

Woodwose Homilies

*An Exhortation of the Green Savage
to the Inheritors of the Desecrated Field*

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WOODWOSE HOMILIES



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Daniel A. Schulke



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NEMETON



AN ANCIENT LIGHT BORNE OF THE
FIRST LAW, WHICH WOVE THE
PRIMAL MASK OF LEAVES,
AND ENDOWED IT
WITH DIVINE
SPEECH



Of the Clava.

(THE NATURE OF THE
ENLEAFED CLUB)

Behold Woodwose and Woodwife, emergent from the fast-woven thicket and standing at the margins of field and wilderness. Clad in leaves, twigs, and shirts of moss, they are resplendent in vegetal raiment. Look upon them in bewilderment—for in seeming they are both plant and human.

In their hands they bear fearsome clubs which, putting forth growing leaves (and despite their murderous nature) are forever green and living. Observe the great size of this weapon, and know its power to protect, repel, injure and kill. For this armament, the Wildwoman and Man are named *barbarian*, or 'bearded', being the very pasquinade of the uncivilized. Thus portrayed,

they are meant to stand in contrast to the builders of cities and their doctrines, who fancy themselves sophisticates.

In looking upon them, let us reflect that 'civility' does not concern genteel social contracts, nor the advancement of human culture, nor Art, nor even peaceable relations.

These, rather, are the false enticements which have lured ye out from the green and wild places. Fear is their hidden governor: for they promise shelter from dangers, ease from the pain of toil, miraculous medicines, and satiating Provender, supplied by the hands of countless intercessors, both human and machine. Know this and recall the fate of the aurochs.

The Club of the Woodwose, or *Clava*, beyond its vulgar signification of wild brutality, is an emblem of the power of Nature, our hard mistress. It may be formed of Oak, or of Beech, and of course Holly as well, that noble wood of adversity which always suggests a challenge, riddle or proposition.

As with any riddle or challenge, this dense and gnarled weapon presents a number of contradictions. As a branch it is separated from the tree, yet it continues to grow leaves. It is rough in character and its threat of brute force, yet it has been shaped, smoothed, and polished in a rudimentary manner into an object quite *beyond* its natural function. It is suggestive of both raw material and refinement, Nature and Art. It is both like and unlike its master: wrought of similar materials, it bears resemblance, yet possesses its own terrible genius. It is suggestive of the upward flow of sap in the spring, and the Red Sap of Man, flowing from the bludgeoned head, to green the land. The *Clava* is investiture of power, and of life, but also a conduit of death.

Behold ye the club raised in warning: recall in times of old that the forests, marshes and mountains were places of danger, where human death awaited in many forms. Mislead to the point of madness, suffering exposure and the savagery of wild animals, insects, injury and thieves, the flesh of man and woman had to be hardened, or

it would be enjoyed by our mistress as a dainty. Mirage, illusion, and the sometimes-fatal lure of the *ignis fatuus* were the strange lights borne atop our sacred clubs, meant not to illumine but to lure the wanderer to his death. These aspects are still present today; as the 'civilized' human—its head befouled with the illusions of superiority—is sometimes brutally reminded. The tree branch is still called the 'widow-maker.'

Threat and exigency notwithstanding, the sprouting club is our scepter of dominion, embodying the 'raising up' of power within the isolate wilderness. It evokes at once the ecstasy of the Dionysian thyrsus, the oppositional wisdom of Old Hermes' caduceus, the sorcery of the Rod of Aaron, and the spiritual authority of the crosier. Remember that all are derived from trees—where we go forth, we plant our club, and it takes root, in time generating an entire forest.



Of the Rude Mantle.

The appearance of Wood-wife and Woodwoose is always a violation of the established order. This is first noted by their raiments: the Mask of Leaves, Crown of Twigs, and the Shirt of Moss. Amidst them, we also find human expressions, as well as anatomies: eyes, bellies, breasts and hands. In them, the pious Christian imagines an emblem of primordial Adam and Eve, who sought leaves to conceal their nakedness, and indulges in an affected, self-righteous pity. The animist, beset in mystical reverie, reckons them as trees who tore diverse body parts from mankind and adopted them as wardrobe.

As for the Woodwoose and Wood-wife, their outward appearance is, unto them, a sealed arcanum, and an engine of their disruptive power at the margins of humanity.

Theirs are the powers of emergence and disappearance, not merely by command of the seasons, but from the hidden realms which evade human detection and knowledge. Coming forth from an origin unknown, making a brief appearance in a form partially obscured, and then returning to a hidden state of genesis.

Such is but one power, and mystery, of Jack in the Green. This effrontery is a function of their incongruity, the station dually occupying plant and human, naked and clothed, wild and cultivated. Masters of both realms, they achieve a third station which is like unto the combined shadow of each—interpenetrative, osmotic, and clandestine. As such, no human convention or protocol is safe from a sudden and violent intrusion of the preternatural rustic.





Of Projection and Ipseity.

Demonization: the process by which the human is rendered inhuman. As one of the most ancient and perfected of mankind's art forms, it identifies the enemy and makes of it a monster. By this art, a person may lose not only liberty and life, but that most treasured and comforting of human qualities—personhood.

At its most effective, this art uses words, sounds, concepts, and images to intensify repugnance, and justify annihilation. An old favorite, it is used by governments in warfare, by religions in maintaining orthodoxy, and by merchants in gaining market share. With the passage of years, its perpetrators become self-reflective, and perhaps even experience abhorrence at their deeds... even as they begin to demonize anew.

If, as we are told, mankind emerged from the ancient gods, wherefore its pernicious self-loathing and cowardice?

The contorted, vine-tangled face which confronts you, sheathed in darkened verdure, is not the daydreamt projection of a medieval scribe. Nor was my hideous body fabricated by the forgers of gods or the makers of law. My dwelling-place at the margins arises because it is territory I have claimed: like the Devil himself, I violently possess the idylls of the saintly.

My arrival is marked by horror and clamor, I herald disruption and mayhem. I affront the mind and repulse the eyes; the civilized recoil at my sight. When I make my entrance, I burn the palace of the King, even before I am announced. I am Humbaba, Basajaun and the *Leshi*. I have devoured the ruins of Yaxchilan and Pripyat, and the day shall come when I shall consume Jerusalem.



Of the Vanish'd Garden.

The loss of even a single species represents the eradication of a lineage, as each represents not only a genetic bloodline, but also a spiritual one—a living steward of terrestrial wisdom, and a linkage to the first primordial Tree.

Consider *Glossopteris*—a well-known genus from an ancient order of arboreal ferns, whose morphology more resembled trees. The entire order of the Glossopteridales was destroyed during the end-Permian mass extinction event of 250 million years ago, a time of horror also known as the Great Dying. During this period, most of the earth's life was annihilated.

The finely-detailed leaves of *Glossopteris* are found trapped in late Permian rock: delicate jewels of dusty pink, maroon, yellow and olive green which fell in ancient autumns and were quick-

ly preserved in compressed mud. It and its kin dominated the elder supercontinent Gondwana, composed of the landmasses of what are now South America, Antarctica, Africa, India, and Australia. Its fossils are also found in proximity to Permian coal deposits. Once a vital anchor of its plant community, a life-giving monarch of its realm, its corpse is now hacked from the ground and burnt as a filth-producing fuel, fouling the air where once it produced a sweet atmosphere.

The Fields of the Wise have been burnt many times, and many times have risen anew by the hands of our mistress. But its desecration, driven by hatred and hubris, have been the blight of men alone.





Of the Desecrators.

The ugliness of Christianity is not limited to the slaughter of innocents, the degradation of women, the hobbling of the intellect and creative spirit, and the gross perversion of the teachings of its founder. Its atrocities extend unto Nature herself, by whose sovereign mysteries the Zygote of Jesus would never have congealed.

Behold! A man comes forth among you and calls himself 'Martin of Braga'. He preaches the gospel, not of the Christ, but of the wanton rape of the forest. In his asinine strivings, called 'holy work' by some, we are admonished that our Holy Tree, which God made, and which we revere, must now be destroyed. Let the act be witnessed by time, and by the chroniclers of human malfeasance and pettiness.

Behold, a sacred tree is felled in order to pimp an unpopular god to the skeptical and unim-

pressed. In an asinine and desperate display, the evangelist dispenses with subtlety, embracing the brutish tactic of the troglodyte, bringing destruction to the holy place. Recall that this particular entity was a desert-god, dwelling where trees were in short supply, and thus treasured. Shall your own grove of offering be laid waste, and made a desert to accommodate his foul presence?

Behold, over a thousand years have passed since this miserable 'saint' succumbed to the mortal hammer of our Dread Mistress. Observe his bones gathering green moss, and the host of the blessed Carabid defecating inside his skull. Observe how the mandible, once a mouthpiece for vampiric theology, lies broken and silenced. Witness, O my brothers and sisters, the trees drawing nourishment from his body, their roots sundering his rib cage, their trunks grown old and high to reconstitute the sacred grove anew.

Weep not for his victims, nor for him, but rejoice and give praise at his destruction and apotheosis at the hands of the true God!

THE DESECREDATED FIELD



A PERSISTENT SHADOW, EMERGENT
FROM THE ÆON OF EXILE, WHICH
SCATTERED THE LEAF-
MASK TO THE
WINDS



Of the Graven Head of the Green Man.

Behold the stone sentinel whose eternal stare penetrates the souls of all who enter the sanctuary, the cathedral which rises above the Desecrated Field. Masked in leaves and coldly chiseled to an alarming symmetry, he nonetheless emanates a warmth and life, a power anomalous amid the static and overwrought desperation of surrounding Christian iconography. His mask is deferential and retreats from scrutiny, assuming a certain reservation, yet from his open mouth erupts a violent flood of living green matter. His is a visage of vitality, but also disruption, incongruity and alarm.

Wherefore this rude idol amid churchly splendor?

His Mask is, to him, one of his sacred arcana, and as such it dwells in the veil of ancient mystery. As such, its function when encountered by

the human is to confound, but also to inspire and incite reverie. But to soothe themselves from the unbearable itch of unknowing, the dwellers of the Desecrated Field have made of him a god, and given him attributes, some of which are human, and some of which are plant. Bewilderment has given rise to diverse speculations, none of which are proven or entirely satisfy.

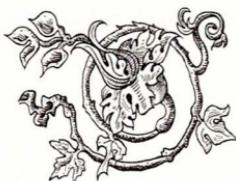
Yet, rather than the personal nature of the *Green Man*, which remains an idolatrous focus of the scholar, might we seek to understand his arcanum in the context in which he appears? His execution in stone was given all due care, contextualized amid sacrality, and underwritten by the same purses which funded the essential carvings of the Crucifixion.

Perhaps his presence speaks to the essence of the Sacred Enclosure, an echo of what once was, recalling the Sanctuary of ancient days, ringed in Oaks or Yews. In medieval legend, we recall the Green Knight, the Beheaded One who yet lives and speaks, and who tested the heart of the knight Gawain in a harrowing initiatory trial.

Severed from the ancient grove, he is the relict warden of its mysteries, the collective spirit—embodied and memorialized—of the trees forming the First Temple, which were felled to make way for the Temple of Stone. In him, we recall the dark ritual of the Foundation Sacrifice, and understand the True Nature of the Cathedral, as the Green Chapel, the “Church Ring’d in Green.”

Tossed in the wind, the Wormwood speaks:

“Perfect are my leaves in form and symmetry, beloved of the artisan as ornamentation, and a geometric cipher of the Power of Three. My likeness in stone gives form and grace to the leaf-masked head. But I also bring poison, frenzy, hemorrhage and death.”





Of the Fetish Generated of Exile.

Alienation and Exile give rise to the Other, which in turn begets the fetish. Its primordial essence is formless and exalted in its power. By its separation in time, space, and attribute, it reigns as the Unknown God.

When the fetish is profaned with an increasing accretion of attribute and obsession, its power lessens. As it stoops toward the familiar, mantled by fantasy and craving, it becomes as a false god, a mirror to ape the delusions of the fetishist. Enslaved to this obsession, and buckled by its weight, it becomes wholly enslaved to its imagined powers, and ceases being Other. Now familiar, the triumph of the profane is complete, and it is become both impotent and ridiculous.

Through the comfortable but distorted looking-glass of 'civilization', mankind looks upon

the Desecrated Field and imagines the splendor it once was. Perhaps it was a realm of Paradise, perhaps of Torment. Perhaps in those days, the gods walked the earth and spoke with women and men, and each plant gave forth oracles in a voice that could be understood.

But the Desecrated Field is not the exiled body of our estrangement, nor the Other-become-idol transforming into an ever-denser corpus of clay. Rather it is the one who walks it, desperately looking beyond place and moment, for reason within reason, and secret within secret. Yea, the Sanctuary has always been the Body, even as it moves among other bodies, and its re-consecration and restoration lies in the awakening to where one stands and how. Elsewise, one is become an earthen fetish, primed for the glazing, firing, and shattering at the hands of the profaners.



Of the Firmament, and the Shade-Dwellers.

Let us contemplate the Living Firmament, its power, and its rightful restoration.

An essential nature of our Green Chapel is sanctuary, in essence a grand extrapolation of the parish plot and the magic circle. As much as it functions to contain, it also protects, providing air and habitat. By design of Nature, the Below mirrors the Above, and thus the firmament also spreads in the subterranean world in the form of roots and their biotic realms, anchoring earth, and conserving water. It serves as a storehouse for carbon, which may otherwise bind the atmosphere.

We also propose the idea that sanctuary includes the essential principle of privacy, which the tree canopy affords. The encouragement of

shade and canopy is a revolutionary act, for it dares to claim private space with screening, shade, and the creation of habitat, on one's own terms.

If, as the prophets say, our world is to become ravaged by heat and sun, the green firmament will become ever more essential, not only for comfort, but to the process of evolution itself. Elsewise, it is back to the caves, or reliance on another expensive humanism.





Of the Fallen.

Bemoan not the dissolution of things past, nor the shards of the dis-integrated which can never attain their former grandeur. Rather, draw thy sustenance from the dark splendor of Decay, and recognize the present and thriving embodiments of former bodies.

Within the preternature of our Cathedra, they are perpetual, and serve as nourishment for the present recension. Give tithe unto the slime mold, leaf litter, and vulture, for it is they who have perfected this magic.

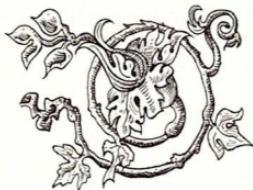
Atop a great column of death do we, the living, stand in debt. The wisdoms and follies of past humanity are poured out by time into us as vessels. As with mortal men, so with the tree: the blood of the primordial forests is extracted from the earth, distilled, and burned in an orgiastic

bonfire of carbon fuels. Witness the forests, now become books of knowledge, and the habitations of Adam's seed.

Salt, we are told, provides the foundation of the body, and it is true that Natura herself decrees this. Because he exerts a strong preference for the soul, we are told that the Devil abhors Salt, and that it should be used against him.

But the forest-gathered witches know otherwise, for the flesh is his delight and delectation. In the worship of the body, neglect not the fallen, for it too has its power: go forth unto the charnel ground with utmost sanctity, there to witness the power of thy future self.

For Behold! The Tomb is both our antecessor and our inheritance, and the naked glory of the Alchemist.





Of the Restoration and Consecration of the Field.

The Field was initially desecrated because of a disruption to rootedness—being that estate by which we are enmeshed with Place. Not in stasis, as sedentary stone (for roots are ever in motion, seeking and acquiring), but an Unknowing borne of striving 'beyond' the 'bestial' state. As such, the perception of Place was altered from sanctuary to adversary. As the sacred trees were uprooted and burnt, we ceased our dreaming, and inherited their charred remains.

And yet, the immolation of a sacred thing changeth not its holiness, merely its form. If knowledge of sacrality exists, the means of approach may become known, and this gives rise to the Way of Renewal.

In the fearful folk-tellings of the ancients,

Green is the adversarial or infernal color, the mantle of the fairy queen, and the raiment of the Devil himself. The virid hue gives forth a power not merely of wildness, but a realm of *other* where magic, grotesquerie, and madness hold sway. As the light wanes and this color darkens, an ever-deeper green leads us into the forest of night, the liminal place where one first awakens in human dreaming. From this place many run, seeking the comforts of the waking world, but those who pass deeper may yet perceive the ghost of the Field that once was. Verily I, the wildwomen and silvaticae dwell here, at the very breach of human and plant knowledge.

In our rootedness we dream, and thereby vivify the Field. As it grows, it becomes in time the *Cathedra*, from which all powers are harvested. Some of this knowledge is innate, and some of it learned, but some is perpetually bound in the interweaving of human and plant, become indistinguishable as individual consciousness, ever so much as the haunting commingling of entities giving rise to the Lichen.

CATHEDRA



A RESURGENT POWER BORNE OF LIGHT AND
SHADOW, WHICH GATHERED UP THE
ASHES OF ALL RELIGION,
AND MADE THE
LEAF-MASK
ANEW



Of Beating the Bounds.

With withes and switches we beat the bounds, to seal that which is ours. The sacrificed branch, bleeding sap and whipped into an ecstatic fervor, marks all that it touches and in doing do defines the boundaries of our sacred enclosure.

The seal of protection thus given, that which lies within our bounds is made holy, to the exclusion of rot, pestilence, vulgarity and all manner of foulness. Life and motion are turned toward the Eminence of Purity, and the nexus of time and space are refreshed. In the sphere of the Rustic, it is the theory of medicine exacted in practice, and particularly its art of hygiene.

The sycophants wail, giving forth protests at the notion of exclusivity, and the personal affront of the locked door. But hear ye my words, O' man and woman of flesh: the sanctified states of pro-

tection and intimacy rely as much upon exclusion as inclusion. Within one's own body, one is sovereign: those who would violate and abuse it must be cast out.

Yet the power of this action also lies in the beating, for by doing so, we rouse the blood of the land, thereby awakening it and its spiritual organs. It gives forth ecstasy and makes the ground anew. For the earth is torn by rain and flood, avalanche and slide, and the hooves and claws of every burrowing creature. This is a truth of our mistress, well known unto the flagellants of old.

Know ye the wisdom of this action, for the withe is not the *Clava*. It is subtle and not gross: as much as its usage is an action of violence and vigor, it is also one of love and rousing. The withe is to the right hand what my club is to the left, an extension of power from my hand, and the tree of its emergence, bearing a fire which may kindle, or yet burn kingdoms.



Of Vegetal and Human Temperament.

We are advised, according to some folk-sayings, that agricultural skill is a most mysterious power, residing in the human hand—specifically in the thumb. If perchance its color is green, then trees, herbs and grains will flourish under our care, and we will gather the fruits of their power.

But woe and woe unto those born under the curse of the black thumb! Such people, so we are informed, are destined to fail in all horticultural pursuits. Because this curse is beyond our control, we are absolved of our aspirations, and surrender all personal power in the matter to the fundamentalisms of chattering superstition.

Where success with plants is found wanting, we often find appended bizarre explanations for failure. Perhaps the stars were not properly aligned, or Sometimes seed is not viable, but this

excuse should not be repeatedly allowed. Perhaps witches sent a blight on the crop, or a thumb that by rights is usually green was besmirched by ink.

These rationalizations fail to account that trees, herbs, mosses and ferns are each like men and women: each keeps its own law, consumes its own food and drink, and exhibits distinct preference for where to live. Each has a family, and a community, friends and enemies. Each exhibits a complex character, whether friendly, averse, indifferent, or other, and each pursues manifold agendas. Tending each then, requires not merely aspiration but presence, receptivity, and attention just as one's own family, friends, and chosen company. Of these approaches, mindfully done, skill shall be born, and perhaps love.

Rather than greened or blackened thumbs, let us call out those who care—and those who do not. In this distinction lies the measurement of thy success.



Of the Masters of Futurity.

Beware ye the manipulator of plant bloodlines, and the breeder of 'new varieties'. With great discernment and skill assess motive, practice and result.

Some who practice this art do so privately, and with honest work, for small-scale preservation of crop types that benefit family, plant community, and farm, and are adapted to local soil and microclimate. In doing so, they convert a local understanding of, and intimacy with plants, to agricultural benison, and so secure a future for the plant and for their human descendants. Importantly, they serve their community both human and plant and preserve local traditions of food, fiber, and medicine.

Others are of disingenuous and greedy character. Ascertain well their proclamations concern-

ing this Art—they will be loud and long: For the benefit of all, we are told, they twist the heredity of the green earth, and would have us think them saviors.

Yet, be assured: they do it not to feed the starving, nor to treat the suffering, nor to benefit the plant, but to consolidate dominion and vulgar coin. In their superficial quest for flawless appearance, standardized flavor, greater shelf life, and pest resistance, they have usurped control over plant reproduction, and over the supply of food, medicine, and fiber.

Standing within one's present plot, look beyond! Behold the land in time distant, long nurtured by your blood and bones, in the care of your descendants. In the virtue of thy living action, let not the stewardship of seed fall to the rapacious, but vouchsafe it with your own knowledge and care. Thus shall your garden's legacy be carried forward, with all its powers and freedoms.



Of Mirage, Illusion and Actuality.

This is the danger: in the adoption of any temporal embodiment of plant tradition, we risk degradation of Nature to a dishonest status, empty of virtue and ornamented with false doctrine. Essentially impotent fads, such constructions are shaped equally by fantasy, vanity, desperation and ignorance. In considering revivalism, we must ever beware of an insincere fetishism which neither revives the corpse of the past, nor lays it to rest with the proper funerary rites. Such folly exceeds this and descends to a failed necromancy.

Tradition arises not because we invent or desire it, but as a complex and cohering force of need, community, time and self-reflectivity. In the richest and most pervasive traditions, definitive points of origin are often obscured, and history becomes interlaced with myth, and myth with a primordial divine emanation. A unique family tradition, such as might occur on birthdays,

arises because it binds the whole, while also giving sustenance and inspiration to the individual. The same is true for the traditions of religions, military and spiritual orders, ethnic groups and myriad other human societies.

Frankincense is burned in the ceremonies of the church not only because it was a precious gift of the Magi, but also because, in the centuries of its liturgical use, its scent and smoke gave rise to an empowered spiritual reverie in the collective Body of Christ. The fragrant smoke evokes holiness and purity, and its balsamic spice affects the mind such that a state is engendered conducive to prayer. This bridge of incense also evokes within each individual a nostalgia of the spirit, an immediation of things past. Consider that the Christian use of Frankincense rests atop millennia of preceding religious and magical traditions: those of Canaan, Phœnecia, Egypt, Ugarit, Saba, Nabatæa, and countless others. As the incense migrated from one religion to another, its human practitioners may have forgotten or ignored its previous usages, but the tree did not.



Of the Apotheosis.

The Oak Tree speaketh:

"Nobility is thine if thou wouldest but don the crown. But first, thou must die."

Thus is our corpse laid out on the ragged oaken bier, wrought of ancient blood-stained patibula and crucifixion nails. Bedecked in leaves, branches, galls and acorns, we lie in state, our head encircled by the golden chaplet of Mistletoe. In the great grove our substance is thus offered up to the Four Eternals, each of which arrives to divide the body and parcel out its share. In time, we are as one with the cellar-house barrel, conspiring with the seasons and atmosphere to ripen the Transcendent Wine.

The Ivy speaketh:

"O' corpse! I dwell with thee in the gloom of the graveyard-ground: I am the breaker of the crypt, the corpse-strangler, the spell-weaver and bane of the stonemason. Ever subtil and in motion as a serpent, I wend the way as old Cain, first wanderer of the earth: my sinuous body goes forth to penetrate and subdue all, even the Mighty, who curse me. Yet behold! I am also that ancient vine which intoxicates—taste and come forth!"

The Holly Tree speaketh:

"Ye of flesh, who have once been and are ever yet to be, look upon thy dominion anew. For verily, some pass through death, and are yet become its master, ever to command the vernal powers, and with prickle and thorn goad the blood of the living. Such is the mystery of mine own mantle, my leaf and fruit, and that coarse cloak you have assumed. Let thy power rise and go forth in haste!"

Moving from atemporality to the present moment, the Leaf-mantled One speaks:

*From my root, the trunk.
From my trunk, the body.
From my body, the branch.
From my branch, the hand.
From my hand, the leaf.
From my leaf, the medicine.
From my medicine, the cure.
From my cure, the power.
From my power, the awakening.
From the awakening, the Dreaming born anew
In the Minster of the Green Veil.*



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“MY ARRIVAL IS MARKED BY
HORROR AND CLAMOR...”



The Woodwose or *Wuduwas* is an Anglo-Saxon form of the archaic Wild-man, an enigmatic figure clad and masked in leaves. Bearing a leafing club or staff, he makes his appearance at the margins of wilderness and civilization, dream and waking, plant and human. Embodying both nobility and barbarity, both he and the Wild-women or *Silvaticæ* are the deified reservoirs of Nature-as-other.

Emerging as an ancillary text of Daniel A. Schulke's book *The Green Mysteries*, the chapbook *Woodwose Homilies* assumes the persona of the Wildman, putting forth a magical philosophy of empowered human-plant relation.



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