

RESEARCH PAPER

# "Wild Worship of a Lost and Buried Past": Enchanted Archaeologies and the Cult of Kata, 1908–1924

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Histories of archaeology traditionally traced the progress of the modern discipline as the triumph of secular disenchanted science over pre-modern, enchanted, world-views. In this article I complicate and qualify the themes of disenchantment and enchantment in archaeological histories, presenting an analysis of how both contributed to the development of scientific theory and method in the earliest decades of the twentieth century. I examine the interlinked biographies of a group who created a joke religion called "The Cult of Kata". The self-described "Kataric Circle" included notable archaeologists Harold Peake, O.G.S. Crawford and Richard Lowe Thompson, alongside classicists, musicians, writers and performing artists. The cult highlights the connections between archaeology, theories of performance and the performing arts – in particular theatre, music, folk dance and song. "Wild worship" was linked to the consolidation of collectivities facilitating a wide variety of scientific and artistic projects whose objectives were all connected to dreams of a future utopia. The cult parodied archaeological ideas and methodologies, but also supported and expanded the development of field survey, mapping and the interpretation of archaeological distribution maps. The history of the Cult of Kata shows how taking account of the unorthodox and the interdisciplinary, the humorous and the recreational, is important within generously framed approaches to histories of the archaeological imagination. The work of the Kataric Circle is not best understood as the relentless progress of disenchanted modern science. It suggests a more complicated picture in which dynamics of enchantment and disenchantment stimulate and discipline the imagination simultaneously. I conclude with a reexamination of the politics of an emphasis on playfulness and enchantment.

Socialism, said Oscar Wilde, is a female capable of bewitching people by various means. Some she captivated through their "hatred of injustice", others by "faith in the future", others by "love of art", lastly were those fascinated through their "wild worship of a lost and buried past".<sup>1</sup> It is Wilde's last admirers of socialism, men and women whose ardour for socialism sprang from their obsession with buried pasts, who are the subjects of this article. There were many at the end of the nineteenth- and early twentieth century for whom the archaeological imagination was intimately connected with a potent combination of alternative spirituality and utopian politics (Hutton 2001, Stout 2008). Socialism, feminism and sex radicalism were each connected to visions of the past, informed by Ruskinian medievalism, the Arts and Crafts, Guild Socialism and the first folk revival (Livesey 2007, Boyes 2010). Individuals performed their devotion to the religion of socialism through vegetarianism, sandal-wearing, rational dress, outdoor living, sexual experimentation and alternative spirituality (Yeo 1977, Rowbotham 2008). "Wild worship" enchanted the modern world, conjuring utopia through collisions

between past and present, exotic and everyday, primitive and futuristic.

In this paper I examine the interlinked biographies of a group of friends who created and performed what they described as the "Cult of Kata" from 1908 to the mid-1920s. I use this analysis to reconsider the theme of enchantment in relation to archaeology and its histories. The Cult of Kata was, as Hauser has put it, "only partly a joke" (Hauser 2008: 10) binding together an intimate in-crowd including archaeologists Harold Peake, O.G.S. Crawford and Richard Lowe Thompson. Cult members had a wide range of interests, especially in the arts, music, performance, feminism and creative writing, and archaeology was harnessed to the promotion of activities that members believed would lead to spiritual enlightenment, artistic innovation, and social renewal.

The "Cult of Kata" is known today largely through letters kept by O.G.S. Crawford (see Barber, this volume) and was first identified by Kitty Hauser when she opened boxes Crawford left to the Bodleian Library marked "not to be opened until the year 2000" (Hauser 2007, 2008). Hauser outlined "a sort of pagan cult ... described obscurely as the 'Kataric Circle'" (2008: 10) that bound the young Crawford together with a friendship group that was to shape the course of his intellectual life. This paper builds on work by Hauser (2008: 10–11) and Barber (see this volume), and

puts material from Crawford's archives alongside archives associated with other members of the Kataric circle.<sup>2</sup> The Cult of Kata shows how friendship groups contributed to processes of disciplinary formation in the Edwardian period (see also Thornton 2011, 2015), connecting histories of archaeology to histories of arts and culture more broadly (Finn 2004, 2006, Duesterberg 2015). Participants in the "Kataric Circle" shared social contacts with significant figures in culture and progressive politics including editor of the influential 'New Age' magazine, Alfred Orage, suffragettes Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence and Constance Lytton, pioneer of the folk revival, Mary Neal, sociologist Victor Branford and "eutopian visionary" Patrick Geddes. Approaching the Kataric Circle as a group, I investigate the place of enchantment in the production of archaeological knowledge at the beginning of the twentieth century.

I begin with brief discussion of the theme of enchantment in archaeological histories. I seek to complicate and qualify the traditional Weberian notion that the history of archaeology is best understood as a modernization process through which the world becomes progressively disenchanted. Instead I propose that the development of modern archaeology involved dynamics of disenchantment and enchantment intersecting within an interdisciplinary field that contributed to the historical formation of the archaeological imagination. I move on to consider the Kataric Circle as an example of what Sarah Cole (2003: 4) calls "the organization of intimacy" in early twentieth century life: who was inside the Kataric Circle? How did the "wild worship of a lost and buried past" facilitate building and sustaining friendships alongside intellectual and artistic careers? The next section – "Performing Enchantments" – examines the role of performance in the Cult of Kata, and the contribution of archaeological theories of performance to the performing arts, the folk revival and utopian politics. The third section – "On the Trail of the Wheel" – examines how parodies of archaeological method (particularly field survey and distribution mapping) contributed to a dynamic of enchantment and disenchantment present in the archaeological imaginary of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Finally, I return to the theme of enchantment to show how the joke religion of the Cult of Kata illustrates the importance of enchantment for archaeology, its histories and its self-understanding today.

### Enchanting Archaeologies

When all trenches are backfilled and the equipment is packed away, the final night of an excavation project is devoted to drinking and partying. A one end-of-dig party last year, I watched as archaeologists ritually incinerated "Mr Chubbs Ju Ju", tutelary deity of their excavation project. Dressed in glow sticks and hi vis they processed across the dark camp towards a huge bonfire. The site director extemporized a liturgy invoking the "Great God Make Make", casting Mr Chubbs into the flames. Yelling "Mr Chubbs, Mr Chubbs", they circled the fire, beating kitchen utensils and beer cans to improvise a soundtrack. The atavistic rave went on longer than I expected – around 10 minutes or so, by which time Mr Chubbs was

completely consumed. Although the excavation team has since dispersed, memories of Mr Chubbs Ju Ju live on; shared among friends via email and social media.

Approached analytically, the sacrifice of Mr Chubbs Ju Ju encourages us to ask questions concerning the part such activities potentially play in archaeological sociality and epistemologies: what difference did it make that these archaeologists were excavating one of Britain's most famous prehistoric ceremonial monuments? Could the primitivism of this parodic sacrifice have any relationship to how archaeologists reconstructed ritual activities in prehistory? Was it significant that the excavation project took place at a location recognized as a world centre for contemporary cultic practice? What are the contributions of ritual and enchantment to scientific inquiry? The sacrifice of Mr Chubbs was a joke. This does not necessarily lessen its usefulness as an incident that encourages us to ask questions about the circumstances in which archaeologists produce interpretations of prehistoric ritual. The analysis of joking relationships has a long pedigree including works by Henri Bergson (1914), Sigmund Freud (2002 [1905]), Radcliffe Brown (1940) and Mary Douglas (2003 [1970]) among many others. I suggest that jokes are too important not to take seriously in histories of science. It is the negligible, irrelevant and minor incidents of archaeological history that might allow us to rethink the discipline.

In this article the Cult of Kata provides an opportunity to complicate archaeology's self-understanding by undermining the traditional emphasis on disenchantment and secularization in archaeological histories. Traditionally, historians of prehistory in particular, have routinely emphasized the valiant struggle of archaeology as it hauled itself laboriously out of the mud of religious prejudice and unreason onto the high ground of rigorous field methods, rational interpretation and modern science. Archaeology, so this variety of modernization discourse had it, was opposed to various forms of pre-modern, enchanted world-view, while archaeology proper occupied the disenchanted secular high ground of neutral method and testable theory. This conception of 'modern' archaeology drew indirectly on Weber's famous idea that the modern world was the outcome of a process of secularization, intellectualization and disenchantment. Even if the man (sic) in the streetcar had less knowledge of how the streetcar worked than a "savage" knew about his tools, the modern man knew he could find out, without making recourse to "mysterious incalculable forces" (Weber 1946 [1922]: 6–7). The modern world was, in principle, open to calculation, knowable, unbewitched and disenchanted.

More recently alternative perspectives to the Weberian account of modernization as disenchantment have emerged. Bruno Latour's (1993) account of the dynamics that stabilize 'modern' science offer one such alternative to the modernization discourse of disenchantment. Latour examined the processes of purification that continually reaffirm the boundaries between modern disenchanted and pre-modern enchanted world views. He draws attention to the hybridization necessarily conjured through work of purification. At the very

moment science strives to render the world disenchanted and open to calculable rationalization, it generates new mysteries, new unknowns, effectively performing its own enchantments – we have never been 'modern' in the sense the modernization discourse of disenchantment proposes. Philosophers and historians of science have shown how the forms taken by modern scientific enchantments incorporate religious, folkloric and poetic inheritances (e.g. Bennett 2001, Martin 2011). From this standpoint the modern can be seen as an ongoing dynamic continually requiring particular kinds of work, rather than a definite and finally accomplished historical project (Wickstead 2013). We have never been disenchanted, because the project of disenchantment itself generates new spells with which to bewitch us.

The theme of enchantment has become particularly important in histories of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries over the last two decades. The fin de siècle cooked up a potent brew of Nietzschean notions of the will, Emersonian transcendentalism, theosophy, spiritualism and psychoanalysis (Eagleton 1995, Owen 2004). This potion intoxicated intellectuals, artists and scientists of the 1890s into the 1920s (Rowbotham 2008, Steele 1990). Many individuals sought the dawning of a New Age uniting renewed spiritual consciousness with utopian social reform (Yeo 1977). At the same time the arts and literature witnessed a 'big bang' of imaginary worlds, effectively inventing what we now call virtual realities (Saler 2012). Through richly imagined alternative worlds, such as those of detective fiction, science fiction and fantasy novels, moderns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could experience alternative truths while retaining consciousness of the constructed, artificial, status of such worlds and truths. Modernist art and literature offered reflexive approaches drawing attention to the artificiality of artistic and literary forms. These developments can be seen as encouraging self-reflexivity and the exercise of a "double consciousness" around enchantment and disenchantment. Moderns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were equipped to "embrace complementarities, to be capable of living simultaneously in multiple worlds without experiencing cognitive dissonance" to be enchanted and also disenchanted in the same moment (Saler 2012: 19).

Michael Saler offers an analysis of the dynamics of enchantment and disenchantment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century imaginary that makes an interesting parallel with Latour's analysis of purification in modern science. In his history of literary virtual realities Saler (2012: 18) observes "a specifically modern enchantment that can be defined as one that enchants and disenchants simultaneously: a disenchanted enchantment". Late nineteenth and early twentieth century fantasy worlds were not opposed to rationality, he observes. On the contrary they were highly 'objective', richly imagined and invested with the realistic impedimenta of maps, languages, histories and archaeologies. To inhabit virtual worlds fully without rejecting modernity's central tenets, moderns allowed themselves to be enchanted via the 'disenchanted' methods of modern geography, philology and archaeology, and

to be captivated by alternative times and places without betraying their modern status. Although Saler is primarily concerned with fictional worlds, his dynamics of "disenchanted enchantment" offers an approach to the history of science that does not neglect the other side of Latour's purification process, but that allows for the hybridization of enchantment and disenchantment.

Dynamics of "disenchanted enchantment" offer approaches to archaeological fieldwork that can incorporate seemingly nonsensical and peripheral events like the sacrifice of Mr Chubbs Ju Ju and integrate them into histories of the discipline. In this paper I focus on a group of people – the Kataric Circle – for whom the project of imagining prehistory was not purely a process of disenchantment. Members of the Kataric Circle, I argue, approached the past in ways that might be better characterized as producing dynamics of disenchantment and enchantment. The Cult of Kata was a fictional religion that spoofed the 'disenchanted' methods of modern archaeology through performances that ritually enchanted them, and that used prehistory as a resource to comment self-reflexively and ironically on modern archaeology, the modern world and its politics. Furthermore, I will argue, these dynamics are not only pertinent to the Cult of Kata – but have some relevance to how we might approach the history of archaeology and its politics in the present.

### **The Kataric Circle: Friendship, Politics and the Religion of the Joke**

"Perhaps the biggest mistake one can make in conceptualising friendship is to assume that it is a private, voluntary relation, governed by personal sentiment and easy communion. It is not. Like any complex social relationship, friendship has its own conventions and institutional affinities ... and it is shot through with social meaning" (Cole 2003: 4).

The Kataric Circle was formed in a period when British life was distinguished by its clubability, and provides an example of the ways in which archaeology was formed by a changing "organization of intimacy" at this time. Jose Harris (1994: 220) has observed that, in the late nineteenth century, the majority of the British adult population belonged to between five and six voluntary associations; in France and Germany participation was both smaller and organized differently. Edwardian Britain was characterized by a culture of collectives ranging "from idealistic and often utopian cults, friendship groups, brotherhoods, fellowships and the like, through scientific, philosophical and literary societies, savings clubs and co-operatives, to occupational associations such as trade unions" (Cottingham, forthcoming). The nineteenth century had witnessed the rise of the artistic Brotherhood (the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood one among many examples). These artistic and counter-cultural collectivities were often committed to visions of long ago: "Aiming for a 'better tomorrow', and promising an enlightened future, the brotherhoods took their vision from an idealised past" (Morowitz and Vaughan

2000: 2). Medievalism, monasticism, chivalry, and the cult of saints were mobilised in an effort to provide an alternative economic, social and political basis for cultural production, opposed to what many saw as the rampant commercialism of mainstream society.

The Kataric Circle formed around the home of Charlotte (Carli) and Harold Peake – Westbrook House, Boxford. "The very type of the Edwardian Bohemian Intelligensia", the Peakes were, "comfortably off ... spurned organized religion, wore sandals and went in for vegetarianism, Japanese art, the resuscitation of folk rituals and the reorganization of mass society" (Hauser 2008: 10). Life at Boxford was "unconventional", and for its many younger visitors it offered a thrilling "glimpse of new, strange interests and people ... entirely different from anything we had known hitherto" (Toye 1948: 115). The whole "new set of values" and "emancipation from convention" at Boxford

made it a "second home" for many guests, in particular the young (ibid). "The house was a centre of light and learning ... with its rehearsals for village plays and pageants, its many committees and charities" (Fleure in Peake and Fleure 1956: iii). It fostered an atmosphere of conviviality, conversation and humour: "many younger workers ... came for refreshment from the wit and wisdom that was always generously at our disposal in walks up and down the beautiful garden or talks over the wood fire in the open hearth" (ibid).

Carli Peake (nicknamed the "Missus", **Figure 1**) was born Charlotte Bayliff in 1862. Her family were well connected (her maternal grandfather was Conservative prime minister, Robert Peel), although, her sister pointed out, they did not *feel* well off, experiencing straitened circumstances due to her father's ill health (Peel 2011 [1933]). Carli's father, Captain R.L. Bayliff, wrote plays,<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 1:** Crawford's photograph of Carli Peake at Harold and Crawford's excavation campsite (aka the "Kataric Camp") at Botley Copse, 1910. © OGS Crawford photographic archive Institute of Archaeology Oxford.



encouraging his daughter's early interest in performing and writing for the stage. The comedietta "Our Hated Rival" – jointly authored by father and daughter – was staged at the Theatre Royal Richmond in 1891. She drew well from childhood and trained at Bristol Art School. By the 1890s, she was practising as an artist at the heart of the Aesthetic movement, in the Chelsea studio of Charles Furse. A contributor to *The Yellow Book*, Furse was one of Britain's leading portraitists; William Rothenstein (cited in McConkey 2009) recalled his studio "full of generals, admirals, distinguished and admiring ladies, painters and poets; while he strode up and down, working away with huge brushes and boisterous energy".

Carli was a paid professional illustrator and writer, working for magazines including *The Queen* (now known as *Harpers Bazaar*).<sup>4</sup> Around this time she undertook social work among the London poor (a not uncommon activity among radical women of the period, see Livesey 2007: chapter 2). Apprenticed to a midwife, she witnessed terrible poverty and learnt to nurse (Peel 2011 [1933] : 83). She continued to work after her marriage in 1897 as novelist, playwright and illustrator and is listed in the 1901 census as "employed on her own account" (Peake and Kimura 1907–8, Peake 1921, 1923). "Big in every way, artistically, intellectually, and physically", she continued to nurse among the ordinary people of Boxford in later life. She was "utterly without affectation and snobbery, a writer of beautiful plays and novels, and possessed of a nature overflowing with generosity" (Sharwood Smith 1935: 52).

Carli's younger husband, Harold Peake, was; "a man of rare gifts, possessed of the most acute and penetrating intellect that I have ever encountered, a trained observer and a remorseless analyst of humbug and pretentiousness" (Sharwood Smith 1935: 52). "An authority of the first rank on the early history of mankind" (*ibid.*), Harold was a member of the Council of the Society of Antiquaries of London, President and Huxley Medalist of the Royal Anthropological Institute, and President of the Anthropological Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (Fleure in Peake and Fleure 1956: v). Among his many publications was the important 10 volume "Corridors of Time" series – an overview of world prehistory from "the dawn of human life to the periods when written ideas and abstract thought spread far and wide" which Peake wrote with his friend H. J. Fleure (1927a, 1927b, 1927c, 1927d, 1928, 1929, 1931, 1933, 1936, 1956). "Being possessed of leisure and competence" (his marriage certificate listed him as "gentleman"), Harold "gave up [his] leisured ease to the service of the community" (Sharwood Smith *ibid.*). He was honorary curator of Newbury Museum, head of Berkshire Education Committee and governor of Newbury Grammar School. Harold's civic mission should not be separated from his archaeological interests: projects of social reform and archaeological scholarship were closely intertwined for the Peakes and their circle.

Friends recalled how Harold Peake liked to joke (Sharwood Smith 1935: 52–4, Piggott, 1946, Toye 1948: 53–4, Fleure in Peake and Fleure 1956: iii–v). Stuart

Piggott remembered him "particularly in conversation, making some archaeological point with a sly witticism as he stood lighting his pipe and giving one a humorous side-long glance..." (Piggott, 1946: 7). "He could be extremely witty and even ribald in a decorous kind of way", observed Francis Toye, "I admired him then as I admire him still for getting a great deal out of life with the expenditure of very little money and no concession whatever to fashion, prejudice, or snobbery" (1948: 53). Spending years cultivating an elaborate joke religion was in keeping with Harold's disposition. Carli, with her theatricality and irreverence, was the ideal partner in pushing this joke to its limits.

Two younger visitors who went on to work in archaeology were drawn into the Kataric circle: O.G.S. Crawford (nicknamed "Mog") and Richard Lowe Thompson ("Pilgrim"). The Kataric Circle was to set the direction of O.G.S. Crawford's archaeological career (Hauser 2008: 9–10); previous writers have described Harold as Crawford's "surrogate father" (Van Tilburg 2005: 467). Despite this, years later, Crawford was to distance himself from the archaeological theories espoused by the Cult of Kata, although his publications indicate he supported these ideas during his years in the Kataric Circle (Crawford 1912, 1913 cf Crawford 1955). The life of Richard Lowe Thompson has been less explored than that of Crawford (**Figure 2**). Both Lowe Thompson and Crawford studied for the Geography diploma at Oxford, Crawford being encouraged to do so by Harold (Hauser 2008: 9). However, Lowe Thompson would develop a very different archaeology to Crawford's. While Crawford was to pursue the tenets of regionalism, geography and distribution mapping espoused by Harold, dropping some of Harold's free-wheeling eclecticism. Lowe Thompson dropped the former and pursued the latter. Lowe Thompson published two unusual and individual books in the 'Psychic Miniatures General Series' (authors included Bronislaw Malinowski, H. J. Massingham, A. L. Rowse, C.K. Ogden among others). Texts in this series were positioned as studies in psychology. Lowe Thompson's work (1926, 1929) exemplifies the contribution archaeological theory made to the developing science of psychology in the early twentieth century. Although Crawford is now acclaimed as one of archaeology's "founding fathers", Lowe Thompson's work has disappeared into relative obscurity. It was left to Crawford to select and preserve Lowe Thompson's scandalous, vividly written, and funny letters after Lowe Thompson's death.<sup>5</sup> Despite their different approaches, the archaeological research of both drew on ideas developed through participation the Cult of Kata. Lowe Thompson drew inspiration from authors he could have encountered through the Kataric Circle, either directly or as friends of friends. Crawford's early fieldwork was materially advanced through the labour of cult members.

Creating the liturgy, staging the rites and building the temples (see below) of Kata demanded considerable effort. This work fused the archaeological expertise of Harold, Crawford and Lowe Thompson with the theatrical expertise of Carli and Harold's second cousins – the Toyes: Geoffrey and Francis with their sister, Eleanor. In 1908,



**Figure 2:** Richard Lowe Thompson, with his friend Mary Neal (whom he described as “everything-a-good-aunt-should-be”<sup>6</sup>), at the “Kataric Camp” at Harold and Crawford’s 1910 excavation at Botley Copse. © OGS Crawford photographic archive Institute of Archaeology Oxford.

nineteen-year-old Geoffrey Toye was just beginning his studies at the Royal College of Music. He was to go on to a significant career as conductor, composer and musical director of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, Sadler's Wells and the Royal Opera, Covent Garden. Before he enlisted in 1914, Geoffrey had already conducted Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird* at the Haymarket, the premiere of George Bernard Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*, and the first performance of Ralph Vaughan Williams' *London Symphony* (Jacobs, 2007). Geoffrey's older brother, Francis, was also musical, but was to pursue a career as a novelist, music critic and writer (Colles and Porter, 2007). During his *Cult of Kata* years, Francis, like his brother, was composing and performing, as well as writing his novel 'Diana and Two Symphonies' (Toye 1913). The main idea of the novel – “attractive in [the] days of trade unionism”<sup>7</sup> – was the formation of a “National Association of Musicians” which would put an end to antagonism between musicians and critics and “help on the young English composer instead of habitually crushing him”. The National Association would publish an independent musical paper (similar to the *Revue Musicale* published by the *Société Internationale de Musique* in Paris), and build a club-house, open to the professional and the “serious-minded dilettanti” alike, with bedrooms and rehearsal spaces that would encourage solidarity and interchange among artists and

intellectuals. Parallel socialist ambitions were played for comedic effect in Geoffrey Toye's operetta *The Red Pen* (first BBC broadcast, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1925, libretto by A.P. Herbert) in which a union of poets agitates to nationalize, leading to the creation of a “Ministry of Verse” (Toye and Herbert 1927).

Politics, performance and the resurrection of a pagan past were closely intertwined for members of the Kataric Circle. The folk revivalist Mary Neal was closely associated with the circle (see **Figure 2**), visiting the “Kataric” excavations at Botley Copse and corresponding with Crawford and Lowe Thompson. A suffragette and socialist, Mary Neal took the minutes at the first meeting of the Women's Social and Political Union. She lived with and was passionately devoted to Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence (who also visited the Peakes). Friends and visitors to their house included George Lansbury, Edward Carpenter and Ramsey MacDonald. Neal, Pethick-Lawrence and Constance Lytton were jailed for suffrage activism in 1909. Like her friend Carli, Neal had felt compelled to work among the poor of “outcast London” (Mearns 1883, cited in Neal 1937–9), in the late nineteenth century. She and Pethick-Lawrence sought a “new way of social work” based around inter-class solidarity, joyful performance and spiritual renewal (Neal 1937–9: 73). In 1905, Neal began devising folk dance performances at a social club



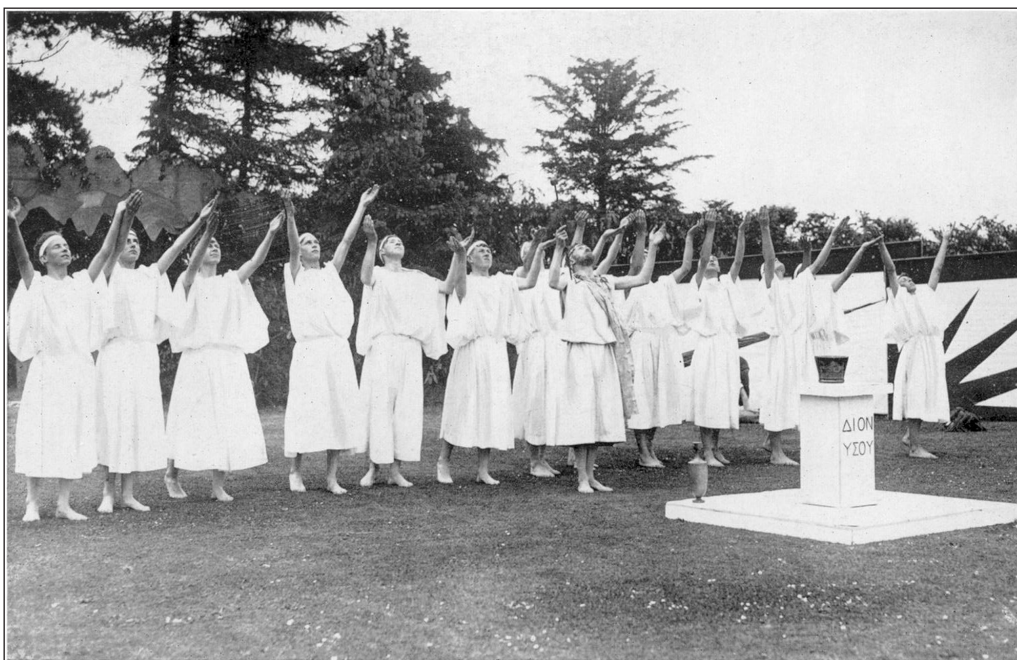
she and Pethick-Lawrence founded for working class girls. Neal contacted Cecil Sharp for musical advice, and was soon engaged in fieldwork seeking out what she regarded as the "survivals" of ancient folk dance (Neal 1937–9, Boyes 2010). Constance Lytton played piano for several of Neal's performances. Although considerable collections of folk music had been made in the late nineteenth century, (including collections made by figures working in archaeology, such as Sabine Baring Gould) relatively little attention had been paid to dance and performance before Neal's work. Her most influential contribution was to "revive" what she saw as "ancient" performances, initiating folk dancing events across Britain, Ireland and in the USA (Boyes 2010).

It is perhaps difficult to appreciate today how radical, progressive and fashionable folk dance was in the early twentieth century. In 1911, Neal's "National Folk Dancing" was officially recognized by the Board of Education as a suitable part of every child's schooling and by 1919 her "dream was reality": "organized by Clergy, Employers of Labour, School Teachers, and County Ladies and Social Workers, the children are dancing and young men and girls who have left school and are at work have accepted the Folk dances as the basis of their recreation" (Neal c.1919: p. no). Neal's folk dance revival drew on her theories of the prehistoric past (Neal, Carey and Toye 1910, 1911–12). Theory and practice, researching the past and reviving it, formed a locus of common effort, so that, for the Kataric circle, archaeology and the performing arts were closely related.

Celebrities and intellectuals were drawn to the Peake's home and the periphery of the Kataric Circle. From the presence of these individuals something of the strength of the circle as a nexus in within a larger social network can be adduced. Among the celebrities associated with

Boxford were the actress Ina Pelly (see **Figure 3**), celebrity chef, author and restaurateur, Marcel Boulestin, and Hippisley Cox, who combined an interest in archaeology with running the theatrical restaurant Romano's – a famous thespian haunt on the Strand. The intellectual climate was influenced the urban planner Patrick Geddes and his friend the sociologist Victor Branford. By 1900 Geddes was "already becoming something of a celebrity" (Scott and Bromley 2013: 111); he had created his famous Outlook Tower and was committed to numerous utopian projects for the transformation of universities and museums and the spiritual renewal of society. Harold and H. J. Fleure were to work closely with Branford and Geddes, planning a book with Branford's wife, Sybella Branford entitled "The Land and its People: A Study in Regional Development" (Scott and Bromley 2013; 67). Peake and Fleure both contributed books to Branford's "The Making of the Future" Series, Fleure on 'Human Geography in Western Europe' and Peake on 'The English Village' (Fleure 1918, Peake 1922a). Both books used archaeology (and racial anthropology) to formulate geographical principles that could be applied to the solution of contemporary social ills.

Visitors to Boxford enjoyed a climate skeptical towards established religion. That Carli and Harold did not go to church "will sound tame enough to the modern reader", but to Boxford's young guests, "it seemed daring, not to say dashing in the extreme. All the people we knew went to church as a matter of course" (Toye 1948: 53). Agnosticism did not mean the Peakes were not interested in Christianity – far from it. Around the turn of the century, the Bible was a lively wellspring from which anthropology, archaeology, philology and folklore could all draw and into which each might plunge at any moment. The comparative method re-contextualized



**Figure 3:** The Frogs, 1932: "All plays were acted on the Headmasters lawn, the palace, though it appears to be solid enough, was made of plywood. The cost of the whole performance was very little" (From Anon, 1965: plate CCLXV).

Christian tradition within a vastly expanded religious landscape, and at a time of growing popular fascination with Eastern and alternative religions, as well as with spiritualism, occult and hermetic orders and Theosophy (Owen, 2004). The Peakes' circle included figures that interacted with Annie Besant and other Theosophists, with Isreal Zangwill and the Zionists, and with Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, and other Hindu visionaries (Scott and Bromley 2013: 13). Alice Osmond (who published "A Study of Correspondences" in *The Theosophist* (Osmond 1920) visited Boxford in 1918.<sup>8</sup> Particularly important in expanding debates around alternative spirituality, theosophy and the history of religion was the magazine *The New Age*. Alfred Orage, its editor, visited Boxford at the time of a "Pan-Kataric gathering", possibly participating in the ritual.<sup>9</sup> Orage was to resign his editorship to study with George Gurdjieff, eventually becoming a Swedenborgian (Steele 1990). The Cult of Kata celebrated the Peake's enthusiasm for religious diversity – as one "Kataric proverb" stated, "It takes all sorts of Gods to make a world".<sup>10</sup>

Britain's established church, with its special relationship to government and the legal system, was a major presence in institutions central to middle and upper class life, including schools, the military and most universities. Hence the offering of creative alternatives to and unorthodox perspectives on Anglican tradition was not without controversy. One member of the Kataric Circle – Edward Sharwood Smith – found himself in hot water over revolutionary innovations introduced at Newbury Grammar School while he was Headmaster (and Harold on the Board of Governors). Sharwood Smith was a Classics educator (Sharwood Smith 1897, 1918) and poet (e.g. 1899) for whom knowledge of ancient religions led onto disquiet about how the doctrines of the Church had become "a formal and legalistic code, not only unsuitable for a growing world, but the complete antithesis of the standpoint of the Founder of Christianity" (1935: 81). The Board of Education required Sharwood Smith's school to provide "instruction in the Christian faith", and hold a daily assembly (which most schools organized as a conventional Anglican service). Sharwood Smith's autobiography, *The Faith of a Schoolmaster* (1935), records his highly unconventional service, in which schoolboys, elected by the student body, were allowed "absolute freedom of choice" in the texts they read out. Readings included excerpts from the bible, but also John Ruskin, Edward Carpenter, Lao-tse, and the dialogues of Plato. "No censorship was exercised over the passages chosen" (1935: 88). The school hymn book included the poetry of Browning, Tennyson, Emerson and Christina Rossetti (ibid: 89). Perhaps unsurprisingly there was some opposition from local clergy, as well as a "small section of the town population which combined a fervid, almost perfervid patriotism, and a devotion to the Establishment with a rooted objection to change in any shape or form" (ibid: 70). Nonetheless, this, and other wide-ranging reforms, transformed the school into a beacon of Sharwood Smith and Peake's progressive educational theories (Scott and Bromley 2013).

Like the sacrifice of Mr Chubbs Ju Ju, the Cult of Kata bound together a friendship group (see Bergson 1914, on laughter and solidarity). It did so in a period when clubs and friendship groups were a significant aspect of the organization of intimacy, forming what Sarah Cole describes as a "bridging structure" mediating between institutions (such as the military, the established church, schools, and universities) and individuals (2004: 3). Yet the organisation of intimacy in the Kataric Circle was both embedded within and hostile to such institutions. While the older members – the Peakes, Mary Neal and Sharwood Smith – assumed "respectable" middle class positions, regulating the lives of the young and the working classes, they also aspired to flamboyant unconventionality. Creating a joke religion allowed the Kataric Circle to express ambivalence towards the perceived norms of wider society, including those of the established church ("All jokes have [a] subversive effect on the dominant structure of ideas" (Douglas, 2003: 150). Like the nineteenth century artistic brotherhoods, or Francis Toye's National Association of Musicians, the Kataric Circle offered a solidarity that 'revived' the past in opposition to the bourgeois present, while at the same time advancing its members' creative projects and careers in that present. For the Kataric Circle, as for many other friendship groups of the period, friendship became a means of negotiating ambivalence towards the institutions that imposed middle-class respectability, imperialism, mass culture, and intellectual and artistic conformism while at the same time claiming a stake within such institutions. For the younger members of the Cult of Kata – Crawford, Lowe Thompson and the Toyes – celebrated individuals offered, not only a taste of glamour (Toye 1948: 117), but also access to a network of 'weak ties' that could help them advance their careers (Granovetter 1973, Thornton 2015). In their late teens and early twenties, the career paths open to these young men were neither easy nor (in the case of archaeology) well-trodden. The Kataric Circle lay at the intersection of many different paths, allowing its members to exploit a flexible range of potential contacts and networks.

### Performing Enchantments

However debauched or uproarious, "Pan-Katarics" were staged performances with distinct formalities and settings. The customary order of service involved drinking (some meetings were a "low Punch" – an alcoholic variation on the High Tea) hymns, prayers, proverbs and other elements of liturgical poetry and performance; sometimes Kata would be invoked by lighting fires<sup>11</sup> or walking in circles. Specially constructed stage sets were produced, as least partly for the purposes of staging ritual performances. These took the form of megaliths and/or incorporated sarsen stones. Kataric megaliths were built in at least two locations: In the "natural theatre" constructed in woods near the Peakes' home where relocated sarsen stones were "used as an altar" (Toye 1948: 115–121) and at Saint-Jacut-de-la-Mer, Brittany, where the Toyes regularly holidayed with friends and family. At Saint-Jacut "the ritual was ... more defined still. We invented a routine, a convention to govern our daily activities; we invented cults and



pilgrimages; we invented place-names now so intertwined with the genuine, local names that a newcomer often cannot disentangle one from the other". Among the rocks and beaches:

"...the most important was a rock not quite so big perhaps as Westminster Abbey, which has received the curious appellation of Kata. This is due to its having on the summit a miniature imitation of a prehistoric temple laboriously constructed in the course of the years in honour of our tutelary goddess of fine weather, a kind of illegitimate and neo-paganized St Catherine thus styled. Everybody who went to Saint-Jacut in our company was expected to place a stone on the stone circle, which, together with the central dolmen, is now quite imposing" (ibid).

Letters between Carli and Crawford imply the Cult of Kata originated in a parody of Peake and Crawford's theories concerning chapels dedicated to St Catherine, and their distribution with respect to the sea, trade routes, megaliths and bronze implements. As the theory proliferated, so the cult grew more complex, with the addition of St Swithin (whom Harold believed to be a rain deity) as an evil counterpart to Kata, associated with bad weather and depression:

"Francis, Geoff & Eleanor Toye came down – madness of Kata fell upon us. Result a Kataric litany with a new tune & two hymns ("Lead, blinding tight"). Then came your gargoyle which was unanimously recognised as Swithin. He is truly delightful & ... overlies the seat of honour in the middle of the mantel-piece. One night overcome by weakness I offered incense to him & saw his gasp of agony turned to a self complacent leer. Much fear have I that Kata will forsake me..."<sup>12</sup>

Peake and Crawford believed that prehistoric megaliths tended to be found in places later dedicated to St Catherine, and that St Catherine was therefore a 'survival' of an earlier deity worshipped at these sites. The megaliths and performances of the Kataric Circle were therefore an ironic recapitulation and revival of what some members of the circle believed to be the archaeologically documented past. The Cult of Kata was a performance of the primitive.

Theories of theatre and performance had a presence in late nineteenth- and early twentieth century archaeology that is, perhaps, difficult to appreciate today (although see Shanks and Pearson 2001). In this period performance, ancient theatre and ritual were central to the work of key theorists including Jane Ellen Harrison, James Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists. Investigating folk and primitive performances offered important evidence for prehistoric 'survivals'. Several members of the Kataric Circle investigated folk performances in this way. In 1903 Carli Peake published an account of Children's Games which previous writers had pointed out "may in time serve to throw some light upon the social and religious observances of

our ancestors in the remote past" (1903: 103). She discovered several variants including courtship games, funeral games, sportsmanship games and robbing games, which she suggested might be survivals of "religious ceremonial or war dance after marriage by capture" (1903: 104).

Research for Mary Neal's folk revival involved Neal and Geoffry Toye in an "archaeology of folk dances" based around the fieldwork of folk collecting (Neal, Carey and Toye 1910, 1911–12). Morris dancing, Neal believed "had a religious origin", and the fact that dances were often arranged in circles indicated they were "part of a ceremonial connected with the worship of the sun" (1911: xii). She discerned survivals from ancient rites of human sacrifice, worship of horned gods, and phallic worship in folk dance traditions (see also Piggott 1929) and readily set about reviving these within a renewed art of "National Joy".

In the first decades of the twentieth century the imaginary origins of performance were closely bound up with interpretations of Ancient Greek drama and the Athenian Dionysia (Thornton, 2011). When Mary Neal set out her vision for "The Theatre of my Dreams" she saw Jane Ellen Harrison's (1913) image of Ancient Greek theatre as "a fine basis for the dream theatre of the future, the foundations of which are already laid in the already accomplished revival of folk dancing." (Neal 1919: 2). "There is a curious link", she continued, "between these Greek ceremonies and our own times"; Greek drama and ritual included items that Neal observed in English Folk tradition – such as the worship of bulls ("horned gods") an animal Neal linked to the cult of Dionysos. Like Greek drama, the theatre of Mary Neal's dreams would perform religious ceremonial as well as plays; performances would be timed around cosmic festivals and no one would pay for a ticket. Another member of the Kataric Circle, schoolmaster and classics scholar, Edward Sharwood Smith, was a significant figure in promoting Classical Greek, including drama, outside the public schools, publishing books that popularized Greek texts (Sharwood Smith 1898, 1918). He had a personal link with the Cambridge Ritualists, and was proposed for election to the council of the Classical Association by Gilbert Murray (Murray 1919). From at least 1926, Sharwood Smith staged the tragedies of Euripides and comedies of Aristophanes in English translation at Newbury. The productions were out of doors and included Sharwood Smith's own adaptations, such as changing Greek placenames to local ones (**Figure 3**, Anon. 1965).

The Kataric circle also wrote and performed entirely new plays in which the prehistoric past was an important theme. From 1905 Carli Peake began writing a series of plays known as The Boxford Pastoral Masques. The Boxford Masques fictionalized the prehistoric, primitive, folkloric and mythical. In 'The Rivers' (c.1915a), a dragonfly "shows, by a spell, a vision of Boxford in ancient days":

"DRAGONFLY: Forget a hundred thousand years,  
Forget all fruit of war and tears;  
Forget the Church, forget the mill,  
Forget the plough upon the hill;  
Roll back, ye centuries, in haste,

And show the wild primeval waste,  
 Where savage folk must hunt their food,  
 With flint tipped spear and arrow rude;  
 Show us the men of old and show  
 Their dreadful, scaly, dragon foe.  
 Appear! Appear! Appear!"

The dragonfly's incantation calls forth a cast including "a Palaeolithic Pigmy, and a Primitive Boxfordian, His wife, children and members of his Tribe". The Boxford Masques took place every year on the last Wednesday in July until imminent war, the last twentieth century performance being the revived 'Well in the Wood' in

1913 (Peake 1913, c.1915a, c.1915b, c.1915c). Since the turn of this century the Boxford Masques have been revived and the next performance is currently under production.<sup>13</sup>

The Masques achieved fame; "people came from all parts to see them, and the *Times* honoured them with at least two notices" (Toye 1948: 115, Anon: 1909). Celebrity chef, Marcel Boulestin "who excelled at comic miming" was called upon to play the part of a "still speechless prehistoric man" (ibid) and famous actress Ina Pelly took a starring role (**Figure 4**). Like Neal's folk dancing (which began as roughly the same time), the Boxford masques were participatory performances, casting working class



**Figure 4:** Actor, dancer and (later) film actress Ina Pelly, photographed in costume for the Boxford Masques before 1913. © West Berkshire Archives.

alongside middle class and professional performers and staged out of doors. "There was, at the time", Francis Toye noted, "nothing like them" (1948: 115–121, see also Flint 1909b). Earlier performances were set to music by Gluck, but later masques had a score specially composed by Geoffrey and Francis Toye. The masques gave Geoffrey Toye his first performances, propelling him into his musical career. The Masques – like Carli Peake's translations of Japanese poetry – were promoted by Alfred Orage's influential journal "The New Age", Flint 1908, 1909a, 1909b). F.S. Flint, poetry reviewer for *The New Age*, contributed to the climate in which the earliest literary modernism would germinate around 1910. Flint was impressed by Carli Peake's experiments with Japanese poetry (although he would have preferred her not to make the verses rhyme!) (Peake and Kimura 1907–8, Flint, 1908) and attended performances of the Boxford Masques.<sup>14</sup> Flint's review of *The Well in the Wood* grouped Carli Peake with Ezra Pound as the two poets of the coming age who could kill "the dragon of inertia and stupidity which has the world in its power" (1909b: 102).

It is not difficult to draw parallels between the imaginative themes of Carli's fiction and the Cult of Kata. Just as the Cult centred around a female deity, the Masques abound in strong female leads, with women cast as Enchantresses, 'Lady of the Year', Witch Mother or Great Mother for example. Just as the Kataric circle held Kata responsible for favourable weather (and St Swithin for bad), so the masques often feature natural forces and the drama of the seasons. The Masque entitled 'The Crowning of the Year' is a drama of vegetable rebirth with shades of Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1922), which plays out around the figure of the "Lady of the Year" (C. Peake, n.d.). These themes are continued in Carli Peake's novels (1921, 1923), particularly 'Pagan Corner' (1923), a story of witchcraft featuring a young enchantress choosing to live as a single mother. The Boxford Masques dramatized theories of performance and the primitive that could be found in late nineteenth and early twentieth century anthropology, folklore and archaeology. It is instructive to find *Pagan Corner* cited as a scholarly source in archaeological publications (Grinsell 1939: 137).

For the Kataric Circle performance was not merely recreational amusement. As well as being fun, it was serious fun, and could also be understood as a political project that looked forward towards a utopian future. For some utopians masques and pageants offered a participatory vehicle through which the populace could be enjoined to reenact and recapitulate elements of local history in ways that enabled them to enact and envision their futures. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century witnessed an explosion of 'pageantitis' across Britain (Bartie et al forthcoming). Historical pageants reconstructed episodes from local history, and could involve thousands of members of the local community as participants and audience members.<sup>15</sup> Two key associates of the Kataric Circle – Patrick Geddes and Victor Branford – advocated a politics of performance that connecting theatre to utopian social reform. "There is an ever growing cult of life in all its protean manifestations" wrote Branford, "Old religions have

revived; new ones are emerging. New types of drama are developing in a renewed theatre" (1914: 1).

For Geddes and Branford "dramatization" was a primary medium for disseminating their messages of sociological development as well as a means through which development could be brought about through acts of spiritual renewal and revival (Scott and Bromley 2013: 58): The medieval mystery play had acted as "the People's University", Branford argued, making "History real to people and allow[ing] them to put their lives in a larger context. (1914: 147). Dramatization would lead to a revival of the medieval "miracle and masque" giving drama a contemporary role in planning the utopian future. In 1912 Geddes was involved in the staging of a "Masque of Learning" at his utopian University Hall in Edinburgh, and this was later transferred to Crosby Hall, Chelsea, where it was performed in two parts: "These dramatizations of history and the development of knowledge were seen as central to the cultural role of social members of the Geddes circle [with members of the circle] playing the parts of great historical figures and personifying larger social groups and cultural movements to depict the progress of cultural understanding and scientific knowledge" (Scott and Bromley 2013: 94).

The potential connections between theatrical performance and utopian politics for members of the Kataric Circle can be elucidated in a lecture series Geddes gave to Crawford's students when Crawford was Instructor for the Geography Diploma at Oxford.<sup>16</sup> Planning the future of cities or regions, Geddes argued, depended on elucidating their "essential historical tradition" by identifying key scenes in its "Civic Drama". This was no light matter, for "the very essence of our civilization" could be "measured by the degree to which we participate in this".<sup>17</sup> For the lecture "On Pageants" students were instructed to choose a town or city and "scheme out ... the main scenic episodes of its historic pageant". Outlining the "essential acts" of a place's "Civic Drama" would allow students to identify "the main factors in its successive developments and decline" and plan its future. Writing and staging plays and pageants was more than recreational. For associates of the Kataric Circle such as Geddes, dramatization was "significant and vital" in connecting past and present, re-enactment and enactment, history and utopia.

Far from suggesting a world from which modern science was progressively removing enchantment, members of the Kataric Circle were actively involved in projects that deliberately sought out, 'revived' and activated enchantment. As I showed in the first section of this article, the Cult of Kata created strong bonds of intimacy within the circle, allowing interdisciplinary exchanges to thrive and encouraging members to assist each other in their projects. Among the circle, many projects became shared projects. The success of archaeological fieldwork and theatrical performances depended equally on the strong networks fostered by cult membership. Exploring the performances studied, revived and created by members of the Kataric Circle suggests that the scientific and artistic imaginations were not entirely separable within their projects, instead, they overlapped and fed off one another. Scholarly



theories of performance that informed Mary Neal's folk revival, Carli Peake's Boxford Masques and Patrick Geddes' 'dramatization', were also at work in archaeology. The theory of survivals was central to the cult, which parodied Peake and Crawford's idea that the medieval cult of saints preserved elements of prehistoric ritual.<sup>18</sup> The doctrine of survivals constructed the everyday environment as an enchanted place, infused with traces of primitive magic. For the Kataric Circle the enchanted world of the primitive was immanent in their everyday surroundings. Not only in the earthworks and green roads sought on their "pilgrimages", but also in the language, material culture and habits of the 'folk' and even (as Harold joked) at Newbury racecourse. Tylor's systemization of the methods through which survivals might be identified (Tylor 1891: chapter 3) primed scholars to seek out the irrational in their contemporary surroundings, for it was only phenomena without rational explanation that could be shown to be survivals. The illogical absurd provided a route along which ancient enchantments could be pursued.<sup>19</sup> It is easy to see the appeal of this method for a group predisposed towards playfulness who sought to expose the arbitrary nature of bourgeois conventionality. For a group inclined to value 'dramatization' as a political tool, it was only a short step from identifying the survivals of ancient ritual to reviving the pagan past and devising theatrical re-enactments that might contribute towards spiritual and social renewal.

### "On the Trail of the Wheel": Enchanted Distribution Mapping

The Cult of Kata is probably the only known example of a religion founded on the methods and results of archaeological distribution mapping. Within the Kataric liturgy methods of mapping were transformed into religious manifestations known as "pilgrimages". The cult parodied the theory that the distribution of sites dedicated to St Catherine, once mapped, could be used to trace prehistoric trade routes and thereby, the spread of a megalithic religion. On 15<sup>th</sup> June 1908, Harold was helping Crawford work on a research article, concerning St Catherine as a "survival" linked to prehistoric earthworks. This would be one of Crawford's earliest research projects; an important step in his intellectual development. As far as Harold knew, there were: "no articles on St Catherine and her chapels. The idea, such as it is, is mine alone".<sup>20</sup> Harold enclosed a list of chapels as well as details of where to find lists of earthworks and references to publications he should follow up. A manuscript survives in Crawford's archive marked "written about 1910" which describes how:

"by the side of old roads, usually on hill-tops & often overlooking a harbour, there are found chapels dedicated to St Catherine ... Now the symbol of St Catherine is a wheel; and a wheel was the symbol of one of the chief Gaulish deities. It looks as if these chapels occupied a site once sacred to the Gaulish god of travellers. It is well known that the early Christian priests, acting on instructions from headquarters, often turned a pagan altar or site into a Christian one by the change of little else than a

name. The distribution of these chapels coincides to a remarkable extent with that of preh[istoric] remains indicating trade". (Crawford c.1910).

From letters between Carli Peake and Crawford it appears that it was this archaeological research that led to Crawford being portrayed as "founder" of the religion.

Field survey, conducted for the purposes of distribution mapping, became known as going on "pilgrimage" among the Kataric Circle. Going for long walks in the countryside to trace ancient earthworks was a shared enthusiasm. On one 1917 "pilgrimage" Sharwood Smith traced 6 miles of ancient road; information Harold mapped and shared with Crawford.<sup>21</sup> "Pilgrim" (aka Richard Lowe Thompson) corresponded regularly with Crawford concerning his "pilgrimages" to sites connected with St. Catherine and on other "survivals" of the Cult of St Catherine and other saints.<sup>22</sup> In the early twentieth century, walking and field observation were turning up significant new discoveries. Before aerial survey was widely applied in archaeology, field observation was key to archaeological mapping projects (Wickstead and Barber 2012, Barber this volume). Other "pilgrims" were clearly influenced by the work of the Katarics: the question of whether St Catherine "succeeded to an old Celtic god of the hill-tops, who also had a wheel associated with his worship, and was the patron saint of travellers and seamen" was, J. P. Williams-Freeman noted, a "most interesting question" (1915: 201–2). The romance of archaeological 'pilgrimages' lay behind the popular success of Hippisley Cox's *Green Roads of England* (1914). A friend to the Kataric Circle, Hippisley Cox popularized the techniques of field observation, turning the archaeological distribution map into an itinerary for walkers and popularizing walking routes such as the Ridgeway. The book proved hugely successful, going to six editions between 1914 and 1948. A national club – The Green Roads Society – was formed for sharing information and mapping the 'ancient' ways.

Mining the cult of saints for "survivals" was a common theme underpinning the work of the Kataric Circle and its associates. "The whole question of saints and pagan deities is a large one", wrote Harold to Crawford in 1908, rolling off a long list of saints who succeeded pagan gods, including St. Sebastian, St Christopher, St Margaret, St Martha, St Leonard, and St Michael: "St Swithin I believe to be a rain deity ... But this list could be extended *ad infinitum*, as also the association of Christian festivals with Pagan feasts".<sup>23</sup> (Peake 1919). Margaret Murray's study of *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921) argued that the devil emerged from Christian suppression of a pagan horned god, in which repressed traces of prehistoric deity survived. Murray's work stimulated an interest in horned deities among the Kataric Circle and its associates. Harold Peake supplemented Murray's idea by finding additional examples of worship of horned gods in the Palaeolithic (Peake 1922c). The third edition of the *Esperance Morris Book* featured Berkshire morris dancers (from the county where the Peakes lived) holding a prominently horned bulls head on a stick (Neal, Toye and Carey 1910). The sociologist, Victor Branford, was also engaged in researching

the medieval cult of saints, producing "a study of social inheritance and spiritual development" focused on the prehistoric origins and historical development of the cult of St Columba (Branford 1913).

Lowe Thompson's *History of the Devil* (1929) united Murray's work on horned gods with insights from the sex radical Edward Carpenter – a personal friend of Mary Neal (Neal 1937–9). Carpenter's (1919) 'Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk' argued that homosexual and intersex people acted as prophets, priests or wizards in "primitive" societies. As well as possessing innate gifts, such individuals were constitutionally unfit for the role of warrior, and therefore turned towards the spiritual and creative. Lowe Thompson's (now almost totally overlooked) contribution to archaeology was to bring prehistory into relation with radical theories of sex and sexuality.<sup>24</sup> Lowe Thompson's work featured heavily in Stuart Piggott's investigation of medieval Mummer's plays, in which he sought a connection between Beelzebub, 'prehistoric' imagery including the Cerne Abbas giant and "the definite survival of a pre-Christian ceremony or ritual of the death of the Old Year and the rebirth of the New" (Piggott 1929: 193–4).

Archaeological distribution mapping connected the modernization of scholarly methodologies to utopian politics and planning. In 1912, Harold Peake set out an ambitious scheme for the Anthropological Survey of the British Isles, which would answer what he saw as the most crucial questions of prehistory as well as addressing "many sociological problems" (1912: 56). Peake's Survey of Britain would be organized through a structure of local units, devised by reformatting Ordnance Survey quarter sheets into system based on parishes and counties. Each local unit would have a local secretary reporting to the headquarters staff, a "body of experts in every department which we touch", with dedicated offices and library. Peake's scheme took up elements of the existing Victoria County History (VCH). Unsurprisingly, Harold was on the Committee of the Berkshire VCH, producing its first report on ancient earthworks (Peake, 1906). Yet he was critical of its outputs and organisation (Peake 1907–8). Peake's mission was, in fact, very different to the antiquarian vision of the VCH. For Peake, the past was useful because it informed the utopian project of planning a better future. Maps showing the present-day "density of the population, the economic conditions of the people and maps illustrating lunacy, poverty and crime" could be related to maps of environment, archaeology and folklore showing "the distribution of various customs". The mapping of Britain would also involve the anthropometric survey of racial characteristics "with maps illustrating head form, stature and colour" (1912: 57). Peake's enthusiasm for mapping race alongside archaeology was shared by his long-time collaborator, H.J. Fleure, who conducted anthropometric surveys of populations in Wales as well as devising racially based histories of the peoples of Europe (Fleure 1917, see Peake 1922a: chapters 3 and 4 on "The Meaning of Race" and "the Races of Europe"). The utopias of Peake and Fleure had uncomfortably eugenic implications (cf Fuller 2007 on eugenics in the work of Branford and Geddes).

Peake's regionally based scheme for reinventing archaeology around the distribution map fit within a much more ambitious project for regionally based World Governance. Peake outlined the "utopic ideas" he had or intended to write about in his plans for a "long chat" with H. G. Wells (also an associate of Branford and Geddes). The conversation took in: "The Division of England [into] provinces; the reconstruction of the countryside & the formation of larger villages; a world capital at Constantinople with a world university; a national museum for nature & history on a logical basis of arrangement".<sup>25</sup>

Only distribution mapping, Peake insisted, could prove or disprove important questions such as whether "great and rich centres of population have always arisen at those point where the greatest number of trade routes converge, and that the possession or loss of such centres has caused the rise and loss of states". A series of maps "on which are shown the principal lines that trade has followed during successive ages" including maps of "the distribution of discoveries of articles traded – bronze celts, amber, pigs of lead and the like as well as the position of the gold, copper and tin mines of antiquity" would not only illuminate the distant past but enable civic planning for the future of Britain and her imperial territories (1912: 56).

The distribution map was crucial to what is perhaps today Harold Peake's best known contribution to archaeology – the "prospector theory". The prospector theory proposed that "elements of megalithic architecture" (initially the dolman, Peake 1916) had been spread by prospectors seeking precious commodities including metal ores. The rudiments of megalithic religion spread initially from Syria into Egypt. From thence, prospectors travelled the world and into North West Europe, bringing the megalithic religion with them (Peake 1922b: chapter 4). Peake set up national databases that could have verified his prospector theory. Under the auspices of the British Association for the Advancement of Science he founded the National Bronze Age Implements Index and a Megalithic Index (Wexler et al 2015). Field survey and distribution mapping were thus central to Harold Peake's archaeological and utopian projects alike.

The Kataric Circle were committed to re-enchanting the world and their excavations of various 'buried pasts' contributed to this project. But it is in their approach to archaeological method that the significance of *disenchantment* working alongside enchantment can be identified. Referring to archaeological fieldwork as "pilgrimages", and to excavation as a "Kataric Camp", the cult of Kata represented modern scientific method as if it were a form of ancient religious rite. The theory of survivals was here applied to archaeology itself, as if archaeology contained within it the traces of the primitive societies it attempted to decode. This strategy punctured the pomposity of archaeology as 'objective science' having power to disenchant the world, since the tools of disenchantment, were themselves, ironically, already enchanted. Reconceiving archaeology as a cultic ritual performance meant it could be *both* disenchanted and enchanted at simultaneously. It is here that we might return to what Michael Saler calls "disenchanted enchantment" (2012). Members of

the Cult of Kata did not reject modernity's central tenets. They were fundamentally committed to their belief in the authority of experts and the contribution archaeology would make to designing future utopia. However, they also, simultaneously, enchanted their surroundings using the methods of modern anthropology and archaeology. They vividly imagined and promoted alternative times and spaces, some fictional (e.g. the Boxford Masques) some scientific (e.g. Peake's Megalithic Prospectors). For the Cult of Kata enchanting the everyday world through archaeology demanded a rigorous commitment to disenchantment, which was also (ironically) itself enchanted. This stance might be best understood through reversing Saler's terms – if late nineteenth and early twentieth century virtual worlds exhibited "disenchanted enchantment", the Cult of Kata exhibited "enchanted disenchantment".

### Conclusion: Enchanting Archaeologies

"I think that life is far too important a thing ever to talk seriously about it".

(Lord Darlington in Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*).

In this article I set out to complicate and qualify the notion that the emergence of modern archaeology can be represented as a process of disenchantment exclusively. I sought to retrieve and value some seemingly inconsequential and peripheral dimensions of archaeological fieldwork – jokes and parodies, rituals, dancing and performance – as locations from which enchantment, humour and the power of play could be incorporated into archaeological histories. I began with a discussion of archaeological friendship groups, using Cole's (2003) notion of historically specific 'organizations of intimacy'. Playfulness and humour bound the Kataric Circle together, encouraging their opposition to mainstream conventions but still supplying them with access to networks and resources allowing them to prosper. I examined the various ways in which performance, performance theory, and the politics of 'dramatization' underpinned the works of the Kataric Circle in the performing arts and archaeology. Far from seeking to disenchant the world the Kataric Circle strove to identify, revive and activate ancient sources of enchantment in the modern world. Finally I explored the Kataric Circle's commitment to field survey and distribution mapping, which they called "pilgrimages". By creating a joke religion that applied the theory of survivals to their own scientific method, members of the Kataric Circle maintained an ironic enchanted disenchantment. Reversing the terms of the anthropological encounter and turning their methods inwards, they posited themselves as the enchanted primitives conducting "pilgrimages" and inhabiting "camps" even while they sought to maintain the objectivity of their science. Archaeology itself became "the wild worship of a lost and buried past". The history of the Cult of Kata suggests that intimacy, playfulness and enchantment can be at least as important to archaeology and its histories as objectivity, sobriety and disenchantment.

For the Cult of Kata, playfulness and enchantment were more than recreational – they were also political. The Kataric Circle were committed to utopian projects that reimagined past and the future simultaneously. These projects were deeply serious, and the group's commitment to them was sustained through humour, conviviality, friendship and an earnest devotion to play. By locating, creating and reviving ancient enchanted worlds members of the Kataric Circle sought to seduce moderns away from stultifying convention and nonsensical bourgeois norms towards the freedom and fun they associated with socialist utopia. The politics of enchantment were essential to the success of many of their endeavors. The philosopher Jane Bennett offers a standpoint from which this relationship between enchantment and politics might be unpacked (Bennett 2001). Enchantment is valuable, Bennett argues, because it nurtures the affective predispositions that enable us to act ethically. Ethics, in Bennett's view, is not only an abstract code to which one is obligated, it also emerges from an embodied, sensory engagement with the material world that encourages one to become ethically committed. Characterizing the modern world as a "disenchanted place of death and alienation ... or a place of reason, freedom and control (when compared to a dark and confused pre-modernity) ... ignores and then discourages affective attachment to that world" (ibid: 3). One of the strategies Bennett posits as key to activating the political or ethical potential of enchantment is the cultivation of a sense of play. Far from being irrelevant to the serious business of politics, enchantment helps us to rediscover our faith in the utopian. "You have to love life", she tells us, "before you can care about anything".

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Oscar Wilde, 'Poetical Socialists, Pall Mall Gazette (13 Feb. 1889, 3) cited in Livesey, 2007.
- <sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Martyn Barber for sharing material from his research into the archives of O.G.S. Crawford at the Bodleian and Institute of Archaeology, Oxford and Historic England. I would also like to thank the staff of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, and the British Library. I am especially grateful to all those involved in the revived Boxford Masques. In particular to Geraldine McCaughrean, Nigel Reid, Steve Wilson, Simon Fenton and Gay Smith. Mr Martyn Barber, Dr David Lawrence, Dr Kathleen Sheppard, Dr Curis Horrocks and Prof. David Cottingham kindly read and commented on an early draft of this article. Finally, the most heartfelt thanks to Dr Kathleen Sheppard for her kindness and generosity of spirit while she awaited this text.
- <sup>3</sup> See Bayliff, Capt. R.L. (1891) *St George and the Dragon an Entirely New Operatic Extravaganza in Three Acts*. C. Hill: Ellesmere. This play was performed at the Theatre Royal, Richmond in December 1891.
- <sup>4</sup> A few years earlier, in 1887, Oscar Wilde had taken up the job of editor of The Queen's rival publication *The Woman's World*.
- <sup>5</sup> Letters indicate Crawford unsuccessfully attempted to track down more of Lowe Thompson's correspondence



from mutual friends as Crawford compiled the materials he selected for the archive. See Martyn Barber's blog post on Crawford's selection of material to go into his archive at <https://hargroup.wordpress.com/2016/02/19/the-lost-works-of-ogs-crawford-and-others/>.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Richard Lowe Thompson to OGS Crawford 10<sup>th</sup> October 1910.

<sup>7</sup> Review of Diana and Two Symphonies in *The Spectator*, 25<sup>th</sup> October 1913: 24.

<sup>8</sup> Carli Peake to O.G.S. Crawford, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1918.

<sup>9</sup> Carli Peake undated postcard to Crawford: "On the 26<sup>th</sup> inst there will be an holy convocation which will last till the 28<sup>th</sup>. An important Epistle General from Pausanias will be delivered to the saints. It is hoped that the joint step in the conjunction of the New Age & the Morning Post will be taken, as the editor of the former is expected. Your attendance is expected".

<sup>10</sup> Carli Peake to O.G.S. Crawford, undated, 1917. The full excerpt reads: "Cecilia Peel has just been here weasling gerundically and a new Kataric proverb has resulted – "It takes all sorts of Gods to make a World".

<sup>11</sup> Letter, Harold Peake to Crawford, 30 December 1913

<sup>12</sup> Letter, Richard Lowe Thompson to Crawford, 10<sup>th</sup> January 1910.

<sup>13</sup> For more details of the revived Boxford Masques see: <http://www.boxfordmasques.org.uk/>.

<sup>14</sup> An unpublished letter to Flint given to me by Geraldine McCaughrean of the Boxford Masques indicates Flint circulated *The Well in the Wood* to a theatrical personage with the initials "W.M". The letter reads as follows:

"Hame, Redbourne, Herts.

*Whit Monday.*

*Dear Mr Flint,*

*Many many thanks for sending me the masque – wh. I now return. It is as you have shown an excellent little bit of art, just missing real greatness. It is not quite what I want this time. As a matter of fact it is rather unsubstantial (sic) for the open air – unless, perhaps by moonlight With all the conditions of the theatre and a fair cast it ought to go well – (but not in a wood!) We may do it next Xmas. Hoping to see you soon and with all good wishes believe me Yours W.M".*

<sup>15</sup> For example, the 1911 'Festival of Empire' staged in London, had 29 episodes in four parts, the first three representing British History and the last that of places around the Empire (Lomas 1911). Each episode was compiled using historical advisors, who included R. G. Collingwood, A. W. Pollard, J. G. Carr, and James Gairdner. Sir Laurence Gomme compiled Scene I, "The Dawn of British History: Primitive London" (ibid.), the other 28 scenes were all of the historical period. Wherever possible, scenes were set to "contemporary popular music" (by Vaughan Williams among others).

<sup>16</sup> The Bodleian Crawford archive contains pages marked in Crawford's handwriting "Summary of lectures at Vacation Course, School of Geography, Oxford 1910? By Patrick Geddes".

<sup>17</sup> Crawford's unpublished notes on a Lecture Series given by Patrick Geddes, Crawford Archive c.1910.

<sup>18</sup> Although the doctrine of survivals is commonly attributed to Tylor, the notion that Catholicism preserved elements of prehistoric pagan worship goes back at least to the late eighteenth century. See for example Richard Payne Knight's (1786) account of the "survival" of primitive "worship of the generative organs" in the practices of eighteenth century Catholics.

<sup>19</sup> Archaeology gave Harold a certain 'objective' detachment on the religious mainstream of his own time: "When a foreign guest, going to stay with [Harold] as so many did, asked, as the train passed, what Newbury racecourse might be: 'That', said Peake, 'is a temple of our national religion'" (Fleure, in Peake and Fleure 1956: v).

<sup>20</sup> Letter, Harold Peake to OGS Crawford, 15<sup>th</sup> June 1908: "There are, as far as I know, no articles on St Catherine and her chapels. The idea, such as it is, is mine alone. I know of no authoritative list of chapels, but am enclosing one I have made. It does not pretend to be exhaustive. There is no complete list of earthworks, except those being published in the Victoria County Histories. If these volumes are not yet issued, try other County Histories, and failing that have recourse to the ord. map. When you have got as far as you can, refer to me again for any earthworks you have not found. Besides the authorities quoted in my list, refer to Folklore iii 77 and Rhys Celtic Heathendom, pp 55, 164, 211, 409; in fact, read the book right through if you have not already done so. I shall be very interested to see your article when you have put it together".

<sup>21</sup> Letter, Harold Peake to "Mog" (OGS Crawford) 12<sup>th</sup> February 1917.

<sup>22</sup> After Lowe Thompson and Crawford drunkenly enjoyed a Parisian brothel at Rue L. in 1910, Lowe Thompson observed the Katarically named flower "Flora Divae Caterinis": "It is common in English gardens (even mine) – where it be called two wise "Love in a Mist" or "Devil in the Bush". The flower is blue. Begorra, it just occurs to me how aptly the plants two names describe the Rue L..."

<sup>23</sup> Letter, Harold Peake to OGS Crawford, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1908: "... In Italy, S Sebastian has succeeded Marsyas, S Christopher, Atlas; while some deities have not even changed their names; for I saw a church in Milan dedicated to S Satyre, of all people. In England we may consider S Margaret, S Martha, S Leonard, and I think S James, though I am not aware of their prototypes. S Michael succeeded a Celtic divinity of Markets, who was associated with a dragon. Whence his association with Mont S Michael and S Michael's Mount. Churches of St Michael, in towns, are often close to the Market Place. St Swithin I believe to be a rain deity, and comparable with S Medard in northern France. But this list could be extended ad infinitum, as also the association of Christian festivals with Pagan feasts".

<sup>24</sup> Lowe Thompson's first book – *The Hunter in Our Midst* (1926) – developed an extraordinary theory of social evolution by extending Patrick Geddes' dualisms of

'active' and 'passive', katabolic and anabolic, male and female sexual evolution into a theory of the divergent evolution of hunter-gatherer societies around "active" and "passive" hunting methods (see Geddes and Thomson, 1889). Dividing hunter societies into active, warlike "wolf-men" and peaceful, intelligent "cat-folk" Lowe Thompson generalized about the sexual inclinations and social organization of each, before tracing the evolution of the wolf-man, towards senseless massacre and World War.

<sup>25</sup> Letter, Harold Peake to OGS Crawford, 16 May 1917.

### Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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