Reclaiming Quarterly Archives

Two Reviews of "Enchanted Feminism: The Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco" by Jone Salomonson, from Reclaiming Quarterly.

Issue #88 - by Anne Hill

Issue #92 - by 3-D Circle

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To See Ourselves As Others See Us

Essay & review by Anne Hill

Witches are generally disparaging of academia. Academics are often perceived as being too intellectual, too "stuck in their heads," to understand why we believe and practice as we do. Their motives are called into question, particularly when they reach conclusions that are at odds with some of Paganism's most cherished beliefs. It is true that Paganism has been misrepresented, attacked, or dismissed by many anthropologists, theologians, archaeologists, and others. Yet the careful observations of academic researchers have also led to rich sources of ethnographic data and historic information, which has been to our benefit.

There are now several recent academic books which are respectful of or actually written by Pagans. The tone of these books is generally accepting of Witchcraft as a New Religious Movement, and more than one author grapples with her position as both an insider and an observer to the movement. It is time for Witches and Pagans to start taking a closer look at these representations of the Craft, and what they can tell us about ourselves.

Enchanted Feminism

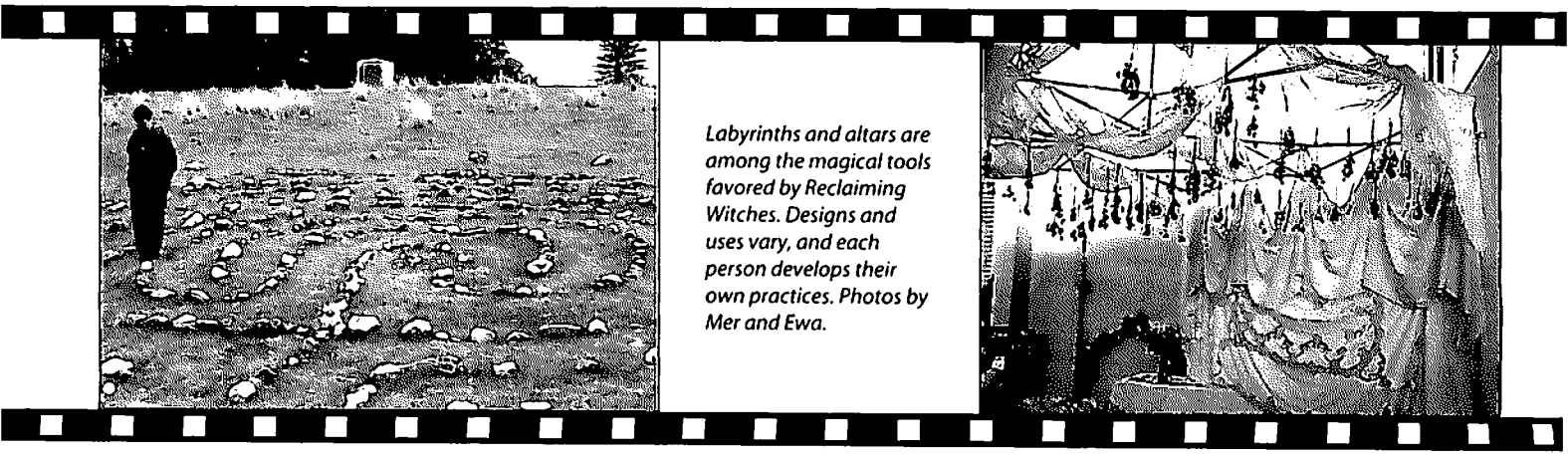
The Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco

by Jone Salomonsen
(London: Routledge, 2002)

The most recent, and closest to home, is Jone Salomonsen's book on Reclaiming, called *Enchanted Feminism.* Jone, now a Senior Research Fellow in Theology and Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo, Norway, studied Reclaiming from 1984–1994, using her fieldwork with us for both her Masters and Doctoral degrees. She interviewed many people (including me), attended rituals and classes in San Francisco, joined a coven, went to anarchist coffeehouses and BC Witchcamp, and even went through Reclaiming initiation, all of which she writes about in her book.

Jone is not a Pagan. She looks at Reclaiming from the vantage point of a feminist Protestant theologian and anthropologist, and this vantage determines her areas of inquiry. She studies both textual representations of belief, mostly Starhawk's writing, as well as the lived expression of those beliefs, through ritual and daily life dynamics within the community. She explores the insider/outsider dynamics in Reclaiming, and the tensions between anarchist politics and an initiatory, apparently hierarchical, tradition. She also takes a particularly critical look at the degree to which our rituals conform with, are in conflict with, or actually broaden, certain precepts of feminist analysis.

Jone seems to have brought to her research two basic questions: Is the Goddess as a primary deity, and a matrifocal spiritual pursuit, "ethically



Labyrinths and altars are among the magical tools favored by Reclaiming Witches. Designs and uses vary, and each person develops their own practices. Photos by Mer and Ewa.

more advanced and liberating than Jewish and Christian," God-centered, male-oriented religion; and "If an ideal in feminist theology is to include voices and perspectives from all genders and queer spirits, and represent the realities of the world in which we live more meaningfully...how may the discipline of theology be revised?" The first seems to be more of a personal query for her. The second frames the work she has set before herself professionally, and explains (for me, anyway) why she made some of her more questionable moves in the book, and why she reached the conclusions she did.

The biggest service to Reclaiming that Jone has done here is recording our history from 1979–1997. The first chapter of her book covers the creation of the Collective; the formation of the first classes and covens; the controversies within the community in those early years; the structure of the wider Reclaiming community in San Francisco; and the process by which the Collective eventually dissolved and the Wheel was formed. (In telling stories about specific people, Jone usually changes the names.)

Jone's history is very accurate in its portrayal of Reclaiming through the 80s and early 90s, when she was actively researching here. She is less informed about events and trends from the mid-90s on, which makes her analysis of Reclaiming dynamics a bit dated.

Though she names the other Reclaiming communities that have sprung up, Jone's focus of research was San Francisco, and so her history is also limited in geographic scope. Another caveat to *Enchanted Feminism* is that it is riddled with errors, both large and small. Jone misspells important names like Zsuzsanna Budapest, Raven Moonshadow, Cybele, Corythalia; she has frequent syntax errors; and she gets her facts wrong on several occasions as well. I can't speak for other inteviewees, but I was completely misquoted in my comments during a ritual, making me wonder how much her own personal feelings of the subject at hand had colored her memory of actual events. Still, this is a tremendously helpful archive for anyone interested in early Reclaiming history.

The other great service Jone has done is to place Starhawk's writings within the context of Reclaiming as a whole. She calls to task Ronald Hutton and many other respected authors for treating Starhawk as "a single feminist interpreter, not as the most important founder of a new social and spiritual community." Jone also points out places where other Reclaiming Witches diverge from Starhawk's stated theories, creating an accurate picture of the range of belief and practice within Reclaiming.

All that being said, there are a couple major flaws in the book. Her chapter on initiation begins with a completely muddled view of Reclaiming and Faery initiations. It is so confused and erroneous, I almost want to correct it point by point, but on second thought, maybe it's best that this work is not a reliable source of information on initiation. She has also earned the ire of some of her informants by paraphrasing the initiation script from the Spiral Dance, and adding to it a detailed account of one Reclaiming initiate's initiation experience, as well as some parts of her own.

Her justification for doing this is that all the information is available in print through other sources. This strikes me as a rather disingenuous logic, and I read through the chapter looking for ways that these disclosures might actually add to her analysis in a way that a less detailed account would not. I could not find any thread in her discussion that is dependent on such a telling, and so am forced to conclude that she wrote in such detail about initiation for all the typical academic reasons: because she could, because she had informants willing to let her, and because it represented a type of academic coup for her fieldwork. Though she genuinely

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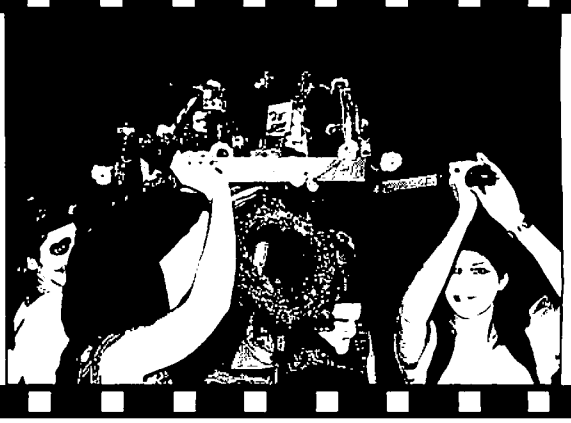
During the late 1980s and through the '90s, Reclaiming maintained its tradition of street action, including Nevada Test Site protests and the annual Day of the Dead procession in San Francisco. Photos by Steve Nadel and Susan C.



willing to accept challenges from each of her initiators, and must fulfill them to everyone's satisfaction before the actual ceremony can take place. These challenges are created by each individual initiator in accordance with what that priest/ess feels the candidate needs to be challenged on, and the rule of thumb is that an initiator only gives a challenge which she has already done, or would and could do. No one is challenged to be a trapeze artist, for instance. She may, however, be challenged to such an undertaking as undergoing a white-water rafting experience if that is something the initiator determines would foster the candidate's growth—and that the person is ultimately capable of. For instance, a diabetic wouldn't be given a challenge involving prolonged fasting, nor would a physically frail person be expected to stay out all night unclothed.

Reclaiming Collective incorporated as a non-profit religious corporation in the State of California in 1990, wrote Bylaws based on a consensus process model of decision-making, and eventually gained 501(c)(3) tax status with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

Over the years, Reclaiming Collective expanded from teaching the Craft and providing public rituals to providing a recorded Events Line listing classes, rituals and other activities, recording chants, publishing a book, and maintaining an internet presence with a website and listserves. The Reclaiming Newsletter grew into a magazine called Reclaiming Quarterly.

After years of discussion and seeking input from those not members of the Collective itself, the Collective (which varied in size from about ten to twenty or more at its largest) dissolved itself and turned over authority to the Wheel, a representative body comprised of spokespersons from all the many cells. At that point, about 52 people had, over the years, been members of Reclaiming Collective, for greater or lesser periods of time. In order to open up the perceived central authority of Reclaiming to the many Witches who, by the '90s, identified with Reclaiming and who practiced in the somewhat anarchic style of Reclaiming Witchcraft, the Collective created a statement called our Principles of Unity.

In addition to the Principles of Unity, the collective revised the former Mission Statement by deleting only four words: "San Francisco Bay Area." Today there are Reclaiming-tradition groups spread over a widespread geographic area — see the Regional Pages beginning on page 38 for the full scope.

Realizing that we have no way, need or desire to dictate to others how they should perform their rituals, and abhorring dogma and stagnation, we believe that any Witch may honestly and sincerely claim to be a Reclaiming Tradition Witch if he or she practices Reclaiming-style magic and agrees to our Principles of Unity.

The Principles of Unity are posted at www.reclaiming.org. M. Macha NightMare, P&W, is author of "Witchcraft and the Web," co-author of "The Pagan Book of Living and Dying," and all-round Pagan webweaver. She teaches on the broomstick circuit and at Cherry Hill (Pagan) Seminary, www.machanightmare.com

To See Ourselves

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seems to understand the transformation that happens through initiation, this chapter in the end strikes me as more pillaging than respectful of a community that took her in to the extent that we did.

The other major flaw in Jone's book is historical. In her view, supported by limited research, Witchcraft was created whole cloth by Gerald Gardner in the 1950s. She arrives at this conclusion by debunking Margaret Murray's theories that Witchcraft is the remnant of an older, pre-Christian religion, citing historian Ronald Hutton and Aidan Kelly's writings as proof that Gardner made it all up. "Thus, from an academic point of view, Gardner (with Crowley and Valiente) must be regarded as the sole inventor of modern Witchcraft, including its practices."

This is, again, a very disingenuous approach to a complex, contested history. In the first place, neither Hutton nor Kelly are particularly reliable sources of early Craft history. Hutton has been called to task for misrepresenting the sources of his arguments against Murray, relying on secondary sources, and for making misleading or inaccurate statements based on those misrepresentations. According to Pagan scholar Don Frew[1],

"In fact, the Paganism of today has quite a lot in common with the Paganism of the past, just not with the Paganism with which Hutton is apparently familiar. This reflects on Hutton's scholarship rather than on the still-debated antiquity of contemporary Paganism."

Jone's choice of Kelly as a reliable source is a much worse gaffe. Aidan Kelly, an early, influential figure in the Bay Area Craft community, came out with a book in 1991 claiming that his access to Gardner's private papers proved that Gardner had made everything up.

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There was a huge uproar at the time the book came out, not only because of Kelly's unethical conduct in many regards, but because he had doctored Gardner's writing to support his own conclusions and made up details out of whole cloth, among other offenses.

I cannot believe that Jone would not have been aware of the controversy, as she was in the Bay Area during that time, and makes a point of noting that she had spoken to local Witches of different traditions as well: "In more traditional Wiccan groups there is often a lively debate regarding the contemporary roots of Witchcraft, and people take pride in being well read and arguing consistently." Jone was also, in May 1999, published in *The Pomegranate*, a scholarly Pagan journal which has had an ongoing debate before and since that time about Craft origins. One would expect a broader discussion in a scholarly book by an author with such close ties to her subject. I can only assume that by citing Kelly non-ironically and ignoring all evidence to the contrary, Jone has developed a myth of Craft origins that serves her overall thesis. The question is, how?

Jone's chosen historical outlook leads to some highly conjectural, almost amusing statements throughout her book. For example, "Ritual nudity is of Gardnerian heritage." She takes her viewpoint into realms where she has done no research at all, and states "It is, therefore, unlikely that the sources of the Faery initiation ritual were different from those available to Gardner." She also considers herself an expert on not only Reclaiming Witchcraft, but all Craft traditions: "This is the Faery/Starhawk version of a myth that is used by all traditions of Witchcraft."

Jone goes farther than to credit Gardner with the creation of Witchcraft, however. After eliminating the possibility of earlier Pagan origins, she makes the claim that Witchcraft is descended almost in totality from Christianity and Judaism.

"Furthermore, because of the obvious connection between Witchcraft and western esoteric traditions, correlations must also be assumed with the religious heritage Gardner insisted to have rejected: Jewish and Christian religions... the most important context in which to understand Pagan Witchcraft is a Christian context: Witchcraft is not a new religion, but a reformation."

This theme is constantly repeated in *Enchanted Feminism*, and is increasingly unwieldy the more Jone tries to fit every Reclaiming practice into a Christian or Jewish religious context.

For instance, in a chapter on how we teach and practice magic, she discusses the practice of grounding at the beginning of rituals. After

establishing that "It is commonly held that the contents of the Tree of Life meditation, with its imagery, breathing, chakra points and power-chant, are taken from Hatha Yoga," she then goes on to propose that "the concept of a cosmic tree representing axis mundi is probably appropriated from the Jewish Kabbalah." Jone then gives a description of the Kabbalistic tree of life, concluding that the "Witches turn this mystical figure upside down and insist on a first and primary association between Goddess and Earth, not between God and Heaven."

Since she acknowledges that to appropriate the Kabbalistic model in a tree of life meditation would mean standing it on its head, why does she insist on this far-fetched explanation while discounting the obvious? I can't think of any Reclaiming priestesses of that era who were big students of Kabbalah, but I know several, including myself, that had experience in yogic spiritual practices. Yet to accept the Eastern roots of this practice would be to cast a shadow over her conviction that Witchcraft was created from Judeo-Christian practice, and Jone cannot allow any other possible hypotheses of Pagan origins. Again, the question is, why?

After struggling with this question through much of the book, I finally came to see this attribution from her perspective as a type of compliment. Because she paints us as a reform branch of Christianity, she is able to take our feminist, Earth-centered practice and use it to influence the evolution of Protestant theology. If she had arrived at any different historical conclusion, she would not have given herself the legitimacy she needed to carry out her own reformation work. It is even possible that she had to make this kind of claim in order to have her work validated at all through the University of Oslo, though that is conjecture on my part. This does not excuse Jone's sloppy scholarship, but it does provide a way of reconciling to the fact that there is yet another book on the market that misrepresents Pagan origins and in a broader sense doesn't "get it" about who we are, or why we do what we do.

There are other problems with the book. For instance, the index not worth much. When wanting to refer to an earlier mention of the Principles of Unity, the index pointed me only to their full text in the Appendix, ignoring the references (which I then had to leaf through the whole book to find) on pages 61 and 297. The names of covens, people, and Reclaiming concepts are not indexed, nor are Christian theological concepts such as "deeds" and "grace." This is disappointing, and detracts from the book's usefulness.

The sections of the book that flowed the best strictly from a writing standpoint were the history of Reclaiming, her chapter on women's mysteries, and on initiation. Her feminist analysis I found interesting, and easier to read than some of her theological constructs, which generally suffered from her distorted historical analysis.

Most people involved with Reclaiming don't have much use for theology (or thealogy, for that matter), because theory is distracting and beside the point when dealing with mystical

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experiences of the Divine. The Reclaiming Principles of Unity specifically stay away from theology, instead focusing on the values that we have in common with each other. It seems inevitable that at some point Reclaiming will have to define its thealogy a bit more clearly, or more likely, that some Reclaiming Witches will feel moved to articulate their understanding of our thealogy. When that happens, this book will come in handy. Certainly it will be the text to which academics will compare any arguments put forward by Reclaiming Witches in the future.

Enchanted Feminism is the first attempt to place Starhawk's work in the context of Reclaiming practice as a whole, and view it all with the tools of theology and anthropology. Jone's hope in the end is that it will spur more research into men's experiences in Reclaiming (as she focused more on women's). My hope is that it will intrigue members of many Reclaiming communities to cultivate the observer role—one of the useful skills that academia has to offer—and document our history from the inside, rather than from without.

Published by Routledge. Reviewed by Anne Hill. Anne Hill is a longtime Reclaiming priestess and a doctoral candidate at the University of Creation Spirituality in Oakland, California.

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1 Frew, Donald H. "Methodological Flaws in Recent Studies of Historical and Modern Witchcraft," Ethnologies 20:1, 1998. Pg.42-44, 54-59.

2 www.uscolo.edu/natrel/pom/

Contact RQ for a fully-footnoted version of this article.

Good Dish

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coven sister all about who was doing what with whom at Witchcamp. Thus a web of connection is spun.

Gossip serves to inform us as to the unspoken, informal, or implicit rules of groups, as opposed to the formal explicit ones. In Reclaiming, we say in our principles of unity that we are non-hierarchical. Anyone who participates in the community for over a year and a day will eventually learn from gossip how the unspoken hierarchies operate. Gossip also serves as challenges to these hierarchies and can enforce and bring about ethical standards. Recently, a prominent figure in the environmental activist community told friends he was hiring a prostitute for another prominent activist's bachelor party. Gossip spread, and eventually people knew who were outraged. He was confronted as to the destructive sexual politics this action embodied and the terrible position he was putting the other men who would be present at the party. Gossip served to hold him accountable and stop an action that would have been damaging to the community at large. It is my experience that in our own community when there is an outcry against gossip this usually signifies something important needs to be brought to light. When there is talk that attacks on leadership are being carried out through gossip, this might signify that there are abuses of power and issues of accountability that need to be brought to the surface. Gossip allows us to exchange truths that otherwise would remain hidden, and puts pressure on those wielding influence to deal with things they would rather suppress or keep quiet.

Of course, gossip can also be used to discredit those who are challenging power structures. In the past few years I have been in conflict with other prominent members of the community over issues of how we structure ourselves. I not only have conflicting views with prominent members of our community, I am a prominent member myself. Who more than myself can expect to be gossiped about? To step into our power in the community means that every wart and wrinkle in our personality and misstep in our personal lives will be part of public discourse. To challenge power in the community means the same. This is aggravating, often humiliating, but completely inevitable. In fact, it serves to build and create community.

It is part of our hard-wiring to gossip about those we see as powerful and prominent in our community. By doing so, we figure out what constitutes social prominence, and we also begin to challenge it. Researchers have noted that negative gossip increases when we discuss those we perceive as more powerful. This is a way we integrate the fact that those in the light also have a shadow, thus painting a truer picture of what it means to be human. Gossip functions in human community to humanize us all, to mitigate our tendency to idealize our leaders. Gossip also serves to keep the social order, thus it makes sense that it is utilized in dismissing those who challenge the status quo. The paradox of creating an anarchistic Pagan community is that we are embarked on an endeavor in which we are constantly creating, challenging, and defending the status quo. A lot of this is done through the practice of gossip.

Gossip can be the language of power-with, but it also can be a tool of power-over. Research on childhood bullying finds that a fundamental aspect of female bullying is spreading lies about those who are the target of the bullying. In just about every women's community I have been a part of, this kind of behavior occasionally has been employed. When we hear gossip in our community, the first question we must ask ourselves is, is this true? It is important to be wary of being told something hideous about another community member and being asked to keep it confidential. This may be a clue that what you are being told is untrue, and you are being told this information to discredit the other member of your community. If you are in a meeting and Treestump invokes confidentiality and then tells the group that Rainwater, another priestess who she has had trouble with, has said terrible things about everybody in the group, well, this is confidentiality that you don't want to keep.

Enchanted Feminism and Courageous Scholarship

a book review by 3-D Circle

RQ first reviewed Jone Salomonsen's book about a year ago. We feel that ongoing discussion about this carefully-researched academic study of Reclaiming's origins has shown enough interest to warrant a second review.

Enchanted Feminism

The Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco

by Jone Salomonsen

Starhawk, one of Reclaiming's founders, says of this book, "Jone Salomonsen has negotiated the difficult role of the participant observer with grace and integrity... While I'm sure I could find something on every page to debate with her, overall she has created a clear and illuminating portrait of one era in Reclaiming's growth and development: our efforts to embody a new spiritual/political paradigm in our rituals, teaching, and organizing."

The author, from the University of Oslo, lived in the Bay Area for a couple of years, and has visited other times.

The book focuses on Reclaiming as a feminist community, with chapters on the Wiccan Revival, Utopian Witches, Priestessing in Reclaiming, Women's Mysteries, and the Spiral Dance ritual.

The book is part of a series by Routledge called "Religion and Gender."

"Witches" were still devil-worshippers in the public mind, and "Pagans" merely ignorant and superstitious primitives, when Jone Salomonsen, then a Norwegian graduate student in theology, first arrived in San Francisco in 1984 and chose from among dozens of young communities, traditions, and organizations, to study Reclaiming.

This was when a gathering of 50 hardy people on the beach counted as a large public ritual, and attendance at the Spiral Dance was around 350.

Mainstream academics in this country and in Norway told Salomonsen that Goddess worship was an insignificant New Age phenomenon, that Witchcraft was not a religion, and that her work would not be taken seriously. With a mixture of chutzpah and stubbornness, Salomonsen eventually faced down the skeptics, obtained a series of grants, made many trips to California over the course of the next decade, ultimately was awarded a Ph.D. in theology from the University of Oslo, and in 2002 published *Enchanted Feminism: Ritual, Gender and Divinity Among the Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco.*

Since the book's first appearance we, some of the subjects of the book, have had time to reflect on Salomonsen's work and its value, and on our own experience of being studied at close hand by someone from another culture.

Salomonsen places her study of Reclaiming in the early 1980s in the context of a dominant discourse in her academic field, i.e. the analysis of Judaeo-Christian culture and belief systems, and raises such intriguing issues as the possible connections between the theology of feminist Witchcraft, to the extent it was discernible in the 1980s, and the Kabbalah. She also covers questions which may be of more interest to Pagan-centric minds, such as the familiar one of whether there is convincing evidence of a continuous historical lineage between Witches in Old Europe and modern American feminist Witches, and reaches agreement with the prevailing international consensus among scholars that there is not.

Our focus, however, is not on such theoretical questions but rather on Salomonsen's methodology of living among us and practicing our religion with us, while observing and analyzing us at the same time.

After all, who better to evaluate Salomonsen's innovative approach than us, a few of her actual subjects? How different our understanding of other cultures would be if the subjects of all ethnographic studies of people around the world had this kind of opportunity.

Method of Compassion

First we have to say, knowing this book is on the reading list in various university courses in anthropology, women's studies, and theology, it feels amazing to think that we could all appear in some perspiring student's blue book exam next June! More important, though, the innovative methods Salomonsen developed in the field make her book a lot more significant to her field, and to future Witches, scholars, or others curious about early Reclaiming, than our vanity is.

Some academics may continue to categorize Salomonsen's approach to studying our community as the "participant observer" method often used in ethnographic studies. But the author herself has coined the phrase "method of compassion" for her approach. The difference is that the traditional participant observer joins in

some aspects of the life of the studied community with an *open mind,* in order to have as little effect as possible on the subjects and to be able to describe their activities accurately. The "compassionate" scholar on the other hand, participates in the subjects' rituals, daily activities, and personal lives with an *open mind, heart, and soul.* This method, which not everyone can honestly achieve, results in an ability to understand the subtleties, complexities, and contradictions in the subject which cannot be achieved by a more intellectually detached method. Harder, but better.

In the field of theology, believers' analyses and explications of their own religious practices and beliefs are par for the course; indeed, they are considered essential to informed discourse. But Salomonsen's choice to blend analytical approaches from theology with the use of *ethnology,* normally a tool of anthropologists, in order to understand Reclaiming in San Francisco in the 1980s, was original, daring, and yet refreshingly appropriate for her goal: to study this emerging religion as it was being practiced and developed in a shifting and vibrant community of living people.

An early Spiral Dance ritual. Photo courtesy of Kevyn Lutton.

Still, it's hard to hit a moving target. So Salomonsen made extensive and ongoing use of her informants as critics of her work, both while it progressed and in the months before publication of *Enchanted Feminism,* repeatedly inviting feedback and input from her subjects. Thus, at several junctures during and after her various trips into "the field," i.e., our community, she offered drafts of her descriptions, analyses, and conclusions to her primary informants as her written work evolved. So drafts of individual chapters or of the whole book were reviewed and criticized not only by academics (theologians and anthropologists) at the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Oslo, and San Francisco State Unversity, but also by Reclaiming community members.

That is not to say that Salomonsen yielded her own perspective to her subjects. For example, when informants were invited to preview some of the chapters of *Enchanted Feminism,* one person voiced objection to the description of what she considered to be "secret" aspects of Reclaiming-style initiation. Salomonsen respected the tradition of secrecy around the subject of initiation by not using her own or any other informant's actual initiation as a source for any of the "secret" material in the book. But she kept this material in, on the grounds that she had taken it only from information already previously published by others, primarily Starhawk, and that omitting these aspects from the section on initiation would be a serious weakness in the text.

This dilemma illustrates the tension created by the method of compassion, the kind of challenge that arises for the conscientious scholar who chooses it, and the fact that resolutions can be found that satisfy both ethical and scholarly standards.

It is very rare for ethnographers to engage in so much consultation with the community they write about, and at least three benefits are discernible. First, the ongoing consultation and feedback process resulted in more valid data.

Also, since Salomonsen could be, and sometimes was, challenged at any point by her informants who had access to her work, the dialogue served to hone her own thoughts and opinions and strengthen her perspective. Perhaps most importantly, the transparency of her approach meant that we in the Reclaiming community, as well as academics outside our community whom the author also consulted, were able to observe Salomonsen's ethical standards throughout her research. This fostered trust and, again, more and better data.

An old joke says that any 12 witches will express at least 13 different opinions on a given subject, and we are sure that others of Salomonsen's subjects would report differently on their experiences of being studied, and on the written product of that study. We do not speak for anyone but ourselves.

Besides, different people will always choose different points to focus on and analyze, and there will always be differences of interpretation as well as points of convergence among an ethnographer and the people she studies. There will also always be omissions, and representations

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GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP for development offers a very good framework for working intentionally, holistically, in an integrated way, with a gender perspective, to bring quality of life to peoples and health and peace to the planet. In this framework we can make use of such supportive programs as the Beijing Platform of Action, the Decade of Culture of Peace, Decade of Literacy, Education for All Through Life, Decade of Education for Sustainability, Agenda 21, Women's Agenda 21 for a Healthy and Peaceful Planet, Financing for Development, and any other programs that are relevant to carry out these goals. We can use them to guide our work, and to monitor and press our national governments and global processes to bring about these commitments and goals in favour of rural women and peoples, food security and sovereignty: for a peaceful and healthy planet.

In this context, it is urgent that each country review its agricultural and rural development programs and related financial support as an integral part of meeting its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and WSSD. It is important to ensure that rural women's access to land ownership and the recognition of water as a national public good, and as a fundamental human right, are essential to the life of rural peoples. Historically these have been at the base of great social conflict and existing inequalities. Water has been and is increasingly becoming a source of local, national, regional and international conflict. Access to safe unpolluted water and to sanitation is another key commitment of the Millennium Development Goals and a major one of the last Social Development Summit.

We are challenged to commit to work on these goals, and we urge everyone for the good of all, to accept this challenge. I am part of the people who have committedly worked creatively in all possible ways and levels to create this reality. I commit to continue to do so. I invite you to join with us.

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Enchanted Feminism

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that some will feel miss the point. We have heard one Reclaiming Witch say that she thinks Salomonsen over-emphasized the connections between early Reclaiming and the Anarchist community. Anne Hill, who reviewed the book in RQ #88 (Autumn 2002), believes that she was misquoted in the book. Some of us had a similar feeling seeing our own remarks in print, but actually, all direct quotations in the book were taken verbatim from taped interviews. Still, it is possible that in summarizing or referring to something that a subject said, the author may have unintentionally misrepresented the person's meaning.

But what makes any ethnography useful is not that it provides an exact presentation of the Objective and Real relations that are studied. Rather, it should be an engaged account of the interaction among people that sheds some insight on the topic at hand — in Salomonsen's case, the early years of the Reclaiming community and the fast-changing, living religion which was its heart — and this, the book accomplishes.

Enchanted Feminism is a courageous work that provides our community with one of many possible mirrors. Our continuing discussions about this reflection will enrich our own and others' understanding of our religion, our dynamic community, and ourselves. Blessed be the scholars!

3-D Circle members, since 1984, are: Janie, Joy, Kim, Laurie, Moher, Vibra, and Jone Salomonsen. Jone did not participate in the writ-

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ing of this review. As it happens, our Circle includes two people (Moher and Kim) with advanced degrees (M.S. & Ph.D.) in anthropology who are especially aware of the challenges of ethnography, as well as someone (Vibra) who has been a Reclaiming priestess and teacher for over 15 years, holds a CoG clergy credential as an Elder in the Reclaiming Tradition, and was a member of the Reclaiming Collective during the period covered by Enchanted Feminism and until its dissolution in the mid 1990s. All of us are longtime participants and volunteers in Reclaiming public rituals.

Feast and Famine

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and to eat moderate portions. Today, food only takes up a reasonable amount of time and energy in my life. It's not God anymore, nor is it my drug of choice. Well, it is my drug of choice, but at present I am "sober" with it.

My community has been incredibly supportive. I am grateful for the way my community addresses recovery issues. I'm blessed. For example, I can ask for a non-sweet cake to be put on the cakes plate at ritual. Limitations are understood, and respected. My circle-mates would no more feed me sugar than insist that a recovering alcoholic drink wine from the chalice. Even at Midwest WitchCamp, where the cooks are cooking for a huge group at every meal, I am blessed and have wonderful choices.

So don't worry, I'm not lacking for sensual decadence in the food arena. For our Beltane gathering, I brought a pile of