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Demotic Possession: The hierarchic and anarchic in *The Wicker Man*

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‘Perhaps it is just as well you won’t be here to be offended by the sight of our May Day celebrations’

Director, Robin Hardy, and (co-)writer, Anthony Shaffer, devised the film *The Wicker Man* (Hardy, 1973) as a critique of the New Age and Pagan cults that had become a noticeable part of the countercultural landscape of the late 1960s and early ’70s.¹ The focus of Hardy and Shaffer’s dissatisfaction was with what they saw as the incipient fascism of these movements. In separate interviews about the influences on their script, both refer explicitly to the horrors of National Socialism in connection to unorthodox religious activity. Shaffer, in discussion with the journalist Allan Brown, draws on the historic experience of Nazism in analysing the dangers of cultism. In this account, the Holocaust and Jonestown Massacre shared various central themes with Dark Age practices, especially the centrality of sacrifice as an ‘articulation of power over weakness’.²

Hardy makes the same point more explicitly in an interview with David Bartholomew in the magazine *Cinefantastique*. He states that pre-Christian religious belief:

[K]eeps people in the thrall of superstition. Maybe it’s not too big a connection to make between the final scene of *The Wicker Man* and the Nuremberg rallies in Germany. It was no accident that Hitler brought back all those pagan feasts in his rise to power.³

¹ There was some dispute between Shaffer and Hardy as to who was responsible for the narrative. See Brown, *Inside ‘The Wicker Man’*, p. 21, p. 26. Brown lists Shaffer as sole creator of the screenplay in his foreword to the 2000 Pan edition of the co-authored novel; see Brown, *Inside ‘The Wicker Man’*, p. ix.

² Brown, *Inside ‘The Wicker Man’*, pp. 21-22.

³ Bartholomew, *‘The Wicker Man’*, p. 12. Note too that Hardy draws additional parallels between the Pagan Lord Summerisle and Hitler: see Bartholomew, *‘The Wicker Man’*, p. 34.

Even 30 years after the making of the film, Hardy still refers to the Jonestown Massacre and the Nuremburg Rally in connection with the final scene of *The Wicker Man*.⁴

Despite these explicitly stated authorial intentions, audiences have appropriated the film in a distinctly subversive manner. In terms of the politics, the creators' purpose and its reception are widely divergent, and this is partly due to the socially conservative, liberal theoretical account of authoritarianism that is presented in the film. The lacunae and contradictions in this type of interpretation of political oppression's causes have allowed for dissident readings of *The Wicker Man* from a wide variety of audiences, including those who identify with the 1960s counterculture.⁵ Indeed, contemporary Pagans have been amongst the film's most avid supporters.⁶ Political radicals from British anarchist movements have also utilised themes from *The Wicker Man*. The latter sections of this paper demonstrate how the film has been used in anti-capitalist propaganda to promote libertarian (and often libidinous) ends. These reconstructions of meaning, in conflict with the authors' stated intentions, could be termed a 'demotic possession' of the text.

The British Enlightenment tradition, personified by John Locke, stood opposed to superstition and the irrational use of power. From its beginnings, the use of reason became synonymous with government legitimacy. The origin of just rule lies in consent from rational sovereign subjects,⁷ with government charged with the protection of private property, fairly distributed by consensual market arrangements.⁸ Unjust authority, which arbitrarily enslaved, slaughtered or interfered with justly acquired property rights was the product of irrationality and defended by illogical claims such as traditional practice.⁹ It is still a mainstay of liberal analysis to consider authoritarian regimes to be maintained through essentially

⁴ Wojtas, 'A burning passion', p. 21.

⁵ See, for instance, Knight, 'Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Uniform'.

⁶ See, for example, Peg Aloi's 'Witch Cinema' on *The Witches' Voice* website, which states that the film is 'one of my favorite cult films of all time' and rates it at number one in Aloi's top ten favourite films. See also the *Wicca Net: The home of Wicca and Wiccans on the Web*.

⁷ 'We are born Free, as we are born Rational'. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, p. 308.

⁸ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, pp. 285-302.

⁹ Locke is particularly critical of Robert Filmer who advocated absolute monarchy based on primogeniture. See Locke, 'First treatise', *Two Treatises of Government*.

non-rational means, whilst representative-democratic (and predominantly capitalist) societies are based on reason.

The categorisation of societies as ‘authoritarian’, ‘totalitarian’ or ‘fascistic’, is itself a contentious political activity. For instance, the changing interpretation of ‘totalitarian’ to exclude all but the old Communist states or those political systems hostile to American policy, by right-wing political scientists and senior American policy advisors, is indicative of how these political labels are used to influence public opinion and direct government policy.¹⁰ James Molloy’s overview of the use of these prescriptive as well as descriptive political labels by various academics, including the arch-conservative Jeanne Fitzpatrick (adviser to Ronald Reagan), begins with the father of political sociology, Max Weber.¹¹

Weber argued that a society could only function if the power structure that supports it has the general acceptance of its populace. For Weber, different types of society function under three types of claim to legitimacy: traditional, charismatic and rational. Traditional authority rests ‘on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority’.¹² These beliefs that justify the structure of power are believed to ‘have been handed down from the past [and] “have always existed”’.¹³ Weber associates absolute monarchies and tribal patriarchy with this type of traditional authority.¹⁴ Whilst the economy of traditional societies can be consistent with a free-market, more frequently the maintenance of traditional orthodoxies and other ‘irrational factors’, such as ancient practices, restrict the efficient operation of the marketplace.¹⁵

The second form of legitimacy described by Weber is charismatic authority. This rests ‘on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him [*sic*].’¹⁶ The person with charismatic authority is ‘treated as endowed with supernatural [...] powers’.¹⁷ The

¹⁰ Moore, ‘Public Secret’, p. 235.

¹¹ Moore, ‘Public Secret’, p. 229.

¹² Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, p. 301.

¹³ Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, p. 313.

¹⁴ Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, pp. 317-29.

¹⁵ Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, p. 325.

¹⁶ Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, p. 301.

¹⁷ Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, p. 329.

charismatic leader is associated with prophets and agents of revolutionary change. Control based on this charismatic form of authority can undermine traditional authority as the personal inspiration of the leader can break established norms. Such authority is considered the least rational.¹⁸

Economically rational structures, as Weber regards capitalism, require continuous routine. As a result, such an economy is antipathetic to the charismatic character. This makes charismatic leadership transitory and leads to its transformation into rational or traditional patterns of management.¹⁹ The fear, which goes back to Plato's *Republic*, is that the exercise of freedoms wrought from breaking the restraints of traditional rules will inevitably lead to tyranny. In *Cinefantastique*, Shaffer links the sexual licence that characterises the Summerisle community directly to societal decline.²⁰

The final form of Weber's tripartite distinction is legal-rational authority. Here, rules and procedures are based not on the character of person holding the office but on government laws.²¹ The laws, unlike those of traditional authority, are intellectually analysable,²² and exist to support the smooth running of a capitalist economy. In legal-rational societies, officials are subject to the laws and not above them, and there is a strict hierarchy of powers. Appointment to higher positions is conducted by a fair and open scheme, not nepotism or primogeniture.²³ Offices are 'filled by a free contractual relationship'.²⁴ For Weber, legal-rational systems are the most efficient, and associated with 'capitalistic enterprise'.²⁵ Elsewhere in Weber's works, he associates the rise of capitalism with Protestant Christianity.²⁶

Under Weber's tripartite division of forms of authority, traditional and legal-rational are considered permanent, and

¹⁸ Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, p. 332.

¹⁹ Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, pp. 332-34.

²⁰ Bartholomew, 'The Wicker Man', p. 40.

²¹ Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, p. 300.

²² Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, p. 332.

²³ Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, pp. 306-7.

²⁴ Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, p. 306.

²⁵ Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, p. 311.

²⁶ See Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, p. 197 and Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The novel makes clear Howie is an Episcopalian, part of the Anglican Communion. See Hardy and Shaffer, *The Wicker Man*, p. 5.

charismatic transitory. However, the ‘irrational’ forms of legitimacy are regarded as interconnected by liberal (especially conservative-liberal) commentators. This is because liberal-rational structures are thought by such critics to be able to generate change through the expansion of science and technology and the development of meritocratic institutions. Traditional authority acts as a constraint on necessary social developments, and as a result charismatic leadership is required to break the accepted social order and then reconstitute traditional authority.²⁷

Whilst *The Wicker Man* concentrates on the clash of religious belief between Sergeant Neil Howie and the islanders, as David Bartholomew has suggested,²⁸ it also portrays a struggle between the types of authority Weber and others identify. The film’s central conflict is one between legal-rational legitimacy associated with modern capitalism, as represented by Sergeant Howie, and authoritarian traditional authority infused with charismatic leadership as represented by Lord Summerisle. Lord Summerisle, as in the model for traditional leadership, appeals to ancient practice to maintain his rule: ‘Here the old Gods aren’t dead’ he informs Howie at their first meeting at his castle. Along with a set of beliefs held to be fixed by long-established convention, the Summerisle community is regulated by a hierarchy which is similarly perceived to be set by long-standing custom. Summerisle’s status is indebted to a pre-Christian practice that is maintained into the present day, that of primogeniture. Upon Howie’s arrival on the island, the locals explain that all matters have to be reported to his Lordship, and continual reference is made to Summerisle’s title at the apex of the pre-capitalist, feudal social structure. This deference is not simply honorific, as social hierarchies are much in force. For instance, on Howie’s departure from the castle on the second occasion, Summerisle summons a minion, Broome, by ringing a small bell, and instructs his servant to take the policeman to his transport.

Whilst the Summerisle community is presented in the film as superficially idyllic – there is sexual licence, a strong sense of social solidarity and an approach to the natural world that fears neither death nor guilt – it is nonetheless governed by a rigid and unequal power structure. In keeping with the characterisation of the island being subject to traditional authority, there is an absence of critical

²⁷ Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, p. 161.

²⁸ Bartholomew, ‘*The Wicker Man*’, p. 33.

thought from the islanders in opposition to patrimonial power. At no point in the film are any of Summerisle's subjects in dissent with the dominant ideology, nor are critical views expressed against his lordship. Those who held a contrary value system, like the church ministers, in Summerisle's words, 'fled the islands never to return'.

The distinctions foregrounded by the Weberian taxonomy of authority are implicitly recognised by *The Wicker Man*'s characters. With Summerisle's traditional practices under threat due to the failure of the crops, charismatic leadership is required in order to maintain them. Christopher Lee describes the persona of Summerisle as 'charming', a term with a myriad of magical connotations.²⁹ Summerisle's lead role in the ritual slaughter of Howie is indicative of the former's claim to magical ability over natural forces, to be able 'when necessary to appease' them. Through ritual sacrifice under Summerisle's control the crops, in his own words, 'will not fail'. Howie also recognises that Summerisle's authority is now based on charismatic claims, and seeks to undermine it. He attempts this first by stressing his opponent's own ordinary mortal status ('man' not 'lord'), then exaggerating Summerisle's social position (king). Second, and concordant with such an appeal to authority, if the sacrifice fails, Summerisle's own position is in direct threat; indeed, Howie's nemesis will be the next sacrifice:

Howie: Killing me isn't going to bring back your apples Summerisle. You know it won't. Go on, man, tell them it won't.

Summerisle: I know it will.

Howie: Well don't you understand that if your crops fail this year, that next year you will need to have another blood sacrifice. And next year no one less than the King of Summerisle himself will do. With the crops' failure, Summerisle, your people will kill you on May Day.

Summerisle: They will not fail. The sacrifice of the willing, king, virgin fool will be accepted.

This is consistent with Weber, who similarly identifies the dangerous instability of charismatic leadership:

²⁹ Lee, 'A Letter from Lord Summerisle', p. 60.

[T]he charismatic quality of the monarch, which was transmitted unchallenged by heredity, was upheld so rigidly that any misfortune whatever, not only defeat in war, but drought, floods or astronomical phenomena which were considered unlucky, forced him to do public penance and might even force abdication. If such things occurred, it was a sign that he did not possess the requisite charismatic virtue; he was thus not a legitimate 'Son of Heaven'.³⁰

By contrast, Howie appears to be a straightforward incarnation of the legal-rational paradigm. Howie's commitment to the legal-rational approach imbues his character throughout the film, and informs his response to practices that are not based on institutionalised norms. As he exclaims on leaving May Morrison's shop, 'You're all raving mad'. For Howie, the structures and beliefs that maintain the customs of Summerisle are not just wrong, but irrational.

In contrast to the Summerislanders' enthralment by charismatic leadership, Howie is bound by the rules of his office. Howie owes allegiance to the charismatic leadership of Christ, but is able to repress it – at least partially – in the performance of his policing function. Even when he comes across transgression with which he agrees, such as in the opening scene of the longer 'Director's Cut' version, when he and a colleague (McTaggart) happen upon graffiti reading 'Jesus saves', Howie orders that the message be 'removed'. Despite his strong religious beliefs, Howie conducts himself in accordance with the office of the State, maintaining the distinction between his own deeply held spiritual values and his office, as required under bureaucratic rationality. As he tells Lord Summerisle at the end of the first meeting at the castle 'I am interested in only one thing – the law'.

Bureaucratic rationality requires respect for the legal hierarchy in which it operates. Howie's insistence on respecting such order includes seeking out his prime suspect's approval for the exhumation of Rowan's body, because of Summerisle's legal position as Justice of the Peace. Throughout his encounters on the

³⁰ Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, p. 330.

island, Howie defines himself through his office, as he tells the schoolgirls, 'I am a police officer, here from the mainland'. His response to transgression is to report it to the appropriate agency. On his second meeting at Summerisle's castle he threatens that he shall 'report my suspicions to the Chief Constable of the West Highland Constabulary'. The islanders mock these bureaucratic-rational appeals to authority, with their corresponding division of duties. When Howie recounts the peculiar run of events, ending with the discovery of a hare in Rowan's supposed grave, Summerisle's rebuff is to remind him that 'you are supposed to be [the] detective here'. Under legal-rational authority, by which Howie claims to act, it is his duty to resolve the situation by virtue of his office.

Similarly, when the Sergeant threatens Miss Rose over her instruction on the 'Rites and Rituals of May-day', Howie's words perfectly encapsulates the legal-rational mentality: 'Miss, you can be quite sure that I shall report this to the proper authorities'. Miss Rose recognises the appeal to bureaucratic-rational authority that Howie is claiming. She undermines it by reminding him that under bureaucratic-rationality, legitimacy is tied to office and has 'a clearly defined sphere of competence in the legal sense.'³¹ As she acerbically observes, 'I was unaware that police had any authority in matters of education'. Howie has no rebuttal to this reply.

The conflict between Howie and the islanders is thus apparently between two different forms of authority, one associated with liberalism, modernity and democracy and the other with tradition, pre-modernity and authoritarianism.³² The brutal attack on a 'Christian copper' in which the whole community is complicit, was supposed (by the film's writer and director) to savagely indict the latter form of social organisation and the practices that underpin it. Shaffer refers to those interested in paganism and witchcraft as 'lunatics',³³ yet audiences have continually sided with the populace of Summerisle rather than with the virtues represented by Howie.

One grouping in particular, contemporary class-struggle anarchists, has embraced the imagery of *The Wicker Man*, utilising it in their anti-capitalist propaganda. There is insufficient space here to fully develop an account of a distinctive anarchist approach to 'reading' filmic and artistic texts, although some writers like Allan

³¹ Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, p. 306.

³² See also Weber *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, p. 389.

³³ Bartholomew, 'The Wicker Man', p. 14.

Antliff and Richard Porton have looked at specific anarchist themes in cinematic and other cultural forms, especially as promotional devices.³⁴ These, however, are not the only ways anarchists have used cultural products. Jude Davies and John Moore, to name but two, have explored the ways in which other popular cultural forms have been subverted (or détourned) by radicals, who unmask both the reactionary elements in mainstream media phenomena³⁵ but also their subversive potential.³⁶ This dissidence can lie in the properties of the product (as in propaganda), the actions of the producer, the approach of the audience, and the interaction between these three, as well as in the reaction by existing authority.³⁷

The example of such radical subversion I will draw on appeared in a free newspaper, *Hate Mail*, which was handed out in the run-up to the anti-capitalist May Day demonstrations in 2002. The paper's layout, displayed in Figure 1, pastiches the right-wing tabloid *The Daily Mail*. The article inside the paper (and trailed on the front page), like many others in *Hate Mail*, spoofs mainstream reporting of radical activities (see Figure 2). A characteristic feature of popular journalism is to seek out extraordinary origins for radical protest as a way of fixing the blame on the 'irrational' source of these disruptive movements, and damning both by association. These investigations often find that responsibility rests with 'outside agitators' or 'professional' revolutionaries inspired either by Soviet or Chinese Communism, and thus purportedly lie outside liberal rational societies.³⁸

In this case the anarchists, emphasising their points by using stills from *The Wicker Man*, suggested that the 'inspiration' for their disorder lies in the film. In true tabloid style, they construct a collection of societal scapegoats supposedly lying behind the anti-

³⁴ Antliff, 'Anarchy in Art'; Porton, *Film and the Anarchist Imagination*.

³⁵ Davies, 'Anarchy in the UK?', p. 76.

³⁶ Moore, 'Public Secret', p. 118.

³⁷ Moore, 'Public Secret', p. 120.

³⁸ Following the anti-capitalist demonstrations of June 18th 1999, the mainstream press sought out the culprits, amongst squatter communities, 'crusties and New Age hippies, the anti-motorist groups and anarchists, and earth mothers': Nigel Hastilow of the *Birmingham Post*, cited in Anon., 'Column inches', p. 30. Paul of *The Daily Mail* blames 'anarchists' and 'eco-protestors' for the 'violence' at the May Day protests in 2000: Harris, 'Then the thugs came out to play', p. 4. For claims about Soviet Communism inspiring anti-capitalists see Heffer, 'This bestial behaviour is motivated by evil, not nobler concerns', p. 6 and for the association with Chinese socialism see Malone, 'The howling mob just bite the hands that feed them', p. 31.

capitalist disorders, composed of ‘anarchists, football hooligans and pagans’ as well as portraying anarchists as cider-quaffing vandals who receive instruction on destructive practices through the Internet.³⁹ By playing with the discourse used by socially conservative, economically liberal institutions such as the mainstream media, *Hate Mail* helps to illuminate how these operate, and hence undermines their effectiveness. Parody and exaggeration demonstrate the underlying ideological assumptions in Weber’s taxonomy of authority. The reductive subsumation of all anti-liberal democratic forces into either traditional or charismatic societies suggests that only capitalism provides a bulwark against tyranny. It is this highly questionable underlying assumption that *Hate Mail* lampoons, by claiming that *The Wicker Man* and its ‘benevolent tyranny’ is the inspiration and model for contemporary anti-capitalism.⁴⁰



Fig.1: Front cover of the anti-capitalist *Hate Mail* using a still image from *The Wicker Man*.

³⁹ MacGregor, ‘B-movie plot for Mayday mayhem’, p. 5.

⁴⁰ See Lee, ‘A Letter from Lord Summerisle’, p. 60.



Fig.2: 'B-movie plot for Mayday mayhem' in *Hate Mail*, p.5.

This is not to say that there are not amusing parallels to be drawn between the activities of the Summerisle residents and subversive activists. The community has many attractive aspects, which have made audiences more sympathetic to the murderous Pagans than to the martyr. As Tanya Krzywinska points out in her analysis of the representation of the irrational in occult films, Howie's death fails to shock the audience out of their 'identification with Summerisle's anarchic paganism'.⁴¹ The ludic, anarchic features of Summerisle are too beguiling for the audience to identify fully with the martyred 'Christian copper', and it is these seductive

⁴¹ Krzywinska, *A Skin for Dancing In*, p. 83.

elements that radicals play with. These include sexual licence, the sense of community, rejection of the state religion and the mockery of oppressive legal authority.⁴² These subversive features of the Summerisle community are common also to anarchism. It is especially the latter, the assault on the judicial authority that maintains the structures of exploitation, that *Hate Mail* relishes. The article's pseudonymous writer, the archetypal tabloid reporter, has a 'top-secret plan' revealed to him by a suitably anonymous 'informant', which is 'to incinerate a top-level police figure. "The victim must represent the law of the land, he must come as a fool, he must come willingly and he must be a virgin. The first two can be arranged, the others I'm not sure about."'”⁴³

A further similarity that Summerisle residents (and modern Pagans) and anarchists share is a common commemoration of May Day (Beltane).⁴⁴ *Hate Mail* – created for the May Day protests – parodies the tone and style of its Northcliffe Publisher's near namesake, and draws direct analogies with the reclaiming of the streets of major cities on May 1st and the May Day celebrations of Summerisle:

For example, the pagans have a procession where they are lead by a tuneless band – how similar to the racket of the evil 'Samba band' that urges modern day rioters on their Mayday mayhem! And in another telling scene, the officer requests that they remove the outlandish masks they wear to conceal their identity. They refuse to do so, in a scenario that has become all too familiar in the past couple of years.⁴⁵

Yet there is much in the Summerisle community that is antipathetic to class struggle anarchists: the maintenance of patriarchal authority, the existence of a capitalist economy (although we only see it operating with Howie), and a rigid division of labour, with characters assigned roles by occupation ('doctor', 'fisherman', 'librarian' and

⁴² MacGregor, 'B-movie plot for Mayday mayhem', p. 5.

⁴³ MacGregor, 'B-movie plot for Mayday mayhem', p. 5.

⁴⁴ See, for instance, the demonstration on May 1st 2000 in San Francisco. Mahtin, 'Reclaim MayDay San Francisco'.

⁴⁵ MacGregor, 'B-movie plot for Mayday mayhem', p. 5.

‘school-teacher’), as well as the distinction between the governor and the governed. The original script also made clear that there was also a gendered division of labour: May Morrison

Mrs Morrison: My husband, like most of you men, leaves everything to be cleared up after him.⁴⁶

The mocking tone of *Hate Mail* also draws attention to the myriad weaknesses in Weberian analysis. First, as Herbert Marcuse, a libertarian socialist and critic of Weber points out, the ‘pent up aggression’ produced by bureaucratically administered capitalism legitimises for itself ‘medieval cruelty’ discharged ‘scientifically’.⁴⁷ Capitalist bureaucracy produces impulses which are suppressed, manifesting themselves in irrational, destructive behaviour. Second, capitalism’s claims to reason are not adequately supported, for managerial constructions are often based upon pre-existing theocratic institutions, just as Howie’s bureaucratic rationality is ultimately predicated on religious faith.⁴⁸ Similarly, Summerisle’s irrational religious superstructure was constructed to maintain a rational entrepreneurial exercise. As Lord Summerisle explains to Howie over a sample of one of his cultivars, the ‘joyous old Gods’ were reconstituted to increase economic efficiency and ‘rouse them [the workers] from their apathy’. Rather than being in conflict with technical reason, traditional practices supported by charismatic leadership were developed in order to maintain productive efficiency, based on technological advance.

Third, *Hate Mail* derisively pastiches the socially conservative liberal association of anti-capitalism with irreason and consequently with tyranny. The hysterical tone of tabloids and their mythic conspiracies (in which DIY stores selling wicker garden furniture are negligent in selling anarchists the materials for their diabolical plans)⁴⁹ show that the discourse supporting liberalism is partial and value-laden. Finally, bureaucratic reason’s claims to superiority are

⁴⁶ See Phillips, ‘*The Wicker Man*: Scenes filmed but never used’.

⁴⁷ Marcuse, *Negations*, p. 207.

⁴⁸ ‘Knowing the law, in Christian Scotland, to be based on the teachings of Christ, he saw his work in the police as an opportunity to give a practical expression to his faith and convictions’. Hardy and Shaffer, *The Wicker Man*, p. 5.

⁴⁹ MacGregor, ‘B-movie plot for Mayday mayhem’, p. 5.

unsupportable. Howie, who is wholly manipulated, falls victim to the mocking islanders and loses every argument, thereby questioning the consistency, and undermining the supremacy, of liberal 'rationality'. Similarly, *Hate Mail*'s ridicule of bureaucratic reason illustrates the superficiality, and the prejudices, that underwrite liberal-rational discourse.

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