

**PLAYING PUCK: A STUDY OF PERFORMATIVE ACTION IN
THE SHAPING OF A 'LEGEND LANDSCAPE'**

ROBERT PETER IRVING

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
the University of the West of England, Bristol, for the Degree
of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Faculty of Arts, Creative Industries and Education,
University of the West of England, Bristol**

June 2014

Abstract

This thesis engages, through visual practice and written analysis, with the British tradition of 'thin' places that act as thresholds between everyday circumstantial reality and the otherworldly. It does so by focusing on the complex of prehistoric monuments that make up the Avebury ritual landscape because these have become a crucible of contemporary cultural significance and a site of mystical tourism concerned with allegedly paranormal phenomena. I argue that these circumstances produce a range of responses, often broadly religious or aesthetic, which involve ritualistic, artistic, and, above all, *performed* activity, where legends are re/enacted into being and presented as fact. My contention is that this activity not only revitalises and extends the legend as a form of cultural mediation but also stimulates a shared 'sense of place' that helps to enrich an existing narrative world. In this self-reinforcing cycle, memory, imagination, and artfulness together contribute to the shaping of 'legend landscapes' as sites of pilgrimage where otherworldly events are said to have occurred and spiritual presences (and absences) still dwell.

The study is undertaken from the 'insider' perspective of a practitioner fully immersed in these processes. Following a statement of aims and objectives, and the theories and methodologies that underpin my approach to art practice (Chapter 1), I will describe the historical background to my subject (Chapter 2) before discussing how Avebury's landscape is perceived today in the context of legend (Chapter 3), and the subtle collusion involved in reciprocal processes of ritual engagement through legend telling by action (Chapter 4).

Overall, the argument proposes that concealment or anonymity is an essential tool of this creative practice, acting as a methodological principle that aligns the practitioner with the mythical figure of the Trickster. Thus the artist is presented here as an 'operator of meaning,' rather than as a sole 'creator,' encouraging a plurality of interpretations – a view that is consistent with my representation of the collusive nature of artistic activity. The thesis discloses a number of hitherto unknown, obscured, or otherwise unrecognized aspects of the legend landscape and of artistic activity within it. The original contributions to knowledge presented in this study are likely to be relevant to the theory and practice of art and cultural history, and the wider contemporary arts community.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr Iain Biggs, my teacher and Director of Studies, whose depth of insight has inspired me throughout the period of my research. Also Dr Ruth Jones, Dr Victoria Walters, Dr Judith Ashton, and Dr Mary Modeen for their careful supervision, the University of the West of England (UWE), and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for their support. I am indebted to Peter Brookesmith for his editorial advice. My grateful thanks to Dr Chris Wright for his support, to Terry Hall and Davina Kirkpatrick for lending me their ears, to the Circlemakers (John, Rod, Wil, and Mark B.) for all the conversations over the years, to George Hansen for his pioneering research on the Trickster, to Richard Long for his question, and, not least, to Leslie Glenn Damhus for her love and forbearance.

Playing Puck: a study of performative action in the shaping of a 'legend landscape.'

Se non è ben trovato (Even if it is not true, it is well conceived).

Anonymous, Late Renaissance Italian motto.

CONTENTS

Title Page	
Abstract	<i>ii</i>
Acknowledgements	<i>iii</i>
Epigraph	<i>iv</i>
General Introduction	<i>viii</i>
1 Aims, Objectives and Methodologies	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Aims and Objectives	1
1.3 Research and Cultural Context	3
1.3.1 Personal Background to the Project	3
1.3.2 Cultural Context	6
1.3.3 Legend as Flow	11
1.3.4 Constraints	12
1.4 The Thinking, Theory, and Method Behind my Research and Practice	13
1.4.1 Interdisciplinary Framework	13
1.4.2 Methodology: specific contingences	14
1.4.3 Theory	15
1.4.4 Method – action research in practice	17
1.4.5 Precedents	22
1.5 Towards a Theory of the Trickster as a Methodological Principle	26
1.5.1 Introduction	26
1.5.2 Antistructure	28
1.5.3 Playing Puck	31
1.5.4 Methodological Complications	34
1.5.5 Case Study: H-Glaze	38
1.6 Summary	39
2 Background to the Research	42
2.1 Introduction	
The post-rationalist re-emergence of the pre-modern	42
2.1.1 The Damned	46
2.2 Separating myth and legend	49
2.2.1 Myth	50
2.2.2 Legend	52
2.3 The Avebury Complex	54
2.3.1 The Power of Place	55
2.4 A 'long-lost truth' and its mythic association with the Avebury Complex	58
2.4.1 Aubrey, Stukeley, Newton, and Wood	59
2.4.2 Blake	65
2.5 A Long-lost Truth Reclaimed	67

2.5.1	As Above, So Below	71
2.5.2	UFOs	72
2.5.3	The Warminster Mystery	76
2.5.4	Circular Evidence	81
3	Theatre of Schemes	86
3.1	Introduction	86
3.2	Crop Circles	91
3.3	Legend Landscapes	101
3.3.1	Introduction	101
3.3.2	A Haunted Landscape: legend performance as cultural re-membling	102
3.3.3	Harmony Blue	111
3.3.4	Place as Mediating Object	116
3.3.5	<i>Darśan</i> : The Pilgrim Gaze – landscape as temenos/theatre	117
3.3.6	Case Study: East and West Kennet crop circles	127
3.4	Summary	129
4	Ostension, Theatre, Hoaxing and Concealment: The Social Dynamics of Performance in the Legend Landscape	130
4.1	Introduction	130
4.2	Ostension	134
4.2.1	Ostension as Signs, Referents, Interpretants	139
4.2.2	Two Case Studies: Concerning the Normalisation/Inversion of a Legend	141
4.2.3	Subcategories of Ostension	148
4.3	Ostension as Dark Play	150
4.3.1	The 'Hoax' as a Theatrical Act of Ostension	152
4.4	The Legend Landscape as Perceptual Field	155
5	Why Give Martians All the Credit?	159
5.1	Anonymity as a Phenomenological Tool of Art Practice	159
5.2	Review	163
5.2.1	Intentionality, Anonymity, and 'Art'	167
5.3	Summary	171
6	Conclusion	173
	Bibliography	179
	Appendices	189
	Fieldnotes: Special places, spectral traces	
	Submitted as documentation of the practical element of my thesis	DVD
A1	Data: responses to my Questionnaire	DVD

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:	<i>Miracle</i> by S. Harris.	36
Figure 2:	The Mowing Devil.	37
Figure 3:	A map of the Avebury complex.	56
Figure 4:	Silbury Hill.	57
Figure 5:	Avebury Stone Avenue.	57
Figure 6:	Avebury Henge.	57
Figure 7:	Stukeley's 'serpent' map of Avebury.	62
Figure 8:	International Times: Flying Saucers.	68
Figure 9:	The Flying Saucer Vision.	73
Figure 10:	A depiction of the St Michael line.	81
Figure 11:	Doug Bower's sketch of the Chilcomb pictogram, 1990.	83
Figure 12:	Alton Barnes pictogram, 1990.	83
Figure 13:	Doug Bower & Dave Chorley in Bower's studio. 1991.	84
Figure 14:	A crop circle overlooking Silbury Hill.	92
Figure 15:	A typical product from the sacred marketplace.	96
Figure 16:	Clouties in an oak tree at West Kennet.	97
Figure 17:	Ritual leavings at Swallowhead spring.	97
Figure 18:	Red Collie with his notebook.	107
Figure 19:	Red Collie on Facebook.	109
Figure 20:	Web-like material at West Kennet.	115
Figure 21:	Scanning Electron Microscopy of web-like material.	115
Figure 22:	The sublime in the horizontal, Waden Hill.	124
Figure 23:	West Kennet long barrow, on skyline.	124
Figure 24:	View of Silbury Hill from site of stone avenue.	126
Figure 25:	East Kennet crop circle from West Kennet long barrow.	126
Figure 26:	A purported materialization of spirit phenomena.	138
Figure 27:	A crop circle at Yatesbury, Wiltshire 2012.	142
Figure 28:	Samples of wheat showing bent growth nodes.	144
Figure 29:	One of Andrew Pyrka's 'aliens.'	147
Figure 30:	Another of Andrew Pyrka's 'aliens.'	147

General Introduction

This project explores and analyses a particular set of beliefs and conjectures that arise from apparent encounters with the paranormal in a particular landscape – the area around Avebury, Wiltshire. I will show how these beliefs and the legendry that arises from them are inextricable from the perceived (but not orthodox) history of this specific landscape, and indeed that they are an extension and continuation of that alternative history.¹ In this introduction I will survey the complex content of these legends, and discuss why they and the 'paranormal' phenomena that inspire them are an invitation to, as well as a manifestation of, performative artistic activity. These circumstances and their dynamics have informed and illuminated my own art practice. I will then lay the groundwork for the next chapter by deconstructing the title of my thesis, as it contains all the essential elements of my line of argument.

In 1990, Lucy Pringle, a founder member of the Centre for Crop Circles Studies, describes her experience while dowsing a crop circle:

When I go into a crop circle configuration I always start by asking my pendulum if it will be happy to answer questions – luckily the answer has always been in the affirmative! [...] At one of the 'pictographs' this year, I had a violently positive reaction in the circle without rings, and when I went into the top circle (surrounded by the 3 half circles) the pendulum also gyrated rapidly, this time registering negative. The energy in both circles was so powerful that whilst I was swinging the pendulum straight backwards and forwards, asking the question, it started to jump before answering. This I understand happens when there is a strong energy force. At the perimeter, the pendulum swung around so powerfully that it flew off, having snapped the chain. Goodbye pendulum, I said to myself; the velocity must have carried it yards into the standing wheat, so... imagine my amazement when I glanced down and there within 3–4" of the edge of the circle was my pendulum lying in the standing crop! What force had stopped it dead in its tracks so that it plummeted to earth instantly without any rebound? There it lay and I scooped it up with joy.

Lucy Pringle, 'Dowsing: Lucy Pringle loses her pendulum,'
The Cereologist, the Journal for Crop Circles Studies,
No. 1, Summer 1990.

¹ The term 'legend landscape' was first used by the folklorist Will Erich Peuckert (1965). My utilization was inspired by Linda Dégh's use of the term in her chapter "The Landscape and the Climate of the Legend" in *Legend and Belief*. (2001: 311-399).

Pringle's account is typical of the kind of story that is frequently passed among crop circles researchers. In this example, the story functions as apparently factual evidence supporting the myth that crop circles contain powerful 'earth energies' – in other words, as I will define later, it is a legend.² Like others of its kind, it is part of, and feeds into, wider mythology concerning UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects, a popular euphemism for extraterrestrial spacecraft, 'flying saucers,' etc.), which itself derives from a succession of yet broader myths that leads, eventually, to (G)od/s, or at least evidence of a suprahuman Other. In turn, crop circles legendry and UFO myths form part of a nebulous network of post-rationalist (Klass 1995: 152; n2) and pseudoscientific ideas known collectively as New Age thought.³

The sub-set of people within this post-rationalist movement that is interested in crop circles are known, collectively, as 'croppies.' The term is used freely within this community and is non-derogatory, so I will use it here. Croppies go to enormous lengths to preserve a sense of elemental mystery concerning the means whereby crop circles appear. This determination reflects one of the fundamental impetuses of the New Age: it expresses a conceptual imperative that privileges conjecture over the kind of problem-solving that deploys scientific knowledge and methods. Treated as a scientific problem, the 'crop circle mystery' is easily solved by secretly creating a crop circle, measuring its effects (e.g., biophysical and social responses), and comparing these with the content of the legends, like Pringle's, that have helped establish the belief that a genuine paranormal phenomenon inheres in the circles. In practice, this test is performed, in broad terms, whenever someone makes a crop circle and someone else perceives it as paranormal. If this were a purely scientific issue, few scientists would favour the vagaries of apocryphal evidence over such a practical demonstration. Yet, the popular notion that crop circles present a scientific

² Just as the camera and photography were once seen to be immune from subjectivity, so any tool can be assumed to provide non-interventionist objectivity over human fallibility. Alternatively, the tool is an extension and enhancement of the human body, magnifying our subjectivity through interpretation – photography and dowsing being good examples. Dowsing signifies the disclosure of the intrusion of the non-physical into the 'real world': an expression of unobservable objects of belief in terms of observable phenomena. The objective nature of this lends enough scientific credibility to the action to persuade both actor and audience of its facticity. As Pennick & Devereux have noted, "dowsing rods have become the implement to authorize the acceptance of subjective ideas as factual statements" (Pennick & Devereux 1989: 243).

³ In Chapter 2 below, I will define and expand upon "New Age thought," its special interest in UFOs and other related phenomena, and the relevance of these to my project.

problem persists in the face of an embarrassment of evidence to the contrary.⁴ As 'science,' this mystery is factitious, a contrivance, but a spectrum of the croppy community from circle-makers to website administrators to conference organisers, tour operators, experts, souvenir sellers, and even the people who visit crop circles, are complicit in maintaining the pretence. Beyond this subculture, the legend is nourished by print and electronic media that extend worldwide.

So much for science as understood by croppies. But social science and the arts must, of necessity, go further. In this thesis I examine how legend is treated and performed as *fact* in the face of other, more culturally dominant, facts, using the crop circles phenomenon to unravel the nature and significance of that treatment and performance. Central to this as a performative research method is the puckish figure of the circle-maker – but, crucially, this work develops meaning (it is never 'completed') only through the participation and contributions of the croppy community.⁵ The 'final' (that is, continuously evolving) product is in effect a dramatic ritual grounded in a particular landscape. This perspective raises questions about how we should, or could, define art.

It is not fatuous to be concerned with the definition of art since approaching the creative act brings with it a certain kind of receptivity. In thinking about what constitutes art, we might make a start by observing how, in *The Marvellous Puppet Show* (1615), Miguel de Cervantes' satirical precursor to the story of the *Emperor's New Clothes*, the author reveals a process of tacit agreement on the part of the audience to go along with a performance rather than spoiling its potential for magic. What occurs onstage (or rather, is imagined) thus becomes a collective

⁴ This denial may be explained in terms of Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance, where he observed that:

Sometimes [...] a large group of people is able to maintain an opinion or belief even in the face of continual definite evidence to the contrary. Such instances may range all the way from rather inconsequential occurrences of short duration to phenomena which may almost be termed mass delusions. [...]

It is only when a large number of persons who associate with one another have the identical dissonance which cannot be resolved in easier ways, that by supporting one another they may actually be able to maintain the opinion [...]. If everyone believes it, it most certainly must be true.

Festinger 1957: 198-200

⁵ In a manner akin to Barthes' co-creation of the reader.

fabrication. The story shows the human capability to 'turn a blind eye' to anything that disturbs and reveals a mutually agreed or accepted pretence. Moreover, continuing the pretence is the easiest way to avoid feeling duped, and of fragmenting the community spirit of the make-believe encounter (Ellis 2001: 167). This suggests that a sense of *communitas*, a liminal state in which diverse individuals identify themselves and one another as members of a unified body (Carse 2008: 84; Ellis 2001: 183), can contribute to a tacit conspiracy to maintain a (self-) deception. Where *communitas* is bound by a shared sense of mystery, and mystery and *communitas* are considered pleasurable experiences, some people understandably prefer to prolong the pleasure. Where myths of 'the paranormal' are concerned, 'blind eye' regression to less perceptive reasoning is compounded by the complicity of the media, for whom curiosity-value also tends to displace an interest in mundane solutions.

In the 1950s, Jung identified this tendency to affirm the modern myth of UFOs as a reflection of the public appetite for magical mystery and/or quasi-religious iconography. In doing so, he observed that because the behaviour of the media can be used to gauge public opinion:

One must draw the conclusion that news affirming the existence of UFOs is welcome, but that scepticism seems to be undesirable. To believe that UFOs are real suits the general opinion, whereas disbelief is to be discouraged. [...] Why should it be more desirable for [flying] saucers to exist than not?

Jung 1959/1987: x

Jung's question, which applies as well to crop circles as to UFOs, cannot be answered satisfactorily by simply reducing the problem to its material constituents and containing it within what is already known; to do so would ignore the crucial element of *desirability* identified by Jung. The UFO sighting, or whatever is experienced in response to a crop circle, may be an attempt to break out of those confines.⁶

⁶ Returning to Pringle's experience, a physicist, for example, might point out that according to Newton's third law of motion (1687) any force capable of stopping an object "dead in its tracks" would have to be at least as strong as the one propelling the object. This suggests that any object would have difficulty exiting the circle, yet Pringle does not report any difficulty of her own in leaving it. This is easily explained; to the post-rationalist, Newtonian physics is itself a 'myth' in the popular sense of 'falsehood' or 'fiction.' So it goes with legend as understood here – an oscillation between opposing 'dogmas'.

In considering this proposition, I follow Morgan (2010: 59), and argue that we cannot afford to ignore the value of emotion in the relationships people develop with things and places, and indeed with their own experiences and memories. Therefore I take an interdisciplinary approach that acknowledges the alchemy of *communitas* (Turner E. 2011; Carse 2008: 84-6; Ellis 2001: 183; Turner V. 1969: 96-7), the nature of the performance involved, and the cultural practices that people bring to engagements with the weird.⁷ Bringing together these different lines of enquiry allows us to understand how these experiences are grounded, and to appreciate the value to believers of feeding and sustaining them.

Gregory Bateson argues that the desire to believe takes form as a quest for something that is perceived to be lost, when human "behaviour is corrupted by deceit – even self-deceit – by purpose, and by self-consciousness" (1972: 128). He adds that while art is a part of this quest to escape the everyday, cultures that foster a negative approach to the integration of the conscious and unconscious mind are unlikely to produce "great" art (*ibid* p129). I would take this further: the art that flows from such an integration creates a cognitive paradox that often *ensures* artistic success.

This raises the age-old question: 'What is art?' As modern art, crop circles have an audience that most gallery-based contemporary artists would envy – that is, if crop circles were to be perceived as art by the 'art world.' I will be arguing that art is not limited to the gallery, nor even other art contexts such as 'land art,' but consists in experience triggered by stimuli, and that (after Peckham 1965) the greater the perceptual dissonance it provokes in the beholder, or, as J.D. Dewsbury has said, the more it "perplexes people, makes them go off with a problem they cannot solve without changing" (2009), the more successful it is.

Even so, my interest in the circles as part of a social phenomenon exceeds my interest in the circles themselves, even as works of art. That is not to say that the social activity is not steeped in artistic behaviour; it is. In turn, this activity raises interesting questions about the role of art in modern culture, and these are among my main concerns in this study.

⁷ From *Wert*. This proto-Indo-European root "to turn in a circle, revolve, spin" gave rise to Germanic verbs of 'being' and 'becoming.'

My approach in what follows is derived from a combination of two streams of thought. One is Dissanayake's theory that the "biological core" of art is a behaviour she calls "making special" (1995: 42). The other has trickled down from Dewey (1934) via Peckham (1965) to Eno (1996). Its essence is that art is not confined to the object, or 'work of art' itself, but extends to the experience it triggers. This is epitomised by Duchamp's observation (1957) that art is not the object, but resides in "the gap" between what the artist makes and what others make of it.⁸ There is nothing intrinsic to any work of art, nor, for that matter, any significant object or image, that makes it such that is not mediated by attitudes that are learned and nurtured through cultural exposure. (I will return to this observation at the beginning of Chapter 4.) This changes the conditions determined by prevailing notions of what art is and what it is not – art can occur at any time, especially when we least expect it. This is relevant to the present study because, from exchanges I have had with (especially) curators and gallerists, what I call artistic activity (and what is integral to my practice) is, to some, "tricking people" [Jenner 2013, *pers. comm.* (conversation)].

This is in one puckish sense true, although not in the way my interlocutors intended, and calls for closer consideration of the definition of what an artist is, or does. In this study I aim to show how, in legend environments, the artist is an *agent provocateur* – a trickster – who plays a subversive role within the community in which s/he operates. That community in turn is defined by its own subversive tendencies in relation to conventional 'rational' values. Parallels exist between art, ritual and play in the creation of an experiential space demarcated as a special field, mood, or state of being, where 'nothing' becomes everything. As Dissanayake observes, "in play, ritual, and art things are not ordinary – they are less real or more real than everyday reality" (1995: 49).

I intend, too, to show that the same tensions are intensified by rendering the human artist invisible. The efficacy of much religious or ritual art, whether acheiropoietic icons, the 'Veil of Veronica,' the 'Turin Shroud,' African vodun sculpture and its derivative 'voodoo,' is grounded in this principle. As Bateson observed, confusion of science-based 'rational solutions' and aesthetic processes occurs whenever we

⁸ As exemplified by JL Borges' story "Pierre Menard Author of Don Quixote" (*Ficciones*, 1993) which contains an account of how the reader responds quite differently to *Don Quixote* as written by Cervantes, and *Don Quixote* as recreated by Menard – although the texts are *exactly the same*.

are confounded by art, or ritual, or myth (1972: 134). I will argue further that the particular and peculiar, paradoxical, nature of my subject matter means that it is only when phenomena such as crop circles are *not* perceived as 'art' that their success as art is assured. This does not conform to 'artworld' (Danto 1964) formulae that insist art has to announce itself 'as art' in order to be considered as such (Napier 1992: 16). That this understanding is now academically discredited has yet to be accepted, least of all if perhaps understandably, by those trapped by the *communitas* of the artworld.⁹ This disparity creates an interesting liminal overlap and flux between semiotic objects, their performance, and the performances they impel, along with ritual and other kinds of performance. With Patrick Harpur I would argue that it is a mistake to neglect the uncanny and to trivialise modern folklore – for it displays the structure of the imagination more clearly than 'high culture,' "which is overlaid by so much sophistication, self-consciousness, stylistic variation, fashionable issues, and so on" (1994: 124).

The exception here is what Harpur calls the "highest" art, which "returns to the simplicity of myth and, like myth, almost seems unauthored, anonymous" (*ibid*). Benjamin also recognised this distinction, observing that: "Art teaches us to look into objects. Folk art [...] allows us to look outward from within objects" (1999: 279). Crop circles are exemplary in this respect, as they speak to a human sense of mystery. An object may evince the mystery of time, as do objects made up to 40,000 years ago. Or, as with the well-wrought crop circle, it may evince a mystery, borne of authorlessness, and interpreted as the presence of an absent Other. Crucially, mystery is something that is *brought to the exchange by the experiencer*.

I am in consequence contending that there is no common denominator that makes an artefact 'art'. Art is not quantifiable as any particular, canonical quality belonging to an object, text, or performance. *It is a perceptual and behavioural response to the extraordinary, which can be defined only by ordinariness*. If we accept Dissanayake's (1995: 39-42) proposition that art is an act of making special, the same is true of place, and it is made special through artistic behaviour. This is how I view the assemblage of man-made artifices, visible today as remnants of Britain's prehistoric

⁹ Such is the social pressure to conform that "it would take a brave soul to raise a hand" to question it, observes Botton (2012: 215).

heritage. The ritual landscape (Robb 1998; Pryor 2004: 244)¹⁰ at Avebury, Wiltshire, invites this kind of response. Following this argument, we should also include under the heading of modern conceptual artworks 'leys' and crop circles, and their associations with these places, where conceptual art is understood as a ritual transaction that invites participation.

Central to my argument then, is that certain place/landscapes become revitalised by art/ritual activity, and as such raise interesting questions about the nature of human interaction with the Other.

A Brief Deconstruction of the Title

As I have found, it is all too easy to talk around this evasive subject matter, so a pithy deconstruction of my thesis title is in order, as it contains all the essential elements of my line of argument.

Puck, based on the mischievous English land spirit Robin Goodfellow, was immortalised as a quintessential spirit of the Trickster by William Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (first performed in 1595). Like his Welsh counterpart *Pwca* and the Irish *Púca*, the name points to earlier origins (as do *puki* in Old Norse, *puke* in Swedish and *puge* in Danish [Irving & Lundberg 2006]); all derive from the Vedic 'deva' (shining one), a supernatural being that is subordinate to (G)od/s. My phrase "Playing Puck" is redolent of the artfulness, theatricality, impersonation, and risk contained within my interpretation of the Trickster as a kind of *human* behaviour. I have developed this interpretation as the methodological principle that underpins my practice; I saw myself as 'playing Puck' in performing the practical element of my study.

I use 'performative' to describe creative action that *generates* performance in the way an audience contributes to the conditions of performance, and so makes its outcome not only meaningful but provisionally 'real.' This action is intended to capture "the unsteadiness, slipperiness, porosity, unreliability, and ontological riskiness of the realities projected or created by playing" (Schechner 1993: 39) that I hope to summons by my use of the Trickster as a methodology. I view this

¹⁰ I am aware that some academic archaeologists consider the term 'ritual landscape' to be problematic, but as an artist I am also interested in the concept as it is envisioned by the earth mysteries movement, so I have decided to follow Pryor and use it here.

kind of performativity in terms of ostension, a term used by folklorists to describe how legends are expressed through action (Dégh 2001; Ellis 2001), or the ritual enactment of potential realities (Grimes 2006: 102). This kind of enactment with its associated interaction shapes the way certain places and landscapes are perceived and experienced. Haunted houses and Avebury's prehistoric ritual landscape are examples of such ostensive performativity, and I have chosen the latter as the focus of my study.

My approach can be likened to Ellis' observation that, like Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, folklorists are embarked on a quest for "something that we rarely glimpse and almost never capture – a legend that will stand still long enough to let us appreciate it in both its aesthetic and experiential sense" (2001: 58). I propose that crop circles, and other aesthetic and experiential activity performed in and around Avebury's ancient landscape, embody just such a legend. This project is my attempt to unveil and analyse the dynamic practices it has fostered, and their intimate relations with place.

The first step in my line of argument is to explain how my project came about, its aims and objectives, and the theories and methodologies that underpin my approach to art practice. This will form the substance of Chapter 1. In the second part of this chapter I shall attempt to elucidate my notion of the Trickster as a methodological principle and as a basis for my performative research method. Where relevant I will cite the work of other contemporary artists who operate in similar ways. I will then disclose the results of my research into the historical background to my subject before moving on to discuss how Avebury's ritual landscape is perceived in the context of legend, and how people engage in subtle reciprocal processes of ritual engagement with myth through legend telling by action. From here, I will lead into my conclusion by ruminating on a question put to me by Richard Long: "Why give Martians all the credit?"

Fieldnotes: Special places, spectral traces

I have included documentation of the integrated practical element of this study in the form of a 120-page book, *Fieldnotes: Special places, spectral traces*, available as a PDF file on the DVD included on the inside front cover of this thesis. This is intended to be fully engaged with as a core part of my submission.

1 Aims, Objectives and Methodologies

1.1 Introduction

Having sketched the general area and scope of my study, I will now set out its specific aims and objectives. I will then indicate how the current research project came about, and my own interests in the subject matter. Next, I will describe in more formal terms the cultural context in which my study is situated, and how this relates to contemporary art theory. In Section 1.4 I will discuss the thinking and theory that underpins my approach, and the method behind my research and practice. I will then contextualise the space occupied by these approaches to my subject in relation to precedents in the contemporary art marketplace, in order to make the distinctions between them clear. The second part of this chapter will be taken up by a discussion of the Trickster as a methodology of risk, embodying the most fitting approach to this area of research and directly addressing hoax-like activity as a tool of creative practice.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

My practice is informed and inspired by the impact of perceptions of paranormal phenomena on feelings and emotions; by how these experiences are influenced by place; and by how this affects the way place and landscape are experienced. The overarching aim of my study has been to examine the processes by which extra-personal myths and legends inform responses to place and landscape, and how these responses ensure the continuity of myth as it is fed back into society as contemporary folklore. This aim required me to consider and examine the role of concealment (anonymity/invisibility) as a tool of creative practice as part of this process. (It is in this context that the notion of 'playing Puck' becomes important). Following on from this I also intend to address the following questions:

- To what extent is contemporary legend realised through social processes of 'make-believe'?
- What are the processes by which artists and audience act together in perpetuating social relations between art, legend, and landscape?
- How does setting – namely location, place, and landscape – help shape the legend narrative, and vice-versa?

In suggesting productive answers to these questions I will make an original contribution to knowledge by revealing how such artistic transactions manifest as artefacts and narratives, or artworks, that extend contemporary folklore *and its understanding* and affect the way place/landscape is perceived and experienced.

In short, having observed this cycle and its effects over many years, I wanted to 'get inside' the question of why particular places attract only certain kinds of legend, and how artists may best situate themselves so as to track the course of and intervene in this kind of narrative. To do this involved directly experiencing the processes whereby myth is kept alive by human activity and integrated into mythic narratives as legend.

My first objective was to take Avebury's ancient ritual landscape and its current status as a site of pilgrimage as the primary site in which to investigate the intricately balanced ecology of social dynamics by which a community perpetuates a legend of place. In doing so I wished to explore whether this is a ritual process, and the extent to which such activity acts as a generative force for social change – for example, in shaping attitudes towards ecological concerns. My objective here was to open channels of understanding into how nonconventional artistic approaches to place might play a more fundamental role in generating an alternative lived experience within a changing culture.

The objectives above were predicated on the New Age assumption that powerful courses of 'earth energies' run through Avebury and its environs, with the consequence that the region plays host every summer to the 'unexplained' appearance of crop circles and other strange phenomena. In due course, then, I will examine:

- how these assumptions contribute to the current popular fascination with myths and legends associated with ancient monuments and the increase in tourism to the area in recent years.
- the nature of relations between crop circles and other phenomena and the places and landscapes that play 'home' to them.
- whether each feeds the other and, if so, how artistic performance is relevant to this process.

In addressing these questions, my objective is to examine how legend association with setting or place is shaped by the continuous system¹ of cultural activity it generates. I explore this through a practice-led study, using my own artistic interventions. I then observe whether (and subsequently how) these become integrated into folklore by adding to the flow of legend. In relation to my practice, my hypothesis here was that I would be able to contribute to the construction and development of narrative, and so better understand how this process affects the way place is experienced.

My second objective, which flows from the first, is to use practice to show how artistic activity mediates different realities. This calls for a reappraisal of the role of the 'artist as trickster' as a key operator whenever a community trades in paranormal folklore that is elemental to its cultural identity. Since the artist's concealment is crucial to the kind of process and practice employed, the hidden artist *ipso facto* becomes a species of Trickster in the context of both artworld and in place/landscape-related folklore and legendry. In bringing problematic issues such as anonymity to the fore, I examine a state of affairs within contemporary art theory that remains untested as a force for social change. Consequently the study also seeks to contribute to new knowledge by extending discussion about Trickster activity as a catalyst for transformative experience in the context outlined above.

1.3 Research and Cultural Context

1.3.1 Personal Background to the Project

I have worked as an art practitioner since 1979. Between 1981 and 1989 I lived in Los Angeles, California, and became interested in the development of the New Age as a cultural phenomenon. By then it had become a burgeoning marketplace of alternative ideas and practices. While in LA I missed the historical attachment that I felt in Britain, and used to spend hours looking at images of the Avebury landscape and reading about 'Mysterious Britain' (Bord & Bord 1981). I returned to the UK in

¹ Unlimited interpretation concerns systems, not processes (Eco 2011: 36). While the latter suggests a series of actions or steps toward a particular end, the former has the potential to repeat the same actions *ad infinitum*. Here, I am talking about how legend mutates and adapts to local conditions through the telling and retelling. This is one important difference between the folkloric oral tradition and texts, with their reduced range of semiotic choices. I will examine this further in my discussion on the Trickster.

May 1989 to an atmosphere of excitement surrounding the crop circles phenomenon as it approached the zenith of its popularity. Within a short time I was walking in the first circles to appear near Avebury. Through the dark lens of its mystery, I saw this phenomenon as a 'neo-primitive' graffiti-style art form, writ large – “beyond Basquiat”² in size and ontological scope. To me, the circles represented another set of dichotomies, those of 'real' and 'fake,' and the experiential-philosophical interface between 'inside' and 'outside,' 'us' and 'other.' Crop circles attracted me because, in the wake of the cultural blandness of the 1980s, they generated an alternative cultural 'buzz' of belief in the 'here and nowness' of a socio-cultural movement, which was described at the time in terms of a “paradigm shift.”³ The physical presence of crop circles, perceived as imprints, implies an absence, but of what? Aliens? Nature spirits? Archetypal consciousness? I saw the crop circles phenomenon as typifying the peculiarly English notions of 'wyrd' that spiced 1960s counter-culture, with its attachment to the mythical terrain of an English landscape alive with ancient and modern myth and legends (Clarke & Roberts 2007).

While in 1991 news of the man-made origins of crop circles curbed general public interest in the subject, it did not diminish my own curiosity in their value as a social phenomenon and cultural activity: an art form. I became intrigued by the artistic ramifications of activity that, through the concealment of its authors, creates art that talks “not to other works of art but to the world” (Kuspit 1985). In 1991, I joined in, and have since collaborated in making crop circles with Jim Schnabel, Rod Dickinson, John Lundberg, Wil Russell, Julian Richardson, and, of late, Mark Barnes, among others. My conversations with these individuals have shaped my own insights into the mindset that drives this example of “art objects manufactured by (human) artists [that] are not believed to have originated in that way; they are thought to be of divine origin or to have mysteriously made themselves” (Gell 1998: 23).

As part of The Circlemakers, this facet of my art practice has taken me around the world working for various clients including Nike, Greenpeace, Microsoft, and others, and artistic collaborations with Santiago Sierra and the American Nu Metal

² As a product of Warhol's Factory system of art collaboration, Jean-Michel Basquiat specialised in works that communicated suggestive dichotomies concerning race and relative wealth. He had died the previous year, in 1988.

³ At this, I read Thomas Kuhn, triggering my interest in the sociology of science.

band Korn. The present research project attempts to understand some of the core elements of the human fascination with crop circles and related paranormal phenomena, and what these suggest about human yearnings, the Trickster, and feelings of connection to special places and landscapes.

In 2001, doctoral students at UCL's Department of Anthropology invited me, as a known crop circle-maker, to lead a seminar on the topic of crop circles. I was not used to an academic environment, and the criticality of their questions exposed yawning gaps in my own thinking on the subject, which my natural curiosity compelled me to fill. That evening, I probably learned as much if not more about my subject matter from them as they did from me. This experience prompted me to read anthropological texts by their immediate supervisors, Daniel Miller and Suzanne Küchler, and Alfred Gell's *Art and Agency* (1998) – a key text for them, and now for me. What, I wondered, would Gell have made of crop circles, especially in relation to how they mediate felt connections between things and people, but whose ambiguity in terms of authorship relates to “a more psychological, non-linguistic view of religious vertigo” (Gell 1999: 17). Reading on, I learned that this ambiguity is a key to practical magic in the way it transfers the primacy of cognitive effect and interpretation to the spectator, thus challenging semiotic traditions of meaning. This anthropological perspective helped me to identify what I had experienced in the fields of Wiltshire, and to place this in terms of what Turner saw as cultural movement from rational cognition to performative process and embodied ritual practice (Morgan 2010: 55-6). Through the filter of Material Culture, it articulated a sense I had long felt as an artist but was unable to put into words or thoughts: I was hooked.

I first visited a crop circle in 1989. I was immediately struck by two things: one was that the mystery of the phenomenon revolved around the circles' origins; the second was the urge of 'experts' to be seen to solve this problem. A third observation came later, and could only have come from the unique perspective of the crop circle maker, as this enabled me to properly judge the veracity of these experts' analyses. It was that intellectual pretension can be just as misguided in rationalists as in those they deem to be irrational – 'the paranormal' is an intellectual leveller. I learned that the most salient feature of our engagement with

mysterious phenomena is that the truth does not always lie in the most rational explanations, and people who think in straight lines are often the most easily deceived. I was experiencing what the biophysicist Rupert Sheldrake (2012) has called the science delusion⁴ – a minor skirmish in a war of episteme. This became the focus of my fascination. It was around this time, in 1992, that I met Jim Schnabel, then a student of sociology working under the supervision of the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge 'guru' Harry Collins. I read Collins, and will refer to his work later. Schnabel also introduced me to the work of Paul Feyerabend.

At that time, my knowledge of science amounted to the sum of an insipid secondary education and what I later absorbed through osmosis. The superiority of scientific fact over all other forms of knowledge went unquestioned in me. I accepted this situation until my experiences with crop circles led me to be suspicious of *all* intellectual pretension, including my own. Following Gide's advice (1959: 146), I learned to trust seekers of truth over those who had found it.⁵ I became a sceptic, namely:

One who doubts the validity of what claims to be knowledge in some particular department of inquiry (e.g. metaphysics, theology, natural science, etc.); [popularly], one who maintains a doubting attitude to some particular question or statement. ... [Occasionally] a seeker after truth who has not yet arrived at definite convictions.

Shorter Oxford Dictionary (Third Edition)

1.3.2 Cultural Context

My study explores the role of place and landscape within a specific cultural ecology (Dillon 2011), a triadic interrelationship of social relations between people, physical environment, and cultural context. The study's setting is the Avebury area; the context is modern myths and legends of preternatural and paranormal phenomena, a genre including experiences (ghostly hauntings, alien beings, fairies), UFOs, crop circles, and earth energies. In the area around Avebury the ritual practice of using physical objects to stand for products of the human psyche can be seen in the remnants of ancient human activity, and is continued today as

⁴ "The science delusion is the belief that science already understands the nature of reality." Flyleaf (Sheldrake 2012).

⁵ "Believe those who are seeking the truth. Doubt those who have found it." *So Be It or The Chips Are Down* (1959), tr. Justin O'Brien, Alfred Knopf, New York.

central to New Age ritual practices. Rumours that Avebury's prehistoric landscape abounds with these phenomena have invited pilgrimage to, and mystical engagement with, local topographical features such as Silbury Hill (the largest prehistoric man-made mound in Europe). Frequently, as part of this cultural activity, rumour manifests as legend when conveyed in ways that are accepted as 'real' expressions of the preternatural or paranormal, but whose 'truth' is disputed. (Crop circles are an ideal example of this; much of their attraction in this context is that their physical presence allows empirical analysis.) Legend is the dialogical interface ensuring that tension is maintained between scientific truth and "the mythical realm of the imagination [where] what is important is the truth as we see it" (Stevens 1951: 147). Thematically, this kind of correspondence is intriguing in the ways it explores relations between natural science, material culture, religious activity, and poetic imagination, and how objects are used to mediate between everyday reality and perceptions of Other. As such, it may be said to return art to its roots.

From this initial position, I will contextualise this activity in terms of art history, particularly concerning the artist's invisibility or concealment in this milieu and how it challenges some received ideas in contemporary art theory. Full immersion in the activity described requires levels of phenomenological 'sleight-of-hand' on the part of the participants. Both makers and interpreters share an interest in phenomena being perceived as magical, and this entails their tacit agreement to skirt around questions of authorship. I will argue that this kind of collusion belongs to a wider creative deception that is a necessary part of science, ritual, and art.

Grayson Perry's 2013 Reith lectures are of interest to me because the image he portrays of the Western contemporary art marketplace serves as an indicator of current mainstream attitudes surrounding visual culture. The title of the series was *Playing to the Gallery*. Rather than exploit the epistemological potential of contemporary art by extending the limits of what may be considered art, perhaps by shocking his audience, Perry chose a safer strategy that reflected the artworld, and himself, as comedic parodies. His second lecture (BBC R4 22/10/13), titled "Beating the Bounds," reinforced boundaries that generally conform to Dickie's 'Institutional' theory (1969), which argues that a thing can only be considered 'art' if it is accepted and co-opted as such within the community of artists, critics, educators, curators,

collectors and frequent gallery-goers that constitute the artworld. This trades on a sense of exclusivity, and is therefore also an instrument of social exclusion. It is this tradition that my argument sets out to challenge. Further lines separate high art from 'craft' and 'folk art.' Perry cited his own success in winning the 2003 Turner Prize as a "potter," elevating ceramics from 'craft' to Art. In 2005, another Turner Prize winner Jeremy Deller presented crop circles as part of his Folk Archive. Ostensibly, this existed outside the context of contemporary art – but does it? I would argue that Deller used this material to beat new bounds – or, as with Perry's pots, to return contemporary notions of 'what art is' to older traditions. I expect Perry would agree that the lines he defined are soft-edged and subject to continually shifting cultural values, which exist to be tested. As Gell observed of Dickie's idea, "it is a sociological theory rather than a truly philosophical one – a theory about what is (really) considered art, rather than what ought (rationally) to be considered art." (Gell 1996).

In a published conversation with Brian Eno in the wake of his Reith lectures, Perry observes that "increasingly, contemporary art overlaps so much with religion."⁶ This is a recurrent theme for Perry: In a recent television documentary he remarked to a curator at the British Museum that:

As an artist, I make things, and when I look at the cultural output of other times and places I am envious. And when you talk about these objects in that way... I suppose there's a bit of me that would like it if you talked about *my* things in that way. I would like my own objects to be treated with that much respect and have that power.

Grayson Perry and the Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman,
Imagine, BBC One, broadcast 01/11/11.

Perry is describing a sense that in both art and religious worlds accedes to received notions of authorial authenticity, especially concerning artefacts that possess, or are possessed by, what Benjamin (1935) has described as their aura, which tends to be measured by the experience triggered by association. The paradox here is that Perry's idealised vision of contemporary art revered quasi-religiously seems incongruous in a culture that prides itself on its secular principles. I would also

⁶ Brian Eno and Grayson Perry on how the internet taught us we are all perverts: Creativity, popularity and pornography – and why great art always involves losing control. *New Statesman*, <http://www.newstatesman.com/2013/10/internet-has-taught-us-we-are-all-perverts> Ret. 7/11/13.

argue, moreover, that this puts the cart before the horse. In Gell's anthropological ruminations on the power or agency of artworks, the 'horse,' or the human propensity for religious experience, leads. No semiotic object is intrinsically sacred; religious specialness is conferred upon it by a religious audience. The most agentive objects in the sense Perry is talking about are simultaneously works of art *and* articles of belief. To think this sense of aura can be led by secularist approaches is to disregard the nature of 'aura,' and perhaps its purpose in relation to aesthetics, as well as the human desire to seek this sensation. Here I draw from Eagleton's observation concerning the origins of aesthetics in visceral, creaturely senses as opposed to those that "conduct some shadowy existence in the recesses of the mind." (Eagleton 1990: 13). The response Perry wants his work to receive is more 'gut reaction' than cerebral, emanating from times and places before European notions of 'fine art' emerged in the early Italian Renaissance, when cultural mores were shaped by a different paradigm; conditions where the artist's anonymity/semi-anonymity influenced the perceptual field in which spiritual and aesthetic experience are synonymous – all in all, as I will show, a magical mystery world that has survived into today's New Age ideology. Later (Chapter 5), with regard to Western values of possessive individualism, I argue that quasi-religious awe directed at the lone genius of the artist is rendered irrelevant amid the spiritual sensibility the work itself succeeds in evoking. This enchantment is easily confused with inner feelings of "I couldn't do that," as Perry himself describes when standing before the altar of the Wieskirche in Steingaden, Bavaria, in the aforementioned documentary.

In order to ensure that any false dichotomy between the practice in this thesis and that of other contemporary art is not over-emphasised, I acknowledge the existence of practitioners operating within the artworld and related contemporary culture whose methodologies reflect my own, with particular regard to the use of anonymity and/or semi-anonymity, and other Puckish strategies. Although more activists than artists, the Yes Men would qualify as an example. As stated on their website:

The Yes Men are a group who use any means necessary to agree their way into the fortified compounds of commerce, and then smuggle out the stories of their undercover escapades to provide a public glimpse at the behind-the-scenes world of big business.

<http://theyesmen.org/faq> Ret. 29/10/13

Another example, rooted firmly in the artworld, is Angus Fairhurst's "mischievous act of cultural terrorism"⁷ in which he connected two art gallery front desk employees on the telephone; as neither party was able to grasp the other's agenda the conversation dissolved into confusion, bewilderment, defensiveness, and hostility. This was an artwork with the artworld as its subject, in which a scenario was contrived that gave voice to the artworld's tendency to 'speak only to itself,' to paraphrase Kuspit, quoted above. In this instance the end justified the means; the value of the message communicated outweighed its underhandedness. Like my own, the work deployed a methodology of risk, for it involved surrender on the part of the artist – Fairhurst had no control of the conversation and could not be sure of its outcome; and thus he becomes part of the audience. *Playing Puck*, Fairhurst invisibly sets up, then records the conversation. We the audience are then invited to witness the drama as it unfolds, an everyday scene in a false world. The lovers are unaware of their foolishness, but for observers it is readily apparent.

"What fools these mortals be!"

Puck, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Act iii Scene ii

However, exposing human foibles is not the only aim of such interventions. They may also generate social cohesion, as with Marcus Coates' explorations into the generative power of ritualistic, quasi-religious appeal to animistic powers. Coates is recognised for his performances that employ shamanistic rituals in attempts to enter into an intimate medium of exchange with his immediate audience. The Puckish objective is to deviate from critical rationalism in order to access the potential of unconscious reasoning, stirring seas of ambiguity and movement in the sociocultural spaces separating 'art' and belief. Coates earns his living as an artist, although in a different time and/or cultural environment the same role might have been performed as a shaman, or fool. Even in a contemporary urban environment, his identity as artist becomes hidden as it is transformed in the eyes of his participatory audience through reconstructed reality; it enters the realm of 'dark play,' a species of performativity that I will address in more detail in Section 4.3.

⁷ <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/angus-fairhurst-2591> Ret. 30/10/13

Others who have presented similar activities within the context of contemporary art and academic discourse include Fred Wilson and Rod Dickinson. Wilson uses similar approaches to mine (*cf.* Section 1.4.4), where unorthodox dissemination impels the questioning of bias and limitations that come with different contexts which shape interpretations of truth, value, and environmental perception. Dickinson's practice is also concerned with ideas surrounding concepts of truth, half-truth, folklore and legend, including, as I will soon proceed to discuss, the specific pedigree of practice and semiotic means of objectification I am addressing here. These examples illustrate parallels between activism, art, and the practical joke... lines that are separated only by context. A small neatly wrapped and carefully labelled parcel containing something delightfully evocative – a feather... or a fragment of a note? – anonymously placed in someone's luggage on a train (artist unknown) left an indelible impression on me when I heard about it. The artist as mediator, whose role is to facilitate an experience; this is essentially Surrealist in the foundational principle of juxtaposing the familiar in unfamiliar settings or states, but isolated in the frame of real life. And what of that movement's occult roots? In the context of my own study, it is interesting to note that none of these examples takes anonymity/semi-anonymity to the point where the thing being communicated is considered to be *dei gratis*: i.e., out-of-this-world, non-human, and therefore 'not art.' That is not to say that such art does not exist: Crop circle makers (those who do not, as part of their 'artistry,' announce their authorship of particular works) and their ostensionist kin belong to an older, more cosmopolitan tradition of artists working in the hidden universes that exist in the gaps between shifting tectonic plates of science, religion, and art, truth, and fiction. This kind of activity is indigenous to these chaotic borderlands. As science, such activity is actionable in one sense, as false, illegal, but as art it is actionable in another sense, in terms of having practical value, as revealing needs and desires for illusions to be true, to feed spiritual belief. After all, all art is illusion.

1.3.3 Legend as Flow

In this project I am describing a cycle⁸ of ritual fed by art and play. In what follows I agree with Dissanayake (1992) that at a root-level there is a separation of oral and

⁸ Fittingly, the word 'cycle' originates from the Greek *kuklos* = 'circle.' Oxford dictionaries define 'cycle' in terms of ecology as the movement of a simple substance through the soil, rocks,

text-based approaches to art. The oral may be said to be inherently social, folkloric, as word-of-mouth is shared among folk, while engagement with the textual has naturally become more solitary and analytical. With emphasis on individual intellect, stories are not to be trusted and sophisticated Westerners are obliged to 'read' and understand a text correctly. While the textual attempts to explain a material reality that is determinable by five physical senses, the orally-based art addresses a "non-sensible something-behind-the-sensible-world" (Dissanayake 1992: 212) derived from Plato's idea that a non-sensible realm exists alongside the sensible, and that this comes alive through imagination, myth, and story. Stevens' remark, cited previously, states in full: "In life, what is important is the truth as it is, while in the mythical realm of the imagination what is important is the truth as we see it" (1951: 147). The art that interests me here emanates from this mythical realm. It is inherently ambiguous, ensuring movement, and yet it invites, and entraps, the kind of sophisticated interpretations to which modern humans are accustomed. The aspect of this engagement that interests me most is how these interpretations are conveyed as legend. I am looking at a rarefied social activity which, I will argue, is attempting to challenge established scientific paradigms. This activity is led by practices that derive from the oral – legend-telling – but bring the textual into play. Ultimately, it represents a deeper tension between ontological belief and semiotics. Consequently, I am engaging with a system whereby artistic activity (on the part of both actor and audience) ensures the flow and movement between unexpressed intention and unintended expression in the realisation of mythical truth.

1.3.4 Constraints

Drawing on Klass (1995) and others, I wish to argue that today's New Age movement is, essentially, a rebellion against scientism.⁹ New Age rituals and techniques are likely to initiate epistemological conflict between the cultural mainstream (structure) and counterculture (antistructure).¹⁰ Part of this process

water, atmosphere, and living organisms of the earth, and this is also a useful metaphor for the way legend moves in relation to people and environment, as well as embodying place as a physical carrier of its substance. [Let us also be mindful that metaphor (Greek) means transport.]

⁹ As distinguished, primarily, from scientific approaches towards knowledge. However, the tyranny of those who know is still a tyranny (Blackburn 2006: 70).

¹⁰ Turner defines antistructure as the dissolution of normative social structure (1982: 28). Antistructure may be used literally or figuratively. The prefix 'anti' is used strategically: it does not imply negativity or opposition to structure, as such, but is used in terms of 'counter', as in 'counterculture' – an alternative, rather than bent on destroying that to which it contrasts itself.

involves the invention of counterfactual conditions that act upon people as, and are often indistinguishable from, facts, and are allied to give intellectual strength to an alternative position. This is grass-roots legend politics.

The present project addresses these local concerns rather than conforming to an orthodoxy that would automatically exclude or reject alternative approaches. It does so in order to understand “a certain type of world in a certain kind of collective” (Latour 1997: *xiii-xiv*) through engagement, requiring a methodology that allows me to take an agnostic view of ritual practices. To return to my earlier example, I will not be engaging in arguments about the validity of divination as a tool, only observing its use. Here I also draw on Deleuze & Guattari’s observation that “tools only exist in relation to the intermingling they make possible or that make them possible” (1988: 90). And so, in my own practice I have used the appropriate tools to attend to ontological concerns as part of a wider epistemology.

In what follows I will not attempt an exhaustive historical analysis of any particular myth, as this would extend beyond the scope of my enquiry. The provision of historical background (Chapter 2) marks the limit of my critical analysis of the truth or otherwise of any mythic or legend narratives. My study deals with human *responses* to legends; beyond background history, it is not concerned with the facticity of particular myths or legends. My concern here is not to ‘take sides’ in quarrels between opposing positions. I wish to reemphasize that my practice is not an attempt to debunk, to argue for or against any viewpoint, or to criticize any interpretation of, or explanation for, ‘anomalous’ events or experiences. Nor does my treatment devalue the way the Avebury (or any other) landscape is experienced, but rather enhances it. My study and its practical elements were intended to gauge the extent to which the efficacy of legends resides in the processes it provokes in the beholder. My role as an artist was, and is, to ‘tell,’ or enact, legend in order to observe its progress and understand how it assumes different significances beyond the reductive; how legend, through its interactions and interference, mediates different realities, and how this affects human relationships with place.

Antistructure is positive: it tends to ignore, reverse, cut across or occur outside dominant structural relationships (Turner 1974: 274).

1.4 The Thinking, Theory, and Method Behind my Research and Practice

1.4.1 Interdisciplinary framework

My study draws upon an interdisciplinary framework consisting of art history, anthropology, performance theory, and contemporary folklore studies. To my knowledge, there have been no academic studies that adopt the same approach/es to my subject as I do here. As stated, deception can be constructive, and I am interested in its artistic value rather than in using it as a means of deconstruction (i.e., hoaxing; debunkery).¹¹ My study is immersive, and may be differentiated from debunkery inasmuch as (1) my practice generates legend, and does not seek to undermine it; (2) I recognize the existence of a plurality of interpretations, rather than favouring any one; and (3) my main focus is on responses to place as part of a narrative that exists within a wider cultural ecology.

1.4.2 Methodology: specific contingences

My methodological approach is, broadly speaking, that of theoretically-informed action research. It has an orientation consistent with general anthropological theories of magic (Mauss: 1950; Lévi-Strauss, 1950: *xiv*, quoted by Pocock in Mauss, 2001: 5), as well as more recent work by Taussig (1993: 250-5) and Gell (1998: 96-153). Likewise, there is a Maussian core to my fascination and engagement with the “peculiar relations between persons and things” (Gell, 1998: 9), that underpins my art practice.

Rumour and dialogue are essential components of legend environments. I used an ethnographic approach of interviews and participant observations to record the spectrum of responses to my covert art practice. The reciprocal nature of my practice turned these approaches into opportunities to respond to ‘cues’ as indicators of further artistic activity. This involved interaction with people whose opinions and interpretations I do not necessarily share, and I did not want this to come between us as a distraction, or to fog the clarity of my understanding.¹² I was also mindful of Dégh’s (1977: 243-244) advice that the task of the folklorist is to

¹¹ As far as belief in a particular legend is concerned, the result may be the same; both ‘hoax’ and art contribute to legend by fuelling the system of contestation – as Festinger, *et al* (1956) showed, even outright disconfirmation can strengthen ontological beliefs.

¹² In this, I was guided by Lee’s observation that “you never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... [...] until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” – Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* [1960/2006: 33(ch3)]

study the movement and behaviour of legend, not to engage in debate over its veracity. I should emphasize at this point that I did not see my task as being to create art and then unpick its mystery, but rather to record any aura of magical efficacy that surrounds it (Benjamin 1935; Taussig 1987; as a methodology, Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009: 202-3). I wanted to experience the exegesis of the 'legend landscape' through the eyes of the people who populate and define it in those terms. To do so entailed action research based on a model of collaborative inquiry in which I compare the effects and conditions of social action in order to better understand its impact as an element of practice and the situations in which it is performed.

To this end, I proceeded, as Lewin (1946: 38) recommends, "in a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action." Here, I assumed an abductive (or hypothetical) stance (Gell, 1998: 14-16; Eco, 1979: 131, citing Peirce *ii.* 624) – i.e., following the narrative, and sometimes subtly influencing it, rather than imposing my own interpretation onto it – thus allowing actors (human or non-human) room to express themselves. My prior experience within this community was helpful in accessing the mindset of my informants, enabling me to converse as an ontological equal, or at least someone who understood and tolerated the grammar of the narrative.¹³

This is important because the success of my method of action research depends upon my ability to negotiate disparate perceptual fields and political states, which is itself relevant because these occupy the same physical space. This is a state of affairs that sits at the heart of my thesis. In order to address this properly I have to be able to move between worlds, Trickster-style, and to understand that to their respective inhabitants – those inclined to believe New Age legendry and those inclined not to – these are separate, and in many ways opposite, worlds. This is relevant not only to my ideas about concealment in relation to ontological values, but also to issues around perception, identity, cultural indoctrination, and the nurturing of exclusivity and otherness. These are ideal conditions for Trickster or hoax-like activity; I will elaborate on this shortly in the forthcoming discussion towards a theory of the Trickster as a methodological principle.

¹³ It is worth mentioning here that cycles of responses to artistic stimuli can be unpredictable and continue beyond the research process.

1.4.3 Theory

Theories concerning the creative art of play (e.g., Huizinga 1938) and semiotics, with their shared implicit tensions of discontinuity between the actual and the actualised, were central to my research into folklore as “artistic communication” (Ben Amos 1971, quoted in Dégh 2001: 33). The Greek etymology of the word ‘phenomenon,’ that which is shown, appearing evidently, inviting inferences, relates to another key conceptual element of my study: ostension, or ‘legend-telling by action’ (Dégh, 2001; Ellis, 2001), which was originally conceived of as a tool of semiotics (Eco, 1979: 224-6). Peirce’s notion of the interpretant, locked “in an infinite regression of endless representations... unlimited semiosis” (Eco 1979: 69) is relevant to the way legend is passed among folk. His observation of how semiosis occurs *ad infinitum* throughout the entire communicative process (Davis & Postlewait 2003: 24) whenever truth and fiction, fantasy and reality come into contact, echoes the semiotic dynamic described in Turner & Turner’s anthropological analyses of pilgrimage, and the *performance of* and *responses to* the social object as a “vehicle” (1978: 143) carrier of lore. Turnerian approaches to ritual, liminality, antistructure, communitas, and performance, are also relevant insofar as I see the correlation between ritual and theatre as being played out now, in England, as lived experience. These theoretical approaches, coupled with Feyerabend’s anarchic or Dadaist (1975/2010: xiv) approach to natural science, have helped me to recognize and understand the conditions by which tensions between ontological and epistemological values arise in legend environments. My interest in this area was initiated by Peckham’s theory of art as a discontinuous process whereby artificial tensions are experienced as an exercise in re/orientation (1965: 314), reinforcing our ability to take risks, either by responding to unexpected but familiar situations through known rules, or by handling novel situations by deducing new rules (1965: 59). This is consonant with Lévi-Strauss’ (1966) observation that myth mutates with every telling and, like art and play, comes alive through adaptation to novelty.

By using Latour’s and Law’s theoretical framework of ‘actor networks’ to assess the influence of quasi-objects in socio-cultural arenas, it is possible to reveal the processes by which legend is constructed and performed. This was invaluable in

defining anything that is transferred between people through networks of relations, and which act on those relations. These ideas, combined with Dillon's on "cultural ecology" (2011) helped me to envisage a holistic image of how people, objects, and stories form relations where every actant makes a difference. Tilley's approaches to landscape (2004; 1994; [Bender (ed) 1993]) brought place into this equation, and guided my own subject-centred approaches to practice through walking and topographical poetics. The notion that Avebury's ancient landscape is a hallowed place infused with ancestry and speculative approaches to connecting with it, and our ancestors through it, is central to my thesis. This, I would argue, is driven by yearnings for a return to a halcyon pre-modern world, away from present woes, that is conceived equally in terms of postmodern science fiction.¹⁴ This tests Wylie's (2007: 182, quoting Merleau-Ponty) observation that landscape phenomenology is haunted by a sense of nostalgia and "directed towards re-establishing a direct and primitive contact" (Wylie 2007: 182) with a long-forgotten past. I looked, again, to Tilley, and Pryor (2010), and Parker-Pearson (2012), among others, for archaeological background and insight into the ancient landscape as setting for this 'cultural archaeology,' and to Jameson (2005), and the extensive writings of John Michell, to understand how it manifests as practice in the post-rationalist world of the New Age.

Running through this theoretical framework is the importance of value reversal, and how new ideas and models of practice can emerge out of chaos. The question of anonymity in relation to contemporary art theory with its emphasis on authorship, for example, is consistent with ritual; in ritual performance, when authenticity relates to supernatural origins, it is often necessary for artist/makers to remain anonymous or hidden to allow for the suspension of normal values. Last but not least, due to the nebulous nature of my art practice I found affinity in the actor-network theorist John Law's (2004) argument that methods do more than just describe social realities, but are also involved in shaping them. Law's ideas about mess, alongside similar observations by Feyerabend (1975; 1987; 1999), and Babcock-Abrahams (1975), have helped construct my image of the Trickster as a species of artistic behaviour. This was augmented by a wide range of theory on the Trickster from Bandelier (1888) and Jung (1959/2010: 255-72) through Pelton

¹⁴ Likewise, Bacon's ideas in *The New Atlantis* (1624/7), emulated by the founders of the Royal Society, were a science fiction based on essentially the same myth.

(1980) and Lévi-Strauss (1988/96), to Hynes & Doty (1993) and Ricketts (*ibid*), and the more recent contribution to the genre by Hyde (1998).

1.4.4 Method – action research in practice

In terms of theoretical argument I have tested my approach to this subject matter through presentations of conference papers, articles, exhibitions of photographs, gallery talks, collaborations, and by peer feedback. This included, for example, discussions around my ideas about Trickster strategies, first trialled in a paper delivered at the Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference,¹⁵ and subsequently at an international conference dedicated to 'Trickster Strategies in the Artists' and Curatorial Practice' at the Institute of Art History at the University of Wroclaw, Poland.^{16,17}

I adopted a similar approach in terms of my photographic practice. For example, I was involved as a founding member of the Space, Place, Practice group in various projects, where I focussed on memory, imagination, and objectification in relation to place. These projects entailed walks and phenomenological approaches that I was able to adapt as practice methods. I have included additional activities as a footnote below.¹⁸

¹⁵ Session: Sacred Journeys II

¹⁶ Session: Behind the Trickster's Mockery: Ambivalence, Transculturation and Self-Irony.

¹⁷ The former paper will be published by Ashgate in a collection of session papers titled *Mobility and Meaning in Sacred Journeys*, edited by session convenors Alan Terry, Avril Maddrell, and Tim Gale. The latter paper was published in *Trickster Strategies in the Artists' and Curatorial Practice*, a collection of conference papers by the Polish Institute of World Art Studies & Tako Publishing House, Toruń 2013. I also contributed an essay, *The Trickster's Interval*, to a collection by PLACE associates published as *Between: ineffable intervals* (2012, Wild Conversations Press).

¹⁸ In January 2013, I presented my ideas about legend, art and ostension in an intimate setting at 44AD, a contemporary art space located in Bath, as part of the 'Contemporary Tales' series of talks and events that showcase artists and their works. At the same gallery I was subsequently involved in *A Place of Departure*, an exhibition of contemporary landscapes, where I showed four photographs from the present research. In 2010/11, as part of the Space, Place, Practice 'Box Project' and exhibitions, I collaborated with glass artist Davina Kirkpatrick on a series of site visits to Hergest Ridge, which straddles the Welsh border between Gladestry and Kington, at the place where my mother's remains had been scattered. At a UWE seminar in 2011 (Spaces of Renewal: Defining the sacred in the leisure-heritage-tourism-pilgrimage nexus. Department of Geography and Environmental Management, UWE, 13/01/11) I met Professor John Eade who invited me to his Pilgrimage workshops at University College London. I have attended workshops, and am now part of the CRONEM (Centre for Research on Nationalism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism) AHRC/ESTRC network on pilgrimage, and through this have benefitted from the opportunity to communicate with other members of that network.

In 2009, I co-authored (with Peter Brookesmith) an article for Smithsonian magazine titled *Crop Circles: The Art of the Hoax*. [http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/Crop-](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/Crop-Circles-The-Art-of-the-Hoax)

For the purposes of the present study, my practice has been integrated with my theoretical groundwork through a series of interventions, undertaken through:

- Walking Avebury's ritual landscape as part of a process of recognizing local viewsheds (Pryor 2010) and intervisibility (Tilley 1994) between sites, thus identifying a system to use as a basis for my practical research. This involved assuming a subject-centred approach as a way of understanding ancient human experience through my own presence in the landscape, then plotting new sites that 'connect' into this system.
- Collaboration in the production of crop circles at selected sites, as part of a system of novel pairings with existing sites.
- The introduction of novel pairings (of materials) into these environments.
- Photographic documentation. This is an important element of my practice.
- Direct intervention and social interaction, through performances such as guided tours, public talks, published articles, and comments on internet fora, offering radical alternatives to existing viewpoints.

In employing these strategies and techniques to address the aims of my thesis, the question I was asking is: *What happens when an enigma is introduced into real life situations, and what role does setting play (if any) in helping to shape the legend narrative?*

These practical interventions were augmented by the introduction of a fictional online female character called Harmony Blue (HB). The name was inspired by the recent publication of a book, *Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World* (2010), by H.R.H The Prince of Wales (and co-authors). Steeped in New Age philosophy, as a spoof in the Swift/Defoeian mould, HB's persona and thinking were situated where New Age historicism is filtered through conventional science and fed back into New Age historicism. For example, her speculative paper *A novel approach to*

Circles-The-Art-of-the-Hoax.html Ret. 08/09/12. The comments this article attracted (149 to date) have been a helpful indicator of the range of opinion about my subject matter, as well as the strength of conviction with which these are held. This allowed comparison with the responses I gathered during my fieldwork. Moreover, the article also proved to be a valuable marker by which to measure changes in my own approach towards my subject matter over the course of my research.

*crop circles: 'Ghost' geometry as spectral traces of generative energies*¹⁹ proposes that the geometry of crop circles affects nitrification in the local soil. It suggests that the circles are an invitation to investigate this idea as a potential solution to the ecological disadvantages of artificial fertilizers. The paper combines emergent and established myths associated with crop circles, such as sacred geometry, sacred space/place, and the eccentric notion that ancient monuments were created as power centres to store and re/vitalise grain – the kind of connection-seeking that I argue drives and typifies New Age thought. For example:

The *art* of coming to terms with psychophysics is to recognize that just as a circle is either concave or convex depending on whether the observer stands inside it or outside, the mind and body, spirit and matter, are only different sides of one reality, and to learn to hold both points of view simultaneously. *Art*, because in contrast to routine thinking, the creative act of thought is always double-minded.

Harmony Blue, after Peter Tomkins [*The Secret Life of Plants* (1989)]
and the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson

HB's contributions, both via 'her own' blog and as a presence on various online croppy fora, represented an attempt on my part to stimulate a conversation about nature as an "immanent, vital, emergent force" (Wylie 2007: 202) that is responsive to creative human action upon it, constituting a reciprocal communication where we may expect to see some kind of *supernatural* manifestation in return. This idea was intended to detract from the Aristotelian emphasis on the causal origins of crop circles towards a focus on *what they do*, regardless of origins. Whenever I wanted to communicate an ostension through, e.g., photographs of strange phenomena, novel pairings of physical materials, alternative ideas about the nature of 'ghost' crop circles, or intervisible connections between crop circles and prehistoric sites, I channelled these interventions through HB. My intention here was to enliven the chatter by adding an alternative respected voice. If I had wanted HB to develop as an entity, judging from the feedback she received she might easily have gained a following. Her 'open-minded' approach to the subject matter ensured that she was readily accepted within the online paranormal research community: "Trust her... Harmony is one of the good guys," assured one influential voice, blogger Marian

¹⁹ <http://harmonybluesky.wordpress.com/2011/03/>

Youngblood.²⁰ As far as this audience was concerned, HB's word had scientific weight: for example, her use of a scanning electron microscope carried an underlying message that she had rare access to expensive state-of-the-art scientific equipment, suggesting an association with a well-funded research laboratory.

Through HB, I could introduce ideas and artefacts that I would not have been able to present successfully as myself, because my reputation as a circle-maker invited perceptions of untrustworthiness. Therefore, HB provided an outlet allowing me to intervene in the ways outlined above, offering radical alternatives to existing viewpoints through word-of-mouth, citing her research as something to be read, and which could influence the way readers perceived and/or experienced crop circle sites and the surrounding landscape.

The underlying logic to this aspect of my practice was based on the premise that in legend environments, if one tells a believer "no" they will not think No but seek ways to maintain the Yes that confirms their belief (Festinger 1957; Carse 2009). This is a creative process, which gives primacy to potential and ensures possibility. (As I will explain in Section 1.5, the Trickster presents a role model for an artist in this context, as a methodological means to sabotage habitual thinking.) During the period of my fieldwork the crop circles community were going through a "no" phase; human crop circle making had received a lot of media attention in England, and for many people – or the representative 'reasonable person' – the subject no longer presented a mystery. As a vocal admirer of HB's ground-breaking research, I saw my Puckish task as tendering viable reasons for thinking "yes."

In Chapter 4, I introduce a case study which is intended to illustrate the social dynamics that tend to occur around legendary phenomena in the vacuum created by the absence of any known 'author' or causal agency. What is of interest here is that it also shows how these dynamics become intensified once a cultural/semiotic object – in this case, a large crop circle featuring complex geometry – which is accepted at first as being of supernatural origin is revealed as a staged event. My employment as the Lead Artist on *Measuring the Land*, a Heritage Lottery-funded educational project aimed at bringing maths to life in imaginative and extraordinary

²⁰ <http://tinyurl.com/harmonygoodguy>

ways for young adults not in work or education, presented an opportunity for me to put my research methods (Section 1.4.2) into practice by secretly creating a crop circle, observing responses to it, and then subsequent responses to its reveal as a human artwork. As the artists' anonymity was short-lived, from my unique perspective I was able to gain valuable insight into how the polarity of the discourse around the object was reversed as the farmer's assertions that he had been paid for the circle to be made on his land were disputed by believers in a non-human causal agency. Crucially, the social dynamics as they unfolded allowed me to gauge how the geo-situatedness of cultural objects within the 'legend landscape' influenced these proceedings (p.143), thus addressing one of the main aims of my study.

Other case studies in the same section are intended to illustrate the importance of context in influencing visual interpretation, and how this is linked to the way art objects are presented as evidence of the reality of the idea being represented. This is intrinsic to the semiotic nature of my art practice, and illustrates the importance of ambiguity, allowing space for an unlimited variety of interpretations. This aspect of my research method foregrounds the location of an object and/or person in the place/landscape and specifically the way location influences perceptual and experiential fields. I selected my case subjects because I identified in their activities the same *modus operandi* as I describe in Section 1.5 concerning Trickster-like behaviour, which I emulated in my own art practice. These methods and observations furthered the process of my research by facilitating my direct engagement and involvement with crop circle culture in the context of my ethnographic fieldwork and knowledge construction.

1.4.5 Precedents

As previously stated, this context is not uncharted territory for artists. Santiago Sierra told me that "What you are doing is currently the most exciting form of contemporary art – *vive la alien revolution!*" [2011: *pers. comm.* (conversation) 24/05]. Professor Richard Taylor of Oregon University's Dept. of Art and Physics described crop circle making as "a growing underground art movement combining mathematics, technology, stunts and whimsy" (*Nature*, Vol 465, 10/06/2010). Alongside Dickinson and Lundberg, during the 1990s I was involved in discourse

problematizing how and why this kind of activity might be contextualized as 'art.'²¹ I therefore felt well placed to evaluate the differences that emerged between the temptation of artists working in this genre to fit these activities within artworld conventions and the opportunity to contest ideas about the role and nature of art in contemporary art theory – in other words, the ways the artworld thinks about itself. Dickinson's approach represented a useful natural counterposition by which to differentiate my own, so as to formulate a new research outcome by defining what it is not. These differences divide into three main elements:

1. *The artist's anonymity or invisibility.* In exhibiting crop circles in a gallery, Dickinson is compelled by the system to represent himself as their sole author, or at least lead artist, thus arguably presenting a false picture of the collaborative nature of this kind of activity. Identifying secondary reality (Pawley 1975) with human artistry plays to the demands of the artworld, but misrepresents the 'anomalous' nature of such reality in the eyes of its *primary* audience. I do not think Dickinson would disagree with my view that categorizing crop circles as art in this way changes their aura: the object is no longer a mystery, but 'art.'²² My research is concerned with exploring how crop circles retain the potential to "push the boundaries of what art can be" [Lundberg, *pers. comm.* (telephone) 12/06/2012] indefinitely. In my scheme events live 'unauthored,' and thereby continue to mediate a tension of *contested* authorship.²³
2. *The artist as instigator.* In a legend-charged environment, the artist/maker plays a constituent role in a social system that includes the consumer as part of an organic whole. There is no passive 'audience,' as suggested by Roberts' dichotomous characterisation of a relationship between the artist (doctor) and "believer" (patient) (1999: 88-90). This arguably indulges the same scientific

²¹ E.g., *A Beginner's Guide to Crop Circle-Making*, Irving, Lundberg, Dickinson 2004.

²² Dickinson's exhibition *Half-lit World* (1998) at London's Camerawork gallery and elsewhere featured documentation of "Dickinson's" (Roberts 1999) crop circles (I accentuate Roberts' problematic attribution of authorship to Dickinson because the works featured in these exhibitions were collaborative team actions performed covertly.)

²³ However, to this I would add that believer denial is often strong enough to survive this kind of disconfirmation. A case in point would be the 'Julia Set' pattern that appeared near Stonehenge in 1996, a work featured in Dickinson's exhibition. It has also been described as man-made (and by whom) in Jon Ronson's book *The Psychopath Test* (2011: 10), and elsewhere, but none of these revelations have been sufficient to dent the artwork's reputation amongst croppies as being of non-human origin.

power relations that the artworks, as magical 'signs and wonders,'²⁴ were intended to undermine. According to the methodological principle I will set out, the artist as instigator is constructively ambivalent towards all ideology regardless of its 'ir/rationality.'

3. The third key difference is that Dickinson and Deller have represented crop circles as seen from above, in terms of what the artwork discloses to the sky as a 'god's-eye' view, essentially as *symbols* to be disseminated via the Internet and other media platforms. Aesthetic details, elemental to how crop circles are experienced in situ – nested centres, the delicate layering of fallen crop, discoverable strange materials, and the 'inside' experience of the artwork's geographical and cultural situatedness in its natural surroundings – were treated as peripheral to their exposition. I have no issue with this, except that my own preferences as a circle-maker have always leaned towards how crop circles are perceived from ground level, and my practice reflects this. A crucial aspect of my project is how events situate people in relation to ancient sites and viewsheds, returning us to human eye-level rather than a 'god's eye' view – i.e., from the perspective of the prehistoric people who understood the landscape so acutely.

In exhibiting crop circles in an art gallery, *sui generis* as art, it is difficult to escape the inevitability that to a primary artworld audience it reflects back preconceptions of Otherness, mirroring perceptions of alienation from 'rational' values, thereby reaffirming the status quo to an audience that considers itself culturally sophisticated: a cultural elite. Here, consumers of the work are separated into those who are 'in the know' and those who are not. By contrast, my approach is to explore shared feelings of familiarity with the otherworldly, revealing a unity of the uncanny with place. The disparity in our respective approaches to crop circles may be characterised as the difference between Dickinson seeing them as 'visual art' and my seeing them in terms of 'site-specific performance.' My 'us' and 'our' refers neither to the artworld nor to an exclusory cultural world in which 'they' (croppies) are assumed to be outsiders, unsophisticated, irrational. I am therefore a participant

²⁴ For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Matthew 24: 24 *King James Bible, Pure Cambridge Edition.*

in a communal practice, rather than an occasional anthro-tourist, and the aim of my interventions is to challenge a hegemony of linear preconceptions of epistemological and ontological superiority. I would argue that where Dickinson's approach ultimately supports the status quo, mine examines efforts to undermine it.

I will now set out my framework for a fitting methodological principle for art practice performed covertly (invisibly, or hidden in plain sight) as an antidote to these presuppositions. My model is the mythological figure of the Trickster. As a mode of behaviour it represents a strategy of risk, where the intent behind the artwork and its outcome are determined by collaborative exchange with the audience, where the artist, like Shakespeare's Puck, has no control in how the work is received, but has to stand back and watch as part of the audience.

1.5 Towards a Theory of the Trickster as a Methodological Principle

There is no art without risk.

Godin (2013: 64)

(variously attributed to Cocteau, Pasternak, Fuentes, Kuczok...)

1.5.1 Introduction

In his article *It's Art for Folk's Sake* (1998), Dickinson associated the fascination of artists with the occult, and the techniques used by artists and others to contrive strange phenomena, with the mythic figure of the Trickster. In his concluding paragraph, Dickinson writes:

While mostly outside the parameters of conventional art practice, this type of folk art embraces that rich vein of mythology occupied by the trickster. Far from being a cynic or a sceptic, the trickster, from shamanic cultures to our own, has punctuated history with lies and deceptions. The resulting collision of genuine and fake, artifice and reality, has created a paradoxical twilight reality that is the arena of strange phenomena. Artists have found and populated this arena for decades, perhaps even centuries, regularly producing representations which, at their best, are visionary works of art.

Dickinson (1998: 43)

The popular idea of the Trickster figure is of a sometimes divine, sometimes animal being, which plays tricks and breaks rules (Hyde 1998). A reappraisal of its role suggests a subtler identity than this with regard to art, where it plays a part in an interactive process. I maintain that artistic interventions in relation to myth and legend are logical extensions to a cycle that includes aesthetic and religious experience, and that the Trickster lives in the gaps of this cycle of creativity. As I noted earlier [p. *xiii* (and address further below)], Duchamp spoke of art living in "the gap" (1957) between what is articulated and that which is yet to be articulated, a space or *metaxy*²⁵ that is forever pregnant with potential. The Trickster brings this space to life by creating an uncertainty rich in aesthetic connotations, a collaborative strategy between the artist/actor and audience in which the latter takes an active role in the creation of art. As Hynes (Hynes & Doty 1993: 212) observes, just as a child's

²⁵ Plato's term (spoken by Diotima in *Symposium*) meaning the ambiguity or between-states whereby oral tradition can be perceived by different people in different ways.

presence reminds adults how rigidly they have adopted a certain kind of order, the Trickster forces us to acknowledge that there is more than one way to play. It generates sparks in a system of unlimited semiosis (Eco 1979; Peirce²⁶), and thus a plurality of potential meanings.

Following this general observation, I have developed an analysis of the dynamics of Trickster-like activity that drives the performance of the secondary realities addressed here. I will begin by discussing the structural conditions that invite Trickster-like behaviour, focussing on modern folklore surrounding phenomena that are received as *dei gratis*,²⁷ as part of a ritual cycle of legend-telling. Embedded within this interactivity is a principle that transcends the conventional dichotomy of 'actual fact' versus 'fiction/untruth' (cf. Hillman 1994). I compare this equivalent to Hillman's "healing fiction" with other practices and philosophies, and in doing so define a foundational principle or methodology that contributes both to the present study and to a broader understanding of the social dynamics of legendary communicative encounters.

The *prima facie* relevance of the Trickster tradition and its role in this research is that it serves as a model of deceptive behaviour in the pursuit of progressive outcomes. It also tends to undermine expectations of what those outcomes might be. My interpretation of the Trickster as a mode of behaviour translates into a working system by which I perform my practice, as well as understanding audience performance in response. Either way, it describes an important element of risk within my overall methodology. Moreover, as the Trickster is a creature of myth and legend, it is appropriate (and important) to acknowledge its voice in these proceedings. Not to do so would be a dangerous oversight for an author dealing in my area of interest.

My thesis focuses on using artistic performance in and around the domain of quasi-religious delight in magical phenomena, an area that is traditionally a source of great

²⁶ "The meaning of a representation can be nothing but a representation. In fact, it is nothing but the representation itself conceived as stripped of irrelevant clothing. But this clothing never can be completely stripped off; it is only changed for something more diaphanous. So there is an infinite regression here. Finally, the interpretant is nothing but another representation to which the torch of truth is handed along; and as representation, it has its interpretant again. Lo, another infinite series." Peirce, undated fragment:
<http://www.helsinki.fi/science/commens/terms/interpretant.html> Ret: 03/09/12.

²⁷ Gifts of the gods.

fascination for artists. Using crop circle making as my example, I cast the Trickster as a mode of human behaviour, whereby 'Trickster acts' attempt to subvert habitual thinking. These acts counterbalance epistemological norms by confounding certainty, thus satisfying the need for stimulation beyond the order-direction that society tends to manufacture. They solicit fresh intellectual flexibility and the kind of improvisational spontaneity that is identified with creativity (Hallam & Ingold 2007: 1-24). As catalytic action this kind of activity is central to art-making, especially in relation to human transactions with 'paranormal' phenomena, such as crop circles, which by their nature are objects of folklore that challenge ontological orthodoxy. True to Trickster mythology, such acts dissolve the lines we draw and the values we impose to separate notions of 'genuine' and 'fake,' truth and fiction, 'reality' and performance, extracting art out of the twilight hinterland that sits betwixt and between these constructions. In legend environments, unfettered by normative cultural boundaries, the Trickster neutralizes ideological hegemony by fostering competing discourse and a pluralism of ideas and, thus, endless potential for difference. As a methodology of art practice, it invites risk and uncertainty.

As a folk figure in traditional societies, the Trickster personifies latent alternatives to normative structures. The broad, multifarious realm of paranormal belief within contemporary Western culture abounds with Trickster activity, and any attempt at an exhaustive analysis of worldwide Trickster tales would be an undertaking that extends beyond the scope of my enquiry here, but some background is necessary to illustrate and substantiate my point. Myth tends to be themed around the rearrangement of assumed boundaries such as change, death, and rebirth (Armstrong 2006: 142), driving the development of human culture as part of a system that facilitates movement. Movement and flow are integral to mythical intervention, and to the ways in which the Trickster acts to mediate between opposites, activity that is consistent with early Greek notions of flux and *poïesis*. In my scheme, the Trickster works the joints articulating relations between make-believe (*mythos*) and 'rational' *logos*, in an effort to open new ontological vistas.

1.5.2 Antistructure

Normative social structures are likely to be constructed around a shared sense of ontological cohesion based on principles thought to be well-founded within a

particular society. However, even rigid dichotomies are not fixed but differ from society to society and from one cultural context to another.²⁸ Yet, the extent to which we may adapt to differences by deconstructing divisions does not diminish the human tendency to create them. This tendency, coupled with de Castro's observation that the sense of rational superiority is an attitude that appears to be a universal of social apperception (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 469-88), provides universal justification of the value of Trickster folklore, in consideration of the character's traditionally unholy relationship with boundaries and certainty.²⁹ The act of ordering also creates structural antitheses, which, as Douglas observed, exist as matter out of place, the "waste" that is left once we are done making sense of the world: "Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, insofar as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements" (Douglas 1966: 44). Hence the disgust mentioned above. One of the fundamental characteristics of the Trickster is that it enjoys creating, playing in, and with, its own dirt products (Hyde 1998: 8).

Turner's ideas about antistructure are appropriate here; antistructure represents the need for the generative power of heuristic conjecture allowing us to embrace, rather than reject or falsely classify, phenomena that exist unrecognized, misunderstood, or ill-defined. Indeed, in writing of the Trickster, Turner's student Barbara Babcock-Abrahams observes that society seems to create orders and rules for the very drama attendant upon their being broken³⁰ (1975: 147-8). In theatre

²⁸ Over the last century, such structural tensions have been particularly relevant in relation to an enduring anthropological discussion about systematic differences between modern and pre- or non-modern societies, i.e., between those societies whose cosmology is shaped by European Enlightenment values, and those that are not. The defining difference is contained in modern perceptions of a separation of culture from nature, an idea derived from notions of scientific procedural standards and the necessity in science for the human observer to be detached from the object of study: nature (Latour 1993). Contrarily, cultures that do not live by these values may see no distinction between their own being and the rest of the natural world – the relationship between society and nature does not exist as a dichotomy.

²⁹ As the vicar of St Mary's church, Bilbury, Gloucester, told me: "No one is more certain to be wrong than the person who is certain they are right" (Rev Errol Williams *pers. comm.* 17/08/12).

³⁰ Whether we design our fictions in order to dissolve problematic restrictions is a question relevant to my overall argument. This would appear to be born out by the ritual mechanisms we invent that allow flexing when the established order of things is deemed too rigid. One example is the mediaeval Feast of Fools, a religious carnival sanctioned by the Church, where clergy were paraded among the populace and ridiculed, asses were introduced into religious ceremony, and by and large all colluded in creating a temporarily inverted world with conventional rules and roles reversed. The theme of these occasions is

terms, the Trickster is a necessary plot device in a continual drama where what is known and notions of 'unknown' are contested.³¹ Legend fosters just such conditions, and invites Trickster-like activity; the Trickster, it could be said, is indigenous to any legend environment.

In the legend crucible, Trickster figures provide a semiotic function. Where standards are determined by what they are measured against (Eco 1979: 7),³² Trickster acts make unlikely connections, between opposing norms, or accepted codes of what are considered 'ir/rational' and/or 'un/acceptable'³³ within their respective environments.³⁴ Because my thesis addresses nonconformist approaches to knowledge, in discussing the Trickster it is important to recognize that the same semiotic implications apply to science. After Popper (1934) the defining criterion of 'the scientific method' is that before opting for the truth of any proposition it must first be defended against counterpropositions by a system of attempted falsification through rigorous testing, rather than be merely asserted. Following Feyerabend,³⁵ I am arguing that this approach must be systematic and open-ended, always inviting the extraordinary. I suggest that an analogy may be made here with a Hindu concept known as *Neti Neti*, or 'Not this, Not that,' where truth is always left open to potential knowledge; Brahma goes beyond the either/or of "this" or "that" (Schechner 2010). Schechner relates this to performance. I do too. Trickster activity ensures continuous drama, even in the performance of science.

the pretend inversion or merging of conventional opposites. The community is afforded a kind of rehearsal space in which to vent its resentment at those in power, but in an environment that is relatively safe for all sides. When the festivities are over and normality is resumed, either the *status quo* is validated, and thus stabilized, or the interval of liminality has presented an opportunity to institute a process of change.

³¹ I was introduced to this idea by George Hansen's *The Trickster and the Paranormal* (2001). I am also grateful to him for sourcing for me a rare copy of Babcock-Abrahams' paper, 'A Tolerated Margin of Mess' (1975).

³² Semiotics is "a discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie. If something cannot be used to tell a lie, conversely it cannot be used to tell the truth: it cannot "in fact" be used to tell at all" (Eco 1979: 7).

³³ While a spectrum exists between these extremes, this does not obviate their conceptual value.

³⁴ Later, I will compare this role to that of the Surrealist.

³⁵ Popper's best known student and critic.

1.5.3 Playing Puck

The children were at the Theatre, acting to Three Cows as much as they could remember of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Their father had made them a small play out of the big Shakespeare one, and they had rehearsed it with him and with their mother till they could say it by heart. They began where Nick Bottom the weaver comes out of the bushes with a donkey's head on his shoulders, and finds Titiana Queen of the Fairies asleep. Then they skipped to the part where Bottom asks three little fairies to scratch his head and bring him honey, and they ended where he falls asleep in Titiana's arms. Dan was Puck and Nick Bottom, as well as all three fairies. He wore a pointy-eared cloth cap for Puck, and a paper donkey's head out of a Christmas cracker – but it tore if you were not careful – for Bottom. Una was Titiana, with a wreath of columbines and a foxglove wand. The Theatre lay in a meadow called the Long Slip. A little stream, carrying water to a mill two or three fields away, bent round one corner of it, and in the middle of the bend lay a large old Fairy Ring of darkened grass, which was the stage.

Rudyard Kipling, *Puck of Pooks Hill* (1951: 5)

The Puck of my title is both a perennial Trickster figure and, thanks in no small part to Kipling, one now closely associated with a particular vision of the English countryside as a temporal phenomenon. The Trickster appears in a variety of animal and godly guises, a multivalence that reveals unique skills in adapting to the local. Unfettered by cultural boundaries, the Trickster views competing orthodoxies in terms of their endless potential, realised by dissolving their differences. Its quasi-archetypal status has emerged from its migration across cultures; the collective imagination has made an emotional investment in this kind of character-trait and transformed it into a fluctuating individual (Eco 2011: 96).^{36, 37} The ensuing

³⁶ It is important to remember that any shortlist of Trickster characteristics reflects not only the list-maker's orientation, which in turn reflects the ontological beliefs of the society that has adapted the myth. For example, the Trickster mediates between higher gods and humans only where appropriate transcendental mythology exists, such as the classical Greek and Roman. In immanent cosmologies, the Trickster figure is personified in more earthly forms: animals, ancestor, or nature spirits. (That is not to say that these two states are necessarily mutually exclusive, however.)

³⁷ Hynes & Doty (1993: 4) identify a potential methodological flaw arising out of the Trickster's tendency to evade classification. The Trickster's skill at adapting to the local makes it impossible to list its universal characteristics, thus rendering 'the Trickster as archetype' a myth. An Internet search of 'trickster archetype' reveals the concept as a popular trope. However, my search of Jung's writings reveals no such phrase; in his introduction to 'Four Archetypes,' which includes his paper on the Trickster as one of the four, Jung is careful to explain the distinction between an

ambiguity allows breathing space for speculations that relate more to imaginal healing fictions as a reservoir of possibilities than they do to the rational intellect (Hillman 1976/92: 151).³⁸

I draw from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Warner's analysis (2002: 75) to illustrate the Trickster's role as an antidote to a structural contradiction that is only reconciled and made to work by the perpetual interplay of shifting values between polar opposites.³⁹ In Shakespeare's version of the story,⁴⁰ Puck serves as a rolling plot device drawing the audience to conspire in his tricks. Oberon the Fairy King instructs him to unmeld imperfect human love entanglements, but instead he manages to entangle them further, until... of course, all ends well.⁴¹ Early in the play (Act ii, Scene i), a fairy identifies Puck as Robin Goodfellow, that "shrewd and knavish sprite" who is the cause of life's troublesome twists, that "merry wanderer" who annoys and entertains us to equal degree. Satire lives in the dialogical encounter of consternation and humour. The same union of opposites resides in the pain of every pratfall and in the laughter and relief that goes with it. As Huizinga (1938/55: 8) noted, the contrast between play and seriousness is always fluid. Trickster tales, and the actions therein, tend to be themed around such crossings, and the dissolution of obstacles through counterintuitive solutions, arrived at by

archetype and an *archetypal idea*. In Jung's paper he aligns the Trickster with the overriding Shadow archetype. I suspect that the inclusion of Trickster as one of the four archetypes in a book of that name was a decision made by his publisher, with Jung's conditional assent.

³⁸ Shakespeare's Puck, however, exemplifies this aspect of the Trickster's character whereby, through his own 'foolishness' and that which he fosters in others, he manages to achieve what reason often fails to accomplish (Jung 1959/2010: 255-72), typically emerging triumphant out of his own catastrophic errors of judgment.

³⁹ Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is an early *surviving* source of Trickster mythology, and an early form of Shakespeare's variation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Book XI recounts how after an artistic dispute about who was the superior musician, Pan or Apollo, Apollo 'rewards' Midas, a supporter of Pan (and who, after all, according to earlier Greek myth, had satirical blood in his veins), with ass's ears as a replacement for his own. It is an example of Ovid's promise "to tell of bodies changed to different forms." No sooner had the world's creator "separated out everything within fixed limits" than the world was made animate, and Humankind installed to rule over all others. There follows a Golden Age when "humanity knew only its own shores," having not yet discovered its bestial instincts; but then we do, and the cosmos suddenly seems threatening.

⁴⁰ Shakespeare's telling of how a benignly bumptious thespian called Nick Bottom grows furry ears and falls into a trance-induced state in which he cavorts with the Queen of the Fairies revisits the fluid relationship between human, animal, and godly states. It embodies the continuous conflict between, as Warner states, "due organic change on the one hand and incongruous and disruptive mutation on the other" (Warner 2002: 75).

⁴¹ The story is not our concern here, except as an example of Puck's role in showing us (the audience) goings-on that are hidden to the narrative's protagonists.

extending internal contradictions to their 'logical' extreme, when they take on the form of their 'illogical' opposite: a mirrored inversion, where left becomes right. This is not wholly anarchic activity; as Lévi-Strauss (1996: 11) observes, in a universe that is undergoing constant change the Trickster is both the ultimate rebel and the foremost *maker* of rules. The key to understanding this paradox is that acts of dissolution inevitably lead to construction elsewhere, and vice-versa, and so on indefinitely in a process of constant flux and transformation. Using Huxley's phrase *A Tolerated Margin of Mess* to exemplify this continuity, Babcock-Abrahams (1975) lists sixteen key traits of Trickster behaviour ranging from ignorance of spatial and temporal boundaries, through its uncertain sexual status, to more general ambivalence to social rules, and the breakdown of any distinction between reality and reflection. Hynes & Doty (1993: 33-45) reduced these to a typology of six:

- Trickster behaviour is fundamentally ambiguous and anomalous;
- it is deceitful and likes to play tricks;
- it shifts shape when it suits;
- it is likely to invert any given situation;
- it acts as both messenger and imitator of gods;
- it is known for sacredness and vulgarity in equal measure.⁴²

Jung's vision of a creature "both subhuman and superhuman... so unconscious of himself that his body is not a unity, and his two hands fight each other" (Jung 1959/2010: 263) and Hyde's as "the mythic embodiment of ambiguity and ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, contradiction and paradox" (Hyde 1998: 7), suggest an internal, down-to-earth conflict, just as immanent as it is transcendent. By making us laugh at our own propensity for error, the Trickster grounds humanity singularly and globally as a combination of both lower and higher orders, simultaneously reminding us to recognize the unlimited power of *human* potential rather than having to seek it elsewhere. I will return to this point later (Chapters 3 & 4), where I will discuss how Trickster acts are treated within the croppy community.

⁴² I would add to Babcock-Abrahams' latter observation as a diagnostic property – when visitors to Florida's Holy Land Experience cannot distinguish a glass-fibre construction from the cold stone walls of Christ's tomb, or any secondary reality is preferred over that which demonstrably exists, this is the Trickster at play.

1.5.4 Methodological complications

As long as you don't believe in them, the collision of two ideas, both false, can create a pleasing interval, a kind of *diabolus in musica*.

Umberto Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum* (1988/9: 50)

Eco's observation refers to the syncretism that occurs when two or more objects are combined, creating weird outbreaks of what Eno (1996, after Peckham 1965) has called the 'art experience.'⁴³ (Drawn from Peckham's theory that such experience is produced through a process of discontinuity: i.e., expectation and failed prediction, leading to disorientation, reorientation (Peckham 1965: 217-22), and catharsis.) The Trickster's transgressive tendencies throw up another conundrum: the irreducibility of that which evades classification inevitably impacts upon the nature of enquiry into it, thereby neutralizing exclusively rationalist or reductionist approaches. The Trickster, like 'the paranormal,' will always precisely transform itself into something that exists outside any boundaries designed to contain it.⁴⁴ This makes the Trickster and the paranormal ideally suited.

Surrealists applied occult principles to art. Whereas, in three-dimensional realms, shadows exist as two-dimensional representations of physical things, Duchamp saw his artworks as three-dimensional shadows, suggesting the presence of a causal object in the fourth dimension. Here, art occurs as a result of a collaborative process or exchange rather than residing solely in the object made by the artist. To Duchamp, art is an inexpressible *x-quotient* that lives in the gap between the maker's intentions and unintended expressions in the form of responses and interpretations on the part of recipients. The gap is a zone of mediation between

⁴³ In music, the combination of C and F# 'plays' an implied, but not explicitly heard, third note: G – the fifth or 'perfect' harmonic of C, thereby creating a dissonant chord (the *diabolus in musica*) and a unique metonymic experience. The pianist Theolonius Monk used this to great effect. Similarly, the Tibetan 'singing' bowl I use to bring my attention into focus emits two distinct notes of different frequencies simultaneously.

⁴⁴ A fitting example of the impossibility of classifying that which will not be classified is implied by Kofman's observation that Freud's attempt to taxonomize the *Uncanny* ultimately failed because it could never be complete without being immediately invalidated (Kofman 1991: 121).

artistic projection and artistic retrospection, a space brimming with the potential for novelty to be expelled from the merging of two disparate textual universes.⁴⁵

A 'legend landscape' is such a liminal space, embodying tensions between ontological belief and semiotics, and the literality and/or metaphorical interpretations of phenomena. As a mechanism of perpetual irony, much like a universal joint, the Trickster articulates tensions of opposites, allowing play, or interaction, between them. Analogously, Duchamp spoke of the "corridor of humour" that led from the oppositional Dada to the more good-humoured Surrealist movement. Hyde offers another variation, based on the Latin root of the word 'humour' – fluidity: "The escape from this trap of mere opposition is some third thing... a pore through which fluid may move into new areas" (1993: 274). To Duchamp, the original inspirational vision of the artist can never be fully expressed because it lives outside the scope of our ability to contain it within any given structure; it is naturally dissonant, antistructural. As he explained in a lecture in 1957:

In the chain of reactions accompanying the creative act, a link is missing. This gap, representing the inability of the artist to express fully his intention, this difference between what he intended to realize and did realize, is the personal 'art coefficient' contained in the work.

Duchamp (1957)

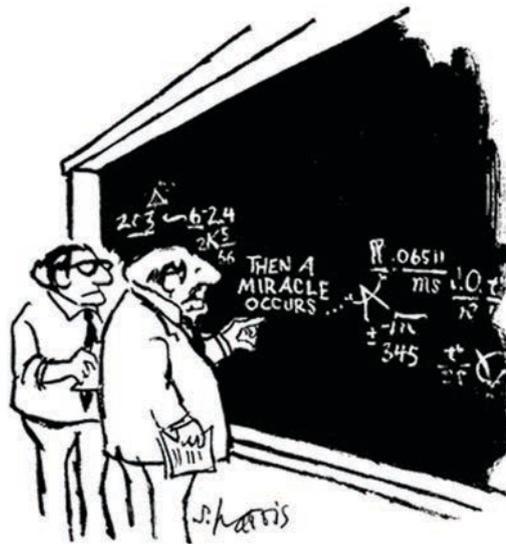
He expanded on this in an interview with the art historian Arturo Schwarz:

What art is in reality is this missing link, not the links that exist. It is not what you see that is art; art is the gap.

Schwarz 1975: xxxii; also, Judovitz (1998: 135)

In S. Harris' cartoon overleaf, a professor is analysing his student's equation on a blackboard. The first step is joined to the third by an ambiguous proposition: "Then a miracle occurs." Duchamp's gap is the condition in which a miracle may occur; the Trickster is the miracle worker. In the context of my concept of the legend landscape, defined by the opposition of ideas and beliefs and their contestation, the gap is an

⁴⁵ This is very evident in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as Puck himself falls victim to 'wrong' interpretations of his, or actually his master's, intentions. Puck himself, as intermediary, cannot control but only influence outcomes.



© ScienceCartoonsPlus.com

"I think you need to be more explicit here in step two."

Fig. 1 "In the chain of reactions accompanying the creative act, a link is missing. This gap, representing the inability of the artist to express fully his intention, this difference between what he intended to realize and did realize, is the personal 'art coefficient' contained in the work. In other words, the personal 'art coefficient' is like an arithmetical relation between the unexpressed but intended and the unintentionally expressed."

Marcel Duchamp, *The Creative Act*, Session on the Creative Act, Convention of the American Federation of Arts, Houston, Texas, 1957.

ideal (abstract) condition for the (abstract) Trickster to operate (abstractly) as a spark between poles. It is the transitory state of unstable equilibrium that is creative thought (Babcock-Abrahams 1975), which, when it is disturbed enough, spontaneously expels something unique, or, in the context of my study, irrational, from the union – the indefinable coefficient that gives meaning to an equation. Myth, ritual, and much art is preoccupied with those areas that exist between categories; the same is true of any activity that performs the extraordinary or otherworldly. The paranormal's burlesque origins in parody and other 'para' concepts such as paradox, as belonging *inside* a system that includes things *and* their opposites – i.e., as legend landscapes – present ideal conditions for this activity. They are theatres of interactive creativity in which to escape convention. Such 'pararealms' are the Trickster's natural habitat. In the legend landscape, then, my Puck is more frontiersman than degenerate:

At night-time he will sometimes do little services for the family over which he presides.

Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (1898).



Fig. 2 Merrily Harpur's cartoon, published in *The Cerealogist* magazine in 1992, captures the association of inexplicable crop circles with devilment, Tricksterism, Puck, etc.

As an example of how the Trickster occupies the gap between artistic projection and artistic retrospection, mediating the potential for novel expression, let us consider the following case study. This also gives an indication of the narrowness of the gap in subjects of this kind between claims of 'science' and 'pseudo-science.'

1.5.5 Case study: H-Glaze

In 1993, there was a trend for using magnetometers to seek anomaly in order to identify signs of "genuineness" in crop circles. I wondered how this visual data would be interpreted if it showed a recognizable image, such as a question mark or a 'smiley' face. I put some iron filings into a paper bag and set off into a field to perform the experiment. It did not go well. After the crop circle was completed it started raining, so I dumped the filings in the circle in no particular pattern. Months later, I was alerted to a paper in the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*. The Abstract read as follows:

We report the unusual discovery of a natural iron 'glaze' composed of fused particles of meteoritic origin, concentrated entirely within a crop formation in England, appearing shortly after the intense Perseid meteor shower in August, 1993. Physical and chemical characteristics as well as spatial distributions indicated reheating to a semi-molten state at the time of crop impact, suggesting involvement with an ion plasma vortex, a mechanism previously considered the chief candidate in scientific investigations of crop formations. Abnormalities in seedling growth were also consistent with the unusual responses of seeds taken from numerous crop formations.

Levengood, W.C. & Burke, John, Semi-Molten Meteoric Iron Associated with a Crop Formation, *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, Vol 9, No. 2, 1995: 191-9

The legend of H-Glaze has become a foundational component in the scientific argument for the objective verity of the non-human crop circle. For example, it formed the basis of a challenge to MIT students to recreate effects found within crop circles. They failed, of course; their particle shooter was overcomplicated as a means of distributing iron filings (though it did cause a camera to malfunction, which is another sign of latent crop circle energies).⁴⁶ My action showed how easily domain-specific expertise can succumb to a peculiar blindness to the infinite jests of the outside world. This is fertile ground for an artist to furrow. In alchemical terms, my

⁴⁶ <http://www.blresearch.com/published/mit.php>

action was the catalytic equivalent of adding saltpeter to a mixture of sulphur and charcoal. The unintended consequences exceeded expectations in supporting the legend of the 'genuine' crop circle. Arguably, the artwork was, in part, at least conceptually, the scientific paper, and all it led to, e.g., the MIT performance.

1.5.6 Summary

Isaac Newton described the elusive vital ingredient which, when introduced into chemical environments, transforms base materials into something special as “a *mercurial spirit* [my emphasis], extremely subtle and supremely volatile, which is dispersed through every place” (Newton, *Notes on Alchemy*, c1680). This is an apt metaphor for Trickster activity not only for its reference to Mercury, the Roman Hermes, but also in terms of the meaning of metaphor itself, as transit from one condition to another. An elemental characteristic of Trickster behaviour is that it acts to dissolve certainties and habits of regularizing convention. As an aspect of legend performance it creates artifice that joins and articulates polar opposites, making them work together in new ways. I have given examples where human fallibility is exploited by stepping outside the boundaries of imposed logic, thus unlocking rational dilemmas which would prove impossible to resolve using standard methods. Likewise, the politics of contestation and polarisation which tend to develop whenever humans construct subjective certainties that invite opposition – i.e., myth-based ‘facts’ or legends – summon reciprocal outbreaks of performative activity that shares characteristics traditionally associated with the Trickster. This, I argue, renders the Trickster as a fitting patron saint, or, in more down-to-earth terms, exemplar or *methodological principle*, for artists operating in this “field” (Turner) or “playframe” (Bateson) to emulate. This methodology is bound up in the understanding that its only rule is to ensure that ‘the game keeps going’ indefinitely; no stoppage, no stagnation: infinite progress. It ensures that there is always an outlet that may act as a counterpoint to any relational polarity.⁴⁷ Trickster activity supports and destabilises

⁴⁷ This is analogous to Plato’s dialogical stance, where he steps back to a relatively neutral position favouring neither side but lending weight to either where necessary in order to sustain the dialogue, adding an extra dimension (a lateral position) to any two-dimensional perception. The Trickster plays a role in established systems such as Nicholas of Cusa’s (née Cryfts) fifteenth-century philosophical principle of the ‘coincidence of opposites’ (Hynes in Hynes & Doty 1993: 34), based on the Neoplatonic belief that truth is implicit in an alternative that always manages to escape rigid dichotomies. Accordingly, in ambiguity lies divine oneness, the absolute *quidditas* of all opposites. Cusa’s and subsequently Giordano Bruno’s ideas came together to form the *Hermes Trismegistos* strand of Hermetic thought

both theses and antitheses in equal measure in attempting to restore a state of uncertain (or risky) equilibrium, thus maintaining a balanced platform for conjecture. Hence, Duchamp's analysis of 'what art is.'

If art is a lens that enables us to see beyond worldly realities into mythical realms, then turning the lens around reveals the internal workings of contestation and performative processes that drive modern folklore. This kind of interaction also contributes to the shaping of how certain landscapes are perceived. The ancient topography of the Avebury area is a contested landscape that is undergoing a process of de- and re-territorialization (Deleuze & Guattari 1988) through the re-emergence of ritual.⁴⁸ As I discuss in the next chapter, this is a narrative that forges new forms of cultural belonging, memories and identities that are, paradoxically, rooted in a prehistoric, and thus *poetic* past. In legend environments, the psychological space between map and territory is essentially semiotic. In the gap between 'as is' and 'as if,' the Trickster gives unique form to the human capacity to misinterpret or invent. This is of particular relevance in a society that is ruled by man but is no longer governed by god/s.

In this chapter I have set out the aims and objectives I attempted to achieve through my practice, the theoretical underpinning of my research into folklore as artistic communication, and its manifestation in the methods I used to research my subject and to action my practice. I have looked at precedents in terms of contemporary art and contrasted these with my own approaches. I have also proposed a methodological principle based on the mythological Trickster figure as an appropriate model for performative action in generating folklore as cultural mediation.

that emerged out of the Italian Renaissance (e.g., Yates 1964). As with Lévi-Strauss' structural theory of binary opposition, the Trickster resides in the anomalies that bind and simultaneously repel counterpoised states. The Jungian equivalent is expressed in his reading of the assumption of the Virgin from earth to heaven, corporeal flesh to spirit, materiality into divinity, the binary dogmas of earth mother and pure saintliness driven to extremes. Again, a third element is introduced with the realisation that there is no position without its negation (Jung 1959/2010: 109).

⁴⁸ Deleuze & Guattari ask: "Can this becoming, this emergence, be called Art?" (1988: 348), and their statements: "That would make the territory a result of art. The artist: the first person to set out a boundary stone, or to make a mark" (*ibid*). Boundary markers are 'herms,' signifying Hermes (OED), or places where the trickster Hermes had trodden.

Having set out this methodology to inform my practice, I will now discuss the background to my subject in terms of New Age ideology and its relations with certain places and landscapes, Avebury in particular. I will also explain how I differentiate myth and legend, and how this plays out in terms of my subject matter. This will be followed with a brief history mapping the relations between modern myths of UFOs, 'leys' and 'earth energies,' and crop circles, and how these came to be associated with certain 'mystical' places and landscapes, thus preparing the way for discussion on how these myths translate into performative action.

2 Background to the Research

2.1 Introduction: The Post-rationalist Re-emergence of the Pre-modern

Roger Wibberley: OK SH-C, I'll take that as a "no" then (i.e., no information verified or approved). Why has SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) not heard of your breakthrough – they've been trying this for decades, and here you are casually saying you already have real-time electronic contact. Can you not see that there must be something 'wrong' here somewhere?

Scientia High–Confidence: Approved or verified by whom? Communications like these don't move in a 'chain-of-command' model. It's faster, more intelligent, and more efficient than that. [...] The question you should be asking is "How can I help?"

Report a Crop Circle Formation,
Facebook, retrieved 30/04/2012

The above epigraph reveals the ideologically disparate 'rational' perspectives that define legend contestation: on one hand, the hegemonic attitude that underwrites demands for 'proof' of extraordinary claims surrounding modern myths [which, accordingly, "require *extraordinary* proof" (Truzzi 1978)⁴⁹] and, in contrast, the expeditious dismissal of conventional standards by which to judge this kind of claim. To excavate this relationship properly it is important to dig beyond limited and limiting talk of pseudoscience in order to understand why Scientia High-Confidence (as the Ambassador for post-rationalism) wishes to emulate science, while at the same time bypassing it.

In my introduction I argued that various modern myths, such as UFOs, emanate from an overarching myth of the suprahuman Other to form a nebulous network of post-rationalist and pseudoscientific ideas known collectively as New Age thought. In order to explain how this is relevant to my main topic, a brief explanation of my understanding of this philosophy is necessary.

⁴⁹ Made famous by Carl Sagan as extraordinary "evidence" in *Cosmos*. Episode 12. Broadcast on USA's Public Broadcasting Service 14/12/1980. The maxim "an extraordinary claim requires extraordinary proof" was coined by Marcello Truzzi in *On the Extraordinary: An Attempt at Clarification* (*Zetetic Scholar*, Vol.1, No.1, p11 1978).

As its name suggests, the New Age can be viewed in terms of a re-awakening, the re-imagining of an ancient dreamtime. In being re-imagined, so the world is re-made. The sociologist Colin Campbell used the term “cultic milieu” to refer to a system of belief that is steeped in “the worlds of the occult and the magical, of spiritualism and psychic phenomena, of mysticism and new thought, of alien intelligences and lost civilizations, of faith healing and nature cure” (Campbell 1972:122). While acknowledging this phrase can usefully serve as a description of New Age thought, it is important to recognize that this movement is not religious in the traditional sense of a community bound by a particular doctrine of the transcendental. Nor does the generalisation that it sits in opposition to “the mainstream” (e.g., Prince & Riches 2000) sufficiently define its essential anti-structurality. The claim that there is a “two way transfer [...] between the movement and the mainstream” (Prince & Riches 2000: 9) gives the false impression that a binary exists between New Agers and a majority consensus of different beliefs. However, the New Age movement is in fact atomised to the extent that, somewhat ironically, many of its values are now integrated into mainstream society. This relationship might be taken as exemplifying the philosopher Geraldine Finn’s observation that “we are always both more and less than the categories that name and divide us” (1996: 171), with apparent boundaries being more blurred than Prince & Riches suggest.

Consequently I would argue that the New Age phenomenon is a social movement driven and held together by its creation, and subsequent *rejection* of, a particular rhetorical ‘straw man’: the conception of a dogmatically fixed cluster of given and established economic, ecological, and epistemological values. Here, Science (note capital S) is conceptualised as scientism; namely as a monolithic institution that considers itself superior to all other knowledge systems and refuses to entertain new ideas; as representing a worldview where truth is arrived at methodically. Thus arguably it is scientism that has created alienation and a popular trade in ‘alternative’ wisdom. Curiously, much of this ‘alternative’ wisdom or ‘unorthodox gnosis’ is projected as conjecture into the prehistoric past⁵⁰ and the landscapes in which traces of that past are particularly manifest. One obvious example of these

⁵⁰ The ‘post’ in post-rationalism, as with post-modernism (Latour 1993; Locher 1999), is actually *pre-modern* in its leanings. To Latour, post-moderns feel that they come ‘after’ the moderns, but with the disagreeable sentiment that there is no more ‘after’. “No future: what remains?” What remains is the vision of a return to pre-modernity.

political, epistemological, and religious tensions is the dispute in recent decades over access rights to Stonehenge, exemplified by the concept of the 'Spirit of Albion,' in which the State inadvertently set the agenda for direct action movements to oppose.

As illustrated in the epigraph, paradoxically (as befits an antistructural movement), intuited conjecture (or 'what science has not discovered yet') is preferred to methodical approaches based on empirically established knowledge. This feat of double-inversion manages to situate 'lost' wisdom of a faraway past at the 'cutting edge' of science. This is steered by a belief that intuitive ideas reflect archetypal memories as indicators of 'forgotten' knowledge. We might modify Descartes' famous meditation on doubt, *cogito ergo sum*, to bring it into line with New Age dogma: "I think it, therefore it is." The narratives that result capture an antimodernist sentiment that manifests as an inversion of what is taken to be scientific convention; as such, it is reflexively contrarian in its guiding image of a "World Gone Wrong" (Irving & Brookesmith 2012: various *pers. comms.*).⁵¹

Wrong, that is, according to a New Age perspective, which is postmodern, and rather relativistic in its outlook. In epistemological terms the New Age milieu is more clearly defined in its negative form – like the Turin Shroud. It is primarily an assertion *against* something; the secular embrace of an opposite perspective, rather than a coherent set of defined beliefs. I agree with Klass (1995: 151) that, especially since the 1960s, Western society has undergone an ideological shift at the interface of religion and science, and that the significance of this demands that we seek to understand the post-rationalist⁵² fascination with paranormal myth "as reflections of continuing conflict and change within the overarching context of belief and meaning" (*ibid.*).⁵³ Different scientific standards may apply to a single object

⁵¹ Made public by Brookesmith on 23/02/2012 at the London Fortean Society in a talk titled 'Apocalypse 2012: You May Well Ask Why.'

⁵² Klass (1995: 152; n2) makes the point that certain ideas and phenomena central to New Age thought preceded the genre – indeed, arguably the roots of New Age thought lie in the emergence in the 19th-century of an occult response to scientism – therefore, I accept Klass' proposal that 'New Age' and 'post-rationalist' are essentially synonymous.

⁵³ In light of this, I would argue further that the same antistructural sentiment can be found in neo-paganism, which may be viewed as a response to the perceived hegemony of monolithic religious institutions that prioritise their own knowledge over others' and have

depending on its context, and other systems of knowledge – aesthetic ones, for example – will apply yet other standards to that same object.⁵⁴ The New Age has aligned itself with tropes of an 'old world,' and cultures that have either escaped, or reject, the influence of the European Enlightenment and who entertain different values.⁵⁵ This is not just an epistemological interface.

In the context of this thesis I contend that it can carry geopoetic implications, as certain landscapes are associated with paranormal legend. Moreover, I would argue that it is *because* in certain environments 'the paranormal' exists *outside* or *alongside* nature that it presents post-rationalists with an opportunity to pursue lines of flight that exist separately, and by separate rules, from conventional values in favour of new potentialities. An observation by Latour in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993), is pertinent here:

Look to the origins of modern myths, and you will almost always find them among those who claim to be countering modernism with the impenetrable barrier of the spirit, of emotion, the subject, or the margins.

Latour (1993: 124)

In the sections to follow I will examine this general idea, with a view to how it relates specifically to prehistoric sites and landscapes through historical and current religious perceptions of these sites as temples to pre-modern values. I am arguing, that is, that the New Age can be said to represent a revival of epistemological values through the reclamation of hidden or 'lost' knowledge. This has relevance to my thesis because modern myths and legends, such as UFOs, 'earth energies,' and crop circles, are all believed to mediate this arcane wisdom to current New Age consciousness, and this belief is brought to bear in legendary interactions with certain prehistoric places/landscapes. An examination of the modern history of these phenomena, and their relations to each other, makes the nature of their relationship to these places/landscapes apparent.

thus become detached from nature. In the post-rationalist world, all standards, even scientific ones, are relative.

⁵⁴ As Paul Dirac observed: "This result is too beautiful to be false; it is more important to have beauty in one's equations than to have them fit experiment." *The Evolution of the Physicist's Picture of Nature Scientific American* 208 (5) (1963).

⁵⁵ As Klass observes, "problems arise for Westerners who wish to define what is 'natural' and what is not in cultures where no such distinction is made" (1995: 28).

2.1.1 The Damned

I will begin by adding detail to the New Age myth of hidden knowledge, and contextualising it in relation to the subjects my thesis addresses. Michael Barkun has identified groupings of legends [or “claims to truth that the claimants regard as verified” (2003: 26)] that are contested or marginalised by science-based doctrine. This ‘stigmatized’ knowledge comprises:

- **Forgotten Knowledge:** knowledge once allegedly known but lost through faulty memory, cataclysm, or some other interrupting factor (e.g., beliefs about ancient wisdom once possessed by inhabitants of Atlantis).
- **Superseded knowledge:** claims that once were authoritatively recognized as knowledge but lost that status because they came to be regarded as false, or less valid than other claims (e.g., astrology or alchemy).
- **Ignored knowledge:** knowledge claims that persist in low-prestige social groups but are not taken seriously by others (e.g., folk medicine).
- **Rejected knowledge:** knowledge claims that are explicitly rejected as false from the outset (e.g., UFO abductions).
- **Suppressed knowledge:** claims that are allegedly known to be valid by authorised institutions but are suppressed because the institutions fear the consequences of public knowledge or have some evil selfish motive for hiding the truth (e.g., the alien origins of UFOs and suppressed cancer cures).

Barkun (2003: 27)

Charles Hoy Fort referred to this kind of material as “the Damned,” arguing “there never was an explanation which didn’t itself have to be explained” (quoted by Michell, 1990c: 16). He deplored the alacrity with which authority is assumed on the basis of scientific explanations. To both Fort and New Agers, it is this alleged urge to rationalise mystery that distorts observation and obscures alternative ways of seeing the world. As the term ‘New Age’ suggests, this movement contains an inbuilt expectation that solutions to present global ecological, economic, and other social crises will be brought about through rapid and radical social transformation. This assumption is rooted in temporality and ‘lost’ memory – the myth of a ‘Golden Age’ that is thought to have existed in a faraway past, and which is believed recoverable using unorthodox or ‘alternative’ methods.

At this point, the movement assumes a moralistic – even Puritanical (Brookesmith 2013)⁵⁶ – persuasion,⁵⁷ consistent with its opposition to establishment values. This reveals a religious dimension in its reliance on faith and intuition – symptomatic of a banner philosophy that is an inversion of all the things that it opposes. In consequence, particular landscapes that 'embody' elements of that past take on very high levels of significance. As I explain in this chapter, a history of 'alternative' (and thus political) mystical association with Avebury's ancient landscape can be traced back some 300 years. The relationship between place/landscape and New Age vision is central to that idea, hence my focus on it in this thesis.

Nostalgia is grounded in place/landscape as much as it is in time. Paradise is idealised as both physically located place and conceptual space. It represents an archetypal recollection. Edward Casey (1987/2000: 201) advises that rather than thinking of memory as a form of re-experiencing the past, it can be conceived of as an activity or re-placing: re-experiencing past places. Thus, place gives memory a body, placing remembering/remembered bodies within it.⁵⁸ To Jameson, the World Gone Wrong and its radical solution correspond to a tension previously identified as "a very fundamental one indeed in aesthetic theory: and this is the tension between expression and construction" (Jameson 2005: 43). I suggest that Jameson's observation returns us to Deleuze & Guattari's remarks (Section 1.5.6 and fn48) about territorialization and the re-emergence of ritual as art and vice-versa. This is of particular relevance to the Avebury complex and other legend landscapes.

⁵⁶ 'The Apocalyptic Blues,' *The Philosopher's Magazine* No 60 (January 2013).

⁵⁷ E.g., New Age books about angels, channeled testimony from aliens via contactees and abductees are often contrarian and censorious in the sense that they explicitly or implicitly criticize a World Gone Wrong and display a degree of contempt for humanity (which always means the post-Renaissance West). One general sign of New Age puritanism is its emphasis on being 'open-minded,' so being 'closed-minded' – i.e., applying critical judgement – is the worst curse. Having no rules is itself a rule [Brookesmith 2012 *pers. comm.* (email)].

⁵⁸ Memories, observes Casey, are ineluctably place-bound. Just as archaeology is a useful method of 're-membering' something we have not lived as direct experience – member = limb – ritual processes of remembering represent a way of *reattaching* and *articulating* our relationship with the people who lived the past, and may even be conceived of, as Jameson (2005) does, as 'archaeology of the future,' a form of futurological wish-fulfilment.

Myths concerning 'the paranormal' are well established in British culture.⁵⁹ The same millenarian rhizome that feeds 'alternative' utopian ideas and inspired visionaries such as Thomas More, Francis Bacon, and Isaac Newton, now appears in responses to modern myths such as UFOs, crop circles, and 'earth energies.' This suggests that some mythic themes run so deep in the human psyche that they survive negative influences from dominant ideologies by defying secular disregard. Like the Trickster, they also elude classification. The idea that prehistoric monuments are keys to an esoteric system of knowledge, and that somehow these myths are integral to this relationship, is embedded in New Age thought. This belief may be said to have emerged from a simple formula: Mystery invites conjecture.⁶⁰ This goes beyond historical curiosity. In recent years archaeologists, reflecting a cultural shift away from purely utilitarian interpretations, have come to accept that rituals of veneration played more complex roles in the lives and deaths of our early ancestors than was previously assumed. Whereas the preoccupation with human origins was once largely the specialist domain of an institutionalized discipline of archaeology, today it is shared by 'alternative' (and often undisciplined) archaeologists.⁶¹ Consequently, when seen through the lens of post-rationalism, the ancient past has become a cornucopia of possibilities.

Let us proceed by considering this discussion in terms of the relationship between the myth and legend that concerns me here, and the distinctions I make between them. This is crucial to the development of my argument as it shows how myth survives, through legend, by an accretive and continuous system of adaptation and mutation in response to shifting cultural tastes.

⁵⁹ A survey conducted by OnePoll on behalf of Independent Television (ITV) of 2000 UK adults showed that 18.10% believed that aliens have visited earth, compared with 29.95% not sures, and 51.95% who did not believe. A majority of respondents believed in the afterlife [Y:39.60% N:29.70% NS:30.70%]; likewise, that Ouija boards are dangerous [Y:42.15% N:35.40% NS:22.45%] (21-5/02/2013).

⁶⁰ For a timely example, consider the hoopla that surrounded the supposed 'end of the world' in 2012, which acquired significance amongst post-rationalists based on over-imaginative interpretations of scant information on what the ancient Maya thought about the End of Days.

⁶¹ E.g., the continuing collaboration of one-time UFO buff and 'ley' hunter Paul Devereux with Professor Tim Darvill of Bournemouth University, and others, on The Landscape & Perception Project (see <http://www.landscape-perception.com/> Ret. 20/04/12). Similarly, Devereux's idea of Silbury Hill as an observation platform has been adopted by archaeologists, some of whom now see Silbury facing outward as the hub of a wider and all-encompassing ritual landscape.

2.2 Separating myth and legend

Clue: Legend (4); Answer: Myth

Quick Crossword, *London Evening Standard* 02/06/2011

This clue from a newspaper crossword typifies a tendency to treat 'myth' and 'legend' as identical. From the perspective of the folklorist, this is problematic because it excises crucial differences that constitute an intricate working relationship. Consequently it is important to recognize how myth and legend differ, as well as how they operate interdependently. Myth is understood here as the essential proposition, e.g., otherworldly beings are visiting Earth; while legends are understood as the affirmative evidence of the proposition, e.g., crop circles are imprints left by otherworldly beings, thereby revealing their presence. Conversely, anti-legends (Dégh & Vazsonyi 1973: 12-14) are an attempt to impugn the veracity of the legend, e.g., the claim that 'all crop circles are made by people'. This not only challenges the legend content but also the social significance of the narrative genre in which both myth and legend are located. However, it is this challenge that defines legend as something other than myth. The contestation that defines their relationship arises when something unknowable manifests as phenomena whose credibility is disputed [Dégh (1996) citing physiologist Robert W. Holley]. As Dégh states elsewhere:

Disputability is not only a feature of the legend it is its very essence, its *raison d'être*, its goal. The legend demands answers, but not necessarily resolutions, to the most mysterious, critical, and least answerable questions of life.

Dégh (2001: 3)

This climate of dispute may be seen in terms of any system consisting of a pluralism of practices and freedom of belief, constituting a marketplace of ideas where even the most dominant ideological traditions are made to interact with others on a level playing field. Legend encourages wishful thinking and, crucially, *wish fulfillment*. In this, we can also see an important distinction between myth and legend. Myths may be a comfort, legends are not; legends are designed to test the permeability of

the status quo. In keeping with New Age values, the dispute they foster represents an antistructural foil to orthodox belief.⁶²

In order to illustrate the relational dynamic between myth and legend with a view to clarifying their difference, I will now define them individually, starting with my understanding of myth in the present context.

2.2.1 Myth

Human beings are inveterate mythmakers. Myths are accumulations of stories, the meanings of which are not expressed in the form of truth propositions but are latent, and cannot be told in any way other than by story. Here I focus on a specific type of myth, characterised by its setting in some kind of otherworld, the scope of which may include death, the past or future, a parallel dimension, or outer space. These settings might be populated by otherly entities, which stimulate fear, or comfort, or a tensile combination of both – evoking a general sense of the numinous.⁶³ These entities usually remain secret and hidden – unknown, but partially revealed through myth.⁶⁴ Morgan's definition of numinosity as "a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience" (2012: *xiv*, quoting Peter Berger) is consistent with the idea that a mysterious presence exists in relation to specific

⁶² Otto describes "miraculous" experience as "the occasional breach in the causal nexus of nature" (1923/59: 3). While believers and non-believers will tend to rationalise perceived anomaly along the familiar lines of their commitment to their respective views of reality (Peirce 1877; Festinger 1957), the task of legend and its antithesis, anti-legend, is to challenge these preconceptions. Legend is naturally antistructural, i.e., transformative (Van Gennep 1909, subsequently Turner 1969) by revealing 'truths' that counter rationalist values.

⁶³ Otto (1923/59: 8) described this as "creature feeling," a sense of something greater outside the self; of absolute profaneness (1917: 51) in the face of an otherly presence. Freud identified this as a response to "the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread" (1919/2003: 123), yet shares an uncanny familiarity that appeals to aesthetic sensibilities. The latter was picked up by Freud in his essay *The Uncanny* (1919).

⁶⁴ This is the interface where Freud situated his essay *The Uncanny* (1919). He would have been aware of Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* (1917), which was an immediate success in Germany, yet he avoids using Otto's term 'numen' or 'numinous' to describe what is essentially the same sense. Reading these works together, I wondered if, as Otto gave credence to a sense of the holy (the numinous), defining it as non-rational, positioning it as an antithesis of rational thought without diminishing its value, Freud, as a progressive rationalist, and on behalf of scientific reason, felt the need to do just that by treating it as fiction. In separating 'real life' experience from 'fairy tale,' Freud disconsiders the liminality that can exist between the real and not real, and the extent to which this is mediated by environmental factors, such as place/landscape, that contribute to their coalescence.

settings and objects, which thus offer the possibility of interaction with this otherly power or entity. It is this kind of shared qualia, and its mythical domain, that my study addresses.

Myth is the product of a peculiar characteristic of the human mind, its ability to have ideas and experiences that challenge rational explanation. Myths should not be understood as 'lies', or necessarily fictions, but rather as mental images existing within networks of ideas that suggest particular ways of interpreting the world and shaping human understanding of it. As such, myths give form to communal experience.⁶⁵ To rationalists inclined to see reality in purely material terms, these ideas are easily tested and disregarded. (As with the 'scientific problem' of crop circles.) However, to post-rationalist New Agers, myth is an invitation to proceed beyond prescribed limits of understanding in search of deeper meanings – for, as Bachelard observed, these are “problems posed by poetic imagination, (where) the cultural past doesn't count” (1958/94: xv). Like art and play, myth is unaffected by the fetters of reason and logic. Myths, then, are stories that may be distinguished by their ability to take teller and listener into imaginary realms that exist at least partially beyond everyday experience.⁶⁶ Myth provides a structured frame of reference in which to place the unknown; it counterbalances what is already known and at the same time can light the way to potential new knowledge. The myth of 'life after death,' for example, is usually themed around familiar elements that would appear to be designed to provide comfort, or evoke fear, for those who take it literally.⁶⁷ Yet, myth is also counterintuitive.⁶⁸ In my example, the imaginary

⁶⁵ 'Communal' is key here, because, whether based on shared fears or desires, a community's myths reflect its latent ontological imaginary, which lies dormant until circumstances bring these visions into the open.

⁶⁶ Mary Midgley (2004/11: 1) argues that, rather than being the opposite of science, myth plays a central role in deciding the significance of knowledge acquisition within any community. Sagan's biographer, Keay Davidson, gives one example of how myth drives scientific curiosity: he tells how Sagan's boyhood obsession with flying saucers and his early speculations about their origins led him to revisit the same ideas once he had become a professional cosmologist. Moving away from belief in flying saucers, he retained the sense of wonder that the myth had instilled in him. As Davidson observes: “It was ... like someone who is religious when they're young who outgrows the details of the religion but they never outgrow the spirit” (*The Beauty of Diagrams* 6/6, BBC TV, broadcast 23/12/10).

⁶⁷ Consider the flurry of science this inspired in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, pioneering an obsession with invisible substance that led, obliquely, for example, to the discovery of x-rays (Irving 2000: Warner 2006: 225).

⁶⁸ If it were universally accepted as fact we would call it history.

counters the material evidence that death ends life and our bodies perish. When myth is coupled with religious ideas, e.g., doctrines of redemption and/or karma, it acts to modify behaviour in the living.⁶⁹ I will now examine how this plays out as legend.

2.2.2 Legend

Having established an understanding of myth it is necessary to turn to legend in order to understand how myth is performed as something physically witnessed as empirical experience, and which is thus open to dispute. In seeking to articulate what I understand by legend here it is useful to begin with a particular event. I once interviewed a man who claimed that during a séance he met a physical manifestation of his 'deceased' father. His father told him that when we die our bodies are returned to their optimum condition – in his father's case, aged 24 – and that he spends his afterlife playing cricket: "He loved cricket," added my informant, perhaps for his own peace of mind, but also as if to validate the story.⁷⁰ Here, the myth of eternal life was revealed to me as factual through the personal experience of my informant.⁷¹ It is at this point, where myth is represented as an event that occurred in real time and space, that it becomes legend. To reiterate this using a well-known example: In *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (Irving W. 1820), the protagonist Ichabod Crane sees a headless horseman, who is the personification of the myth of revenants. That these exist in the flesh, as it were, is the myth; the legend concerns the specific instance that was seen at a particular time and place identified in the narrative. Folklorists Linda Dégh (2001; 1994; various papers) and Timothy Tangherlini define legend as:

...Typically, (..) a short (mono-) episodic, traditional, highly ecotypified, historicized narrative performed in a conversational mode, reflecting on a psychological level a symbolic representation of folk belief and collective experiences and serving as a reaffirmation of commonly held values of the group to whose tradition it belongs.

Tangherlini (1990: 385)

⁶⁹ To Eliade (1963: 8) the establishment of models of behaviour was myth's primary function.

⁷⁰ Michael Roll is a good example to use in the wider context of my argument above as since this experience he has run the Campaign for Philosophical Freedom, writing and distributing such papers as *The Scientific Proof of Survival After Death* (1995) and *The Suppression of Knowledge* (1995).

⁷¹ Incidentally, other witnesses I spoke to also supported Roll's account of this event.

The term 'ecotypified' is highly relevant as it refers to a legend's location in time and place. As I will show, the myth of a paradisiacal, prelapsarian Golden Age, where people lived according to a 'lost' wisdom that is now in the process of being reclaimed, has accrued layers of New Age legendry such as UFOs, earth energies, and crop circles. How these events are interpreted stimulates these "commonly held values of the group to whose tradition [they] belong" (*ibid*), thereby substantiating the underlying myth. Thus legend may be typically 'conversational,' passed on by word of mouth, but in the situations I will describe it is acted out or performed as real life. This applies to things as well as people; as I will explain in Chapter 4 on ostension, a legendary object may tell a story through the agency of its association with a legendary event.

Like Hermes, legend is a message carrier. It expresses, explicitly or implicitly, that the message it represents is something that can be believed in. As the folklorist Will-Erich Peuckert (1965), observed, legend wants to be true, and to report truth, but it is "in essence, the expression of a truth that reached the point of formulation in the environment of the magical world, determined by mythical thinking" (quoted in Dégh 2001: 38). Where myth may be perceived as 'not true' (or 'metaphorical') without diminishing its symbolic value, legend relies on popular belief as a generative impetus (Tangherlini 1990: 375) in order to ensure that it is passed on as fact. It demands that we "believe it or not."⁷² In the present quasi-religious context, this is also consistent with the distinctions Otto made between the 'rational' and 'non-' or irrational, or 'supra-rational' (1923/59: 1-4), reflecting the values of a particular social environment and its climate of belief.

A parallel may be drawn here with Indian storytelling tradition. Legends are not intended to conform to normal truth-values. Indeed, in both Indian storytelling and New Age legend environments, the more fanciful the telling and retelling of the legend the more 'true' it seems to become (inasmuch as it represents underlying truths, and anxieties, that bind its believers). In legend environments, the story is taken into the realm of lived experience. The same inversions can be observed in the Hollywood

⁷² Ripley's *Believe It or Not!* epitomized the legend vehicle, which, during a time when fewer people travelled, transported the 'other' into the 'here and now' in the form of exotic and mysterious artefacts, many purported to be 'paranormal.' ("I have travelled in 201 countries and the strangest thing I saw was man," said Ripley.)

tradition of the adolescent 'legend trip' (Ellis 2001: 166), where legendeers enter legend environments (e.g., a haunted house) in anticipation of encountering the object of legend (e.g., ghosts). More often than not, thrill-seekers will return thrilled, but perhaps most importantly, they have fresh experiences to talk about. The nature of the storytelling that ensues, and the imagination required on the part of the listener, not only validates the myth but also adds to the ritual of its coming into being as reality through lived experience. Hearing these stories, one senses an underlying challenge that is also evident in the Indian tradition: 'How far can I take my tale before it is disbelieved?' In legend environments, it is often the most outlandish stories that are the most socially binding, while disbelief can mean alienation.

To recapitulate: while myth exists at the threshold of everyday reality and otherly realms of the imagination, legend exists at the threshold between fact and fiction, as expressed conceptually within particular social environments. As an entity in itself, it achieves this most effectively by living and feeding on the dialogue between myth and the everyday, a liminal third realm of conflicting, disputed dogmas. Legend pulls myth into the world of actuality. With this in mind, I will now introduce an idea that is central to my overall argument: that there are social and physical environments where legend may be expected to displace prevailing ways of seeing the world. In such a setting, myth is enacted as legend, thereby defining the conditions of its being as a legend landscape.⁷³ The example to be explored is a geographical locale situated between visible horizons, containing remnants of an ancient ritual topography, a setting that encapsulates these psychosocial internalisations.

2.3 The Avebury Complex

I will now locate my argument above in terms of the specifics of the Avebury complex, with a view to establishing that this place/landscape is perceived by New Agers in terms of a collective mythology and as a legend setting where this mythology manifests as 'real life.' The complex consists of six key prehistoric megalithic and earthen monuments contained within an area of 8.7 square miles, around 20 miles north of Stonehenge in Wiltshire. This area is designated a World Heritage Site because of the importance of its Neolithic remnants and their

⁷³ E.g., in such conditions, to the believer in revenants, the appearance of a headless horseman makes sense.

placement within an integrated ritual landscape. This network of sites grew up around the source of the River Kennet, a place known today as the Swallowhead spring. This is situated a quarter of a mile to the south of Silbury Hill. Less than a mile to the north is Avebury itself, a village built in medieval times around a church founded on the site of an enormous prehistoric henge, originally consisting of around 100 stones averaging 40 tons in weight. After their ritual purpose was forgotten, many of the stones were broken up and used for building material to construct the church, a manor house, and other village buildings and walls. Under the care of the National Trust, Avebury has become a popular site of heritage tourism, attracting more than 250,000 visitors a year (*Which?* 2013).⁷⁴

A broad avenue of stones, some still in situ, connected the henge with a smaller circular configuration of (variously) timbers and stones a mile to the southeast, at a place now known as the Sanctuary. This is situated at the end of the Ridgeway, a prehistoric track linking ancient sites from Wiltshire to Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and into East Anglia. From here, Windmill Hill, the site of an early causewayed enclosure, is aligned about a mile directly northwest of Avebury. Otherwise, the landscape contains numerous burial sites; those that survived the plough are still visible as tumuli and long barrows, including a well-known chambered example at West Kennet. The former Neolithic landscape, where cereal cultivation shared space with ritual cycles of life and death, today competes with an emerging industry in mystical tourism, creating palimpsestic tensions between continuous agricultural utility and a curious pre-apocalyptic intimacy with ancestral ruins.

2.3.1 The Power of Place

In order to understand the way in which the Avebury Complex functions as a legend landscape it is important to understand the role played by place in New Age thinking; that is to say what is termed here 'the power of place'. Wherever on the globe there is western influence one will find a New Age fascination with place along mystical lines complicit with the emergence of theories of human origins that challenge scientific orthodoxy. Few sites in Britain compare with the prehistoric

⁷⁴ <http://tinyurl.com/which-avebury> Ret. 15/03/2013.

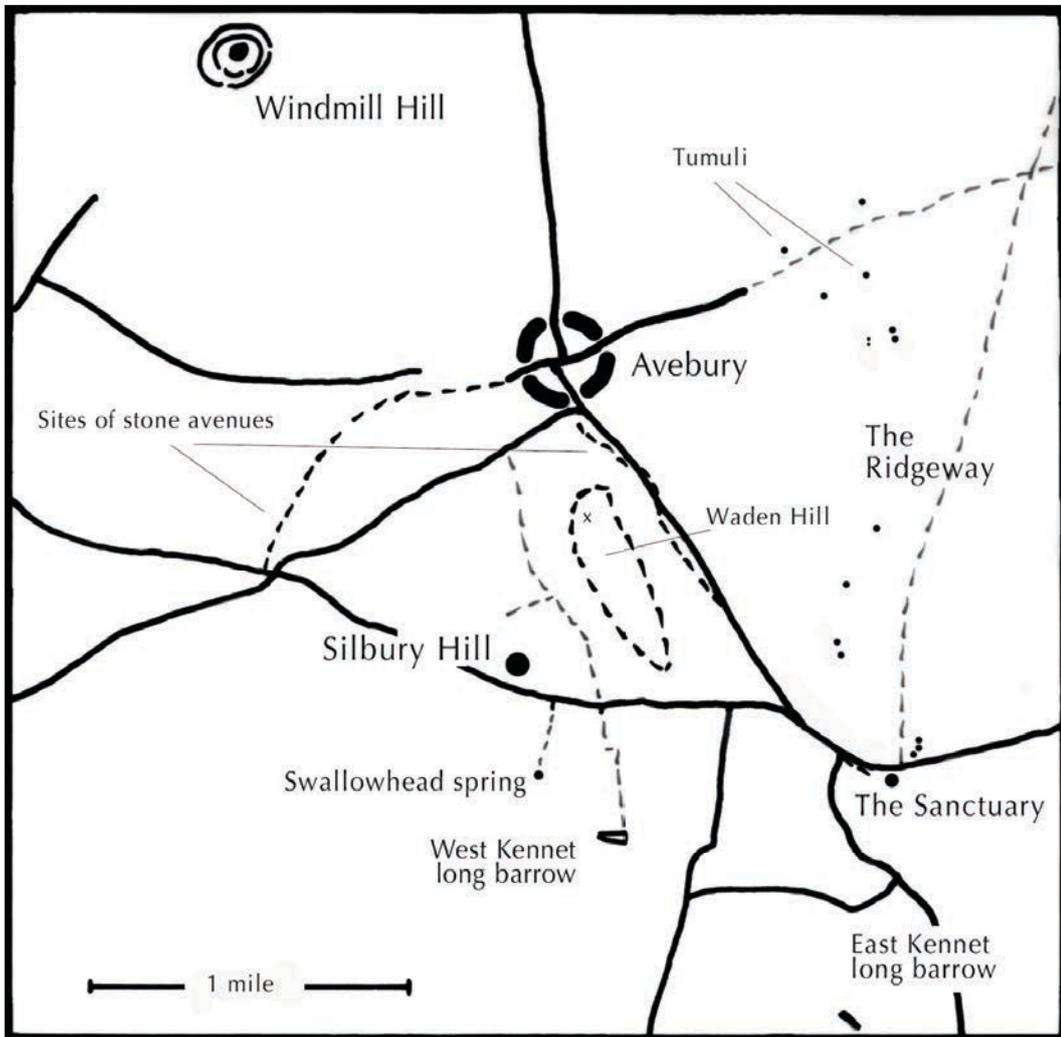


Fig. 3 A map of the Avebury complex, showing the main sites featured in my thesis.



Fig. 4 Silbury Hill.



Fig. 5 Avebury stone avenue.



Fig. 6 Avebury henge.

complex at Avebury in the extent to which it attracts people who engage phenomenologically with otherworldly narratives. As this chapter progresses, I will explain the recent emergence of legendary phenomena that are held to be manifestations of this power/attraction. However, belief that Avebury is a monument to forgotten principles of ancient wisdom has persisted for more than 300 years. Since Oxford student John Aubrey 'discovered' strange bumps and mounds, and the deliberate juxtaposition of large stones that make up what is now known as Avebury's ritual landscape, this has included layers of Judeo-Protestant, neo-Hermetic historicism from such influential figures as John Wood the Elder, William Stukeley, and Sir Isaac Newton – doctrine epitomized by Newton's phrase "a long-lost truth" (1733, Part 2, Ch 1). It is a religious sentiment that was further illustrated by William Blake's poem, *Jerusalem*:

Jerusalem the Emanation of the Giant Albion! Can it be? Is it a Truth that the Learned have explored? Was Britain the Primitive Seat of the Patriarchal Religion? If it is true: [it] is also True that Jerusalem was & is the Emanation of the Giant Albion. It is True, and cannot be controverted. Ye are united O ye Inhabitants of Earth in One Religion. The Religion of Jesus: the most Ancient, the Eternal: & the Everlasting Gospel – The Wicked will turn it to Wickedness, the Righteous to Righteousness. Amen! Huzza! Selah! "All things Begin & End in Albion's Ancient Druid Rocky Shore."

Blake, (*Jerusalem* 1804)

2.4 A 'long-lost truth' and its mythic association with the Avebury Complex

When we contemplate the elegance of this county of Wiltshire, and the great works of antiquity therein, we may be persuaded that the two Atlantic islands, and the islands of the blessed, which Plato and other ancient writers mention, were those in reality of Britain and Ireland.

William Stukeley (1743: 14)

In the following sections, I will explore this historical background in light of the mystical association of Avebury's prehistoric landscape with Hermetic tradition, contextualising modern myths around UFOs, crop circles, and other material in the Earth Mysteries oeuvre in relation to contemporary New Age thought, and, more specifically, popular belief in the myth of 'ancient astronauts' and the lost, but *recoverable* wisdom they are believed to have introduced in prehistoric times. I will

highlight the role of John Michell, who in the 1960s weaved the Neo-Platonic ideas of Wood and Stukeley into a rich tapestry of emergent New Age myth. In doing so, I intend to show that this hidden knowledge, and its relation to ancient sites, the myths of Atlantis and Albion as the New Jerusalem, as well as contemporary legend surrounding flying saucers, crop circles, merged ideas of 'leys' and 'earth energies,' and continuous New Age notions of the Avebury area as a place/landscape replete with occult power, are all interconnected parts of a larger, and very ancient, myth.

2.4.1 Aubrey, Stukeley, Newton, and Wood

The remnants of Avebury's ritual landscape present as much of a mystery today as they did that day in 1649, when Aubrey, out hunting with friends, stopped to take notice of the local topography. His subsequent fascination culminated in 1663 in a paper on his studies of Avebury delivered to the Royal Society, marking the birth of modern archaeology (Bryson, 2010: 5). Aubrey saw the Avebury henge as a Druid temple. It seems certain that as an educated man he would have been familiar with the works of Greek and Roman writers, who viewed the *Druidae* as a priestly sect active in Celtic culture in Britain prior to its Roman occupation. In his *Commentaries on the Gallic War*, the Roman general Julius Caesar (50s BCE) described them as "engaged in things sacred" (Book IV: XIII). "They likewise discuss and impart to the youth many things respecting the stars and their motion, respecting the extent of the world and of our earth, respecting the nature of things, respecting the power and the majesty of the immortal gods" (IV: XIV). Accordingly, the Druids were "an institution supposed to have been devised in Britain ... and now those who desire to gain a more accurate knowledge of that system proceed there for the purpose of studying it." Julius (IV: XVII) adds that they also worship Mercurius (Hermes), "whom they regard as the inventor of all arts."⁷⁵

Aubrey's thread was picked up fifty years later by William Stukeley (1687-1765), an antiquarian vicar and friend of Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727). Stukeley's approach to his extensive survey of the Avebury landscape was framed within a religious ontology, based on the Old Testament but influenced by a Hermetic-Cabalistic

⁷⁵ According to Julius, the Druids also consider Mercurius to be "the guide of their journeys and marches, and believe him to have very great influence over the acquisition of gain and mercantile transactions" (Bk IV: XVII). This is very pertinent to my discussion about the mythical Trickster and its influence.

tradition imported into Britain during the Elizabethan era, continued by Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626), and then by Newton's circle of Neo-Platonists. Reappraisals (MacCulloch 2009; McKnight 2006) of this early period in modern scientific history reveal a strong intellectual attachment to Platonic thought and its mythology, the latter most notably in cultural references to the antediluvian state of Atlantis.⁷⁶

As Enlightenment values turned European society away from magic, interest in archaic knowledge manifested in a proliferation of secret 'friendly' societies and part religious, part scientific Orders (Carr-Gomm & Heygate, 2009: 381), set against a backdrop of belief among the intellectual elite in an imminent apocalypse (MacCulloch, 2009: 773-4). Speculative movements tend to be steeped in elaborate mythologies of their origins, but on the whole these revolved around the Hermetic tradition of the divine nature of geometry and magical numerology defined by the myth of *Hermes Trismegistus*.⁷⁷ Stukeley was initiated into Freemasonry in 1721; around the time he began his studies of Avebury. A year later, upon the death of John Toland, who founded the first neodruidic Order, Stukeley assumed the role of Chief Druid, and with it the name Chyndonax. This offers valuable insight into the level of religiosity that underpinned early scholarly perceptions of prehistory, and its application to specific sites and landscapes, Avebury in particular.

True to his Platonist leanings, as a "closet alchemist and Hermetic philosopher" (MacLennan, 2006), Newton accepted the principle that hidden causes lay behind natural phenomena. Like Bacon, Stukeley, Newton, and others among their fellow members of the Royal Society regarded natural philosophy as an examination of God's creation; it required a true understanding of theology, and this in turn meant understanding ancient history, chronology, and prophecy (Haycock, 2004). Stukeley shared his work on stone circles with Newton, and together they formulated an exegesis that Britain's ancestral monuments were remnants of a prelapsarian wisdom, lost to idolatry, but which was being reclaimed through the current pursuit of an esoteric blend of natural science and the 'true faith,' which by now was distinctly

⁷⁶ The influence on Enlightenment thought of Plato's account of a lost ancient cosmology should not be underestimated. Bacon's analytical approach to science, as set out in *New Atlantis* (1623), inspired a group of natural philosophers, including such luminaries of the age as Sir Christopher Wren and Robert Boyle, to meet and discuss his 'rediscovered' ideas, culminating, in 1660, in the founding of the Royal Society.

⁷⁷ For a detailed account of this myth, see Yates 1964/2002: 1-46.

Protestant. Following the biblical, apocalyptic writings of Daniel and St. John of Patmos, it seemed clear to Newton, also to Stukeley, that ancient people had knowledge of a 'long-lost truth.' Newton stated plainly that the prophecies:

are not only for predicting but also for effecting a recovery and re-establishment of the long-lost truth, and setting up a kingdom wherein dwells righteousness.

Newton 1733, Part 2, Ch 1

Drawing on this theme and a fashion for speculative Freemasonry, Stukeley recognized in Avebury's man-made landscape an embedded pattern of Hermetic symbolism. For example, in the curved avenues leading to and from the main henge he saw a serpentine form as part of a giant hieroglyph of the union of snake and circle. Accordingly, the Sanctuary represented the snake's head (see *Fig. 7*),⁷⁸ linking the builders with "the common ancestors of mankind" (Stukeley, 1743: 56).

In Stukeley's time, as 'natural philosophy,' science was not incompatible with religious values; it was only gradually that a divergence developed into a schism between the alchemical, occultist approach of traditional religion and a detached, secular approach to science. Newton occupied both positions simultaneously. Historian of science Stephen Shapin observes that "seventeenth century confidence in the basic propriety and power of a mathematical framework for natural philosophy had ancient warrants" (1996: 58) as scientists looked to Pythagorean and Platonic ideals to justify their mathematical treatment of nature's laws. The main point to consider here is that this perception of ancestral sites was defined by the belief that the divine imagery and geometrical proportion they displayed were based on fixed universal precepts, which therefore ruled interpretation. To paraphrase Feyerabend, what is perceived as truth adapts to changing socio-cultural conditions (1999: 137). Just as Newton derived his understanding of physics from God's order, so it was assumed that God's revelations also follow set laws, and that any discovery derived from these rules was divinely revealed. (This doctrine continues into today's New Age, e.g., as the notion of 'sacred' geometry,' etc.)

⁷⁸ Michell (2003) writes: 'The serpent is an image of the mercurial earth currents by which the country is made fertile; transfixing the serpent's head with a stake or stone pillar is the traditional method of arresting and tapping its flow of energy. At Delphi, where in archaic times the Pythoness or earth serpent had dwelt and given oracles for a brief season in the year, the piercing of her head by Apollo's staff lengthened her period of efficacy by several months.'

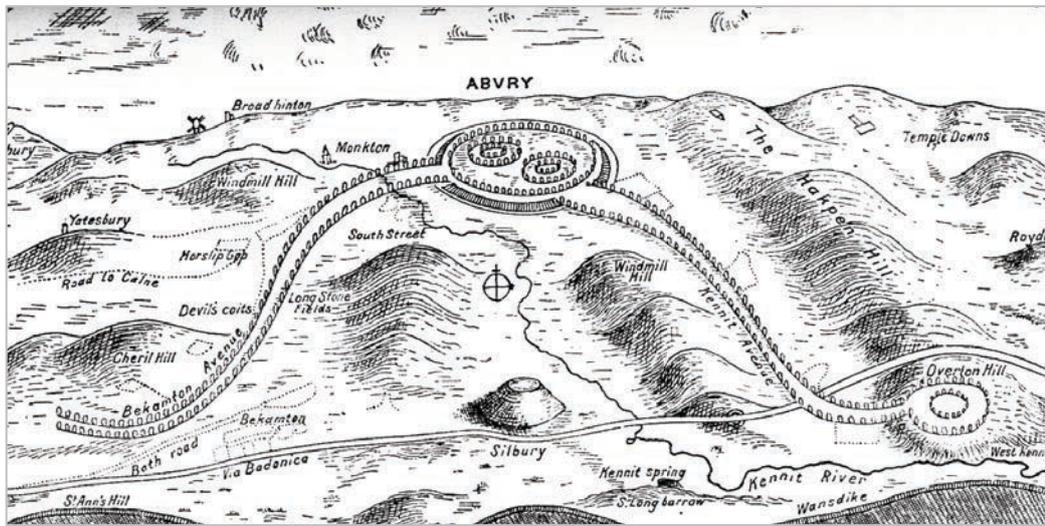


Fig. 7 William Stukeley's idealized drawing of the Avebury complex, showing the stone avenue as a 'serpent' – its head at the start of the Ridgeway, at a site known as the Sanctuary.

Further indication of 18th century attitudes toward prehistoric monuments can be found in the writings of another Freemason, the architect John Wood the Elder, who designed Bath's most Hermetically meaningful structures. His Royal Circus, for example, precisely mimics the circular ratios of Stonehenge, and his measurement of Queen Square emulates the dimensions of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. The circle and the square are connected by a short street, the whole signifying a giant key, the Masonic symbol of the presence of secret knowledge. Wood's essay *The Origin of Building: Or, The Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected* (1741) is concocted of homespun interpretations of the Old Testament coupled with an account of Bath's mythical hero, Bladud, 'King of the Britons,' as an actual historical figure, whom Wood claimed was the founder of ancient Druidism.⁷⁹ By incorporating mystical arts into his practice, Wood hoped to expose received notions of classical architecture as misguided in the context of contemporary debates on the origin of primordial wisdom, a cue he took from Newton. Plato's presence can be felt throughout Wood's assertions concerning the centrality of number and measure to the uncontroverted fact (Harris 1989) that beauty and proportion are absolute, inherent and inseparable qualities.

Wood assumed that understanding of geometry and geometric ratios originated in ancient Greece, and that stone circles came after. He claimed that King Bladud had travelled to Greece where he studied under Pythagoras. Accordingly, on his return to England Bladud set up the first of four Mystery Schools at Stanton Drew in Somerset, where a stone circle replicated the Pythagorean planetary system. Other colleges were set up at Avebury, Harptree in Somerset, and at Stonehenge. Wood's thinking here was consistent with Newton's: the links between ancient stone circles with their Pythagorean principles of mathematics, astronomy and geometry, and Biblical architecture, confirmed the divinity of the designer. Likewise New Agers

⁷⁹ This set Wood at odds with Stukeley, who became frustrated at what he saw as Wood's 'pillaging' of his own research, describing his ideas as "whimsys of his own crackt imagination, wild extravagancys concerning Druids, without the least foundation of knowledge...." "I cannot but smile," writes Stukeley,

on this quack in antiquity, with a head stuffed with an indigested farrago chipped out of all ancient and modern authors, and huddled up into a ridiculous fabric, not stronger than the children's house of cards; and it would be a more childish work to pretend to answer it.

Stukeley's diary, 3rd August 1763

and 'sacred' geometry, which deploys the same principles as Neolithic architects (Johnson 2008). Indeed, the late Neolithic – early Bronze Age is contemporaneous with ancient texts describing Pythagorean precepts.

The following example relates this philosophy directly to the myth of lost knowledge. It concerns the similarity between Ezekiel's visions of a holy state as told in the Book of Ezekiel, and how it acquired Greek character in Plato's subsequent version about Atlantis and its demise. The epic of Gilgamesh carries elements of the same prelapsarian moral, and precedes both stories. The same theme was carried by a stream of well-known treatises: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8CE), St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* (500CE), Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun* (1602), and Sir Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1623), returning us to the time of Aubrey and his discovery. None of these views was new; they were the oldest of thoughts adapted for the writers' contemporary audiences. Each contains imagined blueprints for change and rebirth. It follows that the urge to embrace and re-enact myth requires a sense of disenchantment with the present. Historian Frances Yates captured the essential alchemical tension in looking back to look forward in the opening paragraph of her book *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964):

The great forward movements of the Renaissance all derive their vigour, their emotional impulse, from looking backwards. The cyclic view of time as a perpetual movement from pristine golden ages of purity and truth through successive brazen and iron ages still held sway and the search for truth was thus of necessity a search for the early, the ancient, the original gold from which the baser metals of the present and the immediate past were corrupt degenerations. Man's history was not an evolution from primitive animal origins through ever growing complexity and progress; the past was always better than the present, and progress was revival, rebirth, and renaissance of antiquity. The classical humanist recovered the literature and the monuments of classical antiquity with a sense of return to the pure gold of a civilization better and higher than his own. The religious reformer returned to the study of the Scriptures and the early Fathers with a sense of recovery of the pure gold of the Gospel, buried under later degenerations ... the return to a golden age of magic.

Yates 1964/2002: 1

As for the figure of Hermes Trismegistus, it is part of its legend that he lived in extreme antiquity, within three generations of Moses, and was a nephew to the Greek god Hermes. Interestingly, this was a history told by Christian writers, in particular Lactantius (c240-c320) and St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430). The key, or trick, to its emergence as an idea is that Hermes Trismegistus was supposed to have preceded Plato by some centuries, and that Plato's philosophy was therefore derived from Hermetic teachings. More likely, rather than originating in Egypt, Hermes Trismegistus was an invention devised by Greek writers around the second and third centuries CE, probably in order to invigorate traditional Platonism, with an emphasis on results, culminating in gnostic revelation and change (Yates 1964/2002: 2). The legend contains elements of fact concerning lost knowledge of geometry (Johnson 2008), and possibly much else, but as an assemblage of myth it was a conceptual 'sleight of hand' that went on to dominate Western theology.

2.4.2 Blake

Perhaps England's most notable example of one who embraced ancient myth through a sense of disenchantment with the present is the visionary poet William Blake (1757-1827). Surveying ancient British pagan belief, the historian Ronald Hutton describes Blake as "one of a number of writers between 1760 and 1840 who set out to 'reconstruct' the principles of a noble and natural religion worthy to be associated with prehistoric philosopher-priests" (1993: 140). Hutton attributes the promulgation of 'pre-Christian mystic wisdom rooted in Egyptian and Hebrew occult practice' (*ibid*: 124) to a French mystic, Eliphas Lévi (1810-1875). Hutton writes:

It was this creed, together with the system of magic developed by Lévi and passed off by him as "ancient hidden wisdom", which was further elaborated by the late-nineteenth century occult groups such as the Golden Dawn and the Theosophy Society. Through them it survived to become part of the inspiration of modern writers such as John Michell.

Hutton 1993: 124

As I have shown, however, the idea that Neolithic Britons were 'an international prehistoric intelligentsia' (*ibid*: 111) goes back much further. Elsewhere, Hutton has asserted that the distinguishing characteristic of "alternative archaeologists" (1993: 119) (e.g., pseudoscientific approaches to rediscovering the past), is that they tend

to couple their love of the past with distaste for the present. With this, I agree. But if this sentiment was repressed in the puritanical era of Stukeley and Newton, it achieved full bloom in Blake's. Appalled at the industrial growth and urbanisation he saw around him, the rural setting represented an escape, not only in terms of place but also time. Moreover, his works represented more than a lament for a lost past: they envisaged possible futures. Blake also saw in the vestiges of prehistory traces of a utopian ideal.

Much of my preliminary research centred on Blake's fascination with the myth of Albion, which Michell carried into the present through his own explorations of Bladud and Ezekiel. While this is interesting, it is also wide ranging, and I will limit my focus on Blake's work to Michell's handling of its revelatory aspects and their influence on current perceptions of the Avebury complex. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Blake was either unaware of or had overlooked Bacon's and Newton's Hermetic leanings, because he portrayed them as rational materialists "sheath'd in dismal steel," (*Jerusalem*, Ch.1, Pl.15 1804) as agents of a caged truth. He had read Stukeley's work on Avebury (Ackroyd 1999: 51), however. In Blake's view, much had been lost with the arrival of the Romans in Britain, and, as Ackroyd writes, he "was entranced and persuaded by the idea of a deeply spiritual past, and he continually alluded to the possibility of ancient lore and arcane myths that could be employed to reveal previously hidden truths" (1999: 51-2). Like Stukeley, Blake also saw traces of the lost continent of Atlantis in the British Isles (*ibid*: 52).

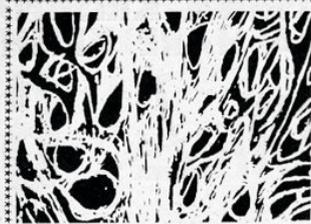
Stukeley's publication on the serpent temple at Avebury features in Blake's engraving on the final page of his poem *Jerusalem* (1804). Inspired by this vision, and writing in the style of Hebrew prophets, his mythical Albion was a British Eden, governed by Druids. Stukeley's own visions match the same mythic blueprint inasmuch as "The Egyptian Hieroglyphs, the Greek and Roman Mythology, and the Modern Freemasonry (were) the last remnants of it" (Ackroyd: 1999: 102). Moreover, as Blake writes in *Jerusalem*, the Jews "derived their origin from Abraham, Heber, Shem and Noah, who were Druids, as the Druid Temples ... over the whole earth witness to this day" (Blake 1804). I will now contextualise the myth that Avebury is a monument to forgotten principles of ancient wisdom in line with contemporary New Age thought, and the writings of John Michell.

2.5 A Long-lost Truth Reclaimed

John Michell is the most influential figure in the latter-day re-conceptualization of Avebury and other sites (Glastonbury in particular) as mystical power centres. In the 1960s, Michell synthesized Aubrey's, Stukeley's, and Blake's ideas about Druidism, Albion, God, Plato, Pythagoras and 'sacred' geometry, with modern myths concerning 'ley' lines, earth energies, and flying saucers. He did so by suggesting that they were all interconnected parts of a larger phenomenon, which, for the last thirty years or so, has manifested around Avebury in the form of crop circles (in which Michell also developed an influential interest). This history is important to my argument because it establishes the thread of continuity from the "idealized visions" (Crouch 1994: 43) of early antiquarians to ontological projections played out today as New Age gnosis, from ancient and modern myth into contemporary folklore and legend, and the ritual activity observable in and around Avebury. This sets the stage for an examination of how Avebury's ritual landscape currently performs as a legend landscape. I contend that this derives from the most enduring of myths: that contemporary earthly reality is a pale shadow of its Platonic archetype, an imperfect copy (Armstrong 2006: 5) of a harmonious Golden Age that found expression through science, art, and architecture; one that created a blueprint of a glorious future now pursued as a vision of the New Age.

Michell would repeat Blake's phrase "All things..." many times over the course of his forty books, numerous articles and pamphlets, most of which concerned what became known as Earth Mysteries. Bob Rickard, Michell's one-time co-author and the founder of *Fortean Times*, wrote that Michell's first three works "provided a synthesis of and a context for all the other weirdness of the era" (Rickard 2009).⁸⁰ I will concentrate on two early articles that illustrate this, and typify Michell's oeuvre. These were published in the winter 1966-7 in the countercultural newspaper *International Times* (IT). The timing is significant because it precurses the growth of the modern New Age movement – indeed, one of the earliest contemporary uses of the term features on the cover of Issue 23: "A Guide to a New Age...". Interestingly, Stukeley's reference to Britain as "islands of the blessed," quoted earlier, is echoed in the rest of the *International Times* headline: 'A Guide to a New Age and the Ecstatic

⁸⁰ The Man From Atlantis, *Fortean Times* April 2009
<http://tinyurl.com/manfromatlantis> Ret. 10/03/12.



WHY ARE UFO'S MAKING EVERYONE SO UPTIGHT?

I FIND it necessary as a point of basic intellectual honesty, to take account of the fact that intelligent life from outer space has arrived. Considerable life is now being generated in many different chemical environments, and there are many stars with planets that have chemistries virtually identical to our own. If life on earth progressed from primordial protein molecules to moon rockets in a couple of billion years, isn't it rational to assume that somewhere in the infinite universe something similar is happening - or has happened? And when there are thousands of credible incidents of sightings of extremely peculiar, and consistent aerial phenomena reported in a period of twenty years, the very twenty years that have brought mankind to the brink of space travel, isn't the presence of extra-terrestrial life the only logically acceptable assumption?

The individuals who made the following statements would agree that it is. Dr. Herman Oberth, the grand old man of German rocketry, said: "Flying saucer come from distant worlds". Air Chief Marshal, Lord Dowding, who headed the Royal Air Force during World War II, said: "Of course the flying saucers are real - and they are interplanetary". Albert M. Chop, deputy public relations director for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, wrote: "I've been convinced for a long time that the flying saucers are interplanetary. We are being watched by beings from outer space". Professor Claudio Aquilino, director of the Cerro Cazor Observatorio in Santiago, Chile, said: "There is scientific evidence that strange objects are circling our planet. It is lamentable that governments have a veil of secrecy around this matter". Rear Admiral Delmar Edlener, USNR, "identified flying objects are entering our atmosphere at very high speeds and obviously under intelligent control. We must solve this riddle without delay". The Hon. John McCormack, Speaker of the House, wrote: "I feel that the Air Force has not been giving out all the available information on the unidentified flying objects. You cannot disregard so many unimpeachable sources". Dr. Walter Reidt, noted German rocket expert, states flatly: "I'm convinced that saucers have an out-of-world basis".

It is becoming increasingly clear that the governments of the leading western nations are acting in co-operation to keep the true facts about the saucers hidden. Our own Air Force, which has been seriously investigating the UFOs since 1947, has

practiced a systematic and wholesale deception in the matter, involving control of the press, bribery and coercion of individuals, and much outright lying.

In 1955, a UFO reportedly crashed near Spitzbergen, Norway. The Norwegian government was quoted as saying that they had found a flying saucer, badly damaged, but recognizably extra-terrestrial in origin. Colonel Gernod Darabyl of the Norwegian Air Force stated: "It has this we wish to state emphatically - not been built by any country on earth. The materials used in its construction are completely unknown to all experts who participated in the investigation." An extensive report would not be issued in Colonel Darabyl's words, "until some sensational facts have been disclosed with U.S. and British experts. We should reveal what we have found out, as misfused secrecy might lead to panic."

The American and British policy of secrecy had been in effect for years, so that the Norwegians, knowingly or not, were in the strange position of asking both governments to reveal their own long-standing deception. Obviously, the Norwegians were silenced, probably by economic pressure. No report ever was issued.

The incidents of the repression of the fact about space sightings by our government are numbered in the thousands, and this clearly is another indication of the UFOs extra-terrestrial origin. Why, indeed, has the space program proceeded so slowly as it has? Certainly the cause is not lack of technical advancement. Our own government always reacts with a zealous and paranoid hostility to any nation or fact that threatens in any way to overshadow America's omnipotence.

Whatever is causing a crisis in these UFOs definitely has military superiority over every and all nations on earth. We are, in other words, theoretically subject at any future time to total control by a race that has come to us out of some unknown part of the universe for reasons and purposes that are equally unknown. The most significant single event in the history of mankind, the meeting of another form of intelligent life is clearly in sight. IN VIEW OF THIS SITUATION, THE TIME HAS COME FOR US OF THE PSYCHEDELIC GENERATION, WE WHO ARE THE INEVITABLE INHERITORS OF POLITICAL CONTROL OF THE SOCIETY TO TAKE COGNIZANCE OF THE SITUATION.

Joel Melitz: extract from an article which appeared in the East Village Other, November, 1966.

FLYING SAUCERS

as a portent of the revelations which will attend the opening of the aquarian age

As well as in months and years, the passage of time is measured in periods of far greater length, periods known to early pre-Egyptian civilizations which recorded their cycles. The end of one such period, the age of Pisces, which coincided with the reign of Christianity, is now at hand, and the spring-point is entering Aquarius. At such a time, according to all precedents, significant changes must be expected, involving a shift in the archetypes and leading to chaos and bewilderment for those not prepared to receive them. Already the symptoms and portents of these changes are becoming apparent.

This was the last message of C. G. Jung in his book "Flying Saucers" published in 1959, a book derided at the time, but now appearing more and more obviously inspired. The time which Lenin foresaw when our obsession with politics and with purely terrestrial systems would be replaced with an entirely new system of thought, is now imminent, partly as the result of our growing consciousness of the existence of extra-terrestrial life.

RUSSIANS

Already politicians and their world seem remote and irrelevant. Some event is awaited which will inspire us with a new ideal and open our minds to a further realization of our potential. What form this event will take is impossible to say, for it will involve us in experiences and visions for which we lack any precedent and can not therefore foresee, or even in thought. All we can do to prepare ourselves for the magnitude of the changes is come to study that period in the remote past when, as today, some dramatic event was about to occur.

As far as we can tell, the first and most recent of the great crises in human history was that which involved the introduction of our present concept of civilization, the appearance on earth of a force from outside the terrestrial limit. The interpretation of mythology and all our subsequent religious and social practices in the light of the recognition of this event is an immense and urgent task to which certain people, including an influential group of scientists in the Soviet Union, are now applying themselves. In this the Russians have the advantage that they do not have to reckon with the atrophied religious system which still inhibits their western colleagues. This does not mean that their work has no religious significance, in that it represents a return to an earlier and purer form of religion than that contained in Christianity.

Earlier religions were concerned above all with understanding the nature of God and the forces which control the rhythm of the universe, whereas Christianity represents a system of ethics rather than an approach to an understanding of the higher forms of life outside the earth. It can therefore be said that the approach to the Bible of Soviet scholars such as Professor Agrest is more truly religious than that of strictly Christian theologians.

Agrest sees in the Old Testament traces of a traditional mythology of extreme antiquity. An article published some years ago in Literaturnaya Gazeta gave his interpretation of certain Biblical themes in terms of an invasion of the earth in the past by a superior extra-terrestrial race, a people who, he suggests, built the gigantic stone platform of Baalbek as a launching site for their space craft. The extraordinary universality of archetypal myths is explained by Agrest by relating them to the times when the arrival on earth of an alien race inflicted a lasting trauma on the human mind.

This way of thought which considers the probability of life outside the earth is shared by many Soviet scientists. The famous astrophysicist, Shklovski, believes that certain pre-historic rock paintings, particularly those found in the Sahara desert, are portraits of past extra-terrestrial visitors, and he has shown by calculation that one of the peculiar satellites of Mars is hollow and therefore presumably artificial. Another leading scholar, the palaeontologist Plerov, has indicated that a people from space may have been responsible for

what appears to be bullet holes in the skulls of animals and men thousands of years old.

The possibility that an alien race may be infiltrating human society has always been an influence in Russian literature; Dostoevski in particular was obsessed by the figure of the alien among men. And a short story published a year ago in Encounter by Sinyavski, one of the two Soviet writers recently sent to prison, described the plight of an extra-terrestrial compelled to live unobtrusively in a human community.

A great deal of evidence points to one origin for the tradition on which our civilization is based. At some period in the remote past, after untold ages without any conception of the possibility of another way of life, men were suddenly faced with an incredible vision, the arrival of an

extra-terrestrial race, can we begin to realize something about the experiences which we will shortly have to undergo.

MR & MRS HILL

Already our revived consciousness of the mysterious discs in the sky has brought to the surface a number of old beliefs which, since the days when the Gods last appeared on earth, had been on the decline. The enigmatic creatures associated with flying saucer reports are becoming identified with the legendary other race which has always been known to exist alongside our own. Whereas in the past it was fairies, spirits and succubi who haunted the fringes of our world, impersonating, abducting and seducing human beings, it is now of the flying saucer people that such stories are told. The extraordinary series of modern reports of sound encounters between men and extra-terrestrials, of which the recently much publicized adventure of the American couple, Mr. and Mrs. Hill is but one example, can be compared with those legends found in all parts of the world which record the mating of a man from earth and a woman of unearthly origin, often explicitly described as one who has descended from the sky inside a flying saucer.

Among the Algonquin Indians, a race with many traditions clearly deriving from the time of open contact with the gods, the vehicle in which the erotic woman descends is said to be a circular basket, visited by the singing of its occupants, a clear reference to what many people suspect are the powers of sound to create movement and flight. There is indeed evidence to suggest that this power may have been rediscovered by certain individuals in recent times, notably by John Keely of Philadelphia at the end of the 19th century, but, as so often happens with inventions which may threaten the monopolies of the oil companies, they have been persecuted and their discoveries suppressed.

Far more people than is generally realized claim to have seen flying saucers, far until recently the subject has not attracted much serious interest. The only two groups of people who have inquired closely into it are the societies of amateur researchers and the governments and military leaders of the great powers concerned at the appearance of the mysterious flying objects. But now the flying saucer phenomenon is coming more and more to be accepted as a potent of great events shortly to be expected.

THE GODS

Just as the sight of the gods' flying discs gave primordial man their first indication of the mind-expanding vision which the coming of the space people represented, so today the mysterious objects in the sky, reported from all parts of the world, are part of our preparation for some devastating revelation. The influence of some force, working to prepare us for this event, may be seen in other recent developments such as the new interest in psychodrama, drugs and in astrology as a means of interpreting the larger patterns of the rhythm of time.

The remarkable revival of interest in astrology, both on a popular level through newspaper horoscopes, and among serious students of this ancient science, is the more impressive since astrology plays no part in our present educational system, unlike in the past when among earlier civilizations it was studied to the exclusion of almost everything else. Its resurgence at this time can be seen, like the appearance of the enigmatic flying discs, as deliberately inspired to open our minds to the approaching revelations of the Aquarian age.

by John Michell

John Michell is author of "The Flying Saucer Vision" to be published by Sidgwick and Jackson later this year.

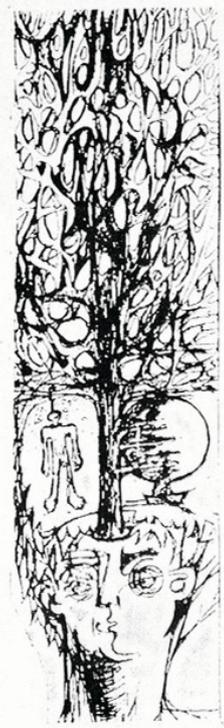


Fig. 8 'As far as we can tell, the first and most recent of the great crises in human history was that which involved the introduction of our present concept of civilization, the appearance on earth of a force from outside the terrestrial limit.' From Michell's article published in *International Times*, 30/01/67.

<http://www.internationaltimes.it/archive/>

Return of Everyone Blessed,' bringing older and newer variations of the story full circle.

Michell makes this clear in his earlier article by concluding that:

We know now that the 18th century vision of the mystery of Britain and of the hidden clues contained in the body of the country was a true one. The belief in a lost system from an age when men knew the gods, (and) lived with and respected them was accepted by scholars like the great Dr. Stukeley, [and] philosophers and poets such as Blake. To them, Britain lay under a spell, divorced from its gods, the old power forgotten. Yet Britain was the country destined to receive the new vision, the idea behind Blake's famous line, 'All things begin and end in Albion's Ancient, Druid, Rocky Shore!'

Michell 1967: IT Vol.1 No.19

We might say that Michell transformed Newton's "long-lost truth" into a proto-science. I would contextualise this in terms of the contemporary emergence of postmodern ideas intended to counter the hegemonic ideology of the time. He was writing in the wake of Kuhn's (1962) challenge to the prevailing notion of science as a wholly coherent, singular, and progressive activity. Kuhn's notion of 'paradigm shifts' inspired a response that was determined to instigate revolutionary changes in consciousness, and this represented an ideological jolt to the status quo, undermining received notions of truth as a product of institutional authority. Drawing on this argument, Michell offered an alternative steeped in Hermetic philosophy: while empiricism makes valuable contributions to knowledge, it ignores a more primal source. To Michell, the cultural municipality of this Golden Age was the British Isles.⁸¹ Accordingly, governed by gods, this earliest civilization lived by a system which unified science and metaphysics, its secrets passed to mankind as poetic narrative through a priestly class known as the Druids. Michell claimed that the megalith builders "found sites where stones could be erected to combine accurate astronomical observations with their translation into geometric figures expressing advanced mathematical concepts" (Michell 1967a: 7).⁸² This,

⁸¹ Governed by what Zecharia Sitchin would later identify as the Anunnaki, the ghosts "of royal blood" (Leick 1998: 7) who feature in the myths of numerous cultures.

⁸² "We can only conclude," argued Michell (1968: 7), "that these sites were discovered using some form of divination," a 'fact' that can be confirmed today through divination by anyone who believes in divination. While rationalists may dismiss this argument as circular, to the Hermeticist it accords with an alchemical principle whereby opposites meet and form unions, and serves to confirm the New Age maxim that there are no coincidences without meaning. Cochrane (2009) has termed these marginal facts "New Age counterfactuals,"

and the careful placement of stone circles within the landscape established by example a universal aesthetic whereby mathematical ratios underpin geometric and musical proportion and harmony, thus combining, as Plato put it centuries later, as “the very soul of beauty.”⁸³ Michell imagined that at such sites “God took his compass, centred it upon a fixed point, representing eternal law, and described the ever-spinning circle of the cosmos” (2005: 229).⁸⁴ However, he argued, sooner or later all man-made systems are doomed to fail. Every such system begins as an approach to God, founded on truth and advanced through inspiration (Michell 1967a: 7). The end always comes through human pride in the fruit of our own intellectual journey, at which point we lose sight of God. Accordingly, “from the moment science becomes secularised all advance is towards destruction” (*ibid*), and so tragedy beset the Neolithic megalith builders when they lost touch with the spirit that inspired them in their works.

The mystical ethos that sits at the heart of this narrative is important because it reveals a thread of Hermeticism that runs from the idealized visions projected upon Avebury by early antiquarians and which is still visible and *performed* today in New Age ritual practice. I will give examples of the same themes (ancient astronauts) arising in my interviews with respondents, and also in interpretations of crop circles (‘sacred’ geometry). In the following subsections, I will summarise a chain of “signifying sense” (Nancy 1997: 134) that connects this myth with legends of UFOs, elemental beings, ley lines, earth energies, and crop circles in a locus of

which make sense only in their own legendary context. Michell was wholly unconcerned with being proved wrong by mainstream historians. Rather, his intention was to suggest that conventional history is wrong.

⁸³ *Symposium* 211d: ‘And if (..) man’s life is ever worth the living, it is when he has attained this vision of the very soul of beauty.’

⁸⁴ Continuing Michell’s synopsis, these teachings influenced the philosophies of other cultures, where geometry is suffused with religious significance due to a perceived mystical synthesis with mathematics. Considering how these ideas were suppressed, first by the Romans, then by the Catholic Church, and then by Protestantism and the “iron cage” of Rationalist Enlightenment (Weber 1905), Michell’s cynicism is not surprising in lamenting that:

Men, urged on by pride, advanced their science to its ultimate meaninglessness until the Tower of Babel scene was re-enacted. Life within the great poem ceased, the poem itself corrupt, suppressed by priests and revised by policemen. A few folk tales, scraps of popular botanical and astronomical lore, are all that survive.

Michell (1967 IT23)

What Michell does not say is that the “great poem” itself and many of the “few folk tales that survive” are of his own invention.

association with Avebury. This puts Michell's writings, particularly his first book, into context with the development of this association. The unification of these 'phenomena' shows how legends come together as natural partners, revitalising and regenerating myth through continual flux.

2.5.1 As Above, So Below

A head stuffed full of liberal, academic nonsense was spun around, and new patterns of thought appeared, far more natural and interesting than any which had been offered by the education process.⁸⁵ I felt sorry for the victims of education, so I wrote a book for them, *The Flying Saucer Vision*, as a way of communicating to younger people that madness was not as unique and fatal as everyone said it was.

John Michell, private papers, date unknown.

Quoted in *Michellany* (2010: 33)

The phrase 'as above, so below' refers to the Hermetic doctrine of analogy and correspondence – as in, for example, Stukeley's notion of alchemy spatialized as landscape (Fig. 7). I now intend to show how this is taken literally to illustrate the relationship between Jung's "modern myth of things seen in the sky" (1959), and the emergence of the concept of 'earth energies,' and the circumstances that led to the offspring of this pairing, crop circles, as the product of a syncretic convergence that typifies how myth is regenerated in an accretive and continuous system.⁸⁶

Michell's first book, *The Flying Saucer Vision* (1967), in which Aubrey's and Stukeley's speculations about Avebury blossomed into a colourful theory of ancient astronauts, launched a raft of fresh conjecture about Mankind's origins, its gods, and their signs. Millenarianism has a long history, yet, in Britain its latest manifestation as a quasi-religious countercultural movement can be traced to the revival in the late 1960s of the Somerset town of Glastonbury as a place of

⁸⁵ "Most people think that [Blake's] "dark satanic mills" means those horrible factories where people slaved all day, but scholars say it refers to Oxford and Cambridge universities, where Blake saw little souls being milled out by education." John Michell to Sun and Allan Lundell (2003). <http://vimeo.com/5968393> Ret. 15/02/2013.

⁸⁶ In his last book, completed shortly before his death in 2009, Michell compared myths to scientific theories insofar as they both "come and go" (2009: 2). I would argue, however, that some myths are more resilient: they come and they stay, outliving scientific paradigms and even influencing shifts to new ones.

pilgrimage. This related to its association with national myths concerning the founding of Christianity in England and to Arthurian legend, layers of mysticism that were laid during the later medieval and, in particular, early modern Tudor era. Michell's arrival as a frequent visitor from London brought fresh accretion.⁸⁷

2.5.2 UFOs

The attachment of mystery to aerial phenomena appears endemic. But even this simple proposition is problematic: Is the myth of things seen in the sky really an expression of their mystery, as in *Unidentified Flying Objects*, or is it more about *identifying* with traditional notions of Other? Generally, what is observed is a body that is round, or spherical, or disk or "cigar-shaped," and is glowing or shining, i.e., either emitting or reflecting light. Jung also identified a psychic aspect, observing that:

The round bodies in particular are figures such as the unconscious produces in dreams, visions, etc. In the latter case they are to be regarded as *symbols* representing, in visual form, some thought that was not thought consciously, but is merely potentially present in the unconscious, in invisible form, and attains visibility only through the process of becoming conscious. The visible form, however, expresses the meaning of the unconscious content only approximately. In practice the meaning has to be completed by amplificatory interpretation.⁸⁸

Jung (1959: 17-21)

⁸⁷ As Rollo Maughfling, Archdruid of Glastonbury, Stonehenge & Britain, eulogised of Michell to a Beltane dawn gathering on Glastonbury Tor in 2009:

Sadly a week ago a very dear friend passed over, or went to the summer lands, died, whatever you want to call it. [...] People from Glastonbury will remember *Flying Saucer Vision*. But the big one that really made an impact in the seventies was *The View Over Atlantis*. Following on from that, *The City of Revelation*, *Dimensions of Paradise...*etc. He had discovered the way the ley lines, and the male and female currents interweave around the planet. He had discovered the numbers of creation. He had cracked the code of the Book of Revelations; how it applied to the Pyramids of Giza, Stonehenge, Plato's Republic, St John's revelation, Glastonbury Abbey... the same code of cosmic numbers that all the ancients knew about, before science and telescopes and computers and the rest of it. He gave us this insight and this knowledge.

<http://tinyurl.com/rollo-eulogy-toJM> Ret: 25/01/13

⁸⁸ Jung's "meaning has to be completed by amplificatory interpretation" seems pertinent to Peirce's notion of "the creature of the sign called the interpretant," which will come to the fore of my argument in Chapter 4.

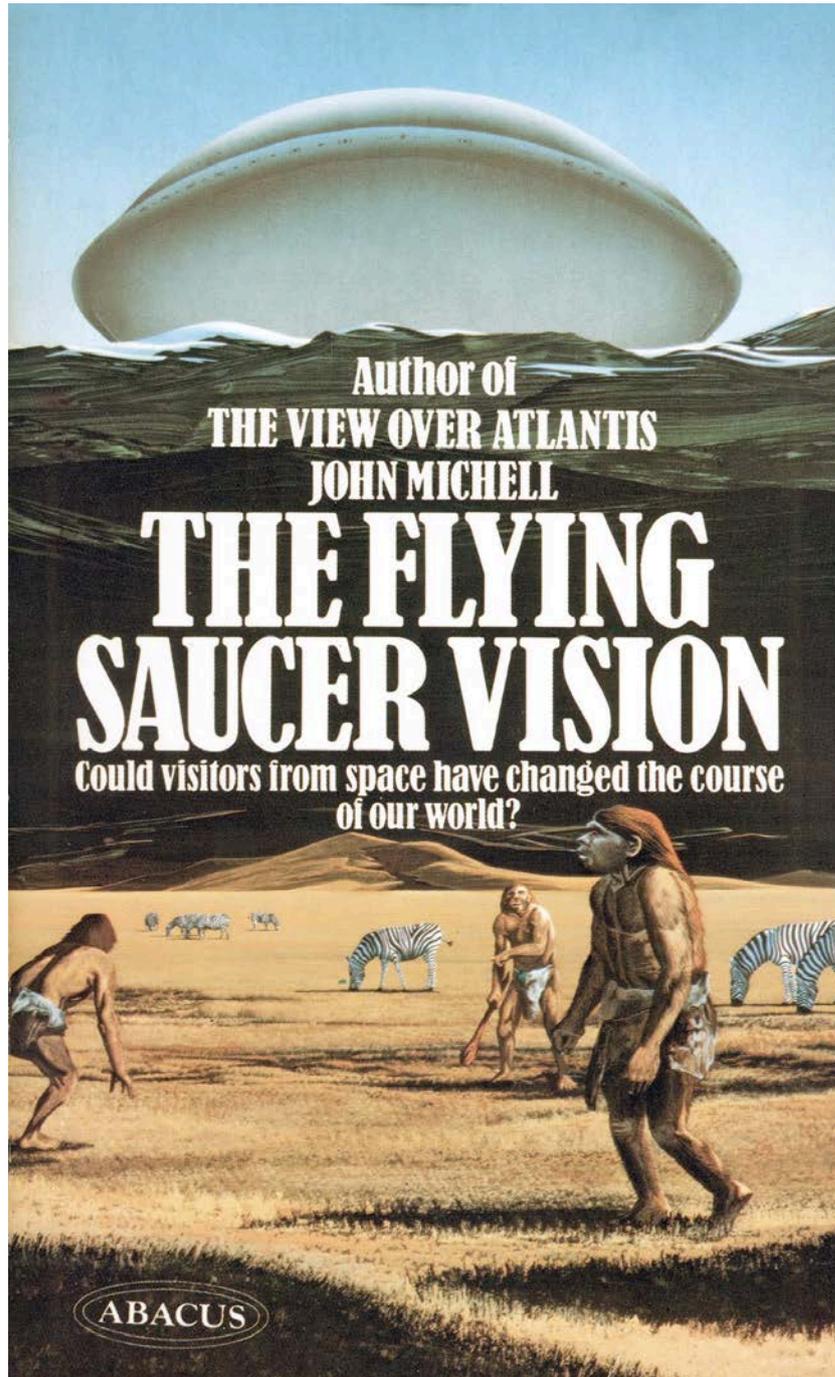


Fig. 9 In a scene reminiscent of A.C. Clarke's 2001, A Space Odyssey (1968), the cover of this 1974 edition of John Michell's first book, The Flying Saucer Vision (1967), depicts the moment new truths were revealed to early humanoids.

Of the plenitude of UFO sightings, only relatively few describe 'flying saucers,' a term that belongs to a uniquely American tradition of 'nuts and bolts' spacecraft, which found popularity in the late 1940s. Fascination with extraterrestrial visitors took hold in Britain soon afterwards, but the myth competes with an earlier tradition belonging to the terrestrial rather than the celestial: floating phosphorescent light phenomena carry memory associations with elementals and trickery.⁸⁹ This tradition includes Shakespearean references to sprites and strange lights, which glide, for example, 'along the church-way paths'⁹⁰ thus linking the airborne to the land.⁹¹ Yet, unlike its American counterpart, this earth-based or sub-horizon aspect of the UFO myth is more immanent than transcendental. Nevertheless, it fits Jung's model of the UFO as an archetypal image manifesting as spontaneous projections equally well, and addresses similarly otherworldly notions.

In Jung's Hermetic, polytheistic world, daimons exist as spiritual ancestors of the middle realm, occupying liminal regions between god and human, fictional and factual (Hillman 1983/2005: 55). In positioning himself between the orthodoxies of religion and science Jung re-established the liminality of what he called 'psychic reality,' consisting of fictive figures that are naturally poetic, dramatic, literary. As previously stated, I see Puck, as a Trickster figure, and my role as an artist making Puckish interventions in the landscape, in this context. It is important to recognize

⁸⁹ Entities such as Will O'the Wisp and Jack O'Lantern. 'Fairy' or 'pixie lights', 'spook lights' and 'corpse candles' [known collectively as *ignes fatui* (Latin: "foolish fire") and defined as a light that misleads or deludes – an illusion]. Unwary travellers lured into trouble by such lights are said to have been 'pixie led.'

⁹⁰ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act v. Scene ii. Spoken by Puck.

⁹¹ "Church-way paths" refer to a class of old pathway or road known as "corpse roads." They are known in Britain as bier or burial roads, coffin lines, lykes or lych ways (from Old English liches, corpse). The Saxon *deada waeg* may be the etymological root of the Dutch term for corpse roads, *Doodwegen* (deathroads). As Devereux (2007) argues, Puck's allusion to an occult history of these routes suggests associations with "long extant spirit lore, for they ran not only through the physical countryside but also through the invisible geography, the mental terrain, of pre-industrial countryfolk." This is pertinent to discussion of 'ley' energy to follow. An early example (given by Pennick & Devereux 1989: 237-8) of the confluence of physical and energetic pathways is found in a footnote in W.Y. Evans Wentz' book *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Counties* (1911):

An Irish mystic, and seer of great power... regards 'fairy paths' or 'fairy passes' as actual magnetic arteries, so to speak, through which circulates the earth's magnetism.
Evans Wentz 1911

that phenomena being discussed here are viewed in these terms by the people who believe in their reality.⁹² In this sense, Tricksterishness can be said to not only exist in the manufacture of these kind of phenomena but also in the way they are perceived and interpreted. And, moreover, I contend that the Trickster lives in the imaginal, creaturely interpretants (Peirce 1909) that are inevitably generated when direct experience is passed on to others as legend. As such, it serves (in many and various forms) as an otherly, viral presence.

Generally, scientific discussion about phenomena such as UFOs pans outward with little acknowledgement that engaging with them is also a religious activity. While it may be intuitive to expect the phenomena to articulate its 'self' to the spectator, faced with this kind of phenomenological encounter it is the spectator who does this, and who thus in a sense controls the object's behaviour. During the course of my research I found that it was commonly reported, of encounters with 'balls of light,' that at this point of reciprocal exchange all sense of cognition dissolves into a union of interplay between the viewer and the viewed. Place plays a crucial role in this, both in grounding phenomenal experience and revealing it within a specific socio-cultural context; its 'reality' is defined by the conditions of its setting. As with a holy icon, when place is perceived as special, or sacred, there is more to what it is than merely 'what it is' (Williams 2002) – it is how it is experienced; how the physical object or place invites us in to inhabit a space only previously hinted at. Informed by Gell's notion of *darśan* as 'witnessing as agency' (1998: 116), much of my practice came out of the idea that places of power intensify the reciprocal nature of this kind of engagement, where phenomena is experienced as an intimate exchange, or communion, with the otherly.

Echoes of a synthesis between the myths of flying saucers and a prehistoric Golden Age, and their relationship to Avebury, can be traced to a time that slightly precedes Jung's book. In 1954, Earth Mysteries expert John Foster-Forbes led a field trip to Avebury on a quest to make contact with flying saucers (Clarke & Roberts 2007: 75-9). None appeared, but their trip was well covered in the national press (*ibid*). 1968 saw the English publication of Erick von Daniken's bestselling book *Chariots of the Gods?* This was followed by T.C. Lethbridge's *The Legend of the Sons of God* (1972),

⁹² As typified by Harpur's influential book, *Daimonic Reality* (1994).

the title describing Lethbridge's treatment of extraterrestrial beings, as mentioned in Genesis: 'There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare *children* unto them, the same *became* mighty men [...] men of renown' (Genesis XI: 4).

Careful reading of Michell's *Megalithomania* (1982) reveals a clever method of circular referencing, where Lethbridge is used as an authoritative voice to bolster an idea of which Michell himself was probably the source. He writes:

An archaeologist who was well aware of the unidentified power in the Cornish stone circles was the late T.C. Lethbridge. In *The Legend of the Sons of God*, he described a visit to the Merry Maidens circle and the attempt he and his wife made to date it by use of a diviner's pendulum. The date of 2540BC was plausibly obtained for it, but in the course of their proceedings the Lethbridges were alarmed by the strong electric shocks they felt and by the sensation that the stones were rocking and dancing. "But why did anybody wish to store up electronic power in such places?" asked Lethbridge. The astronomical theory seemed to him unconvincing and his suggestion was that the circles were built as guiding power-beacons for the space craft of the structure-building extraterrestrials who from time to time visit this planet.

(Michell 1982: 119)

As Brookesmith (2013) points out, it is possible through recent scholarship [e.g., Colavito's *The Origins of the Space Gods* (2011)] to trace the roots of this modern variation on an old myth back to H.P. Lovecraft's *The Call of Cthulhu* (1928), featured in the pulp magazine *Weird Tales*, and beyond, including the writings of Fort.

2.5.3 The Warminster Mystery

Separate myths can come together as natural partners, not only to maintain their consistency but also combining syncretically to proceed complementarily. The unification of UFOs, elemental beings, and Earth Mysteries is an example of this. This also has a temporal aspect: when conditions are conducive such unions may be said to have found their time, at which point they begin to influence conditions. Such was the case as Michell was writing *The Flying Saucer Vision* (1967), which Pennick & Devereux described as a "Molotov cocktail lobbed into the melting pot of the psychedelic decade" (1989: 238). As Michell was conducting his own brand

of research around Glastonbury, twenty miles away in Warminster, Wiltshire, local journalist Arthur Shuttlewood was writing the first of his six books describing events surrounding an outbreak of UFO activity in that town – what became known as the Warminster 'flap.'^{93,94}

Michell and Shuttlewood's (first) books were published in 1967. The overlap of their subject matter leaves little doubt that each was aware of the other's researches, and that they shared the same cultural influences, e.g., Michell was aware of the 'flap' surrounding Warminster, and Shuttlewood was made aware of contemporary ideas about earth energies and prehistoric sites by fellow sky watchers. The key to understanding this convergence is Tony Wedd, "an ex-RAF pilot, a freethinker, a critic of modern materialism, (and) a man with both technical and artistic leanings" (Pennick & Devereux 1989: 208). Earlier (fn91), I mentioned the reference from 1911 to "fairy paths" as "magnetic arteries" in Wentz' book on fairy lore, and Wedd may have been aware of it. It is known that he had read Alfred Watkins' book (1921) about "old straight tracks," which Watkins called 'leys,' connecting ancient sites.⁹⁵ In the 1950s, Wedd read Aimé Michel's *Flying Saucers and the Straight Line Mystery* (1958), which posited the notion, suggested to him by his friend the Surrealist poet Jean Cocteau,⁹⁶ that clusters of UFO sightings fell into straight-line arrangements. He also read *My Trip to Mars, the Moon and Venus* (1956) by Buck Nelson, a Missouri farmer who claimed to have been taken by Space People on the tour described in his pamphlet, which he sold at Flying Saucer conventions held on his farm. In 1961,

⁹³ As in a state of agitation or panic. "If the classic wave is an epidemic" writes folklorist Thomas E. Bullard, "some periods qualify as pandemics because wave-level activity continues unabated for several years on an international scale... UFOs cavorted through the skies (over Warminster) during 1964-8 with a complexity of activity beyond description" (*Waves*, in Clarke, 1996, *The UFO Encyclopedia: Vol 3*, quoted in Devereux & Brookesmith, 1997: 49).

⁹⁴ The scale of public interest in this activity may be put into perspective by considering the following: In August 1965, the local District Council held a public meeting to discuss the events and their implications to the town. Apart from the council leader, the panel consisted of UFO experts and a local priest with an interest in astronomy. More than 500 people attended, including reporters from the national press and television. As a consequence of their reports, the following holiday weekend saw an estimated 8-10,000 visitors to Warminster (Dewey & Rees 2006: 4). It was the first time since VE Day in 1945 that the town's pubs had run dry. <http://magonia.haaan.com/the-warminster-files/> Ret. 25/01/13.

⁹⁵ Interestingly, 'leye,' also once meant flame or fire (*Notes & Queries* July 28, 1928).

⁹⁶ Cocteau writes: "Aimé Michel's book passes from the objective to the subjective with airy ease. Each day adds prolifically to the evidence he has brought forward, and when the scoffers, the fools, the romantics and the braggarts have done their worst, there remains a strong element of truth. I sadly recall Renan's words: Truth could mean disappointment." (1st UK edition, 1957: 9)

Wedd combined these ideas into one grand theory, which he published as a pamphlet, where he writes:

Even if the voyage described by Buck Nelson to Mars, the Moon and Venus were not a real experience, such a person would doubtless provide a means of relaying the sort of information the Space People are trying to get over to us; we might miss some useful information in rejecting the entire story. For instance he explains that the space ships travel along magnetic currents, and that each of these is named and numbered. He also says "The Space People tell me that the places where magnetic currents cross is comparable to a crossroads sign."⁹⁷

Wedd, *Skyways and Landmarks* (1961)

Wedd continues:

Since flying saucers have been visiting the Earth throughout recorded history, such crossroads signs would have to be prehistoric. With the publication in 1925 (*sic*) of Watkins' book on *The Old Straight Track* people have in fact become aware that there are landmarks across the country, lying along quite straight alignments, and a society now exists to plot them. And indeed the types of marks dealt with are in fact the prehistoric ones. So far, however, there has been no suggestion that these marks are the crossroads signs mentioned by Buck Nelson.

Wedd (*ibid*)

That is, until this was suggested of Cley Hill by Jimmy Goddard, the first editor of *The Ley Hunter* magazine and a fan of Wedd's work. He described it as:

...a really remarkable structure. The hill itself is 784 feet high and one side of it seems to be hollowed out into a kind of huge crater. All around the top of the hill are lots of weirdly shaped earthworks which look so unearthly one cannot [help but] wonder at the hill being a centre of Thing activity.

<http://www.leyhunt.fsnet.co.uk/lhunt66.htm> Ret: 13/10/11

By "Thing," Goddard meant UFOs. His view is interesting because it indicates a perceptual link *between the visual appearance of a place and the phenomena associated with it*. On Easter weekend, 1966, Goddard joined Shuttlewood on a hilltop sky-watch and introduced him to the subject of Earth Mysteries, an idea Shuttlewood duly passed on to television viewers during an interview with Kenneth

⁹⁷ Peter Brookesmith has noted that the crossroads is "a classic liminal place and, of course, where blues singer Robert Johnson sold his soul to the Devil!" [*Pers. comm.* (email) 2011].

Hudson for a BBC TV documentary *Pie in the Sky* (1966), consolidating the fusion of UFO phenomena with Britain's ancient topography:

Hudson (in voiceover): Why should (these events) happen particularly in Warminster? The Warminster journalist Mr. Arthur Shuttlewood has some interesting theories about this.

Shuttlewood: Well I think there could be several reasons, obviously. One, I think, is because it has, according to all the archaeologists and the UFO researchers who have been plaguing us, you know, since all this began... it has 11 leys – that's L-E-Y-S – and apparently they are an archaeological term meaning prehistoric points of various types. For example, you must have a natural fount head or water supply (a spring), you must have a certain radius of either consecrated or unconsecrated burial ground, and of course we have the tumuli and all the earth barrows around here, and you must have a place of worship, a church or some sort of worship. And we find that we have 11, which according to all the experts, so I gather, is unique in this world. In other words, it's a billion-to-one chance.

Pie in the Sky, BBCTV 1966⁹⁸

Out of the conditions and circumstances I have described thus far emerged more notable phenomena that are elemental to the diet of New Age belief: crop circles and the notion of St Michael and St Mary lines. It would not be fair to describe the St Michael line as non-physical or invisible, and to allow it on that basis to be dismissed as non-existent, because it does have a physical dimension. Michell first noticed it in 1968 as he stood on top of Glastonbury Tor, a terraced, natural prominence in the Somerset levels that stands as an icon of the local mythos.⁹⁹ At

⁹⁸ http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/wiltshire/hi/people_and_places/history/newsid_8694000/8694729.stm Ret. 25/01/13.

⁹⁹ Of which the anthropologists Edith & Victor Turner (1978: 21-2) observed:

From its early medieval beginnings, this pilgrimage has always had a broad penumbra of Celtic pagan and other pre-Christian associations, some of them figuring as important parts of the Arthurian and Grail legends. [...] These associations continue to resonate - for example, in the countercultural pilgrimages which link the ruins of Glastonbury with adjacent prehistoric sites and regard the whole complex as a cosmological schema laid out either by the lost Atlanteans or by extraterrestrial "Saucerians," to whom are also attributed the megalithic structures of Stonehenge and Avebury. [...]

Victor Turner and Edith L.B. Turner
Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture, Columbia University Press, 1978: 21-2

its summit is a ruined tower.¹⁰⁰ Visible some eleven miles to the southwest is a solitary hill, or mump, similarly adorned with a ruined church and dedicated to St Michael. During his Glastonbury fieldwork, Michell observed that:

The Tor and the Mump have another feature in common, their orientation. The axis of the Mump is directed towards the Tor, where the line is continued by the old pilgrim's path along the ridge of the Tor to St Michael's tower. This line drew attention to itself and demanded investigation, so I extended it further east, and the result confirmed its significance. The line went straight to the great stones at the entrance to the megalithic temple at Avebury. In the other direction, westward, it pointed towards St Michael's Mount by way of other prominent Michael sanctuaries.

[Michell, Review of *The Sun and the Serpent* (1989),
Michellany 2010: 36]

According to Michell, he "recognized" the St Michael line as a fragment, and yet another example, of 'lost' knowledge.¹⁰¹ The line stretches from the easternmost tip of England, through Glastonbury, Avebury, Bury St Edmunds and other holy sites, to Hopton, East Anglia, where it aligns with the Mayday sunrise.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ The 12th century chapel of St Michael de Torre had replaced a monks' retreat, but it was destroyed in a powerful earthquake. It was rebuilt in 1323. Two centuries later it was the site of the Abbot of Glastonbury, Richard Whiting's execution, in the aftermath of the Dissolution and the destruction of the Abbey, at which point the chapel was abandoned.

¹⁰¹ Michell writes:

A revelation is something that comes into your mind when you feel the need for it and are looking for it, even though you may not know quite what you are looking for. [...] A revelation that occurred to me over thirty years ago is the St Michael line through the extreme width of southern England. It had long been a secret, forgotten by everyone, but once recognized it stirred up old memories and shed light on one of the deepest mysteries in ancient British history.

(Michell 2005: 67, from *The Oldie*, circa 1999)

¹⁰² In his book *Earth Magic*, Francis Hitching (1978: 101) describes Michell as starting the St Michael ley at St Michael's Mount but observes (p103) that the Glastonbury-Avebury line, when stretched full length, misses the Mount by two miles and Bury St Edmunds by half a mile. Is it possible that the serpentine St Mary line, devised later, being a living, breathing, and wriggling creature, was designed to correct this discrepancy?



Fig. 10 A depiction of the St. Michael line.

In Michell's hands (2004: 87-96), the line shared synonymy with the Icknield Way, an ancient track thought by archaeologists to be the oldest road in Britain.¹⁰³ The feminine Mary aspect of the Michael line was brought into being as its elemental, energetic companion through the work (inspired by Michell) of Paul Broadhurst & Hamish Miller, whose book *The Sun and the Serpent* (1989) describes their pursuit of its origins through dowsing. The book continues to sell well – it is a 'cult classic' – thus galvanizing the Earth Mysteries movement and localizing its attention upon the Avebury complex, which Michell identified as a point of convergence of many ancient tracks and energy lines. It was, observed Michell, "the main crossroads and the centre of prehistoric life and religion. As Delphi was to the Greeks, so was Avebury to the tribes of Britain" (Heath & Michell 2004: 69).

2.5.4 Circular Evidence

In the last section of this chapter I will summarise the modern history of the crop circles phenomenon from its early association with UFOs at Warminster to its present home at Avebury. This will prepare the way into the next chapter, where I will discuss this phenomenon in terms of contemporary ritual performance so as to

¹⁰³ Cochrane (2009) [see fn82] called this "a deliberate sleight of hand to conflate controversial ley theory with respectable archaeology."

demonstrate to the reader how contemporary legend is realised through make-believe, audience collusion, and the playframe¹⁰⁴ of place-space relations.

One summer night in the late 1970s,¹⁰⁵ Doug Bower and his friend Dave Chorley entered a wheat field in the moon shadow of Cley Hill, near Warminster, and swirled a circle, thirty feet in diameter. Bower had always been captivated by stories of flying saucers and visitors from other worlds. An avid reader of UFO books and magazines, he was aware of the history of circular 'ground traces,' not least those reported to have occurred at Warminster in the early 1970s.¹⁰⁶ Bower told me in 2010 that his transition from a passive to active participant in the UFO myth, and the act of turning myth to legend, was triggered by his urge to experience, *and have others experience*, something he had previously only imagined: the imprint of a landed flying saucer in the English countryside. It took many more circles before the phenomenon came to public attention. In August 1980, the *Wiltshire Times* made the crucial link:

Mystery Circles – Return Of The 'Thing'?

The Warminster "Thing" could be back. Speculation that the UFO, which hundreds of people claimed to have seen in the mid and late 1960s, begun again this week after three circular depressions appeared in cornfields near Westbury White Horse.

Wiltshire Times, August 1980¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Petra Tjitske Kalshoven: "I was invited to enter the playframe of a tepee camp in Belgium – but on one particular condition only." *Anthropology and Performance: A Critical Conversation*. University of Manchester 16/04/10 (Conference programme).

¹⁰⁵ The actual year is lost to poor memory. Bower thinks it is 1978. Chorley recalled that it corresponded with his son's school sports day, in 1976.

¹⁰⁶ Arthur Shuttlewood reports finding "landing spots" in grass, swirled clockwise, their "blades swept smoothly inert in shallow depressions." Of these, he writes:

It is significant that most circles [...] measure exactly thirty feet in diameter, some beyond this figure, yet one aspect of these circles is exasperating. One could understand a too-zealous believer in flying saucers trying to fake such circles deliberately, yet here the reverse is happening!

Shuttlewood 1967/73: 153

Shuttlewood goes on to tell of the systematic destruction of "giant nests, where I think Things (UFOs) have silently touched down," complaining that whenever he went to see the evidence it had been "mysteriously obliterated" (*ibid*). The frontispiece to Shuttlewood's *UFOs, Key to the New Age* (1971) featured four photographs showing flattened grass in numerous shapes and sizes, but displaying an apparently deliberate geometry.

¹⁰⁷ The report noted the clockwise swirls and the absence of tracks leading into the circles, two indicators suggested as evidence against human culprits. The Army, too, was mystified;

The article implied that the circles were too neat to be the work of humans. This set the tone for decades of legend dispute. The appearance of crop circles, or pairings and sets of circles, some ringed, attracted the attention of paranormal investigators and orthodox scientists. News media stimulated popular imagination for what might be causing them. As Jung had predicted, there was a tendency to want to keep the mystery, and therefore the story, going. In 1990 came a revolutionary shift in design from simple circles to linear 'pictograms.'¹⁰⁸ The prototype, inspired by *Young Woman* (1919), by the Dadaist painter George Ribemont-Dessaignes, consisting of avenues and boxes as well as circles, appeared in a field of young wheat at Chilcomb, Hampshire.

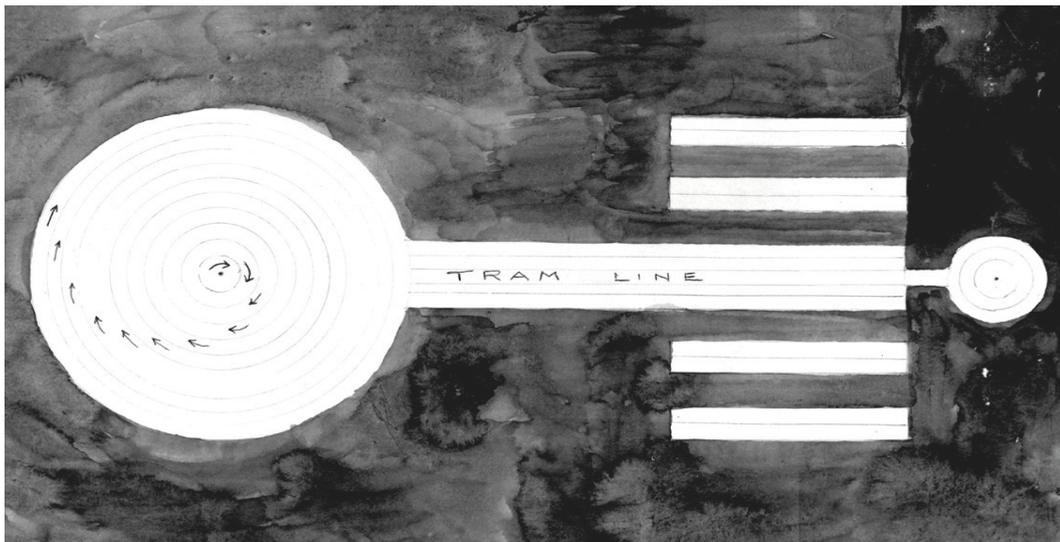


Fig. 11 Doug Bower's sketch of the Chilcomb pictogram, 1990.

One month later, a pictogram larger than anyone had seen before appeared in a field in Alton Barnes, in Wiltshire's Vale of Pewsey, a few miles from Avebury.

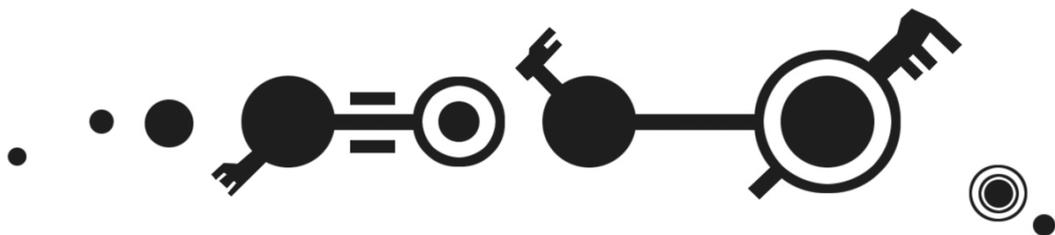


Fig. 12 Plan of the Alton Barnes double pictogram, 1990.

a spokesperson denied that the swirled lay of the crop could have been caused by the downwash of helicopter blades. Nor could the weather have been responsible, according to a local farmer. "It certainly cannot be wind or rain damage" he said, "because I have seen plenty of that and it is just not that regular. If it's not a helicopter, then it is very mysterious."¹⁰⁸ "Pictogram," the term used to describe joined up crop circles, was first used by an early investigator, Pat Delgado, under advice from the British Museum.



Fig. 13 Doug Bower (right) and Dave Chorley photographed in 1991, in Bower's Southampton studio. (Photo: Rob Irving)

Bower and Chorley had not made the one at Alton Barnes; they rarely ventured so far north into Wiltshire – the crop circles phenomenon had outgrown them and ‘fled the nest.’ In September 1991, after years of secrecy, Bower and Chorley sold their story to a national newspaper. They thought that would be the end of the enterprise. But the circles appeared the following year, and every year after that, and their mystery continued to flourish as the patterns increased in complexity, attracting a new species of enthusiast: the sacred geometer. That summer, John Michell had founded *The Cerealologist*, a quarterly journal dedicated to the mystery of the circles; in effect, it was also a vehicle of assimilation into the Earth Mysteries movement. The journal existed for three years under his editorship, before it was overtaken by disillusionment among its English audience, and by the Internet; now, information about the phenomenon is disseminated instantly, worldwide, via bespoke social networks such as Facebook, its audience-base more global than local. Nevertheless, Michell and friends, Patrick Harpur in particular, had brought a unique breed of Fortean/Mercurial humour to proceedings, as is evident from Michell's treatment – a subtle double entendre headline is enough – of Lucy Pringle's report at the beginning of this thesis.

With this historical outline, I have attempted to explain the psychosocial association of UFOs and other phenomena under the general heading of Earth Mysteries, including crop circles, with certain places and landscapes, and the current popular fascination with the myth of association between these legends and prehistoric monuments. I have argued that these legends are connected as aspects of a myth of 'lost' knowledge, in the Hermetic tradition, which is central to New Age thought. It is my intention that this brief history also gives an indication of this kind of cultural activity as a continuous regenerative system, where legend mutates and adapts to local conditions through the telling and retelling. From here I will examine these processes further, looking at how myths and legends inform responses to place and landscape, and the subtle collusion involved in ensuring the continuity of myth as it is fed back into society as contemporary folklore.

3 Theatre of Schemes

3.1 Introduction

Marina Warner: A really ancient place of worship has become the sum of all the people's experiences that have gone before. It isn't just like any other place, it's completely different.

Rob Irving: And if we were to disguise it as a MacDonald's, would we still feel this?

MW: If we made it profane?

RI: I mean, do we have to know the bones are there to sense the sanctity?

MW: The rational answer is that if we didn't know we probably wouldn't feel it, but the point is we're not rational in that way. If we were queuing up at MacDonald's and someone in line said "this used to be a church, a very holy church – what a shame they built a MacDonald's here," we'd feel differently.

'On ghosts, ground plans, nanoveres...'

An interview with Marina Warner (2002)

<http://www.nthposition.com/onghostsandground.php>

Ret. 31/12/12

During the period of the present research (2009-13), belief in myths concerning UFOs, mystical alignments, earth energies, and crop circles, and their legendary association with Avebury's prehistoric ritual landscape became stronger than ever among the thousands of visitors the site attracts during summer months.

In this chapter, I will examine the ritual practices being played out in light of the historical background I have outlined. I have argued that New Age legend has its roots in Hermetic tradition, whose mystical association with Avebury's ritual landscape has a history of at least 300 years. We are currently witnessing a revival of this tradition in New Age philosophy, reflected in legends that give form to an overarching myth of a Golden Age of 'lost' knowledge, and its reclamation through ritual practice. As modern folklore, this is recognized by contemporary artists such as Dickinson, Lundberg, Deller, Coffin, Coates, and others (including myself), as fertile ground on which to extend the lines of what constitutes 'art' in contemporary culture.

Of concern to me here, however, is the question of how physical setting provides a playframe for legend, offering sensorial conditions that stimulate conjecture. This provides the grounding for my subsequent examination of how legend is performed

and brought into reality, as art, through processes of ostension. This includes the human manufacture of objects of inquiry as legendary phenomena. I will attempt to locate this practice and its reception under one umbrella of reciprocal performance, where both practice and reception are responsive to each other. There is a lot that could be said about legend in modern society, but what is most important for my purposes here is the key role art/artifice plays in shaping this social drama.

I contend that entering this legend playframe entails a kind of quasi-religious acceptance of the conditions of its being as a place where preternatural events are expected to occur. [This was supported by data collected in the form of responses to my questionnaire (Appendix 1, DVD)]. In this sense, place offers “psychic insulation” (Peckham 1965: 81) from the socio-cultural environment outside. The legend landscape can therefore be described as liminal territory requiring disorientation, and subsequent reorientation in preparation for *wyrd* experiences (Section 1.3.1, first paragraph). Where scientists are conditioned to recognize existing relationships, the seer seeks new ones. S/he enters into a kind of *folie à deux* with objects of inquiry, as legendary phenomena, making connections that may otherwise be overlooked. For example, one long-running legend is that crop circle ‘energies’ drain camera batteries. When this happens, it is assumed to be ‘anomalous,’ *croppyspeak* for a paranormal signature. Rather than test this under rigorous scientific conditions (this has never been done), it is more expedient to accept it as evidence for the legend. This kind of response creates a space for people to choose appropriate interpretations of *wyrd* phenomena according to their cultural or religious inclination.¹⁰⁹ Just as the drama that gives meaning to sacred experience seems out of place in a profane setting, what is considered normal outside legend environments is transformed into a mythical otherworld. As myth becomes realised through legend, the relational

¹⁰⁹ A few thoughts converge here: First, the Catholic art philosopher Jacques Maritain’s observation that visionaries tend to turn away from what is known in favour of an interest in their own subjectivity (1953 Ch 1) intertwines interestingly with Eagleton’s observations that, as a concept, aesthetics does not originate in abstract conceptual thought, such as ‘art appreciation,’ but to human perception and the senses as we distinguish between “the material and immaterial: between things and thoughts, sensations and ideas, that which is bound up in our creaturely life” (Eagleton 1990: 13). I interpret Eagleton’s ‘creaturely’ as a reference to Otto’s “creature feeling” (1923/59: 51) of profaneness when in the presence of the holy. Accordingly, aesthetics are the “stirrings of a primitive materialism – of the body’s long inarticulate rebellion against the tyranny of the theoretical” (Eagleton 1990: 13). All of the above, I think, is pertinent to Gell’s [1998: 97 [and Freedberg’s 1989: 77]] proposition that aesthetic and religious experience are essentially synonymous.

structure in which myth is something that exists outside reality folds back on itself – where, to borrow an image from Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, the windmills outside become giants.¹¹⁰ Douglas's observation that "a marked off place alerts a special kind of expectancy, just as 'Once upon a time' creates a mood receptive to fantastic tales" (1966/2002: 78) is also germane to this argument.

Occult belief is, by definition, antistructural, therefore it is characterised by its opposition, indeed its explicit *antagonism* toward, conventional ontologies. As indicated in Section 2.1, this creates a curious inversion of all the things that it opposes. It also ensures demands for the physical embodiment of these ideas, from both ends of the spectrum of belief/disbelief. Places and landscapes (such as the Avebury complex), things, the human body, and how these are used in combination in ritual practice all fulfil this demand. Understanding this collocation of elements entails appreciation of the nature of aesthetic and religious experience in relation to performativity, interpretation, the suspension of disbelief, the interplay of pleasure, awe and fear in visionary experience, and how these are mediated by physical environment. I see this in terms of artistic activity, akin to Surrealism, but where the latter is taken to its 'logical' extreme; such activity, i.e., acts of 'making special,' can be seen whenever humans interact with the divine.

This is important in the present context because it represents a unity of art and religion, which also enters into epistemological territory in the extent to which legend is treated as real and paraded as fact. This is a problem for rationalists, and thus creates a climate of disputation. Yet, to the philosopher Alain de Botton, "the most boring and unproductive question one can ask of any religion is whether or not [what is believed] is true" (2012: 11). In the gap between these positions lies an interesting, *innately Surrealistic*, tension which sits at the heart of the kind of ritual activity that manifests legend. In overlapping with art it necessarily includes art, and what I wish to address here is the artist's role in perpetuating social relations between legend and landscape through notions and artistic manifestations of the sublime.

¹¹⁰ For example, to conspiracy theorists, the UK government's openness in releasing UFO 'X-files' becomes proof of the existence and suppression of *real* X-files.

Through the associations and interactions discussed in the preceding chapter, place can be seen to mediate mythical subjects through its own materiality, providing an appropriate setting for legend. This activity is an important branch of aesthetics that has been 'separated out' of modern life through a combination of utilitarian and secular values. The psychic insulation offered by certain places, and by the perceptual and experiential fields that spring from human relations with the sacred and uncanny, are central to practical magic, where subjectivity overrides 'objective' analysis. My exchange with Marina Warner quoted at the beginning of this chapter suggests that our own preconceptions are at play here.

As Ellis observed, a ghost in a fast-food restaurant would seem *ungrammatical* (2001: 94). Conversely, just as ghosts inhabit old, decrepit buildings loaded with history there are certain legends that seem to *belong* in certain places. The ensuing tension binds reality and illusion. In the triadic round of seer, seeing, and the seen, normative distinctions become obscured. When we associate certain places or landscapes with a particular legend or cluster of mythical events, these places become the embodiment of the legend – e.g., a haunted house embodies, even *personifies*, the idea that ghosts inhabit places. What makes this so powerful is that it is not the product of thought alone, but also felt experience; the psychic insulation becomes a phenomenological enterprise.

I am arguing that setting shapes the legend narrative, but that it is also shaped by it – it is a reciprocal process. Just as some tourists to Jerusalem become overwhelmed by their proximity to its history, assuming the identity and role of biblical figures,¹¹¹ so city-dwellers engage with Avebury's ancient topography and lose themselves in its legends. Just as in the moment we learn or decide that something is a 'work of art' we change our behaviour towards it, and that, anthropologically, this *defines* an artwork as social agent (Gell 1998 5-7), when a particular place becomes culturally charged in this way, it invites engagement. Thus, Avebury trapped Aubrey, and has trapped others since. As with any religious image or object, certain places have an aura about them, and similarly it is affect, or the attitude of a certain kind of receptivity, that defines their power and efficacy.

¹¹¹ For an up-to-date overview of Jerusalem Fever, see Alexander Van De Haven's chapter *The Holy Fool Still Speaks: the Jerusalem Syndrome as a religious subculture* in Tamar Mayer & Suleiman A. Mourad (eds) (2008) *Jerusalem: Idea and Reality*, Routledge.

We can get a measure of the way belief influences how place is perceived and experienced from the following story told by a crop circle maker. It was night, he was in an unfamiliar field and had just started marking out his design when he was disturbed by a rustling noise in the crop. Emergent myth among some circle-makers stated that the ritual act of creating crop circles attracts paranormal phenomena, often in the form of 'shadow entities.' My informant's first thought was that he had summoned such a being. At this, he ran away, abandoning the circle. Even in the relative safety of a pub a few days later, he insisted that the noise was evidence of something exotic. He had not considered any prosaic alternatives – a deer perhaps? – and he promptly dismissed my suggestion. This account circulated within the cropy community¹¹² as a legend of contact with a daimonic entity.¹¹³ My impression was that the informant was unused to sharing a field with other nocturnal creatures, and, primed by tales of similar experiences, was easily spooked. His story also offered an added attraction of placing him, a relative newcomer to the scene, at the centre of an existing legend (see Section 4.4). Another more experienced circle-maker told me that, for him, the act of making a circle was a way of *interacting* with supernatural forces. This involved the intake of mind-altering substances. Once the circle's role in this engagement was fulfilled, it did not matter to him how others interpreted it or used it to their own ends. In both cases, *the experiences had been shaped by a powerful combination of place and its association with particular legends.*

Whatever the truth of such stories, they foster the idea that the acknowledgement of human involvement in the creation of crop circles is not the end of the mystery, but the beginning of a new one: offering, for some, an escape from disillusionment. These stories coalesce as new legendry concerning direct engagement between human crop circle-makers and daimonic phenomena. Drawing on Harpur's premise that daimons are more than merely a product of the imagination, and building on Jung's ideas about this, it is assumed that archetypal entities exist and operate with autonomy within the collective human unconscious, and are thus able to exert

¹¹² In subsequent tellings, Chinese whisper fashion, the witness had struck the entity with a 'stomper' (a wooden plank used for making crop circles), but the weapon passed right through the invisible assailant as if it was not there!

¹¹³ Folklorist Theo Meder (2007a: 287; 2007b: 150) likens these stories to religious *exempla*, bearing witness to an affirmation of the otherworldly status of the circles, its moral credence supported by the curious twist that whatever was out there had taught human crop circle makers ('hoaxers') a lesson they would not forget.

influence on people to behave in ways that are prompted, if not instigated by elements of our own unconscious minds. This would explain how crop circles act upon us, both individually and collectively, so effectively. To the social researcher unconcerned with truth values, what is important here is that the idea of humans operating under the influence of ancient archetypes exists, and that it influences perception. This reflects a process by which legend reinvents itself by adaptation, adoption, and evolution in order for the myth to survive the debilitating anti-legend that 'all crop circles are made by people.' At the same time, it maintains the aura of mystery in the presence of the divine, or demonic, summonsed by the creative act.

Central to my argument here is the notion that perceptions of place and space¹¹⁴ collaborate in such sensorial transformations. A legend landscape can be thought of in terms of both an altered ontological state that differs in relation to conventional views of reality outside itself (often referred to as "the real world"), and as the physical embodiment of these ideas. It offers believers a *parareality* to that which exists outside itself. The fictive products of this state may be (and sometimes certainly are) communicated to others as universal fact. In the performance of my practice my focus is on the human responses elicited in this legend context, and how these are used to validate perceptions and experiences of the vitality of the Avebury landscape as a place of special relevance to New Age concerns. Crop circles, as both empirical and conceptual objects, mediate between these states. Through them, "we are able to trace [...] a movement of thought, a movement of memory reaching down into the past and a movement of aspiration, probing towards an unrealised, and perhaps unrealisable futurity" (Gell 1998: 258).

3.2 Crop circles

Having detailed relevant contextual and theoretical concerns, I will now turn directly to relevant elements within the legend landscape of Avebury and to the role of my practice – both in making crop circles and other legend platforms. This will include the social interaction resulting from their appearance.

¹¹⁴ My differentiation of place and space follows Ingold's: "Farmers plant their crops in the *earth*, not in space, and harvest them from *fields*, not from space. Their animals graze *pastures*, not space. Travellers make their way through the *country*, not through space, and as they walk or stand they plant their feet on the *ground*, not in space. Painters set up their easels in the *landscape*, not in space" (Ingold 2011: 145). Space is a mental, climatic state: a field.

Crop circles perform on multiple levels, not only as *sui generis* phenomena that evince occult power, but also as individual sites of ritual performance. On one level, they are catalysts of conviviality, places where croppies meet and form social bonds. On another, arguably more esoteric level, these sites make ideal spots where 'God takes his compass' and centres it within "the ever-spinning circle of the cosmos" (Michell 2005: 229), placing the individual or collective self at its fulcrum. As such, crop circles serve as temporary *temenos* becoming special sensorial 'sites of encounter' with both their physical surroundings and the occult presences that reside there. Here, 'field' becomes both the literal and metaphoric interface by which the human body can make contact with these presences – in the context of my subject here, an actual field serves as a metaphor for the virtual. I witnessed an example of this while visiting a crop circle overlooking Silbury Hill (*Fig. 14*). I overheard, and documented, two people communing with the True Circlemakers, whom they named as the Star Councils of Light: "Did you make this circle?" one asked her pendulum. "Yes," came the reply, which she passed on to her friend and to anyone in earshot. As well as acting as a kind of telephone box, the crop circle, thus verified as authentic, also authenticates the sanctity of its setting within this peculiar landscape. This prompted me to ask whether the reciprocal nature of this exchange with the daimonic realm extended to a broader sensorium. Perhaps the circle would not have been so easily authenticated if it were nestled in a field next to an industrial estate? What I was witnessing suggested a *séance*, which also demands its own unique set of conditions. This is an analogy worth bearing in mind as my argument progresses.



Fig. 14 A crop circle overlooking Silbury Hill.

Crop circles also have extended selves as quasi-religious graphical motifs that circulate beyond their physical location. Photographs of the 'symbols' in situ affirm a mystical association with particular landscapes; peripheral images that can be taken away or disseminated as tokens (postcards, calendars etc.) are an essential part of the pilgrimage experience (Freedberg 1989: 100; Reader 2011). As for the motifs on their own, in 1992, when some circle-makers were making circles in order to communicate with the daimonic creatures they believed were responsible for the original 'messages,' I wrote (with Jim Schnabel) that:

The patterns they swirl are related to symbols from mystical alchemy, rune languages, mandalas, and sacred geometry. Their crop circles may thus be considered devotional art, and of the highest quality.

Schnabel & Irving *Independent* magazine (29/081992: 38)

It is this, we argued, that separated these works from those of Richard Long, Robert Smithson, and Andy Goldsworthy. Yet, I realise now that whereas much devotional art is intended to present clear messages and ideas to its audience, it is precisely the *ambiguity* of crop circle patterns that carries their mystique and mystical potential. These iconic motifs have been absorbed into New Age mystical frameworks, and subsequently channelled back into contemporary culture in a continuous feedback loop.¹¹⁵ Like sacred icons, the crop circles' religiously perceived nature and significance dwells in the space between its qualities of "making strange what is familiar, and the homeliness of what is strange" (Williams 2002: xv). Whatever our evaluation of this phenomenon, something is being communicated. Is this evidence of 'the gods' displaying an ability to interact with humans? Or is it a conversation we are having with ourselves? These questions are of equal interest to me, and I will explore their semiotic implications further in my next chapter.

In creating these conditions and situations, human circle-makers are not merely catering to a disarticulated art worldview – there is little that is transformative in that – but are integral to a more social process of creative stimulation. Our work

¹¹⁵ E.g., crop circle tattoos have become contemporary fashion statements. I would also point to the artist Marc Treanor (and friends), much of whose 2D sand art on Welsh and Cornish beaches are copies of designs that have appeared, unauthored, in Wiltshire crop fields, sometimes only days before – see <http://www.sandcircles.co.uk/> Ret. 21/02/2013.

should be viewed in this context: as an invitation to wonder if what we produce is humanly possible, and “if they are not made by ‘us,’ then by whom or what?”

In doing so, it is important to recognize that our creative scope extends to include the discourse the crop circles evoke [as with the H-Glaze *JSE* paper (Section 1.5.5) and Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917)]. In thirty years, crop circles have evolved from being perceived as physical imprints of flying saucers to having an innate power to act upon us either directly or remotely, as images.¹¹⁶ Like moon rock (Pearson 2001: 95), ‘genuine’ (i.e., supposedly non-man-made) crop circles possess an aura (Benjamin 1935; Taussig 1987; Pearson 2001) that denotes otherness. This aura¹¹⁷ and its efficacy are predicated on the notion that the works are non-human in origin, which is contingent on their sudden occurrence and the concealment of their maker/s. Thus, the effect of the artwork on spectators is fundamentally conditioned by the collective notion of the processes which gave rise to it. Yet, as Pearson observes, if the ‘moon rock’ were revealed to be not from the moon, but from earth (i.e., it would be just another piece of rock), its aura vanishes; likewise, once exposed as man-made the crop circle reverts to, as Bower put it, “only flattened wheat.” Viewed in these terms, ‘genuine’ crop circles give presence to absence, and therein lies their power as artefacts: as they imply the invisibility in the here and now of their makers, they foster a *climate* of Barthesian discourse about authorship and intent. Crop circles are effective because they are *affective*; once identified as man-made art, they are unable to sustain the effects/affects ascribed to ‘genuine’ non-man-made artefacts, even if they are physically identical.¹¹⁸ These artworks are made to be consumed by people who do not regard them as art. As soon as they are seen as art, the magic contained within them, or within us, dies.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ As an example of the latter, Lucy Pringle told me that at a talk she gave in New York a member of the audience approached her saying that she was in pain, but that during the talk the pain had subsided “because the circles being shown were acting remotely on the strength of their geometry alone” (interview, December 2012).

¹¹⁷ Aura refers here to the vitality of an object's cultural relevance. Benjamin defines this as where “true to its nature,” the object remains “distant, however close it may be” (1935).

¹¹⁸ This may be demonstrated by the methods set out in my Introduction.

¹¹⁹ The idea that humans act as a channel does not necessarily contradict my assertion that the efficacy of crop circles is predicated upon their being assumed to be of non-human origin, as this scenario is still once removed from an exclusively human solution.

It is important to recognize the value of maintaining this sacred experience by keeping the aura and efficacy of crop circles alive as ritual objects, even as their mystery is assumed to be a scientific problem. This pretence is integral to their performance. As their 'impossibility' is said to evade normal scientific evaluation this invites novel approaches to solutions to the problems they pose, thus opening investigations to the lay audience. This is adequately illustrated by the following promise-filled copy:

We are now signing people up for our "adventure of a lifetime" summer crop circle tour, July 2013.

Identify the Energy

This year's mission: identify the source of the mysterious energies that emanate from Balls of Light seen in and around the crop circles. Despite our best efforts, we still haven't pinpointed exactly where this energy comes from. In the past, it has destroyed batteries and rendered cameras useless, some permanently. And we should warn you, this tour is not for everyone. We're only looking for people that want an adventuresome, cutting-edge, mystically-filled tour on the edge of science. So if you are prepared to experience and explore new ideas and new realities, this tour is for you!

Unpredictable Effects

While we will take every step to insure your safety, we still don't completely understand crop circles and don't know what effect they'll have on you. (Please do not sign up for the tour if you have a pace-maker.) In the past we've experienced battery failure, camera malfunctions, and laptop anomalies. Each crop circle is different so understand that you go into these circles knowing and accepting that anything can happen. To date, crop circles have been associated with space and time distortions, strange lights, and UFOs. For these reasons, we'll ask you to sign a waiver of liability form before the tour starts.

<http://www.cropcircuitours.com/croptour> Ret. 12/04/2013

Crop circles thus represent thresholds into magical thought, and through this, new science. This dynamic may be understood in terms of Morgan's notion of the sacred economy, which relies on a different system of credibility to secular economies, "invok[ing] different authorities to bolster the terms of exchange" (2012: 85). Within the locus of religious experience, it may seem ludicrous to

compare, e.g., a wooden idol, or a vision of the Virgin Mary, with cleverly flattened wheat, but it is what is *brought* to this kind of transaction that defines the object's aura and efficacy, or 'power.' The site-specificity of the legend is determined by belief orientation on the part of the actors in its performance, to which place itself makes a fundamental, essential contribution. The aura of the crop circle as a "distant" (Benjamin 1935) communication is maintained by a delicate balance of complicity and collusion within the croppy community, chiefly between circle-makers and researchers who form part of a wider cycle of collaborative deception that includes study groups, conference and tour organisers,¹²⁰ 'experts,' scientists, psychics, dowsers, writers, photographers, all media by which their output is disseminated i.e., newspapers, television, and the internet (e.g., YouTube, websites, and other social media), as well as the force of opinion among contributors to these fora. As for direct encounters, the relationship between expectation, revelation, and *self-deception* is finely balanced, and it is in itself a form of collusion.¹²¹

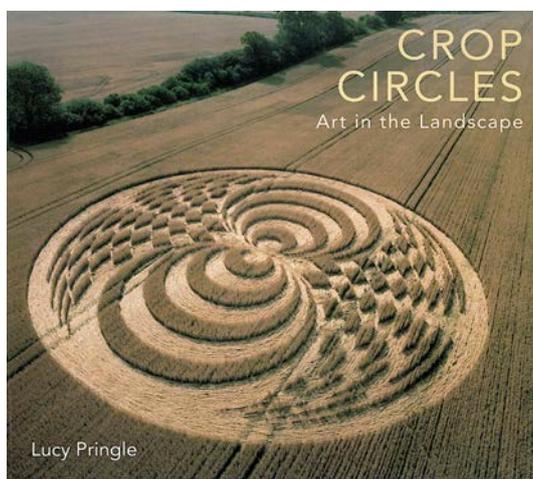
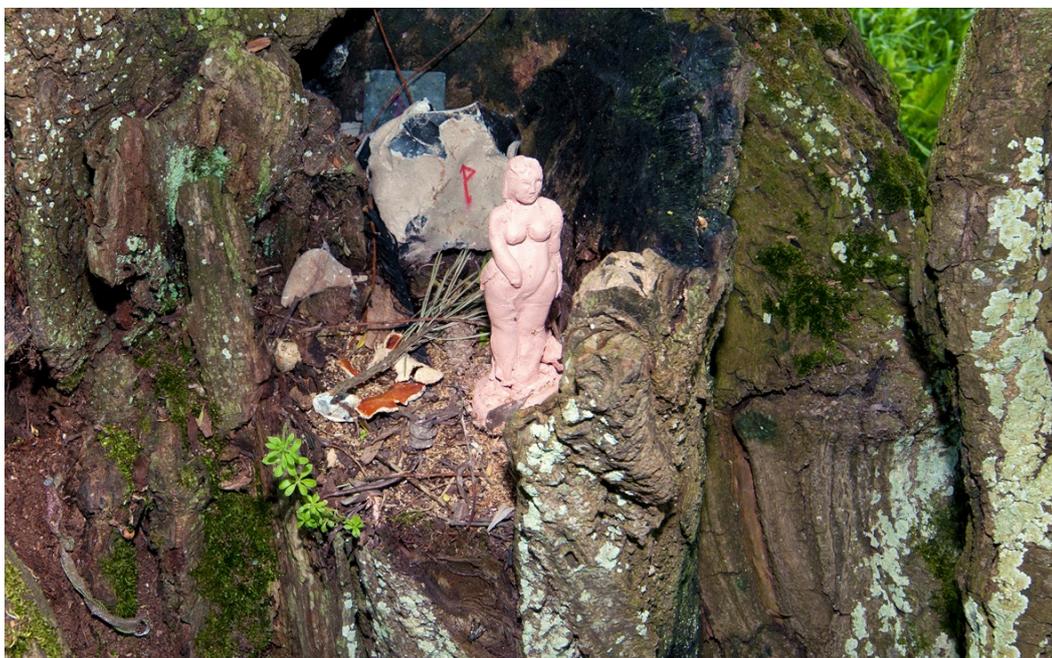


Fig. 15 As an example of a contributor to the sacred economy described above, Lucy Pringle is a researcher, speaker, photographer and prolific author of crop circle books.

¹²⁰ Steve Alexander, crop circle photographer, conference organizer, tour guide, publisher of books, calendars, postcards, DVDs, all with a worldwide market, has been collaborating with human crop circle-makers since the mid-1990s. The owners of the popular Crop Circle Connector website and the 'Crop Circles-UFO's-Ancient Mysteries-Scientific Speculations' Facebook page enjoy similar relations with crop circle-makers.

¹²¹ As a subset of this spiritual commerce, fierce competition exists between some of the above to monetise crop circles through the sale of aerial photographs, DVDs, books, calendars, postcards, and other printed matter. Souvenirs are integral to the pilgrimage experience. They are something to take back, to trigger memories and reconnect the pilgrim to numinous affect, adding to the authority and *authenticity* of experience. Relics taken from crop circles include hallowed earth, plants, water (bottles buried or blessed in a crop circle), stones, etc.



Figs. 16 & 17 In a manner analogous to the exuviae used in ritual magic, meaningful leavings are also a form of interaction where religious experience is not only mediated by objects but also place: the idea that a personal object remains in a specific place can be highly evocative, suggesting efficacy on the part of the pilgrim as a participant in the spiritual exchange. Examples of this at Avebury include effigies, crystals, flowers, sage etc., placed under standing stones, or 'clouties' hung at Swallowhead Spring.

The value of expectation in these negotiations was upheld by the responses to a question in my straw poll of croppies concerning their levels of anticipation of “witnessing or coming into contact with anomalous / exotic / mystical / supernatural phenomena” while in the Avebury area, compared to places not normally associated with such phenomena. Out of 53 respondents, half reported a significantly higher level of anticipation.¹²² This was not meant to quantify experience, but to provide some measure of the perceptual influence, if any, of place. The result indicated that awareness and expectation are key elements in the perception of the locality (since they shape the sensorium of its physical environment) and supports my conception of the ‘legend landscape,’ as a placial and spatial environment where some people are responding to a place they consider special differently than they would otherwise. Framed in terms of a sacred economy, expectancy is important because here the creative act invites an attitude of a certain kind of receptivity, and *reciprocal artistic activity* on the part of recipients, offering people a part to play in its performance.

As for actualizing this power, in considering the paradoxical tensions thrown up by the ritual performance of science (as an intellectual and practical investigation of the *non-sensible* world through observation and experiment), some observations about practical magic are necessary. First, it is important to recognize that the magical basis of ritual performance is mimesis – that is, performing ‘as ifs’ as ‘as is.’ When a performance is framed as theatre, usually in a place dedicated to that purpose, spectators are conditioned *by their setting* to accept fiction as reality; the audience agrees to temporarily suspend its collective disbelief.¹²³ This dynamic changes once the action moves beyond that conceptual framework. In the ‘real world,’ according to modern scientific orthodoxy, reality is judged through the lens of scepticism; it is defined by historical truth, and anything other than demonstrable fact tends to be disregarded as unscientific. In the magical realm this convention is inverted. Here, legend perpetuates belief in the non-sensible (Dégh 1995: 220) and/or irrational (Otto 1923/59). Magical power lies in desire. It is progressive,

¹²² Apart from this insight, the most useful and interesting aspect of the exercise were the *ad lib* comments contained therein. I have included some of these in *Fieldnotes*, which documents the practical component of my study, and in full as A1 in the accompanying DVD.

¹²³ If someone were to loudly announce “This is not really happening!” they would not be thanked for it.

positivistic, and works by inductive reasoning. Its focus is on the universalities that may be inferred from particular instances, hence the positive value New Agers put on hearsay as evidence, where the object of legend is assumed to be true. Gell argues that “this is not confused physics, nor is it devoid of a basis in social experience” (1998: 101). Magic is action; ritual magic is pure practice which, like the Trickster, reveals what words and the rational intellect cannot fully articulate – it is action that speaks louder than words [Pocock (in Mauss, 2001: 5)]. This idea is especially relevant to my overall argument, and I will return to it in a subsequent chapter on ostension, or “legend telling by action” (Dégh 2001; Ellis 2001). For now, it is important to recognize that rituals around paranormal legend involve surrender, a giving oneself over to something [Kirkpatrick 2012: *pers. comm.* (conversation)]. In collective encounters, this is a surrender where individualism is eclipsed by the sense of *communitas*. Here, belief comprises more than affirmation of certain truths, it is an emotional or sensory affect. Mediated by crop circles, using ritual practices (or pseudoscience) to interact with the non-sensible world is a way of amplifying its voice, and in doing so impressing on others that it has one. And when we sing it, it does: like song, “it has its living existence in its performance, and its life is synonymous with *communitas*, which will spread to all participants and audiences when they get caught up in it” (Turner E. 2012: 42).

Secondly, pseudo-traditional spiritual practices, such as blessing the site using sage smoke, or attuning to it with sound – drums, gongs, ‘singing’ bowls, ‘wind harps’ etc., all of which suggest vibratory resonance with place – also create an appearance of scientific corroboration that something magical happened here. This reminds me of something the Harvard psychiatrist John Mack once told me:

Rather than judging strange phenomena by today’s standards of proof, what if we were to acknowledge that such phenomena are intrinsically mysterious and ultimately beyond our present framework of knowledge? It’s time that subjective experience entered the domain of science.

Interview, Helsinki 1996, quoted in *Fortean Times* #96 3/97

I agree with Mack to the extent that, as Richard Feynman observed, “a scientist looking at *non-scientific* problems is just as dumb as the next guy” (1955). But, “when he talks about a non-scientific matter, he will sound as naive as anyone untrained in

the matter" (*ibid*) – in twenty years of close observation I have yet to see such methods used to *disconfirm* the veracity of a crop circle that carries an aesthetic aura of the non-human. The scientific principle of falsification simply does not belong in the New Age repertoire; rather, this kind of mediating activity is part of a ritual process of confirming 'genuineness' in order to recognize and validate non-physical phenomena that are revealed as emanating from outside the bounds of what is normally considered 'natural' and 'real.' These 'ghosts' represent a welcome intrusion because, in self-reinforcing fashion, its apparition justifies belief in it. This is not a resistance to change, it is movement *of change* away from the status quo. It is in this kind of magical encounter, contained within the crucible of social engagement with place, that an alchemy occurs which merges reality and illusion into one experience.

Seen through the lens of the understanding of the legend landscape articulated earlier, these conditions are ideal for observing processes of reciprocity in the pilgrim gaze within the wider system of transactivity between people, legend, and place. In the discussion to follow, I will look at how this activity supports and informs the idea that some places are more likely than others to produce paranormal phenomena. This entails considering how the artistic expression of unobservable objects of belief in terms of observable phenomena¹²⁴ may be seen as the ritual dissolution of conventional boundaries between sensible and non-sensible realms, thus levelling the epistemological 'playing field.' This transformation of sensorial reality may induce radical ontological conjecture, and a plurality of knowledge politics. For, after Feyerabend (1975) and Feynman (1956),¹²⁵ I would argue that there is unity in legend, art, ritual,¹²⁶ and magical thought, and the elemental catalyst of science: curiosity. What is being performed here, in direct contrast to the received wisdom of Occam's Razor as a standard of truth evaluation, is the ritual *multiplication* of possibilities to be curious about. To reiterate, the Trickster's role in this exchange is to foster a politics of plurality as an antidote to the politics of polarity, which naturally tends to stifle intellectual development.

¹²⁴ See *Some Technical Terms Used by Anthropologists* by Alan Macfarlane, under 'Myth': www.alanmacfarlane.com/TEXTS/dictionary.pdf - accessed 17/12/12.

¹²⁵ "You investigate for curiosity, because it is *unknown*, not because you know the answer." Richard Feynman, *The Relation of Science and Religion*, a talk at the Caltech YMCA Lunch Forum, 2nd May 1956.

¹²⁶ Klass suggests an appropriate unitary term for ritual, 'cultural activity' (1995: 32), but, to me, this sounds rather too civilized to be truly useful.

From here, I will look at Avebury's ritual landscape as a crucible of significance whose 'authenticity' renders place a playframe for this kind of make-believe activity.

3.3 Legend Landscapes

Once theophanies are localised, pilgrimages necessarily follow.

Herbermann, Charles George (1907-12)
The Catholic Encyclopaedia Vol 12: 85

Creative work bridges time because the energy of art is not time bound. If it were we should have no interest in the art of the past, except as history or documentary. But our interest in art is our interest in ourselves both now and always. Here and forever. There is a sense of the human spirit as always existing. This makes our own death bearable. Life + art is a boisterous communion/communication with the dead.

Jeanette Winterson (2012: 153)

3.3.1 Introduction

In what follows I will indicate the legend context within which my work in the Avebury area takes place. This is the modern backstory to a generalised myth of an intelligent and communicative force that is seen to manifest in certain places. I will begin this section by considering memory and nostalgia in relation to place as a kind of haunting. At Avebury, its resident 'ghost' is the prevailing notion of the existence of a daimonic reality¹²⁷ consisting of otherworldly beings and energies. While it would be an exaggeration to suggest that Michell's borrowed notion of the 'ancient astronaut' is widely believed, the idea should not be ignored as it provides support for the reclamation of this lost wisdom through studies of "observable phenomena" such as crop circles, balls of light, the movement of dowsing rods etc., all of which have found a spiritual home in Avebury.

¹²⁷ Evoking Graham Hancock's title *Fingerprints of the Gods* (1995). Hancock argues that since humanity's origins we have been visited, taught and nurtured by non-terrestrial beings, which he construes according to different cultural frameworks as 'spirits,' 'elves' or 'fairies,' 'angels' or even 'demons,' and most recently as 'aliens.' He describes these beings as "the ancient teachers of mankind." Accordingly, they may be accessed through altered states of consciousness, including the use of mind-altering substances. Crucially, he insists this does not render these experiences in any way 'unreal.' Indeed, Hancock argues that such contacts, "and how we as a society react to them – are as fundamental to the future of our species now as they were 35,000 years ago" (2012, the Summer Lectures crop circle conference advertising blurb).

The result is a hybrid that incorporates Earth Mysteries into the wider myth of ancient astronauts or gods. While crop circles are believed to represent the outward physical manifestation of a system of earth energies, they also suggest imprints, representing the distributed personhood (Gell 1998: 21) of otherly entities. Until I address the semiotic implications of this in the next chapter, it is enough to note that modern legends of UFOs and earth energies, crop circles, and their connection to sacred sites, are all vehicles of the same origin myth, and the inescapable folklore that is attached to Avebury, and which attracts a large proportion of its visitors. Today, myths around prehistoric interaction with non-terrestrial beings represent a form of ancestor reverence that is played out in pilgrimages to Avebury's legend landscape through New Age ritual practice. The importance of place and/or landscape in these negotiations is that these provide the stage and setting for ritual activity, thus pulling these ideas, and belief in their reality, into the everyday. In terms of these space/place relations, this is Trickster territory. Dickinson's (1998: 43) observation bears repeating in this context: artists have been visiting this liminal twilight world for a long time. As I will argue, this activity is a continuous game of creative flux, whose only criterion for truth is that it 'keeps the game going' indefinitely.

3.3.2 A Haunted Landscape: legend performance as cultural re-membering

For now, however, I draw a parallel between conventional and "alternative" (Hutton 1991/3: 119) archaeological interpretations of how, in prehistoric ritual landscapes, art was intended to be used as a psychological stimulus. This makes it possible to understand the attraction of Avebury as a place of New Age ritual, and the necessity of performative activity in this scheme, where artists and audience are mutually engaged in perpetuating the synergy between legend/memory and landscape.

It is generally agreed (Parker-Pearson 2012: 9-11; Pryor 2010, 2004; Darvil & Wainwright 2005) that Avebury's prehistoric monuments were intended by their makers to embody psycho-social internalisations of myths concerning ancestral spirits and the celestial forces that create and control life. That is to say modifications to the landscape were a way of using the physical to express the

intangible.¹²⁸ As an artist engaging with this culturally prescribed activity, I recognize the usefulness of suspending assumptions about the possible utility of these monuments and assuming that their psychological impact was *every bit* as important as any practical function they may have had. In doing so I am following the idealizations of antiquarians from Aubrey through Stukeley and Blake to Michell, as each added more layers of myth and legend to this place.

My practice both plays off and extends legends such as the conception of 'leys' as geomantic lines. Where Stukeley saw images in the juxtaposition of topographic features, today these patterns are scaled up into larger systems of meaningful alignments between sacred sites, both local and across hundreds, and even thousands of miles, creating vast geodesic maps. For my present purposes, I designed my practice to reveal a microcosm of such a system that could be experienced in situ, creating new relationships between sites: this deployed Michell's idea of centring God's compass (Section 2.5) not only in terms of the geometry of crop circles but also in their placement in relation to visual arrangements in the local landscape.¹²⁹ My practice re-renders this landscape as the kind of place-world Casey identifies as "thin," its membrane malleable to continual reshaping, revealing "a lability of place that corresponds to a fickle self who seeks to be entertained" (2001: 684-685). Art/artifice that seem initially paradoxical become transformative, catalytic, absorbed into ritual acts of re-membering as legend, at which point the materiality of this ancient place becomes momentarily thick again with meaning. This is relevant to my concerns here because it shows how the psychological impacts of these artworks and their mythic undercurrents affect the way local sites are perceived and experienced through social processes of performance, or 'make believe.'

Art in this sense is a participatory process, where artists and audience collude in its perpetuation as legend. I am interested in how place is reinvented through these subtle artistic interventions. My practice is informed by how legend affects the

¹²⁸ As previously stated, the use of physical objects to mediate products of the psyche continues today in New Age ritual practice. I will return to this theme in more detail in the chapter to follow, in my discussion about ostension.

¹²⁹ The mandala, and the mandorla or *Vesica Pisces*, are examples where certain geometrical symbols are suffused with religious significance, due to a perceived mystical synthesis with mathematics. Another example is the *tetraktys*, a figure by which Pythagoreans swore their oaths; it represents a perfect reduction of the numerical to the spatial and of the arithmetical to the geometrical (Eco 2004: 64).

collective sensorium, and how this in turn affects the way place/landscape is experienced as a living entity, with a unique, re-emergent vitality.¹³⁰ Such legendry flows via channels by which inference – I prefer Peircean ‘interpretants,’¹³¹ as living creatures – are artistic extensions of the legend/artwork, ensuring continuity of the underlying myth. This requires the use of concealment as a tool of creative practice. But while, as an artist, I play the role of Puck, this would mean nothing without the collusion of willing participants.

To geographers, historians, and archaeologists, Avebury’s topography represents a man-made ensemble of artefacts that make possible the retrieval of physical trace information. Through interpretation, this then provides a basis for conjecture regarding the conditions of past human inhabitation. It is when these disciplines converge with others concerned with human-non-human social relations that the significance of art in the shaping of our perceptions of the material world becomes apparent. Here I would include expressions of mythopoeia, echoing Cosgrove’s [ed. Bender) 1993: 281; citing Short 1991 and Duncan 1990] observation that:

Landscape and myth (are) subjects of common theoretical interest, distinct but articulated signifying systems through which social relations amongst individuals and groups and human relations with the physical world are reproduced and represented.

Cosgrove (1993: 281)

In considering artistic collusion in perpetuating social relations between legend and landscape, and how setting helps shape the legend narrative, it is important to keep in mind that, like all pilgrims, New Agers are not just passive consumers. As already noted, ‘New Age’ implies an innate urge to reject the orthodox information provided at sites of historical interest. While pilgrimage tends to be associated with

¹³⁰ I gleaned this insight from Michael Sallnow’s observation that paranormal phenomena that are associated with a specific place may be viewed as both emanating directly from the matrix of an animated place, and through its consecration via apparitions or physical manifestations by “external, foreign divinities, whose power is *sui generis* but who choose to channel it through their particular sites to particular populations” (in Eade & Sallnow 1991: 6).

¹³¹ A term C.S. Peirce used to describe how “the sign creates something in the mind of the interpreter... and this creature of the sign is called the interpretant” (Letter to William James 1909). Peirce’s image of a “creature” that adapts and changes with every re/telling captures the qualia of myth, suggesting that folklore possesses a ‘life of its own’ through human transmission, reception, misinterpretation, etc.

a kind of religiosity centred around traditional religions, it can also relate to pure nostalgia. I would argue that the New Age fascination with Avebury binds complex ideas about, and mythical associations with, prehistoric sites, to a shared sense of longing for the rediscovery of lost identity. This is consistent with Smith's model of the 'counter-tourists' who "subject the sites they visit, heritage or otherwise, to their own associations, stories and reconstructions, [and] are not passive, but agentic" (2012: 207). New Age identity and values are informed by a projected image of prehistory; at Avebury this is experienced through assumptions of deep empathy with its ancient inhabitants, mediated by the vestigial remains of their spiritual interactions, all grounded in an image of an unspoilt, but lively, earth. In this legend landscape, personal and social identities are relived in the context of sacred ground made special by the legends that constitute it.

The image of Avebury as a playframe typifies the Aristotelian notion of a place that is both receptive and preservative of the past, held as security in the present (Casey 1987/2000: 213). In these terms, place acts as a constitutive part of the psychology that performs its latent vitality as lived experience. Pringle's dowsing encounter (p.viii) typifies the way post-rationalist ritual practices reference, and at the same time usurp, modern science; much of the pseudoscience woven into New Age belief is, in effect, legend-telling. Likewise, Pringle's methods deploy observable phenomena to validate the existence of an otherwise concealed mythical network of subterranean energies. Avebury and its environs provide the requisite liminal conditions for pilgrims to experience this shared imaginary, which structures spiritual sensibility in powerfully aesthetic terms (Morgan 2010: 7).

This presence of absence works both ways, for in the inverted world of New Age science, absence of evidence is regarded as evidence of absence. This is apparent in the collusive concealment of human crop circle makers. In terms of art practice, this may be compared to African Vodun (or voodoo) sculpture. Like crop circles, the aura and efficacy of these artworks are predicated upon the perception of their otherly qualities, and the way they are received is crucial in maintaining this aura. The *acheiropoiètic* quality separating the divine from the mortal necessarily involves the artist withdrawing from view, so that emphasis is transferred to the story of how the object came into being. This is pertinent to a system identified by African specialist Suzanne Preston Blier whereby artworks "both derive shape and

meaning from and give shape and meaning to the ideas, actions, and expressions of the persons who in one way or another [are connected] with it" (1995: 55). In the absence of a human author, the story of the artwork's origins is picked up and passed on by cultural advocates, comprising, in Preston Blier's example, "the myriad of individuals – diviners, priests, elders, family heads, and the like – who are charged with the guardianship of objects of this sort" (1995: 56). Like crop circles, these objects are "so thick in signification as a result of the roles of these diverse individuals that no single explanation or interpretation of object meaning can be adequate" (*ibid*). This relates both to *Neti Neti* (Section 1.5.2), and the polyphonic, to which I will return later. For now, it is important to note the importance of cultural advocates in influencing how the artworks are perceived and experienced. Also, moreover, the role ambiguity of authorship plays in transferring the authority of cognitive effect and interpretation to these persons, and ultimately the recipient, whose vision of the associative narrative extends beyond the mere genius or skill of the originating artist.

This challenges modern semiotic traditions of meaning, and introduces instead "a more psychological, non-linguistic view of religious vertigo," as Gell (1999: 17) put it. The artist's withdrawal offers legend a free rein; in my cultural ecology of people, context and environment – the legend landscape – it lends *authenticity* to the artwork. In this scheme, even crop circles that are dismissed as "obvious fakes," acknowledge the truth and identity of the thing imitated. Those artworks that pass muster as 'not art' effectuate appropriate artistic responses. Here, as in much ritual activity, deception plays a critical role in the artwork's reception and use, evoking powerful emotions not only in its ability to disorientate, disturb and grip the imagination, but also to re-orientate it and change behaviour.

I will now illustrate the role of cultural advocacy in establishing 'meaning' behind crop circles. One who assumes this role and is well known to croppies is Dr Horace Rainsford Drew III, a retired scientist who goes by the name of Red Collie.¹³²

¹³² Drew is known for his work on DNA structures, coding systems in crystallography, or molecular biology, mostly published in the 1980s. Following the appearance of a crop circle whose pattern resembled a DNA sequence, and whose appearance coincided with a lecture he was about to deliver at Cambridge University – a coincidence he took to be a personal communication from the circle-makers – he has dedicated his time since then to studying crop circles. Collie's eagerness to talk about this culminated in his premature retirement from academic science, enabling him to pursue his paranormal interests full-time.

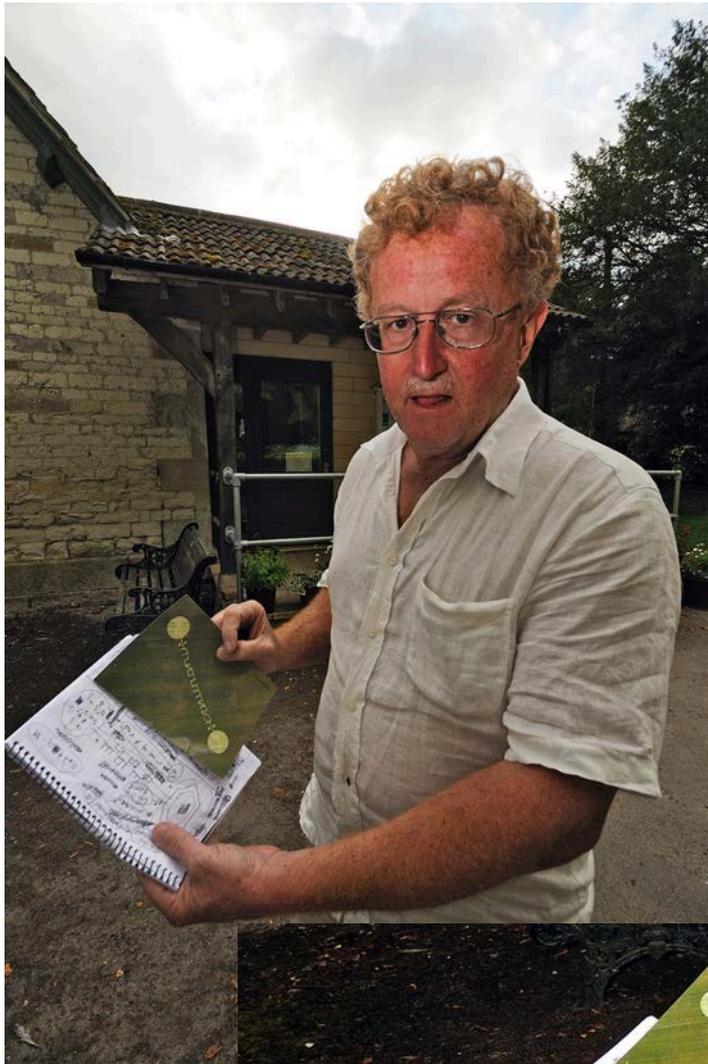


Fig. 18 Red Collie, 2011.



Collie believes in the literal reality of the ancient astronaut, and this idea draws him on an annual pilgrimage from his home in Australia to Wiltshire. In true shamanic tradition, Collie has undergone a dramatic spiritual transition: ever since seeing a UFO as a teenager, he has been interested in the paranormal, and this has guided his thinking ever since. In addition to Collie's natural proclivity to see paranormal phenomena as a scientific problem requiring scientific solutions, what interests me about his interpretations of crop circles is that they represent an 'historical' basis for belief in New Age legendry, which he regularly passes on to his readership in the form of bulletins on the popular Crop Circle Connector website and via Facebook (Fig. 19).

These beliefs should be viewed in the broader context of the recent emergence of a form of emplotment called exopolitics, or human relations with off-world beings. This lived conceptual narrative absorbs a broad spectrum of legendry such as telepathy, 'past lives,' ghosts/hauntings, 'spirit orbs,' UFOs, and crop circles, into one sphere of interaction with alien beings. In keeping with the Hermetic views of Bacon, Stukeley, and Michell, particularly in the manner of the latter's cultural advocacy, it is also rather creationistic in its anti-Darwinian sentiment.¹³³

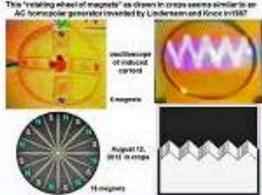
Like many New Agers, Collie consciously eschews metaphor; crop circles and related phenomena are simply empirical evidence for whatever he sees in them. He identifies the architects of Avebury's ritual landscape as the *Tuatha Dé Danann* of Irish mythology. The recent influx of crop circles around Avebury, coupled with a heightened awareness among New Agers of paranormal phenomena in general, suggests that these daimonic ancestors have chosen the present time to return, in preparation for a New Age. When that time comes, as Collie is certain it will, far from being perceived as eccentric, his work on decoding the circles will find its rightful place at the forefront of knowledge.¹³⁴

¹³³ Here, Collie shares the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins's tendency to literalise myth and to argue it as legend – i.e., as his truth against another's – revelling in 'rational versus irrational' polarity. In many ways, Collie and Dawkins are each other's mirror image.

¹³⁴ "They (the *Tuatha Dé Danann*) want me to work on the code," he told me. Collie relates the codes' meaning to cosmological events that are themselves another layer of code which, once unlocked, enable him to predict future events. Collie believes that his task is to help avert ecological catastrophe. At the time I interviewed him, Collie's data suggested that dangerous rays from a deep space explosion would reach Earth in March 2013, but that they would be detected on December 13th 2012, a date he believed had something to do with the celebrated 'end of the Mayan calendar.'

 **Crop Circles-UFO's-Ancient Mysteries-Scientific Speculations** shared a link. Yesterday

Red Collie posts us his fascinating linked article with his covering text – 'Here is the new article on crop circles and magnetism, kindly posted by Mark Fussell, which should be of considerable interest to many people, especially inventors here on Earth.
<http://www.cropcircleconnector.com/anasazi/fringe2013c.html>



Appendix 4. Spin, electricity and magnetism: the extra-terrestrials are teaching us about homopola
www.cropcircleconnector.com

"Before many generations pass, our machinery will be driven by a power

Like · Comment · Share 32

38 people like this.

 **Khong Ly** Love this!! It has kinda given me a EUREKA moment!!! something thanks guys, and to Paramhansa Yogananda, Dan Winters, Heart math institute and all the great meditation masters/teachers... something to do with breathing getting your heart pumping, in a loving way. Time to test out my theory, If you know of the Names/teaching/technology I have mentioned, you may be able to put 2+2 together and try it for yourself 😊 Thanks ever so much for this post!!! The living heart pumping through loving intention, we really are Multi dimensional 😊 Deep breathing now!! With love!!
 Yesterday at 01:04 · Like · 1

 **Glen Tackitt** Goes along with my research into quantum generators.
 Yesterday at 03:16 · Like

 **Rich Mitchinson** I am pretty sure when we gain control over magnetic fields we will be able to stabilize plasma and be able to do amazing things with it.
 Yesterday at 04:33 · Like

 **Richard Wallace** I think you have solved the mystery of the crop circles. They are speaking to us, giving us their knowledge.
 Yesterday at 10:13 · Like

 **Mikels Skele** Does no one remember the originators of this hoax confessing to it? Why be skeptical of them, and so trusting of the other "explanations?"
 19 hours ago · Like

Fig. 19 An example of Red Collie's interpretations of crop circles, and responses, as disseminated on bespoke social media dedicated to 'Crop Circles-UFOs-Ancient Mysteries-Scientific Speculations,' 21/03/13. Collie claims that "all three Nobel Prizes for Physics in 2009, 2010 or 2011 were drawn schematically but lucidly in crops, four months before they were awarded in Sweden," arguing that "those extraterrestrial races are apparently following our current scientific progress very closely, and are making crop pictures in English fields, four months in advance of the fact, to demonstrate that they have time-travel capabilities."

Another informant, Colin Ferneyhough, who travels to Avebury from Peterborough, informed me that “ascended masters” (a term coined by the inventor of Theosophy, Mme. Helena Blavatsky) were using crop circles to communicate a warning to humanity about an “extinction level event, or ELE” (interview 19/07/11): those who don’t ascend will die, he warned me. The ultimate New Age resolution is apocalyptic in its ideocratic vision.¹³⁵ In 2012, and for some time before, this manifested in beliefs pertaining to the myth of Maya prophecy, when it was claimed that mankind was about to enter into a new stage of mental development in the evolutionary process. Whereupon, we (some of us) would understand that in a multidimensional reality “information from another plane [which finds form as crop circles] copies itself onto our scene” (Kössner 2011),^{136,137} at which point interpretative advocacy really comes to life, and the priestly class returns to the fore.

Such thinly-disguised eschatological wishful-thinking is redolent of the New Age identity with lost wisdom discussed above. The role of the ‘primitive’ in this is that it represents an inversion of Blakean discontent with the encroachment of modernity: thus, the prehistoric landscape is an *authentic* one, evoking and even embodying latent notions that a prelapsarian purity once existed. Torgovnick captures this sentiment when she writes: “‘Going home’ involves a journey – actual or imaginative – to join with a universal mankind in the primitive – there will be no homelessness

¹³⁵ Using the ‘Greek etymological root of apocalypse as disclosure, an unveiling of knowledge hidden behind the falsehood and misconceptions of the Enlightenment era. In locating the kernel of this narrative, the UFO may be interpreted in terms of the *deus ex machina*, a plot device, whose theatre origins will become relevant as my argument develops.

¹³⁶ Maya expert Johann Kössner, interviewed in *New Swirled Order*, a DVD documentary by NuoVisoProductions 2009. <http://tinyurl.com/newswirledorder> Ret.12/12/2012

¹³⁷ It will be of interest to art historians that, by the same reckoning, Karen Alexander has claimed that:

The evolution of human art has also followed a similar pattern [...] The first truly 3-dimensional painting appeared in around 1455-60, [...] titled ‘The Flagellation Of Christ’ by Italian artist Piero della Francesca. [...] What this painting showed was that although we have always lived in a 3-dimensional world, and that humans have always seen the world in three dimensions, we had at that point in time only just began to assimilate that knowledge fully into our conscious minds – allowing us to project it onto board and canvas for the first time.

Karen Alexander, Temporary Temples blog, April 2012
<http://www.temporarytemples.co.uk/blog/my-god-its-full-of-stars/> Ret. 28/02/13

(As for cave walls and Greek and Roman marble, however...)

then" (1990: 187).¹³⁸ To New Agers, for "homelessness" read *homesickness* for a "past-most-wished-for" (Pearson & Shanks 2001: 153). Winterson's observation that "the past is another country, but one that we can visit, and once there we can bring back the things we need" (2012: 144), is pertinent here; through place, the past evinces bridges that lead to solid ground, forestalling isolation.¹³⁹ These views are all consonant with Wylie's observation that so much landscape phenomenology is "directed towards re-establishing a direct and primitive contact" (Wylie 2007: 182) with the past, and presupposing "a pre-linguistic, pre-cultural lived body possessed of inherent perceptual arrangements and faculties" (*ibid* p184).

To summarize my argument here, New Age legend landscapes such as Avebury and Glastonbury synthesize an infusion of cultural 'memory' of ancient gnosis with new epistemological approaches that are intended to reverse the failings of an over-technologized world whose ecostructure has entered into decline and decay. Accordingly, only when humanity collectively opens its mind to new ways of thinking, and a New Age, will this situation be reversed.

3.3.3 Harmony Blue

The hidden harmony is better than the obvious.

Heraclitus, Fragment 54.

It was in response to these New Age eco-eschatological notions that I created research scientist Harmony Blue (HB). Drawing on the methodology of land artist Bill Witherspoon,¹⁴⁰ Harmony Blue's 'speculative paper' *A Novel Approach to Crop*

¹³⁸ "Going home" emerged as a theme in my straw poll. For example, "The first time I drove to Wiltshire I felt that I have come home" (Dave Dawson); [Have you experienced any feelings of attachment or connection to this area? If so, how would you describe this?] "It feels like coming home" (Natalie Blair); [To the same question] "I had an immediate sense of familiarity and 'being home' when I first came here in 1991. In 1996 I recognized a particular home in East Kennet as the home I had lived in (with my current husband) in our most recent previous lifetime... according to the details of a regression I had had in 1989" (Barbara Lamb).

¹³⁹ The passage quoted is preceded by: "The more I read, the more I felt connected to other lives and deeper sympathies. I felt less isolated. I wasn't floating on my little raft in the present; there were bridges that led over to solid ground" (Winterson 2012: 144).

¹⁴⁰ In 1990, Witherspoon inscribed a mandala, the Sri Yantra, 400 metres across, on the surface of a dry lakebed in the high desert of southwest Oregon. Its 13 miles of lines were ploughed with a garden cultivator, and covered an area of over 40 acres. Witherspoon believes that the power of its shape effected the immediate environment and behaviour of local wildlife. The soil within it changed from alkaline silt to fertile, while Witherspoon observed that birds and animals were attracted to the vicinity and displayed relaxed and

Circles: 'Ghost' Geometry as Spectral Traces of Generative Energies made a case for evidence that 'sacred' geometry writ large in the landscape revitalised the biophysical environment. Drawing further from croppy legend (e.g., Burke & Halberg 2005), HB argued that the ancients knew this and practiced it during periods of agricultural crisis. HB's paper proposed this idea as a solution to modern problems with overuse of nitrate fertilizers. For example:

In accordance with current agreements, by 2050, British farmers have to meet the Government's climate change targets by reducing greenhouse emissions by 80% of 1990 levels. This means that over the coming years radical alterations will need to be made to the ways farmers encourage crop yield. More efficient use of nitrogen sources for growing crops will significantly contribute to this reduction. [...] Recent preliminary laboratory studies have shown an increase in nitrogenase expression on the rhizosphere of roots found immediately below 'ghost' crop patterns and the surrounding field. This indicates that enhanced nitrogenase activity was associated with changes on the surface, matching the geometrical schema, i.e. the pattern of affected crop. Subsequent analysis of the soil at certain sites suggests that this effect extends through the nitrification process contained within the geometric field.

Harmony Blue, *A Novel Approach to Crop Circles: 'Ghost' Geometry as Spectral Traces of Generative Energies* (2011).

What I wanted to do was to disclose empirical evidence of this in the field, by accidental discovery. It was the idea of the 'spiritualized' earth as a living entity, with a unique, re-emergent vitality, that inspired a specific artistic intervention: the introduction of a web-like substance into certain sacred places, such as tumuli and crop circles. Similar material had been described by Robert Plot (1640-96), whose observations concerning 'fairy rings' have become assimilated into crop circle mythology. 'Angel hair,' a substance associated with UFO and BVM (Blessed Virgin Mary) sightings, has been similarly described as delicate and cobweb-like.¹⁴¹ What

unthreatened behaviour toward him and others. Accordingly, local ranchers noticed an increase in the valley's rainfall, and several plants and three animal species appeared there for the first time. Witherspoon speculates that there is something intrinsic to geometric structures that can initiate change, relating his findings to traditional concepts of spiritual 'consciousness' and awareness... "Could an artwork encourage some specific influence of nature to be amplified in the environment?" he asks (Irving 2006: 149-50; Witherspoon 2005).

¹⁴¹ Angel hair is so named because of its delicate, hair-like appearance. It is also likened to cobweb material. Angel hair is seen floating from the air or found clinging to trees and structures in ways that suggests it has fallen from the sky. Very few samples have been obtained because the substance disintegrates into dust when touched.

would happen, I wondered, if I paired 'angel hair' with crop circles?

In one interesting result of this intervention, an informant described how he saw material he identified as 'angel hair' floating near the crop circle in which the web substance I had introduced had been found. His story validated the initial discovery and vice-versa; 'angel hair' served as a significant allusion that maintained a link between the crop circle and existing legend. Later, I added to these layers of existing legend by suggesting that the material in the crop circle was ectoplasm, a substance traditionally associated with spirit materialization – thus completing a virtuous circle linking UFOs, crop circles, and 'the ancestors.' The surrealist George Bataille's *Critical Dictionary* defined ectoplasm as "leaving in the hand a residue which, when dry, has under microscopic examination the appearance of epithelial cells," which is precisely what was brought to light by Harmony Blue's scanning electron microscope (SEM) images of the substance. Interestingly, when these were made available online someone reported seeing "fairies" in the detail (see *Fieldnotes* pp.93-108). As a puckish exercise intended to consolidate a variety of legends underpinning perceptions and experiences of place as an "immanent, vital, emergent force" (Wylie 2007: 202), I think the experiment was successful.

Harmony Blue's philosophy was modelled on that of HRH Charles the Prince of Wales, whose book (2010) shared the name *Harmony*. [HRH was rumoured to be funding HB's scientific research – an idea I (Rob Irving) started.] HB's research was also used by other researchers (mainly uncited) to promote the idea of the inherent power of geometry and its ecological impact. For example, in May 2011 researcher Bert Janssen's website *Crop Circles and More* carried the following introduction on its home page:

Crop circles are the most fascinating phenomenon of modern times. Most, if not all, crop circles occur in living and growing material. And they seem to favour certain locations on Earth. All in all, it raises many questions:

- What is the effect on the living, growing material (for instance crop) in which the patterns appear?
- What is the effect on the soil the living material grows in? Is there any significance in the locations of where the phenomenon appears?
- Does the phenomenon prefer certain locations?

- All crop 'circles' have intriguing shapes. Is there anything we can learn about or from these shapes?
- And, then there is the phenomenon that appears to accompany the crop circles, like balls of light. What are these lights?

<http://www.cropcirclesandmore.com/content/welcome.html>

Ret. 20/05/2011

Furthermore, Janssen collected samples of the web-like substance and, through his colleague Janet Ossebaard, promised to have them analysed "in a laboratory" (Ossebaard 2011).¹⁴² Alas, no such analysis was forthcoming, hence the necessity for HB's subsequent SEM analyses. However, I did hear of anecdotal evidence that my intervention was having an influence. My initial experiments elicited a response from a woman who described how, while visiting a crop circle with her daughter, they were inundated by ladybirds; her daughter, she said, had intuited that the insects were attracted to the crop circle. This was just the kind of legendary spirit that I wanted to elicit. There were also reports of people eating cobwebs in crop circles! A mention here and there over time, builds up. Another particularly notable response to HB's intervention occurred during a BBC Radio 4 interview with croppy author/commentator Michael Glickman. He told listeners:

Michael Glickman: The detail of the true crop circle – the lay, and overlay, and underlay – is breathtaking. The surge, the flow, is simply of a scale that is unimaginable by simple stomping down. And, above all, the details... the local nests, and tufts, and circles, and doughnuts, at the centre... *the cobwebs...* are so varied, and so particular, and so meticulous that it's simply unthinkable that this is done by humans.

Rev Richard Coles: Some people have spoken of that same phenomenon in connection with sacred sites, or ley lines, or other phenomena like that, but do you think there's something distinctive about crop circles?

Glickman: Yes, and this is only my view; it's a hypothesis. But what the crop circles are telling me is that there is, somewhere, an intelligence superior to our own, further evolved than our own, and that it seems to be gently pushing love letters under the door.

Radio 4 *Saturday Live* (14/8/10)

¹⁴² <http://www.circularsite.com/gedachten56-eng.htm> Ret. 03/03/2013



Fig. 20 West Kennet crop circle central tuft with 'spiderweb' filaments. Sacred earth pyramid Silbury Hill in distance, largest man-made mound in Europe. (Photo: Mariusz Szymaszek.)

<http://siderealview.wordpress.com/tag/angel-hair/>

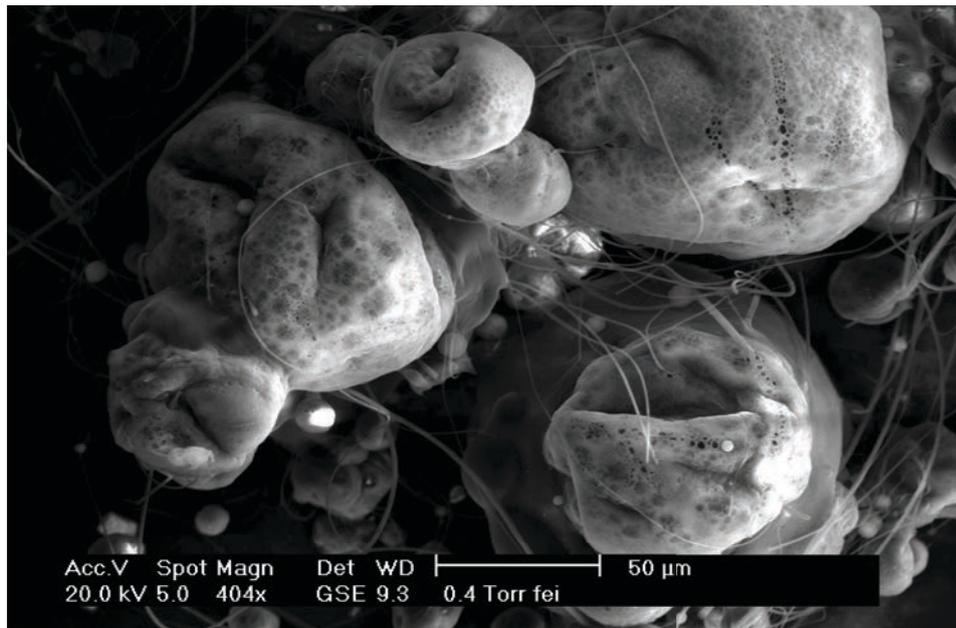


Fig. 21 Harmony Blue's scanning electron microscope (SEM) image of the web-like material found at West Kennet.

Of particular interest to me was the alacrity with which Glickman was responding so positively to images HB had posted on Facebook only a short time before, based on a thin veneer of scientific credibility. One senses that, (as discussed earlier) for him, as with Dirac (fn54), science is driven by aesthetic considerations. During her short life, HB acquired a following of people who hold her work up as exemplary research. For example, this from Siderealview's popular web blog:

Working behind the scenes are a multitude of local altruistic researchers. Their common bond is that they believe that 'genuine' crop circles are phenomena somehow produced through an electromagnetic or dimensional medium, either by light, sound or other variants within that vast spectrum. Sometimes, when local conditions are just right, a substance colloquially known as 'angel hair' (documented as being found after UFO sightings) has been deposited and can be measured, if collected within the first few hours after a formation has been laid down. Researchers in this field include the Massachusetts-based BLT, the British Harmony Blue group, and the Circular Site in the Netherlands. They are consequently disappointed and nonplussed by world media efforts to persevere in 'replicating' crop circles, as has been tried on several occasions. Research on the dimensional/spiritual nature of real crop circles continues. On the morning the West Kennet circle motif appeared, the Harmony Blue team found angel hair [at its centre].

<http://siderealview.wordpress.com/tag/angel-hair/> Ret. 03/03/2013

3.3.4 Place as Mediating Object

When any place becomes associated with prior psychosocial internalisations it affects how that place is experienced, and it is the semiotic implications of this that interest me here. My concerns presuppose that our embodied existence is always rooted in place. In turn, place shapes how the occult is experienced and expressed in terms of sensoria. The myth of 'ley' energies, its relationship to Avebury, and its manifestation as legend through dowsing and other phenomena are important considerations because, as Casey notes, it is the task of place "to congeal disparate products of the senses into a provisional reality" (1987/2000: 202). My 'angel hair' substance contributed to this process as it applies to legend seekers in this context. As Herbermann observes in his pithy epigraph above, the awareness that place, as setting, gives body to the soul of myth impels people to visit the place in question to bear witness and engage in the drama. The way the non-sensible is 'revealed' in

the sensible confirms the role place plays in these negotiations. I used Michell's and Broadhurst & Miller's 'rediscovery' of the St Michael and St Mary lines as one example, but the same principle can be seen whenever cultural/semiotic objects stand for products of the psyche, and are interpreted accordingly. This continues today in New Age ritual practices performed in crop circles.

This synergy of place and legend has an electric empiricity (Gordon 1997: 50). While Janssen suggests that 'the phenomenon' favours certain locations, I would argue that these offer conditions that are conducive to metaphysical experiences, and encourage the occurrence of the kind of events that are relived through legend performance. Here I draw on Tilley's observations that:

- 1) social identities are played out in the context of landscapes and the places that constitute them (2004: 25), and;
- 2) that the vestiges of ancient monuments serve as the primary signifier of a Neolithic past [in Bender (ed) 1993: 50]...

...where the remnants that constitute Avebury's ritual landscape are re-membered in accordance with folklore, subsumed under New Age belief.

That people seek to salve feelings of estrangement from the modern world with uncanny combinations of hominess (us) and strangeness (other) that these places offer is, I contend, the ritual expression of a yearning to return to mythic origins, or even to live in a myth as mythic personages.¹⁴³ Legend represents much more than an escape from the rational; it restores believed sacred realities as a social force that possesses the power to act upon us. The legend landscape thus locates identity by realising myth in a particular setting. *It is the way place mediates body and mind, the physical and psychical, the 'real' and imagined, suffusing nature and art, how it gives physical presence to projections of the human psyche, that defines the legend landscape.*

3.3.5 Darśan: The Pilgrim Gaze – landscape as *temenos*/theatre

The concept of being bound to a place is not limited to traditional notions of association, such as longevity (Tilley, 2004: 25). A place/landscape may be haunted by a sense of possession by past inhabitants, or by its association with legend.

¹⁴³ As with Jerusalem Fever (Section 3.1).

Consider, for example, how Wiltshire's official tourism website has constructed a continuity between ancient topographies and emerging legends associated with crop circles, 'earth energies' and light phenomena:

[Crop circles] have appeared in Wiltshire near ancient monuments that are themselves considered to be built on sites of powerful natural energies. Many people believe that it's no coincidence that the phenomenon appears close to these ancient sites, and some have even reported crop circles forming in under 20 seconds under incandescent or brightly coloured balls of light.

www.visitwiltshire.co.uk/site/things-to-do/attractions/crop-circles

Ret. 31/08/10

While ethnographic studies have shown that for many societies supernatural powers and presences are immanent in the landscape, and are implicated in the way people relate to it, there are gaps in our understanding of how the same occurs in contemporary English culture. To find an example of a liminal space where numinous enchantment is wished for, anticipated, and experienced, and where Trickster figures play a part in satisfying this demand, I turned to Stella Kramrisch's influential work on Hindu temples (1976). Kramrisch opens with a discussion of the virgin site itself, the *kshetra* (Sanskrit: field, tract of land). Like Avebury, such places are magnets for mystical tourism, where divine events are said to have occurred and presences still dwell. As Kramrisch observes:

Whatever makes the site conspicuous or memorable is reinforced in its effect by the attention of the people directed towards and concentrated on that spot. In such places, "the gods are seen at play."

Kramrisch (1976: 4)¹⁴⁴

In Indian tradition, pilgrims visit with the expectancy that they will receive *darśan* from these divinities. *Darśan* is a Vedic concept meaning the sense of not only seeing a manifestation of a sacred or divine presence, but also *being seen by it* (Eck 1981; Gell 1998: 117-8). In this tradition, the eye is an organ of interpersonal transactions; sight is synonymous with touch, and to be seen by the object of devotion is to be touched by it (Eck, 1981/98: 9). A union is achieved when the

¹⁴⁴ Quoting *Brhat Samhita*, LV. 8. *Bhavisya Purana*, CXXX. 15. (Sixth century).

deity or supernatural force is seen to reciprocate the gaze of the spectator. Animacy takes its origin from this ocular exchange:

The net result of the regression whereby devotee's [spectator's] and idol's perspectives become logically interdigitated with one another in this way is a kind of optical oscillation in which [one] and [another's] perspectives shift back and forth with such rapidity that interpersonal boundaries are effaced and 'union' is achieved.

Gell (1998: 120)

The tensile perception of intentionality on the part of UFOs and *ignes fatui* is a powerful element of phenomenological engagement with place. As I discovered on my walks around Avebury, the same sense extends to tumuli and other man-made and even natural monuments. As Merleau-Ponty observed, the roles between seer and seen may be reversed, for example in the case of Paul Klee, who is reputed to have said that "I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me" (Merleau-Ponty 1961/1993: 129; quoted by Tilley 2008: 25). *Darśan* as a creative process of reciprocal exchange between artist and recipient emerged as central to the practical element of my study; I propose that in legend environments this sense of reciprocity unifies 'Puck' and *darśan* as complimentary concepts. (In the sense that Puck's Spanish variant¹⁴⁵ relates to intimate dance between partners.)

I contend that New Age pilgrims recognize the same vestigial spiritual qualities in prehistoric landscapes. Dostoevsky remarked that old, dilapidated churches, whose "ikons were without settings" (1879), are the best for praying in. Margaret Visser notes that in places and landscapes where the past melds with the present through processes of memory and imagination, these:

...if we let them, put us back in touch with our mystical experience. At a simple yet eloquent level, they are always bigger than we are [and] offer more that we can take in.

Visser (2000: 15)

¹⁴⁵ In terms of its southern Spanish variant in Duende, i.e., 1. a ghost, an evil spirit; 2. Inspiration, magic, fire (New OED); 1. A goblin, demon, spirit; 2. Charm, magnetism. (Random House Dictionary); The Larousse Spanish-English Dictionary translates duende as Goblin, elf, imp... Magic. It gives the usages: *los duendes del Flamenco*, the Magic of Flamenco; *tener duende*, to have a certain magical quality.

These authors were writing of churches but as Kramrisch observed, the same experience may be stimulated by any site of mystical significance. At Avebury, 'gods are seen at play' in paranormal phenomena. While folklore concerning lines connecting such sites has existed for a long time, under Michell's influence the idea has recently gained traction as foundational New Age dogma, fulfilling its function as empirical evidence of a sophisticated occult system. The concept of 'leys' (in both geographical and 'earth energies' senses) has become thick with native title – e.g., because so many lines are said to travel through Avebury and Stonehenge it situates these places as central points on the spiritual/mystical map, as centres of Albion (sharing the same stem as *elfydd*: "earth, world") – and divining these lines has emerged as a tool in establishing the ability of a particular, and particularly "English," community to recover this 'data.' Whenever this ritual is performed it implies an association of place, and *kinds of place*, with New Age identity.

Crop circles present an opportunity to test this technique, not only by checking the energy patterns intrinsic to the geometry within the circle's design but also its place in the macrocosm. The circles are perceived as elemental to that local system and its relationship to the broader cosmos (Greek: *kósmos* = order), or the order of things. The Greek equivalent to the *kshetra* is the Temenos, literally a 'sacred space'. In Jung's interpretation of this, it is the 'squared circle,' after the architecture of the classical temple precinct. To the geometer, this represents a duality where the surface area of both square and circle are identical. It signifies a magical space where psychological interaction with the cosmos takes place. Metaphorically, this is a "central point within the psyche" (Jung 1959/2010: 357) – the point of perfect order.

As part of my practice, I arranged for this motif to be embedded in the geometry of two simple crop circles with rings, in order to see if the numerical ratios of rings and circle would be interpreted in these terms, as a 'squared circle.' They were.¹⁴⁶ However, I also noted that this configuration was retroactively applied even where it did not exist: these 'projections of the psyche' were themselves projected, ignoring the actual geometry of the circle. Crop circles act as receptacles of occult knowledge, and as magic is rooted in desire they tend to reflect this knowledge. To Puck, drawing on Emerson (1841/2000: 280), art's highest contribution to the world

¹⁴⁶ See *Fieldnotes*, p.57.

is to make new artists. What matters here is the key role played by art in these negotiations; and what matters to my own aims in particular is that this kind of manipulation is an *appropriate artistic response* to the legend/artwork.

Similar expectancy-fulfilment can be found in relation to healing or revelation at traditional sites of pilgrimage, where, again, affect and effect are assumed to be related to place. I have characterized this activity as archaeology because I see it in terms of an excavation by a First World cultural sub-genre – the New Age movement – attempting to disclose and re/construct imagined futures (Jameson 2005: 345) that are restored by re-living a 'lost' utopian science fiction.¹⁴⁷ Schechner termed this kind of ritual enactment "restored behaviour" (1985: 35), which develops a life of its own "as the original 'truth' or 'source' of the behaviour may be lost, ignored, or contradicted – even while this truth or source is apparently being honoured and observed" (*ibid*). This kind of ritual creates a communal 'memory' of atavistic sacredness, which, through performance, becomes embedded in the landscape and animated through shared anticipation of fresh revelations.

Restored behaviour is subjunctive, rather than indicative. It expresses what Stanislavski called the "as if," where 'if' is used as "a lever to lift us out of the everyday onto the plane of imagination" [Stanislavski in 1936, quoted by Schechner (1985: 102)]. It is the imagined, or wished, or possible (Turner 1969: 52). Entry into the subjunctive means abandoning the world of everyday structure. Situations that would otherwise remain unrealised are enacted *into being* as lived experience, offering participants the chance to "rebecome what they once were – or even, and most often, to rebecome what they never were but wish to have been or wish to become" (Schechner 1985: 38). Dowsing, while enacted as science, may also be seen as an example of the kind of performative drama that makes a fitting response¹⁴⁸ to the legend/artwork, especially when these contain aesthetic signs of authenticity, such as a perfectly swirled lay and neat nested centres, and are themselves nestled in the landscape in proximity to 'meaningful'

¹⁴⁷ Likewise, Bacon's ideas in *The New Atlantis* (1624/7), emulated by the founders of the Royal Society, were a science fiction based on an ancient legend of a lost civilization.

¹⁴⁸ As well as 'earth energies' and reputed anomalous biophysical effects on the plants (which are easily tested, but in their role as legends remain remarkably resilient to disconfirmation), other legends include measured electromagnetic changes and effects (e.g., inferred from drained batteries), desiccated remains of animals found in circles, insects "welded" to seed heads, reports of anomalous radiation found in circles, etc.

landmarks. Avebury's ancient topography thus represents the vestigial remains of a utopian past, now lost, and also possible utopian futures, a combination that is consistent with New Age variations on hermetic thought. The performative act turns this setting into dramaturgical territory, which is then also seen to perform, dissolving normative boundaries separating Stevens' truth "as it is" from its mythic counterpart (1951: 147) through embodiment by place and site-specific performance.

Drawing from Bateson's work with play theory, the Norwegian performance theorist Anita Hammer likens this kind of séance activity to a state in which the 'as if' mode is suspended "and I choose, for the moment, during performance, to make use of the gap between the physical reference and the lack of it, and to be part of the play as long as it lasts" (2010: 73). The Trickster's role in these negotiations is not to lure percipients into a false reality, away from truth, but to bring alternate reality into the everyday. "This is not a matter of invention," observes Hammer, "but one of ignition" (2010: 67), a spark between synapses of the indicative and the subjunctive. This returns to my earlier references to alchemy, where the Trickster, sometimes operating as artist, but not necessarily, catalyses the transformation from one state to another. Central to my argument here is that this is aided and abetted by collusion of the like-minded. When Edith Turner writes that *communitas* "reveals itself through tricks," and that "it is the space between things that makes *communitas* happen" (Turner E. 2012: 221), she is visualising ignition through ritual participation in a world transformed by performance.

This requires some elaboration from a person-centred ground-level perspective. Using my own practice as an example, I would like to show how the landscape combines with the psychology of legend to coalesce as embodied experience. One distinguishing feature of Avebury's ritual landscape is its integration of ancient sites with agricultural land originally cleared during the Neolithic era. In its wide valleys and open chalk lands there are few trees to obscure horizons. As with the desert or seascape,¹⁴⁹ to be out of sight and sound of the modern world is to be removed from

¹⁴⁹ To my straw poll question 'Have you experienced any feelings of attachment to this area or its visible features?' one respondent answered:

Yes, of course, I experience a feeling of attachment because of the land itself, which reminds me [of] something like the waves of the sea, but on the earth.

Ugo Argenton, Italy (*pers. comm.* 31/08/2011)

it – a “remote vacancy” that offers what Otto called “the sublime in the horizontal” (1923/58: 69), and a sense of connection with the past.¹⁵⁰ The smooth undulating surface presented Neolithic and Bronze Age architects with opportunities to exploit the ridges, setting tumuli and long barrows at the interface of earth and sky. This most elemental of binaries renders objects as mediating between ‘here’ and the heavens. A prerequisite to this is, of course, the understanding that such effects depend on the location of the viewer. This is especially relevant in relation to movement around the landscape. It suggests that the way these sites were approached and movement around them was important to their use, and that an intricate system of social dynamics was embedded in the ‘lay of the land’, as implied by ‘processional ways’ marked by remnants of stone avenues. Movement along these routes between Avebury henge and nearby sites invites playful ‘hide-and-seek’ interaction with Silbury Hill, for example (Sims 2003).¹⁵¹

The ritual of the long protracted walk is as much a part of the pilgrimage experience as the sacred objective. A recent example of this was the layout of the British Museum’s *Treasures of Heaven* (2011) exhibition, which emulated the approach to Becket’s shrine in Canterbury Cathedral where the visual experience of the journey is designed to titillate and tantalise [Robinson, curator, *pers. comm.* (Conversation) 2012]. So it is with the layout of processional approaches to the inner sanctums

¹⁵⁰ This is exemplified by the response of James Sheppard, a Wiltshire farmer, to a crop circle appearing on his land in July 2009: “These circles are telling us to look. They get us to a place where we can actually see something; not just in the circle itself, but the landscape it’s in. Look up and out. Look down the valley, and think that maybe 1600 years ago there were people in the same spot, under the same sun, looking at the same view.” (C-Realm 166: Knowing the Land, <http://tinyurl.com/knowningtheland>) There are other implications in the staging of spontaneous performance in a field given over to agriculture. These are examined in James Leach’s (2007) analysis of the *Dynamics of Possessive Individualism*, where notions of ‘natural rights’ are exercised by those who envisage the ‘state of nature’ as a primeval condition of human existence.

¹⁵¹ Beckhampton Hill offers no great impediment to locating the Avenue all along its summit ridge, so it is very clear that for this stretch of the Avenue the builders intended *not* to see Silbury Hill. Not until Beckhampton Avenue drops down to the valley [of the River Kennet] does Silbury Hill return into view, only to drop out of sight once again when walking towards Avebury Circle, from where again it can be seen.

Sims, Lionel (2003), Entering, and returning from the underworld: Silbury Hill – where landscape archeology meets archaeoastronomy, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15: 2



Fig. 22 The sublime in the horizontal, at Waden Hill. The clear interface between earth and sky afforded by the Avebury landscape.



Fig. 23 West Kennet long barrow dominates the skyline in this view from the track connecting the River Kennet to the Wansdyke.

of the Avebury henge (Thomas [Bender, ed] 1993: 30). As in the mediaeval era, when architectural form played an important role in the notion of enshrining the sacred, likewise topographical features – natural and man-made – achieved the same affect within Avebury's prehistoric ritual landscape. As Thomas observes:

[This] requires a consideration of the positioning of persons in relation to the monuments. [...] Vision is important for the appreciation of these monuments, but in terms of the interplay between what is open to view and what is concealed, which is instrumental in the reproduction of privileged positions with respect to social and cultural knowledge. Thus what is seen has to be understood in the context of movement from place to place, and that of non-visual experiences.

Thomas [(Bender, ed) 1993: 30]¹⁵²

A crop circle placed with these considerations in mind taps into the same system not only by 'making special' a particular site, but also by offering different perspectives – looking outwards – of the surrounding landscape. Thus, these pop-up sacred places draw us into an idealised space. This also contains hidden ironies. Having obliterated so many remnants of ancestral significance, agriculture now contributes to a revival of ancestor consciousness by inviting entry into places that are usually off limits to visitors. This is a subtle form of subversion by inverting traditional notions of 'inside' and 'outside,' 'us' and 'other.' It assumes *praesentia* – being present in the 'here and now' – as the first principle of interaction with landscape. Still today, Avebury's ritual landscape is an area rendered sacred by being separated from the profane by its natural topography. The way man-made features are set within the natural landscape seems designed to ensure that legend is continuously regenerated through divine play. I explored the visual dynamics of this through my practice; it revealed the extent of human sensitivity to how artistic interventions perform in response to movement, and how easily the viewer enters into participation *inside* an interactive sensorial experience. I would argue that this participation is dramatically intensified when the artwork is perceived as emanating out of the non-sensible realm, offering a truly surreal phenomenological encounter.

¹⁵² Thomas' observation also addresses the element of 'what is concealed' (the occult; the artist), that is so crucial to my own argument.



Fig. 24 Silbury Hill visible from the processional way from Avebury to Beckhampton.



Fig. 25 East Kennet crop circle visible from the West Kennet long barrow.

3.3.6 Case Study: East and West Kennet crop circles

These observations formulated my thinking behind the following example of how the aforementioned ringed crop circles were experienced in relation to how they were sited in the landscape. The first was in a barley field sloping towards, and plainly visible from, West Kennet long barrow (*Fig. 25*). From the circle itself, the sarsens at the entrance to the barrow were visible on the western horizon. As my informant walked south up the footpath to the barrow from the other side of the ridge, in the direction of the A4 road, he experienced the circle 'rising' over the ridge-line:

Within a short distance of the entrance to the barrow the circle suddenly rose up like a sunrise, and with the sun behind me the circle looked like it had a band of light coming out of it. I thought "Wow, that's amazing. It's meant to be viewed from there, and at that time." I think that effect is what the designer was trying to achieve.

Austen, interviewed 26/07/11

The same informant enjoyed another similarly interactive experience with a crop circle that subsequently appeared nearby (the second of the pair), its position in relation to Silbury Hill, and the perspectival interplay he experienced in relation to both sites as he travelled between Beckhampton and Avebury:

At first, the circle was hidden by Silbury Hill, then as I moved towards Avebury it popped out from behind the hill. It looked amazing.

Austen, interviewed 26/07/11

Hearing these stories and experiencing these effects for myself enabled me to sense a connection with a faraway past and the human experiences that might have inspired the placement of the monuments. This "performance as a practice of engagement" (Pearson 2010: 29), akin to living archeology, is collaborative ritual activity that transforms the participant's understanding of place. The sudden appearance of these artworks set within visual (and philosophical) range of ancient monuments draws people to explore our ancestral past in a way that is mediated by concealment, through performance and performative action. It is this mystique that makes the artworks such powerful gestures. Creating the conditions of this affect is a collective, collusive, and interactive expression that permeates barriers between known and unknown, real and unreal, life and death, human and non-human.

Identifying these playful visual effects and correspondences laid the conceptual groundwork for my own puckish interventions, and they were central not only to my practice as maker but also as a measure of how people engaged with it.

But what of the hidden side of this human transaction? What follows are the words of one of the makers of the two circles in these examples. They allowed me to quote them on condition that I respect their anonymity:

Puck interviewed

On the night of summer solstice we were working near West Kennet long barrow. We could hear drumming inside it. It was loud with a strong beat, and resonated across the valley. It was an ideal accompaniment to what we were doing. Making the circle, it was as if I was part of the happening in the barrow – connecting with the ritual, with the land, and to the spirit of those who entered the afterlife via the barrow. Eventually the drumming stopped. We assumed that whoever was in the barrow would stay there all night. It felt good knowing that they would see our circle at daybreak and that we had contributed to their ritual by manifesting the magic. You could call that 'making special,' but they also made the experience special for us. That night, it felt like a more direct collaboration than we are used to.

A month later we dropped an identical circle in the same area. Leaving the field, we walked down the hill into a dense mist that had settled in the river basin. At the foot of Silbury Hill we stopped and looked at the summit, which was above the mist and silhouetted by the rising moon. It was quite a sight; it felt visceral, primal. And suddenly we were consumers again. We could see people moving on the top. They were probably waiting for dawn to see if any crop circles had appeared during the night. On this occasion, they would not be disappointed. What is weird for us as artists is that if we told them we had given them what they had come to see, they would hate us for it.

Interviewed 25/07/11 and 27/08/11

"And suddenly we were consumers again." This one remark captures the essence of the Trickster's amphibiousness as s/he is able to move easily between worlds.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have provided a snapshot of the cultural ecology of Avebury's legend landscape as a place where modern myths such as UFOs, crop circles, and earth energies find form through social processes of make-believe, or *entertainment* of belief, which drives etiological legends. Place and setting plays a role in this process by conditioning legends as felt experience.

The process by which legend is communicated is central to the aims and objectives of my study. Ben-Amos's definition of folklore as "artistic communication in small groups" (1971) and Sims & Stephens' elucidation of folklore as "informally learned, unofficial knowledge about the world, ourselves, our communities, our beliefs, our cultures and our traditions, that is expressed creatively through words, music, customs, actions, behaviours and materials" (2005: 8), have special relevance to these concerns. In addressing these aims, particularly in relation to the symbiotic dance of artists, cultural spokespersons, and consumers, my argument centres on the dynamic interplay by which shared poetic imaginaries are performed as a strategy to pull them into the everyday, where communal objects (things, places, images, stories) mediate between humans and the numinous, structuring belief according to an aesthetic teleology. The etymology of 'phenomenon' (from the Greek verb *phanein*: 'to appear; to show') is relevant here because the act of showing invites inference – unintended expressions in the form of responses and interpretations on the part of recipients – which is passed on as folklore of direct encounter. This brings us to the means of legend conveyance known to folklorists as ostension. Interestingly, this word shares the same etymological root as phenomenon: the Latin *ostendere* relates to the act of showing, by analogy – thus, likewise, inviting inference. Contained within this curious relationship is the indivisible, insoluble bond between reality and illusion, between those who believe mystery should be adored and those who would play with it... between art (divinely inspired) and artifice (man-made simulacra of the divine), the symbiosis of manufacture and consumption, and the role place plays in these negotiations. In the chapter to follow, I will focus on these processes in terms of human performative action.

4 Ostension, Theatre, Hoaxing and Concealment: the Social Dynamics of Performance in the Legend Landscape

4.1 Introduction

The production of new artwork is generally held to initiate a transaction between the artist and the prospective viewers, within a social and cultural context that is often fuzzy and soft-edged – and therefore very susceptible to direction.

Huang M, Bridge H, Kemp M.J., and Parker A.J. (2011)
Human cortical activity evoked by the assignment
of authenticity when viewing works of art.
Frontiers in Human Neuroscience (2011 5:134)
doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2011.00134

Description is revelation. It is not the thing described, nor false facsimile. It is an artificial thing that exists in its own seeming, plainly visible, yet not too closely the double of our lives.

Wallace Stevens, *Description Without Place* (1945: VI)

Throughout this thesis I have referred in passing to a behavioural concept known to folklorists as 'ostension'. I will now examine this in detail. The concept of ostension is key to my study because it describes a process by which legend is communicated through action, enabling experience and aesthetic sensibilities to influence the acceptance of apparently anomalous or paranormal phenomena as empirical, and thus objectively 'real'. This includes the manufacture of false evidence intended to corroborate existing legend, thereby inevitably extending the legend. This serves as both a gesture toward the rationalist notion that nothing can be considered real unless it is endorsed by material evidence or alternatively, as performance intended to catalyse situations of enchantment in order to subvert rationalist presumptions. In the New Age legend landscape, one – the latter – tends to displace the other.

Ostension thus becomes a suitable tool for the Trickster to use as it moves between worlds. I will now locate this activity in terms of ritual practice, and aligned with Dissanayake's theory that the essential core of artistic activity is what she calls "making special" (1995: 42). I will begin by revisiting my earlier discussion concerning the art coefficient and Barthesian discourse about authorship and

intent, with a view to challenging received notions linking authorship with authenticity and the authority behind a work of art.

In working in ways that combine both the physical and psychical aspects of the legend landscape, I am mindful of Armstrong's observation that myth is inseparable from ritual (2006: 3). Ritual activity lives the imaginary through embodiment (Grimes 2010), and places and things play an important role in this. So does legend; whenever myth is communicated through symbolic action it is a ritual, transformative act. Legend, as metaphor, is the mode of transporting myth into the 'real world.' As metaphor (in Greek) means transport, and Hermes is the god of messages, intervention and invention, theft, diplomacy, and trade (among other qualities), the Trickster resides at the heart of this activity. It is when such acts turn base material into gold, which is received *as fact*, that concerns us here. Place, things, people, ritual and *ideas* form the virtuous circle of transactional and transformative relations that constitutes the cultural ecological framework I call the legend landscape. Consequently I will now focus on the nature of the kind of performative action that shapes it (and is shaped by it). I will also examine the social processes by which legend comes into being. Of particular concern here is how ostension can generate conjecture. In looking at this, I aim to reconcile the paradoxical pairing, and interplay, of ostension (as showing) and concealment as a mechanism of artistic and ritual process which, in the present context, allows legend to come to the fore. Here, the Trickster as a methodological principle emerges as a crucial component in legend creation and maintenance. I am arguing that this kind of hoax-like activity represents the signifying 'presence of absence' of an agentive other, and is thus *pöiesis* not *mimesis*, *making* not *faking*. This activity reflects and *tests* a state of affairs in contemporary culture that, as a counterpoint to the cultural prejudice that tends to align theatrical performance with fakery and falsehood, has never been properly tested in terms of its generative qualities.

Both of the epigraphs above refer to human communication and perception, and reflect distinctions I make between artworld convention that ties artistic and material value to authorship, and artistic acts of 'making special.' My point here is simple: the first position is a fallacy. Huang *et al's* paper concerns authenticity in

art, the relationship between authorship, authenticity, and authority,¹⁵³ and how received preconceptions about these elements affect how art should be perceived and evaluated. I would like to open with a simple illustration of how, within Duchamp's condition of the art coefficient these 'auts' lead to miscommunication. It is from my notes concerning a sharp exchange of views I witnessed at a conference, about the importance (or not) of the artist's intention behind an artwork:

The speaker left questions provoked by his presentation open-ended. This invited a challenge that "most of these questions can be answered if you explain your intention." Someone else, a novelist, took issue with this, arguing that there comes a point with any invented character when the 'artwork' takes on a life of its own: "So what does that say about intentionality?" he asked.

Personal notes, RGS Conference 2011¹⁵⁴

What is interesting is the strength of feeling behind the idea that the 'artness' of an artwork is defined by the intention of the artist making it; the implication being that this quality is expected to conform to a certain kind of meaning, or message, which may be understood by its audience (or at least by those who *already* understand it). To me, this is an extension of the fallacy outlined above. I agreed with the novelist: what of the potential to be explored in *not* 'properly' understanding the artwork? While I am aware that the etymological root of authority lies in authorship – authority = *auctoritas*, from the Latin *auctor*, or author – as an artist I am interested in what happens when we take away the author and the system runs without authority. The nub of my argument here is that art invites this sense of not knowing, so that we may learn [and "fail again; fail better" (Beckett 1983)] to live with it. I see no reason why art should be excluded from the principle of *Neti Neti*, outlined earlier (Section 1.5.2) and mentioned throughout. Like the Trickster, artness always escapes the boundaries/limits we impose upon it.

My example epitomizes the tension implicit in Duchamp's art coefficient, where art resides in the space between what an artist intends an artwork to represent (as its shadow) and how this is realised (or not) in its reception. It is this tension that makes

¹⁵³ I call this the three 'auts' or oughts, but the idea could be extended into 'autarchy' etc.

¹⁵⁴ Royal Geographical Society Annual International Conference, London 2011. [Session: Art, Science and Geographical Imaginaries (3), Spaces and Sites. Paper: *Lost*, by Nick Edwards (University of Manchester.)]

Huang's *et al* (2011) study so relevant here, as it reveals the fallacy in tendencies towards order in Western aesthetics, whereby relations between authorship and authenticity are contrived to define an object's worth. These tensions reveal the power of suggestibility in human responses to art, and also the extent to which culture conditions expectation and shapes experience.¹⁵⁵ Kemp's remark (footnoted below) about pilgrims to art galleries also applies to pilgrims to legend landscapes, who arrive in the expectation of experiencing extraordinary phenomena. For these people, reality is inverted to the extent that experiences which would normally – to outsiders – be considered extraordinary have now – interiorly – become normalised. The effect of situating crop circles in relational proximity to prehistoric sites is that it lends authenticity to how the artwork, and its environment, is experienced, given the legend context defined earlier.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, it is worth considering how Kemp's observation that "it is always better to think we are seeing the genuine article" relates to Jung's discussed in my General Introduction (p.xi) concerning desirability and the exotic.

To New Agers, who are, by definition, authors of a shared intentionality, much value is placed on our ability to recognize the extraordinary in the ordinary. This sets apart, as special, anyone who is perceived to have this ability, particularly if they can demonstrate this talent through ritual techniques such as dowsing. As stated earlier, magic is naturally positivistic; therefore group dynamics tend to ensure agreement of its veracity. Just as singing together is "pure *communitas*" (Turner E. 2012: 43), shared attunement to paranormal phenomena ensures that activity in a certain setting is seen in a certain way, just as it was for the audience in Cervantes' *The Marvellous Puppet Show* (pp.x-xi).

¹⁵⁵ Huang *et al* (2011) showed that a person's brain reacts differently to a work of art depending on whether they have been told it is 'authentic' (i.e., created by an Old Master) or an imitation. Martin Kemp, Emeritus Professor of the History of Art at Oxford University, one of the study's authors, stated:

We have proved what art historians, critics and the general public have long believed – that it is always better to think we are seeing the genuine article. Our study shows that the way we view art is not rational, that even when we cannot distinguish between two works, the knowledge that one was painted by a renowned artist makes us respond to it very differently. The fact that people travel to galleries around the world to see an original painting suggests that this conclusion is reasonable.

http://www.ox.ac.uk/media/news_stories/2011/110611.html Ret: 06/01/13

¹⁵⁶ This is illustrated by Justme's response to the simple circle and rings laid out at West Kennet in 2011, in a field with a view of Silbury Hill (see *Fieldnotes*: p69).

To understand the mechanics of this kind of social drama it is important to recognize that, for the magical-minded, mythic association invites, even *demand*s, its revelation as legend, even if only to provide pilgrims with stories to tell. This demand is satisfied by the impetus of participants wanting myth to be validated by legend. It generates ritual activity that may be seen in terms of wish-fulfilment, as a kind of play or entertainment of belief. Yet, the facticity is realised either as pure belief – e.g., simply believing what one is told – or experientially, which is less of a matter of belief, but rather what is 'touched' by physical sensation: i.e., "I know it's true because I saw it with my own eyes!" The latter relates more directly to my argument here, but, crucially, it also becomes part of the process of storytelling. I contend that this kind of place-based drama generates and *is itself* a form of artistic activity that ensures the continuity of legend by manufacturing phenomena both in its showing and its receiving. The legend landscape is a sensoria of anticipation.¹⁵⁷ These climatic conditions are, I argue, enough to increase the likelihood of outbreaks of legendary experience. At which point I need to return to ostension.

4.2 Ostension

Ostension is a semiotic concept defined as the means by which a message is conveyed using objects, or action/s in simulation. Umberto Eco defines ostension as:

When a given object or event produced by nature or human action (intentionally or unintentionally and existing in a world of fact among facts) is 'picked up' by someone and *shown* as the expression of the class of which it is a member.

Eco (1979: 224-5)

This concept has a special place in folklore studies because it extends oral and textual tradition to include proprioceptive (i.e., bodily) interaction and the use of things and images, thus influencing how legend is received and passed on. An everyday example would be the action of raising an empty bottle of wine to

¹⁵⁷ This was born out by my data, showing that around half the people I interviewed arrived in this part of Wiltshire expecting to experience some kind of paranormal activity. Of course, as one of my informants pointed out in response to my question, it is a relatively safe bet that crop circles will appear around Avebury because they have done every summer for more than twenty years. Nevertheless, this fact contributes to the general sense of anticipation that related phenomena may be experienced.

indicate to a waiter that more wine is required. Here, communication depends on a coded reference being tacitly agreed by both signaller and receiver. With folklore, where ambiguity invites interpretation, thus simultaneously entertaining *and parodying* the human rage for order, ostension communicates legend in a form likely to persuade others, *and/or the teller*, of its veracity. Such activity includes images; when a photograph purportedly of a UFO is shown to people who are likely to either believe in, or dispute, its coded reference, that is an act of legend ostension. Likewise, when Michell visualised the St Michael 'ley' line, mapped it, and presented it as demonstrably real. Pursuing this example further, whenever a person validates the existence of the St Michael line by dowsing it – a regular occurrence at Avebury – these are also acts of ostension. Ostension, in these terms, is legend embodied as something *shown*.

Thus dowsing is a way of re/experiencing the mythical through action involving the mind and body, and the body's situatedness in place, as a means of authenticating expectation and experience. To those who believe in its veracity, dowsing is just as empirical (in the sense that the phenomena it detects is verifiable by observation and experience) as the use of, say, a voltmeter.¹⁵⁸ As ostension, it serves a dual purpose: first in terms of sensoria (*cf.* Stoller 1989; Pearson & Shanks 2001: 10), the culturally located interpretation of experience of one's environment through the senses (including 'special' senses) – i.e., how place reveals its occult nature e.g., through the detection of invisible 'earth energies.' Secondly, in showing this to

¹⁵⁸ This may be illustrated by the following exchange between Alastair Sooke and James Bailey, a churchwarden at Kilpeck church, who claimed that the church sits on powerful currents.

James Bailey: There are many dowsers who come here who are overwhelmed with the feeling in the church.

Alastair Sooke: Dowsers?

JB: Dowsers, yes – we get a lot of dowsers here.

AS: But what have they found here?

JB: Water. There is water flowing straight down the centre of the aisle here. The whole of this church is built on water... and I do say to visitors: "You know that we are all 85% water." It disappears down into the earth, at what dowsers will call a 'power point.'

AS: Why is it such a powerful point?

JB: I don't know.

AS: Has anyone gone down and checked?

JB: No. A dowser doesn't have to.

Romancing the Stone: the Golden Ages of British Sculpture
BBC Four, episode 1: *Masons of God*. (Broadcast 09/02/2011)

others, and thereby passing on the legend. The question of *where* the signal emanates from is debateable; what is important is that it reveals unobservable sacred realities in terms of observable phenomena – e.g., the twitch of a dowsing rod or Pringle's flying pendulum. Crop circles also satisfy this maxim. To make a crop circle in secret, in a place where it is likely to be seen and understood in a particular way – i.e., as a non-human imprint – is a ritual act of ostension. Much of the practical element of my research may be viewed in these terms.

In the cultural and physical setting of the legend landscape, the act of making a crop circle or launching a self-illuminated balloon for the consumption of UFO enthusiasts may be understood as ostensive action, as can dowsing, or any other method that reveals 'truth' about myth through action alone. At this point I need to introduce an original argument: namely *that ostension is the ritual enactment of 'as if' potentialities* (Grimes, 2006: 102). In terms of their ritual potential, quasi-objects "as mere receptacles" of myth (Latour 1993: 52) [or "vehicles" (Turner & Turner 1978: 143)] can be said to perform within a network of relations I have characterised as the cultural ecology of the legend landscape, comprised of people, place, and context. This ostensive activity can take the form of artifice, or interpretants passed on as witness accounts. As long as its mystique remains intact, once such artifice is released into the world it enacts the legend it is designed to represent, thus 'fixing' it so that it becomes susceptible to empirical experience. From mere receptacles, such artworks become vehicles of power, driving events as they act in keeping with and responding to the intentions of percipients, forming vital relations and defining social bonds. In terms of artistic activity, and as Napier (1992: 16) observes, this goes against the wisdom that art has to announce itself as art in order to be considered that way. My study sets out precisely to subvert this fallacy by arguing that ostension is a form of "making special."

To reemphasise a point made earlier (Section 2.2.2) about storytelling tradition, the idea created by ostension outweighs any subsequent determination of veracity because even if the legend is eventually exposed as false, it will have affected people's perceptions of the myth it was intended to represent.¹⁵⁹ Ostension not only

¹⁵⁹ Another relevant parallel has been identified (Dickinson, in Irving & Lundberg 2006: 251-2) between ostension in terms of quasi-objects and the MacGuffin, a Hitchcockian plot

introduces disorder into established, tidy systems, but it is also *orderly* in its conformity to the conventions of the legend landscape in which it performs. It fires the facility of the mind – imagination – that enables us to perceive normality in the abnormal, and vice-versa. For the idea to exist means that we are engaged, or at least tempted, by thoughts of its reality, e.g., that crop circles are the mysterious imprint of an extraordinary entity of some sort or another. The ostensive act thus operates according to what Barthes (quoted in Barry 2002: 39-60) termed 'the hermeneutic code,' an element that poses questions of enigmas that provide narrative suspense.

Let us consider the following example¹⁶⁰ in this context. Huizinga (1938/55: 42-3) tells of a tribal ritual in which the men dress up as ghosts, making suitable noises and gestures, while the rest of the tribe, including their wives, feign not to know who is behind the masks, listening to their tales of gruesome goings-on in the sacred bush and apparently believing every word. Their expressions of terror are quite genuine and spontaneous, at least in terms of the liminal space – physically and figuratively – that they have created for themselves. The audience response is socially constructed as collusion in the ritual, which makes it fun! To respond in any other way would be to act as a spoil-sport. The extent to which we suspend critical judgment as we play along with cultural legendry, favouring apocryphal evidence that obscures the obvious and offers blind-eye insulation from outright recognition, is an open question. What is important is to recognize that it is quite human to want to prolong the delight of not knowing, and that there is method in it. For the rationalist, Festinger's observation that cognitive dissonance "may be reduced, or perhaps eliminated completely, by changing one's own opinion so that it corresponds more closely with one's knowledge of what others believe" (1957: 182) is pertinent here.

The essential tension contained within the legend climate is that social relations are eased when it is generally agreed that *something* weird is taking place, even when there is disagreement about exactly what may be causing it.¹⁶¹ The art of legend

device, a *thing being shown* that is actually unimportant in itself, but which is accepted by participants and acts to motivate a promise of something bigger. With regard to Puck's crop circles, as Dickinson observes, these "would be expected to generate all kinds of impossible situations" (*ibid*).

¹⁶⁰ As told by Brookesmith & Irving, in Hoax! *Fortean Times* #252: 40 (June 2009).

¹⁶¹ Confirmation bias is also known as 'congeniality bias' for good reason: it is an inherent part of *communitas*. Finding confirmation of the subject of a marginal belief is a way of becoming

telling – orally or by action – may be regarded as a systematic filtering of disbelief, leaving a sediment of the willing to seek, and believe in, that “third thing” (Eco, 1988/9: 49), which is indigenous to the gap, connecting disparate realities. Hence, even the most ‘unbelievable’ evidence – a wealth of examples can be found in spiritualist literature, for example (see *Fig. 26*) – is embraced at face value; the sheer *irrationality* of its corniness acts in its favour. As Tertullian reputedly said: *Credo quia absurdum est*. Inside these looking-glass worlds, facts no longer require proof and explanation because ‘reason’ is no longer normative and self-explanatory.

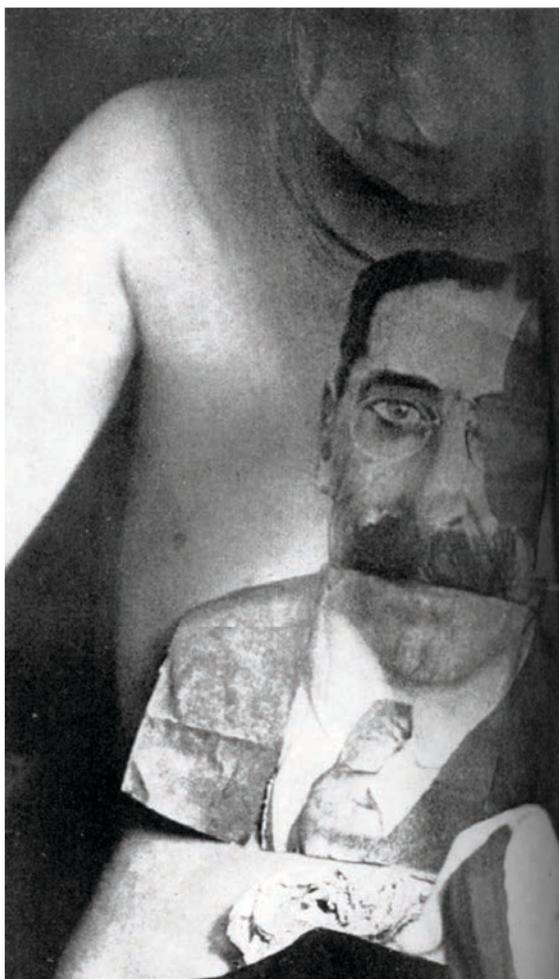


Fig. 26 ‘Mme [Juliette] Alexandre-Bisson’s flashlight photograph of 19 January, 1913,’ taken of medium Eva C, purporting to show the materialization of spirit phenomena.

accepted, even popular, within a group bound together by that belief. On the other hand, finding disconfirmation risks reaping a whirlwind of uncongeniality.

In making this observation I am answering the question that has burned in me for years of engagement with fortune topics: *Given the wealth of contrary evidence, why do people continue believing in things that are so easily disproved?* The key to this lies in the magical and somewhat mystical realm of semiotics.

4.2.1 Ostension as Signs, Referents, Interpretants

In this section I will look at ostension in terms of the art that resides in the semiotic gap between sign and referent, in relation to the kind of legendary phenomena that is associated with Avebury and its environs. In their short history, crop circles have succeeded in signaling a relationship between New Age concerns and re/energized prehistoric landscapes. In doing so, they perform a function; not only do they attract people to Avebury but they also physically engage these pilgrims with Avebury's ritual landscape in unique ways. For some, crop circles catalyse phenomenological engagement, which is intensified by a heady combination of the *absence* of a signaller and the role of imagination on the part of the recipient in filling that void: its referent. Prior to any consideration of 'meaning' contained within the pattern of a crop circle or its placement in the landscape, its sudden appearance carries psychic information in the sense that its origination is inexplicable except as a magical, supernatural, occurrence (Gell 1998: 68). With crop circles, conjecture for how they may have come about is in a continual state of transition, from UFOs (sky) to Gaian explanations (earth), to human intermediaries who are somehow acting under the influence of higher (or lower) beings, or consciousness. Likewise, inferences gleaned from the low altitude 'balls of light' seen in and around crop circles range from "UFO probes" to nature spirits.

Let me offer an alternative example. As Tracy Emin demonstrates, an unmade bed makes present the absence of its occupant; it exists not only as a physical place, announced as special by being exhibited in an art gallery, but also as a conceptual space... this syncretic combination amounting to 'art.' In this elevated sense, objects may also be said to perform; certainly in the case of the crop circle the image of its absent maker finds its performance, most acutely, in the mind of the spectator. Like the art gallery, the church, and the haunted house, the legend landscape is at least partly defined by the aberrance of mind it invokes. Such places have a curious reorienting effect, triggered by the *affect* of sensory stimuli on the

person who interprets it. For those so engaged in the drama, this enchainment of signifying sense comes into play whenever ostension is activated for cognitive disposal (Osolsobe 1980, quoted in Pavis 1999: 224), and passed on to others as the Peircean interpretant.¹⁶² This is a process where, as Eco observes, the original and its simulacra are locked “in an infinite regression of endless representations and interpretants... unlimited semiosis” (1979: 69). This vitalises myth by prolonging the wonder. Peirce’s image of the interpretant as a “creature” adapting to its environment with every telling and retelling captures the qualia of folklore, suggesting that it possesses a ‘life of its own.’ As with my earlier example of the diner and waiter, these coded references are not established arbitrarily; they are motivated by previous experiences, where “the correlation between a given form and a given content has been mediated by a series of mentions, inferences based upon uncoded circumstances” (Eco 1979: 222-3). In this sense, legend telling can be seen as a form of Chinese whispers, where a message is *recreated* through repetition. This is consonant with Lévi-Strauss’ notion of legend as *bricolage*:

...the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or deconstructions.

Lévi-Strauss (1966: 17)

Since Bower’s & Chorley’s intervening ostension of a circular mark in a wheat field, intended to signify a UFO landing, their successors have scaled up crop circles to new levels in size, design complexity, and unlimited potential for meaning. As the referent changes, the imprint takes on the life of the imprinting agent not only in any imagined literal sense but also as a metaphor – representing, and substituting for, a prototypal image, a formula consonant with Osolsobe’s definition of ostension as “a type of communication where the reality itself, the thing, the situation or event itself functions in the role of message” (quoted in Dégh & Vázsonyi 1983). All this means, observes Eco wryly, is that “first of all, one must learn to recognize imprints (or to fake them)” (1979: 221).¹⁶³

¹⁶² See fn131.

¹⁶³ E.g., the introduction of iron filings (or H-Glaze) into a crop circle (Section 1.5.5), and subsequently “cobwebs” or “angel hair.”

To reiterate, in the absence of the authority of authorship, the system on which truth is normally based breaks down, rendering notions of authenticity open to interpretation. The ostension contains the potential energy of the transaction, but as soon as the trap is sprung it assumes a shared authorship of intentionality in which its meaning becomes subject to the beliefs projected upon it. As part of my study, practical intervention enabled insights into the social dynamics of this process, as can be seen from the following example.

4.2.2 Two Case Studies: Concerning the Normalisation/Inversion of a Legend

The first example emerged in the aftermath of a crop circle I facilitated as part of an educational maths project,¹⁶⁴ of which I was Lead Artist. For my purposes here, this provided me with an opportunity to talk openly about a normally hidden aspect of my practice. The crop circle was large – spanning 300 feet – and was made, under my guidance, by a group of people with no prior experience of this kind of activity. In order to make this experience real-to-life from the perspective of the circle-maker, the activity took place at night, under cover of darkness, and in secret. I intended to maintain secrecy long enough after the crop circle's discovery the next morning to measure responses, and to give the team an insight into how it feels to be 'inside' the mystery of its origins. The crop circle was aesthetically incorrupt, both from the air and from the ground; it was initially described as pristine and considered to be a 'genuine' – i.e., non-man-made – occurrence.¹⁶⁵ Such was the consequent furore that within days of its appearance one dedicated webpage recorded over 20,000 'hits.' Contained therein were various testaments as to the crop circle's paranormal qualities.¹⁶⁶

The farmer was dismayed by the amount of visitors to the site. In an email to the Project Manager he wrote: "Unfortunately, we've already had 20-30 visitors this morning and the crop circle 'scientists' think it's impossible that it's man-made!" Subsequently, "coachloads of tourists" [Pickford, pers. comm. (Interview) 07/12/12] inundated the field. He responded to this with a notice to the effect that this was a commissioned job and he had been paid for the use of his field. This created an interesting situation for me to observe in terms of the folklore surrounding a legend event, of which I had intimate knowledge.

¹⁶⁴ <http://tinyurl.com/jugglerslane2012> Ret. 05/02/2014

¹⁶⁵ <http://tinyurl.com/CCUFOetc> Ret. 17/07/2012

¹⁶⁶ <http://www.cropcircleconnector.com/2012/jugglerslane/jugglerslane2012.html>



Fig. 27 The Yatesbury crop circle, created as part of an educational maths project, *Measuring the Land*, aimed at introducing young adults to the ancient and more recent heritage of the Wessex landscape, and its underlying geometry.

Under normal circumstances the farmer's word would have stood as a reasonable explanation for the crop circle's appearance. However, in the inverted world of the legend environment it was identified as an attempt to deny 'the truth' of the crop circle's otherworldly origins. (That is, the truth held dear by its believers.) Accordingly, the farmer must have been paid to say this by the 'powers-that-be,' a narrative consistent with classic Conspiracy Theory, as shown in Section 2.1.1 as 'suppressed knowledge.' A lighter version of this rationale was that "the farmer *would* say that, wouldn't he," presumably in an attempt to dissuade trespassers.

What is interesting in terms of my overall argument is that for a significant number of croppies the farmer's protestations were insufficient to displace their perception of the crop circle's origins. In this inverted realm, the true story was transformed into the legend under dispute! As such, it was an affront to the dominant ideology, and in this sense, somehow (as is the way with Conspiracy Theory¹⁶⁷) confirmed it, at least in the eyes of diehard believers. The rationale for this was an established series of "mentions and inferences based upon uncoded circumstances" (Eco 1979: 223) in the form of the legend (but now *antilegend*) of 'biophysical evidence' that bent growth nodes are impossible for human 'hoaxers' to achieve using normal methods of flattening crop¹⁶⁸ (see *Fig 27*). Typically, in this belief-charged climate standard scientific evidence was ignored in favour of 'anomaly,' i.e., new knowledge.

Because of its proximity to Avebury, this example presents evidence of the influence in these negotiations of the power of place, which contributed to the intensity of the dispute over the crop circle's origins. A measure of this can be seen in the response of some croppies who argued that man-made crop circles should be implemented outside the Avebury area because they have a contaminating effect on its association with 'genuine' crop circles.

Yet, for diehards, the legend landscape offers a protective barrier, or psychic insulation, around what J.P. Carse in his critique of religious belief has called wilful

¹⁶⁷ See fn110.

¹⁶⁸ Ordinarily, the scientific explanation for this effect is based on observations of wind-damaged crops, whereby "geotropic cell elongation" and phototropic effects are part of a plant's natural recovery response. E.g., see agronomist John Graham's *The Nature of Damage to Plants in Corn Circles* in Meaden (ed.) 1990: 132-6.

ignorance, “a paradoxical condition in which we are aware there is something we do not know, but choose *not* to know it.” (2008: 13).^{169,170}



Fig. 28 Crop circles researcher Paul Jacobs holds up samples of wheat he collected showing bent growth nodes. He reports: ‘Lucy Pringle and her group (arrived) just after I recovered the stems. She asked where I’d found them so I took her and the group over, just to verify. She was impressed. The evidence is undeniable.’ (See fn148)

¹⁶⁹ A selection of Facebook responses to confirmation of the crop circle’s man-made status: I figure somebody is not telling the truth about this formation. On the Crop Circle Connector ‘Field Reports’ page for this formation, there are several photos of bent nodes.

Joseph Mason, Facebook <http://tinyurl.com/CCUFOetc> 27/07/2012

THIS IS A BIG FRAUD !! THIS CIRCLE IS DEFINITELY NOT MADE BY THESE PEOPLE. We have reached the peak of deceit and lies coz big money was paid to these players who conveniently pretended to make this [crop circle] to CLAIM THE MONEY.

Disgusting! Maths and Lies do not go together.

Violet Pandora (*ibid*)

¹⁷⁰ In contrast to the above comments, this event inspired one enterprising educator to use crop circles as an educational tool. She writes (in part):

Crop circles are a heaven-sent opportunity to add inspiration and motivation to th[e learning] endeavour. And here is where you and your [team of young circle-makers] come in. They have done what every [young person] would love to do. The ultimate Enid Blyton *Famous Five* adventure – slinking secretly out at night to map out a 300-foot flower in a farmer’s field and make damn sure they got it right after possibly months of design and preparation – and waking up the next day to find it emblazoned in the British papers and croppie fanatics swearing they were made by aliens or the ancestral spirits.

Val King, educator, Cape Town [*pers. comm.* (email) 18/03/13]

This example satisfies the specific aim of my study to examine the processes by which legends inform responses to place/landscape, and how these responses ensure continuity of myth as contemporary folklore. It also can be seen that the concealment of my involvement as an artist was an important ingredient in the initial stages of this process. In terms of ostension, the crop circle catalysed a dialectic whereby believers were able to posit their methodology concerning plant biophysics as a determining factor which 'proved' their side of the debate as to the circle's origins, as well as other ideas concerning the untrustworthiness of 'hoaxers' etc. There is some truth in this: for my part, the hoax was committed in *not* advertising the fact that this was a man-made artwork, because if I had it would have been received differently – previously, known commercial crop circles on the same farm have gone ignored and unvisited. Therein lies an interesting, and very Tricksterish paradox: a 'hoax' is only a hoax when it is accepted as such; in the event, during the contrived absence of the author/s the crop circle was assumed to be of non-human origin. As it was, the breathing space of ambiguity enabled the community of believers to justify their belief, once they had publicly committed to it, in the face of evidence that would ordinarily disconfirm it. As Festinger also observed, often circumstances conspire to create situations where disconfirmation of belief triggers increased fervour (1956: 3-6), and the record shows that this is what happened here.

By examining these social dynamics it is possible to gain insights into how legend survives pressures to conform. As we can see from the above example, the idea that people make crop circles with a view to eliciting wonder and conjecture about their origins is anathema to believers. Belief relies on various forms of wilful ignorance to keep it pure (Carse: 2008: 45).¹⁷¹ In this way, special groups maintain their communal identities by screening off incompatible areas of interference either by ceasing to acknowledge them, or denying their reality, or declaring them evil (Feyerabend 1999: 13), thus neutralising dissent. Moreover, as my example shows, a useful ingredient of belief in the veracity of a legend is the conviction that there are forces attempting to suppress it (Section 2.1.1). Hence the intrinsic apposite value of the myth of the unseen demonic "hoaxer," or trickster, who is motivated to mischief, undermining belief in 'genuine' crop circles by polluting their natural environment

¹⁷¹ John Michell offered a more considered alternative to this problem: "Believe nothing, accept everything."

with man-made material.¹⁷² I will return to this uncertain relationship in Section 4.5. Suffice to say here that hoaxing is not the exclusive domain of non-believers, as my next case study demonstrates.

Case Study: Andrew Pyrka's Aliens

In the 12th century, a document was produced purporting to be an 11th century charter given by Edward I to the monks at Westminster Abbey, deeming the Abbey the permanent site of royal coronation. It was a fake, probably made by the monks, but it was accepted as genuine and its authority still holds today (though nowadays this is attributed to tradition). In the present context, it is important to consider that it was not just the monks who were empowered by this ostension but also the monarchy, as the document acted as a reminder, and *validation*, of royal authority. The ostension *stood for* what it was perceived or intended to denote. In exactly the same way, once a 'genuine' crop circle is perceived as such, it is denotative and validates the truth of its ancestral myth.

The same dubious circularity is apparent in my next example. Andrew Pyrka takes photographs of the interiors of crop circles. He scrutinizes these images for 'anomalies.' On occasion, Pyrka has found simulacra¹⁷³ which he has interpreted as evidence of small alien creatures in or around the crop circle. He calls these "observing entities" because, like the receiver of *darśan*, seeing them is intertwined with the sense that *they* are looking at *him*. Where others may not have seen anything more out of the ordinary than a scuff mark in the crop, Pyrka sees a body, head, and nose. This revelation is phase one of the ostension. If these signs are too ambiguous to be identified by others, he emphasizes their features using photo-manipulation software. In some cases, he has enhanced the simulacrum by drawing

¹⁷² A treatise (IV, *On the Vanity of Idols*) attributed to the early Christian writer Cyprian defined the defiling nature of "impure and wandering spirits, who [...] are lurking under the statues and consecrated images" as a principle that "misleads and deceives, with tricks which darken the truth, [and] leads away a credulous and foolish rabble." This view was shared by the theologian Albert Farges, who, in his 1926 treatise on mysticism, concluded that some miracles "are counterfeits due to an act of the Devil who, in all ages, has shown himself to be the ape of God." These counterfeits, argued Farges, are always betrayed by their moral malice, as are false ecstasies and false miracles. Medieval ecclesial authorities deployed similar tactics to turn benign daimons into *demons*, *devas* into devils.

¹⁷³ Simulacrum: usually an image or representation, but perhaps Pearson's definition, "an exact copy of an original that has never existed" (Pearson 2010: 92), is more appropriate here.



(Above) *Fig. 29* Andrew Pyrka's image of an alien being, spotted at a distance. The image was manipulated, not least to 'enhance' the 'eyes' of the being.

<http://www.cropcirclewisdom.com/1/post/2011/10/alien-beings-at-ogbourne-down-2009.html> Ret. 11/02/2013.

(Below) *Fig. 30* Pyrka shows his model of the 'alien-on-a-scooter' he claims to have seen in a crop circle. He identifies this with the 'ancient artefact' pictured below (right).



an outline around it, or by 'painting' in the eyes (*Fig. 29*), or even by making a clay figurine of the creature (*Fig. 30*). This is phase two. Now we are able to compare the image or maquette to other images and historical artefacts that are said to portray aliens. Like the 11th century 'charter,' these serve to validate the original interpretation, thus actualizing the simulacrum – i.e., the movement from 'as is' to 'as if' is inverted and reverts to 'as is.' The image is then validated further by comparison to existing artefacts/idols thought to depict ancient astronauts. As the ostension emanated from an empirical observation in a crop circle (that is already an alien imprint), this provides another layer of validation of the artefacts depicting actual beings. In this way, a truth of sorts is arrived at. Consistent with Eco's analysis, the alien encounter and its subsequent life as an interpretant are mediated by previous mentions and inferences based on existing, and continuous, mythic narrative. I view these processes in terms of the "grass roots legend politics" discussed earlier in Section 1.3.4.

4.2.3 Subcategories of Ostension

Sub-categories of ostension devised by Dégh & Vázsonyi (1983) and repeated since (Ellis 2001; Meder 2007) include 'quasi-ostension,' the misinterpretation of normal or naturally occurring events as experience of an existing legend (e.g., fluffy thistle spores seen through the telescopic lens of a video camera as 'balls of light,'¹⁷⁴ or a 'ghostly chill' in a chilly room), and 'proto-ostension', in which elements are drawn from existing legend and claimed as personal experience, the teller thus verifying

¹⁷⁴ Here, Puck operates within the gap between the seer and the seen. In this particular legend landscape, video footage of a 'ball of light' floating over a crop circle will be seen as such on the basis of its proximate on screen relationship to a crop circle. Without the circles as context, the object would go unnoticed, e.g., as airborne seed fluff, or perhaps a butterfly. These events often involve optical recording devices, whose telephoto lenses reduce the depth of field, creating an illusion where small objects are rendered bigger (i.e., closer) than they actually are. The fact that these 'balls of light' are only visible to the person looking through the camera is said to contribute to the mystery, intensifying the sense of the sacred revealing itself to particular people. Similar examples of expectancy-fulfilment can be found in relation to healing or revelation at traditional sites of pilgrimage, where, again, affect and effect are assumed to be related to place. Bearing this in mind, it is worth quoting Briggs:

Pwca is best known, however, as a Will o' the wisp. He will lead a benighted wanderer up a narrow path to the edge of a ravine, then leap over it, laughing loudly, blow out his candle, and leave the poor traveller to grope his way back as best he can. In this behaviour he is like the Scottish Shellycoat as well as the English Puck.

Briggs, *A Dictionary of Fairies*, 1976: 338

Elsewhere, Briggs notes that Puck, Pouk, or Robin Goodfellow "amuse themselves with Will o'the wisp pranks at times" (*ibid*: 231), an observation that is reflected in my own practice.

the legend through their own first-person account. As in the example above, the act of situating the legend teller at the centre of the legend allows proto-ostension to become as much about the legend of their own involvement in the legend, as the legend itself. The tale told to me by the circle-maker about his brush with daimonic entities (Section 3.1) may be contextualized in either or both these subcategories. In legend landscapes there are an abundance of scenarios in which these ingredients are combined as social drama, especially in conjunction with ostension involving something shown that represents personal experience, such as photographs/video of UFOs, balls of light, aliens, or fairies. I saw much of this kind of material, and behavioural interaction, during the course of my fieldwork.

Dégh & Vázsonyi created another subcategory: pseudo-ostension, the enactment of an existing legend using fabricated evidence. I respectfully reject this distinction on the grounds that all ostension is fabrication, and as such the term 'pseudo' creates a false distinction. They also argue that "acting in a hoax is not acting in the theatrical sense" (*ibid*). I disagree with this, but attribute their idea to cultural differences explained in the footnote below.¹⁷⁵ What is more important in terms of my argument is the distinction Dégh & Vázsonyi make between unconvinced viewers, for whom "only the unsuccessful hoaxer, clad in sheets, exists" and "the actor who succeeds in disappearing behind the ghost and who is given credence by the gullible viewer" (1983). While the 'real' ghost has shown itself by pure ostension, they argue, the fake ghost "is featured by pseudo-ostension in front of the misled audience" (*ibid*). As I have shown (e.g., discussion around *Fig. 26*) and will examine in more detail shortly, this is too literal an interpretation of the nature of theatricality in its division between actors and audience. I reject the idea of the "gullible misled" – rather, I would argue that there is no real difference between pseudo-ostension and "pure ostension," given that legend telling *and its reception* is a collaborative-creative process of audience collusion in the hoax.

¹⁷⁵ Dégh & Vázsonyi's argument that when actors seek to create a false sense of reality as distinct from a prescribed playframe, that "if [this] can be called 'theatre' it must be considered a very idiosyncratic, multilayered theatre" (1983: 23) would appear to be the product of a cultural divide of perceptual differences identified by Sauter (2000: 36-49) between U.S. and European views of what constitutes theatre. Where Americans have tended to view theatre in more formal text and character-based terms, to Europeans it includes a cornucopia of activities from everyday social life to folk activities such as fairs and carnival, street performance, pantomime etc.

4.3 Ostension as Dark Play

This is essentially the same process proposed by Duchamp, and lives in a “third realm,” as Leavis (1972: 62) put it, between ‘eye and page.’ A Barthesian haunting ensues. Like Duchamp, Barthes saw the role of unintentional expression as that “of the Phantom, the Shadow” (1984/89: 369)¹⁷⁶ of the subject. For the purposes of my wider argument, it is useful to also evaluate Gordin’s description of pseudoscience as “shadow science” in this context:

I have come to think of pseudoscience as science’s shadow. A shadow is cast by something; it has no substance of its own. The same is true for these doctrines on the fringe. [...] The brighter the light of science – that is, the greater its cultural prestige and authority – the sharper the shadow, and the more the fringe flourishes.

Michael D. Gordin, *The Chronicle Review*, Sept 17, 2012
‘Separating the Pseudo From Science.’

In considering these epistemological tensions, I have found it useful to return to Plato’s notion of the existence of a plane of absolute reality beyond the realm of the everyday. Turning again to dowsing as my example, the meaningful movement of the dowser’s tool records movement in the perceptual space between the physical and its shadow. The movement ‘confirms’ a shadow reality that purportedly resonates with the dowser’s extrasensory perception. The inferences and interpretations that may be drawn from this represent a kind of shadow scientific validation that finds equivalence, I would argue, in the subtle intertwining of aesthetics and psychology in art and mystical thought. This activity is consistent with Taussig’s observation that whereas the explicit is tedious and hardworking, the implicit is “geared toward atmosphere and imagery, where and when spaces between words are mined with gesture. This belongs to *homo ludens*, the world of play...” (2011: 100). Schechner captures its *shadowy* nature with the evocative term “dark play” (1993: 27), which:

may be conscious playing, but it can also be playing in the dark when some or even all of the players don’t know they are playing. *Dark play occurs when contradictory realities coexist, each seemingly capable of cancelling the other out* [my emphasis]. [...] Dark play subverts order, dissolves frames, breaks its own

¹⁷⁶ Accordingly to my argument, the same unintentional expression could be said to extend to ‘shadow entities’ (Section 3.1) ‘seen’ by crop circle makers at night, or, for that matter, ghosts. Interestingly, Jung associated the Trickster with his notion of the Shadow archetype.

rules, so that the playing itself is in danger of being destroyed, as in spying, con games, undercover actions, and double agency.

Schechner (1993: 36)

Schechner argues that unlike more acceptable public faces of inversion, such as clowning, dark play involves disruption, deceit, excess, and gratification. These are to society what pseudoscience is to science, but are only cast as such in societies that are structured around a shared sense of cohesion based on principles thought well founded within that society, because they are assumed to undermine those values. The same applies to authorlessness in terms of authority and authenticity. This returns us to theatre as art in its purest form as illusion, which again is home territory for Puck and other would-be tricksters.

To summarize the points made above. My thesis extends Dégh's and Tangherlini's approach to legend in identifying its telling as a ritualistic, artistic, ludic, and *performative* activity. The son would not have perceived meeting his father at the séance (Section 2.2.2) in this way. I do. To him, as felt experience – in the darkness, he was able to touch his father's hair and smell the alcohol on his breath – it represented 'real life.' Where we would differ in our analysis is in my awareness that this may have been performed with that intention, and that the success of the engagement may be gauged by the strength of tacit collusion between participants.

Dégh has also characterized legend telling as "nonartistic," i.e., something that ought to be studied and classified according to some undisclosed (because it is naturally tricky, therefore impossible) criterion of scientific objectivity. She writes:

Although it is generally agreed that the legend is mostly monoepisodic, nonartistic, plain, and reportive, and often relates a personal experience, little has been said about its formal features. Except for F.W. Schmidt's 1929 attempt to describe the legend as an artistic narrative, all of the authors have mentioned the formal inconsistencies of the legend text only in passing, mostly as part of a complaint about the difficulties of finding a workable body of narrative units that can be ordered according to a type and motif classification system.

Dégh (2001: 39-40)

As I think Law (2004) would agree, with the introduction of deceptive practices on the part of both sides of this artistic exchange, entropy ensues, resulting in the kind of mess that represents meat and drink for the Trickster. As Freud found in his attempt to taxonomize 'the Uncanny,' where his subject matter always evaded the boundaries he set to contain them, the occult is an inherently messy business and, as Dégh hints above, this problem is compounded when we treat it as if it *ought* to be coherent (Law 2004: 2) and subject to rationalist values.

My view, as an artist with Trickster tendencies, is aligned with Schmidt's. Whereas Dégh's, as a folklorist, seems to be tied to the Protestant disposition toward "truth in text," mine embraces links between images and the human imagination that are vitalized through contact and lived experience,¹⁷⁷ and where synonymy exists in trance-like states of aesthetic and religious experience. The latter is bound up in expectation and desire, and what we make of sensory stimuli, as well as the etymology of theatre, its relation to theory – both derived from *theorein* (Gr: to look at), and *theion/theia* (Greek: the divine, or divine things). Again, I relate this to *darśan*, the devotional act of seeing *and being seen by* an object, made special in the process, where seeing becomes saturated in affect as the human melds with the divine.¹⁷⁸ This object may be a statue or image of a deity, an actual person, or a place, a crop circle, or a circular piece of rice paper representing Christ's body.

4.3.1 The 'Hoax' as a Theatrical Act of Ostension

I will now consider the much maligned 'hoax' in the present context, its place in the spiritual economy as defined by Morgan (Section 3.2) and how it "invokes different authorities" (2012: 85) in terms of ostension, i.e., showing and receiving. This begins at the highest level of ritual transformation.

The word 'hoax' is thought to have originated in the magical term 'hocus pocus' (Schnabel 1994), which is itself derived from the Latin *Hoc est corpus meum*, or "This is my body" – the phrase traditionally uttered by priests during the Eucharist

¹⁷⁷ At its most active, art challenges received notions of truth. Art and notions of religious Truth famously clashed during the English Reformation: on one side, the allure of art for its artfulness and theatricality, on the other, repulsion rooted in distrust of those same qualities. Echoes of the repression that ensued reverberate today in discourse polarising religion and science.

¹⁷⁸ Tilley (2004: 17-8) draws attention to a similar transaction in Merleau-Ponty's essay *Eye and Mind*, which describes a reversal of roles between the painter and the painted.

and the elevation of the Host. Webster's online dictionary defines ostension as: 'The showing of the sacrament on the altar in order that it may receive the adoration of the communicants.'¹⁷⁹ This association reveals the inherently deceptive nature of the spiritual economy in its exchange mechanism of supply and demand. If it were possible to freeze the Mass at the moment of transubstantiation, subject the Host to reductive analysis, most likely the bread would be disclosed as 'just' bread (or rice paper). But this ignores the power of the aura of the thing being shown, and especially the fact that it is what is *brought* to the transaction that defines the object's power. It was James' solution to this problem that informed his philosophical ideas concerning Pragmatism:

The bread substance must have been withdrawn, and the divine substance substituted miraculously without altering the immediate sensible properties. But though these don't alter, a tremendous difference has been made, no less a one than this, that we who take the sacrament now feed upon the very substance of divinity. [...] This is the only pragmatic application of the substance idea with which I am acquainted; *and it is obvious that it will only be treated seriously by those who already believe in the 'real presence' on independent grounds.* [My emphasis.]

James (1907/2009: 93)

Whereas to the materialist 'seeing is believing', to the believer, seeing is itself already an act of devotion. As in Hindu philosophy, it is related to touch – to being and remaining *in touch with the object of belief*. There is correspondence here with James' "prayerful consciousness" (1902/85: 466), cited by Hammer (2010: 82), as well as Hillman's idea of "religious psychology" (1976/92: 168-228) and his "nonagnosticism" – not quite belief or non-belief, but to one side of agnosticism; an *acceptance* of religious states of being (1976/92: 167) as an approach to understanding human interaction with the holy.¹⁸⁰

James asks whether the drama played out in the Eucharist is just drama or if something is "genuinely transacted" (1902/85: 466). He holds, and Hammer concurs, that the conviction of genuineness is the "very core" of religious

¹⁷⁹ <http://www.webster-dictionary.org/definition/Ostension> Ret. 20/02/11

¹⁸⁰ Likewise, Eno speaks of "zones of pragmatic deceit" (1996: 301) to describe the strategies we create to negotiate the gap between what we claim to stand for and what we have to do to make things work.

experience, which is “indissolubly bound up with the question of whether the prayerful consciousness be or be not deceitful” (*ibid*). From here, Hammer (2010: 83) argues that as “natural science and the industrial arts” never challenge the human psychological element to such transactions, the object/s perceived should be treated similarly by logic and experiment.

I disagree with this argument only inasmuch as what we are discussing here is not a scientific problem of the physical reality of anomalous phenomena, but rather its social effect, and its affect on individual experience. Pace Hammer, I contend that a kind of deceit – what James calls “a certain blindness in human beings” (1907), a softer version of Carse’s “wilful ignorance” (2008) – is integral to the *performativity* of religioaesthetic experience. In this play-frame of expectancy, where beliefs are acted out as real life, we cannot afford simply to dismiss this kind of experience in such negative terms of deceit or delusion, without, so to speak, ‘throwing the baby out with the bathwater.’ This is not to say that all paranormal phenomena are ‘tricks,’ but rather to accept the extent of trickery that exists in this field and the role it plays in legend telling, and that there may be value in it.

By way of contrast to this view as it is played out within the climate of legend belief, Harpur sees the Trickster’s role as a crosser between worlds only in terms of classical mythology. He likens crop circles to boundary markers (or herms) that show where Hermes has trodden (Brown & Michell 2005: 68). Sharing similar sentiments to the theologians quoted earlier (fn172), Harpur abhors conscious mimicry, or “hoaxing,” of daimonic phenomena: to him, human tricksters represent the Trickster’s dark side; they are the cause of contamination of divine revelation. “There is a sinister element to all tricksters” he writes, “they like to play god, or the devil, behind the scenes” (*ibid*). Harpur goes on to argue that while practical jokes may be considered amusing insofar as everyone is allowed to be ‘in’ on the joke:

...what of the joker who does not unmask, like the perpetrator of crop circles? He forces us to unmask ourselves. He needs no satisfaction from the look on our faces. He manipulates for his own sake. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He wants to deflate our self-importance, undermine our principles and beliefs, threaten our reason. He is invisible, ruthless and impersonal, like a psychopath or a god. He is Mercurius who, like Lucifer,

both deceives in order to destroy, and deceives in order to bring light. If we do not know ourselves, that is, know, discern, listen to our daimons – and demons – we are easy prey for the darker side of Mercurius. Let us pray that his tricks stop at crop circles.

Harpur (in Brown & Michell 2005: 68-9)

Poor Puck. But then, to be so misunderstood by one's own friends is an inevitable part of the Trickster's lot.

4.4 The Legend Landscape as Perceptual Field

I will counterbalance Harpur's antagonism towards such activity in the chapter to follow, where I will argue in favour of masks and the value of concealment in this context, and beyond, in terms of its relevance to art practice, and reception. First, to conclude here, I would like to return the discussion to the shaping of the legend landscape through ostension, in terms of performative action. Davis & Postlewait observe that, in recent decades and across the humanities and social sciences:

we have witnessed the proliferation of theatrical models of analysis that privilege the idea of performance. These models typically depend upon comprehensive and integrated ideas of theatre, ritual, myth, play, role-playing, ceremony and carnival. Sometimes this performative idea is located directly in religious practices, sometimes in myths and mythic thinking. In other cases, it is expanded to embrace everyday life, conventional behaviour, and social rituals. In yet other cases, it takes the form of the concept of cultural play and social games. *Or it can be tied to ideas of folk culture...* [my emphasis].

Davis & Postlewait (2003: 28)

This is a view shared by Pearson, when he writes, with regard to landscape, that: "there are performance practices and events within the purview of folklore that form special *occasions* and *opportunities* to animate and reflect upon landscape as 'nature, culture and imagination within a spatial manifold'" (2010: 34). My interpretation of 'landscape as spatial manifold' may differ from Pearson's, but they share crucial similarities. The Trickster articulates the relationships involved in a cultural ecology consisting of nature, people, and myth, and the emergence of legend in this social syncretic place-space crucible. In relating this to ostension I have attempted to account for (and to demonstrate through practice) the performance of, and responses to, phenomena that are taken at 'face value,' that is, a spatial manifold contained

within the way ostension is revealed in the context of contemporary folklore. In his *Theory of Play and Fantasy* (1954), Bateson identified this qualia as contained within play, as part of a premise whereby the playframe itself:

is involved in the evaluation of the messages which it contains, or the frame merely assists the mind in understanding the contained messages by reminding the thinker that these messages are mutually relevant and the messages outside the frame may be ignored.

Bateson (1972: 188)

Avebury's landscape is a crucible of cultural significance: its mythic associations invite performance and responses that are problematized as real life engagement with the unknown/but sensed known. To participants in this game, it offers ideal alchemical conditions, opportunities for Trickster acts, catalysing (for some) situations of wonder and (for some others) disgust. Schechner observes that given these conditions "performance is an illusion of an illusion and, as such, might be considered more 'truthful', more 'real' than ordinary experience" (2003: *xix*). This illusion is made all the more real by the embodied reality of being there, where setting plays a constituent role in providing felt experience. From my perspective as an artist, it is what happens when the epistemological safety net – the right of appeal to a single, authorised truth – is removed that makes this social drama so interesting. Whereas Elizabethan theatre used metatheatrical devices to reassure audiences that what they were watching made no pretensions to reality (Davis & Postlewait 2003: 14-6) we see the opposite in New Age ritual practice, where pretence and credulity combine to sustain the ostension, and in doing so create new realities for those embroiled in the drama. The resulting tension is, I suggest, captured in Davis & Postlewait's observation that because theatrical mimesis is not subject to verification it comes "a little too close to the operations of religious faith for the comfort of the devout" (2003: 5),¹⁸¹ which might explain why the Puritans

¹⁸¹ While New Age practices parody stereotypes of scientific practice by imitating its use of data dissemination, and specialised technology [e.g., EEG (Electro-encephalograph) and ESR (Electrical Skin Resistance) equipment (Pringle 2000) and "miraculous energy effects of crop circles on batteries and cameras" [Hein 2006: *pers. comm.* (email)]], which suggests that a measureable physical effect is at play in and around crop circles, accredited scientists such as Paul Dieppe at the University of Exeter Medical School have been looking at 'healing responses' (pejoratively dismissed by biomedical scientists as the 'placebo effect') in relation to legend landscapes, specifically Lourdes (Pilgrimage workshop, UCL 27/3/12). They have found appreciable efficacy in social interactions between people,, things, and places.

loathed the theatre and closed its establishments in 1642.¹⁸²

In Peckham's variation of Duchamp's maxim, art exists in the gap "between the orientation appropriate to the situation and the actual demands of interaction with that situation" (1965: 80-1). Accordingly, the distinguishing attribute of an artwork's success is the artist's awareness, even encouragement, of *discontinuity* between expectation and the unexpected, not continuity; emotional disturbance, not emotional catharsis (*ibid*: 254). Catharsis comes with reorientation on the part of the perceiver.^{183,184} Peckham's 'field' is my 'space.' Both imply a non-physical realm that is entwined with the physical. According to cultural geographer David Crouch, space is created by feeling, which is always fluid and susceptible to cognitive tension. Perceptual spaces are performed "not only with the eyes but with the feet" [lecture, and *pers. comm.* (conversation) 2011], by which he means that place allows movement within space as lived experience, at which point place and space become fused. Eco's observation that ostension always contains an implicit or explicit "stipulation of pertinence" (1979: 225) is relevant here because in the legend environment things, like the bread and wine of the Eucharist, assume a

Interviewed in December 2012, Lucy Pringle told me about her research into how "crop circles reduce" overt symptoms of Parkinson's disease, such as involuntary tremors. She dismissed my mention of Dieppe's studies, arguing instead that energy lines and geometry have a physical impact on human physiology – referring to this more generally as the "effects of electromagnetic fields on living systems." It is apparent that while Pringle asserts her moral position against "hoaxing" as deception, she seems unaware of how deception may contribute to the "psychological element" (her phrase) that, I (and I expect Dieppe) would argue sits at the heart of her observations.

¹⁸² Asquith (2005) makes a good argument for the existence of hidden Catholic sentiment and messages implicit in much English Renaissance theatre.

¹⁸³ Catharsis, said Aristotle, is addressed by undergoing two opposing movements of the soul at the same time. This classical dialogical tradition of the coexistence of opposites originated in Menippean satire and carnival, and is continued in trickster behaviour, as a coincidence of processes and notions, which Babcock-Abrahams characterises as the particular unity of the liminal: that which is neither this nor that (*neti neti*), and yet is both.

¹⁸⁴ Central to Peckham's theory is the proposition that art is characterised not by order but by disorder. Drawing from Kuhn (1962), he reminds us that we tend to attribute order to whatever we value, emphasising unity, even to the point of distorting perceptual data so that we see something as ordered which in fact is not. This is the "the essential tension" (*ibid*: 79) implicit in scientific research, whereby scientists, like artists, in order to recognize anomalies that may lead to paradigm change, must be able to adapt to a "world out of joint" – to perceptual crises, or disorientation, as Peckham called it. Novelty struggles to emerge against a background provided by expectation. Peckham recognized the necessity within an evolutionary system that is driven by responses to stimuli to allow, or to somehow induce, awareness of anomaly by penetrating existing knowledge, and saw art's role as being to open up knowledge to potentialities.

special significance. This is especially true in legend settings where truth values are inverted and become normalised according to cultural climes. The power of the 'fake' to influence what it copies (Taussig 1993: 250) is the essence of ostension. This is a primitivistic view of magic. It employs a mimetic faculty, which culture uses to create what comes as second nature to humans: the faculty to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become Other (Taussig, 1993: *xiii*).

In the next chapter, I will draw the strands of my argument together toward a conclusion, in a discussion that addresses art's, and the Trickster's role and position in the space between religious activity and postmodern attitudes towards scientism.

5 Why give Martians all the credit?

The title for this chapter comes from a question put to me by the artist Richard Long [*pers. comm.* (conversation) 28/02/2013]. It is a good question, going to the heart of my thesis, and I shall attempt to answer it as I move towards my conclusion.

5.1 Anonymity as a Phenomenological Tool of Art Practice

I would like to begin by returning to my earlier observation that some people are so drawn to mythical notions of primordial sublimity that they shape certain landscapes as 'make-believe' realms; realms where ideas become transformed into felt experience, touched by the phenomenological stimuli I have described thus far. Long's question relates directly to Jung's observation, mentioned in my General Introduction (p. *xi*), concerning the tendency of media to feed and affirm modern myths around phenomena such as UFOs and crop circles. This reflects and satisfies a public appetite for mystery and/or mysterious iconography (e.g., photographs of ghosts, angelic apparitions, and flying saucers). Consequently, aspects of contemporary culture are steeped in such legendry. The same aura of mystical transcendence can be found today in some modern art; Rothko's paintings are often cited for this, and the work of Long himself is another prime example. In our so-called secular post-industrial society, major art galleries such as Bilbao's Guggenheim museum are routinely described as 'temples' to art. In Texas there is even a custom built "chapel" dedicated to Rothko's paintings and the sanctity of modern art, attended by "60,000 visitors each year, people of every faith and from all parts of the world."¹⁸⁵

Clearly, there is an overlap of some art with religious sentiment. After that, it is a matter of where this sentiment is directed, and in this sense Long's question is a theological one. One could ask essentially the same question about the origin myth of the first icon of the Virgin Mary, said to have been painted by St Luke under the guidance of an archangel. The answer can be found in the way artworks are used to mediate between physical and spiritual states. Of course, in keeping with the Western habit of possessive individualism, Long's name is on the caption next to the work as being responsible for our feelings towards it. Let us consider an analogous curiosity: The silence of John Cage's seminal piece *4'33"* (or rather, the ambient

¹⁸⁵ <http://www.rothkochapel.org> Ret. 21/03/13.

sounds that listeners hear as it is performed silently) is considered somehow different, more authentic, when it is performed by Cage himself. If we follow this rationale to its logical conclusion, the author becomes the aura; s/he embodies the modern authoritative ideal. As I heard a guide announce at Tate St Ives, "And now, ladies and gentlemen, come this way to see the Frank Stella – Frank Stella is God." I would argue that religious awe directed at individual genius is rendered rather irrelevant amid the spiritual sensibility the work itself succeeds in evoking. The caption to the work, I suggest, is there for us to thank the artist for the experience, which is not solely about him or her: it is about us, and our interest in the sublime.

In the modern marketplace, artists are celebrated as representing their genre and are often more famous than their individual works. Thus, the graffitist Banksy is known to consumers of art as the acceptable face of the subversive anonymous artist. But he is not anonymous: he is 'Banksy,' a human being in a human mask, and this identity is immediately recognizable through his works. To underline this point about modern culture's view toward anonymity, we only have to note the media obsession with outing Banksy's 'real' identity. Napier observes that:

[The] process of naming or marking is so pervasive within the Western metaphysical framework that anonymity – a real option for the avant-garde – is perceived as not only improbable but undesirable. And, even in those cases where anonymity is a specific focus for artistic behaviour, the art world eventually recuperates through naming the individual and his or her work. Art, in other words, is not a part of anonymous individual action, and artists who work anonymously (or people who adopt anonymous roles) are dangerous confidence men, who need to be rooted out of culture as we know it.

Napier (1992: 22-3)

The perspective Napier describes is that of the conventional 'artworld,' but what of other art worlds? To reiterate a point made earlier in my discussion around Perry's yearning for his work to be experienced viscerally as well as cerebrally, like African Vodun artworks aesthetic sensibility carries an additional layer of veneration when an object is made special through handling by special personages, as relics of touch, and even *darśan*. Its power lies in physical contact; sometimes, in purely religious environments, the artist withdraws, or is marginalised as an unwanted intervention. Direct connections with mysterious, Otherly objects – or, in the case

of prehistoric artifacts, which speak to a sense that evokes the mystery of time – bridge the gap between presence and absence. We might consider in this context Belting's example (1994: 49) of the traces left by Christ's body on the pillar where He was scourged, and also in the context of my broader thesis where, in legend climates, the aura surrounding the cultural object is effective only when the thing is dislocated from the mundane, allowing it to articulate sacred relations between the recipient and the referent. This raises interesting questions about the role of mystique (the aura of mystery, awe, and power) in unlocking artistic potential and invites us to consider how this may be presented most effectively to a receptive audience. The Trickster, as a mode of behaviour, is key to this articulation, but only on condition that its concealment allows the quasi-object to perform. For such an artwork to succeed conceptually, i.e., to achieve its mythopoeic truth, there has ideally to be a symbiosis of relations between the artist/maker and willing participants. In the absence of the artist, these participants adopt for themselves that authoritative role, in displacing it by the wonder of concealment; by unknowing, sometimes the wilful unlearning of what is known. In Avebury's legend landscape, this kind of activity is contingent upon a mutual (and not necessarily tacit) agreement between participants that phenomena will appear, and that they will be experienced by an audience whose only concern is to engage with the mystery of their origins and efficacy. Parallels may be drawn here with the conditions of a séance where, likewise, a non-event would be a rare event indeed.

The essential concealment of this arrangement exists on many levels, and not only between people but also people and things. Huizinga captures this qualia in a passage from his *Homo Ludens* (1938). Here, a father interrupts his four-year old son, who is sitting at the front of a row of chairs, playing trains. "As he hugged him," writes Huizinga, "the boy said: 'Don't kiss the engine, Daddy, or the carriages won't think it's real'" (1938/55: 27). The child was so immersed in the game that the imaginary train (of which he was *in every sense* the engine) had become entirely real – but in itself still retained its imaginary quality, *which it understood* – and it was *collaborating in the game*. So, if Daddy kissed the engine, the train would realize the engine was not real, and therefore it was not itself real as a train, and the spell would be broken. There is a sophistication in the boy's comprehension of the nature of the spell and his commitment to the game. He

recognizes that there is a spell to be broken (that there was a more powerful reality), but the survival of the magically sentient train is at that moment more important than parental affection.¹⁸⁶ And so it is both with crop circles, and secondary artworks such as 'unidentified' thistle spores, or suchlike, floating over them and perceived as otherworldly 'orbs', within the magical confines and context of the legend landscape.

Like the Land Art movement's desire to liberate art from galleries (Wylie 2007: 141), the hidden ostensionist liberates spectators from social conventions that frame art purely in objective terms through actions alone. Here, the artwork's power is contained within both the aesthetic structure of the object itself and the social structure surrounding it. This signals more than a rejection of convention; it circumvents accepted notions of reality, thus returning art to its magical, performative roots and the tacit agreement that illusion eclipses common reality. This is less a willing suspension of disbelief (which by definition gives primacy to the three 'auts' mentioned earlier), than a wilful submission to unreason. Husserl's 'natural attitude' (the natural origin of a thing) is overlooked in favour of the radical empiric, and likewise issues of authorship are set aside. Phenomena "exposing that which is not to be said" (Nancy 1997: 131) induces excursions into uncannily familiar but ultimately unknowable territories. Where, in the realm of everyday society, the sacred, performance, and the plastic arts are set apart from ordinary life, in the mystical realm norms are reversed: art becomes real life. Rationalists may view this as a regression to less perceptive reasoning, but it is also a way forward. In the context of my study, the successful artist is able to influence the 'vision' an audience will bring to the work. While this may seem at first to confirm the artist's individuality it also serves collective ideals. Again, Napier sums up the social dynamic:

Now disguise is, in the study of humankind, the foremost example of how we articulate the problems of appearance in the context of change. Why should this be the case – why disguise and not true change? The answer, again, rests in our recognition of the possibility of illusion – in the awareness of an ambiguity informing the simplest transitions. This awareness aids us in establishing a point of view and in evaluating phenomena that we may later view differently. The *potential* for ambiguity, therefore, remains fundamental to change despite any

¹⁸⁶ Again, as told by Brookesmith & Irving, in Hoax! *Fortean Times* #252: 40 (June 2009).

claims we might make about an inferred, innate, or even empirically perceived identity, and disguise is, in our ontological experience, the primary way of expressing this ambiguity. The use of disguise is thus conducive both to make-believe and to changes of state that are imputed to be real.

Napier (1986: 3)

While it is generally true that hoax-like activity is regarded by New Agers as a destructive influence on their ideals, as exemplified by Harpur (Section 4.5), I am arguing the opposite. Their view requires a certain blindness to the symbiotic role of artists in these negotiations since, while Trickster activity is creative, its magic is only retained by its concealment. As I have shown however, the hoax is often hidden in plain sight and maintained by 'turning a blind eye.' Central to any discussion about sacred objects is the question of how, why, and by whose authority, the authenticity of any object is conferred by a beholder's perception of its origins. In my view, drawing from Benjamin (1935), the human relationship with art as sacred object (and vice-versa) is reducible to the following simple formula:

With the secularisation of art, human authorship supplants religious value.
With the sacralisation of art, religious value supplants human authorship.

As Dickinson (1998) [Section 1.5.1] observed, artists are engaging in activity that has gone on for centuries, and so are the audience – only the values have changed.

5.2 Review

Art is a word that describes the transaction between the individual and things that give clarity to the ontological nature of human experience as it takes place in a partially understood, part-sensed, but ultimately mysterious physical reality. This is a perceptual field composed of a virtual reality generated from sensory input filtered through ideas, knowledge, place, the human capacity for mimetic and poetic association, aesthetic, rational, and emotional response, and so on. Wallace Stevens defined this sense as "an expectation, a desire, a little different from reality, the difference that we make in what we see" (1945: V). The mere act of creating a crop circle is steeped in sacred ritual. It is a consecration in itself. Whatever is inside the circle, including the self, becomes an incarnation of mystery (Campbell 1988: 74), the still point in a turning world. To stand outside looking in (or vice-

versa) induces contemplation. In certain environments, outside the gallery, using legend, invisibility, and *receptivity* as creative tools, crop circles find roothold in the imaginal realm of the non-human exotic (though not necessarily Martian). Apart from the clues to be found in the materials used, the main difference in *how* the works are perceived and experienced lies in the *where* (i.e., in what context).

If not necessarily Martian then, perhaps distinctly Feyerabendian, which is just as alien to scientific orthodoxy in its challenge to sacrosanct Popperean values. New Age engagement with 'alternative archaeology' via ritual/artistic practice is first and foremost an escape from modernity. This is consistent with the observations of Napier (1992: 144-5) and Armstrong (2006: 128-9) that new strands of religious conviction may be seen to emerge and flourish in *response* to rationalism. To which I would add Miller's observation that haunted environments are themselves mythic forms which serve to resolve alienation tensions in social and material relations (2001: 107). The New Age movement may be *defined* by its alienation from, and rejection of, dominant social ideologies (e.g., science, construed and caricatured as scientism) in favour of new ways of conceiving the world. These in turn are, paradoxically, rooted in an ancient, mythic past.

As at Avebury, an alternative gnosis projected as conjecture into the prehistoric past has a bearing on how such sites are perceived, as well as the spirits and spiritual activities they manifest. Vestigial reminders are haunted by the living, whose sense of possession by past inhabitants, or by legend associations, is a way of *identifying* with a perceived loss. Avebury's ritual landscape, taken as a crucible of cultural significance, offers psychic insulation from one circumstantial reality in order to experience another. Lately, it has also become a place that, through such experience, fosters *communitas*, offering insulation from feelings of cognitive dissonance, and at the same time giving voice to the *polyvocal*. From what I gathered during the course of my study, impermeability to 'rational' logic is less an indication of gullibility, as Dégh & Vázsonyi suggested in 1983, than it is of the localised embrace of ideas that fit within a particular worldview, but which is antistructural by design in its non-conventional outlook.

I would therefore argue that the legend landscape, as I have defined it, is socially constructed to create an ideal platform for conjecture about deep-seated mysteries, such as “why are we here?” and an endless multiplicity of “what if?” speculations, which is made all the more pertinent by its performance as felt experience. And, returning to the subtext implicit in Long’s question, it should also be asked of some artists why they disassociate their role in these proceedings by becoming invisible?

The answer is that answers may all too easily gut the wonder out of mystery, childlike curiosity, and the need to ask more questions. This advances my general argument because it attempts to address the necessity for hoaxing – i.e., manufacturing artifice and/or simulacra that are intended to be taken as real/original – as artistic and/or religious activity. As I have argued (Sections 1.5, 2.2, and 3.2), this kind of Tricksterishness fosters a climate of dispute that acts as a force against polarization, which has led to so much social and cultural dissatisfaction.

As myth and legend live, by definition, outside accepted (scientific) values, this kind of activity presents problems for any inquirer who is not willing to enter into a transitory state of double-mindedness and (in the words of a Sufi saying) “dance in more than one direction.” In order to get an idea of the messiness of this subject, let us consider the similarity between Northcote’s analysis of ‘the paranormal’ in terms of contemporary folklore as “a complex web of discursive-based interests and preconceptions” (2007: 186) that hampers efforts towards mutual understanding, and Eade & Sallnow’s observation that pilgrimage supports and subverts established structure through competing discourses, and so counters drives towards consensus and *communitas* with movement towards plurality (Eade & Sallnow 1991: 2). To these views I would add the suggestion that consensus is not what is being strived for; that is the monist assumption, which is inappropriate here. Rather, people are engaging in a struggle for plurality over polarity. Whereas the politics of polarity naturally tends to stifle intellectual development, a politics of plurality I would suggest (following Feyerabend) positively encourages it. I have seen many dyed-in-the-wool Rationalists who are simultaneously attracted and repelled by this innately Tricksterish dance, and become trapped. As such, the legend landscape becomes a graveyard of ambition to solve its mysteries “once and for all.”

Law (1994) offers a potentially fruitful perspective on this dialectic: We should accept its messiness, and recognize the *illogic* of imposing order on chaos. Go with the flow. Recognize that in the socio-culturally... *politically*... charged crucible of the legend landscape, structural hierarchies that set measures on reality are naturally dissolved through Trickster activity. Likewise in physics: just when we think we have arrived at an absolute truth, nature throws up an anomaly, which not so much breaks the laws of nature but opens them up to reveal fresh insights into improbable potentialities that demand attention. (Rowan Williams used similar language in relation to the “poetic” aspects of Christian doctrine, such as ‘virgin birth.’)¹⁸⁷ Anarchy ensues, for awhile, as new truths fight for equal status. To think it matters that these ‘truths’ are built on falsehood is to miss the point. We have to step outside our boundaries into the mind of the Trickster, in order to seek ways to neutralize the tendency of dominant human ideologies to negate claims to their authority. The Trickster challenges hegemonic structures, thus fostering a state of uncertain equilibrium. It is a methodology of risk whose only political objective is to *not* find absolute solutions, but undermine certainty. The activity I have described as taking place each year within Avebury’s ritual landscape is, I contend, the localised site-specific performance of the *neti neti*, representing a microcosm of human yearning for something lost.

Viewed in epistemological terms, the manufacture and consumption (creation, experience, and absorption) of paranormal legend is akin to play behaviour, which Huizinga (1938) identified as elemental to human culture because it undermines the kind of order-directed behaviour that society tends to manufacture. These actions provide opportunities to rehearse our ability to take risks by deducing new rules to handle novel situations (Peckham 1965: 59). The overriding imperative to ‘keep the game going’ is also synonymous with Feyerabend’s notion of an open exchange,¹⁸⁸ where even the most entrenched of ideological traditions is made to interact with others as one body in an orrery of possibilities. Accordingly, the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge is essentially an anarchic enterprise that subsists on a constant supply of alternatives to received wisdom. In other words, quoting

¹⁸⁷ E.g., Dawkins vs. Rev. Williams: <http://atheistmovies.blogspot.com/2010/05/richard-dawkins-interviews-with.html> (Ret. 21/11/11) which may be taken literally, as Dawkins does, or are truer to Plato’s meaning: artistry, the bringing forth of something unique into the world through making and invention... *poiësis*.

¹⁸⁸ See, e.g., Feyerabend, Paul (1975) ‘How To Defend Society Against Science’, *Introductory Readings in the Philosophy of Science* – 3rd edition, Klemke, Hollinger, et al (Eds) 1998: 54-65.

Feyerabend, “there is no idea, however ancient and absurd, that is not capable of improving our knowledge” (1975/2010: 29), for “good arguments can be found for the opposite side of any issue” (1981: xiv).¹⁸⁹ To this end, Feyerabend suggested that in order to give breathing space to explore intuitive plausibility, we recognized the vast potential to be found in “importing systems from outside science, from religion, from mythology, from the ideas of incompetents, or the ramblings of madmen” (1975/2010: 47-8). This goes against modernist tendencies, where approaches tend to be oriented “from listening to looking,” according to standard scientific models of observation and ‘objectivity,’ rather than interaction and interpretation.

5.2.1 Intentionality, Anonymity, and ‘Art’

Central to the aims of the present study is the notion that creative interventions, performed hiddenly, may be judged as art by their ability to provoke a range of responses. The paradox bears repeating that it is only when this is not generally perceived as art that its success as art is assured. I draw here on a sociological perspective that, whereas in science comprehension of an idea is gauged by its remaining true to the author’s intent (see Section 4.1), with much art:

The *oughts* are different. If a ‘reader’ takes something away radically different than what the author intended from an encounter with such a work, no-one has made a mistake. On the contrary, it may be that the greater the range of interpretations inspired in readers the better.

Collins & Evans (2007: 118)

The creative value of this in epistemological terms should not be underestimated; as Feyerabend argued, to concede incontrovertible authority to any single ideology is detrimental both to social and imaginative freedoms. Through the anonymous art that creates and maintains legend landscapes, whose climate demands that science is treated as just another ‘other’ amongst others, counter-suggestive ideas are introduced at the deliberate *expense* of existing knowledge, inducing exchanges whereby:

¹⁸⁹ This philosophy is consistent with the Vedic concept of *darśana*, (similar to *darśan*, but) which Eck (1998) defines in terms of a oneness that consists of multitudinous ways of seeing. Also, the multiplicitous supersession of dialectical structure that is idealized as “three-sided football” [Home (Ed) 1997: 56-8], and the rabbinical tradition of listening as part of conversation (Sacks 2009: 197-8).

participants [are] immersed into each other's ways of thinking, feeling, perceiving to such an extent that their ideas, perceptions, world-views may be entirely changed – they become different people participating in a new and different tradition.

Feyerabend (1975/2010: 284)

Opposing ideas would be pointless unless they were treated as real alternatives. This is a defining condition of all ritual activity. Metaphor is the key: we do not necessarily have to believe in, or to reject, legendary constructs to gain from the vision they offer. In presenting unexpected novelty that threatens, cajoles and ultimately ridicules certainty, such legends invite new ways to perceive and experience the world. Art and legend, like religion, all of which rely on trickery and illusion, open our senses to unlimited potential – which might lead us to ponder Picasso's statement that:

We all know that Art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth at least the truth that is given us to understand. The artist must know the manner whereby to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies.

Picasso to Marius de Zayas in 'Picasso Speaks'
The Arts New York, May 1923.

Before I embarked on this research project I might have concluded that legend in this context, like much art, exposes us to the tensions and problems of a false world so that we may practice problem solving in relation to the real. Drawing further on Peckham (1965: 314), I might have argued that legend landscapes thus serve as rehearsal spaces for the orientation that makes innovation possible. However, I no longer think this as wholeheartedly as I did.

The obstacle to my earlier idea is the absence of a cut and dried innovation that could be directly attributed to this activity: Perhaps one day we might find that, MacGuffin fashion (fn159), crop circles led someone to devise a source of free energy as an alternative to fossil fuels, but I have yet to hear of this. I have had to look more obliquely for insights. My research has enabled me to recognize the social drama I have observed as just that: Theatricality. Play. Entertainment of belief. Make-believe. Wishful thinking. Wish fulfilment. This is not to undervalue the usefulness of wishful thinking, nor the pleasure to be found in its physical and

mental engagement through enactment. It is simply to say that to describe it in these terms is less grandiloquent, and more practical, than my earlier idea because it relates less abstractly to the *intent* of its actors. Myths and dreams come from the same place, noted Campbell, and a myth in one way or another addresses society's dream about a better possible world. Legend telling keeps the dream alive.

It also assuages fear and/or feelings of loss. My change of mind was partly informed by Festinger's observation, which formed the basis of his theory of cognitive dissonance, that anxiety-based beliefs (such as those which are considered Millennialist, or New Age) are often more *anxiety-justifying* than anxiety-provoking (Festinger 1957: *vii*). From this I formed an opinion, based on my observations, that if someone subscribes to belief/s in paranormal phenomena, any out-of-the-ordinary occurrence may be attached to that belief – to justify it, thereby justifying the anxiety. This urge can lead to believers creating the conditions in which belief is made manifest as phenomena, and *revelation*. I would argue that this also serves to explain the movement towards ambiguity, endless semiosis, and plurality. As I have argued in Section 1.5, the Trickster methodology naturally encourages this.

My study excavated a core belief of the New Age movement that a latent 'wisdom of the ancients' exists to be unearthed. It is an old myth that continues to generate new legend in the form of phenomena that relates it directly to place, specifically Avebury's ritual landscape. This information is mediated and conveyed via a range of resources from a variety of sentient messengers – angels, fairies, daimons, aliens, etc. – to notions around a pool of knowledge, the source of intuition, characterised by Jung as the 'collective unconscious,' containing a social memory or shared recollection of the past. This has found a place within, and forms part of, the common understanding of this post-rationalist movement; it defines the cosmology of the community, and is elemental to the shared sense of like-mindedness that is contingent to its spirit of *communitas*. Where ceremony indicates, ritual transforms, and transformation occurs most radically in states of liminality. My concept of legend landscapes represents the ritual demarcation of an area in which, as Grimes observes (2006: 146), ritualists discover ways of inhabiting a place in order to construct a new cosmos that is perceivable from *somewhere*. Somewhere *made special* through this ritual activity, that is. This liminal zone may be geographical,

an event, a border, a period of time, or even a state of mind – often in combination, with the geographical aspect providing a physical grounding for the others. Throw things into this mix and they become actants, vehicles of power, acting and responding according to the intentions of percipients, forming vital relations “because they circulate in our hands and define our social bond by their very circulation” (Latour 1993: 89). Outside the bubble of shared belief this received wisdom defines the essential antistructuralities of the New Age in relation to the normative structures that dominate the society it wants to unseat – as such, it is the mirror-image of its opposite likeness: scientism.

Key Turnerian concepts such as antistructure and *communitas* have yet to fully migrate from anthropology to the creative arts. By de- and re-territorializing ritual in the terms I have described, ritual moves away from ceremony towards more creative kin, and, as I have argued, represents an *avant garde* in artistic practice.¹⁹⁰ Myth, in terms of its transformational and transformative qualities, is inseparable from ritual. Ritual is tied to embodiment. Like so much myth whose success may be judged by its survival and longevity, this ‘lost wisdom’ is relived through ritual and revitalised by a process of continual rebirth through the plurality of its own assemblage. Art, and artfulness in its reception and use, play a key role in this activity. As Benjamin reminds us:

the earliest artworks originated in the service of a ritual – first the magical, then the religious kind. It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function. In other words, the unique value of the ‘authentic’ work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value.

Benjamin (1935)

I have shown how art becomes a valuable tool of antistructural movements, just as it is for the structural; in the present context, a well-hewn crop circle presents a problem for the reasonable person – to repeat Dewsbury’s observation, such art “perplexes people, makes them go off with a problem they cannot solve without changing” (2009). In Avebury’s ritual landscape, every new crop circle brings opportunity to glean fresh insights and discovery. The only rule implicit to its

¹⁹⁰ See, for example, Napier’s remarks on anonymity (1992: 22-3), quoted above (5.1).

'genuineness' as legend is that it adds to the wider assemblage of stories that are kept alive through systematic telling and retelling. The use of actions rather than words to convey such signs and wonders is called ostension. This also applies to things shown. As Grimes observes, "things are people too" (2010). Things act, and often more powerfully than humans. In the legend landscape human participants in contemporary ritual practice play a supporting role to things and to place itself. This dramaturgy is contingent on the survival of its own mystery. Mystery plays a crucial role in the art of storytelling. It builds a sense of anticipation in preparation for change (or resolution). To Grimes, "a ritual without mystery is flat. Mystery is wonder coupled with respect" (2010) – it is not the result of secrecy alone, or of invoking gods, but an outcome of wonder, of "contemplative attentiveness" to whatever presents itself (*ibid*). This is what makes crop circles so special, but the artist/Trickster facilitates this by ensuring flux through practice, in its execution *and* its interpretation. As I have argued, if not the result of secrecy, mystery is at least maintained through the use of invisibility as a tool of creative practice, or its concealment 'in plain sight' through collusion on the part of recipients.

Such collusion is an important part of ritual. Ritual is surrender; it is submission. It comes into being through efforts to participate, to be immersed, to experience myth as real life, at which point others are enticed to participate, even appositely. Through legend performance, once such artifice is released into the world it enacts the myth it is designed to represent, 'fixing' it so that it becomes susceptible to examination and viewed as evidence of its reality. This may be especially relevant in view of Bateson's contention (1972) that art bridges discrete modes of thought such as intellect and emotion, a combination he insists is essential in shaping attitudes towards the environment and, ultimately, human survival.

5.3 Summary

In summary, in keeping with the inverted world that plays host to my practice, my answer to Long's question inverts the maxim popularly known as Occam's Razor, regularly wielded against 'irrational' beliefs, concerning the heuristic principle of parsimony in relation to competing hypotheses: "Plurality is not to be posited without necessity" [Duns Scotus (1265–1308)]. It is that Martians (or something like them: maybe ancient astronauts; maybe God) are a *necessary* multiplication of hypotheses

that *ensure* plurality, whereas, in this scheme, this context, the *human* artist serves no more purpose than William of Ockham's original contention that "the authority of Sacred Scripture"¹⁹¹ has any place in scientific enquiry.¹⁹²

This boils down to differences in logic between Wittgenstein's "procedure of induction, which consists of accepting as true the simplest law that can be reconciled with..." (1922: 6.363), the artist's experience, or Peirce's alternative – a procedure of *abduction* – which, like James' Pragmatism, recognizes the aesthetic potentiality of the poetic imagination on the part of the mystified. This amounts to setting aside questions concerning the real origins and nature of a cultural object in favour of art, and the object's *supernatural* qualities... and thus what science *might* discover in an alternative universe.¹⁹³ In such a space, note Bök & Wershler-Henry, "science escapes from the mandate of its paradigm in order to explore the paradox of its paralogy." Such legend landscapes are phenomenological dream-worlds where diversity breeds diversity, populated by "a secret cabal of rebel artists who conspire to replace the actual world, piece by piece, with a virtual world, so that the inertia of a true history vanishes, phase by phase, into the amnesia of a false memory" (Bök & Wershler-Henry 1997),¹⁹⁴ generating a note of indeterminacy that sings across thresholds.

¹⁹¹ William of Ockham's version read: "nothing ought to be posited without a reason given, unless it is self-evident (literally, known through itself) or known by experience or proved by the authority of Sacred Scripture" (*Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford).

¹⁹² Here, I am mindful of a passage in Feyerabend's *Against Method* (1975/2010):

Does this not mean that they must learn *one particular set of views* to the exclusion of everything else? And, if a trace of the imagination is still to remain, will it not find its proper application in the arts or in a thin domain of dreams that has little to do with the world we live in? Will thin procedure not finally lead to a split between a hated reality and welcome fantasies, science and the arts, careful description and unrestrained self-expression.

Feyerabend (1975/2013: 32)

¹⁹³ This is reminiscent of Borges' observations [in *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* (in *Ficciones*, 1993)] on the alternative world of Tlön, whose metaphysicians are not looking for truth, but amazement. From this it would be possible to deduce that there is no science, let alone rational thought. The paradox, however, is that sciences exist, *in countless number*. [My emphasis.]

¹⁹⁴ http://www.mechanicalbrides.com/bok-henry_millennialpataphysics.html Ret. 26/03/2013.

6 Conclusion

This chapter summarizes this study and its findings, and identifies ways in which these may contribute to new knowledge, particularly in relation to contemporary art theory and practice.

Having set out in Chapter 1 my aims, objectives, and the theories and methodologies that underpinned my approach, I began (Chapter 2) by examining the background to my subject. This entailed detailed consideration of the historical and cultural influences that led to Avebury's identity within the New Age movement as a 'thin' place that serves as a threshold between physical and perceived non-physical realms, and where, latterly, objects of belief are expected to manifest in terms of observable phenomena. I have argued that aspects of the current popular engagement with crop circles in particular may be seen in this way, and seen also as a form of ritual interaction with Avebury's enigmatic landscape (Chapter 3).

I argued further that the products of such engagements may be regarded as conceptual artworks, which may be understood in terms of sensorial cultural objects, places and landscapes 'made special' (Sections 3.3.4 & 4.2) , and which, as such, invite ritual transaction and social participation.

These arguments have been presented within the context of a detailed historical and cultural study exploring the mimetic narrative that emplaces Avebury's prehistoric landscape as the vestigial remains of 'lost' Hermetic knowledge. My line of enquiry explores and extends the writings of John Michell and his influence on modern myths, including UFOs, Earth Mysteries, and other contentious phenomena (Sections 2.4-2.5.4). I then investigated how these ideas find form in socially engaged ritual practice within the New Age community, thus ensuring a mythic continuity that is fed back into society as contemporary folklore. I have used the term 'legend landscape' to define the way certain places and landscapes embody psychosocial internalisations of immaterial worlds, which are perceived and experienced as paranormal intrusions such as crop circles. The contentiousness of these phenomena is key to the antistructural nature of the New Age movement, which holds them up as evidence of a 'paradigm shift' in human consciousness and our understanding of

nature. These ideas led me to explore the creative processes by which artists and audience collude in perpetuating this kind of legend, and I was particularly interested in how landscape helps shape this activity, and *vice-versa* (Sections 3.3.1-2; 3.3.4-6 and Chapter 4).

As set out in Chapter 2, my first objective was to investigate the intricately balanced social ecology by which reconstituted 'Hermetic' values in the form of New Age doctrine have helped to perpetuate a myth of place. This required an examination of the current fascination with ancient monuments and their environs, addressing questions of how these landscapes complement, are complemented by, and play 'home' to crop circles and other phenomena, and the relevance of artistic performance in this relationship. My next objective was to examine how legend association with setting or place is shaped by the cultural activity it generates. As my study was practice-led, I explored this using my own artistic interventions. My hypothesis here was that I would be able to show through my own practice how artistic transactions manifest as artefacts and narratives, or artworks, that extend contemporary folklore *and its understanding*, and affect the way place/landscape is perceived and experienced. I contextualised this activity in terms of art history, particularly concerning the artist's concealment in this milieu and how it challenges some received ideas in contemporary art theory. In addition to invisibility and/or anonymity this, I argued (Sections 2.2.2 and 4.2), requires perceptual blindness on the part of participants, and thus collusion between artist/s and audience.

This strategy called for a reappraisal of the role of the artist – as *Trickster*: a key, if largely hidden, operator (in any guise, artist or otherwise) whenever a community trades in paranormal folklore as elemental to its cultural identity. As integral to this I have provided (Section 5.1-5.2.1) a rigorous, integrated framework by which to consider, examine, and develop the role of anonymity as a tool of creative practice as part of these processes. I showed that *concealment* is crucial to the kind of process and practice employed, and in shaping perceptions of phenomena in relation to its landscape setting. In bringing problematic issues such as anonymity to the fore, I examined a state of affairs within contemporary art theory that remains untested as a force for social change. Consequently my study also sought to

contribute to new knowledge by extending discussion about Trickster activity as a catalyst for transformative experience in the context outlined above.

In suggesting answers to these questions, this thesis forms a distinct contribution to the knowledge of this subject and affords evidence of originality by the discovery of new facts and/or by the exercise of new approaches to art practice in the following ways:

- My researching into and tracing of the intellectual history of the notion of Avebury as a repository of 'lost knowledge' (Chapter 2) as this has impacted on New Age thinking as part of a process by which the oldest of myths is adapted for contemporary audiences.
- Through practice (*Fieldnotes* and Section 3.3.6), I have exploited the notion of intervisibility in prehistoric landscapes in a new and original fashion, as an original contribution to *understanding* existing knowledge, thus extending a pre-existing idea. I have achieved this by adding sites to line-of-sight systems of alignment, in the spirit of 'ley' theory as formulated by Alfred Watkins.
- (In Chapters 3 & 4) I have shown that perceptions of place in terms of its 'aura,' or 'authenticity,' and thus *efficacy*, are adaptive to social and cultural contexts. Drawing on Gell (1998: 3), I have tested the notion that aesthetic preferences are a product of the (collective) mind and do not account for the physical attributes of particular objects, images, or places. In Section 3.1, I argued that place and/or landscape may be compared to the religious icon or relic, or to any 'work of art,' because, as with Gell's rumination on the latter, the moment we learn or decide that something is sacred we change our behaviour towards it.
- I have argued (Section 3.1-2) that this is a form of 'making special,' i.e., making *art*, and it is this attitude of receptivity that defines an object's *artistic and religious* power and efficacy. If, from the point of view of the anthropology of art (Gell 1998: 125), both idols and spirit mediums are treated as containers of divine vitality, then I have shown that the same can be said of place under certain circumstances.

- The foregoing practice and analysis led to my coining the term 'legend landscape,' which describes a perceptual link between the visual appearance of a place and the phenomena associated with it. This should prove both fruitful in further exploration and a useful shorthand for those intending to examine this and similar instances of place/space. (The archetypal example of a legend landscape is the haunted house – whose dynamics and ramifications were beyond my scope here.)
- I would argue that, in Chapter 4, where drawing from Grimes' work on ritual I introduce an original argument that ostension is the ritual enactment of 'as if' potentialities, my study extends and demonstrates previously unnoticed or unexplored aspects of the concept of ostension. As I have argued, this term allows for the reunifying of art and ritual objects in terms of their performative affect, especially in considering how these transform the way place, landscape and/or site are experienced as a setting for social engagement with 'supernatural' Others.
- Concealment (invisibility, and/or anonymity, and/or perceptual blindness) is key to the success of this ritual activity. I developed a model of artistic process that entails showing (ostension) and stepping away (concealment), which thus allows context (legend, as part of a cultural ecology including people and place), to dictate the rules of play.
- In terms of the Trickster as a methodological principle – while others have noted the concept in passing, I have exposed/revealed the mechanics of the Trickster as (in this context) a mode of behaviour (incorporating concealment) and its reliance on the responses of its 'public' to achieve its ends (which contain, inbuilt, the 'risky' potential for difference and/or originality).
- In doing so, my study realigns certain forms of 'deviant' activity to reveal it in a different light – e.g., anonymity as a tool of creative practice – inviting re/consideration of the much maligned concept of the artist/legend teller as 'hoaxer.' In work related to this study (Section 1.4.4, fn17-8) I have made a

major contribution to unravelling and anatomising the actual nature of hoaxing in its various manifestations, many of which may now accurately be seen as a form of artistic activity.

- The idea proposed in Section 1.5 that the space between author and reader, artist and experiencer, contains a collaborative, creative process, is not new. However, the suggestion of a catalyst in the form of the ultimate ambiguity of authorship that returns art to its roots in mystery is a valuable reminder of (and antidote to) our tendency towards possessive individualism and the order that Western society tends to manufacture. The essentially *transactional-collaborative* and creative nature of the relationship between art and audience has also been conclusively demonstrated, in my research/art practice undertaken as part of my doctoral work and in/through responses to it (*Fieldnotes*).
- My analysis of the collaborative/creative relationship between artist(s) and audience in the legend landscape of Avebury, arguably reveals the extent of the essentially contrarian, recusant nature of New Age thinking for the first time.
- My articulation of the 'contrariness' of New Age thinking has, however, led to a further original insight: that its expression (and disputation) takes ritual form in the Avebury legend landscape, and is essentially performative.
- In a society that tends to devalue error and emphasize its correction, rather than see it as a stimulus to new ideas, the deployment of risky strategies is suggested as an appropriate response to Law's observation of the "mess" inherent in social science. The creative arts provide a natural environment to test this hypothesis. To this end, and as a means of unlocking its potential, I explored through my own practice the possibility of a methodology for contemporary art practice based on an oppositional figure known across cultures as the Trickster. While I am not proposing that the Trickster strategies I have deployed would suit every artist, I am indicating the principle's in-built originality as a creative way forward, and one that should be more widely recognized within the framework of contemporary art theory.

- The above, whether taken separately or in combination, provide conceptual tools that researchers should find fruitful and indicates starting-points for further research.

The experience I have gained in the course of this project is consistent with Feyerabend's view that the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge is essentially an anarchic enterprise, one that subsists on a constant supply of alternatives to received wisdom. Hence my interest in 'the paranormal,' and the Trickster as a means by which to create conditions in which paranormal concepts are entertained and engaged with.

I saw the practical element to this study in terms of performing Feyerabend's idea that the arts are complementary to abstraction in this pursuit, and that they are necessary to release its potential. As such, this study models a creative clustering of overlaps, cross-fertilizations and feedback loops among art, anthropology, folklore, and the history of ideas – that is, in concrete terms, a process of interactions between Trickster (half-open, half-hidden) practice, an 'alternative' social movement and its rituals, the creation of legendry, and the mythic origins of them all. I submit that this modeling of a complex of ideas and practices should be seen as a natural extension to 'the arts' rather than being separated out (or even dismissed) as non-conformist and thus rejected as taboo. As indicated here, contemporary folklore is an outlet of creativity and acts as an indicator of cultural interests and even anxieties that are by no means limited to the subculture that articulates them.

Consequently I suggest that artists can take inspiration from Feyerabend's further remark that "examining this function of the arts and trying to establish a mode of research that unites their power with that of science and religion seems to be a fascinating enterprise, and one to which I might devote a year (or two, or three...)" (Feyerabend 1974/2010: 281). I intend to continue doing the same through my own art practice, using what I have proposed here as a foundation on which to build.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Acroyd, Peter (1999) *Blake*, Vintage, London.
- Alvesson, Mats & Sköldböck, Kaj (2000/2009) *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research*, Sage.
- Armstrong, Karen (2006) *A Short History of Myth*, Vintage Canada.
- Bachelard, Gaston (1958/94) *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston.
- Barry, P (2002) 'Structuralism', from *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Manchester University Press, pp39-60
- Bandelier, Adolf Francis Alphonse (1890/2009) *The Delight Makers*, Forgotten Books, online at <http://forgottenbooks.org>
- Barkun, Michael (2003) *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, University of California Press, Berkeley CA.
- Barthes, Roland (1971/77) The Third Meaning, in *Image, Music, Text*, Fontana Press, London.
- Barthes, Roland (1984/89) *The Rustle of Language*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Bateson, Gregory (1972/2000) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, University of Chicago Press.
- Beckett, Samuel (1983) *Worstward Ho* (novella). http://www.samuel-beckett.net/w_ho.htm
- Belting, Hans (1994), *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London
- Bender, Barbara (ed) (1993) *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, Berg, Providence/Oxford.
- Benjamin, Walter (1999) *Selected Writings Vol2, part 1, 1927-1930*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts & London.
- Bennett, Jane (2001) *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings and Ethics*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey.
- Blackburn, Simon (2006), *Plato's Republic: A Biography*, Atlantic Books, London
- Bord, Colin & Bord, Janet, (1974) *Mysterious Britain*, Paladin, London.
- Borges, Jorge Luis (1993) *Ficciones*, Everyman Library Classics, NY.
- Botton, Alain de (2012) *Religion for Atheists: A non-believer's guide to the uses of religion*, Penguin, London.
- Bourriaud, Nicolas (2002), *Relational Aesthetics*, les presses du réel, Dijon.
- Briggs, Katherine (1976) *A Dictionary of Fairies: Hobgoblins, Brownies, Bogies and other Supernatural Creatures*, Allen Lane, London.
- Briggs, Katherine (1959/2003) *The Anatomy of Puck: An Examination of Fairy Beliefs Among Shakespeare's Contemporaries and Successors*, Routledge, London & New York.
- Broadhurst, Paul & Miller, Hamish (1989/2011) *The Sun and the Serpent*, Mythos, Launceston, UK.
- Brown, Allan & Michell, John (2005) *Crooked Soley: A Crop Circle Revelation*, Roundhill Press, Brighton, UK.
- Bryson, Bill (ed) (2010) *Seeing Further: The Story of Science and The Royal Society*, The Royal Society, London.
- Campbell, Joseph, with Moyers, Bill (1988) *The Power of Myth*, Anchor Books, Doubleday, NY.

- Carr-Gomm, Philip & Heygate, Richard (2009) *The Book of English Magic*, John Murray, London.
- Carse, James P. (2008) *The Religious Case Against Belief*, The Penguin Press, NY.
- Casey, Edward S. (1987/2000) *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, 2nd Ed, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis.
- Clarke, David & Roberts, Andy (2007) *Flying Saucerers: A social history of UFOlogy*. Alternative Albion, Loughborough, UK.
- Colavito, Jason (2011) *The Origins of the Space Gods: Ancient Astronauts and the Cthulhu Mythos in Fiction and Fact*, Creative Commons:
http://www.jasoncolavito.com/uploads/3/7/5/9/3759274/the_origins_of_the_space_gods.pdf
- Collins, Harry & Evans, Robert (2007) *Rethinking Expertise*, Chicago University Press.
- Collins, Harry & Pinch, Trevor (1998) *The Golem: What You Should Know About Science*, Cambridge University Press.
- Danto, Arthur (1964). The Artworld. *Journal of Philosophy* 61 (19): 571–584.
- Davis, Tracy C. & Postlewait, Thomas (2003) *Theatricality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Dégh, Linda (2001) *Legend and Belief: Dialectics of a Folklore Genre*, Indiana University Press.
- Dégh, Linda (1995) *Narratives in Society: A Performer-Centred Study of Narration* Indiana University Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Félix (1988: 2004) *A Thousand Plateaus*, Continuum, London & New York;
- Dewey, John (1958) *Experience and Nature*, Dover, NY;
- Dewey, John (1934/2005) *Art As Experience*, Perigee, Penguin, NY.
- Dissanayake, Ellen (1992) *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes From and Why*, University of Washington Press, Seattle & London.
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor Mikhailovich (1879) *The Brothers Karamazov*, ebook:
<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/d/dostoyevsky/d72b/complete.html>
- Douglas, Mary (1966/2002) *Purity and Danger*, Routledge, London & NY.
- Eade, John & Sallnow, Michael (1991) *Contesting the Sacred; An Anthrolopogy of Christian Pilgrimage*, Routledge.
- Eagleton, Terry (1990) *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford Uk & Cambridge MA.
- Eck, Diane (1998) *Darshan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, Columbia University Press, NY.
- Eco, Umberto (2011) *Confessions of a Young Novelist*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, & London
- Eco, Umberto (2004) *On Beauty: A History of a Western Idea*, Secker & Warburg, London.
- Eco, Umberto (1999) *Serendipities: Language and Lunacy*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, NY;
- Eco, Umberto (1988/9) *Foucault's Pendulum*, Secker & Warburg, London;
- Eco, Umberto (1979) *A Theory of Semiotics*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana.
- Eliade, Mircea (1963) *Myth and Reality*, [trans W. Trask], New York: Harper and Row, NY.
- Eliade, Mircea (1957) *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, Harcourt, NY.

- Eliade, Mircea (1952) *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, Princeton University Press, NJ.
- Ellis, Bill (2001) *Aliens, Ghosts and Cults: Legends We Live*, University Press of Mississippi/Jackson.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo (2004) *Essays and Poems*, Barnes & Noble Classics, NY;
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo (1841/2000) *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, The Modern Library, NY.
- Eno, Brian (1996) *A Year With Swollen Appendices*, Faber & Faber, London.
- Festinger, Leon (1957) *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Stanford University Press.
- Festinger, Leon, Riecken, Henry W., Schachter, Stanley (1956) *When Prophecy Fails: A social and psychological study of a modern group that predicted the destruction of the world*, Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, NY.
- Feyerabend, Paul K. (2011) *The Tyranny of Science*, Polity Press, Cambridge (UK), and Malden, MA.
- Feyerabend, Paul K. (1999) *Conquest of Abundance: A Tale of Abstraction versus the Richness of Being*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London.
- Feyerabend, Paul K. (1987) *Farewell to Reason*, Verso, London & NY.
- Feyerabend, Paul K. (1981) *Realism, Rationalism and Scientific Method: Volume 1: Philosophical Papers: Philosophical Papers*, University of Cambridge Press, Cambridge.
- Feyerabend, Paul K. (1975/2010) *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*, Verso edition, London & New York.
- Finn, Geraldine (1996) *Why Althusser Killed His Wife: Essays on Discourse and Violence*, Prometheus Books.
- Fort, Charles Hoy (1919: 1995) *Book of The Damned*, John Brown Publishing, London.
- Freedberg, David (1989) *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, University of Chicago Press.
- Freud, Sigmund (1917) *The Uncanny*, Penguin Classics, London & NY.
- Gell, Alfred (1999) *The Art of Anthropology: Essays and Diagrams* (Eric Hirsch, ed), Berg, Oxford & NY.
- Gell, Alfred (1998) *Art and Agency: Towards a New Anthropological Theory*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Gide, André (1959) *So Be It or The Chips Are Down*, tr. Justin O'Brien, Alfred Knopf, NY.
- Godin, Seth (2013), *The Icarus Deception*, Portfolio, Penguin, London.
- Gordon, Avery F. (1997/2008) *Ghostly Matters*, University of Minnesota Press, USA.
- Grimes, Ronald. L. (2006) *Rite Out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Hallam, Elizabeth & Ingold, Tim (eds) (2007) *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*, Berg, Oxford & NY.
- Hammer, Anita (2010) *Between Play and Prayer: The Variety of Theatricals in Spiritual Performance*, Rodopi, Amsterdam & NY.
- Hansen, George P. (2001) *The Trickster and the Paranormal*, Xlibris
- Harpur, Patrick (1994) *Diamonic Reality*, Pine Winds Press, WA.
- Heath, Robin & Michell, John (2004) *The Measure of Albion: The Lost Science of Prehistoric Britain*, Bluestone Press, St Dogmaels, Wales.

- Hillman, James (1983/2005) *Healing Fiction*, Spring Publications, Putnam, Connecticut.
- Hillman, James (1976/92) *Re-Visioning Psychology*, HarperPerennial, USA.
- Home, Stewart (ed) (1997) *Mind Invaders*, Serpent's Tail, London & New York
- Huizinga, Johan (1938/55) *Homo Ludens: a study of the play element in culture*, Beacon Press, Massachusetts.
- Hutton, Ronald (1993) *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles*, Blackwell, Oxford & Cambridge (US).
- Hyde, Lewis (1998) *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth and Art*, Canongate, Edinburgh, London, New York, Melbourne.
- Hynes, William J. & Doty, William G. (1993) *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts and Criticisms*, University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.
- Ingold, Tim (2001) *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, Routledge, London & NY.
- Irving, Rob & Lundberg, John (2006) *The Field Guide: The Art, History and Philosophy of Crop Circle Making*, Strange Attractor
- Irving, Rob, Lundberg, John, Dickinson, Rod (2004), *The Beginner's Guide to Crop Circle Making (Revised Edition)*, Circlemakers Press.
- Irving, Rob & Lundberg, John (1994), *The Beginner's Guide to Crop Circle Making*, Self-published.
- James, William (1907/2009) *On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings*, Penguin (Great Ideas series), London.
- James, William (1902/85) *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Penguin Classics, NY.
- Jameson, Fredric (2005) *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, Verso, London and New York.
- Johnson, Anthony (2008) *Solving Stonehenge: The New Key to an Ancient Enigma*, Thames & Hudson, London.
- Judovitz, Dalia (1998) *Unpacking Duchamp: Art in Transit*, University of California Press.
- Jung, Carl G. (1966/ 2003) *The Spirit of Man in Art and Literature*, Routledge, London & NY.
- Jung, Carl G. (1962) *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Pantheon, NY.
- Jung, Carl G. (1959/2010) *The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, 2nd Edition, Routledge, London.
- Jung, Carl G. (1959b) *AION: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, Pantheon Books, NY.
- Jung, Carl G. (1959/1987) *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky*, Ark, London.
- Kipling, Rudyard (1951) *Puck of Pook's Hill*, MacMillan, London
- Klass, Morton (1995) *Ordered Universes: Approaches to the Anthropology of Religion*, Westview Press, Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford.
- Kofman, Sarah (1991) *Freud and Fiction*, (trans. Sarah Wykes) Cambridge Polity Press
- Kramrisch, Stella (1976) *The Hindu Temple*, Motilal Banarsidass, New Dehli.
- Kuhn, Thomas S. (1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Leavis, F.R (1972) Two Cultures? in *Nor Shall My Sword*, Chatto & Windus, London.
- Lambek, Michael [Ed.] (2002) *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford.

- Latour, Bruno (1993) *We Have Never Been Modern*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts.
- Law, John (2004) *After Method: mess in social science research*, Routledge, London & NY.
- Leick, Gwendolyn (1998) *A Dictionary of Ancient Near Eastern Mythology*, Routledge, London & NY.
- Lee, Harper (1960/2006) *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Arrow Books, London.
- Lethbridge, T.C. (1972) *The Legend of the Sons of God*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1950) *Introduction à l'oeuvre in Marcel Mauss, Sociologie et anthropologie*, University of Paris Press, Paris.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1966) *The Savage Mind*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1978/2009) *Myth and Meaning*, Routledge, London & New York.
- (1988/1996) Preface to 'The Raven Steals the Light', Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver.
- MacCulloch, Diarmaid (2009) *A History of Christianity*, Allen Lane, Penguin, London.
- Maritan, Jacques (1953) *Creative Intuition in Art & Poetry*, Pantheon Books Inc., NY.
- Mauss, Marcel (1902/1950/2001) *A General Theory of Magic*, Routledge, London and NY.
- McKnight, Stephen A. (2006) *The Religious Foundations of Francis Bacon's Thought*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia & London.
- Meaden, Terence [ed] (1990) *Circles From the Sky: Proceedings of the First International Conference on the Circles Effect at Oxford, together with post-conference additions*, Souvenir Press, Bradford-on-Avon, UK.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1945/1962/2009) *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge, London and NY.
- Michel, Aimé (1958) *Flying Saucers and the Straight Line Mystery*,
- Michell, John (2009) with Allan Brown, *How the World is Made: The Story of Creation According to Sacred Geometry*, Thames & Hudson, London.
- Michell, John (2007) *Megalithomania*, The Squeeze press, Glastonbury.
- Michell, John (2005) *Confessions of a Radical Traditionalist*, Dominion Press, US.
- Michell, John (2000) *The Temple at Jerusalem: a Revelation*, Gothic Image, Glastonbury.
- Michell, John (1994) *At the Centre of the World: Polar Symbolism Discovered in Celtic, Norse and Other Ritualized Landscapes*, Thames & Hudson, London.
- Michell, John (1991) with Christine Rhone, *Twelve Tribe Nations and the Science of Enchanting the Landscape*, Thames & Hudson, London.
- Michell, John (1984) *Eccentric Lives and Peculiar Notions*, Thames & Hudson, London.
- Michell, John (1983) *The New View Over Atlantis*, Thames & Hudson, London.
- Michell, John (1977/89) *A Little History of Astro-Archeology*, Thames & Hudson, London.
- Michell, John (1972) *City of Revelation*, Garnstone Press, London.
- Michell, John (1967/74) *The Flying Saucer Vision*, Sphere Books, London.
- Midgley, Mary (2004) *The Myths We Live By*, Routledge Classics, London & NY.
- Miller, Daniel (2001) *Home Possessions*, Berg, UK.
- Morgan, David (2012) *The Embodied Eye: Religious Visual Culture and the Social Life of Feeling*, University of California Press, Berkeley CA.
- Morgan, David [Ed. (2010)] *Religion and Material Culture: The matter of belief*, Routledge, London & NY.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc (1997) *The Sense of the World*, University of Minnesota Press.

- Napier, A. David (2004) *The Righting of Passage: Perceptions of Change After Modernity*, University of Pennsylvania Press
- Napier, A. David (1992) *Foreign Bodies, Performance, Art and Symbolic Anthropology*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA;
- Napier, A. David (1986) *Masks, Transformation, and Paradox*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Nelson, Buck (1956) *My Trip to Mars, the Moon and Venus*, self-published pamphlet.
- Newton, Isaac (1733) *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John*, http://www.isaacnewton.ca/daniel_apocalypse/
- Northcote, Jeremy (2007) *The Paranormal and the Politics of Truth*, Imprint Academic, Exeter.
- Otto, Rudolf (1923/58) *The Idea of the Holy: An inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relationship to the Rational*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Parker-Pearson, Mike (2012), *Stonehenge: Exploring the Greatest Stone Age Mystery*, Simon & Schuster, London, NY.
- Pavis, Patrice (1999) *Dictionary of Theatre: terms, concepts, and analysis*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Pearson, Mike (2010) *Site-Specific Performance*, Palgrave Macmillan, US/UK.
- Pearson, Mike & Shanks, Michael (2001) *Theatre/Archaeology*, Routledge, London & NY.
- Peckham, Morse (1965) *Man's Rage for Chaos: Biology, Behaviour and the Arts*, Chilton, NY.
- Pelton, Robert D. (1980) *The Trickster in West Africa: A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight*, University of California Press, Berkeley and LA, California.
- Pennick, Nigel & Devereux, Paul (1989) *Lines on the Landscape: Leys and Other Linear Enigmas*, Robert Hale, London.
- Preston Blier, Suzanne (1995) *African Vodun: Art, Psychology, and Power*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Pryor, Francis (2010) *The Making of the British Landscape: How We Have Transformed the Land, from Prehistory to Today*, Allen Lane, London.
- Pryor, Francis (2004) *Britain BC: Life in Britain and Ireland before the Romans*, Harper Perennial, London.
- Ronson, Jon (2011), *The Psychopath Test*, Picador, London.
- Peuckert, Will-Erich (1965) *Sagen*, E. Schmidt, Munich.
- Popper, Karl (1934/59/2002) *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, (as *Logik der Forschung*, English translation 1959), Routledge Classics, London & NY.
- Prince, Ruth & Riches, David (2000) *The New Age in Glastonbury: The Construction of New Age Movements*, Berghahn Books, NY & Oxford.
- Sacks, Jonathan (2009) *Future Tense: A Vision for Jews and Judaism in the Global Culture*, Hodder, London.
- Sauter, Willmar (2000) *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of Performance and Perception*, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City.
- Schechner, Richard (1993) *The Future of Ritual: writings on culture and performance*, Routledge, London & NY.
- Schechner, Richard (1988: 2003) *Performance Theory*, Routledge Classics, London & NY.

- Schechner, Richard (1985) *Between Theatre and Anthropology*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.
- Schwarz, Arturo (1975) *'Eros c'est la vie,' Marcel Duchamp*, Harry N. Abrams, New York.
- Shapin, Steven (1996) *The Scientific Revolution*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Sheldrake, Rupert (2012), *The Science Delusion: Freeing the Spirit of Enquiry*, Coronet, UK.
- Shuttlewood, Arthur (1967/73) *The Warminster Mystery: Eyewitness accounts of dramatic UFO sightings in England*, Tandem, London.
- Shuttlewood, Arthur (1979) *More UFOs Over Warminster*, Arthur Barker Ltd, London.
- Sims, Martha C. & Stephens, Martine (2005) *Living Folklore: An Introduction to the Study of People and Their Traditions*, Utah State University Press, Logan, Utah.
- Smith, Phil (2012) *Counter-Tourism: The Handbook*, Triarchy Press, Axminster UK.
- Stevens, Wallace (1951), *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination*, Vintage, NY.
- Stoller, Paul (1989) *The Taste of Ethnographic Things: The Senses in Anthropology*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.
- Stukeley, William (1752) *Memoirs of Sir Isaac Newton's Life by William Stukeley* [ed. A. Hastings White (1936)], Taylor & Francis, London
- Stukeley, William (1743) *Avebury, a Temple of the British Druids, With Some Others Described: Wherein is a more particular account of the first and patriarchal religion; and of the peopling of the British Islands*: <http://www.avebury-web.co.uk/AburyWS/AburyWS.html>
- Taussig, Michael (1987) *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: a study in terror and healing*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Taussig, Michael (1993) *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Taussig, Michael (2011) *I Swear I Saw This: Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely My Own*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Tilley, Christopher (2004) *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*, Berg, London.
- Tilley, Christopher (1994) *The Phenomenology of Landscape*, Berg, London.
- Torgovnick, Marianna (1990) *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Turner, Edith (2012) *Communitas: The Anthropology of Collective Joy*, Palgrave Macmillan, US/UK.
- Turner, Victor (1988) *The Anthropology of Performance*, PAJ Publications, NY;
- Turner, Victor (1982) *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, PAJ Publications, NY;
- Turner, Victor (1974) *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Cornell University Press, London.
- Turner, Victor & Turner, Edith L.B. (1978) *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Turner, Victor (1969) *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Aldine Transaction, New Brunswick (USA) & London (UK).
- Visser, Margaret (2000) *The Geometry of Love: space, time, mystery and meaning in an ordinary church*, North Point Press, New York.

- Van Gennep, Arnold (1909/60) *The Rites of Passage*, Routledge, London & NY.
- Wales, HRH Charles Prince of; Juniper, Tony; Skelly, Ian (2010) *Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World*, Harper Collins, London.
- Warner, Marina (2006) *Phantasmagoria*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Warner, Marina (2002) *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Watkins, Alfred (1921/74) *The Old Straight Track*, Abacus, London.
- Weber, Max (1905) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (trans. Talbott Parsons) NY: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1958, roads.virginia.edu/~hyper/WEBER/toc.html
- Wedd, Tony (1961) *Skyways and Landmarks*, self-published booklet, available from Jim Goddard, The Vicarage. 1, Rye, Puriton, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA7 8BZ: see <http://www.egyouth.fsnet.co.uk/tony/>
- Williams, Rowan (2002) *Ponder These Things: Praying with Icons of the Virgin*, Canterbury Press, Canterbury.
- Winterson, Jeanette (2012) *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*, Vintage, London.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1922) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*,
- Wylie, John (2007), *Landscape*, Routledge, London and NY.
- Yates, Frances (1964/2010) *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, Routledge, London & NY.

Articles, papers and catalogues

- Armstrong, Karen (2009b) Man vs. God *Wall St Journal* 12 September, 2009.
- Babcock-Abrahams, Barbara (1975) 'A Tolerated Margin of Mess: The Trickster and His Tales Reconsidered', *Journal of the Folklore Institute* vol XI No3, March 1975.
- Benjamin, Walter (1935) The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: <http://design.wishiewashie.com/HT5/WalterBenjaminTheWorkofArt.pdf>
- Bök & Wershler-Henry (1997) Millennial 'Pataphysics: The Postmodern Apocalypse of Science, http://www.mechanicalbrides.com/bok-henry_millennialpataphysics.html
- Brookesmith, Peter (2013) The Apocalyptic Blues, *The Philosopher's Magazine* No 60 (Jan 2013).
- Campbell, Colin (1972) The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization, in *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* 5 (London: SCM Press, 1972): 119-136: C.
- Campbell, The Secret Religion of the Educated Classes, *Sociological Analysis* 39(1978):146-156.
- Casey, Edward (2001) Between geography and philosophy: What does it mean to be in the place-world? *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91, pp683-693.
- Cochrane, Rich (2009) Two Types of New Age Counterfactual, <http://bigi.org.uk/blog/2009/06/25/new-age-counterfactual-john-michell/>
- Crouch, David (1994) Representing an Old Outdoor Entertainment: Stonehenge, in *The Cultures of Celebrations* [eds. Ray B. Browne, Michael T. Marsden], Bowling Green State University Popular Press, pp41-55.
- Darvill, T. & Wainwright, G. (2005), "Beyond Stonehenge: Carn Menyn and the Bluestones", *British Archaeology* 83, July-August.
- Devereux, Paul (2007) Where the Ley Lines Led, *Fortean Times*, June 2007, http://www.forteanimes.com/features/articles/491/where_the_leylines_led.html
- Dégh, Linda (1996) What Is A Belief Legend? *Folklore*, Vol. 107, (1996), pp. 33-46.

- Dégh, Linda & Vazsonyi, Andrew (1983) Does The Word 'Dog' Bite? Ostensive action: A Means of Legend-telling, *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (May, 1983), pp. 5-34.
- Dégh, Linda (1977) UFOs and How Folklorists Should Look at Them. *Fabula: Journal of Folktale Studies* 18: pp.242–8.
- Dickie, George (1969) Defining Art *American Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. 6, No. 3 (Jul., 1969), pp. 253-256 University of Illinois Press
- Dickinson, Rod (1998) It's Art for Folk's Sake (Forum article) *Fortean Times* #106, p43.
- Dirac, Paul (1963) The Evolution of the Physicist's Picture of Nature *Scientific American* 208 (5) (1963).
- Feyerabend, Paul (1975) 'How To Defend Society Against Science', *Introductory Readings in the Philosophy of Science* – 3rd edition, Klemke, Hollinger, et al (Eds) 1998: 54-65.
- Feynman, Richard (1955) The Value of Science, address to the National Academy of Sciences (Autumn 1955); published in *The Pleasure of Finding Things Out : The Best Short Works of Richard P. Feynman* (1999) ed. Jeffrey Robbins, Penguin, UK.
- Gell, Alfred (1996) Vogel's Net: Traps as Artworks and Artworks as Traps, *Journal of Material Culture*; 1: 15.
- Harris, Eileen (1989) John Wood's System of Architecture, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 131, No. 1031, Feb., 1989.
- Haycock, David Boyd (2004) The long-lost truth': Sir Isaac Newton and the Newtonian pursuit of ancient knowledge, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, Part A 35 (3) pp.605-623.
- Huang M, Bridge H, Kemp MJ and Parker AJ (2011) Human cortical activity evoked by the assignment of authenticity when viewing works of art. *Frontiers of Human Neuroscience*. 5:134.
- Ingold, Tim, (2006) 'Rethinking the animate, re-animating thought', *Ethnos*, 71:1, 9-20.
- Irving, Rob (2009) *Ectoplasm, Eidola and the Photographic Image*, self-published.
- Irving, Rob (2000) Capturing the Spirit, *Fortean Times* 131: pp28-31.
- Irving, Rob (1998) Art and Artifice, *Fortean Times* 122: pp34-42.
- Kuspit, Donald (1985) 'In Search of the Visionary Image', *Art Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 4, *The Visionary Impulse: An American Tendency*, (Winter, 1985), pp 319-322.
- Latour, Bruno (1997) Foreword: Stenger's Shibboleth, in Isabelle Stengers (ed) *Power and Invention: Situating Science*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
<http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/P-70%20Stengers-foreword.pdf>
- Leach, James (2007) Creativity, Subjectivity, and the Dynamic of Possessive Individualism' in *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation* (Eds T. Ingold and E. Hallam) ASA Monograph 43, Berg.
- Levengood, W.C. & Burke, John, Semi-Molten Meteoric Iron Associated with a Crop Formation, *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, Vol 9, No. 2, 1995: 191-9.
- Lewin, Kurt (1946) Action research and minority problems. *Journal of Sociology* Issues 2(4): 34-46
- Locher, David (1999) 'Unacknowledged Roots and Blatant Imitation: Postmodernism and the Dada Movement', *Electronic Journal of Sociology*:
<http://www.sociology.org/content/vol004.001/locher.html>

- MacLennan, Bruce (2006) Neoplatonism in Science Past and Future:
<http://web.eecs.utk.edu/~mclennan/papers/MacLennan-NIS.pdf>
- Meder, Theo, T. (2007) Modern exempla: crop circle tales in the New Age era, *Fabula* 48 p. 281-299.
- Michell, John (1990c) Down Among the Explainers, *The Cereologist*, No.1, Summer 1990.
- Peirce, Charles Sanders (1877) The Fixation of Belief, *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (November 1877), 1-15.
- Robb, John G. (1998) The 'ritual landscape' concept in archaeology: a heritage construction, *Landscape Research* Vol. 23, Issue 2, 1998, pp159-174.
- Roberts, John (1999), Trickster, *Oxford Art Journal*, vol 22, No 1 1999. Oxford University Press.
- Sims, Lionel (2003), Entering, and returning from the underworld: Silbury Hill – where landscape archeology meets archeoastronomy, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15: 2
- Schnabel, Jim & Irving, Rob (1992) Rolling Their Own, *Independent* magazine 29/08/1992: 38.
- Stevens, Wallace (1945) Description Without Place (poem) *The Sewanee Review*, Vol.53 No.4 1945: 559-565.
- Tangherlini, Timothy R. (1990) "It Happened Not Too Far from Here...": A Survey of Legend Theory and Characterization, *Western Folklore*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Oct., 1990), pp. 371-390.
- Taylor, Richard (2010) The Crop Circle Evolves, *Nature*, Vol 465, 10/06/2010
- Truzzi, Marcello (1978) On the Extraordinary: An Attempt at Clarification, *Zetetic Scholar*, Vol.1, No.1, p11.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo (1998) *Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism*, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, n.s. 4 (3) pp469-88, reprinted in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (editor Michael Lambek), both Blackwell Publishing, Oxford.
- Witherspoon, Bill (2005) Art as Technology, *Leonardo* (MIT Journal Press), February.
- Other**
- Crouch, David (2011) Art & Geography Symposium, PLaCE, UWE, Feb 2011.
- Dewsbury, J.D (2009) Notes from a lecture delivered July 2009 at University of the West of England, Bower Ashton, Bristol.
- Dillon, Patrick (2011) *Engaging with the Unmarked*, workshop, Axminster 7th March 2011.
- Duchamp, Marcel (1957) Lecture: *The Creative Act*, Session on the Creative Act, Convention of the American Federation of Arts, Houston, Texas, April 1957.
- Grimes, Ronald, (2010) Lecture, Holy Hiatus conference, Cardigan, Wales.
- Kössner, Johann (2011) Interviewed on New Swirled Order, NuoVisoProductions 2009.
- Reader, Ian (2011) (Workshop talk) *Pilgrimage, Travel and Tourism in European and Global Contexts*, Pilgrimage in a Changing Europe: Cultural, Political and Economic Processes, Department of Geography, University College London, June 2, 2011.
- Schechner, Richard (2010) lecture at Anthropology and Performance: A Critical Conversation, Manchester University, 16th April, 2010.
- Turner, Edie (2010) *pers. comm.* (conversation) at Anthropology and Performance: A Critical Conversation, Manchester University, 16th April, 2010.

APPENDICES

At the front of this thesis is a DVD, containing:

Fieldnotes: Special places, spectral traces

Submitted as documentation of the practical element of my thesis (on DVD)

A1 Data: responses to my Questionnaire

(on DVD)