
Celticism, Celtitude and Celticity

The consumption of the past in the age of globalization

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ABSTRACT

“The Celts” has been an amazingly versatile concept in the politics of identity and collective memory in recent history. For analytical purposes, this article distinguishes three broad modes in the ways that Celtic identity has been constructed: Celticism, Celtitude, and Celticity. These distinctions are made in order to highlight some of the significant differences, boundaries, and frictions between various manifestations of identity that are obscured or elided by the common “Celtic” label, while simultaneously encouraging exploration of the interconnections between the different genres of identity.

Celticism consists of self-conscious attempts to construct ethnicized forms of collective memory and communal identity that are territorially bounded and embedded in overt political projects and ideologies (for example French or Irish nationalism, Breton or Scottish regionalism, and EU pan-Europeanism). As I have discussed these at some length in previous publications, this article focuses instead upon Celticity and Celtitude, which are both postmodern global “identityscapes”, linked in complex ways to new possibilities

RÉSUMÉ

Dans l'histoire récente, la notion de “Celte” a remarquablement manqué d'unicité dans les politiques identitaires et la mémoire collective. Aux fins de l'analyse, cet exposé fait la distinction entre trois grandes façons dont s'est construite l'identité celte : le celticisme, la celtitude et la celticité. Cette distinction servira à faire ressortir certaines différences, lignes de démarcation et frictions importantes qui existent entre les diverses manifestations d'identité que masque ou obscurcit l'étiquette “celte” commune, tout en encourageant l'exploration simultanée des interconnexions entre les différents genres d'identité.

Le celticisme consiste en tentatives conscientes de construction de formes ethnicisées de mémoire collective et d'identité communautaire qui ont des frontières territoriales et s'inscrivent profondément dans des projets politiques et idéologies manifestes (comme le nationalisme français ou irlandais, le régionalisme breton ou écossais et le paneuropéanisme de l'Union européenne). Comme j'en ai parlé en détail dans des publications antérieures, je me concentrerai ici sur la celticité et la celtitude, qui sont deux

of mass-mediation and global flows of people and capital while, ironically, at the same time, frequently being motivated by romantic reactions against globalization.

Celticity is a phenomenon centered around a global spiritual connection to the idea of Celtic identity. Although employing many of the same symbols and tropes as previous nationalist and regionalist Celtic movements, versions of Celticity depart in important ways from prior forms of Celticism in that the concept is largely decoupled from essentializing notions of race, "blood", genealogy, or even language – that is, from most of the main traditional tropes of ethnicity.

Celtitude consists of forms of diasporic transnational Celtic identity. It is largely "ethno-nostalgic" in orientation and is found among, for example, descendants of the Irish and Scottish diasporas around the world.

The paper explores various manifestations of Celticity and Celtitude, such as neo-druid organizations, cyber-Celts, and Celtic theme parks, festivals, music, and commodities. It also examines some salient tensions, contradictions, and geopolitical implications that are emerging within and between them, as well as the ways in which the consumption of the past constitutes an important element of their practice.

"paysages identitaires" mondiaux postmodernes liés, de façon complexe, à de nouvelles possibilités de médiatisation de masse et de flux mondiaux de gens et de capitaux, tout en étant, et c'est là bien l'ironie du sujet, fréquemment motivés par des réactions romantiques contre la mondialisation.

La celticité est un phénomène axé sur un lien spirituel mondial à l'idée d'identité celte. Bien qu'ils utilisent un grand nombre de symboles et tropes communs, les précédents mouvements celtes nationalistes et régionalistes et les versions de la celticité s'écartent nettement de formes antérieures de celticisme en ce sens que le concept est en grande partie dissocié des notions essentielles de race, de sang, de généalogie ou même de langue, autrement dit est dissocié des principaux tropes traditionnels de l'ethnicité.

La celtitude consiste en formes d'identité celte transnationale et diasporique. Elle a une orientation essentiellement "ethno-nostalgique" et se retrouve par exemple chez les descendants des diasporas irlandaise et écossaise aux quatre coins du globe.

L'exposé examine donc diverses manifestations de la celticité et de la celtitude comme les organisations néo-druidiques, les cyber-Celtes et les parcs d'attractions, festivals, musiques et marchandises celtes. Il examine également certaines tensions, contradictions et implications géopolitiques bien évidentes qui se font jour au sein de la celticité et de la celtitude, ainsi qu'entre elles, et les façons dont la consommation du passé constitue une part importante de leur pratique.



INTRODUCTION: MODES OF CELTIC IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY

Celts and things Celtic have long occupied a prominent and protean place in the popular imagination. Indeed, “the Celts” has been an amazingly versatile concept in the politics of identity and collective memory in recent history. I would propose, in fact, that it has been invoked as a focus of identity on several contrasting, and often contradictory, scales and planes of “imagined community”, to use Benedict Anderson’s (1991) somewhat overworked, but still useful, term. In previous publications (Dietler 1994; 1998), I have been especially concerned to analyze aspects of three of these: that is, (1) the historical construction of nationalist mythologies of identity within several European states, including especially France and Ireland; (2) regional resistance to nationalist or imperialist projects, as by the province of Brittany against France, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales against England, and Galicia and Asturias against Spain; and (3) at the other end of the scale, the recent attempt during the 1990s to create a sense of pan-European cultural identity in the context of the evolving European Union based upon a purportedly shared Celtic past. Although the latter was an ill-fated effort that I believe has now largely collapsed under the weight of its all too obvious contradictions, the others are still very much in evidence; and these multiple manifestations of Celtic identity span the period from the 18th century to the present (see also Chapman 1992; Collis 1996; 2003; Fernandez 2000; Goudineau 1990; 2001; James 1999; McDonald 1989; Morse 2005; Ruiz Zapatero 1996; 2003). For the purposes of the argument presented here, all three of these manifestations of Celtic identity, despite their contradictory interests and contestatory histories, may be loosely grouped under the analytical heading of “*Celticism*.” By this term, I mean self-conscious attempts to construct ethnicized forms of collective memory and communal identity that are territorially bounded and embedded in overt political projects and ideologies.

In this article, I would like temporarily to set aside analysis of the various forms of Celticism noted above and turn instead toward consideration of several other, quite different, but equally powerful discourses of Celtic identity that have been emerging in recent years: that is, new transnational, postmodern forms of both Celtic spiritualism and diasporic ethno-nostalgia that

I will distinguish with the labels “*Celticity*” and “*Celtitude*,” respectively. Playing upon the terminology of Arjun Appadurai (1996), one might describe both of these as global “*identityscapes*”, linked in complex ways to new possibilities of mass-mediation and global flows of people and capital while, ironically, at the same time, frequently being motivated by romantic reactions against globalization. Recent decades have witnessed a bewildering variety of forms that these new engagements with a Celtic imaginary have assumed. However, for analytical purposes, I will divide them here, as noted, into two main groupings. The point of creating these categories is not to produce a set of reified rubrics for a typological form of analysis. Rather, they are intended as a heuristic device that will serve to highlight some of the significant differences, boundaries, and frictions between various manifestations of identity that are obscured or elided by the common “Celtic” label while simultaneously encouraging exploration of the interconnections between the different genres of identity.

Let me briefly introduce, first, the forms of identity and practice that I would describe as *Celticity*, a label that includes several versions of similar phenomena centered around a global spiritual connection to the idea of Celtic identity. Although employing many of the same symbols and tropes as previous nationalist and regionalist Celtic movements, versions of *Celticity* depart in important ways from prior forms of Celticism in that the concept is largely decoupled from essentializing notions of race, “blood”, genealogy, or even language – that is, from most of the main traditional tropes of ethnicity (Nash 1989). In fact, Celtic identity tends to be seen by many postmodern advocates of this type as an elective orientation or a spiritual quality rather than a matter of historical, geographical, or biological connections. Indeed, the word Celtic has even been transformed into a positive adjective, as in “He’s very Celtic” (Bowman 1993, 147). These are the people whom Bowman (1996) identifies as “cardiac Celts” – those who feel in their heart that they are Celtic.

On the other hand, one finds markedly contrasting visions of diasporic transnational Celtic identity that may be classified as *Celtitude* (on the basis of an analogical, but by no means exact, reference to Léopold Senghor’s “*Négritude*”). These are largely “ethno-nostalgic” in orientation and are found among, for example, descendants

of the Irish and Scottish diasporas around the world. Constructing Celtitude has often involved a kind of re-essentialization, in which a sense of specific ethnic belonging has been carved out of a broader, generic, race-based “white” identity. This has occurred especially in the context of nations like the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand – societies that were formed by European colonization and in which ethnicized identity politics by indigenous peoples and other minority groups has provoked “ethno-envy” and the re-emergence of diasporic roots consciousness and longing among the dominant “white” population. As one might expect, this Celtitude vision of community, grounded in, and bounded by, genealogical connections (at least purported ones) to a distant homeland of the imagination intersects in curious, and often contradictory, ways with the more universalizing, spiritualist forms of Celticity.

The signs of these new versions of Celtic identity have become readily evident over the past decade or so in such things as the international proliferation of neo-druid organizations, Celtic websites, Celtic festivals, Celtic theme parks, Celtic music, Celtic crafts, and even Celtic tattoo styles. These movements and their instantiating manifestations are especially characterized by a marked hybridity of practices and symbols and the use of cyberspace to structure and commoditize transnational mediascapes of identity. The rest of this paper briefly outlines a few of these major new forms of Celticity and Celtitude that I see developing and the ways in which the consumption of the past constitutes an important element of their practice, as well as discussing some salient tensions and contradictions that are emerging within and between them. It also broaches the topic of the role and responsibilities of archaeologists in this complex consumption of the past.

WEB-DRUIDS AND CYBER-CELTS

Let us begin with neo-druids. Druids were originally a class of religious specialists in certain ancient Celtic-speaking societies of Iron Age Europe who were suppressed by the conquering Roman Empire and eventually disappeared. We actually know very little about them or their practices aside from a few sporadic observations recorded by Greek and Roman authors (Piggott 1975). However, there is now a flourishing neo-druid movement animated by dozens of major international and regional organizations. The list

of these is enormous, but includes such names as *ArnDraiocht Fein*, *l'Ordre Druidique des Enfants de la Terre*, the *Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids*, the *Henge of Keltria*, the *British Druid Order*, the *International Grand Lodge of Druidism*, *Order Terra (den indoeuropæiske keltiske Orden)*, the *New Reformed Druids of North America*, the *Celtic Traditionalist Order of Druids*, *l'École Druidique des Gaules*, the *Deutscher Druiden-Orden*, the *Avalon Druid Order*, the *Druids of Texas*, *ArkOkla Druids*, and a host of others. A few of these organizations, such as the *Druid Order* and the *Ancient Order of Druids*, have histories dating back to the first Romantic revival of druidism in the 18th century. However, the vast majority are of quite recent origin – some dating to the 1960s and most to the past couple of decades. Moreover, whereas the earlier neo-druids operated within the framework of what is called “Celtic Christianity” and were markedly patriarchal, most of the newer branches that have arisen during the past couple of decades consider themselves to be part of the neo-Pagan or New Age movements (Adler 1986; Bowman 1993; 1996; Hardman 1996; Hutton 1996). Hence, they tend to be polytheistic, strongly feminist, and largely “green” in orientation. Indeed, many of the founders of recent druid organizations were former practitioners of the other dominant neo-Pagan religion, Wicca (see Shallcrass 1996). And in many branches there is a good deal of mutual borrowing of ritual and symbolism between Druids and Wiccans (not to mention borrowing from Native American, Hindu, and other religions). There are even groves of Zen Druids in Olympia (Washington), and Hassidic Druids in St. Louis who mix Yiddish and Celtic traditions (Adler 1986, 324-325). Clearly such neo-druids have constructed a very different sense of what it means to be “Celtic” than, for example, the Breton Movement, Scottish nationalists, or the “Celtomaniac” French nationalist historians of the 19th century invoking “our ancestors the Gauls” (Chapman 1992; Dietler 1994; McDonald 1989).

The connections among, and organization of, these neo-druid groups are quite variable. In Britain, for example, a *Council of British Druid Orders* was formed in 1989 to coordinate relations among about 14 different major Druid organizations; and this council holds conferences with delegates and distributes minutes (Shallcrass 1996). Other groups are much less bureaucratically organized, and the local branches often have quite disparate practices. However, most neo-druid

organizations rely on the Web to provide structure. Most of them maintain sophisticated websites that use cyberspace to link their far-flung branches (or “sacred groves”) into virtual communities, and many of the branches also have their own websites. Some neo-druid communities exist entirely in cyberspace, with no face-to-face meetings at all (e.g. the *Virtual Druid Order*).¹ These sites provide information about druid beliefs, rituals, magic, history, sacred sites, the Celtic calendar and holidays, and other such things (including tips about proper pronunciation of Celtic names of gods and festivals, as very few neo-druids actually speak Celtic languages). They also provide access to druid and “Celtic” chat groups, recommended reading lists (including mainstream academic works),² and links to other Celtic and neo-Pagan webring and sites (e.g. the *Druid Wisdom Exchange* webring). Some also publish journals and books and provide mail-order courses in druidry.

Viewed from the outside, there are a number of ironies in the relationship between neo-druidic practices and the ancient “Celtic” past that serves as a foundational reference. For example, one of the limited bits of reliable observation we do have from ancient texts about druids is that they maintained a strongly oral culture, insisting that vast amounts of information be committed to memory and strongly resisting the use of writing. However, literacy clearly plays an essential role in the creation of virtual communities in cyberspace for neo-druids, and in the transmission of knowledge. This is perhaps not terribly surprising, given the fact that a large number of early neo-Pagans in general had backgrounds in the computer field (Luhmann 1989, 106-107), and given the increasing importance of the Internet in the creation and operation of virtual communities more generally over the past couple of decades (Wilson, Peterson 2002). Among other ironic features is the fact that neo-druids, who are overwhelmingly in sympathy with ecological and animal rights movements, should have found inspiration in an ancient religion for which the few rituals actually known include, prominently, human and animal sacrifices. Needless to say, neo-druid web sites and manuals are careful to explain why such rituals are no longer practiced. But practitioners do not see these contradictions as ironic, nor are they necessarily troubled by them – this is an accepted aspect of a philosophy of pragmatic eclecticism. As Isaac Bonewits, the Arch-Druid of *Arndraiocht Fein*, noted:

“The Druids had some unpleasant customs which I have no intention of perpetuating... It is important to know where you are coming from if you are going to claim you are connected to certain ancestors or traditions. If you say you are a ‘Druid’ you ought to know what kind of people they were and what kinds of thoughts they had. Then you can pick and choose what parts make sense in modern America” (Adler 1986, 326).

Or as Starhawk, a neo-Pagan writer, stated, “The nice thing about being a Pagan is that you can hold a lot of contradictory beliefs all at the same time” (Vale, Sulak 2001, 11).

Among the general Euro-American population of those who are not neo-Pagans or New Agers, the idea of druids also tends to evoke an image of mystery and mystical spirituality, although sometimes with a slightly sensational sinister edge that neo-druids resent. For example, there are a number of video games that play upon such themes, including the tellingly titled “Mystery of the Druids” and “Dark Druids.” Druids also have a prominent place in the popular role-playing game “Dungeons and Dragons,” and there is even a special handbook on druidry written for this game (Pulver 1994). Correspondingly, the recent French film “*Vercingétorix*” (about the ancient Gallic opponent of Caesar who was constructed as the seminal French patriot and embodiment of the nation by Napoléon III and 19th century nationalist historians: see Dietler 1994; 1998; Goudineau 2001; Simon 1996) was re-titled “Druids” when it was released in the United States. This was an obvious attempt to transform a creation of Celticism into a product saleable to an audience more attuned to Celticity.

Aside from druids, there are various other novel forms of community centered on Celticity that have emerged. These include such things as a web-linked “*Aisling Association of Celtic Tribes*” (aiming, as their website claims, “to develop a modern form of tribal life blending Iron Age ideology with modern day practicality”)³. This spiritually oriented association has branches in places ranging from New Jersey to Indiana, to California. There is also an “Iron Age reenactment society” in England called *Brigantia* in which people dress up as ancient Celts and engage in mock combat and imitations of ancient life. Another, called *Cantiaci*, is devoted to a technologically faithful reconstruction of the life of a particular Celtic tribe that lived in southern England. France has similar groups, perhaps the best known being the *Cercle Celtique*

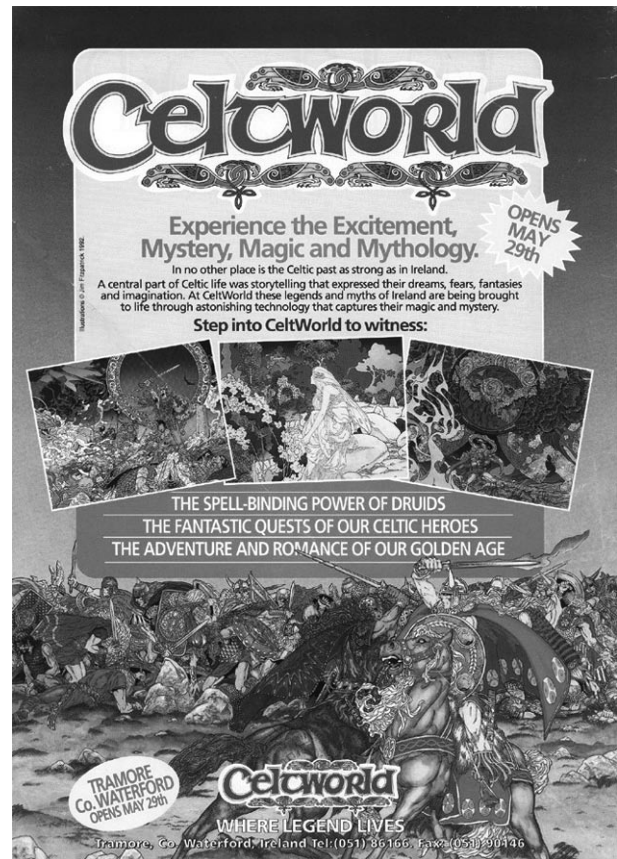
des Ambiani. These groups use the web to diffuse information on how to make swords, shields, and tunics and enjoy the rustic life of the Iron Age. Among the most fervent of such groups is *Clan Dalriada*, a community of neo-pagans living on the Scottish island of Arran who have “dedicated their lives to living and working the Celtic system of the late Bronze Age” – the period they take to have been the “Golden Age of the Celts”.

CELTIC THEME PARKS

Another important manifestation of both the vibrant new Celticity and Celtitude has been the proliferation of Celtic festivals and Celtic theme parks over the past decade. The latter run the gamut from the lurid *Celtworld* in rural Ireland,⁴ to the more pastoral *Celtica* in Wales, to *Parc Asterix* near Paris, to the reconstructed Celtic village of *Cosmopolis* in rural France, to the *Castell Henllys* living Iron Age fort in Wales, to *Columcille*, with its imitations of the Isle of Iona and megaliths in the Pennsylvania countryside (ill. 1). These theme parks range in nature from sites of spiritual pilgrimage, to historical reenactment, to pedagogy, to comic entertainment. *Columcille*, for example, which advertises itself as a “megalithic park and Celtic art center, a playground of myth and mystery” and “a sacred space for quiet meditation,” proclaims:

“In no other place in North America can anyone seeking to connect with the essence of Celtic spiritual heritage find a more powerful, authentically informed landscape than that of *Columcille*”⁵.

Despite their differences, what all these theme parks share is a set of common tropes, prominent among which is the idea of Celtic “myth and mystery.” For example, echoing the description of *Columcille* above, the advertisements for *Celtworld* entice visitors to enter this space “where legend lives” with the offer to “experience the excitement, mystery, magic and mythology.” Equally important is a shared emphasis on the use of simulacra of objects and sites from the distant past to orchestrate a phenomenological experience of particular visions of Celticity and Celtitude. They also encourage the consumption of such Celtic identity through gift shops stocked with Celtic memorabilia – material objects providing a tangible link to this experience and to the Celtic imaginary it plays upon and helps to construct. The pamphlet for the Irish *Celtworld*, for instance,



1. Advertisement for Celtworld theme park, Ireland.

offers a range of Celtic T-shirts, mugs, jewelry, and other such things with the invitation to “bring the legend home with a souvenir from the *Celtworld* Gift Shop.”

CELTIC FESTIVALS AND CELTIC MUSIC

Celtic festivals represent an even more prolific recent “growth industry” for Celtic identity. In many ways, these festivals represent a perfect nexus of Celtic Romantic spiritualism, heritage-seeking ethno-nostalgia, and commercialization that are simultaneously in tension and reinforcing each other. The first of these was the “Inter-Celtic Festival” begun in the nineteenth century by Hersart de la Villemarqué, the noted Breton man of letters and activist, to foster a sense of solidarity among the insular Celts of Brittany, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales (McDonald 1989). However, over the past decade or so, Celtic festivals of a rather different kind have sprouted in locations ranging from Chicago, to Cincinnati, Reno, Austin, Nova Scotia, Cannes, Tokyo, Barbados, Glen Innes (Australia), and a long list of other small towns and big cities around the world.

These festivals provide a meeting ground for the sometimes awkward intersection of Celticity and Celtitude, and they offer a diverse array of attractions that straddle and fuse the interests of both Celtic spiritualists and ethnic-diaspora heritage seekers (ill. 2). These include booths with “Celtic” crafts and artwork, along with information from tourist agents and national tourist boards offering voyages to “the Land of Myth and Legend”, local Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Manx, and Cornish heritage societies, and such organizations as “Celtic Women International” and “The Ancient Order of Hibernians.” At the most recent *Celtic Fest Chicago*, held in Grant Park in the heart of the city over several days, I counted 13 different heritage theme tents and 27 booths selling Celtic jewelry, pottery, glass, woolens, paintings, kilts, and other objects, such as cobblestones from Dublin with Celtic art designs engraved on them. Among the other things on offer were booths promoting Kerrygold butter from Ireland and Irish poets and novelists (at Paddy’s Bookstore booth), as well as a Celtic Pride Mastercard booth (giving away “Celtic Pride” T-shirts and hats in exchange for signing up for an Aer Lingus frequent flyer credit card). The festival also offers Irish and Scottish sports and a demonstration of sheepherding, while others provide historical re-enactments of battles and lifeways of the Celtic past.

However, music is usually a central focus of these festivals, and the main draw for most of the festivalgoers (ill. 3). So-called “Celtic music” has emerged recently as an ever more popular (and profitable) new genre on the world music scene (Mathieson 2001; Sawyers 2000; Stokes, Bohlman 2003). Encompassing such things as what used to be called traditional Irish music, Scottish bagpipes, and a New Age style with high-pitched vocals and synthesizers derived vaguely from Irish ballads, this new hybrid genre has captured an ever increasing market. Hence, the stages of these festivals commonly feature acts from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and Brittany, as well as from the diaspora communities in the United States and Canada. Bands from Galicia and Asturias in Spain have also recently joined the mix as Celtic revivalist movements in these regions have taken off and their music has been folded into the Celtic genre label. A taste for Celtic music is no longer confined simply to regional folk music enthusiasts or nostalgic ethnic diasporas; it has now become ubiquitous in New Age contexts, Hollywood film soundtracks (ranging from *Braveheart* to *Titanic*), Broadway-style



2. Official program for Celtic Fest Chicago, 1998.



3. Irish American dancers at Celtic Fest Chicago (M. Dietler).

musical shows (such as *Riverdance* and *Celtic Tiger*), and a host of other venues. A recent program on American PBS television called “Celtic Woman” featured singers from Ireland performing an eclectic range of pop music that was linked mostly by the New Age “Celtic” style in which it was rendered. Innumerable Irish pubs, with names such as “The Mystic Celt” and “Celtic Connections” (both examples from Chicago), have sprung up in cities around the world, and these frequently

offer live music of some Celtic type on a regular basis. Although many musicians (especially traditional specialists) are uncomfortable with the Celtic music label, the commercial possibilities have not been lost on the major recording companies. These Celtic festivals are often sponsored by record stores and radio stations, and arrays of CDs are featured prominently for sale. At the last Chicago Fest, for example, there was a large booth from Paddy's Music store selling CDs, videos, Celtic music instruments and books. Direct links to .com music sales companies are also found at most Celtic and druid web sites, and druid manuals frequently list favorite Celtic music albums (Knight 2000).

CYBERSPACE, CELTS, AND GLOBALIZATION

The Web, in fact, has provided a medium of exploratory interconnection that has greatly accelerated the growth of postmodern Celticity, as well as fueling the heritage quest of Celtitude. There now exist numerous intersecting "webring" (e.g. the *Celtic Culture Webring*, *Celtic Mysteries Webring*, *Celtic Pagan Webring*, *Celtic Knot Webring*, *Celtic Lovers Webring*, *Nemeton Webring*) that allow cyber-Celts to navigate disparate sites of individuals and organizations with Celtic themes. These informational sites are also tied in with chat groups and linked directly to commercial sites (book sellers, record companies, graphic artists, craft shops, tattoo artists, and Celti-kitsch mug and T-shirt vendors) that feed the consumption of Celtica. There are also links to travel agents and tourist boards offering "Tours of Celtic Mystery" and "Celtic Cruises" that feed both ethno-diaspora nostalgia and New Age and neo-Pagan spirituality quests, servicing an ever expanding pilgrimage market.

It is clear that these new forms of Celtitude and Celticity have a large and expanding commercial dimension that fuels consumption. Yet, even as global identityscapes, they have an ambivalent relationship to globalization. On the one hand, the construction of both forms of a trans-national Celtic imaginary involves a reaction against globalization. In the case of Celtitude, this generally centers around a rural image of the ancestral homeland that is frozen in time and removed from the economic and social realities of, for example, the "Celtic Tiger" of the new Ireland. Similarly, Celticity is in many ways fundamentally constituted by a neo-Romantic reaction against global capitalism and the spiritual and environmental

destruction it is believed to have wrought. Yet both are enabled and fed by global technologies, global flows of capital, and global mediascapes. In addition to the elements already mentioned, such as the roots tourism industry feeding diaspora pilgrimage to the mystical homeland and the Celtic music industry, there is a wide, and ever increasing, range of products and services that play upon the Celtic theme. These include the now ubiquitous Irish pub, New Age occult book and paraphernalia stores with their Celtic spirituality sections, various brands of Celtic beer, Celtic cookbooks, Celtic tattoo artists, and Celtic shops full of Aran sweaters, Scottish clan tartan scarves, and Shamrock mugs. A brief perusal of the category "Celtic" on the web auction site *ebay* will daily turn up hundreds of items for sale, such as Celtic Mythology cigarette lighters, Celtic candles, Celtic Darts, Celtic ties, Celtic silverware, Celtic glass ornaments, Celtic horse harnesses, Celtic socks, Celtic watches, Druid Tarot cards, Druid lapel pins and badges, an album by the rock band Druids of Stonehenge, an "evil druid staff" with a hellhound skull, and a host of Celtic jewelry, music, and books. These are at once the material signs and the engine of the ambivalent relationship between Celticity, Celtitude, and globalization.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE CONSUMPTION OF THE PAST

Every bit as much as it has for Celticism, professional archaeology clearly forms an important part of the field of consumption for these new forms of popular cultural production that I have called Celticity and Celtitude. Nearly all the druid and other Celtic societies have lists of recommended reading on their websites that include the works of mainstream academics – usually with direct links to .com booksellers. Those of us who conduct research on "Celtic" archaeology are constantly receiving e-mail and phone inquiries and requests for lectures on the ancient Celts.

What is more, archaeological excavations have been instrumental in creating the landscape through which druids, heritage-seekers, and others anchor their novel constructions of Celtic identity in a sacred geography. Sites such as Stonehenge, Avebury, Glastonbury, Carnac, and Iona furnish a focus for international pilgrimage and for rituals that serve the construction of collective memory and the embodiment of a comforting sense of authenticity and continuity (despite archaeolo-

gists' caveats about anachronisms). Archaeologists have also provided the material objects that constitute a kind of symbolic reservoir for the metonymic evocation of an imagined collective past. For instance, the authors of the book *Druid Magic: The Practice of Celtic Wisdom* have included a chapter entitled "So you want to visit the Celtic homelands?" with advice about constructing an itinerary based upon sites with names linked to mythology, archaeological sites, and archaeological museums (Sutton, Mann 2000). The Mayor of Chicago (from a prominent Irish-American family), in his greeting to festival-goers in the 2005 official program, claims that "The Celtic Fest Chicago celebrates traditions and music that date back to 700 B.C.", and the first of these festivals actually had a booth dedicated to Celtic archaeological material. The *Celtic Spirit Journeys* website offers images of a dolmen and a Neolithic tumulus mound as enticements to experience "pilgrimages for the soul in search of meaning, magic and mystery" – "an opportunity for a small group of spiritual pilgrims to experience the living power and beauty of these ancient places, to dwell in sacred space through meditation and ritual."⁶ However, the consumption of archaeological sites and objects exemplified by these cases forms part of a broader postmodern pastiche strategy of consumption that sees academic books mixed indiscriminately with the works of 18th century Romantic antiquarians, neo-druid manuals, and New Age philosophical tracts. The interpretative caveats of professionals are rarely headed, and most often archaeologists appear to be valued primarily for their role in producing sites, objects, and images that can be consumed in a free-floating market of decontextualized indexical signs.

Archaeologists have not been insensitive to this market of avid consumers, as the proliferation of lavishly (and sometimes luridly) illustrated coffee-table books on "The Celts", "The Celtic World", "Celtic Gods and Goddesses", "Celtic Art", etc. testifies. Moreover, even for the specialist academic market, the logic of publishers' marketing pressures (at least in the Anglophone world) demands that the word "Celtic" is now virtually mandatory in the title of almost any book on the European Iron Age, even though many professionals have serious reservations about the scholarly use of the word. Some would see this as crass pandering – others as an attempt to educate the broader public by subtly feeding popular culture with an easily digestible message.

Whatever the case, archaeologists have an obligation self-consciously to examine the social context and consequences of their practice. New spiritualized, commoditized, and (at least overtly) de-politicized forms of Celtic identity, decoupled from older associations with nationalism and race, might seem to be a fairly innocuous use of the past that is far less susceptible, for example, to the dangerous ethno-nationalist manipulations of recent history. However, there are subtle tensions, contradictions, and geopolitical implications that must be understood. For example, neo-Pagan druids often feel that New Age Celtic enthusiasts are responsible for a commercialization of spirituality (Bowman 1996), and Irish-diaspora Celts are sometimes annoyed by what they disparage as inauthentic, frivolous claims to Celticity by neo-druids and New Agers alike. A more serious political concern is that many of the more traditional regionalist Celticism movements view the universalizing discourses of postmodern Celticity with alarm as a new form of cultural imperialism – an attempt to absorb, co-opt, and delegitimize their own sense of distinctive local culture and identity and to impose a new form of hegemonic center-periphery relationship. This is not an unreasonable perspective, given that the centers of this homogenizing, de-politicized postmodern Celticity coincide precisely with the centers of power in the colonial and postcolonial world. Hence, one can easily understand the annoyance of some Scottish or Cornish regional activists, for example, who view English druids as attempting to usurp and monopolize Celtic identity while not speaking the Celtic language or having much knowledge of or concern for local history or culture (Bowman 1996; Hale 2002). This is not radically different from the position of Native Americans who see their sacred sites overrun by white middle-class New Age shamans.

Even more alarming are such things as an attempt to use "megaliths," stone carvings, and other objects in New Zealand as a means of demonstrating a Celtic presence on the island before the indigenous Maori. For example, the book *Ancient Celtic New Zealand* and its dedicated website offer the startling contention that Maori Pa forts are "an exact duplication" of hillforts in prehistoric Britain and paranoid claims that archaeological evidence of pre-Polynesian burials and even entire stone cities are being suppressed by politically correct scholars and government officials (Doutré 1999).⁷ This is a clear attempt

to use archaeology to provide a justification for later European colonialism and current land claims based upon imagined ancient Celtic diasporic connections. Equally troubling examples of Celtitude include organizations such as the *League of the South*, a neo-Confederate group formed in 1994 that uses claims to Celtic ancestry to promote the maintenance of white privilege in the American South (Hague, Giordano, Sebesta 2005). The website of this organization includes advertisements for books with titles such as *Celtic Warfare* alongside such works as *Myths of American Slavery*.⁸ In fact, Celtitude (especially the idea of Scottish and Irish ancestry) has become a common trope in the construction of white neo-Confederate southern culture more generally, and the Civil War is even portrayed as a war between Celts (i.e. Southerners) and the English (i.e. Northerners) in various publications of the movement (McWhiney 1988; 1989). As Edward Sebesta has pointed out, there is now even a “Confederate memorial tartan” officially approved by the Scottish Tartan Authority, bagpipes have become a common musical accompaniment to Confederate events, and neo-Confederates have become strong supporters of Scottish nationalist politics.⁹

Equally significant, if less sinister, is the phenomenon of pilgrimage, which, as Stokes and Bohlman note, “is a particularly crucial trope in the contemporary Celticist imaginary, its appeal, once again, primarily to a leisured class of outsiders” (2003, 8). What is potentially unsettling are the visions of wealthy and powerful diaspora com-

munities whose romantic visions of an imagined homeland can come to exert a powerful structuring influence on, for example, Irish understandings of their own identity through the economic force of tourism and the control of cinema, television, and other media of representation. There is indeed a danger that entire communities, or even nations, may become, in a sense, giant theme parks for those searching for their Celtic roots.

Archaeologists have a role in this, and we cannot sidestep these issues. We are not simply providing fodder for innocent popular consumption. There is a dark side to popular culture’s attraction to archaeology with serious social and geopolitical consequences. After a decade of critical analysis, we archaeologists are by now well sensitized to the dangers of essentializing nationalist and colonialist mythologies and their destructive manipulations of archaeology; but the subtly pervasive forces of the neo-liberal market mentality and expanding global commodification of the past pose equally serious dangers for our practice – perhaps all the more so in that they are as yet little recognized. Whether driven by diasporic nostalgia, romantic spiritualism, or commercial profit, the postmodern global identityscapes that I have been discussing here offer a compelling example of the complex new challenges that face archaeologists. We have an obligation to not simply pander, but rather to engage in critical discussion of our role and responsibilities in this emerging new global palimpsest of conflicting identities and interests.

NOTES

1. <http://www.insular.demon.co.uk/vdo.htm>

2. Among the mainstream academic authors recommended by neo-druid and Celtic websites and publications, the works of Barry Cunliffe, Georges Dumézil, Stuart Piggott, Miranda Green, and Mircea Eliade are particularly popular. However, the range is wide and eclectic.

3. <http://www.aislingact.org>

4. *Celtworld*, which was built in a rather inaccessible location in Tramore, county Waterford, shut down a few years after it opened.

5. <http://www.columcille.org/>

6. <http://www.celticspiritjourneys.com/>

7. <http://www.celticnz.co.nz/> This website also contains direct links to other “anomalous history” sites with similar claims for ancient European, Egyptian, Phoenician, etc. connections in the Americas and Australia (such as *Ancient American* – <http://www.ancientamerican.com/> – and *Awareness Quest* – <http://www.awarenessquest.com/>) and it is hooked into *The Stone Circle* webring. The latter, with 234 linked sites, advertises itself as “A Webring devoted to Stone Circles, Megaliths and other Prehistoric Sites around the world. Our sites feature hundreds of images, travel guides, archaeology, archaeoastronomy, and new thinking on the subject” (<http://D.webring.com/hub?ring=stonecircle>).

8. <http://leagueofthesouth.net/index.php>

9. <http://www.templeofdemocracy.com/ScottishAffairs.htm>

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