Journal of Religion, Media & Digital Culture (JRMDC)

<http://jrmdc.com>

Sacralizing Reality Digitally: YouTruths, Kennewick Claims and the First Americans

Mads Damgaard
University of Copenhagen

Keywords: Asatrú, CMC, Kennewick Man, religion online, science and technology studies.

Abstract

Marshalling scientific arguments and methods for religious ends is certainly not a new trend in religious expressions, but new modes of writing scientifically legitimated myths has developed online. Computer-mediated communication provides new tools for such a fusing of religion and science, and the present article asks what this entails for categories of religious authority and authenticity. Taking online expressions of the Neo-Pagan faith called Asatrú, a 9,500 year-old skeleton and an associated modern North American conspiracy theory as the starting points, a configuration of religious authenticity derived from scientific sources is analysed. The case is made that through hyperlinks, YouTube videos and discussion forums, religious communities such as the online Asatrú groups strategically assemble religious authority on a foundation of science, tapping into non-religious ecologies of knowledge available online. This puts into question theoretical premises such as notions of the secular and differentiation of rationalities. Research in CMC and religion, it is argued, must take into consideration the specific hybrid knowledges facilitated by online structures and technologies.

About the Author

Mads Damgaard graduated in Cross-Cultural Studies from the University of Copenhagen and currently works as research assistant at the University of Southern Denmark. He can be contacted at mads_damgaard_andersen@hotmail.dk.

To cite this article: Damgaard, Mads, 2014. Sacralizing Reality Digitally: YouTube, Kennewick Claims and the First Americans. *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 3(2), pp 33-56. [online] Available at: <<http://jrmdc.com/papers-archive/volume-3-issue-2-august-2014/>>

Sacralizing Reality Digitally: YouTruths, Kennewick Claims and the First Americans

1. Introduction: Computer-mediated Communication and Religious Authority

The impact of the Internet on religious authority is a central topic to contemporary religious studies. The questions asked in this field, however, are often concerned with organizational aspects of online religious authority. While computer-mediated communication (henceforth CMC) obviously opens new lanes for challenging traditional authorities and voicing dissent, it could be argued that the internet also restructures the fabric of religious authority and authenticity. The religious mesh of truth claims, mythology, organization and practice gets re-knit, woven anew, through the internet, and the theological content might change as a consequence.

To illustrate the impact of new communication technologies, mediatization and online practice on religious concepts and ideas about sacred authority, I will discuss the case of Asatrú. Asatrú, a Neo-Pagan religious branch associated with pre-Christian deities of Northern Europe, has certain features that make it an ideal object of study for analysing how CMC influences religious categories. Along the three analytical axes of mediation¹, content and organization, Asatrú comes very close to Højsgaard's model of a *cyber-religion* (Højsgaard 2004, p. 52), because the adherents of Asatrú are mostly present on the internet and minimally mediated through other more traditional or mainstream media².

The content of Asatrú is self-consciously local and individualized. Many sites and blogs explicitly state that they provide inspiration and discussions but abstain from dogmas, and most groups take pride in the low degree of institutionalization, making it a very browsing-friendly faith. Indeed, the (negligible) institutionalization may be the only dogma displayed coherently across the - necessarily fragmented - Asatrú milieux. No international organizations and only a few nation-wide communities exist. But during the last two decades, Asatrú has utilized CMC extensively to augment their small-scale community interactions, and should therefore constitute a prime example of how reality is sacralized digitally.

The Asatrú groups of America are especially salient online, and their creation of links between
Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture Volume 3, Issue 2 (August 2014)
<http://jrmcdc.com>

science and their presence on the North American continent constructs religious authenticity in a remarkably modern and rational way. A range of online discourses interweaving scientific and religious positions, including the Kennewick case, exemplifies this. A remarkably ancient skeleton, found near Kennewick in the state of Washington, became a focal point of Asatrú efforts to claim religious and ancestral authenticity on the North American continent through scientific methods such as carbon-14 dating and skull morphology. The Kennewick Man and other pieces of archaeological evidence remain central in the social media circuit of contemporary Asatrú, and because these cases tap into the internet's ecologies of non-religious knowledge, they posit challenges to both academic and common-sense conceptualizations of distinctions between secular and religious truths.

2. Assessing Effects of Online Mediation

Researching religion online requires careful consideration of the reality presented and the ontology of the objects of analysis. The context of the internet is a radically different one than, say, field studies of religious practices or textual and discursive analysis (Markham 2004). Interestingly, this gap seems to be diminishing concurrently with the steady increase of silicon seeping into mundane objects and ordinary frames of action. But as the technology of digital media increasingly integrates without noticeable seams into everyday interactions, it is ever more pertinent to question the apparently growing transparency of computer-mediated (or even chip-mediated) practice.

The character of mediations – whether they are online, televised, or printed – is not theoretically straightforward, however. Media studies has debated the effect of (mass) media extensively. To this day, framing theory approaches (Entman 2010) and other strands of media studies analyse mediation and mediatization (Hjarvard 2013), discussing how media logic influences the mediated discourse. Regarding CMC, it is crucial to understand how mediation creates a space and enables agency inside this space. In the following, I will focus on the construction of religious authority and authenticity through CMC, and how certain types of knowledge are privileged in online religious contexts because of the structure of this medium. I take authority and authenticity to be traits ascribed to many elements of religious discourse. In the case of Asatrú, these are to a very low degree ascribed to individuals or their positions, and to a significant degree ascribed to sources of knowledge or truth.

More to the point, this article explores the linkages between religious truths and scientific truths constructed online in the *religioscape* (Petersen 2011, p. 76) of different branches of Asatrú³. While the construction of such links – both metaphorically and as concrete hypertext – might not accurately represent and reflect the cognitive beliefs of the community at large, I will argue that the discursive processes facilitated by CMC do have very real consequences for the representations of the belief system. Thus, the common linking of science and religion in online practices will have an impact on the flows of Asatrú belief, however loose this concept might be. What needs to be considered, then, is how media technology comes to mould the “content side” of religion (in addition to the form) by engendering a certain ecology of knowledges. I have deliberately chosen a case study that might be termed a maximal or “most-likely” case (Flyvbjerg 1991, p. 150; 2004, p. 426), in the sense that the Western-dwelling, contemporary Asatrú sports a high degree of integration with or even dependence on CMC. Though chosen deliberately for this extreme character of the case, it might still offer insights into the impact of the internet on other faiths, because the findings here can give a clear sense of the trajectory of religious change fuelled by CMC.

The empirical part of this article will proceed as a textual and discursive analysis of two paradigmatic examples of the aforementioned linkages. Along with this, I will unpack how the linkages are mediated and made accessible, legitimate and plausible. Remembering the part of Clifford Geertz's classic definition of religion in which “conceptions of a general order of existence [are clothed] with [...] an aura of factuality” (Geertz 1973), we might define the task of this analysis as a critical exploration of the auras of factuality deployed online by Asatrú believers. Leaving online interactions and offline practice aside, the analysis will be limited to a specific epistemological configuration and its techniques of referencing and building authority through technological mediations.

3. Researching Religion and CMC: Directions and Dynamics

Common research topics in the area of religion and CMC include the construction of authority (Cheong 2013), identity (Lövheim 2008; 2013), community (Campbell 2012; Piff & Warburg 2005) and socialization (Lövheim 2012). The emergence of the so-called Web 2.0 supposedly opens new perspectives for Religion 2.0 (Cheong & Ess 2012; Gelfgren & Fischer-Nielsen 2012), including further differentiation, de-hierarchization and commercialization anticipated by earlier scholars of

sociology of religion (e.g. Lambert 1999; Casanova 1994). Wider and more mobile access combined with the burgeoning production of “user content” displaces the privileged positions of the religious virtuosi (in the sense of Weber 1980, p. 327, 697), and challenges religious institutions, logic, and conventional modes of thinking about religiosity, according to this literature.

Such challenges might influence the contents as well as the structures of religions mediated online, and along these lines, I would suggest that the study of religious change influenced by socio-technological developments also needs to account for changes in ideational and conceptual content. This should not be done by leaving behind questions of transformations in religious organizations, identity repertoires and processes, but rather by re-inserting the topic of religious ideas – myth, world views, religious truths and ethics – into the study of digital religious transformations. I will focus here on the epistemic side of authority, its permutations, and the flows of authoritative knowledge through websites, blogs and videos.

The various forms of internet-mediated discourse and communication between members of any religious group of course expands the arenas of religious interaction. Blogs, user groups, discussion forums, YouTube videos, etc, complement sacred texts, ritual events and other traditional forms of communion and communication. Indeed, according to Mia Lövheim, a new form of religious socialization is emerging in this “media age” (Lövheim 2012, p. 155), reflecting “a different understanding of the world, value, production, identity, authority, space and social relations than among previous generations” (*ibid.*, p. 160). Nuancing Lövheim's broad strokes a bit, Pauline Hope Cheong states that religious transformations articulated through new media include “disjuncture and displacement”, but also continuations and complementary developments in religious activity (Cheong 2013, p. 74). Imagining such effects of disjuncture or affirmation of authority, we might ask in what direction modes and processes of authority move as a consequence of new media.

Modern religious discourse, of course, is not only tied up with specific means of communication, but also to historically contingent formations of knowledge, or *epistemes* (Foucault 1994, p. 168). In modernity, religious communication exists side by side with other systems of communication, and quite often looks to these for strategies of renewal, expansion and reform. Peter Beyer has termed this the *modeling* of religious systems on other societal systems (Beyer 2012, p. 122), and he mentions several examples of such modeling. Beyer draws upon the Luhmannian (Luhmann 1995) concept of global society divided into a range of differentiated

Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture Volume 3, Issue 2 (August 2014)
<http://jrmdc.com>

communication systems (e.g. economy, mass media, health or education), and puts forward the idea of modelling as a structuring of religious communication parallel to that of another system. This gives some possible answers to the question of how new media influences and transforms religious notions of authority. One of the possible modellings mentioned by Beyer is the modelling of religion on science, and with the advent of the internet age, religion has been dealt a new hand for playing the game of science. This trajectory of religious change seems particularly interesting, as it essentially turns some presumptions about religious and secular world views on their heads.

In the following, I will exemplify how science, through internet mediations, becomes a reservoir of knowledge and truths for groups of online Asatrúars, fortifying religious claims in ways that transcend a strict division of scientific and religious domains. This strategy for claiming authority (and even reality) is obviously not a new one, but the poetics of the Web provide new arenas for making such claims. While the flows of one particular arena will be the focus of this article, some general remarks concerning the junction where religion and science meet are also due.

4. Theory and Typology of Religion-and-Science

Several authors have discussed the theme of religion and science in depth (amongst these are Glock and Bellah 1976; Tambiah 1990; Brooke 1991; Bainbridge 1993; and more recently Zeller, 2010; Hammer & Lewis 2011; together with the many contributions of Wouter J. Hanegraff, e. g. Hanegraff 1996). Such research often revolves around new religious movements, particularly the New Age-inspired religions. More generally, Robert Bellah and Charles Glock noted that in modern society, science had turned into “a magical term redolent of the sacred” (Glock & Bellah 1976, p. 75). In earlier modern as well as contemporary societies, science is perceived to possess remarkable powers and for this reason carries an air of prestige and authority, or even charisma, as James Lewis remarks (Lewis 2012, p. 208). In some religious settings, especially the situations where potential new believers are encountered, the aura of factuality that science can lend to the setting is of obvious strategic value:

It thus makes sense that, in today's religious marketplace, religions should seek to enhance their authority by appealing to a source of legitimacy like science, which, at least in the West, possesses both a “mystique of authority” [...] and greater social status than any religion. (Lewis 2011, p. 24)

James Lewis, in his recent *Handbook of Religion and the Authority of Science* (co-edited with Olav Hammer), views religious usage of authoritative discourse derived from science as emergent, spontaneously growing strategies. Lewis identifies scientific authority in religions on seven levels (*ibid.*, p. 32-33), where science is drawn upon as terminology, methodology, organizational model, or as compatible perspective or world view, as providing objective support for religious practices (thereby normalizing them), and, in the most radical cases, through divergent science and technology delivering proofs of faith. Lewis and Hammer note that religions, especially certain forms of New Age religions, explicitly model and professionalize their institutions and media upon the mainstream higher education sector, echoing Beyer's concept of modeling (*ibid.*, p. 36).

However, this observation risks glossing over interesting dynamics by assuming that science and religion are conceptually and representationally differentiated. Historically speaking, the intertwining of science and religion includes various examples of crossovers between state-of-the-art science and religion. In the long process of evolution and differentiation between these two systems of knowledge, many discursive combinations of religion and science incorporated contemporary, scientifically legitimate knowledge, accepting the experimental and theoretical assumptions (Brooke & Numbers 2011). In modern settings, Lewis and Hammer point us towards strategies for welding such links, but in the case presented here, no single level in their model accurately catches the integration of scientific authority into religious discourse. I suspect this is due to an underlying assumption of differentiation, and in the next two sections, I will unpack the ways in which Asatrú manage the integration of science and religion through new media.

5. Primordial Religion: Blut und Boden and Asatrú

While Lewis's typology apparently covers most of the possible ground, a certain kind of argument, used globally by (Neo-)Pagan communities, seems to be missing. Different versions of the *Blut-und-Boden* (Blood and Soil) argument provide a discursive backbone for many rejuvenated religions claiming primordality through archaeology and cultural sciences (e.g. Senholt 2013, p. 248; Cusack 2012, p. 145), clothing religious presence in a given country with an aura of factuality and historical necessity (Gregorius 2008, p. 131; Anderson 1983; see Bramwell 1985 for the historic origins of *Blut-und-Boden* ideology).

The concept of *Blut-und-Boden* ties people and location together in an imagined, transhistorical but strictly local community, with variations on the specific emphasis. The argument basically states that religions develop in particular geographical settings; therefore, some cultural traits including a specific type of religiosity are suited, indeed uniquely fit (through evolution) for a particular location. While some Neo-Pagan configurations of this argument include racist elements, others try to forego all references to blood, genes and race (Gregorius 2008, p. 283; Damgaard 2010); that is, to formulate the question of belonging as a strictly cultural issue. However, they invariably draw upon historic sources such as archaeology, philology or paleo-anthropology for establishing their claims to primordality⁴.

The discursive strategy of projecting an essential belonging, based on (more or less contested) mainstream scientific evidence, is of interest here. In relation to Lewis' typology, the case of Asatrú online is deviant, because as we shall see, although Asatrúars may attach an added religious significance to the facts purported by historical, genetic and archaeological research, they build upon academic facts. This seems oddly secular, does not fit neatly into Lewis' typology, and the academic nature of the religious sources blurs the lines between religion and science in a way that Lewis and Hammer's (typically NRM-affiliated) examples do not.

Before asking how CMC supports the “primordialization” strategy, it should be noted that the modern Asatrú in general relies on historical sources. Dedicated to the rejuvenation of the Norse pantheon (see Andrén et al. 2006) and the worship of values propounded in the *Poetic Edda* (Gregorius 2008, p. 197), Asatrú has some similarities with Neo-Pagan religious practices, albeit rarely acknowledging the influence of these and at times denying them (Klassen 2013, p. 49). Though the ritual side of Asatrú (because of the scarcity of original sources) mainly derives from Wiccan rituals (Warwind 2007, Gregorius 2008, p. 67ff), the online practices of Asatrú appear remarkably Protestant in spirit. Insisting on individual interpretation, emphatically avoiding authoritative institutions, and connecting with modern science in a number of ways, as we shall see, Asatrú practitioners display modern values in their interpretative textual communities devoted to discussing the pre-Christian Norse texts. The texts devoted to interpreting the original Norse sources have a strong emphasis on this-worldliness (Lambert 1999, p. 310ff, 321), and some believers develop “historically correct” interpretations in order to “purify” the two main Norse corpora (the *Poetic Edda* together with the *Prose Edda*) of Christian elements (e.g. Kure 2010).

Such a historical and philological approach to Asatrú is not the only way of scientifically

Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture Volume 3, Issue 2 (August 2014)
<http://jrmdc.com>

legitimizing the faith, however. As Lewis notes, “modern human beings tend to project their idealizations onto a ‘real,’ historical past. Archaeology and genetic research enter into this pattern by providing the scientific ‘facts’ that are supposed to legitimate these idealized reconstructions” (Lewis 2012, p. 203). In the next section, I will demonstrate how a scientific debate on pre-historic migration patterns has been appropriated online and enlisted as witness to the myth of the First Americans.

6. Solutreans: the First Americans and the Ur-Genocide

A group of YouTube channels with a surprisingly large audience constitutes the first main part of the case study. The well-known video sharing service hosts a number of user-posted video feeds or channels dedicated to revealing the alleged truth of the First Americans. This group of YouTube channels features videos, some of them produced by professionals, and some of them home-made interviews or collages of pictures, clips and music. In a few instances, documentaries from established networks have been merged with video prefaces providing the viewer with an interpretative frame. The descriptions of the videos and the commentary tracks embed links supporting the arguments of the videos, and extensive discussion is conducted through comments sections. The tracks of comments show a heterogeneous debate community beyond in-group control, as every registered user of YouTube is able to express herself here.

The activity in the YouTube channels concerned with the First Americans is quite high for a non-mainstream position. One of the videos (“Solutreans Are Indigenous Americans”⁵) was posted in March 2013, but already boasts close to half a million views and hosts much daily activity and debate, centered around the question of truth and scientific validity. The user circuit, consisting of content providers and debating or sharing viewers, reflects the ongoing academic debate over how and by whom the Americas were peopled, which I will describe in the following.

While a group of genetic researchers in 1998 had discovered a mitochondrial link between ancient European and American populations not present in the genes of pre-historic Asians (Brown et al. 1998), the so-called Solutrean solution had its first break-through in 1999 at a Santa Fe conference and a subsequent article (Stanford & Bradley 2000). Questioning the conventional view on the origins of Native American settlements, two anthropologists working with archaeological material, Dennis Stanford of the Smithsonian and Bruce Bradley of University of Exeter, posited

that the colonization of Pleistocene America might have been from Europe rather than Asia. The hegemonic theory, the “theory of Clovis First”, has migratory groups pass across the Bering Land Bridge into North America around 12,000 BCE, as the ocean levels during this part of the ice age were lower than today. The earliest American paleolithic technology, the arrow point designs of the Clovis site in New Mexico, gave this theory its name, but the similarities between the Clovis and the Solutrean arrow points (found in Solutré, France) are also what constitute the cornerstone of Stanford and Bradley's hypothesis that the First Americans came from the Old World.

Stanford and Bradley contributed to Nina Jablonski's anthology on *The First Americans* (Jablonski 2002), and in 2004 the PBS Nova company aired *America's Stone Age Explorers*, a documentary describing the evidence for the Solutrean hypothesis. Shortly after, in 2005, the hypothesis was popularized by the Discovery Channel in the docudrama *Ice Age Columbus*, and more documentaries have appeared since then (e.g. *Journey to 10,000 BC* from 2008 and *Who Really Discovered the Americas* from 2010, both produced by the History Channel) featuring Stanford and Bradley's arguments. These and other documentaries supporting beliefs about North America's European heritage are widely distributed on YouTube, by users with names such as “blacksunrevival”, “777realhistory777”, “freedom3777”, and “March of the Titans”. Some of the videos posted have been viewed close to a hundred thousand times, with the PBS-produced documentary reaching almost 500,000 views in total. The users posting or positively commenting on these videos also typically post or comment on anti-Semitic and white supremacist material, or link to New World Order conspiracies and theories of governments covering up alleged scientific facts.

Sharing links to articles, documentaries and even scientific journals, cross-referencing and concocting argumentation is pre-eminently enabled by the social media technologies of Web 2.0. Of course, hyperlinks have been around for as long as the World Wide Web, but ready and easy access to specialist knowledge coupled with the techniques of viral promotion and dissemination constitute new modes of building religious authority. Sensational discoveries in the sciences herald flurries of proselytizing in online communities and on blogs; new scientific findings are rapidly incorporated into religious discourse and explored as evidence of transcendent truth in a cycle of cross-fertilization following the academic calendar of conferences, publications and reviews.

At the time of writing, the idea that Ancient Europeans and Paleo-Americans had common ancestry has recently made headlines in the influential journal *Nature* (Willerslev et al. 2013). In *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* Volume 3, Issue 2 (August 2014) <http://jrmdc.com>

November 2013, the Danish professor Eske Willerslev, who has previously worked with Dennis Stanford, published genetic evidence linking western Eurasians to Native Americans through 24,000-year old DNA. Willerslev and his team explored the genetic traces that wind through the Siberian and East Asian populations, and their findings support the theory of migration across the Bering Land Bridge. Surprisingly, however, the professor was immediately interviewed for the “white history” YouTube channel “March of the Titans” under the heading “First Americans DNA shows admixture of European and Siberian genes says study”⁶. Reading Willerslev's study as evidence for a primordial presence of “the white race” in the Americas is not, however, a part of the interview, which stays strictly to reporting the findings of the DNA study, although the headline clearly points out a direction for the viewer.

Both the Solutrean hypothesis and the Siberian findings connect American soil and ancestors to Europe. This connection is of interest in white supremacist circles where the notion of an on-going genocide, eroding the white foundations of American society, has floated for some time.⁷ Paradigmatic online examples includes the “White Extinction Awareness Blog (100 years left, and counting down)” or one of many discussions on forums such as *Vanguard News Network Forum* or *Stormfront*.⁸ The genocide unfolding before the eyes of conspiracy-keen white supremacists mirrors a myth connected to the myth of the First Americans: the Ur-Genocide.

We are left, so it seems, with the scenario of genocidal wars. This was the primary cause of the disappearance of the Paleoamericans which anthropologists were at a loss to explain until the end of the twentieth century. But with the incredible discovery of the Kennewick Man, history on the North American continent can now be rethought and rewritten.

The quote is taken from the second main example of this article, an Asatrú website maintained for more than a decade by a person identifying as Theedrich.⁹ Theedrich's site is a good example of the scientifically oriented, extensively documenting and referencing style of argument supporting Asatrú. At the same time, it verges on conspiracy theory by presenting a skull, some bones, and a torrent of legal actions as tell-tale signs of a buried truth, a corrupt and conspiring government. Thus ambiguously situated between archaeological fact and wild speculation, Theedrich's text links the narrative frame of conspiracy to the myth of Asatrú primordially in the United States. In order to contextualize this and to understand how the Solutrean hypothesis of migration patterns could attain religious meaning for Asatrúars, I will sketch out the case of the above-mentioned Kennewick Man.

7. Kennewick Man and American Asatrú

The curious case of the Kennewick Man has already has been the topic of a few books (Downey 2000; Thomas 2000). As one of the few instances where media spotlight homed in on the American Asatrú community, some academic scholars have also taken note of the case (notably Little 2011; Gardell 2003, p. 149; Rommel 2004, p. 26ff). The case has been important for the construction of a scientifically underpinned claim to religious authenticity and primordality in the Asatrú religiouscape, and potentially an important factor for the emerging interest in the First Americans.

In the summer of 1996, two amateur sailors exploring the conditions of the Columbia River in the state of Washington, near Kennewick, found an almost complete skeleton. The local authorities had the remains tested with the carbon-14 dating method, and to the surprise of the county coroner and forensic anthropologist James Chatters, the bones turned out to be about 9500 years old. This remarkable age for a virtually intact skeleton had juridical ramifications in addition to the obvious archaeological value.

Bones from pre-Columbian era legally belong to the Native American tribes affiliated with the place of discovery, since the end of George Bush Sr.'s incumbency, when the repatriation law called NAGPRA (Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act) was enacted at the federal level. The NAGPRA

describes the rights of Native American lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations with respect to the treatment, repatriation, and disposition of Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony, referred to collectively in the statute as cultural items, with which they can show a relationship of lineal descent or cultural affiliation. (McManamon 2000)

This repatriation law effectively inverted the Smithsonian 19th century practice of collecting skulls.¹⁰ After the NAGPRA was enacted, many remains from museums found their way to contemporary tribes, as parts of ritual burials, and therefore as a way of reproducing Native American culture (Johnson 2007, p. 25). Newly found bones are also object of the NAGPRA,

however, and the Army Corps of Engineers, under whose jurisdiction the Columbia River falls, therefore notified local Native American tribes of the findings. The Colville, Yakama, Nez Pearce, Wanapum and Umatilla tribes eventually filed legal claims to the bones (Little 2011, p. 48), but certain characteristics of the findings made two other groups prepare legal action as well. Besides the fact that the bones constituted one of the oldest and most complete skeletons found in the northeastern states, the skull was remarkable in another sense as well: According to the coroner Chatters, the skull

lacks definitive characteristics of the classic mongoloid stock to which modern Native Americans belong. The skull is dolichocranic (cranial index 73.8) rather than brachycranic, the face narrow and prognathous rather than broad and flat. Cheek bones recede slightly and lack an inferior zygomatic projection; the lower rim of the orbit is even with the upper. Other features are a long, broad nose that projects markedly from the face and high, round orbits. The mandible is v-shaped, with a pronounced, deep chin. Many of these characteristics are definitive of modern-day caucasoid peoples. (Chatters 2004)

Upon hearing this, a group of archaeologists and anthropologists tried to contest the repatriation legally out of scientific interest. The scientists wanted to determine the gene stock of the findings, whereas the Indians wanted to give “the Ancient One”, as they called him, a proper burial to put his spirit to rest. However, the Asatrú Folk Assembly, spearheaded by godfather of American Asatrú Stephen McNallen, also laid claim to the Kennewick Man (Gardell 2003, p. 149, 152). The NAGPRA gives extensive rights to indigenous groups claiming buried remains in their local areas, but the cranial features described by Chatters made it possible for the Asatrú plaintiffs to turn this act on its head, questioning the very definition of Native American affiliation. Because of Chatters's assertion that the Kennewick Man had a Caucasian rather than Native American profile, combined with the age of the skeleton, the representatives from the Asatrú Folk Assembly aimed at both the juridical and scientific implications of the Kennewick case, claiming an ancestral belonging to the American continent and at the same time redefining the question of Natives and Colonizers. In fact, Swedish researcher Mattias Gardell quotes McNallen thus: “They [the Native Americans] literally want to bury the evidence. I mean, this is a politically hot potato. The idea of Caucasians that might have walked across the Bering land bridge along with the Native Americans is awesome. It changes the whole question of who was here first. Who genocided who?” (*ibid.*, p. 150)

The multiple lawsuits stalled the court somewhat, and the Army Corps of Engineers detained the skeleton from further studies until they were solved, leading to speculation in Asatru circles on the nature of the Clinton administration's interest in the bones – could it be a cover-up of a secret known to the government, favouring the Native Americans in yet another case of affirmative action, denying white Americans their rights? The prolonged juridical processes of the case lend themselves exquisitely to re-imagining the Kennewick as a site of conspiracy, “the evidence of which is subjected to an investigative machine that depends on the perpetual motion of signification” (Fenster 2008, p. 94).

One example of this is given below, again extracted from the aforementioned website maintained by Theedrich. The Kennewick evidence is discussed in detail, with extensive references and details about the evolution of man, the peopling of the North American continent, and the Solutrean hypothesis. The Clovis-first theory is attacked and a detailed description of the controversy surrounding the Kennewick man feeds into the following conclusion:

... the people (and specifically Whites) have to be protected from the truth. Nonetheless, it did slip out that Kennewick Man was -- and is -- totally unrelated to any modern American Indian type. [...] Such a thing cannot, in the dominant anti-White view they espouse, be true. It will have to be suppressed. Unfortunately, the liberals and their many corporate and government supporters may have the power to do this, since they control such organizations as the Army Corps of Engineers and, apparently, the Burke Museum in Seattle. [...] Kennewick Man, in short, is not an Amerind, but a representative of the eastern branch of the early White or Proto-Caucasoid race. [...] Thus, through great effort and expense, White science has won a partial victory over anti-White irrationality and guilt-mongering by Amerinds. For the time being, at least, non-White suppression of the truth has been restrained. With the genocidal lunatics of the Clinton presidency out of power, science has regained a modicum of freedom. [...] Since the unprecedented rise of the global economy masks the biological (to say nothing of the moral) destruction of the Caucasoid peoples, the majority of Whites is easily persuaded to go quietly into the eternal night. The inner circles of American power are keenly conscious of this reality. For they are the forces most eagerly seeking the Brave New World Order of mulattoism. Their strongest ally is the sick religion: Christianity. This creed, in all its denominations, claims that all Whites are "guilty" by virtue of their white skins. Non-Whites (the darker the better) must be "understood" if they act like animals. This, then, is the all-pervasive, government-led irrationality which seeks to turn the Proto-Caucasoid skeleton called

the Kennewick Man over to Proto-Mongoloids.¹¹

Here, ideological, moral, political and religious discourse is tied in a conspiracist knot. However, I would argue that in the case of Asatrúars deploying the Kennewick man, even conspiracy's "perpetual machine of signification" proposed by Fenster (in an allusion to Deleuze) does not posit anything but regular, natural science. Hidden powers might be pulling strings and manipulating evidence, but for these Asatrúars the truth can still be verified using carbon dating and morphology – and thus, scientific ontology remains intact.

8. Building Scientific Foundations of Faith

The goal of Theedrich, McNallen and other Asatrú authors is analogous to the supremacist YouTube users sharing videos about the Solutrean hypothesis. Drawing upon scientific sources, they vest their own religious or ideological discourse with authority and embed their claims to primordality within a powerful framework of evidence, technology and scientific method. As Jeffrey Kaplan noted, "Modern Ásatrúars are heavily dependent on the work of scholars for the raw material upon which their own elaborate reconstructions of Ásatrú ritual content are based" (Kaplan 1997, p. 60). While Kaplan talked about the historical and textual sources, the statement is increasingly applicable to the construction of Asatrú legitimacy through archaeological evidence. Even though new findings such as Willerslev's may not prove or indeed circumvent assumptions regarding the European heritage of the First Americans, the construction of a paradoxical rationalist-religious belief in naturalized, pre-Christian gods in North America is still supported by references to academic controversy, because it superficially adds another layer to the mounting pile of documentaries, articles, and conferences, finally making the Solutrean solution seem solid and well-documented.

In the case of Asatrú, this embedding of scientific method and evidence in religious arguments, attained through references, links, quotes and footnotes, is primarily an American phenomenon. While the American groups are of an age with the Icelandic Ásatrúarfélagið, founded in 1972 (Strmiska 2000; Strmiska & Sigurvinsson 2005; Kaplan 1997, p. 69; Gardell 2003, p. 152), continental Scandinavia's Asatrú and Germany's Heathen communities have developed mainly in the last two decades (Gregorius 2008; Gründer 2009; Warmind 2007). In contrast to American Asatrú, the European Asatrú organizations have relatively quickly gained legitimacy, including official state recognition in the Scandinavian countries and even state-sponsored burial grounds in

Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture Volume 3, Issue 2 (August 2014)
<http://jrmdc.com>

Denmark. Their claims to authenticity, as in many other cases of “religious appeals to the authority of archaeology to support a specific issue [...] become inextricably bound up with appeals to the authority of tradition, in part because archaeology is brought to bear on past events that are already a part of a given tradition’s sacred narratives” (Lewis 2012, p. 202). Such a tradition is very present in Europe for obvious historical reasons, and absent in the United States.

The Scandinavian Asatrúars forge links to the tradition of the pre-Christian era by tapping into the Northern European romanticism of the early 19th century. The romantic literary trend delved deep into the poems and epics of Snorri and other chroniclers describing or purporting the beliefs of the pre-Christian people of Scandinavia. In this imagery, landscape and geographical links are often stressed, for instance in the national anthem of Denmark from 1823, in which the last line repeatedly names the country and the features of the land “Freya’s hall” with reference to the Norse goddess of fertility. The most celebrated Scandinavian poets (not to mention Richard Wagner, the German composer) made such good use of the Norse pantheon in their oeuvre that images of valkyries and Vikings eventually became clichés. With the rise of the Third Reich, much of the symbolism of the Scandinavian mythology became entangled with the Nazi construction of an Aryan mythology (Goodrick-Clarke 1985; Arvidsson 2006, p. 125ff), and the clichés acquired sinister connotations.

The American Asatrúars, on the other hand, could not call upon geographical connections and archaeological evidence, as the Vikings barely made their mark on American soil. But American souls could still carry gods from the Old World, according to McNallen and others, because the gods are seen as inherent to ethnicity. This view, the so-called folkish view on religion, exists in a strong and a weak version amongst American Asatrúars, and the strong version is marred by the spectre of racism to this day (Gardell 2009, p. 612). The folkish position in the Asatrú religiouscape, hotly debated among Scandinavian Asatrúars and often characterized as racist (Damgaard 2010), is still visible in American Asatrú, but seems to be fading. For instance, McNallen's website for the Asatrú Folk Assembly features texts from the late 90's concerning “metagenetics”¹², but the topic has not appeared in new posts on his website for a long time. This is coincident with the emergence of the archaeological evidence pointing towards Europe. Solutré, the French site giving the hypothesis its name, seems to constitute a link suitable for claims to Asatrú legitimacy in North America, superseding the arguably weaker scientific references to “Jungian archetypes” running in European lineages of the earlier folkish discourse.

9. Mediation and Logics of the Internet

To sum up, I find a clear penchant towards scientific reasoning in the religiouscape of Asatrú, as well as a recent shift in the discursive strategy in American Asatrú in favour of archaeological and paleo-anthropological arguments. The structure of new media, especially the possibilities for sharing, linking and debating, as found on YouTube, blogs and discussion forums, supports this construction of religious lines of argumentation that draw upon academic discourse. References to scientific “truth” and invocations of authority become tangible, accessible and malleable through embedded videos and the hyperlinks of HTML programming language; scientific domains thus become tempting resources for constructing religion and its legitimation. Scientific evidence, widely distributed in journals and magazines, and popularly disseminated by various companies and individuals, constitute pools of knowledge available for discursive pillaging. But although any number of religious views can come to be represented online, no researcher in her right mind would think that this means that “anything goes” on the Internet. In order to theorize religion online, we need to ask: what goes, then? What kinds of dynamics govern the emergence of religious ideas online?

Answering from the perspective of this exploration, I find certain kinds of religious speech acts, or rather, certain discursive strategies, more compelling or effective than others because of the character and make-up of the knowledge ecologies cultivated online. Such strategies make the most of interface conditions (of computers or mobile devices, of the browsing and encoding possibilities), take advantage of the horizon of discourse (the *episteme* of Internet users, the language game of online interaction, and the knowledges accepted and reproduced in the majority of the Web) and the embedding of religious statements. The online world has profound influence on the religious changes we perceive with the advent of Web 2.0, and the scale of this influence is staggering: from simple links to whole domains of knowledge facilitated by browsers, search engines and open-access research, the emergence of “science” (in this case, archaeological and paleo-anthropological research) as a central tenet of American Asatrú is intimately linked to the technological and epistemic context in which it emerges.

This goes somewhat beyond what previous Religion/CMC studies hitherto have asserted. It is not simply a consequence of a particular website or discussion forum's moderators, or pattern of interaction. Global but quite subtle effects of interfacing, linking and sharing also contribute to the

shift of Asatrú towards scientific statements and forms of discussion. This could indeed be seen, as Peter Beyer would argue, as a modeling of religion upon the communication system of science; or, as Hammer and Lewis note, as a deliberate enhancement of religious authority drawn from academic and institutionalized charisma. However, the latter does not seem relevant in this case, as the Asatrúars analysed here do not flash any academic titles or grades; and the former misses the important point that a central part of the religious dogma in the case of Asatrú seems to be replaced with valid science. While the arguments for Solutrean origins eventually spill over into full-fledged conspiracy theory in my examples, and the documentaries posted and shared rarely leave space for scholarly discussion and the possibilities of falsification, the verity of scientific methods are not in question for the Asatrúar.

10. Primordial and/or Scientific Religion?

Furthermore, Asatrú discussions remain firmly planted on the soil of modernity, a discursive ground where paleo-anthropology and state-of-the-art genetic technology (however paradoxically) bear witness to the primordality of European religion in North America. In the North American case, appealing to science in certain ways mirror the creationism of the Christian Right, and invoking genocide matches the preference for conspiracy theories on the far right wing of the American political stage. This is a decidedly modern position, one that puts science in the role of the arbiter of a domain of truth, and while the religious truth of gods such as Wotan or Thor do go beyond this, the Asatrú positions explored here acknowledge valid science to a remarkable extent. Their religious claims build upon historical and archaeological evidence and thereby become vested in Geertzian auras of factuality. It might well be that the Solutrean hypothesis, in the eyes of the general public, does not become “redolent of the sacred” as Glock and Bellah would have it, but to McNallen, Theedrich, March of the Titans, and to the Asatrú communities, the YouTruths and Kennewick claims become increasingly interesting as religious axioms in relation to the degree of mainstream acceptance of, say, the Solutrean hypothesis.

This puts into question theoretical premises such as notions of the secular and differentiation of rationalities. Is Asatrú modeling or rather merging into a scientific world view? Does this religion actually leave myths of origin behind in the pre-modern period, criticizing Christianity and other faiths with myths of genesis contrary to science? If Asatrú stands at this junction, then future research in CMC and religion must stay attuned to such hybrid systems of knowledge facilitated by

online structures, epistemes and technologies. Similar claims could be made in regard to the fan sub-cultures with religious traits proliferating in the last decades. Despite the acknowledged fictionality of the original texts, fan-lore provides material for entire religioscapes online (e.g. Istoft 2011; Petersen 2011, p. 73), as the Internet facilitates the co-production of new additions to the corpora, the creation of communities of massive numbers of fans, and even the development of belief systems based on movies and novels. These cases are prime examples of how CMC enables the emergence of communities and dogmas, but also exemplifies how the line between two domains normally viewed as distinct becomes blurry. Is fan sub-cultural religion different from literature, or just a practice centred around literature? Could a religious world view deliberately *not* diverge from accepted scientific theory? Asatrú online challenges the assumption that religion and science rests on differentiated bedrocks.

11. Conclusion

The modern forms of Asatrú distinguish themselves from Christianity and other world religions by locking onto scientific and technological proofs, thus drawing on their cultural legitimacy, performing a distinct hybridization that uses faith and science, and connecting our present to the past of Vikings and Iron Age religion in a more elaborate way than the "faith and faith alone" of European Protestantism. The Neo-Pagan question of how to make a rejuvenated primordial religion legitimate – the construction of a belonging to a specific location, once termed *Blut-und-Boden* – morphs into scientific discussion of the cultural origins of Man.

The Internet provides access to the scientific domains, while the interfacing conditions provide ways of interaction that enable non-academics' participation in academic discourse by disseminating and discussing research. Engendering hybrid ecologies of knowledge, the uncontrollable flows of new media open new venues of claiming religious authenticity and truth.

Fusing the insights of Glock/Bellah and Geertz, if science is indeed a “magical term redolent of the sacred”, it might very well provide both an “aura of factuality” and a basis of indisputable truth on which to build religious claims for faiths such as Asatrú. Authenticity and authority becomes supported by scientific methodology, then, which could turn out to be a point-of-no-return. Is it possible to displace the modern and scientifically grounded world view at a later point once integrated in Asatrú? This modernization or rationalization of faith is of interest to students of

secularization, because it demonstrates a religious position which buys into the whole gamut of modernity, while still forsaking (some of) the consequences of modern culture, consumption and communities.

Endnotes

1) At the extreme end of Højsgaard's model, on the mediation axis, we find body-centered communication. While not denying that bodies play important roles in the practice of Asatú rituals, the development of doxa seems to be very mediated, often international in character, and I would therefore characterize Asatú as a case of highly virtualized religion. In the American case, this reflects the religions history of prison outreach and scattered groups, but also reflects the burgeoning of Scandinavian groups at the end of the 20th century, making it coterminous with the spread of the Internet.

2) To be fair, some Asatú organizations sponsor physical newsletters and even small publications, and a few authors self-publicize books on the topic of Asatú. The availability of these publications, however, is today dwarfed by the ready online access to blogs, websites and forums devoted to the pre-Christian deities of Scandinavia.

3) The notion of a *religioscape*, suggested by Petersen (2011:76) who draws on Appadurai (1996), seems to me an apt term for describing and conceptualizing a non-coherent and non-dogmatic religious sub-sphere.

4) This creation of religious authority literally from the ground up is a hallmark of Asatú, but a hallmark that has proved quite problematic for some practitioners in Northern America. This is due to the implicit racial theory, the so-called "folkish view" to which I shall return. Folkishness has been interpreted - rightly in some cases, especially in U.S. Prisons - to mean that Asatú is inherently white supremacist (Gardell 2003:152, 2009:623, Kaplan 1997:69ff).

5) "Solutreans Are Indigenous Americans" can currently (30-12-2013) be found at URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNTXCMYjwEk>

6) "First Americans DNA shows admixture of European and Siberian genes says study" can currently (30-12-2013) be found at URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gJQUltFYAw>

7) I have found references to this idea back in Billig's explorations of British racism in the late 70's (Billig 1978), but similar ideas probably emerged in the United States with the abolition of Jim Crow legislation. Tracing the history of this idea half a century back lies beyond the scope of this paper, however.

8) The blog can currently (30-12-2013) be found at URL: <http://whiteextinction.wordpress.com/> while the Vanguard News Network Forum is hosted at URL: vnnforum.com and the Stormfront forum at URL: stormfront.org/forum/.

9) The quote is taken from the text titled "Pre-Indian Caucasoids in America" which can currently (30-12-2013) be found at URL: <http://www.harbornet.com/folks/theedrich/hive/Kenn-Man/Kennewic.htm>

10) The Surgeon Generals Circular no. 2 of 1867 ordered North American soldiers to collect skulls from dead Indians [sic] to prove some of the then cutting-edge racial theories about inferior intelligence. During the following decades, the Smithsonian collected thousands of skulls, mirroring the fear of a Native American scalping practice.

11) This quote is also taken from the text titled "Pre-Indian Caucasoids in America" which can currently (30-12-2013) be found at URL: <http://www.harbornet.com/folks/theedrich/hive/Kenn-Man/Kennewic.htm>

12) "Genetics & Beyond: Metagenetics - An Update" can currently (30-12-2013) be found at URL: http://www.runestone.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=144:genetics-a-beyond-metagenetics-an-update&catid=82&Itemid=571

Bibliography:

- Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Andrén, A; Jennbert, K. & Raudvere, C. (2006) *Old Norse Religion in Long-term Perspectives: Origins, Changes, and Interactions*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press.
- Appadurai, A. (1996) *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Arvidsson, S. (2006) *Aryan Idols: Indo-European Mythology as Ideology and Science*. Translated by Sonia Wichmann. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bainbridge, W. S. (1993) "New Religions, Science and Secularization" in Bromley, D. & Hadden, Jeffrey (eds.). *Religion and the Social Order*, Volume 3A. Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press. Pp. 277-292.
- Beyer, P. (2011) "Socially Engaged Religion in a Post-Westphalian Global Context: Remodeling the Secular/Religious Distinction", *Sociology of Religion* 73(2), pp. 109-129.
- Billig, M. (1978) "Patterns of Racism: Interviews with National Front Members", *Race & Class*, 20(2), pp. 161-179.
- Bramwell, A. (1985) *Blood and Soil: Walther Darre and Hitler's "Green Party"*. Buckinghamshire: Kensal Press.
- Brooke, J. H. (1991) *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brooke, J. H. and Numbers, R (eds.) (2011) *Science and Religion around the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, M.D.; Hosseini, S.H.; Torroni, A.; Bandelt, H.J.; Allen, J.C.; Schurr, T.G.; Scozzari, R.; Cruciani, F. et al. (1998), "mtDNA haplogroup X: An ancient link between Europe/Western Asia and North America?", *American Journal of Human Genetics* 63 (6), pp. 1852–61.
- Campbell, H. A.(ed.) (2013) *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. New York: Routledge.
- Casanova, J. (1994) *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Chatters, J. C. (2004) "Kennewick Man" in *Newsletter of the American Anthropological Association*, 73, pp. 305 – 321.
- Cheong, P.H. (2013) "Authority" in H. Campbell (ed). *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. New York: Routledge. Pp. 72-87.
- Cheong, P.H. & Ess, C. (2012) "Introduction: Religion 2.0? Relational and Hybridizing Pathways in Religion, Social Media, and Culture" in P.H. Cheong, P. Fischer-Nielsen, S. Gelfgren and C. Ess (eds), *Digital Religion, Social Media and Culture: Perspectives, Practices and Futures*. New York: Peter Lang. Pp.1-24.
- Cusack, C. M. 2012. "Charmed Circle: Stonehenge, Contemporary Paganism, and Alternative Archaeology" in *Numen* 59 (2-3), pp. 138-155.
- Damgaard, M. (2010). "Gener eller Grænses, Blod eller Muld?" Conference paper and presentation delivered at the *CHAOS Symposium* in Tromsø, Norway, May 7-8 2010.
- Downey, R. (2000) *Riddle of the Bones: Politics, Science, Race, and the Story of Kennewick* *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* Volume 3, Issue 2 (August 2014) <http://jrmcd.com>

Man. New York: Copernicus.

Entman, R. (2010) "Media Framing Biases and Political Power: Explaining Slant in News of Campaign 2008" in *Journalism* 11 (4). Pp. 389-408.

Fenster, M. (2008) *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Fischer-Nielsen, P. & Gelfgren, S. (2012) "Religion in a Digital Age: Future Developments and Research Directions" in *Digital Religion, Social Media and Culture: Perspectives, Practices and Futures*, edited by Pauline Hope Cheong, Peter Fischer-Nielsen, Stefan Gelfgren & Charles Ess. New York: Peter Lang. Pp. 293-306.

Flyvbjerg, B. (1991) *Rationalitet og Magt. Det Konkrete Videnskab, Bind 1*. Århus: Akademisk Forlag.

----- (2004) "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research" in C. Seale et al. (eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage, pp. 420-434.

Foucault, M. (1994) *The Order of Things*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Gardell, M. (2003) *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

----- (2009) "Wolf Age Pagans" in Lewis, J. and Pizza, M. (eds.) 2009. *Handbook of Contemporary Paganism..* Leiden: Brill. Pp. 612-626.

Geertz, C. (1973) "Religion as Cultural System" in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books

Glock, C. & Bellah, R. (eds). (1976) *The New Religious Consciousness*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Goodrick-Clarke, N. (1985) *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and their Influence on Nazi Ideology*. London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks.

Gregorius, F. (2008) *Modern Asatro: Att konstruera etnisk och kulturell identitet*. Lund: Lunds Universitet.

Gründer, R. (2009) *Germanisches (Neu-)Heidentum in Deutschland: Entstehung, Struktur und und Symbolsystem eines alternativreligiösen Feldes*. Berlin: Logos Verlag.

Hammer, O. (2004) *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age*. Leiden: Brill.

Hanegraaff, W. J. (1996) *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Leiden: Brill.

Hjarvard, S. (2013) *The Mediatization of Culture and Society*. London: Routledge.

Højsgaard, M.T. (2005) "Cyber-religion: On the Cutting Edge between the Virtual and the Real", in M. Warburg & M.T. Højsgaard (eds.), *Religion and Cyberspace*. London: Routledge. Pp. 50-64.

Istoft, B. (2011) "I Frodos fodspor: New Zealand som aktualiseret mytisk landskab for Tolkien-fans?" in *Chaos: Skandinavisk Tidsskrift for Religionshistoriske Studier*, 55, pp. 173-202.

Jablonski, N. G. (ed.). (2002) *The First Americans: The Pleistocene Colonization of the New World*. San Francisco: California Academy of Sciences.

Johnson, G. (2007) *Sacred Claims: Repatriation and Living Tradition*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press

Kaplan, J. (1997) *Radical Religion in America: Millenarian Movements from the Far Right to the Children of Noah*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Klassen, C. (2013) "The Role of Nature in the Construction of Ethics: A Study among Contemporary Pagans in Ontario, Canada", *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 7(1), pp. 49-64.

Kure, H. (2010) *I Begyndelsen var Skriget. Vikingetidens myter om skabelsen*. København: Gyldendal.

Lambert, Y. (1999) "Religion in Modernity as a New Axial Age: Secularization or New Religious Forms?" in *Sociology of Religion* 60 (3), pp. 303-333.

Lewis, J. R. (2012) "Excavating Tradition: Alternative Archaeologies as Legitimation Strategies" in *Numen* 59 [2-3], pp. 202-221.

Lewis, J. R. & Hammer, O. (eds.) (2011) *Handbook of Religion and the Authority of Science*. Leiden: Brill.

Lewis, J. R. & Pizza, M. (eds.) (2009) *Handbook of Contemporary Paganism*. Leiden: Brill.

Little, C. (2011) "Conflict over the Future of the Past", *Totem: The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology* 14(1), article 6. Available at: <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/totem/vol14/iss1/6>

Luhmann, N. (1995). *Social Systems*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Lövheim, M. (2008) "Rethinking Cyberreligion? Teens, Religion and the Internet in Sweden", *Nordicom Review* 29:2, pp. 205-217.

----- (2012) "Religious Socialization in a Media Age", *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 25, (2), pp. 151-168.

----- (2013): "Identity" in H. Campbell (ed.), *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. New York: Routledge. Pp. 72-87.

Markham, A. (2004) "Internet as Research Context" in C Seale et al. (eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage, pp. 358-374.

McManamon, F. P. (2000) "NAGPRA" in L. Ellis (ed.), *Archaeological Method and Theory: An Encyclopedia*. New York: Garland Publishing Co.

Petersen, J. A. (2011) *Between Darwin and the Devil: Modern Satanism as Discourse, Milieu, and Self*. Doctoral thesis, Trondheim: University of Trondheim.

Piff, D. & Warburg, M.. (2005) "Seeking for Truth: Plausibility Alignment on a Baha'i Email List" in M. Warburg & M.T. Højsgaard (eds.), *Religion and Cyberspace*. London: Routledge. Pp.86-101.

Rommel, G.(2004) *Asgard in America: Inventing European Ethnic Identity in a Post-Industrial Pluralist Culture*. Norderstedt: Grin Verlag.

Senholt, J. C. (2013). "Radical Politics and Political Esotericism: The Adaptation of Esoteric Discourse within the Radical Right" in E. Asprem & K. Granholm (eds.), *Contemporary Esotericism*. London: Equinox Publishing Ltd. Pp. 244-264.

Stanford, D. & Bradley, B. (2000) "The Solutrean Solution", *Scientific American: Discovering Archaeology* 2, pp. 54 – 55.

Strmiska, M. (2000) "Ásatrú in Iceland: The Rebirth of Nordic Paganism?", *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 4(1). Pp. 106-132.

Strmiska, M.I & Sigurvinsson, B. (2005) "Asatru: Nordic Paganism in Iceland and America" in Strmiska, M. (ed.), *Modern Paganism in World Cultures. Contemporary Perspectives*. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio. Pp. 127-179.

Tambiah, S. J. (1990) *Magic, Science and Religion and the Scope of Rationality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thomas, D. H. (2000) *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity*. New York: Basic Books.

Warburg, M. & Højsgaard, M.T. (eds.) (2005) *Religion and Cyberspace*. London: Routledge.

Warmind, M. (2007) "Asatro i Danmark - spredning og vækst af en "ny" religion" in M. Warburg & B. A. Jacobsen (eds.), *Tørre tal om troen: religionsdemografi i det 21. århundrede*. Højbjerg: Forlaget Univers.

Weber, M. (1980) *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Willerslev, E. et al. (2013) "Upper Palaeolithic Siberian Genome Reveals Dual Ancestry of Native Americans", *Nature* 505, Pp. 87-91.

Zeller, B. (2010) *Prophets and Protons: New Religious Movements and Science in Late Twentieth-Century America*. New York: NYU Press.