

# CARANTES NEWSLETTER

LOGO BY FORFEDA

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the fifth Carantes newsletter, and happy Fall to everyone. This has been a difficult week as we have watched violence escalate in Palestine. It is out of the purview of CARANTES to make definitive statements about the situation but we feel strongly that antifascist work is and must remain humanitarian at its core. Being anti fascist means caring for the victims of imperialist violence. Therefore we would like to encourage those of you who can to donate to an organization providing relief.

We've chosen Anera, for a few reasons: firstly, it has consistently received high ratings for transparency and accountability from various platforms that screen charities ; secondly, its presence in Gaza for the past 50 years means that their workers come from the communities they serve and know best how to use funds to help those who need it. Even small sums can help make a difference.

<https://support.anera.org/a/donate> Donate to Anera

<https://www.anera.org/faq/> Anera's FAQ

Additionally, we were made aware of a very concerning incident at the University of Western Brittany in Brest. The University was vandalized by far-right individuals, with its walls being covered by neo-nazi messages and numerous Celtic crosses, one of the most common far-right symbols in France. Death threats were also issued against a local activist. CARANTES strongly condemns these acts, and we offer our unconditional support to those targeted by them. We feel this highlights our responsibility as academics to ensure that our fields and places of work remain a stronghold against hateful rhetoric and acts, and that we must stand united in the face of bigotry and violence.

Now, on to your regularly scheduled Celtic Antifascist content. First, here is a reply we got to our last newsletter from Dylan, who says:

*I really enjoyed the September Newsletter, I found Dr Stewart's talk very interesting! I wondered if someone in the Steering Committee could explain **what is meant by the term "vibes"** in the context of fascism? I've noticed this term has been used in Carantes discourse a fair amount, and wondered if someone could clarify its meaning? Is there any further reading I could look at regarding this topic?*

This is a great question, as we have been using the term fairly liberally. Defining it has been, and continues to be, part of CARANTES' work. We don't have a fully satisfying definition to offer yet, but broadly, we use "vibes" to reference a **"distinct emotional atmosphere"** that is "sensed intuitively" (a definition found on Urban Dictionary). It has little to do with rational thought, being a matter of instinct above all. In a way, a "vibe" resides in the tension between a particular object, symbol, or word, and its context. Because of that, it is hard to pin down. You know it when you encounter it ; something feels a certain way for no immediately obvious reason. This will be a matter of further discussion as we move forward, and if you have your own definition to offer, we would love to read it.

## LOGISTICS & NEWS



We are delighted to announce that our second public meeting will take place on November 1st! To celebrate Samhain, we will welcome **Vanessa Iacocca**, who will be giving a one-hour talk on the topic of white nationalist medievalisms (more information forthcoming). Join us on November 1st at 1pm EST, 6pm UTC+1 or 4am UTC+11. Following her talk we will have one hour of discussion. Please **RVSP**, as we'll send out the zoom link the day before her talk. We look forward to seeing you there.



We are also opening a **Discord server**! It has been increasingly obvious to us that we need a space where anyone can come and chat about the topics Carantes is meant to tackle, to share ideas, resources and support. We love reading your emails, but we want to foster horizontal communication above all. You can use this link to join for the next seven days, and if you are reading this later just email us and we will send you a new link. Looking forward to chatting with you soon!

<https://discord.gg/84v5s3bm>

## READINGS & NOTES FROM OUR DISCUSSION

- Mosse, George L., and Roger Griffin. "The Occult Origins of National Socialism." In *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism*, 95–109. University of Wisconsin Press, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv201xj7s.11>.
- Gardell, Mattias. "The Pagan Revival." In *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism*, 137–64. Duke University Press, 2003. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11vc85p.7>.

Mattias Gardell explores the ways in which paganism emerged, or rather re-emerged, in our modern world. He focuses on several branches of paganism, including Wicca, Druidry, goddess paganism, Asatrú, and others. According to the author, the **reconstruction of pre-Christian religious traditions** involves a break from our modern society. Additionally, Gardell raises the point that the tendency of **exaggerating the power of women in Celtic societies** widely echoes and even links its argument to the rhetoric of white women protection in some pagan groups.

We can definitely feel this article was written 20 years ago, as Gardell sometimes uses problematic words and ideas. CARANTES aligns with major Trans activist organizations that reject the use of the word "transsexual" and we want to highlight that the way Native American religious practices are mentioned is reductive. We especially encourage readers to **watch out** for Stephen McNallen, the founder of the Asatru Folk Assembly and a prominent white nationalist, who is quoted by Gardell without mention of his background.

In spite of all this, we feel the article does the important work of tackling prominent issues such as the **biologization of spirituality** (mainly used by North Pagans) or monotheistic variants appropriating figures from non-white tradition. Overall, this article is a must-read for anyone interested in Paganism and Neo-Paganism, but it certainly requires strong critical thinking.

Mosse's article seeks to complicate the common attribution of Nazi thought to a rise in national sentiment following defeat in the First World War by tracing its origin to a cultural shift at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Following an increasing sense of **alienation**, a number of people turned to mysticism and occultism in an attempt to find their place within modernity. They produced works that came to influence the National Socialist worldview in subtle ways, providing an often unexpected basis for the banality of Nazi evil.

Mosse highlights the **naturalism** and **anti-intellectualism** inherent in fascism and according to which nature's mysteries can only be understood by mysticism, not science. He examines a number of pseudo-scientific beliefs that tend to be connected with efforts to **reconstruct the past**. Madam Blavatsky, for instance, believed her methods to be in line with those of the ancients, and therefore to be more valid than modern ones.

Her writings directly influenced certain Nazi theorists, and it is noteworthy that a rejection of the modern scientific process and a desire to reconstruct an idealized past both contributed to the rise of this particular strain of fascism, to which they are not confined.

Though not directly related to Celtic Studies, we were struck in our discussion by the number of parallels between these mystical, occult beliefs that led to Nazi ideology, and much of the misinformation that plagues public-facing content relating to Celtic Studies. How do we distinguish this kind of Celtic mysticism from respectable pagan beliefs? Is it likely that Celtic Studies, being a slightly more niche field than Romance Studies or Norse Studies, might lend itself more to such mystical extrapolations? For those of us who identify as pagans, what can we do to counter the harmful mechanisms described by Gardell and Mosse?

Before we wrap up this fifth edition of our newsletter, we want to encourage you particularly to take care of yourselves in these difficult times. As antifascists and activists it is essential that we do what we must in order to be able to keep with the trouble. Activism burn out is a real issue, and the best way to circumvent it and keep fighting the good fight is to listen to yourself. Reach out, use support systems, process emotions, be kind to yourselves, so that you can keep showing up for those who need it most.

For now that's all from us here 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 thank you for doing this work with us,  
*Your friends at*



# CARANTES

CARANTESWG@PROTON.ME  
@CARANTESWG ON TWITTER

LOGO BY FORFEDA