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**CALIBAN'S MASQUE
SPIRITUAL ANARCHY & THE WILD
MAN IN COLONIAL AMERICA**

**BY
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"...If those that go thither propose to themselves an exemption from laws to live at their liberty, this is to...divest allegiance and be under no man."

-John Donne, Sermon to the Virginia Company (1622)¹

OR A HUNDRED YEARS AFTER COLUMBUS, ENGLAND DID nothing in the New World but watch enviously while Spain harvested all its gold and spices. Yet Elizabeth I had a Court Astrologer, the Welsh alchemist and magus John Dee, who dreamed (out of love for the Virgin Queen) of an occult British Empire in North America. He talked up his pet enthusiasm amongst his most powerful and intelligent friends-Sir Walter Raleigh for example, Hakluyt, the mapmaker, and Will Shakespeare. In a crucial audience with the Queen, the Wizard convinced her to promulgate an official claim to America based on prior discovery-by King Arthur!

Raleigh raised money. Maps-which like magic spells idealize the real world in order to control it-were supplied by Hakluyt; and Shakespeare later wrote a propaganda piece, *The Tempest*, to memorialize the scheme. Prospero was based on Dee, while the savage and unknown New World (which might indeed have been Mars or Venus for all anyone knew of it) was symbolized by the Wild Man, Caliban.

The Wild Man appears in countless Renaissance emblem-books and alchemical tracts. Standing like a shaggy caveman at the antipodes of all civilization, he also symbolizes hyle or materia prima, the inchoate primal matter of the alchemist, the pure chaos which he hopes to transmute into pure order, which in turn is represented o sheer potentia, potential power, wild and ungoverned but also untouched by the corruption of

history. Let him be converted (into a Christian, into the Philosopher's Stone) and he will become the source of all glory and perfection-not only on the spiritual plane but also the material, so that whoever controls this genie will gain both wisdom and wealth.

Now the New World was already populated by wild men, and the intellectuals of the Old World argued about the dual Calibanish nature of these "Indians". Were they subhuman cannibal monsters with faces on their breasts? Or were they "noble savages," in many ways superior to the corrupt tired races of Europe, and needing only the light of Christ to obtain perfection in a single leap? What exactly is "the state of Nature" itself (pre- or post-lapsarian)? That is, did all of Nature fall when Adam fell, or had the New World at least escaped the sin of Adam along with the light of Christ?

Of course Europe also had its "Wild Men"-gypsies, vagabonds, rogues, crazy sectarians, barbaric Celts, witches, sodomites...in fact, the intelligentsia themselves sometimes seemed dangerously wild, all of them a bit mad and perhaps even demoniac. Raleigh and Dee and their circle (known as "the School of Night") were suspected vaguely of paganism and freethinking. "Moses was a juggler," said damnable Kit Marlowe, the rowdy boy genius, faustian pederast, and paid agent of Walsingham (Raleigh's patron and the first "Spymaster" of the Empire). Marlowe, who was also propagandist for Raleigh's favorite herb ("Whoso loveth not tobacco and boyes is a foole"), was himself slain in a tavern brawl, and a mob of torch-wielding villagers burned down Dee's cottage at Mortlake.

The first experimental colonists in "Virgin-ia" (that land of pure potentia) seem to have been either marginalized

intellectuals fascinated by occultism (which then included what we now call "science"), or else marginalized adventurers from the fringes of the Elizabethan underworld. Neither class proved overly fond of work, and laziness soon emerged as the little Roanoake enclave's major social problem.

The bohemian gentlemen wanted to write poems and fill their sketchbooks, while the colonists seemed to expect Nature to relieve them of all labor and boredom, as if Roanoake were a garden of Eden. The intellectuals bailed out at the first opportunity and went home to publish their diaries. Several years passed before anyone thought to send out an expedition to the abandoned colony-and when it arrived it found the island deserted.

What happened to the colony of Roanoake? Pessimists jumped to the conclusion that hostile Indians had wiped it out, and this explanation later found its way into American history books. It suits the image of the Wild Man as racial enemy, treacherous and violent and deserving of genocide, on which our official U.S. mythos is founded. Yet it does not fit the facts of the case.

The rescue mission found no evidence of a massacre-no bones, no burned houses. It found the colony's cannon carefully buried. And it found a note carved into a tree: "Gone to Croatan" (sometimes spelled "Croatoan"). The rescuers knew that the Croatans were a tribe of friendly Indians who lived on another island down the coast, but for various reasons they failed to follow up this clue. Years went by again before a ship reached Croatan-and found it deserted. And so

the mysterious legend of the Lost Colony was launched.

The "mystery" however was an illusion. The fate of the colonists is easy to trace. Clearly fed up with slaving for a bunch of absentee London gentlemen, the lower classes of Roanoake had simply dropped out and gone native. They moved to Croatan and joined the tribe, then moved again to the mainland near the Great Dismal Swamp, where they avoided discovery for a long time (despite elusive rumors of "grey-eyed Indians"). Later they absorbed runaway slaves into their population, and survived as a "tri-racial isolate community" for centuries. In fact the Croatans are still there, still have the family names of Roanoake colonists, and still know exactly who they are. The hideously embarrassing fact is that North America's very first colonists had decided to become Wild Men. European vagabonds transmuted themselves into Noble Savages, said goodbye to Occult Imperialism and the miseries of civilization, and took to the forest. Nor were they the last to follow this path into the heart of darkness. For the next century or so a hidden and secret struggle was waged for the future becoming of the New World-Cotton Mather called it "invisible warfare." It was a many-sided affair. First, the Imperialists, Anglican aristocrats, proto-scientists, and Renaissance classicists. Then, the Puritans who became the ruling elite in Massachusetts, who viewed Nature as a "howling wilderness" and the redman as a devil. Next, the Indians themselves and slaves. Finally, the dregs of European society, the outcast criminals, "prostitutes" (i.e. poor women), radical mystical dissidents, neo-pagans and witches, indentured servants, Irish rebels, buccaneers, etc., who some. times found common cause with Indians and slaves, and always a common hatred for the gentry and Puritans.

We could trace the submerged story of this struggle by various sets of signs-social, economic, historical, even military. Yet a different approach may offer us a better chance to discern underlying ideologies in this warfare: the technique of the history of religions. Sixteenth- Seventeenth century thinkers thought in religious language, not modern political/cultural language, and if we wish to understand their politics and culture we must try to decode their language. There existed what may be called a Church of the Wild Man in America, a religion of wildness or wilderness, opposed both to the High Church of Virginia and the Low Church of the Northeast-a dissidence within the Protestant dissidence and one which has been almost ignored by History.

After all, history is written by those who believe in History. Yet the Wild Men are attempting to escape from History, and so they do not write (or if they do, they write poetry or wild rants). So, "the pen is in the hand of the enemy." We can recover only scattered shards, folklore and rumor, the hebephrenic tracts of crackpot heretics, but out of these broken pieces we can assemble a pattern.

THE FIRST CANONIZATION BESTOWED BY OUR INVISIBLE ANTI-Church belongs by right to Thomas Morton of Merry Mount. Morton came of minor West Country gentry stock, had a passable education, and could boast of contacts in the School of Night (his patron Sir Ferdinando Gorges was a close associate of the Raleigh clique). He arrived in Massachusetts at Plymouth Bay Colony in 1624, and soon fell afoul of the dour and precise sectarians. Morton was Anglican and Royalist, but in the New World these conservative instincts put him in a marginal position vis-à-vis the local elite, the Pilgrim Fathers under Governor Bradford. In truth Morton seems to have been something of a crypto-

pagan, not only by heritage (for the English countryside still preserved ancient British customs), but also by conviction. As a Renaissance gentleman he preferred Greco-Roman mythology to the Bible, a taste he shared with Sidney and Spenser and others of the School of Night, and which seemed to justify his value-system of humane libertinism. In his writings he invariably refers to himself in the third person as "mine hoste of Merry Mount"-or, as he spells it, "Ma-re Mount," with a cluster of puns around his chief obsession and key term, "merry."

Near Mt. Wollaston in the wilderness Morton dropped out and built a trading-post and tavern, where he soon gathered around him a small Comus-crew of disaffected fur traders, antinomians, loose women, Indians and bon-vivants. Morton got on well with the Indians, whom he much preferred to the Puritans. In his mind the natives were like those pagan Canaanites who'd been slaughtered and oppressed by the Israelites of the Old Testament-and if the Pilgrims claimed to be the Israelites of this new holy land, Morton's sympathies would lie entirely with the redskinned Canaanites. In 1627 he erected a huge Maypole (an 80-foot pine trunk topped with a set of deer antlers), proclaimed the "Revells of New Canaan" at Merry Mount; and invited his white and Indian friends to the first inter-racial neo-pagan gathering in North America. In his account of these events, Morton declares that "Cupid's mother" inspired him

With proclamation that the first of May, At Ma-re Mount shall be kept hollyday.

Going on, he says, "The setting up of this Maypole was a lamentable termed it an Idoll; yea they called it the Calfe of Horeb: and stood at spectacle to the precise separatists that

lived at New Plymouth. They defiance with the place, naming it Mount Dagon; threatening to make it a woeful mount and not a merry mount."

Morton's New World experiences had turned him from an old-fashioned rural squire into a raving radical-or rather, the New World itself had changed the meaning of his life for him and revealed to him his own inner connection with wild(er)ness. No wonder the Pilgrims recoiled in horror to find Morton and his friends dancing hand-in- out the good liquor like gammedes and Iupiter" (i.e., Ganymede and Zeus).

The Songe

Drink and be merry, merry, merry boyes,

Let all your delight be in Hymen's joyes,'

Iô to Hymen now the day is come,

About the merry Maypole take a Roome. [??] Make greene garlons [garlands], bring bottles out; And fill sweet Nectar, freely about,

Uncover thy head, and feare no harme,

For here's good liquor to keepe it warme.

Then drink and be merry, etc.

Iô to Hymen, etc. Nectar is a thing assign'd By the Deity's owne minde

To cure the heart opprest with greife,

And of good liquors is the cheife. (Chorus)

Give to the melancholy man A cup or two oft now and then:
This physick will soon revive his blood And make him be of a
merrier mood.

(Chorus) Give to the Nymphe that's free from scorne

No Irish stuff nor Scotch overworne [i.e., no European
clothes]; Lasses in beaver coats come away, Ye shall be
welcome to us night and day.

In other words, Morton hinted of pederasty (Ganymede),
boasted openly of drunkenness, praised pagan deities
(Venus and Hymen), criticized the teetotaling "melancholy"
Pilgrims (whom he derided as "moles"), and advocated
miscegenation with Indian "lasses in beaver coats"! As he
himself boasted, "Hee that played Proteus (with helpe of
Priapus) put their noses out of joynt." In other words, Morton
the shapeshifter, with the aid of his erect penis, cocked a
snoot at all Protestant morality.

Protestant morality, in the person of Governor Bradford,
described the scene thusly:

After this they fell to great licenciousnes, and led a dissolute
life, powering out themselves into all profanenes. And Morton
became lord of misrule, and maintained (as it were) a schoole
of Athisme. And after they had gott some goods into their
hands and gott much by trading with the Indeans, they spent
it as vainly, in quaffing and drinking both wine and strong

waters in great excess, and, as some reported 10lis. worth in a morning. They also set up a May-pole, drinking and dancing about it many days together, inviting the Indian women, for their consorts, dancing and frisking together, (like so many fairies, or furies rather,) and worse practices. As if they had anew revived and celebrated the feasts of the Roman Goddess Flora, or the beastly practices of the mad Bacchinalians. Morton likewise (to shew his poetry) composed sundry rimes and verses, some tending to lasciviousness, and others to the detraction and scandal of some persons, which he affixed to this idle or idoll May-pole. They changed also the name of their place, and in stead of calling it Mount Wollaston, they call it Merimounte, as if this joyly would have lasted ever."

Bradford sent an ad-hoc police force to arrest the merrymakers, under the command of the famous Miles Standish (or "Captain Shrimp" as Morton called him). Thus began Morton's career of misery, his jail sentences and escapes, exile to England (and publication of his book, *New Canaan*, in 1637), return to America, more trouble and strife, and finally his death in 1647 in Maine, where Sir Ferdinando Gorges had established a small colony at Agamenticus. Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his fictionalized version of the events at Merry Mount, claimed that "the future complexion of New England was involved in this important quarrel. Should the grisly saints establish their jurisdiction over the gay sinners, then would their spirits darken all the clime, and make it a land of clouded visages, of hard toil, of sermon and psalm, forever. But should the banner-staff of Merry Mount be fortunate, sunshine would break upon the hills, and flowers would beautify the forest, and late posterity do homage to the May-pole!" If Morton had prevailed, we twentieth century marginals might at least have a sort of North American

santeria tradition, a syncretistic religion based on Celtic, Classical and Algonquin paganism, and Antinomianism: a cult bearing the same relation to High Church Anglicanism that Voudoun and Santeria bear to Catholicism! Alas, as Hawthorne of course knew, Morton lost the battle, and the American future belonged to puritanism and the work-ethic. And yet the Revels of Merry Mount were not the last festal days of our invisible Church of Wildness, nor was Morton its only saint."

ANNE HUTCHINSON MAKES A BRIEF APPEARANCE IN OFFICIAL consensus American history as the heroine (or villainess) of the "Antinomian Controversy" in Massachusetts. She's remembered because she was a woman who defied the Puritan patriarchy—and because she was married to one of the chief patriarchs and thus belonged to the "upper classes" (the classes who write themselves into history). For these reasons her fame has diverted historians' attention from the general context of dissidence in early New England. It seems as if she were the only Antinomian, a lone mutant, a single fly in the ointment of Bostonian orthodoxy. At most it's admitted that she had a few women disciples, some of whom (like Mary Dyer) were persecuted again 20 years later in the Puritans' anti-Quaker campaign. Writers seeking an explanation of the Anne Hutchinson mystery tend to set her in a context of "social deviance," or else treat her as a proto-feminist. Valid and useful as they may be, these approaches miss the context which would have seemed most important to Anne herself: the Antinomian movement.

Antinomianism (lit. "against law") is generally seen as a failed and forgotten offshoot of Protestantism, but it may be more accurate to think of it as descended directly from certain medieval heretical sects such as the Adamites, Beghards and

Beguines, Brethren of the Free Spirit, Franciscan extremists, or certain followers of Meister Eckhardt. The main streams of Protestantism-(Luther, Calvin, etc.)—never really englobed this movement. For a while they all ran parallel courses (rebellion against Rome), but soon diverged again. The decisive moment came in the 1520s when Luther himself directed the massacre of Antinomian Anabaptist insurgents of the Peasants' Rebellion. Thus, we may think of antinomianism as a third way within Christianity, neither Catholic nor Protestant. Of course many Antinomians considered themselves reformers within Protestantism-Anne saw herself in this light at first-but Protestantism always responded to this provocation in the same violent way: expulsion, exile, a hot poker through the tongue, death. In a greater version of the Hutchinson affair, the Puritan dictator Cromwell himself was to turn against the extremists who helped bring him to power. He would purge the New Model Army of Levellers and Diggers, throw Ranters into prison, and re-establish censorship (much to Milton's disgust). This invariable reaction against antinomianism must be seen as perfectly natural for Protestant authority- after all, such heresy threatened not only orthodox ideas, but also challenged the very *raison d'être* of organized religion itself. Antinomianism had no center and no dogma. It was made up of a "congeries of sects"-Family of Love, My One Flesh, Ranters, Seekers, Levellers and Diggers, Libertines, Fifth Monarchy Men, Muggletonians, etc.-all more or less in agreement on the meaning of certain basic experiences. In fact the mystical experience itself meant more to them than any drybone doctrine (or even the Bible), and from this direct and subjective tasting of "Grace" they derived the certainty of freedom from sin. Just as Jesus freed his followers of some Mosaic laws, and Paul of others ("Love God and do what thou wilt"), so Christ's second coming would free the faithful

from all law-because it would free them from all sin. Some chiliastic millenarians believed in a literal Second Coming but claimed it had already happened (England and America were full of reborn Christs in those days)- while the more mystically-inclined experienced an inward Resurrection, a personal "light." No mere moral code can impinge on a soul- or a body-in this state. No action, however paradoxical or seemingly amoral, can stain such a realized mind. The Adamites had symbolized this attainment by "going naked for a sign" of their Edenic re-integration, a practice revived by the Familists. The more extreme Ranters smoked, drank, preached and "blasphemed gloriously" in low taverns, and greeted one another with: "Rejoice, fellow creature-all is ours!" Angry puritans charged them with orgiastic rites-and for once we may well believe them.

Antinomians also tended to agree on politics. Not only did the State have no right to control religion (the bone of contention between Puritans and other Protestants), the State clearly had no right to legislate morality-or taxes-or military service-or indeed anything at all. Antinomianism can be clearly defined as spiritual anarchism, and most adherents considered themselves active revolutionaries. The rich would be overthrown, the poor exalted-"the world turned upside-down." The millennium, which had already arrived for the sectarians on the psychic level, would be externalized and realized through insurrection on the social level.

When Anne Hutchinson began to preach in her home to a group of enthusiastic ladies, she scarcely considered herself an antinomian this sense. She simply believed that her own inner light outshone those of the Boston ministers, even the great John Cotton (once her spiritual teacher but now left

behind by her new revelations). It was in the Puritan "Fathers" who pinned the label on her, persecuted her, tried and condemned and banished her from their Holy Experiment forever. By the time she'd passed through these fires, however, she knew what she was. She knew the Fathers were right-she was an Antinomian-and she knew they were wrong as well, because they were cruel, woman-hating, dense, narrow bigots. Moreover, she knew her true allies: not the "upper class" of merchants and divines and pious men, but another class made up of the marginalized, the women, the poor, the outsiders. She was not broken. Like Roger Williams (who'd been condemned the year before her), she went into exile as into triumph. In fact she followed him to Rhode Island and settled in Aquidneck with some of her associates. There she openly preached anarchy, and "broached new heresies every year. Divers of them turned anabaptists (i.e., like the German rebels) and would not bear any arms, and denied all magistracy."

After her husband died Anne and her group moved to Pelham Bay on Long Island, to escape "the abnormally long arm of Massachusetts persecution." There, tragically, although she and her followers had always condemned all violence against Indians," she was murdered in 1643 by tribesmen who mistook her for one of their Dutch enemies. The Puritans rejoiced at this deliverance from a "sore affliction," and promptly published their own propagandistic version of her life, *A Short Story of the Rise, reign, & ruin of the Antinomians, Familists & Libertines that inflicted the Churches of New England*. The "short story" however was not finished yet. In time, it would lengthen into an epic.

ROGER WILLIAMS WAS A SINCERE AND MODERATE LIBERAL - which by Massachusetts standards made him a

raving radical. He belonged to a sect called the Seekers, who preached that one should wait and search for the inner light, but meanwhile remain tolerant of all creeds (even Jews and Turks!) since one never knows from whence illumination may spring. In the eyes of the Puritans such tolerance could only stand condemned as heresy, since they already possessed the one true light and all its doctrines. Williams never taught anarchy or rebellion and was certainly no Antinomian. In fact he turned out to be a brilliant administrator, and transformed his exile into the triumphant founding of Rhode Island—a haven of toleration which extended even to Indian paganism, and Antinomianism. Many Hutchinsonians fled to the new colony, where they would later involve themselves in Quaker and radical Baptist activity. The purest expression of radical Rhode Island thought however arose not from any of these groups but from the "left wing" of the Seekers themselves, and especially from one remarkable man, William Harris, who may well deserve to be known as the first American Individualist Anarchist.

Harris had accompanied Williams into exile and shared the hardships of the first few years. Yet once the colony reached an even keel, the two men discovered that their aims for it were diametrically opposed. Williams' radicalism ended with religious toleration, while Harris' only began there. Williams gradually took on the role of supreme leader, while Harris moved farther and farther from any form of authority.

Williams' first major act of repression was the expulsion of one Samuell Gorton, who (for the usual spiritual reasons) "opposed all transgressions of government against the rights guaranteed by English common law." In 1642 Gorton founded his own colony, Shawomet, on pro-Indian and extreme

libertarian lines-and even after re-joining Rhode Island five years later Gorton remained a radical. He managed to have imprisonment for debt ended, and wrote the first law abolishing slavery in America (sadly rescinded a few years later).

Williams' drift to the right continued with the establishment of compulsory military service in 1655. The Hutchinsonian Baptists and Quakers protested and even attempted open rebellion. Williams reacted with new laws against "immorality" and "loose living," and with anti-Baptist persecutions. In 1656, William Harris at last launched his revolt against these Cromwellian tactics by publishing a "booke" (which has been lost), and Williams again responded with legal action.

Nebudchadnezzar not fit for the Society of men in Town"; this hermit Harris (said Roger Williams), had lived "in the woods like was "harsh and knotty in body, resentful in temper, pugnacious, keen lost we cannot say for sure that Harris called himselfn "an anarchist." but by all accounts that is what he was. His own term for his ideas was "Generalism." According to James Ernst, in Harris' "book on Anarchy," he upheld liberty with a vengeance.

"A transcendental anarchist, he expected liberty to descend somehow upon the individual who was to realize himself fully by the overthrow and destruction of all law and order in society. As a social being, the individual was to sail safely and unmolested over the uncertain sea of life vexed by winds and waves and strewn with islands, shoals and rocks, unaided by civil chart or social compass. The relations that Mr. Williams held exist between the conscience and God and with which no human law may interfere, were extended to include all relations of man to man, citizen to the state, and thereby to

dissolve all government, establish the sovereignty of the individual, and end all laws. Civil restraint to conscience, thought, or action of man is an evil; the individual would be good if civil restraint were removed. Harris advocated unrestrained individualism without law or government-anarchy.

This doctrine caused a great stir in the colony. Uneasy spirits chafing at the restraint of the Williams policy saw the dawn of a new day. 'No Lords, No Masters' became their war cry. The improvident, the ambitious, and the land poor saw in Harris an angel of light and hope. Dissent and discontent flocked to his banner."

Harris described his enemies as "thieves, robbers, hypocrites, satyrs, owls, courts of owls, dragons, devils, soldiers, legions of devils!" In defending himself against the Williams-packed court he exclaimed "that for all that he had nothing to lose but an old coat for the hangman."

History has forgotten Harris, of course, because he lost; and Roger Williams is remembered because he won. Harris was plagued by bad luck all his life-once he was even captured by Algerian corsairs and sold as a slave-and in his latter days his lifelong quarrel with Williams degenerated into legal squabbles over landtitles. Nevertheless this is no reason to impugn his sincerity, or demote him to the rank of mere "eccentric." Individualist anarchism is usually said to have appeared in America only in the mid-19th century with Josiah Warren and Lysander Spooner - but Harris had expounded all the central ideas of "Individual Sovereignty" in the mid-17th century, on the basis of radical Antinomian speculation. Hutchinson died before she could fully develop all these ideas, so the title of first American anarchist seems to belong

to Harris.

THE BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN QUAKERISM AND OTHER Antinomian sects lay in the Quaker adoption of pacifism and non-resistance, as opposed to the open revolutionism of the Levellers or Ranters. But in most respects the early Quakers were scarcely distinguishable from other extremists. When the Quaker prophet James Naylor rode into Bristol (England) on an ass in 1655, Cromwell responded to this messianic display with violent persecution- Naylor's tongue was bored. Cromwell took it all quite seriously, and launched a general persecution of the mystical "left." The Quakers reacted by distancing themselves from politics and preaching against Ranterism, and this relatively conservative policy undoubtedly preserved Quakerism as an institution in the long run-and in fact made it respectable enough to be granted its own American utopia in Pennsylvania.

The Ranters also came to the New World-but as refugees or transported criminals rather than as decent (if nonconformist) colonists. "Perrot, the bearded ranter who refused to doff his hat to the Almighty, ended up in Barbadoes," as did Joseph Salmon. The latter, a drop-out from the New Model Army, began as a Seeker but moved toward more extreme positions in the mid-1600s. One authority reported "wicked Swearing, and uncleanness, which he justified that it was their liberty to keep company with Women, for their lust."¹⁵ and others of his way, That it was God which did swear in them, and As Salmon put it, "The Lord grant we may know the worth of hell, that we may forever scorn heaven: For my own part I am ascended far above all heavens, yet I fill all things, and laugh in my sleeve to think what's coming..." Salmon was arrested

in 1649 and "was able to attract a considerable audience by preaching through the gates of the prison on Sundays."¹⁷ After his release he seems to have emigrated voluntarily to Barbados, either "in a Zen-like search for 'nothing'," or else to cause "trouble (by) organizing separatist meetings." Perrot Salmon and were intellectuals and their names at least are remembered-but rank-and-file Ranters also emigrated or were deported; a Quaker lady "found herself troubled by the Ranters at general meetings in Oysterbay and Rhode Island" as late as 1680. It seems logical to assume that when Boston Puritans accused people of being Ranters, Familists, Libertines, etc., they were not necessarily just mud-slinging. Some of their victims really did belong to these sects, and had doubtless ended up in Massachusetts as deported "rogues" (especially after the mid-1650s). Similar suppositions may be made about Rhode Island and Pennsylvania. The Carolinas were called "the refuge of the sectaries" in 1683,²¹ and Georgia may also have served this function. Would it then appear unreasonable to suspect the influence of these "sectaries" in various Colonial-era uprisings such as Bacon's Rebellion or the Regulator movement? "Rogue" Quakers were implicated in the latter event, at least.

As for the Quakers of Pennsylvania, although they lacked some of the flair for self-martyrdom exhibited earlier in both Old and New England, nevertheless they took the idea of the "Holy Experiment" quite seriously-in fact, a good deal more seriously than William Penn himself. As a wealthy Protestant grandee, Penn envisioned Pennsylvania as his own feudal fiefdom, complete with quitrents and monopolies. True, he preached religious toleration and peace with the Indians-but compared to Roger Williams he was a rightwing reactionary. Luckily for the holy experimenters, however, he was an

absentee landlord—and they simply decided to ignore him. Spurred on first by the Lloyd family (Thomas and David), and later by the off-shoot "Keithean" radicals, the colonists ceased all governmental activity, refused to vote taxes, and ceded all real power to the consensus rule of the Friends' Meeting. According to Murray Rothbard's analysis, Philadelphia enjoyed four years of total de facto anarchy from 1684 to 1688, and thereafter struggled to retain it till at least 1696. At that point the first tax bill was finally passed—and of course denounced by the radicals as an attack on "our ancient rights, liberties freedom."

As one of Penn's unsuccessful agents had complained in horror, these Quakers "have not the principles of government amongst them, nor will they be informed." And when the conservative party condemned George Keith (who preached that Friends should not engage in government any more than in war) they quite pointed out that his pamphlets showed "a tendency to sedition, and disturbance of the peace, as also to the subversion of the present government." Keithean doctrines are said to have interested Ben Franklin and Thomas Paine.

DEISM, WHICH IS USUALLY DEPICTED AS A STAGE ON THE way to cool agnostic rationality, also had a hot and mystical side to it. After all, it was but a short step from the Antinomian God of inner light to the Deist God of the inner light of "Reason" (a word which then meant something more like "mind" than mere "rationality"). The Ranters (who sometimes spoke of God as "Reason") were accused of "atheism," which in the 17-18th centuries meant denial of religious authority rather than materialism (as in the 19-20th centuries). Deists were also "atheists" in this sense, and like the extremist sects they had their mystics and visionaries.

Their mysticism however tended away from the pole of contemplation toward that of action. As free thinkers and as heirs to much libertarian Protestant thought, their imaginations worked in utopian and revolutionary ways. Not all Deists can be described as middleclass intellectuals. Paine was a workingclass Deist (and very nearly an anarchist), and so were many soldiers who later came to swell the ranks of the Revolutionary Army in 1776.

One brand of mystical Deism crystallized as Freemasonry, an occult order with radical revolutionary aims. The first American Masons appeared a few years before the official establishment of the London Grand Lodge in 1717, and by 1730 Franklin provided the first reference to organized lodges in the New World. (The Masons themselves claim that Raleigh and Dee were Masons and Virginia a Masonic experiment). In their recent (and surprisingly unsensationalistic) book on Masonry, *The Temple and the Lodge*, Baigent and Leigh document the fascinating double nature of New World Masonry." On the one hand more bourgeois colonists tended to belong to lodges chartered by the "official" London Grand Lodge; on the other hand many soldiers of lowerclass origin joined "military" lodges which were not chartered by London but by the Grand Lodge of Ireland. These Irish charters, which were considered spurious by London, gave rise to a kind of underground masonry (the so-called "Scald Miserable Masons"), which was never successfully reintegrated into mainstream masonry. George Washington and his cronies of course belonged to the "official" branch-but clearly both branches found common cause in the vision of American independence. As everyone knows, Washington Won. Somewhat less clearly remembered however is his private inauguration ritual in full Masonic regalia. Baigent and Leigh make a very convincing

argument for the Constitution as a Masonic manifesto and America as a Masonic Republic. It would be interesting however to know more about the politics of the Irish or Scald Masons. Were they among the extreme democrats who felt betrayed by the oligarchic counter-Revolution of 1789? Were they among the Revolutionary veterans who fought against Washington and his cronies in Shays Rebellion and a handful of lesser uprisings in the 1790s? A futile inquiry perhaps-but in any case, clearly Masonry cannot be excluded from the roll of revolutionary mystical sects of Colonial America.

THE DEISTS, LIKE ALL ANTINOMIANS, WERE ATTRACTED BY the image of the Wild Man and of the Wild Man as Noble Savage. It's no accident that the conspirators in both the Boston and the New Jersey "Tea Parties" dressed up as Indians, nor that rebel backwoods farmers declared their region-the Berkshires-reverted to the "State of Nature." For both revolutionary intellectuals and the revolutionary "Mob" felt a certain kinship with Native American spirituality. The "Five Nations" Treaty of Confederation exercised powerful influence on the Articles of Confederation (a radical democratic document) and even on the Declaration of Independence. This unlikely line between native shamanism and Deism emerges with poignant clarity in the mysterious case of Christian Priber of Georgia.

Priber (probably originally German) arrived in the New World in the 1730s as an accomplished philosophe, conversant in English, Dutch (German?), French and Latin, with one all-consuming obsession: the founding of a utopian socialist/libertarian community amongst the natives of South Carolina and Georgia. At his trial in 1743 (coincidentally the same year American colonists first rioted against impressment, marked by some historians as the beginning of

the Revolutionary movement), it was said that Priber had schemed to set up "a Town at the Foot of the Mountains among the Cherokees, which was to be a City of Refuge for all Criminals, Debtors, and Slaves, who would fly thither from Justice or their Masters." Moreover,

"There was a Book found upon him of his own Writing ready for the Press, which he owns and glories in...; it demonstrates the Manner in which the Fugitives are to be subsisted, and lays down the Rules of Government which the town is to be governed by; to which he gives the Title of Paradise; He enumerates many whimsical Privileges and natural Rights, as he calls them, which his Citizens are to be entitled to, particularly dissolving Marriages and allowing Community of Women, and all kinds of Licentiousness; the Book is drawn up very methodically, and full of learned Quotations; it is extremely wicked, yet has several Flights full of Invention; and it is a Pity so much Wit is applied to so bad Purposes."

During the previous years Priber had sold all his possessions and disappeared into Cherokee country, learned the language (and wrote the first dictionary of it, which was later lost along with his "Book"), and went native to such an extent that he "ate, drank, slept, danced, dressed and painted himself, with the Indians," and whites could no longer "distinguish him from the natives." According to one of Priber's enemies, "he proposed to them a new System or plan of Government, that all things should be in common amongst them, that even their Wives should be so and that Children should be looked upon as the Children of the public and be taken care of as such & not by their natural parents....And that they should admit into their society Creeks & Catawbaws, French & English, all Colours and complexions, in short all who were of These principles, which

were truly such as had no principles at all!"

Priber was no authoritarian utopian in the Plato/More tradition; he stressed "liberty" along with community of property, and in his "Kingdom of Paradise" the only law was to be the law of Nature. "Moreover," as his biographer notes, "the liberty which was allowed to men should be shared equally by women; in sign of which no marriages should be contracted. The children of the temporary unions were to be reared by the state, and instructed in everything which they were capable of learning."

Apparently Priber won the hearts of the Cherokee, though he may have ended by learning more from them than they from him. In any case, they protested angrily when the colonial authorities (under Oglethorpe of Georgia) arrested and imprisoned him. Priber languished in gaol a few years, then died. His books vanished. He was another "failure," another bit of lost American history condemned to insignificance by his victorious enemies.

Or was he? The Cherokee later became famous for developing the first Native American system of writing. They known for their hospitality toward Maroons (runaway slaves) and were also as the Lumbee, are classified as "tri-racial." Perhaps some of them are actually descended from Priber, that obscure savant and gentleman who played out again the story of Roanoake, but this time in full consciousness of its utopian implications. Priber came to America in order to "go to Croatan," to seek redemption in wild(er)ness. Like Morton of Merry Mount, Anne Hutchinson and the radicals of "Rogue Island", his spirituality was bound up with that of the vast wilderness and its natives; a strain of American spirituality summed up by Thoreau muttering on his death-bed:

"...forests... Indians...". But Priber also encompassed the European radical tradition, which in turn was rooted in libertarian heresy and Antinomianism. In fact he synthesizes all the main currents of the tradition this essay has investigated, and we may well nominate him for one of our saints.

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION IS GENERALLY INTERPRETED AS a bourgeois liberal movement. But recently some radical American historians 26 have begun to pay closer attention to the role of the "Mob," to proletarian and extremist elements in the struggle, and to their antecedents and influences. Just as official Puritan Protestantism has been considered in some ways a foreshadowing of official American republicanism, so one may argue that non-official radical Protestantism (and its attendant "Indianism") served as the matrix for extreme revolutionary tendencies within the general dissidence and the anti-Imperialist movement. The nameless Antinomians of low estate who followed Anne Hutchinson into exile were the spiritual ancestors of the rioters, farmers, sailors, soldiers, freed slaves, Irish laborers and debtors who pushed "leaders" like Sam Adams and Thomas Paine ever farther to the "left." "Spiritual anarchy" is America's oldest heritage, and its most secret and submerged tradition. And although we've limited ourselves here to the Colonial period, we cannot end without asserting that our invisible "Church" outlasted not only the Revolution but also the Federalist counter-Revolution.

Nathan Barlow, the New England mystic, led the squatters of Kennebec country in Maine during the 1790s against the sheriffs and land agents of the out- of-state proprietors in small bands of armed "white Indians." He wrote "every man to his right and priviledges and liberty, the same as our indian

nation enjoys." They burned barns, rescued prisoners, upset courts, and destroyed writs into "atoms."

Here, trembling on the verge of the 19th century, we'll close our story—confident that the reader will be able to trace the trajectory of our tradition into this more "modern" age—and indeed, even into the 20th century and our own days. Caliban's Masque is not yet played out, nor can spiritual anarchy be consigned to the catalogue of dead things.

Midsummer, 1991 Long Pond

This is an essay from the book 'Gone to Croatan: Origins of North American Dropout Culture'

Suggested Further Reading

TAZ: The Temporary Autonomous Zone by Hakim Bey

Tangpingist Manifesto

How the Stirner Eats Gods by Alejandro de Acosta

Evasion by Mack Evasion

An Invitation to Desertion by Bellamy Fitzpatrick

Possum Living by Dolly Freed

Manual for a worldwide manuke revolt by Matsumoto Hajime

The Abolition of Work by Bob Black

**PRISONERS CINEMA
PRISONERSCINEMA@PROTONMAIL.COM**

The rescue mission found no evidence of a massacre-no bones, no burned houses. It found the colony's cannon carefully buried. And it found a note carved into a tree: "Gone to Croatan" ...

The fate of the colonists is easy to trace. Clearly fed up with slaving for a bunch of absentee London gentlemen, the lower classes of Roanoake had simply dropped out and gone native.

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