

Macrocosm: the Surface Creatures

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Once upon a time an old country was scraped down to its bones while a new country was fashioned from the scraps of other ones from across the seas. Square fields and then square lawns held everything anyone could possibly want, and much more. Within only a few hundred years, vast stretches of artificial lighting would make the night sky safe: *Nothing slithers, nothing crawls under here!*

And yet not everyone handled the transition well, then or now. What was the meaning of a life spent in squares? Some fell ill, in various ways, and called out for help.

But the medicine people were long gone by then. Called alternately or overlappingly traditional healers, shamans, wortcunners (knowers of herbs), midwives, wise women, witches and other things depending on language and tradition, these were the wild ones who dwelt beyond village and hedgerow, at the edges of jungles and mountain hollows. Their conceptions of the world included nuanced sound and odor, creatures above and below, portals inner and outer. Their medicines came from stone and root and flower and meal and touch and prayer.

Naturally the medicine people were some of the first to be suppressed, as always, no matter the continent.

And so new kinds of medicine people had to be developed in the new country, the kind who could think in squares, to stitch together the people's minds and hearts. The first psychologists formed an abstract mental medicine they called New Thought. Inharmonious thoughts, they said, were the source of all disease. This was in line with the dominant religious sects of the time, so New Thought looked a lot like old Calvinism [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg23*]. In either case, emotional spontaneity of any kind was extremely suspect.

The people themselves, then, were the source of their problems, not living in squares. To have healthy minds, they must think better thoughts. They must make their hearts small and predictable and ladylike.

The New Thought fad passed, but not its main features, which soon enough formed the backbone of what became known as the self-help and mental health fields . Herein one constantly examines one's inner life for incorrect or negative thoughts and hedonistic emotional excesses, especially in the case of positive and cognitive-behavioral psychologies [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg14*]. In the popular culture, even cruder New Age-type tenets, in which bad things such as disease happen due to incorrect personal vision, still reign.

Chemically and/or mechanically suppressing negative thoughts and feelings has become almost a national religion, thus returning us full circle back to Calvinism. The poor are poor, for instance, because poverty is all they strive for. In this land every negative thought, feeling or circumstance is ultimately one's own fault.

And so the people never did learn to fully touch or see their own grief, their anger over living in squares. There is no cultural container for a longing for the wild within and without. Strong emotions are supposed to play out on screens, not through bodies, unless they are bodies shown on screens.

This Imbolc¹ season let us begin to reclaim our wild interiors, our sadness, our anger, our irritability, our depression and disease and dis-ease. Let us start here in the long reclamation of the wilds without, knowing that refusal of grief and death refuses also sensuality and rebirth.

¹ ed. – Part of the Wheel of the Year annual cycle of festivals observed by some modern Celtic-inspired pagans; the first cross-quarter day following Midwinter (varying considerably in name and date depending on the group celebrating it).

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