

Nike Moon

On the commercialization of everything

Alon K. Raab

1999

Harvest moon. Moon of the spirits. Cactus moon. Grandmother moon. Nike moon.
Nike moon??

To the many faces and many names honoring the moon, a corporate imprint may soon be added, if a new advertising idea materializes.

Two London-based ad executives, Malcolm Green and Gary Betts, announced plans last year to turn the moon into a giant billboard. By using reflected sunlight from two large umbrella shaped mirrors, they propose projecting corporate logos onto the surface of the moon. They claim to have the assurance of NASA scientists that the plan is feasible.

Rage, pain, and sadness filled me as I read of this scheme. Is there no limit to the depths of greed and to the disregard shown the natural world? Is nothing really sacred?

Perhaps I should not have been so surprised. After all, the list of atrocities and obscenities characterizing our world in these days of globalization is a long one. The relentless acts by captains of industry and their hand-picked politicians to destroy the ozone, the 250,000 child-soldiers who are currently fighting in armed conflicts around the world, the enormous amount of wealth hoarded by capitalists like Bill Gates and Phil Knight, used not to feed and clothe people but to acquire more, the destruction of the environment, the clearcuts, polluted streams, the homeless—the signs are everywhere.

Assault on the Heavens

Nor should I have been so amazed by the assault on the heavens. After all the planting of a flag on the moon, the militarization of space, the blueprints for mineral extraction and space factories, the space junk floating above, and the sending of plutonium aboard the Casini space probe, endangering countless lives, has been ongoing for a generation.

My anger at the advertising men was perhaps misplaced as they are little different than the other efforts to commercialize everything they touch. The use of the Beatles' song "Revolution" and Dylan's "The Times They Are A Changin'" to sell slave labor shoes and accounting services, ads in national parks, and the introduction of Channel 1 (an endless barrage of commercials posing as news) into schools, are recent examples of the role advertising plays in inserting the dominant corporate ideology into all venues of life.

And yet, in this latest plan to conquer the moon, there is a new and sinister element. Perhaps it seems worse since the moon has always been the province of poets, lovers, and dreamers.

Perhaps because while the whole world has been colonized, the moon is still far away, relatively safe from the clutches of those who want to turn the universe into an endless shopping mall. Or, perhaps it is because the moon, throughout human existence, is always in our hearts and souls.

Women's Power

For many people, the moon goddess and the creator were one. For the ancient Finns, the moon, Luonnotar, was also giver of all life; for the Iroquois she was “the eternal one;” for the Sioux, “the old woman who never dies;” and for the Persians, she was Metra—mother. Across cultures the respect accorded the moon was shared. There is much variety in the creation stories associated with the moon, but a common theme is that of women's power.

For the Polynesians, the creator is Hina—the moon, and every woman is Wahine, “made in the image of the moon.” It is no accident that the Indo-European root for moon was Manas representing wise blood in women governed by the moon. For the Greeks Menos meant both moon and power. Hence the threat felt by the early Catholic church Fathers at the sight of women dancing by the light of the moon, and their attempts to ban such practices.

Into this early tradition were later added other stories and myth. Babylonian hymns about primordial creatures emerging from the deep to swallow the moon, and the Guarnay Indian tale of the god Abaangui who, angered by his big nose, sliced it, and tossed it into the sky, where it became the moon. As I grew up, it was a loyal and beloved companion on camping trips in the Sinai desert, the plains of Lapland, and the Cascade mountains, and a source of joy as I embraced a lover under its silvery rays. All over the world, the corporate colonization of nature is advancing, as is the occupation of human consciousness.

The sight of people in Prague, Bombay, and Portland, dressed as walking advertisements for multi-national pushers of jeans, cigarettes, and restaurants, is a common and pathetic sight. The mysterious Reuters news agency writer (human? machine?) who, in reporting the moon ad story, waxed about how “the moon could be more than just a part of the solar system” is yet another representative of an ideology that is becoming all pervasive.

A mind set and way of being that sees in nature nothing more than an opportunity for plunder. Only the destruction of the natural world and of earth-based cultures make such plans possible. Anyone who would dare to suggest to the Fon people of Dahomey that the moon is nothing but a playing field for hawkers of the latest useless product would be met with laughter or incomprehension. For them, Mawu, the moon, the creator, is the mother of all gods and people, and should be treated with the respect given a mother. Only in a world devoid of respect and awe in the presence of the sacred can such a plan appear.

Resist in Every Way

Mictecacihuatl, the Aztec goddess of the underworld who roamed the skies at night seeking victims to devour, or the Tartar Macha Alla, the moon queen of life and death, may be called upon for assistance. May their wrath and vengeance be swift and mighty upon all those who defile and destroy. But we mortals too must take action.

We must resist in every way this latest assault on the moon and the pathology of conquest that is behind it. Calling attention to the plan, educating ourselves and each other, blocking the launching pads of satellites, boycotting and shutting down all companies who wish to profit from this ad campaign, creating communities of nature-based culture, where we help take care of each other and of nature—these are but some essential steps to embrace.

Once, lunacy—possession by the spirit of the moon—did not have the negative connotation affixed to it by those who fear the elements. Let us reclaim this original meaning and power, and let it guide us in our resistance.

Let us be wild in opposing those who have forgotten how to listen to their hearts and how to honor what is truly important and which has no price tag or measure—ebbs and tides, cycles of monthly creation, the warm gaze and loving hand of a loved one while dancing—not under a corporate death-strobe, but under a moon lit sky.

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