantment and magic. There are, in this dissertation, several different phrases that could conceivably be seen as interchangeable. These are: sacred place, numinous place, enchanted place, and magical place. The main referral has been to sacred place. In Chapter 5, the suggestion was made that perhaps numinous place would be more appropriate to describe sacred places where the natural surroundings are part of the sacredness. It was noted that this would also serve as a way of distinguishing these places from built sacred places.⁶⁵⁸ In this chapter, the words “enchantment” and “magic” have been introduced. Certainly there are some places, such as Puzzlewood, where “magical place” or “enchanted place” just seem like

the best possible description. Other places, such as Stonehenge, seem to be better described as sacred or numinous. To a certain extent, this is phenomenological; that is to say, the experience of Puzzlewood is evocative and magical, while the experience of Stonehenge is invoked and more religious.

All sacred places have the *potential* to be magical, and have the potential to create an enchanted experience. But from my own experiences, I have to say that on some days, some places have a more readily available sense enchantment than on other days. I can't say exactly why, but given the phenomenological character of the experience of enchantment, perhaps it is not surprising. The place still holds its sacred character, its stories still contain wisdom, and the presences are still there. But sometimes they seem more reserved, or perhaps I am simply less receptive. Always, though, there is a feeling almost of relief in being in nature, much like the feeling of finally arriving back home after a long trip.

It should also be noted that while sacred places may act as nodes of enchantment or magical feelings, this does not exclude the possibility of coming across other places or situations where that feeling of enchantment, or something very much like it, is experienced. However, this cannot be used to then say all those places are therefore sacred. A beautiful sunset, for example, may take your breath away and capture all of your attention as you marvel at its colours and patterns, but it wouldn't really be very logical to then say that the sky in the west is enchanted. Sometimes it is just the sky in the west. Part of the problem is definitional; "enchanted" really is a very culturally nuanced word. The same line of reasoning holds true for magic; for example, one can experience an utterly magical and truly captivating feeling with your lover. Again, it would be

absurd to then say that either the person or the place where you were together is sacred. The magical feeling in this case is related to person rather than place. The easiest way to solve the problem, perhaps, is to say that it is the combination of enchantment or magical feelings with the other qualities of sacred places, and their stories and presences, that set sacred places apart.

But the question can fairly be asked, if enchantment is an experience in a certain place, how can that change our relationship to the larger world? And how can sacred places bring enchantment and the corresponding ideas of love and an ethic of care into focus as part of a worldview?

A common theme in writing about the experience of enchantment in sacred places is that it is profound. In that moment, the sense that you are connected in deep ways – not just physically but also psychically, to a living, sensate world is very real. It leaves a sort of imprint. That is not to say that all of a sudden a person will change every aspect of their life, but it does bring a new way of looking at the world. As Bennett writes, “the mood of enchantment may be valuable for ethical life...moments of enchantment might be employed to propel ethical generosity. Enchantment spills over into critical consciousness and tempers it, rendering its judgments more generous and its claims less dogmatic.”⁶⁵⁹ This generosity is more pervasive than a momentary realization and becomes a catalyst for greater compassion and kindness. The same is true of self-realization; viewpoints shift, understandings and connections deepen, but overall the rate and kind of change depends on the individual. As Bennett puts it, “I pursue a life with moments of enchantment rather than an enchanted way of life.”

For the experience of enchantment and the effects it creates to be accepted as part of a person's normal personal development would require a substantial shift at the cultural paradigmatic level. But as suggested in the concentric circle model, everything starts from an individual interior. Enchantment is itself a very personal and individual experience, even when the moment is shared. Lee also suggests that the impetus for a different future may be the "personal quest" for fulfillment or meaning,⁶⁶⁰ again hinting at self-realization. Blain and Wallace have found that often it is the search for enchantment that brings people to ancient sacred places throughout the British Isles, including of course Stonehenge. Again there is a reference to Weber's discourse of disenchantment and what Blain and Wallace call a "perceived lack" of enchantment in the modern world. In seeking out sacred places, many people find that "the enchanted past re-enchants."⁶⁶¹ Many Druids seek to reconnect to the stories of sacred places through various rituals and ceremonies; Blain and Wallace cite dowsing, meditation, visualization, as well as celebrations of the solstices at Stonehenge as examples. For these practitioners and celebrants, Stonehenge is "a living temple, as sacred now as it was to 'the ancestors'."⁶⁶² These are examples of actively seeking the feeling of enchantment through connecting to sacred places and the ancient wisdom they contain.

The desire to live a more connected, empathetic life is in itself a powerful thing. Many of those who go to natural sacred places do so to fill a perceived lack. Modern life is disenchanted; there does seem to be consensus about that. And if there is a perceived lack of empathy and/or enchantment with the natural world, then it makes sense to seek reenchantment in a natural place. Of course just being in a place of nature has many benefits; it has been shown to slow heart rates and reduce blood pressure, lower cortisol

and adrenaline levels and so on⁶⁶³. But going for a walk in your local park or botanical garden is not quite the same thing as being in a numinous place, a place that speaks its stories in landscape and legend.

I am lucky to have a little collection of trees in front of my house, almost like a mini-forest or ecosystem, complete with native flowers and food plants. There are quite a few cedars, a stately row of holly trees, a couple of plum trees, a few other as yet unidentified trees and a grand old Garry oak. I am very attached to these trees, and whenever I come home, even if I have just been to mail a letter, I feel like all the trees are welcoming me back. Because it is my home, the trees and I share many stories. But there are other stories to be read in these trees as well; the story of the land (it used to be a strawberry farm), and of all the wonderful creatures who have made this place their home as well; an amazing variety of spiders, as well as voles, hummingbirds, owls, deer, raccoons, and this year a family of hares, among others. Many migratory birds also stop here for a bit on their journeys. This wonderful panoply of nature draws me into its spell – to me this is a very special place. It is enchanting, welcoming, and wonderful. But for all that – it is not a sacred place.

The connection and presences I feel here are very different from the more mysterious feeling of some greater power, some deeper story that I find in Pkols (Mount Douglas), which is sacred to local First Nations as part of their creation stories. I didn't know this when I first started visiting the forest and walking the trails there. But I very quickly recognized a certain "feel"; as though the mountain knew me much better than I knew it. For me, this is a place of enchantment and renewal, and its sacred story is one of the wisdom of the Earth, held since the beginning of time. The sense of connection I feel

there, to the spirits of the place and to the place itself, have been instrumental in fostering in me a greater sense of connectedness with all the beings, both natural and spiritual, who reside here. From that has grown a greater commitment to and passion for extending an ethic of care to the larger environment of the Pacific North West. The connection is of the divine to place, the place to humans, and humans to the divine and to the natural world.

Summing up enchantment

This chapter began by defining the concepts of disenchantment, enchantment and reenchantment. Because of the long-held cultural connotations of the words “enchantment” and “magic,” there is a tendency to dismiss these words as being part of fantasy and fairy tales. But really they are part of the stories and the draw of sacred places. We looked at how the word “disenchantment” found its way into the discourse on modernity, and found that the idea of disenchantment really does fit the effects of the scientific worldview quite well. The wonder is taken out of the world, and it is seen as mechanistic, understandable and tamable. With a little patience, then, everything in nature can be explained scientifically. Yet science cannot explain how stories come to be embedded in places, or how memory becomes inscribed on landscape; it cannot account for love or reverence or attachment to place. In short, the processes that led to disenchantment cannot explain enchantment.

And so the idea of enchantment, of magic and wonder, was simply set aside. It was decided that these things were childish and unimportant. If you were born into a society where modern Western paradigms are dominant, then you grew up with those assumptions. It is not easy to set aside deeply ingrained viewpoints, to unpack your

assumptions, to look at why you think the way that you do, and then to set about trying to find a different perspective. But it can be done. It may be the realization that your soul requires “something more” that provides the impetus for a search for sacred places, and it may be the experience of a sacred place that sets you on the journey of rediscovering enchantment. There is no single “right” path, just there is no single “right” way to follow the principles of the deep ecology movement or to move towards self-realization.

Enchantment, it was noted, is something that *happens* to you, if you are open to the possibility of the experience and willing to accept it; like sacred places, it is revealed, not chosen. While the experience itself is very personal and individual, the effect is one of wider and deeper connections, and the development of an ethic of care. It may be almost instantly transformational, or it may be a gradual process of self-realization. Sacred places, with their stories that sometimes seem to recognize us before we recognize them, may be the places where that sense of enchantment will be experienced.

Summary of dissertation, and final thoughts

Throughout this dissertation, it has been asserted that sacred places are storied places. The places contain the stories, and the stories contain an ancient wisdom; a memory of what it means to live with a sense of the divine in nature, of connectedness with Earth as home place, with an ensouled and enchanting world. In listening to the stories of sacred places, this wisdom is passed along.

Those who are willing to listen and pay attention to those stories, and to the presences of places, may come to have a greater appreciation of the interconnectedness of the human world to the natural world and the sacred in nature, and of each person to

another. These stories may even inspire a sense of awe or love, or bring a sense of magic or enchantment. Thus an ethic of care for that storied place may develop, and a more harmonious relationship between people and environment may come about. Such an ethic of care may be central in finding solutions to current environmental problems, and preventing future ones.

Thus a new story about our relationship with the Earth, based on ancient wisdom, may be the conduit for a kinder, gentler future, where peace, social justice, and environmental care form our cultural paradigms and our individual worldviews. This fusion of stories, the sacred, and the sacred in nature as a way towards self-realization, the development of an ethic of care, and the vision a more harmonious future, is the unique contribution of this dissertation.

Bringing together these diverse strands required a multidisciplinary approach with multiple methodologies, particularly phenomenology to account for experiences in or of sacred places, and hermeneutics to address the stories. In addition, there was a need to include some basic system theories to explore both natural and social systems, and for philosophical inquiry to discuss spirituality, and the cosmological views found in Celtic religion, fairy faith, and Druidry.

Other elements of this dissertation include a background of the ways in which history is presented, how this contributes to the paradigms and worldviews found in the modern Western world, and how those paradigms affect thinking about sacredness in nature, as well as a discussion of why stories are central to all of our lives, and how places come to be imbued with stories. All of this was then set within a framework of the

principles of the deep ecology movement. To bring all this together with a cohesive collection of methods, the concentric circles model was created and explained.

Additionally, this dissertation created and presented five criteria that could prove useful in assessing sacredness in place when such sacred sites are contested, as happens quite often. This too may help to protect (care for) these places.

And lastly, in line with the phenomenological approach that is often advocated as the most appropriate way to understand sacred places, this dissertation has included quite a few personal stories; those of other scholars of the sacred, of a Druidess at Stonehenge, and my own experiences in Puzzlewood and Stonehenge, as well as in my home place of the Pacific North West. Stories, for me, are always fundamental. Sacred places are storied places, and those stories are well worth seeking out.

And so we near the end. The Postscript is a reflection on all the ideas here, tells one last story, and offers some ideas for further research on sacred places. Writing this dissertation has been a long and very interesting journey for me; I hope that you have enjoyed coming on this journey with me, and that you will continue on your journey with love, peace and joy.

Endnotes

⁶²⁵ This is mentioned in both the Prologue and the Introduction, and is discussed further in Chapter 6.

⁶²⁶ Max Weber, "Science as A Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 155

⁶²⁷ Christopher Partridge, "Alternative Spiritualities, New Religions, and The Reenchantment of the West," in *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, ed. James R. Lewis. Published in print and online September 2009; this is from the online version.

⁶²⁸ W.J. Hanegraaff, "How Magic Survived the Disenchantment of the World," *Religion* 33 (2003): 359.

⁶²⁹ Jane Bennet, *The Enchantment of Modern Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 62.

⁶³⁰ Hanegraaff, "How Magic Survived," 361.

⁶³¹ Raymond L.M. Lee, "Weber, Re-enchantment and Social Futures," *Time and Society* 19, no. 2 (2010), 190.

⁶³² See Chapter 3.

⁶³³ Hanegraaff, "How Magic Survived," 359.

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- ⁶³⁴ Bennet, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, 57.
- ⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.
- ⁶³⁶ Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1990). Originally published in 1980.
- ⁶³⁷ David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).
- ⁶³⁸ Abram, *Spell*, 32.
- ⁶³⁹ Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World*, (New York: Bantam, 1981), 10.
- ⁶⁴⁰ Berman, *Reenchantment*, 20-21.
- ⁶⁴¹ Richard Jenkins, "Disenchantment, Enchantment and Re-Enchantment: Max Weber at the Millennium," *Max Weber Studies* 1 (2000): 12.
- ⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, 12.
- ⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*, 18.
- ⁶⁴⁴ One could argue either way for the verifiable existence of magical creatures, but that is perhaps a debate for another time. However, the basic premise of that argument is that just because one group of people claim something does exist and that they have seen it, and another group of people with greater power and influence claim that it *doesn't* exist because they haven't seen it, is not sufficient reason not to believe in its existence.
- ⁶⁴⁵ Lee, "Social Futures," 182.
- ⁶⁴⁶ Berman, *Reenchantment*, 10.
- ⁶⁴⁷ Bennet, *Modern Life*, 7.
- ⁶⁴⁸ Ingemark, "Enchantment," 1.
- ⁶⁴⁹ Alastair McIntosh, *Soil and Soul* (London: Aurum Press, 2001), 2.
- ⁶⁵⁰ Bennett, *Modern Life*, 5.
- ⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 14.
- ⁶⁵² *Ibid.*, 12.
- ⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*, 12.
- ⁶⁵⁴ Lee, "Social Futures," 183.
- ⁶⁵⁵ Versions of this story have appeared in a number of LaChapelle's writings. This version comes from Dolores LaChapelle, "On The Blue Glacier" in *The Soul Unearthed*, ed. Cass Adams (New York: J.P. Putnam's Sons, 1996), 6.
- ⁶⁵⁶ LaChapelle, "Blue Glacier," 7.
- ⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵⁸ Chapter 5.
- ⁶⁵⁹ Bennett, *Modern Life*, 3, 10
- ⁶⁶⁰ Lee, "Social Futures," 190.
- ⁶⁶¹ Jenny Blain and Robert Wallace, *Sacred Sites, Contested Rites/Rights* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2007), 27-28.
- ⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, 113.
- ⁶⁶³ A detailed account of the effects of nature (and nature deprivation) on human body systems and the brain can be found in Eva Selhub and Alan Logan, *Your Brain on Nature* (Mississauga: John Wiley and Sons, 2012).

PostScript

Summary – Reflections and a Story - Future study

Throughout this dissertation, I have sought to show that sacred places, and the stories and wisdom contained therein, can provide a path to reconnecting with the divine, with the natural world, and with each other, thus promoting an ethic of care for the Earth.

Promoting an ethic of care is central in (re)solving current ecological problems, and preventing further ones from occurring.

The first chapter introduced the concentric circles model as a methodology, containing within it phenomenology and hermeneutics, both of which allow the exploration of the sacred, the experience of the sacred, and the stories of sacred places. It also allows for the study of the places themselves, of the ecosystems and environment in which they are located, and of the cultures in which these places exist. It also makes a place for the study of metaphysical ideas and cosmological concepts. The next two chapters focused on how a sense of the sacred had been lost, particularly in the currently dominant Western worldview. Secularization, or at least a change in the way religion is understood, as well as fading intuitions of enchantment, magic, and the sense of the divine in nature, has affected the way natural sacred places are perceived. Various aspects of the creation of this worldview and its implications for sacred places were discussed. Ways of thinking about history, an explication of the differences between paradigms and worldviews, the effects of technology and the link to science, and differences between the Enlightenment and Romantic philosophies of history were all explored.

Two shifts occurred in our perceptions of ourselves in relation to the natural world that are especially critical. The first was a shift away from seeing humanity as a

part *of* nature, to thinking of ourselves as apart *from* the rest of nature. The second was the move from an understanding of the mind and the body as being essentially one, to thinking of mind/reason as separate from the body/experience. Sacred places are also described here as being like a body and soul. There is a parallel then, between the idea that the human mind and body are separate and the idea that stories can be separated from place.

The central premises, or platform principles, of the deep ecology movement have acted as a framework or guide to many of the ideas and suggestions made here. The one aspect of the deep ecology movement that has been most emphasized is the idea of self-realization, or developing the deep ecological self. In essence, this means coming to the understanding that everything is connected; we are part of all that is around us. This idea was introduced in the Prologue and maintained throughout the dissertation. I would like to illustrate it one last time here by way of a story.

I spend a great deal of time looking at a computer screen, since the majority of my day is taken up with writing and editing – not only is this necessary for this particular academic pursuit, but it is also how I earn my living. Sometimes I get so caught up in this that I literally may not leave the house for several days. By nature I am rather reclusive, so this is easily done.

I don't especially miss interaction with people – I live with my artist partner and my teenage daughter, and for the most part, their company is enough socializing for me. But what I do miss out on is an interaction with nature. Now it has been shown by many studies that getting outside in a natural surrounding, such as a park or woods or the beach,

is literally good for your health. Your breathing rate and heart rate slows and your blood pressure drops. It induces a sense of relaxation, and all that tension stored in hunched shoulders and curled fists and knotted stomachs begins to melt away.

I am very lucky in that the house I live in is surrounded by trees. There are a lot of windows, and no matter which one I look out of I can see trees and greenery, rather than houses or a city street. It also seems to be something of a favorite spot for local urban wildlife, especially birds, even though there is a large park just across the road. I think of these trees as my friends (even though my partner and my daughter give me strange looks when I say this) and birdsongs are often a lovely background sound as I work. I keep doors and windows open if it is warm enough, or I will sit outside or do some gardening, but that doesn't exactly qualify as being "in nature."

One day while I was working on the dissertation, I hit a wall. I came to a point where I didn't seem to be able to move forward. This, naturally enough, quickly became a source of stress. The idea came into my head that what I needed to do was to go out for a walk, even if just in the park across the road. But I resisted this idea – I had a dissertation to write, and work to do, and I didn't have time to go wandering through the woods!

And yet, this idea was persistent. In the end I figured that since I wasn't making any progress anyway, I might just as well go outside. It had been some time since I had last visited the park, so I headed over there. As soon as I stepped onto the path that leads through the woods, I sensed a change in my body and in my mind. I felt as though the trees were welcoming me back, that they were in some way happy to see me. Now I

realize that may sound strange, but that feeling was quite strong. Perhaps I knew on some intuitive level how much I needed to be there.

A few minutes in, and my breathing was deeper and slower. My limbs felt less tense and the headache that had earlier been threatening to take over had disappeared altogether. As I continued my walk, I became increasingly infused with a sense of well-being. I started to take more notice of all the things around me; the way the shades of purple melted into one another on the petal of a flower, the microsecond of stillness between the flutters of a butterfly's wings, the pattern of the wind current that an eagle was riding far above, and the fantastic number of different shades of green in the trees and plants.

There is a place along this path where the trees bend together to form a sort of archway or tunnel. It's one of my favourite places along the trail, and I stopped for a moment underneath these branches. As I stood there, enjoying the filtered sunlight and the softness of the breeze, I began to notice that it seemed that as I breathed in, the leaves of the trees breathed out. And as I breathed out, the leaves breathed in. I also became aware that much as the leaves formed an arch above, so too did the roots form a cradle below – entwining together to hold the earth in place so that the path doesn't wash away in the rain or get overtaken by the marshy land beyond the trees. For a moment – maybe more – I was spellbound by the sense of being part of all these things.

Then I heard the sound of voices and footsteps approaching and the moment was gone. But the memory of it was not. I was reminded again of why I am so passionate about caring for the Earth. Why should I want to harm, or even disregard, this place that

so unendingly takes care of me? Why would I not seek to keep it safe in the same way that it keeps me safe? And this place is ultimately part of a greater whole.

The deep ecology movement can be understood as being part of the three great movements of our time: the peace movement, the social justice movement, and the environmental movement. Keeping in mind the purpose of these movements, even in a very general sense, provides a way to ensure that any actions taken to safeguard sacred places are done in ways that do no harm. This matters because not only do we get the future we imagine, we get the future that we shape with our actions. Saving a sacred place while acting in ways that are violent or that ignore or injure already marginalized groups, would be a sad victory indeed. It would be better to strive not to even incidentally perpetuate any forms of injustice, but instead seek to create more harmonious and inclusive communities.

This dissertation also included a list of suggested criteria to aid in settling cases where the sacredness of a site is disputed. Unfortunately this happens quite frequently for sacred places that are situated in nature. Of course it would be far better if instead of contesting sacredness in place, there was acceptance sacredness in place, and the value of that in itself. However there are other kinds of uses that, in the currently dominant Western paradigm, might seem more pragmatic. This could be revenue generation through resource extraction, development, or tourism, or in the form of knowledge generation through various sorts of research activities that involve invasive or destructive techniques, in particular archaeology. (Clearly research can also be done in sympathetic ways that increase understanding and do not disrupt either the place itself or the use of it

as a sacred place.) Yet, sacred places can generate other things, such as wisdom and spiritual fulfillment. There is value in community, not just commodity. These things too are part of what makes us human.

As humans, clearly we are capable of doing more than just seeking to fulfill material needs, nor are we just containers of knowledge or collectors of skills. We also have a deep need to find meaning in the world – the kind of meaning that fills our spirits. There are many ways in which people seek this meaning. One of the points of the deep ecology movement is that it can be infused with any theology, doctrine, dogma, or philosophy; a person may be Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, agnostic, panentheist, or pagan, and also be a supporter of the deep ecology movement. One can move towards self-realization in many different ways, and the divine can be conceptualized in almost countless different ways.

Because the idea of the divine has so many interpretations, it stands to reason that there are also a great number of different stories told about it. Sometimes these stories are presented as being the one “true” story, but it seems to me that if the divine is understood to be infinite or at least in part unknowable, then there is no reason to choose only one story and silence all other voices. One person may find that the stories of the Hebraic bible fit with their worldview and make sense to them in their life; another may find resonance in the stories found in Druidry. We can understand how deep and universal this need for understanding is by reflecting on the number of long, brutal wars that have been fought to win the right to say “my story is better than your story.” These battles continue to this day. These are not just the wars fought in places such as the Middle East, although certainly that particular war has been long and fierce. It can also be seen in much subtler

ways whenever a sacred place is dismissed as being nothing more than a place where fairy tales or folklore are told. This is why I chose not to categorize the stories of place. All are equally valid to those who hold them sacred.

I recently mentioned in a conversation that I find it increasingly hard to defend the idea that not all of nature is sacred. That uncertainty comes from an increasing recognition on my part that all things – the trees in my yard, the creek that feeds the duck pond across the road as well as the trees of Puzzlewood and the stones of Stonehenge– all of these are ensouled. But ensoulment is not the same thing as sacredness, although ensoulment does imply a numinous quality. This equivocation arises, I think, from my increasing sense that all things hold the possibility of *enchantment*. In the story told above, I very purposefully used the word “spellbound” to suggest a kind of enchantment. There is a real sense of wonder, of some mischievous mystery to be found in the many ways of being on this planet. But there are places where a sense of the sacred – as well as that sense of ensoulment – can be more strongly felt. There is a perceptible difference to the feel of the park across the road, and the presences and enchantment of Pkols, long known as Mount Douglas.

Sacred places do have a different “feel” to them; this has been repeated often in the literature and in this dissertation. There is a difference too between a place that has value and meaning, and a sacred place. Different kinds of presences, or spirits, as well as deep layers of stories, set sacred places apart. It is a place where the divine becomes immanent; it provides a sort of doorway to another realm. Sacred places, and the feeling of enchantment, are both described as being “given” rather than being “created”. Now of

course one has to be open to receiving; when a person doesn't "believe" that something can be true, they will not be open to evidence supporting it to be true.

What a person sees, or feels, or believes, is mediated by the society in which they have formed their worldviews and gained their knowledge of the way the world works. It is shaped by the stories they have heard since early childhood and the stories they continue to listen to and tell. Many centuries ago, it was believed that the world was either flat or shaped like a dome, rather than being spherical. Anyone could see that this was most obviously the case. But the theory of a flat or dome-shaped world was disproven by a closer study and rethinking of the movements of the planets and the stars. Most people simply looked at the world itself – not what lay beyond, or above, and the idea of a flat world was deeply ingrained. Now we accept that not only is Earth round, but it is the third of eight big round objects spinning around a big, round, very hot, star.

The conception of a geocentric universe is another major change. Acceptance of the Copernican view of the heliocentric solar system required a fundamental shift in Western European paradigms. That change did not come quickly or easily or without resistance, but it did come, and now is accepted without question. In the same way, paradigmatic shifts towards an acceptance of the immanence of the divine in place– and acceptance of diverse understandings of the divine – are entirely possible.

There are some things that cannot be rushed and paradigmatic change is one of them. But that doesn't mean that efforts should not be made to continue to safeguard sacred places or to learn more about them. In most cases this will involve compromises, such as negotiating respectful tourism, or finding a way to cooperate with archaeological digs and the sharing of the artifacts unearthed. For the tourism boards and archaeologists

that might mean at least accepting, even if not understanding, the views of those to whom the place is sacred. For those to whom the place is sacred, that means understanding that changes come slowly, and that the increase of and dissemination of knowledge, if not wisdom, about the place can be a good thing.

While many in our present time and culture may scoff at the idea of a the divine in nature, there are also many who understand that the spiritual side of *our* nature, wherever that may have come from and however that may be understood and interpreted, needs to be nurtured. Sacred places, including all those wonderfully diverse natural, community sacred places, are a vital component in finding that nurture in nature.

Further studies

The next step in the study of sacred places could focus on the idea of shared stewardship. Management plans for currently contested sites could be developed by understanding that less dominant or entrenched worldviews do have validity, and that those voices deserve to be heard. While there are many differences between sacred places, there are also many similarities, and the issues that one place has to contend with may well show up in other places too. The solutions tried in one place, then, may have application in others, although attention must always be paid to the social and cultural milieu in which each place exists.

There are also further studies that could be done with stories – not just the stories of sacred places necessarily, but about the lineages of other place-based stories too. There has not been a great deal of research done, for example, about the stories of the Forest of Dean, and perhaps it is not possible to find out much about the old stories that were told,

but it would nonetheless be interesting to try. This would likely involve deep archival research. In the same way it would be interesting to find out more about Celtic lore and legends, and to (re)attach them to their places. Doing such research will likely mean agreeing to the categorization of stories, and finding ways to do so that are culturally sensitive.

There are three other ideas put forth in this dissertation to pursue, although they are not directly related to sacred places. I would like to expand upon the concentric circles model. The explication of it in this dissertation is in a way rudimentary. I would like to disseminate it in the academic community to see what kind of feedback there is about it, and to both refine and expand upon it.

I would also be interested in exploring whether there is any support, perhaps initially in the academic world, for using the phrase “numinous places” for natural sacred places as a way of distinguishing them from built sacred places (the mosques and churches and cathedrals). The reasoning behind this is simple enough: whenever I mention that I am involved in the study of sacred places, the immediate assumption has been that this is about built places. I then have to explain that it is about sacred places that gain their sacred characteristics from their natural surroundings. Having a less cumbersome phrase such as numinous places would certainly be useful. The etymology of the word supports such as use as well.

The third area where I would like to do more research is related to the second, and could also relate to the first. It would be interesting to delve further into the concept of sacredness. When writing this dissertation, I was surprised at the extent to which I had to narrow down the research I have done over the past 10 years or so into concepts of the

sacred. This is something I would very much like to return to and expand upon. While this would certainly involve discussions of sacred places, it would also involve much wider usages and understandings of what “sacred” really means, and the many, many ways it has come to be used and understood in modern Western culture.

In closing...

In closing, I'd like to go back to the beginning. The Prologue contained a discussion about the need for researchers to situate themselves in relation to the subject being researched. However, this isn't just a single process, something that can be done once and then it is over with. I have found that it involves a constant kind of monitoring of the views and ideas and assumptions that I make, as well as understanding how those affect each part of the research. How do the ideas that I hold about history, for example, relate to current issues in sacred places? The latter is more detached, although I do feel strongly about it. It troubles me that my daughter's high school history class teaches about World War I and II, but not about Gandhi. What does this tell her and her classmates about what is important in the world? This is reinforced daily on the news; more often than not the news covers conflict and terrible events, and only rarely does it tell stories of more positive movements. If we envision the future based on the stories we are currently told, then it is little wonder that the future we envision is dystopic, if not apocalyptic. This is the story we tell our children.

This ties in with the subject of current conflicts in sacred places. That chapter was incredibly difficult for me to write, as it was so disheartening to read story after story about the destruction of, and disrespect shown, to sacred places around the world. One

image that stayed in my mind was a photograph of a model in a bikini on the top of Uluru. This was deeply disrespectful and offensive to the Aborigine population. Then there are the stories of irreversible destruction. One of those is very close to home: the destruction of a sacred cave in Bear Mountain on Vancouver Island. This cannot be undone, and it engenders such a feeling of helplessness.

I am also very aware that many people think I am a little bit odd (or maybe more than a little bit odd) in my views about the value of nature and our connections to it. Truthfully, this doesn't bother me at all, but I am aware of it. It shows up in little things, such as my partner still rolling his eyes when I take the time to coax a spider onto a piece of paper and take it outside rather than stepping on it (and we live in a very spidery house). But as far as I can tell, that spider has a right to live out its life in peace, and it has done no harm to anyone. In a wider context, I realize that I have a tendency to assume that other people will somehow understand, if not share, my assumptions about the value of all living things, even though time and again this turns out not to be the case. That has been something that I have had to constantly check myself on in the writing of this dissertation, and I don't always get the balance right.

But I do hope that by being the way that I am, I can show others the kinds of values that I hold and maybe convince them to reconsider theirs. I will continue to not step on spiders, and to believe in the intrinsic value of all ways of being, to believe that all beings are ensouled and that we are all connected. I will continue to believe in the power of stories, and try to tell the ones that make sense to me. This story, the story of seeing the possibilities inherent in sacred places to make visible the connections of the divine to places, places to people, and people to the divine, to each other, and to the natural world,

is one that I believe. This brings us back to the beginning, and I think, to the end of this particular telling of the story of sacred places.

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