



**THE
EIGHTH
SEAL**

Gigan-Aleehs, Guardian of the Eighth Seal, do you receive our mind-stretch? It is Solstice; the sun is reaching towards its high ascent and Mercury is in superior solar conjunction with the moon. Conditions are optimal; we await your transmission.

Gigan-Aleehs, so much is yet to learn! Our foremothers fought fearlessly to preserve your teachings but centuries of persecution have left you unknown and unheeded except for us few followers. The Sovereign distorted your image, carving mock- replicas above their places of worship- grimacing hags with sunken eyes and gaping vulvas. They feared you. They still do.

Gigan-Aleehs, our foremothers were wise beyond anything we ourselves have known! Cunningly, under a veil of domesticity, they forged new lines of communication with the present. Knowledge of the Eighth leached down to us through age-old recipes, cryptic needlework and songs around the hearth. We continue to piece together the scattered bible of our legacy, our tasks.

Gigan-Aleehs, This much we know for certain! : Opening the seal that binds our worlds will alter human consciousness indefinitely. The wise ones say you will activate the portal at a time of psychic imbalance: that time is unquestionably now. In the name of the Eighth we vow to guide our communities through the impending transition. Do you receive our mind-stretch?

To the uninitiated Mary Furlong's latest publication, *The Eighth Seal*, will likely prove a challenge. Many mistook her 2009 book, *The Harbinger*, a revisionary study of the origins of Sheela Na Gig carvings, for a work of science-fiction. But to dismiss Furlong's project as speculation would mean ignoring its staggering implications. Mary Furlong is a historian, lecturer and research fellow in the Dept of Biological Anthropology at UCC. *The Eighth Seal* develops her line of inquiry into an entity that she and others refer to as 'Gigan Aleehs.' A growing number of scholars believe Gigan to be the source of the mysterious carvings scattered widely throughout Ireland and parts of Great Britain. Writer and radio presenter Joan Hennessy sat down with her to find out more.

Joan: Mary, the Sheela na Gig has long been a subject of academic debate. She's been described as a Celtic goddess, the vestige of a fertility cult, an obscene hag, a sexual stimulant, and the list goes on! Why do you think there are so many divergent interpretations?

Mary: Well Joan, while many of these interpretations are compelling they unfortunately don't hold up to scrutiny. Mostly they're just romantic conjecture but in some cases they serve to perpetuate patriarchal narratives. The first thing we need to understand about the carvings is that they are anthropomorphised depictions of a non-human entity, the one we call Gigan Aleehs. In that

sense, the representation of human attributes, like arms and legs, is pure projection. Now, there's an obvious explanation for this, Gigan arranges its substance in a figure of eight composition, which was presumably perceived by early witnesses as a head and a torso.

*Magic eight, magic eight,
Return again and seal our fate*

*Magic eight, magic eight,
Open your hermetic gate*

*Flour, sugar, yeast and salt,
This cruel fate was not our fault*

*Push and fold and slap and roll
That was how they seized control*

*Cover 'til the yeast kicks in
Educate and then begin*

*Flavour, prove and shape the dough
Watch the opposition grow*

*Magic eight, magic eight,
Return again and seal our fate*

*Magic eight, magic eight,
Open your hermetic gate*

J: In your latest book, *The Eighth Seal*, you draw upon an expansive archive of Gigan-related material, ranging from decorative tapestries and leather engravings to eyewitness reports. It's worth mentioning that in the case of every authored record, the witnesses are women. Why do you think this is?

M: This is the biggest puzzle for any Gigan scholar Joan because, as we know, women were largely excluded from the official literature and the few who were literate kept their activities extremely covert. However, I have to credit Dr Bronagh McShane for her extensive research into the journals of a 15th century Noblewoman by the name of Mairgréag Ní Cearbhaill. Bronagh's study unearthed some startling revelations, not least of all the existence of a secret women's society called of 'An t-ochtú Séala' (The Eighth Seal). This has been an invaluable resource.

J: Hence the title of your book! Do I detect some biblical connotations?

M: Yes I believe so, there seemed to be a shared desire amongst the group to move beyond the dogmas of the church, quite a controversial position when you consider the time in which the journals were written. I think their title was a provocation, to me it suggests a wry critique of Christ's failed second-coming, since in the *Book of Revelations*, Christ's return was marked by the opening

of the seventh symbolic seal. But the eight might also refer to Gigan- Aleehs, which the women referred to then as an t-osnádúr, a Gaelic word meaning the supernatural.

Neither man nor woman...animal nor rock nor plant...it was none of these things and yet all of them at once.

So to revert to your previous question, there appears to be a correlation between records of Gigan and periods in which women were becoming conscious of their oppressed status within society. Some theories assert that collective psychic tension is a trigger but I'm personally unconvinced Gigan is merely a neurological symptom. I mean, it could well be, as The Eighth Seal believed, that the entity is a harbinger of social emancipation. For now the question must remain open.

The cyborg is our ontology; a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformation.

J: Let's return to Sheela-na Gigs for a moment, you mention in your book that the majority of the examples we see around Ireland are imitations. What do you mean by this?

M: Yes it's true, save for a handful of standing stones dating back to the 12th century, the vast majority owe little to the true origins of the images, Ní Cearbhail's journals confirm this. She describes in detail how a

meeting was raided by church leaders and local government officials, whereupon their records were seized and all but destroyed. It seems the Gigan depictions were misinterpreted as pagan goddess iconography. Stonemasons were ordered to carve parodic replicas above church and castle doorways to warn the populace against the sins of female lust.

The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. We take pleasure in the confusion of boundaries.

J: So the exaggerated vulva, which is a distinctive feature of these carvings, you're saying this is actually a distortion?

M: Correct, in light of more recent scientific discoveries, we can now fairly surmise that the women were trying to depict a magnetic portal, although they would have had no frame of reference for this at the time.

J: I must admit Mary, whenever I hear this term I imagine faraway galaxies but magnetic portals are actually common earthly phenomenons aren't they?

M: I know, a lot of this language can be difficult to digest if you're not accustomed to it. To put it simply, magnetic portals are invisible points in the earth's magnetic field that connect to the magnetic field of the Sun. They open dozens of times a day causing jets of energetic particles to flow through the openings in an uninterrupted path.

NASA calls these Flux-Transfer Events, or FTE's for short. They follow an identical principle to modern atomic particle colliders. Most portals are small and short-lived but others can be vast and sustained.

J: So as I understand it, Gigan Aleehs would fall into the latter category, is that correct?

M: Yes, there are records that date right back to the Norman invasion but my guess is Gigan has been with us for longer than that.

J: Ok but if these portals are invisible, as you say, how can we account for eight centuries of visual and written records?

The cyborg is our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction.

M: Well so far the psychological hypothesis seems to bear the most weight. Gigan could be understood as a vision induced by the portal's magnetism.

J: Do you mean to say that Gigan is a hallucination?

M: Not quite because that would imply the absence of external stimulus and would fail to explain why identical visions are cited across the board. No, it's more complex than that, I believe portals can attune our awareness to qualities that lie beyond our normal sense perception. You see they create environments in which

geomagnetic field intensity is decreased. This stimulates the body's own electromagnetic circuitry which profoundly influences the dissolved iron flowing in the blood vessels, not to mention the millions of magnetite particles floating inside the skull and the pineal gland. In such environments, people are known to experience altered states of consciousness. Those who've entered into psychic commune with Gigan have variously described the entity as an angel, a spirit, an extraterrestrial, a hologram, and even a cyborg.

The in-between place is where the figure resides - that barely perceptible layer between the waking and the dream world - yes this is a place, though few people realise. You must train your awareness to recognise it. Once inside you must hold your focus long enough to follow the silver cord - this takes practice. All you will likely capture at first is an impression, a hazy after-image that will stain your retina until long after the encounter. This, comrades, is the origin of our Sigil

J: Mary, The Eighth Seal experienced somewhat of a renaissance in recent decades. You write about a prominent feminist movement who took up the title in the late seventies. Can you tell us a little bit about them?

M: Sure, I first came across The Eighth Seal in 1983 during my early studies at Maynooth college. The group comprised of radical activists, scholars and practitioners across multiple fields. Prompted by a shared interest in

Ní Cearbhaill's journals, they were conducting field research in the Boyne Valley where the majority of psychic encounters were reported. It's from them that we get the name Gigan-Aleehs as it happens, a reverse of Sheela Na Gig.

J: I find it strange that there's so little information to be found about them online, especially given how vocal they were early on. Is there a reason for this do you think?

M: Well, I'd say this is partly down to the faculty, their activities caused quite a stir you see. It began with leaflets circulating around the campus outlining bizarre theories and propositions. The Eighth Seal believed that for centuries Gigan had been attracting, storing and generating its own energy field and that it's energy could be harnessed to alter the structural formation of proteins in human brain tissue. This, they claimed, would have unprecedented effects on the human psyche, something they regarded with optimism.

Our species is embarking on a momentous evolutionary voyage. The Eighth Seal assumes a responsibility to guide and educate our communities throughout this transitional stage. Our chief concern is the eradication of gender inequality, beginning at local level. We predict the ongoing injustices waged against women in this country will no longer be endured, since the system of social reproduction that supports these atrocities will soon be dismantled.

Henceforth do we reject:

The traditions of 'Western' science and politics

The tradition of racist, male-dominant capitalism

The tradition of "progress"

*The tradition of the appropriation of nature as resource
for the productions of culture*

*The tradition of reproduction of the self from the
reflections of the other*

Not long afterwards rumours abounded of strange experiments involving sensory deprivation and esoteric incantations. Members described visions in they were being propelled towards the portal by a silver cord and metamorphosing into hybrids of plants, minerals, animals and machines. Much like their predecessors, these activities presented an enormous threat to the status quo. Some members lost their positions within the faculty and the movement was forced underground.

Seeing the silver cord before me, I grab it with both hands. A dull current rattles through my vertebrae. CONTACT. Instinctively I pull myself through the fog, this time making it as far as the clearing. And there it is. The presence that the thing radiates overwhelms me and for a moment I lose my grip. I follow the cord with my eyes to a cavernous crater puncturing the torso. By now the cord has fused its sinuous fibres to my hair follicles and I can no longer tell if my movements are my own. The crater begins to throb with a heavy pulse,

creating tiny fissures of light across the rock surface. Phosphorous ooze splutters out through the cracks and crystallizes into patches of glowing lichen. A dense network of shoots emerges from the newly-formed crust. Magnetised by the silver cord, they accelerate towards the centre. At the same time the cord coils itself around my waist and thighs, hauling you upwards. PHASE ONE.

J: Mary, what became of The Eighth Seal? Is the movement still in operation?

M: I've been informed by reliable sources that The Eighth Seal is thriving. Their expulsion from the college was a serious impediment to their research initially, since it deprived them of essential resources and the means to disseminate information. However, social media has played a pivotal role in their resurgence. The movement is currently experiencing its highest levels of affiliation, especially among radical young people.

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Our time is a mythic time; The boundary between science fiction and social reality is an illusion.

With Haraway echoing in our ears, we take to the streets. Swathes of painted faces, banners, badges, t-shirts, placards and flyers adopt a set course. Sharp eyes and steady strides, surfaces everywhere emblazoned with the totemic number. Today we will

exorcise the demons that have seized its power for too long.

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...our sigil proliferates via digital substrate, extending its tendrils in every direction. An energetic matrix unfolds, propelled by the swells of delirious incantations. We are intoxicated by a shared sense of purpose, united by our common pain. Witch-weavings tangle up the webs of power, the sigil is working. A thicket of smog builds up overhead, casting us in its mottled shadow & dissipating just as quick.



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