Welcome to August's edition of our monthly newsletter! We had our first public meeting this past Sunday and we want to thank everyone who attended for making it such a great experience. We hope you felt as energized and excited as we did, and if you weren't able to make it, no worries! Here are the meeting minutes so you can get a sense of where the conversation went. We hope it'll inspire you to join us for the next meeting. And in the meantime feel free to email us with any thoughts this brings up for you!

NOTES FROM OUR DISCUSSION

'We were delighted to see so many people from different backgrounds attending our Lughnasadh meeting, our first Quarterly meeting. The discussion was very fruitful, and here is a summary of what was stated during the session.

- Self-introduction of each CARANTES member and participants. Logistics and details. Recording begins.
- First open question: how did everybody feel after reading these articles? What did everyone think of them?

Comments:

Lincoln's general argument can be found in other sources. A question was raised about symbol appropriation and how difficult it is to 'retake' these symbols when they have been used by right-wing activists (i.e. the Celtic Cross).

Question of reclaiming the past through grabbing onto a specific symbol, a central mechanism of fascist aesthetics. The particular problem of ignoring these groups in an academic context and therefore isolating some aspects of research for questions of politeness or avoiding any controversy.

Speaking out against these facts can be detrimental to one's academic career, which further complicates the task. -> How do we change the status quo of not talking about these things?

LOGISTICS

Our next newsletter will be out a little later in September, as we're taking the rest of August off for some much needed rest. In that spirit, we're not suggesting readings this month.

Look out for our next batch of anti-fascist reading recommendations around the 20th of September!

ARTICLES DISCUSSED HERE

- Webber, Shannon, 'White Supremacy's Old Gods,' Political Research Associates, February 1, 2018. (1)
- Lincoln, Bruce, 'Rewriting the German War God: Georges Dumézil, Politics and Scholarship in the Late 1930s,' History of Religions, vol. 37.3 (1998): 187-208. (2)

'On Shannon Webber's 'White Supremacy's Old Gods'

Opened with a citation, the last paragraph of the article:

'As White supremacist Ásatrúar, Odinists, and Wotanists continue to grow in number and influence across North America and Europe, it will be essential to better understand, document, and track their growth. It is critical to have a full view of the connections between racism, antisemitism, and misogyny that animate White supremacist appeals to pre-Christian European religion as activists and researchers develop best practices for countering their recruitment strategies. Going forward, anti-racist advocates will need to continue challenging and dismantling pseudoscientific theories of Aryan racial purity and superiority, ahistorical claims about the nature of pan-European White identity, and teachings that pit marginalized groups against one another. Above all, advocates will need to continue their sustained and vocal pushback on the increasing prominence and validity given to these types of groups by the Trump administration and those adjacent to it. Through these means, as well as through partnering with anti-racist Heathen groups like HUAR, White supremacist Odinism can be countered.

- There seems to be a tendency to focus a lot on fascist groups and less on friendly groups. Focus instead on what people have done to fight fascism, and take inspiration from their efforts.
- Supremacists emerge from a variety of places, with deeply rooted driving narratives.
- Paganism can be found in various forms and can also differ from one country/culture to another, even in close cultures like the Celtic ones. See works of Ronald Hutton. Paganism can be about rejecting dominant religious structures and looking for a more personal experience. For people on the margins of society (i.e. queer people), neo-paganism can help them find/forge their identity. On the contrary, people participating in extreme, fascist groups are in search of identity and take comfort in being supported by strict rules, brotherhood, authority which gives them something to exist through and a false sense of identity. Coming together as a united group also promotes violence, this violence itself deriving from inherent personal violence experienced by members of such groups. Paradoxically, this can tend to delay violence as members of fascist groups will then focus on a future and pivotal opportunity for violence, rather than lashing out immediately. Spirituality / identity are central to understanding fascism as well as our own work?
- Norse-related far right groups have a stronger connection to hypermasculinity than Celtic ones. Why is that? Could it be due to the 'femininity' often associated with Celtic nations, opposing the 'masculine', 'strong' Roman and Anglo-Saxon societies? Although, note the existence of Aontú, a farright anti-abortionist republican party founded on elements of Irish mythology.

On Bruce Lincoln's 'Rewriting the German War God: Georges Dumézil, Politics and Scholarship in the Late 1930s'

- Argument of neutrality and its place? Refusing to give fascists a platform to express themselves is
 not enough for an anti fascist movement. Questioning apoliticality → politics have always played a
 role. There's no such thing as neutrality, our worldview will always color our analysis and our
 translation of History. Importance of making the field of Celtic Studies more inclusive, better at
 amplifying and protecting diverse voices and perspectives, and fight against supremacists.
- Problem with Celtic Studies → niche field, everybody knows everything/everyone. Need to be efficient but careful not to create chaos, that would be totally unproductive. Added component to the problematic → scholars often have part of their identity tied to their research which can provoke reactionary attitudes. Emotional topics for many people, difficult to accept critique.

- Issue of accessibility → the material people have free access to tends to be outdated. Scholarship
 has moved on and these sources need to be updated and promoted towards non-specialists. Free
 access to academic articles and books of good quality are hard to find. Old books are republished
 regularly because they sell and they speak to the general public. Urgent need to make academic
 works more fun and attractive for students, or even people who are vaguely interested.
- Some people's legitimacy is to be questioned in Celtic Studies. Work based on 19th century ideals, heavily biased and outdated. Some continue to go unchecked and publish/present at conferences. Potential solution → democratizing academic reviews. Speak up against disinformation in articles, forums, websites...
- Fix the language problem → make sources accessible in a variety of languages and not only English, i.e. in France, some scholars use obsolete material because it is the only accessible material they can read and understand fully. Recent publications are mainly in English-speaking countries, those who do not speak/read English do not engage with such sources.
- Idea of making 'Wikipedia editing days' to update direct sources of information. Create a database for publicly accessible and reliable sources? A website dedicated to sources in Celtic/Medieval Studies? A journal that would review both academic and popular material?

Closing remarks

- As antifascist scholars, we understand the necessity of speaking up against far right appropriations, supremacist ideas fuelled by certain scholars in our field and more generally disinformation. It is also easier to face this task as a community rather than alone.
- There is a balance to find in the way that we approach this: being conscious of the consequences it can have on the field (career opportunities for instance) but refusing to embrace the status quo of apparent neutrality. Importance of working together as a group, as a community.

For now, that is all from us here at the Carantes Steering Committee. We hope you are all doing great in this beautiful month of August, and please feel free to contact us if you have any reactions, thoughts or concerns, or if you would rather not get any more emails.

Until next time, keep well and safe, And thank you for doing this work with us, Your friends at

