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"Penis, Power and Patriarchy": Troubled Masculinities in British Paganism Set Against the Feminist Challenge of the 1970s and 1980s

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Abstract

This article analyzes the ways in which British Wicca's encounters with radical feminist theory during the 1970s and 1980s, as well as with feminist forms of Witchcraft and Goddess Spirituality, shaped changing notions regarding masculinity among male British Wiccans and Wiccan-derived Pagans, both in terms of their individual roles as priests within the religions, as well as in regard to their visioning of Wicca's male deity—the Horned God. These issues are examined in light of the current academic study of masculinity, both in general and in relation to religion and spirituality.

Keywords: Wicca; Contemporary Paganism; Feminism; Masculinity; Horned God; Britain

In recent decades, gender has evolved to become an important aspect within the study of religion. Indeed, as argued by Ursula King, "Without the incisive, critical application of the category of gender it is no longer possible to accurately describe, analyze or explain any religion."[1] Building on King's thought-provoking argument, this article sets out to analyze the ways in which British Wicca's encounters with radical and cultural feminist theory,[2] as well as with feminist forms of Witchcraft and Goddess Spirituality, shaped changing notions of masculinity among male British Wiccans and Wiccan-derived Pagans

1. King, "General Introduction," 8.
2. For a detailed analysis of the differences and commonalities between these feminist tendencies, see Feraro, "The Goddess is Alive. Magic is Afoot," 61–63.

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during the 1970s and 1980s,[3] both in terms of their individual roles as priests within the religion, as well as their visioning of Wicca's male deity—the Horned God.

Change, as Eileen Barker maintains, is the norm in religions: "Religions are constantly changing . . . and new religious movements are liable to change more rapidly and radically than older, more established religions, if only because new religions are prone to find themselves facing challenges that the older religions have already resolved."[4] The development of contemporary Pagan—as well as, more generally, esoteric—traditions has been shaped by gender notions to a great extent, as these religious groups serve as a lightning rod for individuals who are "dissatisfied with the gender roles in society or their previous religions." Many Pagans and occult practitioners are therefore actively and continuously engaged with "the implications of the gendering of magic and divinity."[5]

The emergence of contemporary Paganism in the Western world owes much to Gerald Gardner (1884–1964), a retired British civil servant who embarked upon a quest to revive what he described as the ancient religion of pre-Christian witchcraft (or Wicca, as it came to be known) during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Since Gardner's death, Wicca has evolved into the most widely known and influential of the traditions which comprise contemporary Paganism today.[6] Virtually all Wiccans define themselves as both witches and Pagans. However, not all Pagans who subscribe to the broader definition of "witch" would also characterize themselves as "Wiccan." Indeed, some—especially in the

3. The academic study of masculinity began to formulate during the late 1980s to mid-1990s as a result of pioneering work by scholars such as John Tosh and R. W. Connell, based on the understanding that it is as much a social and cultural construct as "femininity," as—to paraphrase Simone de Beauvoir—"one is not born, but rather becomes, a man." Quoted in Mirsky, "Three Arguments for the Elimination of Masculinity," 27; see Tosh, "What Should Historians Do with Masculinity?"; Connell, *Masculinities*.

4. Barker, "Revision and Diversification in New Religious Movements," 1.

5. Hedenborg-White and Tøllefsen, "Introduction," 8. See, for example, Hedenborg White, *The Eloquent Blood*; Johnston, "A Deliciously Troubling Duo."

6. Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*.

United Kingdom—would often be at pains to state that they are "not Wiccan."[7] Our discussion focuses on the 1970s and 1980s, a period in which the Pagan community in Britain was dominated almost exclusively by Wiccans and by Wicca-inspired Pagans and witches.[8]

There exists a clear and direct correlation between contemporary Paganism and Goddess Feminism, as both spiritual traditions call for "restoring" the connections between human beings, the natural world, and the sacred feminine.[9] Scholars of contemporary Paganism agree that Wiccan practices and ideology were influenced by second-wave radical feminism, as a result of Wicca's expansion into the United States during the 1960s.[10] As the 1970s drew to a close, that influence was already evident in the US through the writings of Miriam Simos, who writes as "Starhawk," and Zsuzsanna Budapest (b. 1940), the developers of feminist and Dianic Witchcraft respectively, becoming by far the most popular spokespersons for the American Pagan community.[11]

While Wicca emphasized gender balance in both theology and ritual praxis from its inception, during the 1950s and 1960s its various branches were in fact

7. These would include, for instance, feminist witches who are influenced by Starhawk (b. 1951), whose reclaiming tradition fuses Wicca with radical and cultural feminist ideologies. Another example would be the adherents of "Traditional Witchcraft," who claim to follow a path which predates Gardner's Wicca. To further complicate matters, in the United States the term "British Traditional Witchcraft," or BTW, is often used to refer to initiatory Wiccan groups with a lineage stemming from Gardner or Sanders, namely Gardnerian and Alexandrian.

8. Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 387.

9. Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess*; Rountree, *Embracing the Witch and the Goddess*; King, *Women and Spirituality*; Griffin, "Webs of Women: Feminist Spiritualities."

10. Clifton, *Her Hidden Children*, xi; Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves*, 119; Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism*, 6. As I claim elsewhere, the impact of British radical feminism on UK Pagans was considerably smaller than that exerted by American radical feminist theory, due to the relative primacy of socialist feminism within the British WLM. Furthermore, many British Pagans did not accept these ideas wholesale, and sometime even consciously rejected them (Feraro, *Women and Gender Issues in British Paganism*, 9–11, 266).

11. Melton and Poggi, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Paganism in America*, 209. For studies of Starhawk's thought and the Reclaiming tradition, see Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism*; Feraro, "The Politics of the Goddess." For studies that focus on Budapest's writings and the later development of Dianic Wicca, see Coleman, *Re-riting Woman*; Feraro, "The Goddess is Alive. Magic is Afoot."

led by men, who occasionally acted in order to preserve their male power within a patriarchal society. As I have shown elsewhere,[12] changing views on gender and the place of women in Western society during the latter half of the twentieth century, along with the rise of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) and the emergence of feminist branches of Witchcraft and Goddess Spirituality during the 1970s and 1980s, forced British Wiccans and Wiccan-derived Pagans to re-consider the gendered dynamics within covens and ritual groups, as well as to (re)examine the relationship between Wicca's main deities—the Great Goddess and the Horned God. Research into Wicca has thus far mostly centered on the figure of the Great Goddess and the ritual role accorded her priestesses, with little scholarly attention paid to developments in the status of the Horned God after the founding of Wicca or to men and masculinity in Wiccan ritual settings, beyond Gardner and Sanders. As I shall demonstrate below, during the late 1970s and particularly the 1980s, some British Wiccans and Pagans felt that the Horned God had been relegated to the sidelines in the new feminist-influenced cosmology and ritual practice. This resulted in highly charged debates regarding the role of the male priest and deity, which occurred as part of their wider—and varied—set of reactions to the challenge provided by the growing feminist movement.

Studies that focus specifically on masculinities in contemporary Paganism are few and far between: *The Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality* has yet to include an article dedicated to the subject, save for a 2012 emic treatment of the related current of Western Shamanism, which contains a passing reference to the latter as a phenomenon that "resembles female masculinity," building on Jack Halberstam's use of the term.[13] Elsewhere—and around that time—Scott Simpson wrote on the construction of masculinity among adherents of the Rodzimowierstwo Polish Native Faith since the early 1990s.[14] A decade earlier, Jenny Blain, who studied practitioners of Heathenry during the 1990s, touched upon the issue

12. Feraro, *Women and Gender Issues in British Paganism*.
13. See Kelly, "Entering Water," 71; Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*.
14. Simpson, "Men Constructing Masculinity in Polish Rodzimowierstwo."

of masculinity as part of her treatment of contemporary male Heathens who practice seiðr, traditionally connected with female ritual specialists.[15] In areas more relevant to Wiccan-derived Paganism, David Green focused on what he termed the Male Goddess Movement, and maintained that numbers of Pagan men were "turning away from androcentric mythopoetic figures such as the Green Man and the Horned God towards female spiritual archetypes . . . where masculinity and femininity are held in various creative tensions, forming part of what might be termed a spiritual and psychic gestalt."[16] Around that time, Christopher Chase presented a paper on the forging of masculinity within the American 1970s Pagan milieu as part of a session dedicated to Pagan masculinities that took place in the 2010 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion.[17]

This article aims to contribute to the nascent field of Pagan masculinities by focusing on British Wicca—which in many ways gave rise to Contemporary Paganisms—during the turbulent period ushered in by radical and cultural feminisms. It begins by first introducing Gardner's own musings regarding male priesthood and divinity, then proceeds to show how these issues were explored by leading Wiccans, most of whom were women, following his death in 1964. A short presentation of British matriarchalists and Goddess Feminists' critique of Wiccan theology and gender views follows, while the remainder of the article is dedicated to how the feminist challenge shaped the discourse on masculinity and male divinity within British Wicca during this period.

The Horned God and His Male Representatives in Gerald Gardner's Wicca

In order to make sense of the changing notions regarding masculinity and the status of the Horned God among male British Wiccans and Wiccan-derived Pagans during the 1970s and 1980s, it is first necessary to discuss the

15. Blain, *Nine Worlds of Seid-Magic*, 120–41.

16. Green, "What Men Want?"

17. See page 64 in the 2010 AAR Program Book on the AAR Website, https://pittsarchives.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/rg057/web/programbooks/2010_ProgramBookAM_AAR.pdf, accessed 10 November 2021.

foundation laid down by Gardner regarding these issues in his published works, *Witchcraft Today* (1954) and *The Meaning of Witchcraft* (1959). Gardner described the origins of the witch cult and its deities in a somewhat inconsistent manner. In *Witchcraft Today*, Gardner envisioned the Stone Age as "probably a matriarchal age, when man was the hunter and woman stayed at home making medicine and magic."[18] He explained that during the matriarchal period, "caves, trees, the moon and stars all seem to have been reverenced as female emblems." While "men had a hunter's god, who presided over the animals . . . a myth of the Great Mother came into existence and woman was her priestess."[19] In *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, he developed this further and wrote that "the cult of the Goddess was superimposed on the original cult of the Old God of Hunting and Death."[20] According to this narrative, as Stone Age magic "was first used to obtain good hunting it became part of the religion attached to the hunting god. Later, when it was also used to obtain fertility, a fertility goddess came into the cult."[21] Elsewhere in the book, however, he wrote that it was only after men understood the facts of procreation that the male, phallic deity was "brought into prominence" alongside the Great Mother that actually preceded Him.[22]

Gardner described this "Great Mother of all" as "the giver of fertility and the power of reproduction," and added that "all life comes from her."[23] In *Witchcraft Today*, he attributed this Goddess with the charge of the mysteries of birth and reincarnation, while the hunters' god of "Death and what lies beyond" ruled over the world of the afterlife, in which individuals rested awaiting to be reborn.[24] This is while in *The Meaning of Witchcraft* Gardner added the phallic qualities of fertility to this male deity and titled him as "the Opener of the Door of Life."[25]

18. Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*, 31.
19. Ibid., 32.
20. Gardner, *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, 128.
21. Ibid., 69.
22. Ibid., 42–43.
23. Ibid., 132.
24. Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*, 32.
25. Gardner, *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, 22, 45.

It is also difficult to understand why a matriarchal society would produce a male god before it developed a goddess. This line of progression coexisted in Gardner's books with others, influenced by writers such as Robert Graves (1895–1985) and Margaret Murray (1863–1963).[26] In one such timeline, women were first to hold primacy in the Stone Age cult during a matriarchal period, followed by a period in which the male god became dominant. In this process, "the woman's cult, because of the magical secrets, continued as a distinct order" in which the chief priest of the male god would hold sway when he visited the meetings from time to time. In his absence, the chief priestess acted as a deputy.[27] In another narrative, Gardner envisioned a matriarchal society which included both goddess and god and in which "the god-representative, or high priest, was the choice, and often the husband, of the goddess-representative, or high priestesses."[28]

In attempting to explain the primacy of the Goddess in the contemporary witch cult he encountered (or, more likely, developed), Gardner added that woman's "beauty, sweetness and goodness" caused man—who "seems at one time to have taken the lead in the cult"—to place her "as the god placed the goddess, in the chief place, so that woman is dominant in the cult practice."[29] He reasserted this later in the same volume when he "explain[ed] why the wiser, older and more powerful god should give his power over magic to the goddess."[30]

Gardner would later try to utilize this version of Craft history to his advantage. In 1957, the Bricket Wood coven split due to concerns voiced by some of the senior

26. See, for instance, his reference to "Robert Graves and others [who] have postulated the evolution of a male priesthood which gradually usurped the privileges of the ancient matriarchy, and took over the exercise of its powers" (Ibid., 78).

27. Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*, 43. In a similar description from this book, Gardner actually shows this distinct order as comprised "of priestesses and their husbands who looked after magic," so it is not clear whether he was simply being inconsistent or whether "the magical secrets" which were supposed to have been protected by this order were general witch lore instead of "women's mysteries" reserved only for females (Ibid., 32).

28. Gardner, *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, 46.

29. Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*, 32.

30. Ibid., 41.

members regarding Gardner's publicity efforts. Doreen Valiente (1922–1999) and some of the original coven's senior members founded their own group, but the two covens still met occasionally. In the beginning of July, however, Valiente sent a letter to past and present coveners which contained a list of "Proposed Rules for the Craft," which were drafted by fellow mutineer Ned Grove and were aimed at regulating the behavior of Wiccans, especially in matters of secrecy.[31] Gardner reacted by stating that a list of ancient rules of the Craft already existed, and produced a document known as "The Old Laws." These conveniently included an item which declared that the Goddess' "youth and beauty, her sweetness and kindness, her wisdom and Justice, her humility and generosity" prompted "the God himself . . . [to lay] his power at the feet of the Goddess. So he resigned his lordship to her." The document further stated that "the Priestess should ever mind that *all power comes from him* [my emphasis]. It is only lent when it is used wisely and justly. And the greatest virtue of a High Priestess is that she recognizes that youth is necessary to the representative of the Goddess, so that she will retire gracefully in favour of a younger woman, should the Coven so decide in Council."[32] In *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, he added that woman's privileged position as a representative of the Goddess was to be maintained "as long as she was worthy. That is, she had to be kind and charming and generous," as well as "young and lovely, loving and . . . motherly," all "qualities which can be summed up in the one word 'sweetness'."[33] Thus a high priestess in Gardner's eyes

> should be steadfast, trusty and easy; otherwise she is not fit to have the Goddess descend upon her. If she is cross and selfish and ungenerous, it is certain she will never receive that divine blessing. Our Lady of Witchcraft has a high ideal set before her; she must be fresh and kindly and always the same to you . . . youth is among the requisites necessary for the representative of the Goddess, and . . . she must be ready to retire gracefully in favour of a younger woman in time.[34]

31. Heselton, *Witchfather, Volume II*, 533, 536; Hutton, *Triumph*, 257; Kelly, *Crafting the Art of Magic*, 103.
32. Ibid., 103–5, 145–47.
33. Gardner, *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, 128, 140.
34. Ibid., 128.

As has been observed by others recently, it is quite obvious that by requiring the coven's reigning high priestess to retire in favor of a younger priestess, Gardner was attempting to maintain a measure of covert authority.[35] Regardless, this would have been consistent with his statement elsewhere in the document that Wiccans should love the Gods by being mastered by them, just "as a man loveth [*sic*] a woman, by mastering her."[36]

According to Gardner's description of coven proceedings in *Witchcraft Today* and *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, the coven's high priestess had "the position of authority" and the right to appoint a high priest of her choosing. In ritual, "the priestess usually presides," and although "there are certain rites where a man must be the leader, . . . if a man of requisite rank is not available, a chief priestess belts a sword on and is thought of as a man for the occasion." He added that a high priestess must be present in order for a coven to celebrate its rites, and added that while "a priestess may impersonate either the God or the Goddess, . . . a male priest may only impersonate the God."[37]

The Post-Gardner Era

Some of the High Priestesses Gardner initiated would later become influential leaders and promoters of Wicca in their own right, and it is therefore of relevance to ascertain their own thoughts on the Horned God and the position of men within the fledgling religion. In the case of Doreen Valiente, we see her in 1962 describing the Threefold Goddess as "perhaps the most ancient deity conceived

35. Heselton, *Witchfather, Volume II*, 539.

36. Kelly, *Crafting the Art of Magic*, 145–46. Valiente later claimed that she "totally rejected" said items of Gardner's "Old Laws" (Valiente, *The Rebirth of Witchcraft*, 70–71). Oral history interviews show us that "wartime experience gave some [mainly young, single] women a greater sense of independence and self esteem" (Addison, "The Impact of the Second World War," 10). It is therefore hardly surprising that Valiente—who was posted in Barry, Wales, as a secretary in the war effort during the early 1940s—was not impressed (to say the least) by Gardner's "Old Laws" (Heselton, *Doreen Valiente*, 40–50).

37. Gardner, *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, 19, 124, 140; Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*, 23, 43–44, 114.

by man," ruling together with "the horned phallic god of fertility [who] is also the god of death and the world of spirits,"[38] in much the same way Gardner had envisioned. It should be noted, however, that *Witchcraft for Tomorrow* also contained a reference to "the horned god and his consort, the goddess of the moon" as presumed deities of the ancient witches of old.[39] This reference to the witches' Goddess as the consort of the Horned God was unique among Wiccans and feminist witches, who kept to a description which would ensure the primacy of the Goddess and relegate the Horned God to the position of *her* consort. This might not be so surprising when considering Valiente's "kind of personal devotion to Old Hornie,"[40] but it was probably an anomaly, since in her preface to Evan Jones' *Witchcraft: A Tradition Renewed,* she described this deity as the "son and consort" of the primeval Mother Goddess.[41]

Valiente's own work inspired celebrated Wiccan authors Stewart and Janet Farrar, who hailed from an Alexandrian background but by the mid-1970s began to develop their own particular form of coven work, which they termed "reformed Alexandrian."[42] Drawing on Graves' *The White Goddess* and the writings of Valiente, the Farrars added another level to the Wiccan concept of the Horned God in the form of two complementary twin deities: the God of the Waxing Year, referred to as the Oak King, and the God of Waning Year,

38. Valiente, *Where Witchcraft Lives*, 85.

39. Valiente, *Witchcraft for Tomorrow*, 27.

40. Valiente, *The Rebirth of Witchcraft*, 185. In 1972 she furthermore noted in a letter to John Score that unlike Patricia Crowther—who, as we shall see below, insisted on the primacy of the Goddess in Wicca and Witchcraft—she herself was less dogmatic, and preferred "everyone should have their own approach, recognising that there are many paths to the centre" (Doreen Valiente, Letter to John Score, 11 December 1972, 1; Museum of Witchcraft Library/Documents Collection/732).

41. Valiente and Jones, *Witchcraft*, 10.

42. Valiente cooperated with Stewart Farrar in the writing of *Eight Sabbats for Witches* (1981) and *The Witches' Way* (1984). She provided him "with much of the historical information [they] contained" and co-authored "many of the passages" in the latter book with him. Janet Farrar would eventually come to consider Valiente as her "true spiritual mother" (Guerra and Farrar, *Stewart Farrar*, 17, 137, 173; Farrar and Farrar, *A Witches Bible*, 17).

or Holly King, each slaying the other and ruling in turn at the summer and winter solstices. According to Janet Farrar, the rituals featuring the Oak King and Holly King "were not part of Craft Ritual, or to be found in *The Book of Shadows* until . . . [Stewart Farrar] researched them and put them in."[43] Described using multiple "male appropriate" terms, Oak and Holly eternally "conquer" and "surrender" to each other, "fall" and are "ousted" by one another, and "*compete* . . . for the favor of the Great Mother [my emphasis]."[44] Elsewhere they added that "it is the role of the Sacred King to bow to the Goddess-Queen."[45]

The Farrars addressed the issue of coven gender relations as early as 1981. They described the position of the high priestess as "first among equals," the leader of the coven, complemented by a high priest who acts rather like a Prince Consort of a reigning Queen.[46] In 1984 they added that while "leadership is required from him, too, in his own way . . . the one thing he should not do is to assume the primacy himself. . . . However much drive and enthusiasm a High Priest has, he *must* [*sic*] channel it through the leadership of his High Priestess."[47]

The reasons for this, according to the Farrars, were twofold. First, "at the tail end of the patriarchal epoch," female aspects "may have to be over-emphasised, even exaggerated, in order to overcome the inertia of the status quo."[48] The second, more important and "timeless" reason, noted the Farrars, was that "Wicca, by its very nature, is concerned especially with the development and use of 'the gift of the Goddess'—the psychic and intuitive faculties—and to a rather lesser degree with 'the gift of the God'—the linear-logical, conscious faculties. . . . *on the whole* [*sic*], woman has a flying start with the gift of the Goddess."[49]

43. White, "Remembering Stuart Farrar," 28.
44. See the original introduction to *Eight Sabbats for Witches* in Farrar and Farrar, *A Witches Bible*, 24–25.
45. Ibid., 107.
46. See the original introduction to *Eight Sabbats for Witches* in Farrar and Farrar, *A Witches Bible*, 17.
47. Farrar and Farrar, *The Witches' Way*, 182.
48. Farrar and Farrar, *The Life and Times of a Modern Witch*, 68.
49. See the original introduction to *Eight Sabbats for Witches* in Farrar and Farrar, *A Witches Bible*, 17–18; Farrar and Farrar, *The Witches' Way*, 68, 169.

At the same time, though, they took care to stress Wicca's emphasis on balanced polarity "between the male aspect (energy, fertilization, rationality, linearity) and the female aspect (form-giving, nourishment, intuition, cyclicality)," and noted that "without the energizing support of the Gifts of the God, even the most talented and purposeful High Priestess cannot function."[50] Stemming from this emphasis on gender balance, the Farrars included in *The Witches' Way* a "Drawing Down the Sun" ritual (in which the high priestess invokes the God aspect into the high priest), that was devised by Stewart in order to balance the Wiccan "Drawing Down the Moon," so central to Wicca's liturgy.[51] In 1989 they also published a companion volume to *The Witches Goddess* (1987), which focused, in turn, on the God.[52]

Patricia Crowther—who was initiated into Wicca by Gardner in 1960—held somewhat different views to Valiente and the Farrars. In 1965 she stated that she personally believed that "originally there was only one primitive religion throughout the world—the worship of the Great Universal Mother," and that ignorance of the male part in conception meant that the female was recognized "as the giver of fertility in everything. . . . When men took over the chief parts in religious rites," added Crowther, "they also infiltrated into the craft of the Wica [*sic*], and, although there are as many men in it today, it is still the High Priestess who rules the coven."[53] This was of course in concurrence with one of Gardner's narratives, influenced by Graves, as described above. Crowther added "that the witch cult was originally a woman's cult and the deities were bi-sexual. . . . The High Priestess represented the Goddess during the Summer festivals, and when the God, or the male principle took over in the Winter, she girded on a sword and played the part of the God."[54]

50. Farrar and Farrar, *The Life and Times of a Modern Witch*, 42–43, 66–68; Farrar and Farrar, *The Witches' Way*, 306. See also the original introduction to *Eight Sabbats for Witches* in Farrar and Farrar, *A Witches Bible*, 20.

51. Guerra and Farrar, *Stewart Farrar*, 137. For the ritual layout see Farrar and Farrar, *The Witches' Way*, 67–70.

52. See Farrar and Farrar, *The Witches God*.

53. Crowther and Crowther, *The Witches Speak*, 123, 33.

54. Ibid., 33. This idea was privately voiced by Gardner himself as early as 1952 in a letter to Cecil Williamson, which stated that "a High Priestess is usually given a sword, as a sign of rank, making her a man in fact" (quoted in Heselton, *Witchfather, Volume II*, 460).

As an avid proponent of matriarchal prehistory and its implications for both Wiccan cosmology and coven leadership, Crowther was enraged in 1972 when John Score (1914–1979)—who headed the Pagan Front and edited its organ, *The Wiccan*—suggested that the male and female aspects of the divine, as well as of coven leadership, should be considered paired equals.[55] In a letter to John Score, Doreen Valiente noted that Crowther informed her of her intention to write a piece for *The Wiccan* and "remind people that—in her opinion—the worship of the Goddess should be pre-eminent."[56] In late November, Crowther's letter was published in *The Wiccan*: "While acknowledging the principle of both male and female being recognized in Divinity . . . it is nevertheless a matriarchal cult," restated Crowther, "with the Great Mother (the Goddess Triformis), paramount as the first principle behind the Universe! Thus the High Priestess as Her representative, leads the Coven!"[57] She designated "the female, on the whole, [as] the wiser and more intuitive of the species" in much the same way as she would do in 1981 in *Lid off the Cauldron*, and repeated the claim she made in *The Witches Speak* in 1965 regarding men's "infiltration" into the ranks of "the Old Religion" occurring only at a later period.[58]

Score labeled her description of women as "the wiser sex" "a piece of female chauvinism." In response to Crowther's "the Craft developed during matriarchal prehistory" argument, Score stipulated that "the Old Religion may have over-emphasised the female aspect, becoming thus unbalanced, neglecting integration

55. *The Wiccan* 27 (28 September 1972), 1. Score was initiated into first and second-degree Gardnerian Wicca in 1967. His wife, Jean (d. 2002), was initiated as well, and together they founded a coven in Poole, which they named the Order of the Golden Acorn. In 1968, Score founded *The Wiccan*, and in 1971 he established the Pagan Front (which he would lead until his death in November 1979)—an organization that had considerable influence on the 1970s Pagan underground in Britain (Howard, *Modern Wicca*, 210, 242–43, 246; Pengelly, Hall, and Dowse, *We Emerge*, 15).

56. Doreen Valiente, Letter to John Score, 11 December 1972, 1; Museum of Witchcraft Library /Documents Collection/732.

57. *The Wiccan* 29 (27 November 1972), 1.

58. Ibid. For Crowther, women's greater wisdom and intuition stemmed directly from their "physical make-up." See her second piece in *The Wiccan* 30 (1972?), 2.

of the male forces, [and this] left the gate wide open to disastrous ingress by those whose minds were similarly distorted towards male exclusiveness . . . [i.e.] the Xtian priesthood."[59] Score also criticized "the deliberately limited approach of certain exponents of the Craft" on the matter of the superior status of the Goddess (symbolized by the moon) vis-à-vis the Horned God (also represented by the sun):

> Clearly the influence of any subordinate satellite body will depend upon the governing nucleus—in this instance the Sun. Our Moon, as a symbol, has no existence without the fiery, masculine, initiatory light of the Sun. The Sun precedes the Moon, and on this limited analogous scale the male God-force dominates the female Goddess powers; and this situation is as unacceptable as the reversal promoted by female chauvinists![60]

Elsewhere Score illuminated his readers with his view on "proper balance" between men and women in committed relationships:

> Male aggressiveness and sexual potency are inextricably interwoven. . . . If a woman should be so unwise as to allow herself the eccentricity of dominating her male partner, for *her* [*sic*] he becomes sexually impotent. . . . It is a clear warning to all women who wish for a normal and sexually fulfilled life . . . to respect, cherish and encourage male dominance and aggression, and at the same time match and *balance* [*sic*] it in a closely ambient relationship, with loving feminine submissiveness and influence; thus channeling male force towards the creation of love-forms rather than disruption and destruction.

He summarized this with the formula "the woman should be boss in the kitchen, and the man boss in bed."[61] It can be argued that these views (especially when considered in tandem with his adversarial attitudes towards male homosexuality and lesbianism)[62] match the practices termed by Connell as "hegemonic masculinity."[63]

59. *The Wiccan* 29 (27 November 1972), 1–2.
60. *The Wiccan* 33 (15 September 1973), 3
61. *The Wiccan* 29 (27 November 1972), 4.
62. See Feraro, *Women and Gender Issues in British Paganism*, 132, 207, 208.
63. Connell and Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity."

The Feminist Challenge

The disagreements among British Wiccans regarding the status of the Horned God and of men in Wiccan ritual were only exasperated by—and in part, were a reaction to—the rise of the WLM during the 1970s and 1980s, alongside Matriarchy Study Groups, Goddess Feminism, and feminist/Dianic Witchcraft.[64] Margaret Roy, for instance, who was affiliated with the London Matriarchy Study Group, criticized Wiccans for taking what she termed as the dark, fourth aspect of the Goddess from the female and according it to "a male Horned God as an aspect of maleness and so that this pole is controlled by men—with the Lady's horns on his head . . . [thus] opening a space for men who formerly were not allowed into the Goddess's presence."[65] Janet McCrickard, a member of the Glastonbury women's group with ties to the London Matriarchy Study Group, similarly argued during early 1981 against the relegation of the Goddess to the position of Earth Mother, fertilized by a male Sky Father. This, claimed McCrickard, was an act of dismemberment perpetrated by patriarchy:

> In confining the Goddess to the earth, patriarchy buries Her, entombs Her, . . . establishing that polarity where activity, will, fire and the spirit are part of exalted or 'higher' being, i.e. maleness. Father Sky is high and dry, while down beneath him lies Mother Earth, waiting—for what? To be got pregnant by his thunderbolts, for she has no fruitfulness of her own—will, conception, . . . creativity are all inevitably contained in the image of Father Sky. The essence and purpose of the Earth Mother/Sky Father theme is the justification of male power; . . . Each time the lie is reiterated, the Goddess is raped, dismembered, buried.[66]

64. Indeed, by May 1979, *The Cauldron*'s editor, Michael Howard, stated with certainty that "the entry of feminist groups onto the [Pagan] scene is something which will create challenging new problems in the years to come" (Howard, "Balance & Polarity," 5). I have elaborated elsewhere on the cross-fertilization and connections between the two respective milieus during the 1970s and 1980s (Feraro, *Women and Gender Issues in British Paganism*).

65. Roy, "Power of the Dark Goddess," 33. Not all matriarchalists thought the same, though. Around four years later, a Matriarchy activist and Dianic Witch named Sheila Rose wrote in an internal publication that although some women in the Matriarchy Network might feel uncomfortable with Starhawk's inclusion of a male deity, for her "the idea of the Horned God is becoming important" (Rose, "Celebrating the Summer Solstice," 5).

66. McCrickard, "Mother Earth, Father Sky . . . Beware the Patriarchal Lie!" 14.

Kathy Jones, another member of the Glastonbury women's group, was also critical of British Wiccans, and claimed in 1988 that "most of the paganism I have seen is mainly male dominated, using the same old stuff dressed up in another version. Feminism to me is about empowering women and redressing the balance. If that needs positive discrimination in favor of women, then I'm for it."[67] She did give men the chance to "fully recognize how patriarchy has betrayed them too" in order to create a balanced future society.[68]

Thus, while harkening back to a matriarchal golden age in which women "used to be the High Priestesses to the Goddess to whom men came for spiritual mediation," Jones' vision for a future society was a future in which "neither sex is going to be dominate," for "patriarchy and matriarchy are both about . . . one sex having more power than the other by divine rite [*sic*]."[69] Commenting on the concept of the Horned God, Jones stated that "the male role in a matriarchal culture was to die for Her [i.e. the Goddess], to be lunar consort. That was because it was a matriarchal culture." Her vision for the immediate future was the construction of an egalitarian Goddess culture, in which both sexes would undergo symbolic and mental descents into the Goddess in order to be reborn spiritually.[70]

The Changing Status of the Horned God

During the latter half of the 1970s and especially throughout the 1980s, encounters between British matriarchalists and Dianic and feminist Witches on the one hand, and British Wiccans and Wiccan-derived Pagans on the other, occurred in increased frequency and density in key focal points, or arenas, such as Glastonbury, Greenham Common, London, and the New Age festival scene. These in turn forced the latter groupings to react—as well as occasionally to change and adapt—to the feminist challenge. As part of this wider framework,

67. Jones, "Kathy Jones Inner Views," 29.
68. Jones, "The Death of God," 19.
69. Ibid., 16.
70. Jones, "Kathy Jones Inner Views," 29–30.

discussions regarding the changing status of the Horned God continued in British Wicca and its environs during the latter part of the 1970s. By 1976, Michael Howard felt that the Horned God was "largely ignored by many covens." For Howard, this was "a negative and destructive action," as "life cannot begin without impregnation of the seed by the male and this initiation of new stirrings is brought into manifestation by the female."[71] In early 1977, Christine Ogden added in Howard's *The Cauldron* that "the God, when He is mentioned at all, seems to be regarded as an unfortunate necessity too complex for us even to understand."[72] She added that males in the Craft were mostly content with praising the Goddess forever (in the aspects they find desirable) and "will find it difficult to understand the need for change—it is up to us women who must help the God image to grow again for we need Him as does our Lady."[73]

Such concerns continued to be voiced during the 1980s and early 1990s as well. In a letter written during March 1985, Leonora James likewise comments that "too much Goddess-worship may have resulted in a weakening of the sheer power and directionality of the Horned One."[74] Yet perhaps due to growing awareness of feminist critique, several commentators couched their reservations by conceding—as did Michael Howard in a piece written during 1991—that "in this historical period [the God] has to take a lesser role in relation to the feminine until the balance can be restored." He took care to stress, though, that "despite this, if we ignore or repress the masculine principle then serious and dangerous psychological and spiritual problems will be created to blight future generations."[75]

71. "The Male Principle," 1.

72. Ogeden, "Balance—An Alternative View," 1–2. Ogden was the organizer of the Pagan Moot in Leeds, and at the time also a member of the Pagan Movement. She was an ardent fan of Buckland's *The Tree: The Complete Book of Saxon Witchcraft* (1974), in which he used the Saxon word 'moot' to denote a meeting or gathering. See http://bonawitch.webs.com/beginnings.htm, accessed 10 July 2015.

73. Ogeden, "Balance—An Alternative View," 1–2.

74. B., Letter to Sean P. McCabe, 24 March 1985; Museum of Witchcraft Library/Pagan Federation Archive/Prudence's Correspondence.

75. M.H., "Male Mysteries or the Mysteries of the Male," 6.

A similar attitude, albeit from a feminist point of view, was expressed in 1990 by Rae Beth—propagator of Hedge Witchcraft—who claimed that "as present-day witches, I think our understanding of the God still lags behind our understanding of the Goddess. She has to come first, after thousands of years of suppression of all Goddess worship."[76]

Even the feminist-inclined co-editor of *Moonshine* magazine, Rich Westwood, who called for an over-emphasis on the Goddess and matriarchy as a counter-measure against the "primarily patriarchal, God based" nature of Western society, simultaneously added that such an emphasis must be "very short term, and . . . if prolonged, will need to be counteracted by an emphasis on the God."[77]

Dragon's Brew—the house magazine of the Silver Wheel Coven—illustrated these sentiments in 1990 when it initiated a questionnaire meant to "collect together some of the different ideas and practices of modern day Pagans and Wiccans concerning the horned God," due to "the need today to more or less re-introduce the God's presence." The magazine's editor felt that "sadly, he has been pushed to one side because of the amount of books available that center on the Goddess" and stressed the need for "maintain[ing] the balance which is central to the Thea/Theology of Wiccan and Pagan practice."[78]

Around this time, Richard Wybold, then a seasoned member of Bricket Wood coven—originally founded by Gerald Gardner himself—argued that the Horned God, while far from being a "secondary, . . . subordinate consort of the supreme Goddess," happily "stand[s] and watch[es]" as "the Lady, so long denied and disregarded by the many, . . . now [takes the] centre-stage and spotlight for her solo."[79] Wybold also took issue with what he considered as a misunderstanding of the ritual death and rebirth of the Horned God as observed by Wiccan covens, stating that while this suited the Craft's ritual pattern, the God does not

76. Beth, *Hedge Witch*, 152–53.
77. Westwood, "Warriors and Lovers," 6.
78. "Questionnaire," 14–16.
79. Wybold, "The God of Wicca," 171.

in actuality die in winter but "merely turns his head and shows us a different face."[80] Perhaps in response to the popularity of the books produced during the 1980s by the Farrars, Wybold took care to stress that while figures such as the sacrificial Corn and Holly Kings have basis in folklore, "they are not the God of the Craft, nor even aspects of him," as "the concept of sacrifice is not a part of the central thesis of Wicca."[81]

Such sentiments, however, began to worry other commentators, such as John Walbridge, who wrote several articles for the feminist-inclined *Moonshine* magazine and chose to take issue with the "growing tendency to question the traditional pagan emphasis upon the Goddess." As far as Walbridge was concerned, the long age of patriarchy instilled a "sickness deep within" men and women. Therefore, he concluded, "until the day when we are free of all patriarchal conditioning we desperately need the influence of the Goddess to protect us from our own baser nature."[82] Fears of a backlash to the feminist influences on Wicca and Paganism continued into the early 1990s. Kath, a columnist for the *Manchester Pagan Wheel* and a member of a mixed-gender Goddess group (and influenced by the writings of Starhawk, Budapest, Stone and Daly, as well as by *Womanspirit* magazine), wrote of the hostile response of some British Pagans toward Goddess women, as the former felt that these women "concentrated solely on the Goddess for long enough" and should therefore "give some . . . attention to the 'Male principle', to 'polarity' and 'balance'."[83]

Simultaneously, different interpretations of the God were continuously being aired in light of feminist critique. In an article published during the summer of 1986 in the organ of the Pagans Against Nukes network, *The Pipes of PAN,*[84] Greg

80. Wybold, "The God of Wicca," 176.

81. Ibid.

82. Walbridge, "Concentrating Upon the Goddess," 9.

83. Kath, "Backlash?"

84. For a survey of the Pagans Against Nukes network and its magazine see Feraro, "Playing the Pipes of PAN."

Hill provided an emic view of the feminist-oriented Pagan scene at the time: "It appears to be fashionable to identify the Horned God with the acceptable male attributes, and project the unacceptable ones on to the transcendent God of judeo-christianity [*sic*] . . . a development of the middle-eastern Sun God, or Sky Father." This, added Hill, was further complicated by "the desire of some of us to see the Sun as female."[85] Hill, on the other hand, stressed that "the nature of the gods depends to a large extent on the peoples who worship them." In an attempt to legitimize for modern Pagans the interpretation of the male deity as Sky Father, Hill made the point that while an aggressive people would likely view Pan as a "mascot in war as he is likely to be a protector of peace-loving peoples," both could not deny Pan as deity.[86] By the start of the next decade, an anonymous piece which appeared in *Greenleaf* concluded that a Neopagan's male deity "cannot be the god of patriarchal tyranny . . . nor will a god who is just a helpful appendage to the goddess impress at all. This mirrors the big cultural difficulty men have trying to be neither an oppressive bastard . . . nor the submissive little helpmate many find themselves encouraged to be."[87]

Changes in Gender Relations in Wicca During the 1980s

This brings us to consider another important issue—gender relations within British Wiccan and Pagan groups during the 1980s, set against the background of the varied penetration and influence of feminist literature and ideas on said groups, as described above and elsewhere.[88] In an interview conducted in November 1989, Patricia Crowther recalled that the majority of initiates to her Sheffield coven during the 1960s were men, and it was only by the early 1970s that the tables had turned and women seekers outnumbered the men.[89] This

85. Hill, "The Gods," 3.
86. Ibid.
87. Anon., "Becoming a Pagan."
88. Feraro, *Women and Gender Issues in British Paganism*.
89. Morgan and Crowther, "Profile: Patricia Crowther."

clearly reflected a wider change[90]—which coincided with the rise of the WLM and could arguably be caused by its advent—and seems to have effected gender relations within some covens as well.

Writing during early 1977, Christine Ogden bemoaned that the Horned God's "would-be representative, the High Priest, is little more than a lackey to the High Priestess."[91] This view seems to have intensified during the following years. Looking back upon the 1980s shortly after the decade drew to a close, Michael Howard recalled it as a time that

> saw the birth of that rare and exotic breed, the New Man—the sensitive guy who can change nappies, eat quiche and cry at the same time! In retrospect he seems to have been the artificial product of the advertising industry, women's magazines and feminist wish-fulfillment . . . Emotionally women seem to be searching for an ideal partner who can be both strong and gentle and who transcends the male stereotypes of Rambo and the New Age Wimp.[92]

That same year, seasoned Gardnerian Richard Wybolt stressed that while the priestess "may pronounce the decision and the blessing," it would be "foolish [of her] . . . not to give full weight to her priest's counsel and wisdom to balance her own intuition," for "he sees from a different angle but with no less validity."[93] In 1990, a female (non-feminist) Wiccan contributor to the *Deosil Dance* complained that "the male species are fading fast . . . from our religion & and men are getting a bad deal. If we are not careful, the Old Religion will be a totally Matriarchal religion, & will be just as bad as the Patriarchal religions it will be eventually replacing."[94]

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90. Indeed, studies conducted during the mid-1990s—albeit in the United States—and published later during the decade and at the start of the following one, found that "Neo-Pagans are disproportionately female," with between 56.8 to 64.8 percent identifying as women. Data specific to Wiccan groups, which traditionally emphasize 'gender balance,' still showed that 58.9 percent of adherents were female (Berger, Leach and Shaffer, *Voices from the Pagan Census*, 27–28).
91. Ogeden, "Balance—An Alternative View," 2.
92. M.H., "Male Mysteries or the Mysteries of the Male," 6.
93. Wybold, "The God of Wicca," 171–72.
94. Morgan, "In Support of Old Horney."

Not all 'mainstream' Wiccans and witches saw it exactly the same, though. In 1992, a Wiccan named Phil Power protested that

> there is still an undercurrent of sexism in many traditions of Wicca, in particular the more middleclass pedestrian ones where men, whilst recognizing that negative stereotypes are really 'un-right-on' still tend to put their priestesses on pedestals. Also in defining 'masculine' and 'feminine' attributes, they make it pretty clear that men are still superior where it matters. For example: feminine-passive = intuitive, and masculine = active = logical.[95]

In a piece published in *Moonshine*'s 1987 Summer solstice issue, Robin Freman crystallized the confusion felt by many within the British Pagan community during the latter half of the 1980s:

> We have been brought up to believe in the active male, but can see the destruction it causes when unbalanced. We still deny the material feminine, and cannot handle yet the spiritual feminine. We try and compensate by creating artificial 'equalities', wymn, wimmin . . .
>
> Men trying to do least harm refute their maleness, women seeking equality deny their femininity and seek maleness. But it is all done on a material level. The men turn out wimps, frightened to make a decision or to upset anyone, and the women take those aspects of masculinity which men are trying to get rid of. But without understanding their own basic feminine-ness.[96]

'Tom O' the Ring,' a contributor to *The Pipes of PAN* who seems to have been an avid matriarchalist, may serve to illustrate what Freman was reacting to. According to him, while as a result of the advent of the WLM "the Father is dead and the sons are confused, even if not exactly mourning His passing," not many Pagan men were actually prepared to play the part of Son of the Mother, consort and junior partner, which he happily adopted. Yet even he saw fit to stress that while "women, as mothers themselves, are indeed the Mother's embodiment upon earth . . . the ruling woman on earth is the collective woman; the rest are sisters to their brothers and daughters still to their fathers."[97] Several months later he credited the WLM with the

95. Power, "Men, Myths & Magick," 6.
96. Freman, "An Action and In-action," 2.
97. Tom O' the Ring, "Paganism Ain't What It Used to Be," 10.

revival of Contemporary Paganism, ignoring Gardner's position as the popularizer of Wicca, and identified himself as a man who "acknowledge[d] woman's authority in . . . [the creation of mythic understanding of the matriarchal past] and other matters." In his view, only "men [who] *voluntarily* [*sic*] accepting that shame [i.e. their responsibility for patriarchy], and living through it by living with it, may speak [in dialogue with women] . . . on the shared understanding that if they step out of line they can always be *returned* [*sic*] to . . . silence. A man once made silent knows thereafter where the collective authority lies."[98] His take on the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy was that

> the powerful, mothering matriarchs registered man's dependency and, voluntarily, and with typical self-sacrifice, 'decided' to 'step down'; . . . [so that] men [could] come into their own 'manly' maturity, and serve as fit and supportive partners to the women which women were. . . . the 'experiment' went somewhat awry . . . [when] 'released' from the matriarch's mothering protection . . . [and] denied woman-reference, . . . man [began t]urning inward in search of his own profundity, then there cannot be much doubt that he encountered an 'inner spirt' vastly different to that which women met when they did as much.

He concluded that "the first women were first, and no man may usurp that place."[99] His hope for a future society, still, was not a return to matriarchy but—influenced by Riane Eisler's discourse—the creation of a new gynandry made out of the cooperation between women and new "other-responsive, other-caring" men.[100]

John Rowan and The Horned God

Tom O' the Ring's musings seem to have been inspired by a similar—yet much more coherent and sustained—vision promoted by John Rowan (1925–2018), a fellow writer for *The Pipes of PAN* and a transpersonal and humanist therapist, who had been deeply affected by feminist criticism of Wiccan theology and gender relations. During the mid-1980s Rowan presented himself as "a man who has

98. Tom O' the Ring, "Pagan Politics," 2–4.
99. Ibid., 4–5.
100. Ibid., 5–6.

accepted the feminist critique and found the whole feminist analysis of patriarchy very convincing."[101] Rowan began to read feminist literature more than a decade earlier after his wife started attending and organizing feminist events. Eventually, in 1972, he joined a men's group in London.[102] According to Rowan, this specific group "was very strong on theory. We all knew the theory of feminism as it had emerged up to that point. We read our Friedan and our Greer, our de Beauvoir and our Firestone, . . . our Koedt and our Millett, our Mitchell and our Morgan."[103] In 1975, he joined a new mixed organization called Alternative Socialism (that included, among others, Daniel Cohen, Pauline 'Asphodel' Long, Mary Coghill and Monica Sjöö), which held a large meeting in York that year, as well as in London and at Lauriston Hall in August 1976. The organization had its own newsletter and had close links with the more established *Peace News*, but eventually collapsed due to the tensions which arose out of its mixed nature.[104]

By the spring of 1981, Rowan embarked upon a spiritual quest, reading anything he could find, and in December of that year, he came across Starhawk's *The Spiral Dance*. This encounter instilled in him "the shock of recognition" of feminist-inclined men's need to work on the spiritual as well as the political level, and find the deities and archetypes that can inspire and guide *them* in the fight against patriarchy. By that time, he also noticed Sjöö's 1981 "much improved, properly printed, well-illustrated version of her earlier pamphlet."[105] He soon discovered Charlene Spretnak's 1982

101. Rowan, "Penis, Power and Patriarchy," 9.

102. Rowan, *The Horned God*, 6, 16.

103. Ibid., 18. Rowan provides helpful information on the development of the anti-sexist Men's Movement during the 1970s—first in the United States and then in Britain—in ibid., 16–27.

104. Ibid., 26–27. See also Long and Coghill, *Is It Worthwhile Working in a Mixed Group?*

105. Rowan, "Penis, Power and Patriarchy," 19–20; Rowan, *The Horned God*, 72–73. Rowan knew about Sjöö's Goddess art and writing during the latter half of the 1970s, but "had not taken much notice of this, because it seemed to be all about women; useful for them, no doubt, but not much use to me [as a man]" (Ibid., 74). Several years later, in 1985, Rowan "acquired a deep sense of the downward direction as spiritual, with the help of the writings and paintings of Monica Sjoo". The quote is taken from John Rowan's personal website, available at http://www.johnrowan.org.uk/mystical-experiences/, accessed 21 August 2015.

anthology, *The Politics of Spirituality*, "with chapters by Merlin Stone, Marija Gimbutas, Adrianne Rich, Starhawk, Carol Christ, Robin Morgan . . . Margot Adler . . . Mary Daly, Naomi Goldenberg . . . and many others."[106] Rowan "felt inspired to tune in deliberately to the energies [of the Goddess] which Monica Sjöö and Starhawk had spoken of" and argued that "because I had learned about her from feminist women, it was not a male and flattering image of the Goddess that I had, but a strong female vision," presented in lengthy quotes from Sjöö in his book.[107] He accepted the feminist argument—set forth most thoroughly by Daly—regarding men's vampiric drainage of women's energy in favor of their own quest for power and suggested that men should "plug in" to the Goddess instead: "by acknowledging that they do really need that female power and strength, men can get it direct from the source, so to speak, and gain immensely from doing so, in such a way that the women around them can gain immensely too."[108]

In Sjöö's 1981 book, Rowan found that "there is a place for the male, so long as he depends on the Goddess and recognizes her authority and power. But again he has to be prepared to die."[109] It was Starhawk's treatment of the Horned God figure, however, which Rowan found most inspiring and productive as a man: "here was a declared feminist actually putting forward a vision of the male which she can accept and approve of. Here there is no sense that masculinity is something to be disposed of or set aside or replaced. . . . Here was the key. The male was safe, positive, so long as it was in the service of the Goddess. . . . But this relationship was not easy," added Rowan, "it had to be won by an intense experience of humility and sacrifice."[110] Inspired by the writings of Starhawk and Sjöö, Rowan joined "a moon group, organized along Wiccan lines, but not actually calling it

106. Rowan, *The Horned God*, 75.
107. Ibid., 76, 77.
108. Ibid., 84.
109. Ibid., 75.
110. Ibid., 86.

that." Group members celebrated the full moons and the eight yearly festivals.[111] According to Rowan, he was eventually initiated into Wicca itself by one of the members of that group.[112] Rowan, however, was also critical of "mainstream" (i.e., established Gardnerian and Alexandrian) British Wicca and stated that "when it comes to the Horned God, we cannot simply rely on the established forms of Wicca. The Craft was not designed to overthrow patriarchy, it was designed to ignore patriarchy . . . we have to be much more conscious than Craft people usually are of the possibilities of patriarchal subversion within witchcraft."[113]

In 1987, Rowan published his ideas in book form as *The Horned God: Feminism and Men as Wounding and Healing*, a "book . . . written by a man for other men, . . . intended to help in starting to fill various enormous gaps in the[ir] education."[114] As a veteran of the Growth Movement Rowan called upon men "to allow themselves to be wounded [by feminism, as this] . . . wound is necessary before any healing can happen."[115] He urged men to come to terms with the power of patriarchy by "'thinking across boundaries', as Mary Daly says."[116] Rowan found inspiration in Daly's *Beyond God the Father* and *Gyn/Ecology*,[117] and while he took care to characterize patriarchy as "an historical structure [having] . . . nothing to do with biological determinism" (opposite to Daly's own views as expressed in her 1978 book), he eventually concluded—building on Daly's work—that "masculinity and femininity are fatally flawed concepts, culturally loaded, patriarchally based, unusable except as names of harmful stereotypes."[118]

111. Rowan, *The Horned God*, 80. I have written about this group in Feraro, *Women and Gender Issues in British Paganism*, 141 n. 72, 220–23.

112. See the second edition of Rowan, *The Transpersonal*, 107; Rowan, "Dialogical Self Research," 62.

113. Rowan, *The Horned God*, 127.

114. Ibid., ix.

115. Ibid., 1.

116. Ibid., 3.

117. He referred his readers to Daly's treatment of "the history of *suttee* [*sic*] in India, of footbinding in China, of genital mutilation in Africa, of witch-hunts in Europe, [and] of gynecology in the USA," also quoted from Daly's discussion on androgyny in *Beyond God the Father* and her eventual rejection of the term in *Gyn/Ecology* in the context of his own treatment of it (Ibid., 8, 62, 68).

118. Ibid., 71.

In a 1984 article titled "Penis, Power and Patriarchy"—which was published in *The Pipes of PAN* and was developed further in *The Horned God*—Rowan attempted to find a place for men in the feminist world by guiding his readers first through a model which placed the "bad penis" and "nicey-nicey penis" at opposite sides of the pendulum and attempted to find a middle ground between the two. Rowan's ultimate conclusion, however, was that such an attempt was not the way to go, and he opted for the "good penis" instead—a model of masculinity which could be "strong and powerful, but non-oppressive . . . a good way of being a man, an OK way of having genuine male power" which is not domineering.[119] Rowan equated this sort of "good penis" with Starhawk's "power-with" model and combined it with both Sjöö's and Starhawk's varying visions of the Horned God as the untamed yet gentle son of the Mother Goddess.[120] To Rowan, these authors "both seem to be talking about a process of integration, whereby a man has to go through a process of questioning and bringing-together, losing old assumptions of staying cool and getting ahead, and acquiring a deep respect for the strong female qualities of the Goddess and the deeply male qualities of the God. As a true Son of the Mother, he can serve her fully, not by denying his masculinity, but by throwing it into the melting-pot and allowing it to come out renewed and reborn."[121] The God, he emphasized, "is never self-sufficient. At the moment that he tries to be self-sufficient, the Goddess will drag him down . . . He must be connected to the Goddess."[122]

Admittedly drawing a lot of inspiration from Starhawk's treatment of the Horned God, Rowan saw Him as the archetypal figure that could aid men in this endeavor:

119. Rowan, "Penis, Power and Patriarchy," 9, 10. See also Rowan, *The Horned God*, 55–57.

120. Rowan, "Penis, Power and Patriarchy," 10–11. See also Rowan, *The Horned God*, 58, where he presents this model but does not relate it to Starhawk. He also refers to Starhawk's *Dreaming the Dark* in "The Horned God," 22.

121. Rowan, "Penis, Power and Patriarchy," 11.

122. Rowan, *The Horned God*, 138.

> The Horned God is strong and vulnerable at the same time. He is not afraid to die because he knows he will be reborn. He . . . is the Undivided Self, in which mind is not split from body . . . The ordinary way of thinking holds that men are steady and dependable, . . . but the Horned God is all about change . . . the standard way of thinking about men is to say that they must be continuously male. If they drop their masculinity even once, and become female even in one way, they are labelled feminine forever, and never respected in the same way. But the Horned God has complete freedom in this respect. As a shape-shifter, he can be male or female, essentially bisexual.[123]

Conclusions

Wicca is studied by researchers mostly in the context of its main deity, the Great Goddess, and the ritual role it accords to women. The study of the Horned God in the aftermath of Wicca's creation—as well as the study of ideas on masculinity and the place of men in Wiccan ritual settings—has been under-explored thus far outside of discussions that centered on Wicca's main male propagators, namely Gardner and Sanders. As we have already seen, in the aftermath of Gerald Gardner's death, British Wiccans were by no means unanimous in their perceptions of the status of the Horned God. While Doreen Valiente had a "soft spot" for "Old Horny," Lois Bourne, another veteran Gardnerian High Priestess, wrote that "the God of the witches is less real to me, he who is the Lord of Death and Resurrection is a shadowy figure, her consort, who seldom appears to me in dreams or visions."[124]

According to Ronald Hutton, during "the early decades of Wicca the Horned God was more or less the equal of the Goddess, but by the 1980s he had generally become the junior partner, her 'son and consort.'"[125] This observation corresponds neatly with the findings presented in this article. Feminist critique of patriarchy during the 1970s and 1980s seems to have stymied many male British Wiccans and Wiccan-derived Pagans, who began to search for alternative models

123. Rowan, "The Horned God," 20, 22. See also Rowan, *The Horned God*, 92–93, 133, 140.
124. Bourne, *Conversations with a Witch*, 127.
125. Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the British Isles*, 338.

of masculinity in the face of the feminist challenge. Yet this was not an easy task. Gardnerian veteran Richard Wybold stated in a 1991 volume dedicated to "revisioning masculinity" that in modernity the Horned God's role and image "is not so obvious"—a fact that "perhaps accounts for the weight of attention now focused on the Goddess."[126] Writing in the same volume, John Matthews questioned: "If you take away the image of the dominant male, what remains? The New Age wimp? The consciously bisexually-minded male whose recognition of his own femininity has actually weakened his position, both in society (which still, by and large, recognises men as superior) and in personal relationships?"[127]

This perceived crisis of masculinity caused anxieties among both male and female Wiccans. Writing in 1985, a priestess who was strategically placed within the British Gardnerian network thus lamented that

> although High Priestesses in all strains of the Craft seem on the whole to be well-balanced between Goddess and God principles, they are not matched by High Priests with an equal balance, but either by subservient yes-men, or by more virile characters who nevertheless expect their women to identify with the yin principle, rather than incorporating this within their own psyche, as the HPSs [High Priestesses] have usually done with the yang principle. The only difference between such HPs [High Priests] and the sex-role-stereotyped males outside the Craft is that the former actually respect women and the Goddess principle. This is a welcome difference, but frankly it is not enough at this point in history.[128]

Responses among male Wiccans to the feminist challenge varied. Some, such as Stewart Farrar, emphasized the God's cycle of death and rebirth and highlighted the motif of sacrificial death by introducing the figures of Corn and Holly Kings. Others, such as Richard Wybold, discouraged such a view, while emphasizing the Horned God's role as protector and the Goddess's equal

126. Wybold, "The God of Wicca," 172.

127. Matthews, "Introduction," 10.

128. As the contents of this private letter are highly sensitive, I have chosen in this case to refrain from revealing the identity of its author.

partner.[129] Wybold also added another element to the God's attributes—that of the "Master Programmer," who "builds in so many options and possibilities for us to use, but . . . does not seek to control them" so long as humans don't utilize them to cause harm to other beings.[130]

Yet others tended to seek personal empowerment via "a priestess or through a Goddess-oriented group," and by the late 1980s some decided to opt for forming all-male groups dedicated to magical working in line with new notions of masculinity, aiming to "rebalance masculinity" in order to a reach the "balance state" which supposedly existed in ancient societies, and moving towards a future in which men's growth would not be undertaken "at the expense of the other sex."[131] Such "Men's Mysteries"[132] groups were criticized by feminists, scholars engaged in the study of masculinities, and men active in the profeminist men's movement, as attempts to maintain "hegemonic masculinity" in a different guise.[133] Some of the latter, such as John Rowan, presented men instead with an alternative model of masculinity which they hoped would truly rise to the feminist challenge, inspired to a great degree by the writing of Starhawk and Monica Sjöö. Rowan's model found support among feminist-inclined men involved in the local Pagan milieu, such as the editor

129. Wybold, "The God of Wicca," 171–73.

130. Ibid., 173.

131. Matthews, "The God Within," 135; Matthews, "Introduction," 9, 11. While suggesting that the answers can be found in the world of myth and ritual, Matthews himself cautioned "against a kind of nostalgic, backward-looking exploration of old ideas such as heroism, chivalry or the wild man" (Matthews, Introduction," 11).

132. Better known as the Mythopoetic Men's Movement, Men's Mysteries groups began to develop during the 1990s, inspired by American poet Robert Bly's 1990 bestseller, *Iron John*. As observed by Graham Harvey, members of such groups believe "men need male companionship to develop into whole men," and that "Brotherhood between men is required before men can be proper lovers, fathers, sons and brothers to women" (Harvey, *Contemporary Paganism*, 200–201).

133. Kaufman and Kimmel, "Weekend Warriors," 270. Similar criticism has been levelled at Pagan men's utilization of Green Man/Horned God images as "essentialist and depoliticized constructions of gender" (Smith, "The Wild/Green Man"; quoted in Green, "What Men Want?" 314).

of *Wood and Water*, Daniel Cohen (b. 1934).[134] Its emphasis on vulnerability, connectedness, and bisexuality as an alternative to self-sufficiency, reservedness, and ambition as prescribed by hegemonic masculinity can be viewed in terms of Claire Duncanson's suggestion of a transitory, hybrid stage of masculinity on the path towards the ultimate and more challenging relations of equality.[135]

Discussion regarding the place of the Horned God in Wiccan and Pagan cosmology and ritual practice was a lively one throughout this period and intensified as the 1980s drew to a close. This was also the period in which the few books dedicated to the Wiccan male deity began to appear—Rowan's *The Horned God*, the Farrars' *The Witches' God*, as well as *Choirs of the God* (1991), an anthology edited by John Matthews, which contained—amongst others—Richard Wybold's aforementioned treatment of the Horned God. While on the whole British Wiccans and Wiccan-derived Pagans increasingly engaged with gender issues when confronted with the growing feminist movement, their adaptation of feminist discourse and ideas was by no means uniform. Some objected overall to radical and cultural feminist discourses and to feminist forms of Witchcraft. Others adopted them wholly, while most engaged with them partially, picking and choosing what worked best for them. Such disparities did cause, of course, highly charged debates among British Wiccans and Wiccan-derived Pagans, as the disputes around gender relations and the status of the Horned God show.

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134. See Cohen, "John Rowan."

135. Duncanson, "Hegemonic Masculinity and the Possibility of Change in Gender Relations."

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