

CARANTES NEWSLETTER

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Dear Friends,

We hope that you are all doing alright and taking care of yourselves in spite of the current hellish political climate. As this newsletter comes right after our Imbolc public meeting, the bulk of it will be made of the minutes from that meeting. We do want to thank all those who attended, and who helped make the discussion a truly engaging one! But before delving into that, we have a few announcements to make.

Rhys Kaminski-Jones, who organizes the reading group, is planning to propose a **Carantes panel at the Gorwelion International Conference at CAWCS, Aberystwyth in September (17th-19th)**. Rhys will introduce the panel with the image of the Pan-Celt flag at the 2023 Llanelli anti-migrant protests, and in the context of Reform's strong polling in the 2026 Senedd elections. This is not the only possible angle for this panel (medievalism and work not on Wales welcome!), but anything in line with that context or others like it might work particularly well. So if anyone would like to propose a title and short abstract (no more than 150 words), feel free to email Rhys at rhys.kaminski-jones@wales.ac.uk by 21st March.

Additionally, towards the end of our Imbolc public meeting, **the possibility of putting a podcast together** was discussed, with some members already interested in getting involved with organising it! This podcast would feature **exchanges between fiction authors and academics, on subjects dealing with the relationship between Celtic material and the literary genre of fantasy**. To this aim, we would like to put out a call for anyone interested in helping setting up this project, and especially on the technical side of things (i.e. editing). Drop us an email if you want to get involved!


We are still working on our website, but **submissions for short reviews of pop culture artefacts that have to do with anything Celtic** are welcome. These pieces can be between 400 and 1000 words, and examine Celtic aspects of any kind of media. Email us submissions, proposals for submissions, or any questions you might have.


Finally, If you would like to **join the Discord server**, you can use this link to join for the next seven days: <https://discord.gg/K9trRdy8>. Many interesting and informative discussions are taking place there, and it is a great place to connect with others folks interested in organizing.

READING GROUP

The next meeting of the bi-monthly Carantes Reading group will be held online on Zoom, on **Monday February 24th at 7-9pm GMT/UK Time**. E-mail in reply to this message if you'd like to attend - all are welcome!

The readings are two freely available articles on **race and modern Celticity**, written by the leading Welsh-Jamaican and Welsh-Guyanese scholars Hazel Carby and Charlotte Williams. Topics include relations between African Americans and Irish Americans, essentialist Celticism within modern Welsh multiculturalism, Afro-Celtic identities, and the fascist aesthetics of Riverdance(!). The readings are listed below:

 Hazel V. Carby (2001), 'What is this 'black' in Irish popular culture?', in *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 4.3: 325-349.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/136754940100400305> [If you have no institutional access to this journal, please email rhys.kaminski-jones@wales.ac.uk for a free pdf copy, kindly provided by Prof. Carby]

 Charlotte Williams (2004), 'Can We Live Together?: Wales and the Multicultural Question', in *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 11: 216-230.
<https://journals.library.wales/view/1386666/1426735/217#?cv=217&m=107&h=Can%20we%20live%20together&xywh=-2904%2C-196%2C8237%2C3875>

CONTENT NOTE: these articles contain unexpurgated racial slurs and some descriptions of racialised violence. **In discussing them, we will establish as ground-rules that speaking such slurs aloud is not acceptable, and that debate should foreground the needs of minoritised participants.** For a more recent treatment of some Irish appropriations of Black identity covered by Carby, see here:

https://pure.manchester.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/252108891/Zacek_Proofs.pdf

We can also announce the text for our subsequent meeting, to be held in April. We will be reading Patrick R. O'Malley's *The Irish and the Imagination of Race: White Supremacy Across the Atlantic in the Nineteenth Century* (2023), <https://www.upress.virginia.edu/title/5964/>. This book is not freely available, so we're letting you know in advance in case you can order it to your local/institutional library.

We look forward to seeing you soon! Rhys & Elisabeth (co-organisers).

IMBOLC MEETING MINUTES



- Kathleen Belew, 'The Crunchy-to-Alt-Right Pipeline', from The Atlantic on December 14th 2022.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/12/fringe-left-alt-right-share-beliefs-white-power-movement/672454/>



- Cynthia Eller, 'Matriarchy and the Volk', Journal of the American Academy of Religion 81.1 (2012): 188-221. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23357881>

We held our most recent public meeting on Friday February 7th, during which we discussed two articles, which were presented in our previous newsletter and are listed above.

Our discussion of the Belew piece moved through several different topics, some of which have become perennial subjects of interest for the organization. We began by discussing several similar phenomena where organizations or groups are drawn into the orbit of Far Right ideologies, despite the origins of such groups being quite apart from this endpoint. Here, we focused on Mumsnet, an online community initially focused on supporting mothers (primarily in Britain), which has become the cornerstone of online British TERF discourse and organization, and various Ecofascist movements.

This progressed to a discussion of how groups can functionally 'trip' into Far-Right ideologies, focusing on two concepts: (a) the frog in boiling water, and (b) the risks of single-issues. For those unfamiliar, the metaphor of the frog in boiling water is that if the temperature of a container of water is turned up slowly, the frog within the container won't necessarily notice. Similarly, when groups have new members that slowly but steadily introduce minor Far-Right ideological stances into a space, for someone who is not aware of the intricacies of such beliefs or who feels awkward challenging someone otherwise perceived to be 'on the same side' as you, an organization can be transformed over the course of several years into a bastion of hate.

Parts of this are quite similar to the risks of single-issue activism. When people are focused on single issues they are deeply invested in, this can lead to compromising the broader picture of a movement. The TERF movement is a good example of this, where some feminist groups or thinkers have wound up siding with Far-Right and Fascist organizations who are ultimately violently opposed to feminism. This discussion moved on to how Far-Right movements focus on specific extreme emotions and attempt to use these emotions to draw people into increasingly extreme political positions.

Our discussion of Eller's piece was perhaps one of the most successful syntheses of perspectives between scholars and members of the public attending the meeting. Much of what the paper discusses in great detail is the timeline of certain misconceptions that have become rooted in modern popular conceptions of what is 'Celtic', such as ideas around Mother Goddesses and potentially matriarchal Celtic peoples. Some of the attendees who follow modern revivalist faiths or have previously been members of such communities discussed how prevalent these ideas remain in such spaces, and the challenges they pose. Similarly, several attendees who teach in universities discussed the challenges of these (and related) misconceptions, and how this article would be a helpful teaching tool. Ultimately, we focused on the challenges of trying to teach the ideas of the article, and how difficult it is when the starting point is 'well, all of what you think you know is wrong, I'm really sorry'.

After our discussion of these articles, we shifted perspectives slightly from Eller's piece and discussed if the ways we teach and engage with myth are innately conservative, idealizing the attempt to uncover or preserve an 'original' version of stories, and how alternative perspectives on the nature of oral traditions and how stories grow can be incorporated into teaching.

Lastly, as we concluded, we discussed some possible future goals, such as a podcast (discussed above) as a form of public outreach, and a round agreement that our meetings really need to have scheduled breaks in the middle which we shall do going forth.

That is all for us now at the CARANTES steering committee. 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 thanks for doing this work with us.
Your friends at

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