7 Pseudoarchaeology and nationalism

Essentializing difference

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Pseudoarchaeology and nationalism in political context

P.T. Barnum may or may not have said "There's a sucker born every minute," but there is not much doubt that whoever said it was right on the money. There is not much doubt either that the sucker phenomenon has been recognized and exploited by the unscrupulous and the fanatical ever since the first sucker drew breath. The real question is not so much who benefits – snake oil salesmen, confidence tricksters, propaganda ministers, or other dealers in flimflam and illusions, who come in many colors – but rather why there should be a sucker born every minute. What is it that leads otherwise apparently sane and rational people to collude in their own deception? It is relatively easy to understand why political systems, particularly nationalist movements and dictatorships, are so often enablers in a process of self-delusion, since expediency is the hallmark of most seekers of power and influence. A more difficult question is what distinguishes the misappropriation and misrepresentation of the deep past, as represented by the archaeological record, its investigation and interpretation, from the other forms of "fringe" enthusiasm available for manipulation by nationalist interests. Moreover, do different forms of nationalism make predictable use of different forms of archaeological and historical interpretation? And are there differences in the exploitation of archaeology compared with pseudoarchaeology in the construction and reification of nationalist meta-narratives?

The cooptation of the archaeological past for political purposes as a topic has become something of a growth industry in academic publishing in the last fifteen years.[1] However, most of these studies have been viewed from the perspective of the political systems that typically benefit from the appropriation and exploitation of the past. The motivations or agendas of the intended audiences for these manipulations tend to be discussed in passing without being subjected to a critical analysis in their own right. Constructing a nationalist view of the past is viewed from the perspective of those in power in most of these case studies when in fact it is a complex interaction between the power structure and the majority population. Popular media, including film and non-academic publications, are also rarely analysed as transmitters of nationalist narratives about the archaeolog-

ically and historically documented past, even though they play an important role in the blurring of the line between fact and fiction that makes such narratives so dangerous.

In addition, nationalism cannot be viewed solely as a negative force but must be considered a continuum ranging from the construction of a positive collective self-image to the superior ranking of an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) at the expense of other groups (Arnold 2002), what Ignatieff has called "authoritarian ethnic nationalism" (1993: 8). At one end of the continuum are citizens peacefully celebrating the anniversary of their nation's creation; at the other, genocide. Nationalism, as Smiles has so cogently put it:

> is the servant of many masters ... dependent on circumstances and ideological persuasion. It can be marshaled for repressive as well as emancipatory ends. The nationalism associated with imperial expansion may share the same beliefs in manifest destiny and cultural aptitudes as the nationalism organized to resist imperial domination. Nationalism, in other words, is effective both as an imperial device to orchestrate national unity and as a more localized politics of resistance to that very imperialism.
>
> (Smiles 1994: 27)

The chimera-like quality of cultural nationalism, the expedient use of the past in the construction of nationalist agendas, and the role of consumer/audience complicity in the production of nationalist pasts, particularly in political systems that make use of pseudoarchaeological "cultural genealogies" (*ibid*.: 27), will be explored in this essay in two contexts: National Socialist Germany and Celtic nationalism in continental Europe and in the British Isles.

Motives and agendas

Shaping public opinion and attracting public attention are two obvious motivations for various other forms of exaggeration or fabrication masquerading as fact (Boese 2002: 5), with personal gain a close third. Fanaticism is another potent force, in the form of the misguided beliefs of an individual or a group of people who seek approbation and validation in some public form. Public praise of and support for a complex of ideas or beliefs require not only a potent message but also an effective delivery system, which at least partially explains why it is with the emergence of print media that the "imagined communities" known as nations first appear in Europe. Not coincidentally, the systematic study of past human behavior based on material remains, known today as archaeology, developed as a profession almost in parallel with European nationalism.[2]

However, aspiring dictators, drug-addled cult members, and unscrupulous charlatans out to make a fast buck at someone else's expense account for

a relatively small proportion of the world's population. The motivations of nation-states in search of cultural capital from which to stitch together a collective identity have been extensively studied; archaeology is of obvious utility to such entities – as long as it conforms to their agendas. When it does not, pseudoarchaeology and pseudohistory can be fostered and supported to fill the breach (Arnold 1999). More mysterious is what moves the general public to cooperate with such programs of mass delusion. Michael Shermer (1997: 6) argues that hope

> drives all of us – skeptics and believers alike – to be compelled by unsolved mysteries, to seek spiritual meaning in a physical universe, desire immortality, and wish that our hopes for eternity may be fulfilled. It is what pushes many people to spiritualists, New Age gurus, and television psychics, who offer a Faustian bargain: eternity in exchange for the willing suspension of disbelief (and usually a contribution to the provider's coffers).

This rather positive assessment of what motivates people to be complicit in their own deception fails to acknowledge a flip-side to hope as a motivator that is an even more potent force in the process of self-delusion: fear. Most people may hope that there is a life after death, but that hope is based in part on the fear that in fact there may not be such a thing. Most people would prefer to believe that their nation, or religious denomination, or other imagined community is superior to the rest, but they rather suspect that it may not be. Anyone who preaches a message that sedates that doubt will find legions of supporters, just as the company of those who tell us only good things about ourselves (not all of which may be true) will generally be preferred to that of those who present us with a less comfortable but more accurate self-image. Recognition of this simple but universal aspect of human psychology – the need to appear greater to oneself and to others than one truly is – is a characteristic of all nationalist regimes, and the manipulation of the deep past so that it presents to the members of an imagined community the face it most wants to see is a potent weapon in the creation and maintenance of the nationalist fiction of the superior race or culture.

There is another factor involved in public participation in the construction of a wholly or partially fictitious past that often has the mangling and misrepresentation of archaeology as a corollary, and that is the frequently indifferent if not actually hostile attitude of the average citizen to science and scholarship and the methods by which they are practised. Cole refers to the ambivalent anti-elitism of the general public, consisting of "vilification of the Establishment coupled with an inordinate respect for and envy of it" (1980: 7). Harrold and Eve (1984: 4) make the point that "cult archaeology can often provide [answers] that are more psychologically satisfying to many individuals." Television producer Tom Naughton's attitude toward this issue is quite revealing and makes it clear that the popular media pander directly

to what they perceive as the simultaneous aversion of the general public to "scholarship" and their desire for entertainment:

> Television is not about education or providing news and information. Television is about storytelling and holding the largest audience for the longest amount of time. Programmers will do anything they can to accomplish this. Pseudoarchaeology programs are in many ways more fun to watch than programs on archaeology.
>
> (cited in Fagan 2003: 49)

It is not a coincidence that some of the most successful pseudoarchaeologists, Swiss ex-hotel keeper Erich von Däniken being perhaps the most obvious example (Feder 2002: 204–30), have no formal training, often lack any kind of post-secondary degree, or have a degree in a completely unrelated subject (Radner and Radner 1982: 17–26), as in the case of Barry Fell (1917–94), the retired Harvard marine biology professor who was a proponent of regular pre-Columbian European contact with the New World (Feder 2002: 106–48). An anti-intellectual orientation, often accompanied by feelings of inferiority and suspicion of what is perceived as academic elitism, is partly responsible for the proliferation of various forms of contemporary "lunatic fringe" preoccupations, including UFOs, the existence of Atlantis, and the construction of the Egyptian pyramids by aliens (for other examples, see Chapter 12). Pseudoarchaeologists like von Däniken and Fell pander to the notion that credentials, degrees or professional training are not only unnecessary, they actually produce an army of scholar clones who are too brainwashed to see the "truth." The popular media, especially television and film, do nothing to dispel this tendency; in fact, they have often been accused of actively pandering to it. This results in a schizophrenic production of "knowledge": what the public is presented with by the popular media versus what is disseminated by scholars and professionals in various fields and disciplines requiring post-secondary education or professional training.

Neil deGrasse Tyson, the astronomy columnist for *Natural History* magazine, coined the term "astro-errors" to describe the inaccuracies related to astronomy and astrophysics that he has documented in Hollywood films. He makes a point of distinguishing between what he calls "bloopers" – "mistakes that the producers or continuity editors happened to miss, but would ordinarily have caught and fixed" – and "astro-errors," which were "willingly introduced and indicate a profound lack of attention to easily verifiable detail" (2002: 26). It would be easy – and entertaining – to compile a dossier of "archaeo-errors" in Hollywood films and television programs, but since that is not the primary purpose of this discussion, I will briefly discuss one particularly egregious misrepresentation of archaeology and archaeologists that happens to combine contemporary manifestations of pseudoarchaeology with the manipulation of the past by German National

Socialist archaeologists, who engaged in their own form of pseudoarchaeology: Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones* film trilogy.

Pseudo-Nazi archaeologists: the curse of Indiana Jones

Indy has been more of a bane than a boon to archaeologists. On the one hand, the number of people who assume that archaeologists are people who dig up dinosaur bones has declined significantly since the first film came out in the early 1980s; on the other hand, the number of people who think that archaeologists are people who spend about ten minutes a year in the classroom, ignore international antiquities laws while engaged in looting escapades around the globe, and occasionally shoot, stab, whip, or otherwise dispatch the natives of various non-European countries, has increased exponentially.

Interestingly, the few nuggets of fact buried in the morass of romanticized (infantilized?) and occasionally racist notions of archaeology and its practitioners in the Indy films involve the Nazi use and abuse of archaeology, and the pursuit by Nazi archaeologists of "objects of power," including the Holy Grail, the Ark of the Covenant, and the Spear of Longinus. There can be little doubt that while Steven Spielberg has not been particularly concerned with accurately representing archaeology as a profession, he takes German National Socialism, and particularly the Holocaust, more seriously – although historians are critical of *Schindler's List* for much the same reasons that archaeologists have mixed feelings about Indy and his exploits (Manchel 1995). However, this has not stopped Spielberg from blending invention and fact in such arbitrary ways that the two can be disentangled in his films only with great difficulty.

Part of the problem is that there is no code of ethics in film making comparable to the techniques used by the restorers of old paintings or ancient art. The professional credo of such restoration work is that it must be done in such a way that the restored ("fake") sections can be distinguished from the original ("real") sections in perpetuity. In other words, there is currently no way to ensure that movie "audiences observe the difference between perception and reality" (*ibid.*: 92) in order to separate the personal vision of the film maker from the historical (or archaeological) sources. This distinction is critical because, as Manchel and others have pointed out, movies "have the ability to affect people's values and attitudes" (*ibid.*: 96). In the case of *Schindler's List*, that was presumably one of Spielberg's motivations, but damage can be done inadvertently through sins of both omission and commission, as has happened with the portrayal of archaeology in the *Indiana Jones* trilogy. The fact that the Indy films do not claim to represent archaeology accurately in the way that a documentary (at least theoretically) is expected to do is not the issue. The problem lies in the *blending* of fact and fiction, so that where one begins and the other ends cannot be determined by the average viewer. In effect, archaeology as represented in the Indy trilogy is pseudoarchaeology in the dictionary sense of the

prefix "pseudo": it is a false and spurious representation of the field, superficially similar but morphologically unlike the real thing. The fact that the film is intended to entertain rather than deceive does not change that.

Ironically, Spielberg's representation of archaeology as an academic discipline is less carefully researched than some of the background information on Nazi pseudoarchaeology. The SS-Ahnenerbe (Ancestor Heritage Society), led by party ideologue Heinrich Himmler, did send archaeologists out on expeditions to search for the Grail, the Ark, and the Spear, among other items (Arnold 1992; Hale 2003). Spielberg, his scriptwriters, and/or the concept developers of the trilogy actually seem to have read some of the available source material on this topic (Manchel 1995: 95). The American archaeologist who is missing at the beginning of the first film (*Raiders of the Lost Ark*) is named Ravenwood, a name too close to that of the author of a questionable work on the Spear of Longinus (Ravenscroft 1973) to be coincidence, for example.

Another "convergence" between reality and fiction is the fact that the *magnum opus* of Otto Rahn, an SS-Ahnenerbe scholar and Himmler protégé, closely parallels two of the Indy films. Rahn was convinced that the Holy Grail was secreted in the vicinity of Montségur in the French Pyrenees, a mountain fastness associated with the Cathars, a sect persecuted by the Catholic Church between AD 1208 and 1229 in the Albigensian Crusade of Pope Innocent III. Rahn believed that the Cathars who guarded the Holy Grail in their castle at Montségur were connected in an unbroken line to Druids who had converted to Manichaeism, a dualist religion that blended elements from Buddhism, Christianity, Gnosticism, Mithraism, and Zoroastrianism. The Cathars held that humans were created by Satan (Sklar 1977: 141–4) and that death was followed by a form of reincarnation, none of which endeared this heretical sect to the Catholic Church. The last heroic stand came in 1244. According to local lore and oral traditions, which Rahn recorded, on the night before the final assault, three Cathars carrying the sacred relics of the faith slipped unnoticed over the wall. They carried away the magical regalia of the Merovingian king Dagobert II as well as a cup reputed to be the Holy Grail. Rahn believed that they had hidden it somewhere in the honeycomb of passages and caves under Montségur and other nearby mountains. He spent years searching for its hiding place.

This mix of Nazis, Arthurian legend, and pseudoarchaeology complete with treasure hunters and remote locations obviously appealed to Spielberg, for whom archaeology in the *Indiana Jones* films was never more than a means to an end, the framework within which to present the crowd-pleasing mix of action adventure and stereotypical clichés that characterizes many of his films. The fact that he returns to the theme of the Nazis and their obsession with pseudoarchaeology and the occult after abandoning it in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* was obviously motivated by the second film's (relatively) poor box-office showing compared with its predecessor. In *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, when Indy is heard to declare "Nazis. I

hate these guys" (Barta 1998: 127), it is to the cheering of audiences and the chinging of cash registers. Clearly, Spielberg was on to something good. Ironically, he had hit upon the same winning combination that the Nazis had discovered before him (*ibid*.: 128).

The *Indiana Jones* trilogy exploits the profession of archaeology and German National Socialism with equal enthusiasm and with a disregard for accuracy or consequences. None of this would matter much if the average citizen were in a position to distinguish between the Hollywood constructions and archaeological evidence and practice, or if archaeologists were better at communicating with the public. Unfortunately, this dual failure has real-life consequences, as the recent scandalous handling of the looting of the Baghdad Museum in the aftermath of the US military takeover of that city has clearly shown. Also, as Tony Barta points out in a recent essay, making a distinction matters, because "the mythic Nazi was from the very beginning the accompaniment of the nastier historical one, and was designed – by the Nazis themselves – to create the cinematic representation of the future" (*ibid*.: 128).

The fact that the past, particularly the "deep" past based on archaeological evidence, has been invoked and appropriated by so many nationalist movements and regimes testifies to its political significance as cultural capital. The Nazis recognized this quality as well, and they exploited it as ruthlessly as they made use of other tools that could aid them in the construction of an appropriately glorious vision of themselves. The crucial difference between pseudoarchaeology as practised by a nationalist regime and scientific archaeology lies in the respective approaches to interpretation: nationalist pseudoarchaeology is not interested in what actually happened in the past, only in how the past can be made to fit *an already existing view of the past*, while scientific archaeology adjusts its interpretations based on new data, *whether that data require the jettisoning of previous interpretations or not*.

Pseudoarchaeology has been both manipulated and endorsed by nationalist movements partly because of the frequently marginal and disenfranchised character of its discourse and the perceived lack of professional status of its practitioners. Historically, this has led many pseudoarchaeologists to become willing collaborators in nationalist projects, since the legitimacy denied them by the "professional" establishment has frequently (and often cynically) been offered in exchange for the "validation" of a politically useful past. Nazi Germany remains one of the best-documented and most extreme examples of the manipulation and distortion of archaeological evidence for political purposes.

Nazi pseudoarchaeology and the invention of German national identity

German National Socialism was underwritten by a patchwork of pasts, some based on fact, some manufactured, most predating Hitler's rise to power in

1933. In 1990, when I published an article in *Antiquity* that provided a brief summary of the appropriation of the past by German National Socialism (Arnold 1990), there were a scant half-dozen articles on the subject, none written by a German archaeologist. Since then, and especially within the past five years, there has been a veritable explosion of extremely well-researched and critically analysed volumes by German archaeologists on the subject.[3] The basic outline of the appropriation and misuse of the archaeological past by National Socialist ideologues has been presented in numerous contexts and will not be reiterated here. I will instead focus on National Socialist use of pseudoarchaeology, which by association will require some discussion of the obsessions of Heinrich Himmler, Nazi ideologue and enthusiastic supporter of pseudo-research of all kinds.

Germany in the years after the First World War has been described as "a magnet for malign cranks, a vessel into which they might pour their poison" (Meades 1994: 41). The Nazi Party was an equal opportunity organization when it came to some of the more extreme forms of weirdness that flourished during this time, including spiritualism, back-to-nature movements, numerology, astrology, dowsing, and every conceivable form of pseudoscience. In 1935, Himmler, together with Hermann Wirth and six others (Kater 1974: 454), founded the Deutsches Ahnenerbe: Studiengesellschaft für Geistesgeschichte ("Ancestor Heritage Society"); also related was the Externsteine Stiftung ("Externsteine Foundation"), which, under Himmler's patronage, was headed by Julius Andree (*ibid.*: 80). Eventually, the Ancestor Heritage Society morphed into the notorious SS-Ahnenerbe and supported much of the archaeological research conducted in Germany and other parts of the world.

Ackermann devotes an entire chapter to Himmler as a "protector of pseudo 'scholarly' disciplines" (1970: 40–53), which illustrates the close relationship between Nazi ideology and "fringe" research of all kinds – including the so-called medical research conducted on human subjects, characterized by the same anti-intellectual scientism as other SS-Ahnenerbe activities (Berger 1990: 1435–40). The following quote of Ackermann's illustrates this point particularly well: "In this respect the historiographic illumination of the past was of secondary importance – indeed, the ideological goals forbade the truly scientific exploration of germanic-German history. ... It is therefore significant that National Socialism completely repudiated any absolute and objective research" (1970: 41; translated by author). The anti-intellectual character of the National Socialist program was quite explicit, particularly with respect to the training of young boys and men. Hitler is reported as having said in a conversation with Rauschning about his pedagogical principles: "I don't want an intellectual education. Scholarship spoils the young. ... But they must learn control. I want a violent, dominant, fearless, brutal youth ... one that will shock the world" (*ibid.*: 124; translated by author). He could have added "biddable and gullible" to the list, since that was clearly a significant part of the re-educa-

tion program developed by the party, one of the reasons for the proliferation of pseudo-disciplines during the period between the two world wars.

The SS-Ahnenerbe was dedicated to Himmler's belief that the prehistoric and historical record of the Germanic people had to be rectified, "purified" and restored to its original, pre-Christian glory. Links between modern Germans and their ancestors, termed *germanische Erbströme* ("streams of germanic patrimony") by Himmler, had to be retraced and reconnected, and prehistoric archaeology was one way of achieving this goal. A frequently used analogy was that of a chain leading directly back into the past. Every fourth child born to an SS man, for example, received a candlestick with the inscription "You are only a link in the clan's endless chain" (Sklar 1977: 101). Ultimately, all SS activities, including its archaeological and pseudoarchaeological programs, had one goal: securing, purging, and healing German "blood," which Himmler's grotesque notions of "racial hygiene" viewed as tainted and continually threatened by "Jewish–Bolshevik subhumans" (Hüser 1987: 13).

It is this aspect of the SS program that connects the manipulation and misuse of archaeology by Nazi ideologues to the Holocaust. The disciplines of archaeology and history were to be handmaidens to this effort, tolerated only if they supported the state's agenda (Ackermann 1970: 42). Since the evidence frequently did not fit the National Socialist ideologues' view of the past, results were manufactured or exaggerated, while inconvenient discoveries or interpretations were suppressed or denied (Arnold 1990: 469). As a result, by 1938 international scholarly opinion of the regime had rapidly eroded, and professional German scholars, archaeologists among them, many of whom had contacts outside Germany, began to be concerned about the effect of the *Germanomanen*, the "Germano-maniacs" (*ibid*.: 470) on their disciplinary reputations.

The response of German archaeologists trained before 1933 to attempts by the state to engage in the *Gleichschaltung*, or "ideological mainstreaming," of their profession, is a good example of the complex interaction between the power structure of a totalitarian regime and its members, not all of whom are necessarily in agreement with all aspects of the ideological program. On the one hand, many German archaeologists of the time were active and supportive party members. On the other hand, this did not make them willing to have their research put on a par with the activities of the party's fantasists, whom they vocally despised and gradually worked to remove from positions of influence. While active resistance, along the lines of organizations like the student resistance movement the White Rose (Shirer 1981: 1022–3), did not occur in the archaeological establishment, various covert forms of resistance were practised, particularly by the archaeologists of the SS-Ahnenerbe, some of whom, like Herbert Jankuhn, Werner Buttler and Hans Schleif, had excellent international reputations. Through intrigues and networking, the exerting of subtle pressure on party officials and publications denouncing the "lunatic fringe" and its activities (the Externsteine in particular spawned a flurry of articles and monographs decrying the unpro-

fessional and pseudoscientific approach to the excavation and interpretation of sites), archaeologists defended their discipline with some success from total cooptation by the *Germanomanen* (Arnold 1990: 470). The outbreak of war in 1939 not coincidentally also had an impact, but by then many of the "lunatic fringe" elements had been removed from their positions.

The independent German–Dutch scholar Herman Wirth, who was convinced that "civilization" was a curse that could be lifted only by a return to a simpler, more "traditional" way of life as materially documented in the archaeological and historical records, is a good example of a "Germanomaniac" (Kater 1974: 11–16). His early publications, especially *Der Aufgang der Menschheit* ("The Rise of Humankind"), published in 1928, and his "translation" of the so-called "Ura Linda-Chronik," a text that ostensibly documented the history of a Frisian family between the sixth and first century BC, were vilified by Germanists (*ibid*.: 14) for their dependence on a naive kind of romantic nationalism. The Ura Linda-Chronik turned out to be a skillful forgery, inked on artificially aged Dutch machine-made paper dating to around 1850. Wirth's refusal to accept the scientific evidence for fraud made him a target for the scorn of scholars like Bolko von Richthofen, Gerhard Gloege, Arthur Hübner and K.H. Jakob-Friesen (*ibid*.: 16). Von Richthofen in fact publicly and in print criticized Wirth for his gullibility, drawing Himmler's ire, who repeatedly admonished him to desist from his defamatory attacks on the Chronicle and on Wirth, finally commenting in a memo: "I will send Mr. von Richthofen a last letter on this subject, but after that my patience will be at an end" (Ackermann 1970: 49). Himmler's defense of Wirth was ultimately to no avail; he remained a marginal figure with respect to academic scholarship, and by 1938 Himmler had distanced himself from his former crony.

Nazi neo-paganism and pseudoarchaeology

A fundamental element of Himmler's ideological program was the confrontation between the nascent*,* state-organized, neo-pagan belief system and the Christian faith in its various denominations (Ackermann 1970: 40, 62; Höhne 1967: 146-7; Meades 1994: 38), which he and other high-ranking Nazi officials had repudiated because of its dependence on a "semitic" religious tradition that emphasized the brotherhood of all human beings (Ackermann 1970: 41). This anti-Christian attitude is clearly stated in an SS educational pamphlet dating to 1937: "What is Christian is not Germanic; what is Germanic is not Christian! Germanic virtues are manly pride, heroic courage, and loyalty – not meekness, repentance, the misery of sin and an afterlife with prayers and psalms" (*ibid*.: 56; translated by author).

One of the reasons Himmler was an early champion of Otto Rahn's "research" on the Holy Grail and the persecution of the Cathars was because the Albigenses, as they were known in France, were a non-Christian sect

who viewed Lucifer as the Bringer of Light (the literal meaning of his name), in addition to being associated with one of the most potent symbols of power known in Biblical tradition in the form of the Grail. Rahn's second book, entitled *Lucifer's Court Servants: A Tour of Europe's Benevolent Spirits*, was in effect a travel diary describing the locations where pagans and heretics were martyred by the Catholic Church. After Rahn's death in 1939, Himmler had 10,000 additional copies printed and distributed (Ackermann 1970: 58). He took an active interest in "reawakening" the German people to their pre-Christian, pagan past and the persecutions suffered by their ancestors at the hands of the Catholic Church.

Himmler liked to present himself as a reincarnation of Heinrich I, who married a great-granddaughter of Widukind, the Saxon king converted to Christianity together with his people after their defeat by Charlemagne. Heinrich I also reportedly refused to be anointed by the Church when he was crowned in Fritzlar in AD 919 (*ibid.*: 60), which made him an ideal candidate for Himmler to glorify in his "return to paganism" campaign. In 1936, on the 1,000th anniversary of the death of Heinrich I, Himmler gave a speech in the cathedral of Quedlinburg, where the bones of the king were supposed to have been laid to rest. Himmler admitted in a pamphlet published in honor of the occasion that in fact it was not known what had happened to his remains (*ibid.*: 61).

One of the hallmarks of Himmler's brand of pseudoarchaeology was not to let the absence of evidence get in the way of the pursuit of his agenda. Less than a year after the anniversary celebration, Himmler announced that SS Obersturmführer Heinz Höhne had been ordered to conduct excavations in the Quedlinburg crypt and had (surprise!) discovered the bones of the great king. Himmler thereupon established a fund in honor of Heinrich I, which was announced in July 1938 to all the towns of central Germany with historical connections to the ruler, and the crypt itself became an official national memorial (Ackermann 1970: 61–2). Every 2 July from that year on, Himmler held a "vigil" in the crypt at midnight to commune with his ancestor and namesake (Höhne 1967: 145).

Party ideologues stressed the association between the introduction of Christianity to the Germanic tribes and the battles against the pagan Saxons waged by Charlemagne, who was crowned Holy Roman Emperor at Aachen in AD 800. As the ruler of the Franks, Charlemagne was linked by Nazi propaganda with the "Romanized" French and thus demonized as "Carl the Saxon Slaughterer" (Ackermann 1970: 56) in reference to the 4,500 Saxon captives he was supposed to have executed in 782 during his campaign in what is now Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony). He was also reputed to have destroyed the most important ritual site of the Saxons, the place where the Irminsul, or World Tree, was worshipped. Herman Wirth and other members of the Vereinigung der Freunde germanischer Vorgeschichte ("Union of the Friends of Germanic Prehistory") were convinced that this site was identical with the Externsteine, a sandstone formation not far

from Detmold where the meetings of the group were regularly held (Halle 2002) (Figure 7.1). The location is picturesque, and there is evidence of its use by anchorites from a nearby Benedictine monastery, but there is no archaeological evidence to support a Germanic occupation of the site. Nevertheless, Himmler assigned SS-Ahnenerbe archaeologist Julius Andree the task of directing excavations at the Externsteine (*ibid.*; Kater 1974: 80). He dutifully "discovered" that it had indeed been used during the period in question as a solar observatory, and he interpreted enigmatic graffiti on some of the chamber walls as "runes" related to the solstices (Arnold 1990: 470–1).

The juxtaposition of the Christian Charlemagne and the Saxon king Widukind, supposedly forcibly converted during the Saxon campaigns (*ibid.*: 59), was favored by both Himmler and party ideologue Alfred Rosenberg as a "correction" of the "false history" that had denied the German people the right to acknowledge their glorious pre-Christian past. However, Hitler actually passed an edict forbidding the use of the pejorative term "Carl the Saxon Slaughterer" for Charlemagne, a good example of the many rifts and differences of opinion regarding ideology and policy within the Nazi Party. Hitler saw Charlemagne as the unifier of the German people and the creator of the German Reich; the introduction of Christianity could be forgiven such an inspiring leader (Ackermann 1970: 57). Hitler was never an enthusiastic supporter of Himmler's neo-pagan cult in any case (Arnold 1990: 469).

Figure 7.1 The Externsteine sandstone formation near Detmold, site of pseudoarchaeological investigations by German National Socialist archaeologists (photo: B. Arnold)

From 1935 onward, the SS organization had what has been described as its "spiritual headquarters" (Frischauer 1953: 247) in the Wewelsburg castle in Büren near Paderborn (Figure 7.2), variously referred to in the postwar literature on the Third Reich as Himmler's "Valhalla" (Höhne 1967: 143), his "jewel" (Ackermann 1970: 105), and his "Camelot" (Höhne 1967: 141–2; Hüser 1987: 6). According to an apocryphal tale, Himmler was supposed to have heard a prophecy that the next invasion from the east would be withstood and halted by a lone castle in Westphalia, whereupon he scoured the area looking for a fortress that fitted the bill (Höhne 1967: 143). The castle itself is of interest to those fascinated by the Nazi obsession with the occult, but more significant is the fact that it is located in a region of northern Germany that is occupied by three sites of importance in Nazi pseudoarchaeology: the Externsteine and the Hermann Monument near Detmold in Nordrheinwestfalen, and the Sachsenhain near Verden in Niedersachsen.

The Hermann Monument commemorates the destruction of three Roman legions in AD 9 by a tribal confederacy led by the leader of a German tribal rebellion whom Tacitus refers to as "Arminius," a name that was later Germanized as "Hermann." The erection of the monument in 1875, just four years after the end of the Franco-Prussian war, which marked the birth of the German nation-state, was intended to represent freedom from both the ancient and the recent Mediterranean military threat (Arnold 1998: 242–3; Geary 2002: 22). Pseudoarchaeology was involved in the creation of the Hermann Monument only in the sense that it was erected on what was
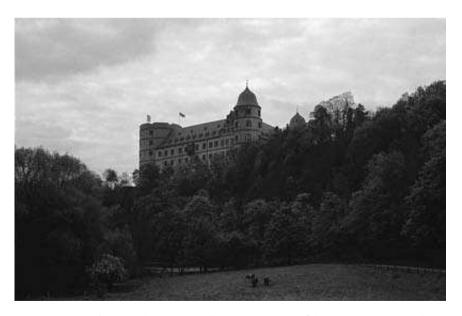

Figure 7.2 Wewelsburg Castle, cult site and "spiritual center" of the SS (photo: B. Arnold)

known to be a Celtic Iron Age hill fort, and in fact there is no evidence that local Germanic tribes ever inhabited the summit. Based on recent archaeological discoveries, the battle itself is now thought to have taken place significantly further north and west (Arnold 1998: 242; Wells 2003).

The Sachsenhain is particularly representative of what was referred to during the Nürnberg trials by the German prehistorian Assien Böhmers as "the hoax research characteristic of that time" (Kater 1974: 81–2). Himmler "investigated" the site in 1935 and erected rows and circles of 4,500 megaliths or standing stones, each one supposedly from 4,500 villages in Niedersachsen (Ackermann 1970: 56) intended to commemorate the pagan Saxon captives ostensibly slaughtered at the site. There is absolutely no evidence of any prehistoric activity at this location (in spite of Himmler's erection of megaliths at the site), and the entire Sachsenhain complex has been called "probably the most comprehensive work of ersatz prehistory ever undertaken" (Meades 1994: 36–8). It also exemplifies the anti-Christian and neo-pagan elements of the new "religion" that Himmler hoped to impose on the German people. Solstice ceremonies conducted there for members of the SS paralleled those held at the Externsteine in Horn not far to the south and west of the Sachsenhain. The National Socialist practice of justifying action in the present by reference to the archaeological or historical past is summed up neatly by the following excerpt from a Himmler speech delivered during one of the solstice ceremonies at the Sachsenhain: "Back then 4,500 heads fell that had refused to bend; today heads are being proudly raised that will never bend again!" (cited in Ackermann 1970: 56; translated by author).

Himmler recognized that no society could survive without a belief system. The question was what would replace the Christian faith? An "ancestor-based" tradition that had its roots in the Romantic movements of the previous century was outlined, complete with Germanic names for the days of the week, months, and holidays (Christmas became Jul, for example). One part of this wholesale invention of a religious tradition, which depended in part on the cooptation or construction of archaeological sites to lend it legitimacy (Arnold 1992: 34–6; Lurz 1975), was the so-called Thing-movement. Initiated in 1933, this artificial neo-pagan tradition was based on a bizarre mélange of Scandinavian/Germanic mythology that emphasized Sun worship and focused on large, pageant-rich communal gatherings in open-air theaters designed to mimic Greek and Roman theater prototypes. To qualify as a *Thingstätte*, the term coined to describe the open-air theaters/places of worship that were to be the focus of this neo-pagan cult, evidence was required of Germanic occupation of the prospective site. Communities competed with one another for the honor of acquiring such a monument, and by 1935 twelve such cult sites had been dedicated. At one of these locations, the Heiligenberg *oppidum* (Julius Caesar's term for Celtic hill forts) across the river from the city of Heidelberg, there was no archaeological evidence for a Germanic occupation (Figure 7.3). The site was ultimately granted *Thingstätte* status on the basis of fabricated archaeological

evidence, and most of the Roman, Celtic, and Bronze Age occupation horizons were destroyed in the construction of the *Thingstätte*, which was used for only one open-air ceremony before the Thing-movement was terminated in 1935 (Arnold 1992: 36). The main reason the movement was abandoned was that popular resistance to the replacement of the Christian faith had proved too strong and threatened other, more important, National Socialist agendas.

Resistance to ideological mainstreaming, including the imposition of a neo-pagan religion based on pseudoarchaeological and pseudohistorical interpretations of the past, occurred at several levels, demonstrating the extent to which the public must be willing to be duped if such manipulations are to be effective:

- *Professionalism*. Within the professions and academic disciplines there was resistance by a handful of individuals who were able to work within the system to maintain what they believed was the scientific rigor of their field of expertise (Arnold 1990: 472–3).
- *Apathy*. Members of the National Socialist military machine and civilian bureaucracy were, like most human beings the world over, more concerned with personal safety, comfort, and leisure than with ideology. Höhne describes the constant complaints on the part of the RuSHA (Rasse und Siedlungshauptamt, or "Central Department of Race and Settlement") regarding the lack of interest in ideology on the part of the reserve troops (Verfügungstruppe) and the general SS (Allgemeine SS),

Figure 7.3 The open-air Thingstätte on the summit of the Heiligenberg near Heidelberg (photo: B. Arnold)

whose response to the overblown prose style and convoluted, romanti-cized wanderings of Himmler and other party ideologues was "a huge yawn" (Höhne 1967: 146). The "educational evenings" during which such presentations were made were among the worst attended of the SS gatherings (*ibid.*).

- *Resistance.* The general public was also not entirely passive, particularly with respect to the replacement of the Christian faith (Protestant or Catholic) by a state-conceived and controlled neo-pagan religion. The Thing-movement is a good example of the effect of "bottom-up" resis-tance to state policies involving ideology, even within a totalitarian state. This was one area in which Himmler's ideological program encountered serious difficulties, even within his handpicked elite, the SS. Two-thirds of the general SS remained officially affiliated with a Christian faith, but in the SS reserves and in the Death's Head units, where participation would have been expected to be greatest, no more than 69 percent of members were officially affiliated with Himmler's neo-pagan tradition, and these numbers dropped significantly after the outbreak of war in 1939 (*ibid.*: 147–8).

Pseudoarchaeology, pseudohistory, and Celtic nationalism

Celtic nationalism and the appropriation of "Celtic" symbolic capital by neo-pagan sects may at first glance appear to have little in common with the abuses of the deep past by National Socialist ideologues. However, both the Celtic (also referred to as the Gaelic) revival that underwrote nationalist and separatist agendas in the Celtic-speaking areas of the British Isles[4] as well as in continental Europe (Diaz Santana 2002; Dietler 1994, 1998; McDonald 1989) and German National Socialism were born out of the Romantic movement, and they share the appropriation of the archaeological past in the construction of national identity. The Ura Linda-Chronik has its counterpart in the poetic output of the invented Scottish bard Ossian, for example, whose German translation in 1794 "kindled an interest in archaic German history and references to the prehistoric, heroic past of the German people" (Smiles 1994: 34) on the continent as well as in Scotland.

Comparing German and Celtic nationalism serves several purposes: (1) it challenges the tendency to view the German National Socialist exploitation of the past as historically specific to that particular time and place; (2) by highlighting the similarities between two case studies that at first glance seem unlikely candidates for such an analysis, the meta-narratives of pseu-doarchaeology and nationalism are exposed; (3) it reveals that archaeologists are willing to support nationalist agendas, particularly in countries in which their research has traditionally been underfunded and accorded little respect, in much the same way that nations that are struggling with inferiority complexes are vulnerable to manipulation by nascent dictatorial regimes (Arnold 2004; Galaty 2004); (4) it demonstrates that the two forms of

nationalist exploitation of the past not only have common roots but are also inextricably entangled in their contemporary manifestations.

The selection by National Socialist fantasists of the Externsteine as the spiritual center of the Germanic world (Arnold 1990: 470–1, 1992: 34; Halle 2002) was born of the same Romantic and antiquarian fascination with ruins and archaeological landscapes that characterized most of northern Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In France as in Britain, Neolithic sites like Stonehenge or Carnac were considered symbols of national pride, and faux megaliths, tumuli, and other monuments were erected in the gardens of the rich in a number of European countries during this period (Smiles 1994: 29).

The Externsteine is still described today as "a powerful spiritual center of our ancestors" on the unofficial Externsteine website (*www.externsteine.de*), even though absolutely no verifiable archaeological evidence for Germanic activity or occupation of the site was uncovered during Julius Andree's excavations at the site under Himmler's patronage (Arnold 1992: 34; Halle 2002). Every *Walpurgisnacht* (the night of 30 April / 1 May), considered by pagans to be the night when witches meet to consort with the devil, a major pagan festival is still held at the site, and the website reflects contemporary neo-pagan beliefs as well as the legacy of National Socialist pseudoarchaeology. Ironically, one of the main attractions at the site is a large bas-relief cut into the cliff that depicts Christ being taken down from the cross, part of the anchorite legacy associated with the nearby monastery of Corvey. Elements of this relief were interpreted by Nazi fantasists as representing the survival of pagan beliefs in spite of Christian domination, a kind of coded message on the part of the local Saxon people, but there is no evidence to support this notion. The same is true for the supposed "runes" inscribed in various places at the site, supposedly representing solar and lunar worship and the solstices.

When comparing German and Celtic nationalist manipulation of the past, it is important to distinguish between Celtic nationalism as constructed by the English and the Celtic nationalism of the minority Celtic-speaking groups in the British Isles. As Kidd and others have pointed out: "the different national contexts of enlightened historiography in Ireland and Scotland led to the emergence of widely divergent constructions of Gaeldom" (1994: 1198). The latter form of Celtic nationalism is at least in part due to feelings of cultural inferiority encouraged by British imperialism, and in its defensive as well as aggressive self-aggrandizing rhetoric it often resembles German nationalism after 1871, when the new German nation-state was seeking legitimacy and respect in post-Napoleonic Europe. Just as Nazi ideologues like Himmler repeatedly sought to emphasize the greatness of prehistoric Germanic culture independent of, or indeed preceding, developments in the Mediterranean and the Middle East (Arnold 1990), an important dimension of Irish cultural patriotism, for example, was to demonstrate that the pre-Christian, "Milesian" Ireland had been a great

civilization in its own right. Ireland's claim to fame as the "island of saints and scholars" was due not only to a derivative continental culture imposed by Christian missionaries but also to the Celtic, rather than Latin, roots of its civilization (Kidd 1994: 1203). Claims that this ancient Milesian kingdom of the Gaels, for which no archaeological evidence exists, had once been the equal of the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome (*ibid*.: 1202) repeat almost verbatim pronouncements made by German nineteenth and early twentieth-century nationalists (and echo the claims of modern Indian nationalists; see Chapter 9). Old English antiquary and poet Geoffrey Keating, for example, developed "an account of a fabulous high civilization in pagan Irish, or Milesian, antiquity to refute the slurs of English commentators" (*ibid*.: 1199), while eighteenth-century "Catholic myth maker" Charles O'Connor is cited by Kidd as "having made the proud boast: 'All the modern nations of Europe (the {Irish} Scots alone excepted) are indebted to the Greeks and Romans for their letters and learning'" (*ibid*.: 1202).

The monumental expression of nineteenth-century European nationalism based on archaeological and early historical sources is represented in several European nations in the form of a Celtic or Germanic tribal leader who challenged the hegemony of Rome. In Germany, Arminius, the destroyer or three Roman legions in AD 9, is commemorated by the colossal bronze Hermann Monument; in France, Vercingetorix of the Averni, who led a tribal rebellion against Julius Caesar in Gaul in 52 BC, is memorialized by a bronze statue; in Belgium, the monumental bronze statue of the Celtic tribal leader Ambiorix celebrates a victory over Caesar in 54 BC; in England, the marble statue at Mansion House in London of the British tribal leader Caractacus represents his resistance to the Claudian invasion in AD 43; and, finally, the monumental bronze statue of Boudicca on the banks of the Thames pays tribute to that queen of the Iceni, who in the first century AD led a campaign against the Romans that destroyed London itself, then a thriving Roman colony (see Table 7.1 and Figure 7.4).

Table 7.1 Monuments to tribal leaders who resisted the Romans

Tribal leader	Date of rebellion	Type of monument	Location of monument	Date of monument
Ambiorix (Eburones)	54 BC	Bronze statue	City square, Tongeren, Belgium	1867
Vercingetorix (Averni)	52 BC	Bronze statue	Celtic *oppidum* of Alesia (Alise Ste Reine), France	1863–65
Arminius (Cherusci)	AD 9	Bronze statue	Celtic *oppidum* on the Groteburg, Detmold, Germany	1875
Caractacus (Silures)	AD 54	Marble statue	Mansion House, London, England	1856
Boudicea (Iceni)	AD 60/61	Bronze statue	Westminster Bridge, London, England	1871

These monuments share a number of significant features that illustrate the pan-European nature of the nationalist manipulation of the primitive, tribal, essentialist past, part of an invented tradition based on the expedient interpretation of archaeological and textual sources:

- All five monuments commemorate leaders of tribal rebellions against Roman imperialism.
- All five rebellions occurred more or less within a 100-year period of Roman occupation of these territories.
- All five monuments were constructed within a twenty-year period marked by a number of conflicts between the nations erecting them.
- All five monuments are based on very sketchy archaeological and historical evidence. We know next to nothing about the individuals represented, and what we do know comes from hostile (i.e. Roman) sources. The variant spelling of the names (Caractacus/Caratacus; Boudicca/Boudicea/Bodicea; Arminius/Hermann – the second is a nineteenth-century invention, while the first is the kind of name that was given to non-Romans while serving in the Roman army, which

Figure 7.4 Boudicca monument, London (photo: B. Arnold)

Tacitus claims Arminius did – is just one example of the extent of the obscurity that surrounds these national symbols.

- The locations of the monuments are in some cases ironic (the erection of a monument to Boudicca in a city where a destruction horizon known as the "red layer" marks her razing and burning of the original Roman town), in some cases expedient and directly counter to the archaeological evidence (the Herman monument stands on a Celtic hill fort that has not produced any evidence of Germanic occupation, and recent archaeological investigations place the pivotal battle much further north and west). In other cases, the site is archaeologically associated with the event but culturally ambivalent (for example, the statue of Vercingetorix is located on the site of his eventual defeat by Caesar's invading forces, ushering in the Mediterranean cultural and linguistic traditions that still characterize France today).
- Historical accuracy was not a consideration with respect to costume and accoutrements. Boudicca wears a diaphanous dress that clearly owes more to nineteenth-century English notions of Roman women's clothing than anything an Iron Age woman, let alone a woman warrior, would have worn. The scythes on her chariot's wheels are not documented archaeologically, and although we know quite a bit about Iron Age British horse harnesses, these sources were clearly not consulted by the sculptor. Vercingetorix and Ambiorix sport a mélange of military hardware ranging from the Bronze Age (Vercingetorix' sword) to the mediaeval period, while nothing like Arminius' winged helmet is known from contemporary Germanic contexts. Caractacus is depicted as a heroic nude adorned with some strategically placed classical drapery, a miniature shield, and a battle-axe of mediaeval type.

The "manufactured past" represented by these monuments to Celtic and Germanic tribal leaders is just one manifestation of the cooptation of archaeology and history in the construction of a nationalist cultural identity. There were numerous nineteenth-century "lunatic fringe" organizations in the British Isles that dabbled in one way or another in the (unsystematic) exploration and interpretation of archaeological sites. Stonehenge is probably the best-known manifestation of this phenomenon (Burle 1999; Chippindale 1983), but a more obscure example from Ireland is a bizarre conflation of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Freemasonry, and British (English) imperialist attitudes toward the Celtic-speaking minority populations of the Islands. As it happens, Indiana Jones and the Nazis were not the only ones searching for the Ark of the Covenant. Several eighteenth-century sources, among them the writings of Charles Vallancey, make reference to the Hill of Tara in County Meath as the possible final resting place of the Ark. In the late nineteenth century, a London-based group known as the British-Israelites (many of whom were also Freemasons) followed up on these rather obscure hints by mounting a campaign to conduct excavations at the site, starting with the

initial proposal to dig on the hill as early as 1875. Since Tara is known to have been the seat of the Irish high kings, and as the spiritual center or heart of Ireland has both historical and symbolic significance for the Irish people, this proposal was opposed by a large number of scholars, literary lights and society figures (including Robert Cochrane, W.B. Yeats, and Maud Gunne; Carew 2003). Opposition to the proposed British-Israelite operation at Tara was due in part to the interest in sites related to the pre-Roman history of the islands that characterized the Celtic/Gaelic revival (Corlett 2003: 42).

British Celtic nationalism in effect combined both Celtic and Germanic cultural patrimony in the construction of a national identity, a particularly striking illustration of the multi-vocality of cultural symbols, especially those derived from the ambiguously polyvalent archaeological record. Initially, the cultural capital represented by images of ancient Britons defending their land against invading Romans provided a powerful morale booster during England's eighteenth-century wars with France, with England's self-proclaimed love of freedom being linked to the Celtic past and the contemporary conflict with France presented as analogous to the earlier struggle against the Romans (Lang 1997: 105). Over time, however, the English turned away from the archaic past as a source for the creation of a national identity, looking instead to their Anglo-Saxon (i.e., "Germanic") heritage. By the mid-nineteenth century, "Saxonism" had replaced the emphasis on Celtic roots, with nationalistic appeals to the Celtic past occurring only among the Welsh, Scots, and Irish. This attitude shift has been attributed to England's emergence as an imperial power that was better able to identify with the Roman Empire as well as notions about race that permanently separated "backward" Celts from "advanced" Anglo-Saxons. It is worth pointing out that Hitler's ambivalence about whether or not to attack England was due in part to his belief that the English qualified on the basis of race and cultural affinity as members of the "Germanic" Reich, and that eugenics "experts" in both countries were in regular communication with one another in the post-First World War period.

Our ancestors, ourselves: pseudoarchaeology and nationhood

The archaeologically documented past is an attractive source of symbolic capital precisely because its time depth lends credibility while simultaneously providing enough ambiguity to support an almost infinite number of interpretations (Arnold 1999, 2002). As Smiles (1994: 38) has put it:

> Such appeals to the archaic past indicate how effective a symbol, because innocuous, the barbarian ancestor could be, redolent of a past so remote as to be either immune from class, religious or party interests or so ambiguous as to allow many different interests to seek confirmation from one and the same source.

This is why the material remains of the Celtic past could be successfully appealed to both by English nationalists and by the Celtic "fringe" attempting to create an identity separate from English domination: "In the rarified world of abstract patriotism Caractacus and Boadicea join Arthur and Alfred not as Celtic chieftains but as patriot heroes, staunch defenders of these islands against the evils that might beset it from outside" (*ibid.*: 45).

How does Celtic nationalism manifest itself today? For most members of the general public, especially in the United States, the term "Celtic" is automatically associated with Ireland first, followed by Wales, Scotland and Cornwall, and for a much smaller number, Brittany and the Isle of Man. Nationalists in those regions, on the other hand, have begun to use the term "Gaelic nationalism" in order to emphasize language as the primary distinguishing membership criterion for these twenty-first-century imagined communities, intentionally distinguishing themselves not only from the nineteenth-century imperialist British use of the term but also from the continental Celts documented primarily on the basis of archaeological remains. Continental Celtic nationalism, in the meantime, is increasingly becoming associated with the emerging polity of the European Union.[5] Several exhibitions of archaeological finds from across Europe have had "the Celts" as their central theme, at least partly to provide an apparent cultural precedent for the creation of this new socio-political entity. The emphasis in this case has tended to be on a construction of Europe linked by a shared Celtic past, based of necessity on archaeological as well as textual evidence supporting that vision while conveniently ignoring equally compelling evidence for significant temporal and geographical differences. Partly in response to this appropriation of the term "Celtic" by a supra-national entity, it has become *de rigueur* among British archaeologists to question the use of the term "Celtic" in association with the archaeological record of the British Isles (James 1999). Once a cultural symbol loses its essentializing association, it no longer has the qualities necessary to support a nationalist agenda and must be replaced by a new term that emphasizes differences rather than commonalities.

There are parallels between the representation of National Socialist German and Celtic nationalism in popular culture as well. If German National Socialist archaeology as represented by Hollywood has the Indiana Jones trilogy, Celtic nationalism has the blockbuster *Braveheart*, loosely (one could say barely) based on the story of William Wallace as portrayed in the romanticized, nationalistic tearjerker by Jane Porter, *The Scottish Chiefs* (Porter 1866). Interestingly, the parallel between German nationalism and Celtic/Gaelic nationalism is drawn explicitly in a recent critique of the film by Colin McArthur: "Narratives about certain societies – the ante-bellum American South and Nazi Germany spring to mind – seem particularly prone to a mélange of savagery and sentimentality, and narratives about Scotland show something of the same tendency" (1998: 175–6).

The historical accuracy of the film – starring Mel Gibson as the larger-than-life Scottish rebel leader who trounces the English, led by Edward I, at

the Battle of Stirling Bridge in 1297, only to be hanged, drawn, and quartered eight years later – is not an issue here. The film does about as good a job of faithfully representing thirteenth-century England and Scotland as *Indiana Jones* does of accurately representing archaeology as a discipline or National Socialist German archaeology as a phenomenon. What is interesting is the response to *Braveheart* in Scotland at a time when calls for a separate parliament were taking on new momentum, since it is this phenomenon that illustrates the participatory role of the public in the perpetuation and proliferation of pseudo-visions of the past. The expedient use of the past by political systems (it does not matter what kind of past it is, i.e. whether pseudo or backed by archaeological or historical evidence, as long as it supports the political agenda of the moment) is also illustrated particularly neatly by the *Braveheart* phenomenon, as the appropriation of the film by the Scottish National Party (SNP) clearly shows (*ibid.*: 179). McArthur provides the following excerpt from a speech by the SNP's National Convener, Alex Salmond MP:

> We should be ashamed that it has taken Hollywood to give so many Scots back their history. ... And George [Robertson, Labour MP] and Michael [Forsythe, Conservative Secretary of State for Scotland] should also be worried, because now, as anyone who knows the story and has seen the film will know, the real villains are not the English but the establishment leadership of Scotland who bought and sold their country for personal advancement.
>
> (McArthur 1998: 181)

McArthur's conclusion is telling: "there is a connection between *Braveheart*'s debased Romanticism, its post-1789 populist nationalism and xenophobia, and the way it has been appropriated by individuals and institutions in Scotland" (*ibid.*). Film, fiction, poetry, art, and other media are not in and of themselves "pseudo"-anything. However, they *can* promulgate pseudo-perspectives on persons, things or even concepts (see Chapter 2). In addition, the fact that most nationalist movements make calculated use of the emotional response evoked by such media is proof of their potential vulnerability to manipulation.

The most recent conflation of pseudoarchaeology, neo-paganism, and Celtic Romanticism is the New Age movement, particularly the various neo-pagan traditions that combine most of the elements presented in this essay (Bowman 2002). The anti-establishment attitude of most fringe movements also characterizes this one, with the addition of a Luddite element that emphasizes a distrust of technology and science. It is no coincidence that many neo-pagans are also drawn to various forms of re-enactor groups, including the Society for Creative Anachronism and the denizens of various "Renaissance" festivals in North America and Europe. Living in the past has become a way of life to an unprecedented degree in the West, evolving from a form of upper-class entertainment at the court of Louis the XIV in seven-

teenth- and eighteenth-century France to a pan-national movement that attracts people from all social classes. As it has been put it in a recent essay:

> In their broadly retrospective and romantic "vision", the exponents of "Celtic Christianity" [and various neo-pagan groups based wholly or in part on a constructed "Celtic" tradition], follow an approach which can be traced through Arnold and Renan and as far back as Macpherson's Ossianic translations of the early 1760s. They also pursue outdated lines of scholarship.
>
> (Meeks 2002: 251)

In effect, a "primitivist, alternative culture" has been created "on the Celtic fringe" (*ibid*.: 252) that is rooted in an earlier scholarly tradition, borrowing freely and indiscriminately from written and archaeological sources and generally unaware of or uninterested in more recent scholarship that has questioned or refuted many of the sources on which the practitioners of these groups rely. Ironically, the marginality of the Celts, which is part of the appeal of this cultural complex for New Age seekers, Christian as well as pagan, is, as Meeks points out, "an external and essentially Anglocentric" perspective (*ibid*.: 253). As in most such invented traditions, the chosen people are described as the first or the only ones to engage in a range of behavior, including a true symbiosis with nature, an emphasis on simplicity, and a tolerance of religious differences (*ibid*.: 257–60).

The popular press in most European countries and in the United States has tended to reinforce these assumptions, stressing the piety, simplicity, and moral superiority of these idealized denizens of an imagined Celtic past. A particularly good example is represented by a recent Swiss magazine cover (Figure 7.5), rather ironically titled *Facts* magazine, which shows an artist's conception of a "Celt" of indeterminate gender, although the dagger in the right hand suggests that the individual is intended to be male. The eyes are closed, the arms spread wide in a gesture presumably intended to convey worship; heavy gold bracelets adorn the one wrist that is visible, gold fibulae hold a cloak at the shoulders, and what looks like a gold torque is around the neck. The cover reads: "The Celts: Our Ancestors: Strong, Intelligent, and Pious." The illustration is shown again in the text of the article, but this time more of the scene is visible, and it is clear that the man exhorting the gods is standing in front of a large bonfire or funeral pyre, while an aged individual with beads threaded in his/her hair and wearing an antler headdress is leading?/supervising(?) the proceedings. The article text is typical of the "our ancestors, ourselves" rhetoric that dominates such publications, drawing parallels between life today and life in a reconstructed 2,100-year-old Celtic town, part of a virtual exhibit documenting ongoing excavations in the northern part of the city of Basel in Switzerland. The following description would make most archaeologists cringe:

The only thing missing is the Opel *Astra* [a popular European family car] with a child seat, and the middle class idyll would be complete. The little wooden houses are arranged in tidy rows, low ridges neatly separate the lots, and the fenced in verandas are cozily designed. And there's a dog racing around in the front yard.

(Widmer 2003: 101; translated by author)

Figure 7.5 Cover of the Swiss magazine *Facts* with the headline: "The Celts: Our Ancestors"

Despite periodic disclaimers – the caption of another illustration showing a man and a woman chopping and clearing trees in a downpour states "Hard work: Life back then bore little resemblance to the Celtic kitsch of today" – the article concludes with the sentence "Why go abroad then (to search for the Celts)? Switzerland is a *bona fide* Celtic country" (*ibid*.: 106).

In a shift that is clearly linked to changing contemporary political configurations, as continental Europeans have been reclaiming their Celtic pasts, the Celtic-speaking peoples of the British Isles have been rejecting the label, if not the concept. Expedient manipulation of archaeological discoveries and historical records characterizes the reinvention of the Celts in both contexts as well as in North America, in large part apparently motivated by popular interest as much as political advantage: fertile ground, in other words, for producers of pseudoarchaeology and pseudohistory, whose publications litter the New Age sections of most bookstores and who clutter the Internet with spurious sites. What can those of us engaged in serious scholarship do about this, if anything? Engage rather than withdraw, and provide resources and access to information for the interested general public that can be clearly distinguished from the "alternative" sources, on an individual level by presenting public lectures whenever possible, and on a larger scale by making effective use of the Internet, which is increasingly becoming the information source of choice for most people. Pseudoarchaeology may always be traveling with us, but we do not have to let it drive the train.

Notes

1. Among others, Abu el-Haj 2001; Arnold 2002, 2004; Atkinson *et al*. 1996; Ben-Yehuda 1995; Crooke 2000; Diaz-Andreu and Champion 1995; Diaz Santana 2002; Dietler 1994; Galaty 2004; Gathercole and Lowenthal 1989; Graves-Brown *et al*. 1996; Hall 2000; Halle 2002; Härke 2000; Hallote and Joffe 2002; Hamilakis 2002; Haßmann 2002a, 2002b; Jones 1997; Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Kuhnen 2002; Lech 1998; Leube 2002; Meskell 1998; Oestigaard 2002; Reid 2002; Silbermann 1982, 1989; Steuer 2001; Veit 1989.
2. Arnold 1990: 465, 1998: 243; Diaz-Andreu 1996: 48–54; Smiles 1994: 26–45.
3. Among others, Halle 2002; Halle and Schmidt 1999; Haßmann 2002a; Kuhnen 2002; Leube 2002; Steuer 2001; Veit 2002.
4. Belchem 2000; Crooke 2000; Edelstein 1992; Ellis 1998; James 1999; Kidd 1994; Smiles 1994.
5. Arnold 2002: 111; Collis 1996; Dietler 1994: 595–6; Fitzpatrick 1996; James 1999: 11, 19; Shore 1996.