

1: All Roads Lead to Rome?: Decadence, Paganism, Catholicism and the Later Life of Oscar Wilde

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In its main feature the Declaration of Independence is a great spiritual document. Equality, liberty, popular sovereignty, the rights of man – these are not elements which we can see and touch. They have their source and roots in the religious convictions. They belong to the unseen world. Materialism is neither new nor scientific. In the main, it is ancient Epicurean Atomism revamped and dressed up as modern science. Materialism teaches that all that exists is merely material or energy which is impersonal, totally neutral to any moral system or any interest in man as man. In this view, there is no basis for law, and no basis for man as unique and important. Materialism is of the world view of monism which teaches that all that exists is "one self-creating, self-sufficient substance" which may be divine spirit pantheism or spiritless substance materialism. Monism teaches that all things, including mankind, are merely diverse parts of the one-substance. God is acceptable to this monistic frame of mind only if He is not something outside of and superior to the one-substance but one with it. In other words, God must be dispersed throughout the whole substance. In his book, "Utopia: For utopians this means a heaven on earth ruled by perfected god-men. It was for this reason that Coolidge warned against pagan materialism: We cannot continue to enjoy the result if we neglect and abandon the cause. In practical terms, this means that through the goetia black magic of Darwinian transformism "we the people" have been speculatively reduced to aggregates of matter, subsumed into the "one substance" and now have solidarity oneness with apes, rocks, trees, fish, tumblebugs, pond scum, and dirt. Individual salvation has become collective salvation, individual rights are now group rights, male-female created distinctions have been melted down into androgyny, and monogamous marriage has become a sexual free-for-all. Law, foreign affairs, taxation, politics, immigration, morality and all other important decisions are now decided by a small group of "elites," many of whom are New Age spiritists led by spirit guides and Transcended Masters, and what they decide at any given moment is supposedly for the common good of society. The Return to Paganism C. The Renaissance reawakened a magic view of the world closely connected with pagan Gnostic sectarianism, Eastern pantheism as well as alchemical-scientism. Along with Eastern pantheism came spiritual evolution, reincarnation, karma and occultism, which means that evolutionary conceptions existed long before Darwin. Early on Lewis understood that Cosmic and Secular Humanism were merely two sides of the same revival of pagan monism. Thus he argued, Cosmic and Secular Humanism are not enemies in principle but rather cooperating philosophies united against the transcendent Creator, Christianity and Christian-based civilization. Brooks Alexander also identifies both Cosmic and Secular Humanism as the two sides of pagan monism. And because they are from the same root they tend to cross-pollinate and: This thought is expressed openly in the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and Dr. Beverly Galyean, leading exponent of occult New Age confluent education: So my whole view is very much based on that idea. Ethics is autonomous and situational Secular Humanism adopted the Gnostic myth of biological Darwinian evolution as an explanation both for the origin and development of life as well as for the perfecting of the one substance and mankind. According to him, this evolution of God from the world results in evolution becoming "conscious of itself" and ultimately, in the transformation of all matter into "Christ consciousness" or "pure spirit. Former guru Rabindranath R. But it could also be dangerous. Frightening psychic experiences awaited the Demons described in the Vedas had been known to take possession of some Yogis. Kundalini power, said to be coiled like a serpent at the base of the spine, could produce ecstatic experiences when released in deep meditation – or The line between ecstasy and horror was very fine During daily meditation I began to have visions of psychedelic colors, to hear unearthly music, and to visit exotic planets where the gods conversed with me, encouraging me to attain even higher states of consciousness. Sometimes in my trance I encountered the same horrible demonic creatures It was a frightful experience, but the Brahmacharya explained that it was normal and urged me to pursue the quest for Self Realization. At times I experienced a sense of mystical unity with the universe. I was the universe, Lord of all, omnipotent, omnipresent. My

instructors were excited at this. I was obviously a chosen vessel, destined for early success in the search for union with Brahman. The Forces that had guided my father were now guiding me. More serious and fiercer than ever before, the conflict is between the old and the new worldview. By the mids, a bright "new" spirituality began to seductively beckon demoralized, restless, narcissistic, consumerist Westerners. Promising personal "spiritual" power, peace, unending pleasure, and oneness with the Divine, it enticingly whispers, "you can become god. Western society is at a pivotal point, said Ferguson in reference to what she called the "Emergent Culture" of New Age. Ferguson called it the Aquarian Conspiracy for two reasons. First, astrology foretells the end of the Age of Pisces the fish. Astrologically the fish symbolizes the Christian Age, which is finally giving way to the New Age of Aquarius. Second, she calls it a conspiracy in recognition of a spiritually-cohesive, vast interlocking-network of individuals, grassroots initiatives, and thousands upon thousands of formal New Age organizations at every level of society, from the lowest level to the highest global corridors of political, spiritual, and economic power that link this movement both nationally and internationally. As occult spirituality moved with great speed and force over and across post-Christian America, mainstream media took note and reported: The Battleground for Freedom," Allen Quist warns: The ACLU and other similar organizations have no objections to pantheistic indoctrination. It is only Christianity that these organizations object to. In a work entitled, "Teachers, Preachers and Greens: The Unholy Alliance to Transform America," DeWeese reveals the existence of a well-funded yet covert effort to paganize American society through an assault on schools and churches. He reveals that the Cathedral of St. DeWeese describes a pagan "church service" at St. John, the Divine in New York City, the priest stands at the altar, ready to receive a procession of animals for the annual Feast of Saint Francis blessing. Down the aisle comes a procession of elephants, camels, donkeys, monkeys and birds. These are followed by members of the congregation carrying bowls of compost and worms. Next, to the sounds of music, come acrobats and jugglers. In their search for answers they are jettisoning as useless materialist explanations. A "new" consensus is emerging: Men have souls and demons exist: On the psychological level, we have come to know the notion underlying all possession, namely, that the body is a shell, inhabited by a soul, and that this shell may on occasion be surrendered to an intrusive alien entity. It was quite amusing to see how uncomfortable the theologians were at this strange exhibition of what I think they regarded as Medievalism from a distinguished member of their own theological group. It was as if they were apologizing to the scientific psychiatrists present that a theologian had returned to the era of demons and evil possession. By contrast the psychiatrists were in fact leaning forward eagerly recognizing that the collective demonic is something with which they are continually dealing. Conflict and Dialogue, John P. Raschke concludes that the "upsurge of Satanist practices The Satanist mindset is not "religion" in the regular sense of the word, but a mystification of the most corrupt secular passions and values Satanism is but the spiritual Frankenstein created by a social order that has attempted to sustain itself without God. The Occult and the West â€” Part 6, Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. John Weldon "All the gods of the pagans are demons" Psalm As a result, in the space of a few short decades, occult pagan spirituality has made profound inroads. Its upsurge manifests itself in the form of everything from UFO channeling cults, ghost-hunting, necromancy, goddess worship, shamanism, light-bearers, spirit guides, goddess worship, transcendental meditation, contemplative prayer, labyrinth walking, yoga, Wicca, revitalized Norse paganism, the annual Burning Man Festival now televised and the proliferation of Satanic cults. The End of the West? As the great apocalyptic prophet Fyodor Dostoevsky clearly understood, they are a madness-inducing "fire in the minds of men" that comes from the "unseen world. This means that our primary battle is spiritual, for we are not "contending against flesh and blood, but against the evil spirits It heralded the end of Babylon, Rome and the Aztec civilization. It came at the end of the medieval world and now it has come at the end of the post-Christian West But do contemporary Christians and like-minded Americans possess the undying faith, unfaltering courage, love of Truth, rock-solid conviction, perseverance and will to engage this spiritual war? Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future, Fr. Seraphim Rose Spirit Wars: Linda Kimball Linda Kimball is the author of numerous published articles and essays on culture, politics, and worldview. Her writings are published both nationally and internationally. Subscribe Receive future articles by Linda Kimball: [Click here](#) More by this author.

2: History of Southern Decadence in New Orleans

Decadence, Magic(k), and the Occult Goldsmiths, University of London, July Keynote speaker: Professor Patricia Pulham (University of Surrey) Call for Papers Nineteenth-century Decadence coincided with a resurgence of esotericism, alternative religions, and a belief in magic as a rejection of secularism and science.

For two centuries, those in control of the Louisiana state government have tried in vain to impose their prejudices on a city that is French, Spanish, Creole, African, Catholic, pagan and very gay in both senses of the word. If nothing else, New Orleans knows how to throw a party, from the world-famous Mardi Gras to other, more specialized celebrations. At any given time the residents numbered anywhere from six to ten, and it was still sometimes difficult to come up with the rent. The large bathroom became a natural gathering place in the house. It had no shower, only a clawfoot tub, but it also had a sofa. With from six to ten residents, and one bathtub, everyone became close friends. While one soaked in the tub, another would recline on the couch and read *A Streetcar Named Desire* aloud. And so it was, on a sultry August afternoon in , that this band of friends decided to plan an amusement. According to author James T. Spears, writing in *Rebels, Rubyfruit and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South*, this "motley crew of outcasts" began Southern Decadence as a going away party for a friend named Michael Evers, and to shut up a new "Belle Reve" tenant from New York who kept complaining about the New Orleans heat. Come As Your Favorite Southern Decadent," requiring all participants to dress in costume as their favorite "decadent Southern" character. According to Spears, "The party began late that Sunday afternoon, with the expectation that the next day Labor Day would allow for recovery. Forty or fifty people drank, smoked, and carried on near the big fig tree In , the Southern Decadence visionaries named Frederick Wright as the first Grand Marshal, hoping to provide at least a modicum of order. For the next six years, the format of the celebration changed little. Some were gay, some were not. But all were members of the founding group. By , most of the original organizers had moved on with their lives. Many felt that the event had become so big that it was no longer the intimate party they had started nine years earlier. He, along with some of his friends that hung out at the Golden Lantern bar, thought it was worth continuing and they took over the festivities. It was at this point that Southern Decadence became primarily a gay event. Both of these traditions continue today. And in , the Grand Marshal began to make a proclamation of the official theme, color and song. Because the celebration was cancelled due to Hurricane Katrina, Southern Decadence Grand Marshals Lisa Beaumann and Regina Adams reigned for both and , making the very first time in Southern Decadence history that grand marshals ruled for two years. And keeping with the unpredictability of Decadence, the Grand Marshals from reigned once again in The rest, as they say, is history. What began as a little costume party is now a world-famous gay celebration. It all begins in earnest six weeks before Labor Day. However, the real party starts on the Wednesday before Labor Day, and the events are non-stop. Want to read more about the "Crescent City"? Click on the following link:

3: Occult Pagan revival signals death of America and the West

This article examines paganism, Catholicism and decadence in the life and letters of the writer and wit Oscar Wilde, focusing in particular on the period after his release from Reading Gaol.

As both the capital of the pagan Roman Empire and the home of the Catholic popes, Rome can simultaneously represent the idealised Classical past of Cicero and Virgil as well as the resting place of the apostles Peter and Paul. For Wilde in , Rome is the place in which he can indulge in profligacy by spoiling his new companion Armando in a way reminiscent of his early relationship with Alfred Douglas, while at the same time making frequent visits to the Vatican and, for the first time since Berneval, debating the nature of his Catholicism with Ross e. Wilde , , , Wilde internalises the history of the city and uses it to narrate various points in his life—like Rome, he considers himself to have lived a life of paganism, then one of Christianity, before reconciling the two, in the same way as the city displays both aspects of its history, pagan and Christian, to its visitors. By examining his letters, this article will explore the ways in which Rome and its history gave Wilde a model with which he could articulate the key changes that occurred in his life during his final years. After struggling with Catholicism for most of his adulthood, it was not until he was able to live in Rome as both a pagan and a Catholic that he could come to terms with these aspects of his life. Nineteenth-Century Decadence, Paganism and Catholicism 2The meanings behind, and the connotations of, the three key terms used in this essay, namely decadence, paganism and Catholicism, were the subject of much discussion in nineteenth-century literature as writers and thinkers negotiated the intimate relationship between the three ideas. As Gilman wrote in his discussion of decadence as an epithet: Many key figures in the Decadent Movement invoked classical antiquity, particularly ancient Rome. Imperial Rome, with its colourful and omnipotent emperors, its varied literature and its immense spectacle, provided an archetypal model for many of the Decadents. All three of these emperors are notorious in the classical tradition as despots see, for example, Tacitus Annals 6. Elagabalus is another favourite of the Decadents. In Degeneration, he writes: Commodian, Prudentius and Sidonius are all late-antique Christian writers. Prudentius wrote in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, and Sidonius Apollinaris in the mid to late fifth century AD. This was not an easy task as traditional religion was so deeply imbedded in the idea of Rome and its empire. Similarly, in , Reverend H. Some there were who protested against this heathenising of the church, but in vain. The pagan ritual came in. Early Christian writing was frequently discussed in the literature of the Tractarians of the Oxford Movement. Although Newman struggled with the ostentation of Catholic ritual, early exegetical works and the words of the patristic fathers remained valuable to his own understanding of Christianity. The way in which Catholicism was shaped by its antique origins was a controversial topic in the nineteenth century and, as we will see, the legacy of the Oxford Movement was still present when Wilde went up to Magdalen College, Oxford in . Alongside the influence of broader nineteenth-century concerns about decadence, paganism and Catholicism, Wilde also encountered varying forms of paganism and Christianity as a boy and young man in Ireland. From a young age, he was introduced to a number of belief systems that encouraged him to think about the relationships between ancient, modern, Celtic and Roman forms of paganism and Christianity. Wilde discusses the appropriation of William Wilde, in his publication Irish Popular Superstitions , argues that Irish Catholicism is full of pagan elements that predate Christianisation. Rome was both corrupt and corrupting, and Greece was the home of proper paganism. Being very impressionable [Oscar] is just now rather fascinated by Roman Catholicism, and is indeed on his way to Rome, in order to see all the glories of the religion which seems to him the highest and the most sentimental. Mahaffy is quite determined to prevent this if possible, and is using every argument he can to check him. At first he tried hard to persuade him to come to Greece with us, pointing out to him by the way all the worst faults of Popery. While, for Mahaffy, Roman paganism had been tainted as a result of its appropriation by Roman Catholicism the reverse of the argument made by Bennett and Leonard , the Greek Orthodox Church was far enough removed from Classical Greek paganism that neither one was spoiled. However, the conversion did not take place see Wilde , 44, to Reginald Harding. In , Wilde visited Reverend Sebastian Bowden at the Brompton Oratory in London to

discuss a possible conversion, but finally, on the appointed day of his baptism with Fr Bowden, he sent a bunch of altar lilies in his place Schuchard , ; Wilde , n. Wilde himself provides a practical reason for his non-conversionâ€”his father would financially disown him if he converted: Wilde , 57; see also Wilde , 54 and Ellmann 32, It is better, thought Wilde perhaps, to stay as a Protestant and a Classical Greek scholar, than a Roman Catholic faced with the worst parts of Roman pagan and Christian culture. The Road to Rome 13We can see fully the impression that these early encounters with paganism and Catholicism left on Wilde when we consider his process of self-contemplation and self-reflection following his release from prison. He explains to Alfred Douglas in *De Profundis*: You admired my work when it was finished: I am not speaking in phrases of rhetorical exaggeration but in terms of absolute truth to actual fact when I remind you that during the whole time we were together I never wrote one single line. Whether at Torquay, Goring, London, Florence or elsewhere, my life, as long as you were by my side, was entirely sterile and uncreative. And with but few intervals you were, I regret to say, by my side always. Nelson, in May Masurel-Murray explains that there is a certain irony apparent in this scene: Wilde knows that his protagonist is providing a corrupt mouthpiece for the values that he himself is accused of holding by his critics. To the editor of the *Scots Observer*, Wilde writes: For this, sir, there is no excuse at all. Dorian confesses to desiring an even more sensuous experience than was had by Petronius, who was notorious for being an amoral product of the Neronian age Tacitus *Annals*

However, the soulless Dorian does not experience life as others do, and, significantly, it is this tainted character that invokes the young despotic rulers of Rome and can only appreciate the ritual of Catholicism in terms of its vestments and objects. This includes rejecting the traditional symbols of classical paganism as, at this point, they threaten the purity of his Catholicism. The result is his adoption of an un-decadent and un-Bennett-like Catholicism. We see the manifestation of this in his proceeding letters: I am going tomorrow on a pilgrimage. I always wanted to be a pilgrim, and I have decided to start early tomorrow to the shrine of Notre Dame de Liesse. So I went into the water without being a Pagan. The consequence was that I was not tempted by either Sirens, or Mermaidens, or any of the green-haired following of Glaucus. I really think that this is a remarkable thing. In my pagan days the sea was always full of tritons blowing conches, and other unpleasant things. Now it is quite different. Wilde encourages Ross to write to him about religion, and is dismayed that his friend is not always forthcoming in his replies: Neronian Rome can represent if Wilde so chooses paganism at its worst. Nero, in the early Christian tradition in which he was also an Antichrist, wilfully rejected Christianity because of his veneration of the pagan gods see, for example, Lactantius *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* 2. At this time we see Wilde retreat into this life and convey an almost child-like vulnerabilityâ€”he is scared to go somewhere as big and bright as Paris. Whether this fear is an exaggeration or not, Wilde seems, temporarily at least, to be attracted by the remedies that a frugal life, with regular attendance at Mass on Sundays, could offer. The pendulum has swung back the other way. Wilde leaves for Naples, and we do not hear anything about church visits either while he resides there with Alfred Douglas, or in the period after that during which he resides in Paris. We see this in two letters to Ross from Paris, his next stop after Naples, in which icons of Roman paganism and Roman decadence take precedence. I mean are they people who were ever my friends? Moreover, while Elagabalus and Antinous are both renowned as freely homosexual figures from the Roman past, they are also important in terms of their religious significance. Owing to his veneration of an eastern solar deity above Jupiter, in the historical tradition Elagabalus is most infamous for his crimes against religion. By mentioning Elagabalus, Wilde not only appeals to the freedom of ancient sexuality, but also to a figure who, according to the historical tradition, dared to threaten the gods of the Roman pantheon themselves. By referring to Antinous and Elagabalus, Wilde finds figures from antiquity that can represent the true nature, as he sees it, of his relationship with Douglas. He is witty, graceful, lovely to look at, loveable to be with. However, Wilde still does not seem to be visiting churches, and does not debate or request debates about Catholicism with Ross. He describes a typical day in his Parisian life to Ross, but religion is absent: I live an ordinary life. I dine in modest restaurants for two or three francs. My life is rather dull. I cannot flaunt or dash about: And, in fact, when Wilde does get some money, a sign of decadent paganism in the form of Neronian Rome returns: The loveliest carriageâ€”all yellow roses, the horses with traces and harness of violetsâ€”was occupied by an evil-looking English man: He said he never would: Just a

month later, Wilde tells Robbie Ross of another young boy, Dario, with whom he goes to see the Pope. Wilde does not deny himself such pleasures, but instead decides to affect a form of separation between the decadent space in which he kisses, and the spiritual space in which he does not. He enjoys a young boy in his garden, but it is not the only thing he does. Wilde has found his solution: Naples was evil and luxurious. If Sicily represents unbridled beauty and Naples represents evil luxury, then Rome represents spirituality. His relationship with ancient Rome through modern Rome is measured, and encompasses all sides of his engagement with religion without one overwhelming the other: Wilde does not entirely commit to institutional Catholicism, but neither does he ignore the pagan things that were absent from his almost baptismal bath in Berneval, which provide him with so much pleasure. Thus, the unique place of Rome as pagan and Christian capital allows Wilde first to negotiate and then to reconcile his impulse to turn to religion following his release from prison with his decadence, his materialism, his paganism and his Romanness. Through his visit to Rome, Wilde can adopt or reject aspects of these concepts in order to create a personal religiosity that can be termed distinctly Wildean. InterVarsity Press Academic, *Popery, as Set Forth in Scripture: Its Guilt and Its Doom*, a Sermon. *The Idea of Decadence in French Literature Studies in the Literary Influence of the Oxford Movement*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, *Pagan City and Christian Capital*:

4: The Closet Professor: The History of Southern Decadence

Decadence, Magic(k), and the Occult Goldsmiths, University of London, July Keynote speaker: Professor Patricia Pulham (University of Surrey) Nineteenth-century Decadence coincided with a resurgence of esotericism, alternative religions, and a belief in magic as a rejection of secularism and science.

Quotes[edit] Gods are called many by the error of some who worshipped many deities, thinking as they did the planets and other stars were gods, and also the separate parts of the world. Comparative theology is a two-edged weapon, and has so proved itself. But the Christian advocates, unabashed by evidence, force comparison in the serenest way; Christian legends and dogmas, they say, do somewhat resemble the heathen, it is true; but see, while the one teaches us the existence, powers, and attributes of an all-wise, all-good Father-God, Brahmanism gives us a multitude of minor gods, and Buddhism none whatever; one is fetishism and polytheism, the other bald atheism. This is one edge of the sword, and this the other: Despite missions, despite armies, despite enforced commercial intercourse, the "heathen" find nothing in the teachings of Jesus -- sublime though some are -- that Christna and Gautama had not taught them before. And so, to gain over any new converts, and keep the few already won by centuries of cunning, the Christians give the "heathen" dogmas more absurd than their own, and cheat them by adopting the habit of their native priests, and practicing the very "idolatry and fetishism" which they so disparage in the "heathens. When you come down to it, has there ever been a genuine polytheism? Even Homer supposes a sort of fundamental unity of the divine that permits the gods to identify themselves as gods, even when they dwell far from one another Odyssey 5. What the [monotheistic] revelations bring is, rather, the end of a "cosmotheism" that makes no radical distinction between the divine and the physical. The remote dwellers upon the Ganges distinctly made known that future life about which Moses is silent or obscure, and that unity and Omnipotence of the Creator which were unknown to the polytheism of the Greek and Roman multitude, and to the dualism of Mithraic legislators, while Vyasa perhaps surpassed Plato in keeping the people tremblingly alive to the punishment which awaited evil deeds. General Joseph Davey Cunningham, author of A history of the Sikhs, from the origin of the nation to the battles of the Sutlej. The wise call the One Being by many names. Quoted from Elst, Koenraad Who is a Hindu?: Hindu revivalist views of Animism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and other offshoots of Hinduism. ISBN Even the most humane and compassionate of the monotheisms and polytheisms are complicit in this quiet and irrational authoritarianism: Christopher Hitchens , Letter to a Young Contrarian Not at all similar are the race of the immortal gods and the race of men who walk upon the earth. Homer , Iliad, Book V. This is the "research quote" for Polytheism in Civilization IV. It must appear impossible, that theism could, from reasoning, have been the primary religion of human race, and have afterwards, by its corruption, given birth to polytheism and to all the various superstitions of the heathen world. Reason, when obvious, prevents these corruptions: When abstruse, it keeps the principles entirely from the knowledge of the vulgar, who are alone liable to corrupt any principle or opinion. The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg. For atheism and polytheism there is no special problem of suffering, nor need there be for every kind of monotheism. The deepest difference between religions is not that between polytheism and monotheism. It is impossible to imagine the universe run by a wise, just and omnipotent God, but it is quite easy to imagine it run by a board of gods. Donald M Simanek, John. Bible , Psalms High is He above what they attribute to Him! The Vedic approach, is perhaps the best. It gives unity without sacrificing diversity. In fact, it gives a deeper unity and a deeper diversity beyond the power of ordinary monotheism and polytheism. It is one with the yogic and the mystic approach In this deeper approach, the distinction is not between a true One God and false Many Gods; it is between a true way of worship and a false way of worship. Wherever there is sincerity, truth and self-giving in worship, that worship goes to the true altar by whatever name we may designate it and in whatever way we may conceive it. But if it is not desireless, if it has ego, falsehood, conceit and deceit in it, then it is unavailing though it may be offered to the most true God, theologically speaking. Wahabbis think that holy sites are a manifestation of polytheism.

They deem anyone who opposes them to be polytheist. They believe Shias, Sunnis, and the Islamic world are polytheist. I studied the Koran a great deal. I came away from that study with the conviction there have been few religions in the world as deadly to men as that of Muhammad. So far as I can see, it is the principal cause of the decadence so visible today in the Muslim world and, though less absurd than the polytheism of old, its social and political tendencies are in my opinion to be feared, and I therefore regard it as a form of decadence rather than a form of progress in relation to paganism itself.

5: Sexual Personae - Wikipedia

Examining the final years of Delphic consultation, this monograph argues that the sanctuary operated on two connected, yet distinct levels: the oracle, which was in decline, and the remaining religious, political and social elements at the site which continued to thrive.

Fellini, among the greatest filmmakers to survive the Second World War in Italy, adopted the conventions of neorealism but soon moved to his own style of surreal fantasy. His *La Dolce Vita* put ancient myth in its place and shifted its perspective to the present. Actors in the film wear modern outfits that bring to mind figures from the mythical past. The goddess Anita Ekberg and the demigod, two figures of ancient paganism, dance in a popular nightclub while two of the more powerful icons of the rebirth of Rome descend on the city in the form of a statue of Christ, and the cathedral named for Saint Peter. The movie is building up a graveyard of Civilization on the open field today called the Circus Maximus. The questing hero Mastroianni makes a nighttime journey in and around Rome with the goddess at his side. She finds an abandoned kitten in an alley and carries it through the dark streets until she comes upon the Trevi Fountain. Wading into the water in full evening gown, she calls to Mastroianni to join her. It would have been astounding if she had dropped her gown here, but the legend is that the water was too cold. The film begins to unravel at this point, with decadence devolving into debauchery and debauchery becoming depressing. In a nightclub, a group of female dancers performs; they bring large balloons onto the dance floor and leave them there when they depart. Later, a sad figure in a top hat enters and plays a plaintive trumpet solo to the balloons strewn on the dance floor. When he leaves, the balloons follow him off. They stand around it and study it indifferently â€” it appears to be dead. A pretty young girl calls to Mastroianni across a small inlet. He cannot hear her words so she mimes her invitation. Still he cannot make out her meaning and wanders off with the ragtag crew. Impressions of *La Dolce Vita*: Marcello is the post-cultural man, a journalist surrounded by paparazzi. To further confuse the affair, Marcello has a pretty mistress at home who attempts suicide. Marcello tries to find a place where they can spend the night, but is unsuccessful. He returns her to her hotel at dawn where he takes a beating from her jealous boyfriend Lex Barker, who slaps her and punches Marcello in the gut. Out on a photo shoot, Marcello sees his old friend Steiner walking into a church; he follows and Steiner plays the organ for him. Next he is out in the countryside with Emma where it is alleged that two children have seen the Madonna in a tree. But, Steiner is not convinced, he feels trapped in a bubble. Marcello spends some solitary time at the beach trying to write and then returns to Via Veneto. His father pays him a surprise visit. In Via Veneto, Marcello falls in with another group and they take their cars to a villa somewhere outside of the city. The wealthy partiers are engaged in dilettantish rites. Suddenly, Marcello is sitting in his car with Emma on a desolate highway and they have a terrible fight. He ejects her from the car and drives off, then returns and takes her home. He arrives to find that Steiner has been shot and killed. Marcello and a detective must meet the bus bringing Mrs. Steiner home from work and tell her what has happened. Abruptly, he is back in a procession of cars going to a party at a wealthy home. It is an exercise in decadence, or the simulation of decadence; this is where we see Marcello ride one of the women like a horse. He is cruel and abusive to most of the women. The whole affair is degrading. Special Features on the DVD: There is a television piece where Fellini leads a grinning, silent interviewer through the grounds of Cinecittà reminiscing on his days of glory within these walls. There are also some interviews with Marcello Mastroianni and Anita Ekberg that are actually part of the *Intervista* material. Further irrelevance may be found in a set of about 20 brief commercials Fellini shot for use in *Fred and Ginger*. The one for *Dante Watches* involves a marionette Dante. It is a movie about Rome, and a movie about movies, and an autobiographical romp for the director. The vaudeville scenes are my personal favorites. These were the times of *Il Duce*. Some cinematic scenes have a modern Dantesque quality, including a long sequence on the choked highways leading into modern Rome, ending at the Colosseum at night; and a sequence in the tunnels where they are digging the Roman subway. The excavators find ancient Roman frescoes fancifully replicated, which promptly disintegrate as the air hits them. Fellini appears onscreen occasionally. A nod to the times includes scenes of hippies making love and music on the Spanish Steps. The

film ends with street scenes of modern Rome at night. The cameras follow a motorcycle gang roaring through the ancient deserted streets of the city, past the Colosseum again, and off into the darkness. This is an idiosyncratic and self-indulgent film that succeeds in making a beautiful city look sordid at best and desolate at worst. For a more deeply personal epilog on the metaphor of the fall of Rome, see *Amarcord*

6: Project MUSE - Theophile Gautier and the Conception of Decadence

Abstract. Barnett examines romantic paganism's eighteenth-century roots and offers a synthesis of Enlightenment debates over the role of pagan mythology in the eighteenth century, including analyses of pamphlets that link paganism with both "popishness" and sorcery.

We see Michael Psellus in the 11th Century surprisingly contrasting "the ancient and lesser Rome, and the later, more powerful city" [! Even so, in the midst of Istanbul, it mostly still remains standing, in some places even restored, its breaches merely allowing modern streets to pass [note]. As Roman historians liked to use archaic place names, and so frequently called Constantinople "Byzantium," their use of "Byzantine," Byzantinus, was simply and logically for residents of the Capital. The Suda [a tenth century encyclopedia] calls [the historian] Malchus [of Philadelphia] a "Byzantine," which usually meant a native of Constantinople but in this case must have meant a longtime resident. German, envoys, in an embassy from Otto I , with their own pretensions as successors of Rome, arrived at the Court of Nicephorus Phocas in , their representation of Otto as the "Emperor of the Romans" Imperator Romanorum was hotly disputed. Otto was not a successor of Constantine. A letter then arrived from the Pope addressed to the "emperor of the Greeks. Evidently the Pope had not heard of "Byzantium" as the name of the Empire [note]. While "Byzantium" is indeed used merely as a term of convenience and custom by most historians, there is the awkward question of when "Rome" ends and "Byzantium" begins. If Rome "fell" in , then clearly "Byzantium" should begin there; but this boundary is rarely used. Since Constantinople itself must be explained, Byzantine histories commonly begin with Constantine, often in , when Constantine had defeated Licinius and acquired the East. This is what one finds in A. The flip side of this would be simply to end the "Roman Empire" with Constantine. This is not common, but I have seen Garrett G. With thirty-six lectures on Emperors, Fagan abruptly stops at Constantine, with a handoff to Kenneth W. Fagan says that, to him, Constantine was the first Mediaeval, or the first Byzantine, Emperor; and so his job is done. The drawback of this approach is that the last century and a half of the Western Empire falls between the stools, not to mention the extraordinary and tragic Julian , who ruled the whole Empire. And Harl has the annoying habit of saying "Stilichio" for Stilicho and "Visigoths" for "Visigoths," forms that I do not see attested in any print source. So this approach really will not do. On the other hand, David R. Others take Phocas or Heraclius , under whom the Danube Frontier collapsed and the Arab invasion occurred, as the first "Byzantine" emperors: Fischer Verlag, Part 2, Second Edition, , pp. Fischer Verlag, Second Edition, , pp. One nice touch for the division at Phocas could be that he was the last Emperor to place a monument, a column, in the Forum at Rome. A final date for the transition could be , which is used by Peter Brown and others to terminate "Late Antiquity. Both these events are significant, but they seem like variations on developments already far progressed. However much one wishes to avoid the dangers [? As I have noted, several recent writers prefer to see "Byzantium" proper as beginning from ca. Constantinople was formally inaugurated in AD , but there was not yet such an entity as "Byzantium," distinct from the eastern Roman Empire, and it remains the case that the Byzantines thought of themselves as Romans chapter 3. The shock and loss of territory consequent on the Arab invasion of the seventh century also necessitated a painful adjustment. Nevertheless, adopting a later periodization risks obscuring the fact that what we call Byzantium had a long earlier history; it was not a new state formed only in the medieval period. In the last generation "late antiquity" has taken over from "the later Roman empire" in much of the secondary literature, even if the continuing number of publications discussing its scope and nature suggests that these questions are not yet settled. The "explosion" of late antiquity and now the turn to the east -- that is, toward the eastern Mediterranean, the rise of Islam, and the early Islamic world -- that is such a feature of current scholarship are both tendencies that threaten to squeeze out Byzantium. And if there are "tendencies that threaten to squeeze out Byzantium," then perhaps this should be encouraged, since a more honest and accurate naming eliminates much of the basis of the sort of contempt that Cameron herself laments. If we want to avoid entirely the impression that Byzantium "was not a new state formed only in the medieval period," then this would be accomplished most effectively by just not using the word "Byzantium. Cameron certainly never

actually calls them Romans. So why should modern historians have ever scorned the successors of Augustus in Constantinople? The scorn goes back a little earlier. Nothing after Alexander Severus is quite Roman enough for many scholars. The Oxford dictionary is also missing "Romania," etc. These truncations leave one without the connections to the mediaeval and modern meanings of "count," "duke," or "diocese. The abbreviation of Classical Latin literature is also evident in the classic Latin textbook, which I bought in , Frederic M. Secular Late Antiquity thus gets ignored and bypassed -- perhaps from a disinclination to admit that it even existed -- ironically and incongruously without this being motivated by any admiration for Christianity. The chapter is called "Envoi: On Taking Leave of Antiquity. Such impatience can also be seen in the large format and lavishly illustrated Chronicle of the Roman Emperors by Chris Scarre Thames and Hudson, , ; pages of text. Thus, years of Roman history, including a century the 4th with extensive ruins and literature, are given less than half the space that one might expect. Closer inspection reveals something else. Not a single pre monument of Constantinople is shown, not the pillars of Claudius II or Constantine, nor the Walls of Theodosius II though they are at least mentioned. In fact, after the Arch of Constantine and a part of one of his churches in Rome, there is not a single monument or building illustrated in the text, not even anything from Ravenna, the capital of the last Western Emperors. No wonder things could be wrapped up so quickly. One is left with the false impression, merely scanning the pages, that nothing was built, an impression as false and misleading though consistent with expectations for decadence or the Dark Ages as the title of the last chapter, "The Last Emperors," which disposes of everyone after Constantine years -- George Washington to Herbert Hoover in just ten pages. For a summary treatment, Goldsworthy does a good job; but for an army that was twice as large as that of the Principate, with a much more complex organization, whose performance involves many very critical historical questions, the lack of proportion is obvious. Indeed, why Valens lost the battle is one of the most important questions in all of Roman, or even world, history. Rather than deal with those changes, which for the secular historian involve disagreeable topics like Christianity, it is much easier to dismiss them, write them off, and bundle the rest of the history of Romania into a different, and contemptible, academic subfield. This then preserves "Rome" as a glittering, static, Platonic Form of fascination, whether proudly pagan -- and therefore modern, since the old gods need not be taken seriously as religion -- or delightfully hedonistic and decadent -- and therefore modern again, like any good party in Greenwich Village. Diocletian and Constantine themselves become something rather like a footnote to the real story, whose interest is exhausted with Nero, or perhaps with Marcus Aurelius. Constantine has already sinned against the sensibilities of the Enlightenment or is it the Renaissance? He, and his successors, have willfully disqualified themselves from our serious consideration, let alone our respect. The "Fall" is thus not an event in history, but a boundary in historiography -- something more dramatic and absolute than anything some marauding Goths could have accomplished -- people whose identity and deeds are irrelevant anyway, besides the absurdity of that new religion, which is the real issue. Classicists perhaps just should not bother with Roman history after They only continue down to because they have taken that as the "Fall" and the end of Roman history, which they have a disagreeable duty to address. Since is actually nothing of sort, they should just forget about it. They certainly have enough to keep them busy before The first two hundred years of Roman history do make a pretty compact cultural and historical unit. The culture and religion are still pagan, the office of emperor maintains some pretense of republican form, Roman power is more or less triumphant and unchallenged, and there are those wonderfully entertaining "decadent" emperors, upon whom every indulgence and sexual excess can be projected which may actually be what the Roman historians were doing themselves. Then we have a world of trouble. Palmyra takes the East. Gaul and Spain break away. The Goths sack Athens. Pirates rake the seas. The Empire seems to be disintegrating. Soon philosophy turns from the grim determination of Stoicism to the otherworldly consolations of mysticism, whether in the pagan Neoplatonism of Plotinus or the new religions like Christianity, Mithraism, or Manicheanism. This is all often too much for the Classicists, whose bias then distorts their estimation even of the facts of Late Antiquity. If inattention to the 3rd century onwards was due to a lack of events, a lack of literature, or a lack of ruins and archaeology, it might make some sense. But none of those things are lacking. It is the interest that is lacking: Classicists are all versions of Livy, whose historiography was driven by moral judgments that Rome was just not what it used to be see what he says

about Cincinnatus. Fortunately, there has been a reaction against this for a while now. Despite the date in the title, Brown essentially begins with the transformations of the 3rd century. This is, in essence, when Rome became Romania. But to those for whom "Rome" merely means the City, not the Empire, that is the problem. The transformation and universalization of the state means a loss of interest, despite complete continuity, even in language for a while. The new era for Romania begins neatly enough. The Era of Diocletian, beginning in , continued to be used in Egypt long after his death. Indeed, the Era of Diocletian is still used in Egypt by the Egyptian Christians, the Copts, in conjunction with the months of the ancient Egyptian calendar Thout, etc. Thus, September 11, , was the first day of the Year for the Copts. In the Sixth Century, Dionysius Exiguus, who was making up the Easter tables for the Julian calendar with Alexandrian astronomical data, was offended that Christians should be using the era of a persecutor of Christians. He thought that Christians should be using an era based on the life of Christ. They call theirs the "Era of Martyrs," in homage to the martyrs, not to the person, of Diocletian. The Era of Diocletian does suggest the unit of a later, or perhaps second, Empire. Its natural end is not , but , as in Jones and Whittow. The emperor Heraclius , who had to deal with those appalling events, ushers in profound changes in the Empire. As the armies retreated from the shattered frontiers, they were settled in areas of Anatolia intended to support them in the absence of all the revenues from the lost provinces. This was the beginning of the "theme" military divisions, which eventually replaced the old Roman provinces. Also Greek rather than Latin began to be used for all official purposes. Further divisions are clear enough: This great story gives us "Middle Romania," when a transformed empire found a new identity, achieved remarkable status and, at least against the Bulgars , exacted a terrible revenge. Whether "Late Byzantium" or "Late Romania," we have the story whereby the Cosmopolitan Empire of Nations, founded on conquest and history and refounded on religion, vanishes altogether.

7: Decadence: Definition with Decadence Pictures and Photos

Decadence, Rome and Romania, whether in the pagan Neoplatonism of Plotinus or the new religions like Christianity, Mithraism, or Manicheanism.

Transformation The tradition positing general malaise goes back to Edward Gibbon who argued that the edifice of the Roman Empire had been built on unsound foundations to begin with. According to Gibbon, the fall was - in the final analysis - inevitable. On the other hand, Gibbon had assigned a major portion of the responsibility for the decay to the influence of Christianity, and is often, though perhaps unjustly, seen as the founding father of the school of monocausal explanation. On the other hand, the school of catastrophic collapse holds that the fall of the Empire had not been a pre-determined event and need not be taken for granted. According to this school, drawing its basic premise from the Pirenne thesis, the Roman world underwent a gradual though often violent series of transformations, morphing into the medieval world. The historians belonging to this school often prefer to speak of Late Antiquity instead of the Fall of the Roman Empire. They gradually entrusted the role of defending the Empire to barbarian mercenaries who eventually turned on them. Gibbon held that Christianity contributed to this shift by making the populace less interested in the worldly here-and-now because it was willing to wait for the rewards of heaven. The decline of Rome was the natural and inevitable effect of immoderate greatness. Prosperity ripened the principle of decay; the causes of destruction multiplied with the extent of conquest; and as soon as time or accident had removed the artificial supports, the stupendous fabric yielded to the pressure of its own weight. Vegetius on military decline Writing in the 5th century, the Roman historian Vegetius pleaded for reform of what must have been a greatly weakened army. The historian Arther Ferrill has suggested that the Roman Empire "particularly the military" declined largely as a result of an influx of Germanic mercenaries into the ranks of the legions. This "Germanization" and the resultant cultural dilution or "barbarization" led not only to a decline in the standard of drill and overall military preparedness within the Empire, but also to a decline of loyalty to the Roman government in favor of loyalty to commanders. Ferrill agrees with other Roman historians such as A. There was a decline in agriculture and land was withdrawn from cultivation, in some cases on a very large scale, sometimes as a direct result of barbarian invasions. However, the chief cause of the agricultural decline was high taxation on the marginal land, driving it out of cultivation. Toynbee and James Burke argue that the Roman Empire itself was a rotten system from its inception, and that the entire Imperial era was one of steady decay of institutions founded in Republican times. In their view, the Empire could never have lasted longer than it did without radical reforms that no Emperor could implement. The Romans had no budgetary system and thus wasted whatever resources they had available. The economy of the Empire was a Raubwirtschaft or plunder economy based on looting existing resources rather than producing anything new. With the cessation of tribute from conquered territories, the full cost of their military machine had to be borne by the citizenry. An economy based upon slave labor precluded a middle class with buying power. The Roman Empire produced few exportable goods. Material innovation, whether through entrepreneurialism or technological advancement, all but ended long before the final dissolution of the Empire. Meanwhile, the costs of military defense and the pomp of Emperors continued. Financial needs continued to increase, but the means of meeting them steadily eroded. In the end, due to economic failure, even the armor and weaponry of soldiers became so obsolete that the enemies of the Empire had better armor and weapons as well as larger forces. The decrepit social order offered so little to its subjects that many saw the barbarian invasion as liberation from onerous obligations to the ruling class. By the late 5th century the barbarian conqueror Odoacer had no use for the formality of an Empire upon deposing Romulus Augustus and chose neither to assume the title of Emperor himself nor to select a puppet, although legally he kept the lands as a commander of the Eastern Empire and maintained the Roman institutions such as the consulship. The formal end of the Roman Empire on the West in AD thus corresponds with the time in which the Empire and the title Emperor no longer had value. Michael Rostovtzeff, Ludwig von Mises, and Bruce Bartlett Historian Michael Rostovtzeff and economist Ludwig von Mises both argued that unsound economic policies played a key role in the impoverishment and decay of the

Roman Empire. According to them, by the 2nd century AD, the Roman Empire had developed a complex market economy in which trade was relatively free. Tariffs were low and laws controlling the prices of foodstuffs and other commodities had little impact because they did not fix the prices significantly below their market levels. After the 3rd century, however, debasement of the currency i. The price control laws then resulted in prices that were significantly below their free-market equilibrium levels. It should, however, be noted that Constantine initiated a successful reform of the currency which was completed before the barbarian invasions of the 4th century, and that thereafter the currency remained sound everywhere that remained within the empire until at least the 11th century - at any rate for gold coins. According to Rostovtzeff and Mises, artificially low prices led to the scarcity of foodstuffs, particularly in cities, whose inhabitants depended on trade to obtain them. Despite laws passed to prevent migration from the cities to the countryside, urban areas gradually became depopulated and many Roman citizens abandoned their specialized trades to practice subsistence agriculture. This, coupled with increasingly oppressive and arbitrary taxation, led to a severe net decrease in trade, technical innovation, and the overall wealth of the Empire. By the 3rd century, according to Bartlett, the monetary economy had collapsed. But the imperial government was now in a position where it had to satisfy the demands of the army at all costs. Failure to do so would result in the army forcibly deposing the emperor and installing a new one. Therefore, being unable to increase monetary taxes, the Roman Empire had to resort to direct requisitioning of physical goods anywhere it could find them - for example taking food and cattle from farmers. The authorities tried to restore order by requiring free people i. Eventually, this practice was extended to force children to follow the same occupation as their parents. So, for instance, farmers were tied to the land, and the sons of soldiers had to become soldiers themselves. Many common people reacted by moving to the countryside, sometimes joining the estates of the wealthy, and in general trying to be self-sufficient and interact as little as possible with the imperial authorities. Thus, according to Bartlett, Roman society began to dissolve into a number of separate estates that operated as closed systems, provided for all their own needs and did not engage in trade at all. These were the beginnings of feudalism. Tainter argues that societies become more complex as they try to solve problems. Social complexity can include differentiated social and economic roles, reliance on symbolic and abstract communication, and the existence of a class of information producers and analysts who are not involved in primary resource production. Such complexity requires a substantial "energy" subsidy meaning resources, or other forms of wealth. When a society confronts a "problem", such as a shortage of or difficulty in gaining access to energy, it tends to create new layers of bureaucracy, infrastructure, or social class to address the challenge. For example, as Roman agricultural output slowly declined and population increased, per-capita energy availability dropped. The Romans solved this problem in the short term by conquering their neighbours to appropriate their energy surpluses metals, grain, slaves, etc. However, this solution merely exacerbated the issue over the long term; as the Empire grew, the cost of maintaining communications, garrisons, civil government, etc. Eventually, this cost grew so great that any new challenges such as invasions and crop failures could not be solved by the acquisition of more territory. At that point, the Empire fragmented into smaller units. We often assume that the collapse of the Roman Empire was a catastrophe for everyone involved. Tainter points out that it can be seen as a very rational preference of individuals at the time, many of whom were better off all but the elite, presumably. Archeological evidence from human bones indicates that average nutrition improved after the collapse in many parts of the former Roman Empire. Average individuals may have benefited because they no longer had to invest in the burdensome complexity of empire. The army still remained a superior fighting instrument to its opponents, both civilized and barbarian; this is shown in the victories over Germanic tribes at the Battle of Strasbourg and in its ability to hold the line against the Sassanid Persians throughout the 4th century. But, says Goldsworthy, "Weakening central authority, social and economic problems and, most of all, the continuing grind of civil wars eroded the political capacity to maintain the army at this level. The Slow Death of the Roman Superpower Monocausal decay Disease William H. McNeill, a world historian, noted in chapter three of his book *Plagues and Peoples* that the Roman Empire suffered the severe and protracted Antonine Plague starting around AD. For about twenty years, waves of one or more diseases, possibly the first epidemics of smallpox and measles, swept through the

Empire, ultimately killing about half the population. Similar epidemics, such as the Plague of Cyprian, also occurred in the 3rd century. McNeill argues that the severe fall in population left the state apparatus and army too large for the population to support, leading to further economic and social decline that eventually killed the Western Empire. The Eastern half survived due to its larger population, which even after the plagues was sufficient for an effective state apparatus. Archaeology has revealed that from the 2nd century onward, the inhabited area in most Roman towns and cities grew smaller and smaller. Imperial laws concerning "agri deserti", or deserted lands, became increasingly common and desperate. Wars also increased contact with Asia, particularly wars with the Persian Empire. With increased contact with Asia came increased transmission of disease into the Mediterranean from Asia. Romans used public fountains, public latrines, public baths, and supported many brothels all of which were conducive to the spread of pathogens. Romans crowded into walled cities and the poor and the slaves lived in very close quarters with each other. Epidemics began sweeping through the Empire. The culture of the German barbarians living just across the Rhine and Danube rivers was not so conducive to the spread of pathogens. Germans lived in small scattered villages that did not support the same level of trade as did Roman settlements. Germans lived in single-family detached houses. Germans did not have public baths nor as many brothels and drank ale made with boiled water. The barbarian population seemed to be on the rise. The demographics of Europe were changing. Economically, depopulation led to the impoverishment of East and West as economic ties among different parts of the empire weakened. Increasing raids by barbarians further strained the economy and further reduced the population, mostly in the West. In areas near the Rhine and Danube frontiers, raids by barbarians killed Romans and disrupted commerce. Raids also forced Romans into walled towns and cities furthering the spread of pathogens and increasing the rate of depopulation in the West. A low population and weak economy forced Rome to use barbarians in the Roman Army to defend against other barbarians. Environmental degradation

Further information: Deforestation during the Roman period Another theory is that gradual environmental degradation caused population and economic decline. Deforestation and excessive grazing led to erosion of meadows and cropland. Increased irrigation without suitable drainage caused salinization, especially in North Africa. These human activities resulted in fertile land becoming nonproductive and eventually increased desertification in some regions. Many animal species become extinct. Also, high taxes and heavy slavery are another reason for decline as they forced small farmers out of business and into the cities, which became overpopulated. Roman cities were only designed to hold a certain number of people, and once they passed that, disease, water shortage and food shortage became common. Lead poisoning

Publishing several articles in the 1880s, the sociologist Seabury Colum Gilfillan advanced the argument that lead poisoning was a significant factor in the decline of the Roman Empire. This syrup was used to some degree to sweeten wine and food.

8: Project MUSE - Decadence, High Art, & Popular Writing

The antiquities exhibition, Decadence and Domesticity, is part of The Arts of Engagement exhibition and is located on the ground floor of the Arts West Building at the University of Melbourne.

Thursday, January 17, Cultural Decadence: French explorer Iberville and his men stopped to rest for a day beside a small bayou about twelve miles from the mouth of the Mississippi River. On Shrove Tuesday, knowing that the day, March 3, was being celebrated as a major holiday in Paris, they christened the site Point du Mardi Gras, as the weary, homesick men must have recalled that back home in France maskers were filling the streets. The tradition of the New Orleans Mardi Gras is undoubtedly French, as during the first years of existence, it heavily resembled the one held in Paris more than it did any other. There is a striking similarity between the ancient tribal rituals of fertility that welcomed the arrival of Spring. A possible ancestor of the celebration was the "Lupercalia", a circus-like orgy held in mid-February in Rome. In this ancient fertility festival, the worship of Lupercus involved cross-dressing and masquerading, promoting sexual orgies among the Romans. Steeped in Egyptian, Grecian and Roman fertility rites, half of the parades celebrate and honor ancient pagan gods. Ancient Greeks would sacrifice a goat, cut its hide into strips, and run naked through the fields while their pagan priests lashed them with the goat-hide strips. This was a symbolic part of their Spring fertility rite to ensure a productive harvest for their fields and increase the fertility of their flocks and women. The custom was degenerate even by pagan standards, being a time of sacrifice, lewdness, immortality, drunkenness and revelry, and was associated with the worship of the Greek god "Pan". Pan originates with the Ancient Greek language, from the word *paen*, meaning "to pasture". He was a fertility god and therefore was always represented as crude, wanton, and lustful. He took the form of a half-goat and half-man, having the legs, ears, and horns of a goat, in the same manner as a faun or satyr the goat is the ancient symbol of Satan, but the torso, arms, and face of a man. Being a rustic god, Pan was not worshipped in temples or other built edifices, but in natural settings. The playful and lecherous Pan is also the Greek god of lust and the masculine generative power. According to Thelemic standards, "Pan is both the giver and the taker of life, and his Night is that time of symbolic death where the adept experiences unification with the All through the ecstatic destruction of the ego-self. In a more general sense, it is the state where one transcends all limitations and experiences oneness with the universe. Pagan priests accompanied by the idol, showered the crowds with Spring flowers, herbs, grains and coins. Good fortunes, spells and curses were shouted, including calls to the idol god to grant favor and blessing. The early Church fathers, realizing that it was impossible to break away from pagan customs, decided instead to direct their new converts into Christian channels. Thus Carnival was created as a period of merriment that would serve as a prelude to the penitential season of Lent, providing a balance between the Christian Church and its early pagan celebrations. By 1765, when Don Antonio de Ulloa took possession of the colony of Louisiana for Spain, Mardi Gras, though sketchy and crude, was an established custom. The Spanish permitted it to continue for a time, with pre-Lenten balls and fetes commonly held in New Orleans during the late 1700s, but within a few years street masking and masked balls were banned. All of this, together with an increasing number of free people of color, had made Mardi Gras masking a rowdy, even murderous, affair. The balls continued, and the character of these has been much debated. There were already some private affairs, to which none but a certain circle and a few distinguished visitors were admitted. This all helped to give New Orleans a reputation as a city as evil and as dangerous as Marseille, a city which was in time to earn the denomination of "hell on earth. Every sort of vice was rampant and murder was so common that it has been said that the natives would step over a corpse on the way to a ball or the opera and think nothing of it. The prohibition of masked affairs continued when New Orleans became an American city in 1803, as street masking was revived in New Orleans in the years between Spanish suppression and the American acquisition of the colony, when the French ruled again, and the American authorities permitted it to continue until 1817. This time Mardi Gras almost died, and for years it existed only in the memory of the Creole population. By 1817, the Creole populace prevailed upon the American governor, and balls were allowed once again, and in street masking was once more permitted and officially made legal. The balls were soon more numerous and

more brilliant than they ever had been before. And Ash Wednesday always proved them right, for the jails were always filled, and more than one corpse, still dressed in a ridiculous costume, lay in a gutter or sprawled across a banquette. No lady ever masked in the streets, or if she did she took the utmost precaution never to be recognized. It was the Americans who gave Mardi Gras its present pattern. It was they who, at least to some extent, took it away from the people and changed what had been an unorganized and informal street revel into an entire social season, a highly stylized program of balls and pageants. The Americans kept alive and increased the whole concept of imitation aristocracy and the present-day snobbery that still characterizes some of the Mardi Gras krewes. Only street masking remained a delightful custom as ever, although many people, both Creole and American, considered it bad taste to mingle in the streets in a costume. The first formal parade took place in 1857. Until then maskers had formed lines and chains and walked and run through the streets on Mardi Gras to the amusement or disgust of the spectators, but without real organization or plan. They romped and shouted and behaved as foolishly as possible, but those taking part were usually considered wild men at best. As time went on more and more persons took part in the street pageants. During the 1850s the throwing of flour or pellets of flour, which broke and dissolved, became popular, as it has long been in European carnivals. In a newspaper writer said that so much flour was thrown on Mardi Gras that on Ash Wednesday the streets looked as if they had been covered in snow. In the early 19th century, the public celebration of Mardi Gras consisted mainly of maskers on foot, in carriages, and on horseback. In 1857, a costumed group of revelers walked in the first documented "parade," but the violent behavior of maskers during the next two decades caused the press to call for an end to Mardi Gras. The festivities were becoming more and more rowdy, as there was much drunkenness and fighting and subsequent filling of jails. Most of the newspapers began to campaign for a complete abandonment of the custom, citing two major reasons. One was the constant brawling between white men and boys and Negroes. The other was the vast amount of prostitutes that poured into the streets and into the best neighborhoods on that day, some with their men, sometimes in groups wearing the most daring costumes, and behaving in the most brazen fashions. Some would dress as men, particularly as sailors, as this was considered shocking. They would shout gay and obscene remarks from their carriages, or stroll along the streets, mocking the ladies, as Mardi Gras was a paradise for whores. These things, together with a continued throwing of lime and bricks, were threatening to bring about the end of Mardi Gras in New Orleans. Comus coined the word "krewes" and established several Mardi Gras traditions by forming a secret Carnival society, choosing a mythological namesake, presenting a themed parade with floats and costumed maskers, and staging a tableau ball following its parade. Comus is the son of the necromancer Circe and reveler Bacchus. Each krewe is completely autonomous and there is no overall coordinator of Carnival activities. Several do not reveal the name of the parade until the night of the event, and the identity of their royalty is never publicized. After the Civil War, Comus returned to the parade scene in 1874. Four years later, the Twelfth Night Revelers debuted. In New Orleans, popular custom holds that whoever receives the slice that contains the baby must purchase the next cake and throw a party. The King of the Carnival immediately became the international symbol of Mardi Gras. One of the first and most beloved krewes to make its appearance in the 20th century was Zulu. The 20th century brought with it some difficult years. As New Orleans entered the new century its population was approaching 200,000, and every year at least 100,000 visitors came to see a Mardi Gras that was both the same in all its fundamentals yet vastly different from the Mardi Gras of earlier decades, and like New Orleans, seemed very old, but was also very young. The city was prosperous, with no more yellow fever epidemics or cholera to wipe out half its population. Girls Playing Cards, Storyville, circa 1900. There was still vice, but even it was more civilized, and the regulated red-light district known as Storyville was considered more of an asset than anything else. On Mardi Gras the women of Storyville did not often mingle with the maskers but remained in their own neighborhood, which now was spreading into the French Quarter, as they took over the houses left by the vanishing Creoles, who once had also possessed Mardi Gras. Now, on that day, visitors would wander through Storyville in the hours between parades, to gasp at the luxury of the gaudy apartments. They could peep through shutters into the cheap cribs, where naked girls sat around awaiting patrons. They heard remarkable stories, such as the one about the new kind of music being played in Storyville called "jass," which was being introduced in other parts of the city but was considered rather indecent. Mardi Gras masking

underwent much change. After they began to vanish, unfortunately, and no longer did two or three men appear in the street as a gigantic, realistic elephant, or a dozen forming a writhing serpent half a city block long. The interests of the day are always reflected in Mardi Gras costumes. Now minstrels in blackface, straw hats, and loud suits and ties became popular. By World War I bitterness had returned and effigies of the Kaiser were carried through the streets suspended from a gallows. A generation later his piece was replaced by Adolf Hitler. Throughout its years, masks have always symbolized a way of being anonymous, and by wearing a mask, you "take on a different persona. Like the masquerade balls of the 17th and 18th centuries, the wearing of masks was sometimes set as a game among the guests. The masked guests were dressed as to be unidentifiable, adding a humorous effect, enabling a more enjoyable version of typical balls. Less formal "costume parties" may be a descendant of this tradition. The earliest mention of a Carnival celebration is recorded in the 12th century Roman account of the pope and upper-class Roman citizens watching a parade through the city, followed by the killing of steers and other animals. The purpose was to play and eat meat before Ash Wednesday, which marked the beginning of Catholic Lent-- the forty-day fast leading up to Easter. Marching clubs were numerous in the s, some of which, such as the Jefferson City Buzzards and the Garden District Club, will probably live as long as there is Mardi Gras. Then there were others-- the Broadway Swells, the Jasey kids, the St. But it was the stately and the elegant krewes that endured, and with so little change in the types of floats used and the styles of costumes that to-day they are almost exactly as they were a half-century ago. Beads and other trinkets, known as "throws," have been tossed from floats since at least transforming parades into a participatory experience, as spectators beg and scramble for treasure. Beads became part of an exchange ritual involving flashes of bare flesh-- a phenomenon that stoked the market for more eye-catching, fancily designed necklaces. Contrary to popular belief, "flashes" are rarely experienced myths, derived from mass-marketing soft-core pornography, and is not a tradition of New Orleans Mardi Gras. The flashing for beads or primary ritual paradigm or worship of the gods is a form of "ceremonial exchange" that is not simply unstructured hedonism, but rather a "ritualized enactment.

9: HILAIRE BELLOC: ESSAYS

Paganism, or the deliberate insults we see not acknowledging God, is rich and on the horizon likewise. Beauty that was contained in Picasso was perhaps inevitable, it all falling in the order of things: meaning, we have a good excuse for bad art.

However, a new interpretation has come to the forefront of modern western society. Despite this, it is this interpretation I will attempt to explain. There is no denying the facts that there are other ancient religions in other parts of world, which by the Christian definition, are pagan. Pagan1 noun -s [ME, fr. L, civilian, country dweller, fr. When changes happen in history, they usually begin in the cities and towns. This is attributed to the greater interaction with outside cultures, usually through trade and war. Therefore, it is not surprising that there existed a cultural and social distinction between city and country inhabitants. Ancient Rome is one such embodiment; a great conquering nation that assimilated many cultural ideas and philosophies. This amalgamation was so significant that eventually what was practiced in the Roman cities urbs no longer resembled what was practiced in the countryside pagus. The word, pagus, incorporated this social distinction both in its agrarian and non-combatant status. Whether or not, these country dwellers ever identified with the term is doubtful. So, when the Romans come into contact with Judaic monotheism, they pretty much ignored it. As a non-invasive religion, Judaism posed little threat to the Romans. In contrast, Christianity was far more intrusive and prolific. Unlike Judaism where you were born into the faith, Christianity accepted new members through conversion. This did not go over well with the Romans to say the least. This new religion was far more detrimental than any other religion Rome had ever come across. Rome was right to worry, for many Romans did convert. It was these converts who ultimately changed the meaning of paganus from country dweller to polytheistic heathen. It was these selfsame converts, along with other historical factors, that finally changed the power base of Rome. The power base now lies firmly in the hands of the Christians. From the 4th century onward, pagan becomes a pejorative term to indicate one who is not Christian. The word mutated and adapted throughout Christian history to what now resides in the dictionaries. Quite often you will see heathen used as a synonym for pagan. The way I see it; pagan was used as a prejudicial classification both before and after the introduction of Christianity and at no time, was it ever a religion in and of itself. That is until, 1, years laterâ€¦

Post Paganism In the Webster dictionary under paganism, there is a line that, if taken out of context, may give a clue to what Neo-Paganism means today. The question then remainsâ€” what outlook and what attitude? As part of the larger sixties Hippie Counterculture, Neopaganism incorporates many of their anti-establishment and liberal attitudes. Perhaps, this is why the framework of their belief systems or traditions is so polymorphic; making it virtually impossible to find a single unified religious composite. For this reason, many do not consider Neopaganism a religion. Nevertheless, there are those who follow a broader interpretation of religion and who would define it as such.

Historical Inputs An assortment of historical developments needed to come together in order for Neopaganism to evolve.

The Age of Philosophy BCE - This was the time of speculative thought, where man studied the meaning and justification of beliefs, ethics, reality and all aspects of life. For more on the great thinkers of our time visit: The Medieval Crusades - Ironically, it was the Crusader who re-introduced pagan concepts to the Christendom. They brought back from their travels, an assortment of literary subjects covering Gnosticism, Jewish Mysticism, and the ancient works of the Greek and Roman Philosophers.

Renaissance During the 15th century, a pivotal shift in thinking set in motion a whole series of changes that would reverberate throughout history. When pagan philosophies like, rationalism, individualism, humanism and nationalism were once again being discussed and when people started looking to themselves, instead of the Church for answers.

Enlightenment Era - With the Bible no longer being the source of all knowledge, a need to better understand the world arose. Human beings began to explore nature through science and rationalism. Enlightenment was the time for freedom of thought and the age of reason.

Age of Romanticism - Interest in other cultures was emerging. New ideologies were being introduced into Europe and America from abroad. Most importantly of these, was the introduction to Oriental philosophy.

The Spiritualism Movement - Interest in other cultures continued to flourish, especially in the

form of archeology and anthropology. One culture in particular was of great interest -Ancient Egypt. It provided a great source information for those interested in witchcraft, mysticism, and other esoteric practices. Many of the resources used in Modern Paganism come from this movement. Aradia, Gospel of the Witches by Charles G. Freedom of speech, race and religion was preached and liberal belief systems, which exceed the social, political and moral norms, are practiced. The New Age Movement popularizes such practices like holistic healing, hatha yoga, inner channeling, and alternative medicine. The majority of the Neopagan traditions focus on those ancient cultures in Europe and Middle East that were displaced by the Abrahamic religions. However traditions based on other indigenous cultures like Eastern, Native America and African are becoming popular. Despite the differing beliefs and practices among the traditions, there are some common identifiable aspects to Neopaganism. Non-authoritarian - There is no centralized organization that governs Neopaganism. Emphasis is placed on the return to the simpler direct relationship between the individual and their divine. A practice long lost in many hierarchical institutionalized religions. What structuralization that does exist in Neopaganism is purely social. Non-dogmatic - There is no sacred book, tenet or doctrine. Within each tradition, there may exist a writ of their beliefs and tenets but this is not a universal dogma. Humanism - Focus is on reconnecting with life; living in the here and now, no matter what the belief structure. Spiritual anarchism - There is no reward or punishment just consequences. Unlike mainstream religions, there is no atonement or salvation needed for redemption for there is no sin. Nature - Nature plays an important role albeit in varying degrees from sacred worship to harmonious interaction. However, its utilization varies among the denominations. This energy is primarily used for empowerment, self-realization and magic. Additionally, it may be viewed holistically as a singular divine entity. It has various names: While some labels are self explanatory others can cause confusion and contention. Much of this is attributed to misinformation, interpretation of history and personal opinion. Traditional and Eclectic - Often used when describing the antiquity factor, as well as the source. Usually the adjective traditional is applied to those denominations that adhere strictly to one distinct ancient culture as oppose to a mixture of cultures or eclectic. Modern and Neo- Commonly used for those spiritual constructs formed in the later half of the 20th century, even though it accurately defines all re-constructed traditions in the Post Christian Era. Solitaire - A designation used to describe what seems to be the preferred method of practice -solitary. For those who would like to practice in groups can do so in covens, brotherhoods, orders, societies, families and churches. Family is used to describe those traditions with beliefs and practices that have been handed down within the family generations. However, there is some skepticism within the Neopagan community for those who claim their family tradition is older than three generations. Paganism and Neopaganism - Academically, paganism is used to refer to the genre of polytheistic religions that existed before the Christian Era, while Neopaganism is used for the later re-constructions in the Post Christian Era. Socially, Paganism and Neopaganism are often used synonymously. The general consensus being, that Paganism has a more holistic connotation while Neopagan is more deterministic. Personally with regards to the distinction between Paganism and Neopaganism, I put no importance on one or the other, except that they both should be capitalized when referring to the religion or the movement. Looking at it from a historical perspective, they are both modern religions. Hybrids Hybrids, for a lack of a better term, are a combination of two already existing religions but they are not exactly traditions. Still, many will classify them under Neo Paganism because one of the two religions is polytheistic. Due to this syncretic nature, hybrids do not necessarily share all the characteristics of other Neopagan groups. Vodoun, Santeria and Candomble are examples where Roman Catholicism mixed with African and other indigenous religions as a result of slavery. Divinity At first glance, one would assume that Neopagans practice polytheism, end of story. This is not necessarily the case. It is far more complicated than that. The heterogeneous nature of Neopaganism allows for all spiritual attitudes towards divinity. Add to this the extensive list of philosophical outlooks and the permutations are endless. Here is a sampling of a few relational attitudes. New Polytheism - The deities are just Jungian archetypes created by human need. The deities are but symbols. Polytheism - This is the belief and worship of multiple deities. These deities are often sentient personification of non-sentient entity s , which are beyond human comprehension. This personification is known as anthropomorphism. Duotheism - The polarity of natural forces are expressed in

the deities, often a masculine-feminine structure.

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