

Review: William Anderson: *Greenman: The Archetype of Our Oneness With the Earth*, COMPASSbooks, Helhoughton, 1998

Pages: 174

Green Man Paganism Lives

This is a detailed study of an ancient pagan god, the Green Man, which the author traces from ancient Gaul and Rome, through Britain and into late Middle Age cathedrals.

That thousands of Green Men are carved into European churches alone shows a deep syncretism with Catholicism, and proof there is nothing Christian about them.

Today, the Green Man is seen in folk traditions such as the Jack in the Green procession, but is also linked to the Gaia movement as the “male counterpart” of the female goddess. Therefore, he is likely to be a global satanic force in eschatology.

Prelude (pp. 3-13)

Jack in the Green is escorted by several Green Men, who drive their swords into him, then take a leaf of flower home for luck.

At Arthur’s Court, a Green Knight with holly bush in one hand and a green-steel axe in the other issues a challenge: a knight is to strike off his head, then a year later the Green Knight can do the same. Sir Gawaine accepts in Arthur’s stead.

Thousands of Green Men are carved in European churches.

O 17/8/1591, Catholic Lord Montague entertained Queen Elizabeth which included a wild man “cladde in Ivie”.

I) The Hunt for the Green Man (pp. 14-33)

The Green Man [GM] signals irrepressible life and is much older than Christianity. He has three main forms: (i) head out of a leaf mask, (ii) head disgorging vegetation, (iii) fruit or flower head.

The spires of *Frieburg im Bresgau* (c. 1340) rise from Green Men heads.

The GM is treated as a sinister survival of old pagan religions, a great pagan archetype.

He is associated with Robin Hood, the King of May, and the Garland. There is also a connexion with the spring sacrifice.

In France he is *le feuillu* (the leaf man) and in Germany *der grüner Mensch*.

Serpents, dragons, the Great Goddess, young god born of Sky and Earth, and sacred tree are images associated with GM.

The Ouroboros may be seen as eating his tail, or creating himself.

In 1865, while dozing on a bus, the chemist Kekulé dreamt of the ouroboros which gave him the idea of a benzene ring.

The rise of Mariolatry in the 12th and 13thC is a manifestation of the Great Goddess returning in a new guise.

The Yakshi tree goddess was under the Bodhi Tree guarded by the python.

In Islamic hell, the Zaqqum tree bears devil-head fruit for consumption.

Derived from the Roman Magna Mater Festival, Cybele reappears in the guise of the May Queen and the Maypole as the sacred Attis-pine. The pine was taken to the Palatine temple in Rome.

Attis wore a Phrygian cap.

St George was martyred for refusing to sacrifice to Apollo. Muslims identify him with al-Khidr (the Verdant One), and honour him on April 23.

Robin Hood is derived from “Robin of the Wood”.

“Jubilation” is from *jubilus*, the perpetual peasant humming while labouring.

Bacchus is a precursor of the GM.

II) The Green Man in Antiquity (pp. 34-49)

The two main sources of GM images are from Roman sculptors early AD, and pre-Roman Celtic art of Gaul.

Dimetor is “twice mothered” and *trigonos* “thrice born”.

The Celts venerated water and would cast in weapons (like swords and the Lady of the Lake). They also worshipped severed heads.

Septimus Severus was a keen supporter of mystery religions.

III) The Green Man in the Dark Ages (pp. 50-60)

Nymph is from the Celtic *nemeton*, a sacred place or grove.

At the time of Rome’s departure in Britain, there was a revival of pagan cults for protection.

Merlin was the child of a demon and a nun!

Harold Bluetooth’s tomb (d. 986) has a Christ-Odin figure entwined with vegetation.

IV) The Green Man in the Romanesque and Early Gothic Periods (pp. 61-81)

Lady Day is 25 May, supposedly for the Annunciation by Gabriel to Mary.

In the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, Adam sent Seth to Paradise for a branch of the Tree of Mercy, who returned and placed it in his father’s mouth.

V) The Triumph of the Green Man in the Gothic Period (pp. 82-106)

St Hildegard of Bingen claimed she saw God [contra Jn 1.18].
The Exeter Cathedral has two GMs sprouting artemisia and wormwood leaves.

Easter succeeded the Attis death and resurrection rites.

The GM is claimed to be “above right and wrong”.

VI) Masterpieces and Mysteries (pp. 107-132)

Sybils were foretellers of Christ.

Roslin chapel, south of Edinburgh, was built in the 1450s. It has a Prentice Pillar, named after a murdered apprentice who built it while his master mason mentor was a way at Rome (the master hit him over the head with a mallet when he returned). Eight dragons coil the column's bottom.

Zerubabel rebuilt the Temple in 515 BC.

The devil at time appears with a foliate head in architecture.

VII) Recurrences and Vanishings (pp. 133-153)

In 1595, Philip Stubbes wrote against May-pole idolatry on May Day he would witness.

Cernunnos is the god of wealth and the underworld.

VIII) The Green Man Returns (pp. 154-164)