

## INTRODUCTION

### Globalization, Nationalism, and the Pagan Revival

**D**uring the 1990s racist paganism emerged as one of the most dynamic trends of the increasingly radicalized but highly fragmented and schismatic radical-racist milieu in the United States. Currently surpassing traditional racist vehicles, such as national socialist parties and the Ku Klux Klan(s), in terms of numbers and influence, racist paganism has caught the attention of a new generation of racial activists and is well on its way to reducing earlier racist creeds, such as Christian Identity, to the status of an “old man’s religion.” The most cursory glimpse at white-racist publications, Web pages, and white-power lyrics reveals muscular heathens, pagan gods and goddesses, runes and symbols, magic, and esoteric themes in abundance.

Despite the rising tide of paganism in white-racist culture, the field is remarkably understudied. Although this trend has been acknowledged briefly in works on occult national socialism, radical religion, or Eurocentric paganism, no systematic investigation of this forceful but enigmatic phenomenon has previously emerged.<sup>1</sup> Drawing on years of extensive field research that involved observation of pagan ceremonies and gatherings, daily heathen routines and activities, as well as taped interviews and informal discussions with heathen ideologues and activists, *Gods of the Blood* offers a unique introduction to the world of racist paganism. While looking at a wide spectrum of “Aryan” pre-Christian pagan traditions, this book focuses on the scene’s most vibrant elements: reconstructed Norse paganism—Asatru or Odinism—and the dim underworld where heathendom meets racist Satanism and occult national socialism.

In addition to introducing the thoughts, practices, and goals of racial pagans, this study aims at reconstructing the mental universes of the racist activists involved and gives an account of the social processes of which they are a product. In accentuating the revolutionary position increasingly adopted by white under-

ground activists since the early 1980s, racist paganism represents a further radicalization of the white-racist milieu. Denouncing Christianity as unnatural and anti-white, racist pagans distance themselves further from the American mainstream, forcibly rejecting even the far-right “Christian Patriot” as part of the problem. Racist paganism is, however, not unique to the United States but part of a global phenomenon. American reconstructions of Norse paganism have been successfully appropriated by “Aryan” revolutionaries in more than forty countries; these revolutionaries communicate electronically on a daily basis and construct their worldviews with material gained from the global flow of ideas.

Despite the pagans’ common claim that they represent the resurfacing of ancient traditions, kept intact throughout the centuries by an unbroken succession of underground guardians, they may, from a scholarly perspective, be classified as a tendency within the broader category of new religious movements. During the past few decades tens of thousands of new religious movements have emerged worldwide, many of which are inspired by premodern traditions, suggesting that a global perspective may offer insight to our understanding of racist paganism in the United States.

## Globalization and Neonationalism

An increasingly global social reality has gradually become the greater context for all cultures and religions of the world. Most economies are now part of the world capitalist system. The nation-state model has been adopted all over the world, with most countries participating in an international political system based on nation-states. Media, entertainment, military industry, tourism, migration, science, medicine, sport, music, and art know few borders and contribute to the advance of globalization. And communication technology now makes it possible to connect any two locations on Earth. In short, the world is gradually becoming “a single place,” the term *global village* emerging to emphasize that the planet has become a small place where we know much about each other and where life differs greatly depending on whether you live in the nicer villas or in the huts among the village outcasts (Roland Robertson 1987, 43). At the same time, so-called fundamentalist interpretations are forcibly gaining ground in all major world religions—Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism—and in societies with different histories and various economic realities and political systems. Fundamentalism is a global phenomenon and to paraphrase Durkheim, global facts need to be understood in the light of other global facts.

The gradual construction of a global culture implies the relativization of all other cultures, despite how universal the values and norms of each culture may once have appeared to those within it. For religious ideologues who have been accustomed to dealing in “universal truths,” this realization might be especially painful. The Abrahamic God of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam might be a jealous God, but in the global arena He must get used to having other gods beside Him. The global flow of ideas will undermine even the most ambitious monopolizing effort, and it will be increasingly difficult to demonize followers of other religions as wholly Other. However, while the grand narrative of globalization optimistically asserts that as cultures and religions come into closer contact, they will inform and become more tolerant of each other in a process that will culminate in a single humanity cooperating for the future survival of the planet and mankind—and while this trend most certainly is discernible—an opposing reaction in terms of ethnic, racial, and religious fragmentation is simultaneously identifiable, as evidenced by the rise of religious fundamentalism. The process of globalization accordingly involves a tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces.

That numerous neonationalist projects have been spawned in the wake of globalization might seem paradoxical, since globalization undermines the significance of the nation-state through an increasingly transnational, even post-national, social reality.<sup>2</sup> After all, the strongest economies in the world today are multinational corporations, not nation-states, and political efforts to adjust to changing realities by establishing regional trade blocs such as the European Union (EU) or the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) seem dated at launching. Corporate power is further underscored by the free trade zones on territory set aside and exempted not only from regular taxation but also from the jurisdiction a state would otherwise exert over its territory. Yet, the world map is being constantly revised as the number of nation-states continues to increase: in 1945 the United Nations counted fifty membership states; in the 1950s it had expanded by more than thirty new nation-states; the 1960s saw the formation of more than forty nation-states; the 1970s ushered in twenty-five more; and after a slow 1980s with a mere seven new nation-states, the twentieth century closed with a record of close to 200 nation-states, of which thirty-two were established in the 1990s.<sup>3</sup> Add to the list a number of unrecognized nation-states and the “national liberation movements” fighting to achieve independence—such as the Kurdish, Basque, Moro, Palestinian, or Tibetan movements—and a pattern of fervent nationalist activity becomes apparent.

At least three distinct types of neonationalist projects can be identified: *ethno-*

nationalism, which claims that ethnicity should be the foundation for an independent nation-state, as manifest in the nationalism that forced itself on the agenda in the civil wars of Rwanda and former Yugoslavia; racial nationalism, which asserts that all members of a given race properly constitute a nation entitled to self-determination in a state of their own, a position held by the Nation of Islam and other black separatist movements in the United States, as well as by the Aryan nationalists who aim at establishing a pan-Aryan “white homeland” that transcends the current nation-state borders of Europe, Australia, and America; and, finally, religious nationalism, which holds that adherents of a given religion “by nature” (and the will of God) properly belong to the same nation, a conviction that caused, for example, Muslims to secede from the Federation of India to form Pakistan as the “Land of the Pure” and that is voiced by Hindu nationalists in India and by Islamist revolutionaries such as Hamas or Ikhwan al-Muslimun (the Muslim Brotherhood). These neonationalist categories are hardly static and, not being mutually exclusive, often interweave with each other such that, for instance, religious identity turns into a national marker in an ethnonationalist project, as illustrated by Serbian and Croatian nationalism.

To some readers, the prefix *neo-* might seem curious, as many nationalist ideologies assert the cultural homogeneity of the nation and trace its origin to a specific ethnic or religious group of which the nation is held to be an “organic” outgrowth. What nationalists say, however, should not necessarily be accepted at face value. An overwhelming majority of the *de facto* existing nation-states (including, of course, the United States) have historically been, and still are, multiethnic, multilingual, and multireligious in composition. What is new in neonationalism, then, is the refutation of the state-sanctioned nationalist ideology in favor of an alternative nationalism that is aimed either at purging an existing nation-state of everyone held to be extranational or at establishing a new, secessionist nation-state composed exclusively of and by those deemed to qualify. But the nationalist conception of nation as “organic,” as something given by nature—as though mankind had always been organized in different nations, or as though the nation were merely a modern appendage to the evolution of family-clan-tribe—lands far from the mark: a nation is not a product of blood but of ideology and social processes. Conflicting ideas of the nation’s make-up may thus be present at the same time and place, and the dominant definition of a given nation may change over time.

The word *nation* is derived from the Latin *nascor* (I am born) and long signified only a lineage group or clan. “Insofar as it was attached to a territory,” Eric Hobsbawm notes, “it was only fortuitously a political unit, and never a very

large one” (1990, 15). The meaning of the concept began to change during the eighteenth century when it was applied to produce sentiments of solidarity between the inhabitants of a given territory and the state apparatus as a form of political administration. The now popular equation between “nation,” “state,” “people,” and “homeland” made its breakthrough toward the end of the nineteenth century (Hettne, Sörlin, and Östergård 1998; Hobsbawn 1990). Although nationalist ideologies may still biologize the conception of nation, the original connotation of “kin related by blood” has thus in practice been detached from nation—not even citizens of microstates such as Andorra are all related to each other.

As convincingly argued by Benedict Anderson (1991), then, a “nation” may be defined as an “imagined community,” involving feelings of solidarity and belonging between people traversing time and space. Members of a nation feel that they share something of importance with everyone else of the same nation, despite the fact that they will never meet more than a tiny fraction of these conationals and despite the fact that they often don’t have that much in common with those they actually do meet. That people actually identify with anonymous strangers, strangers who might live in places they have never heard of, who are deceased or yet unborn, that people feel deeply connected to such unknown others as long as they “belong” to the same “nation” indicates that “imagined” cannot be equated with “unreal.” Although a product of nationalist ideology, the nation imagined is a social fact of importance, politically and culturally, as evidenced in recent history.

Nationalists generally produce an imagined community by projecting the idea of a corporative nation back into legendary or mythological time, often presented as a “golden age,” a time untainted by the ills of the modern world and liberated from whomever is designated the national enemy. Frequently, the nationalist intends to revert to the ideals of the glorious high culture, albeit adopted to suit current conditions. Thus the importance of pre-Christian Norse culture to Aryan pagans, Atlantis or Hyperborean culture to occult national socialists, the divine high civilization of the original man to the Nation of Islam, and Islamic society during the time of Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah to Islamic fundamentalists. The nationalist cause is often strengthened by inserting a (historical or mythological) “national trauma,” that is, a time when the nation was subjugated, occupied, or severely threatened by national enemies. Slavery, for instance, is the trauma informing black nationalism, the Holocaust the trauma informing Jewish nationalism, the Civil War the trauma informing Southern nationalism, and the Battle at the Field of Thrushes in 1389 the

trauma informing Serbian nationalism. The national trauma is often reenacted on memorial days, in commemorative ceremonies, and with theater productions, thus enabling members of the nation to identify with the co-nationals of the traumatic past.

Furthermore, endowed with a notion of eternity, the national trauma serves as a frame of reference with which to interpret current conflicts. In Serbian nationalist propaganda, Albanians turned into Ottoman Turks. Jewish nationalists may view Palestinian activists as Nazis, styling Arafat a Hitler. Spokespersons of the Palestinian Hamas typically interpret Israel as a crusader state. Black nationalists may talk about nonseparatist blacks as slaves and see slaveholders in contemporary white politicians. Using the metaphor of the individual organism when discussing the “features” and history of the nation in question reinforces the notion of national solidarity. Born during the golden age, the individual nation is endowed with certain inherent qualities, a personal history, and a destiny to be fulfilled in a glorious future. Nationalists accordingly bestow on the imagined nation a notion of eternal belonging, enabling contemporary nationals to identify also with future generations when “we” will secure national independence and fulfill the destined greatness.

A corporative dimension is typically attached to the notion of nation. Nationalists may contend, for instance, that a worker of a given nation has more in common with an employer of the same nation than with a worker of another nation or that a woman of a given nation “belongs” to the men of the same nation and not with a man or woman of another nation. This corporative character easily (but not necessarily) lends itself to xenophobic sentiments, fascist elements, authoritarian collectivism, and politics of purity.

The centrifugal movement toward ethnic, racial, and religious fragmentation seems linked to the centripetal movement of globalization. Urbanization, modernization, and market fundamentalism have scattered traditional communities. Facing an increasingly interlaced and condensed global reality, many take refuge in affiliations that espouse particular identities. Along those lines, many neonationalist movements are animated by the alarmist assumption that globalization is a leveling process of cultural homogenization. The emerging global culture is interpreted in monolithic terms as an exacting force that replaces all previous cultures so that everyone will soon live in one identical global culture, speak the same language, believe in one universal God, wear uniform clothing, eat the same food in identical restaurants, and share the same morals, worldviews, and values. From this perspective, then, individual cultures and religions

stand at the brink of extermination and will, unless something is done to reverse the process, be present in the lives of our grandchildren only to the extent that they visit museums of ancient history.

Although this is a widespread notion that ideologues have frequently seized on to mobilize popular support for the nationalist cause, there is scant evidence to support such an alarmist interpretation. As noted by Ulf Hannerz, global culture can hardly be characterized as the homogenization of systems of meaning and expression: “it is marked by an organization of diversity rather than by a replication of uniformity” (1990, 237). This does not mean that the global culture can be perceived as the sum of its parts or as a cultural mosaic of separate, well-defined pieces. The different cultures of the world are instead becoming subcultures within the global culture, with all that this suggests in terms of intersecting, flowing, and ambiguous boundaries (Hannerz 1992, 218). Arjun Appadurai argues that the “new global cultural economy has to be understood as a complex, overlapping, *disjunctive order*” (1990, 296; emphasis added).

To explore such disjunctures, Appadurai suggests looking at the relationships between various dimensions of global flow, which he likens to “landscapes” to emphasize that they are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle but are instead the perspectival constructs of different sorts of actors (multinational corporations, nations-states, diasporic groups, religious movements, political undergrounds). Appadurai categorizes five dimensions of global flow: *ethnoscapes*, the shifting flow of people in terms of tourists, guest workers, refugees, exiles, immigrants, students, and the like; *technoscapes*, the flow of technology; *financescapes*, the rapid and fluctuating flow of capital; *mediascapes*, the unevenly distributed capabilities of producing and distributing information and images; and *ideoscapes*, the flow of ideological and political ideas such as progress, human rights, development, freedom, and democracy. These rapid global flows currently follow nonisomorphic paths and contribute to shifting constellations of conflicts, raptures, and contradictions locally, regionally, and globally.

Although asymmetrical relations of power still structure these global flows, colonial centers no longer control the directions, and global networks can no longer be understood in terms of center-periphery models (Appadurai 1996, 33). There is no longer a center, no one is in control, and no civilization is in a position to monopolize or determine the processes of globalization. Yet, everywhere except in the West, globalization is frequently perceived as an attempt, led by the United States, to subdue the world to the hegemony of Western civilization. Be-

sides the obvious ambition of the United States to shoulder the role of upholder of global law and order by policing the world community with the authority of its military might, this conclusion is understandable for two primary reasons.

First, certain commodities of American origin, such as Coca-Cola, Pizza Hut, Levis, Nike, Tommy Hilfiger, Juicyfruit Gum, and McDonald's, are found all over the world. Associated with a lifestyle seemingly at odds with the values of "traditional culture," the global flow of these products is frequently interpreted in terms of an aggressive American cultural imperialism. However, these multinational corporations are not carriers of American culture, but of globalized commercial culture. Americans may feel equally distressed as any Frenchman at the cultural impact of McDonald's, or may abhor the fact that Ronald McDonald has higher name recognition among the young than say Thomas Jefferson or other icons of Americanism.<sup>4</sup> Despite its American origin, McDonald's is a global corporation that serves kosher burgers in Tel Aviv, Halal Big Mac in Mecca, rice and chicken for breakfast in Manila. It is poor-man's food in Stockholm and luxury fare in Beijing, which points to the need to study the processes of *glocalization*, by which the global is localized and given meaning according to context. Instead of an American cultural imperialism, it would be more accurate to discuss the global flow of branded commodities in terms of a *coca-colonization* of the world, led by a few global corporations that have invaded public space to such an extent that their brand names permeate the minds of a great portion of the world population.<sup>5</sup> Yet, this material and mental colonization is in many quarters still mainly conceived of as an American cultural imperialism, which facilitates the translation of social and economic conflicts into the cultural and moral arenas and thus may constitute a basis for anti-American populist mobilization against the symbols of what Ayatollah Khomeini denounced as *Westoxification*.

Second, and more important, globalization is considered inherently Western because everywhere, except in the West, globalization began as an exogenous process, as convincingly argued by Peter Beyer (1994). Combining the theories of Immanuel Wallerstein, Roland Robertson, and Niklas Luhmann, Beyer analyzes the process of globalization in terms of the dynamics of a social reality based on functional differentiation. The condensed time and space of global life and its rapid nonisomorphic flows represent only the current phase of a development that began at least as early as the sixteenth century. Beyer traces globalization's roots to the gradual shift in early modern Western society from a society based on social stratification to a society based on functional differentiation. In the former system, politics, economy, science, medicine, and art



were subordinate to the interests of the religious-political elite, as illustrated in that science was confined to limits defined by established religious truths. With the shift to functional priorities, politics, economy, science, medicine, education, and art began to evade centralized control and in time emerged reconstituted as functionally differentiated instrumental systems, rationally structured to achieve specific results. With this shift, each field's potential to upgrade, innovate, develop, and expand was changed radically. The ability of the functionally differentiated subsystems to develop independently and yet interdependently became instrumental in their global expansion.

Although the scientific revolution and technological innovations had no territorial references, they facilitated imperialist conquests. The capitalist market economy extended to areas outside the control of the colonial centers, but the enterprises would have failed without active colonial support. The missionaries had their own motives, which not infrequently conflicted with the interests of trading houses and colonial administrators, but imperialism was critical for their success as well. As capitalist economy, secular education, secular science, technology, and secular medicine expanded globally, they were spread by people who were culturally Westerners. Globalization and modernization thus became identified as carriers of Western culture, both by colonizers who presented imperialism as a project of civilizing the world and by the colonized people subject to their rule.

Hindsight reveals that assumption to be erroneous. What globalized was not Western culture but instrumental techniques to reach specific ends such as profit (capitalist economy), truth (science), or healing (medicine). Functional orientation emphasizes rationality, efficiency, and adaptive upgrading, not cultural or religious identity. What is at issue is not *who* someone is but *what* someone does. Colonial efforts to establish a premodern system based on social stratification rather than on function—racist systems collectively known as white world supremacy—were in the long run undermined by demands for efficiency and rationality that arose from the functionally differentiated subsystems. Capitalist economy, for instance, is oriented toward profit and will in time find the skin color of a consumer or producer functionally irrelevant. Capital, not race or religion, qualifies a person for inclusion in the capitalist economy. Rational actors involved in science, medicine, education, sports, or music would similarly come to consider race secondary to producing the results desired. Thus, as functionally irrelevant rules of exclusion were removed, non-Westerners were gradually included in various fields; Chinese, Korean, and Japanese people, for instance, appropriated with great skill the techniques at

hand and soon became better capitalists, engineers, and scientists than many Westerners without becoming Western culturally. Since anyone could learn the techniques of function-based systems, then, racism was not being refuted on moral grounds but as an obstacle to progress.

Modernity was, after all, not inherently Western but proved adaptable in many different ways in many different cultures. The nation-state model was appropriated by national liberation movements and turned against colonizers all over the world. The global expansion of functionally differentiated instrumental techniques can thus be seen as having propelled not only the global rise of Western culture but also its subsequent “fall,” the latter process yet unfolding. Thus, despite the fact that globalization began in early modern Western society, it has inevitably led toward the construction of a global culture that is not Western. As this realization begins to sink in, many Westerners react with confusion and even panic.

The colonial era spawned an ideological discourse that identified Western civilization as the most advanced and the white race as the crown of creation. World dominion made objectification of Western ethnocentrism possible, and the norms and values of Western culture were presented as if they were universal. To this day, when these notions are challenged, many Westerners react with disbelief, as did the heads of European governments when Malaysian prime minister Mohammad Mahathir in 1996 declared, “European values are European. Asian values are Universal” (“Asia and Europe” 1996). But neither Mahathir nor his European detractors are correct. In the context of the emerging global culture, *every* other culture is relative, including the Western and Asian.

This is clearly a painful realization for many Westerners, as evidenced by American responses ranging from Pat Buchanan’s reactionary extremism to the militia movement to the emergence of the Aryan revolutionary underground. Buchanan is fond of boasting that should he become president, “all surrenders of American sovereignty to any and all institutions of the New World Order come to an end,” as will the “looting of the American nation by global socialists of the IMF [International Monetary Fund] and the World Bank.”<sup>6</sup> Loyalty to global society is disloyalty to America, Buchanan declares, which might be confusing to neonationalist activists of Asia, Africa, or America to whom globalization equals an American attempt at world dominion. To Buchanan, it is either “America First or World Government.” “We don’t want to be citizens of the world, because we have been granted a higher honor—we are citizens of the United States,” he claims, going on to say that he “struggle of nationalism against globalism” is “the millennial struggle that succeeds the Cold War.”<sup>7</sup>

As for American “patriots,” fear of a global world alerted them to prepare for a final showdown, and during the early 1990s populist militias mushroomed in the United States, organizing to defend America’s liberties against what was perceived to be a global conspiracy.

A yet more radical reaction to the process of globalization emerged in the racist nationalist projects launched by Aryan revolutionaries in America, as well as in Europe and Australia. Interpreting globalization as a process of homogenization engineered by a secret conspiratorial center known as the Zionist Occupation Government (ZOG), racist nationalists explain the relativization of Western culture and the gradual fall of white world supremacy with the theory that racial enemies have gained control over all “the once white countries.” Corporate relocation of production to non-Western countries and Western localization of global flows of non-Western migrants, commodities, ideas, art, music, and religions are interpreted in terms of an antiwhite conspiracy that ultimately aims at exterminating the Aryan race.

The imagined community of Aryan revolutionaries transcends existing national borders in a vision of a pan-Aryan transatlantic homeland. Marginalized in their respective local settings, Aryan revolutionaries communicate electronically in cyberspace. Global flows of racist news information, music, histories, conspiracy theories, military tactics, religions, mythologies, dating services, and stories of heroic martyrs give even the loneliest Aryan a sense of belonging. He becomes part of a grand narrative that tells of a once-glorious race sinking into a corrupting morass of decay and filth, surrounded by enemy forces. With imagery drawn from pagan mythologies and fantasy novels, the few remaining warriors are urged to lift their swords in defense of race and honor and fight to protect the beauty of the white woman. Braving the apocalypse, few will survive to see the Aryan race rise again out of the ashes, but the slain will be immortalized in the annals of racial heroes. Such warrior dreams summon Aryans from all over the world and provide a sense of unity of purpose and identity, but have so far only occasionally erupted into seriously violent activities. When such violence does occur, information instantly reaches the whole network of Aryan revolutionaries through cyberspace, thus confirming the grand narrative as at least a virtual reality.

Conspiracy theory suggests, of course, that there is a conscious agent directing the course of events, a horror story that nonetheless provides a greater sense of security than recognizing that there is no one in control. A primary feature of globalizing modernity with its functionally differentiated social subsystems is the *absence* of orchestrated control. As science, for example, was gradually un-

fettered from the normative control previously exercised by religious authority, the scientific search for truth vigorously expanded in a multitude of directions. Discoveries and innovations propelled increasing divisions into ever more specialized fields of knowledge. Not even the most encyclopedic scholar of today can keep up with the knowledge produced by frontline research in more than a tiny fraction of the many differentiated disciplines of science.

Indeed, the state of globalized science illustrates well the conditions under which the global society is constructed. Globalization is moving at breakneck speed in conflicting directions, yet nobody knows where we are going and no cooperative body of orchestrated human control exists. While each globalized subsystem is totalizing in the sense that everything might temporarily be incorporated into any one system—for example, as soon as anything is assigned monetary value, it is included in the economic system—no subsystem is all-encompassing. “Everything has its price but not everything is commodified,” notes Beyer (1994, 56). “Precisely because the differentiated functional systems concentrate on specialized means of communication and not, for instance, on the total lives of the people who carry them, they leave a great deal of social communication undetermined, if not unaffected” (*ibid.*). No specialized system articulates anything encompassing about life or the global system as a whole.

Functionally oriented and professionally specialized, the various globalized subsystems typically neglect problems generated by their activities as long as they do not turn into obstacles for their own activity. No specialized system articulates a sense of higher values and in no field of activity is God or morality functionally relevant. Such a system is thus in conflict with life itself as it appears from the perspective of the living, feeling, acting, individual man. People partake at different times in varying degrees and in various roles in the differentiated subsystems, yet maintain a holistic perspective on existence in a system that does not articulate holistic concerns. But neonationalist and religious fundamentalist ideologies do articulate these concerns. Proceeding from holistic articulations of meaning, neonationalists aim at seizing control in order to subordinate the differentiated subsystems to some form of higher values, such as the advancement of the race or the will of God.

## Globalization and Religion

Religion is a mode of social communication that traffics in holistic issues (such as the meaning of life), which explains in part the fervent religious revival that is happening worldwide. Paradoxical as it might seem, globalization simul-

taneously pushes secularization and stimulates religious revivalism. Secularization questions not to what extent man believes in God, but to what extent religion exerts public influence in society. The shift toward functional differentiation gradually diminished the field of competence of God and the religious elite in favor of other experts, such as secular physicians, scientists, politicians, teachers, and attorneys. With the global expansion of instrumental techniques, every society, irrespective of how religious its citizens, has in some measure been secularized. From giant corporations down to the local car mechanic, the overwhelming majority of companies in the world are governed by corporate, not religious, concerns. Religious schools in most societies have lost ground to secular education, and where religious jurisdiction is still found, it has gradually been restricted to family law. It is precisely this secularized reality that religious fundamentalists single out as the chief cause of the perceived ills they organize to overcome. Why otherwise struggle to re-Islamicize Muslim countries?

Globalization means that religions and civilizations have been brought in acute contact with each other and eagerly seek to project their respective ideals and values onto the global culture in formation. Combined with the religious mobilization against secularization, the breathtaking speed and uncertain outcome of globalization provoke teleological concerns. Global flows of information about environmental destruction, AIDS, ethnic cleansing, racial strife, epidemic famines, widening gaps between the planet's rich and poor, terrorism, wars, drugs, crime, and natural catastrophes feed the unease. Are we really going in the right direction? Is humanity on the road toward salvation or doom? Globalization seems to spur three different religious responses: fundamentalism, interreligious cooperation, and new religious movements.

Fundamentalism reacts to relativization by forceful denial: there is but one truth, there is but one way. Organized as social movements, fundamentalism often mobilizes around residual problems generated but not solved by the process of globalization. Proceeding from conflict between globalized expectations of freedom, human rights, wealth, and progress and those consequences of globalization that prevent such expectations from being realized, fundamentalist movements often assume responsibilities that the state neglects or is incompetent to handle. Establishing programs for community improvement such as schools, rehabilitation, and shelters lends an aura of credibility to the fundamentalist message that it is time to try the way of God. Demonizing secular politicians, followers of other religions, and aliens as incarnations of evil is often inherent to the fundamentalist politics of purity and serves as an effective tool of populist mobilization. Articulating global ambitions rhetorically,

fundamentalists in practice often adopt the isolationist themes of nationalistic policies and frequently organize under the rubric of religious neonationalist projects. Though effective as an oppositional position, fundamentalism in power still partakes of the global culture. The Islamic revolution in Iran, for instance, has not been able to shut out globalization or products of Western culture: young Iranians dress in green U.S. Army jackets, headbang to Metallica, and enjoy *Beverly Hills 90210* by satellite when they're not studying in rationally organized secular institutions of higher learning; Iranian leaders regularly sit down to negotiate with delegates working for the Great Satan; and the Iranian economy is undeniably part of the capitalist world system. Empowered locally, fundamentalist truth is as relative as before in the global context and is likely to find its program undermined by globalizing realities.

The ecumenical response of interreligious cooperation asserts that people of different faiths must come together in a joint effort to combat the residual problems of the process of globalization. As do fundamentalist movements, liberal theologies also often establish programs of social improvement but have far less simple long-term remedies. Respect and curiosity for other religions and cultures frequently result in the establishment of antiracist, multicultural, and interfaith forums to foster tolerance and knowledge of each other and to pave the way for programs of practical cooperation. In their refusal to scapegoat specific targets such as aliens, homosexuals, Jews, or Muslims as demonized Others, such programs are at a pedagogical disadvantage when compared with fundamentalist approaches. It is easier, after all, to mobilize against a personified evil using simple solutions of purification (extermination, repatriation, legal bans) than it is to address a depersonified evil in terms of structural injustices and social processes. Like a computer, the human mind seems to communicate meaning most easily in terms of binary oppositions. Without night there is no day, without sorrow there is no joy, and without "them" there is no "us." (Perhaps we need to find intelligent extraterrestrials against which to define ourselves if we are to establish one humanity.)

Newly created religious movements constitute the third empirically identifiable theological response to globalization. Such movements interpret the relativization of previously established religious truths as a sign of their invalidity. Globalizing modernity has led to what Giddens (1990) termed the "disembedding" of individuals from their traditional cultural and social contexts, and new religious movements provide an avenue for "reembedding" individuals and groups in a new context. Global flows of religious and philosophical ideas provide ample material from which creative entrepreneurs can assemble

alternative religious bricolages, recontextualizing the elements. The new religious actors often have a distinctly global approach, interpreting globalization in terms of, say, a growing “planetary consciousness” or perhaps as the sign of an approaching apocalypse. Since the end of the Second World War, tens of thousands of new religious movements have been established worldwide, although far from all have endured. Conservative estimates suggest that there are between one and two thousand new religious movements in the United States, one thousand in Europe, some three thousand in Japan, and more than ten thousand in Africa, with no reliable statistics for Asia or Latin America (Melton 1992; Barker 1989, 148). (These numbers serve only as general indicators of the levels of new religious activity, rather than as specific empirical data. New religious groups arise and wane with amazing speed, with many operating on more than one continent, and reporters differ greatly in their definitions of “new” and as to whether New Age and other vaguely defined and less-organized religious milieus should be included.)

Broadly speaking, there are three types of new religious categories, each differing in its orientation and mode of organization: (1) the New Age scene, which is open and constantly transforming, populated by individual seekers who freely choose from a multitude of spiritual techniques and ideas offered by religious entrepreneurs; (2) new religious movements (“sects” or “cults”), which possess hierarchical organizational structures, systematic doctrines, and high missionary ambitions; and (3) pagan groups, which are autonomous or federated local communities with low missionary ambition, revolving around reconstructions of premodern pagan traditions. The typology should not be seen as if the borders were absolute and nontranscendable. A group may coalesce within the New Age community and develop a well-defined organizational structure to become a sect, and sects may disintegrate and members dissolve into the New Age milieu. Pagan groups may advertise in New Age bookstores, appropriate New Age elements, and turn into tight, sectlike organizations. Still, these categories are useful for analysis, as their general orientations differ significantly and adherents of groups in one category often take exception to the other two.

Within the New Age community, emphasis is commonly placed on individual healing and spiritual growth that aims at harmonizing with a world conceived as fundamentally good. The outer, material, objective conditions of life are generally seen as reflections of inner, mental, subjective conditions. Typically, each person is thought to have chosen his parents and designed his life in order to meet certain tests and acquire certain experiences necessary to promote his spiritual growth in this and coming reincarnations. Accordingly, the bat-

tered woman, the child laborer, the homeless, and the affluent have themselves chosen their own respective realities; global inequalities between countries reflect different “national karmas.” New Age philosophies also tend to suggest that all knowledge is located hidden within oneself and that if one manages to connect with and evolve one’s higher self, outer reality will change in accordance. In searching for spiritual keys to open up the inner world and log into eternal truth, individuals are left to explore the products offered at the global marketplace of New Age practices and to concoct their own truth according to taste, trial, and error—in other words, (spiritual) life is defined as a personal project. This egocentric focus is frequently combined with a global perspective linked to a palingenetic utopian vision: the world is at the brink of a spiritual revolution that will usher in a “new age” of planetary consciousness and a new, purified, spiritually advanced man.

While similar philosophical elements may be found in the new religious movements, which often cater in the Gnostic message “Thou art God,” the orientation of the sect is on salvation by following a well-defined path. Being not infrequently extremely authoritarian, new religious movements may form global microcultures, with distinct dress codes, symbolism, routines, diet, and terminology identical for members worldwide. However, as the global is localized in Moscow, Berlin, Accra, Montevideo, or Sidney, and so on, the meanings ascribed to these elements differ according to context. Within this category, too, appear elements of fundamentalism, liberal ecumenism, and/or neonationalist mobilization, the process of globalization being variously interpreted in missions of world salvation. Take, for instance, the Nation of Islam (NOI) and the Baha’i. Like more established religions, the Nation and Baha’i both engage in community improvement programs to address social problems generated by the process of globalization, but each reaches a very different conclusion about today’s world. Whereas the NOI identifies global culture as the evil product of white devils who will soon be consumed in flames by the wrath of the black god(s), Baha’i sees truth in all religions and believes that establishing a world government composed by and of men of all races and cultures is a viable project.

Reconstructions of pagan, premodern, and preglobal traditions constitute the third category of emergent religious response stimulated by the process of globalization. The rise of paganism has much to do with roots, identity, and urban man’s romanticized notion of nature and “natural life.” An Earth-based spirituality that holds nature to be sacred, paganism is generally dissatisfied with modernity’s technological rationality and its objectification of nature and demystification of life. In addition to repopulating the cosmos with intelligent,



nonhuman beings—guardians of nature, elves, trolls, ancestors, pagan gods and goddesses—pagans also bestow mountains, lakes, rivers, trees, and animals with souls and communicative power. While the resacralization of nature may also emerge now and then in the former two categories, paganism can be distinguished by its emphasis on traditions of the past, local communities, and tribalism. Pagans as a rule are less tightly organized than most religious groups. They rarely offer salvation or develop demands for orthodox uniformity of belief and practice. A local emphasis is frequently combined with a global perspective. Local pagan communities may base their spirituality on recontextualized traditions originally developed on a continent other than their own, as in, for example, the Swedish tribes that are animated by Native American spirituality or the American tribes of Norse heathens. Local pagan communities often form “global tribes” or small imaginary pagan communities that transcend national borders.

In envisioning the future in terms of the past, the pagan effort to revive or reconstruct premodern religious traditions not infrequently runs into ethnocentric considerations probably unknown to premodern man. Are techniques developed in Sioux spirituality open for everyone to explore or should this be considered “religious theft”? May a modern Asatrúer look to Wicca or ancient Egypt for inspiration or should he or she uphold a symbolic purity of tradition? Should revived Celtic spirituality be tied to Celtic ancestry or may an African be a Celtic pagan? Such issues have not found universally accepted answers but are at the heart of perennial debate and conflict in the pagan worlds. While many pagans consider any ancient tradition to be open to anyone irrespective of race or ethnicity, many heathens (who form the subject of this book) claim tradition on the basis of ethnicity or race.

Racist pagans tend to biologize spirituality. Somehow, gods and goddesses are encoded in the DNA of the descendants of the ancients. Blood is thought to carry memories of the ancient past, and divinities are believed to be genetically engraved upon or to reverberate from deep down within the abyss of the collective subconscious or “folk soul” of a given ethnic or racial group. Consciously or unconsciously informed by centuries of racist discourse, adherents of this philosophy often find mixed ancestry problematic, of course, as all systems of classification find problematic whatever blurs or negates the categories of classification. Mixed blood purportedly mixes up the memories of the ancient past and the engraved divinities of different heathen traditions, resulting in spiritual confusion. Accordingly, each individual needs to find *one* spiritual home. Pagans of this conviction tend to dismiss as New Age all pagan belief systems based on

more than one heathen tradition. Despite racial pagans' claims of clear ethnic and/or racial foundations for their traditions, there are in fact more inventions of traditions, ethnicities, and races than most racial pagan activists acknowledge. Such inventions often become integral to the articulation of identity in the cultural economy of globalized reality and/or get inserted into the context of a neonationalist project aiming at political self-determination for the racial or ethnic community imagined.

Among pagans who link ethnicity with spirituality, the implicit racist logic is not necessarily acknowledged and may even be denied. Many activists publicly denounce the fascist and racist elements of the pagan milieu and declare solidarity with Native Americans and pagans of every other ethnicity who seek to preserve their traditions in the face of globalization and "imperialist" Christianity. However, a substantial number of racial pagans are explicitly racist in orientation and believe paganism to be at the heart of a long sought for racial revolution. Returning to the traditions evolved during an imaginary golden age of the "folk," they feel, is key to racial rebirth and empowerment. "Aryan" paganism, in particular, stands as the spiritual dimension of fascism, often fleshed out along Ariosophic lines; that is, it reflects a racial mysticism that considers the Aryan race divine. This racial mysticism connects the current revival of racist paganism to the occult roots of national socialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with many of the influential heathens of today specifically representing their projects as extensions of the effort made by philosophers and mystics of that era.

Indeed, observed from the perspective of globalization, the racist heathen milieu of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in many ways parallels the pagan revival that emerged a century earlier in Europe, during what Roland Robertson terms the "take-off" phase of globalization, from 1880 to 1924. In the wake of industrialization, modernization, urbanization, rationality, positivism, secularization, and imperialism arose a nostalgic idealization of the agrarian past, ancient traditions, magic, occultism, secret societies, lost worlds, paganism, vegetarianism, Theosophy, anthroposophy, and primitivism. This was the time of Wagner, Nietzsche, Evola, Blavatsky, Crowley, Jung, von List, and Spengler—all philosophers and artists who also exert a powerful influence in the current pagan revival. Out of that earlier environment, the fascist and national socialist projects were eventually constructed, suggesting that the trajectory of the new pagan revival should be taken quite seriously.

## Occultism, Paganism, and National Socialism

National socialism revolves around a palingenetic myth of racial rebirth and renewal. The German national socialist revolution aimed to rid society of parliamentary democracy, liberal humanism, capitalist economy, and communist class struggle, all of which were considered antithetical to the interest of the “organic race.” Purified by a baptism of fire, the German Eagle would emerge from the smoldering ruins to usher in a millenarian New Order and a New Man. Attracted to this myth were different ideologues and groups with divergent views concerning what exactly this dream was supposed to mean and how it translated into political practice. Involved in its heated intrigues were scientists and mystics, Norse pagans and nationalist Christians, National Bolsheviks and reactionary aristocrats, rural romantics and urban industrialists, modernists and antimodernists. The efficient “total-state” machine envisioned was far from national socialist German realities. A significant constituency understood national socialism as essentially a spiritual project, a perspective represented in the national socialist leadership by Heinrich Himmler, Rudolf Hess, and Alfred Rosenberg. While Hitler accepted the support of esoteric societies in his bid for power, he remained largely indifferent to the project of Aryan self-theomorphosis, finding the loyal soldier more useful than the wandering mystic.

The study of occult national socialism has been approached from different perspectives. One school of thought seeks to explain the Third Reich in terms of metaphysical evil, analyzing the “occult machinations” behind its rise to power. Hitler is cast as a master magician who tapped occult forces to spellbind an unwitting German population. Speculations produced by this line of reasoning have inspired racist Satanists to see Hitler the devil as an exemplar, thereby contributing to the fear that clandestine cults are practicing black Nazi magic and lending a resemblance of factuality to that fantasy. American heathens tend to find important predecessors in the pan-German *völkisch* movement. Asatrú magazines and Web sites frequently carry articles about *völkisch* philosophy, secret societies, and pagan revivalism. Asatrú veteran and rune magus Edred Thorsson has popularized *völkisch* thought by translating Ariosophic classics and by publishing studies of Germanic magic and rune lore. The body of scholarly literature is more modest, the seminal work being Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke’s 1992 *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, a detailed and balanced account of the Ariosophic undercurrent of national socialist ideology.

The subterranean maelstrom that animated the diverse milieu of occult na-

tional socialism was fed by a number of tributaries. Theosophy and the importation of other alternative religions met with revived Western esoteric traditions, paganism, magic, and monist pantheism, all cast in the context of a vibrant national romantic *völkisch* culture. The meaning of the German word *Volk* transcended the literal sense of “people” or “folk” to connote the spiritual qualities of the imagined nation, the unique personality of the German “folk soul.” Searching for the soul of the German nation, *völkisch* ideologues turned to folklore and mythology, traveling the countryside to record old tales, folk music, and traditions. The *völkisch* movement was integral to the construction of a pan-German nationalism aimed at “reunification” of all German settlements at the territorial expense of other European states, a philosophy that later propelled the German war effort.

A romantic revolt against the “ills” of modern society, industrialization, urbanization, materialism, and rationalism, *völkisch* culture yearned for mysteries, irrationality, nature, and heroic legends. Constructing a counterorder by idealizing rural life and inventing traditions of the past, *völkisch* ideologues rejected democracy and egalitarianism, upholding instead the values of hierarchy, nobility, and spirituality. Fragmented according to orientation, *völkisch* activists engaged in sun worship, rune magic, nudism, pagan traditions, race mysticism, vegetarianism, herbal medicine, biodynamic gardening, and excursions into nature or sites of ancient “German” presence. Untainted German blood symbolized the spiritual link with the heathen forefathers and was envisioned as a carrier of ancestral memories harking back to the mythical golden age of national greatness.

*Völkisch* magus Richard Wagner celebrated the mysteries of blood and race in his grandiose operas; staged at the Bayreuth temple theatre, Wagnerian dramas assumed the qualities of transformative *völkisch* ceremonies, stirring the audience to the call of the racial soul. Wagner belonged to the *völkisch* category that sought to Germanize Christianity. The quest for the Holy Grail in *Parsifal* symbolized the *völkisch* longing for an Aryan Christ, a mystery cult centered on the redeeming force of pure German blood (Hollinrake 1982; Noll 1997a). “Whoever makes the assertion that Christ was a Jew is either ignorant or insincere,” influential racist historian Houston Stewart Chamberlain concluded (quoted in Noll 1997a, 144).<sup>8</sup> “He had not a drop of genuinely Jewish blood in his veins” (*ibid.*). An Aryan Christ was central to Alfred Rosenberg’s attempt to make Christianity a religion of Nordic supremacy. Eventually, the notion of an Aryan Christ crossed the Atlantic to emerge in the racist mission of Christian Identity. The effort to Germanize Christianity coexisted with other alterna-

tive constructs of Aryan religiosity. Among the ariocentric new religious movements, Theosophy was of special importance, exacting an influence far beyond its membership.

With its emphasis on elitism, racism and esoteric knowledge, Theosophy was well suited to the *völkisch* milieu.<sup>9</sup> Drawing on Hinduism, Buddhism, Gnosticism, Masonry, and the latest developments of then modern scientific racism, Theosophy founder Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1972 [1877]; 1888) elaborated an alternative view on man and world. According to theosophical precepts, the universe is a regulated, interconnected septennial hierarchy of septennial hierarchies, combined in an ever-transforming totality moving in cycles of birth, death, and rebirth. Man is a microcosmic reflection of the comprehensive whole, moving through time in a series of reincarnations regulated by karmic law. The cosmic whole strives toward perfection through a progressive spiral motion, with each round of birth, degeneracy, and renewal completed one step higher than at the point of departure. The history of mankind was similarly described as an evolutionary spiral motion of revolving cycles of degeneration and ascendancy.

Of special significance is a sequence of seven distinct “root races,” each populating a different continent.<sup>10</sup> The first human race was the last divine race and lived on an “imperishable” astral continent overlooked by the North Star. The three root races that followed were more material and populated now sunken continents: the hyperborean continent between the North Pole and America; Lemuria, between Africa and Australia; and Atlantis, located in the Atlantic ocean. The Aryan race is the fifth root race and is assigned the task of leading mankind’s return into divinity, completing the sevenfold round at a stage higher than the divine point of departure.

During the era of gradual deterioration, Theosophy holds, divine knowledge fragmented into the different religions and mythologies of the world. Only an elite of enlightened Aryan sages fully preserved the original divine consciousness. Guarding the keys that could unlock the mysteries, the Aryan sages left the sinking Atlantis and relocated to the mythical subterranean cities Agartha and Shamballah, in the Himalayas and the Gobi Desert respectively. At a hidden Himalayan monastery, the white masters invited Blavatsky to read a sacred text that she translated and published with commentaries as *The Secret Doctrine* (1888). Divine truth, she claimed, will initially remain concealed to all but the spiritually most advanced. Eventually, though, voiced by the Aryan elite, theosophical truth will shatter the distortions of Semitic thought to implement the next evolutionary leap, leaving to karmic justice the leaders of the old order.

The theosophical themes of racial redemption, secret knowledge, subterranean cities, hidden masters, lost worlds, and exalted Aryan origins in the hyperborean motherland fit perfectly with *völkisch* imagination. The meeting between Theosophy and *völkisch* culture would birth Ariosophy, a peculiar brand of esoteric racism asserting the inherent divinity of Aryan man. Coined by self-anointed Austrian aristocrat Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels (1874–1954), Ariosophy was less a uniform school of esoteric thought than the direction in which several different race mystics headed when exploring the occult underground. With headquarters at a medieval castle ruin, Lanz in 1907 established an initiatory order of esoteric knights, *Ordo Novi Templi* (ONT), to serve the Ariosophic end envisioned.

Merging Theosophy and Gnosticism with anthropology and zoology, Lanz formulated the “theozoological” theory as the “scientific” basis of a dualist religion in which Aryans and non-Aryans were identified as carnal representations of the metaphysical principles of good and evil locked in a battle for world dominion. Lanz believed that the blond, blue-eyed Aryan was descended from an omniscient divine race that originally populated *Arktogäa*, a mythic Aryan motherland in the North Pole region. When Aryan women engaged in sexual relations with “daemon” races, the original race lost its superhuman powers. Aryan Christ came to redeem his race. His racist gospel was distorted by mainstream theology and forced underground, preserved throughout history by the Knights Templars and other initiatory orders. Centuries of uncontrolled procreation had increased the non-Aryan population, which gradually corrupted the German folk soul to the low point of modern society.

Surfacing with the rising tide of *völkisch* desire, the Aryan Christ summoned the race for the final battle. To restore Aryan supremacy, Lanz developed a program with striking similarities to the national socialist policies that were to come: an Aryan revolution was necessary to clear society of degeneracy; inferior races were to be exterminated, deported, or enslaved; enforced eugenics would improve the race, castrating the inferior element and actively supporting the reproduction of the superior; Aryan females were to be assigned to breeding convents and matched to an elite of Aryan studs; racial rejuvenation would then empower the Aryan god-men to launch a world war to exterminate the racial enemy; securing the Aryan birthright to sufficient *lebensraum* would lay the foundation of a millenarian reich of Aryan supremacy.

In terms of membership, the ONT remained small, with an estimated total of less than three hundred initiated knights distributed at a handful of local fraternities. Each secret center was subdivided into a hierarchy of seven orders

that reflected degrees of racial purity and mastery of the Ariosophic mysteries. Lanz developed a New Templar liturgy and ceremonies and composed psalms to fit the “restored” gospel. A prolific writer, Lanz edited *Ostara*, a widely circulated journal dedicated to racial economics and anthropology that counted Hitler among its regular readers during his Vienna years. After World War I, Lanz moved to Hungary where he joined the right-wing counterrevolution of 1920, eventually serving at a Christian nationalist press agency linked with the foreign office. By then, Lanz had amended his Ariosophy with virulent anti-Semitism. ONT was supportive of the emerging national socialist movement and cultivated ties with a cross section of European fascists. In 1932, Lanz proudly proclaimed that Hitler was one of his pupils. However, this did not save the ONT when the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP) regime turned increasingly hostile to secret organizations outside their control. In 1942, ONT was banned in Austria and Germany, which left the one chapter in Hungary. Lanz spent the war years in Swiss exile and made no recorded attempt to revive ONT in postwar Germany.

Among the celebrities associated with ONT was Guido von List (1848–1919), the revered guru of Ariosophic paganism. Dedicated to restoring national greatness by reverting to the wisdom of the ancients, von List made a *völkisch* career as a journalist, novelist, playwright, folklorist, astrologist, poet, heathen, rune master, and magician. An acclaimed part of the *völkisch* literary establishment, von List in 1902 had a mystical revelation that would reorient his intellectual effort. While spending almost a full year in virtual blindness recovering from an eye operation, the secrets of the runes and the occult laws regulating the evolution of the Aryan folk soul came to him. He would spend the remainder of his life researching and resurrecting the hidden traditions of his ancestors.

His interpretation of Norse paganism was clearly influenced by Theosophy and Gnostic racism, the latter borrowed from the younger Lanz and other Ariosophists in the *völkisch* milieu. Von List claimed that the *Edda* (a collection of Norse myths and sagas) confirmed theosophical historiography. The different realms of *Musspelheim* (world of giants), *Asgård* (home of Aesir), *Vanaheim* (realm of Vanir), and *Midgård* (man’s world) found in Norse cosmology corresponded to Blavatsky’s cosmogony with its sub-sequence of manifest elements (fire, air, water, earth). The three subsequent *Logoi* (from Greek *Logos*) of theosophical speculation were identified as Allfather Wotan (Odin) and his two sons, Vile and Ve. Blavatsky’s first four root races corresponded with the offspring of four giants (*Ymir*, *Orgelmir*, *Thrudgelmir*, *Bergelmir*) that in Norse mythology preceded the creation of man. Following Lanz, von List believed that the fifth,

Aryan, race originated at the vanished polar continent, Arktogää, then built a new homeland on present-day Austria from which they expanded throughout the ancient world. Aryan man was to von List a reflection of the ancient Norse god/desses and a glimpse of future glory when man's innate divinity would be fully manifest. Cosmology corresponded with the microcosm of Aryan man, and von List introduced practices like rune yoga, rune meditation, and rune magic to serve the end of working with innate divine energies, techniques that would be adopted in the practice of Ariosophic pagans in America a century later. In accordance with Theosophy, von List believed that the immortal Aryan ego journeyed through time in cycles of reincarnations patterned like a continuous spiral staircase "in order to approach the final aim of the highest perfection, of a similitude to God, and ultimately to full union with God in this spiral form" (1988 [1908], 88).

The aboriginal religion of Aryan man was preserved in its most authentic form in the heathen world of the Teuton. Whereas Aryan Buddhism focused solely on the spiritual and Greco-Roman Aryanism stressed the material, Norse paganism cultivated the physical as coequal to the spiritual. To fully appreciate heathen religion, von List held it essential to distinguish between the exoteric and esoteric religious approaches on which the "national freedom" of antiquity supposedly had been based. The former was a religion of nature, known as Wotanism, adapted to the needs and level of sophistication of the heathen commoner. The latter was an initiatory mystical religion, termed Armanism, exclusive to the Armanenschaft, the elite class of Wotanist priest-king-scientists educated in occult and secular sciences at various Armanen lodge centers established throughout the heathen world.

With the advent of Christianity, the Armanenschaft initially sought to preserve paganism by blending the two religions and encoding its principles in the folklore of simple people. When Christian rulers initiated campaigns of violent aggression against any diversion from orthodoxy, the Armanenschaft went underground. To preserve Aryan faith and law, the Armanen encrypted its message in words, poetry, law, art, architecture, heraldry, and symbols, using a threefold code of interpretation to prevent noninitiates from detecting the secrets. Any given text or artifact would accordingly have three meanings—one exoteric and two esoteric. The latter two were divided into a low and high level to communicate messages of different magnitude to Armanen adepts and masters. A system developed already in ancient rune magic, whereby each rune communicated a meaning on three different levels, was now carried on in the secret cryptic language, *kala*. However, as Christian oppression continued with



witch trials, inquisition, and reformation, the concealed meaning got lost or survived only as disparate remnants or misunderstood corruptions, like Freemasonry. Only the indigenous heraldry of German coats-of-arms still conveys uncorrupted esoteric wisdom for the initiates to read. Von List came to believe that he was a reincarnated Armanist priest-king, added the aristocratic “von” to his name, and developed an occult key with which to restore the hidden meaning embedded in artifacts and lore throughout the German landscape (von List 1988 [1908]; Flowers 1988).

The tribulations of modernity were to von List signs of the messianic woes of Aryan rebirth. The ambitions of the German nation were frustrated by an evil cabal of racial enemies organized in the “Great International Party” of von List’s imagination, bearing the traits of then rampant anti-Semitic sentiments in *völkisch* thought. Von List argued for an Aryan war of aggression to exterminate the racial enemies and restore an Armanist empire. In accordance with his millenarian vision, von List initially was enthusiastic about the First World War effort. His apocalyptic dreams frustrated by the outcome, von List prophesied that an army of reincarnated Aryan soldiers slain at the battlefield would return under the leadership of the “Strong One from Above” to inaugurate an Aryan thousand-year reich. Based on theosophical and astrological calculations, von List set the year at 1932, one year before the ascendancy of Hitler.

Von List was a legend in his lifetime, with numerous groups formed to carry his ideas to fruition. In 1908, the Guido von List Society was founded as an exoteric outlet to support the works of the *völkisch* master. At a midsummer ceremonial working in 1911, von List founded the esoteric Hoher Armanen-Orden (High Armanic Order), the activities of which are less known. In Germany arose numerous Ariosophic societies, including the Germanenorden, an armed Armanen underground founded in 1910 to restore the ancient order. Its principal aims were to monitor Jewish and revolutionary anarchist and socialist activity, including in its clandestine operations assassination of targeted enemies. Germanenorden ceremonies were based on elements borrowed from von List, Norse mythology, Masonry, and Wagner.

In 1916, the Germanenorden adopted the swastika as its official emblem. Although widely used in theosophical and *völkisch* circles, it was from the Germanenorden and its successor group, the Thule Society, that the swastika found its way to the NSDAP. Instrumental in this story were the activities of self-proclaimed nobleman Rudolf von Sebottendorff, who organized the Germanenorden in Munich. When Soviet-inspired activism increased, the Germanenorden metamorphosed into the Thule Society to avert unwanted left-

ist attention. During the short-lived Communist Republic of Munich of 1919, the Thule Society kept the dual agenda of Ariosophic mysticism and terrorist activism. Thule members infiltrated communist cells, stockpiled weapons, and engaged in violent assaults against leftists, thus contributing to the defeat of the republic. Aside from participating in ceremonies and terrorism, von Sebottendorff organized völkisch lectures and political discussions, including among its invited guest speakers Alfred Rosenberg and Rudolf Hess.

The Thule Society had an upper-class orientation. To attract the working class for the Aryan cause, Thulean initiates in 1918 launched the *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (German Worker's Party), of which Adolf Hitler became a member. Impatient with its conspiratorial secrecy and lodge elitism, Hitler assumed control and reorganized the party into the NSDAP in 1920, aiming to create mass appeal.

If Hitler mainly had priorities other than those of the occult völkisch mystic, Rudolf Hess, Alfred Rosenberg, and Heinrich Himmler were more enthusiastic about the Ariosophic project. Born and raised in Egypt, Hess moved to Germany during World War I and caught the völkisch fever. A vegetarian who kept to a biodynamic diet, Hess was intrigued by anthroposophy, herbal medicine, astrology, magic, and Aryan race mysticism. Active in occult circles and a veteran member of the NSDAP who participated in the Beer Hall Putsch and took dictation for Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Hess was eventually outmaneuvered in the constant intrigues of the national socialist inner circle. Hess's solitary surprise flight to Scotland in 1941—intended, he said, to negotiate for peace—has variously been interpreted as insanity, a failed effort to impress Hitler, and a desperate last attempt by the Thule Society to correct an Ariosophic revolution gone astray.

Alfred Rosenberg, the NSDAP minister of culture asserted, "Race is the image of soul. . . . Racial history is therefore simultaneously natural history and soul mystique" (1930, 4). Tracing the "history of the religion of the blood" (4), Rosenberg believed that all high cultures of human history were the creations of a superior Aryan master race that had swarmed out from their northern motherland Atlantis. Racial memories of a prehistoric Nordic tradition were present in mythologies of southern Europe, North Africa, western Asia, Persia, India, and China. However, through desecration of the blood, all had perished. The German defeat in World War I was the outward effect of inward collapse, the cataclysmic outcome of Jewish corruption of true Aryan Christianity. However, the blood that had died had begun to live anew, and "in its mystical sign the cells of the German folkish soul renew[ed] themselves" (5), thus effectuating

an Aryan resurrection. Rosenberg's comprehensive history of the racial soul, *Der Mythos der 20. Jahrhunderts* (The Myth of the Twentieth Century), sold more than a million copies, becoming a nonfiction bestseller, second only to Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (Rosenberg 1930; Whisker 1990; Godwin 1996, 58). To document the spiritual history of the Aryan race, Rosenberg also established research departments involving scholars of the history of religions, ethnology, Orientalism, linguistics, and anthropology.

A prominent patron of Ariosophy in the NSDAP leadership was Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer of the Schutzstaffel (SS) and head competitor with Rosenberg for the leadership of the national socialist ideological apparatus. Recalling the ideals of Lanz, the black-uniformed SS troops would be a spiritual and physical elite, serving as progenitors of the future race of supermen. To direct Aryan destiny, of course, it was essential to control its history, and Himmler rivaled Rosenberg in recruiting scholars and funding research centers to that end.<sup>11</sup> In 1935, Himmler incorporated the Ahnenerbe Research Institute of Indo-German Prehistory and Archeology as an SS department and made its scholars uniformed SS officers.<sup>12</sup> The main objective of Ahnenerbe was to explore the geographical distribution of Aryan man and account for his material and spiritual accomplishments throughout history. Scholars engaged in a wide range of projects, including archeological excavations, comparative Indo-European mythology, medieval church art, and herbal medicine. Himmler was, however, attracted to subjects and knowledge extending beyond the limits of the mainstream academic world. Recruiting astrologers, magicians, and völkisch mystics, Himmler aimed to research the mysteries of the occult. Among the occultists enrolled in the SS was Austrian Karl Maria Wiligut (1866–1946) in whose esoteric expertise Himmler became especially confident.

Wiligut claimed to be the direct descendant of a royal family line of god-kings that ruled the ancient German nation. By tapping into the bank of ancestral memories, Wiligut could detail the marvels of racial prehistory, from its astral origins through its subsequent manifestations in worlds long vanished (Wiligut 2001). Outlining the hidden history of the present, or fifth, epoch, Wiligut revised von List's distinction between Armanism and Wotanism, casting them as two separate religions locked in perennial conflict. The Wiligut family had allegedly been champions of "Irmanist" monotheism, introduced by the German King Krist, a theology which had eventually been suppressed by Wotanist aggression. The Wiligut family secretly cultivated the Ariosophic legacy, but at the brink of national rebirth, an evil conspiracy of Jews and Freemasons sought to annihilate esoteric truth as evidenced by the outcome of the Great War. Wiligut

grew concerned that the cabal was out to destroy him. Declared insane, he spent two years in an asylum, corresponding with New Templars and other völkisch mystics. Moving to Germany in 1932, he engaged with the Edda Society. In 1933 he was introduced to Himmler.

Finding Wiligut's ancestral memory to be a unique source of information about Aryan prehistory, Himmler designated him head of the department for pre- and early history. Joining the ss under the pseudonym Karl Maria Weisthor, Wiligut was ordered to document on paper his wealth of ancestral memories. Himmler evidently enjoyed listening to Wiligut's tales of prehistoric Aryan glory. Wiligut was also entrusted with reviewing the teachings of Italian radical conservative traditionalist Julius Evola. The perennial philosophy of Evola, with its romanticized notions of the spiritual nobility and hermetic traditions of the pagan past, had proved not wholly acceptable to fascist Italy. Finding fascism too compromising, Evola sought recognition by the ss and began lecturing in Germany from 1934 onward. Wiligut, however, discouraged further cooperation with Evola, finding him too reactionary and ignorant of Aryan prehistory (Goodrick-Clarke 2002).

The most "spectacular contribution" Wiligut made to national socialist Germany was the development of the Wewelsburg as the castle and ceremonial center of ss order. Acquired by the ss in 1934, Wiligut conceptualized the castle as the "center of the world," an Ariosophic "Vatican" and occult academy. The ceremonial center for the Ariosophic knights of the ss was the northern tower with its vault, Walhalla, Hall of the Slain, the floor of which was decorated with the Black Sun, the occult source of energy that invigorates Aryan theomorphosis. At Wewelsburg were held seasonal pagan festivals to celebrate the wheel of nature and name-giving rites for the progeny of ss officers. Wiligut also designed ritual objects, notably the striking ss Totenkopfring with its death's-skull and cross-bones, a swastika, a hagal rune, double sig runes, and an Ariosophic rune group.<sup>13</sup> In 1938, Himmler declared that the rings of dead ss men should be returned for ritual storage at Wewelsburg to express the notion of a chivalric order transcending death.

In the end, the thousand-year reich collapsed after twelve years, the millenarian dreams thwarted by the Allied war effort. The political collapse of national socialism did not, however, end the Ariosophic quest. Although völkisch activity fell sharply into disrepute in popular culture, a flickering occult subculture remained during the subsequent decades, and at the brink of the millennium, Ariosophic concerns suddenly resurfaced among a new generation heathens across the Atlantic. Völkisch pre-national socialist pagans are

now commemorated in contemporary heathen ceremonies, lyrics, and art. The Wotansvolk project is cast as a continuation of the Ariosophic effort. Pagans often focus on Ariosophic themes such as blood mysteries, lost worlds, immortal Aryan sages, or the Ultima Thule mythos of Aryan origins. To some American pagans, this fascination is bereft of any political ambition. To others, Ariosophic paganism is part of a neonationalist project aimed at establishing a transatlantic white homeland.

### A Few Words on Terminology

Racist paganism is linked with the political history of race in American society, so the terminology used herein might need some clarification. Some of the heathens categorized as “racist” in this study would probably object to the label due to the negative connotations associated with the concept in contemporary mainstream discourse. Many Americans consider racists to be uneducated red-necks at best, prejudiced oppressors at worst. However, racists have not always been considered public villains. Racism was long considered a divinely mandated order of nature and an important pillar of American society, protected by constitutional law

In this book, then, the term *racist* is detached from any moral assumptions and simply signifies a person who believes that mankind may be classified into any given number of “races” that “by nature” differ from each other not only in physical but also in mental and moral qualities; from this perspective, the races of mankind are often metaphorically thought of as “organisms” with different “personalities.” A racist asserts that every individual member of a certain race shares fundamental mental predispositions unique to that race. To a racist, the importance of race goes beyond race as a social fact or construct generated by an essentialist reading of racial classification—for a racist, race determines how people *are*. Race is thought to provide man with his inner essence of which physical traits may be indicators. Accordingly, the color of the skin does not determine how people are; rather, innate mental qualities are believed to determine the physical characteristics. This does not necessitate a hierarchical ordering of distinct races in terms of “superior” or “inferior,” even though this often has been the case. Not every racist arrives at the same conclusion when reflecting on the political and social implications of his or her racist worldview. A few of the racists introduced herein, for instance, would fully accept “integration” as long as racial “differences” were acknowledged and protected by policies preventing assimilation and miscegenation. Others would assert that multiracial or multi-

cultural societies “don’t work,” claiming that social harmony is best served by implementing some degree of racial separation. While some talk about redefining American federalism in terms of a confederacy of monoracial “tribal” societies, others envision a division of the American continent into separate monoracial states, and yet another category talks in terms of global cleansing and the establishment of a worldwide white empire. What they all have in common is a desire to preserve a perceived “natural order” by instituting policies of purity to prevent the blurring of the units of classification.

A religious racist takes the racist mode of classification a step further by stipulating that the Divine, however defined, created the various races of man that differ not only mentally but also spiritually. This, in effect, makes “God” a racist, and preserving the purity of the different races of man may therefore be interpreted as respecting divine will. The organic notion of race is commonly strengthened by asserting that each race is endowed with a racial soul commonly thought of as its core essence. Each race has therefore “by nature” a relationship with the divine, a religion distinctively their own. In its mildest version this view might be expressed by rejecting the missionary efforts of agents who propound a universal interpretation of religion. In its more extreme versions, it might be worked into theories asserting that different races reflect in their beings metaphysical good or evil. World history may then be cast in apocalyptic terms as an ongoing conflict between races divine and diabolic that is now reaching its predestined end.

The racist pagans of this volume all believe that there is an organic link between biology and spirituality. Somehow the pagan god/desses of the ancestors are encoded in the genes of their progeny and might therefore reassert their presence to replace the “alien” religion of Christianity when conditions allow. In some, but not all, versions, this is elaborated to mean that the race, or ethnic tribe, “by nature” is divine. The divine energies represented within man by his pagan god/desses may be called on in ceremonies intending to raise their presence and recharge innate divinity in a project of self-theomorphosis set in a context of resurrecting the racial soul. The racist pagan worldview might occasionally extend to the thought that every “folk” is a creation of its god/desses. Here, the God of Christianity is defined as the tribal god of Jewry, who in trying to pose as the universal god of mankind reveals the megalomaniac traits of a demiurge who brings destruction to every nation that he possesses.

The words *pagan* and *heathen* did not originally signify a specific religious tradition. Practitioners of pre-Christian spirituality had no word for religion and no label with which to distinguish their orientation from those of other people.

Both concepts originated as pejoratives used by “enlightened” European Christians to signify the backward beliefs and customs of rural commoners. *Pagan* derives from the Latin word *paganus* meaning “country dweller” and already in Roman times connoted something similar to what modern urban Americans generally mean by *hick* or *hillbilly*. Similarly, *heathen* literally means “people of the heaths” and was used to refer to unsophisticated rural people who stuck to traditions of the past rather than converting to Christianity.

In time, *pagan* and *heathen* assumed the additional meanings of “unbelievers,” “idolaters,” “devil-worshippers,” and even “atheists.” When people attracted to ancient pre-Christian traditions began to use *pagan* and *heathen* to define themselves, they adopted a strategy akin to northern Americans calling themselves Yankees. The meaning of *Yankee* has, much like the word *bad*, thereby been redefined in the face of those who originally used it as a dismissive term. *Pagan* is herein used in the same spirit as when it used by modern pagans themselves, that is, as a generic term for pre-Christian traditions such as Norse, Celtic, Greek, Egyptian, or Yoruban, as well as more modern reconstructions of those traditions such as Asatrú, Wicca, voodoo, or Santeria. *Heathen* is used specifically to signify pagans oriented toward Norse paganism, a common usage among Norse pagans themselves, who wish to differentiate themselves from generic pagans, pagans of other traditions, and to distance themselves from what might be considered the “New Age confusion” of what Norse paganism “properly” means. All heathens are therefore pagans, but not all pagans are heathens.