

Exploring Counter-Cultural Subcultures that Reclaim the Divine Feminine

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Given the current climate, marked by ecological disasters, climate change and Covid-19, many of us are now questioning our exploitative relationship with Nature. This re-evaluation of how we live is manifest in a growing interest in alternative life-style choices such as wellbeing, mindfulness, sustainability, self-sufficiency, Veganism and alternative and/or complementary spiritual practices. Goddess Culture is enjoying a resurgence of interest, as it entreats the individual to become more in touch with the inner feminine, espousing a more nurturing, empathetic and collective spirit in relation to the environment and Mother Earth. The emphasis of Goddess Culture is that the world has become imbalanced and chaotic, and that it is only by developing a more 'feminine' spirit that that we can begin to heal it. Such a stance has profound implications for social, cultural and ecological well-being.

Prior consumer culture theory (CCT) work has examined subcultures of consumption that challenge dominant ideological norms and advocate active resistance to them (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). However, the research on subcultures of consumption is usually framed as brand-driven and often transitory and tribal. Instead this research project focuses on counter-cultural movements that are deeply committed to belief systems and practices that challenge patriarchal norms and reclaim a sense of "divine femininity". These counter-cultural subcultures seek to look to historical and mythological ideas of the feminine to reclaim its inherent power, arguing that the privileging of the masculine has led to an imbalance in Western culture and that it is only by acknowledging and re-integrating the feminine that society can repair the damage - structural, psychic and environmental - that has been done. Wicca is one example of such a spiritual movement or belief system, as is the practice of Tantric yoga, whose adherents revere the ten Wisdom Goddesses (*dasha-mahavidya*) to reach spiritual aims. Potential topics of research interest include, but are not limited to:

1 ***Green Witchcraft***, a feminist subculture which draws on eco-feminist principles to unite environmental concern, natural healing and female empowerment, offering an alternative means to find spiritual value as well as advocating environmental and feminist activism (Plumwood (2004).

2 ***Tantric Yoga and the Divine Feminine***. This project may take a psychoanalytic perspective (Cluely and Desmond 2015), particularly as feminist Jungian scholars have long worked to tease out archetypal feminist characteristics and features (e.g., Clarissa Pinkola-Estes 1992) with the aim of re-awakening a divine femininity in the postmodern (consumer) subject.

3 ***Goddess Culture - Sacred Landscapes and Pilgrimage Sites***. This project is likely to apply an ethnographic lens to explore sites that revere Goddess Culture. The importance of the Goddess Sulis/Minerva and her sacred spring in Bath's development as a pilgrimage site is one potential topic, as is the Sacred Feminine in sites such as the Chalice Well and Red Spring in Glastonbury.

Topics 1 and 3 are part of a larger project: *Bewitching Consumer Culture: Witchcraft, Feminism and Markets* by Maclaran, Stevens & Kravets, forthcoming, 2021.

